

Kings Pond – The Next Steps in Deciding the Way Forward

A Briefing Paper

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The Kings Pond site has been a public amenity owned by Alton Town Council since the 1970s. It is valued by the local community for its landscape, wildlife, peace and quiet, and for offering a piece of countryside in the town. Our common objective must be to enhance and maintain the site in the most sustainable way for the well-being and enjoyment of current and future generations.

The pond has been formed by the construction of various dams in the River Wey dating back to the late 1700s. The dam in its current form was constructed by Alton Urban District Council when it acquired the site in the early 1970s. The River Wey flows in at the southern end. The water flows out over a weir at the northern end. The pond has been dredged twice whilst in the ownership of Alton UDC or ATC. In the early 1970s and in 1996.

Following a report on Kings Pond commissioned by Alton Town Council (ATC) in 2022 and public consultations, ATC resolved to conduct more investigations.

What are the problems?

The River Wey carries material from upstream and deposits it in Kings Pond. The pond is heavily silted and is now very shallow in some parts.

The silting is a continuous process. If we do nothing the pond will eventually be filled with silt.

Water levels in the pond fluctuate, partly due to changes in water volumes and partly due to frequent blockages of the screen at the weir where the water flows out. High water levels have caused erosion of the banks and islands

The pond and weir block the normal life and functions of the river. Fish and other aquatic life cannot move up or down stream past the weir. The river deposits silt and gravels in the pond instead of carrying them away downstream as it should do naturally.

The river downstream is adversely affected by the pond. Chalk streams such as the Wey are spring fed and the stream water is cool. However, while it is held in the pond, the water warms up and the large numbers of wildfowl and the pond fish change the nutrient content of the water that flows out over the weir in to the river downstream. These temperature and nutrient changes have a negative effect on the chalk stream ecology downstream

The large population of wildfowl has an adverse effect on the vegetation surrounding the pond through grazing, fouling and trampling.

What have we learnt from our surveys and investigations?

To restore the pond to the depths achieved by the dredging in 1996, there is approximately 10,000m³ of silt to be removed. This is similar to the amount removed last time.

The silt is polluted with chemicals from road run-off and also with high levels of lead and zinc. It would be

acceptable for ordinary landfill but is not usable for agriculture, allotments or gardens. It can be re-used on site but would have to be covered with a layer of cleaner material.

ATC appointed Water Environment Limited to study the feasibility of removing the weir. In their Weir Removal Feasibility Study they conclude that the weir could be removed and they described the options this would make available to us. The drawings for the options discussed below are taken from that report.

Ecological surveys undertaken in 2025 record the significant number of over-wintering and breeding birds; there are significant numbers of bats visiting the site to feed but none have been found to roost on site; The health of the pond is poor as evidenced by the lack of invertebrates in sampling.

South East Water has been investigating the effects of drinking water abstraction on the River Wey. (Abstraction has been capped at current volumes.) They are also considering improvement works to the Wey, including how to reduce the silting problems at Brick Kiln Lane near the source of the river.

