

**PART THREE – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER: CONTENTS**

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## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

### 3a: THE GREEN WEDGE GENERALLY . AN OVERVIEW

The Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge study area falls between two character areas identified in the Leicestershire County Council Landscape and Woodland Strategy 2001, those being the 'Upper Soar' and 'High Leicestershire'. The character of the Green Wedge area cannot, however, be attributed to either one or the other as the surrounding urban environment exerts such a substantial influence on the Green Wedge that it takes on a unique character of its own.

The main features, in general terms, of this landscape are:

*Urban influences.*

*Enclosed rolling landscape with distinct high level ridges.*

*Arable emphasis to the south and an amenity or recreational emphasis to the north.*

*Little established woodland.*

*Some evidence of ridge and furrow.*

*Field ponds.*

**Physical extent**

This study area is characterised by containment. The Green Wedge is bounded north, east and west by the built environment. Farmland to the south, in contrast, provides links to open countryside. The wedge is approximately 2.8km in length (north - south) by 1/2km width in the north and 1km width at its widest point in the south. The narrow width amplifies views of the urban edge across this area, which in turn acts to increase its sense of containment.

The Green Wedge would appear in plan to comprise of two distinct areas, north and south, dominated by Leicester Racecourse in the north and Brocks Hill Country Park in the south. These two 'lobes' meet along Oadby Road, a pinch point only 300 metres wide.

**Boundaries**

To the north west the Green Wedge is bounded by the housing area of South Knighton and by Knighton Park. To the west the town of Wigston borders the area. To the north east and east the town of Oadby borders the Green Wedge and to the south the Green Wedge adjoins open countryside.

**Major physical features**

The study area is defined by dominant boundaries with the built environment. Boundary treatments for the most part divide the wedge with the private gardens of surrounding housing areas. These are typically long, linear forms, which result in very obvious edges. Boundaries are in places both abrupt and obtrusive.

The chief physical feature of the study area is a ridge of high ground, which cuts across the area east - west, to the south side of Oadby Road.

Land rises south from the Racecourse at 75m above sea level towards a crest 115m above sea level on the boundary between Brocks Hill and neighbouring farmland at which point the land falls away towards the countryside. This ridgeline permits wide ranging views from its crest and acts as a landmark when viewed from some distance away.

### **3b: THE GREEN WEDGE GENERALLY - SWOT Analysis**

#### **STRENGTHS**

The Green Wedge, for the most part, has visually strong and clearly defined boundaries. These are almost exclusively associated with built development, mainly residential areas but also a small number of industrial premises.

The spatial scale and containment gives this Green Wedge a strong sense of intimacy and perceived safety.

Where publicly accessible the Green Wedge area is well used by both local residents and visitors. A variety of recreational activities are available both publicly and privately.

Brocks Hill Country Park provides an important and unique educational, ecological and recreational resource.

The Green Wedge seems to be highly regarded and valued by its users. Threats to the existence of the Green Wedge are taken seriously and a large number of local residents appear to be actively involved in management and/or interest groups.

Common urban and suburban problems such as littering are not greatly in evidence. Much of this landscape appears well cared for. Vandalism, though occasionally met with, tends to be very localised.

The Wash Brook provides a relatively coherent ecological corridor.

The Green Wedge has a good number of existing mature trees which linked to the topography act as important landmarks and provide a degree of landscape structure to the area.

#### **WEAKNESSES**

The Green Wedge appears to have a lack of overall identity to its users, and hence a lack of overall meaning. People tend, partly by virtue of the way in which they use the landscape, to see this landscape as a series of 'compartments' and not as a whole.

Use tends to be highly concentrated, typified by particular pursuits such as dog walking, or limited by the necessity to be an organisation member e.g. the allotments etc or by certain events e.g. race days or organised football matches etc.

Connectivity, especially between residential areas using rights of way, is very poor. Medium and longer distance journeys through the Green Wedge are currently not possible, exacerbated by a high degree of severance by Oadby Road.



## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

### WEAKNESSES (CONTINUED)

The area is physically split and fragmented, although for the most part visually coherent.

The surrounding built environment although providing a strong degree of containment has a weak relationship with the wedge i.e. all the houses back onto the wedge rather than fronting this area. (preventing connectivity and movement along and through the boundaries).

### OPPORTUNITIES

Increase the intrinsic identity of 'The Wedge' as a whole.

Define Green Wedge Entrance Points, using a clear, robust and imaginative marker system i.e. give the wedge a brand.

Increase connectivity by reinforcing and creating linkages within the Green Wedge, especially between residential areas, to make through routes, circular and distant journeys possible. Focus initially on school catchments. The aim would be to establish a network, with a clear hierarchy, which would be easy, safe and pleasant to use and straight forward to maintain.

Improve access especially for bicycles and wheelchair users.

Encourage local residents and developers to protect the character of the Green Wedge by reinforcing boundaries by, for example, targeted native tree and shrub planting, traditional hedgerow management and replacement of fenced boundaries with hedgerows.

Concentrate improvements to ecological quality and habitat creation to specific locations such as along the Wash Brook corridor and encourage access agreements where these would not lead to a degradation in ecological quality.

Use possible future development proposals as a means to secure, through planning agreements over the longer term, landscape, ecological and possibly recreational enhancements.

Links with open countryside beyond the Green Wedge can potentially be established and/or reinforced both physically and visually i.e. footpath connections cross boundary tree/hedgerow planting etc.

Engage with landowners to open up possible access routes, diversify recreational opportunities and manage the landscape in a more benign manner.

Engage with farmers to increase the area farmed under Countryside Stewardship and or participate in an entry level scheme post 2004.

**THREATS**

Development pressure, due to the accessibility of this area is inevitable. Local residents seem to perceive consistent and almost inevitable erosion of the Green Wedge.

Any increase in traffic along Oadby Road due to either surrounding transport or residential development, would further increase severance effects.

A lack of attention to overall landscape management issues will compound existing problems and prevent the wedge from achieving its landscape, ecological and recreational potential.

Degradation of the ecological quality of the wedge area, due to pressure resulting from increasing land use or potential future intensification of mowing, cropping or grazing regimes, is a distinct possibility.

Further development at the margins of the Green Wedge area may increase light pollution, with the attendant ecological and amenity impacts.

Additional residential development nearby may lead to greater amenity pressure through increased numbers of people and dogs using neighbouring access ways etc.

Conflicts of interest between recreation and habitat creation could if not properly addressed lead to ineffective and/or poorly implemented land use and management practices.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

### 3c: LOCAL CHARACTER AREAS OF THE GREEN WEDGE

#### GREEN WEDGE - NORTH



This local landscape character area is located between Oadby town to the east and Leicester City to the west. The area straddles Oadby Road to the south where it abuts the Green Wedge - Central Landscape character area. To the north this area is bordered by the A6, London Road.

This is a characteristically open area with wide ranging and largely unhindered views both east-west and north-south. Although open this area has a strong sense of containment due to a combination of highly visible boundaries and rising topography to the north, east and south. Boundaries are strong linear features, which for the most part divide the Green Wedge with the back gardens of neighbouring residential properties and a number of commercial premises.

Topographically this area sits within a shallow valley. The lowest point is where the Wash Brook leaves the Green Wedge at Knighton Park in the west. The Wash Brook, which runs across this area from east to west, is the main watercourse in the area. This has been confined to a narrow artificial channel, culverted in places, with little if any bank side vegetation evident due to intensive management practices. A small number of dry ditches are also visible features within this landscape.

This character area can be broken down into a series of distinctive and self-contained pieces or compartments. Each piece such as the Racecourse, golf course, allotments etc caters for a specific recreational pursuit of which the majority are privately owned and limited by payment or attendance to an event or fixture. All of these components combine into a singular, 'cohesive' landscape characterised by recreation. This cohesion is purely visual however, as access points and through routes are non-existent with the exception of one route to the north of the Racecourse.

