

# Skylark Technical Note



**Tyler  
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**Land West of Thaxted Road,  
Saffron Walden  
17<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

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14764_R04	17 <sup>th</sup> January 2023	a	Harry Du Bois- Jones BSc	Aaron Grainger BSc MSC MCIEEM	Aaron Grainger BSc MSC MCIEEM



## Background

- 1.1. As a consequence of the development proposed on Land West of Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden (UTT/22/3258/PINS), breeding bird surveys were undertaken in May, June, and July 2022. The site comprises arable crop. The surveys identified one probable breeding territory for skylark on the site. The development will involve removing the suitable arable crop habitat, and so it is assumed that one potential skylark territory will be lost on the development site. Comments received from Place Services at Essex County Council on 23rd December 2022 raised objection to the Ecological Assessment prepared by Tyler Grange in support of the development. The objection stated that there was insufficient information provided to ensure that impacts to skylark would be suitable mitigated.
- 1.2. The site is surrounded by arable fields subject to crop rotation, and skylark were also observed off-site to the south and east during the breeding bird surveys. It is therefore considered that any skylark territories on or adjacent to the site likely vary in location in accordance with the crop rotation applied to these fields.
- 1.3. The red line boundary for the development site is presented in **Figure 1** below.



**Figure 1** - The development site (red line).

## Skylark Compensation

- 1.4. To compensate for the lost territory on the development site, it is proposed that skylark plots be introduced on neighbouring arable land, the exact location of which will be confirmed through agreement with a third-party landowner.
- 1.5. It is proposed that at least two skylark plots are introduced onto neighbouring arable land, and their creation and maintenance adheres to the following principles:
  - Plots will be located in an arable crop field of an area of 5ha or more, with an open aspect.
  - Plots will comprise an area of 16m<sup>2</sup> where crop seed is not sown, as a minimum.
  - Plots will be located at least 50 metres from any hedgerows or boundaries, and located away from tramlines.
  - Plots will be spaced at a density of 2x plots per hectare.



## Conclusions

- 1.6. The above principles for creating off-site plots for skylark will be outlined in more detail within a Farmland Bird Mitigation Strategy, which could be secured by a suitably worded condition. This strategy will also confirm the management of the site for the benefit of skylark for at least 10 years. This strategy will also confirm how the funds for the management of the proposed skylark plots could be controlled. A further 'Grampian' condition can also be attached to a decision notice to secure the delivery of skylark plots, requiring works to have been completed on third-party land prior to the commencement of development works.
- 1.7. Given the loss of one skylark territory on site and the proposed provision of two skylark plots within the locality, it is considered that the proposed development would represent an overall improvement for skylark habitat in the locality.





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