

Ecological Walkover Survey

Project Information & Site Context

Site Name & Location	Horiba MIRA, Watling Street, Nuneaton	Grid Reference	SP 3620 9537
Client Name	Horiba Mira Ltd	Report Number	RT-MME-159786-01 Rev A
Site Area (ha)	0.2	Topography	Predominantly flat
Project Background	In February 2023, Horiba Mira Ltd commissioned Middlemarch to undertake an Ecological Walkover Survey to identify any constraints ahead of vegetation clearance associated with an upcoming planning application.		
Summary of Proposals	This survey was required ahead of a proposed building extension. Associated vegetation clearance is proposed imminently in order to remove suitable vegetation ahead of bird nesting season. It is understood that vegetation along the ditch corridor, including two trees, and a length of hedgerow will be removed in order to facilitate the works.		

Methods

Field Survey	An ecological walkover survey of the site was undertaken on 17 th February 2023 by Helen Griffin ACIEEM (Principal Ecological Consultant) 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 recorded.			
Weather Conditions	Temperature (°C)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind Force (Beaufort)	Precipitation
	6	100	F1	Nil
Constraints	The scrub on site was dense in places and impenetrable to the surveyor. It was possible to undertake a thorough assessment from the accessible peripheries, and as such this is not considered a significant constraint to this assessment.			

Results

Overview of Habitats	The survey area extended from the north-western and south-western corners of an existing building (SP 36221 95353 and SP 36239 95379 respectively) and northwards along the ditch to approximately SP 36250 95394. The western extents were located within the adjacent field at approximately SP 36161 95384 and SP 36174 95411 to form a roughly rectangular area projecting from the western elevation. The majority of the survey area contained rough neutral grassland containing perennial rye-grass <i>Lolium perenne</i>, false oat-grass <i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>, creeping bent-grass <i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>, teasel <i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>, dove's-foot cranesbill <i>Geranium molle</i>, common willowherbs, docks <i>Rumex</i> spp. and thistles <i>Cirsium</i> spp. Cow parsley <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i> was also noted marginally, as was encroaching nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i> and bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i>. Species-poor grassland was also noted along the eastern margins of the ditch and the western extent of the survey area comprised arable farmland.
-----------------------------	---

	The most notable habitats were the ditch corridor, scattered mature trees and a hedgerow which delineated the boundary between the rough grassland and arable farmland. The ditch corridor was approximately 6 m wide and comprised mature hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i>, blackthorn <i>Prunus spinosa</i>, and bramble to c. 4 m in height. The ditch was visible through 'windows' in the scrub and was found to be dry at the time of survey. Scattered mature standards were noted in association with this corridor. These comprised two mature oak <i>Quercus robur</i> standards which appeared in varying stages of decay. The hedgerow contained cherry <i>Prunus</i> sp., privet <i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>, hawthorn, blackthorn and hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i>. The hedgerow had been cut by flail to c. 2 m tall and a gap was present along the base.
Key Species Considerations	<u>Bats</u> The potential of the site for bats is discussed further within the accompanying Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (RT-MME-159786-02). Please refer to this report for further details. <u>Great crested newt</u> No standing water (potential breeding habitat) was present on site; however, terrestrial refuge opportunities were provided by the tussocky grassland, potential gaps in the roots of trees and mature shrub species, and within a number of partially collapsed rabbit <i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i> holes along the ditch. Reference to OS and aerial mapping indicates the presence of two ponds within 250 m, located 170 m to the west and 190 m to the north-west respectively. These ponds were surveyed by Middlemarch on behalf of Horiba Mira Ltd during 2021 in association with works which are occurring elsewhere on site. One of the ponds was found to be dry throughout the survey period while the other supported a small population of great crested newts (peak count 1 individual). Four additional ponds are present within 500 m of the survey area, two of which are known to support populations of great crested newts. These were also surveyed by Middlemarch in 2021 and were found to support one small (peak count 8 individuals) and one medium population (peak count 24 individuals). Given the suitability of the habitat on site and proximity to known populations of great crested newts, it is possible that individuals could be encountered on site during the works. Long term impacts resulting from habitat loss and/or fragmentation are not deemed likely due to the small scale of the project. The ponds will be retained, while suitable commuting and foraging habitat will remain within the surrounding landscape. However, in the absence of mitigation, clearance works to the grassland, roots and holes within the bank have the potential to cause death or harm to individuals. The site has been reviewed by a Registered Consultant under the Low Impact Class Licence WML-CL33 and, due to the scale of works, the site is deemed appropriate for registration under this licence. <u>Nesting birds</u> The scrub, trees and hedgerow have the potential to support a range of species including farmland species. The vegetation clearance works therefore have the potential to directly impact upon nesting birds. It is understood that vegetation clearance works are currently programmed to take place between the 20th and 23rd of February 2023, which would avoid the bird nesting season. If clearance cannot be completed prior to the commencement of bird nesting season, any vegetation to be removed or disturbed should be checked

	by an experienced ecologist for nesting birds immediately prior to works commencing. A recommendation has been made below. <u>Reptiles</u> The rough grassland on site is suitable for reptiles, particularly grass snake <i>Natrix helvetica</i>, and a population is known to be present within the wider landscape to the east. Though the grassland was suitable, the scrub and hedgerow were both rather open and exposed at ground level, providing only a low number of suitable opportunities for refuge or hibernation. As such it is not considered likely that the site would support a dependent population, though there is potential for individuals to pass through on occasion and bask within grassland areas. The risk to grass snake is considered low overall; however, the risk should be reduced to negligible through implementation of protection measures. A recommendation to this effect has been made below. <u>Terrestrial mammals (including badger, hedgehog and brown hare)</u> A brown hare <i>Lepus europaeus</i> was recorded within the grassland on site during the survey. The grassland and arable farmland provide suitable habitat for this species, including potential breeding habitat. No evidence of badger <i>Meles meles</i> or hedgehog <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i> was recorded, though the habitats on site provided suitable opportunities for commuting and foraging and individuals may pass through on occasion. Protection measures for terrestrial mammals has been provided below.
--	--

