



Pegasus Planning Group

Ladydale, Leek

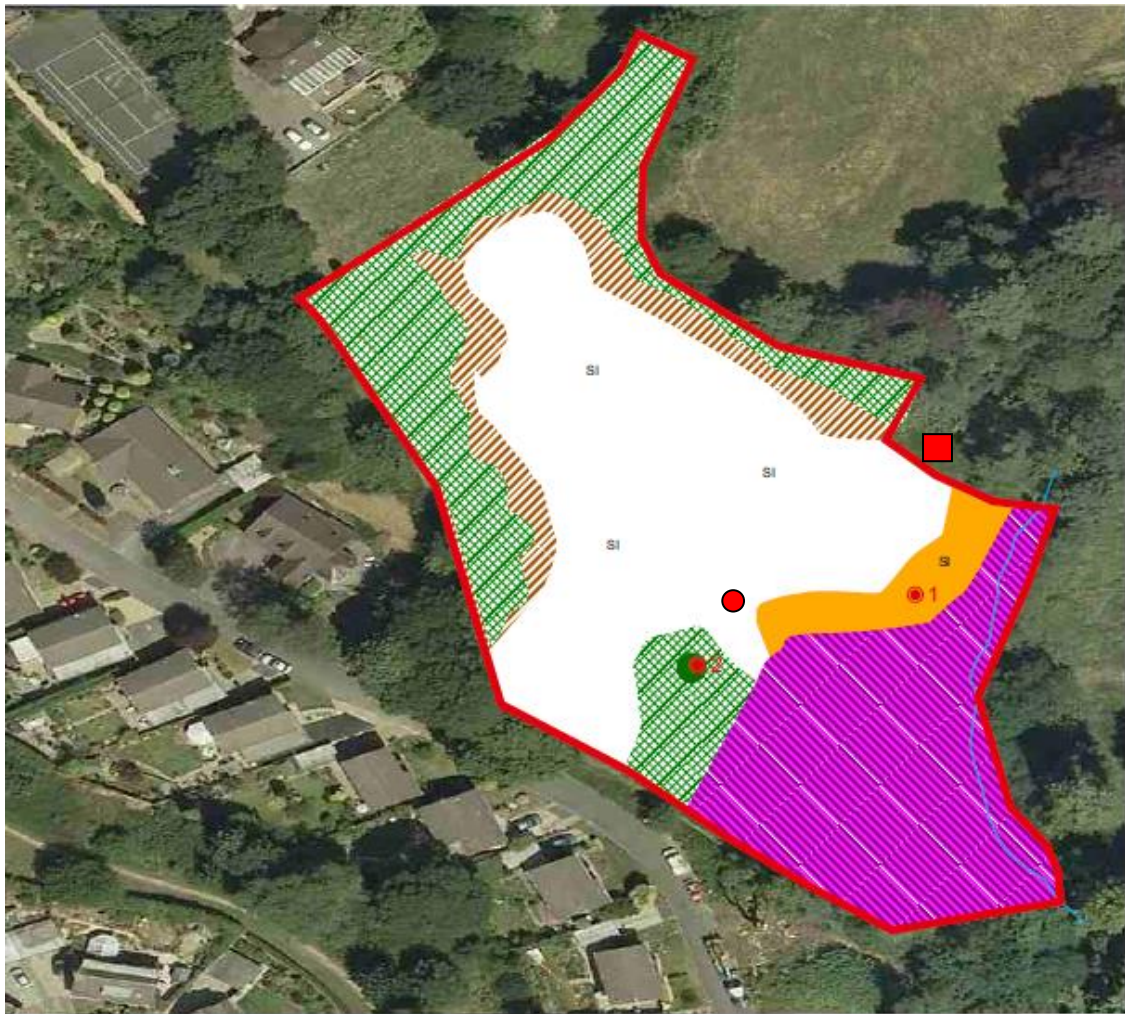
CONFIDENTIAL ECOLOGY APPENDIX B

October 2017

CONFIDENTIAL BADGER SURVEY INFORMATION

Survey Results

Evidence that the site forms a part of at least one badger social groups home range was noted within the site in the form of frequent foraging evidence, paths through vegetation and in the form of a single hole outlier sett (indicated by ●) located in the bank between the grassland and fen habitats. No evidence of recent use was observed and the spoil was well vegetated suggesting that it is likely to have been excavated over 12 months ago, although the sett was located immediately adjacent to a well-used mammal path.



