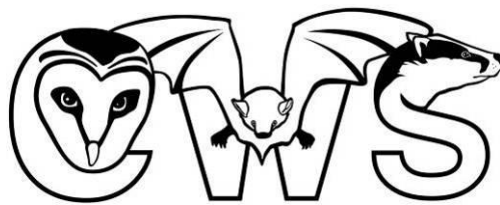


Reptile Survey Report & Mitigation Strategy for Land off Southampton Road, Alderbury, Salisbury, Wiltshire



Cotswold Wildlife Surveys

July 2025

QUALITY CONTROL

Date	Version	Name
01.04.25	Set out artificial refugia	Caroline Warren – BSc (Hons) Director
13.04.25 19.04.25 27.04.25 04.05.25 11.05.25 17.05.25 25.05.25	Refugia checks	Caroline Warren – BSc (Hons) Director
29.07.25	Report prepared	Andy Warren – BSc (Hons), MA (LM), Tech Cert (Arbor A), MCIEEM Director
29.07.25	Checked	Caroline Warren – BSc (Hons) Director
29.07.25	Reviewed and issued	Andy Warren – BSc (Hons), MA (LM), Tech Cert (Arbor A), MCIEEM Director

The information in this report has been prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) Code of Professional Conduct. The conclusions and recommendations expressed are reasoned judgements based on the evidence.

Every reasonable attempt has been made to comply with BS42020:2013 *Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development*, CIEEM *Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing* (CIEEM, 2017). If there has been deviation from recognised practice, justification/explanation has been given.

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SUMMARY

On land off Southampton Road in Alderbury near Salisbury, planning permission is being sought for the development of the site.

In August 2022, Cotswold Wildlife Surveys was instructed to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site. The Phase 1 Habitat survey took place on 4th August 2022.

An ecological data search for the area revealed only four reptile records in total, these of Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis* and Grass Snake *Natrix natrix* between 2006 and 2010. These appeared to be from within Ivychurch Copse just to the northwest of the site on the opposite side of Clarendon Road.

The application site itself was potentially suitable for reptiles as there were basking areas and foraging opportunities. However, there were no obvious refugia or hibernacula and no reptiles were observed during the site visits.

Given the above, a full reptile survey was recommended to determine the presence or absence of reptiles.

On 1st April 2025, a terrestrial search was undertaken by Cotswold Wildlife Surveys, following which 80 artificial refugia (0.5 m² sheets of tarred felt) were placed around the survey site. This focused on the areas which were considered most likely to be used by reptiles, and which were also accessible and not overgrown.

The refugia were allowed to 'bed-in' for two weeks, after which seven visits were made between 13th April and 25th May 2025 to check for reptile presence.

A number of Slow-worms and Grass Snakes were found during the survey period, these distributed across the site. No amphibians were found under any of the refugia.

At the times of the surveys, the land off Southampton Road has been identified as a reptile site, and mitigation measures to prevent harm to reptiles will be necessary.

These measures will include the fencing off of the construction site with an exclusion barrier and implementation of a 30 day trapping regime by an ecologist in suitable weather conditions (temperatures above 7°C), and not during the hibernation period (November to March inclusive).

The trapping will end provided no reptiles have been caught within the last five days of the period. If any animals are trapped in the last five days, the period will be extended until there have been five clear days with no captures.

All reptiles captured will be released outside the exclusion fence, as this is effectively the receptor area. The fence will remain in place throughout the construction and landscaping period, after which it will be removed, again not within the hibernation period and under supervision of the ecologist.

No licence from Natural England will be required for the trapping programme.

1. INTRODUCTION

On land off Southampton Road in Alderbury near Salisbury, planning permission is being sought for the development of the site.

In August 2022, Cotswold Wildlife Surveys was instructed to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site. The Phase 1 Habitat survey took place on 4th August 2022.

An ecological data search for the area revealed only four reptile records in total, these of Slow-worm and Grass Snake between 2006 and 2010. These appeared to be from within Ivychurch Copse just to the northwest of the site on the opposite side of Clarendon Road.

