



Land off Westwood Close, Emsworth

Dormouse Report



Hampshire Homes Ltd

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Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
1.0 Introduction	2
1.1 Background	2
1.2 Site Location.....	2
1.3 Development Proposals	2
1.4 Purpose of the Report	2
2.0 Planning Policy & Legislation	3
2.1 National Planning Policy.....	3
2.2 Adopted Havant Borough Council Local Plan	3
2.3 Legislation	4
3.0 Methodology	5
3.1 Desk Study	5
3.2 Field Surveys	5
3.3 Limitations.....	6
4.0 Results	7
4.1 Survey Results	7
5.0 Discussion & Conclusions	8
5.1 Recommendations.....	8
5.2 Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement for Dormouse	8
5.3 Conclusions	8
6.0 References	9

FIGURES

Figure 1 – Site Location

Figure 2 – Nest Tube Locations



Executive Summary

Contents	Summary
Site Location	The site is located to the east of Westwood Close and south of Westbourne Road in Emsworth, Hampshire and is centred at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SU 75295 06967. The site comprises a large area of common land with grazing cattle present. A tributary of the River Ems runs along the eastern site boundary, whilst residential properties back on to the site from the west. A subway passing beneath the A27 is located at the southernmost point of the site.
Proposals	The proposed application is for up to 36 residential units with associated access roads, parking areas and landscaping including a provision of affordable housing.
Existing Site Information	An extended Phase I habitat survey was completed at the site in May 2017 (WYG 2017). The survey identified the eastern boundary gappy hedgerows provides suitable habitat for dormice due to connectivity to wider suitable habitat.
Scope of this Survey(s)	The aim of this survey is to determine if dormice are present/likely absent on site to inform the planning application with recommendation for mitigation and enhancement during the development process. The dormouse nest tubes were installed in June and surveys were carried out monthly between July and November 2017.
Results	No dormouse or evidence of dormouse was found during the survey and therefore this species is considered likely to be absent from the site.
Recommendations	It is recommended that hedgerows and areas of woodland are retained as much as possible. Enhancements to these features, especially the western boundary hedgerow, are recommended via planting of dormouse favoured plants such as honeysuckle and hazel.



1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

WYG was commissioned by Hampshire Homes Ltd in June 2017 to undertake a hazel dormouse (hereafter referred to as 'dormouse') presence/likely absence survey at Land off Westwood Close in Emsworth with the aim of identifying potential ecological constraints to development following an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey completed in May 2017. The habitat on site is considered to have moderate potential for dormice due to the presence of a hedgerow eastern boundary that degraded and gappy but connect to wider more suitable habitat.

This report has been prepared by Assistant Ecologist Dominika Muriénova.

1.2 Site Location

The site is located to the east of Westwood Close and south of Westbourne Road in Emsworth, Hampshire and is centred at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SU 75295 06967. The survey area, hereafter referred to as the 'site', is shown on Figure 1 and comprises a large area of common land with grazing cattle present. A tributary of the River Ems runs along the eastern site boundary, whilst residential properties back on to the site from the west. A subway passing beneath the A27 is located at the southernmost point of the site. The wider area is made up by residential properties and arable fields.

1.3 Development Proposals

Proposals are for the construction of 36 residential units, including a provision for affordable housing. A proposed access road into the site will adjoin Westwood Close, whilst it is proposed that the existing footpath running through the site is realigned around the development. In addition to the above, hard and soft landscaping is also proposed.

1.4 Purpose of the Report

The aims of the survey work and the subsequent report presented herein were to:

- Determine the presence or likely absence of dormice at the site;
- Provide an appraisal of the implications created by the potential presence of dormice at the site;
- Establish if any potential effects on dormice caused by the development are permissible; and
- Provide preliminary advice on mitigation strategies against any adverse effects on local dormice population(s) which may arise as a result of the proposed development.



2.0 Planning Policy & Legislation

2.1 National Planning Policy

2.1.1 National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF requires local planning authorities to take account of the conservation of protected species when determining planning applications and makes the presence of a protected species a material consideration when assessing a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat.

In the case of European Protected Species such as dormouse, planning policy emphasises that strict statutory provisions apply (including the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010* (as amended)), to which a planning authority must have due regard.

Where developments requiring planning permission are likely to impact upon protected species, it is necessary that protected species surveys are undertaken and submitted.

It also includes a requirement for the planning system to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment through protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, ecosystem services and provide net gains in biodiversity.

