



USING OUR GREEN ASSETS TO HELP ACHIEVE **NET ZERO**

 Case studies

UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF GREEN SPACE



CONDUCTING A GREEN AUDIT

-  Biodiversity & Nature Gain
-  Funding Options
-  Strategic Planning with Nature in Mind

Below: Woodhouse Park, South Kilburn, London

Assessing Green Space Potential

In Milton Keynes, Clarion Housing has ambitious plans, including the greening and biodiversity enhancement of a large social housing estate, which includes native tree planting, wildflower borders and wildlife habitat improvements. With funding from [Ground Control's Evergreen Fund](#) and help from resident volunteers the project aims to involve the local community in tackling the climate crisis, as well as increasing natural beauty and biodiversity across the estate's outdoor space.

"Through a Green Audit Ground Control and Clarion identified this housing scheme as having underutilised outdoor space that could best benefit from enhancements to increase biodiversity, enhance amenity value, and encourage greater use of outdoor spaces," explains Sam Jones, Housing Sector Lead, Ground Control. The approach is already bearing fruit, says Jones, with a number of initial pilots complete and more projects in the pipeline.

How to Conduct a Green Audit

1. Catalogue outdoor spaces by function, location, size and use.
2. Identify areas of underutilised land with the potential to become high quality green space.
3. Consider the holistic opportunity for biodiversity enhancement.
 - a. Tarmac slabs replaced with green space, wildflowers, or more diverse shrubbery
 - b. Land that has fallen out of management becomes a biodiverse tiny woodland
 - c. Hedgerow corridors and habitat boxes improve nature for wildlife
 - d. Edible herb borders and fruit trees deliver sustainable food production and resident experience



Left: Tree planting at Gainsborough Green, part of Clarion's Abingdon Community projects series.

"THROUGH A GREEN AUDIT GROUND CONTROL AND CLARION IDENTIFIED THIS HOUSING SCHEME AS HAVING UNDERUTILISED OUTDOOR SPACE THAT COULD BEST BENEFIT FROM ENHANCEMENTS TO INCREASE BIODIVERSITY, ENHANCE AMENITY VALUE, AND ENCOURAGE GREATER USE OF OUTDOOR SPACES."

4. Carry out a stakeholder consultation to create meaningful engagement with a diverse group of residents. Encourage new voices from the younger generation to emerge as community green champions. Aim to understand the aspirations and needs of local people in tandem with the requirement of wildlife and ecosystem.
5. Take a fresh look at land that is already managed. Could a more nature friendly approach be taken in the longer term?
6. Aim to evidence each greening decision with a sound environmental, business, and social value case. How the enhanced green space will not only be a place for people to enjoy and wildlife to flourish but how it will help with the fight against the effects of climate change by purifying the air, locking up carbon, providing shade and soaking up excess water which would otherwise contribute to flooding risk.

THE POTENTIAL TO MAXIMISE EXISTING GREEN ASSETS IS IMMENSE AND, AS YET, UNTAPPED



"We know that around 10% of social housing will never be sustainable enough to make it to net zero. As social landlords we can use the process of a green space audit to look for innovative ways to tap into the potential of green space to create carbon offsetting and biodiversity enhancement opportunities in the green spaces we manage."

Left: Nusheen Hussain, Executive Director Business Development, Home Group



"To excel, green space enhancement projects will require us to take a holistic view of data measurements, taking into account carbon capture and customer health and wellbeing. Housing Associations each have a unique blend of land types. For this reason, only individual green asset assessments which catalogue function, location, size and use of green space will deliver meaningful sustainability value."

Left: Elly Hoult, Director of Assets and Sustainability, Notting Hill Genesis

30% for Nature

The momentum for 30% of land to be managed for nature is growing. Taking a more nature friendly approach to land management will give our besieged wildlife the chance to recover and also cultivate sustainable green assets – assets that store carbon and help to tackle the climate crisis.

The challenge is how the housing sector can best align with the Government's commitment to manage 30% of land for nature. "We start from the premise that protecting and effectively managing 30% of land for nature across the housing sector would help to restore habitats and wildlife populations and have significant co-benefits for climate and people," says David March, Head of Environmental Sustainability, Orbit. "Because of the wider environmental and social



Above: David March, Head of Environmental Sustainability, Orbit

"BECAUSE OF THE WIDER ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS, PROJECTS WILL REQUIRE SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE DESIGN, PLANNING AND POST-COMPLETION PHASES."

considerations, projects will require significant community involvement in the design, planning and post-completion phases. Our view at Orbit is that our customers should feel that any enhancements to green spaces are being done with them and not to them. Customers need to know what to expect across the seasons, for example a wildflower meadow may look unkempt for some time to allow seeds to develop before they can be cut back. This will need to be considered in tandem with accessibility, health & safety and ongoing maintenance when attempting to contribute towards a 30% target."

Kick-start consideration

In order to contribute towards a 30% target, land must meet two conditions:

1. Protected for nature in the long-term: the entirety of the 30% should be afforded long-term protection for nature and long-

term protection against damage such as pollution, overexploitation, invasive non-native species, habitat destruction and development.

2. Well managed and in good or recovering condition: land that counts towards the 30% should be well-managed for nature. This includes regular monitoring at appropriate intervals as part of a programme of active management and investment. The aim is to show clear evidence of good management for nature and that the land is either in good condition for nature or is showing demonstrable signs of ecological recovery.

Green assets across the housing sector may not always meet these conditions to contribute to 30% but regardless, by attempting to align as closely as possible housing will still play an important role in nature's recovery.

Biodiversity Blueprint



At Ground Control's 296-acre [Wildfell Environmental Recovery Centre](#), near Braintree Essex, we are responding to the housing sector's need for examples of biodiversity best practice. The environmental showcase will enable us to share over 50 years of knowledge in biodiversity, ecology and tree planting and provide guidance and hands-on learning opportunities in habitat creation, biodiversity net gain and carbon sequestration.

The planting of 'First Avenue' in December 2021 heralded the start of an ambitious programme of native woodland restoration and ecological recovery that will include the planting of 150,000 trees by 2025.

Left: Wildfell's 'First Avenue'



"MAXIMISING NEW AND EXISTING COMMUNAL GREEN

SPACES SHOULD BE A CENTRAL PART OF NEIGHBOURHOOD DECARBONISATION EFFORTS. THE SOCIAL HOUSING TENANTS' CLIMATE JURY SHOWED THE ENTHUSIASM TENANTS HAVE FOR THEIR AREAS AND THAT, GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY, ACTIVE STEWARDSHIP OF NATURE CAN ALSO BE A SHARED STEWARDSHIP BETWEEN LANDLORD AND TENANT. IN DOING SO, ENERGY EFFICIENT HOMES CAN BECOME ONE PART OF LOW CARBON COMMUNITIES THAT HAVE BOUGHT INTO TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE AND ARE MORE SOCIABLE, HEALTHIER PLACES TO LIVE

Right: Liam Gregson, Member Engagement Manager, Northern Housing Consortium

Development Models – The Options

Creating the right public realm sustainability model is about redefining success through the double lens of society and nature. Value comes not only from the positive impacts gained from enhanced community well-being but also from the creation of healthier, habitat rich green space, improvements to the environment, air quality and biodiversity.

“There’s a real focus on bringing important environmental benefits to our public spaces,” says Rob Flavell, Senior Director for Regeneration in the Midlands and North for St. Modwen. As is the case in Longbridge Town Centre, it could be about planting native trees, diverse shrubs and hedgerows, bulbs and wildflowers. All accessible through walking and cycling routes, with seating and play equipment for a diverse multi-generational crowd.”

Engage with nature

Set within the unique setting of the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, The Children’s Garden is a dedicated green space for fun, exploring, play and learning and one of the most ambitious projects in the Botanic Gardens last decade. Designed around the structure of ‘What do Plants need to Grow?’ the scheme focuses on encouraging creative play and an engagement of children with nature to create lasting family memories.

“Emphasis was placed on the creation of a play garden rather than a traditional playground and therefore the design includes secret paths, structures for climbing, the opportunity for splashing and manipulating nature through water play as well as open and quieter areas for families to gather and explore,” says Patrick Wynniatt-



Above: Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, The Children’s Garden

“THERE’S A REAL FOCUS ON BRINGING IMPORTANT ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS TO OUR PUBLIC SPACES”

Husey, Project Manager of The Children’s Garden, Royal Botanic Garden’s Kew. “But the site was challenging. Creative and innovative design and working solutions needed to be adopted including raised footpaths, bridging structures over existing archaeology and supporting key play features with existing trees within the natural setting.”

Funding Green Space Projects

Without evidence it is not yet possible to demonstrate return on investment, third party funding plugs the gap and gets projects over the line right now.

For housing providers, it will be beneficial to undertake regular research into the range of funds available, which organisations can apply, and which projects could benefit.

As funds tend to have a very limited application timeframe and are in high demand, it pays to know what you want to achieve, the required outputs, and have fully costed the programme in advance. Engagement and planning are the key to success.

Consider City Council and Local Authority funding, previous examples include:

- [Green Space Fund](#)
- [Mayors Green Capital Grant Scheme](#)
- [Grow Back Greener Fund](#)
- [Green and Resilient Spaces Fund](#)
- [Greener City Fund](#)

Third party organisations also have funding available, examples include:

- [The Woodland Trust](#)
- [Climate Action Fund](#)
- [Awards for All](#)



Biodiversity vision

The biggest hurdle facing residential developers is biodiversity net gain (BNG).

Once the two-year transition period of the Environment Bill has passed, it will be mandatory for all developments in England to replace any biodiversity lost and add 10% to provide the net gain. The net gain will need to be delivered by the end of the development and the associated habitat creation or enhancement will need to be maintained for 30 years.

Leaning on other local developments that have gone through similar green space planning issues is vital when assessing land for viability and in the creation of a biodiversity gain plan, explains Sam Jones, Housing Sector Lead, Ground Control. “Equally, it’s important to engage as many stakeholder groups as possible early in the master planning stage. Reach out to neighbouring developments, resident inspector groups, community groups, resident gardening groups, resident led sustainability jury, leaseholders and freeholders.”

Below: Longbridge Town Centre, St Modwen Homes



Tips from the Experts

We asked our housing sector partners what tips they would give their peers about delivering biodiverse local landscapes that benefit people and planet. **Here’s what they said.**



Quality, quality, quality

If green spaces are to improve quality of life and help reverse nature’s decline, there can be no compromise on quality.



