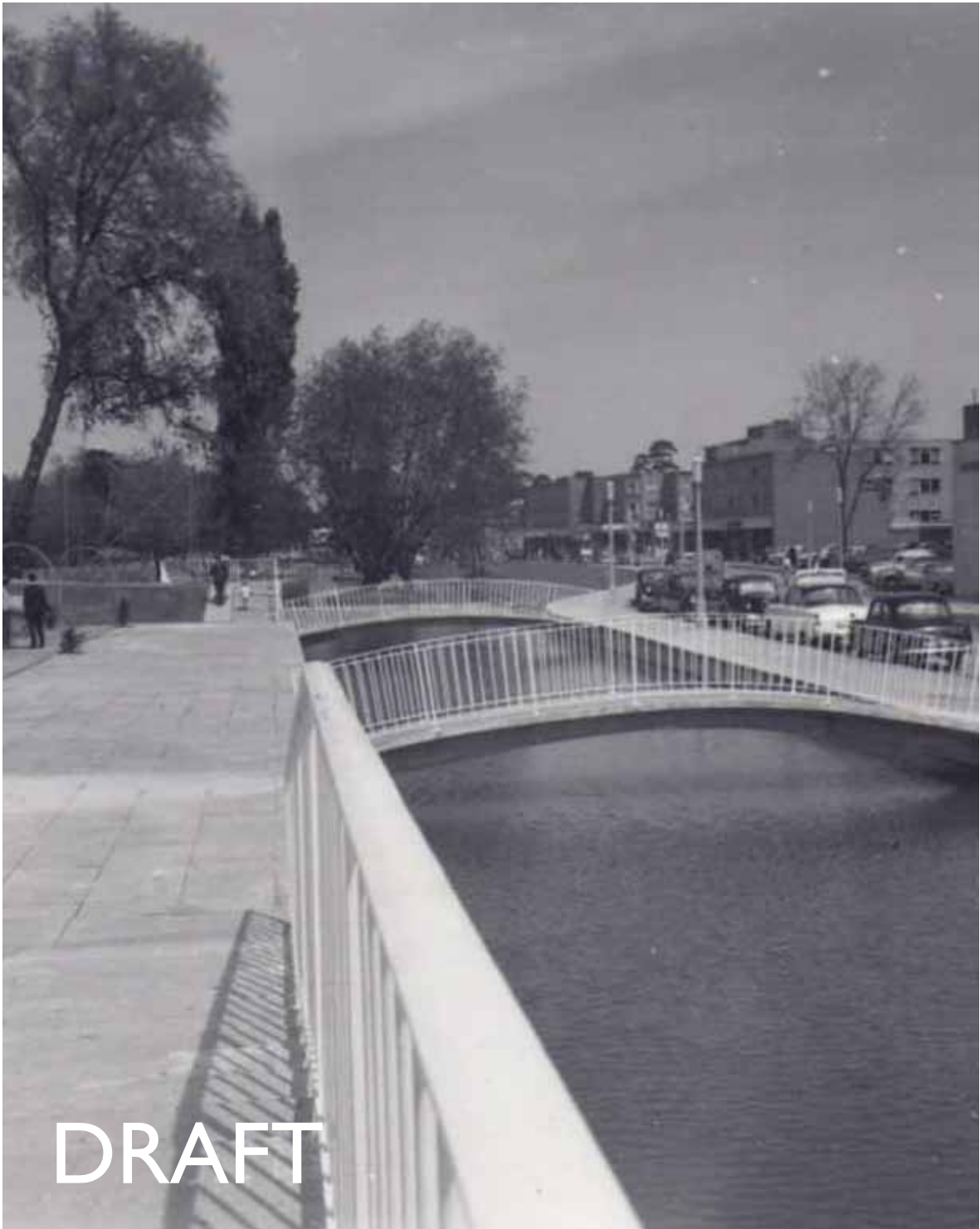


THE WATER GARDENS, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
DESIGN DEVELOPMENT REPORT



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HTA



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1. Introduction

In May 2012, HTA Landscape Design and its consultant team were commissioned by Dacorum Borough Council to produce the HLF Stage 1 Parks for People submission for the Water Gardens at Hemel Hempstead.

This report is intended to inform the proposals for restoration and design interventions. It summaries the first stage of the master planning process during which analysis of the existing site has been carried out in tandem with research into the key principles, aspirations and aesthetic of the original Geoffrey Jellicoe design. It assesses how much of the original design is still preserved; how changes in context have impacted upon the Gardens and examines the scheme's relevance to Hemel Hempstead today.

Opportunities, constraints and key issues are examined and conclusions put forward as a series of proposals. The report concludes with a concept diagram which establishes the principles and form of the master plan.

Once the design principles have been agreed with the Council, these will be taken forward to the Conservation Statement.

Audience development

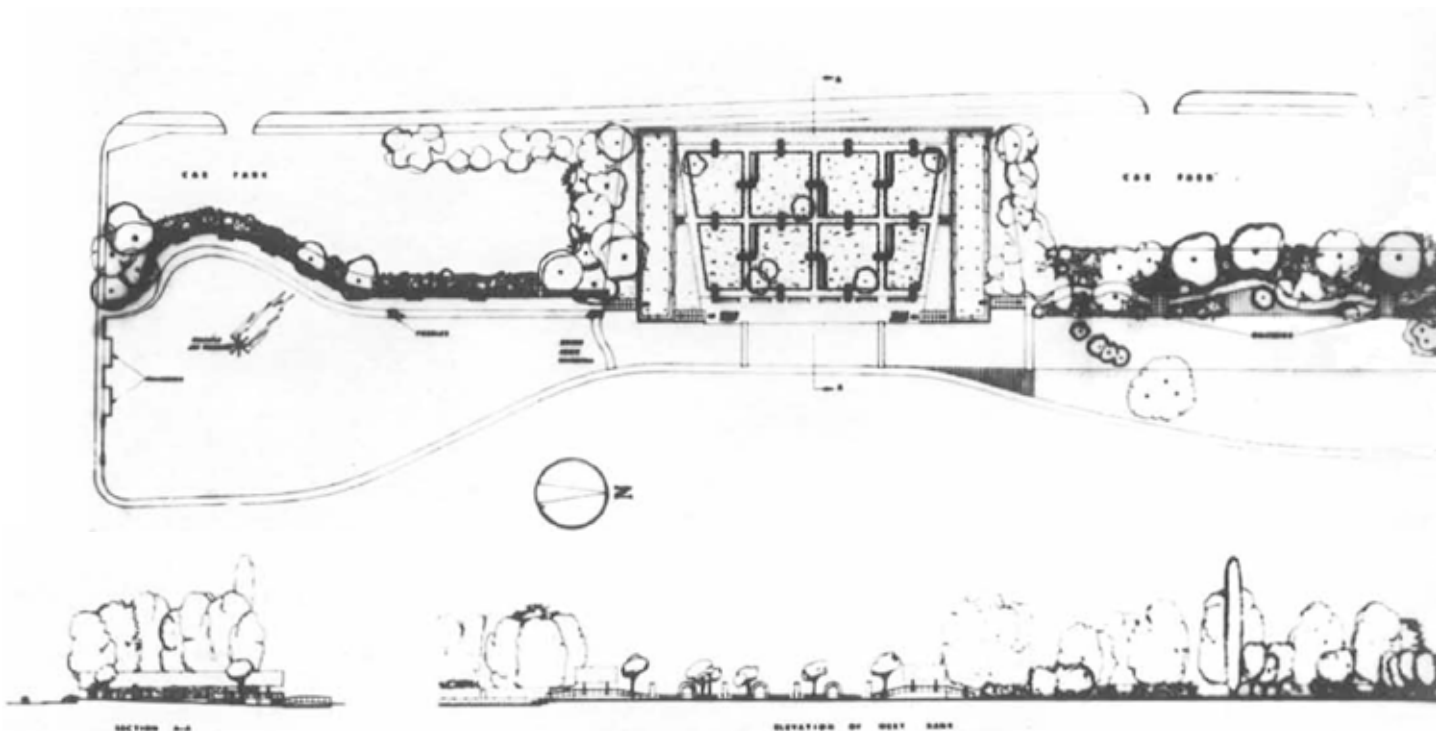
A draft of the audience development statement has also been prepared and is included within Section 8 of this document.

Historic development and significance

This report does not focus in detail on the historic development of the site, social history, significance or vulnerability which is currently being researched and will be included in the Conservation Statement supporting the bid.

Hydrology

Initial contact has been made with the Environment Agency and discussions are ongoing. A detailed section will be included on hydrology and water quality in the Conservation Statement.



Plan and section from Guelph Lectures, 1983

2. Overview

Geoffrey Jellicoe was the foremost British Landscape Architect of the 20th Century. A founding member of the Landscape Institute he served as president of the organization between 1939-49. His work as a landscape theorist led to the publication in 1975 of his seminal work 'The Landscape of Man'.

The formal Water Gardens are included on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by English Heritage for their special historic interest. They are identified as Grade II and were first registered on 1st February 2010.

Jellicoe cited the Water Gardens as one of his favourite projects. In the Guelph lectures on landscape design, 1983, Jellicoe sets out his approach to the Gardens. He describes the site as a narrow uninviting strip along the little river Gade, squeezed between the town centre and car park.

"It was clear that in order to make any impact upon its urban surroundings it must simultaneously be authoritative and romantic. The straight line of a canal appeared early in the sketches, widening at the south end into a lake. Excavations from the canal were to be used to conceal a car park and create both the sloping flower gardens and the narrow 'lovers walk'. The canal were to be dammed with pleasant little cascades and crossed by elegant bridges to give access from car park to town centre. It was then that the serpent, inspired by Klee's two paintings in rich combination were conceived as a complete and balanced natural form. Thereafter

every detail conformed to this idea; the monsters head with its single fountain eye and mouth; the flower gardens like a 'howdah' strapped to the serpent's back, the under belly curving almost imperceptibly, the lively tail pressing against a hill – all so abstract as to remain unrecognisable and unseen to the roving eye."

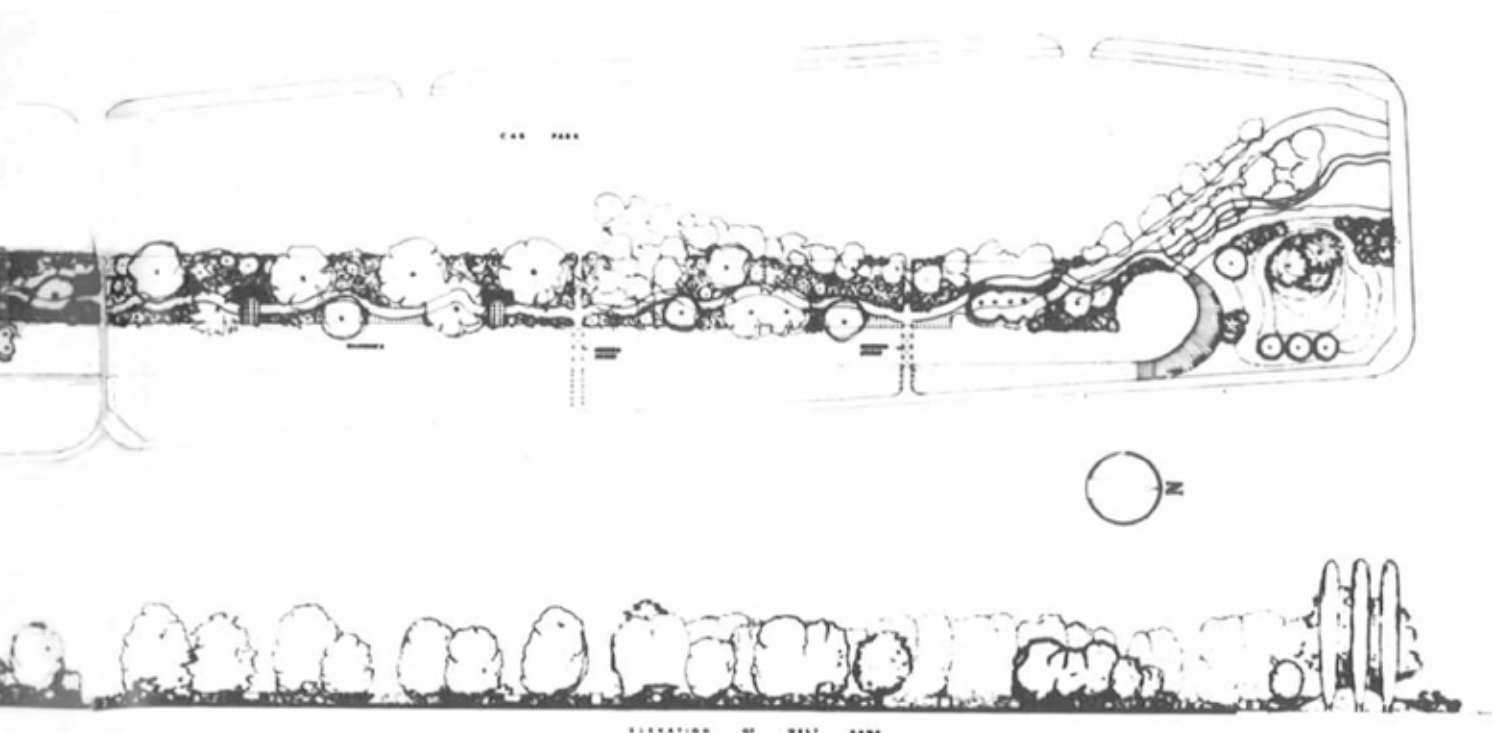
He concludes:

"There are few works so liable to suffer change as parks and gardens. By burying an idea into the water gardens it is hoped that this idea will be its own protection."

