

APPENDIX 11.9 REPTILES

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 The reptile survey results presented in this appendix reflect the survey information available at the time of writing. Presence/absence surveys could not be completed due to repeated removal and theft of artificial refugia from the Application Site. The findings should therefore be treated as interim and precautionary, with the assessment and mitigation approach to be reviewed and updated, if necessary, following completion of the wider ecological survey programme and any subsequent design or mitigation updates.

1.2 Methodology

- 1.2.1 The potential presence of reptiles on site was assessed considering the habitats present (availability of refugia and basking areas) and suitability of surrounding environment. The assessment of habitats was informed by the *Herpetofauna Workers Manual* (Gent and Gibson, 2003). Where possible, attempts to confirm reptile presence on site were made following *Froglife Advice Sheet 10 – Surveying for Reptiles* through direct observation in reptile “hotspots” and checking of any existing refugia.
- 1.2.2 Seven presence / absence surveys were attempted of targeted areas most likely to contain reptile habitats and to those areas that may be disturbed as part of the scheme. Searches were undertaken when the air temperature was between 9°C and 18 °C with intermittent or hazy sunshine, little or no wind, and no rainfall. The location of the reptile mats are displayed within Figure 1. Due to the limited amount of suitable reptile habitat on site, mats were only deployed in select areas where suitable habitats (such as grassy field margins) were present.
- 1.2.3 Due to the public right of way being present on site, the deployed reptile mats were removed and stolen from the site several times. Reptile mats were redeployed twice across the site with signage detailing the works and surveys undergoing; despite this, the mats were still stolen again, and therefore reptile surveys were stopped, as this is a limitation of the assessment, and as surveys could not be completed, precautionary mitigation measures will be employed.



Figure 1 Reptile mat locations (initial and re-deployment)

Data search

- 1.2.4 There were five records of reptiles returned in the data search. There were three records for Slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) 1.4km northeast of the site boundary and identified in 2016, and two records for Grass snake (*Natrix Helvetica*) 2km west of the site boundary in 2016 and 1.38km northeast of the site boundary in 2018.

Habitats

- 1.2.5 The site is predominately arable fields with some temporary lay and other neutral grassland fields, woodland block and hedgerows, there are two fishing lakes in the southwest and one in the north at the centre of the site. The arable land is of very low value habitats for reptiles; however, the grassland and hedgerows are suitable habitat for reptiles. Some of the large arable fields have wide tussocky field margins which also provide suitable habitat for reptiles.

Survey results

- 1.2.6 Presence/absence surveys were attempted between August and September 2025. Overall, 70 mats were deployed across the site in the limited, most suitable habitat, the field margins along the hedgerows and scrub areas.
- 1.2.7 Several surveys were attempted across the site over August and September, however no reptiles were recorded and equipment was consistently stolen, therefore surveys could not be completed; adopting the precautionary principle, with the known presence of reptiles in the area from the background data search and small areas of habitat suitable for reptiles, low numbers of presence is assumed and therefore mitigated against accordingly.

1.3 Assessment of impacts and Mitigation

Construction impacts

- 1.3.1 As the risk of reptiles on site is low and a small area of the site has been deemed potentially suitable for reptiles to be impacted is small, the following precautionary measures have been deemed appropriate:
- All vegetation within the proposed construction site footprint will undergo a two-stage process under ecological supervision and be cut to ~15 cm height during the reptile active season (March – October inclusive).
 - Vegetation requiring removal which is considered suitable for reptiles (i.e. scrub, grassland, ruderal vegetation) will be destructively searched by the ECoW. This will involve carefully checking within and underneath any suitable refugia such as leaf piles, logs, tree trunks, small mammal burrows and rubble.
 - Following a 24-hour period, the vegetation will be cut down to the ground and maintained to a short sward until commencement of construction.
 - Any reptiles found during the works will be moved to suitable retained such as the woodland and hedgerow edge along the northern boundary of the wider site ownership, away from the works area.

Operational impacts

- 1.3.2 Given the retention of most of the potential habitat across the site, notably the terrestrial land around the watercourse and the hedgerow and woodland edges, it has been determined that there will be no significant impacts on any potentially present reptiles with the aforementioned precautionary measures.

- 1.3.3 As the proposed site landscape plans show that the existing key areas of suitable habitat will be retained, and enhanced for reptile suitability, an overall improvement for reptile suitability will occur. The LEMP will detail the habitat improvements for reptile suitability, which will result in an overall minor beneficial impact on reptiles from the proposed development.