



# CUNNINGHAM FIELD OPEN SPACE

## PROJECT PROPOSAL ENGAGEMENT – RESPONSE SUMMARY



# Engagement response

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## Introduction

As stated in the original project proposal, St Albans City and District Council (SADC) would like to enhance Cunningham Field Open Space for the benefit of the local community and environment. This fully funded project aims to enhance habitats for wildlife, improve all-weather access around the site, improve provision of family facilities and meet the increasing local demand for allotment gardening. This project has been developed in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council's Countryside Management Service (CMS). The aim of this public engagement was to confirm whether the projects outlined are supported by the local community.

A period of public engagement took place between Monday 5<sup>th</sup> July and Monday 26<sup>th</sup> July. A document which outlined the proposals for improving Cunningham Field Open Space (CFOS) was posted on St Albans City and District Council's website. Letters notifying local residents of the public engagement were sent to properties located closest to the site, which directed residents to the website. Posters publicising the engagement were also placed at all pedestrian entrances to CFOS; the aim being to capture the views of local residents and regular site users. This document will summarise the response received and highlights some common matters that were submitted.

## Summary of responses

### 1. Key questions

In total, 91 responses were received, 77 of which were living at properties within the catchment area defined by local council members, as a result their votes were weighted 2:1. The potential score for each section of the questionnaire is 168, based on 77 weighted responses and 14 non-weighted responses.

Although 91 responses were received, not all sections of the questionnaire were answered within each response. Some responses did not use the feedback form at all, however votes were still counted where intent was obvious from their comments. Questions that were not answered have been omitted from the statistical analysis below. All general and additional comments have been reviewed and key themes are presented in section 2.

The table below breaks down votes for each section of the questionnaire. The results demonstrate that 71% of the respondents support the extension of Cunningham Field allotments, 63 % support the installation of a junior play area and 81% support the installation of an all-weather path. Path option A was most favoured with 47% of votes. Many respondents commented positively on the plans to improve the site's biodiversity through active woodland management, meadow creation and additional woodland and parkland tree and shrub planting.

Table 1. Summary of results with majority highlighted.

Question	Answer	Local votes (weighted)	Other votes	Total Score	Percentage (%)
Do you support the proposed extension of the allotments?	Yes	46 (92)	7	99	<b>71%</b>
	No	19 (38)	3	41	29%
Do you support the proposed installation of a junior play area?	Yes	45 (90)	5	95	<b>63%</b>
	No	26 (52)	4	56	37%
Please indicate which path option you support	A	34 (68)	6	74	<b>47%</b>
	B	13 (26)	1	27	17%
	C	9 (18)	3	21	13%
	None of the above	13 (26)	4	30	19%
	In favour of a path, but no preferred option	3 (6)	0	6	4%

## 2. Additional comments

The public engagement gave the local community an opportunity to comment further on the changes proposed at CFOS. After reviewing all comments, a few common observations and suggestions arose, these have been grouped into the following themes:

### 2.1. Antisocial behaviour: vandalism, drug abuse, mopeds

A number of residents expressed concern about antisocial behaviour witnessed at CFOS and recalled that the previous play area was eventually removed due to vandalism. The area behind the pavilion is reportedly often littered with rubbish including drug paraphernalia. A common concern from both those in favour and opposed to the new play area was that it would be subject to misuse especially after dark.

Respondents also described mopeds being driven across the field with little care for safety of other users. The entrances from Park View Close and the Dellfield steps remain open access, the staggered barrier along Footpath 65, which is designed to slow cyclists heading to and from Dellfield, is ineffective at preventing mopeds accessing the site.

**Response:** Local Councillors have been liaising closely with the Police and residents and they will press for the previously requested additional patrols to be maintained as well as investigating any further measures which can be taken to deter antisocial behaviour. Modern play area equipment is now much more robust than it used to be. However, we are very aware of these concerns and will continue to explore ways in which

mindless misuse can be deterred. Experience elsewhere shows that greater use of open spaces also encourages a positive sense of ownership amongst the local community.

Unfortunately, adding entrance structures that may inhibit moped access is also likely to affect legitimate users, for example those with mobility vehicles or prams. We strongly recommend that if users observe misuse occurring, they contact the Police on 101 for non-emergencies to help build an incidence log for the area.

