



HATFIELD ROAD CEMETERY

GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN, 2023 - 2028

BRIEFING DOCUMENT

Produced by:



On behalf of:



St Albans
City & District Council

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1. INTRODUCTION

A new five year Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) is being produced for Hatfield Road Cemetery. 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 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 21 November 2022 to 02 January 2023. A further engagement period in February 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 Hatfield Road Cemetery GAP.

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

2. BACKGROUND

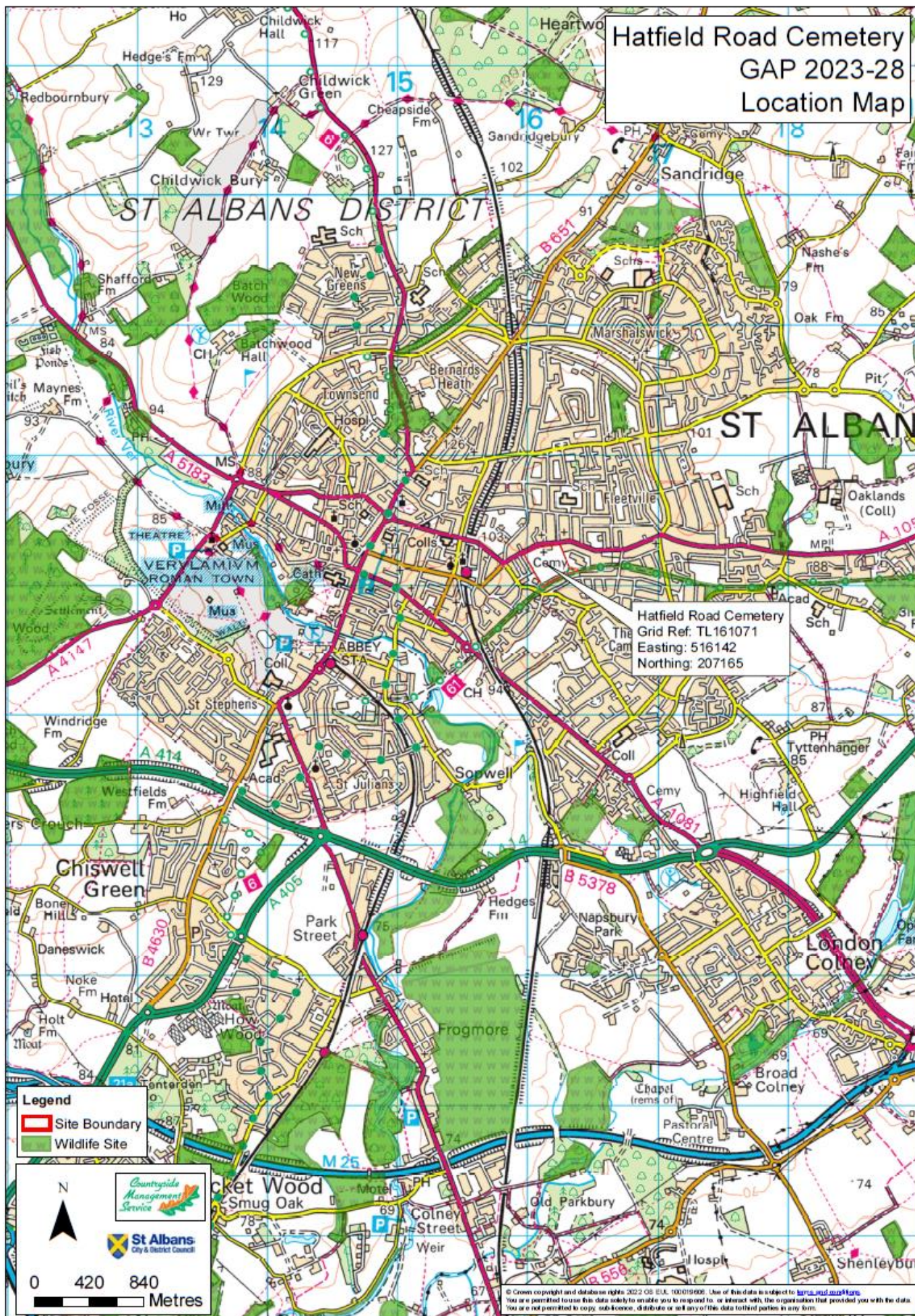
Hatfield Road Cemetery is situated on the A1057 St Albans to Hatfield Road, in the Fleetville Ward of St Albans, approximately one mile from the City Centre, and half a mile from the city station. The cemetery is owned and managed by St Albans City and District Council in line with the best practice advocated by the Institute of Cemeteries and Crematorium Management (ICCM). Hatfield Road Cemetery was first awarded a Green Flag Award in 2015 for the quality of its management and facilities. A site location map is included in the following pages.

