



Ormskirk Road, Knowsley Wintering Bird Survey

March 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

Whitfield Ecological Services (WES) were instructed by Urban Green to undertake a Wintering Bird Survey of farmland at Ormskirk Road, (Grid Reference SJ438967) between September 2021 and March 2022.

The information contained within this report comprises:

- The methodology employed for the wintering bird survey;
- The results of the wintering bird survey; and
- Conclusions drawn from the results of the wintering bird survey.

The survey was undertaken by Andrew Whitfield who is a Chartered Ecologist and Chartered Environmentalist. Andrew has been working as an ecological consultant for over 30 years, most recently as Director of Whitfield Ecological Services. Andrew has extensive experience at undertaking ecological surveys, assessment and research, managing multi-disciplinary teams and delivery of environmental and strategic assessments, and management plans focussed on ecological issues.

Andrew has over 30 years of ornithological experience including academic studies of peregrine falcon status in Snowdonia National Park and implications of different woodland management regimes on western oakwood woodland bird populations. Projects include wader and wildfowl surveys and assessments on the Mersey Estuary following an oil spill, wader surveys on the Duddon Estuary in Cumbria for a HRA associated with a proposed housing development. Andrew has also given ecological evidence regarding potential impacts associated with a proposed development in Cheshire on wintering bird populations on the adjacent Mersey Estuary. Andrew has undertaken numerous breeding and wintering bird surveys for proposed developments throughout the UK.

The survey and assessment were undertaken through site surveys undertaken on a number of visits throughout the winter period and a review of available information to establish potential importance of the feature for wintering birds.

Site Context

Following submission of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) by Urban Green MEAS commented that:

[“10.1 The development site is adjacent to farmland which provides functionally linked land for the following national and international sites. These sites are protected under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 \(as amended\) and Local Plan policy CS20 applies:](#)

- Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA;
- Ribble and Alt Estuaries Ramsar site;
- Mersey Estuary SPA; and
- Mersey Estuary Ramsar site.

10.2 The HRA of the Local Plan states that fields adjacent to Coopers Lane, north of the A580, have been identified as Functionally Linked Habitats (paragraph 8.24 of HRA of Local Plan). Assessment for Likely Significant Effects (HRA) will be required prior to determination of any future development due to the potential for disturbance of qualifying species which may use the adjacent arable landscape for foraging.”

Although the proposed development site lies to the south of the A580 and MEAS subsequently advising that wintering bird surveys were not required, it was considered that undertaking a suite of wintering bird surveys will allow for a robust assessment to be made of the potential value of the site given the proximity of the nationally and internationally protected sites.

Aim of the surveys

The aim of the surveys is to determine which species are using the survey area during the winter and to assess the importance of notable populations including qualifying species of the nationally and internationally protected sites and species listed on the following acts:

- Species protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981;
- Species of Principal Importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity covered under Section 41 (S41) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006;
- Red and Amber listed Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) (Eaton et al., 2015).¹

Potential qualifying bird species considered for these surveys primarily concern pink-footed goose, whooper swan and Bewick’s swan that utilise areas of pasture for feeding.

¹ Stanbury, A., Eaton, M. A., Aebischer, N. J., Balmer, D., Brown, A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D., and Win, (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.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Site Survey

The wintering bird surveys were undertaken between September 2021 and March 2022. The survey focused on recording species of conservation interest associated within farmland, woodland and hedgerow habitats in the survey area plus adjacent habitats where access and/or visibility allowed. Pre-planned transect routes through the survey area were walked and all bird observations were recorded. Data collected included weather conditions, species present and numbers of individuals.

Surveys were undertaken monthly between September 2021 and March 2022. Surveys were timed as to maintain at least two weeks between each survey visit. On each visit, the ornithologist walked the transects and undertook a 0.5 hour vantage point surveys at each of the two vantage point locations (for locations of vantage points see Field maps in Appendix 1). During the surveys, all birds within the survey area were recorded, including birds in flight. All wintering bird surveys were undertaken by an experienced ornithologist who was able to identify birds by sight and calls/song.

The surveys were undertaken during suitable weather conditions and followed standard methods for bird monitoring including the use of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) species codes and symbols for bird activity (Bibby *et al.*, 2000)². Current best practice as described in Bird Census Techniques (Bibby *et al.*, 2000) and Bird Monitoring Methods (Gilbert *et al.*, 1998)³ were adopted.

