



**wild
scapes**

**Blackhouse Farm - Thornton
Curtis (PA/2023/1692)**

Species

Protection Plan

Table of Contents

Introduction 3

Site Summary 3

Planning Requirements 4

Great Crested Newts 5

Introduction 5

Pre-Construction Survey 5

General Mitigation Measures 6

Birds 8

Introduction 8

Pre-Construction Survey 8

General Mitigation Measures 9

Badgers 10

Introduction 10

Preconstruction Survey 10

General Mitigation Measures 11

Works in Proximity to an Active Sett 11

Hedgehogs 13

Introduction 13

Pre-Construction Survey 13

General Mitigation Measures 14

Reptiles 15

Introduction 15

Pre-Construction Survey 15

General Mitigation Measures 16

Introduction

Wildscapes CIC were commissioned by Natural England as of September 2019 to act as the Habitat Delivery Body (HDB) for the District Level Licensing Scheme (DLL) across several districts within the Yorkshire & Humberside region including North Lincolnshire. The selected HDB is responsible for the delivery of the project through all stages of planning, construction and pond management including producing associated Species Protection Plans (SPPs) where required.

The surveys and protection plans are required to ensure that legislative requirements pertaining to protected species are upheld during construction in order to conserve biodiversity in accordance with saved policy LC5 of the North Lincolnshire Local Plan and policy CS17 of the North Lincolnshire Core Strategy.

This SPP outlines the key legislation, mitigation measures, and emergency procedures that should be followed to protect protected species during construction, and has been produced in accordance with NE guidance. The SPP is designed to give on-site guidance as to the actions that should be taken to avoid impacting on any protected species, and what to do if a protected species should be unexpectedly encountered. The SPP will remain a live document, and an up-to-date copy will be kept on site.

Site Summary

The proposed site lays within the grounds of Blackhouse Farm, located off Station Road, Thornton Curtis, ULCEBY, DN39 6XF (at the grid reference, TA 10271 18026). The site area compromises of a mixture of grassland and broadleaf deciduous woodland (planted approx. 2010) with a pre-existing pond of around 100m² in its late successional stages to the south of the site. The site borders consist of mature hedgerows on the North, East and Southern sides.

The proposed development is to construct a wildlife freshwater pond (grid reference, TA 10271 18026). The pond will be constructed in accordance with the specification provided by Natural England, which is as follows;

- Surface area between 100m² and 1000m² – On this site, the pond construction will be constructed at approximately 150m²;
- Maximum central depth of 1m to 3.5m; - The pond will have an approximate max depth point of 1-1.5m.
- Variable bank gradients of 1:10, or ideally 1:20
- A range of depths across the pond;
- Located in areas of good quality terrestrial habitat;
- Terrestrial buffer zone of *at least* 3m around each pond (to be left untouched);
- Ponds constructed in clusters, rather than in isolation;
- Absence of shading on the south side;
- Good water quality, with negligible run-off from agriculture and roads.

The pond selected for restoration fits within the eligibility guidelines of the DLL which is as follows;

- NOT currently be suitable to support GCN;

- Be either overgrown with scrub and trees, or;
- Be entirely dominated by plants such as reedmace *Typha latifolia* and common reed *Phragmites australis* with no or minimal water;
- Have a base of thick black anaerobic sediment covered by no or minimal water;
- Be located close to existing suitable terrestrial habitat;
- NOT be fed by pipes and ditches that drain arable fields;
- NOT support highly valuable trees or protected/ priority habitats or species;
- NOT support invasive non-native species.

Planning Requirements

The planning notice for the application PA/2023/1692 states;

“No development shall take place until a Species Protection Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plan shall include details of measures to avoid harm nesting birds, great crested newts, reptiles, badgers and hedgehogs during demolition, vegetation clearance and construction works. All site clearance and pond creation work shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Species Protection Plan.”

This SPP includes the results of the pre-construction surveys for the above-mentioned species and the required protection measures for protected species, and has been produced to meet the requirements of conditions LC5 and CS17 of the consent, and subsequently ensure that the project is compliant with its planning permission.

Great Crested Newts

Introduction

Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are fully protected under UK and European legislation via the Bern Convention 1979: Appendix II Strictly Protected Fauna Species, The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as Amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Regs). These laws make it an offence to do the following to great crested newts through all stages of their life cycle:

- Intentionally kill, injure, capture or take great crested newts.
- Deliberately take or destroy eggs of great crested newts.
- Possess or control alive or dead great crested newt or any part or thing derived from them.
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy, or obstruct access to, any structure or place which great crested newts use for shelter or protection.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb great crested newts while occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.
- Sell, offer or expose for sale, or possess or transport for the purpose of sale, any live or dead great crested newt or any part or thing derived from them. This applies to all stages in their life cycle.
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place.
- Keep, or transport, or exchange great crested newts.

