

East Lancashire Paper Mill, Radcliffe

BIRD HABITAT ASSESSMENT REPORT

784-B038963

Morris Homes (North) Limited

December 2022

Prepared on Behalf of Tetra Tech Limited.

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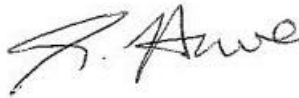
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Contents	Summary
Site Location	The site is located at East Lancashire Paper Mill, Radcliffe (approximately 4.8 km south of Bury in Greater Manchester, National Grid Reference: SD 79296 07445).
Proposals	The proposals are for a residential development, providing up to 400 homes which may potentially include a new secondary school and associated works including relocation of cricket pitch, including a pavillion, provision of open space and sports facilities and demolition of existing building and structures.
Previous Results	List of relevant previous reports: • WYG (2016) Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Report • WYG (2017) East Lancashire Paper Mill, Breeding Bird Survey Report • WYG (2018) Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – East End
Scope of this Survey(s)	Desk study and assessment of the habitats on site for the suitability to support breeding birds.
Results and Evaluation	A total of five notable bird species were considered to be breeding within the site or immediately adjacent to the site during the breeding bird surveys conducted in 2017 (WYG, 2017). Eighteen common and widespread species were recorded breeding or likely breeding within, or immediately adjacent to the site in 2017. The following broad habitat types were recorded within the red line boundary: • Mature Scrub and Young Trees • Trees • Young Willow Scrub • Unmanaged Grassland with Scattered Scrub • Marshy Grassland with Scattered Scrub • Amenity Grassland • Swamp • Lake • Hard Standing with Ephemeral Vegetation • Urban Areas with Buildings • Active Construction Site • Riparian Habitat
Assessment and Recommendations	The site continues to provide suitable nesting habitat for a breeding bird assemblage including willow warbler and sand martin.

	Based on the proposed site layout it is considered that majority of the habitats with value for breeding birds will be either temporarily or permanently lost as a result of the development. Mitigation measures to retain the value of the site for breeding birds include: • Provision of scrub planting within newly created flood plain • Design and implementation of habitat management plan for breeding birds over a minimum of 5 years. • Planting hedgerows throughout the site to provide flight lines and wildlife corridors. • Retention of mature trees wherever possible. • Retention / creation of ponds and / or marshy area. • Retention of retaining wall nesting features along the River Irwell or replacement of suitable nesting habitat for sand martin. • Off-site habitat creation / enhancement to reduce the impact on the local breeding bird populations. Site clearance should avoid removal of nesting habitat during the nesting bird season (March – September) in order to avoid committing an offence under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Tetra Tech was commissioned by Morris Homes in October 2022 to undertake a bird habitat assessment of the site known as East Lancashire Paper Mill, Radcliffe (hereafter referred to as the 'site').

Planning Condition 18 of the planning permission granted on the 24th March 2022 by the Bury Council (planning ref:67597) stipulates that:

“Breeding bird surveys for the areas to be used for the relocated cricket club facility shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority as part of the first reserved matters application affecting this area. The survey shall include appropriate mitigation measures and the approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the relocated cricket club facility hereby approved, being brought into use”

This report aims to provide background information in relation to the suitability of habitats currently present on site for local breeding populations. The requirement for the bird habitat assessment has been agreed during consultation with Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (who advise Bury Council in relation to ecology matters) in October 2022¹ in order to replace the full breeding bird surveys required to discharge the relevant planning condition and avoid delays to the start of construction works.

This report was prepared by Tetra Tech Senior Ecologist Patryk Gruba MCIEEM. The conditions pertinent to this report are provided in Appendix A.

1.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The 'site' is located in Radcliffe (approximately 4.8 km south of Bury) in Greater Manchester. The central Ordnance Survey Grid Reference of the site is SD 79296 07445 (Figure 1).

The site is approximately 22.3 hectares and comprises habitats such as hardstanding, scrub, standing water, amenity grassland, introduced shrub, mature trees, bare ground and buildings.

