



Bengeo Parish Council
10 Ware Road
Tonwell
Ware, Hertfordshire
Sg12 0HN

**Countryside & Rights of Way Service
Hertfordshire County Council
Farnham House**

**Six Hills Way
Stevenage
SG1 2ST
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk**

Tel: 01992 588890
Email: Kallum.wright@hertfordshire.gov.uk
My ref:
Your ref:
Date: 09/04/2026

Dear

Mr Ron Brett

Re: Chapmore End Pond

Thank you for meeting with me on 25 March 2026 to look over the village pond at Chapmore End and discuss options for its future management. You raised concerns about low oxygen levels and the possibility of installing aeration. The following summarises what we discussed on site, along with some simple advice on how the pond could be improved over time.

Background Information

The pond at Chapmore End is an historic feature of the village and Chapmore End Farm. It was most likely used in the past to water livestock rather than as a cartwash, despite being close to the road. The front edge sits directly beside the road and is formed by a concrete bank, with small areas of grass around the sides and a hedgerow or treeline to the rear.

With its original use no longer required, the pond now serves as an important village feature, valued for both wildlife and amenity. It forms part of the village green and is managed and maintained by the parish.

In recent years, a number of management works have already taken place. A large willow has been pollarded, another removed, a native hedgerow planted along one side, and the pond was desilted in the early 2000s. You also explained that barley straw has been added each year for the past five years to help control algae. While feeding of ducks is discouraged, it still takes place and likely increases bird numbers.

Although fishing does not occur, the pond supports a large number of fish, though it is unclear how they were introduced.

Management Advice Summary

Typical of many village ponds, the current condition suggests several underlying factors are contributing to the issues you are seeing. The most significant of these is nutrient enrichment. This arises from a combination of the high number of fish present, public feeding of both ducks and fish, organic matter entering the pond from leaf fall, and the gradual build-up of silt mixed with road runoff washing directly into the water. Carp activity then further compounds the problem: as they feed, they constantly disturb the sediment, releasing trapped nutrients back into the water column. Together, these pressures create ideal conditions for algae to proliferate and cause oxygen levels to fluctuate, particularly during warm weather.

With this in mind, the pond would benefit from a more holistic management approach, with the first and most effective step being to reduce the inflow and recycling of nutrients throughout the system.

1. Fish and Ducks

Fish and ducks in village ponds can be a sensitive topic, as many people expect to see them present. While small numbers can be beneficial, high numbers often cause problems. Feeding, particularly with bread, adds nutrients to the pond and encourages higher bird and fish numbers than the pond can support.

Although feeding cannot easily be stopped, placing simple, friendly signs explaining pond health and why bread should be avoided would be a low-cost way to gently change behaviour. Providing alternative feed is not recommended at this stage, as reducing feeding altogether will help improve conditions.

A key issue is the large number of fish, and particularly Carp. Carp disturb the pond bed as they feed, keep the water cloudy keeping the water permanently cloudy, releasing nutrients that fuel algal growth, and preventing aquatic plants from establishing. They also have a high oxygen demand and often come to the surface for food, encouraging more feeding and worsening the problem.

There are two realistic options. All fish could be removed, which would allow the pond to reset, but this may be unpopular and could be reversed if fish are later reintroduced. A more balanced option is to remove around 80 percent of the carp, delivering most of the ecological benefits of, clearer water, better oxygen stability, and improved plant recovery, while retaining a small, low-impact fish presence. However, carp are prolific breeders, and if feeding remains, their numbers will rebound. Under typical conditions, further electrofishing would be required roughly every 5–10 years to keep the population in check.

Either option would need to be carried out by a licensed contractor such as [Aquamaintain](#), who can assess the fish stock, remove carp safely and legally, and provide related services such as installing vegetation, improving planting, and applying water-quality treatments. Their involvement can help ensure the work is compliant, humane, and offer potential future ecological management if required.

2. Barley Straw

It is worth highlighting the continued use of Barley Straw. As you will have been advised, when barley straw breaks down in sunlight and oxygen it releases natural oxidising compounds that help prevent new algae from developing. For best effect it should be placed loosely in mesh bags near the surface and added early in the year before algae starts to bloom.

Each application generally remains effective for around six months and should be replaced routinely. Correct dosing is important, as applying too much straw can reduce oxygen levels during decomposition. Barley straw works best as part of a wider approach and is most effective once other pressures, such as fish numbers and nutrient inputs, are reduced.

