Land at Brunninghams Farm
Heath Ride
Finchampstead
Berkshire
RG40 3QJ

Reptile Survey

Report ref.: R2977_RS_b

Report Quality Control Information	
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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned to undertake a survey for the presence of reptiles on land at Brunninghams Farm, Heath Ride, in Finchampstead. The survey was commissioned in connection with a planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council to re-develop the site with the construction of 7 new dwellings. The work will include the demolition of the existing outbuildings.

1.1.2 A preliminary ecological appraisal and roost assessment was undertaken in April 2025 by Arbtech Consulting Ltd which showed that the site supported habitats that provide foraging, sheltering and basking habitats for reptiles such as slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) and grass snake (*Natrix natrix*). The site covers an approximate area of 1.77 hectares and comprised areas of wet woodland, other neutral grassland, bramble scrub, bracken and scattered trees. The report recommended further surveys to be undertaken to determine the presence or likely absence of reptiles on site.

1.1.3 A reptile survey was undertaken by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy. Artificial refugia were checked on seven occasions between the 19th August and 8[24th] September 2025. Slow worms were recorded during six of the checks below refugia across 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.

1.1.4 A programme of capture and translocation to the reptile protection zone on retained land to the southwest of the development site, which will be enhanced for reptiles as part of the land management and maintenance plan, will be implemented for the development to go ahead lawfully and to maintain the conservation status of local reptile populations.

1.1.5 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 to undertake a survey for the presence of reptiles on land at Brunninghams Farm, Heath Ride, in Finchampstead. The survey was commissioned in connection with a planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council to re-develop the site with the construction of 7 new dwellings proposed. The work will include the demolition of the existing outbuildings.

2.1.2 A preliminary ecological appraisal and roost assessment was undertaken in April 2025 by Arbtech Consulting Ltd which showed that the site supported habitats that provide foraging, sheltering and basking habitats for reptiles such as slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) and grass snake (*Natrix natrix*). The site covers an approximate area of 1.77 hectares and comprised areas of wet woodland, other neutral grassland, bramble scrub, bracken and scattered trees. The report recommended further surveys to be undertaken to determine the presence or likely absence of reptiles on site.

2.1.3 The survey reported as follows, aims to establish if reptiles are present on site, and if reptiles are present, to assess the status of the population(s) to guide a suitable reptile mitigation strategy to fit with the approved plans (refer to plans in **Appendix 5**).

2.2 Site Location and Context

2.2.1 The site comprises the buildings and land at Brunninghams Fam, Finchampstead. The site is situated along the southern side of Heath Ride in the village of Finchampstead, in Berkshire (OS central grid reference: SU 80812 64367).

2.2.2 The site is in a suburban setting amongst residential properties and their respective gardens along Heath Ride, with scattered mature trees to the east and west of the site. There is nearby woodland - Simon's Wood and The Ridges to the south - which form a mosaic of broadleaved woodland, pine plantation and lowland heathland habitats, while large lakes: King's Mere and Queen's Mere, are to the northeast.

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 18ºC. 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 21 artificial refugia, made of bituminous roofing material and measuring approximately 0.5m^2, were laid out on the 15th July 2025 and left in-situ for just over four 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 19th August and 24th September 2025 (refer to **Appendix 3**). 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 ecologist Callum Waldie BSc (Hons), MSc – an ecologist with two and a half years' experience of conducting ecological surveys.

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 five 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 9ºC and 20ºC, 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 six of the seven survey visits with an average of 2.7 slow worms per visit (refer to survey findings plan in **Appendix 1** and raw data in **Appendix 2**).

4.1.2 During the survey on 19th August, one adult male slow worm was observed under one mat, and on the survey on 19th September one female slow worm was observed. Counts of between one and two juvenile and/sub adult slow worms were observed during four of the surveys. No reptiles were recorded during the visit on the 30th August. A peak count of eleven juvenile slow worms were recorded on the 24th September 2025. The slow worm sightings were observed under six mats across the site.