In the wider area there are large expanses of woodland located in Springwater Park (approximately 0.75 km east of the site). Between Springwater Park and the east of the site there is mainly scrub, marsh and grassland habitat. The River Irwell borders the southwest of the site and hydrologically connects Springwater Park to the site. There is also woodland along the south of the river corridor, approximately 0.5 km south of the site. Immediately north and west of the site is the urbanised area of Radcliffe.

1.3 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The proposal comprises residential development of up to 400 homes, soft landscaping, access roads and potentially a new secondary school. The proposed site layout had been included within Appendix B.

1.4 PURPOSE OF REPORT

The objectives of this report are to:

¹ Email from David Dutton (Ecologist, Borough of Tameside) to Phil Preston (Tetra Tech) from 14th October 2022 followed by a telephone phone call between David Dutton and Phil Preston confirming the current scope

- Provide details of the existing information on ornithological interest on site and relevant records of protected/notable bird species within 2 km of the site:
- Provide an assessment of the current suitability of the habitats on site to support breeding birds; and
- Provide an assessment of the potential ecological constraints and recommendations for further surveys and mitigation.

Note that scientific names are provided at the first mention of each species and common names (where appropriate) are then used throughout the rest of the report for ease of reading.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 PREVIOUS SURVEYS

Previous reports relevant to the site have been reviewed for this report and discussed below. These reports include:

- WYG (2016) East Lancashire Paper Mill, Bury. Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Report
- WYG (2017) East Lancashire Paper Mill, Breeding Bird Survey Report
- WYG (2018) East Lancashire Paper Mill, East End. Ecological Appraisal

The above reports were reviewed and accepted by Bury Metropolitan Borough Council in granting the outline planning consent (planning ref: 67597).

In addition to the above the below report has been provided by the client and has been reviewed to inform this report.

- TEP (2022) Site Inspection Report

2.2 DESK STUDY

Information was requested from the Greater Manchester Local Record Centre (GMLRC) for records of birds and designated sites relating to birds within a 2 km radius of the site in 2022.

MAGIC www.magic.gov.uk - DEFRA's interactive, web-based database for nearby statutory designated sites with designated ornithological features, namely Special Protection Areas (SPA), Ramsar sites, Sites of Special Scientific interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR) and Local Nature Reserves (LNR).

2.3 HABITAT ASSESSMENT

An initial assessment of the site's habitats was carried out in 2016 as part of the Ecological Appraisal (WYG, 2016); the eastern end of the site was subject to additional assessment provided as part of the Ecological Appraisal in 2018 (WYG, 2018).

The habitat assessment survey was carried out by Tetra Tech Senior Ecologist Patryk Gruba MCIEEM on the 10th November 2022.

The purpose of the 2022 bird habitat assessment was to identify broad habitats currently present onsite that are of value to local breeding bird populations. Subsequently, the assessment highlighted the particular bird species / group of species that are likely to use the specific type of habitat recorded on site for breeding based on the local bird records provided by the GMLRC and species previously recorded on site as part of the Breeding Bird Survey conducted in 2017 (WYG, 2017). This is a bespoke approach agreed with the LPA ecologist based on the planning application submission timescales (see section 1.1 for details).

2.4 LIMITATIONS

The purpose of this report is to review a historical bird information available for the site and provide a broad overview of the habitats with value for breeding birds only; due to the time of year this assessment was instructed it was not possible to undertake a detailed breeding bird survey of the site. However, the information provided in this report (along with data presented within reports produced by WYG in 2018, as highlighted above) is likely to give a strong indication of bird species / group of species likely to use the site for breeding and is sufficient to inform the appropriate mitigation.

The details of this report will remain valid for a period of **one year** from the date of the latest survey, after which the validity of this assessment should be reviewed to determine whether further updates are necessary. Note that the recommendations within this report should be reviewed (and reassessed if necessary) should there be any changes to the red line boundary or when development proposal details are finalised.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 PREVIOUS SURVEYS

3.1.1 Notable Bird Species

A total of eight notable bird species were considered to be breeding within the site or immediately adjacent to the site during the Breeding Bird Surveys conducted in 2017 (WYG, 2017). These included bullfinch *Pyrrhula*, dunnock *Prunella modularis*, house sparrow *Passer domesticus*, mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, greenfinch *Carduelis chlorins*, wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, woodpigeon *Columba plumbous* and willow warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*.

