

REVITALISING  
THE RIVER  
  
ST ALBANS



## **Our Outline Proposals**

### **Reach 6 – From the Watercress Wildlife Site to Sopwell Mill Farm**

**19 March 2018**

## Reach 6 overview

Reach 6 covers the River Ver from the Watercress Wildlife Site to Sopwell Mill Farm – see maps below.

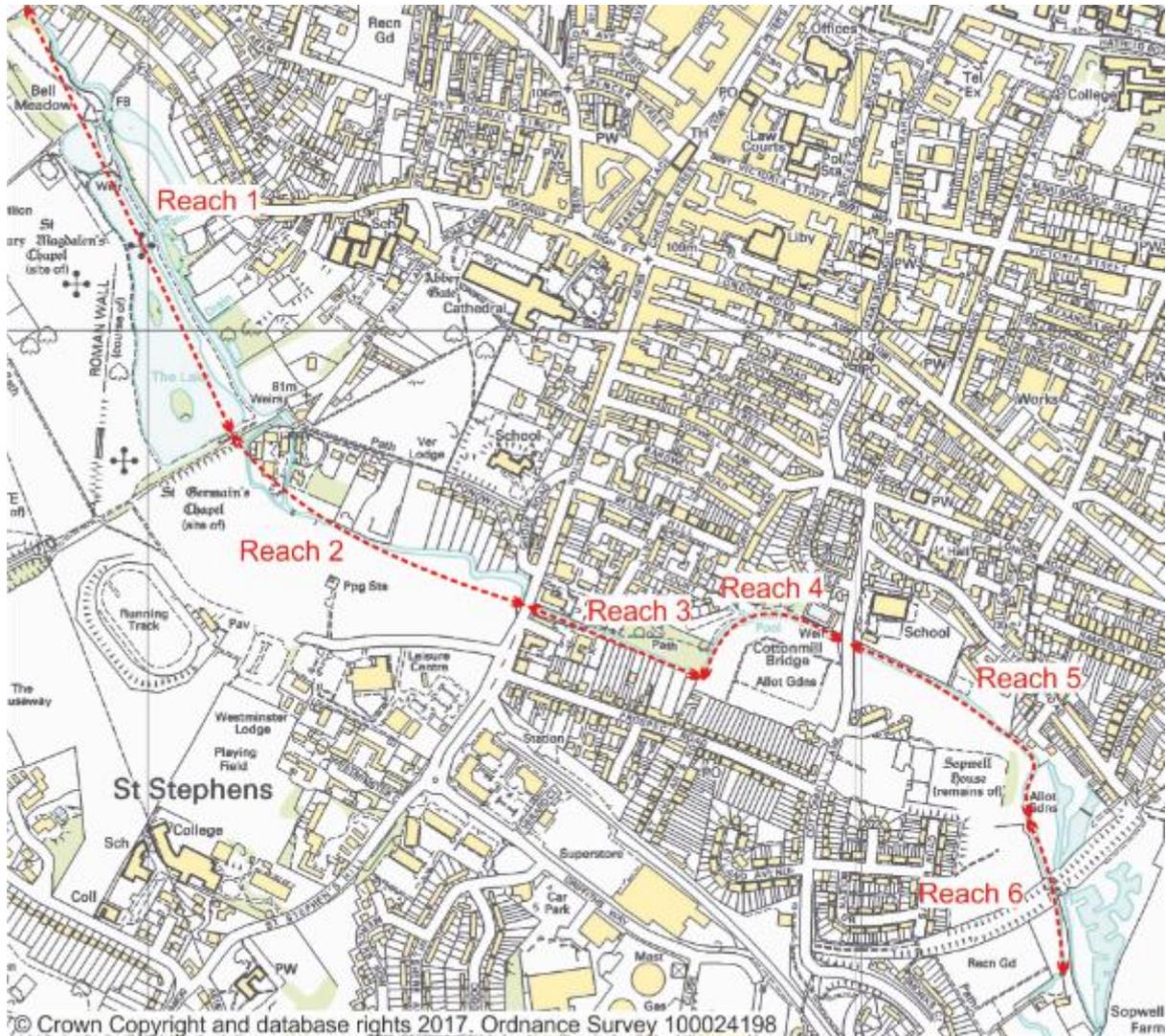


Image 1 – Map of all reaches



*Image 2 – reach six*

To the north of the Alban Way, there is a wildlife site to the east of the river and allotments to the west. To the south of the Alban Way, there are fishing lakes to the east and open parkland to the west.