Fifty years following completion, the structure of the Gardens has remained remarkably intact. The canal, bridges, weirs, circulation and formal flower garden are largely unaltered.

However, their character has been significantly impacted upon and the sense of 'romance' described by Jellicoe has been lost. This has occurred through changes in maintenance, piecemeal encroachment and interventions, changes of materials, furniture, tree planting, loss of views and a weakening in the relationship to the town centre.

The Gardens are perceived as neglected and unsafe. Whilst many people walk through the park on their way to the town centre, active use remains low.



3. Analysis

Following Implementation

Town Centre Connection

Key to the success of the Gardens is their relationship to the Waterhouse Street. In Jellicoe's scheme, the Water Gardens are an integral part of the town centre, acting as their front garden and an attractive place to sit, use and enjoy. Shops and cafés front onto the gently sloping lawns along the eastern bank. They are open, inviting and encourage recreational use.

Waterhouse Street forms a key part of the setting. Its wide open frontage to the Gardens with regular connections through to the town high street and the design of the building frontage along Waterhouse Street which face onto the Gardens helps create a strong relationship between the town and Gardens. The east-west pedestrian links which connect the town centre with the parking areas and the residential areas beyond tie the Gardens into their setting. In both the masterplans by Jellicoe and in the final masterplan later implemented by the development corporation, the Gardens are a central part of the vision for the town centre. The design of the Gardens reflect this and the visual and physical links between the two areas together with the open design of the Eastern Lawn are key parts of this.

Allies and Morrison: Water Gardens Report, 2011

Low levels of traffic and parking result in a strong connection between Waterhouse Street and Gardens. The more informal treatment of the road surface creates a strong link between the Gardens and Town Centre shops. The colour and tone of the surface narrows the appearance of the carriageway and visually connects the two sides.



Open lawns act as 'front garden' to town centre shops. The buildings are reflected in the still water which reaffirms the link between these areas.



The iconic circular car park forms a distinctive and dramatic backdrop to the southern lake that sets the Gardens in their post war era.



Treatment of road surface visually connects town centre with Gardens



Lawn areas largely bare, high levels of traffic on Waterhouse Street reduce attractiveness of Gardens. Geese significant contribution to the problem



Loss of positive frontage on adjacent buildings



Waterhouse Street now acts as a barrier

Current Condition

Town Centre Connection

The scale of the adjacent buildings remains largely the same as when the scheme was first implemented and many of the original buildings are still present. However, the majority of the shops no longer positively address the Gardens. They now front onto the Marlowes shopping precinct and are serviced from the Water Gardens side. Of particular concern is the southern end which was previously a key gateway to the town but now significantly detracts from the setting of the lake.

New tree planting interrupts the link between the buildings and Gardens by obscuring views and the reflections, inhibiting grass cover and contributing to the bank's erosion.

Parking is prevalent on both sides of the road, weakening the relationship between these areas and the surface has been changed to black macadam, so that it forms a divide between the town and Gardens. The road is busier, so that the noise and disturbance reduces the appeal of the banks as a place to stop and spend time.

Following Implementation

Views

Key to the Garden's design was their open layout, intended to create a strong visual connection with the town centre. There were no vertical boundaries adjacent to Waterhouse Street and low banks and beech hedges screened the car parks whilst permitting views beyond.

Jellicoe's scheme provides a series of controlled vistas. He is concerned with what is seen on a conscious level and what is not seen but experienced at a subconscious level, the metaphor of the serpent.

Long views extend northwards across the lake's expansive open water which have a sense of openness.

The bridges and platforms provide other important vantage points for viewing the formal tapering lines of the canal along its north-south axis.

Key east-west views are also established. Of particular importance, is the vista from Bank Court to the sloping Formal Flower Gardens and school grounds beyond. The photograph shows, that whilst there is parking in Bank Court, this area has an uncluttered open character.

Openness and Space:

Despite its narrow confines, the Jellicoe scheme achieved a sense of openness. The grassed east banks gave the impression of breadth and connectivity. The southern lake felt generous and expansive; the views along the length of the Gardens gave an impression of depth and scale and the westerly views extended the vista beyond its boundaries.



Long views north from the southern basin with the fountain and the 'straps across the serpent's back', the bridges



Views along the canal with clear sightlines between high level vegetation and ground cover



View across Gardens from Bank Court

Current Condition



Long views truncated by overmature vegetation. Feeling of openness lost

Views

The original design controlled views through the site, with clear sightlines between tree canopies and the ground plane. The effect of this horizontal layering within the Gardens has been lost as both original and additional shrub planting has become overgrown.

New trees and vegetation overhanging the water have obscured many of these key views established in the Jellicoe design. The introduction of two vegetated islands in the southern lake has curtailed sightlines. Understorey shrubs on the more northerly islands now obscure views of the town centre beneath the tree canopies.



Islands now create visual barriers

Openness and Space

Changes post-implementation have impacted negatively on the sense of openness and space. The south eastern corner of the lake has been altered to accommodate the construction of the Moor End Roundabout. Insertion of two islands and subsequent growth of vegetation has reduced the sense of openness in the southern lake.

The northern most car park was enlarged to provide a deck in the 1980's which has encroached on the Lover's Walk, reducing the breath of this corridor, losing the original sense of picturesque and providing an unattractive and intimidating edge to the Gardens.

Overgrown vegetation has reduced the width of 'Lover's Walk' and, in combination with the car park, make it feel more enclosed.



The view today from Bank Court. The vista to the school has been lost

Tree planting has reduced the scale of the banks and interrupted views of Waterhouse Street shops

Following Implementation

Edges, Lines and Definition

Jellicoe sets up a number of constructs:

The formal paved edge to the southern lake is narrowed at the Formal Flower Gardens to provide a generous terrace and create the entrance to the canal.

The formal treatment is retained in a straight alignment as the canal progresses north but becomes grassed to the east and vegetated to the west. A simple reveted edge is set just above water level.

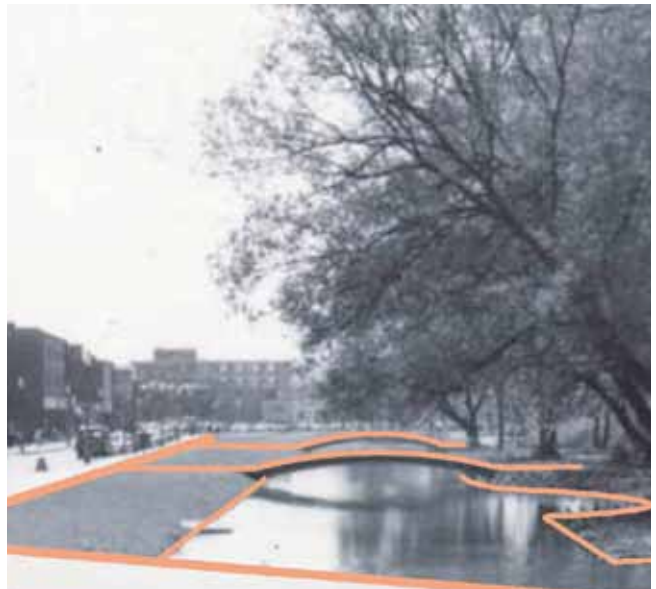
The softer sinuous and more wooded path of 'Lovers Walk' to the west contrast with the lighter more open, formal eastern edge.

The alignment and gentle slope of the banks are of significance. Along the eastern side, they interact with the northern mound to suggest the continuation of the water out of sight.

The gentle hedged banks to the car parks provide screening without obscuring views beyond.



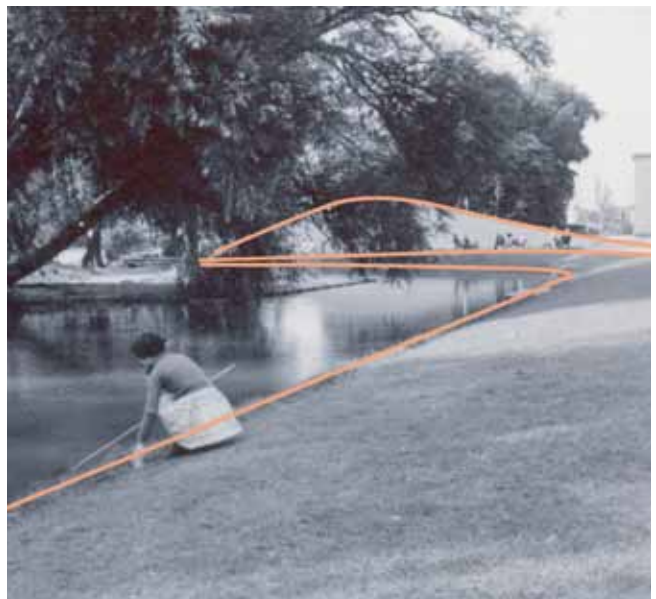
Terrace with arched bridges



Simple, straight timber revetment to either side



The softer sinuous path of 'lovers walk'



The alignment and gentle slope of the banks.

Current Condition

Edges, Lines and Definition

The clean sweeping lines of the Gardens have been eroded. At the southern end, edges are now differentiated by a variety of copings and materials which no longer have crisp flowing lines at changes of direction.

This effect is repeated in the lover's walk where the gently curving alignment has been replaced by faceted concrete edging.

The straight edges to the canal have been lost to erosion and the gently sloping banks are no longer legible due to the trees. A variety of edge treatments detract from the uniformity of the original design.



Flag terraced reduced in width, resurfaced in tarmac and brick coping introduced



Eroded banks detract from the canal effect



Faceted edgings



Vegetation interrupts sweep of banks

Following Implementation

Materials & Furniture

A very simple palette of materials is used that reflects both the aesthetic and budgetary constraints of the post war era. Bins and benches are metal framed with timber slates and match aesthetically. Standard concrete paving flags are used in the southern section and self binding gravel is used for the lover's walk and formal flower gardens surfaces.

Materials used and detailing are extremely light and fine. Careful attention has been paid to the inter-relationship between materials and detailing at junctions. Likewise furniture has been used sparingly and placed very selectively.

Bridge and platform balustrades are visually light weight and white which draws the eye to them and helps to create striking reflections in the water.



Benches



Slatted timber bin



Revetment construction



Footpath surfacing



Flag paving, bridge and handrail details



Flag paving overhanging revetment



Canal edge



Paths extend in a straight line from the bridge to the highways footway.



