



Reptile Mitigation Method Statement And Plan For Site Measured Clearing

Introduction

Following completion of the reptile survey undertaken by an experienced ecologist, discussions were held regarding the most appropriate mitigation method for clearing the garden in advance of any construction/demolition, including alleviation practices for the reptiles found on site evidenced as; slow worms and a grass snake.

If the current application is approved this summer, demolition/construction would not be able to commence until spring 2027 at the earliest. Although site clearing would need to have been completed before October 2026 if this was to be possible. If this route is not possible the next opportunity for garden clearing would not be able to commence until after March 2027, when reptiles would be out of their hibernation period.

The principal objective of a garden clearing methodology is to minimise the risk of harm to reptiles identified on site by encouraging them to safely progress onwards whilst gentle clearing takes place, (and before any demolition/construction commences) which in turn will promote foraging and resting in safe and alternative areas. There are areas that surround No. 85 to the west, north and east of the site which consist of well established gardens, paddock and farmland.

It is the warmer times of day during the warmer spring and summer months (when reptiles are out of hibernation) which gives the reptiles the heat they need to warm their bodies to enable quick movement, so it is these warm periods which are the best times to carry out site clearing but, essentially, in stages.

Reptiles, being sensitive, tend to move away from vibration created by vegetation clearing methods, so this combined with clearing at warmer times of day during warmer months are ideal circumstances, but as already mentioned clearing must be carried out in stages.

Gentle, and slow walking through areas of vegetation in warm conditions should disturb and encourage reptiles to move elsewhere, as warm reptiles are active reptiles. It is important not to flatten any grass at this makes it difficult to cut.

Existing Habitat

The application site forms part of a wider network of suitable reptile habitat. The site is bordered by established vegetated gardens to both the east and west, while to the north lies a garden/paddock and agricultural land containing grassland, hedgerows and associated vegetation. These surrounding habitats provide important foraging, sheltering and hibernation opportunities and function as natural wildlife corridors. It should be noted that a 2m strip will remain vegetated on site on the western boundary, and left undisturbed functioning as an on site habitat where from this point there is access to other habitats to the west, north and around to the east (Green Street area).

The garden at No. 85 is therefore not an isolated habitat but forms part of a larger interconnected landscape capable of supporting reptile populations. This connectivity is particularly important, as isolated populations can suffer from reduced genetic diversity, lower reproductive success and an increased risk of long-term population decline.

During the survey, slow worms and a grass snake were recorded within the site. Both species utilise similar habitats comprising rough grassland and dense vegetation. Whilst adult grass snakes do predate slow worms, the availability of extensive surrounding habitat should allow both species to coexist with sufficient opportunities for movement, foraging and refuge. The ability for reptiles to move into adjacent habitat during the clearance works and after will therefore contribute to maintaining the long-term viability of the local population.

Vegetation Clearance Strategy

Following consultation with the ecologist, it was agreed that the most appropriate approach would be to undertake a gradual directional clearance of the onsite vegetation. And for this to take place in the summer months, but to be completed by mid September. Works commencing on the eastern side of the site (Zone 1 where only one of the refugia mats on this east side had any slow worms) will be the starting point for the clearing works before progressing slowly westwards towards the existing gravel driveway in stages, then in further stages the clearing will continue towards the western part of the site.

A continuous 2-metre-wide strip of approximately 70m² of habitat adjacent to the north-western boundary will be retained throughout the construction phase (protected Zone A, see plan). This retained habitat adjoins the neighbouring hedge, paddock/gardens and a wider network of suitable habitat and will provide an undisturbed refuge into which reptiles can naturally move during the clearance process as well as having other habitats surrounding this retained, approx 70m², of onsite habitat. To assist with habitat, 2 hibernacula will be constructed within the 2m retained strip, and constructed in advance of the garden clearing process when half of the clearing process has been completed.

Vegetation Clearance Method

Vegetation clearance will be undertaken slowly and progressively in a series of defined zones, reducing vegetation height over several weeks.

Initial cutting will be undertaken using brush cutters or similar equipment set to a high cutting height. Vegetation will then be progressively reduced in 4 stages from approximately knee height, to calf height, to ankle height and finally to ground level.

Works shall only take place during suitable warm dry conditions when reptiles are able to move quickly. This means only clearing when the all three of the below conditions are met:

Temperature: Must be above 17°C ambient

Weather: Dry, sunny

Time: Mid to late morning, and mid afternoon only.

All vegetation removal will be undertaken carefully. Should any reptile or other protected wildlife be observed during the works, clearance within that immediate area will cease until the reptile has moved safely into adjacent, neighbouring or retained habitat. Under no circumstances will reptiles be handled or intentionally disturbed.

Following clearance, each completed area will be maintained at ground height throughout the construction period to discourage reptiles from the working area.

Construction of Hibernacula

Following partial vegetation clearance, reptile hibernacula will be constructed within Zone A. Each hibernaculum will comprise:

- Size, 1m/1.5 wide x 1m deep. Excavation approximately 50cm-60cm deep extending below the frost line. The top will be raised above ground level by approximately 50cm-60cm of material outlined below
- Location to be in the sunniest position within the 2m retained strip
- A mixture of untreated logs will be arranged in a criss-cross configuration, stones, bricks with cavities and inverted turf to fill the excavated area with some pipes together forming voids to enable reptiles to enter and leave the structure.
- A covering of soil and leaf litter on top will provide insulation and assist with heat retention.

These hibernacula will provide suitable long-term refuge and hibernation opportunities within the retained habitat.

Retained Habitat And Protection

Zone A - 70m². This is next to approximately the 70m² of hedging. This area should receive 2 calf-height trims during the clearance works to prevent excessive overgrowth whilst retaining its habitat value. The first cut should be when half of the clearance works are completed, then the second cut before the hibernacula are going to be constructed.

Once the clearance works are completed and the hibernacula have been constructed the retained habitat will be protected using secure reptile fencing to prevent the reptiles moving into the potentially harmful site working area from that point and the duration of the construction phase. The reptile fencing will be in place when the reptiles come out of hibernation too. This will help keep the reptiles away from the construction site.

All site personnel will be informed during the site induction that reptiles have been found on site and leaflets will be provided including photographs that will be handed to personnel working on site showing what the protected species look like in case they are encountered. Within this leaflet information will be included on what to do if any reptiles are encountered during the construction phase.

The onsite vegetation must be controlled and kept low to the ground. This will prevent habitat forming.

Materials should be elevated and placed on wooden pallets or concrete blocks and not directly on the ground, ideally 15-30cm off the ground. Materials kept in a lockable workmens shed is a good way to store materials if this is possible. Avoid keeping discarded materials on site as these can provide environments for reptiles and their prey to hide or set up home. Whilst covering materials, make sure the covering is secured tightly to the ground to prevent hiding and 'resident' places forming.

And, importantly, make sure daily that the reptile fencing is secure and in place around the site perimeter as this will prevent reptiles from entering the area.

Programme of Vegetation Clearance

See accompanying plan 'Existing site layout' on page 6.

Week 1

Zone 1 to be trimmed down to knee height and then calf height, in 2 stages

Week 2

Zone 1 to be trimmed to ankle height

Zone 2 to be trimmed down to knee height

Week 3

Zone 1 trimmed to ground height and this height maintained

Zone 2 trimmed to calf height

Week 4

Zone 1 ground height maintained

Zone 2 taken down to ankle height

Zone 3 taken down to knee height

Week 5

Zone 1 ground height maintained

Zone 2 taken down to ground height and maintained

Zone 3 taken down to calf height

Week 6

Zone 1 ground height maintained

Zone 2 ground height maintained

Zone 3 taken down to ankle height

Zone 4 taken down to knee height

Week 7

Zone 1 ground height maintained

Zone 2 ground height maintained

Zone 3 taken down to ground height and maintained

Hibernaculums constructed in Zone A

Week 8

Zone 1 ground height maintained

Zone 2 ground height maintained

Zone 3 ground height maintained

Zone 4 taken down to knee height

Week 9

Zone 1 ground height maintained

Zone 2 ground height maintained

Zone 3 ground height maintained

Zone 4 taken down to calf height

Week 10

Zone 1 ground height maintained

Zone 2 ground height maintained

Zone 3 ground height maintained

Zone 4 taken down to ankle height

Zone 5 & 6 taken down to knee height in the first part of the week

Zone 5 & 6 taken down to calf height in the latter part of the week

Week 11 (mid September)

