

Sopwell Nunnery

Greenspace Action Plan

2018 - 2023



January 2021 v0



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OVERVIEW

i. Greenspace Action Plans (GAPs)

Greenspace Actions Plans, or GAPs, are map-based management plans which specify activities that should take place on a site over a stated period of time; these activities will help to deliver the agreed aspirations which the site managers and stakeholders have identified for that site.

ii. Public Engagement

Engagement with stakeholders is at the centre of effective management planning on any site. An initial engagement period was held for Sopwell Nunnery in December 2017, to establish core aims and objectives for the site; these are reflected in Section 4. A second stage of engagement completed in March 2018 enabled stakeholders and users/local residents/wider public to comment on the proposed management actions for the site. An associated engagement response document, published online as an appendix to this plan, summarises comments received and any amendments made to the plan as a result.

iii. Version Control

Amendment Date	Version No	Section Updated	Details
24.01.2020	CMS January 2020 v0	5.0 Five Year Action Plan	5.1 Annual Items 0.13 and 0.15 updated. 5.2 Year 1 Action Plan 2018-2019 1.13, 1.14 and 1.17 updated.
27.01.2021	CMS January 2021 v0	2.7 Habitats and Wildlife	2.7. Habitats and Wildlife Introduction to Section 2.7 updated.
27.01.2021	CMS January 2021 v0	3.5 Conservation and Heritage	3.5.7 River Ver updated.
27.01.2021	CMS January 2021 v0	5.0 Five Year Action Plan	5.1 Annual Items 0.13 and 0.15 updated. 5.2 Year 1 Action Plan 2018-2019 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.13, 1.14, 1.17 and 1.19 updated. 5.3 Year 2-5 Action Plan 2019-23 2.1 to 2.22, and 1.19 updated.

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1.0 SITE SUMMARY

Name	Sopwell Nunnery Green Space
Address	Cottonmill Lane St Albans AL1 1 HH
Grid ref	TL 515099 206378
Size	6.4ha (Sopwell Nunnery 5.5ha & Sopwell Mill Open Space 0.9ha)
Owner	St Albans City & District Council
Designations	Scheduled Ancient Monument Metropolitan Green Belt Environment Agency – Flood Zone 3
Other documents	SADC GAP Framework Document

VISION STATEMENT

Sopwell Nunnery Green Space provides an uplifting experience for any visitor whether walking under the magnificent trees and through the meadows; exploring the ruins; discovering wildlife on the river; exercising the dog or following the site's thousand year old gardening tradition on the allotment. The Green Space allows you to make connections: it links you to the wider countryside and town via the Alban Way and the Ver Valley Trail; connects you to the city's medieval and Tudor heritage; to the productivity of the soil; to other people and to nature. It's a valuable resource for the people of St. Albans.

The vision for management of Sopwell Nunnery Green Space will be to create:

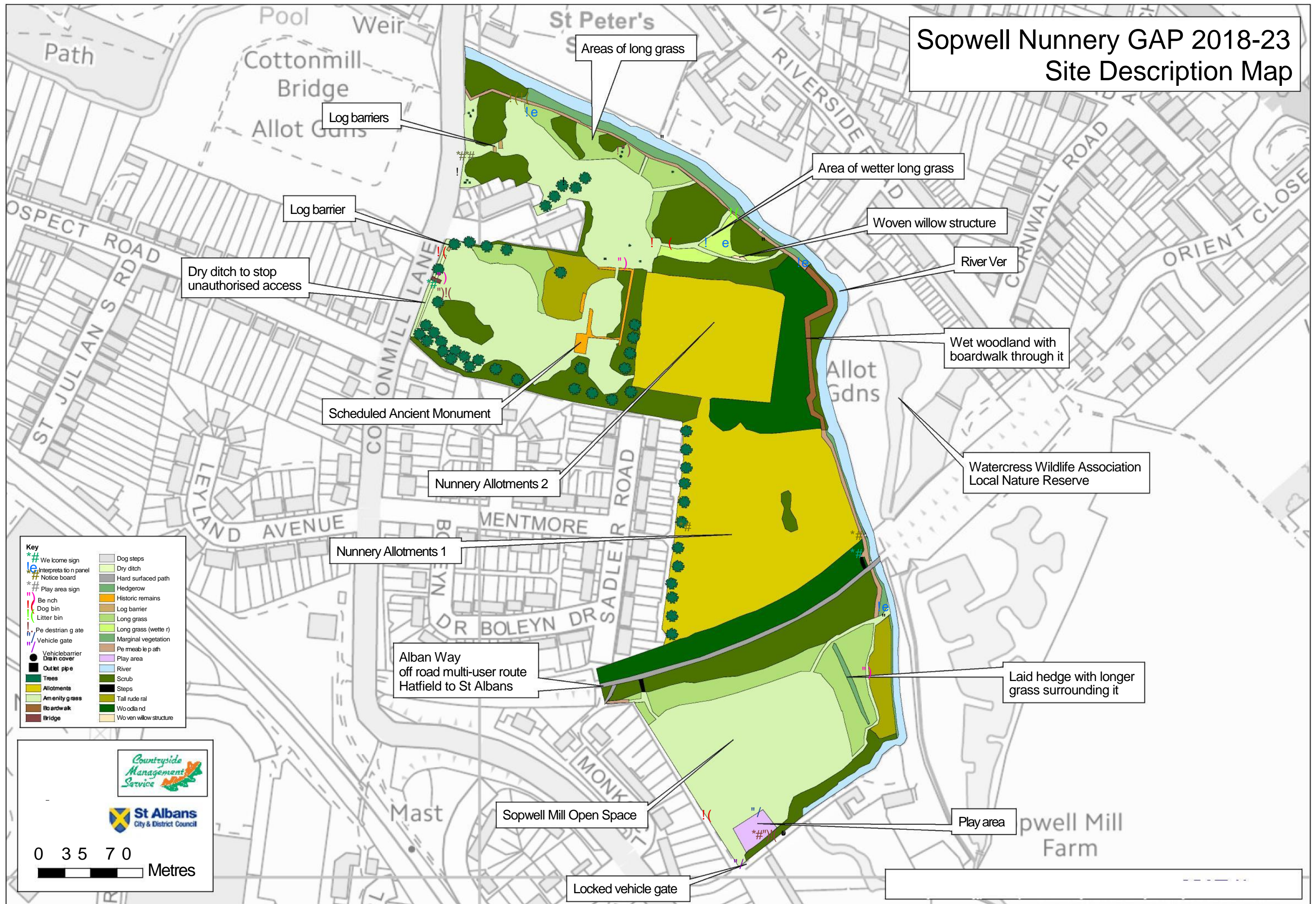
- a welcoming and accessible Green Space for the local community and for visitors from further afield
- a site whose historic significance is interpreted, celebrated and respected
- a place that supports and celebrates self-sufficiency and the production of food
- a site rich in biodiversity

Sopwell Nunnery GAP 2018-23 Location Map

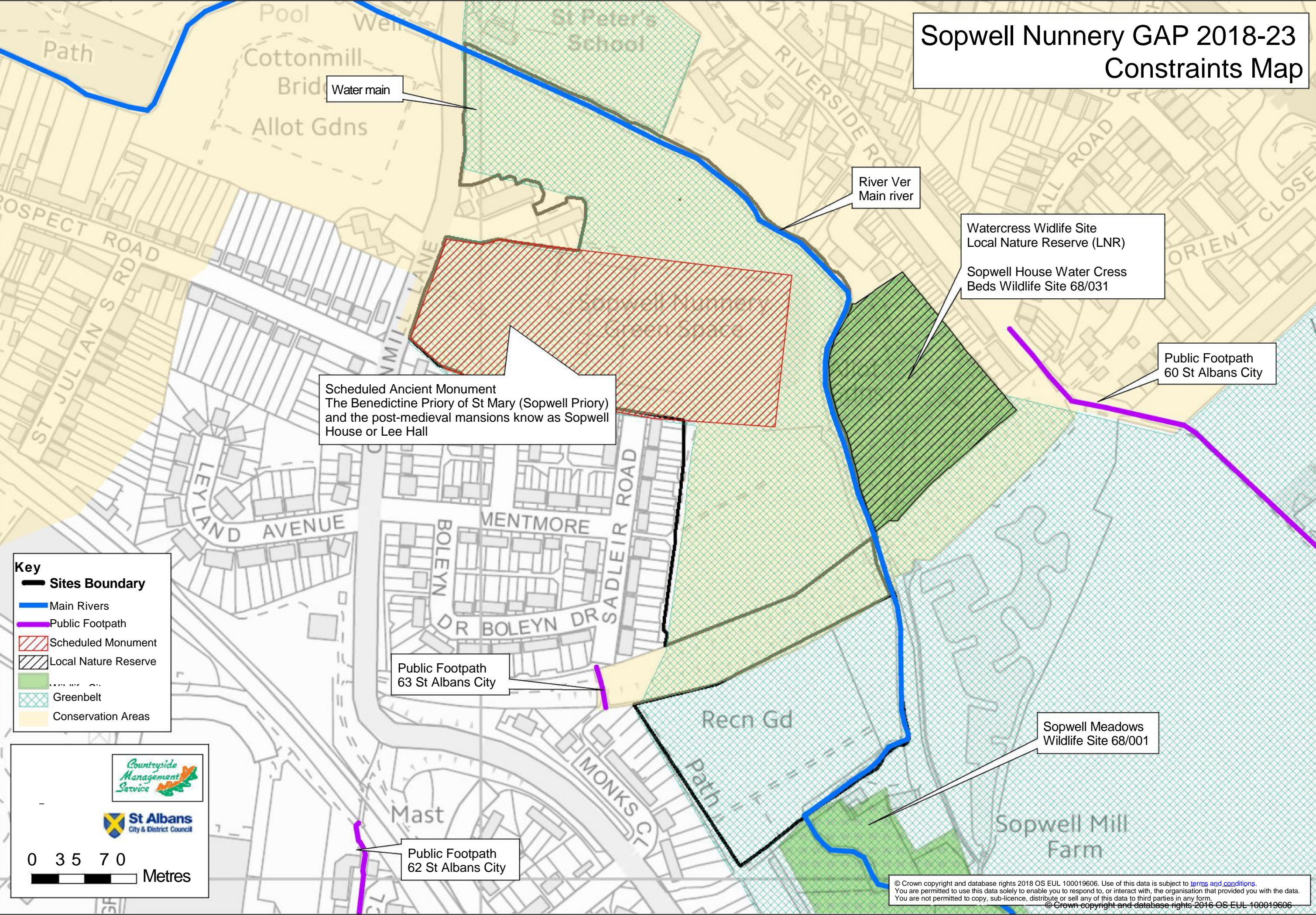


Sopwell Nunnery GAP 2018-23

Site Description Map



Sopwell Nunnery GAP 2018-23 Constraints Map



2.4 INTRODUCTION

Sopwell Nunnery Green Space is a 5.5 hectare public open space situated in the Sopwell Ward to the south of St. Albans. The busy city centre is only a ten minute walk away. It is bordered by the Alban Way to the south, Cottonmill Lane and Sadleir Road to the west, and the River Ver on the other two sides. The green space, including the associated Nunnery Allotments, is located on a Scheduled Ancient Monument: the site of the 12th century Nunnery of St Mary and the 16th century remains of Lee Hall.

Sopwell Mill Open Space is 0.9 hectares situated to the south of the Nunnery site, separated by the railway embankment that now accommodates the Alban Way, but connected to the Nunnery green space by the Ver Valley Trail.

2.5 GEOGRAPHY AND LANDSCAPE

2.5.1 Landscape

The site is located on the flood plain of the River Ver. The geology comprises river alluvium covered in stone-less clayey and poorly drained soils, some of which are calcareous.

Although the Sopwell neighbourhood has its share of dense residential developments, there is also a considerable amount of green open space.

The River Ver chalk river winds its way through the wide valley. Mature willows, some of which have been pollarded, follow the course of the river. The meadows and scattered clumps of scrub add interest to the area of amenity grass.

The ruins of the Tudor Hall have scenic as well as historic interest with the brick walls, window spaces and arches representing the remnants of Richard Lee's Tudor Hall, which was built upon the twelfth century nunnery site.

The green space has an important function as an informal recreational area for children, families and dog walkers because of its proximity to the town centre and residential areas. Walkers and cyclists can utilise the good connections along the River Ver Trail or on the Alban Way to access the wider countryside. From the Alban Way to the west there are views of the Abbey Cathedral.

Allotment owners benefit from its long history of cultivation, fertile soils and accessible location.

Nearby sites include the Watercress Wildlife Association Local Nature Reserve and Local Wildlife Site on the opposite river bank to the allotments. The site is managed by local residents and volunteers and is open all year round, with a nature trail, boardwalk, wet woodland, old orchard, meadows and a wealth of wildlife to explore.

South of Sopwell Mill Open Space is Sopwell Meadows Local Wildlife Site, alluvial pastures with spring sources along the valley of the River Ver supporting areas of dry semi-improved neutral grassland, species-rich unimproved wet marshy grassland, swamp and fen, and areas of open water.

2.5.2 Conservation Designations

Sopwell Nunnery is subject to statutory and non-statutory designations. See Table 1 and the constraints map.

Table 1 – Statutory and non-statutory designations

Scale	Designation	Detail
National	Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM)	Sopwell Nunnery Green Space is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) which means the site has national significance and is protected under statute
District / Borough	Conservation Area	Sopwell Nunnery Green Space falls within the Conservation Area for St Albans, a designation which seeks to preserve the character or appearance of a particularly valuable area. This covers all aspects of the landscape, including trees. Therefore, if any tree works are to take place within the site, a request must be made to the planning authority, who will decide whether the works can commence or whether to issue a Tree Preservation Order.
	Metropolitan Green Belt	Both Sopwell Nunnery Green Space and Sopwell Mill Open Space fall within the Metropolitan Green Belt, designated under PPG2 (Green Belts), which restricts the growth of development in strategic rural areas on the edge of conurbations.

The Environment Agency has included all of the Sopwell Nunnery Green Space and the river past Sopwell Mill Open Space in Flood Zone 3 which means consent will be required for any works which may have an impact on the risk of flooding.

2.6 HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Sopwell Nunnery is a well-defined and well documented archaeological site which has been left relatively undisturbed. The monument belonged to the Church in the first instance, before being taken over by one of the Henry VIII's most important advisers. The site's archaeology illustrates the great social and political changes that were occurring in the sixteenth century. The Nunnery has a national significance and has been designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. It is worth noting that, although the visible ruins are commonly referred to as 'Sopwell Nunnery', they actually represent the remains of a Tudor Hall built by Richard Lee.

Geoffrey de Gorham, the Abbot of St Albans, founded a Priory here around 1140, for Benedictine nuns dependent on St Albans Abbey. There were only five nuns and a prioress present at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The remains of the nunnery still lie beneath the present ruins.

Richard Lee was born in 1513, and his official connections began when he was appointed bailiff and farmer of the Priory around 1534. In 1535, Lee was employed as 'visitor' of the monasteries, and in the next year served with the King's armies as Surveyor of Works in Calais. As a close adviser to Henry VIII, he was in a position to exploit the Dissolution of the Monasteries. By 1540 he had acquired the stone of the priory church and its vestry, paying the Crown £13 6s for full ownership of the building and its property, plus an annual rental of £10s 10d. In 1549, he began altering Sopwell and calling his new house 'Lee Hall'.



The remains of Richard Lee's Tudor Hall.

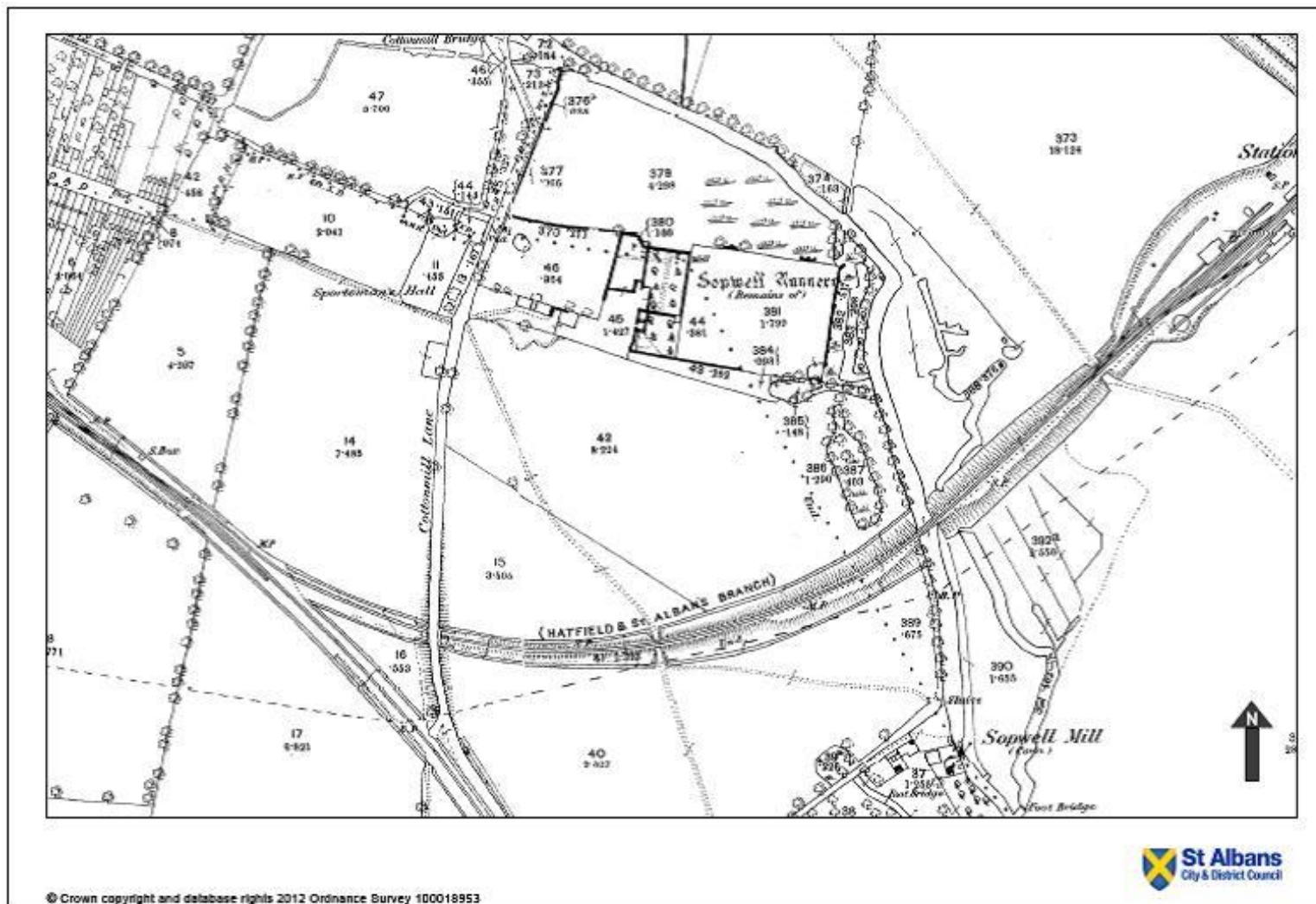
Richard Lee's will in 1570 includes mention of 'Lee Hall'; and on his death in 1575, the property passed to his eldest daughter Mary Coningsby, later married as Pemberton. Her sister and nephew, Anne and Richard Sadleir inherited in 1610 when she died childless. Thomas Saunders married Helen Sadleir, a descendant of Anne and Richard, and sold the property to Sir Harbottle Grimston. An estate plan of around 1650 shows the north front of the house, probably in its last major incarnation.

Only the ruins of one wing and parts of the Great Hall now survive. In 1673 building material was removed from the site for re-use at Gorhambury, and eventually by 1682 it was said that 'Here was a great house but of late taken down and sold'. However, something of the building still survived, as payment was made to a glazier in 1698 for maintenance work at Sopwell. These tenements endured into the early eighteenth century when a lease of a great garden, 'now ploughed', and garden house was made to a William Kilby, gardener. Representations of the building in the eighteenth and nineteenth century show a ruin (see picture below) but there are indications of limited habitation as late as 1793. Indeed, one outbuilding was in use until the 1960s as a motorcycle repair shop and scrap metal merchant.

Management of the ruins is consented by Historic England. The current works include removing encroaching vegetation and vegetation that is growing out of the ruins, repairing brickwork using approved processes and clearing vegetation from in front of the ruins to maintain the views. There have been problems with graffiti and vandalism with bricks removed from the walls and people climbing on the ruins.



Sopwell Ruins by Mr John Day 1850.



Map of the site circa 1880.

2.7 HABITATS AND WILDLIFE

Sopwell Nunnery Green Space has a significant role to play in the Ver Valley's wider landscape and as a wildlife corridor. Adjacent sites like the Sopwell Mill Open Space, the Cottonmill Lane Allotments, the Watercress Wildlife Association Local Nature Reserve, the Alban Way and the Marlborough Club provide connectivity and additional habitat space for wildlife. Although the Sopwell Nunnery site is relatively small, it hosts a wide range of habitats and species. St Albans City and District Council is undertaking an audit of all open spaces to see where biodiversity can be improved. The Sopwell Nunnery Green Space will be included in this audit.

2.7.1 Grassland

Across the sites there are two large sections of amenity grass that are cut regularly, to allow the public to use the open space for recreation purposes such as informal ball games and picnics.

In the previous plan there were efforts made to restore areas of the grassland to wildflower meadow by relaxing the grass cutting regime and planting plugs. This has not been successful and the species diversity has not increased, although it has resulted in areas of grassland being left longer throughout the year which provides a diverse range of habitats for invertebrates, small mammals and birds. This plan will follow on from that and take a more proactive approach to creating wildflower grassland in some of the longer grassland areas.

The introduction of a wildflower meadow by the side of the laid hedge on Sopwell Mill Open Space will provide an additional nectar source for invertebrates and food for small mammals.

2.7.2 Trees and Wet Woodland

Wet woodland or Carr is an important, rare habitat featured as one of the Forestry Commission's Regional Targets and in the Hertfordshire BAP. Apart from the construction of the Ver Valley Trail boardwalk, this area remains largely unmanaged. The site has a range of old mature Willows (*Salix spp.*), some which have been previously pollarded and some of which are heavily laden with Ivy (*Hedera*). Many of these trees are likely to provide excellent habitats for species such as woodpeckers and bats. There are few young naturally regenerating trees. Trees on site are surveyed regularly and resultant works are prioritised due to risk to life and property. Volunteers have constructed a woven willow tunnel in the meadow area which has become an interesting feature on the site.

During the last plan period a small number of new trees have been planted around Sopwell Nunnery Green Space to provide habitat when the more mature trees reach the end of their life. The trees have been planted on land that is not part of Scheduled Ancient Monument; species include 3 Willow, 3 Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) and 4 Lime (*Tilia spp.*).

2.7.3 Scrub and Hedgerows

There are areas of scrub which form clumps within the grasslands, allotments, and along the boundary of the site, especially on the embankment of the Alban Way. Scrub provides habitats for nesting birds and mammals in the transitional zone between open ground and woodland. When scrub is dense it forms an impenetrable boundary feature as well as providing valuable shelter for wildlife. To retain this density and to control its propensity to invade grassland habitats, scrub needs to be managed regularly on a rotational basis. Areas where scrub has been cleared have developed into areas of tall ruderal vegetation including Bramble (*Rubus*) and Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*). Scrub has developed on some of the old footprints of

the ruins; it should be removed and managed to improve views of the monument and to prevent further damage to the ruins. Behind the houses there is evidence of dumped garden cuttings piling up.

The hedgerow along the southern boundary of Sopwell Mill Open Space needs to be managed to stop encroachment into the grassland and play area. The laid hedgerow across the site needs to be managed by continued laying and cutting of regrowth.

2.7.4 Allotments

Cottonmill and Nunnery Allotment Association (CNAA) manage the site along with nearby Cottonmill and Sopwell Mill sites. The Allotment area is divided into two separate sections: Nunnery 1 and 2. The two sites are separated by a narrow corridor of mixed trees, shrubs and low lying vegetation. This area is already an important feeding and nesting site for small birds and is used for shelter by larger birds and mammals, such as Foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) and Hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*). With the suitable habitats the site has the potential to be used by Grass Snakes (*Natrix natrix*) and Slow Worms (*Anguis fragilis*). The allotment association plan to develop this area to further improve it as a suitable wildlife habitat and increase its biodiversity.

