Ivel Springs

GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN 2020 - 2025

BRIEFING DOCUMENT

Produced by:

Countryside Management Service

On behalf of:

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

NHDC

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1. INTRODUCTION

A new five year Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) is being produced for Ivel Springs. This briefing document provides an overview of how the GAP will be produced, and sets out how stakeholders can contribute to shaping the plan.

GAPs are map-based management plans that provide focus and direction for the running and improvement of open spaces. They provide a clear, logical process to determine the activities that should take place over a stated period of time to achieve the objectives for the site.

The GAP is being produced by the Countryside Management Service (CMS), part of Hertfordshire County Council's Countryside and Rights of Way Service, on behalf of and in partnership with North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC). The completed document will inform the management actions to be undertaken over the next five years, commencing in April 2020.

Engaging communities is integral to the production of GAPs, to ensure that stakeholders are fully aware of and able to interact with the plan production process. This briefing document initiates and supports this community engagement.

The engagement period will run from the 1st July to 11th August 2019. A further engagement period in January/February 2020 will provide an opportunity to assess the draft version of the GAP. Please use the contact details in Section 6 to comment on the aspirations for the site.

This document has been broken down into easy to read sections:

Section 2 provides an overview of the site and location map.

Section 3 reviews recent management of the site.

Section 4 contains the core objectives for the Ivel Springs GAP.

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

Section 6 contains contact details for comments to be returned to.

