

Breeding Bird Survey Report

July 2025

Birch Business Park

Moss Hall Road

Heywood

OL10 2SX

National Grid Ref: SD 8426 0869



Birch Business Park, Moss Hall Road, Heywood, OL10 2SX
Breeding Bird Survey Report

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Executive Summary

As part of a proposed planning application with Rochdale Borough Council concerning a plot of land at Birch Business Park in Heywood, E3P carried out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) in February 2025.

Proposals are understood to involve the erection of an industrial unit with associated access and carparking within an existing area of semi-natural habitat bordering the north of the business park.

Within the PEA it was determined that breeding bird surveys, following the appropriate guidance laid out within the Bird Survey & Assessment Steering Group (2022) and by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), would be required at the site, to inform an appropriate impact assessment of the proposed development on the local and surrounding bird populations.

Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd were thus commissioned by Yeagate Limited to undertake the recommended surveys.

Survey Results and Recommendations

32 bird species recorded during the surveys, with five species considered to be probable breeders and a further 18 considered to be possible breeders.

The current plans associated with the proposed development will result in the permanent loss of valuable foraging and probable breeding habitat, impacting both amber and green listed passerine species.

Given that all birds are protected when at the nest, it is recommended that any vegetation clearance works on site in relation to the areas with breeding potential are carried out outside of the breeding bird season (March – September inclusive). For works undertaken within the breeding bird season, any areas that can support nesting birds should be checked by a professional Ecologist for nesting birds within 48 hours or less prior to works commencing.

The loss of passerine nesting habitat will be mitigated for through the inclusion of suitable artificial nesting provisions within the proposed development. It is recommended that such provisions are aimed at notable birds recorded during the breeding bird surveys and integrated within retained hedgerows, scrub and individual trees, where possible. However, specific locations will need to be detailed upon receipt of finalised proposed site plans

See **Section 6.0** for more information.

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Birch Business Park – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report Ref: 82-299-R1-1 (E3P, February 2025)

1.0 Introduction & Scope

- 1.1 As part of a proposed planning application with Rochdale Borough Council concerning a plot of land at Birch Business Park in Heywood, E3P carried out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) in February 2025 (see **External Appendices**).
- 1.2 Proposals are understood to involve the erection of an industrial unit with associated access and carparking within an existing area of semi-natural habitat bordering the north of the business park. See **Figure 1.1** for an indicative proposed site plan.

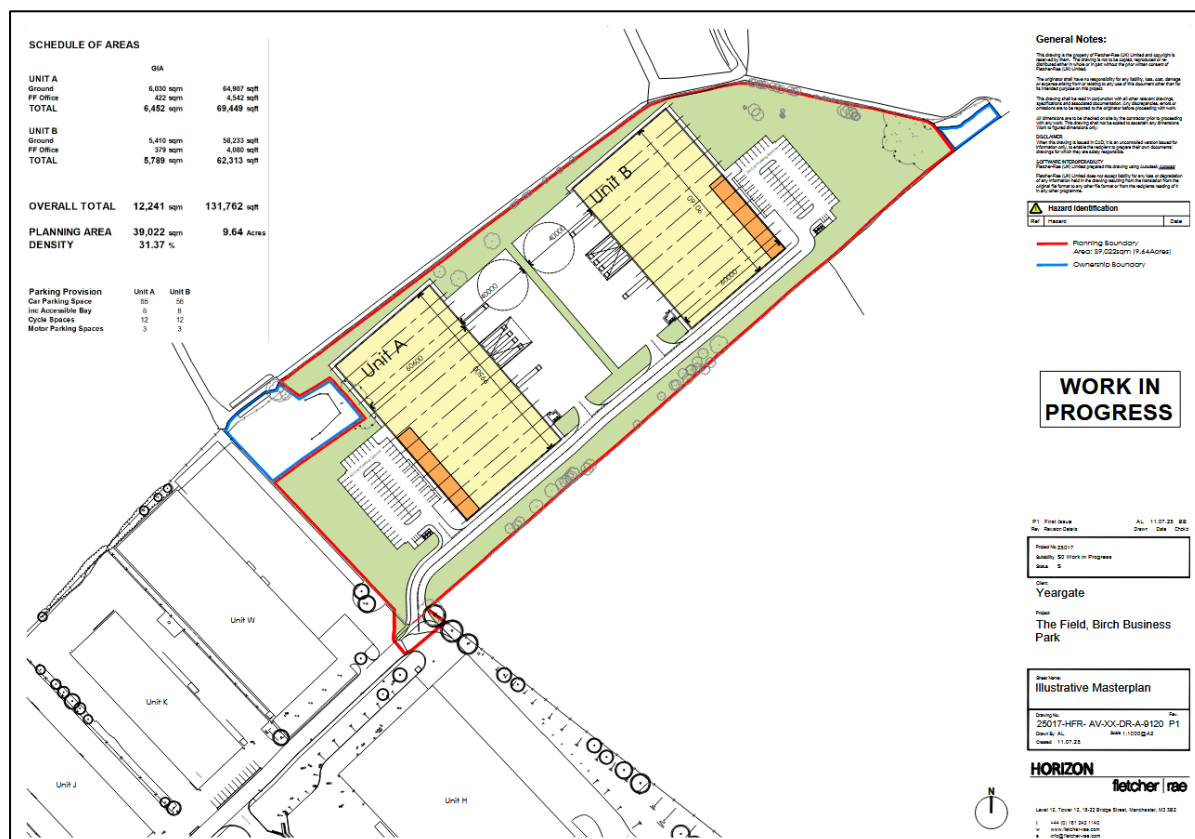


Figure 1.1 – Illustrative Masterplan of site (© Fletcher-Rae)

