

**Residential Development
Bloomfield Park, Bracklin Road, Edgeworthstown,
Co. Longford.
Bat Survey and Assessment of Associated Areas**

Report by

Gerard Tobin, BSc, MA., Ecological Consultant

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SUMMARY

Site:	Development Bloomfield Park, Bracklin Road, Edgeworthstown,
Structure;	Housing development
Grid reference:	GR 25430 72891
Bat species present:	Soprano Pipistrelles (<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>), Common Pipistrelles (<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>) Foraging and commuting occurs along the boundaries and one internal hedgerow
Roost location:	There is no evidence of bat roosts in area encompassed by the site. None of the hedgerow trees are suitable for roosting.
Bat access:	N/A
Proposed work:	Housing development plus associated site works.
Impact on bats:	No impact to either roosting foraging or commuting habitat anticipated with the proposed mitigation measures
Habitats Present:	3 Wet Grassland (GS4), Hedgerows (WL1), Drainage Ditches (FW4)
Bat survey by:	Gerard Tobin, BSc MA. (Member of Heritage Council and NPWS panel of “Bat Experts”) 0872233587 gjtobin@gmail.com

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Introduction

This is a bat survey for a proposal for a residential development which is to be constructed at Bracklin Road, Edgeworthstown, County Longford at a greenfield site, located on the northern outskirts of Edgeworthstown and bounded to the east by Bracklin Road and a line of existing housing. The Project is to consist of the construction of housing units which are to be connected to the existing public sewer network for the treatment of wastewater and disposal of surface water.

Site location and access

The proposed development is to be constructed at Bracklin Road, County Longford located on the northern outskirts of Edgeworthstown. Access is from the Bracklin Road.

Bat Survey

This report presents the results of a site visit by Gerard Tobin on 20th May 2021 during which the site and structures were inspected. The potential bat fauna on the site are described and the likely impacts of the proposed works on the bat fauna are discussed with recommendations for mitigation measures if necessary.

Survey methodology

Survey of bat fauna was carried out by means of a thorough search within the site. The nature and type of habitats present are also indicative of the species likely to be present.

A pre-dusk and post-dusk examination of the site was undertaken.

The presence or absence of cavities in trees, suitable for bats, was used as an indicator of likely bat presence. Where suitable cavities were found a further visual examination of the area was undertaken using infra-red imaging equipment and a Ciel Electronique CDB 301 HD/FD Bat detector and an Echo Meter Touch 2 (for Android) Bat detector with software app on Samsung Galaxy GT along with both a “V-Scope” flexible fibre borescope and a fibre optic video camera capable of looking into small cavities.

A vantage point within the site allowed visual confirmation of bat presence in the areas under examination.

A Magellan Explorist handheld GPS unit was used to mark the location of items of interest on-site. Heavy tree cover may compromise the accuracy of GPS locations.

Digital cameras (Canon 1000D and Canon IXUS 185) were used to document items of interest.

Survey constraints

The survey was carried out by means of a thorough examination of the site. There were no climatic and seasonal constraints in regard to bat survey as it was undertaken within the active bat season. Daytime temperatures reached 15° Celsius and dropped to 11° Celsius at dusk. There had been some rain and rain was intermittent throughout the survey.

Brief description of Bracklin Road from the perspective of bat habitat

The proposed development is situated in a semi-rural area on the outskirts of Edgeworthstown. There are many older buildings nearby, hedgerows and drainage ditches. These habitats can be favourable to many species of bat. There are hedgerows surrounding the site.

Results of bat survey

The area, potentially, offers opportunities for bat use, as there is available commuting and foraging routes.

Indication of significance of site for bats

There is evidence that bats are currently present in the area. Common Pipistrelles, Soprano Pipistrelles were seen and heard foraging in the area post dusk. Foraging and commuting habitat is present in the nearby hedgerows. No bats over fly the centre of the site.

