

Appendix 13-9 TVP P&R Scheme Breeding Bird Survey Report

Your Ref:

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Dear John,

Subject: Thames Valley Park Park and Ride Scheme: Breeding Bird Survey Report

Please find below a short report setting out the results of a single breeding birds survey visit to the Thames Valley Park Park and Ride (P&R) Scheme site.

INTRODUCTION

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) proposes to develop an area of land on the north-eastern outskirts of Reading in Berkshire, hereafter referred to as 'the Site', into a Park and Ride. The Site which is approximately 1.9 hectares (ha) in size with a central grid reference of SU 73463 73895, is known as Broken Brow and is situated to the immediate south of the River Thames and the Thames Path National Trail which runs parallel to the southern bank of the river. The Site is bordered along its southern extent by a First Great Western railway line and associated rail estate, and to the east by Thames Valley Park beyond which is Thames Valley Park. Wokingham Waterside Centre lies to the immediate north of the Site with a car park to the northeast, and a former pub called The Dreadnought which is now used as a boat house and administration centre by Reading University rowing club, also lies to the immediate north of the Site. The landscape to the south of the railway line is urban whereas to the north and northeast of the River Thames lies the Thames and Kennet Marina, the Redgrave Pinsent Rowing Lake and Caversham lakes.

The proposed design entails the redevelopment of the Site to a Park and Ride which will accommodate a total of 360 standard car parking spaces and 16 disabled parking spaces. Cycle stands and motorcycle bays will also be provided as well as a small toilet block and a bus stop. These works are hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development'.

Wokingham Borough Council identified the need for breeding bird surveys to be conducted within the Site to enable the collation of ecological baseline information required to inform the ecological assessment of the Thames Valley Park Park and Ride (P&R) project.

ECOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

An ecological desk study was undertaken by WSP|PB in June 2015 which entailed obtaining bird records within a 2km search radius of the Site, from Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) and the Berkshire Ornithological Club (BOC). Numerous records of birds of conservation importance were identified within 2km of the Site and comprise 23 species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended), 21 red-listed and 59 amber-listed Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) (Eaton et al. 2009), 23 species of principal importance (SPI) as listed on Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, 23 UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) priority species and 13 Berkshire BAP priority species.

It should be noted that several of the Schedule 1 bird records pertain to species that are scarce or migrant breeders in the country such as redwing *Turdus iliacus*, non-breeding summer visitors, or migrant/wintering birds. The additional protection afforded to those species listed on Schedule 1 Part 1 of the WCA 1981 (as amended), however, only pertains to birds and their young whilst at, on or near an active nest.

The desk study did not identify any statutory or non-statutory designated nature conservation sites within the defined search parameters around the Site (2km for statutory national level sites and non-statutory designated sites and 10km for European statutory designated sites) for which breeding bird assemblages form part of the reasons for designation.

BRIEF AND OBJECTIVES

WSP|PB was commissioned to conduct a breeding bird survey at the Site; the overarching objective of which was to obtain baseline data regarding the bird community present within the potential zone of influence of the Proposed Development during the breeding season. Due to access restrictions and other barriers to survey including the railway line that borders the southern boundary of the Site, the survey area comprises the Site itself and the area to the immediate north that could either be accessed on foot or surveyed from the Thames Path which is a Public Right of Way (PRoW), and this included the section of the River Thames north of the Site.

The intended aim of the breeding bird survey was to provide:

- A list of bird species encountered and their breeding status (i.e. confirmed, probable or possible breeding, or not considered to be breeding within the survey area) and an estimate of the likely number of territories/colonies of bird species breeding on or close to the Site;
- An evaluation of the value of the survey area for breeding birds; and
- Recommendations as to how proposals should account for breeding birds in relation to legislation, planning and biodiversity policy.

The results of the above survey are contained within this letter report.

BREEDING BIRD SURVEY METHOD

In order to inform an evaluation of the on-site habitats for bird species and to collate data regarding the breeding bird assemblage within the survey area, it was originally planned that five breeding bird survey visits would be completed between May and July 2015. However, on account of the reasons discussed in the Notes and Limitations section below, only one survey visit was undertaken. The survey work followed a standard method based on the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO's) Common Bird Census (CBC), as summarised by Bibby *et al.* (2000).

The survey visit was carried out on 28th May 2015 and was completed in the early morning, commencing and finishing at approximately 6.40am and 9.20am respectively.

