

**Land at 33a Mansfield Road
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 6AL**

Badger Survey

Report ref.: R3117_Badg_a

<i>Report Quality Control Information</i>	
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1	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2	INTRODUCTION.....	4
2.1	Project Background	4
2.2	Legislative Background.....	4
2.3	Site Location and Context.....	5
3	SURVEY METHODOLOGY.....	6
3.1	Field Survey.....	6
3.2	Survey Constraints	7
4	SURVEY FINDINGS.....	8
4.1	Field Survey.....	8
5	DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	12
5.1	Status of Badger Activity.....	12
5.2	Impact of Proposals	12
5.3	Recommendations.....	13
6	REFERENCES	15

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Rod Holder and Jane Vella to undertake a Badger Survey of land at 33a Mansfield Road in Reading, Berkshire. The survey was commissioned to accompany a planning application to be submitted to Reading Borough Council seeking planning consent for a rear extension.
- 1.1.2** The application site comprises an area of just under 0.05ha of land on the southern side of Mansfield Road in Reading, Berkshire (central OS grid ref.: SU 70794 72626). The site is predominantly a garden with a patio, modified grassland, beds of introduced shrubs and scattered trees.
- 1.1.3** A site walkover was undertaken on the 6th January 2026 by Vicky Potts MCIEEM, a Senior Ecologist, to look for badger sett entrances and evidence of badger activity within the site.
- 1.1.4** The survey findings show that badgers are active on the application site with seven sett entrances present onsite and one in the adjacent neighbouring property. The application site was characterised by modified grassland with scattered trees, shrubs, with open access to a small patch of woodland 140 m to the east of the site.
- 1.1.5** The proposed work will not result directly in sett interference because the badger sett entrances are approximately 15 metres from the proposed works. However as an active sett is present in the garden a precautionary method of working will ensure that no individuals are harmed during the construction activities.
- 1.1.6** It is recommended that post-development, the plot remains permeable to mammals, into the adjacent gardens and nearby woodland because the garden acts as a route from one important foraging area to another within a badger's territory.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

2.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Rod Holder and Jane Vella to undertake a Badger Survey of land at 33a Mansfield Road in Reading, Berkshire. The survey was commissioned to accompany a planning application to be submitted to Reading Borough Council seeking planning consent for a rear extension.

2.1.2 This report presents the findings of the Badger Survey and provides details on the impact of the proposals.

2.2 Legislative Background

Badgers

2.2.1 Badgers are protected by the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. The Act makes it an offence to:

- Wilfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger; and
- Intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett.

2.2.2 Sett interference includes the disturbance of badgers whilst occupying their sett and the damage, destruction or blocking of a sett. Guidance on '*What is disturbance?*' was issued by Natural England in June 2009. The guidance highlights Section 3(e) of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 that makes it '*an offence for a person to interfere with a badger sett by disturbing a badger that is occupying the sett.*' There are two elements to this offence:

1. There must be an action, capable of disturbing a badger, which amounts to an interference with a sett; and
2. A badger must be occupying the sett at the time of the disturbance.

2.2.3 There are some activities at or near setts that are not considered likely to cause disturbance to badgers which include:

1. Development, or other activities occurring close to badger setts (use of hand tools and/or machinery), where there is no reason to believe that the 'disturbance' will be greater than that which badgers commonly tolerate, and therefore any badger(s) occupying the sett are unlikely to be disturbed;

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13/02/2026

2. Vegetation removal (including felling small trees or shrubs) over or adjacent to setts (using hand tools and/or machinery); and
3. Clearing out of ditches/watercourses using machinery and/or hand tools where badger setts are present.

2.2.4 A badger sett is defined within the legislation as '*structure or place, which shows signs indicating current use by a badger*'. A sett is defined as such (and thus protected) as long as signs indicative of '*current use*' are present. Therefore, a sett remains protected by the Act until such time as the signs (i.e. 'field signs') have deteriorated or decayed to such an extent that they no longer indicate that the sett is in '*current use*' (Natural England 2009).

