



OPEN SPACE CONDITION ASSESSMENT

**Little Stanion Farm Management
Company**

Little Stanion, Corby

Ref: 15-3182

Version: 5

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Author: Richard heath

Reviewer: Ian Dudley

**Address: 7-8 Melbourne House
Corbygate Business
Park
Weldon
Corby
Northamptonshire
NN17 5JG**

Purpose of Document

Lockhart Garratt Ltd was commissioned by Little Stanion Farm Management Company to undertake an independent condition assessment of the existing public open spaces at Little Stanion, Corby.

This document presents the findings of this assessment and provides, where relevant, remedial works or ongoing management recommendations for each open space type within each area.

Executive Summary

Despite recent heavy rainfall Little Stanion was found to be well managed and in good order. Grass cutting had yet to be commenced across the site due to the ground conditions; this delay was considered to be a positive response to the constraints posed by the weather, as any attempt to bring machinery onto grassed areas would likely cause wheel rutting and soil compacting.

Works appear to have begun to restore Badger Alley following the damage caused during pylon grounding.

Young trees within the front and rear woodland bunds are performing well, and starting to bud up. Of the sample demographic none were found to have failed.

Overall the site is well-maintained. A number of minor actions are required to ensure that current good standard is maintained:

- Once cutting is underway the public open space, in particular Long Meadow, would benefit from fertiliser application.
- Minor repairs to amenity grass areas that have been tracked over by vehicles.
- Repairs to Deer fence enclosing the rear woodland bund.
- Clearing litter from swales and attenuation basins following storm events.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Extent of Assessment

1.1. The following open space areas of Little Stanion are currently open to the public and were considered as part of this assessment:

- Top Meadow
- Long Meadow
- Short Meadow
- Front Wooded Bund
- Rear Wooded Bund
- Badger Alley
- Welcome Centre Green

1.2. The locations of these various areas are shown on Plan Ref. M15-1846 at **Appendix 1**.

Assessment Methodology

1.3. The assessment was undertaken as an on-foot survey on 23rd March 2016, in which each area was visited and comprehensively walked. The condition of the various landscape treatments (grassland, wetland, etc) was recorded, as well as general observations such as the presence or absence of litter. Illustrative photographs were taken and are displayed throughout this report in the relevant sections.

Assessment Limitations

1.4. This is a landscape management assessment report and therefore any comments made in relation to hydrology, engineering or other disciplines should be taken as general comment or observation for referral to appropriate specialists.

1.5. This report is an assessment of the management of the resources currently in place at Little Stanion and does not cover the creation of additional landscape treatments or open space areas.

2. TOP MEADOW

Introduction

- 2.1. This area is located along the north-western boundary of Little Stanion and separates the site from the adjacent woodland.
- 2.2. It comprises amenity grassland with no other features.

Grassland

- 2.3. The grass sward is fully established with minimal broadleaf weeds present.
- 2.4. It is currently wet underfoot, which accounts for the fact that it is yet to receive the first cut of the growing season. Some minor damage was noted, likely caused by a motorcycle tracking through the area in wet conditions. The damage is minor but should be monitored for signs that compaction is impeding growth performance.

Litter

- 2.5. No litter or dog fouling was observed within this area.





3. LONG MEADOW

Introduction

- 3.1. Long Meadow accounts for the largest area of open space within the site. It bisects the site from Top Meadow in a south-easterly direction, and is centred on the primary swale and associated ephemeral basins.
- 3.2. This area comprises amenity grassland for much of its length, although the south-eastern part is meadow grassland. There is a large detention basin at the lower end of the site.

Amenity Grassland

- 3.3. The amenity grassland areas are generally well established with very little weed growth observed; however the wet winter has encouraged the establishment of rushes within the amenity areas, in particular at the lower end of Long Meadow within the levelled playing field. Whilst the presence of a minor element of rush in the main meadow sward is acceptable, it is recommended that the rushes in the playing field area be controlled through the targeted application of herbicide using a weed wiper or similar.
- 3.4. Some vehicle tracking has occurred at the lower end of Long Meadow. At the time of surveying these tracks held standing water. This highlights the fact that any attempt to cut the amenity grass would likely cause further damage by the machinery, and therefore this activity should be delayed until ground conditions improve.





