



Elite Ecology

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**Land off The Green,
Cheadle**



Herptile Method Statement

February 2022



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1 Introduction

1.1 Report rationale

This report has been prepared at the request of Mr. Stephen Lowndes (Ash Green Homes Ltd). It relates to the potential presence of herptiles at the proposed works located at the Land off The Green, Cheadle, Staffordshire, ST10 1PH (Central OS Grid Reference: SJ 99716 42914).

Following this method statement will ensure that the development does not cause harm to any protected species or their habitats in accordance with Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

1.2 Site description and works

The site is situated in an urban setting on the eastern edge of the town of Cheadle. It is situated off of a main street, behind the petrol station on The Green.

Currently, works have already commenced, and a significant amount of clearance has already occurred on the site. Prior to clearance, hard standing ground, scrub, introduced shrub, marginal vegetation, and buildings were present. The works have been limited to the section of the site which the hard standing ground, and the building were present. The scrub, introduced shrub, and marginal vegetation have largely been undisturbed, and are to be enhanced through a Biodiversity Impact Assessment, and a Biodiversity Net Gain report. The habitats which remain, have the potential to support a variety of protected species.

Within the wider landscape, further habitats are present. These come in the form of some residential dwellings (and their associated gardens), poor semi-improved grassland, scrub, tall ruderal, and running water. The habitats that surround the site also have the potential to be utilized by a variety of protected species.

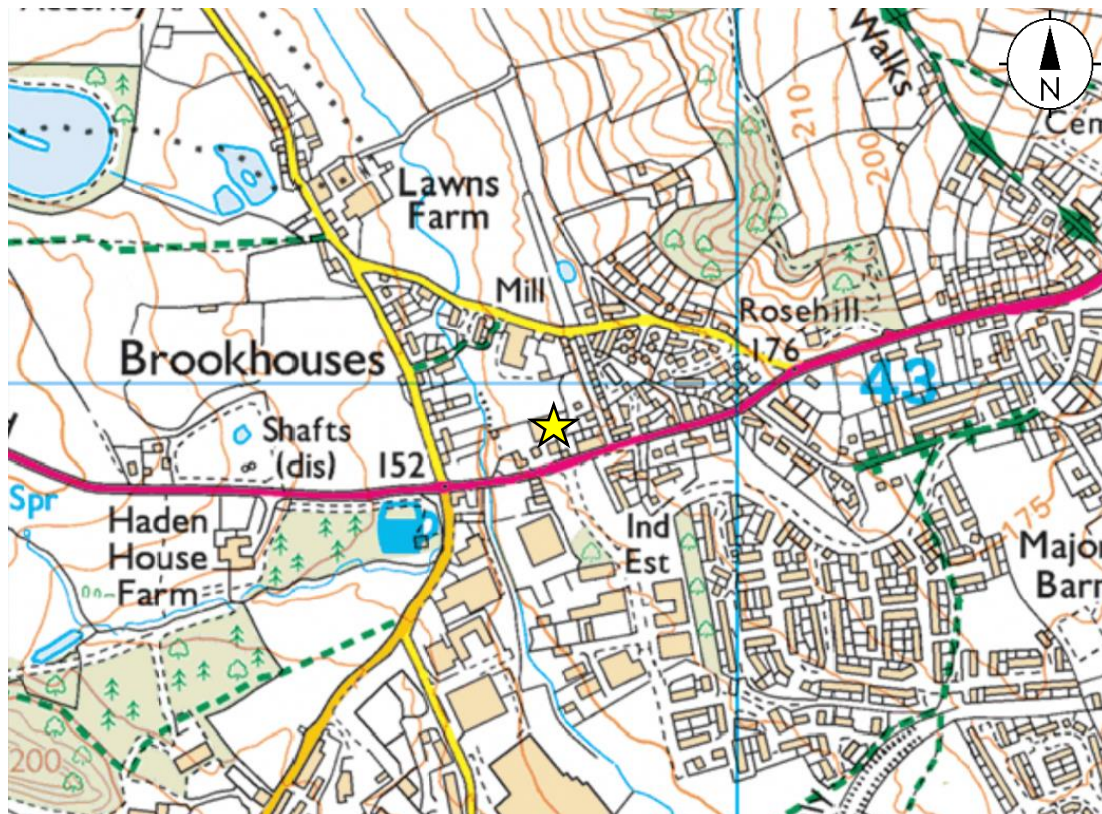
Under the current proposals, nine new residential dwellings with driveways and access roads, are to be erected, and landscaping is to be carried out. This will result in both the permanent and temporary loss and/or alteration of some of the habitats located on the proposed re-development site.

