

# Dormice Survey Report

Land at Girders Bridge

Gay Street Lane

North Heath

Horsham

RH20 2HW

NGR: TQ 06909 21521



4<sup>th</sup> December 2025

**Sylvatica Ecology Ltd**

Company Registration Number: 07705793

<https://se-planning.com>

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### **Limitations and Liabilities**

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It should be borne in mind that the behaviour of animals can be unpredictable and may not conform to standard patterns recorded in scientific literature. Therefore, this report cannot predict with absolute certainty that animal species will occur in apparently suitable locations or habitats, or that they will not occur in locations or habitats that appear unsuitable.

In order to minimise the likelihood of adverse effects on protected animal species over time, it is accepted good practice, in accordance with Natural England (NE) (formerly English Nature) guidance for ecological surveys to be repeated should works be deferred for over 12 months from the date of initial survey.

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

The recommendations and information contained within this report are based on the information provided on the development works prior to the surveys being carried out. Should the development proposals change then the findings and recommendations contained within would potentially require revision.

The findings within this report do not constitute legal advice. Should this be required, then a suitably qualified professional practitioner should be contacted.

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## 1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Dormouse surveys were undertaken at land north of Girders Bridge, Gay Street Lane, North Heath, Horsham, RH20 2HW, NGR: TQ 06909 21521, to assess the presence or likely absence of hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* and to evaluate any implications for the proposed development. The surveys formed part of the site's ecological assessment and were carried out using 50 nest tubes installed along suitable hedgerow, scrub and woodland-edge habitats in accordance with the Dormouse Conservation Handbook and Natural England guidance. The survey aimed to achieve a minimum probability index weighting score of 20 required to determine dormouse presence or absence confidently.
- 1.2 Surveys were completed monthly between July and November 2025, with weather conditions remaining suitable throughout. These surveys contributed a total weighting score of 18, marginally below the required threshold due to the absence of the early-season May survey, which remained outstanding at the time of reporting. Despite this shortfall, survey visits recorded no evidence of dormice in any of the tubes across the monitoring period. Field signs observed in tubes 13, 32 and 43 were attributed solely to wood mouse *Apodemus sylvatica*, including bedding material, acorn caches and chewed acorns. No nesting material, feeding signs or gnawing characteristic of dormouse activity was identified. The consistently negative results suggested that dormice were highly unlikely to be present within the site's woody habitats during the survey period.
- 1.3 The report concluded that one further survey in May would be required to fully meet the recommended survey effort and clarify absence with confidence. However, based on the available evidence, the site was assessed as unlikely to support dormice. Should the May survey also return a negative result, works could proceed under a precautionary non-licensed method of works. This would have involved phased vegetation removal undertaken outside the main bird nesting season, using hand tools and a bottom-up clearance approach to allow any small mammals present to disperse naturally. Arisings would have been left temporarily to permit natural movement before removal, and works would have ceased if any dormouse evidence had been encountered, with an ecologist consulted immediately.
- 1.4 If future survey work were to confirm dormouse presence, a European Protected Species licence from Natural England would have been required, accompanied by an appropriate mitigation strategy. This would likely include replacement and enhancement of suitable habitat, installation of dormouse nest boxes, and long-term planting of species such as hazel and blackthorn to retain favourable conservation status. The report reaffirmed that mitigation must follow the established hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement to ensure legislative compliance and achieve biodiversity benefit.

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

### *Aims and Objectives of this Study*

2.1 This report presents the findings of dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) surveys at land north of Girders Bridge, Gay Street Lane, North Heath, Horsham, West Sussex, RH20 2HW, NGR: TQ 06909 21521. A preliminary ecological assessment<sup>1</sup> was conducted on this site. This report concluded that there was dormice potential habitat that was likely to be impacted by the proposed development works. Therefore, dormice presence/ likely absence surveys were carried out.