- 1.3 As part of the PEA, a commercial data search of local records within a 1.0km radius of the site was sourced from Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU). This search revealed a large number of notable bird species in proximity to the site, including kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*), grey partridge (*Perdix perdix*), curlew (*Numenius arquata*), tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*), lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*), lesser redpoll (*Acanthis cabaret*), house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), hobby (*Falco subbuteo*), linnet (*Linaria cannabina*), barn owl (*Tyto alba*), little ringed plover (*Charadrius dubius*), and yellow wagtail (*Motacilla flava*).
- 1.4 In addition, the site was assessed as providing suitability for common and notable bird species within the mosaic of habitats, namely other neutral grassland, reedbed, fen, scrub, woodland, lines of trees, log and brash piles, individual trees and hedgerows.
- 1.5 Therefore, based on the aforementioned information and the proposed loss of habitat onsite it was determined that breeding bird surveys, following the appropriate guidance laid out within the Bird Survey & Assessment Steering Group (2022) and by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), would be required at the site to inform an appropriate impact assessment of the proposed development on the local and surrounding bird populations. Tyrer Ecological

Consultants Ltd were therefore commissioned by Yeagate Limited to undertake the recommended surveys.

Aims & Objectives

- 1.6 The purpose & objectives of this breeding bird survey report are to:
- Outline the legislative protection given to birds;
 - Summarise the finding of the bird surveys and report on the presence of breeding bird species on and around the site; and
 - Provide an assessment of the potential ecological constraints to the proposed works at the site and recommendations for further survey, avoidance, mitigation, and enhancement where appropriate.

2.0 Legislation & Policy

- 2.1 The legislature and guidance considered for the purposes of this report includes the following:
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006),
 - Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) (1981) (as amended).
- 2.2 All wild birds in the UK are protected under Section 1 of the WCA which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy the nest (whilst being built or in use) or its eggs. Bird species listed in Schedule 1 of the WCA receive further protection which makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb these species while building a nest or in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; or disturb dependent young of such a bird.
- 2.3 Forty-nine bird species are listed as 'Species of Principal Importance for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in England' under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Section 40 of this Act places a duty (the Statutory Biodiversity Duty) on public bodies (including local planning authorities) when undertaking their duties (including the making of planning decisions) "to take such measures as they consider expedient for the purposes of conserving biodiversity". The conservation of species listed on Section 41 of the NERC Act, including the restoration or enhancement of a population or habitat, is therefore legally required to be considered in planning decisions. ODPM Circular 06/2005 further clarifies that they are capable of being a material consideration for planning decisions, along with Local Biodiversity Action Plan priority species, as referred to below.
- 2.4 In addition, Annex 1 of the EU 'Birds' Directive (1979) lists 194 species that are subject to special conservation measures concerning their habitat in order to ensure their survival and reproduction. Member States are required to designate Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for the Annex 1 and all migratory species. SPAs are scientifically identified areas critical to the survival of the targeted species. The SPAs form part of the Natura 2000 EU network of protected nature sites. The designation of an area as an SPA gives it a high level of protection from potentially damaging developments (European Commission, 2004).

Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC)

- 2.5 The conservation status of all regularly occurring British Birds has been analysed in co-operation with the leading governmental and non-governmental conservation organizations, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and Birdlife International Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (Stanbury, *et al*, 2021). The basis of species ongoing population trends is assigned to one of three lists of Conservation Concern. These are the UK Red, Amber and Green list. The criteria for birds being included in the lists is detailed in **Table 2.1**.
- 2.6 Although the lists confer no legal status in themselves, they are useful in evaluating the conservation significance of bird assemblages, and for assessing the potential significance of impacts and informing appropriate levels of mitigation with respect to bird populations.

Table 2.1 – Relevant legislation

BoCC ₅ List	Qualifying Criteria
Red List	- Globally threatened. - Historical population decline in UK during 1800 – 1995. - Severe (at least 50%) decline in UK breeding population over last 25 years, or review, starting in 1969). Severe (at least 50% contraction of UK breeding range over last 25 years, or longer-term period.
Amber List	- Species with unfavourable conservation status in Europe (SPEC = Species of European Conservation Concern. - Historical population decline during the 1800 – 1995 but recovering: population size has more than doubled over last 25 years. - Moderate (25-49%) decline in UK breeding population over last 25 years, or since 1969. - Moderate (25%-49%) decline of UK breeding range over last 25 years, or since 1969. - Moderate (25-49%) decline in UK non-breeding population over last 25 years, or since 1969. - Rare breeder, 1-300 breeding pairs in UK. - Rare non-breeder; less than 900 individuals. - Localised; at least 50% of UK breeding or non-breeding population in 10 or fewer sites, but not applied to rare breeders or non-breeders. - Internationally important; at least 20% of European breeding or non-breeding population in UK (NW European and East Atlantic Flyway populations used for non-breeding wildfowl and waders respectively).
Green List	Species that occur regularly in the UK but do not qualify under any of the above criteria.

Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 2.7 A revised NPPF was issued in December 2024 (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2019) and currently supplements government Circular 06/2005, *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation: Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System* (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005). Refer to **External Appendices – PEA** for the specific details relevant to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, inclusive of birds.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

- 2.8 Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) identify habitat and species conservation priorities at a local level (typically County by County) and are usually drawn up by a consortium of local government organisations and conservation charities. Although they are no longer managed at a national level, they are still reviewed and updated at a local level.

