



Land at Newlands Farm, Rodbourne Road, Corston,
Wiltshire, SN16 0HB

Reptile Survey



July 2026

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Document Control

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The results of the survey and assessment work undertaken by All Ecology are representative at the time of surveying.

Every endeavour has been made to identify the presence of protected species on site, where this falls within the agreed scope of works.

The flora and fauna detailed within this report are those noted during the field survey and from anecdotal evidence. It should not be viewed as a complete list of flora and fauna species that may frequent or exist on site at other times of the year.

Up to date standard methodologies have been used, which are accepted by Natural England and other statutory conservation bodies. No responsibility will be accepted where these methodologies fail to identify all species on-site.

All Ecology cannot take responsibility where Government, national bodies or industry subsequently modify standards.

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Reference to sections or particular paragraphs of this document taken out of context may lead to misrepresentation.

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1.0 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 In April 2026, All Ecology Ltd was commissioned to undertake a reptile survey of a site at Newlands Farm, Rodbourne Road, Corston. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site was carried out by All Ecology in November 2025 and found the site to be a mostly rough grassland and with areas of scrub, tall ruderals, individual trees and boundary hedgerows. The site provides suitable reptile habitat with local records indicating evidence of Slow-worm and Grass Snake in the local area including a Slow-worm record within 100 m of the application site.
- 1.2 The proposals for the site are to erect two new dwellings with associated gardens, access and driveways. This will involve removing the majority of the existing habitats, including the buildings, grassland, most areas of scrub and the individual trees.

Objectives and Aim

- 1.3 The aims and objectives of the field survey were as follows:
- To establish presence/absence of species of reptiles.
 - To determine sex, distribution and population size of likely Slow-worm population and other species of reptiles if confirmed as being present.
 - Which type of mitigation measures would need to be employed.

Site Location



Figure 1: Site location plan.

2.0 Legislation and Status

- 2.1 The Smooth Snake and Sand Lizard are fully protected under Schedule 5 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). As such they receive full protection under Section 9 of this Act. This Act has been amended several times, most recently by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 which added 'or recklessly' to Section 9(4) (a) and (b). They also are protected under Regulation 39 of the Conservation Regulations 1994. Collectively these pieces of legislation mean that it is an offence to;
- intentionally kill, injure, disturb or take any individual of these species
 - intentionally take or destroy the eggs of any individual of these species
 - intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by any individual of these species
 - intentionally or recklessly disturb any individual of these species while it is occupying a structure which it uses for that purpose
 - keep, transport, sell or exchange or offer for sale any individual of these species or anything derived from these species.
- 2.2 The other native species of reptiles (Common or Viviparous Lizard, Adder, Grass Snake and Slow Worm) are partially protected under Schedule 5 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), under part of Section 9(1) and all of Section 9(5). As such it is an offence to;
- intentionally kill or injure an individual of these species
 - transport for sale or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange alive or dead an individual or any part of an individual of these species.
- 2.3 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 mean it is not a defence to show that the killing, capture or disturbance of a species covered by the Regulations or the destruction or damage of their breeding sites or resting places was the incidental and unavoidable result of a lawful activity.
- 2.4 The 2010 Regulations also extend the prohibition of possession and trade (including transport and exchange) of all species listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive 1992, even those species not native to Great Britain. This makes it an offence to possess, transport, sell or offer for sale a live or dead individual or any part derived from any individual of a species listed in Annex IV.
- 2.5 All native reptile species are NERC Priority Species (JNCC, 2017).

3.0 Methodology

Field Survey

- 3.1 Reptile survey equipment was set out in areas of potential habitat for reptiles on the 20th March 2026. The equipment consists of artificial refuges made of roofing felt that is cut into 50 cm x 50 cm mats and Onduline corrugated black bitumen cut into 1 m x 50 cm sheets. The roofing felt is more suited to Slow-worms, and the Onduline sheets are often favoured by snakes. The refuges warm up quickly and retain the heat well, attracting reptiles. A total of 60 artificial refuges were laid in suitable habitat across the site. The refuges were numbered and their locations were mapped to record reptile distribution and approximate population density.
- 3.2 The refuges were placed across the site most predominately around the outer boundaries and around a central area of habitat which splits the site into two sections to the northwest and southeast. A higher density of refuges was placed around patches of scrub and other more optimal reptile habitat, in places that receive direct sunlight for at least part of the day. The refuges were then left to bed down for at least ten days. During this time, they develop favourable conditions (e.g. suitable humidity and temperature gradient) and the reptiles become more familiar with them. To assess presence or absence, the refuges were checked during seven visits from the 31st March to the 28th April 2026 during suitable weather conditions in accordance with recommendations set out by Hill et al. (2005). As only small numbers of Slow-worms were recorded, it was not deemed necessary to extend the survey in order to make a more accurate assessment of the distribution and population size.

