

Ore Valley Greenspace Consultation

Summary of Consultation process (February to July 2007)



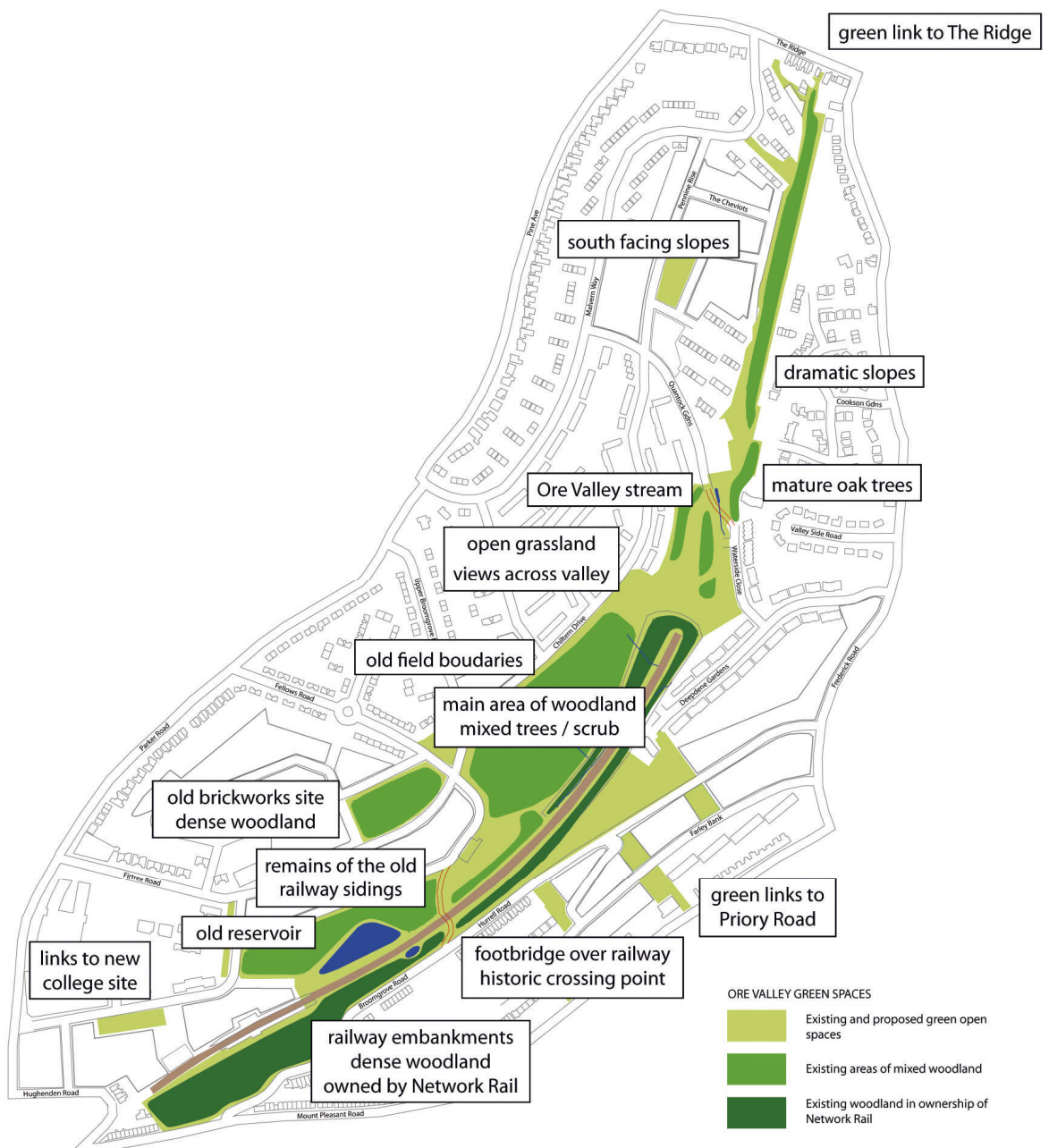
Present use of the Greenspace

In the Ore Valley there are presently fairly substantial green areas to the south and east composed of woodland, formal and informal paths, and open spaces. Most of this 'Greenspace' is steep as it rises up from the railway. Consultation on the future development of the Greenspace involved local residents, community groups, young people and service providers in considering:

- a) improving the spaces for the local community now and
- b) improving the spaces for the community as it changes following the housing and services/facilities development that will be taking place in the Ore Valley.