None of the hedgerows provide trees suitable for bat roosts.

Legal status and conservation issues – bats

All Irish bat species are protected under the Wildlife Act (1976) and Wildlife Amendment Act (2000). Also, the EC Directive on The Conservation of Natural habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive 1992), seeks to protect rare species, including bats, and their habitats and requires that appropriate monitoring of populations be undertaken. Across Europe, they are further protected under the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention 1982), which, in relation to bats, exists to conserve all species and their habitats. The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention 1979, enacted 1983) was instigated to protect migrant species across all European boundaries. The Irish government has ratified both these conventions.

All bats are listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive and the lesser horseshoe bat is further listed under Annex II.

Potential impacts of proposed works on bat fauna

The proposed works should not adversely affect bats as long as suggested mitigation measures are followed.

Mitigation measures

As there are bats present in the environs there is a requirement for mitigation measures.

Application for a derogation licence

NB: Works on a known bat roost is a notifiable action under current legislation and a derogation licence has to be obtained from the National Parks and Wildlife Service before works can commence. There is a no licence required in this instance.

Measure 1: hedgerows

Any removal of hedgerows along boundaries or internally must be replaced by suitable tree and understorey plants to provide foraging and commuting habitat. Linear planting of trees within the proposed development will provide new commuting habitat. Landscaping of rear gardens within the development can replicate the current linear hedgerow foraging habitat. Native species suitable for urban planting will be used.

Measure 2: All lighting along the boundaries will follow the measures indicated below. Lighting has increased dramatically over the last number of years as a result of many new developments. This includes aesthetic lighting of bridges, monuments and buildings, flood lighting of sports grounds, street and road lighting and security lighting of urban and rural areas to name but a few. Lighting can impact on bats' roosting sites, commuting routes and foraging areas. Contrary to common belief, bats are not blind. While bats tend to rely on a type of sonar, known as echolocation, for orientation and hunting during the hours of darkness, vision is still an important sense for bats. When bats emerge from roosts early in the evening, they tend not to echolocate but rely on eyesight to fly from the roost to adjoining treelines or hedgerows. Various studies have shown that bats' eyesight works best in dim light conditions. Where there is too much luminance, bats' vision can be reduced resulting in disorientation. While light sensitivity varies between species, bats tend to have a higher tolerance for red visual light than white light. Short wave frequency (UV) light is most disturbing for bats. This is due to the fact that bats have a higher proportion of rods in their retina compared to cones. The rods allow greater absorption of light in dim conditions. Too much luminance at bat roosts may cause bats to desert a roost. Light falling on a roost exit point can delay bats from emerging and miss peak levels of insect activity at dusk. Any delays of emergence can reduce feeding periods. Lighting can also disturb bats' feeding behaviour. Many night flying insects are attracted to lights especially those lamps that emit UV light. A single source of light in a dark area can cause local insect populations to congregate in concentrations around the light source. While some Irish bat species such as Leisler's bats will opportunistically feed on such insect gatherings, the majority of Irish bat species are too sensitive to such light sources and suffer from insect populations being reduced in traditional feeding areas. In addition, artificial lighting can increase the chances of bats being preyed on. Lighting can be particularly harmful to bat populations along river corridors, woodland edges, along hedgerows and treelines and at lake edges.

Measure 3: Types of light Low Pressure Sodium (SOX) – this light (typically orange light) is emitted at a single wavelength with a very low amount of UV. Therefore very few insects are attracted to this light source and it has a minimal effect on bats. High Pressure Sodium (SON) – this light (typically pinkish-yellow light) is emitted over a slightly broader wavelength spectrum. It is a more intense light so attracts more

insects and has a greater impact on bats. Metal Halide & Mercury vapour– these are white light sources that emits light at wavelengths across the colour spectrum and emits high levels of UV. These light types can attract high levels of insects and because it is a close match to daylight has a greater impact on bats. Metal halide typically comes in three types: Quartz arc tube; Ceramic arc tube and Cosmo ceramic. Luminary (Light) accessories Shields – these can be mounted at the front or back of luminaire. Masking – by painting a section of the luminaire protectors, light will be blocked from penetrating through. Louvres – these can be either internal or external rows of slates angled to block light in a certain direction.

