

Annex 35.5

Breeding Bird Survey Results:
Cherry Cobb Sands (fields)

*(Institute of Estuarine and
Coastal Studies University of
Hull)*

the
INSTITUTE
of
ESTUARINE
and
COASTAL
STUDIES

**Breeding Bird Survey Results:
Cherry Cobb Sands (fields)**

Report to Able UK Ltd

Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies
University of Hull

16th May 2011

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Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies (IECS)

Able UK Ltd

Breeding Bird Survey Results: Cherry
Cobb Sands (fields)

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Reference No: SBB327-F-2011

For and on behalf of the Institute of
Estuarine and Coastal Studies

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	I
SUMMARY	1
1. INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY	2
1.1 Introduction	2
1.2 Methodology	2
1.2.1 Breeding Bird Survey.....	2
1.2.2 Data interpretation.....	2
2 RESULTS	5
2.1 Survey Log.....	5
2.2 Species Accounts	5
2.2.1 Red List, Amber List and Schedule 1 Species recorded as possible, probable, confirmed breeders within the survey area.....	5
CONCLUSION.....	10

SUMMARY

Four breeding bird surveys, utilising a modified Common Bird Census (CBC) / Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) methodology, were carried out between 31st March and 3rd May 2011 at the proposed Cherry Cobb Sands development area.

The survey route (c.8.5 miles long) was covered by foot with the survey starting shortly after sun rise and each visit lasting approximately five hours depending on breeding activity. All visual and aural avifaunal activity was noted on a site map using standard CBC species codes and activity mapping notation. The data derived from the survey was assessed to determine the numbers of breeding territories and the general usage.

Several Red-List Species were recorded as breeders (possible or probable) immediately within and within very close vicinity of the proposed development area. Farmland bird species were well represented across the survey area with Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) and Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*) present in good numbers in the wheat fields. Reed Buntings (*Emberiza schoeniclus*) were also well represented along the relict hedgerows bordering the fields and the vegetated soaking dykes. Breeding Linnets (*Carduelis cannabina*) were present in lower numbers and the species appears to show a preference for dense patches of Hawthorn (*Crataegus* sp.) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) present along the Cherry Cobb Sands Bank. The more mature and continuous hedgerows across the Cherry Cobb Sands Road supported several breeding territories of Yellowhammers (*Emberiza citrinella*). Other Red List species recorded in the survey area included Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix*).

There was no evidence after four visits of the presence of breeding birds listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

Data from the four breeding bird surveys suggest that in general, the habitats within the survey area are of low to moderate ornithological value, and are characteristic of assemblages associated with farmland habitat and the estuarine fringe of the Holderness area.

1. INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

Able UK Ltd commissioned the Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies (IECS) at the University of Hull to conduct four breeding bird surveys at the proposed Cherry Cobb Sands development area. The current report presents the survey methodology and the findings from the four surveys carried out between late March 2011 and early May 2011.

The main objective of the report is as follows:

- To determine abundance (number of pairs) and breeding status of Red List¹, Amber List and Schedule 1 Species recorded at the proposed Cherry Cobb Sands development area.

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 BREEDING BIRD SURVEY

Four breeding bird surveys, utilising a modified Common Bird Census (CBC) / Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) methodology, were carried between the 31st March and 3rd May. The survey route was walked over by foot with the survey starting shortly after sun rise and each visit lasting approximately around five hours depending on breeding activity. All visual and aural avifaunal activity was noted on a site map using standard CBC species codes and activity mapping notation. A full description of the survey techniques employed can be found in Bibby et al. (1992)². The survey route concentrated on grass banks, dykes, hedgerows and field margins, as these habitats were considered to present the main avifaunal interest of the site. In addition, areas of arable fields were also surveyed to ensure coverage of all habitats present. A hand-held Global Positioning System (GPS) was used to log the route followed by the observer. The route followed is shown in Figure 1.

