



Technical Note

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RE: Arborfield Green Parcel N, Wokingham (O/2014/2280) – Reptile Mitigation Strategy Amendments

Background

This document has been produced to provide some additional information on changes to the proposed strategy for mitigation the impacts of the proposed development upon the low population of Grass Snakes (*Natrix natrix*), identified during the updated walkover undertaken by ACD Environmental Ltd (2025) to support the Reserved Matters application at Arborfield Green Parcel N, Wokingham (OS grid reference SU 77098 65373) (Fig 1).

This is a minor deviation from the strategy outlined within the Reptile Mitigation Strategy produced to discharge Condition 21 of the approved Outline application O/2014/2280, by ACD Environmental Ltd (2025).

Figure 1. Proposed Layout (Pegasus Group, 2026. Drawing No: P24-1739_DE_01_AF_01).



Status of Reptiles on Site

AECOM, ENTEC, and ARUP surveyed the site and wider area in throughout 2008 to 2014, it was noted that habitats in the wider area had varying degrees of suitability for reptiles, due to the presence of agricultural land and then areas with more suitable grassland, with the current application site not surveyed for reptiles. The nearest parcel surveyed to the north of the site (now known as Linear Park Phase 3) was noted to comprise a population of Slow Worm (*Anguis fragilis*), identified by ENTEC in 2008. Furthermore, it is important to note that the site does not fall within an area of 'potential reptile habitat' in line with the Arborfield Garrison – Reptile Mitigation Strategy (AECOM, 2014).

A single Grass Snake was identified during the walkover survey undertaken by ACD Environmental Ltd (2025), with the conclusion that a low population of Grass Snake is present within the Parcel N boundary. The updated walkovers noted semi-improved grassland and scrub located within the site boundary, and as such, despite the likely absence of reptiles present historically, a robust reptile mitigation strategy is required.

Current Strategy

The reptile mitigation strategy as outlined within the Reptile Mitigation Strategy produced to discharge Condition 21 by ACD Environmental Ltd (2025) details the following:

- The SANG receptor will be retained in its current condition due to already comprising suitable habitat;
- A reptile exclusion zone using semi-permanent HDPE reptile fencing will be installed along the boundary of the approved application site as per **Figure 2**, below;
- Deploy artificial refugia at a high sensitivity and undertake a minimum of 20 days of trapping in suitable weather (9–18 °C, April–Sept). Reptiles captured are moved to the receptor area under qualified ecologist supervision;
- Habitat manipulation during the latter stages of trapping, including gradual strimming and brush-cutting to concentrate reptiles for capture; cease trapping after five clear days of zero captures;
- Destructive search entailing an ecologist to hand-search and excavate remaining refugia and topsoil to ensure no reptiles remain before groundworks commence;
- Fragmented removal of exiting hedgerow under ECoW supervision, using two-stage directional strimming (200 mm then 50 mm) and hand searches for reptiles and hibernacula; only during active season (April–Oct);
- No post-translocation monitoring required but weekly checks of fencing integrity by Site Manager will be undertaken with immediate repair of any damage; and
- Provision of a hibernaculum and log piles within the receptor site, prior to occupation to act as an enhancement.

Figure 2. Proposed reptile mitigation strategy (ACD Environmental Ltd, 2025).



Changes to the Strategy

In line with the approved AECOM documents and due to the individual Grass Snake identified on site (low population) it is considered that the most appropriate form of mitigation would be to adopt a precautionary approach. The following methods will be undertaken to ensure that no reptiles are harmed during the works in the event that individuals are present on site.

- The days prior to ground works commencing:
 - Stage 1:** During the first stage, the vegetation will be cut down to a height no lower than 20cm. Cutting will occur directionally, working towards suitable habitat to be retained along the site boundaries to encourage reptiles to these areas. This will be done under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist.
 - Stage 2:** A second cut (the following day) will take it down to ground level. At this time, the supervising ecologist will do a fingertip search of any tussocky areas. Any potential refugia (i.e., deadwood, rubble, earthbanks) will also be searched and removed. Any potential reptiles encountered will be captured and relocated to areas of retained habitat on the margins of the site to the north-east Linear Park Phase 3 boundary which will be subsequently subject to reptile capture and translocation following Reserved Matters approval (**Fig 3**). This will be done under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist.

- The ecologist on site will then hand search any denser areas of cover such as leaf litter where these areas are to be directly impacted upon.
- All vegetation on site must be kept managed during the development to ensure that reptiles don't establish whilst works take place.
- Materials must not be stored along the boundary vegetation on site and must be kept raised off of the ground (i.e., stored on pallets).
- ***Depending on the habitat type present, a destructive search may also be required, as detailed below, under supervision of an ECoW.***

Following the two-stage clearance, a destructive search may be carried out under the supervision of the suitably qualified ecologist depending on the habitat type present. Topsoil will be gently stripped to 100mm depth using a digger with a toothed bucket. The supervising ecologist will capture any reptiles found and relocate them to the retained boundary habitat. Please note, any suitable habitat within the root protection zone will not have the topsoil stripped and will only be maintained cut at ground level.

These works will be undertaken during the active reptile period (April – October) when temperatures are above 10°C with sunshine. This area of habitat will be regularly managed and maintained unsuitable for reptiles for the duration of the works and will be cordoned off from the site to prevent vehicles entering the area. The arisings will be removed and any materials will be stored off the ground using pallets or skips if stored in the grassland to prevent sheltering reptiles.

Following the two-stage clearance of the areas outlined above, tree protection fencing will be installed as per **Figure 3**, below, which will protect the root protection zones and existing habitats within these buffers to be retained and protected throughout the duration of the works. With the remainder of the site unsuitable following the two-stage clearance works, this will protect the receptor area and ensure that no personnel or construction workers enter during the construction phase. The site must be maintained to a short / limited sward height to prevent any reptiles present recolonising the site. As such, it is recommended that groundworks take place immediately after the two-stage clearance.

The mitigation strategy will remain as per detailed within the Reptile Mitigation Strategy (ACD Environmental Ltd, 2025) regarding the installation of hibernacula and log piles, as detailed above.

Figure 3. Proposed alterations to the reptile mitigation strategy (Google Satellite, 2026).



Conclusion

This document sets out amendments to the reptile mitigation strategy necessary in order to facilitate the development. Amendments include a two-stage precautionary approach to areas of significantly low use of reptiles under supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist and removal of the proposed reptile exclusion fencing. Following this, the mitigation strategy in terms of enhancement features, will remain as detailed within the Reptile Mitigation Strategy (ACD Environmental Ltd, 2025). Once the mitigation measures are taken into account, the overall impact of the development will be *negligible*.

Kind regards,

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References

ACD Environmental Ltd (2025). Parcel N Arborfield Green Wokingham. Reptile Mitigation Strategy.

AECOM (2014). Arborfield Garrison EIA. Reptile Habitat Survey Locations and Results Summary.

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HART (2009) Herefordshire Amphibian & Reptile Team. Reptile Habitat Management: Guidelines for Landowners