

**LAND NORTH-WEST OF
SOUTHWATER, HORSHAM**

**ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT,
VOLUME II, APPENDIX 8.8
2025 DORMOUSE REPORT**

FEBRUARY 2026



LAND NORTH-WEST OF SOUTHWATER, HORSHAM

2025 DORMOUSE SURVEY REPORT

Prepared for Berkeley Strategic Land Ltd

by

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HDA ref: 2090.78

January 2026

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HDA Document Control and Quality Assurance Record

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site location and summary description

1.1.1 This report describes a Hazel Dormouse survey of approximately 116ha of land north-west of Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex, hereinafter referred to as ‘the site’. The site centre is located by National Grid Reference TQ154274. The study was commissioned by Berkeley Strategic Land Ltd in April 2025.

1.1.2 The site lies to the north-west of the village of Southwater, West Sussex, and comprises a series of arable fields, semi-improved grassland fields and improved grassland fields bordered by hedgerows, treelines and fence lines. Other habitats present include areas of broadleaved woodland, mixed woodland and tall ruderal vegetation. In addition, the Marlpost Gill flows in a southerly direction through the western part of the site. The site is bordered to the west by agricultural land and Two Mile Ash road and associated residential properties, beyond which are arable fields; to the north by the A24, industrial units and agricultural land; to the south by Kirsty’s Wood, Bonfire Hill road with associated residential properties and grassland fields; and to the east by Worthing Road, beyond which is the settlement of Southwater.

1.1.3 The smaller area of the site measures approximately 1.35ha in size and is located approximately 800m to the north-west of the main site near Christs Hospital railway station. This area comprises part of a grassland field and is bordered to the north by woodland; to the east by grassland fields; to the west by a public right of way and access road with residential properties and Christ’s Hospital station car park beyond; and to the south by residential properties. The location and boundary of the site are shown in *Appendix A*.

1.2 Background and legislative context

1.2.1 The Hazel Dormouse (hereinafter referred to as ‘Dormouse’) is a nocturnal animal that lives in woody habitats, mainly deciduous woodland and scrub, where it feeds on a wide variety of arboreal foods including flowers, fruits and insects. Habitats supporting a high diversity of tree and shrub species are subsequently beneficial to this species as these provide an unbroken sequence of food throughout the Dormouse active season. The Dormouse lives in the tree and shrub layer throughout the spring, summer and autumn during which time it rarely descends to the ground. During the winter however, when little food is available, Dormice descend to ground level where they save energy by going into hibernation under logs or under vegetation and leaf litter at the base of coppice stumps and thick hedgerows (Bright *et al.*, 2006).

1.2.2 The Dormouse has undergone substantial declines in recent years as a result of habitat loss, deterioration and fragmentation and is consequently protected as a ‘European Protected Species’ under the 2017 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (as

amended). In relation to European Protected Species (EPS), the 2017 Regulations make it an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of an EPS;
- Deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species, in particular any disturbance which is likely to: (i) impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or to hibernate or migrate; (ii) affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal; and/or
- To (a) be in possession of, or to control; (b) to transport any live or dead animal or any part of an animal; (c) to sell or exchange or (d) offer for sale or exchange any live or dead animal or part of an animal of an EPS.

1.2.3 In addition, Dormice are protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended). Dormice are listed on Schedule 5 of the Act and are subject to the provisions of Sections 9.4b and 9.4c, which make it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a Dormouse while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection; and/or
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a Dormouse.

1.2.4 If works are planned that are likely to constitute an offence under the current legislation, a Natural England EPS licence should be applied for, and granted, prior to works commencing.

1.2.5 Dormice are also identified as a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species for the UK and as a Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the 2006 NERC Act. This requires planning authorities to regard Dormice as a material consideration in the planning process.

1.3 Development proposals

1.3.1 Outline planning application, with all matters reserved (except for primary access to the highway) for a phased development comprising: the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of residential dwellings (including affordable housing) (Use Classes C2 and C3); a mixed-use neighbourhood centre (Use Classes E and F); education facilities (Use Class F1(a)); business and employment floorspace (Use Classes B2, B8 and E(g)); redevelopment of existing agricultural buildings including construction of a building for community use (Use Class F2); improvements to public rights of way; sports pitches; gypsy and traveller pitches/plots; public open space; landscaping, and associated infrastructure.

