

Oadby & Wigston - A Green Infrastructure Strategy

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November 2009

Introduction to Green Infrastructure

The East Midlands Regional Plan (March 2008) sets out the Region's commitment to green infrastructure under policy 28 stating

Local Authorities, statutory environmental bodies and developers should work with the voluntary sector, landowners and local communities to ensure the delivery, protection and enhancement of Environmental Infrastructure across the Region. Such infrastructure should contribute to a high quality natural and built environment and to the delivery of sustainable communities.

The Plan continues to define green infrastructure as:

'networks of multi-functional green space which sit within and contribute to the type of high quality natural and built environment required to deliver 'sustainable communities'. Delivering, protecting and enhancing these networks requires the creation of new assets to link with river corridors, waterways, woodlands, nature reserves, urban green space, historic sites and other existing assets.'

To be able to define a green infrastructure network to the south and east of Wigston it is important to understand what assets currently exist, the ability they have to be linked, the intrinsic landscape character that can be strengthened and enhanced through future rural initiative and the way in which people use the landscape and how this can be developed.

The Baseline Environment

Landscape Character

In March 2005 the Local Authority commissioned a landscape character assessment that identified four landscape character areas that include:

- Oadby and Wigston Vales:
- Upper Soar (north),
- Sence Valley, and
- Upper Soar (south)

Lane to the south of Wigston is located in the Oadby and Wigston Vales, more specifically the Wigston East character area. The key characteristics of this area can be summarised as follows:

- Undulating and distinct landform with established field boundaries.

- The gradual transition from town to countryside;
- Public rights of way network provides good links to the countryside;
- Fields ponds are a common feature in this character area.

The land to the south and east of Wigston is defined by a gently rolling topography created by local watercourses that have carved shallow valleys into the landform that fall towards the Sence Valley in the south. The undulating landform restricts distant views and contains the settlement edge to a restricted number of short distance views from roads and footpaths. Further south there is a distinct change in landform beyond the Midland Mainline railway and the Grand Union Canal where the low lying floodplains of the Sence Valley define the landscape.

In terms of vegetation woodland cover is generally limited with the principal resource comprising native field boundary hedgerows and mature field trees. Woodland cover is prominent in locations surrounding the Glen Gorse Golf Course, Wistow Hall, Kilby and riparian vegetation associated with the river and canal.

The land use to the land south and east Wigston is predominantly agricultural with broad areas of intensively managed arable land covering the lower lying fertile alluvial plains. Towards the settlement edge and areas surrounding villages the land use changes to smaller scale pasture, often used as horse paddocks.

Public access from the urban areas to the countryside is currently facilitated by a number of lanes, bridleways and footpaths, however effective links between countryside destinations are somewhat limited.

The assessment recognises the urban fringe qualities of the countryside in close proximity to the settlement and that the variation in land quality offers the potential for expansion of the settlement in the future. It is therefore important that green infrastructure networks are identified and used to guide the shape and form of development.

Landscape Designations and Important Features

When considering the baseline environment for a green infrastructure strategy it is important to identify potential landscape destinations and important features that the users of the countryside (both people and wildlife) will want to use or visit.

The 6C's Growth Point recently published 'Towards a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the 6C's Growth Point'. The broad principals of the strategy are to identify existing strategic green infrastructure assets, such as river corridors and important green space, possible green infrastructure destinations and city scale green infrastructure corridors that create the major green highways that cross the landscape and provide multi-functional and connected spaces.

Within the strategy the land to the south of Oadby and Wigston is identified as an urban fringe green infrastructure enhancement zone that connects to the River Sence strategic corridor, which is also identified as a city scale green infrastructure corridor. To the north of the study are the Brocks Hill Country Park is identified as a green infrastructure destination. The study seeks the delivery of a 'doorstep to countryside' network of greenways that link green infrastructure destinations with the wide and more strategic city scale corridors. Taking the wider 6C's study into consideration other destinations and features within this landscape include.

