

REPTILE SURVEY REPORT

FEBRUARY 2025




Stairfoot Quarry

Sandy Gate Lane,
Ardsley,
Barnsley,
S71 5AW

U R B A N
G R E E N



QUALITY MANAGEMENT

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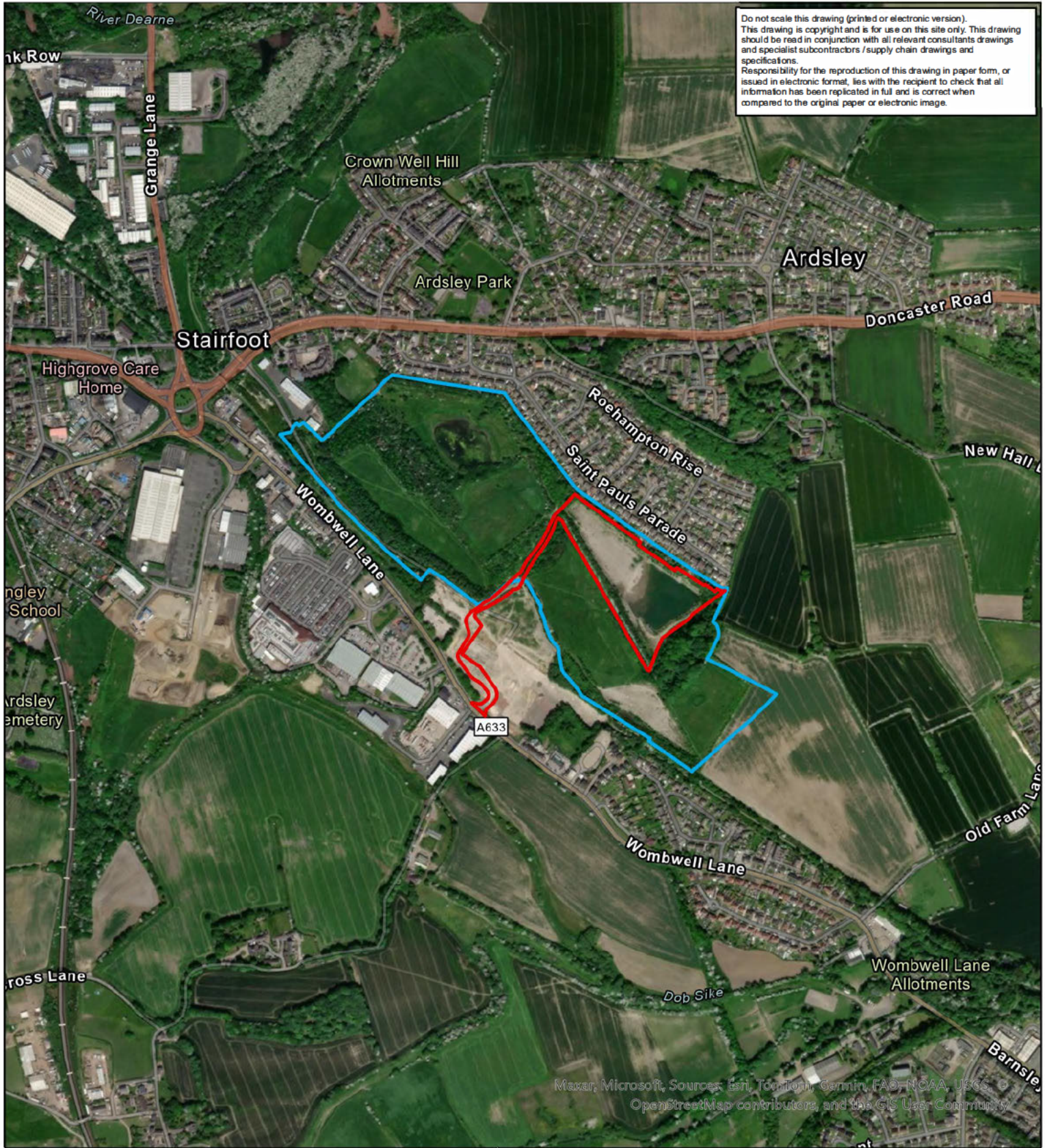
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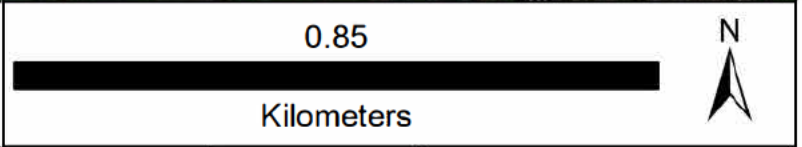
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1 Executive Summary

