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Breeding Bird Report

Client

Avant Homes Yorkshire

Project

Thurnscoe Bridge Lane,

Thurnscoe

Date

November 2024



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Rev	Issue Status	Prepared/Date	Reviewed/Date	Approved/Date
-	Final	NG / 08.10.24	MPF / 09.10.24	JD / 01.11.2024



1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 FPCR Environment and Design Ld. were commissioned by Avant Homes Yorkshire to conduct a scoping breeding bird survey on a site at Bridge Lane, Thurnscoe, to inform an application for a residential development.
- 1.2 The scoping survey was undertaken in April 2024 to establish the need for any further breeding bird surveys based on species and assemblage recorded at the Site. The Site predominantly comprises arable land and managed grassland. Hedgerows and trees were also present along boundaries, along with small areas of scrub and tall forbs. A total of 14 bird species were recorded during the survey, of which six were considered 'notable' species.
- 1.3 The species recorded were common and widespread predominantly generalist species and were present in small numbers, generally associated with the boundary habitats of the Site, and as such were considered of Site conservation importance only.
- 1.4 The breeding bird assemblage recorded did not meet the relevant Local Wildlife Site (LWS) selection criteria. As a result, the breeding bird assemblage was considered to be of Site conservation importance only.
- 1.5 The proposals will likely lead to a Negligible impact on bird species recorded since the majority of boundary habitats are to be retained, with higher value habitats within the greenspaces to be created/enhanced, which may lead to localised benefits for such generalist species.
- 1.6 Appropriate planting to support foraging and breeding habitats for a range of bird species within the green infrastructure of the Site is recommended as an enhancement, including the provision of native fruit and nut-bearing species, and wetland grassland planting in association with the proposed attenuation features. A mixture of bird nest boxes has been recommended to enhance nesting opportunities within the built areas of the Site's design layout, as well as provide nesting habitats whilst the green infrastructure matures.



1.8 INTRODUCTION

1.9 The following report has been prepared by FPCR Environment & Design Ltd. on behalf Avant Homes Yorkshire and details the results of a scoping breeding bird survey carried out on a site located off Bridge Lane, Thurnscoe (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference SE454049), hereafter referred to as the 'Site'. This report should be read in conjunction with the Ecological Impact Assessment¹ for the Site which includes an evaluation of the site regarding all ecological aspects.

Site Location and Context

- 1.10 The Site is approximately 9.92ha and located on land off Thurnscoe Bridge Lane to the south of Thurnscoe and northwest of Goldthorpe. The Site is surrounded by residential development to the north and south, a railway line, industrial buildings and Phoenix Park to the east, and arable land to the west. Further afield, to the southwest, lies RSPB Deane Valley.
- 1.11 The Site consists predominantly of arable land with a large parcel of modified grassland to the west of the Site, whilst hedgerows, tall forbs, mixed scrub and modified grassland are present at the north and eastern Site boundaries.

Site Proposals

1.12 Proposals for the Site entail the construction of a residential development comprising 305 dwellings with associated gardens, car parking, access roads, footpaths, cycle paths and a Local Area of Play (LAP). Green infrastructure proposed includes the creation of a sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) in the south and public open space (POS) within the western area of the Site, and tree planting.

Survey Objectives

- 1.13 The scoping breeding bird survey was carried out during April 2024. The objectives of the survey were to:
 - Identify the presence and distribution of breeding birds;
 - Evaluate the conservation importance of breeding bird populations present;
 - Evaluate the importance of breeding bird populations and the anticipated residual impacts of the development;
 - To identify areas of ornithological interest and make recommendations to minimise the potential impact of the scheme; and
 - Identify the need for further breeding bird survey visits.

¹ FPCR (2024), Ecological Impact Assessment, Bridge Lane, Thurnscoe



Legislation & Status

Legislation

- 1.14 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)² (WCA) 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 recklessly or intentionally:
 - Kill, injure or take any wild bird;
 - 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.
- 1.15 Species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) receive additional protection against intentional disturbance whilst building or occupying a nest, and against disturbance of dependent young. Certain species have also been identified as Species of Principal Importance (SPI) under Schedule 41 (S41) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006)³. 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 NERC Act, to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions.

