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For the attention of the Parks Strategy Team,
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**Formal response to the Area Green Space Plan proposals for Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve,
Troopers Hill Field and Crews Hole Woodland**

On behalf of Friends of Troopers Hill, on the basis of comments from our members and a formal meeting to discuss the proposals on Tuesday, 13th July, our formal response to each of the proposals is given below. We currently have more than 200 members.

Proposal for Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve

1. The footpath network should complement proposals to improve the network in Crews Hole Woodland, provide circular routes and better connect these spaces to the River Avon Trail.

There should be no more formal paths on the Local Nature Reserve. This is a wild space of great value to a large number of invertebrates and unusual plant species for the area. More formal paths would not add value to the site. The existing paths which include wheelchair access for views from the top of the site provide excellent and adequate access for people.

There could be some value in diverting the existing rights of way to reflect the reality of the existing paths. Some of the rights of way are impassable due to the changes in landscape achieved by council tipping in the 1970's.

Signage for pedestrians from the River Avon Trail and then from Crews Hole Rd to the lowest entrance on Troopers Hill would encourage use of the Local Nature Reserve and make people aware of the network of green spaces. That signage could incorporate safe pedestrian routes to the nearby Dundridge Park and Conham River Park. A safe circular route from Troopers Hill's lowest entrance on Troopers Hill Rd would cross Crews Hole Rd to the River Avon Trail, follow the River Avon Trail back on to Conham Rd, cross back again on to the river path, then either exit at the Conham River car park to go up Conham Vale or do the half mile loop on the river bank and exit via the track opposite Beeses to cross a stile and Conham Rd to go up Conham Vale. From Conham Vale take the deer path to Dundridge Park. Cross Dundridge Park and exit turning left on

the path at the front of the houses on Furnwood exiting on to Dundridge Lane. Then cross Nibletts Hill into Corkers Hill, down Parfitts Hill and then there is the option to return to Troopers Hill or the River Avon Trail. There are also paths across Troopers Hill to Lamb Hill or Strawberry Lane to drop down to Crews Hole Rd and back to the River Avon Trail.

The point about signage was raised by Friends of Troopers Hill at an early Area Green Space Strategy exercise to understand how spending can be apportioned to raise site quality.

Proposal for Troopers Hill Field

1. Extend and improve the planned new play area to provide play facilities for young children. Ensure that this space is dog-free through new fencing and plant trees for shade if needed.

We are very pleased to say the "planned new play area" was formally opened on 5th December, 2009. We agree that play facilities are needed for young children and that they should be kept dog-free but the siting of this area and any fencing should be very carefully considered, with a high degree of consultation. The "planned new play area" was an excellent example of good consultation. We are also pleased to note that even very young children are finding entertainment within the new play area. We have been particularly asked to request that the existing slide be kept or replaced with an equivalent facility. It is heavily used and much loved by young children and their families.

2. Ensure that there continues to be ample informal space to enjoy ball games and hold events. Provide 5-a-side goalposts.

We regard it as extremely important that there continues to be ample informal space to enjoy ball games and hold events. We are pleased to say that the 5-a-side goalposts were provided and installed via last year's Play Pathfinder funding and that St George Neighbourhood Partnership have funded the marking of a 5-a-side football pitch for this year, therefore this part of the proposal can be removed.

3. Widen the entrance from Summerhill Road with a kissing gate to control access.

The problem of motorcycle access via the path from Summerhill Rd known as the "milestone path" has been resolved by the placing of a large stump in front of the exit from the path into Troopers Hill Field. Pedestrians may pass, motorbikes may not. Therefore no action is needed.

If this proposal were still to be considered it should be pointed out that widening the entrance would require use of allotment land. This narrow path is part of the character of the area and we would not want to see it change.

4. Ensure views are available through Crews Hole Woodland either at intervals or along the whole boundary and provide more seating.

No more views are needed from Troopers Hill Field via Crews Hole Woodland. No more seating in Troopers Hill Field is required. A considerable amount of additional seating or structures able to be used as seating were installed as part of last year's Play Pathfinder project. These include a formal flat bench, two logs of bench height, at least 10 metres of planed log and at least 10 stumps. Photos of some of this seating can be seen on <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/events/playopen15.jpg> , <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/plan/bench3.jpg> and <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/plan/bench3.jpg>

hill.org.uk/field/2009_1023_play2.JPG. We would not want to lose the "wow" factor as people walk on to Troopers Hill and see the full view for the first time.

