

Open Space Condition Assessment

Little Stanion Farm Management Company

Little Stanion, Corby, Northamptonshire



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Arboriculture

Ecology

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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

Since the last survey, it is clear that the site has been well managed and is generally in a tidy and clean condition. As construction on site is ongoing, it is noted that the grass and ground in some locations has been damaged.

As within the previous survey the bottom section of Long Meadow still shows signs of disturbance, which has resulted in the loss of large sections of grass. This section will require properly re-establishing once the construction work is complete. This work is likely to coincide with the delivery of the MUGA.

Overall, all open spaces are well kept and it is clearly apparent that remedial action has been undertaken on issues arising from the continuing construction process.

This report makes the following recommendations to ensure the continued improvement of the amenity and biodiversity value of Little Stanion:

- Grass should be reseeded in damaged areas.
- Young community woodland within Top Meadow should be maintained, including removal of grass from shelters, replacement of shelters and canes where they are missing or damaged, and replacement of failed stock. *(It is noted, however, that this area is not under the control of the management company.)*
- Cut vegetation within swales.
- Remove weeds from ornamental beds and top up bark mulch.
- De-compact and reseed areas of vehicle tracking.
- French drain within Southern Wooded Bund to be repaired and ground levelled before reseeded.
- Continual management of the new meadow area in the south of Short Meadow.
- Change management of the grass beneath the bow top fence to regular strimming rather than herbicide treatment.
- Removal of litter from Northern Wooded Bund.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Instruction

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;
- Southern Wooded Bund;
- Short Meadow;
- Badger Alley; and
- Northern Wooded Bund.

1.2. The locations of these various areas are shown on Plan Ref. M14-1237 v3 at **Appendix 1**.

Scope of Assessment

1.3. This report relates to the condition of the above public open spaces as judged at the time of survey, which was carried out on the 26th October 2021. It wholly assesses the public land within



the control of Little Stanion Farm Management Company, and excludes all public open spaces, incidental open spaces, play areas, and all other land within Little Stanion that falls under the control and/or ownership of third parties.

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

Description

- 2.1. This area is located on the north-western boundary of Little Stanion. It is a linear amenity strip bounded to the south, west and north-west by adjacent woodland (offsite). The eastern boundary is defined by a post and rail fence beyond which lie the existing properties associated with the north eastern boundary of Little Stanion.

Assessment

Grassland

- 2.2. Since the last survey the management company have relaxed the mowing regime of the meadow areas as per the long-term design plan. These areas are now establishing, with a good diversity to the sward, including plantains, salad burnett, scabious, and ox eye daisies.
- 2.3. Elsewhere the grass sward is established and cut to amenity height.

Litter and Debris

- 2.4. At the time of the survey the area was free of litter and dog mess.

Pathways

- 2.5. No ruts were evidenced on or adjacent to the pathways within Top Meadow at the time of the survey.



Area of Tree Planting

- 2.6. A number of supporting canes and spiral guards were either broken or missing. Some stock was found to have failed. Spirals were also seen that were choked with weeds and grass.
- 2.7. These trees were not part of the original landscape masterplan, rather were planted by a community group. Therefore, their maintenance and upkeep is not specifically the responsibility of the management company.
- 2.8. It is clear that if these trees do not receive the seasonal maintenance operations required, they are likely to fail in great numbers. Therefore, it is recommended that discussions are held to establish this management regime to ensure the longevity of this community asset.



3. LONG MEADOW

Description

- 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 a 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 Long Meadow.

Assessment

Amenity Grassland

- 3.3. The quality of the soils has been a long-term issue on this estate, due to the significantly high levels of clay. The quality of the grass sward improves year on year as the soils retain more nutrients, however the site will still suffer from deep cracks in dry periods, and waterlogged soils in wet spells.
- 3.4. The grass had not been mown immediately prior to the inspection; however, it was clear that it receives regular cuts and has not been neglected. In several places, the grass adjacent to the path edges had died back, likely through a combination of underground kerb haunching and human erosion. Repairs to these patches would improve the overall experience of Long Meadow, although it is likely to be an ongoing recurrence.
- 3.5. To the southeast of Long Meadow there was evidence that vehicles had been tracking across the grass between Brecon Close and the undeveloped land to the south of the Primary School. This has degraded the area and will require remediating once works are complete. It is noted that this area is still incomplete, with a MUGA and a number of trees to be planted, as well as some regrading associated with the forthcoming development to the north. It is important that the compacted ground that will remain either grass or soft landscaping is de-compacted and properly established as part of the landscape construction works.



Trees

- 3.6. The standard trees were generally in good condition with no obvious signs of damage or disease within Long Meadow. Stakes were in place and the trees appeared to be healthy.

Swales and Ephemeral basins

- 3.7. The SUDs and ephemeral basins were well established with marginal plants, and it would be recommended that these are strimmed this winter to keep the drainage system functioning well.
- 3.8. A minor amount of litter was present within the swales; however, it was not unacceptable level, and it did not appear to have been present for a long period.



Planted Beds

- 3.9. Planting around the headwalls has established well, and effectively softens these structures.
- 3.10. However, a few weeds were observed within the beds and the mulch levels were low. This requires remediating prior to the growing season next year, to keep the beds in good condition.
- 3.11. Elsewhere the planted beds were in good condition and appeared to be establishing well.

Hedgerows

- 3.12. The young hedgerows appeared to be establishing, and stock was starting to knit together and form a hedgerow.