Wildscapes CIC are active project license holders in relation to the District Level Licensing Scheme (ref. WML-OR66). This license is issued under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (regulations 55(2)e, 55(9), 57). Regarding the purposes specified in this licence there is no satisfactory alternative and that the actions authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range, including to:

- Deliberately disturb;
- Deliberately capture/take;
- Transport great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*); and to
- Damage or destroy the resting places in which they are found, but not during hibernation.

These actions are permitted for the purposes of “Imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment.”

This license is subject to conditions which will be listed below. Further information and copies of this license will be granted on request.

Pre-Construction Surveys

Due to the conditions of the license granted to Wildscapes CIC in relation to the District Level Licensing scheme, pre-construction field surveys for Great Crested Newts (GCN) do not form part of our species protection plans, instead unique general and specific mitigation measures

during all construction phases of this project apply instead. This is due to the primary strategic opportunity areas (SOA's), our targeted areas for pond construction (which are provided to respective HDB's from Natural England), lying within areas of existing GCN populations and areas of suitable GCN habitat.

General Mitigation Measures

All works must be undertaken using best practice methodology to ensure minimal risk to great crested newts. Mitigation must be in line with the requirements set out in the most up to date edition of the 'Great crested newt Mitigation Guidelines' and persons acting under this licence must abide by the advice.

Compensation Project Sites (proposed scheme work areas) shall be located within Strategic Opportunity Areas ('SOAs') and within SOAs individual sites shall be selected where there is least likelihood of disturbing, damaging or destroying suitable great crested newt habitat or potential hibernacula. Should a great crested newt be found during the vegetation clearance stage, the pond site shall be moved a minimal viable distance to avoid disturbance to the individual wherever possible. Whilst the SOAs are designed such that Compensation Projects are inherently likely to occur in suitable habitat, effort must be made to reduce the risk of damaging and / or destroying high suitability habitats.

Proposed scheme work area selection will be mindful of surrounding habitats and site access by contractors, vehicles and machinery. Access to and from the proposed scheme work area will make all reasonable efforts to avoid damaging or destroying suitable great crested newt habitats.

Prior to vegetation clearance, detailed inspection by hand searches (see definitions below) of the habitats for great crested newts must be undertaken by appropriately trained and skilled Authorised Persons or Accredited Agents or Assistants (under direct supervision) during daylight hours. Where works are delayed, a second search immediately prior to works, is required.

Vegetation clearance using hand tools or mini excavator only is permitted:

- within the immediate vicinity of the proposed pond; and
- to facilitate restoration of a pond;
- to facilitate construction of fencing (if required) around the pond; or
- to facilitate access to the pond / site of the proposed pond by vehicular machinery.

Vegetation must first be removed to no shorter than 15cm above ground to check for newts before being completely removed. Any potential hibernacula such as tree roots or rubble piles must be left in situ wherever possible. Where this is not possible potential hibernacula must be recreated within a maximum of 5m of where they were found within the same land ownership.

Any vegetation cleared to facilitate works outlined above shall be left on site or chipped on site by machines working from the running rails. Chipped material shall be spread evenly in remaining vegetated areas, where possible. The construction of new hibernacula or refugia piles is also permissible.

Vegetation clearance, must not take place when weather conditions indicate great crested newts are likely to be in a state of torpor or hibernating.

Vegetation clearance, must not take place when weather conditions are extreme, including extreme heat and drought, when great crested newts are likely to be sheltering.

Should a great crested newt be found during any of the licensed works, and disturbance to the individual is unavoidable, it shall be captured by hand and moved to a safe place, within 20m of where it was located, into suitable terrestrial habitat on land in the same ownership by a suitably trained and skilled Authorised Person or Accredited Agent or a directly supervised Assistant. A record of where this was captured and moved to must be kept and submitted to Natural England.

Where works carried out outside the active season (March-October) and a great crested newt is uncovered which is in torpor or hibernating, Best Practice methodology must be followed and the animal must be left undisturbed, and its place of shelter returned to its original condition, prior to the commencement of works in that area. Only where this is not possible, shall the great crested newt be removed with minimal handling and placed in a suitable, safe, habitat to enable continued hibernation/torpor. Authorised Persons must consult with Natural England before deciding whether it is safe to continue with the works without breaching the conditions of this licence.

