LAND NORTH – WEST OF STONE HILL ROAD
EGERTON
KENT:
ECOLOGICAL SCOPING SURVEY

BY

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30th June 2020
Revised 5th April 2021

D151. Egerton (TQ90794718) Rv2

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document was compiled in order to report upon a protected species scoping survey of land north – west of Stone Hill Road, Egerton, Kent[1]. The survey site consists of one large field which is accessed by means of a narrow track from Harmers Way on the north – east boundary. The field was composed entirely of grass at the time of survey. It is bounded on all sides by hedgerows, except on the southern half of the north – east side where fences divide it from the gardens of properties on Harmers Way, and on part of the south – west side where a fence provides part of the boundary with a public footpath which runs along that boundary and separates the survey site from the adjoining open countryside. The south – eastern boundary is separated by a hedgerow from Stone Hill Road and the open countryside beyond, and the site is surrounded by part of Egerton village on the north – west and north – east sides.

1.2 Internally, the entire field is currently laid to grass[2], albeit with some relict, narrow grass verges all round. There are no large trees, but a small linear copse occupied the northern end of the north – eastern boundary and separates the field from the properties in Harmers Way. A hedge does the same on the north – western side, where it separates the field from properties in Elm Close. At the south – western end of the north – western side there is a small area of grass – dominated land that forms a small extension of the field further to the north - west.

1.3 The whole site is located on the south - eastern edge of Egerton village at a mean elevation of 100 metres OD. The site is more or less level, although it forms the top of a steep incline down to the south – east where the incline begins just outside the south – eastern boundary. The soil is derived from the underlying sandstone. The survey site position and boundary is shown in Figures 1 and 2.

1.4 There are the following **designated sites** within approximately one kilometre of the survey site:

- Posternfield Shaw, 705 metres to the north, is an ancient woodland[3].
- Simmond's Wood, 705 metres north of the survey site is also an ancient woodland and is also part of the Foxden Wood Local Wildlife Site[4].

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[1] OS / TQ90794718 – approximate centre. Grid reference taken from http://gridreferencefinder.com/#
[2] Although it has been ploughed frequently in recent years.
[3] Ancient Woodland is protected by the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019).
[4] Hereafter 'LWS'. LWS are protected against development at a local (county) level.

1.5 The survey site is to be the subject of a planning application for residential dwellings[5].

[5] Edge Urban Design, 2021.

2.0 METHODS

2.1 The site **visit** took place on Wednesday 3rd June 2020 and took approximately one and a half hours, during which time the whole site was visited. The purpose of the visit was to carry out ecological scoping surveys as follows:

2.1.1 The plant and animal **species** of the site were listed by using the variety of inventory methods described by Sutherland (2000) and Beattie and Oliver (1994). Obviously – introduced or planted species of plants were not included in this list.

2.1.2 A search was made for any species, or habitat suitable for any species that are specifically **protected** for conservation purposes by wildlife legislation[6] such as [redacted] bats, and common reptiles[7], using appropriate established techniques e.g., assessment of potential habitat for reptiles by comparison of the habitat on site with descriptions of potential reptile habitat given by Gent and Gibson (2003) as augmented by previous personal experience.

2.1.3 A search was also made for species[8] that are included within the short list of the national **Biodiversity Action Plans** and associated lists[9]. For birds, a search was made for species which are included within the red part of the national bird **'Red List'**[10] as well as any other species that were recorded within the Kent Red Data Book[11], Kent Rare Plant Register[12] and other similar publications.

2.1.4 A **biological records** search was also conducted through the Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre[13].

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[6] Mostly, this included species listed in http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-3408 as being protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and related legislation.
[7] E.g., common lizard (Zootoca vivipara), grass snake (Natrix helvetica) and slow – worm (Anguis fragilis).
[8]Or habitat suitable for species.
[9] Biodiversity Steering Group, 1995 as amended. Hereafter known as the 'BAP'. Also, the species subject of Biodiversity 2020 (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/biodiversity-2020-a-strategy-for-england-s-wildlife-and-ecosystem-services).
[10] Burns et al (2020).
[11] Waite, 2001. Hereafter referred to as 'KRDB'.
[12] http://bsbi.org/kent
[13] Hereafter 'KMBRC'.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 A total of 75 **species** of plants and animals were initially recorded on the site and are listed in Appendix 1.

