



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL
Planning Committee

PLANNING COMMITTEE: 15 March 2016
DIRECTORATE: Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning
DIRECTOR: Steven Boyes

APPLICATION REF: N/2015/1498

LOCATION: Delapre Abbey, London Road, Northampton, NN4 8AW

DESCRIPTION: Formation of car parking area.

WARD: Delapre & Briar Ward

APPLICANT: Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust
AGENT: BCAL Consulting

REFERRED BY: Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning
REASON: NBC owns the land

DEPARTURE: No

APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION:

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 **APPROVAL** subject to the conditions as set out below and for the following reason:

The impact on the character, appearance or historical significance of the listed building, the registered Battlefield and Delapre Conservation Area would be outweighed by the public benefit arising from the development, with no undue adverse impacts on neighbour amenity, road safety or drainage. The impact of the proposal on the registered battlefield has been minimised by appropriate site selection and the proposal would assist with the overall project to restore the Abbey and remove it from the Heritage at Risk Register and thereby accords with Policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, Policies E20 and E26 of the Northampton Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

2. THE PROPOSAL

2.1 The application seeks planning permission for additional parking to serve Delapre Abbey, providing 126 general car spaces in total, an increase of 80 above the current provision, as well as 11 disabled parking spaces and 2 coach spaces. The additional parking provision would largely come from the provision of a grasscrete parking area.

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The site of this proposal is the existing car park area, which would be reconfigured, and a grassed area adjacent to this, within the grounds of the Abbey. This grassed area is located at the eastern end of the drive, before the main abbey buildings and is adjacent to one residential property (Park Cottage).
- 3.2 The site is within the Delapre Park Conservation Area as well as the registered Battle of Northampton site. The Abbey buildings are Grade II* listed.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 In October 2013 an application was approved for the repair and refurbishment of Delapre Abbey, 18th Century Stables and Coach House and change of use to include functions/events, conferences, guided tours, visitor and heritage centre and ancillary retail, offices, café and restaurant, and holiday lets. An associated application for listed building consent for the works required was also approved at that time.
- 4.2 Subsequently applications for associated works have also been approved, mainly for advertisement consent but also for a disabled toilet, café facility and the siting of temporary buildings.

5. PLANNING POLICY

5.1 Statutory Duty

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014) and Northampton Local Plan (1997) saved policies.

Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities when considering development to pay special attention to preserving a listed building or its setting and to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

5.2 National Policies

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the current aims and objectives for the planning system and how these should be applied. In delivering sustainable development, decisions should have regard to the mutually dependent social, economic and environmental roles of the planning system. The NPPF should be read as one complete document. However, the following sections are of particular relevance to this application:

Paragraph 17 that states that planning should conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.

Paragraph 126 States that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

Paragraph 131: In determining applications Local Planning Authorities should take account of: The desirability of sustaining the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic viability and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 132: When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the assets conservation and any harm should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

Paragraph 133: Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, LPA's should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss.

Paragraph 134: Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

5.3 West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014)

The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) provides an up to date evidence base and considers the current Government requirements for plan making as it has been prepared in full conformity with the NPPF. Policies of particular relevance are:

Policy BN5 "The Historic Environment", which sets out that heritage assets will be conserved and enhanced and that where heritage assets are at risk they will be appropriately conserved and managed.

5.4 Northampton Local Plan 1997 (Saved Policies)

Due to the age of the plan, the amount of weight that can be attributed to the aims and objectives of this document are diminished, however, the following policies are material to this application:

Policy E9: Locally Important Landscape Areas gives special importance to the impact of proposals to the character of locally important landscape areas.

Policy E20 "New Development", which states that the design of any new building or extension should adequately reflect the character of its surroundings in terms of layout, siting, form, scale and use of appropriate materials and that development should be designed, located and used in a manner which ensures adequate standards of privacy, daylight and sunlight.

Policy E26 "Conservation Areas" which states that development must preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area, and not include the demolition of any building which makes a significant contribution to the character or appearance of the area.

