



## **Land at South Hatch Stables**

### **Condition 28: Reptile Monitoring Strategy 18/00308/FUL**

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**LIABILITIES:**

Whilst every effort has been made to guarantee the accuracy of this report, it should be noted that living animals and plants are capable of migration/establishing and whilst such species may not have been located during the survey duration, their presence may be found on a site at a later date.

This report provides a snap shot of the species that were present at the time of the survey only and does not consider seasonal variation. Furthermore, where access is limited or the site supports habitats which are densely vegetated only dominant species maybe recorded.

The recommendations contained within this document are based on a reasonable timeframe between the completion of the survey and the commencement of any works. If there is any delay between the commencement of works that may conflict with timeframes laid out within this document, or have the potential to allow the ingress of protected species, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted.

It is the duty of care of the landowner/developer to act responsibly and comply with current environmental legislation if protected species are suspected or found prior to or during works.

## 1.0 Introduction

### Background

- 1.1 The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Talon Properties to develop a strategy in order to support the discharge of Condition 6 (detailed below) on land at South Hatch Stables.
- 1.2 The site is located at South Hatch Stables on Burgh Heath Road in Epsom, Surrey. The site covers approximately 3.47ha and includes stable blocks and paddocks. The site is surrounded by a mosaic of horse paddocks, golf courses, woodland and high-density housing. The Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is 1.6km west of site and the Epsom and Ashted Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is 2.1km west. The approximate red line boundary of the site is shown in Figure 1 overleaf. This was also the approximate survey boundary. The blue line boundary is the area to be developed.



*Figure 1: Approximate location of the red line boundary (survey area) and blue line boundary (development area)*



Figure 2: Masterplan

1.6 Planning permission (18/00308/FUL) has been granted for the development including the demolition of the existing racehorse training establishment and the erection of a new RTE comprising of a main yard stable complex of 40 boxes, a secondary stable block of 20 boxes, an isolation yard, a trainer and assistant trainers house, stable staff accommodation, horse walkers, muck pits, a therapy barn, trotting ring and outdoor school, a lunge ring, turnout paddocks and a machinery store and storage barn and enabling residential development comprising 46 apartments.

1.7 Condition 28 is pertinent to ecology:

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*Details of a plan for the long term monitoring of the reptile translocation site shall be submitted prior to the occupation of the development. The monitoring plan shall be implemented as approved.*

*Reason: To enhance biodiversity and nature habitats in accordance with Policy CS3 of the Core Strategy (2007) and Policy DM4 of the Development Management Policies 2015.*

### **Purpose and Objectives**

- 1.3 This document is designed to discharge Condition 28 of the planning permission and to ensure that reptiles are monitored post development.

### **2.0 Site Review**

- 2.1 Surveys completed across the red-line were conducted in 2016 with an update PEA conducted in 2018.

- 2.2 The site was comprised of a collection of buildings on hardstanding making up the equestrian centre next to a house. Surrounding these was a large area of semi-improved grassland bordered by hedgerows. There was also a large tree line through the middle of the site adjacent to the buildings and a large area of ruderal vegetation next to this. Brash and log piles were also dotted around the grassland in addition to scattered trees throughout the site.

- 2.3 The grassland to the north of the site, has been periodically cut and grazed, with pockets of well grazed grassland present set within the lunge / paddock pens set within the grassland. Pockets of unmanaged grassland were also present. The grass is also heavily cut in between grazing regimes.

- 2.4 Mature hedgerows ran along the northeast boundary next to the road as well as the western and southern boundaries of the site. Species included blackthorn, bramble, rose, hawthorn, sycamore and holly.

- 2.5 Through the centre of the site, from the buildings westwards, was a line of mature trees. The main species included sycamore, horse chestnut, lime and oak. Other species included holly, blackthorn, ash, lords and ladies, bluebells and common hogweed. The trunks of all

the mature trees were densely covered in ivy. This habitat is being retained within the scheme.

2.6 Other habitats included ruderal pockets of vegetation, log and brash piles, buildings and hardstanding. The habitat map, taken from 2018 is shown in Figure 3 below.

