

**Consultation on the status of Scraftoft Local Nature Reserve**

**Public Consultation**

**September 2017**

## Contents

<b>1. Purpose of the Consultation</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Background</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Scraptoft Neighbourhood Development Plan</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. Reasons for the proposed de-declaration of the Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve</b>	<b>6</b>
Proposed Submission Harborough District Local Plan	6
Management of the Local Nature Reserve	7
Ecological Value of the Local Nature Reserve	8
<b>4. Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>5. Next steps</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>6. Background reports</b>	<b>13</b>

## Appendices

- Appendix 1: Map of Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve
- Appendix 2: Designation of Local Nature Reserve, Scraptoft – Report to the Executive Meeting of 9th October 2002
- Appendix 3: Map of Scraptoft North SHLAA site
- Appendix 4: Map to show Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve and the proposed Scraptoft North Strategic Development Area
- Appendix 5: Map of Scraptoft LNR Strategy

## 1. Purpose of the Consultation

- 1.1 This consultation seeks public views on the future status of Scraftoft Local Nature Reserve (a map of which is shown at Appendix 1). Further details of the consultation, together with background material and details of how to reply to the consultation are available at the following link:

[www.harborough.gov.uk/consultation](http://www.harborough.gov.uk/consultation).

**Comments on the consultation are invited between 9am on Friday 22 September 2017 and 5pm on Friday 3 November 2017.**

- 1.2 Harborough District Council is proposing to de-declare the Scraftoft Local Nature Reserve; the reasons for which are outlined below. Following the end of the consultation, Harborough District Council will take a decision on the future status of the Local Nature Reserve.
- 1.3 This consultation should be read and considered in conjunction with proposals contained within the Proposed Submission Harborough Local Plan (September 2017). Representations are invited following Publication of the Proposed Submission Harborough Local Plan under Regulations 19 and 20 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The Proposed Submission Harborough Local Plan (September 2017) can be viewed online at the following link, where representations may also be made. Further details of the proposals relating to Scraftoft are explained below in the sections entitled 'Background'.

<http://www.harborough.gov.uk/consultation>

- 1.4 This paper explains the proposal, the background to the proposal and how the most ecologically valuable parts of the site would be protected if a decision is taken to de-declare the Local Nature Reserve.

## **2. Background**

### **Background to the original declaration of Scraftoft Local Nature Reserve**

- 2.1 Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 gives local authorities the power to acquire, declare and manage Local Nature Reserves (LNR). Unlike National Nature Reserves and SSSIs, the selection, declaration and management of LNRs is a function of local authorities rather than of Natural England.
- 2.2 Section 19 of the 1949 Act provides that if land within the LNR can no longer be managed for the purpose of the LNR or if the LNR is no longer under the control of the local authority, then de-declaration would be required.
- 2.3 Harborough District Council's Executive at its meeting on 9th October 2002 recommended that 'Land at Beeby Road, Scraftoft be formally designated as a Local Nature Reserve and that a declaration to this effect be executed under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949.' This was confirmed by Council on 13th November 2002 (Minute 411 refers). The officer report is provided at Appendix 2.
- 2.4 The reasons for the recommendation were: 'The site fulfills the necessary requirement to become a Local Nature Reserve. Its designation would also achieve one of the key actions set out in the Scraftoft Green Wedge Management Plan.'

### **3. Scraftoft Neighbourhood Development Plan**

3.1 Scraftoft Neighbourhood Plan ('made' on 11 March 2016) includes the following policy:

*'Policy S11: Biodiversity*

*New development should not harm the network of local ecological features and habitats. New development will be expected to maintain and enhance existing ecological corridors and landscape features (such as watercourses, hedgerows and tree-lines) for biodiversity.*

*The retention and improvement of Scraftoft Local Nature Reserve is supported. Improvements should include:*

*i) maintaining the quality and increasing the extent of species-rich grassland;*

*li) improving the appearance and biodiversity value of boundaries;*

*iii) information to the public; and*

*iv) public safety.'*

3.2 This plan was prepared and 'made' prior to knowledge of the proposed Scraftoft North Strategic Development Area proposal coming forward, or its proposed allocation in the Proposed Submission Draft Harborough District Local Plan (September 2017).

#### **4. Reasons for the proposed de-declaration of the Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve**

- 4.1 The de-declaration of the Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is proposed for the following reasons:
- a) The site has been identified to help meet future housing needs and is proposed for allocation within the Proposed Submission Harborough District Local Plan (September 2017) as part of the Scraptoft North Strategic Development Area.
  - b) The LNR does not appear to have been managed as per the original management plan, suggesting, in accordance with the relevant Act, that the LNR should be de-declared.
  - c) The parts of the site with significant ecological value can be protected and enhanced through alternative means.

Further details are set out below:

##### **a) Proposed Submission Harborough District Local Plan, September 2017**

- 4.2 In April 2016 a site to the north of Scraptoft village, largely bounded by Hamilton Lane and Beeby Road was formally submitted to the Council for consideration as part of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The site was subsequently assessed through the SHLAA as being developable for residential use. The presence of the LNR on the site was noted and it was explained that further investigation would be needed to understand the biodiversity value of the site. A map of the SHLAA site is shown at Appendix 3. The SHLAA site includes all of the Scraptoft LNR.
- 4.3 On 9 May 2016, the Council's Executive resolved that 4 of the original 9 Options to accommodate future housing and employment growth through the Local Plan and consulted on in 2015, be carried forward for further assessment. These included 'a variation of Option 4: Scraptoft / Thurnby, but based on a minimum of 1,200 dwellings in the vicinity of Scraptoft North.'
- 4.4 The Council's Executive at its meeting on 15 May 2017, resolved, 'To recommend to Council inclusion in the Draft Submission Local Plan of a hybrid option of Option 6, involving a Strategic Development Area (SDA) East of Lutterworth, and a variation of Option 4, Scraptoft North SDA, for meeting Harborough District's housing and employment needs . . .'. As such, the Scraptoft North SDA is identified for allocation in the Proposed Submission Draft Harborough District Local Plan (September 2017). Appendix 4 shows a map of the Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve and proposed Scraptoft North SDA.

