



FREEMEN'S WAY, DEAL, KENT

Reptile Survey Report

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Author	Alexander Watkinson
Client name	Hume Planning
Corylus reference	19017

CORYLUS ECOLOGY

Unit A3 Speldhurst Business Park, Langton Road, Speldhurst, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. TN3 0NR
Telephone: 01892 861868 E-mail: info@corylus-ecology.co.uk

Director: H G Wrigley (née Lucking) BSc. MIEEM, CIEEM

Corylus Ecology Ltd Registered in England No 5005553
Registered Office: Henwood House, Henwood, Ashford Kent TN24 8DH
VAT Reg No. 862 2486 14

CONTENTS

	Page Number
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Methodology	2
3.0 Results	4
4.0 Evaluation	5
5.0 Conclusion	7

References**Tables within text**

Table 1 – Reptile Evaluation Methodology

Figures

Figure 1 – Locations of Heat Traps

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Full Reptile Survey Results

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Corylus Ecology has undertaken a suite of reptile presence/likely absence surveys of Land adjacent to Freeman's Way, Deal, Kent hereinafter referred to as 'the Site'. The proposals for the Site involve the construction of c.100 dwellings along with associated landscaping, including a sports pitch within the eastern half of the Site. Access will be from the existing access point to Freeman's Way to the south-west.

1.2 The surveys were recommended after Corylus Ecology undertook a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the Site in January 2019. The survey identified suitable habitat for reptiles throughout the margins of the Site: the open grass areas provide opportunities for basking and foraging, whilst the longer vegetation are suitable for foraging and shelter.

Scope of Survey

1.3 The aims of the reptile presence/likely absence survey were as follows:

- Determine the presence/likely absence of reptiles;
- Evaluate the importance of any reptile population within the Site; and
- Suggest appropriate mitigation and compensation for reptiles where necessary.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Reptile presence/likely absence survey

- 2.1.1 For a presence/likely absence reptile survey, Froglife recommend that a minimum of seven survey visits are undertaken in favourable weather conditions. To achieve a satisfactory degree of confidence in a negative result, the survey should be spread over a minimum of 30 days.
- 2.2.2 Reptile surveys can be undertaken between the months of March and October and the most profitable months for surveying tend to be April, May and September (Froglife, 1999). The Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland (HGBI) guidance suggests that optimum conditions are temperatures between 9°C and 18°C, with an absence of wind and rain and the best time of day is between 8.30am and 11.00am and between 4.00pm and 6.30pm, depending on the conditions. Peak counts of reptiles can often occur outside those times mentioned above, in particular immediately after rain. The surveys were therefore timed to utilise the best available weather conditions.
- 2.2.3 The standard survey guidance for reptiles (Froglife, 1999) recommends ten heat traps per hectare. For this survey, a total of 45 heat traps were placed throughout the Site in areas considered suitable for reptiles (see Figure 1). The suitable habitat within the Site is approximately 1ha so this achieved a density of greater than ten per ha following guidance. Heat traps consisted of heavy gauge green mineral roofing felt cut into approximately 0.7m x 1m rectangles which were placed following linear margins and orientated to receive the maximum amount of sunshine.
- 2.2.4 Seven survey visits were undertaken from 3rd May to 24th June 2019 in weather conditions suitable for reptiles; the time and conditions of each visit were recorded.

Reptile Evaluation Methodology

- 2.2.5 Froglife have established criteria for establishing Key Reptile Sites and the criteria is also used in the designation process for Local Wildlife Sites. The scoring system is based upon the maximum number of adult animals: that is all animals recorded excluding hatchlings and juveniles, seen under artificial refugia (placed at a density of a minimum of 10 per hectare) or by general observation by one person, in one day.

Table 1 – Evaluation of Reptile Population Status

Species	Low Population Score 1	Good Population Score 2	Exceptional Population Score 3
Adder	<5	5-10	>10
Grass Snake	<5	5-10	>10
Common Lizard	<5	5-20	>20
Slow Worm	<5	5-20	>20

2.2.6 A Key Reptile Site is identified when a site meets any of the following thresholds:

- Supports three or more reptile species; or
- Supports two snake species; or
- Supports an exceptional population of any one species; or
- Supports an assemblage of species scoring ≥ 4 points using the above system; or,
- Supports a population of adder scoring > 1 .

2.2.7 Any other species noted under the refugia were also recorded, principally any amphibian species in terrestrial phase.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Reptile presence / likely absence survey

- 3.1.1 No reptiles were recorded during any of the seven survey visits. There were also no amphibians or small mammals recorded under the refugia. Appendix 1 shows the full results including weather conditions.

