

Hole Farm Community Woodland Health Impact Assessment

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Hole Farm Community Woodland
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1. Introduction

This Health Impact Assessment (HIA) has been prepared by Jacobs on behalf of Forestry England ('the Applicant'). The HIA supports a planning application for the creation of a community woodland facility comprising: vehicular access into a 94-space car and coach park with EV charging points and overflow area; substation; an open sided visitor shelter; a modular café with covered outdoor seating area, bin store, cycle parking and WC facilities; demolition of a grain store and development of a community building including staff welfare and office facilities and outdoor terrace; staff and disabled car parking; demolition of an agricultural machinery store and construction of a Forestry England barn; service yard and vehicle turning circle; surfaced and unsurfaced woodland paths; creation of six new ponds; countryside heritage and interpretation boards and informal natural play areas at Hole Farm Lane, Great Warley, Brentwood, Essex CM13 3JD ('the site').

The site is currently owned by National Highways (NH), the Community Woodland would be managed by Forestry England (FE). It would create an asset for the local community and add to the network of woodlands comprising the Thames Chase Community Forest.

The site is included within the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) Project Order Limits of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project Ref TR010032). In relation to LTC, Hole Farm is proposed to accommodate mitigation and compensation for the environmental effects of the LTC in the form of replacement 'Special Category Land', habitat creation and woodland planting to compensate for the permanent acquisition of land, compensation for the potential impacts of nitrogen deposition from vehicles using the LTC, and as compensation for ancient woodland which would be lost due to the construction of the LTC.

Table 1 sets out the ten determinants of health. Each determinant has been evaluated to determine whether there would be a positive, neutral or negative impact as a result of the Project. A brief commentary is provided to justify the suggested 'score' and, where a neutral impact is identified, commentary is provided addressing the balance of benefits.

2. Table 1 - Health Impact Assessment

Health Determinant	Impact on Health (Positive / Neutral / Negative)	Mitigation / Commentary where applicable
<p>Access to education</p>	<p>Positive</p> <p>The community space would, amongst other things, accommodate school and other groups for educational purposes and workshops or other activities. The adjacent outdoor tree nursery will also be used for teaching purposes in relation to tree growing.</p> <p>Information boards will be placed throughout the woodland alongside pathways and will also direct users to Great Warley Conservation Area, increasing community engagement and awareness of the area's heritage.</p> <p>It is intended that the proposed open-sided visitor shelter can be designed and constructed by a student group working in forestry, architecture and construction, such as the Forest School module collaboration of Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London (UAL) together with FE.</p> <p>The proposals themselves will have no detrimental impact upon access to education.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>Access to work and training</p>	<p>Positive</p> <p>The Project would provide employment opportunities for one full-time FTE staff member visiting site Monday – Friday, with up to three other FTE staff members visiting infrequently during the week. There will be one Thames Chase Trust staff member visiting site to manage the tree nursery and run weekly volunteer sessions.</p> <p>Volunteers would work in the tree nursery and learn the processes and methods of tree growing.</p> <p>The proposed café will also provide an employment opportunity.</p> <p>The proposals will have no detrimental impact upon access to work and training.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>

Health Determinant	Impact on Health (Positive / Neutral / Negative)	Mitigation / Commentary where applicable
<p>Access to health and social care services and other social infrastructure</p>	<p>Positive</p> <p>In line with Public Health England’s ‘Improving Access to Greenspace’ (Public Health England, 2020), greenspace can play an important role in promoting good public health. Increased exposure to a greener environment can have a range of favourable physiological and mental health and wellbeing outcomes.</p> <p>The Project would provide an accessible green space for local people and encourage social interaction, walking, cycling including an all abilities track and multi-user accessible surfaced pathways. Access to the existing Public Right of Way across the site and adjacent bridleways will not be compromised. The tree nursery will encourage local volunteering and social interaction.</p> <p>The Project would therefore provide beneficial health and social related activities for the local population and visitors to the area and would not be detrimental to any existing facilities in the area in this regard.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>Access to and nature</p>	<p>Positive</p> <p>The Project would provide a new, accessible green space for local people and visitors. There would be numerous access points to the community woodland for vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders including an all abilities trail. Access to the existing Public Right of Way across the site and adjacent bridleways will not be compromised.</p> <p>The landscape design incorporates the provision of natural play areas throughout the woodland for children to enjoy while walking in nature. A series of existing and new ponds will create wildlife areas while information boards throughout the site will inform visitors about the wildlife, woodland and local area.</p> <p>The arrangement of planting and rides and glades neutral grassland includes vantage points which will maintain open and important views, accessed from a network of</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>

