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Environment and Infrastructure Department
County Hall
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Bengeo Neighbourhood Area Plan (BNAP)

Hartham Common Action Plan 2023-28 Feedback

The Plan can be found online at:

<https://lovebengeo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Bengeo-Neighbourhood-Area-Plan-comp-ressed.pdf>

1.1 Hartham Common falls within the Bengeo Neighbourhood Area Plan area. It is an important resource both for Bengeo and Hertford, a key area for leisure activities, wildlife and nature conservation and communication via footpath and byways. Therefore, it is of great interest and concern to Bengeo Neighbourhood Area Plan Steering Group.

1.2 We welcome the opportunity to comment on the plan and the good work carried out during the last plan for the period 2018-2023.

1.3 We note particularly the addition of a new play area for younger children completed in 2021 and the maintenance and improvement to the footpath in the upper part of the Warren as mentioned on page 5 of the document. These are achievements both to be celebrated by the management team and local people who have been actively engaged in one way or another. Para 4.40 of the Neighbourhood Plan references the 2018-23 Greenspace Action Plan.

1.4 The plan for the period 2023-28 is a robust and thorough document that is both detailed and contains some interesting and exciting proposals.

1.5 These include promoting local health walks 0.21, promoting events 0.22 and maximise the potential to contribute to wider networks 0.23.

1.6 We note that cycleway 61 runs through Hartham Common, but cycling is not specifically mentioned in the document other than the commitment outlined on paragraph 0.23. BNAP in Policy HBT3 (page 37) specifically says that "Development proposals should contribute to the establishment, enhancement, and improved connectivity of cycle routes into, out of, and through the Neighbourhood Plan Area." In this context we would like to see more attention to cycling in the plan.

1.7 One of our residents proposed that restricted byway 86 be converted so that it can act either as a cycleway or a footpath. We back this proposal and note that many people already cycle along this particular byway. We suggest this as a measure that could be costed and further evaluated. This is in line with our policy HBT4 on page 37.

1.8 We also suggest an audit of other pathways to evaluate the feasibility of upgrading to cycleways if it can be done without damage to local ecology.

1.9 We welcome the attention to crucial waterways and the removal of invasive plants such as typha.

1.10 The idea of adding easy access for paddling 1.14 and 2.1C is very welcome and will encourage use of the park in warm weather. Safety of bathers obviously being a prime consideration here. We note that pollution in the River Beane is an ongoing concern. We, therefore, support the suggestion by Save Beane Marshes group that Hartham Common Management could apply to DEFRA to have the site designated as "bathing water". This would help to put pressure on the

Environment Agency to improve water quality. See

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bathing-waters-apply-for-designation-or-de-designation>

1.11 We welcome continued prudent woodland management as mentioned throughout the document and the encouragement of native species. The maintenance and improvement of pathways is of great importance to local people.

1.12 Woodland fringes and headlands are extremely important to the fauna of the woodland. There are many species such as owls, bats and snakes which will hunt around the edges of woodland. In this regard it is important to keep fringes relatively wild and ideally meadow species and wildflowers should be encouraged in the grassland in these areas. It would be good to see an audit of the woodland fringes and measures put in place to increase wildflowers and native insects such as butterflies, bees etc. Currently the woodland fringes are not included in the plan.

This would be in line with policy HBN3 of the Neighbourhood Plan "Proposals to create new natural areas and wildlife habitats, or to expand or enhance existing provision, will be supported." Page 24. It would be good to involve the Woodland Trust in any initiative of this sort.

1.13 We welcome the initiative to improve local views across the common 1.16. Neighbourhood Plan Policy HBN2: Important Views provides additional protection from inappropriate development to two views across Hartham Common

1.14 Within the urban area of Bengeo parking is a huge issue. It was one of the matters most raised by local people during consultation for the Neighbourhood Plan.

Our policy HTB5 States "Proposals to increase off-street car parking provision in areas with insufficient residents' parking (particularly near to Hertford North Station) will be supported when consistent with other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. S106 contributions collected under the provisions of Policy TRA1 of the District Plan could contribute to solutions to improve residents' parking in areas with limited parking."

We note there are two car parks close to Port Hill one off Port Hill over a wooden bridge and the other at the end of Hartham Lane. We wondered if at least some of the spaces in these car parks could be rented annually to local residents and/or businesses. We recognise this may not be within the remit of the Action Plan but we believe the car parks do have sufficient space to allow this to happen, so we hope that this suggestion is considered.

1.15 We would welcome further provision, within the park, for teenagers who are currently underprovided for. We are sure any efforts in this direction would be locally welcome and it would be good to see this addressed in the plan.

1.16 CCTV provision near the skate park could be investigated to increase the security of the common and deter anti-social behaviour.

1.17 Lighting of the park could be dimmed where appropriate to lessen light pollution and disturbance to wildlife.

1.18 Strengthening of offerings at the playground café and elsewhere in the park could help attract families and deter anti-social behaviour.

1.19 Once again we would like to thank officers for preparing this thorough and comprehensive plan and look forward to reading the revised document.

1.20 The Neighbourhood Plan will continue to support the excellent work of officers and encourage the involvement of residents where appropriate.

John Howson

Chair BNAP Steering Group 13th June 2024