LIZARD
Landscape Design and Ecology

REPTILE SURVEY REPORT

Land at Chesapeke, Reeds Lane, Sayers Common

On behalf of: Antler Homes

Client:	Antler Homes			
Project:	Land at Chesapeke, Reeds Lane, Sayers Common			
Reference:	LLD2818-ECO-REP-003-00-Reptile			
Revision:	**Date:**	**Author**	**Proof**	**Approved**
00	03/08/23	Kofi Bernson BSc	Hayley Swann MSc PgCert	Catherine O'Reilly MCIEEM

Disclaimer:

The information provided within this report has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

This report is intended for the sole use of the Client and their agents in accordance with the agreement under which our services were performed. Unauthorised communication, reproduction or usage of this report by any party other than the aforementioned is prohibited. No liability is accepted by Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology for any use of this report, other than for the purposes for which it was originally prepared and provided. This report does not constitute legal advice. No warranty, express or implied, is made as to the advice in this report or any other service provided by us.

Validity:

This report is valid for 18 months from the date of the site visit. If works have not commenced by this date, an updated site visit should be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist to assess any changes in the habitats present on site, and to inform a review of the conclusions and recommendations made.

LIZARD
Landscape Design and Ecology
The Old Bank, 34 South Street, Tarring, Worthing, West Sussex, BN14 7LH
T. 01903 216033 E. lizard.landscape@btconnect.com W. lizardlandscapeecology.com

Contents

LIZARD
Landscape Design and Ecology
The Old Bank, 34 South Street, Tarring, Worthing, West Sussex, BN14 7LH
T. 01903 216033 E. lizard.landscape@btconnect.com W. lizardlandscapeecology.com

SUMMARY

Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology has been commissioned by Antler Homes to complete an updated reptile population assessment of Land at Chesapeke, Reeds Lane, Sayers Common (*Grid Reference: TQ 26509 18043 – hereafter referred to as 'the site'*).

24 no. artificial reptile refugia *(roofing felt; 1.0 x 0.50 m)* were laid out around the area on the 12th of May 2023. Mats were distributed along each field margin, covering all areas of optimal reptile habitat. Refugia was allowed to bed-in for 14 days prior to survey visits beginning on the 26th of May 2022.

The results of the survey recorded a peak count of 2no. adult grass snake (*Natrix Helvetica*) on site.

Due to the low numbers of reptiles on site a full translocation exercise is not proportionate to the predicted scale of the impacts. To ensure the protection of the reptile species on site, vegetation within the site should be cleared using phased cutting to encourage reptiles to disperse from the construction zone. The implementation of these mitigation measures will ensure that that no reptiles are harmed and the development proceeds in accordance with The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology has been commissioned by Antler Homes to complete an updated reptile presence / absence and population assessment of Land at Chesapeke, Reeds Lane, Sayers Common (*Central Grid Reference: TQ 44090 00406– hereafter referred to as 'the site'*).

1.2 The site was subject to a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal on 6th December 2022 which identified the presence of suitable reptile habitat on site in the form of grassland and tall ruderal vegetation to the field margins, as well as developing habitat within the central field areas. A full reptile survey was therefore recommended to assess the presence / absence of reptiles and the population size or species composition on site.

1.3 This report has been compiled in accordance with current guidelines, including British Standard 42020:2013 Biodiversity. Code of Practice for Planning and Development, 2013 and CIEEM, 2017 and 2018.

Site Information

1.4 The survey area covers c. 1.5 hectares (ha) of grassland fields located towards the south-western edge of Sayers Common. The site is enclosed by mature, mixed-species hedge and treelines and is bordered by Reeds Lane to the north, residential properties to the east and west and farmland to the south.

Surrounding Landscape

1.5 The surrounding landscape is rural, with the nearest large settlement of Burgess Hill located 3.1 (km) to the east, while the properties of Hurstpierpoint are located 1.5km south-east. Surrounding land is dominated by arable fields and grazing land interspersed with small shaws and mature tree / hedge lines.

1.6 The surrounding landscape is highly suitable for all common UK reptile species, however no suitable habitat for sand lizard *Lacerta agilis* or smooth snake *Coronella austriaca* exists in the vicinity.

Development Proposals

1.7 The development proposals include the construction of a c. 33no. new residential dwellings with associated public open space, amenities, gardens and parking.

