

# WILD FRONTIER ECOLOGY

Proposed Development at Lanwades,  
Kennet, near Newmarket, Suffolk



Stone Curlew Scoping Report

April 2025

Report produced by	Report submitted to
Author: Graham Riley BSc ACIEEM	SWECO UK Ltd Grove House Mansion Gate Drive Leeds LS7 4DN  Contact: Joshua Stafford
Quality control and senior review by: Robert Yaxley BSc (Hons) CEcol CEnv MCIEEM	
Wild Frontier Ecology Unit 2, Cold Blow Farm Great Snoring Fakenham Norfolk NR21 0HF Tel: 01328 864633 graham@wildfrontier-ecology.co.uk	

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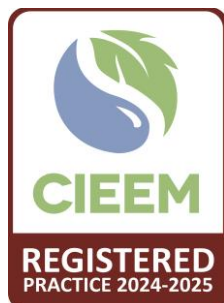
Company Registered in England and Wales No: 4942219.

VAT Reg No: 887 4692 54

Registered Office: Saxon House, Hellesdon Park Road, Drayton High Road, Norwich NR6 5DR

Director: Robert Yaxley BSc (Hons) CEcol Cenv MCIEEM

The data which we have prepared and provided are accurate and have been prepared and provided in accordance with the CIEEM's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that any opinions expressed are our best and professional bona fide opinions.



This report conforms to the British Standard 42020:2013 Biodiversity - Code of practice for planning and development.

Contents

1. Background ..... 4

2. Methods ..... 5

3. Constraints..... 5

4. Results..... 5

5. Discussion ..... 8

6. Conclusion ..... 8

7. Appendix 1 Photos ..... 9

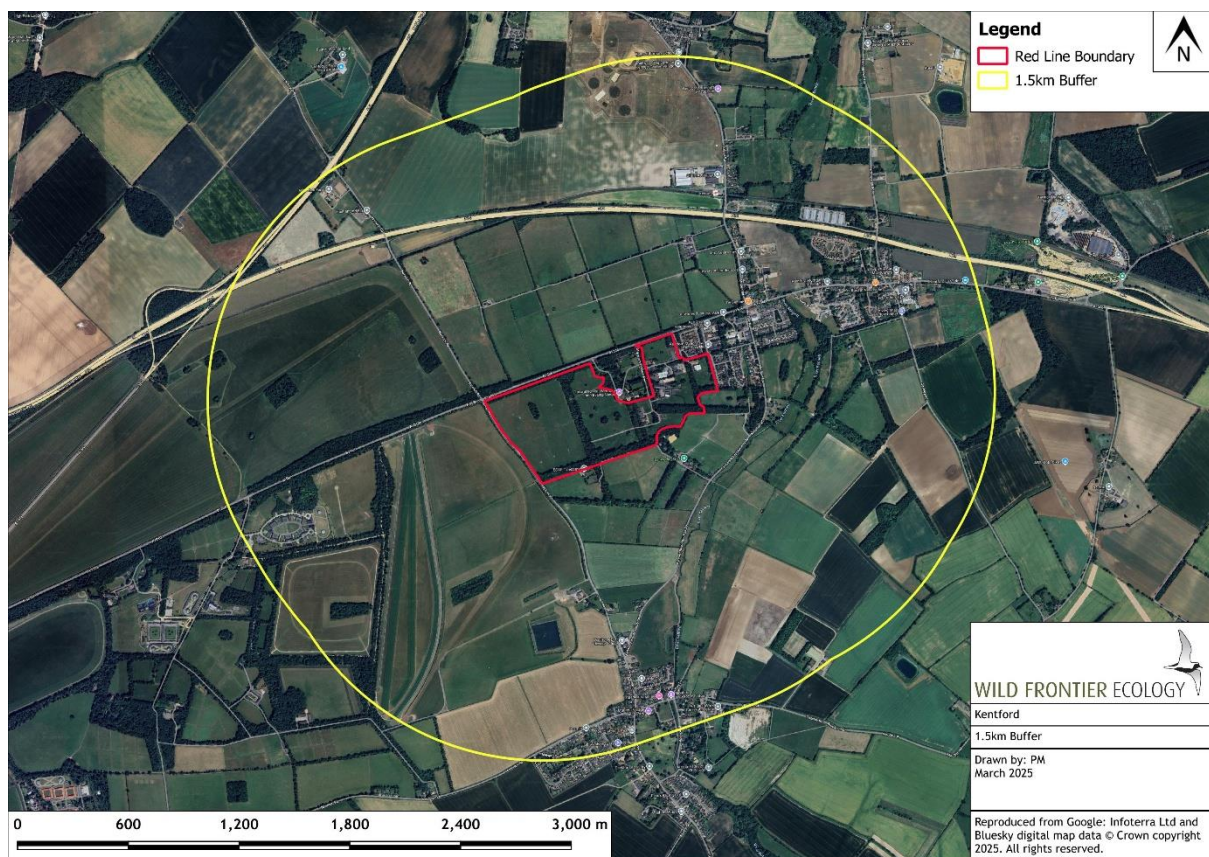
## 1. Background

Wild Frontier Ecology Ltd. (WFE) was commissioned by SWEKO UK Ltd to undertake a stone curlew scoping exercise in relation to a proposed residential housing scheme at Lanwades, Kentford near Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 7UA.

