

Reptile Survey Report

Howards House Hotel, Teffont

October 2023

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Reptile Survey Report

Howards House Hotel, Teffont

11/10/2023

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Non-technical Summary

Following a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Phlorum, August 2023) a reptile survey was recommended at Howards House Hotel, Teffont. Phlorum Ltd was commissioned by Chapman Lily Planning to undertake a reptile survey which was carried out at Howards House Hotel during September and early October 2023, to establish the status of this species group within the site and to provide information on their presence/absence and distribution.

Design proposals for the site include the redevelopment of the site to include an extension and additional parking, as well as internal modifications. The survey area extended over approximately 0.2 hectares (ha). The reptile survey did not cover the whole site, as only the proposed car park area was considered suitable habitat for reptiles.

The main findings of the surveys are as follows:

- The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal assessed that the habitats on-site offered **moderate** potential to support populations of reptiles.
- A series of seven site visits were conducted during September and early October 2023 to survey the area for reptiles.
- The survey identified a **low** population of slow worms (*Anguis fragilis*) within the site.
- However, the surrounding area offers suitable habitat for reptiles and, as a result, provided that a **controlled vegetation clearance** is carried out, it **is not** considered that reptiles pose a constraint to works at this site.
- A precautionary approach to vegetation clearance is recommended.
- Further information regarding site enhancement is provided in the recommendations section of the report.

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1. Introduction

Background

1.1 Phlorum Limited was commissioned by Chapman Lily Planning to carry out reptile mitigation prior to development at Howards House Hotel, Teffont Evias, Salisbury, SP3 5RJ (hereafter referred to as "the site").

1.2 The reptile survey follows on from a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Phlorum, August 2023) which identified potentially suitable habitat for this species within the site. The report assessed the potential for reptiles to be on the site as **moderate**.

1.3 This report provides an assessment of the status of reptiles on the site, providing information on their presence/likely absence and distribution. Potential impacts of the proposed development are identified and measured to mitigate the effects of the development on reptiles are discussed in outline.

1.4 Development proposals for the site include the redevelopment of the site to include an extension and additional parking, as well as internal modifications.

Site Description

1.5 The site was comprised of buildings, hardstanding, grassland, ruderal vegetation, vegetated garden, bare ground, hedgerows, trees, a pond, a wall, and a hay pile.

1.6 The National Grid Reference for the centre of the site is ST 99079 31314. The survey area extended over approximately 0.2 hectares (ha).

2. Methodology

Data Search

2.1 Records for reptiles from within a 2km radius of the site were obtained from the Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC, 2023).

Reptile Survey

Presence / Absence Survey

2.2 The survey protocol followed accepted standards for reptile surveys as set out in Froglife (1999), Hill et al (2005) and English Nature (2004).

2.3 The survey involved a combination of visually searching for reptiles (direct observation) and the use of artificial refugia.

2.4 On the 26th August 2023, artificial refugia were placed around the site throughout areas of suitable reptile habitat. Refugia comprised individual 0.5m^2 (approximately) sections of roofing felt. These were laid out at approximately 5m intervals around the site. Potentially suitable reptile habitat within the survey area consisted of a large hay pile and surrounding ruderal vegetation. A total of 15 refugia were used.

2.5 A total of seven survey visits were undertaken commencing 9 days after the refugia had been set out and these were completed during September and early October 2023. Refugia were checked during appropriate weather conditions, that is, where temperatures ranged between 9°C and 20°C, with little rain or wind. Visits were carried out, where possible, between the hours of 08.30-11.00 or 16.00-18.30, which are the optimum times for recording reptiles, although the time of day varied slightly according to weather conditions.

Population Size Estimate

2.6 An assessment of the reptile population size is based on Froglife (1999) guidance which requires a minimum of 20 repeat survey visits. Population sizes are then assigned to one of three categories (Low, Good or Exceptional) based on the peak count of individuals for each species across all the visits.

