



Planning Committee

Directorate:

People, Planning and Regeneration

Corporate Manager:

Christine Stevenson

Date: **13 February 2008**

Report Title	APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION:
	<p>Application no: N/2008/0004 (Outline)</p> <p>Proposal: Erection of heritage centre including teaching facilities, museum, tea room and gift shop and access together car parking</p> <p>Address: Land off Station Road, Billing</p> <p>Target Determination Date: 27 February 2008</p> <p>Reason for Referral: Departure from Development Plan</p>

1. Recommendations:

REFUSAL for the following reasons:

- 1) The proposed development is on a greenfield site in open countryside in an unsustainable location not easily accessible by means other than the private car. The development would therefore be contrary to national guidance contained in Planning Policy Statement 1 and Planning Policy Statement 7, and the following development policies: Regional Spatial Strategy 8 Policy 4, Northamptonshire County Structure Plan Policies GS5, Northampton Local Plan Policies E6 and L16.
- 2) The site lies within an area of greenspace within the river valley. It is considered that the introduction of a substantial building, with associated car parking and access would be detrimental to the visual amenities of the area and contrary to the national guidance contained in Planning Policy Statement 7, and the following development plan policies: Policy GS5 of the Northamptonshire County Structure Plan, Policies E6 and L16 of the Northampton Local Plan.

2. Proposal:

An outline application with all matters, except for layout and access, reserved. The proposal is for a museum providing an insight into the aspects of past country life in Northamptonshire. The application site is 0.941 hectares in size. Land to the north, which does not form part of the application site, will continue to be used for rough grazing.

Plans show access to the site off Station Road via a 330m long driveway. A building of 949.5 sq m floor area will be constructed to the south of the site and is intended to accommodate display areas, teaching rooms, a tea room, a gift shop and toilet facilities. An artist's impression shows a 2/3 storey building and an attached single storey building to be constructed in the style of a traditional agricultural building.

To the north of the museum building is a car park for 46 cars and 3 coaches and an external display area for larger agricultural equipment.

The application is supported by a Planning Statement, Northamptonshire Museum's Supporting Statement (including a financial forecast), a design and access statement and a plan showing existing footpath and cycle routes in proximity to the application site.

3. Background & History:

The application site is located on the south eastern edge of Northampton and to the north of the village of Cogenhoe. The site straddles the Borough boundary with South Northamptonshire. The access off Station Road and the access road lie within South Northamptonshire, with the main part of the site lying within the Northampton Borough boundary.

This application is a resubmission following the refusal of planning permission by the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation on 20th March 2007 for the following reasons:

- 1) The proposed development is on a Greenfield site in open countryside in an unsustainable location not easily accessible by means other than the private car. The development would therefore be contrary to national guidance contained in Planning Policy Statement 1 and Planning Policy Statement 7, and the following development policies: Regional Spatial Strategy 8 Policy 4, Northamptonshire County Structure Plan Policies GS2 and GS3, Northampton Local Plan Policies E6, E16 and L16, South Northamptonshire Local Plan Policy EV8.
- 2) The site lies within an area of greenspace within the river valley. It is considered that the introduction of a substantial building, with associated car parking and access would be detrimental to the visual amenities of the area and contrary to the national guidance contained in Planning Policy Statement 7, and the following development plan policies: Policy GS2 of the Northamptonshire County Structure Plan, Policies E6, E16, and L16 of the Northampton Local Plan and Policy EV2 of the South Northamptonshire Plan.

The previous application was for a larger site area (1 ha) and therefore fell under the remit of WNDC. The Borough Council was consulted on that application and a report was considered by the Planning Committee on 17 January 2007. The Members resolved to strongly support the proposal contrary to the advice from the

Officers to object to the application on the grounds of unsustainable development and contrary to Development Plan Policy and national guidance.

4. **Planning Policy:**

Development Plan:

Section 36(6) of Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan and unless material consideration indicate otherwise. The current Development Plan comprises the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), the Northamptonshire County Structure Plan and the Northampton Local Plan.