The application site itself was potentially suitable for reptiles as there were basking areas and foraging opportunities. However, there were no obvious refugia or hibernacula and no reptiles were observed during the site visits.

Given the above, a full reptile survey was recommended to determine the presence or absence of reptiles.

The result of this survey is contained in this report.

All common reptiles (Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, Grass Snake, Slow-worm and Adder *Vipera berus*) are afforded legal protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) largely as a consequence of a national decline in numbers associated with persecution and habitat loss.

Under the terms of the Act it is illegal to intentionally kill or injure a reptile.

2. METHODOLOGY

Commoner reptiles which may be encountered in rural areas in Wiltshire include Grass Snake, Slow-worm, and Common Lizard.

During the winter months, from mid-October to late February or early March, they are in hibernation, usually deep in underground hibernacula, such as holes and cracks in the ground, among rocks or the roots of large trees, down animal burrows, or in piles of rubble or stone.

In the spring and summer they live above ground in well-vegetated places, with Grass Snakes often near or in water. Being cold-blooded all reptiles like to bask, and can often be found in open places.

There are very few signs of reptile presence, but these include:

- ❑ Shedded skin (snakes);
- ❑ Eggs (but not Common Lizard which gives birth to live young).

The survey methodology followed guidelines produced by the Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland (Froglife 1999; Gent & Gibson 1998), and involved laying refugia (squares of tarred felt) of at least 0.5 m² in size in suitable habitat and surveying them during suitable weather conditions.

It is recommended that the refuges are left for at least one week to 'bed-in' and to provide time for reptiles to locate them. Each refuge should then be checked on seven subsequent occasions during an optimum time of day and optimum weather conditions (temperature between 9°C and 18°C with intermittent or hazy sunshine, and little or no wind).

Current guidelines (Froglife 1999) state that the number of refuges required depends on a number of factors including the size of site and likelihood of disturbance. Whilst stating that the more refuges used increases both the chance of finding reptiles and a higher number of reptiles being seen, the guidelines recommend that for general survey purposes between 5 and 10 refuges per hectare is adequate.

On land off Southampton Road, a terrestrial search of the survey area was made on 1st April 2025, following which a total of 80 artificial refugia were set out around the site. This focused on the areas which were considered most likely to be used by reptiles, and which were also accessible and not overgrown.

The refugia were allowed to 'bed-in' for two weeks, after which seven visits were made between 13th April and 25th May 2025 to check for reptile presence.

The results of the visits are detailed in Section 3.

3. RESULTS

A terrestrial search of the site was undertaken by Caroline Warren on 1st April 2025. Although no basking or hiding reptiles were recorded, the search identified the best locations for the artificial refugia.

A total of 80 ‘mats’ were set out around the survey area. This focused on the areas which were considered most likely to be used by reptiles, and which were also accessible and not overgrown.

The locations of the refugia are shown in Appendix 1.

The refugia were allowed to ‘bed-in’ for two weeks, after which they were checked on seven occasions between April and May 2025.

The weather conditions during the time of the surveys were recorded and are presented in Table 1.

Date	Temp (°C)	Cloud cover (%)	Precipitation	Wind speed (Beaufort scale)
13.04.25	13.0	100	None	3 WSW
19.04.25	14.0	40	None	3 WSW
27.04.25	18.0	10	None	1 SW
04.05.25	13.0	60	None	2 NNE
11.05.25	18.0	20	None	S ESE
17.05.25	14.0	25	None	1 NE
25.05.25	17.0	10	None	2 W

Table 1 Weather conditions during the refugia checks

The results of the refugia checks are detailed in Table 2 below.

