



VERULAMIUM PARK

GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN

2023 - 2028

BRIEFING DOCUMENT

Produced by:



On behalf of:



CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Background.....	4
3. Recent management.....	7
4. Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) 2023-2028	8
5. Community Engagement and Plan Production Process	12
6. Stakeholder Feedback.....	15

1. INTRODUCTION

The current GAP for Verulamium Park expired in 2022, and a new GAP was initially planned to be implemented from April 2022. However, given several major projects within the park are at critical stages of development, the new GAP has been deferred by a year so that these projects can be fully integrated into plans for the following five years.

The new five-year Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) for Verulamium Park will therefore run from 2023-28. This briefing document provides an overview of how the GAP will be produced and sets out how stakeholders can contribute to shaping the plan.

GAPs are essentially map-based management plans that provide focus and direction for the running and improvement of open spaces. They provide a clear, logical process to determine the activities that should take place over a stated period of time to achieve the objectives for the site.

The GAP is being produced by the Countryside Management Service (CMS), part of Hertfordshire County Council's Countryside and Rights of Way Service, on behalf of and in partnership with St. Albans City and District Council. The completed document will inform the management actions to be undertaken over the next five years, commencing in April 2023.

Engaging communities is integral to the production of GAPs, to ensure that stakeholders are fully aware of and able to interact with the plan production process. This briefing document initiates and supports this community engagement.

The engagement period will run from 31st October 2022 to 30th November 2022. A further engagement period in early 2023 will provide an opportunity to assess the draft version of the GAP. Please use the contact details in Section 6 to comment on the aspirations for the site.

This document has been broken down into easy-to-read sections:

Section 2 provides an overview of the site and location map.

Section 3 reviews recent management of the site.

Section 4 contains the core objectives for the Verulamium Park GAP.

Section 5 summarises the public engagement methodology, setting out how and when stakeholders can contribute to the plan.

Section 6 contains contact details to provide stakeholder feedback.

2. BACKGROUND

Verulamium Park is a 66.9-hectare site located close to St Albans City Centre within the ward of Verulam. Bluehouse Hill and King Harry Lane, both major routes into the City, form two of the boundaries to the park, while numerous footpaths link to the adjoining countryside.

The site is owned by St Albans City and District Council (SADC), who manage the majority of the site through a grounds maintenance contract, the exceptions being the Roman wall which is managed by English Heritage, and Abbey View Golf Course which is maintained by the Leisure Management contractor.

