

**TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**

**CABINET - 26 FEBRUARY 2015**

**DECLARATION OF MADELEY PITMOUNDS LOCAL NATURE RESERVE**

**REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: PLANNING SPECIALIST**

**LEAD CABINET MEMBER: COUNCILLOR CHARLES SMITH**

**(PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT**

**1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for the declaration of a new Local Nature Reserve in Madeley, South Telford – approximately 44 hectares of distinctive wooded pitmounds which are linked historically and archaeologically and which are an important feature of the local landscape (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 Accessible, high quality, green spaces are integral to ensuring the borough remains an attractive, vibrant and healthy place for residents, businesses and visitors alike. The importance of protecting and maintaining high quality green spaces is central to the Council's commitment to retain and nurture our 'green town' reputation.
- 1.3 The proposal has been developed by Madeley Town Council in liaison with a local community group - the Madeley Pitmounds LNR Steering Group - and will involve volunteers carrying out small-scale conservation tasks as part of the management of the site. The selection, declaration and management of Local Nature Reserves (LNR) is a function of local authorities. These sites have potential to improve the quality, function and value of natural green spaces and play an important role in maintaining a healthy balance in spatial planning between the built environment and the green infrastructure.
- 1.4 The site in question is referred to as the proposed Madeley Pitmounds LNR and comprises of 5 pitmounds at Madeley Court, Blists Hill, Hills Lane, Tweedale Woods and Meadow and is described in Appendix 1 to this report. It is considered to fulfil the requirements of becoming a formal designated site. The site:
- Includes two county wildlife sites, at Madeley Court and Tweedale Woods and is not allocated for development
  - Has an up to date management plan
  - Has a strong level of community involvement and support and resource from Madeley Town Council
- 1.5 Subject to approval, the next stage will be to progress the site further through the formal process with Natural England prior to final declaration.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**It is recommended that Cabinet:**

- 2.1 **Approve the declaration of the Madeley Pitmounds Local Nature Reserve as described in Appendix 1 to this report**
- 2.2 **Delegate authority to the Assistant Director (Planning Specialist), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Development and Borough Towns, to make any minor amendments to the boundaries of the Madeley Pitmounds Local Nature Reserve if required and to complete the declaration process**

### 3 SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

<b>COMMUNITY IMPACT</b>	Do these proposals contribute to specific Priority Plan objective(s)?	
	Yes	Maintaining a clean, quality environment and improved green infrastructure and public realm: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Protect and enhance the green infrastructure and biodiversity of the borough</li> </ul>
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	Madeley, Cuckoo Oak and Woodside Wards comprise 13 SOAs in the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010, 7 SOAs are within 20% most deprived nationally for Health & Wellbeing. <p>Telford &amp; Wrekin Council, Local Green Space Infrastructure Needs Survey (2013) states that qualitative improvements of natural green spaces would help address health and wellbeing needs. Madeley has no parks and gardens and “poor quality amenity sites”.</p>
<b>TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE</b>	March 2015 Declaration of Local Nature Reserve	
<b>FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT</b>	<p>The designation of the land (as detailed in Appendix 1) as a Local Nature Reserve requires the Council to manage and maintain the land in accordance with a management plan. In order to avoid a financial pressure as a result of the designation, the Council will continue to maintain the site at its current level. The Madeley Pitmounds LNR Steering Group working with Madeley Town Council will be responsible for securing third party funding for any additional works or site improvements, over and above the current maintenance regime. Should additional funding not be identified, the requirements under the site management plan will be amended accordingly.</p> <p>The land to be designated is in the ownership of the Council and the designation will offer protection from future development or inappropriate use. This may have an impact on future strategic options for asset use or disposal.</p> <p>JAC 060215</p>	
<b>LEGAL ISSUES</b>	Yes	<p>The Council has power under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to declare that land which it owns is to be managed as a nature reserve and the declaration stands as conclusive evidence that the land is being managed as such. There is a procedure that needs to be followed regarding the declaration and Legal Services will assist the Assistant Director (Planning Specialist) as required regarding the process.</p> <p>The land to be declared is believed to be within Council ownership. However, for final confirmation, title to the land will be investigated further to ensure that there are no impediments to declaration as a Local Nature Reserve.</p> <p>IR/05.02.15</p>
<b>OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b>	Yes	Declaring this area as a Local Nature Reserve will enhance the natural environment of the wards and contribute to the preserved/managed landscape setting of heritage assets to achieve an attractive environment that will support the local business and visitor economy of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site and Severn Gorge Conservation Area.
<b>IMPACT ON SPECIFIC</b>	Yes	The proposal site is located in the Borough Wards of Madeley,

<b>WARDS</b>	Cuckoo Oak and Woodside and will benefit the whole community who will have access.
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## **(PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **4 INFORMATION**

4.1 This report sets out a proposal to declare a statutory Local Nature Reserve (LNR) known as Madeley Pitmounds Local Nature Reserve. This is in accordance with the provisions of Sections 19 and 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Subject to approval, the proposal will then need to receive a formal welcome by Natural England.

