

DENVILLE HALL CARE HOME, 62 DUCK'S HILL ROAD, NORTHWOOD

REPTILE SURVEY



A Report to: Change Project Consulting

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

In June 2021, Change Project Consulting commissioned MMEcology to undertake a Reptile Survey of suitable habitats at Denville Hall, 62 Duck's Hill Road, in Northwood.

This assessment is required to inform an application associated with minor changes to the main care home building, such as extensions and introduction of heated glass walkways, along with the development of the three derelict buildings on site, repositioning of the driveway, creation of additional parking facilities and landscaping works.

The application site is located to the west of Duck's Hill Road, in Northwood, Greater London. It is approximately 3.2 acres in size and comprises a number of buildings, with Denville Hall care home in the southern extent of the application site being the largest one. Three smaller derelict buildings are located in the northern extent of the site. The care home grounds support areas of managed amenity grassland and ornamental shrubs, along with a large number of trees scattered throughout the site.

This report represents the findings of the reptile survey at the site carried out between July and September 2021 and an updated site visit in October 2022 to ensure that the site conditions have not changed and the survey data is still valid. The small area of semi-improved grassland in the north of the site, along with areas of unmanaged amenity grassland associated with the gardens of the derelict bungalow and flats in the north, provide suitable habitat for reptiles. These areas are to be affected as part of the proposed landscaping works and construction of an additional car parking area in the north. Therefore, a total of 40 artificial refugia were set out in suitable habitats within the site and checked over seven survey dates with reference to Froglife Advice sheet 10 (Froglife, 1999) and Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland Guidelines (HGBI, 1998).

No reptiles were found to be present on site. Therefore, the proposals can be carried out with no constraints in relation to this group of species.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In June 2021, Change Project Consulting commissioned MMEcology to undertake a Reptile Survey of suitable habitats at Denville Hall, 62 Duck's Hill Road, in Northwood, Middlesex. This assessment is required to inform an application associated with minor changes to the main care home building, such as extensions and introduction of heated glass walkways, along with the development of the three derelict buildings, repositioning of the driveway, creation of additional parking facilities and landscaping works, as shown in Figure 1 below.

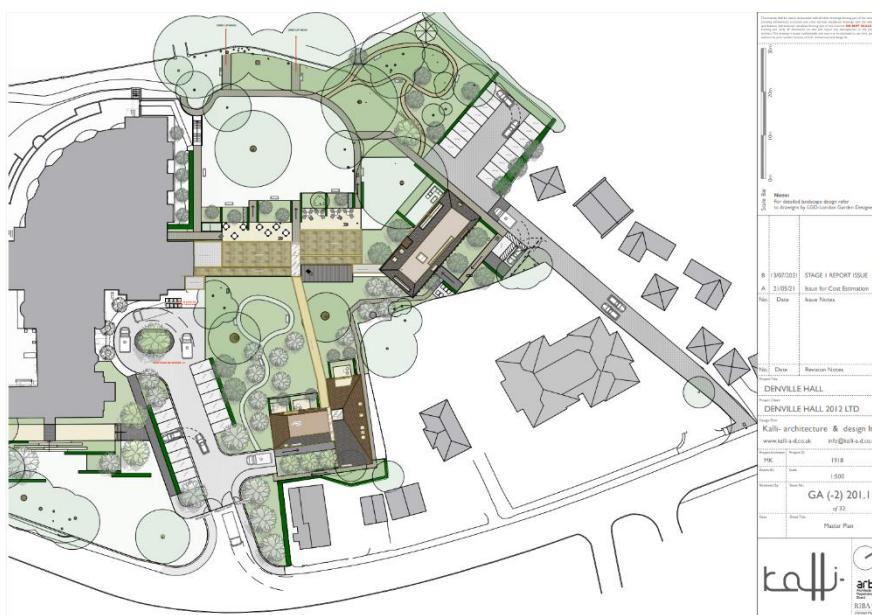


Figure 1. Masterplan (Source: Kalli Architecture and Design Ltd.)