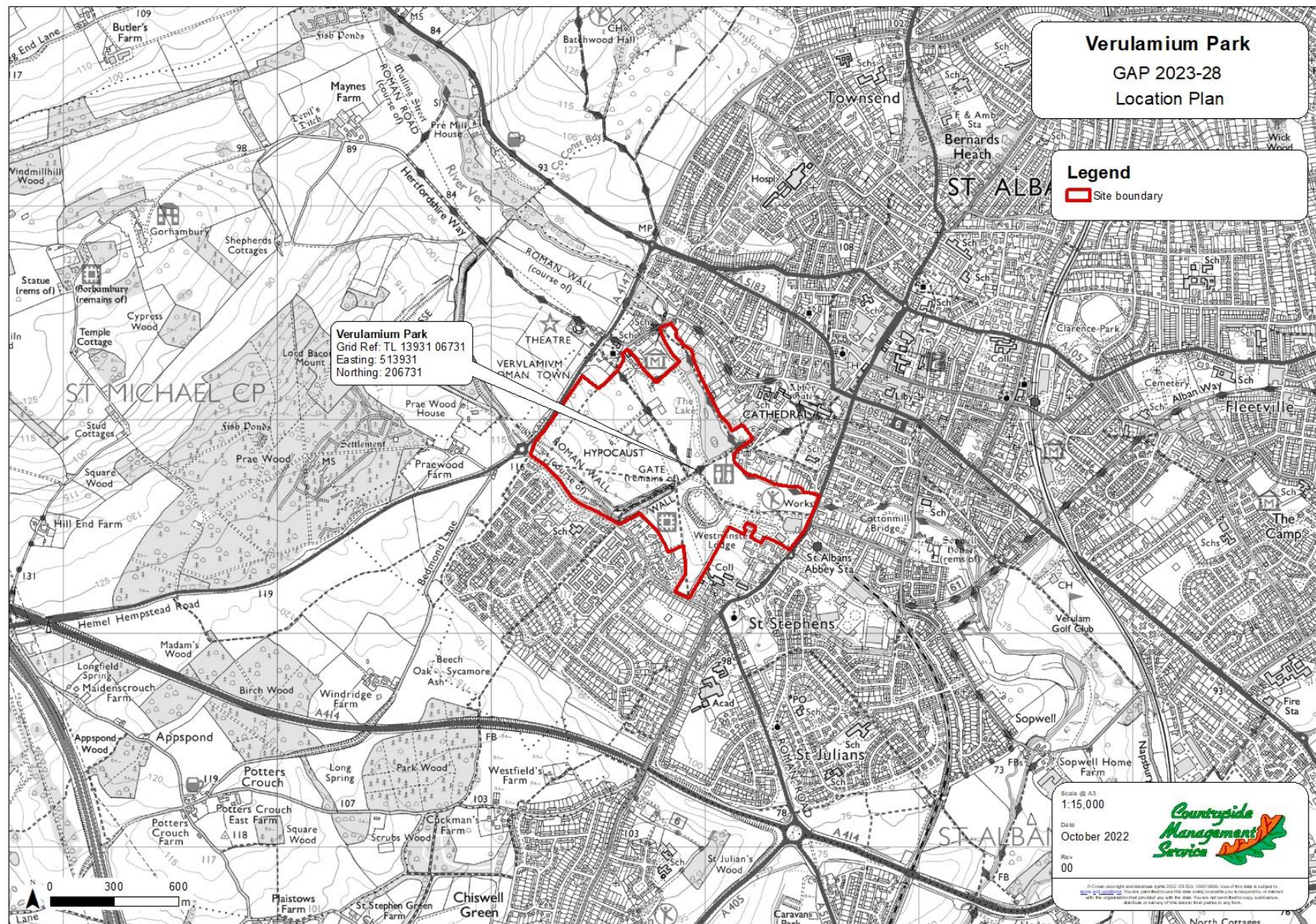
The Park is a complex site with a number of significant archaeological, historical, wildlife and landscape features. These include the designated Scheduled Monument of the Roman City of Verulamium, which lies beneath much of park and the adjacent countryside to the west. There are numerous Listed Buildings, found mainly around the north-western fringes of the site, and the entire park falls within the Conservation Area for St Albans. Verulamium Lakes and Abbey Mill Lane Area are both designated as Local Wildlife Sites.

The site is invaluable for amenity and recreation, with a large number of features and facilities including Verulamium Museum, the Abbey Theatre, the Inn on the Park café, a Roman mosaic & hypocaust, splash park, large play area, crazy golf, an orienteering course, the AdiZone outdoor gym, a beach volleyball court, hard surface sports courts for tennis, netball and basketball, an athletics track, the Abbey View nine-hole golf course, senior and junior football pitches, two cricket pitches, a cricket pavilion and a general sports pavilion.

The Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre is a state-of-the-art facility offering a wide range of activities including swimming, gym, fitness classes, spa, sports hall, climbing wall and café.

Footpaths and cycle ways criss-cross the park and large open areas of grassland provide space for amenity and more informal use.

The diverse features and needs of the site require carefully balanced management, ensuring the conservation of the natural and historic environment, management of the wide-ranging recreational facilities, and public enjoyment of the park.



3. RECENT MANAGEMENT

Under previous plans, significant improvements to the park have been delivered through large projects such as the development of Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre and signage upgrades.

This progress continued through the period of the 2017-22 GAP, delivering a number of improvements to facilities, including the replacement and upgrading of the main play area and the replacement of benches on site.

