



Breeding Bird Survey 2024

Partridge Green, Horsham

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CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	3
2.0	METHODOLOGY	5
3.0	RESULTS	7
4.0	DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	13
5.0	REFERENCES.....	15
	APPENDIX 1. BREEDING BIRD SURVEY (1 OF 2) – 21/03/24	17
	APPENDIX 2. BREEDING BIRD SURVEY (2 OF 2) – 12/04/2024	18

LIABILITIES:

Whilst every effort has been made to guarantee the accuracy of this report, it should be noted that living creatures are capable of migration and whilst protected species may not have been located during the survey duration, their presence may be found on a site at a later date.

The views and opinions contained within this document are based on a reasonable timeframe between the completion of the survey and the commencement of any works. If there is any delay between the commencement of works that may conflict with timeframes laid out within this document, or have the potential to allow the ingress of protected species, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted.

It is the duty of care of the landowner/developer to act responsibly and comply with current environmental legislation if protected species are suspected or found prior to or during works.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Croudace Homes to undertake an assessment of breeding birds on land Partridge Green, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 8EF.

Site Context and Status

1.2 The site is situated just off Bines Road, Partridge Green, Horsham, West Sussex (TQ 18853 18751). The site consists predominately of arable fields, and semi-improved grassland field margins with hedgerows bordering its northern and eastern boundaries. Some mature scattered trees are also present along its western boundary.

1.3 A wider survey area (Figure 1) was covered as to ensure that a better idea of the presence of bats within and around the development site was known.



Figure 1: Survey boundary (cyan) and development boundary (red).

1.4 This specialist survey was identified as needed due to the potential value of the site for farmland birds, the conservation of which is identified as a priority at both national and local levels.

Proposed development

1.5 The current proposals include a residential development of 101 units, with associated gardens and public green space, and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) located within the eastern portion of the site. The current proposals are shown in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2: Current proposals for the site.

Planning context: priority and specially protected species

1.6 Local Planning Authorities should have regard in their “duty to conserve biodiversity”, as discussed further below. This duty can reasonably be interpreted as requiring an assessment of breeding bird interest for larger development proposals, to inform the impact assessment.

Domestic legislation

1.7 All bird species are protected against intentional killing or injury, their active nests against intentional damage or destruction and their eggs against intentional destruction, through the provisions of section 1(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. Certain species, listed on Schedule 1 of the Act, are afforded additional protection against disturbance whilst in or near a nest and disturbance to dependent young, through the provisions of section 1(5) of the Act.

Other species of conservation concern

1.8 A number of farmland birds are in decline in England and the UK and are classified, through inclusion on the Section 41 list of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, as of “Principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity” in England. These species and others are also classified as of Red or Amber List concern in the UK (Eaton et al. 2015) due to declines in their breeding or wintering population size or range. This non-statutory assessment is based on more recent national data than the Section 41 List and can be used alongside that list for the purposes of conservation evaluation. The requirement of the Secretary of State under Section 41(3) of the NERC Act to “further the conservation....” of the listed species and “promote the taking by others of such steps” implies obligations to Local Planning Authorities, often met through local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP).

2.0 Methodology**Field survey**

2.1 The survey period was between March and April 2024. The surveys were conducted by Benjamin Prego BSc (Hons) and Greg Holland an experienced ornithologist. A British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Breeding Birds Atlas method (Balmer et al. 2013) was followed and adapted, through the sub-division of observations by habitat type, to provide information on breeding species and activity for each of the main habitats within the site.

- 2.2 On each visit, the site was walked along linear habitat features with the aim to maximise site coverage. Each bird seen or heard was identified to species, registered to the parcel of land in which it was recorded and given a BTO Atlas breeding evidence code¹.
- 2.3 The desk study had identified the site as likely to have breeding populations of several Section 41 and Red List. The atlas methods were considered sufficient to identify which of these species were present and likely to be breeding and in which habitats.

