

2020

Land North West of Goring Station, Goring, West Sussex



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**Land North West of Goring Station,
Goring, West Sussex**

Winter Bird Survey Report

Report for Persimmon Homes Ltd.

**Ref No.: PH Ltd._310720_Land North
West of Goring Station, Goring, West
Sussex**

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1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 TSA Ecology was commissioned by Urban Edge Consulting Ltd. on behalf of Persimmon Homes Ltd. to carry out a Winter Bird Survey of Land North West of Goring Station, Goring, West Sussex (OSGR TQ 6350 7843).
- 1.2 For clarity in this report the development site (or 'site') refers to land within the survey encompassed by the redline boundary (see Figure 1, Appendix A).
- 1.3 Mixed use development comprising up to 475 dwellings along with associated access, internal roads and footpaths, car parking, public open space, landscaping, local centre (uses including A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, D1, D2) with associated car parking, car parking for the adjacent railway station, undergrounding of overhead HV cables and other supporting infrastructure and utilities (see Figure 2, Appendix A). The area to be developed comprises an area of land of 19.96 ha, south of the Ferring Rife (see Figure 1, Appendix A). This includes creation of proposed access from the eastern end of the site, the A259 (Goring Street) (see Figure 3, Appendix A).
- 1.4 The format of the application is an Outline application with all matters of detail reserved for determination at the Reserved Matters stage. Details will however be provided for the main access junction and the LPA can condition them if they wish.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1.5 The objectives of the 2019-2020 winter bird survey were to provide information on the:
 - current assemblage and abundance of wintering birds in the survey area;
 - presence of wintering waders, wildfowl (e.g. ducks and geese), and wintering gulls;
 - conservation status of the wintering birds found in the survey area;

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- distribution of wintering birds of conservation concern found in the survey area;
 - use of the survey area by wintering birds.

SURVEY AREA

1.6 The survey area comprised fields owned by Chatsmore Farm bisected into northern and southern sections by the Ferring Rife watercourse. The A259 Littlehampton Road bounds the north of the site and the A259 Goring Street bounds the east of the site. Rear gardens of residential properties bound the majority of the west of the site, with the Brighton to Portsmouth railway line forming the southern site boundary. The report provides baseline information on the use of the site by wintering birds, and assesses the potential for wintering bird species to be impacted. The report highlights any potential constraints posed by wintering birds associated with the proposed development.

1.7 Within the survey area:

- the dominant habitat was arable land;
- other habitats included semi-improved grassland, tall ruderal, hedgerow;
- habitats of conservation value included hedgerows, wet ditches and the main watercourse, the Ferring Rife.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 The English names, scientific names and taxonomic order of birds detailed in this report follows the British List (BOU, 2014).

Registration Mapping

2.2 The survey methodology involved standard territory (registration) mapping techniques as detailed in Bibby et al. (2000). Registrations of birds, using standard British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) two letter species codes, were placed onto an appropriate field map (scale 1:5000). Specific codes were also used to record the birds' behaviour e.g. feeding, roosting.

2.3 Four diurnal surveys were undertaken (two in December 2019, one in January 2020 and one in February 2020). Survey dates accorded as closely as possible to the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Wetland and Estuary Birds (WeBS) monthly count dates.

2.4 The survey area was walked at a slow pace in order to locate and identify all individual birds observed. All field boundaries and suitable habitats were walked. Visits were undertaken between 08:30 – 16:00, with the key areas visited at around the high tide period to look for roosting waterbirds and gulls. The whole survey area was covered during each visit, using suitable optical equipment (binoculars and telescope) to observe bird behaviour. Routes were alternated on each visit, to ensure that all areas were covered at various times of day across the duration of the survey.

2.5 Surveys were undertaken between December 2019 and February 2020, with four survey visits taking place. The survey dates were as follows:

- 12th December 2019
- 19th December 2019
- 9th January 2020

- 7th February 2020

2.6 The weather conditions encountered during the surveys are detailed in Table 2.1

Survey Visit	Date	Tide Height (m) and Time of High Tide	Wind Conditions			Temperature (Ave °C)	Rain (y/n)
			Direction	Maximum gust (km/h)	Speed (Average km/h)		
1	12/12/19	6.07 10.57 am	SW	32	25	11	Dull, damp day with occasional light rain throughout
2	19/12/19	5.15 16.44 pm	SSE	43	26	12	Some brightness, occasional light rain from 11 am
3	09/01/20	5.76 09.53am	SW	32	20	12	Intermittent light rain
4	07/02/20	5.57 09.33 am	S	12	15	8	Generally bright and sunny with some cloud. No precipitation.

Table 2.1 Weather conditions during 2019-2020 winter bird surveys

weather data obtained from: <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk> and <http://www.accuweather.com>

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- 2.7 Observations of birds made in the field were recorded directly on to base maps. Upon completion of the surveys the data were then downloaded and used to create master maps.
- 2.8 The conservation status of the species recorded as wintering were compared against the following criteria:
- Annex 1 of the EU Birds Directive (Directive 79/409/EEC);
 - Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, (as amended);
 - Species of Principal Importance Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act (2006), (as amended);
 - UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) priority species (Anon, 2007);
 - West Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species (<http://www.cpbiodiversity.org.uk/biodiversity-action-plans/priority-species>);
 - Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) Red/Amber List (Hayhow et al., 2017).
- 2.9 The master maps were used for those species that are covered by one or more of the above criteria, to create a species of conservation concern distribution map.