2.2 **Figure 1: Site Location (Redline Boundary)**



### *Legal Status of Dormice*

2.3 The potential presence of dormice within the proposed development site has to be considered as dormice are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended)<sup>2</sup>. The WCA states that '*a person is guilty of an offence if intentionally or recklessly they disturb [a dormouse] while it is occupying a place which it uses for shelter or protection; or he obstructs access to any place which [a dormouse] uses for shelter or protection*'.

<sup>1</sup> Sylvatica Ecology Ltd (2025) Preliminary Ecological Assessment: Land at Girders Bridge Gay Street Lane, North Heath.

<sup>2</sup> HMSO (1981) The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended.

2.4 Dormice are also protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017<sup>3</sup>. Dormice are listed as European protected species under which it is an offence if;

- *a person deliberately captures, injures or kills any wild animal of a European protected species;*
- *deliberately disturbs wild animals of any such species;*
- *damages or destroys a breeding site or resting place of such an animal.*

2.5 Disturbances of animals include in particular any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability to;

- *survive, breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young;*

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Surveying for dormice involves a combination of searches for field signs, such as characteristically gnawed hazel nuts, and the use of nest tubes to find evidence of animal nesting. Nest tubes were installed linearly along hedges and woodland belts, where habitat is considered potentially suitable in accordance with monitoring guidance<sup>4</sup>. To comply with the survey guidance, a minimum survey effort score of '20' must be reached.

3.2 A total of 50 dormouse nest tubes were installed along horizontal branches in suitable woody vegetation, such as woodland and dense scrub where habitat is considered potentially suitable. Tubes were spaced out approximately 20m apart, where suitable vegetation made this possible, to cover the main areas of potential habitat (woodland, scrub and hedges). These tubes were installed on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2025

#### ***Month Probability Index Weighting Scores***

3.3 ***Table 1: Survey Dates and Weighting Score for Month***

Month	Date of Survey	Weighted Month Score
July	27/07/2025	2
August	24/08/2025	5
September	21/09/2025	7

<sup>3</sup> HMSO (2017) The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

<sup>4</sup> Natural England (2006) Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

October	19/10/2025	2
November	09/11/2025	2
May	TBC	-
Total Weighted Score		18
Required Weighted Score		20

3.4 Weighted survey effort was calculated using the standard monthly weighting system. Surveys were undertaken on 27 July 2025 (weighting 2), 24 August 2025 (weighting 5), 21 September 2025 (weighting 7), 19 October 2025 (weighting 2) and 9 November 2025 (weighting 2). This resulted in a total weighted score of 18 against a required threshold of 20. One survey remained outstanding in May (weighting pending), which, once completed, would raise the overall effort to meet or exceed the required weighted score.

***Dormouse Tube Locations***

3.5 ***Figure 2: Dormice Tube Locations***



***Lead Surveyor***

3.6 The survey work and reporting has been led by Richard Law BSc MRes CEnv MCIEEM FLS. Richard has been undertaking ecological survey work over the last 20 years on a number of differing locations

throughout the United Kingdom, for a variety of protected species and is a licenced dormouse surveyor (2015-13188-CLS-CLS). Richard is also qualified in track and sign and trailing *via* an international system of assessment ([www.trackercertification.com](http://www.trackercertification.com)). This formally assesses the ability to identify a variety of the field sign of mammals, birds and invertebrates.

## 4.0 RESULTS

4.1 This section provides an account of the results from the dormice surveys carried out. These findings will inform any further recommendations outlined within this report.

### *Survey Meta Data*

4.2 **Table 4: Timings and Weather Conditions**

Month	Date	Temp at Start	Temp at End	Rain	Wind Speed (Beaufort Scale) and direction
July	27/07/2025	20°C	21°C	None	Still
August	24/08/2025	24°C	25°C	None	Still
September	21/09/2025	15°C	16°C	None	SW (2)
October	19/10/2025	14°C	15°C	Light rain prior	S (3)
November	09/11/2025	14°C	14°C	None	E (1)
May	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC

4.3 Weather conditions during the surveys were suitable across all completed visits. On 27 July 2025, temperatures ranged from 20°C at the start to 21°C at the end, with no rain and still conditions. On 24 August 2025, temperatures increased from 24°C to 25°C, again with no rain and still air movement. The survey on 21 September 2025 began at 15°C and ended at 16°C under dry conditions, with a light south-westerly breeze (Beaufort 2). The 19 October 2025 survey recorded 14°C at the start and 15°C at the

end, with light rain prior to commencement and a southerly wind at Beaufort 3. The final completed survey on 9 November 2025 was undertaken in stable conditions at 14°C throughout, with no rain and a gentle easterly wind (Beaufort 1).

