Badger Walkover Survey: High Ridge, Upper Warren Avenue, Reading **4th August 2025**

To Whom It May Concern,

In July 2025 Harry Stone MCIEEM was instructed by Mr Hashim Mitchla to undertake a badger walkover survey of High Ridge, Upper Warren Avenue, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7ED. This walkover survey was required assess the likely presence/absence of active badger setts in relation to a commenced development at this address, and thus potential future impacts of site landscaping and construction works. The site is centred at the what3words location bank.glee.cried and national grid reference SU 69712 75260.

On 31st July 2025 a walkover of the site and relevant sections of the escarpment was undertaken by Harry Stone MCIEEM. Modest rain during the site visit was not considered a significant constraint to a robust assessment of badger activity and evidence of sett building - while some small evidence such as badger hairs may have been washed away, the tree canopy was found to generally have mitigated this and the setts inspected remained mostly dry. Suspected badger sett entrances were recorded in five locations. These locations are indicated in Figures 1, 2 and 3 and assessment of each sett entrance is presented in Table 1 below.

Sett entrance number	**Location**	**Assessment**	**Status**
1	SU 69699 75197	Clearly disused, with dense accumulation of leaf litter and twigs in hole entrances. Tunnels found to be collapsed and not extending beyond 30-40 cm upon inspection.	Disused
2	SU 69675 75199	Clearly disused, partially cobwebbed with extensive leaf litter, twigs and soil accumulating in the entrance. The entrance tunnel turned sharp right then appeared to narrow significantly upon inspection, suggesting most recent use by rabbits.	Disused
3	SU 69669 75204	Appeared currently disused with accumulated soil, leaf litter and stinging nettle growth in entrance.	Disused
4	SU 69666 75205	Appeared potentially active, with notably greater soil disturbance around entrance and less leaf accumulation in entrance.	Potentially active
5	SU 69689 75231	The entrance hole was found to be clear of debris with a well worn path leading up to it, however this path appears established by people and the lack of leaf accumulation is likely caused by an overhang above the hole. Upon inspection the hole was found to bend left then right, continuing beyond the reach of inspection towards the centre of the site, narrowing as it went. The sett entrance is situated at the base of an ash tree in obvious poor health (hollow at base, standing dead wood, leaning) that seems about to collapse.	Potentially active

Table 1: Summary of badger sett entrance assessments

What appeared to be a well worn badger path was observed around sett entrance 4. This path continued eastwards to sett entrances 2 and 3, where it quickly became notably less worn, with ground flora establishing and increasing leaf and twig litter accumulating, indicating the path is not in regular used by badgers around sett entrances 2 and 3. No further evidence of badger activity such as latrines, badger hair, footprints or snuffle holes was recorded during the site visit. Rabbit droppings were recorded near sett entrance 2.

Protections

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992[1] makes it an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any part of a badger sett or disturb a badger while it is occupying a sett. Within this legislation a badger sett is defined as any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger. Setts are protected from damage and obstruction to entrance holes, as well as damage to tunnels and chambers, which can extend over 20 m underground.

Badgers are also protected by legislation under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (which places a biodiversity duty on public authorities to consider badgers in decision-making).

Legislation around damaging badger tunnels and chambers is commonly handled across the UK through the use of appropriate buffer zones. It is standard ecological best practice to assume that high-impact works, typically the use of heavy machinery and tracked vehicles, within 30 m of active badger sett entrances, generates a significant risk of collapsing badger tunnels and chambers.[2] 10 m buffer zones are similarly common within ecological mitigation plans and method statements, where works can be considered low-impact, typically working with hand tools above ground or clearing vegetation without significant stump removal. Standing government advice[3] states that work with hand tools close to a sett usually won't need a licence if they are unlikely to damage said sett or disturb badgers within.

Where works cannot avoid sett disturbance (e.g. working within 30 m of an active sett with heavy machinery, or excavations), a mitigation licence from Natural England is legally required. This includes submitting a method statement detailing works, mitigation, and timing outside peak breeding season.

Recommendations

The site has been subject to some recent vegetation clearance, with the current active works areas consisting of the construction of a garage in the northernmost portion of the site (between Upper Warren Avenue and the derelict house), and a low wall being built at the southern edge of the garden, above the escarpment (indicated in Figure 2). It is understood that the completion of this wall will involve neither heavy machinery nor further excavations, therefore a 10 m buffer zone is considered appropriate mitigation for the completion of works in this area.

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[1] Protection of Badgers Act 1992, available: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/51/contents

[2] Protected Species Advice for Developers: Badger, NatureScot, available: https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2017-10/A2293028%20-%20Species%20Planning%20Advice%20Project%20-%20Badger.pdf

[3] Natural England Standing Advice on Badgers, last updated 29 March 2015, available: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/badgers-protection-surveys-and-licences

The derelict house and the active works area north of it are clearly beyond 30 m of all recorded badger setts. The northern portions of neighbouring properties were inspected by looking over fences and it was clear that no badger sett entrances were present in these areas. Therefore, continued works in this portion of the site are not expected to have an adverse impact on local badgers and their setts.