Scope of the Survey

1.8 The aim of the updated reptile survey has been to:

- Determine whether reptiles exist on site;
- Provide an assessment of the distribution and population of reptiles within the site, if present; and
- Provide a mitigation strategy to ensure reckless killing / injury of reptiles is avoided, such that works would comply with *The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended)* and net gains for reptiles are achieved.

2.0 LEGISLATION

2.1 All species of UK reptile are listed under Schedule 5 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Reptiles are afforded protection under section 9(1) and section 9(5) against intentional killing or injuring, offering for sale, transport for sale or advertisement of any live or dead reptile. All UK reptile species are also recognised as species of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, meaning that local authorities must take into account the conservation of reptiles when assessing a planning application.

2.2 Smooth Snake and Sand Lizard receive additional protection under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) which makes it an offence to kill, injure, capture or disturb them; damage or destroy their habitat; or to possess or trade in them.

Licensing

2.3 If a site is found to support Smooth Snake or Sand Lizard and disturbance or removal or habitat is unavoidable, a licence will be required from Natural England to allow work to proceed.

2.4 A licence must show that there is no satisfactory alternative to the works proposed, and that they are for reasons of health and safety or overriding reasons of public interest. Licenses are only issued once planning permission has been granted.

2.5 There is no formal licensing requirement for sites which support only common UK reptile species (slow worm, common lizard, adder or grass snake *Natrix helvetica*).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Field Survey

3.1.1 24 no. artificial reptile refugia *(roofing felt; 1.0 x 0.50 m)* were laid around the site area on the 12th of May 2023. Mats were distributed along each field margin, and allowed to bed-in for 14 days prior to survey visits beginning on the 26th of May 2023. The locations of artificial reptile refugia are detailed within *Figure No. 01.*

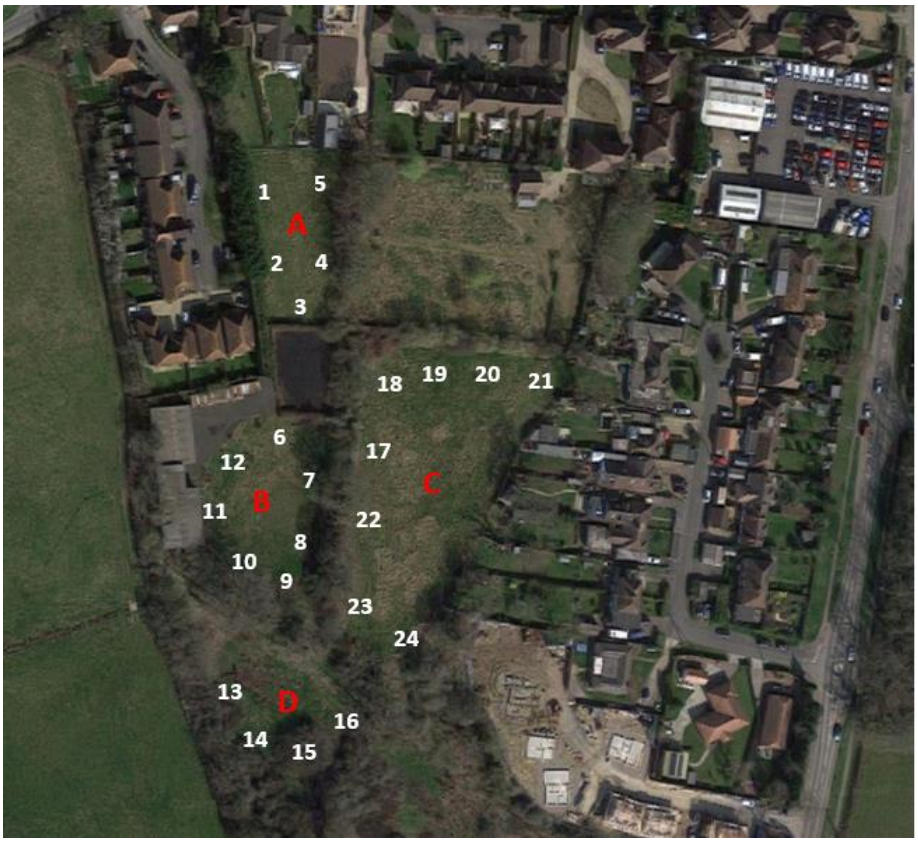

Figure No. 01 – Map detailing reptile refugia location (white) and field number (red)

3.1.2 07 no. site visits were conducted, where the number, species, age and sex of the reptile's present were recorded. Debris piles on-site considered suitable as reptile refugia were checked during the surveys, and repeated walkovers of the site were used to search for active reptiles.

