

PLANNING COMMITTEE: 24th November 2015
DIRECTORATE: Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning
DIRECTOR: Steven Boyes

N/2015/1040 **Reserved Matters application for the approval of reserved matters of details of the appearance, landscaping, layout and scale of 1198 beds of student accommodation, supporting ancillary facilities (bank, convenience store, GP and multi-faith chaplaincy), a 32 bed hotel school, landscaping and public realm works following Outline Approval N/2013/0912**

WARD: Delapre and Briar Hill

APPLICANT: University of Northampton
AGENT: Savills

REFERRED BY: Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

REASON: Major applications relating to a key development site

DEPARTURE: No

APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION:

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 APPROVAL subject to conditions and for the following reason:

The layout, appearance, scale and landscaping that has been proposed as part of this phase of the development is of an acceptable standard that has a neutral impact upon the amenities of surrounding properties and the setting of the Grade II Listed Building whilst providing new buildings and landscaping of a good design that would positively contribute to the regeneration of this prominent site. The development is therefore in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework; Policies E6, N1 and S10 of the

West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Policies 1, 3 and 28 of the Northampton Central Area Action Plan.

2. THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The applicant has applied for reserved matters approval for a specific phase of the redevelopment of the former Avon/Nunn Mills site as a new campus for the University of Northampton.
- 2.2 The matters for consideration within this application are the siting, scale and appearance of the student living accommodation and the various ancillary facilities associated with this function. The proposals also include the installation of various elements of landscaping.
- 2.3 These works would be located in the western section of the site, with the convenience store and bank being located to the north of the area covered by the application. To the south of this would be a number of buildings that would be constructed as 'cluster flats'. These would comprise a series of bedrooms/living areas with en suite accommodation that would be occupied by individual students. These flats would be clustered around kitchens and communal spaces that would be shared amongst a small number of residents. These buildings would have a varied height and would be of five storeys in height.
- 2.4 Further south is a 32 bedroom hotel that would be operated as part of the University's courses in this area in addition to further ancillary features including a multi-faith chaplaincy and health centre.
- 2.5 To the south and west of this building are a number of student houses of four storeys in height. These are arranged in terraced and would contain 12 bedrooms with shared bathroom, kitchen and living space.
- 2.6 The areas surrounding these buildings would be landscaped and would also contain refuse and cycle storage.

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The wider site is approximately 25 hectares in area and is located on the south eastern edge of Northampton town centre, on the south side of the River Nene and opposite Beckett's Park. Midsummer Meadow, Nene Meadows and Barnes Meadow form areas of largely green open space and are located in reasonably close proximity to the application site. The site is level in nature.
- 3.2 The majority of the previous uses of the site were predominantly industrial in nature and included now demolished manufacturing facilities for Avon; a power station (of which only the northern façade remains, although this is to be demolished to enable the construction of the new university) and various railway lines.

- 3.3 The site includes a Grade II Listed former railway engine shed with separate associated office building. This is excluded from the current application; however, separate proposals for these buildings are currently under consideration by the Council.
- 3.4 The southern boundaries of the site are adjacent to the disused Northampton-Bedford railway line. Beyond this is the Ransome Road site, where redevelopment for residential accommodation is envisaged.
- 3.5 Midsummer Meadow, Nene Meadows and Barnes Meadow form areas of largely open space and are located to the north across the site over the River Nene. Nene Meadows is also located within the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area (NIA). The NIA is an interconnected network of wildlife habits intended to re-establish thriving wildlife populations and to help species respond to climate change

