



**SPORT
ENGLAND**

ACTIVE DESIGN CASE STUDY
**THE NATIONAL FOREST:
CONNECTIVITY
THROUGH WALKING
AND CYCLING**



ACTIVE DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN ACTION:

1. ACTIVITY
FOR ALL



2. WALKABLE
COMMUNITIES



3. CONNECTED WALKING
& CYCLING ROUTES



7. APPROPRIATE
INFRASTRUCTURE



10. ACTIVITY
PROMOTION &
LOCAL CHAMPIONS



ACTIVE DESIGN CASE STUDY

THE NATIONAL FOREST: CONNECTIVITY THROUGH WALKING & CYCLING

THE NATIONAL FOREST USES THE PLANNING SYSTEM TO DEVELOP ITS GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK. TO DATE 22% OF FOREST CREATION HAS BEEN ACHIEVED THROUGH THE PLANNING SYSTEM.

Spanning parts of Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire, The National Forest extends over 200 square miles. Over 25 years it has planted in excess of 8.5 million trees, creating an integrated green infrastructure network of cycling and walking routes through the creation of new woodland spaces. This network provides local communities with easy access to recreational opportunities on their doorstep and illustrates a number of Active Design principles.

The National Forest is an excellent example of how working with new development within the Forest area can help to create a joined-up network of walking and cycling routes for both local residents and visitors. The Forest provides a green lung for the surrounding cities of Birmingham, Derby, Leicester and Nottingham with 10 million people living within 90 minutes' drive.

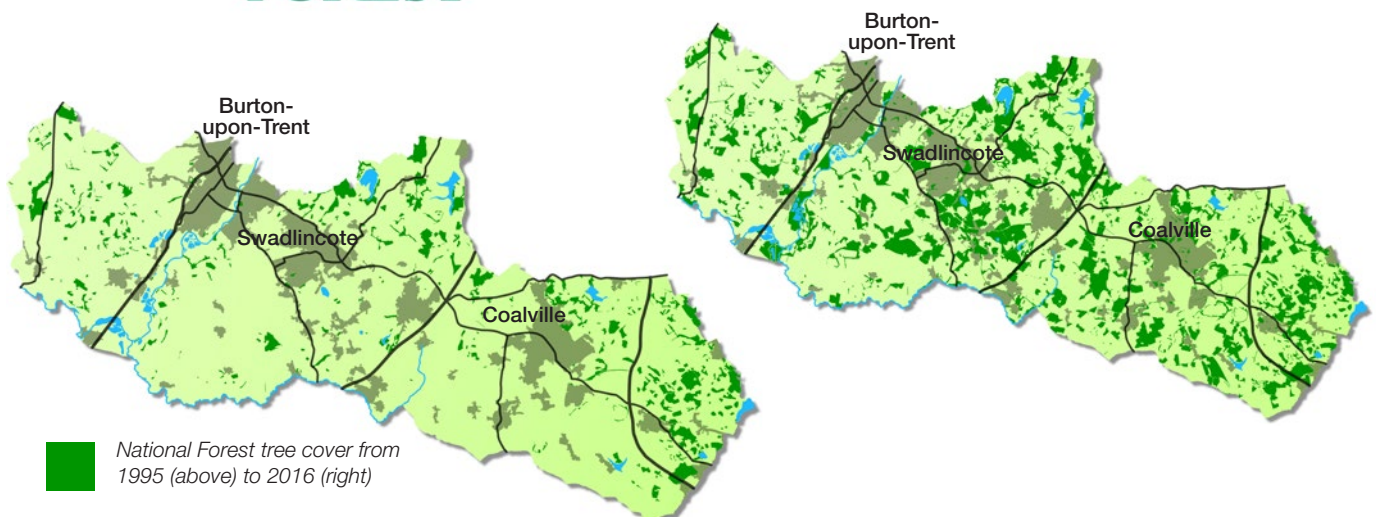
The National Forest uses the planning system to secure continued tree planting as well as developing its green infrastructure (GI) network. To date 22% of forest creation has been achieved through the planning system. This has been delivered by National Forest officers advising on existing and emerging development schemes and planning applications, contributing to the design and layout of the schemes, and embedding positive policies into the local authorities Local Plans. These policies all refer to the National Forest Guide for Developers and Planners.