## 2.2. Parking problems

There is an existing problem with parking on Park View Close and Cell Barnes Lane where resident and visitor bays are being used by members of the public. This is exacerbated during the football season, when teams use the pitches weekly. Residents are concerned that this problem could be worsened by improving the site to attract more users.

**Response:** The aim of this project is not to promote the site as a new attraction, rather, improve the greenspace for existing users and the local community. Reducing the number of football pitches from three to two could help to ease the demand for parking.

## 2.3. Night time safety

Some respondents are concerned about personal safety when passing through the site at night, requesting that installation of lighting be considered as part of this project.

**Response:** We do not recommend that members of the public walk through greenspaces, side streets or any unfamiliar environment at night. If someone does have to walk alone at night, they should plan their route to stick to well-lit areas that have CCTV cameras and where possible, are busy with activity.

Many people have commented on CFOS's unique, natural character compared to other local greenspaces. Installing lighting would urbanise this greenspace and disturb local residents, particularly those whose properties overlook the site. The addition of lighting is also counter to Hertfordshire County Council and St Albans City and District Council sustainability goals, and would be costly to install and maintain.

## 2.4. Location and choice of play area

Some residents living in Dellfield and Park View Close are unhappy about the proposed location of the play area. Some have commented that a higher volume of people live towards this end resulting in more being affected by potential noise.

Some have requested that the play equipment suits the natural character of CFOS.

**Response:** Keeping feedback in mind, the exact location and design of the play area will be carefully considered. Equipment will be selected for robustness, whilst remaining sympathetic of the character of the site surroundings.

## 2.5. Accessibility and inclusivity

Some have questioned the suitability of crushed granite paths for wheelchair users, suggesting this path surface can be more difficult to use than bound tarmac surfacing. Many have requested that park benches are installed to provide resting areas for people to sit and enjoy the park, particularly for those with limited mobility.



**Response:** Unlike tarmac, crushed granite surfacing allows for drainage and is more suited to the site's character. By opting for crushed granite, a flat and level surface will be constructed that will go hard over time with use. This surface will still improve accessibility to wheelchair and mobility vehicle users and will be installed to the correct width for the level of use. Examples of this type of path installed elsewhere in the district can be found at The Wick, How Wood and Victoria Playing Fields.

Plans to install benches around the greenspace have now been added to the project design for CFOS. This valuable addition to the project will help to improve accessibility for the local community. Placement of benches will be carefully considered to ensure suitable resting intervals are provided. SADC guidelines for memorial benches will be followed.

## **2.6. Tree planting along Footpath 65**

Residents of Park View Close have expressed concern about large trees being planted close to their properties that will obstruct views of the greenspace and may cause root disturbance.

**Response:** Being mindful of these concerns, suitable species will be planted at an appropriate density for the space. For example, small flowering cherries can be selected for this area, they are suitable for planting in spaces such as this due to their small crown and therefore small root mass. They are frequently selected for roadside planting for this reason. They are also beneficial to wildlife, providing an early source of nectar for pollinators in the spring, a leafy food source for caterpillars and several species of butterfly and moth and fruits are eaten by birds and small mammals. They are also striking when blossoming in spring and as the leaves change colour in autumn.

