

Cambridge North Station Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, England

VolkerFitzpatrick Ltd.

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Community Engagement Award

Project overview

The overall project aim is to provide a brand new station 'Cambridge North', including a 2 storey 450 sq.m Station building, platforms and footbridge leading from the building to the platforms. Local freight train sidings will also be re-configured. Two main line platforms and a bay platform shall be built from pre-cast concrete beams and blocks at a length suitable to accommodate a 12 car train. The £50 million building and infrastructure project began early 2015 with look to open the station in early 2017. The site covers approximately 15 ha and the site team comprises of around 50 people. The development also comprises of a new car and cycle park and links to a wider public transport network including cycle, pedestrian and guided busway links. The development is within a suburban setting and is to maintain the rural-urban fringe character of the area within its operational landscape design.

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

The site was overgrown with vegetation comprising of dense scrub and large areas of open ground dominated by areas of broadleaf woodland and ephemeral/short perennial vegetation. The combination of biodiversity provides habitats of ecological value of district importance. It provides a habitat and supporting assemblages suited to invertebrates and plants.

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

The site has 3 planning conditions concerning ecology and the station will be BREEAM rated however the work in the allotments was completed in addition to any of the requirements set out by the planning conditions or BREEAM.



Aerial photo of the site. Yellow lines to mark the site boundary.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The project team donated redundant sleepers to Nuffield road allotments which border the western boundary of the site. The sleepers were used to build raised flower beds for the allotment users. A walkway was also built to improve access within the allotments. VolkerFitzpatrick volunteered two weekends worth of labour by the site team to complete these enhancements.

After the construction of the beds they have been managed by the allotment users. On such development sites sleepers have previously been used to construct raised flower beds on site and not built for an external party, this suggests that the time volunteered exceeded the norm.

The construction of the raised flower bed allowed for the creation of habitats within the immediate boundary of the site. The habitat not only provides for biodiversity net gain but also has much social value and contributes to the local area and improves the relationship with the neighbouring local community. The site team involved have also been invited to the re-opening of the allotments.

The proximity of the allotments gave the site team a unique opportunity to reuse materials and provide biodiversity net gain in a way which benefits the local area. The flower beds are likely to be a long term addition to the allotments which will have a long term benefit for the local flora and fauna.



Construction of raised sleeper beds

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement

Further information

The redundant timber sleepers were placed on a level ground in the location chosen by the allotment users. The sleepers were then fastened together by screwing the sleepers together at the corners. The steps were then repeated multiple times to build the height of the raised sleeper beds. A plastic membrane was then installed to create a barrier between the wet soil and the sleepers. The raised beds were then filled with soil ready to be used by the allotments.

There are environmental and social long term benefits for these works as the works increase the net biodiversity levels and engage the local community within the area. The works will be a long lasting enhancement of Nuffield allotments.

The works have assisted in the achievement of a number of site and client set objectives by diverting waste from landfill, optimise resource consumption and the donation of materials to the local community in order to create biodiversity enhancements.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The work was a good opportunity to reuse on site materials, to enhance the biodiversity of the local area and engage with the local community simultaneously.

It was a chance to show the good initiatives that the project team have and share these initiatives to create a positive impact locally.



Allotments highlighted in yellow and site boundary in red