

ALBAN WAY GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN (GAP) 2014 - 2019



Briefing Document for Consultees

January 2014

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1 INTRODUCTION

This briefing document has been produced to guide the first stage of consultation that will support the writing of a Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) for the Alban Way. The GAP will be produced by Countryside Management Service (CMS) in partnership with St Alban District Council (SADC). The plan will cover a 5 year period 2014 to 2019.

GAP's are map based management plans and are invaluable documents that give focus and direction to the running and improvement of all types of open space. They provide a clear, logical process to determine the activities that should take place on a site, over a stated period of time, in order to meet agreed project objectives and core aspirations.

It is our intention to hold a structured consultation to ensure that stakeholders are fully aware of the plan production process. Engagement will be encouraged and opportunities to feed into the plan in a constructive and timely way promoted locally. This document is intended to initiate and support this process.

This document has been broken down into easy to read sections. Sections 2 and 3 provide background information, historical context and a review of current management operations.

Section 4 outlines the aims and objectives of the plan and how we intend to use and present the document.

Section 5 summarises the consultation methodology that forms a part of the GAP production process, specifying how and when stakeholders will be consulted.

2 BACKGROUND

The Alban Way is a multi-user route of approximately 6.5 miles along the former route of the Hatfield to St Albans branch line of the Great Northern Railway. Opened in 1865, the line was used for freight and passenger services until it was closed and dismantled in 1969. Some elements of the railway infrastructure such as old platforms and halts still remain.

The route is an important link in the local sustainable transport network and forms part of Route 61 of the Sustrans National Cycle Network. There are several access points along the route which link into the public Rights of Way network and other cycleways.

The Alban Way has become a popular route for commuting, leisure and a safe route to many schools and the University of Hertfordshire. It provides a link between these two historic towns with access to many amenities and facilities along the way. It also provides a continuous linear wildlife corridor that acts as a buffer between the industrial and residential areas, while creating a route for wildlife, linking the countryside and greenspaces.

Since the closure of the railway, regular large-scale vegetation clearance along the route has ceased. Long sections of the route which were once open have been colonised through natural successional processes and are now dominated by self-set trees and scrub.

3 REVIEW OF PROGRESS

Previous management plans have guided SADC's management of the route's infrastructure. Current management operations include: management and maintenance of the route surface and signage, small scale vegetation management, litter picking, fly tip removal and reactive tree works to address safety issues.

More aspirational vegetation and woodland management operations have previously been identified; delivery of these elements has been limited by available resources. Recent developments in the local wood-fuel market and current potential for external grant aid to support this element, have created a more supportive financial environment. These elements are essential to the achievement of a long term vision for the future management of the route and realisation of the full potential of this key strategic Green Infrastructure asset.

As part of the GAP production process we will revisit previous consultation documents and where possible integrate responses into the new draft GAP.

4 GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN (GAP) 2014-19

The Alban Way GAP will be a simple, easy to read plan for use by officers of SADC, CMS officers, members of the public, and act as a guide to work of volunteers. The plan will be largely map based, with sequential, annual management maps to show the actions planned for each year. The resulting change will be represented on the map for the following year. The plan will be costed and potential funding sources identified; once the final GAP is agreed, external funding will be sought to enable the plan to be delivered. The document will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and relevant.

Objective:

The objective of the GAP is to improve and enhance this multi-user route for all to enjoy.

Core Aspirations:

Are as follows:

- **To promote awareness and interest in the Alban Way**
- **To improve access to and from the route, with links to local greenspaces, businesses and schools**
- **To install appropriate signage to, from and along the route**
- **To improve the visitor experience and enhance opportunities for informing and educating**
- **To conserve and enhance the on-site historical features along the route for visitor enjoyment**
- **To protect and enhance the biodiversity that can be found along the route**
- **To undertake proactive, rotational woodland/vegetation management along the whole route to benefit people and wildlife**
- **To support volunteer activity along the route and to ensure all involved operate towards achievement of the GAP**
- **To secure external funding to ensure the viability of capital works**
- **To ensure ongoing maintenance costs are financially sustainable**

5 CONSULTATION

Effective consultation is at the centre of a successful GAP. Their particular value as documents comes from balancing the thoughts and aspirations of stakeholders and interest groups throughout the writing process. The length and route of the Alban Way means that it is of value and interest to a great many people.

In order to enable as many stakeholders and interest groups as possible to have the opportunity to feed into the production of the new GAP, we have adopted a structured two-stage approach to consultation.

For the first stage, consultees will be invited to make comment on the core aspirations that we are putting forward as part of this briefing document; it is hoped that any further aspirations and/or issues will be addressed through this information gathering process.

For the second stage, consultees will be invited to read through and make comment on the draft GAP.

Following this exercise, the final document will be produced, published and promoted more widely to the general public.

The following diagram shows the Greenspace Action Plan production process: