NICHOLAS PEARSON ASSOCIATES

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNERS
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
ECOLOGISTS

Inglewood, Paignton

Cirl Bunting

Winter Survey 2018/19 & Breeding Survey 2019

A Report on behalf of Deeley Freed Estates

November 2019

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 An outline planning application (Torbay Council Planning Reference P/2017/1133) for a residential led development of up to 400* dwellings, together with the means of vehicular and pedestrian/cycle access, the principle of a public house, primary school with nursery, internal access roads and the provision of public open space (formal and informal) and strategic mitigation, was submitted in November 2017. *This has now been amended to "up to 373 dwellings".

1.2 The application was supported by both winter (2015/16) and breeding (2016) surveys for Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* (Ecological Baseline Report, NPA May 2017). At the time of writing the planning application has yet to be determined. Given the age of the surveys that initially informed the application, update surveys have been undertaken.

2.0 METHODS

Winter Surveys

2.1 Four survey visits were undertaken, by an experienced ornithologist with previous experience of Cirl Bunting surveys following the Cirl Bunting winter survey methodology set out in the RSPB's Survey Methodology to Establish Presence of Cirl Bunting on a Site (RSPB, 2017).

2.2 Details of the survey dates and weather information during the surveys are detailed in Table 1 below. All surveys were undertaken in the morning, commencing within an hour of sunrise and continuing for approximately 3.5 hours. Days with rain or strong winds were avoided. A walk route was followed passing within 10m of each field boundary though there was some variance in the route to avoid livestock and at least one side of each hedgerow was surveyed on all occasions with the exception of one hedgerow length (hedgerows 12 and 16, see Phase 1 Habitat Map) on the western side of the survey area. However, it was possible to effectively survey this hedgerow from distance with binoculars.

Table 1: Cirl Bunting Winter Survey Details

Date	Surveyor	Times	Weather
30/11/2018	Mark Tunmore	08:30—12:00	2/8 cloud cover, dry, Beaufort Force 3 westerly, 10°C at survey end.
30/12/2018	Mark Tunmore	08:25–11:45	6/8 cloud cover, dry, Beaufort Force 2 westerly, 11°C at survey end.
21/01/2019	Mark Tunmore	09:00–12:30	3/8 cloud cover, dry, calm, 8°C at survey end
11/02/2019	Mark Tunmore	07:55–11:20	2/8 cloud cover, dry, Beaufort Force 2 westerly, 12°C at survey end.

2.3 During the surveys, all Cirl Buntings either seen or heard were mapped accurately onto a map noting, the appropriate BTO behaviour codes, the time, habitat, movements and behaviour of each individual or pair. Records, such as age and sex of each individual bird, were recorded where possible.

Breeding Surveys

2.4 Five survey visits were undertaken, by an experienced ornithologist with previous experience of Cirl Bunting surveys following the Cirl Bunting breeding survey methodology set out in the RSPB guidance.

2.5 Details of the survey dates and weather information during the surveys are detailed in Table 2 below. All surveys were undertaken in the morning, after sunrise and ending before 11.00. Days with rain or strong winds were avoided. A walk route was followed passing within 10m of each field boundary though there was some variance in the route to avoid livestock and at least one side of each hedgerow was surveyed on all occasions with the exception of one hedgerow length (hedgerows 12 and 16, see Phase 1 Habitat Map) on the western side of the survey area. However, it was possible to effectively survey this hedgerow from distance with binoculars.

2.6 A separate general breeding bird survey was carried out, usually a day either side of the April, May and June Cirl Bunting surveys. Some additional observations from these surveys are referred to in Table 4.

2.7 In accordance with the RSPB guidance records were then clustered to estimate the minimum number of territories present.

Table 2: Cirl Bunting Breeding Survey Details

Date	Surveyor	Times	Weather
25/04/2019	Mark Tunmore	08:00—11:00	4/8 cloud cover, occasional showers initially, becoming sunny, Beaufort Force 3 south-westerly, 10°C at survey end.
27/05/2019	Mark Tunmore	07:15–10:30	3/8 to 6/8 cloud cover, dry, Beaufort Force 3 westerly, sunny, 15°C at survey end.
23/06/2019	Mark Tunmore	06:50–10:00	8/8 cloud cover, dry, Beaufort Force 3 south-westerly, 16°C at survey end
22/07/2019	Mark Tunmore	07:10–10:25	8/8 cloud cover, dry but humid, Beaufort Force 2 south-westerly, 18°C at survey end.
28/08/2019	Mark Tunmore	07:30–10:30	8/8 cloud cover, dry to 10.00 then light precipitation, Beaufort Force 3 westerly, 15°C at survey end.

3.0 RESULTS

Winter Surveys

3.1 As detailed in Table 3 and recorded on the winter survey maps (Visits 1-4) Cirl Buntings were seen on three of the four visits, only the January visit proving negative.

3.2 The maximum number of birds seen was three, although it was not always easy to be certain that sightings of a bird close to a previous sighting was the same bird. Professional judgement was applied in such cases, erring on the side of caution. It is possible that undercounting may have occurred on occasion and the maximum number of possible birds on any single visit would have been 4 on the final visit.

Table 3: Cirl Bunting Winter Survey Results

Date	Cirl Bunting Observations	Total number observed
30/11/2018	Male and female seen together in north-west corner of site, perched in Ash in roadside hedge. The male was also heard singing. An additional sighting of a male in the opposite hedge was thought likely to be one of the same birds.	2 (male and female)
30/12/2018	Female seen in roadside hedge then flew to opposite hedgerow. Male heard singing from tall Beech in hedgerow in north-east corner of site. Different male heard singing in southern boundary hedge.	3
21/01/2019	None	0
11/02/2019	Male heard singing in roadside Ash in north-west corner of site. Male seen 20 minutes later foraging in muddy field then 8 minutes later male heard singing from nearby hedge. All sightings thought to relate to the same bird. Male and female seen in the same area at end of survey. A different male heard singing in field to the west of the survey area.	3–4 (2–3 males and one female)

3.3 A distinct preference was shown for the north-west corner of the survey area where male and female birds were observed on three of the survey visits, the male singing regularly from roadside hedgerows and occasionally foraging in the muddy field where cattle had been feeding. Singing males were also observed in three other parts of the survey area, singing from boundary hedges and trees.