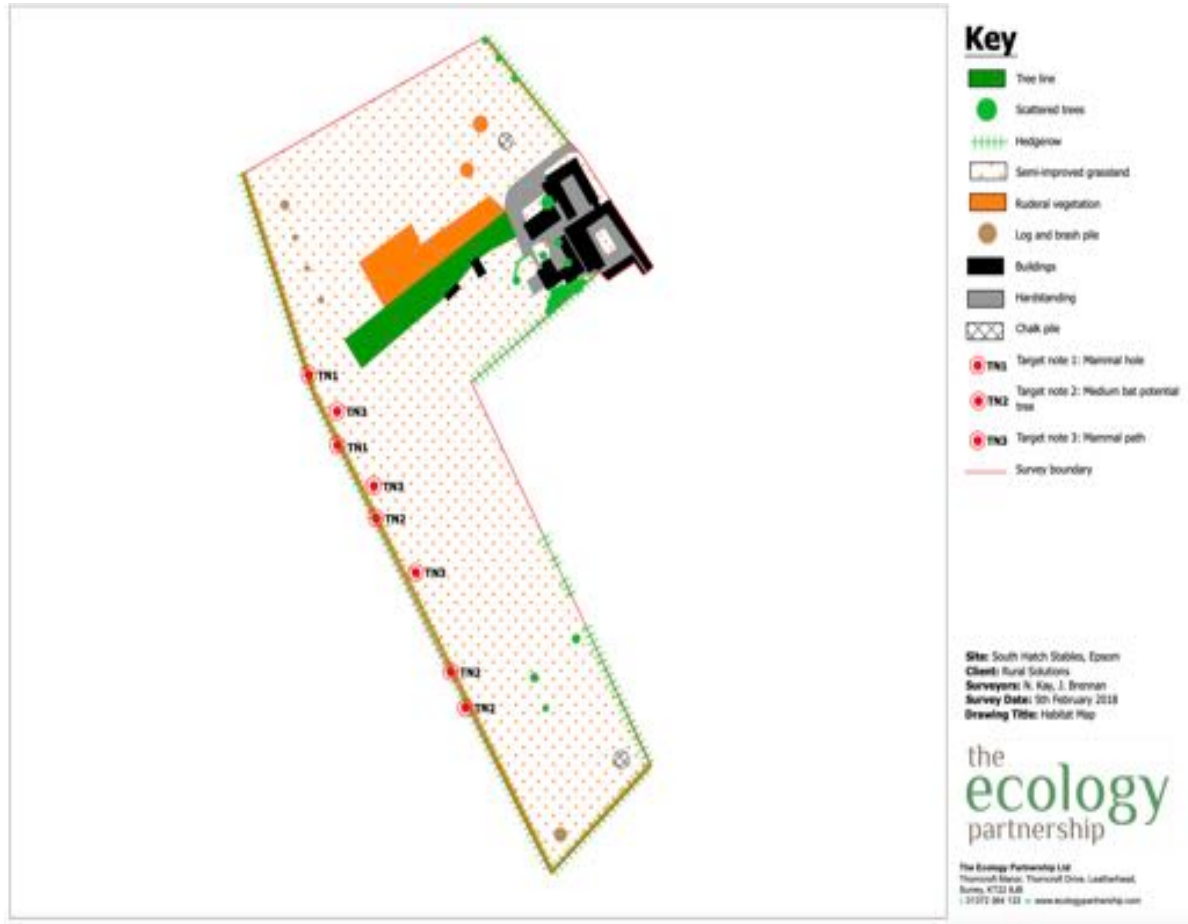


Figure 3: Habitat Map (2018)

2.7 An internal and external inspection of all the buildings on site was carried out on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2016. No evidence of bats, such as droppings, staining or feeding remains, was found in any of the 11 buildings on site on the day of the survey (Figure 4). Most of the buildings on site, including the stables, barn and mobile homes, were not considered to be suitable for roosting bats due to their light and breezy condition, lack of crevices suitable for roosting bats and/or their construction materials. As such, no further surveys on any of these buildings was considered to be necessary and these buildings are not considered to be constrained by roosting bats.





