

## LAND AT CHICHELE ROAD, OXTED: BADGERS

### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An updated badger survey has been undertaken to assess how the site is used by badgers with the main objective to locate any badger setts on or adjacent to the site. Badgers and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 as amended by the Hunting Act 2004.

### 2 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 A walkover of the site was undertaken on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024. The survey involved two ecologists searching the site for signs of badger and included a search of the development site and surrounding habitats (where feasible) for any evidence including setts, foraging signs (snuffle holes), runs and latrines. Any field signs of badger seen during other surveys undertaken onsite were also noted.

- 2.2 It is important to classify each sett and determine its use by the social group. This involves counting the number of entrances per sett and assessing sett use based on the following criteria:

- Well-used: being clear of any debris or vegetation, obviously in regular use and may or may not have been excavated recently;
- Partially-used: not in regular use and have debris such as leaves and twigs in the entrance or have moss and/or other plants growing in or around the entrance. Partially-used holes could be in regular use after a minimal amount of clearance; and
- Disused: not been in use for some time, are partially or completely blocked and could not be used without considerable amount of clearance. If the hole has been disused for some time, all that may be visible is a depression in the ground where the hole used to be, and the remains of the spoil heap, which may be covered in moss or plants.

- 2.3 Where setts were found, activity levels were scored using the following criteria:

- number of well-used holes (with one or more of the features: well-worn entrance; freshly excavated soil; bedding material);
- number of partially used holes (leaves or twigs in entrance and/or mosses and other plants growing in or around entrance);
- number of disused holes (partially or completely blocked, with considerable amount of excavation required for reoccupation).

#### 2.2 Camera Trap Surveys

- 2.1 To aid in the classification of the potential sett, camera trap surveys was undertaken with trail cameras deployed outside the potential sett entrances on the 25<sup>th</sup> June and

collected on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2024. Data was analysed for any evidence of badger to aid assessment and classification of the sett. The date, times and type of behaviour were noted.

2.2 As a guide to classifying each sett the following criteria is followed:

- main setts usually have several well used holes with radiating tracks, latrines and other signs of activity. The actual number of holes can vary greatly, depending on social group size and soil conditions. Several holes with large spoil heaps and obvious paths emanating from and between sett entrances.
- Annex – a secondary sett, close to the main sett. Will normally be connected to the sett with very obvious tracks. Annexes may not be occupied constantly, even when the main sett is very active. Normally less than 150m from main sett, comprising several holes.
- Subsidiary – occurring at a greater distance from the main sett, and not as clearly linked to it as an annex. These setts will clearly fall within the territory of a social group and may be seasonally used by badgers; and
- Outlier – less frequently used, these setts may be colonised by other species when not in use by badgers. Outliers may represent a temporary sett, or a habitation for migrating individuals, or those excluded from a social group.

### 3<sub>1</sub> RESULTS

3.1 The badger walkover survey found potential signs of badger on site in the form of three mammal holes in the south of the site near to an existing entrance (see figure 1).



Figure 1 Mammal holes along southernmost southwest boundary

- 3.2 A mammal track led from the holes along the fence line and to the offsite woodland. The northern hole was quite vertical in its underground trajectory; the middle hole led directly under the wooden fence line offsite and the third hole was partially filled with leaf litter. No field signs of badger were found near to this hole. Camera trap surveys were carried out to monitor use of these holes.



Photo 1 Mammal trail leading to hole 1



Photo 2 Hole 1 in proximity to the fence



Photo 3 Hole 2, under fence



Photo 4 Hole 3 in proximity to the fence

- 3.3 The camera trap surveys recorded a single badger (a cub) passing the area, however there was no evidence of the badger entering or exiting any of the holes. Other videos recorded fox entering/exiting on of the holes with suitable time elapsing in-between to confirm the hole is used by fox for resting.
- 3.4 One sighting of badger was recorded during a bat transect survey onsite. A badger cub was seen on 1<sup>st</sup> June towards the south of the site by the fence line. The badger commuted away through the entrance gate at the south of the site.



Photo 5 Fox entering hole 1



Photo 6 badger commuting and investigating camera

## 4 SUMMARY

- 4.1 There is evidence that badger use the site for commuting. This has been confirmed through live sightings and recordings of badger.
- 4.2 One mammal hole on site is confirmed to be used by fox. Mammal holes 1 to 3 are currently assessed to be inactive for badger.
- 4.3 An updated badger survey will need to be carried out a minimum of 60 days prior to any works being carried out to re-assess the current status of the mammal holes. Should any mammal holes be confirmed to be in use by badger, a badger mitigation

strategy will be prepared and agreed in writing with the local planning authority. The requirement for this can be secured by planning condition.