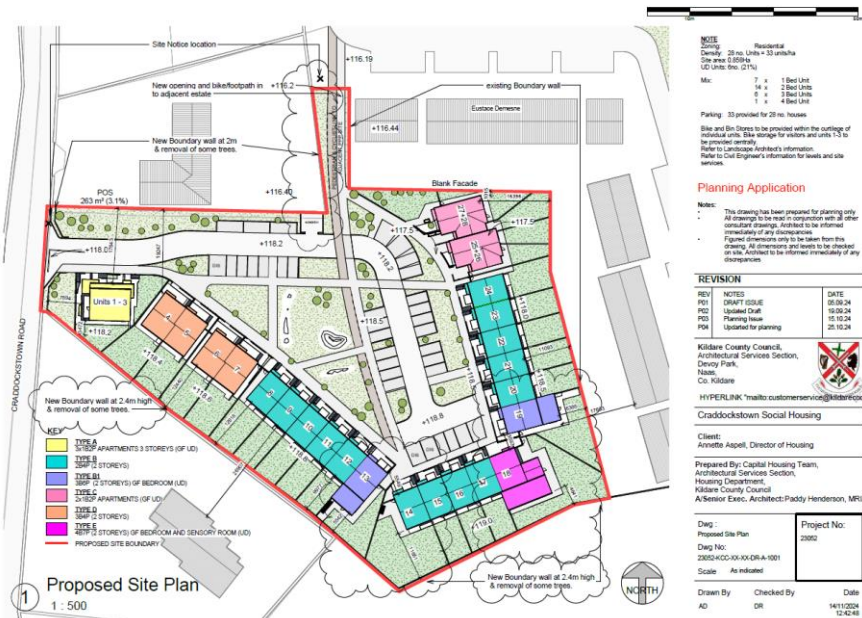


An evaluation of lands at Craddockstown, Naas for the presence of badgers to accompany a Section 8 Planning Application to facilitate Social Housing Construction



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Introduction

Most of Ireland's mammals enjoy protection under the Wildlife Act (1976) and the more recent updating of this legislation (Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000, S.I. No. 94 of 1997, S.I. No. 378 of 2005, European Communities (Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations, 2005). In conjunction with the enactment of the Habitats Directive into Irish legislation, all native mustelid species are protected. A speedy and productive means of determining the mammal fauna within a site is to walk the entire site concerned, paying particular attention to all hedge, tree cover or woodland, watercourses (where present), fence lines, paths etc. to locate mammal signs. More information can be gathered from the use of motion-activated cameras to determine the usage of a track or burrow, where required. This can allow the identification species, an estimate of numbers and social structure and the seasonality of use.

Determining the fauna of the surrounding area may involve a much greater level of assessment if the aim of the survey is to catalogue all mammals in all townlands but this is often too detailed for the aim of creating mitigation for a localised development. The survey undertaken in the current site aims to allow a targeting of mitigation measures to the appropriate or most efficient sites to prevent accidental death or injury to badgers, if badgers are noted to be resident within the site.

Construction and subsequent occupancy of housing create a number of significant short-term and long-term risks for the resident badger fauna, in addition to impacts upon other vertebrates and invertebrates.

The construction of the housing will involve the removal of key features of the surrounding environment, and this could affect the habitats of badgers if trees and hedges are removed and serve as feeding sites or more significantly resting and breeding sites for badgers. The most damaging operation is the destruction of badger dwellings or setts, during the vegetation clearance and early earthworks.

In relation to badgers, the clearance of hedgerow poses the risk of the removal of the badgers' home burrow and the associated burrows (all of which are known as setts) that are used seasonally or occasionally throughout the year. In winter, this is especially risky if the sett is not identified before hedgerow removal operations, as this is the time when badger cubs are born. In the current proposal, badger sett(s) may be removed as part of the clearance of the site to provide for housing.

In the classification used in this report, setts are considered to fall into four categories, which are best elaborated by long-term studies but can be interpreted to a relatively good accuracy in terms of status based on basic observations.

The basic sett type within which badgers are typically present throughout the year is the main sett. This is almost always the sett within which cubs are born. Bedding outside the entrance to these setts often identifies their use as such and paw prints and dung pits or latrines nearby also assist in their categorisation.

There are typically a number of entrances to a main sett, some of which may be disused. Paths leading from the main sett are often quite easy to trace for some distance.

Annexe setts are similar in construction to main setts and are typically accessed by a number of entrances. They are often discernibly connected to a main sett by well-worn paths, which is within 150 metres of the annexe sett. Badgers do not necessarily use this type of sett throughout the year, and they may be inactive at the time of any short-term study. Subsidiary setts are again not always active throughout the year. There may be a number of entrances to the sett, and they are not clearly associated with any other sett.

The last type of sett, the outlier sett, may only have one entrance and has no clear path leading to it. This type of sett is only sporadically used and may even be in areas subject to flooding or seasonally unsuitable to badger use. These setts may be overlooked if they have remained inactive for several weeks and this may be true of all setts if surveying is undertaken at an inappropriate time period.

