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JULY 20

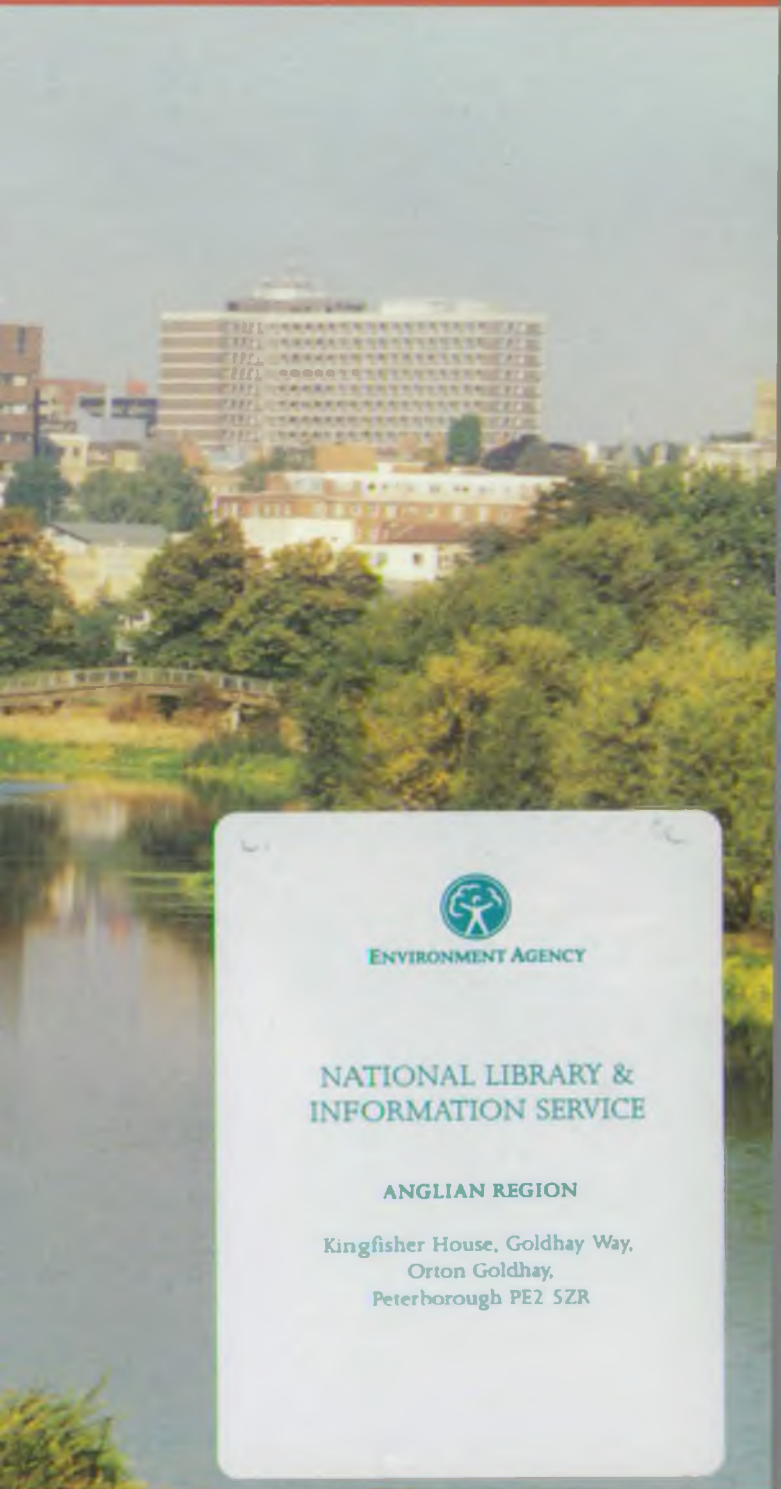


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FOREWORD

The Northampton River Valley Master Plan is a joint study undertaken by Northampton Borough Council and the Environment Agency into the principal issues that influence the future development and management of the river valley.

Following the devastating Easter floods in 1998 the Environment Agency is about to commence a programme of flood defence improvements. This provides an opportunity to look at other recreational and amenity enhancement projects in combination with the flood defence works.

The overall vision for the future of the river valley produced in the Master Plan is presented here so that all those who have an interest in the river valley will be able to play their part in formulating the ideas. To this end a consultation programme has been carried out and the observations received taken into account.

The Master Plan document explains how we intend to progress this vision and identifies projects relating to improved access to the riverside, better recreational facilities, encouraging tourism and use of the river and canal for recreational and commercial purposes, improvements to wildlife conservation areas and the general landscape of the river valley.

It also sets out the importance of continuing community involvement in the development and management of the river valley.

The Master Plan is recommended to all those who wish to see the river performing a key role for the growth of the town in the new century.



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Information Services Unit

Please return or renew this item by the due date

Due Date

12-MAR-07

Peter Barham
Nene Strategies Manager
Environment Agency

Councillor Leslie Marriott
Chair, Urban Regeneration Sub-Committee
Northampton Borough Council

P R E A M B L E

The 1998 Easter floods had a significant social, economic and environmental impact on Northampton and other parts of the River Nene catchment area. Since this event, the Environment Agency has undertaken investigations into flood defence improvements for the town and has developed a preferred flood defence scheme. Following its publication, Northampton Borough Council and the Environment Agency have been working in partnership to investigate and guide how the flood defence improvements can be used as a catalyst for environmental improvements and enhancement along the riverside and on adjoining development sites.

Preliminary research and discussions found that a Master Plan for the enhancement of the river and canal areas within Northampton was long overdue.

The River Valley Master Plan is the culmination of the partnership working and investigations by Northampton Borough Council and the Environment Agency. It highlights the aspirations of the two partners, and identifies projects for the provision and improvement of opportunities and facilities for the benefit of all users of the river valley.

The primary aim of the Master Plan is 'to enhance and conserve the river valley and surrounding environment, and make it accessible to local communities and visitors so that they may fully appreciate its history and natural qualities'. It also provides guidance for the future development in the river valley.

The Master Plan signifies the start of a programme of works in the river valley. It is anticipated that further projects will be identified by other partners and interested groups enabling the vision to develop and grow over the next few years.

Master Plan

1. Introduction

Vision

- 1.1 The aim of the Master Plan is to make the riverside available to the townspeople and visitors so that they can enjoy its environmental, recreational and economic value to the full.

Strategy

- 1.2. *The development and adoption of a Master Plan by a partnership involving Northampton Borough Council, the Environment Agency and others with interest and ownership in the river valley.*

The Master Plan will identify projects and look at opportunities to enhance, conserve and sustain the built and natural environments of the river valley. The Master Plan will also explore partnership funding for projects within the river valley including flood defence improvements. It will also provide guidance for the design of flood defences and other development affecting the valley area.