- 2.9 The Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (GMBAP) contains the following avian Species Action Plans (**Table 2.2**):

Table 2.2 – GMBAP Species Action Plans

Species Action Plans	
Black redstart (<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>)	Farmland birds (various)
Twite (<i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>)	Willow tit (<i>Poecile montanus</i>)

- 2.10 This national focus on protecting habitats and protected species is echoed in the Rochdale Borough Council Core Strategy (Adopted October 2016), see **Table 2.3** below:

Table 2.3 – Relevant policies as extracted from the Rochdale Core Strategy

Policy Title	Summary
Policy G7 Increasing the Value of Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Sites and features of biodiversity importance will be recognised and protected, with opportunities for enhancement and creation supported. Proposals should not result in a net loss of biodiversity, and developments that would affect protected species will not be allowed unless there is no adverse impact on the species and alternative provision is proposed.

3.0 Methodology

- 3.1 As part of the breeding bird survey, desk-study information derived from the PEA (**External Appendix**) specific to bird species has been summarised. A field-based study has been conducted, with the methodology expressed below.

Desktop Study

- 3.2 As part of the initial PEA's diurnal visit a desktop study was conducted using online resources to obtain information pertaining to any sites afforded statutory (e.g. SSSI) designations within 2.0 kilometres of the site boundary; where necessary and applicable, an expanded search encompassing up to a 10km radius can be carried out in order to assess the impact on internationally designated sites (RAMSAR, Natura 2000 etc.) designated for its bird composition. To do so, the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGiC – provided by DEFRA) was accessed to gather such information; this particular interactive mapping service was also used to locate species records to further inform conclusions concerning such species in the context of the site and its proposed development.
- 3.3 A bespoke commercial data search to include all protected species and designated sites within a 1.0-kilometre radius was also sourced from the Local Environment Records Centre serving the area, in this case GMEU, to provide additional, and often otherwise unobtainable, biodiversity information, in conjunction with the combination of online data and the daytime survey data available to the ecologist. Details and relevant information of the data search are provided within the external PEA, though where deemed appropriate, species records will be included to inform the recommendations of this report.

Field Survey

- 3.4 The current guidance (Bird Survey & Assessment Steering Group, 2022) recommends six survey visits between March to mid-July. Due to the date on which Tyrer Ecological was commissioned, only four breeding bird surveys have been undertaken at the site, from June to July 2025, missing the months of April and May (refer to **Section 4.0** for further details).
- 3.5 The survey methodology involved using the standard territory mapping techniques (Bibby, Burgess, Hill, & Mustoe, 2007). This method is based on the observation that many species are territorial during the breeding season and is found particularly amongst passerines, where territories are often marked by conspicuous song, display, and periodic disputes with neighbouring individuals.
- 3.6 The surveys consisted of a combination of observations from a walked transect route around the site, which ensured full coverage of the survey area (see **Appendix I**). The surveys were timed between sunrise and midday to record high periods of uniform bird activity.
- 3.7 Registrations of birds were recorded on a field map, using standard British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) two letter species codes (Gilbert, Gibbons, & Evans, 2002).
- 3.8 Behaviours including singing, calling and movements of the same bird between different areas, flying, carrying food, nest building, aggressive encounters and other notable behaviour were recorded (Gilbert, Gibbons, & Evans, 2002). The expected outcome of this technique was that mapped registrations fell into clusters, approximately coinciding with territories.
- 3.9 The likelihood of breeding was determined using the BTO breeding status codes using observations of activities such as singing, food carrying, aggressive encounters and actual nest building, detailed in **Table 3.1** overleaf.

Table 3.1 – Breeding behaviour and corresponding assessment

Breeding assessment	Behaviour recorded
Confirmed – examples of confirmed breeding include:	- Recently fledged or downy young; - Adult carrying faecal sac or food for young; - Nests containing eggs; - Nest with young seen or heard; and - Distraction displays / injury feigning.
Probable – examples of probable breeding include:	- Pair seen in suitable habitat; - Permanent territory (defended over at least two survey visits); - Courtship and display; - Visiting potential nest site; - Agitated behaviour; and - Nest building / hole excavation.
Possible – examples of possible breeding include:	- Observed in suitable nesting habitat; and - Singing male.
Non-breeder – examples of non-breeding behaviour include:	- Overflying; - Migrant; - Summering non-breeder; and - Observed in unsuitable nesting habitat.

- 3.10 The field data from each survey was transferred into the main bird map of the site. This map was analysed to estimate the number of breeding territories found for each species and produce a table with bird species total.
- 3.11 The following meteorological variables were recorded at both the start and end of each survey:
- Percentage cloud cover;
 - Wind speed (Beaufort scale: Force 0 – no wind, to Force 6 – strong wind (*NB: Surveys should not be carried out above Force 6 wind*));
 - Temperature (°C);
 - Precipitation (mm); and
 - Visibility (excellent, good, moderate, or poor).
- 3.12 Details of the breeding bird survey dates and weather conditions are provided in **Table 3.2** overleaf.