4.2 Declaration of the land as a LNR requires the Borough of Telford & Wrekin to manage the land shown in Appendix 1, as a nature reserve and to protect it from inappropriate uses or development. The site includes two county wildlife sites, at Madeley Court and Tweedale Woods and is not allocated for development in the Borough Plan.

4.3 The proposed LNR is believed to be within the Council's ownership and meets the necessary criteria for selection, has an up to date management plan, and has gained support from Telford Trust, South Telford Rights of Way Partnership, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Natural England.

The initial proposal for declaration of Madeley Pitmounds LNR grew out of work undertaken by Shropshire Wildlife Trust to improve Madeley Court Pitmound, a County Wildlife Site, which was included in Telford & Wrekin Council's Local Development Framework (Development Control Policies) draft as a proposed Local Nature Reserve (Policy EN5) (superceded by Core Strategy Policies CS12 and CS14).

The site has nature conservation value and a strong level of community interest and involvement which will support the management of the site. The Madeley Pitmounds LNR Steering Group has developed a statement of aims and objectives and will play a key role in the site's management. Madeley Town Council has contributed to the existing Management Plan and will be involved in its implementation.

Through active engagement with the local community and local schools, the site is already used for health and educational purposes supported by South Telford Rights of Way Partnership and Telford and Wrekin Green Gym. The management and protection of the site will be developed in accordance with the Management Plan with regular volunteer work parties and skills training opportunities organised.

4.4 The LNR would contribute to the quality of the Borough's natural environment and protected green spaces. The natural environment is fundamental to well-being, health and a successful economy. The landscape and green space is at the heart of the Council's vision for Telford. Green spaces and the natural environment complement and provide a structural context for homes and jobs needed by the community.

4.5 The LNR would add to the existing interconnected network of green spaces that are protected by the Council and create the quality places enjoyed by the community. There are six established LNRs including the Town Park and 41 local wildlife sites. Natural England's standard for accessible natural green space is 1 hectare per 1,000 population and that forms the basis for a local target<sup>1</sup>. Telford & Wrekin currently has 1.3 hectares of LNR per 1,000 population. The approval of this LNR will further improve this position.

4.6 The proposal site is included in the Madeley Neighbourhood Development Plan.

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<sup>1</sup>**Exceed Natural England's standard for accessible natural green space of 1 ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population (1.3ha 2010/11, 1.4ha 2011/12, 1.5 ha 2012/13)**

## **5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **5.1 Community Impact**

- 5.1.1 All members of the community should have the opportunity to benefit from the diverse range of species and habitat present in the Borough. Research has shown that improving the provision of and access to natural green space can be valuable to a wide range of groups within the community. A formal declaration provides clarity that public access is encouraged.
- 5.1.2 Improving the provision of and access to natural green space can be valuable to a wide range of groups within the community, including opportunities for local schools (Sir Alexander Fleming Primary School nature walks programme; Woodlands School forest school) and health projects (the Villa Mental Health walks led by the South Telford Rights of Way Partnership). In addition, the site is linked by a local network of Public Rights of Way that supports accessibility and green routes.
- 5.1.3 Declaration of Local Nature Reserves is beneficial to a number of priorities associated with sustainable transport and community and health & wellbeing, and, in particular, the protection and enhancement of the green infrastructure and biodiversity of the Borough. The Council has a local target associated with LNRs which will benefit from the declaration of this site.

### **5.2 OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES**

- 5.2.1 Internal consultation has taken place within the Council. Whilst there were no objections, a number of issues were raised which have been addressed as follows:
- Land stability, mine shafts, colliery spoil - geotechnical review of proposal site completed February 2013. Recommendations included in Management Plan 2014.
  - Telford Trust Lease – Madeley Court Pitmounds - boundary amendments agreed with Telford Trust and unqualified support received for declaration
  - Conflicts with play/sports facilities - boundary amendments agreed that remove areas of concern
  - Resource implications and update of Management Plan - management plans for all pitmounds updated and consolidated for proposal site (2014) and will be delivered in partnership. External funding sources to be assessed.

## **6. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

- 6.1 Cabinet report 12 February 2007 entitled 'Declaration of Local Nature Reserves'.

## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 Local Nature Reserves in England: A Guide to their selection and declaration (Natural England, 2010)
- 7.2 Local Nature Reserves: places for people and wildlife (English Heritage)
- 7.3 Accessible natural greenspace in towns and cities: A review of appropriate size and distance criteria (English Nature Research Reports No 153)

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