For the purposes of this licence the following licensed methods are defined as:

- A “hand search” is the dismantling of refuges such as debris piles by hand and the manual searching through of vegetation/undergrowth by hand. Clearance of vegetation by hand and using hand tools where appropriate may be necessary to enable a thorough hand search of an area, however vegetation must only be reduced to no less than 150mm in advance of a hand search taking place where required.
- A “destructive search” is the careful, controlled stripping of areas likely to harbour newts, directly supervised by an Authorised Person or Accredited Agent but should only be used after a thorough hand search has been undertaken.
- A “Compensation Project” is defined as a pond creation or pond restoration project undertaken by the Licensee as part of the District Level Licensing scheme. Each Compensation Project is conducted to mitigate for development impacts elsewhere in strategy area.
- The “Appointed Person” is an employee of the Licensee who is nominated by the Licensee to act as a single point of contact for Natural England with regard to this licence. The Appointed Person is expected to oversee use of the licence, including authorising employees and Accredited Agents to act under the licence, training, record keeping and compliance.
- An “Authorised Person” is an employee of the Licensee who has received appropriate training and is competent to undertake activities permitted by the licence and who is authorised to act under the licence by the Appointed Person.
- An “Accredited Agent” is a suitably trained and experienced person (e.g., contractor) who is able to carry out work under the licence without the personal supervision of an Authorised Person. To carry out work they must be in possession of a letter signed by the Appointed Person authorising them by name as an Accredited Agent for the purposes of the licence. Accredited Agents shall carry a copy of the said letter when acting under the licence and shall produce it to any police or Natural England officer on request. An Accredited Agent may supervise the work of an Unaccredited Contractor.
- An “Assistant” is a person assisting an Authorised Person or Accredited Agent. Assistants are only authorised to act under this licence whilst they are under the direct supervision of either an Authorised Person or Accredited Agent.

Birds

Introduction

All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Additional protection is afforded to a number of birds listed on Schedule 1 of the Act. Operations likely to injure or kill any wild bird or damage its nest and operations likely to disturb a Schedule 1 species must be avoided. There are no exceptions and no licence can be granted which allows this to occur. It is an offence to:

- kill or injure any wild bird;
- capture or keep (alive or dead) any wild bird;
- destroy or take the egg of any wild bird;
- sell or advertise for sale any wild bird or its eggs;
- destroy, damage, interfere with, take or obstruct the use of the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.

This legislation means that birds are fully protected in England, and that any planned activity, which may affect them, requires prior consultation with the appropriate statutory nature conservation organisation (Natural England). In most cases you should be able to avoid harming wild birds by:

- timing your work to avoid the breeding season
- using a range of methods that deter but don't harm them.

Pre-Construction Surveys

Desktop Surveys

To accurately assess the potential ecological impacts of the scheme, a desktop study has been undertaken to identify the presence of sensitive ecological receptors at the site and within the surrounding area to help inform on the correct approaches for subsequent habitat assessments and field surveys regarding the species present in this report. Data has been obtained from a range of information sources including:

- Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC).
- National Biodiversity Network (NBN); and
- Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre (LERC).

Results

Due to an absence of schedule 1 protected species records obtained through the baseline surveys underpinning the desktop surveys, no further field surveys were undertaken for these species.

Field Surveys

In advance of construction at any location where there is the potential for protected birds to be present, it is essential that:

- A breeding bird survey must be carried out by suitably experienced ecologists/ornithologists at an appropriate time of year and using methods agreed with Natural England to inform construction and dismantling (e.g., the micro-siting and dismantling of access tracks) in locations where breeding birds could be affected.
- A pre-construction/dismantling survey for birds is completed on a rolling programme (maximum of 12 months prior to start of proposed works in a particular area) to ensure availability of up-to-date information.
- The findings of the pre-construction/dismantling bird surveys must be submitted to Natural England and the relevant councils.
- Relevant plans and documentation will be updated with new and amended information as it is produced, with changes communicated to appropriate staff as required.
- A review must be undertaken to identify whether project works are likely to affect birds. If necessary, works should be modified to reduce the impact on protected bird species.
- The site working methods and detailed mitigation will be amended as necessary to take account of the findings of the surveys and legal and best practice requirements.

