

Project Profile

Mixed Use Development At Roade,
Northamptonshire: Benefits
To Business, The Economy
And Nature

In Roade, Northamptonshire, following translocation of reptiles to a locally-secured and prepared receptor site, monitoring has demonstrated an increase in lizard numbers after three years, as well as colonisation by grass snake and glow-worm. Our work in securing and managing this receptor area has helped Persimmon fast-track a mixed-use development on allocated development land, creating homes, jobs and amenities; and benefitting business, the economy and nature.

The Challenge

Approximately 11ha of land at Ashton Road, Roade was identified for potential development by South Northamptonshire Council in the Roade Masterplan in 2011. There was a need to attract a potential purchaser of the site in order for the Masterplan to be delivered.

Baseline survey work by BSG Ecology identified the main immediate constraint to development was a population of common lizard. All native reptile species, including common lizard, are protected against killing and injury under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Natural England Guidelines for Developers state that: "where it is predictable that reptiles are likely to be killed or injured by activities such as site clearance, this could legally constitute intentional killing or injuring;" and, "planning decisions should aim to "protect reptiles from harm that might arise during development work and ensure no net loss of reptile conservation status."

In order to make the land an attractive prospect for acquisition, through accelerating its potential for development, a solution needed to be found.

The Solution

In order to help attract a prospective buyer for the Land at Ashton Road, a reptile mitigation strategy was needed. The most appropriate solution was considered to be translocation of common lizard to an off-site receptor area.

BSG Ecology scoped a number of potential receptor sites, eventually selecting one that with appropriate habitat enhancement would allow the donor population of common lizard to remain viable and potentially expand. Habitat creation and enhancement works took place during 2013. These included construction of hibernacula/basking banks from railway sleepers and rubble, pond excavation, hedge and grassland management, and the encouragement of scrub to create ecotones.

A reptile mitigation strategy including habitat creation and enhancement, a method for translocation, a management plan and monitoring protocol was approved by the local planning authority in 2014. This strategy helped secure outline consent for up to 292 dwellings and a 0.5 ha employment area in 2014.

Proactivity developing the receptor site meant that, when Land at Ashton Road was purchased by Persimmon, the receptor site habitats were established enough to allow the immediate translocation of common lizard. This dramatically reduced the timescales for development, with purchase and translocation occurring simultaneously during April and May 2015 and site clearance beginning at the end of May 2015.

The Outcome

The project has been a success. The ecological approach has enabled Persimmon to rapidly develop a site that will create homes, jobs and amenities, while also delivering net gain for biodiversity. As of February 2019, construction of new homes in Roade is almost complete. Continued management of the receptor site should help maintain and increase its biodiversity value further.

Monitoring has established an increase in common lizard numbers at the receptor site, as well as colonisation by grass snake, glowworm, plants characteristic of calcareous conditions (such as hairy violet, greater knapweed and pyramidal orchid), and use of the site by foraging kestrels.