



**South Gillingham Consortium**

**South Gillingham, Dorset**

**Dormouse Presence / Likely Absence  
Survey**

**November 2017**

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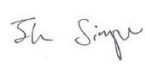

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## Executive Summary

Contents	Summary
<b>Site Location and Proposals</b>	The site is located to the south of the town of Gillingham in Dorset, centred on OS grid reference ST819488. It covers an area of approximately 91.8 ha and is divided into three areas. Park Farm, the eastern area is located to the east of Shaftesbury Road. West of Shaftesbury Road lies Ham Farm, the central area. West of Ham Farm lies Newhouse Farm, the western area.
<b>Previous Reports / Surveys</b>	The Ecology Solutions and SLR surveys carried out at the site in 2011 recorded no evidence of hazel dormice on site (Ecology Solutions, 2012; SLR, 2012).
<b>This Survey(s)</b>	WYG was commissioned by South Gillingham Consortium in April 2017 to complete a hazel dormouse presence / likely absence survey at the Site. This involved five visits from 30 <sup>th</sup> May 2015 to 29 <sup>th</sup> September 2015 in suitable weather conditions.
<b>Results</b>	No evidence of hazel dormice was recorded. As such they are considered to be absent from the site.
<b>Recommendations</b>	No recommendations are made in respect of hazel dormice.



## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

WYG was commissioned by South Gillingham Consortium in April 2015 to complete a hazel dormouse presence / likely absence survey at the proposed development site in South Gillingham (hereafter referred to as 'the site'). Following the completion of an extended Phase 1 habitat survey hazel dormice presence / likely absence surveys were recommended due to the presence of suitable habitat for hazel dormice in the form of hedgerows and plantation woodland.

### **1.2 Site Location**

The site is located to the south of the town of Gillingham in Dorset, centred on OS grid reference ST819488. It covers an area of approximately 91.8 ha and is divided into three areas. Park Farm, the eastern area is located to the east of Shaftesbury Road. West of Shaftesbury Road lies Ham Farm, the central area. West of Ham Farm lies Newhouse Farm, the western area. To the north of Ham Farm lies the residential area of Ham Common. West of Ham Common runs the River Lodden, with the Lodden Lakes beyond, which forms the northern boundary of Newhouse Farm. To the south and west of the site lie agricultural areas including both pasture and arable fields, with hedgerow networks. The northern and eastern boundary of Park Farm comprises Fern Brook, with further agricultural areas beyond.

Park Farm comprises a matrix of habitats including improved grassland pasture grazed by horses, sheep and cattle, species-poor hedgerows with mature trees, broadleaved plantation woodland, neutral semi-improved grassland, bare ground and buildings. Ham Farm comprises a matrix of improved grassland pasture grazed by cattle, neutral semi-improved grassland, broadleaved plantation woodland, species-poor and species-rich hedgerows with mature trees and bare ground. Newhouse Farm comprises a matrix of improved grassland pasture grazed by cattle, species-poor hedgerows with mature trees and bare ground. There are six ponds located on site, a running ditch within Newhouse Farm and two watercourses flowing along the northern boundary of Newhouse Farm and the north and east boundaries of Park Farm.

### **1.3 Development Proposals**

The site has been identified within Policy 17 of the emerging North Dorset Local Plan 2011-2026. Development proposals are for up to 1800 residential dwellings with associated schools, new access roads open space and sustainable urban drainage. The masterplan framework for the site includes a significant



buffer of approximately 100m from the River Lodden and Fern Brook as well as numerous other features of ecological interest.

## **1.4 Survey & Reporting Objectives**

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

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



## 2.0 Planning Policy & Legislation

### 2.1 National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework was adopted in March 2012<sup>1</sup>. Section 11 of the NPPF, Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment replaces Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9): Biodiversity and Geological Conservation. However, government Circular 06/2005, Biodiversity and Geological Conservation: Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System, which relates to PPS9 remains valid and is referenced within Paragraph 113 of the NPPF.

Circular 06/2005 states that the presence of protected species is a material consideration in the planning process. The NPPF also states that 'planning policies should promote the protection of priority species populations linked to national and local targets'.

### 2.2 Local Planning Policy

Policy 1.37 of the North Dorset District-Wide Local Plan 2011 includes a requirement **protect and** enhance the continuity and integrity of landscape features which are of major importance for wildlife. Development will be expected to fully consider nature conservation. Where development is permitted the following should be taken into account:

- (i) important woodland, wetlands, trees, hedgerows, watercourses, ponds, geological features and other major natural features and habitats are retained;
- (ii) compensatory provision is made for replacement habitats/features of quality where the loss of existing habitats and/or features is unavoidable;
- (iii) habitat features, attractive to wildlife including those which meet the needs of particular species, are, where appropriate, incorporated in the development;
- (iv) full provision is made for the future management of retained and newly created wildlife features.

Under 1.137 of Policy 1.37 it states; 1.137 when considering relevant development proposals the Council will seek and act on the advice of wildlife conservation bodies, in order to safeguard the habitats of protected species or determine appropriate mitigatory works such as the provision of alternative nesting and roosting boxes.





