



The Thomas Family & Bloor Homes Limited

Land at Newlands Farm, Old Wokingham Road, Wokingham

BREEDING AND WINTERING BIRD SURVEY REPORT

December 2023

FPCR Environment and Design Ltd

Registered Office: Lockington Hall, Lockington, Derby DE74 2RH

Company No. 07128076. [T] 01509 672772 [E] mail@fpcr.co.uk [W] www.fpcr.co.uk

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following Breeding Bird Survey Report has been prepared by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd on behalf of The Thomas Family & Bloor Homes Limited and provides details of a series of breeding bird surveys undertaken at land at Newlands Farm, Old Wokingham Road, Wokingham (hereafter referred to as the 'Site'). The Site measures approximately 16 ha and is centred on ordnance survey grid reference SU 832 664.
- 1.2 The scope and objectives of the report are to:
- present the findings of the breeding bird surveys undertaken to date in 2023;
 - assess the relative importance of the survey area for the breeding bird assemblage;
 - review the site proposals and provide recommendations for mitigation, compensation and enhancement based on the surveys to date.

Site Location and Context

- 1.3 The Site is located between Bracknell and Wokingham in Berkshire. It is surrounded by a mixture of pine woods, grazing pasture, golf course and fruit farms. The Site itself encompasses a number of grazing pasture and arable field parcels with hedgerows and fencing separating them, as well as two small areas of woodland. There is also a series of ditches and streams present across the Site.

Development Proposals

- 1.6 The proposals are for the Site to be developed into a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). This will involve the creation of new wetland, woodland and grassland habitats across the Site as well as a car park and a network of pathways for public access.

2.0 LEGISLATION & STATUS

Legislation

- 2.1 Annex 1 of the EC Birds Directive lists rare and vulnerable species of regularly occurring or migratory wild birds that are subject to special conservation measures. The Directive also provides for the designation of Special protection Areas (SPA) for the protection of these species which form part of the Natura 2000 networks of sites protected by European Wildlife Legislation.
- 2.2 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is the principal legislation affording protection to UK wild birds. Under this legislation all birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and it is an offence, with certain exceptions to:
- Kill, injure or take any wild bird intentionally;
 - Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while in use or being built;
 - Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.
- 2.3 Additional protection is afforded to species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), whereby intentional disturbance whilst building or occupying a nest or disturbance of dependent young is considered an offence.
- 2.4 Certain species have also been identified as species of principal importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 (NERC S.41). The S41 list is used to guide decision-makers such as public bodies, including local and regional authorities, in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions.

Status

- 2.5 In addition to statutory protection, some bird species are classified according to their conservation status, such as their inclusion on the Red and Amber lists of Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) in the UK¹:
- Red list (high conservation concern) species are those that are globally threatened according to IUCN criteria; those whose population has declined rapidly (50% or more) in recent years; and those that have declined historically and not shown a substantial recent recovery.
 - Amber list (medium conservation concern) species are those with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe; those whose population or range has declined moderately (between 25% and 49%) in recent years; those whose population has declined historically but made a substantial recent recovery; rare breeders; and those with internationally important or localised populations.
 - Green list (low conservation concern) species fulfil none of the above criteria.

¹ Stanbury, A., Eaton, M., Aebischer, N., Balmer, D., Brown, A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D., and Win I. 2021. The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. *British Birds* 114: 723-747

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Desk Study

- 3.1 In order to compile existing baseline information, relevant ecological information was requested from both statutory and non-statutory nature conservation organisations including:
- Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website (www.magic.defra.gov.uk)
 - Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC)
- 3.2 Further inspection of colour 1:25000 OS base maps (www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk) and aerial photographs from Google Earth (www.maps.google.co.uk) were also undertaken to provide additional landscape context and identify any features of potential importance for nature conservation in the wider countryside.
- 3.3 The search area for biodiversity information was related to the significance of designated sites and protected species and associated potential zones of influence. For local bird records (e.g., protected, or otherwise notable species) a 2km search area was adopted.
- 3.4 Datasets were restricted to the last ten years to ensure that recent and more relevant records of protected/notable species were considered. However, where protected/notable species have been documented over ten years ago and there are no recent accounts, these have been included.

Field Survey

Breeding Bird Survey

- 3.5 Three breeding bird surveys (BBS) have been undertaken in 2023; one survey per month in April, May, and June. The survey methodology employed was broadly based on that of territory mapping, as developed by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)². All birds encountered (seen or heard) were recorded on a field survey plan using standard BTO species codes and symbols, which denote bird sex, age and behaviour (where appropriate).
- 3.6 The Site was walked over by experienced ecologists between sunrise and 11:00am. A route was mapped out prior to the survey, with particular attention paid to linear features, such as hedgerows and tree lines, and other natural features, such as scrub or waterbodies.
- 3.7 The criteria used in the assessment of breeding birds has been adapted from the standard criteria proposed by the European Ornithological Atlas Committee (EOAC 1979)³ and are grouped into four categories:
- **Non-breeder** e.g. flyover, or observed in unsuitable habitat
 - **Possible breeder** e.g. birds observed in suitable habitat, or a singing male recorded
 - **Probable breeder** e.g. pair in suitable habitat, territory defence, agitated behaviour or nest building; and
 - **Confirmed breeder** e.g. recently fledged young observed, adult birds carrying food for young.

² Bibby, C.J., N.D. Burgess & D.A. Hill (2000) *Bird Census Techniques*: 2nd Edition. London: Academic Press

³ EOAC (1979) *Categories of Breeding Bird Evidence*. European Ornithological Atlas Committee.

- 3.8 The surveys were conducted to ascertain the Site's potential to support breeding populations of bird species that have been assessed to be of some conservation importance, including those included on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and/or Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) Red or Amber lists⁴. These species are likely to be at greatest threat in relation to further decline and are commonly referred to as 'notable' species.
- 3.9 The surveys were not undertaken in unfavourable conditions such as heavy rain or strong wind, which may negatively affect the results (**Table 1**).

