



# Sandleford Park, Newbury

## Appendix F3: Reptile Presence/Likely Absence Survey



## Bloor Homes & The Sandleford Farm Partnership

**February 2019**

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## Executive Summary

Contents	Summary
<b>Site Location</b>	The site is located at Sandleford Park in Newbury, West Berkshire, centred on OS Grid Reference SU 46847 64550. The site comprises agricultural fields with areas of grassland and several copses of ancient woodland. A central valley runs from the north-western corner of the site towards the River Enborne at the site's southern boundary.
<b>Existing Site Information</b>	WYG completed an initial ecological appraisal in 2008 with update surveys carried out in 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016 and 2017 (Appendix F1). These surveys identified habitat considered optimal for reptiles, and presence/likely absence surveys which have been completed across the whole site in 2011 and 2014, with further updates across parts of the site in 2017 and 2018.
<b>Scope of this Survey(s)</b>	The aims of the survey work and the subsequent report presented herein were to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarise the findings of reptile surveys across the site;</li> <li>• Estimate the population size class (if possible) of reptiles where present;</li> <li>• Review the reptile survey results and proposed mitigation with reference to the current proposals for the site.</li> </ul>
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A <b>low</b> population of slow worm and grass snake were found across the entire site in 2011 which is considered to be breeding due to the presence of juveniles.</li> <li>• A <b>low</b> population of slow worm, grass snake and common lizard were found across the whole site in 2014.</li> <li>• <b>No</b> reptiles were recorded within the area south of Newbury college in 2017, although two toads were identified close to the dried-out ponds.</li> <li>• The DPN1 area in the northeast of the site was also surveyed in 2017, and found to support a <b>low</b> population of grass snake, considered to be breeding due to the presence of juveniles.</li> <li>• A <b>low</b> population of slow worm and grass snake were found across the whole site in 2018.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations</b>	As reptiles are known to be present within certain habitats on the site, reptile mitigation is recommended to need to be implemented at the site to prevent breaching the <i>Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981</i> . The proposals for the site have been informed by ecology survey and ecologist input. Areas of enhancement for reptiles have been included within the Country Park.



	<p>A reptile mitigation strategy will be required for each phase of the works (where reptiles have been found to be present), to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority. The approach to this is outlined in the EMMP (Appendix F18). This is to comprise the displacement of reptiles to retained and enhanced areas of the site. Reptile displacement should be undertaken during the animals' active period which runs from mid-March until mid-October and in suitable weather conditions. It should be noted however that should conditions on-site change significantly (i.e. changes in the extent of habitats on site or larger numbers of reptiles are identified) a translocation may be required in conjunction with or in lieu of a displacement.</p> <p>There are no constraints to works within the main arable fields, as this habitat is considered to be sub-optimal for reptiles.</p>
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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

WYG was initially commissioned by the Sandleford Partnership in 2011 to undertake a reptile presence/likely absence survey at the site known as Sandleford Park, Newbury. Update surveys were later undertaken on the behalf of Bloor Homes and the Sandleford Farm Partnership in 2014, 2017 and 2018.

WYG was commissioned by Bloor Homes and the Sandleford Farm Partnership in December 2018 to review the status of reptile populations at Sandleford Park, with reference to the current proposals. This summary report has been prepared by Associate Ecologist Tamsin Clark MCIEEEM.

### 1.2 Site Location

The site is located at Sandleford Park in Newbury, West Berkshire and is centred at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SU 46847 64550. The survey area, hereafter referred to as the 'site', is shown on Figure 1 and comprised of agricultural fields with areas of grassland and several copses of ancient woodland dispersed throughout. A central valley runs from the north-western corner of the site towards the River Enborne at the site's southern boundary.

For details of the development description, please see the main ES chapter.

### 1.3 Purpose of the Report

The preliminary ecological appraisals carried out by WYG have identified the potential for reptiles to occur on site (Appendix F1) and reptile surveys have been completed in 2011, 2014, 2017 (across part of the site), and 2018. These surveys have confirmed the presence of a low population of reptiles within the site boundary. The aims of this summary report are to:

- Confirm the distribution population size class of reptiles across the site;
- Provide an appraisal of potential impacts of the current proposals.



