

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**CABINET – 15 FEBRUARY 2018****DECLARATION OF TWO NEW LOCAL NATURE RESERVES: ROUGH PARK AND RANDLAY VALLEY****REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: BUSINESS, DEVELOPMENT & EMPLOYMENT****LEAD CABINET MEMBER – COUNCILLOR JOHN MINOR****PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT****1 SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS****New Sites**

- 1.1 The Council has made a commitment to the retention of locally important green spaces which have value to local communities. This already includes the protection afforded to the Green Network through policies in the adopted Local Plan, through the existing 104 Green Guarantee Sites and 11 Local Nature Reserves.
- 1.2 This Report sets out proposals to designate two new Local Nature Reserves – Rough Park and Randlay Valley – part of a wider program of greenspace projects to be launched during Telford's 50th year celebrations with those LNRs designated in 2018 forming part of the Telford@50 legacy.
- 1.3 These LNR sites will add to the eleven already approved in the Borough: Telford Town Park, The Granville, Lodge Field, The Ercall and St Lawrence's Hill, Limekiln Wood, Madebrook and Stirchley Dingle, Dothill, Madeley Pitmounds, The Beeches, Ketley Paddock Mound and Apley Woods.
- 1.4 Through this commitment the area of LNR protected will increase by 90 hectares, to 368 hectares of approved LNR. The extent of LNR provision is more than double Natural England's target of 1.0 Ha of LNR/1000 people delivering 2.2 Ha of LNR for every 1000 people in the Borough. It also means that 89% of households are within 300m of greenspace.
- 1.5 Rough Park is located to the north of Woodside above the Ironbridge Gorge and comprises a grassland and woodland of considerable value to wildlife including butterfly populations, woodland birds, amphibians, reptiles and bats. Rough Park is designated as part of Telford and Wrekin's Green Network and sits within a wider landscape of locally designated sites including two adjacent Local Wildlife Sites. This group of sites is also important for recreation, access and visual amenity and Rough Park forms an integral part of a wider green corridor linking the Ironbridge Gorge with the Madeley Pitmounds LNR to the east and also the proposed Local Nature Reserve of Lightmoor in the north and beyond.
- 1.6 To the north, west and south Randlay Valley is surrounded by residential areas including Hollinswood, Randlay, Brookside and Stirchley. The site is also well

connected to the commercial developments of Halesfield and Stafford Park. The site includes woodland, grassland, waterbodies and fragments of heath. The site is of strategic importance in the wider green network providing, connecting the Town Park LNR with Nedge Hill and the wider countryside to the east.

- 1.7 Maps showing the proposed LNRs are in Appendix 1 and 2.
- 1.8 These proposals have been developed in liaison with the local community including the local Parish Councils and will involve local friends groups and volunteers carrying out small scale conservation tasks as part of the management of the sites.
- 1.9 The designation of additional LNRs further reflects the Council's commitment to promoting health and wellbeing. It has been shown that living close to accessible green spaces can promote public health and reduce levels of obesity, heart disease, reduce stress and levels of depression¹. 89% of households in the borough are located within 300m of accessible natural greenspace. Both sites encompass a number of rights of way including the Stafford Park Way, Dawley Way and the South Telford Way and the proposed designations will provide a framework to increase engagement with partners such as 'My Options' and 'Healthy Telford' further promoting the utilization of greenspace for public health and wellbeing.
- 1.10 The selection, declaration and management of Local Nature Reserves is a function of local authorities. These sites play an important role in maintaining a healthy balance in spatial planning between the built environment and green infrastructure. These green spaces also help to meet local and strategic green infrastructure needs.
- 1.11 The proposed sites are all within Council ownership with the exception of an area of Randlay Valley which is pending legal transfer from HCA and are considered to fulfil the requirements to become a formally declared LNR. The sites:
 - Are all at least partially designated as Local Wildlife Sites;
 - Have up to date management plans; and
 - Have a strong level of local involvement
- 1.12 Subject to approval, the next stage will be to progress the sites further through the formal process with Natural England prior to final legal declaration.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that cabinet:

2.1 Approves, in principle, the declaration of two Local Nature Reserves;

2.2 Delegates authority to complete the declaration process to the Assistant Director: Business, Development & Employment (and any officer authorised in writing by that Assistant Director) following consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member for Leisure, Green Spaces & Parks.

