

Rebecca May
Strategic Land Manager
HIMOR
Pembroke House,
Carrington Business Park,
Carrington,
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29th October 2019

Our Ref: RT-MME-151146-02

Dear Rebecca,

Ecological Walkover Survey – Coronation Road, Pelsall

Introduction

In October 2019 HIMOR commissioned Middlemarch Environmental Ltd to undertake an ecological walkover survey of a proposed development site located off Coronation Road in Aldridge, West Midlands. The site measures approximately 21 ha in size and is centred at National Grid Reference SK 0309 0313.

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 Bosty Lane, Aldridge. These sites will be reported in RT-MME-151146-01 and RT-MME-151146-03 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 23rd 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)	11
Cloud (%)	50
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 Coronation Road, Pelsall survey area was dominated by arable farmland accounting for approximately 80% of the total survey area and, at the time of the site visit, was occupied by a young *Brassica* crop. Fields were enclosed by a network of mixed boundary types, with frequent tree cover often forming boundaries with numerous early mature and mature oaks *Quercus robur* and lesser amounts of willow *Salix caprea* and occasional ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. Ditch features were often associated with the boundaries.

One or two small fields of poor semi-improved grassland were also present within the survey area containing a selection of common grasses and forbs. Some of the fields appeared to be irregularly managed or unmanaged. In the south-western corner of the study site were a small number of fields which had been closely grazed by horses. These fields also possessed small wooden/brick horse stables.

Also located on the western side of the survey area was a small block of young, broad-leaved plantation woodland which continued north and north-eastwards outside of the survey area but formed its north-western boundary. The woodland was relatively young and very densely planted with oak and hazel *Corylus avellana* dominating. Also abutting the western edge of the plantation woodland and the horse grazed paddocks was the Ford Brook, a small watercourse draining in a southerly direction and fringed by abundant reedswamp vegetation and linear scrub.

Additional habitats recorded on site comprised a small pond, marginal areas of tall ruderals and occasional linear scrub.

The distribution of habitats across the site is shown on Drawing C151146-02-02.

Key Biodiversity Features

It is considered that the key features recorded within the Coronation Road, Pelsall are:

- 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 but are also valuable wildlife corridors.
- Ford Brook – this watercourse is a habitat of principal importance and is also a valuable wildlife corridor. In addition, it has the potential to support protected species such as otter and water vole.
- Plantation woodland – although this habitat is still in the early stages of establishment and does not qualify as a Habitat of Principal Importance it may support a range of protected and notable species and is also a valuable landscape and screening feature.
- Pond – the small onsite waterbody is considered likely to fulfil the relevant criteria be a Habitat of Principal Importance and may also support amphibians, which may include great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*.
- Poor semi-improved grassland – although this habitat type is frequently a commonly occurring habitat and is not a Habitat of Principal Importance, the area of rough, tussocky neutral grassland at the eastern extent of the survey area, and occupying 0.75 ha, potentially provides an important terrestrial habitat for a range of faunal species.
- Scattered Trees – the numerous mature trees contained within the field boundaries are important habitats and landscape features.

Development Opportunities and Constraints

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

- Boundaries – only those boundaries that are largely intact and possess large numbers of early mature/mature trees
- Pond
- Poor semi-improved grassland – the eastern block of semi-improved grassland should be retained and it is considered that there is an opportunity to significantly enhance this area of grassland
- Scattered trees
- Watercourse – Ford Brook is an important wildlife corridor

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.
- Closely grazed horse pasture.
- Pockets of poor semi-improved grassland in the southern and western areas of the survey area.

Areas of greatest ecological value are highlighted on Drawing C151146-02-01.

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 Ford Brook corridor through the retention of a 10 m wide buffer zone adjacent to the bank top. This would be fenced and a rough grass sward allowed to develop with an appropriate future management regime established.

- 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 plantation woodland in the west of the survey area. This area may already be subject to a management regime with an appropriate management strategy in place for its future management. If no such strategy exists then it will be pertinent to produce and implement a plan to manage this habitat for biodiversity.
- Install an appropriate management regime for the grassland habitat at the eastern extent of the survey area. This should include measures 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 grassland in June/July to inform any such plan.
- Pond – the small pond within the survey area should be retained and enhanced if possible. However, this pond in its current state is rather poor and lacks aquatic vegetation and may also be impacted by agricultural run off from the adjacent fields. If this pond was to be lost then the creation of two new pond features within the survey area which were appropriately designed to provide varied depths, sinuous shoreline and planted up with native aquatic species local to the area would offset its loss.

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 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.
- Otter and water vole – surveys to be undertaken for presence of both species along the Ford Brook extending up to 100 m beyond the boundaries of the survey area.
- Reptiles – a survey of potential habitat areas, e.g. rough grassland, should be completed.

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.