For other breeding bird species, not legally protected from disturbance under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, appropriate buffers around breeding sites shall be applied to prevent nest abandonment or failure. The exact nature of buffer requirements shall be determined with the ECoW taking into account the timing, local conditions and species involved.

Results

Due to the construction works to be scheduled to take place between December 2023 – March 2024, outside of bird breeding season, and compromising of minimal scrub clearance, no tree clearance and a defined “work footprint perimeter” providing clearance from the surrounding hedgerows, field surveys weren’t undertaken to assess the potential impact of nesting birds. If the proposed start dates are delayed then subsequent pre-construction field surveys will take place to assess the impact of the proposed scheme on nesting birds within the immediate area.

General Mitigation Measures

The ECoW shall be on site on a permanent basis throughout all site clearance and earthworks stages, particularly if works are taking place in proximity to nesting/roosting sites, to ensure all mitigation relevant to birds is implemented.

All site staff will be briefed on procedures to be implemented if any nesting birds are found within the construction/dismantling area. Work would stop in the area until specialist advice is sought and implemented.

Where possible, vegetation/ ground clearance shall be avoided throughout the breeding bird season (March – August inclusive). Where site clearance operations are required throughout the breeding season the ECoW will ensure that any ground scheduled to be cleared is free of all breeding bird species.

Appropriate exclusion zones for any breeding nest sites and non-breeding roost sites confirmed during pre-construction/dismantling surveys will be established on a site-specific basis, and depend on the species, local topography, existing woodland screening and levels of human activity (and will be agreed in consultation with Natural England where necessary).

Badgers

Introduction

The main legislation relating to badgers (*Meles meles*) is the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, which is primarily concerned with the prevention of ill-treatment of this much persecuted animal, rather than with its conservation. The result is that both the animal and its dwelling, the sett, are very strongly protected. The presence of badgers on site or the use of a site by them for foraging may constrain the activities planned for it. A licence from Natural England (A01 and LR01/A24 and LR24) will be required for any activity likely to disturb badgers or their setts. The reproductive lifecycle of the badger imposes significant constraints on the timing of works as licences are not issued during the badger breeding season – (December-June).

Pre-Construction Surveys

Desktop Surveys

To accurately assess the potential ecological impacts of the scheme, a desktop study has been undertaken to identify the presence of sensitive ecological receptors at the site and within the surrounding area to help inform on the correct approaches for subsequent habitat assessments and field surveys regarding the species present in this report. Data has been obtained from a range of information sources including:

- Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC).
- National Biodiversity Network (NBN); and
- Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre (LERC).

Results

LERC records show sett presence is noted in Abbey Wood (approx. 1000m east from site location) with an adult badger sighting within 1000m dating from 2016.

Field Surveys

Pre-construction surveys for badgers are completed on a rolling programme (maximum of 12 months prior to start of proposed works in a particular area, including Site Investigation) to ensure availability of up-to-date information on sett locations.

Pre-construction badger surveys shall include a minimum of 30m beyond the Proposed Scheme boundary, and up to 100m for areas of potential high noise and vibration activities during construction. These surveys shall be carried out by suitably qualified and experienced ecologists who can identify badger signs along with active, inactive and defunct setts.

Active setts are defined by a number of characteristics such as:

- Tunnels having smoothly brushed sides (lack of cobwebs etc);
- Obviously used paths to the entrance (characterised by a lack of vegetation);
- A lack of vegetation/leaves in the entrance;
- Footprints; and

- Sometimes snuffle holes, latrines and tree scratchings in the immediate vicinity.

Inactive setts are characterised by tunnels looking disused (e.g., cobwebs) and vegetation/leaves in the entrance and no other evidence of badger.

Defunct setts are characterised by a loss of the structural integrity of the tunnel entrance (such as when they have been trampled by cattle) and/or roots growing through the tunnel, and no other evidence of badger, (i.e., the hole could not be used for shelter by a badger in its current state).

If badger setts are discovered (within the above-mentioned distances) during the pre-construction surveys, a licence may be required from Natural England, before the Proposed Scheme can proceed further.

Under Section 10 of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 licences may be granted by Natural England, for specific purposes, to permit activities which would otherwise be illegal. Licences are unlikely to be issued which would require closure of badger setts during the badger breeding season (1st December to 30th June inclusive), as badgers are more sensitive to disturbance during this period and where mitigation could have negative impacts on dependant young.

Results

An initial survey (which took place on the 10th August 2023) failed to find any setts or any signs of badger activity within 100m of the proposed site location. Construction work is set to begin between the dates of December 2023 – March 2024.

