

Rebecca May  
Strategic Land Manager  
HIMOR  
Pembroke House,  
Carrington Business Park,  
Carrington,  
Manchester  
M31 4DD

29<sup>th</sup> October 2019

Our Ref: RT-MME-151146-03

Dear Rebecca,

## Ecological Walkover Survey – Bosty Lane, Aldridge

### Introduction

In October 2019 HIMOR commissioned Middlemarch Environmental Ltd to undertake an ecological walkover survey of a proposed development site located off Bosty Lane in Aldridge, West Midlands. The site measures approximately 48 ha in size and is centred at National Grid Reference SP 0540 9956.

In addition, Middlemarch Environmental has also been commissioned to undertake ecological walkover assessments of two additional sites in the Aldridge area of the West Midlands. These sites are Greenwood Road, Pelsall and Vicarage Road/Coronation Road, Aldridge. These sites will be reported in RT-MME-151146-01 and RT-MME-151,146-02 respectively.

The purpose of the survey was to provide a preliminary view of the ecological sensitivity of the sites to inform potential future development aspirations.

### Ecological Walkover Methodology

The survey comprised a site walkover assessment, during which the location and extent of all habitat types present within the site were noted. The presence, or likely presence, of protected species within the site was also noted.

### Results

The ecological walkover survey was undertaken on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2019 by Tim Hextell MCIEEM (Principal Technical Ecological Consultant). The weather conditions at the time of the survey are detailed in Table 1.

Parameter	Conditions
Temperature (°C)	13
Cloud (%)	10
Wind (Beaufort)	F1-2
Precipitation	Nil

**Table 1: Weather Conditions**

### Constraints

The site was not subject to any constraints and all areas could be accessed for the purposes of survey.

### Site Description

The Bosty Lane survey area was dominated by a mixture of horse grazed pasture and arable farmland at the time of the site visit. Fields were enclosed by a network of mixed boundary types with frequent tree cover often forming the field boundaries with numerous early mature and mature oaks *Quercus robur* and lesser amounts of sallow *Salix caprea* and occasional ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. Ditch features were often associated with the boundaries. On the western side of the survey area was a large farm complex and area use for vehicle storage.

Additional habitats recorded on site comprised scattered trees and linear broad-leaved woodland with areas of tall ruderals and pockets of scrub. The site abutted a large area of mature broadleaved woodland to the south, which forms the Cuckoo's Nook and the Dingle Local Nature Reserve. Parts of this woodland are designated as ancient woodland.

The distribution of habitats across the site is shown on Drawing C151146-03-01.

### Key Biodiversity Features

It is considered that the key features recorded within the Bosty Lane site are:

- Nature conservation sites - Cuckoo's Nook and the Dingle Local Nature Reserve comprised an area of high-quality woodland habitat and abuts the southern boundary of the survey area.
- Arable farmland (if notable birds present) – though still a common and widespread habitat within the West Midlands this habitat type may support farmland birds of conservation concern both as breeding species and during the winter period.
- Boundaries – the hedgerows are well-established and possess large numbers of mature trees, frequently with ditch features also present. The hedgerows are considered to qualify as Habitats of Principal Importance and are not only valuable habitats in their own right but are also valuable wildlife corridors.
- Linear woodland – largely confined to the northern edge of the survey area and fronting Bosty Lane with ash *Fraxinus excelsior* dominating, this wooded strip is considered to be a Habitat of Principal Importance it may support a range of protected and notable species and is also a valuable landscape and screening feature.
- Scattered Trees – the numerous mature trees contained within the field boundaries together with frequent mature oaks *Quercus robur* in the north-western quadrant of the survey area are important habitats and landscape features.

A further area of mixed habitat located to the south of the western farm complex, and occupying a footprint of approximately 2 ha, consisted of colonising scrub with damp grassland and pockets of wet tall ruderal vegetation. Though not considered to qualify as a habitat of principal importance it has high ecological value due to its mosaic nature and relative scarcity in the West Midlands county.

### Development Opportunities and Constraints

It is considered that those habitats/features that are of importance and should be retained and protected are:

- Boundaries – the majority of boundaries within the survey area are considered to be of high ecological value and are important green corridors. This includes the southern boundary that abuts an area of mature broadleaved woodland (Cuckoo's Nook and the Dingle Local Nature Reserve) that is considered to be of high ecological value.
- Linear woodland – the block of broad-leaved woodland along the northern periphery of the site, and fronting Bosty Lane, provides a valuable roadside screen and also is a valuable wildlife corridor.
- Scattered trees – the mature trees within the areas of grazed horse pasture in the north-western section of the survey area are important landscape features and provide highly valuable wildlife habitats in their own right.
- The mosaic of wet scrub, neutral grassland and tall ruderal vegetation to the south of the farm complex should be retained and enhanced and although this area does not qualify as a habitat of principal importance it does have intrinsic value as a scarce resource within the county and may support a range of protected/notable species.

