

Land North of Barkham Road
Langley Common
Barkham
Wokingham
Berkshire

Updated Reptile Survey

Report ref.: R2354_UpdRS_a

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Alfred Dragon to undertake a reptile survey of the 'Land to the North of Barkham Road' in Barkham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 77529 66940). The survey was commissioned in connection with planning proposals to be lodged with Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for the construction of a new dwelling and associated landscaping including the addition of a new driveway on the land.
- 1.1.2** Previous reptile surveys were undertaken in 2008 by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy which showed that the site supported grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) and the survey findings were consistent with a 'good population' being present, with up to five adults and two juveniles recorded onsite. An updated survey undertaken in 2023 found no evidence of reptiles on the site which had become overgrown with scrub.
- 1.1.3** An updated preliminary ecological appraisal undertaken on the 2nd April 2026 found that a large area of mixed scrub that had previously encroached the site had been recently managed and cut back, exposing a large area of grassland towards the southern side of the site. The site was therefore considered to offer suitable habitat for use by reptiles and therefore an updated reptile survey was recommended.
- 1.1.4** Artificial refugia were checked on seven occasions between the 24th April and 17th June 2026 by Vicky Potts MCIEEM and Lauren Hayward - a qualifying member of CIEEM. Slow worms were recorded during three out of the seven checks below refugia on the south-eastern and eastern sides of the site. The survey findings – undertaken following standard procedures for determining the presence or likely absence of reptiles (Froglife 1999) – indicates that the site supports a low slow worm population and therefore the proposed development would potentially lead to reptiles being harmed in the absence of mitigation and will lead to the loss of reptile habitat.
- 1.1.5** A programme of capture and translocation to the reptile protection zone on to the north and west of the development site, within the retained woodland and grassland within the ownership boundary, will be implemented for the development to go ahead lawfully and to maintain the conservation status of local reptile populations.

- 1.1.6** The development site's landscaping will incorporate species rich turf, native hedging and tree planting and hibernaculum to provide biodiversity enhancements and opportunities for reptiles within the site following the completion of the construction.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

- 2.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Alfred Draggon to undertake a reptile survey of the 'Land to the North of Barkham Road' in Barkham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 77529 66940). The survey was commissioned in connection with planning proposals to be lodged with Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for the construction of a new dwelling and associated landscaping including the addition of a new driveway on the land.
- 2.1.2** Previous reptile surveys were undertaken in 2008 and 2023 by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy (Report reference number: R3566/a). The 2008 survey showed that the site supported grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) and the survey findings were consistent with a 'good population' being present, with up to five adults and two juveniles recorded onsite. There were no reptiles found during the 2023 reptile surveys when the site had become overgrown with scrub.
- 2.1.3** With reference to the Key Reptile Sites Register (Froglife 1999), the findings from the updated reptile survey found that the site supported a maximum count of one sub-adult per visit and therefore a 'low population' of slow worms. Slow worms (*Anguis fragilis*) were recorded on the site during three of seven survey visits and were distributed on the south-eastern and eastern sides of the site.
- 2.1.4** The updated survey reported as follows, aims to establish the current status of any reptile populations on site, and if reptiles remain, to guide a suitable reptile mitigation strategy to fit with the approved plans (refer to plans in **Appendix 6**).

2.2 Site Location and Context

2.2.1 The land to the north of Barkham Road (henceforth referred to as the 'site'), comprises unmanaged grassland and woodland, with the area of ownership land covering just over 1.14 ha and the development area covering 0.25 ha. The site is situated on the northern side of Barkham Road in Barkham, Berkshire (OS Grid reference for approximate centre of the development site OS grid reference: SU 77529 66940). The site is in a semi-rural setting surrounded by a continuation of the woodland to the northwest, a brook on the northern boundary which connects to grazed paddocks, arable fields to the south and a few residential properties to the east and one residential property to the west. In the wider area more extensive woodland (The Coombes) is situated 200 metres to the north east of the site.

2.3 Reptile Biology and Habitat Requirements

2.3.1 Reptiles will make use of a wide range of habitats. They require structurally diverse vegetation, including areas of long vegetation to provide cover, and more open areas to allow for basking. Raised features such as wood piles will often be used by basking common lizards (*Zootoca vivipara*) for example, which bask freely up to temperatures of 18°C. Slow worms (*Anguis fragilis*) typically bask in the open very infrequently and are usually associated with areas of dense vegetation, often being encountered in gardens (Gent & Gibson 2003).

