

**11-15 Western Elms Avenue
Reading
Berkshire**

Note of Slow Worm Mitigation Work

Ref: R621/b

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Linthatch Limited to complete a programme of slow worm mitigation works at 11-15 Western Elms Avenue in Reading, Berkshire. The mitigation was required following a reptile survey completed by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy in April 2013, which recorded slow worms (*Anguis fragilis*) on the site during all seven survey visits with an average of 1.7 individuals per visit indicating a small slow worm population was present on site.

1.1.2 The translocation was commissioned in connection with plans to construct five semi-detached dwellings on the plot granted planning consent on appeal. The mitigation scheme recommended a programme of capture using artificial refugia set on site undertaken in conjunction with the erection of temporary slow worm fencing and a destructive search of likely habitat features to ensure they are not harmed. This report presents the findings of the mitigation work completed.

1.2 Site Description and Context

1.2.1 The survey site covers an area of approximately 0.22 hectares and consists of established residential gardens with the railway line from Reading West Station forming the site's eastern boundary (OS grid reference SU 701 733).

1.2.2 The land surrounding the survey site is a developed residential area with a small amount of open space within the gardens of the adjoining properties. The railway to the east of the site has several mature trees along its length creating a 'green corridor' within the suburban setting. More extensive open space is present at Prospect Park, which has grassland and scattered mature trees just over one kilometre to the south west, whilst the open farmland bordering the River Thames to the north is situated approximately one kilometre from the site.

1.3 Reptile Biology and Habitat Requirements

1.3.1 Reptiles will make use of a wide range of habitats. They require structurally diverse vegetation, including areas of long vegetation to provide cover, and

more open areas to allow for basking. Raised features such as wood piles will often be used by basking common lizards (*Lacerta vivipara*) for example, which bask freely up to temperatures of 18°C. Slow worms (*Anguis fragilis*) typically bask in the open very infrequently and are usually associated with areas of dense vegetation, often being encountered in gardens (Gent & Gibson 2003).

1.4 Legislative Background

- 1.4.1** The reptiles considered most likely to be encountered in garden habitats (slow worm, common lizard and grass snake) are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The Act makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure, possess or sell any of the species.

2 NOTE OF MITIGATION COMPLETED

- 2.1.1** Thirty artificial refugia were set out on the site on the 27th February 2013. The refugia consisted of roofing felt, and corrugated bitumen roofing sheets measuring approximately 1 metre by 0.5 metres.
- 2.1.2** A slow worm exclusion fence was erected to the north of the gardens of Plots 1-5 following the specification set out in the reptile survey report (Reptile Survey (R579a; John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP dated May 2013).
- 2.1.3** Once the exclusion fence was complete, the refugia were checked on 26 occasions (26 days) between the 21st June and 25th July in conditions suitable for recording reptile activity (**Appendix 1**). During this period 12 slow worms were found on the site under refugia mats and subsequently translocated to the designated receptor area. Translocation stopped after ten days of finding no slow worms to ensure sufficient trapping effort had been completed.
- 2.1.4** After completing the period of slow worm capture, areas of cut wood and rubble remaining on the development site that could harbour individual slow worms were taken apart and removed by hand under the supervision of an ecologist on August 13th 2013 and removed from the site.

3 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1.1** The 26 checks of the site and destructive search of wood and rubble piles were considered sufficient capture effort for the small population of slow worms recorded on the site during the survey. Therefore it is considered highly unlikely that the planned ground works will result in the slow worms being harmed subject to the temporary reptile exclusion fence being maintained intact during the course of the work. It is important that the fence is checked regularly throughout the site works and reinstated if damage occurs.
- 3.1.2** The final ground clearance and preparation works at the commencement of development to be carried out by machine should be completed carefully under the supervision of an ecologist. In the unlikely event that slow worms are encountered during the course of the building work, the ecologist should attend to the animal and translocate it to the receptor area.

APPENDIX 1 – ARTIFICIAL REFUGE INSPECTION RAW DATA

Date	Time	Survey findings	Weather conditions
21/06/2013	10.10	Translocated one adult female slow worm	Dry; Sunny with light drizzle in last 5 minutes; 30% cloud cover; 14°C
24/06/2013	9.20	Translocated one adult male and two sub-adult slow worms. Missed one sub-adult slow worm.	Dry; Cloudy; 40% cloud cover; 15 °C
25/06/2013	10.00	No reptiles	Dry; Sunny; 30% cloud cover; 15 °C
26/06/2013	12.40	No reptiles	Dry; 50% cloud cover; 19 °C
27/06/2013	11.55	No reptiles	Dry; Sunny; 40% cloud cover; 19°C
29/06/2013	10.20	Missed one sub-adult slow worm.	Dry; 50% cloud cover; 15°C
30/06/2013	10.45	No reptiles	Dry; Sunny; 40% cloud cover; 11°C
01/07/2013	10.15	Translocated one adult female and one adult male and missed one adult female	Dry; 80% cloud cover; intermittent sunshine with a light breeze; 16 °C
04/07/2013	8.40	Translocated two adult females and one sub-adult slow-worm. Missed one sub-adult slow worm.	Dry; Sunny; 30% cloud cover; 19°C
06/07/2013	10.50	Translocated one adult female and one sub-adult slow-worm	Dry; Sunny; 0% cloud cover; 17°C
08/07/2013	6.55	Missed one adult slow worm.	Dry; Sunny; 10% cloud cover; 18°C
09/07/2013	7.30	No reptiles	Dry; Sunny; 0% cloud cover; 14°C
10/07/2013	8.05	No reptiles	Dry; Sunny; 0% cloud cover; 16°C
11/07/2013	9.35	No reptiles	Dry; Sunny; 10% cloud cover; 17°C
12/07/2013	9.30	No reptiles	Dry; Sunny; 10% cloud cover; 16°C
13/07/2013	8.00	No reptiles	Dry; Light breeze; 0% cloud cover; 17°C
14/07/2013	7.35	Translocated one adult male slow-worm	Dry; No breeze; 0% cloud cover; 17°C
15/07/2013	6.30	No reptiles	Dry; Sunny; No breeze; 0% cloud cover; 15°C
16/07/2013	6.45	No reptiles	Dry; Light breeze; 0% cloud cover; 19°C
17/07/2013	7.00	No reptiles	Dry; Light breeze; 0% cloud cover; 19°C
18/07/2013	6.45	No reptiles	Dry; 0% cloud cover; 19°C
19/07/2013	7.50	No reptiles	Dry; Sunny; 0% cloud cover; 16°C
20/07/2013	7.25	No reptiles	Cloudy; Dry; 90% cloud cover; 16°C

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26/08/2013

22/07/2013	7.30	No reptiles	Dry; Light breeze; 0% cloud cover; 19°C
23/07/2013	7.10	No reptiles	Dry; 30% cloud cover; 17°C
24/07/2013	9.20	No reptiles	Dry; Light breeze; 80% cloud cover; 16°C
25/07/2013	7.50	No reptiles	Dry; Sunny; 40% cloud cover; 16°C