









James Blake Associates Ltd

Breeding Bird Survey

of

The Covered Reservoir at Gondar Gardens, West Hampstead, London

On Behalf of:

LifeCare Residences

October 2018

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Revision	Purpose	Originated	Checked	Authorised	Date
		SK	GP	KS	November 2018
Job Number: JBA 10/35		Title: Breeding E	lake As	ne Covered Rese	
	Gardens, West Hampstead, London				

Disclaimer

James Blake Associates Ltd have made every effort to meet the client's brief. However, no survey ensures complete and absolute assessment of the changeable natural environment. The findings in this report were based on evidence from thorough survey: It is important to remember that evidence can be limited, hard to detect or concealed by site use and disturbance. When it is stated that no evidence was found or was evident at that point in time, it does not mean that species are not present or could not be present at a later date: The survey was required because habitats are suitable for a given protected species, and such species could colonise areas following completion of the survey.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Breeding bird surveys were carried out at the Covered Reservoir at Gondar Gardens, West Hampstead, in London, on the 18th July and the 14th August 2018.

Seventeen bird species were recorded on or flying over the site of which 15 used habitats within the site boundary (see Appendix A for plans showing bird activity). Of those recorded using the site, a single species of principle importance (SPI) two red listed birds of conservation concern (BoCC) and two amber listed BoCC species were recorded. These are either relatively common and/or widespread species in London or it is recommended that they are provided for through the mitigation of lost scrub and grassland.

The proposed development has incorporated previous recommendations by locating the construction zone to the centre and west of the site, retaining the majority of trees and scrub along the boundaries. Grassland and scrub to the east of the site is to be retained as a wild 'open' space and managed appropriately for foraging and nesting birds, as instructed by the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP). It was considered unlikely that any nesting or foraging habitat would be significantly impacted by the proposed development if recommendations within this report, the LEMP and the Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) are adhered to.

Recommendations are detailed that will compensate for loss of grassland habitat, and enhance the site for birds, post development.

Any thinning or removal of scrub, shrubs, ruderal areas or trees should be undertaken outside the breeding bird season, (March to September). Should vegetation removal be required during the nesting season, it is recommended that a <u>nesting bird survey</u> be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than three days prior to works.



1 INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

- 1.1 James Blake Associates Ltd, formerly JBA Consultancy Services Ltd, was commissioned by LifeCare Residences to undertake breeding bird surveys of The Covered Reservoir at Gondar Gardens, West Hampstead in London (grid reference TQ 248 853, taken from the centre of the site).
- 1.2 Previous surveys were carried out by James Blake Associates in 2011 and JBA Consultancy Services Ltd (now James Blake Associates Ltd) in 2014, during which six survey visits were undertaken between late-March and early-June, and early-July and early-August, respectively. In 2016 these surveys were again updated on a third occasion, with two survey visits, one visit in mid-July and another in mid-August.
- 1.3 Nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended), and some bird species are also priority species under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006). All protected and priority species are material considerations for individual planning decisions under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2018, which places responsibility on Local Planning Authorities to aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity and to encourage biodiversity in and around developments.

Surveyors

1.4 Surveys were carried out by Isaac Sterling BSc (Hons), Crystal Acquaviva BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM (Natural England great crested newt class license WML-CL08; bat class license WML-CL18) and George Poulton BSc (Hons) MSc GradCIEEM, all suitably experienced ornithologists.

Site Description

1.5 The site is located at Gondar Gardens, Camden, London, and consists of a former underground reservoir with a neutral, rough grassland covering and shrubs and trees located at the site boundary. The area is designated a Site of Borough Grade II Importance for Nature Conservation. Residential properties with gardens are located directly adjacent to the southern, northern



- and eastern boundaries of the site, while directly to the west was Gondar Gardens road, across which are further residential properties.
- 1.6 The surrounding habitats are mostly urban with the parkland habitats of Hampstead Cemetery located approximately 125m north of the site with playing fields beyond. A railway and associated vegetation is located approximately 170m south west of the site (see Figure 1 below). The significant green spaces of Golders Hill Park and Hampstead Heath are located approximately 1.35km north east and approximately 1.9km east of the site respectively.