Paving flags extend across gravel path from the viewing platforms

Current Condition

Materials & Furniture

The simple palette of materials has been changed and added to overtime resulting in ill assorted furniture and clutter which detracts from the overall appearance of the Gardens.

Highways improvements have replaced the large unit slab paving with smaller units adjacent to Waterhouse Street. The generous terrace adjacent to the flower garden has been reduced in width and the slabs replaced with macadam loosing the sense of balance and composition. Self binding gravel has been replaced by macadam and a variety of edgings.

Numerous signs, bins, railings have been installed which detract from the aesthetic, comprise views and the 'call point' stations contribute to a perception that the Gardens are unsafe.

The careful attention to detailing and placement of objects within the landscape has been lost.



Benches



Intrusive litter bin, one of a variety of types within the Gardens



Coorporate signage within the Gardens. The 'safety' sign create a negative percetion



Footpath surfacing replaced with macadam. Brick edging to tree surrounds



Flag paving, bridge and handrail details



Large format paving flags without edgings have been replaced with smaller units, with brick detailing and concrete edging



Eroded canal edge with a variety of treatments



Straight line of 'howdah' reconfigured to reflect desire lines



Flags no longer extend over path

Following Implementation

Planting

Early photographs of the Gardens show a rich planting design of herbaceous plants, shrubs and marginal aquatics with the Formal Gardens forming a centrepiece of ornamental planting. The only information available on file with regards planting are; a list of plants (from April 1962) of dead or missing plants, a list of suggested replacement plants and Susan Jellicoe's comments on species suggested by the Corporation to replace the failed Irises around the fountain pool.

Allies and Morrison: Water Gardens Report 2011



View of Formal Flower Garden



View of Formal Flower Garden



Irises frame southern lake



Picturesque quality of Lover's Walk

Current Condition

Probably the most significant change to the Gardens since it was built has been to the planting. The original planting plans by Susan Jellicoe no longer remain however it is clear from early photographs that the species and planting structure has changed significantly. Some of this is the natural consequence of planting maturing over time and would have been the original design intention. So, for example, tree planting in Lovers Walk has matured to provide dense tree cover to the walk, the pleached limes and yew in the Formal Gardens give a strong sense of enclosure to the Gardens. Elsewhere however, planting and maintenance works over the years has resulted in substantial changes to the character and quality of the Gardens.

Photographs suggest that until the 1980s this was well maintained and the general character of the different



Loss of character and planting within the Formal Gardens

planting areas was maintained. Since then however the maintenance team responsible for the Gardens has reduced in size and the maintenance of planting in the Gardens has been minimal. Most herbaceous planting has disappeared and has been replaced with a narrow range of shrub species many of which are overgrown and now form dense areas of vegetation with little aesthetic appeal.

Also over the years significant tree planting has taken place along the eastern bank. In Jellicoe comments on changes to the Gardens; "Trees have been added to the east bank and by linking one side of the canal with the other could, in time, harm the idea of contrast between the two banks". The passage of time has indeed obscured the contrast and the trees can be seen to dilute the serpent theme by spoiling his 'plain underbelly'.

Allies and Morrison: Water Gardens Report 2011



Existing yews and trees. Yews were intended to form arches across paths



irises have failed



Car park has impacted upon Lover's walk and herbaceous plants have been replaced with amenity shrubs

4. Key recommendations

Restoration

A sensitive approach to restoration is advocated to reinstate Jellicoe's original vision and install the lost sense of romance into the Gardens. The following key principles are proposed:

- The original structure will be revealed and restored.
- Concrete structures cleaned and repaired where possible. Replacement will be considered where they are not salvable.
- Links to the town centre will be reinstated.
- Key views will be reinstated through vegetation management and tree removal.
- Surfacing, edgings and furniture will be replaced with a more historically sensitive palette to achieve an aesthetic appropriate to the 1960s scheme. Signage and furniture will be rationalised to reduce clutter.
- Lighting will be replaced and enhanced.
- Planting will be renewed and replaced where required to achieve the design aesthetic of the period. However, new proposals will be resilient to climate change and maintainable to ensure that they are sustainable.
- Water quality will be enhanced and works to the channel carried out to improve flow without affecting the aesthetic of the canal. Marginal planting will be reintroduced where it is appropriate to the original design.

This section describes the above principles in more detail before looking at a new layer of contemporary interventions which are being considered either to address areas where changes post implementation have negatively impacted on the Gardens or where new interventions would not negatively impact on the heritage of the Gardens but increase use.

Town Centre Connection:

The key objective for this area is to revitalise the eastern side of the Gardens, reinstating the connection between the Gardens and town centre so that shops and cafés are motivated to positively address the open space. A key indication of success will be new entrances, frontage and placing tables and chairs overlooking the water.

The concurrent Town Centre studies present the opportunity for a coordinated approach to address these issues.

The following approach is proposed:

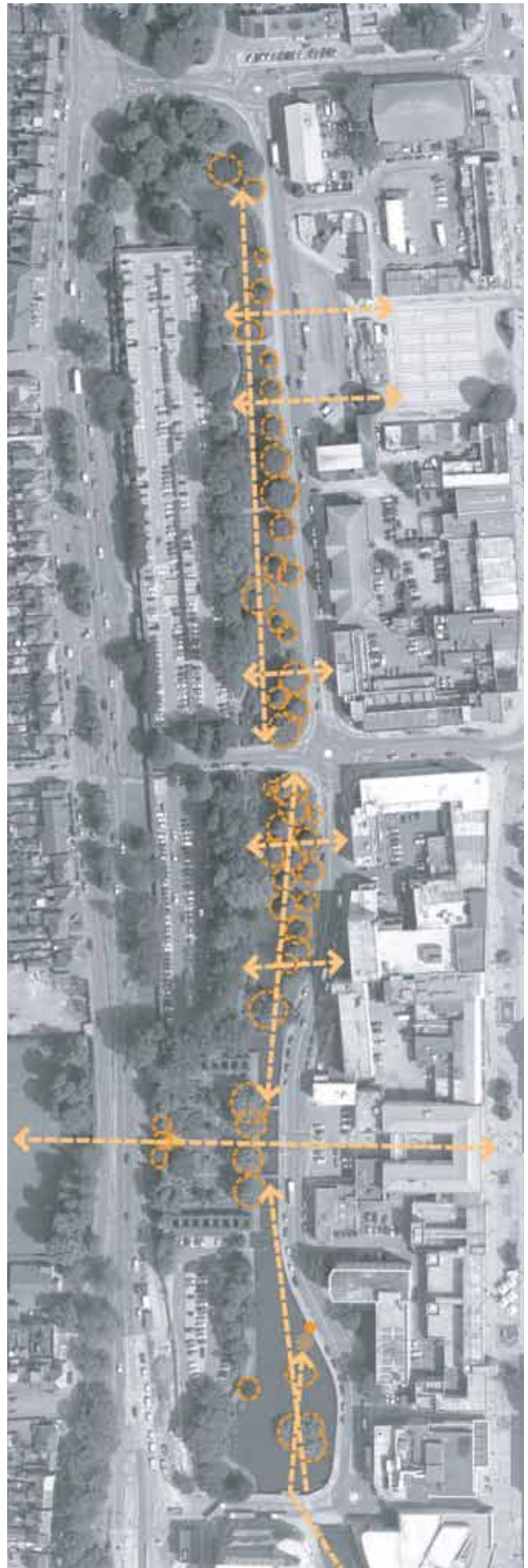
- Tree removal is advocated on the eastern bank to reinstate the visual connection between the town centre and Gardens.
- Reinstatement of the grassed banks, including edging and gradient. A strategy for management of geese will be required to ensure successful establishment.
- Highways:
 - Parking and traffic management is proposed to reduce the impact of traffic on the Gardens. It would be desirable for parking to be restricted to the town centre side of Waterhouse Street.
 - Treatment of the road surface is proposed to reinstate the visual and tonal link between the town centre and Gardens. However, the traditional road configuration is proposed with upstand kerbs retained in order to facilitate the removal of waterside railings and barriers.
- A Stage I Safety audit would be required in order to determine whether the above proposals could be implemented.
- Bank Court: rationalisation and removal of visual clutter is required to reinstate the views of the Gardens and reinstate the sense of openness. This includes removal of visually intrusive litter bins, signage and modification of the controlled crossing to use reduce the number of columns etc. The following options should be considered:
 - Option 1: removal of parking and creation of a high quality public new square.
 - Option 2: creation of high quality shared surface with parking retained but reconfigured to prevent this area being used as a drop off zone.



Views:

Reinstatement of key views is proposed:

- Removal of the islands in the southern lake: this will restore the sense of openness and expansive water. It will enable views of the Rock And Roll sculpture from the southern viewing point and also views of the new riverside development looking southwards.
- Removal of trees on the eastern bank to enable views of the Gardens / town centre across the water.
- Relocate Rock and Rock interpretation plaque to bankside so that it is easier to read and does not become part of the lake view.
- Vegetation management, tree removal and lifting of tree canopies: reinstate views along the canal. Removing understorey vegetation so that there is visual permeability beneath tree canopies. Cut back or replace vegetation adjacent to the platforms so that they project into the water. This work will be informed by the historic tree mapping and arboricultural impact assesment to determine which trees are of significance.
- Reinstatement and enhancement of the westerly view from Bank Court:
 - Remove visual clutter in Bank Court and rationalise vehicluar / pedestrian circulation.
 - Selective tree and vegetation management to create 'windows' in the Garden's boundary to open us views of the school grounds beyond
 - Remove the wall backing the Discobolus, so that the sculpture becomes a point within the landscape and not the terminus to the view.



Edges, Lines and Definition

Reinstatement of key lines and edges are proposed:

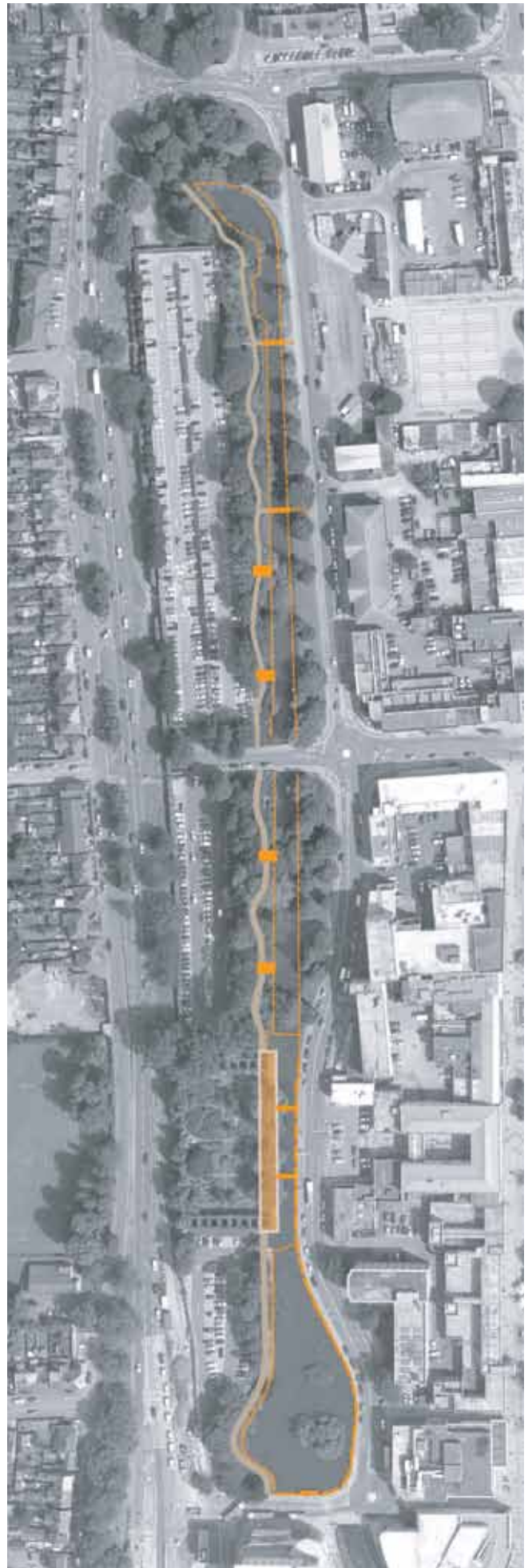
- Replacement of edgings and copings to achieve straight lines / controlled curves and changes in direction and sloping bank profiles.
- Reinstatement of sinuous character to Lover's Walk to emphasis the contrast between the west and eastern sides of the Gardens
- Relocate Rock and Rock interpretation plaque to bankside so that it is easier to read and does not become part of the lake view.
- Reinststate continuity of materials and character:
 - The straight line from the bridges to Waterhouse Street footway (a modern solution such as a different paving material will be required to accommodate desire lines).