The Greenspace is both a large areas of public amenity as well an area that contains ecologically protected space (areas designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest). An illustrative map is below.

Map of Ore Valley Greenspace



Ore Valley Greenspace Task Group

An 'Ore Valley Greenspace Task Group' has been exploring how the greenspace is presently used and clearing some of the access points and over-grown patches. The group has involved the Ore Valley Forum, HBC (Hastings Borough Council), BCTV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) and 1066 Housing Association and it is hosted by Sea Space. The Task-Group is using a Landscape Architect to evaluate the site and it decided to undertake an open, local consultation, (facilitated by a independent consultants) to consider what local people wanted most from the Greenspace. Following this, plans will be drawn up for a display of how the Greenspace areas can be improved and what needs to be done to put a plan in place.

Consultation process



The consultation involved inviting local residents, community groups and other interested parties to take part in one of three events (plus the option for local residents to respond individually via a questionnaire). 61 people, community groups and service providers participated as 'consultees' in the following ways:

- o 39 people participated in 2 separate consultation sessions (including residents, community and voluntary groups, environmental groups, council departments, schools and 1066 Housing Association). A further 4 residents responded individually via questionnaire.
- o 18 young people participated in a consultation session at Hillcrest School

Priorities for improving the Greenspace

The consultation demonstrated that local people regard the Greenspace as precious – a 'green lung' giving the feeling of the countryside and important as both an amenity for local people and for its ecology. There was agreement and consensus that the Greenspace needs to be maintained as a local resource and improved to enable more access. Ideas for developing the Greenspace are:

- o Improving amenities for general use by all – better access points, paths and routes; information boards; route signage; appropriate lighting; benches; and a picnicking area
- o Improving amenities for specific use such as adventurous play apparatus and natural play areas and cycle routes
- o Informal 'zoned' areas (rather than fenced separate areas) that encourage use by particular groups or for particular activities
- o Protection for wildlife and the general ecological balance of the Greenspace
- o More organised activities and projects that make more use of the area (e.g. art features and natural sculpture, environmental play and more projects such as the 'locality audit' undertaken by Hillcrest School groups)
- o Long term management of the site (including local 'rangers' and environmental clearance/management events)
- o Feasibility work to look at whether more substantial facilities could be provided (such as a shelter structure; a café; an area for football/basketball)

The Exhibition



The Greenspace Task Group commissioned a landscape architect to draw up a plan for the Greenspace, based upon ideas from the consultation. Based on the feedback we received outlining community needs and wants, the landscape framework aimed to achieve a balance between preserving the natural beauty of the landscape and its wildlife, and providing facilities for use by the community. These two key factors of ecology and amenity are central to the landscape framework, and were exhibited at The Bridge in June in Ore Valley.

Those attending this community consultation were invited to complete a questionnaire on the proposals. The results are as follows:

- Of the 39 respondents who answered the questionnaire, the majority (56%) resided in the Ore Valley, with the remainder mostly from other areas of Hastings and St Leonards, in particular Ore (13%).
- The overwhelming response to the proposals was positive, with 72% stating that they believed the proposals would improve the Greenspace. No respondents said it wouldn't, and 18% were unsure.
- When asked if they believed that the proposals struck the right balance between ecology and amenity, 62% of those that answered said that it did, with 15% saying it did not, and 23% unsure.
- Of those interviewed, 59% stated that they currently use the Greenspaces area, with the majority of participants using the facilities for exercise (35% said they used the space for walking, including walking the dog), and for recreation (34% said they used the space to relax, including watching nature).
- 89% of those that answered the question said that they would more likely use the proposed Greenspace than they do now.