ECOSA
Ecological Survey & Assessment

**TECHNICAL NOTE**

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| **Project:** | Mortimer Quarry Southern Extension , Mortimer West End, Hampshire | **Client:** | Hills Quarry Products Limited |
| **Subject:** | Reptile Destructive Search – Phase 1b and Phase 2 | **Author:** | Lucy Bartlett, ECOSA<br>Richard Chilcott, ECOSA |
| **Date:** | 17th December 2018 | **cc:** | |

**Introduction**

Ecological Survey and Assessment Limited (ECOSA) have been contracted by Hills Quarry Products Limited to undertake a reptile destructive search associated with Phase 1b and Phase 2 at Mortimer Quarry Southern Extension, Welshmans Road, Mortimer West End, Hampshire, RG7 3UA.

The proposals for the site are for the extension to sand and gravel workings at Mortimer Quarry with restoration to commercial forestry and biodiversity, a temporary conveyor gantry crossing of Welshman's Road, retention of existing quarry plant site and associated development including construction of additional silt lagoons with restoration to commercial forestry and biodiversity. The proposed extraction works in Phase 1b and Phase 2 are scheduled to begin in Autumn 2018.

**Background**

A suite of ecological survey work has previously been undertaken at the site between 2004 and 2011 in order to support the preparation of an Environmental Statement[1] for the proposed gravel and sand extraction and subsequent restoration of the site on behalf of Hanson Quarry Products Europe Limited. Following submission of the proposals to the Mineral Planning Authority (Hampshire County Council) the site was subsequently granted planning permission for the proposed extraction works (reference BDB/73759).

As part of the previous works undertaken a population of reptiles was recorded within the site with all four widespread species of reptile recorded (adder *Vipera berus*, common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, grass snake *Natrix natrix* and slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*). The population recorded as present was

[1] Scott Wilson (2011) Extension to Sand and Gravel Workings at Mortimer Quarry into Land Known as Benyon's Inclosure, with Restoration to Commercial Forestry and Biodiversity, a Temporary Conveyor Gantry Crossing of Welshman's Road, Retention of Existing Quarry Plant Site and Associated Development Including Construction of Additional Silt Lagoons with Restoration to Commercial Forestry and Biodiversity – Environmental Statement



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assessed as being low. Given the rotationally managed nature of the plantation woodland at the site the most suitable areas of habitat change over time. Whilst reptiles were recorded in suitable areas of mature woodland, these were considered likely to be only transitory individuals, given the heavily shaded nature of the habitat. The key areas of habitat at the time of survey in 2010 were the situated within the proposed Phase 1, Phase 3 and Phase 5 (around vegetated pond) and grassland margins to tracks in the south-west (Phase 7 and 8) and margins to the site itself.

Various mitigation works including a reptile translocation of the Phase 1 area of the site were undertaken by URS in anticipation of an April 2012 start of extraction. A total of 185 reptiles comprising all four common species were translocated to two temporary receptor areas within the wider Mortimer Quarry site between September and October 2011 (M1 and M1a).

Following the completion of a number of elements of the proposed mitigation the project was subsequently put on hold. Subsequently Hills Quarry Products have taken the site forward with a review of the existing strategy and updating survey work to provide an up to date baseline undertaken by ECOSA in 2017[2].

A suite of mitigation works in relation to Phase 1: East were subsequently implemented including a reptile translocation exercise in 2017[3] whereby a total of 295 slow-worm, 177 common lizard, 16 grass snake and two adder were captured and translocated to the two receptor sites termed M1 and M1a within the wider site. The topsoil strip of Phase 1: East completed in Autumn 2017 and the extraction of this phase commenced in early 2018.

Mineral extraction of Phase 1b and Phase 2 is to commence in Autumn 2018. A Mitigation and Management Strategy[4] was produced by ECOSA in February 2018 in anticipation of Phase 1b and Phase 2 of the extraction.

The proposed works associated with Phase 1b and Phase 2 will result in the permanent loss of dense immature commercial forestry, which provides limited suitability for support widespread species of reptiles.

ECOSA were subsequently commissioned to implement the ecological mitigation works proposed as part of the 2018 Mitigation and Management Strategy[4] including a reptile destructive search. Given the relatively poor quality of the habitat for reptiles in Phase 1b and Phase 2, a full trapping and translocation exercise was not recommended. This technical note should be read in conjunction with the Mitigation and Management Strategy[4].

[2] ECOSA (2017) Mortimer Quarry Southern Extension – Updating Walkover Survey and Mitigation Strategy FINAL
[3] ECOSA (2017) Mortimer Quarry Southern Extension – Reptile Translocation Phase 1: East dated 17th November 2017
[4] ECOSA (2018) Mortimer Quarry Southern Extension – Mitigation and Management Strategy – Phase 2 Detail DRAFT

**Scope of Report**

This Technical Note presents the results of the reptile destructive search carried out by ECOSA between October and November 2018.

**Reptile Destructive Search Methodology**

Prior to the commencement of the destructive search of the Phase 1b and Phase 2 areas, reptile fencing was erected around the margins of Phase 1b and Phase 2 in order to ensure that reptile remain excluded from the phase following the completion of the destructive search. This fencing forms a continuation of the fencing erected around Phase 1.

One-way reptile fencing was also erected between the boundary of Mitigation Area M2 and the remainder of the site to ensure that any reptiles present within Mitigation Area M2 do not disperse into the Phase 1b and Phase 2 areas of extraction.

Following the completion of the harvesting of the commercial forest within Phase 1b and Phase 2, a reptile destructive search was undertaken over 10 days between 8th October and 2nd November 2018. This involved the clearance of the top layer of vegetation using an excavator under the supervision of an ecologist. Any reptiles encountered were relocated to Mitigation Area M2.

**Reptile Destructive Search Limitations**

The reptile destructive search was undertaken at the very end of the active reptile season in 2018. Whilst the work continued into the autumn the weather conditions were unseasonably mild with temperatures remaining favourable for reptile translocation, and, therefore it is not considered that this presented a significant limitation to the destructive search exercise.

**Results**

A total of four adult slow-worm, two juvenile slow-worm and two adult grass snake were captured and relocated from Phase 1b and Phase 2 to Mitigation Area M2 during the reptile destructive search works undertaken. No other reptiles were encountered during the destructive search.

During the destructive search the entirety of Phase 1b was cleared and a proportion of Phase 2a (see **Map 1**).

