



Badger Survey

Alma Park Primary School, Errwood Road, Levenshulme, Manchester, M19 2PF

Daniel Markwart

Status	Issue	Name	Date
Draft	1	Kayleigh Davies, BSc (Hons), MSc, Graduate Ecologist	06/08/2024
Reviewed	1.1	Mel Reid BSc (Hons) MRes MRSB, Senior Consultant	08/08/2024
Final	2	Kayleigh Davies, BSc (Hons), MSc, Graduate Ecologist	08/08/2024

Kayleigh Davies

Graduate Ecologist

Tel: 07842 430258 Email: kayleighdavies@arbtech.co.uk

<https://arbtech.co.uk>

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Executive Summary

Arbtech Consulting Ltd were commissioned by Daniel Markwart to undertake a Badger Survey at Alma Park Primary School, Errwood Road, Levenshulme, Manchester, M19 2PF (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The surveys were required to inform the “*creation of three MUGA pitches*” (hereafter referred to as the “proposed development”). Cameras were deployed between 28th June and 29th July 2024 with weekly visits during that period to collect data and survey for evidence of badger activity. The aim of the assessment was to determine the usage of any badger setts within 30m of the site and to characterise the type of setts present.

Survey assessment conclusions (with justification)	Foreseen impacts	Recommendations
Badgers were observed to commute through site not to be present within the locality, no evidence of badger activity was associated with these holes and therefore these setts are concluded to be disused by badgers. A deceased hedgehog was found during the initial assessment of the setts. This was not present during the initial scope and therefore suggests the presence of hedgehogs within the site. Furthermore, foxes were observed to regularly utilize the site.	There are no impacts to badger setts however, the construction activities may cause death or injury to commuting badgers if unmitigated for. Furthermore, hedgehogs and foxes have been found to be present within the site, and therefore, construction may result in the harm or injury to hedgehogs during construction.	A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures: • An updated badger scope is required if work is not carried out within 3 months. • Digging of the area containing the earth should be undertaken by hand to avoid injuring any animals taking shelter underground and permit their escape. • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which hedgehogs could use. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. If any hedgehogs or badgers are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, hedgehogs should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance.

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1.0 Introduction and Context

1.1 Background

Arbtech were commissioned by Daniel Markwart to undertake a Badger Camera Survey at Alma Park Primary School, Errwood Road, Levenshulme, Manchester, M19 2PF (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The survey was required to inform a planning application for the “*creation of three MUGA pitches*” (hereafter referred to as “the proposed development”). A proposed development plan is provided in Appendix 1 (where available).

Cameras were deployed between 28th June and 29th July 2024 with weekly visits during that period to collect data and survey for evidence of badger activity. The surveys were completed in accordance with the latest guidelines from Natural England and DEFRA *Badgers: Surveys and Mitigation for Development Projects* (2015) and The Mammal Society *Surveying Badgers* (1989). These surveys were completed following recommendations made in the Badger Scoping Survey report completed by Arbtech Consulting Ltd in May 2024. The site was found to contain evidence of two separate setts, ~10-15m away from the development site boundary. The sett to the east of the site was found to have 5 sett entrances and the second sett to the south of the site had one sett entrance. A mammal push through was identified to the southeastern corner of the site. No other evidence of badgers was found.

1.2 Site Context

The site is located at National Grid Reference SJ 87375 93811 and has an area of approximately 0.1ha comprising of neutral grassland and woodland. It lies within the city of Manchester and is directly surrounded by urban infrastructure such as roads, residential dwellings and gardens, and commercial premises. A railway track runs directly east of the site. The immediate landscape is extremely built up, although contains suitable commuting greenspaces connected by alleyways and gaps within boundary fences. The nearest green area is Highfield Country Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR), an open public space located ~580m east. The site has direct connectivity to the LNR, likely to contain excellent resources for local badger populations. A site location plan is provided in Appendix 2.