Through the Opportunity Audit of SADC Greenspaces conducted by CMS and the Wilder St. Albans project (further information at <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/wilding>), enhancements have been made to wildlife habitats on site through the introduction of conservation mowing to areas of grassland. These enhancements will be built upon through further work in the next GAP.

Despite the progress made, a number of projects from the 2017-22 GAP are yet to be delivered. These include the introduction of grazing to Seabrook Meadow, the replacement of the bridge leading from King Harry Lane, production of a Heritage Trail, and the development of enhancements to the lake and River Ver through the 'Revitalising the River Ver' project (further information at <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/revitalising-river-ver>), for which planning work is ongoing.

4. GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN (GAP) 2023-2028

The Verulamium Park GAP 2023-2028 will be a simple, easy to read plan for use by officers of St. Albans City and District Council and members of the public and will act as a guide to the work of volunteers. The plan will be largely map based, with sequential, annual management maps to show the actions planned for each year. The document will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and relevant.

The plan will be costed, and potential funding sources identified. Once the final GAP is agreed, external funding will be sought to enable the plan to be delivered.

The aim and objectives of the GAP will be as follows:

Vision

Verulamium Park is an irreplaceable resource of beauty and opportunity. The park's many thousands of visitors, from near and far, come to experience the fascinating history, rich wildlife, stunning views, and recreational facilities. The site is perfectly placed to offer visitors both tranquillity and relaxation, whilst also enabling discovery and adventure.

Collaborative management will allow all parties linked to the park to work together, ensuring the successful integration of measures to protect and conserve the nationally significant historic assets, whilst enhancing a well-loved local landscape and providing a rich and dynamic visitor experience.

Aim

To provide a valuable, welcoming, and well-maintained park for the community whilst protecting heritage features, managing its environment sustainably, and enhancing its biodiversity.

Objectives

- A. A welcoming place** – *To make Verulamium Park a welcoming site with inviting entrances and with a high standard of features and facilities that will encourage long stays and repeat visits.*

- A1 Maintain site entrances to form welcoming, appealing gateways to the park
- A2 Maintain signage to enable visitors to successfully navigate to, from, and around the park
- A3 Maintain a suitable network of accessible paths and transport routes throughout the park

B. Healthy, safe and secure – *To ensure that visitors to Verulamium Park feel safe and able to explore and enjoy the whole site at all times.*

- B1 Improve and upgrade existing recreational facilities as required; provide new facilities where needed and/or an opportunity has been identified
- B2 Maintain a regular staff presence within Verulamium Park
- B3 Continue to carry out a programme of regular surveys and inspections of the trees and structures within the Park
- B4 Respond promptly to reports of misuse of the site

C. Well-maintained and clean – *To maintain Verulamium Park to the highest of standards so that it is in peak condition for every visitor.*

- C1 Carry out a programme of regular monitoring and reactionary maintenance to ensure that all fixtures, fittings, facilities, and buildings are maintained in a serviceable, safe, and attractive condition
- C2 Continue to remove redundant structures and furniture in poor condition, replacing with standard design of furniture
- C3 Continue to make the most of Park Rangers to monitor the grounds maintenance contract and ensure its success
- C4 Remove fly-tipping, undertake regular litter picking, empty litter bins, and carry out small scale vegetation management along access routes

D. Environmental management – *To ensure compliance with the council’s environmental policies and seek sustainable activities and solutions relevant to the special nature of the site*

- D1 Ensure ongoing maintenance costs are financially sustainable
- D2 Secure external funding to ensure the viability of capital works
- D3 Ensure impacts of climate change are considered in management decisions, both in terms of the effect of climate change on wildlife habitats and of carbon emissions from management operations
- D4 Make the most of opportunities to re-use by-products generated through conservation activities within the park
- D5 Monitor results of delivery to evaluate the success of management activities

E. Biodiversity, landscape and heritage – *To conserve and enhance the nationally significant features of cultural and natural heritage which make Verulamium Park such an important site*

