

Reptile Presence/Absence Surveys

Survey site:

Land at Spin Hill, Market Lavington, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 4NS

Client:

John Price

Rerport date:

21st November 2025

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with Wiltshire Council. The proposal is described as: *'Use of land for the stationing of caravans for residential use and the laying of hardstanding and erection of a dayroom ancillary to that use'*.

Survey legislation can be found in Appendix 4.

Ecological Survey Factor Conclusion, Impact or Recommendations	Detailed using desk study and site survey (carried out under good weather conditions). Any specific limitations are noted within the relevant section. This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent. All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice.
See Proposed Plans in Appendix 1, Location Plan in Appendix 2, Refugia Locations in Appendix 3, and Legislation in Appendix 4.	
Limitations	This survey aims to follow best practice guidance to confirm presence or likely-absence of reptiles and where present, characterise the site in terms of species and distribution, habitat suitability and context with the wider landscape. However, this information is collected at finite dates and times and provides an indication of the conditions on site only. This survey cannot provide an indication of population. There were no other specific limitations regarding weather, safety or equipment during the survey. Due to the presence of thick bramble scrub in the southwest, small areas of the site weren't able to be accessed by foot but reptile mats were placed on the perimeters of these areas.
<i>Scope of report</i>	This report describes the suitability of the habitats on the site for reptiles and identifies the presence or likely absence of reptiles within the site. It identifies possible constraints in relation to reptiles as a result of the proposed development and summarises the requirements for further surveys and mitigation measures to inform subsequent mitigation proposals, achieve planning or other statutory consent and to comply with wildlife legislation. To achieve this, the following steps have been taken: • A field survey has been undertaken, including an assessment of habitat suitability and the deployment of artificial refugia and subsequent inspections to identify presence or likely absence of reptiles within the site. • An outline of potential impacts on reptiles has been provided, based on the proposed development. • Recommendations for further surveys and mitigation have been made.

	• Opportunities for the enhancement of the site for reptiles have been set out.
<i>Background and site context</i>	The reptile survey has been informed by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, 2025), which identified the site to have suitable basking, foraging and sheltering opportunities due to the mature other neutral grassland, bramble scrub and tall forbs, in addition to the areas of rubbish scattered throughout the site (tyres, bricks and bottles) that could provide sheltering opportunities. The survey was required to inform a planning application for: ‘<i>Use of land for the stationing of caravans for residential use and the laying of hardstanding and erection of a dayroom ancillary to that use</i>’ (hereafter referred to as “the proposed development”). A plan showing the proposed development is provided in Appendix 1, and location plan is provided in Appendix 2. The survey site is centred on National Grid Reference SU 00599 54867 and has an area of approximately 0.14ha. The site comprises open grassland with scattered trees and scrub along the borders. It is surrounded by agricultural land and located North-East of Market Lavington. There is one unused sealed surface building located in the centre of the western border that is surrounded by bramble scrub and the site contains a telephone line mast towards the eastern edge.
<i>Methodology</i>	The surveys were undertaken by Laurence Wills ACIEEM BSc (Hons), Samuel Tofts BSc (Hons) and Kiera Horman MSc. The survey methodology is based on the Froglife Advice Sheet 10: Reptile Survey, an introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation (Froglife, 1999), Herpetofauna Workers' Manual (Gent, T. and Gibson, S., 2003) and the Reptile Habitat Management Handbook (Edgar, P., Foster, J. and Baker, J. 2010). Refugia was placed around the site in suitable reptile habitat with each refuge numbered and the locations recorded for monitoring, reporting and mapping. The refugia were steel ‘tins’ (corrugated steel sheets of approximately 100cm x 50cm) and sheets of bitumen felt (square approximately 50cm x 50cm square). The steel tins are regarded to have better habitat value for certain species (particularly snakes) due to their superior thermal retention, and therefore a number of tins were deployed on the site. A total of 4 tins and 33 felts were used. Locations of refugia are illustrated in Appendix 3.