Meadow Grassland

- 3.5. The meadow grassland surrounding the lake was at the time of surveying indeterminable from the amenity grass. Once the amenity grass is cut the distinction will be more noticeable.
- 3.6. A path runs through this area which is regularly used by dog walkers. The area has suffered from vehicle tracking which has left the ground uneven in places.

Swales

- 3.7. The swale which forms the spine of Long Meadow is well established with a range of aquatic and marginal species which are growing strongly. The channel itself has been reformed by the passage of water into a more natural appearance.
- 3.8. There are woody species (willow and dogwood) colonising the swales, particularly at the top of Long Meadow. Any goat willow should be cut and treated with herbicide to prevent further establishment.
- 3.9. One of the gabion cages, which form a vital function within the swale, has been vandalised and some of the stones removed. It is recommended that this is monitored regularly and if this behaviour persists steps should be taken.
- 3.10. Daffodils have been frequently planted on the swale margins, and were coming into flower at the time of inspection.
- 3.11. A number of shrubs have been planted around the mouths of the swale inlets. The rootstocks of these plants are established, although they were not in leaf at the time of surveying.





Ephemeral Basins

- 3.12. These holding basins are designed to attenuate water flow and reduce flooding in severe weather events. These basins have been thoroughly tested over the winter, and are clearly performing well at reducing flooding of the lake.
- 3.13. Over the winter months they have received management to reduce the invasive common reed *Phragmites australis* which would otherwise smother the areas and out-compete other wetland species. Evidence of new growth is already evident within these basins.
- 3.14. The reeds grow and spread very quickly, and it is common practice to cut them down to the rootstock every other winter.



Lake

- 3.15. The lake is looking well-established, with reed and rush beds and clumps of willow at the water's edge, all of which are helping to encourage overwintering birds. Minimal litter was observed.
- 3.16. It was too early in the season to accurately identify the species of willow, however it would be advisable to remove any goat willow in the first instance, as this is a far less desirable species. Not more than one third of the waterline should be allowed to be colonised by willow species, which grow very quickly and can cause problems associated with leaf drop and over-shading.
- 3.17. It is recommended that the willow colonisation is reviewed in the Autumn of 2016 to determine if coppicing should commence.
- 3.18. It is recommended that around 20% of the willows are coppiced, in small groups, every 5 years. Goat willow stumps should be treated to discourage regrowth.
- 3.19. The water appeared to be freely flowing through the overflow outfalls, however these areas do tend to get clogged with litter and debris, particularly after storm events and it is worth checking regularly.
- 3.20. Siltation should be monitored and reviewed by a suitably qualified person.

Fencing

- 3.21. A post and rail fence runs between the lake and the A43. This is generally in good order, although a small number of horizontal rails have been broken.

Litter

- 3.22. Long Meadow was generally litter-free, although a small amount had collected within attenuation basins and outlets.



4. SHORT MEADOW

Introduction

- 4.1. Short Meadow is located within the south-western part of the site and runs approximately parallel to Long Meadow.
- 4.2. It mainly comprises amenity grassland, although a swale runs along its south-western boundary.

Grassland

- 4.3. As with elsewhere on site the grass is yet to be mown for the first time this year; however it is well-established and relatively weed-free.

Swale

- 4.4. The swale appears as little more than a linear depression within the grass, with gabion cages stacked at the outfall and intermittently along the length. No standing/flowing water was present at the surface.

Litter

- 4.5. Short Meadow was litter free.





5. FRONT WOODLAND BUND

Introduction

- 5.1. This feature is located between Little Stanion and Long Croft Road, and forms one of the main frontages to the site.
- 5.2. It comprises a grassed bund planted with native trees and shrubs, with a hedgerow along its north-eastern boundary on the public highway frontage.

