

REPTILE TRANSLOCATION METHOD STATEMENT

THE PADDOCK, MANGOTSFIELD



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The material and data in this report were prepared under the supervision and direction of the undersigned.

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1.0	30/07/2021	ISSUE
1.1	28/09/2021	Revisions to clearance methodology to protect great crested newt.

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VALIDITY

Due to the dynamic nature of ecological conditions the results of the survey(s) and related conclusions and recommendations as contained within this report should only be considered **valid for up to 12 months from the date the last survey was undertaken.**

Any alterations to the site proposals may invalidate the recommendations contained within this report.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Abricon Ltd. was commissioned by Blackhorse Place Ltd. to produce a method statement for a proposed translocation of a population of slow worms, identified on the development site during reptile surveys undertaken in May 2021 (Abricon, 2021).

1.2 Donor Site Location & Description

- 1.2.1 The site (approximately 0.11ha) is located off Blackhorse Place, within the suburban area of Mangotsfield, Bristol, centred on National Grid Reference: ST 66501 76720.
- 1.2.2 The site is predominantly comprised of poor semi-improved grassland, which features compost and brash piles. These habitats are bounded by a stone wall and species-poor defunct hedgerow to the west, a stone wall to the south, a fence line of a neighbouring residential property to the east and an open area of scrub to the north.
- 1.2.3 Residential properties and their associated garden spaces are present to the immediate west, north and east of the site, whereas Blackhorse Place and amenity grassland is present to the south.
- 1.2.4 Within the wider landscape, the site is predominantly surrounded by roads and residential areas in every direction. However, scattered trees, a pond, and grassland are also present to the south of the site, extending to the nearby prison located approximately 150m away.

Figure 1.1 – Donor Site Location (highlighted) – accessed 18/11/2020



Imagery, Map Data: Google, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, Maxar Technologies, The Geoinformation Group

1.3 Proposed Development

- 1.3.1 It is understood that the plans for the site include the erection of three residential dwellings with associated garden spaces, access roads and parking. The proposal will involve restructuring of the site, including the large areas of poor semi-improved grassland.

2 Method Statement for Slow Worm Translocation

2.1 Receptor Site Location & Description

- 2.1.1 Following consultation with South Gloucestershire Council Planning Ecologist Michelle Newman, a potential receptor site was identified at The Chain and Wheel Earth Sculpture, A4174, Emersons Green, South Gloucestershire, centred on National Grid Reference ST 67308 76248.
- 2.1.2 The site (approximately 6.1ha in area) consists of a large earth bank with scrub and grassland (determined from aerial imagery) and is bordered by the A4174 to the east, Pomphrey Hill Playing Fields North to the west, Pomphrey Hill to the south and a strip of woodland to the north.
- 2.1.3 Although the site has not yet been inspected, it has been ascertained through consultation with Michelle Newman that the site in its current condition contains optimal reptile habitat and this will be maintained in the future. The site will be subject to a walkover inspection prior to commencement of the translocation process.

Figure 2.1 – Receptor Site Location (highlighted) – accessed 28/07/2021



Imagery, Map Data: Google, CNES / Airbus, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, Maxar Technologies

2.2 Receptor Site Survey, Selection and Background Information

- 2.2.1 Given the large area of the receptor site and the small population of slow worms anticipated to be translocated, it was concluded following consultation with Michelle Newman that reptile surveys of the receptor site would not be required. However, the number of individuals translocated will be monitored throughout the process and if larger numbers than expected are encountered, then continued consultation or alternative arrangements may need to be sought.

- 2.2.2 The translocation process (Section 2.3 below) includes the relocation of the entire slow worm population found on a proposed development site at The Paddock, Blackhorse Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol, BS16 9AD. The Chain and Wheel Earth Sculpture was selected as the receptor site as it was considered that no further enhancements will be required on this site and its ready to receive reptiles, and it is located in close proximity to the proposed development site (approximately 850m east). The receptor site contains approximately 60,000m² of suitable habitat. The development site contains approximately 1000m² of suitable reptile habitat.
- 2.2.3 As a peak count of 4 slow worms (it is likely that more are present) were identified during the reptile surveys of the donor site, it is proposed that all of the individuals will be relocated to the receptor site, as it is believed that this site can sustain this population of reptiles.
- 2.2.4 If, however, more than 100 individuals are found during translocation process, further consultation may be required and alternatives may need to be sought.
- 2.2.5 No enhancement measures are considered necessary on the receptor site.