5. Provide all-weather footpaths to support access to the new children's playground and to the Nature Reserve from Summerhill Terrace.

The only all-weather footpath route that we would currently view as both acceptable in retaining the ample informal space (see the 2nd proposal) and to provide useful access, would be a path from the Summerhill Terrace kissing gate following the line of the hedge boundary of Westleigh Nursing home to exit at the kissing gate at Malvern Rd. This would connect with an existing track leading to Troopers Hill from the Malvern Rd entrance, provide a good track for people wishing access facilities via Summerhill Rd such as schools and buses and reuse the remaining part of a tarmac track previously installed by the council to provide access to the now defunct Malvern Rd tip.

6. Introduce sensitively designed formal space at the entrance from Malvern Road, providing seating and ensuring that views across the Avon Valley to the south are unobstructed.

This response includes input from residents of Malvern Rd. Formal space is, in our view, inappropriate for Troopers Hill field. As we have said in point 4, no further seating is required. Again, as per point 4, no further views are needed from Troopers Hill Field. While there has been shown to be a lack of formal space in St George, placing additional formal space in Troopers Hill Field would only benefit a small number of people and would not be of a significant size.

7. Widen the entrance to the Local Nature Reserve by removing some trees, bushes and shrubs and remove the existing gate.

The "existing gate" has already been removed. Shrubs and trees have been removed to ensure the entrance is welcoming. No action is needed in relation to this proposal.

Proposals for Crews Hole Woodland

1. Significantly improve the footpath network through the woodland ensuring that routes from Crews Hole Road and the River Avon Trail through to the Nature Reserve and the Field are clear and well signposted. Routes should be wide to improve perceptions of safety and provide additional wildlife habitat. Circular routes leading to and from the Field and Nature Reserve should also be explored.

While the Friends of Troopers Hill would strongly support the introduction of a woodland management plan and signage they would only currently support the introduction of a single additional path, see point 5. Both Strawberry Lane and Lamb Hill, access points to Crews Hole Woodland are in severe need of maintenance with walls collapsing into both these lanes, lack of cutting back of shrubs and soil encroaching on the tarmac surfaces.

Access from the River Avon trail close to Lamb Hill needs review as there is one path accessing Crews Hole Rd between buildings that offers little visibility of cyclists from oncoming traffic. While vehicle observing the speed limit are likely to be able to react appropriately, speeding vehicles will not. The only other option for cyclists is to carry their bicycles up a set of steps.

2. Introduce seating areas at appropriate places to appreciate views across the Avon Valley.

There are no view points from the existing paths in Crews Hole woodland, nor would there be any on the proposed new path that the Friends would support. The Friends would not support felling of trees for view points. Therefore no seating is necessary.

3. Make access to Crews Hole Woodland from the Field more welcoming, encouraging exploration and enjoyment of the woodland environment.

This proposal was not supported by the Friends. Part of the enjoyment of exploring a wild space is to explore and find new things.

4. Provide a new footpath directly opposite the Public Right of Way from the River Avon Trail. This should act to make road crossing safer, make the woodland more welcoming and encourage greater connectivity between the Avon Trail, Troopers Hill, Crews Hole, Dundridge Farm and Conham River Park/Avon valley Woodlands.

See 5 (below).

5. Provide a formal car parking area to encourage use of the woodland, Troopers Hill and the River Avon Trail provided along Crews Hole Road.

This is shown as point 4 of the aerial view of Crews Hole Woodland in the Area Green Space Plan. The land concerned is an open area on a bend on Crews Hole Rd. that is already used for informal parking and flytipping. This seems a good use for the space and could be an opportunity to take steps to prevent the flytipping.

It is from this point that Friends of Troopers Hill would propose a path going up through the woodland to meet the lower path that runs from Lamb Hill to Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve. No other new paths through the woodland are thought necessary.

Susan Acton-Campbell
Chair, Friends of Troopers Hill