

2018

HARBOROUGH LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

MATTER 8: SITE ALLOCATIONS

PLANIT-X ON BEHALF OF SCRAPTOFT PARISH COUNCIL AND
THURNBY & BUSHBY PARISH COUNCIL

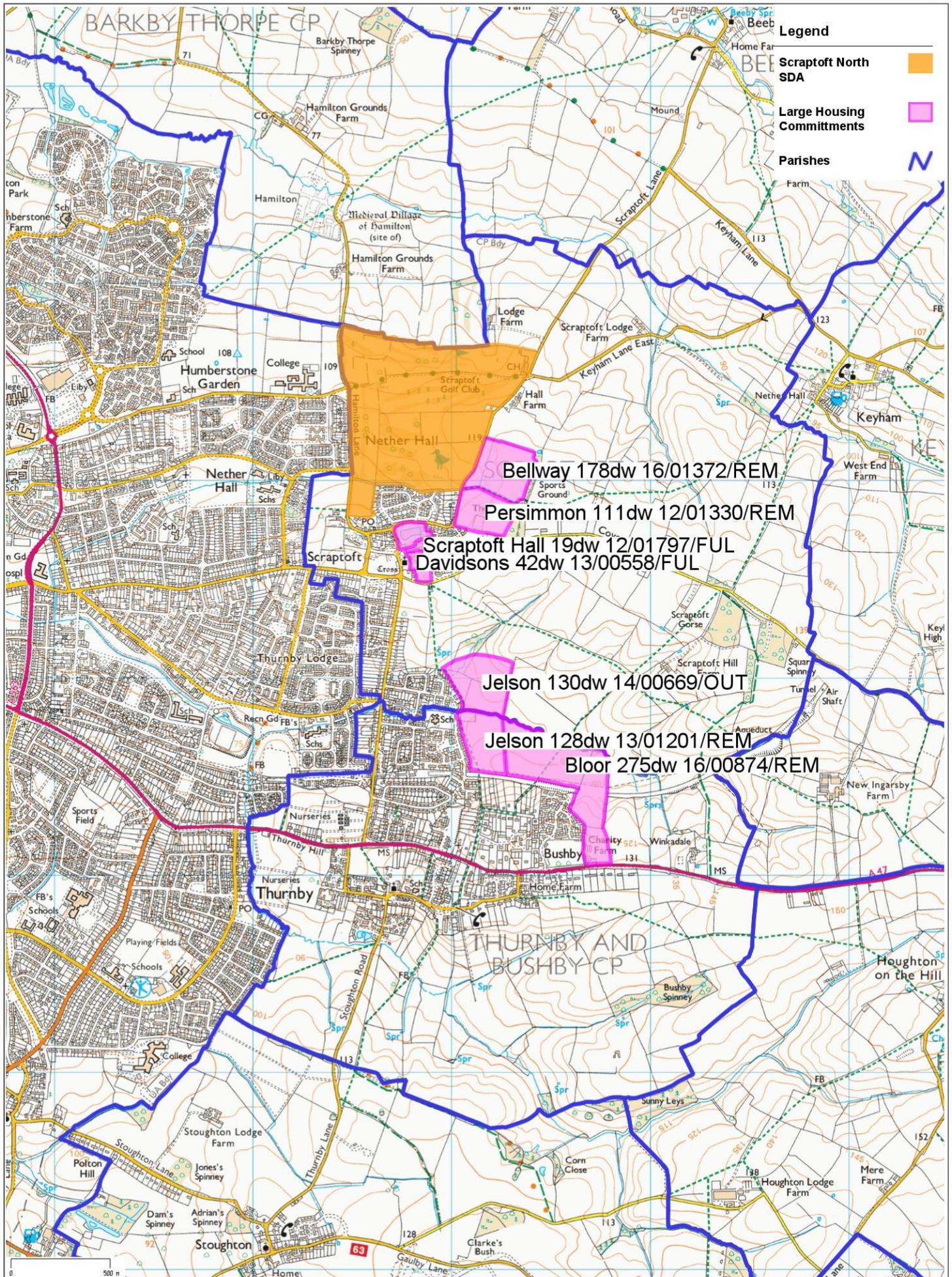
SC1: Scraptoft North Strategic Development Area