Lake

- 3.13. Some remedial work has been undertaken to remove a percentage of the willows and alder from around the lake. This has improved light levels and reduced leaf fall into the water, which will help the water quality to remain balanced, and reduce potential associated maintenance issues.
- 3.14. This will require repeating every five years or so to keep the waterside trees under control.



4. SOUTHERN WOODED BUND

Description

- 4.1. This area of young plantation woodland defines the south-western and south-eastern boundaries of Little Stanion. It also continues partway along the north-western boundary. It comprises a number of native tree species, including a small percentage of evergreen broadleaf.
- 4.2. A glade has been left unplanted at the southernmost point of the site and views of the surrounding landscape are obtainable from this point.
- 4.3. A large undergrounding pylon is present to the east of this area.

Assessment

Woodland

- 4.4. The woodland within this area appears to be well established, however, when on Site it was identified that a number of trees within this section were displaying signs of Ash Dieback, with lesions present on a number of trees as well as the dying back of some crowns.
- 4.5. The woodland is establishing well, although there is evidence that it has suffered from deer damage and ash dieback – neither of which are uncommon locally. Some restocking may be required in the long term; however it is likely that the loss of a small amount of trees will allow the remaining to establish better, with increased space and light levels being to their benefit.



Paths

- 4.6. The pathways in this area are informal, and morph from aggregate to a simple mown route. Some work has been undertaken to try to drain the pathways, and ditches and pipes have been installed to divert and contain surface water.



5. SHORT MEADOW

Description

- 5.1. Short Meadow is located within the south-western part of the site and runs approximately parallel to Long Meadow.
- 5.2. The northern end of this area contains an equipped play area. In the south the land has been re-profiled, and some tree planting has been undertaken.

Assessment

Grassland

- 5.3. The grass in this area is well established in the north, although some of the grass adjacent to the pathways is patchy and worn. The bow-top fence that encloses the play area has been sprayed off with an herbicide, which has left an unsightly brown strip beneath the fence. If this was controlled with a strimmer it would leave a more attractive finish.
- 5.4. The reprofiled area to the south was seeded with meadow seed. This will take a number of seasons to establish properly; during this time it will require maintenance to remove any unwanted broadleaf weeds (such as nettle, thistle, and ox-tongue) prior to seeding, and two-three cuts per annum to encourage root growth.





Trees

5.5. The trees within this section are generally healthy and well established.

Litter

5.6. There was some minor litter noted, that should be cleared.

6. BADGER ALLEY

Description

- 6.1. This area follows the line of a disused railway, which has since been restored to grassland.
- 6.2. It currently comprises meadow grassland with a central mown path, bounded either side by mature hedges.

Assessment

Meadow Grass

- 6.3. Grass was, for the most part, in good condition with patchy grass evidenced in places, most likely as a result of pedestrian traffic. No remedial action required.

Hedgerows

- 6.4. Hedgerows appear well established and have been left unmanaged for biodiversity benefit.

Litter

- 6.5. The area was for the most part litter free however a small amount of litter was noted within the scrub vegetation. This should be litter picked.

7. NORTHERN WOODED BUND

Description

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

Assessment

Woodland

- 7.3. The woodland and trees along this bund have established well. Guards and stakes have been removed and the trees are for the most part looking healthy; however, as noted within the southern wooded bund Ash Dieback was evident. In addition, a number of other trees appear to show some pest damage but are not anticipated to require replacement. No remedial action required.



Hedgerow

- 7.4. The hedge that fronts this area is well maintained and in good condition.



Litter

- 7.5. The rear slope of the bund abuts a number of dwellings, and the tree planting is offset so as not to overcrowd these properties as they establish. There is evidence that garden waste has been dumped over the rear boundaries from properties abutting this area, and the management company need to make regular visits to rectify this. As seen in the image below, the area has been recently cleared.



In addition, a tent has been erected and may be regularly used, although this has not been confirmed. Clothing and other personal items were spotted.

8. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

- 8.1. The current management of the site is considered to be of a good standard. Most areas were litter free, and the landscaping has been well maintained. There are a small number of additional remedial actions that should be undertaken over the next year in order to improve the overall condition of the estate. These are listed below.

Recommendations

Top Meadow

- 8.2. Grass should be reseeded in damaged areas.
- 8.3. Young community woodland to be maintained, including removal of grass from shelters, replacement of shelters and canes where they are missing or damaged, and replacement of failed stock.

Long Meadow

- 8.4. Cut vegetation within swales.
- 8.5. Remove weeds from ornamental beds and top up bark mulch.
- 8.6. De-compact and reseed areas of vehicle tracking.

Southern Wooded Bund

- 8.7. French drain within northern section to be repaired and ground levelled before reseeding.

Short Meadow

- 8.8. Continual management of the meadow areas to ensure establishment.
- 8.9. Change management of the grass beneath the bow top fence to strim.

Northern Wooded Bund

- 8.10. Ongoing management and removal of litter from boundary with properties.

9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Open Space Plan

Ref: M14-1237

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NEW WOODLAND DESIGN | CARBON | WOODLAND EVALUATION

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MINERALS & WASTE RESTORATION

PLANNING RATIONALISATION & STAKEHOLDER LIAISON | LAND SURVEY & MANAGEMENT PLANNING
COST ENGINEERED LANDSCAPE & HABITAT DESIGN | IMPLEMENTATION MANAGEMENT & CLERK OF WORKS
RESTORATION & AFTERCARE MANAGEMENT PLAN (RAMP) | SOIL SURVEY & ADVICE