

Reptile Survey

Havering Park Riding School, Bower Farm Road, Havering-atte-Bower

A Report To: Adam Smyth and Richard Harris

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Date: October 2025

Quality Assurance

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Declaration of Compliance

This study has been undertaken in accordance with British Standard 42020:2013 "Biodiversity, Code of Practice for Planning and Development". The information which we have prepared is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

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Validity of Data

The findings of this study are valid for a period of 24 months from the date of survey. If works have not commenced by this date, it may be necessary to undertake an updated survey to assess any changes in the status of reptile species on site, and to inform a review of the conclusions and recommendations made.

Non-Technical Summary

Project Background

In June 2025, Adam Smyth and Richard Harris commissioned Middlemarch to undertake a reptile survey at Havering Park Riding School, Bower Farm Road, Havering-atte-Bower in the London Borough of Havering. This assessment is required to inform a planning application associated with a proposed residential development at the site.

Scope of Survey

To fulfil the above brief, a reptile habitat assessment and presence/absence survey were undertaken between 21st July and 25th September 2025. The survey was undertaken in accordance with the best practice methodology detailed in the Herpetofauna Workers Manual.

Survey Results

No reptiles were recorded during the presence/absence survey; therefore, the proposed development is not anticipated to impact upon the favourable conservation status of reptiles.

Potential Impacts on Reptiles

It is expected that the proposed development will result in loss of some suitable habitat for common reptile species. Since no reptiles were recorded during the survey period, and the low numbers of records returned via the desk study, it is concluded that the impacts of the proposed development on local reptiles will be negligible in the short-term. The proposed landscaping is anticipated to enhance the value of the site for reptiles in the long-term, incorporating areas of scrub, woodland, and enhanced grassland.

Recommendations

R1 Reptiles: No reptiles were recorded on site during the presence/absence survey, therefore no recommendations for further work are made. However, should any reptiles be discovered on site during development, works should cease, and an experienced ecologist should be contacted immediately to determine a way forward. If works have not commenced within 24 months from the date of this report, then an updated reptile survey should be carried out.

R2 Scheme Design: The proposed development should be designed in accordance with the ecological mitigation hierarchy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

R3 Updated Survey: If works have not commenced within 24 months from the date of this report, then an updated Reptile Survey should be carried out.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Background

In June 2025, Adam Smyth and Richard Harris commissioned Middlemarch to undertake a reptile survey at Havering Park Riding School, Bower Farm Road, Havering-atte-Bower in the London Borough of Havering. This assessment is required to inform a planning application associated with a proposed residential development at the site.

Middlemarch has previously carried out the following surveys at the site:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (RT-MME-162574-01);
- Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment of Buildings (RT-MME-162574-02);
- Biodiversity Statement and Metric Assessment (RT-MME-162574-03);
- Bat Surveys (RT-MME-180266-01); and,
- Ground Level Tree Assessment (RT-MME-180266-02).
- Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index Assessment & eDNA Survey (RT-MME-180266-03); and,
- Badger Survey (RT-MME-180266-04).

All native reptile species receive protection under UK law and are capable of being material considerations in the planning process. Further information about the legislation that protects reptile species is provided in Appendix 1.

1.2 Site Description and Context

Table 1.1 provides a brief summary of the site and its surroundings.

Attribute	Description
Location	Havering Park Riding School, Bower Farm Road, Havering-atte-Bower, Romford, London Borough of Havering
National Grid Reference	TQ 51079 93165
Site Area (ha)	1.8
Topography	Predominantly flat, with a sloping field in the north of the site, sloping down towards the northwest.
Land Cover (on site)	The site was previously used as a horse-riding school, as such much of the site comprises stables, paddocks, and fields. As well as stables, further buildings are present in the form of a metal barn, sheds, a summerhouse, and a listed brick-built building in use as additional stables and a private residence. Hardstanding is present across the site in the form of roads, paths, courtyards, and comprises brick paving, concrete, and gravel. Landscaping on the site includes patches of amenity grassland, scattered trees, and introduced shrub. Two large fields are present within the west of the site and mainly consist of improved and semi-improved grassland, with areas of bare ground, tall ruderal vegetation, and scrub. A hedgerow borders the fields to the north, whilst the south is bordered by woodland. An area of woodland forms the northeast of the site.

Table 1.1: Summary of Site and Surroundings (cont.)

Attribute	Description
Land Cover (site surrounds)	Residential areas of Havering-atte-Bower are located immediately south and north-east of the site. An area of woodland associated with Havering Country Park SINCE is located immediately adjacent to the south-west of the site. The wider landscape is dominated by farmland and woodland.