3.2 The **plant** list consisted of 50 species, all typical of the prevailing agricultural grass – dominated habitat of the site, and its surrounding hedgerows. Several species were widespread, but none were abundant, except for the grasses which are normally associated with habitats of this type. The relict grassland of the edge of the site approximated to Rodwell's (1998) *Arrhenatheretum elatioris* grassland and indicated that the site has been ploughed and the original grassland had been destroyed. The bulk of the grassland, however, consisted of the same author's *Lolio – Plantaginion* ley. There were no botanically – interesting areas or plant species in the whole survey site, although the occurrence of Alexanders, which is predominantly a sea – side plant[14], but which is becoming more common inland in Kent, was notable.

3.3 Fifteen **bird** species were recorded at the site. There was abundant nesting habitat in the site in the hedgerows. The following notable bird species were recorded:

- **Linnet**, which was feeding on site.
- **Starling**, which was flying over the survey site.

3.4 The following evidence of species, or habitat suitable for any species which are specifically **protected** under wildlife legislation was found on the site:

- There were no ponds on site, but three ponds[15], respectively 49, 59 and 68 metres to the south – west of the site were noted, and the survey site was in a **great crested newt**[16] amber risk zone[17] which is sandwiched to the south – west and north – east by green[18] risk zones; the site therefore has a high probability of hosting the terrestrial stages of great crested newts at certain times of year. This species is protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

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[14] Stace, 2019.
[15] Which could not be accessed.
[16] Triturus cristatus.
[17] https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/gcn-risk-zones-kent?geometry=0.647%2C51.185%2C0.810%2C51.204. Amber zones contain main population centres for great crested newts and contain important connecting habitats that help natural dispersal of great crested newts.
[18] Green zones contain sparsely distributed newts and are less likely to contain important corridors of connecting habitat.

[redacted]

- The small north – western extension of the field contained a small area of original vegetation which had not been converted to a rye grass ley. As such, it contained a mixture of grasses, forbs and scrub that made it a potentially – suitable habitat for **common reptiles**, and almost certainly for slow - worm[20] which would be expected to occur in the nearby gardens. Common reptiles are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

3.5 No evidence of the presence of any other **BAP**, KRDB or other notable species was found on site.

3.6 The **KMBRC** search recorded the following:

- Eleven records of great crested newt, of which five were within one kilometre's radius of the survey site.
- Fived records of slow – worm of which four were within one kilometre of the survey area.
- Five records of dormouse, of which two were within one kilometre of the survey site.

[19] It has been inspected by the author of this report in the past when more entrances were found on neighbouring land.
[20] Anguis fragilis.

4.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Short surveys such as this one are good at giving a sample of the ecological value of a given site and showing which species, if any, require more detailed survey[21].

4.2 The **methods** of the survey have been used extensively elsewhere with consistent results and accord with good practice guidelines[22]. Signs of protected species and their habitat parameters are reasonably obvious to an experienced surveyor and ecological surveys of this type are valuable in terms of helping to determine whether protected or notable animals or plants are likely to be present, are present, or have been present in or around a site and whether further, more detailed Phase 2 survey is required for certain species. However, the results of a survey are partially determined by the time of year at which the survey takes place, the stages in an organism's life cycle, and the accessibility of the site. At this site, access was complete.

4.3 The **plant** list was typical of the flora which is found in similar such areas where the predominant habitat is agricultural grassland. There were no unusual or uncommon or protected plant species at the site.

4.4 Because of their level of protection, the status of common **reptiles** at the small grassland area of the site needed to be determined prior to the assessment of the planning permission, especially as there are records of slow - worm[23] from the Egerton area[24]. However, following the publication of the masterplan[25] this area is no longer within the development area and will not be affected. There is therefore no requirement for further reptile survey.

4.5 The ponds to the south – east of the survey site are in a **great crested newt** amber risk zone and there are records of the species within one kilometre of the survey site[26]. The nearest ponds are within a garden / pasture area where large areas of suitable habitat separate the ponds from the survey site. All these factors taken together, the importance of the survey site could be quite significant to great crested newts during the terrestrial phase of their annual cycle and necessitated

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[21] Stork and Samways, 1995.
[22] E.g., Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, 2013: British Standards Institute, 2013, Collins, 2016.
[23] Anguis fragilis.
[24] Personal observation KMBRC.
[25] Edge Urban Design, 2021. Hereafter referred to as 'the masterplan'.
[26] Anon, verb. comm. And KMBRC.

further great crested newt survey work. This was carried out by Ecoassistance[27] but following a request for access for the purposes of surveying being refused by the landowner, consideration was given to entering a District Level Licensing scheme.

