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Introduction

St. Peters riverside represents one of the key opportunities for comprehensive new investment in Northampton town centre. The riverside site extends from near to Castle station at the western gateway into the centre to the Carlsberg brewery, and has some 500m of frontage to the River Nene.

This report proposes a plan for the redevelopment of the St. Peters riverside and development of an exciting new mixed use quarter with new homes, offices, shops, hotel and bars and restaurants, within a series of riverside buildings surrounding a major new piazza space created on the riverside.

The plan develops earlier thinking on the potential of the site within the Northampton Waterside Development Framework study takes account of detailed constraints, and provides more detail on the likely form the buildings and spaces should take to help guide developers preparing proposals and those responsible for their approval.

The study has been prepared for the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC) by David Lock Associates, Town Planners and Urban Designers in conjunction with BPS property market and delivery advisors. The study has been undertaken over a three month period. During the course of the study consultations were held with key parties including the Environment Agency, Anglia Water, Northampton Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council.

The study has involved the testing of a number of land use and development alternatives and the evaluation of alternative options in order to identify a preferred development option, which is presented in this report. This master plan report is supported by a detailed delivery report.

The report is presented in four main sections.

- Chapters 01-03 considers the site today and the main features of the site
- Chapters 04-011 describes the proposed master plan and its constituent components
- Chapter 012 then illustrates the proposals with views and elevations of the illustrative proposals

A list of main contacts is provided at the end of the report for further information.
The strategy for Northampton’s Waterside is to create a more active, vibrant and accessible riverfront for the town through the improvement of connections between the riverside and town centre, and the creation of a number of major new development sites alongside the river. These sites would be developed for a variety of uses including business, residential, culture, leisure and retail, each complementing the regeneration and further development of the town centre and station area.

The conceptual strategy is shown in the ‘wheel’ which shows the structure of the connections and the main locations for new developments, and the key drivers for the development in that area. The development nodes are major points of interaction between riverside and the town centre and the key means to achieve integration. The St. Peters location is identified for business uses, and is identified as a key location and of a scale and level of potential to attract large-scale investment in offices and supporting uses.

The strategy develops a number of frameworks for Waterside within which development will be set including the natural waterside, the active waterside, the connected waterside, recreation waterside, destination waterside and the built waterside, all of which inform the character of St. Peters.
The Vision for Waterside

Indicative Vision Plan (Source: Waterside Strategic Framework)
St. Peters Waterside

The concept for St. Peters Waterside is developed further as a sub-area strategy in the framework, which identifies the potential for a business-led mixed use scheme with residential uses in the west near the station and a major office led development on the current gas works site, extending across the river to include sites on the southern riverbank. St. Peters is considered as two sites:

• West Waterside; and
• St. Peters area office hub.

The main principles established in the strategy for both the west and office hub sites include, to:

West

• Redevelop underused and vacant/derelict buildings
• Create high quality residential and office developments fronting St. Peters Way and the riverside
• Improve access to Foot Meadow Park
• Improve links and connections between the town centre and waterside
• Improved links between Castle Station and Waterside

Office hub

• Create a high quality, large scale comprehensive new office location
• Improve pedestrian access to the waterside and connections between the town centre core and waterside;
• Create high quality, distinctive new built gateways into the centre
• Provide access into Foot Meadow Park
• Create new day-long attractions on the waterside.

The mix of uses within St. Peters aims to generate activity throughout the day and evening; making it a vital new location within the centre, and along the riverside. The aim is to secure a substantial critical mass of new office space on a single and related sites that can create a new business quarter in the centre capable of competing with edge of town locations and with other major towns in the sub-region. The prominence of the site and the location on the river side are considered to be major advantages in creating prestigious highly visible opportunities.

The proposed “strategic framework” to guide development of the west and office hub locations are shown in the figure.
The Strategic Framework for Waterside

[Map showing various elements and features related to Waterside, including development areas, focal points, public realm priorities, major links, key local features/retained buildings, local/external links, new landmark buildings, landscaped rivers edge, riverside footpath, and views to water.]

