

**Waterbeach  
Barracks  
Newsletter**

**Spring  
2021**

**11**



Urban&Civic

# Welcome to the latest Waterbeach Barracks newsletter

# Hello



Welcome to the Spring edition of the Waterbeach Barracks newsletter.

It has been a busy few months as the team start the early infrastructure works for the first phase of development. The earthworks team has moved around 350,000 cubic metres of earth – the equivalent of around 140 Olympic swimming pools – to heighten the mound along the ‘ecological corridor’ that runs alongside the A10, prepare the landscape and establish the sustainable drainage system.

This activity has prepared the way for the internal infrastructure network that includes foul and storm drainage with pumping station, roads, footpaths and cycleways and the supply and installation of services including water, electric and broadband fibre.

Our first housebuilder, Stonebond Properties will deliver the first 88 new homes at the gateway to the new development. The Company is the perfect partner to start our first homes as its experienced team share Urban&Civic’s commitment to sustainability and enduring quality. Longhurst Group has also been appointed to support the delivery of an innovative range of affordable housing options for local people as part of the development.

The natural environment is an intrinsic part of the design for Waterbeach Barrack and the team was recently awarded the Landscape Institute Award for Excellence in Masterplanning and Urban design, which celebrated the value of landscape in connecting people, place and nature. In this edition, we have provided a focus on key habitat areas we are protecting and enhancing and some of the species that live there.

As the development progresses, we will continue to engage local communities, stakeholders and partners about the different elements coming forward. We’re currently seeking your views on the naming strategy for the development – for the New Town as a whole and the names of streets, public spaces, walking loops and play areas within it (see page 8 and the consultation

document delivered with this edition of the newsletter). We will also be consulting on the detailed plans for the Mere Way cycle connection, which will run from the Barracks, across the A10 to Landbeach and connect to and upgrade the existing bridleway of Mere Way (see page 18).

In this edition, we also welcome Herons’ Preschool to its new, purpose-built home at the entrance to Waterbeach Barracks and share updates from Waterbeach Military Heritage Museum, Landbeach Tithe Barn, Wicken Fen and Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey, who are all looking forward to welcoming visitors as lockdown restrictions lift. We are particularly excited to be working with the Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey to showcase some of the archaeological finds from excavations at the Barracks, which include artefacts from the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman period.

We hope you find this edition of the newsletter interesting and informative and look forward to hearing your views on the New Town naming strategy and Mere Way cycle connection through the consultation feedback mechanisms provided.

If you have any queries, please get in touch. You can also register for updates via our e-newsletter on our website – [www.waterbeachbarracks.co.uk](http://www.waterbeachbarracks.co.uk)

With very best wishes  
Rebecca Britton

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## Planning to delivery

It has been a busy few months as the team start the early infrastructure works for the first phase of development. Working with local contractors to get the site ready for development has so far taken 39,882 hours from four companies. Some key highlights of the work follow below.

### Making the earth move

Tom Blackwell Contractors and Plant Hire has been working with the project team on some extensive landscaping work, including heightening the mound that runs along the side of the A10 to extend the 'ecological corridor' that provides rich grassland for local species and a protective buffer for the school and first homes. The top of the mound will also provide a safe walking, cycling and equestrian route. The team has moved around 350,000 cubic metres of earth over the last few months – that's about the equivalent of 140 Olympic swimming pools!

Alongside that, a sustainable water drainage system has been landscaped into the new layout, which can take 19 million litres of run-off rainwater and connect up existing water systems to the lake at the heart of Waterbeach Barracks. This is part of the climate-change proof system, which uses natural drainage systems with 21st Century engineering technology to monitor and manage water flow around the site and into key water storage areas. The systems have to withstand a 1 in 100 year 'weather event' and have built in an additional 40% capacity to account for climate change as part of ensuring a sustainable development of the future.

The team also removed and recycled 12,000 tonnes of former runway and taxiways, which have been used to create construction 'haul routes' for the build out of key phase 1. This work connected with the new A10 construction access at the Cambridge Research Park Roundabout, which has been installed by J Breheny Contractors. The new access is part of the commitment to manage construction traffic away from the village and will be used to enable the first homes and buildings to come forward.



The team has worked really hard to ensure that the earthworks operation has not impacted too much on local villages and residents, and we have also been really pleased to be able to take on local people as part of the site team. It's amazing to see the work we have done here start to shape and enable the landscape and layout coming forward. It's going to be a really stunning place to live.



Ashley Tate Project Manager, Tom Blackwell Contractors & Plant Hire

The earthworks have included the creation of new ponds as part of a site-wide sustainable drainage system.



## Putting in the new infrastructure

With the earthworks in place, work has begun on the infrastructure, setting out the internal network that includes foul and storm drainage with pumping station, roads, footpaths and cycleways and the supply and installation of services including water, electric and broadband fibre.

Bedfordshire-based company ECL Civil Engineering is taking forward this work, which will last for much of the rest of the year. Alongside some largescale works, the range of the project will also include intricate detail installing heritage footways in key areas; hard landscaping public realm including installing the development's first benches and dog poo bins; and tree pits for soft landscaping, which will come forward across the green spaces. Among its landscaping work, the ECL team will be preparing the soil, footpath and car parking area for the development's first allotments and preparing large green spaces, which will then be transformed next year into formal and informal play areas and open spaces for new residents to enjoy.



The contractors have been working hard throughout the bad weather to minimise the impacts of the work, with wheelwashes, checks at the construction access and traffic marshalls in place to minimise impact on local roads.

It is set to be a busy time on site, with average staff levels peaking between 40 and 60 as construction builds up during the summer months. ECL is also working with Urban&Civic and local colleges and the jobcentre to open up opportunities to local people for key roles, apprenticeships and graduate roles within the growing business. ECL has already recruited a site engineer, a senior site engineer, a document controller and testing technician, and a traffic marshal from the local area and more vacancies will be coming up as the work continues.

John Burrows, Senior Project Manager for ECL, said: "We're looking forward to being part of the wider project team helping to transform Waterbeach Barracks into a sustainable community for future generations. We'll be on site over the next 12 months, laying the ground-works for this exemplar development, and will be advertising future job opportunities locally and on the Waterbeach Barracks website as they arise."