Table 1: Survey Dates and Weather Conditions

Date	Cloud Cover (%)	Rain	Wind (Beaufort scale)	Visibility
12 th April 2023	30	None	1-2	Very Good
10 th May 2023	10	None	0-1	Very Good
7 th June 2023	100	None	1-2	Very Good

Species & Assemblage Assessment

- 3.10 The conservation value of bird populations was measured using two separate approaches: nature conservation value and conservation status.
- 3.11 The CIEEM guidance on Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA)⁵ assesses nature conservation value within a geographical context. To attain each level of value, an ornithological resource or one of the features (species population or assemblage of species) should meet the criteria set out in **Table 2**. In some cases, professional judgement may be required to increase or decrease the allocation of the specific value, based upon local knowledge.
- 3.12 In order for a species to obtain a conservation value as Local Level or higher, they must regularly occur in sustainable populations within the site boundaries.
- 3.13 The 2016 annual bird report for Berkshire⁶ was then consulted to inform the conservation status of species within the county. The abundance of species referred to by these reports is classified by the following criteria:
- Very rare – Fewer than ten records ever;
 - Rare – Ten or more records ever, but less than annual;
 - Very scarce – Fewer than ten birds occurring or pairs breeding annually;
 - Scarce – Between ten and 100 birds occurring or pairs breeding annually;
 - Fairly common – Between 100 and 1000 birds occurring or pairs breeding annually;
 - Common – Between 1000 and 5,000 birds occurring or pairs breeding annually;
 - Very common – Between 5,000 and 30,000 birds occurring or pairs breeding annually;
 - Abundant – More than 30,000 birds occurring or pairs breeding annually.

⁴ Stanbury, A.J., Eaton, M.A., Aebischer, N.J., Balmer, D., Brown, A.F., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D.G. & Win, I. (2021) The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. *British Birds*, 114: 723-747.

⁵ CIEEM (2018) *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine (version 1.1)*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

⁶ Berkshire Ornithological Club (2017) *The Berkshire Bird Report 2016*

Table 2: Evaluation Criteria

Nature Conservation Value	Selection Criteria
International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A species which is part of the cited interest of a SPA and which regularly occurs in internationally, or nationally important numbers. • A species present in internationally important numbers (>1% of international population).
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A species which is part of the cited interest of a SSSI and which regularly occurs in nationally or regionally important numbers. • A nationally important assemblage of breeding or over-wintering species. • A species present in nationally important numbers (>1% UK population). • Rare breeding species (<300 breeding pairs in the UK).
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species listed as Priority Species under Schedule 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006), which are not covered above, and which regularly occurs in regionally important numbers. • Species present in regionally important numbers (>1% of regional population). • Sustainable populations of species that are rare or scarce within a region. • Species on the BoCC Red List and which regularly occurs in regionally important numbers.
County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species listed as Priority Species under Schedule 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006), which are not covered above, and which regularly occurs in county important numbers • Species present in county important numbers (>1% of county population). • Sustainable populations of species that are rare or scarce within a county, or listed as priority species for nature conservation under S41 of the NERC Act. • A site designated for its county important assemblage of birds (e.g. a SINC Site). • Species on the BoCC Red List and which regularly occur in county important numbers.
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other species of conservation interest (e.g. all other species on the BoCC Red and Amber List or listed as Priority Species under Schedule 41 of the NERC Act (2006) which are not covered above) regularly occurring in locally sustainable populations. • Sustainable populations of species which are rare or scarce within the locality.
Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species that are common and widespread

Wintering Bird Survey

- 3.14 A single wintering bird survey was undertaken on 22nd February 2023 to determine the nature of the wintering assemblage occurring within the Site. A subsequent three survey visits will be conducted between November 2023 and January 2024.
- 3.15 These surveys are conducted to ascertain the potential of the Site to support overwintering bird species, assessed to be of some conservation importance for their inclusion on the WCA Schedule 1, NERC S41 and/or BoCC Red or Amber lists. These species are considered likely to be at greatest threat in relation to further decline and are commonly referred to as 'notable' species.
- 3.16 The survey methodology employed was broadly based on that of territory mapping, as developed by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)⁷. All birds encountered (both seen or heard) were recorded

⁷ Bibby, C.J., N.D. Burgess & D.A. Hill, (2000). Bird Census Techniques: 2nd Edition. London: Academic Press

on a field survey plan using standard BTO species codes and symbols to denote bird sex, age, and behaviour, wherever appropriate.

- 3.17 The Site was walked over a one-day period by an experienced ecologist, between sunrise and 16:00. A route was mapped out prior to the survey being undertaken, with particular attention paid to linear features, such as hedgerows and tree lines, as well as other natural features, such as areas of scrub or waterbodies.
- 3.18 Surveys are not undertaken in unfavourable conditions such as heavy rain or strong wind, which may negatively affect the results.

4.0 RESULTS

Desk Study

Statutory Designated Sites of International Conservation Importance

- 4.1 Two statutory sites of international importance were identified within 15km of the Site which are designated at least in part for the avian species they support.

Thames Basin Heaths SPA

- 4.2 The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) is designated as such for the bird assemblages it supports. The SPA is classified under article 4(1) of the Directive (2009/147/EC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the Great Britain populations of the following species (**Table 3**) listed in Annex I in any season:

Table 3. Annex I Species in Thames Basin Heaths SPA

Annex 1 Species	Count and Season	Period Recorded	% of GB Population
Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	264 churring males – breeding	1998/99	7.8
Woodlark <i>Lullus arborea</i>	149 pairs – breeding	1997	9.9
Dartford Warbler <i>Sylvia undata</i>	445 pairs – breeding	1999	27.8

- 4.3 In addition, the following non-qualifying species of interest are listed on the SPA citation: hen harrier *Circus cyaneus*, merlin *Falco columbarius*, short-eared owl *Asio flammeus* and kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* which all occur in non-breeding numbers of less than European importance (<1% of GB population).