4.6 Apart from linnet and starling, no notable species of **birds** were recorded at the site. A few additional species might be expected to occur on or over the site at other times of year due to their occurrence in the surrounding area.

- **Linnet** is a bird of open country, scrub and sometimes gardens, and avoids forests and woodlands[28]. It nests in scrub, shrubs, and hedges[29] where it feeds on a wide range of invertebrates and seeds[30]. It is widespread throughout the British Isles[31] and it is widespread but declining in Kent[32]. It has been declining in the UK during the last few decades[33]. The cause is still largely unknown but is thought to be related to changes in hedgerow management in the countryside[34]. However, the impact of any proposed development on this site on linnets is likely to be negligible since although they were observed to fly over the site, there was no evidence of nesting although the food supply in parts of the site is quite abundant. Appropriate mitigation should, however, be provided during the planning of any landscaping on the site, to include the provision of potential nesting and feeding sites.
- **Starlings** have declined considerably in recent years[35] due to a variety of causes, but the site offers seasonally - good foraging habitat for this species by virtue of its short vegetation and open nature. However, there are no nesting sites because of the absence of any trees, and the starling that was seen was clearly feeding young off – site. As a result, the impact on starling of the proposed development of this site is negligible and no mitigation is required.

4.7 Breeding **birds** were present in the hedgerows. No breeding bird habitat should be cleared between late March to the beginning of August inclusive unless a contemporary survey reveals that no breeding birds are present; nesting birds and their nests, eggs and young are protected whilst nests are in use, under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

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[27] Ecoassistance, 2021.
[28] Cramp et al, 1994.
[29] Newton, 1978:
[30] Cramp et al, 1994.
[31] Brown and Grice, 2005.
[32] Clements et al, 2015.
[33]Marchant, Hudson, Carter, and Whittington, 1990; Brown and Grice, 2005; Parkin and Knox, 2010.
[34] Brown and Grice, 2005.
[35] Hayhow et al, 2017; Parkin and Knox, 2010.

[redacted]

4.9 Consideration was also given to a wide range of other protected species that might occur on site, but none were found. For example:

- The connectedness of the survey site's hedgerows with the greater countryside is high; the connecting hedgerows are mostly intact and there are records of **dormouse**[37] in the area[38]. As a result, the masterplan has avoided all potential dormouse habitat. Dormice are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.
- There were no buildings and no suitable trees on site and therefore there will be no impact on **bats** or requirement for mitigation.
- Because of the absence of any buildings or large trees, there was no evidence of the presence of nesting **barn owls**[39] and therefore no impact or requirement for mitigation.

4.10 The development proposals for the survey site will not directly affect the **designated sites** including the nearby ancient woodland / local wildlife site, but development is likely to result in increased impact from visitors using public access to parts of the site.

4.11 In **summary**, therefore:

- No potential breeding bird habitat should be cleared between late March to the beginning of August inclusive.
- There is no requirement for reptile survey.

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[36] Where there is a risk of disturbing the sett or damaging part of it.
[37] *Muscardinus avellanarius.*
[38] Personal observation and KMBRC.
[39] Tyto alba.

- Great crested newts are likely to be the subject of a District Level licencing scheme.
- Dormouse may be present, but all potential dormouse habitat will be retained.

[redacted]

4.12 It is strongly recommended that, in order to accord with the National Planning Policy Framework[40] and to provide some positive ecological benefits, some of the wildlife conservation measures and **mitigation**[41] suggested by Gunnell, Murphy and Williams (2013) for instance, for the built environment should be incorporated into any proposed Scheme by means of a biodiversity plan for any completed development. Such measures could include:

- The provision of bird[42] and bat boxes.
- The provision of log piles for invertebrates.
- The provision of bumble bee nest boxes and pollinator resources.
- Provision for some of the species on the Kent BAP species list[43] where applicable to the site and conditions.
- A scheme of native species landscaping and similar measures.

[40] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019.
[41] Calculation of the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric (http://publications.naturalengland. org.uk/file/ 5815257 627099136) for the site, in the absence of any definite plans for the site, was difficult. But the most important habitat was the north - western grassland area, which, if lost, would represent a loss of 0.24 biodiversity units. The metric should be recalculated when precise information on the development is available.
[42] Especially sparrow terraces.
[43] For details see http://www.kentbap.org.uk/habitats-and-species/priority-species/. The list includes such species as great crested newt, common toad, slow worm and other common reptiles, house sparrow, hedgehog, noctule bat, soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat, dormouse, and other species.