## 2.0 Methodology

### 2.1 Desk Study

#### 2.1.1 Previous Reports

WYG completed an initial ecological appraisal in 2008 with update surveys carried out in 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016 and 2017 (Appendix F1). These surveys identified habitat considered optimal for reptiles and recommended further presence/likely absence surveys which were completed in 2011, 2014, 2017 (across part of the site), and 2018. The results of these surveys, in particular the most recent, have been summarised in this report.

#### 2.1.2 Local Ecological Records Centre

Up to date information was requested from the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) and the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) in November 2017 for information on any nature conservation designations and protected or notable species records within 2 km of the site.

The data search covers:

- Statutory designated sites for nature conservation, namely SACs, SPAs, Ramsar sites, SSSIs, NNRs and LNRs;
- Non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation, namely LWS;
- Legally protected species, such as great crested newts, bats and badger;
- Notable habitats and species, such as those listed as Habitats or Species of Principal Importance; and,
- Priority habitats or species within both HBIC and TVERC areas.

#### 2.1.3 Online Resources

A search for relevant information was also made on the following websites:

- MAGIC [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk) - DEFRA's interactive, web-based database for statutory designations and information on any EPSL applications that have been granted in the local area since 2015.

## 2.2 Field Surveys

In accordance with the guidance outlined in the Herpetofauna Workers' Manual (Joint Nature Conservation Committee - JNCC, 2003), Advice Sheet 10 – Reptile Survey (Froglife, 1999) and the Handbook of Biodiversity Methods: Survey, Evaluation and Monitoring (Hill *et al.*, 2005) surveys were completed to establish the presence or likely absence of reptile species. This involved seven visits during the reptile active season between April and October.

Artificial refugia were placed in areas of potentially suitable habitat, at the required density.

- 231 numbered artificial refugia (sections of bituminised roofing felt) were placed across the site in areas considered to have habitat suitable for reptiles in 2011.
- A total of 500 similar refugia were placed in 2014;



- In 2017 the site was split into the DPN1 area which had a total of 68 refugia and the area to the south of Newbury college which had 65 refugia;
- The site was reassessed in December 2017 (Appendix F1), and found not to have significantly changed in its potential to support reptiles; and
- In 2018 a total of 325 artificial refugia were placed across the site in areas of suitable habitat (with the exception of DPN1).

The refuges were then left undisturbed on the site prior to survey; to allow for reptiles on the site to find and utilize. Each refuge was then first checked for basking individuals from a distance before being slowly approached and searched for sheltering reptiles. Terrestrial habitat between artificial refugia was also searched for reptile species on each visit. The location of each reptile sighting was then recorded to allow for analysis of population distributions across the site.

As a guideline it is recommended that the optimal time to survey reptiles is between 8:30am to 11:00am and between 16:00pm and 18:30pm and when air temperature is between 9°C and 18°C. Strong rain and wind are deemed unsuitable (Froglife, 1999). As reptile activity is heavily dependent on weather conditions the following conditions were recorded during each survey: air temperature, wind levels, rain levels, and the cloud cover.

### 2.3 Limitations

All surveys were completed within suitable weather conditions, during the optimum season for reptile surveys across all years.

The majority of the site was accessible; however, on some occasions, some areas of the site had cattle grazing so it was not possible to put mats in these areas. Following the initial survey set up in 2017, some of the fields were mown which meant mats were lost and had to be replaced.

These are not considered to represent significant limitations to the findings of this summary report, which includes data collected over a number of years.



### 3.0 Results

#### 3.1 Desk Study

HBIC returned 4 records of reptile species within 2km of the site from the past 15 years. The species identified include slow worm and common lizard with the closest record being of a slow worm 0.5km SE from site.

