

The day before the government asked non-essential workers to stay at home regarding Covid 19, I was out clearing vegetation to make installation of Fences by a contractor easier the next day. As I and the contractor didn't regard ourselves as essential we stayed at home. Since then I have returned to work to ensure a limited service.



Before



After

I am very much looking forward to the fences being installed, as it will ensure access at certain points and limit access to motorcyclists that sometimes use the site. Hopefully they can be installed just as soon as the contractor is back at work.

We are also still waiting for the land to be cultivated by the Farmer that last farmed the land. It was probably a little too wet leading up to the time of the lockdown but we continue to be hopeful that it can be done this Autumn.

It came to light that a 3 metre wide, hard cycle track, with street lighting had been agreed to run along and inside the south border of the Country Park. The track will now run inside the phase 3 area of the development so as not to detract from the Country Park but will continue to run inside the Park alongside the phase 2 development.

I have worked on a management plan for the Park and have attached it to the e-mail. The plan is not 'set in stone' and can be changed but objectives and basic proposals need to be agreed on. The challenge is to create a Park that has access for 'all' where possible and balancing the needs for different user groups such as dog walkers and horse riders, this along with retaining and enhancing biodiversity.

The other day I put up two bird boxes with a 32ml entrance holes which are large enough to let Great Tits enter. Within 20 mins after putting up a pair of Great Tits were in and out of the box. As I clanked my ladder against the old Oak tree a Barn Owl flew out from further up the tree. (Not the below tree) I looked up and I could see a large cavity where it may have been roosting. The rougher areas of grassland and the area that has been set aside as scrubland, will harbour many Voles and Mice and make great hunting for birds such as Barn Owls and Kestrels.



Good numbers of Skylarks are currently nesting in the Park. It is difficult to make out exactly how many but at a conservative estimate I would say 6 pairs. These birds nest on the ground, the nest tucked into a tuft of grass or other vegetation. They will choose the least trodden and disturbed areas. It is great to have these now red listed birds breeding within the Park (Red listed means of most concern for conservation, in this case for declining numbers.)



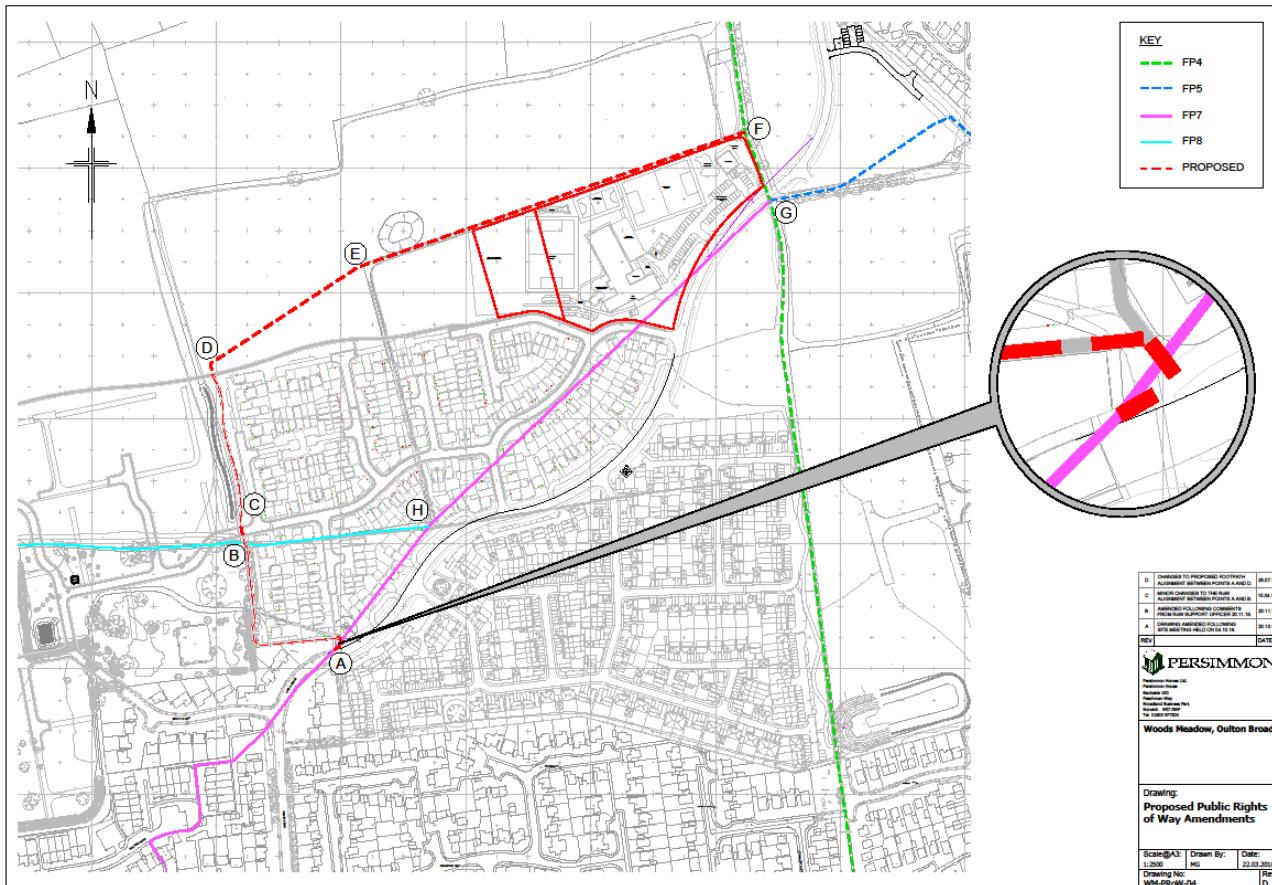
Skylark

A large flock of Linnets has been present in the Park throughout the Winter making use of the available seeds from the wildflowers which have thrived. The flock is now thinning as some are settling down to breed. This is another bird species which has declined dramatically, mostly due to lack of habitat and modern farming practices.



Male Linnet

The Footpath diversion, which spurs off from Longfield footpath, will now have a compacted surface to make it suitable for wheelchairs and strollers. This will go some way in fulfilling our ‘access for all aspiration’. On the plan below the path diversion begins point F and proceeds along the boundary of the school then going diagonally from point E to point D, it then continues through the new development back on to Lime Avenue.



Wild Plum in blossom

A long awaited dog bin will soon be placed at the end of Longfield footpath at the Lime Avenue end. Most dog walkers visiting the Park have been great but a few think it is okay to leave their bagged dog waste, on the ground or in a bush, it doesn't matter, it is against the law and you could receive a fixed penalty notice.

We will all have to use our imaginations as to how the Park will mature but hopefully the management plan will help you do that. A statement that defines the purpose of Country Parks are is this: "**The purpose of a country park is to provide a place that has a natural, rural atmosphere for visitors who do not necessarily want to go out into the wider countryside. Visitors can enjoy a public open space with an informal atmosphere, as opposed to a formal park as might be found in an urban area.**" In the mean time #stayin #staysafe..... and you know the rest!

Chris.