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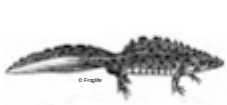
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Reptile Survey Report

November 2022

**123 Levenshulme Road,
Gorton,
Manchester,
M18 7NF**

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123 Levenshulme Road, Gorton, Manchester, M18 7NF
Reptile Survey Report

Document Title	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
Prepared for	Watson Homes
Prepared by	Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd

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Review Date	09/11/2022
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Executive Summary

As part of an ongoing planning application regarding 123 Levenshulme Road, Gorton, a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken by Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd during March 2022. Due to the habitats present within the application site boundary, reptile surveys were recommended within the PEA, and it is understood that proposals are for the development of the currently unutilised site into an apartment building consisting of 54 individual units with associated infrastructure and access.

Reptiles are protected under *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* (WCA) which makes it an offence to kill or injure native British reptiles. *The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000* (CROW Act) amends the WCA to also make it an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct a place that a species, listed on Schedules of the WCA, uses for shelter or protection.

The reptile surveys involved placing suitable refugia (bitumen felt roofing tiles and carpet tiles) in areas of suitable reptile habitat across the site. Seven visits were undertaken on separate days during September and in appropriate weather conditions to assess reptile use of the refugia.

No reptiles or amphibians were recorded during the survey. It is considered they are not present on the site and mitigation for these species is not required to support the current planning application.

Mitigation for other species and habitats are included within Appendix I prepared by Tyrer Ecological Consultants and should be read in conjunction with this Reptile Report.

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1.0 Introduction & Scope

- 1.1 Following recommendations for reptile surveys within an associated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at 123 Levenshulme Road in Gorton, Manchester, Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd carried out seven reptile surveys in September 2022.
- 1.2 Due to the habitats present within the application site boundary, reptile surveys were recommended within the PEA, and it is understood that proposals are for the development of the currently unutilised site into an apartment building consisting of 54 individual units with associated infrastructure and access.
- 1.3 The aims of the surveys were to determine the presence / likely absence of reptiles within the application site boundary. If present, the reptile population size would be determined in order to design an appropriate reptile protection and mitigation plan that acknowledges the objectives of the client whilst following the 'avoid, mitigate, compensate' hierarchy in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other relevant national and local legislation.
- 1.4 The objectives of the surveys were to:
 - Determine the presence / likely absence of reptiles within the application site boundary over seven surveys following standard industry guidelines (Froglife, 2015; GOV.UK, 2015)
 - If present, identify the reptile population size and determine appropriate mitigation / compensation measures likely to be required in line with the mitigation hierarchy (i.e. avoidance > mitigation > compensation).

2.0 Legislation & Policy

2.1 Relevant legislation in relation to reptiles considered for the purposes of this report includes the following:

- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006)
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species (amendment) (EU exit) Regulations (2019)
- The Countryside Rights of Way (CROW) Act (2000)
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended)

2.2 Reptiles are protected under *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* (WCA) which makes it an offence to kill or injure native British reptiles. *The Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000* (CROW Act) amends the WCA to also make it an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct a place that a species, listed on Schedules of the WCA, uses for shelter or protection.

2.3 Reptiles are also listed as Species of Principal Importance under *Section 41 of The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006* (NERC Act) and are therefore a material consideration in planning decisions. Planners require relevant, up to date information from reptile surveys if there is a reasonable chance that these species could be present on the site. This is in order to assess the effects of a proposed development on reptile populations as Councils have a statutory obligation under section 40 of the NERC Act to consider biodiversity conservation in the determination of planning applications.

Policy

2.4 Guidance for Local Authorities: Extract from Office of the Deputy Prime Minister - Circular 06/2005:

“It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision”.

2.5 Paragraph 180 of the National Policy Planning Framework (as revised in July 2021) states:

180. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and,

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

2.6 Policy EN15 of the Manchester Core Strategy 2012 – 2027, regarding Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, states:

“The Council will seek to maintain or enhance sites of biodiversity and geological value throughout the City. Particular consideration will be given to:

- sites with international or national designations for their biodiversity value. Manchester contains one Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Cotteril Clough); there is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and an SSSI just over the border in Oldham (both on the Rochdale Canal within Oldham);*
- other sites of biodiversity value, including Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs); Manchester currently has 35 SBIs (including the Rochdale and Ashton Canals) and 7 LNRs; priority habitats found within Manchester, as listed in the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy and included in the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (GM BAP);*
- protected and priority species, as listed in the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy and included in the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (GM BAP); sites that are recognised for their geological importance;*
- the Council’s objective to protect and conserve the City’s existing trees and woodlands and the aim for a net increase in trees across the City.”*

2.7 The policy also delves further into biodiversity protection and enhancement, and goes on to say:

“Developers will be expected to identify and implement reasonable opportunities to enhance, restore or create new biodiversity, either on-site or adjacent to the site, contributing to linkages between valuable or potentially valuable habitat areas where appropriate... Any adverse impacts on biodiversity will need to be justified against the wider benefits of the proposal, assessed against other LDF policies. Where adverse impacts are unavoidable, developers will be required to provide appropriate mitigation and/or compensation.”

