Dormouse Survey Report

Land at Mercer Road,

Horsham

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LIABILITIES:

Whilst every effort has been made to guarantee the accuracy of this report, it should be noted that living creatures are capable of migration and whilst protected species may not have been located during the survey duration, their presence may be found on a site at a later date.

The views and opinions contained within this document are based on a reasonable timeframe between the completion of the survey and the commencement of any works. If there is any delay between the commencement of works that may conflict with timeframes laid out within this document, or have the potential to allow the ingress of protected species, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted.

It is the duty of care of the landowner/developer to act responsibly and comply with current environmental legislation if protected species are suspected or found prior to or during works.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Riverdale Developments Ltd to undertake an update assessment of dormice on land at Mercer Road, Warnham, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 3RL.

1.2 The ancient woodland to the north and deciduous woodland habitats on site were considered to provide some suitable habitat for dormice. In addition, boundary hedgerows and treelines provide suitable habitat. These habitats contained a number of species of value to dormice, specifically bramble, hazel, oak, blackthorn and hawthorn. Consequently, due to this, further surveys were considered necessary. Previous surveys were conducted in 2017/2018 did not identify any dormice to be present within the red line boundary and survey area, however, these surveys are now considered to be historic and update surveys as such have been recommended.

1.3 The Ecology Partnership undertook an update PEA and whilst the habitats on site and management of the site have not significantly changed, with the lapse in time since the original survey, recommendations for updating the dormouse survey were made.

1.4 This report presents the results of the surveys on site which specifically aim to determine the likely presence or absence of dormice on site.

Site Context and Status

1.5 The site is characterised by a number of fields, used as horse paddocks, with associated margins, the site is split into two separate parcels by Mercer Road. It totals *c.* 14.6ha. It is situated within a rural setting close to Warnham Railway Station, north of Horsham in West Sussex (central grid reference: TQ 17340 33825). The approximate red line boundary of the site is shown below in Figure 1.

1.6 Deciduous woodland habitats on site in addition to boundary hedgerows and treelines provide suitable habitat for dormice. Connectivity to surrounding woodland is relatively limited, with scattered blocks present in the local landscape, much of it not directly connected. Tree lines running along the site also provide potential for commuting and foraging dormice.

Figure 1: Approximate location of the redline boundary.

Description of Proposed Development

1.7 The current proposals are for a new housing estate, associated access and landscaping.

2.0 Previous Surveys 2017 - 2018

2.1 Dormouse nest tubes were established across the hedgerows and scrub habitats on 13th June 2017. A total of 84 dormouse tubes were established along the ancient woodland boundary to the North and boundary hedgerows across the site (Figure 2). Each dormouse tube was established as per Natural England guidelines, attached to the underside of a suitable branch with a cable tie. All tubes were located within the hedgerows and treelines at approximately 20m intervals.

Figure 2: Approximate locations of the dormice tubes from survey undertaken in 2017-2018.

2.2 Surveys were undertaken once a month in July - November 2017 and April – June 2018. This is required to meet the minimum Index of Probability score of 20 which is considered necessary in order to detect presence/likely absence of dormice.

2.3 Surveys undertaken on the 24th July 2017, 24th August 2017, 27th September 2017, 25th October 2017, 28th November 2017, 5th April 2018, 16th May 2018, and 25th June 2018 did not find any evidence of dormice using any of the nest tubes within the site.

3.0 Given that no dormice or evidence of their presence was identified over the 2017-2018 survey period, they were considered to be likely absent from the site.

3.0 Survey Methodology

3.1 In 2024, dormouse tubes were established along the hedgerows and tree lines, following as close as possible, to the previous locations of the dormouse tubes as per 2017-2018. Dormouse tubes were established on the 26th March 2024. A total of 92 tubes were positioned around the site boundaries (Figure 3).

3.2 Surveys were undertaken once a month in April to October 2024, therefore meeting the minimum Index of Probability score of 20 necessary to detect presence/likely absence of dormice, with an overall score of 46.

Figure 3: Approximate locations of the dormice tubes from survey undertaken in 2024

4.0 2024 Results

4.1 A total of 92 dormouse nest tubes were set up on site on the 26th March 2024. Surveys conducted on the 23rd April, 24th May, 25th June, 30th July, 27th August, 24th September, and 22nd October 2024 did not record any dormice using the nest tubes.

4.2 One wood-mouse nest was found in the July and August checks, with four other wood mouse nests found in the September and October checks. Additionally, a total of three food caches were found in the April, July, August, and September checks.

4.3 No evidence of dormice was identified throughout the survey period.

5.0 Discussion

5.1 Dormice surveys were conducted from July to November 2017 and April to June 2018, and an update survey from April to October 2024. During these, no dormice or evidence of dormice, such as nests or feeding remains, anywhere on site. As such, it is considered that dormice are likely absent from the site and the proposals for the site would therefore not be constrained by dormice.

5.2 The current proposals are for a new housing estate, associated access and landscaping. The majority of the treelines, hedgerows, scrub, and woodland will be retained as part of the proposals.

5.3 It is always recommended that linear boundary features such as treelines and hedgerows are maintained and enhanced on site where possible to ensure these habitats continue to support a range of species such as dormice and wood mice.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The habitats on site, including the tree lines and hedgerows, were considered to provide suitable habitat for dormice during the preliminary ecological appraisal carried out in April 2017 and the updated PEA conducted in 2024, confirmed the continual presence of these features and their suitability for dormice.

6.2 A total of 84 dormice nest tubes were established in suitable habitat around the site in June 2017 and checks were undertaken between July to November 2017 and April to June 2018. In 2024, 92 dormouse nest tubes were established on site and checks were conducted from April to October 2024. No evidence of dormice presence was found during the survey period, only wood mice were found to be using the nesting tubes. It is considered that dormice are likely to be absent from the site and therefore the development is not constrained by this species.

6.3 Current proposals for the site involve the construction of a new housing estate, associated access and landscaping on the majority of the fields on site, leaving the majority of the woodlands, treelines, hedgerows, and scrub intact.

6.4 Enhancements and mitigation measures have been outlined to protect habitats on site and to improve connectivity to the wider landscape. Planting has also been recommended for the master plan using a range of native species of value to wildlife.

7.0 References

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