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Figure 1: An aerial map showing the location of the site at Land off The Green, Cheadle (as shown by the yellow star) in relation to some of the local landscape.



Figure 2: An OS map obtained from Bing showing the location of Land off The Green, Cheadle (yellow star).



2 Desktop Study

Elite Ecology was not commissioned to undertake a desktop Ecological Data search.

3 Field Survey

One field survey was undertaken by Elite Ecology in February 2022. Details of this can be found within the document submitted as part of the application. During the field survey of the site at the Land off The Green, Cheadle, eight habitat types were revealed. These are as follows:

- A2.1 Scattered Scrub
- A3.1 Scattered Broad-leaved Trees
- F2.1 Marginal Vegetation
- J1.4 Introduced Shrub
- J2.4 Fence
- J2.5 Wall
- J3.6 Buildings
- J4 Bare Ground

Some of these habitats were deemed to be of value to protected species. It was reported that the habitat mosaics at the site are conducive for the local reptile and amphibian populations. Therefore, it was deemed conceivable that some herptiles may be present on the site.

The habitats located on and adjacent to the site are deemed suitable for utilisation by the local herptile populations.

4 Impact Assessment

Based on the information gathered during the original walkover survey, it was deemed that the proposed works on the Land off The Green, Cheadle will have a **low** impact on the local amphibian populations and a **low** impact on local reptile populations. This is due to the survey site containing habitats on site that have the potential to support herptiles, but these habitats are largely being retained, and enhanced. Additionally, there is more suitable habitat running adjacent to the site, to the north.

This mitigation statement is only relevant to the habitats located on site and presents a best practice working approach to ensure that otherwise legitimate works do not inadvertently harm protected herptiles and/or cause a breach in the law.

5 Recommendations

Due to the potential for herptiles to be present, the following working methods should be adhered to. This will ensure that all herptiles that may be present are protected.

5.1 General Methods:

- On day 1 of the works, a toolbox talk will be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist. This will educate contractors in relation to the amphibians and reptiles that could be encountered and the legislation covering them. Associated documentation will be left with the site manager/project manager. This documentation will include contact details for Elite Ecology and the licenced ecologist appointed to the project.
- Prior to the commencement of the works, a walkover survey of the area will be undertaken to confirm that no alterations in baseline conditions have occurred. This will also search for the presence of any amphibian or reptile species on site, as well as taking into account the presence of other protected species such as nesting birds and badgers.
- All workers at the site will be inducted into the ecology constraints. This will include protocols to be adhered to should any reptiles or protected species be found during the works. This method statement and contact details will be left in the site office for the duration of the works.

5.2 Mitigation Strategy:

- Passive displacement of amphibians and reptiles is sufficient for this project. Considering the majority of the works have already been undertaken, and the suitable surrounding habitat being is being retained, further negative impacts on herptiles will be minimal.
- Passive displacement is required to be undertaken in suitable weather conditions and **avoid** a combination of the following conditions:
 - Temperature below 9°C
 - Rain or dense fog
 - Strong winds/blustery conditions
- Vegetation clearance shall subsequently follow a strategic pattern. The remaining vegetation is only present towards the west of the site. Any vegetation clearance within this section of the site should be conducted with the use of hand tools only.
- The vegetation clearance shall initially reduce vegetation to 200mm.
- Then, after a period of 48 hours, a second wave of clearance should begin. This second wave should reduce the vegetation further, to 50mm.

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- Two ecologists will need to supervise this – one supervising the vegetation clearance and the second located on the hard standing to the north-east of the vegetation in order to prevent any harm that vehicles could cause to reptiles dispersing in this direction.
- All arisings from vegetation clearance not used for the creation of new hibernacula/habitat piles must be removed from the working area immediately.
- Any existing hibernacula/habitat piles (features such as rubble piles, log piles, tree/hedgerow roots) will then be removed by hand under the supervision of the ecologist. Any reptiles caught will be relocated to suitable habitat to be retained.
- All construction materials and products to be used at the site must be stored on pallets in a compound located away from any potential herptile habitat. This is to prevent any herptiles getting harmed during the construction phase.

6 References

Edgar, P., Foster, J. and Baker, J. (2010). Reptile Habitat Management Handbook. Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bournemouth.