Materials

Surfacing, edgings and furniture will be replaced with a more historically sensitive palette to achieve an aesthetic appropriate to the 1960s scheme. Signage and furniture will be rationalised to reduce clutter and located so that it does not impact on key views. The following approach is advocated:

- Replacement of benches and bins so that they are historically accurate and appropriate. There is an original bench in the playground which could be used as a template for fabricating replacement benches.
- Corporate signage / call point signs are removed / reduced in number subject to consultation.
- Sensitive interpretation is placed where it does not detract from the Gardens.
- The Formal Flower Garden terrace is reinstated to its original width and surfaced in large format flags running to the water's edge. Consideration given to use of large units to Waterhouse Street footway.
- Bridges and platforms are restored and metalwork returned to the correct colour.
- Replacement of tarmacadam path and flag paved areas to reflect original design intent. Consideration given to using large flag units.
- Rationalisation of edgings.
- Reinstatement of Jellicoe's attention to detailing of materials and junctions so that paving slabs extending to the water's edge and slabs project across the path at platforms



Planting

Further research is required to determine the planting strategy for the Water Gardens including mapping of historic trees and planting. However the following is being considered:

- Tree removal to reinstatement the open eastern bank.
- Arboricultural works and vegetation management - crown lifting and thinning to open up views and reinstate sightlines.
- Sensitive reinstatement of the Formal Flower Gardens aesthetic through retention of existing original features such as yews and trees. Reinstatement of herbaceous beds to create aesthetic of Susan Jelicoe design whilst providing a scheme that is both maintainable and sustainable.
- Reinstatement of planting to banks of Lover's Walk.
- Reinstatement of marginal planting with species that will satisfy the Environment Agency's requirements and endure.

Note: tree removal proposals indicative only and will be subject to detailed arboriculture and historic mapping.



Concept Plan



- ① Formal Flower Gardens revitalised
- ② Bank Court reconfigured (offsite)
- ③ Trees removed and terrace reinstated
- ④ Free standing tables and chairs / temporary kiosk
- ⑤ East west views beyond site reinstated
- ⑥ Potential location of play space
- ⑦ Formal extent of Gardens reinstated
- ⑧ Road surface changed to link town centre with Gardens
- ⑨ Existing building used to facilitate Friends and volunteers during development of the Gardens
- ⑩ New community facility
- ⑪ Straight revetment / edges reinstated
- ⑫ Sinuous path to Lover's walk resurfaced / edged
- ⑬ Paving details reinstated - slabs extend over path
- ⑭ Paving details reinstated - slabs form straight line from bridges (desire lines in other hard surface)
- ⑮ Green screen to car park
- ⑯ Southern Islands removed
- ⑰ Existing trees removed
- ⑱ Existing trees thinned (selective removal, crown lifting etc)
- ⑲ Low level ground cover reinstated
- ⑳ Marginal planting reinstated
- ㉑ Architectural lighting to fountain
- ㉒ Functional lighting enhanced
- ㉓ Bridges refurbished

5. *New Interventions*

The following new interventions are proposed:

- A** **Northern Area adjacent to the gardens:** transformed into an open grass area
- B** **Green screen to car park:** to soften the impact of the decked car park on Lover's Walk.
- C** **New community facility:** inserted into the corner of the existing decked car park to act as a focus for community activity, increase use and provide toilets to enable visitors to stay in the Gardens for longer periods.
- D** **Central hub:** relocated play area combined with cafe concession, tables and chairs to increase and diversify use

Northern Area:

Northern Area

This area provides the opportunity to create a more open space where informal recreation can take place. It is proposed to remove the play area and car park access road so that the area can become an open lawn. The new space will address the mound and future town centre developments to north by opening up views, selective vegetation removal and reinforcing links to the River Grade footpath and cycleway.

Hedge retained adjacent to Leighton Buzzard Road to maintain screening along western edge.

Green screen to car park

'Greening' of car park elevation with climbers on wire system creating a green backdrop, mitigating the encroachment of this building into the Lover's Walk experience.

Greening this elevation would enable existing vegetation to be thinned to create the feeling of a more generous corridor.



Indicative treatment of northern open space



Artists impression of the Gade and original Marlowes Zone produced as part of the town centre studies showing the location of the new civic building



Existing play area



Proposed vertical green screen to car park to reduce its visual impact on the Gardens



Existing building:

Potential temporary use to facilitate Friends Group and volunteering whilst Gardens and new centre are under development

Northern end

Play area and car park entrance removed. Area returned to lawn. Views opened to north and to connect with mound.

Car Park Elevation

Decked car park screened to provide enhanced interface with Water Gardens.

New Community Facility

Utilising the southern corner section of the existing decked car park. This building would provide community focused facilities such as exhibition space, information desk, meeting room and toilets etc. As it is a reconfiguration of an existing building it would have minimal visual impact on the setting of the Gardens.

New Community Facility:

Location:

The new community facility is proposed in a central location within the Gardens at the corner of Bridge Street. It would be inserted into the southern corner section of the existing decked access car park. In this location, it has the potential to act as an attractive backdrop to the Water Gardens on a key east west vista from the Town Centre.

Impact:

The existing car park has already negatively impacted on the Gardens and therefore adapting the existing structure is not considered to have a significant adverse impact on the heritage of the Gardens.

This proposal has the potential to mitigate some of the adverse visual impact of the car park and to provide a more attractive and visually sensitive backdrop to the site.

Function:

The new community facility will act as a focus for community activity both within the Gardens and also for the wider town centre increasing the number of people visiting the park and enabling them to stay in the Gardens for longer periods. It could provide a large flexible space with the following potential uses:

- Friends Groups meetings and briefings
- Volunteers meeting place
- Workshop space for training and courses for volunteers, schools etc
- Exhibition space e.g. displaying the history of the Water Gardens, New Towns or contemporary themes including exhibition space, history of Gardens, New Town Hemel Hempstead as well as contemporary uses such as art etc
- Information centre
- Public toilets
- Storage of tools for volunteers.
- Storage for cafe concession / tables / chairs
- Hand washing facilities etc

Assumed Brief:

- An approximate size has been allowed for that suits the car park structure. This could be varied within the building grid.
- Large flexible space
- Reception desk and simple display

- Reception desk and simple display
- Toilets
- Kitchenette (not commercial kitchen)
- Store
- Small plant room
- Electrically operated shutters
- Reconfiguration of staircase to within car park structure.
- Potential for roof terrace

Key considerations:

- Loss of parking spaces: approximately 8 spaces including reconfiguring staircase (not including roof terrace)
- Longevity of car park deck: confirmation is required that there is sufficient building life to merit capital investment.
- Adaptation of structure and internal layout: structural survey required to determine whether internal layout can be adapted. The proposal requires reconfiguration of the car park exit including the bottom of the ramp from the upper level. Further feasibility is required to determine whether this is technically feasible. Refer to concept sketch.
- Café: discussions with other local authorities indicate that a commercial café is unlikely to generate enough income to subsidise the running of the building. However, consideration could be given to it being run as a social enterprise facility.

Management, staffing and running costs

A management strategy is required which determines how the centre will be run, opening hours and what level of staffing is required in order to determine the running costs.

Next steps

These proposals have been prepared without engineering or architectural input. In order to determine the viability of building and more precise costs the following additional work is required:

- Formulation of brief - function and performance
- Structural assessment of car park and proposals
- Highways / civil assessment of adaptation of internal layout ramp and levels.
- M and e regarding services connection for toilets and drinking water
- Architectural stage b / c proposals
- Updated cost plan

Existing Car Park Structure

The existing car park has a wide opening onto the Water Gardens and a covered colonnade which could be converted into an attractive waterside building.

The existing external stairs significantly detract from the Gardens and impact on the footpath and Lover's Walk. There is the potential to reconfigure the stairs immediately adjacent to the new building as part of this project.

Landscape enhancements as part of the wider restoration of the Gardens would open up views across the water to the building.

There is the potential to replace the brick parapet with a more visually permeable balustrade to enable the upper area to become a viewing deck.



View of car park opening from Bridge Street

Precedent

A potential precedent for the new community facility is Russell Page and Jellicoe's 1930s design for the Caveman restaurant and visitor centre at Cheddar Gorge. The architectural language would be applicable to the structure the new centre at the Water Gardens at a more modest scale.