Early engagement

Open conversations with community groups who will access the space. Traditionally, neat borders are what people like to see. So, it’s important to carry out consultation with residents when implementing biodiversity enhancement at scale.



Play to your strengths

Capture and amplify the positive environmental impacts of community gardens, woodlands and play areas that already exist within your open space.



Team up

Seek out the expertise and knowledge of local Wildlife Trusts. They will understand what Local Authorities want to achieve from the process.



Align the vision

Make the biodiversity, wellness, and tree planting gains you are hoping to achieve part of a neighbourhood management standard that all stakeholders have bought into. You will avoid time on heavy red tape later in the process.



New Talent

Consider recruiting a dedicated biodiversity manager, expertise which is becoming more readily available from graduate programmes. Ground Control’s housing solutions team provides ecological survey, species selection, design, stock procurement, project planning, delivery, and ongoing land management to accelerate biodiversity enhancement plans.



Be ready to roll

Have projects ready in advance, and act quickly to apply for government funding opportunities the moment they arise because funds sell out fast.



Mirror best practice

Make the most of best practice guides that already exist within the sector. The UKCEH & Southern Housing Group Biodiversity Toolkit is a great place to start.






Flexible metrics

At this stage, don’t get too caught up in how the benefit of enhancements can be demonstrated through metrics. This will come.



LOCAL COMMUNITY PROJECTS

-  Community Partnerships
-  Biodiversity & Nature Gain
-  Access to Nature

In the community

Cuppa and a Chat picnic

'Cuppa and a Chat' was established in collaboration with Vistry Partnerships earlier this year. The aim was to provide a way for Aylesbury residents to keep in touch with neighbours and friends despite lockdown restrictions. After months of meeting online, we were delighted to finally meet up with 25 members of the group in real life for a summer picnic.

Former resident, Moussa, a teacher and master craftsman of West African instruments, accompanied by his brother, provided some wonderful music so it didn't take long before many were up dancing to the music!

One resident said, "Many thanks...for all your hard work putting a lovely event together for us. We truly appreciate and loved every bit of it." Another was pleased to see the joy it created: "It was good to see all the ladies up dancing to the music which was great, and the children happily decorating their canvas bags."

Rosalyn, Resident Involvement Programme Manager, who co-organised and hosted the picnic said, "Following delays due to the pandemic and despite some challenging weather conditions on the day, it was wonderful to come together at last. It goes to show, where there is a will there's a way and the ingredients

for a successful gathering truly are good company, energy, food and music."

Sarah, Resident Liaison Manager at Vistry Partnerships said "It was an honour to put on this event alongside Notting Hill Genesis. To see the many happy and excited faces was great. It was wonderful to see everyone together."

We will continue to hold 'Cuppa and a Chat' online for now but we are making plans for these to become 'in person' events. Harry, who regularly attends and is also Chair of the Thurlow Lodge Tenants and Residents Association, has this message for those who may like to get involved: "Aylesbury is a community and Cuppa and a Chat is the spirit of the community, so join in and feel the spirit!"



Exhibition celebrates Aylesbury community projects

'As here becomes there' and 'Home is where the heart is' are two community projects which explore the Aylesbury Estate through the lives, eyes and experiences of the residents who live here.

'As here becomes there' is an exploration of the estate guided by young residents to the places of significance to them. It investigates these places through a series of drawing, printmaking and photography workshops which took place in early 2020.

Meanwhile, 'Home is where the heart is' marks the publication of an intergenerational postal exchange made across eight weeks of lockdown in 2021 between older and younger residents. This project explores the challenges of relocation by focusing on the strength of the community and its shared experiences.

An exhibition of the work was held in August and September at the ASC Gallery in Taplow, Thurlow Street. Notting Hill Genesis is proud to have provided funding to enable these projects to happen.

In the community

Grow your own veg!

In our last issue, we introduced you to OK Grow, a new communal food growing project based on Albany Road (near junction with Thurlow Street). The project is now in full swing and beetroot, purple cabbage and carrots have recently been harvested!

Paul McGann, Director of Grow London CIC, says, "Everyone is welcome to join and grow food with us and no previous experience of gardening is necessary. The idea is that you can get involved

in a community garden without the full time commitment of an allotment. All are welcome to spend some time and enjoy the benefits, even if they only have the occasional spare hours."

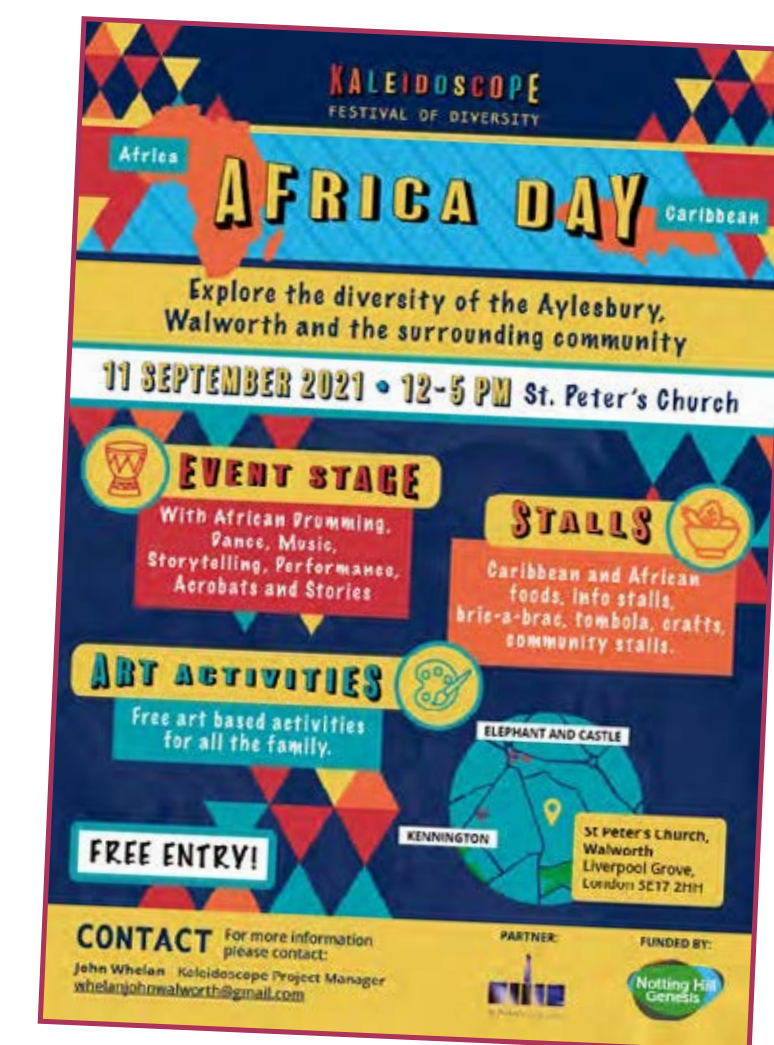
The produce is shared between the people who participate and local community based food projects such as Walworth Community Food Hub, Peckham Pantry and Peckham Community Kitchen. Join OK Grow on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoons between 2pm and 4pm.



Festival of Diversity success

We were delighted to fund Kaleidoscope BME Festival to host their 'Festival of Diversity' which took place throughout Walworth from April through to September. The festival featured a wide range of workshops and community pop up events, culminating with 'Africa Day', held in St Peter's Church grounds. The day was all about bringing the community together to celebrate the richness of our community and included music, storytelling, stalls and art activities.

Our very own Lorraine is Chair of the Kaleidoscope BME Festival. She said, "A celebration like this is a great opportunity to recognise the rich diversity of the local area and the very fabric of the local community, particularly given the challenges of the last 18 months."





BIODIVERSITY & NATURE GAIN

 Local Community Projects

 Access to Nature

Biodiversity pilot: Cephas Court, Coventry

On the day:

- ▶ 163 hawthorn, hazel and field maple hedge planted
- ▶ 40 pollinator shrubs planted
- ▶ native wildflower seed sown to add to the natural wildflowers already growing



Wildflower meadow in progress

This area is being managed for wildlife, providing food for insects, butterflies, bees and other small creatures.

The area has been sown with wildflower seeds and will not be mown during spring and summer months to allow the grass and flowers to thrive.

Take a closer look and you might see knapweed, field scabious and yellow rattle.

Download your free Wildlife Outside Your Window booklet here



Young hedge alert

These native hedge plants have been planted to help provide food and shelter for wildlife, from birds to caterpillars.

They will also help make the air cleaner and absorb carbon emissions to help fight climate change.




Please take extra care of the hedge whilst it is young and growing.

Download your free Wildlife Outside Your Window booklet here





ENGAGING A YOUNGER GENERATION

-  Local Community Projects
-  Biodiversity & Nature Gain
-  Access to Nature



As a result of the pandemic children themselves understand the personal benefits of time spent outdoors and in nature.

A recent study by Natural England conducted in August 2020 between the first two lockdowns allowed children's voices to be heard during the crisis¹². For the first time, children were asked directly through an online survey how they felt about the spaces around them and what was most important to them.

The results from the survey suggest the positive role of nature in supporting children's wellbeing. 83% of children agreed that being in nature made them very happy. This figure was higher for children who stated they had spent more time outside since coronavirus (91%) and even higher for those children who stated they had spent more time outside looking at wildlife/nature (94%)¹³.



There are simple, free solutions all around us.

There is clear evidence that time outdoors and a connection to nature can combat poor mental health in children and young people¹⁴.

Over the last 5 years, 'Nature Connectedness (NC)' has emerged as a measurable set of simple and effective ways to use nature to improve holistic wellbeing. For children and young people these benefits include changes to "behaviour (e.g. attention deficit disorder), health (e.g. obesity), psychological well-being (e.g. depression) and physical development (e.g. short sightedness)"¹⁵.

The Nature Connectedness approach is simple and accessible.

Crucially in the time of Covid-19 it is also highly adaptable to those who do not usually have the means to access nature. It proves that free activities on your doorstep are just as valuable as visits to 'the big outdoors'. The guiding principles are now being used by large environmental organisations including The Wildlife Trusts and The National Trust. These charities are adapting leading resources such as the National Trusts '50 things to do before you're 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ '¹⁶ and The Wildlife Trusts '30 Days Wild'¹⁷ to reach children excluded from their properties due to social and economic barriers.



¹² & ¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-people-and-nature-survey-for-england-child-data-wave-1-experimental-statistics>

¹⁴ <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/12/3250/htm>

¹⁵ Hallam, J., Gallagher, L., & Harvey, C. (2019). "We've been exploring and adventuring": An investigation into young people's engagement with a semiwild, disused space. *The Humanistic Psychologist*

¹⁶ <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/50-things-to-do>


¹⁷ <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildness>

What is Nature Connectedness?¹⁷

Nature Connection is a series of simple ways to experience nature which have a positive impact on physical and mental health.