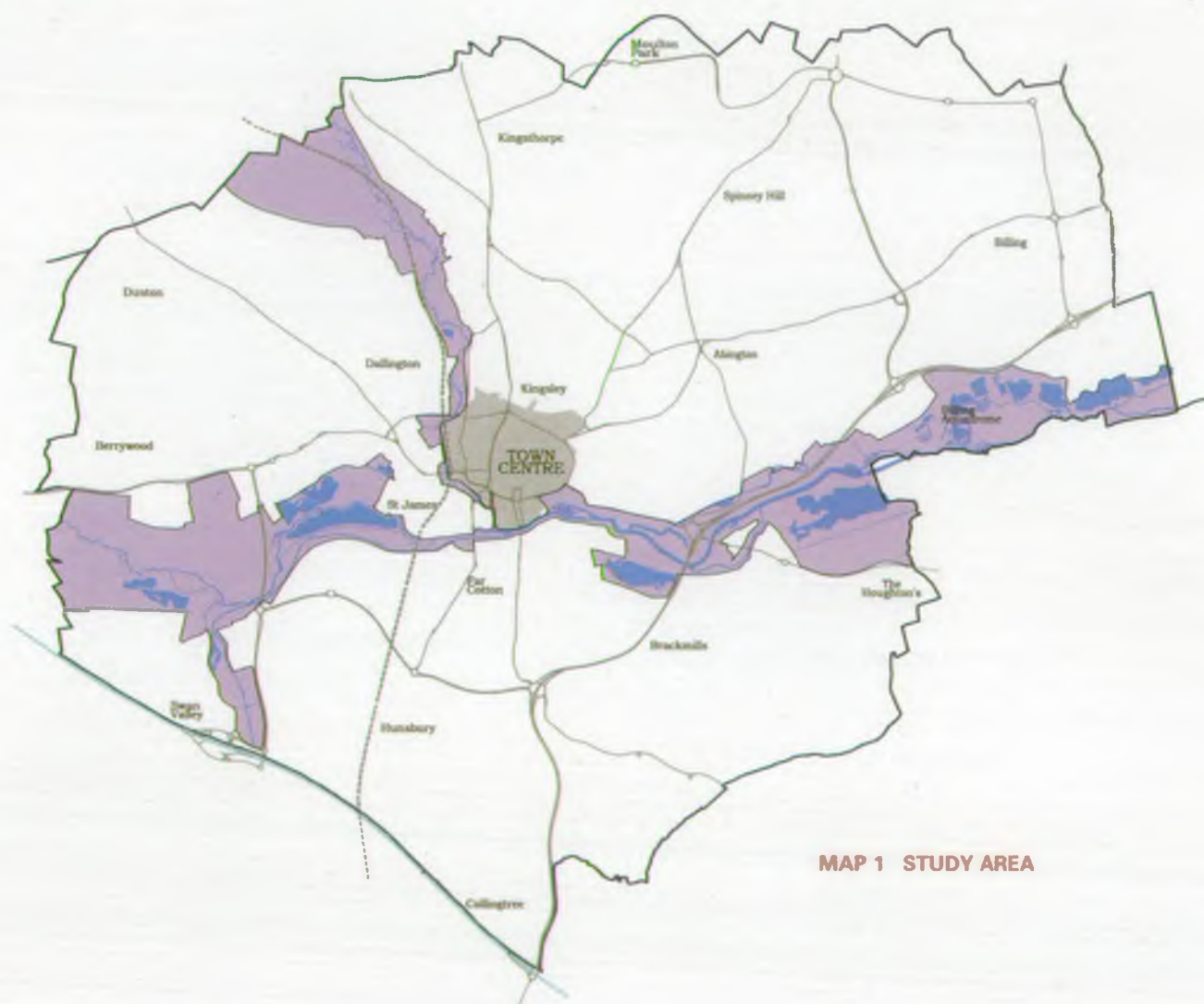
Boundary of study area

- 1.3. The boundary of the study area is shown on Map 1. The boundary has been influenced by a number of factors; the river valley policy area as identified in the Northampton Local Plan, the identified floodplain, and areas which impact on the valley area. The study area also includes sites which have been identified for development in the Local Plan but currently offer good views over the river valley, an issue which can be taken into account when determining the details of any future applications for planning permission. The river valley policy area was based on the identified floodplain prior to the Easter floods of 1998, and incorporated land which was considered unsuitable for development other than for agriculture, leisure or recreational use.

Planning Objectives

- a. To protect and enhance the character and landscape of the river and the open space surrounding it for pleasure and recreational purposes, for nature conservation, wildlife and to increase biodiversity and riverside habitats.
- b. To promote the enhancement of the river valley to improve accessibility and improve facilities for the enjoyment of the local community and tourists and encourage its wider use, giving adequate consideration to public and waterside safety.
- c. To promote environmental improvements with provision of new footpaths, seating and planting, and to create an effective management regime.
- d. To encourage appropriate leisure and recreational use of the river valley through leisure-orientated development.
- e. To establish pedestrian and cycle links between the town centre and the river.

- f. To encourage use of the river and canal by boats for recreational and commercial purposes and provide facilities such as moorings, sanitary stations etc, in a secure environment.
- g. To provide planning and design guidance for developers in the study area to ensure that the character of the valley is retained and enhanced.
- h. To guide the planning and development of the flood defence works in achieving improvements to the river corridor.
- i. To provide opportunities to involve local communities in the development of the Master Plan projects.
- j. To regenerate physically, economically and socially the areas surrounding the river valley and create opportunities for inward investment, and to explore major recreational opportunities of regional importance.
- k. Bring about new approaches to joint working and delivery of the projects between the public and private sectors and the local community.
- l. Use planning and funding opportunities to maximise opportunities in the delivery of projects.
- m. To support measures, as appropriate, to develop business and employment opportunities and help to increase the wealth of the local regional economy.



MAP 1 STUDY AREA



Master Plan

2. Existing River Valley

Historic Background

- 2.1. From its Saxon origins, Northampton quickly became an important commercial and administrative centre, and in the last 200 years has established itself as the major growth area in the region. The river has played a key role in the history of the town, although until the 18th century it was mainly used for milling purposes since it was not navigable as far upstream as Northampton until 1761.
- 2.2. Construction of the Northampton Arm of the Grand Union Canal began in 1793 and it opened in 1815. The canal linked Northampton with the main canal route between London and the industrial Midlands, bringing with it a boost to the economic base of Northampton. The prosperity of both the river and canal were severely undermined following the coming of the railway in 1845. By 1969 commercial traffic had decreased significantly, and the canal is now only used occasionally by commercial traffic.

2.3. Although the river has been in use for many centuries, the evidence of its historic heritage is limited. What now remains is represented by historic bridges and a small number of mills and warehouses. This historical background and remains of the built heritage can provide a source of inspiration for the development interest alongside the river. Both river and canal are now used for recreational purposes, including the annual Inland Waterways Association boat rally. The canal is navigable, and joins the River Nene south of the town centre. The river is navigable eastwards to The Wash. The river upstream of its junction with the canal is only navigable as far as West Bridge (Brampton Arm).

2.4. There are important historical and archaeological remains in the river valley, such as the Scheduled Ancient Monuments at Upton and the site of the Battle of Northampton, south of Delapre Abbey, which has been included on English Heritage's Battlefields Register. Other features of interest exist without any form of statutory protection but are worthy of consideration and protection as they make a contribution to the history of the town. Such features include a World War II pill box on the river bank near Nunn Mills Road and the old crane site near South Bridge (the crane structure is at present in storage and could be restored).

2.5. Kingsthorpe conservation area is situated on the east side of the Brampton Arm of the river, and provides a picturesque setting with its handsome church spire and surrounding group of buildings.



The River Environment

- 2.6. The river corridor is a valuable amenity in Northampton, providing both landscape and ecological value. The main river flows through a gently sloping valley from the west of Northampton to the east. The town has developed on the valley slopes around the main river's confluence with the Brampton Arm that flows from the north. The Northampton Arm of the Grand Union Canal lies along the south of the valley and joins the main river just downstream of the main river's confluence with the Brampton Arm. As they pass through the valley the river and canal form an important natural landscape feature within Northampton. An open corridor is retained along the river and the floodplain, in the most part, remains free of development. However, through the centre of Northampton, the floodplain is highly developed on either side and flood defence measures, for example piling, can be found along most of the river bank.
- 2.7. The undeveloped meadows of the floodplain are of vital importance in protecting the urban areas of Northampton from flooding. Their development is restricted through policies in the current development plans. The floodplain allows excess water from the river system to be stored during periods of high flow. As the meadows drain, floodwater is released slowly back into the river system once peak flows and the risk of flooding has passed.



- 2.8. When floodplain is developed its storage and conveyance capacity is lost and flood defence measures will need to be implemented to protect the development from flooding. Urban surfaces also increase the rate of run-off so that, following a rainfall event, more water will enter the river system over a short period. Base flows are also reduced and the river system becomes 'flashier'. The loss of storage capacity causes excess water to be channelled downstream and, coupled with increasing peak flows, the risk of flooding to downstream areas is increased unless counter measures are taken.

Master Plan

Wildlife and Nature Conservation

2.9. A range of habitats is encountered along the river corridor and the Northampton Arm of the Grand Union Canal as they pass through the town. These habitats include remnants of species-rich meadow, sedge marsh, improved grassland, fragments of woodland, marginal vegetation and in-channel riffles and pools. Downstream from Northampton, flooded gravel pits support valuable wildlife habitats, with many being reclaimed specifically for nature conservation purposes. These gravel pits form part of a complex of lakes along the Nene Valley which support significant populations of waterfowl, while the Northampton Washlands supports nationally important numbers of golden plover.

2.10. The diversity of habitats results in a diverse flora and fauna typical of lowland river corridors. Several species listed in the Northamptonshire Biodiversity action plan and protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) are closely associated with the river. The river by Kingsthorpe Local Nature Reserve supports two regionally notable aquatic invertebrate species. In partnership with the Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust, river improvement works can encourage the return of watervole, kingfisher and otter.

2.11. The water quality of the river is classified as 'fair' (i.e. suitable for coarse fish populations) under the Environment Agency's General Quality Assessment Scheme, as the river is adversely influenced by surface run-off from Northampton and intensive farming practices upstream. The river supports a good diversity of fish, including roach and pike. The most valuable areas of the river for fish are areas of slow flow, marginal vegetation, side channels, and riffles and pools along the Brampton Arm. Northampton Castle Angling Club, Royal Mail Angling Club and the Northampton Nene Angling Club hold fishing rights along the Nene and the

canal. Anglers make use of the Brampton Arm and the main river wherever access to the river bank is possible, and also utilise the gravel pits downstream of Northampton.

2.12. The river and canal corridors are an important wildlife asset within the town. Significant portions of their lengths are identified as County Wildlife Sites – a designation for sites in the county which do not benefit from statutory protection but are still of high value to wildlife and are very important in a local context. They are identified by the Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust.

2.13. The majority of the river/canal corridor is designated as being of Acknowledged Nature Conservation Value in the Northampton Local Plan. These areas are those which, when surveyed by the Wildlife Trust in 1990, were considered to have a significant nature conservation interest.