## **b) Management of the Local Nature Reserve**

- 4.5 Section 19 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 Act provides that if land within the LNR can no longer be managed for the purpose for which the LNR was declared or if the LNR is no longer under the control of the local authority then de-declaration would be required.
- 4.6 The 2002 Executive report, recommending designation of the site as a LNR explains that: ‘The purpose of designating the site as a LNR is to give a commitment to managing the land for the purpose of preserving the flora and fauna and features of special interest on this land. . . . For a site to be designated as an LNR, the local authority must consider the site to be of special interest or value in their area and be certain that the site will be appropriately managed as a LNR.’
- 4.7 A Management Plan for the LNR was attached to the 2002 Executive report, attached at Appendix 2, and agreed as the plan for the LNR. The 2002 Executive report explains that a formal nature reserve agreement will be drawn up between Harborough District Council (as the site lies within its jurisdiction) and Leicester City Council (as owners of the site). The report goes on to say that the agreement will state ‘that the land will be managed in accordance with an agreed Management Plan (Appendix C to the 2002 report to Executive) jointly reviewed every 5 years from 1st December 2002’. There does not appear to be evidence that a Management Agreement was entered into between HDC and Leicester City Council.
- 4.8 A guide published by Natural England in 2010 explains the process of declaring a LNR:
- ‘The local authority makes a declaration that:*
- *The land is subject to an agreement entered into with them or has been acquired and is held by the authority; and*
  - *The land is being managed as a nature reserve.*
- If the agreement should end or the land to which the declaration relates ceases to be held by the local authority, it should make a declaration of this.’*
- 4.9 It is unclear what, if any, maintenance has been carried out on the LNR since 2002. The 2017 Lloyd Bore Report<sup>1</sup> indicates that some of the actions identified in the Management Plan appear not to have been undertaken. For example monies were identified to fund hedge planting and information signs and to infill gaps in the hedgerows adjacent to the sports pitch and Beeby Road, which appear to still be gappy, suggesting that these actions were not implemented.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Report to provide information in relation to Scraftoft LNR’, Lloyd Bore Ltd, April 2017

### **c) Ecological Value of the Local Nature Reserve**

4.10 The National Planning Policy Framework states that sustainable development includes moving from a net loss of biodiversity to achieving net gains for nature, and that a core principle for planning is that it should contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution.

4.11 Natural England's advice on the status of the LNR has formally been sought. Their response included the following recommendation:

*'If LNR de-declaration is unavoidable, the local authority should consider declaring replacement LNR land which is at least equal to or higher value in terms of nature conservation, access and landscape than the area to be de-declared. Alternatively it may be possible where there are small partial de-declarations for improvements in the quality of the remaining LNR to be offered to counteract the loss in land area. The overall aim should be to achieve a net gain for nature.'*

4.12 The ecological value of the LNR is varied. An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, undertaken by the site promoter's ecologists in 2016<sup>2</sup> found that the LNR consists of closely grazed, semi-improved grassland and areas of dense scrub. It found that the eastern half is dominated by closely cropped grass with a very sparse structure and has low ecological value. The western half was found to support 'islands' and bands of mature scrub vegetation, dominated by hawthorn, bramble and elder. This part was found to be of higher value than the eastern part, 'but is not currently considered to be of high ecological value'. The report recommended that if the eastern half of the LNR be used for development, the western half could be substantially enhanced to mitigate for the loss of low quality habitat.

4.13 Leicestershire County Council Ecologists have also surveyed the LNR<sup>3</sup>. They also conclude that the north-eastern part of the site has declined due to over-grazing by horses, but find that the rest of the site is not over-grazed and has a similar species composition and habitat description to that recorded in 1999, prior to the LNR declaration. The main value of the site is as a habitat-mosaic, with patchy grassland quality, with herb-rich parts, but not species rich. Leicestershire County Council Ecologists do not object to the proposed de-declaration, but indicate that apart from the north-eastern part, the site meets the current Local Wildlife Site criteria for scrubland habitat mosaics.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Scraptoft Leicester (site 1) Phase 1 Habitat Report', D F Clark Bionomique, May 2016

<sup>3</sup> 'Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve', Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Record Centre, Leicestershire County Council, May 2017

4.14 A Botanical Survey and Assessment, undertaken in July 2017 by Ecological Planning and Research Ltd<sup>4</sup>, on behalf of the site promoters focused on the flora of the grasslands on site. It found the condition of the grasslands to be unfavourable. It identified the eastern half of the site to be composed of herb-poor pasture, of limited conservation interest. It recommended that if development is proposed, this area would be the first area to consider. The southern edge of the site was found to be the most diverse floristically, with good patches of herb-rich grassland on the ridge and furrow. Development in this area was recommended to be avoided. The grasslands in the western part of the site were found to become more diverse further west, though this is off-set by scrub. Developing the grasslands areas in the western part of the site was recommended to be avoided, if possible, with suitable compensation being needed if development of one or more of the grasslands parcels in this area were to be developed.

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<sup>4</sup> 'Scraftoft North Botanical Survey and Assessment Draft Report', Ecological Planning and Research Ltd, July 2017

## 5. Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy

### 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework states:

- Para 9: 'Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, including (but not limited to): ..... 'moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature';
- Para 109: 'minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures';
- Para 113: 'Local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geo-diversity sites or landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks'.

5.2 Paragraph 118 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Harborough Proposed Submission Local Plan (September 2017) Policy GI5 require that a hierarchical approach is taken towards mitigating the negative effects of development upon features of biodiversity value. This hierarchical approach involves avoiding significant harm to biodiversity where possible, then mitigating the harm, and then, as a last resorted compensating for any harm.

5.3 The Botanical Survey and Assessment, undertaken in July 2017<sup>5</sup> by Ecological Planning and Research Ltd, on behalf of the site promoters identifies the retention and future enhancement of the more diverse grassland on surviving ridge and furrow to be an essential component of a future overall mitigation and enhancement strategy for development at this site.

5.4 The Scraftoft North SDA site promoter's Green Infrastructure Proposals plan<sup>6</sup> is an illustrative plan at this stage. However, it shows the proposal to develop most of the LNR for residential development, but to maintain the southern portion as the Scraftoft Brook Park. Their accompanying note explains that this area would provide a generous separation from the existing built edge of the village to the SDA and be around 100m deep, providing a range of natural habitats and have a strong and rich natural theme, incorporating trees, grasses, ponds and water features. It is suggested that this area would more than compensate for the loss of the LNR,

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<sup>5</sup> 'Scraftoft North Botanical Survey and Assessment Draft Report', Ecological Planning and Research Ltd, July 2017

<sup>6</sup> 'Note on Scraftoft SDA Green Infrastructure Proposals', Andrew Hiorns Town Planning Ltd, May 2017

providing opportunities to manage the area directly and bring the space into more direct use by local residents.

- 5.5 Discussions are currently taking place to consider further the most appropriate way to conserve and enhance the nature conservation value of the site and incorporate such methods into the design of the SDA. It is likely that the details of such would be set out in the design masterplan accompanying the SDA, which is required under the emerging Local Plan policy SC1 Scraptoft North Strategic Development Area. Any proposal would need to accord with the Proposed Submission Local Plan (September 2017) Policy GI5 Biodiversity and Geodiversity.
- 5.6 Key principles of the future mitigation and enhancement strategy are shown at Appendix 5 'Scraptoft LNR Strategy' (as proposed by the Scraptoft North Strategic Development Area site promoters) and are likely to include:
- The management of existing scrubland for biodiversity value, which will be suitable for Sustainable Urban Drainage features (land parcel A on the plan at Appendix 5);
  - The retention and management for wildlife value of higher quality grasslands, with small scale swale features crossing to existing brook and measures to naturalise the course of the brook to enhance the wildlife potential (land parcel B);
  - Restoration of existing poorer quality areas as replacement habitat for grassland lost to development, with Sustainable Urban Drainage features and road crossings acceptable (land parcels C); and
  - Further mitigation expected to be off-site.

Full details of the mitigation and enhancement strategy will be worked up through the preparation of the masterplan and the planning applications for the development of the site.

## **6. Next steps**

- 6.1 The most valuable parts of the LNR for nature conservation should be preserved and enhanced in order to meet the NPPF's requirement that sustainable development achieves net gains for nature. The details of how this will be achieved are still to be worked up through the ongoing master planning process that accompanies the proposed SDA. However, the existing proposed Scruptoft North SDA provides opportunities to enhance and protect the most valuable parts of the LNR, whilst providing opportunities to enhance public access to the site and to actively manage the site for nature.
- 6.2 A further Council decision on the status of Scruptoft Local Nature Reserve is expected following the conclusion of this consultation.

