

Combined Reptile Refugia and Walkover Survey.

Version One. 22.10.25

Prepared for: The Northern Group

Prepared by Ryan Whitmarsh. Ecologist. BSc (*Hons*).

NAME OF SITE:	Land at Station Road, (The Secret Lake), Nelstrop Rd N, Levenshulme, Stockport M19 3WH
PROJECT No:	12596
CLIENT NAME:	The Northern Group.
SPECIALIST:	Amenity Tree Care Ltd
DATE PREPARED:	22.10.2025
PREPARED BY:	Ryan Whitmarsh
REVIEWED BY:	Simon Brain
DATE REVIEWED:	28.10.2025
VERSION CONTROL:	Version 1

1.1	Introduction	3
1.1	Site description, location and context	3
1.2	Purpose aims and objectives. Legislation.	3
2.	Methods	4-5
2.1	Summary of survey methods	4-5
2.2	Pre Survey data search	5
2.3	Surveyor information	5
3.	Results	5-7
3.1	Conditions on survey	5-6
3.2	Survey results	
3.3	Constraints to the survey	7
4.	Assessment and summary	7
4.1	Constraints on survey information and equipment	7
4.2	Assessment summary	7
5.	Recommendations and mitigation	7-8
5.1	Recommendations	7
5.2	Mitigation measures and mitigation licenses	8

Appendix 1 Images.

Appendix 2 Reptile survey plan.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Site description, location, context and development proposals

Amenity Tree have been instructed by The Northern Group (the client) to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) on land located at Station Road, Stockport (central grid reference, SJ 8874 3945) as shown in **Figure 1**. The site is an area of conservation interest due to the habitats which have been identified in the PEA survey (reedbed, reservoir, mixed scrub and other woodland; mixed) and species that have been recorded in the vicinity.

Figure 1.

Site location plan, highlighting the development boundaries (redline).



1.2 Purpose aims and objectives of this report. legislation

A previously undertaken Preliminary Ecological Assessment stated:

“All native reptile species in the UK are protected under law from killing or sale. Suitable basking habitat is present onsite and refugia in the form of areas of fly tipped materials. Reptiles have potential to be present on site”.

All native species of reptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, making it illegal to intentionally kill or injure a common reptile. Rare reptiles (smooth snake and sand lizard) also receive legal protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

It is illegal to deliberately injure, kill, capture or disturb a rare reptile, or to damage or obstruct any place used for shelter or protection. Rare reptiles may only be handled by licensed ecologists.

All reptile species are species of principal importance under the Natural Environment Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, and local authorities and other public bodies have a legal duty to take their conservation into account. Because of this they are a material consideration in the planning process.

2. Methods

2.1 Summary of survey methods

The Survey methods outlined in the “Survey protocols for British Herpetofauna V1 March 2013” as outlined by the Amphibian and Reptile Trust.

Reptiles tend to be most active during spring, summer and autumn from April to October but they are best surveyed from April to May and also September to October. Reptiles are best surveyed when the ambient temperature is between 9-19 degrees, where sunlight exposure is good with minimal wind and rain and therefore survey timings are adjusted to fit these periods.

Prior to the placing of any refugia, a site walkover search was carried out on the 28th of April 2025 to identify any areas of high suitability such as south facing banks, rubble piles near dense vegetation and unmanaged grassland. Areas which held basking suitability identified in the area included undisturbed vegetation such as tussocky unmanaged grassland, patches of bare earth and swards of grassland within scrub habitats. Some refugia such as concrete posts and wooden boards were also found as a result of fly tipping which are considered ideal for reptiles.

Refugia (bitumen felt squares 500mm) were distributed in suitable areas within the redline boundary, and in total 30 refugia mats were placed around the site (the mats were separated into 6 groups; each individual group comprised as 5 mats) as marked on the plan in Appendix 2, providing an overall coverage of 15 Sq M. For presence/absence purposes, a study (Sewell *et al.* 2012) has shown that 5 survey visits (depending on species) *“are usually sufficient to detect 95% of occupied sites, at least for the widespread British species, providing a combination of both tins and other artificial ACOs are used in addition to transects.”* (from 'Survey protocols for the British Herpetofauna').

The first survey was undertaken on the 20th of June 2025 and consisted of a preliminary habitat suitability assessment (including the positioning of refugia) and a walkover survey. The remaining 6 surveys were combined walkover and refugia surveys. After the initial visit the refugia was then left for over 2 weeks to bed in, creating a suitable shelter/basking habitat. Additionally, as part of the habitat suitability assessment, a pre-determined route was produced to ensure visual checks were made in the most suitable basking areas.

The site was also assessed for potential nesting areas in the initial habitat walkover. Survey effort was then increased in these areas later in year when reptiles typically nest. All refugia were placed in a sunny, south facing aspect.

2.2 Pre-existing data on local reptile species

Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside website shows there are no previously granted European Protected Species (EPS) license applications for reptile species within a 1km radius of the site.