Health Determinant	Impact on Health (Positive / Neutral / Negative)	Mitigation / Commentary where applicable
	<p>surfaced paths and grass rides. Views to and from the Great Warley Conservation Area were also a key consideration in the design of the Project.</p>	
<p>Accessibility and active travel</p>	<p>Positive</p> <p>The Project would provide an accessible green space for local people and a facility that encourages social interaction. The Project would therefore promote a healthier and more active lifestyle for the local population.</p> <p>Access to the site is possible via public transport. Car, coach and cycle parking is also available, with EV charging points. Access on horseback is also possible in addition to walking. A Transport Statement accompanies the application.</p> <p>The Project has adopted an inclusive design for all potential users. (Further details are provided in the 'social cohesion and inclusive design' section below).</p> <p>There would be nine access points to Hole Farm Community Woodland offering access to vehicles, bikes, wheelchairs, mobility scooters, horse-riders and pedestrians.</p> <p>For vehicular access, the site is adjacent to the M25 and a kilometre away from junction 29. There is also a bus stop within a short walk of the site on Great Warley Street. For pedestrians, nearby Great Warley and other local settlements are within walking distance. There is also an existing footbridge over the M25 connecting to Folkes Lane Woodland via the Public Right of Way.</p> <p>The site will contain an all abilities pathway providing maximum inclusion and safety for all users. The pathway would be clearly demarcated and lead from the public car park, with a circular route connecting to Great Warley Street.</p> <p>The Masterplan also includes numerous surfaced and unsurfaced pathways to encourage as many different types of movement through the site as possible for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>

Health Determinant	Impact on Health (Positive / Neutral / Negative)	Mitigation / Commentary where applicable
Housing and Home Design	Not applicable.	Not applicable.
Access to healthy food	<p>Neutral</p> <p>The land within the site boundary has historically been managed as arable farmland until September 2022 when the use ceased after the site was purchased by National Highways. The Agricultural Land Classification is Grade 3 – good to moderate quality and the Project would therefore result in the loss of some agricultural land.</p> <p>The modular café on site would provide a range of healthy eating options.</p>	<p>It is suggested that the recreational, health and social benefits of the proposals together with creation of natural habitat, ponds, rides and glades species rich grassland and native woodland areas will result in a sustainable and biodiverse woodland area which, in balance, offsets the loss of this area of agricultural land.</p> <p>There will be areas within the site where tree felling will eventually take place and a small area of commercial woodland for bringing on trees which will be used to populate National Highways road schemes.</p>
Social cohesion and inclusive design	<p>Positive</p> <p>As it matures, the Project will bring people together in a shared indoor and outdoor space. The design includes an all abilities access trail for less abled visitors and multi-user tracks for dog walkers, users of bikes and horse-riders, as well as walkers, with play areas for children, visitor café and toilet facilities.</p>	Not applicable.

Health Determinant	Impact on Health (Positive / Neutral / Negative)	Mitigation / Commentary where applicable
	<p>The Project would provide an accessible green space for local people and a facility that encourages social interaction. The Project would therefore promote a healthier and more active lifestyle for the local population.</p> <p>The landscaping design also incorporates the provision of natural play areas intersected throughout the woodland along play trails for children to enjoy while walking in nature and a series of existing and new ponds for wildlife.</p> <p>The Project would bring visitors together in a shared indoor and outdoor community space which can be used for events, education, workshops, or team building activities. FE will manage the building.</p> <p>The proposed new buildings have been designed to have a rural feel while meeting high standards of inclusive access. The spaces exceed Building Regulations for wheelchair users; hallways are 2m wide and the lobby allows generous manoeuvrability. There is an accessible toilet directly off the main hallway and tree nursery and an accessible toilet and shower within the FE welfare facilities. The community kitchen is sufficiently large enough for wheelchair manoeuvrability and counter service is to be provided at a range of heights for inclusivity.</p> <p>Thresholds are accessible and gradients to landscaping are designed for unaided wheelchair users. There will be seven blue badge car parking spaces in the main car park, two of which are for Electric Vehicle charging. There will also be two surfaced disabled spaces at the building cluster.</p> <p>The modular café design will include wheelchair accessible counter service and informal seating. There are fully accessible public toilets proposed at the public entrance area.</p>	
<p>Crime reduction and community safety</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>

