

Land off Mill Lane, Whitburn
Ornithological report

July 2026

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Contents

1	Introduction.....	2
2	Methods.....	4
3	Results.....	9
4	References	18
5	Figures.....	19
	Appendix 1: Summary of non-breeding records recorded during breeding bird characterisation surveys	20
	Appendix 2: Wader survey results.....	21



1 Introduction

- 1.1 BSG Ecology was commissioned by Story Homes (the 'Client') in October 2024 to undertake wintering wader bird surveys in support of a proposed residential development at land off Mill Lane (the 'Site'), Whitburn, South Tyneside. BSG Ecology were further commissioned in April 2025 to undertake further ecological works, including spring passage wader, autumn passage wader surveys and breeding bird characterisation surveys. Other ecological works were commissioned but these are not relevant for this Ornithological report and will be presented within a separate Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) report (BSG Ecology, 2026a). The ecology surveys were undertaken to provide a robust baseline to inform the final development design.

Site description

- 1.2 The Site is approximately 10.7 hectares (ha) in size, and it is located adjacent to the east of Lizard Lane, Whitburn, South Tyneside. To the east of the Site is the A183 and to the north of the Site is Kitchener Road. The Site is centred on an Ordnance Survey grid reference (OSGR) of NZ 40564 63396.
- 1.3 The Site comprises of a single arable field, which was in a grass lay with a haylage cut for most of the survey period, from prior to first survey in November 2024 until the field was turned over and planted with winter wheat in August 2025. There are no significant field margins, and the boundaries are delineated by a dry-stone wall or post and wire fencing. Scattered scrub is present along the western boundary.

Description of project

- 1.4 The client submitted a full planning application (planning reference: 260049) in January 2026 for a residential development of 205 units with associated sustainable urban drainage features and public open space. The ecology surveys have been undertaken in accordance with industry standard guidance (CIEEM, 2024) and have been used to inform the final development design taking the mitigation hierarchy into account.
- 1.5 A planning response was returned from the LPA Ecologist in March 2026 with a request for additional information and clarification on a number of issues.
- 1.6 A revision of this Ornithological report was considered necessary in order to account for additional desk study data on non-breeding curlew records, as well as to update wader analysis data.

Buffer zones

- 1.7 The wader surveys undertaken between November 2024 to October 2025 included the Site and a survey buffer (the 'wader buffer zone'), which was considered necessary to inform the baseline dataset on potential disturbance effects to waders using the fields immediately surrounding the Site. the buffer zone distance was informed by desk study information, including an aerial mapping review of likely suitable habitat for foraging waders and the results of two wader studies commissioned by South Tyneside Council (STC)) (E3 Ecology, 2020 & 2023). The village of Whitburn was assessed as unsuitable to support foraging or roosting waders and the buffer was reduced to 100 m in the east on this basis. To the west of the Site suitable habitat to support roosting waders was identified and the western buffer extended to 300 m to incorporate this land. Buffer zone land to the west comprises two agricultural fields sown with winter cereals, found south of an access track leading to Lizard Lane Farm, and three horse-grazed pasture fields north of the access track. Other areas of the wader buffer zone are more built up, with some small areas of green space used for recreation to the south-east and north-east, and as horse grazed pasture to the east.
- 1.8 For the breeding bird characterisation surveys, the Site and a 50 m buffer zone was surveyed. Some additional 'incidental' breeding recorded during non-breeding wader surveys were recorded and these are included within **Section 3** of this report, where relevant.
- 1.9 The Site and the buffer zones surveyed are shown on **Figure 1, Section 5**.

Report purpose

- 1.10 This report presents the results of the ornithological survey work completed in 2024 and 2025 and has been revised, following LPA Ecologist comment and is to be submitted as part of the planning application (ref: 260049).
- 1.11 This report provides the baseline results from the suite of ornithological survey work. The EclA (BSG Ecology, 2026a) sets out the impacts, scale of said impacts and measures required to adequately avoid or mitigate for likely potential impacts. Further measures to compensate for non-breeding waders are set out in a separate Wader Compensation Strategy report (BSG Ecology, 2026c).

Consultation

- 1.12 On 17 October 2024 an on-Site meeting between the South Tyneside Council local planning authority (LPA) ecologist and BSG Ecology took place to discuss the scope of survey effort required for the Site. It was agreed that wintering waders were a high priority receptor, and a robust suite of surveys would be required to inform the planning decision (methods are summarised in **Section 2**). Additionally breeding birds, including [REDACTED] [REDACTED] were discussions as to the scope of ornithological survey effort.

