



Breeding Bird Survey 2025

Land at Kings Pond, Alton

The Ecology Partnership, Thorncroft Manor, Thorncroft Drive, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 8JB

T +44 (0) 1372 364133 **E** info@ecologypartnership.com **W** ecologypartnership.com

CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	3
2.0	METHODOLOGY	5
3.0	RESULTS.....	7
4.0	DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	12
5.0	CONCLUSIONS	19
6.0	REFERENCES	21
	APPENDIX 1. BREEDING BIRD SURVEY (1 OF 3) – 11/04/2025.....	22
	APPENDIX 2. BREEDING BIRD SURVEY (2 OF 3) – 09/05/2025.....	23
	APPENDIX 3. BREEDING BIRD SURVEY (3 OF 3) – 25/06/2025.....	24

LIABILITIES:

Whilst every effort has been made to guarantee the accuracy of this report, it should be noted that living animals and plants are capable of migration/establishing and whilst such species may not have been located during the survey duration, their presence may be found on a site at a later date.

This report provides a snap shot of the species that were present at the time of the survey only and does not consider seasonal variation. Furthermore, where access is limited or the site supports habitats which are densely vegetated only dominant species maybe recorded.

The recommendations contained within this document are based on a reasonable timeframe between the completion of the survey and the commencement of any works. If there is any delay between the commencement of works that may conflict with timeframes laid out within this document, or have the potential to allow the ingress of protected species, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted.

It is the duty of care of the landowner/developer to act responsibly and comply with current environmental legislation if protected species are suspected or found prior to or during works.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Alton Town Council to undertake an assessment of breeding birds for land Kings Pond, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 2SZ (grid reference: SU 72272 39356), hereafter referred to as the 'site'.
- 1.2 The site is located in the town of Alton (SU 72272 39356) and covers an area of approximately 3.98 hectares consisting of grassland, buildings, woodland, and a pond the pond lies on the course of the River Wey, the river flows into the southern end of the waterbody and then exits from an outflow to the north. The wider area is surrounded by a mix of residential and light industrial units, with a railway running along the eastern side of the site.
- 1.3 The approximate red line boundary of the site and the immediate surrounding area are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Redline boundary of the site

Proposed development

- 1.4 Final plans for site have not yet been produced; however, works are understood to be focused on hydrological/ecological restoration the section of the River Wey and improving water quality both on site and downstream and solving the problem of siltation either in the short term or the long term. There are currently two proposed ideas for the site. The first would be to improve the current pond, by desilting the waterbody and making a number of ecological improvements. The second proposal would be to restore a more natural course of the river, separating a stretch of the river from any standing water on site with the creation of ponds and wetlands surrounding the river.

Planning context: priority and specially protected species

- 1.5 Local Planning Authorities should have regard in their “duty to conserve biodiversity”, as discussed further below. This duty can reasonably be interpreted as requiring an assessment of breeding bird interest for larger development proposals, to inform the impact assessment.

Domestic legislation

- 1.6 All bird species are protected against intentional killing or injury, their active nests against intentional damage or destruction and their eggs against intentional destruction, through the provisions of section 1(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. Certain species, listed on Schedule 1 of the Act, are afforded additional protection against disturbance whilst in or near a nest and disturbance to dependent young, through the provisions of section 1(5) of the Act.

Other species of conservation concern

- 1.7 A number of birds are in decline in England and the UK and are classified, through inclusion on the Section 41 list of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, as of “Principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity” in England. These species and others are also classified as of Red or Amber List concern in the UK (Eaton et al. 2015) due to declines in their breeding or wintering population size or range. This non-statutory assessment is based on more recent national data than the Section 41 List and can be used alongside that list for the purposes of conservation evaluation. The requirement of the Secretary of State under Section 41(3) of the NERC Act to “further the conservation...” of the listed species and “promote the taking by others of such steps” implies obligations to Local Planning Authorities, often met through local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP).
- 1.8 The PEA and designated sites within 15km of the site indicate breeding populations of European nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Woodlark *Lullula arborea*, and Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata* within the local area.

2.0 Methodology

- 2.1 Three survey visits were conducted between April and June 2025. The surveys were conducted by Greg Holland an experienced ornithologist.

- 2.2 A British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Breeding Birds Atlas method (Balmer *et al.* 2013) was followed and adapted, through the sub-division of observations by habitat type, to provide information on breeding species and activity for each of the main habitats within the site.
- 2.3 On each visit the site was walked along linear habitat features with the aim to maximise site coverage. Each bird seen or heard was identified to species, registered to the parcel of land in which it was recorded and given a BTO Atlas breeding evidence code¹. The desk study had identified the site as likely to have breeding populations of a number of Section 41 and Red List. The atlas methods were considered sufficient to identify which of these species were present and breeding in which habitats.

Field survey limitations and justification

- 2.4 The surveys were completed during dawn to early-morning period which is the recommended period to maximise the detection of most species (Balmer *et al.* 2013). Nocturnal species could be overlooked. As these would be woodland species and offsite woodland is to be retained and predicted to be unaffected by proposed works, it was not considered necessary to carry out additional nocturnal surveys.