2.4 Legislative Background

2.4.1 The reptile species considered most likely to be encountered on the site, i.e. grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*), slow worm (*A. fragilis*) and common lizard (*Z. vivipara*) are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended). In outline, the WCA makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure, possess or sell any of the aforementioned species.

2.4.2 Slow worm (*A. fragilis*), grass snake (*N. helvetica*), common lizard (*Z. vivipara*) and adder (*V. berus*) are all listed as species of principal importance for the purpose of conservation as defined under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (commonly referred to as Priority Species).

2.5 Report Format

- 2.5.1** The format of the report is as follows: survey methodology in **Section 3**; survey findings in **Section 4**; and discussion and recommendations in **Section 5**. The appendices are as follows: map of artificial refugia locations (**Appendix 1**); and raw reptile survey data in **Appendix 2**.

3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1 Reptile Survey

3.1.1 A total of 13 artificial refugia, made of bituminous roofing material and measuring approximately 0.5m², were laid out within the sites development boundary on the 2nd April 2026 and left in-situ for three weeks before checks commenced. The artificial refugia locations were recorded using a phone GPS signal (refer to **Appendix 1**).

3.1.2 The refugia were checked on seven occasions between the 24th April and 17th June 2026 (refer to **Appendix 2**). During the survey visits, a walkover survey of the site was undertaken searching for basking reptiles in suitable habitat. The survey visits were carried out by senior ecologist Vicky Potts MCIEEM and assistant ecologist Lauren Hayward - a qualifying member of CIEEM.

3.2 Survey Constraints

3.2.1 There were no significant survey constraints. The surveys were undertaken at a time of year when reptiles are active, i.e. March to October, with six visits occurring within the key survey months, i.e. April, May and September. The survey visits were predominantly carried out in weather conditions optimal for detecting reptiles, i.e. temperatures between 9°C and 20°C, intermittent or hazy sunshine, and little or no wind (Froglife 1999; Gent & Gibson 2003).

4 SURVEY FINDINGS

4.1 Reptile Survey

- 4.1.1** Slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) was recorded on the site during three of the seven survey visits with a maximum count of one adult (refer to survey findings plan in **Appendix 1** and raw data in **Appendix 2**).
- 4.1.2** The peak counts of two juvenile slow worms were recorded on the 20th May 2026; observed under one mat (Mat 13) on the eastern side of the site. One adult and one one juvenile slow worm was observed under one mat (Mat 1) on the south-eastern side of side on the 7th and 12th of May 2026.

5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Assessment of Reptile Population Size Class

- 5.1.1** The maximum count of one adult slow worm on site that covers an area of approximately 0.25 hectares with a trap density of 5x the recommended density of 10 refugia per hectare (Froglife 1999), indicates that the site supports a low population with reference to the Key Reptile Site selection criteria (Froglife 1999) and HGBI guidance (HGBI 1998).
- 5.1.2** A peak count of two juvenile slow worms was recorded during the visits, however only individual adults are included in the population size (Froglife 1999).
- 5.1.3** Although no grass snakes were recorded during the 2026 reptile survey, they have previously been recorded in 2008 with a peak count of three adult grass snakes, it is therefore considered likely that grass snakes are still present on site occasionally.

5.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

- 5.2.1** The ground works required for the permitted re-development of the site could potentially lead to the killing or injury of slow worms and grass snakes - legally protected and species of principal importance for conservation (as defined under the NERC Act 2006) – without mitigation measures being adopted, and would also lead to the loss of reptile habitat, and therefore a programme of mitigation and compensation is required for the work to go ahead lawfully and to maintain the favourable conservation of slow worm and grass snake populations as set out in **Section 6** below.

6 REPTILE HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AND MITIGATION PROPOSALS

6.1 Reptile Habitat Protection

- 6.1.1** For the site to continue to provide habitat for the local slow worm and grass snake population, the grassland and woodland habitat within the Reptile Protection Zone will be retained and enhanced in the long term. Sensitive management of the other neutral grassland (western site boundary) and woodland (western and northern ownership boundary) in addition to specific habitat enhancements (refer to **Section 6.3** below) will ensure the long-term ecological functionality of the site for slow worms and grass snakes (see proposed site layout in **Appendix 6**).