Field survey limitations and justification

- 2.4 More frequent visits could give more precise estimates of the number of territories of skylarks (Chamberlain *et al.* 1999) and some other species. However, this objective is considered beyond the required scope of the impact assessment. An assessment of the number of territories of all species would require typically eight to ten visits² and then be accurate, in comparison with even more intensive nest search, for approximately 70% of species. As this monitoring method through territory mapping has been abandoned by the BTO since 2000, there would also be no ready means of comparing such detailed results between the site and national or regional trends, therefore such detailed information would be both inaccurate for some species and not informative on the value of a site for most other species.
- 2.5 The surveys were completed during dawn to early-morning period, over 6 hours, which is the recommended period to maximise the detection of most species (Balmer *et al.* 2013). Nocturnal species could be overlooked. As these would be woodland species and any woodland is to be retained, it was not considered necessary to carry out additional nocturnal surveys.

Data analysis

- 2.6 Each species was assigned a highest evidence of proof of breeding for each habitat type. The total number of pairs for each species of conservation interest for each habitat type was estimated from the maximum number of apparent territories (birds showing possible,

¹ <https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u36/downloads/breedingcodes.pdf>

² <https://www.bto.org/about-birds/birdtrends/2015/methods/common-birds-census>

probable or confirmed breeding activity). This number should be considered as giving an indication of the relative abundance of species, rather than being a precise estimate, for reasons discussed above (2.4). When it was considered that a species was present, but not breeding, for example, a migrant singing on one visit, this is mentioned in the results.

Table 1: Survey conditions.

Date	Cloud cover	Temperature (°C)
21 st March 2024	100%	7
12 th April 2024	10%	10

Evaluation

2.7 The evaluation of farmland birds makes use of the current listing of birds of conservation concern in the UK (Eaton *et al.* 2021) and the Section 41 list. The evaluation of the use of the site's habitats for species of conservation concern, hence any impact and mitigation, references recent literature on habitat and resource selection and response to habitat loss or disturbance for the relevant species.

3.0 Results

Species of Conservation Concern

3.1 In total, the surveys recorded 22 possible/probable or confirmed breeding bird species, within the red line or adjacent. A total of 10 of the possible/probable or confirmed breeding are of conservation concern (principal importance, red or amber list). These are discussed in more detail below (Tables 2 and 3). Maps of the species recorded on each visit can be seen in Appendix 1.

Table 2: Species of conservation concern recorded during the breeding bird surveys (Red and Amber List).

Species	Estimated Number of Pairs
Confirmed breeding	
Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	1 - 2
Probable breeding	
Dunnock <i>Prunella modularis</i>	1 - 2

Woodpigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>	10 - 15
Possible breeding	
Bullfinch <i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	1 - 2
Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	3 - 4
Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	6 - 7
Stock Dove <i>Columba oenas</i>	1 - 2
Greenfinch <i>Chloris chloris</i>	2 - 3
Mistle Thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	1 - 2
Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	1 - 2

Table 3: Other bird species recorded during the breeding bird surveys.

Species	Estimated Number of Pairs
Confirmed/probably breeding	
Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>	1 - 2
Blue Tit <i>Parus caeruleus</i>	10 - 11
Carriion Crow <i>Corvus corone</i>	2 - 3
Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	2 - 3
Chiffchaff <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	3 - 4
Collared Dove <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	1 - 2
Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	6 - 7
Great Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos major</i>	3 - 4
Great Tit <i>Parus major</i>	6 - 7
Jackdaw <i>Corvus monedula</i>	2 - 3
Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>	1 - 2
Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	4 - 5

Table 4: Species of conservation concern - non-breeding bird species recorded during the survey (Red and Amber List and Schedule 1).

Species
Non-breeding
Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>
Linnet <i>Linaria cannabina</i>
Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>

Great Black-backed Gull <i>Larus marinus</i>
Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i> (and Schedule 1)
Grey Wagtail <i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Rook <i>Corvus frugilegus</i>
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>
Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i> (Schedule 1)
Red Kite <i>Milvus milvus</i> (Schedule 1)

Habitats

3.2 The site primarily consisted of arable farmland, with areas of mixed scrub, grassland along the site boundaries and hedgerows.