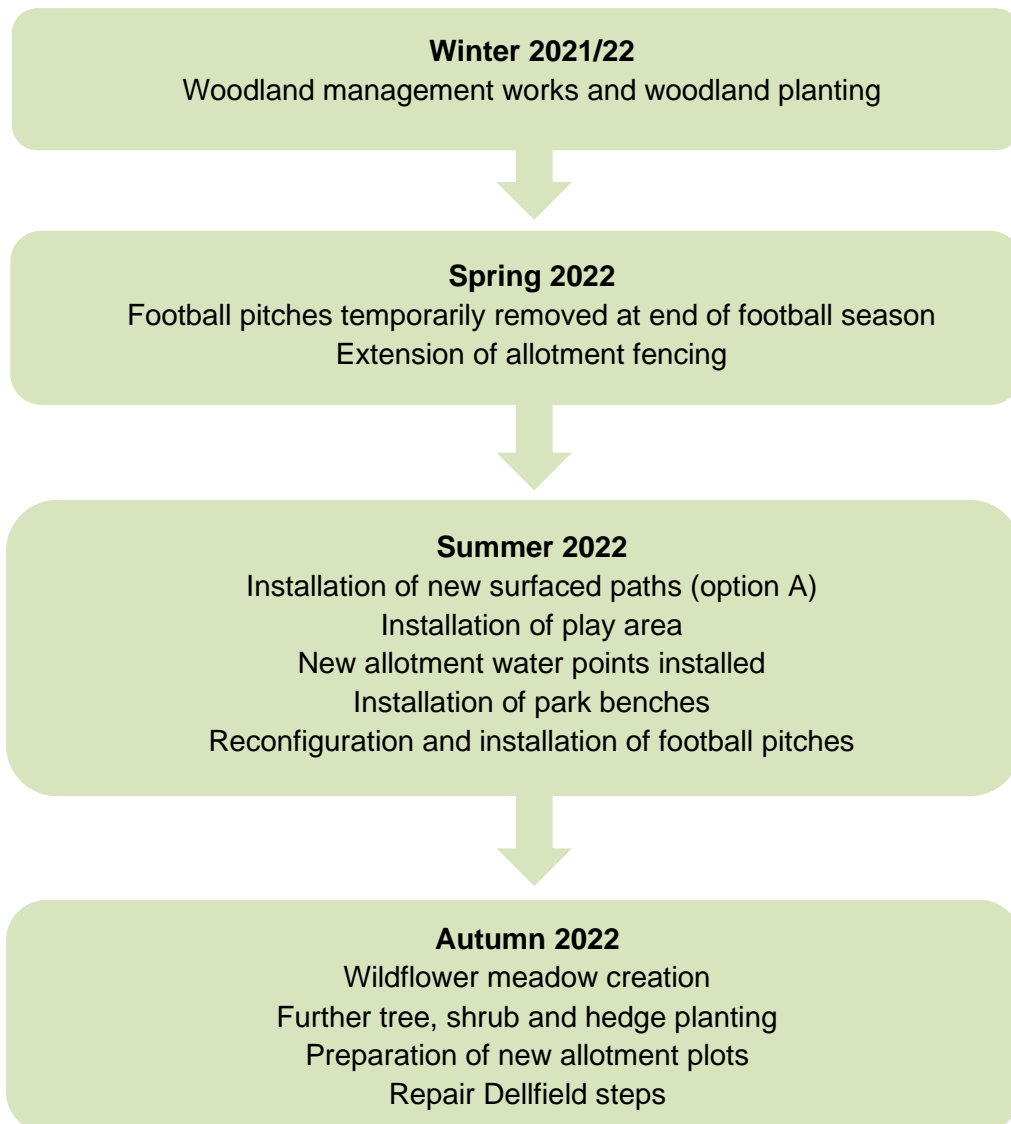
## **2.7. Allotment extension design**

Allotment users have requested that the extension is mindful of the high winds that plots are vulnerable to at CFOS. In light of this, several requests have been made to retain the section of bramble growing through the existing fence to the northern allotment boundary, as this provides a valuable windbreak and is well looked after and harvested by all the allotment owners. There are also requests for an additional water tap to accommodate increased use.

**Response:** The allotment extension will create a further 8-10 plots for use by the local community. This extension will retain the section of bramble that currently serves as a valuable windbreak and late summer harvest. Plans to plant a mix of native hedgerow species around the new allotment boundary will also help to create a protective screen against high winds once well established. The new fence lines will be constructed using green powder coated anti-climb fencing for the whole allotment site and water points will be extended to the new area, creating more taps to serve the new plots.

