

East Cambridge Country Park, Cambridge

**Critique and Financial Model Evaluation for
the Proposed East Cambridge Country Park**

for

Cambridge City Council.

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Executive summary

The Landscape Partnership has been instructed by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Services and Cambridge City Council - City Services, to provide a comprehensive critique and financial model evaluation for the proposed public opening and development of Cherry Hinton Lakes into the East Cambridge Country Park. The project involves several stakeholders, including Cambridge City Council (CCC), Anderson Group (AG), and Peterhouse College (PHC).

1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Landscape Masterplan for a new country park accompanies the outline application for Project Newton parcels A, B & C ref. 23/04590/OUT. As part of the requirements in the adopted Local Plan (2018) the preparation of a long-term management and funding plan for the new urban country park is a requirement; reviewing the information to date is part of this process and the finding of the review and critique are outlined in this report.

1.1.2 The two key parcels of land being reviewed are parcels B & C. **Parcel B** is intended to safeguard ecological enhancement to create a tranquil place. This parcel will focus on ecological protection and biodiversity value, with the creation or regeneration of a mosaic of habitats that encourages ecological enhancement to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain requirements for the adjacent development. The creation of the bespoke open mosaic habitat across the mitigation site is split into three distinct areas:

- Species-rich wildflower grassland.
- Scrub.
- Bare and recolonising ground.

As the habitats develop, it is planned to consider the optimum way to provide managed access to special interest & educational groups, without compromising ecological biodiversity.

1.1.3 **Parcel C** is intended to provide public access to the existing lakes along with significant new areas of public open space for recreation and enjoyment by local residents. These areas of land hold a specific interest for different groups, including a fishing club, so access is intended to be controlled to ensure the benefit of wildlife and ecology is maintained appropriately. Five access points will be provided to the proposed country park: at Burnside Lakes, three along The Tins, and another access point off Burnside. These will provide new public access points to the Lakes, with dedicated public cycle parking provided on the western boundary. Ecology and biodiversity enhancement measures associated with Parcel C include:

- Enhanced Lowland Calcareous Grassland

- Enhanced Dense Scrub
 - Faunal-specific measures will be implemented, such as the inclusion of a Sand Martin Riparia Barrel within the East Lake, Bat Boxes and Reptile refugia

The long-term management of both parcels is key to the success of these spaces. With that comes the mechanism for funding and implementation for stewardship of both these parcels of land, for at least the 30-year period associated with the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements and beyond.



Feasibility of the proposed developments and necessary works.

1.2 The landscape strategy and proposals for both sites are feasible, in principle, to achieve the site objectives BUT only with the correct level of capital and management sums for delivery and ongoing maintenance, which is currently not sufficient. The current level of detail is insufficient to be confident that both Parcel B and C will be successful in their aims. The proposals are a useful starting point but, in our opinion, they currently do not provide a workable scheme for an urban country park in their current form and there is a lack of clear operational management of the park.

1.3 **Parcel B's** main objective is intended to safeguard and improve biodiversity value, to create a tranquil place that will focus on ecological protection and enhancement, achieved through the creation or regeneration of a mosaic of habitats. As the habitats develop, the plan is to consider the optimum way to provide managed access to special interest & educational groups, without compromising ecological biodiversity. **It is this long-term aim that currently lacks any detail to ensure the functioning and success of the space, but also the feasibility of enabling and ensuring the correct use of the space requires further detail and explanation.**

Issues around the feasibility of the proposed use of this space for a tranquil space for ecological enhancement and regeneration, and the further consideration/detail required, can be summarised as follows:

- Has the proposed ecological enhancement of scrub and grassland been discussed and agreed with the airport authorities?
- What measures and boundary treatment are proposed to ensure site security (physical and wildlife and ecology) is maintained (none shown on the proposal drawings) and no anti-social behaviour occurs or potential use of the site by unauthorised encampments, particularly with regard to the site's appearance while developing as a less managed landscape.
- No details are indicated for the proposed site access during establishment for maintenance and in the future, for access to both enjoy the tranquil space and for special interest & educational groups to experience, without compromising the sites ecology.
- Proposed site interpretation boards should be considered for this to be an educational and recognisable/understandable space.