Conservation Status

- 1.16 In addition to statutory protection, some bird species are classified according to their conservation status, such as their inclusion on the Red or Amber lists of Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) in the UK⁴:
 - 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.

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² [Online] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69

³ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents

⁴Stanbury A, Eaton M, Aebischer N, Balmer D, Brown A, Douse A, Lindley P, McCulloch N, Noble D & 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.



2.0 METHODOLOGY

Desk Study

- 2.1 In order to compile existing baseline ornithological information, the following statutory and non-statutory organisations were consulted for data regarding designated sites for which birds are a designating feature, and protected/notable bird records:
 - Natural England via the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website⁵; and
 - Sheffield Biological Records Centre (SBRC) and Doncaster Local Records Centre (DLRC);
- 2.2 The geographical extent of the search area for biodiversity information was related to the significance of sites and species and potential zones of influence which might arise from development within the Site. The consultation exercise was completed using the following scales, considered to be appropriate:
 - 10km around the Site boundary for sites of International Importance (e.g. Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar site);
 - 2km around the Site boundary for statutory sites of National or Regional Importance (e.g. Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI));
 - 1km around the Site boundary for statutory sites of County Importance (e.g. Local Nature Reserve (LNR));
 - 1km around the Site boundary for non-statutory designated sites of County Importance (e.g. Local Wildlife Site (LWS)) and for protected or otherwise notable species records (including SPI under S41 of the NERC Act 2006).
- 2.3 When handling data, species data were filtered to include records from the previous 20 years only (since 2004).

Field Surveys

- 2.4 A single scoping survey was undertaken between dawn and 11.00 on 17.04.24. The survey methodology employed was in accordance with the newly developed Bird Survey Guidelines for assessing ecological impacts⁶. All birds encountered (seen or heard) were recorded on a field survey plan using standard BTO species codes and symbols for bird activities and to denote breeding behaviour, activity, sex and age where appropriate. A route was mapped-out prior to the surveys being undertaken, paying particular attention to any linear features, such as hedgerows and watercourses, and other features such as ponds and scrub. Bird surveys were not undertaken in unfavourable conditions, such as heavy rain or persistent strong wind (conditions which can negatively affect the results).
- 2.5 During the survey on 17.04.24, there was 0% cloud cover, no rain, a Beaufort wind level of 0 (calm) and Excellent visibility

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⁵[Online].Available at: http://www.magic.gov.uk/ [Accessed 01.10.24]

⁶ Bird Survey & Assessment Steering Group. (2023). Bird Survey Guidelines for assessing ecological impacts, v.1.1.0. https://birdsurveyguidelines.org [Accessed 0.1.10.24]



Species & Assemblage Assessment

2.6 The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) guidance on ecological impact assessment assesses nature conservation importance within a geographical context⁷. To attain each level of importance, an ornithological resource or one of the features (species population or assemblage of species) should meet the criteria set out in Table 1. In some cases, professional judgment may be required to increase or decrease the allocation of importance, based upon local knowledge.

Table 1: Evaluation Criteria

Nature Conservation Value	Selection Criteria				
International	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	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	SPI under S41 of NERC Act (2006), which are not covered above, and which regularly occur 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 occur in regionally important numbers.				
County	SPI under S41 of NERC Act (2006), which are not covered above, and which regularly occur 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 afforded a non-statutory designation for its county important assemblage of birds (e.g. a Local Wildlife Site). Species on the BoCC Red List and which regularly occur in county important numbers.				
Local	Other species of conservation interest (e.g. all other species on the BoCC Red and Amber List or listed as SPI under S41 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.				

