

Landscape Strategy

The proposed green infrastructure and landscape strategy focuses on retaining and enhancing retained existing vegetation as far as possible with new understorey native vegetation, native hedge planting, and new predominantly native tree planting implemented to secure a net benefit for biodiversity and in line with the stepwise approach. Biodiversity would be maximised and enhanced through proposing flowering shrubs and species-rich grass throughout of benefit to wildlife, especially pollinating insects. Communal gardens would provide opportunities for relaxation, and planting of herbaceous species and shrubs would provide texture and colour to enhance visual amenity.

New boundary tree and hedgerow planting would strengthen and enhance opportunities for wildlife corridors and provide connections to wider existing green infrastructure networks. Tree planting would include native species along boundaries, but ornamental species within shared communal spaces would be proposed for aesthetic benefit. Hedgerows will be managed to maximise biodiversity benefit through single cuts to provide a more natural appearance, with one side cut every three years on a rotational basis.

3no. new trees are proposed for every 1no. tree being lost due to the development proposals. The replanting tree ratio of 3:1 would be to mitigate for existing Category A to C trees being removed. Category U trees will also be removed due to their current condition, regardless of the proposed development, which are:

- “Trees that have a serious, irremediable, structural defect, such that their early loss is expected due to collapse, including those that will become unviable after removal of other U category trees (i.e. where, for whatever reason, the loss of companion shelter cannot be mitigated by pruning)
- Trees that are dead or are showing signs of significant, immediate, and irreversible overall decline
- Trees infected with pathogens of significance to the health and/or safety of other trees nearby, or very low quality trees suppressing adjacent trees of better quality.”

The removal of the Category U trees, which offer limited ecological value, would be mitigated through proposing native understorey vegetation, species-rich grass seeding, native hedge planting and a combination of herbaceous and shrub species throughout.

Proposed trees would mainly be planted as Semi-mature sizes on the day of implementation with some Extra Heavy and Selected Standards. Tree species would include:

Semi-mature tree planting

- Amelanchier x grandiflora 'Robin Hill'
- Acer campestre (Native)
- Betula pendula (Native)
- Pinus sylvestris (Native)

- Prunus avium (Native)
- Sorbus aria (Native)

Extra Heavy Standards tree planting

- Crataegus laevigata 'Paul's Scarlet'
- Crataegus monogyna (Native)
- Liquidambar styraciflua

Selected Standard tree planting

- Prunus sargentii 'Rancho'
- Quercus robur (Native)

Overall, it is considered that the proposals avoid the removal of existing trees and vegetation as far as possible and have minimised the impacts on existing semi-natural habitats. Where loss is unavoidable, appropriate compensation has been put in place in line with the Step-wise approach.

The proposed landscape and ecological enhancements fit with the DECCA Framework^[1] by:

- Increasing diversity within the local ecosystem by incorporating species rich grassland under low intensity management. This will offer habitat which is not common in the local area and will therefore have the potential to support a different and more diverse assemblage of species;
- Increasing the extent/ scale of ecosystems by creating a greater length of hedgerow than is currently present on site, and incorporating species-rich grassland that is not currently present on site.;
- Improving the condition of the ecosystem by bringing the site under long term management;
- Improving connections within and between ecosystems through increasing connectivity around the site; and
- Improving ecosystem resilience and adaptability to future pressures through the planting of trees (carbon capture).

It is therefore concluded that, as a result of ecological measures embedded within the proposed development, it is expected that there will be a demonstrable net benefit for biodiversity.

¹ <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Net-Benefits-briefing.pdf>