

Spinney Fields
Long Itchington, Warwickshire, England
David Wilson Homes, Nicholsons and RSPB

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Temporary

Project overview

David Wilson Homes Mercia are building 150 new homes in Long Itchington in rural Warwickshire. As part of the partnership between Barratt David Wilson and the RSPB, a wildlife-friendly 116m² garden was created for one of the showhomes on the site. The garden was designed collaboratively by Nicholsons and advisers from the RSPB. The garden was designed to attract a range of wildlife by providing nectar-rich plants, a pond, bird and bat boxes, a bug hotel and various other features, and has been shown to cost just 5% more than a standard showhome landscaping scheme.

In addition, a document encouraging new residents to follow suit and create wildlife habitats in their gardens has been produced by David Wilson Homes and is being given to new residents when they move in, as well as being available to visitors to the showhomes.

The wider site is the delivering over 9000m² of newly formed meadowland/wetland, an attenuation pond, 3500m² of landscaped amenity areas and 5600m² of retained/enhanced copse. Hibernacula, dead wood features, bird and bat boxes and Hedgehog Highways also feature on the site.

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

The site was in agricultural use and had limited ecological value.

Were there any specific reasons that led to this project?

Barratt David Wilson have had a partnership with the RSPB since 2014 and this project was devised as a way to demonstrate partnership working, to deliver biodiversity gains and to create community engagement opportunities.



Wildlife-friendly show garden, Spinney Fields

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The garden was designed to attract a wide range of wildlife, including pollinators such as bees, butterflies and hoverflies, amphibians, hedgehogs, garden birds, common bat species and maybe even reptiles, which are known to be present in the local area. Features installed include nectar-rich plants, a small pond, wildflower turf, bird and bat boxes, a solitary bee box, dead wood features, a reptile hibernaculum, a bird bath, a hedgehog house, hedgehog highways and a compost bin. A number of these features will also be installed throughout the rest of the development, for example hedgehog highways, bird and bat boxes and wildflower grassland.

In addition to creating the garden, the RSPB also ran an activity with the local primary school to create the reptile hibernacula in the garden and a guidance document has been produced for new residents to encourage them to create similar wildlife friendly features in their own garden once they move in. The Sales Team have been engaged in the process and helped with the primary school session. Other groups engaged in the project include the local parish council and there are plans to hold events with local cubs, brownies and other groups.

Interpretation boards were installed in the garden to highlight to customers the scheme and the installed nature-friendly features. Barratt David Wilson are currently working on additional guidance materials to allow this initiative to be spread throughout the whole business, thus making this project highly replicable.



Standing dead wood feature surrounded by nature-friendly plants

How would you best describe the project?

Enhancement

Further information

The technical design work and the garden installation were undertaken by Nicholsons staff. The garden will remain in place for as long as property is a showhome (likely to be approximately 3 years), after which it will be handed over to the occupier, who will be encouraged to maintain the wildlife-friendly features. We hope that other owners will also be encouraged to do similar in their gardens, enhancing biodiversity throughout the site.

On a recent visit in May 2017, bees were observed feeding on nectar-rich flowers, a blue tit was spotted in the garden and a banded demoiselle damselfly darted around the pond, indicating that some target species have already begun to take advantage of the features.

We have shown with this project that 'wildlife-friendly' can still satisfy all the objectives of a showhome garden, with minimal additional cost and with the benefit of increased footfall to the showhomes as a result of engaging with local groups.



Hedgehog highway

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

It was an opportunity to do something that delivered biodiversity benefits in line with Barratt David Wilson corporate goals while also delivering the primary function of being an attractive showhome garden. The project was engaging and motivating because it was something new and different for the staff involved.