



**the BIG
Biodiversity
Challenge**
do one thing

Caddington Woods

Chaul End, Luton, UK

Redrow

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category:

HABITAT CREATION: PROJECT of the Year AWARD (> 5ha and above)

Project overview

Formerly a 22 ha car park, Caddington Woods will eventually feature 314 new homes amid nature-rich spaces and eight ha of green space. Redrow has reintroduced wildlife-friendly habitats to land previously unsupportive of flora and fauna, through partnership work and a commitment to achieving biodiversity net gain (BNG).

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

The site included a 14.7 ha tarmac car park (61.5% of site) – which had negligible value to wildlife – and 0.5 ha made up of buildings, grassland patches, scrub and pond habitats. Around the site edges were 7.7 ha (32.5%) of broadleaved woodland habitats. In creating this sustainable new neighbourhood, our approach to both the environmental and community infrastructure has been innovative, leading the way as we developed our Nature for People biodiversity strategy. Alongside the new homes, a comprehensive scheme of biodiverse planting was developed while woodlands have been enhanced so the site will achieve 63% BNG, far beyond planning requirements.

What were the reasons behind this project?

The site was chosen to reintroduce wildlife-friendly habitats through partnerships with the RSPB, Bumblebee Conservation Trust and others as well being a great opportunity to go beyond our current commitment for BNG (>10%). We wanted the project to be a shining example of how nature rich spaces don't just benefit wildlife, but provide a better way to live for residents and enhance wellbeing. The development also provides 94 affordable homes, including 46 endowed by Redrow to the CaSE Trust and local community, as well as a state-of-the-art community centre. Built by Redrow and managed by the Trust, the centre is classified as Zero Carbon due to its solar pv panels, which offset its carbon footprint.



The original site was home to a 6500-space car park



Caddington Woods has transformed the location into a natural haven with wildflower planting and ponds

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Alongside new homes the development includes wildflower meadows, tree planting, ponds, and swales, which all provide shelter, food and water for wildlife.

We worked with the RSPB to design the green spaces and infrastructure to ensure they are best for wildlife. The RSPB also advised on landscaping for four show home gardens to highlight measures homeowners can introduce in their own gardens.

Partnering with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, we introduced pollinator friendly habitats across the site, while local school children assisted with bee-friendly bulb planting and creation of bee hotels. Homeowners were gifted Trust membership and received a welcome pack, which included wildflower seeds and information leaflets.

We also worked closely with the People's Trust for Endangered Species and British Hedgehog Preservation Society to develop 'Hedgehog Highways' assisting with safe roaming.

We have retained the woodland, with a management plan in place to ensure its biodiversity value and improve its condition. We've given the best trees more space by thinning and coppicing. Many logs from this are left on the woodland floor to provide habitats for wildlife, while new bat and bird boxes encourage nesting. Paths constructed using low-impact methods provide access to woodland for the community. Information boards have been installed to help people explore and enjoy the woods. A contractor has implemented the woodland management plan and the long-term management plan includes annual inspections and maintenance.

We've also improved the existing ponds and created new habitats for wildlife including species-rich grassland and native shrub planting. The final development will have eight ha of green or public open space for residents and the local community to enjoy, including a play area.

The measures ensure the project will achieve a 63% BNG and provided a blueprint to replicate similar schemes at other brownfield locations.



Bee hotels have been installed alongside pollinator-friendly planting



The biodiversity value of the woodland has been enhanced, with coppicing encouraging a range of wildflowers to thrive on the woodland floor



Further information

Redrow acquired the 22 ha site, between the hamlet of Chaul End and Caddington village, from Vauxhall/ General Motors, who had owned the land since the 1950s and most recently used it for vehicle storage.

We produced a long-term strategy to improve the site's natural assets with the aim of creating nature-rich spaces to benefit wildlife, while also providing a superb place to live.

We partnered with Central Bedfordshire Council, General Motors, and the local community to launch the Caddington and Slip End (CaSE) Community Trust, which will ensure the legacy of the site. This pioneering community trust is harnessing revenues from the rent of 46 affordable homes, endowed by Redrow to the Trust, which will see £5million invested into the area over 20 years to support the new neighbourhood. It will fund bespoke bus services; manage the woodland, open spaces and landscaping; and run the community centre. After 20 years it will leave a 'sinking fund' of £1m for continuously upgrading and improving the Trust properties, community centre, play area and public open space.

The community has been involved throughout the development. Around 200 children from two local schools completed an art project to create a mosaic tiles for the new community centre, to reflect local and nature-related themes, including 'wildlife' and 'woodland'. An expert from the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire also hosted a public talk on how to help hedgehogs.

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

To show how brownfield sites can be transformed into nature-rich spaces for people and wildlife alike to enjoy. The partnership work undertaken on site provided a replicable model for future developments and informed our long-term Nature for People strategy, latterly created in partnership with The Wildlife Trusts. At Caddington Woods we have succeeded in creating an exemplary sustainable neighbourhood and secured a long-term management plan through the innovative community trust, investing £5million into the neighbourhood over the next 20 years.



A range of habitats were created for native species, including hedgehogs, along with hedgehog highways



Redrow's Nature for People strategy is on full display at Caddington Woods