Table 1.1: Summary of Site and Surroundings (cont.)

1.3 Documentation Provided

The conclusions and recommendations made in this report are based on information provided by the client regarding the scope of the project. Documentation made available by the client is listed in Table 1.2.

Document / Drawing Number	Author
Topographical Survey	Laser Surveys
Proposed Scheme Design – Block Plan (FRNT_22.622_100_P3_Proposed Site Plan_A1)	FRONT Architecture
Pre-app Statement (FRNT 22.622 610_P1_Pre-App Statement_A3)	FRONT Architecture
Detailed Landscape Proposals (CLPD 184 P02 Revision A)	Cornus Landscape Planning & Design

Table 1.2: Documentation Provided by Client

2. Methods

2.1 Desk study

As part of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Report RT-MME-162574-01) an ecological desk study was undertaken. The consultees for the desk study were:

- Natural England - MAGIC website for statutory conservation sites;
- Greater London Authority - Green Belt Map <https://apps.london.gov.uk/planning/>;
- Essex Field Club; and,
- Greenspace Initiative for Greater London CIC (GiGL).

Middlemarch then assimilated and reviewed the desk study data provided by these organisations. Relevant bat data are discussed in Chapter 3. In compliance with the terms and conditions relating to its commercial use, the full desk study data are not provided within this report.

The desk study included a search for statutory nature conservation sites designated for bats within a 10 km radius of the site.

2.2. Field Survey

The field survey comprised the following elements:

Site Suitability Assessment

An assessment of the suitability of the site to support reptile species was undertaken, based on a review of habitat characteristics and other parameters known to influence reptile distribution. The following parameters were considered:

- Location of site in relation to species range of native reptiles;
- Site management and disturbance;
- Topography and aspect of site;
- Vegetation type and structure;
- Likely prey abundance;
- Presence of refugia and potential hibernation habitat;
- Egg-laying site potential (grass snake and sand lizard only); and,
- Connectivity to surrounding habitat of potential value to reptiles.

The suitability assessment was used to design the route of survey transects for the presence/absence survey.

Presence/Absence Survey

A presence/absence survey for reptiles was undertaken in accordance with the best practice methodology detailed in the Herpetofauna Workers Manual (Gent and Gibson, 2003)¹ and (Froglife, 1999)².

¹ Gent, T. and Gibson, S. (2003). *Herpetofauna Worker's Manual – Second Edition*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough

² Froglife (1999). *Reptile Survey: an introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation*. Froglife Advice Sheet 10. Froglife, Halesworth

This consisted of the following works:

- Survey transects through the site were identified to ensure all suitable habitats were covered by the survey.
- A series of artificial refugia were installed within the site to facilitate detection of reptiles (further detailed below).
- Seven survey visits to the site were undertaken to inspect natural and artificial refugia in suitable weather conditions.
- Checks of any natural refugia present within the survey area, such as log piles or rubble piles, were undertaken during the survey visits.

Sixty-eight artificial survey refugia were installed within the site during the first survey visit. These refugia consisted of squares of roofing felt approximately 500 mm x 500 mm.

The site suitability assessment and presence/absence survey were carried out between 21st July and 25th September 2025 by James Sharma (Senior Ecological Consultant), Arthur Jones (Senior Ecological Consultant), Ben Huxley (Ecological Field Officer), and Anna Morgan-Faulkner (Ecological Project Officer). Table 2.1 details the dates the survey visits were carried out, together with the weather conditions before and during the survey.

Date/Time	Cloud cover (%)	Air Temperature (°C)	Precipitation	Wind Speed (F)
21-07-25 11:00	70	18	Dry	F2
07-08-25 08:45	100	17	Dry	F3
13-08-25 07:45	10	18	Dry	F1
21-08-25 09:00	80	18	Dry	F3
05-09-25 12:00	0	19	Dry	F1
11-09-25 09:30	70	15	Dry	F3
19-09-25 09:00	70	16	Dry	F1
25-09-25 12:00	20	17	Dry	F4

Table 2.1: Weather Conditions During Survey Visits

2.3 Constraints

No constraints were experienced throughout the survey period.

3. Desk Study

3.1 Species Records

The data search was carried out in June 2024 by Greenspace Initiative for Greater London. Records of reptile species within a 1 km radius of the survey area provided by the consultee are summarised in Table 3.1. It should be noted that the absence of records should not be taken as confirmation that a species is absent from the search area.