4.0 EVALUATION

4.1 Reptile presence / likely absence survey

4.1.1 No reptiles were recorded during any of the survey visits in 2019.

4.1.2 No further action is required in regard to reptiles but the tall vegetation at the Site margins should be cleared outside the breeding bird season, which is from March to September. If this falls outside of planned schedules, the vegetation should be checked for active nests by a suitably experienced ecologist. If any active nests are found, works in the vicinity of the nest(s) will have to cease until the eggs have hatched and the chicks have fledged.

4.2.1 Recommendations in accordance with NPPF

4.2.1 The following recommendations (made in the PEA Report in March 2019) should still be included in the scheme to maintain and enhance biodiversity:

- Enhancing the hedgerows forming the boundary of the Site by planting up the hedgerow gaps with native species and planting species-rich hedgerows through the interior of the development area, such as alongside roads, between gardens and around garage/refuse areas should be made. These should be species-rich and include heavily flowering and fruiting native species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, bullace, hornbeam, hazel, spindle, field maple, holly and guelder rose, alongside honeysuckle and dog-rose to thicken the vegetation.
- Maintaining a grassy headland/margin of at least 1.5m at the base of the boundary hedgerows to allow landscape connectivity for small mammals including hedgehogs. Any closeboard fencing installed would need to be fitted with minimum 12cm square gaps to allow continued movement of hedgehogs through the landscape.
- Generous planting of native trees including fruit trees which will benefit people and wildlife.
- Provision of four log piles to provide a refuge for small mammals and increase invertebrate diversity.
- To provide roosting space for birds, it is recommended that four colonial house sparrow boxes are incorporated into the eastern eaves of the proposed houses. Ready-made wooden or woodcrete (*Schwegler*) boxes are widely available. Alternatively, nesting spaces for sparrows can be incorporated into the soffits when the house is being constructed with an entrance formed by cutting away a 32mm slot in the back of the soffit board against the external wall.
- Generous native and nectar-rich planting should be incorporated into the development. Climbing plants can be included on the proposed buildings and fences to soften the visual impact of a new development whilst enhancing biodiversity by attracting invertebrates, such as moths, and providing bird nesting opportunities. Species such as honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, ivy *Hedera helix*, clematis *Clematis* spp, jasmine *Jasminum* spp., and single-flowered roses *Rosa* spp. are all suitable.

- It is recommended that a range of nectar-rich plants are considered for any landscape planting and flowering plants should be made available for as long as possible through the year, by planting a combination of plants which flower during spring, summer and autumn. This would benefit local wildlife by providing more nest building opportunities and food sources for small mammals, birds and invertebrates. Species such as lavenders, heathers and honeysuckles are good nectar sources for bumblebees and other insects, and honeysuckle can also be used by birds to forage and nest in.
- If the mature trees on the northern and southern boundaries of the Site are within the same ownership, bird boxes should be mounted on them to provide additional opportunities for woodland birds. For example, the CedarPlus OpenFront Wooden Flycatcher Box is an open-fronted nest box suitable for spotted flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*. Spotted flycatchers are summer migrants from South Africa and are often found in woodland with open glades where they catch insects on the wing. The boxes should be positioned between 2 – 4m above ground level on trees with a good vantage point. The Schwegler 2B Tree Creeper Nest Box with Predator Protection. Tree creepers *Certhia familiaris* prefer to build their nest in contact with the trunks of trees. For this reason, the above box is open at the rear (the tree side) to encourage nesting and to allow the birds to search amongst the bark cracks for prey.
- Nest boxes should be incorporated into the proposed new dwellings for threatened bird species such as house sparrow *Passer domesticus*. House sparrow is on the BTO's Birds of Conservation Concern 'Red List'. Ready-made wooden or woodcrete colonial boxes are widely available, such as the Schwegler 1SP Sparrow Terrace or similar. They should be installed during the construction process in groups beneath the eaves of the buildings and they should be placed out of direct sunlight, preferably on the eastern elevations and at least 3m above ground level. They should not be placed directly above any windows or doors. Alternatively, nesting spaces for house sparrows can be incorporated into the soffits by cutting away a 32mm slot in the back of the soffit board against the external wall. Sparrows are colonial, so three of these slots should be created in four separate locations.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 A reptile presence/likely absence survey has been undertaken of land at Land adjacent to Freeman's Way, Deal, Kent in 2019.
- 5.2 No reptiles were recorded during the survey and there are no further recommendations regarding the clearance of the Site in relation to reptiles. However, the denser vegetation at the Site boundaries should be cleared outside of the bird breeding period.
- 5.3 The recommendations for enhancing biodiversity in accordance with NPPF should be followed. These include native planting of hedgerows, planting of climbing plants and nectar-rich plants and the provision of bird boxes.

