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WOODCROFT FARM, WECOCK

Breeding Bird Survey

Grainger Plc

17/05/2013

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	5
1 Introduction	6
1.1 Project Background	6
1.2 Ecological Background	6
1.3 Brief and Objectives.....	7
2 Methods	8
2.1 Overview.....	8
2.2 Breeding Bird Survey.....	8
2.3 Evaluation Methods	8
2.4 Personnel and Dates of Survey	9
2.5 Limitations	9
3 Results and Evaluation	10
3.1 Results of Breeding Bird Survey.....	10
3.2 Evaluation of the Site for Breeding Birds	13
3.3 Assessment of Effects in the Absence of Mitigation	14
4 Legislation and Planning Issues.....	15
4.1 Legislation	15
4.2 Planning Policy	15
5 Recommendations	17
5.1 Avoidance, Mitigation and Compensation Measures.....	17
5.2 Ecological Enhancement Measures	18
6 Conclusion	19
7 References.....	20
7.1 Project References	20
7.2 Technical References	20
8 Figure 1 – Site Location Plan	21
9 Figure 2 – Breeding Bird Territory Map.....	22

Executive Summary

The Site comprises six horse grazed fields on the edge of Wecock, Hampshire, separated by field boundaries comprising hedgerows with standard trees. Buildings on the Site include horse stabling units and sheds. The Site has been allocated for mixed-use development within Havant Borough Council's Core Strategy (2011).

In order to inform an assessment of likely impacts on birds and their habitats associated with the development of the Site, a four visit walkover survey based on the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO's) Common Bird Census technique has been undertaken to record the species present, and inform an evaluation of the Site for breeding birds in line with standard good practice (IEEM, 2006).

The survey involved walking the Site slowly and methodically, recording and mapping all species and their behaviour using standard BTO species and activity codes. This has allowed a picture of the breeding bird interest to be derived. Two surveys were completed in April 2012, with further surveys in May and June 2012.

The Site has been found to support a range of common and widespread species typical of the habitats present. All nesting birds were associated with hedgerows, trees and buildings, with no species of open-ground noted within the Site boundary. Some birds that breed on the Site, including song thrush *Turdus philomelos* (up to five territories) and dunnoek *Prunella modularis* (up to six territories) are of conservation priority at the local and national level, while another priority species, starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, uses the Site extensively for foraging but breeds in local residential areas.

Notwithstanding this these species remain numerous or abundant at the county level. On both this basis, and due to the unexceptional nature of the habitats on Site, the breeding bird community is considered to be of local value.

Both the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and the Havant Borough Core Strategy (2011) set out policies with regard to biodiversity in the planning process. Those species categorised as being of importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England or which have been identified in local biodiversity action plans need to be appropriately considered when making planning decisions. These policies also require potential impacts on all protected species to be minimised, promote the maintenance and enhancement of habitat networks and encourage positive measures for biodiversity in order to achieve local conservation gain through development.

Recommendations have therefore been included to help ensure legislative and policy compliance with regard to birds. These include the retention of trees and hedgerows, the sympathetic management of open space, compensatory planting of beneficial trees and shrubs, and the erection of nest boxes and the provision of interpretation.

It is considered that if all mitigation and enhancement measures recommended within this report are incorporated into the development proposals and subsequently implemented, development of the Site would be compliant with relevant legislation protecting breeding birds and could deliver local conservation gain with respect to breeding birds in line with national and local planning policy.

1 Introduction

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Woodcroft Farm (hereafter known as the 'Site') is located in an agricultural landscape, adjacent to the residential area of Wecock in the Borough of Havant, Hampshire. Approximately 9.7 hectares in size it comprises six fields of close-grazed semi-improved grassland, separated by mature hedgerows; an occupied house and associated gardens; and an area of hard standing with a number of stable blocks and sheds. There is also a small area behind the sheds filled with old cars and other disused vehicles. A surfaced lane runs along the southern boundary of the Site, providing access to the buildings, whilst in the southern corner of the north western field there is a small sand riding arena. The Site boundary is shown on Figure 1.
- 1.1.2 The Site is accessible from Woodcroft Lane to the east, with a public bridleway running along the southern and western boundaries of the Site. The southern boundary of the Site runs parallel to the edge of the Wecock residential area whilst Lovedean residential area lies to the east. Immediately to the west lies an arable field, whilst to the north lie further horse pastures and James's Copse, which is an ancient semi-natural woodland.
- 1.1.3 The Site is allocated as a strategic site within Havant Borough Council's Core Strategy (HBC, 2011) for a 340 unit mixed use development. It is also listed within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (HBC, 2012) as an allocated strategic site for 320 dwellings. Grainger plc's proposals for the Site comprise development of 293 dwellings and include retention of the locally listed farmhouse, with the remaining outbuildings to be demolished. A replacement playing field for the school located immediately to the south will be created within the most easterly field; and a bridleway will be diverted, likely running adjacent to one of the existing hedges. Proposals include retention of the majority of the hedges and mature treelines. The proposals are hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development'.