Urban&Civic will be working with ECL to record the changes through drone and time lapse photography as the development rolls out. More information will be available at [www.waterbeachbarracks.co.uk](http://www.waterbeachbarracks.co.uk)

## Planting a northern buffer

The first major planting scheme is taking place this Spring at the northern edge of the Barracks site to safeguard historic views from Denny Abbey and ensure the views towards it from the development frame it in an appropriate heritage landscape.

The planting – with a woodland mix of oak, field maple and hazel as well as willows, alder, birch and black poplars – will also help restore some of the more natural wooded fen edge landscapes that would have been in this area many centuries ago.

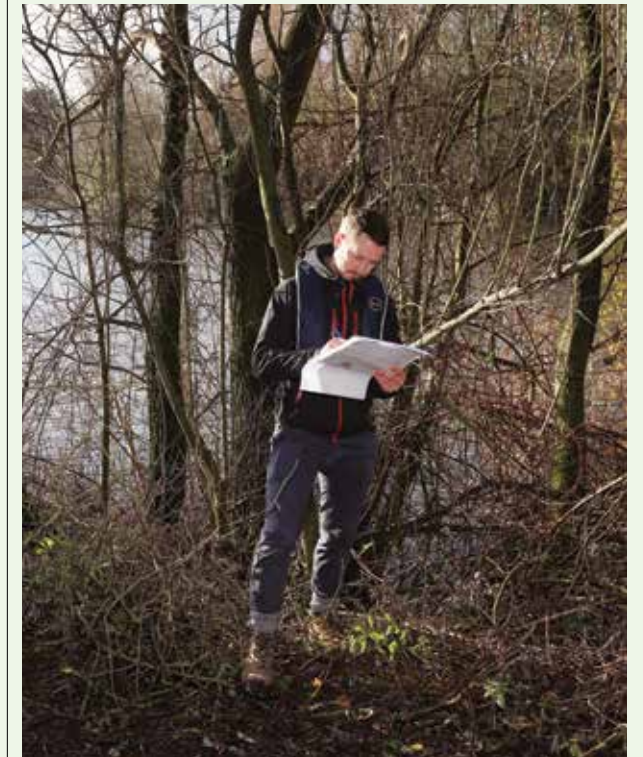
The northern buffer scheme will provide around 17 hectares of high-quality grassland habitat and connect to other priority habitat areas – see article on page 10. This planting is the first part of the creation of a much larger Northern Park, which will come forward as the development rolls out, providing an interconnected mosaic of habitats for nature and places people can explore.

Rebecca Britton, from Urban&Civic, said: "This planting is an important obligation we wanted to put in early to show our commitment to the sensitive connection from the development to our historic neighbours at Denny Abbey and the Farmland Museum. It is the first step to creating what will be an important green space for people to enjoy as the Causeway connection comes forward later in the development – and provides almost a journey through time as you walk towards the Abbey."



## Lake survey

The team has also been carrying out surveys on the lake, to develop a strategy for opening up parts of it for watersports and leisure, and to ensure key areas of it remain protected for nature.



Ecology surveys were undertaken on the islands, as well as exploration of the lake bed to remediate the water from its military training uses. The team found some of the legacy of military training on the islands.



# First homes coming forward

## Stonebond appointed as first housebuilder

Stonebond Properties will deliver the first 88 new homes at the gateway to the new development and is currently putting together its plans to submit a planning application in May.

The Stonebond homes will include apartments and one to four bedrooms houses built in mews, terraced styles and larger detached family homes. They will be framed by mature woodland on one side and connected to water features and woodland walks to play areas on the other. The homes will also be a short walk away from the new primary school, designed within a safe, car-free area surrounded by woodland, which will open in September 2023.

The wider sustainability commitments for the development are echoed by Stonebond's approach to delivering homes. The company promotes a 'fabric first' approach, which has multiple benefits including reduced energy use, improved temperature control and lower running costs. This approach looks to reduce the amount of CO<sub>2</sub>/m<sup>2</sup>/year by at least 10% compared to current building regulations.

Sustainable methods of transport will be encouraged, with electric vehicle charging points installed. Lower water use is also promoted, whilst rainwater butts will be fitted for water harvesting and reuse within public spaces. Stonebond will also be working with Urban&Civic to support local suppliers and sub-contractors where possible throughout the build of its homes.

Stonebond's properties will include 28 homes that reflect the full and innovative range of Affordable Housing tenures developed with South Cambridgeshire District Council's Housing team as part of a commitment to ensuring the Waterbeach development provides homes for people with all levels of income.

Graham Cherry, Co-Chairman of Stonebond, said: "We are honoured to be the first housebuilder to come on board, and the location of our quality homes will really help set the tone for what is sure to become an outstanding new place to live, work and socialise. We anticipate that the first homes will be for sale in autumn 2022."

Caroline Foster, for Urban&Civic, said: "Stonebond is the perfect first partner to start our first homes at Waterbeach: bespoke designs, delivered by a vastly experienced team and, most importantly, with a shared commitment to sustainability and to enduring quality. I know Graham and his team stand equal to our ambition in delivering well designed, sustainable homes for people to set down roots here. Environmental and biodiversity passions run through every layer: from swift bricks to energy efficiency ratings, and mature woodlands to a primary school nestled in nature. Waterbeach is going to be extraordinary."

For more information visit:  
[www.stonebondproperties.com](http://www.stonebondproperties.com)

Further information and details about designs of future homes will appear in the next edition of our newsletter.



## Longhurst Group to deliver affordable homes

Longhurst Group has been appointed to support the delivery of an innovative range of affordable housing options for local people as part of the development.

Urban&Civic has worked closely with South Cambridgeshire District Council to ensure that the development is set up to deliver a wide and varied choice of quality, sustainable homes of different sizes, types and tenures, which meet the needs of different households and age groups.

Caroline Foster, from Urban&Civic, said: "Working with Longhurst Group and South Cambridgeshire District Council, Waterbeach can play a big part in supporting the delivery of Affordable Homes, and crucially doing this in a way that reflects wider commitments to ensure those homes are healthy homes, close to transport links; low carbon homes with low household costs; and offering a range of tenures which give people real choice about the options that work best for them."

The first phase of the Barracks development will deliver over 400 homes from the four different housing tenures available, which include Affordable Rent, Shared Ownership, Rent to Buy and Discounted Market Sale.

Speaking for Longhurst Group, Marcus Keys, Longhurst Group's Executive Director of Growth and Development, said: "We're committed to providing the homes people want, where they're needed most, and this is a shining example of how we collaborate with expert partners in order to realise that vision. We're delighted to be already working with Urban&Civic and now taking forward delivery with the first housebuilder Stonebond Properties to ensure that we are ready from day one: providing a range of affordable housing options that meets the needs of families across Waterbeach and the surrounding area."

