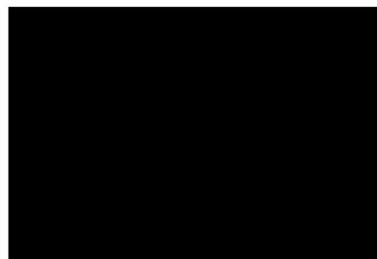
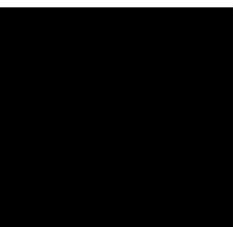


Our ref: Pr-1048.AM.let.002.CF
Your ref:

29th April 2025



Dear 

Re. Land at Charity Farm, Uppingham Road, Bushby – Landscape Response to Green Wedge Designation

Further to our recent correspondence, I have now reviewed the Green Wedge designation associated with Charity Farm, together with the Green Wedge Review (December 2024) prepared by Harborough District Council (HDC), and would make the following observations from a landscape perspective.

Landscape Review of Leicester / Scraftoft / Bushby Green Wedge

1. Harborough District has two development control designations, the Green Wedge; and Areas of Separation. The latter simply seeks to maintain separation between neighbouring settlements, preventing coalescence, where the gap is less than 1km and at least one of the settlements is in the 'medium village' tier or above (as identified by HDC's Settlement Hierarchy Assessment (2023)). Green Wedges are also designated to prevent coalescence, with the additional objectives of guiding development form; providing access from urban areas to the countryside; and providing recreational opportunities.
2. There are currently two Green Wedges within HDC, both adjacent to the Leicester urban area. Charity Farm lies within the Leicester / Scraftoft / Bushby Green Wedge. The designation extends east, from the edge of Nether Hall, as far as the western side of the former railway corridor, to the south east of Scraftoft Hill Farm. The designation follows the lower slopes of the localised valley, with the Thurnby Brook forming the southern extent. The northern edge of the designation follows several field boundaries around the 120m contour, although there is some variation as a result of the undulating topography.
3. The 2024 Green Wedge Review breaks the Leicester / Scraftoft / Bushby Green Wedge down into 4 sub-areas, with sub-areas C & D incorporating land associated with Charity Farm. Sub-areas A & B lie to the west, with sub-area A covering the remaining open space between Nether Hall (to the west), Thurnby Lodge (to the south) and the settlement of Scraftoft, which lies to the north east of the designation. Sub-Area B extends south east from Covet Lane, forming the western extent of the designation where it lies within the Thurnby Brook valley. The plan in page 19 of the Green Wedge Review illustrates the extent of the designation and the sub-areas. An extract is included below at Figure 1 for ease of reference.

GW1: Leicester/Scraptoft/Bushby



Figure 1: Extract from HDC Green Wedge Review (2024)

4. In terms of **preventing the merging of settlements**, it is clear from the plan extract above that sub-areas C & D do not contribute to the separation of Scraptoft from the wider urban area. This role is achieved by sub-areas A & B.
5. The Green Wedge Review considers that while sub-area D makes a weak contribution to separating the settlements, sub-area C's contribution is moderate. As can be seen on the above plan, this clearly can't be the case as there is a large area of undesignated land to the north of the Green Wedge which is not subject to any development control designations, with sub-area C located away from the edge of Scraptoft.
6. Based on the above, it is considered that sub-areas C & D make **little or no contribution** to preventing the merging of settlements.
7. In terms of **guiding development form**, the current designation clearly seeks to curtail any further growth into the valley from the recent developments to the south. However, this would be at odds with the findings of the 2024 HDC Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LSA) which also forms part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan. The LSA identifies a series of land parcels across the District and assesses their sensitivity to proposed residential and employment development. Sub-areas B, C & D lie within Parcel LR4 which covers the landscape between Covert Lane and Thurnby Brook, extending east, from the edge of Bushby / Thurnby, as far as the disused railway line. Parcel LR4 covers a greater area than the Green Wedge and includes the more elevated landscape, between the designation and Covert Lane, and the wooded landscapes to the north east of Scraptoft Hill Farm.

8. It is noted that the LSA identifies that the elevated, northern areas are visually open, with the southern areas, set down in the landscape adjacent to the existing built edge, more enclosed. Overall, the LSA concludes that the parcel has a Moderate – High sensitivity to residential development, but sets out a series of development management guidelines to minimise adverse effects upon landscape and visual character. These include:

“Ensure that development maintains the perception of physical and visual coalescence between the settlements of Thurnby/Bushby and Scraftoft.