2.1.2 Biodiversity 2020

Biodiversity 2020 replaces the previous UK Biodiversity Action Plan and sets national targets to be achieved. The intent of Biodiversity 2020, however, is much broader than the protection and enhancement of less common species, and is meant to embrace the wider countryside as a whole.

The priority species and habitats considered under Biodiversity 2020 are the Species of Principal Importance (SPI) & Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI) detailed under NERC Act 2006. Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAP) identify habitat and species conservation priorities at a local level (typically at the County level), and are usually drawn up by a consortium of local Government organisations and conservation charities. Although no-longer accountable at a national level, many are still managed and implemented at a local level.

2.2 Adopted Havant Borough Council Local Plan

The site is within Havant Borough and is governed by the Core Strategy for Havant Borough Council. Development Management Policy DM8 Conservation, Protection and Enhancement of Existing Natural Features states:

Development will only be permitted where it protects and enhances local habitats and landscape distinctiveness and which addresses all of the relevant criteria as set out below:

- *Protects natural features of nature conservation and/or amenity importance on the site, for example trees, woodlands, hedgerows, soils, streams, stream corridors, springs, ditches or ponds from damage, destruction and a deterioration in quality.*
- *Sympathetically incorporates existing features into the overall design of the scheme including measures taken to ensure their continued survival.*



- *Provides new landscape works that integrate successfully with the local environment and existing natural features, using local materials and plant species and making provision for future maintenance of new landscape works associated with new developments.*
- *Ensures sequences of greenspaces are maintained and protects the attractiveness and visual amenity of all green open spaces that contribute to the identity of the borough.*

2.3 Legislation

The dormouse is legally protected in the United Kingdom under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended); this legal protection was strengthened in 2000 by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 in England and Wales. Under Schedule 12 of this Act, it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure used by dormice for shelter or protection or to disturb an animal whilst occupying such a structure.

Further, dormice are also afforded full legal protection under European legislation on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended), which transposed the European 'Habitats' Directive (92/43/EEC) into UK law, making it a European protected species. In combination, these legislations make it an offence to:

- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture a dormouse;
- Damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a dormouse;
- Deliberately disturb a dormouse while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.

The dormouse is listed as a SPI under the NERC Act 2006.

A European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) from Natural England is required for any development works that would affect dormouse or dormouse habitat (e.g. hedgerows, scrub or woodland) where the species is known to be present.



3.0 Methodology

3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 Local Ecological Records Centre

Information was requested from the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) for information on any nature conservation designations and protected or notable species records within 2km of the site. This provided the overall ecological context for the site and surrounding areas and potential basis for the bat surveys.

HBIC returned no records of dormice within 2km of the site.

3.2 Field Surveys

The following methodologies have been used to identify the dormouse presence/likely absence on or near the site, which is relevant to the proposed development.

3.2.1 Dormouse Survey

A dormouse survey was undertaken following the methodology as described in Bright *et al.*, (2006), the English Nature *Dormouse Conservation Handbook*.

85 artificial nest tubes were placed within suitable dormouse habitat (Figure 2). These are readily used by dormice for breeding and daytime shelter. Tubes are made from stiff double walled black plastic sheet, 5 x 5cm in cross section and 25cm long. A small plywood tray is placed inside, projecting 5cm beyond the tube's entrance to allow the animals easy access. The opposite end of the tube is sealed with a wooden block mounted on the tray. The tubes are suspended by wire or tape, fixed firmly underneath horizontal limbs, where they resemble a hollow branch. The tubes can be emptied without removing them by placing a plastic bag over the closed end and pushing in the wooden tray from the open end of the tube.

Nest tubes were located approximately 20m apart within a total length of approximately 1,800 meters of the suitable habitat. This included all boundary hedgerows dominated by hawthorn (approximately 1,700m) and a woodland area in the centre of the site (approximately 100m). Tubes were positioned on trees and shrubs at between 1 and 2 metres from the ground. Tubes were distributed throughout hedgerow and the edge of the woodland habitat. The location of the tubes are shown in Figure 2.

3.2.2 Number of Survey Visits

To establish the likely absence of dormice at a site, visits were made to check the nest tubes each month between July and November inclusive. This would achieve 20 points, which is considered to be a reasonable survey effort based on the index of probability scoring system, (Bright *et al.*, English Nature, 2006). The points system varies throughout the year as nest tubes are most likely to be occupied during May and August / September. However, as surveys can only determine presence or likely absence and cannot provide a population estimate, once presence of dormice has been determined within a site, they can be assumed to be present within all suitable and connected habitats.



