

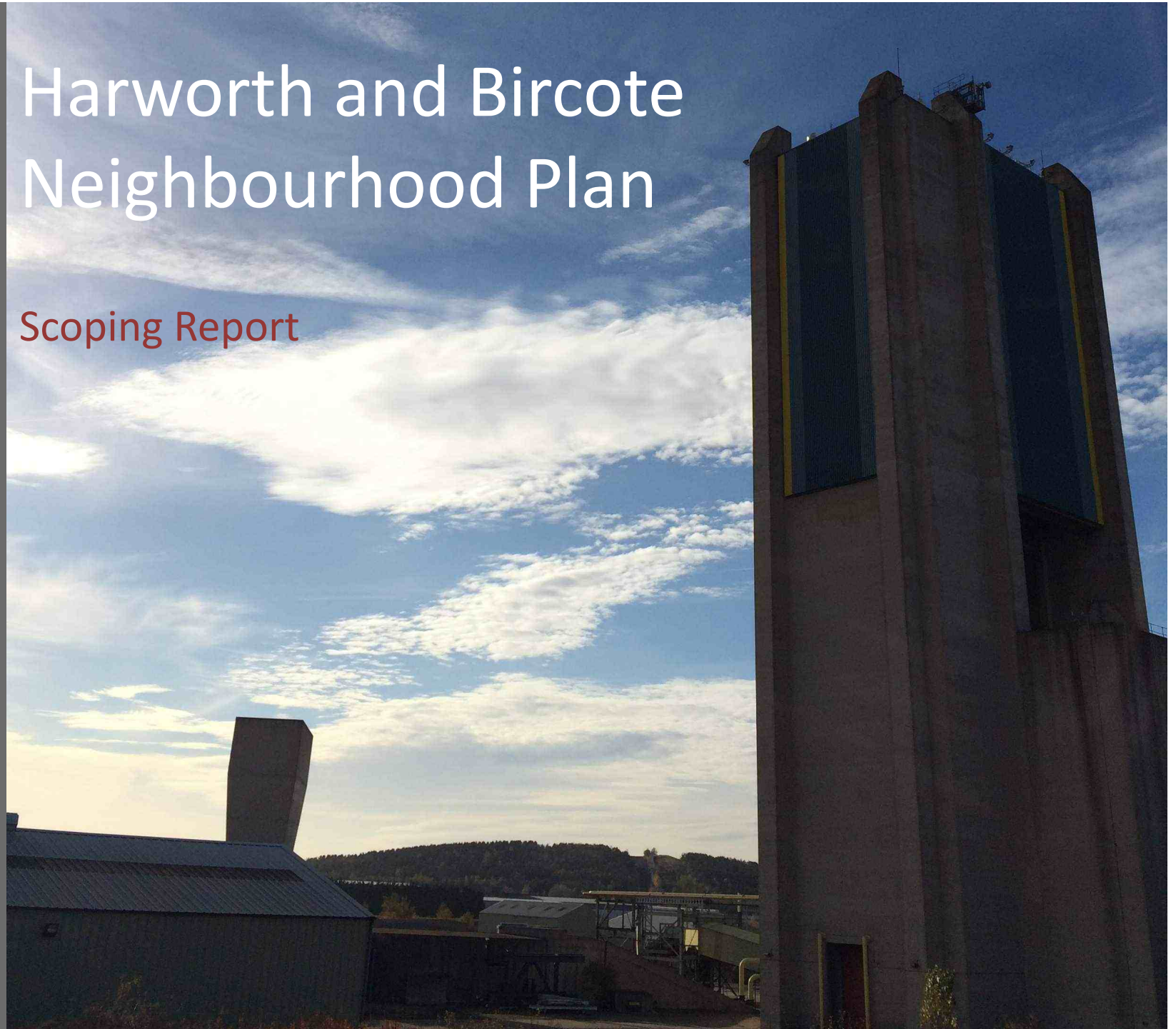
Harworth and Bircote Neighbourhood Plan

Scoping Report

Prepared 18th November 2013



Prepared by
OPUN on
behalf of
Harworth NP



Introduction

OPUN met with the Harworth Neighbourhood Planning Group on the 13th November 2013 to discuss potential design-based ideas and aspirations that could be incorporated into any future documents or policies.