1.4 Scope and purpose of the report

1.4.1 The updated desk study identified historical records of Dormouse within the wider area the closest of which relates to two records from 2016 within 20m of the main site boundary. In addition, the updated UK Habitat Classification survey identified areas of suitable Dormouse habitat within the site, including species-rich hedgerows and areas of broadleaved woodland. These habitats are well connected to additional areas of potentially suitable Dormouse habitat in the surrounding landscape.

1.4.2 A Dormouse survey was previously undertaken of the site by HDA in 2021-2022, during which no Dormice or evidence of Dormouse presence was recorded (HDA, 2022).

1.4.3 In view of the continued presence of suitable Dormouse habitat within the site, the time that has elapsed since the previous survey, and the legislative context outlined in *Section 1.2* above, a updated Dormouse survey was undertaken to inform the proposed development. The aim of the survey was to establish whether Dormice are present at the site and to identify the need for any mitigation and licencing requirements, where appropriate.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Nest tube survey

2.1.1 A Dormouse nest tube survey was conducted at the site by Steph Smith of Hankinson Duckett Associates, in accordance with the methodology described in *Section 3.2.6* of the Dormouse Conservation Handbook (Bright *et al.*, 2006). A total of 200 Dormouse nest tubes were installed across the site on 23rd April 2025. The distribution of nest tubes is shown on the plan in *Appendix A*.

2.1.2 A series of four subsequent monitoring visits were made to the site. On each visit, all tubes were inspected for the presence of Dormice or evidence of occupation by Dormice, such as nests. Evidence of other small mammals using the tubes was also recorded. The dates of all Dormouse survey visits are provided in *Table 1*.

Table 1: Dormouse survey visits

Date	Reason for visit
23 rd April 2025	Installing nest tubes
2 nd June 2025	Nest tube monitoring
13 th August 2025	Nest tube monitoring
25 th September 2025	Nest tube monitoring
25 th November 2025	Nest tube monitoring and removal

2.1.3 The Dormouse Conservation Handbook describes a scoring system for nest tube surveys which provides an indicator of the thoroughness of a survey. The system is based on an 'index of probability', whereby each month of the year in which Dormice are active is

assigned a value according to the likelihood of Dormice using nest tubes (and leaving evidence of occupation) in that particular month. *Table 2* identifies the value of each month according to this system.

Table 2: Index of probability of finding Dormice present in nest tubes in any one month (Chanin and Woods, 2003, in Bright *et al.*, 2006).

Month	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
Index score	1	4	2	2	5	7	2	2

2.1.4 Values for individual months are based on the use of 50 tubes. If the number of tubes used is increased, the score for each month increases proportionately. In accordance with this methodology, the assumed absence of Dormice from a site should not be based on a total search effort score of less than 20 points. During the survey conducted at the site, 200 nest tubes were in place on the site for the months of May, June, July, August, September and October in their entirety. This provided a total score exceeding 20 points and therefore the results are considered to provide a robust indication of likely Dormouse presence/absence in relation to the site.

2.2 Habitat assessment

2.2.1 As an additional element to the nest tube survey, areas of woodland and hedgerows within or immediately adjacent to the site were critically assessed for their suitability to support breeding populations of Dormice, or to provide habitat linkages between areas of suitable breeding habitat.

2.3 Limitations

2.3.1 The smaller 1.35ha area of land to the west of the main site was not included in the Dormouse survey. This area comprises an open grassland field and significant areas of habitat suitable for Dormice are not expected to be affected by the proposed provision of parking facilities in this area. The survey is therefore considered sufficient to allow a robust assessment of the likely effects of the proposed development on Dormice and inform the recommendations provided in *Section 5* below.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Habitat assessment

3.1.1 The majority of the survey area comprises managed grassland and cultivated arable fields which are unsuitable for Dormice. However, the hedgerows, woodland and scrub do provide suitable Dormouse habitat. These include:

- Courtland Wood LWS in the west of the survey area comprises an ancient woodland with species such as Pedunculate Oak, Ash, Birch and Willow with an understorey of Hazel coppice, Holly, Lime, Field Maple and Small-leaved Lime. Blackthorn, Dog-

rose and Bramble are also present at the woodland edges. The woodland has a high canopy with a clear scrub and herb layer. The woodland supports a good age diversity and species diversity which offers good quality habitat for Dormouse.

