



**BARNHILLS FARM, MERRYLEES ROAD,
THORNTON, LEICESTERSHIRE**
BADGER SURVEY REPORT

JM ECOLOGY LIMITED

COMPANY NUMBER: 14370362

VAT NUMBER: 451433221

ADDRESS: STERLING HOUSE OUTRAMS WHARF, DERBY, DE21 5EL

WEBSITE: WWW.JMECOLOGY.CO.UK

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1 This badger *Meles meles* survey report has been complete on behalf of Mr & Mrs Gary and Amy Knight for the proposal at Barnhills Farm, Merrylees Road, Thorton. It has been produced to inform proposed creation of a nursery at the Site in the place of existing outbuildings.

Site Context

- 1.2 The Site is located within rural Leicestershire and is surrounded by agricultural land with lakes, watercourse, woodland and hedgerows in close proximity providing attracting features for badger foraging, commuting and potential sett building. The wider landscape is also predominately agricultural.

Figure 1-1: Site Context



Purpose of Report

- 1.3 The purpose of this assessment is to ascertain if badger setts are located within the survey area (site plus 30-35m access permitting). Additionally, the assessment provides detail on transient badger as well. Recommendations associated with this assessment are provided in the interest of protecting badgers and their setts in accordance with legislation.

2. LEGISLATION AND POLICY

2.1 In the UK, the main relevant legislation concerning badger is the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Under the legislation it is an offence to:

- Wilfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat* a Badger, or attempt to do so;
- To intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett (this includes disturbing Badgers whilst they are occupying a sett, as well as damaging or destroying a sett or obstructing access to it).

3. METHODOLOGY

Badger Survey

- 3.1 Surveys were complete/lead by Joe McLaughlin BSc (hons) MCIEEM. Joe has over 11 years' experience in survey and site assessment for protected/notable species and habitats and is appropriately qualified for the surveys based on the CIEEM competencies for carrying out badger surveys (CIEEM, 2017). Joe also acts as the named ecologist on numerous protected species mitigation licences.
- 3.2 A specific badger survey was carried out on the 10th April 2024 included checks for evidence of badger and was complete in accordance with best practice Harris *et al*, (1989) and Badgers Trust (2023). The ecologist searched for evidence such as latrines, dung pits, prints, paths, snuffle holes, setts and fur; all within 30-35m of the Site boundary.
- 3.3 The main objective of the survey was to determine if an active badger sett was located on-Site and where possible to characterise the sett as follows:
 - **Main Sett:** The Main Sett represents the primary and most extensively used badger sett within a specific area. It serves as the core habitat and social centre for a badger community, housing the main group or clan of badgers. The Main Sett is typically characterised by a complex network of tunnels, chambers, and entrances, reflecting the long-established occupancy and regular use by badgers. It often exhibits signs of continuous occupation, such as well-worn pathways, fresh bedding material, and active scent marking. The Main Sett plays a vital role in providing shelter, breeding sites, and communal spaces for badgers to interact and carry out their daily activities;
 - **Annex Sett:** An Annex Sett is a secondary badger sett that is connected to the Main Sett. It serves as an extension or satellite sett, offering additional habitat options for the badger population. Annex Setts are generally smaller and less complex compared to the Main Sett. They may be used intermittently by badgers, providing alternative resting places or emergency shelter within close proximity to the Main Sett. Annex Setts can exhibit signs of occasional occupation, with fewer signs of active use compared to the Main Sett;
 - **Subsidiary Sett:** A Subsidiary Sett refers to a separate badger sett within the territory of a badger clan. It is typically smaller in size and less frequently used compared to the Main Sett. Subsidiary Setts may serve specific purposes such as resting, or emergency shelter. They are often characterised by fewer tunnels and chambers, with signs of occasional or seasonal use by badgers. Subsidiary Setts can provide additional habitat options and flexibility for badgers within their territory, allowing them to adapt to changing environmental conditions or social dynamics within the clan; and,
 - **Outlier Sett:** An Outlier Sett is a badger sett located outside or on the edges of the main territory of a badger clan. It is typically a solitary sett occupied by a single or small group of badgers sporadically. Outlier Setts can serve as temporary shelters, outlying foraging areas, or dispersal locations for young badgers exploring new territories. They are often characterised by simple tunnel systems and show limited signs of recent activity. Outlier Setts can be important for maintaining genetic diversity and facilitating badger population expansion into new areas.

Limitations

- 3.4 Despite efforts made during the field survey to provide a comprehensive account of the site, it is important to acknowledge that no investigation can guarantee complete characterisation and accurate prediction of the natural environment. Moreover, it is crucial to recognise that habitats are dynamic entities prone to changes, including the potential colonisation of species subsequent to the surveys complete as part of this report.
- 3.5 In line with standard guidance, the results and recommendations within this report are valid for one year from the date of survey, assuming there are no significant changes to the survey Site or its immediate surroundings. Updated survey work may be required to support any future planning applications outside of this time period.
- 3.6 Specific guidance on the valid period of ecological survey data can be found at:

<https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Advice-Note.pdf>

4. RESULTS

- 4.1 The badger survey area is shown below in Figure 4.1. This extended beyond the Site boundary where possible 30-35m as per Section 3.2.

Figure 4-1: Survey Area



- 4.2 The survey area supported suitable habitat for badger species such as:
- Open grassland;
 - Hedgerows;
 - Woodland;
 - Watercourse (bankside/riparian habitats); and
 - Lakes (bankside habitats).
- 4.3 Furthermore, given the rural context, the habitats were considered to be subject to limited disturbance pressures which was considered advantageous for badger.
- 4.4 No evidence of badger was identified anywhere within the survey area. Furthermore, no paths were identified which badger were likely to have created/use. Nor were there any areas that were too densely vegetated to be robustly surveyed.

- 4.5 No other burrows or holes were identified or field signs of other small mammals within the survey area.

5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 As no evidence of badger (including setts) was found during the survey, the species are not considered a constraint to the proposal. As such badger do not present a major constraint to development.
- 5.2 However, given the rural context, it is considered highly likely transient badger occasionally traverse across the Site. As such the following good working practices are recommended for implementation during construction:
- Safe storage of chemicals;
 - Covering open excavations at the end of each working day or providing an escape route for them to utilise to avoid them becoming trapped;
 - Avoidance of creating rubble/earth/waste piles, which badger and other small fauna could utilise for refuge or sett excavation;
 - Capping open pipe work and sensible storage of building materials within a designated compound/ storage area; and,
 - Avoidance of nightwork.
- 5.3 Any artificial lighting required/installed at the Site should avoid illuminating the Sites peripheral dense and mature vegetation.
- 5.4 Where development does not commence within the next 12 months, a re-survey for badger will be required.

6. REFERENCES

- Badger Trust, (2023). Badger Protection: Best Practice Guidance for Developers, Ecologists and Planners.
- British Standards Institution (2013) BS42020:2013 Biodiversity – code of practice for planning and development. BSI Standards Ltd, London.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017) Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing. CIEEM, Winchester.
- Harris, S., Cresswell, P. and Jefferies, D. (1989) Surveying Badgers. The Mammal Society

APPENDIX 1: SITE PHOTOS







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