Ensure that development respects the local ridgeline along Covert Lane, where both local and more distant receptors may be adversely affected.

Development should respect the setting of Scraftoft Conservation Area.

Areas less sensitive to development change include lower land adjacent to harsh settlement edge of Thurnby/Bushby.

Consider the potential to further enhance vegetation along water course corridors.

Preserve views from higher land to the north over the surrounding landscape, including views from the edge of Scraftoft, Covert Lane and elevated public rights of way.”

9. As can be seen in plan and on the ground, recent growth has been to the east of the city, extending along the Thurnby Brook valley. More established development already extended along the parallel ridgelines to the north and south, with the contemporary residential estates forming infill on the valley sides. While the more recent growth has been to the south of Thurnby Brook, development has extended onto the northern side of the valley (Spencer Clarke Road), with a new sports pitch and open space also proposed on the northern side of the watercourse. As such, development along the lower valley sides, extending to the east of the city would not be at odds with the prevailing character and it is considered that sub-areas C & D would not guide development in the right areas.
10. It is clear that the more sensitive landscapes are those to the north of the Green Wedge, between the designation and Covert Lane, rather than the lower valley sides associated with sub-areas C & D. Reconfiguring the Green Wedge to cover the more elevated landscape, leaving the lower slopes available to assist in the delivery of housing, would ensure that development on the more visible, open ridge is avoided, a more sensitive edge to the existing urban areas is created and opportunities to deliver a high quality network of green and blue infrastructure, as well as public open space and habitat creation along Thurnby Brook are achieved.
11. Furthermore, the current Green Wedge, as set out within the Review and illustrated at Figure 1, above, does not take into account Housing Allocation S1 – Scraftoft East, which extends across all of sub-area B, between the northern edge of the recent development associated with Bushby and the southern edge of Scraftoft. An extract from the Draft Proposals Map is included below for reference at Figure 2.
12. The allocation completely fails to maintain any sense of separation between Scraftoft and Bushby, with the remaining Green Wedge shown on the Draft Proposals Map forming an arbitrary corridor through a development of 950 dwellings. The revised Green Wedge shown on the Draft Proposals Map does not appear to follow any defined boundaries which would be at odds with the methodology set out within the Review at paragraph 2.9.

