

Broom's Cross - new planting at Lunt Consultation responses Autumn 2023

Design Consultation

Public Consultation for the Broom's Cross Extension at Lunt was held virtually from Wednesday 30th August to Monday 19th September July 2023. Plans were shared through Citizen Space and stakeholders were invited to comment either directly to the woodland creation team or via Citizen Space.

72 letters were hand delivered to local residents informing them of the proposal including the Local MP.

Emails were also sent to the following key stakeholders:

- Sefton Council
- Sefton and Lunt Parish Council
- Thornton Parish Council
- Mersey Forest
- Wildlife Trust
- RSPB
- Environment Agency
- National Trust
- Historic England
- Eden Project

Response

In total there were 21 responses. Of which 15 were from local residents and the remainder were from the following key stakeholders:

- Natural England
- Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service
- National Trust
- Mersey Forest
- Lancashire Wildlife Trust
- Historic England

Follow-up

Below Forestry England has gathered the feedback from the consultation into key areas and questions and provided responses regarding the design of the proposed woodland.

Responses

Feedback	Response
General	
Trees in field nearest to Lunt houses. How close to the houses will these be? How high will the orchard trees be?	The trees in this field will be a minimum of 30m away from the fence line of the houses. It is the plan for these trees to be orchard trees (fruit trees) and therefore their mature height will be lower than other trees in the proposals, approximately 10m but this will depend on variety and growing conditions.
Will the existing footpaths and PRowS be protected?	Yes, the Public Rights of Way will remain exactly as they are.
When will the trees reach maturity?	Likely to vary between 40 and 60 years, but some trees may be retained for a longer period, beyond maturity.
Will we have an opportunity to help with planting?	Yes, it is our plan to arrange some community planting days as we have done on other woodland creation schemes.
What do you mean by Timber Production in an easy to access area	The area has a good road network which makes accessing the site for management relatively easy compared to some of Forestry England's more remote sites. It is also on land that is already owned and managed by Forestry England and therefore access requirements are already in place and no extra infrastructure is needed.
What do you mean by 'informal recreation in a woodland setting' and who will look after this.	'informal recreation' refers to the use of woodlands for walking, dog walking and observing nature. It means that we do not intend to build specific infrastructure for recreation but rather use the existing paths and incorporate a few extra grass rides for people to enjoy with the expectation that this will be used primarily by local residents and those that are already using the site. These grass rides will be managed by Forestry England.
How do you intend to address the issue of parking for 'people to enjoy' the site.	As we are not developing any further recreation infrastructure to what is already existing on the site, we do not anticipate an increase in the number of vehicles visiting the new woodland.
Have you considered your proposals in the context of the wider landscape character?	A Landscape Appraisal has been undertaken and uploaded to Citizen Space that considers the proposed woodland in the context of the wider landscape character.
Operations	
When will planting start	The application for (Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) approval will be made by end of October. Providing this is successful, planting is likely to commence Feb/March 2024
Will there be a lot of noise and disruption during the planting phase	The most noise will be from a post basher when the fencing is put in, this will take place over a couple of weeks. The physical planting is done by hand so no noise will be heard.

Responses

Management & Maintenance	
How will this woodland be managed and maintained in the long run? The woods you manage nearby are very dark and densely planted.	The woodland will be managed under our woodland management plan. In most cases, our woodlands have their first thinning after approximately 20 years, therefore, existing areas of woodland under our management at Lunt will be due to have this thinning imminently. Once thinning starts it will continue on a 5-year cycle.
Will the ditches and drains be maintained as effective water management is very important to us as a community?	Yes, the ditches will be maintained by Forestry England as part of the woodland management plan with care taken to maintain their ecological value.
Will there be access to electric cables when needed?	We will not be planting close to any electric cables so access will be unchanged.
Biodiversity & Species Selection	
Will wildflowers remain in this area?	Yes, a large section of the field in the SE will continue to be managed by the Eden Project for wildflowers. We have avoided planting in a section of the NW field due to identified Bee Orchids, Marsh Orchids and Common Spotted Orchids. Flower rich areas have also been identified in the encroaching willow areas where no planting is planned.
Would you not consider some wildflowers as they just as important to the wildlife?	We have left large areas of the site unplanted to protect and enhance wildflower areas (see above).
Have you considered how this will affect the existing species that can be found on site?	<p>We have undertaken a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA). The PEA report states that tree planting within these areas is unlikely to have any significant negative impacts on any protected or notable species. We took recommendations from the PEA and have incorporated these into the design, leaving areas unplanted where some notable flora were found. We have also left unplanted buffers around hedgerows and ditches to retain water vole habitat.</p> <p>As the habitats mature appropriate planting will add to the structural and species diversity across the site which would likely provide enhanced foraging, commuting and refuge for a range of species including bats, badger, breeding birds, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates.</p>
Will the community be consulted about the species of fruit trees to be planted?	Yes, we plan to involve the community in the selection of orchard trees make the most out of this opportunity to work together.
Have appropriate Breeding Bird Surveys been completed?	Yes, Breeding Bird Surveys were undertaken for the site in Spring 2023. Recommendations have been incorporated into the design.
There are records of pink-footed geese feeding within the largest of the proposed planting areas and so this is considered to be functionally linked to these national network sites. There are also records of pink-footed geese feeding in the wider area. It is our view, based on current	Natural England (NE) have assessed the proposals against a 2021 report entitled 'Identification of Functionally Linked Land supporting Special Protection Areas (SPAs) waterbirds in the Northwest of England'. With the closest parcel of functionally linked land being the Lunt Meadow Nature Reserve to the north of the

