

REVITALISING
THE RIVER

ST ALBANS



Our Outline Proposals

Reach 3 – From Holywell Hill to Cottonmill Lane Allotments

19 March 2018

Reach 3 overview

Reach 3 covers the River Ver from Holywell Hill to the start of Cottonmill Allotments – see maps below.

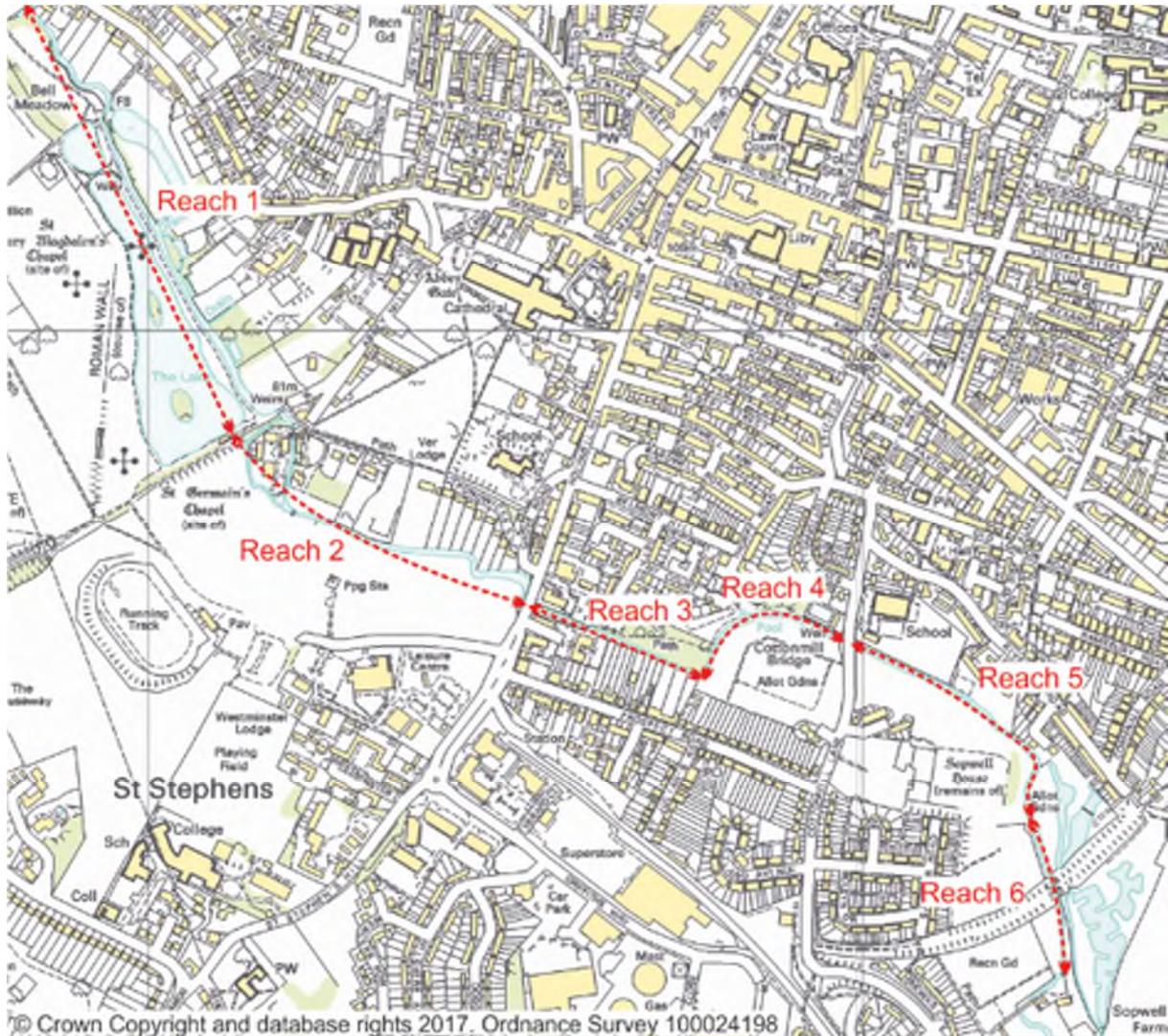


Image 1 – Map of all reaches



Image 2 - Map of reach 3

In this reach the River Ver has a straight, over-wide channel, constrained by properties to the south and woodland to the north. The channel is very heavily shaded by trees over the entire reach, which limits aquatic and marginal plant growth. The river is in a poor condition and shows very few chalk stream characteristics. Access along the river is uneven and very narrow in places.

Current levels of groundwater abstraction from the underlying chalk aquifer are planned to be reduced in the near future. This will return the groundwater table and river flows to more natural levels. As a result, some of the low lying areas in the woodland that are already boggy and marshy for some of the time, will become wetter more often.

Our proposed plans will significantly improve the river habitat and offer improvements to access and amenity along with accommodating the upcoming changes as a result of the abstraction reductions.

Issues and constraints overview

This plan shows the range of issues which currently affect the river and the constraints within which we are working to develop solutions. Click on the plan to open it in a separate pdf, which will allow you to zoom in and see the detail. Further information on the issues is provided in the following sections of the report.

Issues and constraints for Reach 3 - River Ver Restoration From Holywell Hill to Cottonmill Lane Allotments



Issues in reach 3

The river in reach 3 is very straight and suffers from a range of issues which compromise habitat quality and diversity. Little in the way of characteristic chalk stream features can be seen and the value of the river for wildlife is low as a result. The issues with this reach are:

- Over-wide and straight – all through this reach the river is too wide and unnaturally straight, which slows the flow.
- Low flows – due to abstraction pressure.
- Silty – as a result of the above factors, the gravel river bed is smothered in silt in many places.