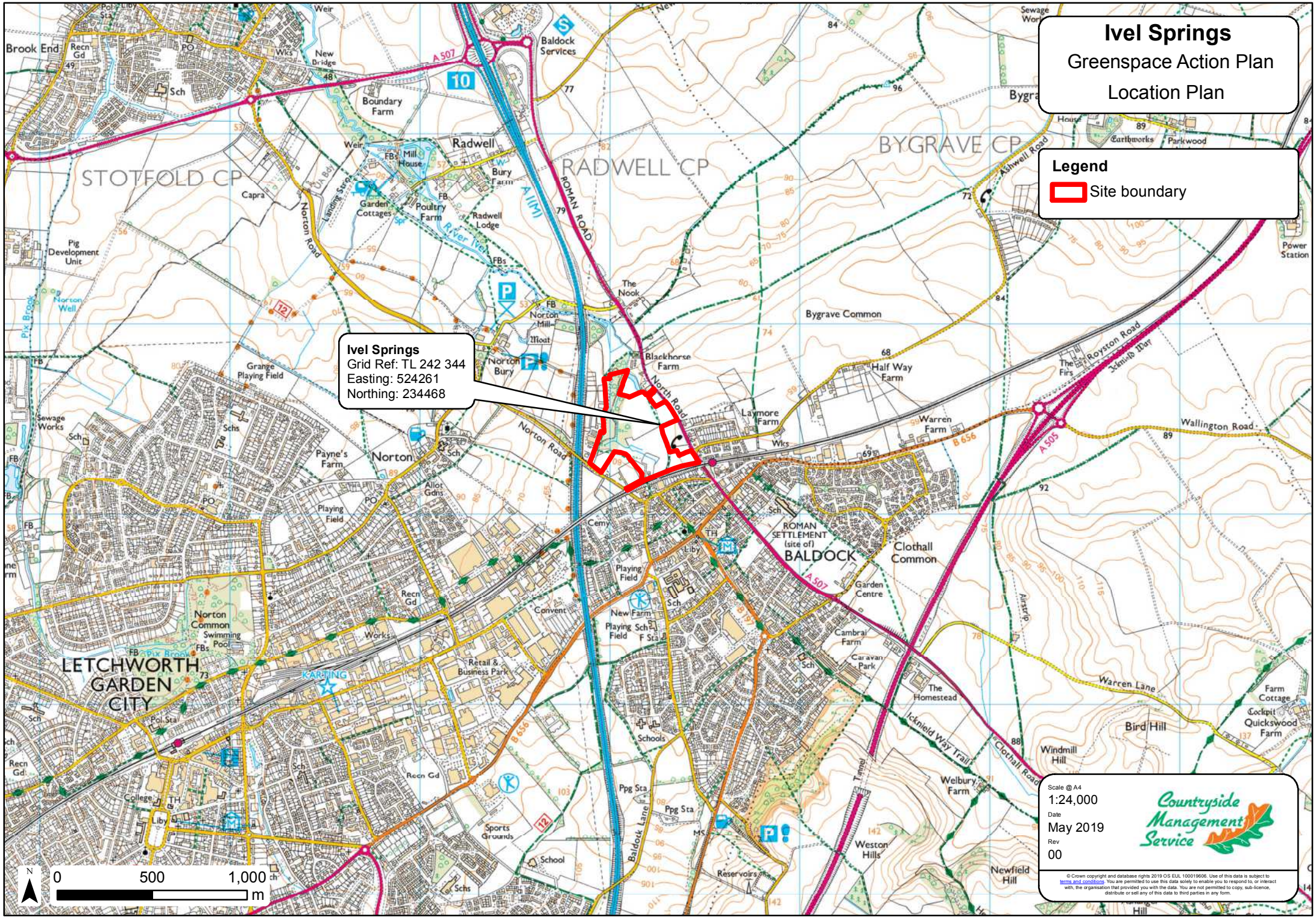
2. BACKGROUND

Ivel Springs Local Nature Reserve is a 15 hectare (37 acre) open space just north of Baldock which is owned by North Hertfordshire District Council, and managed in partnership with the Countryside Management Service (CMS) and Friends of Baldock Green Spaces (FoBGS).

Ivel Springs has a long history stretching back more than five thousand years, and several historic features are located on the site. This includes a designated Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) located under the main wildflower meadow area.

The site was designated a Local Wildlife Site in 2007 and over time a diverse mosaic of habitats has developed, including wildflower meadows, hedgerows, reedbeds, ponds and woodland. Chalk springs on the site give rise to the River Ivel which flows north into Bedfordshire to join the Great Ouse River.

The meadow contains a wide range of wildflowers including common knapweed, cowslip, yellow rattle and common birds-foot trefoil, along with more unusual species such as pyramidal orchid and common broomrape. The woodland contains a variety of tree species including alder and a range of willow trees, as well as a number of fruit trees. The mosaic of habitats host a broad range of bird species, and evidence of water vole has been recorded in the wetland areas.


Ivel Springs
Greenspace Action Plan
Location Plan
Legend
Site boundary
Ivel Springs
Grid Ref: TL 242 344
Easting: 524261
Northing: 234468
STOTFOLD CP
RADWELL CP
BYGRAVE CP
LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY
BALDOCK
Norton
Radwell
Bygrave Common
Clothall Common
Norton Common
Baldock Services
Boundary Farm
Blackhorse Farm
Half Way Farm
Laymore Farm
Warren Farm
Norton Bury
Norton Mill
Garden Cottages
Poultry Farm
Radwell Lodge
Bury Farm
Mill House
Pig Development Unit
Norton Well
Grange Playing Field
Payne's Farm
Playing Field
Allot Gdns
Cemy
Playing Field
New Farm
Playing Field
Convent
Works
Retail & Business Park
Norton Common Swimming Pool
Pix Brook
Recn Gd
Schools
Ppg Sta
Sports Grounds
School
Reservoirs
Weston Hills
Newfield Hill
Welbury Farm
Windmill Hill
Bird Hill
Farm Cottage
Cockpit
Quickswood Farm
Cambrai Farm
Caravan Park
The Homestead
Garden Centre
ROMAN SETTLEMENT (site of)
Ashwell Road
Royston Road
Wallington Road
Warren Lane
Icknield Way Trail
Clothall Road
Baldock Lane
Norton Road
North Road
ROMAN ROAD
A 507
A 505
B 656
A 1(M)
Brook End
Sewage Works
Power Station
Earthworks
Parkwood
Airstrip
Tunnel
Scale @ A4
1:24,000
Date
May 2019
Rev
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3. REVIEW OF PROGRESS

Positive progress has been made against a number of the objectives from the 2015-2020 GAP. Notable successes are outlined below:

A Welcoming Place

Several benches have been replaced during the period of the last GAP. However, the planned interpretation renewal did not take place and will be carried over to the new GAP.