During the survey visit the survey area was walked slowly whilst watching and listening for birds. The locations of birds seen and heard were mapped using standard BTO two letter codes and standard activity symbols, including those denoting breeding activity, as set out within good practice guidance (Bibby *et al.*, 2000).

Field observations from the survey visit have been analysed to provide an indication of breeding status of those species recorded within the survey area. It should be acknowledged that it does not constitute a comprehensive evaluation given the relatively limited conclusions that can be drawn from one survey visit. Therefore, analysis serves to provide an indicative evaluation regarding breeding status only, with the exception of those species for which it has been possible to ascertain confirmed breeding within the survey area or for those species considered not to be breeding within the survey area. Moreover, it has not been possible to provide an estimate of the likely number of territories within the survey area.

Where breeding activity was observed this has been classified in accordance with the following categories (based on standard BTO criteria):

- Non-breeder – birds observed flying over, considered to be still on migration or a summering non-breeder.
- Possible breeding – species observed in suitable nesting habitat in breeding season or singing male present (or breeding calls heard) in suitable habitat in breeding season.
- Probable breeding – a pair observed in suitable habitat, territorial behaviour observed in the same place on at least two separate occasions, or by many individuals simultaneously on one day, or birds observed visiting a probable nest site, showing courtship or display behaviour in suitable breeding habitat or nest building.
- Confirmed breeding – nest containing eggs or young seen or heard, adults observed carrying faecal sac or food, feigning injury as a distraction display or entering or leaving a nest site in circumstances indicating an occupied nest, a used nest or eggshells found or recently fledged or downy young recorded (showing evidence of dependency on adults).

The breeding bird survey visit and subsequent data analysis was completed by Emma Fisher, Senior Ecologist with WSP|PB. Emma has over ten years' experience as a professional ecologist, including breeding bird surveys of lowland and upland sites as well as a range of other ornithological survey methods.

NOTES AND LIMITATIONS

The breeding bird survey has been subject to a number of limitations and as such it has not been possible to completely fulfil the original brief.

The main limitation to the breeding bird survey is that during the first survey visit a number of health and safety issues were detected within the Site boundary including unknown persons camping out in tents, and sections of the Site being inaccessible due to very dense impenetrable vegetation and scrub. The survey was completed as far as practically possible whilst minimising the risk associated with the aforementioned hazards. It was consequently determined on the grounds of health and safety, that further survey visits were to be postponed until the identified issues were resolved. The survey visit undertaken does not constitute a complete and robust breeding bird survey, and does not accord with the standard method stipulated in Bibby *et al.* (2000). As such it has not been possible to confirm the breeding status of all the species recorded or to calculate the number of territories, and it is possible that not all species that occur at the Site were detected during the one survey visit that was carried out.

The survey area was limited to the site itself and publically accessible land alongside the River Thames (to the south). The absence of survey data for nearby land which could not be accessed (for example the railway corridor and beyond) is not considered to constitute a significant constraint to the survey due to the localised nature of the Proposed Development whereby solely the Site will be directly affected by works. Furthermore, the urban area to the south of the Site provides limited habitat suitable for most bird species during the nesting season, and those species that do utilise urban environments such as house sparrow *Passer domesticus* are generally habituated to higher levels of disturbance such as that which may result from the Proposed Development, than species that do not use urban areas.

With the exception of species that were confirmed to be breeding within the survey area during the one survey visit carried out, it has not been possible to determine the breeding status of all species recorded as more than one survey visit is often required in order to differentiate between those species that are possibly or probably breeding within the survey area. In these instances species have been categorised as possible breeders.

It should be noted that whilst every effort was made to detect all species present during the survey visit, some bird species are more difficult to detect due to their elusive or secretive nature and therefore may have gone undetected during the survey. As a limitation which is applicable to all bird

surveys, this is not considered to place significant restrictions upon interpretation of the results for this project.

RESULTS

A total of twenty-four species were recorded within and over the survey area during the single breeding bird survey visit, and of these it has been assessed that one species, namely robin *Erithacus rubecula*, is a confirmed breeder and one species, long-tailed tit *Aegithalos caudatus*, is a probable breeder within the survey area, and specifically the Site. Fourteen species are possible breeders and eight species have been categorised as non-breeders. It is feasible that some of the latter species could nest within relatively close proximity to the Site, however it has not been possible to determine this on the basis of one survey visit, and therefore on account of the absence of suitable nesting habitat within the Site itself where the proposed works will actually take place, these species have been classed as 'non-breeders' for the purposes of this summary report.

