



**NORTHAMPTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**PLANNING COMMITTEE:** 27<sup>th</sup> October 2009  
**DIRECTORATE:** Planning and Regeneration  
**HEAD OF PLANNING:** Susan Bridge

**APP: N/2009/0606**                      **Retrospective subdivision of industrial unit and part use as builders merchants (Sui Generis). External changes including altering and creating openings and erection of 2.4m high fence around yard at Unit 5, Minton Business Centre, Main Road, Far Cotton.**

**WARD:** Delapre

**APPLICANT:** Keystone Roofing Supplies Ltd  
**AGENT:** Architectural Services

**REFERRED BY:** Head of Planning  
**REASON:** Applicant is a relative of an NBC employee (section 2.1.4 of the Constitution)

**DEPARTURE:** No

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**APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION/ CONSULTATION BY:**

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

**1.1 APPROVAL** for the following reason:

The change of use to builder's merchants and external changes to the building and forecourt are acceptable by virtue of maintaining the business characteristics of Minton Business Centre, utilising suitable highway access and by enhancing the appearance of the building and site. For these reasons the changes accord with saved Policies B2, B3, B14 and E20 of the Northampton Local Plan and no other material considerations indicate otherwise.

**2. THE PROPOSAL**

**2.1** The application is to subdivide an approximately 1,500 square metre industrial unit into two spaces, one of which is proposed to be a builder's merchants (sui generis use) covering a footprint of 935 square

metres with the creation of a 240 square metre first floor mezzanine office space. This leaves the second unit from the subdivision as a 535 square metre unit. This smaller unit is not proposed to be changed from its existing industrial uses.

- 2.2 The larger unit comes with a forecourt area which is fenced with 2.4 metre palisade metal railings creating an external outside storage space measuring approximately 900 square metres.
- 2.3 It is also proposed to re-clad the walls of the building with aluminium panels resulting in changes to windows and doors and other openings (these works are now largely complete). The existing lighting on site is not proposed to be changed.

### **3. SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 3.1 Minton Business Centre was previously the site of tractor/ digger cab manufacture and performed a range of business uses around this core activity. With the closure of these operations the buildings are being remarketed for business uses.
- 3.2 The site is 1km southwest of the centre of Northampton on an established industrial area close to Far Cotton and directly south of the Grand Union Canal. The estate is accessed from a roundabout on Towcester Road. The surrounding area is entirely commercial with a wide range of business land uses taking place.

### **4. PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 A long history of planning consents dating from the 1950s for body works factory activities on the wider site. More recently consent for this building in 1970/71, extensions in 1980/90s and in 2005 an application for flood defences.

### **5. PLANNING POLICY**

#### **5.1 Development Plan**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The current Development Plan comprises of the East Midlands Regional Plan, the saved policies of the Northamptonshire County Structure Plan and Northampton Local Plan 1997.

#### **5.2 National Policies:**

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development

PPG4 – Industrial, commercial development and small firms

#### **5.3 East Midlands Regional Plan 2009**

Policy 2 – Promoting Better Design

Encourages highway access and parking that improves both safety and the quality of public space, whilst seeking design that reduces crime and the fear of crime.

**5.4 Northampton Borough Local Plan**

E20 – New Development

B2 – Existing business areas

B3 – Business development

B14 – Development for non-business uses

T14 – Rail corridor safeguard

**5.5 Supplementary Planning Guidance**

Planning out Crime in Northamptonshire SPG 2004

**6. CONSULTATIONS/REPRESENTATIONS**

**Internal**

6.1 **Access Officer** – Level access required, doors will need to meet DDA standard

6.2 **Public Protection** – No comments to make.

**External**

6.3 **County Highways** – storage of building materials shall not impinge on car parking areas.

**Neighbours**

6.4 No representations made.

**7. APPRAISAL**

**Principle of change of use**

7.1 The proposals include part of the building being changed from B-class uses to a sui generis use, a builder's merchants. This type of use is well-suited to an industrial estate where the kind of noise and vehicle activity typical of builder's yards can be kept away from residential neighbours and the road infrastructure is designed to handle heavy vehicles.

7.2 Nonetheless, saved Local Plan Policy B14 seeks to protect industrial areas from the loss of business class uses unless there would be a significant benefit to the local community and substantial employment opportunities. It is considered in this case that the use closely reflects B-class activity and would employ similar numbers to the existing permitted uses. The benefit of keeping builder's yards in areas remote from housing is also considered to weigh in favour of the proposals.

- 7.3 In summary, the change of use element of the proposals maintains the business characteristics of Minton Business Centre, would not reduce local employment opportunities and is sustainably located away from sensitive neighbours such as housing.

#### **Parking and access**

- 7.4 As mentioned above, the road infrastructure into Minton Business Centre is adequate to handle HGVs and business traffic. NCC as Highway Authority does not raise objections to the suitability of the access, but do have concerns about car parking. The site is considered highly accessible, in a relatively sustainable location and will not result in highway safety problems.
- 7.5 A protected rail corridor passes directly by the entrance of the site and down the south side of the building. This close relationship has existed for decades and the proposals go no further than the existing lawful business activities already occurring on the land. In this respect, the change of use of the site is no more harmful to the protected rail corridor than the existing situation.
- 7.6 NCC's concern regarding the internal parking spaces being covered by stored materials or other obstructions is considered a valid one and it is recommended that a planning condition is applied to keep these available at all times for staff and visitor's cars.