3.1.3 Surveys were undertaken during recommended times *(08:00–11:00 and 16:00-18:30)* with suitable weather conditions for surveying reptiles wherever possible *(guidelines recommend temperatures 9-18^{o}C).*

Table No. 01 – Weather Conditions during Surveys

Survey	*Date of Visit*	*Time*	*Temp.*	*Weather Conditions*
1	26/5/2023	10:00	16ºC	Dry, WF2, 10% cloud
2	30/5/2023	10:30	14ºC	Dry, WF3, 10% cloud
3	07/6/2023	10:00	18ºC	Dry , WF1, 10% cloud
4	12/6/2023	00:00	18ºC	Dry, WF1, 10% cloud
5	28/6/2023	10:00	18ºC	Dry, WF2, 50% cloud
6	21/6/2033	00:00	16ºC	Dry, WF1, 10% cloud
7	30/6/2023	09:30	18ºC	Dry, WF0, 10% cloud

3.2 Population Assessment

3.2.1 Reptile populations were assessed in accordance with population level criteria as stated for the Key Reptile Site Register (*Froglife, 1999*). This system classifies populations of individual reptile species into three population categories assessing the importance of the population. These categories are based on the total number of adult animals observed during individual survey occasions and based upon a survey density of 10/Ha.

Table No. 02 – Population Size Assessment

Species	*Low Population*	*Good Population*	*Exceptional Population*
Slow Worm	<5	5-20	>20
Common Lizard	<5	5-20	>20
Grass Snake	<5	5-10	>10
Adder	<5	5-10	>10

3.3 Details of Surveyors

3.3.1 The reptile survey was undertaken by the following ecologists, all of which have extensive experience undertaking both reptile surveys and reptile translocation:

- Catherine O' Reilly – Principal Ecologist, 9 years' experience
- Hayley Swann – Assistant Ecologist, 2 years' experience
- Angus Cairncross – Assistant Ecologist, 1 year experience
- Sam Hall – Assistant Ecologist, 2 years' experience
- Ben Sear – Assistant Ecologist, 2 years' experience

3.4 Constraints and Limitations

3.4.1 No constraints or limitations which would impact the overall conclusions of this report were encountered.

4.0 RESULTS

Desk Study

4.1 SxBRC returned 45no. records of slow worm, 19no. records of grass snake, and 9no. records of common lizard within 2.0km of the site.

4.2 SxBRC returned records which indicate that the most recent records of reptiles within 2km of the site include grass snake and slow worm in 2017, and common lizard in 2021.

Field Survey

4.3 The results of the survey recorded a peak count of 2no. adult grass snakes. No other reptile species were recorded during the surveys. A summary of each visit is detailed below:

Table No. 03 – Summary of Results (adults only)

Survey	*Date of Visit*	*Results*
1	26/5/2023	1no. grass snake
2	30/5/2023	2no. grass snake
3	7/6/2023	1no. grass snake
4	12/6/2023	2no. grass snake
5	28/6/2023	1no. grass snake
6	21/6/2033	No recordings
7	30/6/2023	1no. grass snake

4.4 The results indicate a low population of grass snake. Reptile distribution was limited across the site, as both individuals were consistently found under the same refugia, no.6 and 18. Both tiles are located centrally within the site, on the northern boundary of field B and C respectively.