2.14. Becket's and Victoria Parks are designated in the Local Plan as Locally Important Landscape Areas and are located within the study area. These are areas which are considered to make an important contribution to local character and appearance.



- 2.15. Of the five designated Local Nature Reserves (LNR) within the Borough, the river valley includes the following:-

Kingsthorpe Local Nature Reserve

Located on the Bampton Arm of the river. A five hectare site of former flood meadow declared as an LNR in 1990. The site is a valuable remnant of the riverine meadows which up until the end of the last century were a common habitat along the river valley. The Reserve contains a wide range of habitats supporting a diverse flora and fauna. The river within the LNR supports good aquatic vegetation.

Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve

The reserve is located to the south of the town centre based around a redundant arm of the river. The site was declared an LNR in 1990 and was then substantially extended in 1998. The reserve is of high wildlife interest because of its relatively undisturbed nature and because it has been allowed to revert to a semi-natural wetland habitat. The sort of wetland habitat found in the reserve is rare in the Borough and unique in the County. The LNR is particularly noted for its dragonflies, particularly the existence of some rare species.

Footpaths, Bridleways, Byways and Cycleways

- 2.16. Footpaths are a crucial element in developing the town's recreational potential. Convenient footpaths into the open spaces by the river and other water features are of particular benefit. A major footpath along the river valley is the Nene Way Long Distance Footpath. It follows the River Nene for 116 km through Northamptonshire, with 11km within Northampton. The town is situated within the southern section of the route, and a leaflet giving the route and associated information has been produced by the Nene Valley Project (see Appendix 2). The route is marked by way-markers at various points.



- 2.17. Other rights of way (footpaths and bridleways) do exist around the river and canal areas, particularly in the south west of the Borough, for example, close to Duston Mill Reservoir, and at the northern end of the Bampton Valley. Other footpaths exist along the Bampton Valley and through part of the town centre. These are not statutory designated footpaths but rather are permitted path agreements or evidently well-used footpaths (see Map 2).
- 2.18. There is a notable lack of designated links from adjoining residential areas to the river/canal side. However, a large number of informal links do exist. These are well-used and provide links both along the routes of the waterways and from the residential areas to the waterside.
- 2.19. Route 6 of the Sustrans National Cycle Network runs through Northampton. Two sections of the route fall within the river valley study area, one along the Bampton Arm of the river and the other close to Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve and through Brackmills Industrial Estate. The cycleway is currently well-used by cyclists and walkers, but the potential does exist to improve its popularity and enhance its links to other routes within the river valley.

Navigation and Facilities

2.20. Through Northampton the Nene is navigable up to the Northampton Arm of the Grand Union Canal. The Bampton Arm is navigable to Westbridge. Pleasure boating is the main activity, especially during summer months, but a canoe slalom, and rowing and sailing clubs also exist. Navigation is maintained on the river through a series of sluices and navigation channels downstream of South Bridge and on the canal through a series of locks. Marina facilities exist at Billing Aquadrome and there are also moorings on the river bank at Foot Meadow, Becket's Park and Midsummer Meadow. At Midsummer Meadow, near Nunn Mills sluice, facilities are provided for the use of pleasure boaters (rubbish disposal, water point and sanitary facilities).

2.21. The navigation authority for the river is the Environment Agency and for the canals British Waterways. The Agency and British Waterways are keen to work in partnership to improve navigation on both waterways.

Urban Growth and Land Use

2.22. Northampton is primarily an urban area with pockets of green space ranging from formal parks and gardens to expanses of informal open space for passive recreational purposes. Northampton's rapid expansion during the 1970's necessitated the erosion of some of these green areas, thereby enhancing the value of the remaining areas.



2.23. In 1994 the Northampton Partnership (Northampton Borough Council, Northamptonshire County Council and Northamptonshire Training and Enterprise Council) was successful in securing Single Regeneration Budget monies from central government. The Partnership's bid was based upon the intensive social, economic, environmental and physical regeneration of 55 hectares of land in the heart of Northampton. Much of the area benefits from a riverside/canalside location, but is largely underused, derelict in part and in need of considerable investment. A large proportion of the area has already been the subject of schemes for housing and business use, and the first phase has already commenced. It is anticipated that the regeneration works will act as a catalyst resulting in the improvement of the surrounding areas.

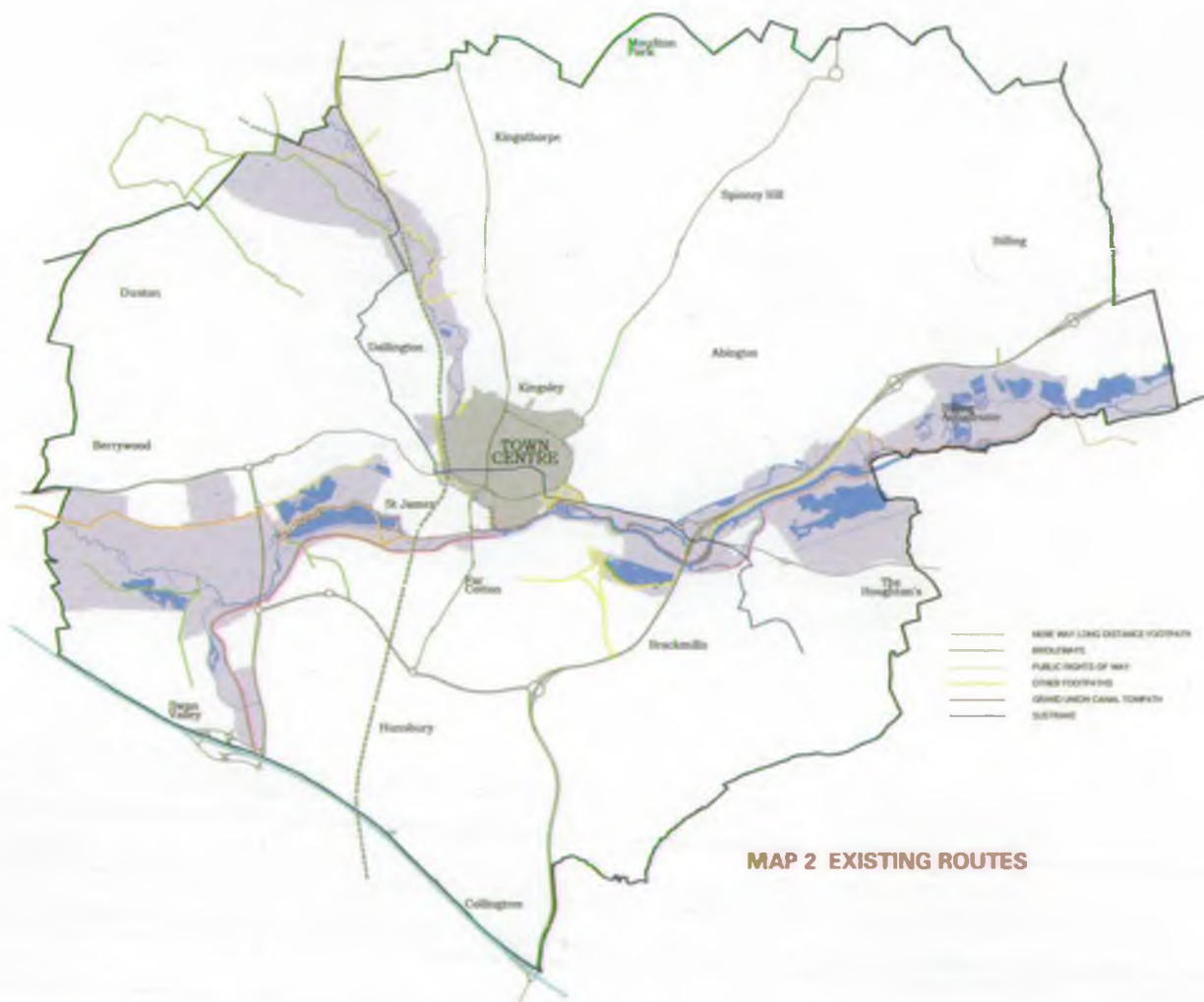
2.24. The Partnership has been very successful in delivering regeneration projects, bringing run-down and deprived areas back into use and providing environmental enhancements which improve the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. The Council, with its partners, will continue to pursue this aim with an on-going programme of works designed to increase the environmental quality of public spaces and offering additional leisure and recreational facilities.

Land Ownership

- 2.25. The Council owns some large areas of land adjacent to the river and canal, as do a number of other public organisations. The greater proportion, however, is in private sector ownership. This will result in the need to establish a good working relationship with owners from the outset if the aims of the Master Plan are to be realised. It will be essential to undertake full consultation with land owners at an early stage in the development and implementation of the Master Plan projects.

Utilities

- 2.26. A number of utilities make use of the river corridor, including water (Anglian Water), gas (Transco), electricity (East Midlands Electricity) and communications (BT). Several foul sewage pipes and gas mains run within the river corridor. Electricity and communications cables cross under the river in a few locations but not many run along the corridor. There are a number of surface outfalls and one sewage treatment works that discharge into the main river. A number of surface water and groundwater abstraction licences have been granted within the river corridor for industrial and agricultural purposes.