Setts may be under threat from construction if they lie directly in the line of the housing, roads, or associated lands. Setts outside of this land take area may also be threatened with damage from the normal activities of the heavy plant equipment required to build the housing. For example, if a badger sett entrance were located outside of the land take but led to a system of tunnels that lay under the working area of the heavy plant, there is a clear risk that the tunnels would be crushed under the repeated movement of equipment.

These tunnels may occasionally go as deep as three metres underground but are also liable to surface to shallower depth to avoid rocky substrate or water.

Thus, badger setts may be affected by the immediate impact upon them from the excavation and removal of the soil within which they are established or by the indirect destruction of tunnels that lie under the construction corridor of roads etc.

Statement of Authority

Fieldwork for the current report on badger distribution within the site was carried out by Brian Keeley of Wildlife Surveys Ireland on November 8th, 2024. Brian Keeley has been undertaking badger surveys for planning applications, Biodiversity surveys, badger distributions studies on behalf of county councils, NRA / TII, Irish Rail, OPW, NPWS and private companies and individuals for over 20 years. He has over 30 years fieldwork experience and has provided expert witness accounts for state prosecutions in addition to Oral Hearings for major projects including roads and rail.

Methodology

The site was examined for evidence of badgers including badger setts, latrines, dung pits, snuffle holes, tracks, hairs, paw prints or scratch marks. This allowed a determination of the importance, if any, of the site to badgers. The entire site was walked, noting any excavation (burrows, scraping) to each side of hedgerow and treelines or walls wherever possible. Each tree base, area of scrub and the field area were examined in sequence working in an approximately clockwise direction from the entrance. As noted above, typical signs sought in this assessment were badger setts, badger paw prints and tracks, scratch marks on walls or concrete, badger latrines and dung pits, badger snuffle holes and digging and badger hairs.

Results

Badger signs within the site

Badger setts within the site *None*

There are no badger setts within the site. There are a number of small burrows within the site, and these are all almost certainly rabbit burrows. The entrances are too undeveloped and narrow for badgers. There are no spoil heaps of any size. There are no piles of old bedding, paw prints, latrines or any other features typical of badger setts. Rabbit droppings were noted in 2 places. The tracks noted within the site are primarily attributable to rabbits but there is some evidence of fox and dog movement through the site (there were no paw prints and therefore there is no evidence of any mammal other than rabbit at present but indications of fox and dog from the tracks).



Fresh rabbit droppings within the site

Badger commuting and foraging signs

There is no evidence of badger activity within the site. The main mammal evidence is of rabbits and there are no paw prints or snuffle holes and no dung pits or latrines.

Badger evidence within the surrounding area

There are no badger signs in the connecting surrounding lands, and this included an absence of badger paw prints and tracks and snuffle holes but there was care taken to ensure that surveying was undertaken only within the site, and it is very possible that badgers are present within the larger surrounding fields. Data from the NBDC indicates badger records from within a radius of several kilometres but this record is from 2004, and this may now be out of date.



Species list for N902179

Species name	Record count	Date of last record	Title of dataset	Designation
European Rabbit (<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>)	1	09/06/2012	Atlas of Mammals in Ireland 2010-2015	Invasive Species:



Site (yellow) relative to 2004 badger record (pink square)
from NBDC database



Impacts of Construction

Loss of feeding and commuting

There were no signs of badgers in November 2024 but given the adjoining agricultural lands, it is probable that badgers travel through the neighbouring lands and may occasionally enter the site. The impact is considered to be slight to negligible negative impact of permanent nature.

Mitigation of construction impacts - None required

Impacts of Construction After Mitigation

There will be no impacts upon badgers following development of the site.

Proposed Development for the Site

The development description is as follows:

The construction of 28 No. dwellings consisting of:

Type A: 3No. 1-bed, 2No. person, 3-storey apartments (GF UD)

Type B: 14No. 2-bed, 4No. person, 2-storey houses

Type B1: 2No. 3-bed, 6No. person, 2-storey houses (GF bedroom (UD))

Type C: 4No. 1-bed, 2No. person apartments (GF UD)

Type D: 4No. 3-bed, 6No. person, 2-storey houses

Type E: 1No. 4-bed, 7No. person, 2-storey house (GF bedroom and sensory room (UD))

Landscaping works including:

Open space kick about areas

Natural play features

Pedestrian and cycle lane connections to the adjacent Eustace Demesne housing estate.

Associated site and infrastructural works including provision of:

1No. ESB substation and switch room

Car (33No.) and bicycle parking

Public lighting

Bin storage

Temporary construction signage

Estate signage

Varied boundary treatment comprising walls and fencing

All associated site development works including the removal of some existing vegetation from the site in advance of construction works.



Approximate site footprint at Craddockstown, Naas and proposed housing.
 See Kildare County Council plans for full details.



Current condition of the site – improved pasture and scrub with a surrounding hedgerow and treeline backing on to a housing estate and agricultural lands and individual houses



Agricultural land, road and housing estate surrounding the site



Mammal signs within the site including rabbit burrows and unidentified mammal tracks, The tracks are most probably predominantly rabbit In origin.