

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 01/03/2016

Title:

WEYDON LANE FORMER LANDFILL SITE – OPTIONS REVIEW

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Simon Thornton]
[Wards Affected: Farnham Firgrove]**

Note pursuant to Section 100B(5) of the Local Government Act 1972

An annexe to this report contains exempt information by virtue of which the public is likely to be excluded during the item to which the report relates, as specified in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, namely:-

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Summary and purpose:

The Council has been exploring the scope and viability of undertaking works on the former Landfill site on Weydon Lane, Farnham to enable greater public use, for example, for formal recreational use.

At its meeting on 25 November 2014, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed the short term management plan for the site and recommended to the Executive that a Special Interest Group (SIG) be established to assist the Portfolio Holder in reviewing future options for the site. The Executive subsequently agreed that a SIG be formed. The SIG was chaired by the Portfolio Holder for the Environment, Cllr Simon Thornton, and comprised Cllrs Pat Frost, Michael Goodridge, Jill Hargeaves and Chris Storey.

The Terms of Reference of the SIG are attached as Annexe 1. This report summarises the options identified for the future use of the site, appraises their viability and recommends a way forward to the Executive.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

This report relates to the Council's **Environment** priority; monitoring contaminated land is an important duty that the Council performs.

It also relates to the Council's **Leisure & Lives** priority, and the aim to "encourage residents to use the Borough's open spaces and countryside as an important recreational resource, and to work with local residents and park users to develop appropriate management plans".

Financial Implications:

A wide range of future costs may result, depending on the decision on future use of the site. The costs for the larger scale options are very significant, and the Council does not currently have a budget for these works.

Legal Implications:

Waverley Borough Council owns the Weydon Lane Former Landfill Site and has a duty of care to users of the land. The land was conveyed to Farnham Urban District Council in 1972. The terms of the conveyance deed require that the land should not be used for any purpose other than that of a recreation ground or public open space. Further detailed legal advice is provided in (Exempt) Annexe 6.

Introduction

1. The Weydon Lane SIG met on 3 occasions and considered and consulted on a number of options for the future use of the former landfill site.
2. The high level options considered were:
 - a. Do nothing;
 - b. The Brambleton Park proposals;
 - c. Park & Ride;
 - d. Housing development;
 - e. New location for Farnham Football Club (subject to funding);
 - f. Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS);
3. Each of these options, or a combination of them, has been considered by the SIG with input from interested parties and expert witnesses where appropriate.

Option a. – Doing Nothing

4. This option will still incur costs for the Council despite not being developed for an alternative use. This is because the Council has a duty of care to keep the site safe and also safe for persons who enter the site. There is a suggested cost of £71,000 for localised temporary clay-cap augmentation just to keep the current landfill cap viable for interim protection.
5. An alternative would be to reinstate the fence boundary using palisade fencing (to keep people out) along with minimal safety works, costs were estimated at £75,000. There is also an ongoing requirement to continue monitoring of the site, which presently costs approximately £21,000 per year. In the longer term, complete re-instatement of the clay cap will be necessary at significant cost. Estimates vary considerably but the range is indicated in the (Exempt) Annexe.
6. Clearly the public have had access to the site for many years (dog walking and short cuts) despite there originally being a fence to keep people out, however the Council have not actively prevented access to site and informal

access by the public has continued. So to actively prevent access now, would perhaps provoke a strong reaction from the local public

Option b. – The Brambleton Park Proposals

7. The Brambleton Park proposals developed by members of the local community seek to develop the site as a natural park and recreation area, possibly including sports facilities for the local community (see Annexes 2 and 3). This would involve formalising the current informal use which would need planning permission. It would be an acceptable use in planning terms but would be subject to the Council being satisfied that the development would not affect the integrity of the clay cap or impede any subsequent works to maintain and augment the clay cap and monitoring of gas emissions set out in option a above.
8. Whilst the proposers estimate that the creation of a natural park would cost in the region of £150,000, this would only include the temporary, localised augmentation of the clay cap and minor landscaping work. Complete augmentation of the clay cap and creation of a formal park to provide a long term solution is estimated to cost significantly more at around £2.75m. There is not, however, currently any source of funding identified for this proposed use of the site.
9. There are also concerns from technical advisers that, in view of the inconsistent and inadequate topsoil cover and the deteriorating condition of the clay cap, planting trees and shrubs would create an unacceptable risk of this penetrating the clay cap and releasing contamination.

