

Ascerta

Landscape, Arboricultural & Ecological Solutions
for the Built Environment

Reptile Survey Report

Castleton Sidings,
Rochdale
Ref: P.1733.22

October 2023

Revision	Date	Description

Ascerta

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P.1733.22

Reptile Survey Report

Of

Castleton Sidings, Rochdale

For

Kellen Homes

October 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Four surveys for reptiles have been carried out at Castleton Sidings, Rochdale between August 2023 and October 2023. All visits were undertaken in suitable weather conditions on separate days to check for the presence of reptiles.

No reptiles were found to be present within the survey area during the reptile surveys undertaken August, September and October 2023. The survey areas are present on drawings P.1733.22.06 (Appendix 1).

The following will be undertaken in order to protect reptiles during the proposed works:

1. Implementing the Reasonable Avoidance Measures Method Statement for reptiles, outlined in section 6.1, during the development works.

The above recommendation, if fully implemented, will enable the proposals to meet the requirements of national and local guidance and legislation including the NPPF, the Biodiversity and Geodiversity Policy, policies NE3, NE4, NE5, NE8 and NE9 and policy G7 within the Rochdale Core Strategy (Adopted October 2016 and updated February 2017) and The Habitats Regulations.

1.0 Introduction

Ascerta has been instructed by Kellen Homes to carry out Reptile Surveys at the Land at Castleton Sidings, Rochdale (hereafter referred to as the site). The site OS grid reference is SD 876 101 and the What3Words reference is plan.tips.worry.

Our client seeks planning consent to redevelop the site for the erection of residential dwellings with associated access routes, and areas of public open space (POS).

The site was visited once in August 2023 by Liz Kenyon, twice in September 2023 by Liz Kenyon and Lizzie Atkinson and once in October 2023 by Liz Kenyon and Lizzie Atkinson. The artificial refugia were deployed by Liz Kenyon and Jack Kay in August 2023 to allow time for the mats to 'bed in'. The reptile surveys were carried out in accordance with methods set out in Froglife (1999) *Reptile survey: an introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation*, Froglife *Surveying for reptiles* (2016) and *lizard conservation. Froglife Advice Sheet 10*. Froglife, Halesworth. This report presents the results of the surveys, including proposals to ensure no harm to reptile populations during works. This is in order to satisfy current wildlife legislation and to achieve our client's objectives.

Previous surveys have been undertaken by EP3, report *80-464-R4-1 Reptile Survey Report, Castleton, Rochdale*, which should be read in conjunction with this report.

2.0 Objectives

Our client's objectives are to ascertain if reptiles are present within the survey area in order to inform measures that will need to be taken to ensure no harm to reptiles during and after development.

Our objectives are to undertake surveys for reptiles and design an appropriate reptile protection plan that meets the objectives of the client whilst following the 'avoid, mitigate, compensate' hierarchy in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other relevant national and local legislation.

3.0 Relevant Legislation

3.1 UK Legislation

Reptiles are protected under *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* (W&C Act) which makes it an offence to kill or injure native reptiles. *The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000* (CROW Act) amends the W&C Act to also make it an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct a place that a species, listed on Schedules of the W&C Act, uses for shelter or protection.

Reptiles are also listed as Species of Principal Importance under *Section 41 of The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006* (NERC Act) and are therefore a material consideration in planning decisions. Planners require relevant, up to date information from reptile surveys if there is a reasonable chance that these species could be present on the site. This is in order to assess the effects of a proposed development on reptile populations as Councils have a statutory obligation under section 40 of the NERC Act to consider biodiversity conservation in the determination of planning applications.

The NPPF

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 has been published to provide further planning guidance. Wildlife, biodiversity and ecological networks are referred to in Section 15 '*Conserving and enhancing the natural environment*'. The NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services, minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures. Further guidance is provided within Government Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System.