Species of Conservation Concern

3.3 Figure 3 highlights the recorded species of conservation concern across all surveys.

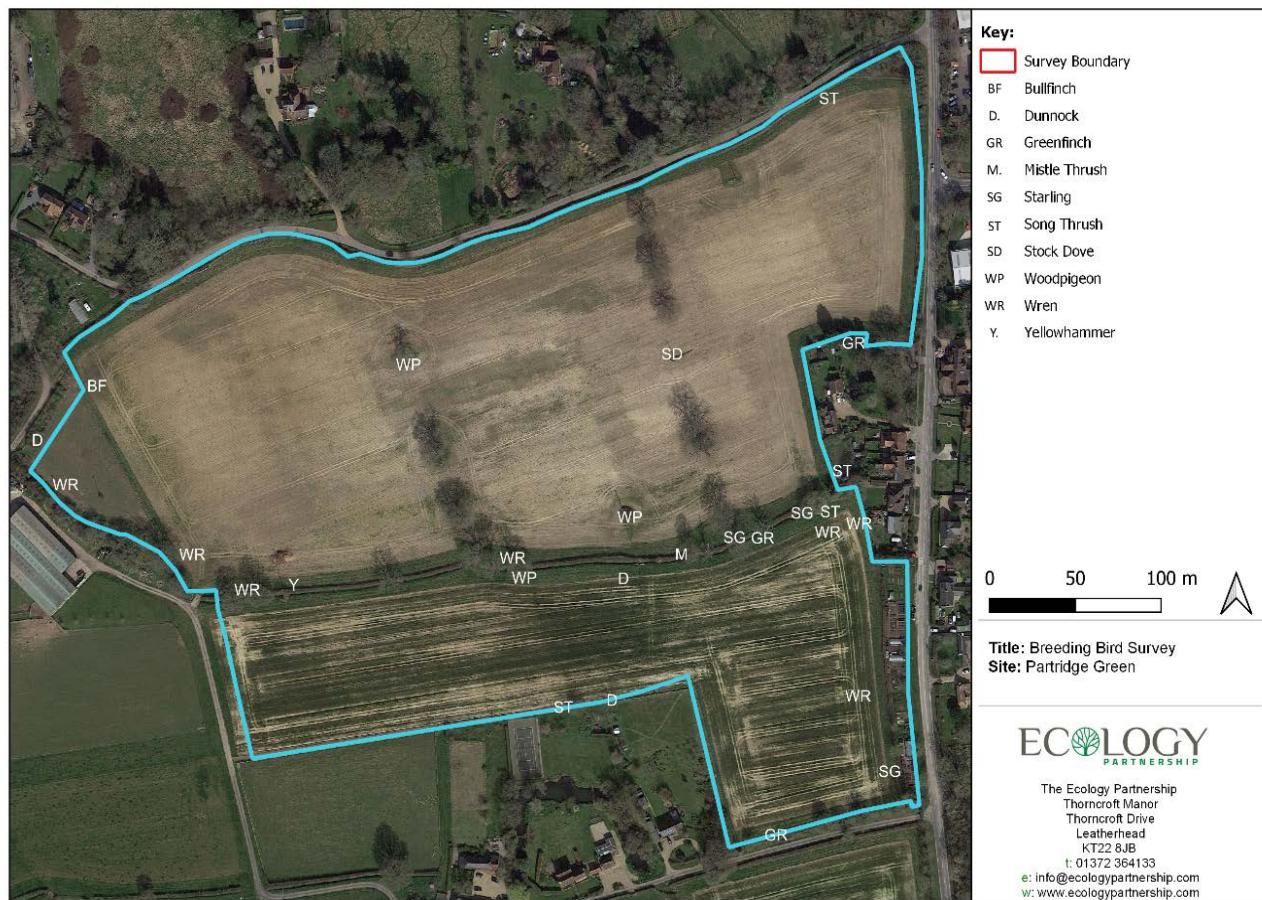


Figure 3: Survey Results - Species of Conservation Concern.

Starling

3.4 An active nest hole occupied by a starling family was recorded on 12th April. This species was confirmed to be breeding on site.

Dunnock

3.5 A pair were seen probably breeding in the hedgerow/field margins.

Woodpigeon

3.6 10 to 15 breeding pairs were recorded across all surveys. These were recorded across the entire site. This species is probably breeding within the mature oak trees.

