

## Rosary House, Aerodrome Road, Bekesbourne, Kent

### Reptile Survey and Mitigation Strategy

9<sup>th</sup> November 2021 / Ref No 2021/05/17

Client: Woodchurch Property Developments



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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background to the Scheme

Following a ‘Preliminary Ecological Appraisal’<sup>1</sup> which identified the risk of reptiles being present, KB Ecology Ltd was commissioned to undertake a reptile survey with regards to a proposed development at Rosary House, Aerodrome Road, Bekesbourne CT4 5EX Kent, in support of a planning application for the demolition of an outbuilding and erection of a number of new dwellings.

## 1.2 Survey Objectives

The purpose of the survey was to assess the likely impact of the scheme on reptiles, and to assist in demonstrating compliance with wildlife legislation and planning policy objectives.

The key objectives of this survey were to:

- Confirm the presence / likely absence of reptile species within suitable terrestrial habitat.
- Provide recommendations for necessary mitigation work.

## 1.3 Limitations

This report records the potential for flora and fauna evident on the day of the site visit. It does not record any flora or fauna that may appear at other times of the year and, as such, were not evident at the time of visit.

The findings of this report represent the professional opinion of a qualified ecologist and do not constitute professional legal advice. The client may wish to seek professional legal interpretation of the relevant wildlife legislation cited in this document.

# 2 Methodology

Detailed reptile surveys were undertaken using artificial refuges, in accordance with best practice guidelines (Froglife, 1999). Twenty-six artificial cover objects were installed over 3,000m<sup>2</sup> (i.e. approx. 86/ha) on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021. They were then checked on seven separate occasions in July-August 2021. Numbers of each reptile species were recorded, as well as the air temperature. Naturally occurring refuges were also checked for reptiles, and any additional incidental sightings were also recorded.

Surveys were only undertaken during suitable weather, they were not carried out during wind or rain. They were undertaken by Megan Austin, who has over ten years’ experience in reptile survey and mitigation work.

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<sup>1</sup>The reader is referred to the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal report by KB Ecology Ltd dated 7th August 2021 / Ref No 2021/05/17



### 3 Results

The survey recorded grass snakes *Natrix natrix*, slow worms *Anguis fragilis*<sup>2</sup> and common lizards *Zootoca vivipara*. Table 1 below gives the details of the survey.

**Table 1: Results and weather conditions for each survey visit**

Reptile survey, Rosary House, Aerodrome Road, Bekesbourne CT4 5EX

Refuges installed on 29/06/2021

Survey	Date	Time	Average Air Temp. deg C:	Wind	Cloud cover, %	Viviparous Lizards			Slow worms			Grass snakes					
						adults											
						Male	Female	Unknown				Male	Female	Male			
1	6 Jul 2021	13:00	18	moderate	60	2	1			1	2	4	7	3	1		
2	12 Jul 2021	13:30	17	light	100	2				4	3	10	11		2		
3	23 Jul 2021	9:00	16	none	0				1		1	2	4				
4	26 Jul 2021	8:00	18	none	100		1		1		3	5	2				
5	28 Jul 2021	18:00	18	moderate	20	2	1	3	2	1	1	9	5	2	1		
6	2 Aug 2021	8:30	16	v.light	0		1	1	2		1	5	2				
7	4 Aug 2021	10:00	18	none	50	1		1			2	12	9	4	1		

<sup>2</sup> This means that a low population of slow worms is present (only a small proportion of the population will be seen during survey work, most animals will stay hidden from view)



The maximum number of adults of each reptile species found was:

- 3 lizards;
- 16 slow worms;
- 1 grass snake.

As this was with a density of 26 artificial cover objects over 0.3ha, once these numbers are adjusted to a density of 10 per hectare, this means that these are low populations of grass snakes and lizards and a good population of slow worms, as per Froglife's scoring system (see Appendix A).

As three species are present, the site can be considered a key reptile site in Kent, as defined per Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group.

## 4 Legislation

All British native reptiles are listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA). This legislation prohibits to:

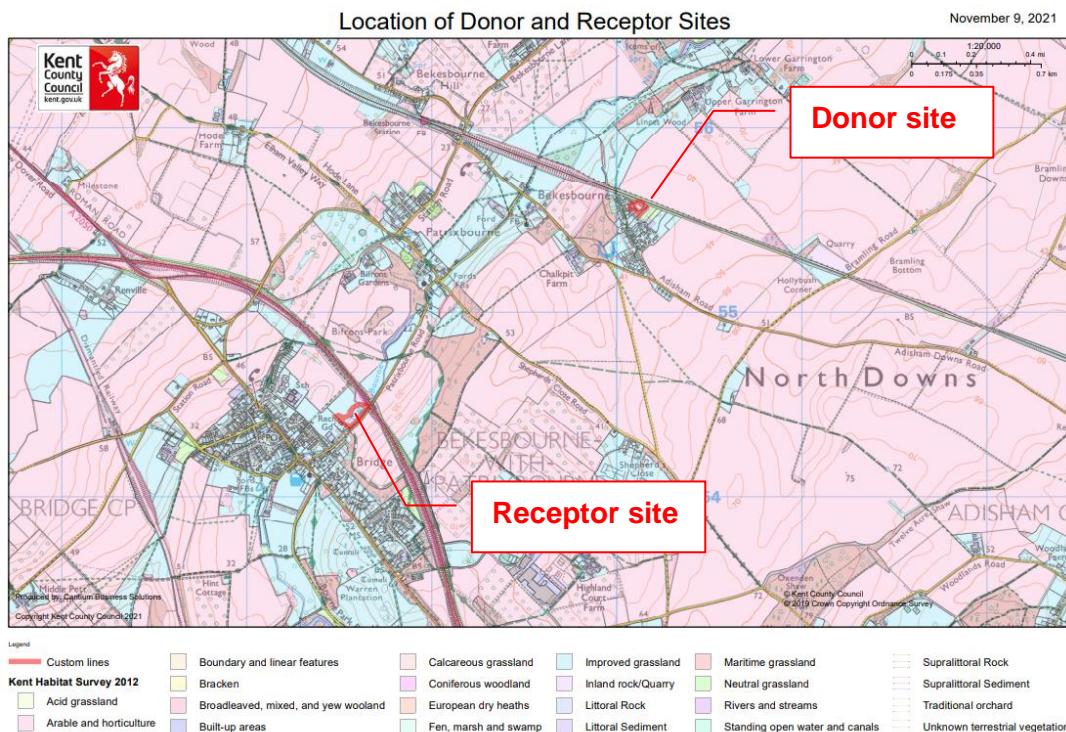
- Intentionally or deliberately capture, kill or injure a common reptile species (which includes slow worms).
- Sell, barter, exchange, transport or offer for sale reptiles or any part of them.

The Abandonment of Animals Act 1960 (as amended) may also apply when translocation of reptiles are proposed as part of a mitigation strategy. As such, care must be taken to ensure

that any receptor sites are suitable for the species in terms of habitat and carrying capacity in order that minimal stress and suffering is imposed upon the reptiles concerned.

## 5 Mitigation Strategy

The proposal will entail the loss of most of the reptile habitat (2,400sqm of high quality habitat to be lost, with a small strip retained along the railway line). It will not be possible to retain all the reptile population on site and a 0.42ha receptor site has been found locally in Bridge, along the Patrixbourne road (at TR185544).

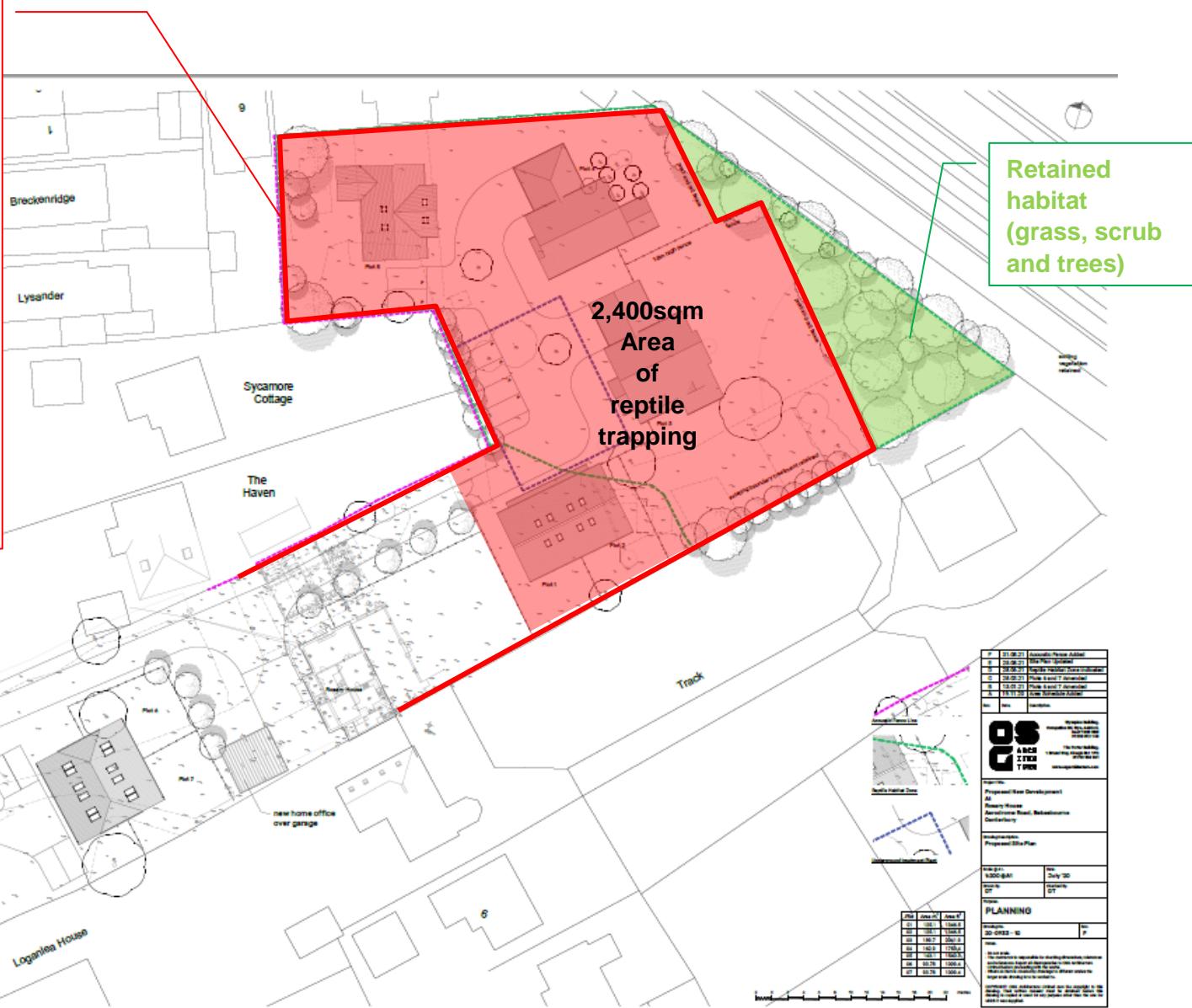
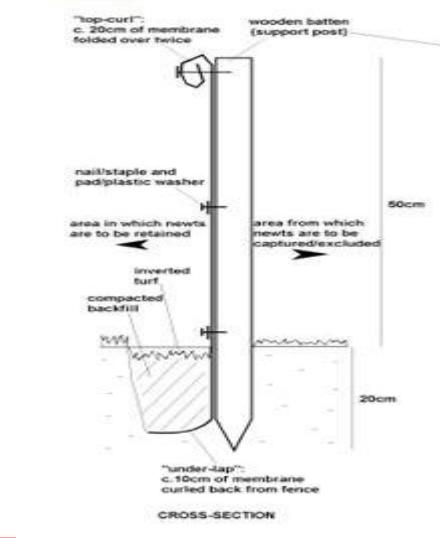


