



See Attached Appendix

**PLANNING COMMITTEE:** 29<sup>th</sup> July 2014  
**DIRECTORATE:** Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning  
**HEAD OF PLANNING:** Susan Bridge

**N/02013/0912:** Outline planning permission for redevelopment of the site as a new campus for the University of Northampton, including site clearance and enabling works comprising remediation and re-leveling of the site, demolition of all buildings on the site (except the Grade II listed structures). The proposal includes up to 40,000m<sup>2</sup> university floorspace; up to 15,000m<sup>2</sup> university expansion floorspace; up to 35,000m<sup>2</sup> commercial (B1-offices) floorspace; up to 3,550m<sup>2</sup> of retail floorspace (up to 1,800m<sup>2</sup> of A1, up to 150m<sup>2</sup> of A2, and up to 1,600m<sup>2</sup> A3/A4); up to 1,500 beds of student accommodation; up to 760 car parking spaces for University use; up to 1,100 car parking spaces for commercial / leisure use; a hotel of up to 7,000m<sup>2</sup> (up to 150 bedrooms); sports hall and floodlit sports facilities; reuse of listed locomotive shed (520m<sup>2</sup>) and curtilage listed office building; an energy centre of up to 600m<sup>2</sup>; a new road bridge and junction on to Bedford Road including reconfiguration of Midsummer Meadow car park; a new pedestrian foot/cycle bridge connecting the site to Beckett's Park; and retention of the existing road access (As Amended) via Nunn Mills Road at land for redevelopment, Nunn Mills Road, Northampton.

**WARD:** Delapre & Briar Hill

**APPLICANT:** University of Northampton  
**AGENT:** Savills Planning

**REFERRED BY:** Head of Planning  
**REASON:** Major Project & Legal Agreement

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## **APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION:**

### **1. RECOMMENDATION**

#### **1.1 APPROVAL IN PRINCIPLE** subject to the previously agreed conditions and the following reason:

The proposal as revised demonstrates that the scheme could be designed to respect the character of its locality and would not adversely impact upon residential amenity, visual amenity, heritage, transportation, biodiversity and flood risk and drainage related matters and is considered to be acceptable on its planning merits. For these reasons, the proposal would comply with Policies 1, 4, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 15, 25, 28, 29, 30 and 36 of the Central Area Action Plan 2013, the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Submission and the National Planning Policy Framework.

#### **1.2** The prior completion of a Section 106 Legal Agreement to secure:

- i) A financial contribution towards key infrastructure and sustainable travel related works;
- ii) A financial contribution towards Monitoring – this is used to pay the costs of monitoring the compliance of the legal agreement.

### **2. THE BACKGROUND**

**2.1** Members will recall that this planning application was first considered by the Planning Committee at your meeting on the 17 December 2013, the original report and addendum is attached at Appendix A. At that Planning Committee meeting it was resolved that the above outline application be approved in principle subject to the completion of a suitable legal agreement. This legal agreement required a financial contribution being made towards key infrastructure and sustainable travel related works. Further matters relating to the proposal involving additional conditions were also subsequently agreed at your meeting in February 2014, this latter report and addendum is attached at Appendix B.

**2.2** Since the initial consideration of the proposal, further discussions have taken place between the University's Advisors, the County Council's Highway Authority and Sport England. As a consequence of this further revised plans have now been submitted to the Borough Council in connection with the above development. The original submitted parameter plans and illustrative masterplan have been updated to reflect the change in use on part of the site. An addendum to the Design and Access Statement and a Technical memorandum relating to traffic implications have also been received and considered. The University of Northampton are requesting that these amendments be formally considered prior to the completion of the legal agreement and the decision notice for the outline planning permission being issued.

### **3. THE REVISIONS**

3.1 The key changes can be summarised as follows:

#### **1) Modifications to Planning Application Boundary**

3.2 Members will be aware that in the initial scheme the Bedford Road towards its junction with Nunn Mills Road would be realigned and improved and made accessible by a traffic light controlled junction. A new road and pedestrian bridge would be provided cutting through part of Midsummer Meadow adjacent to the existing car parking area over the River Nene from Bedford Road. These principles would remain unaltered.

3.3 At the behest of the Highway Authority and in order to comply with subsequent Road Safety Audits, the proposed revisions now involve a new right hand turn being provided from Bedford Road into Riverside Way to improve the junction. In effect this change would allow traffic turning right to wait in a separate lane and for two existing traffic lanes to remain free from obstruction. In order to implement the right hand turn lane, the applicants would need to carry out some of the highway work outside of the previously considered redline plan. This would require a minor incursion into Midsummer's Meadow, and accordingly the redline plan has been enlarged to accommodate the proposed revision to the area. The site affected is a very small area along Bedford Road and on the northern corner of the site close to the skateboard park. It is not considered that there would be any significant impact on this area of open space.