- 2.7 Particular attention has been given to bird species with an associated protection and/or conservation status such as WCA Schedule 1, SPI under S41 of NERC Act 2006 and/or BoCC Red or Amber list species. These species are likely to be of the greatest threat in relation to further decline and are commonly referred to as 'notable' species.
- 2.8 The recent county annual bird report, Yorkshire Bird Report 2017⁸ was consulted to inform the assessment. The abundance of species referred to in this report follows the guidelines as used in the county annual bird report:

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⁷ CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.2. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

⁸ Yorkshire Naturalists' Union, (2021). Yorkshire Bird Report 2017



- Vagrant Up to 10 records in total since records began;
- Rare 0-10 individuals each year in the past 10 years;
- Scarce 11-100 individuals each year in the past 10 years;
- Uncommon 101-1,000 individuals each year in the past 10 years;;
- Fairly common More than 1,000 records per year;
- Common More than 10,000 records per year;
- Abundant More than 50,000 records per year;



3.0 RESULTS

Desk Study

3.1 There was one statutory site of relevance to birds present within the search areas as summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Designated Sites of Ornithological Interest within Search Radius

Site Name and Designation	Summary Description	Ornithological Interest	Approx. Distance from site
Dearne Valley	Comprises a network of	The site provides breeding habitat for gadwall Mareca	2km
Wetlands (SSSI)	22 wetland, scrub and	strepera, shoveler Spatula clypeata, garganey Spatula	southeast
	woodland areas that	querquedula, pochard Aythya ferina, bittern Botaurus	
	extends through the	stellaris, black-headed gull Chroicocephalus ridibundus and	
	catchment of the River	willow tit Poecile montanus.	
	Dearne.	The site also supports a diverse assemblage of breeding birds	
		of Lowland damp grasslands, lowland scrub and a mixed	
		assemblage of lowland open waters and their margins and	
		lowland fen.	

Protected/Notable Species

- 3.2 A summary of the bird records provided for the area by the Sheffield Biological Records Centre (SBRC) is contained within the Ecological Impact Assessment.
- 3.3 A total of 310 records of 40 notable bird species were returned within 1km of the Site. No records with a grid reference of six figures or greater were returned within the Site boundary, although several records (from 18 species) originated from the SE4504 and SE4505 monads, a small percentage of which fall within the Site boundary, including the following NERC S41 species:
 - dunnock Prunella modularis, grey partridge Perdix perdix, house sparrow Passer domesticus, skylark Alauda arvensis, song thrush Turdus philomelos, starling Sturnus vulgaris, willow tit Poecile montana, willow warbler Phylloscopus trochilus, yellow wagtail Motacilla flava, and yellowhammer Emberiza citronella.

Breeding Bird Surveys

- 3.4 A total of 14 bird species were recorded during the 2024 breeding bird survey (for the complete list see Appendix A). Of these, six species meet the criteria of at least one of the following pieces of legislation/classifications discussed above: Schedule 1 of the WCA; Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006; and BoCC Red or Amber lists. These species are referred to as 'notable' species.
- 3.5 Of the 14 species recorded as present during the survey, no species were confirmed as breeding. Three species were considered probable breeders which included one notable species: (dunnock *Prunella modularis*). The other two probable breeding species were both BoCC Greenlisted and therefore of low conservation concern.
- 3.6 The remaining 11 species recorded were considered either possible breeders (10) or non-breeders (1) on the Site.



3.7 Table 3 provides a summary of the notable species recorded during the survey and their respective breeding statuses on site, whilst Figure 1 shows the approximate locations where they were recorded.

Table 3: Notable bird species recorded during the breeding bird surveys

Species Name: Common name Scientific name	Conservation Status & Protection	Count	Breeding Status	Recent Status in Yorkshire
Woodpigeon Columba palumbus	Amber List	8	Possible	Abundant and widespread resident and passage migrant/ winter visitor
Wren Troglodytes troglodytyes	Amber List	4	Possible	Abundant resident; passage migrant in small numbers
Song thrush Turdus philomelos	Amber List NERC S.41	1	Possible	Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor
Redstart Phoenicurus phoenicurus	Amber List	1	Non- breeder	Uncommon breeding summer visitor and passage migrant
Dunnock Prunella modularis	Amber List NERC S.41	4	Probable	Common resident; passage migrant
Linnet Linaria cannabina	Red List NERC S.41	5	Possible	Common resident and passage migrant