5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Assessment of Reptile Population Size Class

5.1.1 The average count of 2.7 slow worms per visit, with a maximum count of one adult on two occasions (one male and one female recorded on separate visits) on a site that covers an area of approximately 1.77 hectares with a trap density above 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).

5.2 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 - 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 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 population, the grassland habitat within the Reptile Protection Zone at the south western end of the site will be retained and enhanced (refer to **Section 6.2** below) to ensure the long-term ecological functionality of the site for slow worms (see proposed site layout in **Appendix 6**).

6.2 Reptile Habitat Enhancements

6.2.1 In the long term the reptile protection zone to the southwest of the site will be extended on completion of the construction and will be managed with a mosaic of habitats with areas of woodland, scrub, bracken and species rich grassland around the boundaries (refer to **Appendix 6**). The area will also include a communal picnic area within the meadow for the residents. Sections of the grassland in particular along the boundaries will be less intensively managed with rotational cuts 2-3 times per year 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 two reptile hibernacula within the reptile protection zone (refer to **Appendix 3** for a specification and **Appendix 5** 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 within the reptile exclusion area.

6.3 Reptile Mitigation

6.3.1 To prevent reptiles being harmed by demolition, 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 south western end and perimeter of the development site (refer to **Appendix 4** for a reptile fencing specification).

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 100 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 south-western side of the site. The fencing will remain in place during construction.

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 by a suitably qualified ecologist and any slow worms or grass snakes encountered transferred to the protected on-site reptile receptor site. This will include the removal of any log piles, dead wood or stored items on site that have the potential to act as refuges for reptiles.

6.3.6 The site will then be deemed unsuitable for reptiles. The reptile exclusion fencing will be retained to discourage reptiles moving back into the development area – refer to the pre-construction and during construction plan in **Appendix 5**.

6.3.7 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.

7 REFERENCES

DRYAD tree specialists (2021) *Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement (Report Ref: D2695.V2.1-AIA.AMS)*

