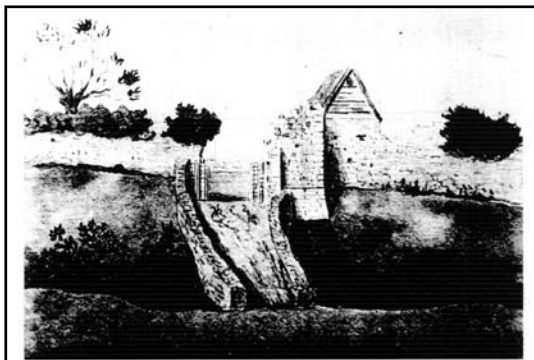




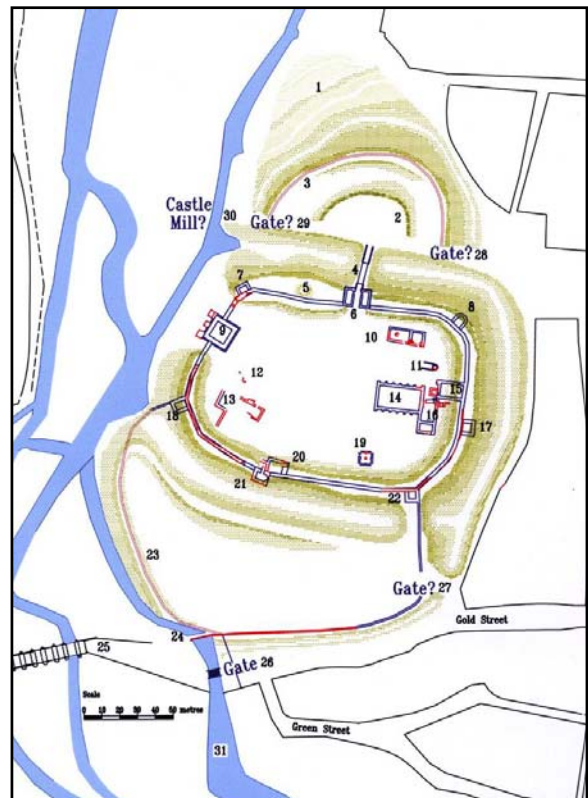
**NORTHAMPTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# Review of Historic Buildings and Regeneration Opportunities

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 Task and Finish Group



*Figure 3.4. Powell's 1839 drawing of the North Gate. The causeway crossing the ditch had stone walls on each side. Only the west side of the gatehouse and the lower part of the 9 feet (2.74m) wide entrance survived. The buttress, roll moulding, and battered base, suggest that the gatehouse was 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century in date. Behind the curtain wall is the gable end of a thatched barn in a small farmyard. The gatehouse must have been demolished shortly after this was drawn.*



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# Foreword

The protection of Northampton's historic buildings is of concern to many local residents given the unprecedented levels of regeneration in Northampton; more and more of our historic buildings are under threat of demolition or significant alteration. People quite rightly expect the Council and its partners to take action to protect the town's heritage.

The Task and Finish Group first met in September 2007 and concluded its review in January 2008. The findings of this review will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee One, Partnerships, Regeneration, Community Safety and Engagement; at its meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2008.

The decision on how and in what way the group's recommendations are taken forward lies with this committee. Once a decision has been taken on this, it is for the Council's Cabinet to take a decision on the implementation of the committee's recommendations. The area for review was very broad, that it was clear very early on in the review and that the group would not be able to consider all of the areas as originally scoped in full detail. The group therefore decided to focus on what needs to happen to improve the town's approach to addressing conservation issues.

Membership of the group was myself as Chair, Councillor Paul Varnsberry as Vice-Chair and group members Councillors Tony Clarke and Andrew Simpson. Councillor Jean Hawkins, as the Council's Heritage Champion was co-opted onto the committee.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who gave evidence to this review, the Overview and Scrutiny Officers for their advice, managing the process and drafting this report and thanks also to the Regeneration and Growth department for advice and guidance on conservation and regeneration matters.

**Councillor John Caswell**

**Chair of the Historic Buildings Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group**

# Executive Summary and Key Findings

At its scoping meeting, the Task and Finish Group agreed that it would do the following;

- Use the issues around Castle and the Masterplan proposals as a paradigm case
- The Chair of this task and finish group would that this Council's Administration requests that West Northamptonshire Development Corporation defer any planning decisions affecting the Castle area of Northampton until the work of this task and finish group is completed, as recommendations regarding future Planning Policy maybe made, in particular with regard to historic and important sites and buildings.
- Review of the current powers and those of partner organisations.
- Review of the extent of the Borough Conservation Areas including the Management Plan Programme in hand.
- Review proposals for mapping of buildings that are not listed but are of value to the Town.
- Review proposals for mapping of Regeneration projects.
- Assess a resources plan to compile a wider assessment of buildings of value including potential funding available from other sources.
- Examine the powers available to NBC are established and those that are not, ascertain who has them
- Recognise the impact that the role of NBC has on WNDC and how they carryout their respective roles.
- Strengthened partnership working through agreed partnership agreement in respect of historic buildings and regeneration
- Consider possible consequences of not following recommendations from above work.

At the end of the review, the progress against the original scope is;

Scope	Progress
<p>The task and finish group would use the issues around Castle and the Masterplan proposals as a paradigm case</p>	<p>Presentation on the Castle area delivered to the group on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2007</p> <p>Group meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 2008 to examine the evidence and consider any outcomes arising from it</p>
<p>The Chair of this task and finish group to ask that this Council's Administration requests that West Northamptonshire Development Corporation defer any planning decisions affecting the Castle area of Northampton until the work of this task and finish group is completed, as recommendations regarding future Planning Policy maybe made, in particular with regard to historic and important sites and buildings.</p>	<p>Letter sent and response received</p> <p>Response letter from WNDC rejected request to defer planning applications.</p>
<p>Review of the current powers and those of partner organisations.</p>	<p><i>Briefing note was provided by Jane Jennings and circulated to the group</i></p> <p><i>Noted that the national consultation on amending the powers available to local authorities has closed. The new legislation will no doubt create an increase in workload (to review)</i></p>
<p>Review of the extent of the Borough Conservation Areas including the Management Plan Programme in hand.</p>	<p>Paul Lewin provided additional information on this (Mark Farmer phone conversation on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January)</p> <p>There is an ongoing programme to review areas</p> <p>Four a year are carried out. Additional resources would be needed if more were required</p>
<p>Review proposals for mapping of buildings that are not listed but are of value to the Town.</p>	<p>Briefing note provided by Jane Jennings stated that there no in-house resources available</p> <p>Paul Lewin provided additional</p>

	<p>information on this (Mark Farmer phone conversation on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January)</p> <p>Maybe possible that trained NHAG volunteers could do this work or funding found to commission outside people to carry out this work</p>
Review proposals for mapping of Regeneration projects.	<p>Paul Lewin provided additional information on this (Mark Farmer phone conversation on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January)</p> <p>Part of the work carried out when proposals come forward to regenerate an area</p>
Assess a resources plan to compile a wider assessment of buildings of value including potential funding available from other sources.	Briefing note provided by Jane Jennings stated that there no current resources available to complete this work
Powers available to NBC are established and those that are not, ascertain who has them	<p><i>Briefing note was provided by Jane Jennings and circulated to the group</i></p> <p><i>Noted that the national consultation on amending the powers available to local authorities has closed. The new legislation will no doubt create an increase in workload (to review)</i></p>
Recognise the impact that the role of NBC has on WDC and how they carryout their respective roles.	Briefing note was provided by Jane Jennings and circulated to the group
Strengthened partnership working through agreed partnership agreement in respect of historic buildings and regeneration	<p>Paul Lewin provided additional information on this (Mark Farmer phone conversation on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January)</p> <p>Conservation section would like to develop closer working relationships with WDC to ensure that they give more consideration</p> <p>The County Council as a partner</p>

	needs to provide an Archaeological service
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For information the following people are Northampton Borough Council Officers and hold the following roles;

Mark Farmer is an Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

Jane Jennings is a Principal Planning Officer with responsibility for conservation issues.

Paul Lewin is the Planning Policy and Conservation Manager

## **The key findings of the review are that;**

### **Resourcing**

In comparison to other local authorities Northampton Borough Council's conservation service is under resourced. The review compared the level of conservation activity in Northampton and the resources available to support this work. Areas that are comparable to Northampton Borough Council have at least two more officers and do not have the same levels of regeneration activity. The group also received an outline of the new Historic Buildings protection legislation that the Government is currently consulting. The group is minded to recommend that additional resources are found to increase the size of the conservation team- to bring it to the same size of other comparable areas and to ensure that there is enough capacity to cope with the additional workload created by the new legislation. It is estimated that a team size of six officers would be appropriate.

### **Partnership working with the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC)**

It is clear that the council's relationship and partnership arrangements with West Northamptonshire Development Corporation need to be improved. Working protocols on the way in which conservation issues will be dealt before the planning application stage need to be developed to ensure that the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation is considering conservation issues at an early stage of regeneration proposal development. The group has therefore recommended that work is carried out to improve working protocols between West Northamptonshire and given the limited time available for this review that the Task and Finish Group that is established to review the council's partnership working with the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation should consider the issues outlined in this report.

The group received a presentation on the historical importance of the Castle area. The presentation highlighted a number of issues relating to the conservation issues surrounding the area. Given the historical importance of the area, it is recommended that any plans that are brought forward either by WNDC or Northampton Borough Council to regenerate the gateway entrance reflect the history of the area.

### **The future**

The group as part of its evidence gathering were made aware that a secondary list of buildings that are of historical interest, but are not formally adopted for protection existed. Group members therefore feel that this list should be adopted in order to demonstrate that the council is serious about protecting the town's heritage. Other proposals to help protect the town's heritage include developing a county storage facility for archaeological finds and mapping out the town's historical buildings.

The group was made aware of the new conservation legislation that the Government is currently consulting on. This new legalisation should enable councils to provide better protection to historic buildings. Until this time it is noted that one of the few ways in which to protect buildings is to establish a conservation area. It was unclear at the time of this review how the government intends to take forward the new legislation. Members are therefore recommending that officers provide members with a response to how the council will implement the new legalisation. It is clear that the new legislation will have a significant impact on the workload of the conservation office (as a number of powers will be transferred from English Heritage to NBC the group is of the view that additional resources will need to be found to deal with this additional workload)



# Recommendations

These recommendations will be presented with the report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee One, Partnerships, Regeneration, Community Safety and Engagement on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 2008.

## **Recommendations are that;**

### **Cabinet allocates;**

1. Additional resources to the conservation service, (The group estimates that a team of six officers is required);

In order to;

- Ensure that there is sufficient resource available to respond to the emerging legislation on the protection of historic buildings
- Ensure that there is sufficient resource available to deal with the increasing demands placed upon the service as a result of increasing levels of regeneration

### **Cabinet instructs officers;**

1. To bring forward proposals to map buildings that are not listed, but of value to the town. (Proposals could include using volunteers or consultants to carry out the mapping process)
2. To bring forward proposals to adopt the secondary list; this would recognise that these buildings are important and that the council would wish to protect them
3. To work with our partners to review county archaeological advice and storage arrangements
4. To examine the feasibility of building a physical and computer model of Northampton central area - so that an understanding can be gained of the potential impact of proposed new developments on historic buildings

### **Cabinet is asked to note;**

1. That when WND, NCC and Cabinet consider regeneration proposals for the Castle gateway, that the proposals must be sympathetic to and help promote the historical importance of the area
2. Cabinet is made aware that for historic buildings that are not listed or scheduled ancient monuments, location within a conservation area provides some potential for protection from significant change or demolition
3. Overview and Scrutiny Committee One has instructed officers to bring forward a report from on the new legislation and how it will be implemented in Northampton- as soon as the Government lets local authorities know how it intends to implement it

### **Recommendation to Overview and Scrutiny Committee One;**

1. That the Task and Finish Group which will be established to examine partnership working with WNDC, consider the issues relating to partnership working raised in this report

# Evidence

**The Task and Finish Group met on the following dates;**

24<sup>th</sup> of September 2007

11<sup>th</sup> of October 2007

12<sup>th</sup> of November 2007

29<sup>th</sup> of November 2007

11<sup>th</sup> of December 2007

11<sup>th</sup> of January 2008

7<sup>th</sup> of February 2008

**The group took evidence from the following organisations and bodies;**

Northampton Borough Council Regeneration Team

Northampton Borough Council Conservation Team

English Heritage

Northampton Heritage Action Group

Martin Ellison Local resident and conservation officer with a local council

Brian Giggins Castle area expert

Paul Hobden Local business owner

Heritage Hunters

Any evidence presented to the group throughout the review is included in the rest of this report.