Table 1 Index of probability of finding dormice present in nest tubes in any one month (Bright *et al*, English Nature, 2006)

Month	Index of probability
April	1
May	4
June	2
July	2
August	5
September	7
October	2
November	2

The dormouse survey was set up on 16th June 2017 and the dates for the dormouse surveys were:

- 7th July 2017 (representing June), cumulative points total = 2;
- 31st July 2017, cumulative points total = 4;
- 18th August 2017, cumulative points total = 9;
- 12th September 2017, cumulative points total = 16;
- 11th October 2017, cumulative points total = 18;
- 2nd November 2017, cumulative points total = 20.

3.3 Limitations

Two surveys were carried out in July, one at the beginning of the month (7th July) and one at the end of the month (31st July). The survey carried out on 7th July represents a results for month of June. Two surveys were conducted in one month due to timings of the instructions to proceed with works. As the surveys were done at each end of the month, and the first one was carried out more than two weeks after installation of the nest tubes, this is not considered a significant limitation.

All surveys were completed according to the relevant guidelines and all dormouse tubes were accessible. On the survey of 2nd November Tube 7 and 13 were found damaged as a result of livestock grazing. This is however not considered a significant limitation as the remaining tubes along the hedgerow were not damaged and they were found damaged only on the last survey.

The details of this report will remain valid for a period of **two years** from the date of the last survey, after which the validity of this assessment should be reviewed to determine whether further updates are necessary. Note that the recommendations within this report should be reviewed (and reassessed if necessary) should there be any changes to the red line boundary or development proposals which this report was based on.



4.0 Results

4.1 Survey Results

The results of the dormouse surveys are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Dormouse survey results

Date	Habitat/Location	Tube	Results
7 th July 2017	N/A	N/A	No dormouse signs observed
31 st July 2017	N/A	N/A	No dormouse signs observed
18 th August 2017	N/A	N/A	No dormouse signs observed
12 th September 2017	N/A	N/A	No dormouse signs observed
11 th October 2017	N/A	N/A	No dormouse signs observed
2 nd November 2017	N/A	N/A	No dormouse signs observed

No dormice were recorded during any of the surveys. Wood mice and their signs (nests) were identified in Tubes 2, 21, 43, 46, 50, 59, 64 and 69.

Although potentially suitable habitat for dormice was identified within and surrounding the site, no dormice or evidence of nest building was found during the surveys. **It is considered that dormice are likely to be absent from the survey site and the immediate surrounding area.**



5.0 Discussion & Conclusions

5.1 Recommendations

The recommendations detailed in this section are based on the results from the dormouse survey in relation to the proposed works / development within the site.

Recommendations for enhancement take into account relevant legislation and planning policy pertaining to dormouse (as detailed in Section 2).

As no dormouse or evidence of dormouse was found during the survey, the development can proceed without any specific mitigation relating to dormouse and the proposals will not require a EPSL.

In the unlikely event that a dormouse (or evidence of dormouse) is found during the development works, all works must stop and a licenced dormouse ecologist must be contacted to for further advice.

5.2 Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement for Dormouse

The suitable habitat for dormouse on site will be protected and enhanced as part of the development. Gaps in the western boundary hedgerow will be infilled by planting a mixture of native wildlife friendly plants such as hazel, honeysuckle and hawthorn.

Further, UK native tree and shrub species of value for dormouse such as hazel, oak, ash, yew, crab apple, blackthorn and hawthorn will be incorporated into the planting schedule. The additional planting within this area will increase ecological connectivity within the site and along the hedgerow boundaries.

5.3 Conclusions

No evidence of dormouse was recorded within the site and it is concluded that dormice **are likely absent** from the site.

Enhancements for dormouse have been recommended to enhance the potentially suitable habitat for dormice. These comprise planting up of gaps within the hedgerows with locally native shrub and tree species.

The results of this survey will remain valid for two years (i.e. until November 2019). If works have not commenced by this time, the validity of this assessment should be reviewed to determine whether further updates are necessary.



6.0 References

- Bright, P, Morris, P. & Mitchell-Jones, A, (2006). The Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2nd Edition. English Nature, Peterborough.
- National Planning Policy Framework (2012)
- WYG (2017) Land off Westwood Close: Ecological Appraisal Summary



FIGURES

Figure 1 – Site Location

Figure 2 – Nest Tube Locations