Avoid lighting along rivers, lakes and canals. Avoid lighting along important commuting routes. Avoid the use of mercury or metal halide lamps Minimise light spills using shields, masking & louvres Keep light columns as low as possible Restrict lights to ensure that there are dark areas Restrict lights to ensure that there are dark hours.

Measure 4. Sensor lighting to reduce energy wastage

Measure 5. Use of planting to reduce impacts of lighting

Measure 6. Use of demountable columns

Measure 7. Screening to reduce impacts of lighting

Measure 8. Assessment of lighting regime after installation

Measure 9. Greater use of the solar clock to control timing of lighting

Potential impact of work on bird fauna

No negative impacts will occur to bird species.

Predicted and Residual impact of the proposal

No foraging areas should be lost due to the proposed works if the recommended mitigation measures are implemented.

No loss of commuting or foraging habitat is anticipated.

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Appendices

Bat ecology – general

The bat is the only mammal that is capable of true flight. There are over 1,100 species worldwide, representing almost a quarter of all mammal species. There are 47 species in Europe - in Ireland, ten species of bat are currently known to exist, which are classified into two families, the Rhinolophidae (Horseshoe bats) and the Vespertilionidae (Common bats).

Prey

All the European bat species feed exclusively on insects. A Pipistrelle, weighing only 4 to 8 grammes, will eat up to 3000 insects every night, ensuring a build up of fat in the bat's body to allow it to survive the winter deep in hibernation.

Breeding and longevity

Irish bats can produce one young per year but, more usually, only one young is born every two years (Boyd & Stebbings, 1989). This slow rate of reproduction inhibits repopulation in areas of rapid decline. Although bats have been known to live for twenty or more years, this is rare as most die in their first and the average lifespan, in the wild, is four years.

Threats

All bat species are in decline as they face many threats to their highly developed and specialised lifestyles. Many bats succumb to poisons used as woodworm treatments within their roosting sites (Racey & Swift, 1986). Agricultural intensification, with the loss of hedgerows, treelines, woodlands and species-rich grasslands have impacted bat species also. Habitual roosting or hibernation sites in caves, mines, trees and disused buildings are also often lost to development. Summer roosts are prone to disturbance from vandals. Agricultural pesticides accumulate in their prey, reaching lethal doses (Jefferies, 1972). Chemical treatments in cattle production sterilise dung thus ensuring that no insects can breed within it to be fed upon by bats. Likewise, river pollution, from agricultural runoff, reduces the abundance of aquatic insects. Road building, with the resultant loss of foraging and roosting sites is a significant cause in the reduction of bat populations across Europe.

Extinction

As recently as 1992, the greater mouse-eared bat *Myotis myotis* became the first mammal to become extinct in Britain since the wolf in the 18th century.

Description of bat species known or expected from the area

Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

This species was only recently separated from its sibling, the soprano or brown pipistrelle *P. pygmaeus*, which is detailed below (Barratt *et al*, 1997). The common pipistrelle's echolocation calls peak at 45 kHz. The species forages along linear landscape features such as hedgerows and treelines as well as within woodland.

Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

The soprano pipistrelle's echolocation calls peak at 55 kHz, which distinguishes it readily from the common pipistrelle on detector. The pipistrelles are the smallest and most often seen of our bats, flying at head height and taking small prey such as midges and small moths. Summer roost sites are usually in buildings but tree holes and heavy ivy are also used. Roost numbers can exceed 1,500 animals in mid-summer.