Responses

<p>evidence, that the project would require Habitats Regulations Assessment. Nonbreeding bird surveys are recommended to determine whether the proposed planting areas are functionally linked to these national network sites and the extent of use by qualifying features. The survey data would then inform a Habitats Regulations Assessment.</p>	<p>site, there are no concerns that the proposal will impact on any functionally linked land.</p> <p>The Forestry Commission Area Ecologist has also commented that as NE have produced a report, in 2021, specifically for this area which notes the threshold value as regular use by 1000+ individuals we do not believe a HRA would be required for this site.</p> <p>The NE report notes Lunt Meadows as an area of High potential for FLL but this does not stretch down to the proposal area which is recorded as arable and horticulture, a common habitat type in this area. The record of Pink footed geese in the area does not make this FLL, unless there are records indicating significant numbers using the site, the mere presence of records would by that assessment make anywhere within 20km of the SPA's FLL which would have massive impacts on all types of development.</p> <p>'We believe that good design will mitigate for the most interesting features recorded via the PEA and the plans for this woodland creation will also deliver for the local community as well. This will include functionally connected open ground, transition edge zones and a good range of species.'</p> <p>Natural England also looked at the predator shadow of the existing woodland and assess that against any potential new predator shadow formed by the woodland creation proposals. This was very minor and did not extend onto open land and so they had no concerns in this regard.</p>
<p>The farmland may also provide suitable nesting sites for ground nesting birds which are protected. An assessment of the proposed planting areas would be required to determine the potential for ground nesting birds. If the sites are considered suitable survey for ground nesting birds is recommended to inform any required mitigation.</p>	<p>We have had a detailed Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Breeding Bird Survey done for this site that identified the potential for ground nesting birds. These reports recommended mitigation that has been incorporated into the design. The proposed woodland has been designed sensitively to include a mosaic of habitats that will support a range of species.</p> <p>An over wintering bird survey has also been carried out in the area. This identified a winter roost of 200+ curlew to the east of your proposals, however, this is over 500m away and advice from Natural England is that this is unlikely to be impacted by the proposals.</p>
<p>There are a large number of waterbodies within 250m the proposed planting areas. These waterbodies and proposed planting areas could provide habitat for GCN which is protected. An assessment of the habitat (terrestrial and aquatic), initially by undertaking a Habitat Suitability Index Assessment (HSI) is recommended. Further</p>	<p>The PEA identified records of common toad Bufo bufo (SPI) within 1km of the site. No great crested newt records were returned within 1km of the site, and a review of Natural England's open datasets did not return any class licence returns or pond survey data for great crested newts between 2017 and 2019 within 2km of the Scheme. There are no ponds on site. There is one ephemeral pool on site (within existing woodland) plus a</p>

Responses

surveys such as eDNA sampling, presence/absence, and population estimate surveys may also be required.	number of wet ditches which may provide suitable breeding habitats for common amphibian species such as common frog <i>Rana temporaria</i> . The planned work is low impact, and tree planting proposals will take account of the agreed FE/NE protocol for managing GCN
This area falls within the North Merseyside and West Lancashire Red Squirrel Stronghold and although red squirrels have been considered in the current plan, we believe this could be improved upon. There is currently no mention of monitoring or grey squirrel control. Grey squirrels are the biggest threat to red squirrels, through competition and transmission of squirrel pox virus and their numbers cannot be managed through habitat management alone. So even though the species mix favours red squirrels, they will still be outcompeted by grey squirrels without any effective management.	Currently we do not have any grey squirrel damage in this area, however, we recognise that this may change in the future. We will have to monitor for the presence of grey squirrels on site and any negative impacts. In controlling grey squirrels, we will consider all control methods that we have and are able to use in an open access woodland. Creating this woodland will help provide more opportunities for red squirrel habitat and potential expansion for the range in the future.
Historic Environment	
To avoid risk of accidental damage to Broom's Cross Monument we (Historic England) recommend that an area is left unplanted around the cross and that it is fenced off during planting.	We have left 20m unplanted around the Scheduled Monument and fencing will be in place prior to planting