



Leigh Ecology Ltd

Protected Species and Habitat Surveys

**Highfields,
West Hill,
East Grinstead,
West Sussex**

Relevant Method Statements and Working Practices.

On behalf of Igloo Care Ltd (Developer) and EQ Care East Grinstead Ltd (Operator).

12th June 2025.

Important Information to Reader

This report has been prepared for Igloo Care Ltd (Developer) and EQ Care East Grinstead Ltd (Operator), in accordance with the terms and conditions of appointment for the relevant Ecological updates and working measures. Leigh Ecology Ltd cannot accept any responsibility for the use of or reliance on the content of this report by any third party.

The advice contained in this report is based on the information available and/or collected during the period of study. We cannot eliminate the possibility of important ecological features being found through further investigation and/or by survey at different times of the year or in different years.

Surveys and assessments are undertaken on the understanding that nothing in our reports will be omitted, amended, or misrepresented by the client or any other interested party.

Please be aware the information contained within this report is valid for a period not exceeding two years. After this time, data contained within will require updating.

This report and its contents remain the property of Leigh Ecology Ltd, until payment has been made in full

Context

This report has been prepared to address any requested amendments from the Local Planning Authority (LPA) or its appointed consultants and statutory bodies. It follows previous submissions, including ground-level tree assessments, badger reports, Biodiversity Net Gain documentation, and a letter of reliance—all intended to update the LPA and relevant stakeholders on the site's current ecological context. These updates are provided in relation to ecological surveys conducted by Phlorum in 2022.

The site remains largely unchanged since the previous assessments, consisting of a large residential dwelling, ancillary buildings, associated lawn habitats, linear tree corridors, and a woodland area. The proposed development includes the construction of a care home complex and a residential block, along with associated hardstanding.

This report specifically outlines requested avoidance measures and recommended working practices aimed at minimising impacts on key protected species across the site. These include the Hazel Dormouse, reptiles, amphibians, and hedgehogs. Bats (both in trees and buildings) and badgers have been assessed separately and are therefore excluded from this report.

Detailed within are a Precautionary Method Statement for Hazel Dormouse, as well as avoidance measures for reptiles, mammals, and nesting birds.

Amphibian Safeguarding Method Statement

This Method Statement must be implemented during the initial phase of works, particularly where activities may impact the surrounding terrestrial habitats. It is also applicable to any minor or short-term destructive or disturbance works, ensuring legal compliance and the protection of ecological integrity.

The Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS) outlined herein are designed to safeguard protected species, including Water Vole and Otter. Although no suitable habitat for these species is expected to be directly affected by the proposed development, these measures will

help prevent any potential indirect or secondary impacts, thereby maintaining the favourable conservation status of all relevant species.

The following measures will be adopted throughout the construction period of the proposed development.

- A toolbox talk covering the following points will be presented to the developer undertaking the construction activities.
- A fingertip search by a licensed ecologist will be conducted, of the proposed construction area immediately prior to any turf removal.
- Should any trenches or excavations be required, an escape route for animals that enter the trench must be provided, especially if left open overnight. Ramps should be no greater than 45 degrees in angle. Ideally, any holes should be securely covered.
- All excavations left open overnight or longer should be checked for animals prior to the continuation of works or infilling.
- There will be no impacts on surrounding hedgerows. All hedgerows will be maintained throughout the construction programme.
- Any excavated material should be placed on boards or sheeting to reduced damage to the grass sward (if present). If left overnight this material should be searched prior to being used as infill.
- Back filling should be completed immediately after any excavations, ideally back filling as an ongoing process to the work in hand.
- **If a GCN is found during the construction activities, work must stop immediately and contact should be made with a licensed, qualified ecologist, who will liaise with Natural England.**

Hedgehog Reasonable Avoidance Measures

The proposed RAMS to avoid impacts to hedgehogs and the triggering of the legislation protecting them is as follows and will be implemented prior to the start of any site clearance affecting suitable habitat for hedgehogs in each development phase:

- Works which could potentially affect hedgehogs, should they be present, such as the removal of tall ruderal, scrub (both dense and scattered) and broadleaved woodland, as well as any brash piles that may be present, will be undertaken under supervision of a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE) outside of their hibernation season (October to March/April, inclusive), dependant on weather conditions (dry and warm- night-time temperatures above 5°C);
- Immediately prior to work commencing, a walkover of the site will be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist (SQE) to identify the most important areas of habitat. This would be combined with a preliminary check for hedgehogs.
- Prior to work commencing, a toolbox talk will be provided by a SQE to all contractors working on the site. This will inform them of all ecological constraints and considerations relevant to the construction and will include identification of the species, their legal protection and necessary mitigation measures, including what to do if the species is encountered on the site during site works.
- Particularly sensitive areas, such as brash piles and within the woodland, will be carefully cleared by hand, prior to commencement of works on site.
- Once cleared of vegetation, the area will be maintained as bare earth to avoid hedgehogs recolonising the area prior to commencement of development.

