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Badger Mitigation Report

CORNAMADDY PHASE 4



For: Enviroguide
Date: October 2023

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Badger prints at active sett at Cornamaddy

Statement of Authority

This report and contributory fieldwork was carried out by Billy Flynn BSc, MSc, MCIEEM, MIEnvSci, CEnv. Billy has over 25 years of experience in mammal surveys and mammal mitigation design.

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Badger trail leading to watercourse on north-western boundary of site



Badger trail in grassland within Phase 4 works area

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the details of findings of a mammal survey carried out by Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants on behalf of Enviroguide Ltd at a site at Cornamaddy, Atolone, Co. Westmeath. In particular it details mitigation measures that will be required in order to ensure the conservation and protection of the population of Badgers (*Meles meles*) occurring within the area under survey.

This area under survey is proposed for development for housing. The recommendations of this report refer to the development of the fourth phase of this housing development. This is being carried out by Marina Quarter Ltd. The entire extent of the lands proposed for development is shown within the red line boundary of the drawing below in Fig 1 while the Phase 4 development is shown in Fig. 2.

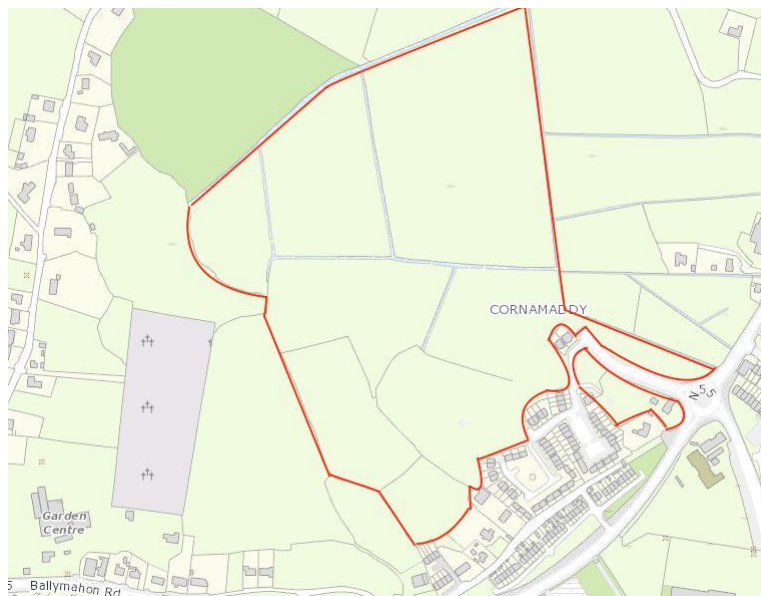


Fig. 1. Entire area proposed for development at Cornamaddy.



Fig. 2. Extent of proposed works in Phase 4 shown in red outline. (see also Appendix 1)

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2. METHODOLOGY

Fieldwork was carried out with regard to the following guidance:

Harris, S., Cresswell, P. & Jefferies D. (1989). *Surveying Badgers*. Occasional Publication No. 9. The Mammal Society, London.

National Roads Authority (2010). *Ecological Surveying Techniques for Protected Flora and Fauna during the Planning of National Road Schemes* NRA (now TII), Dublin.

Mitigation measures were drawn up with regard to the following guidance:

Natural England (2015). *Guidance: Badgers: surveys and mitigation for development projects. Standing advice for local planning authorities who need to assess the impacts of development on Badgers.*

National Roads Authority (2005). *Guidelines For The Treatment of Badgers Prior To The Construction Of National Road Schemes*. NRA (now TII), Dublin.

The entire site was surveyed for mammal activity and habitation on 6 November 22. Survey methodology followed guidelines for surveys of this species given by the National Roads Authority (NRA, 2010, 2005). A number of Badger setts were recorded. The site was subsequently revisited on 5 April 2023 in order to confirm activity levels at the setts recorded here.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Badger Activity

Numerous signs of Badger activity were found. These included several well-established mammal trails that were found throughout the site. Evidence of Badger feeding was found in numerous areas. These are known as ‘snuffles’ or ‘scrapes’ in the vegetation (usually in grassland) where Badgers seek invertebrate prey at shallow depths beneath soil surface. Badger field signs found are shown in Fig. 3 (below).

3.2 Badger Setts

4 no. Badger setts were located. Of these, 2 no. were active, 1 no. inactive and the fourth recently active in November. This last was confirmed as being inactive in April 2023. The status of the other setts was unchanged on resurvey. Badger setts found are shown in Fig. 4 (below).



Fig. 3. Badger activity at Cornamaddy in November 2022.



