



L I Z A R D

Landscape Design and Ecology

WINTER BIRD SURVEY

Land at Lower Horsebridge

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Date	4 th March 2022
Document Reference	LLD1993
Revision	00

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SUMMARY

Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology has been commissioned by [REDACTED] Ecological Services Ltd (on behalf of Hertfordshire Holdings Ltd) to provide a winter bird survey of land at Lower Horsebridge, East Sussex (*Centred on Grid Reference: TQ 575 111 – hereafter referred to as 'the site'*). Surveys were undertaken weekly between late January and late February 2022, all surveys were undertaken in accordance with the BTO English Winter Bird Survey Methodology.

The surveys revealed the site to be used by a relatively limited species assemblage. The surveys recorded 20 species of bird using the site, of which five are 'Red' listed and two 'Amber' listed.

The areas of site proposed for development were rarely used by birds, and the proposed developments are considered to have a 'negligible' impact upon winter birds, and no impact upon birds for which the nearby Pevensey Levels SSSI is designated.

The development of these areas of the site would not require any specific mitigation to maintain the favourable conservation status of bird species at the site or in the wider vicinity. To accord with current legislation and best practice regarding ecological enhancement, the proposals should seek to buffer the edge of the development with hedge, tree or shrub planting such that the floodzone areas which are being retained will be subject to minimal ongoing disturbance. This would allow birds to continue using the entirety of the site and would result in an enhancement for some 'Red' listed species such as greenfinch and tree sparrow.

The majority of the site is being retained as part of the flood zone.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology has been commissioned by [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Ecological Services Ltd (on behalf of Hertfordshire Holdings Ltd) to provide a winter bird survey of land at Lower Horsebridge, East Sussex
(Centred on Grid Reference: TQ 575 111 – hereafter referred to as ‘the site’.

1.2 Surveys were undertaken weekly between late January and late February 2022, all surveys were undertaken in accordance with the BTO English Winter Bird Survey Methodology.

1.3 Field survey data has been collected by [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

Survey Rationale

1.4 Pevensey Levels is located 2.35km south-east of the site. The Levels consist of a large area of low-lying grazing meadows intersected by a complex system of ditches which show a wide variety of form and species composition and support important communities of wetland flora and fauna. The site supports one nationally rare and several nationally scarce aquatic plants and many nationally rare invertebrates.

- 1.5 Ornithologically, the site is of national importance and designated as a SSSI as the number of wintering lapwings has regularly exceeded 1% of the total British population in recent years. Pevensey Levels is designated as a Ramsar site for the outstanding assemblage of ditch flora and fauna. The numbers of snipe *Gallinago gallinago* may also be of national importance but exact data relating to the country's wintering population is as yet unavailable. Wintering golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria* are of local significance and in some years are of national importance. Sedge warblers *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* and reed warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* which nest in scrub close to water and reeds in the ditches respectively, breed in numbers of local significance. The site also supports about one fifth of the breeding yellow wagtails *Motacilla flava* in Sussex.
- 1.6 The site is formed of a large field laid to grassland, with the Cuckmere River forming the southern boundary and several water courses running north through the site. The site was considered potentially suitable to support foraging wildfowl including Annex I species known to utilise the SPA such as snipe, golden plover and lapwing, and therefore winter bird surveys were undertaken.

Development Proposals

- 1.7 The development proposals consist of residential development to the west and north-east of the site. The majority of the site will be retained as floodplain land.

2.0 SCOPE OF THE SURVEY

2.1 The aim of the winter bird survey was:

- *To identify the main bird species using the site and adjacent arable fields;*
- *To establish whether the site is of importance to any species for which the local Pevensey Levels SSSI is designated;*
- *To allow the formulation of a suitable mitigation strategy (should one be required).*

3.0 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The survey area was selected as the site itself, with the surroundings of the site being largely unsuitable for winter birds (*residential, roads and recreation grounds*). A line transect (*see Figure No. 01*) was set up ensuring all areas could be surveyed using binoculars and telescope as appropriate, whilst giving consideration to not disturbing birds prior to their recording. The site and surrounding fields were each assigned a number in order to be able to identify them (*see Figure No. 01: Winter Bird Survey Field Plan*). Survey work was undertaken by experienced bird surveyors.
- 3.2 Survey visits were undertaken in accordance with the BTO English Winter Bird Survey Methodology, with the two transects within a 1km square being replaced by one large transect through the site which covers c.0.18 square kilometres. Transects were walked four times during the winter period. Survey timings were compressed, from one survey per month to one survey per week. The surveys were conducted during good daylight (*between one hour after sunrise and one hour before sunset*). Each visit took between two and four hours to complete at a slow, methodical pace and avoiding adverse weather conditions such as heavy rain, strong winds or poor visibility when activity is decreased. Weather conditions were recorded for each visit, these are shown in Table No. 01 below. The Pevensey Levels are not tidally-fluctuating nor tidal habitats, and as such the tidal period was not considered as a significant factor.
- 3.3 The numbers, location, species and general activity of any birds was recorded and digital plans of the BTO codes of birds digitised onto site plans (*refer to Appendices for further details*).

