MAPLE AND STANFORD PARK
BUTTS LANE, STANFORD LE HOPE, ESSEX
BDW Eastern Counties

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category: Medium - Large

Project overview

The project is located in Stanford-Le-Hope, Essex, and was previously occupied by St Cleres Hall Golf Club. Approval was granted for 350 residential dwellings, community facility, associated infrastructure and 51ha of Strategic Public Open Space. A new accessible country park was created to mitigate impacts and enhance the site's biodiversity value as part of the SPOS.

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

Previously a golf course, the development site had areas of natural habitat, hedgerows and highly managed amenity grassland. Species found on site included Great Crested Newts, Grass snakes, Adders, Slow worms and Common lizards.

Planning conditions required provision of a 51ha SPOS. In consultation with Landscape Architect, Ecological Consultant and Natural England the decision was made to create a community country park by sensitively, translocating the important habitats and species found in the development area to the SPOS, creating a biodiversity rich area aimed at protecting and enhancing habitats specifically for those species and providing a focal point for the surrounding community to access and experience local nature.

Existing Site Survey

Site Location

What were the reasons behind this project ?

This project was the outcome of our response to the planning condition, our understanding of the biodiversity sensitivities related to this site and our priority as a company to create Great Places for people to live in and for wildlife to be able to thrive alongside communities.

This project was also consulted on with the local community and included input from Natural England as well as the LPA ecologist and landscape team with regards to the mitigation, relocation, ongoing management and enhancement of the biodiversity and habitats across the development site and the 51ha SPOS.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The measures included developing three new ponds, 300m of hibernaculum, native hedgerow relocation and a new wildflower habitat as well as translocating all the protected species within the development site into the new Country Park.

The three new ponds and hibernaculum were constructed to receive the relocated GCN and reptiles. The hibernaculum construction consisted of a linear ditch alongside a continuous log and brush pile (made up of cuttings from hedgerows and felled trees on the development site), which was then covered by the arising's from the ditch, which backed on to the translocated hedge. To encourage invertebrates into the hibernaculum smaller branches and openings were also located along the hibernaculum.

Strategic Public Open Space Proposals

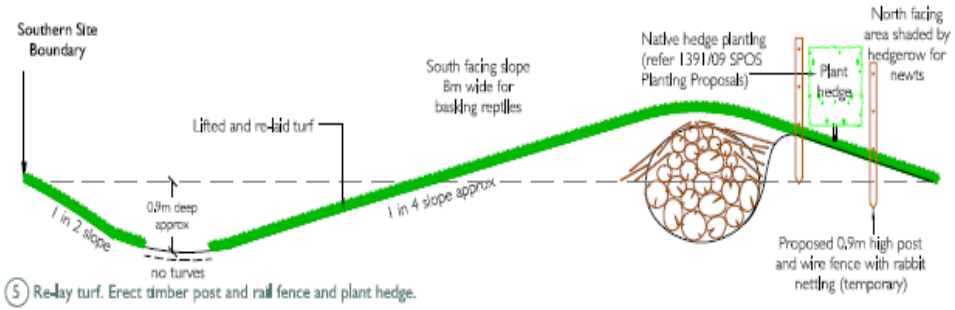
What were the biodiversity measures taken? *(continued)*

In addition to the creation of the ponds, hibernaculum and hedgerows, we have also created large areas of wildflower habitat. This is intended to mitigate the loss of habitat in the developed section of the site and enhance the overall ecology of the site, for example improve feeding and nesting opportunities for birds.

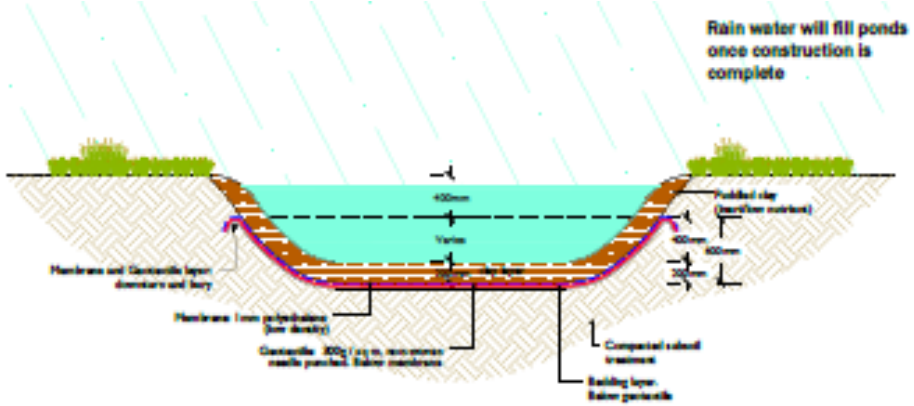
All mitigation measures and hibernaculum's created used the surplus materials from the development and the site clearance. Within the SPOS an existing area of gorse, nicknamed the snake pit, was designated as an additional habitat area where any surplus vegetation could be placed rather than disposing of the material off site, enhancing the area for reptiles.