This character area is dominated by two main land uses, which roughly split the area in two down the centre; the Oadby golf course in the west and Leicester Racecourse in the east. Both are highly manicured landscapes comprised of large swathes of mown grass broken by fragmented hedge and fenced boundaries.

There is little tree cover in the area. The golf course accounts for the majority of trees with individual specimens or groups dotted throughout this area. Although only a small number of these trees are significant ecologically, they have a great landscape significance adding hugely to the character of the area. In addition to the golf course trees there are only a few significant trees in the rest of the area, namely individual specimens in the car park adjacent Topps Park, those between the Tigers training ground and the civic amenity site and hedgerow specimens in land north of Palmerston Way.

Woodland is limited to a small area to the south of the Racecourse.

**GREEN WEDGE - NORTH**

**Typical Views**



**Wash Brook**

Picture 'A' illustrates a typical view of the Wash Brook, a relatively narrow channel as it winds through the golf course. Margins are closely mown and there is little bank side tree or shrub vegetation. Views across the brook are unrestricted.

In contrast picture 'B' illustrates a typical view of the Wash Brook as it crosses Oadby Road adjacent Topps Park. The channel becomes densely vegetated and is at times completely obscured from view.

In both circumstances the brook is not obvious in the landscape



1. View across the golf course looking south.
2. View north into the Allotments from Oadby Road.
3. View west into Topps Park (Oadby town football club).
4. View north east towards Leicester Racecourses Grandstand (right) and the golf course club house building (left).

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER



### GREEN WEDGE - CENTRAL



This local landscape character area is located between Oadby town to the east and Wigston town to the west. The area abuts the Green Wedge – North local landscape character area to the north, along the line of the Wash Brook, before crossing the brook and wrapping back up and around the Oadby Town Football ground to meet Oadby Road. To the south and south east this area is bordered by the Green Wedge – South local landscape character area.

This character area lies almost entirely within Brocks Hill Country Park, with the exception of one small area of semi improved grassland to the north east, adjacent to Oadby Road. This landscape is typical of a Country Park in that specific management regimes have been employed to blend urban and rural land uses and management practices, resulting in a landscape that has environmental and/or economic benefits.

The main focus of the area is the Brocks Hill Environment Centre and the Parklands leisure facility. Both buildings and their car parking sit comfortably within the landscape, although dominant features they are not visually obtrusive.

As in the Green Wedge – North local landscape character area, boundaries are a highly visible and dominant feature, however, in this instance the Central landscape character area does not have the same feeling of containment by surrounding housing as the northern character area due to its topography.

Topographically this area comprises rising ground towards a ridge line on the boundary of this local landscape character area with the Green Wedge – South character area. From the highest point views are possible across this area and beyond with wide ranging views towards Leicester. Views are restricted southwards as the boundary is marked by a strong hedge line and new woodland planting.

New woodland planting makes up a key component of the Country Park comprising roughly 50% of the total area. All of this planting is currently immature so although it provides a degree of spatial definition and emphasises the parks pathways it does not currently limit views across the area. Oadby and Wigston. These views will become filtered as woodland planting matures. A number of existing mature remnant hedgerow trees are also highly visible and important features within this landscape.

Pathways are a strong feature throughout the park, providing access and circular routes to a large portion of the area.

Besides woodland the remaining portion of this area comprises predominantly of semi-improved grassland and remnant field hedges. The majority of the grassland lies between patches of newly planted woodland. The remainder is currently being used for pasture.