should be avoided in the future.

d. The various roles undertaken by NBC and WNDC

- AGREED:**
- (1) The task and finish group would use the issues around Castle and the Masterplan proposals as a paradigm case.
  - (2) The Chair of this task and finish group to ask that this Council's Administration requests that West Northamptonshire Development Corporation defer any planning decisions affecting the Castle area of Northampton until the work of this task and finish group is completed, as recommendations regarding future Planning Policy maybe made, in particular with regard to historic and important sites and buildings.
  - (3) The task and finish group work to the following purpose/objectives:
    - Review of the current powers and those of partner organisations.
    - Review of the extent of the Borough Conservation Areas including the Management Plan Programme in hand.
    - Review proposals for mapping of buildings that are not listed but are of value to the Town.
    - Review proposals for mapping of Regeneration projects.
    - Assess a resources plan to compile a wider assessment of buildings of value including potential funding available from other sources.
    - Consider possible consequences of not following recommendations from above work.
  - (3) The task and finish group work to achieve the following outcomes:
    - a. Powers available to NBC are established and those that are not, ascertain who has them
    - b. Recognise the impact that the role of NBC has on WNDC and how they carryout their respective roles.
    - c. Strengthened partnership working through agreed partnership agreement in respect of historic buildings and regeneration
  - (4) All lists regarding listed buildings, historic and important buildings need reviewing
  - (5) The following background information is required:
    - i. Policies in support of the protection of built and natural heritage
    - ii. Castle Masterplan
    - iii. Land ownership regarding the paradigm case
    - iv. Law regarding ancient monuments
    - v. WNDC documentation
  - (6) Research regarding best practise in particular regard to York, Lincoln, Norwich and Ipswich. Additionally those Councils known to be good at making policy
  - (7) An evidence session is established with the Joint Planning Unit to inform their consultation process and that they in turn inform this task and finish group.

Discussion took place regarding the format of information and in particular sources of evidence both written and those requested to present to the task and finish group,

**AGREED:** (1) Written evidence against a set of questions would be required from the following organisations and people:

- Andy Chapman } NCC Archaeology
- Steve Parry } }
- Clive Fletcher English Heritage Advisor 44 Derngate
- Friends of St Peter's Church
- Tom Walsh
- Gerald Smith Chronicle and Echo
- Regional Directors National Trust
- Regional Directors English Partnerships

(2) The following people would be invited to give evidence at the task and finish group meetings:

- Graham Cadman NCC Sites and Monuments Officer
- Paul Hobden Conservation Architect
- Kate Wills Heritage hunters
- John Brown Blue Badge Guide Trust

(3) A questionnaire would be sent to all those attended the Heritage Day

(4) The Chronicle and echo are approached in respect of them running a campaign regarding the questionnaire

(5) Portfolio holders (Councillors Church and Glynane) are invited to give evidence.

(6) Initial question to include, 'How do we protect our heritage within the new dynamics of WNDC and NBC?'

#### **4. PROPOSED SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS - FOR DISCUSSION**

- 11 October 2007 Desk top research
- 1 November 2007 Evidence gathering from witnesses
- 12 November 2007 Evidence gathering from witnesses
- 29 November 2007 Finalise chair's report

The meeting concluded at 5:45

#### **Information presented to the meeting;**

#### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SCOPING A REVIEW O&S COMMITTEE: FOCUS OF THE REVIEW:**

1. Purpose / Objectives of the Review

2. Outcomes Required

3. Information Required

e.g.

- \_ Charts
- \_ Budgets
- \_ Services
- \_ Evidence from users/service employees
- \_ Information from partners
- \_ Best Practice councils
- \_ Experts

#### 4. Format of Information

e.g.

- \_ Officer Briefings
- \_ Officer Reports
- \_ Portfolio Holder Reports
- \_ Councillor Reports
- \_ Published Reviews by other organisations
- \_ Case studies
- \_ Expert Advice
- \_ Surveys
- \_ Witnesses verbal / written Evidence
- \_ Commissioned Research
- \_ Presentations
- \_ Local / regional / national data

#### 5. Methods Used to Gather Information

e.g.

- \_ Interviews in committee/ community
- \_ Focus Groups / User Groups in the Community
- \_ Public Meetings
- \_ Working Groups
- \_ Structured Visits to Other Organisations
- \_ Site Visits
- \_ Advertisements
- \_ Media
- \_ Questionnaires

#### 6. Co-Options to the Review Committee

#### 7. Evidence gathering Timetable (Including start and finish dates)

#### 8. Responsible Officers

#### 9. Resources and Budgets

3. Final report presented by:

4. Final report submitted to:

5. Monitoring procedure:

### **The Top 10 Questions To Ask Before Any Scrutiny Begins**

The Top 10 questions that should be asked (and answered) when setting work programmes, Working Parties or Task & Finish Groups when working within the LAA block

1. Terms of reference
  - a. Are they clear?
  - b. Specific?
  - c. Relevant?
  
2. What are the Governance arrangements for your particular subject?
  - a. Cabinet Controlled Decisions
  - b. Council Controlled Decisions
  - c. Delegated Officer Decisions
  - d. Outside Agency or Body Responsibility
  
3. Targets – Being careful not to predetermine the outcome of any investigation the following information is likely to be requested
  - a. The present targets set
  - b. The present performance reports
  - c. The past 3 years performance
  - d. The future targets set (BVPP)
  
4. Risks
  - a. What are the risks?
  - b. How can you alleviate any such risks?
  
5. How are you going to measure success?
  - a. What made you start the project?
  - b. What are you looking to achieve?
  
5. Witness's
  - a. Who from the authority do you require?
  - b. What other agencies do you need to invite?
  - c. Community Leaders may be needed
  - d. Private individuals with a specific interest

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1  
(Partnerships, Regeneration, Community Safety and Engagement)**



## Briefing Note

### **Regeneration and Growth**

#### **1. General:**

Following the Overview and Scrutiny meeting held on 21 June 2006, the Panel identified 6 pieces of work it would like to perform, 3 affecting Regeneration.

These 3 were:-

- A. **Historic Buildings/Regeneration Opportunities** - To be led by Councillor John Caswell
- B. **WNDC Partnerships** - To be led by Councillor Andrew Simpson
- C. **Regeneration Consultants** - To be led by Councillor Tony Clarke

The Corporate Manager (Regeneration & Growth) met with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Councillor Richard Church and Director (People, Performance & Regeneration) Clive Thomas to discuss the scoping, resourcing and programming of this work. This was in the context of the following constraints.

**2. Resources General:** The Council's Regeneration Team comprises a funded resource for limited posts. This resource was cut by an efficiency saving in the form of a staff budget cut of £100k earlier this year reducing the capacity of the Service. Up until the end of December 2006, the Team had comprised of only one professional officer with the role supported by interim managers as it embarked on a recruitment campaign to fill posts. Recruitment has delivered one Renewal Project Officer who commenced in January 2007 and 3 further posts, a Regeneration Project Officer, an Assistant Regeneration Project Officer and an Assistant Regeneration & Renewal Officer all who commenced in May 07. The Team Leader also left the Council in May 2007.

In summary, the Regeneration Team comprises 4 posts.

#### **3. Current workload**

The Team are currently bringing forward a portfolio of key projects including:-

- Grosvenor/Retail Centre incorporating regeneration of Greyfriars Bus Station
- St John's Cultural Quarter
- Northampton Brownfield Initiative
- Sixfields
- The Breathing Spaces project across the Borough

With a low resource base, it is imperative that the Team provide support to overview and scrutiny without compromising key projects currently engaged and included within the Service Delivery Plans.

#### **4. A. Historic Building/ Regeneration opportunities**

**Scope:** It is suggested that an overview of the following be considered:-

- Review of the current powers and those of partner organisations.
- Review of the extent of the Borough Conservation Areas including the Management Plan Programme in hand.
- Proposals for mapping of buildings that are not listed but are of value to the Town.

- Proposals for mapping of Regeneration projects.
- Assessment of a resources plan to compile a wider assessment of buildings of value including potential funding available from other sources.
- Consider possible consequences of not following recommendations from above work.

**Resources:**

To include input from the following (to support O & S):

- Chris Cavanagh, Corporate Manager – Regeneration & Growth
- Jane Jennings, Principal Planning Officer Built Environment (Conservation)
- Mike Kitchen, Regeneration Project Officer
- Clive Thomas, Corporate Director (People, Performance & Regeneration)
- Cllr Richard Church – Portfolio Holder

**Priority:** This is considered a practical and valuable piece of work which could have worthwhile benefits for the planning and regeneration of Northampton.

**B. WNDC Partnerships**

**Scope:** This could be further wide ranging to include the effectiveness of partnerships with other key partnership organisations including NCC, NEL, EMDA, EP, LSP. This could also be extended in future beyond the scope of Regeneration. The panel could review:-

- Current Project Boards and Steering Panels, both Officer and Member Forums and review their terms of reference, modus operandi etc.
- Consider leadership and decision making processes.
- Consider funding opportunities through partnerships
- Identify resource effectiveness and corporate support requirements to enable more effective working.

Resource Implications

To include input from the following (to support O & S):

- Chris Cavanagh
- Mike Kitchen
- Clive Thomas
- Cllr Richard Church
- Partner Organisation WNDC (Board Member and Officer) and others

**Priority:** There is much partnership working in place, which may benefit from this review. This needs to be approached with some caution to help engage partners appropriately.

**C. Regeneration Consultants**

**Scope:**

- Identify those consultants appointed, including those through partnerships.
- Consider the reasons for employing consultants
- Consider the basis of consultant appointments and their briefs
- Review the output and value for money of employing consultants
- Consider alternatives to employment of consultants and provide helpful guidance for future resource options.

**Resource Implications**

To include input from the following (to support O & S):

- Chris Cavanagh
- Clive Thomas
- Cllr Richard Church
- Appointed consultants (there will be financial implications which are not budgeted).

**Priority:** The Council is currently engaging consultants both in Regeneration and in other Service Areas across the Council.

**Programme:**

After careful consideration by the Director, Corporate Manager and Portfolio Holder, the following programme is recommended. Since the Council is currently into Quarter 2 it is anticipated that commencement of this work would not be practical until September 2007 and that only two reviews can be undertaken this financial year without impacting on delivery of priority projects.

- A. Historic Buildings/Regeneration  
Task and Finish – September 2007 to November 2007
- B. Regeneration Consultants – December 2007 to February 2008
- C. Regeneration Partnerships – April 2008 to June 2008

Author: Chris Cavanagh  
Corporate Manager

**Meeting Two**

**11<sup>th</sup> of October 2007**

# NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY HISTORIC BUILDINGS/REGENERATION OPPORTUNITIES TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Thursday, 11 October 2007

**PRESENT:** Councillor John Caswell (Chair); Councillors Tony Clarke, Jean Hawkins, Andrew Simpson.

Mike Kitchen, Regeneration Project Officer  
Jane Jennings, Principal Planning Officer  
Monique Ozlati, Secretary (note taker)

### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Paul Varnsvery and Simone Wade, Policy and Governance Manager

### 2. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24TH SEPTEMBER 2007

The minutes were agreed as a true record, however it was noted that written evidence is required from Tom Welsh not Walsh

### 3. DESKTOP RESEARCH

It was confirmed that Castle Ward would be appropriate as a paradigm case as it features a historic building that has been demolished, a historic monument and a redevelopment brief. Discussion took place regarding the powers held by NBC and the Government that could be used to protect the heritage of the town, and ways in which they were or could be used within the Borough.

Points of discussion were noted as:

- a) Conservation areas: The closest conservation area to the Castle Area finishes at the end of Gold Street/Start of Marefair.
  - a. Conservation areas are reviewed on a systematic basis – Review is currently being done of Holy Sepulchre and All Saints' conservation areas.
  - b. NBC can declare conservation areas, and are obliged to review existing areas. In creating a conservation area NBC are obliged to inform the reasons for creating a Conservation Area, and noting what it is that makes it worthy of conservation.
  - c. If there are buildings that fall outside a conservation area but that are worthy of conservation, that it may be prudent to create a new area rather than extend the boundaries, as Conservation areas with the wrong boundary may leave the area open to appeal.
- b) Protecting Buildings by listing them;
  - a. It is not in the remit of the Local Authority to make a building listed; Local Authority's can however submit requests to Central Government to list a building
  - b. Listed Buildings are those identified as being of National importance and are protected from any alterations, which may affect the land or structure; It is English Heritage that are delegated with deciding whether a building is worthy

of becoming listed.

