Breeding Bird Surveys 2024

Land near the Junction of Lynwick Street and Guildford Road, Horsham, West Sussex

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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

Background, planning and legislative context

1.1 The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Welbeck Homes, to undertake an assessment of breeding birds at land near the Junction of Lynwick Street and Guildford Road, Horsham, West Sussex.

1.2 This is one of a number of specialist surveys identified as needed during the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the site, due to the potential value of the site to support either declining or rare bird species, the conservation of which is identified as a priority at both national and local levels, as discussed further in section 1.5.

Site Description

1.3 The site is to the south-west of Rudgwick and to the north-west of Horsham (TQ07973305). The site covers approximately *c.* 5ha and consisted of two cow-grazed grasslands with scrub, broadleaved treelines and hedgerows with trees along the field boundaries. The immediate surroundings comprised of arable fields, broadleaved woodland and low-density residential housing. There are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Local Nature Reserves (LNR) within 2km of the site.

1.4 The aerial photograph (Figure 1) shows the site and its immediate surroundings. The red line depicts the approximate site boundary and survey area.

Figure 1: Approximate location of the red line boundary showing the wider landscape

Planning context: priority and specially protected species

1.5 Local Planning Authorities should have regard in their "duty to conserve biodiversity", as discussed further in paragraph 1.8 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

1.6 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

1.7 A number of common farmland and woodland 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).

1.8 The PEA and data from the Sussex Biological Records Centre (SxBRC) in 2023 identified a number of principal importance and/or red list species as having been recently (post 2015) recorded within 2km of the site. These species included: red kite (*Milvus milvus)*; linnet (*Linaria cannabina*); nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*); starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*); and song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*).

Description of the Proposed Development

1.9 The current proposals for the site are to build a new residential development with associated access and landscaping which includes the creation of SuDS ponds.

2.0 Methodology

Field survey

2.1 Three surveys were conducted across spring/summer 2024, by Greg Holland, an experienced ornithologist.

2.2 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.

2.3 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 code[1]. The desk study had identified the site as likely to have breeding populations of a number of Section 41 and Red List. The atlas methods were considered sufficient to identify which of these species were present and breeding in which habitats.

Field survey limitations and justification

2.4 More frequent visits could give more precise estimates of the number of territories of skylark (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 visits[2] 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 4 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.

[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

Data analysis

2.6 From the combined survey visits, each species was assigned a highest evidence of proof of breeding for each habitat type. A 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, 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 (2.3). 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: Date, time and weather conditions during breeding bird surveys

Date	Time	Cloud cover	Rain	Wind	Visibility
21/04/2024	06:15 – 08:55	0%	None	0-1	Good/Clear
25/05/2024	05:20 – 08:45	40%	None	0	Good/Clear

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.* 2015) 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 A total of seven species of conservation concern (principal importance, red or amber list) were observed on or nearby to the site. Of these, three species were considered to potentially be breeding, within site. These are discussed in more detail below.

Table 4: Species of conservation concern recorded during the breeding bird survey, of Red, Amber and Section 41 status (S41).

Species	21/04/2024	25/05/2024	Estimated Number of Breeding Pairs
Greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*)	-	X	1-2
House sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) (S41)	X	X	-
Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) (S41)	X	X	-
Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*) (S41)	-	X	1-2
Wood pigeon (*Columba palumbus*)	X	X	1-2
Eurasian sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)	-	X	-
Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)	-	X	-

Table 5: Other bird species recorded during the breeding bird survey.