MAP 2 EXISTING ROUTES

3. Northampton Flood Defence Scheme

Preferred Option

3.1. Following the extensive flooding in Northampton during the Easter of 1998, the Environment Agency has undertaken detailed investigations into flood defence improvements for the town. The preferred option was defined after a three-stage consultation programme involving residents, members and officers of the Borough and County Councils, together with an extensive range of interest groups.

3.2. The Northampton Flood Defence Scheme will result in the protection of people and properties within Northampton to the 1:200 year standard, a higher standard than at present. The Flood Defence Scheme will involve the following works:-

- The raising and/or replacement of the existing flood defences, which are currently of a low standard, with embankments or retaining walls;
- Improvements to the river channel both upstream and downstream of South Bridge by widening the channel;
- Improvements to the river channel between the confluence and West Bridge on the Brampton Arm by deepening the channel; and
- Examination / assessment of the management of the Washlands.

Environmental Objectives for the Flood Defence Works.

3.3. An environmental appraisal of the proposed flood defence improvements for the Northampton area identified the following opportunities for enhancing the river corridor:-

- Improve the appearance of the waterfront through the use of appropriate materials and designs in construction works.

- Improve public access (including access for the disabled) and open up green space in order to increase the amenity value of the waterfront. This could be achieved by upgrading existing footpaths or by creating new footpaths and cycle routes linking to existing paths.

- Improve facilities for recreation in order to increase the amenity value of the river corridor. This could include the provision of angling platforms, facilities for birdwatchers, and information and interpretative facilities.

- Improve facilities for navigation in order to increase the value of the river for this purpose. This could include the improvement of river banks and the canal incorporating canoe access, moorings and overnight facilities for use by pleasure boats.

- Incorporate appropriate bank re-grading and marginal contouring into designs in order to enhance the river corridor. The creation of marginal scrapes, berms or riffle and pool reaches would create more varied habitats and improved biodiversity.

- Enhance existing flood meadows by lowering defences in strategic locations with landscaping to create a variety of water depths and habitats. Management of flood levels to create areas of wet grassland or reedbed and to increase biodiversity. As there are no obvious water level management systems which could be enhanced it may be necessary to develop water level management plans from scratch.

Supplementary Planning Guidance on Development and Flooding

3.4

The Supplementary Planning Guidance on Development and Flooding was adopted by the Council in February 2000. The SPG may be taken into account as a material consideration in deciding planning applications. The SPG was written in consultation with the Environment Agency to clarify the Council's current position in relation to development proposals within the Borough that will have an impact on the floodplain.



4. Development Schemes

4.1. The schemes discussed in this section are either recently completed or under discussion. They form a part of various public and private sector initiatives. The Council is keen to ensure that the proposals, while creating development opportunities in the river valley, will also protect and enhance the character and landscape of the valley and its surroundings.

4.2. *Canoe Slalom*

The Nene Whitewater Centre at Bedford Road opened in August 1999. The Centre includes a man-made whitewater rafting course with associated facilities for spectators, a club house, boat storage facilities, changing rooms, toilets, and accommodation for the headquarters of the Northamptonshire Clubs for Young People. The Centre is one of only a few provided nationally. The project was achieved through a partnership between Northampton Borough Council and the Northamptonshire County Council. It received financial support from the Sports Lottery Fund and the Sports Council and various other national and local organisations.

4.3. *Brampton Valley*

This is a finger of green space which runs through the urban area from the north of the town at Harlestone Firs to the town centre. The area, which is adjacent to large areas of residential development, offers many opportunities for passive recreation. Many formal and informal routes run through the area, which with part of the Sustrans National Cycle Network, create a network of links within the area. The Council, with the support of other organisations, has been successful in the past in improving existing links and providing new ones, creating circular walks. Interpretation facilities have also been provided.

4.4. *Southbridge East*

This area is directly south of the town centre adjacent to the River Nene. The site, which is approximately 8.12 hectares, forms part of the larger Single Regeneration Budget area and is in private ownership. The site was formerly used for industrial purposes, much of which had stood vacant and was contaminated in part. The area is now to be transformed, and construction work has recently commenced to redevelop the area for residential purposes with a small element of business use adjacent to Cotton End. A riverside promenade is to be created along the northern boundary with a footbridge across the river providing a link with the town centre. The area will provide a range of house types.

Flood defence improvements are to take place along the northern boundary of the site, including widening of the river to improve the peak-time flows.

4.5. **Southbridge West**

This area also lies within the Single Regeneration Budget area. The site is located south of the town centre adjacent to the Northampton Arm of the Grand Union Canal, and covers an area of approximately 8.4 hectares. The land is owned by Rail Property Ltd, British Waterways, and Northampton Borough Council.

A partnership approach has been adopted by the Council, Rail Property Ltd and British Waterways regarding the potential of the site and a joint planning statement has been prepared setting out the partnership's aspirations for the site. Expressions of interest were invited from potential developers, one of whom has now been selected by the partnership. It is expected that the site will be redeveloped for mixed residential, commercial and leisure use in a phased manner.

4.6. **Upper Nene Valley Country Park**

This is an area of approximately 330 hectares located on the urban fringe to the west of the town. The area is formed of broad floodplain landscape of rural character and is mostly in agricultural use. The park will serve local communities as a public open space, leisure facility and green corridor into the town. The park will also form an important landscape, heritage and wildlife asset. It is intended that the proposed country park will include parkland development east and west of Upton Way including Duston Reservoir, the canal corridor and former gravel lakes managed as Local Nature Reserves. A planning application for the western portion of the country park involving land to the west of Upton Way was given outline planning permission by the Council in February 2000.

4.7. **Former British Gas Site – Land at Towcester Road**

This 3.9 hectare site is located in the town centre and is bounded by both the Kislingbury and Bampton branches of the River Nene. It forms approximately half of Local Plan Development Site D30 and any development of this site would need to adhere to the provisions of this policy. Full planning permission was granted for this site in November 1999 for the erection of a retail unit, a riverside pub and restaurant, car parking and associated landscaping. As part of an associated legal agreement, when implementing this consent developers are obliged to provide a footbridge over the River Nene linking the site to the south (between the river and canal), a bridge link across the Bampton Arm, watering and mooring facilities for boats, viewpoints, fishing platforms, wildlife habitat and signage in a parkland setting.

4.8. **Former Cattle Market Site**

Full planning permission was granted for the construction of 24 dwellings in the south-east corner of the site in October 1999. Consent was subject to a S106 Agreement, which includes a footpath link at the eastern end to the towpath and Becket's Park and at the western end to the towpath.

4.9. **Dallington Grange**

This is a large area of approximately 152 hectares located on the north western edge of the town, north west of Kings Heath housing area and west of the railway line. A draft planning brief has been produced and has been the subject of public consultation. The brief identifies a number of issues which will require action by a potential developer. These include flood attenuation measures, provision of footpath and cycle links to the existing network, and landscaping. Responses to the consultation have been placed before the relevant Council Committee. A planning application has been submitted relating to the site proposing primarily housing development with a local centre. In light of the revised PPG3, the Council is re-assessing land for housing in the Borough which will influence when the site is released for development.

4.10. **Stortons Pits**

These are former gravel pits located to the east of Upton Way. The site, which forms part of the proposed country park, is an identified County Wildlife Site currently managed by the Wildlife Trust. Although the area has no formal designation as a nature reserve, it is intended to carry out further research to establish its suitability as a nature reserve.

4.11. **Northampton Washlands**

This is an existing important environmental asset which is well-used for passive recreational purposes. This area of former gravel pits is extremely important from a wildlife point of view, especially birds, as it is a nationally important site for wintering Golden Plover. It does not currently have any formal designation in terms of its wildlife value, but does meet the RSPB criteria to be a Special Protection Area for birds. The long term aim would be to achieve Local Nature Reserve status for the area. The land is currently owned by the Environment Agency and a private individual. The Environment Agency will examine the management and storage capacity of the Washlands over the coming months. However, there is a recognised need to consider the relationship between the recreation and nature conservation aspects of the site.

4.12. **Rapid Transit System**

An outline planning application for a proposed Rapid Transit System in Northampton was 'approved in principle' by the Council in July 1998. The application is subject to objections by the Environment Agency and Northampton Rugby Football Club being resolved, and to conditions and the completion of appropriate legal agreements.

The RTS currently promoted is a segregated guided Bus Way whose aspirations are to attempt to offer a viable alternative to the private car. It follows a 5-route core network covering approximately 40km and is being designed alongside major peripheral development sites to ensure the RTS is integral to development design.



5. Future Proposals and Design Guidelines

Recreation and Tourism

5.1. The recreational and tourism opportunities offered by the many water areas within the Borough have long been recognised and the Council rigorously protects these areas from inappropriate development by the promotion of nature conservation and appropriate leisure uses. A careful balance needs to be maintained between the existing natural features of the waterways and new leisure uses.