Conservation and Heritage

A key objective of the 2015-2020 GAP was to enhance grassland management. This was successfully implemented with the introduction of grazing to the main wildflower grassland. Grazing infrastructure was installed in 2016, comprising stock fencing, access gates, cattle handling facility and water supply. Following this, since 2017, four longhorn cattle have grazed the meadow from July to September, replacing the previous cut and lift management regime. As well as conservation benefits, grazing has the added advantage of reducing the need for machinery to cross the site, protecting archaeological features.

Management of invasive species has been undertaken, with annual control of Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed, comfrey and horseradish by treatment with herbicide. This has significantly reduced the prevalence of these species in problem areas.

Vegetation within the wetland area has been brought in to management, with blocks of vegetation around the pools cut and cleared on a three year rotation. Channels have also been cut in the reedbed to improve vegetation structure and provide views of wildlife. In recent years the wetland areas have become increasingly dry, and works to re-wet these areas will be investigated in the forthcoming GAP.

Previously created glades continue to be managed, with larger glades cut at the same time as footpaths as part of the grounds maintenance contract. Smaller glades are managed by hand on volunteer task days.

Community Involvement

The Friends of Baldock Green Spaces hold bi-monthly task days on the site and during the period of the last plan have undertaken a range of tasks including hedgelaying, scrub removal, glade management and wetland work.

CMS volunteers have also undertaken tasks on the site, including scrub removal and invasive species management. In addition, local volunteers are involved with stock checks when cattle are on site.

Marketing

Several events have been held through the CMS ‘Walks and More’ programme, including a reptile walk and two ‘Meet the Cows’ events.

The Friends of Baldock Green Spaces advertise task days on their Facebook page to encourage local involvement.

4. GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN (GAP) 2020-2025

The Ivel Springs GAP 2020-25 will be a simple, easy to read plan for use by officers of NHDC and CMS, and will act as a guide to the work of volunteers. It will also inform members of the public of the aspirations for the site as well as planned upcoming works. The plan will be largely map based, with sequential, annual management maps to show the actions planned for each year. The resulting change will be represented on the map for the following year. The document will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and relevant.

The plan will be costed and potential funding sources identified. Once the final GAP is agreed, external funding will be sought to enable the plan to be delivered.

The aim and objectives of the GAP will be as follows:

Aim

Ivel Springs will be a welcoming green space, enjoyed by a wide range of user groups from the local community. The mosaic of habitats found on the site will be in positive management, and heritage features will be protected.

Objectives

A. A Welcoming Place – *To provide a welcoming green space for the enjoyment of the local community*

A1 Improve access to, from and around the site where possible – linking to residential areas, local greenspaces, businesses and schools, public transport, shops and local amenities

A2 Update signage to, from and around the site while making it more attractive

B. Healthy, Safe and Secure – *To provide and maintain clear and safe public access onto, and around Ivel Springs*

B1 Carry out reactive tree works to address safety issues

B2 Respond promptly to reports of misuse of the site

C. Well Maintained and Clean – *To ensure that all aspects of Ivel Springs are kept clean and well maintained*

C1 Manage and maintain paths and signage

C2 Remove fly-tipping, undertake regular litter picking, empty dog bins and carry out small scale vegetation management

D. Environmental Management – *To ensure all aspects of site management are undertaken with sustainability as a guiding principle*