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 N/2013/0912 - 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 40,000m² university floorspace (all floorspace is GEA); up to 15,000m² university expansion floorspace; up to 35,000m² commercial (B1) floorspace; up to 3,550m² of retail floorspace (up to 1800m² of A1, up to 150m² of A2, and up to 1600m² 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 7,000m² (up to 150 bedrooms); floodlit sports facilities; reuse of listed locomotive shed (520m²) and curtilage listed office building; an energy centre of up to 600m²; a new road bridge and junction on to Bedford Road including reconfiguration of Midsummer Meadow car park; a new pedestrian foot bridge connecting the site to Becket's Park; a new secondary substation (adjacent to existing substation); and retention of the existing access via Nunn Mills Road – Approved.
- 4.2 N/2014/1072 – Reserved matters application pursuant to application ref N/2013/0912 details of the appearance, layout and scale of the southern section of the North-South access road on the new Waterside University Campus – Approved.
- 4.3 N/2014/1269 – Reserved matters application for the approval of the appearance, landscaping, layout and scale of four academic buildings; two multi use games areas and a flood lit sports pitch; café/bars and associated landscaping/public realm works pursuant to Outline Planning Permission N/2013/0912, University Site, Nunn Mills Road – Approved
- 4.4 N/2014/133 – Reserved matters application for the appearance, landscaping, layout and scale of pedestrian and cycle bridge linking

Beckett's Park with the new University Campus pursuant to Outline Planning Permission N/2013/0912, University Site, Nunn Mills Road – Approved

4.5 N/2014/1482 – Refurbishment and change of use of former engine shed for use as administration centre and recreation facilities to serve University of Northampton Student Union including the refurbishment of associated office building and erection of free standing plant room – Approved

4.6 N/2014/1483 – Refurbishment and change of use of former engine shed for use as administration centre and recreation facilities to serve University of Northampton Student Union including the refurbishment of associated office building and erection of free standing plant room – Approved

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 Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and the Central Area Action Plan.

5.2 Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities when considering development which affects a Listed Building or its setting, to pay special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest.

National Planning Policy Framework

5.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (hereafter referred to as the NPPF) should be read as single document; however, the following sections are of particular relevance.

5.5 Paragraph 17 states that planning decisions should seek to secure high quality decisions and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupiers. Planning decisions should also take into account the differing roles of spaces. The same paragraph states that planning should contribute towards the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, whilst ensuring that brownfield sites are effectively developed. The same paragraph requires that heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Chapter 12 sets out national advice and guidance relating to the historic environment

- 5.6 The requirement to secure good design is strengthened by paragraph 56, which confirms that design is a key aspect of sustainable development, which is indivisible from good planning. It is therefore important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality individual buildings as well as public and private spaces. Separate to this requirement, paragraph 60 states that planning decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes.
- 5.7 A further consideration is that paragraph 61 requires that planning decisions address the connections between people and places and the integration of new developments with the environment.
- 5.8 Paragraph 118 states that when determining planning applications, decisions should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity through the application of adequate mitigation or through encouraging the incorporation of biodiversity into new developments.

West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy

- 5.9 Policy E6 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) states that the educational role of the University of Northampton should be supported through planning decisions. In addition, Policy S10 establishes a framework for the provision of sustainable development; which includes the provision of a strong sense of place, promoting walking and cycling and promoting the creation of green infrastructure.
- 5.10 The importance of green infrastructure is elaborated within Policy BN1, which states new developments should incorporate existing and future networks and be designed sensitively to ensure a good appearance, access provision and biodiversity enhancement and protections. The importance of biodiversity is strengthened through Policy BN8, which states that new developments should demonstrate an understanding of the importance of the River Nene within and beyond the plan area.
- 5.11 Policy BN5 states that heritage assets and their setting and landscape should be conserved in recognition of their individual and cumulative significance and contribution to the local distinctiveness and sense of place.
- 5.12 Policy N1 is also material to this application for it seeks to develop Northampton's Central Area providing high quality design and public realm works, whilst protecting the heritage assets through managed change.

Northampton Central Area Action Plan

- 5.13 Policy 1 of the Central Area Action Plan (CAAP) requires that new developments positively contribute to an area with regards to the existing urban grain, scale, massing, materials and architectural scale of surrounding buildings. In addition, new developments should contribute to the provision of logical and coherent links to and from destinations in order to promote accessibility to and around the Central

Area. In achieving these objectives, weight should also be given to Policy 3, which requires improvements to the public realm. The policy requirements to promote green infrastructure as discussed previously are reinforced by Policy 4.

