



AECOM

PLASYFELIN PRIMARY SCHOOL

BADGER SURVEY REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2024

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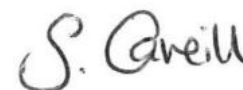
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DRAWINGS	TITLE	SCALE
CA13112-001	Site Location Plan	1:5,000 @A3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wardell Armstrong LLP (WA) was commissioned by AECOM in July 2024 to undertake a survey for European badger on or in close proximity to the proposed development site at Plasyfelin Primary School, Caenant Road, Caerphilly, CF83 3FP (hereafter referred to as 'the site'), centred on approximate National Grid Reference ST 15258 87754.

This is a confidential report detailing records of badger activity within the site. **For badger welfare reasons, this report should be circulated to statutory consultees only and is not for general public release.**

As part of their PEA and BREEAM Report for this site (AECOM, 2023), AECOM identified the site's potential to support badgers. The on site habitats that could be utilised by badgers include grassland, scrub, and the woodland including the school's grassland.

This survey found no signs of badger presence on the site and found no setts or evidence of other badger activity within the survey area.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Terms of Reference

- 1.1.1 Wardell Armstrong LLP (WA) was commissioned by AECOM in July 2024 to undertake a survey for European badger *Meles meles* in connection with the redevelopment of the Plasyfelin Primary School site.
- 1.1.2 The site is located on Caenant Road, Caerphilly, CF83 3FP, as shown on Drawing Number CA13112-001 (Site Location Plan).
- 1.1.3 The buildings on site are intended for demolition, with a larger school rebuilt in its place.
- 1.1.4 This report is **confidential**. It is recommended that this report is only made available to *bona fide* individuals and organisations in order to safeguard this species.

1.2 Survey Area Description

- 1.2.1 The survey area included the grassland areas of the school, and the woodland area adjacent to the school, staying within 30m of the redline boundary, as shown in Drawing Number CA13112-001 (Site Location Plan). Nant Yr Aber river runs adjacent to the site.
- 1.2.2 The habitats within the site comprise of amenity grassland, woodland, dense scrub to the east of the site, an allotment area, and buildings. Scattered trees are also present within the grassland of the site.
- 1.2.3 Badger habitat connectivity in this area of Caerphilly is somewhat fragmented which can be seen on Drawing Number CA13112-001 (Site Location Plan). Roads, street lighting, car parks, and public rights of way create barriers for badgers commuting and foraging, alongside increased noise disturbance to badgers. For these reasons, it is considered less likely for badgers to be utilising the suitable habitats within the survey area.

1.3 Background

- 1.3.1 A desk study was undertaken by AECOM as part of their PEA and BREEAM Report for this site (AECOM, 2023), with information received from South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc). Records included:

- Four records of badger within 2 km of the site, closest approximately 1.3 km southeast from the site. There is no connectivity between this record and the site due to housing and roads.

1.4 Badger Ecology and Legislation

1.4.1 Badgers are relatively widespread in England and Wales and legislation is based primarily on the need to protect badgers from baiting and deliberate harm or injury.

1.4.2 Badgers are afforded full protection under the Protection of Badgers Act (1992), which makes it an offence to:

- Wilfully kill, injure or take a badger;
- Possess or control any live or dead badger or any part, or anything derived from, a dead badger;
- Cruelly ill-treat a badger or attempt to do so.

1.4.3 It is also an offence to interfere with a sett by:

- Damaging or destroying it;
- 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 sett;
- Sell a live badger or offer one for sale.

1.4.4 It is also an offence to mark, attach any ring, tag or other marking device to a badger unless authorised under licence.

1.4.5 Badgers are found in a variety of habitats including urban areas, hedgerows and open-pasture. Their staple diet is earthworms, consequently good permanent pasture is important for foraging, but badgers are also known to feed upon cereal crops, fruits, roots, and tubers. Badgers are very social animals and, in most instances, live in social groups. The national average social group size is approximately six adults, although Roper (2010)¹ suggests that in northern Scotland population densities are lower and clans can comprise of 3-5 individuals. Setts are normally excavated into suitably firm

¹ Roper, T (2010). Badger. HarperCollins. London.

and free draining substrate and as a result are often located in steep banks and mounds.

