

Summary of Response to Feedback on Environmental Impact Study (EIS) for Woodlands North

I. Site context & milestones

Woodlands North is about 23 hectares and has largely been zoned 'Residential (subject to detailed planning)' since the Master Plan 2003.



Figure 1: Zoning of Woodlands North according to Gazetted Master Plan 2019

In 2018, HDB engaged an external consultant to conduct an EIS ([link to full report here](#)). The purpose of the EIS was to better understand the existing topography, hydrology, water quality, flora and fauna, the likely impact of HDB's development plans, and ways to minimise and mitigate against potential environmental impacts. A summary of the EIS findings and recommendations can be found [here](#).

II. Engagement with Stakeholders

Together with NParks, URA, JTC and PUB, HDB carried out engagement sessions with Nature Group representatives. These sessions provided opportunities for various parties to come together to share their perspectives and reach a common understanding on Singapore's land use needs and challenges, and to co-create solutions to address the various concerns for this area in Woodlands.

The EIS report was published online for public feedback from 14 Oct 2021 to 11 Nov 2021. In total, we received 39 responses via HDB's feedback channels.

III. Feedback received

We value all feedback received and have reviewed them in detail.

While there were concerns over the long-term impact of land clearance on climate change and the existing natural habitat, among the feedback, some also voiced support for the recommended mitigating strategies, such as the retention of the proposed core conservation area (CCA) and for the road connecting Riverside Road to the future Woodlands North Coast Road to avoid the CCA.

Others acknowledged the value of Sungei Cina mangroves found within Admiralty Park while a few expressed concerns that the EIS was not conducted during the avian migratory season, which may have affected bird species observed.

A few suggestions were raised by some respondents, as follows:

- 1) Confining future development to cleared areas within Woodlands North
- 2) Increasing the size of the proposed CCA
- 3) Providing connection between Woodlands North area and Mandai Mangrove and Mudflat to facilitate wildlife movement

IV. Responses to feedback

A) Balancing development and conservation to meet the needs of Singapore within a city

Demand for public housing has increased significantly in recent years due to marriage and family formation, as well as changing social norms and aspirations. The overall number of applications received per Build-To-Order (BTO) flat has risen from 3.7 times in 2019 to 5.5 times in 2021. Thus, to meet the strong housing demand, there are plans to launch up to 100,000 flats from 2021 to 2025, if needed, as announced by HDB recently.

Moreover, there are plans to enhance the position of Woodlands as the northern regional centre and gateway to Singapore through the expansion of the Woodlands Regional Centre, as unveiled under HDB's Remaking Our Heartland (ROH)¹ initiative in 2017. The expanded Woodlands Regional Centre, which comprises Woodlands Central and Woodlands North Coast, will introduce new business and residential developments that are expected to be supported by the recently completed Woodlands North Station and the upcoming Johor Bahru-Singapore Rapid Transit System. The expanded Woodlands Regional Centre is anticipated to be a significant employment cluster that brings jobs to homes in the Northern Region.

Where we can, developments are carried out on brownfield sites so that greenery areas can be kept for as long as possible. However, Woodlands has been built-up over the years with limited remaining brownfield sites and the available brownfield sites in Woodlands have been safeguarded for various uses. Hence, there is a need for the development of housing at Woodlands North to support the strong housing demand as well as the expansion plans for the Woodlands Regional Centre.

That said, we recognise that there is a need to develop sensitively. We have therefore worked with agencies and Nature Groups to adopt the EIS recommendations. The proposed mitigating measures outlined in Sections 7, 8 and 9 of the EIS report will also be adopted throughout the course of the development to minimise both short- and long-term impacts. A specialist consultant will also be engaged to develop an Environmental Monitoring and Management

¹ ROH is a comprehensive rejuvenation blueprint to renew and further develop existing HDB towns and estates.

Plan (EMMP) to mitigate and manage potential environmental impacts arising from the development, and closely monitor works at the different stages of development.

B) Revised land use plan for Woodlands North

Taking into consideration the suggested mitigation measures as well as public feedback received, the revised conceptual land use plan for Woodlands North will feature 4 key components.