In addition, Local Records Centre data has been obtained from Greater Manchester Local Records Centre (GMRC/GMEU) in April 2025. No records of reptile were found onsite or within the 1km search radius; however, this does not mean a population is absent from site as the species are typically considered difficult to detect without a full suite of surveys throughout the

optimal periods and an experienced surveyor undertaking the walkover surveys.

2.3 Surveyor information

Ryan Whitmarsh is an experienced ecologist who has attained a BSc (Hons) and has undertaken a range of ecological surveys for protected species and Preliminary Ecological Appraisals (PEA). He has attended courses in bats and currently working towards a Class 2 Bat License. Ryan is a qualifying member of CIEEM and holds a Field Skills Identification Certificate (FISC) at level 3.

3. Results

3.1 Conditions

Survey No 1: walkover survey	Start	End
Temperature	14 °C	15 °C
Precipitation	0%	0%
Wind (0-12 Beaufort)	1	1
Cloud (0-8 Oktas)	1	2
Time	05:20am	09:50am
Date	20 th June 2025	

Survey No 2: walkover and refugia check	Start	End
Temperature	13 °C	15 °C
Precipitation	5%	20%
Wind (0-12 Beaufort)	2	2
Cloud (0-8 Oktas)	6	5
Time	05:40am	09:00am
Date	07 th July 2025	

Survey No 3: walkover and refugia check	Start	End
Temperature	9 °C	14 °C
Precipitation	5%	5%
Wind (0-12 Beaufort)	1	1
Cloud (0-8 Oktas)	1	1
Time	08:00am	10:00am
Date	25 th September 2025	

Survey No 4: walkover and refugia check	Start	End
Temperature	11 °C	14 °C
Precipitation	0%	0%
Wind (0-12 Beaufort)	1	1
Cloud (0-8 Oktas)	4	4
Time	08:00am	10:00am
Date	10 th October 2025	

Survey No 5: walkover and refugia check	Start	End
Temperature	8 °C	12 °C
Precipitation	0%	0%
Wind (0-12 Beaufort)	2	2
Cloud (0-8 Oktas)	2	2
Time	08:00am	10:00am
Date	17 th October 2025	

Survey No 6: walkover and refugia check	Start	End
Temperature	7 °C	9 °C
Precipitation	10%	5%
Wind (0-12 Beaufort)	3	3
Cloud (0-8 Oktas)	5	4
Time	08:30am	10:30am
Date	23 rd October 2025	

3.2 Refugia/walkover survey results.

Survey 1: 20th June 2025

Reptile Present	Location	Notes
No	G1	None taken.
No	G2	None taken.
No	G3	None taken.
No	G4	None taken.
No	G5	None taken.
No	G6	None taken.

Survey 2: 7th July 2025

Reptile Present	Location	Notes
No	G1	Juvenile common frog and palmate newt found underneath single mat within group.
No	G2	None taken.
No	G3	None taken. The felt mats had been moved by the public; they were replaced in a slightly different position.
No	G4	None taken.
No	G5	Adult wood mouse found underneath mat.
No	G6	2 common toads found underneath separate mats within group.

Survey 3: 25th September 2025

Reptile Present	Location	Notes
No	G1	Refugia from fly tipping was checked in addition to the mats. No animals were found.
No	G2	None taken. The felt mats had been moved by the public, the surveyor made detailed visual checks in suitable basking spots instead.
No	G3	None taken.
No	G4	None taken. The felt mats had been moved by the public, the surveyor made detailed visual checks in suitable basking spots instead.
No	G5	None taken.
No	G6	One male palmate newt and one female smooth newt identified under a single mat within the group.

Survey 4: 10th October 2025

Reptile Present	Location	Notes
No	G1	None taken.
No	G2	None taken. The felt mats had been moved by the public, the surveyor made detailed visual checks in suitable basking spots instead.
No	G3	None taken.
No	G4	None taken. The felt mats had been moved by the public, the surveyor made detailed visual checks in suitable basking spots instead.
No	G5	None taken.
No	G6	None taken.

Survey 5: 17th October 2025

Reptile Present	Location	Notes
No	G1	None taken. The felt mats had been moved by the public, the surveyor made detailed visual checks in suitable basking spots instead.
No	G2	None taken. The felt mats had been moved by the public, the surveyor made detailed visual checks in suitable basking spots instead.
No	G3	None taken.
No	G4	None taken.
No	G5	None taken. The felt mats had been moved by the public, the surveyor made detailed visual checks in suitable basking spots instead.
No	G6	

Survey 6: 23rd October 2025

Reptile Present	Location	Notes
No	G1	None taken. The felt mats had been moved by the public, the surveyor made detailed visual checks in suitable basking spots instead.
No	G2	None taken. The felt mats had been moved by the public, the surveyor made detailed visual checks in suitable basking spots instead.
No	G3	None taken.
No	G4	None taken.
No	G5	None taken. The felt mats had been moved by the public, the surveyor made detailed

		visual checks in suitable basking spots instead.
No	G6	None taken.