Leisure Facilities

- Grand Union Canal;
- Glen Gorse Golf Course
- South Leicester Rugby Club and associated sports pitches,
- The Mere Lane Equestrian Centre;
- The Wistow Rural Centre and Nooks Country Park.
- Coombe Park;
- The Wigston Road Allotments; and
- Brocks Hill Country Park

Wildlife/Nature Conservation Assets

- Glen Gorse Golf Course SINC site;
- The River Sence and associated SSSI and SINC sites;
- SINC woodland, grasslands and ponds off Welford Road, South Wigston;
- SINC pastures and ponds of Newton Road, East Wigston; and
- The Grand Union Canal and associated habitats

Historic and Cultural Heritage Assets

- Wistow Hall and Wystowe Medieval Village;
- St Wistan's Church, Wistow;
- St Mary Magdalen Church, Kilby;
- The Church of St Luke, Newton Harcourt
- Foston Medieval Village; and
- The Grand Union Canal with associated locks and bridges

It is clear from the review of the baseline environment that the land to the south of Oadby and Wigston has numerous leisure, wildlife, and cultural heritage assets that can form the basis for a network of green infrastructure focussed on the key destinations and corridors identified in the wider 6C's study. These can be combined with other features allied to the urban fringe such as schools, community halls, and allotments to create a comprehensive network of spaces and places.

A Green Infrastructure Strategy

A Description of the Strategy

The River Sence corridor and Grand Union Canal are major assets of the green infrastructure network in the wider countryside, with Glen Gorse Golf Club, Brocks Hill Country Park and the Nooks Country Park, amongst others, comprising important destinations in the wider environment. The aim of the green infrastructure strategy is to utilise, and where necessary, create links across the countryside making these assets accessible from the surrounding settlements. The green infrastructure strategy for land to the south-east Wigston comprises the following:

- A principal network of green space, both existing and proposed where the strengthening and creation of public access should become a priority. This should be achieved through working with the Local Authority, land owners, developers and other third parties. The principal network includes the River Sence, Grand Union Canal, Glen Gorse Golf Club linked by Mere Lane, and the creation of important new links to Brocks Hill Country Park and associated areas of Green Wedge.
- A secondary network of greenways that provide public access to both the principal green infrastructure and primary/secondary destinations in the wider landscape. Greenways focus on the use of existing public access routes, that should be improved as part of any strategy, but this does not rule out the creation of additional routes to strengthen the network;
- A series of principal green infrastructure destinations that focus on the most important assets in the wider environment, such as the country parks, and established wildlife/biodiversity sites. As part of the strategy the public perception and understanding of these areas can be improved through an improved interpretation of the landscape, this in turn will make these existing and valued resources better used and appreciated by the public.
- A series of green gateways that will help define the principal bridges from built-up areas into the countryside. Most of these gateways were identified in the Local Authorities landscape character assessment, and have been embellished as part of this strategy.
- Secondary green infrastructure destinations that will feed from the catchment of more established attractions. These destinations include more specialist attractions, such as cultural heritage assets, local wildlife resources, smaller parks and specialist outdoor sports/pursuits centres.

The green infrastructure strategy draws together the wider principals of green infrastructure established by the 6C's Growth Point study with the findings and recommendation of the Local Authorities landscape character assessment to create an exciting network of truly multi-functional spaces and destinations that will have real benefits for the public and wildlife

