

# Fears over future of reptiles moved for housing scheme

By Karen Goodwin  
news@theargus.co.uk

THOUSANDS of reptiles “dumped” in a nature reserve are now under threat as the site could be used for housing

Reptiles were moved to Whitehawk Hill in Brighton from Mile Oak Fields in June last year in preparation for building 125 homes.

But the new site has been under threat of development too with more than 200 homes planned.

Ecologist Richard Bickers said there was a sudden large increase in reptile populations after 2,200 common lizards and slow worms were released on Whitehawk Hill last June.

He said: “The site within Whitehawk Hill Local Nature Reserve was not in suitable condition at the time of the translocation, thus breaching the condition that

‘enough time’ should be allowed for new habitats to become suitable for the reptiles before you start to capture them’. It would take at least a year, with the appropriate management, for an area cleared of scrub to develop into suitable habitat for reptiles.

“The guidelines clearly state that receptor sites should be ‘safe from future development and managed in the long term’.”

Last week campaigners were given hope that the plans for Whitehawk Hill will be scrapped.

Brighton and Hove City Council leader Daniel Yates is asking the Homes For Brighton And Hove board to consider removing the development of the Whitehawk Hill site from its proposals.

Until this is formally completed, David Bangs, environmentalist and campaigner still fears for the site.

He said: “Where do they plan to move the creatures



Whitehawk residents and environmentalists stand together to protect Whitehawk Hill

that would be displaced by the Whitehawk development? At some point there will be nowhere left to move wildlife to, but at that point there will also be no wildlife to move.”

Natural England guidelines say native reptiles

should be protected from being “killed or substantially harmed” and local authorities have to make their “translocation” a condition of any new build.

Jess Price from the Sussex Wildlife Trust said: “Rep-

tiles need a nice mosaic of habitats, they need areas of sunlight to bask in and some scrub shelter.

“Slow worms like to be in compost heaps. The thing which is concerning is whether the site was prop-

erly prepared.

“The problem is there’s no monitoring after the reptiles are moved, there’s not that much evidence that translocation is successful.”

The guidelines are clear that sites should be safe from future development and managed in the long term, and Mr Bickers claims the council are in breach of this.

A Brighton and Hove City Council spokesman said: “The Homes For Brighton And Hove Board has put further work on the Whitehawk site on hold while the feedback from consultation, technical, legal and viability issues are reviewed – this includes a hold on further environmental assessments.

“The board will be discussing the proposals at their next meeting in March and will provide further updates then.”

Last year, 143 hibernating adders caught at the Mile Oak site were moved to another part of the development in Portslade.

READER OFFER

## Tax-free money for homeowners aged 55 or over with an equity release plan

- Tax-free lump sum of money
- Stay in the home you love
- No monthly repayments

GET YOUR FREE QUOTE

CALL FREEPHONE  
**0800 4640 736**  
www.lifetime.agepartnership.co.uk

Yes, I would like my free guide to equity release  
Please return this coupon to Freepost Age Partnership



Title.....  
Name.....  
Address.....  
.....  
Postcode.....  
D.O.B.....  
Telephone.....  
Email.....

If you're a homeowner aged 55 plus, you could benefit from releasing money locked up in your home with multi-award-winning equity release specialists Age Partnership.

Speak to one of their advisors who will let you know **if equity release is right for you, how it affects other financial matters including inheritance tax or how your entitlement to means-tested benefits could be affected now or in the future.**

Equity release may involve a home reversion plan or a lifetime mortgage, which is secured against your property. To understand the features and risks, ask for your personalised illustration.

Any money released, plus accrued interest would be repaid upon death, or moving into long-term care.

They provide initial advice for free and without obligation. Only if you choose to proceed and your case completes would a fee of 1.95% of the amount released be payable (minimum £1,495).



We may contact you via telephone regarding your enquiry. By supplying your email, you confirm you are happy for us to contact you via email regarding relevant products and services.

Age Partnership Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. FCA registered No. 425432. Company address: Age Partnership Limited, 2200 Century Way, Thorpe Park, Leeds, LS15 8ZB.

NO May 18