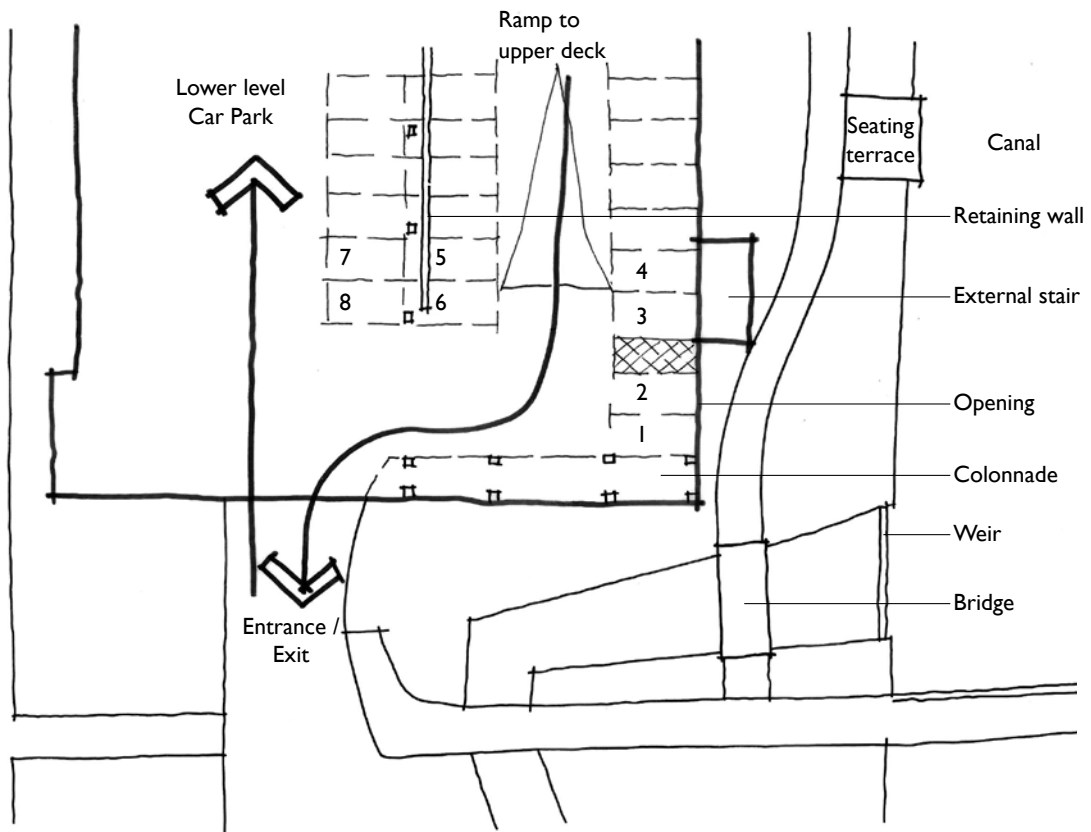
Cheddar Gorge Visitor's Centre



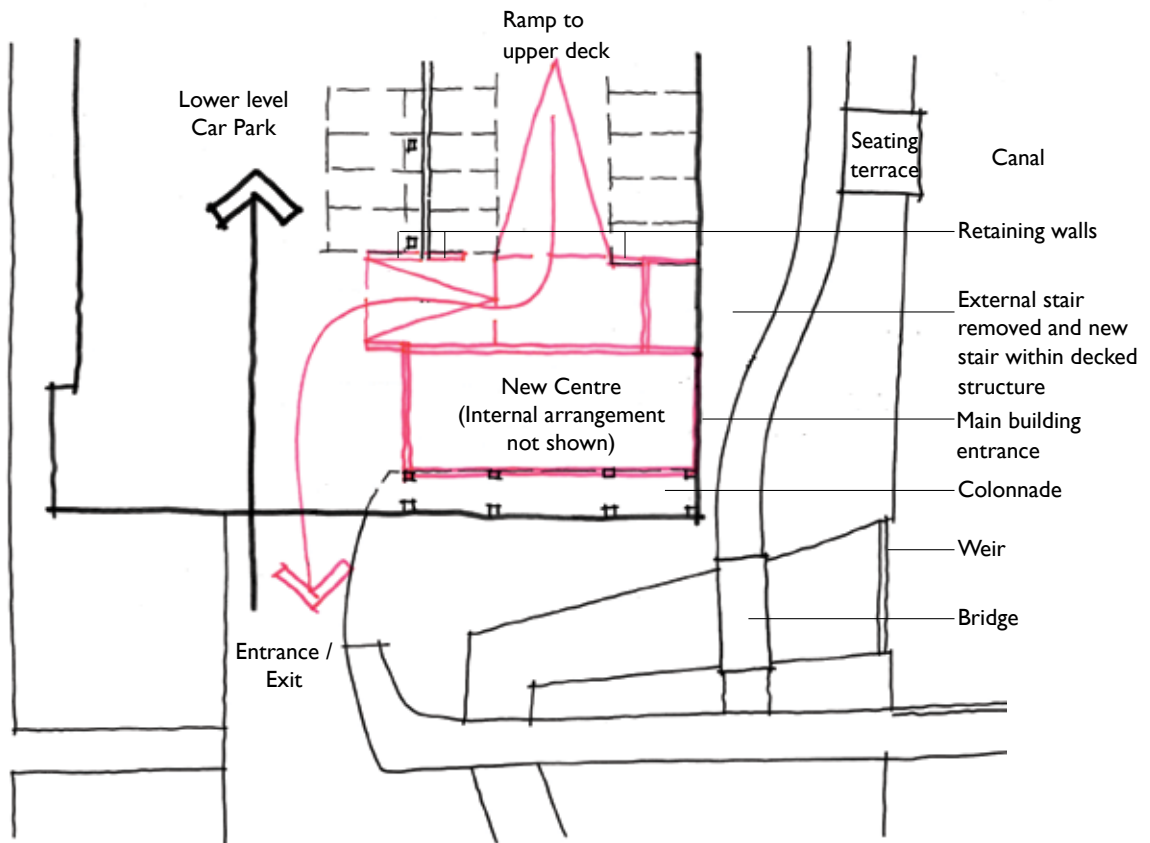
View of new centre across water would be enhanced by vegetation management and clearance



Cheddar Gorge Visitor's Centre



Existing Car Park Structure (Indicative - subject to detailed survey)



Concept sketch plan for new centre (Indicative - levels not known and therefore viability of proposals subject to detailed feasibility)



Generous opening and covered colonnade could become attractive architectural features



Photograph showing start of retaining wall at base of ramp to upper deck



Existing internal layout of car park

Central hub:

Within the Gardens, current levels of active use are low with many people merely passing through on their way from the car parks to the town centre.

Anecdotal feedback from the community, suggests that this is because the Gardens are no longer an attractive place to sit and spend time due to their condition and also disturbance from Waterhouse street traffic. In addition, apart from sitting or walking, there is little to do in the Gardens. Parents often pause on their journey to feed the ducks but use of the play area seems low.

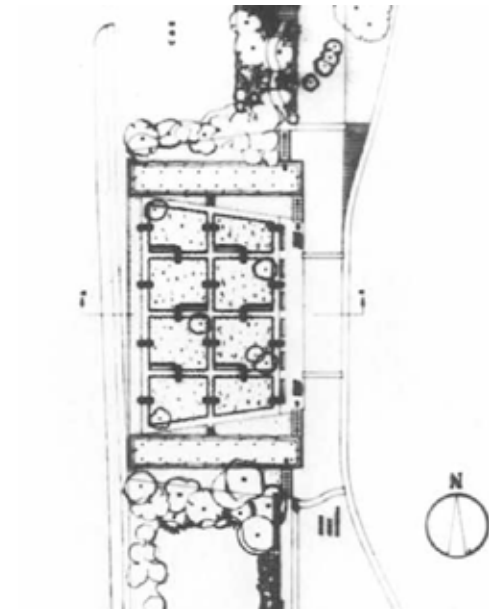
The proposal is focused around the Formal Flower Garden which is the centrepiece of Jellicoe's scheme and sited directly opposite Bank Court, a key link to the Marlowes shopping precinct.

Reinstatement of the terrace: Licensing of a mobile café cart / concession with free standing tables and chairs on the terrace. Consultation has highlighted a desire within the community for the development of a 'café type culture' within the Gardens and interest has been shown by several social enterprise organisations to manage this as a social enterprise facility. If successful, this could be extended to the area under the pleached limes. Storage for tables, chairs and toilets could be located in the decked car park as part of the new community facility.

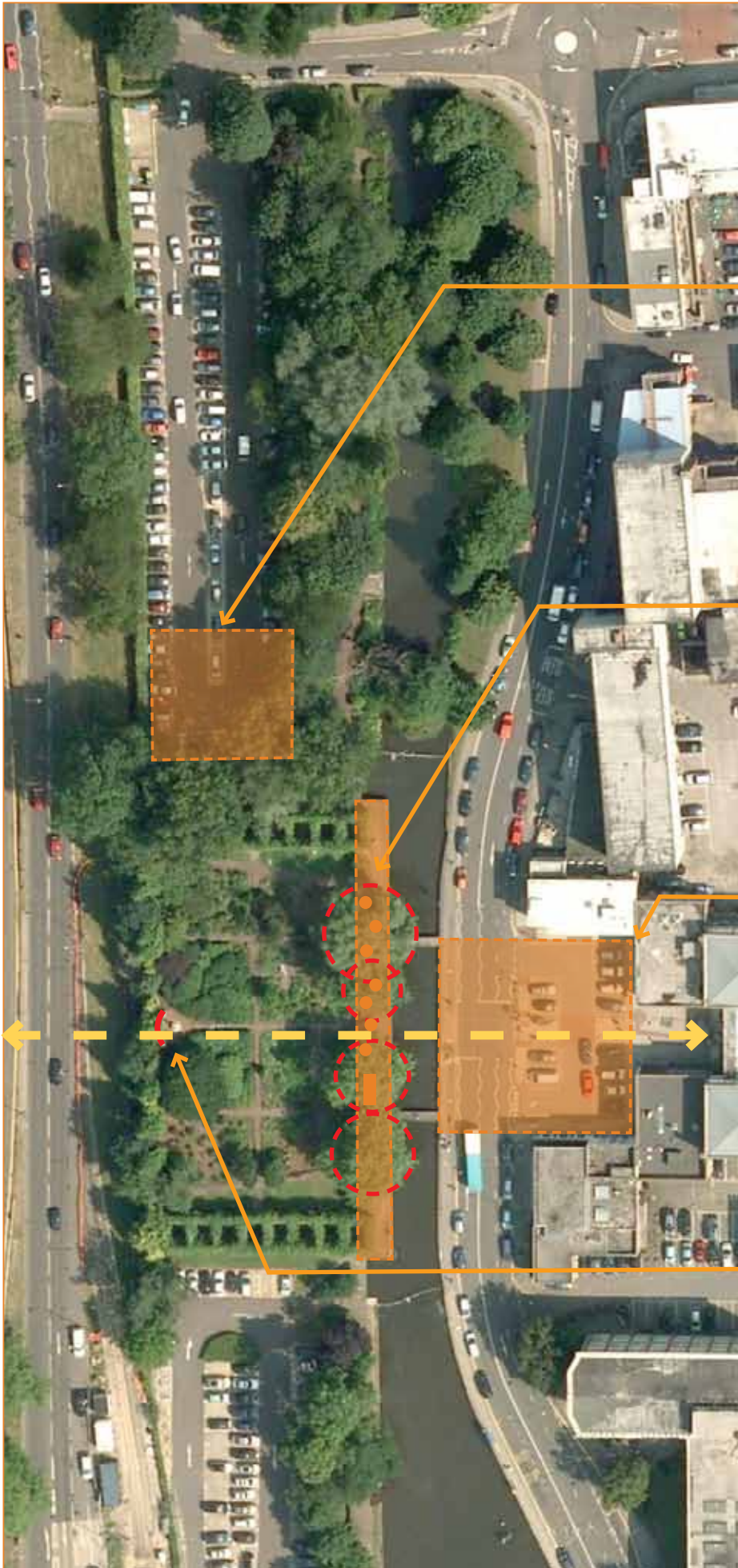
Play: Relocation of the play space to this central part of the Gardens would encourage parents and children to stop for longer periods of time. However, it would entail the loss of several car parking bays. It would also need to be sensitively treated so that it did not adversely impact on the character and heritage of the Gardens. One potential option would be the screening indicated in Jellicoe's drawings.

Additional consultation would be required with the public to determine demand and also from stakeholders as to the appropriateness of play in this location.

Bank Court: This key gateway between the Gardens and Town Centre detracts from the enjoyment of the Formal Flower Gardens because views are interrupted by visual clutter, and parking noise from traffic intrudes upon the tranquility of the Gardens. Removing car parking from Bank Court would be the preferred option. However, if this is not achievable, reconfiguration of this space is advised to deter its use as a drop off. In addition, resurfacing of Waterhouse Street to create the appearance of a high quality square is recommended and the removal of visual clutter is required.



'Plan of the water gardens' taken from 'Guelph' 1983 pp 64-65- Jellicoe



Play Area

Existing play area to be removed and relocated adjacent to formal gardens, screened by the original buffer planting as shown on the 'Guelph' sketch opposite. In this location the play area would be close to the central 'activity zone' without significantly impacting on the character of the gardens

Terrace

Reinstate the Terrace area to its original width and material character which will require the removal of 4 No. non-original trees. Mobile refreshment kiosk to be located on the terrace with free standing tables and chairs informally scattered throughout.

Bank Court

Removal of vehicular access / parking would be preferential. However if this is not achievable then creation of a clutter free shared surface would strengthen links with the town centre and views to the gardens and beyond. Reconfiguration of the parking layout to reduce use of this area for drop-off.

Backing Wall

Removal of non-original backing wall to statue and selective tree/vegetation management will allow views to continue up to the school beyond.

6. Management

New Post:

With the significant capital investment in the Water Gardens, consideration should be given to the creation of a new post. Given the significance of the horticultural and planting elements of the formal flower gardens and 'Lover's Walk', it would be beneficial to consider a new post being created for a gardener to ensure the establishment and long term success of the project. Additional temporary gardeners for the summer could also be considered.

If a gardener post were to be created, we would also suggest that a Dacorum Borough Council officer is given the responsibility of facilitating the formation of the friends group and organising activities / events in the Gardens. It is worth considering this being through the creation of a second new post focused on community engagement and audience development.

The list below may be too onerous for a single post and it is possible that the role could be more focused on gardening and less on community engagement if a second position were to be created.

