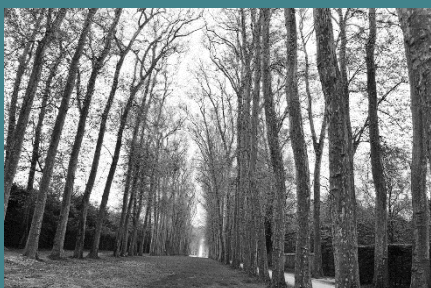


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# Bird Habitat Compensation Strategy

Client

**Hallam Land Management Limited**

Project

**Land East of Knowsley Lane,  
Knowsley**

Date

**August 2026**

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| Rev | Issue Status | Prepared/Date   | Approved/Date    |
|-----|--------------|-----------------|------------------|
| -   | Issue        | MRS/ 12.01.2026 | AJB / 16.01.2026 |
|     | Final        | MRS/06.08.2026  | ET / 07.08.26    |
|     |              |                 |                  |
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## 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 Report<sup>1</sup> and Breeding Bird Report<sup>2</sup> 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.

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

<sup>2</sup> 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 2016<sup>3</sup>. 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 2016<sup>4</sup>. 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 intensification<sup>5</sup>, 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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

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

<sup>5</sup> 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 nationally<sup>6</sup>. 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 insects<sup>7</sup>. 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 guidance<sup>8</sup> Each plot typically measures a minimum of 16m<sup>2</sup> 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

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

<sup>7</sup> Op cit.

<sup>8</sup> 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 type<sup>9</sup>). 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.
- 2.17 The set-aside area will be managed in principle as tussocky grassland, with sensitive cutting in early spring, avoiding the peak breeding bird season. No further management will take place until late July, early autumn. With the habitat left over the winter period.

#### **Lapwing**

- 2.18 A minimum of one hectare of arable land<sup>11</sup> will be incorporated into the wider bird mitigation strategy, to compensate for the loss of breeding habitat for one pair of lapwing. This habitat 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.

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

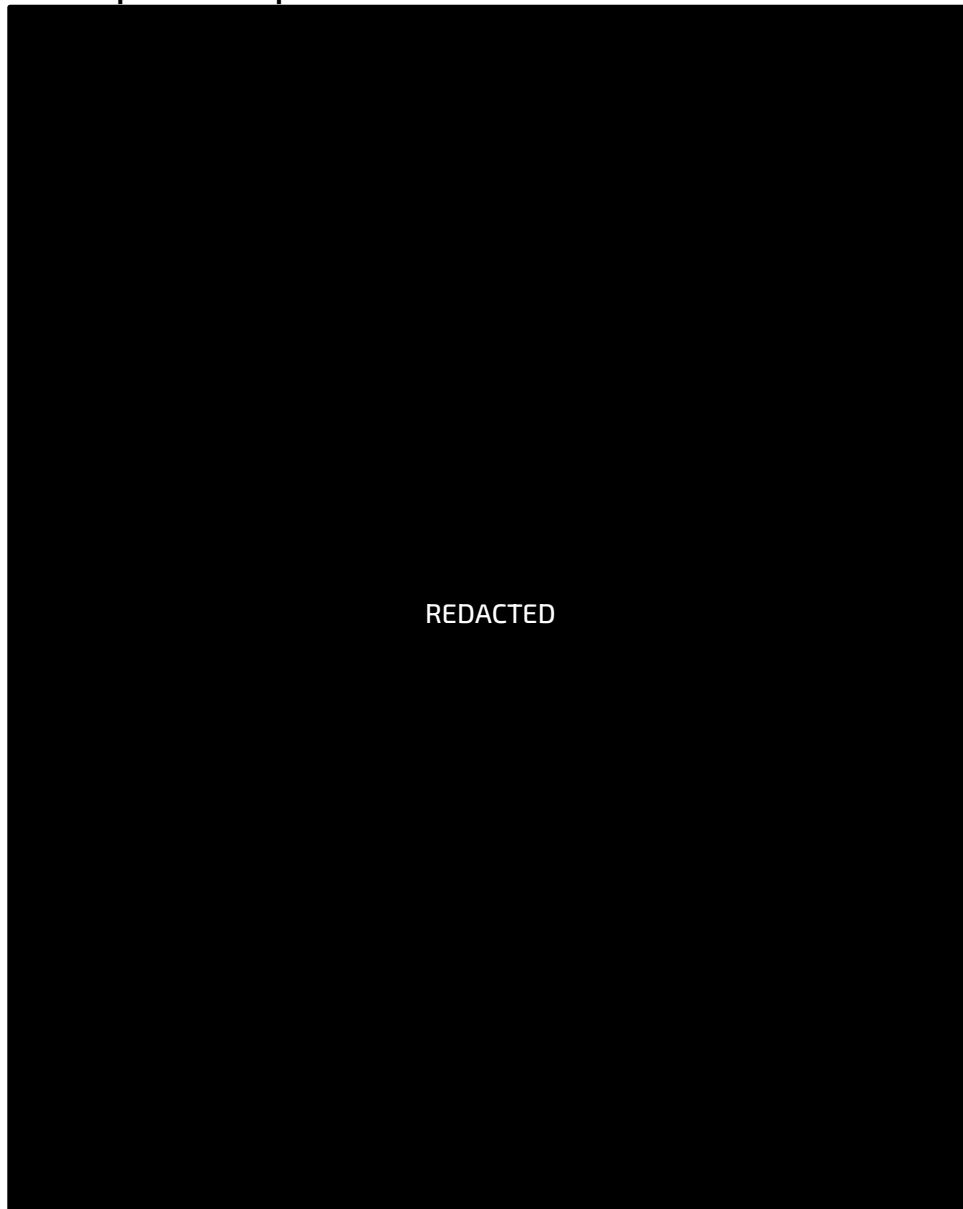
<sup>11</sup><https://www.rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-we-do/influence-government-and-business/farming/advice-for-farmers-helping-bird-species/lapwing-advice-for-farmers>