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Field Survey

4.1.1 Weather conditions during the surveys are shown in Table No. 01.

Table No. 01: Weather and tidal conditions during survey

Survey	Surveyor	Date	Time	Weather Conditions
01	WM	28.01.2022	12:00	Sunny, no wind, 7.5°C
02	WM, JH	07.02.2022	13:00	Sunny, no wind, 8°C
03	CO	14.02.2022	10:00	Sunny, WF3, 12°C
04	CF, AR	23.02.2022	10:00	4/8 Cloud, WF3, 9°C

4.3.2 A total of 20 no. bird species were recorded during the surveys.

4.3.3 Of the species recorded, 5 (25% of species) were of red-listed and England BAP species; 2 (10% of species) were amber listed, and 13 (65% of species). Those species which are of conservation concern were recorded fairly frequently but not in major numbers, with combined peak counts of all red species totalling 27 birds and all amber totalling 32 birds; most of the red-listed birds being herring gull and the amber being black-headed gull.

4.3.4 None of the birds of relevance to the SSSI (*lapwing*, *snipe* or *golden plover*) were noted on or near the site on any survey.

4.3.5 Species composition was typical of such lowland grassland sites, with a relatively large number of black-headed and herring gulls. Of note otherwise was a single tree sparrow (red listed).

4.3.6 Red-listed species were rarely recorded close to the proposed development areas; a group of herring gulls were recorded close to the western and north-eastern development areas, each only once. A greenfinch was recorded once within a small copse relatively close to the western development area.

Table No. 02: Numbers of Birds Recorded During Surveys

Common Name	Scientific Name	Peak Count (Entire Site)	BoCC5 Status	Schedule 1 Listed	England BAP	BTO Code
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	31	Amber	No	No	BH
Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	2	Green	No	No	BT
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	1	Green	No	No	BZ
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	7	Green	No	No	C.
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	12	Green	No	No	GO
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	1	Green	No	No	GS
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	2	Green	No	No	GT
Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	1	Red	No	No	GR
Herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	12	Red	No	Yes	HG
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	5	Red	No	Yes	HS
Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	6	Green	No	No	JD
Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	2	Green	No	No	LT
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	4	Green	No	No	MG
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	1	Amber	No	No	MA
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	2	Green	No	No	R.
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	1	Green	No	No	RO
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	8	Red	No	Yes	SG
Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	1	Red	No	Yes	TS
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	30	Green	No	No	WP
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	1	Green	No	No	WR

Constraints

- 4.3.7 The wintering bird survey work was commissioned in mid-January, with surveys then carried out weekly between late January and late February 2022. Whilst this is a compressed survey period (with surveys ideally starting November) the correct methodology and number of surveys for a whole season has been undertaken to ensure sufficient and robust results. The consistency of the results, and low levels of diversity in general suggest that the results obtained are likely to be a robust indicator of the bird assemblages found within and immediately surrounding the site.