(Refer to Appendix 2- Reptile Survey location Plan for refugia group references).

4. Assessment and Summary

4.1 Habitat suitability assessment

Key basking areas onsite include undisturbed grassland, bare ground, hardstanding surfaces, rubble piles and glades of grassland surrounded by dense scrub. Log piles and dense vegetation were also present in a few areas which held hibernation habitat suitability.

In summary, the site consists of a numerous undisturbed/ tussocky grassland areas, woodland, dense scrub and two standing water bodies (a reedbed and the main lake/reservoir) which will attract prey species including amphibians. The water bodies will also act as a permanent and reliable source for the hydration of reptilian species.

The connectivity of habitats onsite is considered good as linkage of woodland within the site boundary is undisturbed to the mature woodland to the south (approximately 700m from the development boundary) and the railway track located 600m to the north of site.

The proposed development outline plans to construct residential properties in the western, central and eastern parcels of the site; the works will include removal of those habitats that have been outlined as suitable for protected reptiles. Artificial refugia was placed across the site but concentrated on the central and eastern sections in areas of the site where areas are considered suitable for basking. Very limited habitat suitability was present on the western parcel as this area consisted of hardstanding with minimal vegetation, reptiles would be discouraged from using this area as they would be exposed to predation; no felt mats were positioned in this area.

4.2 Constraints to survey equipment

A limitation that should be taken into account is members of the public removing/ damaging the refugia placed by the ecologist. Four groups of mats were removed as discovered on multiple site visits, as referenced in the survey results. This was not considered to be a major factor that impacted survey results as the site had suitable basking habitat/refugia already present in log piles, bare ground and glades of grassland within the scrub habitat and wooden boards/pallets from fly tipping. In areas where artificial refugia had been moved, the ecologist applied more survey effort to walkover visual checks.

4.3 Assessment summary

No reptiles were found during the surveys undertaken. Though habitat suitability has been established onsite, reptile absence is likely due to the immediate urban surroundings and levels of anti-social behaviour on the site.

5. Recommendations and mitigation.

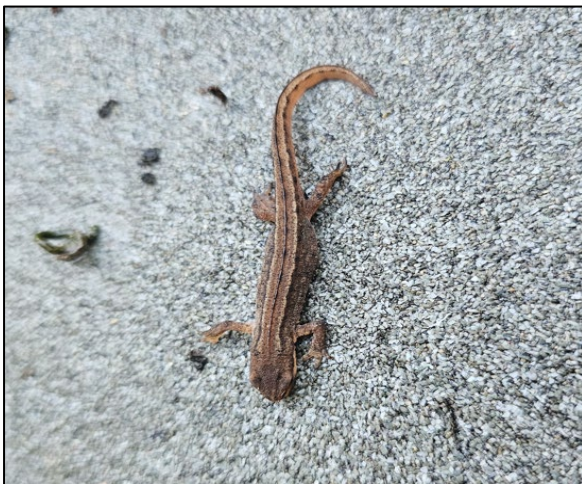
5.1 Recommendations

No further recommendations for reptile species, as the data indicates these species are currently absent from site.

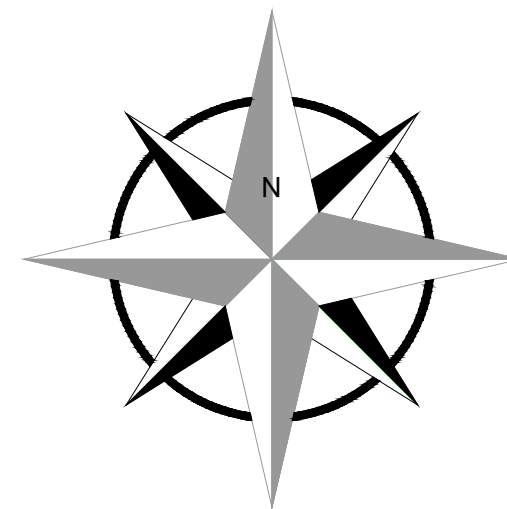
5.2 Mitigation measures and mitigation licenses

No mitigation proposals for reptiles are needed for the development site as they are believed to be absent.

Appendix One – Images



Appendix Two- Reptile Survey Plan, refugia positioning.



Refugia Group positions

KEY

G1 Refugia group numbers

AMENITYTREE
ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING CONSULTANTS

The Annexe, Willow Hill Cottage, School Lane,
Burwardsley, Chester, CH3 9NX
Tel. 01829 770075

Client:

Project:

Land at Station Road
12596

Detail:

UK Habitat Classification Key - Overview

Drawn By: RW Date: 19.09.25 Scale: NTS

Dwg No: TR-01-Sheet 1 Revision: V1