Thursley Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC

- 4.4 Thursley Ash, Pirbright and Chobham is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for the Annex I habitats it supports. This includes European dry heaths, which support protected bird species including nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* (BoCC5 Amber listed, NERC Sch.41) and Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* (BoCC5 Amber listed, WCA Sch.1).

Statutory Designated Sites of National Conservation Importance

- 4.5 Two statutory designated sites of national conservation importance were identified within 2 km of the Site.

Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI

- 4.6 This SSSI is a part of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and is located approximately 1.46km southeast from the Site boundary. It has been designated as a SSSI on account of its heathland and coniferous plantation which supports internationally important populations of woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler.

Heath Lake SSSI and LNR

- 4.7 Heath Lake SSSI and LNR is located approximately 0.7km southwest of the Site. It was primarily designated for its populations of uncommon and rare aquatic plants, but a small island within the lake also supports breeding birds including great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*.

Notable Bird Records

- 4.8 Numerous bird species records within 2km of the site were returned from TVERC. These included a large number of records with two and four figure grid references (i.e. low resolution) that could not be mapped accurately.
- 1.4 These records comprised many common and widespread species, as well as several rarer species with some conservation significance i.e., species of principal importance under NERC S41, or listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). These included but are not limited to: brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*, bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*, cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*, kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, linnet *Linaria cannabina*, peregrine *Falco peregrinnus*, Red kite, *Milvus milvus*, redwing *Turdus iliacus*, woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* and woodlark *Lullula arborea*.

Field Surveys**Summary**

- 4.9 Between April and June 2023, a total of 38 bird species were recorded from within the Site (Appendix D-1). Of these, 13 appear on one or more of the following and are hereinafter referred to as 'notable' species.
- Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
 - BoCC Red or Amber lists
 - Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006
- 4.10 Of the 38 recorded bird species, two species, song thrush *Turdus philomelos* and great tit *Parus major* were confirmed breeders. Twelve species were probable breeders; including mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, lapwing, wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, mistle thrush *Turdus viscivorus* and greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*; with the remaining six species BoCC Green-listed.
- 4.11 The remaining 24 species recorded were considered possible breeders (18) or non-breeders (6).
- 4.12 **Table 4** provides a summary of the notable bird species and their breeding status on site whilst **Figure 1** shows the distribution of the notable species.

Table 4: Protected, Species of Principal Importance and BoCC Red and Amber Listed Bird Species Recorded during Breeding Bird Surveys 2023, and their Recent Status within Berkshire.

Species	Legal/ Conservation status	Peak Count / Number of Survey Occasions Recorded	Breeding Status†	Recent Status in Berkshire
Greylag goose <i>Anser anser</i>	Amber list WCA Sch.1 (Part II)	5 / 1	Possible	Common and widespread introduced resident.
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Amber list	3 (+4 flyovers) / 3	Probable	Common and widespread resident and winter visitor
Red kite <i>Milvus milvus</i>	Green list WCA Sch. 1	(1 flyover) / 2	Non-breeder	Common re-introduced resident
Black-headed gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Amber list	1 (+2 flyovers) / 2	Non-breeder	Abundant winter visitor and passage migrant which now breeds in increasing numbers
Stock dove <i>Columba oenas</i>	Amber list	1 / 2	Possible	Common resident and winter visitor
Woodpigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>	Amber list	56 (+4 flyovers)	Probable	Abundant resident and winter visitor
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Red list NERC S.41	3 / 1	Probable	Locally common summer resident, common winter visitor and passage migrant but in long-term decline
Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Amber list	15 / 3	Probable	Abundant resident
Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Red list NERC S.41	1 / 1	Possible	Common resident and winter visitor, formerly abundant
Song thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Amber list NERC S.41	4 (+1 flyover) / 3	Confirmed breeder	Common resident and winter visitor
Mistle thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Red list	2 / 2	Probable	Common though declining resident
Dunnock <i>Prunella modularis</i>	Amber list NERC S.41	2 / 3	Possible	Common though possible declining resident
Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Red list	6 (+1 flyover) / 3	Probable	Common and widespread resident and winter visitor, has shown signs of decline in recent years

Bird Survey Results Description

- 4.13 The majority of bird species recorded were typical of the range of habitats that dominate the Site, primarily improved grassland and broad-leaved woodland. The internal parts of the grassland provided limited breeding opportunities for the majority of species recorded, with Canada goose *Branta canadensis*, greylag goose *Anser anser* and lapwing observed using the Site, all ground-nesting species and observed on only a single survey occasion each. However, the grassland provides suitable foraging habitat for a variety of species including starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, song thrush, mistle thrush, dunnock *Prunella modularis* and pigeons *Columbidae*.

- 4.14 Three lapwing were observed using the arable field at the centre of the Site on the second survey occasion, expressing courtship and displaying behaviour, as well as agitated behaviour suggesting that the field was probably being used for breeding. A pair of Greylag geese were also observed on the same survey occasion, as well as a pair of Egyptian geese and several Canada geese. However, upon the third survey occasion the field had been cleared and ploughed, removing the suitable nesting habitat for the species, and two foxes were observed in the area where the lapwing had been observed to land. Therefore, it is probable that the active farm management at the Site makes it unsuitable for breeding for these species and that predation is likely at a high level, thus rendering the area more unsuitable for these species.
- 4.15 Woodland and hedgerow habitats across the Site provided breeding and foraging opportunities for a number of common and widespread, generalist and woodland species including wren, blackbird *Turdus merula*, robin *Erithacus rubecula* and the common tit and finch species recorded. Notable species, including song thrush, mistle thrush, dunnock and greenfinch were all recorded using onsite hedgerows/woodland features. A song thrush was observed carrying food during the second survey occasion, confirming it as a breeding species onsite.
- 4.16 Several streams run throughout the Site and were observed to be used by a pair of mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, and so it is probable that the Site is used for breeding by this species.
- 4.17 A number of species, including red kite *Milvus milvus*, buzzard *Buteo buteo*, grey heron *Ardea cinerea*, and feral pigeon *Columba livia f. domestica* were recorded overflying the Site only and due to a lack of breeding evidence and/or unsuitable habitat were recorded as non-breeders. Black-headed gull were predominantly recorded as flyovers although one was observed landed onsite, however it was not observed in suitable nesting habitat and was therefore recorded as a non-breeder.