Compassion
caring about nature and making decision to protect its future



Meaning
using nature to represent an idea, or the meaning of the things you see in nature



Contact
taking in the sensory experience of being in nature



Emotion
acknowledging and talking about how nature makes you feel



Beauty
engagement with the aesthetics of nature

A good example of a simple intervention is the removal of the 'No ball games' signs soon to be launched in the Westminster borough of London. A small but not insignificant move to free up these crucial spaces for young people. The removal of explicit prohibition to play will allow children relative permission to claim the space and be outdoors more often²⁰.



Let's not waste the crisis

When the barriers to accessing nature are understood it brings a clear social inequality into focus. To counter this, Nature Connection provides a framework in which it is possible to maximise the long term benefits of the time spent outdoors in an accessible way.

Collaboration with local community action can square this circle - providing the driving force needed to reach communities struggling to connect with nature.

There has been a major push for a green recovery and a call to arms from conservation organisations²¹. These organisations are perfectly placed to drive public awareness and lean in on the government to make real systemic change. Whilst they do operate in local communities, it is hyper-local networks that have been the backbone of support during the crisis and solve the issue of identifying vulnerable young people in the neighbourhoods they serve.



²⁰ https://www.westminster.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ev_env_017_active_westminster_strategy_2018_2022_wcc_2019.pdf

²¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/19/can-renewed-interest-in-nature-bring-greater-funding-to-restore-uk-wildlife-aoe>

Community campaigns can directly reach the communities most disconnected from nature and who have the most to gain.

Community-led environmental campaigns are at the frontline of being able to radically shift the perception of outdoors action. They can use nature as a tool to improve all-round health in their communities immediately and for the long term.



One such campaign run by Semble, is Backyard Nature whose founding funder is Iceland Food Charitable Foundation and is supported by Clarion Futures – the charitable foundation of Clarion Housing Group, the UK’s largest provider of affordable housing. Backyard Nature is a national campaign to help all children, no matter their background, experience and protect nature. It does this through seasonal missions with the distribution of nature toolkits.

It also acts as a digital ‘nature hub’ sharing carefully collated resources from national charities. A fundamental requirement is to ensure that materials are free and resource materials are accessible. These activities are used both by individuals and organisations like Clarion Futures alongside their Community Ambassadors and partners. By taking part, they join a national movement to connect children with their local outdoors spaces, and take action to protect nature in those spaces.



Backyard Nature



Iceland
Foods★
Charitable
Foundation

Registered charity no 281943





Outdoor Classroom Day

Another example is Outdoor Classroom Day, a global movement - which uses Backyard Nature resources in schools alongside those of local NGOs.



Their aim is to get children to learn and play outdoors as a core part of every school day.

By teaching nature activities in schools, they can provide crucial access to outdoor space in an environment of learning and play which children might not get at home.

A more local example is The Orchard Project. The Orchard Project brings community orchards into the heart of our towns and cities.



They plant, restore and celebrate these spaces, supporting local groups to design and manage them.

Events and partnerships help to encourage local residents and schools to get involved in these green spaces. Over the past 10 years, events have brought over 60,000 people into community orchards across the UK.



The Orchard Project

“It’s a sad fact that many children growing up in urban areas are quite ‘nature-starved’; they lack access to natural spaces, or the resources to get out into the countryside.”

These powerful coalitions of partnerships from the national to the hyper-local bring opportunities to connect with nature into the heart of communities . By combining resources, skills and shared passion they are developing tools for the benefit of generations to come.

Communities who have suffered most can use local nature as a key part of their recovery

Looking holistically at access to green, or nature spaces, there is a clear framework for how to increase engagement with nature for children in areas of deprivation. It is powered by simple free solutions at a local level (see right)

The most significant impact on children's overall wellbeing will come from investment in communities to take action in local spaces themselves. Whatever type of space children can have access to, connection to nature allows them to take action on their terms as a crucial part of our long-term green recovery from Covid-19.

1. Increase access to nature by redefining where nature 'is'
 - Nature space is all around us - children and young people need access to ideas and resources to empower them to find it, engage with it and use it
 - Landowners, local authorities and businesses can help by increasing access to local community spaces and collaborating on appropriate nature projects




2. Supporting campaigns which offer simple solutions to connect to nature
 - Small acts make a big difference. Children and young people can be empowered to all play a part in the overwhelming climate crisis, helping to mitigate a growing eco-anxiety by connecting them into accessible nature campaigns on their doorstep
 - Create opportunities for collaboration between those who create the resources and those with potential distribution channels to children in deprived communities

3. Supporting hyper-local community-led activities
 - Encourage investment by businesses and Local Authorities in community action
 - A hyper-local response led by community groups who know their local area can support children and young people to create the best environment for them to increase their nature connectedness



BIODIVERSITY & NATURE GAIN



-  Local Community Projects
-  Access to Nature
-  Funding Options



Woodland Creation

Working closely with The Forestry Commission, the Environment Agency, Essex Wildlife Trust, Essex County Council and utility companies.

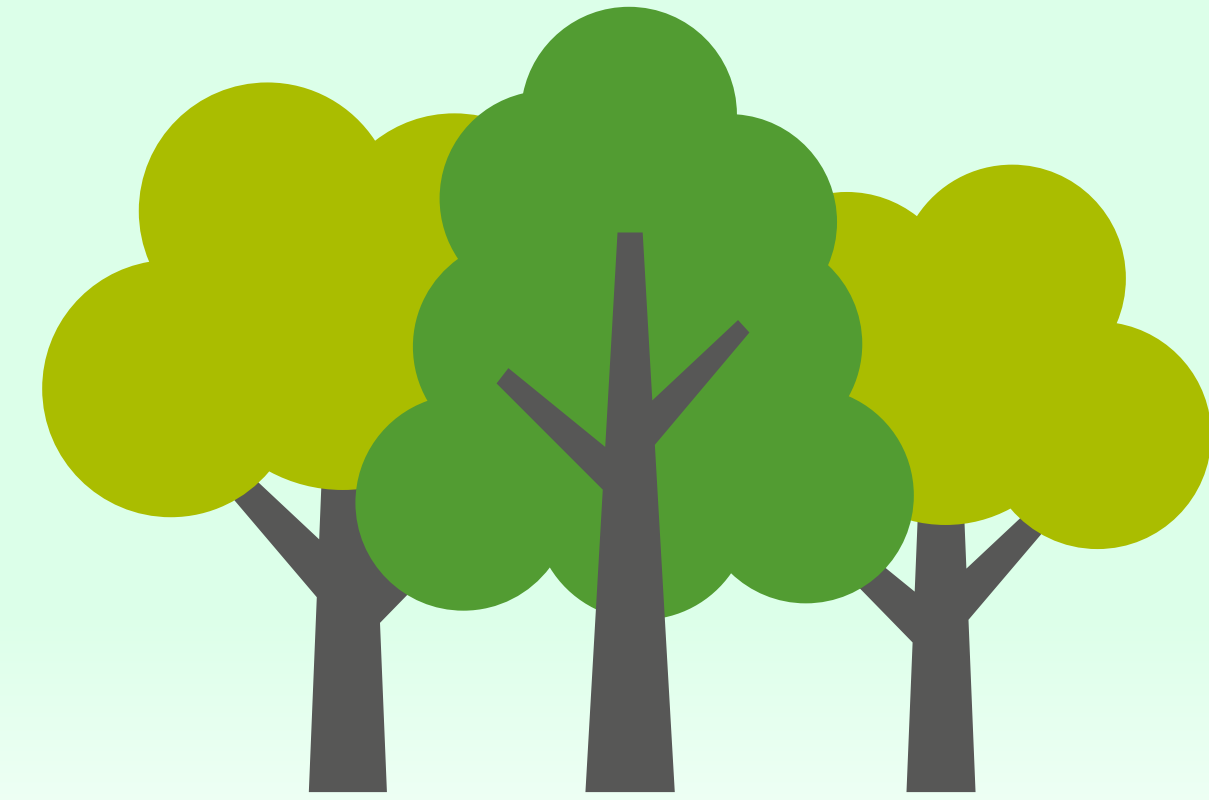
Project Overview

Little Cowbridge Wood is an in-house project creating over 22 acres of new woodland from existing pastureland in Essex. Over 22,000 native trees and shrubs were planted to create a new, multi-functional, broadleaf woodland which will provide a new biodiverse habitat that will capture approximately 3000 tonnes of CO2 by year 50.

This project will contribute to the government's 25-year environment plan and to the UK's fight against climate change.

Ground Control is committed to Caring for our environment and have pledged to plant 1 million trees over the next 5 years.

This project is the first step in this ambitious undertaking.



Project Specification

26 species of plants were used to ensure the woodland will be resilient to climate change and deliver the multiple benefits it is designed for.

Planting density was 2,500 stems per hectare with ten 30mx30m pure oak blocks planted at 6,500 stems per hectare for quality hardwood timber production.

Most of the stock was planted with 1.2m tree shelters to protect against browsing and to further enhance the growing conditions. The remainder of the stock was protected by 60cm rabbit spirals.

Drainage was installed to 11 acres of the site to alleviate waterlogging and improve soil conditions to ensure successful establishment and development of the tree stock.

Cost: £80,000

Grant Funding

Grant funding was achieved through the HS2 Woodland Fund, which contributed approximately 80% of the preparation, planting and first 10 years management costs. It is anticipated that the Woodland Carbon Code will generate further income in excess of £30,000 subject to the position of the developing Carbon Market.

Management

A Woodland Management plan has been created to define the objectives for the project and set out the maintenance and management requirements required to ensure the successful establishment and development of the woodland.

In conjunction with this plan an application is being made to the Woodland Carbon Code to validate its carbon sequestration capability.



Project Outcomes

Ground Control has created a new multifunctional woodland that will deliver the following benefits:

- 1 Increasing Biodiversity
- 2 Increasing Ecological Value
- 3 Carbon Capture and Storage
- 4 Improving Water Quality and Catchment Management
- 5 Improving Landscape Amenity Value
- 6 Social and community benefits



ACCESS TO NATURE

-  Biodiversity & Nature Gain
-  Local Community Projects



Rectory Park Community Orchard, Northolt

In 2019 over 30 volunteers including staff from Network Homes, its partners, residents and people working at the local football centre came together to plant 70 trees and 5,000 bulbs to create a flourishing community orchard in Rectory Park, Northolt.