1.3 Scope of the Report

The aim of the survey was to establish badger sett activity and to characterise any badger setts identified within 30m of the site. This was used to inform an impact assessment of the proposed development on badgers and to design suitable mitigation, as appropriate.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Site Survey

The survey was undertaken by Kayleigh Davies BSc (Hons), MSc, Graduate Ecologist. Cameras were deployed between 28th June and 29th July 2024. Three cameras were used and these were positioned to capture footage from the two sett locations and the established mammal path through the southeastern corner of the site. The locations of the cameras are shown on the badger survey plan in Appendix 3. Weekly visits were made during that period to collect data and survey for evidence of badger activity. This included a search for field signs of badgers and an inspection of any badger setts on the site and in the surrounding 30m, where accessible.

The field signs searched for were as follows:

Badger Setts

Most badger holes/tunnels also have a distinctive shape as well as size, being generally wider than they are tall, with a flattened bottom. This gives them a “D” shape (on its side). Tunnels excavated by foxes or rabbits tend to be rounder or oval in shape, and taller than they are broad. However, there is a lot of variability and in some cases holes are used by more than one species. The tunnels excavated by badgers are approximately 30cm in diameter, certainly no smaller than 25cm in diameter. Rabbit burrows, on the other-hand can be quite large at their entrances, soon narrow to a diameter of about 15cm. In Britain, the badger is well studied and, several categories of setts have been determined. Every badger family group (“clan”) has one main sett. These are occupied continuously and are used for breeding; they are usually large, well-established setts which have been excavated by several generations of badgers and are vital to survival of that clan. These setts can become very substantial over time: setts with a dozen to 20 or more entrances are fairly normal but can grow up to setts with 50-100 entrance holes. Below ground there are hundreds of metres of networked tunnels, created by the excavation of many tonnes of earth.

In addition to the main sett, most clans also have one or more additional secondary setts within their territories. These secondary setts fall into three categories - annexe setts, subsidiary setts, and outlier setts. Secondary setts are less important to the badgers than main setts, but they are useful nonetheless, especially if the main sett is disturbed. Disused setts may be taken over by rabbits or used by foxes; both of these species will also co-habit with badgers in occupied setts.

Badgers are extremely powerful diggers and the nature of excavated material at sett entrances is often diagnostic. Badgers are able to excavate much greater quantities of material than rabbits and foxes and the nature of the excavated material is often much coarser even containing rocks. Sometimes softer rocks are even physically marked by the badger claws. Spoil is excavated out backwards from the hole and fresh excavations are a sign of occupation. In clay soils the excavated material often contains badger hairs. On occasions the bones of badgers, that have presumably died underground, are found in the excavated material.

Bedding Material

Badgers use bedding material within their setts- various types of plant material. Characteristic field signs associated with bedding material include old bedding material cleaned out of the sett; bundles of fresh material stored by the sett (a very clear indication of occupation) trails of bedding material dropped on the way to the sett.

Tracks and Badger Paths

Badger footprints are diagnostic. They consist of a broad, kidney-shaped pad with five toes lined up in front. The prints of the front feet are larger than those of the back feet, and the imprints of the ends of the claws are further away from the toes of the front feet as the claws are much longer than those on the hind feet. Sometimes the fifth does not show up on a print but the orientation of the other four toes is still rather characteristic. A typical adult print is about 5.5 cm (+/- 1cm) wide and the hind paws are slightly narrower. On clear ground there will often be an overlap between the front and rear paw print – characteristic of the badger's walk.

Badger paths are usually fairly obvious and represent regularly walked paths by the badger to a point that vegetation is suppressed. Other field signs are often associated with these paths and at certain times of year it is possible to get an idea of if they have been recently used by signs such as freshly crushed plants or new footprints.

Scratching Posts

Badger setts are usually associated with scratching posts-typically tress but often also artificial structures such as fence posts, the bases are criss-crossed with badger claw marks.

Badger Hairs

The hairs from the badger's backs and sides are very diagnostic and cannot be confused with other native mammals. They are white or whitish (although may be stained yellow in sandy areas), with a black band towards the tip. They are approximately 7 - 10 cm long. The black band measures 1 - 2 cm and the white tip is also approximately 1cm in length. The hairs can be straight or quite curly. The hairs are quite coarse unlike those of foxes or rabbits. They are oval in cross section and do not roll smoothly between finger and thumb of a surveyor. Hairs are often found trapped on wire fences where badgers cross between land parcels.