General Mitigation Measures

The ECoW shall be on site on a permanent basis throughout all site clearance and earthworks stages, especially if works are taking place close to known badger setts identified in preconstruction surveys, to ensure all mitigation relevant to badger is implemented.

If potential setts or badger themselves are encountered on site, an emergency procedure shall be implemented and all works shall cease until the ECoW has inspected the site and provided advice on any additional mitigation measures which may be required. Site personnel shall be informed of this procedure prior to any site activity during a toolbox talk.

All ponds constructed under the Proposed Scheme (whether at a partial or completed phase of construction) shall have exit ramps comprising a formed slope or where appropriate a wooden plank capable of supporting a badger at 45 degrees, to allow any badger a safe escape. All areas shall be checked at the beginning of the shift to ensure exit ramps are still intact and no badger have entered during the night.

Works in Proximity to an Active Sett

If setts (active or defunct) are identified within the immediate surrounding area during pre-construction surveys, an exclusion zone shall be implemented to protect the sett. The ECoW shall define an appropriate exclusion zone depending on the nature of works (e.g., piling or excavation works will require a large buffer to minimise disturbance).

If works are required within 30m of an active sett, the nature of the work shall be reviewed by the site agent and ECoW. If necessary, specific mitigation plans and, where appropriate,

licences shall be obtained from Natural England to facilitate disturbance, temporary closure of a sett or permanent closure, destruction and sett replacement to take place during the permitted time frames.

There is a general presumption against works being carried out which could disturb badgers in their setts or to destroy / exclude any sett. A hierarchical approach to mitigation of Avoidance - Disturbance - Destruction will be applied to any sett that may be affected.

Hedgehogs

Introduction

Hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) are protected by British law under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, making it illegal to kill or capture them using certain methods. They're listed as a Species of Principle Importance in England under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 Section 41 and are also protected in Britain under the Wild Mammals Protection Act (1996), prohibiting cruelty and mistreatment.

These laws make hedgehogs a material consideration for Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) during the planning process. Developments should also be consistent with Local Plans (LPs) and Neighbourhood Area Plans (NAPs), some of which may explicitly refer to hedgehog conservation and connectivity of the landscape.

Pre-Construction Surveys

Desktop Surveys

To accurately assess the potential ecological impacts of the scheme, a desktop study has been undertaken to identify the presence of sensitive ecological receptors at the site and within the surrounding area to help inform on the correct approaches for subsequent habitat assessments and field surveys regarding the species present in this report. Data has been obtained from a range of information sources including:

- Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC).
- National Biodiversity Network (NBN); and
- Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre (LERC).

Results

LERC records show no species observations within 500m of the proposed site location.

Field Surveys

Surveys for hedgehogs are not essential under planning regulations, however LPAs may sometimes require surveys to be conducted, particularly where hedgehogs are considered a local conservation priority, or the proposed development could have significant impacts at the population level. This may be the case, for instance, if your development is on the only large green space in an area that is surrounded by development.

If surveys are required for the proposed scheme work area, then Pre-construction surveys shall be carried out within the immediate area of the proposed scheme. Pre-construction surveys shall be carried out by suitably qualified and experienced ecologists, which may include a torchlight survey (a licence from the relevant statutory organisation is required) and/or footprint tunnels within the appropriate survey time frames (May – September).

Results

An initial survey (which took place on the 10th August 2023) identified suitable hedgehog habitat bordering on the site location, but with no visible signs of activity. A secondary site visit took place (04th September 2023) to remove any potential nesting Hibernacula from the immediate site area via careful dismantling by hand. Construction work is set to begin between the dates of December 2023 – March 2024.

General Mitigation Measures

The ECoW shall be on site on a permanent basis throughout all site clearance and earthworks stages, particularly if works are taking place in proximity to suitable hedgehog habitat or known active hedgehog sites (survey dependant), to ensure all mitigation relevant to hedgehogs are implemented.

Site personnel shall be made aware of a procedure detailing what to do if signs of hedgehogs, or hedgehogs themselves, are encountered during construction. All work within the immediate area must cease, and the ECoW shall inspect the site and advise on any additional mitigation which may be required.

Caution is needed in case of nesting hedgehogs when clearing the ground prior to development, particularly piles of deadwood or leaves and areas of long grass or dense vegetation, and when using machinery within a foot of ground level. Any dense vegetation/scrub clearance below this height will be subject to a thorough hand search before any further clearing can take place.