Site Status Assessment

- 3.3 Each survey visit may reveal only a small sample of the reptile population occurring on site, because the proportion of individuals recorded varies according to weather, time of year etc. It is extremely difficult to establish the size of the population on a site without substantial effort usually involving the capture, mark, recapture method. However, in most cases the precise size of the population is not required for an impact assessment and mitigation planning, and a basic assessment of the population based on peak counts can be made. The table in Figure 1 below is used to obtain a basic evaluation of the size and importance of reptile sites (Froglife, 1999).
- 3.4 A mechanism known as the Key Reptile Site Register can be used to obtain a basic evaluation of the population size and importance of the site. It has been designed to identify and promote the safeguarding of important reptile sites with outstanding assemblages being the guiding principle in judging sites. This has not been specifically designed for use by consultants and is intended to be a rough guide only.

Survey assessment: Key Reptile Sites

The Key Reptile Site Register is a mechanism designed to promote the safeguard of important reptile sites. The criteria for site selection are given below, including a table which allows the classification of the relative size of reptile populations on the basis of survey counts. Compare your survey results with the criteria given below to obtain an objective evaluation of the importance of the reptile interest on your site.

To qualify for the Key Reptile Site Register, the site in question must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- (1) supports three or more reptile species
- (2) supports two snake species
- (3) supports an exceptional population of one species (see table)
- (4) supports an assemblage of species scoring at least 4 (see table)
- (5) does not satisfy 1-5 but which is of particular regional importance due to local rarity (e.g. in the East Midlands of England, adders are very rare so even "low" populations should be designated as Key Sites)

	Low population <i>Score 1</i>	Good population <i>Score 2</i>	Exceptional population <i>Score 3</i>
Adder	<5	5 - 10	>10
Grass snake	<5	5 - 10	>10
Common lizard	<5	5 - 20	>20
Slow-worm	<5	5 - 20	>20

Figures in the table refer to maximum number of adults seen by observation and/or under tins (placed at a density of up to 10 per hectare), by one person in one day.

Figure 1: Survey assessment: Key Reptile Sites (Froglife, 1999).

Limitations

- 3.5 There were no constraints to carrying out the reptile survey. The site was fully accessible and the survey took place in predominantly during April; which is considered to be optimal month for surveying reptiles when weather conditions are suitable.

4.0 Results

Field Survey

- 4.1 The full survey results and weather conditions can be found in Appendix 1. In summary, the only species of reptile recorded during the survey was Slow-worm. These were recorded on the fringes of boundary habitats as well as along the central area of scrub.
- 4.2 The highest count of Slow-worms on site on any one day was 17; comprising of males, females and juveniles, of which four were juveniles.
- 4.3 Various invertebrates were also recorded during the survey.

5.0 Evaluation

Presence/Absence

- 5.1 During the survey the site was found to support Slow-worms. No other reptile species were recorded.

Population Assessment

- 5.2 The Key Reptile Site Register was used to obtain a basic evaluation of the population size of Slow-worms on site according to the Herpetofauna Groups of Britain & Ireland (HGBI) guidelines (1998). As refugia were placed at a higher density than recommended by Froglife (1999) in order to increase the chances of accurately establishing the presence or likely absence of reptile populations. The figure has been adjusted to a density of 10 refugia per ha. This takes into account the whole of the area surveyed despite reptiles only being recorded in certain p of the site.
- 5.3 A maximum of 13 adult Slow-worms were recorded in one day. 60 refugia were used over 0.45 ha. Adjusted to a density of 10 refugia per ha this equates to: $(0.45 \times 10) / 60 \times 13 = 0.975$
- 5.4 Under the Key Reptile Site Register in accordance with the Froglife guidelines (1999) the population of Slow-worms on site is < 5, which is be classed as low. These achieves a score of one which is below threshold of four at which a site would qualify as a Key Reptile Site. It also does not qualify under any of the remaining criteria.
- 5.5 Despite being relatively widespread, Slow-worms are included on the list of NERC Priority Species (JNCC, 2022) due to declines in numbers over recent years. The site supports one species of reptile and is regarded as being of local importance.