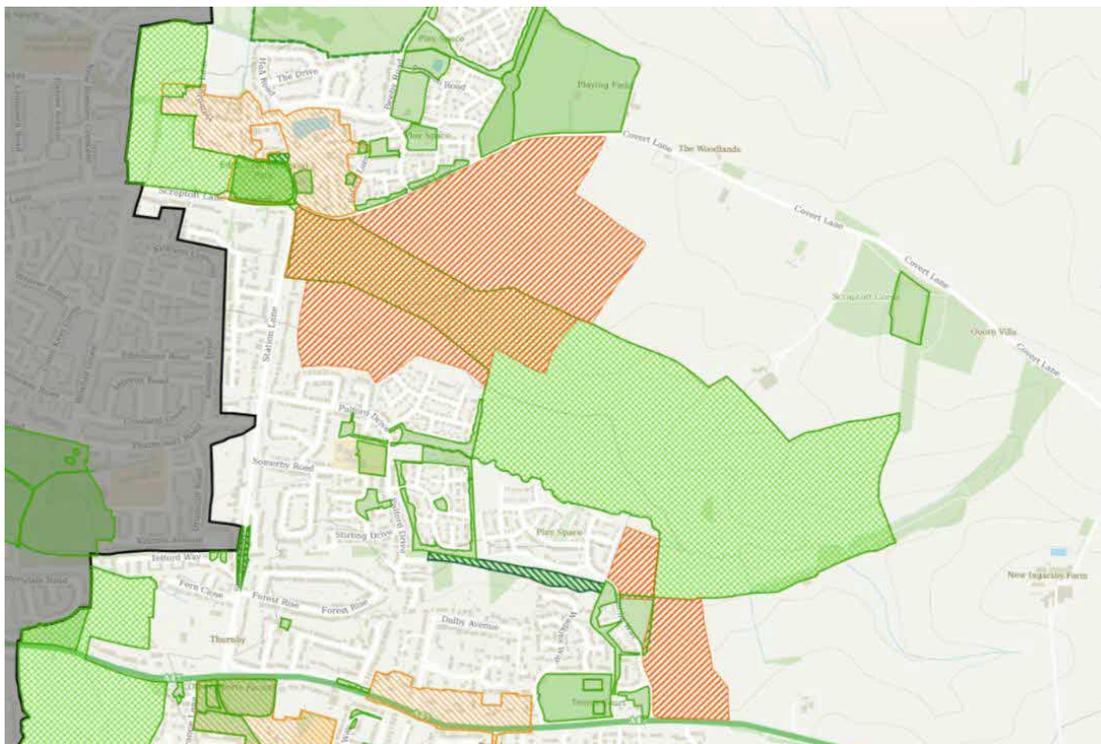


Figure 2: Extract from HDC Reg 19 Draft Local Plan Proposals Map

13. The allocation reflects the Council's aspirations for delivering housing in this part of the District and their suggested direction of future settlement growth. As it is currently shown, the Green Wedge would force future development north, onto the more elevated, open ridgeline and give rise to the perception of Scraftoft extending south, beyond the ridgeline, into the Thurnby Brook valley.
14. As such, it is considered that the contribution that sub-areas C & D make to guiding development that would respond positively to the prevailing growth of the urban areas as well as the findings of the LSA, is **weak**.
15. Green Wedge aims C and D, **providing access from urban areas in green spaces / open countryside; and providing recreational opportunities**, are similar in their objectives to improve connectivity between the urban and rural areas. While it is acknowledged that several footpaths extend across sub-areas C & D, the reconfiguring of the Green Wedge designation would not compromise the public's ability to access and cross these parcels. These are adopted public rights of way, which typically follow field boundaries. As such, it is entirely reasonable to assume that they would be retained and enhanced as part of any future, landscape-led development within the lower parts of the valley.
16. Furthermore, similar to the failure to recognise the sensitivity of the more elevated landscape immediately to the north of the designation, the Green Wedge fails to acknowledge the sensitivity of Covert Lane from a recreational perspective. This is a well-used public right of way, with the tarmac finish and dead-end nature of the road providing year-round access between the urban areas and wider landscape to the east, including the network of footpaths that extend to the north and south of the lane. The sensitivity of Covert Lane is highlighted within the LSA.

17. While it is considered that the presence of several footpaths elevates the contribution that sub-areas C & D make to the Green Wedge, the landscape to the north is equally accessible and, as noted by the LSA, more sensitive. The disused railway corridor and watercourse are not publicly accessible and, as such, the contribution that these features make to these particular aims of the Green Wedge are none. Overall, it is considered that sub-areas C & D make a **moderate** contribution to these aims.

Conclusions

18. While it is clear that the western extent of the Leicester / Scraptoft / Bushby Green Wedge (sub-areas A & B) contributes strongly to the separation of Scraptoft from the wider urban areas to the south and west, sub-areas C & D are located further along the valley and set lower down in the landscape to contribute to the separation of the settlements. In my professional opinion, sub-areas C & D make little or no contribution (weak at most) to preventing the coalescence of the settlements.
19. With regard to guiding development form, the Green Wedge fails to acknowledge the prevailing development pattern and identified growth of the urban area. Most notably, the inclusion of Housing Allocation S1 – Scraptoft East, which would extend across all of sub-area B and would extend development across the northern side of the Thurnby Brook valley, between the watercourse and Covert Lane.
20. It is considered that sub-areas C & D make a weaker contribution to guiding development, particularly given the findings of the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, which identifies that development should respect the local ridgeline along Covert Lane as well as the setting of Scraptoft Conservation Area, with the lower land adjacent to the settlement edge of Thurnby / Bushby identified as less sensitive. It is the more elevated landscape which follows the ridgeline and Covert Lane that would make a greater contribution to shaping the future growth of the urban area than sub-areas C & D.
21. In terms of access to the countryside, it is acknowledged there are several footpaths that cross sub-areas C & D, however, these typically follow field boundaries and it is considered that these could be sensitively accommodated within a landscape-led development which extended along the lower landscape of the valley. The Thurnby Brook forms a robust green corridor along the floor of the valley and it is clear that this could be retained and enhanced as part of a comprehensive scheme of landscaping to contribute positively to local green and blue infrastructure, as well as creating a new publicly accessible route out from the urban area into the countryside to the east. It is concluded that the public's ability to access to the wider countryside setting would not be compromised if sub-areas C & D were excluded from the Green Wedge.
22. In conclusion, while there is a clear justification for sub-areas A & B, it is considered that sub-areas C & D make a weaker contribution to the objectives of the Green Wedge. As such, it is considered that the extent of the designation should be revisited and sub-areas C & D removed.

I trust this is helpful. Naturally should you have any comments or queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