Species	21/04/2024	25/05/2024	Estimated Number of Breeding Pairs
Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)	X	X	1-2
Blue tit (*Cyanistes caerulus*)	X	X	1-2
Carrion crow (*Corvus corone*)	X	X	-
Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)	X	-	-
Collared dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)	-	X	-
Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)	X	X	-
Great-spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*)	X	X	-
Great tit (*Parus major*)	X	X	1-2
Heron (*Ardea cineria*)	X	-	-
Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*)	X	X	1-2
Long-tailed (*Aegithalos caudatus*)	X	-	-
Magpie (*Pica pica*)	X	X	-
Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*)	-	X	-
Red kite (*Milvus milvus*)	-	X	-
Robin (*Erithacus rubicella*)	X	X	-

4.0 Discussion and Recommendations

Species of principal importance and red list species

4.1 A total of seven bird species of conservation interest were recorded within the site, three of which were probable breeding bird species. It is considered to be of low local importance to breeding bird species.

4.2 These birds can broadly be divided into functional groups according to their nesting and feeding habitats. The probable or confirmed breeding birds of conservation concern can be divided into four groups (Newton 2017):

1) Those nesting and taking the majority of their food from scrub, hedgerows and treelines – dunnock.
2) Those nesting in scrub, hedgerows or treelines, but likely taking much or all of their food from more open land (within the grassland) – woodpigeon and greenfinch.
3) Those taking much or all of their food from scrub or hedgerows – house sparrow and wren.
4) Those taking much or all of their food from open land (within the grassland) – starling and sparrowhawk.

4.3 The proposals for site currently indicate the retention or enhancement of all the scrub, hedgerow and treeline resource across site, with the addition of new planting along the northern site border and around the new roadways. As such, it is considered the nesting resource for groups one and two, and the foraging resource for groups two and one and three, is likely to remain functionally intact, if not improve.

4.4 To ensure that the proposed planting does improve the quality of the habitat available to these birds, it should be done with a mix of native and currently on-site species. This is aimed at having the strongest ecological synergy with species currently using site, providing a known exploitable resource, and therefore providing the highest value to them.

4.5 Those species taking much or all of their food from open grassland on site will face the loss of large areas of their on-site foraging resource. These areas will be partially replaced by

newly seeded areas as part of the new development. The site has been assessed as being of low value, implying other local habitat is providing either the same or higher value to the species on site. This is clearly evidenced by large areas of similar open pasture grassland surrounding the site. Given the limited value of the site, combined with the replaced habitat and abundant alternative local resource, the proposed development is considered likely to have a negligible negative impact on local group four breeding bird populations.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Two breeding bird surveys at land near the Junction of Lynwick Street and Guildford Road, Horsham, West Sussex, following British Trust for Ornithology Atlas methods, were carried out in April and May 2024. These surveys were conducted to assess how birds utilise site for various behaviours, but primarily nesting and foraging.

5.2 A number of farmland and woodland bird species are of conservation concern in England or the UK, due to the magnitude of decline in the size or range of their breeding or wintering populations. A total of seven such species of conservation concern, were identified on or directly adjacent to site during the surveys. These were greenfinch, house sparrow, starling, dunnock, wood pigeon, Eurasian sparrowhawk, and wren. Of these, greenfinch, dunnock, and wood pigeon were considered to be breeding on or directly adjacent to site.

5.3 The current proposals for the site are to build a new residential development with associated access and landscaping which includes the creation of SuDS ponds.

5.4 The proposed development will result in the clearance of large areas of open grassland foraging habitat for four species. Plans indicate the inclusion of ample green space, including open grassland and hedgerow/scrub planting, whilst there is a widely available local resource of similar habitat. It is considered that works now represent a negligible negative impact for all species, and a minor residual positive impact for several species.

