

Reptile Presence/Absence Surveys

Survey site:

85 High Street, Great Cheverell, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 5XR

Client:

Mark Hallett

Report date:

12/07/2026

Project:

This report has been produced in support of an upcoming planning application with Wiltshire Council. The proposal is described as: *'demolition of existing dwelling and construction of two new dwellings with associated landscaping'*.

(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 noted within 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 Survey map in Appendix 1, Location plan in Appendix 2, Proposal plans 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. There were no other specific limitations regarding access, weather, safety or equipment during the survey.
<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 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 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 (PEA) which was completed by Arbtech Consulting Ltd. on 4th April 2025 (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, 2025). Habitats onsite include grassland, bramble scrub and a native hedgerow. These

	habitats have been left unmanaged for a number of years, however, historically it is evident that these habitats were regularly maintained as an amenity garden. More recently the garden was managed but left for a reptile survey to be carried out. The survey was required to inform a planning application for Development Type (hereafter referred to as “the proposed development”). A plan showing the proposed development is provided in Appendix 1. The site is situated within a rural location within the town of Great Cheverell, Wiltshire (national grid reference: ST 98386 54416). The site comprises a bungalow, bramble scrub, other neutral grassland, non-native hedgerows, areas of hardstanding and scattered mature trees. The site is surrounded by similar residential properties to the east, south and west, and a large open amenity garden to the north. Open agricultural fields are present within the wider environment to the north, with scattered mature trees present within the surrounding areas. A network of well-connected hedgerows is also present, creating possible commuting corridors for wildlife, and would support subsequent wildlife populations, if present.
<i>Methodology</i>	The survey was undertaken by Laurence Wills ACIEEM BSc (Hons) who has 5 years' experience undertaking reptile surveys. 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 using a GPS unit for monitoring, reporting and mapping. The refugia were steel ‘tins’ (corrugated steel sheets of approximately 50cm x 50cm square) and sheets of bitumen felt (approximately 100cm x 50cm square). The steel tins are regarded to have better habitat value for certain species (particularly snakes) due to their superior thermal retention. For this site, there is assessed to be 0.1ha of potentially suitable reptile habitat on site, comprising grassland in the central and western areas and small area of scrub in the northwest. A total of 5 tins and 50 felts were used. Locations of refugia are illustrated in Appendix 3.

	The refugia were deployed on 23rd April 2026 and left to ‘bed in’ for a minimum of two weeks. Seven separate site visits were completed to search for reptiles between 7th May and 28th May 2026. The surveyor walked slowly and carefully checked the top and underneath of each felt, 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 10am or 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. d. Supports an assemblage of species scoring at least 4 (see table above_. e. Does not satisfy criteria a-d but is of regional importance due to local rarity.	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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Field survey results

Survey dates and weather conditions are described in the table below:

Visit No.	Date	Time	Temp	Humidity	Cloud Cover	Wind Speed	Precipitation
1	07/05/2026	9:45am	14°C	69	60%	5.2 kmph	None
2	15/05/2026	9:45am	11°C	76	50%	2.5 kmph	None
3	19/05/2026	9:15am	15°C	73	30%	1.6 kmph	None
4	21/05/2026	9:30am	16°C	71	100%	6.7 kmph	None
5	25/05/2026	8:30am	17°C	78	0%	5.3 kmph	None
6	27/05/2026	8:00am	16°C	81	10%	1.6 kmph	None
7	28/05/2026	8:30am	16°C	76	10%	7.2 kmph	None

The table below presents the results of the reptile surveys:

Visit No.	Refugia	Species and ages Identified
1	A, B, C, D, E	x3 male slow worm x7 female slow worm x1 juvenile grass snake
2	A, B, C, F, G	x3 male slow worm x5 female slow worm x4 juvenile slow worm x1 juvenile grass snake
3	A, B, C, E, G	x2 male slow worm x4 female slow worm

			x6 juvenile slow worm x1 juvenile grass snake	
	4	A, B, C, E	x5 male slow worm x5 female slow worm x3 juvenile slow worm	
	5	A, C, G	x1 male slow worm x1 male slow worm x1 juvenile slow worm	
	6	A, C	x1 female slow worm x1 juvenile slow worm	
	7	A, C, G	x2 male slow worm x2 female slow worm x1 juvenile slow worm	
<i>Survey results summary and Impact Assessment</i>	The survey effort has revealed a maximum count of 13 slow worms and 1 grass snake on site, resulting in a ‘good’ population of slow worms and ‘low’ population of grass snakes. There will be a significant loss of reptile habitat on site as a result of the removal of the grassland areas in the central/western area, and scrubland area to the east and northwest corner. Individual animals could be killed or injured during site clearance, if not appropriately mitigated.			
<i>Recommendations</i>	A full mitigation and compensation plan will need to be provided. This will include details of fencing, movement of the animals to a suitable receptor site outside of the area of impacts onsite, and safe site clearance measures. An area within the existing site boundary could be a suitable receptor area for any individuals found onsite with some enhancements to increase carrying capacity/suitability. Mitigation must also be provided to ensure that the population is not disturbed post-development. Maintaining an area onsite will ensure that the populations recorded on site stay within the vicinity of the site and are not removed entirely from the locale.			
<i>Enhancement measures</i>	It is recommended that in addition to the receptor area onsite, hibernaculum will be created to enhance the area for reptiles and create additional habitat. A minimum of a 1m-by-1m area can be created with a base layer of large stones and boulders and then			

covered by any removed material from the site and additional topsoil. The hibernaculum should be a minimum of 1m in height (see Figure 1 below).

