

Badger Report



Dwyer Road, Reading

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Where field investigations have been carried out, these have been restricted to a level of detail required to achieve the stated objectives of the work.

This work has been undertaken in accordance with the quality management system of RSK ADAS Ltd.

Revision History

ADAS Ref (Revision number)	Date	Amendment
MPT69105- 846(00)	22/03/2023	INITIAL REPORT

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Summary

ADAS was commissioned by Gleeds Cost Management Ltd on behalf of Reading Borough Council to conduct a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal on land off of Dwyer Road, Reading. The purpose of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was to identify any ecological constraints present on site in relation to the proposed development of residential dwellings. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was undertaken in September 2022, with an updated assessment completed in December 2022. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal assessed the site as having habitats suitable for commuting, foraging and sheltering Badger. A potential Badger sett was also recorded at SU6821671908 in the north corner of the site during the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

Further Badger surveys were recommended to detail Badger activity across the whole site and search for any updated signs of activity at the previously identified sett. This information will allow ADAS to advise appropriate avoidance, mitigation, compensation and/or enhancement measures to comply with relevant legislation.

ADAS conducted a Badger survey in March 2023, and no further signs of current Badger activity at the site were recorded, with some mammal holes now classed as 'disused'. Several of the mammal holes showed signs of activity however upon inspection the evidence suggest that these holes were in use by a Fox. Fox hairs were found in the entrance of all active mammal holes and a Fox was resting 1 m from the entrances.

As the evidence shows that Foxes are present within the site and using the site as a resting place, measures will need to be put in place to prevent any breach of legislation. Foxes are protected against certain cruel acts such as asphyxiation/crushing under the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 (as amended). Appropriate/humane methods of exclusion are therefore required on site. The fox den should be removed by a suitably qualified pest control to prevent asphyxiation or crushing of foxes on site.

It is also recommended that a pre-works check should be completed 24 hours before works begin to confirm that no new evidence of badgers is present on site.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Report Objectives

ADAS was commissioned by Gleeds Cost Management Ltd to produce a report of Badger (*Meles meles*) surveys at Dwyer Road, Reading Berkshire, RG30 3PN (central OS grid reference: SU 68232 71885) to evaluate the likely impacts on Badgers of the planned development of 2–3-bedroom residential houses at the site. The plans are yet to be full confirmed and are currently at RIBA stage 1-2.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the site was undertaken by ADAS in September 2022 (ADAS 2022), which identified a potential Badger sett with seven entrances in the north corner of the site. During the PEA a dung pit was found at SU68260 71860, and hairs found in several of the entrances although no hairs were conclusively identified as Badger hairs. A more detailed Badger survey of the site was conducted by ADAS in March 2023, to gain a better understanding of how badger may be using the site and impacted by the proposed works. The results of the survey will be used to inform further recommended actions required regarding planning and mitigation at the site to minimise impacts on Badger and their habitats, and to comply with relevant legislation.

The purpose of this report is to:

- *Determine the activity usage of Badger on site;*
- *Record any updated signs of Badger presence; and*
- *Provide updated data to classify the usage of existing setts present and/or any new setts discovered.*

1.2 Site Description

The site was ca. 0.5 ha brownfield site located on the corner of Dwyer Road and Burghfield Road, in the residential area of Southcote in west Reading, Berkshire (Figure 1). The site was the location of a former care home known as Alice Burrows House, which was demolished 14 years ago, and has since been left unmanaged. The site was overgrown with vegetation, especially successional shrubs and trees, at the time of the original survey but had since been cleared prior to the updated survey and large amounts of brash and chipping piles were present throughout the site. Excessive amounts of fly tipping and anthropogenic waste were still recorded in most areas of the site. The wider landscape consisted of the mixed urban and residential areas in western Reading, with public greenspaces such as Prospect Park (Local Wildlife Site) approximately 500 m northwest, and the railway line running approximately 500 m south of the site. Beyond this to the south were a mix of agricultural fields as well as important terrestrial and freshwater habitats, including Holy Brook, the River Kennet and a number of lakes created from disused quarries.



Figure 1. Site location and wider landscape (site indicated by red line boundary). Image and red line boundary provided by client: RBC Site Options Amethyst _ Dwyer _compressed (005) - Copy_Part17.

1.3 Description of the Proposed Development

At the time of writing, the development was still in design and proposal stage (RIBA stage 1-2) and awaiting results of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal to inform further project design.

The proposed development includes the construction of 2–3-bedroom residential houses, in an as yet unspecified layout on the site.

Construction is anticipated to commence August 2023.

2 Planning Policy and Relevant Legislation

2.1 Local Planning Policy

Table 3 details the policies within the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted in 2019) which are relevant to the ecological features on site.