6.0 References

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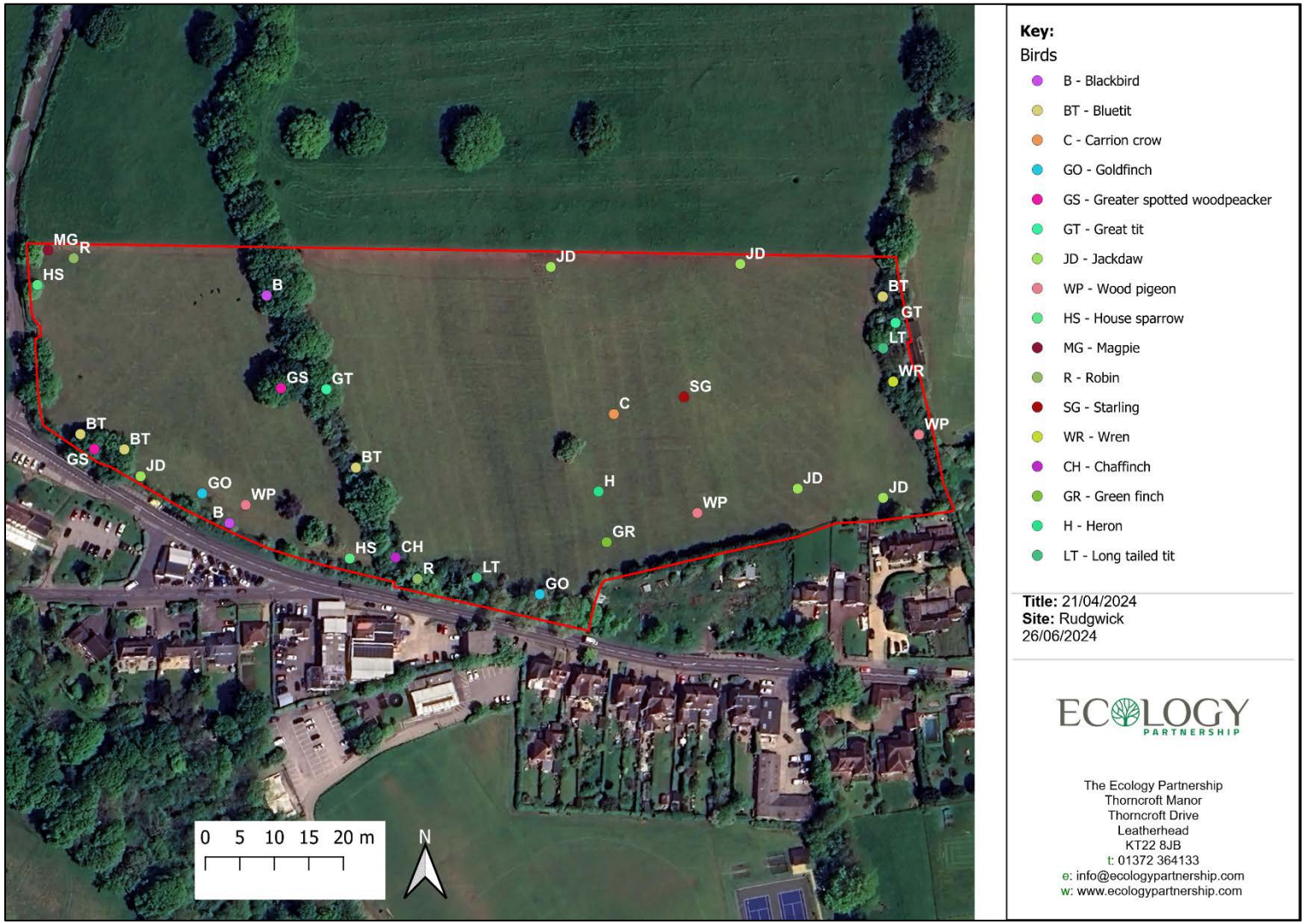
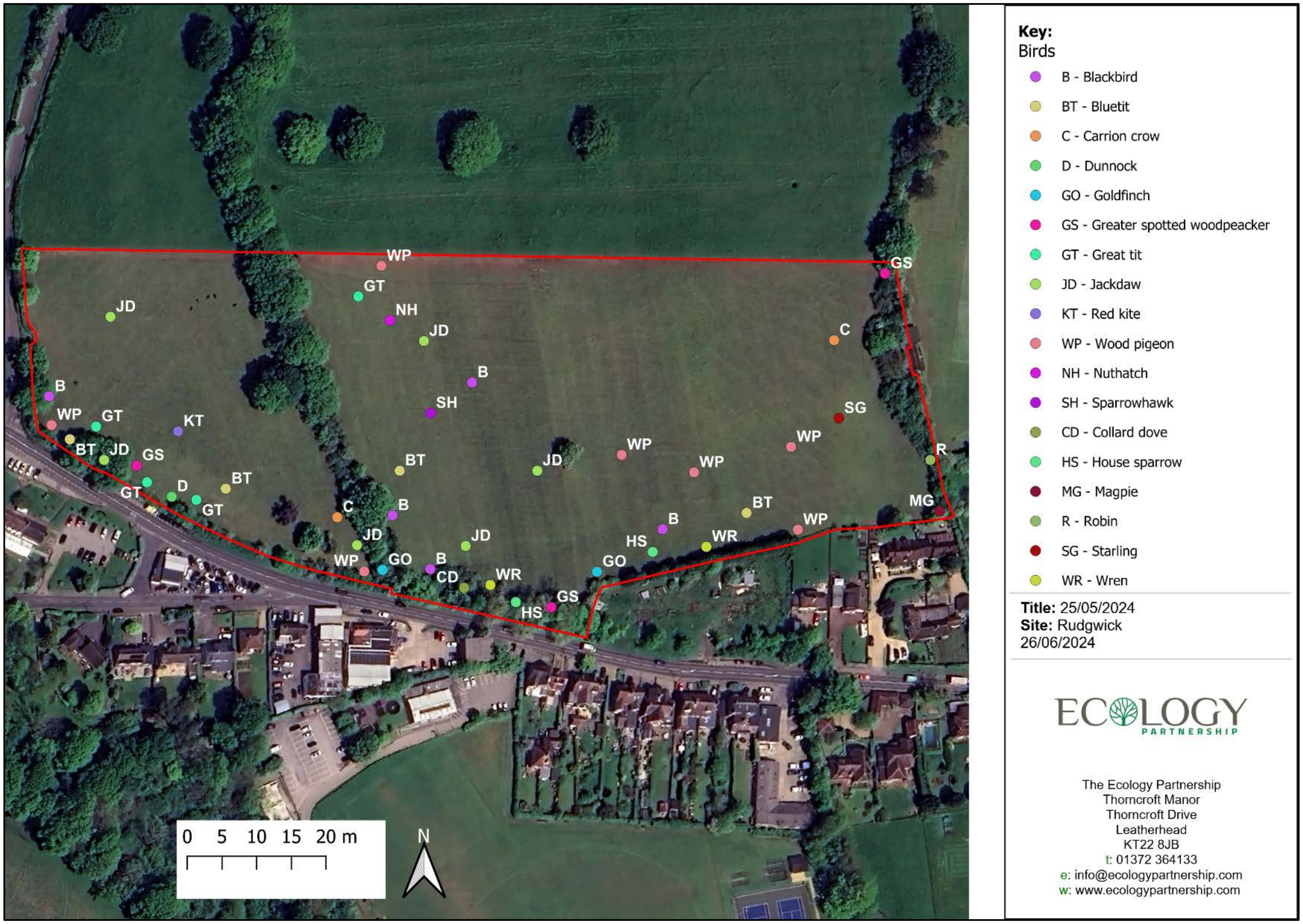
Internet resources:

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

Appendix 1: Results Mapping




Key:
Birds
B - Blackbird
BT - Bluetit
C - Carrion crow
D - Dunnock
GO - Goldfinch
GS - Greater spotted woodpeacker
GT - Great tit
JD - Jackdaw
KT - Red kite
WP - Wood pigeon
NH - Nuthatch
SH - Sparrowhawk
CD - Collard dove
HS - House sparrow
MG - Magpie
R - Robin
SG - Starling
WR - Wren
Title: 25/05/2024
Site: Rudgwick
26/06/2024
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