Personnel

- 1.13 The wintering wader, spring passage and autumn passage surveys were completed by Ian Heard, Principal Ecologist at BSG Ecology, Alexander Permain, Senior Ecologist at BSG Ecology, Ian Forsyth, freelance field ornithologist and Harry Glass, Ecologist at BSG Ecology. Alexander and Ian Heard both regularly undertake bird surveys throughout the wintering bird season and are both competent at wader identification. Ian Forsyth is an experienced field surveyor and has undertaken wintering bird surveys for BSG Ecology for almost five-years. Harry led on several of the crepuscular wintering wader surveys and is competent with the identification of wader species in the north-east of England and identifying species via night vision aids (NVAs). Harry, Alexander and Ian were all supported by second surveyor for the crepuscular wader surveys as there was a requirement to provide a health and safety second.
- 1.14 Breeding bird characterisation surveys were undertaken by Alexander Permain, Ian Forsyth and Ian Cole. Ian Cole is an experienced freelance ornithologist. All three surveyors have multiple years of experience each in conducting breeding bird characterisation surveys and are all competent in sight and visual identification of all commonly occurring and vagrant species which arrive in the United Kingdom. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- 1.15 The breeding bird territory mapping and reporting has been prepared by Alexander Permain of whom has over 3 years' experience in report production and has considerable experience in completing ornithological reports and assessment of breeding bird assemblages and territory mapping.
- 1.16 This report has been reviewed by Ian Heard. Ian has over 14-years of experience in completing ornithological field surveys, writing ornithological reports and providing technical advice.

2 Methods

Desk study

- 2.1 The Environmental Records Centre for the North-east (ERIC NE) was approached for records of protected and notable bird records within 2 km of the Site. The data for which was received on 15 August 2025.
- 2.2 Additional data specifically on non-breeding curlew records was received by BSG Ecology from the LPA Ecologist in March 2026.
- 2.3 Where relevant, desk study data obtained from ERIC NE and the LPA Ecologist has been discussed within **Section 3** of this report.

Non-breeding wader surveys

- 2.4 Wintering, spring and autumn passage wader survey methodology was undertaken in reference to the current industry standard guidance (Bird Survey & Assessment Steering Group, 2025). A survey buffer was included in order to capture any wader activity in the surrounding area. Any notable sightings of other wader species, raptor and owl species or over-wintering or migratory geese using the Site were also recorded during the surveys. Survey observations are presented within **Section 3** of this report.
- 2.5 Survey effort in each month consisted of two diurnal surveys: one at a high tidal cycle, and one at a low tidal cycle (i.e., surveys were undertaken within approximately 2 hours either side of each respective tidal point). A crepuscular survey was also completed each month starting approximately 30 minutes before sunset and up to one hour after sunset. The crepuscular survey was included to understand any nocturnal roosting behaviour of waders and for this survey, surveyors utilised Night Vision Aids (NVAs)¹. This non-standard method was intended to record movements of waders or wildfowl on Site or in the area around dusk and utilised the same methodology as WeBS and low tide counts with the addition of NVAs.
- 2.6 The 'look-see' methodology (Gilbert, *et.al.*, 1998) was used along a pre-determined survey transect route, with ad lib stops at suitable vantage points. All wader species observations were recorded using standard BTO species codes and survey symbology.
- 2.7 Any sightings of notable species, such as raptors, owls, over-wintering or migratory geese using the Survey Area were recorded during the surveys.
- 2.8 The time period and extent of surveys for each of the wader survey periods is shown within the bulleted list below:
 - Wintering (November 2024 – March 2025) – 15 surveys in total;
 - Spring passage (April – May 2025) – six surveys in total; and
 - Autumn passage (August - October 2025) – nine surveys in total.
- 2.9 During all the visits, the 'look-see' methodology (Gilbert, *et.al.*, 1998) was used, observing habitats along a pre-determined survey transect route and stopping at intervals, scanning the area for birds using binoculars of suitable magnification. All waders and other notable species which were heard and or seen were recorded onto base maps using standard BTO species codes and survey symbology, in accordance with standard practice.

All surveys were undertaken during suitable weather conditions and were spread out at least two-days apart from one another (see **Table 1**).

¹ PixFra Arc series A613 thermal monocular.

Table 1: Wader survey details

Date	Survey Type	LT/HT Sunset Times	Survey Time	Wind (Beaufort)	Cloud Cover (Oktas)	Precipitation	Temperature (°C)
HT = High Tide; LT = Low Tide; CRE = Crepuscular							
WINTERING WADER SURVEYS							
18/11/2024	CRE	15:57	15:07 – 17:33	F3	2/8	None	-1
22/11/2024	LT	12:48	12:48 – 14:38	F4	7/8	None	2
27/11/2024	HT	12:53	12:30 – 14:30	F4	7/8	None	3
03/12/2024	CRE	15:41	15:20 – 17:20	F4	2/8	None	5
06/12/2024	LT	13:22	12:00 – 14:30	F2	4/8	None	7
13/12/2024	HT	13:19	12:00 – 14:30	F0-1	8/8	None	7
10/01/2025	HT	12:01	10:45 – 13:15	F2	8/8	None	2
15/01/2025	CRE	16:14	15:14 – 17:15	F1	2/8	None	1
20/01/2025	LT	13:10	11:55 – 14:25	F0-1	8/8	None	4
03/02/2025	LT	12:32	11:15 – 14:25	F0-1	5/8	None	8
13/02/2025	CRE	17:15	16:05 – 17:30	F3	2/8	None	7
22/02/2025	HT	09:56	08:45 – 11:15	F3	0/8	None	9
04/03/2025	LT	12:10	10:55 – 13:35	F3	3/8	None	10
18/03/2025	CRE	18:14	17:35 – 19:20	F1	0/8	None	5
24/03/2025	HT	10:46	09:30 – 12:00	F4	4/8	None	8
SPRING PASSAGE WADER SURVEYS							
02/04/2025	CRE	19:55	19:25 – 20:55	F0-1	0/8	None	10
07/04/2025	HT	12:10	10:50 – 13:20	F2	0/8	None	8
29/04/2025	LT	11:07	10:07 – 12:07	F1	1/8	None	16
07/05/2025	HT	12:37	11:20 – 13:50	F2	6/8	None	13
19/05/2025	CRE	21:28	20:30 – 22:30	F3	7/8	None	13
29/05/2025	LT	11:41	10:20 – 12:50	F3	8/8	None	16
AUTUMN PASSAGE WADER SURVEYS							
12/08/2025	LT	12:35	10:25 – 12:56	F2	8/8	None	20
19/08/2025	HT	13:07	11:35 – 14:05	F2	8/8	None	14