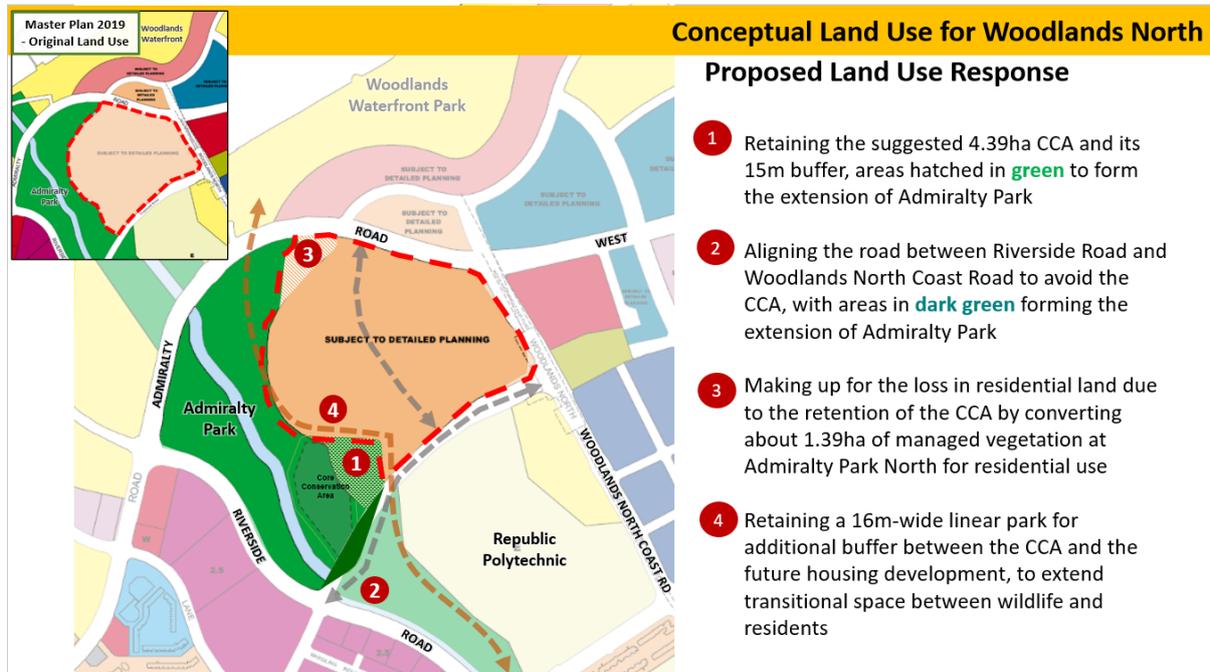


Figure 2: Conceptual land use plan for Woodlands North

Biophilic design strategies will be adopted, as guided by HDB's Biophilic Town Framework so that future residents can better connect with nature and enjoy its intrinsic benefits. Urban design strategies that respect the local ecological context will also be implemented.

