

Mowbray

Employment Land ~

Breeding Bird Report

January 2026



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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	Background.....	1
2	METHODOLOGY.....	2
2.1	Desk Study.....	2
2.2	Bird Survey.....	2
2.3	Survey Constraints	3
3	SITE DESCRIPTION	4
3.1	Desk Study.....	4
3.2	Birds.....	4
4	SUMMARY	6
	REFERENCES.....	7

TABLES

Table 1.	Breeding Status Criteria.....	2
Table 2.	Summary of Breeding bird Species	4

FIGURES

Figure 1.	Breeding Territories.....	8
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Derek Finnie Associates was commissioned by Legal & General (Strategic Land North Horsham) Limited (L&G) to undertake an ecological assessment in relation to an area of land within their wider Mowbray Development, known as the Employment Land, Horsham, herein referred to as the 'Site' (Figure 1).
- 1.1.2 The Site previously had planning permission for the construction of a business park, which implies the principle of any impact on ecology has been deemed acceptable. The previous permission, however, has subsequently expired and L&G are now seeking outline planning permission (all matters reserved) to provide an Employment Park comprising flexible commercial, industrial and logistics uses (Use Classes E(g), B2, B8), healthcare (Class E(e)) and commercial leisure.
- 1.1.3 To inform the application, a series of ecological surveys were undertaken to ensure that the findings and conclusions of the previous Environmental Statement, in as far as they relate to ecology, are still true and valid. The following report, therefore, presents the methodology and results of a breeding bird survey undertaken in 2025. The survey area (Figure 1) covers land associated with both the Employment Land application and the Employment Land Road application.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk Study

- 2.1.1 The Site sits within L&G's wider landholdings at their North Horsham (Mowbray) site, which has been subject to numerous ecological surveys since 2010; all of which have been considered in the context of the current assessment.

2.2 Bird Survey

- 2.2.1 Territory mapping, as described by Bibby *et al* (2000) was used to assess the breeding bird assemblage within the Site. A transect was walked across the Site on four separate occasions, with the route being reversed on the second and fourth visit. The transect came within 50m of all points of the Site to ensure an adequate survey effort was achieved.
- 2.2.2 Observations of all bird species encountered, with the number, sex (where possible) and any breeding or territorial behaviour being noted on a large-scale field map. The transects were undertaken first thing in the morning, although care was taken to avoid the first hour after sunrise as this is the time of highest bird activity and may skew the results in favour of the area at the start of the transect. The survey was conducted in fine weather on the 16th April, 7th May, 22nd May and 8th June 2025.
- 2.2.3 Signs of breeding activity, such as nests themselves or parents carrying food or faecal sacs, as well as repeated territorial behaviour allows the potential breeding status of individual birds to be determined as shown in Table 1, subject to certain assumptions (after IBCC 1969).

Table 1. Breeding Status Criteria

Breeding Status	Criteria
Confirmed	Active nest, dependent young, parents carrying food, parents carrying faecal sacs.
Probable	Pair observed in suitable habitat, repeated territorial behaviour/display in the same area.
Possible	Individual observed in suitable habitats, single observation of territorial behaviour/display
Non-breeding	Individual observed in un-suitable habitat.

- 2.2.4 Given the size and complexity of the Site, and the fact this is a repeat survey, four visit were deemed sufficient to ascertain the level of breeding activity within the Site.

2.3 Survey Constraints

- 2.3.1 The survey was undertaken in line with the latest sectoral guidance from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and BS 42020: 2013 *Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development*.
- 2.3.2 All survey work was undertaken by Derek Finnie MSc DipCons CEnv MEnvSc MCIEEM, Director of Derek Finnie Associates who has over 30 years as a practicing ecologist.

3 SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 Desk Study

- 3.1.1 A moderate breeding assemblage was noted within the Site during previous breeding bird surveys, with skylark being the only notable species recorded.

3.2 Birds

- 3.2.1 The Site appears to support a single pair of skylark within the southernmost field. Given the lack of current farming practices within the Site, combined with the relatively small, enclosed field sizes, the Site does not lend itself to supporting these species in greater numbers. Skylark territories are generally not found within 160m of field boundaries such as hedgerows (Donald 2004).
- 3.2.2 Other farmland specialists such as yellowhammer and linnet were not recorded and are assumed to be absent as breeding species.
- 3.2.3 The majority of the species encountered were associated with the woodland to the north and the hedgerows, which are mainly outside of the Application boundary.
- 3.2.4 The hedgerows and linear belts around the edge of the Site and Wider Survey Area and through the centre supported a range of common, widespread breeding species as summarised in Table 2.
- 3.2.5 A total of 19 species were encountered, with 15 displaying some level of breeding activity.

Table 2. Summary of Breeding bird Species

Species		Breeding Status	Conservation status
Common name	Scientific name		
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Confirmed	
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Probable	
Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	Confirmed	
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Non - breeder	
Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	Non - breeder	
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Probable	
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Possible	
Dunnoek	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Confirmed	BoCC Amber List
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Confirmed	
Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	Confirmed	
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Probable	
Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	Non - breeder	
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Confirmed	
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Probable	BoCC Red List; SPI
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Probable	BoCC Amber; SPI
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Probable	BoCC Red List; SPI
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Non - breeder	
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Confirmed	BoCC Amber
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Confirmed	BoCC Amber



- 3.2.6 Three Species of Principle Importance (SPI) under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 - song thrush, skylark and starling – were encountered within the Site, as well as two species on the Red List of BoCC and four on the Amber list (Stanbury *et al* 2021). The assumed location of the centre of the territory for each of these species is shown on Figure 1.

4 SUMMARY

- 4.1.1 The field surveys confirms the breeding bird populations within the Site is similar to that identified during survey to inform the original Environmental statement. Overall the breeding bird assemblage is assessed to be of Local value only.



REFERENCES

Bibby, C.J., Burgess, N.D., Hill, D.A. and Mustoe, S.H. 2000. *Bird Census Techniques. Second Edition.* Academic Press

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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



- Legend
- WR Wren
 - WP Wood pigeon
 - D Dunnock
 - ST Song thrush
 - S Skylark
 - SG Song thrush
 - Study Area

Drawing Number: Figure 1

Title: Breeding Territories

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Project: Mowbray - Employment Land

Client: L&G

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