

Royal Holloway, University of London

Ripley Springs environmental enhancements

Summary

The Ripley Springs environmental enhancement project is presently at an early stage, though will benefit from initial thoughts and ideas captured in the 2014 Estate Plan. The project essentially seeks to secure a number of objectives:

1. Improved storm water reduction and management through an increase in the capacity of the existing pond in the heart of the area;
2. Opening the wider area up as part of the university's aspiration (and requirement) to improve public access as parts of its "Green Strategy and Visitor Management Strategy" and;
3. To better manage and encourage a net gain in biodiversity in the area through a process of creating and improving wildlife habitats.

Planning Application / Reserved Matters Submission

The Ripley Springs environmental enhancement project offers the opportunity to assist the surface water drainage strategy for the Music and Media Arts Building, which itself is at an early, client briefing, stage.

It is therefore possible that the engineering works relating to the Ripley Springs area will come forward as a twin-track planning submission: essentially in two concurrent submissions: one for the engineering and environmental works in isolation, with the same scheme being incorporated within the full planning application for the Music and Media Arts Building. In this way, should there be any potential delay in the application for the adjacent academic building, it may be possible to secure the necessary works under a separate planning process so that the Ripley Springs works can be brought forward in a timely fashion.



Link with other Estate Plan Projects

The "Green Space and Visitor Management Strategy" requires certain environmental and improved pathways to be created throughout the undeveloped areas of the campus: Ripley Springs being just one of a number of areas which will see enhancements over time. Each area is required to be brought forward in line with the phased delivery of new student accommodation within the campus. Works to the Arboretum to the north of the A30 have already been completed alongside the erection of the George Eliot Hall. The Ripley Springs area is required to be enhanced before the occupation of the 601st new student accommodation unit within the main campus south of the A30.

Given the wider benefits that the Ripley Springs area offers in relation to improving the flow, storage and managed discharge of surface water in the northern part of the site (and the opportunity to create a Sustainable Urban Drainage solution linked to the erection of new academic buildings in the Piggery Gate area – such as the Music and Media Arts Building), the university is looking to bring forward the project early and in advance of any new student accommodation units in the southern area of the campus.



Northern extent of Ripley Springs



Eastern edge of Ripley Springs

Appearance

At this stage, there is no detailed design for the nature of the engineering (pond capacity) works or the proposals for public access through the area and the associated environmental enhancements. Consultants are due to be appointed to investigate the existing pond and weir (covered by undergrowth). This will influence the scale of the enhanced capacity and size of the pond and surrounding area. An ecologist and arboricultural (tree) consultant will also be appointed to work with a landscape architect to bring forward an integrated proposal.

Relevance to the Estate Plan

The Estate Plan was updated in November 2017 to reflect all recently completed developments including the student accommodation north of the A30 (George Eliot Hall), the Boilerhouse, Beatrice Shilling Building and Emily Wilding Davison Building. This was sent to the council in an informative manner.

The Ripley Springs environmental enhancement project was included in the original 2014, and retained

in the updated 2017 Estate Plan. Further detail relating to the Ripley Springs area was provided in February 2015 as part of the "Green Space and Visitor Management Strategy". This document was prepared in response to discussions with the Environment Agency as a means to provide suitable alternative natural green space to offset any increased use of the Thames Basin Special Protection Area by students.



Extracts from the Green Space and Visitor Management Strategy Feb 2015. Detailed designs will have regard to the fundamental principles set out within the Feb 2015 strategy