The area of land between the Nunnery 2 allotment site and Sadleir Road which contains a section of scheduled monument wall and a range of trees and shrubs has been offered to CNAA by SADC to manage as a nature reserve area.

Towards the south east of Nunnery 1 there is a small wooded area of established old trees. This area is known for bats and a breeding site for small birds.

The majority of the allotment site comprises tenanted plots which are cultivated for growing vegetables, fruit, flowers and herbs. Some allotment holders also keep chickens. Many have sheds and greenhouses and recent initiatives from the allotment association have resulted in a proliferation of wildlife areas and ponds appearing on the plots.

The boundaries of the allotments contain a wide variety of shrubs, trees and hedgerows. These constitute another significant wildlife habitat.

2.7.5 River Ver

The River Ver is a chalk river, an internationally rare, Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitat. Chalk Rivers flow from underground aquifers and are typified by good water quality and steady water temperatures. Most of Hertfordshire's chalk rivers are degraded, but at their best they would support species like Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*), White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*), and Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) and plants such Water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus aquatilis*) and Water Starwort (*Callitriche stagnalis*). The Ver's population of brown trout has diminished, water voles have not been recorded here for many years and non-native North American Signal Crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*) can be found along the river. However, some emergent and in-river vegetation persists and Water Crowfoot is doing well. Kingfishers (*Alcedo atthis*) and Grey Wagtails (*Motacilla cinerea*) are still seen regularly.



Well vegetated section of the river Ver.

The vegetated margins of the river can provide an important refuge and migration corridor for wildlife. They are cut in rotation once every three years so that at least two thirds of the margin remains intact at any time. In the past pre-planted coir rolls have been attached to unvegetated sections of the river bank to extend this habitat and reduce erosion.

The Ver Valley Trail follows the River Ver from its source at Kensworth Lynch, north of Redbourn to Bricket Wood where it joins the River Colne and eventually finds its way to the River Thames at Staines.

2.7.6 Wildlife

Kingfishers are known to have bred along the banks of the River Ver in recent years. Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Coot (*Fulica atra*) and Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) are found feeding and nesting along the river. While in the more scrubby and wooded areas you will see Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) and Great Tit (*Parus major*), you might also spot Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*), Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*) and family parties of Long-tailed Tits (*Aegithalos caudatus*). With the nearby lakes Little Egrets (*Egretta garzetta*) and Grey Herons (*Ardea cinerea*) are often seen flying over.

There are plenty of suitable habitats across the site for a wide range of invertebrates from the tiniest of insects such as Woodlouse (*Oniscus asellus*) and ants (*Formicidae*) to the more noticeable species that people recognise such as hoverflies (*Syrphidae*) and bees (*Anthophila*). Butterflies are a favourite with many people and can be seen on a warm sunny summer's day feeding on the various nectar sources around the site. Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) and Peacock (*Aglais io*) can be found on bramble flowers while in the more dappled shady areas you could spot a Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria*). In late spring start to look out for damselflies and dragonflies hawking along the river for insects; an unmistakable one is the Banded Demoiselle damselfly (*Calopteryx splendens*).

With the varied habitats the site has potential for use by both Grass Snakes and Slow Worms, especially the allotment area where there are suitable nesting sites, food and water; they are protected under the Countryside and Wildlife Act 1981. Other species of interest that have been recorded in the vicinity include bats (*Chiroptera*) and small mammals.

2.8 ACCESS, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

2.8.1 Access and Circulation

Sopwell Nunnery Green Space and Sopwell Mill Open Space can be accessed by road, foot and public transport; it is seen as a valuable asset to the local community. Due to its proximity to the urban environment the site has a relatively high rate of usage by visitors to the ruins, walkers, dog walkers, families and children. The site is close to a local primary school, and the close mown areas in front of the ruins are frequently used for informal play.

The sites are accessible from the Alban Way - part of the National Cycleway Network (Route 61) – which divides the two sites with its surfaced off road path popular with cyclists and walkers. The Ver Valley Trail follows the River Ver through the sites.

2.8.2 Site Entrances

There are entrances onto the public open spaces from:

- Cottonmill Lane at various points onto both sites
- Alban Way onto both sites
- Sadleir Road into Sopwell Mill Open Space (crossing the Alban Way)
- Monks Close into Sopwell Mill Open Space

The Council's grounds maintenance contractor requires site access, but following an incursion by travellers onto Sopwell Nunnery Green Space, new access routes have been developed through the allotments. The former vehicular access route from Cottonmill Lane has been blocked off with logs. To discourage further traveller incursions, a ditch has been dug along Cottonmill Lane. Sopwell Mill Open Space has a lockable vehicle barrier to access the main grassland in the southern corner by the play area.

A wooden footbridge has been constructed to allow easy access from Cottonmill Lane across the ditch opposite the ruins. The northerly access point by the river from Cottonmill Lane is furnished with a ramp.

The allotments, which are only accessible to tenants, can be accessed by three pedestrian routes, or by car off Sadleir Road. Off-site parking is very restricted.

2.8.3 Furniture

Play Area

There is a small play area for younger children located in the southern corner of Sopwell Mill Open Space. The play area is popular and regularly used by families. Over time the play equipment will become worn and may require replacement; the play area is inspected regularly and repairs undertaken when required. Any new equipment would require external funding.

Benches

There are four benches on Sopwell Nunnery Green Space, three overlook the ruins. The fourth is installed by the river as part of the Ver Valley Trail depicting the rivers course and the natural and social history of the river. There are two benches on Sopwell Mill Open Space, one in the play area, the other viewing the recently laid hedgerow.



Ver Valley Trail bench.

Litter and Dog Waste Bins

The site is provided with both litter bins and dog waste bins, which are emptied regularly as part of the grounds maintenance contract. There are three litter bins and three dog waste bins on the Sopwell Nunnery side of the site, while Sopwell Mill Open Space has one litter bin in the play area and one dog waste bin further into the site. As bins near the end of their lives they will be replaced with a single bin which can take both litter and dog waste; at this point positioning of bins can be rationalised to reduce the number on site.

Footbridge, Steps and Ramp

The footbridge, steps (from the Alban Way) and ramp are checked regularly for safety and any issues should be dealt with immediately. There are three sets of dog steps into the river which are also regularly checked.

Boardwalk

A length of boardwalk runs through the wet woodland and joins Sopwell Nunnery Green Space to Sopwell Mill Open Space via the Ver Valley Trail. The boardwalk has been named Fenny's Boardwalk after the man who looked after the stables that used to be opposite the ruins in Cottonmill Lane. The boardwalk is inspected regularly, items such as the weld mesh need replacing more frequently than the timbers due to the amount of use.



Fenny's Boardwalk takes the River Ver Trail through the wet woodland.

2.8.4 Interpretation

Welcome Signs and Notice boards

Welcome signs to orientate visitors are located at the three main entrances on Sopwell Nunnery Green Space; these are now looking a little dated.

There are two notice boards on site; one on Cottonmill Lane and the other at entrance to the allotments by the River Ver, they are regularly updated and display the Green Flag Award posters. There is a third notice board located in the allotments off Sadleir Road for use by allotment members. The main allotment access gate from Sadleir Road has a sign with the allotment name and contact details.

Interpretation Panels

Three interpretation panels have been installed around Sopwell Nunnery Green Space to inform visitors about the important natural features that are found on the site - wet woodland, spring and summer wildflower meadows; and explain the management required to enhance those habitats. These are now also beginning to look dated.

There was previously a panel about the ruins located on Cottonmill Lane away from any entrances, but the panel was faded and posts rotten and had to be removed.

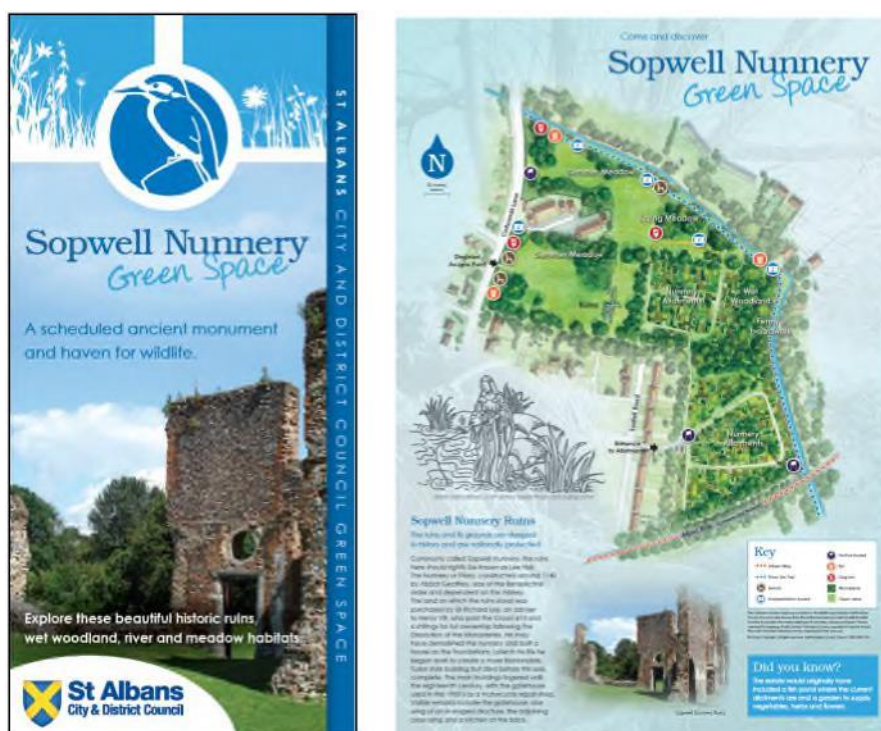
There is a dedicated River Ver interpretation panel on the banks of the river near to the Alban Way Bridge just into Sopwell Mill Open Space; again like the benches this tells the story of the River Ver with intricate carved detail.



River Ver interpretation panel.

Leaflet and Website

The Sopwell Nunnery Green Space leaflet produced in 2011 contains a map with information about the site's history and wildlife. The leaflet currently does not include Sopwell Mill Open Space.



Sopwell Nunnery Green Space leaflet.

Sopwell Nunnery Green Space has its own web page on the Council's website <http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sopwellnunnery>.

2.8.5 Other Routes

There are several other walking and cycling routes that can be accessed from Sopwell Nunnery Green Space and Sopwell Mill Open Space.

The Ver Valley Trail follows the River Ver from its source at Kensworth Lynch, north of Redbourn to Bricket Wood where it joins the River Colne and eventually finds its way to the River Thames at Staines. It is a way marked and leafleted, linear route providing opportunities for longer, self-guided walks exploring the local countryside. The route follows the north and east border of the Sopwell Nunnery Green Space and into Sopwell Mill Open Space on permissive access paths owned and managed by the council.

Two of the 8 Ver Valley Trail leaflets; Ver Valley Walk leaflet 6 – The Two Cities Walk and Ver Valley Walk leaflet 7 – The Watermeadow Walk take in Sopwell Nunnery Green Space and Sopwell Mill Open Space. Leaflets are available at local libraries, the tourist information centre and on the Ver Valley Society's website www.riverver.co.uk/pages-walks/index.html.

The old Hatfield to St Albans branch line – now the Alban Way multi-user route - divides the two sites; the Alban Way leaflet shows the route in more detail and can be downloaded from the Council's [website www.stalbans.gov.uk/albanway](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/albanway).

One of the Abbey Flyer walks - The River Ver guides people from St Albans Abbey Station along the River Ver through Sopwell Nunnery Green Space and Sopwell Mill Open Space to Park Street Station <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/environment-and-planning/countryside-management-service/walking-and-cycling-routes/abbey-flyer-river-ver.pdf>.

The Abbey Line Trail also passes through both sites on its route following the Abbey Line from St Albans Abbey Station to Watford Junction Station <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/environment-and-planning/countryside-management-service/walking-and-cycling-routes/abbey-line-trail-easy-print.pdf>.

2.9 COMMUNITY, MANAGEMENT AND EVENTS

The Council works closely with the local press to promote parks and green spaces especially by organising community days. Following the continued success of achieving Green Flag status Sopwell Nunnery Green Space has received well-earned recognition for being an important open space in the District and has increased awareness in the local community.