The cemetery facilities include a cemetery lodge, chapel, office, public toilets and sheltered seating. There are also two sections of war graves, lawn graves, traditional graves, a Garden of Rest and a small natural burial area.

Hatfield Road Cemetery opened in 1884 and is a typical example of a late Victorian Cemetery and is laid out in the manner of those times though the original avenues of trees are incomplete. The majority of graves are facing east/west and are outlined with kerb sets which were traditional for a late Victorian Cemetery. Despite its urban setting the cemetery retains a peaceful atmosphere, with boundary hedges and mature trees providing a sense of enclosure for visitors.

The Cemetery is adjacent to the Alban Way railway trail, which is route 61 on the national cycle route and is a Local Wildlife Site, but there is no direct link into the Cemetery, as opening the site as a potential thoroughfare would negatively impact the serenity of the cemetery. The only access gate, for vehicles and pedestrians, is directly off Hatfield Road.

The majority of the site is managed as amenity grassland and subsequently these areas have limited ecological significance though they do contain a range of species which tolerate regular mowing including Ribwort Plantain, Creeping Cinquefoil, and Germander speedwell. Taller sward has been allowed to grow in selected areas and in the natural burial area with the aim of establishing wildflower meadow though the latter is currently dominated by tall ruderals including nettle and dock. Formal flower beds at the entrance and along the north-south avenue are sown with annuals providing a valuable source of nectar for pollinating insects.



3. REVIEW OF PROGRESS

Several previous management plans have been produced for Hatfield Road Cemetery. It is a well-studied site which has been actively managed for conservation for many years. The most recent plan covered 2015-20.

The most significant undertaking on the site over the last 15 years has been the creation of a natural burial area. The natural burial area has been well received by the bereaved and initially it contained greater species diversity than the wider site, however it has not developed into the wildflower rich area that previous plans envisaged, becoming dominated by tall ruderals over time. Further actions which will reduce nutrient levels and increase light levels are needed to improve the biodiversity and visual appeal of this area.

St Albans City and District Council started an Adopt a Grave scheme for its cemeteries in 2008, which enables people to take care of unattended graves. This has had a small but steady number of volunteers since it started.

In the period covered by the most recent GAP, the interpretation of the site was updated with new leaflets and a new webpage was created for the cemetery. The new information panel installed was of a style more in keeping with the history of the site.

A tree replacement strategy was initiated to replace the Horse Chestnuts, which showed signs of infestation by leaf minor (*Cameraria ohridella*), with Sweet Chestnuts and this will continue throughout the coming years. Additional specimen trees were planted at the entrance to the natural burial area to formalise the entrance and make it more inviting for visitors. Bird and bat boxes were also installed, in addition to the natural roosts provided by standing deadwood, to increase the value of the site to wildlife.

