

LAND AT CHICHELE ROAD, OXTED: BREEDING BIRDS

1 METHODOLOGY

1.1 Birds

1.1.1 All bird surveys included an assessment of the habitats on site for their potential to support protected and notable species of bird. Targeted bird surveys included three breeding bird surveys and an automated static survey within the key breeding bird period, the details of which are discussed below.

1.1.2 The main habitats impacted on site comprise the area of modified grassland, with boundary woodland and hedgerows being retained and buffered. Therefore, it was considered that sufficient information could be gathered from three surveys (as opposed to six required for more complex sites), along with static monitoring. This is in line with the BTO guidance which states *“fewer survey visits may be justified for projects with very limited impacts, or sites with habitats of low value for birds”*.

Breeding Bird Survey

1.1.3 Three surveys were conducted on the 25th April (Dawn), 22nd May (Dusk) and 6th June 2024 (Dawn). A walked transect of the site was undertaken as shown at figure 1. The surveys were undertaken by Jim Phillips, supported by different members of his team (Kane Burchill, Sarah Forsyth, Steph Green).

1.1.4 The dawn surveys were undertaken approximately between one hour before sunrise and half an hour after sunrise. The dusk survey was conducted one hour before sunset extending to one hour after to detect any nocturnal species.

1.1.5 Information recorded during the survey included all species encountered on the site or land adjacent. The approximate locations of all species were plotted on a site map together with behaviours observed such as nest building, nest activity, birds displaying territorial behaviour, singing birds, calling birds and foraging activity. This information was recorded over three site visits to form a species map of the birds present on site.

Automated / static surveys

1.1.6 One bird static survey was used to provide information on the composition of bird species present and to support the findings of all bird surveys carried out onsite as a supplementary survey method. The location of the detector, along the woodland edge and adjacent to the grassland habitat, was chosen to allow coverage of bird species using the key bird habitats onsite to help identify a diverse bird assemblage. The location of the static detector is shown in Figure 1.

1.1.7 The deployment followed the recommended breeding bird survey methodology (Bird Survey & Assessment Steering Group, 2023) with recording set to a time-sampling

approach, recording one minute in every ten, twenty-four hours a day. The survey period was extended from the standard five day range to fifteen days to maximise detection rates of bird species. The deployment period was from 22nd May to 6th June 2024.

1.1.8 The calls were processed and analysed using the analytical software Quicksight. This software uses automated recognition of bird vocalisations whilst also taking into account the location probability and detection confidence of the record. Any calls below a detection confidence of 0.85 were excluded from the results. For accuracy of call classification, a sub-sample of unusual/rare species records, in context of the site location and habitats present, were manually verified using Audacity software. All calls were checked by experienced ornithologists familiar with bird vocalisations and species distribution, with verification supported call comparisons to Xeno Canto. All false records were excluded from the analysis.



Figure 1 Walked transect and Location of bird static detector

2 RESULTS

2.1 Desk study

- 2.1.1 There were ten bird records returned in the data search, all from 1996, identifying seven bird species within a 1km radius of the site. The records included six common species of gardens and woodland currently on the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) green list, namely robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), blue tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), great tit (*Parus major*), goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*), nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*) and great spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopus major*) and one record for the BoCC Amber listed wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*).
- 2.1.2 The aforementioned species are most likely associated with the woodland and woodland edge habitat, nesting in either tree cavities or building cup nests within trees and hedgerows. In addition, the grassland habitat onsite would likely offer limited foraging opportunities for these species as they primarily forage within trees and shrubs and at the base of hedgerows.
- 2.1.3 The site comprises a grassland field with native hedgerow boundaries and a parcel of ancient woodland to the sites' northern boundary. The grassland field provides some opportunities for foraging birds; however, the hedgerows and woodland were assessed to be the key features on site and were assessed to provide suitable breeding as well as foraging habitats for a range of bird species. The wider landscape has functional habitat links to the site in the form of ancient woodland corridors and further parcels of arable and pasture with native hedgerows boundaries.