5.2. The linear nature of the river valley gives the opportunity of retaining a continuous length of green space easily accessible to a large proportion of the population. The Council's track record of undertaking riverside improvements will add to its attraction for tourists. This commitment to improving the waterside areas will continue in partnership with the Environment Agency and other organisations.

5.3.

Recreational Opportunities

- Walking is one of the most popular forms of recreation. It is therefore important to make provision for associated facilities such as seating, lighting, surfacing, signage etc.

- Cycling is a popular leisure pursuit and is increasingly used as a method of sustainable transport. Provision of facilities such as secure cycle parking will need to be considered as part of any project proposal.

- Encouraging further use of the river and canal by boaters will require the provision of additional facilities for secure mooring, sanitary stations and links to other facilities.

- Wildlife and nature conservation is becoming more important. Northampton has a wealth of sites considered to be of wildlife value, some of which are formally protected. Provision of interpretation boards at significant locations will increase awareness of habitats and their importance, and will offer an educational facility.

- Angling is a popular leisure pursuit. In the town, many clubs hold fishing licences. Improved facilities such as angling platforms, car parking in suitable locations, etc can be provided as part of the river valley improvements.

Landscape design offers many opportunities in terms of soft and hard landscape treatment. The following issues should form part of a structured landscaping scheme in all projects :-

- a) areas can be enhanced to increase biodiversity and create new habitats,
- b) unsightly buildings and features can be screened or suggestions put forward to make them look more attractive,
- c) the external spaces of the waterfront can be transformed to be places of great beauty whatever their usage and whether or not treatment is to be naturalistic, informal or formal,
- d) when proposing a landscape scheme it will be important to consider the height and location of vertical elements to ensure good surveillance and not to undermine community safety.

5.4.

Tourism

Northampton Borough Council's Action Plan for Tourism recognises that the river valley is a valuable resource which, with careful development and promotion has the potential to encourage tourism in the town. The river offers considerable scope for the development of waterside tourism businesses and visitor attractions such as restaurants, pubs, boat hire and cycle hire services. Waterway holidays are becoming increasingly popular and there are opportunities to encourage more waterway holiday cruisers to visit Northampton. The development of a new marina in the South Bridge area is one way of achieving this objective. There is also the potential to encourage visitors to explore the whole of the river valley by creating a series of waymarked routes so that they can explore the natural and historic environment of the waterways.

The Action Plan for Tourism identifies the need for a major tourist attraction in Northampton, and there are sites identified in the Master Plan suitable for promoting high quality tourist attractions.

Improving Public Access

5.5.

There are already many routes in existence along various lengths of the river, canal and around lakes. Some of these routes are footpaths which have a statutory designation whilst others are covered by permitted path agreements. Others have no formal status but are well-used by the local community. In order to encourage the increased and more appropriate use of these links it will be essential to establish their formal status, and surface and maintain them in an appropriate manner whilst discouraging their use for inappropriate purposes (e.g. motorcycles).

5.6.

The area provides an opportunity for creating multi-user routes which link the waterside with the town centre, residential areas and other facilities. It may be possible to work within The Countryside Agency's emerging 'Greenways' Programme to establish these links. Greenways are defined as networks of largely car-free off-road routes connecting people to facilities and open spaces in and around towns, cities and to the countryside. They are for shared use by people of all abilities on foot, bike and horseback, for commuting, play or leisure.

5.7.

Whilst encouraging the use of waterside areas for both passive and active recreational purposes it will be essential to provide supplementary facilities such as car parking and interpretation facilities. It will be necessary to incorporate a programme of appropriate signage to increase awareness of the waterside and the facilities on offer.



- 5.8. Access for all sectors of the community is an important consideration and will be taken into account during the early design stage of each project, in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

River Valley Transportation Opportunities

- 5.9. The river is not currently extensively used to transport freight but the canal and river system does offer potential for this to be developed further. The Environment Agency, along with Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council have commissioned a study to investigate the feasibility of increasing the use of the River Nene for commercial navigation. The results of this study are awaited. Northampton Borough Council, through the Local Plan, supports the concept of freight movements using the waterways system, and is keen to see greater use made of the River Nene for both leisure and commercial use.

- 5.10. One of the constraints for navigational developments on the riverside is that, unlike canals, rivers do not usually have towing paths alongside to allow free and uninterrupted access by the public. The Environment Agency owns very little land adjoining the river and this lack of property ownership by the navigation authority has contributed towards the absence of commercial enterprise using the river for navigation. It is therefore, important that as part of the Master Plan objectives and requirements, a strong working partnership with landowners and businesses is established to encourage navigational opportunities.

- 5.11. The Council has aspirations for using the river for transportation purposes. Schemes such as a water bus service between the town centre and housing areas are seen as an important part of the future transportation network.

Future Projects

- 5.12. A wide range of initiatives could be developed on the River Nene and the canal as part of this Master Plan. There are a number of projects already being considered in the river valley (discussed above under the existing proposals section). To enable the Master Plan to develop, it will be essential for further projects to be identified by partners and other interested groups. It will therefore be important that the river is fully utilised as part of these proposals and in doing so extend and widen the range and quality of leisure facilities. The promotion of projects relating to the Arts is considered to be important in attracting visits to the river valley. The Borough Council is keen to forge links with initiatives which have particular emphasis on the Arts. Establishing strong links between the town centre and the river will also be an important aspect of the Master Plan initiatives.

- 5.13. The projects currently being considered can bring external funding if a partnership approach with the local community and the private sector is formed. A programme of improvements to the infrastructure is being undertaken by the Environment Agency and this should be carried out as part of a wider environmental enhancement programme. Easier operation of locks, possibly automation, should also be given consideration to encourage further navigational use.

5.14. There is also a need for developing waterside tourist business and visitor attractions and the river does offer considerable scope for such schemes. These could be in the form of riverside leisure centres, pubs, restaurants, marina developments etc, aimed at attracting visitors to the town. The area to the south of the town centre between Towcester Road and Barnes Meadow roundabout can provide development opportunities for these uses whilst maintaining strong links with the town centre. A co-ordinated approach to development and marketing of the projects with public, private and voluntary interests working together will be essential to achieve the vision.

5.15. Any development will need to include flood risk reduction measures in accordance with the Environment Agency's Strategic Review. In addition, any development should incorporate the principles of sustainability through ensuring that the use, extent and design of developments maximise community and environmental benefits.

5.16. A summary of the proposed schemes within the Master Plan is given below:

1) Flood Defence

The proposed works can be split into four principal sections:-

a) River works downstream from South Bridge will be timed to coincide with the redevelopment of the Southbridge area, and on the Brampton Branch will follow the improvements to the Tanner Street flood defences.

b) To St James' the works will start at Victoria Park this year and extend downstream to Towcester Road in the following year. Works on the southern side of St James' will occur in year 3.

c) Works on the Cotton End frontage will start this Autumn along the Airflow Streamline frontage. Downstream of Airflow to Carlsberg Social Club the defence improvements will be provided as part of the Southbridge West redevelopment. Similarly the flood defence improvements downstream of South Bridge are being provided by the Southbridge East redevelopment.

d) Any changes to the management of Northampton Washlands will be phased over the next three years.

2) Southbridge Marina

The area of land between the river and the canal to the east of Towcester Road provides an opportunity for creating a small landscaped park and a basin for boat mooring. The area would have to be excavated in part to provide the mooring basin. The lock (No 17) will be retained at its existing location. The area to the south of the canal bounded by the Towcester Road and the railway will be explored for a marina development.

To the north of the river the redevelopment scheme for the Gas Board land will provide a pub/restaurant development and landscaped riverside walk. To the south of the canal a proposed residential development and its canalside promenade will provide an attractive frontage. This scheme forms part of the SRB Southbridge West development site which may include a commercial / leisure facility. Car parking for the marina is being considered on the land to the west of Towcester Road. The Marina is likely to be in a future phase of the site's development.

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The marina development would also provide additional flood storage area while providing an excellent location to the town centre and transport links. The level of facilities required to attract craft will be an important element in the design of the scheme. Particularly facilities such as re-fuelling and sanitary stations, short and long term moorings will need to be carefully considered.

It is hoped that the marina project will attract partnership funding from interested agencies and organisations in making a 'landmark project' at this important gateway location to the town centre.

3) Becket's Park Enhancement Proposals

Becket's Park is a well-used parkland close to the town centre, residential and business areas. There are a number of well-used facilities such as tennis courts and bowling greens and the sea cadets use the boathouse. However, it is considered that there are opportunities to enhance existing facilities, making particular use of the water front, and also for the provision of new features.

Becket's Park is one of seven sites chosen for involvement in the 'Spirit of the Valley' initiative. This is a lottery funded Arts project focusing on the appreciation of the river and its valley, which will involve community groups developing ideas and projects to celebrate the Nene. The project is co-ordinated by the Local Authorities of the County and aims to reconnect the people and communities of Northamptonshire back to the River Nene.

