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Badger Scoping Assessment Report

Site: Babsham Farm, Bognor Regis

Client: Recycle Southern Ltd

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Issued By:
Gray's Ecology
22 Church Road
East Wittering
Chichester
Sussex
PO20 8PS



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1 Summary

1. This is a brief summary of the findings and recommendations of the badger scoping assessment undertaken for Land at Babsham Farm, Bognor Regis, in support of an application to change the use of the site to a skip storage facility. Please read the report in its entirety for full details.
2. Gray's Ecology was commissioned by Recycle Southern Ltd to undertake a badger scoping survey at the above site in accordance with condition 5 of Planning Decision Notice No. BE/79/17/PL.
3. The site is located within a small industrial area, which is surrounded by arable farmland and comprised mainly of hard standing and bare ground, with a perimeter that is partly enclosed by an earth bank.
4. The survey was conducted by Nick Gray on 6th December 2018 and comprised a search for evidence of badger within the site and beyond to a distance of at least 30 m, where access permitted.
5. Habitats within the site were found to be mostly associated with the earth bank, which had a covering of dense scrub. Several piles of rubble were also present.
6. No evidence of badger was found during the survey, although signs of fox, roe deer and rabbit were present.
7. Ecological enhancement of the site should be delivered in accordance with condition 3 of the Planning Decision Notice No. BE/79/17/PL.
8. The proposed activities are considered unlikely to have a negative impact upon badgers within this site and therefore no further survey of the site for badger is required.

2 Introduction

Gray's Ecology was commissioned by Sloane and Brown Ltd to undertake a Badger Scoping Survey of Land at Babsham Farm, Bognor Regis, West Sussex PO21 5EL (the site) on behalf of their client Recycle Southern Ltd., to help inform the proposed change of use of the site and to satisfy a request for the same in accordance with condition 5 of Planning Decision Notice No. BE/79/17/PL. The purpose of the survey was to assess the site and nearby area for badger setts and signs of badgers, to identify any constraints to the proposed development on site, and to make recommendations for mitigation and/or further survey work, as appropriate, to ensure that badgers are not detrimentally impacted by the proposed changes to the site.