Survey Constraints

- 2.10 The surveys were carried out in suitable weather conditions and at a time of day when birds would likely be most active and visible to surveyors. The results were considered to provide a valid indication of the abundance, assemblage and distribution of winter birds within the survey areas at the time of the survey visits.
- 2.11 It was recognised that there were two specific constraints associated with the survey data. These are as follows:
- The survey was carried out between the months of December – February (inclusive) only, which is the 'core' winter survey period. Thus bird species potentially associated

with the migration period (at either end of the 'core' winter period) would not have been recorded; however, based upon the bird species recorded from the site, it is

considered that the data comprises a fair representation of the actual abundance, assemblage and distribution of wintering birds in the location.

- The surveys were carried out over one winter 2019-20; therefore, natural annual variations, and variations due to arable field management would not be identified.

2.12 These limitations should be noted and considered when using these data for any assessment of effects by the scheme proposals on wintering birds.

3. RESULTS

Wintering birds at Land North West of Goring Station, Goring

- 3.1 During the winter bird survey, a total of 14 bird species were recorded between December 2019 and February 2020 (inclusive). Of these, seven species are considered to be of particular conservation importance, based on the criteria set out in para 2.8.
- 3.2 One species (Peregrine) is listed as Annex 1 species under the EU Birds Directive. One species (Peregrine) is listed as Schedule 1 species under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Three species (Herring Gull, Skylark and Starling) are listed as Species of Principal Importance under the NERC Act 2006, these species are also UK BAP priority species. Three species are Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) red listed (Starling, Skylark and Herring Gull). Three species are BoCC amber listed (Mallard, Kestrel and Lesser Black-backed Gull).
- 3.3 All species recorded during the winter bird surveys, their usage of the survey area, together with their conservation status are detailed in Table 3.1.

Species	Behaviour	Conservation Status
Mallard	Flying over site, appeared to land in ditch.	Amber listed
Kestrel	Hunting onsite along Ferring Rife.	Amber listed
Peregrine	Flying over site, presumably hunting.	WLCA Schedule 1
Moorhen	Low numbers present along Ferring Rife.	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Low numbers roosting during high tide on Survey 1.	Amber listed
Herring Gull	Birds present during every survey, generally <5 individuals, but with 45 birds over high tide during Survey 1.	Red listed
Woodpigeon	Low numbers (<5) seen in hedgerows along edge of site.	
Skylark	A roving winter flock was present with 70+ birds evident on the 3 rd survey.	Red listed
Robin	One bird seen on the 4 th survey.	
Blackbird	Present in eastern edge of site in scrub / hedgerow along Ferring Rife, and adjacent to western site boundary.	
Blue Tit	Present adjacent to western site boundary.	
Starling	Flocks of up to 7 seen flying over the site and 3 perched on onsite electricity pylon.	Red listed
Magpie	Seen flying across the site and perched in bushes at edge of site.	
Carrion Crow	Seen on site and flying across the site.	

Table 3.1 Bird species, their behaviour and conservation status recorded during the 2019 – 2020 winter surveys

Table 3.2 details the number of each species recorded during each diurnal survey visit, with the largest individual flock shown in brackets.

BTO Species Code	Species	Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 3	Visit 4
MA	Mallard	2	-	-	-
K.	Kestrel	1	-	1	-
PE	Peregrine	-	1	-	-
MH	Moorhen	1	5	4	6
LB	Lesser Black-backed Gull	4 (2)	-	-	-
HG	Herring Gull	45 (28)	2	1	2
WP	Woodpigeon	-	4 (3)	1	9 (3)
S.	Skylark	-	-	-	3
R.	Robin	-	-	-	1
B.	Blackbird	-	2	1	1
BT	Blue Tit	-	1	-	1
SG	Starling	-	-	7	3
MG	Magpie	-	-	1	2
C.	Carrion Crow	1	1	1	-

Table 3.2: Total number of birds recorded each visit and peak flock size in brackets during the 2019-2020 winter bird surveys. Numbers in red indicate overflying species which may potentially use the site.

4. EVALUATION AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Evaluation of Site's Importance for Wintering Birds

4.1 Overall, a low number (14) of wintering bird species was recorded at the site, of which six were of conservation concern (see Table 3.1), and two were species of waterbirds associated with the Ferring Rife. Numbers of other species such as songbirds were low, with birds largely confined to the site boundaries where some boundary hedging and bushes and young trees were present. The site itself comprised largely arable fields which were little used by birds, and when a species present it was in low numbers; for example there were no gamebirds (such as pheasant and grey partridge) observed and no wintering flocks of finches, thrushes, larks and buntings etc. The presence of several skylark on the fourth survey was suggestive of the commencement of breeding activity. The Ferring Rife itself supported low numbers of moorhen and also mallard, so does have more potential as wintering habitat.