- 5.14 More specific to this application is Policy 28, which requires the use of the site for educational purposes, with the provision of taller landmark buildings in key parts of the site in order to create a gateway into Northampton's Central Area. The redevelopment of this site should include a continuous riverside path, which should incorporate new river crossings. Access to Delapre should also be encouraged. In delivering this, schemes should have the flexibility to allow for crossings of the former railway line.
- 5.15 Policy 5 requires that new developments consider that new developments consider the likely impacts, including those arising from climate change, on flood risk.

6. CONSULTATIONS/REPRESENTATIONS

- 6.1 **Anglian Water** – No objections.
- 6.2 **Arboricultural Officer (NBC)** – No objections
- 6.3 **Conservation (NBC)** – The principle consideration for the current proposal is the potential impact the proposed development will have on the setting of the engine shed. The location of the accommodation blocks has been amended compared to the indicative outline plan with the result that the accommodation blocks are now closer to the engine shed than originally anticipated and the view of the building from the linear path running through the site (north to south) will be more obscured. There is potential for this to be mitigated by the proposed use for the building; the students union has the potential to draw people to the building. The cumulative impact of these works result in a level of harm to the heritage assets, although this is considered to be less than substantial. However, in light of the long-term vacancy of the building, the lack of alternative opportunities for the buildings and the already significant change to setting it is considered that bringing these buildings back into effective use will outweigh the harm to their setting.
- 6.3 **Environment Agency** – No objections.
- 6.4 **Environmental Health (NBC)** – Recommend conditions relating to the control of noise and cooking odours.
- 6.5 **Highway Authority (NCC)** – Request details of a swept path analysis regarding the use of the main east-west route by large vehicles.
- 6.6 **Natural England** – No objections.
- 6.7 **29 Augusta Avenue** – Raise concerns regarding the parking and cycle storage provision.

7. APPRAISAL

Scope of the application

- 7.1 As outline permission has been granted for the university development, the principle of the development has been accepted. Specifically, the outline application permission conferred consent upon the provision of up to 1,500 student accommodation places and a hotel of up to 150 bedrooms. As a consequence of this outcome, the nature of the proposed development is acceptable. Moreover, as the scale of development now proposed is less than the maximum thresholds established within the outline application, the quantum of development is acceptable.
- 7.2 This application also assessed the key access points to the development. As a consequence of this, the application does not need to revisit these matters. Therefore, the appearance, scale and siting of the submitted buildings in addition to the proposed landscaping that would surround them are matters for determination

Design and appearance

- 7.3 Whilst the scale of the proposed buildings are of a large scale, however, given that the buildings would be sited alongside the existing Avon buildings and the academic buildings which were approved by the Council's Planning Committee in February 2015 and are all of a large scale, it is considered that none of the buildings currently proposed would represent an incongruous feature within this context.
- 7.4 In order to add interest to the façades of the buildings and to break up their massing, techniques such as the introduction of contrasting sections of materials and projecting/recessed fenestration have been utilised. The application details a wide palate of materials in order to add variety to the streetscape and ensures a good level of interest.
- 7.5 Of particular importance is the design of the hotel, which is located adjacent to the key north-south pedestrian route which runs from the crossing over the River Nene to the Grade II Listed former engine shed, which would be used for student community facilities, with the potential for a further link to the land to the south. In order to respond to this context, the hotel building would project further forward the remainder of the building line, which adds a greater amount of interest and a feature within the streetscene.
- 7.6 In addition, the building would feature a different roof form to the remainder of the accommodation proposed within the application. In particular, substantially greater amounts of fenestration would be included within the building, which would ensure a greater level of interest and active frontages into the building.
- 7.7 During the application process, the applicant has revised the western side elevation to better respond to the prominence of this elevation,

which comprises alterations to the building's fenestration and the addition of new signage.