*Figure 4: Location of buildings surveyed for roosting bat potential in 2016*

- 2.8 The house (building 9) had no evidence of bats inside the internal roof void, however, there were a small number of lifted clay tiles on the roof, which could be used opportunistically by crevice-dwelling bats. It is understood that this building will be demolished as part of the plans. As a precautionary approach, it was recommended that one dusk emergence survey be carried out on the house to ascertain the use of the building by bats and to assess the level of bat use across the site.
- 2.9 A dusk emergence survey was carried out on the house on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2016. Three surveyors were positioned to cover all aspects of the house, where possible. No bats were seen to emerge from any observable features and general activity was considered to be low. A noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*) was seen passing the house twice whilst five common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) passes were recorded during the course of the survey.
- 2.10 Update surveys were undertaken on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2018. Sunset was at 20:27 and surveyors were on site 30 minutes beforehand. The weather was warm and overcast with a light breeze. The temperature at the start of the survey was 14°C and dropped down to 12°C. No bats



were seen to emerge from any observable features around the house and general activity was considered to be low, with only common pipistrelles were recorded in low numbers.

- 2.11 A terrestrial survey of the site for reptiles (presence or likely absence) was carried out between 5<sup>th</sup> April and 3<sup>re</sup> May 2019. Prior to the commencement of the survey, the site was set up with artificial refugia (roofing-felt mats) for reptiles on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019. Over seven visits, a peak count of 5 adult common lizards (*Zootoca vivipara*) was found on site. According to the Froglife criteria, it is considered that there is a 'good' population of common lizards on site.
- 2.12 An update badger survey was carried out on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2018. The previous badger hole was identified along with an additional badger hole. Both appeared to have been used recently given the presence of disturbed earth but leaf litter had begun to accumulate in each entrance, suggesting they were no longer active. No other evidence of badgers was identified. The location of these holes are shown in Figure 5 below.



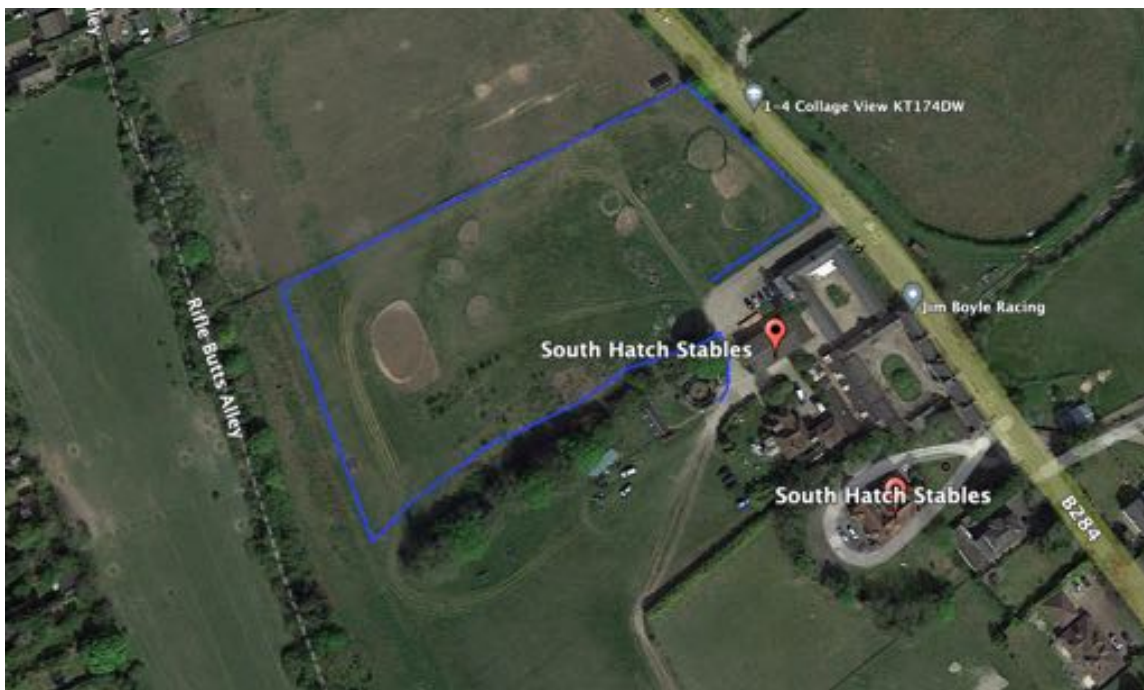
*Figure 5: Site separated into development area (red line) and retained portion (blue line) and locations of previously found badger holes*