Species accounts

4.2 The following accounts of bird species relate to those considered as wintering, within the survey area that are listed on: Annex 1 of the EC Birds Directive, Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Section 41 - Species of Principal Importance of the NERC Act 2006, UK and Local BAP Priority Species and the Birds of Conservation Concern Red List, and species on the Sussex Notable Bird List. The Sussex Notable Bird List consists of species that are particularly scarce or vulnerable to development. It includes species which are either on the Birds of Conservation Concern Red and Amber lists or Schedule 1 species known to have bred in Sussex, or have been recorded in summer and may breed in the future. These species have been decided on by the Sussex Ornithological Society (SOS). These species are, therefore, regarded as of high conservation importance either nationally or locally. The status of each of these species within Sussex is included as described within the Sussex Bird Report (SoS 2018).

Mallard

- 4.3 Common resident and winter visitor (SoS 2018). Mallard is listed as a notable species in Sussex for confirmed or probable breeding or late May - early July records (Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre 2017), and is cited under the Birds of Conservation Concern as an amber list species. A pair of mallard was seen flying low over the site on visit 1 and may have landed in a ditch at the western end of the site.
- 4.4 Mallard may use the Ferring Rife and tributary drainage ditches for feeding, and may potentially nest within the marginal aquatic vegetation, or within the grassy ditch-bank and ditch-top vegetation. It is our understanding that the majority of this habitat will be maintained within any potential development, and thus any impacts upon mallard are deemed to be low, and considered unlikely to significantly impact the site or the local population.

Kestrel

- 4.5 Fairly common or common resident and passage migrant (SoS 2018). Kestrel is cited under the Birds of Conservation Concern as an amber list species. A single kestrel was seen hunting the site on the first and third surveys, favouring the unmanaged grassland along the Ferring Rife.
- 4.6 Kestrel was observed hunting the grassy ditch sides and bank top vegetation. There are no structures on site which kestrel appear to use for nesting, although conceivably they could make use of the pylon gantries. Kestrel appears to use the grassy banks along the Ferring Rife and the tributary drainage ditches for hunting. It is our understanding that the majority of this habitat will be maintained within any potential development, and thus any impacts upon kestrel are deemed to be low, and considered unlikely to significantly impact the site or the local population.

Peregrine

- 4.7 Scarce breeding resident (SoS 2018). Peregrine is cited as a WLCA Schedule 1 species. A single peregrine was seen flying low across the site, presumably seeking

prey, on the second survey. There are no structures on site which peregrine appear to use for nesting, although conceivably they could make use of the pylon gantries. Peregrines will seek out other birds, such as gulls, waders and pigeons as prey items, and presumably the single bird observed was hunting opportunistically. Any impacts upon peregrine are deemed to be low, and considered unlikely to significantly impact the site or the local population.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

4.8 Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor; scarce (mainly immatures) in summer and scarce breeder (SoS 2018). Lesser black-backed Gull is listed is cited under the Birds of Conservation Concern as an amber list species. Four lesser black-backed gulls were roosting with larger flocks of herring gulls during survey 1. The birds appeared to be resting rather than actually foraging on the arable fields. It is considered that the birds were using the fields opportunistically as a daytime roost area and it is not considered that the development will have any significant impacts on the conservation status of the species locally.

Herring Gull

4.9 Very common resident; status uncertain as passage migrant; and winter visitor (SoS 2018). Herring Gull is listed as a Species of Principal Importance and cited under the Birds of Conservation Concern as a red list species. Herring gull was present on the site on all four visits. On the first survey two flocks of herring gulls (one of 28 birds, and one of 17 birds) were located roosting on the fields at high tides. The birds appeared to be roosting rather than feeding. On visits 2 and 4, two individuals respectively were located feeding within the ploughed fields, with one individual located on survey visit 3. The larger flocks recorded during survey 1 birds appeared to be resting rather than actually foraging on the arable fields. On the remaining survey visits, the individuals were considered to be opportunistically foraging on the fields. It is considered that the birds were using the fields opportunistically as a daytime roost area and for foraging in very low numbers, and it is not considered

that the development will have any significant impacts on the conservation status of the species locally.

Skylark

4.10 Very common but declining resident and probably common passage migrant and winter visitor (SoS 2018). Skylark is listed as a Species of Principal Importance and cited under the Birds of Conservation Concern as a red list species. Skylark was present on the site on the fourth survey visit only, when three individuals were located, two of which demonstrated display song-flight activity. It is conceivable that by the time of the fourth survey, skylark had moved back from their wintering areas to begin to establish breeding territories. Alternatively, the species may have been overlooked during the earlier surveys due to being present in low numbers combined with the slightly inclement weather conditions of the earlier surveys. No large flocks of this species were observed on site, and it is considered that birds recorded during survey visit 4 were returning breeding individuals, so the site may potentially be more important as a breeding site than as a wintering site. Any impacts on this population could be put into a local context by further knowledge about the species' breeding status at the site.

