

# Wild Wood play space



At the heart of Waterbeach’s first new homes is Waterbeach Woods, a park with green space for people to enjoy and nature to flourish. It is also the setting for the Wild Woods play area, which takes children from the forest floor into the canopy above through a series of play features that grow in scale and complexity.

The woodland is part of the rich legacy, inherited from the Royal Engineers who planted up dense woodland to help their training in the 1970s and 1980s. Unfortunately, many of the trees had fallen victim to disease and climate change. So, the team worked with the Forestry Commission on a management plan to replace the diseased trees and create a more natural woodland.

The trees were originally planted by the military as a uniformed woodland block, with a limited number of fast-growing species to support armed forces training. This high-density planting meant the trees fought for light and resources, so removing the diseased and failing trees will enable the remaining trees to flourish. The younger trees planted in their place can also grow more naturally to create a sustainable woodland.

New planting included over 340 trees (69 mature, 218 semi-mature and 56 whips), 417 woodland shrubs and 63 woodland climbing plants. The species have been chosen to reflect local woodland species and ensure greater resilience to climate change.

The new woodland includes a more diverse species of varying canopy heights to create a more naturally occurring woodland, which will, in turn, encourage more varied flora and fauna to flourish as well as providing a lovely setting for the play area, close to homes and the first primary school. Other ecological enhancement features will include a log stack wall made of Poplar timber from the felling that has taken place, and ‘deadwood monoliths’ created for insects, reptiles and small mammals. Bird and bat boxes will also be installed using special fittings to allow for future tree growth.

