Elite, Hornash Lane, Shadoxhurst, Kent

Reptile Survey

10th August 2018 / Ref No 2017/04/22

Client: Mr and Mrs Ransley

Prepared by Katia Bresso CEnv MCIEEM
Trading as 'KB Ecology Ltd' (Reg 7595382)
9 Barleyfields,
Weavering, Maidstone
ME145SW Kent
Tel: 07810 412 773
Email: katia.bresso@kbecology.co.uk

Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Scheme

Following a 'Preliminary Ecological Appraisal' which identified the risk of reptiles being present, KB Ecology Ltd has been commissioned to undertake a reptile survey with regards to a proposed development at Elite, Hornash Lane, Shadoxhurst, Kent, in support of a planning application for the development of the site.

1.2 Survey Objectives

The purpose of the survey was to assess the likely impact of the scheme on reptiles, and to assist in demonstrating compliance with wildlife legislation and planning policy objectives.

The key objectives of this survey were to:

- Confirm the presence / likely absence of reptile species within suitable terrestrial habitat.
- Provide recommendations for necessary mitigation work.

1.3 Limitations

This report records the potential for flora and fauna evident on the day of the site visit. It does not record any flora or fauna that may appear at other times of the year and, as such, were not evident at the time of visit.

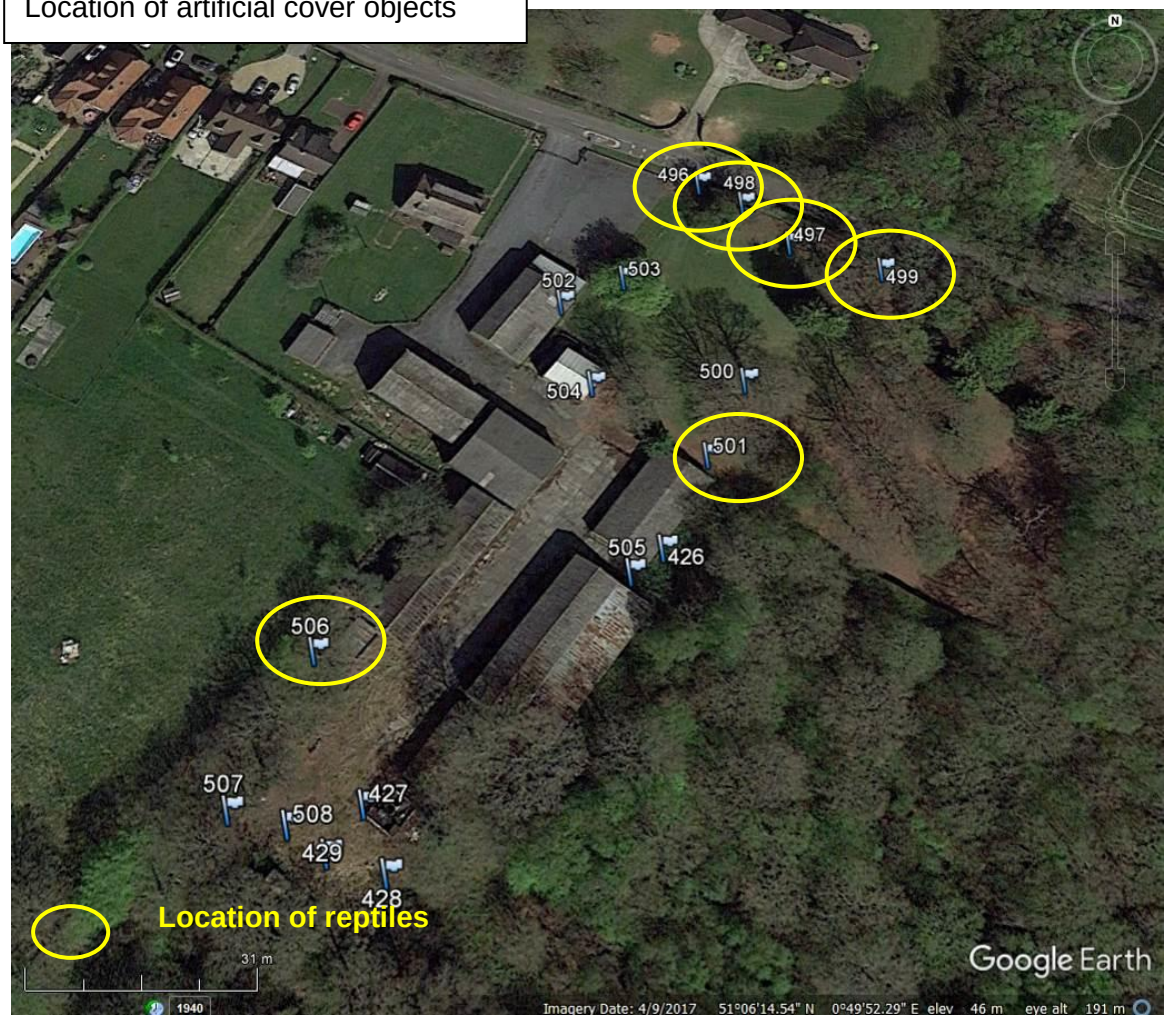
The findings of this report represent the professional opinion of a qualified ecologist and do not constitute professional legal advice. The client may wish to seek professional legal interpretation of the relevant wildlife legislation cited in this document.