- 1.1.1.1 Green Earth Developments (Group) Ltd is proposing to develop land at Stairfoot Quarry in Ardsley, Barnsley (hereafter referred to as ‘the site’). The proposals include an ecological restoration scheme after an operation period as an inert waste landfill site.
- 1.1.1.2 Urban Green has been appointed to complete Reptile Surveys and a Report of the site. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was conducted at the site in April 2023 (Urban Green, 2023). Further surveys, in the form of reptile surveys to identify and assess presence/likely absence of reptiles was recommended, focusing on the habitats which were deemed most likely to support reptiles within the site.
- 1.1.1.3 Presence/likely absence surveys were undertaken between May and September 2023 following standard guidance detailed within the Herpetofauna Workers’ Manual (Gent & Gibson, 2003) and reptile survey guidance (Froglife, 1999; Sewell *et al.*, 2013).
- 1.1.1.4 Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) were frequently recorded within the survey area, throughout the duration of the survey effort. It is considered that grass snake populations within the area are breeding, as adults, sub-adults and juveniles were recorded.
- 1.1.1.5 Grass snake were assigned as having a ‘low-to-good’ population. The Survey Area is assessed as likely being a confined and regionally important refuge for the species, with extensive urban land bordering the site to all aspects but the southeast, which itself connects to extensively managed agricultural land.
- 1.1.1.6 The proposed works are believed to have a low impact on the confirmed grass population, however, works could still contravene relevant wildlife legislation without further consideration. As such it is recommended that the following mitigation measures are implemented:
- Production of a Precautionary Method of Works Document,
 - Enhancement of surrounding habitats,
 - Monitoring surveys alongside operational phase, and
 - Species-specific enhancements within the post development layout.



Legend:	 Red Line Boundary
	 Ownership



Client:	Green Earth Developments (Group) Ltd	
Project:	Stairfoot Quarry	
Title:	Site Context	
Drawing Ref:	UG_1773_SITE_CONTEXT	

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Author:	CL	Date:	07/08/2024

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Legend

- Survey Area
- Reptile refugia

Confirmed Observations

- Grass Snake

x = corrugated metal refugia sheet



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Client:
Green Earth Developments (Group) Ltd