2.7 It should be noted that only seven visits were carried out and that the population assessment for the proposed development site is only an estimate based on the current guidance (see Table 1.1). Population assessments are however typically based on a relatively low survey effort with a maximum of 10 refuge sheets per ha, in contrast to a density of 15 refuge sheets per 0.2ha as employed at the site, and therefore it is considered likely that the survey data is more robust and sufficient to enable a population estimate to be made.

Table 1.1: Population Score (Froglife, 1999).

Species	Low Population	Good Population	Exceptional Population
Adder	<5	5-10	>10
Grass Snake	<5	5-10	>10
Common Lizard	<5	5-20	>20
Slow Worm	<5	5-20	>20

Constraints

Data Search Constraints

2.8 It is important to note that, even where data is held, a lack of records for a defined geographical area does not necessarily mean that there is a lack of ecological interest; the area may be simply under-recorded.

Reptile Survey Constraints

2.9 Reptile surveys can be undertaken between March to October, in the active period for reptiles, in suitable weather conditions; however, the optimum months for survey are April, May and September (Froglife, 1999).

2.10 The survey was however carried out within the recommended survey period in suitable weather conditions and was considered sufficiently rigorous to determine the presence/likely absence and distribution of reptiles within the proposed development site at that time.

3. Results

Data Search

3.1 The data search showed records of slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*) within 2km of the site within the past 15 years.

3.2 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal also showed that the site contained a large hay pile and areas of ruderal vegetation, providing suitable reptile habitat.

3.3 Overall, it was considered that the site offered **moderate** potential for supporting populations of reptile species.

Presence / Absence Survey

3.4 The survey found slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) within the site. Peak counts were 1 adult slow worm on the 14th September 2023 (visit 3).

Table 2: Summary of reptile survey results (with peak counts in red).

Date	Slow Worm		Common Lizard		Grass Snake		Adder	
	Adult	Juvenile	Adult	Juvenile	Adult	Juvenile	Adult	Juvenile
07/09/2023	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12/09/2023	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14/09/2023	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
27/09/2023	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
03/10/2023	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
05/10/2023	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
09/10/2023	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Population Size Assessment

3.5 The peak count of 1 adult slow worm equates to a **low** population for this species based on current guidance (Froglife, 1999).

3.6 The true population size is more difficult to estimate although guidance from Froglife (1999) suggests that peak counts from refuge surveys encounter only c.10% of individuals, albeit with a much lower sampling effort than employed here.

3.7 On this basis, the estimated population of slow worm inhabiting suitable habitat within the site could be 10 adult slow worms. However, this is an approximate guide only and the true numbers may vary.

4. Discussion and Recommendations

Discussion

4.1 Current development proposals include the redevelopment of the site to include an extension and additional parking, as well as internal modifications. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Phlorum, August 2023) identified **potentially suitable** habitat for reptiles within the site.

4.2 A reptile survey was carried out during optimum survey conditions following approved guidance.

4.3 The survey identified slow worms (*Anguis fragilis*).

4.4 The HGBI (1998) guidance provide a guide on the recommended capture effort required for reptiles. This states that for a low population of slow worms a 60 day translocation process will be required.

4.5 However, as only 1 adult slow worm was observed, and there is suitable reptile habitat in the wider surrounds outside of the site boundaries, it is considered that provided a controlled clearance of the vegetation on site is carefully carried out reptiles **will not** pose a constraint to development. This precautionary/ controlled clearance should be supervised by an ecological watching brief and work slowly towards the offsite suitable habitat. Provided this is carried out then this controlled clearance should be sufficient to safeguard this protected species group.

Recommendations

4.6 A single adult slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) was identified during the reptile survey and because of the surrounding area offering suitable habitat for reptiles, it is considered that reptiles will not pose a constraint to development, provided that controlled clearance of this site is carried out. It is therefore not required to mitigate for them in the development other than by employing a precautionary approach to site clearance, and providing enhancement for them in the development.