Of these, willow warbler, bullfinch and dunnock were recorded and these species were considered to be typical representatives of a scrub bird assemblage. On site, these species were typically utilising the dense scrub vegetation and open, edge areas in-between around the site.

House sparrow was confirmed breeding within the domestic buildings to the west and east of the site.

Mallard was recorded within the lake habitat on site, where open water provides suitable foraging and refuge habitat for this species, and thick vegetative cover surrounding the shores of waterbodies on site provides suitable nesting habitat for this species.

Furthermore, the breeding bird surveys noted breeding reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* within the marshy grassland to the east of the site (this area was not included in the 2017 survey boundary; however, it is within the current red line boundary).

An incidental record of sedge warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* was made on-site during another ecological survey conducted at the site, however, given this species was not recorded again during the breeding bird surveys or other ecological surveys conducted on-site during the breeding season. Therefore, it is considered this species was in passage and not habitually using the site.

3.1.2 Common and Widespread Species

Fifteen common and widespread species were recorded breeding or likely breeding within, or immediately adjacent to the site during 2018 Breeding Bird Surveys (Table 1).

Table 1: Common and widespread bird species considered to have nested or were likely to have nested on site in 2017 (Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) Green List).

Scientific name	Common name (BTO code)	Indicative no. of territories	Comments
<i>Turdus merula</i>	Blackbird (B.)	4	Recorded on 30 occasions involving a peak of 10 birds.
<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Blackcap (BC)	1	Recorded on 2 occasions involving a peak of 2 birds.
<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	Blue tit (BT)	2	Recorded on 7 occasions involving a peak of 5 birds.
<i>Corvus corone</i>	Carrion crow (C.)	1	Recorded on 5 occasions involving a peak of 3 birds.
<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Chiffchaff (CC)	2	Recorded on 4 occasions involving a peak of 3 birds.
<i>Fulica atra</i>	Coot (CO)	1	Recorded on 8 occasions involving a peak of 3 birds.
<i>Carduelis</i>	Goldfinch (GO)	3	Recorded on 19 occasions involving a peak of 11 birds.
<i>Parus major</i>	Great tit (GT)	3	Recorded on 18 occasions involving a peak of 5 birds.
<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Little grebe (LG)	1	Recorded on 2 occasions involving a peak of 1 bird.
<i>Aegithalos caudate</i>	Long-tailed tit (LT)	2	Recorded on 11 occasions involving a peak of 5 birds.
<i>Pica pica</i>	Magpie (MG)	1	Recorded on 10 occasions involving a peak of 4 birds.
<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Pied wagtail (PW)	1	Recorded on 5 occasions involving a peak of 2 birds.
<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Robin (R.)	4	Recorded on 33 occasions involving a peak of 14 birds.
<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Sand martin (SM)	1 breeding colony within brick retaining wall of River Irwell (c. 15 – 20 breeding pairs).	Recorded on 34 occasions involving a peak of 12 birds.
<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Tufted duck (TU)	1	Recorded on 1 occasion involving a peak of 2 birds.

The most frequently occurring Green Listed breeding species recorded during the surveys were blackbird *Turdus merula*; goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*; great tit *Parus major*; and robin *Erithacus rubecula*. These species were primarily associated with the scrub habitats on site.

Sand martin *Riparia* were also frequently recorded during survey, utilising the willow scrub and River Irwell immediately adjacent to the southern site boundary for foraging. In addition, sand martin were confirmed breeding within the retaining wall, which forms a stretch of the southern site boundary with the River Irwell.

3.2 DESK STUDY

3.2.1 Designated Sites

There are two statutory designated sites within 2 km of the site: Chapelfield Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is located approximately 0.6 km south of the site; and the Hollins Vale LNR is located approximately 2 km east of the site.