Data analysis

- 2.5 Each species was assigned a highest evidence of proof of breeding for each habitat type. The total number of pairs for each species of conservation interest for each habitat type was estimated from the maximum number of apparent territories (birds showing possible, probable or confirmed breeding activity). This number should be considered as giving an indication of the relative abundance of species, rather than being a precise estimate, for reasons discussed above (2.4). When it was considered that a species was present, but not breeding, for example, a migrant singing on one visit, this is mentioned in the results.

Table 1: Survey conditions

Date	Time	Cloud cover	Rain	Wind	Temperature
11/04/2025	06:28 – 09:55	0%	None	Beaufort	11°C
09/05/2025	05:30 – 08:30	100%	None	0 Beaufort	5°C
25/06/2025	04:44 – 07:44	0%	None	0/1 Beaufort	14°C

¹ <https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u36/downloads/breedingcodes.pdf>

Evaluation

- 2.6 The evaluation of farmland birds makes use of the current listing of birds of conservation concern in the UK (Eaton *et al.* 2021) and the Section 41 list. The evaluation of the use of the site's habitats for species of conservation concern, hence any impact and mitigation, references recent literature on habitat and resource selection and response to habitat loss or disturbance for the relevant species.

3.0 Results

- 3.1 In total, the survey recorded 20 probable or confirmed breeding bird species, within the red line or immediately adjacent. A total of five of the possible/probable or confirmed breeding are of conservation concern (principal importance, red or amber list). These are discussed in more detail below. Maps of the species recorded on each visit are displayed in Appendix Tables 1 - 3.

Table 2: Species of conservation concern recorded during the breeding bird surveys (Red and Amber List)

Species	Estimated Number of Pairs
Confirmed breeding	
Dunnoek (<i>Prunella modularis</i>) (S41)	10-12
Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)	10-12
Moorhen (<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>)	5-10
Woodpigeon (<i>Columba palumbus</i>)	5-8
Wren (<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>)	10-15

Table 3: Other bird species recorded during the breeding bird surveys

Species	Estimated Number of Pairs
Confirmed breeding	
Blackbird (<i>Turdus merula</i>)	8-10
Blackcap (<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>)	4-6
Blue tit (<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>)	10-15
Canada goose (<i>Branta canadensis</i>)	5-10
Chiffchaff (<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>)	3-5
Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>)	15-20
Goldcrest (<i>Regulus regulus</i>)	1-2

Great tit (<i>Parus major</i>)	10-15
Grey heron (<i>Ardea cineria</i>)	2-4
Long-tailed tit (<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>)	1-3
Mute swan (<i>Cygnus olor</i>)	1
Robin (<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>)	8-12
Probable breeding	
Little grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>)	1
Nuthatch (<i>Sitta europaea</i>)	1
Tree creeper (<i>Certha familiaris</i>)	1-2

Table 4: Species of conservation concern - non-breeding bird species recorded during the survey (Red and Amber List and Schedule 1)

Species
Non-breeding
Black-headed gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)
Carrion crow (<i>Corvus corone</i>)
Coal tit (<i>Periparus ater</i>)
Collared dove (<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>)
Egyptian goose (<i>Alpochen aegyptiaca</i>)
Gadwall (<i>Mareca strepera</i>)
Goldfinch (<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>)
Great black-backed gull (<i>Larus marinus</i>)
Greylag goose (<i>Anser anser</i>)
Grey wagtail (<i>Motacilla cineria</i>)
Herring gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) (S41)
House sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>) (S41)
Jackdaw (<i>Coloeus monedula</i>)
Lesser black-back gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>)
Little egret (<i>Egretta garzetta</i>)
Magpie (<i>Pica pica</i>)
Mandarin duck (<i>Aix galericulata</i>)
Mistle thrush (<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>)
Rook (<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>)
Song thrush (<i>Turdus philomelos</i>) (S41)
Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>) (S41)
Stock dove (<i>Columba aenas</i>)
Swift (<i>Apus apus</i>)

Tufted duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) (S41)
--

3.2 A review of all forty-four species recorded on site is detailed below, with those noted as breeding in bold.

- **Blackbird** – Several birds singing and holding territories, with some juveniles seen around the western scrub boundary, trees on the north-west shore, and the main island.
- **Blackcap** – At least four birds holding territories on the main island, in the western scrub boundary, and on the northern/southern shores on either side of the island.
- *Black-headed gull* – A transient gull.
- **Blue tit** – Several family groups, with a nest identified on the north shore above the island, in a tree crevice.
- **Canada goose** – At least five nests seen on the main island, and one on the small island. Several adults were noted with goslings.
- *Carrion crow* – A few birds were seen flying over site, and although suitable trees were present, no nests were identified.
- **Chiffchaff** – At least three birds were noted singing and holding territories, primarily within the main island and along the western scrub boundary on site.
- *Coal tit* – One bird was heard calling on the north-western shore during the third survey, considered likely to be transient, although some limited suitable breeding habitat was present.
- *Collared dove* – A few individuals were seen perched around a tree in the north-east of site, nearby to the car park.
- **Coot** – Multiple nests were identified on the shoreline amongst vegetation, and the fallen trees. Several contained eggs, and there were numerous chicks and fledglings observed active on site.
- **Dunmoock** – Several birds were observed singing or holding territories and contact calling. A few juveniles were seen along the western scrub boundary and in the southern woodland.
- *Egyptian goose* – A pair were seen around the pond, but no nest or young identified.
- *Gadwall* – Maximum of two pairs in the centre of the pond. No breeding activity was identified, and they are considered unlikely to be breeding given the level of disturbance to the pond and land around it.