Common Starling

4.11 Common but declining resident and very common to abundant winter visitor (SoS 2018). Starling is listed as a UKBAP, Species of Principal Importance and cited under the Birds of Conservation Concern as a red list species. A flock of seven starling was observed flying across the site on the third survey. These birds were likely flying to a roost but the species may use the site for foraging / resting etc. although they typically are associated with grassy fields such as sports fields, although there are patches of rough grassland along the Ferring Rife. Three birds were observed perched on an onsite electricity pylon on the fourth survey visit. There is no suitable breeding habitat on site and limited areas of potential foraging (chiefly the rough banktop grassland along the Ferring Rife). Due to this, and the small numbers of

birds overflying the site, it is not considered that the development will have any significant impacts on the conservation status of the species locally.

5. MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT FOR SPECIES OF CONSERVATION CONCERN

The two main areas of ecological interest in respect of bird populations at the site would appear to be:

- The Ferring Rife with its combination of habitats to potentially support wintering and breeding waterbirds, potentially breeding songbirds within the scrub habitats along the banksides and marginal vegetation, and it's provision of hunting areas for species such as kestrel through the presence of rank grassland areas;
- The potential of the wider arable farmscape to provide breeding habitat for skylark.

Much of the use of the site by species of conservation concern (e.g. the gulls) is considered to be opportunistic.

However, habitat management along the Ferring Rife could potentially enhance the site for breeding and wintering mallard, and for kestrel by:

- The retention and rotational management of rank grassland areas and scrub to support kestrel's prey populations (chiefly voles, but also small birds and insects).
- Placement of a kestrel nestbox within the scheme.
- The retention and rotational management of rank grassland areas, and marginal vegetation to support wintering / breeding mallard.

6. KEY POINTS AND FINDINGS

- 6.1 Winter bird surveys were conducted between December 2019 and February 2020 and therefore throughout the period when wintering birds would likely be present. The visits were diurnal visits.
- 6.2 It is considered that the survey results present an accurate reflection of the wintering bird assemblage and species population size present during the 2019-20 wintering season on the Land North West of Goring Station, Goring.
- 6.3 The survey recorded a total of 14 bird species. Of these, six species were considered to be of particular conservation importance. These species comprised Mallard, Kestrel, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Starling and Skylark. In addition to being legally protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), one species, Peregrine, is a Schedule 1 species, and thus is afforded additional special protection under the Act.
- 6.4 None of the species were recorded in particularly large numbers or were making specific regular use of given areas of the site, which predominantly comprised arable fields, and it is not considered that there are any constraints in respect of wintering species of conservation concern. The presence of song-flighting skylark during the February survey is suggestive of this red list species potentially making use of the site for breeding.
- 6.5 General Recommendations in respect of wintering birds at the site have been included.

7. REFERENCES

MAGIC (2011). *Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside*. [On-line]. Available from <http://magic.defra.gov.uk> [Accessed: various dates, January 2020].

Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre. (2017). Biodiversity Annual Monitoring Report. Worthing Borough.

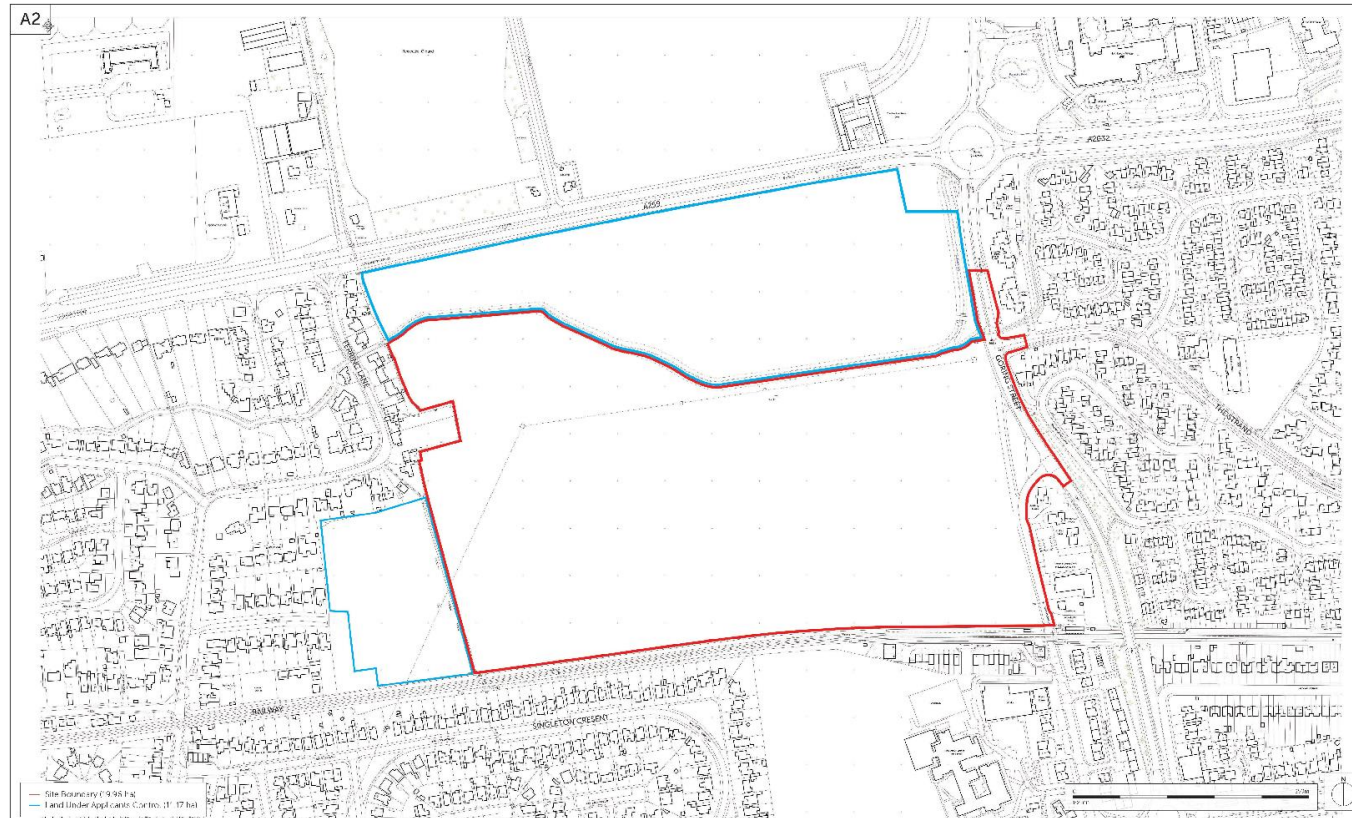
Sussex Ornithological Society (1996). *Birds of Sussex*.