Woodland

- 5.3. The trees and shrubs are well-established with heights between one and three metres depending upon species, and are showing good spring bud formation. Mammal protective guards and supports are in good condition, generally free of leaf debris and soil.
- 5.4. Significant deer tracks were noted in this area; it is therefore advised to leave the guards in place.
- 5.5. The grass sward is yet to receive the first annual cut due to the weather conditions, however it is well-established and generally free of broadleaf weeds.

Hedgerow

- 5.6. The hedgerow plants have had their guards removed, and appear to be left alone by the deer community. The hedge has been regularly topped, and is starting to knit together to become an established hedge.

Litter

- 5.7. There was minimal litter along the pathway, but none on the woodland bund.



6. REAR WOODLAND BUND

Introduction

- 6.1. This area comprises a large area of woodland along the southern boundary of the site.
- 6.2. A central path runs along the entire length of the woodland and a deer fence encloses the planted area. There are pedestrian gates in several locations along the deer fence and a vehicle gate at its eastern end.
- 6.3. A glade has been left unplanted at the southernmost point of the site and views of the surrounding landscape are obtainable from this point.
- 6.4. A large undergrounding pylon is present to the east of this area.

Woodland

- 6.5. The trees are growing well, with good bud growth present on a random selection of plants inspected. Some recent replanting has occurred around the pylon. Mammal guards and supports are generally in good condition.
- 6.6. The grass is not competing with the trees, presumably through herbicide management, and guards were generally free of leaf litter and soil.

Path

- 6.7. The path is well established and well-used. At the time of surveying it was clear of any trip hazards and vegetation; an area of mud was present around the break in the hedge line.

Fencing

- 6.8. The deer fence is generally in good order, with the exception of two broken posts on the run between the woodland and the A43. The straining wire has also been cut, and should be repaired to secure the longevity of the fence.

Litter

- 6.9. Minimal litter was observed within this area.





7. BADGER ALLEY

Introduction

- 7.1. This area follows the line of a disused railway, which has since been restored to grassland.
- 7.2. It currently comprises disturbed ground, bordered by mature hedgerows with occasional trees.

Grassland

- 7.3. It appears that measures have been undertaken to commence remediation of this area following excessive damage caused by vehicle tracking in sub-optimal ground conditions.
- 7.4. It is assumed that operations have been undertaken to decompact and level the worst of the damage. This has left an uneven ground surface, and as such public access to this area is to be avoided.
- 7.5. Once the land drains sufficiently the remediation program can recommence, which will see the soil regraded, the larger surface stones removed, and the re-establishment of a meadow grass sward.

Hedgerows

- 7.6. Badger Alley is bordered to either side with mature hedgerows, which provide valuable nesting and foraging habitat for local birds.
- 7.7. Given the significant damage to the soils along Badger Alley it is advisable to monitor these hedgerows for signs of stress. Any failures should be removed and the gaps replanted. The larger branches should be cut to half-metre lengths and retained within the hedge as additional habitat.

Litter

- 7.8. This area is generally litter free.



8. WELCOME CENTRE GREEN

Introduction

8.1. This area surrounds the Little Stanion Welcome Centre building, at the northern extent of the site.

8.2. It comprises grassland with planting beds.

Grassland

8.3. The grass is in good condition with no broadleaf weeds present. It has yet to be cut this year, likely due to ground conditions.

Herbaceous Beds

8.4. Plants are healthy and well-established.

Litter

8.5. No litter was observed within this area.





Appendix 1: Open Space Areas Plan

Ref: M15-1846



Legend:

- Open space
- Water

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TITLE: OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT AREAS PLAN	
PROJECT/SITE: LITTLE STANION	
CLIENT: LITTLE STANION FARM MANAGEMENT COMPANY	
MAP REF: M15-1846	
VERSION: 1	
DATE: 20/10/15	SCALE: 1:3,500 @A3
APPROVED BY: ID	PRODUCED BY: ACB

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7 - 8 Melbourne House
Corbygate Business Park
Weldon, Corby
Northamptonshire NN17 5JG
01536 408840

7 Astley House
Cromwell Business Park
Chipping Norton
Oxfordshire OX7 5SR
01608 648657