

**WILLOW FARM
FENN LANES
FENNY DRAYTON
LEICESTERSHIRE,
CV13 6BJ**

GRID REF. SP 36683 97703
w3w: [airbag.grub.heartache](https://www.airbag.grub.heartache)

BADGER WALK-OVER SURVEY
FEBRUARY 2025

Ref: WCL/BWS/TH/1025



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**WILDLIFE CONSULTANTS
LIMITED**

20th FEBRUARY 2025

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A) INTRODUCTION

Wildlife Consultants Limited were commissioned by the client, Mrs. T. Hunt, to undertake a badger walk-over survey of Willow Farm, Fenn Lanes, Fenny Drayton CV13 6BJ for possible presence or absence of badgers and their setts. Grid. Ref. SP 36683 97703, with regard to the development within the farmyard – replacement of existing agricultural barn with a residential property.

The barn stands within the existing farmyard, including a range of buildings with hard standing surrounding and the farmhouse.



Fig. 1: Willow Farm.



Fig. 2: Aerial View of site

B **BACKGROUND**

The site is a working farm with a newly created access drive, grass paddocks / fields grazed by sheep and horses all being to the east of the farmyard. The paddocks are divided by post & railed, wired fencing.



Fig.3: Plan of Willow Farm

C) **SURVEY**

Ecologists - ECoW: R. S. Davies, Snr. Ecologist

The survey was undertaken by surveying the farmyard, site boundaries, woodland, and grass paddocks.

LEGISLATION

Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 which, although primarily introduced to prevent animal cruelty, includes a number of offences potentially applicable to development activities. In particular the Act makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly interfere with a badger sett by:

- Damaging a badger sett or any part of it.
- Destroying a badger sett.
- Obstructing access to, or any entrance of, a badger sett.
- Causing a dog to enter a badger sett.
- Disturbing a badger when it is occupying a badger sett.

The Act also makes wilfully killing, injuring or taking, or attempts to kill, injure or take, a badger an offence.

Where activities would otherwise cause an offence, Natural England may grant a licence under Section 10 of the Act. This will enable certain activities to proceed subject to compliance with conditions specified in the licence.

The following guidance is given by Natural England (2009) on interpretation of “current use”, with respect to the definition of a badger sett in the Protection of Badgers Act, 1992:

A badger sett is protected by the legislation if it “displays signs indicating current use by a badger”. A sett is therefore protected as long as such signs remain present. In practice, this could potentially be for a period of several weeks after the last actual occupation of the sett by a badger or badgers.

It follows that demonstration of the fact that a sett is not occupied by badgers does not necessarily exempt it from the protection afforded by the Act if it still displays signs otherwise indicative of current use.

A sett is likely to fall outside the definition of a sett in the Act if the evidence available indicates that it is not in use by badgers (disused); e.g. absence of badger field signs, debris in sett entrances etc. In practice, such a sett may have been unused for several weeks.

Regardless of the presence of signs, the badgers themselves are protected, so a precautionary approach must be taken to interpreting evidence of use at a sett.

BADGER SURVEY

The survey involved searching the farmyard, paddocks, boundaries and woodland for evidence of badger field signs / activity within areas identified as Willow Farm.

The field signs searched for were:

- A. Setts – Comprising of a number of excavated tunnels and chambers. Main setts often has an average five entrance holes although it is not unusual in optimal habitat to find more e.g. 80 entrances. Outside each hole there are typically large quantities of excavated material (spoil heaps), which may also contain old bedding and fur. If the sett is in use, fresh bedding may often be found at the entrances to the setts.

