

**Project Wellesley – Mindenhurst**  
**Deepcut, Surrey**  
**SKANSKA UK PLC**

## BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category: Community Engagement

### Project overview

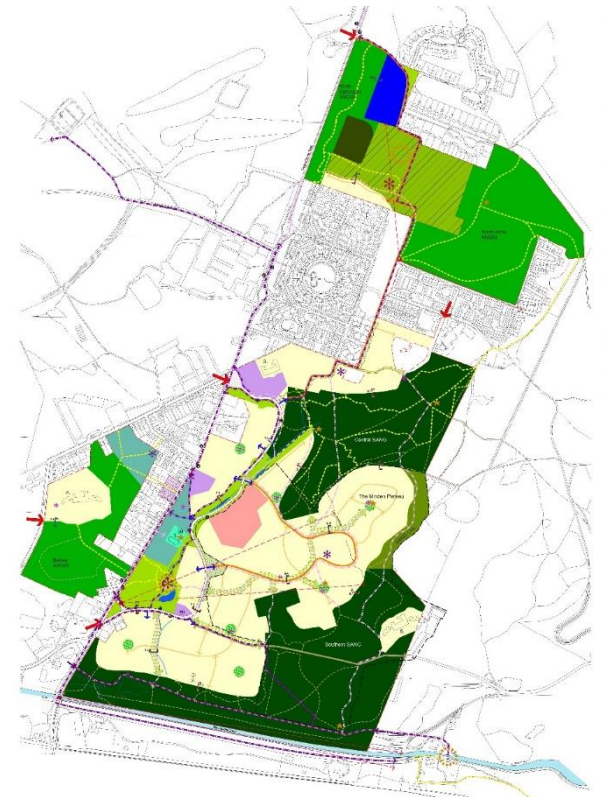
The new 'Mindenhurst' development will build on the heritage of Deepcut alongside its military legacy. Mindenhurst will provide an enormous regenerative benefit for the local community and keep Surrey's proud reputation of being the UK's greenest county. Portesbury School moved to the area in 2015, after Skanska had begun work.

### What were the biodiversity conditions on site, prior to the enhancement?

The site has always been rich in biodiversity due to being surrounded by woodland and supporting a range of habitats/species such as bats, birds, reptiles, badgers and invertebrates. Although the school has always been situated next to woodland area, there wasn't access into this area, especially for vulnerable children, until Skanska developed the woodland into SANGS. Due to the history of the site being a military facility since 1903, there is contamination in the soil which will require extensive remediation, to provide a safe space for the school's 'forest activities'.

### What were the reasons behind this project?

Portesbury School sits directly on the border of the project site, and as one of Skanska's values being 'care for life', the team was motivated to engage with the school to make it feel a part of the new development. With a site so rich with biodiversity we felt it was only right to encourage the school's interest in the environment, and to support the life changing work that the school does, wherever possible.



*Mindenhurst Site plan*

## What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Skanska UK at Deepcut have an ongoing relationship with the local Portesbery School, a school catering for pupils with severe learning disabilities, and have regular meetings to support their needs wherever possible.

In December 2018, Skanska joined in on one of the school's Christmas by gifting each of the pupils with a flat pack bird box and hosted a day at the school where the team volunteered to help the pupils build and paint their bird boxes, the pupils were then able to take them home and install the boxes in their garden. After the bird boxes were painted, the pupils were taken on a 'reindeer' walk through the sites central SANGS. During this walk, one of the Skanska UK staff dressed up as Santa Claus to accompany the pupils, who were extremely thrilled by this. In addition to this, Skanska gifted the school with a bird box and feeder with webcam, allowing the pupils to see birds nesting and feeding in the bird box. *"It was a wonderful day with Skanska, we really appreciate all of the hard work and time that was put into the event. There was excellent feedback from the teachers about the painting sessions and all of the children loved Santa! We are also looking forward to the birds taking up residence in our new bird box as it gets warmer."* – Headteacher, Portesbery School.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019, the teachers of Portesbery School were taken on an educational walk through the sites central SANGS, where the ecologist taught the teachers about the native wildlife and history of the site. The teachers that took part in this walk were thoroughly engaged and took away a new appreciation of the local wildlife, wishing to inspire their pupils with their new knowledge.



*Pupils painting bird boxes with Skanska UK staff*



*Pupils in the central SANGS with Santa Claus*

### Further information

The activities run with Portesbery School have all been great successes. In regards to the gifted bird box, the bird box was sourced, procured, and then installed at a safe height in a suitable location on one of the school buildings cladding by a competent employee, ensuring it was close to woodland but in reach of the school. The connectivity of the webcam was then tested to ensure it worked and Skanska has been continually supporting this aspect with advice and information regarding bird nesting. The smaller bird boxes for the pupils needed ordering and delivering safely to the school to carry out the bird box painting workshops, where specific child friendly paint was provided by the school. Pupils of all abilities were very engaged in these activities and were all excited to use their finished product at home.

### Project Team

- Client- Defence Infrastructure Organisation (Ministry of Defence)
- Consultant – Nicholas Pearson Associate
- Designer- Odyssey Markides LLP

### What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The motivation behind doing this work with Portesbery School was to raise awareness of the local environment, to teach our younger generations of the richness of their local biodiversity, and show them how accessible it is in an enjoyable and engaging way. Skanska has demonstrated that there are a number of interesting species, such as badgers, reptiles and invertebrates and given the school and it's pupils an understanding of the plans for enhancing the biodiversity of the wider area.



*The bird box and feeder being installed*



*The new bird box and feeder.*