Table 1: Summary of relevant local planning policy – Reading Borough Local Plan

Policy	Description
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network	b) On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible. Development should: - Protect and wherever possible enhance features of biodiversity interest on and adjacent to the application site, incorporating and integrating them into development proposals wherever practicable; and - Provide new tree planting, wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements (such as wildlife ponds, bird and bat boxes) wherever practicable. In exceptional circumstances where the need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site, and it is demonstrated that the impacts cannot be: 1) avoided; 2) mitigated or; 3) compensated for on-site; then new development will provide off-site compensation to ensure that there is “no net loss” of biodiversity. Provision of off-site compensation shall be calculated in accordance with nationally or locally recognised guidance and metrics. It should not replace existing alternative habitats, and should be provided prior to development.
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodlands	Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading’s vegetation cover will be extended. The quality of waterside vegetation will be maintained or enhanced. New development shall make provision for tree retention and planting within the application site, particularly on the street frontage, or off-site in appropriate situations, to improve the level of tree coverage within the Borough, to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which a site is located, to provide for biodiversity and to contribute to measures to reduce carbon and adapt to climate change. Measures must be in place to ensure that these trees are adequately maintained.
EN16: Pollution and Water Resources	Development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors through land, noise or light pollution; where it would result in no deterioration in, or ideally enhance, ground and surface water quality; and where adequate water resources, sewerage and wastewater treatment infrastructure will be in place to support the proposed development prior to occupation. Proposals for development that are sensitive to the effects of noise or light pollution will only be permitted in areas where they will not be subject to high levels of such pollution, unless adequate mitigation measures are provided to minimise the impact of such pollution. Development will only be permitted on land affected by contamination where it is demonstrated that the contamination and land gas can be satisfactorily managed or remediated so that it is suitable for the proposed end use and will not impact on the groundwater environment, human health, buildings and the wider environment, during demolition and construction phases as well as during the future use of the site.

Policy	Description
WR3p: Other Sites for Development in West Reading and Tilehurst	In regards to ecology, the following is stated in the principles for development at Alice Burrows House, Dwyer Road: ‘Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO’.

2.2 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2021 is an update to the previous version issued in February 2019 and is a policy framework document which provide a range of important principles. Paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural local environment by:

‘Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.’

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles (Paragraph 180):

‘opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.’

2.3 Relevant National Legislation

2.3.1 The Protection of Badgers Act (as amended) 1992

The Protection of Badgers Act (as amended) 1992 affords protection to Badgers and their setts. This legislation, as well as outlawing the persecution of Badgers, also makes it an offence, amongst others, to disturb Badgers whilst they are using a sett or to damage or block a sett.

2.3.2 Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996

The wild mammals act provides protection for wild mammals against certain acts of deliberate harm. “Wild mammal” means any mammal which is not a “protected animal” within the meaning of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (Schedule 3, Section 13 of the 2006 Act). The following offences are specified in relation to any wild mammal: to mutilate, kick, beat, nail or otherwise impale, stab, burn, stone, crush, drown, drag or asphyxiate.

3 Methodology

3.1 Zone of Influence

The assessment conducted for this report has considered the area in which ecological features could be subject to significant effects from the proposed development. The area of the potential effects is often wider than the actual perimeter of the development site and is known as the Zone of Influence.

The Zone of Influence varies for different ecological features and each designated site, habitat and species. It has been considered in relation to their sensitivity to the proposed development.

Impacts to Badger setts were evaluated for anything within a 30 m Zone of Influence of the sett entrance.

3.2 Desk Study

A desk study was carried out in October 2022 as part of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal to identify known records of Badger within 2 km of the site, from the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC).

It is important to note that most species are greatly under-recorded and therefore a lack of records for a location should not be taken as an absence of the species concerned. Furthermore, a record for a particular species does not necessarily confirm its current presence.

3.3 Field Survey

ADAS Assistant Ecological Rachel Richards BSc (Hons) undertook a Badger survey from the site on 02 March 2023. The methodology for this consisted of a site walkover looking for and recording any Badger field signs within and up to 30 m from the site.

Badger field signs include:

- *Badger sett entrances (horizontal 'D'-shaped hole of moderate size, often with significant spoil heap outside when in use);*
- *Badger hairs (black and white banded hairs that are triangular on cross-section – 'guard hairs' are often left in sett entrances when in use);*
- *Faecal remains including dung pits or latrines;*
- *Badger runs through vegetation (significant pathway made through vegetation by commuting Badger, which is often quite muddy);*
- *Footprints; or*
- *Snuffle/foraging holes.*

All Badger field signs were marked on to a map and approximate grid references of sett entrances were obtained using GPS.

3.4 Limitations

Badgers survey can be conducted at any time of the year, however the optimal survey time is between February and April or September to November, as these are the times when setts are less likely to be obscured by vegetation and badgers are most active.

As the survey was conducted at optimal time of year and in optimal weather conditions for identifying Badger field signs, so there were no significant limitations to this survey.

Within the northeast corner of the site was a section was scaffolding surrounded by lots of fly tip and vegetation, although this limited the search within this section it did not impact the overall results of the survey.

4 Results

4.1 Desk Study

The search found 51 records of Badger within 2 km of the site from 2013 to 2021, with the closest being approximately 0.56 km east in Calcot.

