

Urban Tree Planting Challenge – March 2020 – Engagement Briefing Note

Dear Stakeholder,

We are contacting you regarding proposed tree planting on St Albans council-owned open space. If you have any comments on the proposals or would like to discuss them, please contact the Trees and Landscape team at: trees@stalbans.gov.uk

Introduction

The Government has allocated £10 million for tree planting in urban areas in England. The scheme, known as the Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCf) is being administered by the Forestry Commission (FC).

St Albans City & District Council (SADC) are intending to make an application for funding for new tree planting on three of its Open Spaces.

Prior to doing this, the council are carrying out a short period of engagement with interested groups to seek people's views on the plans and identify any issues, which may need to be resolved.

The FC have recently (Feb 2020) released more detail on funding availability in 2020.

In summary,

- The fund will be open to applications between late March and late May 2020.
- The second round of funding will only support small tree planting projects, not standard tree planting.
- Individual applications can include a maximum of three sites, but multiple applications can be made.

Site assessment

Applications to the UTCf fund will be scored by the FC based on their environmental and social benefit, with higher scoring applications more likely to receive funding. Areas of the district which would score the highest against this criteria have been identified using FC maps (Appendix 2).

The initial review indicated that parts of St Albans City (Batchwood, Sopwell and The Camp) would score highly in terms of social benefit. And that Harpenden and Wheathampstead would score highly on environmental benefit, due to their lower tree canopy cover.

St Stephens; London Colney and Colney Heath parishes are not in target areas for social benefit or canopy cover.

By cross-referencing the FC maps with SADC plans, council-owned open space and housing land in the target areas has been identified. These sites have been visited and the scope for new tree planting, which would accord with the terms of the grant, have been identified.

Brief plans have been produced to outline the scope for each site and provide a visual representation of possible planting (Appendix 1).

From a group of seven sites identified, three were selected based on the following criteria:

- Landscape – sites which currently have low tree cover and would benefit most from new tree planting.
- Community – sites where new tree planting can be located, without being in too close proximity to housing or occupying space used for other activities.

Planting

UTCf funding supports the cost of planting and establishing trees in new areas and cannot be used to fund the replacement of dead trees. The key criteria for planting are as follows:

Small trees – Bare-root whips, approx. 30-60cm height (Appendix 3). At least 150 must be planted in any single location (e.g. Open Space, Park, public land).

It is anticipated that a mixture of native tree and shrub species would be used, (e.g. Oak, Hornbeam, Silver Birch, Hazel, Hawthorn, field Maple).

Next steps

Given the tight deadline and reduced availability of funding, an application focusing on planting on three sites has been developed.

- The three most suitable sites identified are: Tallents Close Open Space, Batford; Holyrood Crescent Open Space, Sopwell; and Oysterfield Open Space; Batchwood (Appendix 2).
- A limited engagement process on the proposals is being carried out, from 13th – 26th March. Those contacted will include: Council Members and Officers; Friends of / user groups (where they exist) and other relevant groups (e.g. Tree Wardens, Parish/Town Councils).
- Subject to any feedback from the engagement process indicated above, an application for funding would then be submitted by the end of April 2020.
- If successful, planting would take place in the next planting season, from November 2020.

Appendix 1 – Site scoping

Oysterfield Open Space



Holyrood Crescent Open Space

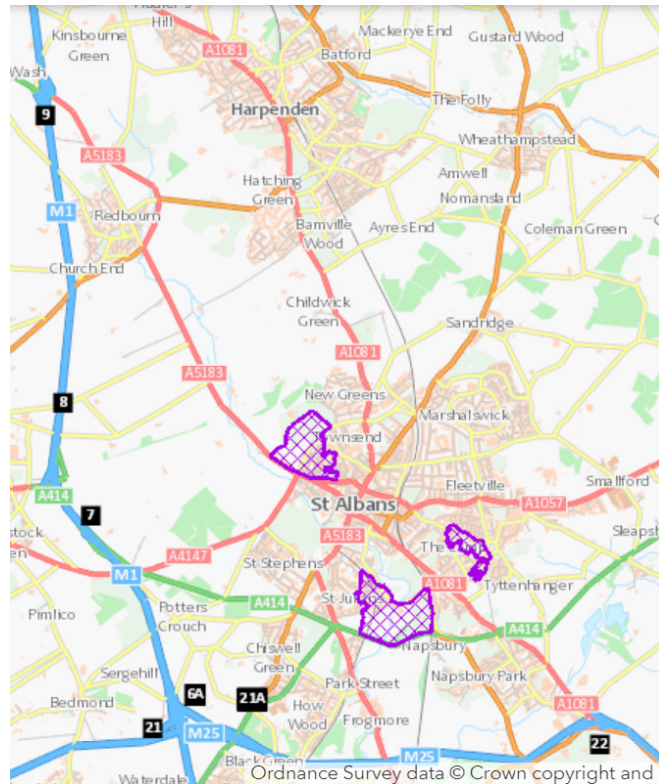


Tallents Close Open Space

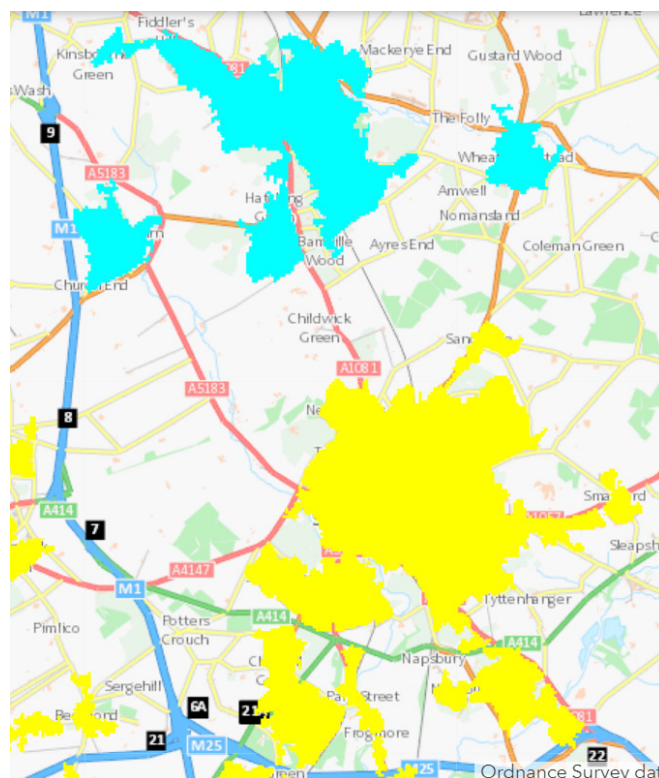


Appendix 2 - FC targeting plans

Priority People – Purple hatched areas



Priority Places – Blue areas (moderate canopy cover) = target areas. Yellow areas (high canopy cover) = non-target areas.



Appendix 3 - Glossary

Small trees – Bare root whips.



Biodegradable mulch mats and wood fixing pegs to prevent weed growth (plastic tubes will not be used).



Temporary rabbit fencing to protect trees.