



Lime Down

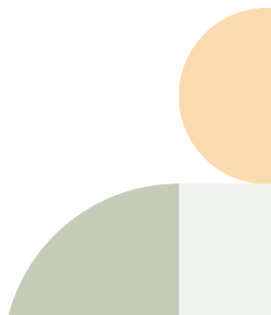
Solar Park

Environmental Statement

Volume 3, Appendix 9-4: Breeding Bird Survey Report

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List of Contents

Appendix 9-4: Breeding Bird Survey Report	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Methodology	3
1.3 Results	11
1.4 Evaluation and Conclusion.....	48
1.5 References.....	51

List of Tables

Table 9-4-1: Breeding Bird Survey Dates	7
Table 9-4-2: Breeding Bird Survey Personnel	8
Table 9-4-3: Breeding Bird Survey Weather Conditions	8
Table 9-4-4: International Designated Sites within 30 km of the Solar PV Sites	12
Table 9-4-5: Key to Conservation Status Abbreviations	15
Table 9-4-6: Area (ha) of Lime Down A-E.....	15
Table 9-4-7: Summary of Breeding Bird Species Diversity Across All Visits – Solar PV Sites	16
Table 9-4-8: Overview of All Notable Bird Species – Solar PV Sites	17
Table 9-4-9: Summary of Breeding Bird Survey Results for Notable Species at Lime Down A (June 2023 – June 2024)	19
Table 9-4-10: Summary of Breeding Bird Survey Results for Notable Species at Lime Down B (June 2023 – June 2024)	21
Table 9-4-11: Summary of Breeding Bird Survey Results for Notable Species at Lime Down C (June 2023 – June 2025)	23
Table 9-4-12: Summary of Breeding Bird Survey Results for Notable Species at Lime Down D (June 2023 – June 2024)	25
Table 9-4-13: Summary of Breeding Bird Survey Results for Notable Species at Lime Down E (June 2023 – June 2024)	27
Table 9-4-14: Estimated Minimum Number of Skylark Breeding Territories and Likely Skylark Breeding Status at the Solar PV Sites.....	34
Table 9-4-15: Summary of Breeding Status of Notable Species and Species of Conservation Concern at the Solar PV Sites*	46
Table 9-4-16: Additional Non-Notable Species Recorded at the Solar PV Sites (June 2023 – June 2025) *	48

Appendix 9-4: Breeding Bird Survey Report

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Clarkson and Woods Limited has been commissioned by Lime Down Solar Park Limited (the Applicant) to conduct a suite of ecological surveys across the Lime Down Solar PV Sites and Cable Route Corridor (CRC), including breeding bird surveys.
- 1.1.2 Six breeding bird surveys have been carried out across the Study Area, namely at the Solar PV Sites and immediately adjacent land, between June 2023 and June 2025. Surveys followed good practice guidelines (Ref 9-4-1). No breeding bird surveys have been completed of the CRC, however habitats within the CRC have been assessed for their potential to support breeding birds, with particular reference to suitability for bird species listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 1.1.3 Information on the presence of species collected during the surveys will be passed to the county biological records centre in order to augment their records for the area. This is in line with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Code of Professional Conduct (Ref 9-4-2).

Aims

- 1.1.4 Breeding bird surveys were undertaken to ascertain a baseline on the current presence, abundance and distribution of breeding birds within the Study Area for the Solar PV Sites. A habitat assessment was undertaken of those areas not subject to detailed breeding bird surveys, within the Study Area for the CRC, to assess the suitability of habitat for breeding birds, with a particular focus on Schedule 1 bird species.
- 1.1.5 The Study Area encompassed all land within the Solar PV Sites and CRC. The Study Area also includes all land at the Solar PV Sites identified within the Development Area at Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) stage, as well as Brickyard Scrub Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and Chalkenhams LWS, which were included within the Study Area at the time of the surveys. The Order Limits has since been refined, but the survey data for these areas has been presented in this report to provide additional context to the evaluation of breeding birds within the Solar PV Sites and immediately adjacent land.
- 1.1.6 This report details the methods and results of the surveys undertaken between June 2023 and July 2025, and a brief evaluation of breeding birds in relation to the Scheme.
- 1.1.7 This information will be used within **ES Volume 1, Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity, EN010168/APP/6.1** to inform the detailed ecological evaluation of the breeding bird population and the habitats used within the Study Area, and to

characterise the impacts on breeding birds considered likely to result from the Scheme.

Study Area

- 1.1.8 A detailed description of the Scheme is provided within **ES Volume 1, Chapter 3: The Scheme, EN010168/APP/6.1** and in **ES Volume 1, Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity, EN010168/APP/6.1** in relation to the ecology of the Sites and CRC, and the habitats present.

Solar PV Sites (Lime Down A-E)

- 1.1.9 Lime Down A-E predominantly comprise large, open and relatively flat arable fields of varying crop types. Some, generally smaller, fields of permanent grassland, were also present. Fields within the Solar PV Sites are bounded by an extensive network of largely species-rich hedgerows and agricultural drainage ditches, with narrow field margins alongside both, where present. A large number of mature trees are present within hedgerows, as well as a small number of individual, standard trees within fields. The habitats within the Solar PV Sites are generally contiguous with the surrounding landscape, which is agricultural in character. The land to the north and west of the Solar PV Sites rises gently to form the hills and valleys associated with the Cotswolds National Landscape, part of which lies adjacent to the Order Limits.
- 1.1.10 A small number of woodland parcels are present within the Solar PV Sites, connecting with and forming part of a network of woodland habitat in the surrounding landscape, with several parcels also located immediately adjacent the Order Limits. Several ponds are present within the Solar PV Sites and constitute part of a wider pond network, as a relatively high number of ponds are present within the surrounding landscape. Ditches within the Solar PV Sites are largely seasonally-dry, with wet ditch features generally concentrated within Lime Down D. The priority river known as Gauze Brook, and Gabriel's Well stream run through Lime Down D and E, respectively.

Cable Route Corridor

- 1.1.11 The CRC runs for approximately 22 km from the Solar PV Sites to the Existing National Grid Melksham Substation. The CRC is of similar character to the Solar PV Sites; habitats generally comprise agricultural fields bounded by hedgerows and ditches, with occasional ponds and blocks of woodland. Several watercourses, railways and roads, including the M4, transect the route.

Quality Assurance

- 1.1.12 All ecologists employed directly by Clarkson and Woods are members, or pending members, of CIEEM and follow the Institute's Code of Professional Conduct when undertaking ecological work.

- 1.1.13 The competence of all field surveyors has been assessed by Clarkson and Woods with respect to the CIEEM Competencies for Species Survey (Ref 9-4-3).
- 1.1.14 This report has been prepared in accordance with the relevant British Standard: *BS42020: 2013 – Biodiversity: Code of Practice for Planning and Development* (Ref 9-4-4). It has been prepared by an experienced ecologist who is a member of CIEEM. The report has also been subject to a two-stage quality assurance review by appropriately experienced ecologists who are members of CIEEM.

1.2 Methodology

- 1.2.1 The section below sets out the methodology that has been applied to inform the assessment of the Scheme in relation to breeding birds.

Desk Study

- 1.2.2 A comprehensive desk study and data search has been undertaken for the Scheme. The specific elements of the desk study, of relevance to breeding birds, are as follows:
- A search for 'International' designated sites for nature conservation within 30 km of the Study Area using the Multi-Agency Graphic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website (Ref 9-4-5) for which breeding birds are a qualifying feature of designations. Internationally designated sites included Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites, as well as proposed or potential SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites;
 - A search for 'National' designated sites for nature conservation within 5 km of the Study Area (using the MAGIC website) for which breeding birds are a qualifying feature of designations. National designated sites included Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs);
 - Information on 'Local' designated sites which cite breeding birds as a reason for designation within 2 km of the Study Area was obtained from the Wiltshire and Swindon Biodiversity Records Centre (WSBRC). Relevant locally designated sites included LWSs;
 - Information pertaining to existing records of breeding bird species within 2 km of the Solar PV Sites and within 500 m of the CRC was obtained from WSBRC;
 - A BTO Data Report utilising BTO's long-term ornithological datasets was commissioned to provide information on bird species recorded at a range of spatial scales, primarily from 1-10 km squares;

- BTO Priority Areas for Countryside Stewardship Measures for Priority Species were consulted in relation to the Order Limits using the MAGIC website; and
- The Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) (Ref 9-4-6) was consulted for priority species and information relating to local conservation strategies relating to wintering birds.

1.2.3 The desk study also included a review of relevant national and local planning policy and legislation in relation to breeding birds.

1.2.4 The distances used in the search radii outlined above are considered proportionate to the scale of protection and likely sensitivity of the features listed, as well as typical dispersal distance of breeding birds associated with the features. It is considered unlikely that the Scheme would give rise to impacts on designated sites beyond these distances and as such are therefore considered to include the Zone of Influence of the Scheme.

1.2.5 The chosen, standard, search radii are considered to remain appropriate when considering the potential for cumulative impacts from other solar development proposals.

Survey Methods

Solar PV Sites (Lime Down A-E)

1.2.6 Surveys covered the entirety of the Study Area at the Solar PV Sites. Given the size of each of Lime Down A-E, and to enable coverage of the Solar PV Sites over the shortest feasible period by multiple surveyors, the Solar PV Sites were subdivided into separate areas, or Survey Zones, measuring approximately 60-80 ha. These Survey Zones are shown in figure **ES Volume 2, Figure 9-4-1: Breeding Bird Survey Zones, [EN010168/APP/6.2]**, and it was ensured that no repetition of survey effort occurred between surveyors.

1.2.7 To provide a reasonable level of accuracy for determining breeding status of bird species and relative use of different key habitat types within the Study Area during the breeding season, each the Survey Zones were surveyed for breeding bird activity over a total of six visits. Surveys of Survey Zones 1-12 were carried out over two survey seasons, with two visits occurring between June and July 2023, and a further four visits between April and May 2024. All six visits of Survey Zone 13 were undertaken during a single season between April and June 2024, and six visits of Survey Zone 14 were undertaken between April and June 2025 (**Table 9-4-1** refers).

1.2.8 The extensive suite of surveys was carried out by a total of 14 suitably experienced ecologist or ornithologists, each with relevant previous experience of breeding bird surveys in agricultural landscapes. Surveyor details are provided in **Table 9-4-2**.

