

Reptile Survey

Site Location	19 Newcastle Road Reading RG2 7TN
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Validity of data

The findings of this study are valid for a period of 24 months from the date of survey. If works have not commenced by this date, it may be necessary to undertake an updated survey to allow any changes in the status of bats on site to be assessed, and to inform a review of the conclusions and recommendations made.

Executive Summary

Chase Ecology was instructed by the client to undertake a Protected Species & Habitat survey for reptiles at the land to the rear of 19 Newcastle Road Reading RG2 7TN. The aim of the survey was to consider the value and suitability of the site and surrounding areas.

Site Location	19 Newcastle Road Reading RG2 7TN
Survey Methodology	A total of 30 felt refugia sheets were deployed around the site on the 1st April 2023 A total of seven visits were made during April to June to assess for any activity/sightings of reptiles. The survey was also extended to amphibians as the refugia would also offer shelter during terrestrial activities.
Conclusion and recommendations	During the seven visits to the site between April & June, no records/activity from both reptiles or amphibians were observed. It is recommended that no further surveys are required for said species. It is recommended that the site be regular maintained prior to development/ground works by keeping the grass/scrub cut back to prevent a gain in value to reptiles which may utilise the site at a later date. Sée Appendix 2: Protection
Requirements for Additional Survey	No further survey requirements identified.
Predicted Impacts of Development on surrounding areas	None if all guidance within appendix 2 is implemented and followed during all stages of the development. See Appendix 2: Protection

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Appendix 1: Protection

1.0 Introduction

Brief

- 1.1** This report is produced to present an initial assessment of the potential ecological constraints and opportunities relating to the named site for reptiles.
- 1.2** The report has been prepared to advise the client of potential ecological constraints and opportunities for reptiles.
- 1.3** The report provides a sufficient baseline for the Site and assessment for Reptiles
- 1.4** The survey was carried out during optimal weather conditions and suitable time of year for such a survey.

2.0 Legislation

This is not an exhaustive list but sets out briefly the relevance of Legislation, Policy and Guidance in terms of planning applications and this assessment.

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (EC Habitats Directive). Provides framework at an international (EU) level for the consideration / protection of European Protected Species (EPS), and habitats through the designation of sites.

Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of wild birds (EC Birds Directive) and The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (1971) Provides framework at an international (EU) level for the consideration / protection of important bird populations and the sites on which they are dependant.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) This transposes 1) into UK law and provides the basis on which all EPS are protected and impacts on them can be licensed in the UK.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended This provides the basis on which UK species are legally protected or restricted and confers protection on Sites of Special Scientific Interest SSSIs. It contains annexes of plants and animals which are legally protected as well as those which are considered to be invasive or harmful. It provides the basis on which impacts on such species can be licensed in the UK and provides controls on work on or near SSSIs.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW) Provides a statutory basis for nature conservation, strengthens the protection of SSSIs and UK protected species and requires the consideration of habitats and species listed on the UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans (UKBAP / LBAP).

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) Sets out the responsibilities of Local Authorities in conserving biodiversity. Section 41 of the Act requires the publishing of lists of habitats and species which are "of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity". At present these largely reflect those making up the UKBAP lists. Hedgerows Regulations (1997) Define and provide protection for Important Hedgerows.

Protected Sites Statutory EU / International Protected Sites Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar Sites contain examples of some of the most important natural ecosystems in Europe. Work on or near these sites is strictly protected and Local Authorities will be expected to carry out 'Appropriate Assessment' of development in proximity of them. In this case there is often an increased burden on the developer in relation to provision of information and assessment.

Statutory UK Protected Sites

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs); National Nature Reserves (NNRs); Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) all receive strict protection under UK legislation. Work in or in proximity to these sites would be restricted with any needing to be agreed with Natural England. Natural England now provide guidance on the nature of development which could impact on SSSIs through Impact Risk Zones.

Locally Protected Sites

Local Authorities have a variety of protected wildlife sites designated at a local or regional level. These are gradually being brought under the banner of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) but at present a plethora of different designations exist - all subject to local policy.