	The refugia were deployed on the 4th of July 2025 and left to ‘bed in’ for seven weeks which exceeds the minimum of two weeks. The surveys were delayed to avoid the sub optimal survey period between July and early August when high temperatures are generally experienced, which may affect reptile behaviour and given results that were not representative. Seven separate site visits were completed to search for reptiles between the 25th of August and 10th of September 2025. The surveyor walked slowly and carefully checked the top and underneath of each felt/tin, as well as looking for reptiles between the felts. The surveys were undertaken during the optimal period (typically in April, May and September) and in suitable weather conditions, when temperatures between 10°C and 18°C with intermittent or hazy sunshine and little or no wind, before 11am and after 3pm.																				
Population size assessment and key reptile site characterisation	A population size assessment was completed in accordance with current guidance detailed within Froglife Advice sheet 10 (Froglife 1999). The population size assessment was determined as per the parameters outlined in Table 1. Table 1: Example results of Reptile Surveys <table><tr><th>Species</th><th>Low Population (Score 1) (Max count)</th><th>Good Population (Score 2) (Max count)</th><th>Exceptional Population (Score 3) (Max count)</th></tr><tr><td>Adder <i>Vipera berus</i></td><td><5</td><td>5 -10</td><td>>10</td></tr><tr><td>Grass snake <i>Natrix natrix</i></td><td><5</td><td>5 -10</td><td>>10</td></tr><tr><td>Common lizard <i>Zootoca vivipara</i></td><td><5</td><td>5 -20</td><td>>20</td></tr><tr><td>Slow worm <i>Anguis fragilis</i></td><td><5</td><td>5 -20</td><td>>20</td></tr></table> In accordance with current guidance detailed within Froglife Advice sheet 10 (Froglife 1999), to qualify as a “key reptile site”, the surveyed site must meet at least one of the following criteria: a. Supports three or more reptile species. b. Supports two snake species. c. Supports an exceptional population of one species.	Species	Low Population (Score 1) (Max count)	Good Population (Score 2) (Max count)	Exceptional Population (Score 3) (Max count)	Adder <i>Vipera berus</i>	<5	5 -10	>10	Grass snake <i>Natrix natrix</i>	<5	5 -10	>10	Common lizard <i>Zootoca vivipara</i>	<5	5 -20	>20	Slow worm <i>Anguis fragilis</i>	<5	5 -20	>20
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	d. Supports an assemblage of species scoring at least 4 (see Table 2). e. Does not satisfy criteria a-d but is of regional importance due to local rarity.		
Field survey results	Survey dates and weather conditions are described in the table below:		
	Visit No.	Date and Time	Weather Conditions
	1	Monday 25 th August 2025 09:25	Temp: 17°C Humidity: 73% Cloud Cover: 80% Wind Speed: 1.4mps Precipitation: None
	2	Wednesday 27 th August 2025 09:30	Temp: 16°C Humidity: 75% Cloud Cover: 70% Wind Speed: 0.5mps Precipitation: None
	3	Friday 29 th August 2025 16:45	Temp: 16°C Humidity: 71% Cloud Cover: 70% Wind Speed: None Precipitation: None
	4	Monday 1 st September 2025 16:22	Temp: 17°C Humidity: 75% Cloud Cover: 90% Wind Speed: 2.2mps Precipitation: None
	5	Wednesday 3rd September 2025 16:55	Temp: 16°C Humidity: 79% Cloud Cover: 85% Wind Speed: 2.3mps Precipitation: None
	6	Friday 5th September 2025 17:36	Temp: 17°C Humidity: 85% Cloud Cover: 100%