D1 Ensure ongoing maintenance costs are financially sustainable

D2 Secure external funding to ensure the viability of capital works

D3 Monitor results of delivery to evaluate the success of management activities

E. Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage – *To conserve and enhance the important wildlife, landscape and heritage features of Ivel Springs*

E1 Continue annual grazing of the meadow

E2 Maintain and enhance the wetland area, with a focus on re-wetting areas which are drying out

E3 Maintain and enhance all habitats and species on site

E4 Work with local land owners to protect the biodiversity of the LNR

E5 Continue with invasive species eradication programmes where required

E6 Ensure Scheduled Ancient Monument and historic features are protected

F. Community Involvement – *To ensure engagement and involvement of local communities*

F1 Support volunteer activity at Ivel Springs LNR and ensure all involved operate towards achievement of the GAP

F2 Continue to support the FOBGS and encourage the local community to become further involved in the management of Ivel Springs LNR in a structured and supported way

F3 Seek to actively engage with new communities as they develop, ensuring they are able to positively contribute to future management

G. Marketing and Communication – *To promote awareness and interest in Ivel Springs*

G1 Improve the visitor experience and enhance opportunities for informing and educating by installing new site interpretation panels

G2 Promote volunteer and community events at Ivel Springs LNR

G3 Update the Ivel Springs LNR site leaflet

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PLAN PRODUCTION PROCESS

Effective community engagement is at the centre of successful management plans. The value of a GAP is maximised when it incorporates and balances the aspirations of stakeholders and interest groups.

In order to provide all interested stakeholders and groups with the opportunity to feed into the production of the new GAP, we have adopted a structured two-stage approach to community engagement.

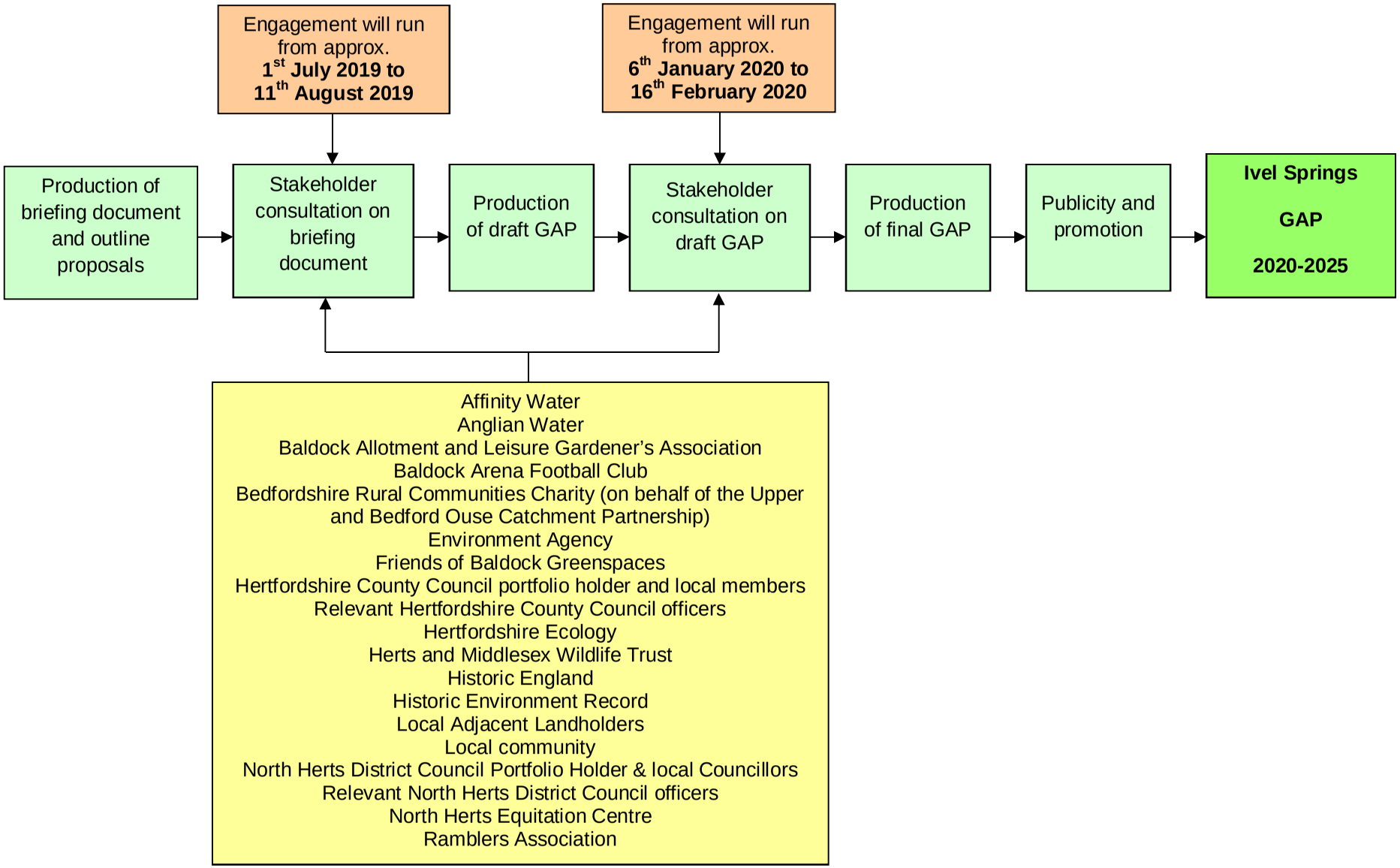
- For the first stage (this briefing document), stakeholders and site users will be invited to make comment on the core aspirations in Section 4; it is hoped that any further aspirations and/or issues will be identified through this information gathering process. This first stage of community engagement will run between **Monday 1st July and Sunday 11th August 2019.**