1.2 Ecological Background

- 1.2.1 An extended Phase 1 habitat survey, including an ecological desk study, was completed in July 2011 to record the habitats present and identify the presence, or potential presence, of protected habitats or species which could pose legal and / or planning constraints to the Proposed Development (WSPE, 2011).
- 1.2.2 As a result of the 2011 desk study 16 species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), 17 Red listed Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) and 16 UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) species were identified as having occurred within 2km of the Site. These records are largely available at 1km or tetrad resolution (individual species may be listed under one or several of the above categories).
- 1.2.3 Of the Schedule 1 species recorded within 2km of the Site the extended Phase 1 report notes that red kite *Milvus milvus* could forage over the Site, whilst firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* and common crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* could also potentially use the mature trees, though these are primarily coniferous and mixed woodland species and therefore the Site is unlikely to be a critical resource (WSP, 2011). It notes that a number of the species listed are winter visitors (brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*, fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* and redwing *Turdus iliacus*), and therefore, whilst these could potentially forage in the hedgerows they would not be expected to breed on the Site. In addition the report notes the habitat present within the Site does not fulfil the breeding requirements for the other Schedule 1 species for which records have been identified (Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata*, nightjar

Caprimulgus europaeus, woodlark *Lullula arborea*, hobby *Falco subbuteo*, whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, honey buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, merlin *Falco columbarius*, Mediterranean gull *Larus melanocephalus* and kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*).

- 1.2.4 The survey indicated that a number of species listed on the BoCC and / or UK BAP list could occur on Site primarily in association with the mature tree and hedgerow habitat present.
- 1.2.5 A number of incidental bird records were gathered during the extended phase 1 habitat survey (WSPE, 2011), with species noted including two BoCC Amber list species, swallow *Hirundo rustica* (breeding in one of the stables) and green woodpecker *Picus viridis*; other species noted included greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, wood pigeon *Columba palumbus*, carrion crow *Corvus corone corone*, great spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*, robin *Erithacus rubecula*, chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, blue tit *Parus caeruleus*, great tit *Parus major*, chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, magpie *Pica pica*, wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* and blackbird *Turdus merula*.
- 1.2.6 A previous Phase 1 habitat survey of the Site undertaken in September 2009 (Bioscan 2009) recorded incidental sightings of the following species in addition to some of those listed above: bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, buzzard *Buteo buteo*, collared dove *Streptopelia decaocto*, goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*, jay *Garrulus glandarius*, long tailed tit *Aegithalos caudatus*, mistle thrush *Turdus viscivorus*, nuthatch *Sitta europaea*, sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, tawny owl *Strix aluco* and treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*.

1.3 Brief and Objectives

- 1.3.1 To evaluate the value of habitats present on the Site for bird species BSG Ecology, on behalf of WSP Environmental Ltd (WSPE), was commissioned to:
- Complete a four-visit breeding bird survey at the Site to provide:
 - A list of bird species encountered and their breeding status (i.e. confirmed breeding, likely to be breeding, or not considered to be breeding on Site) and an estimate of the likely number of territories/colonies of bird species breeding on or close to the Site;
 - A summary of other species noted overflying or using the area, but not breeding within it;
 - Recommendations as to how proposals should account for breeding birds in relation to legislation, planning and biodiversity policy.

2 Methods

2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1 To inform an evaluation of the on-site habitats for bird species, four breeding bird survey visits were completed. The survey work followed a standard method based on the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO's) Common Bird Census (CBC) (summarised by Gilbert *et al.*, 1998).