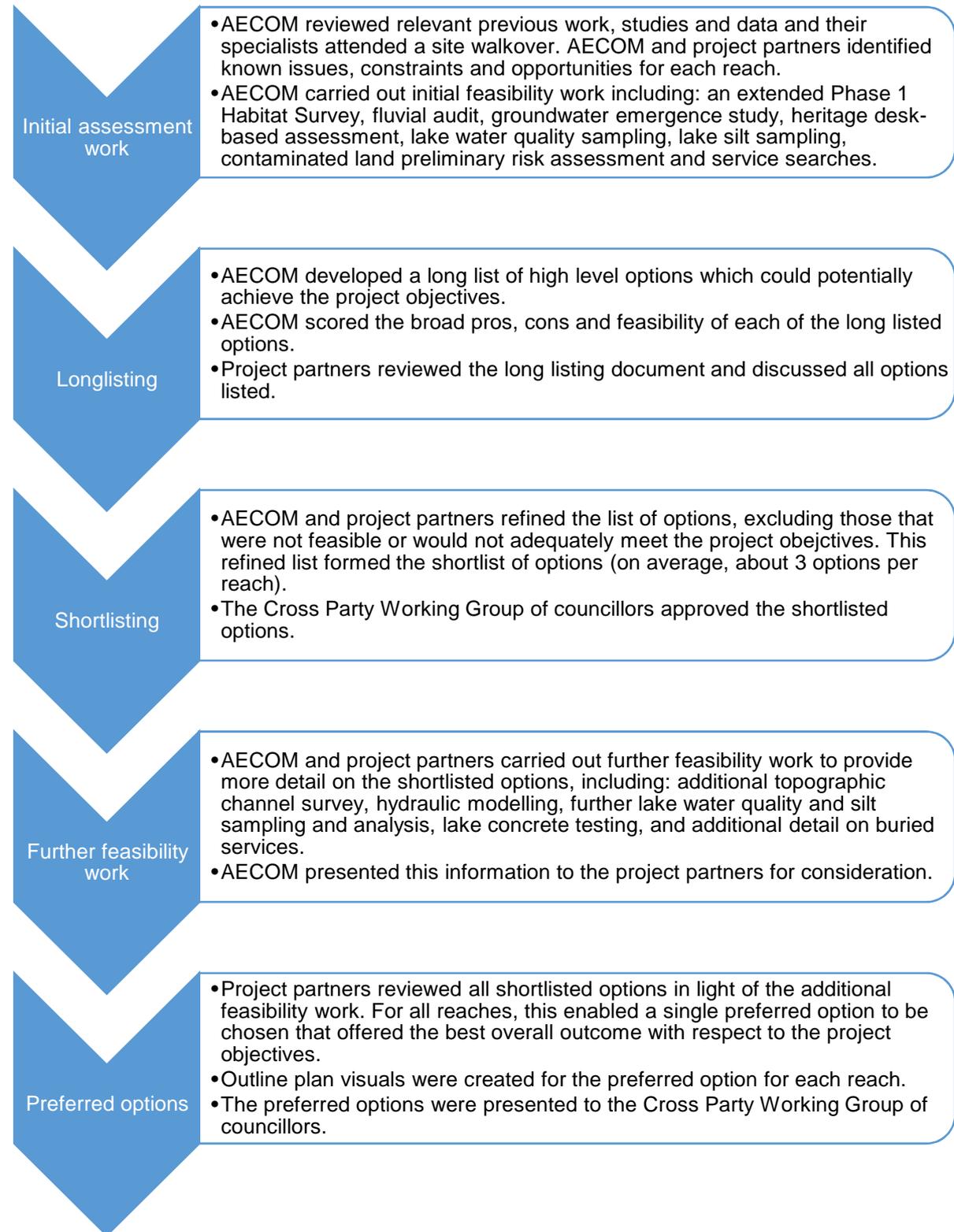
- Lack of habitat and flow diversity – the river habitat is all very similar and degraded in nature which severely limits the wildlife it can support.
- Heavy shading – trees line the banks of the river for all of this reach and the resulting heavy shade blocks light to the river and restricts plant growth.
- Bank protection – there is piecemeal concrete bank protection through this reach.
- Groundwater re-emergence – it is likely that some areas of the woodland to the north of the channel will become wetter more often as a result of planned abstraction reductions.

All of these issues are explained in more detail [here](#).

Option selection process

How we got to our outline proposals

For each of the six reaches, AECOM and the project partners worked through the process show below to identify the best overall option to meet the three project objectives.



Long and shortlisting

The longlisting stage for this reach considered four different options to improve the river. Two of these options were shortlisted for more detailed consideration:

Option number	Description
2	Re-alignment of the downstream half of the river channel through the woodland to the north. Pond creation in the woodland.
4	Maintain the existing river course and improve the channel