Protected Species

European Protected Species

A number of species (most relevantly bats, great crested newts [GCN], and otters) receive strict protection from killing, injury and disturbance under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010). Protection is also conferred on the habitats on which they rely such as roost space in the case of bats and ponds and fields etc. in the case of GCN.

UK Protected Species

A number of species (including bats, GCN, water vole and white clawed crayfish) are strictly protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended, from killing, injury, disturbance and damage or destruction of their resting places etc. Certain species (such as reptiles) and some birds (such as barn owl) receive partial protection e.g. at certain times of the year or from certain activities only. All nesting bird species are protected from damage or destruction of their nests - whilst active.

Invasive species

Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended, lists these species and makes it an offence to cause or allow their spread in the wild. This often has impacts on development and planning in relation to the presence of invasive plant species such as: himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).

Planning Policy / Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework was published in 27 March 2012 (Updated 2021) replacing the majority of previous Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). The most relevant paragraphs from the NPPF are set out below.

The general approach to assessing the natural environment is now embedded within the definition of what 'sustainable development' is. The policy states that sustainable development should “contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural environment” and “help to improve biodiversity”. There is also a need for positive inclusion of the natural environment in development design and “moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature”. The document sets out the Frameworks presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The natural environment is stated within the NPPF core principles: development should “recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside” and contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should, “prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework”.

NPPF details the approach to the natural environment. The Framework states that development should “minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity, where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures”. The Framework sets out ways to minimise the impacts on biodiversity through “promoting the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets”. The NPPF requires the consideration of the impacts of development on the natural environment. The Framework also encourages “opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments”. Importantly this sets out the hierarchy of avoiding, mitigating and compensating harm from development - plans should ensure that they can demonstrate engagement with this hierarchy when required.

Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England’s Wildlife and Ecosystem Services. This strategy builds on the Natural Environment White Paper (June 2011) - The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature. Setting out the current UK Government's approach to nature conservation. It promotes a more coherent and inclusive approach to conservation and the valuing in economic and social terms of economic resources.

The strategy promotes initiatives such as Biodiversity Offsetting, Nature Improvement Areas and a focus on well-connected natural networks and introduces the concept of securing a 'no net loss' situation with regard to UKBAP / Section 41 habitats and species.

ODPM circular 06/05 (2005) Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System

Provides guidance to Local Authorities on their obligations to biodiversity – particularly in relation to assessing planning applications and ensuring the adequacy of information.

BSI (2013) British Standards Institute BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity — Code of Practice for Planning and Development.

Provides a standard for the biodiversity assessment and development industries and decision makers such as Local Planning Authorities to work to.

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

No works of any kind affecting the site can be carried out without the prior consent

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 All reporting undertaken by Mr Garry Smith who is an experienced ecologist with over 10 years' experience of professional ecological surveys.

Great Crested Newt Licence (2015-7216-CLS-CLS)

Bat Licence Class 2 (2017-28032-CLSCLS)

Past associations & Practical enhancements

- Black Country & Staffordshire Naturalists group 2012 – 2014
- Staffordshire Bat Group 2012 – 2014
- Derbyshire Bat Group 2017 – 2018
- ARG Staffordshire – 2015 – 2016
- ARG Shropshire & Staffordshire 2017 – Current

3.2 The report is based on seven visits to the site between April & June 2023 to assess for any activity from reptiles with the aid of 30 felt refugia sheets which were deployed around suitable locations throughout the site.