Policy E38 which states that planning permission will not be granted for development which would adversely affect the character or setting of a nationally important ancient monument (whether scheduled or not), important historic landscape or the site of the battle of Northampton.

5.5 **Supplementary Planning Documents**

The Site of the Battle of Northampton Conservation Management Plan 2014
Planning out Crime in Northamptonshire SPG 2004

6. **CONSULTATIONS/ REPRESENTATIONS**

- 6.1 **Battlefields Trust** – Welcomes the careful approach taken to developing these proposals. Recognises the need for an increase in parking. Development is likely to increase interest in the registered battlefield at Northampton on which the Abbey site is located which itself will enhance protection for the battlefield. The proposed car park construction will have some impact at the margins of the registered battlefield area, but appears unlikely to cause significant damage. Metal detecting survey should be carried out in advance of construction. The construction materials to be used for the car park and its chosen location also appear to the Trust to be sympathetic to the setting of the battlefield and are unlikely to affect its appreciation. No objections.
- 6.2 **Far Cotton Residents Association** – Support the proposals but only as a temporary solution due to flooding and drainage issues. Request investigation of more suitable permanent solutions.
- 6.3 **Local Highway Authority** – Parking spaces appear to be 4.7m long, must ensure they are 4.8m long.
- 6.4 **Police Crime Prevention Design Adviser** – Recommends crime prevention measures are put in place.
- 6.5 **County Archaeologist** - The proposed works are within the Delapre Park Conservation Area and the Registered Battlefield of the Battle of Northampton. The proposed application will have a detrimental impact upon any archaeological deposits present. This does not however represent an over-riding constraint on the development provided that adequate provision is made for the investigation and recording of any remains that are affected.
- 6.6 **NBC Conservation** - Would not harm the setting of the listed building as it is further away. However, concerned regarding the proposed bus parking area. The introduction of large structures (buses) in this location would have a negative impact on views from the approach avenue towards the principal elevation of the building and there would be a negative impact on views out from the building. This element of the proposals would cause harm to the setting of the listed building, suggest seeking amendments to address this.
- 6.7 **Historic England** – No concerns regarding the location of the new additional parking in North Field in relation to the setting of the Delapre Abbey listed buildings, but consider that the most visually harmful area of the existing parking area, this being the area south of the drive, should be removed as part of these proposals (the current car park). Further consideration should be given to the use of suitable landscaping.

- 6.8 **Lead Local Flood Authority** – Insufficient information is available, details of infiltration testing are required.
- 6.9 The application was notified to adjoining occupiers by letter, as well as being advertised by site and press notices. 15 representations have been received in total.
- 6.10 Of these representations, twelve are letters in support and one is classed as an observation, these are from interested persons across the Borough and the adjacent Mencap Centre, and make the following points in summary:
- Car parking is essential for the Abbey
 - Vital for the future of the Abbey as the existing parking is inadequate.
 - The report makes the case for the North Field unquestionable as the best location.
 - Would be nice to see gates at the top of London Road, for security.
 - Foresee more than two coaches
 - Car park should have lighting
 - No provision for emergency vehicles.
- 6.11 A further letter in support was received from the applicants, the **Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust**, setting out the background to the restoration of the Abbey and the approach taken in selecting the site for the car park.
- 6.12 Two objections, from neighbouring residents at Park Cottage and 3 Gardener's Cottage, make the following points in summary:
- Will be affected by noise from car alarms day and night.
 - Flood lighting would be needed which would affect neighbours
 - Cars would be a target for vandals.
 - Will open up neighbouring house for more attacks and vandalism
 - There are better places for the parking
 - Flooding occurs in the field 4-6 times a year.
 - Already have original car park, Mencap car park and staff parking, would complete a horseshoe of parking around Park Cottage.
 - Cabin (in garden of Park Cottage) opens onto car park.
 - Conservation Management Plan states that residents should be involved, this only happened at a late stage.
 - With increased use of the Abbey there are increased security issues, vandalism and other ant-social behaviour. Will increase with increased visitor numbers.
 - Conservation Management Plan also states that driveway could be widened or a circular route provided.
 - Plans do not include any aspect of traffic management.
 - Not clear where staff parking will be, if adjacent to the 19th Century stable block access to this area would need to be controlled.
 - Not clear how water will be drained, if this will add water to the brook
 - Lighting is not specifically mentioned, currently there is little light pollution
 - Incorrect to state the parking causes no overriding deleterious effects.
 - Conditions have changed with the submission of an application for extended opening hours. Location of the car park should be reviewed.

