



13<sup>th</sup> February 2023

## 2022/0115 - WILLOW TIT SURVEY AT SHAW LANE (LAND NORTH OF) CARLTON, BARNSELY, NORTH YORKSHIRE - 2022

### INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was instructed by Network Space to carry out ecological surveys to assist with a planning application at a proposed development site. The site is situated on the north of Shaw Lane, in Carlton (O.S. grid reference: SE 37404 10325) and is the subject of an outline planning application with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) for the construction of up to 215 dwellings with associated car parking/garages, landscaping, public open space including both equipped and non-equipped areas of play, SUDS and drainage, with details of a new vehicular access onto Shaw Lane (planning reference: 2022/0115).

Rachel Hacking Ecology undertook an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey in 2021. The site was identified as supporting habitats that are suitable for nesting birds.

As a part of the planning application, comments were provided by Katie Lawrence (Planning Ecologist, BMBC), requesting a Willow Tit survey prior to determination. Katie's comments were:

*"Willow tit, a bird species in dramatic decline (red list species), is known to occur within Carlton Marsh (part of Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI) in close proximity of the proposals site. Due to the suitability of habitats on site such as hedgerows, scrub, etc. it is recommended that a specialist survey for this species is undertaken to assess the presence/absence of willow tit on site and the potential impact of the proposals."*

In response to the above comments Rachel Hacking Ecology was instructed to carry out a Willow Tit *Poecile montanus kleinschmidti* survey at the site.

All bird species are protected at their nest under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). UK Bird species are listed under the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC), as Red, Amber or Green, depending on population size.

### WILLOW TIT SURVEY

#### Methodology

The Phase 1 Habitat Survey map and data were used to identify habitats/areas of the site which could offer suitable habitats for Willow Tit. Suitable habitats were searched for features required by Willow Tit and an assessment of their suitability carried out. For example, Willow Tit requires standing/rotting deadwood which they hollow out to create a nest chamber. These habitats were then walked, and a recording of Willow Tit was played for 2 minutes approximately every 100m, any response calls from Willow Tit heard within 2 minutes of

playing the recording would establish presence on the site or immediately adjacent to the site. The adjacent railway line was assessed using this methodology.

### Personnel, Timings and Constraints

Andy Harmer (Principal Ecologist) carried out the survey on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022. Andy is an experienced ornithologist who is familiar with the target species and has undertaken multiple surveys for this species. The survey was carried out during optimal survey conditions. The survey was carried out towards the end of the recognised breeding season for this species and only a single survey was conducted (two are recommended). Due to the limited value of the habitats on site, the experience of the surveyor, and the results, this is considered sufficient to determine presence/absence from the site.

### Results

The habitats on the proposed development site, identified from the Phase 1 Habitat Survey as potentially offering suitable habitat for Willow Tit, are the boundary dense scrub and hedgerows and the scrub around the pond. These habitats were assessed and no suitable nesting habitat was found.

The arable field, the dominant habitat on site, is not considered to offer suitable habitat for Willow Tit, offering neither opportunities for foraging or nesting. The boundary scrub and hedgerows were identified from the Phase 1 as potential suitable habitat. However no standing deadwood or other suitable nesting features were located during the survey. The hedgerows are well managed from either site and so no areas of dense vegetation occur which offer cover from predation.

The scrub around the pond was also identified a potential suitable habitat from the Phase 1 survey. The damp conditions can encourage rot within any of the deadwood. However, no such features were located therefore no suitable nesting habitat was located during the survey.

No Willow Tit calls were heard or recorded using the playback method on the site at the time of the survey. No Willow Tit calls were heard during any part of the survey.

The hedgerows and scrub on site are not considered to offer any nesting features suitable for Willow Tit and no calls were recorded on the site during the survey. These habitats could however offer suitable commuting/ connecting habitats. They are to be retained and protected within the scheme and therefore this function will not be lost as a result of the proposed development.

Habitats in the locality offer suitable Willow Tit habitat. Carlton Marsh Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lies 35m to the south of the site at the closet point, although the closest point is the band of vegetation along the railway line which extends away from the main site, with the majority of the site lying much further south from the proposed development site.

The scrub on the adjacent railway could offer suitable habitat, however there is no access to this land to search for suitable nesting habitat. No calls were heard in these areas during the call back survey. This land will be retained during the survey.



### Summary and Conclusion

Willow Tit was not observed or heard on the site or adjacent to the site during the survey. The habitats on site are not considered to offer suitable nesting habitat but they are considered to offer potential connective habitats.

As Willow Tit has been recorded within the locality, it is recommended that no bird boxes are included within the scheme as they encourage Blue Tits and Great Tits which out compete Willow Tits which could result in a decline in this species. Instead, it is important that dense scrub and wet scrub is retained and/or created.



Kate Reed  
Senior Ecologist