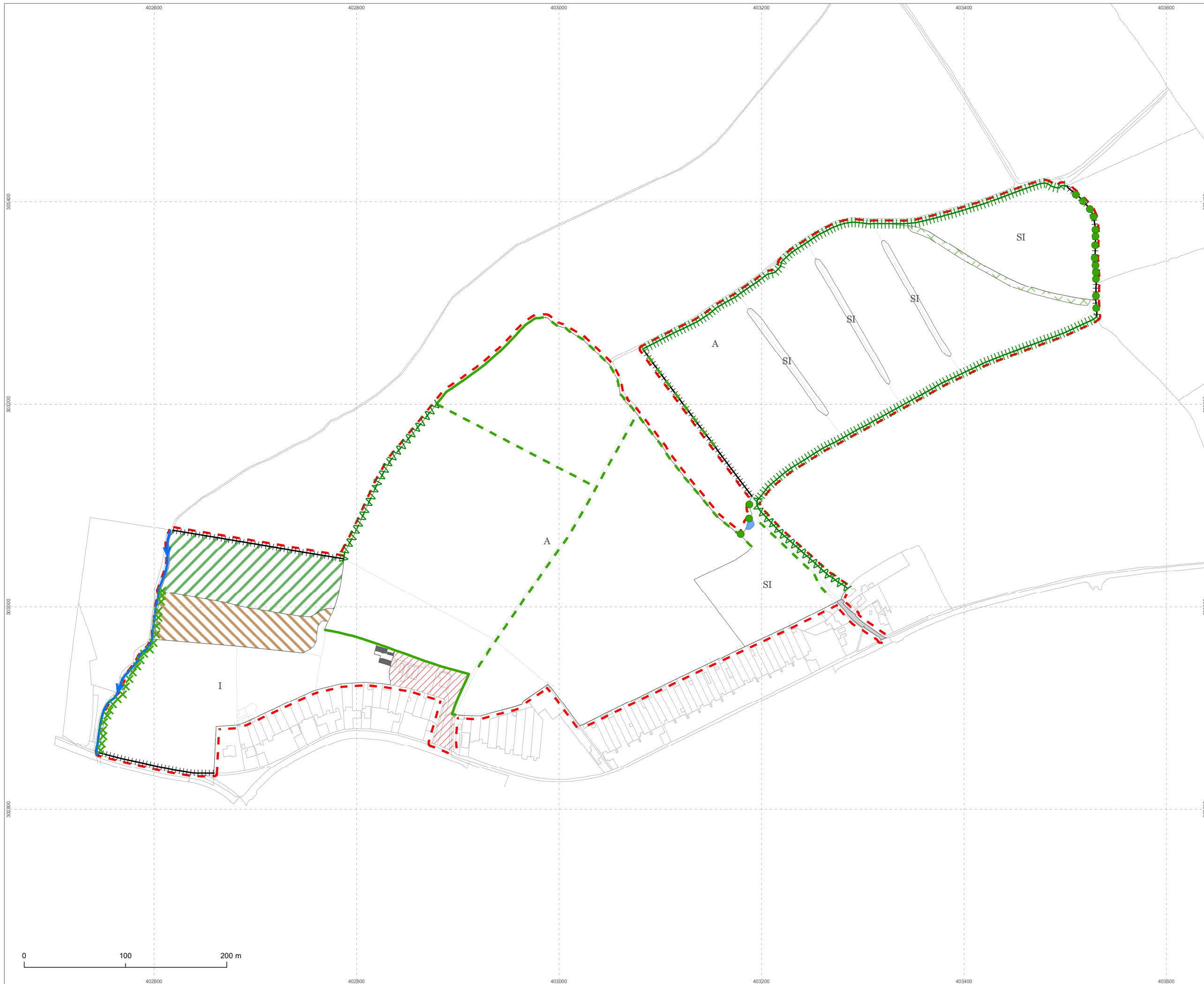
Tim Hextell MCIEEM
Principal Technical Ecological Consultant

Checked and Approved By:

Tom Docker CEcol MCIEEM
Associate Director, EIA

Enclosed:

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



C151146-02-01

Legend

- - - Site boundary
- Scattered broad-leaved tree
- X Scattered scrub
- ++++ Fence
- Running water
- - - Species-poor defunct hedgerow
- ++++ Species-poor hedgerow with trees
- Species-poor intact hedgerow
- ^ ^ ^ Species-rich defunct hedgerow
- ^ ^ ^ Species-rich intact hedgerow
- A Arable
- Bare ground
- Building
- Hardstanding
- I Improved grassland
- /// No access (houses and gardens)
- /// Plantation broad-leaved woodland
- SI Poor semi-improved grassland
- X Scattered scrub
- Standing water
- /// Tall ruderal

