



Badger Survey

Sheengate Gatehouse, 264 Sheen Lane

Clients Name: Mr & Mrs McKittrick

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Principal Author: Edward Clark

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Name	Company	Position	Telephone Number
Edward Clark	ECOassistance	Ecological Consultant	
Mike Bridges	ECOassistance	Operations Manager	01227 840454

1 Executive Summary

ECOassistance were commissioned to undertake a badger survey at Sheengate Gatehouse.

The survey indicate that badgers are likely absent from the property and that no further action relating to badgers is required.

There is some potential for harm to animals crossing the site at night:

- Any excavations must not be left open overnight or must be left with a ramp in place to allow animals which might fall in a means of escape.

Disclaimer

This badger survey and report considers the instructions and requirements of the client and is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party.

The results contained within this report provide a snapshot of time. Usage of the sett could change and therefore an updated badger survey is likely to be required prior to applying for a licence.

Interpretations and recommendations contained in this report represent the author's professional opinions. They are based on currently accepted industry practices and personal experience. This is a working document and must be updated if development proposals change, or new information become available.

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2 Introduction

ECOassistance were commissioned to undertake a badger *Meles meles* survey at Sheengate Gatehouse, 264 Sheen Lane, Richmond, SW14 8RL (hereafter referred to as: the site). The badger survey included a search of all potential habitats within the site and the immediate surrounding areas and a search for badger records.

The survey report will support a number of planning applications at the site to extend and materially alter the main house (hereafter referred to as B1) and to repair the detached garage (hereafter referred to as B2).

The planned extension will be located to the west of B1. The construction works and associated groundworks as well as the movement and storage of machinery and/or materials within the site have the potential to disturb badgers and/or destroy a badger sett and its tunnels.

Badgers are legally protected under the Protection of Badgers Act (1992) which consolidated and strengthened previous legislation and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Local authority planning departments are required to take protected species into consideration when considering planning applications; and are required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012) to not only protect biodiversity, but to achieve net gain as a result.

An indication of the site boundaries and location of the two buildings is provided in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Site boundary with locations of Sheengate Gatehouse (B1) and Garage (B2)



The survey follows on from various ecological surveys at the site, the most recent in relation to the presence of badger having been carried out in March 2018 by FOA Ecology¹ during which badger were deemed likely absent from the site.

The purpose of this survey is to determine whether badgers are now present and to ensure badgers and their setts are not negatively impacted by any proposed developments. Where badgers are found to be present appropriate avoidance, compensation and mitigation measures are provided.

This report describes the survey findings.

¹ Phase 2 Roosting Bat & Badger Survey Work - Sheengate Gate House, 264 Sheen Lane, Richmond, SW14 8RL. FOA Ecology.

3 Methodology

The surveys consisted of a single site visit and a desk search using freely available resources. The surveys were undertaken by experienced badger ecologist Edward Clark in early November 2021. Edward has been named on many badger mitigation licenses over the past 15 years and has carried out a wide range of badger mitigation projects from small household sites such as this one to leading badger mitigation on large infrastructure projects on behalf of the Environment Agency.

3.1 Desk search

Freely available resources were used to ascertain whether badgers have been recorded within 2km of the site. Satellite images of the surrounding area were reviewed for likely commuting corridors and favourable habitat for sett locations.

3.2 Site survey

The site survey was carried out on 03/11/21 and comprised searching potential habitats within the site boundaries and any accessible potential habitats outside of the site within 30m. A search was made for badger field signs including for setts and tunnel entrances, excavations with characteristically large spoil heaps, latrines, foraging signs, well worn paths, prints, hairs and scratching posts.

Where setts were encountered, the number of entrances and levels of use were recorded and the sett classified according to the criteria used in the National Badger surveys (Harris *et al.* 1989). The classification criteria are as follows:

1. Main setts – a large well established, often extensive and in continuous use. There is only one main sett per social group of badgers. This is where the cubs are most likely to be born;
2. Annexe setts – occur in close association with the main sett and are linked to the main sett by clear well-used paths. If a second litter of cubs are born, they will be reared here;
3. Subsidiary setts – these often have 3-5 holes and are normally over 50m from a main sett and are not linked by clear paths. These setts are not continually active; and
4. Outlying setts – these usually have 1-3 holes, have small spoil heaps and are sporadically used. Foxes and rabbits may move in.

Assessment of activity levels around sett entrances also followed the National badger survey assessment criterion which are as follows:

- Well-used: Entrances clear of debris and vegetation and are obviously well used;
- Partially-used: Entrances are not in regular use and have debris such as leaves or twigs across the entrances. These holes could come into regular use with minimal clearance; and
- Disused: Entrances have not been used for some time, are partially or completely blocked. There maybe a depression in the ground where the hole used to be.