### 3. Next steps

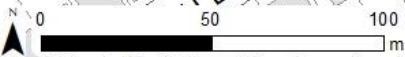
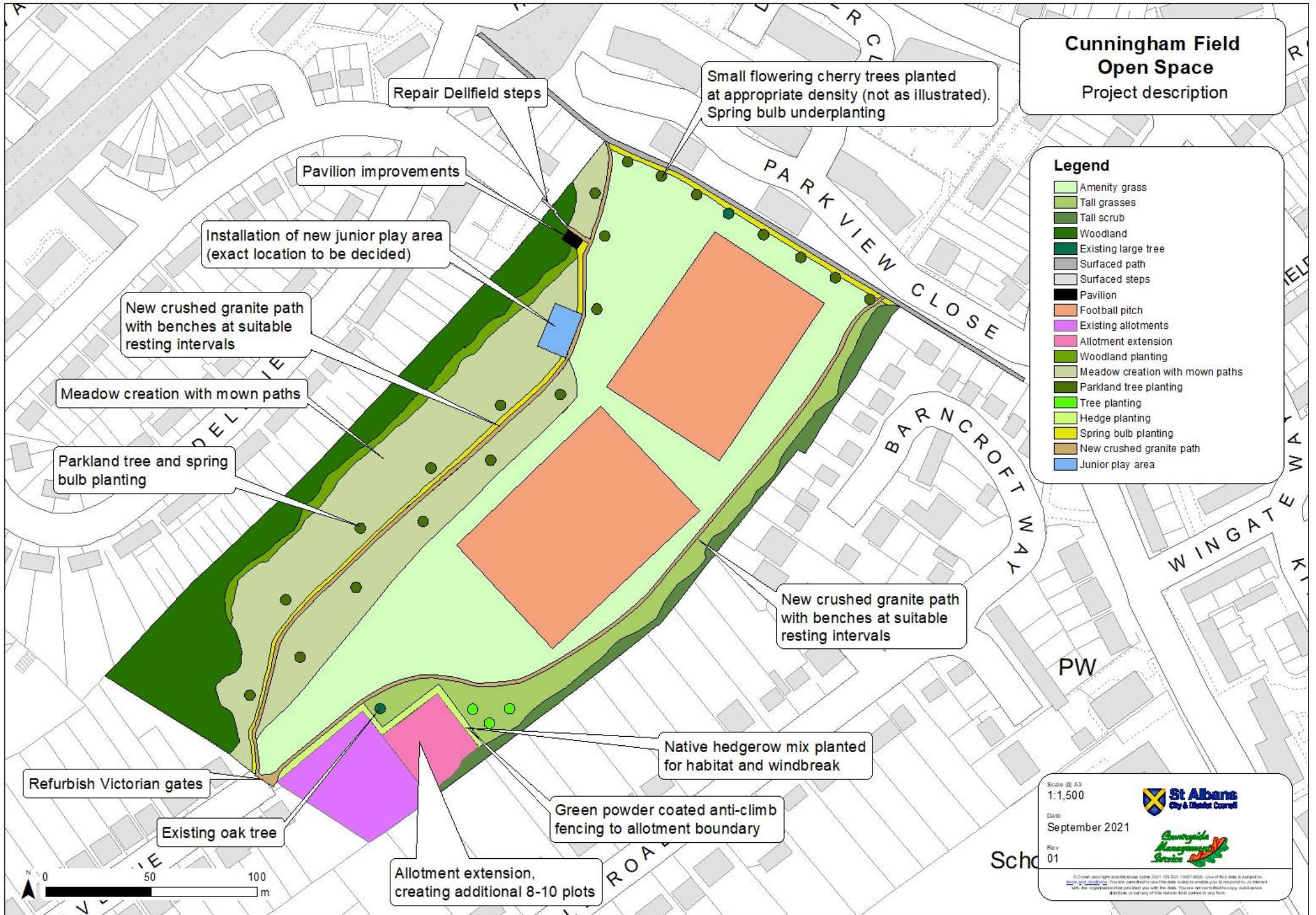
The diagram below outlines a rough timescale for the delivery of this project. Please note that this is a guide only, this does not specify the order of the works and timings may be subject to change



# Cunningham Field Open Space Project description

## Legend

- Amenity grass
- Tall grasses
- Tall scrub
- Woodland
- Existing large tree
- Surfaced path
- Surfaced steps
- Pavilion
- Football pitch
- Existing allotments
- Allotment extension
- Woodland planting
- Meadow creation with mown paths
- Parkland tree planting
- Tree planting
- Hedge planting
- Spring bulb planting
- New crushed granite path
- Junior play area



Scale @ A3  
1:1,500

Date  
September 2021

Rev  
01



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