TVERC returned 564 records of reptile species within 2km of the site. The species identified include common lizard, slow worm, grass snake and adder. The vast majority of these records come from within Greenham and Crookham common SSSI <0.5km east of the site which is an extensive complex of heathland, grassland, gorse scrub, broad-leaved woodland and alder-lined gullies. Newtown Road creates a barrier between the site and these records, so it is unlikely that great crested newts would move across from the SSSI onto the development site.

#### 3.2 Weather Conditions

**Table 1: 2011 Survey Weather Conditions**

Survey	Date	Time	Air Temperature (°C)	Rain
1	30/08/2011	08:30 - 12:00	13.3	No
2	07/09/2011	14:30 - 15:30	15.6	No
3	13/09/2011	09:00 - 12:00	15.3	No
4	16/09/2011	09:00 - 12:00	15.0	No
5	20/09/2011	09:00 - 12:00	18.5	No
6	23/09/2011	09:00 - 12:00	16.8	No
7	27/09/2011	15:00 - 18:00	19.9	No

**Table 2: 2014 Survey Weather Conditions**

Survey	Date	Time	Air Temperature (°C)	Rain	Cloud cover (%)	Wind
1	29/08/2014	08:30	15.5	No	100	Still
2	02/09/2014	08:45	13.5	No	100	Still
3	09/09/2014	08:30	13.8	No	20	Still
4	12/09/2014	08:30	14.5	No	100	Very light breeze
5	15/09/2014	08:45	15.0	No	100	Still
6	18/09/2014	08:30	16.8	No	100	Still
7	22/09/2014	09:00	9.8	No	20	Still

**Table 3: 2017 Area South of Newbury College Survey Weather Conditions**

Survey No.	Date	Time		Air Temperature (°C)		Ground Temperature (°C)		Wind Speed	Precipitation	Cloud Cover (%)
		Start	Finish	Initial	Final	Initial	Final			
1	28.04.17	14:00	14:30	12.0	13.1	14.1	14.1	1	0	75
2	02.05.17	14:25	14:55	17.6	17.4	16.8	16.7	2	0	75
3	05.05.17	10:55	11:15	13.1	13.1	12.3	12.3	1	0	70
4	08.05.17	09:30	10:00	10.1	10.1	11.6	11.6	2	0	95
5	12.05.17	10:25	11:00	14.1	14.2	11.7	11.7	2	0	80
6	17.05.17	10:55	11:15	15.0	15.2	13.2	13.2	0	0	20
7	19.05.17	10:00	10:30	12.1	12.2	11.8	11.8	1	0	40

**Table 4: 2017 DPN1 Survey Weather Conditions**

Survey No.	Date	Time		Air Temperature (°C)		Ground Temperature (°C)		Wind Speed	Precipitation	Cloud Cover (%)
		Start	Finish	Initial	Final	Initial	Final			
1	19.09.17	11:30	13:10	12	18	13	14	0	0	50
2	22.09.17	11:00	12:05	14	14	12	12	0	0	0
3	26.09.17	12:30	13:55	17.3	17.5	16.0	15.9	1	0	50
4	28.09.17	13:30	15:00	17.9	18.1	17.6	17.7	0	0	20
5	03.10.17	15:15	16:30	16.0	15.9	15.7	15.7	1	0	70
6	06.10.17	10:00	11:15	13.8	13.9	12.0	12.4	2	0	50
7	09.10.17	10:30	11:45	17.1	17.1	13.4	13.4	1	0	100

**Table 5: 2018 Survey Weather Conditions**

Survey No.	Date	Time		Air Temperature (°C)		Ground Temperature (°C)		Wind Speed	Precipitation	Cloud Cover (%)
		Start	Finish	Initial	Final	Initial	Final			
1	03/05/18	09:10	12:00	11.6	17.8	9.8	12.1	0	40	None
2	08/05/18	09:00	12:00	17.1	22.3	13.8	15.4	1	0	None
3	11/05/18	09:00	12:30	15.7	17.7	14.2	14.9	3	20	None
4	18/05/18	09:30	12:30	12.0	15	11.5	13.5	0	10	None
5	01/06/18	09:30	13:00	17.7	19.8	17.5	18.2	0	80	None
6	05/06/18	09:00	13:00	13.4	14.4	14.1	14.3	0	100	Light rain
7	08/06/18	09:00	16:00	16.8	23.4	17.8	20.9	1	10	None



### 3.3 Survey Results

The location of reptiles identified on-site across all years of survey can be found in Figure 2.