Signs of Foraging

Badgers typically make “snuffle” marks where they are winning soil invertebrates. These are conical holes about 10 -14cm wide with spoil generally in all directions. They are often just off badger paths. It is sometimes hard to distinguish badger holes from larger rabbit scrapes. Badgers also excavate ant and wasp nest particularly in the late summer. They will also excavate rabbit holes in order to obtain young rabbits.

Dung and Latrines

Badger droppings tend to look like those of dogs in size and shape, but they are more variable in appearance because of their catholic diet. When the diet is principally composed of earthworms the droppings are quite soft and muddy; while other foods leave more clearly identifiable traces such as the wing cases of beetles, the husks of grain, and the stones or pips of fruits and berries such as yew berries and blackberries – dung is often very purple when blackberries are in fruit.

Badger latrines are small pits (often referred to as dung pits), which in appearance are not unlike snuffle holes. Badger latrines are very diagnostic. No other native animal in Britain deposits its droppings in pits in the same manner as badgers. Felines dig pits for their droppings, but they cover them up after use, while badgers leave their droppings exposed. Foxes conversely site their droppings on prominent places such as tussocks, stumps etc.

Sett Characterisation

The following information was recorded for any badger setts:

- The number and location of well used or very active entrances - these are free from any debris or vegetation and are clearly in regular use and may, or may not, have been excavated recently.
- The number and location of inactive entrances - these are not in regular use and have debris such as leaves and twigs in the entrance or have plants growing in or around the edge of the entrance.
- The number of disused entrances - these have not been in use for some time, are partly or completely blocked and cannot be used without considerable clearance. If the entrance has been disused for some time all that may be visible is a depression in the ground where the hole used to be and the remains of the spoil heap.

Where possible, the badger setts were characterised as follows:

- Main setts – these usually have a large number of holes with conspicuous spoil heaps, and the sett generally looks very active. There will be well used paths to and from the sett and between sett entrances. Although normally the breeding sett and in continuous use, it is possible to find a main sett that has become disused due to excessive interference or some other reason and is more common in areas of low badger density.
- Annexe setts – these are close to a main sett, normally less than 150m away, and are usually connected to a main sett by one or more obvious well-worn paths. They usually have several holes, but may not be in use all the time, even if the main sett is very active.
- Subsidiary sett – these often have very few holes, three to five on average. They are usually at least 50m from a main sett and do not have an obvious connecting path. They are not continuously active.
- Outlier sett – these usually only have one or two holes, often with little spoil outside and no obvious path connecting with another sett, and are only used sporadically. When not in use they may be taken over by foxes or rabbits.

2.2 Limitations

Badger surveys can be conducted at any time of the year, but the best times are in the spring and early autumn/winter. This survey provides a ‘snap-shot’ of the assessed habitat and wildlife value of the site at the time of survey only and may require further survey effort to provide robust, scientifically valid evidence of badger status. “Shelf-life” – badger populations are notoriously dynamic and the normal “shelf-life” for a badger assessment is six months after which point refresher surveys may be necessary.

Limitations include:

The SD card for Camera 1 was corrupted during week 1 so there is no footage for the first four days for sett entrance 1. Furthermore, the camera at position 1 was disturbed before the end of the survey and therefore another 2 days were missed. There are no major implications as the remainder of the survey provided enough evidence to confirm that the holes are not being utilised by badgers.

3.0 Results and Evaluation

Table 1 below provides details of the identified potential badger sett. With no evidence of badger activity associated with this sett. The location of the badger sett is also detailed on the badger survey plan in the Appendix 3.

