



Newsletter

January 2019



Welcome

At all seasons Hambrook Marshes is a green lung for Canterbury, a taste of the countryside just half a mile from the noisy bustle of the city centre, so the council's plan to extend the Wincheap park and ride onto a field immediately opposite the Marshes is cause for alarm. The above photo shows the view from the old railway embankment, looking across the river to the proposed car park – please read all about the proposal below.

Proposed extension to the Wincheap park and ride

There would have been little to report, other than our regular litter-picking and some gate repairs, had it not been for the council's application to extend the Wincheap park and ride onto the adjoining allotments and down to the river bank, across the footpath that leads to the footbridge over the Stour, and then north eastwards to cover a scrubby field alongside the river, ending roughly opposite where the Whitehall stream enters the Stour (the riverside path crosses this stream on a small bridge with iron railings). This would provide 278 extra parking places. The council has two reasons for wishing to extend the car park: firstly, the proposed slip-road off the A2 Dover direction will have to run around the edge of the present park and ride which, together with rearrangement of

the car park entrance, will mean the loss of some parking places; and secondly, despite pushing through the multi-storey car park scheme in Station Road West, the council wishes to expand the park and ride system to keep more traffic out of the city.

The map below shows the proposed layout. The diagonal line running from top left towards the bottom right is the A2; the river Stour is at the top of the plan, with part of Hambrook Marshes just visible at the extreme top. Halfway down the plan is the present roundabout, where you exit for the park and ride, B&M and Pets at Home. At ten o'clock to that roundabout is the new layout for the park and ride entrance, and then above it is the proposed parking extension, heading straight for the river over the allotments and woodland. The existing footpath to the footbridge crossing can just



about be made out, snaking its way between parking places. The second part of the extension is to the right of the footpath. Altogether, the extended car park would have a river frontage of about 240 metres. The extension would cover the whole of the green area behind the “Proposed car park” caption on the photo at the top of page one, but would continue further back into woodland not visible in this shot.

While the trustees of Love Hambrook Marshes support the council’s laudable aim of keeping traffic out of the centre of Canterbury through the provision of park and ride schemes, they are objecting to this planning application on the following grounds:

Landscape and visual impact

- The scheme conflicts with the council’s own designation of the area as part of the Stour Valley Area of High Landscape Value
- The footpath from Toddlers’ Cove to Hambrook Marshes is the only public access into the countryside from the city and should be cherished. The proposed development would be visually intrusive, destroying visitors’ illusion of being in open countryside.
- Hambrook Marshes is a semi-wild green lung on the outskirts of Canterbury. In 2014 it was acquired by a local benefactor without any financial support from the council, and with the aim of maintaining it as open space with wildlife interest for the benefit of the local community. It would be a travesty for the council to now support a proposal that has complete disregard for the local benefactor’s extraordinary goodwill gesture, and which would compromise the public’s enjoyment of Hambrook Marshes.
- Proposed screening would be inadequate to hide the sight and sound of the car park, or to prevent significant light pollution from spilling out at night from 10-metre tall lamp posts.

Ecological

- The Local Plan identifies this part of the Stour Valley as an important green corridor into the city, but the proposal would create a serious break in this green link. It is also designated as a Local Wildlife Site.
- 127 trees would be removed, and only 35 retained whole or in part. Some of the trees to be removed are along the south bank, providing shade and cooler water for fish.
- There would be a loss of general wildlife habitat. The Environment Agency has objected to the application on all the above ecological grounds.
- Pollutants from the car park would enter directly into the river.

Flooding

- The council has a presumption against development on floodplains, so this proposal breaches its own policy. The development would reduce the site’s ability to absorb water and lead to excess water entering the river more rapidly, causing floodwater to move more rapidly towards vulnerable areas of Canterbury.

If you feel that the application would materially affect Hambrook Marshes and your enjoyment of the area, please send a comment to the council. Click [here](#) and then click on the Documents tab to view all the available documents and comments that have already been submitted, or click [here](#) to go straight to the page where you can type your comments online. We suggest that your submission concentrates on whichever of the aspects listed above are of greatest interest to you; keeping it brief and to the point will greatly increase its impact. PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL COMMENTS HAVE TO BE SUBMITTED BY TUESDAY 19TH FEBRUARY, so there isn’t much time!

Wildlife Report



With little water on Hambrook, the adjoining Tonford Lake has held more of the interest this month, with a sentinel heron, upright as a post, at the water's edge on 14th, my first record for three months. On 21st, when the entire lake was frozen, 84 black-headed and eight common gulls (left) stood around disconsolately on the ice. The common gull is mainly a winter visitor to Kent (a few pairs breed at Dungeness), but it gets its name from the large numbers nesting in northern Britain, mainly in Scotland. While we may be concerned

about the gulls' ability to find enough food during extreme weather, at least we needn't worry about their having painfully cold feet, as the exposed portion of the leg and foot of birds contains virtually no flesh or nerves. Indeed, birds in cold climates have a knot of blood vessels at the base of the feathered part of the leg that acts as an ingenious heat exchanger, removing warmth from the blood that is about to descend into the lower leg and releasing it into the cooled blood moving up out of the leg. This elegant device prevents blood being cooled unnecessarily, so helping to keep the bird's body warm at all times. Just enough warm blood is sent into the leg to prevent everything from freezing up; research on pheasants when the temperature was -18C showed that the toe temperature was less than 3C, the very thought of which sets my chilblains throbbing, but which causes the birds no discomfort. Another way of conserving heat is for birds to stand on one leg.

The number of tufted duck on Tonford Lake had risen to 16 at the end of December, but has now dropped to just four. Little egrets haven't been prominent at Hambrook in recent months, so it was reassuring to see three around the lake on 28th. A mass of contradictions, the egret's harsh, gruff bark of a call is in stark contrast to the beautiful snowy feathers, black legs and yellow feet that make it arguably our most elegant species. Finally, a water rail was heard twice close to the lake.



Numbers of snipe rose as high as 60 on 7th, but have since declined. Meadow pipits have not featured as regularly as usual so far this winter, but ten were seen on 7th. A total of ten magpies on 7th were the most I had recorded since March, when I counted 28. Also of note were 11 cormorants flying over on 21st, as there have been so few flights of these reptilian birds

up and down the valley in the past year. Similarly, movements of greylag and Canada geese seem to be a thing of the past. A kingfisher was seen once and a sparrowhawk (above, a male feasting on a collared dove) also put in one appearance.

It may seem as though we are just entering winter, but the birds have other ideas. As the days become perceptibly longer, so more species are clearing their throats and lifting our spirits each day. Particularly pleasing was the sound of a mistle thrush (right) in full flow on 28th, its clear, clarion call flung out exuberantly from the very top of a tall tree. Not everyone realises that we have two species of thrush; the song thrush, formerly a common bird, renowned for its habit of smashing snails on favoured “anvils”, is a frequent visitor to gardens, and is generally referred to simply as a “thrush”. The much scarcer mistle thrush is less regularly seen in towns, though still fairly widespread. Somewhat larger than a song thrush, the mistle thrush has a rather greyish plumage in contrast to the fairly warm brown of the song thrush, and the spots on its breast are round, whilst those of its smaller cousin are in the form of little chevrons.



*Common gull and mistle thrush photos courtesy of Dave Smith;
sparrowhawk photo courtesy of Stephen Brooks*

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