**Longhurst Group has a good track record of delivery locally, with a number of homes under its management within the village of Waterbeach, and of the new tenures coming forward, but we also have shared values around investing in the community coming forward and providing opportunities and support to families when they need it. They will be a great partner to work with.**



Caroline Foster Urban&Civic

# Naming strategy consultation



With the development of Waterbeach New Town moving forward as an allocated and consented part of South Cambridgeshire District Council's Local Plan, Urban&Civic and RLW are now undertaking consultation on the name of the new town and seeking input to a 'repository' of useful references and potential names for places within the new town, which will be designed and built over the years ahead.

The consultation document – which has been delivered with this newsletter – provides guidance and information to assist consultees and stakeholders in responding to the two separate parts of the consultation exercise. People can use the freepost service to return completed questionnaires. There is also an online version of the consultation at [www.waterbeachconsultation.co.uk](http://www.waterbeachconsultation.co.uk), where you can fill in the surveys online or download additional electronic copies or survey forms.

The document is in two sections and asks for comments in two separate sections on:

1. The naming of the New Town as a whole, and in combination with the existing settlement of Waterbeach.
2. Names for streets and public spaces, walking loops and play areas within the new development. This section focusses on the Barracks and Airfield part of the development, which is more advanced than the details for Waterbeach New Town East.

The consultation approach has been developed with input from partners and with the agreement of South Cambridgeshire District Council, and will enable a final recommendation of the approach to be agreed by the District Council later this year. This will also enable a framework to be put in place to guide naming of roads and places within the development as they roll out over the next few years.

Rebecca Britton from Urban&Civic said: "We know that names of places are a crucial part of their identity, culture and history. The development has always progressed under the name Waterbeach,

but before we begin development, we feel it appropriate to pause and ask the direct question, solely about the name and naming strategy for this new area of the village. We hope people will reflect on the work done to date and our capturing of feedback leading up to this point, and help us to ensure we get this important next step right."

The process will have two key stages and last 14 weeks, starting 1 April and completing 7 July 2021. Timings and details of these are set out below.

Stage of process	Dates	Detail
<b>Stage 1</b>	1 April– 12 May 6 weeks	Consultation on name of town and on wider naming strategy for streets and places within the Barracks part of the development.
<b>Review</b>	13 May– 26 May 2 weeks	Review of submissions and formulation of preferred preferred options.
<b>Stage 2</b>	27 May– 7 July 6 weeks	Consultation on preferred options including a number of targeted workshops with three key stakeholder groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Parish, County and District Councillors</li> <li>● Heritage groups</li> <li>● Youth representatives.</li> </ul>
<b>Final review and submission</b>	July Cabinet date TBC	Review of feedback and recommendations put forward to South Cambs District Council for final discussion.

We will be holding two webinars with RLW on 26 April and 4 May for additional information and a Q&A. If you would like to attend, please email us: [waterbeach@urbanandcivic.com](mailto:waterbeach@urbanandcivic.com)

If you have any queries about the consultation, please call Rebecca Britton on 07739 339 889, or email [rbritton@urbanandcivic.com](mailto:rbritton@urbanandcivic.com)

# Working with nature

## Landscape accolade

The Waterbeach Barracks team has been awarded the Landscape Institute Award for Excellence in Masterplanning and Urban Design, which celebrates the value of landscape in connecting people, place and nature.

The accolade rewards landscape professionals who are taking innovative and bespoke approaches to urban design and celebrate the transformative power of landscape. At a time of ongoing climate and biodiversity crises and when the importance of public green spaces to enhance personal wellbeing has been brought home during pandemic lockdowns – the awards stressed that good landscape architecture is more important than ever.

Waterbeach Barracks' award submission was led by Bradley Murphy Design, who in partnership with Master Developer Urban&Civic and master-planner Fletcher Priest Architects, developed the nature-led design process that set the vision and informed the Outline Planning Consent for the development. Bradley Murphy Design combined its expertise in landscape architecture and ecology to develop a vision that protects and enhances existing habitats within

the 290 hectare former airfield and barracks site, reflects the surrounding landscape in this fen edge Cambridgeshire landscape, and weaves in new green and blue natural networks to create a rich mosaic for people and nature.

In their comments, the judges said: "With its strong landscape-led approach, this well-presented and clearly explained submission felt rooted in the historical and contemporary landscape. There was a consistency of approach across all scales, from sub-regional context to detailed design, and strong evidence of engagement with the local community. The masterplan clearly sets out design principles for a wide variety of landscape typologies that one can imagine being developed into places with strong character and identity in the future."

The key elements set out within the landscape-led design are all set as fixes within the Outline Planning Consent for the development and are also reinforced through Design Codes for each phase, which all housebuilders and contractors working in partnership with Urban&Civic must work to through planning and delivery.