- c. What are the criteria for listing a building? (It was noted that this information has recently been updated and is available on the English Heritage website).
  - d. A Local list has been drawn up which identifies buildings that the Authority considers need to be protected; however this doesn't provide the building with a statutory protection.
  - e. If a building is in imminent danger it is possible to serve a Building Preservation Notice, which protects a building for 6 months, enabling a formal notice of listing to be submitted (Jane Jennings advised the group that this can pose a risk as you become liable for compensation if English Heritage decide not to allow listing).
  - f. What is the process in house for looking at Buildings and deciding whether or not a listed building application should be submitted? (It was advised that there are triggers internally which identify when a building may be at risk and it is then the Conservation Team which makes an application on behalf of NBC)
  - g. How is protecting the character of the town taken into consideration?
  - h. There is no formal review of the Local List
- c) Cllr Tony Clarke suggested three pieces of work that the group should focus on as being:
- o The Past – A short piece recording the significance of losing a Historic Building using the example of the Maltings; also considering whether NBC could have done anything differently?
  - o The Present – where we are with the consultation regarding plans for the Needle etc
  - o Work in respect of the Castle site/regional planning, enhancing the area and creating tourist attractions, creating a gateway to the town, rebuilding the castle wall with stones held at the Museum?

**AGREED:**

- (1) An up to date Local List to be supplied for discussion at the next task and finish group meeting by Jane Jennings.
- (2) Arun Kotnis, retired officer, should be called to give evidence as a witness regarding Buildings in Northampton that are on the Local List; Simone Wade to make contact with Arun.

#### **4. FURTHER EVIDENCE AND WITNESS EVIDENCE**

The Chair asked Jane Jennings to comment on whether she thought we could have acted differently with regards to the Maltings; the group was advised that in April 2005 2 applications were submitted to English Heritage to list the Maltings and the Church, however they were rejected on the grounds that past works done on the properties made them unworthy of becoming listing – for example the Victorian balustrade that was added to the front of the Maltings at a date later than construction.

It was noted that there was further discussion regarding the potential development of the Castle station area; There was suggestion of using the Princes Trust in order to help with facilitating this work and that following on from this maybe could consider creating a model which could be presented to Cabinet? It was identified that it would be necessary to highlight the level of community involvement. Cllr Hawkins identified that she had been in discussion with Cllr Church and English Heritage regarding the model of Lincoln, and the idea of enquiry by design.

It was suggested that Lincoln may be a suitable example and that they should be contacted for information. Jane Jennings confirmed her view that using an example site

would be a good way forward. The issue of officer capacity was raised as LDF is creating a lot of work for officers and there is concern that there is not currently anyone that this could be delegated to. Cllr Clarke suggested that it may be prudent for this work to be outsourced to Arun Kotnis, and that he be approached with regards to doing a piece of work on a paid basis. Cllr Simpson advised that there is a Scrutiny budget, but that it may be necessary to address the wider issue that is with regards to capacity problems and resource gaps. Concern was raised with regards to Council spending in relation to consultants, particularly bearing in mind the future work to be undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny with regards to this matter.

It was noted that Jane Jennings would be able to estimate the time required to complete the piece of work on presentation of a detailed brief outlining the necessary outcomes.

- AGREED:**
- (1) It was confirmed that there are essentially four pieces of work required to be completed by the task and finish group:
    - a) Past
    - b) Present
    - c) Future
    - d) Examination of Witness Evidence
  - (2) The tasks which would ordinarily fall under an Overview and Scrutiny Officer (not yet in post) be identified.
  - (3) The tasks requiring additional officer/consultant support be identified.
  - (4) Cllr Simpson to raise the issue of workloads of current staff and potential use of funds from the Scrutiny budget at the next Scrutiny Management meeting.
  - (5) That at the 1<sup>st</sup> November meeting the group formulates questions that will be posed to witnesses and that witnesses be prepared to give evidence at the 12<sup>th</sup> November meeting.

## **5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007

### **Information presented to the meeting;**

#### **POLICIES IN SUPPORT OF THE PROTECTION OF BUILT AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

##### **Planning Policy: Legal Framework**

Local authorities are legally required to prepare the LDF which conforms to national policies and meets the requirements set out in regional policies, including those relating to conservation. In addition, there are existing adopted policies in place to protect the Borough's heritage although these policies may be obsolete in September.

##### **National Guidance**

##### **Planning Policy Statement 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development**

One of the key themes of PPS 1 is protecting and enhancing the environment. This includes, as stated in paragraph 5, “*protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside, and existing communities*”.

PPS 1 continues, in paragraph 17, that planning policies have a requirement to protect and enhance the quality, character and amenity of urban areas as a whole, with a high level of protection given to the most valued townscapes.

PPS1 recognises that the condition of surroundings has a direct impact on the quality of life for residents. Therefore, it is seen to be the role of planning, in PPS 1, to maintain and improve the local environment and help to mitigate the effects of declining environmental quality.

### **Regional Guidance 8 (adopted March 2005)**

#### **D. Policy 27: Protecting and Enhancing the Region's Natural and Cultural Assets**

This is a broad and generic policy which seeks to ensure the protection, appropriate management and enhancement of the region's natural and cultural assets (and their settings). Policy goes on to provide 6 key principles on how this can be achieved.

#### **E. Policy 31: Regional Priorities for the Historic Environment**

This is a key policy which states:

*Development plans, future Local Development Frameworks, and other strategies should seek to understand, conserve and enhance the historic environment of the East Midlands, in recognition of its own intrinsic value, and its contribution to the region's quality of life.*

The LDF should pay particular attention to promoting the sensitive change of the historic environment, retaining local distinctiveness by:

- ❖ *Identifying and assessing the significance of specific historic and cultural assets (including their settings)*
- ❖ *Using characterisation to understand the landscape or townscape in areas of change*
- ❖ *Encouraging the refurbishment and reuse of disused or underused buildings of some historic or architectural merit and incorporating them sensitively into the regeneration scheme*
- ❖ *Promoting the use of local building materials*
- ❖ *Recognising the opportunities for enhancing existing tourism attractions and for developing the potential of other areas and sites of historic interest*

Please note that there will be a revision to the RSS and a Public Examination was held in the summer of 2007.

### **Adopted Local Plan**

The Local Plan, adopted in June 1997, contains policies which seek to protect and enhance the built and natural heritage. Under the 2004 Act, the adopted plan expires in September 2007. Some of the policies contained in the adopted plan will be saved for a further period. Government Office for the East Midlands is responsible for making the decisions on which policies should be saved.

It is therefore unknown at this stage whether the policies affecting historic and natural environment contained in the Local Plan will be saved beyond September 2007. It is equally unknown as to how long the “saved” policies will be saved for. NBC is awaiting confirmation from GOEM on this issue.

## **Local Development Framework**

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a new system through the preparation of the Local Development Framework. The LDF contains a series of Local Development Documents comprising both the Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents.

Northampton, together with the authorities of South Northamptonshire and Daventry, prepared a joint Local Development Scheme (LDS), which was brought into effect in March 2007. The LDS sets a timetable for the preparation and adoption of all the documents.

The preparation of each document is based on, amongst others:

- ❖ Ensuring that robust evidence is gathered at the start of the process
- ❖ Continuous effective community engagement
- ❖ Meeting the requirements set out in the national and regional policies

The conservation and enhancement of the natural and built heritage are important elements in the preparation of the DPDs, both at spatial and local levels. These issues will be raised when the discussion papers for both the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (WNJCS) and the Central Area Action Plan (CAAP) are released for consultation. It should be noted that the:

- ❖ WNJCS discussion paper has been approved by the 3 Councils' Cabinet and will be released for consultation formally on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 2007
- ❖ CAAP discussion paper will be discussed at Northampton's Cabinet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September. If approved, public consultation will follow suite

The CAAP has a chapter dedicated to conservation, including the issues associated with built heritage and the options for sustaining and enhancing this provision.

## **Overview & Scrutiny**

### **Heritage assets.**

There are currently a number of ways our built heritage can be protected. Some have a statutory basis other are non-statutory.

#### **F. Principle Act**

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

#### **G. Principle Guidance**

Planning Policy Guidance 15: planning and the historic environment.

Planning Policy Guidance 16: planning and archaeology.

There are also numerous published documents by organisations and amenity bodies regarding conservation best practice.



## **Listed Buildings**

Are buildings included on the statutory list of important buildings considered to be of 'Special architectural or historic interest'. It is one of the functions of English Heritage to consider whether buildings are sufficiently significant to be included on the statutory list. Once included in the list, consent is required for extension or alteration (inside or out) which may affect the special character or appearance of the building. It is the remit of the Local Authority to consider and determine applications for Listed Building Consent. Undertaking work without the necessary consent is a criminal offence.

For the purpose of listed building control, once included on the list protection is afforded to the principle building AND any object or structure which is fixed to the building, or is within the curtilage and forms part of the land and has done so since before 1 July 1948.

Unauthorised work - if work has been undertaken without obtaining the necessary consent the Council has a number of courses of action available

- Do nothing
- Serve a Listed Building Enforcement Notice requiring reinstatement
- Commence prosecution proceedings.

Unauthorised work is an absolute offence and therefore the Council could commence prosecution proceeding AND serve a Listed Building Enforcement Notice simultaneously.

Any one can make an application to English Heritage for a building or structure to be included on the statutory list – this is usually done in written form with an accompanying justification, highlighting the importance of the building/structure.

## **Building Preservation Notices**

If a building is considered to be under imminent threat of alteration or demolition the Council can serve a Building Preservation Notice. This affords immediate protection to the building for a period of six months. Once a notice is served the Council has an obligation to make a formal application to English Heritage to have the building included on the statutory list. Should the building subsequently not be included on the list the Council can be liable for compensation for any losses incurred by the owner.

## **Conservation Areas**

Section 69 of the act places a duty on Local Authorities to designate 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' as Conservation Areas. It is the quality and historic value of the area which is the principle consideration. Section 69 also places a duty on Local Authorities to review their conservation areas – the conservation team has a rolling programme of conservation area re-appraisals. Currently Holy Sepulchre and All Saints conservation areas are under review. Section 71 of the principle act places a duty on Local Authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas.

There are currently 19 designated conservation areas within the Borough.

- Abington Park
- All Saints
- Barrack Road
- Collingtree Village
- Dallington Village
- Delapre
- Deringate

- Duston Village
- Great Billing Village
- Great Houghton Village
- Hardingstone Village
- Holy Sepulchre
- Kingsley
- Kingsthorpe Village
- Kingsthorpe (High Street/Manor Road)
- St Crispin
- St Giles
- Weston Favell Village
- Wootton Village

Designation offers control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and works to trees requires six weeks written notice to be given to the Council prior to work taking place. Permitted Development Rights are reduced for properties within conservation areas. It is the remit of the Local Authority to consider and determine applications for Conservation Area Consent.

Section 72 of the act requires Local Authorities to special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area when considering applications for planning permission within the designated area, or outside the boundary where it is considered the proposal would affect the setting of the conservation area.

#### **Article 4 Directions**

An Article 4 Direction removes specified Permitted Development Rights, which requires the property owner to firstly obtain Planning Permission for the specified development covered by the direction.

Article 4(1) Direction – requires approval of Secretary of State

Article 4(2) Direction – relates to single dwelling houses. S of S approval not required.

Once an Article 4 Direction has been made owners/occupiers have a period of six months to raise objection/comment on the direction prior to the direction being confirmed (or otherwise).

When declaring an Article 4 Direction there is the potential that owners/occupies may claim compensation for abortive costs associated with any planning application which is directly attributable to the Article 4 Direction being made. The Council is only liable to pay compensation for a period of 12 months of the direction being introduced.

There a currently 3 Article 4(2) Direction's in force

- Kingsley
- Barrack Road
- Abington – needs to be confirmed before 16 October 2007.

Each direction has been tailored to protect the identified character of the area.

#### **Urgent Works Notice**

Section 54 of the act enables Local Authorities to undertake urgent works for the preservation of listed buildings in their area after giving notice to the owner. These powers

can only be used with regard to an unoccupied building or the unused part of a partially occupied building. The S of S can also use the power for an unlisted building in a conservation area.