Potential tasks / responsibilities for new gardener position

1. Regular gardening and horticultural maintenance tasks
2. Litter picking (in addition to the clean, safe and green team)
3. Helping set up tables and chairs within Gardens in the morning and clearing away at the end of the day.
4. Informing police of anti-social behaviour
5. Co-ordination of, and some provision of horticultural training of volunteers (Friends Group). Some training will be provided by external organisations/ volunteer individuals.
6. Support for and co-ordination of other groups carrying out activities in Gardens
7. Supervision of and liaison with the Friends Group members for horticultural/ litter picking activities.
8. Liaison with the Community Development Team at DBC to ensure continued community activity in Gardens.
9. Co-ordination of an annual user survey in Gardens with volunteers
10. First point of contact for the community in the Gardens.

HLF funding is for a five year period and it may well be beneficial to split the appointment into two separate posts. The first to cover years 1 and 2 while the project is in development /construction, focused on audience development and the second, a gardening post to cover the remaining three years.

Once funding is no longer available, consideration needs to be given to a longer term maintenance and management strategy to ensure that the planting and condition of the Garden does not decline.

7. Summary of key considerations

Northern open space

- Removal of car park access and relocation of play area

New community facility

- Loss of approximately 8 number parking bays
- Reconfiguration of exit to Water Gardens North Car Park.
- Detailed feasibility study covering levels, service connections, structure, tracking to determine viability of proposals.
- Potential for seating terrace on upper deck.
- Staffing, management and running costs.

Central hub

- Loss of 12-15 parking spaces depending on size due to relocated play area
- Café concession - attracting an organisation to run the concession and developing possible social enterprise links.
- Loss of approximately 8 spaces to reinstate former extent of Gardens.

New Post

- Job description - community engagement / gardener roles
- Length of appointment, temporary or permanent member of staff.

Management

- Long term maintenance strategy

Water quality

- Enhancement of water flow and measures to reduce silt build up and improve biodiversity.
- Potential for offsite mitigation subject to further consultation with the Environment Agency.

Lighting

- Architectural lighting to water features such as fountain.
- Enhancement of functional lighting to improve light coverage, replace defective lights and provide more aesthetically appropriate fittings.

8. Audience Development , Volunteer and Training

(Note: Appendices not included within this report)

8.1. Introduction: The Community of Hemel Hempstead

Hemel Hempstead, situated in the borough of Dacorum, was one of the first new towns which brought rapid growth to the area. With 138,400 residents, Dacorum has the highest population of all Hertfordshire's districts (Office of National Statistics 2006). 15.6% of residents are aged 65 or more and 18.6% are under 15. There are 58,873 (2003 figure) dwellings, of which around 18% (10,500) are owned by the Council.

Based on current trends the population is forecast to increase between 8,900 and 10,300 people over the next 20 years, as more homes are built over the next few years. One of the most significant features is the growth of the population in the over 65 age group -- up to 8,900 (41%) more people, and 3,500 (56%) more people (ONS) in the over 80 age group.

Whilst the area immediately surrounding the Water Gardens has a low level of deprivation, there are two areas of Hemel Hempstead Town where deprivation levels are much higher. The middle of the ward around Midland Road (270 m from northern end of Gardens as crow flies, 360m via road network) is within the 4th decile (40% most deprived). Another area of index 3 (30% most deprived) deprivation at Fletcher Way is 1000m away as crow flies and 1218m by the road network. In this north east section of Hemel Hempstead Town, the adjacent ward Highfield is the most deprived in the borough and amongst the bottom/top 25% quartile of SOA's.

The community is slightly younger than the national average although about average for Hertfordshire. The non-white population in Dacorum is around half the national average. Again where levels of crime within Dacorum are moderate by national standards, crime in Hemel Hempstead Town is shown as high, figuring in the 12% of most deprived wards nationally.

Dacorum has good transport links and many residents work outside the Borough. However the proportion of residents working elsewhere is the lowest in the county, making Dacorum more 'self contained' than the rest of Hertfordshire.

Dacorum scores relatively well for local amenities (cinemas, theatres, libraries and employment in hotels and restaurants). Even though the Borough is

surrounded by beautiful countryside it scores below the national average for natural beauty. This is typical of a largely urban area, particularly one where its environmental assets (such as green space and natural beauty) are offset by poor air quality caused by high levels of commuting.

8.2. The Water Gardens and the Community

Designed by Geoffrey Jellicoe, the Water Gardens were an integral part of his master plan for Hemel Hempstead New Town. They provide an important visual and recreational amenity for the residents of the New Town.

The Water Gardens are a main feature of Hemel Hempstead. It's a place where, when people visit us, we like to bring them down here. Arthur

The Water Gardens are now 50 years old and have an important social heritage which is evidently valued by many in the community. However, the significance and details of the Gardens' original design is certainly not widely understood by local people. Hemel Hempstead is fortunate in having a number of keen supporters of the Gardens via the Herts Gardens Trust (HGT) who have been campaigning to 'Save our Serpent' for the past year and are willing and keen to volunteer in a variety of ways. The HGT has been instrumental in raising the profile and awareness of the Water Gardens and it is important that this work continues.

A little oasis in the middle of a hustling bustling town. Mary Ruffell

8.2.1 What we know about the audience now

On Saturday 5 May 2012, a consultation day was held in Hemel Hempstead town centre and simultaneously at the Water Gardens. Film-maker, David Wachs captured on film the recollections of members of the community of the Gardens in their hey-day. From a 1960s living room set laid out in the Gardens, he drew out the real value of the Gardens for local residents and visitors both from past and present. He explored with local people the issues with the Water Gardens as they now stand and the key barriers to them visiting the Gardens on a more regular basis. Further filming was also carried out with key stakeholders and Dacorum Borough Council officers on 12 June 2012. The footage from these interviews is included as an appendix to this application.

Alongside the filming, a survey was carried out online via the Council's website and face to face in the town centre. Of the 123 people who responded, 79.8% agreed or strongly agreed that the Water Gardens are an important feature of Hemel Hempstead's New Town heritage. 47% agreed or strongly agreed that the Water Gardens are a pleasant route through to the town centre, although 34.7% disagreed or strongly agreed with this statement. The survey also identified a number of key issues to be addressed in the Gardens. 70% of people felt safe visiting the Gardens during the day, but 59.9% did not feel safe visiting at night. 49.7% of people felt that greater efforts should be made to preserve the Gardens' original features. 38.7% felt that new and improved planting was important. 35.2% of people felt that the bridges over the water needed repairing.

Full details of the consultation are included as appendix I self-completion survey to this application.

Through this consultation a number of people were identified as interested in getting involved in the Gardens on a voluntary basis via a Friends Group, the basis of which has recently been formed through the Herts Gardens Trust.

Kate Harwood- I'm surprised at the number of people who remember them in their heyday and how good they were and they are very supportive of any efforts anybody will put in to restore them to something of their original charm.

On 30 May 2012, the Water Gardens Project Team (Dacorum Borough Council and HTA Landscape consultants) held two stakeholder consultation events to gather information to support the bid from key organisations and internal officers who have an interest in the Water Gardens, which has helped us to shape the draft masterplan. Appendix 2 potential stakeholders list provides a list of local organisations which could play a potential role in developing the audiences, and volunteering or training opportunities in the Gardens.

Observations from local authority officers, stakeholders and information from the public through the consultation process has shown us that the large majority of people using the Water Gardens are doing so as the most direct route through to the town centre from the car parks.

It's more of a throughway now, rather than somewhere you sit, take a moment and contemplate. Vaishavi Nagam



Consultation within the Marlowes



Filming in the Gardens



Filming in the Gardens

The Water Gardens car park ticket machines data shows a total of 581,979 car park tickets were bought between April 2011 and March 2012. From this data, we are able to deduce that on average 1594 vehicles use the car park per day. Given that the vast majority of car park users will be visiting the town centre, we estimate that numbers passing through the Gardens will at least match these figures, but are likely to be higher due to multiple passengers in vehicles.

Findings from the consultation days also support officers' observations that another popular use for the Gardens is families visiting to feed the ducks. Very few people came to relax, spend time and enjoy the Gardens, although this is something that many recalled enjoying regularly in the past, when the Gardens were in a better condition.

Older people are drawn to anywhere they can have a quiet sit down and eat their sandwiches. That's what the Water Gardens always used to be. Andy South

8.2.2 What new audiences might we want to attract in the future and why

Families- The consultation told us that the Gardens were very important for young families in the past. People moving to the new town saw the Gardens as one of the key benefits to the town and saw the green space as a pleasant contrast to the urban area of London from where they had come. The number of families with young children living in the Borough is still higher than the national average. Many people said they had happy memories of their childhood in the Gardens and that they would like to see this reinstated for families in the future, allowing parents to pass on their love of the Gardens to future generations. In addition, the Gardens may serve as amenity and recreational space for new residential development within the town centre.

It was a lovely green area.. we have lovely photos in the autumn of the leaves, the kids.. and very happy memories. Anthony Mackay

One of the key challenges for the project is getting people to stay and spend time in the Gardens rather than just walk through. We would like to create an environment where people wish to stop and spend time, rather than rushing through to get somewhere else. Many people who were consulted had good ideas about how this could be done. Most of them felt that reinstating many of the beautiful features and

planting that had attracted them to the Gardens in the past would be all that was required in order for them to want to stay. Dacorum Borough Council will work with our partners will explore opportunities to expand the kinds of activities that take place in the Gardens, to give them their own draw, allowing the Gardens to become more than just a green walk through.

If these Gardens looked lovely people would walk through them, sit on the benches and eat their lunch... you'd get the families here. Jim Dilkes

Disabled people- From the consultation so far, we cannot be sure how accessible the Gardens are to people with mobility issues or other disabilities. We understand that the bridges may pose some difficulties to mobility scooter users, but we need to further explore these issues with a wider group of users.

Young people- We understand from consultation that young people do not feel that the Gardens have much to offer them. We need to explore the possibility of enhancing the features that may attract them or providing relevant activities.

Bring some of the social relaxation from the town centre into the Gardens... like if they had a bandstand...a centre of focus, where you can have a coffee, chill out and read the paper... you'd get the youngsters coming down here because it would be a hip place to come. Jim Dilkes

If they had more cafes, if people were in the area they could take a break, and if there was wifi, they could use the internet and I think that attracts a lot of people, especially our age. Maria Johnson

School children- There are many learning opportunities to be gained from the Gardens and by expanding existing links between local schools, local authority officers and community organisations such as the Herts Gardens Trust, we would be able to encourage visits from more school groups in the future.

Visitors to Hemel - The video consultation showed us that people in Hemel were proud of the Water Gardens, that they used to bring visitors to the Gardens to show them this specific facility. People still come from other towns to visit Hemel Hempstead, often for shopping. We believe that there is potential to restore this feeling of pride in the Gardens and

to allow visitors to explore an open, green space to which they will return again.

Hopefully, what we've done is to transfer over our feelings about the Water Gardens to our family. Arthur

8.2.3 What physical works and activities you might have to do to attract these new audiences.

The safety of the bridges and accessibility for disabled people is a barrier to participation. For over 35 % of people surveyed, the priority was repairing the bridges and 19% wanted better access for people with disabilities. We need further consultation with specific disabled users to explore key issues and potential solutions. In addition, we need to improve the footpaths around the Gardens- this was a priority for 31.7% of people surveyed.

The bridges... need repainting, rebuilding... they don't look safe. Patricia B

We need to provide more community or local authority led activities in the Gardens e.g. arts, sports, markets, bandstand. However, we are constrained by the lack of space in the Gardens, which does not allow for many activities traditionally associated with parks e.g. sports, so any activities will have to be carefully considered. Activities currently being explored with Dacorum Borough Council officers and stakeholders are: an annual paper boat race or 'Pooh Sticks' challenge, pond dipping/ nature trail with local schools. We will explore types of activities further with the emerging Friends Group.

John Aldridge- I think the Water Gardens can be much more integrated into the town centre... If they could bring the two things together so that it is felt like there was the business end, and this is the rest end where you can relax and eat your sandwiches. Maybe they could put on little puppet shows or things for the kids.