5.0 EVALUATION

- 5.1 Overall the surveys found a range of twenty species of birds using the survey area. The majority of these were common birds including garden birds and gulls. Five red-listed species and two amber-listed species were noted; however, None of the birds of relevance to the SSSI (*lapwing, snipe or golden plover*) were noted on or near the site on any survey.
- 5.2 Although the site did appear to support small numbers of 'Red' and 'amber' listed species, these species were relatively common gull or garden bird species, recorded in relatively low numbers and rarely recorded near to proposed development areas, where very little winter bird activity was recorded.
- 5.3 All of the 'Red' and 'amber' listed species are cosmopolitan species, very tolerant of human activity. This is likely why they persist on a site with residential properties, roads and recreation grounds surrounding it. The development of small discrete areas of the site would stand to have a 'negligible' impact upon winter birds, and no impact upon birds for which the nearby Pevensey Levels SSSI is designated.
- 5.4 The development of these areas of the site would not require any specific mitigation to maintain the favourable conservation status of bird species at the site or in the wider vicinity. To accord with current legislation and best practice regarding ecological enhancement, the proposals should seek to buffer the edge of the development with hedge, tree or shrub planting such that the floodzone areas which are being retained will be subject to minimal ongoing disturbance. This would allow birds to continue using the entirety of the site and would result in an enhancement for some 'Red' listed species such as greenfinch and tree sparrow.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Winter Bird Surveys were carried out from January to February 2022 on the site in order to identify the bird species using the area and establish if the site is of importance to any species relating to the nearby SSSI.
- 6.2 The surveys revealed the site to be used by a relatively limited species assemblage. The surveys recorded 20 species of bird using the site, of which five are 'Red' listed and two 'Amber' listed.
- 6.3 The areas of site proposed for development were rarely used by birds, and the proposed developments are considered to have a 'negligible' impact upon winter birds, and no impact upon birds for which the nearby Pevensy Levels SSSI is designated.
- 6.4 The development of these areas of the site would not require any specific mitigation to maintain the favourable conservation status of bird species at the site or in the wider vicinity. To accord with current legislation and best practice regarding ecological enhancement, the proposals should seek to buffer the edge of the development with hedge, tree or shrub planting such that the floodzone areas which are being retained will be subject to minimal ongoing disturbance. This would allow birds to continue using the entirety of the site and would result in an enhancement for some 'Red' listed species such as greenfinch and tree sparrow.

7.0 REFERENCES

British Trust for Ornithology (2022). BTO Species Codes. Available online at: https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u16/downloads/forms_instructions/bto_bird_species_codes.pdf