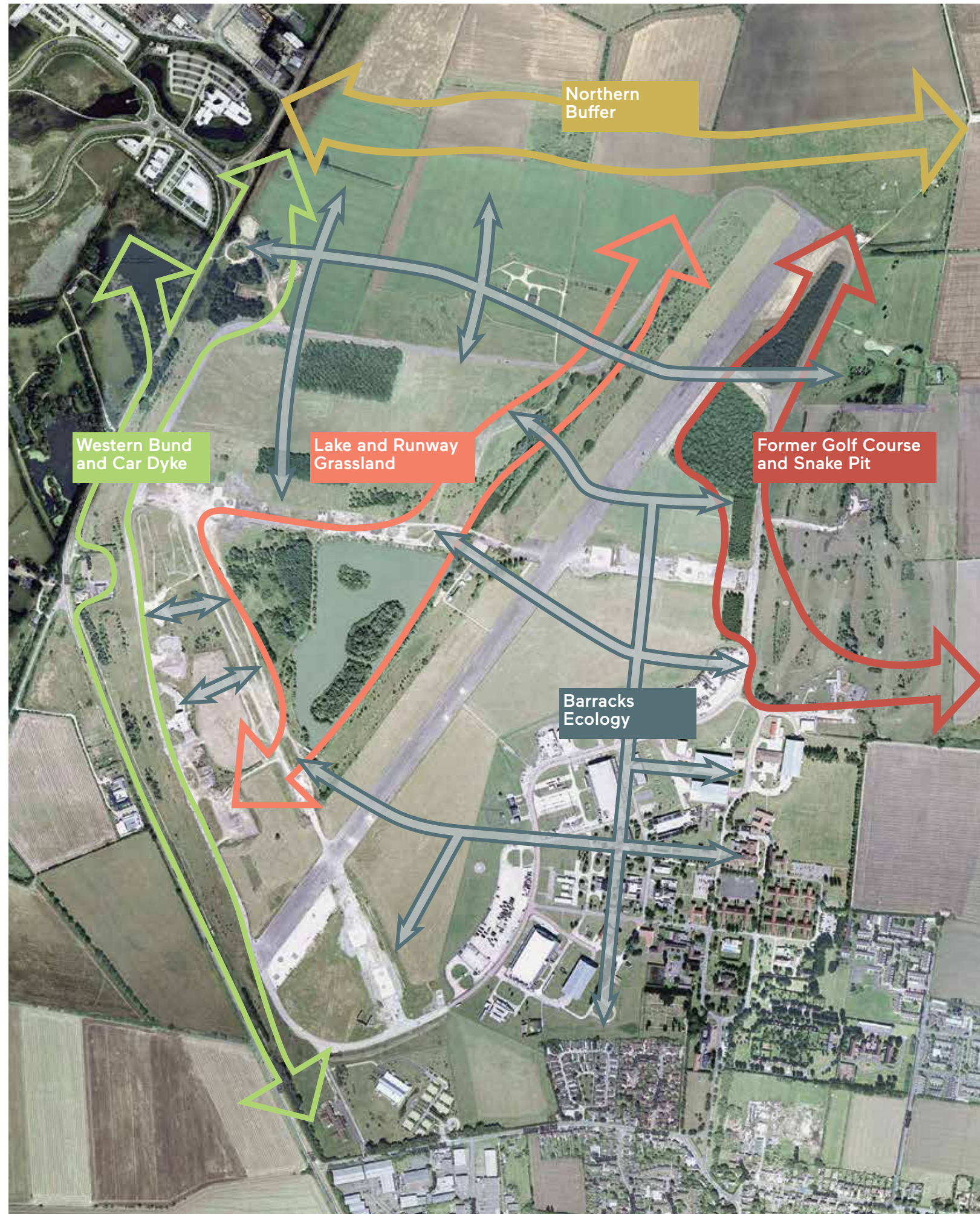


# Habitat and biodiversity priority areas

The starting point for the design and layout for the development of Waterbeach Barracks and Airfield was the extraordinary landscape inherited from the Royal Engineers. Much of this was man-made – from the square blocks of woodland to the triangular lake – but had been reclaimed by nature to become a rich environment of grassland, woodland and water features, supporting a range of important species.

The map shows the five priority habitat areas, set out through each stage of planning to be protected, enhanced and established as key features within the overall development. These equate to over 60 hectares (the equivalent of 60 rugby pitches) of nature-rich spaces for wildlife that are also attractive and accessible to the community.

It will ensure that at each stage of development, Waterbeach Barracks will provide a higher quality of biodiversity than pre-development – that is a biodiversity 'net gain' of about 10%.



## Western Bund and Car Dyke

A linear water, wetlands and grassland ecosystem along Car Dyke, a canal or waterway dating back to the Romans. The enhancement and creation of high quality grassland habitats along the Dyke will benefit species such as reptiles, invertebrates and bats.

## Lake and Runway Grassland

An existing ecological network of open water, woodland islands, wet woodland and grassland, identified to be retained and enhanced through additional planting and appropriate management. Bats will benefit from this nature-rich space as well as birds, reptiles and invertebrates. Existing species-rich grassland alongside the former runway will be retained, continuing to support reptiles, invertebrates, birds and bats.

## Northern Buffer

An ecological network of grassland, parkland trees and wetland habitats. This area will focus largely on habitat creation, converting the existing arable fields to species-rich grasslands and parklands with peripheral wetland areas. Species to benefit from this large area include reptiles, invertebrates, bats and birds.

## Former Golf Course and Snake Pit

A diverse wetland ecological network, reflecting the Fen edge character, focused on supporting local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats, through the retention, enhancement and creation of woodland, wetlands, grassland, scrub and hedgerows for great crested newts, bats, birds, reptiles and invertebrates.

## Barracks Ecology

Creating nature-rich spaces throughout the Waterbeach Barracks residential areas by providing wildlife features such as bird, bat or bug boxes and hedgehog highways and by creating wildlife-friendly planting using locally relevant, species-rich planting.

Brown-long eared bat



Common lizard



Kingfisher



Pond skater



### Western Bund and Car Dyke

**What's there:** The western boundary of the site includes a wide grassy bund with patches of scrub and scattered trees which is situated next to the historic watercourse of Car Dyke.

**What we will be doing:** A patchwork of habitats including grassland, wetland and trees/shrubs will be created to benefit species associated with this area such as butterflies, moths, common lizard, birds and bats. Its unshaded location and areas of sunny grass slopes will offer good conditions for reptiles such as common lizard and grass snake to bask in the sun. Grassland and wetland areas will also provide ideal habitats for reptiles.

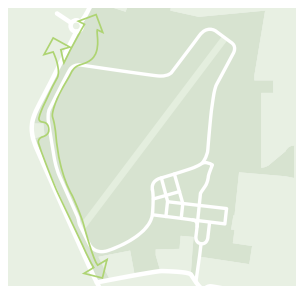
Management and enhancement of the Dyke will help other species that may commute through the area including water vole and otter. Public use will be managed through the creation of dedicated footpaths. Green connections will be created to the Northern Buffer area to provide complementary habitats which also connect to the wider green infrastructure outside the site.

#### Species Focus: brown-long eared bat (*Plecotus auratus*)

- These nocturnal bats are greyish brown with enormous ears, almost as long as their bodies. They feed on flying insects in gardens and woodland, consuming smaller prey like midges mid-flight and taking large prey like moths to perches to eat upside-down.
- Fun fact: their large ears enable them to almost silently hunt their prey using echolocation. Bats call loudly while flying and the returning echo gives the bat a sense of the world ahead of them, including the size and shape of insect prey.

#### Species Focus: common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*)

- Common lizards are often brown with light stripes and spots but can vary in colour.
- Fun fact: common lizards use their speed and agility to hunt invertebrates and avoid predators. However, if they aren't quite quick enough, these lizards have a backup defence. They have the ability to shed their wriggling tails as a distraction if attacked, allowing them to escape into nearby cover. They can then re-grow their tails.