27/08/2025	CRE	20:12	19:30 – 21:00	F1	2/8	None	9
09/09/2025	LT	11:31	10:00 – 12:30	F2	0/8	None	15
18/09/2025	HT	14:20	12:45 – 15:15	F3	0/8	None	20
29/09/2025	CRE	18:46	18:10 – 19:40	F1	4/8	None	10
07/10/2025	CRE	18:33	18:00 – 19:30	F1	2/8	None	12
09/10/2025	LT	11:25	10:10 – 12:40	F3	3/8	None	14
17/10/2025	HT	13:57	12:30 – 15:00	F0	8/8	None	12

Night Vision Aids

- 2.10 The use of NVA systems; an infra-red (IR)² a thermal imaging (TI)³ were both utilised during the crepuscular surveys. Both systems were used in unison by the two surveyors in order to ensure that observation continued after sunset.
- 2.11 The NVA imagery was analysed in the field in order to determine species and count of birds, where appropriate. If there was any uncertainty as to the identification of a bird in the field, the image or video sequence was recorded for a more detailed review.

Breeding bird characterisation surveys

- 2.12 Six breeding bird surveys (five diurnal surveys and one crepuscular) were undertaken between April to June 2025 in suitable weather conditions methodology followed industry guidance (Bird Survey and Assessment Steering Group, 2025) which is based upon methods outlined by Bibby, *et al.*, (2000) and Gilbert, *et al.*, (1998). Diurnal surveys were timed to coincide with the peak period of bird activity, commencing within 30 minutes either side of sunrise and concluding before mid-morning. The crepuscular survey commenced approximately one hour before sunset and concluded approximately 45 minutes after sunset and utilised NVAs. The survey involved walking a transect around the Survey Area at a slow pace recording all birds present and their behaviours using standard BTO survey symbology. Particular attention was paid to birds displaying breeding behaviours that indicated breeding territories or confirm breeding attempts.
- 2.13 Night Vision Aid (NVA) systems were utilised for the crepuscular survey. The kit used was a PixFra ARC series which has the capability of detecting thermal heat sources. The NVA system was used as a means to support the surveyors once it got dark.
- 2.14 **Table 2** presents the breeding bird characterisation survey details.

Table 2: Breeding bird characterisation survey details.

Date	Timing	Sunrise / sunset*	Temperature	Wind speed (Beaufort scale)	Cloud cover (Oktas)	Precipitation	Surveyors
11/04/2025	07:10 – 09:10	06:12	10°C	3	0	None	IF
27/04/2025	05:15 – 07:50	05:36	8°C	1	3	None	IC

² Nightfox Whisker

³ PixFra Arc Series A613 thermal monocular

08/05/2025	05:00 – 07:40	05:14	4°C	2	0	None	IC
26/05/2025	04:20 – 07:10	04:41	8°C	2	0	None	IC
08/06/2025	04:00 – 07:00	04:28	8°C	2	8	None	IC
19/06/2025	20:45 – 22:35	21:48*	12°C	1	2	None	AP / IC

2.15 Where observed, the following breeding activities were noted to aid determination of breeding status:

- Singing male in suitable habitat;
- Adult visiting probable nest site;
- Nest building (including excavating nest hole);
- Distraction display or injury feigning;
- Used nest found;
- Recently fledged young;
- Adult carrying faecal sac or food;
- Adult entering or leaving nest site in circumstances indicating occupied nest;
- Nest with eggs found, or bird sitting but not disturbed, or eggshells found near nest; and
- Nest with young.

2.16 Bird species were also recorded during the survey visits for which no evidence of breeding was noted. This included:

- Individuals flying over the Site;
- Species which may breed locally but for which suitable nesting habitat does not occur within the Site;
- Species where no behaviour was observed that suggested breeding was taking place.

Territory mapping

2.17 The bird survey data was used to estimate the number and approximate locations of each breeding territory recorded within the Site. Putative territory centres are shown in two figures which relate to Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) red list and amber list species territories recorded within the baseline (see **Figure 12** (BoCC red list species)) and **Figure 13** (BoCC amber list species).

2.18 Breeding bird territories were assigned the following categories: confirmed (direct evidence of breeding, as listed above, recorded); probable (bird holding territory and recorded in suitable nesting habitat on at least two occasions); possible (bird recorded in suitable nesting habitat on one occasion). Non-breeding i.e. birds flying over (but not using) the Site were recorded but not included in the breeding bird assemblage.