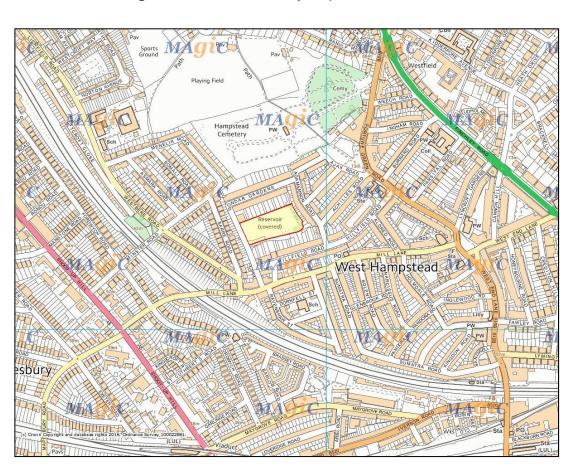


Figure 1: Ordnance Survey map of site location

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Aims and objectives

- 1.7 The aim of the survey was to determine if significant bird species or population sizes were using the site for nesting or foraging at the time of the survey; and
- 1.8 This information was used to determine the likely risk of impact on birds and local bird conservation from the proposed development, and to recommend precautionary measures, compensation of habitats or mitigation to prevent harm to birds, if necessary.



2 METHODOLOGY

Methods

- 2.1 Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) was consulted for records of bird species within a 2km radius (GiGL data provided on the 18th July 2018).
- 2.2 Surveys were conducted in optimal weather conditions (dry, with little/moderate wind) and during the bird nesting season (March to September). The duration of each survey was approximately an hour and a half.
- 2.3 Surveys were undertaken, on the 18th July and the 14th August 2018, within three hours of dawn, when territorial behaviour is usually at its peak.
- 2.4 The survey was based on a registration mapping methodology adapted from the BTO Breeding Bird Survey: during each visit, all birds seen or heard were recorded on a plan along with any significant behaviour, particularly regarding breeding activity e.g. territorial singing, display, carrying food or nesting material, active nests etc.

Constraints

2.5 Access was available to the whole site. However, due to internal hoardings around the footprint of the reservoir structure, it was not possible to observe the entire site at all times during the surveys. However, the transect route enabled visual observation of all areas of the site during the surveys and birdsong and calls were also used for identification. The surveys were undertaken outside the optimal season for breeding bird surveys (April to June); therefore, early migrants and breeders may have been under recorded or missed during the surveys.



3 RESULTS

Desk Study

3.1 The table below shows a full list of rare, protected or SPI birds returned in the data search by GiGL.

Table 1: GiGL data search results.

Birds	Protection	Approximate distance from site	Recent year within 2km
Barn owl	WCA 1	No distance available*	1998
		1.2km south west	1987
Brambling	WCA 1	Within a 1km square of the site	2010
Bullfinch	BoCC amber list; SPI	1.2km south west	1987
	BoCC amber list;	on site	2014
Dunnock	SPI	Within a 1km square of the site	2010
	BoCC red list; WCA	1.2km south west	1986
Fieldfare	1	Within a 1km square of the site	2010
Firecrest	WCA 1	285m north	2010
		959m north	2005
Grey wagtail	BoCC red list	Within a 1km square of the site	2010
		On site	2014
Herring gull	BoCC red list; LBAP	Within a 1km square of the site	2010
Hobby	WCA 1	No location available*	2002
	BoCC red list; SPI;	On site	2014
House sparrow	LBAP	Within a 1km square of the site	2010



Kingfisher	BoCC amber list;	1.7km north	2001
		1.4km south west	1986
Lapwing	BoCC red list; SPI	Within a 1km square of the site	2010
Lesser redpoll	BoCC red list; SPI	1.2km south west	1987
Lesser spotted woodpecker	BoCC red list; SPI; LBAP	135m north	1987
Linnet	BoCC red list; LBAP	Within a 1km square of the site	2010
Mediterranean gull	WCA 1	Within a 1km square of the site	2010
Merlin	BoCC red list; WCA	Within a 1km square of the site	2010
Peregrine falcon	WCA 1; LBAP	No location available*	2006
Red kite	WCA 1	448m north	2010
	BoCC red list; WCA	959m north	2006
Redwing	1	Within a 1km square of the site	2010
Reed bunting	SPI; LBAP	Within a 1km square of the site	2010
.	BoCC red list; SPI;	1.2kn south west	1987
Skylark	LBAP	Within a 1km square of the site	2010
	D 00 HI + 0DI	on site	2014
Song thrush	BoCC red list; SPI	Within a 1km square of the site	2010
Spotted flycatcher	BoCC red list; SPI	1.2km south west	1985
Spotted hydatcher	Bood led list, SFI	1.7km north	1986
	D 00 1" 1 05"	On site	2014
Starling	BoCC red list; SPI	Within a 1km square of the site	2010
Turtle dove	BoCC red list; SPI; LBAP	No distance available*	1987