### Lakeside and Runway Grassland

**What's there:** A variety of habitats including open water, woodland island, wet woodland and grassland supporting a range of key species such as kingfisher, reptiles, bats and amphibians.

**What we will be doing:** Beautiful and tranquil, the Lakeside and Runway are a patchwork of wetlands, meadows and woodland at the heart of Waterbeach Barracks which will be retained and enhanced. Additional planting and appropriate management of some overgrown scrub will restore the open grassland areas. Bats and kingfishers will be the key beneficiaries from this intricate patchwork of habitats, but birds, reptiles and invertebrates will thrive here too. Areas of the lakeside and the southern islands will be managed primarily for wildlife with careful control of public access to ensure sensitive species such as kingfisher are not disturbed.

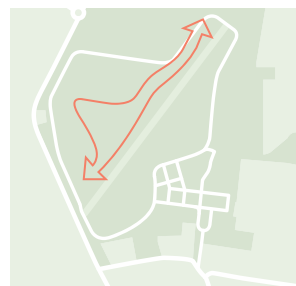
Existing high value grassland alongside the former runway will be retained and managed to ensure it continues to support reptiles and invertebrates in particular, but also birds and bats. Areas of higher value grassland will also be retained along the eastern edge of the lake to provide additional habitat types along the lakeside supporting reptile species such as grass snakes and common lizards.

#### Species Focus: kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)

- Kingfishers nest in burrow-like nests dug into the banks of rivers, lakes and quarries.
- Fun fact: kingfishers catch their fish blindfolded. Once they have spotted their prey, they remember its location and dive into the water beak first with their third eyelid closed. Kingfisher chicks can eat 12-18 fish a day, meaning the adults need to catch over 120 fish per day for their brood.

#### Species Focus: nationally scarce pond skater (*Aquarium paludum*)

- Pond skaters are brown and grey with big bug eyes and long legs.
- Fun fact: pond skaters can walk on water! They use hairs on their feet to repel the water, enabling them to skate across the surface. They can hunt their prey by detecting vibrations of insects that have become trapped in the surface tension of the water.



Brown hare



Barn owl



### Northern Buffer

**What's there:** The northern buffer is currently farmed with small areas of rough grassland along the margins and areas of scattered trees and hedgerows with occasional drainage features. Habitat for species including birds such as skylark and kestrel and mammals such as roe deer, brown hares and badgers.

**What we will be doing:** The Northern Buffer will be a large scale habitat creation area situated along the northern boundary of the site. This will allow for links to existing fields and fenland to the north and connections to all the other biodiversity priority areas. At least 17 hectares of grassland habitat will be created, connecting into the former golf course area.

These grassland habitats will support lizards, butterflies, moths, bats and birds. Open areas will also be available for farmland birds such as skylark, meadow pipit and yellowhammer and mammals such as brown hares. Planting trees and scrub species within this area will provide foraging opportunities for badgers and bats. Public access will be managed to ensure sensitive ecological areas remain undisturbed, such as areas for ground nesting bird species.

#### Species Focus: brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*)

- As suggested by their name, brown hares are golden-brown, with their larger size, long legs and long black tipped ears setting them apart from rabbits. These hares live in grasslands and woodland edges, especially where these habitats meet arable field and hedgerows. Brown hares graze on plants and bark and make use of shallow dips in the ground or grass for shelter instead of burrows.
- Did you know: the hare's strong legs and refined senses allow them to avoid predators in their open grassland habitat, reaching speeds of up to 45 mph. They measure 50-70 cm and weigh 2-5 kg. During the breeding season in early spring, brown hares can be seen 'boxing', when females are warding off unwanted male attention.

#### Species Focus: barn owl (*Tyto alba*)

- These owls have a white belly and heart-shaped face with golden-buff coloured back and wings. Conservation efforts since the 1990s have allowed the UK population of barn owl to recover enough to be moved from Amber to Green conservation status in 2015.
- Fun fact: the barn owls' ghostly silent flight, together with their heart-shaped faces detecting the sounds of prey, make them excellent hunters of the night. Barn owls swallow their prey whole – bones, teeth, feathers and all – then regurgitate the indigestible parts in the form of large pellets.



Great crested newt



Water shrew



### Former Golf Course and Snake Pit

**What's there:** The former golf course supports a range of habitat areas including grassland, scrub, woodland, hedges, ditches and ponds. An area to the east of the former golf course (known by the Royal Engineers as 'the Snake Pit') is an area of rough grassland, scrub edges and scattered trees. These areas support existing populations of important species such as great crested newt and reptiles. The area also provides a range of habitats for birds such as songbirds, wildfowl and birds of prey. The grassland and scrub areas also support wild mammals including deer, foxes and brown hares.

**What we will be doing:** This 10 hectare area will see the creation of a range of new habitats to support a range of local priority species, including great crested newt. Work is already underway to create new and enhance existing ponds, and create grassland and scrub with shelter features such as log piles and partially underground shelter features (called hibernacula).

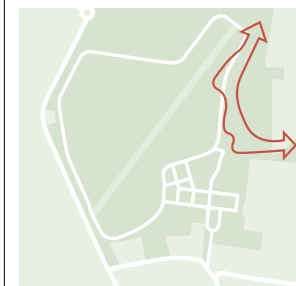
Other target species that will be supported by the habitats include bats, small mammals, reptiles, birds and invertebrates such as slugs, snails and spiders. These areas will be accessible to people, but measures will be designed to control access so that areas remain undisturbed, including paths, water 'fences' and educational trails with interpretation boards.

#### Species Focus: great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*)

- The UK population of these newts is of international importance and they are both a UK and European Protected Species: partly because they indicate a healthy habitat that supports a range of other species. They measure up to 17 cm in length.
- Fun fact: individual great crested newts have belly patterns as unique as a fingerprint and male newts use their distinctive crests to perform an intricate courtship display to attract females, arching their backs and flicking their tails.

#### Species Focus: water shrew (*Neomys fodiens*)

- Water shrews have black and silvery fur with a long, pointed nose.
- Fun fact: this unusual shrew has a venomous bite to help immobilise its prey and it also has red-tipped teeth. Water shrew's stiff hairs along the underside of its body, feet and tail help it to swim as it doesn't have webbed feet.