It is considered that the areas within which development will have less of an ecological impact are:

- Arable farmland – with the proviso that they do not support important numbers of declining farmland bird species which will be informed through survey works.
- Improved pasture grazed by horses.

Areas of greatest ecological value are highlighted on Drawing C151146-03-02.

It should be noted that the survey area also includes a variety of farm buildings, structures and stables. These features are not considered to have intrinsic ecological value but they may support protected species, most notably bats/bat roosts.

### Recommendations

Any development of the survey area should include ecological input into the design process of the development. This could include the following:

- Protection of the wooded corridor along the southern periphery of the survey area (known as Cuckoo's Nook and The Dingle) through the retention of a 10 m wide buffer zone adjacent to this strip that could be managed as a 'ecotone' containing an appropriate planting and management regime.
- Protection and enhancement of the hedgerow and associated ditch network. This would include an appropriate management scheme to provide a varied age structure to the hedgerows, in-filling of gaps where necessary and provision of appropriately sized buffer areas of rough grassland.

- Protection and enhancement of the linear woodland along the northern boundary of the survey area. It will be pertinent to produce and implement a plan to manage this habitat for biodiversity.
- Install an appropriate management regime for the habitat mosaic to the south of the farm complex. This should include measures to limit scrub encroachment and undertake a regime of rotational scrub cutting in order to produce a varied age structure. In addition, cutting of areas of grassland and tall ruderals to increase sward diversity in order to provide a valuable habitat for invertebrates, small mammals and potentially herpetofauna. It would be highly informative to undertake a survey of this area of habitat in June/July to inform any such plan.

In terms of additional survey works require to inform a planning application, it is considered that the following would be required:

- Badger – A badger survey to be undertaken of site and 30 m buffer around study area where accessible.
- Bats – full bat surveys to be undertaken comprising a preliminary roost assessment of trees and structures on site (that latter comprising the large complex of farm buildings in the west of the survey area and the small horse stables in the south-west of the survey area). This may lead to the requirement for emergence surveys (up to three surveys dependent upon findings of preliminary assessment). Bat transect surveys to comprise monthly surveys April to October backed up by installation of static surveys.
- Birds – breeding and wintering bird surveys.
- Botanical – the ecological value of the semi-improved grassland areas should be reassessed during the optimal survey period.
- Great Crested Newt – Habitat Suitability Surveys and full great crested newt surveys of all ponds within the survey area and for a radius of up to 500 m of site (the latter to be determined by presence of impermeable barriers to newt dispersal e.g. major roads or extensive areas of built environment).
- Hedgerows – these should be subject to assessments to determine whether they are considered important under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.
- Reptiles – the majority of the habitats within the survey area are considered to be sub-optimal to support reptiles. However, there are areas of suitable habitat along the southern edge of the survey area (and bordering Cuckoo's Nook and The Dingle).

I trust that this assessment meets your requirements, however if you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

**For and On Behalf of Middlemarch Environmental Ltd.**

Tim Hextell MCIEEM  
**Principal Technical Ecological Consultant**

Checked and Approved By:

Tom Docker CEcol MCIEEM  
**Associate Director, EIA**

Enclosed:

Drawing RT-MME-151146-03-01    Phase 1 Habitat Map  
Drawing RT-MME-151146-03-02    Areas of Ecological Value



C151146-03-01

**Legend**

- - - Site boundary
- Scattered broad-leaved tree
- Fence
- Species-poor defunct hedgerow
- Species-poor hedgerow with trees
- Species-poor intact hedgerow
- A Amenity grassland
- A Arable
- Bare ground
- Building
- X Dense scrub
- Hardstanding
- I Improved grassland
- Other habitat (farm complex)
- SI Poor semi-improved grassland
- Semi-natural broad-leaved woodland



Project		Bosty Lane, Aldridge	
Drawing		Phase 1 Habitat Map	
Client		HIMOR	
Drawing Number	C151146-03-01	Revision	00
Scale @ A3	1:4,000	Date	November 2019
Approved By	TH	Drawn By	RP

