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Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.

LAND OFF THE A628, PENISTONE.

OS REF: SE 2428 0371.

BADGER SURVEY.

Ref No: 181149.

Date: 13th November 2018.

Cliff Edge, Cliff Road, Darfield, Barnsley, S73 9HR.
Tel. 01226 753271. Fax. 01226 270993.
info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk www.whitcher-wildlife.co.uk
Company No. 4401613.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. A planning application has been submitted for the construction of a barn on land off the A628, Penistone.

1.2. The Local Planning Authority has requested a badger survey of the site to assess whether there is a badger sett or badger activity on the site, in support of that planning application.

1.3. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd carried out the badger survey on the 12th November 2018. This report outlines the findings of the survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Badgers and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Appendix I of this report provides details of that protection and some basic information about badgers and their behaviour to assist the reader of this report to understand the contents.

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3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. The Surveyed Area.

3.1.1. The approximate area surveyed is shown outlined in red below.

3.1.2. The site comprises two fields that are surrounded by the River Don, the A628 Trunk Road with a caravan parking area to the east and Penistone Leisure Centre to the west.

3.1.3. The plot of land comprises two fields of improved grassland with a hedgerow between that has been heavily cut back. There are trees around the river boundary to the north and occasional scrub within the eastern of the two fields, all as shown on the photograph below.

2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.

2.1. The survey area and immediate surrounding area was thoroughly searched for evidence of badger (*Meles meles*) activity by looking for the following signs in line with Harris S, Cresswell P and Jefferies D (1989). *Surveying Badgers*. Mammal Society: -

* Badger setts.
* Badger latrines or dung pits.
* Badger snuffle holes and evidence of foraging.
* Badger paths.
* Badger prints in areas of soft mud.
* Badger hairs caught on fencing.

2.2. The survey was undertaken by Derek Whitcher who has over twenty years' experience of surveying for wildlife and has run his own wildlife consultancy since 1998. He has extensive experience of a wide variety of survey techniques for a variety of species of protected wildlife supplemented by attendance on a wide range of training courses through CIEEM, FSC and BCT. As a member of CIEEM he is committed to continuous professional development, a continual process of learning and career development, a condition of CIEEM membership. He holds current Natural England survey licences for barn owl, bat, great crested newt and white clawed crayfish.

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3.1.4. The River Don that curves around the northern perimeter of the field will be a barrier to regular movement by badgers as will the main road along the southern site boundary. The photograph below looks west along the river at the northern site boundary.

3.1.5. Considerable works appear to have been undertaken on the land including the cutting back of the main hedgerow between the two fields. There has also been land drainage installed with outfalls visible into the River Don and improvements to an access track from the road access. There are also large bags of logs stored on pallets within the field.

3.2. Data Search Results.

3.2.1. South Yorkshire Badger Group has been contacted and a data search for records of badger setts in the area around the site requested. The following is their response.

"Although there are active badger setts on Thurlstone Tip and off the Trans-Pennine Trail above Penistone Cemetery, this field has never been part of their territory even during the many years that this field was allowed to develop into a natural wildlife reserve before it was bought by Mr. Lee Hinchliffe."

3.2.2. Mrs Ward also provided additional comments over and above the data search request that are outside the remit of this report but are nevertheless provided in Appendix II of this report.

3.2. Survey Results.

3.2.1. No badger setts or other badger field signs were identified anywhere within the site and the site is deemed unsuitable for badgers.

3.2.2. No other specific ecological issues were identified during the survey.

3.2.2.1. The River Don is unsuitable habitat for water voles and no burrows or field signs were identified. Otters may well use the watercourse although no field signs were found and no evidence of otters holts, couches or slides found.

3.2.2.2. There are mature trees along the boundary between the site and the River Don that provide potential for roosting bats and the River Don represents a high value bat foraging habitat.

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4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. No badger setts or badger field signs were identified anywhere on the site. While the field would be classified as potential foraging habitat for badgers, confined between the river and the main road makes it extremely unlikely badgers will forage on the field.

4.2. Badgers will cross a watercourse but will generally not cross on a regular basis. Badgers will cross a main road, but it is unlikely they will access the field in this case.