- Development Areas
- Focal Points
- Public Realm Priorities
- Major Links
- Key Local Features / Retained Buildings
- Local / External Links
- New Landmark Building
- Landscaped Rivers Edge
- Riverside Footpath
- Views to Water
The St. Peters Riverside site extends to 6.24 hectares in all and includes a series of existing sites stretching from near Castle Station in the west to the Carlsberg brewery and B&Q in the east. The site fronts the River Nene which sits each side of the recently refurbished Foot Meadow Park; the branch extends down alongside the Brewery to join with the river and the arm of the Grand Union Canal. The river is narrow at about 4m at this point and contained by a flood defence wall on the northern side and fencing on the south side, which was extended in 1996 after significant floods in the town. Timber bridges extend over the river and walls to provide a through access between the town centre and retail parks, which are located in the south.

The site also fronts St. Peters Way, which effectively forms an inner ring route across the south side of the town centre, and is at times a busy through-route. However proposals are being explored by the Borough Council and WNDC to effectively down-grade St. Peters Way in traffic terms, removing some traffic, to improve connectivity for pedestrians along and across the route, which will be important to reconnecting the town with its riverside. To the north is the historic quarter around St. Peters Church, which is an important local landmark on this western approach to the town centre, with a prominent ‘banded’ stone façade and a green which falls towards St. Peters Way and overlooked by the site.

Towcester Road also crosses the site from north to south. This is also a major transport route taking traffic through the town centre.
Extent of the Site
**Existing Site Features**

The site is currently in a variety of uses as shown opposite. In the west there are car workshops and retail uses, with some buildings fronting directly on the riverside. There are a row of houses on Tanner Street, which are still occupied. The central part of the site, each side of Towcester Road is dominated by the gas works site with its two large gasometers, north and south or the river. Alongside the north eastern gas works site is a large administration facility, and an interesting red-brick former office building which is worthy of retention. There is a wharf to the riverside and various pipes link the north and southern sides across the river. There is also a bascule bridge linking the sites allowing access across the river.

A footpath also runs along the eastern edge of the site linking St. Peters Way across the river and then running alongside the western bank of the river crossing via a footbridge to the north bank running alongside the brewery.
Main Existing Site Features

Railway Station and Carpark
Station Entrance
Pedestrian Crossing
Parking for Railway Station
Established Foot Meadow Park
Existing Flats and Houses
Railway Bridge
River Nene
Existing Industrial Buildings
Housing on Tanner Street
Footbridge over River Nene
Road Bridge over Park and River
St James Retail Park
A508 into Town Centre
Gas Holder
Existing entrance into Gas Company?
B&Q and Parking
Nene Valley Retail Park
A45 into Town Centre
St Peter’s Church
Green with Mature Trees
St Peters Way / A5123 - Dual Carriageway
Footbridge over River Nene
Gas Holder with Green Fronting Roundabout
Existing Red Brick Northampton Gas Light Company Building
Carlsberg Entrance
Carlsberg Entrance Building
Carlsberg Storage Vats
Carlsberg Brewery
Road Bridge over River
Footbridge over River
River Nene
End Facade of B&Q
Footbridge over River
Existing Land Uses

The site has a variety of low order uses and remnants of its former role in providing infrastructure for the town, but given the prominence and scale of the site these uses represent a poor reflection of its potential.

The site has a variety of ownerships reflecting its current uses. The largest owner is National Grid which controls the gas works site. National Grid control all of the eastern part of the site. WNDC are assembling sites on the western part of the site and are working with existing owners to assemble the land to enable the site to be brought forward comprehensively.
Existing Land Ownerships
Views and Vistas

The views of the site along St Peters Way and Towcester Road make the site one of the most visible in the whole of the town centre, and therefore present a great opportunity to transform the perception of the centre with high quality new development. The key views are identified in the plan. These include:

• prominent views of the site on the eastern and western approaches along St. Peters Way
• north and south along Towcester Road
• the views of the site from Foot Meadow Park, and from the site to the park
• the views both of St. Peters Church and green from the site and from St. Peters to the site
• the Carlsberg brewery is also a prominent landmark in this part of the town centre.
Existing Views and Vistas
Constraints and Influences

The key constraints and influences on future development are shown in the figure. The key constraints can be summarised as including:

**St. Peters Way** - St. Peters Way is a busy through-route and a dual carriageway which will restrict access to the site from the west-bound carriageway only. The volume of traffic using the route may restrict the opportunity for access points and therefore the existing access locations are likely to offer the greatest potential. The Carlsberg brewery has an access off St. Peters Way and increases in the use of the brewery along with development of the site may require modification of that access. Reductions in through traffic may result from plans being prepared by the County, Borough and WNDC.