Works are limited to urgent works – work necessary to keep a building wind and weather proof and safe from collapse.

Following the service of and urgent works notice, should the owner fail to undertake the work, the Council may enter the site, undertake the specified work and claim the costs from the owner. The owner has the right to appeal to the S of S on the grounds that some or all of the work was unnecessary or that the costs are unreasonable. Should the Council be minded to recover costs, the financial circumstances of the owner needs to be taken into account from the outset. The sums the authority wishes to recover should not be unreasonable in relation to the owner's means.

### **Repairs Notice.**

Section 48 of the act enables Local Authorities to serve a repairs notice where it is considered that a listed building is not being properly preserved. The notice must specify the works necessary for the proper preservation of the building. The works are not confined to urgent work or to unoccupied buildings BUT the works must be reasonably necessary for the protection of the building.

The serving of a repairs notice is considered to be the start point for compulsory acquisition of the building. If the owner chooses not to fulfil the requirements of the notice the Council can commence CPO proceedings – serving a notice and not following through, if necessary, may send out the wrong message to the owners and others who are custodians of heritage buildings.

### **Registered Battlefields**

English Heritage has published Register of Historic Battlefields, which identifies a number areas where important battles are sufficiently documented to be located on the ground. NBC has one registered battlefield at Delapre. Battlefields are not graded as Listed Buildings.

### **Historic Parks and Gardens**

English Heritage has published a register of Historic Parks and Gardens. Sites are graded as I, II\* and II which is independent of the grading of Listed Buildings. Currently there are no registered parks or gardens within the Borough

### **Scheduled Ancient Monuments**

Ancient Monuments are designated by the S of S under the Ancient Monuments Act 1995. Ancient Monuments can relate to a building structure or work above or below ground, considered to be of archaeological significance. Sometimes a building can be Listed and Scheduled – in this instance the scheduling takes precedence and scheduled monument consent would be required for any works. Currently applications for scheduled monument consent are determined and monitored by English Heritage.

There are currently 7 scheduled monuments within the Borough

- Multivallate Hill Fort, Hunsbury Hill
- Queen Eleanor Cross, London Road (also Grade I Listed)
- Northampton Castle
- Upton deserted medieval Village
- Saxon Palace Complex, Marefair (Listed Building within defined area)
- Upton Bowl Barrow

- Churchyard cross base, St Michaels Churchyard, Upton

### **Archaeology**

Is not currently a statutory function. NCC have a small archaeology team who maintain the County wide Sites and Monument Record. NBC relied on the County Team for specialist archaeology advice until recently when the service was reduced. Advice included the provision of Building Recording Briefs and Archaeological Briefs in relation to development sites considered to be of significance and assessing submitted reports to ensure they fulfilled the requirements of the brief – this role has been picked up by the Borough conservation team which has had a resource implication.

### **Local List** – non-statutory

The Council recognises the importance of some buildings which, although not included on the statutory list, make an important contribution to the heritage base of the town. In June 1993 the council published a Local List of important buildings for the town centre and a draft list for the remainder of the town has also been drawn up. Both lists require review but are currently in abeyance due to limited staff resources.

Buildings included on the local list benefit from no statutory protection, but their importance is highlighted during pre-application discussions or during development proposals.

### **Design Guides/Development Briefs** – non-statutory

The Council has published a number of design guides and development briefs which aim to offer general advice on design and development issues. Some are generic and others are site specific. Example – shop front design guide (published April 1998) offering advice on the design of shop fronts including adverts and security.

### **Heritage Protection Review**

The manner in which our heritage is protected is currently under review by Central Government. It is proposed to rationalise the current numerous forms of protection into one cohesive list – the **Heritage Asset Register** – which will incorporate all existing protected buildings, areas and sites.

### **Principle issues**

- Archaeology will become a statutory function – probably at district level which may have a resource implication for NBC.
- Local lists will be given some statutory status but not to the same level as listed buildings.
- Responsibility for determining applications for Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent may transfer to Local Authorities which will have a resource implication for NBC.

### **Resources**

The Conservation team currently has three full time staff – a principle officer and two planning officers.

It is the remit of the team to fulfil all the Council statutory heritage obligations and to facilitate the Council's heritage policies including:-

- Undertaking a programme of Conservation Area re-appraisals and management plans in accordance with Government requirements and best practice guidance.
- Identifying and assessing potential areas for Conservation area status.
- Offering heritage advice to the Council's development control team on planning and listed building applications as requested.
- Offering heritage advice to development control on planning consultations from WNDC.
- Offering advice to all other Council departments/teams as requested.
- Offering heritage advice to amenity organisations and the public as requested.
- Enforcing statutory listed building and conservation area controls.
- Making applications on behalf of the Council for buildings to be included on the statutory list.
- Assessing submitted information with regard to the discharge of planning and listed building conditions.
- Offering archaeological advice to the Council's development control team.
- Evaluating submitted building recording and archaeological reports.

The principle officer is currently coordinating the corporate response to strategic WNDC consultations.

### **Meeting Three**

**12<sup>th</sup> of November 2007**

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY HISTORIC BUILDINGS/REGENERATION OPPORTUNITIES TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The next meeting will be held at the The Guildhall on  
**Monday, 12 November 2007 at 6:00 pm**

Chair - Councillor John Caswell  
Councillors Tony Clarke, Jean Hawkins, Andrew  
Simpson, Paul Varnsvery

Councillor Kevin Reeve observing

Chris Cavanagh	Corporate Manager (Regeneration)
Simone Wade	Policy & Governance Manager
Mike Kitchen	Regeneration Project Officer
Jane Jennings	Principal Planning Officer
Paul Lewin	Planning, Policy & Conservation Manager

### AGENDA

#### 1. Apologies

There were none.

#### 2. Minutes of the meeting held on 11th October 2007

The minutes of the meeting were agreed as a true record, with the following amendments:

Item 3 Desk Top Research: Point A(c) – The last sentence should read “..as Conservation areas with an inappropriate boundary maybe difficult to justify at appeal.

Point B (e) – The last sentence should read “...(Jane Jennings advised the group that this can pose a risk as Northampton Borough Council may become liable for compensation if English Heritage decide not to allow listing.”

Point B (h) – The sentence should read “There is no formal process for review of the local list, but there is an informal review underway.”

Point C – Each of the headings should be underlined and the last head “The Future” inserted.

Point (2) of ‘Agreed’ should read “...as a witness and/or consider an option for him to do additional work.....”

#### 3. Task & Finish Group Resources

The Chair introduced Ben Bix, Overview & scrutiny officer to the group.

Simone Wade outlined the availability of overview and scrutiny officer support and spoke about Ben Bix and Mark Farmer’s experience in relation to the work of Overview & Scrutiny.

Chris Cavanagh outlined the resources available to him via his current Conservation Team. In summary, there were a number of vacant posts, with those officers in post providing support to other areas such as strategic planning applications which all added pressure to a small team.

In light of the comments made around existing resources there was further discussion around the possibility of buying in additional support. In the interests of keeping concluding review there was agreement that this option should be explored. There was further discussion around the possibility of using Arun Kotnis who had now retired from Northampton Borough Council either as a paid advisor or as a co-opted member.

**Agreed:** (1) Simone Wade would explore whether Arun Kotnis was available to assist.

#### **4. Written questions for interviews**

The group discussed the issues that they wished to seek answers for from the witnesses in the form of written questions:

The following comments were made:

- There is a need to paint an historical picture so that it is possible to understand where we may have gone wrong in the past and why?
- There is a need to understand what is missing now and what is it that is preventing the town from moving forward.
- Is there a reason as to why heritage buildings have not been protected in the past?
- Following on from the above, how do 'we' protect our heritage buildings of the future?
- Why did we lose these buildings in the past? Was it due to the local authority, or developers or both?

There was discussion regarding the need to invite further organisations to future meetings and in some instances to consider co-opting them onto the group.

**Agreed:** (1) Simone Wade and Jane Jennings would produce a draft set of questions for Councillors to consider.

(2) The questions are to be sent to the witnesses prior to the next meeting allowing enough preparation time.

#### **4. Evidence**

##### **(A) Up To Date Local List**

Jane Jennings made the following comments:

- Northampton Borough Council adopted a list for the town centre and currently there is a draft list for the out of town area available.
- Examples of the information held were circulated and included – Local list candidates, Local list of buildings of architectural or historic interest (town centre) & town centre conservation area map.
- Both the Local list of buildings of architectural or historic interest (town centre) lists are being reviewed.
- Resources have an impact on the progress being made and that currently activity is concentrated around statutory duties.

**Agreed:** (1). Simone Wade to research the resources required to undertake similar services within other local authorities.

**(B) Information from Lincoln**

An invitation by English Heritage was made to look at the process of enquiry by design, at Lincoln City.

The date for this visit is to be arranged. There was further discussion regarding the brief for the visit and whether this group could send some questions.

**Agreed:** (1) Councillor Hawkins to report back to the group.  
(2) Chris Cavanagh's team to pull together a list of exemplar cases  
(3) Questions would be sent to Lincoln when feedback from the witnesses and other evidence has been considered.

**5. Date of the next meeting**

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2007  
Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2007  
Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2008

**Information presented to the meeting;**

Jane Jennings to provide list.

Information on Lincoln statement by design at the end of this report.

**Meeting Four**

**29<sup>th</sup> of November 2007**



## Historic Buildings/Regeneration Opportunities Task and Finish Group 29 November 2007

### Notes and actions

#### Attendees

#### Councillors

Caswell (Chair)  
Clarke (Apologies)  
Hawkins  
Simpson (Apologies)  
Varnsverry

#### Officers

Jane Jennings  
Mike Kitchen  
Chris Cavanagh (apologies)  
Mark Farmer  
Paul Lewin  
Ben Bix

- Kate Wells represented Heritage Hunters
- Valerie Knowles from Northampton Heritage Action Group was also in attendance
- The group requested that the presentation given by Brian Giggins be forwarded to WNDC
- Jane Jennings will involve Northampton Heritage Action Group with the production of the local list
- The list of questions were approved by the group and will be circulated to the other witnesses identified at the meeting on 12 November 2007

It was agreed that the next meetings of the group are as follows;

- 11<sup>th</sup> December – Evidence gathering
- 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008 – Final report

The meeting closed at 8pm

<b>Witness →</b>	<b>Paul Hobden</b>	<b>Brian Giggins</b>	<b>Martin Ellison</b>	<b>Kate Wells (Heritage Hunters)</b>
<b>Question ↓</b>				
1, What do you think our heritage brings to Northampton?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sense of place</li> <li>○ Historical environment can provide information on how the town has evolved</li> <li>○ There is no single source of reference for how the town has evolved</li> <li>○ A 'millennium survey' is currently underway</li> <li>○ Planners need to be aware of appropriate building materials &amp; how they weather</li> <li>○ Planners tend to be Geographers but need an in depth knowledge of the town</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sense of place, something of interest and something to raise awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sense of pride – rewarding to an enquiring mind</li> <li>○ Value in tourism and education e.g. Birmingham &amp; Manchester</li> <li>○ Potential for major tourist draw</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identity and pride in family history</li> </ul>
2, Do you think every building of any heritage value should be saved? On what basis should this be considered? What parameters do we use to assess a buildings value in the context of regenerating the Town Centre where other benefits can be delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Each building should be judged on its merits – buildings should be saved if possible</li> <li>○ However, there must be an option to innovate and be in the spirit of the age</li> <li>○ Design guidance is needed, in the town centre - the scale and materials must be right</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Brian Giggins gave a presentation on the Castle Site (attached)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Not every building should be saved</li> <li>○ County function has ceased to give advice</li> <li>○ Confusion over current legislation and policies. (Jane Jennings response - local policies are still applied)</li> <li>○ When decisions are made against policy then a valid reason must be made available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Most buildings do have a finite life</li> <li>○ Buildings shouldn't be saved for the sake of saving them</li> <li>○ 'Miserable' buildings are Mayorhold car park and the bus station</li> <li>○ Guildhall itself is a tribute to local democracy (design competition on original building)</li> </ul>