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

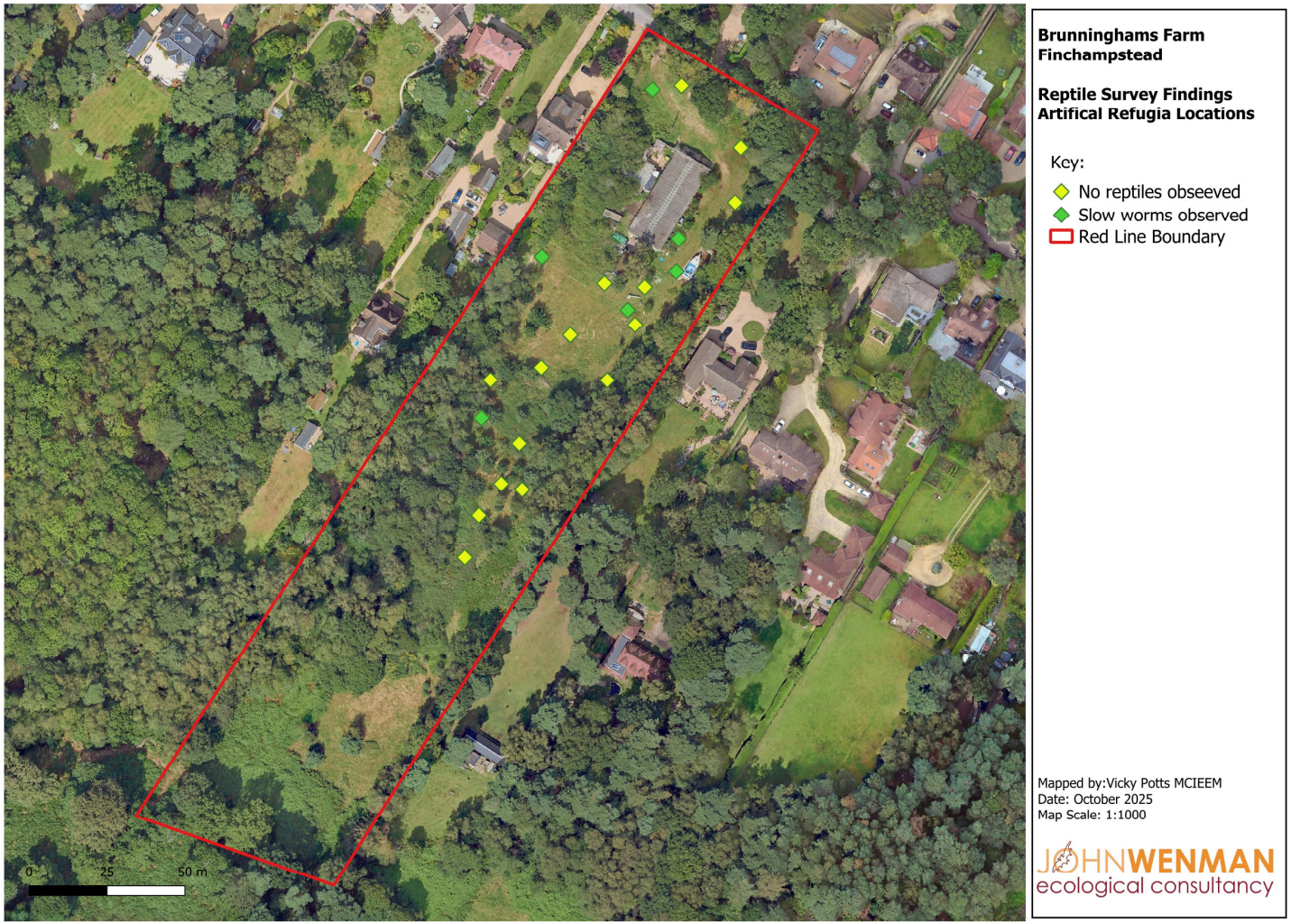
Gent, T. & Gibson, S. (2003). *Herpetofauna Workers' Manual*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

Highways Agency (2005). *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges. Volume 10; Section 4; Part 7* (Nature Conservation Advice in Relation to Reptiles and Roads.

Herptofauna 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.

John Wenman Ecological Consultancy (2021). *Great Crested Newt and Reptile Survey (R2693a)*