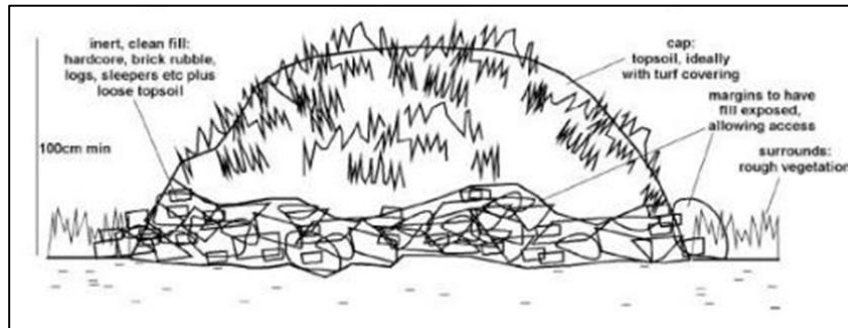
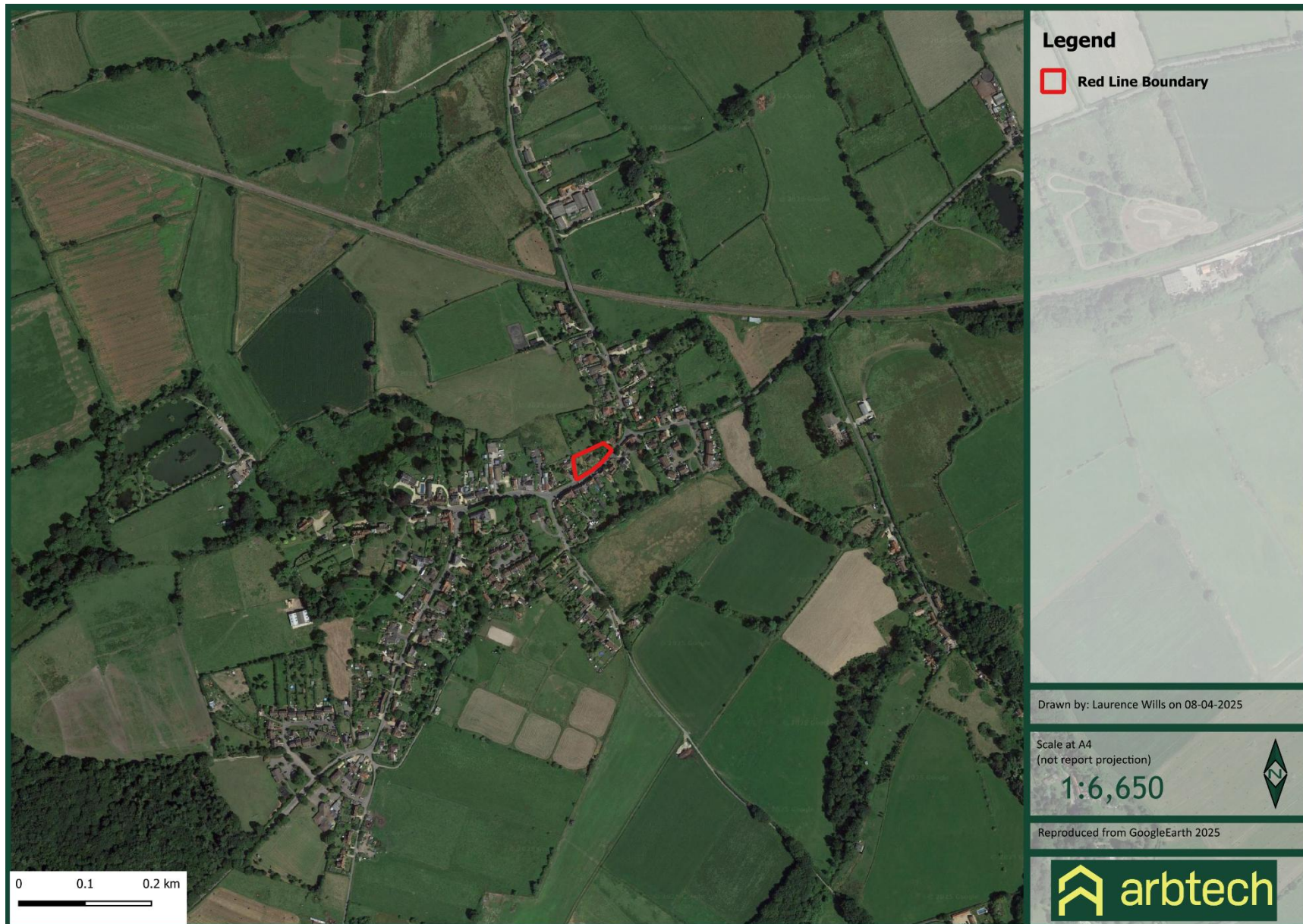


Figure 1: A schematic representation of a man-made newt hibernaculum to provide suitable refugia.

Appendix 1: Survey map



Appendix 2: Site location



Appendix 3: Proposed development 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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Version control			
Status	Issue	Name	Date
Final	1.0	Laurence Wills ACIEEM BSc (Hons), Principal Ecologist	12/07/2026
Amended	2.0	Laurence Wills ACIEEM BSc (Hons), Principal Ecologist	20/07/2026