### 3.0 PROPOSED PARCELS

#### Parcel Context

- 3.1 A total of five plots of land have been proposed as available for compensatory measures to be implemented upon. The plots are located north-northwest of the Site at distances between 4.8km and 6.6km from the nearest boundary of Site to the plot centres, with Plot E the nearest to Site and Plot A the furthest.
- 3.2 The plots discussed below are significantly larger than the area required for the compensatory habitat creation. This is to allow for a rotation of the habitat creation measures within the area of the plot.
- 3.3 Figure 1 below shows the location of each plot and their current or future availability for use. Some distinct areas within the plots have been identified on the figure as unsuitable due to their small individual field size and/or their enclosed nature. These are shown with a red outline.

**Figure 1: Proposed Plot Option Locations**



## Desk Study

### BTO Records

- 3.4 In order to compile existing baseline ornithological information, the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) were consulted for data from the area surrounding the land parcels. This data returned two species assessments: one comprehensive from Bird Atlas 2007-11 data, and one contemporary from Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and BirdTrack data between 2022-26.
- 3.5 Bird Atlas data returned records for 76 breeding and 67 wintering species within 2km of the land parcels. BBS and BirdTrack data returned records for 5 breeding and zero wintering species within 2km of the land parcels. A full summary of this data is available in the BTO Data Report (2026)<sup>12</sup>
- 3.6 Of the combined species records within 2km of the land parcels, 59 appear on one or more of the following and are hereafter referred to as 'notable species':

Schedule 1 of WCA;

BoCC Red or Amber lists;

Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006

All full list of notable species is summarised in Appendix 1. None of the notable species records from the BTO are expected to have a significant impact on the suitability of the land parcels.

### Simonswood Moss

- 3.7 Simonswood Moss is an area of lowland peatland, currently used for agricultural cultivation. Its is located within 1.5km of the proposed land parcels.
- 3.8 The site is known to support a locally significant population of wintering pink-footed geese.
- 3.9 Given the distance from the land parcels, and that the management strategies proposed for implementation would not negatively affect pink-footed goose foraging behaviour, it is not considered likely that the change in land usage will have a significant effect upon this population in the local area.

## Parcel Review

### Parcel A

- 3.10 Parcel A is located 6.6km from parcel centre to nearest Site boundary and encompasses six field compartments covering a total area of 75.68ha.
- 3.11 Two fields in the north and southeast of this parcel have been deemed unsuitable for compensation measures (outlined red in Figure 1), due to encroachment of sightlines, and the general small size of the fields.
- 3.12 The remaining four fields would all be suitable, though any implemented measures would need to be set-back from the woodland blocks at the centre and the southwest border of the parcel, and the hedgerow along the parcels north border. These features would encroach on sightlines of ground nesting bird species, making areas in proximity, unfavourable to such species as nesting and/or foraging habitat.

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<sup>12</sup>BTO Data Report – Common Farm, Knowsley, compiled: 28/07/2026

#### Parcel B

- 3.13 Parcel B is located 6.4km from parcel centre to nearest Site boundary and encompasses three field compartments covering a total area of 24.07ha.
- 3.14 All three fields within this parcel would be suitable for compensation measures to be implemented, with no significant sight-line encroachments identified.