The results of the survey along with the conservation status of each species and the most recently documented county status (in terms of reports that are freely available on the internet) as specified in *The Birds of Berkshire Annual Report 2011* (BOC, 2014), is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Indicative breeding status of those species recorded within the survey area

Species		WCA 1981	NERC Act 2006	BoCC		BAP		Breeding status within survey area	Notes	Berkshire status in 2011 (BOC, 2014)
Common name	Latin name	Schedule 1	Section 41	Red List	Amber list	UK BAP	LBAP			
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>							Confirmed breeder.	Adults recorded singing and calling throughout survey area. Adult seen to land on the ground and commence foraging whilst juvenile perched on low branch close by.	Abundant resident.
Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>							Probable breeder.	Family party (8 birds) observed within suitable habitat to immediate north of the Site, within the survey area. Cannot be certain from one survey visit that nesting within the survey area had taken place. Another family party (5 birds) seen and heard flying over the Site.	Common and widespread resident.
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		x	x		x		Possible breeder.	Singing males seen and heard in suitable nesting habitat. Adult seen foraging on ground.	Common resident and winter visitor.
Dunnoek	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		x		x	x	x	Possible breeder.	Two males heard singing simultaneously at western end of the Site.	Common though possibly declining resident.
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>				x			Possible breeder.	Pair seen on River Thames and suitable nesting habitat exists within the survey area. However, the species is unlikely to nest within the Site itself.	Common (locally abundant) resident and winter visitor.
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>				x			Possible breeder (within building to the immediate north of the Site boundary but within the survey area)	Adults observed and heard calling, in flight over the River Thames and over the Site itself, possibly foraging for insects carried on the air currents. Likelihood of the species nesting within the survey area is relatively low, however given the presence of the old former pub called The Dreadnought within the survey area and immediately north of the Site, the possibility of swift nesting within this building (although no evidence was observed) cannot be discounted on the basis of one survey visit.	Common through declining passage migrant and summer visitor.

Species		WCA 1981	NERC Act 2006	BoCC		BAP		Breeding status within survey area	Notes	Berkshire status in 2011 (BOC, 2014)
Common name	Latin name	Schedule 1	Section 41	Red List	Amber list	UK BAP	LBAP			
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>							Possible breeder.	Singing males seen and heard in suitable breeding habitat.	Abundant resident and winter visitor.
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia articapilla</i>							Possible breeder.	Male seen and heard singing from song post in suitable habitat.	Common summer visitor and passage migrant; uncommon (but increasing?) in winter.
Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>							Possible breeder.	Adult heard calling in suitable breeding habitat.	Abundant resident.
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>							Possible breeder.	Two males heard singing within Site and male heard on northern bank on River Thames.	Common summer visitor and scarce but increasing winter visitor.
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>							Possible breeder.	Adult seen and heard to fly into suitable nesting habitat within the Site.	Common and widespread resident.
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>							Possible breeder.	Three singing males heard (one of which was observed also) in suitable nesting habitat within the boundary of the Site.	Common and widespread resident and winter visitor.
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>							Possible breeder.	Breeding calls heard from adult in suitable breeding habitat.	Abundant resident.
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>							Possible breeder.	Adults heard calling in suitable habitat.	Abundant breeding resident.
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>							Possible breeder.	Males recorded singing in suitable breeding habitat throughout the survey area.	Abundant resident, local numbers may be affected by adverse winter weather.
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>							Possible breeder.	Adults seen to land in suitable nesting habitat within the survey area and specifically within the Site. Adults heard alarm calling and singing	Abundant resident and winter visitor.

Species		WCA 1981	NERC Act 2006	BoCC		BAP		Breeding status within survey area	Notes	Berkshire status in 2011 (BOC, 2014)
Common name	Latin name	Schedule 1	Section 41	Red List	Amber list	UK BAP	LBAP			
Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	x			x			Non-breeder.	Two adults recorded in flight over the Site. No suitable nesting habitat for the species within the survey area however.	Common re-introduced resident.
Greylag goose ¹	<i>Anser anser</i>	x			x			Non-breeder.	A number of naturalised or feral geese observed. A pair seen on the River Thames, a number of adults seen in a mixed group on the southern bank of the Thames to the northeast of the Site and five adults observed around the inlet to the marina located north of the Thames to the north of the Site. Not considered to breed within the survey area and certainly not within the Site itself.	Common and widespread introduced resident.
Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>				x			Non-breeder.	Adult seen to fly over survey area and then along River Thames to the immediate north of the Site.	Abundant winter visitor and passage migrant which now breeds in increasing numbers.
Common tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>				x			Non-breeder.	Two adults recorded in flight above the River Thames to the north of the Site.	Common summer visitor and passage migrant.
Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>							Non breeder.	Adult observed landing on small jetty along southern bank of River Thames to the north of the Site. Not deemed to nest within survey area.	Abundant breeding resident.