Sussex Ornithological Society (2019). *The Sussex Bird Report*. No. 71, 2018.

Appendix A:

Figures

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Rev	Description	Date	By	Chk
1	Issue for RPA	02.02.20	PMW	...
2	Revised drawing	22.02.20	PMW	...
3	Client Review	27.02.20	MEW	...
4	Client Review	28.02.20	MEW	...
5	As shown to client	02.02.20	MEW	...

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Project Goring Station

Drawing Site Location Plan - 02

Client PERSIMMON (THAMES VALLEY)

Job no. PER190227F0

Drawing 04-02

Author PMW/MEW

Status PRELIMINARY

Date 03.02.20

Rev 02

Scale 1:5000@A2

Office Romsey



Figure 1: Red Line Plan, Land North West of Goring Station, Goring

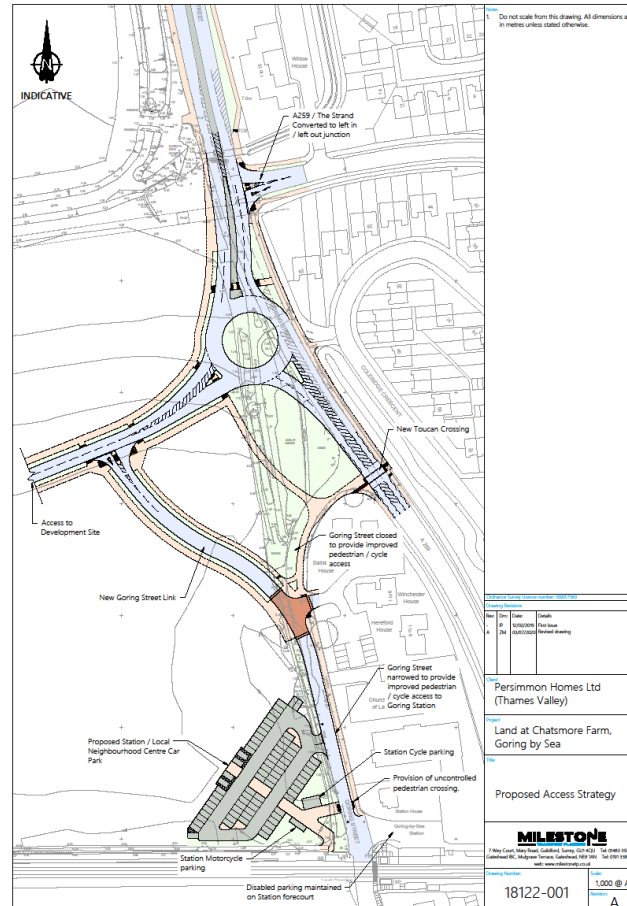


Figure 3: Site Access Arrangement, Land North West of Goring Station, Goring

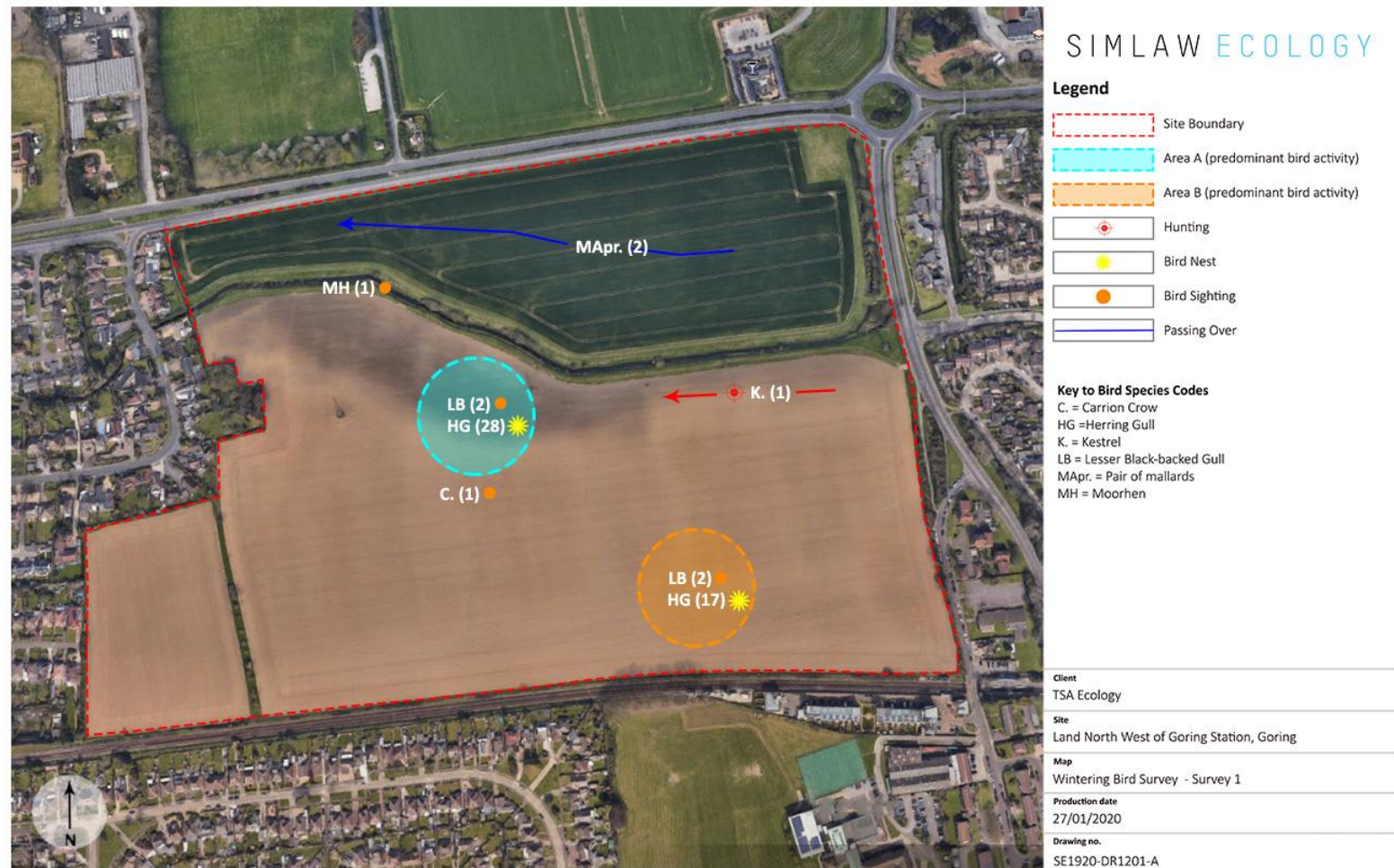


Figure 4: Winter Bird Survey 1, 12 December 2019, Land North West of Goring Station, Goring