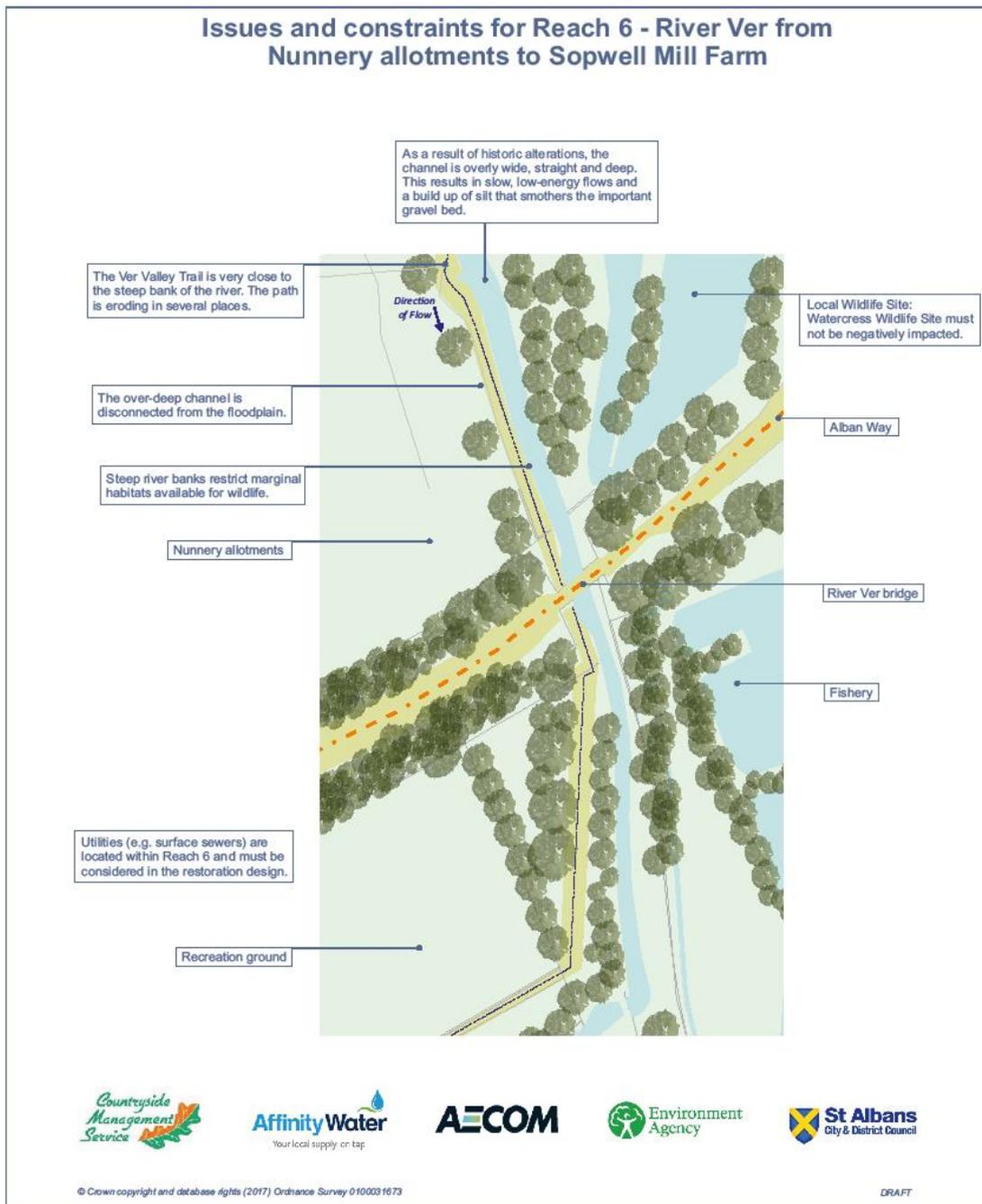
The Ver Valley Trail runs very close to the river along its west bank upstream of the Alban Way. The banks are very steep and the path is eroding in places.

As a result of historic alterations, the channel is overly-wide, straight and deep. This results in slow flows and consequently a build-up of silt that smothers the natural gravel bed.

Our proposals will introduce channel enhancements to narrow the channel, improve the flows and re-establish the gravel bed. Upstream of the Alban Way, they also include improvements to the path and regrading of the river banks to create space for marginal plants that provide vital habitat for a range of species.