3.4 If it is assumed that across all four surveys that the singing males were different birds, as they were in four widely separated locations (a not unreasonable assumption), this would bring the maximum number of birds observed across the survey area to five (4 males and one female, assuming that the female seen in the north-west field was always the same bird).

Breeding Surveys

3.5 As detailed in Table 4 and recorded on the breeding survey maps (Visits 1-5) Cirl Buntings were seen on all five visits, peak activity being noted on the April and July visits.

3.6 As shown on the Cirl Bunting Estimated Breeding Territories map, it is estimated that a minimum of six breeding territories were present within/adjacent to the survey area, with five of these being concentrated in the south-east.

Table 4: Cirl Bunting Breeding Survey Results

Date	Cirl Bunting Observations	Total number of Cirl Buntings
25/4/2019	3 to 4 singing males seen in the south of the survey area; two singing males in the central part of the survey area three days later on the breeding bird survey.	5–6 singing males taken over both dates.
27/05/2019	Two males. One singing from top of a young Oak in the plantation in the north of the survey area. One feeding on bare ground at the field edge in the south of the survey area and later seen in the hedge but did not sing. The previous day a single singing male was noted on a hedgerow in the southern part of the survey area.	2–3
23/06/2019	A male was singing from hedgerows and telegraph wires in the north of the survey area, observed in four different locations on boundaries of the same field. A second male was seen in the top of a Hazel sapling in the south of the site. The previous day on the general breeding bird survey two singing males were observed—one in the location in the north of the survey area described above and a second in the south of the survey area.	2
22/07/2019	A female was seen and heard calling in a hedge in the north of the survey area. A pair were seen on the northern boundary of the southernmost field for a prolonged period, feeding amongst the crop at the edge of the field and sitting in the hedgerow silently. A singing male was noted in the western boundary of that field. A total of three birds were heard singing at the same time at the southern end of this field (one within the survey area and two outside) and it is not clear whether an additional singing bird heard at a different time was one of these birds.	4–5 singing males, one additional pair and another female.
28/08/2019	A single female or juvenile was seen briefly in the hedgerow forming the north-west boundary of the survey area.	1

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The winter surveys continued to record the presence of Cirl Buntings in the off-site field to the north east. The maximum number of Cirl Buntings recorded in 2018/19 was 5, which is an increase on the 3 recorded in 2015/2016 (See Ecological Baseline Report, NPA May 2017), but less than the 7 seen in the off-site woodland planting field to the north of the site in February 2017, during a site visit by the RSPB, ecologist representing Torbay and NPA.

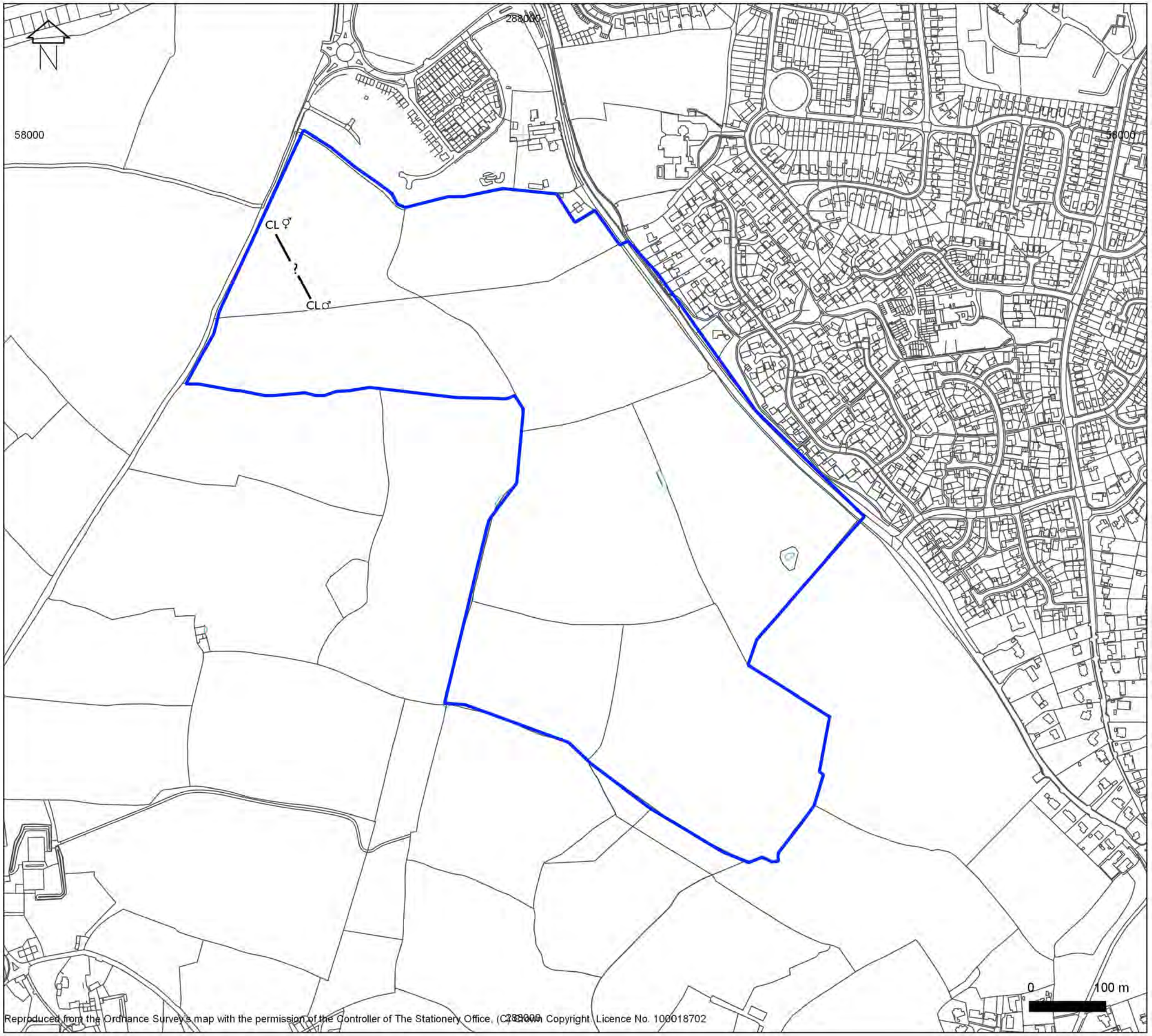
4.2 The breeding surveys recorded a minimum of 2 estimated breeding territories within/overlapping with the proposed built development boundary, and 4 estimated breeding territories outside the proposed built development area. In the 2016 surveys 3 estimated breeding territories were recorded within the proposed built development boundary and 4 estimated breeding territories were recorded outside the proposed built development area.

