

Land off Beech Drive, Thornton

Badger Walkover Survey Note

edp6140_r013a

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Badger Walkover Survey Note has been prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) on behalf of Barwood Homes Limited & J H Hallam & Son Limited (hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant'), in relation to residential development at Land off Beech Drive, Thornton (hereafter referred to as 'the Site').
- 1.2 The Site is centred approximately at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference (OSGR) SK 4641 0771. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) is Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council. The Site measures 3 hectares (ha) and is located south-east of Beech Drive, Thornton. It comprises two hay meadow fields separated by a narrow belt of recently planted broad-leaved woodland, with perimeter fencing, hedgerow, scattered scrub and tall ruderal habitats.
- 1.3 The proposed development is for up to 49 residential dwellings with associated open space, landscaping, amenity space, car and cycle parking and other associated works. The scheme was granted planning permission on 22 May 2020 (application ref: 20/00511/FUL). This report has been written to discharge Condition 19 in relation to the appeal decision (Appeal Reference: APP/K2420/W/21/3285060) attached to the above planning permission. This Condition is worded as follows:

Condition 19

"An updated Badger Survey shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority within 3 months prior to the site clearance. The development shall be carried out in accordance with any mitigation measures outlined within the survey."

2. Historic Surveys

- 2.1 An Extended Phase 1 survey was undertaken by RammSanderson Ecology Ltd in 2018 and EDP carried out an update Extended Phase 1 survey in December 2019, to inform a full planning application for the Site. The survey work undertaken entailed a desk study, Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey and further detailed (Phase 2) surveys in relation to badgers and roosting bats. A badger survey was subsequently updated in May 2022 and February 2023.
- 2.2 Pertinent results, and their implications, from the previous ecological assessment will be summarised within this report. The full results of these historical surveys are provided in EDP's April 2020 Ecological Appraisal (ref: edp6140_r001d), which was submitted with the planning application.

3. Methodology

Update Badger Walkover Survey

- 3.1 An update badger walkover survey of the Site was conducted on 01 November 2023 by a suitably qualified ecologist to check for new badger setts and signs of badger activity within the Site, to ensure that the recommendations within the Ecological Appraisal (edp6140_r001d) remain valid and appropriate.
- 3.2 During the survey, any signs of badger activity such as holes, latrines, trails, snuffle holes and hairs on fencing or vegetation were recorded. Where holes of a size and shape consistent with badgers were identified, the following signs of badger activity were searched for to determine whether they were currently in active use:
- Fresh spoil outside entrances;
 - Old bedding material (typically dried grass) outside entrances;
 - Holes being cleared of leaf litter;
 - Badger guard hairs; and
 - Fresh tracks leading to/from the holes.

Limitations

- 3.3 Whilst badger activity levels can be lower in winter, badger surveys can be undertaken at any time of year, such that this survey was not constrained by seasonal or climatic factors.

4. Results

Historic Surveys

- 4.1 Historic surveys completed in 2018, 2019, 2022 and February 2023 recorded no badger setts or badger activity within the Site. However, there were several badger runs recorded across the Site; this indicates that badgers are commuting/foraging through the Site.

Update Badger Walkover

- 4.2 The update walkover survey in November 2023 confirmed that there have been no significant material changes to the type, extent or quality of the habitats present around the Site since EDP's baseline assessments in 2019.

- 4.3 No badger setts were recorded during the update survey; however, as previously noted, badger runs were still recorded across the Site indicating that badger may use this area for foraging/dispersal. Furthermore, badgers are a mobile species and sett building habitat is present within the Site; as such, it is possible that badgers could create a sett/s in the future.

5. Impacts, Mitigation and Conclusion

- 5.1 Badgers and their setts are protected in the UK under the *Protection of Badgers Act 1992*. If a potential badger sett is found during the Site clearance works, works must cease in the area (at least a 30m radius from the sett) until advice has been sought by an ecologist and further survey and/or licensing from Natural England has taken place, as appropriate.

Construction-stage Mitigation

- 5.2 Intrinsic mitigation for the proposed development has retained the vegetated boundary habitats around the development footprint, as well as retaining a corridor of open space within the west of the Site. To avoid damage/disturbance of retained features during construction, Ecological Protection Zones (EPZs) with an appropriate buffer will be established during the construction phase. EPZs will be achieved through co-ordination with tree protection measures required as good arboricultural practice, as outlined within the EDP Arboricultural Impact Assessment (edp6140_r002a), including temporary protective fencing and signage.
- 5.3 Any excavations will be sealed flush at ground level or formed with a gently sloping sides, to help any trapped badger (or other animals) to escape. Alternatively, excavations must be visually checked in the morning by the Construction Contractor prior to being filled in, to ensure badger (or any other animals) are absent. Should any badger or other protected species be present/suspected present, then work must cease at that location immediately (where safe to do so) and a suitably experienced ecologist contacted immediately for advice on how to proceed.

Operational-stage Mitigation

- 5.4 Intrinsic mitigation for the proposed development has retained and strengthened the vegetated boundary habitats around the development footprint, as well as retaining corridors of open space within the west of the Site. This will provide badgers with dispersal and foraging opportunities within the Site. In particular, the woodland has been retained and will be enhanced through the adoption of appropriate management practices.
- 5.5 New hedgerows will be used to delineate private gardens rather than fencing, to improve the permeability of the development for local fauna.



6. Conclusions

- 6.1 Whilst badgers are likely to be absent from the Site, evidence of badgers foraging and commuting across the Site have been recorded during the 2022 and 2023 surveys. However, appropriate implementation of the construction and operation mitigation measures detailed above will ensure protection for the species if encountered on-site and ensure legislative compliance.