Table 3.2 – Details of the breeding bird survey dates and weather conditions

Survey Number	Date	Sunrise	Start & End Time	Weather Conditions
1	11/06/2025	0440	0440 – 0730	Temp: 7°C Wind speed: 1 Beaufort Cloud cover: 15% Precipitation: N/A Visibility: Good
2	27/06/2025	0442	0442 – 0712	Temp: 12°C Wind speed: 2 Beaufort Cloud cover: 100% Precipitation: N/A Visibility: Good
3	30/06/2025	0443	0443 – 0700	Temp: 18°C Wind speed: 1 Beaufort Cloud cover: 90% Precipitation: N/A Visibility: Good
4	02/07/2025	0445	0445 – 0700	Temp: 14°C Wind speed: 1 Beaufort Cloud cover: 100% Precipitation: 0.2mm Visibility: Moderate

3.13 The surveys were carried out by the following surveyors (**Table 3.3**):

Table 3.3 - Surveyor credentials

Name	Description of most relevant credentials
Mr. H. Mulligan Qualifying CIEEM	• Consultant Ecologist & BNG Lead with 3 years training and experience, • MBiolSci in Biological Sciences (Zoology), • Experience and training in undertaking breeding bird surveys, • Meets the requirements of CIEEM's Competency Framework Section S (Surveying) to Capable level.
Miss. H. McGlynn Qualifying CIEEM	• Junior Ecologist with a range of experience and undergoing extensive training, • BSc (Hons) in Ecology and Conservation and MSc in Conservation Management (a CIEEM accredited course), • Experience and training in undertaking breeding bird surveys, • Meets the requirements of CIEEM's Competency Framework Section S (Surveying) to Capable level.

3.14 The results, conclusions and recommendations of this report have been assessed by Mrs. K. Wilding, Director of Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd, and her assessment concurs with the findings and recommendations of the surveyor and author Mr. H. Mulligan.

4.0 Limitations

- 4.1 Due to the complexity of avian behaviour some degree of subjectivity is inevitably involved within this assessment. However, overall, the survey effort is considered to offer a high degree of accuracy in assessing the range of species breeding within the site and their relative abundance.
- 4.2 The guidance (Bird Survey & Assessment Steering Group, 2022) recommends that six breeding bird surveys are conducted between March to mid-July to capture the most active timeframe of the breeding bird season (considered to run between March to September, inclusive). Due to the late period at which Tyrer Ecological were commissioned, surveys could only be undertaken in June – early July, and only four surveys could be undertaken. It is possible that earlier breeding species may have been missed as a result of this limitation. However, it has been assessed that enough information pertaining to the bird assemblage within the site has been obtained over the four surveys to inform a suitable mitigation strategy to compensate for the perceived impacts during the construction and operational phases. Based on the reduced survey effort, the report does not aim to confirm breeding within the site, however, instead gauges the probability of birds utilising the site for breeding based on behaviour observations; consequently, the mitigation strategy outlined within **Section 6.0** has been tailored to these observations.
- 4.3 In considering all possible survey constraints, no significant limitations were experienced that might adversely influence the results, conclusions, and recommendations of this report. The details of this report will remain valid for a period of one breeding bird season (i.e., considered April 2026) (CIEEM, 2019). Should a planning application for the site not be submitted prior to this date, then the validity of this assessment should be reviewed to determine whether further updates are necessary.

5.0 Field Survey Results

5.1 In total 32 bird species were recorded during the breeding bird surveys, including:

- **Six** BoCC Red List species;
- **12** BoCC Amber List species;
- **14** BoCC Green List species;
- **Nine** species listed as S.41 of the NERC Act 2006.

5.2 Recorded bird species, their breeding status and the number of potential territories is summarised below in **Table 5.1** and highlighted in **Appendix II**.

5.3 It should be noted that the presence of a potential territory does not indicate the total number of breeding territories / pairs, but rather the maximum number of potential breeding territories / pairs during the season when surveys were completed. Due to the limited number of surveys, the number of potential territories for the possible breeding species could not be determined.

Table 5.1 – Species encountered onsite

Species	Breeding Status	Associated Breeding Habitat	Peak Count	Legislation / BoCC Status	No. of Potential Territories
Blackbird (<i>Turdus merula</i>)	Probable	Scrub and hedgerows	2	BoCC Green	1
Robin (<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>)	Probable	Scrub and hedgerows	2	BoCC Green	1
Willow warbler (<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>)	Probable	Scrub and hedgerows	4	BoCC Amber	3
Wood pigeon (<i>Columba palumbus</i>)	Probable	Trees and hedgerows	3	BoCC Amber	2
Wren (<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>)	Probable	Trees, scrub and hedgerows	4	BoCC Amber	3
Blackcap (<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>)	Possible	Scrub and hedgerows	1	BoCC Green	N/A
Blue tit (<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>)	Possible	Trees and hedgerows	1	BoCC Green	N/A
Carrion crow (<i>Corvus corone</i>)	Possible	Trees and hedgerows	1	BoCC Green	N/A
Chaffinch (<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>)	Possible	Trees and hedgerows	1	BoCC Green	N/A
Chiffchaff (<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>)	Possible	Scrub and hedgerows	1	BoCC Green	N/A