Project:
Stairfoot Quarry

Title:
Reptile Survey Results Map

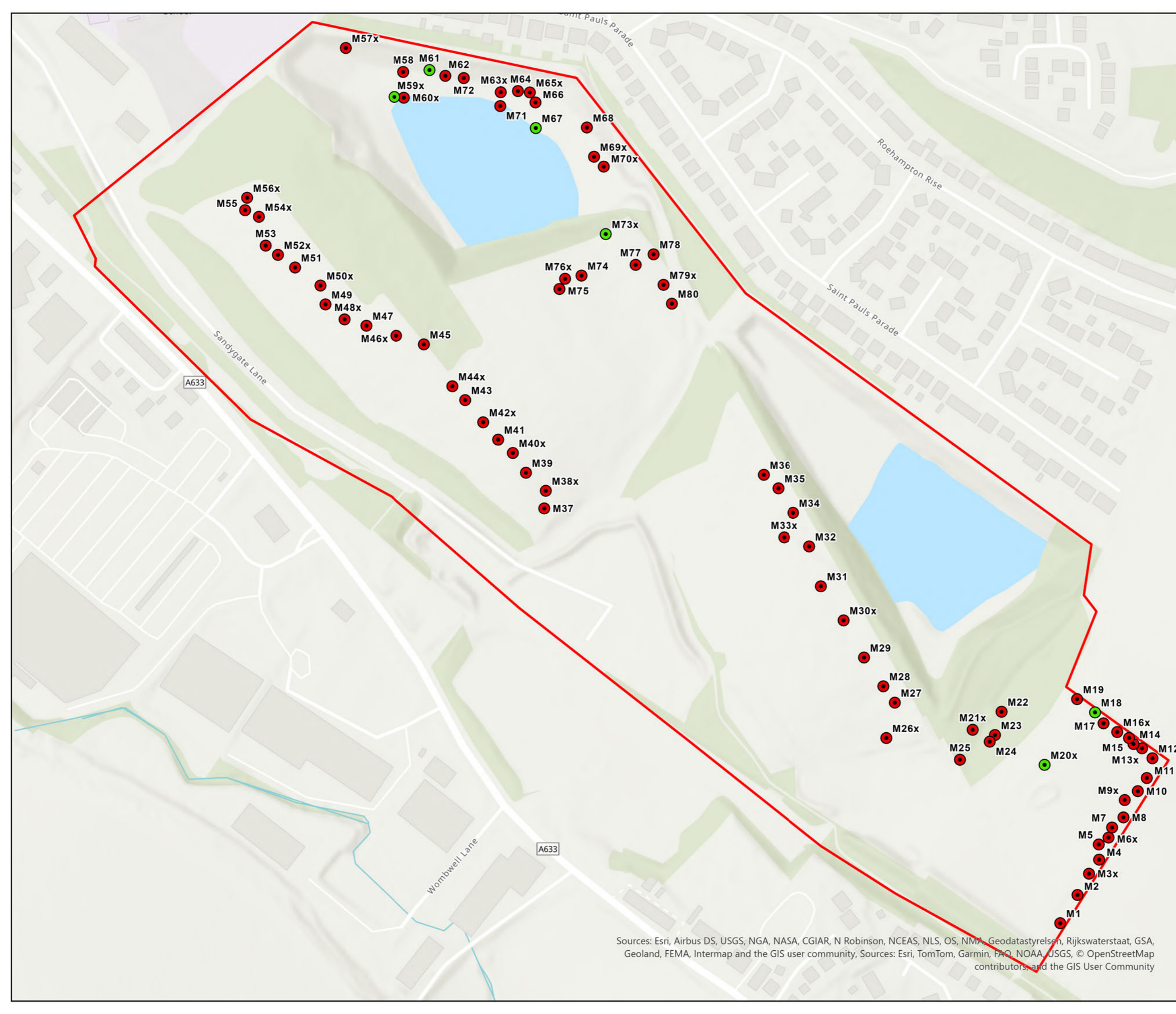
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Sources: Esri, Airbus DS, USGS, NGA, NASA, CGIAR, N Robinson, NCEAS, NLS, OS, NMA, Geodatastyrelsen, Rijkswaterstaat, GSA, Geoland, FEMA, Intermap and the GIS user community, Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



2 Introduction

2.1 Background to the Scheme

- 2.1.1.1 Green Earth Developments (Group) Ltd is proposing to develop land at Stairfoot Quarry in Ardsley, Barnsley (hereafter referred to as ‘the site’).
- 2.1.1.2 The proposals include an ecological restoration scheme after an operation period as an inert waste landfill site. The proposals include the restoration of Yew Tree Quarry, through the infill of non-hazardous excavated soil materials. It is understood that the operation phase of the development will last for approximately 111 weeks and will require the following activities:
- Vegetation removal, including areas of woodland,
 - Breaking of ground,
 - Use of heavy machinery, including ~80 HGV tippers per day,
 - Infill of quarry, and other associated activities
- 2.1.1.3 Urban Green has been appointed to undertake reptile surveys following recommendations outlined within a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), undertaken at the site by Urban Green.

2.2 Site Context

- 2.2.1.1 The site is located at National Grid Reference SE 38138 05192 and comprises a total area of approximately 4.3ha, however the Survey Area includes all land within the client’s ownership comprising 29.1ha (see Figure 1).
- 2.2.1.2 The site is located in the rural-urban fringe of Barnsley, approximately 3km south-east of the town centre. The site is bound by residential properties to the north, and arable land to the east, with industrial and commercial units to the south and west. Doncaster Road (A635) is present approximately 270m north of the site, with Wombwell Lane (A633) present immediately adjacent to the southwestern extent of the site. The wider landscape is dominated by urban development to the north and west while large expanses of open arable land are present to the east and south, including areas of woodland to the south. The River Dearne is located approximately 1.2km north of the site.

2.3 Purpose of this Report

- 2.3.1.1 This report has been produced to set out methods, results and conclusions of a PEA. The purpose of the PEA report is to identify habitats on site and determine the sites potential value for protected and/or notable fauna and flora, with the addition of potential impacts on designated sites. This will inform the need for any further ecological surveys and/or mitigation to minimise the potential impacts on ecology on site and within the local area.
- 2.3.1.2 Further information and details of UK legislation for those species which are formally protected is defined in Appendix 1, which are considered throughout the assessment.