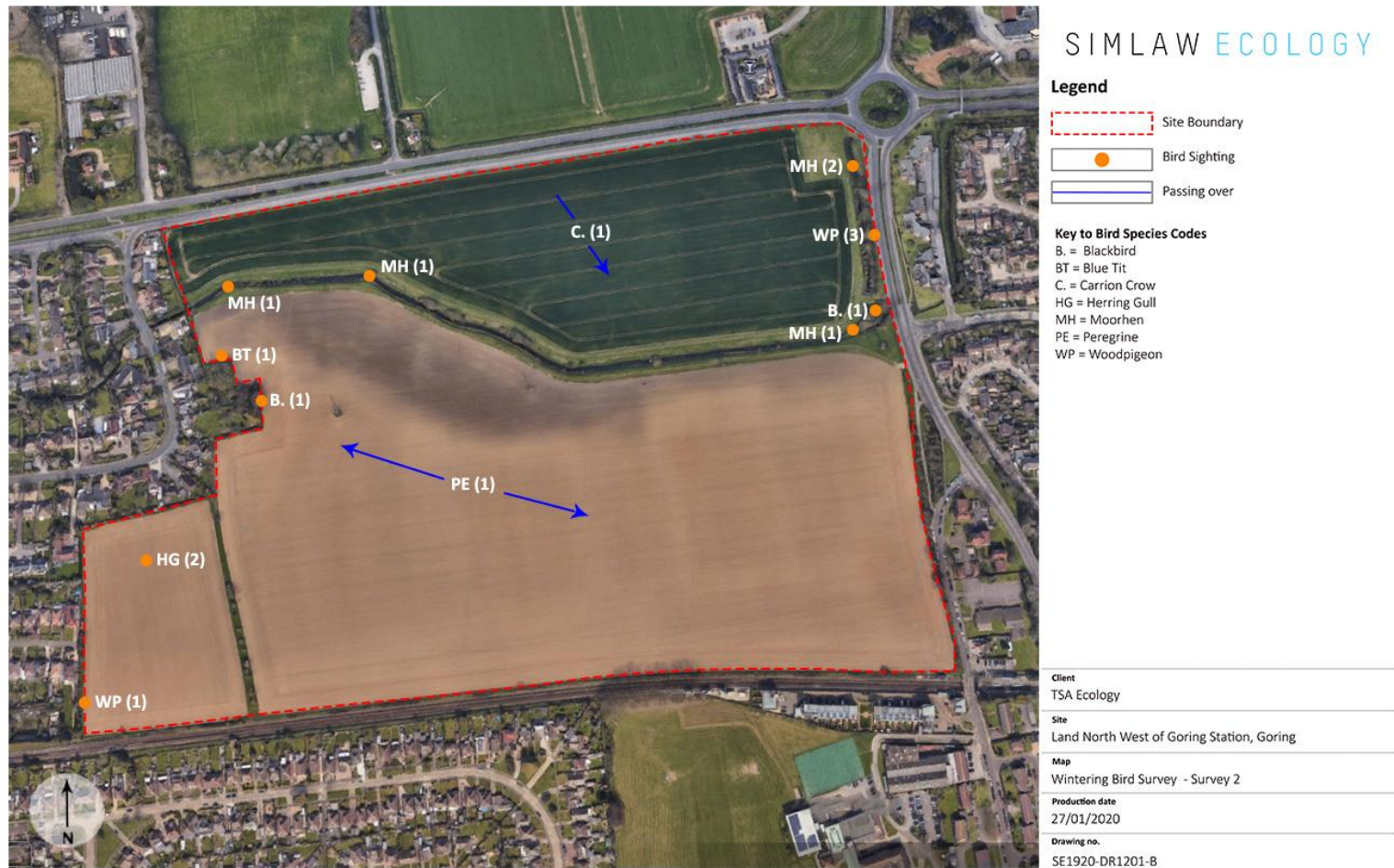


Figure 5: Winter Bird Survey 2, 19 December 2019, Land North West of Goring Station, Goring