			Wind Speed: 1.2mps Precipitation: None
	7	Wednesday 10th September 2025 16:22	Temp: 15°C Humidity: 88.3% Cloud Cover: 60% Wind Speed: 1.9mps Precipitation: None
	No reptiles were identified during the surveys.		
<i>Survey results summary and Impact Assessment</i>	No reptiles were identified on the site and therefore it is unlikely that reptiles will be impacted as a result of the proposed development. However, optimal habitats are still present on site that may be occupied at a later date.		
<i>Recommendations</i>	Precautionary Working Method Optimal habitats are still present onsite. Prior to impacts to the grassland, a precautionary working method will be implemented for widespread reptiles during the works, including the following measures: • For any areas of grassland to be impacted that is above 50mm in height, a 'strim and push' methodology for cutting the grass must be adopted. Grassland cutting will comprise a phased cutting method in addition to cutting in systematic patterns. The phased cutting method will be undertaken in two stages; the first cut will remove all vegetation to approximately 150mm from ground level, and the second cut will be to ground level/ bare ground or immediately for any vegetation <150mm at the beginning of the cut. • Vegetation will be maintained at a short sward (5cm) to discourage reptiles. • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • Best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented to minimise impacts to nearby habitats. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations.		

	• In the unlikely event that a reptile is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.
<i>Enhancement measures</i>	Habitat Compensation A hibernaculum could be created onsite to compensate for any loss of habitats for reptiles. A 2m-by-2m hibernaculum could be created onsite with a base layer of large stones and boulders and then covered by any removed material from the site and additional topsoil. The hibernaculum would be a minimum of 1m in height. Further specifications of hibernaculum can be found within Amphibian and Reptile Group (ARG) Advice Note 10.

Green Planning Studio

John Price
Land at Spin Hill - Land use

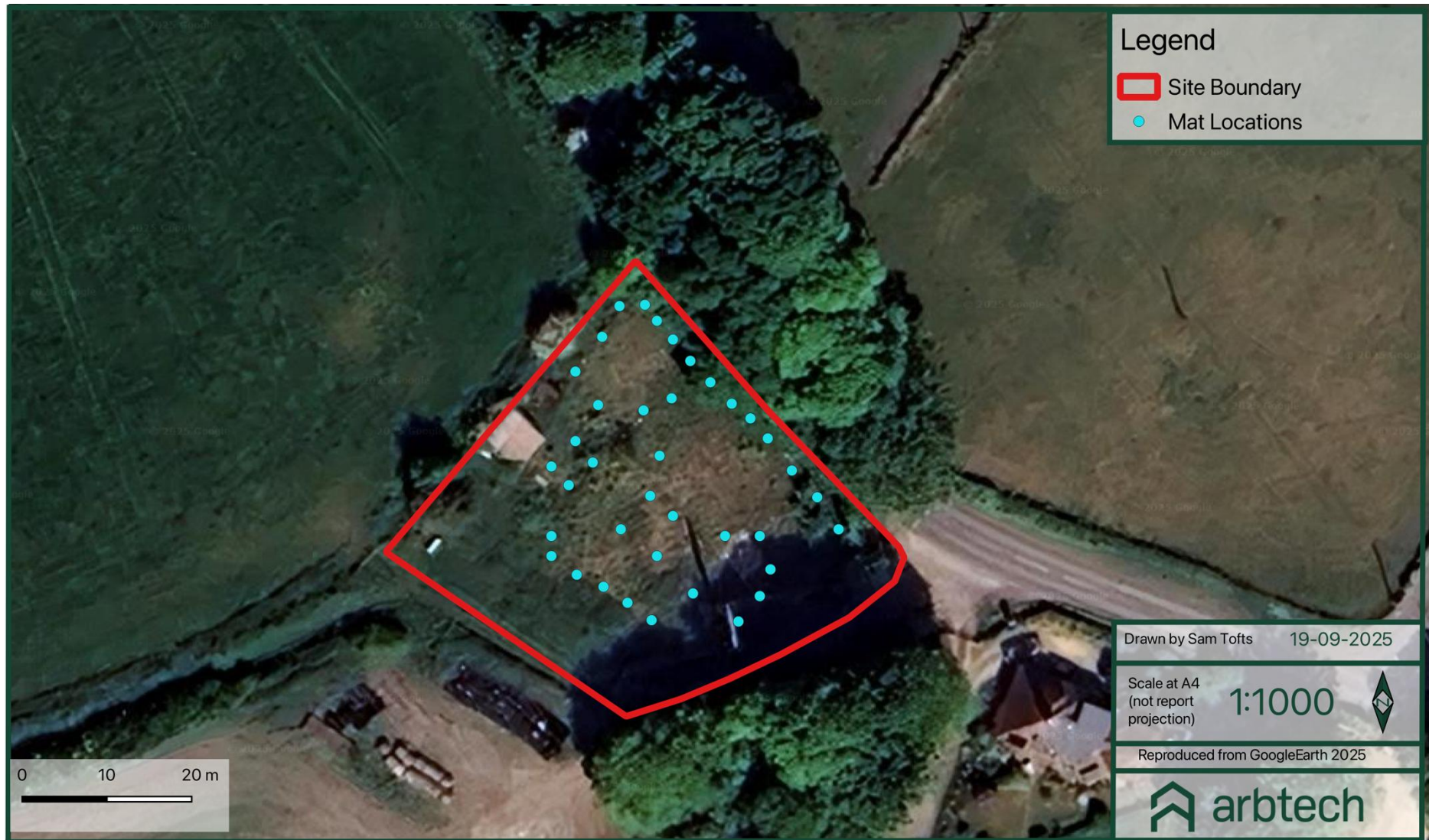
Scale: 1:1000	Date: 22/12/2016	Sheet: 1/1
Project No: 22_1280	Client: John Price	
Site No: 003	Rev: PD2	