Each of the habitats created provide enhanced ecological value for the targeted species and provide opportunities for other species such as ground nesting birds.

The creation of ponds and translocation of hedgerows all contribute to the Essex BAP targets, and are easy to replicate in future projects by others. The novel aspect of this project is the scale of the project and the unique opportunity to create both a biodiversity rich area and an accessible space for people to enjoy and experience local wildlife in a semi-rural setting. It also provides an opportunity to protect an area rich in biodiversity into the future.



Hibernaculum Detail



Typical Pond Creation Detail

Further information

Throughout the planning application process, the SPOS and concern for the ecology onsite was a key focus for the LPA and the existing residents. Meetings with the LPA landscape team and ecologist were held to ensure that the proposals and mitigation measures were acceptable to all parties. Public consultation meetings at the adjoining St Cleres School were held to consult with local residents regards the plans and proposals.

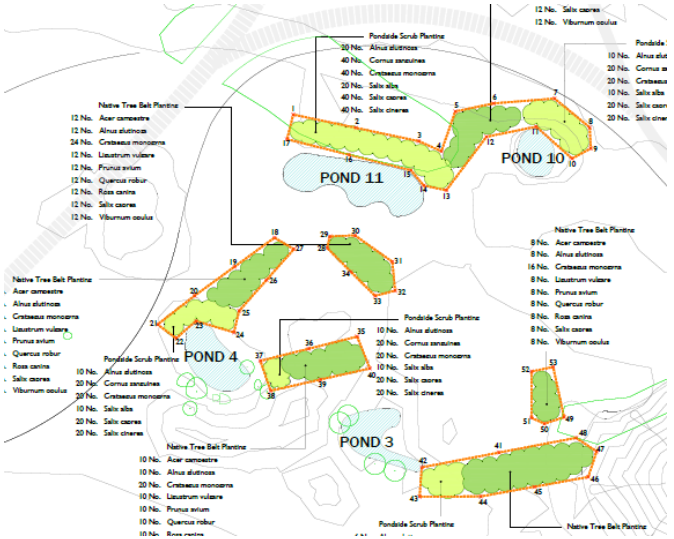
Following the completion of the habitat enhancements ecological surveys have continued to monitor the relocated GCN and reptiles to ensure that they are still there and to establish whether the population is growing. To date it has been confirmed that the population numbers have remained the same.

With the creation of the SPOS nearing completion you can now see how well the habitats have taken and therefore the objectives of the relocating the ecology and habitat from the development areas has been successful.

Once all the measures are completed, ongoing management will be included within a contracted long-term management company. The management company who are in the agreement for the SPOS will involve the Essex Wildlife Trust as part of the ongoing management.

The 51ha SPOS that has been created, enhanced and adapted to accommodate the relocated ecology will certainly be leaving a legacy behind.

Dead Tree Relocation Plan



Enhanced Planting to Existing Ponds

Project Team

- Barratt David Wilson Homes, Eastern Counties Division
- Liz Lake Associates
- Herpetologic Limited
- Thurrock District Council Landscape Officer
- Thurrock District Council Ecologist
- Natural England
- DF Clark Limited
- NAIO Landscaping, Forestry & Fencing

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The key driver and motivation was to retain as much of the habitat and ecology from the development area within our overall boundary ensuring that the characteristics and biodiversity were maintained but also enhanced within the SPOS. We also recognise the importance of biodiversity in relation to people's health and mental well being and developing a focal point like this Country Park provides the local community with a sense of place.

Current SPOS Photo

Current SPOS Photo