Hedgehogs are anticipated to continue to be able to use the site following completion of the development, likely within the retained section of scrub and trees.

It is also proposed that Hedgehog highways are developed between gardens by incorporating 13cm x 23cm gaps in fences or hedges (*please see below*).



Hazel Dormouse Precautionary Working Methods

A Method Statement will seek to avoid any adverse effect in respect of damage or destruction to breeding sites and resting places, based on updated surveys closer to construction, whereby disturbance and offences will be avoided by the implementation of a licence (if required) and/or appropriately timing works and employing one-stage removal of vegetation for critical areas (vehicle access).

- It is proposed that the lengths of hedgerow requiring removal for development purpose or vehicular access is to be removed using appropriate mitigation, depending on the season.
- Two-stage removal seeks to manage the above ground canopy component within which individuals could potentially build breeding nests by coppicing to 1m at a time when dormice would be hibernating (November – end-March) and subsequent removal of the basal habitats (root balls, herbage etc.) at a time when dormice would not be utilising ground hibernation nests.
- Single-stage removal where small amounts of canopy vegetation are removed each day, allows animals time to escape, before a period of at least 24 hours is allowed to pass before the associated basal vegetation is then removed from site.
- Clearance using the single-stage method will be undertaken within best practice timing of April – May (inclusive) and/or mid-September – October (inclusive). Single-stage clearance would comprise:
- A search for dormouse nests will be undertaken by a suitably experienced/licensed ecologist in the above ground canopy portion of vegetation. All vegetation that is scheduled for removal will be checked for birds' nests prior to removal. The canopy vegetation will then be coppiced down to 150-300mm in height using handheld tools e.g. chainsaws, handsaws and handheld loppers under close supervision of the ecologist.

- Following this, a 24-hour period will be allowed to pass before the remaining basal vegetation is then searched for dormouse nests by a suitable experienced ecologist. Once the area has been searched the vegetation may then be removed under close supervision of the ecologist. • No more than 0.25ha of hedgerow shall be removed in any one day to allow dormice present sufficient time to move into retained habitat.
- All hedgerow management (coppicing) must be completed using hand tools only i.e. brush cutter, hedge trimmer, lopper etc. and extreme care must be taken to limit potential damage and disturbance to the ground.
- Any, less woody shrub layer (common bramble, dog rose etc.) can be reduced using hand tools to an appropriate height that can be advised by the attendant ecologist. This vegetation shall be extensively searched for the presence of nests by the suitably experienced, licenced ecologists prior to commencement of works.
- All arisings shall be removed from the working area and either chipped and left in appropriate locations on site; or removed from site.
- All vehicles except for a tracked or wheeled chipper shall remain parked at a sensible distance from the hedgerow and working area or preferably on gravel / hardstanding near the entrance to the site to prevent unnecessary damage or disturbance to the ground. Extreme care must be taken to limit potential damage and disturbance to the ground; although both canopy and basal habitats shall be extensively searched for the presence of nests by the suitably experienced, licenced ecologists prior to commencement of works.
- All works will only be commenced following operative checking in with the relevant site staff and gaining permission to enter the relevant working areas.

Reptile Reasonable Avoidance Measures

- Prior to any works commencing on site, all staff working on site will be made aware of the potential presence of amphibians and reptiles on or surrounding the site and their respective status as potential UK and European Protected Species.
- Vegetation clearance will be undertaken in phases, in order to encourage any amphibians/reptiles to move out of the working area. This clearance work will take place between March and October to ensure the amphibians are at their most active.
- The existing field is heavily grazed and therefore no areas within the development site have grass over 150mm, and therefore no areas shall need to be strimmed prior to any works.
- Edge habitats where there is long vegetation are not to be developed are to be retained throughout the development.
- For any storage of materials, the following measures will take place:
 - o Wherever practical, materials due to be stored on ground will be stored in skips, pallets or raised off the ground.
- Where off ground storage is not feasible, materials will be stored on site for a minimum amount of time possible and placed on sheeting.
- All transport/spreading or bunding of topsoil will be done during daylight hours only.
- Trenches or other holes in the ground which have the capacity to trap amphibians/reptiles will be covered before darkness.
- Building of structures at ground level will aim to minimise the number of gaps where amphibians could enter, and these structures will be completed as soon as feasible.
- All materials when transported on site are to be lifted rather than dragged along the ground.

References

Mid Sussex District Council: Outline Mitigation Strategy

OSMaps: 2025

<https://www.arguk.org/info-advice/advice-notes/9-great-crested-newt-habitat-suitability-index-arg-advice-note-5/file>

Hazel Dormouse Conservation Handbook 3rd Ed-- Mammal Society, Simone Bullion, Robert Wolton, Ian White.