



CONCEPT DOCUMENT

Proposed Country Park
Monarch Park, Stamford | June 2021

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BACKGROUND

This document establishes the concept for Monarch Country Park - a key component of the Green Infrastructure and Ecological Mitigation required for the development of the proposed Development by Allison Homes at Monarch Park, Stamford.

The information builds on the Draft Design and Access Statement, the Stamford North draft Development Brief and the South Kesteven Green Infrastructure Strategy (2009). The document should be read in conjunction with the proposals prepared by Bidwells as part of the material submitted for the outline planning application by Allison Homes and their development team.





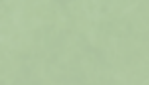









The Monarch Park Development includes a 30ha Country Park and adjacent Local Centre proposed to host a range of activity on both a commercial and community basis. The proposal is a key component of the wider vision for the Stamford North Sustainable Urban Extension providing a wildlife and visitor resource of local importance. The detailed design of the Local Centre Visitor's Building and car parking provision is subject to further design development and agreement.

The Site comprises a number of agricultural fields which are currently in arable use. There are three small ponds on site which were formed when the redevelopment of the brickworks site took place and the great crested newts were translocated from old ponds to the new ponds in the Habitat Management Areas, ensuring that parts of the Country Park will be dedicated to wildlife. There is a significant amount of on-site vegetation including two woodland groups and hedgerow boundaries as well as semi-improved grassland and successional habitat. The majority of the existing vegetation is to be retained and incorporated into the landscape strategy. Beyond Old Great North Road to the south west, the settlement edge of Stamford is defined by mature tree belts.

There are no landscape designations that protect the Site or surrounding area. The Site is not subject to formal public access, although local residents continue to access to the site across Permissive Access Rights that cross the site. A network of lanes and Rights of Way extend through the surrounding countryside; the A1 lies beyond Stamford to the south-west.



KEY

-  Red line boundary
-  Existing vegetation
-  Existing scrubland in undisturbed grass
-  Existing hedgrows
-  Existing grassland/meadow
-  Existing arable land
-  Existing undisturbed grassland with scrub planting
-  Post-excitation disturbed ground
-  Existing ponds
-  Existing informal paths
-  Telecomms mast
-  Indicative outline of proposed development
-  Ground contours
-  Existing access points

SITE ANALYSIS
NOT TO SCALE

LANDSCAPE VISION

The Site is located partly on arable land and in part it encompasses an old quarry with associated woodlands and creates a cluster of open spaces varying in character and vegetation coverage. There is also a telecommunications mast at the centre of the site. The ground slopes gently towards its boundaries, in particular towards the north and east, with a ridge line formed around the location of the disused quarry. The Site is currently being used by local residents for dog walking and outdoor leisure.

Great crested newts are present on-site, with surveys confirming a large metapopulation within the three ponds. A medium meta-population of smooth newts is also present within the three ponds.

The existing meadows comprise a semi-improved grassland and any potential loss of this habitat due to development will be compensated within the extensive Country Park. Existing vegetation and ponds will be retained and enhanced to include for compensation for any trees/hedgerows or scrub removed from the residential development part of the site.

The site offers suitable roosting and foraging opportunities for bats as well as badgers - detailed studies have been carried out and the recommendations have been driving the landscape proposals to ensure they offer the most suitable solutions and enhance the biodiversity and habitat value of the site.

The telecommunications mast dominates the central space of the Site - it is proposed that the Local Centre and associated land uses would be located at this point with tree planting used to screen off the mast housing and security fencing. This is also where the new link road passes through the site so is an important focal point.

The wider strategic principles for Stamford North Extension are to fulfil three overarching aims:

1. To connect within its surroundings;
2. To create a community;
3. To have an emphasis on design and area identity.

Monarch Country Park fulfils all three principles through design solutions, including the introduction of a network of pedestrian and cycle paths linking the development with the areas further afield. The retention and enhancement of existing habitats and landscape designed in careful consideration for the local history and context are a tribute to the local distinctiveness and identity and with the help of Local Centre, they will give focus, sense of pride and ownership to the local community.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- Be a fun, safe place to visit and also provide quiet relaxation for its users;
- Encourage as many different users into Monarch Country Park;
- Be as accessible as possible for users with different mobility levels;
- Promote linkages between the different areas for recreation and traffic-free commuting;
- Retain existing areas of ecological interest and create new habitat;
- Be straightforward and cost-efficient to manage and maintain; and
- Continue to be developed and managed with the aid of national and local partner organisations.