7. APPRAISAL

- 7.1 The issues to consider are the impact on the registered battlefield, the conservation area, the setting of the listed building and on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.

Impact on the registered battlefield

- 7.2 The siting of the proposed additional car park is within the historic grounds of the Abbey and is located within the historic battlefield. This is an area which is currently laid to grass and which forms a parkland setting.
- 7.3 Ideally, the site would remain as undisturbed historic battlefield and as part of the parkland setting. However, there is a need to provide additional car parking to serve the Abbey and there is no identified scope to provide this outside the Abbey grounds. In light of this, various areas within the grounds were given consideration. Of the options considered, the currently proposed site has the advantage of being outside the identified areas of ridge and furrow, which is an important historic feature of the landscape which should be preserved, as well as being close to the historic buildings, therefore not requiring the construction of additional paths to provide access between the car park and the Abbey which would be damaging to the historic landscape.
- 7.4 In terms of the method of construction, this would be done using non-invasive methodology which would not be damaging to any archaeology. A full archaeological survey would be required in any event, by condition.
- 7.5 It is considered, therefore, that the proposed siting would be the least damaging to the historic battlefield.
- 7.6 Some harm would, nevertheless, occur and the impact of this must be weighed against the wider public benefits of the proposals, as discussed in the conclusions.

Impact on the Conservation Area and the Setting of the Listed Buildings

- 7.7 In terms of the impact on the setting of the listed buildings, and the wider conservation area, the proposed site also has the advantage of being outside of the direct line of site for views of the Abbey along the drive, and of views out from the Abbey. The exception to this is the proposed location of coach parking, within an existing parking area, which as identified in the comments from the Conservation Officer would restrict views to and from the Abbey. In order to overcome this impact, it is proposed to require amendments by condition which would reconfigure the parking and remove the coach parking from this prominent position.
- 7.8 Concerns have also been raised by Historic England about the continued use for parking of the area to the south of the drive, which includes the coach parking. Given that this is an existing area of car parking, planning permission is not required for the continued use of this area for cars. Nevertheless, the condition as discussed above, proposed regarding the relocation of coach parking would go some way to addressing this concern.

Impact on adjoining occupiers

- 7.9 In terms of the impact on adjoining occupiers, the car park would be close to the boundary with the garden of the neighbouring occupier at Park Cottage. There would be landscaping provided between the parking spaces and the garden, which would provide some separation. The visual impact of the car park when not in use would also be minimised, as it would retain a green appearance and would not be marked out with lines.

- 7.10 The impact on the occupiers of Park Cottage would therefore be as a result of the use for parking of vehicles, as referred to in their objections. Whilst this would impact to some extent on their enjoyment of the house and garden, it is not considered that this impact would be unduly detrimental during the daytime, given that there would in any event be increased activity around the site following the full opening of the Abbey as a visitor attraction..
- 7.11 However, it is considered that parking close to this neighbouring property would have more of a detrimental impact in the evenings and if cars are left overnight, due alarms potentially going off, as referred to in the objection from this neighbour, but also as a result of noise from visitors returning late in the evening, after visiting weddings and other functions. It is considered that the impact of this can be satisfactorily mitigated by the management of the car park, requiring that this area is used only as an overspill parking area and not for evening events. This would be required by means of a condition requiring a traffic management plan.
- 7.12 This traffic management would enable control over where vehicles are parked on the site as well as access arrangements, reducing congestion.