4.3. The proposed erection of an agricultural building will occupy only a small fraction of the land available on the site.

4.4. The proposed development will therefore have no impact on badgers.

4.5. No other ecological issues were identified as long as the trees along the river are retained and as long as there is no light interference with the foraging habitat along the River Don that would disturb foraging bats or passing otters.

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5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. The proposed development will have no impact on badgers and therefore there are no specific recommendations with respect to badgers.

5.2. It is recommended that all trees along the River Don are retained. If any are to be removed, it is recommended that further bat surveys are undertaken.

5.3. It is recommended that no lighting is installed that will impact on the river corridor to interfere with either foraging bats or passing otters.

5.4. It is recommended that biodiversity enhancements are provided on the site. These should include the erection of a kestrel nest box on the end of the new agricultural building.

5.5. It is recommended that two house martin nest pots be installed on the outside of the new building and two swallow nest pots inside.

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Prepared by:	
Derek Whitcher. BSc, MCIEEM, MCMI	Date: 13th November 2018.

Checked by:	
Sue Whitcher.	Date: 13th November 2018.

6. REFERENCES.

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Appendix I. BADGER INFORMATION.

Ecology

Badgers are territorial animals who live in social groups called 'clans'. The territory of these clans can vary in size from 0.2km^2 to 1.5 km^2 with anywhere between two and twenty Badgers present. In areas where two clans meet territorial boundaries become well-defined, marked by a series of dung pits called latrines. In areas with relatively low Badger populations there will be less competition for territory and the number of territorial markings will be low or even non-existent.

Badgers use paths around their territory repeatedly, following a scent trail from previous use; thus, Badger paths become well worn. These paths are important to the Badgers and obstruction to these paths will interfere with the Badger's movement around their territory.

Badger setts are any structure or place which displays signs of current or seasonal use by a Badger. Within a Badger clan territory there can be several Badger setts which are categorised in the following ways:

- ***Main Sett.*** *There will normally be one main sett in a territory. This will generally be the largest sett in the territory, typically with five or more entrances, will be permanently occupied throughout the year and used as the breeding sett.*
- ***Outlying Sett.*** *These are the smallest setts with generally only one or two entrances. They are intermittently occupied and there can be any number in a territory.*
- ***Annex Sett.*** *A sett of intermediate size, located close to the main sett and connected by well-defined paths. These are occupied for prolonged periods and may be used as a second breeding sett if there are two breeding sows in the clan.*
- ***Subsidiary Sett.*** *A sett of intermediate size, similar to an annex sett but located at some distance from the main sett and not connected to the main sett by defined paths.*

Badgers can mate at any time of year but delayed implantation controls the time of birth. Most cubs are born between January and March, but they can be born at any time between December and June. An average of two to three Badger cubs are born to each sow and will initially be totally dependent on their mother. Cubs do not appear above ground until during April or May when they are 8 – 10 weeks old and are not fully weaned until at least June of each year.

Badgers are omnivorous, but their preferred food source is worms and insects. Worms are most abundant in well-grazed pastureland while mixed woodland is a good source of insects and grubs. Badgers have a soft and supple nose with which they snuffle into the ground to find insects. When they do this, they leave distinct round holes known as snuffle holes or grubbings. Badgers easily find worms on the surface of well-grazed pastureland and often leave no visible indications of this foraging.

Surveys

Walkover surveys can be conducted to identify the presence of Badgers within an area. This will identify the presence of any setts, dung pits, paths or foraging activity.

Bait marking techniques can be used to survey Badger territories. This involves feeding Badgers at each sett pellets of different colours over a period of at least two weeks. The colour of pellet found in dung pits and territorial latrines shows what areas each clan of Badgers is occupying.

Legislation

Badgers are protected under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and the Protection of Badgers Act (1992).

This makes it an offence to take, kill or injure a Badger, cruelly ill-treat a badger, use Badger tongs or firearms in the killing or taking (or attempt) of a Badger. It is also an offence to damage, destroy, obstruct access to, or any entrance of, a Badger sett, to cause a dog to enter a Badger sett or disturb a Badger while it is occupying a sett.