The aim of the surveys was to determine which species are using the survey area during the winter and to assess the importance of notable populations including qualifying species of the adjacent national and internationally protected sites.

The Field maps are presented as Appendix 1 of this report.

2.2 Evaluation

Notable bird species are those which are listed on:

- Annex 1 of the Birds Directive⁴;

² Bibby, C., Burgess, N., Hill, D. & Mustoe, S. (2000). Bird Census Techniques. London: Academic Press.

³ Gilbert, G., Gibbons, D. W & Evans, J. (1998). *Bird Monitoring Methods. A manual of Techniques*. Bedfordshire: RSPB.

⁴ Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds. European Parliament and Council, Brussels

- Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981⁵;
- Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006⁶;
- Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC).

Wintering birds of county importance in Knowsley were determined in accordance with the Knowsley Council, Local Wildlife Sites and Geological Sites, July 2013. For wintering birds, the selection criteria are:

- B1 - Any site that regularly supports 0.5% of the total British population of any native bird species during the non-breeding season;
- B5 – Any site from which the following have been recorded in the last 5 year period for which data are available:
 - a) 30 breeding species
 - b) 60 breeding and/or wintering species
 - c) 100 breeding and/or wintering and/or passage species

3.0 RESULTS

The results of the surveys are presented in the Table below:

Date	Species	Status
03/09/21	Common Chiffchaff	BoCC Green
	Robin	BoCC Green
	Jay	BoCC Green
	Wren	BoCC Amber
	Jackdaw	BoCC Green
	Blue Tit	BoCC Green
	Great Tit	BoCC Green
	Common Chaffinch	BoCC Green
	Pheasant	
08/10/21	Blackbird	BoCC Green
	Robin	BoCC Green
	Wren	BoCC Amber
	Jackdaw	BoCC Green
	Blue Tit	BoCC Green
	Great Tit	BoCC Green
	Pheasant	
12/11/21	Blackbird	BoCC Green
	Robin	BoCC Green
	Wren	BoCC Amber

⁵ Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (England and Wales) (as amended), Chapter 69. Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London

⁶ Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Chapter 16. Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London

Date	Species	Status
	Jackdaw	BoCC Green
	Common Chaffinch	BoCC Green
	Great Tit	BoCC Green
	Pheasant	
10/12/21	Blackbird	BoCC Green
	Robin	BoCC Green
	Wren	BoCC Amber
	Jackdaw	BoCC Green
	Pheasant	
10/01/22	Blackbird	BoCC Green
	Robin	BoCC Green
	BlueTit	BoCC Green
	Pheasant	
10/02/22	Blackbird	BoCC Green
	Robin	BoCC Green
	Wren	BoCC Amber
	Jackdaw	BoCC Green
	Common Chaffinch	BoCC Green
	Great Tit	BoCC Green
	Pheasant	
14/03/22	Blackbird	BoCC Green
	Robin	BoCC Green
	Wren	BoCC Amber
	Jay	BoCC Green
	Common Chaffinch	BoCC Green
	Blue Tit	BoCC Green
	Pheasant	

All of the species, with the exception of Pheasant, were utilising the peripheral habitats of the site: plantation and hedgerows.

Wren listed as BoCC Amber is described thus as a result of a “moderate non-breeding decline over 25 years”. All of the species recorded are common and very common wintering birds in the area.

None of the species recorded utilising proposed development site are significant in their own right, or present in significant numbers. The assemblage of species is also not significant.

4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A wintering bird survey was undertaken of the proposed development area between September 2021 to March 2022.

The surveys recorded the presence of low numbers of common wintering birds associated with open farmland, hedgerows and plantation woodland in this area.

None of the species recorded utilising the Study Area are significant in their own right, or present in significant numbers. The assemblage of species is also not significant.

APPENDIX 1:

Field maps



< View point

3/19?

170
English, Green
V. light brown
420 to 450 ft.



✓ viewpoint

08/10

18°C
1 3/18

clear



< viewpoint

12/11
14°C
2/18
2.



10/12 2006
08:30
11/8. 0000
2.





10/2
09.30
6°C
318



12/3 10:00
11:00 2/8
1