KEY	
	Red line boundary
	Existing vegetation
	Existing hedgrows
	Proposed trees/groups of trees/vegetation
	Existing scrubland and undisturbed grassland
	Existing undisturbed grassland
	New grassland
	Proposed Nature Park grazing meadows with community woodland
	Proposed open meadows
	Proposed grassland habitat area
	Existing ponds
	Proposed pond with wetland/marginal vegetation
	Telecomms mast
	Proposed Local Centre building with picnic/outdoor seating area
	Proposed play area
	Proposed sports pitch
	Proposed formal footpaths
	Proposed informal footpaths
	Views afforded from the ridge
	Potential locations for viewing platforms/seating
	Potential MUGA/ sports facilities

Existing slopes providing opportunities for viewing platforms/incidental seating arrangement

Wetland created within the area already showing signs of water retention, in character with existing ponds and to extend natural habitats

Potential sports facilities: skate park/junior mountain bike park/climbing walls/play space making use of the naturally terraced ground.


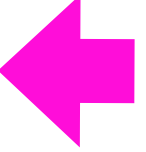






Potential naturalistic seasonal wetland area at the bottom of the pit, with play, footpaths and cycle paths on the higher terraces and slopes.

Play and/or picnic area at stop-off along paths and desire lines

CONCEPT LANDSCAPE MASTERPLAN, NOT TO SCALE



KEY

-  Pedestrian access points
-  Vehicular access points
-  Woodland Walk
-  Meadow Walk
-  Wetland Walk
-  Viewing platform
-  Picnic/seating area
-  Sports area with facilities such as skate park/junior mountain bike course, climbing walls on pit banks

LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT PLAN, NOT TO SCALE

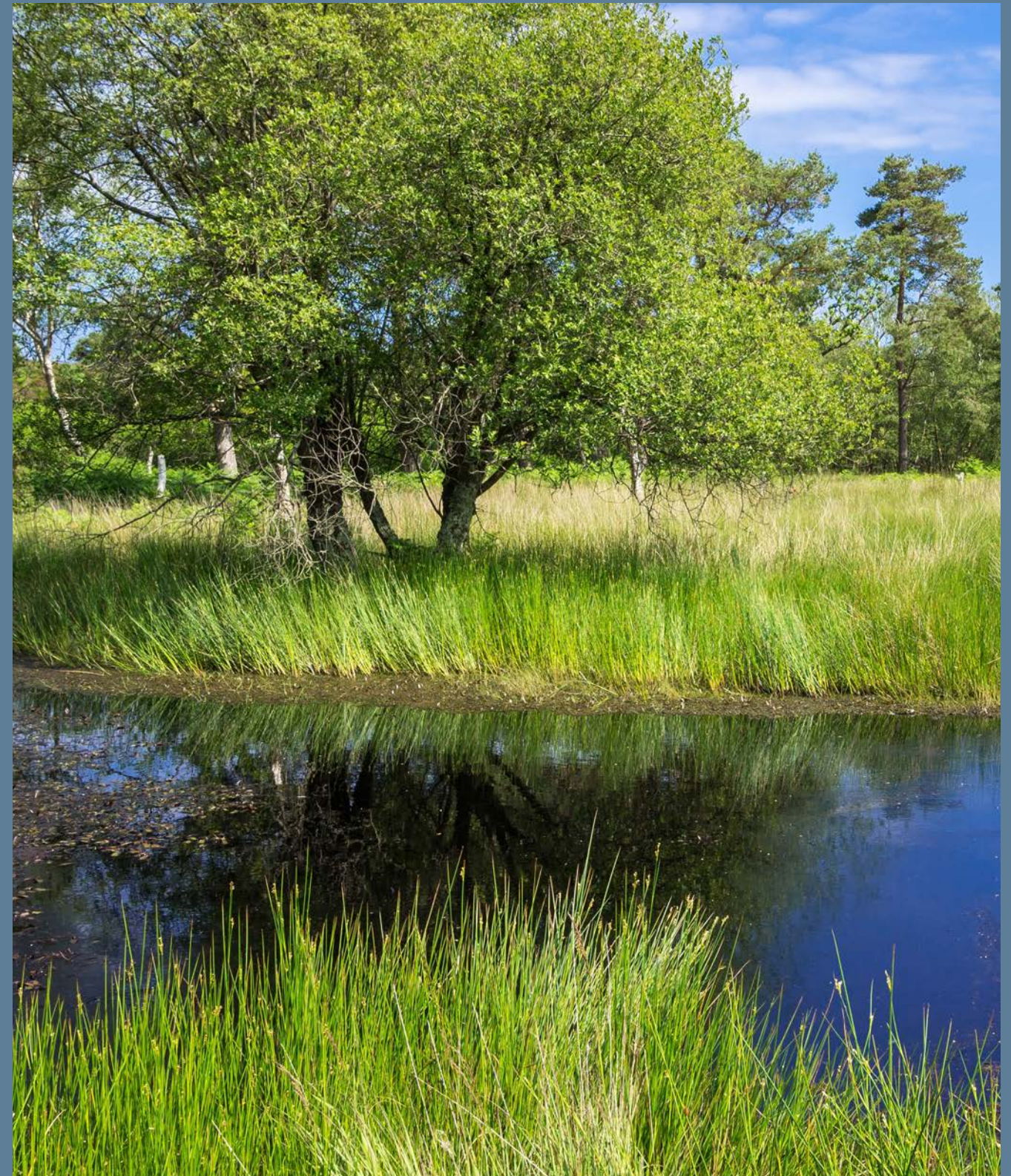
HABITAT CONCEPT

The natural geology and hydrology of the site, alongside a variety of existing habitats and landscape features, will drive the principles of habitat creation, management and the overall landscape strategy of the site.

The wetlands will incorporate enhanced habitats focused around the existing ponds and natural indentations forming part of the site-wide drainage strategy and facilitating habitat creation as extension to already existing wetland habitats. The wetland areas will be fringed by a diverse range of marginal aquatic plants. The surrounding area will be diversified to incorporate a variety of species-rich grassland, woodland and damp scrub. The priority species will be great crested newts, amphibians and bats.

The quarry landscape to the north will be enhanced to establish a mosaic of species-rich grassland, scrub and groups of mixed deciduous woodland to form a community woodland setting. Key areas will be planted, while scrub and woodland habitats will be allowed to regenerate over time. The priority species will include great crested newts, bats, badgers, reptiles and invertebrates.

All of the habitat areas will be accessible via a network of trails and viewing areas allowing exploration and interaction with nature.



HABITAT CONCEPT

WOODLAND AND HEDGEROWS

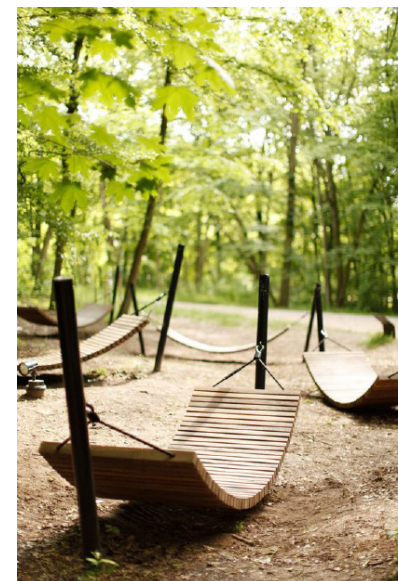
The existing network of hedgerows and tree planting follows the original field division and will be retained and enhanced where necessary. The Site is used by bats for foraging and therefore suitable foraging habitat will be retained including boundary hedgerows, woodland and scattered trees. Where it is not possible to retain these features, replacement habitats including hedgerows will be planted to match existing. A 3-5m buffer should be kept from all hedgerows with a 10m buffer around areas of woodland.

The existing pattern of field boundaries will be enhanced by the planting of new species-rich native hedgerows and hedgerow trees with the introduction of small copses of deciduous native woodland. Tree species will include native species of local provenance, such as Black Poplar as well as Willow, Alder, Oak and Field Maple. Hedgerows, trees and woodland will contribute to the wider mosaic and network of habitats for invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, birds, badgers, bats and other mammals as well as providing structural vegetation to integrate the development (residential, employment and roads) into the wider landscape.