Option c. – Park and Ride

10. Given the restrictive covenants on the land, it would not be possible to dedicate the whole site to a park and ride facility. Any such facility would have to be combined with recreation facilities and/or public open space. The park and ride option has been considered in this context.

Strategic Transport and Traffic Management considerations.

11. In a predominantly rural Borough such as Waverley, it has to be acknowledged that car travel is, and will probably remain, the most important form of transport. The car will continue to be the primary mode of travel for people visiting towns such as Farnham and the particular challenge is therefore to support the regeneration of Farnham whilst balancing the competing demands for a sufficient supply of parking for commuter, retail, leisure, tourist and business needs and at the same time keeping congestion and its related environmental problems in check.
12. Ensuring adequate parking supply is available within Farnham to meet demand is fundamental to support the local economy and future growth. The current level of provision in Farnham is 1,793 spaces and occupancy surveys indicate that apart from one or two of the car parks at peak periods, there is still some spare capacity in most of them which should be more than sufficient to meet increased demand from the predicted housing growth in the area for

the foreseeable future (Annexe 4). Guidelines suggest there should be at least 10% spare capacity within each town to efficiently manage parking demand, limit search times and reduce unnecessary car use and that long-stay parking arrangements should be located further from the town centres to ensure short-stay parking supply for shoppers and visitors is easily accessible and available in the centre of the town. The current level of spare capacity exceeds 10% and the current charging regime supports this approach.

13. There is no obvious unmet demand for parking to serve people coming into Farnham. The only argument for considering the provision of park and ride facilities is about reducing congestion and the associated environmental impact of it.
14. Park and ride facilities are only normally provided where demand for parking exceeds supply for significant periods and where there is a need to accommodate more visitors etc. for economic reasons. To be effective in managing parking demand park and ride facilities need to be located on or easily accessible from all of the primary roads leading into the town. Examples of this radial layout of park and ride sites around the perimeter of a town are seen with Guildford and Salisbury (Annexe 5) where a number of park and ride sites surround the town, capturing motorists as they approach the town from all directions.
15. It is also generally recognised that park and ride sites need to cater for 400+ spaces to be financially viable in terms of supporting park and ride bus services and that there needs to be effective access to the sites from various radial routes approaching the town. Such a significant increase in the volume of traffic would have a detrimental impact on the area. It is also generally acknowledged that clear and free flowing vehicle routes would need to be in place to enable an effective and efficient bus service to operate.
16. In terms of desirability, the routes taken by motorists travelling to Farnham have been evaluated.
 - Traffic from the East arriving on the A31 would naturally enter Farnham via Guildford Road and East Street where there are several car parks available (Riverside 1, 2 and 3 and St James).
 - Traffic arriving from the North via Castle Hill would have to enter the town and would have to cross the town and exit it onto the A31 to reach Weydon Lane. In doing so it would pass close to the Upper and Lower Hart, South Street, Central and Wagon Yard car parks most of which have spare capacity throughout most of the day.
 - Traffic from the South and South East could access the Weydon Lane site but to do so would have to travel through narrow residential streets.
 - Traffic arriving in Farnham from the West and South West would relatively easily access the site by exiting the A31 at the Coxbridge roundabout, travelling along Wrecclesham Road and into Weydon Lane.
17. In terms of the Shuttle bus route into and out of Farnham, the shortest route from the site into Farnham would be through the traffic light controlled single carriageway bridge over the railway line leading on to the A31 through a traffic

light controlled junction and into a suitable dropping off point in Farnham Town Centre.