2.2 Breeding Bird Survey

- 2.2.1 The three breeding bird surveys recorded low levels of activity during each survey, as such, the results are provided as a combined survey results map at figure 2. In total, eight species of bird were recorded including Blackbird (B), Chiffchaff (CC), Robin (R), Wood Pigeon (WP), Wren (WR), Jackdaw (JD), Blue Tit (BT) and Magpie (MG). No species of principal importance were recorded.
- 2.2.2 All of the birds observed were associated with the woodland edge or hedgerows, with no birds observed within the grassland areas.

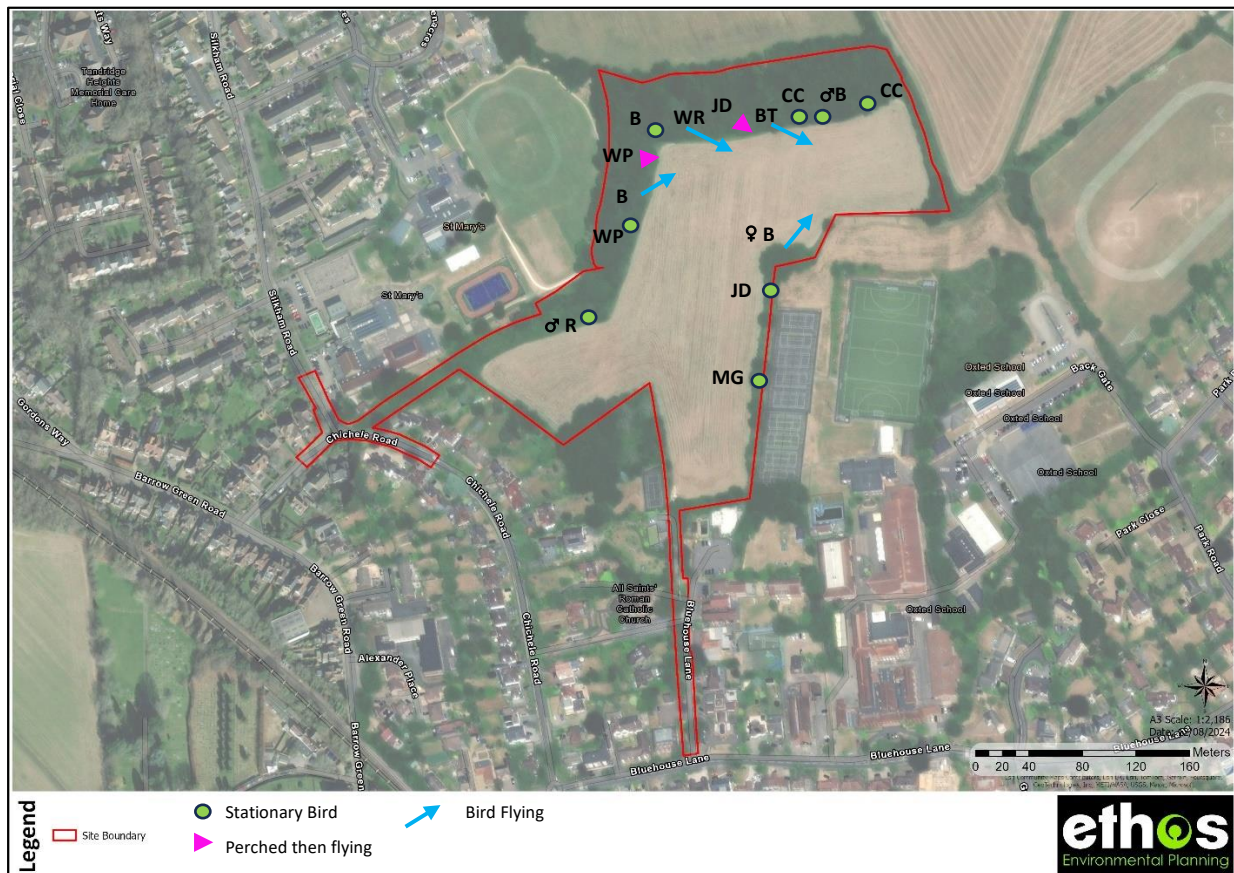


Figure 2 Breeding bird survey results (combined)

2.3 Automated surveys

2.3.1 The static detector survey identified twenty-nine species of bird, four of which were Species of Principal Importance (SPI) under the NERC Act 2006 namely linnet (*Linaria cannabina*), song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) and species on the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) Amber list including woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*), wren, tawny owl (*Strix aluco*), oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), stock dove (*Columba oenas*), moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) and whitethroat (*Curruca communis*). The remaining bird species identified were common species listed on the BoCC green list. The full list of species is shown in Appendix 1.

