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Invasive Alien Species Survey

Proposed Accelerated Social Housing Scheme
Mullavalley Louth Village

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this Invasive Alien Species (IAS) Survey is to outline the results of a pre-construction invasive species survey conducted at Mullavalley Louth Village Co. Louth. These surveys aimed to identify invasive plant species which may impact the proposed works and local ecology.

1.1 Site & Project Overview

The Mullavalley site is located in Louth Village. The developable site area is 3.48ha in total and is composed of two grassland fields separated by hedgerows. The R171 is found along the northern boundary of the site. Housing developments are found to the south. Arable croplands are found to the north and west of the site.

The site itself is currently composed of **Improved Agricultural grassland (GA1)** habitat throughout. This was dominated by Annual Meadow-grass (*Poa annua*), Rye Grass (*Lolium Spp*) and Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*). The herb layer likely contained Thistles (*Cirsium arvense, C. vulgare*), Docks (*Rumex spp*.). The fields on the site were separated by mature Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) dominated **Hedgerows (WL1)** with frequent Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg*), Dog-rose (*Rosa canina*) and Ivy (*Hedera helix*). Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) was occasional.

There are no Natura 2000 designated sites within close proximity to the subject site. The closest is Dundalk Bay SAC and SPA is found 10km west of the Mullavalley site.

General works associated with the proposed development include:

- The removal of soil and overburden material
- Connection to services including water, wastewater, stormwater, electricity and broadband, where applicable
- The construction of 58 social housing units
- The installation of SuDS infrastructure including attenuation tanks, petrol/ oil interceptors, bio-retention systems/ rain gardens and tree pits
- Landscaping and;

- All associated site works

Attenuation tanks will only be used as a last resort where other measures are not feasible. They will be provided on site and will have the capacity for site storage for 1/100 storm and 20% climate change with hydrobrake connection to mains. Petrol/ oil interceptors will be included in the overall drainage design. Bio-retention systems/ rain gardens and tree pits will be included in the landscape design but are not included in SuDS calculation due to impermeable ground conditions and poor infiltration however they will still contribute to overall SuDS.

2 Relevant Legislation

Natural Habitats Regulations SI 477 of 2011 contains a number of provisions relating to invasive non-native species (INNS), covering several sections and subsections of the Acts. It is prohibited, without license, to plant or otherwise cause to grow in a wild state, in any place in the State, any species of flora, or the flowers, roots, seeds or spores of invasive flora listed on the Third Schedule. Articles 49 and 50 of the aforementioned Acts set out the legal implications associated with INNS and Schedule 3 (the Third Schedule) of the regulations lists non-native species subject to the restrictions of Articles 49 and 50, which make it an offence to plant, disperse, allow dispersal or cause the spread of invasive species.

As regards to non-Third Schedule invasive species, including noxious weeds (native species that can act in an invasive manner), there are obligations under the EU Habitats Directive to address any threats to the conservation status of the various habitats and species listed for protection under the Directive.

Ireland has also ratified a number of international conventions that oblige the government to address issues pertaining to the spread of non-native invasive species, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Bern Convention and the International Plant Protection Convention.

Under the EU Plant Health Directive, emergency legislation was introduced in 2002 to prevent the introduction into and the spread of Phytophthora ramorum within the EU. P. ramorum is a fungal pathogen that causes blight in woody plant species, including many broadleaf species like oak, sycamore, chestnut and beech, and causes the disease known as “sudden oak death”. Since 2003, annual surveys have been carried out throughout the EU, and Phytophthora ramorum has been found in a number of EU

member States including Ireland. *Rhododendron ponticum* is a known host of this pathogen and it has been found surviving on, but not killing, species of Rhododendron and Viburnum, meaning that they can act as vectors for its spread.

3 Invasive Species Survey

3.1 Desk Survey

A search of records for invasive non-native species on the National Biodiversity Data Centre[1] was carried out as part of this project. No Third Schedule and Non-third Schedule Invasive species were recorded on the NBDC database within 2km of any of the works.

3.2 Field Survey

Field surveys were carried out on the site on the 21st of July 2023 and the 12th of January 2024 as part of a multidisciplinary site walkover survey of the Mullavalley site and surrounds. No Third Schedule invasive species were found during the survey site. None Third Schedule species including Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Blood currant (*Ribes sanguineum*) were found within the ditches along the site boundary.

4 Results and Discussion

No third scheduled invasive species were found within or surrounding the survey site. Non Third Schedule species including Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Blood currant (*Ribes sanguineum*) were found within the ditches along the site boundary. These species are naturalised into the Irish landscape and do not require management under the legislation. If works are planned to commence 12 months after this report was written it is advised to carry out a pre-construction IAS survey prior to the commencement of works.

[1] https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Map

References

European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations 2021.

Guidelines on The Management of Noxious Weeds and Non-Native Invasive Plant Species on National Roads, National Roads Authority 2010.

Invasive Species Ireland, 2021: https://invasivespeciesireland.com/

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