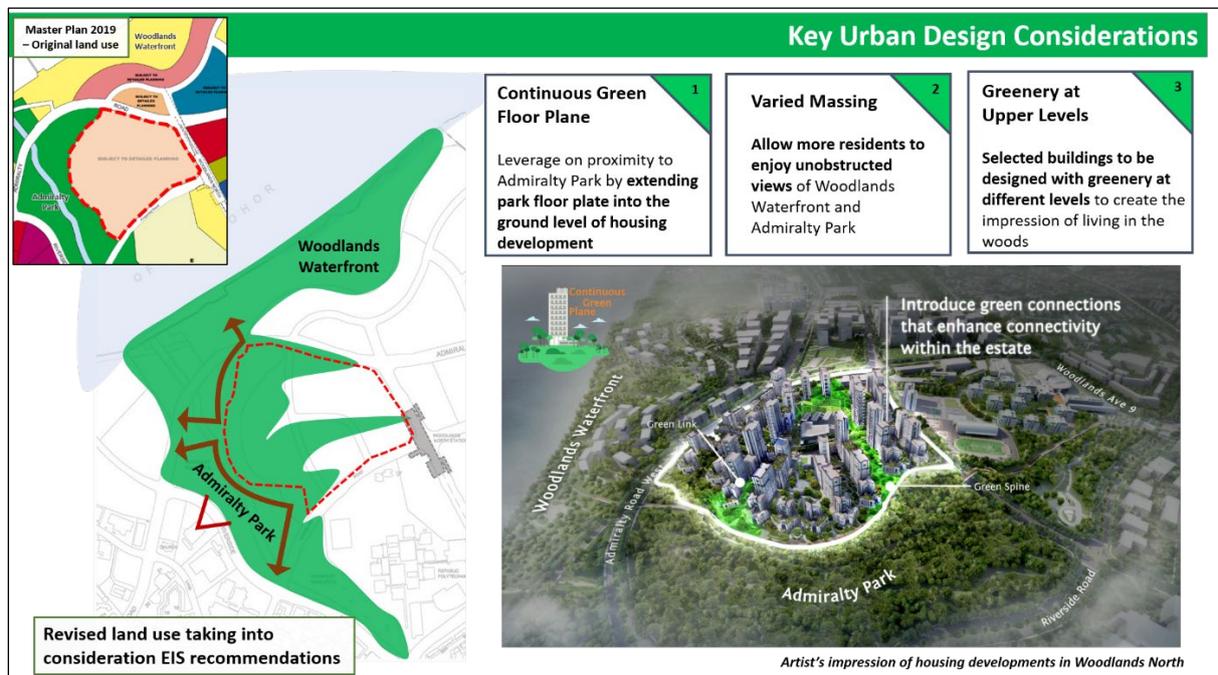


Figure 3: Key urban design considerations for Woodlands North development

With the implementation of suggested mitigation measures, the EIS demonstrates that the resultant impact significance on all environmental parameters is “Minor” or lower, as shown in Sections 7, 8 and 9 of the EIS.

C) Suggestions to increase the size of the CCA to minimise ecological and social impact

The EIS identified an area of about 4.39ha for the proposed CCA, which comprises rare and native vegetation types, a high concentration of large trees and flora species of conservation significance as well as a freshwater stream that sustains this vegetation. Taking into consideration the EIS findings, we have adjusted our plans and are proposing to retain the full 4.39ha CCA. About three quarter of the CCA currently falls within Admiralty Park. Retaining the full CCA entails converting part of the safeguarded land for residential to form an extension of Admiralty Park. This will safeguard the ecological connectivity to the larger Admiralty Park. This proposed 4.39ha CCA is assessed to be sufficient in capturing representative habitats (i.e., native-dominated freshwater swamp forest, native-dominated low secondary forest, and a freshwater stream) and the assemblage of species found within the proposed CCA is similar to that found within Admiralty Park.

A 15m buffer will also be implemented around the proposed CCA to reduce the effect of an abrupt transition to urban landscape. This width is determined by the height of existing trees so that in the event of tree failure, trees are less likely to fall within the CCA and hence not compromising its integrity.

In addition, we are proposing to implement another 16m-wide linear park between the CCA with its 15m buffer and the future residential development, which extends the transitional space between wildlife and residents. The recreational corridor will feature a 1.9km scenic

community link with dedicated cycling, pedestrian paths, rest points and a generous planting buffer that connect Woodlands Central to the Woodlands Waterfront.

In terms of wider ecological connectivity, the plans for Woodlands North have also been accounted in NParks' island-wide Ecological Profiling Exercise (EPE)² for the wider Kranji-Woodlands area.

D) Validity of avian field surveys carried out

Bird species observed during the field surveys carried out for the EIS is representative of the species found in the area. The surveys commenced in April and extended well into October, which sufficiently covered the start of the avian migratory season. The stretch from September to March is generally recognised as the avian migratory season, according to NParks' Biodiversity Impact Assessment Guidelines (2020).

V. Conclusion

The Government regularly reviews our plans to ensure that they remain relevant to the changing needs of Singaporeans and will only develop sites when necessary, after all options have been considered. As responsible land stewards, agencies will continue to assess our various land use needs, as well as social, economic and environmental considerations when reviewing and implementing plans.

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² This exercise seeks to map the ecological profile of vegetated and forested areas across Singapore to better understand their role as biodiversity refugia and/or for ecological connectivity. More details on the EPE for this area will be shared by NParks subsequently.