Monarch Country Park landscape design will include species-rich hedgerow creation to encourage and support populations of farmland and woodland birds that currently use the Site and the surrounding fields. The inclusion of bird boxes, such as house martin boxes and other integral bird features could also be included in the design development of the adjacent residential site, as part of the new buildings within the Proposed Development.

The landscape strategy for woodlands will include:

- Copses of native deciduous woodland; species to be selected according to local soil conditions.
- Selected areas to be planted with mix of subcanopy / canopy species (60-90cm open ground whips) at 2m centres with 5-10% standard trees (8-10 cm girth) to incorporate mulch mats and rabbit protection; with selected plug planting of woodland ground flora at 4/m². Timber from site to be used to create loggeries / wood piles. Other areas to be left to naturally regenerate from grassland / scrub.
- Management to include thinning / coppicing on 10-15 year rotation to develop diverse woodland / woodland edge structure with glades to allow establishment of ground flora. Areas of deadwood to be left in situ or to create loggeries or other habitat features.



HABITAT CONCEPT

GRASSLANDS AND WETLANDS

Grassland areas will incorporate a range of different habitat types. Species-rich seed mixes (incorporating native grasses and wildflowers) will be selected according to site-specific soil conditions, with a varied management regime to create a diverse grassland structure of wet grassland, hay meadows and tussock grassland with naturalised scrub on a field by field basis. Existing grassland will be retained and enhanced where possible or necessary. Grassland areas will provide habitat for butterflies, bees and other invertebrates, as well as foraging and breeding opportunities for reptiles, bats, birds, badgers and other mammals. A series of field ponds will be dug to provide aquatic habitats for amphibians including great crested newts.

Grassland and Meadow Grassland

Existing areas under arable cultivation, ground disturbed by pond creation, or where the diversity of existing grassland is poor, to be re-established by cultivating and seeding with an appropriate grassland or meadow mixture after good ground preparation including site clearance, weed control and cultivation.

Areas of existing grassland to be retained and enhanced by a period of selected weed control, cutting or hard grazing (in autumn), before mechanically harrowing or raking (to expose 50% bare soil) or spraying strips (killing up to 30% of the groundcover) to create exposed areas of soil for seed germination prior to seeding.

Seeding to incorporate harvested seed of local provenance or a seed mix from a reputable supplier (www.floralocale.org). Seed mixes (Emorsgate or similar) to include:

EM4 Meadow Mixture / EG4 Meadow Grass Mixture for Clay Soils

EM8 Meadow Mixture / EG8 Meadow Grass Mixture for Wetlands

EM4F / EM8F (100% wildflower) where seeding into existing grassland

Native plug plants such as cowslip (*Primula veris*) or flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) planted at density of 4/m² to be introduced in selected areas to provide seasonal impact. Yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) to be introduced to low intensity use areas where species diversity is important, for example meadow grassland subject to a summer hay cut.

Areas to be mown regularly from mid-July during first year of establishment with weed control as required. Long-term management to include a summer hay cut (July-September - on rotation), followed by autumn / spring cutting as required and/or low intensity grazing to develop a variety of different swards.

Scrub Grassland

Grassland areas with a mix of native scrub such as bramble, hawthorn and blackthorn. Grassland to be established by cultivating and seeding after good ground preparation including site clearance, weed control and cultivation; existing grassland to be retained where possible.

Seeding to comprise suitable mix such as Emorsgate EM10 Tussock Mixture / EG10 Tussock Grass Mixture. Scattered scrub (60-90cm open ground whips planted at 1/m²) to be planted with other areas left to naturally regenerate to create a mosaic of habitats.

After initial maintenance, open grassland areas to be cut once every two to three years on rotation with scrub coppiced in blocks every 10-15 years.

Field Ponds

All new ponds to be irregular in shape and depth with submerged shelves at different levels to create a variety of 'drawn down' conditions; pond size 50-250m² and up to 1-2m deep with both steeply and more gently sloping sides. To be lined with puddled clay (from site).

Pond margins to comprise suitable pond edge seed mix (Emorsgate EP10). Shelves to be planted with a mix of native marginal / emergent species as plugs (5/m²) with submerged aquatic species planted in areas of permanent water.