4.3 The Cirl Bunting Development Guidance Note[1] states that Cirl Buntings usually forage within 250m of their nests and that if more than 0.7ha of suitable habitat within this 250m is to be lost, then at least 2.5ha of suitable habitat should be provided per territory as mitigation.

4.4 Based on the 250m radius, greater than 0.7ha of habitat would be lost from 4 of the territories recorded in 2019 (from the 3 recorded within the red line and the territory recorded furthest south). It was also the case that greater than 0.7ha of habitat would be lost from 4 of the territories recorded in the 2016 survey.

4.5 Given the above it is considered that the conclusions with regards to Cirl Buntings in the ecology chapter of the Environmental Statement (Stride Treglown, November 2017) that supported the application remain valid. This is based on the proposals still providing more than sufficient mitigation for Cirl Buntings (especially given the habitat enhancements proposed in close proximity to the majority of the breeding territories recorded 2019) which would avoid a residual negative impact during construction and would result in a significant positive impact in the long term.

[1] Devon County Council, Teignbridge District Council, Torbay Council and RSPB, October 2017: Wildlife and development guidance note: Cirl Bunting



Key

Survey Boundary

CL - Cirl Bunting

See British Trust for Ornithology for key to standard activity codes

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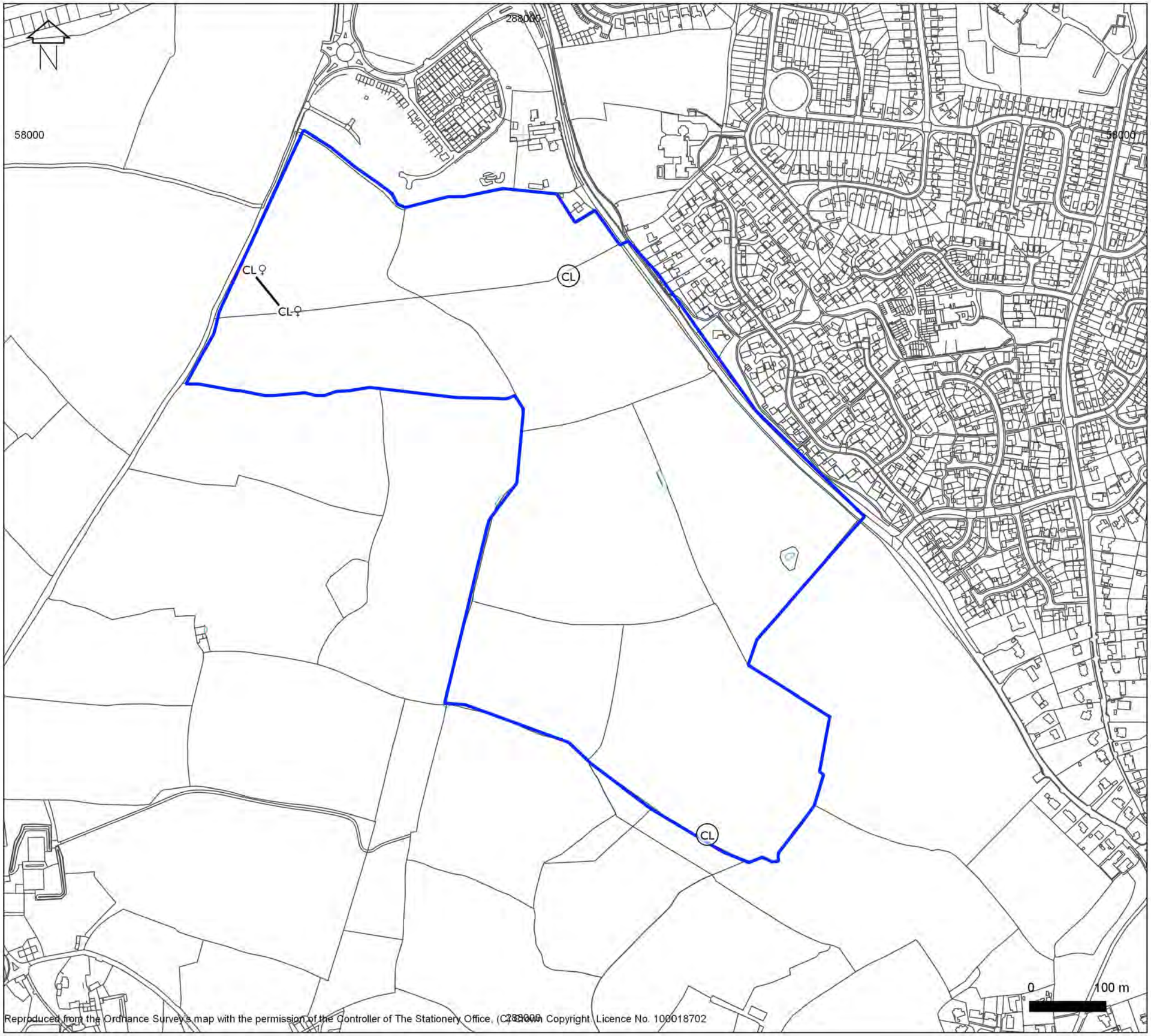
Inglewood, Paignton