2.2 Breeding Bird Survey

- 2.2.1 Four visits were undertaken: three were completed in the early morning with the fourth undertaken in the evening. The evening survey was followed by an additional hour and fifteen minutes spent listening for crepuscular and nocturnal species. All other surveys were completed in the early morning. Survey duration varied between 2 hours 45 minutes (for the evening survey) and 3 hours 45 minutes (when the largest number of registrations were recorded).
- 2.2.2 During each visit the Site was walked at a slow pace to enable all birds detected to be identified and located. Frequent stops were made to scan suitable habitats and to listen for singing and calling birds. All areas of suitable breeding habitat within the Site boundary and immediately adjacent areas were approached to within 50m. Weather conditions were excellent for survey during all four visits.
- 2.2.3 During the survey the location and activity of each bird detected (visually and/or aurally) was recorded and mapped using standard two-letter BTO species codes combined with activity symbols.
- 2.2.4 Birds exhibiting breeding behaviour were assigned to one of three categories: possible breeding, probable breeding or confirmed breeding. These are defined below (based on BTO criteria):
- Possible breeding: birds heard singing or alarm calling or simply present in suitable breeding habitat on one of the survey visits;
 - Probable breeding: a pair of birds present in suitable breeding habitat; a repeat observation of territorial behaviour (song or alarm calling) on two or more different visits in the same location; courtship behaviour or display in suitable breeding habitat; birds apparently visiting a nest site; or, evidence of nest building (including excavation of a hole);
 - Confirmed breeding: one or more adults undertaking a distraction display; the presence of a used nest or eggshells; the presence of recently fledged or downy young (that are clearly of local origin); apparently incubating adults or adults commuting to and from a nest hole; adult birds carrying faecal sacs or food for young; or, a nest with eggs or young present.
- 2.2.5 Field observations from the four visits were combined to enable identification of clusters of records and clear indications of breeding; to facilitate the production of a final territory map (Figure 2)
- 2.2.6 Species that were not in suitable breeding habitat and which were noted flying over, foraging or loafing on the Site were also systematically counted and behaviour recorded.

2.3 Evaluation Methods

- 2.3.1 The evaluation of the importance of the Site to breeding birds has been based on IEEM (2006) guidance. This guidance recommends that valuation of site importance is made with reference to a geographical framework, e.g. a site is of local, regional, national value etc.

- 2.3.2 To inform the assessment in this report, the numbers of potential territories identified, the abundance of species at the county and national level, the quality of the habitat present and the geographical range of the birds concerned have been considered, based on national and regional accounts.

2.4 Personnel and Dates of Survey

- 2.4.1 The breeding bird survey visits were completed by Dave Chown.
- 2.4.2 Dave has worked as a full-time field ornithologist since 1983, and has substantial survey experience in a wide variety of habitats, including lowland wet grassland, uplands, coastal and marine environments, woodland and lowland farmland. Much of his work has been in south-west England.
- 2.4.3 Dave has undertaken substantial long-term survey work on behalf of Natural England and RSPB on the Somerset Levels, around Bridgwater Bay and in the south-west uplands, including breeding bird surveys, nest monitoring, nocturnal wader surveys, radio tracking studies and gull censuses.
- 2.4.4 He has also completed surveys of Bodmin Moor and the Camel Estuary on behalf of Cornwall Trust for Nature Conservation, studies of birds on Porlock Marsh for the Environment Agency, and offshore surveys with regard to renewables energy schemes and following the Sea Empress Oil Spill.
- 2.4.5 The reporting and assessment was completed by Owain Gabb, Principal Consultant with BSG Ecology. Owain has over 14 years of experience in the environmental sector, during which time he has worked in consultancy, for a statutory conservation agency and charities involved in nature conservation. He specialises in ornithological survey, assessment and reporting.
- 2.4.6 Dates of survey and weather conditions recorded during the work are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Weather conditions during survey visits

Date	Duration of Survey	Wind Direction & Speed (Beaufort Scale)	Cloud Cover (Octas)	Precipitation
19/04/2012	07:40-11:00	W 3	8/8	Intermittent light rain
27/04/2012	17:35-20:20 (nocturnal survey 20:20-21:35)	SW 1-3	3/8 - 8/8	None
16/05/2012	05:55-09:40	W 1-2	0/8-2/8	None
13/06/2012	06:00-09:05	N/NE 1-2	8/8	None

2.5 Limitations

- 2.5.1 There were no constraints or limitations to the survey work.

3 Results and Evaluation

3.1 Results of Breeding Bird Survey

- 3.1.1 The results of the breeding bird survey indicate that up to 33 species could be breeding within the Site or immediately adjacent habitats.
- 3.1.2 A full breakdown of possible, probable and confirmed breeders is contained in Table 2 below. Indicative central territory locations (for possible breeders these can simply represent the location in which the bird was recorded) are shown on Figure 2.