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Species	Breeding Status	Associated Breeding Habitat	Peak Count	Legislation / BoCC Status	No. of Potential Territories
Dunnock (<i>Prunella modularis</i>)	Possible	Scrub and hedgerows	1	BoCC Amber, S. 41	N/A
Goldfinch (<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>)	Possible	Trees, scrub and hedgerows	4	BoCC Green	N/A
Great tit (<i>Parus major</i>)	Possible	Trees and hedgerows	1	BoCC Green	N/A
Greenfinch (<i>Carduelis chloris</i>)	Possible	Trees, scrub and hedgerows	4	BoCC Red	N/A
Jackdaw (<i>Corvus monedula</i>)	Possible	Trees and hedgerows	1	BoCC Green	N/A
Magpie (<i>Pica pica</i>)	Possible	Trees and hedgerows	1	BoCC Green	N/A
Meadow pipit (<i>Anthus pratensis</i>)	Possible	Rank grassland	1	BoCC Amber	N/A
Mistle thrush (<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>)	Possible	Trees and hedgerows	1	BoCC Red	N/A
Reed bunting (<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>)	Possible	Reedbed	2	BoCC Amber, S. 41	N/A
Sedge warbler (<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>)	Possible	Reedbed and rank grassland	1	BoCC Amber	N/A
Skylark (<i>Alauda arvensis</i>)	Possible	Rank grassland	5	BoCC Red, S. 41	N/A
Song thrush (<i>Turdus philomelos</i>)	Possible	Trees, scrub, hedgerows and rank grassland	1	BoCC Amber	N/A
Stonechat (<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>)	Possible	Scrub and rank grassland	1	BoCC Green	N/A
Black-headed gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)	Overflying / non-breeding	Surrounding agricultural fields (offsite)	1	BoCC Amber	0

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Species	Breeding Status	Associated Breeding Habitat	Peak Count	Legislation / BoCC Status	No. of Potential Territories
Barn swallow (<i>Hirundo rustica</i>)	Overflying / non-breeding	Nests on buildings (offsite)	1	BoCC Green	0
Common sandpiper (<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>)	Overflying / non-breeding	Wetland (offsite)	1	BoCC Amber	0
Greylag goose (<i>Anser anser</i>)	Overflying / non-breeding	Pond and wetland (offsite)	1	Greylag goose (<i>Anser anser</i>)	0
Herring gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)	Overflying / non-breeding	Surrounding agricultural fields (offsite)	1	Herring gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)	0
House martin (<i>Delichon urbicum</i>)	Overflying / non-breeding	Nests in development (offsite)	5	House martin (<i>Delichon urbicum</i>)	0
Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>)	Overflying / non-breeding	Surrounding agricultural fields (offsite)	20	BoCC Red, S. 41	0
Little grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>)	Overflying / non-breeding	Wetland (offsite)	1	BoCC Green	0
Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>)	Overflying / non-breeding	Surrounding agricultural fields (offsite)	3	BoCC Amber	0

6.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

6.1 The breeding statuses of the 32 bird species recorded during the surveys was as follows:

- **Five species were considered probable breeders**, namely blackbird, robin, willow warbler, wren & wood pigeon;
- **18 species were considered possible breeders**, including song thrush, reed bunting & skylark; and;
- **Nine species were overflying/ non-breeders**: these include house martin, lapwing & oystercatcher.

6.2 The site is assessed to provide valuable breeding habitat suitable for a variety of passerine species. All of the identified BoCC red listed species were determined as unlikely to be breeding onsite, with the exception of mistle thrush and skylark, where breeding was considered possible based on observational records. However, three BoCC amber listed species are considered to be probably breeding onsite, namely willow warbler, wren and wood pigeon. No schedule 1 birds were recorded during the breeding bird survey, although the site does provide suitable hunting habitat for barn owls and favourable habitat for Cetti's warbler, though no evidence of these species were identified; given the adjacent agricultural land and distribution, barn owls are considered more likely to be present in the area.

6.3 The site is assessed to support widespread and common bird species including two BoCC green listed species, namely blackbird and robin, which are considered to be probable breeders within the site based on observational records.

6.4 While no ground-nesting bird species were considered to be probably breeding within the site, a number were identified during the survey that could possibly breed within the site, namely skylark and meadow pipit. While it is unlikely that these species are utilising the grassland onsite for breeding purposes, it is possible given the habitats present and the currently low disturbance regime, though no nesting evidence was identified during the surveys. Given the abundant agricultural land and grassland adjacent to the site and in the surrounding area, it is unlikely that the development would impact significantly upon ground-nesting species, and no further recommendations apply.

6.5 Several wildfowl species and birds associated with wetlands were also noted in proximity to the site, with greylag goose and little grebe heard alongside species such as reed bunting and sedge warbler which could feasibly utilise the reedbed onsite for breeding. While not likely to be currently breeding onsite, the nearby pond and reedbed offer suitability for these species, and any loss of these features should be suitably replaced by favourable breeding habitat for these wetland species.

6.6 The habitat mosaic of scrub, scattered trees, rank grassland, reedbed and hedgerows located onsite offer a plethora of opportunities for breeding birds, particularly the hedgerows and individual trees along the site boundaries which were identified as high activity zones with a range of breeding behaviour observed from a number of species, including territorial chasing from wrens, repeated visits into the willow scrub from willow warblers, warning calls from robins, and display singing from the tops of trees and branches by blackbirds, wrens and wood pigeons.

6.7 While there are no statutory sites designated for breeding birds within proximity of the site, the site itself likely acts as part of a network of habitat for passerine birds in the wider environment, with a highly favourable habitat mosaic extending to the north, west and east.

Impact Assessment – Construction Phase

- 6.8 The current plans associated with the proposed development will result in the permanent loss of valuable foraging and probable breeding habitat, impacting both amber and green listed passerine species.
- 6.9 The construction phase will require the removal and/ or remediation of valuable habitats including areas of scrub, individual trees, hedgerows, rank grassland and reedbeds. This may also cause disturbance and/or damage to nesting birds, their nests or eggs if conducted during the nesting bird season (considered to be between March to September, inclusive).
- 6.10 It is recognised that a variety of favourable habitats will be lost to facilitate the development which offer nesting habitat for a number of birds as noted above. The loss of identified habitat is considered likely to impact upon the sustainability of nesting birds within the site. However, retention of habitats within the site subject to the finalised proposals, particularly the hedgerows and denser scrub, alongside the wide network of semi-natural habitats in proximity, could act as alternative nesting habitat, which would reduce the impacts upon breeding birds, with suitable opportunities locally for birds to migrate to. Nonetheless, the loss of habitat will restrict the number of territories present within the site.
- 6.11 All nesting birds are protected under the WCA (1981) and any vegetation removal during the nesting bird season risks harming nesting birds.