## 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 hazel dormice for shelter or protection or to disturb an animal whilst occupying such a structure. Further, hazel 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 hazel dormouse is listed as a priority species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP).

A European protected species licence (EPS licence) from Natural England is required for any development works that would affect dormice or dormouse habitat (e.g. hedges, scrub or woodland).



## 3.0 Methodology

### 3.1 Desk Study

Information was gathered from the Dorset Environmental Records Centre, the ecological records centre for Dorset, regarding the presence of nature conservation designations and protected and notable species within 2 km of the boundary of the proposed development site. In addition, a search for designations was made using the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside database (MAGIC).

#### 3.1.1 Previous Reports

The Ecology Solutions and SLR surveys carried out at the site in 2011 recorded no evidence of hazel dormice on site (Ecology Solutions, 2012; SLR, 2012).

### 3.2 Field Surveys

The extended Phase 1 habitat survey identified areas of woodland and hedgerows surrounding and within the site. These habitats provide nesting opportunities and food sources for dormice.

### 3.3 Number of Survey Visits

To achieve reasonable survey effort based on the index of probability scoring system, (Bright *et al*, 2006), visits were made to check the nest tubes approximately each month between May and September 2015. The visits were scheduled in order to maximise the number of “points” received by each visit with an aim of achieving more than 20 points. The monthly points vary throughout the year as nest tubes are most likely to be occupied during May and August / September.

**Table 1:** Index of probability of finding dormice present in nest tubes in any one month

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 in April 2015 and the dates for the dormouse surveys were:

- 30<sup>th</sup> May 2015, points total = 4
- 16<sup>th</sup> June 2015, cumulative points total = 6
- 27<sup>th</sup> July 2015, cumulative points total = 8
- 21<sup>st</sup> August 2015, cumulative points total = 13
- 29<sup>th</sup> September 2015, cumulative points total = 20

### 3.4 Limitations

Surveys were completed according to the relevant guidelines, and all areas of the site were accessible. Three hundred and forty five dormouse tubes were set up on site which is more than the recommended number of tubes for a site of this size; therefore, there are considered to be no limitations to the survey effort (Refer to Figure 1). However, the survey only provides a snapshot of data across the survey period rather than full information on population numbers.

An update site assessment was completed in March 2017 which confirmed that there had been no significant change in conditions on site. Therefore, the results of this survey are considered to remain valid until the commencement of 2019 survey season (March/April 2018). If works have not commenced by this time, an update site assessment should be completed to determine if an update survey is required. An update site assessment should also be completed if there is any change in site conditions or operation.



## 4.0 Baseline Conditions

### 4.1.1 Local Records Centre

7.3.13 The data provided by DERC included one record of hazel dormouse located at the southern boundary of Ham Farm in 2005.

## 4.2 Survey Results

All nest tubes were checked from May to September 2015. This gave a score of 20 'survey points'.

Although potentially suitable habitat for dormice was identified during the extended Phase 1 habitat survey of the site, no dormice were found during the nest tube survey. No nests or other small mammal species were found in the nest tubes during the survey visits.



## 5.0 Constraints & Opportunities

The survey work did not identify any evidence of hazel dormice at the survey site between May and September 2015. This is consistent with the findings from 2011. It is considered that this may be due to the fact that some of the hedgerows on site are of low quality and have low species diversity. There is also limited connectivity to habitats in the wider area (in particular broadleaved woodland) and only a single historical record from within 2km of the site. As such it is considered that hazel dormice are likely to be absent from the survey site. As no hazel dormice were recorded within the development site boundary it is considered that the development **can proceed in accordance with legislation therefore no mitigation for this species is required.**

Ecological enhancements including a large amount of open space and habitat creation are proposed as part of the masterplan for the development. Although there is the potential for these to benefit hazel dormice (such as new hedgerow planting) no specific measures for this species are proposed, due to the fact that they are likely to be absent from the local area.



## 6.0 References

- Bright, P., Morris, P. and Mitchell-Jones, A. (2006). The Dormouse Conservation Handbook. 2nd Edition. English Nature, Peterborough.
- Ecology Solutions (2012). Ham Farm, Gillingham, Dorset: Ecological Assessment.
- SLR (2012). Park Farm, Gillingham: Protected Species Surveys Report.
- WYG (2017). South Gillingham, Dorset Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Report.



## **FIGURES**

### **Figure 1 – Dormouse Tube locations**

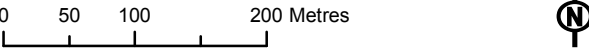




Rev	Date	Notes
A	14/11/17	Initial map production

Legend

- Site boundary
- Dormouse tube locations



Dormouse Tube Locations

Gillingham

Scale at A3: 1:5,750	Project No: A106314	Drawing No: Figure 1	Revision: A
Drawn by: Ben Blowers	Drawn date: 17/11/2017	Approved by: David West	

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