- **Goldcrest** - A few individuals were singing and holding territory in the north-west corner of site, with some contact with juveniles.
- **Goldfinch** – A few birds were seen flying over site and perched calling, although there was minimal suitable breeding habitat on site, limited to the north-west of site.
- **Great black-backed gull** – A transient gull.
- **Great tit** – Several family groups observed, with juveniles.
- **Greylag goose** – One bird seen amongst wildfowl near the picnic tables, considered likely transient as they prefer areas with lower levels of human activity.
- **Grey heron** – At least two active nests identified in the heronry at the northern end of the main island. One with three chicks, and another with an adult and likely eggs. Two other inactive nests also noted.
- **Grey wagtail** – One bird identified foraging around the main island during surveys two and three.
- **Herring gull** – Transient gull.
- **House sparrow** – A few birds were seen socialising in the hedgerows near the car park and along the north-eastern boundary. Likely breeding in the housing estate to the north, but attracted by food provided during the duck feeding.
- **Jackdaw** – A small flock observed flying over on survey three only.
- **Lesser black-backed gull** – Transient gull.
- **Little egret** – One bird perched on the island in survey one.
- **Little grebe** – A pair seen around the open pond with a likely first year adult, a chick from the previous year.
- **Long-tailed tit** – A few family groups seen across site with juveniles.
- **Magpie** – A few individuals seen across site.
- **Mallard** – Several family groups seen with juveniles, with the main breeding area identified as the large island.
- **Mandarin duck** – Single individual male seen on survey one.
- **Mistle thrush** – Individual birds seen on two surveys, with some limited suitable breeding habitat available, but no clear activity identified.
- **Moorhen** – Families seen around site with young being fed by adults. Nests were identified amongst some areas of pond perimeter vegetation, and on the main island.

- *Mute swan* – A pair was observed with nine cygnets swimming around the pond. These are considered likely to be nesting on the main island, as no nest was observed around the edge of the pond.
- *Nuthatch* – At least two birds were heard singing across site.
- *Robin* – Several birds were identified singing and holding territories, with contact calling. A few juveniles were seen along the western scrub boundaries and in the south-western woodland.
- *Rook* – Individuals seen flying over site and were considered to be transient.
- *Song thrush* – A few birds were seen and heard calling across site. Some suitable breeding habitat was noted in the western and southern parts of site, but no confirmed breeding activity was observed.
- *Starling* – One bird observed perching during survey two. No signs of the species nesting but are considered likely to be breeding in the nearby housing estate.
- *Stock dove* – One bird was heard calling in the woodland in the south of site.
- *Swift* – Four individuals were observed flying over the north-east part of site, during the third survey.
- *Treecreeper* – A few individuals were seen foraging in the trees along the western and northern sides of site, with potential faint contact calls from juveniles on the western edge of site.
- *Tufted duck* – No ducklings or nests seen across site, only a small number of adults on the pond. There was some potentially suitable breeding habitat on the island. It is, however, noted that this species generally prefers to breed in areas with lower human activity.
- *Woodpigeon* – There were adults observed across site with nesting material.
- *Wren* – Several birds were recorded singing and holding territories, with examples of contact calling and a few juveniles observed across site.

3.3 In addition to the species observed on site during the breeding bird surveys, an individual kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) was observed flying downstream along the southern portion of the Wey, before it enters the main pond body on the 16th January by The Ecology Partnership. This species has also been confirmed present on site, from information provided by local residents.

4.0 Discussion and Recommendations

- 4.1 Three surveys were conducted between April and June 2025, in which a total of 44 species was recorded on or around site. This included five amber listed species noted as breeding, with a further 15 non-listed species recorded as breeding or probably breeding. This was considered to be a moderately large assemblage for a site of this size, due to a combination of the varied habitats available, and the significant supplementary food available during breeding season.
- 4.2 It was observed that the site contained a range of suitable breeding and foraging habitat for nesting birds, notably the woodland in the south of site, the shrubby vegetation along the western railway boundary, and the islands within the pond (primarily the large one, and the smaller one to a lesser extent). Pond edge vegetation did offer foraging and nesting opportunities; however, the coverage and usage of this habitat was noted as being limited due to the high levels of disturbance to the pond edges.
- 4.3 Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) Schedule 2, all birds are protected from injury or killing when on active nests, just as the nests are protected from damage or destruction, and the eggs within from destruction or taking. Further to this, birds listed under Schedule 1 are protected from disturbance when on the nest as well. Their dependent young are also protected likewise, from disturbances.
- 4.4 The proposed options are not yet finalised in terms of specific requirements for the works to take place, however, inferences can be made as to the likely areas of potential impacts. The options are currently focused on works within the pond/river footprint, with both having the potential to cause impacts via bank top disturbance (removal of vegetation for access and management) and disturbance from machinery during the operational phase within the pond (dredging or draining/ground works etc). Deposition and storage of silt may also be a factor as part of the nature of the restoration works. This could have the potential to impact ground nesting habitat or the tree roots of trees (which could cause soil compaction and tree death). In order to eliminate this risk, suitable storage areas for the silt should be identified, away from the root protection areas of suitable nesting trees and locations where ground nesting has been identified (the islands and pond edges).