Introduction

1. Scraptoft, Thurnby and Bushby are settlements adjoining the built-up area of Leicester. They have grown substantially over time, centred on the historic cores of Scraptoft and Thurnby. The settlements benefit from access to some local services and facilities, but also to a wide range of higher-order retail, employment and cultural services in the wider Leicester area.
2. The Local Plan allocates a Strategic Development Area (SDA) on land north of Scraptoft (Policy SC1). As well as meeting local needs, Harborough District Council state that the delivery of 1,200 dwellings on this allocation could help to meet any unmet need arising from other local authorities within the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area (HMA). This matter is considered in more detail in our representation on Matter 2: The Housing Requirement and Its Delivery.
3. The SDA lies entirely within Scraptoft parish, as shown on page 2.
4. For decades, strategic and local planning policies have helped to protect the individual identities of Scraptoft, Thurnby and Bushby. The respective parish councils recognise that the area should accommodate sustainable housing growth provided this continues to protect the individual identities of the settlements. They are also keen to ensure that the quality of life of their parishioners is protected by ensuring that new development is supported by appropriate infrastructure improvements.

Scraptoft Neighbourhood Plan

5. Neighbourhood Plans are now a well-established part of the English planning system, but in March 2016 when the Scraptoft Neighbourhood Plan was 'made', the process was still relatively new.
6. The Scraptoft Neighbourhood Plan is now not only part of the Development Plan for the area, planning practice guidance expects Harborough District Council to take it into account when preparing its Local Plan strategy and policies (Paragraph: 013 Reference ID: 12-013-2070728).



8.4 What is the full anticipated effect of this allocation on the following locations, having regard to the evidence base?

Traffic movement and congestion

7. The main routes through Scraptoft operate as a one-way system with traffic exiting the village to the south via Church Hill. There has been a high level of development around Scraptoft, Thurnby and Bushby in recent years and this has introduced additional traffic to the centre of Scraptoft and the following junctions where there are already capacity issues:
 - mini roundabout to the south at the junction of Covert Lane, Church Lane, Station Lane and Scraptoft Lane; and
 - staggered junction on A47 Uppingham Road with Station Road and Grange Lane.
8. It is clear from the available assessments that development at this location is hindered by poor connectivity to the west of Leicester and the rest of the country. The road network near the SDA is primarily single-lane residential or rural roads with low capacity. There are destinations that would attract residents of the SDA to the east, but generally the eastern side of Leicester is less well connected than the north, west and south of the City.
9. Located on the City/County border the SDA would be likely to generate two predominant traffic movements:
 - Firstly, radial into the city using Scaptoft Lane to access the A47, combined with orbital movements to access the Eastern side of the city.
 - Secondly orbital movements on County Council highways to access Oadby to the South and the Syston area to access A46/A607.
10. It is the first of these traffic movements that is of principal concern to Scraptoft Parish Council and Thurnby & Bushby Parish Council. This would see traffic passing through the centre of Scraptoft and then onto either Scraptoft Lane or Station Lane/Station Road to access the A47. Congestion on Scraptoft Lane or other routes westwards towards the City of Leicester are likely to encourage more traffic onto the Station Lane/Station Road route to the A47. The junction of Station Road with the A47 is already at capacity.
11. In addition, traffic travelling from the proposed SDA through Thurnby would compound traffic throughput; congestion on Grange Lane through to Main Street and Stoughton Road; and, would further compromise pedestrian safety in the centre of the village in the proximity of St Luke's Primary School and other village amenities.

Safety and congestion near schools

12. The Local Education Authority for the proposed SDA is Leicestershire County Council. The catchment primary school is likely to be Fernvale Primary School on Somerby Road, Thurnby until a new primary school is provided in the SDA. The school is already over-subscribed. Fernvale Primary School is located in a

residential area with limited 'drop-off' and 'pick-up' facilities. Congestion, safety and inconsiderate parking is an ongoing problem.