## 7. Background reports

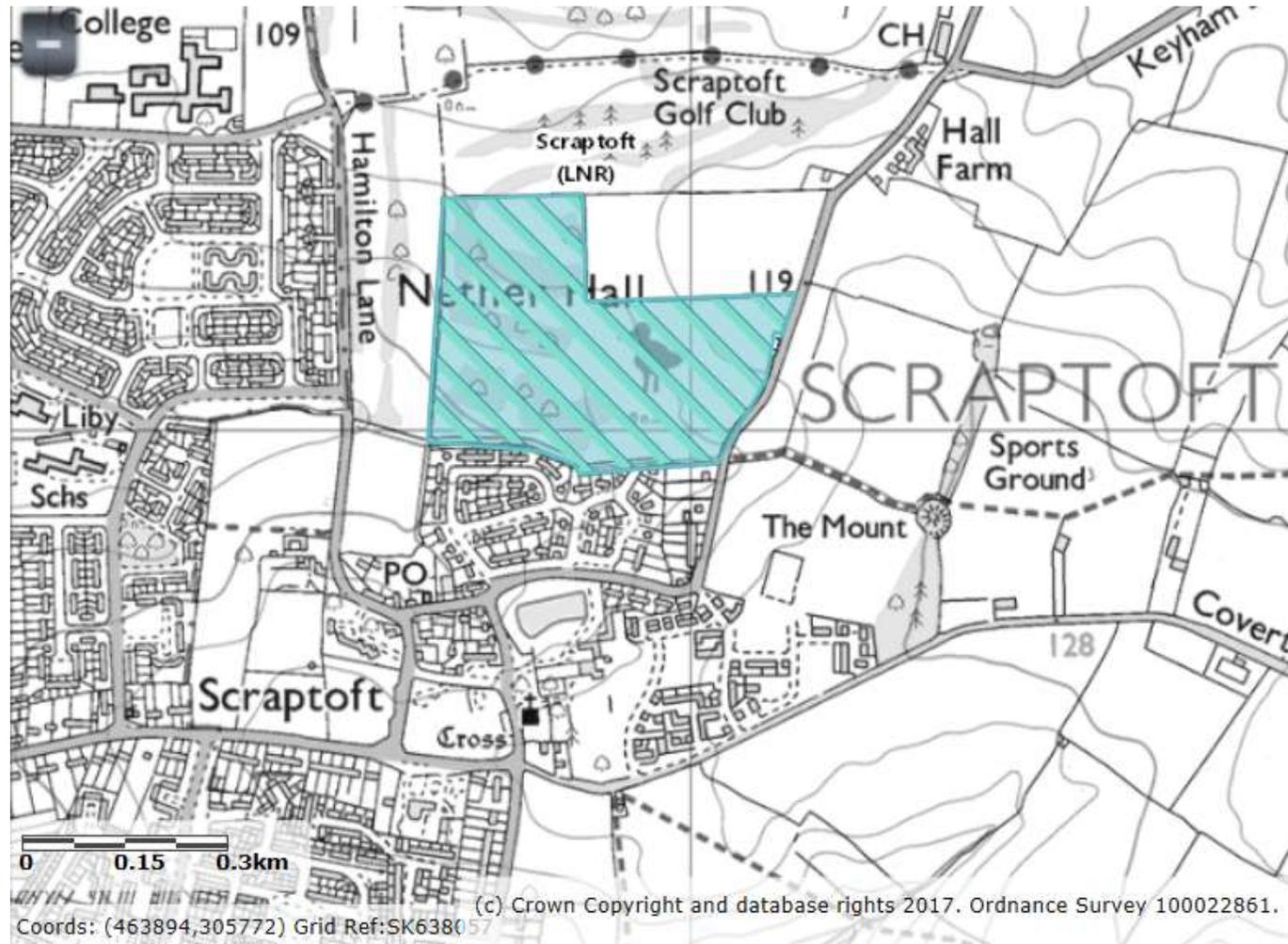
- Scraptoft Leicester (site 1) Phase 1 Habitat Report, D F Clark Bionomique, May 2016;
- Scraptoft Great Crested Newt Report, D F Clark Bionomique, June, 2016.
- Report to provide information in relation to Scraptoft LNR, Lloyd Bore Ltd, April 2017;
- Note on Scraptoft SDA Green Infrastructure Proposals, Andrew Hiorns Town Planning Ltd, May 2017
- Scraptoft Green Infrastructure Plan rev B, Icenl, May 2017
- Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve, Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Record Centre, Leicestershire County Council, May 2017
- Scraptoft North Botanical Survey and Assessment Draft Report, Ecological Planning and Research Ltd, July 2017

All available at:

[http://www.harborough.gov.uk/directory/4/our\\_policies\\_plans\\_and\\_strategies/category/29](http://www.harborough.gov.uk/directory/4/our_policies_plans_and_strategies/category/29)

# APPENDIX 1

## Map of Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve



Source: [http://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx?startTopic=Designations&activelayer=lnrIndex&query=REF\\_CODE%3D%271009541%27](http://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx?startTopic=Designations&activelayer=lnrIndex&query=REF_CODE%3D%271009541%27)

**REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE MEETING OF 9<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2002**

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**Status:**                **Decision**  
**Title:**                 **Designation of Local Nature Reserve, Scraptoft**  
**Originator:**        **Sarah Hunt – Principal Planning Officer**  
**Where from:**       **Not Applicable**  
**Where to next:**    **Full Council**

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1.     Purpose of the Report

1.1    To consider the proposal for land at Beeby Road, Scraptoft to be designated as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

**R 2     Recommendations:**

**2.1    To recommend to Council that land at Beeby Road, Scraptoft (as identified at Appendix B) be formally designated as a Local Nature Reserve and that a declaration to this effect be executed under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949.**

3     Reasons for Recommendation

3.1    The site fulfils the necessary requirement to become a Local Nature Reserve. Its designation would also achieve one of the key actions set out in the Scraptoft Green Wedge Management Plan.

4     Key Facts

4.1    A Management Plan for land contained within the Scraptoft Green Wedge was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by the Council on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2001, following a four-week period of public consultation.

4.2    The Management Plan sets out a series of action points which seek to preserve and enhance the open character of the Green Wedge and to increase access opportunities from Scraptoft and Leicester City out into the surrounding countryside. A summary of the Management Plan is attached at Appendix A ([and Map](#)).

4.3    One of the proposed actions set out in the Management Plan relates to the designation of land at Beeby Road, Scraptoft as a Local Nature Reserve. The landowners, Leicester City Council, have previously given agreement for the process to begin for designating Local Nature Reserve status for this field.

4.4 This land falls within Harborough District, but is owned by Leicester City Council (Property Department). The location of the site is shown hatched on the plan attached at Appendix B ([and Map](#)) together with background information on the site.

## 5 Local Nature Reserves (LNR's)

5.1 Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 gives local authorities the power to acquire, declare and manage local nature reserves. Unlike National Nature Reserves and SSSI's, the selection, declaration and management of Local Nature Reserves is a function of local authorities rather than of English Nature.

5.2 The purpose of designating the site as a LNR is to give a commitment to managing the land for the purpose of preserving the flora and fauna and features of special interest on this land. Designation of the land as a LNR will have an important part to play in biodiversity conservation and in improving the quality of the environment for local people. For a site to be designated as a LNR, the local authority must consider the site to be of special interest or value in their area and be certain that the site will be appropriately managed as a LNR.

5.3 Your officers have worked closely with officers from Leicester City Council and the Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project in considering this site for LNR status. It is considered that the proposed site is of special value due to the biodiversity potential of the land. A Management Plan for the future management of the site has been agreed by the officers involved. A copy of the proposed Management Plan is attached at Appendix C.