The day included a site visit to the colliery site and a tour of the town's green spaces and High Street. This was followed by a meeting involving members of the steering group, the Council, and an independent planning advisor. The following issues and topics for discussion were tabled:

- The future of the High Street
- The feel and function of the various green spaces in town
- The potential future uses of the colliery site

This document has been produced to reflect OPUN's initial ideas relating to these issues.



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The High Street

Currently the High Street is 'single loaded', with shops only on one side. With any new development in town there is scope to add another edge to the street to provide more retail in the core.

Options to improve the public realm and traffic management were discussed at the meeting and our initial ideas are documented here.



The group felt that the existing High Street offer had some positive features, such as small independent shops and a recent public realm upgrade.

However, for a town of around 8,000 people it was felt that elements such as eating out opportunities, clothing etc were lacking and that new development should be delivered in a way that maximises support for the existing retail.

Many of the buildings on the South side of Scrooby Road sit far back in their plots, offering little in terms of activity to the High Street setting.

Any future development should seek to add activity to the remaining edge of Scrooby Road, mirroring the northern edge and enclosing the space.

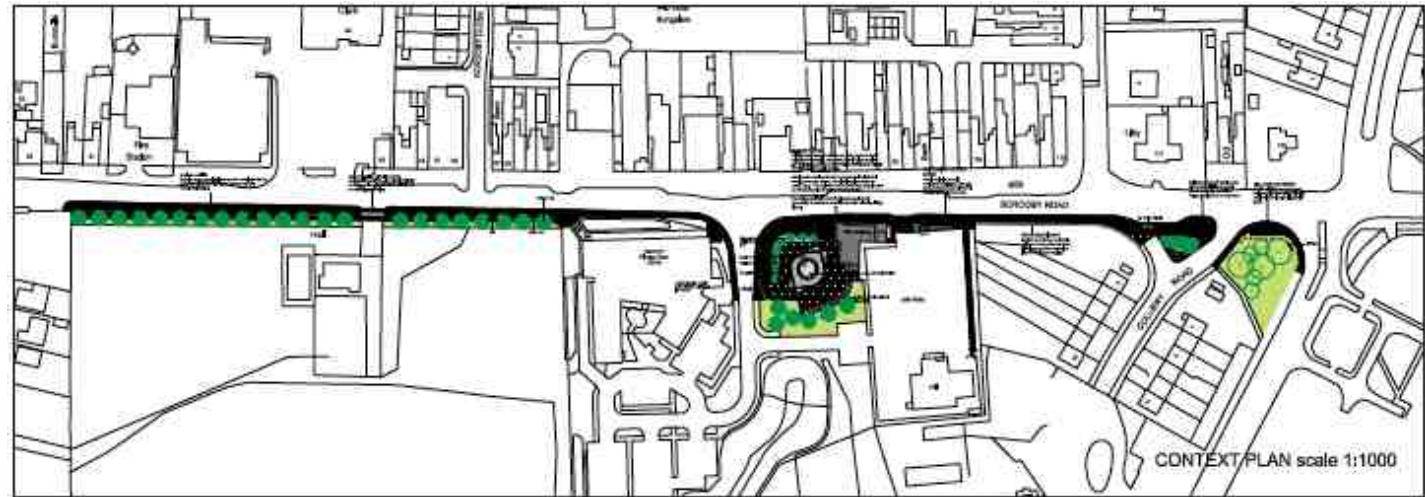


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The High Street

Work is already underway to change certain parts of the public realm, with a longer term strategy which includes possibly pedestrianising parts of Scrooby Road.

The current masterplan could be redrawn to include the elements suggested, right.



Initial elements that could be brought forward as an 'early win' could be to introduce 'gateway' features to demark entering the High Street. Other elements that could be used are 'courtesy crossings', either as raised tables or some other form of shared space. The idea is to moderate driver behaviour, slow speeds and enhance the ability to use both sides of the street easily for pedestrians.



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The High Street

Examples from elsewhere.
Clockwise from top left:

- Shared space High Street in Poynton.
- Poynton showing narrow running lanes.
- Tidworth gateway feature.
- Shared space in Watford.
- Courtesy crossing in Tidworth.
- Pedestrian priority in Poynton.

Some or all of the principles here could eventually be adopted for the retail section of Scrooby Road.



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Green Spaces

Although there is a decent provision of open space in the town, it quickly became apparent from the site visit and from talking to the group that these were not delivering their potential.