- B. Paths – Badgers routinely use the same routes within their territory, so the paths are usually well worn and obvious, being at least 20 cm in width. The paths will often link feeding grounds with the badger sett.
- C. Excavations – Badgers will often excavate shallow depressions under fencing and often push the fencing up to enable them to slide underneath.
- D. Hair – Badger hair is often left behind when the badger slides underneath fencing. The hair is long and coarse and distinctively black and white.
- E. Footprints – These are usually distinctive and easily recognisable, being broader than they are long. Badgers have five toes with long claws on each foot. Footprints display a distinctive kidney shaped heel and the five toes, although many tracks are left with only four toe impressions.
- F. Dung pits (latrines) – Found along territory boundaries and near to inhabited setts. The pits are on average 150 mm across and 150 mm deep (Woods, M. 1995). Where dung pits are grouped together they are termed latrines.
- G. Scratching posts – These are trees situated near to a sett entrance, often elder (*Sambucus nigra*). The bark on these trees may be scored, shredded or completely removed up to a height of 1 m.
- H. Feeding evidence – These include snuffle holes, where the badger is chasing retreating worms, excavated depressions where the badger has been searching for insects, and remains of arable crops.
- I. Bedding trails – Often left when badgers are dragging bedding from a gathering area to the sett. The gathering area can be over 100 m away from the sett and the bedding itself may comprise bracken, dead leaves, straw and dry grass.
- J. Rocks bearing claw marks – sometimes rocks can be found on spoil heaps which have been scored by badger claws during sett excavations.
- K. Badger setts were recorded and classified in accordance with standard published methodology (Harris, Creswell & Jefferies, 1989) and described as either main, annex, subsidiary or outlier setts (where applicable) using the definitions below.

Sett Type Definition

Main Sett

Multiple entrances (used and disused)
Large spoil heaps
Continually active
Well used paths between entrances and leading away from the sett

Annex Set

Multiple well used entrances
Well-worn paths to main sett 50-150m away
Not always in use

Subsidiary Set

Variable number of entrances
No paths to other setts
Not always in use

Outlier Set

1-2 entrances
No defined paths to other setts
Only sporadically used

Sett Disturbance

- A) 10m for the use of hand tools
- B) 20m for use of light machinery (wheeled vehicles)
- C) 30m for the use of heavy machinery (tracked vehicles)

RESULTS



Fig. 4: Walk-over survey area



Fig. 5: Location of barn and 30 mt. radius.

- i. Evidence of current badger activity was identified within the overall site.
- ii. Badger paths were identified within the overall site.
- iii. No badger foraging or rooting was identified.
- iv. No badger latrines were identified.
- v. No badger dung pits were identified.
- vi. No evidence of any active badger setts was identified within farmyard / development site or within 30 mts.
- vii. The walkover survey identified the presence of a sett with 4 entrances approx. 80 mts away within the boundary hedge to the north of the site and beyond the pond.