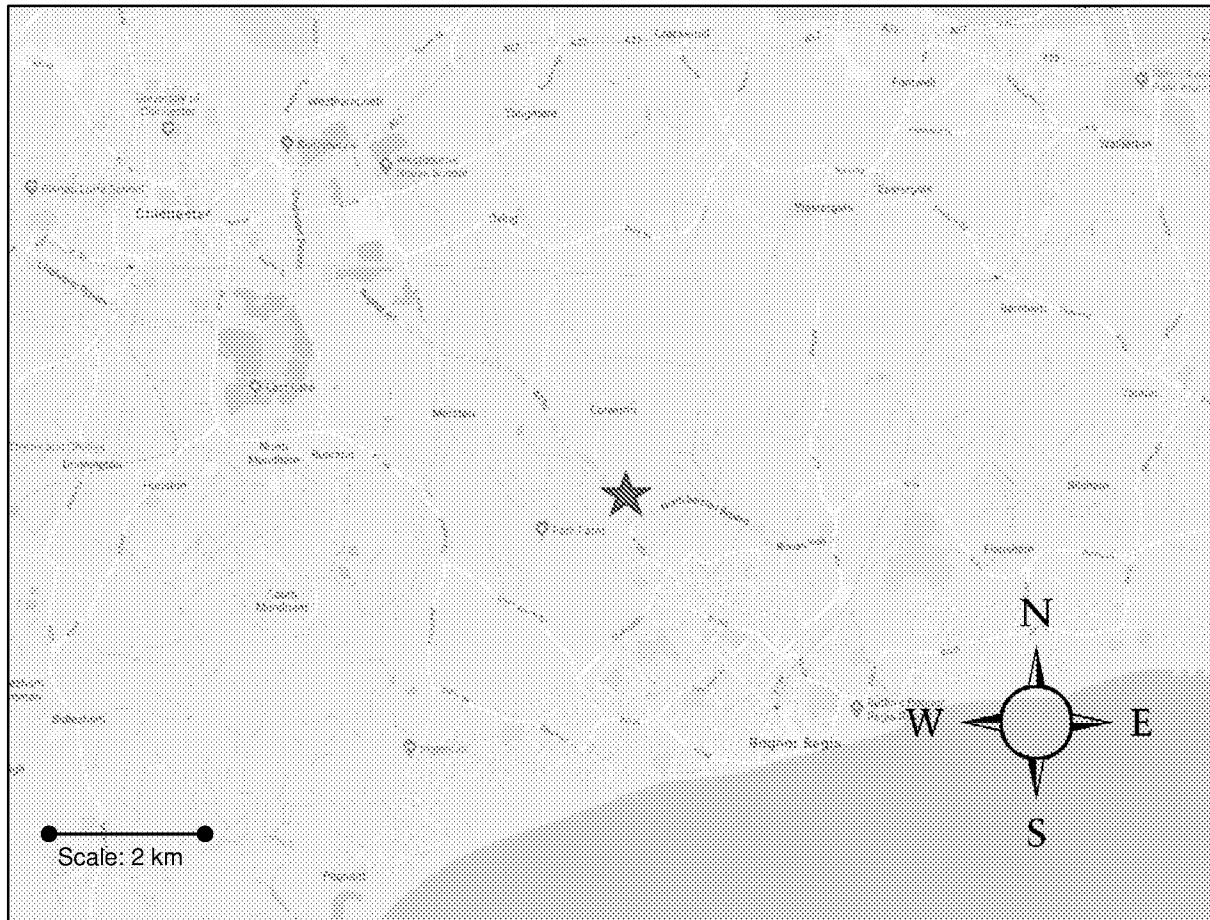
2.1 Site Context

The site covers an area of approximately 0.5 hectares and is located on the outskirts of Bognor Regis (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference for the centre of the site: SU 9174 0172) and comprises a barn within an associated courtyard, surrounded by an earth bank (Photo 1, Appendix 1).

The site is bordered to the north-east, north-west and south-east by arable agricultural land and to the south-east by Babsham Farm Business Park. A ditch system borders the south-eastern site boundary, extending to the north-east. The wider landscape comprises arable farmland to the north, east and west and the urban settlement of Bognor Regis to the south.

The location of the site is shown as a map in Figure 1. A plan of the site, including the survey boundary (indicated by a red line) is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1. Map with red star to indicate the geographical location of the site.



Site Location (©Google Maps, 2018).

2.2 Proposed Development

The plans proposed for this site are for the clearance of existing materials so that the area can be utilised for the storage of skips.

2.3 Brief and Objectives

The purpose of the badger scoping survey was to:

- Seek, identify and map (where appropriate) any evidence of badger activity within the site and the immediate surrounds.
- Identify any potential ecological constraints associated with badgers within the site, especially where they relate to the proposed development.
- Make recommendations for further survey/monitoring, as appropriate.
- Make recommendations for avoidance, mitigation and enhancement for badgers, as appropriate.

3 Relevant Legislation and Planning Policy

Included is a brief summary of legislation. The original texts of the relevant legislation or specific legal advice should be consulted in individual cases, where appropriate.

Badgers are fully protected in the UK by the Protection of Badgers Act, 1992 and by Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence (amongst other things) to:

- Intentionally capture, kill or injure a badger;
- Damage, destroy or block access to their setts;
- Disturb badgers' in setts;
- Treat a badger cruelly;
- Deliberately send or intentionally allow a dog into a sett;
- Bait or dig for badgers.

You're breaking the law and could get an unlimited fine if you:

- Have or sell a badger or offer a live badger for sale.
- Have or possess a dead badger or parts of a badger (if you got it illegally).
- Mark or attach a marking device to a badger.

Activities that can affect badgers include:

- Destroying or damaging their setts.
- Noise, additional lighting or vibration.
- Pile driving.
- Quarry blasting.
- Lighting fires.
- Using chemicals.
- Excavation.
- Ploughing and harvesting crops.
- Tree felling and timber extraction.
- Construction or repair of flood defences or watercourses.

The Wild Mammals (Protection) Act (1996) also makes it an offence for any person to mutilate, kick, beat, nail or otherwise impale, stab, burn, stone, crush, drown, drag or asphyxiate any wild mammal with intent to inflict unnecessary suffering.

4 Methods

Habitats within the site and surrounding areas (up to at least 30 m from the site, where accessible (See Photo 2, Appendix 1)) were broadly assessed for their potential to support badgers in accordance with advice given by Harris et al (1989). Any signs of badger activity, for example setts, footprints, latrines, well-worn paths, foraging marks, were recorded. Further surveys were recommended where appropriate.

A survey for badger setts and signs of badgers was undertaken by Nick Gray BSc (Hons) on the 6th December 2018. The weather conditions were dry after recent rain, with 100% cloud cover, a temperature of 11°C and a Force 2-3 westerly wind.