2.9.1 Sopwell Nunnery Green Space Steering Group

The steering group meets when required; meetings can include a site walk round. The group was established to inform the production of the site management plan. Members of the steering group include:

Sopwell Residents Association (SRA)

The SRA work for, and represent, the residents of the Sopwell ward, to uphold equal opportunities and work for good relations amongst members of the Sopwell community. They promote an ongoing process of consultation between users and providers of organisations. They organise social activities which are open to all members. They also help create a safer community, create a better sense of community and work to improve the environment.

In 2011 the SRA published 'Sopwell, a history and collection of memories'. Details of the book and how to obtain a copy are to be found on the SRA website www.sopwell.org.uk. Any profits made from sales are used for community projects.

Cottonmill and Nunnery Allotment Association (CNAA)

The CNAA are a voluntary organisation, representing plot holders on Cottonmill, Sopwell Mill or Nunnery sites. Formed in 1994, they are one of the largest allotment associations in the St. Albans area, with over 105 active members.

The association works closely with its members and the council to maintain and improve amenities on the allotments. They especially aim to provide a strong and united voice in their dealings with the council. They offer a range of benefits to their members and organise a wide variety of social activities. They publish a regular own newsletter and have a dedicated [website www.stalbansallotments.co.uk](http://www.stalbansallotments.co.uk) which is linked to from the Council's allotment web page.

The Council has updated the allotment rules and tenancy conditions to cover issues such as the use of chemicals, pets, anti-social behaviour, disputes between tenants and measures to deal with waiting lists. John O'Connors supplies the allotments with rotted compost from vegetation collected from across the district, every other year.

St Albans Museum Service

St. Albans Museum Service oversees the protection and maintenance of the scheduled ancient monument, continues to develop the understanding of the site and works to provide information about its [historywww.stalbansmuseums.org.uk/sopwell-nunery](http://www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk/sopwell-nunery).

Every two or three years the service oversees the removal of vegetation from the remains of the Tudor Hall by a private company.

Countryside Management Service (CMS)

CMS works with the Council to enhance, care for and promote enjoyment and awareness of the countryside. They advise and, when able, give practical assistance to local authorities and conservation groups on how best to care for sites, including the commission and implementation of management plans
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/cms.

CMS play an active role in encouraging volunteers and local residents to identify and become actively involved in projects on their local green spaces. CMS's practical volunteers work towards implementing the GAP. Extending works to include Sopwell Mill Open Space and potentially other local sites will make sure that any one site does not get 'gardened' and provide opportunities for people to get involved with lots of different tasks.

CMS also provide opportunities for informal recreation through events, guided walks www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/walksandmoreand run Hertfordshire health walks at local sites www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/healthwalks.

Watercress Wildlife Association (WWA)

Volunteers of the Watercress Wildlife Association (WWA) along with local residents manage for the adjacent Watercress Wildlife Association Local Nature Reserve (LNR). On the opposite bank of the River Ver the LNR consists of old watercress beds, nature trail, boardwalk, wet woodland, old orchard, meadows and a wealth of wildlife. The association has a consultative role on the steering group.

Ver Valley Society (VVS)

Ver Valley Society (VVS) have been integral to the development of the Ver Valley Trail which joins the green space to the wider [countrysidewww.riverver.co.uk/](http://www.riverver.co.uk/). They organise volunteer tasks on this stretch of the river and are part of a wider Riverfly monitoring programme in the area, with a monitoring site at Sopwell.

Other stakeholders who receive minutes from steering group meetings include St. Peter's Primary School.

3.0 ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

3.1 A WELCOMING PLACE

3.1.1 Accessibility and Access

Sopwell Nunnery Green Space and Sopwell Mill Open Space are popular with walkers, dog walkers, families, children and visitors to the ruins. In recent years the site has been made more accessible for visitors by installing easy access structures at entrances to the River Ver Trail and by the surfacing sections of path.

Points along the river bank through Sopwell Nunnery Green Space are becoming eroded where dogs and people are entering the river. At popular access points, dog steps have been installed to reduce this, but erosion is still occurring around the structures. Alternative methods need to be investigated; these include continuing to promote the growth of a vegetated river buffer strip which can be cut less frequently to prevent the invasion of scrub while keeping the vegetated margin. To stop the same happening through Sopwell Mill Open Space two dedicated river viewing areas are to be created to control access. Any works in the channel or on the banks adjacent to the river will require the consent of the Environment Agency.

The Alban Way, an off road multi user route between St Albans and Hatfield following the course of a disused railway line, dissects the sites. The two sets of steps from the green spaces onto the Alban Way require regular checks and repairs when required.

Twice a year in March and September a Council officer conducts an inspection of the allotment fencing and any breaches are repaired.

The timbers and weld mesh on the boardwalk and bridge from Cottonmill Lane onto Sopwell Nunnery Green Space are checked yearly and any repairs undertaken.

The northerly ramp from Cottonmill Lane needs to be resurfaced during this plan period. When resurfacing the ramp, a level landing platform should be constructed at the directional change point. The riverside paths on Sopwell Nunnery Open Space from Cottonmill Lane, past the allotments to Sopwell Mill Open Space also need to be resurfaced during this plan period (Appendix 6.2). Volunteers have been involved in carrying out temporary topping up of the largest holes that appear with fines.

Due to the narrow nature of the path between the Nunnery 1 allotment site and the river, access to the river must remain restricted along its length to avoid further erosion of the bank edge, path and allotments. Retaining and repairing the chestnut paling fencing (or using an alternative) as a temporary means to allow the bankside vegetation to re-establish will help to prevent dogs and people from entering the river at this point. The installation of a deflector in the channel along this section could help to divert the channel away from the allotment bank, stopping the water undercutting the bank and additional erosion occurring in this area. These works will also require Environment Agency consent.

The play area on Sopwell Mill Open Space is inspected weekly under a maintenance inspection and a play area service is carried out every year. Yearly the play area inspector carries out a condition survey of the play equipment and provides recommendations for improvements. Once play equipment reaches the end of its life it should be recycled and replaced. The play area entrance and gate should be relocated to the south west corner to make it more inviting. The slabs can be re-laid to the new entrance to improve the access and stop it from getting water logged in the winter. The sign should also be moved to beside the new entrance to make it

more welcoming. The scrub overhanging the play area needs to be maintained (section 3.5.5).

3.1.2 Interpretation

So that visitors can fully appreciate the significance of Sopwell Nunnery Green Space and come to respect all aspects of the sites, attractive and informative interpretation should be installed. The notice boards around the site have become an effective means of communicating with visitors; the boards need to be regularly updated and display the Green Flag Award poster.

Welcome boards providing orientation at entrances are aging and will be replaced with additional ones installed at the main entrances to Sopwell Mill Open Space; the new maps will include Sopwell Mill Open Space, the River Ver and the Alban Way. The dedicated wildlife panels need updating and relocating; an additional one should be installed in Sopwell Mill Open Space. Two new historic interpretation boards, focussing on the medieval nunnery site and its connections with the Abbey/the Tudor Hall, its estate and the life of Richard Lee should be developed and installed. One should be located near the entrance from Cottonmill Lane; the other should be located close to the ruins. The panels should include links to St. Albans Museum Service website for further information. The dedicated site leaflet should be updated to include Sopwell Mill Open Space as well.

All gates into the allotments should have new signs displaying the allotment name and contact details.

Given the proximity of St Peter's Primary School and other schools, the history and ecology of Sopwell Nunnery Green Space may represent a valuable educational resource. Although there is limited use by the schools at present, it is hoped that more links can be formed with the schools to use the open space as an 'open air classroom'. Installing the new panels would help to increase the value of such a visit.

Sopwell Nunnery Green Space has been awarded a Green Flag award for the last 10 years. Flying a Green Flag on site would not be in keeping with the historic nature of the site. A Green Flag plaque should be installed near to the main entrance from Cottonmill Lane by the bridge onto the site if one can be supplied.

The green space and ruins also have the potential to serve as an event venue or filming location.

Installing new posts with 'Leading to Alban Way' waymarker discs at the bottom of both flights of steps onto the Alban Way will also be a welcome addition.

3.2 HEALTHY, SAFE AND SECURE

The relationship between the wider Sopwell community and the green spaces is supportive and engaged. The SRA in the past have secured grant funding and been active around the green space. The Cottonmill Nunnery Allotment Association (CNAA) works closely with its members and the council to maintain and improve amenities on the allotments.

At strategic level, a positive partnership between the Police and the District Council which includes a two way reporting structure between the organisations has been developed. Through the Council's Community Safety team, SADC report and map antisocial events using Northgate M3 asset management software. The police can then build up a picture of when and where antisocial behaviour is taking place which

allows them to be more specific in designating officer time and resources. As well as reporting incidents to the police, St Albans operates a partnership group called the Joint Agency Group (JAG), which is chaired by Hertfordshire Constabulary. Membership includes various officers from the Council, including Community Safety, the Fire Brigade, the County Council, Probation Service and various Police support officers. JAG meets monthly and reviews current hot spots for anti-social behaviour and crime.

Tree safety surveys are undertaken every three years and any remedial actions picked up in the surveys are dealt with promptly.

Benches are checked regularly and repaired if required. The siting of any new or replacement bench should take into account the impact on local residents and be located accordingly.

The ditch along Cottonmill Lane helps to protect Sopwell Nunnery Green Space from incursions by unwelcome visitors. There are a couple of points where large log barriers help to prevent unauthorised access onto the site but these must be replaced if moved to gain access by authorised people. When the log barriers begin to rot down they will need to be replaced or an appropriate barrier installed. The barrier onto Sopwell Mill Open Space must also remain locked at all times.

3.3 CLEAN AND WELL MAINTAINED

The sites are regularly monitored by the Green Spaces Officers. Litter and dog waste bins on site are emptied 1 to 2 times a week. The site is litter picked once a week, and any fly tip is dealt with as part of the grounds maintenance contract. Once dog bins reach the end of their life they are replaced with a litter bin as part of the project 'any bin will do', which sees dog waste being incorporated with general litter. If the dog bin is situated by a litter bin no additional bin will be installed.

Regular grass cutting is carried out around the site keeping paths, entrance/egress points, signs and benches free from encroaching vegetation. Any graffiti is dealt with in accordance with the Council's graffiti policy.

Site boundaries need to be checked as there is evidence of dumped garden cuttings behind some of the houses bordering Sopwell Nunnery Green Space near to the ruins. If this is encroaching onto the site it needs to be dealt with as fly tipping.

3.4 SUSTAINABILITY

Leaves from nearby path clearance works from the Alban Way and Verulamium Park are collected by JOC who recycle all green waste, compost it and supply various allotments across the district.

Where appropriate material from tree works or fallen trees are stacked as habitat piles on site to benefit the wildlife. Locally sourced material is used in the creation of in stream deflectors.

The pesticide and recycling policies are adhered to on site.

3.5 CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE

3.5.1 Landscape

Through Sopwell, the River Ver presents a broad valley with a wide flood plain. The valley functions as a green corridor through the residential areas to the south of the town centre. It's important to conserve the special character and continuity of the Ver Valley by screening the visual intrusion of residences as far as possible.

There are a number of mature willows and a couple of mature sycamores. These specimen trees should be retained, but where willows are leaning low across the river or causing excessive shading, the trees should be pollarded to extend their lives and to strengthen the character of the river valley.

The river itself should be managed to retain its natural character as far as possible. In areas where a degree of canalisation has been imposed, vegetation and structures should be managed to create a more diverse structure with meanders, pools, emergent and in-river vegetation, bare gravel and riffles.

The Hertfordshire Landscape Strategy calls for the 'establishment of buffer strips of semi-natural vegetation along all watercourses avoiding potential conflict with recreational use.' Along the river bank, there are indeed a number of places where erosion has been caused by dogs and people accessing the river. Maintaining a vegetation buffer strip will reduce this erosion, but it may be necessary to engineer structures that protect the bank while allowing access to the river. Any construction work in the river or on its banks will require consent from the Environment Agency.

Flood plain meadows are a key characteristic of this part of the Ver. These should be retained and managed to encourage a more diverse species mix. Reducing nutrient levels by the regular cutting and removing of arisings will help achieve this. The clumps of scrub within the meadows add structure and interest to the grassland.

3.5.2 History

Sopwell Nunnery is a nationally significant and well documented archaeological site which has been left relatively undisturbed. The monument belonged to the Church in the first instance, before being appropriated by one of the Henry VIII's most important military advisers. The site's archaeology illustrates the great social and political changes that were occurring in the sixteenth century.