Hollins Vale LNR is indirectly hydrologically connected (c.4 km via watercourses) to the site via the Hollins Brook which flows from the LNR and discharges into the River Irwell. However, this confluence is upstream of the site. Details of these designated sites are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Statutory designated sites within 2 km

Designation	Site Name	Distance & Direction	Summary of features
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Chapelfield	0.6 km south	The large triangular shaped reservoir is the central feature of the nature reserve and contains a variety of aquatic plants including the locally rare water violet. Water birds like coot and moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i> are permanent residents on the reservoir. In the woodland areas, English oak <i>Quercus robur</i> , ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> , sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> and hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> can be found with willow <i>Salix sp.</i> around the edge of the reservoirs. The woodland is an important refuge for wildlife and many typical bird species including jay, great spotted woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos major</i> , great tit, wren, chaffinch and nuthatch <i>Sitta europaea</i> have been recorded here.
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Hollins Vale	2 km east	Hollins Vale is a farmland reserve with areas of woodland and wetland adding to its wildlife diversity. The woods are abundant in English bluebell <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i> and lesser celandine <i>Ficaria verna</i> as well as having wood anemone <i>Anemone nemorosa</i> and violet species. The grassland is grazed by cows and is rich in flowers. One area previously used for growing potatoes contains plants such as devil's bit scabious <i>Succisa pratensis</i> , pignut <i>Conopodium majus</i> and harebell <i>Campanula rotundifolia</i> . There are many birds and butterflies present on the reserve.

Furthermore, there are 13 non-statutory designated sites within 2 km of the site which are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Non-statutory designated sites within 2 km of the site.

Designation	Site Name	Distance & Direction	Summary of features
Site of Biological Importance (SBI)	Sailor's Brow & Springwater Park	~0.2 km south	No further information available.
SBI	Wetland Near Radcliffe	~0.35 km northwest	No further information available.
SBI	Swan Lodge	~0.45 km northeast	No further information available.
SBI	Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal (East)	~0.53 km northwest	No further information available.
SBI	Reservoirs at Chapelfield	~0.8 km south	The SBI status has been awarded for the aquatic plants that can be found within it, and in particular, the locally rare water violet <i>Hottonia palustris</i> .
SBI	Withins Reservoir	~0.95 km northwest	No further information available.

Designation	Site Name	Distance & Direction	Summary of features
SBI	Elton Reservoir	~1.27 km northwest	No further information available.
SBI	Marl Pits at Black Lane	~1.3 km northwest	No further information available.
SBI	Spen Moor Ponds	~1.4 km northwest	The SBI includes a collection of six small field ponds with botanical, aquatic invertebrate, amphibian and bird interest. The ponds support four species of breeding amphibians including common frog, smooth newt, palmate newt and GCN. These ponds also support high numbers of aquatic invertebrates. The SBI also includes fields which support breeding skylark and good numbers of other breeding birds such as reed bunting, mallard and coot are also present.
SBI	Elton Goyt	~1.5 km north	Supports important marshy grassland.
SBI	Lower Hinds	~1.65 km north	No further information available.
SBI	Ringley Woods	~1.67 km southwest	Supports important native woodland.
SBI	Parr Brook	~1.9 km east	No further information available.
SBI	Daisyfield	~1.9 km north	No further information available.

3.2.2 Protected and Notable Birds

The ecological data request from GMLRC returned records of 35 species of birds within 2 km of the site. These records are summarised below in Table 4.

Table 4: Protected and notable birds within 2 km of the site.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status*	Number of records
Barn owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	Sch. 1; BoCC – Green	44
Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	Sch. 1; BoCC – Amber	5
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	Sch. 1; BoCC – Amber	2
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	NERC; BoCC – Amber	14
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	NERC; BoCC – Amber	267
Common redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>	BoCC – Amber	25
Common scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Sch. 1; NERC, BoCC – Red	112
Cuckoo		NERC; BoCC – Red	6
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	162
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	NERC; BoCC – Amber	314
Grasshopper warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	108
Herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	151
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	5
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Sch. 1; BoCC – Green	56
House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	323
Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Sch. 1; BoCC – Amber	434