6.0 Impacts and Recommendations

Impacts

- 6.1 The proposals for the site are to erect two new dwellings with associated gardens, access and driveways. This will involve removing the majority of the existing habitats, including the buildings, grassland, most areas of scrub and the individual trees. Reptiles were found to be occupying the outer northeast, northwest and southwest boundaries of the site as well as using scrub in the centre of the site immediately southeast of buildings.
- 6.2 In the **absence of mitigation**, the following impacts with respect to reptiles have been identified.
- Permanent loss of approximately 0.14 ha of optimal reptile habitat i.e. a mosaic of scrub and tall ruderals interspersed with rough grassland and brash/waste materials, which support a small population of Slow-worms.
 - Permanent loss of approximately 0.27 ha of short grassland. This habitat is sub-optimal reptile habitat where no reptiles were recorded, but may be used occasionally given the proximity to more suitable habitats.
 - Loss of approximately 0.04 ha of sub-optimal habitat dominated by nettles but with scattered bramble scrub where a small population of Slow-worm were recorded.
 - Direct killing or injury of Slow-worms during site clearance and during the construction phase of the development.

Further Surveys

- 6.3 Further surveys would only be required if the works were delayed for two years or more. If this were to be the case a repeat reptile presence/absence survey would be recommended before work commenced to confirm that the status of the site remains the same as that described within this report.

Legal Compliance

- 6.4 Common Reptile species are partially protected under Schedule 5 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), under part of Section 9(1) and all of Section 9(5). This means that they are protected from killing or injury. No licence is required to permit the development but some form of mitigation to avoid contravention of the legislation afforded to common reptiles must be approved by the Local Planning Authority Ecologist or the statutory consultee, which in this instance would be Natural England.
- 6.5 Maintenance of conservation status can be achieved in one or more of the following ways:
- Identification of a safe receptor site that will not be affected by works
 - Capture and translocation of reptiles
 - Creation and/or enhancement of reptile habitat
 - Post development management and monitoring

Mitigation

- 6.6 Reptiles were only recorded in certain parts of the site, primarily along the northern and southwest boundaries as well as along the southeast side of habitat in the centre of the site where scrub and tall ruderal habitats were present. The site is surrounded by well-kept residential gardens to the southwest and northwest with fields of short pasture adjacent to the remaining boundaries.
- 6.7 The planning application to permit a new development will require the clearance of scrub, tall ruderal and rough grassland where a small population of Slow-worms was identified.
- 6.8 The proposed strategy is to remove reptiles from the development area to a receptor site outside of the construction area along the northeast boundary of the site.

Reptile Capture and Exclusion

- 6.9 Reptiles will need to be captured, removed and excluded from the proposed working footprint and moved to the receptor site prior to the start of works. No habitat clearance works should be carried out prior to carrying out reptile capture and exclusion.
- 6.10 Refuge mats would be used to remove reptiles from the working footprint. The same refuges used to survey for reptiles would be installed at a higher density than that used during the survey, to capture reptiles from the working footprint.
- 6.11 The proposed receptor site will be an area of land to the northeast of an access track which has suitable reptile habitats of tall ruderals with scattered pockets of bramble that offer cover for Slow-worms.
- 6.12 Reptile fencing will be erected along the edge of the track connecting into the northwest boundary hedge creating an isolated receptor site preventing reptiles to re-enter the development area. Surrounding habitats to the north and southeast of short grazed pasture will restrict movement from this area meaning that reptiles are highly unlikely to re-enter the site by passing through adjacent habitats.
- 6.13 Trapping effort for reptiles according to HBGI guidelines (1998) is a minimum of 60 days for a small population, 70 days for a medium population and 90 days for a large population. However, in this instance, 20 days trapping is recommended as the site is small and only small numbers of Slow-worms have been recorded; this species is significantly easier to capture than other reptile species (Gent and Gibson, 1998). Once the minimum capture effort is exceeded, trapping can only cease if either 5 clear days during optimal weather conditions is achieved or a significant decline in reptile numbers with only one or two individuals consistently being recorded for one to two weeks is demonstrated.
- 6.14 Froglife (1999) define that it is best to search for reptiles when the peak air temperature is between 9 and 20°C. Cooler days are acceptable if there is bright sunshine, while hazy or intermittent sun gives good results at the warmer end of the scale. Rainy or windy conditions are usually unsuitable as are long periods of cold weather or rain. As the capture exercise progresses, any rubble and brash piles as well as vegetation would be cleared from the site until no suitable habitat or hiding places remain.

Timing of Works

- 6.15 Trapping can be undertaken when reptiles are active, generally from March to October, with most profitable months in April, May and September. It cannot be carried out at any other time of the year especially in winter when reptile species hibernate and night air temperatures drop below 5°C.

Habitat Creation, Restoration and/or Enhancement

- 6.16 The majority of the site habitats will be lost to the development. There should be no net loss of habitat quality for reptiles and therefore in order to compensate for the loss of habitat the receptor site should be managed to create enhanced habitat for reptiles.
- 6.17 Although the receptor site currently provides potential for reptiles and a small number of Slow-worms were recorded on the fringes of this area, where nettles dominate is deemed sub-optimal.
- 6.18 Management of this area should aim to produce a mosaic of habitats providing various opportunities for reptiles such as open sunny areas for basking, dense vegetation that provide shelter and provide foraging opportunities and edge habitats where habitats meet. By using hand operated tools rotational cutting will prevent habitats such as bramble and nettle from taking over the area and will allow for rough/tussocky grassland to establish. Planting of scattered native scrub species will provide additional opportunity for cover. Two hibernacula will be created in the east corner of the site to provide a refuge as well as a hibernation site (see Appendix 2 for specification).
- 6.19 Appropriate management would result in the receptor site providing, although smaller in area, more optimal habitat for a small population of Slow-worm and other reptiles species than what is currently present.

Post-development Management and Monitoring

- 6.20 The ongoing management of the receptor site would aim to promote grassland clearings within scrub and tall ruderals and allow grassland habitat to establish tussocks and long, rank grassland with a varied sward structure. This will improve invertebrate diversity and provide suitable habitat for foraging reptiles. The grassy areas would be strimmed to a height of 250 mm – 300 mm during the winter months of November to February and the scrub trimmed back to maintain open areas for basking.
- 6.21 Any habitat creation and on-going management of the reptile population will need to be secured through appropriate planning conditions, to ensure that the receptor site is maintained for reptiles. The nature of the receptor site is such that it is likely to provide suitable habitat in perpetuity with minimal intervention. Due to the reptile presence being limited to low numbers of slow-worms, no monitoring is proposed, subject to agreement from the council's ecologist.

Care and Vigilance During Works

- 6.22 Contractors working in the development area should be briefed on the protocol to follow in the event a reptile is found during works after the capture exercise is completed. This is as follows:
- Halt work.

- Capture reptile using gloves.
- Place in container provided and transfer reptile to the receptor site and seek confirmation that work can continue.
- Resume work if the appointed ecological consultant has granted authorisation.

Timetable of works

6.23 A formal timetable of works has not yet been devised. However, given the small areas of potential habitat loss, the main constraint on timing will be the trapping and translocation exercise, which can only take place from March to October in suitable conditions.

7.0 References

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Hill D., Fasham M., Tucker G., Shrewry M. and Shaw P., 2005, Handbook of Biodiversity Methods, Survey, Evaluation and Monitoring, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

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8.0 Plans

Reptile Survey Results



Wider natural dispersal habitat

Plot 2

Plot 1

OLD FORGE HOUSE

RODBOURNE ROAD

GRANARY CLOSE

Application Boundary

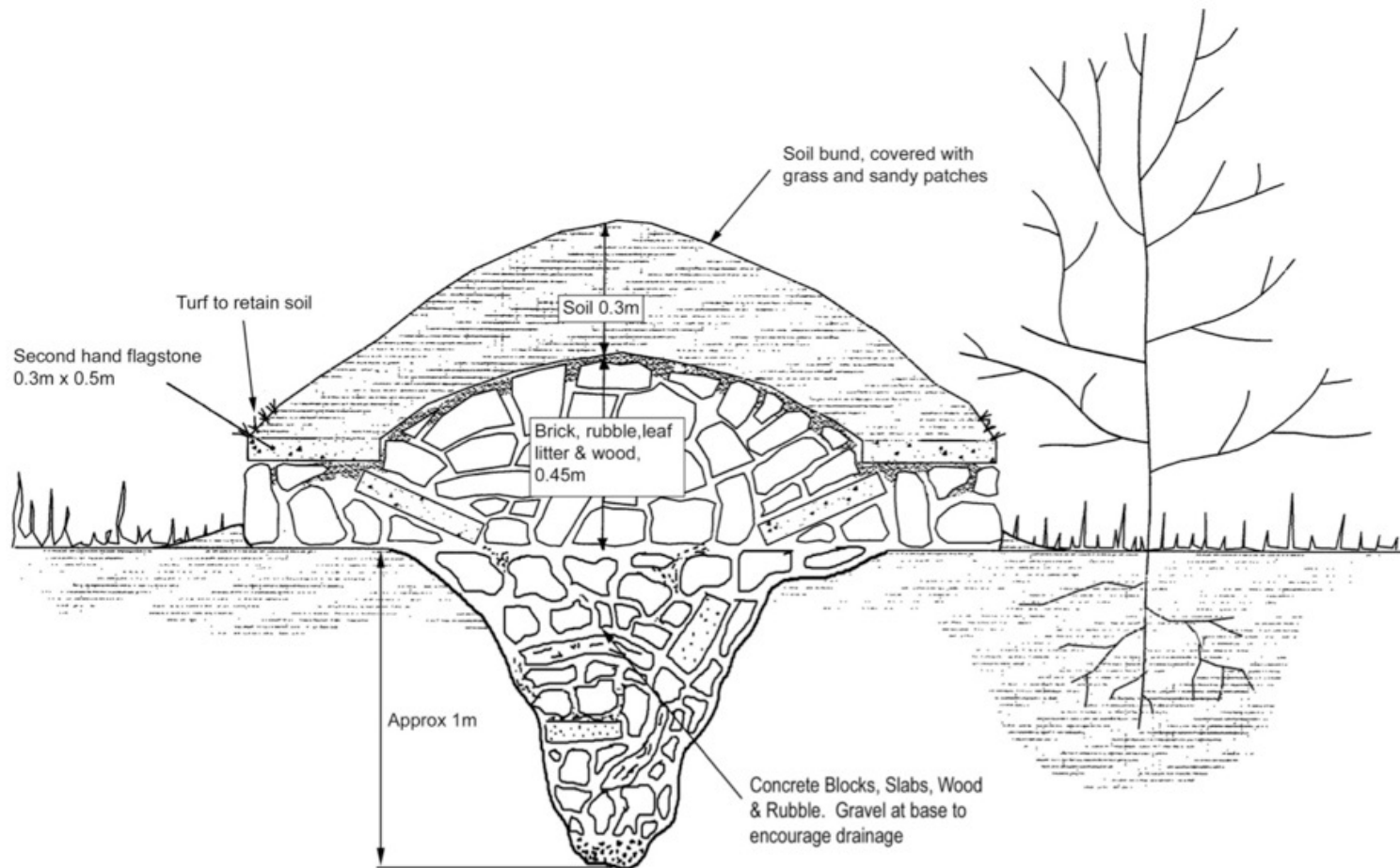
Proposed Reptile Receptor Site

Hibernacula

Reptile Barrier Fence

9.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Hibernaculum Location and Specification



Appendix 2 – Reptile Survey Results

Survey number	Date	Time	Temp °C	Weather Conditions	Slow Worm			Common Lizard				Grass Snake	Adder	Total
					Adult Male	Adult Female	Juvenile	Adult Male	Adult Female	Unknown sex	Juvenile			
1	31/03/2026	14:00	16	50% Cloud, None/Light Wind	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	02/04/2026	10:00	9	80% Cloud, Light Wind	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
3	07/04/2026	10:00	13	10% Cloud, Light Wind	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
4	20/04/2026	16:45	13	30% Cloud, Light Wind	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
5	23/04/2026	08:30	11	10% Cloud, Light Wind	6	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
6	24/04/2026	09:30	10	No Cloud, Light Wind	3	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
7	28/04/2026	09:00	10	70 % Cloud, Light Wind.	7	6	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	17