The remnants of Richard Lee's Tudor Hall, locally referred to as 'Sopwell Nunnery', perches on a raised platform above the flood plain. It is important to maintain and improve views of the ruined Hall by controlling scrub that has developed on underground historical features. Views of the Abbey should also be retained.

The mound of the potential gatehouse in front of the Hall should be maintained scrub free so that future geophysical surveys can be more effective and comprehensive. Where other areas of scrub have developed, particularly in front of the Hall, the scrub should be removed and controlled by an annual cut and the removal of arisings. This will have the benefit of providing better views of the Hall from Cottonmill Lane, which is likely to attract more visitors and deter anti-social behaviour. In addition, the bramble scrub provides a habitat for burrowing animals such as rabbits that could undermine the underground archaeology.

To the rear of the Hall, there is a substantial amount of scrub and ivy that obscures the monument and may be damaging the brickwork. On the other hand, the scrub and ivy restricts access to the ruins so it may be serving as protection for the

monument. Where it is evident that scrub roots or ivy are having a damaging effect, they should be removed. Trees that have fallen down also need to be removed.

Regenerating vegetation that appears on the Hall will need to be carefully removed every two or three years by contractors guided by staff from the St. Albans Museum Service.

A work plan for the monument has been developed in conjunction with Historic England and all works included in it have received scheduled monument consent; any additional works outside of the plan will need separate consents. A member of Historic England visits the site when required to discuss the progress with the plan and any problems that are being encountered.

3.5.3 Grassland

The two areas cut as amenity grass allow the public to use the open spaces for recreation purposes and on Sopwell Nunnery Green Space it helps to maintain good views of the ruins. The grounds maintenance specification requires the sward height to be kept between 20-35mm which means the cuttings can remain.

Adjacent to the hedgerows around Sopwell Mill Open Space a 2 to 5m wide margin should be retained of longer grass to create a buffer between the hedgerows and amenity grassland. This will provide shelter and food for small mammals and birds. The margin should be cut once a year in September/October and the arisings removed from site.

On Sopwell Nunnery Green Space the grassland in the wetter parts of the site – near to the wet woodland and willow structure - should be managed as longer grass and be cut once a year as above. The remaining longer grassland should be scarified and then seeded with a native wildflower wet grassland seed mix suitable for the soil type on site; it would then need regular cutting to initially help get it established (Appendix 6.3).

A new wildflower margin is to be created by the side of the laid hedge on Sopwell Mill Open Space. Seeding would be undertaken on the river side of the hedge only so as not to lose any of the amenity grassland and only up to the path edge not to the top of the river bank. The area would have to be scarified and then seeded with a native wildflower hedgerow seed mix suitable for the soil type on site; it would then need regular cutting to initially help get it established (Appendix 6.3). Ver Valley Society would be interested in helping to fund the work.

3.5.4 Trees and Wet Woodland

Wet woodland or Carr is also an important, rare habitat featured as a Forestry Commission Regional Target and in the Hertfordshire BAP. Some of the older willow trees would benefit from tree surgery such as re-pollarding to help extend the life of the tree, and to increase light levels over the river and into the Carr. A bat survey would be necessary before any tree works were undertaken.

Young tree recruitment is sparse in this area. Where trees are pollarded, cut limbs and brash should be 'planted' in areas where the canopy is sufficiently open – willow is very well adapted to grow in these conditions. There are opportunities to provide additional nesting and roosting sites by the bat and bird nesting boxes that have been installed on some of the more mature trees; these need to be maintained. Bat boxes can only be checked by a licenced bat worker.

The woven willow tunnel requires regular maintenance by volunteers to retain its shape; maintenance involves either weaving in or pruning off the new growth and weeding around the base of the structure to stop bramble and ivy from taking hold. Coppicing some adjacent overhanging willow would encourage a more balanced growth pattern on the willow tunnel.

Any new tree planting on Sopwell Nunnery Green Space should be UK grown from seed, of British provenance (Appendix 6.4). Only native trees in keeping with the surrounding landscape should be planted. Trees should not be planted on Scheduled Ancient Monument land or too close to the ruins. All trees need to be adequately staked and a weed suppressing mat installed to help protect the trees; care needs to be taken when grass cutting not to damage the new trees.

3.5.5 Scrub and Hedgerows

Reference has already been made to the desirability of removing scrub from the vicinity of the ancient monument (section 3.5.2).

Scrub across the site needs to continue to be managed as if left it can become 'leggy', loses its density which nesting birds favour and eventually develops into woodland. This is achieved by cutting back scrub before it becomes over mature; priority areas that need to be managed include the ruins (section 3.5.2), the area adjacent to the willow tunnel and all margins onto both sites to stop encroachment into the grassland. It is also important that the grass cutting regime always includes the strip where such encroachment takes place; this will help to manage the tall ruderal vegetation that is developing.

The area near to the woven willow tunnel floods in winter creating an additional habitat feature on the site, but it also causes restrictions to access across this part of the site. This area should be avoided when flooded to prevent excess damage to the ground; no alternative routes are to be created as the next nearest path onto/from the site is only a few metres away and cutting new routes through the scrub will remove important habitat.

The hedgerow along the southern boundary of Sopwell Mill Open Space needs to be coppiced in sections on rotation, to continue to provide a dense boundary habitat and reduce the encroachment into the grassland and play area. This hedgerow could also be laid; neighbouring homeowners need to be consulted before any works are undertaken as it could open up views to their homes. The laid hedgerow across the site needs to be managed by continued laying and cutting of regrowth; vegetation growing up around it needs to be cleared every 3 years to make sure the hedgerow does not become swamped; this can be undertaken by volunteers.

3.5.6 Allotments

The allotments are managed sensitively to help benefit wildlife while providing a food source. With grass snakes and slow worms having been recorded on site in the past, information about protected species including guidance about compost heaps has been provided. Around and within the allotment sites, wilder areas consisting of mixed tree species, shrubs and low lying vegetation exist along with ponds on some plots. These areas provide food and shelter for birds, mammals, reptiles and insects, and also make a contribution to the connectivity of larger habitats on and around the green space.

3.5.7 River Ver

Rivers provide habitats for wildlife and a corridor for the migration of mobile species. A list of the essential elements of a good quality chalk river habitat would include

meanders, gravel bottoms, some faster running shallow areas creating riffles and some deeper pools, emergent and in-river vegetation. Indicator species include water-crowfoot, water starwort, brown trout and water voles.

Unfortunately, the River Ver's population of brown trout has been diminished, native white clawed crayfish have been superseded by non-native signal crayfish and water voles have disappeared with the nearest known population being on the River Chess at Rickmansworth. From here, if they could establish on the River Colne then maybe one day we could see a return to the River Ver. The Ver is a degraded river but in some sections emergent and in-river vegetation persists. Restoration of habitats for brown trout and water voles are priority BAP actions.

Where the river is over shaded and canalised, the slow, even flow causes silt deposition across the whole river. When combined with the lack of light, these areas become relatively lifeless. On these stretches tree felling, pollarding or pruning of selected trees would allow light to stimulate the growth of in-river and emergent vegetation. The installation of flow deflectors in appropriate locations would create areas of fast flow where gravel bottoms were exposed and areas of slow flow where silt was deposited and vegetation could take root. It would also be beneficial to install deflectors or other structures in the river to help to reduce scour and erosion of the banks. This would increase habitat diversity. The timber from any tree work could be used to construct these structures. A survey of the river and careful consideration of structure design and location would be necessary, with consent required from the Environment Agency.

Bank erosion is a cause for concern, especially adjacent to the Nunnery 1 allotments where the path is very narrow and any erosion will affect the width of the path. Dog steps have been installed at various locations to encourage access only at these points, yet erosion is still occurring around the new structures further damaging the banks. This could be due to the design of the steps. Other options are going to be considered to find an alternative solution to the problem. This might be a combination of options including using coir rolls (these could be pre-planted with native species) or engineering a form of backfilled step arrangement at these points or other stronger reinforcement while maintaining the natural appearance of the bank edge. All works will require consent from the Environment Agency.

The continual development of the vegetated riverside margin along the length of the river with the odd mature tree would also help to reduce the number of informal access points, while sustaining a wildlife corridor along the river and providing viewing opportunities for visitors. This meets one of the aspirations of the River Colne Catchment Action Network – ColneCAN (<http://www.colnecan.org.uk/>). The riverside margin should be cut on a three year rotational basis with one third cut one year, the next third cut the following year and so on, which will also combat any small saplings that might be trying to take hold.

Part way down from the Cottonmill Lane road bridge there is a large stepped outlet into the river from the opposite bank. In the past the water by the outlet has been observed as being a different colour and had an odour, this was reported to the Environment Agency (EA) as a possible misconnection. Any future occurrences should be reported immediately to the EA for them to log the incident. SADC should keep up regular contact with EA if issues are not dealt with swiftly.

A larger River Ver and the Verulamium Lakes Improvement Project is being undertaken at Verulamium Park, with improvements to the wider river valley being considered. The River Ver will be included in Phase 2 of the project. For more information, visit <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/revitalising-river-ver>

3.5.8 Wildlife

Continuing the management practices mentioned above will protect the habitats for the species that use the site.

Natural nesting holes along the river bank are slowly being lost with changes to the rivers morphology and erosion. Installing artificial nesting areas may be the answer; either a whole nesting bank could be installed along the river, or what may work better in this setting could be kingfisher nesting boxes

<https://www.nhbs.com/schwegler-kingfisher-and-sand-martin-nest-tunnel>). The feasibility of these options will need to be investigated further to provide the best available options; any works in or along the banks of the river will require consent from the Environment Agency.

3.6 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

3.6.1 Volunteers

The relationship between the wider Sopwell community and the green spaces is supportive and engaged. Sopwell Residents Association has been active around the green space.

Countryside Management Service (CMS) practical conservation volunteers have undertaken works on both sites and along the Alban Way, on tasks including: hedge laying, coppicing, planting, fencing, sign installation, path improvements and much more.

3.6.2 Allotments

The Cottonmill and Nunnery Allotment Association (CNAA) works closely with its members and the council to maintain and improve amenities on the allotments including habitats for wildlife.

3.6.3 Ver Valley Society (VVS)

The Ver Valley Society (VVS) exists to protect and promote all aspects of the River Ver and its valley. They have a practical volunteer team who undertake tasks in the Sopwell area annually, and some members are involved in undertaking Riverfly monitoring in the area.

3.7 MARKETING

3.7.1 Events

A variety of events have been held on the site, from bat walks and surveys, to historic talks and willow sculpture weaving. Continuing to hold events will help to raise the profile of the site. Events will be advertised on site, on the Council's and CMS websites and locally to get as much participation from the local community as possible.

3.7.2 Promotion

The sites will be promoted through the Council's and partner websites. The leaflet will be available at local libraries and information centres.

Information will be available on the ParksHerts website (www.parksherts.co.uk) which is a mobile-first website application providing a single information point for over a hundred of Hertfordshire's parks and open spaces from recreation grounds through to woodlands and award winning flagship parks, irrespective of administrative ownership. It provides a way for people to discover and enjoy sites they know and

those that they haven't yet discovered, whilst also supporting people to make outdoor exercise part of their everyday lives.

3.7.2 Education

There are local schools in the area which could use the site to learn about wildlife and history; the new leaflet will be distributed widely to attract these new audiences. The Countryside Ranger (JOC) will visit the schools and give talks to the school children about the sites and look at how they can also engage with the parents.

4.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

A A WELCOMING PLACE

To provide a clear and welcoming experience for visitors to Sopwell Nunnery Green Space and Sopwell Mill Open Space.

- A1 Improve all site entrances to form welcoming, appealing gateways into the site.
- A2 Ensure that visitors are able to successfully navigate to, from, and around the site.
- A3 Provide a suitable network of accessible paths and transport routes throughout the site.

B HEALTHY, SAFE AND SECURE

To ensure that visitors to Sopwell Nunnery Green Space and Sopwell Mill Open Space feel safe and able to enjoy the site at all times.

- B1 Ensure that visitors feel safe and secure in all areas of the site by carrying out regular risk assessments of facilities, natural features and general environment.
- B2 Carry out reactive tree works to address safety issues.
- B3 Provide a proactive response to any misuse of the site.
- B4 Continue close liaison between SADC, Sopwell Nunnery Green Space Steering Group (SNGSSG), the local community and local landowners.