- For the second stage, stakeholders and site users will be invited to read through and make comment on the draft GAP, which will include the detailed proposals and actions. This stage is intended to run in between approximately **Monday 6th January** and **Sunday 16th February 2020**. To support this stage, we will be holding a guided walk and engagement session for any users or interested groups that may wish to discuss the proposals or a particular aspect in more detail. The arrangements for this event will be confirmed and advertised nearer the time.

Following the second stage exercise, the final document will be produced, published and the actions will commence.

Please be aware that we will not respond individually to comments received through the public engagements; instead, we will produce a summary of comments, noting any amendments made to the plan as a result. This engagement response document will be published online alongside the briefing document, draft plan and final plan. We will retain contact details only for the purpose of keeping respondents informed about the plan development process.

The following diagram shows the Greenspace Action Plan production process:


Engagement will run from approx. 1st July 2019 to 11th August 2019
Engagement will run from approx. 6th January 2020 to 16th February 2020
Production of briefing document and outline proposals
Stakeholder consultation on briefing document
Production of draft GAP
Stakeholder consultation on draft GAP
Production of final GAP
Publicity and promotion
Ivel Springs GAP 2020-2025
Affinity Water
Anglian Water
Baldock Allotment and Leisure Gardener's Association
Baldock Arena Football Club
Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (on behalf of the Upper and Bedford Ouse Catchment Partnership)
Environment Agency
Friends of Baldock Greenspaces
Hertfordshire County Council portfolio holder and local members
Relevant Hertfordshire County Council officers
Hertfordshire Ecology
Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust
Historic England
Historic Environment Record
Local Adjacent Landholders
Local community
North Herts District Council Portfolio Holder & local Councillors
Relevant North Herts District Council officers
North Herts Equitation Centre
Ramblers Association

6. STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Thank you for taking the time to read this document. We are keen to receive feedback from you on our proposals for the Ivel Springs Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) 2020-2025.

Please return your comments using the contact details below by **Sunday 11th August** at the latest.

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