Zone 1 ground height maintained

Zone 2 ground height maintained

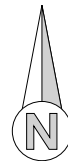
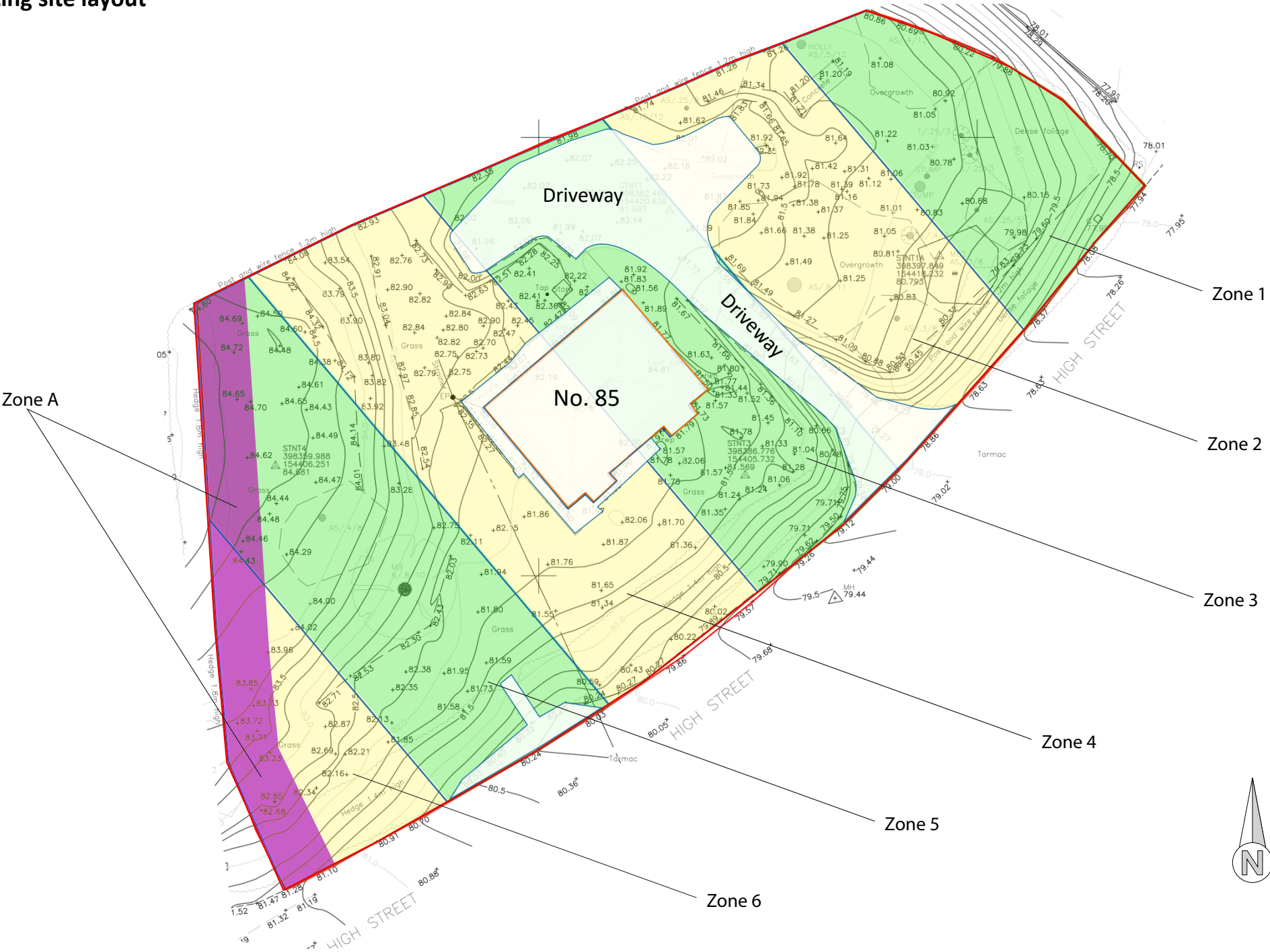
Zone 3 ground height maintained

Zone 4 ground height maintained

Zone 5 & 6 taken down to ankle height in the first part of the week

Zone 5 & 6 taken down to ground height in the latter part of the week

Existing site layout



Construction of Hibernacula

This staged programme over the most active period of the reptiles will ensure that they are given considerable opportunity and time to disperse into retained and adjoining suitable habitat before each successive area is cleared, absolutely minimising the risk of injury and maintaining connectivity to safe areas on site and to adjacent.

Document prepared by
Jack Hallett

For Applewood Designs Ltd
July 2026