Many of the spaces feel unsafe and as such are underutilised. They also don't 'work' together to form a network of open spaces that can be enjoyed as part of a bigger offer.



Many of the possible linkages between the various green spaces are poorly managed and overgrown. They do however offer the potential to accommodate a more formal route system in the future.

The variety of spaces on offer mean there is scope to develop spaces with different characters. More formal play spaces and parks can be complimented by less formal areas such as nature walks, meadows and copses.

Linking these spaces together with an ecologically active network of green corridors would aid biodiversity and give most parts of town access to areas that feel less urban.



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Green Spaces

Poor integration of routes and spaces mean that the more formal play areas do not 'read' as part of a bigger network.

Joining the green spaces together with paths that are well lit and a planting scheme in linking streets could help to solve this issue.



The formal play offer at Snipe Park is of good quality and has the potential to be well integrated with other spaces around the town. It is well connected for easy access from and to the town centre and links into less formal green spaces to the north and beyond the town edge.

However, as with other parts of the towns pedestrian network, the impression of safety and quality of the routes that link to the park is low.

Although formal paving and some lighting is provided, this is not of sufficient quality to overcome the relative isolation that these route suffer from. Nor are the paths wide enough to enable easy use for buggies, cyclists and pedestrians.



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Green Spaces

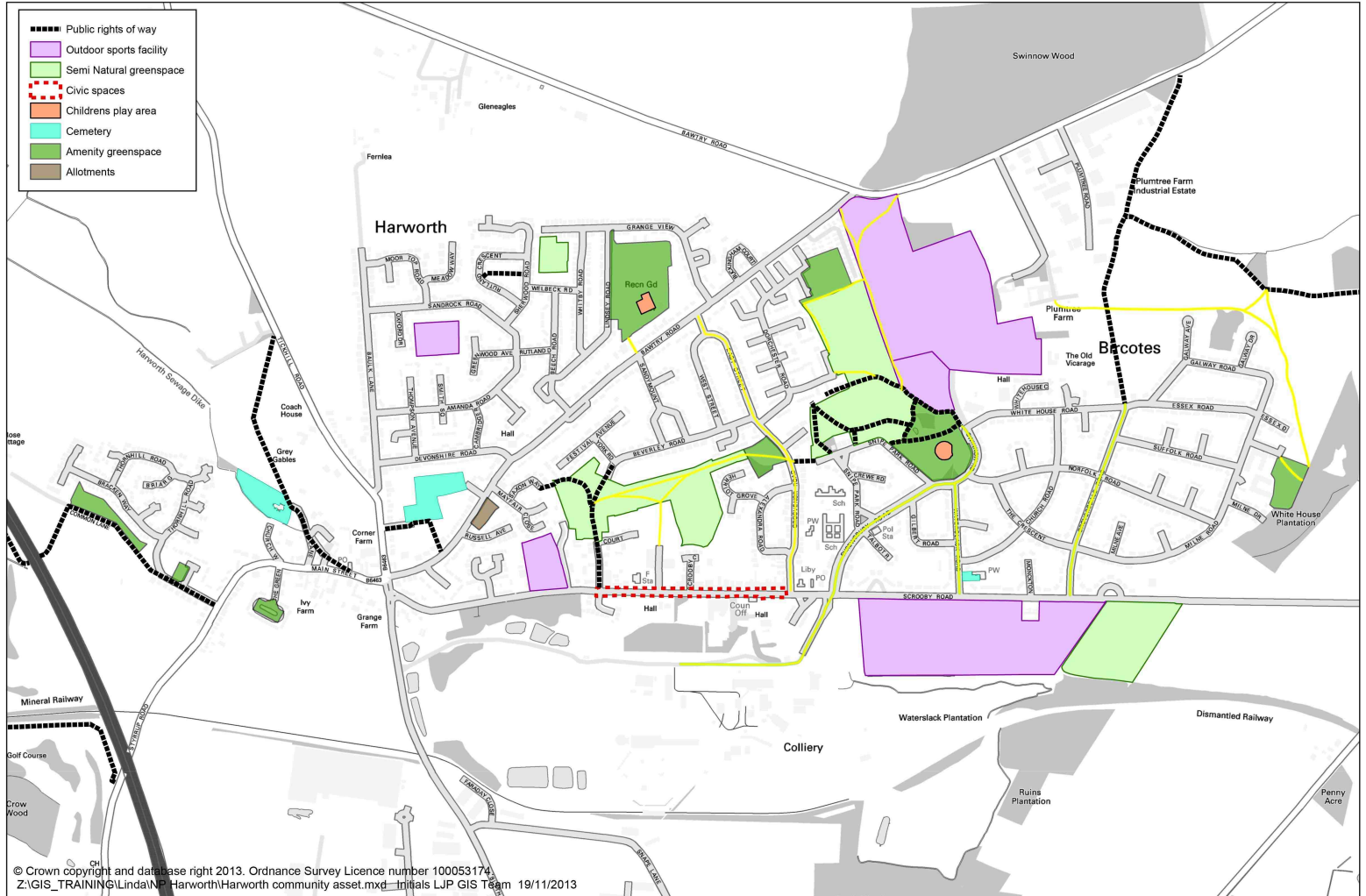
The map (right) shows existing green spaces and a potential way to link them together through new foot paths and through planting in some of the existing streets (yellow).