Further evidence of badgers was noted just off-site to the northeast, where an extensive sett (indicated by ■) was observed to extend from the site boundary for approximately 50m to the northeast. The sett was located in dense woody vegetation and rhododendron scrub on an escarpment above the watercourse. Initial assessment suggested that the sett supported at least ten active entrances, with a further 16 that were partially active. Further evidence if the sett current use included numerous discarded bedding, scratching posts, latrines and a young badger, which, when disturbed, entered one of the sett entrances during the 2015 survey.

Discussion of Impacts

Research indicates that badger territories in lowland England typically range in area from 1km² to 5km² size being a function of the quality and quantity of foraging habitat present in the area. Where poor foraging opportunity is offered, larger territories are required to support a population.

Field evidence suggests that the site is occupied by a single badger social group, centred on a single off site sett. The site was of moderate to good quality for foraging albeit of only limited size.

Any development impact on the badger population is considered in the following text against the illustrative proposals. Development proposals comprise the construction of housing and access roads. An area of open space will be retained in the south of the Site.

Development within 30m of setts (Licensable Actions)

The proposals allow the retention of the main sett, which will be buffered from built development by at least 30m such that impacts arising from construction activities are unlikely to be significant. Some work is likely to be required around the sett in order to form gardens although this could be completed in a sensitive manner and avoiding the more sensitive time of year. Badger setts are however protected from interference or disturbance under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and while the main sett is likely to be retained a small on-site sett could be affected, particularly where subterranean parts extend further into the built development area. Whilst this is unlikely to significantly affect the badger social group, in the absence of mitigation this could lead to an effect on individual badgers, potentially causing entrapment and leading to an offence under the above act. It may therefore be necessary to either temporarily or permanently close these setts, depending on the level of badger activity at the time.

Were these setts closed, it is unlikely to impact significantly due to the presence of other, alternative, sett present close to them that would be retained. They are also only likely to be used sporadically.

Based on the current proposals and assuming that badger activity remains unchanged, it is likely that a badger licence to legitimise works would be required for the works close to the on-site sett.

Disruption/loss of foraging habitat

Construction activities could lead to some loss of suitable foraging habitat arising as a result of the loss of improved and species poor semi-improved grassland. However, significant areas of short grassland (optimum foraging habitat), are present locally outside of the site and a proportion of the on-site habitat will be retained.

In the long-term badgers may also benefit as research suggests that in urban areas, food availability to badgers is considered to be often over-abundant suggesting that the loss in foraging habitat is only likely to be short-term in nature, until garden habitats develop.

MITIGATION STRATEGY

Factors key to effective badger mitigation in this case are: -

- Protection of setts during development

- Where sett closure is essential, ensuring badgers are not harmed during sett closure or construction activities.

The results of the badger survey indicate that a single badger social group territory would be affected by the development proposals. Mitigation measures seek to ensure long term sustainability of the group within the area.

It will be necessary to ensure that existing disused badger setts or newly excavated setts are taken into account as part of the proposals. A full badger survey will therefore be completed prior to construction works to assess any change in status of the identified setts and any need for further mitigation measures.

Should any active setts be identified and their retention not possible within the scheme, it may be necessary to close them under licence. Where this is the case closure would be undertaken using one-way badger gates following guidance as to the use, operation and monitoring provided by Natural England. Closure would be undertaken only during the period from July to November (inclusive) unless under exceptional circumstances and licensed by Natural England.

Other measures to ensure that construction works do not impact on badgers would include:

- Protection of existing retained setts during construction
- Where trenches/voids are created and left overnight, they will be covered or measures taken to ensure that badgers can escape if inadvertently trapped (e.g. placement of scaffold boards).
- Careful consideration given to the location of topsoil storage mounds that can readily become used by badgers for the creation of new setts.