- 1.2.9 All surveys were conducted in accordance with good practice guidelines. Daytime surveys commenced within approximately 60 minutes following sunrise with a target of being completed within approximately three to five hours to record the peak of breeding bird activity.
- 1.2.10 All surveys were conducted in favourable weather conditions, avoiding strong winds (excess of Beaufort 4/moderate breeze), rain more than a light drizzle or where visibility was compromised by low cloud or fog. Weather conditions for each survey have been included within **Table 9-4-3**.
- 1.2.11 The field methodology followed BTO Common Birds Census guidance (Ref 9-4-7) and Bird Survey Guidelines. Each Survey Zone contained a transect route aiming to reach within approx. 50 m of all points on each survey. Each transect was walked by an experienced bird surveyor once per survey visit. Surveyors would periodically stop to scan habitats of particular interest, such as trees, field margins or ditches, as well as opportunistically throughout each field. In some instances, this distance was increased (e.g. within large fields such as those over 20 ha) but not more than 100 m to ensure that birds were observed and heard, which also allowed for the increased distances at which ground nesting birds, such as skylark, are likely to be disturbed and recorded.
- 1.2.12 For the Solar PV Sites, a survey visit comprised transects which were completed across more than one day due to surveyor availability, weather, and to ensure that all surveys were completed during periods of optimal bird activity. Where split across days, the surveys were completed on consecutive days wherever possible or as soon as both weather and surveyor capacity allowed.
- 1.2.13 The location, activity and behaviour of birds was recorded on large-scale survey maps following standard BTO Common Bird Census codes. Particular attention was paid to birds exhibiting breeding behaviour, for instance birds in full song, exhibiting antagonistic behaviour/calling, carrying nest material, carrying food, and returning to nesting sites.

Cable Route Corridor

- 1.2.14 No detailed breeding bird surveys have been carried out within the CRC given the temporary nature of the potential impacts and limited width of the area to be impacted by construction. An assessment of habitat suitability for breeding birds was made during the Extended UKHabitat Survey of the CRC, with a particular focus on identifying suitable nesting habitat for Schedule 1 bird species. Habitats within the CRC are anticipated to be predominantly retained, with any temporary removal of habitat for access and cable installation works expected to be reinstated following a relatively short construction period. As such undertaking specific breeding bird surveys was not considered proportionate or necessary.

Survey Personnel

- 1.2.15 **Table 9-4-2** presents the survey details for the individuals involved in undertaking breeding bird surveys within the Study Area at the Solar PV Sites between June 2023 and June 2025, with details of each survey provided in **Table 9-4-1** and **Table 9-4-3** below.

Table 9-4-1: Breeding Bird Survey Dates

Survey Zone	Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 3	Visit 4	Visit 5	Visit 6	Visit 7	Visit 8
1	15/06/2023	27/06/2023	11/04/2024	24/04/2024	09/05/2024	21/05/2024	-	-
2	15/06/2023	27/06/2023	11/04/2024	24/04/2024	09/05/2024	21/05/2024	-	-
3	15/06/2023	27/06/2023	11/04/2024	24/04/2024	09/05/2024	22/05/2024	-	-
4	15/06/2023	27/06/2023	11/04/2024	24/04/2024	09/05/2024	22/05/2024	-	-
5	16/06/2023	04/07/2023	11/04/2024	24/04/2024	09/05/2024	22/05/2024	-	-
6	16/06/2023	04/07/2023	11/04/2024	24/04/2024	09/05/2024	22/05/2024	-	-
7	16/06/2023	05/07/2023	10/04/2024	25/04/2024	09/05/2024	22/05/2024	-	-
8	14/06/2023	26/06/2023	12/06/2024	25/04/2024	10/05/2024	23/05/2024	-	-
9	14/06/2023	26/06/2023	12/04/2024	25/04/2024	10/05/2024	23/05/2024	-	-
10	14/06/2023	26/06/2023	12/04/2024	25/04/2024	10/05/2024	23/05/2024	-	-
11	14/06/2023	26/06/2023	12/04/2024	25/04/2024	10/05/2024	23/05/2024	-	-
12	14/06/2023	26/06/2023	12/04/2024	25/04/2024	10/05/2024	23/05/2024	-	-
13	-	-	12/04/2024	25/04/2024	10/05/2024	23/05/2024	03/06/2024	19/06/2024
	Visit 9	Visit 10	Visit 11	Visit 12	Visit 13	Visit 14		
14	10/04/2025	17/04/2025	15/05/2025	19/05/2025	12/06/2025	26/06/2025		

Table 9-4-2: Breeding Bird Survey Personnel

Surveyor Name and Relevant Qualifications	Surveyor Details and Experience
Adrian Woodhall BSc (Hons) MSc	MCIEEM, 39 year's survey experience
Anthony Blunden MSc CEnv	MCIEEM, 30 years' survey experience
Gareth Knass LLB (Hons) MSc	MCIEEM, 25 years' survey experience
Craig Brakes BSc MSc PhD	MRSB, 20 years' survey experience
Harry Fox BSc	MCIEEM, 12 years' survey experience
Joel Wright MSc	MCIEEM, 12 years' survey experience
Mark Baker BSc	MCIEEM, 12 years' survey experience
Mike Hockey BSc (Hons)	ACIEEM, 10 year's survey experience
Adèle Remazeilles MSc	ACIEEM, 6 years' survey experience
Rebecca Sandey MSc	ACIEEM, 5 years' survey experience
Richard Taylor	Experienced bird surveyor
Steve Miller	Experienced bird surveyor
<i>Surveyor name redacted.</i>	-
<i>Surveyor name redacted.</i>	-

Table 9-4-3: Breeding Bird Survey Weather Conditions

Survey Visit No.	Weather Conditions (Cloud 0-8, Wind 1-12, Precipitation, Temperature °C)
1	Cloud 1, Wind 0, Dry, 12-20°C
2	Cloud 5-8, Wind 0-3, Mostly dry with short period of light rain, 14-19°C
3	Cloud 4-8, Wind 1-3, Intermittent light rain, 6-15°C
4	Cloud 7-8, Wind 2, Dry, with light frost at start, 2-9°C
5	Cloud 1-4, Wind 0-3, Dry, 9-17°C
6	Cloud 6-8, Wind 2-4, Dry with some light drizzle, 12-13°C
7	Cloud 4-7, Wind 2, Dry, 12-16°C
8	Cloud 1, Wind 1, Dry, 20°C
9	Cloud 3, Wind 1, Dry, 7°C
10	Cloud 2-4, Wind 1-2, Dry, 10-13°C
11	Cloud 4-7, Wind 1-2, Dry, 8-10°C
12	Cloud 3-6, Wind 1, Dry, 9-14°C
13	Cloud 3-6, Wind 1-2, Dry, 8-11°C
14	Cloud 4-6, Wind 1-2, Dry, 15-19°C

Data Interpretation

- 1.2.16 Survey data were digitalised using QGIS to allow interpretation of the distribution and likely territories of different species.
- 1.2.17 To enable the identification of the location and estimation of the number of breeding territories for certain species, the following steps were taken:
- In the field; each surveyor followed a standardised approach, as described above, to ensure consistency across surveys and so that records relating to the same individuals were recorded as such to avoid duplications;
 - Mapping; all bird registrations were mapped using QGIS software including their behaviour, abundance and confirmed evidence of nesting data. Where relevant, this information was collated from each visit and considered together to estimate the maximum and minimum number of breeding territories; and
 - Data interpretation; field results were analysed to determine the breeding status of recorded species which included the following categories; unconfirmed, possible, probable, and confirmed, in accordance with BTO categories (Ref 9-4-8). The territory-mapping approach set out within the BTO Common Bird Census instructions (Ref 9-4-9) was also consulted and professional expertise by contributing ecologists exercised where needed.
- 1.2.18 The estimation of breeding territory numbers was carried out for species considered to be at most risk of impact from development, i.e. their breeding ecology includes open field habitat.
- 1.2.19 The survey scope did not set out to identify nests or confirm nesting for each species (although this was recorded where observed), but to infer their breeding status from collated data and the suitability and context of surrounding habitats.
- 1.2.20 Each species was categorised based on its primary ecological requirements and habitat use recorded on site during the breeding season, as follows:
- Open habitats, including use of open, arable, fallow or grassland/pasture fields, and arable field margins; and
 - Other habitats, including boundary habitats such as hedgerows/scrub, woodland edges etc., mature trees and waterbodies.
- 1.2.21 Species associated with a particular habitat type, e.g. pond or watercourse, or with a particular section of the Study Area, have been included in prose from Paragraph 1.3.32 onwards.
- 1.2.22 It is also acknowledged that many species are associated with more than one category of habitat. Such species were allocated to the primary habitat considered to have the greatest risk of being adversely impacted, to ensure appropriate ecological assessment.

- 1.2.23 Species not of conservation concern and non-notable species were not enumerated as they would not be included as Important Ecological Features in the impact assessment. A complete list of these species is provided in **Table 9-4-16**.

Limitations

Data Search

- 1.2.24 The desk study data presented within the report should not be seen as exhaustive. Data obtained from within the search area is highly unlikely to constitute a complete record of habitats and species within the search radii. It is therefore possible that breeding bird species may occur within the vicinity of the Scheme that have not been identified within the desk study.
- 1.2.25 The data search for the Solar PV Sites was obtained in 2023 and for the CRC in 2024 and does not include records made subsequently. The datasets only provide records where information exists and should not be relied upon as a complete listing of all breeding bird species which may occur within the search areas.

Field Surveys

- 1.2.26 The initial breeding bird surveys were started in June 2023, preventing a complete season's worth of visits from being completed within the same year (excluding surveys of additional land completed between April and June 2024). Additional visits were completed between April and May 2024 to provide a full dataset. Although this resulted in visits being completed over two separate years, the survey results are considered to be representative of breeding bird activity as annual crop rotations will typically influence bird diversity, abundance and productivity in any given year. Surveys completed over two separate years will also mitigate for some of the annual variations for each species.
- 1.2.27 It is possible that the presence of certain species has been missed due to their being present in low numbers, or due to their cryptic nature. However, the survey methodology ensures that all land is visited to within 50 m and so the likelihood of under-recording species has been reduced to a minimum.
- 1.2.28 The surveys offer only 'snapshots' of breeding birds' usage of the Solar PV Sites, and it is possible that over the course of the breeding period the abundance and species of birds using the Solar PV Sites varies slightly from that recorded during the surveys. However, six separate visits have been conducted, spread across the breeding survey period, which allows for a representative baseline to be established.
- 1.2.29 Occasional light rain was recorded during the first and third survey visits at Lime Down A-E. This may have reduced bird activity, where birds sought shelter, but with only intermittent periods of unfavourable weather conditions and typical

levels of bird activity across the duration of the survey, the results are considered to be representative. The survey methodology also ensures that each habitat location is visited to within 50 m, therefore the majority of birds should have been recorded, but notwithstanding that some may still have been missed in dense cover.

- 1.2.30 As of August 2025, approximately 17 ha of land within the CRC has not been accessed for ecological survey due to a lack of access permission. Habitats within these areas have therefore not been assessed for their potential to support breeding birds. An assumption of the likely habitats present has been made, based on available desk study information (using satellite imagery and open-source datasets, where relevant), and the context of other habitats present within the local landscape. The precautionary principle has been applied when considering the suitability of habitats for breeding birds. Access agreements are being sought for these areas, and it is intended for all currently un-surveyed areas of the CRC to be assessed for their suitability to support breeding birds. Following completion of the outstanding survey work, the results of the surveys will be submitted into the Examination and amendments to this appendix will be made, if required.