Capacity of potential Park and Ride Site

18. On the basis that any park and ride facility would have to be subsidiary to recreational or public open space, a rough approximation of the area that could be made available for car parking is 3,060 sq.m. Taking into account the standard sizes for parking bays (disabled parking bays have not been included for this calculation) and also the minimum manoeuvring space required, the number of parking bays which could be accommodated is approximately 121 spaces.
19. The proposed site would not, therefore, meet the recognised viability threshold of 400+ spaces.

Shuttle bus service charges and income

20. Most park and ride sites operate on the basis of free parking with charges for using the buses to and from the town. In most cases a frequent service every ten to fifteen minutes, as a minimum, is necessary to make park and ride an attractive alternative to parking in the town.
21. Indicative costs of providing a shuttle bus service are around £300 per day to operate. To provide a frequent enough service there would probably need to be a minimum of two minibuses operating which would mean a minimum cost of £600 per day.
22. The cost of the bus travel in Guildford and Salisbury ranges from £1.80 to £2.50 for an adult (although Salisbury offer a group ticket for £3.50 for up to four people travelling in one car). If full occupancy of the 121 spaces and an average of 2 persons per vehicle was assumed this could potentially generate an income of between £435 and £605 per day which would barely cover the cost of providing the shuttle bus service. Given that the existing car parks already have spare capacity, however, full occupancy seems unlikely and there could also be a reduction in income from the existing car parks if vehicles moved from one to the other. A more realistic figure is probably therefore closer to £250 per day.
23. At this level the shuttle bus service would have to be subsidised quite heavily and there would be no scope for recovering the construction and maintenance costs of the park and ride car park.

Option d. – Housing Development

24. The site lies within the urban area and may be acceptable in principle for housing. However this would be dependent on the site being remediated to a level where there would not be unacceptable risks in term of health impacts on future residents. The cost of extensive decontamination to enable the site to be used site for residential development would be so high as to make the site unviable for housing even though it would make a useful contribution to housing supply in an area of high housing need.

25. If the site were to be considered for housing development, the land would also need to be “appropriated for planning purposes” in order to overcome the restrictions and covenants on the Land Registry title.

Option e. – New Location for Farnham Football Club

26. In planning terms, the use of the site for football pitches is likely to be acceptable, subject to the careful assessment of the siting and impact of floodlights and the decontamination of the site to an acceptable standard for this use. This option would include bringing together the senior Farnham team with the junior team, Bourne Blades that currently train in South Farnham and address the undersupply of playing pitches in the area. The site is big enough to allow for football pitches alongside informal recreation space for local people.
27. There is a significant cost implication of relocating Farnham Football Club to Weydon Lane which would be expected to be covered by the generation of a capital receipt from their existing site behind the Memorial Hall on West Street, Farnham. By moving the football club to a site that is suitable for recreation purposes, but unsuitable for housing for viability reasons, potentially makes a suitable site on the edge of the town centre available for residential development.
28. For this option to proceed, it would be expected that Farnham Football Club would assist in securing funds in addition to the potential capital receipt from their present ground. They will be eligible to apply for external grants from Sport England, Football Foundation and other funders to assist in their relocation and construction of a new pitch, floodlights, stands, carpark and pavilion. The club would require a long term lease in order to meet some of the criteria from external funding partners.
29. There are significant costs involved in the relocation of the football club, remediation of the Weydon lane site and the provision of a park/open space area. Initial approximate cost proposals have been sought, however, much more detailed investigation and consultation into its feasibility and cost would need to be undertaken in order to accurately assess the financial viability.
30. The provision of a park/open space alongside the more formal sporting areas is certainly possible. It is difficult to assume the costs involved in the provision as there could be considerable variety of provision to choose from, such a formal areas for instance a playground, or, perhaps more informal such as a wildlife area/grass land. Irrespective of these cost, the remediation cost of the soil and clay cap would still need to be applied.