4) Midsummer Meadow

This stretch of the river valley between Becket's Park and the Barnes Meadow roundabout has a great potential for improvement by opening up and securing waterside facilities for attracting visitors. A plan is being prepared to improve and enhance this riverside open space to make a new park which would be more attractive and exciting than the existing open space but which would not lose the natural characteristics that make this area. The plan would enhance the riverside, improve its accessibility and facilities by providing improved links, seating and landscaping. A themed approach is being considered by the Council for leisure and recreational facilities within the new park. This is particularly important for developments such as riverside pubs/restaurants, exhibition areas, sculpture park, and associated car parking which could be accommodated sensitively within the open space. Another important objective is the concept of linking the town centre with the Brackmills employment area and attracting employees from both areas to use the park during lunch-time breaks. The enhancement proposals will take account of the adjacent Barnes Meadow nature reserve and ensure that it is linked with the proposed park.



5) Nunn Mills (former power station) site

A site of approximately 10 hectares located south west of the town centre, south of the River Nene. The site is approached by the Nunn Mills Road which is partly in private ownership. Since the closure of the power station the site has stood largely vacant with a small cluster of businesses in the south west corner.

The Local Plan identifies the site as suitable for a mixed development of residential, business and leisure. A planning brief for the site has been issued by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance (September 1998). Development proposals should include:

- a comprehensive scheme achieving redevelopment of a large majority of the site,
- a high-quality waterfront development incorporating a riverside promenade,
- integration with neighbouring sites making most use of the river frontage and nearby parkland,
- a mix of land uses – leisure, business, retail (max 3,500 sq.m. gross), and residential.

6) Links with the Town Centre

Although within close proximity to the town centre, both arms of the river, situated to the south and west of the town centre, are not well linked with it. As part of the Master Plan proposals it is intended to provide pedestrian links to the river valley to make more use of the open space and the recreational areas.

As part of the Southbridge development a new footbridge is proposed which will link to the southern part of the town centre and the new housing and commercial development at Southbridge. Design concepts for the bridge are at present being explored with the developer.

The aim of the Master Plan is to create safer and attractive pedestrian routes between the town centre and the river, particularly on the southern part, for the benefit of the town centre employees and residents.

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7) Brampton Valley

This finger of green space already offers a wide variety of recreational uses, primarily in the form of a surfaced route for use by walkers and cyclists. However, there are a number of missing links in the route which need to be provided if the full potential of the area is to be realised (eg. provide link between Kingsthorpe Local Nature Reserve and Millers Meadow). The Council in partnership with other interested groups will endeavour to provide the missing links, thereby increasing the recreational value of the area. An opportunity to extend the Kingsthorpe Local Nature Reserve to the south has been identified. This will be subject to agreement with the relevant landowner and may include a footbridge over the River Nene.

8) Land adjacent to Junction 15A (M1)

Development site D9

This site is located adjacent to junction 15A of the M1 motorway and is bounded by the Grand Union Canal and the A43. It has an area of 4.91 hectares and would be suitable for a single development requiring a prominent location. Any development of this site will be subject to the provisions of the Local Plan Policy D9 which makes reference to the importance of providing a landscaped setting to the Grand Union Canal. The north east corner of the site currently has outline planning consent as part of the larger Swan Valley industrial development.

9) Northampton Green Corridor Project

The Council, in partnership with British Waterways and the Northamptonshire Canal Partnership, is working towards providing a network of multi-user routes adjacent to the Northampton Arm of the Grand Union Canal, linking with existing residential areas and other leisure facilities. The works will need to be phased and will be undertaken in consultation with interested parties.

10) River Transportation Opportunities

The potential does exist for the river to be used further to transport freight and people. There are no firm proposals for projects using this type of transportation at present, however, the results of the Environment Agency commissioned study 'Commercial and Future Use of the River Nene' may encourage this avenue to be explored further.



Design Guidelines

- 5.17. The Nene and Welland Flood Defence Committee at their meeting in January 2000 agreed to carry out the flood defence improvement works in the Northampton Catchment Area within the next three years. The works necessary in Northampton will affect approximately 50% of the river frontage. It is therefore important that the works are carried out in a co-ordinated manner, sensitively taking into account the existing character and future enhancement of the river valley.
- 5.18. The following principles underpin the Master Plan objectives. The principles outline the general design requirements and will need to be applied on the basis of detailed survey and feasibility at each location.
1. Soft defence options preferred over hard defences unless related to enhancement opportunities e.g. moorings.
 2. Hard defences should be faced in a material in keeping with the surroundings e.g. brick, reconstructed stone, external quality block work etc.
 3. The use of recycled materials for construction should be investigated where possible.
 4. The defences should not result in a reduction of the floodplain.
 5. Marginal shelves and berms should be incorporated into flood defences where practicable.
 6. Riffles and pools should be incorporated into designs if in-channel works are to take place.
 7. If possible there should be no loss of slow-flowing habitats within the channel.
 8. Incorporate access for maintenance activities (dredging, weed cutting, obstruction removal, routine construction, maintenance and vegetation removal), surveying activities and routine inspections.
 9. Incorporation of access in front of flood defence lines, or on top where bunding is proposed, with appropriate footpath surfacing.
 10. Incorporation of a 9m by-law distance (from the river's edge to the first building or fence) either side of the river and access points at intervals for lorries and machinery required for maintenance activities.
 11. Re-planting of existing marginal and bank vegetation, including trees, should take place following construction works.
 12. For reinstatement works planting of vegetation should utilise locally native species typical of the surroundings and seed mixes used should be of conservation value.
 13. Landscaping should ensure developments are integral with the hinterland.
 14. Landscaping of earth embankments or walls should provide a varied profile for landscape and habitat purposes.
 15. Landscaping should include additional tree planting using locally native species typical of the surroundings.
 16. Provide waymarkers at suitable locations along existing and proposed routes.
 17. Provide additional secure moorings along both the river and canal with associated facilities.
 18. Provide interpretation panels giving details of the nature conservation and built heritage value of the area along with other points of interest.





MAP 3 RIVER VALLEY MASTER PLAN
Existing & Proposed Projects

6. Programme and Implementation

Delivery of Projects

- 6.1. The Master Plan vision discussed in the previous chapters and the projects including a range of ideas outlined indicate that there is ample scope for the regeneration of some river valley sites. From a social and economic point of view the development of a master plan is long overdue. The constraints such as land drainage, flood defence, environment and operational activities and the desire to enhance leisure and tourism opportunities, are fully recognised. The proposed flood defence improvement works and the associated environmental improvement programme should act as a catalyst for some of the Master Plan initiatives.
- 6.2. Much will depend on the availability of funding to deliver the projects but linked with the three-year flood defence improvement programme many ideas can come to fruition.

6.3. It is recommended that the projects and ideas suggested should form the basis of multiple funding bids to a wide range of grant schemes with a programme of implementation over a 5 - 10 year period. Planning applications for the development of the river valley site can also provide a useful basis in achieving many ideas discussed in the Master Plan. The vision must also be shared with local communities, the business sector and statutory organisations and agencies, all of whom have a stake. This support at all levels is crucial in realising the Master Plan aims and objectives. Promotion and marketing will also be key issues.

6.4. Much benefit could be derived from the proposed marina at South Bridge in terms of leisure and town centre regeneration opportunities. It is anticipated that this will act to stimulate enhancements and provision of facilities for both the local community and visitors throughout the river corridor.

Funding Opportunities

6.5. The projects discussed in the Master Plan are varied and offer a wide range of environmental and recreational benefits. They may be eligible for grants either locally or nationally. Working in partnership with the public and private sectors will enable the generation of funding for many projects. Working in partnership with developers of the sites alongside the river and securing planning obligations will also be an important area in the delivery of the projects.

Possible sources of funding are summarised in Appendix 1.

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Marketing Initiatives

- 6.6 The vision and planning observations described in the previous chapters and the range of existing and new projects discussed indicate that there is ample scope for regeneration and enhancement of the river valley. The works forming part of the flood defence improvement scheme for the town are due to commence shortly and this also offers a major opportunity to enhance the river corridor through the town.
- 6.7 The Master Plan is a proactive document and aims to promote the river for the benefit of the local community and visitors alike. The marketing initiatives will develop methods of keeping all interested groups informed by implementing a programme of planned activities incorporating customer contact (consultations with the local people and interested groups), exhibitions and displays, and the Borough Council's web site.