## 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 in reach 6

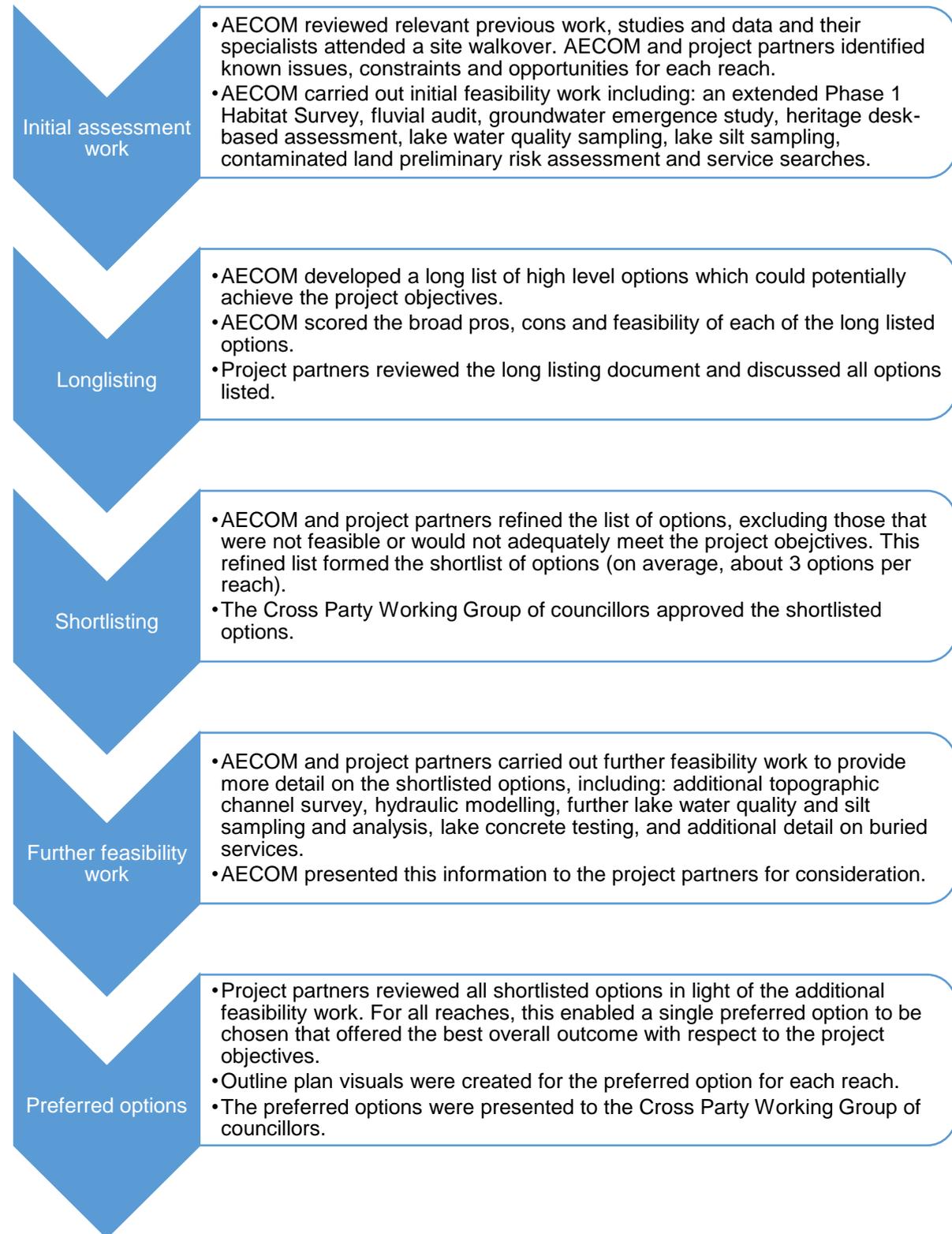
The river in reach 6 above the Alban Way is in a poor condition and the path alongside is narrow and eroding in many places. The downstream section of channel is in a better state, mainly due to recent tree works to let in more light which has improved the habitat. The issues which affect this reach are:

- Over-wide and deep – the river has been over deepened and widened in the past. It is particularly over-deep upstream of the Alban Way.
- Low flows – due to abstraction pressure
- Silty – as a result of the above factors, some of the gravel river bed is smothered in silt.
- Disconnected from the floodplain – the river is disconnected from the floodplain as a result of being over-deep and the mounds of previously dredged material on the bank.
- Lack of habitat and flow diversity – some sections of this reach have little diversity of habitat or flow.
- Bank and path erosion - the path is on the edge of the steep right bank of the river and is eroding in several places due to its close proximity to the river. This erosion is made worse by dogs accessing the river from the path.