Winter Cirl Bunting Survey
Visit 1: 30.11.2018

November 2019	Drawn By - FG	10874 ABA



Key

Survey Boundary

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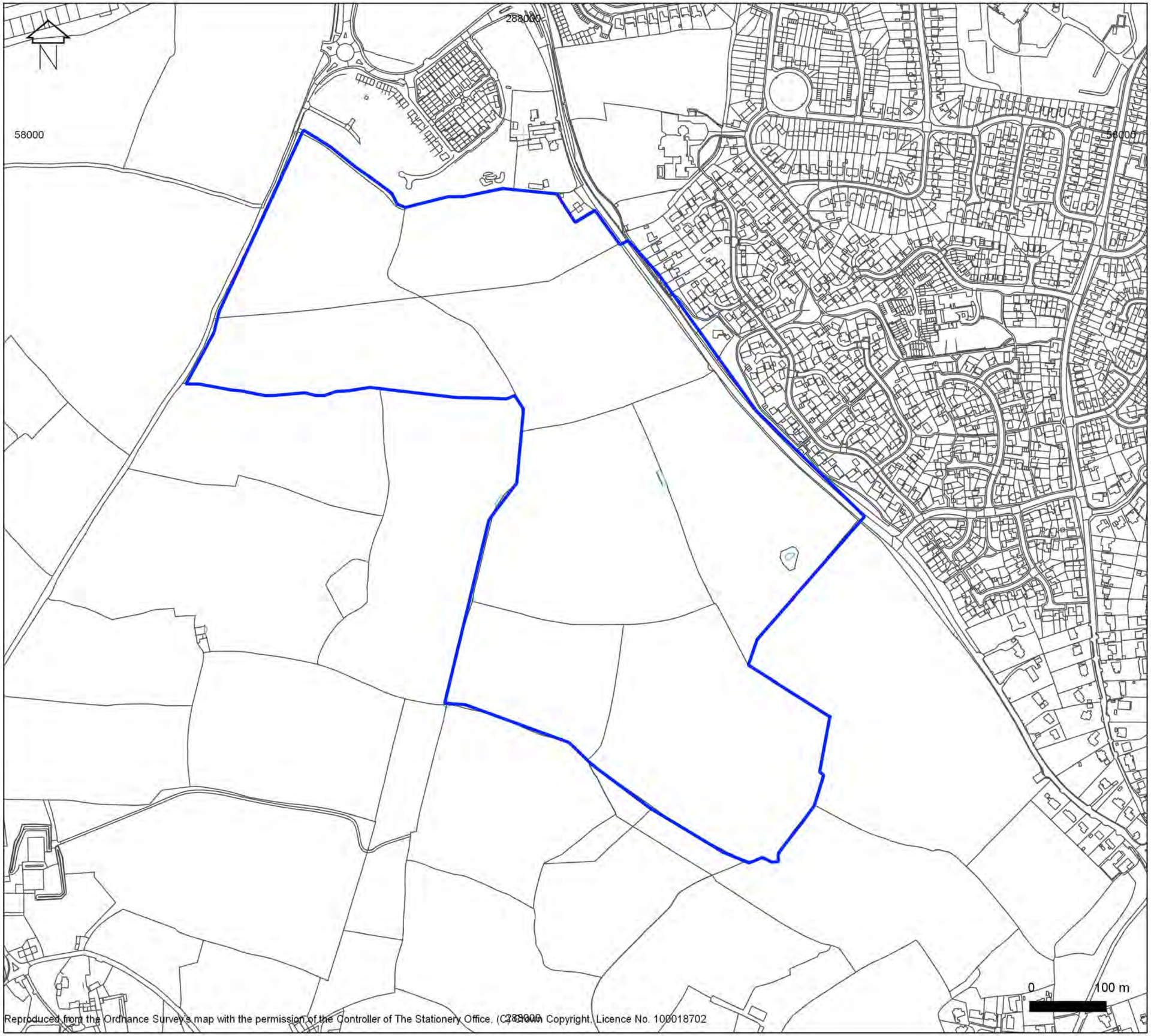
Winter Cirl Bunting Survey
Visit 2: 30/12/2018

November 2019	Drawn By - FG	10874 ABA



Key

Survey Boundary

No Cirl Buntings recorded on this visit

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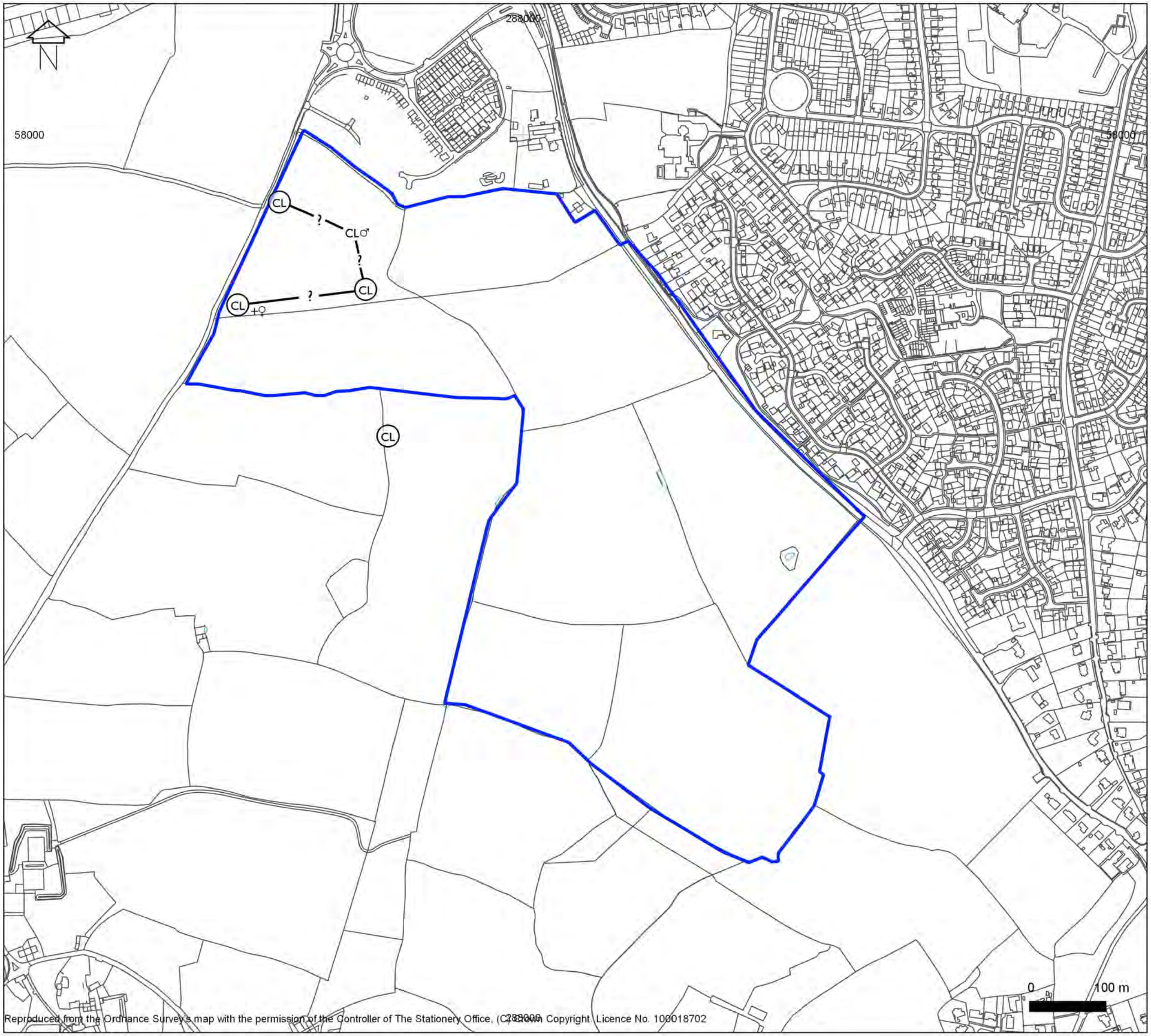
Winter Cirl Bunting Survey
Visit 3: 21.10.2019