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Appendix 2: Site location



Appendix 3: Refugia Location Plan



Appendix 4: Legislation and planning policy

LEGAL PROTECTION

The sand lizard *Lacerta agilis* and smooth snake *Coronella austriaca* receive full protection under Habitats Regulations through their inclusion on Schedule 2. Regulation 41 prohibits:

- Deliberate killing, injuring or capturing of Schedule 2 species
- Deliberate disturbance of species in such a way as:
 - i. To impair their ability to survive, breed, or reproduce, or to rear or nurture young;
 - ii. To impair their ability to hibernate or migrate
 - iii. To affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place

These species are also listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended) and 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
- Selling, offering or exposing for sale, possession or transporting for purpose of sale.

Other native species of reptiles are protected solely under Schedule 5, Section 9(1) & (5) of the WCA, i.e. the adder *Vipera berus*, grass snake *Natrix natrix*, common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* and slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*. It is prohibited to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill or injure these species.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework 2021

The National Planning Policy Framework promotes sustainable development. The Framework specifies the need for protection of designated sites and priority habitats and species. An emphasis is also made on the need for ecological infrastructure through protection, restoration and re-creation. The

protection and recovery of priority species (considered likely to be those listed as UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species) is also listed as a requirement of planning policy.

In determining a planning application, planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by ensuring that: designated sites are protected from harm; there is appropriate mitigation or compensation where significant harm cannot be avoided; opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments are encouraged; and planning permission is refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including aged or veteran trees and also ancient woodland.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Biodiversity Duty

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, requires all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions. This is commonly referred to as the 'biodiversity duty'.

Section 41 of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of 'principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity'. This list is intended to assist decision makers such as public bodies in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Act. Under the Act these habitats and species are regarded as a material consideration in determining planning applications. A developer must show that their protection has been adequately addressed within a development proposal.

EFFECT OF LEGISLATION AND POLICY ON DEVELOPMENT WORKS

A European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) issued by the relevant countryside agency (i.e. Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage) will be required for works likely to affect the breeding sites or resting places of reptile species protected under Habitats Regulations. A licence will also be required for operations liable to result in a level of disturbance which might impair their ability to undertake those activities mentioned above (e.g. survive, breed, rear young and hibernate). The licences are to allow derogation from the relevant legislation, but also to enable appropriate mitigation measures to be put in place and their efficacy to be monitored.

Although not licensable, appropriate mitigation measures may also be required to prevent the intentional killing or injury of adder, grass snake, common lizard and slow worm, thus avoiding contravention of the WCA.

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