Post-Translocation Maintenance and Monitoring

- 2.2.6 The receptor site will be maintained in its current state as per consultation with Michelle Newman.

Monitoring

- 2.2.7 Update reptile presence / likely absence surveys will be undertaken on the receptor site to monitor the onsite reptile population. These surveys will take place in 2022 and 2024 during optimal survey months (April, May or September).
- 2.2.8 Upon the completion of the monitoring process each suggested year, a monitoring report will be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.
- 2.2.9 The monitoring process will assess whether the translocated slow worm population is stable and being maintained and supported by the onsite habitats. If a reduction in slow worm numbers is identified during the update surveys, consideration of further site enhancement works may be necessary to increase the population size.

2.3 Translocation Methodology

- 2.3.1 During the reptile surveys of the development site in 2021, 40 artificial refugia in the form of roofing felt and corrugated, metal tins were deployed. These were collected from the site once the surveys were complete, so they will need to be redeployed before the translocation process commences. Additional refuges (artificial or natural) are likely to boost capture rates of slow worms on site, so it is recommended that more than the minimum number of refugia are used and deployed on site.
- 2.3.2 Once the refugia have been left to 'bed-in' for a minimum of 7 days, the translocation process can commence. Reptile refugia should be checked on a daily basis during suitable reptile conditions, with temperatures between 10°C and 18°C and during a time with no precipitation. Reptiles will be caught by the hand and placed within a buckets or cloth bags, separating larger adults from juveniles to avoid predation. The captured reptiles will then be taken to the receptor site immediately for release.

- 2.3.3 Reptiles should be released by being placed in suitable habitat on receptor site and it should be ensured that individuals are not left exposed due to the risk of predation.
- 2.3.4 The number of days required for the complete removal of a reptile population from a site is difficult to predict and can vary depending on the size of a population and the abundance of suitable reptile habitats. However, in certain cases it has been suggested that between 15 and 20 visits may sufficiently clear a population (Gent and Gibson, 2003). In other cases, translocation efforts can continue for up to 90 days, particularly for sites which contain a high population of reptiles.
- 2.3.5 Instead of defining an exact number of days required for the translocation process, the capture procedure will be repeated daily in suitable reptile conditions until a point where no reptiles are identified and captured for 5 consecutive days. However, it is considered likely that a minimum of 10 capture days will be required to clear the low slow worm population on site.
- 2.3.6 Once the translocation process has been completed, the removal of areas of suitable habitat on the development site will be subject to a destructive search to clear any remaining reptiles from the site. The vegetation on site should be cut to a height of 5cm using strimmers, and the arisings removed from the site that same day (to avoid creating more suitable habitat for reptiles). Once the vegetation has been cut, the area should be left for 48 hours to allow any remaining reptiles to disperse. The destructive search should be overseen by an Ecological Clerk of Works. The destructive search will involve gently removing the vegetation and topsoil from the site using an excavator with a toothed bucket, following vegetation clearance and 48-hour dispersal period. An Ecological Clerk of Works will check for any reptiles present and translocate any remaining individuals to the receptor site.
- 2.3.7 Any existing refugia onsite in the form of rubble, brash, compost and wood piles should be dismantled carefully by hand under the supervision of an ecologist. To avoid the accidental creation of reptile hibernacula, the dismantled material must not be placed on site and should immediately be removed or placed within a skip.
- 2.3.8 Although it is considered unlikely that great crested newt (GCN) are present on the site, the above methodology will also serve to protect GCN from accidental harm during clearance, if present. In the unlikely event that GCN are found during clearance or construction, all works must cease immediately and Natural England (NE) must be contacted for advice. It may be necessary to obtain a European Protected Species licence, and works would not be able to recommence until authorised by NE.

3 References

Abricon (2021) *Reptile Surveys Report of The Paddock, Mangotsfield*

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

Gent and Gibson (2003) *Herpetofauna Workers' Manual*.