Buffer (3-5m) around pond edge to be left uncut. Log piles to be located around the water's edge.

As badgers have been identified on site and using the wider area to forage and commute, it is important that features that allow this movement across the Site are retained and enhanced as part of the final development. The management of surrounding grassland should therefore be sympathetic to badgers and other wildlife by allowing areas of the surrounding grassland to remain unmanaged or minimally managed.

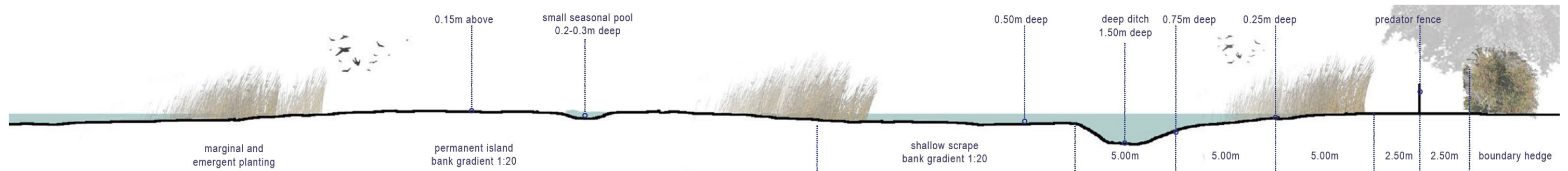
The planting will include local native species such as hawthorn *Crateagus monogyna*, crab apple *Malus sylvestris*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, wild pear *Pyrus communis*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and cherry *Prunus sp.* that offer foraging opportunities to badgers and other wildlife such as birds and small mammals.



Opportunity for habitat creation making the most of the existing landform



INDICATIVE SECTION THROUGH WETLAND HABITAT



HABITAT CONCEPT

HABITAT FEATURES

A range of habitat features will be incorporated to provide refuges, nesting and foraging for specific species including birds, bats, mammals, amphibians and invertebrates, as well as providing educational value. The location of these features will be agreed with an ecologist.

Bird Boxes

Bird boxes (such as swift boxes, house martin cups or other suitable nest boxes) subject to design to be integrated into suitable external elevations of the Local Centre; alternatively to be fixed to existing trees.

Log Piles / Loggeries and Dead Wood

Constructed from timber from site and stacked in both horizontal and vertical positions (the latter buried circa 60cm into ground); minimum 3 x 1 x 1.5m and position in shaded conditions. Saw and/or drill holes in timber. Topsoil and turf or chipped wood to be placed on top of log piles and vegetation allowed to grow over to provide shelter for invertebrates. Woodland areas to incorporate both standing and lying deadwood retained from timber on site.

An area of undeveloped grassland with wide buffers between the Proposed Development and wider countryside will need to be designed into the masterplan to incorporate mitigation for the ground nesting species such as skylark and meadow pipits. This buffer will also provide suitable foraging habitat for species such as yellowhammer, linnets, starlings, green woodpeckers and kestrels

Insect Hotels

Insect hotels can be constructed using a range of materials to include drilled timber (from site), bamboo, straw / hay, dry sticks and leaves, sand, recycled terracotta tiles, plant pots and bricks. To be built up in layers or set into a structural frame on a firm level site. The hotels to be located in full sunlight or light shade near to potential foraging habitat, to provide a range of habitats for bees, wasps and other insects.



HABITAT CONCEPT

GRAZING MEADOWS AND COMMUNITY WOODLAND

Traditionally, floodplain meadows are left to grow in the spring to allow the hay to grow with no grazing animals, followed by a mid-summer hay cut. The subsequent grass growth is grazed by cattle, horses or sheep - a tradition kept alive in other areas in and around Stamford.

The hay cut itself helps to prevent excessive nutrient accumulation in the system. Grazing the meadows into the autumn and winter is important to create gaps in the grassy sward to enable seedling establishment. This also prevents the growth of more competitive plants that are less appealing to cattle and reduce the diversity of the sward.

Animals should be removed from the meadows once the soil is saturated as they can cause soil compaction which can reduce species richness.

Areas of community woodland will be planted amongst the grazing meadows to further enhance biodiversity and to complement the surrounding landscape context. These woodland areas will have a community focus and will feed into the wider principles of the Park.