Project Vicarage Road/Coronation Road,
High Heath, Pelsall

Drawing Phase 1 Habitat Map

Client HIMOR

Drawing Number	C151146-02-01	Revision	00
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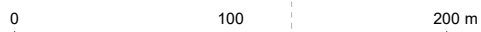
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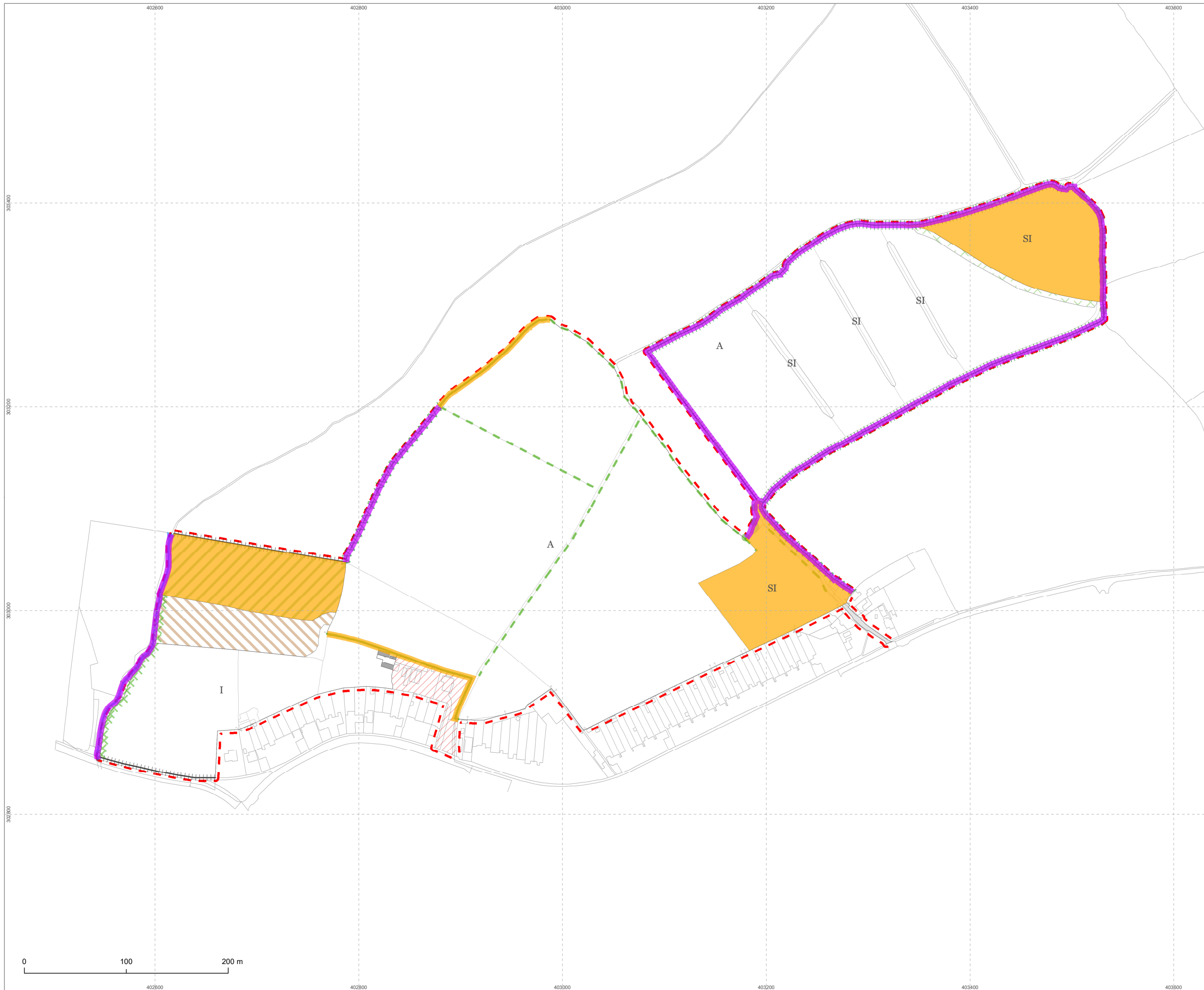
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Legend

- Features of high ecological value
- Features of moderate ecological value (pending further investigation)
- Site boundary
- Phase 1 habitats**
- Scattered broad-leaved tree
- Scattered scrub
- Fence
- Running water
- Species-poor defunct hedgerow
- Species-poor hedgerow with trees
- Species-poor intact hedgerow
- Species-rich defunct hedgerow
- Species-rich intact hedgerow
- A Arable
- Bare ground
- Building
- Hardstanding
- I Improved grassland
- No access (houses and gardens)
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Project Vicarage Road/Coronation Road,
High Heath, Pelsall

Drawing Areas of Ecological Value

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Drawing Number C151146-02-02	Revision 00
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