¹ Our Natural Health Service: The Role of the Natural Environment in Maintaining Healthy Lives. Natural England. (2009).

SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-operative Council priorities?	
	Yes	Designation of the LNR contributes to several priorities, including: -ensure that neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well maintained -improve the health and wellbeing of our communities and address health inequalities On both proposed LNRs there is active community involvement
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	The LNR is a beneficial resource to people who live and visit the area and each site has parts which are accessible to all members of the community, including those with wheelchairs and pushchairs
TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE	Spring 2018 – formal consultation with Natural England	
FINANCIAL/ VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes	The designation of the land (as detailed in Appendices 1-2) 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 sites at their current levels. The 'Friends of' groups associated with these sites will provide ongoing support for works or site improvements, over and above the current maintenance regime. Rough Park and Randlay Valley have a number of mines within their designated LNR areas. Under the Mines and Quarry Tips Act TWC has responsibility as owner and Local Authority and therefore liabilities need to be managed. Should any proportionate steps outlined in sections 4.2 & 4.3 be required, financial responsibility for any additional works, over and above those required to maintain the sites at their current levels, will be funded through Estates and Investments ability to draw upon ongoing revenue funding streams to provide a budget to undertake works at these sites. AEM 18/01/18.
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes /No	The Council has power under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to establish nature reserves by way of a declaration. The declaration will stand as conclusive evidence that the land is an LNR and will be managed as such. There is a making and publication procedure that needs to be followed regarding the declaration which includes prior consultation with Natural England. Legal Services will

		assist the Assistant Director: Business, Development & Employment as required regarding the process. IR-15.01.18 KK 17.01.18
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	Yes	An area of Randlay Valley is currently pending legal transfer from HCA. Unless the council acquires ownership of the grassland area of the Randlay Valley site (identified in Appendix 3) a Nature Reserve Agreement will have to be entered into with the HCA.
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	Yes	Rough Park proposed LNR is located partially in Woodside Ward, Ironbridge Gorge Ward and Madeley & Sutton Hill Ward. Randlay Valley proposed LNR is located in The Nedge Ward.

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

3 INFORMATION

- 3.1 This report sets out a proposal to declare two statutory Local Nature Reserves known as 'Rough Park Local Nature Reserve' and 'Randlay Valley Local Nature Reserve'. This is in accordance with the provisions of Sections 19 and 21 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Subject to approval, the proposals will then need to receive a formal welcome from Natural England.
- 3.2 Declaration of the land as a LNR requires Telford & Wrekin Council to manage the land shown in Appendix 1 and 2 as a nature reserve and to protect it from inappropriate uses or development. The largest part of each of the proposed sites is already adopted as Local Wildlife Site and so is already managed for conservation purposes.
- 3.3 The Telford & Wrekin Local Plan Policies Map shows both of the sites as 'Proposed Local Nature Reserves' and the Local Plan commits to completing the declaration of these sites.
- 3.4 Over and above the areas already adopted as Local Wildlife Sites other parts of the sites also have nature conservation value and a high level of community interest and involvement. Both of the sites have an active 'Friends of' group. These groups have played a key role in developing the proposal in liaison with the local authority and the local Parish Council. Through active engagement with the community, local people are already getting involved in the management and protection of the sites and each has a regular program of volunteer work.
- 3.5 Except for the meadow area of the Randlay Valley Site, the proposed LNRs are within the Council's ownership. They both meet the necessary criteria for declaration with an up to date management plan and informal engagement with Natural England has been undertaken. Formal engagement with Natural England will occur once Cabinet has given approval to the declaration.
- 3.6 As part of the declaration process, subject to Cabinet approval, a consultation document will be issued to Natural England to seek their formal 'Welcome' prior to completion of the declaration and the associated legal seal.

