

		Agenda item number: 13
		Date of meeting: 15 th June 2026
THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL Committee / Council		
Report by: Emily Moseley		Job Title: Place Manager
Subject: Siegecross Trees and Nature Park		

Background

A resident has raised concerns regarding the condition of the planting and landscape areas shown on approved landscape drawings KLP/276/17/05 and KLP/276/17/06 (see attached).

The concerns relate principally to:

- Failure of tree planting within the recreation ground and nature park areas.
- The apparent absence of wildflower areas shown on the approved plans.
- The perceived failure to develop the "Nature Park" as originally proposed.
- The overall appearance of the site compared with the approved landscape scheme.

Planning permission for the South-East Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme was granted under application 17/03079/COMIND on 9 February 2018.

The approved landscape plans included:

- Native wildflower and grass meadow areas.
- Native shrub planting.
- Tree planting throughout the site.
- Reduced mowing regimes to encourage biodiversity.
- Creation of a "Nature Park" incorporating trees, shrubs, wildflowers and native grasses together with public access routes.

Tree Planting

Following the original planting, there was a misunderstanding regarding responsibility for establishment watering. As a result, the trees were not adequately watered during a period of dry weather and the majority failed. Subsequently, replacement trees were planted by WBC.

Following consultation with an arboricultural specialist, Thatcham Town Council undertook establishment watering in accordance with the following advice:

- Summer 2025: 20 litres per tree every fortnight between May and September.
- Summer 2026: 10 litres per tree every fortnight between May and September.
- Summer 2027: 10 litres per tree every month between May and September.

Despite the watering programme being followed, prolonged periods of hot and dry weather adversely affected establishment, and a significant number of the replacement trees have also failed.

Whilst officers acted in accordance with professional advice, it is recognised that additional professional advice could have been sought once it became apparent that the trees were struggling. This may have enabled Council to consider whether enhanced watering or alternative establishment measures were justified.

Wildflower Areas and Nature Park

The approved landscaping drawings envisioned a series of native wildflower meadow areas and the creation of a small Nature Park.

The current appearance of the site does not fully reflect the landscape vision illustrated on the approved plans.

Officers have been unable to establish with certainty:

- Whether all wildflower areas shown on the plans were originally seeded.
- Whether all shrub planting shown on the plans was undertaken.
- The extent to which the Nature Park proposals were fully implemented.
- Whether any formal ecological or landscape management plan was produced following completion.

The Council's current approach has been to manage the area as a low-intervention open space. This includes:

- Maintaining paths and access routes.
- Maintaining benches and site furniture.
- Undertaking tree safety inspections and works where required.
- Retaining suitable deadwood on site where appropriate to support biodiversity.
- Allowing vegetation to develop naturally with limited intervention.

This management approach has biodiversity benefits and reflects the site's role as a natural area. However, it does not seek to actively recreate or maintain the landscape appearance shown in the original planting proposals.

Options Available to Council

Option 1: Maintain Current Approach

Continue to manage the area as a naturalised, low-intervention green space focusing on public access, safety and biodiversity.

Option 2: Investigate Enhancement Opportunities

Request officers to obtain quotations and professional advice regarding:

- Wildflower meadow enhancement and overseeding.
- Replacement tree planting.
- Additional shrub planting.
- Improvements to the Nature Park area.

Option 3: Restore Elements of the Original Landscape Vision

Develop and implement a programme of enhancement works intended to more closely reflect the approved landscape proposals.

Recommendations

The Recreation & Amenities Committee is requested to:

1. Note the contents of this report.
2. Acknowledge that the current appearance of the site differs from aspects of the original landscape proposals.
3. Consider whether the current low-intervention management approach remains appropriate.
4. Decide whether officers should investigate opportunities and costs for enhancing the site, including:
 - a. wildflower meadow improvements;
 - b. replacement tree planting; and
 - c. Nature Park enhancements.
5. If appropriate, make a recommendation to the Finance & General Purposes Committee regarding future investment in the site.

Officer Comment

While the precise extent of the original landscaping works can no longer be clearly established, the site is currently functioning as a naturalised open space with biodiversity value. The key question for Members is therefore not who may have been responsible for historic shortcomings, but whether the Council wishes to invest resources to move the site closer to the landscape vision illustrated in the original flood alleviation scheme proposals.