C CLEAN AND WELL MAINTAINED

To ensure the standard of maintenance is maintained and relevant across Sopwell Nunnery Green Space and Sopwell Mill Open Space.

- C1 Manage and maintain the paths, signage and grass cutting by monitoring the grounds maintenance regimes.
- C2 Remove graffiti and fly tipping, and carry out regular litter picks and small scale vegetation management.
- C3 Ensure all structures are regularly maintained and fit for purpose.
- C4 Carry out regular inspections and any necessary repairs to the play area.
- C5 Report any pollution incidents to the Environment Agency.

D SUSTAINABILITY

To ensure ongoing costs are sustainable, secure external funding for capital works, minimise waste and reuse material within the site.

- D1 Ensure ongoing maintenance costs are financially sustainable.

- D2 Secure external funding to ensure the viability of capital works.
- D3 Seek to minimise waste and reuse material within the site where possible.

E CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE

To maintain and enhance the quality of the habitats across the sites, while maintaining their value for biodiversity and recreation and to protect the nationally significant archaeological remains and historic landscape of Sopwell Nunnery Green Space.

- E1 Continue the annual grassland management regime.
- E2 Create and actively manage wildflower grasslands on both sites.
- E3 Prevent further encroachments of scrub into the grassland.
- E4 Manage the scrub habitats to stop them developing into woodland.
- E5 Carry out yearly maintenance of the woven willow tunnel.
- E6 Undertake rotational coppicing of the boundary hedgerows and manage the laid hedge on Sopwell Mill Open Space.
- E7 Continue to manage the wet woodland on site.
- E8 Continue with active management of the river and river bank habitat – including providing viewing areas and access, erosion control, bank side vegetation management, sustaining wildlife corridors, in-channel structures (if required), tree management and reporting pollution incidents.
- E9 Maintain and improve habitats on site to protect the specialist species that use them.
- E10 Ensure above ground historic features and buried archaeological remains are appropriately managed in accordance with the consented management plan to ensure their preservation – including scrub removal and repairs.
- E11 Continue to manage the allotments in accordance with the site rules and to benefit wildlife.
- E12 Monitor and record species across the sites.

F COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Enable local people and regular visitors to take an active role in the conservation, decision making and development of Sopwell Nunnery Green Space and Sopwell Mill Open Space.

- F1 Support volunteer activity on site and ensure all involved operate towards achievement of the GAP.
- F2 Encourage the local community to become involved in the management of Sopwell Nunnery in a structured and supported way.

- F3 Organise and enable a range of events and activities across the sites.
- F4 Countryside Ranger to run talks and walks for school groups.

G MARKETING

To develop new and innovative ways to attract a wider variety of visitors to enjoy Sopwell Nunnery Green Space and Sopwell Mill Open Space, and to fully realise their value as an open space.

- G1 Continue to develop events and activities with partners, key stakeholders and the community; raising awareness and interest in the sites.
- G2 Promote a greater undertaking, awareness and interest in the sites through a variety of media – notice boards, leaflet, interpretation panels, website.
- G3 Develop and promote the revised leaflet and interpretation panels to local schools and businesses and further afield.
- G4 Display Green Flag Plaque and promote award.

5.0 FIVE YEAR ACTION PLAN

All dates in the action plan are subject to change, depending on resources and funding.

5.1 ANNUAL ITEMS

Ref no:	Action	Obj. no:	When	Responsibility	Funding Stream	Estimated Cost	Spec. ref:	Status (completed/ comments)
0.1	Health and Safety inspections and undertaking of works.	B1	When required	SADC	GM Budget	Contract rates	n/a	Done
0.2	Empty litter bins on a weekly basis.	C1	All year	SADC	GM Budget	Contract rates	n/a	Done
0.3	Empty dog waste bins minimum once a week or when required.	C1	All year	SADC (JOC)	GM Budget	Contract rates	n/a	Done
0.4	Replace old dog bins with litter bins unless another litter bin is in the same area.	C1	When required	SADC (JOC)	GM Budget	Contract rates	n/a	N/A
0.5	Undertake a tree safety survey every 3 years and carry out emergency tree work.	B2	Sep-Feb	SADC	Tree Budget	Staff time, Contractor	n/a	Done
0.6	Continue to manage the Allotments in accordance with their plan.	E11	Ongoing	SADC/CNAA	Allotment Budget	Staff time	n/a	Done
0.7	Conduct bi-annual inspection of Allotment fencing and carry out repairs.	B1	Mar & Sep	SADC/CNAA	Allotment Budget	Staff time	n/a	Done
0.8	Supply rotted compost to allotment composting bins.	D3	Autumn/ winter Every	SADC (JOC)	GM Budget	Contract rates	n/a	Done

			other year					
0.9	Play area inspection and undertake any repairs as required.	B1, B2, C4	Weekly	SADC (JOC)	GM Budget	Contract rates	n/a	Done
0.10	Play area service.	C4	August	SADC (JOC)	GM Budget	Contract rates	n/a	Done
0.11	Commission an independent inspection of play area and carry out identified improvements/repairs.	C4	Annually	SADC	GM Budget	Contract rates	n/a	Done
0.12	Management of vegetation through the Grounds Maintenance Contract.	C1, E1	Ongoing	SADC	GM Budget	Contract rates	n/a	Done
0.13	Cut 1/3 of the riverbank to encourage new growth annually except where erosion is evident.	E8	Sep	SADC(JOC)/ CMS/Vols/VVS	GM Budget	Contract rates	n/a	Ongoing – for contractor
0.14	Annual River Ver check for over-hanging trees/scrub impacting on river. Agree work to be done contractor/vols.	E8	Sep	SADC(JOC)/ CMS/Vols/VVS	GM Budget	Contract rates	n/a	Done
0.15	Weave/prune willow structure, weed around base (SRA) and remove over hanging willow (Vols).	E5	Sep-Mar	SRA/CMS/Vols	n/a	Vol time	n/a	Ongoing – reduction of volunteers due to Covid-19

0.16	Inspect all paths and steps (to Alban Way) undertake repairs as required.	A1-A3, B1, C1	Every 6 months	SADC (JOC)	GM Budget	Contract rates	n/a	Done
0.17	Maintain and replace log barriers.	B1, C3, D3	When required	SADC	GM Budget	Contract rates	n/a	N/A
0.18	Maintain notice boards with a content review every month.	G2	Monthly	SADC/SRA	SADC Budget	Vol time	n/a	Ongoing
0.19	Remove all graffiti in accordance with SADC graffiti policy.	C2	When required	SADC	GM Budget	Contract rates	n/a	Ongoing
0.20	Remove fly tip.	C2	When required	SADC	GM Budget	Contract rates	n/a	Ongoing
0.21	Report any pollution events to Environment Agency.	B3, C5	When required	ALL	n/a	n/a	n/a	Ongoing
0.22	Secure external funding to ensure viability of capital works.	D2	Ongoing	SADC/CMS	n/a	n/a	n/a	Ongoing
0.23	Ensure ongoing maintenance costs are financially sustainable.	D1	Ongoing	SADC	n/a	n/a	n/a	Ongoing
0.24	Undertake management of the ruins following Historic England's recommendations – removing scrub, ivy from around the ruins, fallen trees etc.	E10	Ongoing	SADC/CMS	SADC Budget	£10,000	n/a	Ongoing
0.25	Monitor and record species across the sites (including Riverfly).	E12	Ongoing	ALL	n/a	n/a	n/a	Ongoing

0.26	Maintain bird and bat boxes.	E12, F1	Nov-Jan	SRA	n/a	Vol time	n/a	In progress
0.27	Devise and run a programme of volunteer/community events and walks.	F1-F3, G1-G3	Ongoing	SADC/CMS/SNGSSG	SADC Budget	Staff time	n/a	Ongoing – with JOC Countryside Ranger
0.28	Contribute to Steering Group Meetings (including site walk round).	B4	As required	SADC/CMS/SNGSSG	SADC Budget	Staff time	n/a	In progress
0.29	Liaise with all other users.	B4, F1-F3, G1-G3	Ongoing	SADC/ALL	SADC Budget	Staff time	n/a	Ongoing
0.30	Promote the site as an educational resource and as a venue for public events and film location.	F1-F3, G1-G3	Ongoing	SADC	SADC Budget	Staff time	n/a	Ongoing
0.31	Update Sopwell Nunnery Green Space and ParksHerts webpages when required.	G2	When required	SADC	SADC Budget	Staff time	n/a	Done
0.32	Review and update annual action plans.		Mar Yearly	SADC/CMS/SNGSSG	SADC Budget	Staff time	n/a	Done

Abbreviations: SADC – St Albans City & District Council; CMS – Countryside Management Service; JOC – John O’Connors; GM – Grounds Maintenance; Vols – Volunteers; CNAA – Cottonmill and Nunnery Allotments Association; SRA – Sopwell Residents Association; WWA – Watercress Wildlife Association; SAMS – St Albans Museum Services; SNGSSG – Sopwell Nunnery Green Space Steering Group; SNGS – Sopwell Nunnery Green Space; SMOS – Sopwell Mill Open Space; VVS – Ver Valley Society.

5.2 YEAR 1 ACTION PLAN 2018-19

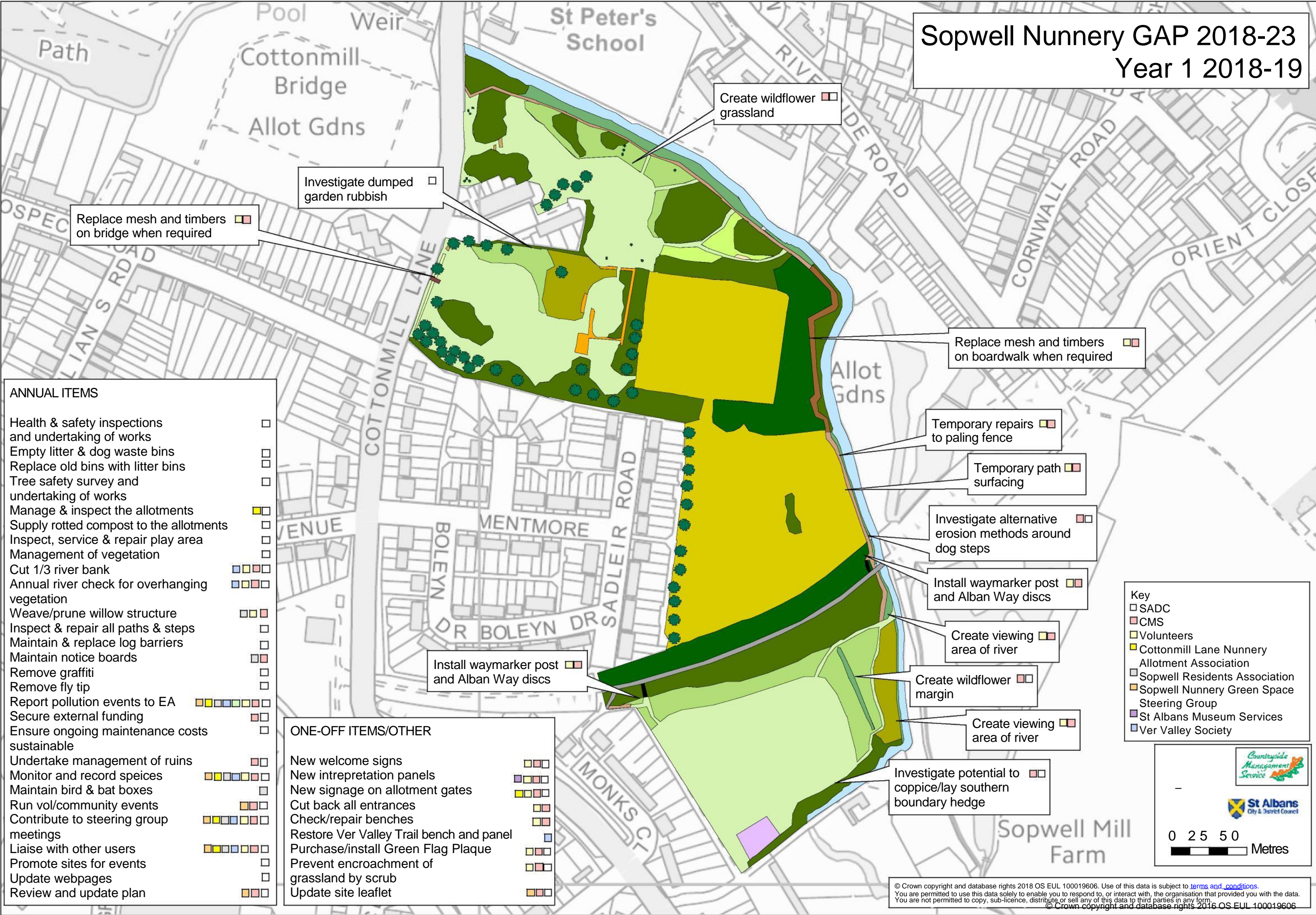
Ref no:	Action	Obj. no:	When	Responsibility	Funding Stream	Estimated Cost	Spec. ref:	Status (completed/ comments)
1.1	Install 5 new welcome signs across the sites.	A1, F1	Jul-Sep	CMS/SADC/Vols	External	Vol time, £1,500-2K each	n/a	Moved to Year 3
1.2	Design and install 4 new interpretation panels – habitat, wildlife, history.	G2, G3, F1	Jul-Sep	CMS/SADC/SAMS/Vols	External	Vol time, £1,500-2K each	n/a	Moved to Year 3
1.3	Install 3 new signs on the allotment gates.	A2, F1	Jul-Sep	CMS/SADC/CNAA/Vols	External	Vol time, £1,000	n/a	Moved to Year 3
1.4	Make sure all entrances are accessible.	A1-A3, F1	Apr-Jun	CMS/Vols	External	Vol time	n/a	Done
1.5	Check boardwalk and bridge; replace mesh and timbers, if required, cut back vegetation.	A3, B1 C3, F1	Jul-Sep	CMS/Vols	SADC Budget	Vol time, Materials	n/a	Done
1.6	Check and repair/replace benches when required.	B1, C3, F1	When required	CMS/Vols	External	£200-500	n/a	Ongoing
1.7	Restore Ver Valley trail Bench and panel.	B1, C3, F1	Summer	VVS	VVS Budget	Vol time, Materials	n/a	Done
1.8	Investigate dumped garden cuttings around the boundary.	B3	Ongoing	SADC	SADC Budget	Contract rates	n/a	Ongoing