## 6 LNR's in the Planning Framework

6.1 The proposed LNR falls within land defined as a Green Wedge under Policy EV/2 of the Local Plan. This Policy seeks to protect the open and undeveloped character of the green wedges and to refuse planning permission for development which would adversely affect that character.

6.2 Declaring a LNR gives a positive use to land and draws attention to the nature conservation interest of the land and to its amenity value.

6.3 The designation of land as a LNR demonstrates the Council's commitment to nature conservation and is an important contribution to achieving the goals of environmental sustainability and biodiversity.

## 7. Consultation

7.1 Consultation on the proposal to declare a LNR at Beeby Road, Scraftoft formed part of the public consultation exercise on the Scraftoft Green Wedge Management Plan which was carried out between 6<sup>th</sup> November – 4<sup>th</sup> December 2000.

7.2 The proposal for the designation of a LNR at Scraftoft was, in principle, strongly supported. A number of respondents expressed concern that existing wildlife would be disturbed by encouraging people onto this land. Others commented that they would prefer the land to be kept as it is at present. These concerns were resolved by revising the proposals to no longer provide for formal access onto this land. This revision was communicated to the respondents

by the Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project Officer. It is due to the existing quality and special interest of the site and the fact that the site is used for the quiet enjoyment and appreciation of nature that it is considered suitable for such a designation. The designation does not imply any need to dramatically change the landscape, but will give effect to proposals to manage and enhance the landscape and wildlife habitat that already exist.

7.3 Prior to designation, under Section 21 of the 1949 Act, local authorities are required to formally consult with English Nature on the proposal. English Nature has recently confirmed that they fully support the proposal. A copy of the response from English Nature is available at [Appendix D](#).

7.4 A Public Notice, advising of the declaration of a LNR at Scraptoft will be placed in the Leicester Mercury and will state where copies of the Declaration and associated Plans are available for inspection.

7.5 Scraptoft Parish Council have also been advised of this Council's intention to proceed with designating the site a LNR.

## 8. Legal Issues

8.1 Local Authorities may declare LNRs on land which is owned or leased by them, or on land over which they have a formal nature reserve agreement.

8.2 The proposed LNR at Scraptoft lies within the jurisdiction of Harborough District Council but is owned by Leicester City Council. As such a formal nature reserve agreement will be drawn up between the two parties, although the formal declaration will be made by Harborough District Council.

8.3 The agreement will state: "that the land will be managed in accordance with an agreed Management Plan (Appendix C) jointly reviewed every 5 years from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2002".

## 9. Resource Issues

9.1 A notice will need to be placed in the local press advising of the declaration of land at Scraptoft as a LNR. This can be met from existing budgets and a contribution from the Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project.

9.2 In making the declaration, HDC and Leicester City Council will seek to implement the actions set out in the Management Plan. It is considered that the actions to be implemented can be met from joint contributions from Leicester City Council, Harborough District Council, the Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project and external funding agencies.

## 10 Corporate Implications

10.1 The designation of the land as a LNR will seek to preserve and enhance the appearance and biodiversity of the area.

- 10.2 The joint declaration of the LNR is an excellent example of partnership working both with other local authorities and the local community towards a common purpose.
- 10.3 Upon declaration, the Scraftoft LNR will be the first LNR in Harborough District. The District Council will actively encourage other LNR's to be designated in the interests of environmental sustainability and biodiversity.
11. Sensitive Issues Procedure
- 11.1 The Ward Member and Member representatives on the Members Steering Group of the Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project for Harborough District have been made aware of this report.
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**Previous report(s): Scraftoft Green Wedge Management Plan, Planning (Policy) Committee  
14<sup>th</sup> December 1999.**

**Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: Yes/No**

## APPENDIX A

### Scraptoft Green Wedge Action Plan

#### Access

- A1 A decision is to be made by Green Wedge Action Group in partnership with the Golf Club and the Parish Council to down grade this Unclassified Road to a Bridle way.  
Time scale: 2-3 year process from date of application.
- A2 Limit access for motorbikes and cycles to the Golf Club Green from the above mentioned unclassified road, (proposed bridle way) by erecting kissing gates or other restrictive gates.  
Time scale: Short-term.
- A3 Improve signage on existing Right of Way through Scraptoft.
- A4 An obstruction to existing right of way. Way marker signs to be erected showing alternative route. Stiles to be erected at the Scraptoft Lane and an application to be made by Leicester City Council to Leicestershire County Council's Right of Way section for public diversion order.  
Time scale: Process takes up to 12 months from application stage.

#### Recreation

- R1 Leicester City Council to approach lease holders to encourage them to plant a hedge around the field boundary.

#### Conservation

- C1 Unimproved grassland. Leicester City Council Arts and Leisure Services have given agreement for the process to begin for designating Local Nature Reserve status for this field from English Nature.
- C2 Potential for the enhancement of the brook and pond for wildlife to be explored and potential funding for the works to be pursued.
- C3 Encourage landowners to leave areas of long grass for nature conservation particularly along hedges.
- C4 Encourage landowners and leaseholders across the whole Green Wedge area to have hedges laid where appropriate. Grants to be sought from organisations such as the Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project.
- C5 Area of scrub to be kept under close control and where necessary scrub clearance to take place with volunteer assistance.

#### Public Awareness

- PA1 Interpretation on the site to be provided where necessary. This could include information on grassland management and possible interpretation of the buried medieval village at PA1.

PA2 A walks leaflet to be produced by the Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project to promote access from Hamilton

to Keyham and include access through Scruptoft Parish along designated Rights of Way.