2.19 For the purposes of this assessment, birds that were considered to be 'probable' breeders have been treated as 'confirmed' territories and have not been differentiated between within this report. This is a precautionary approach but reflects the likelihood of the birds holding 'probable territories' to have at least attempted to breed, even if unsuccessfully during the survey period. Birds that were recorded

as possible breeding are considered to be non-breeders within this report as they did not show sufficient evidence to indicate a breeding territory.

2.20 All territories falling at least partly inside the Site, were included in the area totals, even when some of the registrations forming the territory cluster fell outside the Site. Territories within the 50 m buffer zone were also recorded and are presented in **Table 5** of **Section 3** but are not considered discussed in detail within this report.

2.21 Registrations for each species from each survey visit were mapped and used to identify territory clusters.

Barn owl survey

2.22



Consideration of the potential limitations to survey

2.23 A total of three wader surveys were undertaken per month over the course of the non-breeding wader survey period (see survey details within **Table 1**). Non-breeding wader surveys were undertaken at least 2 days apart from one another. This is a significant increase in effort on the industry standard guidance using Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) 'core count' and LTC methodologies which prescribes seven monthly visits at high tide between November – March inclusive for WeBS and four visits once per month November to February for LTC. The increase in effort has led to a more detailed understanding of the use of the Site and buffer zone by waders than would have been gained by the WeBS and LTC alone. Therefore, deviation from these methodologies is not considered to be a limitation.

2.24 One of the fields off-site to the north-west (within the wader buffer zone) was in horse grazing use. As such, this field was not accessed however sufficient vantage points looking over the field were available from Lizard Lane and from the farm access track to the west of Lizard Lane. This is not considered to be a significant limitation due to adequate coverage from adjacent areas.

2.25 The crepuscular breeding bird survey on 19 June 2025 ended 45 minutes after sunset. This was 15 minutes less than guidance per Bird Survey and Assessment Steering Group (2025). At the time of the survey, the grass within the Site had recently taken a hay cut meaning that for the duration of the survey there was limited breeding bird activity, limited to mostly flyovers prior to sunset. As such, this is not considered to be a significant limitation within this report.

3 Results

Non-breeding wader surveys

Desk study

- 3.1 ERIC NE returned a total of 9,961 bird records within 2 km of the Site. Of the records returned, 1,420 related to wader birds. Of note, 254 of the 1,420 records were returned for curlew. One record of curlew was returned for the Site itself, comprising a flock of over 30 birds recorded in October 2018. One record of lapwing on Site was returned; 40 adults were recorded on Site in October 2018). The majority of the records relate to Whitburn bird observatory which is located off-site approximately 665 m to the east. Other waders recorded in the desk study included bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica* (70 records), black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa* (ten records), dunlin *Calidris alpina* (148 records), golden plover (109 records), green sandpiper *Calidris alpina* (10 records), greenshank *Tringa nebularia* (six records), grey phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* (15 records), grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola* (15 records), knot (61 records), lapwing (17 additional records), purple sandpiper (46 records), redshank *Tringa totanus* (221 records), ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula* (110 records), ruff *Calidris pugnax* (16 records), sanderling (93 records) and turnstone (211 records). The majority of the records relate to Whitburn Observatory whereby there is a sea watching facility for bird watching.
- 3.2 Additional data on non-breeding curlew provided by the LPA Ecologist in March 2026 is summarised below in **Table 3**. The data sent in by the LPA Ecologist only includes notable counts of curlew.

Table 3: Additional non-breeding curlew records provided by LPA Ecologist (including the original record source) within planning response in March 2026

Date	Count	Source
24 December 2019	81	STC wader study – raw data
29 December 2019	112	STC wader study – raw data
6 November 2022	100	ERIC NE
17 October 2024	96	STC species records
27 February 2026	133	iRecord submission
11 March 2026	95	iRecord submission
15 March 2026	130 – 135	Submission emailed to LPA Ecologist

Wintering surveys

- 3.3 During the wintering wader surveys undertaken between November 2024 – March 2025, a total of two wader species were recorded using the Site (curlew and golden plover). Three wader species were recorded using the wader buffer zone (curlew, golden plover and lapwing). Curlew and lapwing are both BoCC red list species, golden plover is a BoCC green list species.
- 3.4 Curlew were recorded using the Site on 12 of the 15 wintering surveys (present on 80% of the wintering surveys). During high tide surveys, curlew was present within the Site except for the March 2025 survey, and a peak count of 85 birds was recorded on the January 2025 survey. Curlew was present on all low tide surveys with a peak count of 83 birds on the December 2024 survey. Curlew was also present within the Site on three of the crepuscular surveys, with a peak count of 57 birds on the January 2025 survey. On all crepuscular surveys, curlew were present at the start of the survey before sunset but departed the Site after sunset, suggesting they had departed to separate nocturnal roost site. It is noted within E3 Ecology (2023) that Boldon Flats Nature Reserve is a nocturnal roost site for curlew and other waders, and this may explain the absence of birds past

sunset. Curlew was also observed within the wader buffer zone and was present on 11 of the 15 wintering surveys (present on 73% of the wintering surveys). A peak count of 76 birds was recorded on the February 2025 high tide survey.