Data Interpretation

- 1.2.31 The identification of territories does present some ambiguity where field results vary between visits, e.g. where territory sizes range over a large area or where species were only seen on few occasions. Therefore, an estimated minimum number of territories has been included for species associated with open field habitats.
- 1.2.32 Bird data was collated for analysis across each of the Solar PV Sites. However, as some surveys of the Solar PV Sites took place on different dates for the same survey 'visit', the peak bird count recorded at each of Lime Down A-E within a single survey visit may have been inflated slightly, should the same birds have moved to different areas between dates. This is acknowledged as a limitation, but in the event that numbers of birds have been slightly inflated, this will only serve to elevate their importance, and so the assessment will follow a precautionary approach. As such, there is no risk of undervaluing the importance of the Solar PV Sites to breeding birds.

1.3 Results

- 1.3.1 This section contains the desk study results, along with the results of breeding bird surveys completed between June 2023 and June 2025. A brief assessment of overall habitat quality for breeding birds within the Study Area is also provided.

Desk Study

- 1.3.2 A summary of desk study results relating to breeding birds is provided below. Refer to **ES Volume 3, Appendix 9-1: Ecological Baseline Report, [EN010168/APP/6.3]** for full data search results and associated figures.

Solar PV Sites (Lime Down A-E)

Designated Sites

- 1.3.3 No international designated sites were identified within 10 km of the Solar PV Sites. However, three international designated sites with migratory birds, as well as notable breeding populations, as a qualifying feature were identified within the wider search radius of 30 km. The affected designated sites include the Severn Estuary SPA and Ramsar site, and Salisbury Plain SPA.

Table 9-4-4: International Designated Sites within 30 km of the Solar PV Sites

Site Name	Area (ha)	Qualifying Features / Reason for Designation (% of UK population)	Distance from Order Limits
Severn Estuary SPA	24,487.91	Internationally important wintering populations of Annex 1 Bewick's swan (2.8%) and wader and waterfowl species including: greater white-fronted goose (35.8%); dunlin (1.8%); gadwall (1.4%); Eurasian teal (1.2%); northern pintail (1.2%); common shelduck (1%); common redshank (1%) and curlew (unknown). Also ringed plovers on passage (1.1%) and nationally important populations of a range of wintering, passage and breeding wetland bird species.	23.71 km north-west of Lime Down A.
Severn Estuary Ramsar	24,662.98	The Severn Estuary Ramsar site's qualifying interest features overlap with those of the Severn Estuary SPA. The site is of particular importance for hosting internationally important populations of several species of waterbird.	23.71 km north-west of Lime Down A.
Salisbury Plain SPA	19,714.54	Nationally important populations of Annex 1 species including breeding stone curlew (10%), and wintering hen harrier (1%). Further Annex 1 species are supported in small numbers. Nationally important breeding populations of quail (20%) and hobby (1%).	27.89 km south-east of Lime Down E.

Protected Species Records

- 1.3.4 Records of a total of 41 bird species were returned by WSBRC during the desk study, using the search parameters set out within Paragraph 1.2.2. A total of

131 breeding bird species were identified in the BTO Data Report for the Scheme.

- 1.3.5 The majority of Lime Down A-E are identified within BTO Priority Areas for Countryside Stewardship measures targeting lapwing, with the exception of the northern half of Lime Down E.

Cable Route Corridor

Designated Sites

- 1.3.6 The three international designated sites identified in relation to the Solar PV Sites are also of relevance to the CRC, namely Salisbury Plain SPA, located 14.72 km south, and Severn Estuary SPA and Ramsar, located 27.48 km north-west (**Table 9-4-4**).

Protected Species Records

- 1.3.7 Records of a total of 82 bird species were returned by WSBRC during the desk study, using the search parameters set out within Paragraph 1.2.2.
- 1.3.8 Much of the northern area of the CRC is identified within BTO Priority Areas for Countryside Stewardship measures for lapwing, with two sections in the centre and to the south of the CRC also within a Priority Area.

Overview of Habitat Suitability for Breeding Birds

- 1.3.9 This section provides a brief summary of the habitat suitability for breeding birds within the Study Area.

Solar PV Sites (Lime Down A-E)

- 1.3.10 The Solar PV Sites largely comprise arable fields with frequent arable margins, and some permanent grassland fields. The fields are bounded by an extensive network of species-rich hedgerows containing mature, standard trees, plus agricultural drainage ditches. The Solar PV Sites are bounded in several places by blocks of ancient and broadleaved woodland, which are present throughout the local landscape. Occasional patches of scrub and numerous ponds are also present within the Solar PV Sites, with a small number of agricultural buildings.
- 1.3.11 The range of habitats across the Solar PV Sites are likely to support a diverse assemblage of breeding bird species, particularly those associated with agricultural habitats. The large open fields provide suitable nesting habitat for ground-nesting species, such as skylark, lapwing and quail, with unbroken sightlines typically required by these species for breeding. Field margins also provide nesting opportunities for further farmland species such as grey partridge and yellowhammer, as well as providing a valuable foraging resource for a range of species. Margins and standard trees are also likely to be important in supporting prey species for raptors and owls, as well as offering suitable

hunting locations for these predators. Woodland blocks within and immediately adjacent the Solar PV Sites, the network of interconnecting hedgerows, and frequent standard trees, provide abundant suitable nesting habitat for a wide range of species including passerines such as tits and thrushes, woodpeckers, corvids, owls and raptors. Limited wetland features within the Solar PV Sites, namely ponds and watercourses, are likely to support small numbers of waterbirds, such as ducks, egrets, and snipe. The small number of buildings associated with the Solar PV Sites also provide nesting opportunities for hirundine species, as well as barn owls.

Cable Route Corridor

- 1.3.12 Habitats within the CRC are of similar character to the Solar PV Sites, as described above. Habitats generally comprise mixed-use agricultural fields bounded by hedgerows and ditches, with occasional ponds, streams and blocks of woodland. The CRC is therefore considered to be of similar suitability for breeding birds, as described within Paragraph 1.3.10 above.
- 1.3.13 During the Extended UKHabitat Surveys of the CRC, an assessment of habitats was made for their suitability to support breeding Schedule 1 bird species, including red kite *Milvus milvus*, hobby *Falco subbuteo*, barn owl *Tyto alba* and kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*. Whilst no nesting behaviour was directly observed by surveyors, nesting opportunities within the CRC for those Schedule 1 species listed were noted, and their breeding cannot therefore be ruled out.
- 1.3.14 Raptors such as red kite and hobby typically nest in mature trees within woodland, or at the woodland edge, often utilising existing corvid nests. Numerous woodland blocks either within or immediately adjacent the CRC were noted and associated mature trees, as well as mature trees within hedgerows and agricultural fields represent suitable nesting habitat for relevant Schedule 1 raptors.
- 1.3.15 Mature trees, namely those with hollows or large veteran features, also provide nesting opportunities for barn owl. A small number of buildings present within and adjacent to the CRC also provide nesting opportunities for hirundine species, as well as barn owls.
- 1.3.16 Open farmland habitats that comprised the majority of the CRC are likely to support abundant prey species for barn owl, red kite and hobby that may be nesting nearby and constitutes ideal habitat for these species where farmland is interspersed with woodland.
- 1.3.17 Suitable nesting habitat for kingfisher was limited within the CRC, restricted to rivers and streams with banks of suitable depth, gradient and substrate, and wooded riparian corridors. Watercourse CRR7 was identified as good quality habitat for the species, with watercourses CRD6, CRR1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 representing suitable but poor habitat.

Breeding Bird Surveys

Solar PV Sites Overview

- 1.3.18 Survey data for notable species are set out in **Tables 9-4-9 to Table 9-4-13**, which detail the number of individuals recorded during each survey visit, the number of surveys (out of six (or out of eight or 12 for areas where surveys of additional land have been completed)) in which they were recorded, the peak abundance of each species, and the likely breeding status of the species at each of Lime Down A-E (across all surveys). An analysis of breeding status and abundance across the Solar PV Sites is provided for each species, focused on the primary habitat each species was predominantly associated with to facilitate assessment of potential impacts. Additional non-notable species are listed in **Table 9-4-16**.

Table 9-4-5: Key to Conservation Status Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
Amber BoCC	Amber-listed on the BTO Birds of Conservation Concern List
Red BoCC	Red-listed on the BTO Birds of Conservation Concern List
S41	Listed as a Species of Principle Importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006
<u>Sch 1</u>	Schedule 1 species under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
Annex I	Annex I species under the Birds Directive (under the European Council Directive 2009/147/EC)
UKFBI	UK Farmland Bird Indicator
WBAP	Listed under the Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan
PJ	Included on the basis of professional judgement due to numbers observed

- 1.3.19 In order to allow for comparison between Lime Down A-E, their relative areas should be considered and are provided in **Table 9-4-16** below.

Table 9-4-6: Area (ha) of Lime Down A-E

Site	Area (ha)
Lime Down A	94
Lime Down B	71
Lime Down C	241
Lime Down D	213
Lime Down E	132

Species Diversity

Lime Down A-E

- 1.3.20 The breeding bird surveys completed between June 2023 and June 2025 identified 81 species in total, including 50 notable species/species of conservation concern within the Study Area at the Solar PV Sites. Of these, 21 were red listed birds of conservation concern and 23 were amber-listed birds of conservation concern.
- 1.3.21 Of the red and amber-listed species, 18 were also Species of Principle Importance (SPIs). These are listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 and so are capable of being material considerations within the planning process.
- 1.3.22 A total of 23 species were listed under the Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).
- 1.3.23 In addition, five species were also listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This confers species protection when breeding.
- 1.3.24 Red kite are also listed as an Annex 1 species under the Birds Directive (under the European Council Directive 2009/147/EC).
- 1.3.25 The diversity of species recorded at each of the Lime Down A-E is summarised in **Table 9-4-7**, including the number of notable species/species of conservation concern.

