



Dormouse Surveys

Land West of Shoreham Road,
Small Dole, West Sussex

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1.0 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Wates Developments Ltd to undertake an updated dormice survey at land west of Shoreham Road, Small Dole, West Sussex.
- 1.2 The Preliminary Ecological Assessment identified habitats that could be potentially used by hazel dormice. Therefore, The Ecological Partnership undertook a survey for hazel dormice from April, with monthly checks May to November 2022 inclusive.

Site Context

- 1.3 The site lies to the north of the village of Small Dole, West Sussex, BN5 9YH (TQ 21331 13112). The site covers approximately 5.45ha and consists of an agricultural field with hedgerows and trees on the north, west and east boundaries, and deciduous woodland to the south. The approximate red line boundary of the development is shown in figure 1.

Description of the Proposed Development

- 1.4 The proposals are for the development of 45 residential dwellings located in the south-eastern corner of the site. Also, the proposals include the creation of public open space and orchards have been proposed within the site plans.



Figure 1: Approximate red line boundary of the site.

Legislation

- 1.5 Dormice are a European protected species (EPS) and as such protected from deliberate killing, injury or disturbance and their breeding sites and resting places are absolutely protected with no requirement to show that their destruction was deliberate or reckless. The aim of this law is to protect the Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) of the species. Dormice are further protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This law provides protection to individual animals as well as breeding and resting places, making the deliberate killing or injuring of individual dormice unlawful.

- 1.6 Due to the laws providing protection to dormice, any disturbance or destruction of their nests is unlawful unless done under a licence from Natural England.

2.0 Methodology

- 2.1 A total of 53 dormouse tubes were established in all suitable habitat on site including the woodland and hedgerows present around the site boundaries on 8th April 2022. Each

dormouse tube was established as per Natural England guidelines and attached to the underside of a suitable branch. Some of the tubes were located less than 20m apart, due to the size of the site.

2.2 Checks were undertaken once a month between May and November 2022.

2.3 Surveys have been undertaken by Alexia Tamblyn (dormouse survey licence CLS 138) under the Natural England Class Survey Licence WML CL10A and accredited agents.

2.4 Using the Index of Probability in the Dormouse Conservation Handbook, a score of 24 had been achieved between May and November, therefore no further surveys are considered necessary.

3.0 Results

3.1 During the surveys, no dormice or evidence of dormice (such as nests) was recorded within the site. Three wood mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) were found on the final survey in the northern section of the eastern boundary, the nest where they were all recorded is shown in figure 3 overleaf. Woodmice were the only species found during the survey.



Figure 3: Wood mouse nest found on the November 2022 check

4.0 Discussion

4.1 Dormice are not considered to be present within the site as the survey did not identify any evidence of dormice during the survey season. No dormice have been recorded within 2km of the site in the last 10 years, it is considered that dormice are likely to be absent from the site, and therefore the development is not constrained by this species.

4.2 However, an enhancement strategy for the retained and existing habitat has been recommended aimed at improving on site habitat for dormice and other species present within the landscape. Enhancements will also support biodiversity net gain ambitions.

4.3 The woodland and hedgerow habitats are still considered to have good potential to support dormice. The habitat has connectivity between the site and areas of other suitable habitat such as ancient woodland in the surrounding area. The retention and enhancement of these habitats would ensure that if dormice are present within the landscape, that there is no fragmentation of these landscape features and they can be used the species.

4.4 The hedgerows and other boundary features are to be largely retained as per site development plans, with the exception of small sections along the eastern boundary. It is recommended that planting new, linear, woodland edge habitat and hedgerow across the site, should be undertaken. Additional habitat such as orchard may also provide interest to wildlife, with fruit providing food sources for a wide range of species. These recommendations have been incorporated within the site plans and will create new suitable habitat and improve connectivity across the site in general, both for hazel dormice and other protected species.

4.5 Recommended species to be incorporated into the planting scheme will include species of value to dormice and other wildlife and include:

- Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)
- Oak (*Quercus robur*)
- Field Maple (*Acer campestre*)
- Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)
- Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)
- Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*)
- Elder (*Sambucus nigra*)
- Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*)
- Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*)
- Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*)
- Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*)

4.6 Planting native species will ensure a robust network of wildlife corridors is retained and enhanced on site to support a vast range of native species present both on site and within the wider landscape.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The site was identified as having potential to support dormice due to the suitable habitat of hedgerows, hedgerows with trees and scrub around the edges of the site.
- 5.2 No dormice or evidence of dormice were identified anywhere on site between the survey checks undertaken May to November inclusive 2022. A total of 53 nest tubes were installed on site in April and a total effort score of 24 was considered to be undertaken across site. Guidance suggests a survey effort of 20 must be achieved for a valid survey.
- 5.3 Given all the evidence gathered throughout the survey season, dormice are considered to be likely absent from the site. Thus, the development is not considered to be constrained by this species. Wood mice were the only species recorded during the survey, recorded in the November check, this species are not legally protected for their conservation value.
- 5.4 Hedgerows on site will be largely retained and enhanced. Native woody species planting across the site, particularly in the centre of site will ensure a robust wildlife corridor network persists and improves post-development.

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