Nathusius' pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*

Nathusius' pipistrelle is a recent addition to the Irish fauna and has mainly been recorded from the north-east of the island in Counties Antrim and Down (Richardson, 2000) and also in Fermanagh, Longford and Cavan. It has also recently been recorded in Counties Cork and Kerry (Kelleher, 2005). However, the known resident population is enhanced in the autumn months by an influx of animals from Scandinavian countries. The status of the species has not yet been determined.

Leisler's bat *Nyctalus leisleri*

This species is Ireland's largest bat, with a wingspan of up to 320mm; it is also the third most common bat, preferring to roost in buildings, although it is sometimes found in trees and bat boxes. It is the earliest bat to emerge in the evening, flying fast and high with occasional steep dives to ground level, feeding on moths, caddis-flies and beetles. The echolocation calls are sometimes audible to the human ear being around 15 kHz at their lowest. The audible chatter from their roost on hot summer days is sometimes an aid to location. This species is uncommon in Europe and as Ireland holds the largest national population the species is considered as Near Threatened here.

Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*

This species of bat is a 'gleaner', hunting amongst the foliage of trees and shrubs, and hovering briefly to pick a moth or spider off a leaf, which it then takes to a sheltered perch to consume. They often land on the ground to capture their prey. Using its nose to emit its echolocation, the long-eared bat 'whispers' its calls so that the insects, upon which it preys, cannot hear its approach (and hence, it needs oversize ears to hear the returning echoes). As this is a whispering species, it is extremely difficult to monitor in the field as it is seldom heard on a bat detector. Furthermore, keeping within the foliage, as it does, it is easily overlooked. It prefers to roost in old buildings.

Natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri*

This species has a slow to medium flight, usually over trees but sometimes over water. It usually follows hedges and treelines to its feeding sites, consuming flies, moths, caddis-flies and spiders. Known roosts are usually in old stone buildings but

they have been found in trees and bat boxes. The Natterer's bat is one of our least studied species and further work is required to establish its status in Ireland.

Whiskered bat *Myotis mystacinus*

This species, although widely distributed, has been rarely recorded in Ireland. It is often found in woodland, frequently near water. Flying high, near the canopy, it maintains a steady beat and sometimes glides as it hunts. It also gleans spiders from the foliage of trees. Whiskered bats prefer to roost in buildings, under slates, lead flashing or exposed beneath the ridge beam within attics. However, they also use cracks and holes in trees and sometimes bat boxes. The whiskered bat is one of our least studied species and further work is required to establish its status in Ireland.

Brandt's bat *Myotis brandtii*

This species is known from five specimens found in Counties Wicklow (Mullen, 2007), Cavan, and Clare in 2003, a specimen in Kerry in 2005 (Kelleher, 2006b) and another in Tipperary in 2006 (Kelleher, 2006a). No maternity roosts have yet been found. It is very similar to the whiskered bat and cannot be separated by the use of detectors. Its habits are similar to its sibling.

List of Irish bat species and adjudged status on site

Bats		Status on site
<i>Chiroptera</i> ¹		
Common Pipistrelle ²	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Present
Soprano Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	Present
Nathusius' Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>	Potential
Brown Long-eared	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	Potential
Leisler's	<i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>	Potential
Lesser Horseshoe	<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	Absent
Whiskered	<i>Myotis mystacinus</i>	Potential
Natterer's	<i>Myotis nattereri</i>	Potential
Daubenton's	<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	Potential
Brandt's	<i>Myotis brandtii</i>	Potential

¹ Bat distribution records from O'Sullivan (1994) and Richardson (2000).

² Two common species of pipistrelle bat are present in Ireland, recent taxonomic revision. The species are identified by the frequency they use for echolocation (46Hz [Common] and 55Hz [Soprano]), and both occur in similar habitats. Roosts occur in buildings and trees.

Photographic Record

Plate 1 – Common Pipistrelle sonogram



Plate 2- Existing hedgerow commuting pattern in field adjacent and to the west of the development site