Evaluation

Breeding Assemblages

- 4.18 The improved grassland onsite was of limited suitability as a breeding habitat. Only two of the observed goose species could potentially utilise the habitat for breeding; Canada goose, and greylag goose, the latter of which is amber listed and a WCA Schedule 1 species. None of the other species recorded are likely to use this type of habitat for breeding. These goose species tend to nest close to the edge of waterbodies, further limiting the likelihood that they would be using the grassland onsite for breeding and no evidence of confirmed breeding was identified for these species.
- 4.19 The grassland habitats provided suitable foraging habitat for a larger number of species including goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*, woodpigeon and song thrush. Breeding was confirmed for song thrush, considered probable for woodpigeon and possible for goldfinch, but not within the grassland. The Site was considered to be of no more than **Local** level importance for this grassland bird assemblage due to its suitability for foraging.
- 4.20 The arable habitat on-site provided limited suitable breeding habitat due to the ongoing management of the land during the survey period. Lapwing were observed to be using the arable field at the centre of the Site while it was left fallow and were recorded as probable breeders due to the behaviours observed. However, the ongoing active management meant the field was ploughed thus rendering it unsuitable for breeding. No specialist arable species such as yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* or linnet *Carduelis cannabina* were identified that might have used such habitat for foraging or

breeding, although several generalist species were observed that may use the habitat for foraging, such as greenfinch and goldfinch. Therefore, the Site is considered to be of no more than **Local** level importance for the arable assemblage recorded.

- 4.21 Hedgerows and woodland features on the Site provide suitable breeding and/or foraging habitat for an assemblage of common and widespread generalist species including dunnock, blackbird, blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* and wren. The assemblage recorded is considered typical of the habitats present, which are a common feature of the surrounding landscape. While the assemblage includes a number of notable species, these species are all fairly common to abundant in Berkshire and the numbers recorded are all considered typical of the habitats present. The Site was therefore considered to be of no more than **Local** level importance for the generalist assemblage recorded.

Individual Species

- 4.22 **Table 5** provides summarises those birds species recorded from the Site that are of at least Local importance.
- 4.23 The majority of the other breeding bird species were either recorded in small numbers, were recorded flying over the site, were noted in unsuitable breeding habitats and/or are considered common and widespread breeding species. These individual species that make use of the available habitats are recognised as being of only Site importance.

Table 5: Birds of at least Local Importance

Name		Status		Nature Conservation Value
		WCA Sch.1	NERC S.41	
BoCC Red List				
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		+	Local
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>			Local
Mistle thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>			Local
BoCC Amber List				
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		+	Local
Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	+		Local
BoCC Green List				
Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	+		Local

Wintering Surveys

- 4.24 A total of 27 bird species were recorded within the survey area during the February survey, of these, 12 appear on one or more of the following and are hereinafter referred to as 'notable' species.
- Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
 - BoCC Red or Amber lists
 - Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006
- 4.25 The majority of species recorded on site were typical of the habitats present, being mainly wet woodland, marshy grassland and arable fields. The wet woodland supported a number of generalist species including song thrush, goldcrest and wren. A wetland species, teal, was also recorded in the

woodland, with five flushed from one of the pools. A second wildfowl species, mallard, was recorded using the on-site ditches.

- 4.26 The hedgerow and woodland habitat marking the site boundaries supported a variety of common and widespread, generalist species. This assemblage included redwing, blue tit, chaffinch and greenfinch.
- 4.27 Few species were recorded using the arable fields and marshy grassland, with mostly common species such as woodpigeon, green woodpecker and carrion crow recorded. The most notable species recorded using the arable habitat was a single lapwing, a wader species associated with farmland and wet grassland.
- 4.28 A single species, red kite, was recorded flying over the site only and so was not considered to be using any of the on-site habitats.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The following section provides an assessment of the potential impacts of the proposals upon breeding birds. Where appropriate, recommendations are provided for mitigation and enhancement that take account of the likely ecological effects. Throughout the evaluation, any recommendations for mitigation have been informed by the Site Framework Plan.
- 5.2 The proposed SANG development will comprise several wetland and woodland habitats, species rich grassland and scrub with public right of way routes and a boardwalk to allow for year-round use.
- 5.3 The recommendations below have been given with the aim of informing development proposals on how to best maintain the conservation status of bird species present.

Impact Assessment

- 5.4 The potential impact of the loss or change of habitat upon breeding bird species arising from the effects of development is based upon an understanding of each species' ecological requirements, the type of development, number of birds recorded on site, their nature conservation criteria based on legislation and current guidance, their county status according to *The Berkshire Bird Report 2020* and professional judgement.
- 5.5 The following potential impacts to the recorded bird populations and assemblage may result from the proposals:
- Direct loss/change of breeding habitat.
 - Disturbance during habitat creation and/or operation.

Habitat Loss

- 5.6 Habitat loss on the Site is restricted to:
- Total loss of arable habitat;
 - Small loss of existing grassland; and
 - Small loss of existing trees by the road.
- 5.7 The proposed habitat creation includes:
- An extension of the existing wet woodland and creation of new wetland;
 - Scrub planting; and
 - Species rich grassland creation and grassland enhancement.
- 5.8 The individual species recorded on site that are arguably the most vulnerable to impacts from habitat loss/change are the six species that are considered to be of at least **Local** importance. These comprise notable species that are either specially protected, appear on the BoCC Red list and/or are listed as a NERC Priority Species and were recorded in at least locally important numbers.
- 5.9 There was no breeding confirmed within the arable habitat, although lapwing did attempt breeding. The loss of arable habitat will temporarily lead to a decrease in foraging habitat for notable species such as lapwing. This is not expected to lead to a significant impact as the proposed development will provide substantially more suitable breeding and foraging habitat in the long-term, in the form of wetlands and managed grassland habitats. It is therefore considered that the development of the

Site will lead to a short-term minor impact on this species at a **Local** scale, but in the medium- to long-term a beneficial impact is anticipated.