1.2.2 DATA INTERPRETATION

The registrations from the four visits were analysed to determine the number of breeding birds within the survey area (number of pairs). Behaviour recorded in the field that could be indicative of breeding was used to determine the level of breeding evidence (possible, probable and confirmed) for each breeding bird registration. The categories are shown below (Table 1). The location of each breeding registration was subsequently mapped to indicate the nesting site / breeding territory. Table 3 summarises for each species the total number of pairs recorded as possibly, probably or confirmed breeding in the survey area. The location of each breeding registration was subsequently mapped to indicate the nesting site / breeding territory (Figures 2 & 3).

¹ Eaton M.A, Brown A.F, Noble D.G, Musgrove A.J, Hearn R, Aebischer N.J, Gibbons D.W, Evans A and Gregory R.D., 2009. Birds of Conservation Concern 3: the population status of birds in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. *British Birds* 102, pp296–341.

² Bibby, C.J., Burgess, N.D. & Hill, D.A., 1992. *Bird Census Techniques*. Academic Press.

Table 1: Level of breeding evidence

Possible breeder	
H	Species observed in breeding season in suitable nesting habitat
S	Singing male present (or breeding calls heard) in breeding season in suitable breeding habitat
Probable breeding	
P	Pair observed in suitable nesting habitat in breeding season
T	Permanent Territory presumed through registration of territorial behaviour (song etc) on at least two different days a week or more at the same place
D	Courtship and Display (judged to be in or near potential breeding habitat; be cautious with wildfowl)
N	Visiting probable Nest site
A	Agitated behaviour or anxiety calls from adults, suggesting probable presence of nest or young nearby
I	Brood patch on adult examined in the hand, suggesting Incubation
B	Nest Building or excavating nest-hole
Confirmed breeding	
DD	Distraction-Display or injury feigning
UN	Used Nest or eggshells found (occupied or laid within period of survey)
FL	Recently Fledged young (nidicolous species) or downy young (nidifugous species). Careful consideration should be given to the likely provenance of any fledged juvenile capable of significant geographical movement. Evidence of dependency on adults (e.g. feeding) is helpful. Be cautious, even if the record comes from suitable habitat.
ON	Adults entering or leaving nest-site in circumstances indicating Occupied Nest (including high nests or nest holes, the contents of which cannot be seen) or adults seen incubating
FF	Adult carrying Faecal sack or Food for young
NE	Nest containing Eggs
NY	Nest with Young seen or heard