**Table 6: 2011 Survey Results**

Survey	Date	Records			Mat No.	Additional Notes
		Species	Adult	Juvenile		
1	30/08/2011	Slow worm	F		119	
		Slow worm	M		112	
		Slow worm	M		22	
		Slow worm		JU	117	
2	07/09/2011	Slow worm	F		119	
		Slow worm		JU	117	
3	13/09/2011					No reptiles found
4	16/09/2011	Grass snake	SA		112	
		Slow worm	F		119	
5	20/09/2011					No reptiles found
6	23/09/2011					No reptiles found
7	27/09/2011					No reptiles found

**Table 7: 2014 Survey Results**

Survey	Date	Records			Mat No.	Additional Notes
		Species	Adult	Juvenile		
1	29/08/2014	Slow worm	1 female	-	55	
2	02/09/2014	-	-	-	-	No reptiles found
3	09/09/2014	Slow worm	1 female	-	119	
4	12/09/2014	Grass snake	1 unsexed	-	98	
5	15/09/2014	-	-	-	-	No reptiles found
6	18/09/2014	-	-	-	-	No reptiles found
7	22/09/2014	-	-	-	-	No reptiles found

**Table 8: 2017 Area South of Newbury College Survey Results**

Survey	Date	Records			Mat No.	Additional Notes
		Species	Adult	Juvenile		
1	28.04.17	-	-	-	-	No reptiles found
2	02.05.17	-	-	-	-	No reptiles found
3	05.05.17	-	-	-	-	No reptiles found
4	08.05.17	-	-	-	-	No reptiles found
5	12.05.17	-	-	-	-	No reptiles found
6	17.05.17	-	-	-	-	No reptiles found
7	19.05.17	-	-	-	-	No reptiles found

**Table 9: 2017 DPN1 Survey Results**



Survey	Date	Records			Mat No.	Additional Notes
		Species	Adult	Juvenile		
1	19.09.17	-	-	-	-	2x common toad under mats 4 & 23
2	22.09.17	-	-	-	-	No reptiles found
3	26.09.17	-	-	-	-	No reptiles found
4	28.09.17	Grass snake	0	1	19	
		Grass snake	0	1	23	
5	03.10.17	-	-	-	-	No reptiles found
6	06.10.17	Grass snake	0	1	22	
7	09.10.17	Grass snake	0	1	23	

**Table 10: 2018 Survey Results**

Survey	Date	Records			Mat No.	Additional Notes
		Species	Adult	Juvenile		
1	03.05.18	Slow worm	1	0	98	C. Toad – Mats 48 & 47
		Slow worm	1	0	147	
2	08.05.18	Slow worm	1	0	98	C. Toad – Mats 159, 158(x2), 166, 105, 252, 231 C. Frog – Mat 169
		Slow worm	1	0	97	
3	11.05.18	Grass snake	0	1	74	C. Toad – Mats 124, 169, 253
		Slow worm	1	0	98	
		Slow worm	1	0	125	
		Grass snake	1	0	235	
4	18.05.18	Grass snake	1	0	46	C. Toad – Mats 166, 252, 225, 204
5	01.06.18	Slow worm	1	0	93	C. Toad – Mats 165 (x2), 168, 169 (x2), 260, 231
		Slow worm	1	1	99	
		Slow worm	1	0	75	
		Slow worm	1	0	175	
6	05.06.18	Slow worm	1	0	96	C. Toad – 164, 157, 160, 168 (x2), 169, 45, 260, 251 C. Frog - 169
		Slow worm	1	0	104	
		Slow worm	1	0	175	
		Grass snake	1	1	188	
7	08.06.18	Slow worm	1	0	93	C. Toad – 124, 154, 158, 162, 168, 169 C. Frog - 159
		Grass snake	1	0	131	
		Grass snake	1	0	170	
		Slow worm	1	0	232	
		Slow worm	1	0	175	



## 4.0 Relevant Legislation

### 4.1 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

All six species of reptiles native to the UK are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and benefit from various levels of protection. The adder, grass snake, slow-worm and common lizard receive partial or full protection under Section 9 of the Act. This legislation makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill or injure these animals; and
- Sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale or publish advertisement to buy or sell individual reptiles.

The smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*) and sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) are listed in Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. As a result it is an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill or injure these animals;
- Deliberately disturb these animals;
- Take or destroy their eggs;
- Damage, destroy or disturb or impede access to breeding or shelter sites used by these species; and
- Sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale or publish advertisement to buy or sell individual reptiles.

### 4.2 Local Biodiversity Action Plan - The Berkshire Biodiversity Strategy

Of the six species native to UK, with the exception of smooth snake all are classified as priority species for the county of Berkshire (Berkshire Local Nature Partnership, 2014). In addition common toad is also designated as a priority species within the county.



## 5.0 Ecological Constraints, Impacts and Recommendations

### 5.1 Summary of Findings

#### 2011 Report

##### **Two species of reptile - slow worm and grass snake were recorded at Sandleford Park.**

During the 2011 reptile presence / likely absence survey two species of reptile were recorded, most of which were located at the eastern end of Gorse Covert and along the hedgerow leading down to Waterleaze Copse from Gorse Covert. A single slow worm was also found adjacent to Barn Copse. The single grass snake which was identified was located at the eastern end of Gorse Covert; however during the extended Phase 1 habitat survey in 2011, an adult grass snake was also seen basking adjacent to the hedgerow which extended south from the central track to Gorse Covert. Slow worms were recorded during three of the seven presence/absence visits, with a maximum of three adult individuals being recorded on any one day. The sub adult grass snake was observed on the fourth visit only.

#### 2014 Report

##### **Three species of reptile - slow worm, grass snake and common lizards were recorded at Sandleford Park.**

Two adult slow worms and a single grass snake were recorded during the 2014 reptile presence/likely absence survey. One of the slow worms was recorded along the defunct hedgerow which extends from the south eastern corner of Gorse Covert and the other was recorded along the track towards the eastern extent of the site. The single grass snake was recorded between the two eastern most fields at the southern extent of the site. A common lizard was seen within the field between the eastern extent of Dirty Ground Copse and the central track (near reptile mats 131 – 134) during the dormouse survey which was completed on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2014.

#### 2017 Area South of Newbury College Report

**No reptiles were recorded in this area of the site.** Due to surveys being carried out in suitable conditions and within the optimal survey period for reptiles, the confidence in the negative result for this area of the site is high.

#### 2017 DPN1 Report

##### **Two species of reptile – slow worm and grass snake were recorded within DPN1.**

A maximum count of two juvenile grass snakes were recorded on the 28<sup>th</sup> September with another juvenile individual being found on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> September. All of the identified grass snakes were found within the tussocky grass field margin along the northern-most hedgerow which runs adjacent to Monks Lane.

#### 2018 Report

##### **Two species of reptile - slow worm and grass snake were recorded at Sandleford Park.**



A maximum count of four adult and one juvenile were recorded on the 1<sup>st</sup> June. These records were located around the woodland boundaries of Barns Copse, Dirty Ground Copse, Gorse Covert and within the field boundaries of the arable fields.

A peak count of one adult grass snake on the 8<sup>th</sup> May, 11<sup>th</sup> May, 5<sup>th</sup> June and 8<sup>th</sup> June with juveniles being identified on the 11<sup>th</sup> May and the 8<sup>th</sup> June. These records were located around the woodland boundary of Dirty Ground Copse and within the field boundaries of the southern and eastern arable fields.

## 5.2 Population Estimate

**Table 9:** Calculating Populations (from Froglife, 1999)

Species	Low population Score 1	Good population Score 2	Exceptional population Score 3
Adder	<5	5 – 10	>10
Grass snake	<5	5 – 10	>10
Common lizard	<5	5 – 20	>20
Slow worm	<5	5 – 20	>20

Figures in table refer to maximum number of adults seen by observation and / or under roof felt (places at a density of up to 10 per hectare), by one person in one day.

