

Improving biodiversity at The Lawns Aylesford

Redrow Homes

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Small Scale Permanent

Project overview

Redrow Homes have undertaken biodiversity site improvements on their eastern division's new large development The Lawns at Preston Hall. Three key new areas were created, a wildflower garden, bug hotel and small homes for wildlife situated across the construction site such as bird boxes and hedgehog homes.

The site's management team took it upon themselves to improve biodiversity during the construction phase as they noticed there was an undeveloped large section of open grassland that had no plans for redevelopment. They also decided to take it one step further and get a local school involved with the actual building and planting of the new biodiversity area. This is a positive step forward for Redrow as it highlights our efforts to improve staff's knowledge and relationship with nature is now helping communities and developments. Costs were kept to a minimum by reusing waste material from the site.

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

The site was previously the manicured lawns of Preston Hall estate, therefore there was little to support biodiversity due to the short cut uniformed grass. An area adjacent to the site compound was chosen for the improvement, as it wasn't being developed and due to its good visibility and access.

Were there any specific conditions that led to you carrying out this work?

The site team decided they wished to improve biodiversity on site during discussions about what project other developers had done whilst working with considerate constructors. This project goes a long way in improving the appearance and community relation of the site as well as biodiversity.



The insect hotel is completed!

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The long term management of the project was a key aspect, as the improvements are permanent they needed to be in an area that would not be damaged during the build process. The homes for nature also needed to be low maintained and ensure they can be easily incorporated into the new **community's** public open space.

A wildflower meadow was planted in a large section of the biodiversity improvement area, the mixture for the wildflower seeds were chosen to ensure they support local, native pollinators through seeking advice from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, whom we have a partnership with. Pollinators were also a key focus of the education for the children who visited the site. The children were given wildflower seeds to take home and plant as well as taught about the importance of pollinators in supporting our eco systems.

The local biodiversity action plan for the area did not make this enhancement an requirement, however the addition of the improvements for biodiversity ensure the area sees a net gain, and fully support biodiversity when the new community is established. In addition to this the improvements in drainage on the site from SUDs, and more permeable planted wildflower areas work to ensure the site has a sustainable environment.

The site team who undertook the improvements volunteered additional time toward planning, collecting waste materials, planting and then helping with the education of the children who came to decorate and help install the new homes for nature.



A sign was put in place immediately after planting to ensure no damage was caused to the seeds or flowers



Pupils showing the materials used in the construction of the homes for nature.

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement

Further information

Designing:

The site team designed the area whilst looking at ideas into similar projects undertaken across Redrow and our peers. Gathering on their own experiences they sought expert ecological advice on the correct wildflower mix for the area and how to construct wildlife homes reusing materials from site.

Constructing:

Inviting a school to help make the wildlife homes ensures projects like this can be replicated as valuable environmental management skills are learnt. Feedback from the school was positive with their teacher stating: **"The** children really enjoyed visiting The Lawns and getting hands on experience with wildlife. It was different to other trips **they've** been on, giving them a real context of wildlife."

Revisiting:

Improvements to the **site's** biodiversity have been noted since the creation of the new habitats. Also subcontractors and residents on the site have taken a keen interest in finding out how they can build an insect hotel too! Similar projects are now being taken up by **Redrow's** pathfinder volunteer teams to replicate these improvements on other sites, with lessons learnt on how successfully engaging with nature can be a positive with many different stakeholders.



An enjoyable and educational day was had by all!

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

Assistant Site Manager, Luke Stevens:

"It was great to have children on site creating homes for wildlife alongside people building homes for humans, it shows how we can work with nature during construction."