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APPENDIX 1: INITIAL LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED FROM THE SITE (All data approximate) (Notable species in red)				
	SCIENTIFIC NAME	VERNACULAR NAME	NOTES	NO SPP
MOSSES				
	Brachythecium rutabulum	A moss		
	Thuidium tamariscinum	A moss		**2**
VASCULAR PLANTS				
	Acer campestre	Field Maple	In hedgerows.	
	Alopecurus myosuroides	Blackgrass		
	Anthriscus sylvestris	Cow Parsley		
	Arctium sp.	Burdock		
	Arrhenatherum elatius	False Oat - grass		
	Cirsium arvense	Creeping Thistle		
	Cirsium vulgare	Spear Thistle		
	Clematis vitalba	Old Man's Beard	In hedgerows.	
	Corylus avellana	Hazel	In hedgerows.	
	Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	In hedgerows.	
	Dactylis glomerata	Cocksfoot Grass		
	Euonymus europaeus	Spindle	In hedgerows.	
	Festuca pratensis	Meadow Fescue		
	Festuca rubra	Red Fescue		
	Fraxinus excelsior	Ash	In hedgerows.	
	Galium aparine	Goosegrass		
	Geranium dissectum	Cut-leaved Cranesbill		
	Glechoma hederacea	Ground Ivy		
	Hedera helix	Ivy	In hedgerows.	
	Helminotheca echoides	Bristly Oxtongue		
	Heracleum sphondylium	Hogweed		
	Hieracium sp.	Unidentified Hawkweed		
	Holcus lanatus	Yorkshire Fog		
	Juglans regia	Walnut	Self - sown.	
	Lolium perenne	Rye Grass	Dominant.	
	Malus sylvestris	Crab Apple	In hedgerows.	

	Papaver sp.	Unidentified Poppy		
	Plantago lanceolata	Ribwort Plantain		
	Prunus avium	Wild Cherry	In hedgerows.	
	Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn	In hedgerows.	
	Ranunculus acris	Meadow Buttercup		
	Rosa arvensis	Field Rose	In hedgerows.	
	Rosa canina	Dog Rose	In hedgerows.	
	Rubus fruticosus agg.	Blackberry	In hedgerows.	
	Rumex conglomeratus	Branched Dock		
	Rumex obtusifolius	Broad Dock		
	Salix capraea	Goat Willow		
	Sambucus nigra	Elderberry	In hedgerows.	
	Senecio jacobaea	Ragwort		
	Senecio vulgaris	Groundsel		
	Smyrnium olusatrum	Alexanders	Edge of field.	
	Sonchus oleraceus	Smooth Sowthistle		
	Sorbus aria	Whitebeam	Planted?	
	Thelycrania sanguinea	Dogwood	In hedgerows.	
	Torilis japonica	Upright Hedge Parsley		
	Tragopon pratensis	Goatsbeard		
	Ulmus sp.	Elm	In hedgerows.	
	Urtica dioica	Stinging Nettle		
	Veronica chamaedrys	Birdseye Speedwell		
	Vicia sepium	Bush Vetch		**50**
INSECTA : HYMENOPTERA				
	Bombus terrestris	Buff-tailed Bumble Bee		
	Lasius flavus	Common Yellow Ant		
	Lasius niger	Common Black Ant		**3**
INSECTA LEPIDOPTERA				
	Inachis io	Peacock	Larvae on stinging nettles.	
	Maniola jurtina	Meadow Brown		**2**
MOLLUSCA				
	Cepaea nemoralis	Grove Snail		**1**
BIRDS				

	Carduelis carduelis	Goldfinch		
	Carduelis cannabina	**Linnet**	Flying over.	
	Carduelis chloris	Greenfinch		
	Columba palumbus	Woodpigeon	Nest in hedgerow.	
	Corvus corone	Carrion Crow		
	Cyanistes caeruleus	Blue Tit		
	Dendrocopos major	Greater Spotted Woodpecker	Flying over.	
	Erithacus rubecula	Robin		
	Fringilla coelebs	Chaffinch		
	Picus viridis	Green Woodpecker		
	Prunella modularis	Dunnock		
	Sturnus vulgaris	**Starling**	Flying over.	
	Sylvia atricapilla	Blackcap		
	Troglodytes troglodytes	Wren		
	Turdus merula	Blackbird		**15**
MAMMALS				
	[redacted]			
	Oryctolagus cuniculus	Rabbit		**2**
			Total number of species:	**75**

Figure 1: THE POSITION OF THE SURVEY SITE.