Table 2: Summary of bird territories

Species	Latin name	Possible	Probable	Confirmed	Total
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		1		1
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i> ¹	1			1
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i> ¹	1			1
Stock dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	1	3		4
Wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	9	7		16
Collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	1			1
Tawny owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	1			1
Green woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>		1		1
Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus major</i>	1	1		2
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	1	1	1	3
Pied wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarellii</i>	1			1
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	1	11		12
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	3	2	1	6
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	4	17	2	23
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	7	12	2	21
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	3	2		5
Mistle thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	1		2	3
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	2	5		7

¹ Sparrowhawk and buzzard did not breed within the survey area boundary, but forage over the Site (such that the Site appears to be within the core territory of a pair of both species).

Species	Latin name	Possible	Probable	Confirmed	Total
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	1	3		4
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	1	1		2
Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	1			1
Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	9	4	5	18
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	5	6	1	12
Coal tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	1	2		3
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	3		1	4
Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	1	1		2
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	1			1
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	3		1	4
Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>			3	3
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	3	3		6
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	1	2		3
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	2		1	3
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	1	1		2

3.1.3 Species noted during the survey work that were not breeding on the Site, or which were recorded potentially breeding beyond the Site boundary in habitats unrepresentative of the Site, are included in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Non-breeding species recorded during survey work

Species	Latin Name	Use of Site
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Flying over on Visit 3
Black-headed gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Flocks of up to 70 birds (minimum) ² forage on the Site
Mediterranean gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	A second summer bird flew north at low elevation on Visit 3. Four adults flew high south together on Visit 4
Herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Flying over on Visit 3

² There was considerable interchange with birds moving to and from feeding flocks with regularity. 70 birds represent the peak instantaneous count during survey work.

Species	Latin Name	Use of Site
Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Flying over on Visit 3
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Flying over on Visit 4
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	A bird was recorded holding territory on arable farmland to the west
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	Flying over on Visits 3 and 4
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Birds from residential areas close by use the Site for foraging.

- 3.1.4 The breeding bird community of the Site is characterised by a range of common and relatively ubiquitous bird species.
- 3.1.5 The findings are therefore broadly consistent with the conclusions in the extended Phase 1 Report (WSPE, 2011), in that specially protected or notable species at the county level identified during the desk study were not found to breed on the Site or in the surrounding area. Many of the species recorded during the walkover surveys undertaken by WSPE (and previously by Bioscan) were recorded on the Site and are considered likely to have bred.
- 3.1.6 Breeding territories are all located along field boundary features, in isolated clumps of trees and scrub and around buildings. No species that typically nest on open ground were recorded as potentially breeding within the Site boundary.
- 3.1.7 One bird species subject to special protection while breeding (under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 [as amended]) was recorded during the survey work; Mediterranean gull. The habitat present is not suitable for breeding, but birds were recorded flying over the Site on two of the four visits. There is the potential for Mediterranean gull to use the Site for foraging on occasion, as flocks of black-headed gull (with which Mediterranean gulls often associate) regularly feed on the pasture land within it. There is, however, no reason to suspect that the Site is of importance to the species based on survey data.
- 3.1.8 One red-listed bird of conservation concern was recorded breeding on the Site; song thrush. Up to five territories were present within or potentially overlapping the Site boundary. Further red-listed species recorded during the survey work but not breeding on the Site were skylark, which was holding territory in arable land west of the Site, starling and herring gull. Starlings breeding in local residential areas use the Site for foraging. Although no detailed observations were made, a total of 56 commuting flights (of which 19 involved birds apparently provisioning nests as they were carrying food) were recorded over the course of the four visits. Herring gull was recorded commuting over the Site in low numbers.
- 3.1.9 A further five amber-listed species of conservation concern were confirmed to have bred or were considered probable breeders within the Site boundary: stock dove (4), swallow (3), dunnoek (6), mistle thrush (3) and bullfinch (2). Black-headed and Mediterranean gulls, mallard and lesser black-backed gull are also on the amber list: mallard and lesser black-backed gull were recorded commuting over the Site on one of the survey visits, while the nature of known and likely use by black-headed and Mediterranean gulls is set out above.
- 3.1.10 Dunnock, song thrush, starling, skylark and herring gull also feature on the list of Species of Principal Importance (SPI) for the conservation of biodiversity in England (prepared in response to Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006), and are priority species under the UK

Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP). Song thrush is also listed as a priority species in the Hampshire BAP.