Breeding Bird Survey Results Description

- 3.8 The arable and grassland habitats present within the Site provided foraging opportunities for a range of widespread and generalist species, such as woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* and corvids, including magpie *Pica pica* and crow *Corvus corone*. The arable and grassland habitats did, however, not provide suitable breeding habitat for the species present within the Site.
- 3.9 The hedgerows, trees and boundary habitats provided foraging, shelter, and breeding habitat for a range of species. This included the notable species dunnock, which was determined to be a probable breeder within the Site due to it being observed as a breeding pair. The notable species woodpigeon, wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, song thrush, and linnet *Linaria cannabina* were all determined to be possible breeding species within the Site as males were observed singing in suitable breeding habitat. A single redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* was recorded on the southern boundary of the Site with consideration of the habitats present and the time of year it was recorded as a migrant.
- 3.10 Thurnscoe Dike and its associated habitats are located adjacent to the west of the Site, but no wetland or wet woodland bird species were recorded within the Site boundary.



4.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The Site was assessed against published criteria for Local Wildlife Site (LWS) selection in the Guidance for the Selection of Local Wildlife Sites in South Yorkshire⁹ to determine whether it achieved any of the thresholds for county value. This Site does not meet the criteria to be considered for selection as a LWS.

Breeding Birds Evaluation

- 4.2 The habitats within the Site supported an assemblage of common and widespread, generalist species in small numbers typical of the habitats present and the size of the Site, largely confined to the Site boundaries. Therefore, the site was considered to be of no more than Site level importance for its overall breeding bird assemblage.
- 4.3 Individually, no bird species recorded utilising the habitats within Site were considered as being of more than Site importance since they were either recorded in smaller numbers, noted in unsuitable breeding habitats and/or are considered common and widespread breeding species nationally and/or locally.
- 4.4 The redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* recorded within the Site during the survey was not observed performing any breeding behaviours and is considered to be a migrant bird passing through the site rather than utilising it.
- 4.5 Although Thurnscoe Dike is known to support willow tit, the desk study returned only one record of this species within close proximity to the site, the closest record being within the SE4504 monad. This record originated from 2008 with no more recent records within close proximity to the site returned by the desk study. The Site contained no suitable breeding habitat for this species.
- 4.6 A single scoping survey was therefore considered a sufficient and appropriate survey effort, since the site contained highly modified habitats which supported common and widespread bird species, the vast majority of which were generalists. The scoping survey found only a relatively small assemblage of notable bird species, and it was considered unlikely in the professional opinion of the ornithologists that further survey effort would find significant additional information to change this classification and that sufficient information was gained upon which to accurately determine potential impacts and mitigation required.

Impacts and Mitigation

4.7 Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI is located over 2km from the Site and therefore is considered sufficiently distant that the bird interest of the SSSI would not be impacted during construction. While there may be a slight increase in visitor pressure to the Site due to more households within the local area through the proposals, it is not expected to lead to a significant effect, given the level of urbanisation in the vicinity of the Site already present and the presence of a number of existing public footpaths in the local area, offering a range of walking routes, including on and immediately adjacent to the application Site. The site does not contain habitats suitable to support the bird species included within the SSSI citation.

⁹ Doncaster Local Development Framework (2010) Doncaster Local Wildlife and Geological Sites System, Appendix A – Local Site Selection Guidelines, Supplementary planning document August 2010



The arable and grassland habitats within the Site will be lost to allow for the development. The boundary habitats, including the hedgerows and trees are proposed to be mostly retained, except for a section on the eastern boundary to allow for access. As the arable and grassland habitats provided no breeding habitat for the birds recorded within the Site, it is considered that overall, development of the site will result in a Negligible impact on the breeding bird assemblage. Indeed, several species will benefit from the creation of the 'Ecological Mitigation Areas', such as song thrush, mistle thrush *Turdus viscivorus*, redwing *Turdus iliacus*, fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, house sparrow, dunnock, bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, and greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*.