Ref no:	Action	Obj. no:	When	Responsibility	Funding Stream	Estimated Cost	Spec. ref:	Status (completed/ comments)
1.9	Temporary path surfacing.	A3, F1	Apr-Jun	CMS/Vols	SADC Budget	£100, Vol time	n/a	Done
1.10	Purchase and install Green Flag Plaque.	G4	Apr-Jun	SADC/CMS/Vols	SADC Budget	tbc	n/a	Done
1.11	Install waymarker posts 'leading to Alban Way' at bottom of steps.	A2, F1	Apr-Jun	CMS/Vols	External	Vol time, Materials	n/a	Done
1.12	Investigate alternative methods for stopping erosion around the dog steps.	E8	Apr-Aug	CMS/SADC	External	Staff time	n/a	In progress
1.13	Create wildflower grassland areas on SNGS.	E2	Sep-Oct	CMS/SADC	External	£2,500-3k	6.3	Areas currently being identified for winter 2021/2022
1.14	Create a wildflower margin by the side of the laid hedge on SMOS.	E2	Sep-Oct	CMS/SADC	External/VVS tbc		6.3	Completed in March 2020
1.15	Repair temporary paling fence between allotment and river to restrict access. EA permission required.	C3, E11	Sep-Feb	SADC/CMS/Vols	SADC Budget	Vol time, Materials	n/a	Done

Ref no:	Action	Obj. no:	When	Responsibility	Funding Stream	Estimated Cost	Spec. ref:	Status (completed/ comments)
1.16	Create two viewing areas of the river from SMOS.	E8, F1	Sep-Feb	CMS/Vols	SADC Budget	Vol time	n/a	Done
1.17	Prevent further encroachment of scrub into the grassland.	E3, E4, F1	Sep-Feb	SADC/CMS/ Vols	SADC Budget	Vol time – Contractor tbc	n/a	Ongoing – for contractor. Undertaken in the winter / February.
1.18	Investigate the potential to coppice/lay the southern boundary hedge on SMOS.	E6	Sep-Mar	SADC/CMS	SADC Budget	Staff time	n/a	Ongoing
1.19	Update site leaflet.	G3	Jul-Sep	SADC/CMS/ SNGSSG	External	£200-250 (2,500 leaflets)	n/a	Moved to Year 3
1.20	Review Year 1 Action Plan		Mar 19	SADC/CMS/ SNGSSG	SADC Budget	Staff time	n/a	Done

Sopwell Nunnery GAP 2018-23

Year 1 2018-19



5.3 YEAR 2-5 ACTION PLAN 2019-23

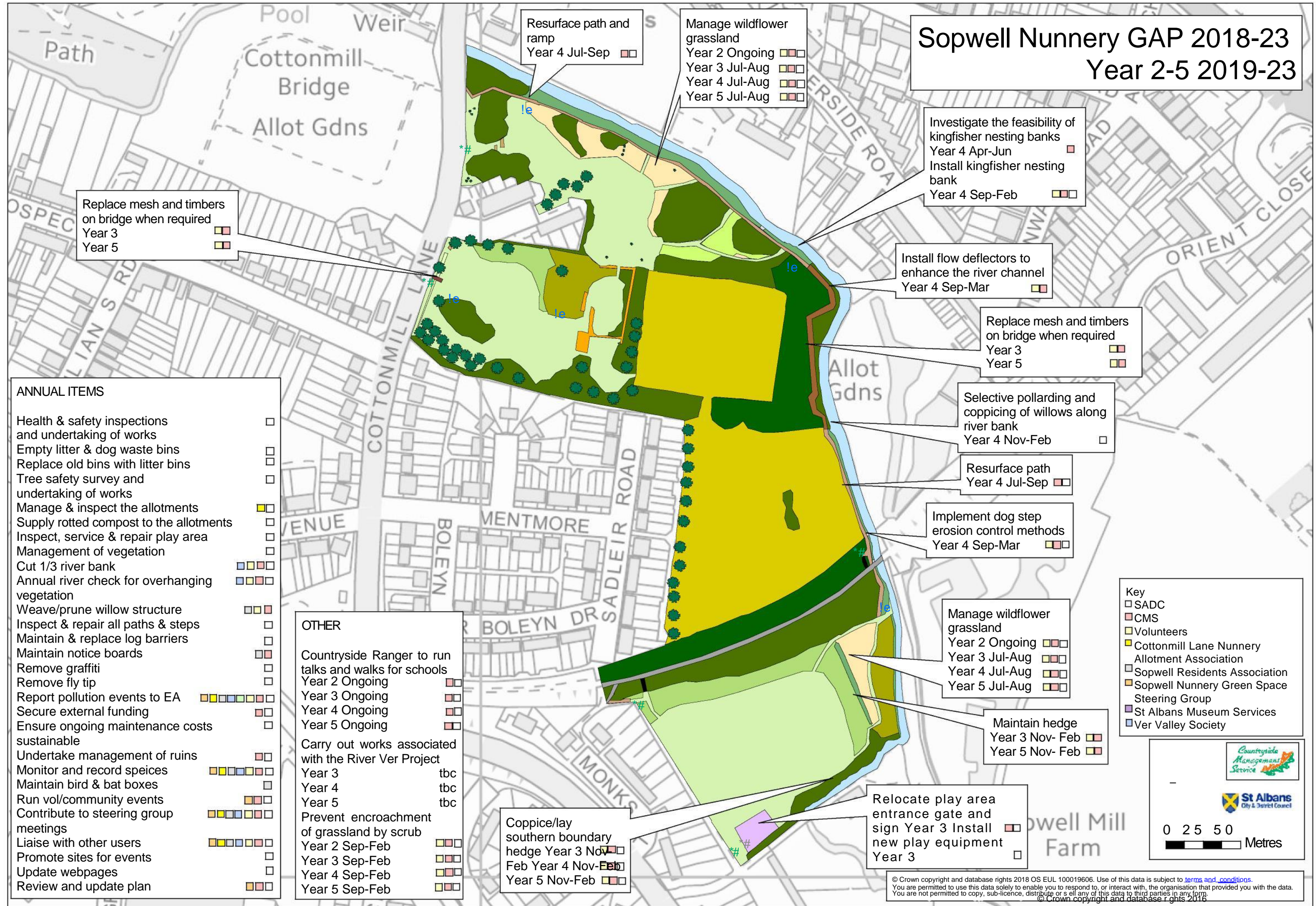
Ref no:	Action	Obj. no.	When	Responsibility	Funding Stream	Estimated Cost	Spec. ref:	Status (completed/ comments)
2.1	Relocate Sopwell Mill Open Space play area entrance gate and sign.	A1, C4	Jun-Sep	SADC/CMS	External	£2,000	n/a	Ongoing
2.2	Install new play equipment at Sopwell Mill Open Space.	A1, C4	Jun-Sep	SADC	S106	£25-30k	n/a	Ongoing
2.3	Carry out any works associated with the River Ver Project.	E8	Ongoing Years 3-5	tbc	tbc	tbc	n/a	Ongoing – in Phase 2 of the River Ver Project
2.4	Check boardwalk and bridge; replace mesh and timbers, if required, cut back vegetation.	A3, B1, C3, F1	Jul-Sep Years 3 and 5	CMS/Vols	SADC Budget	Vol time, Materials	n/a	Ongoing repairs – update in Phase 2 of the River Ver Project
2.5	Resurface paths and ramp.	A3	Jul-Sep Year 4	SADC/CMS	External Funding	£7,000	n/a	Ongoing – in Phase 2 of the River Ver Project
2.6	Investigate the feasibility of kingfisher nesting banks including EA consent.	E9, E12	Apr-Jun Year 4	CMS	SADC Budget	tbc	n/a	Ongoing – in Phase 2 of the River Ver Project
2.7	Install appropriate kingfisher nesting banks including EA consent.	E9, E12	Sep-Feb Year 4	CMS/SADC/Vols	External Funding	tbc	n/a	Ongoing – in Phase 2 of the River Ver Project
2.8	Countryside Ranger to run talks and walks for school groups.	F3, F4	Ongoing Year 2-5	SADC/JOC/CMS	SADC Budget	Staff time	n/a	In progress

Ref no:	Action	Obj. no.	When	Responsibility	Funding Stream	Estimated Cost	Spec. ref:	Status (completed/ comments)
2.9	Manage wildflower grassland areas.	E2, E9	Ongoing Year 2 Jul-Aug Years 3-5	CMS/SADC/ Vols	SADC Budget	Contract rates, Vol time	n/a	Ongoing – reduction of volunteers due to Covid-19
2.10	Maintain laid hedge across SMOS – lay, cut, weed.	E6, F1	Nov-Feb Years 3 and 5	CMS/Vols	SADC Budget	Vol time	n/a	Ongoing – reduction of volunteers due to Covid-19
2.11	From investigations coppice/lay the southern boundary hedge on SMOS.	E6, F1	Nov-Feb Years 3, 4 and 5	CMS/SADC/ Vols	SADC Budget	Vol time – Contractor tbc	n/a	Ongoing – reduction of volunteers due to Covid-19
2.12	Prevent further encroachment of scrub into the grassland.	E3, E4, F1	Sep-Feb Years 2-5	SADC/CMS/ Vols	SADC Budget	Vol time – Contractor tbc	n/a	Ongoing – reduction of volunteers due to Covid-19
2.13	Undertake willow management through pollarding and coppicing of selective willows along the river bank to allow in more light to the channel.	E7, E8	Nov-Feb Year 4	SADC	Tree Budget	Contractor tbc	n/a	Ongoing – in Phase 2 of the River Ver Project
2.14	Implement dog step erosion control methods.	E8, F1	Sep-Mar Year 4	CMS/SADC/ Vols	External funding	tbc	n/a	Ongoing – in Phase 2 of the River Ver Project
2.15	Install flow deflectors to enhance the river channel – EA consent required.	E8, F1	Sep-Mar Year 4	CMS/Vols	SADC Budget	Vol time	n/a	Ongoing – in Phase 2 of the River Ver Project