**GREEN WEDGE - CENTRAL**

**Typical Views**



**Brocks Hill Centre**

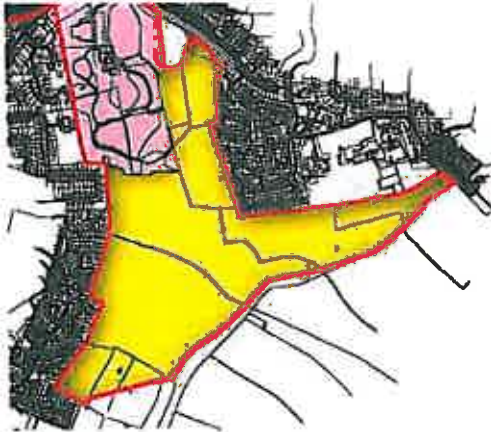
A typical view of the Brocks Hill Environment Centre, set within publicly accessible parkland. The Country Park comprises rising ground to the summit of a ridgeline from which wide ranging views are possible. Large existing mature trees and hedgerows provide the structure for new areas of habitat creation such as new woodland planting, meadow grassland and ponds. The centre and its network of circular pathways provides an important source of informal recreation and educational facilities.



1. View of pedestrian access gate into the park.
2. View along part of a circular pathway to the south of the Brocks Hill Centre popular with dog walkers.
3. View of an area of new single species woodland planting. This is an example of a number of woodland blocks that have been planted around Brocks Hill.
4. View north west towards the Parklands leisure centre.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

### GREEN WEDGE - SOUTH



This local landscape character area is located on sloping ground falling away to the south from a ridgeline along the northern boundary with the Green Wedge – Central local landscape character area. This character area wraps up and around the Central character area to meet Lucas Marsh at its northern most point.

To the south this area opens up and is bounded by open countryside whereas in contrast to the east and west the housing areas of Oadby town and Wigston Town respectively, bound the area.

This area is predominantly under an intensive arable regime with medium to large sized fields. Some smaller fields do exist to the north, where they form part of Brocks Hill Country Park. Although farmed under Countryside Stewardship these fields are in keeping with the farmland character of the southern portion of the wedge. Strangely the Green Wedge boundary to the south west cuts through three small fields.

The area is characteristically open with wide ranging views southwards as the wedge widens. This sense of openness is accentuated by the lack of mature tree groups. Tree cover is poor with only a small number of hedgerow trees visible across the area. A line of former hedgerow trees punctuate the centre of the area, these now stand as individual field specimens.

Boundaries are also highly characteristic both internally and peripherally. Internal boundaries comprise predominantly of well managed native hedgerows containing a small number of hedgerow trees. Peripheral boundaries in contrast are comprised predominantly of rear garden fencing. The southern boundary is a notable exception as this boundary does not follow a recognisable boundary feature, (a portion of the boundary cuts directly through the centre of a number of fields). A narrow watercourse called Black Well Syke does provide a degree of division between this area and the open countryside beyond.

Around the fields in the northern part of this area grassed headlands act to visually reinforce field boundaries. These headlands act as unauthorised, informal access and pathways for walkers into the area from Brooks Hill Country Park.

Public access is limited. There is only one route, part of the Meres also known as the Two Steeples Walk that cuts across the area from Wigston Town towards Great Glen and Newton Harcourt.

**GREEN WEDGE - SOUTH**

**Typical Views**

**Farming**

Intensive arable farming on south facing slopes dominates this area. Large fields with wide ranging and open views to the surrounding countryside are defined by well managed predominantly hawthorn hedgerows. A portion of this area falls within Brocks Hill Country Park. In this portion field headlands reinforce the field pattern.



1. View along fields adjacent the western boundary of the Green Wedge.
2. View south east passed housing into open countryside.
3. View south along the edge of arable fields within Brocks Hill Country Park, typified by hawthorn hedgerows and headland field margins.



## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

### 3d: LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS - SWOT ANALYSIS

#### *GREEN WEDGE - NORTH*

##### **STRENGTHS**

1. High degree of containment leading to strong sense of character and localised identity.
2. Clearly defined land uses.
3. Strong boundaries around the perimeter of the Green Wedge area.
4. The Wash Brook corridor.
5. There are a good number of existing mature trees across the area.

##### **WEAKNESSES**

1. Accessibility is very poor and publicly accessible routes linking across and along the character area are not possible.
2. Character area highly compartmentalised with little if any overall identity.
3. Recreational pursuits generally highly specific and limited.
4. None of the mature trees in this character area currently have Tree Preservation Orders.