- Smith's Copse on the eastern site boundary comprises a mature, dense area of ancient woodland with species including Ash and Oak with Hazel coppice, Holly, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Rhododendron and Field Maple. The woodland has a high canopy and is dense with scrub and Ivy clad mature trees offering good quality Dormouse habitat.
- The woodland in the north of the site comprises a young mixed woodland with species including Pedunculate Oak, Wild Cherry, Sycamore, Larch, Pine, Cedar, Blackthorn, Hawthorn and Field Maple. The woodland however has limited age diversity and a strong browsing line with a scarce scrub understorey, offering a moderate quality habitat for Dormouse.
- The main site supports a network of generally intact hedgerows across the site. Many of the hedgerows are species rich and species include Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Hazel, Oak, Field Maple, Dog-rose, Dogwood, Honeysuckle and Bramble. The hedgerows are currently flailed yearly on each hedgerow edge and some are also topped, which is likely to limit the availability of food for Dormouse. Nevertheless, the species diversity and hedgerow age and structure offer moderate to good quality habitat for this species.

3.2 Nest tube survey

3.2.1 No Dormice or evidence of Dormice was found on any of the survey visits. Nests of leaves and caches of nuts characteristic of Wood Mouse were recorded in a number of the nest tubes across the survey area.

4 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 Dormouse presence/absence

4.1.1 Despite the presence of suitable Dormouse habitat as described in *Section 3.1.1*, neither the nest tube surveys undertaken in 2021-2022 or 2025 identify evidence of Dormice. It is therefore considered that Dormice are highly likely to be absent from the site.

4.2 Dormouse impact assessment

4.2.1 Given the likely absence of Dormice from the survey area, any development proposals for the survey area are considered unlikely to have any impact on Dormice and no requirement for mitigation or licensing has been identified.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 No evidence of Dormice was recorded during the nest tube survey. Based on the results of the 2021-2022 and 2025 nest tube surveys and the habitat assessment, Dormice are

considered likely to be absent from the survey area. No specific impact avoidance or mitigation measures are therefore recommended in relation to Dormice.

5.2 Notwithstanding the current absence of Dormice from the site, this species has been recorded locally, and it is conceivable that Dormice may colonise the site in the future. It is therefore recommended that:

- The Dormouse survey is updated prior to commencement of development at the site should two years lapse between preparation of this report and start of works;
- The development scheme seeks to retain the woodland areas and a network of hedgerows across the site. Where it is unavoidable that hedgerows are lost to development, new areas of connective habitat should be provided such as species-rich scrub lines, treelines and hedgerows;
- Provision of new native woodland, scrub and hedgerow habitats using a wide mix of native species appropriate to the local area. Where possible, these should connect with retained habitat within the site; and
- Sympathetic management of all retained and newly created woodland, scrub and hedgerow habitats to maximise their value to Dormice and other wildlife.

5.3 Although Dormice are currently considered to be absent from the site, this species has been recorded locally and through implementation of the measures outlined above to retain, enhance and create suitable habitat for Dormice in the site landscape scheme it is considered that opportunity for colonisation of the site will remain following development. Securing the long-term management of these habitats could in fact safeguard future opportunities for Dormice and other wildlife in the long-term.

6 REFERENCES

Bright, P., Morris, P. and Mitchell-Jones, T. (2006) *The Dormouse Conservation Handbook, 2nd Edition*. English Nature, Peterborough.

HDA (2022) *Land North West of Southwater: Dormouse Survey Report*. Hankinson Duckett Associates, Wallingford.