- 2.13 On 6<sup>th</sup> May 2019, a member of the public reported to the Council that the sett along the western boundary had become active again. A hole along the alley, which runs adjacent to the western boundary, showed signs of recent use with freshly excavated spoil heaps and fresh grass bedding at the entrance. Given this report and the time since the previous survey, an update badger survey of the site was recommended. An update badger survey was undertaken at the site on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2019.
- 2.14 The two badger holes found during the previous surveys were identified during this most recent survey and both were considered to be inactive at the time given the lack of signs of recent use. The active badger hole along the alley identified by a member of the public was found along with a second active badger hole adjacent within the site (Figure 6). These were considered active due to the presence of recently excavated spoil heaps, the presence of old bedding and the lack of leaf litter.



*Figure 6: Badger holes identified during the update badger survey (June 2019)*

- 2.15 The reptile translocation occurred on site between June to September 2022. Note that translocation was ceased during the hot conditions July and August until the temperatures returned to normal summer conditions. September conditions were considered ideal for the reptile translocation.
- 2.16 The survey was conducted over a period of 35 days. Over the translocation period a total of 17 common lizards were translocated to the other side of the reptile fencing and into the translocation zone by the retained western aspect.
- 3.0 Reptile Mitigation Strategy**
- 3.1 A reptile translocation was initiated on the 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022. It was recommended that a 30 day translocation was undertaken. Due to the excessive heat of the summer, the translocation was halted and then re started throughout the summer months and was finally concluded at the end of September 2022. A total of 17 adult common lizards were translocation with a low number of juveniles also translocated.
- 3.2 The fence line was established as per figure 7 below. This was altered slightly from the original plans due to the southern field being regularly managed and grazed.



*Figure 7: Reptile fence line location*



- 3.3 The translocation area is located along the western and southern aspect of site, which is to remain undeveloped throughout the process. Log piles have been previously established.
- 3.4 During the course of the development additional log piles will also be created along the southern and western hedgerow. These will consist of varying log shapes and sizes (Figure 8). The use of log piles and the maintenance of tussocky grassland and scrub will provide enhanced habitat and improve the carrying capacity of these areas. Furthermore, there is ample habitat provided within the landscape that will be exploited by any reptile species.
- 3.5 The grass is currently under a grazing regime, however where grazing is not taking place it will be cut into two phases, with additional management recommended over the course of the development period. It is recommended that the grassland is maintained at a short sward height from now until development works start.



*Figure 8: Examples of log and brush piles*

#### **4.0 Reptile Monitoring**

- 4.1 It is recommended that the grassland habitats located in The Gallops are managed as per current regime. This grassland area will be cut on rotation to approximately 15cm so there is always optimal habitat for reptiles to thrive, and so there are areas of long and short grass. Cutting should be undertaken by using hand tools, including strimmers.
- 4.2 Cutting can also be completed during winter to avoid ground nesting birds and the active season for reptiles.
- 4.3 This current management is considered sufficient to ensure to long-term success of the new reptile populations in both areas.
- 4.4 Monitoring of the grassland along The Gallops will be conducted 3 years after the development has been completed.

#### **5.0 Conclusions**

- 5.1 A reptile translocation has been conducted over the course of 2022, with a total of 17 adult common lizards recorded and some juveniles. The translocation has been completed and the grassland is being grazed and will be subject to a two stage cut in areas which are not grazed.
- 5.2 Management of the grassland has been detailed and monitoring of the population 3 years post development will occur.
- 5.3 It is considered that this report is sufficient to discharge Condition 6 of the planning permission for the site.

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