Relevant **Structure Plan** Policy: GS5

Relevant **Local Plan** Policy: E2, E6, L16, L29

National Policies:

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG): 13

Planning Policy Statement (PPS): 1, 6, 7, 9, 25

Other Policy Considerations:

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG): Parking, Flooding, Planning out Crime

5. **Consultees:**

External:	<p>Highways Agency: No objections.</p> <p>Crime Prevention Design Advisor: Site is very isolated with no immediate neighbours to provide surveillance. To minimise potential for crime and disorder the building will need to be built to a very secure specification with doors and windows to a secure standard with laminated glazing. Will require a burglar alarm and secure perimeter fence of 2.4m high with prickly planting. Applicant referred to buildings in the vicinity that had to be demolished to stop constant vandalism and I fear the same would happen on this site. It would be better if the project could be located in a more busy and well frequented location where any such activity could be more readily observed and acted upon. Draws attention to page 51 of SPG Planning Out Crime in Northamptonshire where key principles for farm diversification projects are outlined. Pleased to note that the applicant has expressed a desire to work closely with Police to achieve a secure environment. If minded to approve the application suggests a strongly worded condition which will ensure that the applicant takes advice on the levels of security required for the building, perimeter fencing and external areas.</p>
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	Northamptonshire Archaeological Society: Support the application. Northamptonshire is one of the few counties in England without a county museum and, while not a substitute, the Heritage Centre will go some way towards filling this void. Has potential to serve the general public and become a valuable educational resource for local schools and an attraction for summer visitors.
Internal:	Environmental Health: Consider part of the land under the application site may have been used as an inert landfill site in the past. Recommend that a comprehensive site investigation is undertaken prior to development. Also suggest a noise condition to ensure that any noise generated by plant and machinery is provided with mitigation.

6. Representations:

The application was advertised by site and press notice and 35 letters of notification were posted. Responses:

Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish Council – give the scheme full support.

Billing Parish Council – no objection to the application; question why the development is not closer to the road, the flood plan shows less flood area closer to the road and the museum would be more in sight. Concerns about the whole infrastructure for access to this area, with the intended growth of Billing Aquadrome and developments such as this one proposed road structure from the A45 to the entrance to the Aquadrome is insufficient for the requirements.

19 Glebe Way, Cogenhoe – support. This is such an important subject of Northants history and the making of our county as we know and love it today that it needs to be recorded and the history told of our agricultural past in such an excellent centre as this proposed project. See huge value of this centre as resource for teaching our children about our county's fascinating past farming history and skills and rural life. The proposed site has excellent roads close by and a cycle track more or less from town and nearly to Wellingborough as well as good accesses for walkers.

44 Station Road, Cogenhoe – support. Disappointed when original application rejected. Proposal would provide an important educational and recreational facility, valuable both locally and for visitors from a wider area complementing existing amenities in the area. Ideal site with good access by road and river.

21 Church Street, Cogenhoe – support. Will provide a rural facility sadly missing in this county. Fills all the criteria for an amenity on this site in view of planned regional park along the Nene.

Garden House, Cogenhoe – support. Would be a great asset to Northamptonshire. With all the new housing being built in Northamptonshire important that local heritage is not lost. Important educational and recreational facility for local schools, residents and visitors to the area. Traditional design of building will fit into the landscape.

139 London Road, Bozeat – support. Exciting proposal that should be supported. The site with a rural backdrop and river frontage is an ideal one. The land is not good agricultural soil and the proposal will bring the area to life again. Important to education of children.

37 Easton Lane, Bozeat – support. Ideal location being near to countryside and not too far from good road connections. Need for this educational resource in Northamptonshire.

21 Westlea Road, Sywell – support. Works with special needs children and several areas of the curriculum could be helped by visits to a local resource such as this. Nowhere like this within easy travelling distance. Considers proposal for animals would be attractive to parties of small children. Good scheme – ideal location and bound to be supported by Northamptonshire Schools.

91 London Road, Bozeat – support. Northamptonshire is known for it's local history and despite local interest in our historical background not enough is done to promote it. As development changes Northamptonshire it is important that children know about history of their area and what life was like for earlier generations. Building blends with it's surroundings.

10, Hewletts Close, Bozeat – support. Many Northamptonshire people are interested in history and museums in general. Have good museums which concentrate on town life. Believe local agricultural and countryside history needs addressing. Consider proposal would be enormous value to the area.

8 Seedfield Close, Weston Favell – support; Northampton has several excellent museums there is nothing of this nature. The proposed location has been well researched being in walking distance of Billing Aquadrome and easy access from the A45, M1 and A14. Northampton schools will benefit from such a local project.

11 Station Road, Cogenhoe – support; the semi-rural site suites the nature of the use; easy access close to Northampton and Billing Aquadrome; activities unlikely to disturb residents; easy reach for all county schools; the nearby River Nene adds to the attractiveness.

6 Orchard Way – object to the siting of the proposed building so close to the back gardens of houses in Station Road west and Glebe Road, Cogenhoe, as when people purchase properties they consider that the rear of their land is for their quiet enjoyment and relaxation and the Centre will invade this private space. The residents in this area already suffer from almost daily noise from Billing Aquadrome, so it is necessary not to inflict any further noise disturbance on them.