Areas should be cleared carefully on rotation with scrubby patches left to provide nesting habitat and cover. If this is not possible, piles of dead wood and brush piles can be created in other areas around the site to mitigate for the removal of suitable nesting sites. These can be created behind hedges or out of the way for smaller developments with limited space.

Any temporarily exposed pipe systems (i.e., any exposed land drainage systems due to ground excavation works) shall be capped when contractors are off site to prevent any hedgehogs from gaining access.

Mammal exit ramps shall be installed into all exposed pond construction sites (where slopes are judged too steep, approx. 45°) to prevent hedgehogs from becoming trapped when contractors are off site. These areas shall be checked at the beginning of the shift to ensure they are still intact and no hedgehogs have entered in the night.

If a hedgehog is found during development and/or there are welfare concerns, the British Hedgehog Preservation Society can be contacted for advice and guidance on 01584 890 801.

Reptiles

Introduction

Common reptiles are afforded partial protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This makes it an offence to “intentionally or recklessly kill or injure” (but not ‘take’) and also sell, transport for sale and advertise for sale.

The UK’s four common reptile species, i.e., Slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) common or viviparous lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*), grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), and adder (*Vipera berus*) are the only native reptile species likely to be found in relation to the project across all regions. No licensing procedure under UK legislation exists for permitting derogation of Section 9(5) (and parts of Section 9(1)) for development purposes. However, provision is made within the WCA whereby a person shall be not guilty of an offence if it can be shown that the act was the incidental result of a lawful operation, and could not reasonably have been avoided. Therefore, a Species Protection Plan (SPP) for reptiles is required to ensure the protection of these animals throughout the duration of the proposed scheme.

Natural England published in 2004 – “Reptiles: guidelines for developers” which set out statutory expectations of reasonable avoidance of killing and/or injury of reptiles. The guidance identifies two aims that need to be achieved where reptiles are present on development sites:

- To protect reptiles from any harm that might arise during the development work; and
- To ensure that sufficient quality, quantity and connectivity of habitat is provided to accommodate the reptile population, either on-site or at an alternative site, with no net loss of local reptile conservation status.

This SPP for reptiles includes mitigation to achieve the above aims.

Pre-Construction Surveys

Desktop Surveys

To accurately assess the potential ecological impacts of the scheme, a desktop study has been undertaken to identify the presence of sensitive ecological receptors at the site and within the surrounding area to help inform on the correct approaches for subsequent habitat assessments and field surveys regarding the species present in this report. Data has been obtained from a range of information sources including:

- Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC).
- National Biodiversity Network (NBN); and
- Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre (LERC)

Results

Due to an absence of species records obtained through the baseline surveys underpinning the desktop surveys (only 1 solitary grass snake record from 1976 within 2km radius), it was

deemed unnecessary to undertake surveys for Reptile species at the proposed location. Any potential hibernacula/refugia present within the immediate work area were carefully dismantled by hand (04th September 2023) and a suitable relocation area identified in case any reptile presence is subsequently discovered on site. Construction work is set to begin between the dates of December 2023 – March 2024.

General Mitigation

The ECoW shall be on site on a permanent basis throughout all site clearance and earthworks stages and shall provide an advisory role with regards to reptiles.

Works carried out in suitable reptile habitat (e.g., rough grassland, tall herb and heath) between March and October (active period) shall adopt a sensitive approach to vegetation clearance to protect reptiles from injury or mortality. Initially, vegetation shall be taken down to 100mm in height then followed by a subsequent fingertip search. Any holes on exposed ground shall be hand dug under supervision of the ECoW to ensure no reptiles are sheltering within.

Potential hibernation sites (e.g., logs or rock piles and stone walls, rabbit warrens) shall be removed during the active period (March to October). Reptiles may use these features for shelter during the day; therefore, they shall only be removed once a pre-construction check has confirmed no reptiles are present. If the feature is difficult to inspect and the absence of reptiles cannot be confirmed, the feature shall be carefully dismantled by hand. Any reptiles present shall be relocated to a safe area pre-determined after the pre-construction surveys are undertaken.

For occupied reptile habitat identified within 30m of works an initial protection zone of 30m will be marked on the ground using blue rope (or blue tipped canes and signs) to restrict work access. Site staff will be briefed of its purpose through a toolbox talk.

If reptiles are encountered in a particular area on site, all works shall cease until the ECoW has inspected the site and provided advice on any additional mitigation measures which may be required. Site personnel shall be informed of this procedure prior to any site activity during a toolbox talk.