

# BADGER PRESENCE/ABSENCE SURVEY

Ref: 1257

Land to the Rear of 29 Shorncliffe Road

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ECOassistance were commissioned to undertake a badger camera survey of a potential sett at Land to the rear of 29 Shorncliffe Road in Folkestone.

Trail cameras were deployed to observe the potential sett.

Fox, squirrel and rat activity was recorded in and around the entrance with each taking it in turns to make use of the hole. No badgers were recorded.

The survey has shown that badgers are absent from the site and the burrow is being used by other animals.

A derogation licence to destroy the hole is not required but a mitigation strategy to ensure there is no undue harm or suffering cause to the animals which are present is required and this is provided.

Client Name:	Alliance Building Company Contracts Ltd.	
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## DISCLAIMER

This report considers the instructions and requirements of the client and is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party.

In accordance with current good practice guidance, the results contained within this report can be relied on for decision-making purposes without the need to be updated for six-to-twelve months providing there is no significant change in land use or land management in that time.

Interpretations and recommendations contained in this report represent the author's professional opinions. They are based on currently accepted industry practices and personal experience. This is a working document and must be updated if development proposals change, or new information become available.

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## INTRODUCTION

### THE SITE

ECOassistance were commissioned by Alliance Building Company Contracts Ltd. (Hereafter referred to in this report as: the client) to undertake a badger *Meles meles* presence/likely absence survey on a potential badger sett at: Land to the rear of Shorncliffe Road in Folkestone, Kent CT20 2NB (Hereafter referred to in this report as: the site).

The site is located within the County of Kent; in the southeast region of England. The site is within the Folkestone and Hythe District Council Local Planning Authority (LPA). The grid reference for the approximate centre of the site is: TR 21689 36007.

The badger survey has been commissioned following a PEA at the site which found a number of field signs suggesting the likely presence of badger. These included snuffle holes in the grassland habitat, a well-worn path beneath the entrance gate and a hole with well-worn paths surrounding it beneath scrub habitat along the western site boundary. The hole was found by following mammal paths which ran through the edges of the scrub.

### OBJECTIVES

Badgers are legally protected under the Protection of Badgers Act (1992) which consolidated and strengthened previous legislation and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under the legislation it is a criminal offence to:

- Wilfully kill, injure, or take any badger;
- Possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger;
- Possess any dead badger or part of one;
- Possess or control a living, healthy badger; and
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a sett, or disturb a badger whilst it is occupying a sett.

The purpose of the badger survey is to confirm the presence or likely absence of an active badger sett and classify the usage of the site by badgers as appropriate. The results will inform appropriate mitigation as applicable and ensure legal compliance of the planning application.

### METHODOLOGY

The survey consisted of three site visits carried out between 29<sup>th</sup> September 2024 and 16<sup>th</sup> October 2024. The initial visit included a search of the entire site; following field signs such as worn paths and mammal runs to identify potential setts or sett entrances and access points through the site boundaries to ensure that any potential badger setts within the site had been located.

Link Micro LTE trail cameras were securely positioned outside of potential setts (in this instance just a single potential sett entrance) to record animal activity in and around the entrance. Subsequently the

site was visited at least weekly to ensure the cameras remained operational and effective and to review the footage.

The trail cameras recorded footage of the potential sett entrance for 17 nights.

## CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

There were no notable constraints or limitations to the survey.

