

CHAMBERLAYNE ROAD FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME KENSAL RISE, BRENT, NORTH LONDON

MWH, MURPHY, BARHALE & CLANCY DOCWRA (OPTIMISE, ON BEHALF OF THAMES WATER)

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Community Engagement

Project overview

Seventy trees (including a community orchard) and 3,200 wildflower bulbs were planted in Tiverton Green to mark the completion of the £6 million Chamberlayne Road flood alleviation scheme at Kensal Rise, North London. Up to 40 properties, including the local church, the Manor School, businesses and many homes along Chamberlayne Road, were at risk of sewer flooding during times of heavy rainfall when the Victorian sewers reached capacity. The project centred on increasing the size of the sewers that serve the communities and installing a massive 'overflow' tank which is now completely hidden under the 1.5ha park (Tiverton Green). The construction work completion in 2015 prompted a major landscaping effort to regrass the area and replace trees that had to be removed during the two-year project, as well as £14,000 of improvements to the public playground.

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

The park comprised amenity grassland and scattered trees, primarily willow and cherry/plum species. This landscaping provided minimal biodiversity interest.

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

In the early consultation stage with the Brent parks department and the Friends of Tiverton Green, the question was posed to the stakeholders as to whether they would like a Community Orchard as the centrepiece of the landscape reinstatement. The stakeholders were instantly keen on the suggestion and this commitment formed a key part of the subsequent planning application and the legal discussions with the landowner. It also drew the attention of Transition Town Kensal to Kilburn (TTKK), a local community sustainability group who contributed ideas for the orchard.



Above: The overflow tank, a key part of the flood alleviation scheme in construction in Tiverton Green. The community orchard and wildflowers were planted where the crane and car parking is located.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

On Saturday, 14 November 2015, Brent Council as well as volunteers from the Friends of Tiverton Green and a number of volunteers from Optimise took part in planting the community orchard, featuring around 70 plum, cherry, apple and damson trees, as well as other varieties around the park, plus 3,200 wildflower bulbs, paid for by Thames Water.

Maintenance will be taken up by landscaping contractors for Brent Council, who were overseeing the Community Planting Day. The habitats created are particularly valuable to birds and invertebrates including pollinators. It delivers key aims for Parks and Green Spaces as set out in the Brent Local Biodiversity Action Plan which identifies the “difficulty in mainstreaming biodiversity into the management of all green spaces” as well as particular challenges for pollinators and the need to engage and inspire the community to take an interest in their local biodiversity. This project delivers on all of the above objectives, and benefited from advice from the local sustainability group Transition Town Kensal to Kilburn (TTKK).

The community orchard will be monitored by the Friends of Tiverton Green and fully accessible to the local public to harvest.

The spirit of collaboration between Optimise and the local public, including the Friends of Tiverton Green was again on show on the planting day. It was a significant achievement by Optimise to keep relations with the local community civil throughout considering that the Friends’ precious park had been taken over for a year for construction.



Action during the Community Planting Day on 14 November 2015. Members of the local public and design manager Denis O'Brien of Optimise (bottom left) plant the bulbs and trees

How would you best describe the project?

Mitigation

Further information

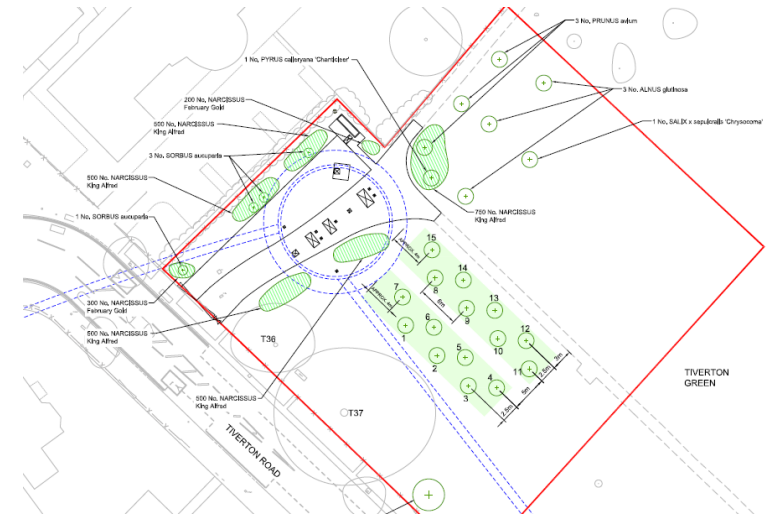
The community orchard and replanting specification was designed and selected in full consultation with the Friends of Tiverton Green, the Parks Department and the Transition Town Kensal to Kilburn (TTKK) – a Community Sustainability group, all contributed ideas on species, dwarf or normal sized trees, maintenance and vandalism concerns and location for planting.

The construction work finished in March 2015, prompting the start of the landscaping effort to regrass the area and replace trees that had to be removed during the two-year project, as well as £15,000 of improvements to the public playground. Landscaping efforts finished in November 2015.

Chris Rochfort, Optimise environmental manager, said: “This essential project has been a great success, with the community orchard the last piece of the jigsaw. The result now is that we have significantly reduced the risk of sewer flooding to a number of properties, and returned the landscape and amenities to a better state than they were before, and helped unite the local community to take even more interest in their local park and community and biodiversity issues.”

Ruth Dar, the secretary of the Friends of Tiverton Green, said: “Thames Water and Optimise have been very good at communicating with the community throughout the project and we’ve all been pretty impressed with the way they’ve worked.”

In the spring and summer of 2016 a noted increase in pollinator insects have been observed in the park. Some of the wildflowers have been trampled however and a lesson to be learnt is to pay particular attention to “desire lines” of walkers and joggers in selecting where to plant wildflowers.



Top: flooding of Chamberlayne Road which prompted the infrastructure project. Above: The landscape design including the community orchard. The buried infrastructure is shown in blue.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

Personally, I had been inspired by the opening of a Community Orchard in Thatcham, Berkshire, my home town. I had attended the opening ceremony days before meeting the local community at Tiverton Green, and this prompted me to offer them a Community Orchard of their own.