### Ecology in the Barracks and new residential areas

Alongside the natural landscape features, the development will ensure features are designed into development parcels and new homes to provide a range of benefits for key species such as hedgehog, urban birds, bats, butterflies and moths. This will ensure connectivity through the site between the Biodiversity Priority Areas and ensure new residents are never far from nature. This will also be reinforced by wildlife garden packs given to each new home to help them create their own wildlife friendly space and to support the built-in features like hedgehog highways.



Some of the key features include:

- Ensuring the connections between green spaces by installing raised garden fences or 'hedgehog highways' between residential gardens.
- Planting across public green spaces to include nectar-rich flowers, fruit and nut bearing species and plants that support insects and in turn the mammals that eat them, such as hedgehogs.
- The installation of a number of bird boxes and built-in nesting features across the site, such as house sparrow bricks, swift bricks and swallow cups on homes and other buildings.
- Further bird nesting options will be included on retained mature trees in key areas of the site, including open fronted and nest hole boxes for small birds such as tits, robins and wagtails and larger boxes for starlings; as well as nesting features suitable for scarcer species such as blackcap and whitethroats.
- Creating roosting features in key locations for bat species, such as bat bricks and bat tubes, and designing lighting in those areas with minimised light spill into bat and bird foraging and commuting areas.
- Community allotments will incorporate boundary planting with species rich in nectar to support pollinators to flourish and work their magic for the allotmenters.
- In key locations, wildlife underpasses will be used to enable species such as hedgehogs, reptiles and newts to crossroads safely, while planting, kerbing and lighting will be used to deflect wildlife away from busier roadways.

#### Species Focus: hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)

- Hedgehogs have brown fur with yellow tipped spines and a small pointed face.
- Fun fact: strong muscles along a hedgehog's back allows it to roll into a ball of defensive spines, protecting it from predators. An individual hedgehog has around 7,000 of these spines made from adapted hair.
- Did you know: hedgehogs are lactose intolerant. To help support local hedgehogs you can try putting out some meat-based cat or dog food, a shallow water dish, but leave the milk in the fridge!

#### Species Focus: swift (*Apus apus*)

- Swifts are black-brown with a forked tail and long boomerang-like wings.
- Fun fact: the only time these birds land is for nesting, swifts spend most of their lives in the air: sleeping, feeding and mating in the sky. When feeding, swifts can hoard up to 1,000 insects in saliva at the back of their throats, they save these insect 'bolus' until they can regurgitate it to feed their young.

# A journey through nature

You can listen to our ecologist James Patmore, from Bradley Murphy Design, talk about his work as the lead ecologist on the project from the very start of Urban&Civic's involvement in the site in 2013 in a video on the Waterbeach Barracks website. James and his team have been conducting daytime and night-time surveys throughout the autumn and winter months, during his regular survey work of our priority species.

The survey work is part of ongoing habitat improvement works, which are embedded into the development strategy and aim to improve the scale and quality of the habitats at Waterbeach Barracks, and to support increases in the numbers of key priority species. The work is the result of partnership discussions with the local authority ecology team, the Wildlife Trust and Natural England, and our commitment to delivering a net gain for nature through the development of the Barracks.

**Waterbeach Barracks is the most amazing location. Right from the start all of the team has taken a nature-led approach to how the future development comes forward: working with and enhancing the ecology that is here and integrating it fully into how the site develops.**



James Patmore Bradley Murphy Design

James said: "I am very lucky that part of my job is to explore every inch of the site, but it also fills me with personal and professional pride, that we will be creating an environment in which the development will really improve the condition of the habitats that are here: putting them into proper management approaches for nature; designing in areas that are for nature specifically and to protect key species; but also open up aspects for more people to enjoy and understand the nature on their doorstep. If nothing else, the last year has shown the importance of that for everyone's health and wellbeing."

You can follow James' journey through nature on the project website: [www.waterbeachbarracks.co.uk/a-journey-through-nature-at-waterbeach/](http://www.waterbeachbarracks.co.uk/a-journey-through-nature-at-waterbeach/)



# Mere Way



Following many months of engagement with cycle groups, local landowners and other partners, Urban&Civic is getting ready to share the detailed plans of the Mere Way cycle connection. This will run from the Barracks, across the A10 to Landbeach, and connect to and upgrade the existing Bridleway of Mere Way.

The route will provide an important purpose-built cycle connection from the new homes to a key employment centre at the Science Park and to the Regional College. It will also connect on to the wider network of cycle routes into Cambridge.

The route will be supported by a pedestrian and cycle bridge over the A10, to the north of Denny End Road, and will follow a historic field boundary to Landbeach, with a new cycle lane running along Green End, Spaldings Lane and Cockfen Lane before connecting into the historic Akeman Street and Mere Way routes. Going under the A14, the route will then cross the Guided Busway link and connect to the back of the Science Park.

The team has been meeting with Camcycle and Waterbeach Cycling Campaign, farmers and landowners along the route as well as Landbeach Parish Council representatives to ensure the route works with other uses and users along the route, including walkers, horse-riders and agricultural vehicles. Given the historic nature of the route, it has also been designed to be low impact on the archaeology beneath the historic Roman road and byways.

As much of the route is existing road and byway, it does not need to go through the usual planning process, but the team are keen to ensure that a full consultation goes ahead before plans are submitted, so that everyone can input to and help shape the route.

Caroline Foster, from Urban&Civic, said: "The work so far has been quite technical to ensure the route does all it needs to do from a heritage and environmental perspective, and to be safe in engineering terms. We now want to ensure people have the chance to input their thoughts about the route. It is really important to us that this is not just about getting to the Science Park but also enabling more people along the whole of the route to get out and enjoy cycling whether for commuting or leisure, or to see the heritage and ecology on their doorstep."

"With Covid restrictions still in place, we are having to be flexible on the way we consult. Most of the maps and detailed drawings will be available online in a consultation portal, but we will also be holding some briefing sessions and one-to-one discussions with key parties. This is a really important piece of infrastructure, as well as physical symbol of our commitment to ensuring we work hard to make Waterbeach a cycle-first place, and really support people to make positive and active travel choices and not use their car for local journeys."

"That's why it's really important to get your views and ensure this provides a safe and easy cycle connection. With the Mere Way Cycle Route coming forward alongside the A10 to Milton Cycle route and the future Greater Cambridge Partnership Greenway connection, Waterbeach will become one of the best-connected places for people to cycle."

Further details about the consultation will be available from the Waterbeach Barracks website and promoted locally.