Consultations

- 6.8. The study area represents a diverse landscape providing an attractive setting in many areas and opportunities for new development. Consultations on the Master Plan have been an essential exercise in which local communities, public and private sector interests have played an important role. The observations made have been taken into account when drafting this document. The following local and national interests have been consulted on the proposals:-

Statutory Organisations
National and Local Amenity Organisations
Adjoining Local Authorities
Local Sports Clubs
Parish Councils
Residents Associations

- 6.9. The Partnership would welcome any views on the Master Plan. If you have a river valley-based project or an idea for a project please contact either:

Mr Arun Kotnis, Assistant Head of Planning,
Northampton Borough Council, Cliftonville House,
Bedford Road, Northampton, NN4 7NR; or

Mr Peter Barham, Nene Strategies Manager,
Environment Agency, Nene House, Pytchley
Lodge Industrial Estate, Kettering,
Northamptonshire, NN15 6JN



7. Conclusion and Summary of Recommendations

1: Conclusion

- 7.1. The aim of the Master Plan is to create, over a period, a diverse, attractive and environmentally sustainable river valley landscape that is distinctive to the local character and provides an enhanced setting for new development. It is intended that, through a range of access and community initiatives, the river valley is made easily accessible to local people and visitors alike. It is also hoped that by providing easy access, interpretation and information, interest in and use of the river valley

can be increased. The provision of facilities and services for users, well designed and located for ease of use, will also be an essential part of the Master Plan initiatives. An increase in boat traffic such as at the May Bank Holiday annual rally of the Inland Waterways Association requires additional facilities for both recreational and safety purposes.

- 7.2. The use of the river for both commercial and leisure traffic has also been well aired in the plan and with careful resolution and consideration of the issues, the Master Plan initiatives can be taken forward.

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7.3. The proposals outlined in the plan for development, enhancement and conservation would need to be considered in partnership with all interested organisations and agencies.

7.4. The implementation of the projects and ideas in delivering the 'river renaissance' would need to be planned in a balanced way requiring the full range of multi-disciplinary design and project management skills working in a integrated and interactive way.

7.5. The Master Plan complements the policies of the Northampton Local Plan and it is hoped that it will play an important role in influencing the policies and proposals in the forthcoming Local Plan review. It would also help in planning future investments and improvements in the river valley area and to promote leisure and tourism in the town.

2: Summary of Recommendations

7.6. The proposals, both existing and new, discussed in the Master Plan provide a context and framework for future activities, suggest ideas for improvements in the river valley and explore possible ways of achieving the projects. It is recommended that the Master Plan forms a basis for:

a) Implementing flood defence improvements by the Environment Agency with the design guidance discussed in the Master Plan being used in carrying out the improvement works.

b) Contributing to the review of the Local Plan for Northampton (now under consideration) regarding the river valley policies and proposals to promote the potential of the river for regeneration, leisure and tourism whilst protecting and enhancing the natural landscape and wildlife.

c) Guiding future development application proposals (as Supplementary Planning Guidance) and forming a material consideration in the determination of future planning applications in the river valley area.

d) Securing planning obligations as part of the development application process in the river valley area to achieve the ideas and initiatives outlined in the Master Plan.

e) Working on projects with the local community and interested groups on the development and management of the river valley.

f) Promoting leisure and tourism initiatives to attract funding from a wide range of grant sources.

g) Using as a guide for other Council strategies and plans affecting the river valley and for the future management and maintenance programme.

h) Using design guidance discussed in the Master Plan in future development projects.

Appendix 1

Funding Sources

Public Sector Grants

The following grants are offered by various public sector agencies:

Central Government Funds

National Government and European grants are available for landscape, wildlife and heritage enhancement and protection. Sources of funding relevant to the projects will include: Countryside Agency Funding Initiatives, Woodland Grant Schemes, English Partnership Funding and the Single Regeneration Budget.

Countryside Agency

The Countryside Agency was established in April 1999 from the merger of the Rural Development Commission and the Countryside Commission. It is a statutory body receiving Government funds which, through partnership with the public, voluntary and private sectors can be applied to projects in the countryside and urban fringe. Relevant CA funding initiatives for the River Valley Master Plan area are:

- i) Countryside Around Towns.
- ii) Local Heritage Initiative – to be launched in 2000, this aims to support local communities in caring for their local heritage and natural environment.
- iii) Access to Land – includes access to land and water, open spaces, rights of way and green routes.
- iv) Healthy Walking – a partnership between the Countryside Agency and the British Heart Foundation, it aims to increase the health and fitness of sedentary people by promoting regular and brisk walking in their local area.

Single Regeneration Budget

The SRB is a national competition that supports initiatives which builds on good practice, represent value for money and meet one of the seven objectives. In terms of river valley improvements, the key objective is to 'protect and improve the environment and infrastructure and promote good design'. The

programme is currently in its sixth round. Bids should be supported by partnerships representing an appropriate range of interests, with Local Authorities and Training and Enterprise Agencies expected to play the lead as bidders.

English Partnerships

English Partnerships was created by combining the roles of the Commission for New Towns and the national functions of the Urban Regeneration Agency. Amongst the main areas of responsibilities it will include improving the environment and finding new sources of funding. To receive EP funding, projects must be achievable, provide value for money and promote economic and environmental regeneration in areas of need. A key requirement for EP funding is the need for the proposal to be well argued in terms of the impacts and benefits of the investment.

English Heritage

The Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme is a grants programme for conservation led area-based regeneration run by English Heritage. Its aim is to help boost England's most deprived urban and rural communities, concentrating on employment generating activities which are a focus for community life and prosperity. The scheme will work with local authorities to address their needs and harness their commitment through match funding.

East Midlands Development Agency

The East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) was launched, along with seven other regional development agencies in the country in April 1999. One of its main roles is to further economic development and regeneration. EMDA has taken over many of the grant giving functions of English Partnerships.

Local Government Initiatives

Northamptonshire County Council offers two main grants in terms of enhancing the countryside and local environment:

- i) Landscape Conservation Grant Scheme
Grants from this scheme are available for work that a) conserves and enhances the landscape and its features, and b) is clearly visible to and accessible by the general public, subject to the scheme meeting the provisions of a number of criteria. The grant available is 50% of total costs up to a

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maximum of £250 which is distributed after the works have been completed. Anyone can currently apply for a Landscape Conservation Grant and the scheme particularly welcomes applications from urban areas.

ii) Trees for Northamptonshire

This scheme is designed to help local people enhance their local environment by offering trees, shrubs and hedging plants to a variety of projects, subject to them meeting a number of criteria. The projects have to be in locations visible to the general public and high priority is generally given to those which involve improving publicly available land and those that involve the local community. Projects which involve celebrating a special place/time will also be given priority.

Environment Agency/MAFF funding

There is the potential to utilise MAFF funding contributed towards the flood defence scheme as match funding towards other funding sources. This would require the approval of MAFF and the Local Flood Defence Committee and any project supported in this way would need to complement the flood defence scheme.

The National Lottery Funding

The two main sources of Lottery funding being applied to waterway development are the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Sports Lottery. The Heritage Lottery is potentially the main source of infrastructure, heritage and environmental work. The fund provides assistance of up to a maximum of 75% for capital projects that safeguard and enhance public access to land and buildings of local, regional or national importance. For major recreational facilities, the Sports Council can also give grants on a similar basis e.g. the Canoe Slalom project on Bedford Road.

In addition, the New Opportunities Fund is a new Lottery distributor created to distribute grants to education, health and environment projects across the UK. Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities will be the fund's first environmental initiative. It has £125 million available to help communities understand, improve and care for their natural and living environment. The scope for this initiative is very broad – it will include projects that create, preserve, improve or promote

access to green spaces of educational, recreational or environmental value to the community, as well as small community-based schemes that involve local people in improving and caring for their environment and promoting sustainable development.

The Landfill Tax Environmental Credit Scheme

The scheme forges links between environmental bodies, landfill operators and ENTRUST which has been appointed as the Regulator of Environmental Bodies under the Landfill Regulations. Some operators are able to claim back up to 20% of their landfill tax liability if they make payments to a registered environmental body for approval purposes. Up to 90% of such a contribution can be claimed back. The approved purposes of the scheme concentrate on remediation and restoration schemes which prevent or reduce any potential for pollution and protection of the environment and public amenity within a 10 mile radius of the site. British Waterways is a registered organisation.

Private Sector Grants

A number of private sector organisations also offer grants through their own grant-aiding channels focusing on specific areas of interest:

Esso National Tree Week

This is not a finance-giving fund but one which helps with publicity and promotional aspects of tree planting events. In December 1999, the NCC Trees for Northamptonshire scheme was co-ordinated to fit in with this nationally promoted week, and this is set to continue in 2000.

Other Grants

Other grant-giving bodies and organisations which may be able to provide funding for projects within the River Valley Master Plan:

- Age Resource Awards
- Henry Ford Conservation Awards
- National Grid Community 21 Awards
- Environmental Action Fund
- Transco Grassroots Awards
- Volvo Practical Environmental Projects

Appendix 2

Supporting Documents

Northampton Local Plan

The Northampton Local Plan sets out the policies and proposals adopted by the Borough Council for the development and use of land in Northampton. It seeks to provide a framework within which future development can be accommodated in a way which safeguards the quality of the local environment. Along with the Northamptonshire Structure Plan, Northamptonshire Minerals Local Plan and the Northamptonshire Waste Local Plan it forms the Development Plan for the Borough of Northampton. The Local Plan was adopted in June 1997 and covers the period 1993-2006. A review of the Local Plan is due to commence later this year.