Impact Assessment – Operational Phase

- 6.12 During the operational phase of the development a major increase in activity will occur. The new structures and active usage will cause an increase in noise pollution and higher chance of vehicles striking birds. However, a combined approach of habitat retention, creation and installation of nest boxes is likely to maintain nesting opportunities away from the proposed development, lowering the risk to bird populations whilst maintaining suitable foraging and commuting resources for bird species.

Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs)

- 6.13 Given that all birds are protected when at the nest, it is recommended that any vegetation clearance works on site in relation to the areas with breeding potential listed above (and in **Appendix III**) are carried out outside of the breeding bird season (March – September inclusive). For works undertaken within the breeding bird season, any areas that can support nesting birds should be checked by a professional Ecologist for nesting birds within 48 hours or less prior to works commencing.
- 6.14 Where / if active nests are located by the Ecologist, then any works which may affect them would have to be delayed until the young have fledged and the nest has been abandoned naturally, this can be aided, for example, via implementation of appropriate buffer zone(s) around the nest site (typically 5 – 10 metres for passerine species; 25 metres for ground nesting birds) in which no disturbance is permitted until the nest is no longer in use. This would have to be coordinated through the expert judgement of the professional ecologist and species pending.
- 6.15 Point 3.24 of the British Standards Publication 42020:2013 defines a professional ecologist as: *“a person who has, through relevant education, training or experience, gained recognised qualifications and expertise in the field of ecology and environmental management.”*

Indicative Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

- 6.16 The loss of passerine nesting habitat will be mitigated for through the inclusion of suitable artificial nesting provisions within the proposed development. It is recommended that such provisions are aimed at notable birds recorded during the breeding bird surveys and integrated within any retained hedgerows, scrub and individual trees, where possible. Nest boxes should be targeted at species that are already using the site (e.g., wrens) or are present locally (e.g., great tits). As such, it is recommended that the nesting provisions detailed below are integrated within the proposed site design. See **Appendix IV** for indicative locations of mitigation measures on an indicative proposed site plan. However, specific locations will need to be detailed upon receipt of finalised proposed site plans.
- 6.17 It is recognised that the nest box provisions will not be suitable for all the identified species onsite as not all birds will utilise artificial boxes; of the probable breeding species, willow warbler is the least likely to utilise these boxes. However, while not finalised/ provided to the author at the time of writing, it is considered that the habitat creation, retention and enhancement that will need to be undertaken in line with the BNG strategy for the proposed plans will continue to provide suitable nesting and foraging habitat for the species found onsite and may provide new habitat for additional species to utilise the site. Based upon the current proposals, the hedgerows and bordering scrub along the site boundaries will largely be retained, while works will avoid the north-eastern portion of the site. It is recommended that these areas are thus targeted for enhancement for willow warbler, with the existing areas of willow scrub and hedgerows retained or enhanced, or additional areas created where possible.
- 6.18 Due to the high number of possible breeding passerine species identified within the site, it is recommended that different varieties of nest boxes are erected around the site to provide suitable nesting provisions for a range of species.
- 6.19 Four **open-fronted nest boxes** should be incorporated into the site boundaries, to provide nesting provisions for species such as robin, wren and blackbird. One option is the Vivara Pro Barcelona Woodstone Open Nest Box¹ (**Figure 6.1**), which should be mounted approximately 1.5 metres from the ground and face outwards from the development.



Figure 6.1 – Vivara Pro Barcelona Woodstone Open Nest Box (NHBS.com)

¹ See: <https://www.nhbs.com/vivara-pro-barcelona-woodstone-open-nest-box>

- 6.20 Two **1B Schwegler Nest Boxes (26mm)**² (**Figure 6.2** overleaf) should be incorporated along the boundaries to provide nesting provisions for smaller species such as blue tit and wren, alongside two **32mm Boxes** for larger passerine species such as great tits.



Figure 6.2 – 1B Schwegler nest box (NHBS.com)

- 6.21 Two **large bird nest boxes**³ should be erected around the site to provide nesting provisions for larger species such as wood pigeons, jackdaws, thrushes or possibly owls (See **Figure 6.3** below).