- 5.10 The loss of grassland habitat will temporarily lead to a decrease in foraging habitat for generalist species such as goldfinch, woodpigeon and song thrush. It will also result in a loss of potential breeding habitat for greylag goose although this is unlikely as there are no waterbodies within the grassland, limiting its suitability for breeding for this species. This is not expected to lead to a significant impact as the proposals will provide substantially more suitable breeding and foraging habitat in the long-term. It is therefore considered that the development of the Site will lead to a negligible impact on this species at a **Local** scale, which is anticipated to be a beneficial impact in the medium- to long-term.
- 5.11 A majority of the species recorded were using the woodland and tree habitats. These will be retained and extended, and new areas will be created. This will continue to provide suitable foraging habitats for the generalist species recorded including starling, dunnock, and song thrush which will all readily habituate to human disturbance introduced through PRow routes. The Site will also continue to provide suitable habitat for breeding red kite due to the woodland retention.
- 5.12 The proposed new wetland features onsite should be enhanced by the planting of aquatic and marginal species. This would improve foraging opportunities for the range of generalist species recorded while also providing potential habitat for additional species including reed bunting *Emberia schoeniclus*. Indeed, a number of notable species are likely to benefit from the proposals. It is therefore considered that development of the Site will result in a beneficial impact to the majority of the generalist bird populations recorded.

Disturbance Impacts

- 5.13 There is potential for some low level disturbance during the habitat creation by any works that require heavy machinery. This is limited to the pond creation, bund removal and scrape creation. There is also some potential for disturbance during the removal of the trees required to construct the access road.
- 5.14 Active, high level, infrequent disturbance causes most birds to be displaced for short periods⁸. During the breeding season, this disturbance may lead to nest desertion or the avoidance of the area and reduce the suitability of retained nesting areas temporarily, such as the hedgerows or woodland edge. The temporary nature of this disturbance, which will be followed by an increase in suitable breeding habitat, it is not expected to affect the local conservation status of the majority of the bird species using the site for breeding.
- 5.15 During its operational phase, the level of human disturbance is expected to increase with the provision of more PRow routes across the Site. Many of the generalist species onsite are likely to quickly habituate to increased human disturbance and so it is unlikely to have any major impact on the breeding success of these species.

⁸ Hockin, D., Ounsted, M., Gorman, M., Hill, D., Keller, V., and Barker, M. 1992 Examination of the effects of disturbance on birds with reference to the role of environmental impact assessments. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 36, 253–286

Avoidance of Impacts

- 5.16 To avoid disturbance to breeding birds it is recommended that any tree clearance required for access road and carpark construction or footbridge installation is undertaken outside of the bird-breeding season (March to August, inclusive).
- 5.17 If this is not possible, the area will be checked prior to removal of vegetation or ground works by an experienced ecologist. If active nests are found, vegetation will be left untouched and suitably buffered from works until all birds have fledged.
- 5.18 Subject to these methods of working, no impacts on the generalist breeding birds is anticipated.
- 5.19 Lapwing are a BoCC red listed species and are also listed under Schedule 41 of the NERC act. Three individuals were observed on a single survey occasion within the central arable field, exhibiting behaviour that indicated them as a probable breeding species on-site. At this time the field had been left fallow and provided sufficient vegetation cover for the habitat to be suitable for breeding. However, the ongoing farm management practices mean this area is not suitable for breeding lapwing and no direct evidence of breeding was recorded.
- 5.20 It is recommended that the current farmland management practices are retained to ensure the Site remains unsuitable for breeding lapwing prior to commencement of the habitat creation. Ideally the arable land should remain in a bare ploughed state. It is also recommended that, as a further precaution, ground level works are undertaken outside of the breeding season (March to August, inclusive). Should works have to take place within this time, an experienced ecologist should conduct a nesting bird check, with particular care to identify lapwing nests within the Site. Research suggests the flight initiation distance (FID) of Vanellus species is between 30-80m, and so a buffer zone of 100m would be an appropriate distance to enforce should a lapwing nest be identified on-site.
- 5.21 Subject to these methods of working, no impacts on potential ground nesting breeding birds including lapwing is anticipated.

Mitigation

- 5.22 Given the change in land use, it is predicted that creation of the SANG will have a beneficial impact on the breeding success of lapwing providing suitable the habitat is created and maintained. The proposals should incorporate open areas of short grassland or bare ground which will provide suitable nesting habitat. It would be beneficial to the species if islands of such nesting habitat were created within the proposed wetland habitats so as to reduce risk of predation and limit human disturbance. With these considerations, the proposed SANG development would likely have a positive impact on the breeding success of the local lapwing population.

Enhancements

- 5.23 The proposed habitat creation around the east of the Site will consist of grassland, scattered trees and scrub. Additional planting around the north of the Site will extend the existing wet woodland habitat, and wetland areas to the west are also proposed. These habitats will provide additional foraging and breeding habitat for a range of bird species. Where possible it is recommended that consideration is given to the provision of native, fruit bearing species of local origin to provide an optimal foraging resource for a range of bird species including the thrush species recorded.
- 5.24 Wetland features created towards the west should be planted with an appropriate marginal vegetation mix that includes common reed *Phragmites australis*. This will provide good nesting

opportunities for several notable species, including reed bunting, which will encourage on-site breeding.

5.25 Additional enhancements that could be integrated with the on-going management of the site include the erection of a mixture of nest box types. The following provides details of other suitable nest box types to be erected at suitable locations:

- A mixture of small hole (26mm and 32mm) boxes placed along the retained habitat around the Site will provide nesting opportunities for blue tit *Cyanistes caeruleus* and great tit *Parus major*. These boxes generally have a high uptake rate;
- Small open fronted nest boxes again should be placed throughout the site especially on trees which support a climber such as ivy which provides a degree of concealment. These boxes typically attract robin and blackbird.

