Fitzroy Gate
Isleworth, London, England
St James (Berkeley Group)

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: **Medium Scale Permanent**

Project overview

Fitzroy Gate is a St James development of family homes and extra care apartments for the over 50's, located within a conservation area and 7 acres of riverside parkland in the London Borough of Hounslow.

Within the grounds, Beechcroft Developments have provided additional retirement homes by restoring the chapel, stables and grade II-listed White House, built in 1832 for Sir William Cooper, Chaplain to King George III.

The project team were looking to enhance the parkland area to create both a biodiversity net gain and area of high amenity value for residents to enjoy. The site had previously been vacant for over a decade and was falling into disrepair.

The project started in early 2015 and is due to complete in summer 2017, when the first residents move in.

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

The area was previously amenity grassland with several mature trees, supporting a relatively low botanical diversity. The ecologist's report described the area to be of low ecological value.

Were there any specific reasons that led to this project?

St James' business strategy, Our Vision, places huge emphasis on enhancing biodiversity on developments and creating places for both people and nature. This, along with the rich history of the site and future use by a mix of residents including families and older people, motivated the project team to create a multi-sensory landscape where nature could thrive.

The area prior to development and landscaping.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The following measures were undertaken to create a range of ecological enhancements and biodiversity net gain, creating new habitat and faunal opportunities to compliment Hounslow's local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP):

- Invasive species replaced with a wildflower meadow containing native species to increase the diversity of flora and fauna, such as butterflies, bees, spiders and millipedes;
- With the Thames identified as a key wildlife corridor, a new pond was created and bank side vegetation reinforced with native planting to maximise the area's ecological connection with the river;
- Mature trees were retained and new semi-mature and advanced nursery trees were planted, such as Field Maple, Hornbeam and English Oak;
- Woodcrete bird and bat boxes along with sparrow hotels were installed, to support local populations and BAP species;
- Drainage hollows with native planting were created, providing a diverse landscape, sustainable drainage and a boundary between private and public space;
- Shrubs and hedgerows were planted in private gardens and along borders, in addition to rainwater harvesting butts for sustainable irrigation;
- The public footpath along the Thames was extended to increase connectivity and access to the public;
- A long term landscape management plan is in place to maximise the ecological value of the area and ensure its future environmental stewardship.

In addition to this, natural play areas for public use were created and local school children from Worple Primary School visited the site to discuss ideas for supporting nature in the parkland. The St James Sustainability Advisor also visited the school and discussed environmental issues during an assembly, with the site team donating waste materials for the school garden's bug hotel.

Wildflower meadow with native species for bees and butterflies.

New pond providing habitat for a range of flora and fauna.

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement.

Further information

We decided to start works on the landscaped area early on in the project to help biodiversity establish and provide local residents with a place they could enjoy as soon as possible. For anyone visiting the parkland it is clear to see the benefits of the different landscaped areas which progressively become more natural and native in character towards the river's edge. Bees and butterflies are present in the wildflower area, along with several bird species spotted in and around the pond.

The extra work undertaken to create this space has also provided business benefits, with the landscaping acting as a key selling point to purchasers, who we hope will play a key role in it's long term management. Because of this success and our company commitment to create a biodiversity net gain, this project is being used as a case study for others looking to replicate similar ideas and features in our 'Making Space for Nature and Beauty' guidance, used by all our new developments.

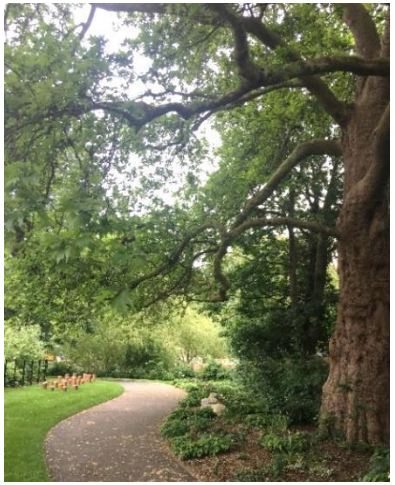
What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

After working on several urban projects, Fitzroy Gate provided us with an exciting opportunity to create a stimulating landscape led environment. We were keen to create more than the bare minimum and provide a place where local species could thrive.

Aerial shot showing how the nature of the space gradually changes, with the landscaping becoming more natural and native in character towards the river's edge.

New pond, drainage hollows and public footpath created along the Thames.

Local children from Worple Primary School visited the project.



Natural play areas created along the public footpath.

New pond created, with varying depths and bank planting ranging from simple grass slopes to thickly planted margins of shrubs.