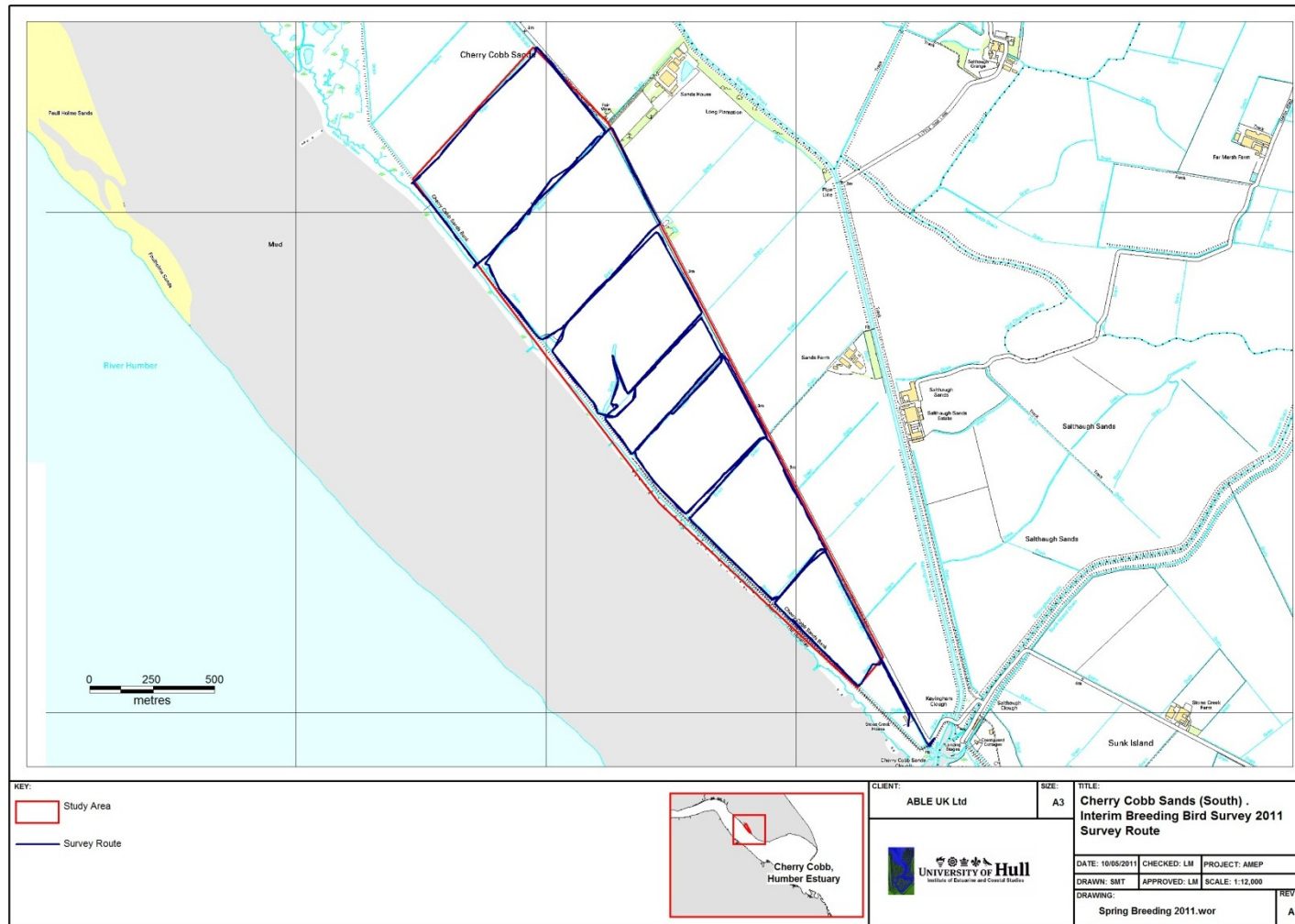


Figure 1: Survey route walked by the observer

2 RESULTS

2.1 Survey Log

The survey dates, time of visits and weather conditions are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Survey Log

Date	Start time	Finish time	Weather conditions
31/03/2011	06:30	11:00	Moderate rain South F3 until 08:00, overcast South F3 until 10:00, and sunny interval South until end of survey, visibility 10km+ throughout the survey
07/04/2011	06:30	11:00	Cloudy, West F4, visibility 10km+ throughout the survey
21/04/2011	05:15	10:30	Mist and band of fog, West F1-2, visibility 0 to 1km throughout the survey
03/05/2011	05:20	11:45	Cloudy, North East F4, visibility 10km+ throughout the survey

2.2 Species Accounts

As expected, the breeding bird assemblage was largely dominated by a breeding bird community characteristic of farmland habitats.

2.2.1 RED LIST, AMBER LIST AND SCHEDULE 1 SPECIES RECORDED AS POSSIBLE, PROBABLE, CONFIRMED BREEDERS WITHIN THE SURVEY AREA

Mallard (*Anas platyrhincos*): The species was well represented in the drains across the area surveyed. Several probable breeders were recorded along the drains, with the species showing a preference for the drain running parallel to the Cherry Cobb Sands Bank and to a lesser extent the Cherry Cobb Sands Drain along the Cherry Cobb Road.

Redshank (*Tringa totanus*): Two birds were recorded singing on the saltmarsh fronting the survey area on two separate visits. It is likely that several pairs nest on the nearby Cherry Cob Saltmarsh with their territories possibly extending to the foreshore of the survey area.