3 Previous Surveys and Reports

3.1 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Urban Green, 2023)

- 3.1.1.1 Urban Green was commissioned by Green Earth Developments (Group) Ltd to conduct a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of their site at Stairfoot Quarry in March 2023. The survey included the entire ownership boundary, comprising approximately 29.1ha.
- 3.1.1.2 The site was confirmed to have suitable habitats for reptiles with a range of habitats present which could provide sufficient sheltering, foraging and basking opportunities for reptiles such as woodland grassland, scrub, disturbed land and water bodies.
- 3.1.1.3 Therefore, surveys to confirm presence/absence were recommended.

4 Methods

4.1 Desk Study

4.1.1.1 Sources of information used in the desk study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Desk Study Sources of Information

Source	Date Consulted	Information Sought
Online aerial imagery	24/03/2023	Review of satellite imagery.
Sheffield Biological Records Centre	24/03/2023	Locally designated wildlife sites within 1km of site boundary. Records of protected and notable species within 1km of the site boundary.

4.2 Presence/Likely Absence Reptile Surveys

4.2.1.1 On April 14th, 2023, 80 refugia (comprising a mixture of bitumen roofing felt and corrugated metal sheets approximately 0.5m² in size) were placed within habitats that were considered to be potentially suitable for use by reptiles within the Survey Area – typically bordering scrub, hedgerows, and dense grass patches on predominantly south and west-facing ecotones. In addition, several earth banks and large rocky debris piles were identified as potentially suitable for use by reptiles and these were inspected during the survey.

4.2.1.2 Refugia were left to settle for a period of 21 days prior to survey commencement. Presence/likely absence surveys were undertaken between May and September 2023 following standard guidance detailed within the Herpetofauna Workers' Manual (Gent & Gibson, 2003) and relevant reptile survey guidance (Froglife, 1999; Sewell *et al.*, 2013).

4.2.1.3 During each survey visit, a visual survey of the area and artificial refugia was carried out prior to any sheltering reptiles observed underneath. A summary of the results is found in Table 2, with full details in Appendix 3.

Table 2. Summary of weather conditions and results

Visit number	Date	Surveyor names	Temperature at start	Weather conditions
1	05.05.2023	Barnaby I. Gardner Max Grindle	16°C	Scattered Clouds / Light Rain
2	11.05.2023	Barnaby I. Gardner	14°C	Scattered Clouds
3	18.05.2023	Max Grindle Jake Healy	16°C	Sunny

Visit number	Date	Surveyor names	Temperature at start	Weather conditions
4	25.05.2023	Barnaby I. Gardner	17°C	Passing Clouds
5	01.06.2023	Barnaby I. Gardner Max Grindle	13°C	Partly Sunny
6	01.09.2023	Barnaby I. Gardner	20°C	Scattered Clouds
7	22.09.2023	Barnaby I. Gardner Toby Mills	16°C	Scattered Clouds

4.3 Population Assessment

4.3.1.1 If the presence/likely absence surveys confirmed species of reptiles are utilising the Survey Area, the following scoring methodology set out in Froglife (1999) Advice Sheet 10, is used to estimate population size. The population size of all species present within the site were calculated and are demonstrated in Table 3. The location of the individual reptiles are detailed within Figure 2.

Table 3. Criteria for Estimating Population Size and Assessing the Site (Froglife, 1999)

Species	Low Population Score 1	Good Population Score 2	Exceptional Population Score 3
Adder (<i>Vipera berus</i>)	<5	5-10	>10
Grass snake (<i>Natrix natrix</i>)	<5	5 - 10	>10
Common lizard (<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>)	<5	5 - 20	>20
Slow-worm (<i>Anguis fragilis</i>)	<5	5 - 20	>20

4.4 Constraints to the Survey

4.4.1.1 It is not possible to provide accurate population size without undertaking detailed capture, mark and release surveys which require a substantial effort. However, it is possible to provide an indication of the relative population sizes by using peak counts of observed reptiles (if applicable).

4.4.1.2 Reptile refugia are often mistaken for litter; especially when placed near public walkways. Throughout the survey season several refugia were either stolen, displaced, or overgrown by scrub and grasses and their location was lost or unreachable. At the season's end, 55 of the original 80 were recovered, and it is thought the findings throughout the season were sufficient, and any impact of the losses on this report's conclusions is negligible.