"It [the guide] helps to tailor the benefits of including green infrastructure to the stage of the planning process. Initially we highlight that the inclusion of GI will help with obtaining outline permission, later on we'll speak to housebuilders about the specific benefits of GI and new access links to prospective occupiers."

Philip Metcalfe (GI Planner for the National Forest Company) on lessons learnt through the planning process.



**THE NATIONAL
FOREST**





DELIVERING OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS

HICKS LODGE CYCLE CENTRE AND MEASHAM ROAD DEVELOPMENT

The Hicks Lodge Cycle Centre opened in The National Forest in June 2011. It has 16km of purpose-built trails, paths, a café, bike shop and play area. Its design was a response to the demand for off-road cycling routes, particularly suited to the family audience. The cycle centre is based at a former opencast coal mine, which operated until the late 1990s. Its restoration offered the opportunity to create a substantial recreational asset to compliment the regeneration of the area. The site now acts as a hub within a network of trails and paths.

Connected walking and cycling routes and walkable communities

A housing development nearby, off Measham Road in Moira, created an opportunity to incorporate a cycle link that joined the cycle centre into the wider cycleway network of the Forest. This link, which runs the length of the site south west to north east, will give the new residents of the Measham Road development safe direct access to the off-road network. It also provides the missing link in the wider National Forest network providing a traffic-free route up to Hicks Lodge.

Networks of multifunctional open space

Hicks Lodge has created an opportunity for a wide range of groups to use the space around the centre, from parents and children to walking and running groups. The Adventure Play area, car park and open space close to the café create an environment to hold various events throughout the year.

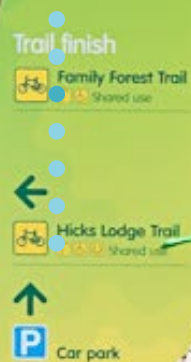
Clear signage and information helps to encourage users to try out a range of activities. It also helps users to know what the gradient and quality of the tracks are like and what they can be used for, such as horse-riding, dog walking, cycling, outdoor education and orienteering.

Access for all

The design of the trails and paths caters for all levels; in particular for those who do not normally cycle or mountain bike. The centre provides a safe and accessible environment to allow users to develop their confidence on a bike. The main routes are suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs and feature a range of gradients for all levels of ability, while also providing separate, more challenging areas for those who want to develop their skills further.

HICKS LODGE HAS CREATED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A WIDE RANGE OF GROUPS TO USE THE SPACE AROUND THE CENTRE, FROM PARENTS AND CHILDREN TO WALKING AND RUNNING GROUPS.







BELLWAY HOMES, EFFLINCH LANE, BARTON UNDER NEEDWOOD, STAFFORDSHIRE

This housing scheme sought to provide open space and woodland planting to connect the development to existing recreational routes and other housing areas. As part of the scheme over 50% of the site area was allocated for the creation of a multifunctional and accessible woodland, other habitat areas and open space.

IT IS HOPED THAT BY CREATING NEW LINKS, RESIDENTS OF THE NEW DEVELOPMENT, AND THE EXISTING COMMUNITY, WILL NOT ONLY USE THE OPEN SPACE BUT ALSO EXPLORE THE EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF RECREATIONAL ROUTES ON THEIR DOORSTEP.

Connected walking and cycling routes & walkable communities

Through the new open space and woodland the development connects to existing residential neighbourhoods to the west, Barton Marina to the north and a pedestrian crossing to employment land to the south. Barton Marina is situated on the Trent and Mersey canal and forms a 90 acre site, largely covered by woodland and open water, intersected by a network of paths and bridges. It is hoped that by creating new links to the Marina from the existing residential and employment areas, this open space will encourage new residents and the existing community to not only use the open space, but explore the extensive network of recreational routes on their doorstep. This is a great example that illustrates the advantages of connecting paths and routes into the wider paths system, extending the opportunities for new and existing residents to benefit from a larger network.