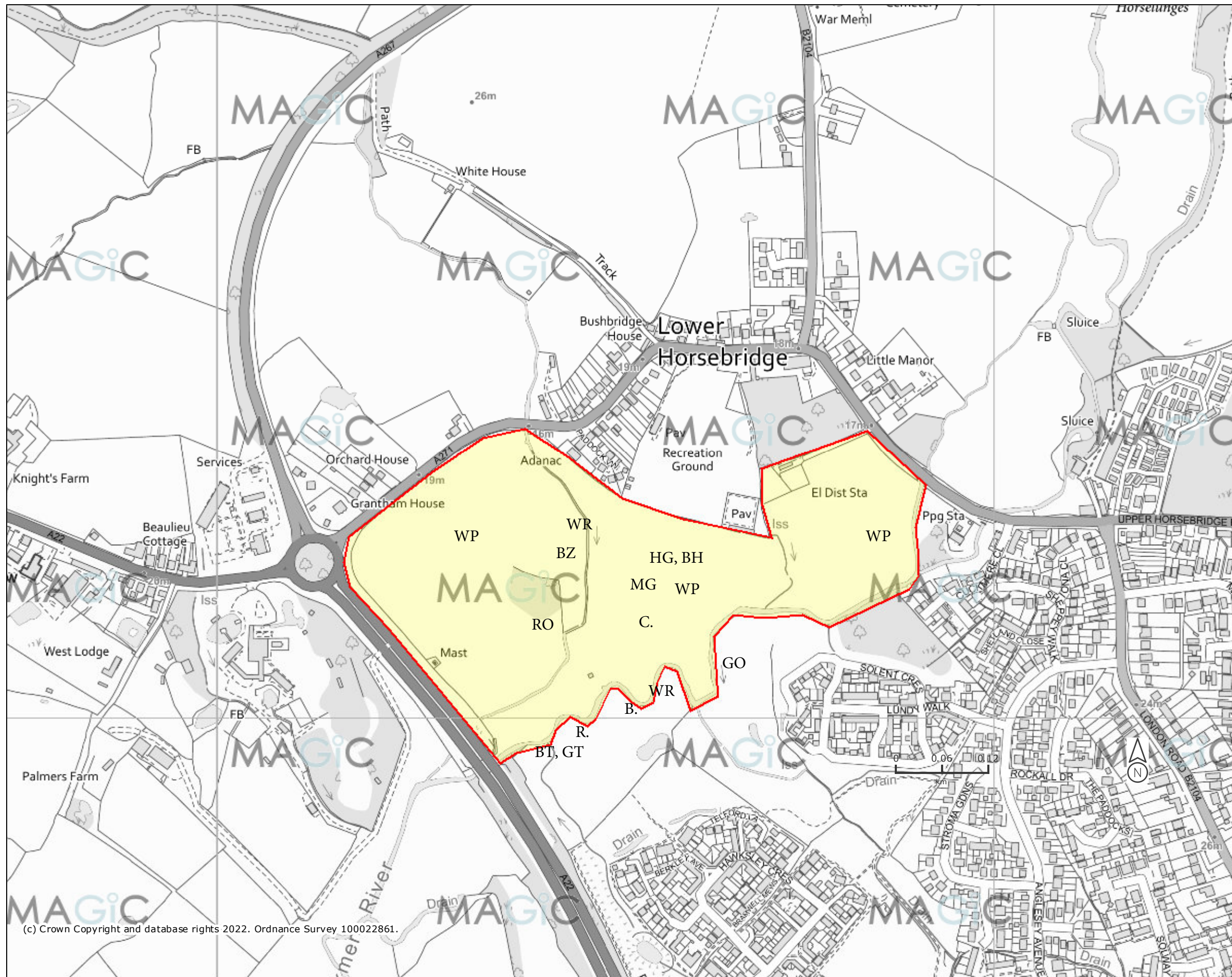
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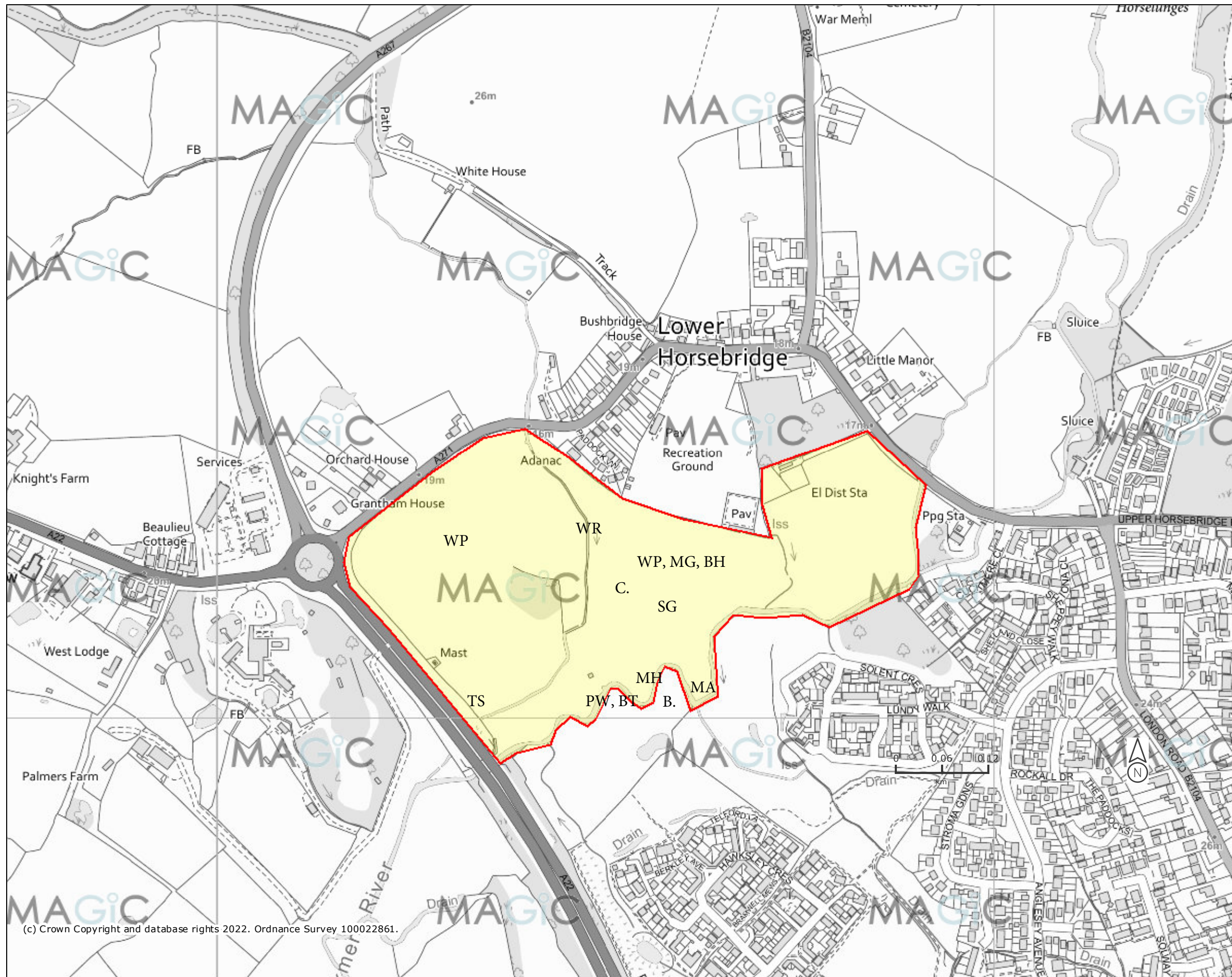
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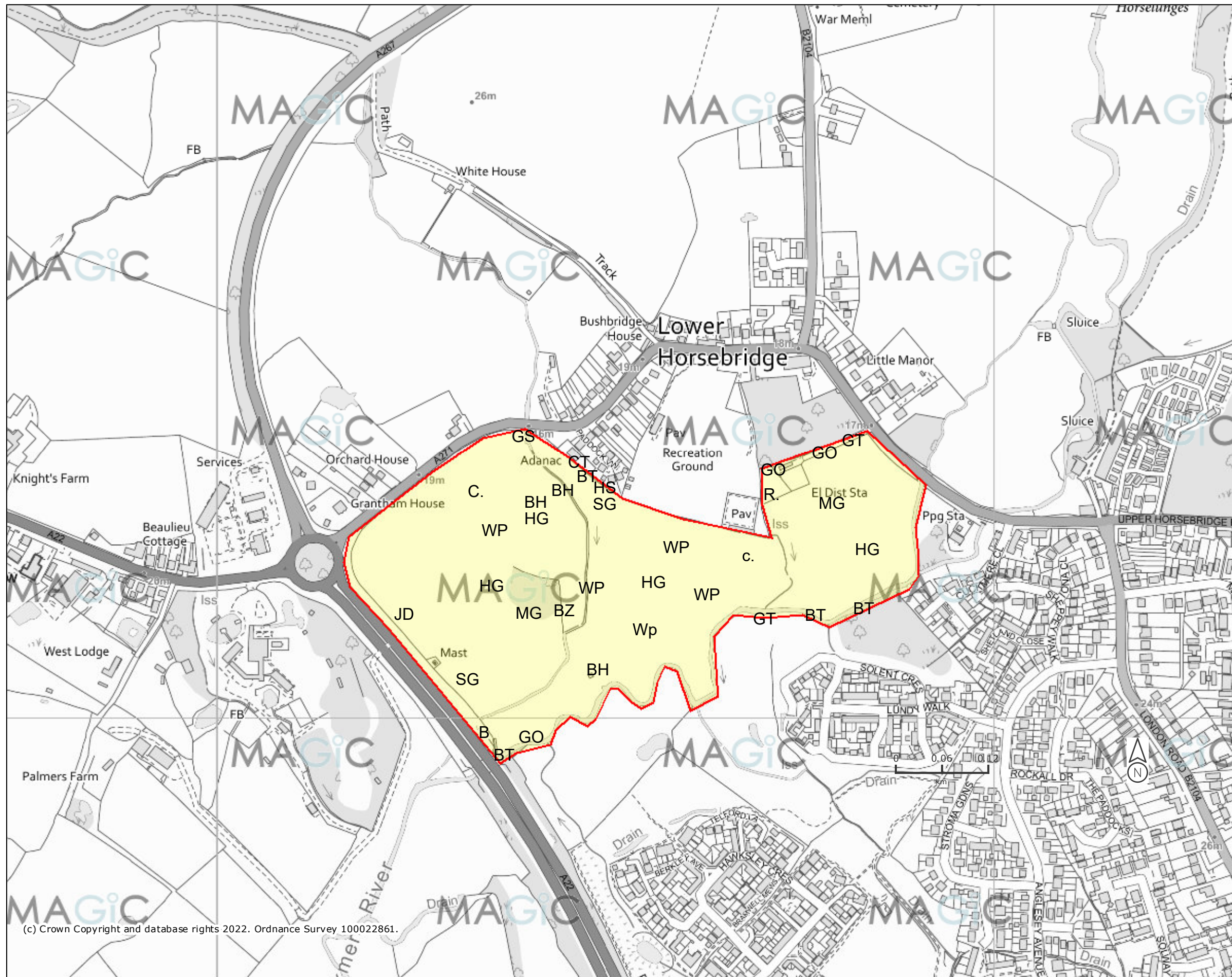
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Figure No. 01 - Winter Survey Field Plan
Appendix A – Survey Plans







Projection = OSGB36

xmin = 556500

ymin = 110800

xmax = 558500

ymax = 111800

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