Option f. – Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS)

31. The site does not meet the criteria for designation as SANG. Natural England’s ‘Site Quality Criteria for an Individual SANG’ run to 19 in all (14 ‘must/should have’ + 5 ‘desirables’). The site is too small to accommodate the requirement for a (minimum) circular 2.3 km walk around the site. It would

need to be around 12 ha for such a walk and would appear to be only around 4ha.

32. A SANG should also be perceived as “semi-natural space”, or provided as a “naturalistic space with areas of (non-wooded) countryside and dense and scattered trees and shrubs.” This is not the case as the site is within the built up area with strong urban characteristics.

Conclusion

33. Doing Nothing (option a) will result in significant cost to the Council in augmenting the clay cap in both the short term and longer term or securing the site along with ongoing monitoring.
34. The Brambleton Park proposal (option b) is not a viable proposal as there is currently no funding identified to meet the costs. In addition, there are concerns over the potential effect of such development and use of the site and its impact on the integrity of the clay cap which could significantly increase the future maintenance costs for the site.
35. There would not appear to be the demand for a park and ride facility for Farnham (option c), there is no business case to support it and the Weydon Lane site, on its own, would not provide a suitable location for such a facility either in terms of capacity or its strategic location in relation to the primary routes into the town.
36. Development of the site for Housing (option d) is not a viable proposition given that this would not generate sufficient funds to pay for the likely remediation costs to make the site suitable for this use.
37. Relocating the Football Club and redeveloping their existing site for Housing (including a proportion of affordable housing) (option e) would seem to provide a viable future for the site although further detailed work would be required to fully evaluate the works required, refine the cost estimates and test its viability further.
38. The site does not meet the criteria for designation as a SANGS (option f). On the basis of these findings option ‘e’ (relocating the football club and using the existing club site for housing development would seem to offer the only viable way forward (subject to a further detailed feasibility study).

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive considers the findings of the Weydon Lane Special Interest Group and recommends to the Council that

1. a supplementary estimate of £50,000 be approved to undertake a detailed feasibility study into relocating the Farnham Football Club on to the Weydon Lane Site and making available their current site for housing; and
2. Ward Councillors and Farnham Town Council be consulted on this option.

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the Weydon Lane SIG are set out below:

- a. To identify the scope of work, cost-range and time-scale required to bring the Weydon Landfill site from its present state to one at which its development for recreational purposes would be feasible.
- b. To identify the options for such development, as well as the technical, environmental and planning challenges involved, and the cost range for each such option;
- c. To identify the necessary timing and funding strategies that would be appropriate for the realisation of each development option;
- d. To consult other stakeholders and the local community on the issues identified.
- e. To report findings back to the Executive in September 2015 at the latest, alongside any recommendations for follow-up in the immediate term.

Brambleton Park Proposals

Brambleton Park Group

Proposals for the Waverley Council Special Interest Group for the Weydon Lane landfill site, following Council SIG Meeting 13th Nov 2015, Waverley Council, Godalming.

Author: Jonathan Austen, 19th Nov 2015

General notes

The site has been vacant and neglected for over 30 years, with no improvements made in that time, despite past promises to residents.

Many improvements, e.g to the perimeter, can be made without clay cap augmentation.

Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee was expected: *"To report findings back to the Executive in September 2015 at the latest, alongside any recommendations for follow-up in the immediate term"*

Clay Cap

The main dilemma is the impasse with regards to emissions and the clay cap at the site.

The site has a clay cap and venting trench and has been monitored since 1981 with no abnormal findings.