The orchard was planted on a piece of unused land the size of a football pitch, owned by Ealing Council. Hill, the housebuilders involved in the regeneration project, also donated their services to dig a lake and create mounds to enhance the landscape. When the trees mature, residents of Rectory Park will be able to pick a range of fruits in the summer, including apples, pears, cherries, quinces, mulberries and medlars along with walnuts and chestnuts.

The variety of growing trees, shrubs and bulbs planted has provide residents with a beautiful amenity space and the lake is attracting wildlife. Residents had the opportunity to sponsor a tree with their children. Those who did got a personal sign on their tree and were encouraged to give it some water in dry spells, and learn about ecology, tree care and pruning with Ealing Council Parks.

Network Homes completed the £100 million regeneration of Rectory Park in 2021. We built a total of 449 new affordable homes, an increase of 179 homes from the 270 properties that originally existed there.

Community orchard planting video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Da9YE9L0TSM>





STRATEGIC PLANNING WITH NATURE IN MIND



- 🌿 Large Scale Project
- 🌿 Community Partnerships

- 🌿 Biodiversity & Nature Gain
- 🌿 Access to Nature

2021 Landscape Institute Awards

Excellence in Horticulture and Planting
Design

Southmere Public Realm

Entry 294-P-HPD

Prepared by LUC

Context

Wider context

Southmere is centrally located in Thamesmead, between Abbey Wood and the river Thames. Thamesmead is located in South East London, and situated within the London Borough's of Bexley and Greenwich. Southmere forms part of the London Borough of Bexley. The neighbourhood has excellent connections to plenty of green spaces and has a prominent and characteristic location on Southmere Lake.

The Southmere estate directly borders Southmere Lake and the extensive park areas to the north and east.

Site context

Southmere is embedded between Southmere Lake, Southmere Park, the green park that connects Lesnes Abbey to Thamesmead and the southern neighbourhoods.

The neighbourhood is characterised by the four residential towers located on the edge of Southmere lake. Besides the four towers, the neighbourhood is made up of residential blocks of flats, constructed of concrete and spread over 2/3 storeys. The site provides a connection via a walkway called Portmeadow Walk from the neighbourhood park to Southmere lake. The walkway runs along four courtyards. Each courtyard space has a number of mature trees located in the raised grassed areas. The design remains fairly unchanged since it was constructed towards the end of the 1960's.

To the south-west of the site lies Southmere Village, which forms part of the wider Abbey Wood Housing Zone proposals. The proposals are currently under construction and a new neighbourhood centre, including a library and community building are soon to be delivered.



Southmere and its context

--- Southmere
— Site



Lakeside Event Centre

LUC

Engagement

Walking Surveys

Walking surveys have been undertaken since the outset of the commission and these have continued during the design stages.

Surveys have been carried out during both the day and night and the following observations were established:

- Contaminated water entering Southmere Lake is a serious problem.
- The courtyards are underused and those observed using the courtyards were traveling from A - B or walking dogs. The courtyards were not actually being used as a destination.
- The courtyards are currently used for dog fouling, which deters families and young children from using the spaces.
- Attendance during days of refuse collections indicated a range of bin types being used with a challenge for refuse operatives to cover the whole neighbourhood from limited routes for vehicular access
- Light levels are currently inconsistent and dramatic changes in lux levels contribute to an unsafe feel. The location of supply, cable runs and metering is also poorly understood.

Resident Engagement at the 2018 Thamesmead Festival

In an attempt to tackle 'consultation fatigue' experienced by residents, an alternative form of consultation was devised and a series of 'mobile models' of the Southmere neighbourhoods were created to be transported around on wheeled trolleys on dates combined with the Thamesmead Festival. The Thamesmead Festival is a contemporary performing arts festival that takes place over two months.

It was envisaged that the use of 'roaming' models at the Thamesmead Festival would naturally peak interest from passers-by and would allow the team to move to where people were gathered or to target busy routes.

The key objective of the consultation was to obtain resident feedback on the nature, extent and phasing of proposals before more detailed plans were produced. It also provided an opportunity to re-confirm Peabody's commitment to create a step change in the quality, safety and maintenance of the public realm. Set questions were presented to residents.

The consultation lasted a total of 10 hours over consecutive Saturday and Sunday afternoons, tying in with events of The Thamesmead Festival. A team of 3 members roamed through Southmere with the models and made 58 approaches to residents and passers-by, posing set questions. A total of 41 responses were received from people willing to engage in conversation about the proposals. Detailed conversations lasted around 10 – 15 minutes yet frequently touched upon issues other than public realm. A further 7 responses via the

Thamesmead Now webpage were received, giving a total of 48 responses. There were 5 questions raised and it was not always possible to engage residents for long enough to answer them all. Some residents felt unable to answer certain questions as they found the issues too complex to give immediate responses.

Given the breadth of issues to address – phasing, extent, key routes, priorities, door-step change etc. it was difficult to engage some residents for an adequate time, and some found the topics hard to give concise opinions on.

The following points were concluded:

- Residents found it difficult to comment on whether money should be spent on a range of areas or on just one area of works.
- A lot of feedback was received on immediate issues such as lighting, day-to-day safety concerns and issues like cracked paving.
- Residents expressed concern over insufficient maintenance and residents voiced the preference for investment to 'tidy-up the estate'.
- Top priority issues such as broken lights, litter, dog mess, and pavement treatments were highlighted.
- Greening of the courtyards and incidental play were suggested. Play should however be low key and not become a destination.
- Many residents expressed the concern that after a long period of no investment, they just wanted Peabody to get on and 'do something' – starting as an absolute basic with outstanding repairs.

Drop in Sessions

Peabody organised further community engagement from the 2nd - 9th March 2019. The aim was to provide an update on all regeneration projects across South Thamesmead and an exhibition and drop in sessions for local residents and stakeholders allowed them to share their views on the landscape proposals. LUC were on hand to answer questions about the works specific to Southmere. In advance of the exhibition a brochure presenting the proposals and advertising the drop in sessions was distributed door to door throughout Southmere. General comments included the following:

- The proposals were well received and residents were keen for the works to be implemented as soon as possible
- The lighting improvements and upgrade to the paving were particularly favoured
- Concerns were expressed about the extent of existing trees to be removed. These were laid to rest when residents understood that the trees would continue to

increase in size over the next 20 years and the damage and nuisance the trees were currently causing would only be exacerbated. The strategy for succession tree planting assisted in justifying the proposals.

- Concerns around the upkeep of the courtyards were expressed.

Community Planting Days Spring 2020

It had been planned to involve the local residents in a series of planting days however this proposal was unable to go ahead due to lockdown laws.

Telephone Survey

Following completion of the works Peabody undertook a telephone survey to collect feedback from the local residents. A summary of the comments follow:

- The new lamp columns have improved safety in the area
- The scheme has improved health and wellbeing through increased sociability and outdoor enjoyment for both children and adults
- The seating has been welcomed and allows residents to take a break and appreciate the planting
- The area is visually more appealing and stimulating

Naming and Opening the Courtyards

Peabody are currently exploring the possibility of launching a competition to encourage local residents to take part in the naming of the courtyards.

This competition along with a celebration event aims to not only foster happiness and social connection but bring residents together to enjoy their new and improved spaces.



Residents engagement



Thamesmead Festival



Exhibition and drop in session

- Lighting
- Paving
- Greenspaces/play facilities
- Parking
- Close alleyways (positive)
- Don't close alleyways (negative)
- More planting
- Dog fouling
- Seating
- Accessibility
- Speed controls
- Litter
- Tidiness/maintenance

Key to topics raised by residents (in anticlockwise arrangement from diagram)

Design Proposals

Landscape Concept

Colour

In order to create a special landscape character and a unique identity, the landscape design required a unifying aesthetic. Colour forms the inspiration for the design through paving materials, furniture and planting, providing an antidote to the grey architecture of the surrounding buildings.

A high proportion of the proposed planting varied in colour from courtyard to courtyard, with some consistency to tie them together.

Likewise, the paving and furniture details are consistent throughout to create unity.

Enhancing courtyard spaces

In addition to the introduction of colour, the approach was to create a more private backdrop to the four courtyards for residents to use.

Private zones were delineated from the more public Portmeadow Walk, with generous swathes of herbaceous planting.

This mix of plants lift and enhance the quality of the landscaped environment, providing a natural dividing line between the public and private areas.