	BoCC red list; SPI;	1.2km south west	1987
Yellowhammer	LBAP	Within a 1km square of the site	2010

^{*} Records do not include the location of sighting and therefore the distance from site cannot be determined, however these records do indicate the presence of a species in the search area

Previous Results

- 3.2 During the surveys carried out in 2011, twenty-three bird species were recorded on, or close to, the site. Three species were on the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) red list of high conservation concern (house sparrow, song thrush and starling); and two were on the BoCC amber list of medium conservation concern (dunnock and swift).
- 3.3 The surveys carried out in 2014 recorded twenty-seven bird species on, or close to, the site. Four BoCC red listed species were recorded (house sparrow, starling, herring gull and song thrush), with four BoCC amber listed species recorded (dunnock, green woodpecker, swift and black-headed gull).
- During the 2016 surveys twenty three bird species were recorded on, or close to the site. Two BoCC red listed species (herring gull and starling) were observed using habitats within the site boundary. Starlings are also listed as an SPI and London BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) species. Two BoCC amber listed species (black-headed gull and swift) were recorded commuting and/or foraging above the site. A further amber listed species, the tawny owl, was also recorded off-site on nearby land; it was considered likely to be located within Hampstead Cemetery over 100m north of the site boundary. None of these species are SPIs. There were no Schedule 1 species recorded during any of the survey visits.
- 3.5 It should be noted that since the 2014 surveys the BoCC lists have been updated. It is the BoCC 4 list that has been used within this report.



Survey results

Table 2: Summary of survey results

Species	BTO code	London BAP	Schedule 1	NERC SPI	BoCC	Survey summary	
<u> </u>							
Blackcap	ВС					√	
Blue tit	BT					✓	✓
Carrion crow	C.					✓	
Chaffinch	CH					✓	
Collared dove	CD						✓
Dunnock	D.	✓		✓	Amber		✓
Goldfinch	GO						✓
Great tit	GT					✓	✓
Green woodpecker*	G.					✓	
Herring gull*	HG	✓		✓	Red	✓	
Jay	J.					✓	✓
Magpie	MG					✓	✓
Ring-necked parakeet*	RI					✓	✓
Robin	R.					✓	✓
Swift	SI	✓			Amber	✓	
Woodpigeon	WP					✓	
Wren	WR					✓	✓

NERC SPI= Species of Principle Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006) LBAP = London Biodiversity Action Plan.

BOCC = Birds of Conservation Concern.

Schedule 1 = protected (while breeding) under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Black text: Observed using habitats within the site boundary.

Black italic text: Observed using habitats adjacent the site boundary.

Text with a star*: Observed flying over the site only.

3.6 Seventeen bird species were recorded on or flying over the site, of which 15 used habitats within the site boundary (see Appendix A for plans showing bird activity).



Weather conditions

Visit	Date	Weather conditions
1	18 th July 2018	16°C to 15°C, 40% cloud cover and Beaufort 1
2	14 th August 2018	16°C, 0% cloud cover and Beaufort 1

3.7 All birds heard or seen using the site (feeding, perching, and resting) were noted on the plans.



4 LEGISLATION AND EVALUATION

- 4.1 All wild birds are protected under Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by Schedule 12 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). The law covers all species of wild birds including common and pest or opportunistic species. Some bird species are further protected, while breeding, under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.
- 4.2 Species of principle importance in England (SPIs), listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act, are a material consideration for planning decisions.
- 4.3 Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) assigns species to red, amber or green lists under the following criteria:

Red List species

These are species of high national conservation concern. Species are included on this list if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Globally threatened;
- Historical population decline in UK during 1800-1995;
- Rapid (> 50%) decline in UK breeding or non-breeding population over last 25 years;
- Rapid (> 50%) contraction of UK breeding range over last 25 years.