Date	Reptiles	Amphibians	Other
13.04.25	4 Slow-worms	-	-
19.04.25	2 Slow-worms	-	-
27.04.25	4 Slow-worms	-	-

04.05.25	2 Slow-worms 3 Grass Snakes	-	-
11.05.25	5 Slow-worms	-	-
17.05.25	7 Slow-worms 6 Grass Snakes	-	-
25.05.25	10 Slow-worms 1 Grass Snake	-	-

Table 2 Results of the refugia checks

The locations of the reptiles are shown in Appendix 1.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the presence of Slow-worms and Grass Snakes at a nearby woodland area, a full reptile survey was carried out to determine the presence or absence of reptiles on the application site.

A number of Slow-worms and Grass Snakes were found during the survey period, these distributed across the site. No amphibians were found under any of the refugia.

At the times of the surveys, the land off Southampton Road has been identified as a reptile site, and typical activities which could cause harm to reptiles include:

- ❑ *Archaeological and geotechnical investigations;*
- ❑ *Clearing land, installing site offices or digging foundations;*
- ❑ *Cutting vegetation to a low height;*
- ❑ *Laying pipelines or installing other services;*
- ❑ *Driving machinery over sensitive areas;*
- ❑ *Storing construction materials in sensitive areas; and*
- ❑ *Removing rubble, wood piles and other debris.*

Since most, if not all of these activities will be required on the land off Southampton Road, the following mitigation strategy is proposed.

4.1 Mitigation Strategy

Prior to work commencing on site, all contractors and other personnel will be given a ‘toolbox talk’ about reptiles by a suitably qualified ecologist.

The talk will raise awareness of the presence of reptiles, and will instruct contractors on what to do should an animal be unexpectedly encountered. This vigilance will be particularly important when dismantling potential refugia such as rubbish and/or brash piles, stone or rubble heaps, and lifting debris.

As it is intended to remove all Slow-worms and Grass Snakes from the development site, it will be fenced off with a temporary exclusion barrier and then trapped for 30 days in suitable weather conditions and at the appropriate time of year, i.e. not during the hibernation period (considered to be November to March inclusive).

The exclusion barrier will be installed by a specialist ecological contractor and under the supervision of the suitably qualified ecologist. The fence will be sturdy enough to be retained for the whole construction period.

Road access and footpath links will require simple ‘gates’ in the fence to allow for movement of vehicles, etc.

The specification for the fence is shown below (Fig. 1), with its position shown in Fig. 2. Sections of drift fencing will also be required to divide the site into smaller areas to improve the chances of catching animals.