- 4.5 To avoid unnecessary impacts from facilitating pond access, access to the main pond should be from areas where there is no suitable nesting vegetation (e.g. the viewing berths), so that loss of suitable nesting habitat is minimised. The protection of all suitable nesting habitat may not be feasible, depending on the size of equipment and access requirements thereof. If any removal of suitable habitat (e.g. shrub vegetation around the pond edge) should be required, then this should be conducted outside of nesting bird season (March to August, inclusive). Should works relating to access be required during this season, then they should only be conducted after an extensive nesting bird check of the local vicinity, by a suitably qualified ecologist. Should the area surrounding the works location be deemed clear of nesting activity, then works may proceed. Any active nest identified should be suitably protected with an exclusion zone, within which no works can take place, until such time as the nest can be confirmed inactive by an ecologist.
- 4.6 The main operational phase of works should also be timed outside of nesting bird season (March-August, inclusive), in order to avoid unnecessary disturbance to those species which rely on the pond, islands and pond edge vegetation. This gives a window within which works should ideally take place of September-February, inclusive.
- 4.7 If works are to extend outside of this window, there is the potential for a temporary disturbance to nesting birds from noise and general site activity created. Specific recommendations for this can be finalised once the final scope of works is understood. Any works within the nesting bird season should be regularly monitored by a suitably qualified ecologist, to check for nesting bird activity, in proposed works areas. Any active nest identified should be suitably protected with an agreed exclusion zone, within which no works can take place, until such time as the nest can be confirmed inactive by an ecologist. If any nests are identified outside of these checks, a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted to advise.
- 4.8 There were five amber listed breeding bird species on site, dunnock, mallard, moorhen, woodpigeon, and wren. Dunnock, woodpigeon and wren are species which are not known to be reliant on the open water and marginal habitats which are to likely to be altered during these works. Dunnock and wren are both known to nest in either scrub, hedgerows or

woodland, whilst woodpigeons prefer larger trees either as individual standard or in woodlands, hedgerows or treelines. Indeed, these preferences match the habitat these species were seen using on site. These habitats are, aside from potential minor losses for pond access, expected to remain available in significant amounts on site. Therefore, the nesting resource on site for these three species is expected to remain the same, and no long-term impacts from potential habitat change are predicted.

- 4.9 Mallard and moorhen are species which are reliant on aquatic habitat for either nesting or rearing their young. Mallard are ground nesting birds, using dense vegetation or isolated locations to protect the nests. They rely on the open water to forage and rear their young once hatched, teaching them to forage and moving them away from land-based threats. Moorhens are similarly reliant on waterbodies, nesting on dense basket-style nests either on the ground, or in marginal vegetation. It is considered that for these species, the scale of works and altering of the habitats present a large-scale temporary impact, as well as the potential for a minor long term one dependent on site design.
- 4.10 Any draining of the pond and works to re-structure the river may present an immediate loss of the waterbody which these species rely on for nesting, if works are spread into breeding season. It is considered that mallard are highly mobile and would likely move to other ponds or suitable nesting locations in the local area, be they ponds or on the River Wey itself. Moorhen (like coot which have also been recorded breeding onsite) are less mobile, whilst they may leave site for other breeding grounds, it would be preferable to maintain some suitable habitat on site whether a retained area if works are to span into the nesting bird season, or habitat created early in the works which would maintain habitat on site for a more invasive scheme such as the river realignment. This would minimise impacts for other waterfowl on site.
- 4.11 For the completion of more extensive engineering works, the nesting populations can be expected to recover over time, with there being suitable nesting habitat created and retained on site, and waterbodies usable for foraging and rearing young being made available. Indeed, any increase in marginal vegetation or wetland habitat proposed in this scheme could be considered as increasing the available nesting habitat for these species. It is acknowledged that the assemblage of birds on site may alter dependent on how extensive

the proposals are. However, any scheme is aimed at finding a solution to the environmental impact of silt and nutrient build up in the water body and to extensively increase the overall biodiversity of the site.

- 4.12 There were fifteen other species identified on site, which were either confirmed as, or considered to probably be, breeding. Once again, there were species present which are not considered to be reliant on the pond/river for their breeding activity. These were blackbird, blackcap, blue tit, chiffchaff, goldcrest, great tit, long-tailed tit, robin, nuthatch, and tree creeper. These species are reliant on the terrestrial vegetation present within the woodland and shrubbery present around the pond. Once again, these habitats are expected to remain and provide a continued nesting resource to these species, which are considered highly unlikely to be at risk of long-term impacts from the proposed works.
- 4.13 There are five remaining breeding species, which are reliant on the pond/river during breeding season. These were Canada goose, coot, grey heron, mute swan, and little grebe.
- 4.14 Canada geese nest in depressions in the ground, directly nearby to waterbodies. On site, these were noted on the main island primarily, as well as the smaller one present at the north east of the waterbody. Similarly, mute swan nest on large mound-like nests, adjacent to waterbodies or in shallow areas of water within them. No nest was identified during the bird surveys around the edge of the pond, it is understood that they nest on the main large island. The Ecology Partnership accessed the main island in September post breeding bird season where a suspected swan nest was noted. Little grebe and coot are both known to nest directly near the waters edge or in the marginal vegetation and shallow water at the edge of waterbodies, on small, mound like nests. Coot nests can be further out into open water, with these mound-like nests being able to float. Finally, the grey heron classically nests in communal colonies called 'heronries', which are generally set within groups of trees nearby to water. This was the case on site, with one noted within the main island.
- 4.15 As with the amber listed species previously discussed, these five species face potential impacts dependent on the scale and timing of works. Coot and little grebe could temporarily lose direct nesting habitat with impacts such as draining the pond or significant engineering, whilst grey heron, mute swan and Canada goose all potentially face temporary loss of