1.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is located to the west of Duck's Hill Road, in Northwood, Greater London. It is approximately 3.2 acres in size and centred at National Grid Reference TQ 08099 91342.

The site comprises a number of buildings, with Denville Hall in the southern extent of the application site being the largest one. Denville Hall care home was originally built in the 1850s and has been extended over time, most recently in the late 1990s. Three smaller derelict buildings are located in the northern extent of the site. The care home grounds support areas of managed amenity grassland and ornamental shrubs, along with a large number of trees scattered throughout the site.

The application site is situated within a semi-urban setting, surrounded by residential dwellings and their private gardens to the east, north and south. Grass and arable fields,

along with wooded parcels are located to the west of the site. A parcel of woodland is also located immediately to the east of the site, beyond Duck's Hill Road.

Figure 2 shows the site location plan with Figure 3 showing the location of the site in the wider landscape.

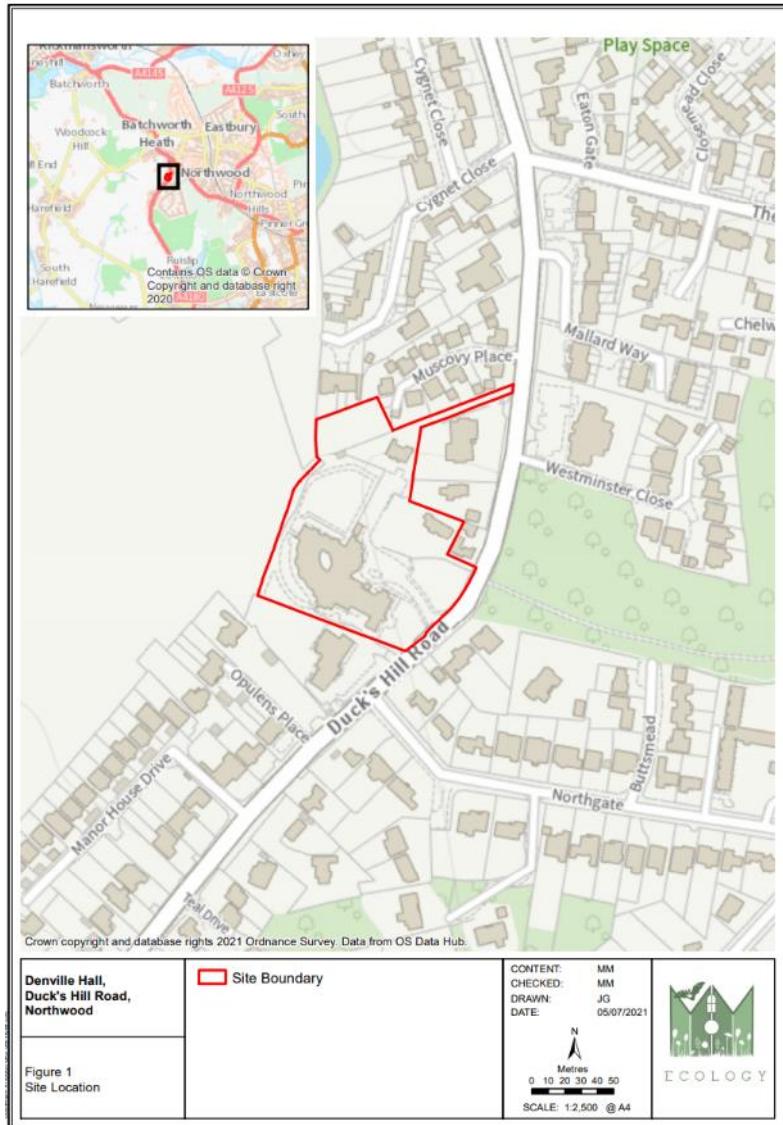


Figure 2. Site location plan

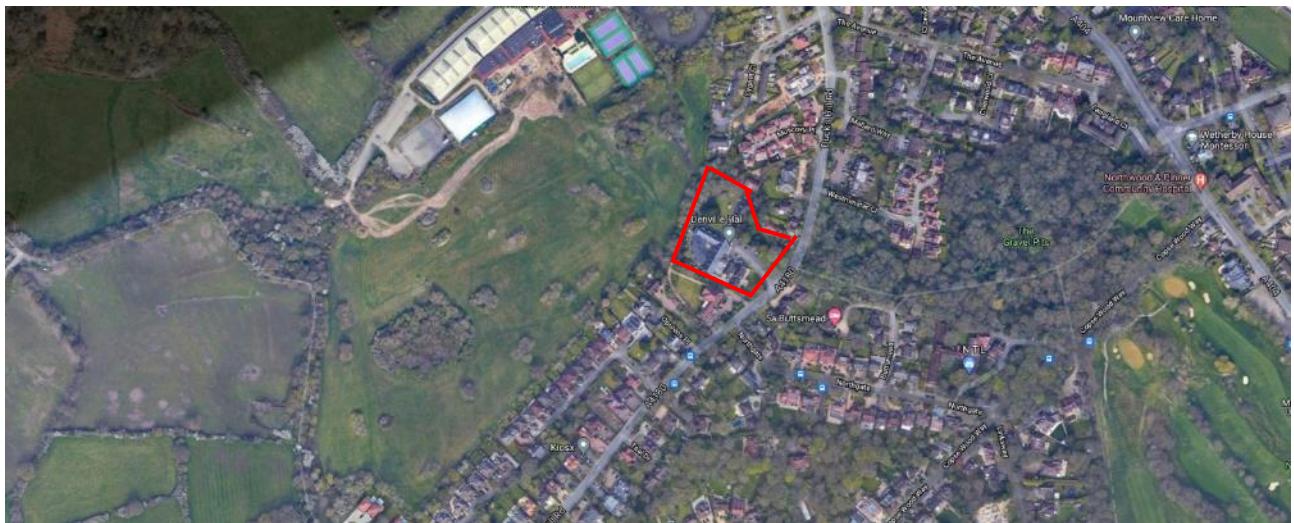


Figure 3. Location of the application site in the wider landscape (Source: Google maps)

The small area of semi-improved grassland in the north of the site, along with areas of unmanaged amenity grassland associated with the gardens of the derelict bungalow and flats, are considered to provide suitable habitat for reptiles.

2. METHODOLOGIES

2.1 PRESENCE/ABSENCE SURVEY