3.2 Evaluation of the Site for Breeding Birds

- 3.2.1 The Section 41 and red and amber listed species that were recorded breeding on the Site, in the surrounding area or using it during the breeding season are considered to be either abundant (dunnock and starling), or numerous at the county level (Hampshire Bird Reports). These terms are defined in the reports as indicating that there are in excess of 30,000 territories in the county and 5,001 - 30,000 territories in the county respectively (Cox [Ed], 2011).
- 3.2.2 The reason for the conservation prioritisation of these common species principally reflects recent and / or historical declines in populations at the national level, sometimes accompanied by a contraction in range. Red-listed birds are those for which the trends have been most marked. Song thrush, for example, has shown a rapid decline in terms of population since effective monitoring began (1969), while starling has shown a long term decline that has accelerated over the past 25 years, and also has an unfavourable conservation status at the European level.
- 3.2.3 Red and amber listing is therefore used as a tool for conservation prioritisation, and to inform updates to the UK BAP, which in turn has been used as the basis for the selection of species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The inclusion of dunnock on the list of species of principal importance is slightly anomalous, but reflects the fact that the race *occidentalis* is restricted to the UK and that the population has been subject to a moderate long term decline.
- 3.2.4 IEEM (2006) Guidance for Ecological Impacts Assessment, which is considered industry best practice, suggests that the value of an ecological resource or features should be determined within a defined geographical context. Populations may therefore be valued anywhere between 'internationally important' and 'of importance within the zone of influence only' (which might be reasonably defined as the Site boundary).
- 3.2.5 In reaching a defensible and reasonable valuation, factors such as the abundance of the resource at the international, national and local level, the importance of the resource in terms of ecosystem function, the quality and local availability of the habitat resource, the density of occurrence and the position of the population in terms of their geographical range are all considered.
- 3.2.6 Due to the relative abundance of ornithological data, it is often possible to derive population estimates for a range of geographical areas. A 1% threshold can then be applied as indicating importance (e.g. 1% of the county population is equivalent to county importance). There is no fundamental biological reason underpinning this rationale, but it is coherent with the rationale for site selection in the Ramsar Convention 1971 (Criterion 6: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird), and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee's SPA selection guidelines. It has also been adopted for the purposes of defining thresholds of importance of waterfowl at the European and UK level by the BTO in their Wetland Bird Survey reporting.
- 3.2.7 On this basis, and considering both the unexceptional nature of the habitats and the broad population estimates presented in the Hampshire Bird Reports, the breeding bird community associated with the Site is likely to be of local value³. This reflects the fact that those species of greatest nature conservation importance that occur on the Site are unlikely to be present in numbers that exceed 1%

³ Local parish size, which has been taken as the basis for defining the 'local' area are between approximately 16km² and 18km² in size.

of the local population, as they remain common and widespread, and have large populations at the county level.

- 3.2.8 The Site is perhaps of greatest value to local starling populations, for which it represents a locally important foraging resource. It was not possible to assess how many individual starlings were using the Site to provision active nests as a result of the survey work, but the horse pasture is likely to result in areas of disturbed ground and invertebrate communities associated with dung, and there was clearly a high turnover of birds.
- 3.2.9 Recommendations to address potential effects on breeding birds are detailed in Section 6 of this report.

3.3 Assessment of Effects in the Absence of Mitigation

- 3.3.1 Without mitigation, the scheme would be likely to result in the loss of many of the breeding bird species associated with the Site; as a result of habitat loss and increased disturbance and prevalence of predators.
- 3.3.2 This could initially result from the removal of hedgerows, trees and buildings used for nesting, and grassland habitats used by some species (breeding on and off-site) for foraging purposes during the construction phase. Then, during the operational phase, a lack of replacement habitat, combined with disturbance as a result of the change of use and the increased prevalence of predators such as cats, could prevent re-colonisation which in the absence of mitigation could lead to long term loss of breeding bird species currently associated with the Site.
- 3.3.3 Section 5 of this report identifies the requirements and recommendations of planning and biodiversity policy and law that are relevant to the Site. Recommendations with regard to appropriate avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures to ensure coherency with these policies is identified in Section 6, along with potential Site enhancement measures.

4 Legislation and Planning Issues

4.1 Legislation

- 4.1.1 All breeding birds and their nests are protected from damage and destruction under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). To prevent an offence under this legislation, mitigation such as the seasonal timing of vegetation clearance is required to avoid contravention of the law (see Section 6.2).
- 4.1.2 Of the 33 species recorded as potentially breeding on or very close to the Site, or using it to provision active nests, 3 (dunnock, song thrush and starling) are Species of Principal Importance (SPI) for the Conservation of Biodiversity in England (on the list drawn up in response to Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006). Skylark, which was recorded breeding in arable land west of the Site is also a Section 41 species.
- 4.1.3 Under Section 40 of the NERC Act (2006) public bodies, including local planning authorities have a duty to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions.