- habitat for foraging and rearing young. Again, this may lead to changes in nesting behaviour and may discourage this species from using the site during works.
- 4.16 As with the listed species, it can be expected that populations will recover post works, although it is not known the exact assemblage that may return, although this is very much dependent on the scale of works. The final design should incorporate suitable habitat for little grebe and coot to ensure that there is available suitable habitat for these species post works. The greater availability of this habitat could allow additional territories for these species breeding pairs. Coot, little grebe, Canada goose and mute swan are known to utilise rivers and open water ponds during breeding season, for foraging and rearing young during breeding season, habitats which are all planned to be on site post-works in early proposals. Grey heron keep their young in the nest to raise them, so will mostly be reliant the water for foraging to feed the chicks. They are known to use the shallow margins of open water ponds and river/streams, again, habitats which will be established on site post works.
- 4.17 The islands will be maintained on site if a more simplified dredging and restoration exercise is undertaken on site. Islands maybe lost as part of any river realignment scheme taken forward, as such it is important to provide areas of secluded nesting habitat onsite post development. The habitats present within the site islands should be protected as part of works, particularly with the wooded habitat present within the larger main island. This supports the heronry and as such needs to be maintained on site.
- 4.18 Ultimately, a reduction in the numbers of some species of waterbird is not considered to be a bad impact of works, when the health of the overall pond/river ecosystem is considered. Waterbirds in excessive numbers around ponds are known to have a significant negative impact on the balance and overall health of the ecosystem within (Williams *et al.*, 2020). Most notably, Canada geese, a non-native species present here in excessive numbers, have an established relationship between local overpopulation, and decreased condition of ponds and the surrounding habitat. Excessive numbers cause de-vegetation within the pond, extreme poaching of the ground around the pond, increased water turbidity, and imbalances in water chemistry with the ammonia (and by-products) coming from their

waste. Combined, these actions have the effect to lower the coverage of aquatic macrophytes, increasing the growth of algal and bacterial blooms, and ultimately lowering the dissolved oxygen levels available within the waterbody. Water quality issues are seen most prevalently in those ponds where supplementary feeding occurs, which is known to occur on this pond/river. If the larger island becomes territorialised during works, then this may ultimately reduce the nesting habitat for Canada geese and if so is likely to improve the health of the aquatic environments on site. Additional management of Canada geese with fencing could also be undertaken. Discouraging feeding of water fowl on site is also likely to significantly help with water quality issues.

- 4.19 A kingfisher was identified during a separate site walkover, and has been identified in local records, but was not seen during any breeding bird survey visits. Nevertheless, as a Schedule 1 species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, consideration should be given to impacts on their potential breeding on site. This species nests in high-sided river banks, forming a long burrow with a chamber towards the end. Only partially suitable habitat for nest creation was deemed to be at the inflow point of the River Wey, although the banks here were likely too short to be of much use and subject to regular disturbance. There were suitable foraging perches all along the banks of the river/pond, especially the south-eastern edge. It is considered that this species is not currently breeding on site, instead foraging on or commuting through it, and using sections of the River Wey either further up or down stream to breed.
- 4.20 In addition to breeding birds, another twenty-four species of bird were noted on site during the survey work, of which these were noted as non-breeding. This included six red list species, Herring gull, house sparrow, great black-backed gull, mistle thrush, starling and swift. Of these species, Herring gull, great black-backed gull and swift are highly mobile species that were seen flying over the site or using the site in a transient nature. House sparrow, mistle thrush and starling are not reliant on the aquatic habitat on site and are considered unlikely to be significantly impacted by any proposed works making use of terrestrial habitats. A further six amber listed species were noted as non-breeding. Again, the black-headed gull and the lesser black-backed gull are mobile transient species, with song thrush and stock dove likely to use terrestrial habitat. However, gadwall and greylag

goose who are associated with the aquatic habitat present were noted, although the individual greylag goose noted was considered likely to be transient in nature.

- 4.21 Ultimately, if restoration of the site through dredging is to be undertaken impacts on nesting birds will likely be managed through timing and sensitive working practices. If the river realignment option is to be undertaken, then impacts into the breeding bird season may occur, with the most impact likely to occur to the waterfowl present on site. Again, mitigation can be designed to minimise any impacts. Careful site design, habitat creation and site enhancement can provide extensive habitat for the breeding bird assemblage post development. Although the assemblage may alter slightly, this is likely to be outweighed by the overall benefit of the scheme to significantly improve the condition and biodiversity present on site. Operational and embedded mitigation will be designed with the final proposal design.