# 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 two different options to improve the river. Only one of these options was shortlisted for more detailed consideration:

Option number	Description
2	Retain and improve the existing channel

Option 2 forms our proposed option for this reach.

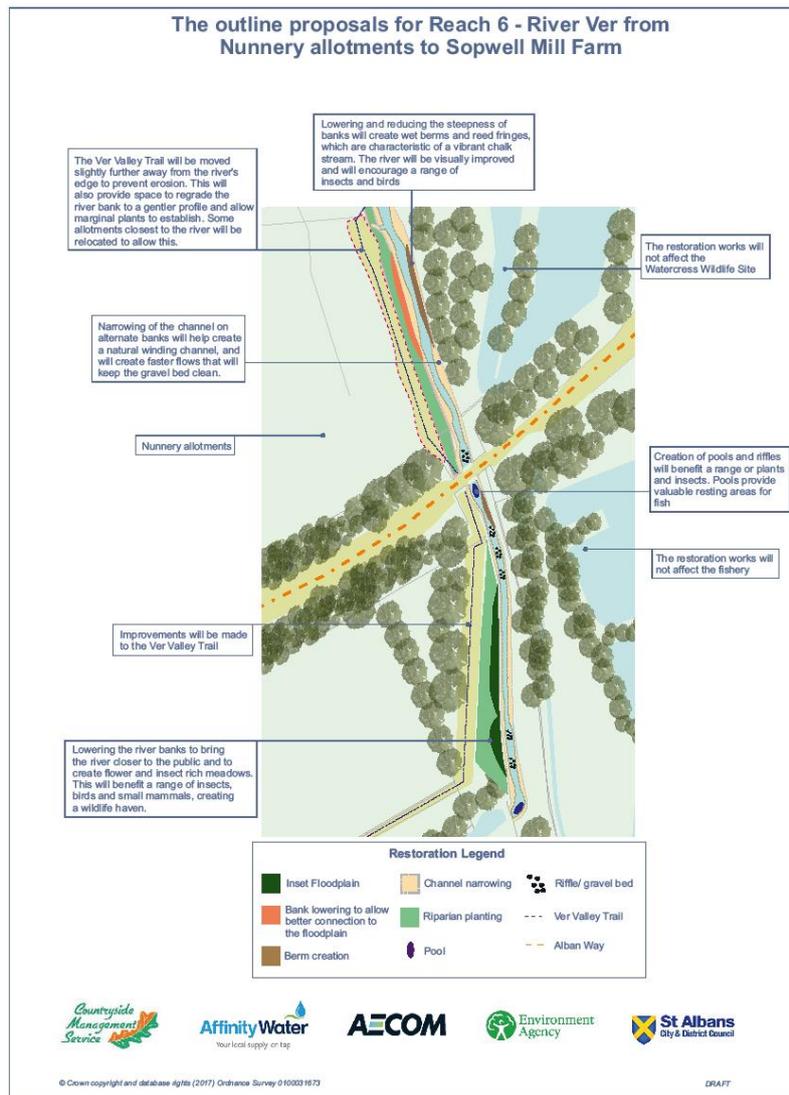
In the top half of the reach (upstream of the Alban Way), the existing channel course would be maintained, however to provide space for access improvements and stabilisation of the west bank of the river, one row of allotments closest to the river would be lost. This would provide room for the path to be set back away from the bank top and improved. The west bank would be regraded to allow marginal plants to establish and in-channel improvements would be delivered.

In the bottom half of the reach, the west bank would be lowered to create an area of marginal vegetation and in-channel enhancements would be made. The path would be set back, which would provide improved views into the river channel.

# Outline proposals

This is the outline proposed plan for reach 6 which will address many of the current problems with this reach, which were detailed earlier. Click on the plan to open it in a separate pdf which will allow you to zoom in and see the detail.

As well as making significant improvements to the river to create a more natural chalk stream, our proposals will restore the Ver Valley Trail through this reach. At present the footpath is in a poor state. Lowering the banks will allow the public to get closer to the river which will run alongside beautiful wild flower meadows, rich in wildlife.



## 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.