166 Station Road, Cogenhoe – objects. Considers heritage museum is a great idea but objects to proposed location as it is on greenbelt land which severely floods. Considers noise from events would cause disturbance to nearby residents.

1 letter received from a **Cogenhoe resident and member of Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish Council** – objects. Site is in the floodplain and could impact on surrounding areas. Development is in the green belt and should not be encouraged. There is a derelict brownfield site nearby (Long and Hambly) crying out for redevelopment. Concerned about viability of proposal and asks what happens if the museum closes. Considers remote location and design of building will make reuse difficult leaving a derelict site or another leisure complex. No local bus services to the site which means increased car traffic. Road already congested by visitors to

the Aquadrome, especially when events occur. Concerned about precedent for further development of Nene Valley which has been discouraged to maintain a natural boundary between Northampton and Cogenhoe village.

125 Station Road, Cogenhoe – objects. Asks why application should be considered for a greenbelt site when the Long and Hambly site and Crow Lane site are both available. Concerned about flood threat.

7. Appraisal:

Policy Considerations

The site lies in an area of open countryside. Development plan policies and central government advice contained in PPS7 seek to ensure the protection of open countryside, the maintenance of the most valuable farmland for agricultural purposes and to discourage development of greenfield land. Development plan policies state that normally new development should be concentrated within the urban area or within villages.

PP6 advocates that “town centre” use developments, such as museums, should be located in existing town centres to promote their vitality and viability, social inclusion and more sustainable patterns of development. It requires that a sequential approach is made to site selection. PPS1 also seeks to bring vacant and underused previously developed land and buildings into beneficial use. The applicants have provided a list of 22 sites that they have investigated since 1992 for the proposed museum. These sites have included existing farm complexes and the former Fairground Museum site at Riverside Park in Northampton.

Whilst it is considered that there are certain aspects of the museum, such as animal enclosures, that could not readily be located in a town centre, it is considered that it would be more appropriate to have established such a museum within a redundant farm complex and in a sustainable location.

Policy E6 of the Northampton Local Plan relates to greenspaces within the borough. Planning permission will only be granted in such areas where the proposed development would not unacceptably prejudice the function of the area. This site lies in open space within the river valley, in order to enhance and maintain the value that the river valley affords, it is essential that open spaces remain undeveloped. Policy L16 of the Northampton Local Plan advises that within the river valley policy area planning permission will not be granted for development other than agriculture, leisure or recreational uses. All such development will be required to avoid significant harm to the amenity value of open space in the valley; pay due regard to the character, natural features and wildlife of the area and make adequate provision for public access. It is considered that the introduction of a substantial building, with associated car parking and access will be detrimental to the amenity value of this undeveloped site, and the part it plays in the character and setting of this part of the river valley.

The site also lies within an area where Policy EV8 of the South Northamptonshire Local Plan applies – wherein development will not be permitted if it significantly intrudes into the important local gap between the village of Cogenhoe and the Northampton Borough boundary.

Design Considerations

Although the application is submitted in outline form with matters of scale, appearance and landscaping reserved, sketch plans show how the applicants envisage that the building would be developed. The scheme is based on a concept of a brick building, similar to a traditional barn or estate yard building. It is considered that if the principle of new-build development were acceptable in the open countryside, this would be an appropriate scheme.

Impact on residential amenity

The building lies approximately 180m from the nearest residential property. Although there will inevitably be some disturbance caused by vehicle movements and special events at the site, it is not considered that the overall impact on residential amenity would be sufficient to render this application unacceptable.

Access and Transport

Access to the site would be almost wholly car-based. Although reference is made in the supporting documents to visitors from Billing Aquadrome, which lies approximately 600m to the north-west, there would be difficulties for visitors walking to the museum as the footpath is narrow and overgrown in places. There is no dedicated cycleway running near the site. The site is not within easy reach of good public transport routes.

The site is not on a bus route. Given the wider debate about travel plans and the need to change the model shift away from the car it would appear that this proposal would not have the ability to bring about any significant change away from the car. Since the previous application however the applicant states that they have had informal talks with the County Council's Sustainable Transport Department who have expressed a keenness to improve the present service to the rural area. The applicant therefore considers the proposal could link into the existing public transport provision currently serving Cogenhoe and the surrounding villages.

The Highways Agency has no objection to the proposal. At the time of writing the report the comments of the County Highway Authority are still awaited.

Flooding

The application site lies within flood zones. At the time of writing the report the comments of the Environment Agency are still awaited. Previously the Environment Agency had no objection to the proposal subject to a condition that a detailed water drainage strategy in accordance with the flood risk assessment and PPS25 were approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Conclusion

It is considered the case put forward by the applicants is not sufficient to justify supporting the proposal in the face of overwhelming prevailing planning policies which seek to restrict development in the open countryside to that which involves the re-use of existing buildings, or to such uses which essentially have to locate in the countryside, such as agriculture and forestry. The search should continue for a site that is in a more sustainable location and uses existing buildings.

