

Ecological Walkover Survey

Project Information & Site Context

Site Name & Location	MIRA – South Site	Grid Reference	SP 3594 9508 (central)
Client Name	Swanvale Developments Limited	Report Number	RT-MME-181351
Site Area (ha)	59.3 ha	Topography	Gentle south-west facing gradient

Project Background	Middlemarch completed a comprehensive suite of ecological survey work at this site during 2021 and 2022 which included a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (RT-MME-154920-01 Rev B) and a range of protected species assessments for badger, reptiles, bats and birds. During these assessments it was determined that the site supported roosting bats (common pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>) within the farm complex and Tree (T4), and a medium population size class of great crested newts <i>Triturus cristatus</i> (peak count 16 no.) within two on-site ponds. The assemblage of birds on site was deemed of local or district value and included species with strong associations to arable farmland (such as skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>, linnet <i>Carduelis cannabina</i>, reed bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>, yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i> and yellow wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>). No reptiles were identified, and no evidence of badgers was recorded. Details of previous surveys can be found within Reports RT-MME-150920-01 to -07 and RT-MME-157459-01. Given the time that has elapsed since these initial assessments were completed, an updated walkover of the site has been completed to identify any significant changes which have occurred within the intervening period. This included any changes to habitats or conditions which could also have impacted upon any ecological receptors utilising the site. The results of this walkover are reported below.
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Methods

Field Survey	An updated site walkover was undertaken on 18 th October 2024 by Helen Griffin ACIEEM (Principal Ecological Consultant) to assess the habitats present within the site and identify any significant changes which have occurred since prior assessment.			
Weather Conditions	Temperature (°C)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind Force (Beaufort)	Precipitation
	15	10	F1	Nil
Constraints	No significant constraints were encountered at the time of survey.			

Results

No significant changes were recorded during the updated walkover of the site.

The survey area was dominated by expansive arable farmland, which at the time of survey consisted of harvested crops with a rough stubble remaining within the fields (Plates 1 and 2). The small field located to the south-east of the stream contained a heavily mown grass crop. The hedgerow boundaries were mature and clipped to c. 1.8 m in height. Along the eastern boundary and southern stream corridor, the boundaries were less intensively managed with a high number of mature standards and encroaching scrub along the base (Plate 3). The two ponds were holding water and set within pockets of dense, mature willow *Salix* sp. scrub (Plate 4). The water level within the stream was low but still retained a flow.

The small paddock and grassland to the west of the farm complex had become overgrown with coarse and ruderal species including nettle *Urtica dioica* and common umbellifers, and the buildings had fallen into disrepair (Plate 5).

Although some small differences in extent or management of habitats were observed, no changes were observed which would suggest that the status of the ecological receptors on site are likely to have been subject to significant change. The ponds appeared in the same condition, while a high number of trees (including T4) remained in-situ and provided suitable potential roosting features for bats (example feature, Plate 6). The barns were more dilapidated than when previously surveyed; however, suitable bat roosting features also remained here. The habitats overall continued to provide suitable habitat for breeding and foraging birds (including farmland species). No evidence of badgers was recorded on site during the walkover, though suitable habitat continued to be present, particularly along peripheral boundaries, stream corridor and farm complex. It is considered highly unlikely given the presence of intensively managed farmland that reptile species would have colonised the site in the intervening period.

Updated surveys will be completed prior to commencement for the purposes of legislative compliance (for example to inform a bat licence application); however, for the purposes of assessment, it is concluded that the overall conclusions and recommendations of the surveys completed by Middlemarch in 2021 and 2022 remain valid.

Quality Assurance

Date	Version	Author	Checked & Approved By
21/10/2024	Final	Helen Griffin ACIEEM (Principal Ecological Consultant)	Tim Hextell MCIEEM (Principal Ecological Consultant)

Photographs



Plate 1: Open fields of arable farmland



Plate 2: Short-mown grass crop



Plate 3: Mature trees within the broad eastern boundary



Plate 4: Southern pond with encroaching bank side vegetation



Plate 5: Farm complex with margins of overgrown vegetation visible in the foreground



Plate 6: Potential roosting feature for bats within a small cavity of elder *Sambucus nigra* (arrowed)