General Ecological Enhancements

- 4.22 With both the proposed options, there is the potential for creation of suitable marginal or shallow water habitat, which could provide sheltered nesting opportunities for a range of waterfowl species. Specific recommendations for this will be explored during the design stage process. The creation reed beds would provide additional habitat of interest on site and may attract additional wetland birds.
- 4.23 Additional bird nesting opportunities can also be installed on site, within existing trees on site. Hardwearing woodcrete boxes, or similar, are recommended. Figure 2 gives examples of suitable bird boxes. The boxes should be positioned on a north or east facing aspect and at least 2m above the ground if possible. These would cater for species such as house sparrows and wagtails.

4.24



Figure 2: Examples of suitable bird boxes which could be installed on site Vivara Pro Barcelona WoodStone Open Nest Box (left) and Vivara Pro Seville 32mm WoodStone Nest Box (right)

- 4.25 As part of proposals artificial kingfisher feeding perches can be installed on site within suitable waterbodies, to provide additional perching opportunities for this Schedule 1 species.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 Three surveys were conducted between April and June 2025, in which a total of 44 species was recorded on or around site. This included six red, and 13 amber listed species, of which there were five amber listed species noted as breeding, with a further 15 non-listed species recorded as breeding or probably breeding.
- 5.2 This was considered to be a moderately large assemblage for a site of this size, due to a combination of the varied habitats available, and the significant supplementary food available from the general public during breeding season.
- 5.3 Works for both options are primarily focused within the pond footprint, with the potential for access-based disturbance to the bank tops. Works should limit access points to those areas where there is a clear bank top already to minimise habitat loss around the pond. For both options works should be scheduled in the wintering period, to avoid undue disturbance to nesting birds within the breeding season. If they extend outside this window, then measures should be taken to minimise impacts to nesting birds.
- 5.4 Nesting bird checks should be conducted across works within the breeding season, on a regular basis, to check for nesting activity within/directly adjacent to works areas. Any

active nest identified should be suitably protected with an exclusion zone, within which no works can take place, until such time as the nest can be confirmed inactive by an ecologist. If any nests are identified outside of these checks, a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted to advise.

- 5.5 River realignment proposals present a longer window of works, and a long-term change in habitats present on site. Of the 20 species considered to be breeding, there were thirteen which were reliant on habitats such as scrub, woodland and individual trees, of which there is going to be a continued resource on site post works, at the same level as currently. These species are not considered to be at risk of long-term adverse impacts to their nesting habitat, post works. The remaining seven species (mallard, moorhen, coot, mute swan, Canada goose, grey heron, and little grebe) are more reliant on the river/pond on site. It is considered that these species may face a long-term temporary loss of habitat during works, with suitable habitat being restored across works and after completion. Although the assemblage may alter slightly post development, this is likely to be outweighed by the overall benefit of the scheme to significantly improve the condition and biodiversity present on site. Operational and embedded mitigation will be designed with the final proposal design.

6.0 References

Balmer, D. *et al.* 2013. *Bird Atlas 2007-11: The Breeding and Wintering Birds of Britain and Ireland*. British Trust for Ornithology.

Chamberlain, D.E., Toms, M.P., Cleary-McHarg, R. & Banks, A.N. 2007. House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) habitat use in urbanized landscapes. *Journal of Ornithology* **148**. 453-462.

Eaton, M. *et al.* 2021. The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. *British Birds*. **114**: 723-747.