Ref no:	Action	Obj. no.	When	Responsibility	Funding Stream	Estimated Cost	Spec. ref:	Status (completed/ comments)
2.16	Review Year 2 Action Plan		Mar 19	SADC/CMS/ SNGSSG	SADC Budget	Staff time	n/a	Done
2.17	Review Year 3 Action Plan		Mar 20	SADC/CMS/ SNGSSG	SADC Budget	Staff time	n/a	Ongoing
2.18	Review Year 4 Action Plan		Mar 21	SADC/CMS/ SNGSSG	SADC Budget	Staff time	n/a	Ongoing
2.19	Review Year 5 Action Plan, consult and write new plan		Mar 22	SADC/CMS/ SNGSSG	SADC Budget	Staff time	n/a	Ongoing
2.20	Install 5 new welcome signs across the sites. Moved from year 1	A1, F1	Jul-Sep	CMS/SADC/	1.1	Vol time, £1,500-2K each	n/a	Ongoing
2.21	Design and install 4 new interpretation panels – habitat, wildlife, history. Moved from year 1	G2, G3, F1	Jul-Sep	CMS/SADC/ SAMS/Vols	External	Vol time, £1,500-2K each	n/a	Ongoing
2.22	Install 3 new signs on the allotment gates. Moved from year 1	A2, F1	Jul-Sep	CMS/SADC/ CNAA/Vols	External	Vol time, £1,000	n/a	Looking for funding to replace all gates & fencing on site. Currently not secure.
1.19	Update site leaflet. Moved from year 1	G3	Jul-Sep	SADC/CMS/	1.19	Update site leaflet.	G3	Ongoing

Sopwell Nunnery GAP 2018-23

Year 2-5 2019-23



Replace mesh and timbers on bridge when required
Year 3
Year 5

Resurface path and ramp
Year 4 Jul-Sep

Manage wildflower grassland
Year 2 Ongoing
Year 3 Jul-Aug
Year 4 Jul-Aug
Year 5 Jul-Aug

Investigate the feasibility of kingfisher nesting banks
Year 4 Apr-Jun
Install kingfisher nesting bank
Year 4 Sep-Feb

Install flow deflectors to enhance the river channel
Year 4 Sep-Mar

Replace mesh and timbers on bridge when required
Year 3
Year 5

Selective pollarding and coppicing of willows along river bank
Year 4 Nov-Feb

Resurface path
Year 4 Jul-Sep

Implement dog step erosion control methods
Year 4 Sep-Mar

Manage wildflower grassland
Year 2 Ongoing
Year 3 Jul-Aug
Year 4 Jul-Aug
Year 5 Jul-Aug

Maintain hedge
Year 3 Nov- Feb
Year 5 Nov- Feb

Coppice/lay southern boundary hedge
Year 3 Nov- Feb
Year 4 Nov- Feb
Year 5 Nov- Feb

Relocate play area entrance gate and sign
Year 3 Install new play equipment
Year 3

- ANNUAL ITEMS**
- Health & safety inspections and undertaking of works
 - Empty litter & dog waste bins
 - Replace old bins with litter bins
 - Tree safety survey and undertaking of works
 - Manage & inspect the allotments
 - Supply rotted compost to the allotments
 - Inspect, service & repair play area
 - Management of vegetation
 - Cut 1/3 river bank
 - Annual river check for overhanging vegetation
 - Weave/prune willow structure
 - Inspect & repair all paths & steps
 - Maintain & replace log barriers
 - Maintain notice boards
 - Remove graffiti
 - Remove fly tip
 - Report pollution events to EA
 - Secure external funding
 - Ensure ongoing maintenance costs sustainable
 - Undertake management of ruins
 - Monitor and record speices
 - Maintain bird & bat boxes
 - Run vol/community events
 - Contribute to steering group meetings
 - Liaise with other users
 - Promote sites for events
 - Update webpages
 - Review and update plan

- OTHER**
- Countryside Ranger to run talks and walks for schools
 - Year 2 Ongoing
 - Year 3 Ongoing
 - Year 4 Ongoing
 - Year 5 Ongoing
 - Carry out works associated with the River Ver Project
 - Year 3
 - Year 4
 - Year 5
 - Prevent encroachment of grassland by scrub
 - Year 2 Sep-Feb
 - Year 3 Sep-Feb
 - Year 4 Sep-Feb
 - Year 5 Sep-Feb

- Key**
- SADC
 - CMS
 - Volunteers
 - Cottonmill Lane Nunnery Allotment Association
 - Sopwell Residents Association
 - Sopwell Nunnery Green Space Steering Group
 - St Albans Museum Services
 - Ver Valley Society

0 25 50 Metres

St Albans City & District Council

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6.0 APPENDICES

6.1 CONTACTS

Organisation	Role	Contact Details	Phone/email
SADC	Site Owner	Nick Sherriff	01727 819584 nick.sherriff@stalbans.gov.uk
John O'Conner Grounds Maintenance	Grounds Maintenance Contractor	Customer care	01727 844638 anne.josey@johnoconner.co.uk
Cottonmill and Nunnery Allotment Association	Chairman	Keith Reynolds	keithlesliereynolds@gmail.com
Sopwell Residents Association	Secretary	Jo Conney	joannabarnsley@hotmail.com
Ver Valley Society	Chairman	Jane Gardiner	janegardiner@madasafish.com
Watercress Wildlife Association	Chairman		info@watercresslnr.org.uk

6.2 PATH SPECIFICATION

1. Scrape off organic debris from existing path (removing from site) and break up top layer. All soft spots to be excavated back to firm ground with the purpose of achieving best surface drainage of the finished route.
2. Minimum depth of 100mm and safe width of the surfaced area should be a minimum of 1.2 metres where possible.
3. Most of the main path already has a base layer but where no firm base layer already exists lay a non-woven geotextile such as Terram 1500 or similar.
4. Material to be used to be either clean recycled concrete aggregate or virgin aggregate.
5. Supply, spread, grade and thoroughly compact a dense, tight, even base course of virgin granite 50 mm to dust, to a minimum finished depth of not less than 75mm.
6. Supply, spread, grade and thoroughly compact to a dense, tight, even surface, a layer of well graded concrete dust fines 6 mm to dust as surface dressing. Finished, compacted depth to be not less than 25 mm. Base course to be completely covered.
7. Path to have a final maximum 1:40 (2.5%) cross fall or minimum camber of 1:50 (2%) to allow surface water to drain either side.
8. Edging/revetment may be required along part of the path's length.
9. Material must be completely free from deleterious materials and any protruding objects to be removed by the contractor.
10. There should be very little excess soil left after the works once edges have been levelled off. Anything that is remaining will need to be taken off site.

6.3 WILDFLOWER SPECIFICATION

SEEDING

1. The area of longer grass by the side of the laid hedgerow on Sopwell Mill Open Space between the hedge and the path and the area currently classed as long grass (wetter) on Sopwell Nunnery Green Space near to the woven willow structure both need to be cut and collected prior to seeding.
2. For best establishment, wildflower seeding should be undertaken in the autumn, ideally October, while the grass is short and before the first frost.
3. The areas to be established are as follows:
 - a. **Sopwell Nunnery Green Space** approximately 1352m² (0.14ha)
 - b. **Sopwell Mill Open Space** approximately 538m² (0.05ha)The exact area will be agreed in a site meeting with the supervising officer.
4. The ground within the sowing area should be scarified using a mechanical scarifier (i.e. a power harrow), and approximately 60-70% of the soil should be visible once scarification is complete to create a suitable habitat for sowing wildflower seeds.
5. Across the prepared area, native perennial wildflower mix seed should be surface sown thinly at approximately 4gms of seed per square metre (or as per manufacture's instructions), by hand or mechanically. Damp sand can be mixed with the seed to act as a carrier and identify where seeds have been spread.
6. The seed mix to be used must be native and similar to the ones listed below, any changes need to be discussed with the Supervising Officer:
 - a. **Sopwell Nunnery Green Space**
Emorsgate Seeds EM8 – Meadow Mixture for Wetlands
<https://wildseed.co.uk/mixtures/view/9>.
 - b. **Sopwell Mill Open Space**
Emorsgate Seeds EH1 – Hedgerow Mixture
<https://wildseed.co.uk/mixtures/view/12>.
7. Do not incorporate or cover the seed but immediately after sowing, firm in with a roll, or by treading, to give good soil/seed contact.

AFTERCARE *(from Emorsgate website)*

SOPWELL NUNNERY GREENSPACE – MEADOW MIXTURE FOR WETLANDS **First year management**

Most sown meadow wild flower and grass species are perennial; they will be slow to germinate and grow and will not usually flower in their first growing season. There will often be a flush of annual weeds from the soil in the first growing season which may grow up and obscure the meadow seedlings beneath. This annual weed growth is easily controlled by topping or mowing.

Mow newly sown meadows regularly throughout the first year of establishment to a height of 40-60mm, removing cuttings if dense. This will control annual weeds and help maintain balance between faster growing grasses and slower developing wild flowers.

Avoid cutting in the spring and early summer if the mixture is autumn sown and contains Yellow Rattle. These sown annuals should be allowed to flower, then in mid-

summer cut back and the cut vegetation removed. This cut will reveal the developing meadow mixture and give it the space it needs to develop.
Carefully dig out or spot treat any residual perennial weeds such as docks.
For more detail see [grassland management](#).

Management once established

In the second and subsequent years EM8 sowings can be managed in a number of ways which, in association with soil fertility, will determine the character of the grassland. The best results are usually obtained by traditional meadow management based around a main summer hay cut in combination with autumn and possibly spring mowing or grazing.

Meadow grassland is not cut or grazed from spring through to late July/August to give the sown species an opportunity to flower.
After flowering in July or August take a 'hay cut' : cut back with a scythe, petrol strimmer or tractor mower to c 50mm. Leave the 'hay' to dry and shed seed for 1-7 days then remove from site.

Mow or graze the re-growth through to late autumn/winter to c 50mm and again in spring if needed.

SOPWELL MILL OPEN SPACE – HEDGEROW MIX

First year management

In the first year after sowing a seed mixture annual weed growth should be cut back regularly. This will encourage the development of a good perennial ground cover and will to help control problem hedgerow weeds like cleavers and sterile brome.
Residual perennial weeds such as docks can be dealt with by spot treatment see [weeds](#) for more on this.

Management once established

Zoned management of hedgerow and woodland margins frequently produces the best diversity of habitat structure. Areas closest to the hedge or woodland boundary can be left uncut in most years. Areas that are further from the margin and more open can be managed as grassland habitat. For example in a 6 metre sown margin the 2-3 metres against the boundary should be left uncut, the next 3-4 metres cut once or twice a year.

Hedgerow vegetation that is not mown or grazed each year will become rough and "tussocky" in character over time, this can form a useful refuge habitat.

To control scrub and bramble development these tussocky areas may need cutting every 2-3 years between October and February. For wildlife this cutting is best done on a rotational basis so that no more than half the area is cut in any one year, leaving part as an undisturbed refuge. Mowing established tussocky vegetation may require heavy duty cutting equipment: domestic mowers would not be tough enough to deal with the thick tussocks or woody scrub that develops.

Hedgerows, glades, rides and margins that are cut each year can [be managed as grassland](#).

6.4 CMS TREE PROCUREMENT SPECIFICATIONS

Tree stock for native woodland planting must be UK grown from seed, of British provenance, and must conform to BS 3936 (where applicable). As far as possible, trees should be from the local UK Provenance Zone 402 and from an Elevation Zone below 300m. To plan for increased genetic diversity, and climate change resilience, a proportion of trees can be sourced from neighbouring southern and eastern UK Provenance Zones (405 and 406), below 300m elevation. Where it is not possible to exclusive source stock propagated from seed in the UK, imported trees and shrubs must be held at the nursery for one full growing season (monitored for signs of pest and disease) prior to planting out.

As part of the procurement process, nurseries must be required to:

- Provide a current Forestry Commission 'Certificate of Local Provenance';
- Provide documented confirmation of seed source;
- Provide assurance of UK propagation through accreditation under the Woodland Trust's 'UK Sourced and Grown Scheme' (UKSG) or equivalent demonstrable evidence;
- Demonstrate, as far as is possible, that trees are pest and disease free.
- Permit inspection of growing area, and tree stock, prior to purchase;

Following procurement, an audit trail of trees must be maintained by the purchaser, allowing planted trees to be traced back to the nursery source and tree batch.