5 Results

5.1 Desk Study

5.1.1.1 The results of the desk study completed are demonstrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Desk Study Results

Information Sought	Details
Review of satellite imagery.	<p>The site is evidenced to comprise a mosaic of unmanaged habitats, including dense grasses bordered by patchy scrub, hedgerows, woodland, with interspersed waterbodies.</p> <p>Much of the site comprises a quarry on the footprint of a formerly demolished train station, and large rocky debris and exposed earth banks are evident throughout.</p> <p>These features collectively provide a range of habitats for hunting, cover, and basking.</p> <p>The site is constrained to all aspects but southeast by substantial urban dispersal barriers; A-Roads and dense residential streets. Habitats connected to site by the southeast corridor are dominantly arable grasslands, extensively managed.</p> <p>The site is evidently an isolated refuge for its diversity of unmanaged habitats in the wider landscape.</p>
Records of reptiles within 1km of the site boundary.	None

5.2 Presence/Likely Absence Reptile Surveys

- 5.2.1.1 Grass snake of varying age and sex were frequently identified across the breadth of the Survey Area during the survey visits. A peak count of three individuals was found on any one survey, and a total of nine snakes were found across the suite. Field mice and their nests – common prey for the species – were also commonly found beneath refugia.
- 5.2.1.2 Grass snakes were only found beneath the refugia placed; none were observed on natural basking features. Excluding the first and final surveys, grass snake were found on every survey. According to Froglife guidance, this population is deemed ‘low’. However, given the range of age classes and sexes found, across the breadth of site, the population of snakes is thought highly likely to be a breeding population. Considering this, and additionally the constraints of lost refugia, it is reasonable that the true population may be assessed to be ‘good’.

- 5.2.1.3 On May 11th, three snakes were found at three distinct locations: aside bramble scrub in the east field (M20X), along a northern hedgerow in the centre-east field, in grassland scrub in centre-west field, overlooking the northwest basin (M73X). On May 18th, three snakes were again found: two within unmanaged shrubbery in the northwest basin (M61, 67), and the third in the same location in the centre-west field overlooking it (M73X). On May 25th, the largest snake of the surveys was found, in bramble scrub aside the basin pond (M59X). Bramble scrub was a commonly favoured habitat; an adult female was found again in the east field patch (M20X), and again beneath bramble in the north of the same field, on September 1st (M18).
- 5.2.1.4 All locations in which snakes were found were in close vicinity to the site's waterbodies, within the borders of unmanaged grasslands, or the borders of scattered, dense scrub within them. No snakes were found south of the site, closer to more commonly used footpaths, nor the clearer, more open bramble scrub in the centre-south field.
- 5.2.1.5 Across the surveys an even distribution of both sexes and adults/juveniles was found, strongly suggesting a breeding population. Notably, snakes were discovered disproportionately beneath corrugated refugia (marked with X), despite such refugia accounting for 1/3 of the total placed.
- 5.2.1.6 Photographs of species found on site are included in Appendix 2.

6 Evaluation and Enhancement

6.1 Summary

- 6.1.1.1 The majority of the Survey Area comprised unmanaged grassland habitats, which could provide suitable terrestrial cover for reptile species, with an abundance of suitable ecotones between bramble and self-set scrub, dense hedges, and woodlands. Grass snakes were identified at several distinct locations throughout the breadth of the Survey Area, most notably in the eastern-most field, the centre-north field overlooking the northern basin, and within the northern basin's south-facing banks. Notably, all locations in which snakes were found were to the site's north, and all along south-facing borders to tall, unmanaged grasslands – besides those in the basin, which features a tall forb mix of wetland species on the edge of the pond.
- 6.1.1.2 Grass snakes were the only reptile species discovered on site. Grass snakes are not a European Protected Species, though they are covered under domestic law by the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and are a priority species under the UKBAP. Under this legislation, it is a criminal offence to injure or kill the species.
- 6.1.1.3 Grass snakes are a highly mobile species, though the basin is bound north, east, and southwest by significant urban dispersal barriers – the A633 running southwest, Doncaster Road north, and the densely residential streets St David's Drive/St Paul's Parade lining the entire site's north-eastern aspects. Thus, the only route of mobility towards suitable habitat beyond the Survey Area is to the southeast, which opens into abundant, actively managed arable fields. It is reasonable to assume the snakes are relatively isolated and confined to within the bounds of the Survey Area, as no likewise unmanaged or diverse habitats are within commutable range. This is supported by the evidence of a likely breeding population. There are no unmanaged fields or ponds accessible in the wider landscape and is highly likely that the ponds within the Survey Area are of significant value to the snakes. Amphibians are grass snake's primary diet, and the most frequent occurrence of grass snakes was found within the northwest basin.