Table 9-4-7: Summary of Breeding Bird Species Diversity Across All Visits – Solar PV Sites

Site	Total No. of Species	SoCC or Notable	Red BoCC	Amber BoCC	SPIs	Sch 1	Annex 1	UKFBI	WBAP
All	80	49	21	23	18	5	1	14	22
A	50	23	8	14	7	0	0	10	8
B	42	22	8	10	9	2	1	10	9
C	66	35	13	18	12	2	1	12	16
D	63	35	16	16	14	3	1	14	17
E	57	32	10	18	10	2	1	11	11

Table 9-4-8: Overview of All Notable Bird Species – Solar PV Sites

Common Name	Scientific Name	Conservation Status
Birds Predominantly Associated with Open Arable/Grassland Habitats, including Field Margins		
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Amber BoCC
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	UKFBI
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	Red BoCC, S41, UKFBI, WBAP
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Amber BoCC
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	Amber BoCC
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Red BoCC, S41, WBAP
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Sch 1
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	Red BoCC, WBAP
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Red BoCC, S41, WBAP
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	UKFBI
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Amber BoCC
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Amber BoCC
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Red BoCC, S41, UKFBI, WBAP
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Amber BoCC
Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	Red BoCC, S41, WBAP
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Amber BoCC
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Amber BoCC
Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	Amber BoCC, Sch 1, WBAP
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	Sch 1, Annex 1
Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	Amber BoCC
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Amber BoCC, S41, UKFBI, WBAP
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	Amber BoCC, UKFBI
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Red BoCC, S41, UKFBI, WBAP
Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Amber BoCC, WBAP
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Red BoCC, S41, WBAP
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	Amber BoCC, UKFBI
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	WBAP
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Red BoCC, WBAP
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Amber BoCC
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Red BoCC, Sch 1
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Amber BoCC, UKFBI
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Red BoCC, S41, UKFBI, WBAP
Birds Predominantly Associated with Other Habitats including Boundary Habitats and Watercourses		

Common Name	Scientific Name	Conservation Status
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	Amber BoCC, S41, WBAP
Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	Red BoCC, S41, UKFBI, WBAP
Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	PJ, Sch 1
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Red BoCC, S41, WBAP
Dunnoek	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Amber BoCC, S41
Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>	Red BoCC, S41, WBAP
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Red BoCC
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Red BoCC, S41, WBAP
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Red BoCC
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Amber BoCC, S41, WBAP
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Amber BoCC
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Red BoCC, S41, UKFBI, WBAP
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	Red BoCC, WBAP
Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Amber BoCC, UKFBI
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Amber BoCC
Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	Red BoCC
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Amber BoCC
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Red BoCC, S41, UKFBI, WBAP

Table 9-4-9: Summary of Breeding Bird Survey Results for Notable Species at Lime Down A (June 2023 – June 2024)

Common Name	Visit Number						No Times Recorded (/6)	Peak Count	Breeding Status (during surveys)
	1	2	3	4	5	6			
Birds Predominantly Associated with Open Arable/Grassland Habitats, including Field Margins									
Goldfinch	5	11	7		2	2	5	11	Probable
Grey Partridge		1		1	2		3	2	Possible
Jackdaw					2		1	2	Possible
Kestrel	1						1	1	Possible
Lesser Black-backed Gull		1					1	1	Unconfirmed
Linnet	16	41	11	1	1		5	41	Probable
Meadow Pipit			5				1	5	Possible
Moorhen		1					1	1	Possible
Rook		1					2	1	Possible
Skylark	20	12	17	19	37	11	6	37	Probable
Stock Dove		4	1	2	6		4	6	Probable
Swift		4					1	4	Possible
Woodpigeon	2	5	22	2	12		5	22	Probable
Birds Predominantly Associated with Other Habitats including Boundary Habitats and Watercourses									
Bullfinch		1					1	1	Possible
Dunnock	5	2	8	7	7	2	6	8	Probable
Greenfinch	1	3					2	3	Possible
Mistle Thrush	1			1			3	2	Possible

Common Name	Visit Number						No Times Recorded (/6)	Peak Count	Breeding Status (during surveys)
	1	2	3	4	5	6			
Song Thrush	4			1	1	6	4	6	Probable
Sparrowhawk				2	1		2	2	Possible
Whinchat	2					1	2	2	Possible
Whitethroat	5	14		3	8	4	5	14	Confirmed
Willow Warbler	2		1				3	2	Possible
Wren	4	10	15	15	17	9	6	17	Probable
Yellowhammer	13	2	7	9	11	7	6	13	Probable

Table 9-4-10: Summary of Breeding Bird Survey Results for Notable Species at Lime Down B (June 2023 – June 2024)

Common Name	Visit Number						No Times Recorded (/6)	Peak Count	Breeding Status (during surveys)
	1	2	3	4	5	6			
Birds Predominantly Associated with Open Arable/Grassland Habitats, including Field Margins									
Goldfinch	3	2	1	4	1	3	6	3	Probable
Grey Partridge			2	1			2	2	Probable
Herring Gull						1	1	1	Unlikely
Hobby	1						1	1	Possible
Jackdaw				2		7	2	7	Possible
Lesser Black-backed Gull						1	1	1	Unlikely
Linnet	10	35	11	12	5	6	6	35	Probable
Meadow Pipit			5				1	5	Possible
Red Kite		1	3				2	3	Possible
Reed Bunting	1						1	1	Possible
Skylark	42	36	36	40	70	34	6	70	Probable
Snipe				1			1	1	Possible
Stock Dove	1	8	1	3		1	5	9	Probable
Woodpigeon	5	8	1	5	1	14	6	14	Probable
Birds Predominantly Associated with Other Habitats including Boundary Habitats and Watercourses									
Cuckoo				2			1	2	Possible
Dunnock	6	3	3	10	7	4	6	10	Probable
Greenfinch	1					5	2	5	Possible

Common Name	Visit Number						No Times Recorded (/6)	Peak Count	Breeding Status (during surveys)
	1	2	3	4	5	6			
Mistle Thrush			1	2			2	2	Possible
Song Thrush	6		3	3		4	4	6	Probable
Whitethroat	4	5			4	9	4	9	Probable
Wren	7	11	11	13	9	7	6	13	Probable
Yellowhammer	12	18	7	7	10	6	6	18	Probable

Table 9-4-11: Summary of Breeding Bird Survey Results for Notable Species at Lime Down C (June 2023 – June 2025)

Common Name	Visit Number														No Times Recorded (/14)	Peak Count	Breeding Status (during surveys)
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14			
Birds Predominantly Associated with Open Arable/Grassland Habitats, including Field Margins																	
Black-headed Gull				4											1	4	Unlikely
Goldfinch	3	11	12	13	12	13	21	6				1	6	1	11	21	Probable
Grey Partridge				1											1	1	Possible
Herring Gull	1														1	1	Unlikely
Hobby		1													1	1	Possible
House Martin	1					1									2	1	Unlikely
House Sparrow		3													1	3	Possible
Jackdaw	13		11	42	14	8	10	8		1	4		6	4	11	42	Confirmed
Kestrel	3	1	1	4	1	2	1								7	4	Confirmed
Lesser Black-backed Gull	3			1								4		3	4	4	Unlikely
Linnet	5	4	97	4	11	41	2	6	29	4	13	2	10	13	14	97	Probable
Mallard			2			1					2				3	2	Probable
Meadow Pipit			17	1					2	3	2		1	1	7	17	Possible
Red Kite				1	1	1									3	1	Possible
Reed Bunting		1													1	1	Possible
Rook	28	2		102	2	8		10			4				7	102	Probable
Skylark	46	62	67	60	57	50	1		4	4	13	12	14	10	13	67	Confirmed

Common Name	Visit Number														No Times Recorded (/14)	Peak Count	Breeding Status (during surveys)
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14			
Snipe			1												1	1	Possible
Spotted Flycatcher						1									1	1	Unlikely
Stock Dove	11	43	110	17	259	118	2				2				8	259	Probable
Swallow											2		4		2	4	Unlikely
Swift							5								1	5	Unlikely
Wheatear				3											1	3	Possible
Woodpigeon	14	2	28	50	24	26	4	1							8	50	Probable
Yellow Wagtail				1	1										2	1	Possible
Birds Predominantly Associated with Other Habitats including Boundary Habitats and Watercourses																	
Bullfinch	1		2	1	1	1				2	2	2		2	9	2	Probable
Dunnock	15	11	22	12	15	20			2	4	1	2	2	2	11	22	Confirmed
Mistle Thrush	2	1		1	2	3									5	3	Probable
Song Thrush	10	5	11	5	11	5	1	1		1	1	3	1		12	11	Probable
Sparrowhawk			1												1	1	Possible
Whinchat	1		1												2	1	Possible
Whitethroat	32	20	3	14	42	28	2	1			1			2	10	42	Probable
Willow Warbler	5	1	5	4	5	6						1	1		8	6	Probable
Woodcock				1											1	1	Unlikely
Wren	31	12	34	27	38	31	4	3	4	3	6	6	4	2	14	38	Confirmed
Yellowhammer	25	18	37	27	15	16	2	4	2	3	3	2	2	2	14	37	Confirmed

Table 9-4-12: Summary of Breeding Bird Survey Results for Notable Species at Lime Down D (June 2023 – June 2024)

Common Name	Visit Number								No Times Recorded (/8)	Peak Count	Breeding Status (during surveys)
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
Birds Predominantly Associated with Open Arable/Grassland Habitats, including Field Margins											
Goldfinch	2	7	2	8	1	2		2	7	8	Probable
Grey Partridge	1								1	1	Possible
Herring Gull						1			1	1	Unlikely
House Martin						2			1	2	Unlikely
House Sparrow		1							1	1	Possible
Jackdaw	1	8	1	7	7	16	3	18	8	18	Confirmed
Lesser Black-backed Gull				1					1	1	Unlikely
Linnet		1	112	9	1	22	4	2	7	112	Probable
Mallard			2	5		2			3	5	Probable
Meadow Pipit			2						1	2	Possible
Quail				3					1	3	Possible
Red Kite				1		1	1	1	4	1	Probable
Redstart			1						1	1	Possible
Reed Bunting			1	1	1	5			4	5	Probable
Rook					10	1		275	3	275	Probable
Skylark	53	36	76	63	61	58	17	10	8	76	Confirmed
Snipe			1						1	1	Possible
Stock Dove	2	15	3	22	15	10	2		7	22	Probable

Common Name	Visit Number								No Times Recorded (/8)	Peak Count	Breeding Status (during surveys)
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
Whimbrel				1					1	1	Unlikely
Woodpigeon	9	7	12	15	13	11	14	8	8	15	Probable
Yellow Wagtail			1	1					2	1	Possible
Birds Predominantly Associated with Other Habitats including Boundary Habitats and Watercourses											
Corn Bunting	2	1	1			2			4	4	Probable
Cuckoo				1					1	1	Possible
Dunnock	2	5	11	11	5	8	2		7	11	Probable
Grasshopper Warbler			1						1	1	Possible
Greenfinch			1		1				2	1	Possible
Mistle Thrush			1	1					2	1	Possible
Song Thrush	2		4	1	2	1	2		6	4	Probable
Sparrowhawk					1				1	1	Possible
Starling			1						1	1	Possible
Whinchat		1	1						2	1	Possible
Whitethroat	9	6		7	18	15	2	3	7	18	Probable
Willow Warbler		1	1	2	1				4	2	Probable
Wren	15	13	23	17	29	21	7	7	8	29	Probable
Yellowhammer	17	11	28	28	21	20	9	5	8	28	Confirmed

Table 9-4-13: Summary of Breeding Bird Survey Results for Notable Species at Lime Down E (June 2023 – June 2024)

Common Name	Visit Number						No Times Recorded (/6)	Peak Count	Breeding Status (during surveys)
	1	2	3	4	5	6			
Birds Predominantly Associated with Open Arable/Grassland Habitats, including Field Margins									
Black-headed Gull						1	1	1	Unlikely
Goldfinch	6	8	7	7	4	1	6	8	Probable
Grey Partridge						1	1	1	Possible
Grey Wagtail						1	1	1	Possible
Greylag Goose						2	1	2	Unlikely
Jackdaw	4	32	15	6	4	19	6	32	Confirmed
Kestrel			1				1	1	Possible
Lesser Black-backed Gull		1		1			2	1	Unlikely
Linnet	4	4	3	4	6	4	6	6	Probable
Mallard				5	1		2	5	Probable
Marsh Tit						1	1	1	Possible
Meadow Pipit			2	4			2	4	Possible
Red Kite		1		4			2	4	Possible
Rook		1			17	59	3	59	Probable
Skylark	10	9	13	11	13	13	6	13	Probable
Stock Dove	4	5	4	3	14	6	6	14	Probable
Swift	2	1					2	2	Possible
Wheatear		2		1	1		3	2	Possible