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status*	Number of records
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	861
Lesser redpoll	<i>Carduelis cabaret</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	115
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	155
Little ringed plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Sch. 1; BoCC – Green	311
Peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Sch. 1; BoCC – Green	249
Reed bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	NERC; BoCC – Amber	410
Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	1
Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	Sch. 1; NERC; BoCC – Red	256
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	280
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	333
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	114
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	261
Tree pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	29
Tree sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	9
Twite	<i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	1
Willow tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	141
Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	3
Yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	108
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	NERC; BoCC – Red	5

3.3 HABITAT ASSESSMENT

During the bird habitat assessment survey the following broad habitats were recorded within the red line boundary:

- Mature Scrub and Young Trees
- Trees
- Young Willow Scrub
- Unmanaged Grassland with Scattered Scrub
- Marshy Grassland with Scattered Scrub
- Amenity Grassland
- Swamp
- Lake
- Hard Standing with Ephemeral Vegetation
- Urban Areas with Buildings
- Active Construction Site

The distribution of these habitats is shown in Figure 2.

Furthermore, riparian habitat associated with the River Irwell was directly adjacent south-west to the site.

The previous habitats recorded as part of the Phase 1 Habitat Survey conducted in 2016 (WYG, 2016) are depicted in Appendix C.

4.0 HABITAT ASSESSMENT INTERPRETATION

The broad habitat types recorded on site with their suitability to support breeding populations of species that either were recorded on site previously (as breeding) or have been identified during the desk study have been provided in the Table 5 below and mapped in Figure 2.

Table 5: Breeding Bird Habitat Assessment

Broad habitat type	Description	Bird species previously recorded breeding within the habitat on site	Potential suitability for other birds identified during the desk study	Photograph
Mature Scrub and Young Trees	Dominant habitat throughout the site recorded predominantly within the core of the site and around the site peripheries. The species recorded included willow <i>Salix sp.</i> , birch <i>Betula sp.</i> and white poplar <i>Populus alba</i> .	• Willow warbler • Dunnock • Bullfinch • Whitethroat • Song thrush • Linnet • Blackbird • Carrion crow • Chiffchaff • Goldfinch • Great tit • Greenfinch • Magpie • Robin • Long-tailed tit • Pied wagtail • Woodpigeon • Wren	• Common redpoll • Lesser redpoll • Tree sparrow • Tree pipit • Willow tit • Yellowhammer • Grasshopper Warbler	

Broad habitat type	Description	Bird species previously recorded breeding within the habitat on site	Potential suitability for other birds identified during the desk study	Photograph
Trees	Frequent habitat occurring as groups or of trees (parkland to the north) or small parcels of woodland (southeast of the site).	• Dunnock • Bullfinch • Song thrush • Linnet • Blackbird • Blackcap • Carrion crow • Chiffchaff • Goldfinch • Great tit • Greenfinch • Magpie • Robin • Long-tailed tit • Woodpigeon	• Tree sparrow • Tree pipit • Willow tit • Wood warbler	
Young Willow Scrub	Extensive stand of young willow scrub succeeding the grassland area was present within the western section of the site.	• Willow warbler • Pied wagtail • Wren	• Common redpoll • Lesser redpoll • Grasshopper Warbler	

Broad habitat type	Description	Bird species previously recorded breeding within the habitat on site	Potential suitability for other birds identified during the desk study	Photograph
Unmanaged Grassland with Scattered Scrub	Relatively small pockets of unmanaged grassland were present amongst the scrub habitats (south and southwest). These covered the pathways throughout the site and had some proportion of young scrub succeeding the grassland areas.	• Pied wagtail	• Skylark	
Marshy Grassland with Scattered Scrub	Extensive stand of marshy grassland with scattered scrub (predominantly willow species) was present within the floodplain area to the east of the site as well as to the northeast of the site.	• Reed Bunting • Wren	• Lapwing • Skylark • Yellow wagtail • Grasshopper Warbler	

Broad habitat type	Description	Bird species previously recorded breeding within the habitat on site	Potential suitability for other birds identified during the desk study	Photograph
Amenity Grassland	Short amenity grassland was present within the cricket field in the center of the site as well as along the flood defense wall to the east of the site.	Not applicable	Negligible breeding potential for the majority of bird species	
Swamp	Swamp habitats with reeds and bullrush were recorded within the three areas on site – predominantly amongst the mature scrub and marshy grassland.	• Mallard	• Bittern – although the reedbed areas were relatively small therefore this is highly unlikely • Reed bunting	

