

Project Wellesley – Mindenhurst
DEEPCUT, SURREY
SKANSKA UK PLC

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category: *Project of the year (> 5Ha)*

Project overview

The new 'Mindenhurst' development will build on the heritage of the Village of Deepcut alongside its military legacy. The development of Mindenhurst will provide an enormous regenerative benefit for the local community and keep Surrey's proud reputation of being the UK's greenest county.

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

Prior to works commencing, the habitats on site consisted of mainly mixed and broadleaved woodlands and amenity grassland within the built environment of the military training camp. The woodlands were a mix of planted and self-seeded mature and semi-mature trees with varying management regimes. The amenity grassland, whilst managed to a short sward on site, contained occasional acid grassland indicator species, hinting at the heathland conditions that persisted before human occupation of the site. The site is known to support common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat roosts, the four common species of reptiles, badgers, stag beetles and numerous breeding birds.

What were the reasons behind this project ?

This development aims to convert the existing Deepcut military training facility into a Woodland village comprising of 1119 residential dwellings, primary retail and commercial units, a primary school, a sports hub, a large area dedicated to Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANG) and other public open spaces. Overall the site provides 69 hectares of open spaces.



Mindenhurst Village

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Embedded within the ethos of the development is the protection and enhancement of ecological resources to support biodiversity both on and off site.

At the northern extent, the site is located within 400m of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, and so a network of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) have been incorporated into the development design. These areas include the majority of the woodland on site, retaining and protecting this valuable resource, a proportion of which is designated as Deepcut Barracks North Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). Improved management of these areas is proposed, with opening up areas of dense canopy to encourage ground flora growth as well as planting of understorey species to add structure to the woodland. In addition, small areas are proposed to be reverted back into heathland, in line with the SNCI designation, and to provide a habitat link to the neighbouring SPA. The first of the SANG areas to be delivered has already seen nightjars from the neighbouring SPA visiting during dusk.

Across the wider site landscape planting is encouraged to utilise native species trees and shrubs, providing a continuous link through the site of habitat that is relevant to the local area context. This will help to enhance confirmed and potential wildlife corridors as identified during species and habitat surveys. Native fruiting and night flowering species are also encouraged across the site to provide foraging opportunities for the local badger, bat and bird populations.

Dead wood retention, in areas with low wildfire risk, is also encouraged to support woodland invertebrate assemblages, including the stag beetle.

Where bat flight corridors have been identified, planting is designed to retain and enhance these corridors and lighting will be designed sensitively to help retain these routes and promote permeability of the development for wildlife.



New path in Central SANGS



Village Green Pond

Further information

Extensive ecological surveys were carried out in order to assess the biodiversity of the site.

In line with these, the design was developed and construction was carried out with many mitigation measures to ensure the fauna and flora were not negatively impacted by the construction activities.

The village green pond is providing a water source as well as habitat for aquatic species

Project Team

- Client- Defence Infrastructure Organisation (Ministry of Defence)
- Consultant Ecologist – Nicholas Pearson Associate
- Designer- Odyssey Markides LLP

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The enhancement aimed at maintaining the woodland aspect of the site and enriching its biodiversity as well as providing extensive areas of open spaces for the local community.



Bird boxes



New planting and rangers hut in Central SANGS