Common Name	Visit Number						No Times Recorded (/6)	Peak Count	Breeding Status (during surveys)
	1	2	3	4	5	6			
Woodpigeon	26	17	6	13	14	20	6	26	Probable
Yellow Wagtail					2	3	2	3	Probable
Birds Predominantly Associated with Other Habitats including Boundary Habitats and Watercourses									
Bullfinch	1			3		2	3	3	Probable
Crossbill		29					1	29	Unlikely
Dunnock	16	14	18	12	15	11	6	18	Probable
Hawfinch					1		1	1	Unlikely
Mistle Thrush	1		1		1	1	4	1	Probable
Song Thrush	4	7	11	8	7	4	6	11	Probable
Sparrowhawk					1		1	1	Possible
Whinchat		1	1	1			3	1	Possible
Whitethroat	9	8	1	3	5	7	6	9	Confirmed
Willow Warbler			1	4	4	2	4	4	Probable
Wren	32	21	31	31	34	23	6	34	Confirmed
Yellowhammer	12	13	11	19	8	11	6	19	Probable

Distribution and Abundance by Primary Habitat Type

- 1.3.26 The primary habitat categories used by breeding birds across the Solar PV Sites discussed below included:
- Open habitats, including use of open, arable, fallow or grassland/pasture fields, and arable field margins; and
 - Other habitats, including boundary habitats such as hedgerows/scrub, woodland edges etc., mature trees and waterbodies.
- 1.3.27 Species associated with each of these broad habitat types are discussed in turn within the text below.
- 1.3.28 A general summary of the findings across the Solar PV Sites is given, followed by a discussion of the findings for each of Lime Down A-E. The abundance, distribution and breeding status of key species is discussed in detail.
- 1.3.29 It is important to note that many species range widely and use different locations sporadically. Both the frequency of recording and the abundance of each species must be considered, and this data reviewed within the context of local and national populations and the availability of similar habitats present within the surrounding landscape.
- 1.3.30 Where data shows a species to have been recorded rarely or in low numbers, this could imply that the particular area at Lime Down A-E are not significant contributors to breeding populations. However, the detectability of such species should be considered alongside, as some species are elusive/ cryptic and may have been missed by the survey. The rarity of certain species should also be considered, as a few individuals may potentially be of significance.
- 1.3.31 Conversely, where a species was recorded regularly and in significant numbers at a particular area at Lime Down A-E, this could imply a greater level of importance of the area to this species. However, again this must be contextualised.

Birds Predominantly Associated with Open Arable/Grassland Habitats, including Field Margins

Schedule 1 Species

Barn Owl

- 1.3.32 No barn owls were recorded within the Study Area during the surveys. However, a single barn owl was recorded on a single occasion during Visit 5 in May 2024. The individual was recorded nesting off-site at Lime Down C, in a nest box located in Lord's Wood to the north of Field C22 (refer to **ES Volume 2, Figure 2-2: Field Boundaries and Numbering**

[EN010168/APP/6.2] for field numbering system). A second barn owl box was also noted in a mature oak tree within Field C9 at Lime Down C, with pellets recorded by the surveyor during Visit 1 in June 2023. A pair of kestrels were later recorded nesting within the box (Paragraph 1.3.72).

- 1.3.33 Further nesting opportunities for barn owl were noted within the Solar PV Sites; pellets were noted within a metal-framed hay store in Field C25, and barn owl were recorded roosting in a disused stone barn adjacent the Study Area at Lime Down B during the wintering bird surveys.

Hobby

- 1.3.34 A single hobby was recorded flying over the Study Area on two occasions; at Lime Down B during Visit 1 in June 2023, and at Lime Down C during Visit 2 in June 2023. Hobbies utilise nests built by species such as corvids for breeding; mature trees within hedgerows, fields and woodland edges at the Solar PV Sites represent suitable nesting opportunities for corvids with breeding jackdaw and carrion crow confirmed at Lime Down C, and so it was considered possible that hobby may breed within the Solar PV Sites.

Quail

- 1.3.35 A total of three quail were recorded during Visit 4 in April 2024 at Lime Down D. The quail were recorded at the south-western ends of Fields D2 and D3; these fields are on arable rotation with grassy margins adjacent the scrub-dominated railway embankment to the south. Quail favour cropland and grassland for nesting, particularly edge habitat such as field margins. Given the presence of suitable nesting opportunities at Lime Down D, it was considered possible that quail may breed within Lime Down D.

Red Kite

- 1.3.36 Red kite were recorded frequently across the Solar PV Sites within the Study Area, with the exception of Lime Down A where no individuals were recorded during the surveys.
- 1.3.37 At Lime Down B, C and D, red kite were typically recorded within or flying over large arable fields which represent ideal foraging habitat for the species. Small broadleaved woodland blocks within and immediately adjacent the Study Area offer suitable nesting opportunities, and it was therefore considered possible that the species may breed within the Solar PV Sites.
- 1.3.38 A family of red kite was recorded at Lime Down E during Visit 2 in June 2023 in a mature hedgerow tree at the boundary of Field E31, and so were confirmed as utilising Lime Down E for breeding. Red kite were also

noted during Visit 4 in April 2024 within arable fields and woodland habitat.

Whimbrel

- 1.3.39 A single whimbrel was recorded on one occasion at Lime Down D during Visit 4 in April 2024, carrying food within Field D1. Although the species was noted carrying food, which is behaviour typically indicative of nesting, whimbrel are a passage species throughout most of the UK with their breeding range restricted to the Shetland Islands and northern Scotland. Therefore, it was considered highly unlikely that the species was breeding within Lime Down D, and the individual was more likely noted on spring passage.

Red-listed Birds of Conservation Concern

Grey Partridge

- 1.3.40 Grey partridge were recorded in low numbers at each of Lime Down A-E within the Study Area on at least one occasion, with a peak count of three individuals during Visit 4 in April 2024. The species was typically recorded in the margins of arable fields; grass margins and game cover strips are characteristically used by the species for nesting.
- 1.3.41 A pair of grey partridge were recorded in Field A8 at Lime Down A during Visit 5 in May 2024, with a single individual recorded in the same field during Visit 4. These records indicate the presence of a likely breeding territory for the species, and breeding was considered probable at Lime Down A. A further calling individual was also recorded in the northern parcel of Lime Down A (Field A12) during Visit 1 in July 2023.
- 1.3.42 Grey partridge were recorded on two occasions at Lime Down B, during Visits 3 and 4 in April 2024, including a pair noted in the margins of Field B6 during Visit 3 which was cropped with barley. Breeding was also considered probable at Lime Down B.
- 1.3.43 A single grey partridge was recorded on a single occasion within the Study Area at Lime Down C, D, and E; at Lime Down C during Visit 4 in April 2024, at Lime Down D during Visit 1 in June 2023, and at Lime Down E during Visit 6 in May 2024. All individuals were recorded at field margins, and, given the abundance of suitable habitat, it was considered possible that grey partridge may use the Solar PV Sites for breeding.

Herring Gull

- 1.3.44 Low numbers of herring gull were recorded during the surveys: a single individual was recorded at Lime Down C during Visit 1 in June 2023, a single individual was recorded flying over the Study Area at Lime Down B, and a single juvenile recorded at Lime Down D during Visit 6 in May 2024.

It was considered unlikely that the species utilise the Solar PV Sites for breeding and instead forage occasionally within the arable fields.

House Martin

- 1.3.45 A single individual was recorded within the Study Area at Lime Down C during Visit 1 in June 2023, a single individual was recorded flying over Lime Down C, and two further individuals were recorded flying over Lime Down D during Visit 6 in May 2024. Given the absence of buildings, representing suitable nesting habitat for the species, within Lime Down C and D, it was considered unlikely that house martin were breeding within the Solar PV Sites.

House Sparrow

- 1.3.46 Four house sparrows were recorded on a single occasion within the Study Area during Visit 2 in June 2023; a group of three individuals were recorded flying over Lime Down C, and a single female was recorded foraging within a small area of ruderal vegetation at Lime Down D. House sparrows typically nest in buildings, i.e. in small holes or at the roof eaves, and no suitable buildings are present within Lime Down C and D. However, the species will occasionally breed in dense vegetation, and so breeding of house sparrow within the Solar PV Sites cannot be entirely ruled out.

Linnet

- 1.3.47 Linnets were relatively widespread across the Study Area at each of Lime Down A-E throughout the surveys, with a peak count of 231 individuals recorded during Visit 3 in April 2024. Linnets typically nest in hedgerows and scrub; the extensive network of generally well-managed, species-rich hedgerows throughout the Solar PV Sites provides abundant suitable habitat for nesting.
- 1.3.48 A family of linnets were recorded within the Study Area at Lime Down C during Visit 1 in June 2023 and in June 2025, a pair of linnets were recorded at Lime Down B during Visit 3 in April 2024, and two further pairs were recorded at Lime Down D during Visit 3.
- 1.3.49 As linnets were frequently recorded throughout the Study Area and across the survey period, including multiple observation of pairs and families, it was considered probable that the species were breeding within the Solar PV Sites.

Marsh Tit

- 1.3.50 A single marsh tit was recorded on a single occasion at Lime Down E only, during Visit 6 in May 2024. The individual was recorded at the edge of Bincombe Wood, bounding Field E14. Marsh tit nest in natural tree

cavities in mature trees, and it was considered possible that the species may breed within Lime Down E.

Skylark

- 1.3.51 Skylark are a species typically associated with farmland habitats, and were abundant throughout the Study Area during the surveys, with a peak count of 238 individuals in a single visit (Visit 5 in May 2024).
- 1.3.52 Two families of skylark were recorded within Field C7 at Lime Down C and an individual was noted carrying food in Field C24 during Visit 1 in June 2023. A total of five pairs were noted within the Study Area at Lime Down C across the surveys. The presence of families and feeding behaviour confirmed that skylark were breeding at Lime Down C.
- 1.3.53 Skylark were also confirmed to be breeding at Lime Down D, with numerous territories present. A skylark nest with four eggs was incidentally noted by a surveyor in Field D4, whilst undertaking great crested newt (GCN) eDNA surveys in April 2024. Notably, the nest was located approximately 10m from a hedgerow within a grassy margin/farm track; this is slightly unusual for the species which typically nest away from field boundaries to ensure open sightlines around the nest for monitoring predators. An individual was also recorded carrying food in Field D21 during Visit 6 in May 2024.
- 1.3.54 Skylark were recorded singing frequently and often exhibiting aggressive behaviour, indicative of individuals competing for/defending territories, throughout the Solar PV Sites. In the absence of definitive evidence of breeding, it was considered probable that skylark were also breeding at Lime Down A, B, and E.
- 1.3.55 The estimated minimum total number of skylark territories within the Study Area was 177 (**ES Volume 2, Figure 9-4-2: Indicative Skylark Breeding Territories, [EN010168/APP/6.2]** refers).
- 1.3.56 Fields B1, C24, C25, C27, and C28 are located within the Order Limits, outside of the Solar PV Sites, and are intended to be retained and utilised for ecological mitigation measures, including for skylarks. The estimated number of skylark territories within the Solar PV Sites and the above five fields was 164.
- 1.3.57 The number of territories and likely breeding status of the species within the Solar PV Sites, Lime Down A-E , and number of territories within field B1, C24, C25, C27, and C28 are provided in **Table 9-4-14** below.