Broad habitat type	Description	Bird species previously recorded breeding within the habitat on site	Potential suitability for other birds identified during the desk study	Photograph
Lake	Small lake / reservoir was recorded within the eastern section of the site.	• Mallard • Gadwall • Coot • Litter grebe • Tufted duck	Waterfowl species	
Hard Standing with Ephemeral Vegetation	Hard standing was associated with the roads, parking areas or disused industrial areas within site; this habitat had frequent stands of ephemeral vegetation overgrowing the disused sections.	Not applicable	• Little ringed plover – historical records indicate that this species was previously recorded on site although the current habitat on site is considered unsuitable for breeding (these species typically use open gravel and bare ground areas for breeding) • Herring gull - although unlikely as these are frequently	

Broad habitat type	Description	Bird species previously recorded breeding within the habitat on site	Potential suitability for other birds identified during the desk study	Photograph
			disturbed by dog walkers	
Urban Areas with Buildings	Buildings included residential terrace houses to the west of the site and buildings associated with the cricket grounds.	• House sparrow • Pied wagtail	• Starling • Black redstart • Barn owl – derelict buildings with open internal access • Herring gull – flat roof buildings can provide suitability for breeding	
Active Construction Site	Active construction site with bare ground and rubble was present to the northwest of the site.	Not applicable	Negligible suitability for local populations of breeding birds	

Broad habitat type	Description	Bird species previously recorded breeding within the habitat on site	Potential suitability for other birds identified during the desk study	Photograph
Riparian Habitat	River Irwell was adjacent south of the habitats with riparian scrub and retaining wall present within the site boundaries; the riverbank had also frequent stand of invasive giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam.	• Sand martin • Dipper – not confirmed breeding on site but likely to breed within the habitats along the River Irwell	• Kingfisher	

5.0 RELEVANT LEGISLATION

All wild birds in the UK are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy the nest (whilst being built or in use) or its eggs. Bird species listed in Schedule 1 of the W&CA receive further protection which makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb these species while building a nest or in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; or to disturb dependent young of such a bird.

Forty-nine bird species are listed as 'species of principal importance for the conservation of biological diversity in England' under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Section 40 of this Act places a duty (the Statutory Biodiversity Duty) on public bodies (including local planning authorities) when undertaking their duties (including the making of planning decisions) "to take such measures as they consider expedient for the purposes of conserving biodiversity". The conservation of species listed on Section 41 of the NERC Act, including the restoration or enhancement of a population or habitat, is therefore legally required to be considered in planning decisions. ODPM Circular 06/2005 further clarifies that they are capable of being a material consideration for planning decisions, along with Local Biodiversity Action Plan priority species, as referred to below.

5.1 OTHER CONSERVATION LISTS AND GUIDANCE

5.1.1 Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC)

The conservation status of all regularly occurring British birds has been analysed in co-operation with the leading governmental and non-governmental conservation organisations, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and Birdlife International Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (Stanbury *et al.*, 2021). The basis of species ongoing population trends are assigned to one of three lists of Conservation Concern. These are the UK Red, Amber and Green list.

The criteria for birds being include in the lists is as follows.

Red List

- Globally threatened.
- Historical population decline in UK during 1800–1995.
- Severe (at least 50%) decline in UK breeding population over last 25 years, or longer-term period (the entire period used for assessments since the first BoCC review, starting in 1969). Severe (at least 50%) contraction of UK breeding range over last 25 years, or the longer-term period.

Amber List

- Species with unfavourable conservation status in Europe (SPEC = Species of European Conservation Concern).
- Historical population decline during 1800–1995, but recovering; population size has more than doubled over last 25 years.
- Moderate (25-49%) decline in UK breeding population over last 25 years, or since 1969.
- Moderate (25-49%) contraction of UK breeding range over last 25 years, or since 1969.