2 Methodology

Detailed reptile surveys were undertaken using artificial refuges, in accordance with best practice guidelines (Froglife, 1999). A total of 17 artificial cover objects were installed on 23rd May 2018. They were then checked on seven separate occasions in June and July 2018. Numbers of each reptile species were recorded, as well as the air temperature. Naturally occurring refuges were also checked for reptiles, and any additional incidental sightings were also recorded.

Surveys were only undertaken during suitable weather, they were not carried out during wind or rain. They were undertaken by Katia Bresso CEnv MCIEEM, a qualified professional consultant ecologist with over 15 years of experience, and Megan Austin.

Location of artificial cover objects



3 Results

The survey recorded slow worms *Anguis fragilis*. Table 1 below gives the details of the survey.

Table 1: Results and weather conditions for each survey visit

Survey	Date	Time	Average Air Temp. deg C:	Cloud cover, %	Wind	Slow worms		Other notes
						adults	juveniles	
1	06.06.2018	10:00	12	100	light			No animals
2	13.06.2018	17:00	17	70	v.light	1		506
3	15.06.2018	9:45	16	10	none	1	1	496, 498
4	19.06.2018	16:00	18	90	light	2	1	506, 497
5	28.06.2018	18:30	17	10	light	2	2	496, 506, 501
6	12.07.2018	8:20	16	100	none			No animals
7	20.07.2018	8:20	17	10	v.light		2	506, 499

4 Legislation

All British native reptiles are listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA). This legislation prohibits to:

- Intentionally or deliberately capture, kill or injure a common reptile species (which includes slow worms).
- Sell, barter, exchange, transport or offer for sale reptiles or any part of them.

The Abandonment of Animals Act 1960 (as amended) may also apply when translocation of reptiles are proposed as part of a mitigation strategy. As such, care must be taken to ensure that any receptor sites are suitable for the species in terms of habitat and carrying capacity in order that minimal stress and suffering is imposed upon the reptiles concerned.

5 Recommendations

The proposal will entail the loss of a small amount of reptile habitat. As the development will not cover the whole land, it will be possible to retain the population on site, by enhancing the areas of land outside the works footprint.