Impact upon Heritage Assets

- 7.8 As discussed previously, the site contains a Grade II Listed former engine shed. A small ancillary office building is also situated in close proximity to this structure and is therefore curtilage listed. These buildings and its setting is of particular importance due to it providing a strong marker of the site's history. These buildings have been unused for some time, have fallen into a state of disrepair and been the subject of crime and anti-social behaviour. Planning permission and listed building consent has been granted for the reuse and restoration of the engine shed and office as for use by the Students Union. This use would attract people to the buildings and help secure its long term future. It therefore follows that that this reuse and restoration would only take place if and when the wider site is redeveloped for the new university campus.
- 7.9 It is accepted that the proposed development would result in student accommodation of four storeys in height (approximately 13m) being constructed in proximity to the much smaller Grade II Listed engine shed (approximately 11m and is sited on land approximately 1m lower). This would have some impact upon the setting of the engine shed and associated office; however, this is less than substantial.
- 7.10 In addition to these factors, it is noted that the surrounding area has seen a number of changes in the life of the Listed Building including the development and demolition of the Avon manufacturing facilities, the development of the Avon Headquarters, the development and demolition of the Nunn Mills Power Station and the development and clearing of the site at Ransome Road. As a consequence, it is recognised that the setting of these buildings has seen a number of changes over time.
- 7.11 The design of the student accommodation within this section of the development has taken some cues from the engine shed. This is most noticeable in the palette of materials that has been chosen in order to reflect the appearance of the engine shed, which assists in building a relationship between the two sets of structures.
- 7.12 Therefore for these reason set out above, it is considered that any harm to the setting of the engine shed and associated office building would be outweighed by the benefits in bringing these building back into a productive long term use. As such there is a clear public benefit to the proposed development.

Impact on neighbouring properties

- 7.13 The buildings have been designed in such a manner so as to ensure that there would be no undue detrimental impact upon the occupiers of neighbouring properties in terms of considerations such as light,

outlook and privacy. It is also recognised that there are significant separation distances between the existing dwellings and the proposed student accommodation. These distances are approximately 30-40m from the nearest dwellings in Malthouse Close and approximately 100m from the residences in Lion Court. The development is also approximately 40m away from the undeveloped Ransome Road site. It is also noted that until comparatively recently a number of large scale buildings were included on the site as part of the Avon manufacturing facility. For these reasons, the development would not represent an overbearing feature.

- 7.14 Although the hotel is in a different position to that suggested within the indicative parameters submitted as part of the outline application as this element of the development has moved from the eastern portion of the site to the western section; however, no harm is apparent from this amendment given that the outline permission does not compel the developer to construct building in precisely the same location as the indicative parameters. A further deviation from the indicative parameters is that some of the student accommodation in the south western portion of the site is of four storeys rather than the three indicated within the previously submitted parameters; however, due to the relatively small scale of this departure and the reasons set out above, this arrangement is acceptable.

Layout

- 7.15 The development retains the broad building blocks established within the outline application. This ensures that the development is permeable and accessible to all, whilst promoting more sustainable means of transport.
- 7.16 Given that the application is for a type of residential accommodation, it is important to balance the desirability of encouraging easy public access to the site, with the need to ensure a reasonable degree of privacy and security for the future residents, particularly as bedrooms would be situated on the ground floor of some buildings (which is not unusual for bespoke student accommodation). In order to achieve this, the applicant has provided enhanced landscaping at such potentially sensitive points, which would include plants such as goat willow and hawthorn.
- 7.17 In addition to these measures, the pathways that would surround the 'cluster flats' would be designed in such a way so as to make it clear to pedestrians, which routes are to be utilised for crossing the development and which form more private access routes to student accommodation. This is to be achieved through landscaping, boundary treatments and differing surface treatments.
- 7.18 The student houses towards the south of the site would feature some private space. Whilst this wouldn't form gardens in the conventional sense, they would represent some defensible space that would ensure that this element of the development is safe and secure for future

residents. This defensible space would also include various thorny hedges (such as rose) for increased security.

- 7.19 The positioning of the convenience store and bank to the north of the area covered by this application is of use in attracting activity to the southern bank of the River Nene and promoting the use of this area. Furthermore, the hotel, reception facilities and health centre are positioned in a convenient and accessible fashion that also promotes activity across the site.