4.2 Planning Policy

- 4.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which replaced Planning Policy Statement 9 in March 2012, forms the basis for planning decisions with respect to conserving and enhancing the natural environment, including birds. The ODPM circular 06/2005 provides supplementary guidance, including confirmation that *'the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal'*. This provision is extended through the NPPF to local BAP species.
- 4.2.2 The NPPF sets out, amongst other points, how at an overview level the 'planning system should contribute to and enhance the national and local environment by:
- *recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services; and*
 - *minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures...*
- 4.2.3 A list of principles which local planning authorities should follow when determining planning applications is included in the NPPF. They include the following:
- *'- if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided...adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*
 - *- ...opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged;*
- 4.2.4 At the local level Policy CS11 of the Havant Borough Council Core Strategy (2011) states that planning permission will be granted for development that:
- *protects and where possible enhances the borough's statutory and non-statutory designated landscape, habitats and features of biological, hydrological or geological interest. Protection and enhancement will be achieved by appropriate adaptation and mitigation measures including wardening, education and information and the creation of new habitats, water bodies/courses planting of new trees and woodland.*
 - *protects wildlife habitats and wildlife corridors to prevent the fragmentation of existing habitats.*

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- 4.2.5 Policy CS13 of the Havant Borough Council Core Strategy concerns green infrastructure. In summary it states that development will be permitted that maintains and facilitates management of the network of green infrastructure at the sub regional and local levels and / or incorporates improvements to existing green infrastructure through the restoration, enhancement or creation of additional resources. Green infrastructure includes natural and semi-natural greenspace, scrub, grassland and water features.
- 4.2.6 Both mitigation and enhancement measures are recommended in Section 6 to ensure that the development proposals accord with the above planning policy in relation to birds.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Avoidance, Mitigation and Compensation Measures

- 5.1.1 The following section sets out a range of ways in which effects on birds can be avoided, mitigated and compensated for in line with national planning policy set out in the NPPF and Policies CS 11 and 13 of the Havant Core Strategy and to ensure legal compliance. The most important aspects are likely to be the retention of the hedgerows and the appropriate management of public open space.
- 5.1.2 The only habitats within the Site that are used for nesting by birds are trees, hedgerows, and the complex of buildings and sheds in the centre of the Site. It is recommended that the network of hedgerows and all mature trees are retained wherever possible, as this should ensure that a similar breeding bird community including Section 41 and amber listed species persists following construction. It is also recommended that these features are fenced off, allowing a margin of grassland and bramble to develop. This will increase the value of the retained hedgerows to seed-eating (e.g. bullfinch), insectivorous (e.g. dunnock) and those species with a more generalist diet (e.g. song thrush), and make them more impenetrable to predators such as cats.
- 5.1.3 Any scrub, tree or building removal that is necessary should be undertaken outside the main bird breeding season. In general, work conducted outside the period March to August inclusive is unlikely to result in contravention of the law concerning breeding birds (cross reference Section 5.1.1). In the event that partial clearance works must proceed during the main bird breeding season, it is recommended that clearance work is supervised and sanctioned by an appropriately qualified ecologist following a detailed check of the area concerned for active nests. Please note, that should active nests be found at this stage works in the vicinity of the active nest would have to cease until the nest was no longer active (i.e. the young have fledged).
- 5.1.4 It is also recommended that any loss of trees and hedgerows is compensated in the longer term through habitat creation which seeks to achieve a minimum of no net loss in suitable nesting bird habitat. This should include planting of native berry-bearing shrubs to also maintain foraging habitat. For example, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, rowan, *Sorbus aucuparia*, and crab apple, *Malus sylvestris*, provide good food sources for bullfinch (an amber-listed species recorded on the Site).
- 5.1.5 It is recommended that where new public open space is incorporated into the master plan, amenity areas are managed to also be of benefit to bird species such as starling (a Section 41 species) and mistle thrush (amber listed). This should include avoiding dense planting around the edges of amenity grassland areas, as this could provide cover for predators (such as cats and sparrowhawks) and reduce the field of view, making the areas less attractive to birds as a foraging resource. It is noted that depending on the area of amenity provision on site, the incorporation of amenity grassland areas could substantially mitigate the reduction in grassland currently used as horse pasture likely to result from development of the Site.
- 5.1.6 To address the loss of 2-3 pairs of swallow (another amber listed species) which would result from the loss of buildings currently present on the Site, it is recommended that any on site 'infrastructure' buildings such as garages, sheds, pumping stations or other utilities-type structures are designed to allow access for swallows, and provide suitable nesting opportunities. Typically this could be through leaving a gap at the top of the door and providing shelves inside for swallows to use. The additional provision of artificial nesting cups is likely to increase the likelihood of these features being used by swallows.
- 5.1.7 Incorporation of interpretation boards within or adjoining recreational green space would highlight the species of conservation concern that occur locally, and discourage potentially damaging practices in

gardens (such as the use of slug pellets / molluscicides), which can result in effects on species such as song thrush.