- Moderate (25-49%) decline in UK non-breeding population over last 25 years, or since 1969.
- Rare breeder; 1–300 breeding pairs in UK.
- Rare non-breeders; less than 900 individuals.
- Localised; at least 50% of UK breeding or non-breeding population in 10 or fewer sites, but not applied to rare breeders or non-breeders.
- Internationally important; at least 20% of European breeding or non-breeding population in UK (NW European and East Atlantic Flyway populations used for non-breeding wildfowl and waders respectively).

Green List

- Species that occur regularly in the UK but do not qualify under any or the above criteria.

Although the lists confer no legal status in themselves, they are useful in evaluating the conservation significance of bird assemblages, and for assessing the potential significance of impacts and informing appropriate levels of mitigation with respect to bird populations

6.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 DISCUSSION

The site supports a variety of habitats with the young and mature scrub (predominantly willow scrub) being dominant habitat present.

The previous Breeding Bird Survey Report (WYG, 2017) identified a number of BoCC Red and Amber list species predominantly using the scrub habitat for breeding. It was identified that the scrub habitats onsite support significant populations of willow warbler (16 territories) which was considered to be of County level importance. This habitat also supports other bird species such as bullfinch, goldfinch, greenfinch and chiffchaff.

The River Irwell wall was also identified in 2017 as a feature that supported breeding colony of sand martins. The site inspection report produced by TEP (TEP 2017) recorded no evidence of nesting sand martins during a site visit completed on 31st August 2023. However, it should be noted that this survey was undertaken outside peak period to assess presence/absence of nesting sand martin (May & June). In addition, sand martin start their migratory journey south in late August/early September, therefore results gained during TEP's site visit do not provide a robust assessment of presence/absence of nesting sand martin.

The desk study and current habitat assessment have also confirmed that the site has potential to support other species such as tree sparrow, skylark, starling or kingfisher although no evidence of these species breeding on site was identified during the previous breeding bird surveys (WYG, 2017).

The bird records obtained from the GMLRC suggest that the site used to support breeding populations of little ringed plover in the past; however, it is considered that the current habitats present on site provide very limited breeding suitability for this species and no evidence of breeding little ringed plover was recorded during the 2017 breeding bird surveys (WYG, 2017).

The current assessment conducted as part of this report has confirmed that the site habitats (and suitability for breeding birds) remained fairly similar with comparison to the habitats recorded during 2017 and 2018 surveys with evidence of further scrub succession throughout the majority of the site (see Figure 2 showing broad habitats recorded on site during 2022).

6.2 ASSESSMENT & RECOMMENDATIONS

Habitats on and adjacent to the site, offer suitability to support both notable and common / widespread nesting birds and there is evidence of previous breeding bird populations recording during the 2017 breeding bird survey (WYG, 2017). Based on the proposed site layout (Appendix B) it is considered that majority of the habitats with value for breeding birds will be either temporarily or permanently lost as a result of the development. It should be noted that outline planning permission is granted (ref: 67597) and therefore the principal of development i.e. extent of housing, removal of habitats, creation of a functioning flood plain, removal of the River Irwell wall and retention of the existing lodge on site are all approved. Text below refers to aspects of detailed design as submitted within the reserved matters application for this site.

Land located between the proposed construction area and the River Irwell is to be subject to re-levelling to provide floodplain area. The landscaping masterplan (ref: M3477-SD-01-V07) shows that this area will be planted with suitable vegetation to replace some of the suitable scrub habitat that will be lost as a result of this project. In addition, suitable nesting habitat for willow warbler is to be

retained to the south of the lodge on site. In accordance with recommendations made in 2017, this area should be managed to benefit willow warbler and other nesting species associated with scrub habitat and a habitat management be designed and implemented over a minimum 5-year period.

In addition, where areas of vegetation are to be lost, it is important that suitable mitigation is employed to retain and enhance the current bird assemblage. This could comprise planting hedgerows throughout the site to provide flight lines and wildlife corridors, seeking to prevent habitat fragmentation occurring as a result of the development. If gardens are created as a result of the development this may help local populations of garden birds to increase, providing the gardens are well connected and not isolated. Some areas of the site could be allowed to turn into scrub through a lack of management. Where possible mature trees present on site should be retained due to their value to biodiversity, however where mature trees must be removed these should be replaced with trees of equal or greater potential to support birds that currently use site trees (e.g., raptor species). Some areas of the site have marsh-like characteristics, and the presence of water in a landscape can provide enhanced biological value to many birds and other fauna, therefore it is recommended that ponds and/or marshy areas are retained and/or created on site to continue providing these habitats into the future.