November 2019	Drawn By - FG	10874 ABA



Key

Survey Boundary

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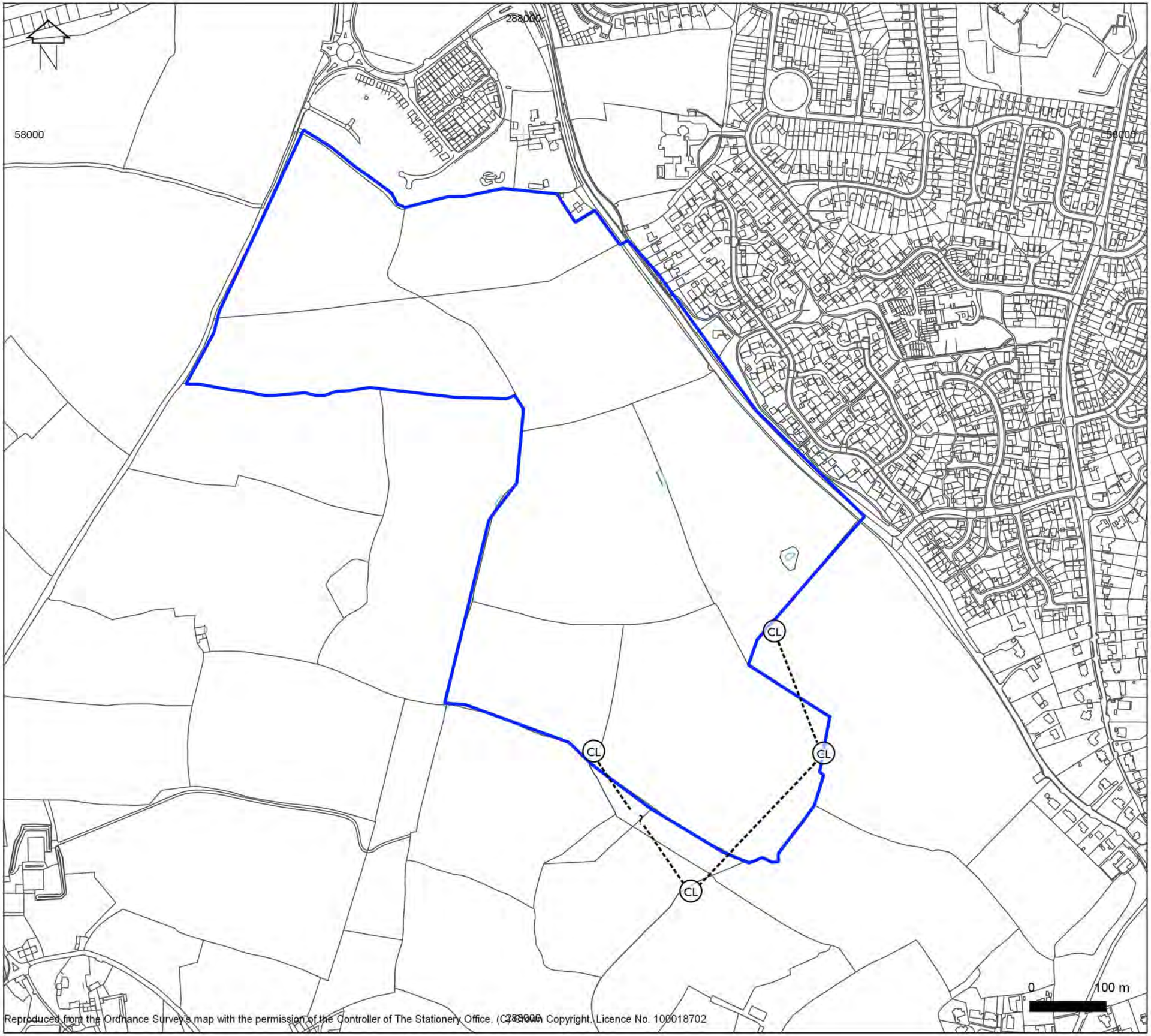
Winter Cirl Bunting Survey
Visit 4: 11.02.2019