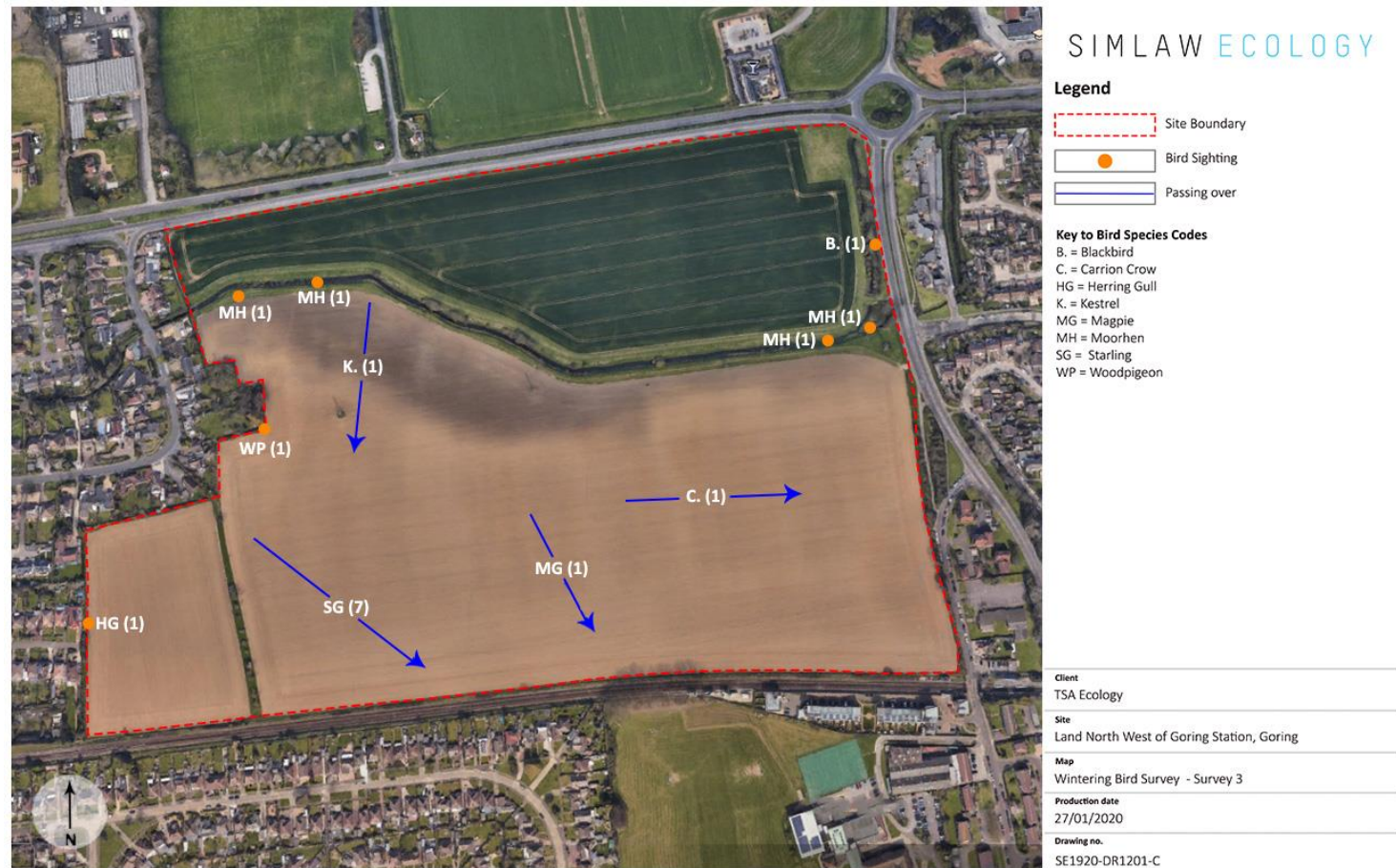


Figure 6: Winter Bird Survey 3, 9 January 2020, Land North West of Goring Station, Goring