In addition, it is understood that the retaining wall of the River Irwell which forms part of the southern site boundary is to be removed in order to create a functional flood plain, this principle being an approved element of the outline planning consent (ref: 67597). It is recommended that a nesting sand martin survey is conducted at the appropriate time of year (May & June) prior to the removal of this wall to determine the value of this feature for nesting sand martin. If possible, a sand martin nest bank/wall should be created adjacent to the River Irwell to allow any breeding colony of sand martin to return to the site beyond the construction phase of the development. Such a feature for sand martin would be subject to bespoke design based on the results of sand martin surveys and positioned at an appropriate location along the northern bank of the River Irwell, within the redline boundary of the site.

The above measures are likely to provide some level of mitigation for the breeding bird assemblage associated with the site if incorporated into the final site design.

In order to avoid causing disturbance to nesting birds (and potentially committing an offence under the W&CA it is recommended that site clearance works are undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (March-September). Should it be necessary to carry out site clearance within the bird nesting season, it is recommended that a nesting bird survey is undertaken no more than 48 hours in advance of works commencing. If no nesting birds are recorded, then site clearance can commence in relevant areas without constraint. Should nesting birds be recorded it may be necessary to establish a buffer around nest locations (size of buffer would be dependent upon species). Nesting areas should be monitored by a suitably qualified ecologist who would confirm when nesting is complete, and chicks have fledged. No works would be allowed within this buffer zone until chicks have fledged and the relevant areas are confirmed free of nesting birds

7.0 REFERENCES

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FIGURES

Figure 1 – Site Location Plan

Figure 2 – Bird Habitat Assessment Map

APPENDIX A – REPORT CONDITIONS

This Report has been prepared using reasonable skill and care for the sole benefit of Morris Homes (“the Client”) for the proposed uses stated in the report by [Tetra Tech Limited] (“Tetra Tech”). Tetra Tech exclude all liability for any other uses and to any other party. The report must not be relied on or reproduced in whole or in part by any other party without the copyright holder’s permission.

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The report refers, within the limitations stated, to the environment of the site in the context of the surrounding area at the time of the inspections’. Environmental conditions can vary and no warranty is given as to the possibility of changes in the environment of the site and surrounding area at differing times. No investigative method can eliminate the possibility of obtaining partially imprecise, incomplete or not fully representative information. Any monitoring or survey work undertaken as part of the commission will have been subject to limitations, including for example timescale, seasonal and weather-related conditions. Actual environmental conditions are typically more complex and variable than the investigative, predictive and modelling approaches indicate in practice, and the output of such approaches cannot be relied upon as a comprehensive or accurate indicator of future conditions. The “shelf life” of the Report will be determined by a number of factors including; its original purpose, the Client’s instructions, passage of time, advances in technology and techniques, changes in legislation etc. and therefore may require future re-assessment.

The whole of the report must be read as other sections of the report may contain information which puts into context the findings in any executive summary.

Tetra Tech reserves the right to share this Report and any related materials, surveys, drawings and/or documents at any time with the relevant Local Ecological Records Centre (LREC), any relevant statutory body or any equivalent organisation as Tetra Tech may reasonably require from time-to-time.

The performance of environmental protection measures and of buildings and other structures in relation to acoustics, vibration, noise mitigation and other environmental issues is influenced to a large extent by the degree to which the relevant environmental considerations are incorporated into the final design and specifications and the quality of workmanship and compliance with the specifications on site during construction. Tetra Tech accept no liability for issues with performance arising from such factors.

APPENDIX B – TEP SITE INSPECTION REPORT

APPENDIX C – LANDSCAPE MASTERPLAN

APPENDIX D – PHASE 1 HABITAT PLAN (WYG, 2016)