2.3.2 The most frequent bird registrations were of chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) followed by tawny owl and goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*), as shown in Figure 3. Only one registration for oystercatcher and two for moorhen, along with the time of day being during the night, indicated that these species are not using the site, but traveling through it. The numerous calls for tawny owl, song thrush, wren and woodpigeon indicate that these species may be utilising the site to nest and forage, as both the woodland, its edge habitats and hedgerows offer opportunities for both species. Call registrations for whitethroat, stock dove, bullfinch and linnet were low compared to other bird species recorded, therefore these species may be more likely nesting and

foraging in the surrounding area, however it is probable that these species will also make use of the woodland and hedgerows onsite.

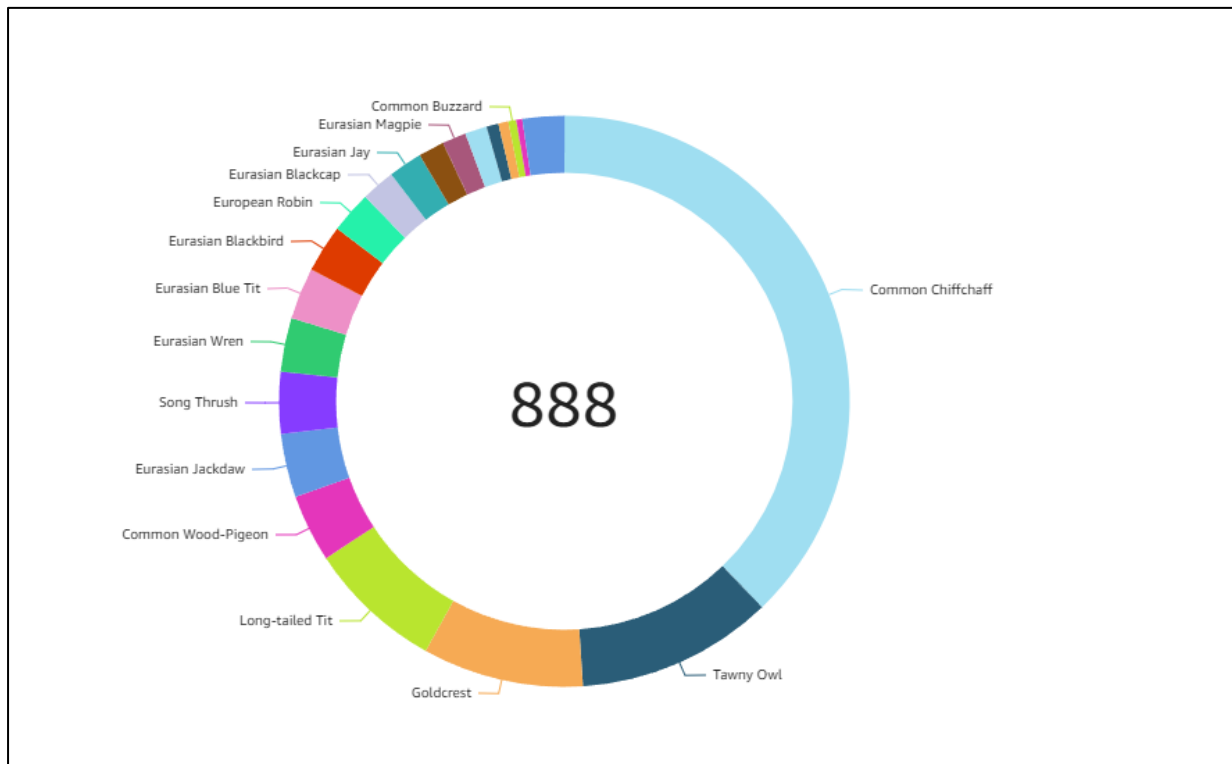


Figure 3 Number of vocal registrations for each bird species recorded during the fifteen day static detector deployment onsite.