6.2 Impact Assessment

- 6.2.1.1 The proposed development is restricted to the to the planning application boundary, which is much smaller in size than the Survey Area. The planning application boundary includes Yew Tree Quarry and the proposed access track, which runs through a parcel of woodland, an area of modified grassland and some hardstanding.
- 6.2.1.2 As detailed within the results section, the majority of grass snake observations were related to the northern quarry basin and scrub habitat within the north of the Survey Area, with the remaining observations associated with an unmanaged grassland field at the southeast of the Survey Area. No observations of grass snake were recorded within the proposed site or any of the immediately adjacent habitat.
- 6.2.1.3 However, the habitats within the site itself hold suitable opportunities for grass snake, particularly the waterbody within Yew Tree Quarry, additionally the grassland and woodland on site provide suitable commuting opportunities for the species.
- 6.2.1.4 Grass snake are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), which makes it an offence to kill or injure any individuals.

- 6.2.1.5 To that end, the proposed development has the risk of contravening wildlife legislation through the killing or injuring of individual grass snake during site clearance works and day to day operational activities (i.e. regular movement of heavy vehicles).
- 6.2.1.6 Therefore, it is recommended that suitable mitigation measures are implemented to safeguard the grass snake population confirmed within the Survey Area and keep the proposed development compliant with relevant wildlife legislation.

6.3 Mitigation / Precautionary Working Methods

6.3.1.1 Full translocation and installation of drift netting was considered for the site, however, it is believed that this would be disproportionate to the proposed works, and would lead to the complete severance of connectivity between optimal habitats that have been confirmed as being utilised by grass snake, potentially separating the local population.

6.3.1.2 Therefore, the following mitigation measures are recommended:

Precautionary Method of Works

6.3.1.3 A Precautionary Method of Works (PMoWs) document should be produced for the site detailing working methods for the site clearance phase, as well as the operational phase and should include the following:

- Toolbox talk for regular operatives on site, detailing presence of grass snake,
- Signage and speed limits along proposed haulage road,
- Presence of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) during any vegetation clearance activities.
- Details around stockpiling activities.

Enhancement of surrounding habitat

6.3.1.4 The surrounding habitats within the Survey Area, particularly those to the north, surrounding the pond should be enhanced prior to the operational phase of the development to encourage grass snake to use this area. This should include the installation of new reptile refugia and marginal aquatic planting within the northern quarry basin, which should be detailed within an Ecological Enhancement Strategy.

6.3.1.5 It is believed that this will naturally encourage grass snake from high-risk areas such as the proposed haulage road and Yew Tree Quarry.

Monitoring

6.3.1.6 Further surveys should be conducted during the operational phase of the development, allowing for the monitoring of the current population of grass snake within the Survey Area.

6.3.1.7 The aim should be to establish the status of the grass snake population alongside the operational activities and evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed enhancement measures.

Post Development Enhancement

6.3.1.8 It is understood that in the long-term, the site will be subject to an ecological restoration scheme.

6.3.1.9 This scheme should include the creation of mitigation ponds where possible to maintain habitat diversity, ecosystem function, and support the foraging habits of the grass snake. Where possible, mitigation ponds should consider:

- A mosaic pond of variable nature, with permanent, semi-permanent, and temporary subsections of variable depth, to promote a diversity of riparian, shallow, marginal, and submerged vegetation, and a diversity of fauna between them.
- A range of pond sizes where possible to boost structural and functional habitat complexity.
- Commission of a long-term management plan to cut back and avoid excessive pond-side succession and overshadowing by riparian vegetation.
- Effort should be made to ensure habitat connectivity between ponds and other suitable habitat features retained or created on site.

