

## **Scraptoft North Strategic Development Area (SDA) Green Infrastructure Strategy – Emerging Proposals**

### **Background**

The land north of Scraptoft village is currently being considered as a Strategic Development Area (SDA) for some 1,200 new homes with supporting facilities including a local shopping centre and new primary school as part of the emerging Harborough District Local Plan. The Local Plan is looking to allocate strategic sites for the period 2016 to 2031.

The Scraptoft North SDA includes a designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR) on land that is owned by Leicester City Council but within Harborough district. This is part of the southern part of the area, the northern part is in use as a golf course. The LNR however, seems not to have been actively managed by either authority for a number of years, and the ecological importance of the LNR is now insignificant, with the land having been heavily grazed. A report detailing the designation of the LNR and its current condition has been prepared by Lloyd Bore consulting ecologists that also refers to recent habitat surveys of the site and the local area. De-designation of the LNR will be required for the SDA to go ahead as proposed, and Harborough District Council is responsible for the de-designation and is undertaking consultations on the de-designation.

Parker Strategic Land Limited is promoting the development of the Scraptoft North SDA. Parkers are purchasing the existing golf course land that is in a separate ownership, and providing a replacement golf course elsewhere in the district at Houghton on the Hill. Parkers are also reaching agreements with the other landowner Leicester City Council to bring that land forward as part of the comprehensive proposal.

The master plan for the SDA is being progressed by the promoters and certain principles are being identified which will inform a comprehensive new green infrastructure framework for the new development and these are outlined in this note. The measures aim to demonstrate that the de-designation of the LNR is not significant given its current condition and use, and that a comprehensive new landscape framework is proposed that will allow housing needs to be met and provide a rich new landscape setting for the development area.

### **Proposed Green Infrastructure Framework**

The overall aim is that the proposals are set within a generous, rich and varied new landscape that protects existing wildlife habitats and captures the opportunities provided by the new development to enhance the local green infrastructure, and improves access to, enjoyment and understanding of the local natural environment.

The emerging framework is shown in the Green Infrastructure Plan prepared by Icení (dated 2 May 2017) which illustrates the following main Green Infrastructure components of the proposals:

#### **1. Scraptoft Brook Park**

The intention is to create a new park to the north of the Scraptoft Brook (which defines the northern edge of the village) and provide a generous separation from the existing built edge of the village to the new built development at the SDA. This would

be around 100m deep extending to the north and provide a range of new natural habitats and have a strong and rich natural theme, with trees and small woodlands, grasses, ponds and water features, and potentially include a softening of the brook edges to create a more natural wetland habitat and mitigate for occasional flooding along the brook.

## 2. SuDS Swale Network

The surface water drainage of the proposals would be conveyed to the existing watercourses via a network of swales within the park system through the scheme. The southern part of the scheme would drain to the Scraftoft Brook and the northern to the Melton Brook. The swales would be shallow natural channels with detention ponds and flow control devices to regulate the flow of water, so that the existing greenfield run-off rates are not exceeded.

The southern part of the scheme would have an entirely new system, with ponds and channels running north to south and potential for a series of ponds along the Brook Park. The northern part of the scheme would include channels and ponds and discharge to existing field drains and overland to then discharge to the Melton Brook. The channels and ponds would have shallow slopes and natural edges and be planted to encourage a rich diversity of habitats, and also be accessible with features designed to encourage interaction with the system, such as seating areas, pond-dipping platforms and boardwalks.

## 3. Boundary Trees/Woodlands

The site has a strong boundary of mature trees that can be retained and reinforced and provide a strong, largely continuous screening of the site in views from the surrounding landscape. The screen is strongest along the northern and western edges but more broken with larger gaps on the eastern, Beeby Road boundary. The aim is to reinforce the planting on the edges of the scheme and set development back to protect existing trees and allow new trees to become established, with graded planted edges with shrubs and grasses along the boundary edges.

## 4. Major Tree Groups and the "Lane"

There are several major tree groups within the site, many associated with the use of the land as a golf course, but some associated with the historic lane that crosses the site, that are worthy of protection. An Arboricultural Survey in 2016 assessed the significance of the tree groups and identified those that are of most value, which occur largely in the northern half of the plan area and include some boundary trees, trees associated with the old lane and some along the existing golf course fairways. The aim is to retain the best of these groups which also helps to provide an 'instant' landscape for the new development, and where possible set them within new open space areas such as greens and courtyards, so that they can continue to thrive. Detailed tree surveys will also be undertaken to assess the health of individual trees during the design stage.

The historic lane is proposed to be retained along with its boundary planting as a feature through the scheme, connecting the proposed entrance square at the western edge of the development, through to an open space gateway at the east, before the route continues along Keyham Lane to the villages of Keyham and towards Hungarton.

## 5. The Retained Green Wedge

This is the land to the west of the village and east of Netherhall estate and is currently largely laid out as horse paddocks. The land will remain open and the existing network of hedges and major tree groups can remain and again the brook edge to the north could be modeled to provide a more natural form and create opportunities for a more extensive and natural wetland habitats. The land is fairly flat and the fields regular shapes that would be suitable for formal sports pitches and may also be appropriate for the proposed primary school, and access could be achieved both off Hamilton Lane and from the west via an extension to Brocklesby Way. The pitches could be located largely within the frame provided by the existing trees and major tree groups and so retain the existing mature setting.

#### 6. Amenity Trees, Grass Verges, Greens and other incidental Open Spaces

The proposals would also include incidental squares, greens, verges, tree avenues and other open spaces throughout the development areas that can be planted and managed to encourage biodiversity. For instance, grasslands could include wildflower species and trees could include flowering and fruiting varieties to attract wildlife such as birds and butterflies.

### **Conclusions**

The proposals for Green Infrastructure across the site provide a comprehensive opportunity to create a new green setting for the development which will enhance the proposals and provide accessible high quality green space close to where people live. This would more than compensate for the loss of the LNR and would bring the open spaces into more direct use by the local residents, and be managed more directly and actively for their use and enjoyment than the LNR has been in the past. The proposed Brook Park and the Green Wedge park in particular, provide major new open spaces for local people to enjoy and the Brook Park, along with the proposed sustainable drainage proposals, will help re-establish a natural setting for this watercourse. The emerging Green Infrastructure proposals provide around 30ha of open space, which is around 45% of the total site area.