Disturbance Impacts

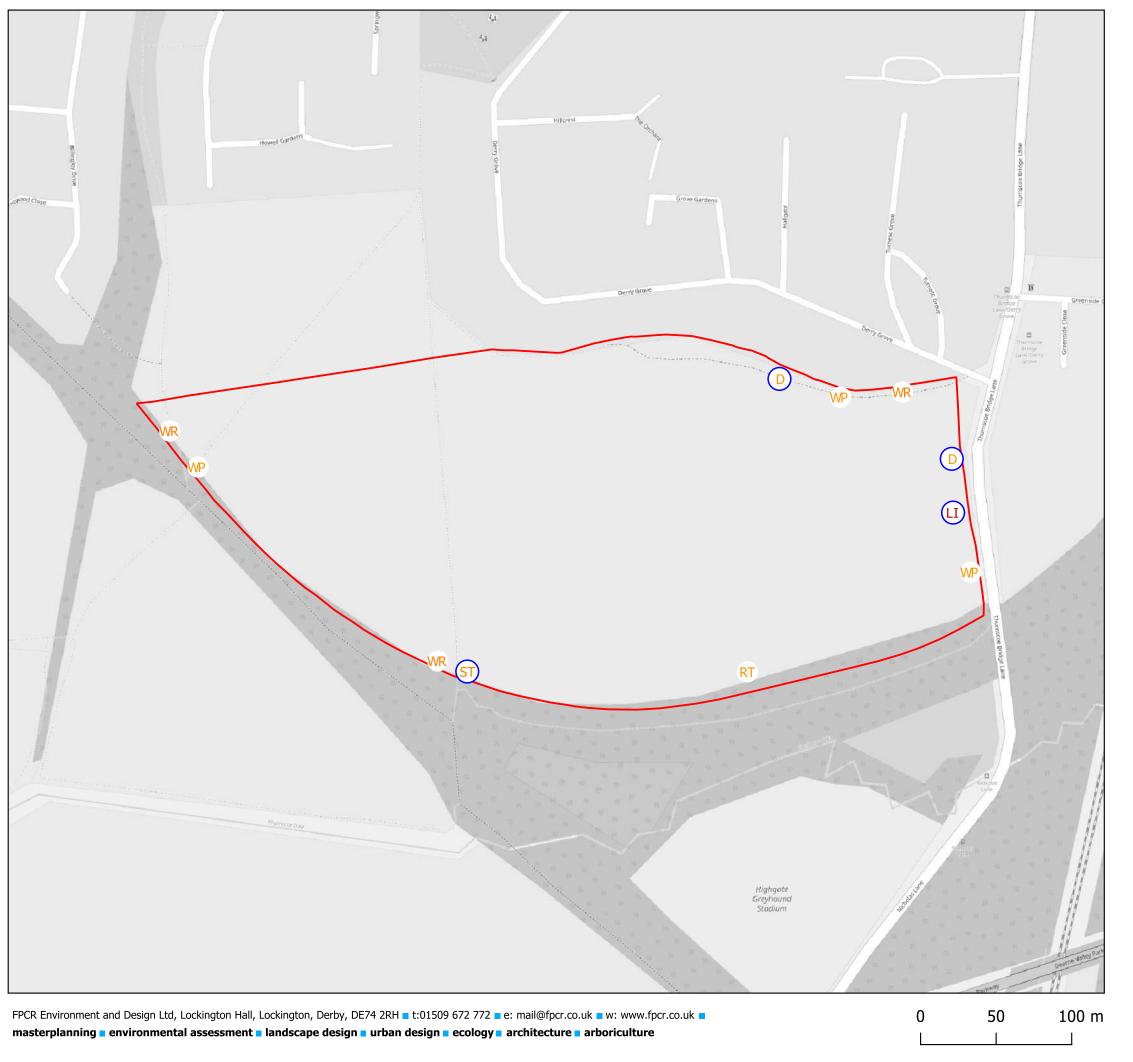
4.9 To avoid disturbance to breeding birds, ground and vegetation clearance works will be undertaken outside the bird-breeding season (March to September, inclusive). If this is not possible, the area will be checked prior to removal of vegetation or ground works by an experienced ecologist. If active nests are found, vegetation will be left untouched and suitably buffered from works until all birds have fledged. Specific advice will be provided prior to undertaking the clearance. This would be a statutory requirement due to the protection of all nesting birds and their nests under WCA. A suitably qualified ecologist would supervise this. These measures will ensure the impact of disturbance during construction to any nesting birds is reduced to negligible.