When my children were little, we used to walk through and look at the trees, work out which tree was which. Mary Ruffell

One spot being dedicated for events, a bandstand or something and bringing back a rose garden. Vaishavi Nagam

There is a particular lack of activities to draw in young people, and so we would aim to provide

features which will encourage them to visit in a positive way. Suggestions have included a free wi-fi hot spot and a cafe in the Gardens. We are considering using the Gardens as a site for geocaching. Hidden locations within the Gardens would provide links to a website full of information/ interpretation about the Gardens' history and design. Once again, further consultation will help identify appropriate additions.

What I'd like to see is for this whole area to be a shared space, where people can actively participate and use this space for their living...with wi-fi and young people working and using technology ...actively using the space. Mr Nagam

We are exploring the possibility of introducing a food/coffee outlet/kiosk- people are keen to see more of a cafe culture developing in and around the Gardens. 29% of people responding to the survey said that introducing catering facilities to the Gardens e.g. a cafe would be a priority improvement for them. One option being discussed with local community organisation Sunnyside Rural Trust, who provide training and work experience for people with learning disabilities, is the potential establishment of a cafe in the Gardens run by a social enterprise supported by the Trust.

Having a natural waterway running through the town is a real asset ...people like being by water. I think one of the big areas we can do is to provide more of a street cafe culture. Anthony Mackay

33.7% of people responding to the survey said that more active uses along Waterhouse Street (cafes, restaurants, bars, leisure activities) would be a priority improvement for the Gardens.

We need to improve the play area- many people we consulted didn't know it was there, and thought it was outdated or felt unsafe in that part of the Gardens due to the heavy shade of the trees. Most people saw the play area as a stop off play facility, rather than a destination play area and there was a general sense that moving the play area to another part of the Gardens was not an issue. It is important to consider how the Gardens may also serve the potential housing development at the north end of the Gardens in terms of play facilities.

There is a need for better signage/ interpretation within the Gardens. We want to welcome people and invite them to stop and relax. Providing them with

information on the heritage of the Gardens or the local wildlife would give them an opportunity to pause and read. Erection of story boards on the history of the Gardens was a priority improvement for 19.6% of people surveyed. Heritage talks and trails with support of the Friends Group and Herts Gardens Trust or other community organisations could also enhance this provision. The Herts Gardens Trust are already planning an oral history project about the Gardens with older people across Dacorum. There is a potential to bring this project into the Gardens and for further outreach work to be developed via local schools.

We plan to increase the number of flowering plants and shrubs- a number of people have said that they used to go to the Gardens during their lunch break from work, as it used to be a pleasant and easy outdoor space to sit and enjoy. However, since the Gardens have deteriorated and the number of flowers has decreased they are no longer inclined to spend time there.

*There used to be roses here, and flowers, the colour was unbelievable! Jim Dilkes
I'm ashamed to say 'Gardens' now, because they look in a terrible state. Patricia B*

Better seating would also encourage people to spend more time in the Gardens. 21% of people surveyed wanted additional seating, and 33% wanted the seating platforms refurbished.

There used to be a lot more benches but these seem to have disappeared over the years. Andy South

We would also need to reinstate the fountains and sculptures, improve the perceived cleanliness of the water and Gardens generally, and manage litter to improve the overall experience. 30.7% of people surveyed prioritised the reinstatement of the river banks. 26% thought restoration of artworks was important.

Management of the geese is a key issue for the Gardens, with 27% of those surveyed prioritising their removal. The number of geese has substantially increased over the years, they cause a number of problems, including destroying grass areas, fouling the pathways and harassing visitors.

There are very tall bushes, very close together, people don't feel safe. Sharon Adshead

Improving the sense of safety is a priority for most people. Many people responding to the consultation are in favour of opening up enclosed spaces by clearing overgrowth and removing trees where appropriate. This is especially important along the walkways which were considered unpleasant.

There are areas where you don't feel quite so safe. Mary Ruffell

Alongside this, we need to work with the local police to improve policing of the alcohol free zone in place in the Gardens, to help reduce the presence of alcohol-users, who intimidate and put off other visitors. There is a need to consider the proximity of local public toilets and the potential need for toilets within the Gardens, especially when the nearby bus station/ market place redevelopment may potentially remove or replace the existing nearest facility.

8. 2.4 Further engagement/ consultation with the community

We understand the importance of ongoing engagement with the community throughout the development of this project. To ensure that the momentum of the community's interest is not lost, Dacorum Borough Council is committed to identifying one key officer who has responsibility for liaison and engagement of the community in the project and the Gardens long term. We envisage this work-programme will require staffing of 1-2 days per week and will cover community liaison, and volunteer recruitment and management.

We will also need to develop a new role within Dacorum Borough Council for an officer who will carry out ongoing horticultural maintenance in the Gardens, be the first point of contact and co-ordinate and deliver some training activities. The role of the new 'Gardener' post is under discussion but could include the following responsibilities:

1. Regular horticultural maintenance tasks
2. Litter picking/ emptying bins
3. Informing police of anti-social behaviour
4. Co-ordination of, and some provision of horticultural training of volunteers (Friends Group). Some training will be provided by external organisations/ volunteer individuals.
5. Supervision of and liaison with Friends Group members for horticultural/ litter picking activities.
6. Ongoing liaison with Community Development Team at DBC to ensure ongoing community activity in Gardens

7. Co-ordination of annual user survey in Gardens with volunteers
8. First point of contact for Friends Group and the community with the Council.
9. Support for and co-ordination of other groups carrying out activities in Gardens

In addition to ongoing collection of car parking data, we intend to work with volunteers via the Friends Group to carry out six-monthly audience surveys/ visitor counts to gather feedback about the people that visit and how to improve the Gardens, to support our audience development plans. The recent survey will provide a baseline to demonstrate how people's perceptions of the Gardens change over time.

Throughout the next stage of the development process, the Water Gardens Project Team intends to carry out a number of further activities to engage and involve the local community, which will enable us to be better informed about the best way to improve and develop the Gardens for the future. Our intention is to engage with the audiences we are trying to reach, and to find out what specifically will encourage them to use the Gardens more frequently, or get a better experience from their visit.

We will work with 7 groups of people representing the audiences we wish to develop. From these groups we hope to identify 5-6 individuals in each group who wish to be involved in the development of the masterplan, further activity plans and potentially may join the Friends Group:

1. The Friends Group
2. Local schools and children's centres
3. Learning and Skills Partnership (including West Herts College/ Sunnyside Rural Trust and other adult learning providers)
4. Youth Council
5. Accessible Dacorum (a Group working to break down barriers for people with disabilities)
6. Neighbourhood Action Group
7. Town Centre Partnership (Local businesses)

We intend to hold two 1-2 hour sessions with each these identified individuals at key points during the development phase, to enable the emerging information to feed into the development of the masterplan. Each workshop-style set up will encourage participants to explore 1 or 2 key barriers and ask them to identify what interventions might help to resolve these.

The council will also actively promote the project via its website. It will make available online a short edited

film from the consultation day and encourage more people to put forward their memories and thoughts via the website. We feel it is vitally important that local people are kept informed about the process and understand the long stretch of time between the initial consultation and a result on the ground. As substantial work has already been done to identify a number of key committed people in the community, we want to ensure that the momentum is maintained. We have therefore planned a series of events over the next 6 months as follows:

- July 2012- Exhibition of draft masterplan and ongoing consultation
- September 2012- Planting and maintenance day
- October 2012- Local display of Oral History project with Herts Gardens Trust
- November- December 2012- Oral history project with local schools.

8.3. Volunteering

8.3.1. Who volunteers now and what they do

The Clean, Safe and Green Team at Dacorum Borough Council organises regular litter picks with volunteers who are mostly employees from local businesses around the Town Centre including the Water Gardens. Three Business Litter Picks have been held since March 2010 with a total of 22 businesses participating including M & S, Cafe Nero, Dominos, Greggs, Tesco and TKMaxx.

The Water Gardens was an obvious choice of location for the litter pick as it is a prominent feature in the town centre and an area visible to shoppers when parking, catching a bus or walking between shops. Some businesses specifically request that they cover the Water Gardens area as they are aware of its importance to the residents of Dacorum. Volunteers litter pick the area and note down any environmental eyesores such as graffiti, overgrown bushes, flytipping or any other issues they come across. This information is then passed onto the Clean Safe and Green department to action.

The Herts Gardens Trust has taken a very proactive role in the Gardens. Kate Harwood from HGT has already invested a substantial amount of voluntary time to raise the profile of the Gardens and their heritage. In April 2011, the HGT held a study day at a local school where a number of high profile people came to talk about the heritage of the Gardens and Jellicoe's design. The event was well attended and as a



Litter pick in the Gardens

result a Friends Group was established with 12 initial members. See appendix 3 The Garden History Society, for further details.

Following the consultation activities, we gathered a list of a further 39 people interested in volunteering in the park. Prospective Friends will shortly be contacted to ask them what activities they are interested in and to provide an update on the parks for people bid. See appendix 4 Friends of the Water Gardens newsletter July 2012.

It's an opportunity to teach people to garden... I'm sure people would be willing to give up their time to come along and tidy it up and make it look better. Mary Ruffell

The HGT also has a number of members with horticultural expertise (e.g. Mick Thompson, the Estate Manager at Ashridge Estate, a nearby National Trust property) who are willing to give up their time to pass on their skills and knowledge to volunteers and maintenance staff working on the Water Gardens.

Kate Harwood and other volunteers at HGT have already volunteered further support for the project in the development of an Oral History project. They will go to residential homes and talk about the Gardens and then gather oral accounts, photographs and other documentation of the Water Gardens in times past from participants. They intend to begin this project in summer 2012.

In addition, HGT members are willing to voluntarily develop a learning session on the heritage of the Gardens for all schools in Hemel.



Group photograph

8.3.2. Which volunteering opportunities you would like to create to help sustain the benefits of your park project

We wish to build upon the existing voluntary activity in the Gardens and the offers of support from individuals and community organisations like HGT, Sunnyside Rural Trust and West Herts College.

We intend to continue the regular litter picks, and recruit new members for the growing Friends Group from all the activities planned in the Gardens over the forthcoming months.

We also aim to work with our community stakeholders to develop the range of activities provided by voluntary organisations in the Gardens.



Litter pick lunch

Friends Group – Following the establishment of the Friends Group in 2011, we have had a good response to calls for volunteers to join the Group as part of the wider Town Centre Consultation. At present, based on this response, we expect our Friends Group to increase to over 30 individuals who are committed volunteers. We would like the group to develop into a multi-faceted team of individuals who volunteer in different ways. We will promote this as a volunteering opportunity across the Borough via local organisations like the Volunteer Centre as well as through the Council's website and on notice-boards in public spaces including the Gardens themselves.

The Friends Group will be supported by an identified Officer at Dacorum Borough Council.

The kinds of Friends' opportunities we would like to create are:

1. Regular horticultural maintenance e.g. pruning, weeding, leaf clearing, edging, pond clearing. The flower Gardens offer an excellent opportunity for local groups to participate in the maintenance and care of the Gardens.
2. Annual planting days e.g. bulb planting and bedding planting
3. Other maintenance activities e.g. Fence and seat painting, litter picking, graffiti clearing
4. Nature surveys
5. Audience surveys
6. Heritage talks/ activities
7. Community activities
8. Management Committee roles- ongoing engagement with local authority
9. Fundraising

In order for our Friends Group to achieve this, we will need to offer regular learning and training opportunities via a range of providers including Dacorum Borough Council, local organisations, specialist training providers and volunteers. Further details are provided in the Training Section.

8.4. How will you improve skills and knowledge about parks through learning and training?

8.4.1 What learning and training activities exist in your park now

The Clean, Safe and Green team at Dacorum Borough Council has been working with HMP The Mount Prison in Hemel Hempstead for the past two years, helping to rehabilitate ex-offenders via a training and mentoring programme. Following a

successful nine month pilot programme in 2010/11, the scheme was set up to provide a maximum of four selected prisoners per year an opportunity to gain valuable training and experience with the Clean, Safe and Green team working around the Borough. They have been provided with a focused, specific training programme to give them the skills they need to be employed in the horticultural industry. The programme is very hands on and participants have been involved in working on and replanting a number of sites across the Borough including the Water Gardens.