The proposal would no doubt have community benefits. However, those benefits

would be outweighed by the harm resulting from the proposed built development in the open countryside and in an unsustainable location. The proposal is therefore contrary to Development Plan Policy and national guidance and should be refused.

8. Legal Implications:

None.

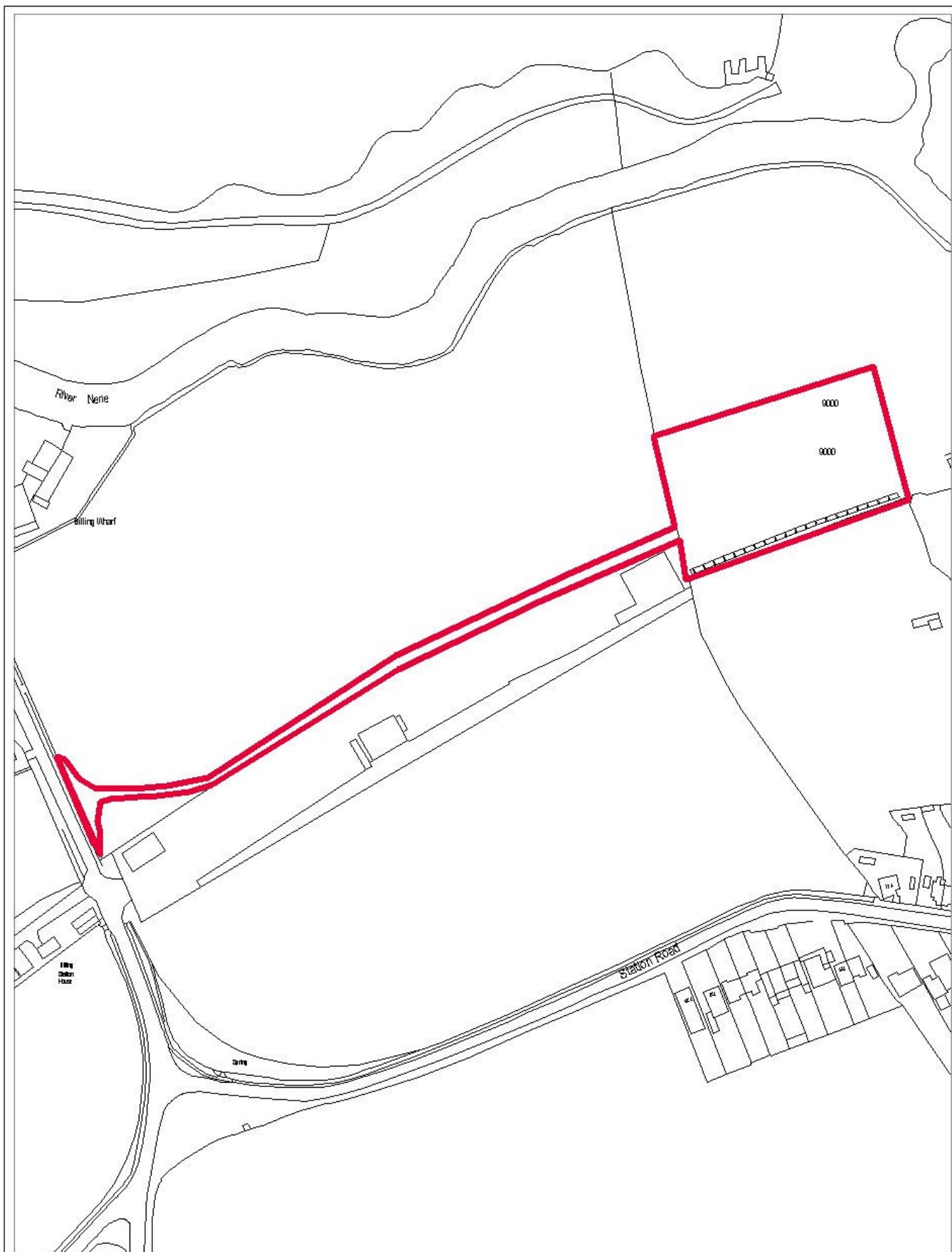
9. Background Papers:

WN/2006/0202, N/2006/1490

Summary and Links to Corporate Plan

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.

Position:	Name/Signature:	Date:
Author:	Rowena Simpson	30/01/08
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NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

To: Ben Gittins
 Date: 1st February 2008
 By: NTS
 For: Planning Support
 Map: Location Plan

Title

Land off Station Road, Billing

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