The grazing meadows and community woodland will form part of a wider network of open spaces and will contribute to creating a visitor experience through a network of footpaths and cycle / horse-riding routes around the park and connecting to other public rights of way in the vicinity.





VISITOR CONCEPT

The vision for Monarch Country Park and the Monarch Park Local Centre will be to bring people closer to wildlife and provide opportunities for environmental education that is both fun and engaging. This will include innovative and accessible visitor facilities to enable families to explore, interact and play with nature.

At the heart of the Park will be a high quality, innovative and flexible Local Centre integrated into the landscape setting. The building and its environs will establish the gateway into the Park and provide a focus for visitor activity with a variety of zones for adventure and natural play, informal education and interpretation, as well as quiet relaxation.

From the Local Centre a network of accessible paths will orientate visitors around the Park and allow people to get close up to nature; from imaginative wildlife / play discovery trails, to marginal habitat allowing 'free-style' exploration through areas of woodland, grassland and wetland. A range of destinations will offer opportunities to experience wildlife close up as well as providing viewing points across the Park and habitats.

Being a community focus initiative, opportunities will be explored for volunteers and the local community to support and be actively involved in Monarch Country Park.

VISITOR CONCEPT

MONARCH PARK LOCAL CENTRE

Local Centre 'Hub'

The Local Centre building will provide the focus and gateway into the Park. The strategic location enables easy access for the local and wider community. The frontage to the building to incorporate a combination of hard and soft landscape to create a high quality setting and provide a transition between the car park and entrance. The entrance and meeting point to incorporate a range of formal and informal seating. Cycle storage provision will be provided. Subject to detailed design by architects, the Local Centre can provide facilities such as a small café with views opening out towards the Park and an outdoor seating area to allow contemplation of the outdoors over a cup of coffee. Adjacent to the Local Centre will be a Play Area located to allow natural surveillance from the Centre hub building's outdoor seating area.

All planting to incorporate a variety of wildlife-friendly and low maintenance trees, shrubs, perennials and grasses with structural planting / low level fencing to restrict access to the Park.

Picnic Area

A potential picnic area is situated to the west of the Local Centre, in close proximity to the building and the area of play allowing natural surveillance and direct interaction between all three areas. Timber picnic tables to be set in the grass, interspersed with swathes of perennial grasses and interplanted with trees to provide enclosure. Provision to be made for polymer sail or timber structure to provide shade.

Bird Feeding Station

A sequence of paths (to include paving slabs, setts, hoggin, gravel / bark) will link the spaces outside of the hub building. Levels to be used to potentially provide incidental play elements.

A bird feeding station will provide a focal point within the hub's garden. Space to incorporate a range of hanging, hopper and platform feeding stations will attract a variety of garden and other birds all year round. Seating to be provided to overlook the space.

Local Sports Facilities

AMUGA or other outdoor sports facility is being considered within the Local Centre area.

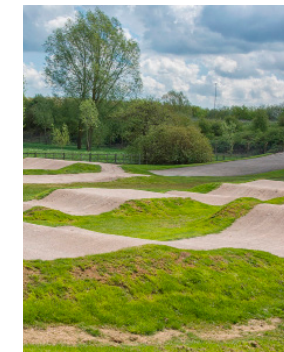


VISITOR CONCEPT

MAKING THE MOST OF THE LAND FORM, NATURALLY-FORMING WETLAND AND VIEWS



Opportunity for viewing platforms and seating/play making the most of the existing landform



VISITOR CONCEPT

PLAY

An adventure play area to form a focus within the local hub, visible and within easy access of the Local Centre building; the space to be integrated with the landscape and adjacent woodland and create a sense of place providing a unique location for children to explore and learn about wildlife and the environment. A more informal play space with trim trails as well as sports provision will be provided to the western edge of the park, abutting the Stamford Edge area of the residential development.

The design of the play area to be creative, imaginative, innovative and stimulating; suitable for the rural context with areas for both younger and older children as well as seating for adults. To incorporate a range of elements such as landform, tunnels, boulders, planting, willow structures, meadow / grass, water such as a river or stream, along with traditional and individual items of play equipment (predominantly timber) to provide a range of play activities and physical challenge: climbing, running, swinging, balancing and rotating as well as natural and social play. Potential for taller elements to provide vantage points over the Park. The footpath link between the three play spaces will allow an opportunity for provision of informal incidental play elements scattered along the paths, like boulders, tree trunks and earth mounds.