Network of multifunctional open space & activity for all

The woodland planting and habitat creation facilitates multiple uses including amenity grassland for sport and recreation, a natural play area, wet meadows and ponds for drainage and allotments for residents. These mixed uses are well spread out and accommodate activities for the different groups that have access to this area throughout the week. Creating a range of paths of different lengths and types helps users to become more active by increasing the choice and variety of routes.

Efflinch Lane development, Barton under Needwood, Staffordshire





MOUNTPARK, BEVERIDGE LANE, ELLISTOWN, LEICESTERSHIRE

With the promotion of the development of a greenfield site for a distribution centre, National Forest officers began to work with the developers to extend the green infrastructure network and woodland around the site.

Walkable communities & connected walking and cycling routes

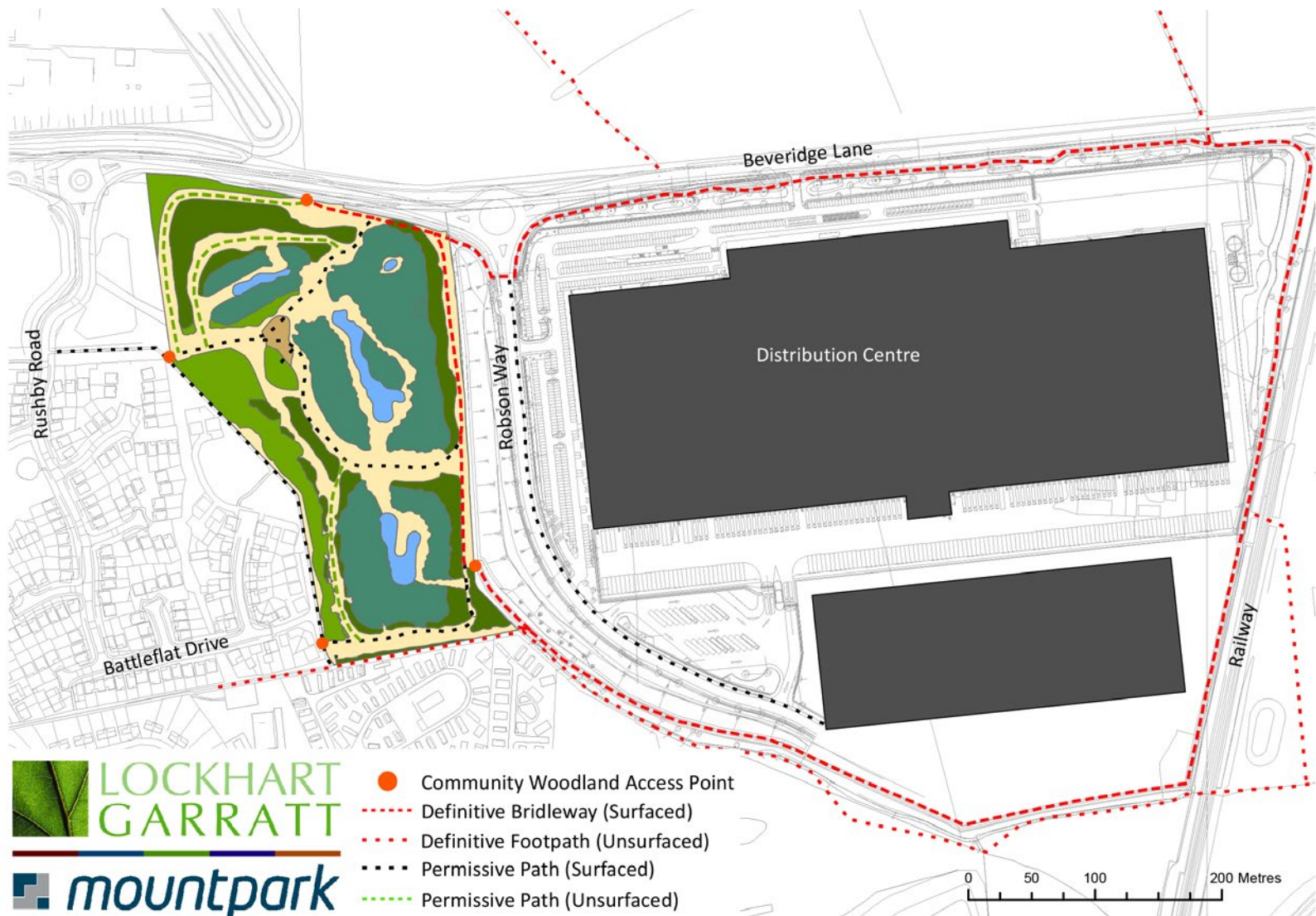
Having secured 30% of the development site for woodland planting, as expected by local planning policies, a footpath network has been extended around the building and into the adjoining residential areas, connecting the woodland at four points. By connecting to existing footpaths, the woodland will be easily accessible to both employees of the new distribution centre and local residents, providing a resource to encourage them to be more active. It is hoped that the paths from this site can also be joined up to the path network to the north, as part of an adjoining development, further integrating the paths created into the wider green infrastructure network.