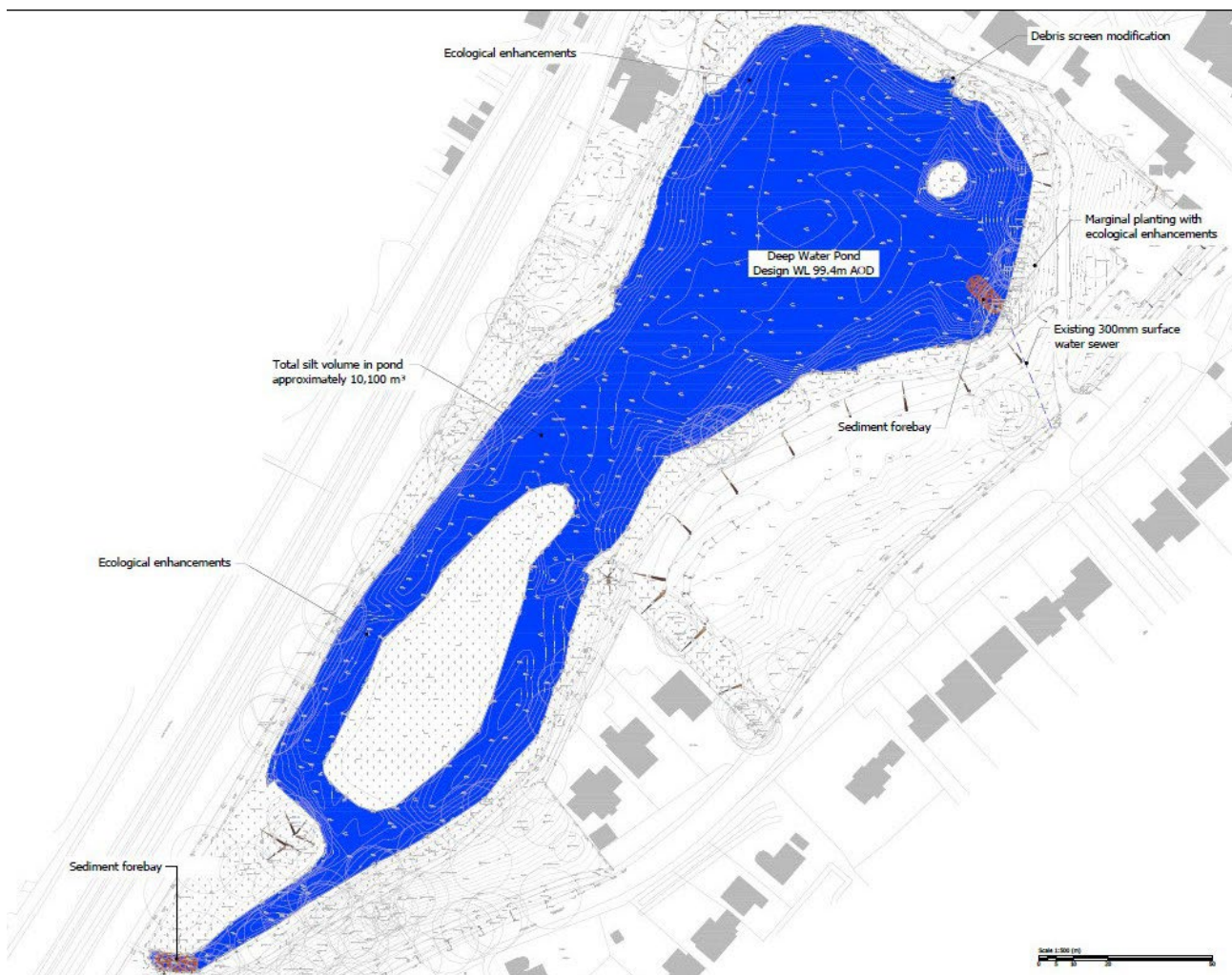
The base geology at Kings Pond is Zig Zag Bed marly chalk as the local aquifer. The groundwater appears to be in hydraulic continuity with the river and the pond, which means that the flow in the river and the level of the pond both vary according to the level of the groundwater in the aquifer. This is, of course, seasonal and is typical of a winterbourne chalk stream.

The 'Lasham Drain' that emerges in a channel in the Waterside Court development has its source in a gravel bed under parts of Alton that is separate from the chalk aquifer. It's flow is not subject to the same degree of seasonal change. There is a possibility that this source could be diverted in to the river upstream near Drayman's Way which would benefit both options. All surveys and reports and a lot of general information are available on the ATC website by going to www.alton.gov.uk and following the menus to Open Spaces and Kings Pond.

Our Options

Any works at Kings Pond will be subject to statutory regulations, approvals and permits. This may affect the viability or scope of options we may consider.

The Dredging Option: one vision for Kings Pond is, of course, keeping the pond in its current form after dredging to remove the silt. This is shown on Drawing 2a.



Drawing 2a Kings Pond restored after Dredging

The associated work would include improvements to the weir to reduce blockages and fluctuations in water level, reinstatement and strengthening of the banks and islands. Some silt capture could be achieved, particularly on local drainage. Ecological improvements can be included with marginal planting, reed planting and creating small wetland areas. Improvements in the woodland, grassland and paths around the pond would also be part of the project.