## 1. **Background Information**

- 1.1 **Site Name** - Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve
- 1.2 **District and County** - Harborough District, Leicestershire
- 1.3 **Declaring authority** - Harborough District Council (in consultation with Leicester City Council).
- 1.4 **Area** - 16.79 hectares
- 1.5 **Ownership** - Leicester City Council (Property Services). Let on an annual grazing licence.
- 1.6 **Site location** - The site is within the urban fringe on the eastern edge of Leicester, within the Parish of Scraptoft. It is bounded by housing in Scraptoft village to the south, by a golf course and sports pitch to north and west, and by Beeby Lane and arable farmland to the east.
- 1.7 **Purpose of formal declaration as an LNR** - In accordance with section 15 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, the purpose of declaring Scraptoft as a Local Nature reserve is to establish ' . . . *land managed for the purpose . . . of preserving flora, fauna or geological or physiological features of special interest in the area . . .* ' .
- 

## 2. **Nature conservation value and current management**

### 2.1 **Main habitat types**

Scraptoft proposed LNR is predominantly unimproved neutral grassland, presently managed by cattle grazing. It is partly surrounded by unmanaged hedgerows and there are clumps of mature Hawthorn scrub scattered throughout the field.

### 2.2 **Grassland**

Although the grassland habitat is not particularly species-rich it does not appear to have experienced agricultural improvement in the past, and supports many species that are characteristic of unimproved neutral grassland in lowland areas. The grassland habitat itself is variable in quality due to past grazing regimes. Some areas have been damaged by overgrazing and poaching, and are now dominated by tall herbs. However, there are still areas of herb-rich grassland, although the actual diversity of species is fairly low.

Typical grasses are crested dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), sweet vernal (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), meadow barley (*Hordeum secalinum*) and red fescue

(*Festuca rubra*), with herbs such as meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), creeping cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*), red clover (*Trifolium pratensis*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*). Hay rattle (*Rhinanthus minor* agg.) is rare. In the damper areas, tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia caespitosa*), hard rush (*Juncus inflexus*) and hairy sedge (*Carex hirta*) are present.

'Ridge and furrow' is present in the northern part of the 'L'-shaped field. The remains of various structures towards Beeby Road and the evidence of ground disturbance in this area are associated with its former use for military purposes.

The field has experienced an irregular grazing pattern in the last few years, due to the 2001 outbreak of foot and mouth disease. In 1999 it was somewhat undergrazed with a small suckler herd of cattle (about 10 beasts). In 2001 it was overgrazed, with up to 30 cattle.

### **2.3 Tall herbs**

A pattern of under and overgrazing may have happened in the past. Parts of the field, particularly towards Beeby Road, are invaded by thistles (*Cirsium arvense* and *C. vulgare*), docks (*Rumex obtusifolius* and *R. crispus*) and ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*). Whilst a certain amount of these tall herbs are beneficial for wildlife, providing a good nectar and pollen source for invertebrates and food for seed-eating birds later on, uncontrolled growth will bring about the loss of the more valuable unimproved grassland in parts of the site. The grazing licensee is responsible for controlling these species, by hand-pulling and cutting.

### **2.4 Scrub**

Scattered bramble and hawthorn scrub is also present over the whole field, and is an important habitat as long as it does not colonise any further. Islands of scrub add structural diversity to the grassland by breaking up the field into smaller units or glades, which are grazed at different rates. Structural diversity in the sward is an important factor in increasing invertebrate diversity, and the scrub itself is also a valuable invertebrate habitat, as well as providing nest-sites and feeding areas for birds and small mammals. The blackberries are also very popular with local residents! The scrub should not be allowed to encroach any more than at present. A limited amount of scrub removal would be desirable in places where the islands of scrub are joining up, creating areas which are not grazed at all. If this scrub growth is unchecked, it would be detrimental in the long term because it will cause the loss of unimproved grassland.

### **2.5 Ponds, marsh and ditch**

The grassland also has a number of marshy hollows, and drains towards a ditch in the south-west corner. There is a silted up field pond in the extreme south-west corner, colonised by large stands of greater willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*). These features may be relics of the drainage systems associated with the former prisoner of war

camp, and it is probably best not to disturb them. Several of the former drains have caved in and have been infilled.

## **2.6 Hedges**

There are hedges around the field except along the sports pitch boundary, which is separated from the field by a very intrusive chain-link fence. Most of the hedges are very overgrown and have developed into lines of trees and mature scrub of considerable ecological value; it would not be appropriate to lay these. New hedges need to be planted, and existing ones gapped up, along Beeby Lane and the sports pitch boundary which could be considered for laying in the future.

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## **3. Use by local community and volunteer groups**

### **3.1 Local people**

Scraptoft proposed Local Nature Reserve is used by local people for a variety of activities, including dog walking, blackberrying and children's play. There is informal access off Beeby Road and from some houses off Hall Road/Keays Way.

### **3.2 Links with voluntary organisations and nature conservation bodies**

The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) has been, and will be involved in practical work on site.

### **3.3 Constraints on public use**

Because it is grazed by a suckler herd of cattle, including a bull, increased or formalised public access is not appropriate. Consultation of local residents carried out in 2000 revealed that, although the majority of residents were supportive of the Local Nature Reserve designation, there was strong opposition to the creation of formal access into the site. This was due to fears about the security of the properties backing on to the nature reserve.