3.0 Survey Methods

- 3.1 The reptile surveys involved laying out refugia suitable for basking and shelter. Each refugia was approximately 0.5m by 0.5m (0.25m²) bitumen roofing felt tiles, or carpet tiles, which provide a warm microenvironment that attract reptiles in the vicinity to use as shelter and to increase body temperature.
- 3.2 40 reptile refugia were placed within approximately 0.5ha of suitable reptile habitat identified from the Phase 1 Habitat survey undertaken (See Appendix I for PEA report; see Appendix II for reptile mat locations). The mats were placed on 24th August 2022, with reptile surveys commencing from the 6th September 2022 following a 'bedding in' phase in which any reptiles present in the area had the opportunity to encounter the refugia. This mat density exceeds the recommended 20 per hectare in order to ensure full coverage of the site and account for any mats lost during survey.
- 3.3 Survey visits were undertaken throughout the day, when the air temperature was between 10°C and 20°C, and were only undertaken in mild conditions with some sunshine during the day to ensure mats were warm to the touch. Details of the dates, times and weather conditions during each survey are presented in **Table 3.1**.

Table 3.1: Survey Timings and Weather Conditions

Survey Date	Start Time and end Time	Weather Conditions
06/09/2022	12:00 – 14:00	Overcast, 90% cloud, Light Air, 17°C
16/09/2022	15:00 – 17:00	Clear, 30% cloud, Light Breeze, 17°C
21/09/2022	15:00 – 17:00	Dry, 100% cloud, Gentle Breeze, 18°C
23/09/2022	16:15 – 18:15	Clear, 5% cloud, Light Air, 18°C
26/09/2022	10:00 – 12:00	Post rain, 50% cloud, Light Breeze, 12°C
28/09/2022	11:00 – 13:00	Clear, 50% cloud, Light Breeze, 11°C
30/09/2022	15:00 – 17:00	Rainy, 100% cloud, Fresh Breeze, 12°C

- 3.4 The mats were checked on seven separate occasions at different times of the day and with variable weather conditions; methodology involved approaching the deployed refugia quietly, scanning for signs of reptiles in the vicinity and on the mats. A corner of the mat was gently lifted and the ground underneath scanned for reptiles including signs of their presence such as skin sloughs, it would then be replaced following the check and records of reptiles and other species sheltering under the mat were recorded. Other suitable reptile basking sites were also checked for presence of reptiles, including other refugia, sunny banks, rocks, piles of wood chip and areas of bare ground.

Field Surveys

- 3.5 The surveys were undertaken between 6th September 2022 and 30th September 2022 by the following surveyor (see Table 3.2):

Table 3.2 - Surveyor credentials

Name	Description of relevant credentials
Mr. Harry Mulligan (Trainee Ecologist)	One year of professional consultant experience & training, including extensive training in UK reptile identification and survey protocol; MBiolSci in Biological Sciences (Zoology); Qualifying CIEEM

- 3.6 The survey followed the UK industry standard reptile survey methods collated by Froglife (2015),
- 3.7 The results, conclusions and recommendations of this report have been assessed by Mrs. K. Wilding, Director of Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd, and her assessment concurs with the findings and recommendations of Mr H. Mulligan.

4.0 Limitations

- 4.1 Due to the late period at which the surveys were commissioned (August 2022), all surveys had to be carried out in September which, whilst still within the active reptile season, covers less of the survey season than is optimal. September is a useful period for encountering juveniles; given the absence of any evidence of reptiles across all visits which were undertaken during suitable weather conditions, this is not considered to be a significant constraint on the survey effort at 123 Levenshulme Road.
- 4.2 Whilst accepting the limitations are a factor on missing the earlier phases of the year, the overall conclusions of this report are considered robust following seven surveys based on the knowledge, experience and skills of Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd.

5.0 Survey Results

- 5.1 The survey area is sited east of Levenshulme Road in Gorton, approximately 5.50 kilometres south-east of Manchester city centre, and comprises a modest sized plot (circa 0.5 hectares) consisting of areas of open grassland and scrub, with a small area of hardstanding and several treelines. The combination of woodland, scrub, hardstanding and grassland forms a varied vegetation structure that provides habitat which might be used by reptile species such as Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*). See **Figure 5.1** for example of the habitat present



Figure 5.1 – Image of the land at the south-east of the site, showing dense bramble scrub and grassland

- 5.2 No reptiles or amphibians were recorded during any survey visit (see **Table 6.1**).

Table 6.1: Reptile Survey Results

<u>Survey Date</u>	<u>Visit Number</u>	<u>Species Found</u>	<u>Mat Number</u>
06/09/2022	1	N/A	-
16/09/2022	2	N/A	-
21/09/2022	3	N/A	-
23/09/2022	4	N/A	-
26/09/2022	5	N/A	-
28/09/2022	6	N/A	-
30/09/2022	7	N/A	-

6.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

- 6.1 Following the completion of seven reptile surveys in September 2022, it can reasonably ascertained that the site does not currently support reptiles or amphibians; it is therefore concluded that impacts to local reptile populations will not occur as a result of construction, and there are no further recommendations in relation to amphibians and reptiles.
- 6.2 Mitigation for other species and habitats are included within **Appendix I** and should be read in conjunction with this Reptile Survey Report.

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**Appendix I: 123 Levenshulme Road, Preliminary Ecological Appraisal - Tyrer
Ecological, April 2022**

Appendix II: Reptile Mat Locations