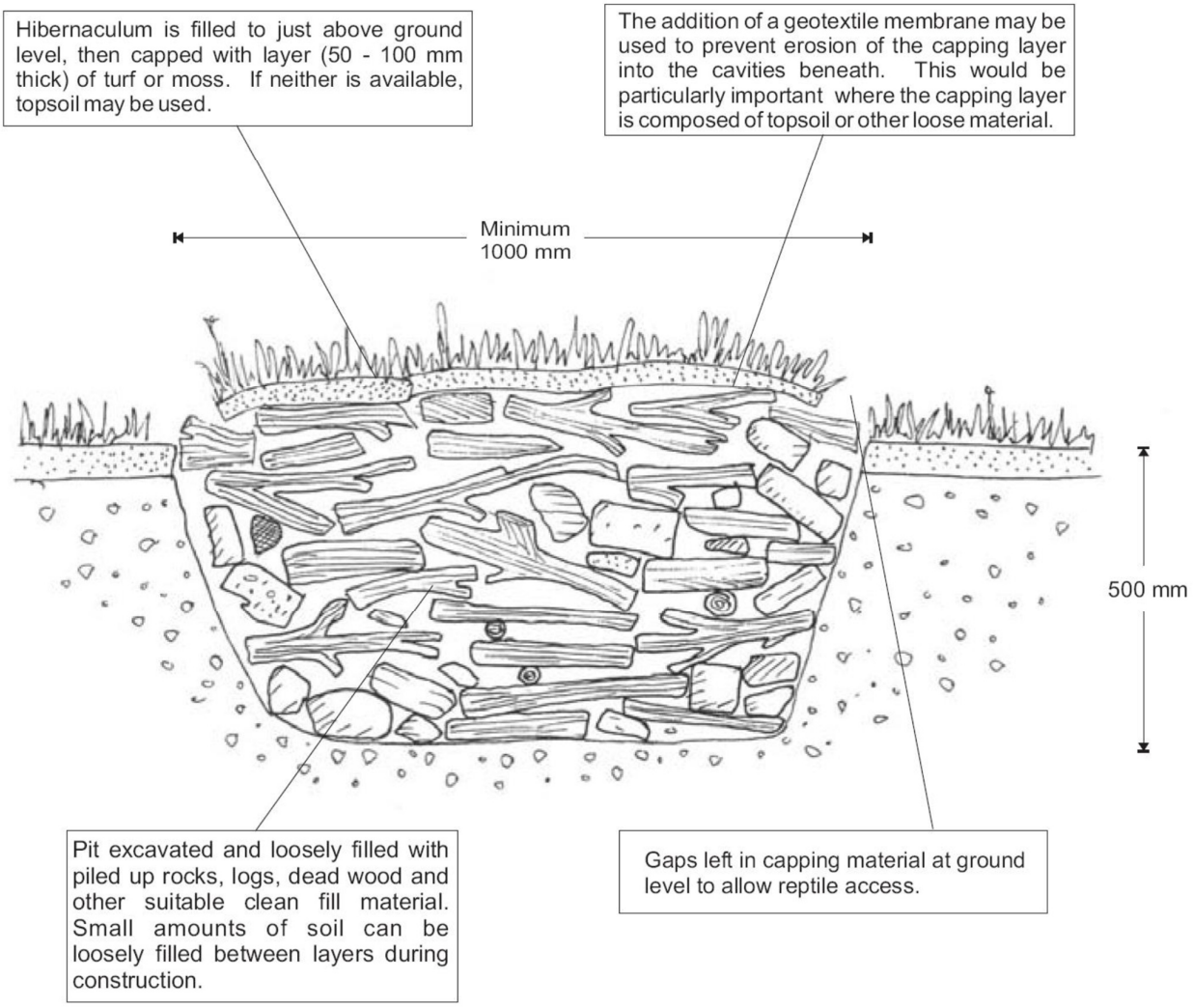
APPENDIX 1 – ARTIFICIAL REFUGIA LOCATIONS AND SURVEY FINDINGS PLAN



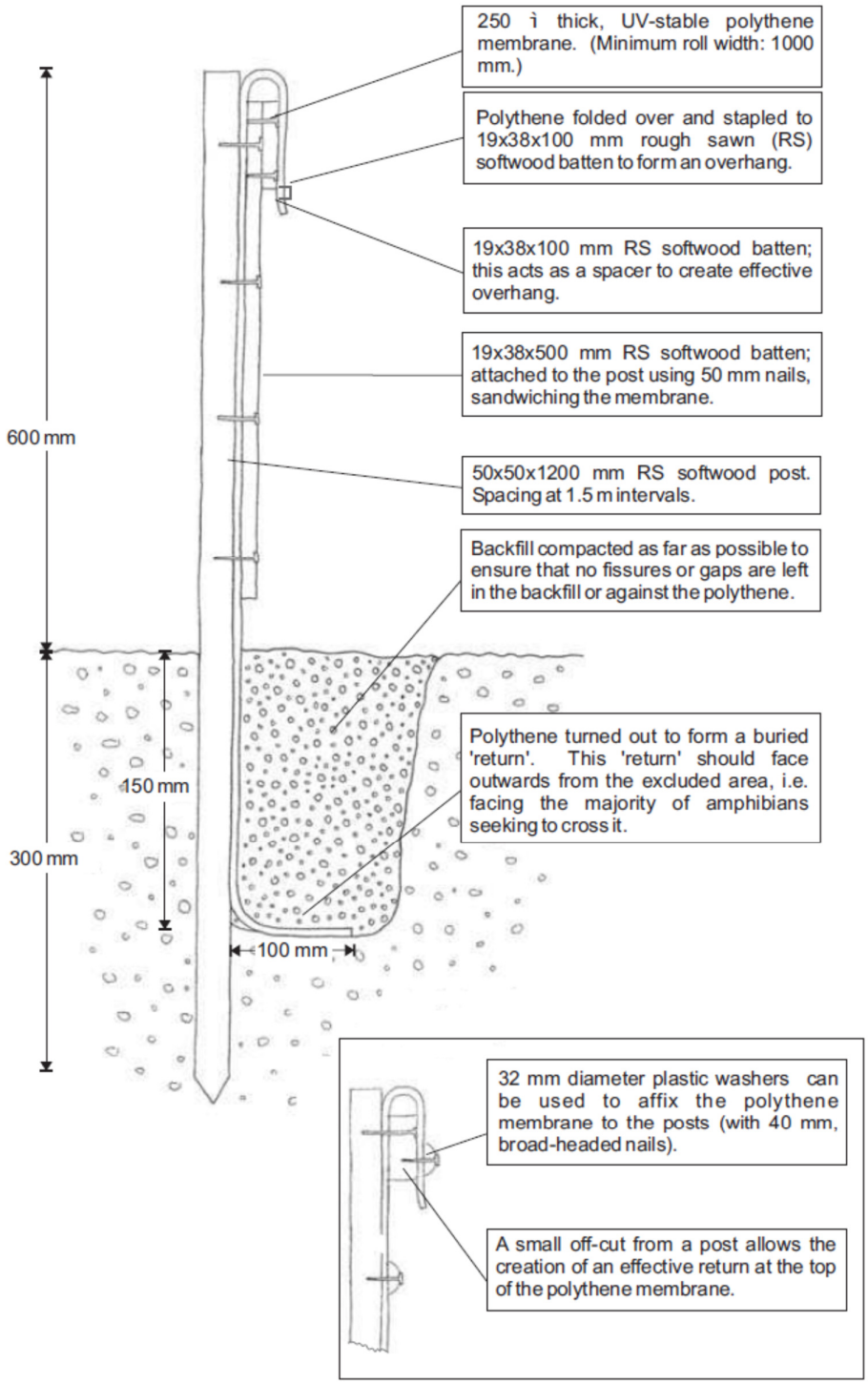
APPENDIX 2 – RAW REPTILE SURVEY DATA

Survey number	Date	Time	Survey findings	Weather conditions
1	19/08/25	08:40	1x Adult (Male) – Slow worm 1x Juvenile – Slow worm	Overcast, 17 °C, dry, BF 2
2	30/08/25	08:01	None	14 °C, 10% cc, dry BF 2
3	05/09/25	10:12	1x Sub-adult – Slow worm	16 °C, 5% cc, dry BF 2
4	08/09/25	09:12	2x Juvenile – Slow worm	15 °C, 5% cc, dry BF 2
5	19/09/25	11:21	1x Adult (Female) – Slow worm	19 °C, 20% cc, dry BF 2
6	21/09/25	11:37	1x Sub-adult – Slow worm 1x Juvenile – Slow worm	14 °C, 10% cc, dry BF 2
7	24/08/25	10:24	11x Juvenile – Slow worm	13 °C, 30% cc, dry BF 1