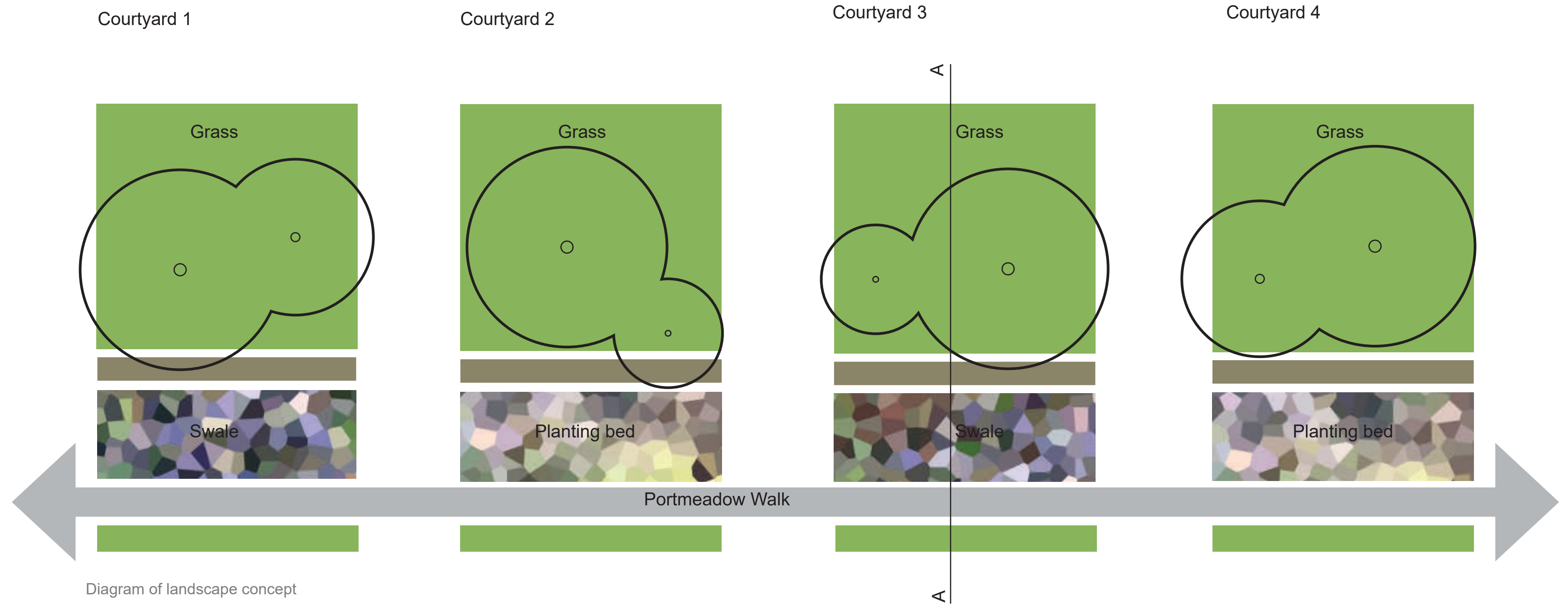
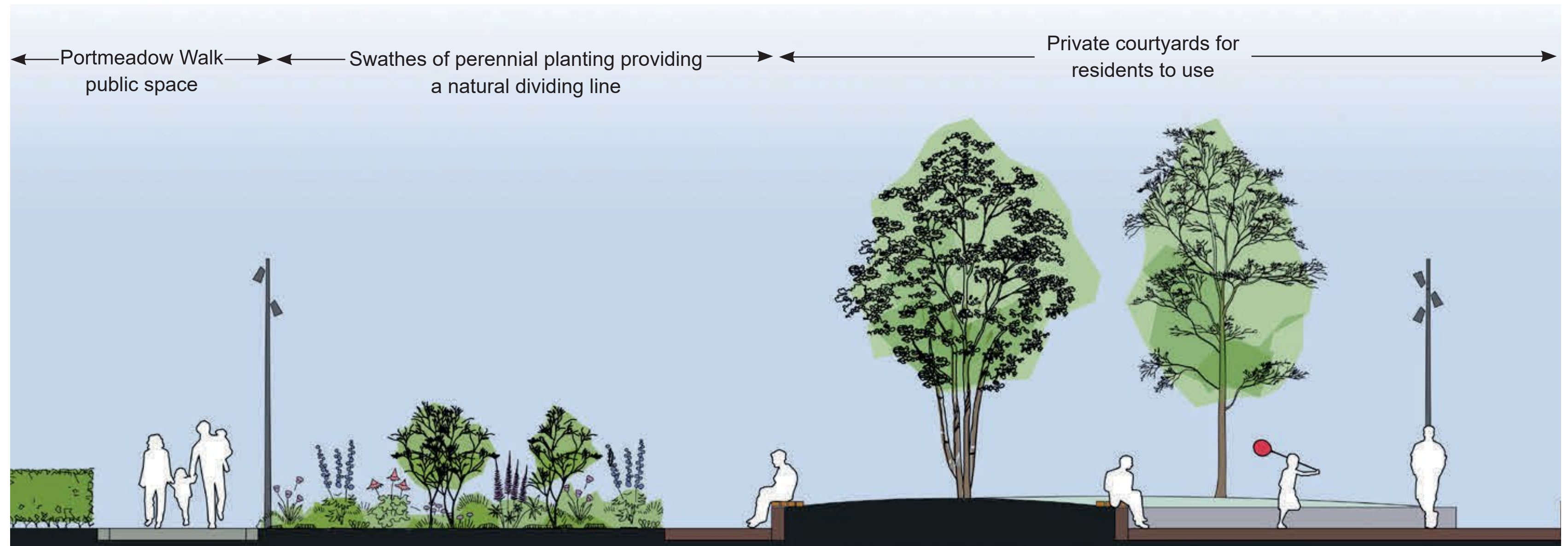


Diagram of landscape concept



Courtyard visualisation



A - A Illustrative section of new courtyard planting and layout

Landscape Design

The lakeside public realm provides a decked area with a sculptural seating feature, formed of coloured metal and timber cubes of contrasting heights. The feature is enhanced with modern lamp columns, again with varying heights that offer sculptural interest and evening illumination.

The form of the lamp columns and character of the lakeside area echo's that of the emerging Southmere Village, located across the lake. The feature assists in providing a visual connection and focal point between the old estate and new development. It also acts as a focus from Portmeadow Walk that stretches through the estate and connects the four courtyards with each other. New lighting along the walkway ensures a well lit environment is provided along the key access route.

Within the courtyards the layout of raised lawns predominantly remains as existing, but with subtle adaptations. The northern and eastern edges do not change substantially. The walls along the western edges are removed and replaced by a grass slope to allow easier access for residents whose front doors immediately face them, as well as to deter people sitting on them.

The southern sections of the raised lawns are removed to accommodate several large plant beds that house a diverse perennial display that provides a rich tapestry of colour, form and seasonal interest. These beds separate the tranquil residential zones from the busier and more communal Portmeadow Walk. In two of the courtyards stepping stone paths dissect a couple of the larger beds and offer opportunities for 'Play on the Way'. Children and adults can cross the swales and become immersed in the planting.

A high proportion of the existing trees, excluding those recorded as Category A trees, are removed to allow increased light levels to enter the courtyards and private rear gardens. The removal of the tree root growth has mitigated continued damage to the existing brick walls and sections are repaired and cleaned.

The age structure of the existing trees is very similar and the introduction of new trees allows for succession planting. It also provides the opportunity to introduce a wider variety of trees and species that are more appropriate in terms of scale.

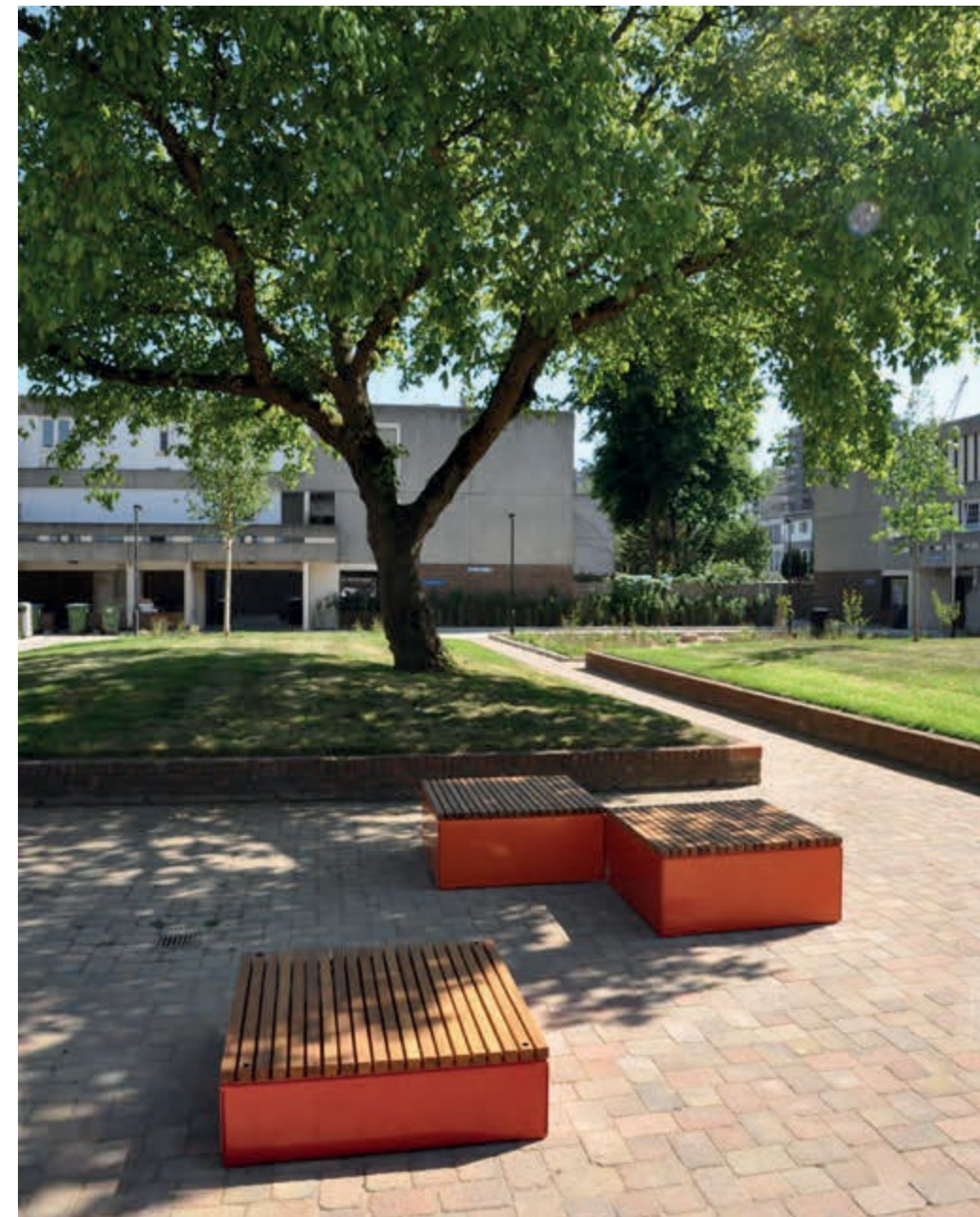
Hedges frame the courtyards on three sides, they assist in screening the dilapidated rear garden fences and provide a uniform backdrop to the courtyards.

New seating is installed along the tops of the existing walls and contemporary colourful lounging cubes provide further fun seating options.

A simple palette of paving reflects the hierarchy and function of the spaces.



Wall top seating and perennial plant beds along Portmeadow Walk



Lounging cubes



Proposed landscape layout ① - ④ Courtyards, ⑤ - Lakeside Feature, ⑥ - Swales, ⑦ - Portmeadow Walk



Lakeside sculptural seating feature

Planting

The Brief

- Introduction of a wide variety of trees that are suited to the courtyard spaces.
- Exciting perennial planting compositions that offer rich texture and a long season of flowering colour.
- The form of the plants within the large beds along Portmeadow Walk should provide fullness and height.
- The plant beds should excite, create delight and intrigue users when they enter each courtyard.
- Peabody's maintenance team will be up-skilled and maintenance requirements should not restrict the planting design.
- To attract pollinating insects by introducing a mixture of plants with an element of native species but a focus on exotic plants to extend the flowering season .
- Habitat enhancement and biodiversity improvements.

Ecological Compatibility

Ecological compatibility is fundamental and any successful planting scheme relies upon choosing plants that suit the site conditions.