6.3.1.10 Specific enhancement recommendations may be made, according to the Reptile Management Handbook (Edgar, Foster, and Baker, 2010), to benefit the snake population on the site, and for a potential draw to additional species:

- Creation and installation of log piles in sunny areas for the benefit of cover, structural complexity, and encouragement of amphibian, mammal, and invertebrate prey. Additional brush piles may be likewise created, from the material collected from scrub clearance.
- The creation of egg-laying heaps may benefit the likely-breeding population on site. Heaps may include rotting deadwood and grass cuttings, which could be obtained from clearance and site management, or compost heaps which may be stocked by the public. Heaps should be at a minimum 1m³ and must be replenished from April-May. Heaps may not be disturbed in the active season, or in winter when they may be used for hibernation.

7 References

Edgar, P., Foster, J. and Baker, J. (2010). Reptile Habitat Management Handbook. Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bournemouth.

Froglife (1999). *Reptile Survey; an introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation*. Advice Sheet 10.

Gent A. H. & Gibson S. D. (2003). Herpetofauna Workers' Manual 2nd Edition. Peterborough, Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Sewell D, Griffiths R. A., Beebee T. J. C., Foster J. and Wilkinson J. W. (2013). *Survey protocols for the British herpetofauna* (Version 1.0).

Urban Green, (2023). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. UG_1773_ECO_PEA_01.

Appendix 1 - Relevant Legislation

Legislation relating to European Protected Species (e.g. Smooth snake, sand lizard)

European Protected Species and their resting places (e.g. bat roosts) are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 transpose the European Union's 'Habitats Directive' (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (EC Habitats Directive) into UK law. The Regulations provide for the designation and protection of 'European Sites', the protection of 'European Protected Species' (EPS), and the adaptation of planning and other controls for the protection of European Sites. EPS are listed on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) it is an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take certain animals listed in Schedule 5;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage or destroy any structure or place which any wild animal specified in Schedule 5 uses for shelter or protection;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb any such animal while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection; or
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place which any such animal uses for shelter or protection.

In addition, under this legislation there are offences relating to sale, possession and control of wild animals listed in Schedule 5.

- Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 it is an offence to:
- Deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal listed as a European Protected Species;
- Deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species in such a way as to be likely:
- to impair their ability:
 - to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or;
 - in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate, or;
- to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.
- Deliberately take or destroy the eggs of such an animal, or;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal.

In addition, under this legislation there are offences relating to possession, control sale and exchange of an EPS.

Legislation relating to reptiles

All native reptile species have some degree of protection in the UK, through section 9(1) and (5) (specified in Schedule 5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). There are two different levels of protection afforded to reptiles through this legislation according to species and this is described in more detail below.

Full Protection

Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) and smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*) are afforded protection under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (are species of European importance) and are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the CRow Act (2000). The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 implements the European Union's 'Habitats Directive' (Council Directive 92/43/EEC (a) on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora) in Great Britain. The relevant sections of this legislation make it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or capture or take a reptile;
- Possess or control (live or dead animal, part or derivative);
- Deliberately (intentionally) or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a breeding site or any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a reptile;
- Disturb whilst the reptile is occupying such a structure or place; and
- Sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative).

Sand lizard and smooth snake are listed as a SoPI under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.

Protection against killing, injuring and trade

This level of protection under section 9 (parts 1 and 5) applies to the four widespread species of reptile, namely the common lizard, slow-worm, grass snake and adder. Only part of sub-section 9(1) applies, which make it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill or injure, and
- Sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative).

Grass snake, slow-worm and adder are all listed as SoPI under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.

Appendix 2 - Species Photographs

Photograph

Details



Juvenile male grass snake found on survey 2



Large male adult grass snake found by the water, survey 4



Juvenile grass snake found by a hedge, survey 6

Appendix 3 – Reptile Presence/Likely Absence Survey Results

Visit number	Refugia number/location	Species observed	Sex	Age Class	Notes
1	None				
2	M20X	Grass Snake	Female	Adult	Head shape pronounced, notably long
	M29	Grass Snake	Unknown	Adult	Very large, and so likely female, head shape unseen
	M73X	Grass Snake	Male	Juvenile	Very small, possibly juvenile, likely male
3	M61	Grass Snake	Female	Adult	-
	M67	Grass Snake	Male	Juvenile	-
	M73X	Grass Snake	Male	Juvenile	-
4	M59X	Grass Snake	Male	Adult	Head shape smooth, very large
5	M20X	Grass Snake	Female	Adult	-
6	M18	Grass Snake	Unknown	Juvenile	Smooth, dark head, very small
7	None				