Flooding

- 7.13 Reference has been made by objectors to flooding of the area, and this is a matter which requires due consideration. In this respect a flood risk assessment including a drainage strategy was submitted with the application. This has been examined by the Lead Local Flood Authority and whilst a concern has been raised regarding the need for infiltration testing it has been agreed that this matter can satisfactorily be dealt with by a suitable condition.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 In considering the merits of this proposal, the positive and negative aspects must be carefully weighed up in accordance with Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as referred to above.
- 8.2 As discussed above, the site for the proposed car parking has been carefully selected from potential locations within the Abbey grounds, given that there is no suitable available land outside the grounds. This site has been selected as the least damaging as it does not include ridge and furrow, and also being close to the Abbey this means that there is not a need for additional paths which would be damaging to the battlefield. Nevertheless, on the negative side of the balance it is acknowledged that there would be a physical impact on the registered Battlefield with the construction of the parking area, and visually on the Battlefield, conservation area and the setting of the listed buildings. However, for the reasons outlined above it is considered that the harm arising from this would be less than substantial.
- 8.3 This must be balanced against the positive aspect of this proposal which is that it would provide for additional visitor parking for the Abbey. Such parking is essential if the Abbey is to succeed as a visitor attraction and this in turn will help to secure a long term economic use for the listed buildings. Given the importance of the buildings it is considered that this represents a substantial public benefit which it is considered is sufficient to outweigh the negative impact of the less than substantial harm to the heritage assets.

- 8.4 Additionally, the revised parking area would not have undue adverse impact on neighbouring residents or other interests of acknowledged importance which could not be satisfactorily ameliorated by the conditions as proposed.

9. CONDITIONS

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

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

- (2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 5489/01, 5489/03, 5489-10,

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

- (3) No development shall take place until the applicant or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, to include metal detecting, which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of archaeological research in accordance with Policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. This is a pre-commencement condition to prevent any damage to archaeological remains which would otherwise occur.

- (4) Full details of security measures, including lighting, to be used within the car parking areas shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall be put into place prior to the commencement of the use of the car park hereby approved and retained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of security and the prevention of crime, in accordance with Policy S10 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

- (5) Notwithstanding the submitted plans, full details of alternative provision for bus and coach parking shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and such parking shall be provided in accordance with such approved details thereafter. For the avoidance of doubt such alternative provision shall not include coach parking to the south of the drive.

Reason: To preserve the setting of the listed building and the conservation area, in accordance with Policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

- (6) Notwithstanding the submitted plans, a detailed scheme of hard and soft landscaping for the parking area shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include, where present, the location and species of any existing trees and hedgerows on the land and details of any to be retained.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and to secure a satisfactory standard of development, in accordance with Policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

- (7) All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the building or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner, and which shall be maintained for a period of five years; such maintenance to include the replacement in the current or nearest planting season whichever is the sooner or shrubs that may die are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased with others of similar size and species.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and to secure a satisfactory standard of development, in accordance with Policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

- (8) A traffic management plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, which shall specify the hours of use of the overspill parking area hereby permitted and which, for the avoidance of doubt, shall preclude the use of this area for guests attending evening events. The site shall be operated in full accordance with the approved plan upon first use of the car park hereby approved and shall continue to be operated thus thereafter.

Reason: To protect the amenities of neighbouring occupiers and for the prevention of crime, in accordance with Policy S10 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

- (9) No development shall take place until a revised surface water drainage scheme for the site, based on sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydro geological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall include provision for the future maintenance of all aspects of the drainage scheme. The scheme shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is completed.