1.3.1 **Parcel C's** main objective is intended to provide public access to the existing lakes, providing significant new areas of public open space for recreation and enjoyment by local residents. **The realistic feasibility of this space being used for public recreation, which currently includes a deep body of open water used by a fishing club, with no public access, has not yet been resolved in the current proposals.**

Issues of the feasibility and further consideration of the proposed use of this space for public access and recreation to the existing lakes, can be summarised as follows:

- Currently the accessibility of the space has not been resolved either strategically or in detail. The site needs to have greater permeability, activity and movement through the space (footpath/cycleways) to ensure good natural surveillance and involvement within the space.
- Boundary treatments need to be resolved to ensure that there is greater permeability and engagement with the space, to create a successful urban country park, while still maintaining safety in proximity to deep water and tranquillity for fishing. Public access will also need to be considered and resolved in respect of current paid membership for the secure fishing lakes.
- Urban country park facilities have not been fully identified and detailed to ensure this space will be well used and the needs of park users are catered for (play areas, refreshments, toilets and wardens)
- The deep-water edge treatment needs further work to ensure that it is both safe and accessible for the enjoyment of park users (fencing, gentle slopes for access/egress, life-saving equipment). The option for currently popular open water/ natural swimming could be considered in association with appropriate management and safety measures wardens/ lifeguards.



2 Critique of the proposed governance structure.

- 2.1.1 The creation and/or the appointment of a management body to oversee the implementation of the agreed stewardship strategy is a recognised approach and should include or involve both, interested parties and the relevant professional consultants, to advise and be involved in the creation of an 'advisory board' (or equivalent). This board is proposed to include landowners, Council and local interest groups, to consult on the implementation of the plan in relation to Parcel C. The involvement of professional consultants is particularly important during this process, as the current design proposals for implementation lack the detail and evidence base to ensure the successful use as a Country Park. Further work is recommended on the masterplan design, detailed design and the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP).

2.1.2 Funding Model

The framework provides the basic principles of a sustainable funding model for the implementation of the Parcel C Works and the Parcel B habitat creation, with the long-term maintenance, management and replacement costs broadly identified and an estimated cost per annum identified in **Appendix D, Framework Management Plan costing schedule** (Confidential). However, it lacks a detailed breakdown of items, activities and sufficient contingencies, or evidence of the inclusion of the funding model assumptions in the final figure, to provide a level of confidence and comfort in the annual figure estimated at circa £38,000 per annum. Examples of omissions are:

- the costs for ecologists to monitor Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) over 30 years.
- the operating costs to manage and facilitate community participation.
- overall management and consultants' fees associated with the coordination of landscape and arboricultural contractors, landscape works and tree risk management.

The suggestion of a proposed a pilot scheme to be carried out is sensible, as it would ensure that the maintenance regime of both parcels is tested, and the related costs are monitored and considered sustainable before any longer-term governance arrangements are fully implemented. However, it would also be sensible to ensure that there is a mechanism to review and adjust the endowment figure up or down, should the pilot scheme identify any significant shortfalls or differences in the figures.