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey (Licence no. 100016414)

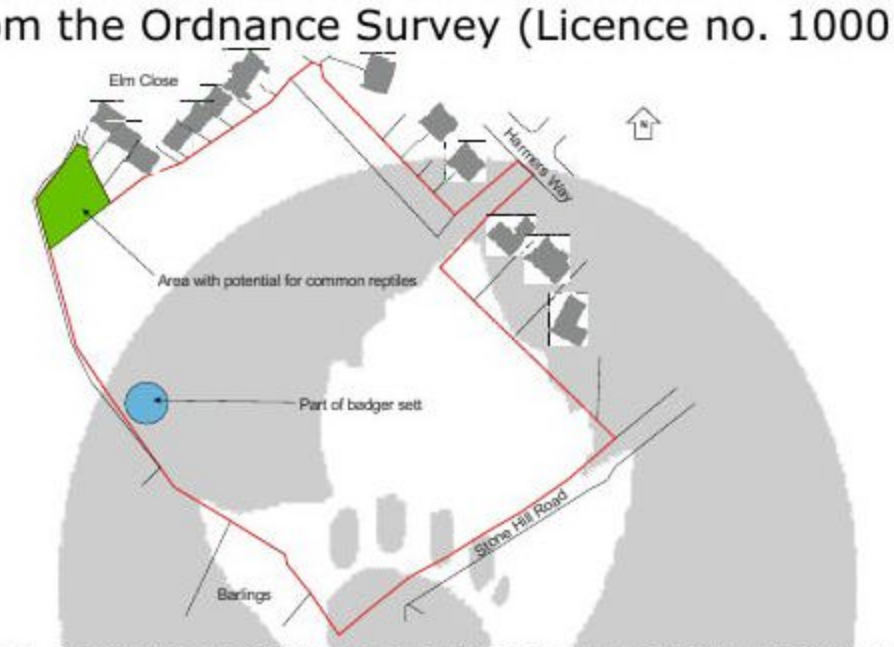


Figure 2: APPROXIMATE LOCATIONS OF HABITAT FOR PROTECTED SPECIES.

