REPTILE SURVEY OF KETTLE
LAND AT MILL LANE HAWKINGE KENT
MAY- SEPTEMEBR 2013

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1. INTRODUCTION

Marsh Environmental was commissioned by Pentland Homes Ltd, to undertake a Presence /absence Reptile survey of the Kettle land off Mill lane Hawkinge, Kent (Grid Ref:TR 621616 140033).

Background to Activity/Development

Marsh Environmental carried out a Baseline Ecological audit of the site in 2012 which highlighted the possible presence of reptiles and amphibians within the grassland and scrub areas of the site.

Marsh Environmental recommended that to comply with wildlife law and current best practice a reptile survey should be undertaken to assess the population at the site, and to inform a mitigation strategy should significant reptile and amphibian populations be found.

Details of Proposed Works that May Affect Reptiles

The land is to be cleared as part of the housing development proposals on site and has the potential to disturb, kill or injure populations of reptiles on site.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND

The Kettle land is located just off Mill Lane in Hawkinge and is bounded by The Street to the North and Denys Road to the south west.

The site is an area of approximately 2 acres and consists mostly of amenity grassland bordered by some mature hedgerow and areas of overgrown scrub. There is also a pond at the northwest sector of the site that is dry and overgrown with bramble and nettle scrub. There are three derelict buildings on site an area of woodland at the northern boundary (outside the boundary line). The site is surrounded by dwellings and gardens along the boundary lines to the south, east and west

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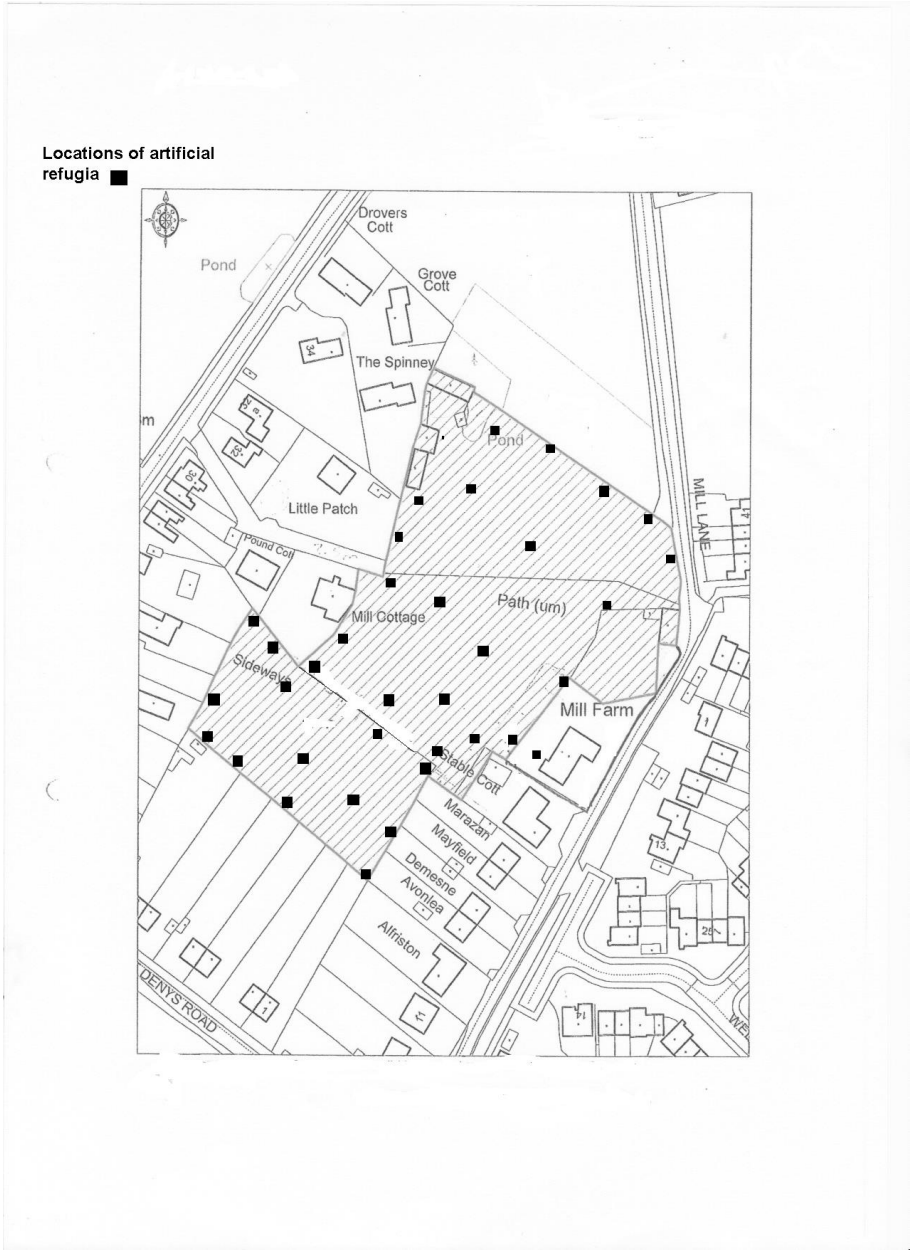
FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION AND SURVEY AREA