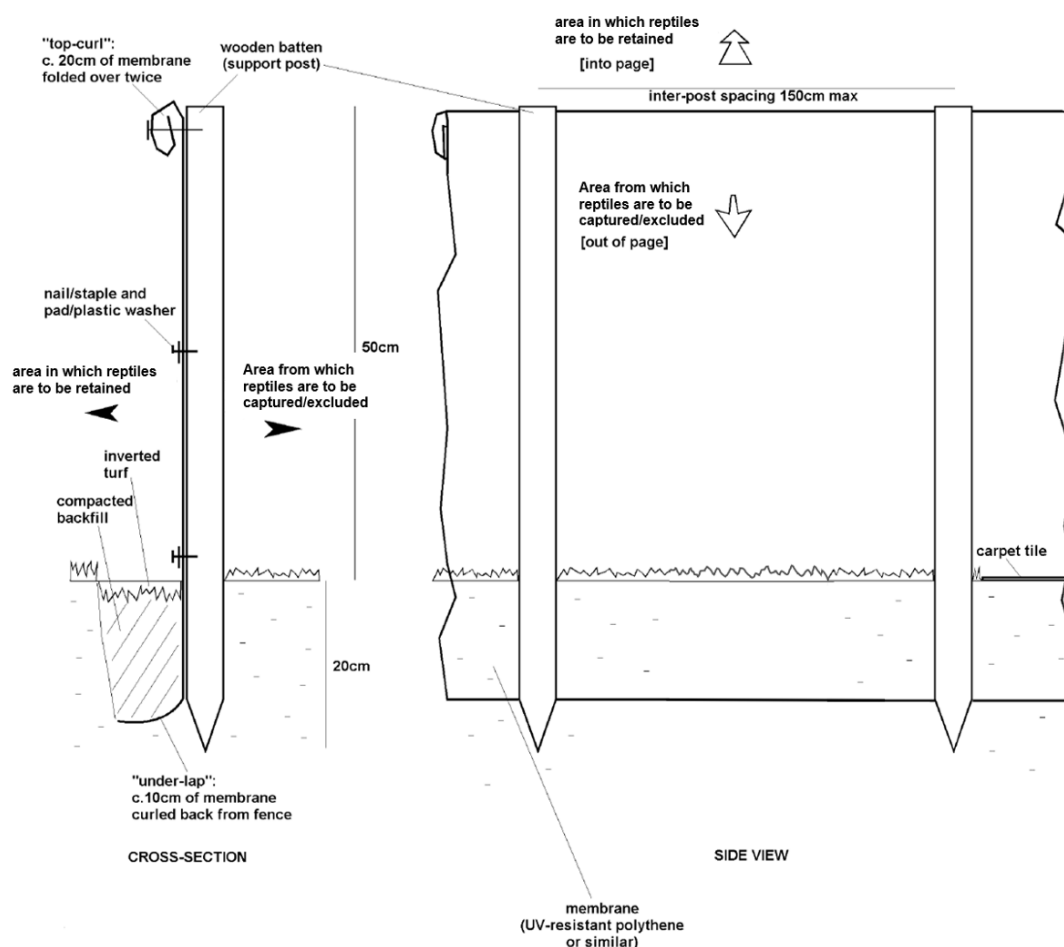


Fig. 1 Specification for the reptile exclusion fence

The installation of the fence may require the removal of some Bramble and shrubs, and if so these will be checked in advance to ensure that no nesting birds are present.

Along the internal boundaries and drift fencing artificial refugia (0.5 m² felt mats) will be set out at 5 m intervals to provide cover and increase the opportunities for basking. These refugia will be allowed at least a week of bedding-in before checks commence. As soon as the refugia have been set out, a 30-day trapping period will start, provided the weather conditions are suitable for active reptiles, i.e. daytime temperatures generally around 12-16°C, with overnight temperatures above 7-10°C.

Checks of the refugia will be carried out by an ecologist. Any reptiles discovered will be carefully lifted and placed into a bucket, avoiding handling the tail which is likely to be shed if grasped. All animals caught will be translocated to the receptor site and released into long vegetation so they are not exposed to predators.

The receptor site is all areas outside the exclusion fence except the section running along the road frontage.



Fig. 2 Position of exclusion barrier - - - & drift fence —

The trapping programme will continue until there have been five consecutive days with no captures, in suitable weather conditions.

At the end of the trapping period and prior to site clearance, the land will be examined by an ecologist to check for any signs of reptiles (or small mammals). This will include the hand lifting of objects and the hand dismantling of any potential refugia.

Again any animals found will be caught and translocated to the receptor site.

As soon as all refugia and internal drift fencing have been removed, the vegetation will be mown/strimmed to height of approximately 150-200 mm, and areas will again be inspected by the ecologist to ensure no animals are present.

The cut areas will then be left for at least two to three hours in suitable weather conditions (warm with no precipitation) before the vegetation is cut to a height of 30 mm. The areas will again be inspected by the ecologist to ensure no animals are present.

The topsoil will then be stripped and stored as necessary. Any unwanted building materials will either be removed from site or placed on pallets on existing hardstanding or bare ground areas. The same will apply to new materials brought onto site.

During the construction period, any trenches excavated will be covered at the end of the working day to avoid animals falling into the trench.

If this is not possible escape routes will be provided. These can be in the form of branches or boards placed on the bottom of the trench, with their upper ends above ground level and touching the sides, or sloping ends left in trenches.

Checks will also be made of the exclusion fence to ensure that it is fit for purpose and acting as a barrier to reptiles.

As such, inspections will be undertaken throughout the construction period, these carried out weekly by the site manager. Any damage to the fence will be repaired immediately to prevent animals re-entering the site.