Wintering Bird Assemblage

5.26 The wet woodland, woodland and hedgerow on-site provided suitable foraging habitat for a number of common, generalist species. Notable species using these habitats included song thrush, redwing, greenfinch and stock dove, all of which were recorded in small numbers. As of now, with only a single survey having been undertaken, the Site is considered to be of no more than Local level importance for this generalist bird assemblage.

5.27 Wetland birds recorded using the arable and wet woodland habitats on-site included lapwing, teal and mallard. The wetland bird assemblage using the on-site habitats was rather limited and, although a number of notable species were recorded, they were recorded in very small numbers. The future surveys will help to determine whether these species regularly utilise this site and if they occur in larger numbers. As of now, the site is considered to be of no more than Local level importance for the wetland bird assemblage.

5.28 With the exception of the arable land, the habitats being utilised by this assemblage are to be retained, enhanced and extended as part of the proposals. The additional creation of high quality habitats will more than adequately mitigate for the loss of arable land and therefore the creation of a SANG is considered likely to have a beneficial impact on wintering birds.

Key

- Site Boundary
- Fly over only

BoCC Red List Species

- L Lapwing
- M Mistle Thrush
- SG Starling
- GR Greenfinch

BoCC Amber List Species

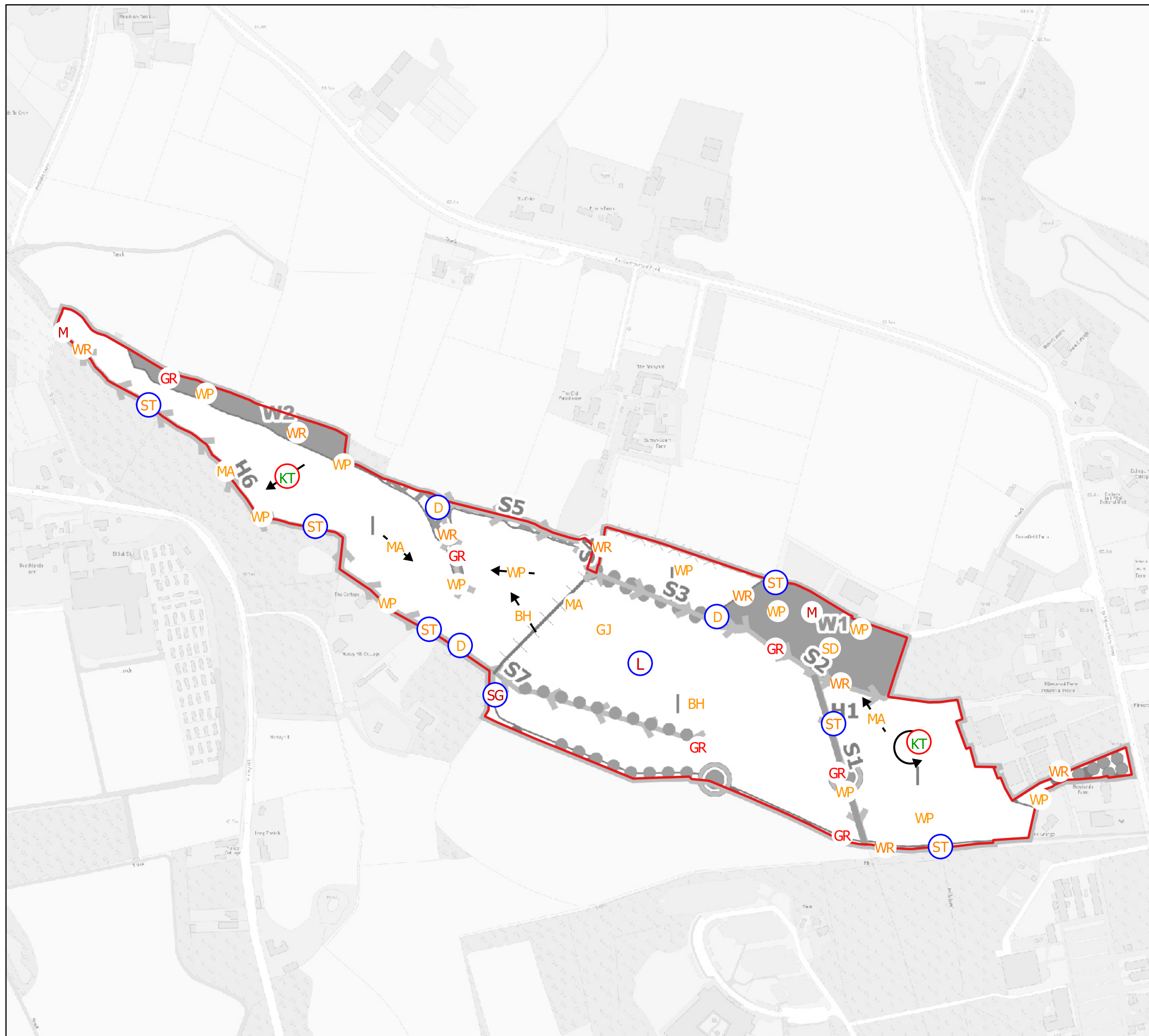
- BH Black-headed Gull
- D Dunnock
- GJ Greylag Goose
- MA Mallard
- SD Stock Dove
- ST Song Thrush
- WP Woodpigeon
- WR Wren