**Survey Data**

4.4 **Table 5: Dormice Survey Results**

Tube Number	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov
1 – 12	N/A	N/A	-	-	-	-	-
13	N/A	N/A	-	-	-	-	WM Bedding
14 – 31	N/A	N/A	-	-	-	-	-
32	N/A	N/A	-	-	-	-	WM Acorn Cache
33 – 42	N/A	N/A	-	-	-	-	-
43	N/A	N/A	-	-	WM chewed acorns	-	-
44 – 50	N/A	N/A	-	-	-	-	-

WM = Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvatica*

4.5 Checks of the dormice tubes from July through November recorded no evidence of target species within tubes 1–12, 14–31, 33–42 or 44–50, all of which remained undisturbed throughout the survey period. Tube 13 contained wood mouse bedding during the November check, indicating recent activity by this species. Tube 32 also contained wood mouse signs, specifically an acorn cache, recorded in November. Tube 43 held chewed acorns characteristic of wood mouse feeding behaviour, likewise noted in September. No other tubes showed evidence of occupation or use during any month surveyed. All confirmed field signs were attributed solely to wood mouse, and no indications of hazel dormouse were identified during the monitoring period.

## Survey Results Map

### 4.6 Figure 3: Small Mammal Locations



## 5.0 DISCUSSION

5.1 Currently, no evidence of dormice was located during the surveys. One more survey in May would be required to completely clarify this result to gain the appropriate probability weighted score of 20, as this is currently weighted at 18. This short fall is due to the surveys starting in July and missing out on the early part of the survey season.

5.2 If the absence of dormice continues to be confirmed, then the following precautionary method of works is recommended regarding any scrub/ tree clearance. If dormice are found to be present, then mitigation licencing from Natural England would be required.

### ***Non-Licensed Method of Works – Dormice Likely Absent***

5.3 Assuming that likely absence if confirmed in May, this approach would involve staged vegetation removal undertaken outside the main bird nesting season where feasible, with any hedgerow or scrub clearance carried out in a phased manner from ground level upwards. Cutting would be completed using hand tools to allow any small mammals present to disperse naturally, and retained shrubs or boundary vegetation would have been handled sensitively to avoid sudden habitat loss. Habitat piles,

brush and arisings would have been left in situ temporarily to enable natural dispersal before final removal. If any potential dormouse nests or other signs had been discovered during works, clearance would have stopped immediately, and an ecologist would be consulted to determine whether additional survey or a licence is necessary.

#### ***Natural England European Protected Species Licencing – Dormice Present***

- 5.4 If dormice presence is confirmed, the presence of dormice and their potential resting places require that consideration for the presence of this species is recommended, should any works take place that is likely to have an adverse impact on the conservation status of this species.
- 5.5 For works that are carried out in areas that dormice presence/ habitat is confirmed, A European protected species licence is required. As a result, a suitable mitigation plan and method statement will have to be drafted to account for the loss of habitat for both dormice and be submitted to Natural England for approval as part of any licence application. This would normally require the replacement of lost habitat and the enhancement of existing habitat. The installation of dormice nest boxes as a temporary measure and the planting of suitable habitat to include plant species (hazel, blackthorn etc) is a longer-term mitigation measure.
- 5.6 There are conditions for the successful application for a licence. A licence cannot be granted unless:
- There is no satisfactory alternative, and
  - The action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.
- 5.7 The mitigation that would be proposed would be designed to follow the mitigation hierarchy process developed by CIEEM (2018)<sup>5</sup>. This is a well-recognised process that provides clear guidance on the established decision making in terms of the mitigation of ecological impacts. These steps are avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement.