3 Detailed maintenance and management cost estimates

Jul-24	Information Issue 01						
Approximate Estimate of Maintenance Costs: INDICATIVE COSTS ONLY							
Rates revised, and quantities broken into Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council							
Site: East Cambridge Country Park Plot B							
As illustrated on drawing: PLAN ECO2: Parcel B Habitat Creation							
Client: Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service							
Item	Rate	Quantity	Unit	Cost over 30 years	Cost per annum	Notes	
Tree/scrub/hedge planting							
Colonising bare ground	£ 0.15	18,443	m ²	£ 82,993.50	£ 2,766.45		
Semi-rich wildflower grassland	£ 0.50	54,234	m ²	£ 18,120.00	£ 604.00		
Hedgerows	£ 1.00	502	Lin m	£ 15,060.00	£ 502.00	Assumes hedges cut using tractor mounted equipment	
Scrub	£ 0.50	9677	m ²	£145,155.00	£ 4,838.50		
Boundary Treatments							
Timber fence and wire netting	£ 30.00	1100	Lin m	£ 33,000.00	£ 1,100.00	Assumes repair and replacement of fencing runs around the whole boundary	
Gate	£ 800.00	2	nr	£ 1,600.00	£ 53.33	Maintenance and replacement cost over 30years, 1	
Ecological Enhancements							
Ecological monitoring of habitats	£1,300.00	2	nr.	£78,000	£2,600	Qualified specialist visiting two days per year	
Maintenance							
Litter pick	£ 0.002	82353	m ²	£19,764.720	£ 658.82	years)	
Vandalism / Failures							
15% of costs (excluding litter pick) to cover costs associated with vandalism / failures					£	1,869.64	
				Total annual cost	£	14,992.75	
<i>Note: Includes for annual maintenance operations and allowance for % of eventual replacement over a 30 year period</i>							

Jul-24		Information Issue 01						
Approximate Estimate of Maintenance Costs: INDICATIVE COSTS ONLY								
Rates revised, and quantities broken into Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council								
<u>Site: East Cambridge Country Park Plot C</u>								
As illustrated on drawing: MLA75322-A1-0421								
<u>Client: Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service</u>								
Item	Rate	Quantity	Unit	Cost over 30 years	Cost per annum	Notes		
Tree/scrub/hedge planting								
Woodland management	£ 0.25	38,291	m ²	£ 287,182.50	£ 9,572.75	2 workers and machine 10 days a year @£750 per day + allowance for extra planting		
Scrub management	£ 0.10	1208	m ²	£ 3,624.00	£ 120.80			
Reed management	£ 0.25	3560	m ²	£ 26,700.00	£ 890.00			
Boundary Treatments								
Timber fence and wire netting	£ 30.00	140	Lin m	£ 2,100.00	£ 70.00	Allowance for % replacement		
Fishing peg wheelchair rail	£ 10.00	77	Lin m	£ 390.00	£ 13.00			
Timber gate	£ 800.00	14	nr	£ 3,200.00	£ 106.67			
Kissing Gate (Timber)	£ 400.00	7	nr	£ 1,200.00	£ 40.00			
Access								
Car park	£ 40.00	980	m ²	£ 7,840.00	£ 261.33	Carpark is existing gravel & replacing 20% of it over 30 years		
Lake side loop trail (Self binding gravel)	£ 40.00	4075	m ²	£ 32,600.00	£ 1,086.67	replacing 20% of new footpaths over 30 years		
Site Furniture								
Interpretation board	£ 1,000.00	6	nr.	£3,000	£100	Allowance for % replacement		
bins/re-cycling/dog bins	£ 600.00	7	nr.	£3,000	£100	Allowance for % replacement		
Benches	£ 1,000.00	13	nr.	£6,500	£217	Allowance for % replacement		
Fishing posts / jetties	£ 5,000.00	12	nr.	£60,000	£2,000	Allowance for % replacement		
Cycle stands	£ 800.00	18	nr.	£1,600	£53	Allowance for % replacement		
Ecological Enhancements								
Sand Martin riparia barrel	£ 200.00	1	nr.	£400	£13	Typically costs around £150 to £250 depending on the specific design and supplier.		
Bat Boxes	£ 40.00	10	nr.	£320	£11			
Bird Boxes	£ 40.00	10	nr.	£320	£11			
Reptile refugia	£ 15.00	5	nr.	£75	£3	Corrugated Refugia Sheets: Typically cost between £5 to £10 per sheet		
Maintenance								
Litter pick	£ 0.002	5100	m ²	£ 1,224.000	£ 40.80	120 Visits at 0.002p/m2/visit (four times a year for 30 years)		
Vandalism / Failures								
15% of costs (excluding litter pick) to cover costs associated with vandalism / failures						£ 2,200.26		
Total annual cost					£ 16,868.64			
Note: Includes for annual maintenance operations and allowance for % of eventual replacement over a 30 year period - where noted								

