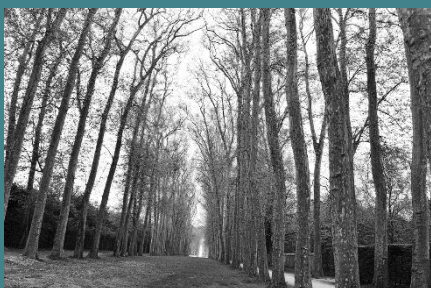


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Bird Habitat Compensation Strategy

Client

Hallam Land Management Limited

Project

**Land East of Knowsley Lane,
Knowsley**

Date

January 2026

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Rev	Issue Status	Prepared/Date	Approved/Date
-	Issue	MRS/ 12.01.2026	AJB / 16.01.2026

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following compensation habitat strategy has been prepared by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd on behalf of Hallam Land Management as an addendum to the Wintering Bird Report¹ and Breeding Bird Report² appendices of the Ecology Chapter of the Environmental Statement for Land East of Knowsley Lane, Knowsley (Central OS Grid Ref: SJ 43687 94684) herein referred to as 'the Site'.

Site Context

- 1.2 The Site is located on the southern border of Knowsley village. It comprises approximately 33.6ha of arable field, priority deciduous woodland, modified grassland, hedgerows, scrub and a number of ponds.
- 1.3 The north of the Site is bordered by a residential area, to the west and east there are areas used for commercial use within young woodland, with further areas of arable, grassland and woodland habitats to the south, east and west of Site.

Site Proposals

- 1.4 The proposals for the Site include up to 700 new dwellings with associated access and gardens. Green infrastructure proposals include the retention and enhancement of existing woodland and scrub and creation of additional native mixed scrub, individual trees, species rich grassland and woodland. This will provide a buffer and enhancement to retained woodland habitat. Other habitats include formal and informal amenity grassland areas, a traditional orchard and ornamental planting.

Background

- 1.5 This bird compensation strategy has been created to provide further information and detail on compensation measures for both breeding and wintering birds within the Land East of Knowsley Lane scheme.
- 1.6 Breeding bird surveys were conducted following survey guidelines onsite between April and July 2025 within the redline boundary. During the surveys skylark and lapwing were noted as probable breeders within the arable parcel on Site, with additional farmland species such as linnet and whitethroat also noted as probable breeders within the scrub habitat present across the Site.
- 1.7 Passage and wintering bird surveys were conducted between October to December 2024 and January to March 2025. During the surveys the arable habitat was found to regularly support flocks of farmland birds including skylark, meadow pipit and linnet. Lapwing were recorded in the passage period of March, as such it is considered these birds were largely prospecting potential nest sites rather than utilising the Site as a wintering resource. Therefore, the wintering farmland bird compensation has been targeted at the passerine species recorded.

¹ FPCR (2025) Appendix 7.3: Breeding Bird Survey Report – Land East of Knowsley Lane, Knowsley

² FPCR (2025) Appendix 7.4: Wintering Bird Survey Report – Land East of Knowsley Lane, Knowsley

2.0 COMPENSATION STRATEGY

Farmland Birds

- 2.1 The proposals are able to provide compensation for a range of more generalist and common birds through the retention and creation of hedgerows, scrub and community orchard, allowing a continuation of sheltering and foraging habitat for these species in winter. The site proposals provide limited opportunities for on-Site compensation for the loss of habitat for farmland species such as skylark and linnet. As such offsite habitat will be provided to compensate for impacts to such species.
- 2.2 Farmland species such as skylark and linnet become gregarious in the winter months and utilise a network of cropland habitats across the landscape for foraging. The landscape surrounding the Site includes extensive cropland which provides an example of this wider network of foraging resources used by farmland birds over winter.

Skylark

- 2.3 Skylarks are one of the most common farmland birds with an estimated 1.6 million territories nationally in 2016³. They nest in a wide range of open habitats mostly heathland, moorland, arable and marshes, with bogs, reedbeds, pasture, coastal areas and villages also favoured but are generally absent from towns and dense woodland. Their status as a common and widespread species nationally is due to their association with the most abundant habitat types in the UK.
- 2.4 Skylark have undergone significant population declines in the UK since the 1960s and for this reason are listed as a Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act and are Red listed on the Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (BoCC5). Whilst the loss of skylark on site, is unlikely to impact upon the local status of the species. However, to compensate for complete loss of the breeding habitat available within the Site, off-site habitat creation is required for the two territories to be lost within the arable footprint of the development.

Linnet

- 2.5 Linnet are a common farmland species with 560,000 territories nationally in 2016⁴. They are typically associated with nesting in dense, thorny vegetation like thick hedgerows, brambles, gorse and scrub, near foraging habitat.
- 2.6 Linnet have undergone populations declines in the UK since the 1960s, a trend which has slowed, but continues. The decline of linnet is largely considered to be due to an increase in nest failure associated with agricultural intensification⁵, rather than loss due to development. Linnet were recorded in relatively low numbers on the Site indicating use by a one to two breeding pairs. The species is considered to be a common breeding species in the county.
- 2.7 Whilst present in winter, observations were in low numbers and infrequent across the survey period, indicating the Site is not an important resource for the species during winter.