Species	No. of Records	Most Recent Record	Proximity of Nearest Record to Study Area	Species of Principal Importance?	Legislation / Conservation Status
Reptiles					
Grass snake <i>Natrix helvetica</i>	3	2021	620 m west	✓	WCA 5 S9(1), WCA 5 S9(5)
Key: WCA 5 S9(1): Schedule 5 Section 9(1) of Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Protected animals (other than birds). Protection limited to intentional killing, injury or taking. WCA 5 S9(5): Schedule 5 Section 9(5) of Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Protected animals (other than birds). Protection limited to selling, offering for sale, processing or transporting for purpose of sale, or advertising for sale, any live or dead animal, or any part of, or anything derived from, such animal					

Table 3.1: Summary of Reptile Records within 1 km of Survey Area

4. Survey Results

4.1 Site Suitability Assessment

The habitat characteristics of the site with regard to suitability to support reptile species are summarised in Table 4.1. Photographs taken during the field survey are presented in Chapter 8.

Reptile Habitat Characteristic	Description
Location of site in relation to species range of native reptiles	The site falls within the known range of the four common native reptile species: slow worm <i>Anguis fragilis</i> , grass snake <i>Natrix Helvetica</i> , adder <i>Vipera berus</i> , and common lizard <i>Zootoca vivipara</i> . In addition, the desk study returned records of grass snake within 620 m of the site.
Site management and disturbance	This site is currently used for equestrian purposes and there is frequent activity on the site. The areas of amenity grassland are frequently managed, and the grassland fields are regularly disturbed by horses, making these grassland areas suboptimal for reptiles. Other habitats on site, such as the tall ruderal, dense scrub, hedgerow, and boundary woodland are relatively unmanaged and undisturbed and provide suitable habitat for reptiles.
Topography and aspect of site	The site is predominantly flat with a gradually sloping field in the north of the site, sloping down towards the northwest. The field is mostly bare due to the disturbance, with limited basking opportunities at the edges of the field.
Vegetation type and structure	Two large fields are present within the west of the site and mainly consist of improved grassland, with areas of bare ground, tall ruderal vegetation, and scrub. A hedgerow borders the fields to the north, whilst the south is bordered by woodland. An area of woodland also forms the northeast of the site. Landscaping is present in the form of amenity grassland, introduced shrub, and scattered trees within the east of the site. The mosaic of habitats on site provides a variety of vegetation types and structural diversity, providing suitable foraging, refuge, and hibernation features for reptiles, albeit somewhat fragmented due to disturbance.
Likely prey abundance	The habitats on site, such as the woodland, hedgerow, grassland, tall ruderal, and scrub habitats, are likely to support a range of invertebrates, birds, and small mammal species, providing suitable prey for reptile species.
Presence of refugia and potential hibernation habitat	The dense scrub, hedgerow, and understorey of the woodland provide suitable cover, and the accumulating leaf litter provides opportunities for burrowing. Deadwood piles were recorded in the woodland, which may offer suitable refugia and hibernacula.
Egg-laying site potential (grass snake and sand lizard only)	Horse manure piles on site may provide suitable egg-laying habitat for grass snakes.

Table 4.1: Summary of Reptile Habitat Characteristics (cont.)

Reptile Habitat Characteristic	Description
Connectivity to surrounding habitat of potential value to reptiles	The site is bound to the northeast by a row of residential buildings and associated gardens, which offers limited suitable habitat for reptiles. Immediately to the southwest is Havering Country Park SINC, comprising mainly woodland and parkland interspersed with scrub, providing good quality habitat for reptiles. The wider landscape is dominated by farmland mixed with pockets of woodland, along with residential areas and local roads extending to the north and south. As such, there is a mosaic of suitable reptile habitat in the surrounding area, although the B175 provides a dispersal barrier to the east and residential areas offer limited opportunities.

Table 4.1: Summary of Reptile Habitat Characteristics (cont.)

4.2 Presence / Absence Survey Results

The findings of the presence/absence survey are detailed in Table 4.2. The location of reptile survey transects, and any reptiles recorded on site are plotted on Drawing C180266-05 in Chapter 7.

Visit	Date	Common lizard	Slow worm	Grass snake	Adder
1*	21-07-25	-	-	-	-
2	07-08-25	-	-	-	-
3	13-08-25	-	-	-	-
4	21-08-25	-	-	-	-
5	05-09-25	-	-	-	-
6	11-09-25	-	-	-	-
7	19-09-25	-	-	-	-
8	25-09-25	-	-	-	-
Key: ♂: Male, ♀:Female, Juv – Juvenile *: Artificial refugia set out on site					

Table 4.2: Presence/Absence Survey Results

No reptiles were recorded on site during the survey period.