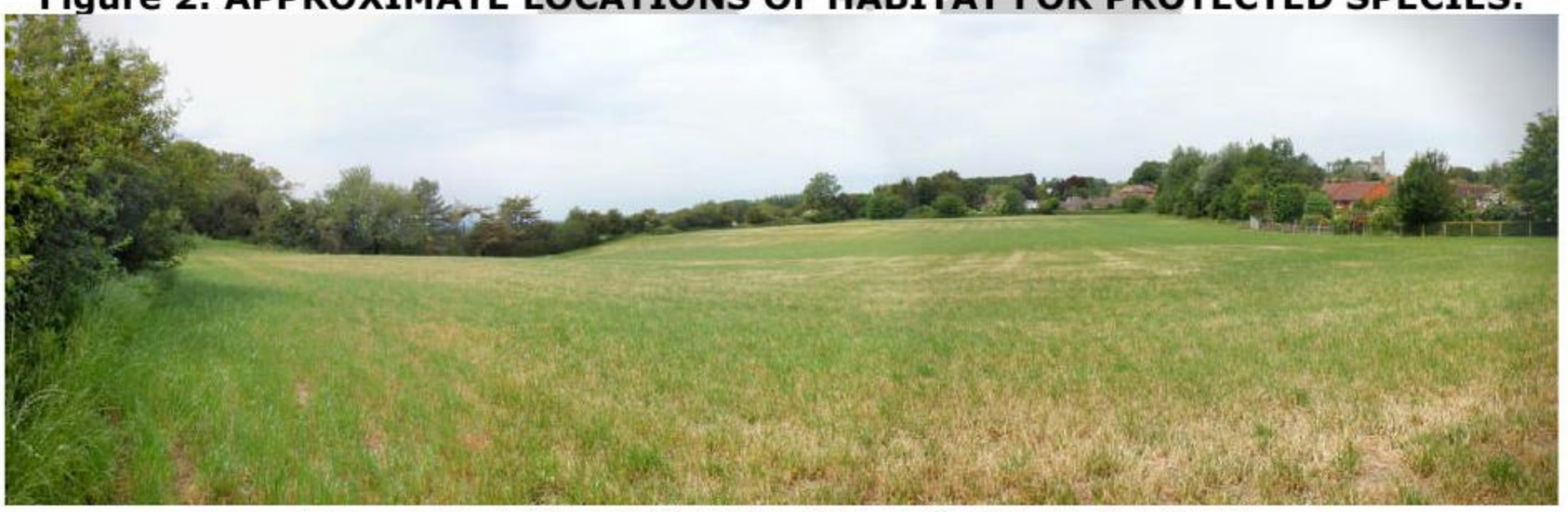
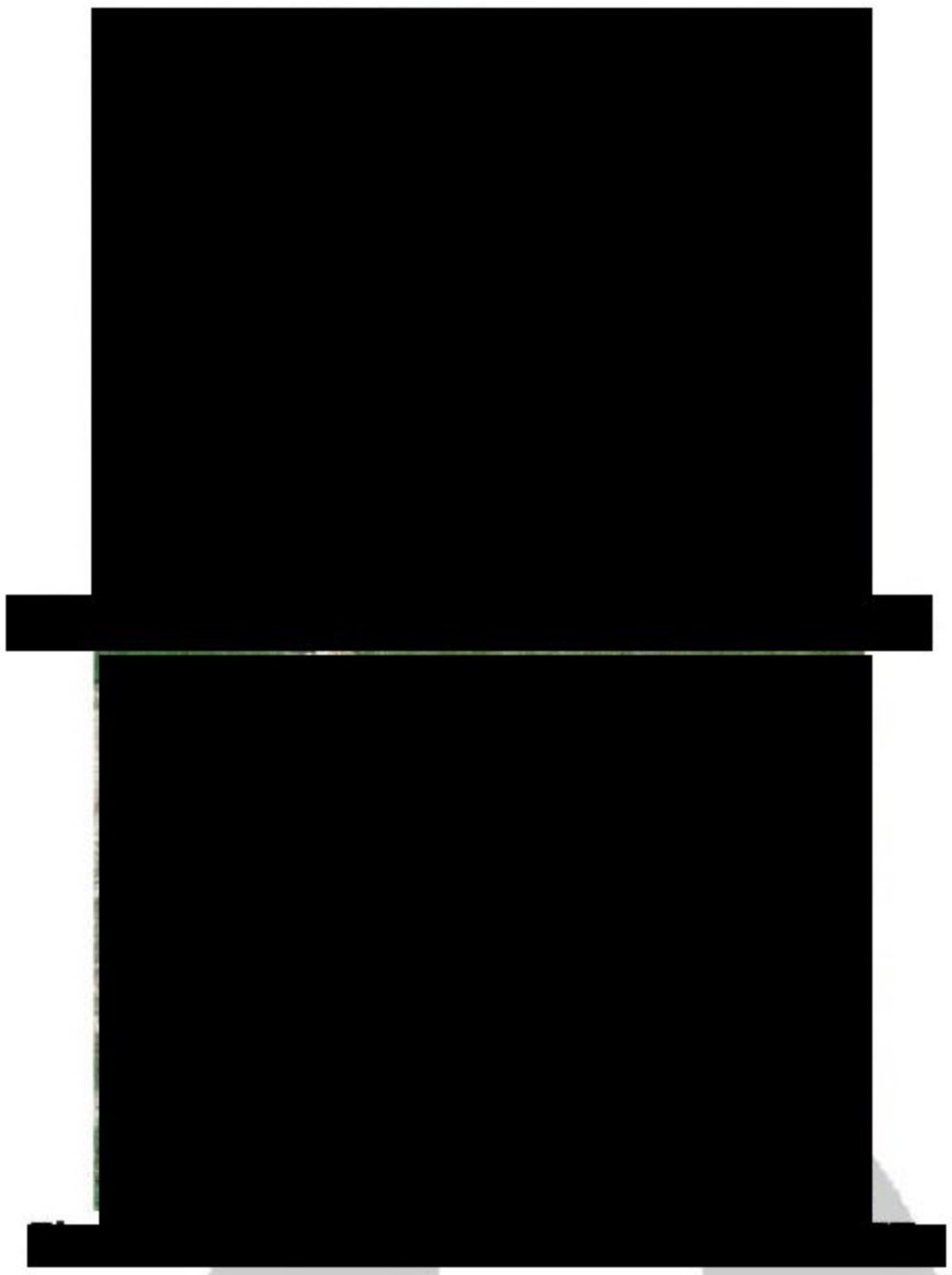


Figure 3: A VIEW OF THE SITE FROM THE SOUTH.

Figure 4: THE POTENTIAL REPTILE HABITAT.



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