3.4 In addition to the above Members should also be aware that as part of the original considered scheme a new pedestrian footbridge was proposed across the River Nene at the north western edge of the site to Beckett's Park, which provided a direct link to the town centre. It has emerged that additional minor works would need to be carried out outside the previous redline plan. The redline boundary has therefore been altered accordingly in order to accommodate the alterations and involves the inclusion of a small area of land. This alteration is required to enable some additional resurfacing works to be carried out on the approach to the footbridge and would require some additional tree removal. No objection is raised the loss of trees.

3.5 The total site area would increase by 0.19 hectares from the original site redline boundary which in the overall scheme is considered to be minimal.

#### **2) Revisions To The Road Bridge Over River Nene From Bedford Rd**

3.6 Members will be aware that the main vehicular and pedestrian access serving the development would be via a new road bridge from Bedford Road. The proposed road bridge structure would be a reinforced concrete deck supported by a single span arch crossing the River Nene. As the detailed work on the bridge progressed, it became evident that further improvements could be made. The proposed bridge has been altered to enable an improved foundation design, to avoid existing cables on the site and to increase the under span at either end of the bridge. These changes to the span reflect a desire from the Northamptonshire Police Crime Design Advisor for the spans beneath the bridge to be as open as possible to maximise visibility for users.

- 3.7 In assessing the revision, this is considered a positive amendment to the bridge design resulting in a safer and a more open setting thus allowing for an improved experience for pedestrians/cyclists using the footpath by the river. The bridge as approved would still achieve a clearance of 3 metres above waterline as required by the Environment Agency. The siting of the proposed bridge would remain unaltered.

### **3) Amendments To The Land Uses Proposed Within The Parameter Plan and Illustrative Masterplan**

#### **3.8 Commercial office space/Hotel**

The initial scheme involved up to 35,000m<sup>2</sup> of commercial (B1 offices) floor space being provided in separate or combined buildings within the north eastern corner of the site. The original proposal also sought to provide a hotel of up to 7,000m<sup>2</sup> (up to 150 bedrooms). The north eastern corner has been reconfigured to reposition the commercial offices into a smaller space and this would also include the hotel, which is to be re-sited from its previous position. The maximum commercial floorspace would remain unaltered. The hotel would only be developed if there was a specific commercial demand.

#### **3.9 University Lawn**

The area previously identified as forming part of the University Lawn to the west of the commercial area has been identified for future potential development opportunities should it be required.

#### **3.10 Sports Hub**

Under the original submitted scheme the sporting facilities were to be largely provided on the south-eastern part of the site and the former locomotive shed was to be utilised as a gym. The Universities Sports Consultant has advised that a single Sports Hub should be provided to consolidate all of the University's sporting facilities at one location. The area previously identified as a potential hotel is now proposed as a sports hall. This would contain indoor courts and it is also intended that the sports hall would provide flexible space that can also be used for teaching and exams and would be available for use by the Community. The sports hall seeks to complement the gym and playing field facilities originally proposed.

The proposed revisions would address and reflect the continuing dialogue and advice from Sport England and would ensure that there is sufficient space for the facilities proposed. It should be noted that the sports facilities are also shown as 'academic' uses in order to ensure flexibility in the future. The relevant parameter plan and illustrative master plan have been accordingly revised by the applicant to reflect the changes.

## **4. CONSULTATIONS RESPONSES**

- 4.1 **Network Rail** – No comments to make.
- 4.2 **The Ramblers Association** – No comments.
- 4.3 **NCC – Highway Authority** – No objections to principle of revised plans and the highway contribution being secured as originally advised by them.

- 4.4 **Canal and Trust River Trust** – Falls outside the notification area for its application scale.
- 4.5 **Western Power** – No objections.
- 4.6 **NCC – Archaeology** – No further comments to make.
- 4.7 **Natural England** – No objections.
- 4.8 **NBC – Corporate Asset Manager** (verbal) – No objection to principle of Borough Council owned land being utilised to facilitate the development. Appropriate discussions are taking in place.
- 4.9 **Environment Agency** - Refer to previous observations.
- 4.10 **English Heritage** – Advise that the alterations would need to be reflected in the Archaeological Strategy and the application needs to be determined in accordance with National and Local guidance.
- 4.11 **Sports England** – The revisions as far as Sport England are concerned is the creation of a Sports Hub, including 4 courts sports hall, multi-use games area and an artificial grass pitch. Sport England has been provided with additional information in the form of a sports facility strategy and further information on the role of an artificial grass pitch. The main elements from Sport England's objectives are a planned approach to the provision of facilities and opportunities for sport. The initial response raised concerns on the extent of the proposed sports provision at waterside to replace those being lost at existing University sites. The University strategy has addressed a number of issues but remain concerned whether the university will be able to provide adequate replacement facilities. They have advised that the applicant should provide the full range of sporting activities at the new site and adequately replace those facilities being lost at the existing university sites and not be over reliant on the artificial grass pitch. New facilities should be fit for purpose and available for community sport. The absence of an objection to this application does not commit Sport England to support for grant funding.
- 4.12 **Northants Police - Police Crime Prevention Design Adviser** – No objections to revisions.