3.3 Site visits were carried out during optimal conditions and during a varied range of times each visit.

4.0 Results

Survey 1 – 17th April 2023

Arrival Time	Completion Time	Weather	Temperature	Reptiles	Other Species	Restrictions
10:00	11:00	0% cloud cover / Dry	14 degrees	None	None	None

Survey 2 – 24th April 2023

Arrival Time	Completion Time	Weather	Temperature	Reptiles	Other Species	Restrictions
13:30	14:30	100% cloud cover / Dry	10 degrees	None	None	None

Survey 3 – 28th April 2023

Arrival Time	Completion Time	Weather	Temperature	Reptiles	Other Species	Restrictions
12:00	13:00	50% cloud cover / dry	14 degrees	None	None	None

Survey 4 – 2nd May 2023

Arrival Time	Completion Time	Weather	Temperature	Reptiles	Other Species	Restrictions
09:30	10:30	50% cloud cover - Dry	11 degrees	None	None	None

Survey 5 – 9th May 2023

Arrival Time	Completion Time	Weather	Temperature	Reptiles	Other Species	Restrictions
11:00	12:00	25% cloud cover - Dry	15 degrees	None	None	None

Survey 6 – 22nd May 2023

Arrival Time	Completion Time	Weather	Temperature	Reptiles	Other Species	Restrictions
15:30	16:30	0% cloud cover / Dry	17 degrees	None	None	None

Survey 7 – 5th June 2023

Arrival Time	Completion Time	Weather	Temperature	Reptiles	Other Species	Restrictions
11:00	12:00	50% cloud cover / dry	15 degrees	None	None	None

Site/Refugia sheet plan



Surveyor Details

Elena Vasileva - Elena has supported Chase Ecology since 2022 as a component survey team leader and competently delivers supervision to survey assistance at all levels on site.

She has demonstrated a clear understanding of survey methodology and offers a good knowledge of best practice survey guidelines.

She has been supporting on both residential and commercial sites.

Previously she has supported other ecology organisations with protected species surveys from 2017.

Qualifications

2008 - Environmental protection and sea preservation technologies, Master-engineer
- Technical University-Varna, Varna

2013 - Environmental protection and sea preservation technologies, Bachelor-engineer
- Technical university-Varna, Varna

Volunteer

2012 - Mapping and identification of conservation status of natural habitats and species” Lot Bats (DIR- 59318-1-2) Mapping habitats on the territory of Bulgaria, handling and counting bats to determine the species, using mist nets to catch bats, using bat detectors and recording devices to gather data.

2017 - Waterway surveys for BCT UK and London Bat Group - Performing annual waterway survey for Daubenton’s bat on a transects given from Bat Conservation Trust. Participating in hibernation surveys and other group activities and workshops with London bat group.

5.0 References

- *English Nature , 2001. Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines. Peterborough: English Nature.*
- *Joint Nature Conservancy Council , 2010. Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey. Peterborough: JNCC.*
- *Stace, C., 2010. New Flora of the British Isles. 3rd Edition. Cambridge University Press*
- *CIEEM. (2017). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. CIEEM*
- *Magic database (2017) <http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx> accessed on 08/03/2017.*
- *Google Earth (2017)*

Appendix 1: Protection

This document must be available to all involved in the planned development. All contractors must be aware of the potential of protected & priority species being found on site and care should be taken during works to avoid harm (including during any tree works), if protected species are found then all work should cease and an ecologist should be consulted immediately.

Mitigation

None-identified during the additional emergence survey.

Protection measures to be implemented during development

Current habitats

It is recommended that the site be regularly maintained prior to development/ground works by keeping the grass/scrub cut back to prevent a gain in value to reptiles which may utilise the site at a later date.

Lighting

It is recommended that during the development process the levels of lighting such as security floodlighting and lighting around working platforms if any should be limited to reduce the level of disturbance caused to bats which have been recorded locally.

Disturbance caused by high power lighting can cause disturbance to common commuting and foraging areas currently used by bats.

It is advised that all works should be carried out during the hours of daylight to further reduce the levels of disturbance caused to bats and other nocturnal wildlife in the surrounding environment.

Protection of Wildlife During the development

All excavations if any should be closed where possible during the hours of darkness to prevent entrapment of wildlife such as mammals which may use the site during the hours of darkness for commuting & foraging.

For excavations which require to be left open a shallow slope should be in place to aid escape.

All external pipe's & services must be capped during development/overnight to prevent animals entering/entrapment.

The site should remain in a tidy fashion with waste materials removed daily to prevent any use from wildlife as an artificial refugia.