Assessment of nature conservation importance

- 2.3.3 Given that the bird species identified within the data search and subsequently in the transect and static detector surveys onsite were species commonly found within woodland and garden habitats, the survey effort is deemed proportional, taking account also of the existing habitats within the development boundary.
- 2.3.4 It is considered that the assemblage of birds present within the woodland, native hedgerows and utilising the woodland edge habitat is of **Local importance** for nature conservation.
- 2.3.5 The key ecological features onsite for these species are the woodland, its edge habitats and the native hedgerows. It is likely that these habitats support bird species in the context of the woodlands connectivity to the wider landscape. These key ecological features are to be retained and enhanced with the inclusion of a 15 m buffer to the woodland edge. The proposed ecological buffer between the woodland edge and the development will prohibit access by residents, benefiting species which may use the woodland edge to nest such as chiffchaff, robin, dunnock and blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*).

Impacts, Mitigation and Enhancement

- 2.3.6 Based on the survey results and scheme layout, it is concluded that impacts on birds will be avoided.
- 2.3.7 The scheme does require the clearance of some areas of vegetation, for example to create the access to the site off Chichele Road. These are relatively small areas (approximately 0.1 ha), and this level of vegetation loss is not considered to have any significant impact on the population of birds present on site. The vegetation clearance will need to be undertaken sensitively, and avoid the bird nesting period. The requirement for this can be secured by planning condition.
- 2.3.8 The scheme provides opportunities for providing enhancement measures for birds, and the scheme will provide a minimum of one universal bird nesting box per house and apartment building in line with British Standard (BS 42021), which is a requirement of Cala Homes' Urban Wildlife Strategy (June 2024).

REFERENCES

Bird Survey & Assessment Steering Group. (2023). *Bird Survey Guidelines for assessing ecological impacts*, v.1.1.1. <https://birdsurveyguidelines.org> [01/05/2024].

Stanbury, A.J; Eaton M.A; Aebischer N; Balmer D; Brown A; Douse A; Lindley P; McCulloch N; Noble D; and Win I (2021) *The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain*. *British Birds* 114: 723-747

APPENDIX 1

Table 1 Table of bird species and number of vocalisations recorded during the May to June static detector survey with each species highest legal protection and current conservation status.

Bird Species Common Name	Scientific Name	Total Bird Registrations	UK Legal Protection & Conservation Status
Eurasian Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	1	NERC S41, BoCC Red list
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	31	NERC S41, BoCC Amber list
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	13	NERC S41, BoCC Amber list
Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	1	NERC S41, BoCC Amber list
Common Wood-Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	34	BoCC Amber list
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	27	BoCC Amber list
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	99	BoCC Amber list
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	1	BoCC Amber list
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	2	BoCC Amber list
Eurasian Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	2	BoCC Amber list
Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	3	BoCC Amber list
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	336	BoCC Green list
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	4	BoCC Green list
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	1	BoCC Green list
Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	24	BoCC Green list
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	17	BoCC Green list
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes coeruleus</i>	26	BoCC Green list
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	1	BoCC Green list
Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	32	BoCC Green list

Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	17	BoCC Green list
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	12	BoCC Green list
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	5	BoCC Green list
Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	3	BoCC Green list
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	11	BoCC Green list
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	21	BoCC Green list
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	81	BoCC Green list
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	2	BoCC Green list
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	68	BoCC Green list
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	2	BoCC Green list
Total		888	

Key to UK legal protection and conservation status -

Schedule 1 (WCA) - Species protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Annex 1 (WBA) – European Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (Bird Directive).

NERC S 41 - Species of Principal Importance (SPI) under the NERC Act 2006.

BoCC - Birds of Conservation Concern on the Red and Amber Lists. Those bird species currently of lowest conservation concern are categorised on the Green list.