Table 9-4-14: Estimated Minimum Number of Skylark Breeding Territories and Likely Skylark Breeding Status at the Solar PV Sites

Site	Estimated Minimum No. of Breeding Territories	Estimated No. of Breeding Territories per ha	Breeding Status
Total Area	164	0.21	Confirmed
A	24	0.26	Probable
B	22	0.31	Probable
C	51	0.21	Confirmed
D	49	0.23	Confirmed
E	13	0.09	Probable

- 1.3.58 The greatest number of skylark territories were recorded at Lime Down C, the largest of Lime Down A-E. The large open fields at Lime Down C represent ideal nesting habitat for the species; Field C10 in particular appeared to be of particular importance for the species, supporting approximately 20% of the total skylark territories at Lime Down C.
- 1.3.59 The highest density of likely territories was recorded at Lime Down A and B (0.26 per ha and 0.31 per ha, respectively). Similar to Lime Down C, Lime Down A comprised large arable fields with open sightlines, and was bounded by woodland at very limited points. Lime Down B however, comprised largely of arable fields of varying sizes; the density of territories was greater within large arable fields (such as B9 and B12), but skylark activity was recorded throughout Lime Down B.
- 1.3.60 Lime Down D also supported a relatively high number of territories. The territory density was much lower to the east of Lime Down D with only four territories recorded in Fields D12-18. Mature trees were frequent in hedgerows bounding these fields, and woody riparian vegetation along Gauze Brook also provide perching opportunities for predators of skylark. Territories were also absent within Field D10, which is bounded to the north by Bradfield Wood.
- 1.3.61 The density of skylark territories per hectare was notably lowest at Lime Down E (0.09 per ha), possibly due to the smaller average field size, abundance of mature trees in dense, well-managed hedgerows, and frequent woodland blocks bounding the Lime Down E, resulting in a more enclosed landscape compared to other Solar PV Sites with reduced suitability for nesting skylark.

Swift

- 1.3.62 Swift were exclusively recorded flying over the Study Area at Lime Down A, C, and E, with a peak count of five individuals during Visits 2 and 7 in June 2023 and 2024 respectively. Swift nest almost exclusively in buildings, of which a very limited number were present within the Solar PV Sites. It was therefore considered possible that swifts may nest within Lime Down A, C, and E, although it should be noted that the buildings vary in condition and suitability for nesting between the Solar PV Sites.

Yellow Wagtail

- 1.3.63 Yellow wagtails were recorded in low numbers at Lime Down C, D, and E across the surveys. Yellow wagtail is a ground-nesting species, that will breed in a variety of habitat types present within the Solar PV Sites, namely arable farmland, pasture and meadows.
- 1.3.64 The estimated minimum total number of yellow wagtail territories within the Study Area was 3 (**ES Volume 2, Figure 9-4-3: Indicative Yellow Wagtail Breeding Territories, [EN010168/APP/6.2]** refers), of which all three are located within, or largely within, the Solar PV Sites.
- 1.3.65 A single individual was recorded on two occasions at Lime Down C during Visits 4 and 5 in April and May 2024 in the north-eastern fields of Lime Down C. A single individual was also recorded on two occasions at Lime Down D during Visits 3 and 4 in April 2024, flying over fields in the centre of Lime Down D. Given that these areas are largely dominated by arable fields, representing suitable nesting habitat for the species, it was considered possible that yellow wagtail were breeding within Lime Down C and D.
- 1.3.66 In May 2024, during Visits 5 and 6, five individuals were recorded at Lime Down E, all within Field E33. A pair and individual male were recorded on one occasion, with a male and female noted individually on a separate occasion. The repeated presence of a pair of yellow wagtail in the same area is indicative of a territory for the species, and it was considered probable that yellow wagtail were breeding within Lime Down E. Whilst yellow wagtail were recorded solely within a large arable field which is typically favoured for nesting, surrounding fields at Lime Down E comprise some cattle-grazed pasture, with off-site lowland meadow habitat present in close proximity, both which are likely to provide a valuable foraging resource for the species.

Amber-listed Birds of Conservation Concern

Black-headed Gull

- 1.3.67 Black-headed gull were recorded within the Study Area on two occasions; four individuals at Lime Down C during Visit 4 in April 2024, and a single individual at Lime Down E during Visit 6 in May 2024. The species were

recorded foraging within arable fields but were considered unlikely to be breeding within the Solar PV Sites.

Grey Wagtail

- 1.3.68 A single grey wagtail was recorded on a single occasion at Lime Down E, during Visit 6 in May 2024. The individual was recorded at the margin of an arable field to the north of Lime Down E (Field E3), although the species is typically associated with watercourses. Gabriel's Well running through Lime Down E represents suitable foraging habitat, with riparian vegetation providing cover and opportunities for nesting; it was therefore considered possible that grey wagtail may be breeding within Lime Down E.

Greylag Goose

- 1.3.69 Two individuals were recorded flying over Lime Down E on a single occasion during Visit 6 in May 2024. Given the absence of suitable nesting habitat, and that no greylag geese were recorded directly utilising the Solar PV Sites during the surveys, the species were considered unlikely to be breeding.

Kestrel

- 1.3.70 Kestrel were recorded within the Study Area at Lime Down A, C, and E, with the majority of kestrel activity at Lime Down C, and only a single individual recorded on a single occasion at Lime Down A and E.
- 1.3.71 At Lime Down A and E, mature trees within hedgerows and fields, and easily accessible trees along woodland edges (particularly at Lime Down E) provide suitable opportunities for cavity-nesting kestrel, and it was considered possible that the species may breed at the Solar PV Sites.
- 1.3.72 Kestrel breeding was confirmed at Lime Down C. A nesting female was recorded at the same location during Visits 4, 5, and 6 in April and May 2024, within a barn owl nest box on a mature oak tree in the centre of Field C9. A male was noted flying within the field on two occasions and was observed carrying food to the nesting female. Kestrel activity was also recorded in the north-west and north-eastern corners of the Study Area at Lime Down C; a total of three individuals were recorded in Fields C1 and C2, across two visits; and a total of five individuals were recorded in Fields C22-C28, across three visits, including one individual carrying food during Visit 4 in April 2024.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

- 1.3.73 Lesser black-backed gulls were recorded within the Study Area at each of Lime Down A-E (at least one individual on one occasion), with a peak count of 4 individuals during Visit 12 in May 2025 at the additional land at

Lime Down C. All bar one lesser black-backed gulls recorded were flying over the Solar PV Sites. The species typically nest in coastal areas, and on rooftops when nesting further inland. Given the absence of suitable nesting habitat and that the species was rarely recorded directly utilising the Solar PV Sites, it was considered unlikely that lesser black-backed gulls were breeding on site.

Mallard

- 1.3.74 Mallards were recorded within the Study Area at Lime Down C, D, and E, including at least one pair at each area. Mallards nest in areas close to waterbodies, including within agricultural fields, with suitable habitat present across the Solar PV Sites. It was therefore considered probable that mallard were breeding at Lime Down C, D, and E.

Meadow Pipit

- 1.3.75 Meadow pipits were recorded within the Study Area at each of Lime Down A-E on at least one occasion. The total abundance of meadow pipits was relatively low given that the Solar PV Sites, particularly Lime Down B, C and E where grassland is more prevalent, comprise suitable habitat for the species.
- 1.3.76 As meadow pipits were generally recorded on only one occasion, with the exception of small numbers during Visit 4 at Lime Down E and at Lime Down C (particularly at the additional land in this area), it is unlikely that the species hold territories through the breeding season and instead appear to predominantly utilise these areas for foraging in the early spring.
- 1.3.77 Nonetheless, tussocky field margins throughout the Solar PV Sites and areas of grassland habitat represent suitable nesting habitat for the ground-nesting meadow pipit, and so it was considered possible that the species may breed within the Solar PV Sites.

Moorhen

- 1.3.78 A single moorhen was recorded on a single occasion, calling within Field A1 during Visit 2 in July 2023. It was considered possible that the species could be breeding within the Lime Down A, given the presence of ponds suitable for moorhen nesting.

Redstart

- 1.3.79 A single redstart was recorded on a single occasion, singing in a hedgerow at Lime Down D during Visit 3 in April 2024. Redstart are a summer migrant and typically nest in tree cavities. Given the frequent availability of mature trees at Lime Down D, it was considered possible that redstart may breed within Lime Down D.

Reed Bunting

- 1.3.80 Reed buntings were recorded within the Study Area at Lime Down B, C, and D. A single reed bunting was recorded on a single occasion at Lime Down B and C, with the majority of reed bunting activity recorded in two fields at Lime Down D (D4 and D6). It was considered possible that reed bunting may nest at Lime Down B and C.
- 1.3.81 At Lime Down D, reed buntings were recorded only in April and May 2024 during Visits 3-6, with a peak count of five individuals during the final visit including singing and calling males. These records indicate the presence of at least on territory within the field, and reed bunting are known to nest in cultivated areas where their preferred nesting habitat of reed beds and marshes are absent. It was therefore considered probable that the species were breeding within Lime Down D. Lime Down D is likely particularly suitable for reed bunting, with the greatest extent of wet ditches and watercourses present compared to Lime Down A, B, C, and E.

Rook

- 1.3.82 Rooks were recorded within the Study Area at Lime Down A, C, D, and E, and were generally recorded in relatively high numbers, with the exception of Lime Down A where a single individual was recorded flying over on a single occasion during Visit 2 in July 2023. Rooks breed communally in large groups, rookeries, in mature trees and woodlands. Although only a single individual was recorded, suitable nesting habitat was present at Lime Down A and it was therefore considered possible that rooks may breed within Lime Down A.
- 1.3.83 At Lime Down C, rooks were recorded during seven survey visits with a peak count of 102 individuals in a large flock within Field C12 during Visit 4 April 2024. At Lime Down D, rooks were recorded on three occasions with a peak count of 275 individuals, also in a single large flock, recorded in Field D20 during Visit 8 in June 2024 at the additional land. Rooks were recorded during three survey visits at Lime Down E, with a peak count of 59 individuals during Visit 6 in May 2024, comprising several small flocks across Lime Down E. The Solar PV Sites are bounded by broadleaved woodland at several locations, including ancient woodland, providing suitable nesting habitat for the species. It was considered probable that rooks were breeding at Lime Down C, D, and E, particularly given that the species were recorded in large groups at each.

Snipe

- 1.3.84 A single snipe was recorded on a single occasion each within the Study Area at Lime Down B, C and D, during Visits 4, 2, and 3, respectively. Snipe tend to nest in small scrapes within wet grasslands, favouring areas

with varied sward height. All individuals were noted in fields close to streams or wet ditches, with habitats at Lime Down D associated with the Gauze Brook priority river particularly suitable for the species. It was therefore considered possible that snipe were breeding within Lime Down B, C, and D.