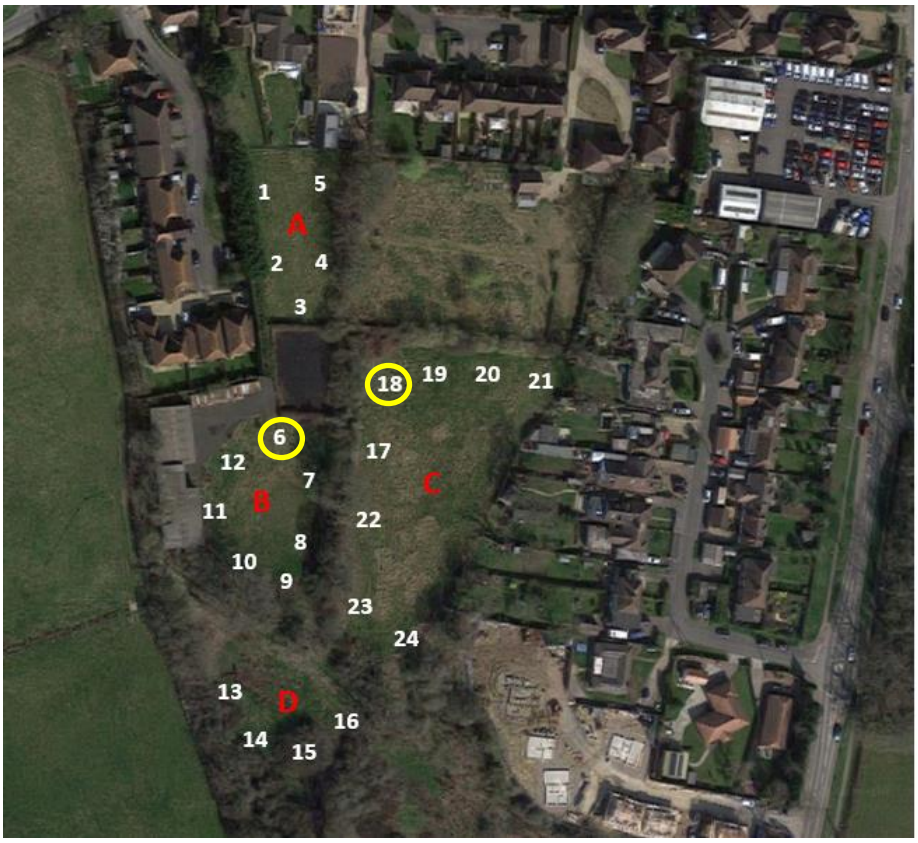

Figure 02 – Location of Reptiles on site (circled)

5.0 EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Impacts

5.1.1 The site supports low number of reptiles of 1no. species and would therefore not be classified as a Key Reptile Site (Froglife, 1999). Without some form of mitigation however there is a risk that development could result in the killing or injuring of reptiles, contrary to The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (*as amended).*

5.2 Mitigation

5.2.1 Reptiles are distributed across a relatively small section of the site. However, the need for large areas of the site to be altered during development means that most of the suitable habitat shall be lost. To ensure that works proceed in accordance with the protection afforded reptiles under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), phased clearance shall be undertaken as follows:

- All grassland on site shall be cleared from north to south in phases, whereby the grass shall first be cut to no lower than 150mm using a cut and collect mower.
- The area shall then be subject to a fingertip search by a SQE, and any reptiles found shall be caught by hand and stored in a lidded bucket or cloth bag prior to their release.
- Reptiles shall be released into areas of retained habitat to the southern section of the site.
- Once the SQE is satisfied that no reptiles are present within the construction area, a final cut shall reduce the vegetation to <50mm.
- The vegetation is to be maintained at this height prior to and during construction to ensure that reptiles do not re-colonise the area.

5.3 Compensation

5.3.1 The retained habitat to the southern portion of the site should be maintained as suitable reptile habitat. The habitat should be formed of tussocky grassland with areas of scattered scrub.

5.3.2 A minimum of 2no. above ground hibernacula should be installed in areas of retained habitat within field D. Log piles a minimum of $1m^3$ should also be installed to provide additional opportunities for shelter and foraging.

5.4 Management

5.4.1 A suitable management plan should be in place to ensure the vegetation level remains <50mm throughout the development once all reptiles are removed to reduce the likelihood of reptiles recolonising the area.

5.4.2 Suitable reptile habitat to the southern section of the site shall be maintained as reptile habitat in perpetuity through an annual cut to 150mm to prevent entire scrub encroachment.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 The site supports a low population of grass snake and does not qualify as a Key Reptile Site. No juveniles were recorded, indicating the absence of any breeding populations.

6.2 The proposals shall require the removal of reptile habitat to facilitate the scheme, with partial retention of some areas of habitat on site. The implementation of the above mitigation measures will ensure that no reptiles are harmed and the development proceeds in accordance with The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

6.3 The scheme should incorporate phased clearance accompanied by fingertip reptile searches by a SQE followed by translocation if required. Such mitigation to encourage the movement of reptiles out of the site will ensure that the scheme will have no significant impact upon the local reptile population.

7.0 REFERENCES

Froglife (1999) *Reptile Survey: an introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation. Froglife Advice Sheet 10*. Froglife: Halesworth

Herpetofauna Groups Of Britain And Ireland (1998) *Evaluating local mitigation/translocation programmes: Maintaining Best Practice and lawful standards.* HGBI advisory notes for Amphibian and Reptile Groups (ARGs). HGBI, c/o Froglife: Halesworth.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (1998) *Herpetofauna Worker's Manual* (Gent, T. and Gibson, S. eds) JNCC: Peterborough