Working Method Statement

4.7 A working method statement should be produced to guide works throughout the project and should remain on site with the site foreman for reference during works.

4.8 The document will detail all precautionary working methods along with continued management plans. Details of post works mitigation will also be included to ensure the habitat remain optimal for widespread reptiles.

4.9 Mitigation measures could include, but not be limited to, log pile and hibernacula creation, grassland seed planting and management of scrub to prevent encroachment.

Habitat Enhancement

4.10 New development offers the opportunity for habitat enhancement in accordance with national planning policy. A series of measures are outlined below which could be incorporated into the design scheme.

Landscape Planting

4.11 Wildlife planting could be incorporated into the landscape proposals for both boundary habitat and any newly created amenity areas to increase species diversity post works.

4.12 Planting should include a high proportion of native species and include areas of shrubs and grassland. For grassland areas, sowing suitable wildflower seed mixes (Emorsgate or similar) is recommended. Species should be carefully selected to ensure they are suitable for the area.

Log Piles

4.13 Log piles or rockeries could also be incorporate into the landscape proposals. These should be oriented to maximise their daily exposure to the sun, with the longest side facing south. The log piles should be made from neatly stacked wood, locally sourced where possible, and stacked approximately 1m in height, either in a pyramidal shape (bound with wire to prevent breaking apart over time) or stacked against mature trees.

4.14 Log piles are ideal environments for reptiles: used for hibernation and as a refuge from predators. The dead wood also supports a diverse invertebrate fauna; a food source for a range of species including reptiles, amphibians, and birds.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The survey site is located at Howards House Hotel, Teffont. The survey area extended over approximately 0.2 hectares (ha). Habitats to be impacted by the development proposals include buildings, hardstanding, grassland, ruderal vegetation, vegetated garden, bare ground, hedgerows, trees, a pond, a wall, and a hay pile.

5.2 The reptile survey identified a **low** population of slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) within the site. However, because the surrounding area also offers suitable habitat for reptiles, it is considered that provided a **controlled vegetation clearance** is carried out, reptiles **will not** pose a constraint to development.

6. References

- English Nature (2004) Reptiles: Guidelines for Developers. Peterborough: Natural England.
- Froglife (1999) Advice Sheet 10: Reptile Survey. An Introduction to Planning, Conducting and Interpreting Surveys for Snake and Lizard Conservation. Froglife Advice Sheet 10. Halesworth: Froglife.
- Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland (HGBI) (1998) Evaluating Local Mitigation/ Translocation Programmes: Maintaining Best Practice and Lawful Standards. HGBI Advisory Notes for Amphibian and Reptile Groups (ARGs). Halesworth: HGBI, c/o Froglife. Unpublished.
- Hill, D. Fasham, M. Tucker, G. Shewry, M. Shaw, P (2005). Handbook of Biodiversity Methods – Survey, Evaluation and Monitoring. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2003) Herpetofauna Workers' Manual. Peterborough: JNCC.
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2004) Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Reptiles and Amphibians. Version February 2004. JNCC, Peterborough.
- Phlorum (2023). *Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – Howards House Hotel, Teffont.* Unpublished report for Phlorum.
- WSBRC (2023). *Biological Record Data for land at Howards House Hotel, Teffont Evias, SP3 5RJ.* Wiltshire & Swindom Biological Records Centre.