A presence/absence survey for reptiles was undertaken in accordance with the best practice methodology detailed in the Herpetofauna Workers Manual (Gent and Gibson, 2003). This consisted of the following works:

- An initial assessment of the habitats on site, in order to identify habitats of potential value to reptile species.
- A total of 40 artificial refugia were installed within the site to facilitate detection of reptiles. These refugia consisted of squares of roofing felt, measuring approximately 500mm x 500mm.
- Seven survey visits to the site to inspect the artificial refugia in suitable weather conditions.

Reptiles are ectotherms, deriving their body heat from the external environment. Therefore, the timing of the survey visits was dictated by the time of year and weather conditions. The surveys were undertaken in suitable weather conditions to maximise the probability of recording reptiles within the site. Suitable weather conditions for undertaking refugia checks are outlined in the Herpetofauna Workers Manual and are summarised in Table 1 below.

Parameter	Value
Temperature	9 - 17° C
Sunshine	Preferable.
Cloud	Little or none, unless on warm days
Wind	Low or none

Table 1. Suitable weather conditions for reptile surveys

In order to provide an assessment of site importance for reptiles, the results of the survey were analysed in the context of Froglife Advice Sheet 10 - Survey Assessment: Key Reptile Sites (Froglife, 1999). This provides a simple methodology for assessing the value of a site to reptile species, based upon the number of species recorded on site and the peak adult count for each species per hectare, when refugia are installed at a density of up to 10 per hectare. The guidelines for assessing the value of the site to reptile species are summarised in Table 2.