Enhancements

- 4.10 To maximise the value to birds of the proposed scrub, hedgerow, and tree planting within the POS areas, it is recommended native species are used, preferably including fruit and nut bearing species to provide an optimal foraging resource.
- 4.11 Planting the attenuation features with an appropriate native marginal vegetation mix that includes common reed *Phragmites australis* will provide suitable nesting opportunities for species not recorded on-site, such as reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniculus* and sedge warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*. Non-native wetland plants should be avoided as many are invasive.
- 4.12 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 suitable nest box types to be erected at suitable locations:
 - A mixture of small hole (25 to 32mm diameter) boxes placed on suitable trees will provide
 nesting opportunities for species such as blue tit Cyanistes caeruleus and great tit Parus
 major. These boxes generally have a high uptake rate;
 - Small open fronted nest boxes placed on suitable trees especially those which support a climber such as ivy which provides a degree of concealment. These boxes typically attract species such as robin and blackbird;
 - Larger wood nest boxes with large holes (45-50 mm diameter) placed within the built environment and on suitable trees will provide nesting for starling. These boxes will also provide suitable nesting for great spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* when placed on large mature trees;



• The inclusion within the built environment of species-specific nest boxes for house sparrow Passer domesticus and swift Apus apus will encourage these urban species to breed on Site, which have both undergone significant local and national declines.



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Key

Site Boundary BBS

BoCC Red List Species

LI Linnet

BoCC Amber List Species

Dunnock

RT Redstart

ST Song Thrush

WP Woodpigeon

WR Wren

Additional Protections



NERC Species of Principal Importance

fpcr

Avant Homes Yorkshire

Thurnscoe Bridge Lane, Thurnscoe

BREEDING BIRD SURVEY 2024 RESULTS PLAN - DISTRIBUTION OF NOTABLE SPECIES

scale @ a3 1:2,500 drawing / fig drawn NG

issue date 8/10/2024

Figure 1

1.a.



APPENDIX A: RESULTS OF THE 2024 BREEDING BIRD SURVEY

Species: Common Name	Species: Scientific Name	Survey 17.04.24	Conservation Status & Protection	Breeding Status
Woodpigeon	Columba palumbus	8	Amber List	Possible S,H
Magpie	Pica pica	1	Green List	Possible H
Carrion Crow	Corvus corone	1	Green List	Possible H
Blue Tit	Cyanistes caeruleus	3	Green List	Probable P,S,H
Great Tit	Parus major	1	Green List	Possible H
Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybita	3	Green List	Possible S,H
Wren	Troglodytes troglodytes	4	Amber List	Possible S,H
Song Thrush	Turdus philomelos	1	Amber List NERC 5.41	Possible S,H
Blackbird	Turdus merula	10	Green List	Probable P, H
Robin	Erithacus rubecula	3	Green List	Possible S,H
Redstart	Phoenicurus phoenicurus	1	Amber List	Non-breeder UH, M
Dunnock	Prunella modularis	4	Amber List NERC S.41	Probable P,S,H
Linnet	Linaria cannabina	5	Red List NERC S.41	Possible S,H
Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis	4	Green List	Probable P,S,H

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 -

- Distraction display or injury feigning (DD)
- Used nest or eggshells found from this season (UN)
- Recently fledged young or downy young (FF)
- Adults entering or leaving nest-site in circumstances indicating occupied nest (ON)
- Adult carrying faecal sac or food for young (FF)



- Nest containing eggs (NE)
- Nest with young seen or heard (NY)

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

- Pair in suitable nesting habitat (P)
- Permanent territory, defended over at least 2 survey occasions (T)
- Courtship and display (D)
- Visiting probable nest site (N)
- Agitated behaviour (A)
- Brood patch of incubating bird, from bird in hand (I)
- Nest building or excavating nest-hole (B)

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)

- Observed in suitable nesting habitat (H)
- Singing male (S)

Non-breeder -

- Migrant (M)
- Summering non-breeder (U)
- Observed in unsuitable nesting habitat (UH)