Figures and Appendices

Appendix A

Reptile Survey Map

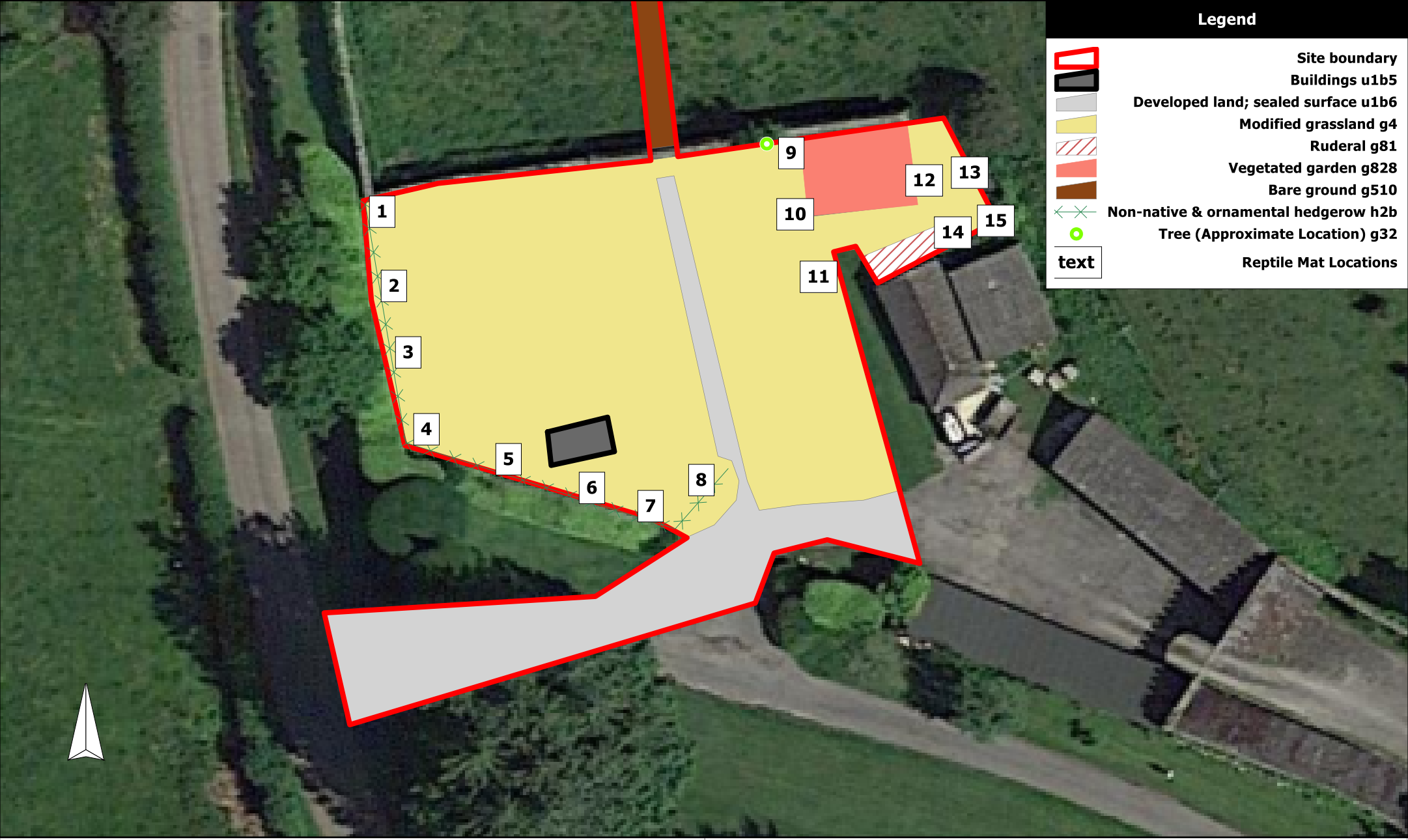

Figure 1: Howards House Hotel, Teffont Reptile Survey Map

Drawn by: BC
On the: 04/10/2023
Not to Scale
Ref: 12270

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Appendix B

Legislation

This section contains information pertaining to the legislation and planning policy applicable in Britain. This information is not applicable to Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands. Information contained in the following appendix is provided for guidance only.

Species

The objective of the EC Habitats Directive[1] is to conserve plants and animals which are considered to be rare across Europe. The Directive is transposed into UK law by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) (formerly The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) and The Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007 (as amended).