REFERENCES

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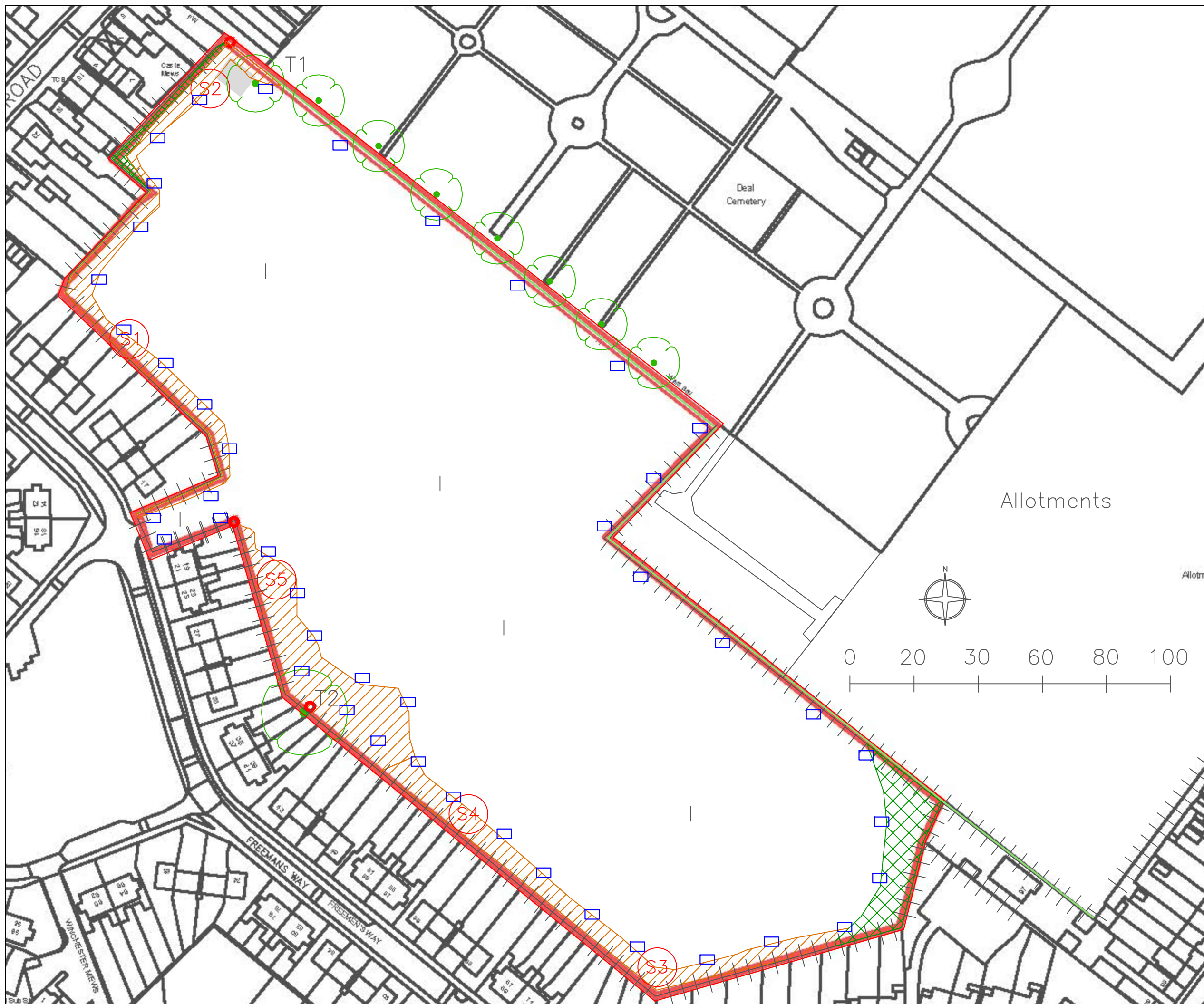
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Key

- Site Survey Area
- Reptile Heat Trap
- Tree
- Dense Scrub
- Improved Grassland
- Tall Ruderal
- Spoil
- Species Poor Hedge
- Fence
- Wall
- Building
- Hard Standing

revision	description	date	checked by

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CORYLUS ECOLOGY

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 19017 Freeman's Way, Deal

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 Reptile Survey Plan

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