1.4.6 Badgers normally have a number of setts in their territory of which the main sett is occupied year-round and is the most important for the social group. In addition, a social group will also occasionally maintain annex, subsidiary and outlier setts each of which is of decreasing importance to the group.

1.5 Objectives

1.5.1 The objectives of the badger survey and report are to:

- Determine the presence/absence of badgers, the likelihood of breeding, if they occur in social groups, their likely ranges and key foraging areas;
- Description of the survey methodology;
- Survey results; and
- Conclusion and recommendations.

1.6 Quality Assurance & Environmental Management

1.6.1 The survey was overseen by and the report checked and verified by a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), whom is bound by its code of professional conduct.

1.6.2 The survey was undertaken with reference to the recommendations given in British Standard (BS) 42020, and as stated within specialist guidance, as appropriate, and are referenced separately.

1.6.3 All of the participating ecologists have previous experience of undertaking badger activity surveys, and are confident in identifying field signs.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Badger Survey

- 2.1.1 The badger survey was undertaken by suitably experienced ecologists from WA on 6th August 2024 to determine the presence of badger activity on site.
- 2.1.2 The survey effort and data recorded followed the standard methodology used in the two most recent national surveys of badgers (Cresswell *et al.*, 1990 and Wilson *et al.*, 1997).
- 2.1.3 The survey area was systematically searched during the walkover survey, with particular attention paid to areas where the vegetation and/or topography offer suitable sett sites for badgers.
- 2.1.4 All holes and mammal runs where present were examined closely in order to determine if they are or have ever been badger setts. The number of entrances and level of use were recorded, and the sett classified according to the criteria used in the National Badger Surveys [Cresswell *et al.* (1990)²], Wilson *et al.* (1997)³]. In addition to setts, the presence of hairs, footprints, pathways, dung pits and feeding signs were used to plot the patterns of movement of the badgers. Where pathways were confirmed as badger pathways (i.e. there is a clear link to a sett or additional evidence of badger activity nearby) these were also noted.
- 2.1.5 The resultant information was used to confirm the classification of the sett (i.e. main, annexe, subsidiary or outlier). Further details are provided in Table 1.

Sett Type	Definition
Main	Can comprise of one or several entrances often with large spoil heaps and obvious paths emanating from and between sett entrances. A number of activity features suggesting continuous presence and use. A breeding site.
Annexe	Normally less than 150m from main sett, comprising several entrances. May not be in use all the time, even if main sett is very active.

² Cresswell P., Harris S., & Jefferies D.J. (1990). The history, distribution, status and habitat requirements of the badger in Britain. Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough.

³ Wilson G., Harris S., McLaren G. (1997). Changes in the British badger population, 1988 to 1997. People's Trust for Endangered Species, London.

Subsidiary	Usually at least 50m from main sett with no obvious pathways connecting to other setts. May be used regularly/intermittently often relating to clan/territory size, and changes in foraging regimes i.e. crop growing times.
Outlier	Little spoil outside entrances. No obvious pathways connecting to other setts and only used sporadically. May be used by foxes and rabbits.

2.1.6 Evidence recorded was then used to demine whether a sett is either in “current use” or “not in current use” (as per Natural England Guidance on ‘Current Use’ in the Determining of a Badger Sett, 2009)⁴ by reviewing the level of activity at setts. A sett is classed as ‘in current use’ if the hole is unblocked (or open) and there are other signs of badger activity (footprints, well-worn paths, latrines and the presence of hairs).

2.2 Caveats and Limitations

2.2.1 Some areas of the tops of the riverbank were too densely vegetated or steep to safely access which limited the search for field signs, however, it was possible to access the river, and the river was clearly visible from one bank at all points of the survey. This is the same area of dense/continuous scrub located east of the site that could not be accessed as part of the PEA undertaken by AECOM.

2.2.2 As the majority of the tops of the riverbanks were visible or accessible, and this habitat is not considered suitable for badger use, the above limitation is not considered likely to have significantly affected the conclusions drawn within this report.