¹ The greylag goose is listed on Schedule 1 Part 2 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which affords special protection during the close season but which only applies to the small indigenous population which breeds in Scotland (in Outer Hebrides, Caithness, Sutherland and Wester Ross only). This is important to note because a 're-established' population was established in southwest Scotland, Wales and parts of England through releases of birds mainly in the 1930s and 1960s, derived from eggs taken from sites in the north and west of Scotland. In recent decades, both of these populations have greatly increased in number and range, and have gradually overlapped to the point where it has become impossible to treat them separately. As a result, since 2010 all greylag geese breeding in Britain are recognised as a single British greylag goose population (Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, 2013).

Species		WCA 1981	NERC Act 2006	BoCC		BAP		Breeding status within survey area	Notes	Berkshire status in 2011 (BOC, 2014)
Common name	Latin name	Schedule 1	Section 41	Red List	Amber list	UK BAP	LBAP			
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>							Non-breeder.	Adult seen on River Thames. Although there is potential nesting habitat along the edge of the River Thames which was included within the survey area as far as practically possible, there is no suitable nesting habitat for the species within the Site and so has been categorised as a non-breeder.	Common resident and winter visitor to open water.
Mute swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>							Non-breeder.	A pair seen on the River Thames, a number of adults seen in a mixed group on the southern bank of the Thames to the northeast of the Site and six adults observed within the inlet to the marina located north of the Thames to the north of the Site. Not observed to nest within the survey area, although the possibility of nesting following the one survey visit cannot be discounted. However, the species will not nest within the Site itself due to inappropriate habitat and therefore has been categorised as a non-breeder.	Locally common resident.
Canada goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>							Non-breeder.	Two pairs seen on the River Thames, a number of adults seen in a mixed group on the southern bank of the Thames to the northeast of the Site and nine adults observed within the inlet to the marina located north of the Thames to the north of the Site. There is no suitable nesting habitat for the species within the Site itself nor within the section of the survey area that could be accessed on foot to the immediate north of the Site.	Common and widespread introduced resident.

LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

LEGISLATION

Habitat Regulations 2010 (as amended)

Under the amendments to the Habitat Regulations (16th August 2012) Reg 9A(2) & (3) state that local authorities '*must take such steps in the exercise of their functions as they consider appropriate to contribute to...the preservation, maintenance and re-establishment of a sufficient diversity and area of habitat for wild birds in the UK including by means of the upkeep, management and creation of such habitat...*'. The legislation continues to state that economic and recreation requirements must be taken into consideration in considering which measures are appropriate.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) all wild birds are protected from killing and injury, and their nests and eggs protected from taking, damage and destruction whilst in use; therefore, recommendations to avoid contravention of this legislation are included in the subsequent section of this report.

Additional protection is extended to species listed under Schedule 1 of the Act, meaning it is also an offence to disturb these species at or near the nest, or whilst they have dependent young.

Of the species recorded within the survey area, red kite and greylag goose are listed on Part 1 and Part 2 of Schedule 1 respectively. Nonetheless, as these species have been categorised as 'non-breeders' in the context of the Site, further specific recommendations in respect of these species have not been considered necessary.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

The NERC Act 2006 reinforces the duty upon all public authorities, including planning authorities, to have regard for the conservation of biodiversity when discharging their duties. The Act refines the definition of biodiversity conservation, stating that it includes restoring or enhancing a population or habitat. Section 41 of the NERC Act requires the Secretary of State to produce a list of habitats and species of principal importance (HPIs and SPIs) for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The habitats and species listed under Section 41 largely replicate those listed on the UK BAP which occur in England (however there are exceptions). Two SPI (also designated as UK BAP priority species) were recorded within the survey area, these comprise song thrush and dunnoek, both of which are considered to possibly breed within the survey area. Therefore, recommendations are included within the affiliated section below with the objective of encouraging the conservation of these species as breeding species within the survey area, wherever possible, following completion of the Proposed Development.

PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework

At a national context planning policy is driven by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012). 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;

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...