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

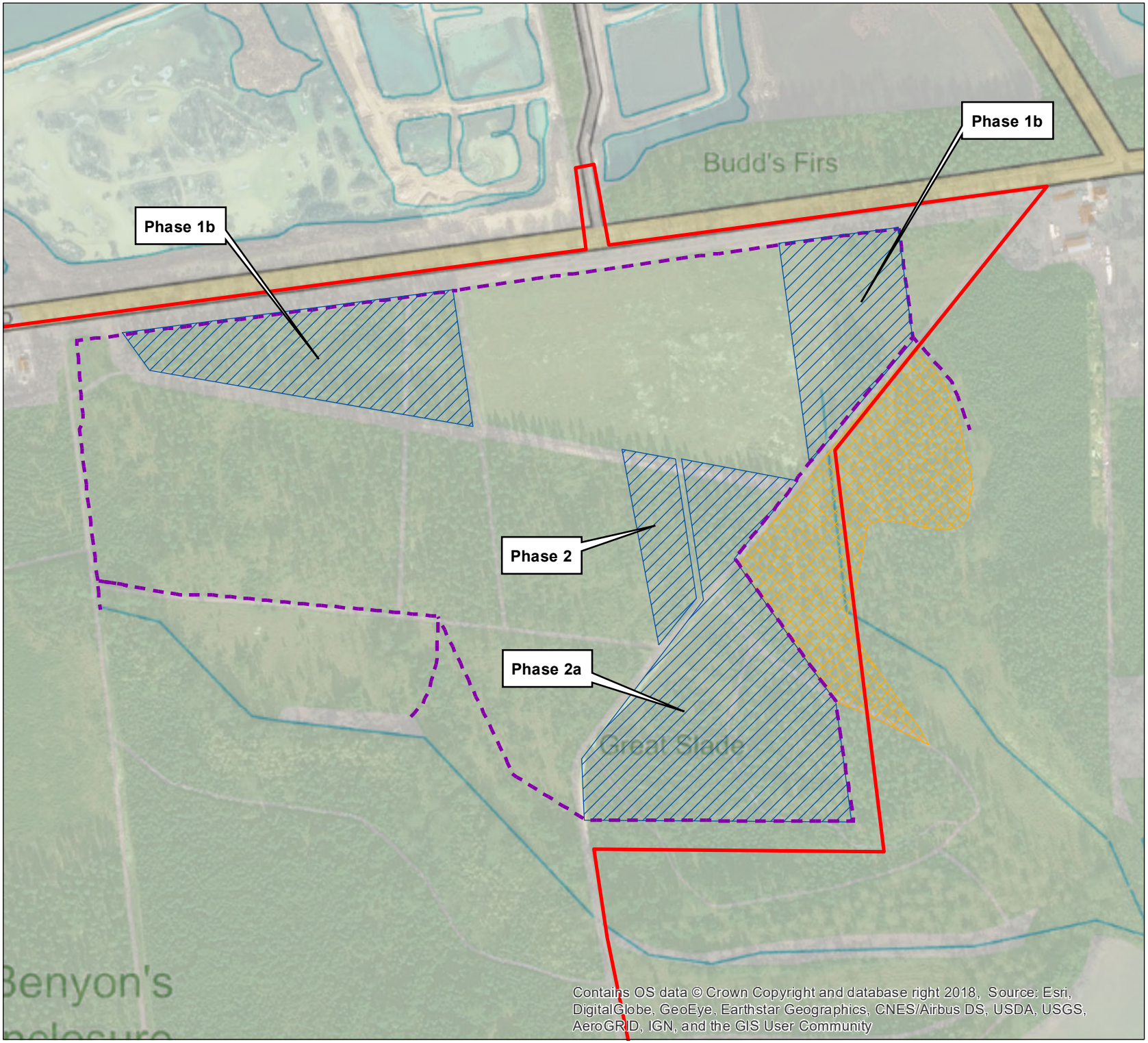
The installed reptile fencing should be maintained in a good state of repair throughout the extraction phase in order to ensure that reptiles do not recolonise the site. Contractors should monitor the fence line for signs of any damage and repairs should be undertaken as necessary. This is essential in order to ensure that reptiles do not recolonise the site during the development works. Following the completion of the development, the reptile fence will be removed.

In order to accord with the Mitigation Strategy for the site the remainder of the Phase 2 area will require destructive search under supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist prior to extraction works commencing in the remainder of the site. This will need to be undertaken in the active reptile season which extends from April to October, inclusive.

The receptor sites termed M1, M1a and M2 within the wider site will be managed by Hills Quarry Products Limited. Please refer to the Biodiversity Mitigation, Management and Monitoring Strategy[5] the 2017 Updating Ecological Walkover and Mitigation Strategy[2] and the 2018 Mitigation and Management Strategy[4] to provide details of the mitigation works and long-term ecological strategy for the site.

[5] URS (2012) Mortimer Quarry: Southern Extension - Biodiversity Mitigation, Management and Monitoring Strategy – Site Strategy and Phase 1 Detail FINAL (Phase 1) – REVISION 06

**Map 1** Reptile Destructive Search October/November 2018




**MORTIMER QUARRY SOUTHERN EXTENSION, WELSHMANS ROAD, MORTIMER WEST END**

TECHNICAL NOTE

Map 1 - Reptile Destructive Search October / November 2018

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| Client: | Hills Quarry Products Limited |
| Date: | December 2018 |
| Status: | Final |

## KEY

- Site Boundary
- Reptile Fencing
- Area Subject to Destructive Search October/November 2018
- Mitigation Area (M2)

Scale at A4: 1:4,000

0 15 30 60 90 120 Metres

N

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