⁴ Natural England (2009). Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended) Guidance on ‘Current Use’ in the definition of a Badger Sett.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Habitats

3.1.1 The habitat utilised by badgers recorded by the desk study is disconnected from habitats on or near the site by roads and areas of residential buildings. The woodland adjacent to the site is fenced from the grass in some areas. However, it is believed that the gap beneath the fence in many areas would still allow badgers to access the site and would not necessarily act as a barrier.

3.1.2 Due to some access between the woodland and grassland of the site, allowing school students to access parts of the woodland, and other areas of woodland being open to the public and demonstrated use of the woodland by the public, there is a relatively high level of disturbance. This level of disturbance, the topography of the woodland being flat, and limited habitat connectivity to wider areas of woodland, it is likely that badgers are discouraged from utilising habitats on or adjacent to the site.

3.2 Badger Survey

3.2.1 No signs of badger were found during the badger survey (i.e. badger hair, footprints, snuffle holes, setts, or latrines).

3.2.2 Some mammal pathways were observed within the grassland on site; however, no signs of badger activity along these pathways was observed. Therefore, it is considered likely that these are attributed to other nocturnal mammals.

3.3 Summary

3.3.1 Following the findings of the badger survey carried out in July 2024, it can be concluded that there was no badger activity on or adjacent to the site at that time.

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The badger survey indicates that badgers are not currently using the site or areas adjacent to the site.

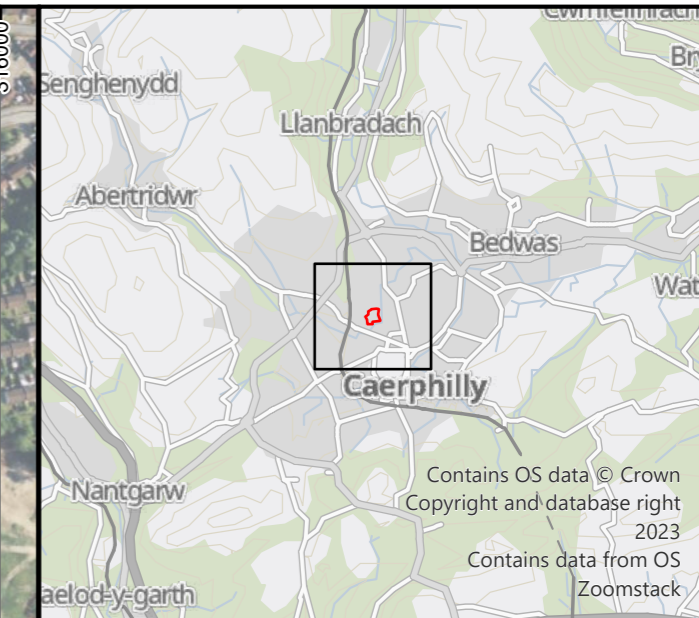
4.2 Report Validity

4.2.1 This report will remain valid for a period of 12 months from the date of the survey. If the proposed development has not commenced within this timeframe, it is recommended that an update badger activity survey is undertaken.


5 REFERENCES

1. Natural England (2009). Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended) Guidance on 'Current Use' in the definition of a Badger Sett.
2. Biodiversity Action Plan for Caerphilly County Borough (2022). Caerphilly County Borough, Volumes i and ii
3. Cresswell P., Harris S., & Jefferies D.J. (1990). The history, distribution, status and habitat requirements of the badger in Britain. Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough.
4. Wilson G., Harris S., McLaren G. (1997). Changes in the British badger population, 1988 to 1997. People's Trust for Endangered Species, London.
5. Roper, T (2010). Badger. HarperCollins. London.

DRAWINGS



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KEY
 **Approximate Site Boundary**

Notes:
 Boundaries are indicative. Aerial imagery shown for context purposes only.

A	FIRST ISSUE	26/09/24	BL	GM	SC
REVISION	DETAILS	DATE	DRAWN	CHKD	APPD

CLIENT
AECOM

PROJECT
PLASYFELIN PRIMARY SCHOOL

DRAWING TITLE
SITE LOCATION PLAN

DRG No.	CA13112-001	REV	A	SUIT CODE	---
DRG SIZE	A3	SCALE	1:5,000	DATE	26/09/2024
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