

Hogwood Farm, Finchampstead

Reptile Mitigation Strategy – Phase 8

January 2024



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Derek Finnie Associates was commissioned by Barratt David Wilson (BDW) Homes to provide ecological advice in relation to a residential development at Hogwood Farm, Finchampstead. The wider site has outline planning permission for up to 1,500 new dwellings, up to 12,000 sqm of employment floor space, a Neighbourhood Centre with up to 1,900 sqm of non-residential floor space, a new primary school, new sports pitches and associated pavilion building (Planning Ref: O/2014/2179 and 140764).

1.1.2 BDW are currently taking forward the reserved matters application for Parcel 8 within the wider Site. As part of the Section 73 permission (Ref: 181194), there are certain conditions that must be satisfied prior to the commencement of development. Condition 26 of the Permission states:

Condition 26.

Prior to submission of any Reserved Matters applications other than pertaining to the Nine Mile Ride Extension South an outline reptile mitigation strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. All sub phases of the development shall thereafter be designed to incorporate the requirements identified in the approved outline reptile mitigation strategy. All Reserved Matters applications for any sub phase of the development shall include a detailed reptile mitigation strategy that demonstrates how the relevant sub phases have been designed to incorporate the provisions of the outline reptile mitigation strategy and the detailed mitigation strategies shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure appropriate mitigation for the biodiversity impact of the development in accordance with Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policy CP7.

1.1.3 The following report, therefore, has been prepared to discharge Condition 26 as far as it relates to Parcel 8 the wider site and has been prepared in line with Site-Wide Outline Reptile Mitigation Strategy (HDA 2018).

2 SITE WIDE STRATEGY

2.1 Previous Surveys

- 2.1.1 A reptile survey was undertaken by HDA in 2017 to inform the site wide reptile mitigation strategy. The survey utilised two main techniques: the use of artificial refugia and transect searches. Full details of the methodologies employed are presented in HDA (2018) and are not repeated here.
- 2.1.2 The survey identified a relatively low population of grass snake across the site with a maximum count of five individuals. Using the criteria presented by Froglife (1999) the site would be assessed to support a 'Good' population of grass snake. However, as HDA point out, caution must be adopted when interpreting these results given the size of the overall site.
- 2.1.3 Previous surveys had also identified low numbers of common lizard and slow worm from the site as well.
- 2.1.4 No reptiles have been recorded within Parcels 8. although grass snake was encountered in 2017 approximately 50m south of Parcel 8.

2.2 Site-wide Mitigation Strategy

Habitat Manipulation

- 2.2.1 The approved outline mitigation strategy for the Site (HDA 2018) suggests that the detailed reptile mitigation strategy for each phase of the development will either implement a precautionary approach to vegetation clearance or implement a full translocation exercise. The approach taken will depend on the extent, location and distribution of the habitat affected and the status of reptiles in any given area.
- 2.2.2 The proposed habitat manipulation techniques to employed can be summarised as follows, based on the strategy presented by HDA (2018):
- **Step 1.** Mow vegetation to 150mm, to be supervised by ecologist;
 - **Step 2.** After at least 5 days, cut vegetation to ground level by hand under supervision of ecologist;
 - **Step 3.** After another 5 days, topsoil strip, progressive from one end of the site to the other under ecological supervision. If this cannot be done after 5 days, then vegetation should be kept at ground level until such times it can be done.

Translocation

- 2.2.3 Translocation of reptiles may be required for phases of development where it is not possible to displace reptiles through habitat manipulation due to: (i) loss of extensive areas of suitable reptile habitat; (ii) the absence of connective habitats between the development phase and suitable retained reptile habitat in the wider site or wider area; and/or (iii) the future presence of higher numbers of reptiles to those currently recorded at the site.
- 2.2.4 Where translocation is deemed appropriate within any specific phase, HAD (2018) recommend the following methodology should be employed:



- Temporary reptile-proof fencing would be installed around the perimeter of the development phase;
- Once the fencing is installed, refugia would be laid out at an average density of 50-100 refugia ha⁻¹ across the development phase. Trapping would then commence, to be carried out between March and September/early October, until results indicate that all reptiles have been excluded;
- During the trapping period, artificial refugia and any existing refuges on site would be searched in suitable weather conditions i.e. temperatures between 9°C and 20°C and low winds. All captured reptiles would be relocated to the receptor area described above;
- Once capture rates have declined, the remaining vegetation and reptile habitat within the development area to be lost would be progressively removed.

3 DETAILED MITIGATION STRATEGY

3.1 Site Clearance

- 3.1.1 The vast majority of the land outlined as Parcel 8 is currently being used as the Site Works Compound and Car Park and as such is devoid of any semi-natural vegetation. Therefore, the potential of any reptiles to be present has been assessed as negligible which negates the need for a detailed mitigation strategy.

3.2 Monitoring

- 3.2.1 Given the assumed absence of reptiles from both Parcel 8, post construction monitoring is not deemed necessary.

4 SUMMARY

- 4.1.1 Within Parcel 8 of the development site, the potential for reptiles to be present has been assessed as being negligible due to the fact the land is currently used as the site compound and contractors' car park. Hence it is devoid of any semi-natural vegetation. Therefore, a specific mitigation strategy is not required.

REFERENCES

Froglife 1999. *Reptile Survey*. Froglife Advice Sheet 10. Froglife

HDA (2018). *Hogwood Farm, Finchampstead Reptile Survey Report and Site-Wide Outline Reptile Mitigation Strategy*. Consultancy Report Prepared for Legal and General Homes