Grey Partridge: The species was not confirmed breeding but two individuals were identified as possible breeders (one pair). The pair was flushed from the grass bank near Stone Creek Houses at the south eastern part of the survey area.

Skylark: Of the Red List, Skylark was the most abundant breeding bird across the survey area, with the species showing a clear preference for the wheat fields. A total of 15 breeding Skylark territories were identified across the survey area.

Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*): Because of the scarcity of grassland fields across the area surveyed, the species was confined to the grass field margins and the fringing saltmarsh along the Cherry Cobb Sands Bank. 14 territories were identified as possibly supporting breeding pairs of Meadow Pipits. The species was found as a probable breeder at only one location after the four visits.

Yellow Wagtail: The species was a common breeder in the wheat fields and appeared to be evenly distributed across the survey area. Ten possible breeding territories were identified, with a further three identified as probably supporting breeding pairs of Yellow Wagtail.

Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*): The species was surprisingly scarce across the survey area. Two singing Dunnocks were heard in the hedgerow along the Cherry Cobb Sands Bank. The scarcity of this species possibly reflected the lack of suitable breeding habitat across the survey area i.e. scrubs.

Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*): The species was found to be associated with intermittent hedgerows and present in good numbers across the survey area. 21 breeding territories were identified i.e. 21 pairs, of which five were recorded as probable breeders.

Linnet: Breeding Linnets were confined to the hedgerow along the Cherry Cobb Sands Bank which supported possibly three breeding territories. It must be noted that the accurate number of breeding pairs was difficult to determine given the semi-colonial breeding behaviour of Linnet. Indeed, pairs can nest in very close proximity of each other. In addition, the presence of small flocks of Linnets on the saltmarsh fronting the survey area made it difficult to separate between the birds breeding within the survey area and those breeding further afield but foraging on the fronting saltmarsh.

Reed Bunting: The species was common and widespread across the survey area. 12 breeding territories were identified across the survey area with the species predominantly associated with relict hedgerows and vegetated soaking dykes.

Yellowhammer: The more mature and continuous hedgerows along the Cherry Cobb Sands road attracted several pairs of Yellowhammers. Five breeding territories were identified across the survey area.

Other breeding birds (Geen List) throughout the survey area included: Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), Blackbird (*Turdus merula*), Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*), Great Tit (*Parus major*), Magpie (*Pica Pica*), Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*), Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*), Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*), Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*) and Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*).

Table 3: Number of pairs of Red List, Amber List and Schedule 1 Species recorded as possible, probable and confirmed breeders between March 2011 and May 2011.

Species	BTO Codes	Status	Possible Breeding	Probable Breeding	Confirmed Breeding
Mallard	MA	Amber List	0	10	0
Redshank	RK	Amber List	2	0	0
Grey Partridge	P.	Red List	0	1	0
Skylark	S.	Red List	10	5	0
Meadow Pipit	MP	Amber List	14	1	0
Yellow Wagtail	YW	Red List	10	3	0
Duncock	D.	Amber List	2	0	0
Whitethroat	WH	Amber List	16	5	0
Linnet	LI	Red List	3	0	0
Reed Bunting	RB	Amber List	10	2	0
Yellowhammer	Y.	Red List	4	1	0