Fig. 4. Badger sett locations at Cornamaddy.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Badger Activity

Evidence of Badger activity was found throughout much of the site. However, this tended to be concentrated toward the south of the site. Most of the evidence of Badger commuting and feeding was found in this portion of the site. There is some evidence of Badgers accessing lands to the north and the west of the site under survey. It may be seen that by far the least activity was noted within the area proposed for development as Phase 4. While Badgers no doubt forage here, no feeding signs were recorded within this area.

4.2 Badger Setts

No Badger setts occur within the area proposed for development at Phase 4. Little suitable habitat (e.g. substantial hedgerows or earth banks) for the establishment of setts occurs within this area so sett development here would be unlikely in the medium to long-term.

4.3 Strategy for Management of Badgers on this Site

A Badger Management Strategy has previously been submitted for a prior planning application (ref: 22/577) and the implementation of Badger mitigation measures has been guided by this to date. Transport Infrastructure Ireland's (TII, previously the NRA) Guidelines for the treatment of Badgers prior to the construction of national road schemes, was consulted in terms of the management of potential Badger setts that lie to the south of the Proposed Development. Planning permission was previously granted for a residential development directly south of active setts no. 2 and no.3 and construction works have commenced on this development. However, it should be noted that specified exclusion zones (of 50m) have been demarcated and in place to preclude any damaging activity to these setts.

At time of writing, a planning application (ref: 22/577) is currently with Westmeath County Council for development adjacent to the Badger setts on Site. Part of this application includes for the closure of two active Badger setts on Site and the creation of an artificial Badger sett and retention of one (natural) Badger sett. The management of the active Badger setts is beyond the scope of this Proposed Development and the active Badger setts and proposed artificial sett will not be impacted by the Proposed Development in Phase 4.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed development of Phase 4 will not impact directly upon any Badger setts. Nor will this development significantly impede Badger migration into or across this part of the site. It will however, result in an in-combination loss of migratory routes across the site as a whole, given the previous phases of development. Phase 4 will also remove some Badger foraging area from use by the Badger group here. In order to mitigate these impacts, the following mitigation measures are recommended:

- A 50m exclusion zone has been put in place around the existing active setts. This is to remain in place in order to preclude any damaging activities that may arise during or in preparation for construction.
- A 50m exclusion zone will be put in place around the agreed location of the artificial sett which is to be created to the south of the Phase 4 area.
- No blasting or pile-driving shall be undertaken within 150m of active setts within the Badger breeding season (December-June inclusive).
- No boundary vegetation is to be removed as part of Phase 4 works. Existing site boundaries are to be retained.
- Commuting corridors are to be retained between the extent of Phase 4 works and the existing site boundaries. These are not to be impeded by works, plant, machinery or the storage of materials, even on a temporary basis.
- Site fencing is to allow for the movement of Badgers around the site outside the area proposed for Phase 4 works.

Active construction sites present hazards to wildlife, including Badgers. The following restrictions must be placed on works areas within Phase 4:

- Any deep or extensive excavations or trenches left overnight must be either covered or secured in order to prevent mammal access to these.
- Excavations or trenches that cannot be covered must be provided with a means of escape for mammals. This may be simply provided using scaffolding planks left at a shallow angle to allow mammal egress.
- No uncured concrete is to be left exposed within the Phase 4 area overnight.
- No toxic, corrosive, hazardous or otherwise potentially harmful chemicals (including fuels and lubricants) are to be left exposed during the works period. Such substances are to be securely stored as per the Construction Environmental Management Plan or as per manufacturers' recommendations.

Site Lighting, Noise and Vibration can have the potential to cause significant disturbance impacts on local Badger populations. The following recommendations are made for works areas within Phase 4:

- Site lighting, including security lighting is not to illuminate any of the corridors which are to be maintained for Badger migration into and around the wider site.
- Only essential site lighting is to be used after dusk.
- Site works are to avoid noisy activities at hours close to dawn and dusk.
- Plant and machinery are only to be operated outside daylight hours when it is absolutely essential and cannot be avoided.
- Plant and machinery operators are to limit the run-time of vehicles/machinery and to shut these off when not in use.

General Measures to be Undertaken

- All contractors/operators on site should be made fully aware of the procedures pertaining to Badgers on this site.
- In order to achieve this, a Toolbox Talk is to be carried out by an ecologist prior to any works on the site.
- No site littering is to be tolerated. A daily walkover inspection of the site and the surrounding areas is to be undertaken by the site foreman or an appointed representative to ensure that no potentially harmful/hazardous items are discarded or improperly stored on or around the construction site.

6. CONCLUSION

With the correct implementation of the above mitigation measures, no significant likely negative impacts upon local Badger populations may reasonably be predicted.

Appendix 1. Site Drawings

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Fig. 1. Phase 4 Development Area (shown in red outline) & Applicant's Landholding (yellow outline)