The signs of badgers looked for during the survey included the following:

- Setts, exploratory holes and day nests.
- Paw prints.
- Paths and “squat-marking”.
- Latrines, droppings and urine.
- Badger ‘push-through’ vegetation and under fences.
- Hairs caught on fences and vegetation.
- Scratching posts.
- Feeding signs and “snuffle-holes” in grassland.
- Broken up wasp nests.
- Badger bones.
- Living badgers.

If a sett was located, it was then classified as either a main, annex, subsidiary or outlier sett based on the number of entrances and apparent level of use, as follows:

Main: A breeding sett – these usually have 5-20+ entrances and are large, well-established setts, normally in continuous use. Each badger group will use only one main sett and it will form the most likely location for the raising of cubs.

Annexe: These setts are usually found in close association with the main sett and will often be linked to it by a well-worn path. Where a second litter of cubs is born, they will be raised in the annexe sett.

Subsidiary: Subsidiary setts will usually have five or more holes, although not all of these will be in continuous use.

Outlying: These setts are used on an occasional basis and will usually consist of only one to three holes. Spoil heaps will generally be smaller than those found associated with the other sett types, indicating a smaller underground structure.

A note was also made of the number of sett entrances. Each sett entrance was then classified as follows:

- Well-used - holes in regular use and are therefore free of debris. They may have been recently excavated.
- Partially-used - debris, including leaves, twigs and other vegetation clutter the entrance to these holes, indicating they are not in regular use. The holes can be used after a minimum of clearance.
- Disused - A considerable amount of clearance is needed before these holes can be used. The holes may become so blocked that only a depression in the ground is visible where the hole used to be.

The classification of badger setts used in this survey is based on definitions given in Clark (1988).

The locations of any field signs recorded were marked on a map of the survey area.

4.1 Survey and Assessment Limitations

The site was visited over a period of one day. Many field signs, such as footprints are vulnerable to degradation from certain weather conditions. Therefore, the survey provides a general assessment of the potential for badgers to be present on the site, based on field signs present during the survey.

The badger survey was undertaken at an appropriate time of year. There were no limitations to the survey in terms of the following:

- The site could be fully accessed.
- Weather conditions (dry and mild).
- Personal competence (qualifications, training, skills and experience).
- Time spent surveying.

5 Results

5.1 Habitat

Habitats within the site comprised mainly of hard standing and bare ground, with the occasional rubble and rubbish pile. A bonfire of burning rubbish was present within the centre of the site. The site was also occupied by an open-sided barn, three metal storage containers, a vehicle trailer and two spoil heaps. The perimeter of the site was delimited by an earth bank on three sides. The bank was covered with dense bramble scrub *Rubus fruticosus* agg. There were also some ephemeral herbs present within the site, comprising lesser periwinkle *Vinca minor*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, mugwort *Artemisia vulgaris*, Canadian fleabane *Conyza canadensis*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius* and yarrow *Achillea millefolium*.

5.2 Badgers

No sign of badgers or badger activity was noted within or near to the site during the extended Phase 1 survey. Foraging habitats of value for this species exist within the site and the surrounding landscape. It is likely that if any setts were situated within 30m of the site boundary, then some evidence of badger activity would have been observed.

5.3 Other Non-notable Mammal Species

Evidence of rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, roe deer *Capreolus capreolus* and fox *Vulpes vulpes* were recorded within the site during the survey.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Further Survey

No further surveys for protected species are required.

6.2 Ecological Enhancement and Opportunities

Ecological enhancement of the site should be delivered in accordance with condition 3 of the planning decision notice (ref. BE/79/17/PL), which requires the applicant to embrace recommendations prescribed within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat Building Assessment (Arbeco Ltd, Aug 2017) and the Reptile Survey Report (Arbeco Ltd, 2017).

7 Conclusion

A Badger scoping survey was commissioned for an area of land within Babington Farm near Bognor Regis in West Sussex, where the owners of the land have proposed to create a container storage facility within the site.

The site is located within a light industrial site, which is surrounded by open arable farmland. The main habitat within the site is comprised of hard standing and bare ground (which is of low ecological value), enclosed by an earth bank and dense scrub.

The findings from a badger scoping survey found no evidence of badgers or their setts within 30 m of the site. It is therefore concluded that no further surveys for badger are required.

Ecological enhancement of the site should be delivered in accordance with condition 3 of the Planning Decision Notice No. BE/79/17/PL.

If the recommendations made in this report are adopted, the proposed activities are unlikely to have a negative impact upon badgers within this site.

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9 Appendix 1 – Site Photographs

Photo 1. Internal view of the site showing barn, storage container and an earth bank on the perimeter of the site.





©Google Maps, 2018.

Photo 2. Aerial view showing site area in blue and extent of survey area in red.