HDA Document Control and Quality Assurance Record

Project Title: Land North-West of Southwater, Horsham
Project Reference: 2090.78
Document Title: 2025 Dormouse Survey Report
Commissioning Party: Berkeley Strategic Land Ltd

Issue	Description	Date of Issue	Signed
1	2025 Dormouse Survey Report	January 2025	

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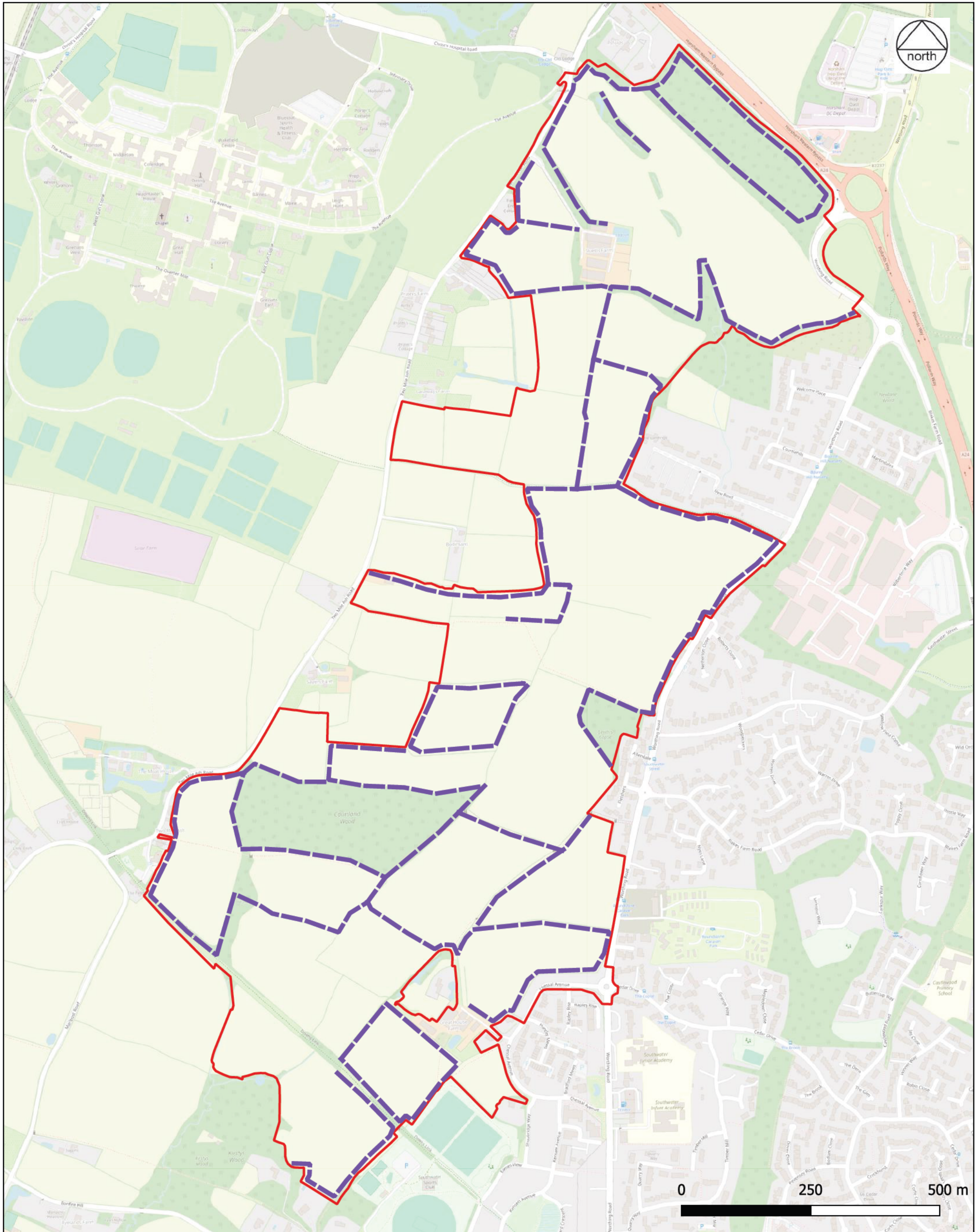
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APPENDIX A

2025 Dormouse Survey Summary Plan



KEY

Site boundary

Hedgerows and woodland edges surveyed using Dormouse tubes*

*No Dormouse were recorded during the survey

Map data from OpenStreetMap 2026-01-08

CLIENT:
Berkeley Strategic Land Ltd

PROJECT:
Land North-West of Southwater, Horsham

TITLE:
2025 Dormouse Survey Summary Plan

SCALE AT A3: **DATE:**
See scale bar January 2026

2090.78/20

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