Dormouse Survey Report

Land Near the Junction of Lynwick Street and Guildford Road

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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 Welbeck Land to undertake an assessment of dormice on land near the Junction of Lynwick Street and Guildford Road, Horsham, West Sussex. This followed an updated preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) completed in May 2024.

1.2 The scrub, treeline, and hedgerow habitats along the field boundaries were considered potential to provide foraging and commuting opportunities for dormice. Although there are no recent biological records for dormice within 2km of the site, a presence/absence nest tube survey with supplementary footprint tunnel surveys were recommended.

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

1.4 This report comprises:

- Introduction, including site status and planning context (Section 1);
- Assessment methodology (Section 2);
- Results of dormouse surveys (Section 3);
- Discussion and recommendations (Section 4);
- Conclusions (Section 5).

Site Context and Status

1.5 The site is to the south-west of Rudgwick and to the north-west of Horsham (TQ07973305). The site covers approximately *c.* 5ha and consisted of two cow-grazed grasslands with scrub, broadleaved treelines and hedgerows with trees along the field boundaries. The immediate surroundings comprised of arable fields, broadleaved woodland and low-density residential housing. There are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Local Nature Reserves (LNR) within 2km of the site.

1.6 The aerial photograph (Figure 1) shows the site and its immediate surroundings. The red line depicts the approximate site boundary and survey area.

Figure 1: Approximate location of the red line boundary.

Description of Proposed Development

1.7 The current proposals for the site are to build a new residential development with associated access and landscaping which includes the creation of SuDS ponds.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Dormouse nest tubes were established across the hedgerows and scrub habitats on 25th April 2024. A total of 50 dormouse tubes were established along the central and boundary hedgerows and treelines on site (Figure 2). Tubes could not be put up along some features due to the gappy nature of the hedgerows or treelines. Each dormouse tube was established as per Natural England guidelines, attached to the underside of a suitable branch.

Figure 2: Approximate locations of the dormice tubes and footprint tunnels.

2.2 Surveys were undertaken once a month in May - October 2024, 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 In addition to the nest tube checks, supplementary footprint tunnel surveys were also conducted. Three footprint tunnels were installed on 26th June 2024 and checked on the same visits as the dormouse nest checks. This involved placing a charcoal/vegetable oil mix to catch the distinctive footprints of hazel dormice, paper slips were changed as necessary during the monthly checks and collected for analysis. Locations of the footprint tunnels are displayed in Figure 2.

3.0 Results

3.1 Throughout the survey period from May to October 2024, no dormice or evidence of dormice were identified on site.

3.2 It should be noted that the difference between evidence of Wood mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus* and Yellow-necked mouse *Apodemus flavicollis* in terms of nests and feeding signs is indiscernible. Given the aim of this report, it is considered proportionate to refer to any

evidence of these species as '*Apodemus* sp.' to suggest the evidence could be from either species. This reference is used for the remainder of this report.

3.3 On the survey 24th September 2024, two tubes were identified as *Apodemus* sp. nests. On 28th October 2024, an additional possible *Apodemus* sp. nest was identified. Nests are displayed in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Apodemus species nests identified on 24/09/2024 (1 & 2), and 28/10/2024 (3).

3.4 The *Apodemus* sp. nests were identified along the boundary hedgerows and treelines, locations displayed in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Locations of Apodemus species nests identified on site.

3.5 As 50 tubes were established a total survey effort of 22 has been achieved, with the minimum requirement of 20 needed to predict likely presence or absence.

3.6 Footprint tunnels were checked monthly during the same visits as the nest tube checks, these did not identify any additional species using the site.

4.0 Discussion

4.1 Dormice surveys were conducted from May to October 2024. During these, no dormice or evidence of dormice, such as nests or feeding remains, were identified 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.

4.2 Current proposals for the site include the development of a new residential development with associated access and landscaping which includes the creation of SuDS ponds. Under current proposals, the boundary features are to be largely retained, however some small-scale removal of scrub and hedgerow will be required to facilitate site access. It is considered that the development of the site will not result in changes in the favourable conservation status of the species in the local area due to the absence of dormice in recent biological records within 2km of the site and the unlikely presence of the species onsite determined by 2024 surveys.

4.3 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.

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

- **Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)**
- Field maple (*Acer campestre*)
- Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)
- Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)
- Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*)
- Elder (*Sambucus nigra*)

- Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*)
- Beech (*Fagus sylavatica*)
- Dog rose (*Rosa canina*)
- Wild cherry (*Prunus avium*)

4.5 Optimal habitat for dormice consists of habitat with a diverse species and age-class makeup, and a multi-storied canopy with links between the different levels of understorey and canopy and sunlight being able to penetrate to the floor.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The habitats on site, including the tree lines, scrub and hedgerows, were considered to provide suitable habitat for dormice during the preliminary ecological appraisal conducted in May 2024.

6.2 A total of 50 dormice nest tubes were established in suitable habitat around the site in April 2024 and checks were undertaken between May to October 2024 inclusively, with supplementary footprint tunnel surveys completed from June to October 2024. No evidence of dormice presence was found during the survey period, only wood/ yellow-necked mice were found to be using the 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 residential development with associated access and landscaping, leaving the majority of the boundary hedgerows/ treelines intact. As such, it is considered that the development of the site will not result in a change in the favourable conservation status of the species in the local area.

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

Bright, P., Morris, P. & Mitchell-Jones, T. (2006) *The Dormouse Conservation Handbook (Second edition)*. English Nature, Peterborough.

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