- 5.1.8 To prevent easy access into adjacent farmland for domestic pets, particularly cats, it is recommended that consideration be given to the installation of a 'cat-proof' fence around the western edge of the Site. Although it will not be possible to prevent cats getting beyond the Site boundary, this is likely to limit the potential for predation of ground-nesting birds such as skylark (a Section 41 species) in adjacent arable land.

5.2 Ecological Enhancement Measures

- 5.2.1 Paragraph 118 of the NPPF and policies CS11 and CS13 of the Havant Core Strategy all indicate that ecological enhancement measures (where possible) should be designed into new development schemes.

- 5.2.2 It is therefore recommended that proportionate enhancement measures are incorporated into the proposals to maximise the benefit to bird species present on Site, and those of nature conservation interest that could use it in future, and to deliver net gain where possible.

- 5.2.3 These measures should include:

- The provision of nest boxes for swifts, which are red-listed species of conservation concern, and which do not currently have breeding opportunities on site. The boxes should be placed on the least sunny side of buildings, under an overhang or the eaves, at least 5 metres above ground, with clear adjacent airspace for access, and away from existing or newly planted trees (which may provide perches or access for predators). Woodcrete boxes are durable and can last as long as the building they are sited on (incorporated boxes may be more desirable in design terms).
- Landscape planting with berry-bearing shrubs. Native species are encouraged in the first instance, however if non-native species are favoured around the residential complex for visual reasons, strong consideration should be given to fruit trees, as these are likely to benefit bullfinch and thrushes through providing a seasonal food source. Any planting of low dense shrubby vegetation will offer some potential opportunities to species such as dunnoek.
- The creation of a pool or seasonally wet area for foraging in close proximity to dense woody habitat likely to be used by breeding song thrush. This juxtaposition of habitats is identified within the UK Species Action Plan for song thrush as being of particular importance for the conservation of the species.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1.1 Survey work undertaken at the Site has recorded a common and relatively ubiquitous bird community that is considered to be of no more than local value. Notwithstanding this, however, a number of red and amber listed species of conservation concern are present, some of which are considered to be of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England and which are priority species for conservation at the national and county level.
- 6.1.2 In order to avoid and reduce potential effects on these species, to maximise benefit for the wider bird community, and to ensure that the law regarding nesting birds is not contravened, a range of measures have been proposed. These include the retention of trees and hedgerows, the sympathetic management of open space, compensatory planting of beneficial trees and shrubs, the erection of nest boxes and the education of the local residents with regard to their local birds and the measures they can take to conserve them.
- 6.1.3 Enhancement measures, aimed at increasing the value of the Site are also proposed to ensure that the proposals are coherent with the recommendations of national (NPPF) and local (Policies CS11 and CS13 of the Havant Borough Core Strategy) planning policy.
- 6.1.4 On the basis that reasonable mitigation and enhancement aimed at Section 41, red and amber-listed birds of conservation concern is put in place, it is likely that the development proposals will be compliant with legislation relevant to breeding birds and fully satisfy planning policy requirements which seek overall benefits.

7 References

7.1 Project References

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- 7.1.2 Bioscan (2009) Woodcroft Farm, Wecock, Hampshire, Ecological Appraisal (report no. E1570R1).