<p>3, In respect of the quality of new build, what criteria do we use to assess new buildings of value and their contribution to the local environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A specific (not generic) heritage study &amp; design guide is needed for Northampton that is accessible to all.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Design and access statements are made available and are beneficial to lay person.</li> <li>○ Quality of plans can be driven up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Disappointment at the lack of 'statement' made by redevelopment of the Derngate.</li> </ul>
<p>4, Where buildings may not be of high heritage or design merit but may have high community value, how can these be assessed to establish whether they should be protected or retained</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Some buildings are already inappropriate to the town</li> <li>○ Sheep street should be returned to its original layout</li> <li>○ Sol and Mayorhold are disappointing</li> <li>○ Move away from consultants quick fix answers</li> <li>○ A 3D town centre model needs to be made to visualise new developments as chronology and topography</li> <li>○ More research and indicative studies are needed as very little is known about the town.</li> <li>○ A Civic Forum would be beneficial</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Even handed appraisal is needed – a benchmarking of buildings against a criteria – some may be important nationally</li> <li>○ Understanding of theme and context is important</li> </ul>	
<p>5, Are there any other points you wish to raise. <i>(and questions/answers at meeting)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Paul Hobden informed the meeting of his background as an Architect, Town Planner and Developer, with recent projects including the regeneration of St Peters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There are lots of examples of where artefacts have disappeared during development</li> <li>○ Jean Hawkins asked for an estimate of how storage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Credible information to inform policy &amp; Development Control process is vital</li> <li>○ The model would be a development control tool</li> <li>○ The urban area database is not being used at the moment</li> <li>○ Everything we</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A real model rather than a computer generated model is more effective</li> </ul>

	<p>Court and the Southbridge scheme where old buildings have been renovated along with providing over 1000 new homes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ An ideal scale of the model is 1:200 – would welcome joint funding for this and has identified potential model maker.</li> <li>○ The town could be divided into 5 interest areas based on chronology rather than focussed on 1 central area.</li> <li>○ More conservation areas are appropriate</li> </ul>	<p>capacity is needed for artefacts</p>	<p>do must inform the Development Control Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Urban design expertise is lacking in most authorities (Jane Jennings response was that Chartered Conservation Officers are in post)</li> <li>○ What happens between conservation areas is important</li> </ul>	
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**Information presented to the meeting;**

**Suggested questions for Historic Buildings and Regeneration Task & Finish Group to put to the witnesses**

For the meeting to be held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2007 at 6pm.

- 1 What value do you think our heritage brings to Northampton?
- 2 Do you think every building of any heritage value should be saved? On what basis should this be considered? What parameters do we use to assess a buildings value in the context of regenerating the Town Centre where other benefits can be delivered?
- 3 In respect of the quality of new build, what criteria do we use to assess new buildings of value and their contribution to the local environment?
- 4 Where buildings may not be of high heritage or design merit but may have high community value, how can these be assessed to establish whether they should also be protected or retained?
- 5 Are there any other points you wish to raise?

## Desktop Research

### Briefing paper for the Historic Buildings and Regeneration Opportunities Task and Finish Group, 29 November 2007 6pm

Desktop research comparing the resources that Northampton Borough Council for uses for conservation work with other similar councils.

It is difficult to make direct comparisons with other local authorities for a number of reasons.

- Every area having a different range of buildings to Northampton,
- Different levels of population growth and regeneration and
- Differences in the urban/rural spread.
- Northampton also has significant development pressure with the growth agenda.

This information and research therefore focuses on those councils identified at previous meetings as being suitable to compare with Northampton.

### Resources at Northampton Borough Council for conservation work

There are two full time conservation officers (one of these posts is currently vacant) and one full time principal officer; however, this officer also works on other areas apart from conservation. There are 19 conservation areas in Northampton and there are 566 listed buildings. Northamptonshire County Council used to have a conservation unit, but this was disbanded a few years ago.

### Resources at comparable Councils

<b>Council</b>	<b>Population (2001 Census)</b>	<b>Number of listed buildings (approx)</b>	<b>Number of officers involved in conservation work (excludes archaeologists)</b>	<b>Additional information</b>
<i>Northampton</i>	<i>194458</i>	<i>566</i>	<i>2 FT + Principal Officer</i>	<i>19 Conservation Areas</i>
Ipswich (Borough)	117,069	Over 600	1 FT Conservation Officer 1 PT Conservation Officer Both report directly to a head of service and there is a development control officer assisting with the units workload	14 conservation Areas  Suffolk County Council has a archaeology unit which works on conservation issues
<b>Council</b>	<b>Population (2001 Census)</b>	<b>Number of listed buildings (approx)</b>	<b>Number of officers involved in conservation work (excludes</b>	<b>Additional information</b>

			<b>archaeologists)</b>	
Derby (Unitary)	221,708	387	2 FT Conservation Officer. 1 PT equiv Technician Plus FT Team Leader (they cover more than just conservation)	
Norwich City (Borough)	121,600	1,500	3 FT conservation officer 1 FT Team Leader (they cover more than conservation)	17 conservation areas
Milton Keynes (Unitary)	207,057	Around 1,100	1 FT Conservation Architect 1 FT Conservation Officer 1 FT eqv shared by two consultants 1 Team Leader (they cover more than conservation)	27 conservation areas
Cherwell District	131,785	Over 3,000	2 FT Conservation Officers 1 PT Conservation Officer 1 FT Team Leader	54 conservation areas

## Conclusion

From the above information it would seem that the resources in Northampton are slightly below other comparable areas however, only Milton Keynes (Unitary) has similar development pressures. As Northampton grows and developers bring forward proposals to regenerate areas through demolition or renovation there will no doubt be greater demands on the councils conservation service.

## Report Author

**Mark Farmer. Overview and Scrutiny Officer**

## Copy of questions sent to witnesses and used at the meeting

### Suggested questions for Historic Buildings and Regeneration Task & Finish Group to put to the witnesses

For the meeting to be held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2007 at 6pm.

- 6 What value do you think our heritage brings to Northampton?
- 7 Do you think every building of any heritage value should be saved? On what basis should this be considered? What parameters do we use to assess a buildings value in the context of regenerating the Town Centre where other benefits can be delivered.
- 8 In respect of the quality of new build, what criteria do we use to assess new buildings of value and their contribution to the local environment.

- 9 Where buildings may not be of high heritage or design merit but may have high community value, how can these be assessed to establish whether they should also be protected or retained.

Are there any other points you wish to raise?

Powerpoint presentation on the Castle Area is included at the end of this report.

### **Information presented to the meeting;**

**Graham Croucher  
18 Abbots Way  
St.James End  
Northampton  
NN5 5DB**

07 December 2007

**Councillor John Caswell  
Chair of Historic Buildings/Regeneration Opportunities  
Task & Finish Group  
Councillor Richard Church (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration)  
Councillor Andrew Simpson (Chair of Overview and Scrutiny)  
Councillor Jean Hawkins (NBC 'Heritage Champion'):**

### **Historic Buildings/Regeneration Opportunities**

Dear Sir/Madam,

In reference to the above I write as an individual, to have my thoughts and ideas considered and hopefully added to the finished report.

It was at a recent meeting that I was speaking to Councillor Paul Varnsverry about Heritage matters and he suggested that I write to yourselves with my thoughts.

My topic of conversation concerns buildings in the St.James area. I have been either a resident or visitor, living in a neighbouring area and using the facilities of St.James, for about 33 years now so have a reasonable knowledge of the area and its people.

For too long now I feel that the powers that be have been allowed, to systematically destroy our heritage locally and nationally. Many important and attractive buildings have been torn down over the years in the name of progress and profit.

Many of these buildings were still useful in providing a function and had been in existence since the formation of their relevant communities and indeed were an integral part of the substance and fabric of these communities. As such they give the community a sense of place, belonging and security, a place they recognize as somewhere they can put down markers and roots and call their community "home".

In St.James alone many houses, shops and shoe factories have been swept away on the whim of the planners' idea of a bright new world! They were replaced with square, featureless, concrete abominations which might serve a purpose of being cheap to construct but do nothing to blend in with the existing surroundings and create a sense of harmony and continuity.

Fortunately, at the moment St.James still has quite a few buildings left, that give it its distinctive identity, and that it can be proud of, but for how long?

St. James Church, already listed, St.James C of E Church school, shares the church site, St.James Bus garage, Church's shoe factory and the Natwest Bank which was originally a Café and gave its name to "Café" Square as St.James Square was originally known. The Square itself with its remaining shops etc all are the very fabric and identity of St.James and have been part of St.James since the late 1800's when St.James was created as a parish. Destroy any or all these buildings and you rip the heart and lungs out of a community and we all may as well move to places like Milton Keynes, with their faceless, uninteresting buildings and no history.

#### **St. James Church school**

This building is under immediate threat and it would be an absolute disgrace and tragedy if this building was allowed to be demolished. Created at the very inception of St.James as a parish it shares ground space with the church and I have fond memories of attending the school and going through the small gate from the playground to attend the church twice a week for prayers and hymns.

This school is an absolute Gem in terms of style, layout and history. It is attractive and has frontage on two roads. The Saints Rugby team were founded here at this School.

The school also forms part of our religious heritage as it was a Church of England school and as already mentioned shares the site with the Church which is already listed. These sites are rare; there are not many Church schools left and in pretty much their original form. As part of our religious heritage this school needs preserving alone. The very idea that the Church provided schools back in the 1800`s shows us how much times have changed and how different things were back then. This image of a way of life needs to be preserved for future generations. This is our heritage and has a place in the modern world.

### **St.James Bus Garage**

This building is also under threat when its current occupiers move out, reportedly in the next two years. I have seen plans to turn this site into residential buildings but as the existing structure is not listed then it seems it could all be demolished. We cannot allow this to happen as this building is far too important to lose.

The Corporation bus garage has occupied this frontage for over 100 years and has been an important feature and landmark of St.James and its origins go back to the first electric trams that Northampton had.

The original part of the building is the old tram sheds and was opened around 1904 and is an attractive building. It extends right back to Spencer St, behind the garage and runs along Sharman road.

In conjunction with the above named roads, with their red brick terraced houses and the neighbouring Church's shoe factory, this area gives us a fascinating glimpse and encourages further imagination, of what St.James was like and how it developed with the terraced houses housing the workers for the shoe factories and the tram depot. As such this area has much social history which needs to be preserved for future generations not just because of the aforementioned historical value but also because these buildings are attractive in their own right and complement any town particularly one which has suffered much destruction in recent years.

The bus garage due its size is quite a landmark in St.James and is an intrinsic part of the make up of this area.

Further use for this building, should the bus company withdraw as is likely, could be as a transport museum.

This museum could house some of the many historic vehicles and artefacts of Northampton's transport heritage that still exist.

The East Midlands Vehicle Preservation Group, based locally, rents around three barns on local farms to store its burgeoning collection of historic buses, all privately owned and comprising well over fifty vehicles in its membership, but represent many different operators including vehicles from Northampton. These barns provide basic protection from the elements and enable a vehicle to be preserved, but a place to store, restore and exhibit this unique collection of vehicles such as The St.James Corporation bus garage would be truly marvellous.

The 154 preservation society also would be interested in use of the bus garage as they currently store one of their vehicles, Northampton 1949 Daimler No.154 currently at the garage. They also own Northampton Daimler No 267 the last rear entrance open platform bus ever built for the home market. Both these vehicles are rare and are of local importance and would be fitting working exhibits in a transport museum based in their old working home.

Buildings such as the bus garage are rare as this is not just any bus garage, as already mentioned it is also the original Northampton Corporation tramways, sheds. This building was purpose built to house the new electric trams in 1904. Many buildings such have this have been demolished and lost forever but Northampton has a chance to save theirs for future generations and it also has a potential further use, thus saving it from standing empty, which would put Northampton further on the tourist map as Northampton's transport heritage has been overlooked and only warrants a small mention in the Central museum.

Our transport heritage is very important as it shows how a place developed and how it was shaped because it is transport that is intrinsic in anything we do. It is not just road transport that could be displayed in the museum but rail and aviation also. The possibilities are endless and this could be, with the will and vision to do it, a real opportunity for Northampton to develop something else that would be important and famous both locally and nationally.

Notable examples of where this idea has been tried and works are,

Manchester, <http://www.gmts.co.uk/index.htm>

St.Helens, <http://www.hallstreetdepot.info/depot.htm>

Aston manor, <http://www.amrtm.org>

Ipswich, <http://www.ipswichtransportmuseum.co.uk/history.htm>,

These notable examples of former bus and tram and trolleybus depots have been preserved and they now have a further use as transport museums bringing in tourists, much needed money to the local economy and a valuable educational source.



