

Dormice Survey Report

Land at Girders Bridge

Gay Street Lane

North Heath

Horsham

RH20 2HW

NGR: TQ 06909 21521



V1.0 4th December 2025
V1.1 10th May 2026

Sylvatica Ecology Ltd

Company Registration Number: 07705793

<https://se-planning.com>

<i>Limitations and Liabilities</i>	- 3 -
1.0 SUMMARY	- 4 -
2.0 INTRODUCTION	- 5 -
<i>Aims and Objectives of this Study</i>	- 5 -
<i>Legal Status of Dormice</i>	- 5 -
3.0 METHODOLOGY	- 6 -
<i>Month Probability Index Weighting Scores</i>	- 6 -
<i>Dormouse Tube Locations</i>	- 7 -
<i>Lead Surveyor</i>	- 7 -
4.0 RESULTS	- 8 -
<i>Survey Meta Data</i>	- 8 -
<i>Survey Data</i>	- 9 -
<i>Survey Results Map</i>	- 10 -
5.0 DISCUSSION	- 10 -
<i>Non-Licensed Method of Works – Dormice Likely Absent</i>	- 10 -
<i>Natural England European Protected Species Licensing – Dormice Present</i>	- 11 -
<i>Mitigation Hierarchy - Avoidance</i>	- 11 -
<i>Mitigation Hierarchy - Mitigation</i>	- 11 -
<i>Mitigation Hierarchy - Compensation</i>	- 12 -
<i>Mitigation Hierarchy - Enhancement</i>	- 12 -
7.0 APPENDIX A – BASELINE HABITAT MAP	- 13 -
7.0 APPENDIX B – DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL	- 14 -

Limitations and Liabilities

Sylvatica Ecology Ltd retains the copyright of this report and its contents are for the sole use of the client (s). Copy of this document may only be undertaken in connection to the development works at land north of Girders Bridge, Gay Street Lane, North Heath, Horsham, West Sussex, RH20 2HW, NGR: TQ 06909 21521 and only once outstanding fees have been paid in full. Reproduction of the whole, or any part of the document, without written consent from Sylvatica Ecology Ltd is forbidden. Under no circumstances can any part of this report be published or shared (in part or in full) on any social media platform.

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.

Author	Signed	Contact
Richard Law BSc (Hons) MRes CEnv MCIEEM FLS		info@se-planning.com

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 likely absence confidently.
- 1.2 Surveys were completed monthly between July and November 2025 (with an additional survey on the 8th May 2026), with weather conditions remaining suitable throughout. These surveys contributed a total weighting score of 22. 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.
- 1.3 The May survey has also returned a negative result. Therefore, works can proceed under a precautionary non-licensed method of works. This would involve a 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.

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 assessment¹ 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)². 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*'.

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

² HMSO (1981) The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended.

2.4 Dormice are also protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017³. 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 guidance⁴. 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 6th 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

³ HMSO (2017) The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

⁴ Natural England (2006) Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2nd edition.

October	19/10/2025	2
November	09/11/2025	2
May	08/05/2025	4
Total Weighted Score		22
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). The 8th May survey carried a weighting of 4 giving a total weighting of 22.

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). 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	08/05/2026	16°C	16°C	None	Still

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 survey on 9 November 2025 was undertaken in stable conditions at 14°C throughout, with no rain and a gentle

easterly wind (Beaufort 1). The final survey on 8th May was carried out in warm weather conditions (16°C) with no wind observed.

Survey Data

4.4 Table 5: Dormice Survey Results

Tube Number	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov
1 – 12	-	N/A	-	-	-	-	-
13	WM bedding	N/A	-	-	-	-	WM Bedding
14 – 31	-	N/A	-	-	-	-	-
32	-	N/A	-	-	-	-	WM Acorn Cache
33 – 42	-	N/A	-	-	-	-	-
43	-	N/A	-	-	WM chewed acorns	-	-
44 – 50	-	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 No evidence of dormice was located during the surveys. Therefore, the following precautionary method of works is recommended regarding any scrub/ tree clearance.

Non-Licensed Method of Works – Dormice Likely Absent

- 5.2 Assuming that likely absence is 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, brash 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

- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 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.
- 5.6 The mitigation that would be proposed would be designed to follow the mitigation hierarchy process developed by CIEEM (2018)⁵. 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

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

Mitigation Hierarchy - Mitigation

- 5.8 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.

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

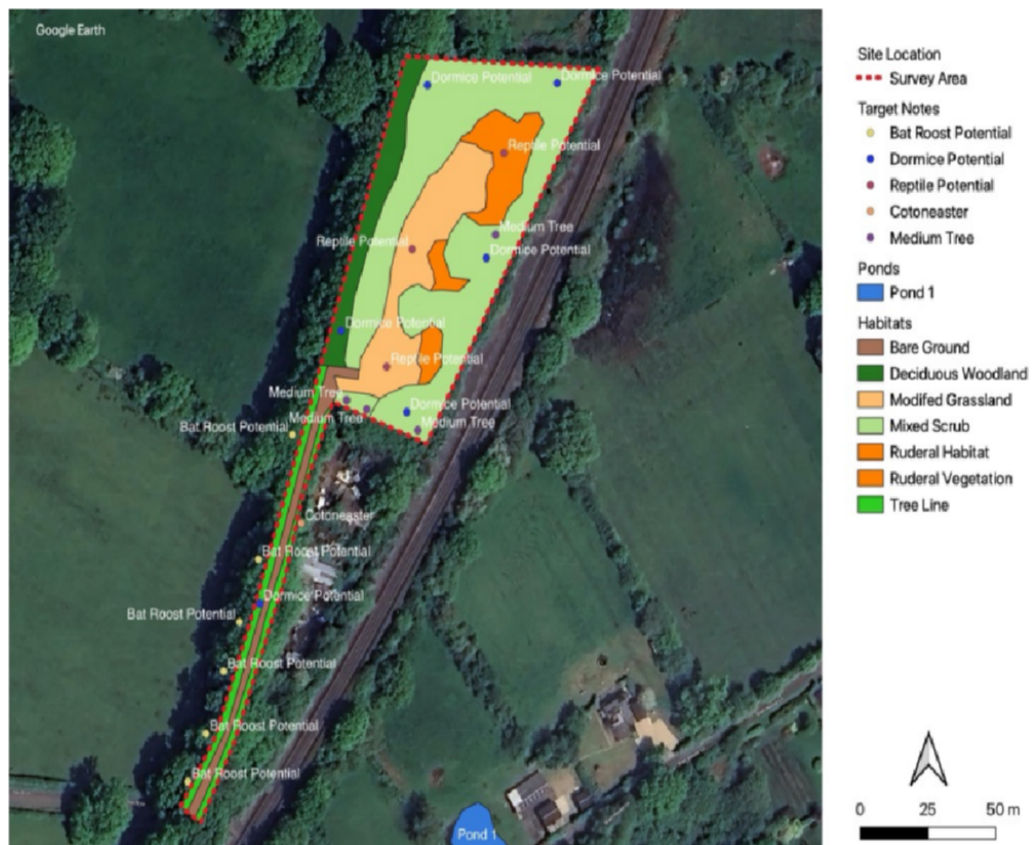
Mitigation Hierarchy - Compensation

- 5.9 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

- 5.10 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