Reason: To prevent the increased risk of flooding, both on and off site. In accordance with Policy S10 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. This is a pre-commencement condition as it is necessary for the drainage scheme to be finalised before any work is carried out.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

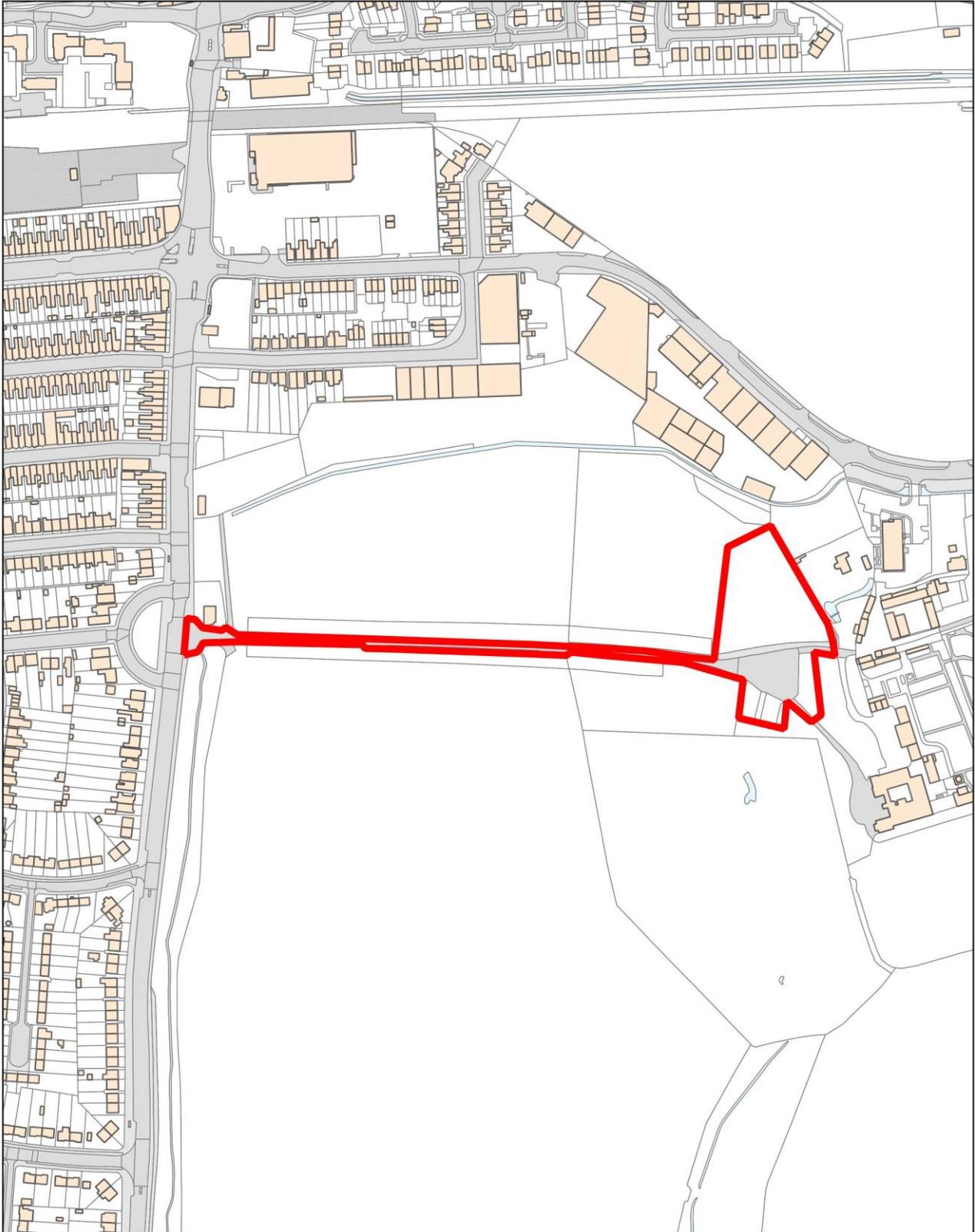
- 10.1 Application file N/2015/1498

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 None

12. SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

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



Title: Delapre Abbey, London Road

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