#### ***Mitigation Hierarchy - Avoidance***

- 5.8 Seek options that avoid harm to ecological features. This is always the preferred option.

#### ***Mitigation Hierarchy - Mitigation***

- 5.9 Adverse effects should be avoided or minimised through mitigation measures, either through the design of the project or subsequent measures that can be guaranteed. Mitigation is relevant for negative impacts assessed as being potentially significant (before mitigation) or where required to ensure compliance with legislation.

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<sup>5</sup> CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland. September 2018

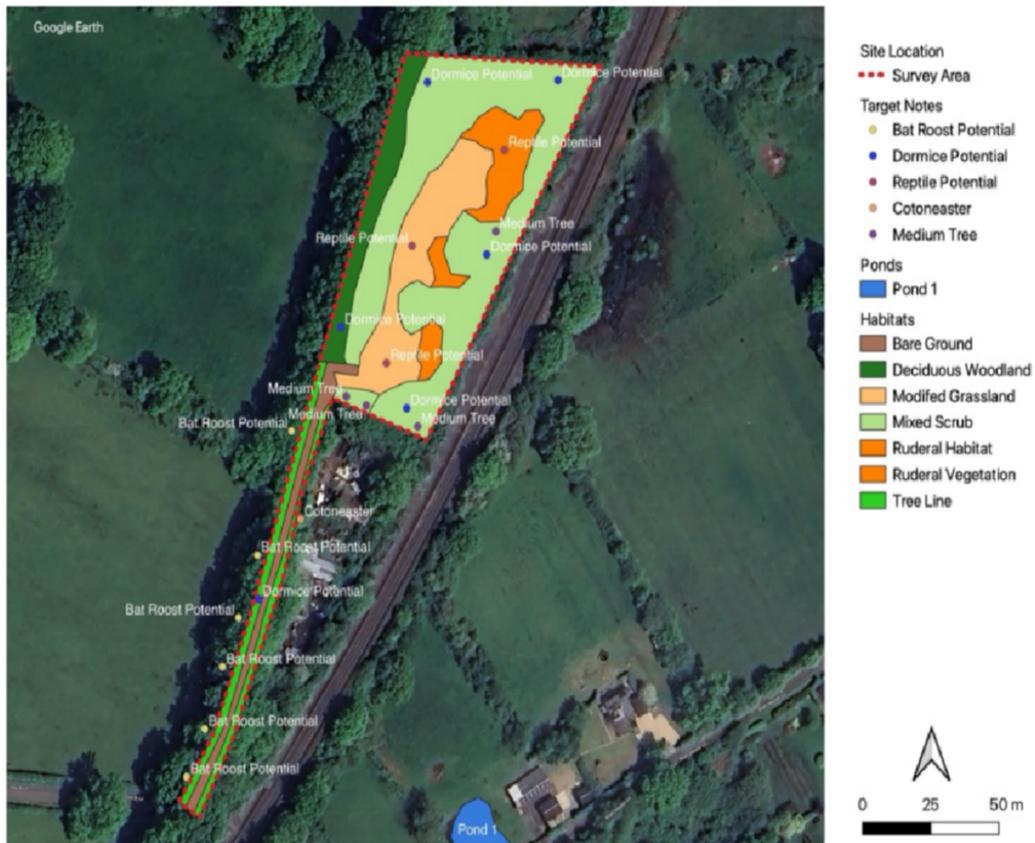
***Mitigation Hierarchy - Compensation***

- 5.10 Where there are significant residual adverse ecological effects despite the mitigation proposed, these should be offset by appropriate compensatory measures. Compensation is relevant for negative impacts assessed as being significant or where required to ensure compliance with legislation.

***Mitigation Hierarchy - Enhancement***

- 5.11 Seek to provide net benefits for biodiversity over and above requirements for avoidance, mitigation or compensation.

## 7.0 APPENDIX A – BASELINE HABITAT MAP



## 7.0 APPENDIX B – DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