HGBI (1998) *Evaluating local mitigation/translocation programmes: Maintaining best practice and lawful standards*. HGBI, Halesworth.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee. *Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey (2010)*.

UK Governments Countryside Geographic Information website: www.magic.gov.uk

4 Wildlife Legislation & Policy

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

- 7.1.1 Certain species are known as European Protected Species (EPS) and these are fully protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017). The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) is the transposition of the European Habitats Directive (1992) to UK legislation. Species protected under this legislation include (but is not limited to) bats, dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius*, great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*, otter *Lutra lutra*, sand lizard *Lacerta agilis*, and smooth snake *Coronella austriaca*.
- 7.1.2 For European Protected Species, it is a criminal offence to:
- Deliberately capture, injure or kill any such species;
 - Deliberately disturb wild animals of any such animal;
 - Deliberately take or destroy their eggs;
 - Damage, destroy, or obstruct access to a breeding site or resting place, whether the animal is present or not;
 - Keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange, any live or dead wild animal of a European Protected Species, or any part of, or anything derived from, such an animal.
- 7.1.3 Operations which will affect European Protected Species may require a development licence from the relevant national statutory body for nature conservation, which provides a derogation for an otherwise unlawful activity.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

- 7.1.4 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) makes it a criminal offence to:
- Kill, injure, or take any wild bird (with exceptions to species listed in Schedule 2);
 - Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while in use or being built;
 - Take or destroy an egg of any wild bird;
 - Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild animal listed on Schedule 5;
 - Interfere with places used for shelter or protection, or intentionally disturbing animals occupying such places.
- 7.1.5 Water voles *Arvicola amphibious* are protected under Section 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended) against killing, injuring, taking, or selling a water vole; damaging or destroying a place of shelter (burrow), obstructing access to a place used for shelter, or disturbing a water vole whilst it is occupying a place of shelter or protection.
- 7.1.6 Operations which may affect water voles may require a licence from the relevant national statutory body for nature conservation, which provides derogation for an otherwise unlawful activity.
- 7.1.7 Common lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*), slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*), adder (*Vipera berus*) and grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) are all protected under Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended) against injuring, killing or selling.
- 7.1.8 Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) and smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*) are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 against killing, injuring, capture, damaging or destroying a breeding or resting site, intentionally obstructing access to a place used for shelter, keeping, transporting or sale. This means that not only are the animals themselves protected but so are their habitats.

- 7.1.9 For developers in England, Wales or Scotland, to reduce the risk of prosecution under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), wherever works may impact on reptiles there must be evidence that reasonable effort was made to avoid breaking the law – including proof of adequate surveys and mitigation plan.
- 7.1.10 Certain non-native, invasive plant species have become established in Great Britain and pose a threat to native flora. It is an offence to plant or allow species listed under Schedule 9 to spread in the wild.

Protected Sites

- 7.1.11 Within the UK, certain sites are afforded protection measures based on their level of importance to wildlife. They fall into two categories: statutory designated sites and non-statutory designated sites.
- 7.1.12 Statutory designated sites are typically of national or international importance and as such are afforded the greatest levels of protection under various pieces of legislation. Statutory sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), National Nature Reserves (NNR), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and RAMSAR sites.
- 7.1.13 Non-statutory designated sites are normally designated by local authorities or nature organisations and are typically of local or county wide importance for their conservation interest. Non-statutory sites include Listed Wildlife Sites (LWS), Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS), Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI).
- 7.1.14 Properties of non-governmental organisations such as Wildlife Trusts may also be managed for their importance to biodiversity. These areas often have no statutory basis, but often comprise part of a designated site.

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

- 7.1.15 National Planning Policy Framework (2019) sets out Government Policy on Biodiversity and Nature Conservation and places a duty on planners to make material consideration to the effect of a development on legally protected species when considering planning applications. NPPF also promotes sustainable development by ensuring that developments take account of the role and value of biodiversity and that it is conserved and enhanced within the development.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)

- 7.1.16 Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) sets out a list of habitats and species that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The list (including 56 habitats and 943 species) drawn up in consultation with Natural England, provides a guide to local and regional authorities when implementing their duty as defined in Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006;
- “Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.” - Section 40(1).
 - “Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat”. - Section 40(3).