- 3.7 Through the declaration of these Local Nature Reserves the Council recognises the value of local green spaces in providing formal and informal open spaces, places to walk and be active. Local Nature Reserves provide opportunities for volunteering in the natural environment which increases physical activity, social interaction, encourages life long learning of new skills and allows individuals to give back to their local community which lead to increases in physical and mental wellbeing².

4 IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 4.1 Consultation with relevant stakeholders has taken place and the declaration of the sites as LNRs has received support.
- 4.2 **Rough Park** - The proposed boundary has been subject to internal officer consultation and external stakeholder engagement. The following should be noted:
- The site is not a spoil mound but does lie within a mining consideration area. There appear to be 12 mine shafts associated with the site with others around the site boundary. Proportionate steps will be taken to make the land safe e.g. by fencing, installing appropriate signs informing visitors of any risks and performing risk assessments.
 - No local flooding issues were identified.
 - There is an active ‘friends of’ group for the site and the Parish Council is supportive of the proposal.
 - Land to the west of the proposed LNR is within the ownership of the Council but is excluded from the LNR proposal because it is under a long term lease with Severn Gorge Countryside Trust who are satisfied that the current Local Wildlife Site designation on the land is sufficient to ensure its protection and appropriate management.
- 4.3 **Randlay Valley** - The proposed boundary has been subject to internal officer consultation and external stakeholder engagement. The following should be noted:
- The very north western part of this site is colliery spoil mound and there are four recorded mine shafts in this area which have received some degree of treatment but are not fully stabilised. Proportionate steps will be taken to make the land safe e.g. by fencing, installing appropriate signs informing visitors of any risks and performing risk assessments.
 - There is an area of HCA owned land with 7(1) New Towns permission within the site. The transfer of this land from HCA to TWC has been agreed and there is no proposal to pursue the 7(1) permission. Declaration will not be completed until the land transfer has been completed or a Nature Reserve Agreement signed with HCA.

5 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 In the case that Cabinet approves the principle of declaration of the two proposed Local Nature Reserves and the recommended delegation, then the required next steps include the following:

² Living Well for Longer in Telford 2015/2016 – Telford & Wrekin Council

A) A formal consultation process with Natural England will be undertaken in February 2018 which includes the submission of a formal consultation document and a site visit following which Natural England will write to formally 'Welcome' the sites

B) All necessary property/title enquiries and searches being undertaken regarding land in the Council's ownership.

C) The Nature Reserve Agreement being entered into with HCA in respect of the grassland area at Randlay Valley unless the Council acquires ownership prior to the declaration

D) The Assistant Director: Business, Development & Employment making or authorising the making of the formal declaration