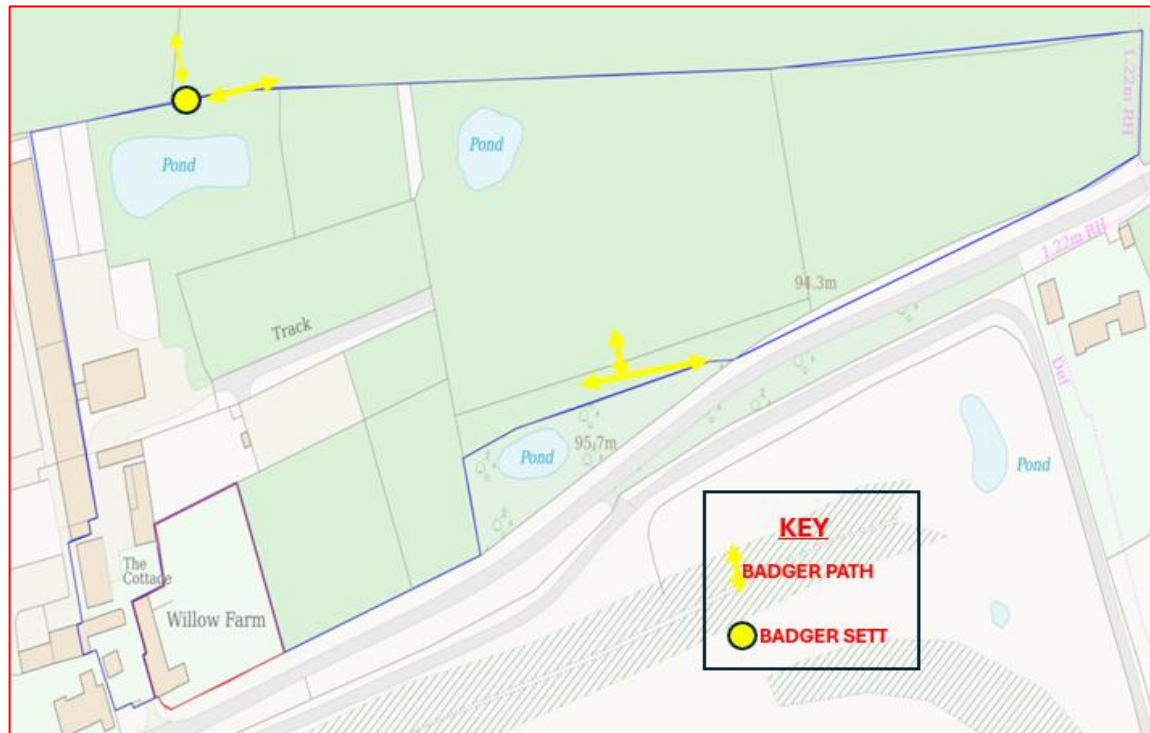
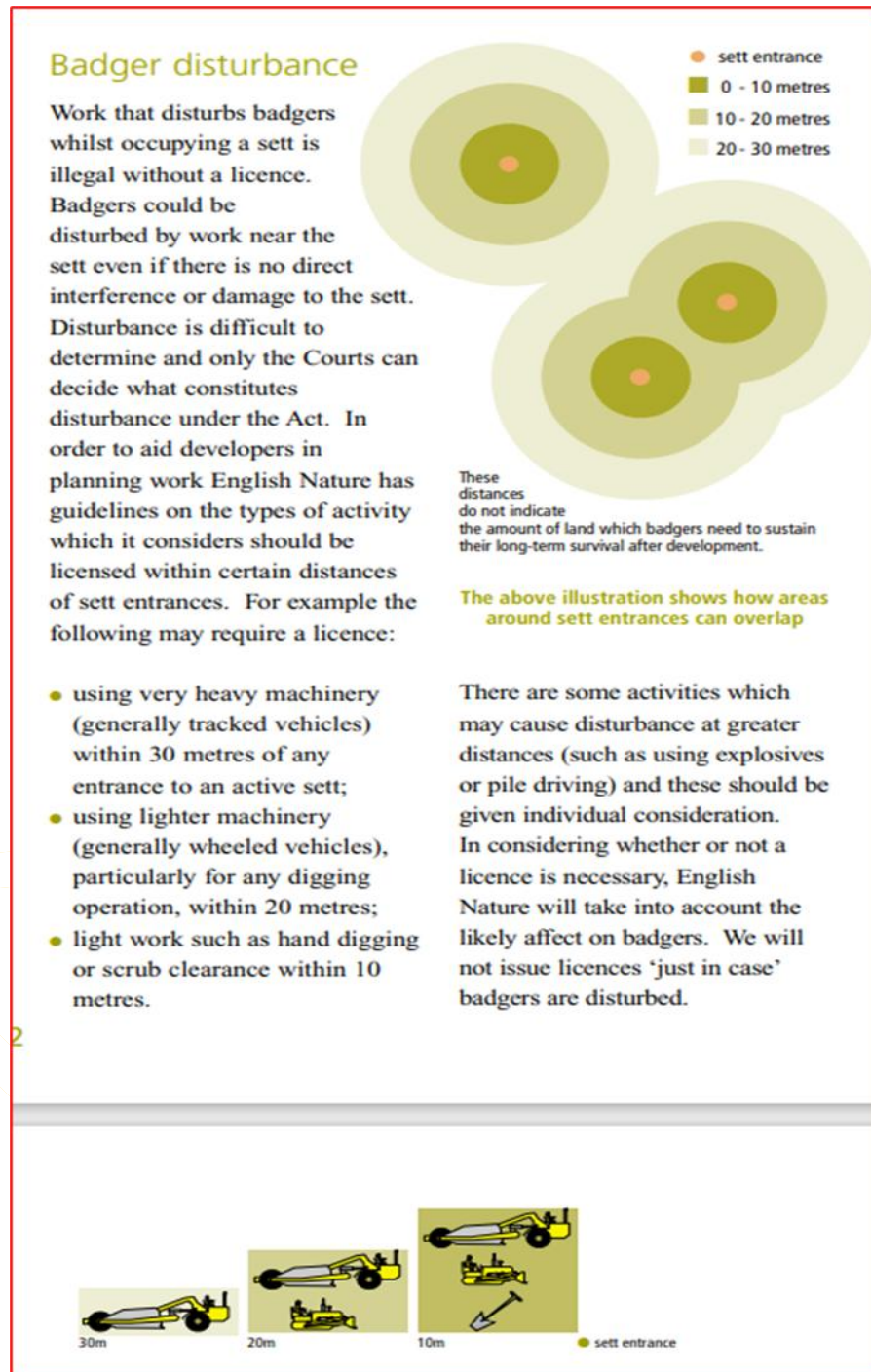