- A **low** population of slow worm and grass snake were found across the entire site in 2011 which is considered to be breeding due to the presence of juveniles.
- A **low** population of slow worm, grass snake and common lizard were found across the whole site in 2014.
- **No** reptiles were recorded within the area south of Newbury college in 2017, although two toads were identified close to the dried-out ponds.
- The DPN1 area had a **low** population of grass snake, considered to be breeding due to the presence of juveniles in 2017. Although no adult grass snake were recorded within the DPN1 area (which are used to calculate population estimates) it is not possible to assume likely absence due to the presence of grass snake at other life stages.
- A **low** population of slow worm and grass snake were found across the entire site (with the exception of DPN1) in 2018. Both species were considered to be breeding due to the presence of juveniles.

## 5.3 Recommendations

Given that reptiles have been recorded on the development site, reptile mitigation is recommended to be implemented at the site to prevent breaching the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*. The proposals for the site have been informed by ecology survey and ecological input. Areas of enhancement for reptiles have been included within the Country Park.

A reptile mitigation strategy will be required for each phase of the works (where reptiles have been found to be present), to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority. The approach to this outlined in the EMMP (Appendix F18). This is recommended to comprise the displacement of reptiles to retained and enhanced areas of the site. Reptile displacement should be undertaken during the animals’ active period which runs from mid-March until mid-October and in suitable weather conditions. It should be noted however that should conditions on-site change significantly (i.e. changes in the extent of



habitats on site or larger numbers of reptiles are identified) a translocation may be required in conjunction with or in lieu of a displacement.

There are no constraints to works within the main arable fields, as this habitat is considered to be sub-optimal for reptiles. It is recommended that prior to the commencement of the construction works, current agricultural use of the arable field continues to ensure that suitable habitat in the form of tall grassland doesn't encroach into the arable land (currently considered sub-optimal for reptiles).

## **5.4 Other Species**

Common toad were recorded during the survey. Toads are a Priority Species listed under the NERC Act (2006). The measures recommended to displace reptiles will also ensure that any toads found are also relocated to retained habitats to the south.

## **5.5 Habitat Management**

Following translocation / displacement works, it is recommended that the cleared works areas are regularly managed to maintain a short vegetation height unsuitable for reptiles. This will seek to prevent future establishment of a reptile population in these areas and thus avoid potential impacts during the construction phase of the development.

Enhancement measures for reptiles are proposed within the wider Sandleford Park development, in particular within the Country Park. These measures are specified within the Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan (Appendix F18).