- 3.5 Golden plover was recorded within the Site on one survey; a flock of 24 birds was recorded loafing on the January 2025 high tide survey. Golden plover was also recorded within the wader buffer zone on three surveys, on the November 2025 crepuscular and high tide survey, and a high tide survey in January 2025.
- 3.6 Lapwing was not observed using the Site during any of the surveys. Lapwing was recorded within the wader buffer zone on three surveys. A flock of 20 birds was recorded loafing on the November high tide survey to the south-west of the wader buffer zone (155 m from the Site), 16 on the low tide survey in November and 78 birds were observed in two pre-sunset flocks during the crepuscular survey in January 2025 (85 m to the west of the Site).
- 3.7 A summary of the peak count of waders from the wintering wader surveys is shown in **Table 4** and the full data set is shown in **Table A-2-1 to A-2-2, Appendix 2**. The data collected from the wintering wader surveys is shown on **Figures 2a – 6c, Section 5**.

Table 4: Peak counts of waders across all wintering wader surveys (15 surveys)

<u>Species</u>	Site	Buffer Zone
	Peak count	
Curlew	85	76
Golden plover	24	57
Lapwing	-	78

Spring passage surveys

- 3.8 During the six spring passage wader surveys undertaken between April – May 2025, there was a significant fall in non-breeding wader activity in the area. Curlew was the only wader species recorded. One curlew was recorded on the April 2025 high tide survey, observed flying over the Site in a westerly direction but did not land.
- 3.9 No observations of wader using the survey area were recorded during April and May 2025. Therefore, no peak count calculation has been completed.
- 3.10 The full results of the data collected during the Spring passage surveys is shown in **Table A-2-3, Appendix 2**. The data collected from these surveys is also presented on **Figures 7a – 8c, Section 5**.

Autumn passage surveys

- 3.11 Nine autumn passage surveys undertaken between August – October 2025, curlew and lapwing were the only wader species recorded using the Site and the wader buffer zone.
- 3.12 No waders were recorded on Site during the August 2025 surveys.
- 3.13 Curlew were recorded using the Site on four of the nine autumn passage surveys (present on 44% of the autumn passage surveys). Curlew activity peaked on Site during the high tide survey on 18 September 2024, where 65 curlew were recorded using the Site to loaf and forage. Similar numbers were recorded during the crepuscular survey on 29 September 2024, with 51 curlew using the Site. No birds were recorded on the crepuscular survey on 07 October 2025. Twenty-one curlew were recorded on Site during the low tide survey on 09 October 2025. During the high tide survey on 17 October 2025, 52 curlew were recorded foraging on Site, but all birds took off and flew south at 13:40 (approximately 12 minutes before high tide) and did not return.

- 3.14 Curlew were also recorded using the wader buffer zone on five of the nine surveys (present on 55% of the autumn passage surveys). The highest peak count of curlew was 17 birds recorded in the October crepuscular survey using the agricultural field to the south west.
- 3.15 Thirty-four lapwing were recorded on Site during the September 2024 high tide survey. This was the only survey where lapwing was recorded on Site. However, lapwing was recorded in the buffer zone on three other surveys. Overall lapwing displayed preference for fields within the wader buffer zone, with a higher peak count compared to those recorded on Site (see **Table 4**).
- 3.16 A summary of the peak counts of waders from the wintering wader surveys is shown in **Table 5** and the full data set is shown in **Table A-2-4 and A-2-5, Appendix 2**. The data collected from the wintering wader surveys is also presented on **Figures 9a – 11c, Section 5**.

Table 5: Peak counts of waders across all Autumn passage wader surveys (nine surveys)

Species	Site	Buffer Zone
	Peak count	
Curlew	65	17
Lapwing	34	53

Incidental sightings of protected/notable bird species

- 3.17 Incidental observations of barn owl were recorded on a total of six wader surveys (18 November 2024, 15 January 2025, 13 February 2025, 18 March 2025, 02 April 2025 and 19 May 2025). Most of the observations were made off-site to the west and the direction of travel of west - east. Barn owl was observed flying over the Site three times; however, no foraging activity was recorded. The activity was consistent of that of commuting activity. The land use within the Site is arable grassland (in a silage crop) and as such is considered to be sub-optimal for foraging barn owl (Shawyer, 2012). [REDACTED]
- 3.18 During the low tide autumn passage survey on 09 October 2025, a flock of approximately 80 pink-footed geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* were observed just inside the buffer zone in the arable field south-west of Site. The birds were disturbed by a passing helicopter and flew north beyond the buffer zone. No other recordings of pink footed geese were made during any of the other surveys. Based on the timing of the observation, these birds are likely to be recent migratory arrivals on passage to permanent wintering grounds.
- 3.19 During the crepuscular autumn passage survey on 07 October 2025, a 'covey'⁴ of 33 grey partridge *Perdix perdix* were observed on the edge of the wader buffer zone to the south west feeding on tilled land. An additional eight grey partridge were observed separately further north of the wader buffer zone within a horse grazed field approximately 400 m from the large covey of grey partridge. On a precautionary basis, these were considered to be additional birds. No grey partridge was observed within the Site on any of the surveys. Grey partridge often forms large social coveys for foraging efficiencies and predator avoidance (Watson, 2007), and it is likely that the tilled land presented an attractive foraging resource to them at the time. Additionally grey partridge are often thought to roost in tighter groupings at dusk as visual detection decreases (Tillmann, 2009). Grey partridge is a mobile species males can travel up to 4.7 km during winter (Watson, 2007) and therefore this covey is likely to utilise agricultural land, which is widespread in the locality, particularly to the north, south and west of the wader buffer zone.