Recommendations

The recommendations below are based on Middlemarch's current understanding of the project. If works are changed in any way these recommendations will need to be amended if appropriate.

R1	Bats: Recommendations made within the Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (RT-MME-159786-02) should be adhered to.
R2	Great crested newts: Due to the potential for great crested newts to be present on site, prior to any works commencing, the site should be registered by David Smith, a registered consultant (GCN1RC082) to use Natural England Great Crested Newt Low Impact Class Licence (WML-CL33).
R3	General Safeguarding Measures: The following safeguards and appropriate working practices should be employed to minimise adverse effects on biodiversity and ensure compliance with UK Wildlife Legislation: ● <u>Nesting Birds:</u> It is understood that vegetation clearance is being carried out between the 20th and 23rd February 2023 in order to avoid the nesting bird season. Vegetation clearance should be undertaken outside the nesting bird season. The nesting bird season is weather dependent but generally extends between March and September inclusive (peak period March-August). If this is not possible then any vegetation to be removed or disturbed should be checked by an experienced ecologist for nesting birds immediately prior to works commencing. If birds are found to be nesting any works which may affect them should be delayed until the young have fledged and the nest has been abandoned naturally, for example via the implementation of an appropriate buffer zone (species dependent) around the nest in which no disturbance is permitted until the nest is no longer in use. ● <u>Terrestrial Mammals:</u> Any excavations that need to be left overnight should be covered or fitted with mammal ramps to ensure that any animals that enter can safely escape. Any open pipework with an outside diameter of greater than 120 mm must be covered at the end of each work day to prevent animals entering/becoming trapped. ● <u>Brown Hare:</u> Any clearance of arable habitat should be undertaken outside of the breeding season for brown hare (April to August), where feasible. If this is not possible, a suitably

	qualified ecologist should check suitable habitat prior to works to establish if any young brown hare are present. If any young brown hare are located then a suitable undisturbed buffer zone should be implemented around them and they should be allowed to disperse naturally.
R4	Reptiles: A reasonable avoidance method statement should be compiled detailing how the proposed works will be undertaken in a sensitive manner to avoid any potential breach of legislation. This document should describe working methods, timings and should detail any ecological control measures that will be implemented e.g. vegetation management and ecological supervision. This statement could be combined with actions also required for great crested newts into one method statement to cover both amphibians and reptiles.
R5	Scheme Design: The proposed development should be designed in accordance with the ecological mitigation hierarchy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). The mitigation hierarchy requires all development schemes to apply the following principles: ● <i>Avoidance</i> – the proposed development should seek to avoid/minimise losses of hedgerow, scrub, trees and grassland, in the first instance and incorporate these features in the landscaping layout of the scheme accordingly. This will help to further avoid and minimise impacts to protected and notable species. ● <i>Mitigation</i> – where significant harm cannot be wholly or partially avoided, adverse effects should be minimised by design or through the use of effective mitigation measures such as minimising light spill on retained vegetation. ● <i>Compensation</i> – where unavoidable losses occur and mitigation cannot be provided, compensation for significant residual harm will be required as a last resort or planning permission could be refused. Compensation should include the remediation of lost habitats and/or connectivity, the creation of new habitats of ecological value and providing novel compensation solutions to minimise effects on protected or notable species to ensure compliance with UK wildlife legislation. In accordance with the principles of the Environment Act 2021 the development should also secure an overall net gain for biodiversity. Biodiversity Net Gain is a planning process that aims to leave biodiversity on site in a better state than it was before, going beyond solely avoiding, mitigating and compensating adverse effect on biodiversity and actively seeking to enhance the site's biodiversity value overall. A Biodiversity Metric tool should be used to help guide and quantify the baseline and proposed value of the scheme.
R6	Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP): A Landscape and Ecology Management Plan should be produced setting out the detailed establishment and management of all on site compensation and enhancement measures. In accordance with Biodiversity Net Gain Best Practice Principles, and the principles of the Environment Act 2021, the LEMP should cover a period of 30 years from the date of commencement with provisions for long-term monitoring and contingency actions linked to the Biodiversity Net Gain objectives of the project. The LEMP should be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval (typically to discharge planning conditions) and should be implemented in full thereafter.

Quality Assurance

Date	Version	Author	Checked & Approved By
22/02/2023	Final	Helen Griffin ACIEEM (Principal Ecological Consultant)	Tim Hextell MCIEEM (Principal Ecological Consultant)
10/03/2023	Rev A	Helen Griffin ACIEEM (Principal Ecological Consultant)	Tim Hextell MCIEEM (Principal Technical Ecological Consultant)