Our maintenance and management cost estimates - **Parcel B** - £14,992 and **Parcel C** - £16,868 are based on the current scheme and information provided and are not significantly different from the cost estimates provided (£14,065) and (£15,930), but there are some additional costs outlined below that should also be considered in an overall final figure for a successful creation of a new urban country park and its annual maintenance and management costs.

We have included some tree and woodland management costs per annum in our figures, but not tree risk management, which might be required to ensure the trees are both healthy and a low risk to the public. Additional allowance should be made for a survey and reporting every 3-5 years. The estimated cost of each survey is £2,000, making the total for 8No surveys over the 30-year period approximately £16,000. In addition, an allowance for 4No. visits for tree works associated with the survey, over and above the management costs, might be an additional £3,000-5,000.

Other items currently not allowed in our estimate, but which should be considered in the overall sum agreed, include:

- Long term inflation: an average of, say, 2.5% increase per annum on all costs
- Management/consultants fees to monitor/manage maintenance - approx. £6,000 pa - £180K over 30yrs
- Contingencies – 20%
- Startup costs professional fees for preparation of LEMP, specification, contracts etc. – approx. £25K
- Additional design fees for developing the design to achieve a workable urban country park might also be a consideration. - Approx. £80K

Based on the figures above, without inflation and contingencies this would be a further **£285,000 for startup costs**, additional design and ongoing consultants' costs.

If you add a further 20% contingency to the est. £32,000 p/a maintenance costs this would be an additional £6,400 p/a (£38,400p/a) and £1.1m over 30yrs maintenance.

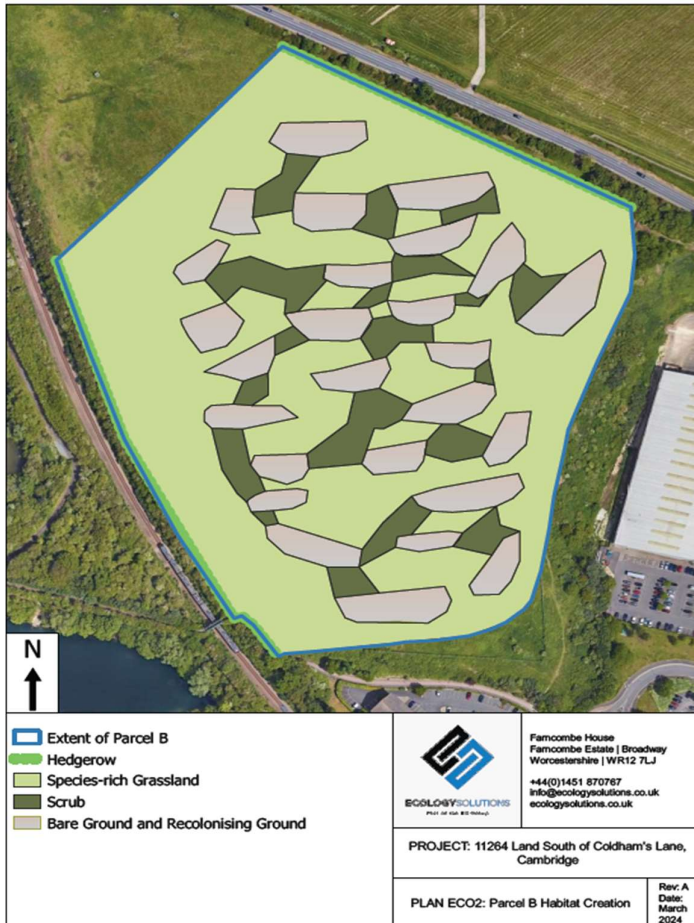
Total sum for additional design development, start up and maintenance over 30yrs estimated at **£1.4m** without including allowance for inflation.