2.3 Site Location and Context

2.3.1 The application site comprises just under 0.05 hectares of land at 33a Mansfield Road in Reading, Berkshire (central OS grid ref.: SU 70794 72626).

2.3.2 The property is situated on the southern side of Mansfield Road in an urban setting with residential properties on all sides. A strip of trees are present along the southern boundary of the site which link to a small patch of woodland approximately 140 metres to the east. A recreational ground with scattered trees is situated 215 metres to the south and a river flows 545 metres to the south linking to extensive areas of open space with parcels of woodland and meadows.

3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1 Field Survey

3.1.1 A site walkover was undertaken on the 8th January 2026 by Vicky Potts MCIEEM, a Senior Ecologist, to look for badger sett entrances and if found, determine the location and status of the sett whilst noting any latrines and/or pathways.

3.1.2 Signs of badger activity were looked for during the walkover survey. Field signs that can indicate badger activity include:

- **Latrines** – badgers will usually dig shallow pits in which they deposit their droppings to act as territorial markers; badgers will also occasionally deposit droppings without first digging a pit.
- **Badger paths** – obvious pathways in the vegetation surrounding badger setts are usually visible because badgers will follow the same routes to foraging areas repeatedly.
- **Badger hair** – hair can become trapped on fences and is often present in the soil in sett entrances. Badger hair is triangular in cross section and banded with white tips.
- **Snuffle holes** – Whilst foraging for earthworms in grassland, badgers will dig up turf and soil leaving obvious holes.
- **Footprints** – Badger footprints have a large rear pad with five toes; claw marks are often visible.

3.1.3 Badger sett entrances are usually more than 20cm in diameter. They are typically dome shaped and continue back into the ground with a height of between 20 and 30cm from the roof to the floor of the tunnel (Clark 2001).

3.1.4 Badger sett entrances will often be associated with large spoil heaps and may contain bedding material such as dry grass. Typically, badger setts will have more than two entrances; foxes usually dig smaller and shallower burrows and tend not to have more than two entrances (Sargent and Morris 2003).

3.1.5 For the purposes of this survey, active entrances were defined as those that showed signs of badger activity e.g. fresh digging, badger hair and the removal of vegetation blocking entrances. If sett entrances are found during a survey and are shown to be inactive, it is possible that they could be used by

badgers at some point throughout the year and therefore this should be taken into consideration in the assessment.

3.2 Survey Constraints

- 3.2.1** Full access was available to the site so there were no significant constraints to the badger survey.

4 SURVEY FINDINGS

4.1 Field Survey

4.1.1 The application site is characterised by a small patio area, modified grassland, unmanaged beds of introduced shrubs along the eastern and western boundaries, and scattered trees amongst the grassland and along the southern boundary (**Photographs 1 - 4**). An old metal fence was visible along the boundary where a footpath was historically present (**Photograph 5**).



1. Patio to the rear of the house.



2. Modified grassland with scattered trees.



3. Introduced shrub beds on the sites western boundary.



4. Trees on the sites southern boundary.



5. Old fenceline on the southern boundary.

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4.1.2 Seven badger sett entrances were located at the southern end on the sloped bank and amongst trees along the boundary of the rear garden and one sett entrance was located in the neighbouring garden to the east (**Photographs 6-9**). The associated tunnels looked to extend underground primarily towards the west and east. At the time of the site visit, the entrances were free of debris and considered to be active, and, there were obvious spoil heaps, which would indicate that the diggings are extensive underground and that the activity is frequent. Clear pathways were also visible between the sett entrances further evidenced that the sett was active and frequently used. Access gaps were present in the fences between the rear gardens to the west, east and south used by the badgers to move freely between the areas. A number of snuffle holes were also present across the grassland indicating foraging in the garden (**Photographs 10 & 11**). These badger survey findings are shown in **Figure 1** below



6. Active sett entrances with spoil heap.



7. Active sett entrance with fresh diggings.



8. Active sett entrance.



9. Active sett entrance,



10. Snuffle hole in garden.



11. Snuffle hole in garden..

- 4.1.3** A search on the NBN Atlas revealed two 1km records from 2021 for badger including one adult male in a front garden approximately 315 metres to the west and 2-5 badger were recorded 720 metres to the east.