November 2019	Drawn By - FG	10874 ABA



Key

Survey Boundary

CL - Cirl Bunting

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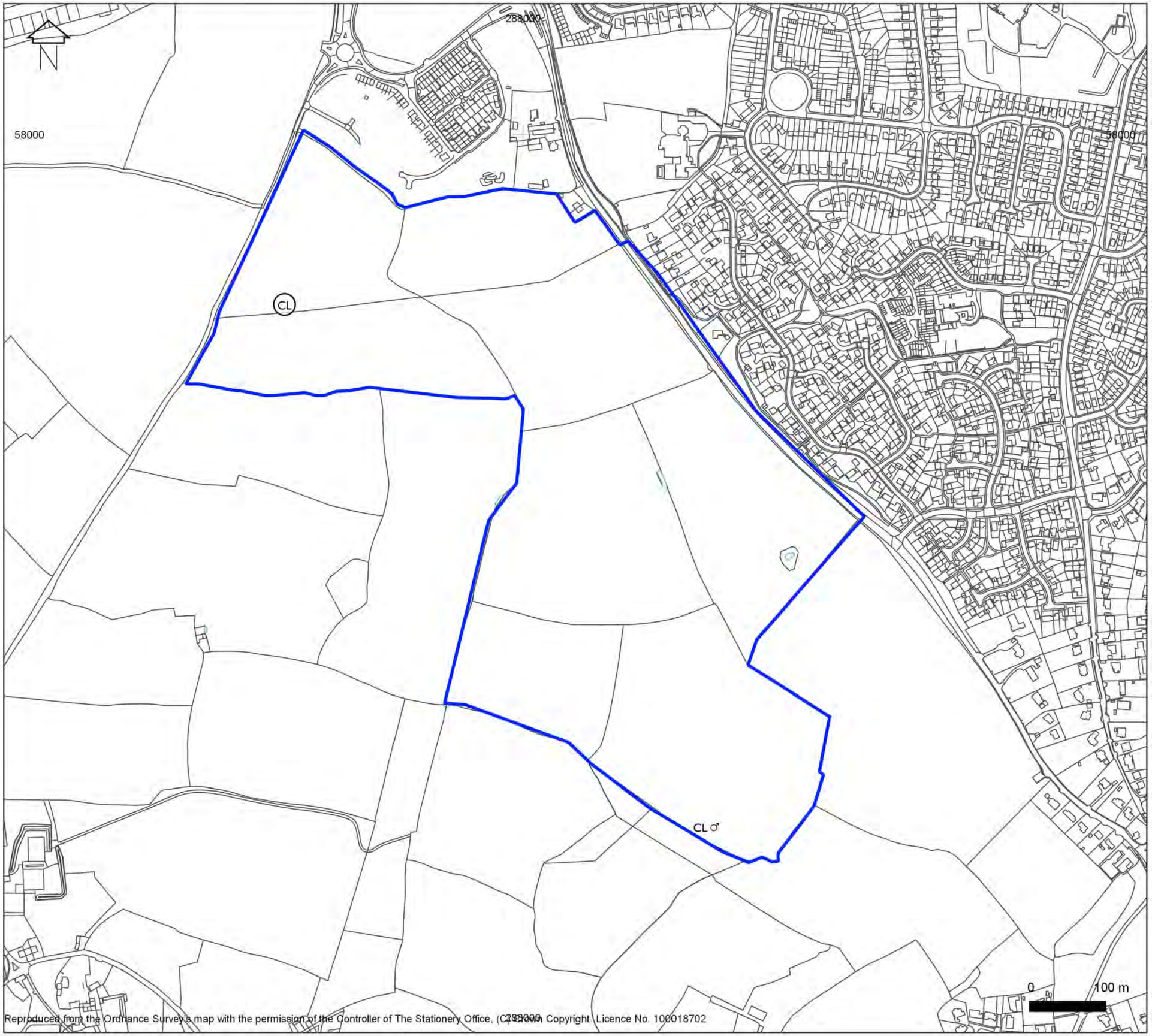
Breeding Cirl Bunting Survey
Visit 1: 25/04/2019

November 2019	Drawn By - FG	10874ABA



Key

Survey Boundary

CL - Cirl Bunting

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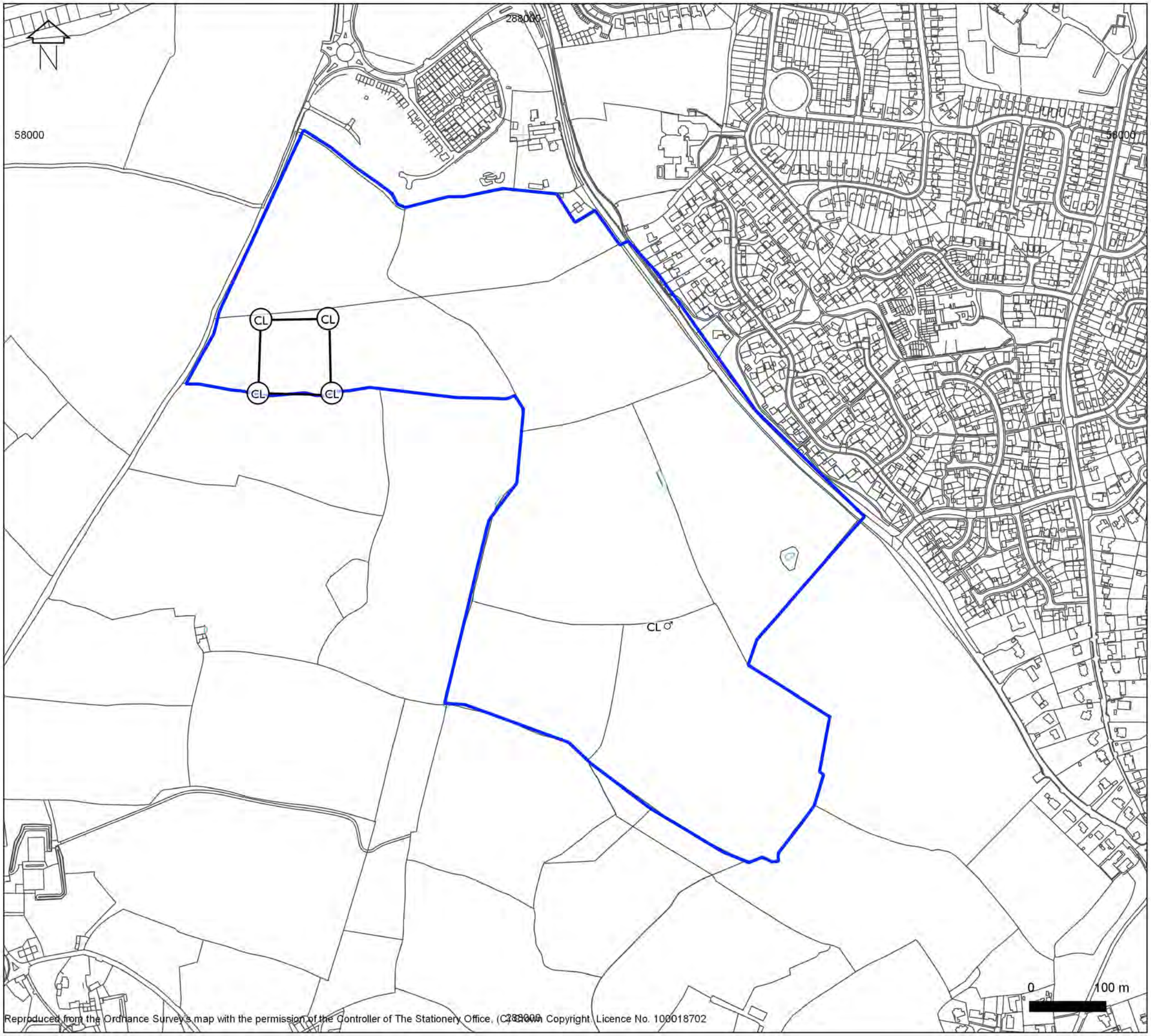
Breeding Cirl Bunting Survey
Visit 2: 27/05/2019