4 Constraints and Limitations

Neighbouring properties to the north and west were both walled and gated and access to search these areas was not possible on the day of the site visit. These were as follows:

- The gated complex to the west could be viewed from a distance through metal access gates. The entire area appeared pristine, well-manicured and regularly managed and did not resemble habitat which had been used by or indeed had much intrinsic value to foraging badgers. The habitat was predominantly hardstanding.
- The inaccessible residential gardens to the north were a considerable distance from the area to the west of B1 where construction and groundworks will take place. It is highly unlikely that any tunnels originating from the property to the north would reach beneath the footprint for this proposed extension as this is a linear distance of >c.25m without adjoining entrances or tunnels. There are no field signs to suggest that there are any tunnels here.

Badger records are regarded as sensitive information by the local badger groups that keep them and in many instances the records have not been shared with local biological records centres. This in turn means that a lack of badger information found

on data searches does not necessarily confer absence of badgers. A badger records request from the local badger group is not deemed necessary in this instance owing to the complete lack of badger field signs in and around the site and the unlikelihood of any badger sett tunnels being disturbed due to the location of the proposed groundworks. Were a badger licence required the badger records would be needed.

5 Results

5.1 Desk search

There were 54 records of badger within 5km of the site but no records within 2km.

5.2 Site survey

The potential badger habitat within the site comprises modified grassland and ornamental shrub beds and the areas beneath occasional mature trees.

- Modified grassland is a primary foraging habitat for badgers because the habitat type promotes worm biomass, a favoured prey of foraging badgers.

Photos of the potential habitats on the site are shown in Figures 2 & 3 below.

Figure 2: modified grassland making up a large proportion of the south of the site



Figure 3: modified grassland, shrubs and hedgerows in the north of the site surrounding B2



A relatively small number of recent foraging signs (snuffle holes) were found in the area between B1 and the western boundary, immediately adjacent to the footprint of the proposed extension. The low numbers encountered suggest the presence of a single animal. The foraging was not deep or extensive and might have been made by either fox *Vulpes vulpes* or badger.

The snuffle holes encountered are shown in Figure 4 below. They were not characteristic of those made by a badger, which in general cause more disturbance to the ground and have more conspicuous paths as a result of habitual use of foraging areas.

Figure 4: snuffle holes near to the western boundary



A single gap was identified beneath the fence along the southern boundary. Inspection of the timber edges found them to be smooth indicating regular usage for access to and from the site as well as fox hairs. The gap is shown in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: gap beneath southern boundary



At the northern end, it was clear that more potential access holes had been present in the past but had been blocked with the addition of weld mesh, steel sheets and logs. One of the blocked potential entrances is shown in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Example of a blocked-up former access point to the site garden along the northern boundary



These measures to block access to the site appeared it is estimated have been in situ for >10 years.

An individual fox was directly observed during the survey on top of B2.

6 Conclusion and recommendations

A thorough search of all on site habitats found no evidence of badger presence; no potential badger setts or any evidence of there ever having been a badger sett on the site.

A small number of foraging signs were recorded but these are deemed to have been made by fox because:

A fox was directly observed on the site;

Searches of access points into the site only found fox hairs;

Badgers in general tend to leave larger snuffle holes which are often found spread throughout modified grassland areas rather than grouped in one small area beneath a tree;

No other field signs indicating the presence of badger were encountered.

- Whether made by a badger or a fox, the foraging area discovered has no legal protection in this instance.

No badger setts/tunnels were encountered within 30m of the proposed development area. Where areas were inaccessible for survey these were located far enough away from the proposed footprint to render the potential for undermining a badger negligible; or a visual check albeit from a distance satisfied the surveyor that areas were unsuitable.

Badgers are likely absent from the site. There is some very limited potential for badgers to access the site through the access point in the southern boundary but any access through the northern boundary was blocked up long ago. The lack of a 'through-route' renders the presence of badgers even less likely.

The fox on the site has some legal protection against cruelty. There is also potential for smaller mammals to be present.

- All wild mammals are afforded legal protection under the Wild Mammal (Protection) Act 1996 (as amended). There is some risk of mammals being killed or injured during site clearance and groundworks, in particular after the excavation of footings and laying of services (as applicable) which might cause mammals to become trapped in excavations or pipes left open overnight.

To avoid any risk of harm to small mammals during construction any excavations for foundations or services including trenches, holes and open pipes should be covered at the end of each night where possible. If excavations cannot be covered, wooden planks (a scaffold board for example) must be left within the excavation (at a maximum angle of 45°) to allow mammals to climb out if they become trapped.

Excavations and open pipes must be checked at the beginning and end of each working day by the site manager (or equivalent) to check for animals. Any trapped mammals should be allowed to escape, or carefully moved into suitable boundary habitat away from construction works.

7 References

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8 Site Photos