## New beginnings for Waterbeach Toddler Playgroup

Exciting times lie ahead for Waterbeach Toddler Playgroup as it settles into its new home in a re-purposed building at the entrance of Waterbeach Barracks and changes its name to Herons' Preschool.



Despite a few Covid-related delays, the transformation of the old 'short arms' shooting range into a bright and dynamic space for the preschool was completed in the autumn. With Ofsted registration in place, and a hectic Christmas break moving the last bits of equipment and adding the finishing touches, Herons' Preschool was able to open in its new premises on 5 January 2021. A great start for the New Year!

This redevelopment project has provided the preschool with a fantastic opportunity to create the space they have been longing for and provide for further expansion, potentially doubling the capacity from its previous premises. The preschool now takes children from 2 years old and currently has 28 children on the roll and is looking forward to welcoming more children soon.

The move follows a challenging time for the preschool as its previous premises were no longer fit for purpose but, working with Cambridgeshire County Council's Education Capital Team and Urban&Civic, the move heralds a bright future supporting both the existing village and the future development coming forward.

The new building provides flexible space, with two playrooms for the children as well as an office, a reception area and a large outdoor play space.

Wayne Badcock, Preschool Manager, said: "It has been fascinating to watch this old, windowless building be completely revamped and given a new lease of life. It is now a bright, modern and inspiring place that the children, parents and staff are all enjoying very much. There is lots of space for the children to play, learn and be creative as they prepare for future school life.

"We are particularly excited about the outdoor space and are very grateful to our committee members and parents who have helped turned it into a lovely big garden. We can't wait for the weather to warm up a bit so the children can start planting seeds and watching the saplings grow in four large planters purchased through previous fundraising efforts. I'd also like to take this opportunity to extend a special thanks to Vikki Ashcroft and Gina Clark for all their hard work, time with the planning and helping us to make the dream a reality."

In recent years, families and friends of the children going to the preschool have supported many fundraising activities including the popular Waterbeach Running Festival, which takes place at Waterbeach Barracks each year. Due to the pandemic, the event took place virtually last year and may need to do so again this year.

To find out more about Heron's Preschool and future events, visit its Facebook page or: [www.heronspreschoolwaterbeach.org](http://www.heronspreschoolwaterbeach.org)

# Waterbeach Military Heritage Museum



Waterbeach Military Heritage Museum is located in the community building just beyond the main gate to the former barracks site. The Museum opened in 2017 and is dedicated to preserving Waterbeach's military heritage and displays a fascinating collection of objects, photographs and memorabilia.

The Museum's most recent acquisition is a bottle of 1921 vintage champagne from the family of Flying Officer Alan RL Lundie of 514 Squadron. He was an RAF Bomb Aimer, who was killed on 21 November 1944, along with the other six crew members on board the Lancaster LM684, JI-C, on a raid to Homberg. The family also donated a collection of Alan's documents and photographs.

The champagne by Charles Heidsieck of Reims had been bought by Alan's father to celebrate his only son's 21st birthday, which had been in March 1944. Alan had been away training in Canada, as many crews did, before joining 514 Squadron at Waterbeach. Sadly, he was killed on a mission before he could get home to celebrate his birthday with his family.

His parents could not bear to open the bottle and it stayed in the family, finally ending up with cousins Angela Sharrad and Madeline Costin. In 2016 the cousins took the bottle of champagne to the Antiques Roadshow. The museum has a clip of that moment and a new display around the bottle, with additional information from the documents shared by the family.

Other recent donations include an optical signalling lamp similar to an Aldiss signal lamp that would have been on aircraft and ships for use during radio silence.

Adrian Wright from the Museum, added: "The Museum is always pleased to receive donations of artifacts from any of the units, Royal Airforce, Royal Engineers or civilian employees that were based at Waterbeach Airfield during its military past. We also welcome educational visits. Some of the Trustees and volunteers were in the Armed Forces serving at Waterbeach, whether in the RAF or the Royal Engineers, so they have first-hand knowledge of the Armed Forces role in society and the Waterbeach RAF Station and Barracks. We can tailor any visit to focus on aspects of most interest from the collection."

Subject to lockdown restrictions being lifted in May, Waterbeach Military History Museum will be open from 10am to 4pm on the first Sunday and Wednesday in June (telephone booking 01223 861846) and subsequent months through to October. It also has a special opening for Remembrance Sunday from 1-4pm. The Museum can also open for groups at other times by special arrangement, especially for visitors from abroad who may be in the UK for a limited time.

To find out more visit their Facebook page or [www.waterbeachmilitarymuseum.org.uk](http://www.waterbeachmilitarymuseum.org.uk)

## Watch this space

Urban&Civic has teamed up with C1 Media and the Waterbeach Military Heritage Museum to start recording memories and reflections on life at the Barracks from Royal Engineers who served there. The project will be ongoing and is being co-ordinated by Col David Adamson, drawing on the history book he wrote about the Royal Engineers' time at Waterbeach. A copy of the book is available from the Museum.

# Landbeach Tithe Barn

Local charity, the Tithe Barn Trust has been busy taking care of the unique listed timber frame Tithe Barn in Landbeach and making plans for the year ahead.

## Spend a penny campaign

Having completed the urgent repair works to the historic Tithe Barn, the trust is now turning its attention to fundraising for the second phase the project which will bring permanent toilet facilities to the site.

The Trust plan to install two new, fully accessible toilets along the path to the Barn to make it an even better place to visit, hire and enjoy. If you spent a penny in the medieval period, you'd be spending over £5 today! It would be great, if those of you who can, donate at least £5 to the 'Spend a penny' campaign to help reach the £30,000 target: [www.totalgiving.co.uk/appeal/TitheBarnTrust\\_spendapenny](http://www.totalgiving.co.uk/appeal/TitheBarnTrust_spendapenny)

## Events at the Tithe Barn

To find out more about the Barn, or fully experience its wonder, why not join one of the wide range of events being held. There really is something for everyone:

- 1. Annual General Meeting**  
7pm on Thursday 6 May via Zoom  
Meet the Tithe Barn Trust volunteer team and learn all about the Tithe Barn project.
- 2. Histon Country pop up market**  
9am-midday on Saturday 22 May  
Handmade food and gifts by local producers from nearby villages. Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- 3. Art exhibition**  
11am-4pm on Sunday 30 May. Booking essential  
Local artist Maureen Mace will be exhibiting alongside other local artists from the Cambridge Drawing Society. Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

**4. Covid Dreams: art installation and exhibition**  
11am-4pm on Saturday 12, Sunday 13, Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 June  
Booking essential.