Beyond the boundaries of development

This connectivity promotes access for all and goes further in its detail by creating pathways that are tiered, with the main path around the woodland being appropriately surfaced for people of all abilities and unsurfaced pathways leading off the main route. The woodland features open ground, an orchard with an edible hedgerow and a picnic area that completes the public space and provides areas that can be used by a range of people during the day.

The development is a good example of how residential and employment land can benefit from the provision of public spaces that separates development whilst improving its surrounding connections, in this case by looking outside the boundary of the development and creating a wider path network for people to use and enjoy.

Below: Beveridge Lane, Ellistown, Leicestershire, plan showing the proposed development, woodland and pathways around the site





Forestry Commission
England

This is the Family Forest Trail



Family Forest Trail
Shared use (two-way)



Shell Brook Trail start
Moderate



Wood Farm Trail start
Easy



Family Forest Trail
Shared use (two-way)



Hicks Lodge



THE HEART OF THE FOREST

One of the key elements to the success The National Forest has had in creating an integrated network of footpath and cycle routes is having an overall plan and vision for the Heart of the Forest.

Activity Promotion and Local Champions

The Heart of the Forest Forum has brought together local champions from across a range of recreational interests. This knowledge has helped to create an overall road map to develop an integrated recreational network, setting priorities and identifying gaps.

Collaboration has helped drive projects in the area. The Access and Connectivity Group has been able to prioritise a network of paths for promotion and investment. Members of the group have used their local knowledge to highlight any gaps in this network following hundreds of hours of volunteer time surveying the path network in the area.

A new link from the Measham Road development in Moira to Hicks Lodge was identified as a priority by the group – as a result of this, in collaboration with the landowner (the Forestry Commission), the National Forest Company was able to secure external funding to build the link and the County Council prioritised this for adoption as a bridleway.

“The Forum was established in 2011 by a collaboration of partners. The Access and Connectivity Group is a working group which includes volunteers representing the various recreational interests and organisations that they are associated with, such as Sustrans, ramblers and the British Horse Society. The group also includes Local Authority representatives from Leicestershire County Council, Parish and District Councils, and local landowners such as the Forestry Commission, National Forest Company, National Forest Charitable Trust and the Woodland Trust. The Access and Connectivity Group has made a significant contribution to the development of the network of paths through the Heart of the Forest. The volunteers on the group have been absolutely key to achieving this success.”

Alan Leather, Development Manager
for the National Forest Company

Working in partnership with



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