Ground investigations established that the water table across the site is high which corresponds with the sites low lying nature and its previous marshland environment.

The ground investigation also recorded the existing soils were contaminated and not suitable for reuse in the swales due to low drainage performance. With the exception of the grass areas a decision was made to import new topsoil for the trees, hedges and ornamental planting. The existing subsoil was retained with a marker layer being provided between the contaminated subsoil and new topsoil.

The subsoil was recorded as Loamy Sands to Clay Loams and occasional pockets of sand and clay were recorded.

In response to the above findings, the plant species selected for the site prefer moist but well drained soil.

After reviewing the plant schedule the soil specialist selected a suitable specification for the imported topsoil with a pH value of 6.0 - 8.5.

The plants were carefully selected in relation to the plant bed and the amount of sunlight the bed receives throughout the day. Consideration was also given to plants within the bed that would receive reduced levels of sunlight due to shading by taller plant species.

The plant selection process addressed the provision of flowering species to provide forage for a wide variety of pollinating insects and the introduction of British native species to support invertebrates and promote a healthy ecosystem.

Planting Design Principles

Colour

Nature has created plants with a huge range of colours specifically to attract or repel insects, birds and animals but, humans also respond to colour, especially the colour of plants. It is known that colour has a strong emotional effect on people and creates atmospheres. Warm colours generally make us feel positive, with exciting emotions and cool colours elicit a more calm and passive response.

Using the colour wheel we have explored the relationship between colours and how they interact.

Analogous colour schemes use colours which are next to each other on the colour wheel and create serene designs which are harmonious and pleasing to the eye. We have applied this colour theory to Courtyards 2 and 4 and added white to provide accent and depth to the planting.

In contrast to this, within Courtyards 1 and 3, we have used a combination of complimentary colours. Complimentary colours are opposite each other on the colour wheel and the contrast between the colours creates a vibrant feel.

Form - Trees and Hedges

The trees selected for the courtyards are small to medium in size and the intention is they will grow to fill the space with their physical size and root growth not becoming an ongoing management problem. The trees are generally small leaved varieties offering a light canopy and casting dappled shade for users of the raised lawns.

Large Semi-Mature and Extra Heavy Standards are purposefully planted to withstand vandalism and provide some instant impact to compensate for the loss of the existing trees. Likewise, large feathered hedging specimens provide semi-instant hedges.

If the courtyards are thought of as rooms the hedges form the walls and the trees create the ceiling. In effect they form the structure of the space. The hedges have an added use in that they provide a continuous screen to the existing residential boundary fences some of which are privately owned and in a dilapidated state. The clipped single species hedges create a uniform backdrop to the courtyards whilst the mixed native hedges provide a tapestry of texture.

The trees planted informally in groups will eventually provide relief from the rectilinear shapes imposed by the architectural forms. The trees will also assist with anchoring the built form into its setting and humanising the courtyards.

“Gardens are beautiful. Everything looks really nice”

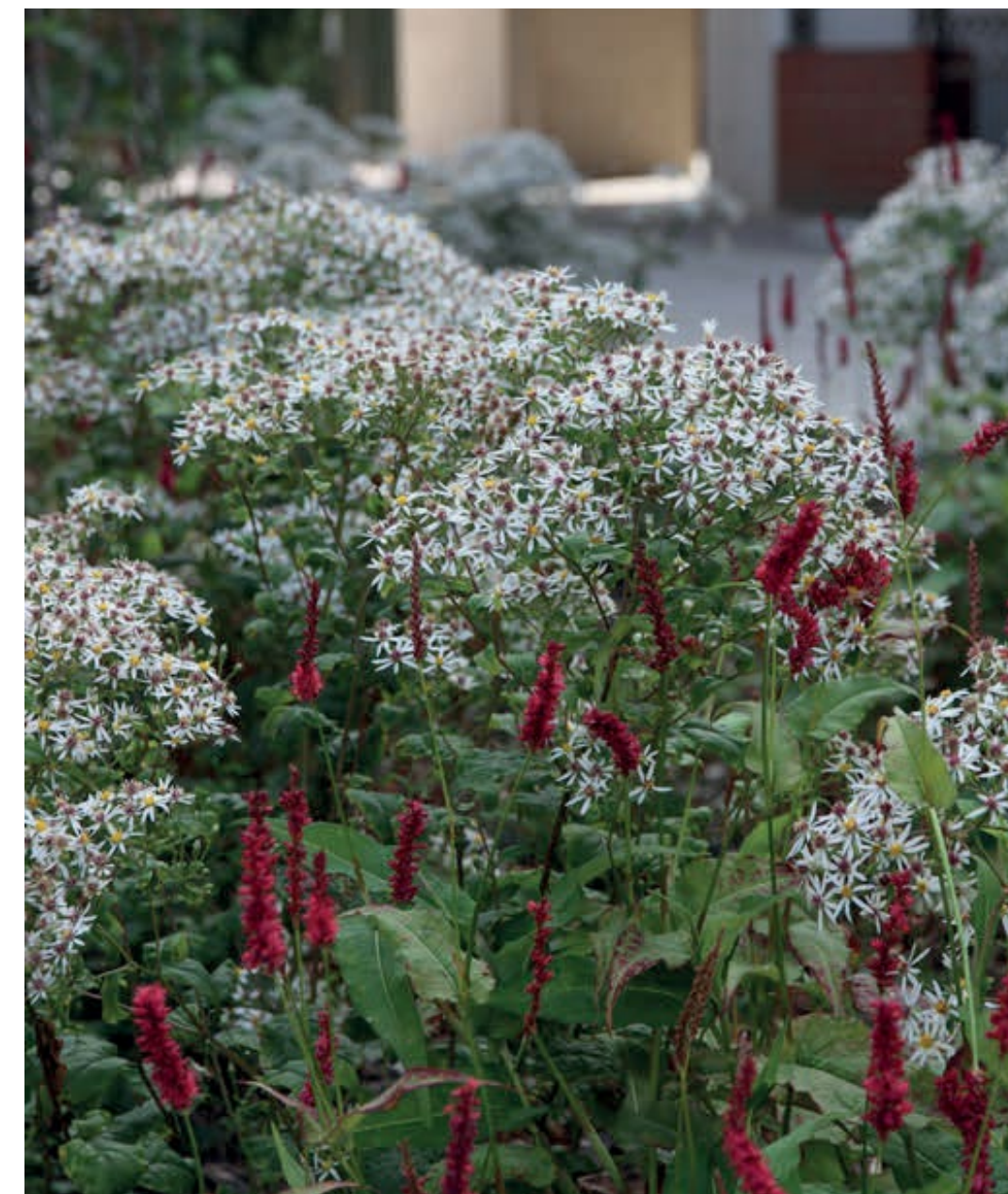
Local resident quote



Courtyard 2, analogous colour scheme. Molinia caerulea 'Karl Foerster' harmonising with Sanguisorba 'Pink Tanna'



Blocks of Carpinus betulus hedge form the walls of the courtyards



Courtyard 4, white being used as an accent. Persicaria amplexicaulis 'Firetail' combined with Aster divaricatus



A predominantly grass display provides amazing textural interest and screening to the private boundaries

Habitat Enhancement, Biodiversity Improvement and Sustainability

The existing courtyards, consisting of only trees and lawn, were of low biodiversity value. The courtyards have seen enhancement to these habitats and the provision of new habitat types and planting combinations. Several small to medium varieties of tree including Elm, Sweetgum, Birch, Cherry, Honey Locust, Field Maple and Crab Apple are introduced to support the existing trees. New hedges, shrubs, perennial planting and bulbs establish new habitats and provide a mix of non-native and native specimens.

The native hedges include mixed species; Hazel, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Dog Rose and Guelder Rose with stretches of Hornbeam being planted as a single specie hedge. These species are supported by several exotic plants which assist in extending the native flowering season from early summer up until November.

The extended flowering season is aimed at attracting pollinators, the ornamental grasses and seeds provide nesting material and offer a food source for birds, the native hedges along with the ground cover plants and ferns offer dense vegetation for foraging and cover for bird species, edible fruits; Serviceberry, Crab Apple and Quince provide an important food source for wildlife and the mixed native / single specie hedges offer further feeding and nesting opportunities.

In addition to this, general bird nesting boxes and robin bird nesting boxes are provided in the existing trees.

A biodiversity assessment has been undertaken to see how the habitat enhancements are improving the biodiversity and using Defra's Habitat Valuation Calculator pre and post works were assessed to see whether a biodiversity gain had been achieved. The following findings were recorded:

'These enhancements will result in an increase in habitat units by 0.09 units. This sounds like a small increase, however the area is relatively small – the score per ha is an increase in 2.2 units per ha, and the enhancement equate to a 40% net gain. The courtyard enhancements will increase the number of shrub species by 18 species, as well as four mixes of shrub plants. A total of 8 species of trees are also proposed to be planted in these areas.'

The biodiversity assessment goes on to recommend the following next steps:

'Proposed changes in management and habitat creation do not always deliver the biodiversity results that are anticipated at the design stage. It is proposed that a post-enhancement habitat survey is undertaken to assess the impact management enhancements and habitat creation is having on the overall condition of habitats.'

The site photos on the right illustrate a number of pollinators and insects that are beginning to colonise the site.

The Common Blue Damselfly was spotted in the courtyard 4 swale, amongst the *Juncus maritimus*. This demonstrates that the greening of the courtyards has provided a greenlink between Southmere Lake, where the Damselflys are a common sight and the furthest courtyard.

The greening of the area and the enhanced and new habitats is allowing wildlife to flourish and in turn will mitigate against the increased globalisation of pests and diseases.

The addition of the swales assists in cleaning the surface water before it enters the lake and the tree cover combats climate change by providing a natural cooling effect through the provision of shade.

Management and Maintenance

Upon expiration of the rectification period the landscape management and maintenance will be handed back to Peabody's Environmental Services team.

Peabody have been busy in upskilling their workforce in preparation for the handover with employees adding to their knowledge by attending a part-time maintenance course at Capel Manor College.

Maintenance of the landscape will be guided by the Southmere and Parkview Public Realm Landscape Maintenance Plan prepared by LUC. In addition to this plan and in collaboration with PlantPartner LUC have prepared a more detailed schedule which identifies specific maintenance and management requirements for the individual trees and plants.

With particular reference to the perennial planting it is acknowledged that this will evolve over time. It may become apparent that more dominant species and those that self seed easily will require selective editing. In addition particular species will require dividing every 2 - 3 years in order to ensure the plants perform year after year. This will also provide the opportunity to multiply the plant stock.