#### Parcel C

- 3.15 Parcel C is located 6.2km from parcel centre to nearest Site boundary and encompasses a single field compartment covering a total area of 15.66ha.
- 3.16 Similarly to Parcel B, this parcel would be suitable for compensation measures to be implemented, with no significant sight-line encroachments identified.

#### Parcel D

- 3.17 Parcel D has been deemed unsuitable for compensation measures due to the fragmented nature of the field compartments that it's composed of, along with the large farm buildings located in the parcel centre, which would encroach on sightlines.

#### Parcel E

- 3.18 Parcel E is located 5.8km from parcel centre to nearest Site boundary and encompasses eight field compartments covering a total area of 33.59ha.
- 3.19 Three fields in the northwestern half of this parcel (outlined red in Figure 1) have been deemed unsuitable for compensation measures due to their enclosed nature, surrounded by either woodland blocks or hedgerows.
- 3.20 The remaining five fields would all be suitable, though any implemented measures would need to be set-back from the woodland blocks in the centre of the parcel, and the small hedgerows dividing the field interiors. These features would encroach on sightlines of ground nesting bird species, making areas in close proximity, unfavourable to such species as nesting and/or foraging habitat.
- 3.21 A ditch also separates the field interiors though this is unlikely to have a negative impact on the nesting and foraging suitability of the parcel.

#### **Baseline Assessment**

- 3.22 Breeding bird surveys will be conducted to assess the existing carrying capacity of the proposed parcels, prior to formal selection for the reserved matters application.
- 3.23 Parcels considered able to support the additional skylark and lapwing numbers will be taken forward for consideration as the compensatory habitat for the scheme.

### **4.0 MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING**

- 4.1 In principle management of the compensation land, will be conducted sensitively in accordance with the breeding ecology of skylark and lapwing. This will include measures such as very early spring cuts, to ensure suitable vegetation heights for nesting birds, with no activity within the breeding bird season. A further cut will be undertaken late July/early autumn, prior to the wintering season.

- 4.2 Management will be detailed once the habitat creation options have been finalised alongside the proposed parcel for which the compensation will be delivered.
- 4.3 The compensatory habitat will be provided for a period of 30 years. Over the course of the 30 years, monitoring surveys will be conducted periodically to ensure that the habitat is supporting the additional numbers of breeding and wintering farmland birds, required. Remediation measures will be implemented should monitoring surveys identify that the current management is not delivering suitable habitat to support the additional birds.
- 4.4 The above management and monitoring details, along with the baseline ornithological data for the selected parcel, will be set out within an Ecological Management Plan.

## Appendix 1: Summary of Notable Species Records within 2km of the Land Parcels from BTO Data Report

| Species                                                | Relevant Legislation              | Data Source        |                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
|                                                        |                                   | Bird Atlas 2007-11 | BBS & BirdTrack 2022-26 |
| Barnacle Goose<br><i>Branta leucopsis</i>              | Amber List                        | ✓                  |                         |
| Greylag Goose<br><i>Anser anser</i>                    | Amber List<br>WCA Sch.1 (Part II) | ✓                  |                         |
| Pink-footed Goose<br><i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>       | Amber List                        | ✓                  |                         |
| Shelduck<br><i>Tadorna tadorna</i>                     | Amber List                        | ✓                  |                         |
| Shoveler<br><i>Spatula clypeata</i>                    | Amber List                        | ✓                  |                         |
| Gadwall<br><i>Mareca strepera</i>                      | Amber List                        | ✓                  |                         |
| Mallard<br><i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>                   | Amber List                        | ✓                  |                         |
| Teal<br><i>Anas crecca</i>                             | Amber List                        | ✓                  |                         |
| Pochard<br><i>Aythya ferina</i>                        | Red List                          | ✓                  |                         |
| Grey Partridge<br><i>Perdix perdix</i>                 | Red List<br>NERC S.41             | ✓                  |                         |
| Quail<br><i>Coturnix coturnix</i>                      | Amber List<br>WCA Sch.1           | ✓                  |                         |
| Swift<br><i>Apus apus</i>                              | Red List<br>LBAP                  | ✓                  |                         |
| Cuckoo<br><i>Cuculus canorus</i>                       | Red List<br>NERC S.41             | ✓                  |                         |
| Stock Dove<br><i>Columba oenas</i>                     | Amber List                        | ✓                  |                         |
| Woodpigeon<br><i>Columba palumbus</i>                  | Amber List                        | ✓                  |                         |
| Moorhen<br><i>Gallinula chloropus</i>                  | Amber List                        | ✓                  |                         |
| Oystercatcher<br><i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>          | Amber List                        | ✓                  |                         |
| Little Ringed Plover<br><i>Thinornis dubius</i>        | Green List<br>WCA Sch.1           | ✓                  |                         |
| Lapwing<br><i>Vanellus vanellus</i>                    | Red List<br>NERC S.41<br>LBAP     | ✓                  |                         |
| Curlew<br><i>Numenius arquata</i>                      | Red List<br>NERC S.41             | ✓                  |                         |
| Bar-tailed Godwit<br><i>Limosa lapponica</i>           | Amber List                        | ✓                  |                         |
| Snipe<br><i>Gallinago gallinago</i>                    | Amber List                        | ✓                  |                         |
| Black-headed Gull<br><i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i> | Amber List                        | ✓                  |                         |
| Common Gull<br><i>Larus canus</i>                      | Red List                          | ✓                  |                         |