Health Determinant	Impact on Health (Positive / Neutral / Negative)	Mitigation / Commentary where applicable
	<p>Security for the occupants, visitors and assets of Hole Farm has been considered throughout the design process. The design team have liaised with Essex Police and have met on site to discuss how best to design out crime.</p> <p>The form of different access points to the site for different users has been carefully considered. The access gates are designed to allow pedestrians, cyclists, dog walkers and horse-riders through. Signage, and where possible design of gates, aims to prevent motorbikes, motor-cross and quad bikes from entering the site.</p> <p>The car park and facilities will be open in daylight hours with the gates locked after dusk.</p> <p>Lighting to bike storage and to the car park will be motion detection only to mitigate the impact on wildlife and generally avoid urbanisation of this natural setting.</p> <p>The buildings are to be locked at night. There is secure storage in the FE barn, including point locks, for vehicles, machinery, equipment and tools.</p> <p>Natural surveillance has also been incorporated into the Project where possible. The FE office has glazing to the north-east corner, allowing surveillance of the farmyard. In the car park area, the layout offers surveillance of the cycle parking from the café covered outdoor seating area.</p> <p>The potential security risks of the Project have been identified and mitigation measures are in place with the aim of reducing risk. These include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secure casing for the Electric Vehicle charging points. 2. Secure doors/shutters for overnight and lighting for lockups in the winter for the office and community building. 3. Providing cover over the bike storage while maintaining visibility, and the provision of lighting. 	

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	<p>4. Securely locking the barn when not in use, provision of a locked gate into the yard area.</p> <p>5. Lockable storage at the community tree nursery so all equipment and tools can be locked away when not in use.</p> <p>6. To mitigate antisocial behaviour, lighting around the building for secure lock up after dark will be installed, sensor lighting will also be provided in the car park area for use after hours, and implementation of a lone working policy for FE staff.</p> <p>Emergency services access has also been considered in the design and layout.</p> <p>Hole Farm will become part of FE's Thames Beat woodlands and thus will be inspected on at least a weekly basis to check the condition and security of the site.</p>	
<p>Environmental Sustainability</p>	<p>Positive</p> <p>The Project utilises a landscape-led design approach that would protect and enhance an area of local environmental value, providing a biodiverse, clean and functional environment to assist in providing biodiversity net gain. As the site is within the London Metropolitan Green Belt, the openness of the character of the site is to be protected and enhanced.</p> <p>Ecological surveys carried out on site found the presence of Common bats in Buildings 1 and 2. Evidence of badger setts were also found on site. A European Protected Species mitigation licence will be obtained from Natural England prior to commencement of any works. Bat boxes suitable for Common and Soprano pipistrelle bats are proposed.</p> <p>For badgers, construction management is crucial to the protection of this precious wildlife on site and a distance around the site. Exclusion zones will be setup where required. All relevant guidance for wildlife protection will be adhered to.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>

Health Determinant	Impact on Health (Positive / Neutral / Negative)	Mitigation / Commentary where applicable
	<p>The survey of existing ponds in June 2021 found no presence of Great Crested Newts however, given the drought experienced at the time, the surveys are due to be repeated in Spring 2023. If Great Crested Newts are found on site, efforts will be made to protect and encourage the species to flourish.</p> <p>The Project will provide biodiversity and ecological improvements on site; retaining mature trees and hedgerows, providing additional native planting and adding bird boxes and hedgehog friendly features. There are also to be a series of ponds and water features, encouraging varied habitat creation for increased biodiversity, as well as sustainable drainage systems for flood management.</p> <p>The proposed car park also includes the provision of 14 Electric Vehicle charging spaces, with the capacity to expand to 22 at a later date.</p> <p>Reuse of the existing buildings was carefully considered but was not possible due to structural and asbestos issues. Notwithstanding, environmental sustainability has directed the design of the buildings from the beginning of the design process. Low carbon and passive principles have been prioritised including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low embodied carbon • Passive heating and cooling systems • Daylighting and balancing solar gain • Low energy space and water heating • Rainwater harvesting and water recycling • Sustainable energy sources • Foul waste-water – new septic tanks 	

Health Determinant	Impact on Health (Positive / Neutral / Negative)	Mitigation / Commentary where applicable
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Life cycle - a design life minimum of 75 years• Adaptability in building and architectural layout• Reuse and recycling of construction materials	