Bullfinch

3.7 One male was heard calling on 12th April. This species is possibly breeding within the scrub habitat in the west

Song Thrush

3.8 Three to four pairs were recorded across all surveys. This species is possibly within the northern and central hedgerows.

Stock Dove

3.9 A male was heard calling on 21st March. This species is possibly breeding within the site.

Wren

3.10 Six to seven breeding pairs were recorded across all surveys throughout the site. This species was possibly breeding within the central hedgerow.

Greenfinch

3.11 One to two breeding pairs were recorded across all surveys. This species was possibly breeding within the eastern and southern hedgerow.

Mistle Thrush

3.12 One male was recorded singing on 12th April possibly breeding within the central hedgerow.

Yellowhammer

3.13 Yellowhammer were recorded to the western side of the site, outside the development boundary. These were not confirmed breeding, but a couple of males were recorded singing in this location. These were considered to be 'possible' breeding.

Herring gull

3.14 One individual was seen within the northeastern corner of the site on 12th April.

House Sparrow

3.15 One individual was seen within the northeastern corner of the site on 12th April.

Linnet

3.16 A few birds were recorded flying over the site on both surveys.

Skylark

3.17 One male was heard singing in fields to the west of the site on 12th April. No skylarks were recorded within the site boundary on either survey.

Great Black-backed Gull

3.18 One individual was recorded flying over the site on 12th April.

Greylag Goose

3.19 Two individuals were recorded within the southern field on 12th April.

Rook

3.20 A single individual was recorded flying over the site on 21st March.

Mallard

3.21 A single individual was recorded flying over the site on 12th April.

Meadow Pipit

3.22 A single individual was recorded within the southern field on 12th April.

Kingfisher

3.23 A single individual was recorded flying over the site on 21st March.

Red Kite

3.24 A single individual was recorded flying over the site on 12th April.

Species of lower conservation concern

3.25 The most frequent non-priority bird species recorded breeding or probably breeding on site included blue tit, great tit, and goldfinch.

4.0 Discussion and Recommendations

4.1 A total of 10 bird species of conservation interest, confirmed/probably/possibly breeding, were recorded within the site. These birds can broadly be divided into functional groups according to their nesting and feeding habitats. The 9 species of conservation concern can be divided into two groups (Newton 2017):

- 1) Those nesting and largely feeding in and near hedgerow, scrub and woodland;
- 2) Those nesting in hedgerow, scrub and woodland, but taking much or all of their food from open land;

Effects on group 1 species (dunnock, bullfinch, wren and song thrush)

4.2 The majority of the scrub, hedgerows and lines of trees will be retained as part of the proposed development. New areas of scrub and hedgerows will be planted which will enhance opportunities for this species.

Effects on group 2 species (woodpigeon, starling, stock dove, yellowhammer, greenfinch and mistle thrush)

4.3 The majority of the scrub, hedgerows and lines of trees will be retained as part of the proposed development. New areas of scrub and hedgerows will be planted which will enhance opportunities for this species. New areas of species-rich grassland will be planted below the proposed solar panels which will provide foraging opportunities. It is recommended that weedy margins are provided and subject to limited management to ensure food resources are available for these species all year.

4.4 Overall, the proposed development will enhance opportunities for the species recorded within the site and in the local area.

Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

4.5 Killing, injury and disturbance of breeding birds during construction will be avoided with the implementation of mitigation measures such as removing vegetation outside of the breeding bird season, March to September inclusively for most species, and clearance under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist will be carried out to ensure compliance with Schedules 1 and 5 of the WCA.

4.6 Starlings were recorded nesting within the site, as such it is recommended that starling nest boxes are included as part of the proposed development. Bird boxes can be hung on mature trees around the site to create new nesting opportunities. Recommended boxes include:



Figure 4: Vivara Pro WoodStone Starling Nest Box (left) and Vivara Pro Seville 32mm WoodStone Nest Box (right).

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 A total of 22 possible/probable or confirmed breeding bird species were recorded over the survey period, 10 of which are of conservation concern. These being starlings, dunnocks, woodpigeons, bullfinch, song thrush, wren, stock dove, greenfinch, mistle thrush and yellowhammer.

