

Badger Sett relocation Westhill, Kettering, NN15 7RH

Kier Living Eastern

BIG Biodiversity Challenge : Medium Scale Permanent Award

Project overview

Kier Living Eastern's construction of a new artificial badger sett at our Westhill development in Kettering aimed to safeguard the species during the construction works. It was also to ensure the badgers' use of the site's new country park and neighboring farmland.

The style and design of our £6,030 sett could be replicated on almost any development site. The materials used in its construction are all standard products which can be sourced from any builders' merchants.

What were the biodiversity conditions on site, prior to the enhancement?

We created the artificial sett on a cultivated piece of farmland on the edge of what will be the country park at Westhill. The land was of limited ecological value and ground water was minimal.

Were there any specific conditions that led to you carrying out this work?

The artificial badger sett was constructed prior to the start of development works at Northampton Road. Doing so was a contractual obligation between Kier Living Eastern and the landowner BQ Farms, while it was also a prerequisite for obtaining a Natural England mitigation license.



Artificial tunnels and chambers were created after liaising with badger experts.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Over just two days, we created the artificial sett on a cultivated piece of farmland which was of limited ecological value and where ground water was **minimal**. The **basic construction replicated badgers' natural setts**, using timber stakes and plywood boards for nesting chambers and plastic tubing for tunnels.

These structures were then covered over with soil to create a safe, insulated home for resident badgers. We also included blind tunnels to enable badgers to make their own extensions to the sett. The new sett was covered with over a metre of soil which was excavated from a new balancing pond. This formed the main sustainable drainage strategy of the development and meant that no additional material was brought onto site. This considerably reduced our costs.

Meanwhile, thicket planting immediately around the sett was undertaken to provide cover for badgers emerging, and to provide a seasonal food source with fruiting species. This also benefits birds, insects and other mammals.

Wider landscaping beyond the badger sett is currently being designed. This will provide ongoing foraging habitat for badgers, including fruiting trees and shrubs, as well as grassland which provides earthworms, the favourite food of the badger.



During the creation of the artificial badger sett at Westhill the plywood boards, which would form the nesting chamber, were laid out on the ground.

How would you best describe the project?

Mitigation

Further information

Creating the new artificial sett has ensured that we have successfully retained the badgers within the curtilage of the development site. In turn, this means the animals continue to be familiar with their surroundings. In years to come, this project can be used as an example of good environmental practice to other developers.

The start of the works followed extensive consultation with Northampton Badger Group, Natural England, The Wildlife Trust and Kettering Borough Council. We also followed guidance from CIRIA, an organisation which works to help improve the construction industry.

In the long term, the sett's external fence and perimeter landscaping will be overseen by Westhill's management company. The internal structure was designed to allow badgers to extend the sett by digging, so in effect the animals will manage and maintain it themselves. We are proud that our efforts to retain the badger population on site has meant that we have gone beyond normal business practice.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The existing badgers living on site needed to be cared for and relocated before building work could begin. This was an exiting and different project for the site team and fulfilling that badgers are now living in the artificial sett.



This is how the new badger sett at Westhill looks now. It forms part of the country park being created at the site and will provide a long-term home for the Westhill badger colony