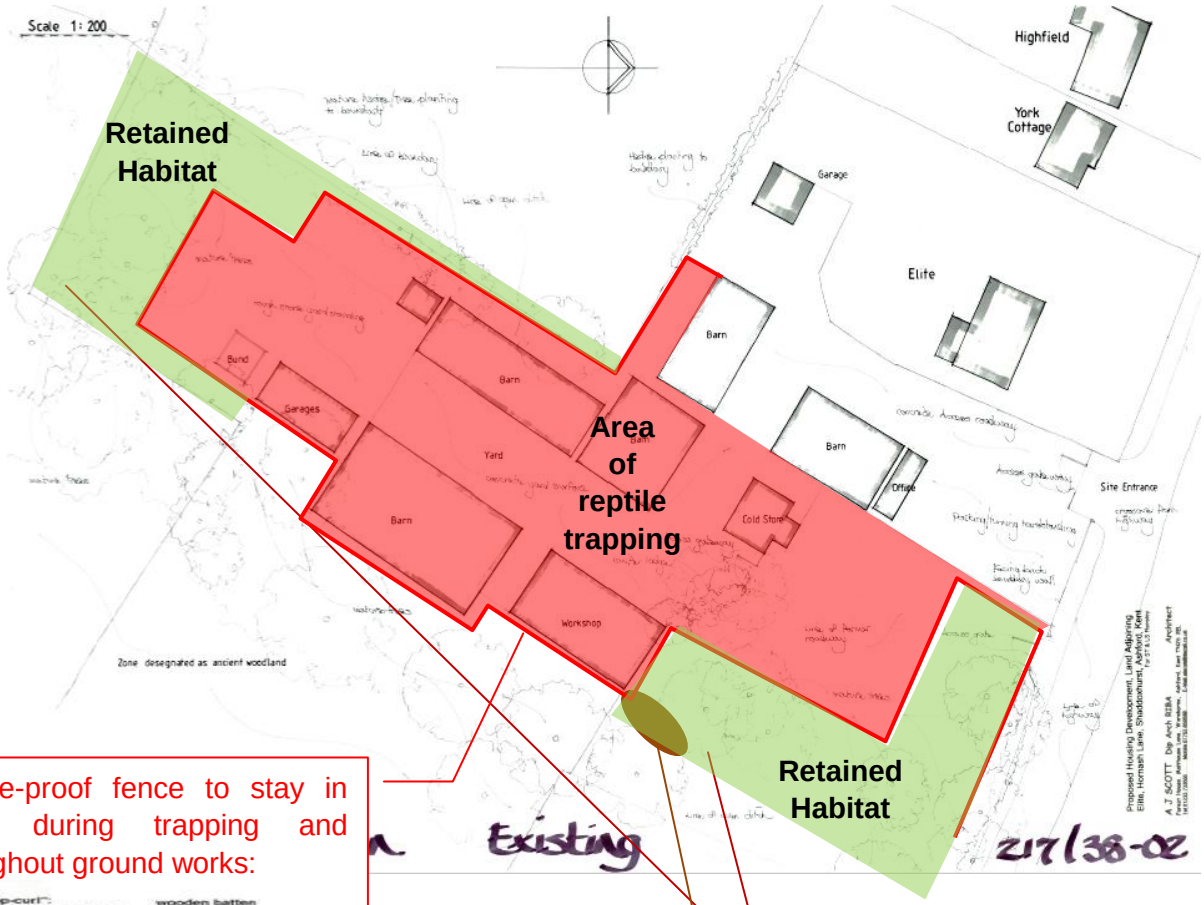
Prior to any ground works starting, a translocation exercise should take place, entailing the erection of reptile-proof fence around all area of the site where ground works will take place, following some vegetation management (outside of the bird nesting season as birds are expected to be nesting in the bramble scrub and trees), the installation of refuges and the trapping of animals for a number of sessions[1] between March and October, during suitable weather conditions (i.e. cool weather with no heavy rain but sunny intervals between showers, and ambient air temperatures between 10-20^{o}C).

Prior to any animal trapping taking place, the retained areas will be enhanced with the installation of one hibernaculum and two brash/log piles[2].

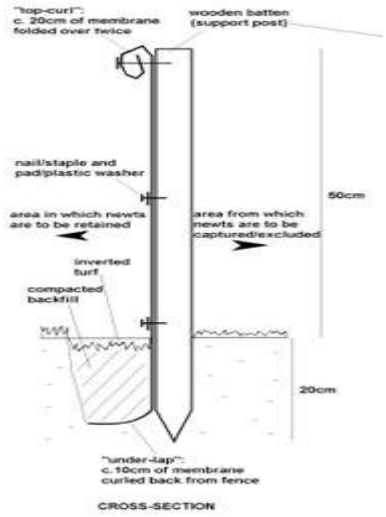
[1] minimum of 20 trapping sessions, ceasing trapping after five clear days with no trapping during suitable weather conditions)

[2] Brash and log piles will be at least one meter high and two metres in diameter. They will comprise a mix of large and small diameter material. The centre of the pile will be compacted, but the outer part will be un-compacted. They will be located in sunny positions. They will be topped up periodically (for example every five years) with further material.

