Kings Pond

Public Consultation 2nd November 2026 to 4th January 2027

A Summary of the Public Presentations

Background

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.

ATC commissioned reports on the Kings Pond site in 2017 and 2022. These set out similar options for the future of the pond, and both recommended that consideration should be given to taking the pond off-line. The Environment Agency's position is that the pond should be taken off-line, but they have made clear that this is a decision for ATC and they would not object to dredging.

In January 2023 ATC first resolved to investigate dredging of the pond and to investigate removal of the weir to open up other possibilities. Surveys and investigations followed with ATC resolving to consider the two options set out in this briefing.

At each step along the way ATC has reconfirmed that there would be full public consultation before decisions are made.

This is that public consultation!

What are the challenges?

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 pond has been dredged twice whilst in the ownership of ATC - in the early 1970s and in 1996. The silt accumulation since then is estimated at 10,000m³ and it is polluted mostly from road run-off.

The silting is a continuous process. If we do nothing the pond will continually fill with silt naturally evolving from deep open water to a pond that becomes smaller and more shallow over time and finally a marsh or fen with a stream running through it. (Estimated time scale 80/100 years)

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 into the river downstream. These temperature and nutrient changes have a negative effect on the chalk stream ecology downstream.

The large population of wildfowl, particularly the non-native invasive Canada Geese, has an adverse effect on the vegetation in and around the pond through grazing, fouling and trampling.

The non-native bottom-feeding carp are very harmful to aquatic life.

The Condition of the Pond

Ecological surveys undertaken in 2025 recorded a 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. Some of the birds are fish-eaters so we know there are fish including large non-native carp that are often seen.

However, all is not well. There is a lack of marginal plants, water quality is assessed as poor. There is Eutrophication, the water is overly enriched with nutrients. Invertebrate habitats are in poor condition; no native reptiles and few amphibians present. Aquatic plants and the life that they support are almost entirely absent.

The accumulation of reports shows that the condition of the pond is poor.

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 Plus Option:



King's Pond would be kept broadly in its current form after dredging to remove silt. There would be improvements to the weir, restoration of eroded banks and islands, silt traps to reduce future sediment build-up and the addition of some wetland and marginal planting.

Dredging Plus – Flood Risk

- No significant change to pond size, water levels, or overall flood risk.
- Local flooding would still occur on the west (railway) side and large island during very high water levels.
- No increased upstream flood risk; downstream risk remains low and limited to exceptional overtopping events.

Dredging Plus – Pros & Cons

- Retains the pond's current character, size, and most existing wildlife habitats.
- Provides a known, predictable end result.
- Discourages geese.
- Silt build-up will continue, requiring future dredging despite improved silt management.
- Limited biodiversity gains and no improvement to existing impacts on the River Wey.

The River & Pond Option



The alternative vision is of the river running through the site with a smaller retained pond and wetland areas. The banks and island of the pond would be reinstated, reprofiled and strengthened. The weir would be modified. A variety of pond, river, marginal, wetland and woodland habitats would be created with additional paths and walkways through the new landscape.

River & Pond – Flood Risk

- Lower outflow and pond levels would create additional flood storage capacity across the existing pond area.
- Local flood risk would be reduced, with no increased upstream flood risk.
- Restricted outflows would prevent increased downstream flood risk and could reduce it by removing the risk of dam overtopping during extreme rainfall.
- Detailed hydraulic modelling and flood risk assessment would be required during the design and permitting stage.

River & Pond – Pros & Cons

- Greatly reduces future dredging needs and removes adverse impacts on the River Wey except upstream fish passage.
- Restores a more natural river system, creating a wider range of habitats and increased biodiversity.
- Results in changes to existing bird and wildlife populations, including fewer waterfowl.
- Higher delivery and outcome risk than the dredging option.

Climate Change

Annual rainfall is expected to increase and the winters become wetter. This would benefit both options as this would help maintain wetlands and pond levels. There may be higher winter levels of water in the chalk aquifer that supply the river producing stronger flows and perhaps maintaining flow through a longer season.

Rainfall events are likely to become more intense at any time of the year. This means flash flooding. The Dredging Options would suffer more silting and large rapid increases in water levels with associated problems. The River and Pond option would cope with flash events by carrying the water downstream, by-passing the pond which would maintain a more stable level.

Summers will become hotter with longer dry spells and more periods of drought. The river may be dry for longer in the summer. These conditions will be difficult for the ponds in both options as they may tend to dry out and rising water temperatures will create conditions that are harmful to aquatic life and produce algal blooms.

Project Costs

Dredging Plus build cost £859,716

River & Pond build cost £2,236,221

For both options this:

- Is costed for construction in 2028/29
- Includes 10% risk/contingency
- Assumes cart away off site of surplus silt
- Does not include VAT (reclaimable by ATC)

Additional costs for both options:

- Stage 2 design £78,417
- Flood Risk Modelling £11,647
- Planning application £1,487
- Path tarmacking £73,208

Funding

- The cost of either option cannot be met from Alton Town Council funds alone.
- It may be possible to sell Biodiversity Net Gain credits for some elements of the work.
- The project will be reliant on grant funding:
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) grants from ATC and EHDC (developers' contributions)
- Environment Agency
- Other Government funding for Wetland Restoration & Nature Recovery
- National Lottery Funding
- Dredging that may have to be repeated is likely to be seen as maintenance which, in itself, is unlikely to attract substantial funding.
- Funding applications must be framed in terms of restoration, habitat improvement and biodiversity gains, climate change resilience, flood management and sustainability. Community participation and educational elements are also important.
- From a potential funder's perspective, the River & Pond option is likely to satisfy more of these criteria.
- There is the option of increasing the Town Council's share of Council Tax

Estimated Ongoing Annual Maintenance Costs

(On top of general maintenance and 18-monthly tree works as per all the Council's Open Spaces)

Dredging Plus £39,703

River and Pond £16,236

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY

Go to alton.gov.uk/kings-pond-consultation or scan the QR code.