Although dredging would be disruptive in the short term, many residents will see the main advantage of this option being the least change to the existing wildfowl population and other characteristics of the pond. And the pond would stay a similar size. Another advantage is that it is a low risk option as we know what the finished project would look like!

The main disadvantage is that it is not a sustainable solution – silt would continue to accumulate in the pond and eventually it would need dredging again. It wouldn't remove or reduce any of the negative impacts that the pond has on the Wey. There would be no change in the range of habitats and biodiversity on the site.

The Pond & River Option: the alternative vision is of a restored river running through the site with a large retained pond and wetland areas.

Drawing 3c shows one possible arrangement.

(Note that the yellow line is an unpaved maintenance access route on a grass bank)



Drawing 3c Pond, River & Wetland

Drawing 3c shows a significant change from the Drawing 4a that was included in the October 2024 issue of this document. Drawing 4a showed a more meandering river. This required engineering works to remove the weir and form a significantly lower outflow level. Further investigation of land ownership has shown that the necessary engineering works could not be completed within land owned by ATC. The arrangement on Drawing 3c can be achieved within ATC ownership and is the next best alternative but the limited fall that can be achieved across the site means that the river must be straighter.

The 3c arrangement will be subject to design development during the technical assessment stage of the project. More recent surveys have shown that the outflow level can be lower than shown; ecological assessment recommends that the large island is retained as an island for breeding wildfowl.

Pond banks and islands would be reinstated and strengthened. A variety of pond, river, marginal and wetland habitats would be created. Improvements would be made to the surrounding woodland, grassland and paths

Advantages. This is a sustainable solution for the pond – with silting minimised the need for significant

future dredging would be greatly reduced. The negative downstream impact on the River Wey would be greatly reduced. Unfortunately, full connectivity between the upstream and downstream reaches of the river would not be restored as fish would not be able to pass upstream past a significant drop in the river just beyond the boundary of the ATC owned site. Forming a river channel through the site, together with recent works upstream, would restore and greatly improve the condition of this important chalk stream. A wider range of habitats would improve biodiversity.

Disadvantages: The impact on the existing pond. The retained pond would be significantly smaller than the existing pond so there may be a reduction in waterfowl numbers as populations find their new natural levels. There is the possibility that some species will move away and give way to others as habitats and biodiversity change. This option has some risk as we cannot be completely certain of what the completed project would look like until more work has been done.

Recent Activity and Next Steps *(updated at January 2026)*

During November and early December 2024, ATC held public briefing sessions based on the content of the original October 24 version of this document. There were opportunities for questions and discussion. The Powerpoint presentation prepared for the Briefings was recorded and can be viewed on the ATC website.

ATC had already resolved, in January 2023, to conduct the technical and financial assessment of the Dredging Option and to carry out other investigation work.

On 8th January 2025, ATC resolved to also conduct a technical and financial assessment of the original 4a Pond & River option. (Some of the work to be done is common to both options and they can be worked on in parallel.)

Ecological surveys are required for all options and most are seasonal. The necessary expenditure was approved at the Council Meeting on 6th November 2024.. A comprehensive set of surveys was carried out during 2025. Reports of the completed surveys are published on the ATC website. There are some gaps in our knowledge, particularly on the condition of the pond itself, so further surveys of invertebrates, macrophytes and fish may follow in the 2026 season.

In December 2025, the Council resolved to recommence technical and financial assessments of the original Dredge option and the “Pond and River” option 3c, with a straighter river going through the site.

Early in 2025 a Task & Finish Group was formed, comprised of councillors and local residents with relevant skills and interests. This group is responsible for moving the project forward. It is currently gathering information and identifying consultants for the design works. The next step will be to put the design work out to tender.

A Community & Stakeholder Focus Group has also been formed to share information on the King’s Pond Project and as a conduit for community feedback to the Task & Finish Group.

At each stage ATC will re-affirm that any options taken forward will be presented for comparison and consideration at public consultation before any decision to proceed with work on site.