There is no definitive evidence that sett entrance 5 is in active use, and while badgers typically avoid high-disturbance environments, the possibility of this burrow being used as an outlier sett by badger cannot be ruled out. Adhesive hair traps were deployed at this entrance on 31st July 2025. If these traps remain in place for a significant time and badger hairs are not found to have adhered to the tape, this would indicate a lack of current use by badger. Camera trapping would provide the most robust conclusion on current badger use.

It is understood that landscaping of the central portion of the garden with heavy machinery and demolition of the derelict house is scheduled for summer 2026 at the earliest. Sett entrance 5 should be checked for badger use prior to the commencement of such significant works within its 30 m buffer zone. Significant works would constitute movement of tracked vehicles, use of heavy machinery, digging/excavation, movement of soil and reprofiling of grounds. Sett entrance 5 should also be checked prior to the commencement of works involving hand tools within its 10 m buffer zone. Buffer zones are indicated in Figures 2 and 3. The 30 m buffer zone around sett entrance 5 may be simplified to mean works south of the existing footprint of the derelict house.

The development should continue to ensure that badgers and other wildlife are not at risk of becoming trapped or injured during the construction phase, primarily by avoiding completely steep-sided excavations, ensuring safe storage of chemicals, directing artificial lighting away from setts, and working during daylight hours. Similarly, the development should minimise impacts on badger setts long-term, by taking steps to prevent future disturbance. For example, the escarpment should be protected from artificial lighting and future gardening/landscaping must not risk disturbing badger setts.

I trust these survey findings and recommendations meet your requirements. Sincerely,

Harry Stone MCIEEM

Photographs from 31st July 2025

1: Sett entrance 1	2: Sett entrance 2
3: Sett entrance 3	4: Sett entrance 4
5: Sett entrance 5	6: Sett entrance 5 with adhesive hair trap