4.2 Field Survey

The same mammal holes identified during the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was again recorded during the Badger survey in March 2023. Seven mammal hole entrances were found around SU 68215 71904 and two more entrances were found further to the northeast of the site (SU 68228 71912 and SU 68230 71916).

Upon inspection of the original mammal holes found during the PEA, three of the entrances could be re-assessed as “disused”. These all had leaf litter and rubbish within the entrance of the holes indicating that nothing was passing through. Four of the remaining entrances showed signs of activity with entrances clear of vegetation and evidence of digging outside each of them. During the survey these were inspected for hair and prints to indicate if Badger were present. Hairs were found in all of the used entrances however the hairs were identified as Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) hairs. An adult Fox was also seen resting approximately 1 m from the entrance during the survey.

The two entrances to the northeast were assessed as not in use due to leaf litter and rubbish filling the entrances.

Sandy areas of bare earth were located around the site in which footprints were clearly distinguishable. These were photographed and measured and were identified as Fox prints. There were also two locations where Fox dropping were found in the southern corner of the site.

At the time of survey, no evidence of Badgers using the site was found and the activity in and around the sett is due to Fox activity. Fox have been known to regularly take over mammal holes of other species for their own use. It is therefore considered likely that the mammal holes were previously used by Badgers (due to size, shape, Badger signs in the wider area), but is now occupied as a Fox den.

5 Impact Assessment

The Badger survey conducted recorded no signs of current use by Badger at the mammal holes previously identified in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, and no other signs of Badger activity at the site. However, the mammal holes on site are currently being used by Foxes.

Foxes are not protected by specific legislation however they are protected from deliberate harm and from the blocking or destroying of Fox earths if they are occupied under The Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996. As the survey shows the mammal holes to be occupied by Foxes the works cannot damage or destroy the den without being in breach of the law. Appropriate/humane methods of exclusion of the Foxes from site and the den are therefore required for the works.

6 Conclusions

The Badger survey did not identify any signs of current use of the mammal holes by Badgers, however, evidence from the survey show that Foxes are currently using the mammal holes on site. Foxes are protected against certain cruel acts such as asphyxiation/crushing under the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 (as amended). Appropriate/humane methods of exclusion are therefore required.

It is recommended that a suitably qualified pest controller is hired before the works commence to remove the den appropriately and humanely from site to prevent asphyxiation or crushing of foxes on site. To avoid harming/killing foxes, it is recommended the area is dug by hand. If any foxes or other mammals are found during the works, they must be safely and humanely removed from site.

It is also recommended that a final pre-works check for Badger be completed within 24 hours of the works beginning to ensure no new Badger activity has occurred on site.

7 References

ADAS (2022) *Dwyer Road, Reading*. Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

Appendix 1: Map of Mammal Activity

See following page.



Reading Borough Council

Mammal Survey Map

- Site Boundary
- Fox Den
- Disused Mammal Tunnel
- Live Adult Fox
- Signs of digging
- Fox Droppings
- Fox Footprint

Drawn by Rachel Richards 22/03/23



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Appendix 2: Photographs

Photographs



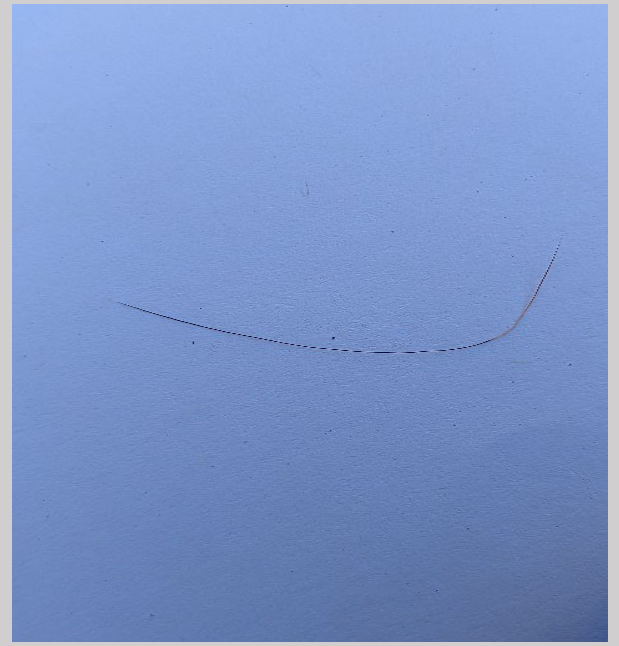
Photograph 1. Fox print found in sandy area on site



Photograph 2. Mammal holes in the vegetation at the back of site that showed signs of use.



Photograph 3. Disused mammal hole entrance found at



Photograph 4. Fox hair found in mammal hole entrance.

Photographs



Photograph 5. Adult Fox found resting above mammal hole entrances.



Photograph 6. Disused sett filled with leaf litter and rubbish



Photograph 7: Fox dropping found on top of a pile of wood chippings