5.2 The proposals are retaining the vast majority of the boundary habitats, namely the hedgerows and line of trees, as well as already incorporating new high-value habitats such as hedgerows, species-rich grassland and scrub. As such, it is believed that the proposals, in combination with the mitigation and enhancement measures laid out within this report, would result in a net positive for breeding birds within the local area.

6.0 References

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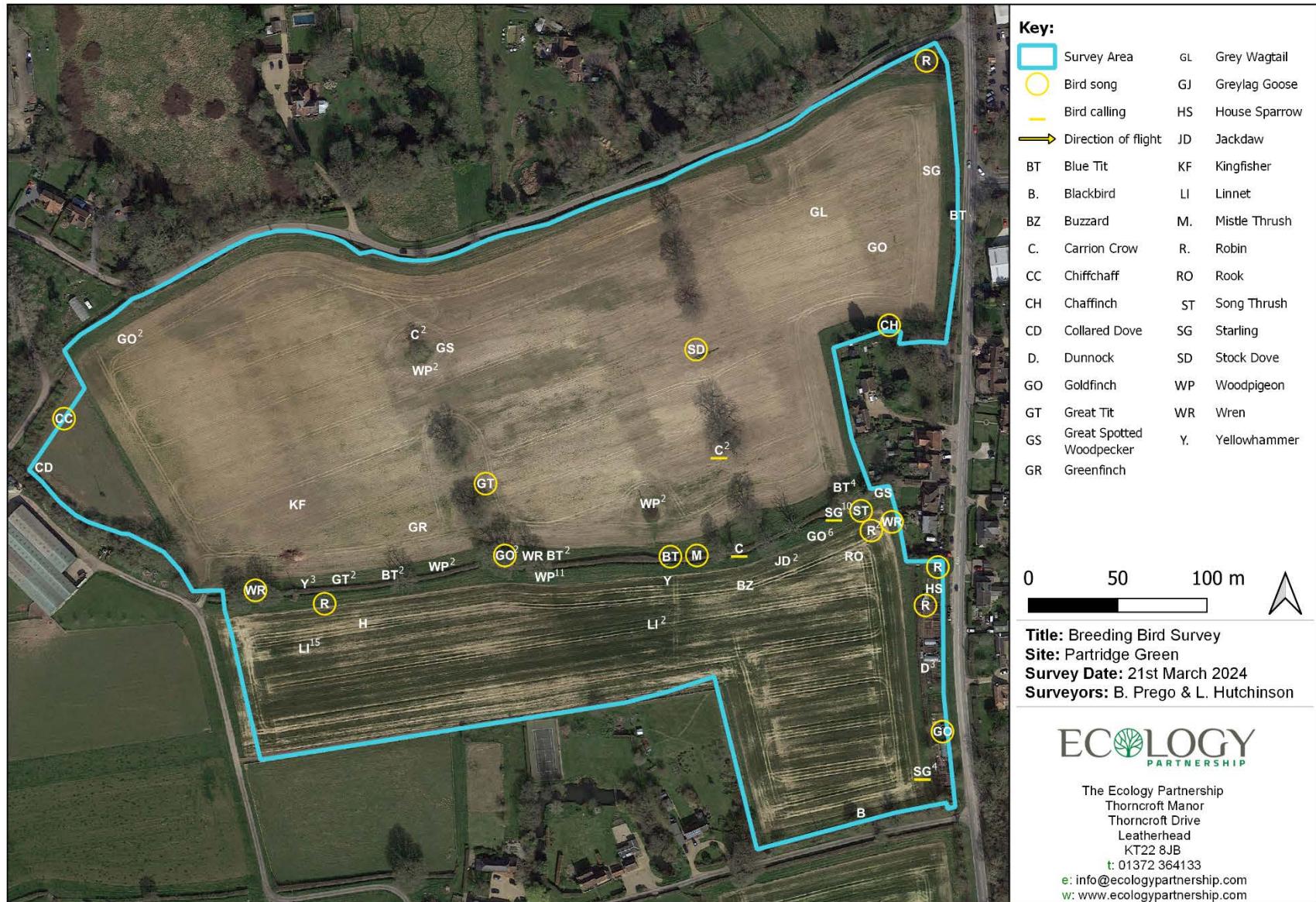
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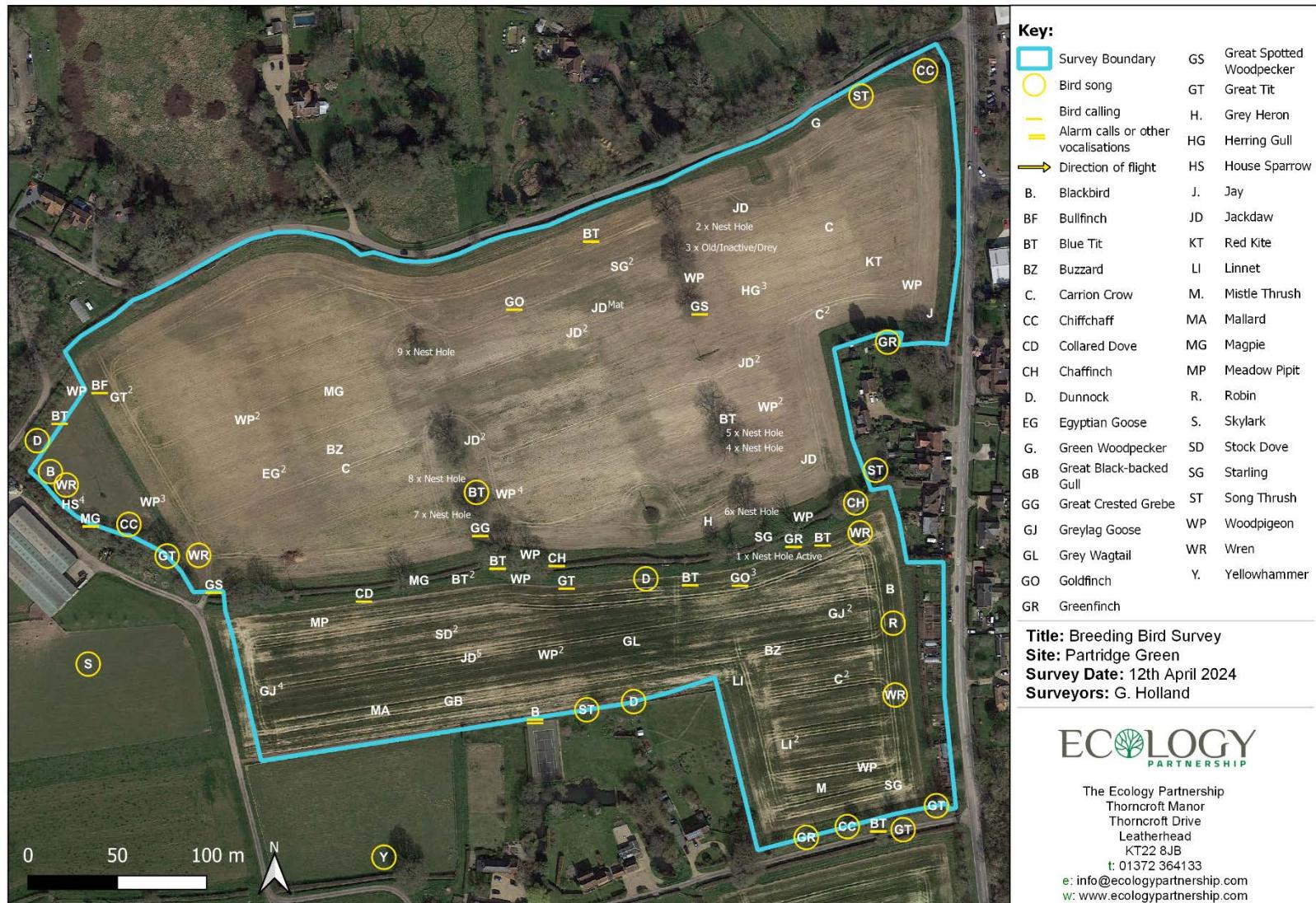
Internet resources:

Google Maps: www.maps.google.co.uk Magic Interactive Map: www.magic.gov.uk

Appendix 1. Breeding bird survey (1 of 2) – 21/03/24



Appendix 2. Breeding bird survey (2 of 2) – 12/04/2024



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