6.2 Reptile Habitat Enhancements

- 6.2.1** The reptile protection zone, which is outside of the development area, to the north and west of the site will be managed as infrequently cut grassland (rotational cuts 2-3 times per year) and unmanaged woodland to provide enhanced structural diversity and cover for reptiles. Additional structural features to provide enhanced shelter and hibernation opportunities will be provided by creating at least three reptile hibernacula within the reptile protection zone (refer to **Appendix 3** for a specification and **Appendix 6** for proposed locations). The management regime and installation of hibernacula will be instigated before site clearance begins to ensure that there is adequate suitable land for reptiles to be moved into.

6.3 Reptile Mitigation

- 6.3.1** To prevent reptiles being harmed by vegetation clearance and construction work on site, they will be excluded from the footprint of the proposed development in advance of any ground works or clearance by machine taking place by erecting reptile exclusion fencing around the perimeter of the development site (refer to **Appendix 4** for a reptile fencing specification). The reptile exclusion fencing will be set up following the red line boundary of the development site boundary, to enclose the area to the east and south-east of the site where reptiles were found.
- 6.3.2** Prior to installing the exclusion fencing, the vegetation along the fence route will be cleared by hand and with hand held tools to make it unsuitable for reptiles under the guidance of an ecologist.
- 6.3.3** To remove slow worms and grass snakes from the construction zone, artificial refugia will be set at a density of at least 10 per hectare. The refugia will be checked every day and any animals encountered captured and transferred to the other side of the

fencing, within the reptile protection zone. Such work will be undertaken between March and mid-October inclusive, and trapping will continue for a minimum of 30 days and until trapping rates have declined to zero for at least five suitable trapping days. Based on the population size of the two species recorded on site it is anticipated that capture may continue for a minimum of 30 days (HGBI 1998). Captured animals will be relocated to the Reptile Protection Zone to the western and northern side of the site.

- 6.3.4** As capture progresses, it will be aided, as necessary, by the strimming of areas of taller vegetation in the development zone to create 'islands' of reptile habitat amongst less favourable habitat to assist with the capture of any reptiles present. The reptile fencing will be checked regularly by the ecologist during the trapping process to ensure it is in good condition and continuing to function as a barrier to reptiles.
- 6.3.5** Once trapping has been completed, a destructive search of any remaining suitable refuges will be undertaken. A section of fencing will be opened up along Barkham Road to allow access for machinery onto site and vegetation and turf will be stripped back by machine under the close supervision of an ecologist and any slow worms or grass snakes encountered transferred to the protected on-site reptile receptor site.
- 6.3.6** Although the likelihood of reptiles being affected by the construction works post site clearance is low, there will remain a small risk they will be present on site and therefore precautions will be adopted as follows:
- During the course of development, any open excavations and trenches should be backfilled before nightfall, or alternatively, escape ramps should be installed to allow reptiles to escape if they become trapped;
 - Any stored building materials such as bricks etc. that might offer shelter should be kept raised off the ground on pallets.

REFERENCES

Froglife (1999). Froglife Advice Sheet 10: Reptile Survey: An introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation. Froglife, Halesworth.

Gent, T. & Gibson, S. (2003). *Herpetofauna Workers' Manual*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland (1998). Evaluating local mitigation/translocation programmes: Maintaining Best Practice and lawful standards. HGBI Advisory Notes for Amphibians and Reptile Groups (ARGS). HGBI, co/ Froglife, Halesworth. Unpublished.

