

Project: Land North of Melton Drive, Storrington (20134)

Planning Ref: DC/24/2006

Date: 05/06/2026

Dormouse Statement

1 Introduction

1.1.1 This statement has been prepared by Aspect Ecology on behalf of Matthew Homes Ltd to support the discharge of outline planning Condition 6 relating to Hazel Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* for the consented erection of up to 62 dwellings on Land North of Melton Drive, Storrington, West Sussex (Horsham District Council ref. DC/24/2006).

1.1.2 Condition 6 states:

'As part of each reserved matters application and prior to commencement of development, any works which will impact the breeding / resting place of Hazel Dormouse, shall not in any circumstances commence unless the local planning authority has been provided with either:

a) A licence issued by Natural England pursuant to Regulation 55 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) authorising the specified activity/development to go ahead; or

b) A statement in writing from Natural England to the effect that it does not consider that the specified activity/development will require a licence.

Reason: To conserve protected species and allow the Local Planning Authority to discharge its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and s17 Crime & Disorder Act 1998 and Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) and Policy 15 of the Storrington Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan (2019).'

1.1.3 Matthew Homes intends to submit a reserved matters application for the full 62 dwellings; accordingly, Aspect Ecology is assisting with discharge of the above condition.

2 Site Description and Surveys

2.1.1 The site is located in the rural town of Storrington, West Sussex. The site is bound to the north and east by fields, whilst Melton Drive bounds the site to the south. To the west the site is bound by Fryern Road.

2.1.2 A UK Habitat Survey was completed by RSK in November 2023 (Ecological Impact Assessment, RSK, December 2024) and the site was noted to comprise a field consisting of other neutral grassland with areas of bramble scrub at the southern and eastern boundaries. Areas of lowland mixed deciduous woodland were recorded to the north of the field adjacent to the track. An area of other woodland; mixed was recorded within the east of the site, albeit the red line boundary for the reserved matters application now excludes the entirety of this woodland. A species-rich native hedgerow was recorded along the north-western boundary and a non-native ornamental hedgerow was recorded within the south-east of the site.

- 2.1.3 Three derelict farm buildings were recorded within the north of the site, albeit the red line boundary for the reserved matters application now excludes all of these.
- 2.1.4 Presence/absence surveys in relation to Hazel Dormouse were undertaken by RSK in 2024, with 11 nests and eight Dormice recorded, with all nests/sightings restricted to the native hedgerow at the north-western boundary and the area of bramble scrub at the eastern boundary. Based on the abundance of suitable habitats within the surrounding landscape, the site was assessed to be of local value for Dormice.
- 2.1.5 An updated walkover survey was completed by Aspect Ecology in March 2026, which confirmed no material changes to the ecological status of the site since the time of the previous survey work. In particular, suitable habitat for Dormice remains restricted to the site boundaries, as identified in the previous survey work. Therefore, in accordance with relevant guidance¹, given that the habitat has not changed significantly, the previous survey findings remain valid and no further survey work is required.

3 Assessment of Impacts & Proposed Mitigation

- 3.1.1 As set out in the 2014 EclA (para. 4.1.66 *et seq.*), the proposals will result in the loss of grassland and a small section of scrub to facilitate a cycle way at the south eastern boundary (and one Goat Willow T35 – see SJA Arboricultural Assessment). As a precautionary measure, all vegetation clearance and tree removal works shall be subject to pre-commencement checks by a suitably qualified ecologist and undertaken under ecological supervision to ensure that any dormice present are identified and appropriate measures implemented to avoid harm.
- 3.1.2 All other scrub and hedgerows currently present will be retained and protected both during construction and post-development. During construction, a fenced buffer is proposed, with a minimum distance of 2m from the outside edge of the hedgerow and scrub.
- 3.1.3 Potential operational phase impacts include new lighting at night, predation by cats, and disturbance of hedgerows / scrub (e.g. cutting), particularly at sensitive times of year such as during breeding periods (normally June–September).
- 3.1.4 Post-development, a 2m wide fenced buffer is proposed to protect the retained hedgerow and scrub from disturbance and reduce accessibility to cats. This will be supplemented by thorny vegetation, including hawthorn, blackthorn, rose, and bramble, to discourage cats from hunting within the boundary vegetation.
- 3.1.5 New native hedgerow planting is proposed on site to provide additional food resources and to connect the eastern boundary vegetation with the eastern side of the drovers' track, providing enhanced connectivity with the existing native hedgerow at the north-west boundary. Native shrub planting is also proposed, which will provide a net gain in foraging and potential nesting habitat. A total of 25 Dormouse nest boxes will also be installed across the site to increase nesting resources (see enclosed Plan 20134/DEP1). A sensitive lighting plan will be implemented to reduce the potential for disturbance to Dormice at night, as they are a nocturnal species.
- 3.1.6 As concluded in the 2014 EclA, given that the retained hedgerow and majority of scrub will not be impacted by the proposed works, and a minimum 2m buffer will be retained along field boundaries and woodland during construction, a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) for hazel dormice is not considered necessary during construction.

¹ Natural England Standing Advice - Hazel dormice: advice for making planning decisions (last updated April 2025) "Surveys up to 3 years old are acceptable if the habitats have not significantly changed"

- 3.1.7 In summary, in accordance with the approached agreed at outline stage, the proposed works will not materially impact Dormice; on the contrary, there will be net gains for Dormice as a result of new habitat creation, including new hedgerow and woodland creation and nest box provision. This will ensure the favourable conservation status of the local Dormouse population is maintained, if not enhanced.
- 3.1.8 A precautionary approach will nevertheless be implemented. A suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) will oversee works in relation to the small area of scrub removal and retained habitats, toolbox talks will be delivered to site personnel, and any unexpected encounters with Hazel Dormouse will result in immediate cessation of works and further ecological advice being sought.
- 3.1.9 On the basis of the available survey evidence and the nature of the proposed works, in line with the approach agreed at outline stage, it is concluded that a licence from Natural England is not required. As set out in Standing Advice, Local Planning Authorities do not need to consult Natural England on the wording or discharge (approval) of any conditions imposed on a development proposal. Natural England is unable to provide advice on this. Accordingly, the above statement, prepared by professionally qualified ecologists (Aspect Ecology), is provided to the Local Planning Authority to confirm compliance with the planning condition.

Enclosed: Plan 20134/DEP1

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Dormouse Nest Box

A solidly built softwood box designed to support dormouse populations. Site boxes well away from public areas, near a potential routeway such as honeysuckle or leaning branches. Position approximately 1.5m above ground, on trees or other suitable support, with the hole facing inwards. Use wire loops rather than nails so the boxes can be easily removed.

Dimensions: 200mm x 142mm x 188mm, Weight: 1.32kg



Key:

- Site Boundary
- Wider Survey Area
- Dormouse Nest Box [25]
- Retained Bramble Scrub
- Created Mixed Scrub
- Retained Species-rich native hedgerow
- Retained Non-native and ornamental hedgerow
- Created Native hedgerow
- Created Non-native and ornamental hedgerow



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Land North of Melton Drive,
Storrington
Dormouse Enhancement Plan

PROJECT

TITLE

DRAWING
NO.

REV

DATE

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20134/DEP1

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