Table 1: Details of Badger Sett Entrances

Reference	Badger/Fox Activity and Observations			
Sett 1 and 2	Setts 1 and 2 were found to be disused by badgers during the survey. Badgers were observed to utilise the corner of southeast of the site for infrequent community. Foxes were also observed to use this gap for commuting regularly.			
	A map showing the location of the setts and sett entrances can be found in Appendix 3a.			
	No badger evidence was observed at any point during the survey such as latrines, or hairs and prints.			
	Sett 1 – beginning of survey (28/06/2024) (w3w: once.member.decent) Disused – wooden sticks were places at the entrance to the sett (all 5). No hairs or prints were observed to be present near the sett entrances. The sett entrances were also covered with a wooden pallet, as observed during the initial survey. A deceased hedgehog was observed in the entrance to one of these holes (red circle).		Sett 1 – end of survey (29/07/2024) Disused – confirmed all sticks observed to be in place and unmoved at the end of the survey. The same amount of leaf litter was within all the holes as compared to visit 1.	

	Sett 2 – beginning of survey (28/06/2024) (w3w: packet.period.scans) Disused – wooden sticks were placed at the entrance to the sett. No hairs or prints were observed to be present near the sett entrances.		Sett 1 – end of survey (29/07/2024) Disused – confirmed disused from footage review all sticks observed to be in place and unmoved at the end of the survey. The same amount of leaf litter was within the holes as compared to visit 1.	
	Mammal Path – beneath the fence at the southeastern corner of the site. (W3W: branded.known.swan)		The push through was observed to be used regularly by foxes. Badgers were also observed to be using this push through occasionally to enter the railway track to the east of the site.	

Table 2 provides details of the camera trap surveys. No badger activity was associated with the identified sett.

Table 2: Details of trail camera footage

Position Observed	Observations	Screenshots		
Disused Sett 1 – Cam 1	Week 1 (28 th June – 5 th July, 2024)	Corrupted Files		
			SD corrupted from 28/06/2024 – 02/07/2024	02/07/2024 – a robin observed foraging nearby the sett.
	Week 2 (5 th July – 12 th July 2024)			
	5th July 11am – vegetation moving. Only activity caught during this time.			

	Week 3 (12 th July – 19 th July 2024)			
		23 th June 16:37 – grey squirrel on the tree trunk near sett, before climbing up the tree.		
	Week 4 – (19 th July – 29 th July- additional days to cover cam disturbance)			
		20 th July 05:25 – a fox briefly comes into view before disappearing off screen.	24 th July 00:55 – cat sniffs around sett.	27 th July 22:59 – fox sniffs the sett at then exits to the right of the screen.

Disused Sett 2 – Cam 2	Week 1 (28 th June – 5 th July, 2024) Very limited activity.		
		2 nd July 22:49 – rat moving around sett.	
	Week 2 (5 th July – 12 th July 2024) Very limited activity.		
		3 rd July 09:24 – wren flying around sett.	
			
		5 th July 16:20 – vegetation moving due to wind. All footage for the week was casued by moving vegetation.	

	Week 3 (12 th July – 19 th July 2024)				
		13 th July 22:04 – a cat observed sniffing hole and then leaving.		14 th july 06:02 – fox inspects hole and then leaves west.	
	Week 4 – (19 th July – 29 th July- additional days to cover cam disturbance)				
		19 th july 23:21 – vegetation movement.		24 th July 16:41 – rat moving around.	

Mammal Path – Cam 3	Week 1 (28th June – 5th July, 2024)		
		29 th June 14:24 – magpie in front of cam. No other activity.	
	Week 2 (5th July – 12th July 2024)		
		07/01/2024 - 03:41am – two badgers are seen approaching from east of site and then exiting under fence.	2 nd July 02:51 – cat exiting under fence.

	Week 3 (12th July – 19th July 2024)			
		<i>15th July 04:04 - A badger is observed entering the gap under the fence in the early hours of the morning.</i>	<i>16th July 03:54 - another badger is observed quickly entering the gap under the fence as it rains.</i>	<i>14th July 18:14 - A fox uses the gap under the fence as a commuting route.</i>
	Week 4 – (19th July – 29th July- additional days to cover cam disturbance)			
		<i>25th July - 04:44 – Fox into the gap under fence– another one follows a minute later</i>	<i>26th July 07:13 – Two foxes exit the the gap under fence and move off to the right.</i>	<i>29th july - 08:23 – Fox enters the the gap under fence.</i>

4.0 Conclusions, Impacts and Recommendations

4.1 Informative guidelines

The European badger *Meles meles* is known to occur within 2km of the site. The species is protected by the Protection of Badgers Act, 1992. The Act makes it a criminal offence too:

- Wilfully, kill, injure, take or possess or cruelty ill-treat a badger, or attempt to do so.
- Interfere with a sett by damaging or destroying it.
- Obstruct access to, or any entrance of, a badger sett.
- Disturb a badger when occupying a sett.