APPENDIX 1 – ARTIFICIAL REFUGIA LOCATIONS AND SURVEY FINDINGS PLAN

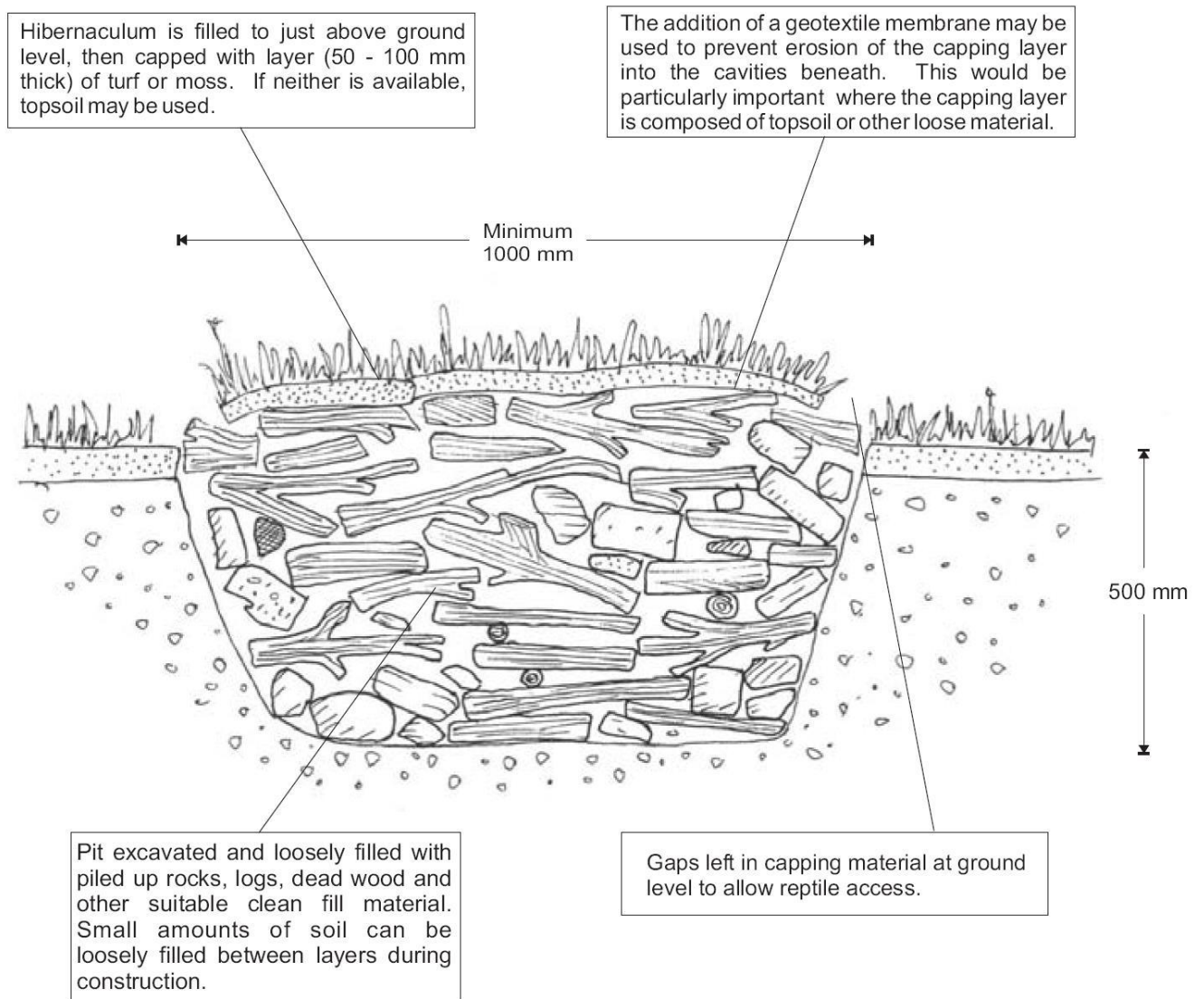


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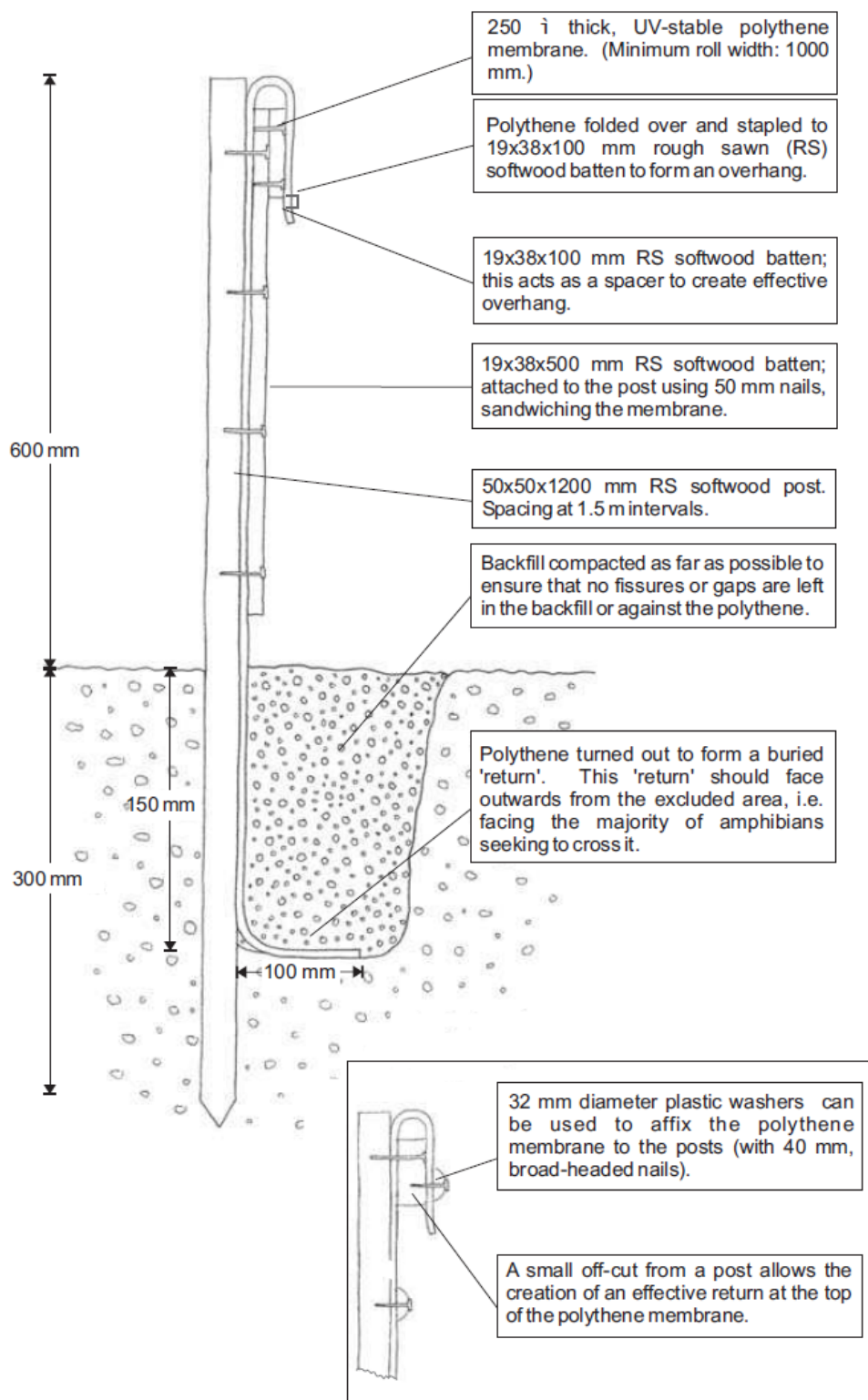
APPENDIX 2 – RAW REPTILE SURVEY DATA

Survey number	Date	Time	Survey findings	Weather conditions
1	24/04/2026	10:30	No reptiles	Sunny, 11 °C, clear, BF 1
2	30/04/2026	10:30	No reptiles	Sunny, 19 °C, clear, BF 1
3	07/05/2026	12:45	1x adult slow worm (mat 1)	Sunny, 20 °C, 10% cc, BF 1
4	12/05/2026	10:45	1x juvenile slow worm (mat 1)	Cloudy with sunny spells, 14°C, 20% cc, BF1
5	20/05/2026	10:4	2x juvenile slow worm (mat 13)	Cloudy with sunny spells, 16°C, 50% cc, BF1/2
6	04/06/2026	10:30	No reptiles	Cloudy with sunny spells, 13 °C, 50% cc, BF 2
7	17/06/2026	10:30	No reptiles	Sunny, 20°C, 30% cc, BF1

APPENDIX 3 – REPTILE HIBERNACULUM SPECIFICATION



APPENDIX 4 – REPTILE FENCING SPECIFICATION



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APPENDIX 5 – PROPOSED HIBERNACULA PLACEMENT



Land north of Barkham Road
Barkham

Reptile Survey Findings and Proposed
Hibernaculum Placements

- Key:
- HEDGEROWS
- Proposed Reptile Hibernacula
 - Slow Worms Observed
 - No Reptiles Observed
 - Development Boundary
 - Ownership boundary

Mapped by: Vicky Potts MCIEEM & Lauren
Hayward (Qualifying member of CIEEM)

Date: June 2026

Scale: A4 1 : 800

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APPENDIX 6 – PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT

Hawkes Architecture - Barkham Road
0.5 hectare red line example drawing
11th Feb 2026



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