The NPPF states that this should be achieved through local planning development frameworks and gives recommendations for criteria based policies which recognise the hierarchy of designated sites which range from internationally important habitat, to sites of importance at a local level and ensure that protection is *'commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks.'*

A list of principles which local planning authorities should follow when determining planning applications is included in the NPPF which includes the following:

'if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided...adequately mitigated, or, as last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

...opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged;

planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland...unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss...'

Although the NPPF revoked Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9), the ODPM circular 06/2005 originally prepared to accompany PPS9 remains current; this states that *'the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal'* and also includes confirmation that *'potential effects of a development, on habitats or species listed as priorities in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)...are capable of being a material consideration in the...making of planning decisions.'* The circular advises that local authorities should consult Natural England before granting planning permission if the proposals could adversely affect a protected species, this definition of a protected species includes birds.

Local Planning Policy

At a local level, the Wokingham Borough Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted 29 January 2010) contains Policy CP7: Biodiversity, which states that *"development which may harm habitats or, species of principal importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors), whether directly or indirectly, or that compromises the implementation of the national, regional, county and local biodiversity action plans will be only permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm is available which will meet the need, and: mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts; or appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided."*

NATURE CONSERVATION POLICY

Birds of Conservation Concern Red and Amber Lists

The UK's leading bird conservation organisations reviewed the most up to date information on the status of birds in the UK and elsewhere in their range to produce the third review of the status of birds which occur regularly in the UK. This is presented as the Birds of Conservation Concern 3 (Eaton *et al*, 2009), comprising a 'red list' of species of high conservation concern, an 'amber' list of species of moderate conservation concern, with other species that do not qualify under red or amber list criteria on the green list. To qualify on the red list species may be listed as globally threatened by IUCN, have suffered a historical decline without substantial recent recovery, or a decline of more than 50% in breeding or non-breeding populations, or a 50% contraction in breeding range over 25 years (or the longer term). Amber list species can be those listed as Species of European Conservation Concern, those which have suffered a historical decline but shown significant recent recovery, have shown a decline of between 25 and 50% in breeding or non-breeding populations, or a contraction in breeding range of between 25% and 50% over 25 years (or the longer term) or be rare or localised breeders in the UK, or be species for which 20% of the breeding or non-breeding population is found in the UK.

Red or amber listing does not confer additional protection under legislation or planning policy, however it provides a basis for informing evaluation of the breeding bird community within a defined survey area and for targeting conservation effort, and as such is a widely used resource for interpreting bird populations.

One red list species, song thrush, has been recorded and categorised as possibly breeding within the survey area, and more specifically, the Site. Seven amber list species were recorded during the survey visit of which four are considered to be 'non-breeders', whilst the other three are deemed to possibly breed within the survey area, and comprise mallard, dunnoek and swift. Recommendations to facilitate the continued use of the survey area by red and amber list species wherever possible post development completion are proposed within the section of the same name, below.

Biodiversity Action Plans

The UK BAP, first published in 1994 and updated in 2007, is a government initiative designed to implement the requirements of the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to conserve and enhance species and habitats. The UK BAP contains a list of priority habitats and species of conservation concern in the UK, and outlines biodiversity initiatives designed to enhance their conservation status. The priority species generally correlate with those listed in accordance with Section 41 of the NERC Act (with some exceptions).

BAPs in the UK have no statutory status, but provide a framework for implementing conservation requirements. Furthermore, species listed as priority species in the UK BAP which are also listed as SPI are afforded a degree of protection under the NERC Act (2006), which states that local authorities have a duty to conserve biodiversity (see above). Two UK BAP species were recorded within the survey area, song thrush and dunnoek, and these have both been categorised as possible breeders.

The UK BAP is supplemented by Local BAPs (LBAPs) which identify habitats and species of particular value or concern at the local level. The survey area is covered by *The Natural Environment in Berkshire: Biodiversity Strategy 2014 – 2020*. Although the strategy does not contain targeted Species Action Plans (SAPs), it contains a list of priority species that have been recorded in Berkshire (as listed in Appendix 4 of the document) and stipulates with reference to these species that: '*by focusing on landscape scale habitat conservation we envisage that these species will benefit as a result*'. The strategy thereby seeks to adopt a landscape scale approach to conservation of bird species within the county and advocates the maintenance and creation of habitat networks. In terms of Berkshire priority bird species (as listed in Appendix 4 of the biodiversity strategy), dunnoek has been recorded as possibly breeding within the survey area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

AVOIDANCE AND MITIGATION MEASURES

In the first instance it is recommended that the vegetation within the Site, most notably the scrub and trees that afford suitable nesting habitat for birds, is retained as far as practically possible and incorporated as landscaping features into the design for the Park and Ride Scheme, especially given the geographical and landscape setting of the Site within close proximity to the River Thames. It may be viable to investigate design options that would entail retention of the trees and scrub currently forming vegetative boundaries to the Site, as this would allow for the retention of some nesting habitat for birds within the Site whilst providing an aesthetically pleasing boundary to the Site.