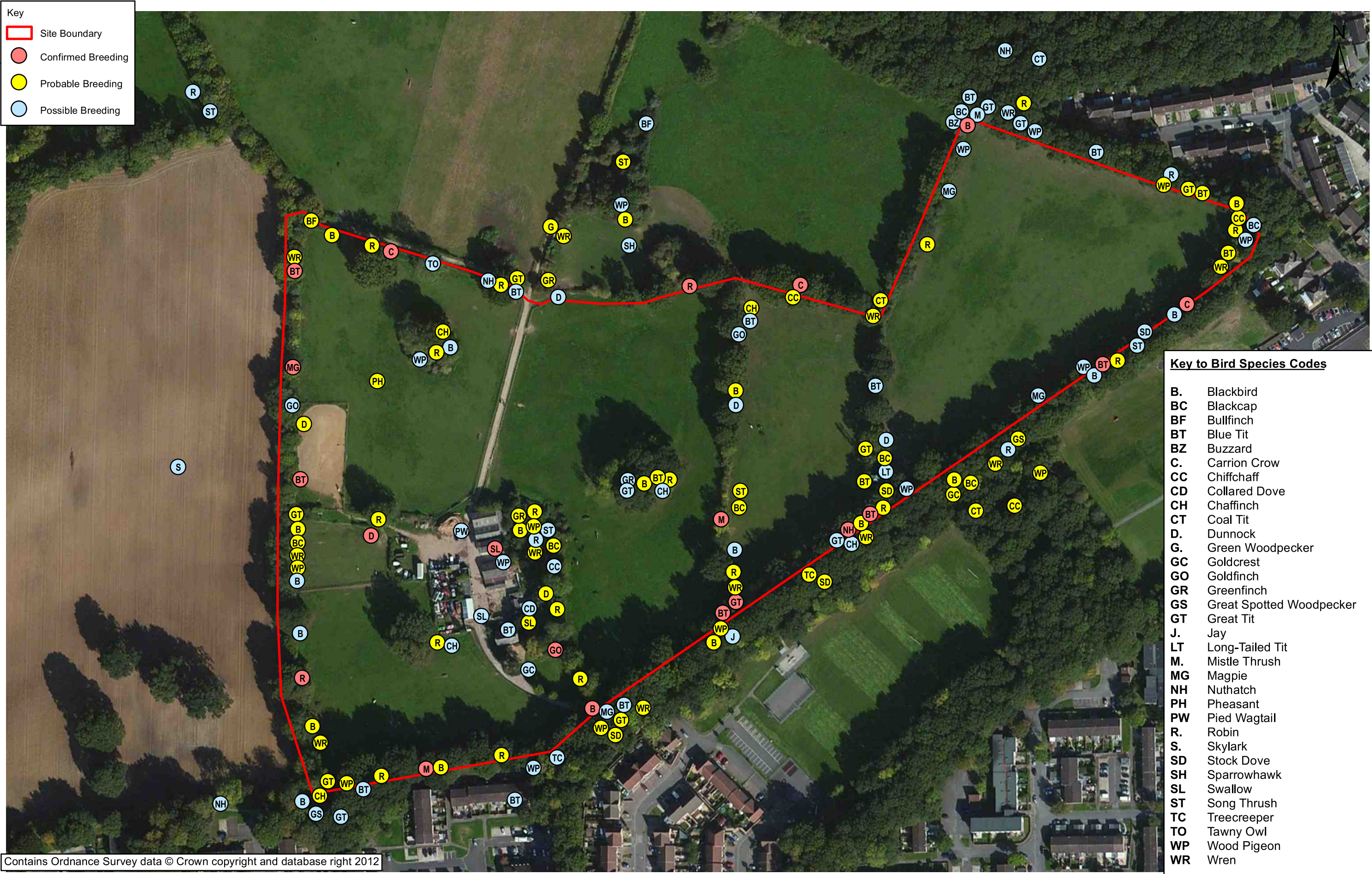
7.2 Technical References

- 7.2.1 Cox, A [Ed]. (2011). Hampshire bird report 2010. Hampshire Ornithological Society.
- 7.2.2 Department for Communities and Local Government (2012), National Planning Policy Framework . Department for Communities and Local Government, London. Available: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2116950.pdf>
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- 7.2.5 Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership. (Undated). Biodiversity Action Plan for Hampshire: Volume 2. <http://www.hampshirebiodiversity.org.uk/pdf/vol2/Vol2ActionPlansp1-13.pdf>
- 7.2.6 Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan, available: <http://www.hampshirebiodiversity.org.uk/hampshire%20BAP.html>
- 7.2.7 Havant Borough Council. (2011). Local Development Framework Core Strategy. Havant Borough Council, available <http://www.havant.gov.uk/havant-11604>
- 7.2.8 Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) (2005) Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Circular 06/2005 HMSO, Norwich. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147570.pdf>
- 7.2.9 HMSO Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) available: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69>
- 7.2.10 IEEM. (2006). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment. Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Hampshire
- 7.2.11 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>
- 7.2.12 UK Biodiversity Action Plan information can be found at the following link: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5155>

8 Figure 1 – Site Location Plan



9 Figure 2 – Breeding Bird Territory Map



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