Stock Dove

- 1.3.85 Moderate numbers of stock dove were recorded within the Study Area across the Solar PV Sites, on at least four occasions at each of Lime Down A-E. A total peak count of 294 individuals was recorded during Visit 5 in May 2024. Stock doves tend to nest in holes in trees and agricultural buildings, habitats which are present throughout the Solar PV Sites, with mature trees abundant either within hedgerows or woodland edges. Given the widespread records of the species and availability of nesting opportunities, it was considered probable that stock doves were breeding at all Lime Down A-E.

Wheatear

- 1.3.86 Wheatears are a summer visitor which nest in sheltered cavities, generally at ground-level, either in rubble piles, stone walls or rabbit burrows, for example. Such features were noted occasionally throughout the Study Area.
- 1.3.87 Three wheatears were recorded within the Study Area on a single occasion at Lime Down C during Visit 4 in April 2024, within Field C1. A total of four wheatears were recorded at Lime Down E across Visits 2, 4, and 5, with all individuals noted in the south-eastern corner. It was considered possible that the species may be breeding within the Solar PV Sites.

UK Farmland Bird Indicator Species

Goldfinch

- 1.3.88 Goldfinches were recorded consistently in low numbers within the Study Area across the Solar PV Sites (on at least five occasions at each of Lime Down A-E), with a peak count of 41 individuals during Visit 2 in June 2023. Preferred nesting habitat for the species typically comprises scattered trees and scrub, the extent of which is fairly limited within the Solar PV Sites. Goldfinch will however also nest in hedgerows, which are ubiquitous within the local landscape, and in vegetation at the edge of woodlands.
- 1.3.89 Goldfinches were frequently recorded singing and calling within hedgerows across the Study Area. A family of goldfinches were noted at Lime Down B during Visit 2 in July 2023, and a pair noted at Lime Down D

during Visit 3 in April 2024. No further behaviours indicative of breeding or nesting were observed by surveyors.

- 1.3.90 However, given the frequent and widespread records of goldfinch throughout the Study Area and availability of suitable nesting habitat, it was considered probable that goldfinches were breeding within the Solar PV Sites.

Jackdaw

- 1.3.91 Jackdaw were recorded within the Study Area at each of Lime Down A-E, with trees suitable for nesting (i.e. mature, with tree cavities) abundant throughout at woodland edges, within hedgerows, and in fields. A pair of jackdaws were recorded on a single occasion at Lime Down A, and a total of nine individuals were recorded at Lime Down B over two visits, and it was considered possible that the species may be breeding in these areas.
- 1.3.92 Jackdaw were confirmed to be breeding within the Study Area at Lime Down C, D, and E, with records of the species more abundant and widespread. At Lime Down C, a total of 121 individuals were recorded over 11 visits, including a family of jackdaw recorded associated with a small copse of trees surrounding a pond to the south of Field C3 during Visit 1 in June 2023, and one individual recorded carrying nesting material during Visit 3 in April 2024. At Lime Down D, a total of 61 individuals were recorded over eight visits, including two nesting individuals in April 2024; one nesting in a mature oak tree in the centre of Field D14 during Visit 3, and the other nesting in a hedgerow tree at the boundary of Field D14 during Visit 4. At Lime Down E, a total of 80 jackdaws were recorded over six visits, including a family of jackdaw at a nest located in Bincombe Wood adjacent Field E13, recorded during Visit 2 in June 2023.

Wiltshire BAP Species

Swallow

- 1.3.93 Swallow were recorded flying over the additional land at Lime Down C (Survey Zone 14) on two occasions, in May and June 2025. Whilst no buildings suitable for swallow nesting are present within the Survey Zone, there are suitable nesting structures elsewhere within Lime Down C, and therefore the possibility of swallow nesting cannot be ruled out, although the species were not recorded directly using the habitats on site during the surveys.

Birds Predominantly Associated with Other Habitats including Boundary Habitats and Watercourses

Schedule 1 Species

Crossbill

- 1.3.94 A flock of 29 common crossbill were recorded on a single occasion at Lime Down E during Visit 2 in June 2023. The flock was comprised mostly of females and immatures and was recorded flying over Lime Down E from Seagry Wood and were considered unlikely to be breeding within Lime Down E.

Red-listed Birds of Conservation Concern

Corn Bunting

- 1.3.95 Corn buntings are a ground-nesting species that typically nest in arable fields or at the field margins. Given the agricultural character of the Solar PV Sites, suitable nesting habitat for the species is widespread, although corn buntings were only recorded within Lime Down D during the surveys. Corn buntings were recorded on four occasions at Lime Down D, largely at similar locations (along the northern boundaries of Field D3 and D5), indicating the likely presence of a breeding territory. It was therefore considered probable that corn buntings were breeding within Lime Down D.

Cuckoo

- 1.3.96 Three cuckoos were recorded during a single visit, Visit 4, in April 2024. Two individuals were recorded within the Study Area calling along the eastern boundary of Lime Down B, associated with small woodland blocks immediately adjacent. A single calling individual was also recorded at the edge of woodland bounding Field D1 to the south. It was considered possible that the species may be breeding in these areas, despite only being recorded on a single occasion. Cuckoos utilise the nests of other species to lay their eggs, such as meadow pipit, which were recorded in low numbers at Lime Down B and D.

Grasshopper Warbler

- 1.3.97 A single grasshopper warbler was recorded on a single occasion at Lime Down D, during Visit 3 in April 2024. The individual was recorded singing associated with Gauze Brook, and it was considered possible that the species may be breeding within Lime Down D, potentially in the scrub and riparian vegetation along the watercourse.

Greenfinch

- 1.3.98 Greenfinch were recorded within the Study Area in low numbers at, Lime Down A, B, and D, on no more than two occasions at each. Greenfinches tend to nest in small, loose colonies, and will nest in hedgerows, trees and shrubs, which are widespread throughout the Solar PV Sites. It was therefore considered possible that the species may breed within Lime Down A, B, and D.

Hawfinch

- 1.3.99 A single hawfinch was recorded on a single occasion at Lime Down E, during Visit 5 in May 2024. The individual was recorded calling within Bincombe Wood. Given that woodland habitat suitable for hawfinch nesting at Lime Down E was present only adjacent the Order Limits, it was considered unlikely that the species was breeding within Lime Down E itself.

Mistle Thrush

- 1.3.100 Mistle thrushes were recorded in low numbers within the Study Area across the Solar PV Sites, with a peak count of five individuals recorded during Visit 4 in April 2024. Mistle thrush typically nest in woodland and mature trees, which are present throughout the Solar PV Sites., At Lime Down A, B, and D, one or two mistle thrush were recorded on two occasions, and breeding was considered possible. Where mistle thrushes were recorded slightly more frequently, at Lime Down C and E, breeding was considered probable within these areas.

Starling

- 1.3.101 A single starling was recorded on a single occasion at Lime Down D, during Visit 3 in April 2024, and was recorded singing within a hedgerow to the south of Lime Down D. Starlings nest in cavities, either in trees or buildings, and it was considered possible that the species may be breeding within the Lime Down D given the large number of trees present.

Whinchat

- 1.3.102 Whinchat are a ground-nesting species, that tend to favour grasslands for nesting, although can be found in a range of habitats. A single whinchat was recorded within the Study Area on two occasions at Lime Down C and D, and on three occasions at Lime Down E. At Lime Down A, a peak count of two individuals was recorded during Visit 1 in June 2023. At Lime Down E, whinchat were recorded at the boundary of grassland, pasture fields suitable for nesting, and tussocky margins at Lime Down A, C, and D. It was considered possible that whinchat may be breeding in areas where they were recorded.

Woodcock

- 1.3.103 A single woodcock was recorded within the Study Area on a single occasion at Lime Down C, during Visit 4 in April 2024. The individual was recorded singing in a small patch of ruderal vegetation at the boundary of Field C7 but was considered unlikely to be breeding within Lime Down C given the lack of suitable nesting habitat (i.e. heavily wooded areas) within the boundary of Lime Down C.

Yellowhammer

- 1.3.104 Yellowhammer were widespread throughout the Study Area, with a peak count of 96 individuals during a single visit on Visit 4 in April 2024. Pairs were recorded within the Study Area at each of Lime Down A-E, with a total of 24 pairs recorded during the surveys. Yellowhammer nest at the base of dense hedgerows, which are present throughout the Solar PV Sites and area often associated with grassy field margins, which provide suitable foraging opportunities.
- 1.3.105 Breeding was confirmed at Lime Down C, D, and E with individuals noted carrying food, and a family of yellowhammer recorded at Lime Down E during Visit 2 in June 2023. At Lime Down A and B, it was considered probable that the species were breeding given the frequent sightings of pairs and abundant suitable nesting habitat.

Amber-listed Birds of Conservation Concern

Bullfinch

- 1.3.106 Bullfinch typically nest within woodlands but will also nest in hedgerows and scrub; these habitats are present throughout the Solar PV Sites and present suitable nesting opportunities for the species. Bullfinch were recorded within the Study Area in low numbers at Lime Down A, C, and E, with a peak count of four individuals during Visit 4 in April 2024. At Lime Down A, only a single bullfinch was recorded on a single occasion, although it was considered possible that the species may breed within Lime Down A given the presence of suitable habitat. Where bullfinch was recorded more frequently, at Lime Down C and E, breeding was considered probable.

Dunnock

- 1.3.107 Dunnocks were widespread across the Study Area, with a total of 296 individuals recorded throughout the surveys and a peak count of 64 individuals recorded during Visit 3 in April 2024. Almost all dunnocks were recorded singing or calling.
- 1.3.108 Despite the frequent records, dunnocks were confirmed to be breeding within the Study Area only at Lime Down C, with a family recorded during Visit 6 in May 2024 along the railway embankment bisecting Lime Down C. At Lime Down A, B, D, and E, it was considered probable that dunnocks were breeding, with suitable nesting habitat for the species comprising dense vegetation and hedgerows widely available.

Song Thrush

- 1.3.109 Song thrushes were recorded within the Study Area at each of Lime Down A-E on at least four occasions and were relatively evenly distributed, with

a peak count of 32 individuals recorded during Visit 1 in June 2023. No behaviour indicative of nesting was noted by surveyors, although breeding was considered probable across the Solar PV Sites given the availability of suitable habitat at woodland edges and dense hedgerows.

Sparrowhawk

- 1.3.110 A single sparrowhawk was recorded within the Study Area on a single occasion at Lime Down C, D, and E, and three sparrowhawks recorded over two visits at Lime Down A. The species were generally recorded perched in boundary features or hunting along hedgerows. Dense woodland is the preferred nesting habitat for sparrowhawk, although they will nest in smaller wooded areas or standard trees. Opportunities for nesting are present, and it was considered possible that sparrowhawk may nest at Lime Down A, C, D, and E.