Breeding bird characterisation surveys**Desk study**

- 3.20 Of the 9,569 bird records returned by ERIC NE within 2 km of the Site, including 1,319 records relating to BoCC red list species. Most of the red-listed species are seabirds or wildfowl of which typically don't breed in arable grassland which is found within the Site. Three ground-nesting, red-listed species were returned in the desk study: grey partridge (six records), lapwing (57 records) and skylark *Alauda arvensis* (32 records). Additional records of notable, red-listed species returned typical of farmland and fringe habitats were: greenfinch *Carduelis* house sparrow *Passer domesticus* (15 records), *Carduelis chloris* (ten records), linnet *Linaria cannabina* (27 records), tree sparrow *Passer montanus* (17 records) Many other red-listed species are seabirds of which suitable habitat for breeding is not available on Site.
- 3.21 A full data set is not shown within this report but can be made available upon request.

⁴ Small family group or social flock (GWCT 2018).

Field survey

- 3.22 In total, 36 species were recorded within the Survey Area during the breeding bird characterisation surveys undertaken in 2025. Of which, ten were Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) red list species, ten were BoCC amber list species, 14 were BoCC green list species and two were species not assessed in the BoCC due to being non-native/introduced (pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*) and of domestic origin (feral pigeon *Columba livia domestica*). The remaining species consisted of 14 BoCC green list species and two introduced species that is not assigned a BoCC status. These species are common and widespread and are not of conservation concern. As such, they are not discussed further within this report.
- 3.23 A total of five species were considered to be confirmed breeding within the Site. Of those breeding within the Site, grasshopper warbler *Locustella naevia* was the only red-listed species that had established territory. An additional four amber-listed species were considered to confirmed breeding within the Site and this included: meadow pipit *Anthus pratensis*, whitethroat *Sylvia communus*, woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* and wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*. Woodpigeon are amber-listed due to the UK supporting over 25% of the European population but are a common and widespread species in the UK and ubiquitous in farmland environments. Woodpigeon is not considered to be a species of consideration within this assessment as they are ubiquitous, occur in vast numbers and the Site is not particularly important to them based upon the single territory present. As such, woodpigeon is not considered further within this report.
- 3.24 No green-listed species were recorded breeding on Site.
- 3.25 Red-listed species confirmed breeding in the survey buffer include greenfinch, herring gull, house sparrow, starling, linnet, grey partridge, and skylark. The greenfinch territory was associated with the residential gardens immediately south of the Site. The herring gull, house sparrow and starling territories were associated with residential buildings and green space to the immediate north-east of the Site. The linnet territory was centred on scrub within Kitchener Road LWS. The grey partridge and skylark territories were associated with the arable and grazing fields off-site to the west.
- 3.26 Meadow pipit and wren were the only amber-listed species confirmed breeding in the survey buffer. The meadow pipit territory was located within the arable field off-site to the south-west and the wren territory was located on the edge of a residential garden to the south-east.
- 3.27 Four green-listed species were confirmed breeding within the survey buffer, including blackbird *Turdus merula* (two territories), chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* (one territory), goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* (two territories) and pied wagtail *Motacilla alba* (one territory). These green-listed species and species not assessed in the BoCC are of low conservation concern, being common and widespread, and as such are not considered significant ecological features and are not assessed further within this report⁵.
- 3.28 A total of 19 species were observed within the Site or 50 m buffer zone but were not considered to have established a territory, either due to unsuitable breeding habitat, or insufficient breeding evidence over the survey period. A summary of non-breeding BoCC red and amber listed species recorded is shown in **Table A-1, Appendix 1**.
- 3.29 Results are summarised in **Table 6**, along with BTO code, number of territories, and conservation status. Breeding territories are shown in **Figure 12** (BoCC red list species) and **Figure 13** (BoCC amber list species), **Section 5**.
- 3.30 Some incidental records of breeding attempts of BoCC red and amber listed species were recorded offsite and outside of the 50 m buffer during the suite of spring passage wader surveys. These territories are not listed in **Table 6** below due to being outwith of the standard buffer zone, however due to their potential interaction with the wader compensation site (see BSG Ecology, 2026c), these have been considered within text below and are also shown in **Figures 12 and 13, Section 5**.

⁵ Barn owl is assessed due to its protection under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Table 6: Classification of birds and their associated territories recorded in the Site and 50 m buffer zone.

Common name	Scientific name	Breeding (✓)	Confirmed breeding territories (Site)	Confirmed breeding territories (50 m buffer zone)	BoCC status	Designations *	Estimated Breeding Pairs within the Vice County ⁶
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	-	-	-	Red	Section 41	-
Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>	✓	2	-	Red	Section 41	300
Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓	-	1	Red	-	<4,000
Herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	-	1	Red	Section 41	1,500
House martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	-	-	-	Red	-	-
House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	-	5	Red	Section 41	>25,000
Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	-	1	Red	Section 41	5,000
Grey partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	✓	-	1	Red	Section 41	1,500 – 2,000
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓	-	1	Red	Section 41	30,000
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	-	1	Red	Section 41	20,000 – 35,000
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	-	-	-	Amber	-	-
Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	-	-	-	Amber	-	-
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	-	-	-	Amber	-	-
Meadow pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	2	1	Amber	-	20,000
Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	-	-	-	Amber	Schedule 1	-
Reed bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	-	-	-	Amber	Section 41	-
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	-	-	-	Amber	-	-
Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	✓	2	-	Amber	-	7,400

⁶ In reference to Bowey *et al* (2012). Vice County '66' County Durham.

Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	1	-	Amber	-	N/A
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	1	-	Amber	-	79,200
Barn owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	■	-	■	Green	Schedule 1	100
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	-	2	Green	-	49,000
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	-	-	-	Green	-	-
Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	-	-	-	Green	-	-
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	-	1	Green	-	60,000 – 70,000
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	-	-	-	Green	-	-
Collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	-	-	-	Green	-	-
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	-	2	Green	-	3,000
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	-	-	-	Green	-	-
Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	-	-	-	Green	-	-
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	-	-	-	Green	-	-
Pied wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	-	1	Green	-	3,000
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	-	-	-	Green	-	-
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	-	-	-	Green	-	-
Feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia domestica</i>	-	-	-	Not assessed	-	-
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	-	-	-	Not assessed	-	-
* Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Schedule 1 listed species. * Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act NERC (2006). Section 41 species list.							

Protected and Notable Species***Schedule 1 Wildlife and Countryside Act*****Barn owl**

3.31

[REDACTED]

3.32

[REDACTED]

3.33

[REDACTED]

Quail

3.34

[REDACTED]

3.35

[REDACTED]

BoCC Red List

3.36

Grasshopper warbler was the only red-listed species recorded as breeding within the Site. A total of two grasshopper warbler territories were found on the Site's northern and north-western boundary, centred on the small areas of scrub present within the Site.

3.37

Six other red-listed species were recorded breeding offsite within the 50 m buffer zone. This included: grey partridge (one territory within horse grazed field offsite to the west), herring gull (one territory) associated with a breeding territory on a residential property, house sparrow (four territories) associated with residential housing offsite to the north east, linnet (one territory) located north of Kitchener Road and starling (one territory) associated with residential properties offsite to the north east.

3.38

An additional six incidental skylark territories were recorded outside of the Site and 50 m buffer zone as part of the spring passage wader surveys. Three of which were located within a horse grazed field offsite to the north west and singles were recorded offsite to the south west within a winter wheat crop and offsite to the north within an area of grassland and scrub.

BoCC Amber List

3.39

A total of two meadow pipit territories were located within the Site. The territories were located in the northern and western areas of the field. Two whitethroat territories were also located within the Site, centred on the area of scrub to the west of the boundary, and to the north. One wren territory was located on the southern boundary of the Site, likely associated with residential gardens immediately adjacent.

3.40

Within the 50 m buffer zone, one meadow pipit territory was recorded offsite to the south west within a winter wheat crop and a single wren territory was offsite to the south on a residential garden boundary.

- 3.41 An additional two territories were recorded outside of the Site and 50 m buffer zone as part of the spring passage wader surveys. These included one territory respectively for whitethroat and wren, both of which were considered to be breeding within an area of scrub on the edge of a winter wheat crop offsite to the south west.

Summary

- 3.42 In total, the Site had two territories of one red-listed species (grasshopper warbler) and four territories of amber-listed species of conservation concern (two each of meadow pipit and whitethroat). All other territories found during the breeding bird characterisation surveys within the Site were of species not of conservation concern or were centred off-site in adjacent fields or residential areas

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5 Figures

Figure 1: Site and buffer zones

Figures 2a – 2c: Wintering wader surveys [November]

Figures 3a – 3c: Wintering wader surveys [December]

Figures 4a – 4c: Wintering wader surveys [January]

Figures 5a – 5c: Wintering wader surveys [February]

Figures 6a – 6c: Wintering wader surveys [March]

Figures 7a – 7c: Spring passage wader surveys [April]

Figures 8a – 8c: Spring passage wader surveys [May]

Figures 9a – 9c: Autumn passage wader surveys [August]

Figures 10a – 10c: Autumn passage wader surveys [September]

Figures 11a – 11c: Autumn passage wader surveys [October]

Figure 12: Breeding bird characterisation survey: BoCC Red List species

Figure 13: Breeding bird characterisation survey: BoCC Amber List species

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



Legend

- Site boundary
- 50m Survey Area
- Wader Survey Area



OFFICE: NEWCASTLE
T: 0191 303 8964

JOB REF: P24-775

PROJECT TITLE
LAND OFF MILL LANE, WHITBURN

DRAWING TITLE
Figure 2a: Wintering wader surveys [November]
– Low Tide

DATE: 07/11/2025
DRAWN: SP

CHECKED: AP
APPROVED: IH

SCALE: 1:3,100
VERSION:1.2

Legend

3 CH

Activity not recorded

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew
L.	Lapwing



Legend

3 CH Other activity

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew
GP	Golden Plover
L.	Lapwing



