

Elveden Courtyard – stone-curlew assessment

Project:	Elveden Garden Centre
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Assessment of impact of proposed Listed Building works in Elveden Walled Garden.

In December 2019, West Suffolk Council gave permission under reference 19/0470 for Planning Application - (i) Garden Centre (A1) with replacement farm shop, Restaurant/Cafe (A3) and ancillary facilities within the Elveden walled garden (ii) Provision of associated car parking and landscaping on adjoining land and ancillary service, delivery and refuse areas. The planning application was accompanied by an 'Ecological Impact Assessment incorporating a Habitats Regulations Assessment' dated March 2019 by The Landscape Partnership. Part of the walled garden, and the carpark extension site, is within around 1200m of Breckland SPA. The site is screened by woodland from the SPA, and the area of greatest activity would be the garden centre within the walled garden itself. Together with the existing retail activity at the site, there would be no disturbance impacts upon stone-curlew, woodlark or nightjar, and the impact on Breckland SPA was assessed as Neutral.

The proposed works to the existing Walled Garden needed to implement the planning permission, which require an application for Listed Building Consent, comprise:

- Removal of existing copings and re-bed on fresh lime mortar incorporating high grip DPC. Where copings are damaged or missing replace with new / reclaimed copings to match existing.
- Widen existing gateway to south elevation, construct new arch header and reform quoins to jambs – all to match existing in lime mortar.
- Replacement of existing timber doors to external perimeter with new softwood painted timber doors
- Repair cracked / damaged bricks, replacing where appropriate, with reclaimed bricks to match existing in lime mortar.
- New roof abutments to be independently formed with new metal composite, insulated roof sheets. Junctions with existing brickwork to be provided with two-part flashing chased into existing mortar joints to form weather tight seal.

West Suffolk Council has asked that the impact of these works on stone-curlew is assessed.

Planning policy, based on research on stone-curlew density measurements, suggests that there is a reduction in nest density within a distance of around 1500m from residential development. The research found that the impacts on stone-curlews arose from residential buildings, and there was no detectable effect arising from development of commercial buildings. Agricultural buildings were associated with areas of higher nest densities and it can be concluded have little or no impact. The study did not look at why residential buildings had an impact but commercial buildings didn't, but it may be related to the impact of pets, for example cat predation or dog walking, recreational activity, or other 'disturbance impacts'.

The site lies within an existing retail, agricultural and residential setting with daily vehicle movements, visual and noise impacts already established.

A small part of the application site lies within the Local Plan 1500m stone-curlew buffer to SPA land to the north. The existing retail and hospitality enterprises adjacent to the appeal site also lie in that buffer; as does the A11 Elveden bypass to the north-west. The site is screened around its eastern, northern and western boundaries by established woodland and existing development,

and the garden centre building would be wholly contained within the walled garden itself. To the south beyond London Road is Elveden Church, within Elveden Park.

There is no direct line of sight to those components of Breckland SPA which are suitable for use by stone-curlew. The screening is such that there is no direct line of sight to any habitats outside the SPA which might be suitable for stone-curlew nesting.

The proposed works will generate low levels of noise which are unlikely to give rise to disturbance impacts beyond the site boundaries given existing uses and noise levels.

The proposed works to the walled garden's walls, alone or in combination with the already permitted Garden Centre project, within the existing commercial setting, is therefore considered unlikely to result in any increase in disturbance impacts. There would be no likely significant effect on Breckland SPA alone or in combination with any other project.

This document is NOT CONFIDENTIAL as it does not contain any information which could assist egg thieves from learning the position of stone-curlew nests.