An important theme for any new network of routes is connecting the centre of town to the green spaces at the towns edge.

Also, making clear links from the High Street to the green spaces deeper in town will help support both elements.

Finally, should the colliery site come forward for development then any green route structure should be extended into this to allow both sides of town to link together.

Harworth & Bircotes



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Colliery Site

The current colliery site has the potential to be developed for a variety of uses, but not all uses will generate spin-off benefits for the town centre and existing residents.

There is a proposal for employment uses to be developed on the site should it cease to be used commercially, but the potential for a substantial number of houses should be explored as this will provide the 'critical mass' needed to support both day and night time economic activity.



There is the potential for development close enough to the existing town centre to allow walking to the shops and other services.

Existing features of note should be incorporated in any new scheme to add character and identity.



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Colliery Site

The neighbourhood plan could allocate the colliery site for mixed-use development, with some office space being complimented by housing.

Viability is a key consideration, and allowing housing may unlock the deliverability of the site for other uses.



Important principles that need to be implemented during any masterplanning for the colliery site include ensuring clear and direct links to the High Street, bringing planting and lighting in from other areas to link the two sides of town together, providing an employment opportunity (offices?) near to the High Street to create activity, and possibly providing a bus interchange near any employment.

The area (right) could be developed for housing and should be considered as part of any neighbourhood plan.



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Key design actions / issues to solve

Connectivity, Movement and Green Spaces

- A network of routes reinforced by planting and lighting needs to be developed to help movement around town on foot and by cycle.
- A strategy for the town's green spaces, covering their current and potential uses and how they could link together should be developed.
- Routes from the existing town through the centre and to new development on the colliery site should be investigated. These should be clear and direct as well as feeling safe and attractive.

The High Street

- Development along the Southern edge of the High Street should be explored to add more activity and enclosure to the street.
- Support for the existing units on the High Street might come from new development on the colliery site, so any new development must not compete economically.
- Locating complimentary uses on the colliery site, such as employment and a hotel, close to the High Street will encourage more activity.
- The public realm of the High Street could be retreated to provide a slower traffic environment that is more pleasant for pedestrian.
- There is potential for a market to be provided in the High Street and this should be trialed to test viability and popularity.

Colliery Site

- This site has the potential to provide much-needed benefits to the existing town but only if it is designed and delivered in a way that captures spend and activity to support local businesses.
- Good links to the rest of town and within the site are key to enabling this.
- The site could be home to other uses that also bring benefits to existing residents.



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Who We Are

OPUN is the Architecture and Design Centre for the East Midlands working for the creation of better quality neighbourhoods, buildings and public spaces across the region. We believe in the value of good design and creativity and are passionate about engaging people in architecture and their built environment. OPUN is a member of the Design Network an exiting collaboration between the eight regional Design Review Panels in England.

What We Do

We work with decision makers, design, planning and regeneration professionals, communities and young people to improve the design of the built environment. We put high value on the contribution excellent design, culture and creativity bring to making places which are distinctive, places where people can enjoy living and working and have pride in.

OPUN manages the East Midlands Design Review Panel and offers a range of other services, enabling and neighbourhood planning, training, inspirational visits and tours, talks, events and professional networking opportunities for anyone interested in the design of new or regenerated buildings and places.

OPUN Architecture East Midlands is a registered charity 1143920.