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 (2003) Herpetofauna Workers' Manual.

Langton, T.E.S., Beckett, C.L., and Foster, J.P. (2001), Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook, Froglife, Halesworth

The European Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994. HMSO.

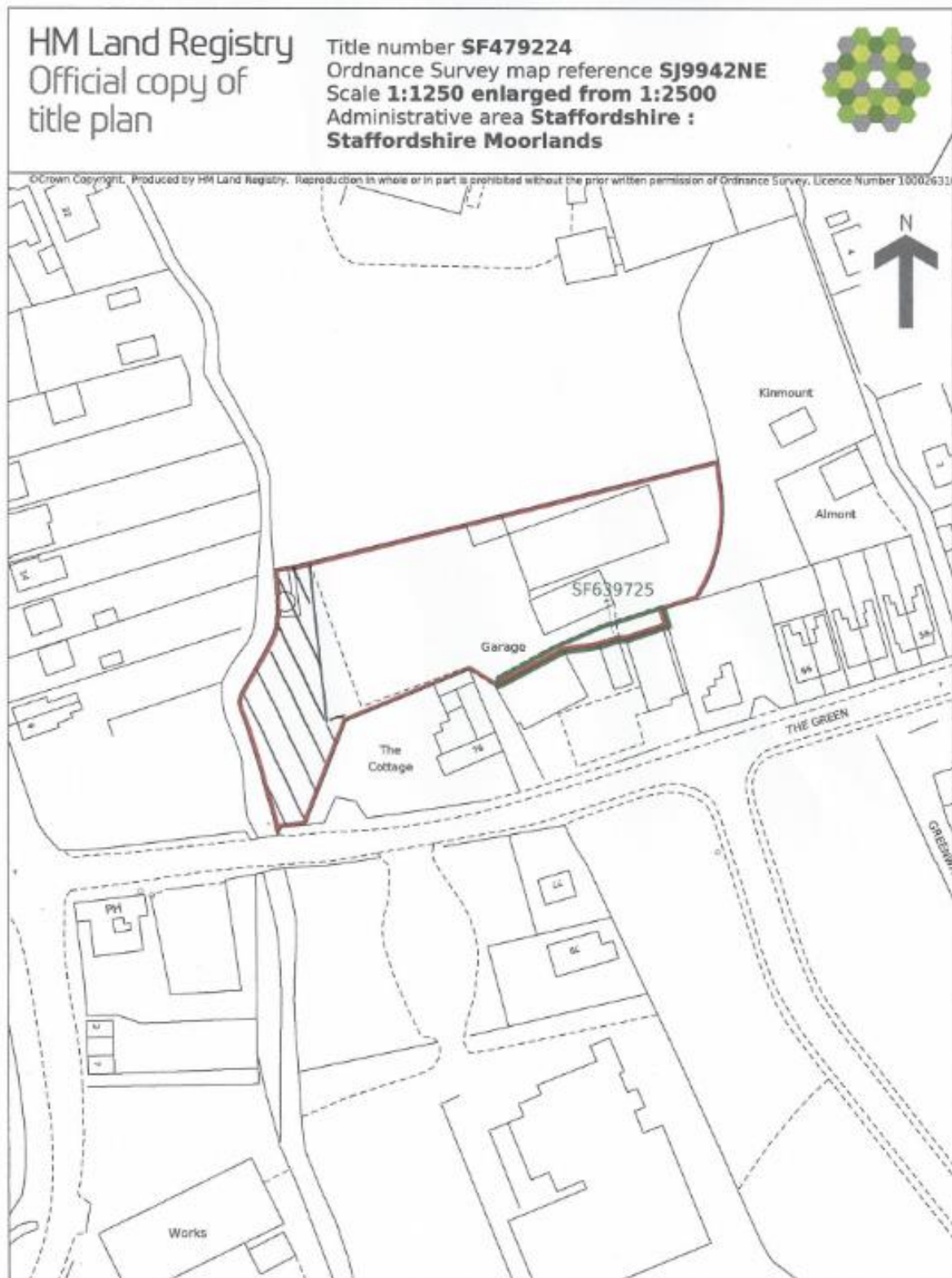
Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

Countryside Rights of Way Act (2000)

7 Appendices

Appendix A: Site Plans

Appendix B: Legislation and Policy

Appendix A: Site Plans



Appendix B: Legislation and Policy

Reptiles:

All six native reptiles within the United Kingdom are legally protected, with some species afforded additional protection depending on their rarity and conservation importance.