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## **4. The local context**

### **4.1 Unimproved grasslands in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland**

The most important habitats on the proposed LNR are the grasslands. Species-rich neutral grasslands are believed to be suffering the highest rate of decline of any habitat within Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. The current rate of loss is estimated to be 5% per year. This very much reflects the national state of this habitat, which has decreased in England and Wales by an estimated 97% between

1930 and 1984 (reference: *Biodiversity Challenge: an Action Plan for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (1998)*). Many of the surviving areas of grassland within our area are reduced to small fragments of their former extent, so the large size of Beeby Lane field is of significance.

#### **4.2 Scraptoft Green Wedge Action Plan**

The proposed Local Nature Reserve lies within the Scraptoft Green Wedge, as designated in Harborough District Local Plan (April 2001), for which the County Council's 'Stepping Stones' Project has drawn up an Action Plan. The purpose of the Action Plan is to bring about improvements to biodiversity, landscape and public use and access into the Green Wedge, which is within Leicester's urban fringe.

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### **5. Past uses**

**5.1 Prisoner of war camp** - further research needs to be done on this interesting aspect of the site. The only evidence we have is an undated aerial photograph estimated to be from the 1940s/50s. The use does not appear on any ordnance survey maps from the period.

#### **5.2 Recent history.**

Since the 1950s it is believed to have been grazed by cattle.

At one time it was proposed as a new cemetery for the City of Leicester - a proposal now withdrawn because of the ground conditions on site.

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## SCRAPTOFT LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

## MANAGEMENT PLAN - 2002 to 2006

## A: Maintain quality and increase extent of species-rich grassland

	<i>Action</i>	<i>Implemented by:</i>	<i>cost</i>
A1	Graze at circa 15 cattle or horse per year.	LCC: grazing licence	N/A
A2	Restrict supplementary feeding to winter months and in eastern corner near gate and water trough	LCC: grazing licence	N/A
A3	Cut tall herbs annually before seeding (June/July)	LCC: Grazing tenant	N/A
A4	Pull Ragwort and remove from field	LCC: Grazing tenant	N/A
A5	Selectively cut back circa 20 mature Hawthorns to ground level per year and allow to re-grow; target scrub near best grassland. Allocate area to burn arising OR remove from site	BTCV/ Volunteers	2 days @ £150/day
A6	Do not undertake agricultural improvements – application of pesticides, herbicides, inorganic fertilisers, ploughing ,re-seeding and drainage improvements	LCC: Grazing licence	N/A

## B: Improve appearance and biodiversity value of boundaries

	<i>Action</i>	<i>Implemented by</i>	<i>cost</i>
B1	Find funding for and plant new hedge of Hawthorn:Hazel:Field Maple (ratio 4:1:1) along sports pitch boundary and protect with single strand barbed wire fence until established (planting @ £3.50/m; fence @ £3.50/m)	HDC/LCC	£3150
B2	Find funding for and plant/gap up new hedge of Hawthorn:Hazel:Field Maple (ratio 4:1:1) along Beeby Road boundary and protect with 3 strand barbed wire fence until established (planting c. £2000, fence @ £4.00/m)	HDC/LCC	£3000

## C: Inform public

C1	Find funding for and install information sign at safe place along Beeby Road	HDC/LCC	c. £500
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## D: Protect site from adverse development and damage

D1	Prepare information needed to consult English Nature	LCC	N/A
D2	Declare as LNR	HDC	N/A

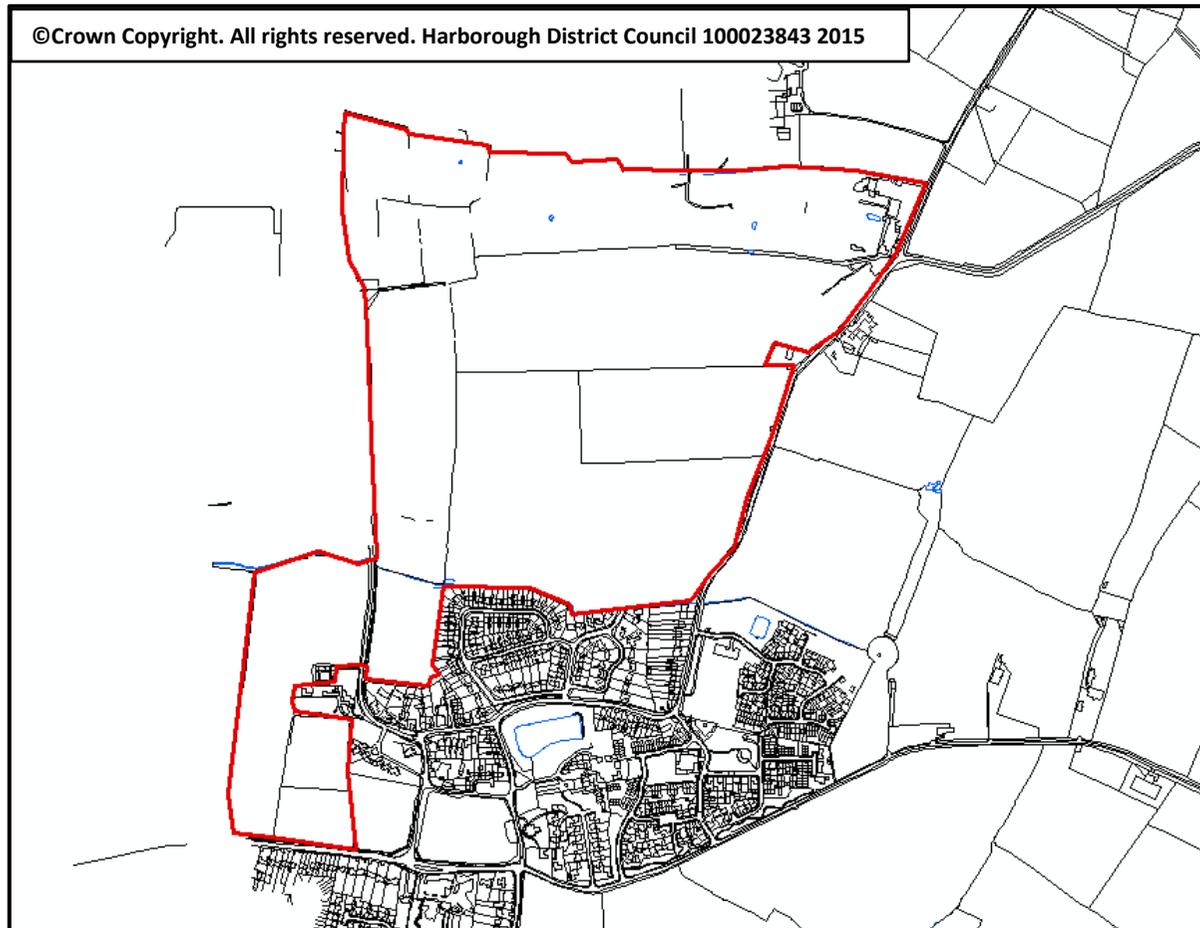
**E: Ensure safety of people and grazing stock**

