



Dormouse Survey Report 2024

Land at Coombe Farm,
Sayers Common

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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

Background

- 1.1 The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Welbeck to undertake an assessment for presence/likely absence of dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) on the proposed development site on land at Coombe Farm, Sayers Common.
- 1.2 This document provides findings of the dormouse surveys completed by The Ecology Partnership in 2024 in order to support the planning application for the proposed development. Section 2 of this report sets out the methodology of The Ecology Partnership's survey and the results in Section 3 and Section 4 and the implications discussed in Section 4. Conclusions are provided for in chapter 5 of this report.

Site Context and Status

- 1.3 The site is located to the east of London Road (B2118) at Coombe Farm which lies to the south of the village of Sayers Common, West Sussex (TQ 26862 17823). It covers approximately 13ha and consists of woodland and grassland fields with tree lines and hedgerows. The wider landscape comprises largely of arable land and low-density housing. There are no statutory or non-statutory designations within 2km of the site.
- 1.4 Planning proposals for the development have not yet been finalised. It is understood that the development will comprise a residential housing estate.



Figure 1: Approximate location of the red line boundary

Relevant Legislation

- 1.5 Hazel dormice are a European protected species (EPS) and as such are protected from deliberate killing, injury or disturbance and its breeding sites and resting places are absolutely protected with no requirement to show that their destruction was deliberate or reckless. The aim of this law is to protect the favourable conservation status (FCS) of the species. The dormouse is further protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This law provides protection to individual animals as well as breeding and resting places, making the deliberate killing or injuring of individual dormice unlawful.

- 1.6 The report has been produced with reference to current guidelines for preliminary ecological appraisal (CIEEM 2017) and in accordance with BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development.

2.0 Dormouse Survey Methodology

- 2.1 A total of 75 Dormouse nest tubes were established within the boundary scrub and woodland habitats around the site's boundary in April 2024. Each dormouse tube was established as per Natural England guidelines, attached to the underside of a suitable branch.
- 2.2 Checks 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. By conducting the surveys once a month between May to October, a total Probability score of 33 was scored. Surveys were carried out by Alexia Tamblyn's (The Ecology Partnership) accredited agents.

3.0 Results

- 3.1 Surveys undertaken once a month between May to October 2024, with the results shown within Table 1 below.

Table 1: Survey Dates and Results

<i>Date of check</i>	<i>Observation</i>
29 th April 2024	<i>Set up</i>
31 st May 2024	No evidence
28 th June 2024	No evidence
30 th July 2024	No evidence
29 th August 2024	No evidence
30 th September 2024	No evidence
30 th October 2024	No evidence

- 3.2 No evidence of dormice was found during the course of the survey period. During the August check, wood mice (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) were recorded in tubes on the southern boundary, and within the hedgerow in the centre of site (figure 2).



Figure 2: Woodmouse found within dormouse tube

3.3 Using the Index of Probability outlined in the Dormouse Conservation Handbook (Bright *et al.*, 2006), a score of 34 has been achieved. A recommended score of 20 is deemed necessary to detect presence/likely absence of dormice.

4.0 Discussion and Recommendations

4.1 Dormice surveys were conducted from May to October 2024, with the tubes being taken down on the final survey. No dormice or evidence of dormice, such as nests or feeding remains, were found 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 A total of 75 dormouse tubes were set up and checked on site, resulting in a survey effort of 33. The survey effort meets the minimum requirement of 20 which is recommended by the Dormouse Conservation Handbook (Bright *et al.* 2006).

4.3 During the course of the survey period, no evidence of dormice using the site was confirmed. However, the tree lines and hedgerows provide a well connected network and provide opportunities for a range of species, including bats, and therefore recommendations are for the protection and enhancement of these features.

4.4 Recommended species which will 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 sylvatica*)
- Dog rose (*Rosa canina*)
- Wild cherry (*Prunus avium*)

4.5 Planting native species will ensure a robust network of wildlife corridors is retained and enhanced on Site to support a vast range of native species present both on Site and within the wider landscape.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 The site at Coombe Farm, Sayers Common was originally surveyed by the Ecology Partnership in June 2017. The potential for the site to support dormice was identified, due to the presence of woodland and hedgerows within the site boundaries.

5.2 A total of 75 dormice nest tubes were set up in April 2024 and checks were carried out from May until October inclusively. No evidence of dormice presence was found during the survey period. It is considered that dormice are likely to be absent from the site and therefore the development is not constrained by this species.

- 5.3 Current proposals for the site involve the construction of a housing development within the arable field on site, leaving the woodland and the majority of the boundary habitats intact. Recommendations have been made to buffer the boundary features from development. As such, no mitigation specific to dormice is considered necessary.

7.0 References

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

Bright, P. & MacPherson, D. (2002)., *Hedgerow management, dormice and biodiversity (Report number 454)*. English Nature, Peterborough.

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