Figure 1: Reptile Mitigation Strategy



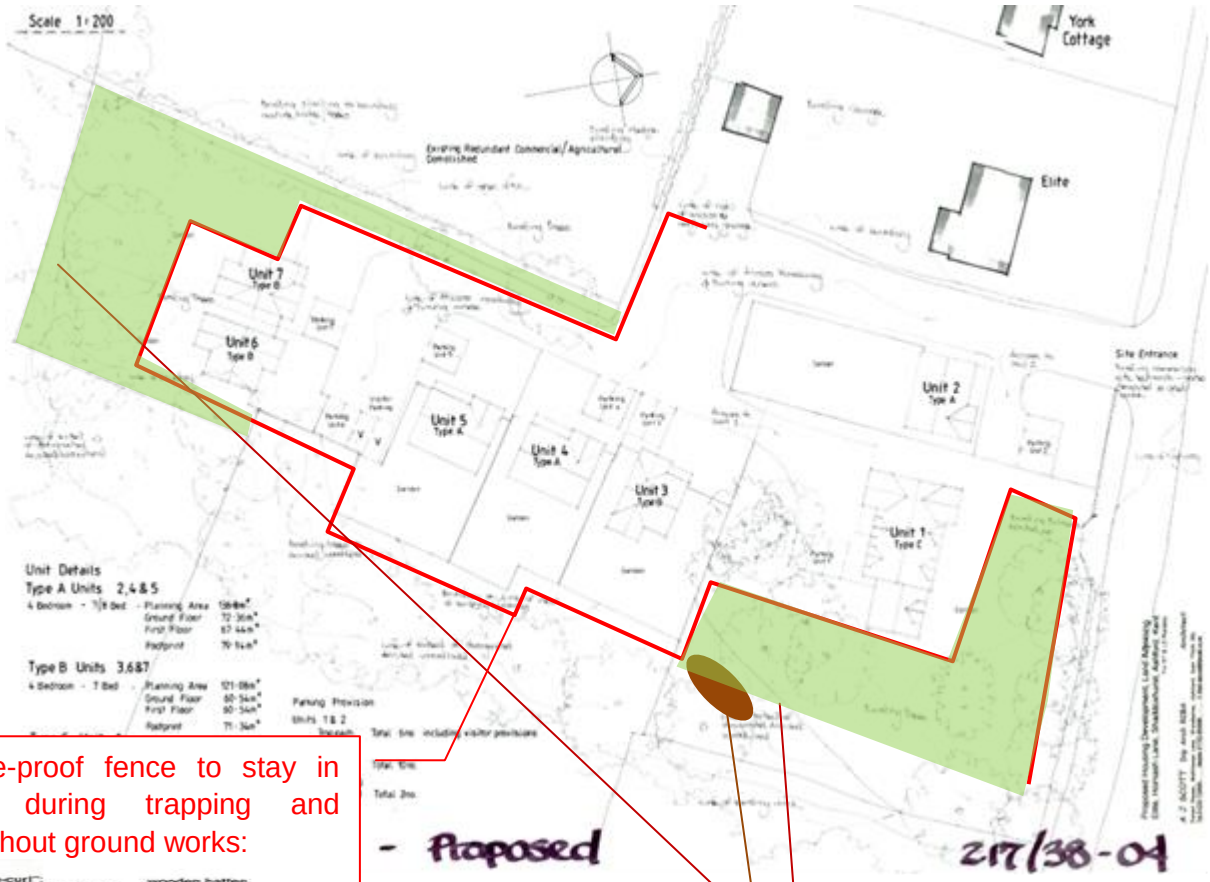
Reptile-proof fence to stay in place during trapping and throughout ground works:



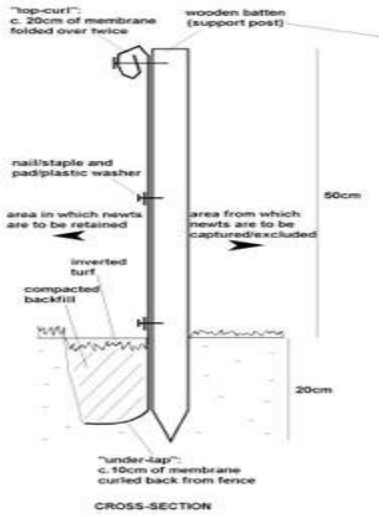
In areas of hard standing, the fence shall be held in place using tight fitted sand bags

Brash and log piles

hibernaculum



Reptile-proof fence to stay in place during trapping and throughout ground works:



In areas of hard standing, the fence shall be held in place using tight fitted sand bags

Brash and log piles

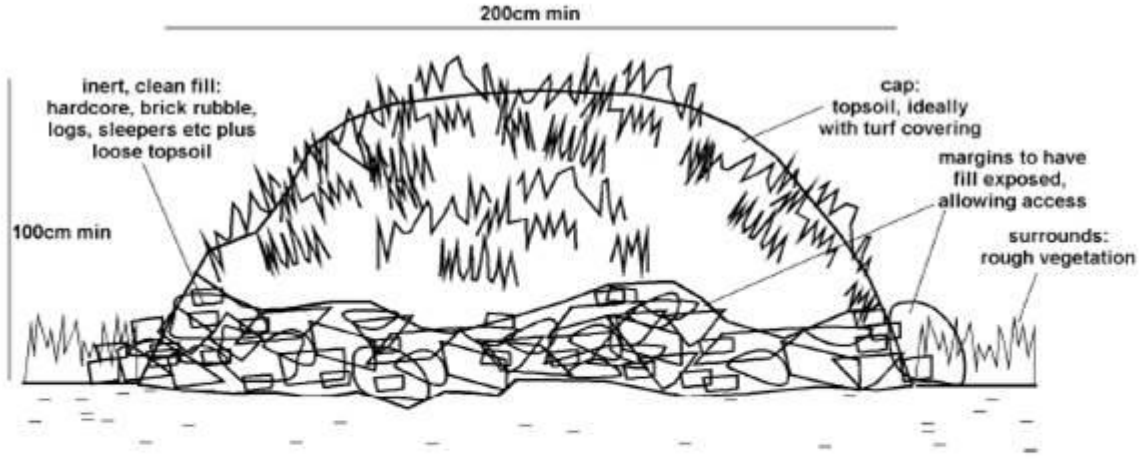
hibernaculum

Hibernaculum specification

Large piles of rubble, rock, log piles and earth banks (with plenty of mammal burrows and ground fissures present) make good hibernation and refuge sites. These features may be located in sheltered areas which are neither too dry nor prone to winter flooding or freezing (eg in frost hollows). On free-draining soils, these may be located below ground level by excavating a pit or trench, then infilling with a mixture of topsoil and rubble, sleepers, logs, etc. Some of the largest great crested newt populations in Britain occur within old brickworks sites, which usually provide a good range of these type of habitats. For ideas on the design and construction of suitable hibernacula, see Figure 3: Suggested hibernaculum design. Smaller refuges for daytime shelter may also be provided, though on sites which will be heavily used by the public these may not be appropriate unless they are well secured. Great crested newts are known to spend a considerable proportion of their terrestrial phase either underground or just above ground under refuge sites, so it is important that this aspect is addressed in mitigation plans.

Figure 3: Suggested hibernaculum design

This design mimics artificial and natural conditions in which great crested newts have frequently been found over-wintering. Dimensions should not be below 2m length x 1m width x 1m height. The illustrated design would be suitable for locating on an impermeable substrate. On free-draining substrates, the design is largely similar but the bulk of the fill is sited in an excavated depression in the ground. Hibernacula should ideally be positioned across a site, both close to and distant from breeding ponds, always in suitable terrestrial habitat and above the flood-line



Translocation of newts into terrestrial habitats should be delayed where time is required for maturation from the point of creation or restoration; this may be a year or more depending on soils, vegetation