November 2019	Drawn By - FG	10874 ABA



Key

Survey Boundary

CL - Cirl Bunting

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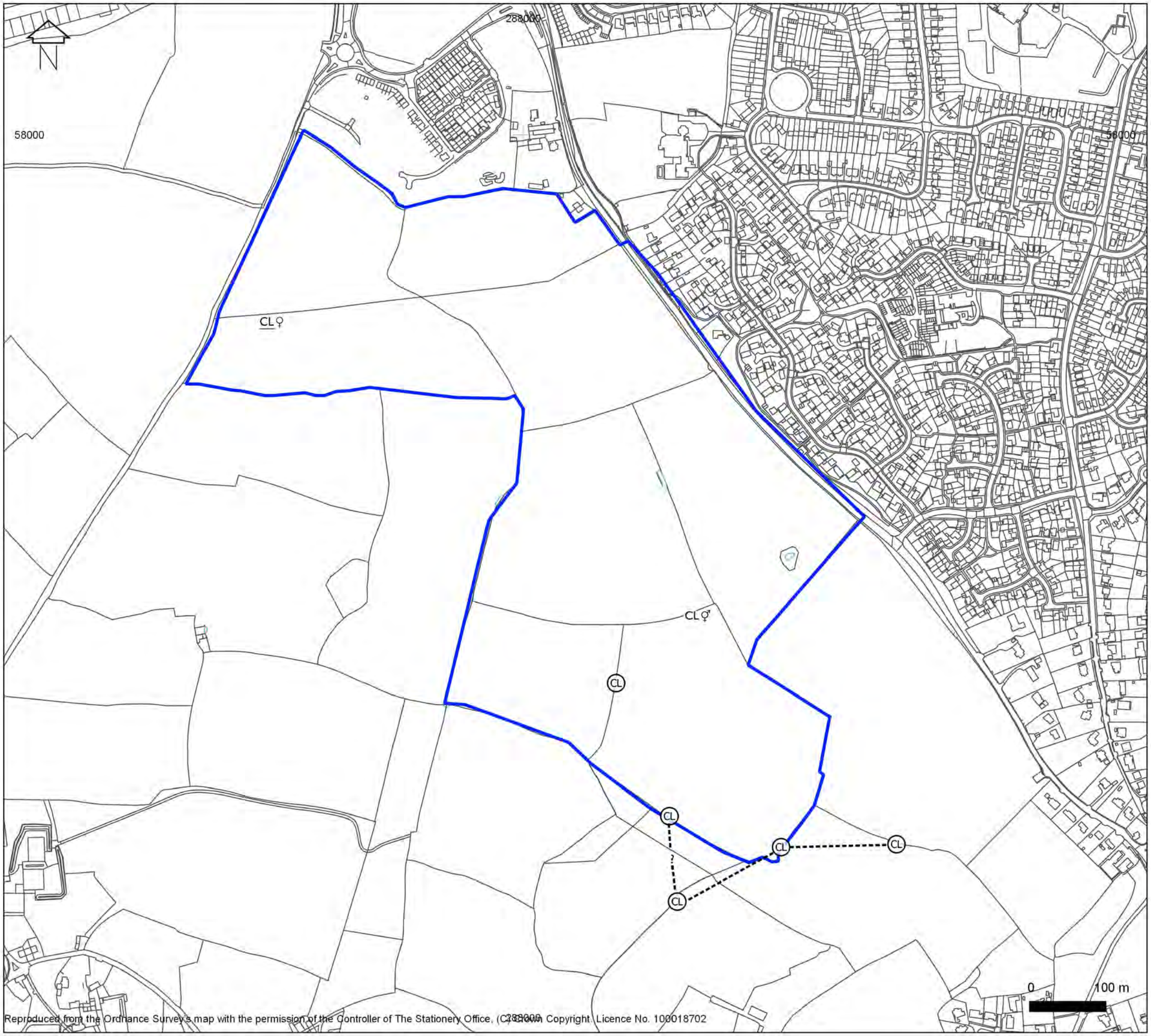
Breeding Cirl Bunting Survey
Visit 3: 23/06/2019