Amber List species

These are species of medium national conservation concern. Species are included on this list if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Historical population decline during 1800-1995, but now recovering with population size having more than doubled over the last 25 years;
- Moderate (25-49%) decline in UK breeding or non-breeding population or breeding range over the last 25 years;
- Species of European Conservation Concern;
- Between only one and 300 breeding pairs, or one and 900 individuals, in the UK;



- >50% of the UK breeding or non-breeding population in ten or fewer sites:
- >20% of the European breeding population in the UK;
- >20% of the North-West European (wildfowl), East Atlantic Flyway (waders) or European (others) non-breeding populations in the UK.

Green List Species

All regularly occurring native species that do not qualify under any of the red or amber criteria are green listed. The green list also includes those species listed as recovering from Historical Decline in the last review that have continued to recover and do not qualify under any of the other criteria.

Overview of birds observed during the surveys

4.4 Species of Principle Importance (SPIs)

Two priority species (dunnock and herring gull) were recorded using the site; related information and field observations are detailed below. House sparrow and song thrush were not recorded during the current survey despite being recorded during surveys in 2011 and 2014. Moreover, starling was not recorded during the current survey, despite being recorded during surveys in 2011 and 2016. The absence of house sparrow, starling and song thrush could be a result of the current surveys being undertaken late in the breeding season and it is likely that these birds still persist within the area as they are common and widespread. Recommendations for these species are therefore included within this report.

• Dunnock were recorded during the second survey visit (14th August 2018), singing and calling from early-mature trees, shrubs and scrub which border the site. These habitats provide a variety of potential breeding habitat. The dunnock is an SPI and BoCC amber listed species as UK populations declined significantly during the 1970s and 1980s, although are now more stable. The species remains widespread throughout Britain and Norfolk, and was the 13th most recorded species in the RSPB 'Big Garden Birdwatch' in 2018, being found in approximately 46.6% of participating gardens. Good



quality breeding habitat, such as low thick scrub and bramble patches, is present along the sites borders. It is considered that current site habitat plans adequately retain and enhance this vegetation, to maintain breeding and foraging habitat for dunnocks and compensate for the loss of any habitat during development. It is therefore considered unlikely that the local population status of the dunnock would be significantly impacted by the proposals.

• A herring gull was recorded during the first survey (18th July 2018) flying over the site from land adjacent to the site. This species is considered unlikely to be breeding at the site due to the lack of suitable nesting sites and would likely use the semi-improved grassland for foraging only. The site itself does not provide suitable breeding habitat for herring gull which prefer cliffs, beaches, shingle islands, moorland and buildings (usually with a flat roof). As this species was only recorded flying over the site from adjacent land it is considered unlikely that the development would impact the local population status of these gulls.

4.5 BoCC Red Listed Species

A single red listed species, the herring gull was recorded during the survey visits, observed flying over the site. The potential impacts have been discussed above.

4.6 BoCC Amber Listed Species

Black-headed gull was not recorded during the current survey despite being recorded during surveys in 2014 and 2016. Two BoCC amber listed species were recorded using habitats within the site boundary. Only the swift is not an SPI and is detailed below, details for dunnock (SPI) can be found above.

Two swifts were recorded during the first survey visit (18th July 2018), frequently heard calling, seen flying over site, feeding and using boundary trees. This species is considered unlikely to be breeding at the site. There is a huge abundance of buildings in the local area which offer preferential nesting sites. The site provides habitat for a large number of common and widespread invertebrates which provide a good opportunity for foraging swifts.



The planned retention of the less species rich area of the site to the east, which includes ruderal, rough grassland and scrub, is to be enhanced and managed as a wildlife area post development. This should adequately encourage invertebrate abundance and diversity to compensate for habitat loss on site. Appropriate management of the retained rough grassland will increase species diversity, and ensure that the grassland does not revert to scrub and become encroached by ruderal species, thus increasing the value of the habitat for butterflies and other grassland insects, which will also benefit swifts.

Recommendations detailed in Section 5 are designed to improve breeding opportunities and foraging habitat post development for species such as swift.

4.7 <u>Schedule 1 Species</u>

No Schedule 1 Species was recorded using the site.

4.8 London Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species List

Only species on site previously listed (herring gull, dunnock and swift) are included on the London Biodiversity Action Plan's (LBAP) Priority Species List.