Prior to any ground works starting, a translocation exercise should take place, entailing the erection of reptile-proof fence around all area of the site where ground works will take place, following some vegetation management (outside of the bird nesting season as birds are expected to be nesting in the bramble scrub and trees), the installation of refuges and the trapping of animals for a number of sessions<sup>3</sup> between April and September<sup>4</sup>, during suitable weather conditions (i.e. cool weather with no heavy rain but sunny intervals between showers, and ambient air temperatures between 10-20oC). All the animals would be relocated in the receptor site.

<sup>3</sup> Trapping will cease after five clear days with no animals trapped, during suitable weather conditions. Number of trapping needed likely to be circa 60

<sup>4</sup> Natural England advises against trapping in autumn

Reptile-proof fence to stay in place during trapping and throughout ground works:



## Appendix A

### Population Scoring System

Froglife's scoring system for a site is based upon the number of adult animals of each species found in one day by one person. If artificial cover objects (refugia) are used then their density should be *no more than 10 per hectare*.

#### For adder and grass snake.

Under 5 animals score 1 (Low population)

5 - 10 animals score 2 (Good population)

Over 10 animals score 3 (Exceptional population)

#### For slow worm and viviparous lizard.

Under 5 animals score 1 (Low population)

5 - 20 animals score 2 (Good population)

Over 20 animals score 3 (Exceptional population)

### Key Reptile Site Register

"The Key Reptile Site Register is a mechanism designed to promote the safeguard of important reptile sites." <http://www.kentarg.org/Projects/key-site-register>

The Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group Krag have adopted and slightly amended this methodology to create criteria used to identify key reptile sites.

- (1) All sites with sand lizard.
- (2) The site supports three or more reptile species.
- (3) The site supports two snake species.
- (4) The site supports an exceptional population of one species.
- (5) The site supports an assemblage of species scoring at least four, based on the relative population scoring system described by Froglife (1999).
- (6) The site is of particular regional importance due to local rarity. In Kent, such sites will include (but not be exclusive to) any areas that support a 'good' or 'exceptional' population of adder, based on the population scoring system described by Froglife (1999).
- (7) The boundary of a Key Reptile Site may be defined as an area of land within a specified ownership.
- (8) The boundary of a Key Reptile Site may be defined as land within a specified Survey Region that may be owned and/or managed by one or more landowners.
- (9) Greater emphasis will be placed on promoting designated sites where available data indicates the presence of a breeding population. Breeding will be determined by the identification of eggs, neonates and/or juveniles.
- (10) Greater emphasis will be placed on promoting designated sites that include terrestrial habitat features that are deemed of particular importance to reptiles. Such features may include hibernation areas, nesting sites and foraging areas.