The Herts Gardens Trust has already carried out a significant amount of work in-kind to support the Gardens, including an important educational study day for local community members at a local school in 2011 on the heritage of the Gardens and their designer, Jellicoe. They have also published a substantial learning resource of information online. The HGT has expressed interest in supporting ongoing learning opportunities.

8.4.2 Who you will reach with the learning and training activities provided through your project; what these people will learn and be trained in;

Building upon our existing activities, we intend to reach a broad range of people and also further support our audience development plans.

Dacorum Borough Council has established a Council Apprenticeship Scheme using the nationally recognised frameworks developed by Sector Skills Councils and funded through the National Apprenticeship Scheme. The Council as part of its economic regeneration programme has committed to improving employment opportunities for local young people.

This scheme will be extended to the Water Gardens with the creation of two new apprentice posts, with training focused around a Level 2 Diploma in work-based Horticulture. The posts will become permanent on successfully completing the course. This commitment will provide both valuable learning and skills and also contribute to enhanced maintenance within the Gardens.

Dacorum Borough Council intends to continue and expand the horticultural training programme with ex-offenders, but plans to re-focus a key part of their training on the Water Gardens. During the development of the Gardens, there may be an opportunity for the participant to shadow the

appointed contractors and learn about some of the larger scale horticultural works.

We are also intending to open up this training programme to other learners via the local college and the Sunnyside Rural Trust.

West Herts College is sited at the north end of the Water Gardens. The College offers a range of courses to young people and adults, across a broad range of subjects. We are currently exploring the following opportunities for students to get involved in the Gardens:

1. Volunteering- gardening, litter-picking, railing painting etc
2. Study Days/ case studies for Art/Design History students
3. Exhibition space for 3D outdoor artworks/ site specific projects
4. Potential role in running cafe kiosk in Gardens
Sunnyside Rural Trust is a Registered Charity working for people with learning disabilities. Established in 1990, they operate from allotment sites in Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead. The charity provides a valuable and popular service which supports over 70 service users each week to develop their skills and potential through social enterprise and horticultural activities. The new Hemel Food Garden site, close to the Water Gardens, offers a Community Training Programme around food growing, horticulture, gardening for wildlife, sustainable living, natural crafts and more. Based at Dacorum Borough Council's central nursery, it also has outdoor growing space, polytunnels, and greenhouses and provides the majority of Dacorum Borough Council's bedding plants.

Sunnyside Rural Trust are keen to support the Water Gardens project and believe that it could offer a wealth of positive opportunities for training, development and practical activity for the local community and their trainees. We are working with Sunnyside Rural Trust to develop a partnership which offers a number of opportunities for people with learning difficulties to gain skills and experience within the Gardens. We are exploring the following opportunities with them:

1. Regular maintenance/ planting hands-on training sessions in the Gardens in partnership with other local organisations and groups
2. Provision of plants from Sunnyside's central nursery
3. Establishment of a cafe kiosk in the Gardens, drawing on Sunnyside's locally grown/ sourced fruit

and vegetables and Social Enterprise initiatives, and in partnership with Dacorum Local Food Initiative/ DBC Local Food Strategy work

4. Work experience with Dacorum Clean, Safe and Green team and shadowing opportunities with appointed works contractors
5. Bringing Sunnyside's community training programme into the Water Gardens- e.g. gardening for nature, natural crafts etc and provision of horticultural skills training for the Friends Group
Dacorum Borough Council's Clean, Safe and Green team regularly goes out to local schools to give talks on environmental issues such as recycling. We would like to expand these activities to include a talk specifically about the Water Gardens. Working with HGT, we plan to develop a schools learning session on the heritage of the Gardens, which we can take into the local primary and/or secondary schools. HGT already has a very active schools section with good links to schools across Herts. There is also potential to develop a learning pack which schools can use to bring a group to the Water Gardens for a further study visit tied into the curriculum.

There is potential for us to work with other local organisations such as Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust to develop a series of learning activities about wildlife which would be appropriate for schools, families or individual nature enthusiasts.

We will also be helping the volunteer Friends Group to develop and expand their skills via regular learning and training opportunities. HGT members have offered to pass on their horticultural expertise to volunteers to help them gain key skills such as pruning etc. We would also like to offer them the opportunity to learn about the heritage and wildlife of the Gardens so they can pass this on via talks in the Gardens and other events. Dacorum Borough Council's own officers and Clean, Safe and Green team will also be able to benefit from some of these learning opportunities on offer, helping them to gain specific skills to ensure the correct maintenance of the newly developed Gardens.

We are very aware of the succinct lack of interpretation materials in the Gardens at present. We intend to identify interesting and engaging ways of communicating the heritage of the Gardens and its features throughout the site. We hope that these materials will be a welcome learning resource for all visitors to the Gardens, and intend to incorporate them into a new and relaxing experience of the Gardens.

8.4.4 What difference this activity will make for people and your park.

Collectively these activities will enable local people to value and enjoy their local Gardens more, and encourage more engagement. We hope that by learning about its history and wildlife, children and families will lead them to form more of an attachment with the Gardens. As a result we hope to see audience figures grow, and the length of time spent in the Gardens increase, as well as the range of people using the Gardens to expand. We anticipate that this will lead to more people volunteering in the Gardens in the future.

The Gardens have over the past 50 years been loved by local people for providing a welcome green space amongst the urban setting of the Hemel Hempstead New Town. By giving people in the community the skills required to maintain the Gardens in the long term, we hope to secure their sustainability for at least another 50 years. We also want to invest in developing horticultural skills amongst young people, as the sector is in great shortage of skilled individuals who understand how to care for our open spaces appropriately.

The learning and training opportunities we plan to put in place will therefore support the park on a number of fronts:

1. To develop the Garden's audience
2. To invest in its future maintenance and sustainability
3. To pass on a sense of the value of the Gardens to future generations
4. To provide an added value to visiting the Gardens
5. To raise awareness of the Gardens and its heritage

9. Stakeholder Workshop

30th May 2012 – AM

Morning Session – 10-12am, Dacorum BC Officers Attendees:

Fiona Webb – ATL Conservation and Design
Ashling Cronin – Asst. Environmental Awareness
Robert Cassidy – Parks and Open Spaces Officer
Hilary Parrish – Land Planning Officer
Nicky McIntye – Neighbourhood Action Officer
Katy D'Souza – Outdoor Recreation Officer
Angharad Lewis – Social Enterprise and Commissioning Officer
Colin Chambers – TL Trees and Woodlands
Graham Adshead – Ward Councillor
Lisa Devayya – Learning and Skills Officer

Key Recurring/ Important Themes Highlighted:

1. What key issues do you think currently affect the gardens?

- a) Lack of maintenance leading to poor visual appearance
- b) Car parks dominant area rather than the Water Gardens
- c) Threat to security/ perception of crime day and night
- d) Presence of anti-social behaviour
- e) Geese!
- f) Lack of ownership/ pride within local community
- g) Lack of funding
- h) Feeling of enclosure created by decked car park and dense trees
- i) Quality of play facilities
- j) Noise from adjacent town centre and the pollution and detriment to the atmosphere that this cause.

2. What activities/ programmes of work do you currently support in the Gardens?

- a) Litter picks
- b) 'Don't Feed the Geese' works
- c) Maintenance
- d) Tree Management

3. What is your vision for the park in 5 years time?

- a) Well used and looked after by the local community
- b) Restored to its former glory / original condition
- c) Good example of horticulture
- d) Clean and safe
- e) Colourful and cheery

- f) Active/ vibrant
- g) Good mix of local volunteer groups active in the Gardens
- h) Reunited with town centre
- i) Wider recognition of the importance of the Gardens to 20thC design
- j) A good educational resource
- k) Fewer / no geese

4. What can you or your department contribute to achieve this vision?

- a) Coordinate/ communicate with various local organisations and bodies including.
 - i. Learning, Employment and Skills partnerships
 - ii. Voluntary Sector
 - iii. Local employers/ businesses
 - iv. Social Enterprise
- b) Providing links between the council and community.
- c) Gain support from local councillors
- d) Planning support and potential for s106 or CIL contributions
- e) Assist with the preparation of the HLF bid.
- f) DBC needs to lend greater political weight to the significance of the restoration of the Gardens.

5. Is there any other information you would like us to know to inform the HLF bid?

- a) The 20thC Society are conducting a tour of the Gardens in July.
- b) Events are planning in Gadebridge Park for the Olympics. These could be expanded to include the Water Gardens.
- c) DBC Heritage policy is currently being developed.
- d) Restoration/ regeneration of The Water Gardens would achieve key commitments stated in policy.

6. Ideas discussed:

- a) Play location – mixed views about whether it was in the right location or isolated from the Gardens. Play nearer the centre of the Water Gardens was generally supported and seen to be complimentary to the Town Centre play.
- b) There was also a discussion as to whether the entire Gardens should feel playable.
- c) Context of north of Gardens is changing with new emerging strategies for the Town Centre.
- d) Idea of tables and chairs on terrace was liked.
- e) There was a discussion about the sculpture in Bank Court and possibility of reinstating it.
- f) There was also general consensus that there were too many trees within the Gardens, resulting in overshadowing and views being obscured.

Stakeholder Workshop

30th May 2012 – PM

Afternoon Session – 2-4pm, Key Stakeholders/ Local Residents. Attendees:

Phil Pennington – Chair; Dacorum Environmental Forum (DEF)
Mike Moore – Environmental Lead, Town Centre Partnership
Ian Richardson – General Manager, Box Moor Trust
Sarah Scott – Biodiversity Officer, Environment Agency
Allen Beechey – Chiltern Chalk Streams Project

Key Recurring/ Important Themes Highlighted:

1. What is your and your organization's role / interest in the Gardens?

- The impact the Water Gardens have on the ecological and hydrological character of the River Gade.
- Helping the River Gade meet key project requirements for the EU Waterframework Directive.
- Improving and integrating the Water Gardens into the wider town centre improvement proposals.

2. What key issues do you think currently affect the gardens?

- Loss of original concept
- General degradation of physical form and lack of effective maintenance.
- Anti-social behaviour and safety concerns.
- Geese
- Long term viability of project.
- Real need to actively involve the community.
- Accommodating conservation (ecological) requirements.
- Morphology, water quality, sedimentation, flow.
- The Gardens currently perform poorly as a public open space
- Accessibility – the pavement along the southern corner of the Gardens, fence should be extended further.
- Invest money but long term maintenance will not be there.

3. What activities/ programmes of work do you currently support in the Gardens?

- Walking through.
- Working with key stakeholders including DBC to improve the R. Gade

4. What is your vision for the park in 5 years time?

- A public open space that is used and valued by the local community.
- A naturalized R. Gade which is a functional chalk stream ecosystem.
- Sustainable use of water and a restored river.

5. What can you or your organisation contribute to achieve this vision?

- Support for any ideas that the council wish regarding issues such as low flow, water quality etc.
- Issues of Water Framework Directive (WFD)
- Issues of water quality
- Issues of water resources
- Advice on how to achieve a naturalized river restoration.

6. Is there any other information you would like us to know to inform the HLF bid?

- Would like to review development proposals.
- What value to this bid are existing solutions to the project?
- How do HLF feel about historical/ heritage issues over environmental?

7. Ideas discussed:

- Lack of colour and faded nature of flower gardens mean that it is no longer an attractive place to spend time.
- Idea of community facility was supported. However, it was felt that if there was to be a cafe in the gardens it would be located in the new building (and not a franchise)
- There was a strong desire from the Chalk Stream Project representative to return the Gardens back to a more natural profile - internationally important, only 200 hundred chalk streams in the world) Current design not sustainable. – silt extraction expensive.
- The EA also had a desire / mandate to improve water quality and proposed naturalising the banks and notching weirs.
- Some of the residents raised health and safety concerns - did not feel safe at night due to the overgrown paths. Also felt vulnerable walking along Waterhouse Street without railings. Could the railing be extended from the south east corner of lake.