Figure 1. Badger Survey Findings

5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Status of Badger Activity

- 5.1.1** The application site was characterised by patio, modified grassland, introduced shrubs, and scattered trees, with open access to neighbouring gardens and connectivity to a small woodland parcel to the east of the site. The desk study confirmed the presence of badgers within 1km from the site and the survey findings show that badgers are active on the application site (i.e. sett entrances, mammal diggings and runs).
- 5.1.2** There were seven sett entrances in the garden onsite and one in the neighbouring garden. In addition there were distinct and significant worn mammal paths and evidence of foraging badgers in the garden, confirming regular use of the site. The survey suggests that the entrances on site are most likely to be a main sett but it could be an annexe sett connected to a main sett in the woodland to the east. Main setts can have anything from 8 to 100 entrances but this can be less in urbanised populations.
- 5.1.3** The surrounding habitats are likely to support badgers, particularly the strip of trees along the southern boundary of the neighbouring properties which lead to a small parcel of woodland to the east. The gardens are used as foraging habitat for badgers and is accessible to badgers from suitable surrounding woodland habitats.

5.2 Impact of Proposals

- 5.2.1** The proposals involve seeking planning consent for a rear extension of the existing bungalow.
- 5.2.2** The proposed work will not directly result in sett interference because no badger sett entrances were found within the proposed development footprint or within a 15 metre radius of the footprint. However, the survey findings confirm that badgers regularly use the grassland for foraging and traversing the site, as well as using the rear southern end of the site as a potential main sett. Therefore, a precautionary method of working will ensure that no individuals are harmed during the construction activities (see recommendations in **Section 5.3**).

- 5.2.3** The minor loss of grassland will result in reduced foraging habitat for the local badger population and therefore grassland habitat retention and enhancement should be focused in the southern half of the site to compensate for the loss of grassland to built development (refer to recommendations in **Section 5.3**)

5.3 Recommendations

Pre-construction activities

- 5.3.1** Heras fencing will be installed across the back of the garden at a 15 metres distance from nearest sett entrance to ensure no construction activities extend into this area and will provide an undisturbed area prior to any ground works starting. The fencing should remain in place until the works are complete.

During construction activities

- 5.3.2** Excavation works will be avoided after dusk and any open excavations or trenches will be backfilled or left with escape ramps to prevent badger from becoming trapped.
- 5.3.3** Any security or construction lighting if necessary should be directed away from the southern end of the garden to reduce disturbance to the nocturnal badgers.
- 5.3.4** All machinery and excavation works will be undertaken away from the setts, and the use of the southern section of the garden for storage will be avoided with machinery and materials to be stored on the driveway at the front northern side of the bungalow.
- 5.3.5** Construction techniques will be adopted that minimise noise production and using super silenced plant/machinery where feasible
- 5.3.6** If any badgers are encountered during construction works must stop and the contractors must seek advice from a suitably qualified ecologist.

Post construction

- 5.3.7** It is recommended that post-development, the southern end of the plot remains permeable to mammals, into the adjacent gardens and woodland

because the garden site acts as part of a wider foraging habitat for badgers as well as a route from one important foraging area to another within a badger's territory..

- 5.3.8** In the long-term, in order to mitigate for the loss of foraging habitat, grassland will be retained on site at the southern end of the site in close proximity to the area used by badgers currently. Vegetation should be retained around the sett entrances to provide cover. The vegetation towards the southern end of the garden had been recently cleared and it is recommended that orchard and/or scrub species should be planted to improve the foraging opportunities for badgers, i.e. fallen fruit and blackberries on bramble scrub.
- 5.3.9** Any future works within the garden that could cause an obstruction to the sett entrances or involve excavations such as the addition of an outbuilding at the southern end of the garden, could disturb the badger sett. In the future, if there are proposals for the southern section of the garden and this area cannot be avoided, detailed observations of the sett entrances and a badger mitigation strategy will be required. Any works within 10 metres of the sett should involve the use of hand held tools only and there should be no fixings for outbuildings added in this area of the garden as it could impact the tunnels beneath.

6 REFERENCES

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