The key question is the integrity of the clay cap. It would appear (to the layman) that there is no problem at all with the cap as it stands – it has been in place for many years with no problems. We would like to suggest the council gains full assurance that the current cap will be viable for the foreseeable future once it has been partially augmented.

Trees

It was suggested at the meeting that tree-planting was not viable. There have been a number of studies showing that it is possible for trees to be planted and grow successfully on former landfill sites.

The Forestry Commission has restoration guidance for landfill sites, with *"with great potential to support woody vegetation as part of sustainable reclamation"*:

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/infd-5wqd6d>

Further information of tree-planting at landfill sites:

<http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/files/landfillreport1004.pdf>

Also, if trees were a problem, why have the existing trees not been removed?

Extract from CGL site description, 2013: *"The site is generally covered with grass and a variety of trees and shrubs. "*

Pond

The underlying clay and its settlement over time has created seasonal ponds. Localised clay cap augmentation could create a central seasonal pond, filled by rainwater.

It cannot be raised above the site as suggested at the meeting as gravity dictates it must be lower than its surroundings. The clay cap augmentation should be designed to facilitate the pond-filling process.

CGL report

The five options from the CGL report are:

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. | Do nothing. Leave everything as it is. | £0 |
| 2. | Close the site off completely from public access. | £75,000. |
| 3. | Formalise current use with localised clay cap augmentation. | £71,000 |
| 4. | Create a formal park. | £2.75M |
| 5. | Develop as a sports facility. | Over £3.5M |

Our Proposals

We propose option 3 from the CGL list as it is the most viable, cost effective and rapid choice to bring the area in to public use as it should be. Additional augmentation could be carried out to ensure the long term viability of the site, at a greater cost. This may increase the cost to approximately £150k(est), but this is still less than 10% of the cost of options 4&5 and should be considered.

The Brambleton Park Group opposes options 4&5 above (in the short term at least) on the grounds that:

1. The extra 1m of clay required for the site would cause major disruption to the area.
2. The existing grassland would be destroyed, along with new trees that have self-seeded in the last 30 years.
3. There is no evidence that there is any problem with the existing cap that could not be remedied with localised cap augmentation.
4. Residents, who have become accustomed to the area, would be upset by unnecessary destruction to wildlife.
5. Spending of such large sums purely on a clay cap are excessive and unnecessary.
6. Funding of approximately £3m for such work is unlikely to be available in the near future.

Therefore we consider a **two phase** approach to be the most sensible.

Phase 1, completed before the end of 2016

Improvements that can be made regardless of the clay cap dilemma:

- Removal of old fencing from the north and south sides.
- Rubbish bins. Required as the site is has been used as a rubbish dump due to its current appearance.
- Renaming of the area.
- Installing seating areas. The seats can be positioned in areas on the raised south side that would not be affected by any later cap augmentation.
- Creation of new public entrances. Currently the entrances are very poor and not official in any way. Clean, welcoming public entrances would, by themselves, improve the area.

Phase 2, 2016-2017

Assuming the SIG makes a decision to go ahead with augmentation work

- Clay cap augmentation where deemed appropriate after expert site survey.
- Circular path around the land – this path would be raised slightly, should not be tarmac. It should allow drainage and fit in with the naturalistic surroundings.
- Landscaping and grassing of part of the land so it can be walked on more easily.
- Planting of trees and shrubs to enhance the natural environment and add interest.
- Removal of some/all gas monitoring points. (How long does monitoring need to continue for?)
- Create a large central wildlife pond.
- Make the area accessible to the old and young. Older residents are deterred by the uneven surfaces.
- Installing Public Park signs.

Questions for the SIG

1. Could we be given an estimated date for the publication of an initial report from the SIG.
2. If there is a problem with the existing clay cap, why does option 3 from CGL, above exist?
3. Could we be provided with names of the SIG members.
4. Please provide historic and ongoing costs for site monitoring from CGL.
5. Is it necessary to continue monitoring with the existing high number of monitors? The site has been monitored for many, many years and a number of them must surely be superfluous to requirements.
6. Could we have estimated timescales for the consultation and for work to be approved, funded and commence?