5. Impact Assessment

5.1 Summary of Proposals

It is understood that the proposals include the demolition of all the buildings on site, with the exception of the locally listed building in the southeast of the site, which is to be renovated and converted for residential use. This is to facilitate the construction of six new dwellings and associated private and communal amenity areas. As a result, areas of woodland, grassland, and scrub are likely to be lost to facilitate the development. Conversely, areas of woodland, scrub, and grassland are to be created as part of the landscaping scheme, along with private gardens.

5.2 Summary of Key Features for Reptiles

Suitable habitat for reptiles was present on site in the form of woodland, grassland, tall ruderal, and scrub habitats. The dense scrub, hedgerow, and understorey of the woodland provide suitable shelter for reptile species, while deadwood piles recorded in the woodland offer suitable hibernacula. Furthermore, manure piles on site may offer suitable egg-laying habitat for grass snakes. However, most of the site was frequently disturbed by equestrian use, which likely decreases the suitability of the site for reptiles.

No reptiles were recorded on site during the survey to establish the presence or likely absence of reptiles. The results of the survey indicate that the site does not support a reptile population at present.

5.3 Potential Impacts on Reptiles

The results of the survey did not find reptiles to be using the site, and the proposed works are therefore not expected to impact any reptile species.

It is expected that the proposed development will result in loss of some suitable habitat for common reptile species. Since no reptiles were recorded during the survey period, and the low numbers recorded from the desk study, it is concluded that the impacts of the proposed development on the local reptile population will be negligible in the short-term. The proposed landscape scheme for the development includes woodland, scrub, hedgerow, and tree planting, as well as enhanced grassland, which should improve the value of the site for reptiles and other wildlife in the long-term.

6. Recommendations

All recommendations provided in this section are based on Middlemarch's current understanding of the site proposals, correct at the time the report was compiled. Should the proposals alter, the conclusions and recommendations made in the report should be reviewed to ensure that they remain appropriate.

- R1 Reptiles:** No reptiles were recorded on site during the presence/absence survey, therefore no recommendations for further work are made. However, should any reptiles be discovered on site during development, works should cease, and an experienced ecologist should be contacted immediately to determine a way forward. If works have not commenced within 24 months from the date of this report, then an updated reptile survey should be carried out.
- R2 Scheme Design:** The proposed development should be designed in accordance with the ecological mitigation hierarchy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). The mitigation hierarchy requires all development schemes to apply the following principles:
- *Avoidance and Mitigation* – the proposed development should seek to avoid/minimise losses of tall ruderal and dense scrub in the first instance and incorporate these features in the landscaping layout of the scheme accordingly.
 - *Compensation* – where unavoidable losses occur and mitigation cannot be provided, compensation for significant residual harm will be required as a last resort or planning permission could be refused. Compensation should include the creation of new reptile habitat such as rough grassland/scrub mosaic as well as replacement refugia and hibernacula, with linkages to suitable offsite opportunities to ensure the conservation status of reptiles on site can be maintained.

Any retained/created habitat for reptiles should be subject to long term management in accordance with a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP).

- R3 Updated Survey:** If works have not commenced within 24 months from the date of this report, then an updated Reptile Survey should be carried out.

7. Drawings

Drawing C180266-05-01 – Survey Transects and Findings



C180266-05-01

Legend

Reptile tile transect

Site boundary

Project

Havering Park Riding School,
Bower Farm Road, Havering-atte-Bower

Drawing

Reptile Survey Plan

Client

Adam Smyth and Richard Harris

Drawing Number

C180266-05-01

Revision

00

Scale @ A3

1:750

Date

October 2025

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Appendix 1

Relevant Legislation

All of the UK's native reptiles are protected by law. The two rarest species – sand lizard *Lacerta agilis* and smooth snake *Coronella austriaca* – benefit from the greatest protection.

Common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, adder *Vipera berus* and grass snake *Natrix helvetica* are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) from intentional killing or injuring.

Sand lizard and smooth snake are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Habitats Regulations 2017) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (Habitats Regulations 2019). They receive further legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981, as amended. This protection means that it is illegal to kill, injure, capture, handle or disturb these animals. Places they use for breeding, resting, shelter and protection are also protected from being damaged or destroyed. In addition, it is illegal to obstruct these animals from using such areas.

All native reptile species are listed as Species of Principal Importance for Nature Conservation in England and as such are material considerations in the planning process.

This is a simplified description of the legislation. In particular, the offences mentioned here may be absolute, intentional, deliberate or reckless. Note that where it is predictable that reptiles are likely to be killed or injured by activities such as site clearance, this could legally constitute intentional killing or injuring.

The reader should refer to the original legislation for the definitive interpretation.