BoCC Green List Species

- KT Red Kite

Additional Protections

- NERC Species of Principal Importance
- Schedule 1 Species



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Key

 Site Boundary - 21.07.22

 Fly over only

BoCC Red Listed Species

- L Lapwing
- SG Starling
- GR Greenfinch



BoCC Amber Listed Species

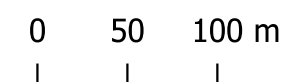
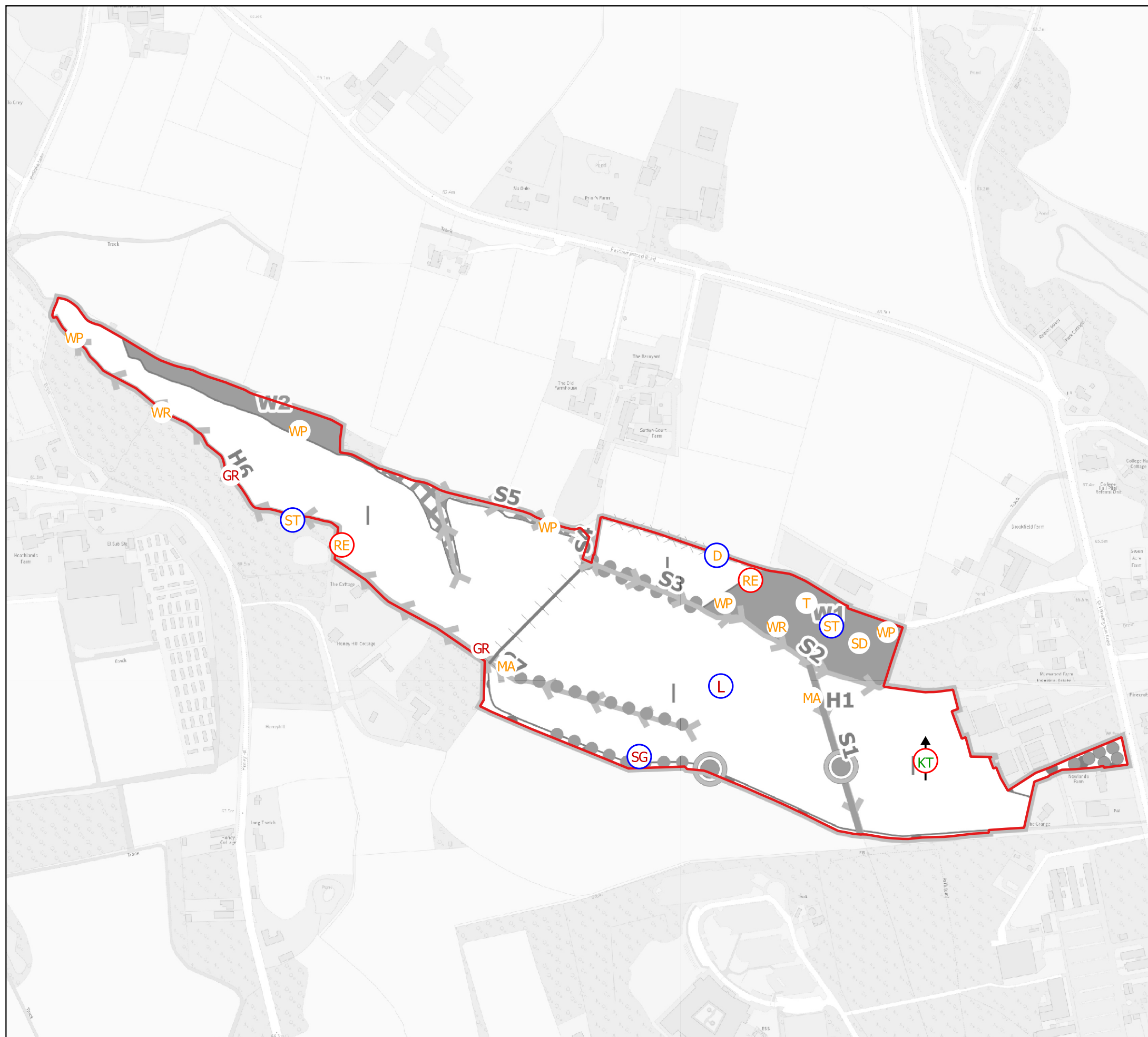
- D Dunnock
- MA Mallard
- SD Stock Dove
- T Teal
- RE Redwing
- ST Song Thrush
- WP Woodpigeon
- WR Wren

BoCC Green Listed Species

- KT Red Kite

Additional Protections

-  NERC Species of Principal Importance
-  Schedule 1 Species



client
The Thomas Family & Bloor Homes Limited
 project
Land at Newlands Farm, Wokingham
 drawing title
WINTERING BIRD SURVEY RESULTS -
LOCATION OF NOTABLE SPECIES

scale
1:4,200
 drawing / figure number
REM / EB
 issue date
19/12/2023



Figure 2

10930-E-01

APPENDIX A: BREEDING BIRD SURVEY RESULTS & CATEGORISATION OF BREEDING STATUS

Table 1: Surveyors and Conditions

Survey	Surveyor	Date	Cloud (%)	Rain	Wind	Visibility
1	REM	12.04.23	30	None	1-2	V. Good
2	REM	10.05.23	10	None	0-1	V. Good
3	EB	07.06.23	100	None	1-2	V. Good

Table 2: Surveyors Results

Species: British Common Name	Species: Latin name	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Conservation Status & Protection	Breeding status ¹
Egyptian goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	-	2	-	Not listed	Possible - H
Canada goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	-	6	-	Not listed	Possible - H
Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	-	5	-	Amber List WCA Sch.1 (Part II)	Possible - H
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	(7 flyovers)	3 (+ 4 flyovers)	(2 flyovers)	Amber list	Probable - P
Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	-	-	(1 flyover)	Green list	Non-breeder – F
Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	-	(1 flyover)	(1 flyover)	Green List WCA Sch.1	Non-breeder – F
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	-	(1 flyover)	-	Green list	Non-breeder – F
Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	-	(3 flyovers)	1 (+ 2 flyovers)	Amber list	Non-breeder – UH
Feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia f. domestica</i>	-	(1 flyover)	-	Not listed	Non-breeder – F
Stock dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	1	1	-	Amber list	Possible - H
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	56 (+ 4 flyovers)	9 (+ 6 flyovers)	12	Amber list	Probable - T
Collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	1	-	-	Green list	Possible – H
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	-	3	-	Red list NERC S.41	Probable – P, D, A
Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	2	-	1 (+ 1 flyover)	Green list	Possible - H
Green woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	2	-	-	Green list	Possible - H
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	-	-	1	Green list	Possible - H
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	4	2	4	Green list	Possible - H
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	7	(8 flyovers)	8	Green list	Possible – H
Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	26	14	1 (+ 1 flyover)	Green list	Possible – H
Coal tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	1	-	-	Green list	Possible – H, S
Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	16	11	13	Green list	Probable – P, T
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	11	13	16	Green list	Confirmed – ON
Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	2	-	-	Green list	Possible – H
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	4	2	3	Green list	Probable - T
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	2	2	4	Green list	Probable – A, T

¹European Ornithological Atlas Committee, 1979. *Categories of Breeding Bird Evidence*. European Ornithological Atlas Committee.