#### **Design and appearance**

- 7.7 The former appearance of the site has been updated by works that involve grey aluminium cladding to the upper part of the building, blue powder coated frame windows (included at first floor height) and 2.4m metal palisade fencing around the forecourt.
- 7.8 All of the aforementioned design changes are considered an improvement on the original form and layout and give a boost to a tired and aged area of this industrial estate. On this basis the proposals accord with saved Policy E20 of the Local Plan.

### **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The principle of losing business uses to a builder's merchants is considered acceptable in terms of saved Policy B14 by virtue of retaining employment and business activity on site in a location that is clearly preferable for such uses. The access arrangements are acceptable and providing off street parking is suitably maintained there are no objections to the layout proposed. The fencing and building improvements enhance the building and revitalise the appearance of the area.

For all these reasons the proposal is considered to accord with the policies of the Development Plan and no other material considerations indicate otherwise.

**9. CONDITIONS**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The car parking spaces shall at all times be reserved for the parking of vehicles by staff and visitors and there shall be no storage of goods, materials, refuse, pallets or skips thereon.

Reason: To ensure that adequate parking facilities are maintained in accordance with PPG 13 Transport.

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

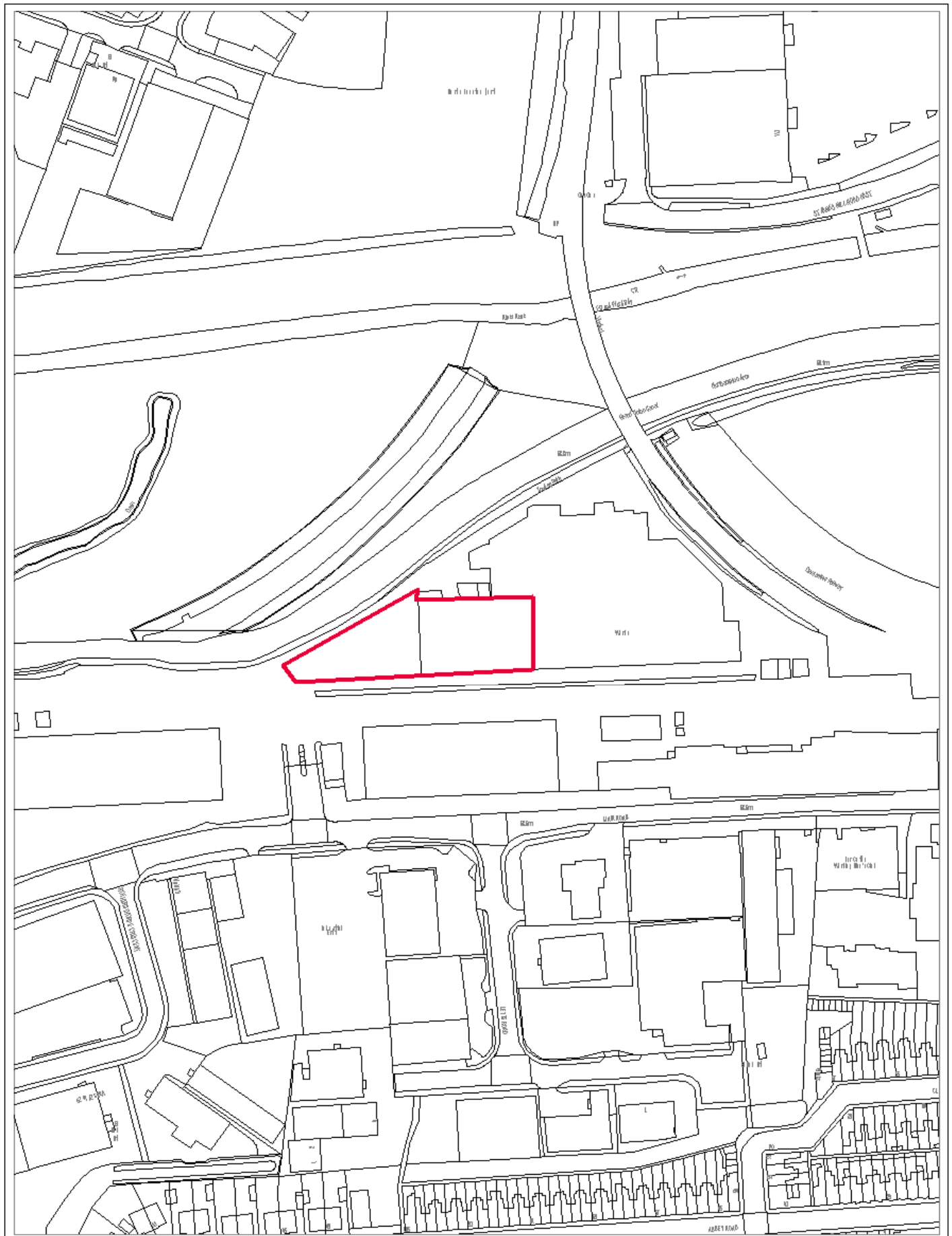
**11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

None

**12. SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN**

12.1 In reaching the above recommendations, regard has been given to securing the objectives, visions and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan together with those of associated Frameworks and Strategies.

<b>Position:</b>	<b>Name/Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Author:</b>	Richard Boyt	8/10/09
<b>Development Control Manager Agreed:</b>	Gareth Jones	12/10/09



Im: Jon Martin  
 dt: 7th October 2009  
 nr: 1:2000  
 pt: Planning  
 mt: Location Plan

Title  
**Unit 5 Minton Business Centre, Main Road, Far Cotton.**

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