Brambleton Park Proposals

Welcome to Brambleton Park

Brambleton Park is a 10 acre piece of land currently known as 'Weydon Lane Landfill site' in Farnham, Surrey. This website is for anyone interested in its future and contains all the facts and current status of the land.



MP Jeremy Hunt and Farnham Town Council and support the project. On 25th November 2014 Brambleton Park was discussed at Waverley Council's Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Committee agreed to recommend the creation of a Special Interest Group to the Executive. The overwhelming response has been that the project should go ahead and would be of benefit to the local community.

CGL report released After a very long wait, the 49 page report from CGL was released in 2014. The purpose of the report was to give Waverley council options and costs for developing the area.

Current Position The Waverley Council

Special Interest Group(SIG) for Brambleton Park consulted with interested parties on proposals for the area on 19th Nov 2015. The Brambleton Park group presented their case. The SIG is due to report back with its findings and proposals in March 2016.

It is proposed that the aims of the Group are:

- a. To identify the scope of work, cost-range and time-scale required to bring the Weydon Landfill site from its present state to one at which its development for recreational purposes would be feasible.
- b. To identify the options for such development, as well as the technical, environmental and planning challenges involved, and the cost range for each such option;
- c. To identify the necessary timing and funding strategies that would be appropriate for the realisation of each development option;
- d. To consult other stakeholders and the local community on the issues identified.
- e. To report findings back to the Executive in September 2015 at the latest, alongside any recommendations for follow-up in the immediate term.

A number of local interest groups will be invited to participate in the SIG.

Our Proposal The 4.3 hectare (10 acre)

site could very easily be transformed from its current poor state into a beautiful natural park and recreation area, possibly including sports fields, for the local community. The site is perfectly positioned in an area of south Farnham surrounded by housing with no other parks in the immediate vicinity.

The options presented in the report are:

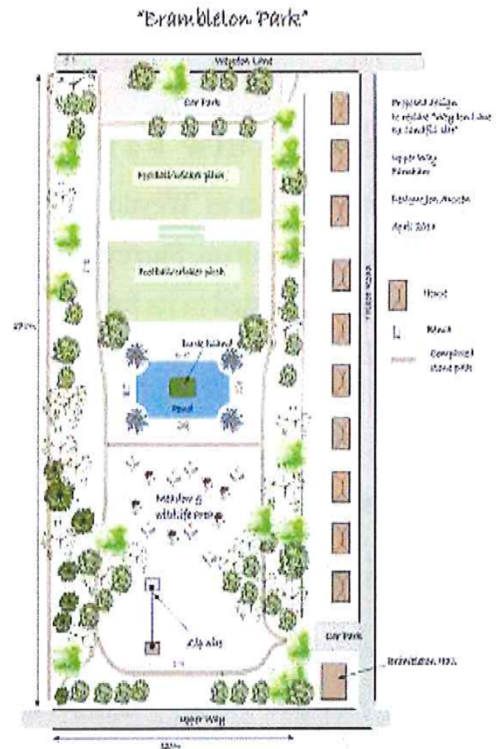
Cost

1. Do nothing. Leave everything as it is.
£0
2. Close the site off completely from public access.
£75,000.
3. Formalise current use with localised clay cap augmentation.
£71,000
4. Create a formal park. No available funding.
£2.75M
5. Develop as a sports facility. No available funding.
Over £3.5M

Options 4 & 5 require full clay-cap augmentation by the importation of 36,000m³ of clay and soil. All options have ongoing costs of between £10k and £20k per annum.

