

Energy from Waste Facility (EFW) including Infrastructure for CHP, IBA Plant with Outside Storage Area, Visitor & Office Accommodation and APC Disposal Facility within the Sutton Courtenay Resource Recovery Park.

Sutton Courtenay Waste Management Site,
Oxfordshire

Waste Recycling Group Limited

Badger Survey

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Figure 1: Locations of Badger Evidence

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2008, Waste Recycling Group Ltd commissioned RPS to undertake a badger survey at the proposed Sutton Courtenay Resource Recovery Park (NGR: SU 516 930). The results of this survey will be used to inform the Environmental Statement for a Scheme to develop an energy from waste plant and associated hazardous landfill area and a visitor's centre.
- 1.2 Habitats present within the site boundary pre-dominantly include semi-improved grassland, small pockets of semi-mature trees and scrub, newly planted hedgerows, two lagoons and two drainage ditches.
- 1.3 The site covers an area of 50.29 ha.

Scope

- 1.4 A desk study was undertaken to identify existing badger records within 2 km of the site boundary.
- 1.5 The survey involved a detailed inspection of the site and the immediate surrounding area (up to a distance of 50 m from the redline boundary) for evidence of badger activity. In particular, badger setts were searched for. The locations of badger evidence are provided Appendix 1 of this report.

2. Legislation

2.1 The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 provides legal protection for the Eurasian badger (*Meles meles*) in England, Wales and Scotland. The Act makes the following actions an offence:

- to kill, injure or take a badger, or attempt to do so; and
- to interfere with a badger sett by damaging a sett or any part of one, destroy a sett, obstruct access to any entrance of a sett, or disturb a badger when it is occupying a sett.

3. Methodology

Desk Study

3.1.1 In January 2008, an extensive desk study was undertaken as part of the Phase I habitat survey that originally assessed the site. The following organisations were contacted for existing records of badger within 2 km of the site boundary:

- Oxfordshire Badger Group;
- Oxfordshire County Council;
- South Oxfordshire District Council;
- Thames Valley Environmental Record Centre;
- Natural England (Thames and Chilterns Team); and,
- Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust.

Field Survey

3.1.2 The badger survey was carried out between February and March 2008. The survey area included all land within the redline boundary and up to 50 m outside of the boundary. All survey days were dry, although it had rained in the days prior to survey.

3.1.3 The survey methodology followed that developed by Harries *et al.* (1989) and was undertaken through the winter months as there is less vegetation to obscure the direct view and access to sett entrances and signs of ground activity.

3.1.4 The survey area was thoroughly searched for evidence of badger activity by looking for the following signs:

- badger setts;
- badger latrines or dung pits;
- badger snuffle holes and evidence of foraging;
- badger paths; and
- badger prints in fresh spoil heaps or areas of soft mud.

3.1.5 Any setts located during the survey were classified according Harris *et al.* (1989). In order to classify the setts using this method, the following information was recorded:

- the number of well used entrances;
- the number of partially used entrances; and
- the number of disused entrances.

3.1.6 This allows the setts to be classified into the following categories:

- main setts - a breeding sett (usually 5-20 entrances);
- annexe setts - setts within 150 m of the main sett connected by obvious paths;
- subsidiary setts - small setts (with 1-3 holes) within 50 m of the main sett; and
- outlying setts - small setts (1-2 entrances), often up to 500 m from the main sett. (This sett would not be used for breeding).

- 3.1.7 This classification allows a measure of importance to be assigned to setts (should they be present). For example, a disused outlying sett will not be considered as important as a main breeding sett if surface or subterranean activity were to disturb them.

4. Results

Desk Study

- 4.1 The Oxfordshire Badger Group provided two badger records within 2 km of the site: a badger sett, 0.24 m from the northern site boundary) and a road traffic accident on the A4130, 1.31 km from the southern site boundary.
- 4.2 These records highlight that badger are present within the local area. In particular, badger's present at the sett to the north of the Site boundary may be using the site for foraging activities. However, it is likely that Appleford Road may act as a barrier and limit the movement of badger's between the sett and the proposed development site.
- 4.3 No other existing badger records were obtained.

Field Study

- 4.4 No badger setts were found within the site boundary or immediate area.
- 4.5 Badger footprints were found in four different locations within the site boundary and are described below. A set of snuffle pits was also noted. Figure 1 illustrates the locations of this badger evidence.
- 4.6 One footprint was noted in the north of the site on the earth embankment that runs between two large lagoons (Waterbodies 5 and 8).
- 4.7 The set of snuffle pits was found approximately 30 m to the east of the above-mentioned footprint, suggesting movement along the embankment between two separate areas: woodland and grassland to the west and arable land to the east.
- 4.8 Two footprints were noted in soft mud near to the ditch running along Hobbyhorse Lane in the middle of the site (Figure 1 and Photograph 1).

Photograph 1: Footprints close to Hobbyhorse Lane.



- 4.9 A 2 m length trail of footprints was found in the landfill area in the southeast corner of the site (Photograph 2). The trail was on a large spoil heap between two large ponds but it did not give a clear indication of

where the badger had come from and/ or gone to. An area of rubbish that has not been fully capped stands nearby, it is thought that the footprints may indicate that badgers visit this to forage.

Photograph 2: Footprints close landfill area.



- 4.10 A couple of footprints were found in soft mud near a gateway at the south end of the site. They were at different angles indicating the badger had circled in the area, probably snuffling around the gateway and at the end of the adjoining hedgerow.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 No badgers were observed during the survey and no setts were found within the study area. Evidence of badger, including snuffle holes and footprints was found at four separate locations. This evidence was mainly concentrated to the south of the study area where an active landfill exists. It is likely that the refuse may be attracted scavenging badgers from further a field.
- 5.2 The development will not affect any badger setts and as such a Natural England licence to undertake the proposed works will not be required. However, the utilisation of the site by badgers may change prior to the commencement of construction. Should a badger sett be found anywhere within the study area, a suitably qualified ecologist should be immediately contacted for professional advice on how to proceed.
- 5.3 The proposed development will not fragment badger foraging territories and it is probable that badger will continue to use the site in low numbers since they are already acclimated to a relatively high level of human disturbance.
- 5.4 No mitigation is recommended relating specifically to badgers. However, badgers are likely to benefit indirectly from the proposed planted scheme to the north of the site. The planting scheme will include native, and where possible locally sourced shrubs and trees. In the long term these will provide badgers with new areas to forage in and improved interconnectivity between foraging habitats.

6. References and Bibliography

Harris, S., Cresswell, P. and Jefferies, D.J. 1989 *Surveying Badgers*. London. The Mammal Society.

The Forestry Authority (1995) *Forest Operations and Badger Setts: Forestry Practice Guide 9*. Forestry Practice Division.