

PDC Design Questionnaire

PAGE1

Before I start asking you more specific questions would you tell me what is your overall impression of this piece of land as it is now?

G. I am ashamed of it, it's a bit depressing and somewhere to get past quickly and not look at too closely! As a front garden and on our roadside it should be a bit of a showcase and it really isn't! It is difficult to keep looking good and this is hard because it is the first thing our guests and visitor see. There has been some planting but it wasn't really planned properly- it was done on the hoof a bit. Stuart was keen to get some elements of a chicken forage system there and he bought and arranged some plants. I don't think in its current state it meets anyone's needs, not ours, not the guests and not the chickens'.

S. It's scruffy

What do you like about this piece of land and what elements specifically do you want to keep? Why do you want to keep these elements?

S. I like the three trees in a triangle because they give height. I like the willow patch but I have a feeling it's too big, but it could be coppiced, that would sort it out. I like the bank of green that separated it from the garden behind, the loft garden. I also like it wherever there is colour in the hedge line at the front. I specifically want to keep the sense of height surrounded by vegetation.

G. I like the elder trees for several reasons; they give us elder flowers and berries which I crop and use and also attract birds and insects. Also in the future when we let the home we are currently living in they screen the view from the bedroom to what will be our private garden.

I like the willow. I think it has done well it and screens the flower meadow area without casting too much shade. The chickens like it too.

I like some of the mature shrubs in the hedge.

I love the colour of the yellow acacia in the bank and I am sorry it is so slow growing!

I like the comfrey although I would prefer it if it were grouped around the trees better, it looks a bit haphazard in planting.

The Siberian Pea Shrubs are quite attractive but they are hidden behind the willow and also I fear that the pods are very small and won't deliver seed. I think they may be a more decorative strain rather than a productive strain.

What don't you like and what do you specifically want to get rid of? Why do you want to get rid of these elements?

PAGE 2

S. I don't like the elder by the chicken house because it is too big. I don't necessarily want to get rid of it but it could be pruned. The same goes for the elder by the electricity pylon. I don't like the gaps in the hedge line and I would like those filled in so there is a bank of colour.

G. I don't like the gorse bushes very much. I think they make the area look like a neglected roadside, they are very spiky and difficult to manage and I haven't seen the chickens in any way interested in them.

I would like to get rid of the lumpy edge as it is impossible to mow and looks messy.

Linked to that I would like to get rid of the standing water that collects in the corner. I believe if we opened up the drain we could channel the water into it.

If I am honest I'm not that happy with the planted trees. They do give height but I feel they would have grown better and with a nicer shape if they had been smaller. Two out of the three are now directly under the new power-lines. The rowan is particularly disappointing, as it looks very spartan and unhealthy looking.

I don't like the mulberry tree, as it resembles a twisted dwarf! It is an odd, stunted little thing and the fruits are very small. I don't feel it delivers on any front.

What do you feel is currently 'easy' about this space'?

S. The only think that doesn't really need maintaining is the willow patch. Nothing much is easy about this site.

G. It is easy to access from both our current house and our projected new house. There is a nice looped walk round from the house, through this area, past the polytunnel or compost and round. I like that. . The central area is quite flat so it should be easy to maintain.

What for you is 'difficult or problematic' about this area?

G. The most difficult thing is that it is almost impossible to keep looking good. The only thing we can do is mow round the weeds and even that is limited. It is frustrating and takes more time that it should.

S. The bindweed, thistles and other perennial weeds. The whole place needs weeding. The comfrey is quite dominant.

What resources does this area have already?

S. It has a chicken house on it but that needs rebuilding.

G. It has the chicken house but we are agreed that this needs a rebuild. There is a possibility of running rain water there as we have an unused roof run off which could be channelled there. We now have two varieties of comfrey planted there and these won't be able to be moved so we could see them as a resource.

What currently takes time here?

S. We are currently not spending much time here at all and it shows because it has got out of hand. This is because we have so many other things to do.

G. Mowing- it takes much longer than it should. We don't do much here because it feels a bit over whelming and a bit of a waste of time because it will just look the same in a few weeks! I think we are both aware the 'ad-hoc' design isn't working but with so many other things going on it gets left alone.

As it is what do you have to do to maintain this area, i.e. what do you currently have to 'input'?

S. Currently we do a quick mow, which is awkward because of the slopes and uneven edges and round the drain area.

G. We have to mow it to keep it looking half decent and this involves an awkward slope, a lumpy edge, a blocked drain which is impossible to mow over, clumps of shrubs with weeds growing in and around them which are gradually taking over and impossible to get at because the plants are spiky (gorse and Pyracantha) . We also have to input time with the chickens, we clean them out weekly, we can't currently get the wheelbarrow in the chicken house and part of the rebuild would look at this.