6 PREVIOUS MINUTES

6.1 Cabinet report 12th February 2007: 'Declaration of Local Nature Reserves'

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

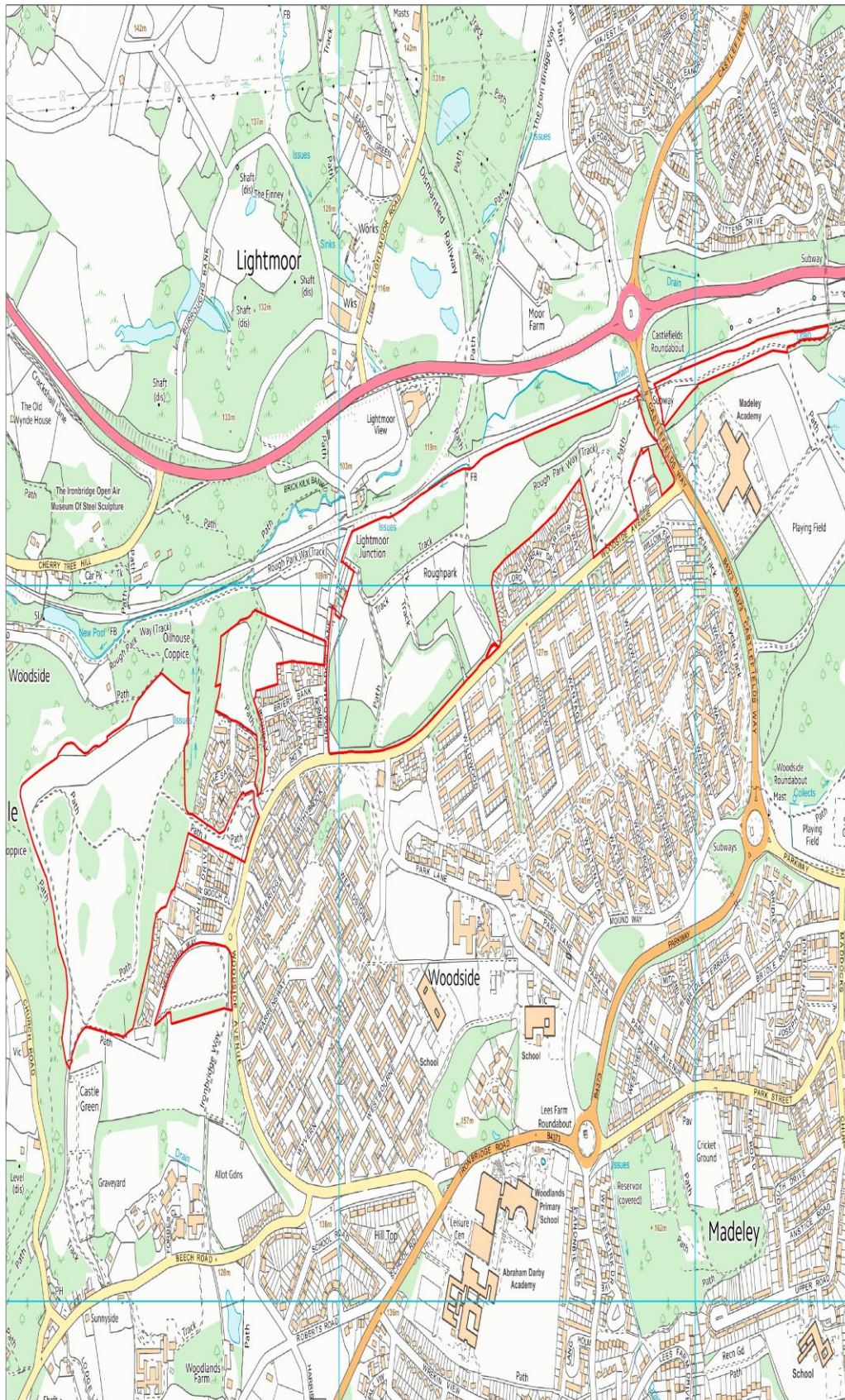
7.1 Local Nature Reserves in England: A Guide to their selection and declaration Natural England, 2009

7.2 Local Nature Reserves: places for people and wildlife (English Nature)

7.3 Accessible natural green space in towns and cities: A review of appropriate size and distance criteria (English Nature Research Reports No. 153)

Report prepared by Mark Latham, Ecology & Green Infrastructure Specialist, 01952 384239