## 6.0 References

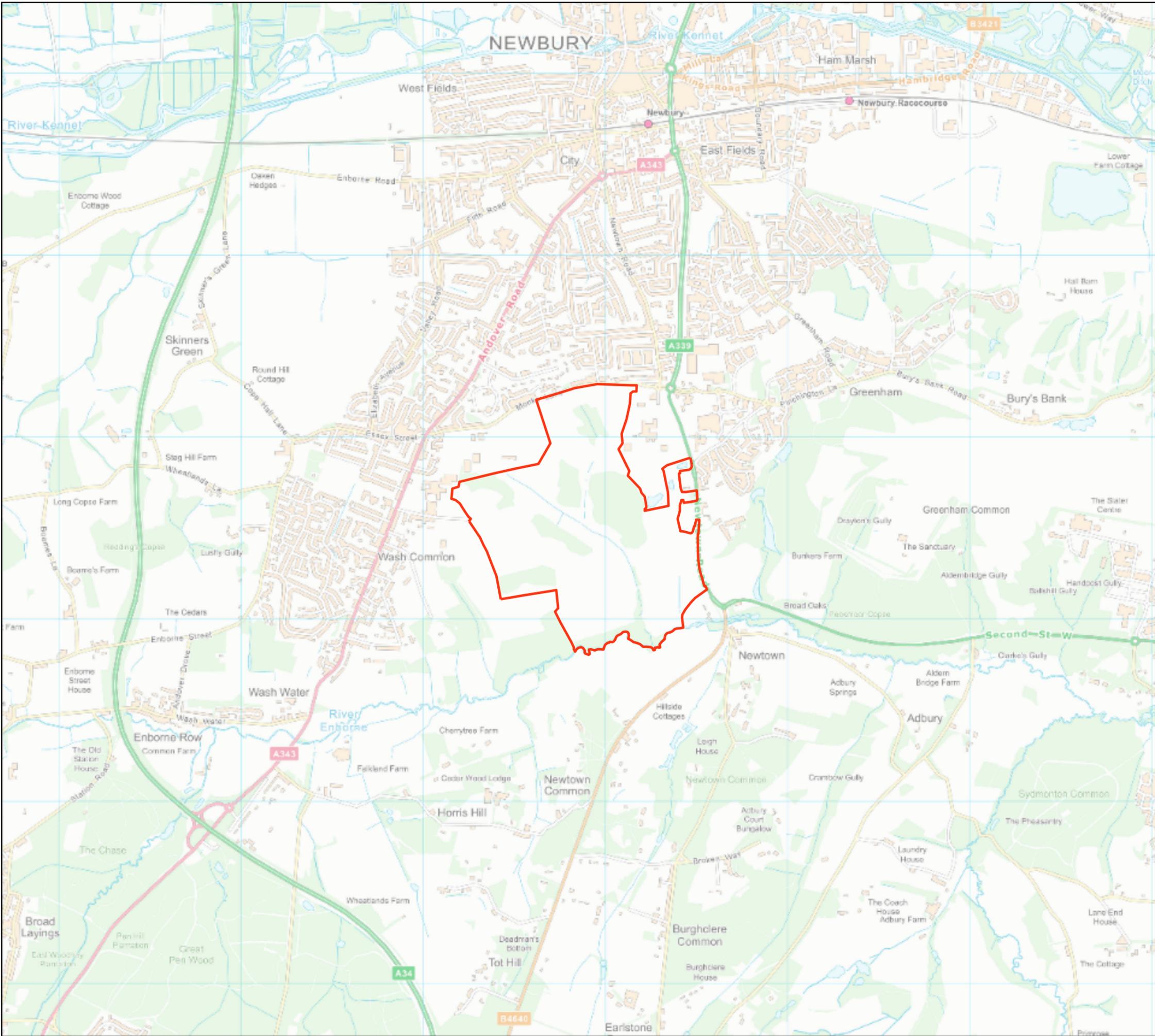
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- WYG (2017) Sandleford Park, Newbury – DPN1: Reptile Presence/Likely Absence Survey Report
- WYG (2018) Sandleford Park, Newbury - Reptile Presence/Likely Absence Survey



## **FIGURES**

**Figure 1 – Site Location**

**Figure 2 – Survey Results**



Rev	Date	Notes
A	09/03/2018	Initial map production

**Legend**

Site boundary



**Site Location Plan**

**Sandleford Park, Newbury  
Bloor Homes**

Scale at A3: 1:20,000	Project No: A070660-23	Drawing No: Figure 1	Revision: A
Drawn by: ben.cooke	Drawn date: 09/03/2018	Approved by: david.west	

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Rev	Date	Notes
A	17/12/18	Initial map production

**Legend**

 Site boundary

2018 results

 Grass snake (2018)

 Slow worm (2018)

2017 results

 Grass snake (2017)

2014 results

 Grass snake (2014)

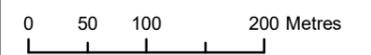
 Slow worm (2014)

 Common lizard (2014)

2011 results

 Grass snake (2011)

 Slow worm (2011)



**Survey Results**

**Sandleford Park, Newbury: DPN1  
Bloor Homes**

Scale at A3: 1:6,000	Project No: A070660-21	Drawing No: Figure 2	Revision: A
Drawn by: Ben Blowers	Drawn date: 17/12/2018	Approved by: Alex Hellyar	

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