3. Coir roles

Pre-vegetated coir rolls can offer significant benefits where a bank is hard-engineered, such as along the concrete roadside edge of the pond. Their dense coir fibre structure functions as an effective physical filter, slowing and trapping silt, debris, and nutrient-rich runoff before it enters the water. Because coir is both biodegradable and highly porous, it helps reduce turbidity and intercept the nutrients that would otherwise contribute to algal growth.

Over time, the vegetation that grows through the coir softens the concrete edge and allows marginal vegetation to establish. As the plants root into and through the coir, they form a naturalised fringe that stabilises the pond edge and supports a wider range of wildlife.

To remain effective, the vegetation requires only light, periodic management, allowing it to establish fully and continue stabilising the bank with minimal intervention. However, they may need some protection from wildfowl using wire mesh as they establish.



Example of Coir Rolls as bank protection

1.1 Installation

Installing coir rolls along the concrete edge requires securing them firmly to the pond side of the concrete. This is usually done with timber posts securely wedging them in place or alternatively with brackets fixed to the concrete. Rolls should be tightly joined to avoid gaps. It would be sensible to check whether there is concrete beneath the waterline before installation.

Adjacent rolls should be overlapped and tied securely together to form a continuous barrier with no gaps for water to funnel through. Although vegetation cannot root beneath the concrete, plants established directly into the coir roll or in small planting pockets created just pond side will eventually weave through the material, forming a naturalised margin over the hard edge.

1.2 Management

For the first one to two years, plants should be left uncut so they can establish and secure the rolls in place. After this, a single cut each year in late summer or early autumn is usually enough. This light cut prevents the margin from becoming overgrown while maintaining its filtration and stabilising benefits. All cut material should be removed to avoid reintroducing nutrients into the pond.

As the coir naturally biodegrades and breaks down, vegetation will fully take over its stabilising role. Management then focuses on keeping the marginal growth from

leaning too far into the water or obstructing access. Occasional checks and infill planting may be needed to keep a continuous edge

4. Floating islands

Another option is the use of small floating islands, (such as these from [Phoenix Amenity Supplies](#)) which offer a simple and effective way to establish aquatic plants in areas of the pond where they cannot root naturally. These buoyant platforms support native wetland species whose roots hang directly into the water, allowing them to take up excess nutrients and filter suspended sediment. This helps reduce algal growth, improve water quality, and create additional habitat for insects, amphibians, and beneficial microbial communities.



Bioscape floating island

Given the steep, engineered edges of the pond and the disturbance caused by the fish population, floating islands provide a practical method for introducing plants that would otherwise struggle to establish. Once anchored in position, the root systems act as living filters and gradually remove nutrients from the water, particularly if the plant material is harvested from time to time. Installation is straightforward: the rafts are simply secured with weighted lines or anchors and require only light annual checks to ensure they remain stable and the vegetation continues to grow healthily. Again these may need to be protected from wildfowl with mesh to aid establishment.

5. Silt Removal

As the pond was last desilted in 2000, it would be sensible to check whether silt has built up again before deciding if any removal is needed. This can be done through a

simple depth and sediment check, which would confirm whether the pond has lost capacity and whether any action would be worthwhile. If silt removal is considered, samples would need to be tested to determine how the material can be disposed of, particularly due to the pond receiving road runoff over many years.

It is likely that any removed silt would need to be taken off site for disposal, which can make desilting costly. For this reason, a measured approach is recommended, starting with investigation rather than committing to full removal. Again, Aquamaintain would be a suitable example of a contractor for these types of works.

Summary

When used together, the measures outlined including reducing carp biomass, improving aeration, installing coir rolls, introducing floating islands and continuing preventative methods such as barley straw would deliver significant and lasting improvements to the pond. Each measure is beneficial in its own right, but their effectiveness is greatly increased when applied as a package, as no single action can address all of the pressures currently affecting the pond. The excessive carp population remains the main driver of poor water clarity, low oxygen levels and limited plant growth, and addressing this issue is essential for the wider improvements to be successful.

If this is a route the parish wishes to pursue, the habitat based works such as marginal planting, coir rolls, floating islands and similar enhancements fit well within the CMS [Environmental Improvement Grant \(EIG\)](#) which can provide up to £3000 of match funding for agreed biodiversity improvements. Fish management activities however fall outside the scope of the EIG and would need to be undertaken by a licensed contractor. Once that specialist work has been completed, the habitat enhancements supported through CMS and the EIG are likely to be far more effective, helping the pond recover into a clearer, healthier and more resilient community asset.

I hope that the above information is of help and please do get in touch if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely



Kallum Wright
Land Management Project Officer
Countryside & Rights of Way Service