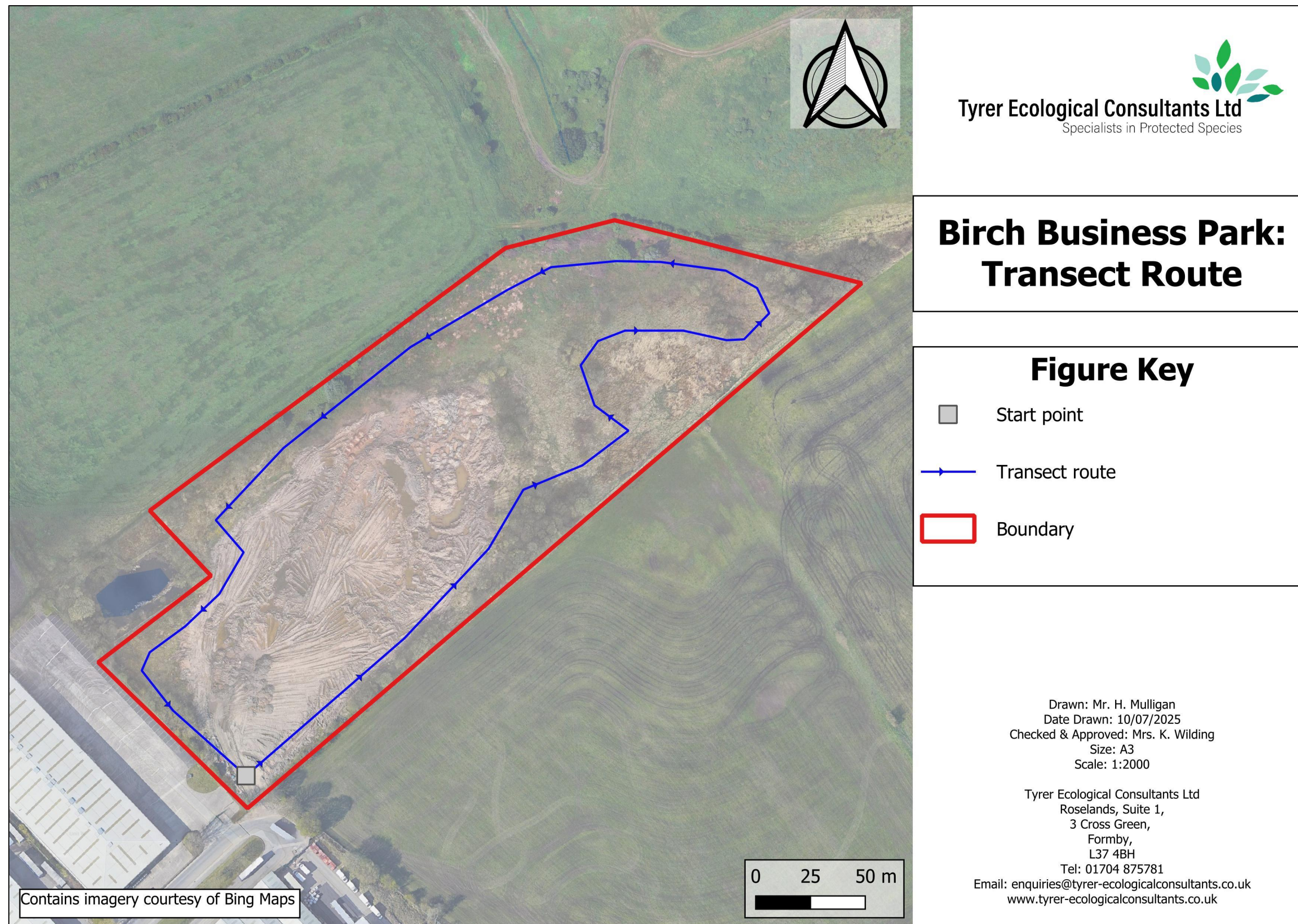
Figure 6.3 – Large bird nest box (NHBS.com)

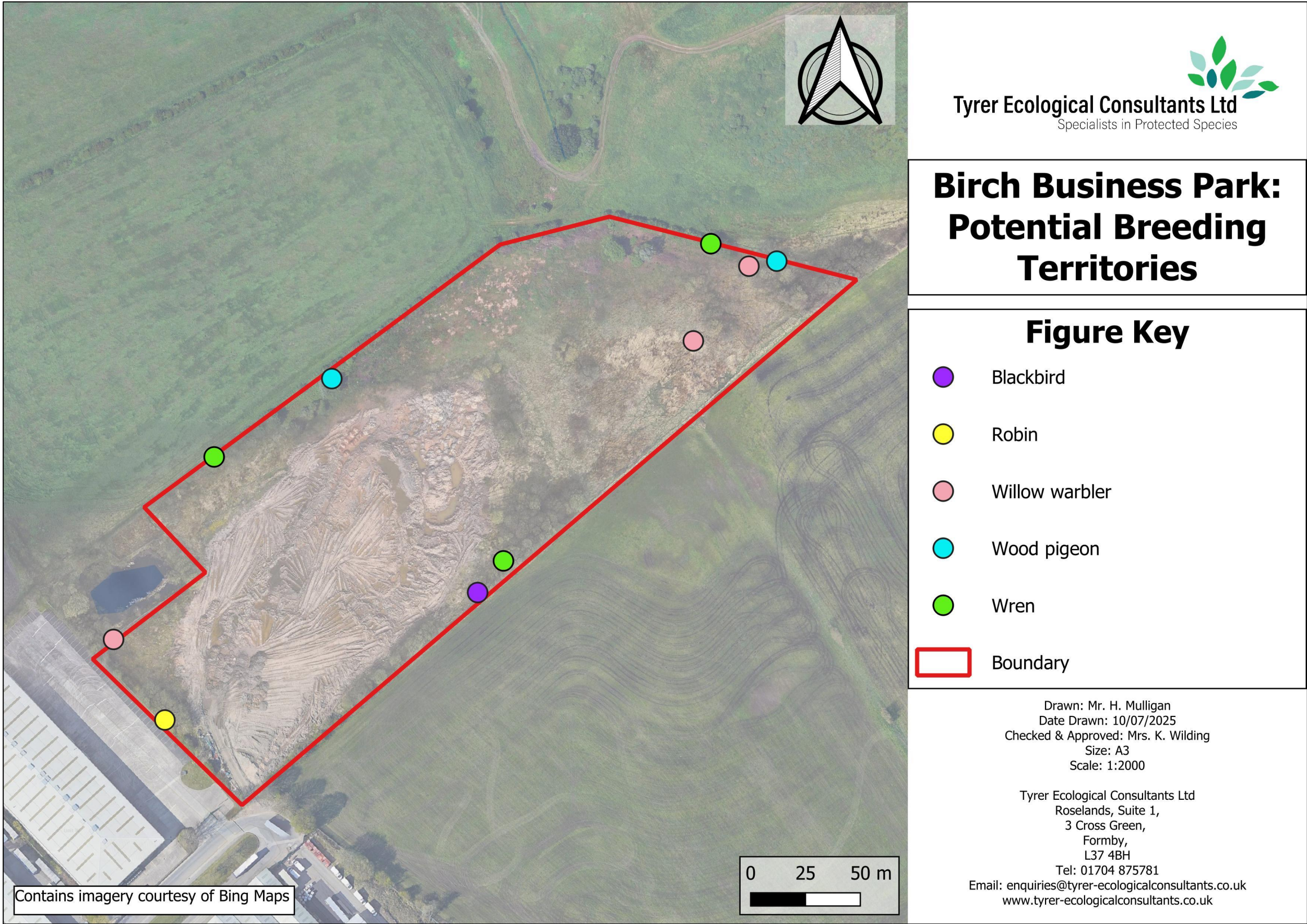
² See: <https://www.nhbs.com/1b-schwegler-nest-box>