## **5. REPRESENTATIONS**

- 5.1 The revisions were advertised by site and press notices and nearby occupiers were notified. A letter of objection has been received from a commercial occupier operating from unit 20 Bedford Road. They point out that they have large lorries turning into and out their site off the Bedford Road and object to a traffic Island. This traffic Island forms part of the previously considered plans and is not affected by the current amended details.

## **6. APPRAISAL**

- 6.1 The initial outline planning submission was accompanied by an Environmental Statement and Appendices which provided a comprehensive assessment of the potential environmental impacts arising from the proposed development. Where considered necessary appropriate mitigation measures

were recommended. It should be noted that the land use changes do not raise any additional impacts which have not already been assessed. The assessments undertaken previously covered this area and the built form was already proposed in this location and this does not therefore affect the conclusions previously presented to Planning Committee. The overall levels of floor space proposed are the same as those considered in the original assessment. There are no significant changes to the anticipated trip generation associated with the development. The previously submitted Environmental Statement had been carefully assessed to ascertain how the mitigation measures proposed within it would be secured.

- 6.2 In assessing the encroachment on existing Borough Council controlled land, the Corporate Asset Management has been in negotiation with the Universities Property Advisors and is currently in discussion on these matters separately. There are no planning objections to the principle of the amendments proposed on this issue. The alterations to the red line boundary are not considered to be significant and are considered acceptable. With regard to the design alterations to the bridge, these do not give rise to any additional environmental impacts over those assessed in the Environmental Statement and associated reports. The main consideration is the visual impact from the change to the under spans of the bridge and this is considered to be positive.
- 6.3 The environmental impacts of the development proposals affecting Becket's Park and Midsummer Meadow have been assessed in the initial scheme as part of the original Environmental Statement and the minor additional incursions into these areas are not considered to give rise to any additional significant environmental impacts. The National Planning Practice Guidance makes it clear that requests for further information should be limited to the "main" or "significant" environmental effects to which a development is likely to give rise. The key test therefore is whether the information contained in the Environmental Statement is sufficient to allow the main environmental effects to be identified. The main environmental impacts can be identified from the initial Environmental Statement submitted with the original application and appropriate mitigation measures were proposed where relevant. The current amendments do not give rise to significant environmental effects above those already considered. There is therefore no need for further information in line with the EIA Regulations.
- 6.4 In concluding, this is an underutilised brownfield site and the proposal seeks to provide a new consolidated University Campus. The application would secure the future of the University as a leading higher education institution and result in the development of a new centrally located campus with access to town centre amenities. This proposal would continue to be a landmark development with significant regenerative impacts with other wider benefits to the Enterprise Zone. The proposed amendments are minor in their nature and do not alter the main impacts identified in the initial Environmental Statement including ecological implications. The matters raised by Sport England have been considered previously. The development timeframe for the development would remain unaltered and it is anticipated that the University is seeking to be operational by September 2018.

## **7. ADDITIONAL & AMENDED CONDITIONS**

- 7.1 Condition 5 in the original attached report should be amended to reflect the updated drawings and should read as follows;

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 0116-Z(00)000 Rev B; 0116-Z(00)002 Rev B; 0116-Z(00)003 Rev B; 0116-Z(01)000 Rev E; 0116-Z(01) 0001 Rev D; 0116-Z(01)002 Rev D 5695.201 Rev H; 5695.203 Rev F; 203239-DWG-00201 Rev B; 203239-DWG-SK06 Rev G; 203239 SK30 Rev C; 203239 G02 Rev J; 203239 G03 Rev J and CH2-H03-H2-DR-C-0001 S2 Rev P2.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to accord with the terms of the planning application.