Key



Leisure/recreation features



Cultural heritage assets



Ecological resources



Existing access



Grand Union Canal



Schools/colleges/universities



Green Wedge pushing out into countryside



Sence Valley



Ridgelines

1

Brocks Hill Country Park

2

Glen Goose Golf Club

3

Mere Lane Equestrian Centre

4

Coombe Park

5

Grand Union Canal

6

The Church of St Luke

7

Wistow Hall, St Wistan's Church and Wistow Medieval Village

8

Wistow Rural Centre and Nooks Country Park

9

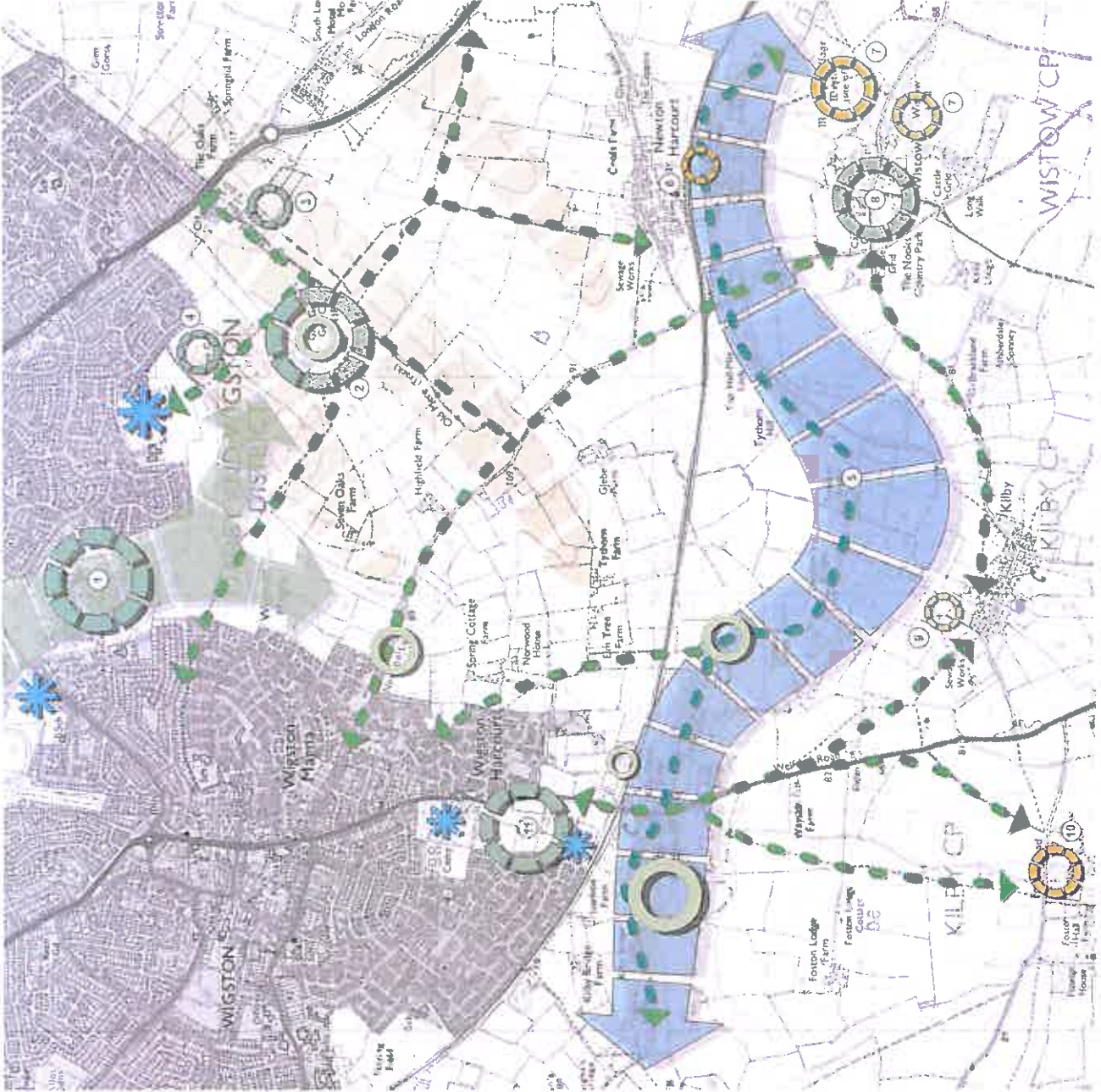
St Mary Magdalen Church

10

Foston Medieval Village

11

South Leicesters Rugby Club





View 7



View 8



View 9