4.9 All birds were recorded as mostly using vegetation, trees, scrub, grassland, and ruderal vegetation along the site boundary. Activity along the boundary areas was evenly distributed. Vocal calls across all species were also varied, with activity recorded as singing, calling and alarm calling. No breeding activity, such as active nests and carrying food and material, was noted.

 Table 3: Likelihood of species breeding on site.

Species		Breeding status on site				
	Confirmed	Likely	Possible	Unlikely		
Blackcap		✓				
Blue tit		✓				
Carrion crow			✓			
Chaffinch		✓				
Collared dove		✓				
Dunnock		✓				
Goldfinch		✓				



Great tit	✓		
Green woodpecker		✓	
Herring gull			✓
Jay		✓	
Magpie	✓		
Robin	✓		
Ring-necked parakeet		✓	
Swift			✓
Woodpigeon	✓		
Wren	✓		



5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 It is considered that if retained areas are managed appropriately for breeding birds, particularly foraging house sparrow and starling as well as breeding/foraging dunnock in the long term, to maximise the number of species and individuals that it can support. Enhancing the potential to absorb any individuals displaced from the construction zone. It is unlikely that any nesting or foraging habitat would be significantly impacted by the proposed development if recommendations within this report, the LEMP and the Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) are adhered to.
- 5.2 The proposed development has incorporated previous recommendations by locating the development in the centre and to the west of the site, retaining the grassland to the east, and the majority of trees and scrub along the boundaries. This will continue to provide breeding, foraging and commuting habitat for birds. Grassland and scrub to the east of the site is to be retained and managed appropriately for foraging and nesting birds, incorporating shorter sward heights in places where possible, which will be beneficial to both reptiles and birds; as instructed by the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP). This will provide additional foraging opportunities for priority species, such as starlings.
- 5.3 An Ecological Action Plan (EAP) should be produced, detailing management objectives, procedures and likely outcomes. This should include the provision of suitable nesting and foraging habitat for all SPI and BoCC listed species discussed in this report. Retained hedgerows should have a buffer of at least 5m to the proposed construction zone, to retain existing grassland for foraging birds and ensure connectivity is maintained around the site. These should be suitably managed for foraging birds in the long term and included in the EAP.
- 5.4 The EAP should include sensitive hedge-cutting cycles (to produce dense, tall hedgerows with a diversity of species and ground flora), management of hedgerow buffers, appropriate establishment techniques of the grassland and wildflower areas, sensitive grass cutting regimes (which should also consider reptiles present at the site) and prevention of scrub encroachment into the grassland. An enhancement and on-going management regime for retained areas should also be included.



The inclusion of the retention pond outlined in the habitat plans will create a valuable wetland area to attract invertebrate to site to provide enhanced foraging habitat for swifts and hirundines post-development. The proposed pond should be planted with marginal and aquatic species such as marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*), bog bean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), water forget-menot (*Myositis scorpiodes*), common reed (*Phragmites australis*), reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and pendulous sedge (*Carex pendulus*). This will ensure the habitat is high quality habitat to support the aforementioned species.

- 5.5 A Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) has been produced for the site, and includes sensitive hedge-cutting cycles (to produce dense, tall hedgerows with a diversity of species and ground flora), management of hedgerow buffers, appropriate establishment techniques of the grassland and wildflower areas, sensitive grass cutting regimes (which should also consider reptiles present at the site), prevention of scrub encroachment into the ditches and suitable management regimes for all waterbodies and watercourses post development. An enhancement and on-going management regime for retained areas should also be included.
- Any scrub or tree clearance or management should be undertaken outside the breeding bird season (March to September). Should vegetation removal be required during the nesting season, it is recommended that a nesting bird survey be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than three days prior to works.
- 5.7 Any trees or scrub (including buffers) to be retained should be suitably protected from harm throughout the duration of the works to preserve this nesting and foraging habitat for birds.
- 5.8 Schwegler bird boxes consisting of two 3SV Starling boxes, two 2H open fronted boxes and three 1B (holed) nest boxes will be installed on retained mature trees within the site hedgerows. 5 17b swift bricks should also be installed into buildings. Boxes will be located out of direct sunlight and close to, but not restricted by, vegetation and should follow manufacturer's specifications. 3S starling boxes will be placed over 2.5m above ground level, with the 2H and 1B boxes placed between 2m to 4m above ground level. 17b



swift bricks should be positioned at the highest points possible, ideally under eaves and above 5m form the ground.