Landscaping and ecology

- 7.20 Whilst the site has previously featured a variety of commercial and industrial uses, it should be recognised that the site has been colonised by a number of species, which therefore contribute to the level of biodiversity within the locality. A number of these habitats would be lost as a result of the redevelopment of the site, although the relative value of these spaces is comparatively low. Mitigation would be offered through enhanced landscaping that would draw upon native species that would also assist in the creation of new habitats.
- 7.21 The pursued landscaping strategy includes the creation of formal areas that would mark the main routes across the development and would contain trees such as English Oak and Field Maple. These would be contrasted with more informal areas of planting that would be provided in closer proximity to the student accommodation. This will serve to provide a more attractive living environment for residents of the development as well as assist in defining the extent of the public and semi-private spaces.
- 7.22 The landscaping strategy has been reviewed by the Council's Arboricultural Officer and it is concluded that the plant types and means by which they are to be planted are appropriate and sufficient to ensure that these elements of landscaping are a success.
- 7.23 No objections have been received from Natural England and as a result, it is apparent that the proposed development would not have a significant impact upon any wildlife species of particular importance.

Highway considerations

- 7.24 The matter of highway access was addressed within the outline application and as such does not need to be revisited within this application. In addition, on site car parking provision was addressed within the previous reserved matters application (reference N/2014/1239), which was approved in February 2015. Of further note is that conditions attached to the outline approval require the submission of a Travel Plan and a Section 106 Agreement secured a financial payment towards the provision of more sustainable means of transport.
- 7.25 It is noted that the Highway Authority have requested the submission of a swept path analysis in respect of one of the east-west routes across

the site. In response to this, it should be recognised that this route already benefits from full planning permission (on which the Highway Authority was a consultee). It is understood that the reason for the request is to ensure that the site is accessible by large vehicles such as refuse lorries and fire appliances. The submitted application documents detail that the scheme have been designed to ensure accessibility by fire appliances. In addition, a refuse collection strategy is outlined that highlights the use of small vehicles to collect refuse, which will then be centrally stored before being dispatched.

Environmental Health considerations

- 7.26 The Council's Environmental Health section have requested conditions related to the attenuation of noise arising from the more commercial elements of the scheme and cooking odours emanating from any commercial kitchen. Given the proximity of residential accommodation to these elements of the proposal, it is considered that such conditions are necessary and reasonable as well as consistent with other permissions granted for comparable uses.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 It is considered that buildings of acceptable design have been proposed, which have a neutral impact on neighbour amenity and positively contribute to the regeneration of this key site. Subject to conditions, the impacts of the development can be mitigated and for these reasons, the scheme is in conformity with national and local planning policies.

9. CONDITIONS

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the attached schedule of approved plans.

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

2. Prior to the commencement of the development, a scheme shall be submitted detailing the phasing of the construction of the development. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. This condition is required in order to ensure that all other relevant details are agreed in a timely manner.

3. Prior to the commencement of each phase, details and/or samples of all proposed external facing materials shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure that the development will harmonise with its surroundings in accordance with Policy 1 of the Central Area Action Plan.

4. Prior to the commencement of each phase, details and/or samples of all proposed surface treatments shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure that the development will harmonise with its surroundings in accordance with Policy 1 of the Central Area Action Plan.

5. Prior to the commencement of each phase, a decorative lighting strategy, including details of light levels and hours of use shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details, and shall be fully implemented prior to the first bringing into use of each phase and retained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity in accordance with Policy 1 of the Central Area Action Plan.

6. Prior to the hotel and commercial units first coming into use a scheme which specifies the sources of noise and the means for its control shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be implemented prior to the development first coming into use and shall be retained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of securing a satisfactory standard of development in terms of neighbour amenity in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

7. Prior to the hotel first coming into use, a scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, which specifies the collection, treatment and dispersal of cooking odours and the ongoing maintenance of this scheme. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme, be fully implemented prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted and retained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of securing a satisfactory standard of development in terms of neighbour amenity in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

8. The development hereby permitted does not confer Reserved Matters Approval upon Phase 2 of the Student Residences Scheme as shown on drawing C235-STL-R00-01-DR-A-02001-P9.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to comply with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 N/2013/0912; N/2014/1072; N/2014/1269; and N/2014/1331

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None

12. SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

12.1 In reaching the attached 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.



Name: **Site Location Plan**
Date: **16th November 2015**
Scale: **1:5000**
Dept: **Planning**
Project: **Planning Committee**

Title

University Site, Nunn Mills Road

Produced from the 2011 Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright
Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Licence number: 100019655