

Our online forms for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support will be unavailable on Saturday 5 September due to essential maintenance. Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience.

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Swale Borough Council is now the freehold owner of a new key green space in Bapchild.

The green space known as *Stones Farm Country Park* near Sittingbourne will be managed by the council's park ranger as a natural open space, protecting its existing features including a chalk stream.

The open space already includes a recently established orchard, planted trees, a wet woodland, and a network of pathways for residents to enjoy.

The countryside gap was secured as part of the Spring Acres (formerly known as Stones Farm) housing development to mitigate the recreational impacts, from residents of that development, on nearby protected habitat sites.

This green space will provide high-quality, accessible open space for walking and informal recreation away from Swale's sensitive coastal environments, including the ecologically important Thames, Medway and Swale Estuaries Ramsar Site.

The council will use the funding secured from the developer to make the area more welcoming for visitors and for its ongoing maintenance.

Improvements will include:

- new signage and information boards
- planting new hedges to improve biodiversity
- installing new gates to prevent vehicles entering the site
- adding litter bins

A key part of the plan is to involve local residents. The council will work closely with Bapchild Parish Council to make the site a pleasant space for local people to enjoy Swale's natural environment.

The park ranger will be organising volunteer days and will be forming a 'Friends' group to help the local community get involved in managing their new green space.

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The first event will be a tree planting volunteer day taking place on 18 February 2026 from 9:30am to 11:30am at the new country park, ME9 9AD.

Planting equipment will be provided but volunteers need to dress appropriately for the weather, and wear gloves and appropriate shoes.

Cllr Monique Bonney, chair of the Economy and Property Committee, said:

“We are pleased to take on the ownership and management of this important greenspace in Bapchild, ensuring it is properly maintained, publicly accessible, and managed for both people and nature.

“The developer funding will help us do the work needed to create and maintain an attractive place for residents to visit whilst protecting nearby Ramsar coastal ecosystems, the Bapchild chalk stream and the sites’ rare wet woodland.

“We will be working closely with the parish council to help this new important public space flourish.”

Cllr Dolley Wooster, chair of the Environmental Services and Climate Change committee, said:

“This is a wonderful opportunity to create a real community space.

“We are keen to form a ‘Friends’ group and run volunteer days so this greenspace can make a positive contribution to the area.

“We want to help people get out into our natural environment. Having lovely spaces like this to visit and care for helps build a great sense of local pride.”

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