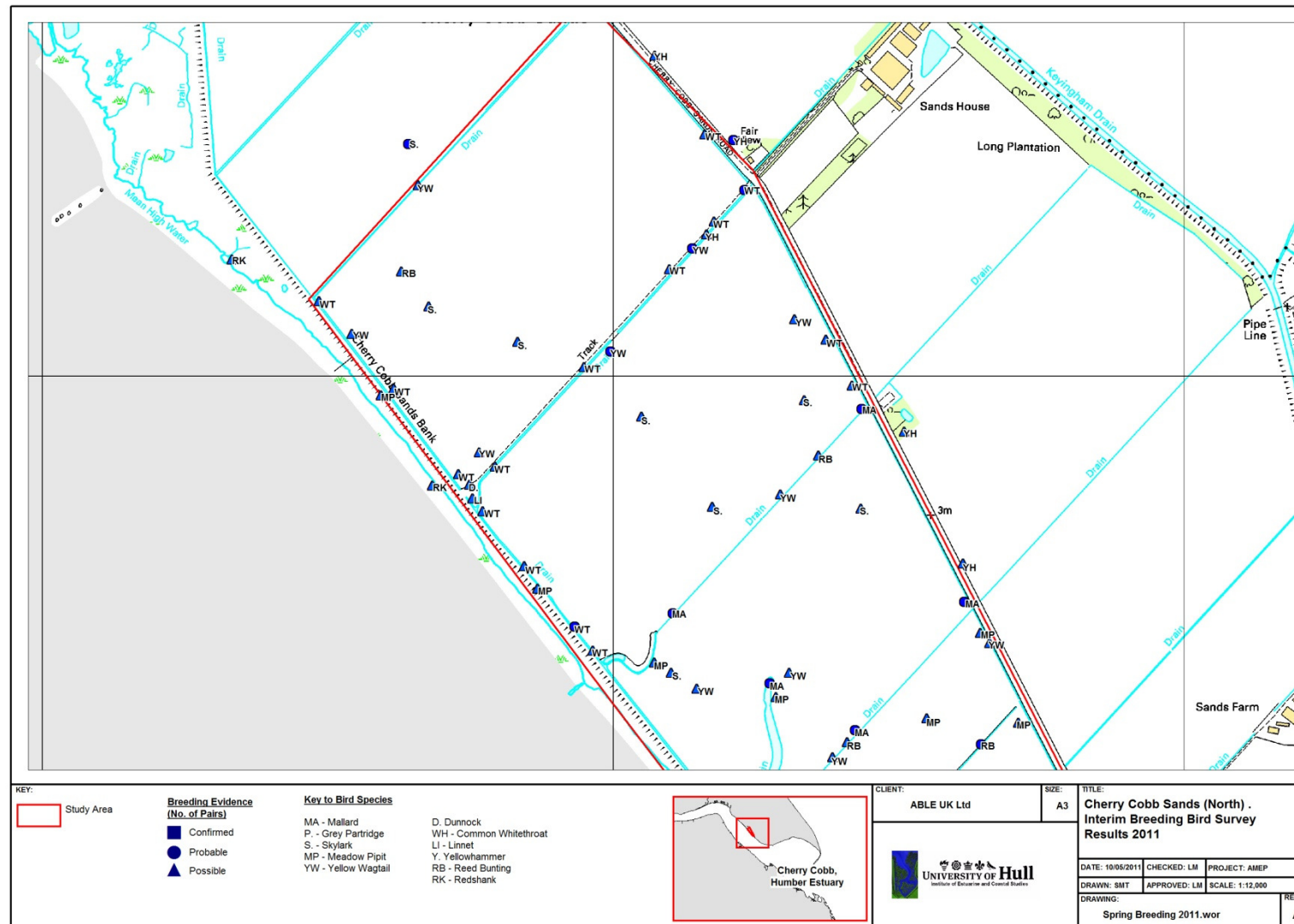


Figure 2: Map showing breeding status and location of breeding pairs across the survey area.