Apart from the shoe museum, Northampton is not renowned for being a Mecca for tourists looking for museums, an idea such as this would, I feel, be of great importance and value to St.James and therefore the town. I understand that these sites have possibly been earmarked for residential development. I feel this would be a terrible blow to the area if we allow these buildings to be torn down and replaced with housing. As well as housing, a community also needs culture, employment and leisure opportunities for regeneration.

These buildings could also partly be used for community based projects, where sections of the local community can go for either support or educational purposes.

Further I also feel and I urge you to consider the idea that St.James be made a conservation area.

I urge you to consider these fantastic buildings and add them to the list of Northampton's buildings that need preserving and listing in order to protect them and consider them in terms of regeneration, but not for housing.

I feel this is too important an opportunity to be missed.

**Sincerely,  
Graham Croucher**



cc:  
Councillor Paul Varnsberry  
Councillor Pam Varnsberry (St.James)  
Councillor Jenny Conroy (St.James)  
Councillor Terry Wire (St.James)  
Tracey Low (St.James Fusion Project)



## ENGLISH HERITAGE

Mr Ben Bix  
Overview and Scrutiny Officer  
Northampton Borough Council  
The Guildhall  
Northampton  
NN1 1DE

10 December 2007

Dear Mr Bix

### **NORTHAMPTON HISTORIC BUILDINGS RESEARCH**

Thank you for your e-mail on 4 December requesting a contribution from English Heritage for the scrutiny review being carried out by Councillor Caswell, Clarke, Hawkins Simpson and Varnsverry. I note that members of the scrutiny panel have met with various interested parties and given the role of English Heritage as the government's adviser on all aspects of the historic environment I hope very much that there will be an opportunity for some or all of the scrutiny panel members to meet likewise with our Historic Areas Adviser, Clive Fletcher. Subject to the practicalities of a congested diary, I too would welcome the opportunity of participating in this discussion with relevant Councillors.

I appreciate the panel's concern to undertake a rapid strategic overview, but it is a tall order for us to distil in a few sentences the kind of rigorous response required to address the specific questions you have asked. Moreover, we are doubtful that these questions alone are sufficient to address such wide-ranging issues as 'Historic Buildings and Regeneration Opportunities' in Northampton. We have already written at length to the Borough Council on various matters relating to heritage-led regeneration in the town, and I am therefore enclosing a copy of the letter from Clive Fletcher dated 23 August 2007.

Relevant legislation, government policy and guidance must naturally be the starting point for your review. In particular therefore I would draw attention to Planning Policy Guidance No 15, *Planning and the Historic Environment*, and No 16 *Archaeology and Planning*. The contribution of 'historic buildings' to opportunities for regeneration is indivisible from the broader historic environment encompassing our understanding of historic character, topography and archaeology. Within this framework, I shall address your questions by reference to published policy, guidance and evidence.

## Value of Heritage

The review in 2001 of *Viewpoints on the Historic Environment of the East Midlands* has articulated the wide ranging value of the region's heritage. English Heritage publications such as *Regeneration and the Historic Environment* and *Conservation Area Appraisal* articulate these values specifically in relation to historic places. *Built to Last* demonstrates the commitment of English Heritage to promoting the understanding of historic places – in this case characterisation of the important urban landscape of boot and shoe manufacture in Northampton and neighbouring areas.

## Protection of Historic Buildings

PPG16 explains the current arrangements for designation of 'listed buildings' and 'conservation areas' and identifies the various statutory controls that underpin the informed management of change. Proposed reform of heritage protection is set out in the recent *Government White Paper*. Revised *Principles of Selection* for listed buildings were published at the same time. Copies of these documents are enclosed.

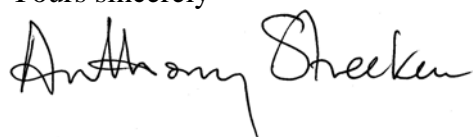
## New Build

English Heritage has prepared a toolkit to help decision-makers. *Building in Context* describes good practice in addressing the contribution of new buildings to the historic environment. Our portfolio of exemplary developments in *Shared Interests* demonstrates how good design can contribute positively to historic places. Community value is not reflected solely in buildings themselves; the value of groups of buildings, associated spaces and wider character and topography can best be protected and enhanced through conservation area designations. Despite clear recommendations from English Heritage these opportunities remain to be addressed in Northampton. Copies of English Heritage's published guidance on *Conservation Area Appraisal* and *Conservation Area Management* are enclosed with the hard copy of this letter. We know that enlightened authorities are already using Conservation Area Appraisals as a vital instrument for the delivery of local government responsibilities for 'place making'.

## Other Issues

I hope that these comments will be helpful to the scrutiny panel. Our historic areas adviser has already arranged to introduce senior officers and members of the Borough Council to the principles of Enquiry by Design as a helpful approach to masterplanning. I do genuinely feel that it is very important for English Heritage to engage directly in the important work of the scrutiny panel so I will ask my PA, Julie Simkins, to contact you shortly in order to explore the practicalities.

Yours sincerely



DR ANTHONY D F STREETEN  
Regional Director, East Midlands

Enclosures:

- Letter from Clive Fletcher dated 23 August 2007
- Viewpoints on the Historic Environment
- Regeneration and the Historic Environment
- Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals
- Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas
- Built to Last
- Heritage Protection for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- New Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings
- Building in Context



## ENGLISH HERITAGE

Christopher Cavanagh,  
Northampton Borough Council,  
Cliftonville House,  
Bedford Road,  
Northampton.  
NN4 7NR

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**Fax 01604 735401**  
e-mail: [clive.fletcher@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:clive.fletcher@english-heritage.org.uk)

**Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2007**

H. Dear Mr Cavanagh

**Subject:** HERITAGE LED REGENERATION IN NORTHAMPTON

I'm writing as promised to follow up our very useful meeting on the 16th. Our discussion managed to cram quite a breadth of topics into an hour and a half, but I think I've managed to recall all we discussed – if not, please do let me know.

First I'd like to say that we were very glad to hear that the Borough Council sees the historic environment as a positive asset to Northampton, and how it is regarded as a key element in its future revival. We hope that we can help you work towards realising its full potential. Beyond our statutory role in the planning system, as a national and regional organisation we are also in a position to disseminate relevant good practice through our involvement in other towns and cities, and we have a long track record of implementing heritage led regeneration.

### The Boot and Shoe Industry

Few large towns still possess such a totemic symbol of their identity in national and international terms. This isn't however celebrated in the town or fully developed as a tourist attraction, and its economic regeneration potential remains untapped. We therefore welcome the news that ideas about drawing upon this as part of the regeneration effort are now being looked at seriously. We'd like to re-iterate our offer to take councillors to see the Jewellery Quarter conservation area in Birmingham, where the traditional jewellery manufacturing industry has been a key part of regeneration in the city. Our illustrated publication,

“Built to Last” explains the history of boot and shoe manufacture in the town and the county – we also wrote a similar volume about the Jewellery Quarter prior to its regeneration.

#### The BDP Master Plan.

We have had sight of the BDP Master plan, and for a town centre the size of Northampton’s, it is a very thin document. Whilst it correctly identifies severance as a problem and the historic environment as an asset, it unfortunately doesn’t give any meaningful solutions to how these two issues will be handled apart from in very localised areas.

To achieve the step change we understand is needed in terms of growth and regeneration of the town centre a much larger piece of work will be necessary with a far greater scope and depth.

#### Enquiry by Design

The enquiry by design process provides an unrivalled opportunity for partnership working towards design solutions, where the various partners *participate* rather than act as consultees in the design process. We are cognisant for instance that the highway authority leads on highway issues, but that doesn’t mean that highway engineering concerns should be paramount in urban highway design. In the case of Northampton, urban design solutions to the severance caused by the ring road need to be quite radical and urban designers and highway engineers will need to work closely together to achieve them.

In Lincoln, Enquiry by Design achieved a detailed and deliverable master plan for the whole city centre, including quite major surgery to the ring road, previously thought to be impossible. The “Lincoln Master plan” Enquiry by Design was a first at the time it was done, and was remarkably successful. We would be happy to facilitate a visit to Lincoln so that staff/members can meet the people responsible for instigating and implementing it.

#### Characterisation

Characterisation has contributed strongly to regeneration projects around the country, perhaps most notably Liverpool. It is a fundamental prerequisite to good urban design, and often provides answers to apparently intractable urban planning and regeneration problems.

Town centres can be likened to complex organisms – the routes in and around them have often been compared to blood vessels or irrigation channels. While it is possible to zero in on specific areas – for a site design brief for instance – where a town centre as a whole is in need of regeneration characterisation has to look at the whole first before gaining an understanding of where localised problems originate – the solution to the problems of one part of town may actually lie outside of it.

We can advise further on characterisation, and potentially help to fund it.

### THI

Given the range of issues relating to regeneration and the historic environment in Northampton, you may wish to look at the Heritage Lottery “Townscape Heritage Initiative”, which can provide funding for public realm, historic building restoration and renovation of floor space in historic buildings, with partnership funding running

to £2m (total budget £4m with project value of approx £6m) with up to £50k development funding and salaries of project officer(s) built in. The amount of matching funding that is currently available in the town may mean that the Borough could potentially run a very large scheme. The lead in time to such a project would be about two years. As I promised at the meeting, I am happy to come along for a day and advise on what could go into a stage one application.

### The Grosvenor Centre

The opportunity to re-plan areas of townscape that have been made dysfunctional by modern interventions are all too rare. In Northampton’s case, the bus station and the Grosvenor Centre truncated a substantial area of the city centre, both functionally and visually. The chance to re-plan this at a time when the centre needs to grow sustainably has enormous potential to stitch both this area and those adjacent and beyond into the historic town centre.

An essential background to making such design decisions however, is understanding, and again characterisation is the means of achieving this. A quick characterisation analysis of the urban form, for example, shows that most of the north/south routes through the town centre were blocked or rendered illegible by the construction of the original Grosvenor Centre. This legacy has effectively prevented the town from expanding north, limited the commercial viability of the historic buildings on Sheep Street, and cut off a beautiful part of town including the Round Church from the city centre. The historic buildings and mix of uses on Newland and Victoria Street have entirely vanished.

The expansion of the Grosvenor Centre is, (in purely design terms) not incompatible with the reconnection of this portion of town, but resides outside the formula of simply a larger internal shopping mall. For the town centre to grow sustainably it needs to form a new urban quarter that meshes with the historic street pattern, allowing flexibility in years to come, and complementarity with adjacent areas.

#### Protection of Unlisted Buildings outside Conservation Areas.

While there are proposals in the new heritage white paper to allow planning authorities to protect locally listed buildings outside of conservation areas, the timeframe for the introduction of this is as yet undetermined. At present there are unfortunately no statutory mechanisms for protecting such buildings.

In the case of the now demolished Melting's ("Pachanga's"), inclusion within the conservation area could have saved the building, as although not ideal, separation by the ring road from the main conservation area would not have precluded its extension to encompass it. The tragic loss of the Basset Lowke warehouse could have been prevented in a similar manner. At present, most of the historic boot and shoe area is unprotected and there have been numerous losses of historic factories, most recently the original Church's premises. We continue to advise that a conservation area is designated to protect these buildings at the earliest available opportunity - the research has after all already been done.

The timescale for the designation or extension of a conservation area is largely the discretion of the planning authority. It will be based upon how and if they wish to do

public consultation and other factors such as expediency. All the Act requires is that the Secretary of State and English Heritage are notified and that advertisements are placed in the London Gazette and a local newspaper, all of which can be done rapidly.

#### Conclusion

Northampton has suffered some setbacks in recent times, and it has often been perceived that a lack of confidence has hampered the town in achieving the sort of high value regeneration that other towns have enjoyed.

We have always believed that Northampton has the potential to be a special place because of its unique history and surviving historic environment - our development of conservation led regeneration techniques over many years has seen the regeneration of countless urban and rural centres.



The range of issues may seem to point to a seemingly large programme of work, but many of them are in fact overlapping – the formulation of a THI strategy could for instance encompass a number of issues including characterisation.

May I suggest a follow up meeting so that we can discuss next steps?