7: Ash tree in obvious poor health adjoining sett entrance 5

8: Hollow base of ash tree

9: Wall construction at southern edge of garden

10: Active works area between derelict house and Upper Warren Avenue

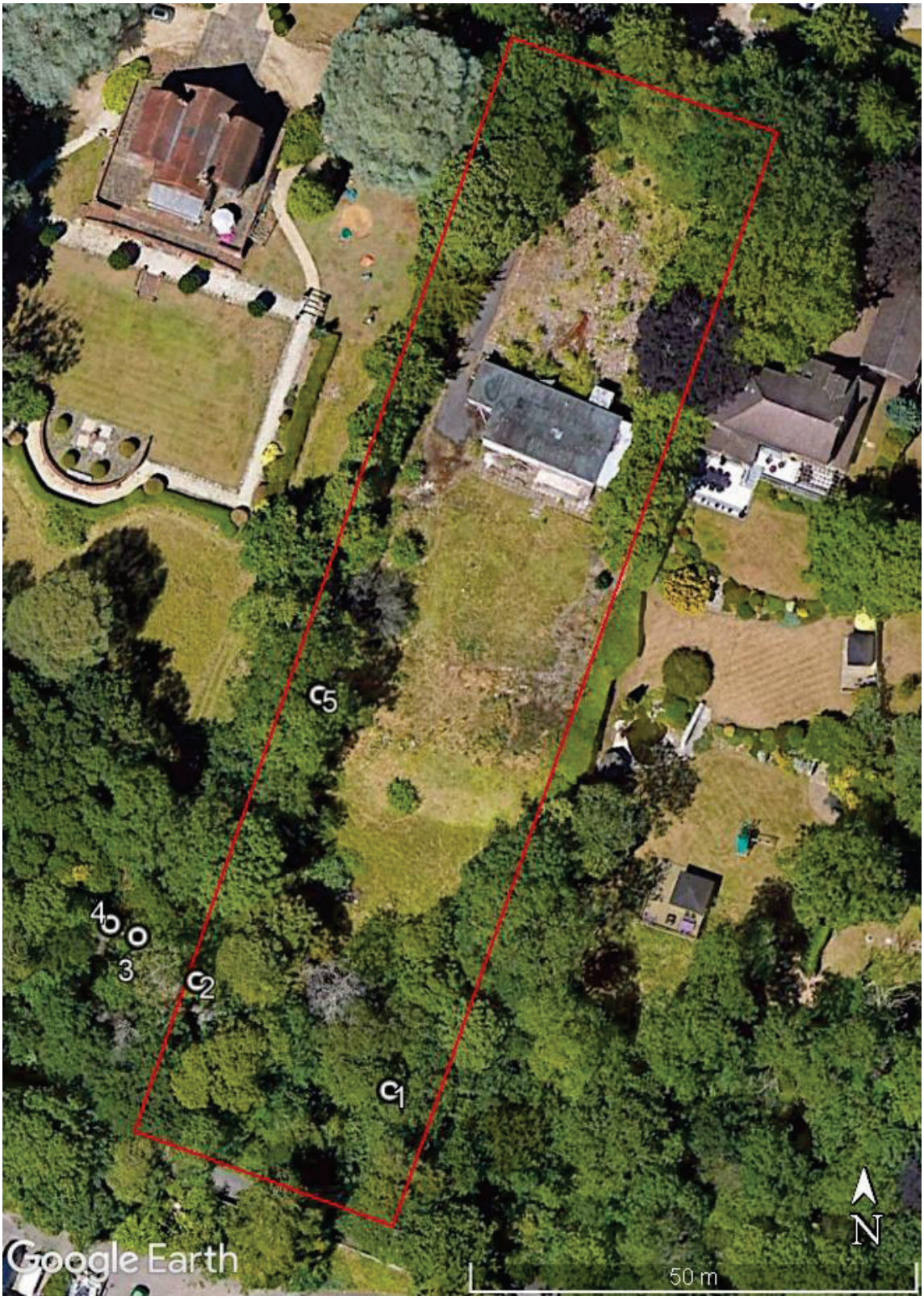

Figure 1: Site ownership boundary with potential and disused badger sett entrances numbered

Figure 2: Badger sett entrances with 10 m buffer zones (pink-purple) sketched, approximate location of wall in mid-construction illustrated in cyan-blue

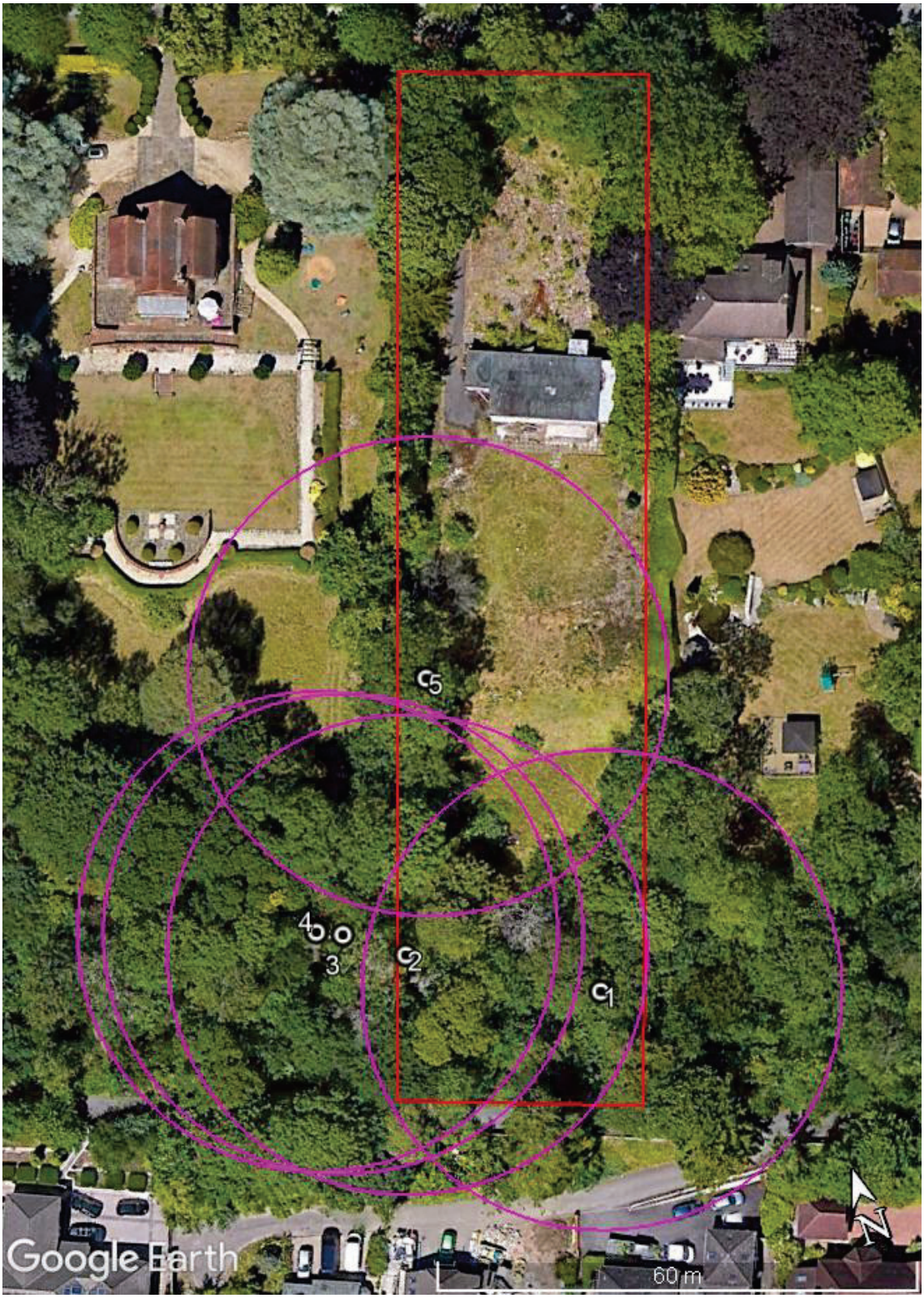

Figure 3: Badger sett entrances with 30 m buffer zones sketched