Badger setts are protected if there are signs of badgers, even if they aren't occupying it at the time. The legislation to protect badgers arises from a desire to control persecution of the species rather than for nature conservation purposes- the native badger population is not under any threat as such.

4.2 Evaluation

Taking the desk-based assessment and site survey results into account, the following evaluation and recommendations for badgers are provided in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Evaluation of survey

Survey assessment conclusions (with justification)	Foreseen impacts	Recommendations
Badgers were observed to commute through site not to be present within the locality, no evidence of badger activity was associated with these holes and therefore these setts are concluded to be disused by badgers. A deceased hedgehog was found during the initial assessment of the setts. This was not present during the initial scope and therefore suggests the presence of hedgehogs within the site. Furthermore, foxes were observed to regularly utilize the site.	There are no impacts to badger setts however, the construction activities may cause death or injury to commuting badgers if unmitigated for. Furthermore, hedgehogs and foxes have been found to be present within the site, and therefore, construction may result in the harm or injury to hedgehogs during construction.	A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures: • An updated badger scope is required if work is not carried out within 3 months. • Digging of the area containing the earth should be undertaken by hand to avoid injuring any animals taking shelter underground and permit their escape. • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which hedgehogs could use.

		Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. If any hedgehogs or badgers are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, hedgehogs should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance.
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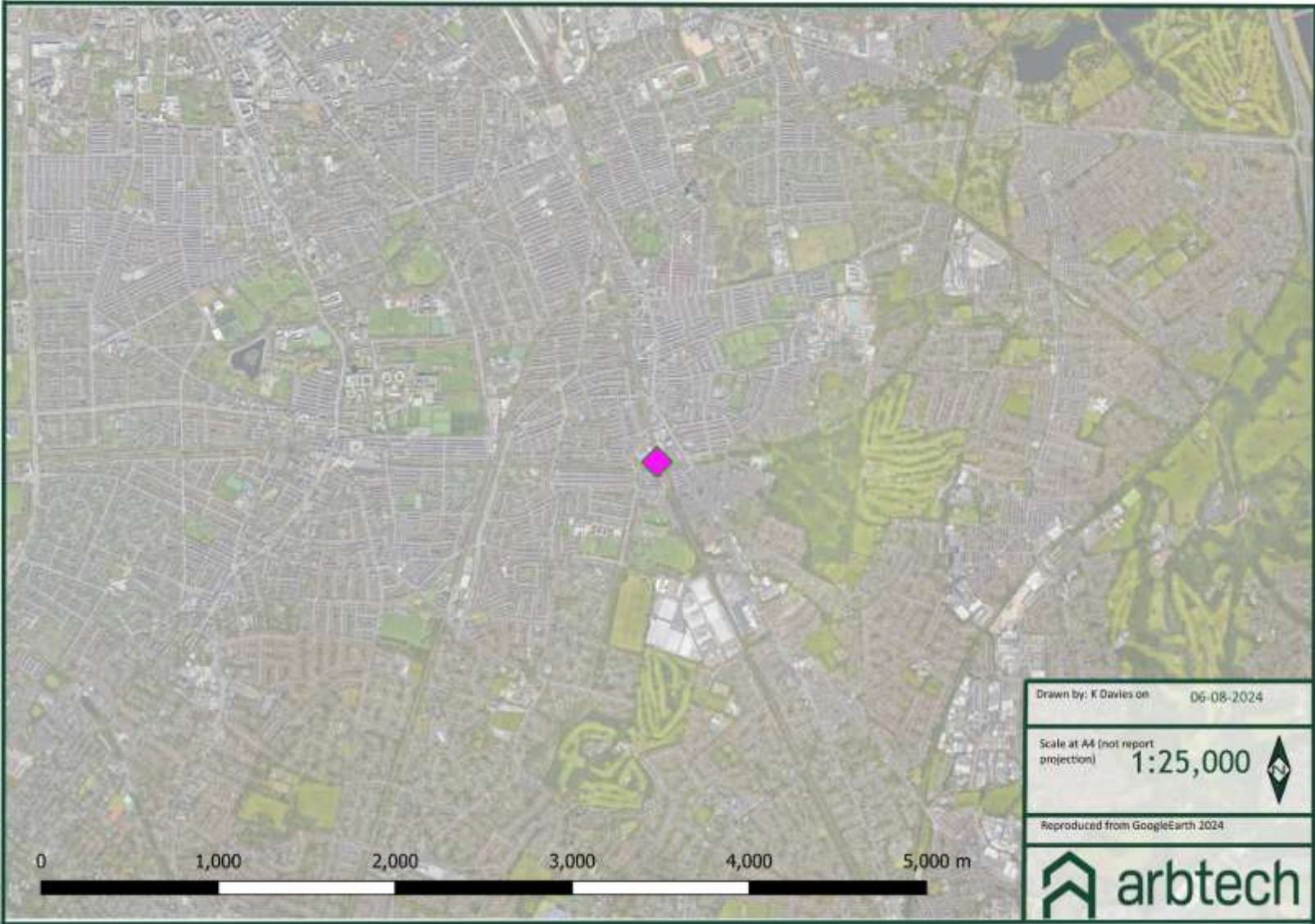
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Appendix 1: Proposed Development Plan