Reptile Species	Low Population	Good Population	Exceptional Population
Slow worm	<5 individuals/ha	5-20 individuals/ha	>20 individuals/ha
Common lizard	<5 individuals/ha	5-20 individuals/ha	>20 individuals/ha
Grass snake	<5 individuals/ha	5-10 individuals/ha	>10 individuals/ha
Adder	<5 individuals/ha	5-10 individuals/ha	>10 individuals/ha

Table 2: Reptile population assessment criteria

3. LEGISLATION

All of the UK's native reptiles are protected by law. Common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, adder *Vipera berus* and grass snake *Natrix natrix* are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) from intentional killing or injuring. The two rarest species, sand lizard *Lacerta agilis* and smooth snake *Coronella austriaca*, are additionally protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, extending the protection to their habitats and against disturbance.

4. RESULTS

The reptile habitat assessment was carried out on 23 June 2021. 40 reptile refugia were installed on 15 July 2021 and left for one week before checking to allow them to 'bed-in' (Figure 4). The location of the refugia is marked on Figure 5. The presence/absence checks were carried out between July and September 2021. An updated site visit was also carried out on 14 October 2022. This site visit confirmed that the site conditions have not changed since the previous survey works and therefore the survey data is still considered to be valid.



Figure 4. Example of refugia installed in the northern part of the site



Figure 5. Approximate location of the reptile refugia

Table 3 below summarises the weather conditions and the findings of the presence/absence survey work.

Visit number	Date	Weather & Time	Slow worm	Common lizard	Adder	Grass snake
1	22.07.21	0% (cloud), 18°C (temperature), F1 (wind), Dry (precipitation), 17:00 (time)	-	-	-	-
2	06.08.21	80% with intermittent sun (rain the night before), 16°C, F1-F2, Dry, 09:30	-	-	-	-
3	27.08.21	70% with intermittent sun, 15.5°C, F1, Dry, 10:30	-	-	-	-
4	01.09.21	10%, 13°C, F1, Dry, 09:00	-	-	-	-
5	05.09.21	20%, 14°C, F1, Dry, 08:00	-	-	-	-
6	10.09.21	90%, 16°C, F1, Dry with intermittent light drizzle earlier in the morning, 09:00	-	-	-	-
7	13.09.21	13.5°C, F1, 50%, Dry, 08:00	-	-	-	-

Table 3. Presence/absence survey results

The reptile surveys confirmed the absence of reptiles within the surveyed areas.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

The proposals include changes to the main car home, provision of additional car parking areas, demolition of the derelict buildings and their replacement with assisted living units, along with landscaping such as creation of woodland walks for the residents, inclusion of water features and additional tree and shrub planting.

5.2 FINDINGS OF REPTILE SURVEY

The reptile surveys undertaken between July and September 2021 confirmed the likely absence of reptiles from within the survey area.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

As the likely absence of reptiles from the application site has been confirmed, the proposals are unlikely to result in any adverse impact on this group of species.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Whilst the likely absence of reptiles on site has been confirmed during the surveys in 2021, it is recommended that the compost heap and the log piles (Figure 6) located to the east of the car parking area/western boundary of the garden of the derelict bungalow are removed under the supervision of an ecologist (if these features are to be affected by the proposals). In the unlikely event that a reptile is found during the works, it should be carefully moved to a suitable area within the grounds of the care home, outside the works footprint.



Figure 6. Log pile and compost area on site

The survey data obtained for the site is valid for 24 months from the date of the last survey. If development works to the suitable reptile habitats have not commenced within this timeframe, it may be necessary to update the survey effort to establish if reptiles have colonised these areas in the interim.

REFERENCES

Froglife (1999) Froglife Advice Sheet 10: Reptile Survey. Available at:
http://www.devon.gov.uk/froglife_advice_sheet_10_-_reptile_surveys.pdf

The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.
Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/9780111176573/schedules>

Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) As Amended. Available at:
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/contents>