Species: British Common Name	Species: Latin name	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Conservation Status & Protection	Breeding status ¹
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	1	1	-	Green list	Probable - T
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	15	9	13	Amber list	Probable - T
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	1	-	-	Green list	Possible - H
Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	-	-	1	Green list	Possible - H
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	1	-	-	Red list NERC S.41	Possible - H
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	7	5	4	Green list	Probable – P, A, T
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	2	4	4 (+ 1 flyover)	Amber list NERC S.41	Confirmed - FF
Mistle thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	-	2	1	Red list	Probable – T, A
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	19	10	7	Green list	Probable - T
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	2	1	1	Amber list NERC S.41	Possible – H, S
Pied wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	-	(1 flyover)	-	Green list	Non- breeder – F
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	2	6 (+ 1 flyover)	4	Red list	Probable – T, P
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	1 (+ 1 flyover)	(1 flyover)	-	Green list	Possible – H
Total No. Species		26	29	22	Total: 38	

Breeding Status evidence can be broken down into four sections, each with their own codes, as defined by the European Ornithological Atlas Committee:

Confirmed breeder

- DD** – distraction display or injury feigning
- UN** – used nest or eggshells found from this season
- FL** – recently fledged young or downy young
- ON** – adults entering or leaving nest-site in circumstances indicating occupied nest
- FF** – adult carrying faecal sac or food for young
- NE** – nest containing eggs
- NY** – nest with young seen or heard

Probable breeder - Evidence accumulated during the survey indicates that the bird species is breeding on site.

- P** – pair in suitable nesting habitat
- T** – permanent territory (defended over at least 2 survey occasions)
- D** – courtship and display
- N** – visiting probable nest site
- A** – agitated behaviour
- I** – brood patch of incubating bird (from bird in hand)
- B** – nest building or excavating nest-hole

Possible breeder - Evidence accumulated during the survey indicates that the bird species could be breeding on site, but the evidence is less conclusive than that obtained for probable breeders.

- H** – observed in suitable nesting habitat
- S** – singing male

Non-breeder

- F** – flying over
- M** – migrant
- U** – summering non-breeder
- UH** – observed in unsuitable nesting habitat

Appendix B: Land at Pinewood, Wokingham – 2023/24 Wintering Bird Survey Results

Survey	Date	Cloud (%)	Rain	Wind	Visibility
1	22.02.23	100	1	1	Very good
2	09.01.23	20	0	2	Very good
3	27.01.23	90	0	2	Very good
4	14.02.23	100	0	1	Good

Species: British Common Name	Species: Scientific name	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4	Conservation Status & Protection
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	-	-	-	38	Not Listed
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	2	58	17	41 (+ 2 flyovers)	Not Listed
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	4				Amber List
Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	5				Amber List
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	-	-	2	1	Not Listed
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	(1 flyover)	-	-	(1 flyover)	Green List
Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	(1 flyover)	1 (+ 1 flyover)	(3 flyovers)	(2 flyovers)	Green List WCA Sch. 1
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	1	-	-	-	Amber List
Stock dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	1				Amber List
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	96 (+ 3 flyovers)	1	6	7 (+ 2 flyovers)	Amber List
Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	1	-	-	-	Amber List
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	1				Red list NERC S.41
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	(1 flyover)	(1 flyover)	(15 flyovers)	-	Amber List
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus meanocephalus</i>	-	-	1 (+ 2 flyovers)	-	Amber List WCA Sch.1
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	2	-	-	-	Red List NERC S.41
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	-	-	-	(1 flyover)	Green List

Species: British Common Name	Species: Scientific name	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4	Conservation Status & Protection
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	-	-	-	(1 flyover)	Green List
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	-	1	-	4	Green List
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	2	-	-	-	Green List
Ring-necked parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	1	-	-	-	Not Listed
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	1	1	2	4	Green List
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	5	2 (+ 2 flyovers)	4	-	Green List
Jackdaw	<i>Coleus monedula</i>	3	2 (+ 144 flyovers)	109 (+ 5 flyovers)	10 (+ 52 flyovers)	Green List
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	-	-	-	3	Amber List
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	11	7 (+ 1 flyover)	16 (+ 1 flyover)	29 (+ 10 flyovers)	Green List
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	-	-	(2 flyovers)	-	Green List
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	4				Green List
Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	18	2	-	15	Green List
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	13	1	4	11 (+ 1 flyover)	Green List
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	1	-	2	-	Green List
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	-	-	-	1	Green List WCA Sch.1
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	5	-	27	19	Green List
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	-	-	1	-	Green List
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	1	-	4	1 (+ 1 flyover)	Red List NERC S.41
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	4	1	6	8	Amber List
Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	1	-	-	2	Green List
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	24 (+ 13 flyovers)				Red List NERC S.41
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	2	2	-	1	Amber List NERC S.41
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	3	3	78 (+ 1 flyover)	190 (+ 30 flyovers)	Amber List WCA Sch.1

Species: British Common Name	Species: Scientific name	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4	Conservation Status & Protection
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	5	1	9	11	Green List
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	152	5	19 (+ 13 flyovers)	-	Red List WCA Sch.1
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	14	-	5	11	Green List
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	1	-	-	1	Amber List NERC S.41
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	1 (+ 1 flyover)	-	-	(10 flyovers)	Green List
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	6	2	-	4	Amber List
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	3	-	-	7	Green List
Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	2				Red List
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	33 (+ 1 flyover)	(25 flyovers)	2	9	Green List
Total No. Species		27	18	22	29	41