|                                                    |                         |   |   |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|---|
| Herring Gull<br><i>Larus argentatus</i>            | Red List<br>NERC S.41   | ✓ |   |
| Lesser black-backed Gull<br><i>Larus fuscus</i>    | Amber List              | ✓ | ✓ |
| Sparrowhawk<br><i>Accipiter nisus</i>              | Amber List              | ✓ |   |
| Barn Owl<br><i>Tyto alba</i>                       | Green List<br>WCA Sch.1 | ✓ |   |
| Tawny Owl<br><i>Strix aluco</i>                    | Amber List              | ✓ |   |
| Kestrel<br><i>Falco tinnunculus</i>                | Amber List              | ✓ |   |
| Merlin<br><i>Falco columbarius</i>                 | Red List<br>WCA Sch.1   | ✓ |   |
| Peregrine<br><i>Falco peregrinus</i>               | Green List<br>WCA Sch.1 | ✓ |   |
| Rook<br><i>Corvus frugilegus</i>                   | Amber List              | ✓ |   |
| Skylark<br><i>Alauda arvensis</i>                  | Red List<br>NERC S.41   | ✓ |   |
| House Martin<br><i>Delichon urbicum</i>            | Red List                | ✓ |   |
| Willow Warbler<br><i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>    | Amber List              | ✓ |   |
| Sedge Warbler<br><i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i> | Amber List              | ✓ |   |
| Whitethroat<br><i>Curruca communis</i>             | Amber List              | ✓ |   |
| Wren<br><i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>             | Amber List              | ✓ |   |
| Starling<br><i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>                | Red List<br>NERC S.41   | ✓ | ✓ |
| Song Thrush<br><i>Turdus philomelos</i>            | Amber List<br>NERC S.41 | ✓ |   |
| Mistle Thrush<br><i>Turdus viscivorus</i>          | Red List                | ✓ |   |
| Redwing<br><i>Turdus iliacus</i>                   | Amber List<br>WCA Sch.1 | ✓ |   |
| Fieldfare<br><i>Turdus pilaris</i>                 | Red List<br>WCA Sch.1   | ✓ |   |
| Tree Sparrow<br><i>Passer montanus</i>             | Red List<br>NERC S.41   | ✓ |   |
| House Sparrow<br><i>Passer domesticus</i>          | Red List<br>NERC S.41   | ✓ |   |
| Dunnock<br><i>Prunella modularis</i>               | Amber List<br>NERC S.41 | ✓ |   |
| Yellow Wagtail<br><i>Motacilla flava</i>           | Red List<br>NERC S.41   | ✓ |   |
| Grey Wagtail<br><i>Motacilla cinerea</i>           | Amber List              | ✓ |   |
| Meadow Pipit<br><i>Anthus pratensis</i>            | Amber List              | ✓ |   |
| Brambling<br><i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>       | Green List<br>WCA Sch.1 | ✓ |   |

|                                             |                         |   |  |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|--|
| Bullfinch<br><i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>       | Amber List<br>NERC S.41 | ✓ |  |
| Greenfinch<br><i>Chloris chloris</i>        | Red List                | ✓ |  |
| Linnet<br><i>Linaria cannabina</i>          | Red List<br>NERC S.41   | ✓ |  |
| Redpoll<br><i>Acanthis flammea</i>          | Red List<br>NERC S.41   | ✓ |  |
| Corn Bunting<br><i>Emberiza calandra</i>    | Red List<br>NERC S.41   | ✓ |  |
| Yellowhammer<br><i>Emberiza citrinella</i>  | Red List<br>NERC S.41   | ✓ |  |
| Reed Bunting<br><i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i> | Amber List<br>NERC S.41 | ✓ |  |

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