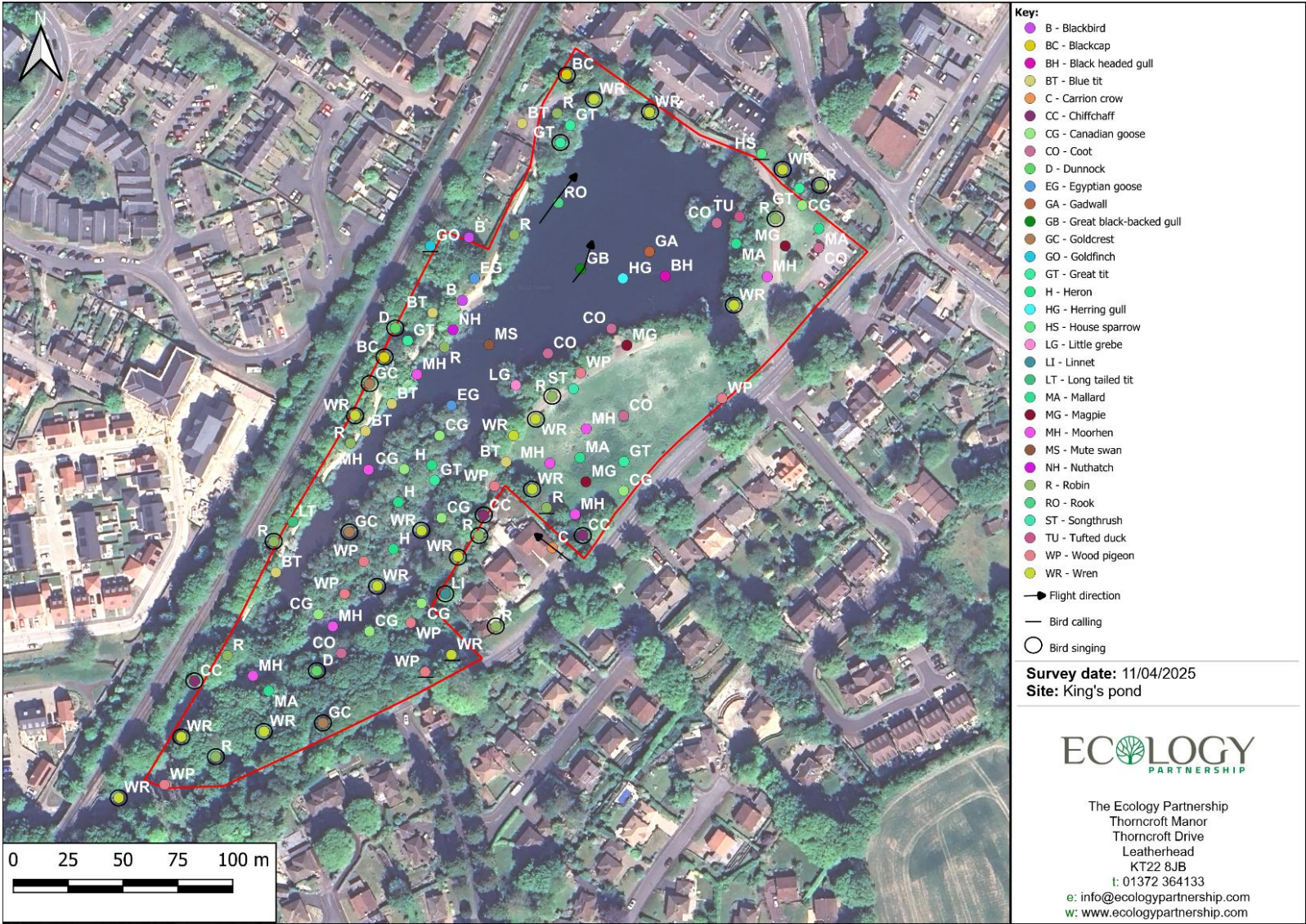
Musgrove, A. *et al.* 2013. Population estimates of birds in Great Britain and the United Kingdom. *British Birds*. **106**. 64 –100.

Internet resources:

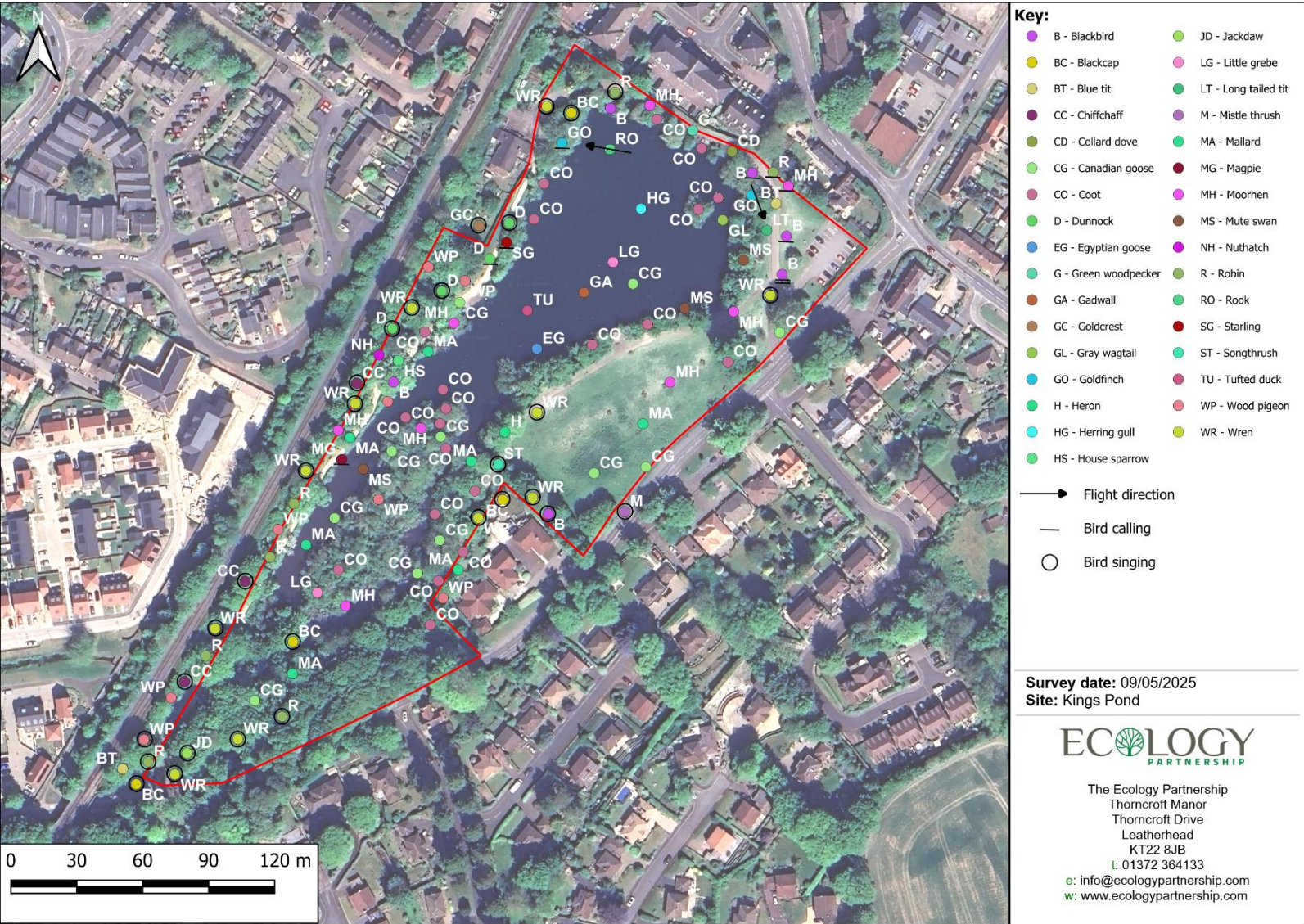
Google Maps: www.maps.google.co.uk

Magic Interactive Map: www.magic.gov.uk

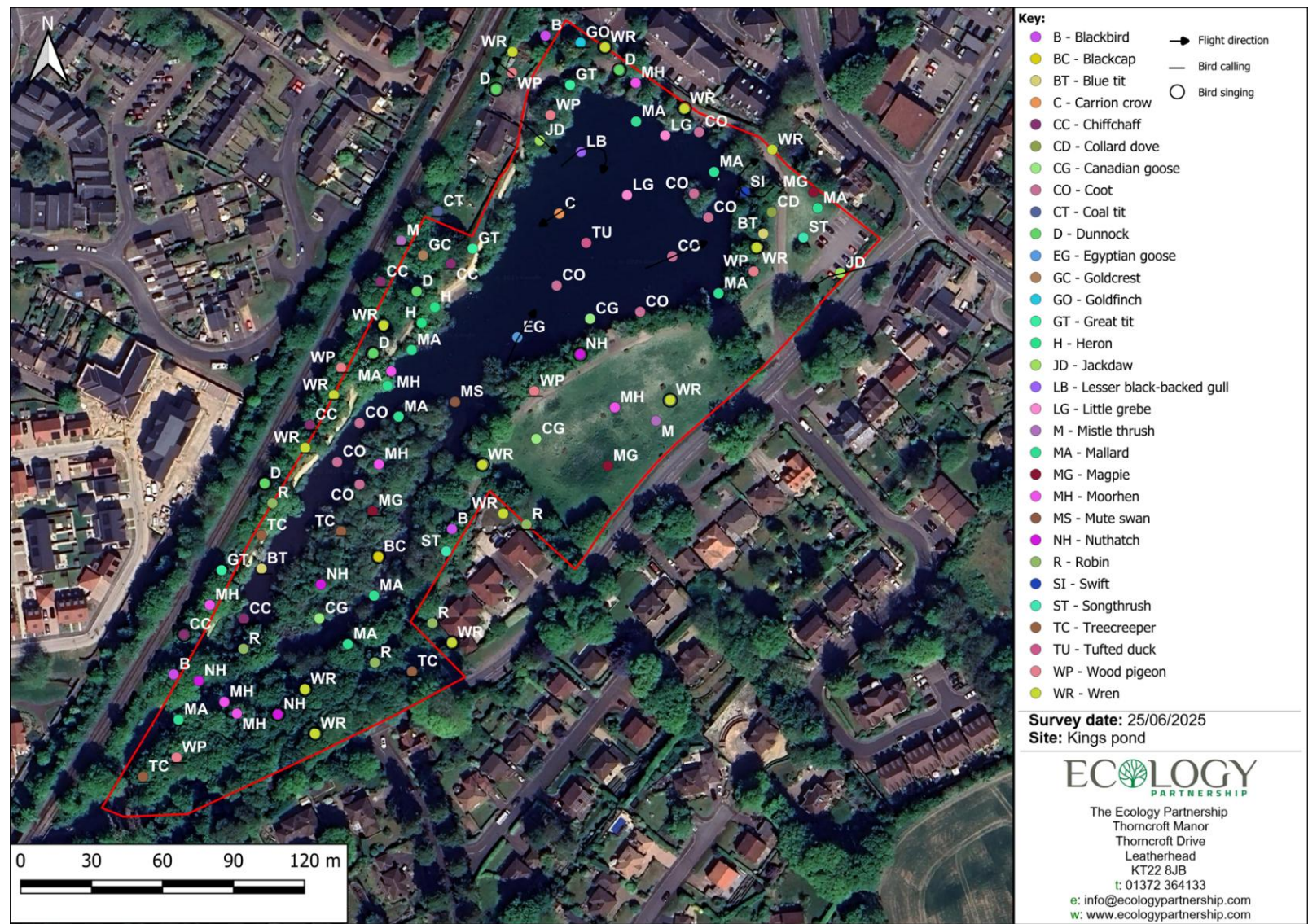
Appendix 1. Breeding bird survey (1 of 3) – 11/04/2025



Appendix 2. Breeding bird survey (2 of 3) – 09/05/2025



Appendix 3. Breeding bird survey (3 of 3) – 25/06/2025



The Ecology Partnership

Thorncroft Manor

Thorncroft Drive

Leatherhead

KT22 8JB

Tel. 01372 364 133

www.ecologypartnership.com

Approved by: Alexia Tamblyn MA (Oxon) MSc CEcol CEnv MCIEEM FRGS

Issue 2 Date: 06/11/2025