Water butts were installed to enable rain harvesting and composting areas were established to make the regular grounds maintenance activities more sustainable. Regular grounds maintenance activities were also amended to be more sympathetic to the needs of wildlife, including relaxing the mowing schedule in areas selected to be summer meadows. In 2022 wildflower seed was scattered in these summer

meadow areas as a trial. Future efforts to increase the abundance of wildflowers on the site will be informed by these trials and how they are received by the public.

Efforts to establish a hedge to act as a sight and sound barrier between the natural burial area and the neighbouring school grounds were unsuccessful. Hedge planting will be more likely to succeed following removal of the tree currently shading the area.

Unfortunately COVID and the associated lockdowns prevented the burial register being digitised. This action will be carried forward into the new plan, however the digital records may be made available online instead of via a touchscreen at the cemetery office.

4. GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN (GAP) 2018-2023

The Hatfield Road Cemetery GAP 2023-27 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 resulting change will be represented on the map for the following 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:

Aims

Hatfield Road Cemetery contains a range of habitats from amenity grassland, wildflower meadows, parkland trees and pockets of secondary woodland, in addition to being a valued space for quiet reflectance. This plan seeks to secure a sustainable future for the cemetery, to conserve the formal parkland landscape and introduce management regimes to conserve and enhance the mosaic of wildlife habitats. The primary aims for management of the cemetery are therefore to keep the cemetery a clean, well maintained, safe and secure open space and to enhance the biodiversity value of the site.

Objectives

A. To maintain Hatfield Road Cemetery as a welcoming place, enhancing the experience of using the site for the bereaved and other visitors:

- A1 Continue to follow best practice as outlined by the ICCM's Charter for the Bereaved.
- A2 Undertake regular inspections and maintenance of trees, furniture and structures to ensure their condition is safe and suitable.
- A3 Create a woodland path through the trees at the southern edge of the cemetery.

A4 Improve the accessibility of interpretation materials.

B. To ensure that visitors to Hatfield Road Cemetery feel safe and able to enjoy the site at all times:

B1 Fill gaps in boundary hedge using native hedge species to improve privacy.

B2 Complete memorial inspections every five years.

B3 Carry out tree safety surveys every three years.

C. To ensure the standard of maintenance is upheld and relevant across the site:

C1 Manage and maintain the paths and signage.

C2 Remove self seeded scrub from unattended graves.

C3 Undertake regular litter picking and small scale vegetation management.

C4 Ensure all contractors used on site adhere to sustainable and environmental policies.

D. To conserve and communicate the heritage of Hatfield Road Cemetery:

D1 Continue delivery of the tree replacement strategy for the avenues of horse chestnuts.

D2 Promote the cemetery as a place of historic interest.

E. To enhance and communicate the biodiversity value of the cemetery:

E1 Remove topsoil and overshadowing trees from the nature burial area and reseed with wildflower meadow seed mix.

E2 Replace non-native species in hedges with native species.

E3 Maintain and increase wildflower meadow areas.

E4 Promote the cemetery as a place for enjoying wildlife.

F. To attract a wider range of visitors and users to the site and promote opportunities for involvement:

F1 Develop links with schools and promote the cemetery as a site for learning about conservation, sustainability and bereavement.

F2 Produce regular SADC Community News articles

F3 Continue to promote the Adopt a Grave scheme

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 **Monday 21st November and Monday 2nd January.**
- 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 between approximately **Monday 6th February and Monday 6th March.**

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 approximately 21st November 2022 and 2nd January 2023.
3. Production of draft GAP.
4. Stakeholder engagement on draft GAP. Engagement will run from approximately 6th February 2023 and 6th March 2023.
5. Production of final GAP.
6. Publicity and promotion.

5.2 Stakeholders

- Local HCC members
- SADC members
- Relevant SADC officers
- St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society
- Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust
- Diocese of St Albans
- St Albans City Neighbours Committee
- Environment Agency
- Institute of Cemeteries and Crematorium Management

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 Hatfield Road Cemetery Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) 2023-2028.

Please return your comments using the contact details below by **Monday 2nd January** at the latest.

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