Sand Lizard: This species is afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). In addition to this, the sand lizard also receives protection under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (also referred to as the Habitats Directive).

Smooth Snake: This species is afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). In addition to this, the sand lizard also receives protection under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (also referred to as the Habitats Directive).

This means that both the aforementioned species are protected from deliberate disturbance, killing, injury or capture. The legislation also protects the habitats in which they live, to prevent them from being damaged or destroyed. Any activity involving disturbance or damage to habitats utilised by sand lizards and/or smooth snakes is in need of a development licence issued by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) following consultation with the statutory nature conservation organisation (Natural England).

Adder: This species is partially protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Common Lizard: This species is partially protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Grass Snake: This species is partially protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Slow-worm: This species is partially protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

This means that these species are protected from intentional killing, injuring and sale, but their habitat is not protected. The presence of these species in planning terms is viewed as a material consideration, with any reptile interest on a proposed development site needing to be safeguarded. If a proposed development is likely to have an impact on these reptiles, then this must be notified to the relevant statutory nature conservation body (especially if capture and translocation is being proposed).

In certain areas of the UK, sites that support common reptile species such as common lizards and slow-worms can qualify as County Wildlife Sites. Sites of this designation may receive protection in planning policy.

Amphibians:

All amphibians are listed under schedule 5 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), with some species afforded additional protection depending on their rarity and conservation importance.

Great Crested Newt: This species is afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Please see below for this species' additional legislation.

Pool Frog: This species is afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are also protected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Natterjack Toad: This species is afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are also protected under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994, whilst also being listed on the Habitats Directive (annex IV) and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP).

This means that the aforementioned species are protected from deliberate disturbance, killing, injury or capture. The legislation also protects the habitats in which they live, to prevent them from being damaged or destroyed. Any activity involving disturbance or damage to habitats utilised by these species needs a development licence from Natural England.

Common Frog: This species is partially protected section 9 (5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Common Toad: This species is partially protected section 9 (5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Palmate Newt: This species is partially protected section 9 (5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Smooth Newt: This species is partially protected section 9 (5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

This means that these species are protected from sale only, but should be considered as a material consideration if the proposed development works on a site could negatively impact upon these populations.

8 Notice to Readers: Conditions of this Report

All reports are certified products and cannot be shown, copied or distributed to third parties without the written permission of Elite Ecology. No liability is accepted for the contents of the report, other than to that of the client(s).

Elite Ecology agrees to supply ecological consulting services and advice of a preliminary or thorough nature as advised or commissioned. Upon commissioning Elite Ecology to undertake the work, the client(s) grant access to the site upon the agreed date. If no site access is available upon this date, Elite Ecology holds the right to charge the client(s) for lost staffing time and additional travel costs.

Elite Ecology undertake all site surveys with reasonable skill, care and diligence, within the terms of the contract that has been agreed with the client and abiding by Elite Ecology's Terms and Conditions. The actions of the surveyors on site, and during the production of the report, were undertaken in accordance with the Code of Professional Conduct for the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.

The latest good practice guidelines put in place by Natural England or the relevant statutory conservation bodies have been followed by the surveyors on site. If those methodologies fail to identify a protected species during the survey efforts, no responsibility can be attributed to Elite Ecology. If any of these guidelines are adapted between the date(s) of the surveys being undertaken and the submission of this report, then Elite Ecology takes no responsibility for this.

Should any equipment be damaged or lost on site at the fault of the client(s), then Elite Ecology withholds the right to charge 100% above the current market value for that exact product or the nearest similar product.

The survey results purport the current status of the site and its potential for protected species utilisation at the time of surveying. It should not be viewed as a complete list of the possible flora and fauna species that could be using the site at different times of the year.

Elite Ecology has been provided with full payment for this report and thus the product has been released to the client(s) for the purpose of their planning application. If any part of the report is lost or altered without the written permission of Elite Ecology, then the entire report becomes invalid. Due to the potential for continual change within the natural world, this report is valid for **2 years only** from the date of the last survey visit. If this report is submitted after the 2-year deadline, then a further updated inspection will be required to ascertain whether the site remains in the same condition as it was when initially inspected.

No reliance should be made on any such comments in relation to the structural integrity of the features located on the surveyed site. All information within the report is based solely on evidence that has been found on site during the service provided. No individual opinion or inference will be made other than that of the suitably qualified ecologist appointed to the project.