E1	Fill in holes in field	LCC/BTCV	£400
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## APPENDIX 3

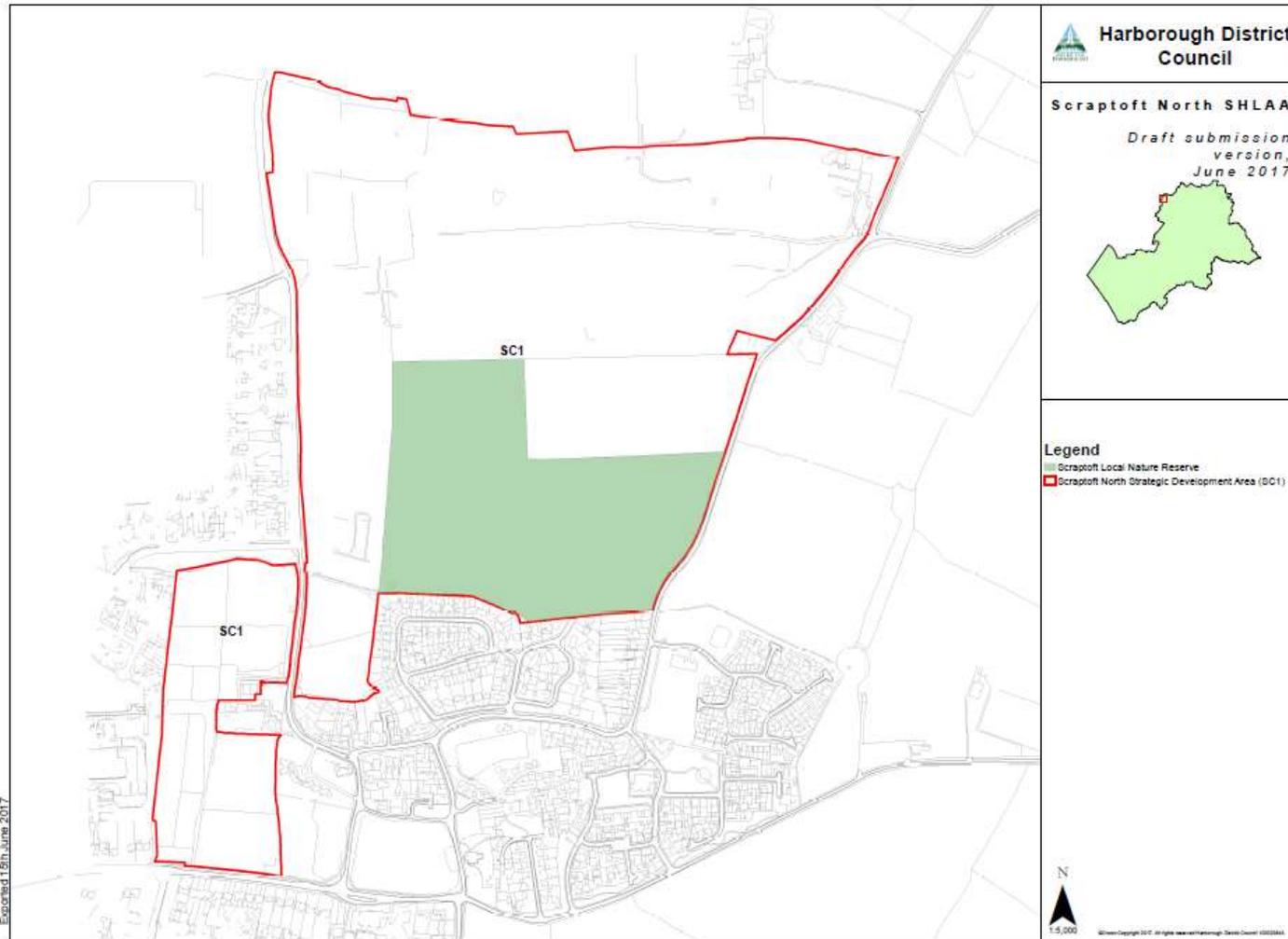
### Scraptoft North SHLAA Map

(Extract from Harborough District Council Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment – Site Assessment Companion Guide – Strategic Development Areas, 2015 Update)



# APPENDIX 4

## Map to show Scraftoft Local Nature Reserve and the proposed Scraftoft North Strategic Development Area



# APPENDIX 5:

## Map of Scraftoft LNR Strategy

(as proposed by the promoters of Scraftoft North Strategic Development area)

