

Enhancing Lyne Road Green, Kidlington for Biodiversity

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LYNE ROAD GREEN currently provides limited opportunities for biodiversity, but owing to its size (0.5 ha) and the fact that it is a 'blank canvas', it has great potential. Biodiversity enhancements should be balanced with recreational needs. This document outlines proposals for the site.

Lyne Road, Kidlington (SP484143)

- The Green is amenity grassland between a railway and a road, with housing on three sides.
- The best links to existing rich habitat are to the south west, with a large area of scrub and marsh to the south of the neighbouring industrial park. Beyond that is the Rushey Mead SSSI.
- This is a strategically useful site to enhance for wildlife: for birds and small mammals crossing from the wilder areas, and also for a much wider range of grassland species.
- The nearby verges and gardens also provide significant wildlife opportunities— particularly the adjacent green space near Thorne Close.
- The site could be improved for wildlife through planting trees and hedgerows, relaxing grass cutting, and adding locally sourced wildflower seeds if needed.
- There are several opportunities for community engagement.

Existing tree and scrub species include: rose, ivy, bramble, elder, hazel, spindle, holly, blackthorn, hawthorn, turkey oak, field maple, ash, English oak, small-leaved lime. There are also ornamentals including cherry and cotoneaster.

Existing grassland species include: clover, cranes-bill, daisy, mouse-ear and dandelion family species, plus a dense patch of yarrow to the north east.

Baseline biodiversity survey: a baseline biodiversity survey should be carried out by Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) before reaching decisions.

- This could help to better understand the existing species, and guide detailed plans.

- It would also provide a baseline for measuring biodiversity gains over time, which in turn, could help gain funding and community support.

Habitat enhancement suggestions

Tree planting: This would be an excellent opportunity to build up flower- and fruit-producing trees and shrubs. The species in Appendix 1 have high wildlife value, thrive in a variety of conditions, are widely distributed across the UK, and are traditionally found in hedgerows.

- **Note on ash:** No more ash (*fraxinus*) should be planted due to the risk of ash dieback. There is some ash on the northern edge. Deadwood from felled ash trees could be left on site as useful habitat piles which could also limit unwanted vehicular access.

Hedging: The hedging species in Appendix 1 could be supplemented with *Rosa canina* (Dog Rose), *Rosa arvensis* (Field Rose), *Lonicera periclymenum* (Honeysuckle).

Wild grassland: The amenity grassland holds little botanical diversity. The existing flora should be encouraged to grow and spread before seeding with wildflower mixes. This can be achieved using a more relaxed mowing regime and reviewing success after 3 years. If diversity does not increase after 5 years, then supplemental seeding can be explored.

Habitat creation plan

Western side of Green: Network Rail has carried out extensive tree felling beyond the fence, along the railway line. To compensate, and to strengthen the habitat corridor along the western edge, the blocks of trees and shrubs could be linked with infill planting. Assuming Network Rail would not want tall trees growing beside the fence, lower species should be planted, complementing the existing hazel, field maple, holly and blackthorn. This would help to screen sound and light emanating from trains and the industrial park beyond.

Northern side of Green: Some areas are slightly richer in herbs, including the dense patch of yarrow to the north east, and other herbaceous perennials referred to above.

It is recommended that before re-seeding with wildflower mixes, the mowing regime should be relaxed to allow plants already there to flower and spread seeds. The TVERC survey will review success annually, and mowing can be adjusted if needed. The collection and disposal of arisings off site is also crucial.

Timing of cuts for long grass: We suggest a cut in February, March or April with no further cutting until mid-July or August (12 to 16 weeks gap). This should be kept under review. Timings might need to be adjusted depending on which species emerge.

Southern side of Green: This looks to be an old boundary with an existing hedge line. It could be infilled to enhance the extent and quality of the habitat and boost the emergence of younger plants, thus creating an extra wildlife corridor. This would protect the valuable ditch feature behind it that serves as a corridor connecting to the railway. It would also help limit further trampling or littering. Near the pedestrian cut-through to Thorne Close, this habitat merges with the additional grassland area adjoining the ditch there.

- Existing ivy and bramble should be retained.
- Larger bramble patches can be cut back periodically to prevent excessive creep onto grassland.
- Trees could be planted from the hedge line towards the centre of the Green, extending the habitat and food sources. Some could be coppice

blocks of hazel complementing the hazel already there.

Trees could be planted in stages for a diversity of tree ages, or coppiced in rotation for a similar gain, and to admit light to different areas in turn. Sufficient distance from the existing hedge line should be left to allow in light for growth, sunshine for insects, and access for maintenance.

- There are three mature Turkey oaks at the SW end of the hedge line: more oaks (three species) could be introduced to plan for succession, with some carefully-sited younger oaks to provide specimen oaks of different ages intermixed amongst other species.
- Underneath the existing oaks are numerous oak seedlings that could be collected and used in schemes calling for large trees. Having local provenance, they will be happy in local conditions, bring no imported disease risk, and will be low cost. This is an opportunity for community engagement.

Eastern side of Green: The main purpose of this planting is to restrict vehicular access. KPC will replace the Lego blocks with groups of trees set slightly back from the road and connected by attractive and biodiverse hedging. The Lego blocks will be kept until the planting is well established. When the blocks are removed, the bare earth can be sown with locally sourced wildflower seeds to leave a strip of enhanced grassland.

Ideally when mature enough, the hedge line would be 'laid' in order to thicken it at the base, to retain its shape, to extend its lifetime, and to look cared for. This could encourage community involvement.

Appendix 1

Small tree and/or hedgerow species

- *Prunus spinosa* (blackthorn)
- *Rhamnus cathartica* (purging buckthorn)
- *Malus sylvestris* (crab apple)
- *Viburnum opulus* (guelder rose)
- *Corylus avellana* (hazel)
- *Euonymus europaeus* (spindle)
- *Viburnum lantana* (wayfaring tree)
- *Prunus cerasifera* (cherry plum)
- *Ligustrum vulgare* (wild privet)
- *Prunus insititia* (damson plum)
- *Pyrus pyraeaster* (wild pear)
- *Ilex aquifolium* (holly)
- *Salix caprea* (goat/pussy willow)
- *Salix cinerea* (grey willow)

Larger tree species:

- *Acer campestre* (field maple)
- *Tilia cordata* (small-leaved lime)
- *Sorbus aucuparia* (mountain ash)
- *Sorbus aria* (whitebeam)
- *Sorbus torminalis* (wild service tree)
- *Carpinus betulus* (hornbeam)