



Three Rivers District Council

# Rickmansworth Aquadrome

Initial Steering Group Workshop: Record Report

1181

24 October 2025



## RSK General Notes

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This work has been undertaken in accordance with the quality management system of RSK Environment Ltd.

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# 1 Introduction

This short report sets out the findings from an initial workshop with the Rickmansworth Aquadrome Landscape and Environmental Design Project Steering Group, held at Rickmansworth Golf Club on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025. The workshop formed part of a wider project update meeting hosted by Charlotte Gomes and Jo Copley of Three Rivers District Council. The workshop was facilitated by Andrew Tempany and Christopher Wright of RSK, Alexander Rosenberg of LinkyThinks and Christine Echtner and Beth Green of Haley Sharpe.

The workshop took the form of an introductory presentation about the project, scope and intent by RSK. This was followed by an initial warm-up exercise on linguistic framing and evocation of place from LinkyThinks and then two break-out sessions with four groups running in parallel (two for each session):

- interpretive benchmarking hosted by Haley Sharpe with supporting illustrative/precedent imagery, and
- key site assets, potential and issues, as perceived by participants, hosted by RSK.

The latter took the form of tagged and located map annotations on a large format aerial photograph of the site.

The key messages from the above three exercises are summarised overleaf.

## 2 Exercise 1: Linguistic Framing

### 2.1 Key messages

- Presentation of the concept of linguistic framing, whereby words are used to both describe and shape an experience.
- Discussing the limitations of fact-based, information-driven education and a move toward a more experiential approach to learning.
- Groups were encouraged to think of creative collective nouns for animals, with examples such as 'a lamentation of swans', 'a murmuration of starlings' given as poetic examples. Groups came up with playful and abstract ideas such as 'a gingeration of foxes' and 'a bothering of badgers'.
- The groups were given some leaves with new vocabulary written on them, prompting discussion about what they might mean. Words like *apricity*, *eolian*, *petrichor*, *flânerie*, *viridescent*, *anemoia*, *crepuscular*, *sussurus*, *sonorous* were presented as examples that reflect poetic observation of nature.
- This was followed by discussion of the kinds of experiences people associate with the Aquadrome and what kinds of messaging/emotional responses we want to elicit from future engagement with it.
- Conversations took place about how standard information boards, poetry and art can be potentially unapproachable. Solutions could involve a more deconstructed approach that takes visitors on journeys through the landscape via words, textures and guided activities to provide context and accessibility.

## 3 Exercise 2: Interpretive Benchmarking

### 3.1 Key messages

- Storytelling interventions can draw from natural, historical, industrial and social heritage sources with the overall aim being to increase appreciation of the site.
- Interactive ideas were popular, e.g. tactiles, brass rubbing, sensory and full body play initiatives. Participants in the workshop responded well to 'look down and up' initiatives and other ideas that would draw audiences to explore areas of the site that are not on the main pathways. Sculptures should have added interpretation.
- There was an eagerness for visitors to have opportunities to interact with the natural assets of the site, including wildlife, through initiatives that encourage and facilitate engagement.
- Littering and environmental consciousness should be addressed in the interpretation, creating a greater appreciation of the natural habitats.
- It was universally identified that it is particularly important to keep the "wild" feel of the site.
- Concern was expressed about the potential for interpretation initiatives dating.
- There was also concern around the impact of the flooding onsite with regards to any interpretive material.
- Positive feedback was expressed for natural play ideas, if these are not disruptive to the natural aspects of the site.
- Concern was articulated around the security of the site and impact on interpretation materials. It was remarked that these would need to be made of inexpensive/easily replicable materials (e.g. plastics rather than metal) and robust.
- Durability and low maintenance solutions should be considered for all interpretive solutions.
- The entrances to the site should clearly communicate that this is the start of a local nature reserve and reveal more of the special character and quality of the site/to foretell what awaits visitors.
- Signage and wayfinding should also consider demarcations from the wider landscape and townscape (i.e. the walk from the train station and associated orientation).

## **4 Exercise 3: Site assets, potential and issues**

### **4.1 Key messages**

- The key findings from this exercise are summarised on the annotated aerial photograph overleaf. This captures the observations made by the participants in all the breakout groups on key assets, potential and issues/areas for improvement, as seen by them.
- The spatial tagging and numbering on the image overleaf reflects the locational notes as positioned on the paper copy maps on the day by participants, as do the comments in the right-hand margin of the image, albeit with some editing and where high levels of duplication of responses occurred.



RICKMANSWORTH AQUADROME

STEERING GROUP WORKSHOP RESPONSE  
- EXERCISE 3

- KEY
- Positives
  - Areas to improve

No.	Comment
1	Lovely entry point into the Aquadrome from Ladbroke Road. Very attractive bridge, please maintain
2	Low the flow of water here but make bridge higher so it doesn't flood.
3	Good water-based activities but don't like the motorised boats in the lake.
4	Very nice to see the grassy areas - not to them. For people just to sit. Keep plants a few trees and bushes.
5	Beautiful glades. Very tropical, please continue not to do earth moving. It feels much more natural.
6	Very nice to see the grassy areas - not to them. For people just to sit. Keep plants a few trees and bushes.
7	Like the cafe and space in nature to sit and drink.
8	Beautiful space for walking or running. General outdoor enjoyment.
9	Great to have an adult gym though I have to admit that my grandchildren like trying out the
10	Dog free picnic area with abundant trees. More play/space that are natural.
11	Private area can get better.
12	Beautiful walk in the woods.
13	Beautiful walk in the woods.
14	Unimproved area for discovery.
15	Unimproved area for discovery.
16	River Colne Pathway along river is a lot!
17	Kids, family and pet, children and teenagers, excellent walk.
18	Green - early morning.
19	Early like the first viewing platform where you can get lovely views of Batchworth Lake. I would
20	Early like the first viewing platform where you can get lovely views of Batchworth Lake. I would
21	Beautiful space to view and well used by lots of adults and children.
22	A lovely place to sit and feed from plants to the ducks. Much more accessible than it used to be.
23	Love the new bridge.
24	Love the new bridge.
25	So many people use the lake so please keep them.
26	So many people use the lake so please keep them.
27	Middle island inaccessible.
28	Middle island inaccessible.
29	Good variety of recreational activities across the lake sites - new advertisement.
30	Good variety of recreational activities across the lake sites - new advertisement.

No.	Comment
1	Connectivity between town, Colne Valley, Elvish Way and canal.
2	Connectivity between town, Colne Valley, Elvish Way and canal.
3	Connectivity between town, Colne Valley, Elvish Way and canal.
4	Connectivity between town, Colne Valley, Elvish Way and canal.
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