November 2019	Drawn By - FG	10874 ABA



Key

Survey Boundary

CL - Cirl Bunting

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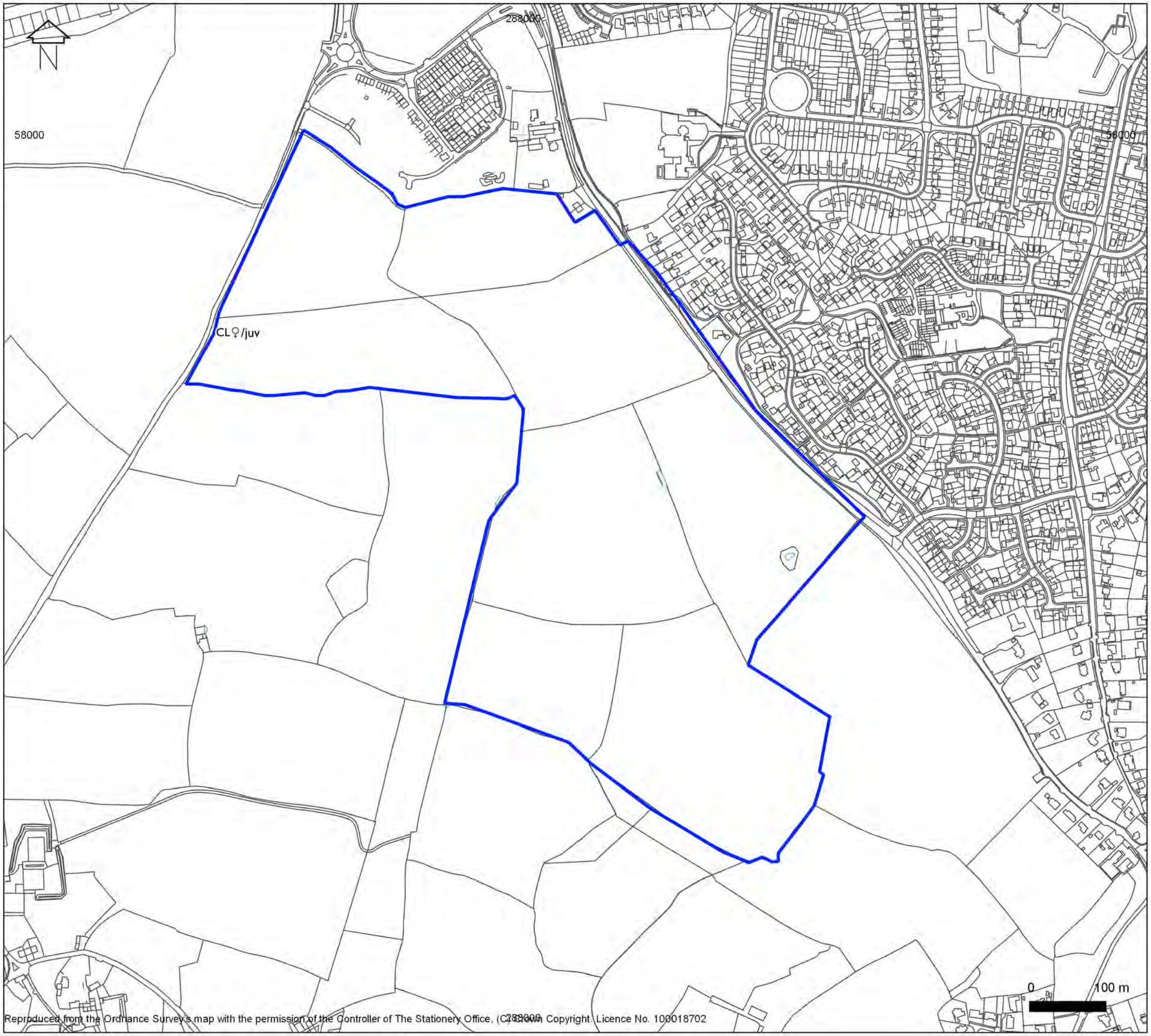
Breeding Cirl Bunting Survey
Visit 4: 22/07/2019

November 2019	Drawn By - FG	10874 ABA



Key

Survey Boundary

CL - Cirl Bunting

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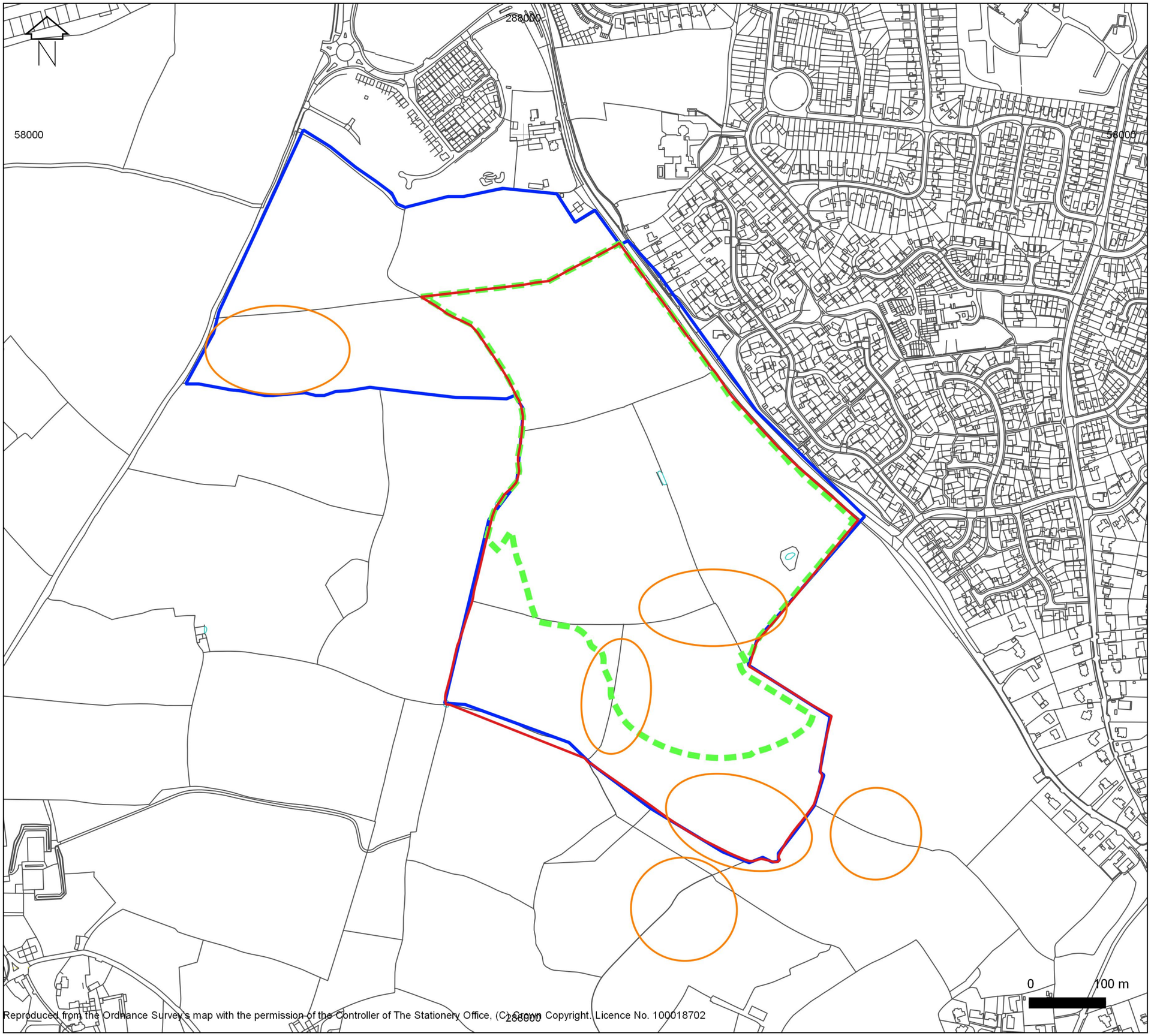
Breeding Cirl Bunting Survey
Visit 5: 28/08/2019

November 2019	Drawn By - FG	10874 ABA



Key

- Survey Boundary
- Extent of proposed development boundary
- Planning Application boundary
- Cirl bunting estimated breeding territories

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Cirl Bunting estimated breeding territories

November 2019	Drawn By - FG	10874 ABA

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Approved by:				

REVISION RECORD

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