VISITOR CONCEPT

TRAILS

A network of accessible paths will orientate visitors through the Park and allow people to get close up to nature; from imaginative wildlife / play discovery trails through the core of the reserve, to marginal habitat allowing 'free-style' exploration. Along the trails wild play / interpretation features and viewing points will offer opportunities to experience wildlife close up.

Trails

A series of trails of varying length and character will take the visitor through the Park; starting from the Local Centre, four themed circular routes will allow visitors to experience the different habitats and species within the park:

Woodland Walk
Meadow Walk
Wetland Walk

All marked trails to be fully accessible, 1.8m wide and surfaced with hoggin with timber edging and signed with timber-coloured waymarkers. Timber seating and wildlife discovery, wild play and interpretation features to be provided at key locations along each route.

Features

Wild play exploration and interpretation features will be located alongside trails at key locations, where visitors can get close up to the natural environment and wildlife. To be predominantly formed from natural materials such as timber and stone, with timber being used from site where possible.

Possible wild play features may include:

- stepping stones / balance beams over water features
- pond dipping platforms
- climbing boulders
- landform such as hills and hollows
- timber crawl tunnels
- willow or wicker shelters / nests
- carved timber structure / animals

Habitat features (see Habitat Concept) may include:

- butterfly alley planted with nectar rich plants alongside path
- stinky hedgerows planted with smelly plants such as honeysuckle and garlic
- log walls / piles
- reptile areas
- insect hotels



VISITOR CONCEPT

ACCESS AND CAR PARKING

Access and Car Parking

Vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access to Monarch Country Park will be indirectly from the Old Great North Road (B2081) through the Stamford Edge area of the development.

Access

As access to the Park will be via the Stamford Edge area of the development, the route on the approach should be well signed. Opportunities to be explored to ensure a green approach from Old Great North Road to the Park entrance by the creation of a corridor incorporating sustainable drainage swales and native boulevard trees.