West Suffolk Council have requested three years of stone curlew survey data for the surrounding 1.5km radius (figure 1) of the proposed development boundary as the site lies just within 1km square cells where at least part of the cell is within 1,500m of the Breckland SPA (holding stone curlews). These 1km cells have significant data gaps as they are not within the traditional stone curlew nesting areas covered by the RSPB and therefore additional data may be requested regarding development proposals.

This scoping exercise comprises a data search with the RSPB (undertaken by SWEKO) and a habitat survey (within the 1.5km buffer) undertaken by WFE.

**Figure 1: Proposed Development Footprint and 1.5km Buffer**



## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Data Search

The RSPB was contacted by SWECO UK Ltd in February 2025 to obtain stone curlew nesting data within 1.5km of the proposed development site within the last 10 years.

### 2.2 Stone curlew habitat survey

The survey was undertaken by senior ecologist Graham Riley on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2025. The surveyor has extensive experience working with stone curlews having been part of the RSPB Eastern England Stone Curlew Recovery Project for 14 seasons between 1993 - 2006 and has subsequently completed many stone curlew projects while working for WFE. The survey involved appraising and mapping the habitats within the 1.5km buffer with regard to their suitability for nesting stone curlews as well as assessing the levels of human disturbance that these areas may be subjected to. Apart from within the proposal site itself this survey was undertaken from public roads.

Stone curlew habitat within eastern England comprises extensive undisturbed areas of short sward rabbit grazed grass heathland as well as large, spring sown bare fields, most notably sugar beet. Within the Breckland core area other spring sown crops such as maize, onions, linseed and carrots can also be utilised on occasion, but the preference is for bare ground which is why sugar beet is important as it is a relatively slow growing crop and retains good bare ground habitat until late spring/early summer.

## 3. Constraints

The survey was out of necessity undertaken from public roads due to a lack of access to the surrounding landholdings, and there were limited opportunities for pulling over on the busier routes. Also, due to the topography of the land some areas on the periphery of the buffer could not be viewed at all (unmapped areas in figure 2). Therefore, the habitat mapping is not comprehensive within the entire buffer area, but it is considered that the majority of the habitats could be viewed adequately for the purposes of the survey.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Data Search

The RSPB returned no records of nesting stone curlew within 1.5 km of the development site and provided a confirmation letter of zero records on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025. The closest of two records returned from outside of the buffer comprised a nesting pair 1.65km to the west of the site from 2022.

### 4.2 Habitat Survey

The observable habitats within the 1.5km buffer have been mapped and are presented within figure 2 below.

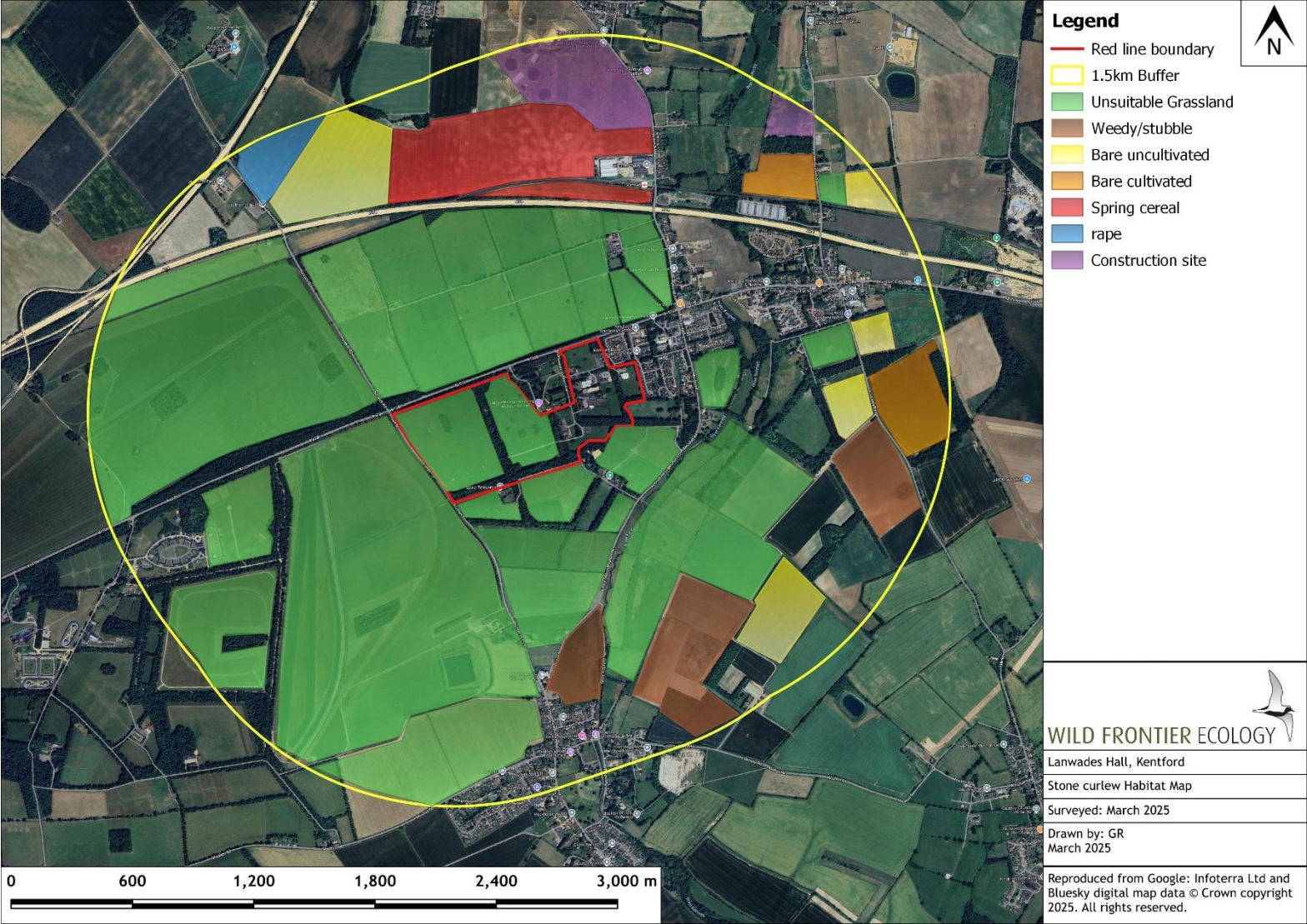
The vast majority of the land within the buffer was comprised of grassland paddocks and fields, predominantly used for grazing and exercising racehorses. The grass sward was variable in length and generally tussocky showing little sign of recent grazing activity.