Biodiversity Action Plan Species

Background information about the lists of priority species (Species of Principal Importance) can be found within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP). Although this has been succeeded by The '*UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework*', many of UK BAP tools are still relevant. BAPs identify habitats and species of nature conservation priority on a UK (UK BAP) and Local (LBAP) scale. Most BAP priority species have Species Action Plans (SAP) and there are also "grouped action plans" for groups of related species with similar conservation requirements. The LBAP relating to this survey area is the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan.

3.3 Local Legislation

The site lies within Rochdale and is covered by Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council Unitary Development Plan (Adopted June 2006) and the Rochdale Core Strategy (Adopted October 2016 and updated February 2017). The policies of relevance here are policies NE3, NE4, NE5, NE8 and NE9 and policy G7 respectively and these policies have been taken into account when preparing this report.

4.0 Survey Methods

4.1 Desk Study

A review of UK and Local priority species and habitats known to occur in the region of the site has been undertaken; using the Joint Nature Conservation Committee website and local records from Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (Appendix 5, Ecological Appraisal). Reptile records will only be referred to within the text of this report, with relevant maps included in Appendix 1. Full record search details are displayed within P.1733.22C Ascerta Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Castleton Sidings within Appendix 3.

4.2 Field Study

Artificial Refugia Survey

Reptile surveys using the artificial refugia survey method were carried following methods set out in Froglife (1999) *Reptile survey: an introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation*, Froglife *Surveying for reptiles* (2016) and *Lizard conservation. Froglife Advice Sheet 10*. Froglife, Halesworth.

The site was visited once in August 2023 by Liz Kenyon, twice in September 2023 by Liz Kenyon and Lizzie Atkinson and once in October 2023 by Liz Kenyon and Lizzie Atkinson. Survey visits were undertaken in the morning, when the air temperature was between 9°C and 20°C and avoiding mid-day. No surveys were carried out during rain or strong winds. Details of the weather conditions during survey are recorded in Appendix 2.

Artificial cover objects (reptile mats) were installed on 17th August 2023. Reptile mats were distributed within a section north of the southern site boundary, adjacent to the golf course boundary and with more central areas of the site where suitable habitats are present for reptiles. The location areas are marked on drawings P.1733.22.06 within Appendix 1.

The location areas were then checked from presence/absence of reptiles. This involved lifting the mats and checking whether any reptiles were present underneath the artificial refugia. During the survey, if reptiles were found, the surveyor recorded:

- Species
- Age (Adult or Juvenile)
- Sex
- Approximate location

During the survey, visits to check the reptile mats, a transect route was walked covering all areas of the site that was accessible to check for a present of reptiles within the wider area of the site. The transect route is marked on drawings P.1733.22.06 within Appendix 1.

4.3 Limitations

The surveys were undertaken in suitable weather conditions at the appropriate time of year, however the visits were undertaken outside of the peak season (April/May) for reptile surveys. This limitation has been taken into consideration with the report conclusions.

Previous surveys have been undertaken by EP3, report *80-464-R4-1 Reptile Survey Report, Castleton, Rochdale* within the peak period for reptile surveys and no reptiles were identified within the site.

5.0 Survey Results

5.1 Field Survey

Reptile surveys were undertaken using the artificial refuges method, in accordance with best practice guidelines (Froglife, 1999). The habitats within the survey areas, the location, and whether the area is proposed to be retained or lost are described below.

The survey area where the reptile mats were distributed within a section north of the southern site boundary, adjacent to the golf course boundary and with more central areas of the site where suitable habitats are present for reptiles, including semi-improved grassland.

The majority of these habitats will be lost to accommodate the proposed residential dwellings. The proposed landscaping include public open space (POS) to the east of the site where existing habitats will be retained to the site boundaries and enhanced.

The locations of the reptile tiles are shown in drawing P.1733.22.06 within Appendix 1.