What do you want or need from this area, i.e. what do you want the 'outputs' to be?

G. We want a beautiful area that is easy to maintain, that is also a good area for the chickens.

S. I want this area to have a high aesthetic value for paying gite guests when they arrive. It is the first thing they see and I want them to think they have arrived at a beautiful quality place.

What resources to you have to make any changes? Please think in terms of time, money, existing materials etc.

G. We do have some time to do this as this is our work, we don't have to fit it in at the weekends. We can also spend some money on things like fencing and possible earth and plant moving.

PAGE 4

S. I am prepared to spend some money on earth moving and fencing, as they will be one off costs. I am also prepared to re build the chicken house and move some plants.

Do you want to implement this design quickly or slowly over time?

S. This are needs to be ready by this coming Spring so we need to do the work this winter.

G. We really want this done by the Spring, ideally during the winter as I would love to start mulching out new beds but the chickens just scratch it all away! Also I think we will affect our business if we don't up our game.

How much time do you have realistically to maintain this area?

G. Really only about an hour a week, so we are talking about a quick mow, a bit of dead heading and pruning once a year. On top of that there are daily visits to the chickens of course putting them away, checking their water etc. If we took rounding up the chickens each day out of the equation this would give back a bit more time.

S. About an hour a week

What is your vision for this land?

S. I want it to be some sort of chicken forage area, but from my reading I think it may not be enough on its own. So it needs to be a chicken friendly area, which can be supplemented with additional pasture and other areas. I want it to be beautiful and have a rose hedge, perhaps even some espalier fruit on the inside.

G. I would like it to look lovely, a classy cottage garden style that has all the features of an ideal chicken area. I want to be proud of it. I think a nice wooden fence with pink roses, buddleia perpetual geraniums and bulbs on the outside perhaps! A neat edge and then behind the fence a great chicken area full of happy good looking birds doing their thing.

What functions do you want/need this area to fulfil?

G. It needs to be a 'welcome mat' for our business, a showcase for them and for our neighbours. In a way front gardens are like good manners, they are important to keep nice so everyone can get on, they're a sign of respect I feel. Regarding the chickens this will be their prime space, even if they are pastured around the place at other times.

S. It needs to have a chicken coop with a run that they could be securely kept in if we need to be out for the day for example. It needs to house about 12 chickens. It

needs to be a fenced chicken friendly area that they can forage in, and it needs to be welcoming and beautiful for paying guests

If this is intended to be a chicken forage area, from your observations of the birds free ranging, what areas do they particularly like and why?

S. Chickens like mulch, they like hiding out in the willow patch, they like shelter from the rain, shade and a dust bath.

G. They love the covered area as it gives shelter and dust bath space. They love mulch and scratch it up wherever they can get to it, which is one of the reasons I need them fenced in! They eat a lot of grass seed heads, dandelion flowers etc. They hang around the compost heaps a lot as there are rich pickings there. They also sit in our front door area as it gives warmth and shelter.

What is your understanding of an ideal chicken forage area?

G. Ideally a chicken forage area would deliver all a chickens needs in a growing system. This would be a forest as they would be in the wild. So a man made forge system would deliver the conditions and plants that encourage insects and seeds, fruit etc and also provides security and shelter.

S. Having done more reading I am less convinced now that fruit and nut trees will do much in delivering food for chickens over a twelve month period. I believe that systems which encourage insects plus grasses as food would be good.

What would make this area good as a chicken forage area?

S. A good secure pen and plenty of plants and insects for them. I am sure we will need to move them around though.

G. The following elements do it for me

- The willow area is good as it provides shelter and also leaf litter.
- An area for deep mulch that the chickens can scratch perhaps bordered so it is contained.
- A log pile which can be moved periodically to encourage insects
- An area of water, with reeds and other plants to encourage insects and also as drinking water
- A fruit tree, like a pretty small apple tree or cherry as they give very pretty blossom and the chicken would eat the fruit.
- A long grass patch sown with other grains
- A bit of a wild patch that the chickens can scratch about in
- A covered area, maybe sandy to encourage dust bathing. This may need to be covered at night to prevent cats using it.
- A coop with a protected run that the chickens could be housed in at night and during the day on odd occasion.

PAGE 6

What would be bad about it?

G. If it was scratched bare and looked miserable! So that means we need to look at stocking density carefully and also the possibility of 'folding' the chickens into neighbouring areas for some times to rest the space.

S. It is important to get the stocking density right so what I don't want is the chickens to scratch the area bare.