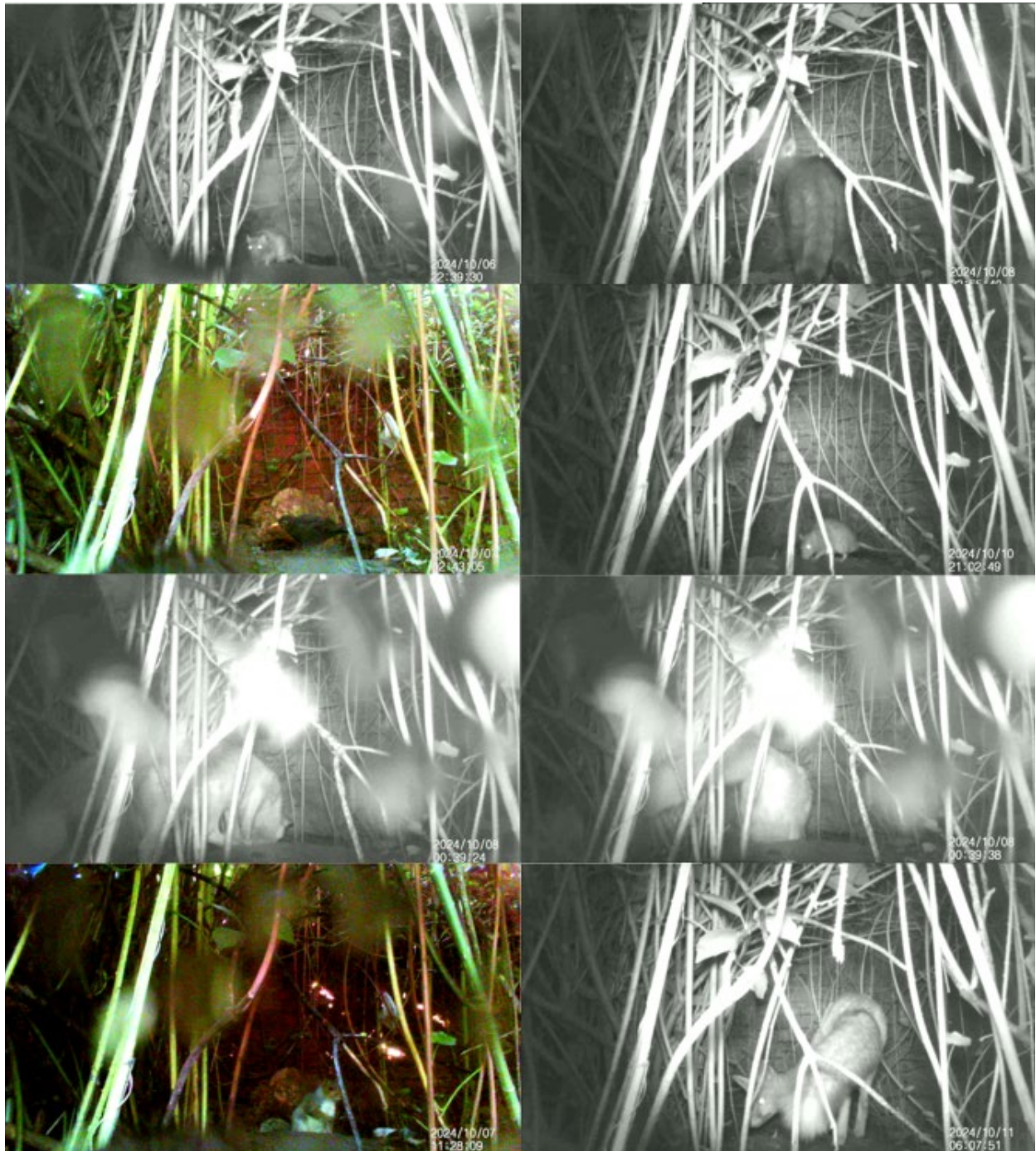
## RESULTS

A single potential sett entrance was identified within the site. This showed no signs of recent badger activity such as recently excavated spoil from within but conversely snuffle holes within the nearby grassland and a lack of vegetative growth in the well-worn paths surrounding the sett entrance suggested that badger may be present and the hole could be an active badger sett.

Review of the trail camera footage found the hole to be used by a number of animals over the duration of the survey period. This included at least two different rats *Rattus rattus* that were regularly filmed emerging from the hole. On other nights a red fox *Vulpes vulpes* was seen entering the hole and on one occasion a grey squirrel was seen emerging from the hole. The trail camera footage also showed regular visits to the area surrounding the hole by a male blackbird and on one occasion a large domestic cat.

The figure below shows a selection of screenshots taken from the trail camera video footage.

Figure 1: Screenshots taken from the trail camera video footage of animals using the hole



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of the survey undertaken was to determine whether a large hole beneath scrub on the western edge of the site is a badger sett.

A sett is defined in the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 as 'any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger'.

Deployment of a trail camera over a period of 17 nights recorded a number of different animals in and around the hole. Animals that were seen entering or exiting the hole included a fox, rats and squirrels; with the rats recorded entering and exiting the hole most often. Badgers were not recorded at any time during the survey.

The survey has shown that the hole is not currently an active badger sett, not just because badgers are absent, but because an active single-hole sett would be unlikely to also be used periodically by rats, squirrels and a fox.

The survey has also shown that the hole is used by other species periodically and therefore some mitigation is required when excavating near to the hole.

- In order to avoid causing unnecessary suffering to individual mammals by inadvertent crushing or asphyxiation a careful destructive search of the hole will be undertaken prior to commencement of any works within 5m. This is because all wild animals are protected from cruelty;
- An Ecological Clerk of Works (EcoW) will be present to inspect the hole prior to the destructive search to check there has been no new excavations which might mean that the hole has become a badger sett. (In the unlikely event that newly excavated spoil is present, the commencement of works should be postponed so that further camera trap survey can be undertaken);
- The destructive search will comprise gradually digging back the entrance of the hole under the supervision of an EcoW who is experienced in live digs for mammals; and
- The tunnel shall be dug back gradually with time left between each scrape to allow animals inside to escape; and
- If animals remain in the lower part of the tunnel then the live dig shall stop before harm is caused to the animals and the exposed tunnel will be left overnight to allow the animals to escape.

## REFERENCES

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