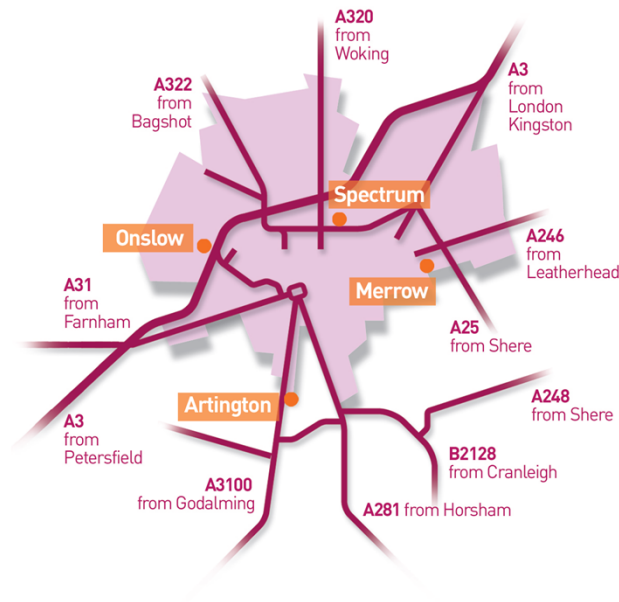
- We can clearly see that of the five options presented, numbers 1 and 2 are not options as something must be done with the site.
- Numbers 4 & 5 require millions of pounds and thousands of tons of soil and so are unfundable and unrealistic for many years.

The only viable solution, as Goldilocks (who didn't need a 49 page report) said, "I'll have the one in the middle please, that's just right!"

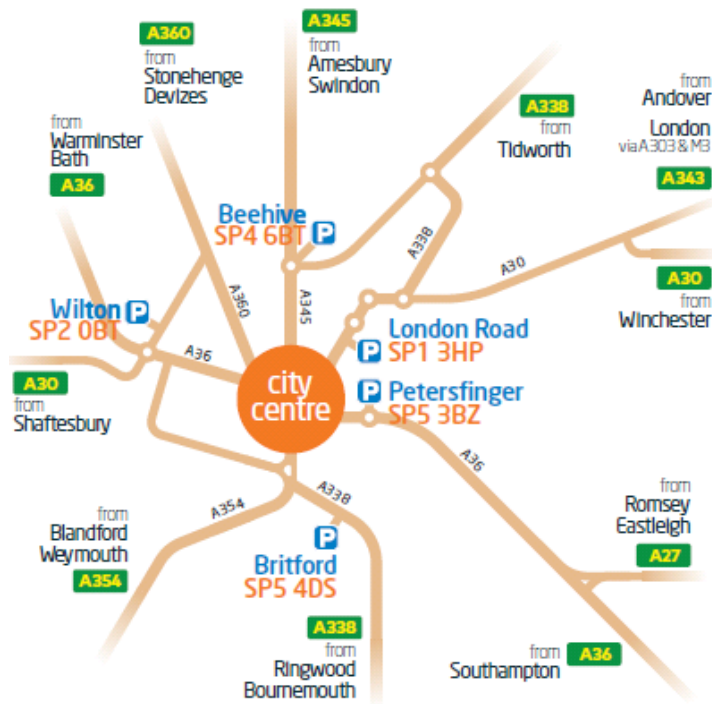


History The land was used previously as a rubbish dump. It was closed and covered over in 1976, and has been virtually untouched since. The area is mainly rough grass with some boggy areas, a few shrubs and a number of mature trees on the borders. The area is dotted with gas monitoring pipes. The land is not officially open to the public, though unofficially it is used mainly by dog walkers. Waverley Council have stated that no bins are provided as currently it is not recognised as a public space. The land was originally acquired by Farnham Urban District Council under the Physical Training and Recreation Act 1937 and there was a covenant contained in the transfer that the land was to be used as a public open space. No buildings can be built there so the tiny gas emissions are irrelevant to its use as a park.

Radial car park locations in successful Park & Ride schemes



Guildford Park & Ride – car park locations



Salisbury Park & Ride – car park locations