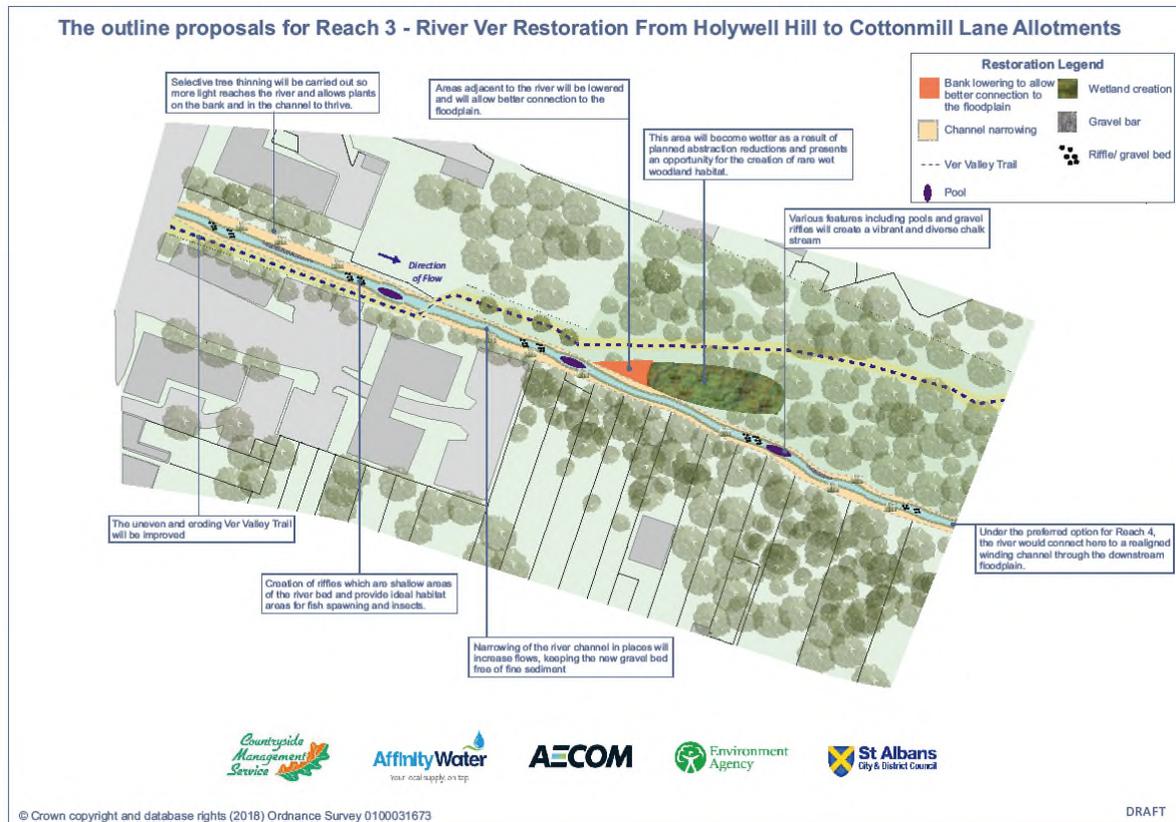
The decision we reached was to take forward option 4.

Although option 2 offered slightly greater potential for improvements to the river, the existing ecological value of the woodland area and the archaeology of the area could have been too severely affected. It was also considered that most of the benefits to the river could be achieved through works within the current channel extent, so option 4 still offered a positive environmental outcome.

Option 4 retains the current course of the river, but creates in-channel flow diversity through restoration of natural channel features. It also narrows the over-wide river channel to enable faster river flows to keep the gravel bed free of silt. Selective tree works will be carried out to increase light levels reaching the river to encourage marginal and in-channel plants to establish. It also includes floodplain reconnection to the north and the creation of wet woodland in the area of groundwater emergence. Improvements to the Ver Valley Trail are also included within this option.

Outline proposals

This is the outline proposed plan for reach 3. Click on the plan to open it in a separate pdf which will allow you to zoom in and see the detail.



Our proposals will dramatically improve the state of the river through this reach. By narrowing the channel, installing in-channel features and letting more light into the channel we can expect a much more natural looking and healthy chalk stream. Another key improvement will be to improve the degraded path to allow better access.

Next steps

We would like to hear what you think of the proposed plans, both for this reach and any others you are interested in. There is a survey on St Albans City and District Council's website [here](#) where you can leave us your feedback.

We are organising engagement events for stakeholders which will be held over the coming months. Feedback from the survey and these events will be used to refine the outline plans.

Once we have agreed the proposed option, we will carry out further feasibility studies that are necessary to help inform the detailed designs. The detailed designs will then be developed and any necessary permissions will be sought. Alongside this, we will also begin to identify potential sources of funding to deliver the plans.

There will be many other opportunities throughout this process for you to have your say. We hope you share our enthusiasm for this fantastic opportunity to achieve significant benefits and that you will help us shape the proposals to achieve the best possible outcomes for people and wildlife in St Albans.