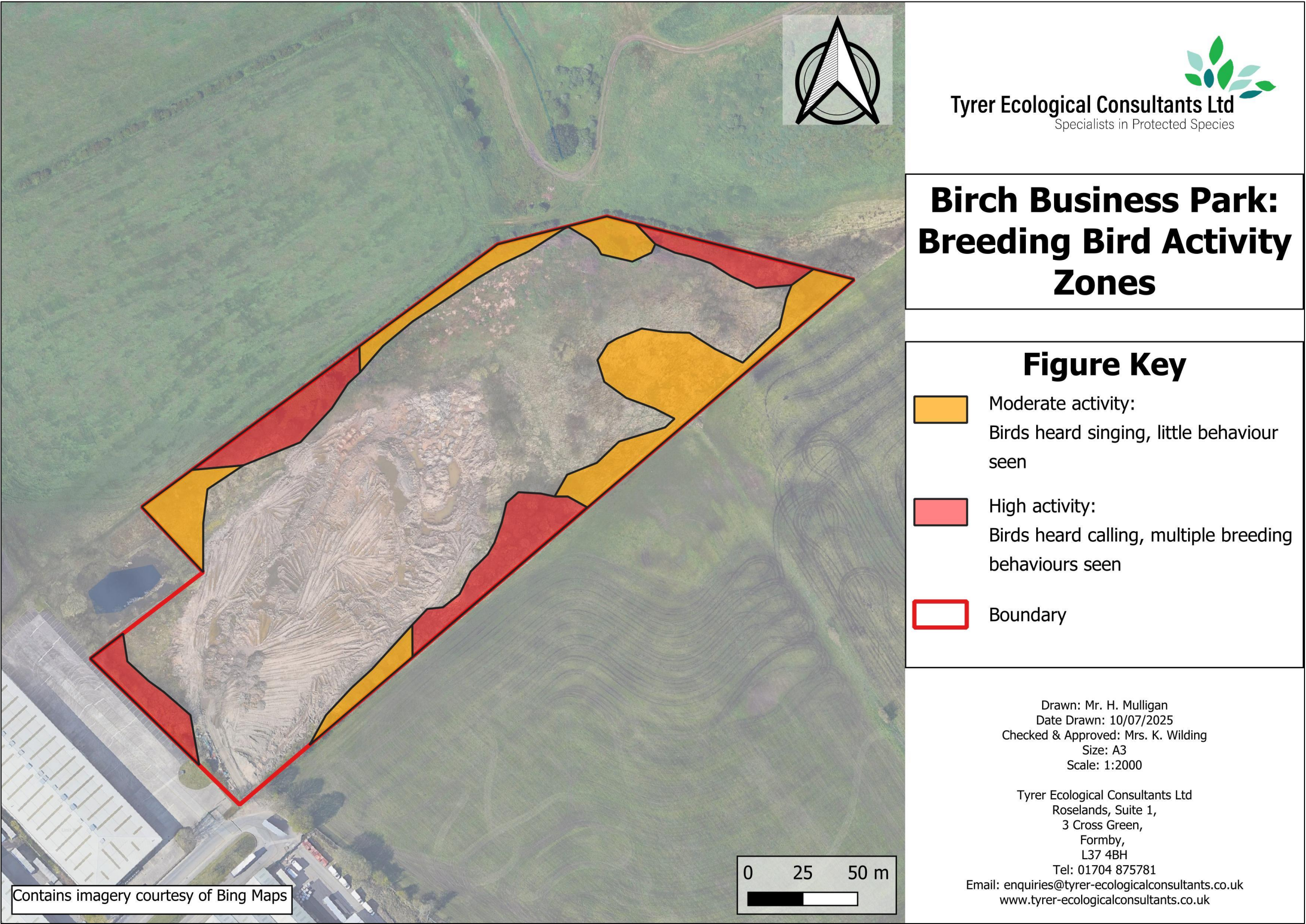
³ See: <https://www.nhbs.com/large-bird-nest-box>

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Appendix IV: Approximate Locations of Nest Boxes