13. Similar issues are faced by St Lukes C of E Primary School, Main Street, Thurnby. St Lukes C of E Primary School is in Thurnby village centre where off-street parking is limited.

Air quality

14. There is little evidence to suggest that air quality has been a consideration in the selection of this option.

Village character

15. It is clear from the preparation of the Scraptoft Neighbourhood Plan that local people want to protect the identity of Scraptoft and prevent the village core from merging with neighbouring settlements. They also want to conserve heritage, protect important green areas and improve the design of new development so that it respects local character.
16. The Neighbourhood Plan has responded by recognising the unique landscape that characterises the area, protecting the countryside between the Scraptoft village core and the suburbs of Leicester, identifying green areas of local importance, and conserving and enhancing heritage assets and the natural environment. Some of these matters are addressed in more detail below.
17. Many developments in Scraptoft consist of standard, 'identikit' homes that typify new developments built by some volume house builders. Some of the housing looks exactly the same as developments elsewhere and could be anywhere in the country. Too often new developments are dominated by the same, identikit designs that bear no resemblance to local character. The Scraptoft North SDA promises more of the same.

The historic environment

18. Scraptoft was recorded in the Domesday Book as Scrapentot, part of Gartree wapentake.
19. The Scraptoft Conservation Area was designated in 1994. The Conservation Area incorporates the original village core of Main Street, Hamilton Lane to the complex of Nether Hall and its outbuildings, and Scraptoft Rise. Within this area several buildings exhibit an attractive vernacular quality and include examples of Swithland slate roofing. The Conservation Area also includes the large square of open space of the Edith Cole Memorial Ground which with its surrounding hedges recalls the agricultural history of the settlement. It is the character of this part of the Conservation Area that is most at risk from the proposed SDA although the character of the whole area is affected by through traffic and on-street parking.

8.5 What mitigation measures are realistically capable of being put in place through a development scheme on this site, and what mechanisms would be employed?

20. Neither Local Plan Policy SC1 or its supporting text contains any specific traffic mitigation measures. Although the Land East of Hamilton Lane Scraptoft Initial Transport Feasibility Assessment 2016 (TRP4) identifies a series of measures which, it is claimed, will not only mitigate the development traffic but also offer benefits to existing road users, this has not been demonstrated.
21. In relation to access to the site, opportunities exist to provide access from Hamilton Lane at two locations to tie into the westward links via Keyham Lane west and New Romney Crescent. By forming the accesses with these westward links, there is an opportunity to discourage north/south traffic on Hamilton Lane and through the centre of Scraptoft. The connection of the development to Beeby Lane will also provide residents of the Bellway and Persimmon developments (along with other residents living in this area) with more direct access to Leicester city and areas to the west rather than travelling through the centre of Scraptoft.
22. TRP4 proposals also include traffic management measures in the centre of Scraptoft.
23. These measures may be a benefit to the residents of Scraptoft who have experienced a growth in traffic within the centre of the village from the various developments that have taken place in recent years. However, even if they were demonstrated to be effective these measures, together with improvements at the above-mentioned junctions need to be front-loaded for the following reasons:
 - Existing conditions within Scraptoft village centre and at the junction of Covert Lane/Church Lane/Station Lane/Scraptoft Lane and A47 Uppingham Road/Station Road/Grange Lane are already unacceptable; and
 - Until such time as new community facilities are provided, new residents of the SDA will rely on existing services and facilities, many of which are to the south of the proposed development.

8.7 Is it necessary to include social infrastructure trigger points in the policy? Are the thresholds for the provision of the school and social facilities appropriate and what provision is made for residents prior to those thresholds being reached?

24. It is important to ensure that social infrastructure is delivered early within the life of the proposed SDA otherwise new residents will be dependent upon existing services and facilities. These include schools, local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, public houses and places of worship. Many of these lie to the south of Scraptoft or in the village centre: Fernvale and St Lukes Primary Schools in Thurnby, Co-op foodstores in Scraptoft and Thurnby, Scraptoft Village Store, Scraptoft Village Hall, The White House PH, All Saints

Church, Willowbrook Medical Centre, Bushby Surgery. Access from the SDA to these services and facilities would require traffic to pass through the centre of Scraptoft.

