

Annex A: Ruling out impacts of small-scale development to Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA) - Background

- 1) Stone Curlew (a qualifying feature of Breckland SPA) are sensitive to disturbance up to 1.5km from residential development for a number of interconnected reasons (built development in the landscape, noise, light pollution, pet predation, influence of recreational disturbance). In order to reduce consultations where there may be impacts detected on Stone Curlew, but these are so small that they would not reasonably contribute to an in-combination effect with other plans and projects, Natural England has developed the following list of the types of development which would not require further assessment
- 2) For residential development, the evidence base is the Stone Curlew Planning Tool (SCPT), a model which predicts the number of Stone Curlew nests lost to a theoretical development. The SCPT is based upon Clarke et al. 2013¹ & Clarke & Liley 2013², using a predictive equation based on equation M2 on page 71 of Clarke & Liley (2013).
- 3) A number of scenarios have been tested using the tool to inform this advice, modelling hypothetical developments of differing sizes in different locations around the SPA and the 1.5km constraint zone around it. These have modelled the impact of a new development on the historic Stone Curlew data embedded within the SCPT (nest data collected by the RSPB for the period 1988 – 2011) or recent nest data provided by the RSPB and landowners where available.
- 4) It is not possible to isolate and test separately the different disturbance factors listed in paragraph 1. Therefore, developments where some of these factors are not present (ie change of use of an existing building) cannot be tested using the SCPT. It is considered therefore that for the other residential developments listed there would be no greater impact on Stone Curlew within the SPA compared to an equivalent new built development of the same size
- 5) Also included on this list are some agricultural buildings, further to Natural England's 2013 document "Agricultural buildings and the Breckland Special Protection Area stone curlew constraint zone".
- 6) The list only applies to impacts upon Stone Curlew nesting within or directly adjacent to the SPA. Developments may also have impacts on Stone Curlew nesting outside of the SPA which would need to be considered and offset as appropriate.
- 7) It is also important to note that the list only applies to indirect impacts to Stone Curlew in the SPA from the operational phase of a development. Construction (and decommissioning) may result in increased potential for disturbance during these phases, particularly outside of existing urban areas. Consideration will therefore be required for temporary impacts that may require mitigation.

¹ Clarke RT, Liley D, Sharp JM, Green RE (2013) Building Development and Roads: Implications for the Distribution of Stone Curlews across the Brecks. PLoS ONE 8(8): e72984. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0072984>

² Clarke, R.T. & Liley, D. (2013) Further Assessments of the Relationship between Buildings and Stone Curlew Distribution. unpublished report for Breckland District Council, Footprint Ecology, Wareham, Dorset

Table 1: Proposed list of developments with minimal impacts on Stone Curlew in Breckland SPA

A – Screened out at HRA stage 1 (no likely significant effect (LSE) alone or in combination)	B – Taken to HRA stage 2 but adverse effect on the integrity (AEOI) of the SPA can be ruled out *
<p>Development outside of 1.5km constraint zone around SPA</p> <p>Development within 1.5km constraint zone but outside of SPA meeting one of the following criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Householder extensions less than 100% of existing footprint within existing property boundary • Redevelopment of existing building(s) to residential where there is no net increase in area of built development within settlement boundaries • Construction of single dwellings within existing settlement boundaries as defined in local plans** except for those outlined in table 2 • Construction of up to 50 dwellings within settlement boundary of Thetford • Construction of up to 10 dwellings within the settlement boundaries of settlements (table 3) defined as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Market towns & local service centres in Breckland ○ Key rural service centres in King’s Lynn & West Norfolk ○ Market towns & key service centres in West Suffolk 	<p>Development outside of SPA, but within 1.5km constraint zone, meeting one of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-residential re-development or change of use, of an existing building, where there is no net increase in area of built development outside settlement boundaries • A new agricultural building of less than 120 sqm • An extension to existing agricultural buildings of less than 120 sqm or 100% of the original, whichever is less • Replacement building with footprint of less or equal to existing with same use outside defined settlement boundaries
<p>C – Consultation always required with Natural England and will require HRA taken to stage 2 and the provision of Stone Curlew records (Five years within 1.5km)</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any built development within the SPA • Any built development within primary constraint zone not meeting criteria listed in A & B 	

* Potential of disturbance impacts to Stone Curlew during construction and / or decommissioning. Mitigation can likely be achieved by working outside of the breeding season or confirmation there are no Stone Curlew nests within 500m but will require consultation with Natural England

**Settlement boundaries as defined within local plans adopted as of 2022

Table 2: Villages where a single dwelling is likely to be above the threshold to act in-combination.

Settlement name within 1.5km of SPA
Brettenham
Threxton Hill
South Pickenham
Bodney
West Tofts

Table 3: Settlement hierarchies

Breckland market towns within 1.5km of SPA	Breckland local service centres within 1.5km of SPA	King's Lynn & West Norfolk key rural service centres within 1.5km of SPA	West Suffolk market towns within 1.5km of SPA	West Suffolk key service centres within 1.5km of SPA
Watton	Weeting	Feltwell with Hockwold-cum Wilton	Brandon	Lakenheath
Swaffham			Mildenhall	Red Lodge