REPTILE MITIGATION AND SAFEGUARDING STRATEGY

PROJECT NAME: LAND TO THE SOUTH OF WARBOYS, CAMBRIDGESHIRE, WARBOYS, PE28 3AH

PURPOSE: To inform the proposals and planning application

DATE: 11th July 2025

1. Introduction

1.1. Allied Ecology Ltd has been appointed to prepare a Reptile Mitigation and Safeguarding Strategy in respect of the proposals at Land to the South of Warboys, Cambridgeshire, Warboys, PE28 3AH (grid reference TL 29956 78357).

1.2. It is understood that the proposals are for demolition of an existing derelict Nissen hut structure, to be replaced by a single new residential dwelling with associated landscaping and access infrastructure.

1.3. It is intended that this Mitigation and Safeguarding Strategy be read in conjunction with the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment (dated 05/07/2022), and updated assessment undertaken in 2025, prepared by the third-party ecologist (Arbtech Consulting Limited) to inform the proposals.

2. Ecological Background and Legislation

2.1. Ecological Background

2.1.1. Six species of reptile are considered to be native to England, all which may be adversely impacted by development related activities during site clearance works, fragmentation of habitats and isolation of populations.

2.1.2. Reptiles can be found within a diverse variety of habitat types, ranging from grasslands, ruderal and scrub habitats, to heathlands and woodland edges, and coastal dunes. They consume a wide diversity of prey species, with common and widespread reptile species typically predating invertebrates, amphibians, and small mammals.

2.1.3. Being cold-blooded, and unable to regulate their body temperatures without warmth from the sun and surrounding ambient temperatures, reptiles often seek out areas to bask in order to raise their metabolic rate prior to hunting and in order to aid digestion / other bodily processes. As such, reptiles are typically more active during periods of higher temperatures and are more readily able to escape predation or move out of harm's way during vegetation management / clearance. As a result of their inability to regulate their body temperatures, during periods of high heat, reptiles may seek out shaded areas or go to ground. As such, they may be more vulnerable to construction related activities during periods of high heat.

2.1.4. Reptiles hibernate during the winter, in cool moist environments, typically below ground and / or beneath logs and rubble piles, or even at the base of large grass tussocks. During the hibernation period, reptiles are typically inactive and therefore vulnerable to construction or

development activities that they may otherwise be able to escape from during their more active summer months.

2.2. Legislation Summary

2.2.1. All British reptiles are protected under domestic legislation (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended), which makes it an offence to kill or injure them. Rarer species of reptile, including Smooth Snake and Sand Lizard are afforded a greater level of protection under this legislation, which also makes it an offence to:

- disturb them while they occupy a structure or place used for shelter or protection;
- obstruct access to a place of shelter or protection.

2.2.2. Smooth Snake and Sand Lizard receive further protection through international legislation (Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended), and as such, they are classified as European Protected Species. For these species it is also therefore an offence to:

- deliberately kill, injure, disturb or capture them;
- deliberately take or destroy their eggs;
- damage or destroy their breeding sites and resting places; and
- possess, control or transport them (alive or dead).

2.2.3. In addition to the above legislation, all native reptiles are classified as Section 41 Priority Species, and are therefore afforded a greater level of consideration within development under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, representing a material consideration at planning.

3. Summary of Survey Work Undertaken

3.1. Site Overview

3.1.1. The site is located to the south of Warboys, Cambridgeshire, adjacent to the A141, and comprises a derelict / dilapidated Nissen hut, with associated hardstanding. Habitats within the site are understood to not have received regular / ongoing management or maintenance and as such, have become overgrown with tall ruderal vegetation / tall forbs.

3.1.2. Since the 2022 assessment was undertaken, more recently produced / available aerial photography appears to show that the vegetated habitats present within the site have continued to develop and appear even more overgrown, which appears to be supported by the findings of the third-party ecologist's 2025 assessment. This is not unexpected, given the time that has elapsed and the lack of ongoing site management.

3.2. Reptile Suitability Identified

Overview of Third-party Ecologist's Findings

3.2.1. The third-party ecologist's 2022 reporting identifies that areas of tall ruderal vegetation present on site would provide some sheltering opportunities for reptiles. The reporting does however also state that the site is bordered by roads and regularly disturbed arable land,

which would restrict reptile movement. The third-party ecologist's 2025 assessment appears to also reconfirm that the site remains potentially able to support reptile species, and recommends that a Presence / Absence Survey is undertaken to inform the proposals.

Allied Ecology Ltd. Review

3.2.2. Following a further review, while the site is bordered by the A141 to the west, it appears that the site is also bordered by permanent grassland habitats and scrub to the north, east and south, which do not appear to be separated by particular barriers to reptile movement. On that basis, the identified on-site habitats with their potential to provide sheltering opportunities for reptiles do appear to be connected to off-site habitats capable of supporting reptiles.

3.2.3. It is therefore considered that the potential presence of common (albeit protected) reptile species to be present within the site cannot be ruled out.

3.2.4. Given the relatively small size of the site, and extent of potentially suitable reptile habitat within it (removing the building / hardstanding) measuring ~0.3ha, it is considered that the site would be unable to support a population of any reptile species in isolation, albeit could form part of a wider territory or foraging / sheltering resources (if reptile species are present in the vicinity).

3.2.5. If undertaking a reptile Presence / Absence Survey at the site, based on the standard density of 10 refugia per hectare[1], this would mean that three refugia would be deployed and it is considered unlikely that the survey effort would encounter reptiles (if present). As such, it is considered likely that if this survey did not encounter reptiles, their presence could still not reasonably be ruled out and further mitigation / safeguarding measures would still likely be recommended.