25. There are also local concerns regarding the capacity of some of these services. For example, Fernvale Primary School is already over-subscribed.

8.9 What planning purpose would the new Green Wedge fulfil? Would it be an adequate replacement? Is it appropriate for a school and its grounds, a cemetery, and for built recreational development?

26. Green Wedges comprise the open areas around and between parts of settlements, which maintain the distinction between the countryside and built up areas, prevent the coalescence (merging) of adjacent places and can also provide recreational opportunities.
27. Most of the SDA is designated as part of the Leicester/Scraptoft Green Wedge. The Green Wedge between Scraptoft and Leicester to the north of Scraptoft is currently safeguarded from development to prevent the coalescence of the two settlements and provide recreational facilities and access to the countryside for residents.
28. The detailed boundary of Green Wedge was originally defined in the Scraptoft, Thurnby and Stoughton Local Plan (1987) and was carried forward into the Harborough District Local Plan (2001) with no change. A review of the Green Wedge was undertaken by Harborough District Council in 2011 and this was used to help define a new boundary for the Green Wedge in the Scraptoft Neighbourhood Plan (Policy S6).
29. The Green Wedge Review: Draft Technical Update 2015 (LAN4) confirms the role of Green Wedges and the importance of the Leicester/Scraptoft Green Wedge. It proposed an extension to include Edith Cole Memorial Park (consistent with the Scraptoft Neighbourhood Plan).
30. The majority of the existing Green Wedge is to be deleted by the Harborough Local Plan 2011-2031 to accommodate the Scraptoft North SDA. The area to be deleted includes Scraptoft Golf Course and Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve (LNR). This allows for the western extension of the urban area of Leicester and its coalescence with Scraptoft. This is clearly at odds with the aims and objectives of the Scraptoft Neighbourhood Plan which seek to conserve the identity of the village.
31. Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve on the Beeby Road to the north-east of Scraptoft village, was once a prisoner of war camp, but now contains scrub, a mature hedgerow, trees, a pond and a ditch known as Scraptoft Brook. The LNR provides an important green barrier between the built-up area of Scraptoft and the surrounding agricultural and formal manicured landscapes. Its mosaic of habitats complements and reflects the village gardens that border its southern side. The 2005 Management Plan for Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve

(Leicester City Council) confirms the site's ecological importance and its role in protecting Leicester's Green Wedge.

32. Little of the site has changed significantly in quality since the previous survey of 1999 that was used to inform the LNR declaration of 2002. The north-eastern part of the site has declined, due to over-grazing by horses, but aerial photo evidence suggests this is less than in previous years. The rest of the grassland is not over-grazed, and has a similar species composition and habitat description to that recorded in 1999, and the scrub does not appear to have changed. There is still some informal use by the public.
33. Scraptoft Parish Council and Thurnby & Bushby Parish Council support Leicestershire County Council's conclusion that, except for the north-eastern part, the site continues to meet Local Wildlife Site designation criteria. Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust also disagrees with the proposal to de-declare the Scraptoft Nature Reserve. The retention and improvement of Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve is supported by Policy S11 of the Scraptoft Neighbourhood Plan.
34. Policy S7 of the Scraptoft Neighbourhood Plan defines an Area of Separation to ensure Scraptoft retains its identity and prevents coalescence with development to the south, including Thurnby and Bushby. This area is now to be re-designated as Green Wedge in the Harborough Local Plan 2011-2031 (Policy GD7), but this is not compensating Green Wedge as the area is already protected by the Area of Separation designation.
35. The residual Green Wedge to the west of Scraptoft represents a very narrow open area between Scraptoft and Leicester. Built development here would lead to the coalescence of the two settlements, eroding the village character of Scraptoft and harm the adjoining Conservation Area. It is not a suitable location for a school, cemetery or built recreational development.

8.10 The policy does not appear to tie the provision of the replacement golf course to the development of Site SC1; is it necessary to do so?

36. The Framework protects the golf course from built development unless:
 - a. an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
 - b. the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
 - c. the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.
37. In accordance with criterion b, the Harborough Local Plan should secure the provision of a replacement golf course.