The planting design will not be a static entity and LUC will be on-hand to assist with the maintenance regime and the continued delivery of a successful scheme.

“ ‘A daily blessing on my general health, mental health and sense of well-being”

Local resident quote



Knautia arvensis - Bumble Bee



Molinia caerulea 'Karl Foerster' - Seven-spot Ladybird



Sanguisorba 'Pink Tanna' - Hover-fly



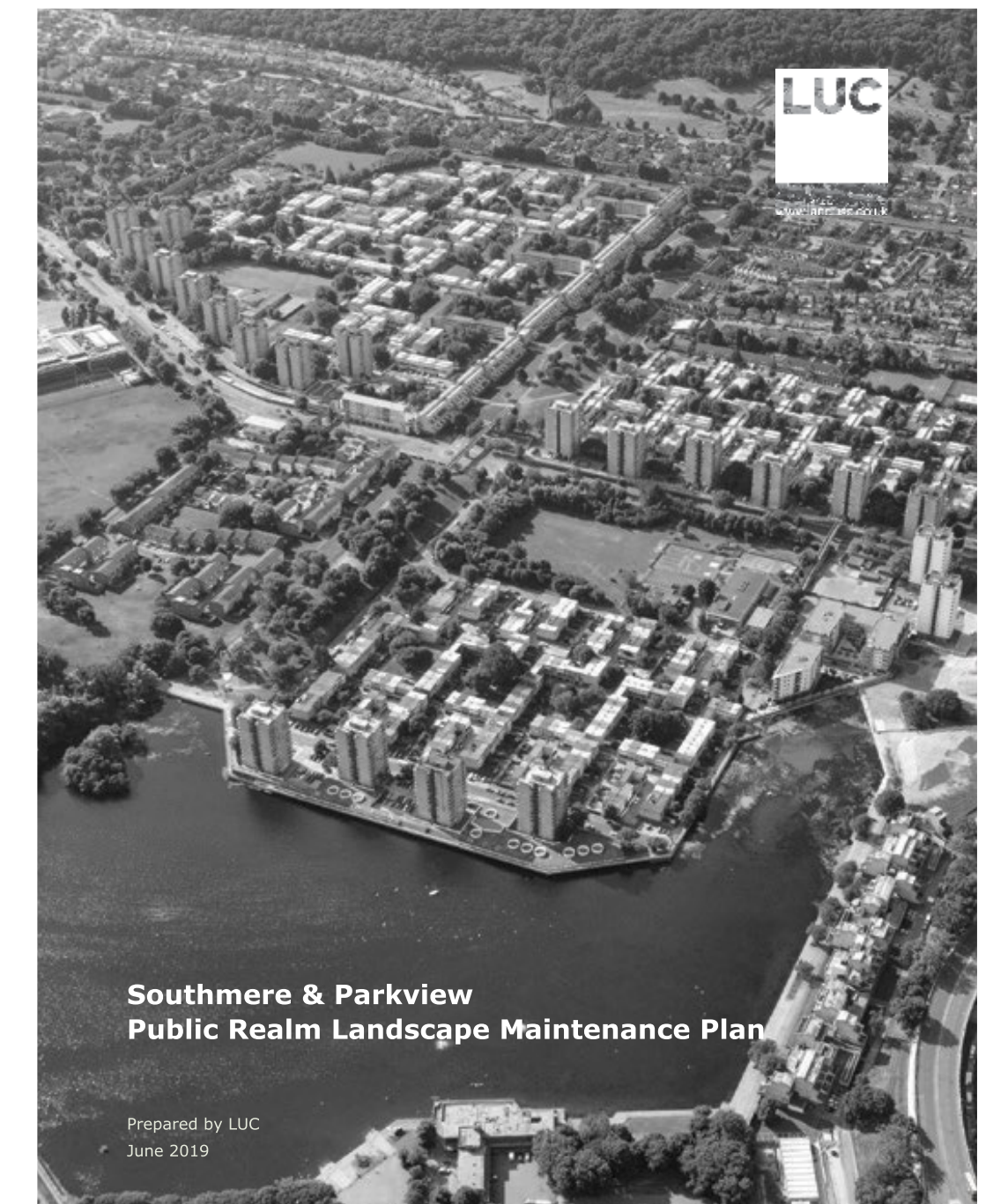
The swales provide dipping ponds for wildlife



Geum - Geum 'Prinses Juliana'



Juncus maritimus - Common Blue Damselfly





LARGE SCALE PROJECTS

-  Community Partnerships
-  Biodiversity & Nature Gain



Highways England and community plant poppies along Remembrance Way

More than 70 volunteers, from school pupils and road workers to councillors and residents, rolled up their sleeves and grabbed a bin liner in a day of action to tidy up the A453 – Remembrance Way – in Nottingham.

A large grassy bank was cleared and poppy seeds planted alongside the road which was given the name in recognition of the 453 armed forces personnel who lost their lives in Afghanistan, including a local resident from Clifton. The mass effort saw the East Midlands Asset Delivery team – made up of Highways England and 22 partners – join forces with the local community including the NG11 Clean Champions. All of the time and materials were donated. More than 80 bags of litter were collected in Clifton and the surrounding areas along the A453 by volunteers which also included students from the nearby Nottingham Trent University, local school children and councillors. There were 30 volunteers from Highways England and its supply chain partners including Amey, Ground Control and Balvac. They were also supported by the nearby McDonald's and Tesco which provided hot drinks and muffins.

Highways England's Head of People and Business Services Nicole Westera said: "The dedication of the NG11 clean champions to keeping tidy one of the gateways into Nottingham, and the surrounding estates, is very admirable and a worthy cause that we were very happy to support. "We had a nice day working alongside local residents, who use our network, in weather that was very kind to us. We are now keeping our fingers crossed that we will have a stunning sea of red poppies come next year on one of the embankments along Remembrance Way." Alma Davies, who leads the NG11 Clean Champions, said: "The Nottingham Clean Champions initiative gives residents the opportunity to make a difference where

they live. There is an acknowledgement that council street teams do not have the capacity to clear all the litter which irresponsible pedestrians and drivers continually discard, and Clean Champions are therefore prepared to volunteer their time to help. "Such events as this help keep the NG11 team motivated; it's a thank you for their effort and it means that many more areas can be tackled. And when there are so many eager volunteers that go out in force, with a smile on their faces, in their hi-vis vests and uniforms, residents can't help but notice the difference that is being made, in clearing so many areas. A fantastic collaborative event – a sterling effort – teamwork at its best." Amey project manager Michelle Pavlovic said: "Alma and her team do a tremendous job all year round and we were glad to support her and the team today. Scattering poppy seeds along Remembrance Way was a nice touch to end the day. We look forward to seeing them in bloom next spring, leaving a legacy of our joint efforts today. It is amazing what we can achieve for the customer when we work together!" Nottingham City Councillor Roger Steel added: "A magnificent turn-out from Highways England was complemented by an equally large turnout from our local Clifton litter picking groups. "The primary route into Nottingham from the south – Remembrance Way – was topped and tailed to a pristine condition. This 'entrance' into Nottingham will now display banks of poppies in commemoration of the 453 soldiers who lost their lives in Afghanistan."

Environmental





STRATEGIC PLANNING WITH NATURE IN MIND

-  Large Scale Project
-  Community Partnerships

-  Biodiversity & Nature Gain
-  Access to Nature



Ground Control invests in Wildfell Centre for Environmental Recovery

A 296-acre site, dedicated to helping landowners unlock the potential of their underutilised land for nature's recovery.

With two months until the COP26 climate summit begins, a new rewilding centre – one of the largest in the country – has been launched by Ground Control to showcase and share the best biodiversity and sustainability practices in land management.

The Wildfell Centre for Environmental Recovery, a 296-acre site near Braintree, will be dedicated to helping landowners unlock the potential of their underutilised land with the potential to increase environmental and societal value for generations to come.

Explore the Wildfell Centre in this new video here.

After buying the site for £2m, Ground Control – the UK's leading landscape and maintenance contractor – will lead in its transformation into a research and training facility, providing guidance and hands-on learning opportunities in woodland creation, meadow & hedgerow restoration, and biodiverse habitat restoration.

Our clients and landowners will also have the opportunity to learn from evidence-based trials in sequestering carbon whilst increasing biodiversity and sustainability practices relevant to their landbank.

Sustainability leaders celebrate the launch at Green Gains Live.

To mark the centre's launch, sustainability leaders from organisations such as Anglian Water, Network Rail, Forestry England, JLL, Guinness, Fujitsu, Aviva and Network Rail attended our first 'Green Gains Live' summit to discuss ways to better utilise land to support environmental recovery.

Green Gains keynote speaker Chair of Natural England Tony Juniper CBE welcomed the project, he said – "Environmental ambition must today go beyond protecting what's left of our natural world to embrace plans for its recovery. One vital aspect of what is needed are compelling examples of success to inspire more investment and action, including trailblazing initiatives from businesses like Ground Control's Wildfell Project."

Watch the Green Gains Live event again here.



Ground Control director Kim Morrish said, "I am incredibly proud to announce that Ground Control is creating a 296-acre centre dedicated to nature. The Wildfell Centre for Environmental Recovery, formerly Grays Farm which we acquired in April 2021, is comprised of arable farmland and woodland near Braintree, Essex. The site will showcase purpose-driven, environmentally conscious land management practices to public and private landowners. At Ground Control we are keen to inspire property-owners across the UK to dedicate underutilised land to reverse the decline in the UK's natural environment. The site will highlight best practices for habitat creation, biodiversity net gain and carbon sequestration; supporting and demonstrating the potential to achieve Green Gains. The Wildfell Centre will be much more than tree planting. It will operate with science-based, verifiable measures for carbon sequestration, habitat creation and environmental management. Land evaluation, project design and stakeholder engagement has already begun, with woodland, habitat creation and restoration projects commencing in the coming months.

In 2019, many of partners helped Ground Control create the pilot project, Little Cowbridge Wood in Billericay. The Green Gains on this site include nine hectares of new native broadleaf woodland, meadow restoration, orchard planting, introduction of bees, and the generation of 11kW of wind, 50Kw of solar power, and 80kWh of battery storage. The Wildfell Centre for Environmental Recovery is ten times the size of this first project and will support clients in understanding how best to enhance the environmental value of their land. Since 2004, we have demonstrated how business can be a force for social and environmental sustainability. We are proud that Ground Control is already recognized as a force of significant green change, both within our industry and beyond. The Wildfell Centre for Environmental Recovery will showcase how public and private sector landowners can maximise Green Gains and leave their own sustainable legacy for the next generation."