- 5.9 Six Schwegler 2F bat boxes will be placed on retained mature trees within the site hedgerows (See Appendix B). Schwegler bat boxes are recognised as being suitable for roosting bats and long lasting. Bat boxes will be located facing a variety of aspects (between south east and south west), close to vegetation and high (above 5m) and should follow manufacturer's specifications. Final locations of the bat and bird boxes will be agreed on site and should be incorporated into landscape plans. The LEMP should detail all necessary maintenance works for the nest boxes installed.
- It is recommended that any proposed soft landscape scheme uses native and/or wildlife-attracting plants and trees such as hazel (*Corylus avellana*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), wild cherry plum (*Prunus cerasifera*), guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and field maple (*Acer campestre*), and incorporates wildflower areas wherever possible. These areas would provide foraging resources for seed-eating and insectivorous birds recorded at the site, such as house sparrow and dunnock. Planting within the development will be designed to maintain connectivity through the site for birds. This could include hedgerow planting at the boundaries or along access roads, and grouped tree or shrub planting to provide 'islands' of habitat within the development.



6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The birds identified during the survey were predominantly common and widespread species, both at a national and local level. However, species of recognised importance were also recorded on site; herring gull (BoCC red list, SPI and LBAP), dunnock (BoCC amber list, SPI, LBAP) and swift (BoCC amber list and LBAP). It is considered that only dunnock were likely using the on-site trees and scrub for nesting.
- 6.2 The majority of birds heard and seen during the surveys were using the vegetation to the site boundaries, or flying over site.
- No significant numbers of any species were recorded using the site. Therefore, under the proposed site plans, the likely loss of some areas of nesting and foraging habitat will be adequately compensated, and the value of the site for birds will be maintained. Areas of higher quality foraging and nesting habitat (trees, scrub, semi-improved grassland), are to be maintained, enhanced and suitably managed, providing additional nesting and foraging opportunities. Additionally, the incorporation of amenity grassland and wildflower areas will provide foraging opportunities for priority species, such as starling, house sparrow and dunnock. If wildflower areas are also managed appropriately for breeding birds, particularly foraging house sparrow, starling and dunnock, this may help secure the long term future of these species in the London area.



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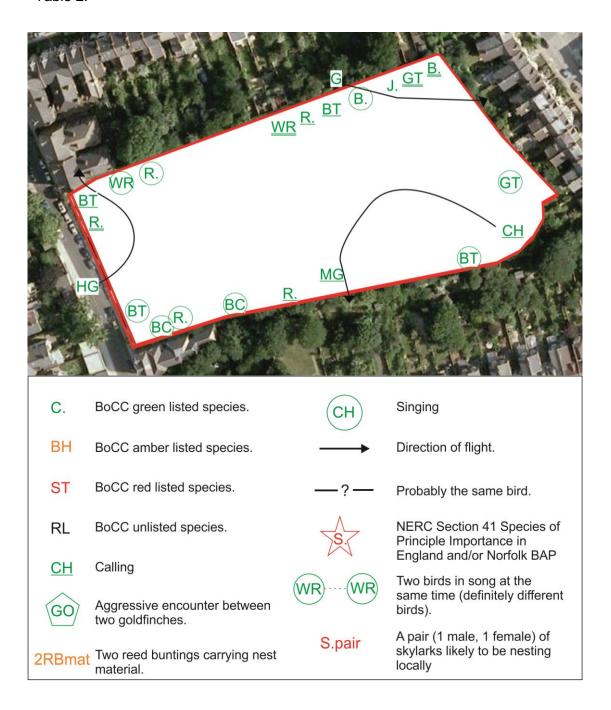
Appendix A: Plans showing bird activity

Transect Route walked by surveyors during each survey and site habitats SI SI Key Scattered scrub Neutral grassland Semi-improved Trees with shrubs Rough grassland/Tall ruderal Wood piles covered Scrub by vegitation Shrub belt Hardstanding Site boundary Building Transect route



Visit 1: 18th July 2018

Species recorded during the first survey visit. The numerous woodpigeons, swifts (also feeding over site), ring-necked parakeets, and carrion crows passing over the site, flying around frequently and using the boundary trees on the first visit have been excluded from the map for visual clarity. The species codes used can be found in Table 2.





Visit 2: 30th June 2016

Species recorded during the second survey visit. No species are absent from the map. The species codes used can be found in Table 2.