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) implements the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) and also implements the obligations set out for species protection from the Council Directive 2009/147/EC (formerly 79/409/EEC) on the Conservation of Wild Birds (EC Birds Directive) in Great Britain.

Various amendments have been made since the Wildlife & Countryside Act came into force in 1981. Further details pertaining to alterations of the Act can be found on the following website: www.opsi.gov.uk. Key amendments have been made through the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act (2000) and Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.

There are a number of other legislative Acts affording protection to species and habitats. These include

- Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000
- Deer Act 1991
- Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- Protection of Badgers Act 1992
- Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996

Herpetofauna (Reptiles and Amphibians)

The following species receive full protection under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) through their inclusion on Schedule 2.

- Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*);
- Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca);*
- Natterjack toad (*Epidalea calamita);*
- Great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus);* and
- Pool frog (*Pelophylax lessonae).*

Under this legislation, Regulation 41 prohibits:

[1] Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora

- deliberate killing, injuring or capturing of species listed on Schedule 2;
- deliberate disturbance of any Schedule 2 species as to impair their ability:
  (i) to survive, breed, or reproduce, or to rear or nurture young; and
  (ii) to hibernate or migrate.
- deliberate disturbance of any Schedule 2 species as to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species;
- deliberate taking or destroying of the eggs of a Schedule 2 species;
- damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place; and
- keeping, transporting, selling, exchanging or offering for sale whether live or dead or of any part of a species.

With the exception of the pool frog, these species are also currently listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this Act, they are additionally protected from:

- intentional or reckless disturbance (at any level);
- intentional or reckless obstruction of access to any place of shelter or protection; and
- selling, offering or exposing for sale, possession or transporting for purpose of sale.

Other native species of herpetofauna are protected solely under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). These species include:

- Adder (*Vipera berus*);
- Grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*);
- Common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*); and
- Slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*).

Under this legislation, for these species it is prohibited under Section 9(1) & (5) to:

- intentionally (or recklessly in Scotland) kill or injure these species; or
- sell, offer or expose for sale, possess or transport for purpose of sale these species, or any part thereof.

The following species are listed in respect to Section 9(5) of Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which only affords them protection against sale, offering or exposing for sale, possession or transport for the purpose of sale:

- Common frog (*Rana temporaria);*
- Common toad (*Bufo bufo);*
- Smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris);* and
- Palmate newt (*L. helveticus*).

Appendix C

Photographs

Feature	Photograph of Feature
Photograph 1: Adult female slow worm found on the site.	

Appendix D

Full Survey Data

Reptile Survey Recording Form AD=Adult M=Male F=Female SUB-AD=Sub-adult JUV=Juvenile UNID=Unidentified

Job no: 12270 Client: CLP Project: Howards House Hotel, Teffont

Survey No.	Date	Time	Surveyor	Sky (Octares 0-8)	Temp: (°C)	Wind (Beaufort scale 0-12)	Rain	Common lizard							Slow worm							Grass snake							Adder						
								Ad			Sub ad	Peak count (ad/sub-ad)	Juv	Total	Ad			Sub ad	Peak count (ad/sub-ad)	Juv	Total	Ad			Sub ad	Peak count (ad/sub-ad)	Juv	Total	Ad			Sub ad	Peak count (ad/sub-ad)	Juv	Total
								M	F	Unid					M	F	Unid					M	F	Unid					M	F	Unid				
1	07/09/2023	09:50	Billie	1	20	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	12/09/2023	17:05	Billie	7	19	3	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**
3	14/09/2023	17:00	Billie	3	19	1	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	1	0	0	**1**	0	**1**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**
4	27/09/2023	09:45	Billie	8	17	2	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**
5	03/10/2023	17:20	Billie	6	16	3	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**
6	05/10/2023	18:00	Billie	7	15	4	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**
7	09/10/2023	09:25	Billie	3	16	2	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	**0**
							Total	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**



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