³ Woodward, I., Aebischer, N., Burnell, D., Eaton, M., Frost, T., Hall, C., Stroud, D.A. & Noble, D. (2020) Population estimates of birds in Great Britain and the United Kingdom. British Birds 113: 69–104

⁴ <https://www.bto.org/learn/about-birds/birdfacts/linnet#population-size>

⁵ Op cit.

- 2.8 The onsite proposals include significant additional provision of thorny scrub and hedgerows, alongside retention of much of the existing scrub. This will provide extensive additional habitat for nesting linnet within the Site, to compensate for any loss caused by the site proposals. The provision of species-rich meadow grassland will continue to provide a foraging resource for the species within the Site.

Lapwing

- 2.9 Lapwing are a red list species, shown to be declining nationally⁶. However, within the county they are found to be a common but declining breeding resident. Lapwing nest in open, often bare ground on farmland, spring-tilled fields or short grassland with nearby wet areas for feeding chicks on insects⁷. The site proposals are unable to provide sufficient habitat in open areas to meet the requirements for breeding lapwing. As such compensation is required for the loss of breeding habitat for one pair of nesting lapwing.
- 2.10 Whilst lapwing were recorded during the wintering surveys, they were only recorded in March which overlaps with their breeding period (mid-March and June). As such compensation for this species has been limited to provision of breeding habitat. Compensation for other wintering farmland species are likely to benefit wintering lapwing.

Compensation Options

- 2.11 Compensatory habitat for wintering farmland birds will include the creation of set-aside habitat on land within the local area of the Site. Set-aside habitat is shown to benefit farmland birds, providing extensive foraging habitat during winter. This will be paired with provision to compensate for the loss of skylark nesting habitat, the scale of habitat creation varies depending on the two options provided below.

Wintering Farmland Birds and Skylark

Option One: Skylark plots and wintering provision

- 2.12 Skylark plots are areas set aside within a crop to provide suitable skylark breeding habitat. As per the Countryside Stewardship guidance⁸ Each plot typically measures a minimum of 16m² and is of least 3m wide and be created in accordance. These would be at a density of one plot per hectare and in this case a minimum of 4 plots would need to be created over 4ha of field. Each plot should be located at least 50m from any field boundaries and margins.
- 2.13 To compensate for the displacement of skylark within proposed scheme it is proposed that skylark plots are created on nearby farmland surrounding the proposed Site. This would provide breeding provision for the two pairs displaced by the development. Skylark plots are best created by either turning off the drill when cropping an area, to leave an unsown plot, or to sow crops as normal and then spray the area with a herbicide.
- 2.14 The provision of skylark plots are unlikely to provide sufficient foraging habitat for wintering farmland species such as skylark and linnet. As such it is recommended that in addition to the provision of the plots, an area of set-aside habitat is created within the same locale, to provide

⁶ <https://www.bto.org/learn/about-birds/birdfacts/lapwing>

⁷ Op cit.

⁸ Defra (2025) AHW4: Skylark Plots. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/find-funding-for-land-or-farms/ahw4-skylark-plots#what-to-do>

compensatory habitat for wintering farmland birds. The area created would be a minimum of a 1-2 hectares, and can be provided around the skylark plots.

Option Two: Set-aside Creation

- 2.15 The creation of the set-aside habitat as part of the habitat compensation outlined above can also provide nesting habitat for skylark. Set-aside is shown to provide foraging and nesting habitat for skylark, with some studies finding higher nest survival and productivity than arable fields. Additionally, the creation of this habitat offers opportunities during the breeding season for other farmland species such as linnet and yellowhammer.
- 2.16 In the absence of provision of skylark plots, a larger area of set-aside will be created to support nesting and wintering farmland birds. A minimum of area of 5ha will be provided to compensate for the loss of breeding skylark within the site (based on an average density of 0.39 skylark territories per hectare, within this habitat type⁹). This area will also be sufficient to provide a wintering foraging resource for farmland birds, and compensate for the loss of wintering habitat on site for such species.

Lapwing

- 2.17 A minimum of one hectare of arable land¹¹ will be converted to meadow grassland, or existing grassland will be enhanced to compensate for the loss of breeding habitat for one pair of lapwing. This habitat will be in addition to the measures detailed above. This should be managed to ensure a shorter sward available for breeding lapwing between March and June. It is recommended that this area is in close proximity to the Site and is an open area away from trees and hedgerows, damper soils are preferable to provide suitable foraging for lapwing, with a varied sward also providing invertebrate foraging opportunities.

⁹ Fox, H (2022) Are Skylarks being overlooked in Impact Assessment. CIEEM InPractice. Issue 117.

¹¹<https://www.rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-we-do/influence-government-and-business/farming/advice-for-farmers-helping-bird-species/lapwing-advice-for-farmers>

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