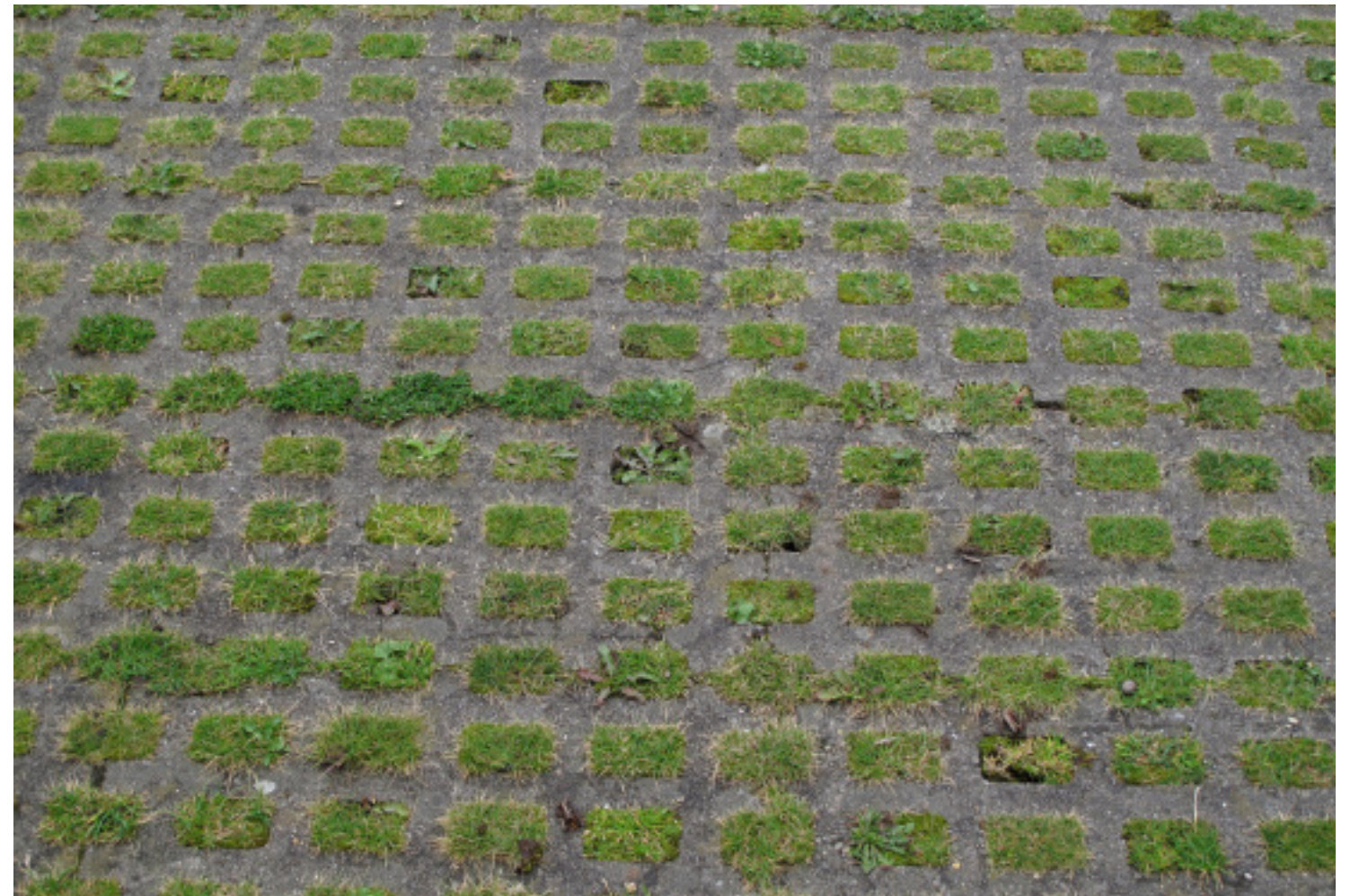
Parking

Parking for cars (including disabled spaces) with associated circulation will be located to the rear of the Local Centre. Surface materials and edgings will be detailed to engineer's specification; to achieve low maintenance finish of rural appearance e.g. gravel dressed tarmac with concrete setts for spaces; opportunity for low key surface e.g. netpave / gravel for spaces outside of the core area. All car parking spaces to be clearly defined.

Layout of car park to be designed to direct the public to the Local Centre hub building; all pedestrian routes to be segregated from vehicular traffic and clearly signed with appropriate crossing points where necessary.

Car park area to be broken up by areas of soft landscape including native hedgerows, areas of low level planting and trees to provide a rural appearance and maintain natural levels of surveillance. Edge of adjacent employment area to be integrated by native buffer / woodland planting.

Overflow parking and service zones to be included in the design development of the Local Centre hub.



VISITOR CONCEPT

INFRASTRUCTURE

Throughout the Park, provision will be made for infrastructure to include fencing, gates, seating and signage. Opportunities should be explored to integrate public art and sculpture into features where possible.

Fencing and Gates

If deemed necessary, stock proof fencing to be provided to fields (wetland, grassland and meadow) subject to management by grazing. To include suitable five bar timber gates for vehicular access (1 per field) with pedestrian gates (fully accessible) where required along trails and paths.

Seating

All seating (seats, benches and picnic tables) to be durable timber, rural in character. To incorporate public art to nature theme where possible.

Incidental seating opportunities to include use of boulders and logs (using timber from site where available).

Signage / Interpretation

To include directional signage from car park to local centre and then from local centre to key destinations and the start of the trails; coloured trail way markers; activity stations / maps, and interpretation boards. All signage to be durable timber and rural in character.

Potential for art / text to be incorporated into features such as timber seating/trail signage to provide interpretation of habitats, species and heritage features.



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

PROPOSALS MUST:

- increase and enhance provision of open space and green infrastructure links for the benefit of the public;
- increase footpath and cycleway connections to develop safe and attractive routes around the wider development Site and through to Monarch Country Park;
- seek to offer a variety of design solutions that develop a sense of place and respond to the surrounding landscape setting;
- incorporate measures to increase habitat and/or food sources for wildlife;
- create a 'natural' character that reflects the location of the Site, adjacent to Monarch Country Park, and encourages wildlife; and
- new green spaces and tree planting should be incorporated, accentuating an informal character to the layout while providing opportunities for social spaces suitable to pause/meeting and chance encounter.

