

SEVERALL SCHOOL COLCHESTER

SKANSKA

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Temporary

Project overview

Severalls School is a new build school project in Colchester, Essex. The school is built adjacent to the former, derelict Severalls Hospital which is ear-marked for further residential development and adjacent to a newly constructed dual carriageway (by others). The school completes in summer 2016 after a 12 month period on site. The school will comprise 2 storeys of education space, hard play areas and parking, playing fields and landscaping.

What were the biodiversity conditions on site, prior to the enhancement?

No habitats of ecological significance were recorded within the site prior to construction. The eastern part of the site had been considerably disrupted by the ongoing adjacent highways work. The site comprised grassland, shrubs, bare ground and mature trees adjacent to the periphery.

Were there any specific conditions that led to you carrying out this work?

The project is not undertaking BREEAM and biodiversity offsetting did not form part of the planning conditions.

The temporary biodiversity improvements put in place were undertaken at the discretion of the Project Team in order to **promote team work and Skanska's** commitment to the environment.

In addition, the Project Team wanted to leave a legacy to the school so we have included the future pupils as much as possible and we will leave the biodiversity enhancements behind for use as educational tools as well as promoting biodiversity on the new site.



The Project Team working together to create the "Skanska Sanctuary – No Humans Allowed"

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Several initiatives were implemented during the construction phase which are easily replicable and we have worked with the school to encourage them to keep and adopt as many as possible. Everything installed requires little to no maintenance so can be continued after we leave the project.

Over the course of the project, several measures have been put in place such as nesting boxes for birds and planting flowers. Some small saplings that had to be removed were relocated to a nearby farm rather than destroying them. Over the course of a week in May 2016 these measures were brought together with larger measures to create the **“Skanska Sanctuary”**. The Sanctuary formed a small corner of the site, behind the cabins, which would not be disturbed and included:

- Bird feeders
- Bird baths
- Hedgehog hotel made from waste timber from site
- Bug hotel made from waste pallets from site
- A herb garden to attract bees and butterflies
- Log piles to attract mammals, reptiles and invertebrates

Almost all of the materials used to create the enhancement came from the site itself, so the cost was very low, making it easy to replicate elsewhere. The hedgehog and bug hotel were a simple design so they can be replicated with whatever surplus materials are available from site.

The entire project team got involved with the project as part of Skanska’s **“Living our Values Week”** where we take time to promote our values, including caring for life and the environment.

In addition, we reached out to the local school and pupils that may be attending the new Severalls School when it opens in September 2016, to visit the site and see the enhancements. The school have been impressed with the project and are fully engaged on the issue of biodiversity, so they will be keeping the enhancements that we have put in place and using them to inspire the pupils to replicate this elsewhere.



“Hedgehog hotel” formed from surplus timber and a fallen tree that was originally at the periphery of the site

How would you best describe the project?

Enhancement

Further information

The benefits of the scheme were realised almost straight away and having a sanctuary area on site not only promoted biodiversity, but also helped the team to connect with nature and have a space to relax. Everyone was included in the project and everyone takes delight in keeping track of the visitors including rabbits, birds and mice.

The involvement of the local school means that this will continue for many years to come.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The Biodiversity enhancements at Severalls School personified the attitude of the team towards working together and enhancing the environment. Carl Borwick (Project Manager) and Helena Cole (Design Manager) said:

“Our surrounding area inspired us to create a wildlife area to leave a lasting legacy for the school and the local wildlife”



“Bug hotel” made from materials from site



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