##### **OPPORTUNITIES**

1. Increase connectivity by reinforcing and creating linkages within the character area, to make through routes, circular and distant journeys possible.
2. Engage with landowners to adopt more benign landscape management practices.
3. Increase biodiversity potential.
4. Engage with landowners to diversify recreational opportunities.
5. The Wash Brook corridor.

##### **THREATS**

1. Continued intensive management practices.
2. Degradation of the ecological quality of the character area, due to land use pressures.
3. Localised flood risk.
4. Increased pressure on the landscape due to localised overuse by increasing numbers of people/visitors.
5. Increased levels of traffic along Oadby Road exacerbating severance of Green Wedge.
6. Conflicts of interest between habitat creation and recreation/access.

**GREEN WEDGE - CENTRAL**

**STRENGTHS**

1. High degree of containment leading to strong sense of character and localised identity.
2. Brocks Hill Environmental Centre is well used and highly regarded, offering unique opportunities for informal recreation and education and facilitates community involvement with the Green Wedge.
3. Clearly defined land uses.
4. Strong boundaries around the perimeter of the Green Wedge area, a number of which are noted to be ancient hedgerows.
5. A variety of establishing habitats.
6. There are a good number of existing mature trees across the area.

**WEAKNESSES**

1. Access is restricted as there is a lack of access points.
2. Publicly accessible routes linking across and through this character area are difficult. Routes between this character area and the Green Wedge South character area are unofficial and may cause conflict.
3. Surrounding schools have no direct access.
4. Segregated from the Green Wedge - North character area by Oadby Road.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

1. Increase connectivity by reinforcing and creating linkages across the Character area, to make through routes and distant journeys possible.
2. Explore direct access and links to neighbouring schools.

**THREATS**

1. Degradation of the ecological quality of the character area, due to land use pressures.
2. Increased pressure on the landscape due to localised overuse by increasing numbers of people/visitors.
3. Increased levels of traffic along Oadby Road exacerbating severance of Green Wedge.
4. Conflicts of interest between habitat creation and recreation/access.



## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

### **GREEN WEDGE - SOUTH**

#### **STRENGTHS**

1. High degree of containment leading to strong sense of character and localised identity.
2. Strong visual connection to the surrounding countryside.
3. Clearly defined land uses.
4. Generally strong boundaries around the perimeter of the Green Wedge.
5. There are a number of existing mature hedgerows and hedgerow trees across the area.
6. A large area is already under the Countryside Stewardship Grant Scheme.

#### **WEAKNESSES**

1. Access is restricted due to a lack of access points.
2. Publicly accessible routes linking across and through this character area are difficult. Routes between this character area to the Green Wedge - Central character area and surrounding countryside are poor.
3. A large number of unofficial routes, (desire lines) exist which may cause potential conflicts of interest between the public and landowners.
4. Surrounding schools have no direct access.

#### **OPPORTUNITIES**

1. Increase connectivity by reinforcing and creating linkages across the Character area, to make through routes, circular and distant journeys possible.
2. Explore direct access and links to neighbouring schools.
3. Alternative land uses for recreation at certain key locations.
4. A larger area brought in line with the Countryside Stewardship Grant Scheme.
5. Increase biodiversity potential.

#### **THREATS**

1. Degradation of the ecological quality of the character area, due to sustained land use pressure and intensive farming practices.
2. Conflicts of Interest between habitat creation, recreation/access and economic use.
3. Development pressure at the margins of the Green Wedge reducing the potential of the Green Wedge.
4. Continued intensive management practices.

**PART FOUR – CONTENTS**

*[PLEASE NOTE: THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER PULL OUT PLAN  
ON PAGE 64 ACCOMPANIES THIS SECTION.]*

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## MANAGEMENT

### **4a: THE GREEN WEDGE GENERALLY . AN OVERVIEW**

Management of the Green Wedge should aim to meet the objectives set out in the Oadby and Wigston Borough Council Local Plan, County Structure Plan and the Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project Strategy. It should also meet the objectives of the National and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

These objectives can be summarised as:

- Enhance Landscape
- Enhance Biodiversity
- Enhance/Improve Access, Recreation and Community Involvement.