STRATEGIC PLANNING WITH NATURE IN MIND



- 🌿 Local Community Projects
- 🌿 Biodiversity & Nature Gain
- 🌿 Access to Nature

Get greener greens with Futures

For some of us the smell of freshly cut grass is one of the pleasures of a summer day. But while it may create memories of picnics, cricket and walks in the park – all that mowing, trimming and strimming can come at a price. As well as the impact of using fuel and the emissions from equipment, traditional mowing means removing the clippings, which in the Amber Valley alone was costing Futures around £20,000 a year – money that could be better reinvested in our communities. And to help keep the green spaces around our homes looking neat and tidy, like most landscaping teams we've had to resort to years of using weedkillers – most of which contain glyphosphate. At the peak of our weedkiller use we were consuming up to 100 litres a week. While this chemical does the job of clearing weeds, it is hazardous to both people and the environment. It reduces the quality of the soil, which is a problem for the plants we do want to grow, and leads to soil erosion which in turn exposes stones and other hazards, which can damage equipment causing more disruption and expense.

So, since late 2019 we've been working with customers and other local people, including schools, to introduce new, more environmentally-friendly ways of taking care of the green spaces around our homes.

One of the first projects to come to life was in Ironville where our team hand-planted 3,000 square metres of wildflower seeds including cornfield flower and meadow grass mixes in place of the existing lawns. Around trees we used specially selected woodland seeds to remove the need for noisy and time-consuming strimming.

While some customers still preferred the sight of cut grass outside their homes, many also welcomed the return of a more natural look as well as the appearance of more flowers. This prompted local groups and volunteers to get in touch to support the project.



Get greener greens with Futures

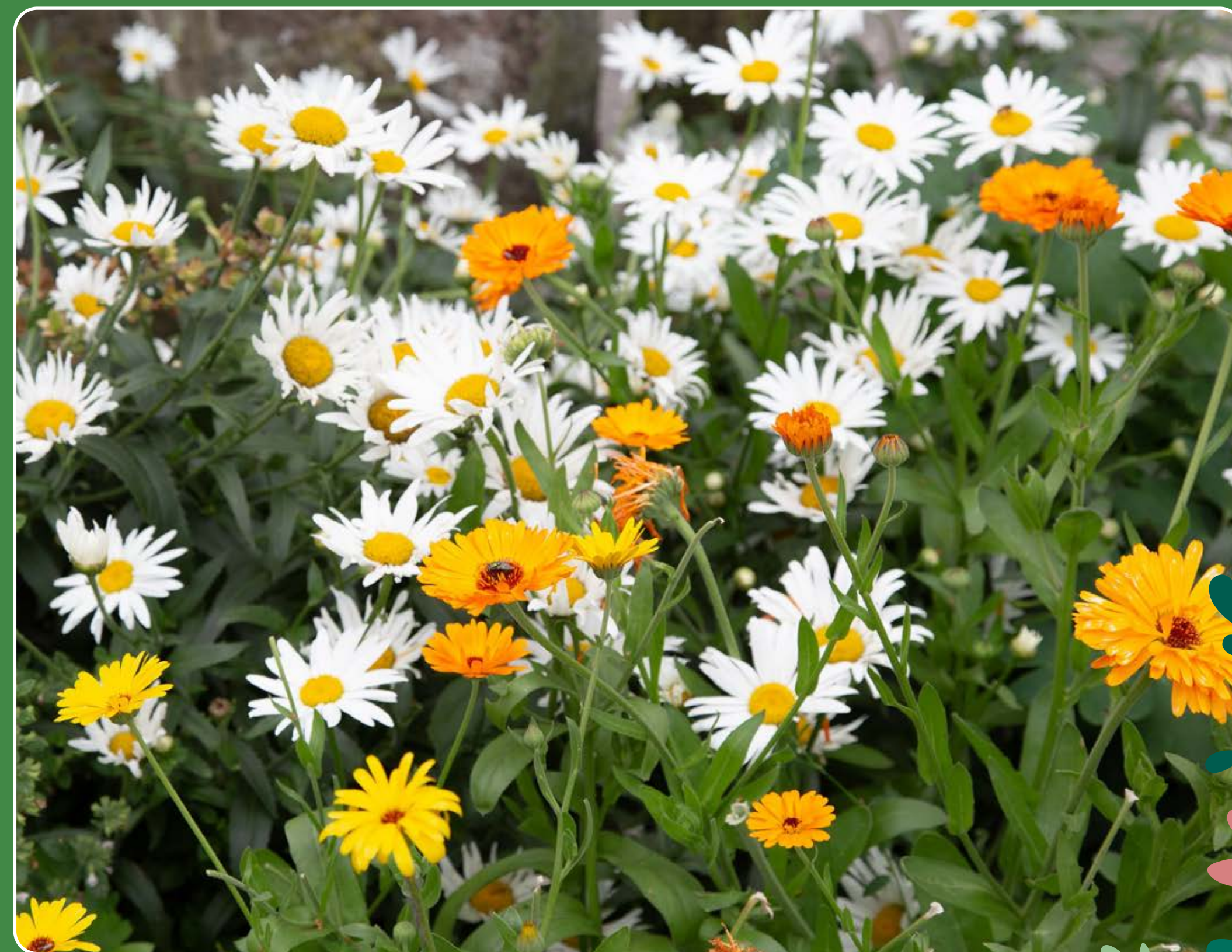
Fast forward to the winter-season of 2020 and further work to 'green' our green spaces expanded to transforming some of the shrub beds that have suffered from years of glyphosphate use. Over the planting season we put in place more than 3,000 new flowering shrubs, 300 hedging plants, ten trees and a further 5,000 square metres of wildflowers. To help with this work we upgraded our tractor and other equipment.

Now, as a result of all these changes, our annual weedkiller useage is down to less than 75 litres a year – a huge boost for the environment. But it's not just 'behind the scenes' that the cost to nature is being reduced – this new approach to planting has seen not just the return of flowers but also many types of animal, including birds and insects, that play a crucial role in a healthy outdoor environment. Once established these new 'greener greens' also provide a fresh, natural and diverse approach to maintaining outdoor areas that we hope more and more of our customers will come to appreciate.

Doing more for the planet is now a big priority at Futures – improving sustainability is one of four central objectives in our corporate plan. And with a new strategy in place, these landscaping changes will be just one small part of many changes to come that will help to make our homes cheaper to run and more comfortable to live in as part of doing more to help reduce our carbon footprint.



Watch this space!





STRATEGIC PLANNING WITH NATURE IN MIND

-  Biodiversity & Nature Gain
-  Access to Nature



Ecology

This theme seeks to assess how the housing provider is protecting the local environment and ecology.

Space and promoting biodiversity on or near homes

Biodiversity net gain, flood management and carbon neutrality are integral parts of our environmental sustainability planning. We believe by maximising ecosystem services derived from our natural capital we can produce a more environmentally sustainable green landscape for our customers, the climate and biodiversity.

We are **investing in land surveys** across our portfolio which will allow us to understand the size, quality and complexity of our green spaces alongside gaining an invaluable understanding of their topography.

We will use this information to improve our land management, improve biodiversity levels, incorporate carbon sequestration on our land via tree planting and improve our estates for our customers.

Reducing pollutants

When tendering and setting our contracts for our development, maintenance and facilities management services environmental performance is a key component in selecting partners. The reduction of pollutants is a key area of focus within these contracts and we monitor, audit and engage with these partners to continuously drive pollutants out of our supply chain and operations.





Resource management

This theme seeks to identify the extent to which the housing provider has a sustainable approach to materials in both the construction and management of properties.

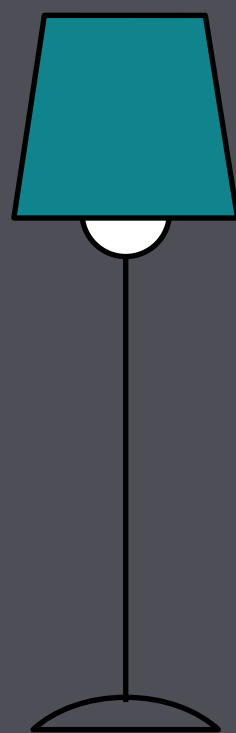


Sustainability in the supply chain

We take sustainability seriously and expect our partners and suppliers to do the same. Through our tender processes we assess the environmental policies of applicants and will frequently qualitatively assess their sustainability experience and suggested approach to the proposed contract. In addition, we have taken the following action in specific areas:

1. We aim to ensure that the products we buy for our homes and offices have as little environmental impact as possible, from recycled paper and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood products to low flow taps and showers. Every time we purchase goods and services we consider any associated sustainability matters.
2. In the repairs and maintenance area:
 - a. Green appointments - dynamic resource scheduling to reduce the carbon footprint.
 - b. Collaboration with other housing associations in the same region - partnering up to avoid using multiple resources inefficiently in the same area.
3. Working with key supply chain partners to establish projects to make our homes more sustainable through renewable technology.
4. Move to renewable green energy in all our directly procured areas.

Overall, we are developing a supply chain sustainability plan - supporting the organisation's drive towards net zero.



Waste management

We actively promote the waste hierarchy and, alongside providing recycling facilities in all offices, actively educate and engage with colleagues and customers about the importance of recycling.

By working with suppliers that provide us with recyclable and recycled products we are improving our ability to utilise the most environmentally friendly products in the most sustainable way.

We have a robust environmental policy which incorporates waste management and have centralised our waste services nationally in order to obtain greater control and visibility on how our waste is managed and processed.

We monitor our diversion from landfill and recycling rate monthly and through annual independent ISO14001:2015 and SHIFT benchmarking audits we provide performance-related data and targets to drive improvements organisation wide.

Water management

Water management across both our office portfolio and housing stock is an important part of our organisational environmental management. Through engagement and education of both our colleagues and customers we actively seek to increase awareness on the importance of sustainable water usage.

We invest in water saving devices, such as low flush WCs and rainwater harvesting, in our office our new developments and retrofitted housing stock.

Water usage and sustainable water components in offices and housing stock is monitored via our environmental management system where targets and trends are verified and independently audited annually by both our ISO14001:2015 assessors and via Suss Housing as part of our SHIFT benchmarking accreditation.



GREENSPACES
Advisory Board



CLARION
HOUSING



Futures
Housing Group



**Ground
Control**

Caring for our Environment



**Network
Homes**



**Notting Hill
Genesis**



orbit building
communities



**home
group**



Peabody