Theo Gayer-Anderson and Gideon Pain, two local artists, reflect on a year of siege from the intangible, a landscape where you cannot save yourself but you can save others.

Admission to the events listed is free but donations to the Tithe Barn Trust are welcome. Check out the website for updates and details of how to join the AGM via Zoom: [www.tithebarntrust.org.uk/learning/2021-events/](http://www.tithebarntrust.org.uk/learning/2021-events/)

## Volunteering Opportunities

'Ensuring the long-term survival of the rare and ancient Tithe Barn, by breathing new life into the site, for everyone to enjoy.'

If you want to make new friends and work in an amazing place, knowing that you're helping a great cause, these are three fabulous reasons to get volunteering.

Current volunteering opportunities include treasurer trustee, event volunteer and learning volunteer.

If you'd like to get involved and help the Trust achieve its mission, email [tithebarntrust@gmail.com](mailto:tithebarntrust@gmail.com) or visit [www.do-it.org/organisations/tithe-barn-trust](http://www.do-it.org/organisations/tithe-barn-trust)

Trustees Emma Naylor and Kimberley Brightley ready to greet visitors to the Barn last summer.



# Wicken Fen

The National Trust bought its first 2 acres at Wicken Fen in 1899, marking an early interest for the young organisation in the importance of countryside, natural beauty and wildlife. From its early years as a site of serious research and recording, crucial in the development of ecology as a science, the Fen is now also a wonderful place for everyone to visit, to enjoy the benefits of immersion in nature.

The spring wildlife at Wicken Fen is always a real treat. Walking routes on the old undrained Sedge Fen allow easy access to experience the changing seasons, taking you alongside flowering meadows, into its woodland area. Stroll along Wicken Lode with its abundant water lilies. From the routes on the wider reserve you might see hares, roe deer, new calves or konik foals, as well as birds like marsh harriers, hobbies and cranes.

Returning summer migrant birds include those iconic harbingers of warmer months ahead, swallows, house martins and swifts finding plenty of our insect species upon which to feed, and good fen mud with which to build nests in corners of hides, sheds and barns. Listen out too for a host of different warblers, and of course cuckoos. Wicken Fen is one of the best places around to hear these increasingly rare visitors to our shores, and to spot the females as they perch on willows, staking out the nests of unsuspecting reed warblers in which to lay their eggs.



For all the latest information about visiting, including booking access onto the Sedge Fen, please check out the website for more information. As we come out of lockdown restrictions, cycle hire will open again, including with a few e-bikes too, or you can bring your own bikes to explore the Lodes Way route on the wider reserve.

The Wicken Fen team is planning to take part in the Fantastic Fens celebratory weekend on 19 and 20 June. Watch out for trails and activities this summer that all the family can enjoy. The Docky Hut Café will be open (eventually inside too), with a wide selection of hot and cold drinks, plus light lunches and sweet treats.

Remember that dogs are not allowed on Sedge Fen, but on leads are welcome on the routes on the wider reserve. Please do ensure all dogs are under effective control so as to not disturb wildlife or grazing animals – and remember that includes in and on the edge of the waterways as well, think of the reed warbler nests built on the reed stems, and not only their eggs and young, but also of the few cuckoo chicks in the county.

Website [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wicken-fen](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wicken-fen)  
Instagram @WickenFenNT  
Twitter @WickenFenNT

Images ©NT Wicken Fen/Mike Selby



# Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey



Located at the end of the historic causeway – which is being reinstated to connect it to the village of Waterbeach as part of the Waterbeach Barracks development – the Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey provide a fascinating glimpse into life in rural Cambridgeshire.

The Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey tells the story of farming, communities and life in the Cambridgeshire Fens over the past 850 years. A family-friendly museum located in a beautiful, rural setting close to Waterbeach, the Farmland Museum is an independent charitable museum that also manages the neighbouring Denny Abbey on behalf of English Heritage.

The museum is hoping to reopen the outdoor spaces and attractions, play area and cafe for takeaway drinks and snacks on Thursday 15 April, with a view to opening the entire museum on Thursday 20 May, in line with the Government's roadmap for opening businesses.

The museum has displays ranging from domestic items to large machinery. Once fully reopened – which is currently expected on 20 May – you will be able to explore the diverse range of exhibits, including a 1940s cottage complete with outdoor toilet, re-creating what life was like for a farm worker and his family 80 years ago, and display rooms about basket making, a farrier's workshop, a typical early 20th century village shop and a dairy. The museum will also be unveiling its new fenman's hut to give visitors a glimpse into this unique way of living.

The museum is set in the grounds of the stunning Denny Abbey, which was lived in by three different religious orders until Henry VIII closed it and sold off the building and surrounding land during the dissolution of the monasteries. After it was sold off and the Countess of Pembroke's church extension demolished, families moved in to the former medieval church and began farming the land around until the early 20th century.

## Get involved:

There is lots to do with the museum set to reopen soon and the team is keen to hear from anyone interested in volunteering – especially those interested in meeting and greeting visitors and explaining the exhibits in an engaging way. Training will be provided, you just need to enjoy history and be friendly, approachable and have good people skills. Email [info@farmlandmuseum.org.uk](mailto:info@farmlandmuseum.org.uk) to express an interest and find out more.

Find out more:

Website [www.dennyfarmlandmuseum.org.uk](http://www.dennyfarmlandmuseum.org.uk)

Facebook @Denny.Farmland

Twitter @FarmlandMuseum

Instagram farmland\_museum

## Watch this space

As part of the site preparation works for the first phase of development at Waterbeach Barracks, extensive archaeological investigations were carried out to capture the history of previous residents and allow their story to inform the future designs and features of the new development. Urban&Civic is working with the Farmland Museum to bring visitors an insight into the lives of some of the area's earliest settlers, with exhibitions planned for later this Summer to showcase some of the finds from the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman period.

Urban&Civic is the Ministry of Defence's development manager for the Waterbeach Barracks and Airfield site; one of the largest brownfield sites in the country.

If you would like to meet the team, discuss any ideas or issues about the development, have a tour of the site or look at the community facilities, then please contact:

**T 01223 622533**

**W [waterbeach@urbanandcivic.com](mailto:waterbeach@urbanandcivic.com)**



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