Legend

3 CH Other activity

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
GP	Golden Plover



Legend

3 CH Activity not recorded

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew



Legend

3 CH

Activity not recorded

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew



Legend

Site boundary

Survey boundary

No target species recorded



Legend

3 CH Activity not recorded

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew



Legend

3 CH Activity not recorded

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew
GP	Golden Plover



- Legend
- 3 CH Activity not recorded
 - Survey boundary
 - Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew
GP	Golden Plover
L.	Lapwing



Legend

3 CH Activity not recorded

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew



Legend

3 CH Activity not recorded

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew



Legend

3 CH

Activity not recorded

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew



Legend

3 CH

Activity not recorded

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew



Legend

3 CH Activity not recorded

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew



Legend

3 CH Activity not recorded

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew



Legend

- Site boundary
- Survey boundary

No target species recorded



Legend

3CH ↗

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew



Legend

Site boundary

Survey boundary

No target species recorded



Legend

- Site boundary
- Survey boundary

No target species recorded



Legend

- Site boundary
- Survey boundary

No target species recorded



Legend

- Site boundary
- Survey boundary

No target species recorded



Legend

3CH

→ Bird Flight Line

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Species
CU	Curlew



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JOB REF: P24-775

PROJECT TITLE
LAND OFF MILL LANE, WHITBURN

DRAWING TITLE
Figure 9b: Autumn passage wader surveys
[August] – High Tide

DATE: 07/01/2026
DRAWN: SL

CHECKED: AP
APPROVED: IH

SCALE: 1:3,100
VERSION:1.2

Legend

3CH

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew



Legend

3 CH Activity not recorded

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
L.	Lapwing



Legend

3 CH Activity not recorded

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew
L.	Lapwing



Legend

3 CH Activity not recorded

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew
L.	Lapwing



Legend

3 CH Activity not recorded

Bird Flight Line

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew
L.	Lapwing



Legend

3 CH Other activity

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew



Legend

3 CH Activity not recorded

→ Bird Flight Line

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew



Legend

3 CH Activity not recorded

→ Bird Flight Line

Survey boundary

Site boundary

BTO Code	Common Name
CU	Curlew
L.	Lapwing



Legend

 Survey boundary

 Site boundary

Confirmed Territories

CH BoCC Red List Species

BTO Code	Common Name
GH	Grasshopper Warbler
GR	Greenfinch
HG	Herring Gull
HS	House Sparrow
LI	Linnet
P.	Grey Partridge
S.	Skylark
SG	Starling



Legend

 Survey boundary

 Site boundary

Confirmed Territories

CH Amber

BTO Code	Common Name
MP	Meadow Pipit
WH	Whitethroat
WP	Woodpigeon
WR	Wren

Appendix 1: Summary of non-breeding records recorded during breeding bird characterisation surveys

Table A-1: Summary of BoCC Red List and Amber List non-breeding records during the 2025 breeding bird surveys

Species	BoCC Status	Description
Curlew	Red	Two birds observed once, off-site flying over the fields to the south-west and calling non-territorially.
House martin	Red	Recorded foraging over both the Site and adjacent fields, presumed nesting off-site in residential or farm buildings.
Kestrel	Amber	Recorded foraging over both the Site and adjacent fields. No suitable nesting habitat on Site.
Lesser black-backed gull	Amber	Recorded foraging in adjacent off-site fields and roosting on the school building south of Site. No suitable nesting habitat on Site.
Mallard	Amber	Recorded flying over the Site only.
Quail	Amber	[REDACTED]
Reed bunting	Amber	Recorded once in the tree in the school playground, on the Site's southern boundary.
Wheatear	Amber	Recorded once singing on Site in the south-eastern area of the field.

Appendix 2: Wader survey results

Table A-2-1: Wintering wader survey results (Site)

Species	Wintering Wader Survey Summary (Site)														
	NOV			DEC			JAN			FEB			MAR		
	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular
Curlew	x26	x77	-	x83	x68	-	x53	x85	x71	x61	x29	x4	x43	-	x2
Golden plover	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table A-2-2: Wintering wader survey results (Wader buffer zone)

Species	Wintering Wader Survey Summary (Wader buffer zone)														
	NOV			DEC			JAN			FEB			MAR		
	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular
Curlew	-	x7	-	x6	x25	-	x13	x2	x49	x41	x76	-	x9	x47	x16
Lapwing	x16	x20	-	-	-	-	-	-	x78	-	-	-	-	-	-
Golden plover	-	x57	x11	-	-	-	-	-	x47	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table A-2-3: Spring passage wader survey results

Species	Spring Passage Wader Survey Summary (Site)					
	APR			MAY		
	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular
Curlew	-	*1	-	-	-	-
*Flying over						

Table A-2-4: Autumn passage wader survey results

Species	Autumn Passage Wader Survey Summary (Site)								
	AUG			SEP			OCT		
	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular
Curlew	x8*	-	-	-	x65	x51	x21	x52	-
Lapwing	-	-	-	-	x34	*2	-	-	*1
*Flying over									

Table A-2-5: Autumn passage wader survey results (Wader buffer zone)

Species	Autumn Passage Wader Survey Summary (Wader buffer zone)								
	AUG			SEP			OCT		
	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular	Low Tide	High Tide	Crepuscular
Curlew	x8*	x6	-	x5	-	x7	-	-	x17
Lapwing	-	-	x18	x32	-	x53	-	-	-
*Flying over									