- E1 Ensure above ground historic features and buried archaeological remains are appropriately managed to ensure their preservation
- E2 Work in partnership with English Heritage to ensure that management of the Roman wall complements management of the wider park
- E3 Conserve the important landscape character of the park and its relationship with St. Albans and the wider landscape
- E4 Deliver further ecological enhancements within the Park, building on opportunities identified in the SADC Greenspace Opportunity Audit, including the introduction of grazing to Seabrook Meadow
- E5 Continue to work in partnership with the Environment Agency and others to support delivery of the ‘Revitalising the River Ver’ project
- E6 Maintain woodland, scrub and hedgerow habitats to benefit biodiversity

F. Community involvement – *To provide opportunities for the local community to engage with Verulamium Park and to get actively involved with management of the site*

- F1 Maintain interpretive schemes that help foster a better understanding of Verulamium Park's historical significance and valuable wildlife
- F2 Develop an annual programme of events and volunteer tasks with partners and key stakeholders and communicate widely
- F3 Consider all activities within this plan as potential tasks for volunteer groups, including St Albans School, Ver Valley Society, CMS, and the Herts Probationary Service

G. Marketing and communication – *To develop new and innovative ways to attract a wider variety of visitors to the Park, and to fully realise its value as a site of open space*

- G1 Maintain the 'brand' identity created for Verulamium Park and ensure this is used for all internal signage and external marketing materials
- G2 Develop a circular Heritage Trail to encourage exploration of the more remote areas of the Park
- G3 Widely promote volunteer and community events at Verulamium Park, using both traditional and electronic media
- G4 Continue to work with external organisations to promote Verulamium Park to a wider audience

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PLAN PRODUCTION PROCESS

Effective community engagement is at the centre of successful management plans. The value of a GAP is maximised when it incorporates and balances the aspirations of stakeholders and interest groups.

In order to provide all interested stakeholders and groups with the opportunity to feed into the production of the new GAP, we have adopted a structured two-stage approach to community engagement.

- For the first stage (this briefing document), stakeholders and site users will be invited to make comment on the core aspirations in Section 4; it is hoped that any further aspirations and/or issues will be identified through this information gathering process. This first stage of community engagement will run between **31st October and 30th November 2022**.
- For the second stage, stakeholders and site users will be invited to read through and make comment on the draft GAP, which will include the detailed proposals and actions. This stage is intended to run in early 2023.

Following the second stage exercise, the final document will be produced, published and the actions will commence.

Please be aware that we will not respond individually to comments received through the public engagements; instead, we will produce a summary of comments, noting any amendments made to the plan as a result. This engagement response document will be published online alongside the briefing document, draft plan and final plan. We will retain contact details only for the purpose of keeping respondents informed about the plan development process.

5.1 Greenspace Action Plan production process

1. Production of briefing document and outline proposals.
2. Stakeholder engagement on briefing document. Engagement will run from 31st October to 30th November 2022.

3. Production of draft GAP.
4. Stakeholder engagement on draft GAP in early 2023.
5. Production of final GAP.
6. Publicity and promotion.

5.2 Stakeholders

- St. Albans City and District Council Lead Member and Ward Cllrs.
- Sustrans
- Relevant St. Albans City and District Council officers
- Cycle Herts
- Hertfordshire County Council portfolio holder and local members
- Ramblers Association
- Relevant Hertfordshire County Council officers
- Local community and site users
- Hertfordshire Ecology
- Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre
- Historic Environment Record
- Abbey View Golf Course and Track
- Rights of Way
- English Heritage
- Hertfordshire Local Access Forum
- Historic England
- Verulamium Park Consultative Forum
- Ver Valley Society
- Environment Agency
- River Colne Catchment Action Network

- Affinity Water
- Anglian Water
- Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

6. STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Thank you for taking the time to read this document. We are keen to receive feedback from you on our proposals for the Verulamium Park Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) 2023-2028.

Please return your comments to Michael Poole at:

michael.poole@hertfordshire.gov.uk