It is recommended that the clearance of vegetation (particularly scrub and trees) necessary to facilitate the works is programmed to take place outside of the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive) in order to avoid damage or destruction of active nests. Where this is not possible, any areas of scrub, individual trees and/or woodland/treebelt to be cleared/felled should be thoroughly inspected by a suitably experienced ecologist for the presence of active nests immediately prior to clearance/felling, or at least within 24 hours of clearance. In the event that an active nest is identified, a buffer zone of at least 5m (actual size to be determined on Site) around the nest should be demarcated (preferably using high-vis tape) and no works will be able to proceed within this area until the young have fledged or the nest is otherwise no longer active. In this scenario monitoring of the nest by an experienced ecologist will therefore be necessary.

COMPENSATION AND ENHANCEMENT MEASURES

The nature of the Proposed Development is such that opportunity for compensation and/or enhancement measures to be undertaken within the Site itself is likely to be limited as it will be converted to hard standing with the construction of one small toilet block. However, the following should be considered during the design process and carried out where possible:

- Any new landscaping to be incorporated within the Proposed Development should utilise native species of local provenance and include fruit bearing shrubs and/or trees. This is in order to provide food resources for birds and to compensate in part for the loss of scrub and trees where this proves unavoidable in order to facilitate the Proposed Development. Wherever possible new landscaping should be designed as connective corridors, linking to adjacent areas of habitat so as not to create isolated areas of habitat that are less likely to be utilised.
- Depending upon the proposed design and dimensions of the toilet block, the potential for inclusion of nest boxes for house sparrows and swifts for example, should be considered and discussed with a suitably experienced ecologist. In all likelihood the inclusion of such features will prove unfeasible as it is anticipated that the block will be small in size. In the event that any other built structures, such as a site office, are included within the Proposed Development as the design progresses, the viability of installing nest boxes should again be given due consideration.

CONCLUSION

A total of twenty-four species were recorded within and over the survey area during the single breeding bird survey visit and of these it has been assessed that:

- one species, namely robin, is a confirmed breeder;
- one species, long-tailed tit, is a probable breeder;
- fourteen species are possible breeders and comprise song thrush (SPI, red-listed BoCC and UK BAP priority species), mallard (amber-listed BoCC), blackbird, blackcap, blue tit, chiffchaff, goldfinch, greenfinch, great tit, magpie, wren, dunnoek (SPI, amber-listed BoCC, UK BAP and LBAP priority species), woodpigeon and swift (amber-listed BoCC); and
- eight species have been categorised as non-breeders and comprise carrion crow, greylag goose (Schedule 1 Part 2, and amber-listed BoCC), coot, black-headed gull (amber-listed BoCC), common tern (amber-listed BoCC), mute swan, Canada goose and red kite (Schedule 1 Part 1 and amber-listed BoCC).

In terms of whether it is deemed necessary to conduct a complete five visit breeding bird survey during the 2016 breeding season, on the basis of the information collected during the single survey visit in 2015, it is not considered necessary. This is due to the relatively small size of the Site which is not likely to constitute a key area of habitat for breeding birds within the area given the landscape context of the Site which is located within close proximity to the River Thames and other larger areas of associated habitat that have suitability for birds during the breeding season. Furthermore, the assemblage of breeding birds that utilise the Site is estimated to be relatively small in respect of the number of species as well as the number of breeding pairs and associated territories.

In addition, it is considered that the risk of directly affecting nesting birds within the Site can be suitably mitigated by appropriately timing works and programming the vegetation clearance to take place outside of the bird nesting season which is generally accepted to be March to August inclusive (i.e. clearance, where required, should ideally occur between October and February inclusive). Moreover, to mitigate the loss of suitable nesting habitat within the Site and to minimise potential effects upon the breeding bird community, the recommended avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures should be taken into consideration during the design process and implemented wherever possible.

REFERENCES

- Berkshire Ornithological Club (2014). *The Birds of Berkshire Annual Report 2011*. Berkshire Ornithological Club, Reading.
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I trust that you will find the above summary report useful, however, please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

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cc: Clare Richmond, Hattie Spray.