Fig. 4: Locations of badger activity

SETT MONITORING

No Monitoring of the sett was undertaken to identify its Status – annex, outlier, breeding etc.

It is in excess of 30 mts. from the site and considered will not be affected by or disturbed by the proposed development.



Badgers and Development

English Nature

2004

D) DISCUSSION

No evidence of badger activity, setts, paths foraging was identified within the farmyard or being present within 30 metres of the proposed development site.

This badger walk-over survey concludes there will be no breaches of current guidelines or legislation resulting from the proposed development.

No loss of foraging potential or access too will result from the proposed development.

Existing habitat will be retained and unaffected by the proposed development.

- a) No licences are required from the licensing authority – Natural England.
- b) No mitigation strategies are considered as being required regarding badgers.
- c) No enhancement measures are considered as being required regarding badgers.

E) CONCLUSION

- a) **An** active badger sett was identified within the Northern Boundary hedge to Willow Farm – in excess of 30 mts from the development site.
- b) **No foraging** areas were identified.
- c) **No** potential loss or restrictions to foraging areas will occur as a result of the re-development of the barn.
- d) **No** disturbance or damage will occur to the active badger sett as a result of the re-development of the barn.
- e) **No** mitigation measures are considered as being required to facilitate the proposed works at this time.
- f) **No** licenses from the licensing authority (Natural England) are considered as being required at this time to facilitate the works to be undertaken.
- g) **No** breaches of legislation, regarding badgers, are considered will result due to the undertaking of the of the re-development of the barn at this time.

F) RECOMMENDATION

- a) If badgers or badger activity is identified on site, then works are to cease immediately and an ecologist is contacted and advice sought prior to re-commencement of works.

G) APPENDIX

G1) Pictures



View of survey site



View farmyard



View of farmyard from badger sett



View of sett entrance



View of sett entrance



View sett entrance



View northern boundary hedge



View field and livestock



View of badger path



View of badger path



View of badger path under post & rail wired fence



View of new site access drive and paddocks beyond



View of roadside woodland



View of barn for re-development

View of roadside boundary hedge



View of farmyard

G2) REFERENCES

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended)

Guidance on 'Current Use' in the definition of a Badger Sett.

Badgers and Development

Natural England 2004

Proposed New Access Track at Willow Farm

Udall-Martin Associates Ltd. June 2022

ISSUE	DATE	STATUS	WRITTEN BY
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