Yours sincerely,

CLIVE FLETCHER  
Historic Areas Advisor

Cllr Jean Hawkins Northampton Borough Council  
Cllr John Caswell Northampton Borough Council  
Jane Jennings Northampton Borough Council  
Anthony Streeten English Heritage

## Meeting Five

### Minutes

11<sup>th</sup> of December 2007

Historic Buildings/Regeneration Opportunities Task and Finish Group

11<sup>th</sup> of December 2007

### Notes and actions

#### Attendees

#### Councillors

Caswell (Chair)  
Clarke (Apologies)  
Hawkins  
Simpson  
Varnserry

#### Officers

Jane Jennings  
Mike Kitchen  
Chris Cavanagh (apologies)  
Mark Farmer  
Paul Lewin  
Ben Bix

- Mark Farmer to send a copy of the Brian Giggins Castle area presentation to West Northamptonshire Development Corporation
- Noted that the County Council did not send a representative to the evidence gathering meeting, but were asked to do so on a number of occasions
- On the review of the original plan, the meeting noted that not all the aims and objectives have been met. It was therefore agreed that a officers and elected members to meet to draft the report with the evidence gathered so far and fill the gaps if necessary afterwards
- Review of evidence to happen at the report draft meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January
- The officers that have written the new economic strategy will need to consider the outcomes of this review
- Jane Jennings to circulate information on the national consultation on the protection of Historic Buildings
- Chris Cavanagh to provide further information on the level of resourcing for conservation work in Northampton

It was agreed that the next meetings of the group are as follows;

- 11<sup>th</sup> January – Draft report
- 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008 – Final report

The meeting closed at 7.25pm

**Further evidence taken at this meeting;**

Witness →	Jane Jennings	Heritage Hunters
Question ↓		
Is there sufficient resource at the Borough Council to ensure our historic buildings are protected?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ We can always do with more resources- currently understaffed; due to a vacant post with the team.</li> <li>○ With a significant increase in regeneration the level of current resources will probably be in-adequate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Would like to see a dedicated team that can focus on buildings that are under threat.</li> </ul>
What happens if a building of historic importance is under threat?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ At the planning application stage- conditions can be imposed</li> <li>○ If work is carried out that does not comply with conditions officers do have the power of entry on listed sites to inspect the work</li> <li>○ Any local planning authority can place a condition on a planning application</li> <li>○ Buildings that do not require planning permission can be changed/demolished as the owner wishes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○</li> </ul>
Who monitors planning applications to ensure historic buildings are protected?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This is done by the conservation team before application are approved or sent to committee for decision</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○</li> </ul>	

**Information presented to meeting;**

**Historic Buildings Task and Finish 11 December 2007 – Progress against scope identified**

Scope	Progress	Action needed
The task and finish group would use the issues around Castle and the Masterplan proposals as a paradigm case	<p>Presentation on the Castle area delivered to the group on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2007</p> <p>Group meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 2008 to examine the evidence and consider any</p>	<p>Presentation sent to West Northants Development Corporation</p> <p>Recommendations needed for final report</p>

	outcomes arising from it	
The Chair of this task and finish group to ask that this Council's Administration requests that West Northamptonshire Development Corporation defer any planning decisions affecting the Castle area of Northampton until the work of this task and finish group is completed, as recommendations regarding future Planning Policy maybe made, in particular with regard to historic and important sites and buildings.	Letter sent and response received  Response letter from WNDC rejected request to defer planning applications.	For elected members to determine
Review of the current powers and those of partner organisations.	Briefing note was provided by Jane Jennings and circulated to the group  Noted that the national consultation on amending the powers available to local authorities has closed. The new legislation will no doubt create an increase in workload	Recommendations needed for final report
Review of the extent of the Borough Conservation Areas including the Management Plan Programme in hand.	Paul Lewin provided additional information on this (Mark Farmer phone conversation on the 10 <sup>th</sup> of January)  There is an ongoing programme to review areas  Four a year are carried out. Additional resources would be needed if more were	Recommendation needed  Additional areas

	required	
Review proposals for mapping of buildings that are not listed but are of value to the Town.	<p>Briefing note provided by Jane Jennings stated that there no in-house resources available</p> <p>Paul Lewin provided additional information on this (Mark Farmer phone conversation on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January)</p> <p>Maybe possible that trained NHAG volunteers could do this work or funding found to commission outside people to carry out this work</p>	Recommendations needed for final report
Review proposals for mapping of Regeneration projects.	<p>Paul Lewin provided additional information on this (Mark Farmer phone conversation on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January)</p> <p>Part of the work carried out when proposals come forward to regenerate an area</p>	Recommendations needed for final report
Assess a resources plan to compile a wider assessment of buildings of value including potential funding available from other sources.	Briefing note provided by Jane Jennings stated that there no current resources available to complete this work	Recommendations needed for final report
Consider possible consequences of not following recommendations from above work.	Part of the evidence review on the 11 <sup>th</sup> of January 2008	Recommendations needed for the final report
Powers available to NBC	Briefing note was	Recommendations

are established and those that are not, ascertain who has them	provided by Jane Jennings and circulated to the group  Noted that the national consultation on amending the powers available to local authorities has closed. The new legislation will no doubt create an increase in workload	needed for the final report
Recognise the impact that the role of NBC has on WNDC and how they carryout their respective roles.	Briefing note was provided by Jane Jennings and circulated to the group	Recommendations needed for the final report
Strengthened partnership working through agreed partnership agreement in respect of historic buildings and regeneration	Paul Lewin provided additional information on this (Mark Farmer phone conversation on the 10 <sup>th</sup> of January)  Conservation section would like to develop closer working relationships with WNDC to ensure that they give more consideration  The County Council as a partner needs to provide a Archaeological service	Recommendations needed for the final report

**Possible recommendations;**

1. That additional resources are found for the conservation service, (The group estimates that a team of six officers is required);

**In order to;**

- Ensure that there is sufficient resource available to respond to the emerging legislation on the protection of historic buildings
- Ensure that there is sufficient resource available to deal with the increasing demands place upon the service as a result of increasing levels of regeneration

2. That the conservation service develops a closer working relationship with the West Northampton Development Corporation to ensure that the Corporation is considering conservation issues and previous planning enforcement when bringing forward regeneration proposals and planning applications
3. That the Corporate Manager for Growth and Regeneration brings forward proposals to map buildings that are not listed, but of value to the town. (Proposals could include using volunteers or consultants to carry out the mapping process)
4. That Overview and Scrutiny Committee One is given a full briefing by officers on the new legislation and how it implemented in Northampton- as soon as the Government lets local authorities know how it intends to implement it
5. That Growth and Regeneration officers work with our partners to review county archaeological advice and storage arrangements
6. Recommend to the Task and Finish Group that will be establish, that they examine the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation and our partnership with them, consider the issues relating to partnership working raised in this report
7. That Officers (with our partners) examine the feasibility of building a physical model of Northampton- which shows our historic buildings

**Report Author- Mark Farmer, Overview and Scrutiny Officer**

### **Meeting Six**

**11<sup>th</sup> of January 2008**

- Given that the main purposes of this meeting was to form the recommendations no minutes were kept

### **Meeting Seven**

**7<sup>th</sup> of February 2008**

- Given that the main purpose of this meeting was agree or amend this report no minutes were kept

## Additional Information

**The following additional written responses were received;**

### Letter seven

E-mail received from Martin Ellison- Local resident and conservation officer with a local council

-----Original Message-----

From: Martin Ellison [<mailto:martin@mellison0.wanadoo.co.uk>]

Sent: 13 December 2007 15:53

To: Mark Farmer

Cc: Paul Lewin; Jane Jennings

Subject: Historic Buildings and Regeneration

Dear Mark

I set out below a summary of the points I made on 29.11.07 and a few extra bits.

1 What Value do you think our heritage brings to Northampton?

Northampton's standing buildings are unique to the town and give it its identity. This distinctiveness provides a sense of place and individual character that is irreplaceable. Many buildings are built of local materials that are not found anywhere else such as the iron rich sand and limestones. Craft skills employed in local work shops created many of the doors, windows and other external finishes in the surviving historic areas of the town. Some parts of the public realm still retain items of ironmongery produced in local foundries. These idiosyncrasies of the urban landscape, individual buildings and the detailing of fixtures and fittings are fascinating but are finite.

There is also a huge economic, educational and tourism potential that remains largely untapped. The combination of buildings in the town's Victorian suburbs in particular includes former shoe factories and associated trades buildings, chapels, schools, barracks, workhouses, public houses, brewery buildings and so on, a built landscape that can still inform us about how life was some 100 years or so ago.

These buildings and the areas in which they are located could, by being made more attractive, generate much greater economic and social well being. By reusing the stock of inherited Victorian buildings more imaginatively there would not just be a benefit in terms of neighbourhood vibrancy, there would also be a benefit in terms of self confidence for those communities.

2 Do you think that every building of heritage value should be saved? On what basis should this be considered? What parameters do we use to assess a building's value in the context of regenerating the town centre where other benefits can be delivered?

The bedrock of conservation is knowledge. Built 'assets' have to be understood before the relative value of either an individual building or area can be judged. To assess the value of a building, information on age, rarity, type, function, intactness, innovation and associations is required.



The value placed on buildings also has to be informed by a detailed understanding of the historical development of the urban context in which they sit. Themed surveys are a way in which knowledge can be gained, another method is the use of intensive studies of an area which can inform us of the nature of a settlement's historic development. Here the town centre Urban Archaeological Database conducted by NBC and NCC, funded by EH should be brought to completion and used much more regularly in policy formulation and development control decisions.

Tremendous harm has been done to the town by developments promising 'regenerative' merits but often these benefits have proved elusive and/or have eroded the town's character and confidence by requiring the loss of important historic buildings.

Too often demolition of standing buildings has been an option of first resort rather than last resort. Whilst recognising that some loss is inevitable there should be a much stronger presumption in favor of retaining all standing buildings. Demolishing buildings that have the potential to be reused is also incredibly wasteful.

3 In respect of new build what criteria do we use to assess new build, what criteria do we use to assess new buildings of value and their contribution to the local environment?

A major new provision of the planning system are design and access statements which should set out, both for the development control planners and local communities, the criteria that have influenced the design of new build. Informed criticism of proposals could be a means by which the quality of development is improved. I have consistently been disappointed by the quality of design and access statements submitted to and accepted by local planning authorities across the county. This is because the opportunity that D&A statements provide to allow everyone to comment meaningfully on applications that affect them and the opportunity to raise standards of planning applications is being missed.

4. Where buildings may not be of high heritage or design merit but have high community value, how can these be assessed to establish whether they should also be protected or retained?

I have already touched on some of the considerations that could lend a building value either as a 'heritage' asset or by virtue of its 'design' in my answer to question 2. Very ordinary buildings can still be valuable locally because of their rarity or because of a function they once performed, or because they demonstrate some innovation in construction and so on. It is very difficult to protect a building or built landscape effectively if it is not properly understood.

5. Are there any other points you wish to make?

The resources allocated to building conservation and archaeology are inadequate. The framework in which building conservation and archaeology operate is also misunderstood.

The county council maintained, until recently, a curatorial building conservation and archaeology team. This team examined applications that affected buried archaeology and historic standing buildings that lay outside statutory protection, ie, not scheduled or listed or within a designated

conservation area. Nationally, for example, some 95% of buildings are unprotected and hence vulnerable to unsympathetic change or demolition. The county team was crucial in identifying archaeology and undiscovered buildings of merit and then, where possible, either seeking protection at the national level (some 25 or more shoe factories across the county were subsequently given listed protection because of the work of the county historic environment team). Where buildings and sites could not be protected in this way, recording conditions were attached to planning permissions requiring records to be made of a building that was about to be fundamentally altered or lost. The outcome of this work is held on the county Sites and Monument Record.

The borough council conservation team assists development control planners in making decisions that affect buildings that are already protected by virtue of being located in a conservation area or from being listed. There is little or only arbitrary archaeological advice available at present as I understand it. However, the council has a much greater role to play, as yet unfulfilled, in protecting an extensive and unique urban landscape from unsympathetic development by designating conservation areas across the shoe industry urban landscapes in the town. With current resource levels and priorities this is probably impossible to achieve.

If the Victorian suburbs are ever to play a proper role in, and meet their potential for, the regeneration and well being of the town and the residents, their protection is a vital first step. There is a renaissance waiting to happen in The Mounts and Abington areas of the town. Without taking the first step, this may never happen, or if it does, many as yet unrecognised buildings of value could be lost thus ruining the very features from which these areas derive their character and interest.

The county council is an unreliable partner and so an alternative basis for investigation and mitigation advice to provided needs to be found in partnership with other local service authorities, perhaps similar in operation to the joint planning units. The difficulty here is that the county council still retains the duty to operate the Sites and Monuments Record and this could create an awkward and unhelpful detachment from those using the resource on a day to day basis and the officers responsible for maintaining it.