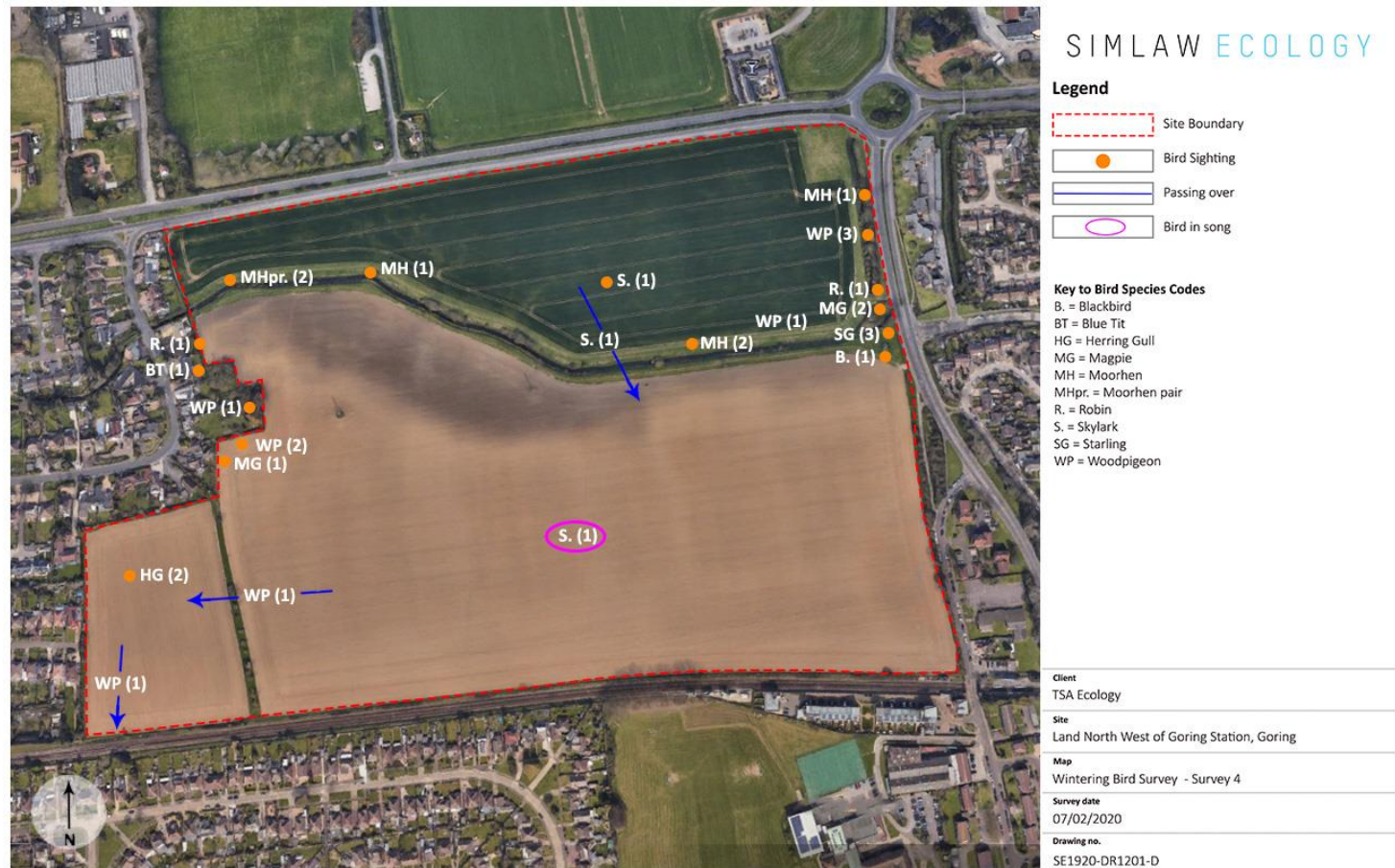


Figure 7: Winter Bird Survey 4, 7 February 2020, Land North West of Goring Station, Goring