Appendix 2: Site Location Plan



Appendix 3: Survey Plan



Appendix 4: Legislation related to Badgers

LEGAL PROTECTION

Badgers are protected under the ***Protection of Badgers Act 1992*** under this Act it is an offence to:

- Intentionally capture, kill or injure a badger
- Damage, destroy or block access to their setts
- Disturb badgers in setts
- Treat a badger cruelly
- Deliberately send or intentionally allow a dog into a sett
- Bait or dig for badgers

It is also an offence if you:

- Have or sell a badger, or offer a live badger for sale
- Have or possess a dead badger or parts of a badger (if you got it illegally)
- Mark or attach a marking device to a badger

Activities that can harm/affect badgers include:

- Destroying or damaging their setts
- Noise, additional lighting or vibration
- Pile driving
- Quarry blasting
- Lighting fires
- Using chemicals
- Excavation
- Ploughing and harvesting crops
- Tree felling and timber extraction
- construction or repair of flood defences or watercourses

Effect on development works:

Licences are issued by the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage) for development operations likely to result in an offence. In most cases it should be possible to avoid disturbing badgers and damaging or blocking access to their sett. However, if this is unavoidable an application for a licence to interfere with a badger sett must be obtained.

A licence is usually not required to:

- Work with hand tools or machinery above or below ground close to a sett
- Clear vegetation near setts, including felling small trees or shrubs, provided they are not uprooted and don't block access to the sett
- Clear ditches and watercourses using hand tools or machinery

The Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation will consider the existing level of disturbance around a sett when deciding if you need a licence.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY (ENGLAND)

National Planning Policy Framework 2021

The National Planning Policy Framework promotes sustainable development. The Framework specifies the need for protection of designated sites and priority habitats and species. An emphasis is also made on the need for ecological infrastructure through protection, restoration and re-creation. The protection and recovery of priority species (considered likely to be those listed as UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species) is also listed as a requirement of planning policy.

In determining a planning application, planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by ensuring that: designated sites are protected from harm; there is appropriate mitigation or compensation where significant harm cannot be avoided; opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments are encouraged; and planning permission is refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including aged or veteran trees and also ancient woodland.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Biodiversity Duty

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, requires all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions. This is commonly referred to as the 'biodiversity duty'.

Section 41 of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of 'principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity'. This list is intended to assist decision makers such as public bodies in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Act. Under the Act these habitats and species are regarded as a material consideration in determining planning applications. A developer must show that their protection has been adequately addressed within a development proposal.