4 Recommendations for improving the proposal and ensuring sustainable management and funding.

4.1 Recommendations for improving the proposals.

Both schemes for Parcel B and C provide a useful starting point for the creation of a new urban country park and an area of habitat creation/regeneration, however they both require further development to ensure that these objectives are achievable both in terms of implementation, operation and management.

4.1.1 Suggestions for Parcel B proposal improvements:



- A clear boundary treatment to ensure site security (physical and wildlife and ecology) is maintained and no anti-social behaviour or the potential use of the site by unauthorised encampments.
- The complex layout of the different habitat types could be simplified to facilitate establishment and maintenance.

- Site access points for maintenance and future-access to both enjoy the tranquil space and for special interest & educational groups to experience, without compromise to the ecology.
- Site interpretation boards for educational and information purposes, to help create a recognisable/understandable space.

4.1.2 **Suggestions for Parcel C** proposal improvements comprising:

- Improve overlooking and open views into the proposed urban country park.
- Encourage greater permeability, activity and movement through the urban country park by including the two adjacent 'greenways', Cherry Hinton Brook and the Tins as part of the park.
- Create more 'nodes' and a hierarchy of spaces with high-quality arrival spaces to encourage visitors.
- Create peripheral spaces and active edges to the urban country park, to encourage use and natural surveillance.
- Improve the relationship with the water to improve the enjoyment and safety (shallow banks and regular points for access and egress) while maintaining the fishing use.
- Consider fence-line positioning, to maintain secure fishing to one of the lakes while encouraging active edges to the remainder of the urban country park and water's edge.
- Consider natural swimming.
- Consider introducing natural play spaces.
- Improve the visitor experience with visitor facilities, toilets, and wardens.

4.2 **Recommendations for improving the proposed Maintenance/Management Works** *Itemised Works*

4.2.1 Suggestions for **Parcel B** proposed maintenance/management improvements comprising:

4.2.2 A regular litter clearance contractor is required for Parcel B as well the annual litter clearance proposed to be carried out as a community volunteer event.

4.2.3 The design intent for a mosaic of habitat types; grassland, scrub and bare ground recolonisation creates complex maintenance and management and, if the layout was simplified, perhaps this area could be managed and grazed by sheep or cattle, still achieving good biodiversity requirements, but with an easier maintenance regime.

4.2.4 Suggestions for **Parcel C** proposed maintenance/management improvements comprise:

- A 'sink fund' for repair and replacement needs to consider full replacement of all timber equipment over the 30-year period.
- A tree risk management survey should be considered every 3-5 years to ensure existing trees within public landscape areas are healthy and safe for the public.
- Hedge cutting in some areas will need to be carried out bi-annually (50% per year) and not every 3 years.
- Litter picking will need to be carried out weekly along with litter bin and dog bin emptying. The current cost does not allow for this.
- Paving surface repairs will need to be inspected for defects once a year and repaired as necessary.
- Site furniture, including fencing, to be regularly visually inspected during each litter pick and a more intensive inspection once per year for damage with special regard to preventing injury to the public, staff, or service users. Site furniture should be cleaned and maintained to provide a well-kept attractive appearance. Ground fixings should be checked to ensure furniture cannot be moved around or removed from site. New benches should be checked periodically for damage and deterioration and repaired as required. Any vandalised or damaged furniture or fencing should be repaired as soon as possible. Prepare and paint metalwork or preserve timber every three years.

5 Appendices

(None currently)