The remainder of the land use within the buffer comprised a mixture of weedy/stubble fields, bare uncultivated and bare cultivated (bedded) fields, spring cereal, oilseed rape and active construction sites. The A14 runs east-west through the northern section of the buffer and the A11 just penetrates the buffer in the far north-western corner. The village of Moulton lies within the southernmost part of the buffer while the village of Kentford occupies a sizeable area in the central/eastern section.

Figure 2. Stone curlew habitat map



## 5. Discussion

There were no areas observed within the grassland paddocks/fields that contained suitable habitat for nesting stone curlews, which have a preference for very short sward, rabbit grazed heathland, ideally with bare and flinty areas. It is considered likely that these grass paddocks also experience regular disturbance which would also discourage stone curlew nesting activity due to their aversion to the presence of humans. At best, some areas could be utilised as foraging habitat, but no nesting habitat was found to be present within the areas viewable from roads.

The bare uncultivated fields were either small and isolated or adjacent to disturbance sources i.e. busy trunk roads (A14 and A11) and the two settlements. They are also likely to be cultivated in the coming days/weeks causing more disturbance and then drilled with potentially unsuitable crops. The bare cultivated fields observed were all bedded which is not the preference for nesting stone curlews, although they occasionally use bedded crops such as onions and carrots within the core area of Breckland. It is not considered likely that such suboptimal habitat would be used in an outlying area away from the major population centre. The remaining fields were drilled with unsuitable crops such as rape and spring cereals which were already at a stage where no bare ground was present. The weedy/stubby fields are also unsuitable as they don't provide enough bare ground and unbroken site-lines that stone curlews require when incubating eggs. These fields will also likely be cultivated later in the spring. The final land use type observed comprised the active construction sites (housing) present to the north of the A14, and these are wholly unsuitable due to the extreme ongoing disturbance from vehicles/machinery and human workers etc.

The fields that were not viewable during the survey were generally on the edge of the buffer, small in size and/or close to disturbance sources such as settlements and major trunk roads. Even if they were drilled with suitable crops such as sugar beet it is considered unlikely that they would prove attractive to a prospecting pair of stone curlews outside of the traditional nesting area.

## 6. Conclusion

The stone curlew scoping exercise comprised a habitat survey of a 1.5km buffer around the Lanwades proposed residential development site and a data search with the RSPB.

The data search provided no nesting stone curlew records within the 1.5km buffer during the last 10 years and the habitat survey found there to be no observable suitable nesting habitat within the buffer. Therefore, it is concluded that it is extremely unlikely that stone curlews will be present as a breeding species within the near vicinity of the proposed housing development within the 2025 nesting season.



## 7. Appendix 1 Photos



Photo 1. Grassy paddock in the north of the 1.5km buffer



Photo 2. Grassy paddock within the proposal site



Photo 3. Grassy paddock in the west of the buffer area





Photo 4. Bare uncultivated field in the east of the buffer area





Photo 5. Rape field and bare uncultivated field in the north-west corner of the buffer area



Photo 6. Bare cultivated field (bedded) in the east of the buffer area





Photo 7. Stubble/weedy field with wide grassy margin in the south of the buffer area