Whitethroat

- 1.3.111 Whitethroat were recorded frequently at boundary features throughout the Study Area, with a total of 308 individuals recorded across the surveys and a peak count of 85 individuals recorded during Visit 5 in May 2024. Whitethroat typically nest in low vegetation, such as bramble, and at the base of hedgerows, with suitable habitat for the species widespread.
- 1.3.112 Breeding was confirmed at Lime Down A, with a family of whitethroat recorded in Field A12 during Visit 2 in July 2023, and an individual noted carrying nesting material in Field A1 during Visit 4 in April 2024. A family of whitethroat was noted at Lime Down E in Field E22, an area of damp grassland with scattered trees and scrub, on two separate occasions in June 2023. Whitethroat were frequently recorded in this field, during five visits, which indicates the field may form a breeding territory, or provide a valuable foraging resource for the species. One further family were noted at Lime Down E.
- 1.3.113 Breeding was considered probable at Lime Down B, C, and D given the numbers of whitethroat recorded as well as abundance of and suitable nesting habitat.

Willow Warbler

- 1.3.114 Willow warbler was recorded within the Study Area at Lime Down A, C, D, and E, with all individuals recorded singing. Willow warblers nest on the ground in loose scrub, preferably willow, but will also nest in woodland on occasion.
- 1.3.115 A low number of individuals were recorded on two occasions at Lime Down A, in the northern fields, and breeding was considered possible.

- 1.3.116 Willow warblers were more frequently recorded within the Study Area at Lime Down C, D, and E, with a peak count of six individuals at Lime Down C in a single visit. At Lime Down C and D, the species was recorded almost exclusively in the scattered scrub and hedgerow habitat along the railway embankment that runs east to west within these areas, which represents the preferred nesting habitat for the species. Distribution was more sporadic at Lime Down E, although one or two willow warblers were noted within Field E22 on three occasions, indicating the presence of a possible territory. Breeding at these areas was considered probable.

Woodpigeon

- 1.3.117 Woodpigeons were relatively widespread across the Study Area, with a peak count of 134 individuals recorded during Visit 3 in April 2024. No signs of breeding were noted during the surveys, however suitable habitat typically comprising trees and hedgerows is also widespread throughout the Solar PV Sites. It was therefore considered probable that woodpigeons utilise the Solar PV Sites for breeding.

Wren

- 1.3.118 Wren was among the most abundant of the small passerines, alongside linnet and yellowhammer, with a total of 631 individuals recorded during the surveys and peak count across all sites of 127 during Visit 5 in May 2024.
- 1.3.119 Families were recorded within the Study Area at Lime Down C and E, during Visit 1 in June 2023, and suitable nesting habitat (dense, low growing vegetation) was widespread. Although no definitive signs of breeding were recorded within the Study Area across the rest of the Solar PV Sites, it was considered probable that wrens utilise Lime Down A, B, and D for breeding.

Summary of Breeding Status of Key Species

- 1.3.120 In total, seven species were confirmed as breeding within the Study Area, including jackdaw, kestrel, skylark, dunnoek, whitethroat, wren, and yellowhammer. Of these, skylark are the only ground-nesting species that typically nest in open arable and grassland fields. Breeding was considered probable in at least one of Lime Down A-E for a further 20 species.
- 1.3.121 **Table 9-4-15** below summarises the breeding status of key species across the Study Area.

Table 9-4-15: Summary of Breeding Status of Notable Species and Species of Conservation Concern at the Solar PV Sites*¹

Common Name	Breeding Status at Sites Lime Down A-E					No. of Sites Where Breeding Confirmed (/5)
	A	B	C	D	E	
Birds Predominantly Associated with Open Arable/Grassland Habitats, including Field Margins						
Black-headed Gull	-	-	Un.	-	Un.	0
Goldfinch	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	0
Grey Partridge	Po.	Pr.	Po.	Po.	Po.	0
Grey Wagtail	-	-	-	-	Po.	0
Greylag Goose	-	-	-	-	Un.	0
Herring Gull	-	Un.	Un.	Un.	-	0
Hobby	-	Po.	Po.	-	-	0
House Martin	-	-	Un.	Un.	-	0
House Sparrow	-	-	Po.	Po.	-	0
Jackdaw	Po.	Po.	Co.	Co.	Co.	3
Kestrel	Po.	-	Co.	-	Po.	1
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Un.	Un.	Un.	Un.	Un.	0
Linnet	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	0
Mallard	-	-	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	0
Marsh Tit	-	-	-	-	Po.	0
Meadow Pipit	Po.	Po.	Po.	Po.	Po.	0
Moorhen	Po.	-	-	-	-	0
Quail	-	-	-	Po.	-	0
Red Kite	-	Po.	Po.	Pr.	Po.	0
Redstart	-	-	-	Po.	-	0
Reed Bunting	-	Po.	Po.	Pr.	-	0
Rook	Po.	-	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	0
Skylark	Pr.	Pr.	Co.	Co.	Pr.	2
Snipe	-	Po.	Po.	Po.	-	0
Spotted Flycatcher	-	-	Un.	-	-	0
Stock Dove	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	0
Swallow	-	-	Po.	-	-	0
Swift	Po.	-	Un.	-	Po.	0

¹ Co. = Confirmed, Pr. = Probable, Po. = Possible, Un. = Unlikely

Common Name	Breeding Status at Sites Lime Down A-E					No. of Sites Where Breeding Confirmed (/5)
	A	B	C	D	E	
Wheatear	-	-	Po.	-	Po.	0
Whimbrel	-	-	-	Un.	-	0
Woodpigeon	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	0
Yellow Wagtail	-	-	Po.	Po.	Pr.	0
Birds Predominantly Associated with Other Habitats including Boundary Habitats and Watercourses						
Bullfinch	Po.	-	Pr.	-	Pr.	0
Corn Bunting	-	-	-	Pr.	-	0
Crossbill	-	-	-	-	Un.	0
Cuckoo	-	Po.	-	Po.	-	0
Dunnock	Pr.	Pr.	Co.	Pr.	Pr.	1
Grasshopper Warbler	-	-	-	Po.	-	0
Greenfinch	Po.	Po.	-	Po.	-	0
Hawfinch	-	-	-	-	Un.	0
Mistle Thrush	Po.	Po.	Pr.	Po.	Pr.	0
Song Thrush	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	0
Sparrowhawk	Po.	-	Po.	Po.	Po.	0
Starling	-	-	-	Po.	-	0
Whinchat	Po.	-	Po.	Po.	Po.	0
Whitethroat	Co.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Co.	2
Willow Warbler	Po.	-	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	0
Woodcock	-	-	Un.	-	-	0
Woodpigeon	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	0
Wren	Pr.	Pr.	Co.	Pr.	Co.	2
Yellowhammer	Pr.	Pr.	Co.	Co.	Pr.	2
Total No. of Species Confirmed as Breeding	1	0	6	3	3	

Non-Notable Species/Species Not of Conservation Concern

- 1.3.122 The primary aim of this report was to ascertain a baseline of breeding bird populations and assemblages for the Study Area. However, conservation priority species, including Schedule 1 species and amber and red-listed birds of conservation concern, have been prioritised to ensure focus on the species likely to be more vulnerable to the potential impacts of the Scheme.

- 1.3.123 **Table 9-4-16** below collates all other, non-notable species recorded within the Study Area across the surveys and indicates which species were confirmed to be breeding.
- 1.3.124 Generally, the additional non-notable species were generally common and widespread, including species typical of an agricultural landscape, as well as birds associated with woodlands and watercourses/waterbodies, reflecting the mosaic of habitats present at the Solar PV Sites.

Table 9-4-16: Additional Non-Notable Species Recorded at the Solar PV Sites (June 2023 – June 2025) *²

Common Name	Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name
Blackbird*	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Blue Tit*	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
Carrion Crow*	<i>Corvus corone</i>	Little Owl*	<i>Athene noctua</i>
Chaffinch*	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Magpie*	<i>Pica pica</i>
Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Raven*	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	Robin*	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker*	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Swallow*	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Treecreeper*	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>

1.4 Evaluation and Conclusion

- 1.4.1 This section sets out a summary of the results of surveys completed between June 2023 and June 2025 and provides an evaluation of the importance of the breeding bird assemblage within the Order Limits and surrounding area with the potential to be impacted by the Scheme.

² An Asterix denotes species that have been confirmed to be breeding within the Sites.

Evaluation

Solar PV Sites (Lime Down A-E)

- 1.4.2 Breeding bird surveys of Lime Down A-E completed between June 2023 and June 2025 have recorded a diverse assemblage of breeding bird species across the Sites, with both open fields and other habitats, such as hedgerows, woodland and watercourses, providing suitable nesting habitat for a wide range of species. Several ground-nesting species of conservation concern were recorded within the Solar PV Sites and were either confirmed or considered likely to be breeding, including skylark (with an estimated 167 territories recorded within the Study Area), yellow wagtail, and grey partridge, utilising the large agricultural fields and associated margins. Several passerine species were recorded breeding (or probably breeding) within hedgerows across the Solar PV Sites such as dunnock, whitethroat and yellowhammer.
- 1.4.3 The breeding bird assemblage recorded at the Solar PV Sites is considered to be of **District Importance**, given the diversity of species, particularly the diversity of species of conservation concern, and availability of suitable nesting habitat. The scale of the Solar PV Sites also contributes to this classification, as a proportionately large assemblage of birds was recorded during the surveys.

Cable Route Corridor

- 1.4.4 Whilst no breeding bird surveys have been undertaken within the CRC, the assessment of habitats for breeding birds concluded that habitats within the CRC are likely of similar value for breeding birds and a similar assemblage of breeding bird species are likely supported within the CRC. Surveys also identified habitats within the CRC suitable to provide nesting opportunities for a range of Schedule 1 species, although no evidence of breeding was noted by surveyors.
- 1.4.5 The breeding bird assemblage within the CRC is therefore also considered to be of **District Importance**.

Conclusion

- 1.4.6 The Solar PV Sites support a diverse assemblage of breeding birds, with widespread nesting opportunities for a range of common species and species of conservation concern. Overall, the Solar PV Sites are considered to be of similar value for the breeding bird assemblage, with variations in diversity and abundance of species reflected in the relative size of the Solar PV Sites.

- 1.4.7 Appropriate avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures relating to breeding birds are detailed within **ES Volume 1, Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity, EN010168/APP/6.1.**

1.5 References

- Ref 9-4-1 Bird Survey and Assessment Steering Group (2021) Bird Survey Guidelines for assessing ecological impacts. Available at: [REDACTED] [Accessed 19 August 2025]
- Ref 9-4-2 CIEEM (February 2022) Code of Professional Conduct. [REDACTED] Accessed 19 August 2025]
- Ref 9-4-3 CIEEM (2013) Competencies for Species Survey (CSS). [REDACTED] [Accessed 19 August 2025]
- Ref 9-4-4 The British Standards Institution (2013) BS42020: 2013 – Biodiversity: Code of Practice for Planning and Development. BSI Standards Ltd.
- Ref 9-4-5 Available at: <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx> [Accessed 19 August 2025]
- Ref 9-4-6 Wiltshire Biodiversity Partnership (2008) Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Ref 9-4-7 Bibby, C.J., Burgess, N.D., Hill, D.A. and Mustoe, S.H. (2000). Bird Census Techniques. Academic Press, London
- Ref 9-4-8 BTO (2022) Breeding Evidence. Available at: [REDACTED] [Accessed 19 August 2025]
- Ref 9-4-9 Marchant (1983) Common Bird Census Instructions. Available at: [CBC-instructions-g100.pdf](#) [Accessed 19 August 2025]