FIGURE 2: SITE PLAN WITH ARTIFICIAL REFUGIA LOCATIONS



3. PROTECTED SPECIES STATUS AND CURRENT LEGISLATION

All reptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
The current legislation offers full protection for two species – sand lizard and smooth snake. Legislation covers protection of the animals as well as protection of their habitats.

The widespread reptiles – viviparous lizard *(Lacerta vivipara)*, grass snake *(Natrix natrix),* adder (*Vipera berus*) and slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis)* - are protected against intentional, deliberate and reckless killing and injuring. All reptiles have also recently been recognised as Priority Biodiversity Species.

Key points of legislation:

For all species: if a development has the potential to impact on reptiles in a way that could cause an offence, efforts should be made to reduce and if possible avoid these impacts.

For widespread species; actions which could predictably kill or injury reptiles may result in an offence.

Actions which could potentially harm reptiles include clearing land, digging foundations, cutting vegetation to a low level, laying pipelines, driving machinery over sensitive areas, storing construction materials on site and removing rubble or wood piles from the site.

4. METHODS

The survey methods were undertaken in line with the *Herpetofauna Workers Manual*, JNCC (2003), *HGBI Advisory Notes* (1998) and *Reptile Mitigation Guidelines.* The survey was undertaken between April and July 2013 to assess the presence/likely absence of reptiles.

To ascertain reptile communities on a site it is rarely possible to employ a single survey method (Foster & Gent, 1996; Griffiths & Inns, 1998). Generally a number of survey techniques are undertaken, each appropriate to the time of year, to particular site circumstances and on the detail required concerning size and nature of populations.

The survey of the Kettle landused three standard survey techniques to search for reptiles:

1. Walkover survey;

2. Examination of suitable basking places during survey visits.

3. In 'situ' refuge sites, such as log piles and compost heaps were examined during visits.

To supplement the above, 35 in 'situ' artificial refugia, made from roofing felt, were placed in places of key habitat and examined in subsequent visits (Figure 2).

It is standard practice to undertake multiple visits to a site in the search for reptiles (English Nature *et al.*, 2003) as populations may only appear during certain conditions.

To ascertain presence of reptiles on a site typically requires between seven and nine visits; determination of relative population size requires twenty visits (English Nature *et al.*, 2003).

FIGURE3: KETTLE LAND PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

5. RESULTS

A total of 16 surveys were undertaken in mostly suitable conditions with air temperatures between 8˚c and 19˚c with relative humidity ranging between 54% - 80%

Summary of Survey Results

Table 1: Summary of reptile survey results

Date	Peak Count of each species	Population estimate from peak counts (adults only)
01/06/2013	0	**<50/ha Low population**
05/06/2013	0	
10/06/2013	0	
15/05/2013	0	
18/06/2013	0	
30/06/2013	0	
15/07/2013	0	
30/05/2013	0	
23/07/2013	0	
02/08/2013	0	
14/08/2013	0	
21/08/2013	0	
30/08/2013	0	
04/09/2013	0	
13/09/2013	0	
22/09/2013	0	

Presence/absence surveys, normally extend to around 7-9 visits. In this case and as suitable reptile habitat was abundant on site additional visits (totalling sixteen) were undertaken to increase the potential to record reptiles on site

The survey completed sixteen visits to the site between June and September 2013. The survey results did not reveal the presence of any reptiles or amphibians during the surveys.

Recommendations

1. Birds – The site has a medium-high potential to support breeding and feeding birds and as such tree or scrub clearance should be undertaken outside the bird breeding season (March – August). If this is not possible then it is recommended that a suitable qualified ecologist checks the site for any active nests before commencement of site clearance.

2. Formally instruct contractors and site personnel on agreed policies, recommendations and requirements to maintain environmental quality and minimise impacts during any proposed construction, generally avoiding unnecessary disturbance and pollution.

3. Provide all Construction personnel with relevant Ecological Tool Box Talks prior to the commencement of any works on the site.

4. If possible, use native planting (preferably of local origin) in all landscaping. Where exotic species are planted, always avoid invasive species and choose those with wildlife value such as for nectar or shelter.

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