- 7.2 An additional condition is recommended to enable the applicant to maintain and manage the landscaping proposals being provided at the Midsummer Meadow Car Park and this should read as follows;

The landscaping strategy considered as part of the approved details in Condition 29 above in connection with the development hereby permitted shall include a management plan setting out details of the future management and maintenance of the landscaping provided within the Midsummer Meadow car park located off Bedford Road. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved maintenance details.

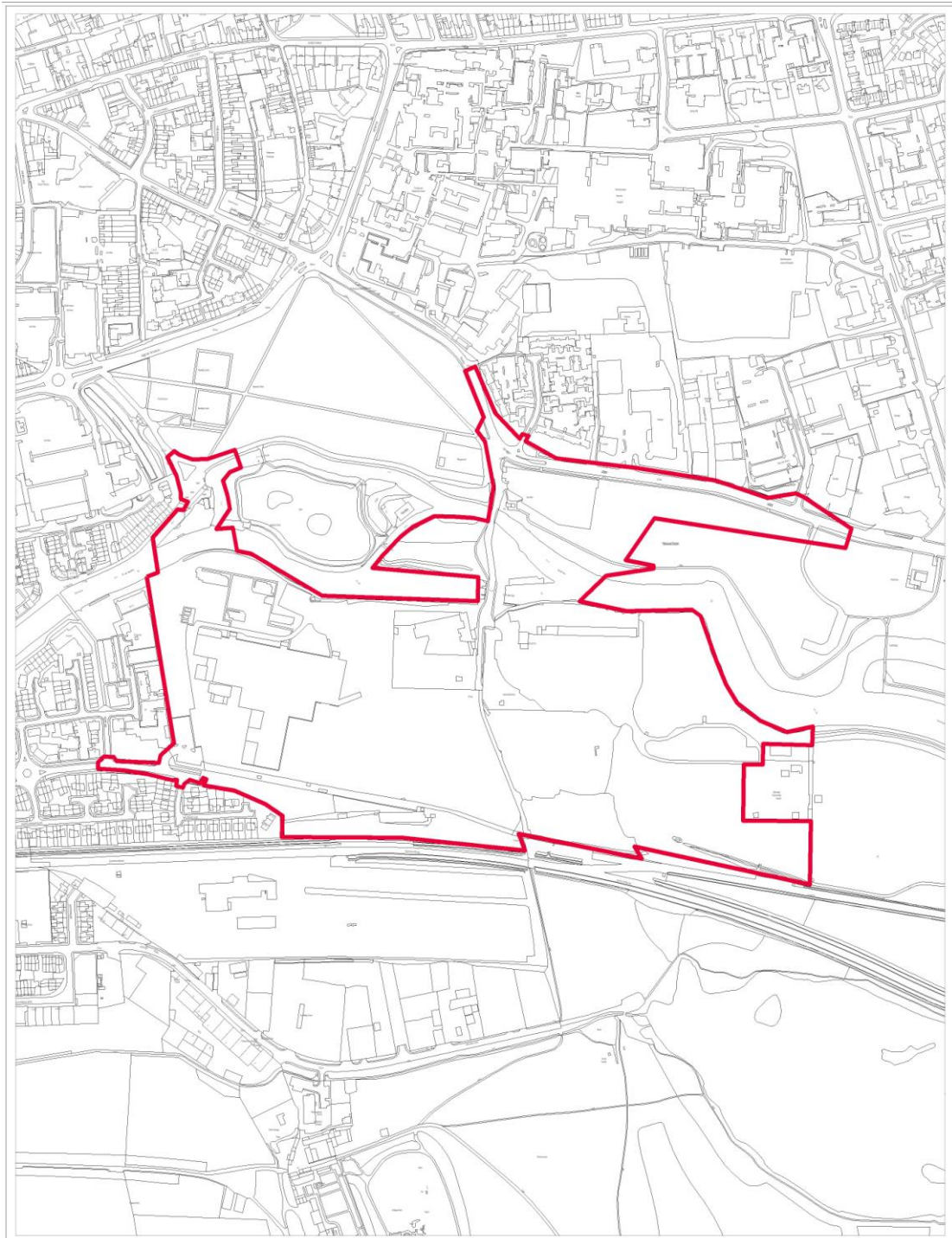
Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Corporate Asset Manager is in negotiations with the University of Northampton to conclude an agreement for dedication of the additional land under the Borough Council's ownership, to allow for the highway related improvements along Bedford Road and the footway bridge crossing at Becketts Park.

## **9. SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN**

- 9.1 Regard has been given to securing the objectives, visions and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan together with those of associated Frameworks and Strategies.



Name: Location Plan  
Date: 21st July 2014  
Scale: 1:5500  
Dept: Planning  
Project: Committee

Title

## Land for redevelopment at Nunn Mills Road

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