At the end of the construction and landscaping period, the fence will be removed.

No licence from Natural England will be required for the trapping programme.

5. REFERENCES

Arnold, E. N. and Burton, J. A., 1978. *Reptiles and amphibians of Britain & Europe*. Collins, Grafton Street, London.

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

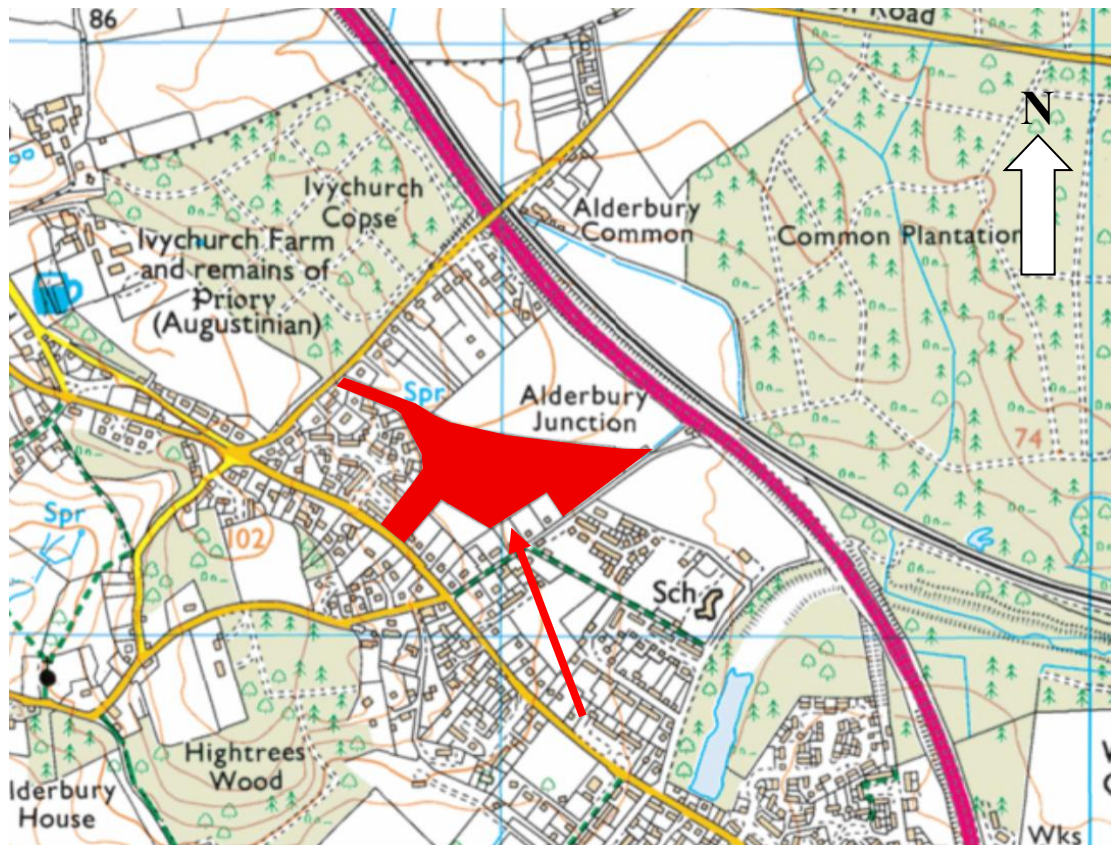
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APPENDICES

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| Appendix 1: | Location plan |
| Appendix 2: | Site plan |
| Appendix 3: | Locations of artificial refugia and reptiles |

Appendix 1: Location plan



Land off Southampton Road, Alderbury

Appendix 2: Site layout



Land off Southampton Road

Appendix 3: Locations of artificial refugia & reptiles



Artificial refugia ★

Slow-worm ★

Grass Snake ★

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Land off Southampton Road, Alderbury – Reptile Survey & Mitigation Strategy

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