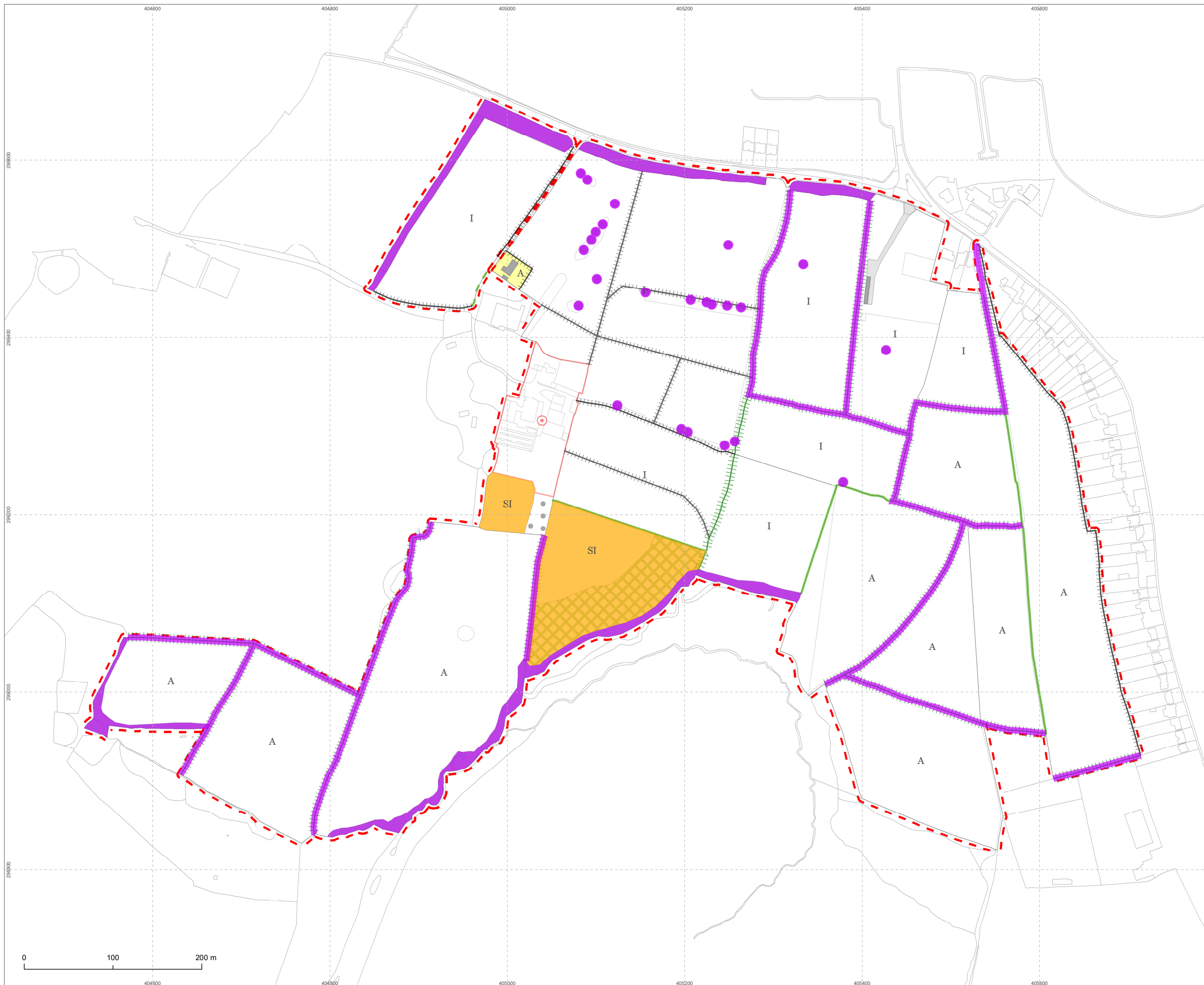
**MIDDLEMARCH ENVIRONMENTAL**

Triumph House, Birmingham Road, Allesley, Coventry CV5 9AZ  
 T:01676 525880 F:01676 521400  
 E:admin@middlemarch-environmental.com

This map is reproduced from the Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office. © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
 Licence Number: 100040519

**Legend**

- Features of high ecological value
  - Features of moderate ecological value (pending further investigation)
  - Site boundary
- Phase 1 habitats**
- Scattered broad-leaved tree
  - Fence
  - Species-poor defunct hedgerow
  - Species-poor hedgerow with trees
  - Species-poor intact hedgerow
  - Amenity grassland
  - Arable
  - Bare ground
  - Building
  - Hardstanding
  - Improved grassland
  - Other habitat (farm complex)
  - Poor semi-improved grassland
  - Semi-natural broad-leaved woodland



Project		Bosty Lane, Aldridge	
Drawing		Areas of Ecological Value	
Client		HIMOR	
Drawing Number	C151146-03-02	Revision	00
Scale @ A3	1:4,000	Date	November 2019
Approved By	TH	Drawn By	RP

**MIDDLEMARCH ENVIRONMENTAL**

Triumph House, Birmingham Road, Allesley, Coventry CV5 9AZ  
 T:01676 525880 F:01676 521400  
 E:admin@middlemarch-environmental.com

This map is reproduced from the Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office. © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
 Licence Number: 100040519