3.2.6. On the basis that the extent of potentially suitable terrestrial refuge opportunities is limited by the relatively small size of the site, and that such few survey refugia would be deployed to align with best practice guidance, it is considered that undertaking a precautionary approach to site clearance / the proposed works would represent a more proportionate and appropriate approach to undertaking such a survey.

3.2.7. As such, the below Mitigation and Safeguarding Strategy has been prepared on the precautionary basis that there remains a risk, albeit low, that reptile populations present within the wider landscape, or individual reptiles at the time of works, could be impacted by the proposals.

4. Reptile Mitigation and Safeguarding Strategy

4.1. A lack of reptile sightings during a Presence / Absence Survey is highly unlikely to be confirmatory or reliable to determine that an individual(s) reptile(s) would not be present at the time of works. As such, given the small size / extent of the site, which would not be capable of supporting reptile populations greater than low (if any), it is recommended that a proportionate mitigation and safeguarding strategy, as set out below, be put in place to

[1] Surveys based on: Froglife Advice Sheet 10 (1999) '*Reptile Survey - an introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation.*'

ensure reasonable steps are taken to avoid any significant potential impact upon common (albeit protected) reptile species.

4.2. In accordance with best practice guidance (BS 42020:2013), detailed mitigation strategies / method statements can be secured through appropriate planning conditions.

4.3. Construction Safeguards

4.3.1. **Destructive Search.** In order to ensure that potential reptile refuge locations within the site do not support reptiles at the time of works, and to avoid an offence under the relevant legislation being unintentionally committed, any existing refugia such as rock piles / debris would be subject to a destructive search exercise, to search for reptiles. The destructive search would be undertaken by hand, where practicable, and by utilising suitable machinery / equipment where necessary, to dismantle relevant features and remove any arisings from site. This exercise would be undertaken with direct Ecological Clerk of Works supervision. Any reptiles encountered would be captured and moved out of harm's way, to a retained and unaffected suitable area in the east of the site, before any remaining clearance activities are carried out under Ecological Clerk of Works supervision.

4.3.2. **Two-stage Clearance of Vegetation.** In order to safeguard reptiles during the remainder of the proposed site clearance and construction related activities, and to avoid an offence under the relevant legislation being unintentionally committed, it is recommended that a two-stage vegetation clearance exercise is undertaken.

4.3.3. This exercise would be carried out under direct Ecological Clerk of Works supervision. Vegetated habitats would be reduced in height as part of a 'two-stage' clearance process, which would see such vegetation managed to a height of ~15cm before being hand-searched by a suitably experienced ecologist. This exercise would start in the centre of the site, and work towards the peripheries / retained boundaries of the site, to enable reptiles to naturally disperse to unaffected areas of the site and suitable off-site habitats. Any reptiles encountered would be captured and moved out of harm's way, to a retained and unaffected suitable area, before any remaining clearance activities are carried out under Ecological Clerk of Works supervision.

4.3.4. **Timing and Conditions.** The above approach to minimising and avoiding harm to reptiles, is reliant on the ability of this highly mobile species group to naturally disperse out of harm's way, with additional safeguarding measures in place such as the method of working and presence of a suitably experienced Ecological Clerk of Works. However, it will also be reliant on the prevailing temperatures and weather conditions being conducive to reptile movement. As such, clearance works should be undertaken between March – October inclusive, with ambient temperatures above 8°c.

4.4. Alternative / Compensatory Habitat Provision

4.4.1. In order to provide alternative terrestrial refugia at the site, following the site clearance and construction activities, it would be possible to create new hibernaculum feature(s) at the eastern part of the site, to provide purpose-build new terrestrial refugia (utilised materials generated from the site clearance / construction activities) in an area adjacent to off-site potentially suitable reptile habitat.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Ecological survey work undertaken at the site in 2022 confirmed the presence of potentially suitable terrestrial opportunities for reptiles, that would be impacted by the proposals, with a third-party ecologist's update survey work undertaken in 2025 taking a different position and recommending that a Presence / Absence Survey be undertaken.

5.2. An updated desk-based assessment undertaken by Allied Ecology Ltd. in 2025 identified that these on-site habitats appear to be connected to potentially suitable off-site habitats for reptiles. On that basis, the potential for common (albeit protected) species of reptile to be present within the site at the time of works cannot be ruled out. In order to ensure that any reptiles present at the time of works (if any) would remain fully safeguarded throughout, a proportionate Mitigation and Safeguarding Strategy has been prepared.

5.3. It is considered that undertaking a Presence / Absence Survey would represent a wholly disproportionate response to the risk or potential for reptiles to be present / impacted by the works, and that adopting the precautionary approach to works detailed within this strategy document represents a considerably more appropriate and reasonable position.

5.4. In accordance with best practice guidance (BS 42020:2013), mitigation strategies / method statements can be secured through appropriate planning conditions.

5.5. In conclusion, the measures outlined in this document will ensure that reptiles can be fully safeguarded, whilst allowing the appropriate progression of the proposed development works.

Enclosed

Plan 25524-RMSS1 – Reptile Mitigation and Safeguarding Strategy



Key:

Reptile Mitigation Strategy Boundary

Area to be subject to destrucive search of refugia and two-stage clearance of vegetation, where subject to works

Indicative location of hibernaculum feature

Land to the South of Warboys, Cambridgeshire, Warboys, PE28 3AH

Reptile Mitigation and Safeguarding Strategy

25524-RMSS1

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