Although the Green Wedge suffers from a lack of overall identity and coherence this landscape would appear to function relatively effectively in its primary capacity as a buffer between Oadby and Wigston and is well used by selective numbers/groups of people.

As the third section of this document demonstrates the Green Wedge is made up of a sum of parts or compartments all of which have clearly defined land uses and their own individual character. Connecting these compartments through physical linkages, sensitive management practices and dialogue between stakeholders is the key to conserving this landscape. This would also help to establish a single unified identity but more importantly enhance and enrich the environment so that it can function more effectively. In other words this landscape can be made to work a lot harder for people and people can be engaged to work a lot harder for this environment.

The following list details five objectives we consider to be essential issues, which need to be addressed in order that the Green Wedge can begin to meet its potential.

#### ***MAKING CONNECTIONS***

##### **1. People**

Broad scale landscape change is impossible without engaging landowners. To do this requires a dialogue to be established with specific landowners. This will be essential in order to effect change.

Raising public awareness by actively celebrating the Green Wedge and promoting the Wedge ought to help establish the Wedge's identity and facilitate change.

It is vital in order for this strategy to be adopted that all Council agents whether County or Borough level, especially planning representatives, effectively communicate in order to target their resources successfully.

##### ***FIRST OVERALL OBJECTIVE***

***Establish a working group/forum involving the Green Wedge's stakeholders.***





## **2. Access and Linkage**

This landscape by virtue of its poor access and footpath/cycleway infrastructure is an insular environment with limited use other than that provided by specific facilities. The rights of way map shows just how limited access to the Green Wedge currently is. Footpaths and cycle routes through this area are virtually non-existent.

The use of rights of way in the Green Wedge for more vigorous types of exercise, such as walking, jogging and running for instance, is severely limited by this lack of connectivity.

Brocks Hill Country Park is unique in that it does have a network of footpaths that offer opportunities for a range of recreational activities, however, these routes are all circular and contained within the boundaries of the Park.

### **SECOND OVERALL OBJECTIVE**

*Assess the Green Wedge for access and linkage opportunities  
Explore sources of funding available for the implementation or assistance in the implementation of any access points and/or routes that are identified in the study.*

## **3. Ecology**

The Green Wedge contains a variety of habitats, which are linked by the Wash Brook Wildlife Corridor. The majority of the habitats, however, are highly managed in a manner which is reducing their potential to support more wildlife.

### **THIRD OVERALL OBJECTIVE**

*Encourage landowners to draw up Management Plans, which seek to marry the interests of recreation, farming and wildlife.*

## **4. Policy**

This landscape clearly works as an effective buffer between Oadby and Wigston. However, the Green Wedge could be made to work more effectively for those that live and work around this landscape.

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council's Local Plan is a proactive and a relatively effective method by which connections such as footpath links, safe routes to schools, areas proposed for recreation etc can be promoted.

### **FOURTH OVERALL OBJECTIVE**

*Review the Green Wedge's boundaries, proposed footpath links and Green Wedge Enhancement proposals during the production of the Local Development Framework.*

## **5. Time - Monitoring and Review**

Plainly the Green Wedge study area should be re-surveyed regularly in order to inform decision making and to assess the effectiveness of any management strategy adopted. Over time results from on going assessment of the Green Wedge ought to feed or 'connect' back into reviewing the strategy laid out in this document.

### **FIFTH OVERALL OBJECTIVE**

*Specific surveys and/or management plans will be required in certain locations or for particular species following this strategy in order to target funding or works.*



## MANAGEMENT

### **4b: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT BY CHARACTER AREA**

In the following section specific management objectives have been laid out for each local landscape character area in turn.

Where we believe certain management strategies do not apply to an individual local landscape character area they have been excluded, i.e. only those strategies that apply have been listed.