Northampton Flood Defence Scheme - Preferred Option

Following the floods of Easter 1998 three possible schemes for flood defence in Northampton were assessed. The three options considered were:-

- 1) do nothing;
- 2) maintain the existing defences; and
- 3) improve the standard of defences offered.

Consultation with statutory consultees and residents of Northampton identified that an improvement scheme would be the only acceptable scheme to implement.

Under an improvement scheme people and properties would be protected from flooding to a higher standard than present. This would reduce the risk of damage to property during severe floods while reducing the levels of inconvenience and distress caused to the local community through flood damage and the possible loss of life. The preferred improvement scheme will involve:-

- Raising of and/or replacement of the existing flood defences which are currently of a low standard with embankments or retaining walls,
- Improvements to the river channel upstream and downstream of Southbridge by widening of the channel,
- Improvement to the river channel between the confluence and West Bridge on the Brampton Arm by deepening the channel, and
- Improvements to the Northampton Washlands by reducing the retained water levels.

Comprehensive environmental appraisals are to be undertaken once more detailed locations and designs are available. There are also a number of opportunities to make enhancements to the landscape, nature conservation, local amenity value and wider recreational/navigational potential of the study area as part of the flood defence improvements.

Upper Nene Valley Country Park

A report on the Upper Nene Valley Park Open Space/Leisure Strategy was carried out by Landscape Town & Country and submitted in support of a Commission For New Towns planning application for housing in the South West District in 1996/7. A Planning Brief for the Country Park is currently in preparation by Northampton Borough Council.

Northamptonshire Canal Partnership - Strategy and Action Plan - June 1999

The Canal Partnership is supported by British Waterways, Northamptonshire County Council and those District Councils in Northamptonshire which have canals within their administrative boundaries. This includes Northampton Borough Council. Support is also given by amenity organisations, boating organisations, Parish Councils and other interested groups and individuals.

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The Partnership published a Strategy and Action Plan in June 1999 which set out the aims and objectives of the Partnership and the means by which these are to be achieved. The primary aim of the Partnership is 'to conserve and enhance the canals and surrounding environment enabling local communities and visitors to access and appreciate the natural and historic qualities of the waterway network in Northamptonshire'. The Action Plan identifies projects for implementation within each administrative area and goes some way towards prioritising each project. It is however noted that priorities may change as new matters arise or a particular site or area makes rapid progress. British Waterways and the District Councils employ a full time project officer who progresses the aims of the Partnership.

Nene Valley Project

The Nene Valley Project was launched in 1990 following a decision by the Nene Valley Working Party to appoint a project officer to co-ordinate the implementation of the Nene Valley Management Plan. This was a plan published in 1985 by Northamptonshire County Council in response to a range of development pressures in the Nene Valley. The Nene Valley Management Plan has now been replaced by the Northamptonshire Nene Strategy (see below). The Nene Valley Project aims to improve opportunities for countryside recreation and to conserve and develop the Nene Valley's landscape and wildlife. It is a joint local authority initiative along the Nene Valley which undertakes practical projects to improve the valley for wildlife and people. Northampton Borough Council is one of a number of Districts which contribute financially to the Nene Valley Project.

Northamptonshire Nene Strategy

The Northamptonshire Nene Strategy was published in 1999 by the County Council on behalf of the Nene Valley Working Party, a group comprised of representatives from a number of local authorities including Northampton Borough Council, statutory bodies and voluntary organisations. The strategy covers the whole of the river and its tributaries within the County and aims to develop and achieve a vision for the Nene Valley. The responsibility for delivering the strategy and its action plans and monitoring its progress lies with the Nene Valley Working Party. The Nene Valley Project carries out the implementation of projects. Northampton Borough Council, whilst supporting the general principles of a strategy for the Nene Valley, has not adopted the Northamptonshire Nene Strategy as Supplementary Planning Guidance due to the inclusion of development control policies which do not relate to proposals within the Northampton Local Plan.

Northampton Wildlife Strategy

The Wildlife Strategy was produced jointly between Northampton Borough Council, Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust and English Nature, and was published in 1994.

The strategy was produced in response to growing concern for the environment and its wildlife. Although not a statutory document a decision was taken to adopt the document in order to realise the benefits nature conservation has for the town. Many other authorities have similar documents. The document has ten primary objectives and details the benefits of nature conservation.

Landscape Guidelines Handbook

The Landscape Guidelines Handbook was published by Northamptonshire County Council and supported by the Countryside Commission in January 1997. It gives practical guidance to anyone interested in and involved with landscape issues within Northamptonshire. The guidelines form the basis of the County Council's guidance on landscape features, trees and woodlands, hedgerows, ponds and wetlands and historic features, and aims to set out some principles of good practice. It provides advice on the landscape character and features of the County, how to incorporate the guidance into projects and plans and who to contact for landscape advice and grant information.

Minerals Local Plan

Adopted in 1996 by Northamptonshire County Council (the planning authority for minerals). The aim of the Minerals Local Plan is to ensure an adequate supply of minerals is found at the best social, environmental and economic cost whilst achieving a balance between the environment and the needs of industry. The Minerals Local Plan contains detailed policies which support those contained in the Northamptonshire Structure Plan, seeks to ensure sufficient resources are available in environmentally acceptable locations, and details the requirements of subsequent land restoration.

Urban Archaeological Database

In partnership with English Heritage, Northamptonshire County Council and the Borough Council an Urban Archaeological Database has been set up to identify all areas considered to be of archaeological value. The database forms part of the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) which is administered by the County Council.

LEAP

The Environment Agency has produced an Action Plan for the River Nene as part of the Local Environment Agency Plan (LEAP). The Nene LEAP Action Plan identifies issues that result from pressure on the river environment and proposes actions that will help to resolve these pressures. The objectives of the Nene LEAP Action Plan are:-

- Improve biodiversity in the Nene Valley through the creation and enhancement of riverine habitats, including wetlands, fringe and overhanging vegetation and bank side trees and hedges,
- Safeguard special conservation interest sites,
- Maintain, improve and develop appropriate fish populations,
- Maintain and improve water quality in order that the nature and amenity value of the watercourses may be enhanced and protected,
- Improve navigation, recreational facilities and public access in the Nene valley without compromising other users,
- Protect the water environment from any detrimental effects due to development, and
- Discourage inappropriate development within floodplains.

Nene Waterways Partnership Initiative

The Nene Waterways Partnership Initiative is seeking to develop a long-term strategy for sustainable management of the Nene between Northampton and Dog-in-a-Doublet Sluice (the tidal limit of the river immediately downstream of Peterborough). The overall vision is to:-

"Promote the management of water levels and waterways regeneration along the River Nene in a sustainable way so as to protect and enhance the environmental quality of the valley for present and future generations."

The Partnership is led by the Environment Agency in consultation with parties who have a keen interest in the river and its future use. Consultees include Local Authorities, Parish Councils, landowners, conservation and heritage groups and recreation and sports clubs.

Master Plan

The Partnership has produced a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), with which any development on the Nene should comply. The main objectives of the SEA are to:-

- Ensure that for any particular project the preferred option is environmentally, as well as technically viable; and
- Establish environmental baseline and environmental objectives that are then carried through to project level environmental assessment.
- In addition, the SEA has identified a number of opportunities to enhance the Nene corridor by improving the waterfront through Northampton and providing facilities for navigation and informal recreation.

Arts Strategy

The Arts Strategy was adopted by the Council on 9th November 1998. It aims to increase access to the arts for the whole community. It will also strive to improve the quality of arts available, and to support opportunities for people developing careers in the arts.

Single Regeneration Budget

The major document relating to the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) within Northampton, is the SRB Partnership Bid prepared by Northampton Borough Council, Northamptonshire County Council and the Northamptonshire Training and Enterprise Council. The document sets out the bid for SRB monies to enable the intensive social, economic, environmental and physical regeneration of a large area within Northampton, a large section of which involves areas close to the waterways.

Disability Discrimination Act

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 places responsibilities on service providers to provide disabled people with access to their services. The Act makes it unlawful for people who provide goods, facilities or services to the public to discriminate against disabled people.

Local Transport Plan

The provisional Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Northamptonshire, was produced in July 1999 by Northamptonshire County Council in consultation and partnership with all District Councils and bus operators. It highlights the major transport issues in Northamptonshire and suggests ways forward. The provisional LTP is a 5-year plan and contains a programme of works for 2000/01 to 2004/05. The final plan is set to be published in mid-2000. This will form the basis of the bid for finance from Central Government to enable the works identified in the plan to be carried out.

Strategic Review of Development and Flood Risk – Environment Agency

The document is a result of the Environment Agency's Strategic Review of Development and Flood Risk in the Upper Nene Catchment carried out as a result of the Easter 1998 flood event. The Agency considers that development in the Upper Nene catchment draining into Northampton, should help in the reduction of flood risk rather than increasing it. The purpose of the document is to set out the principles, practice and technical reasoning which the Agency wish to see adopted in the Town and Country Planning consent process, as a contribution to sustainable development.