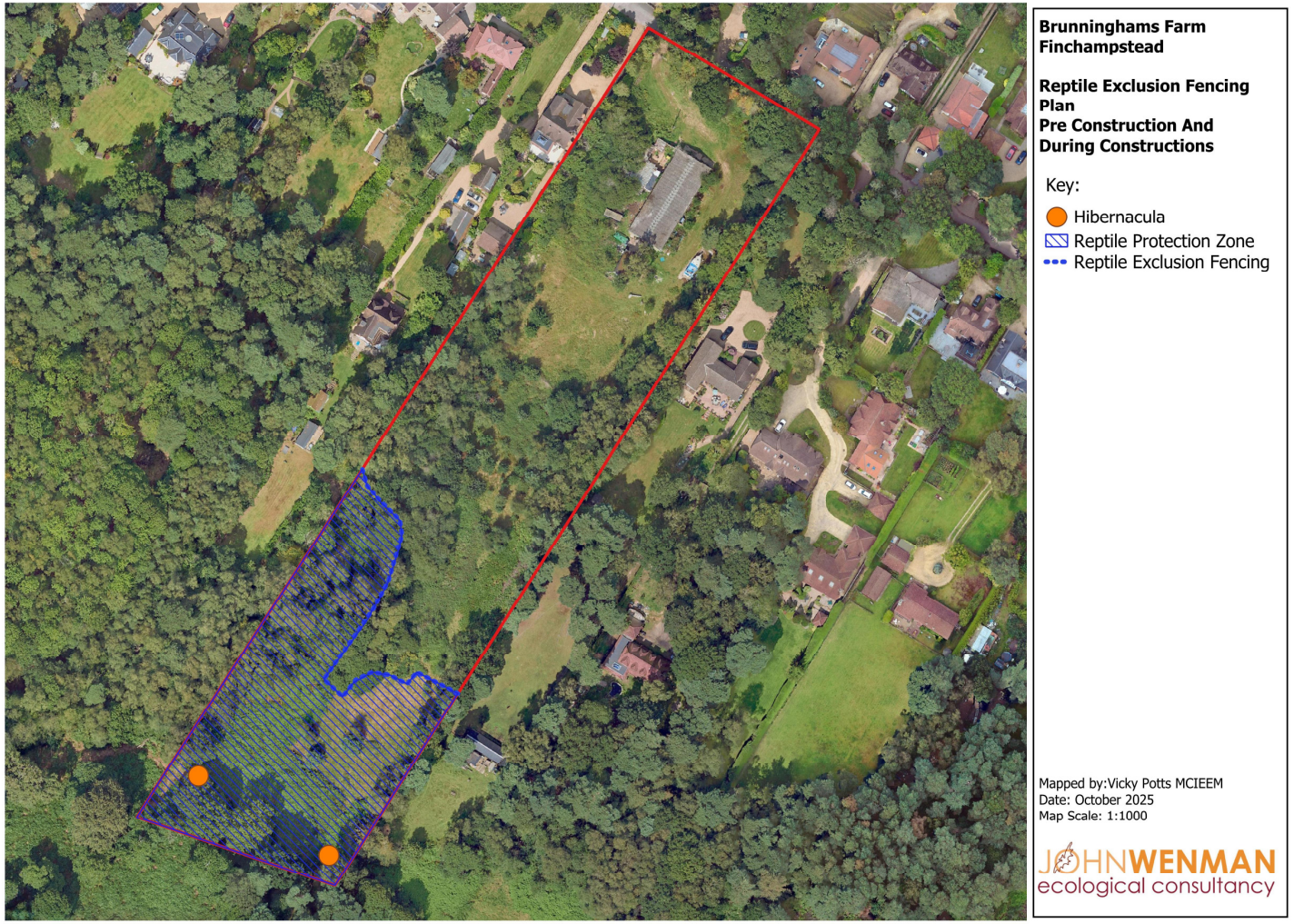
APPENDIX 3 – REPTILE HIBERNACULUM SPECIFICATION



APPENDIX 4 – REPTILE FENCING SPECIFICATION



APPENDIX 5 – REPTILE EXCLUSION FENCING - PLAN PRE CONSTRUCTION AND DURING CONSTRUCTION



APPENDIX 6 – PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT AND REPTILE HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PLAN

Reptile habitat enhancement Hibernacula

Plan by: Philip Wadge Architecture Annotated by: VP	Date: December 2025	Brunninghams Farm Finchampstead Repilte habitat enhancement	JOHNWENMAN ecological consultancy