Appendix 1: Rough Park Local Nature Reserve proposed boundary

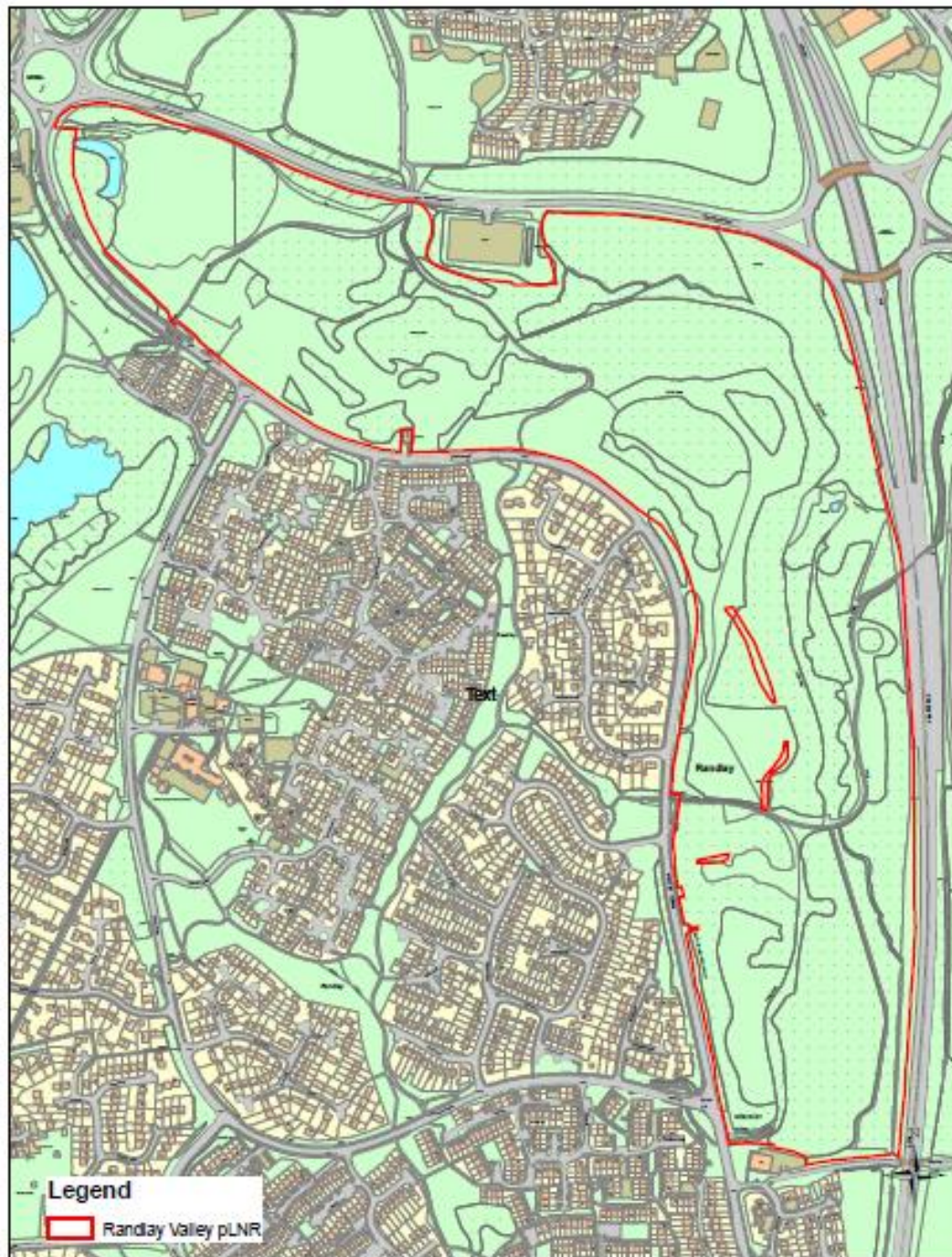


Rough Park Proposed Local Nature Reserve

Reported to the Public and
 Council on 15th February 2018
 of the Council of the Telford & Wrekin
 District Council. The Council has
 approved the proposed boundary
 and the Local Nature Reserve
 boundary. Telford & Wrekin
 Council No. 1001954 04/2018

Drawn by Mark Latham
 6th February 2018

Appendix 2: Randlay Valley Local Nature Reserve proposed boundary



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Randlay Valley
Proposed Local Nature Reserve

Drawn by: Fran Lancaster
16th May 2017

Appendix 3: Randlay Valley pLNR showing land ownership



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Randlay Valley pLNR

Drawn by: Fran Lancaster
14th November 2016