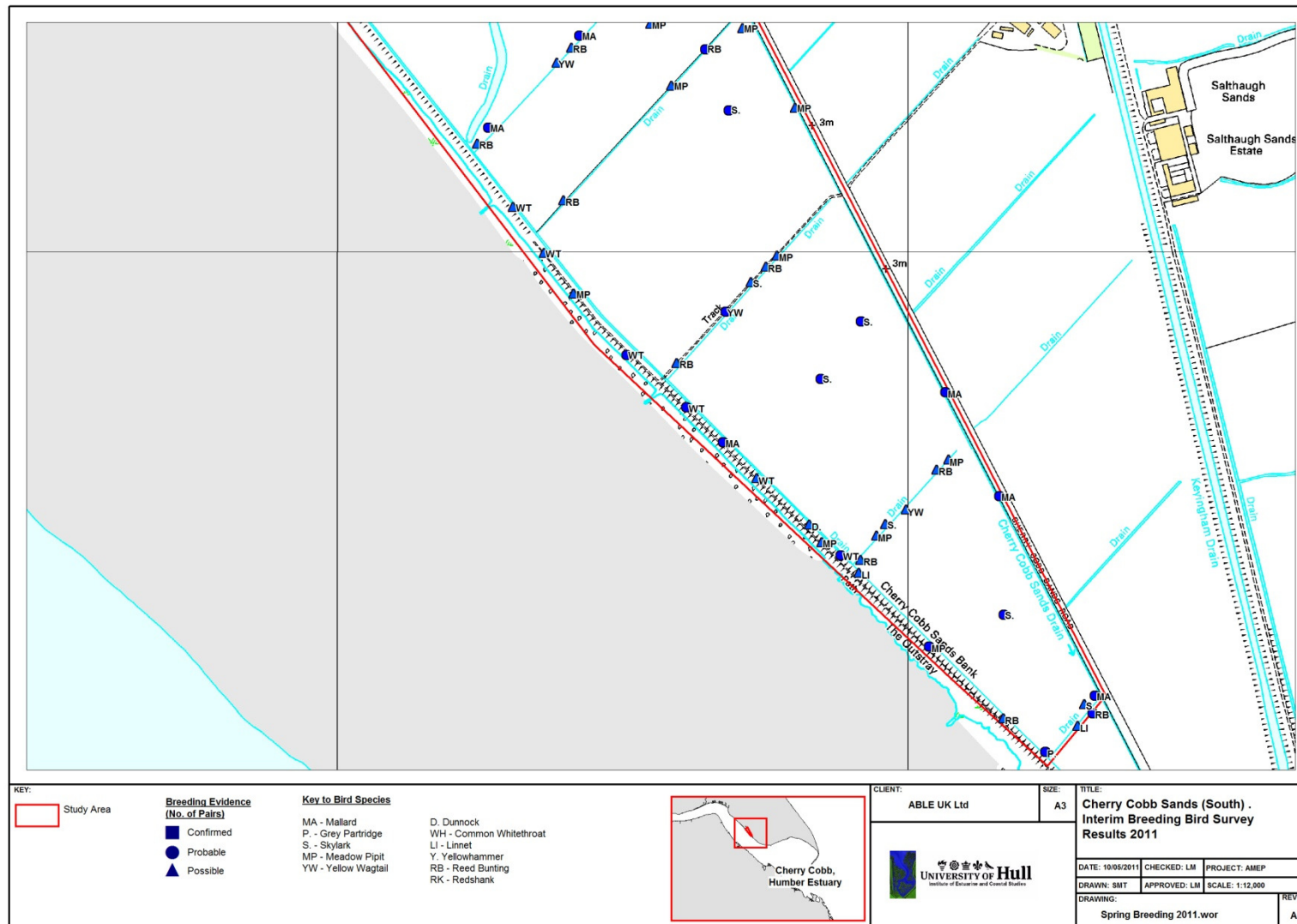


Figure 3: Map showing breeding status and location of breeding pairs across the survey area

CONCLUSION

Data from the four visits conducted suggested that in general, the habitats within the survey area are of low to moderate ornithological value, and are characteristic of assemblages associated with the estuarine fringe of the Holderness area. Skylark, Yellow Wagtail, Linnet, Yellowhammer, and Grey Partridge species identified breeding on the site during the survey, are included on the Red List as species of high Conservation Concern (Eaton et al, 2009), with a further six species included on the Amber List. There was no evidence after four visits of the presence of breeding birds listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).