I still have other things to say but this email is already far too long (and a bit too earnest!). If at any point, however, you wish to recontact me please do so. Please note that I am also involved in a small consultancy that may be able to assist in future conservation based projects.

I would be grateful if you could confirm receipt of this email. Thank you also for inviting me to the Task and Finish Group meeting. I trust that the above comments are found to be helpful

regards

Martin

## **Historic Buildings and Regeneration Task and Finish Group**

[Initial draft of points for meeting on 28.11.2007 prepared by Paul Hobden]

I'm pleased to have this opportunity to give evidence. Firstly I should perhaps clarify that although you agenda describes me as a developer I am in fact a chartered architect who has undertaken postgraduate studies in history, planning and urban design. I am the principal of Derngate based Hobden Associates and a director of three other businesses undertaking respectively; planning and urban regeneration, project management and development, and finally property investment in Bath, London, Northampton and Oxford.

I was born in Northampton, my family have lived in the town from at least the nineteenth century, and have run businesses in the town for over fifty years. Hobden Associates, and my other associated businesses have been established for about twenty-five years during which time they have been responsible for heritage led regeneration projects totally over £100m in the town, and surrounding areas, including the restoration of a number of listed buildings and the creation of over 1,000 new homes on brownfield sites. Our first restoration project in the town was the refurbishment of the town's oldest secular building, Hazelrigg House grade II\*, for the Borough Council as part of our regeneration of the south side of Marefair which was awarded the 1991 Business Environment Award from Northamptonshire County Council. Subsequent projects include the master-planning of the redevelopment of the former High School for Girls site in Derngate including the design of the Scholars Court housing development and the restoration of a number of listed buildings in Derngate, including number 44 for English Heritage. More recently we have been responsible for the master-planning and regeneration of Southbridge. We are committed to using a proportion of our profits to support local good causes which have included sponsoring the town's heritage days for several years, and financial support for 78 Derngate, the University of Northampton and a number of local charities. We have also been financing a survey of Northampton's architectural heritage for the past couple of years.

*1 What do you think our heritage brings to Northampton?*

Northampton's built heritage endows the town with a unique 'sense of place' and has the potential to bring considerable commercial benefit to the town. It also provides an enduring reflection of the town's rich history and can help reveal the complex matrix of forces that shape the urban environment. Such information is crucial to ensuring that future planning policies take full account of the characterization of the town and can provide vital information to help prepare supplementary planning guidance to raise the standard of contextual design in the town's public realm. It should be noted that individual areas of the town, particularly the town centre, have their own particular characteristics initially resulting from a synthesis of geography, geology and topography blended together by the skills and limitations of early builders. Post the fire of 1675 the range of materials used in the town widened due partly to the introduction of basic building regulation and the influence of the Renaissance but the use of brick as a facing material only dates from the early nineteenth century. It is essential that conservation officers, planners, and architects as the principal custodians of the historic built environment are fully aware of the fine detail of the town's heritage. At present no single source of information provides this knowledge and I, therefore, urge the Task and Finish Group to use their influence to encourage the Council to commission such a document.

### **Three Quotes Morris, Summerson , Ruskin**

**William Morris** that fine buildings of the past *do not belong to us only; they have belonged to our forefathers and will belong to our descendents unless we play them false'*

**Sir John Summerson** (1973): *No English town would be worth visiting than any other English town were it not for the enormous, obstinate and overwhelming legacy of the past*

**John Ruskin:** *When we build, let it be such a work as our dependants will thank us for: and let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that a time is to come when those stones held sacred because our hands touched them, and that men we say as they look upon them, see this our fathers did for us*

### *2 Should every building of heritage value be saved?*

Clearly this is a complex question and each individual case must be judged on its merits but this should be within a context that ensures the retention of individual or groups of buildings that make a particular contribution to the historic townscape. Where regeneration is envisaged it is highly desirable that any historic buildings are retained and that new buildings take full account of their context. This should not inhibit innovative design but careful attention needs to be given to contextual design that takes full account of the scale, quality of materials and weathering of new buildings and the spaces they enclose. The present planning and

development control procedures often fail to deliver the quality of building needed to enhance the town and there is an urgent need for greater urban design expertise informed by a detailed appropriate supplementary design guidance.

### *3 Criteria for assessing new buildings?*

As highlighted in my answers to questions 1 and 2, I believe the essential first steps are a Heritage Study, that provides a deeper understanding of the town's historic environment, and the preparation of supplementary planning guidance to explain what it required to potential applicants and to raise design standards in the public realm. Ideally, a panel should be established to consider all applications. The panel should include some members with professional urban design skills who can understand the likely ramifications of complex regeneration proposals as well as elected Councillors who can have an informed knowledge of the town, its traditions and potential.

### *4 Buildings that may not be of high heritage or design merit?*

A Heritage Study as mentioned earlier would identify areas of good and poor townscape and should identify both good and poor buildings. A recent past president of the Royal Institute of British Architects, George Graham, who has been very critical of the mediocre quality of many post-war buildings, and has highlighted a number of such buildings in the town, has suggested a cross rating. Three crosses could be applied to the worst offenders that should be replaced as a high priority. I'm sure we all have a number in mind perhaps including the bus station, Mayorhold car park, the Park Inn, and the Sole Centre for starters. Two stars might include other buildings that should be replaced over time such as the elevations of the Grosvenor Centre and Peacock Arcade that do so much to detract from the appearance of the Market Square. One star would be applied to smaller scale buildings to be replaced over time.

***Other points: As mentioned earlier the urban environment is very complex and any enquiry into historic buildings needs to consider the wider matrix of complex forces that shape the urban landscape. We touched on some but I believe there is value in considering a few other points including:***

*1 Civic Forum headed up by Design & Heritage Tsar*

*2 Research & Indicative Studies*

*3 Education & Training: Local Expertise & Resources*

*4 Environment & Transport*

## *5 Sub-Regional & Wider Issues*

### *1 Civic Forum headed up by Design & Heritage Tsar*

I believe there could be considerable merit in having some form of civic forum where design and heritage matters could be discussed. Ideally this would include councillors with a particular interest in design, heritage and regeneration, officers with similar responsibilities, and representatives of the local architectural and planning profession. The appointment of a design and heritage tsar, perhaps on a non paid voluntary basis, reporting directly to the Leader or a councillor or councillors such as Richard Church (regeneration) or Jean (heritage) or the committee could help raise the profile of good design and heritage and help reassure the public. Major cities such as Barcelona and Edinburgh have established international reputations due to the standard of their heritage and urban design. Whilst it may not be realistic for Northampton to compete with the nation's core cities more could certainly be done to raise the profile of the town's heritage. As the group may know was considered to be one of the most attractive towns in England after it was rebuilt following the fire of 1675 and many of the town's finest old buildings still exist together with an impressive Victorian legacy. Photographic evidence confirms that the town centre was a vibrant and highly attractive place in the 1920s with its trams and traditional buildings. The town's historic townscape remained largely untouched until the 1970s and it is not too late to correct some of the errors of the past thirty years. The Borough's conservation offices have succeeded in protecting some areas of the town but a more comprehensive twenty-five year strategy for the whole town could help transform the town visually.

### *2 Research & Indicative Studies*

Another useful proposal would be a series of indicative studies that illustrate how particular areas and sites in the town could be improved. Three or four areas that spring to mind include; Marefair and Freeschool Street (the planning departments present design brief for the latter site beggars belief), how to reunite the truncated north and south sections of Sheep Street, how to improve Abington Street, and the St John's area to the river. However, before undertaking such studies it would be very informative to establish the successes and failures of post-war planning in the town as a starting point to inform future policies. Much of the conservation work undertaken is of an excellent standard and the same standards now need to be applied to the town as a whole.

### *3 Education and training*

Many people are unaware of the fact that the genesis of modern town planning only dates from the twentieth century. The first planning act, which deal solely with housing dates from 1909. Two particularly important figures were Patrick Geddes and Patrick Abercrombie. (They together with William Morris [SPAM], also pioneered conservation Geddes [Coburn Society] Abercrombie [CPRE]

*“It is perhaps safe to say that the modern practice of town-planning in this country would be a much simpler thing if it had not been for Geddes. There was a time when it seemed only necessary to shake up into a bottle the German town-extension plan, the Parisian Boulevard and Vista, and the English Garden Village, to produce a mechanical mixture which might be applied indiscriminately and beneficently to every town in this country; thus would it be ‘town-planned’ according to the most up-to-date notions. Pleasing dream! First shattered by Geddes, emerging from his Outlook Tower in the frozen north, to produce that nightmare of complexity, the Edinburgh Room at the great Town Planning Exhibition of 1910.”*

The second act, in 1919, required towns with a population of 20,000 or more to prepare a town planning scheme which commissioned in 1925. Just after the war in 1950 another town plan and exhibition was held and in 1975 the then civic society undertook a survey of the town. Each of these studies provide valuable material on the town’s heritage and a knowledge of them and the town’s evolution could have help give BDP’s more substance. In the late 1950s early ‘60s Jeremy Whitehand of the University of Birmingham carried out an urban morphological study of Northampton (and Watford) and concluded that the town’s buildings and character had been retained due principally to two factors greater local ownership and local professional expertise. At that time it most architects in the town and county had been trained with local offices and/or at the Leicester School of Architecture. They thus acquired a depth of knowledge of local evolutions and materials. Most officers in local government were local or remained in post for long periods and acquired considerable local knowledge. This is often no longer the case. There has been a gradual erosion of informed local decision making post the 1947 Act and changes in the structure of local government post the Heath’s government reforms of the 1970’s.

#### ***4 Environment & Transport***

I also believe that there should be a positive proposal for easing traffic congestion and air and noise pollution. There should be a plan demonstrating how a limited tram system could be introduced to initially link the station with the town centre with the option of extending it to

two or three park and ride locations on the major roads into the town, and later linking it to major housing and employment areas. If Northampton is to grow to a population of 250,000 and perhaps beyond it is essential to reduce traffic volumes whilst still providing short and longer term parking in the centre of town for shoppers. Caen in northern France, and a number of other European towns, that have a similar populations to the planned population of the town have such systems and urgent action is needed now to persuade WNDP, EMDA, and their masters that it is essential to tackle this problem before there is any further expansion of the town. A quiet pollution free transport system would have the great advantage of inspiring people to visit the town and allowing the central area to be re-planned to create the ambience of the best continental European towns. No doubt many will cry it is not such proposals are not financially viable but I was told this was also the case in Marefair, Derngate and Southbridge and all three areas have now been regenerated.

### ***5 The Sub-Region and Wider Issues***

It should also be remembered that Northampton is one of fifty-six urban areas with a population exceeding 125,000. Its future needs to be considered within a sub-regional, regional, national and international context. At present I am undertaking a doctoral study at University College London that is considering the evolution England's built heritage and the aesthetic and social consequences of post-war planning policies with particular reference to Northampton and the South Midlands sub-region. The conclusions of the thesis will consider the advantages of future strategic urban design policies that can help ensure that future proposals in older towns ensure that the historic built environment is preserved and enhanced. These are complex issues that require a deep understanding of historic evolution and contemporary challenges backed up by a robust and well informed local development framework with supplementary design guidance. I don't pretend to know all the answers to these challenges but after almost fifty years experience of studying and working towards improving the built environment I at least have a firm knowledge of most of the questions that need to be considered. I am keen to share this knowledge and to engage with others to improve the town and would be pleased to provide any further information that may be of assistance.

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Postscript

I'd be delighted to provide the Council with a copy of the final thesis. On a slightly different theme I've also recently agree to sit on a parliamentary commission set up under the chairmanship of Brian Binley MP that is consider the future of independent shops in town centres. My role is to advise the commission, which consists of a number of MPs and representatives of the major retail trade organisations on architectural, planning and regeneration issues. The commission has already received written evidence from over thirty organisations and individuals which also has provides much potentially valuable information some of which relates to historic centres. I'm sure Brian would be delighted to let the Council have a copy of the Commission's report in due course which could have particular relevance to the future of the town's retail sector and the impact, positive or otherwise, of plans to substantially increase the size of the Grosvenor centre. The latter of course also needs to be considered very carefully in relation to the town's heritage and townscape.

Other possibility: set up public-private partnership to buy and restore buildings at risk?

**Report author, Mark Farmer, Overview and Scrutiny Officer**