5.2 Other Wildlife

A single juvenile common frog was observed under a refugia tile to the east of the site on 30th August 2023. During the survey carried out on and on 27th September 2023, a juvenile common frog and a juvenile common toad were observed under a refugia tiles to the north of the site.

6.0 Assessment & Recommendations

Reptiles were not identified during the surveys conducted in August 2023, September 2023 and October 2023.

Although the majority of habitats within the site will be lost within the proposals, the western boundary will be enhanced to allow species to use the site and the adjacent important land parcel. The proposed changes to the site will continue to provide habitats appropriate for reptiles, maintaining connectivity throughout the site.

6.1 Reasonable Avoidance Measures Statement

Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) will be implemented during the works to avoid any impact on reptiles that may be present. The RAMs will be as follows:

1. Toolbox talk delivered by a suitably experienced ecologist to all contractors working within the survey area. This will detail the identification of protected species that are present, legislation that protects them and what to do if they come across a protected species during the proposed works;
2. The vegetation clearance will be undertaken in two stages. The first cut will be to 150mm, and the second cut will remove vegetation to ground level (with a minimum of 24 hours between cuts);
3. Vegetation clearance works will take place in sections, in a directional manner of the site to allow any reptile to disperse from the area;
4. Construction materials stored on pallets so as not to create areas of refuge for reptiles and;
5. If a protected species is identified during the proposed works, all works will stop immediately, and advice sought from a suitably qualified ecologist prior to works commencing again.

7.0 Assessment & Recommendations

It is considered that reptiles will not be adversely impacted within their natural range, provided the recommendations detailed above are followed. In summary these include:

1. Implementing the Reasonable Avoidance Measures Method Statement for Reptiles, outlined in section 6.1, during the development works.

The above recommendation, if fully implemented, will enable the proposals to meet the requirements of national and local guidance and legislation including the NPPF, the Biodiversity and Geodiversity Policy, Policy SE3, the within Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030 (adopted 27 July 2017) and The Habitats Regulations.

8.0 References

CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester

CIEEM (2018) *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

Froglife (2016) Surveying for reptiles, Tips, techniques and skills to help you survey for reptiles. Froglife,[Online] Available at: <https://www.froglife.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Reptile-survey-booklet-3mm-bleed.pdf> [Accessed 11.11.2021]

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

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (2010) *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a Technique for Environmental Audit*. JNCC Publications, Peterborough;

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). *The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP)* [online] Available at: www.jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5155

Maddock, A., (ed) (2011) *UK Biodiversity Action Plan; Priority Habitat Descriptions*, JNCC.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Governments (2021), *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*

Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) [online]

Rose, F. (2006). *Collins The Wild Flower Key, how to identify wild flowers trees and shrubs in Britain and Ireland*. Penguin Group: London.

Stace, C., (2010). *New Flora of the British Isles*. 3rd Edition. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Appendix 1



- Site boundary approx
- Refugia locations
- Transect route

DO NOT SCALE.
ALL COORDINATES RELATED TO LOCAL GRID.
LOCATED TO NG BY BEST FIT TO DETAIL.
EXTRACTED FROM OS DIGITAL DATA.

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CLIENT:

Kellen Homes

PROJECT:

Castleton Sidings

DRAWING TITLE:

Reptile Survey

SCALE: NTS@A3	DRAWN BY: LK	DRAWING No: P.1733.22.06
DATE: 19/10/2023	CHKD BY: LA	REV:

Appendix 2

Reptile Survey Sheet

Survey Number	Date	Temperature start and end	Cloud cover	Ground conditions	Wind	Species (if none found put N/A). Approx age (adult or juvenile). Male or Female (Gravid?), Approx Location
1	30.08.23	13°C to 16°C	1/8	Dry	F0	None Found
2	07.09.23	16°C to 18°C	2/8	Dry	F0	None Found
3	27.09.23	12°C to 13°C	2/8	Dry	F1	None Found
4	17.10.23	12°C to 12°C	4/8	Dry	F1	None Found