**Towcester Road** - similarly, Towcester Road is a heavily used through-route and restrictions may be placed on the points of access that can be achieved to serve the development. Again the existing points of access into the site and Tanner Street may offer the best locations for new access points.

**Pedestrian connectivity** - As a result of the heavily trafficked routes dissecting the site, the quality of pedestrian access is poor. There are few crossings of St. Peters Way and Towcester Road and access to the station is also limited, although improvements to the public realm around the station have made a difference. Access through the western part of the site is not clear and the bridge links across the river are aging and difficult to use, being steep and slippery. There is no access to the eastern part of the site although the footpath along the eastern edge is poorly defined and way marked. There are opportunities to better connect the riverside to the centre and allow for pedestrian movement through the site, particularly better integrating Foot Meadow Park.

**Flood Risk** - The site is liable to flooding and large parts of the site fall within the 1:200 year flood event. The site is defended by flood walls on the northern bank of the river and by flood walls and defences on the south side of the park and alongside the gas works site. The flood defences are managed by the Borough Council and effectively protect large areas of the centre. Access to the defences and river is achieved from the river side rather than the land side. The site will need to be defended in future although in the redevelopment it may be possible for buildings to form the defence and for the river edge to be lowered if an effective defence is maintained. This might for instance include gates which are closed against floods.

**Combined sewer** - a combined surface water and foul sewer runs through the site from Castle Station to the gas works. It runs through the middle of the western site and across the frontage of the gas works. There are also local surface water sewers that cross the site and drain to the river. The combined sewer imposes a 12m way leave, however it does allow development on both the river and road side and therefore does not impose a major constraint.

**Gas Works** - the gas works imposes a major physical and perceptual barrier to investment in the town centre. The two gasometers remain in use and as such impose a health and safety restriction around them, which sterilises large parts of the immediate hinterland from development for residential and other sensitive developments. While these restrictions can be overcome in some instances, and the standards are only advisory, the Health and Safety Executive are likely to object to redevelopment, particularly for housing while the gasometers remain. The perceptual impact is also considerable; the structures are large and dominate the skyline and investors will be reluctant to invest in creating an outstanding development in this location while they remain.
Constraints and Influences
The objectives for the master plan are that it:

- achieves a mixed use scheme that creates a high quality destination within the town centre;
- creates high quality attractive locations for new homes in the centre with a mix of types and tenures;
- achieves major sites for new business development that are capable of attracting the highest quality new investments to significantly boost the quality of offices in the centre;
- optimises views of the riverside and parkland and St. Peters church and Green;
- creates a connected network of high quality pedestrian routes alongside the riverside and through the site to the town centre which are attractive and encourage pedestrian movement; and
- creates a cohesive and coordinated development that combines to achieve a distinctive new townscape in the centre.

The preferred illustrative master plan is shown in the plan. The plan aims to respond to the main frontages offered by the site to the riverside and to St. Peters Way, to create major sites for offices on the gas works site at the main intersection of routes, and create an attractive and active riverside with new leisure and retail uses on the north side and a hotel and business centre on the south side. We also illustrate how the addition of the B&Q site might contribute to the comprehensiveness of the development.
Preferred Option Master Plan
The Urban Design Framework

The Urban Design Framework provides a guiding structure for delivery of the plan identifying the key requirements of each site and the development as a whole. The framework should be read alongside the building heights plan which provides a three-dimensional “envelope” within which the proposed development should comply.

The key requirements set by the Urban Design Framework include:

• buildings which **address the street and river** and developed to form urban blocks **enclosing central amenity spaces**;
• **key landmarks at major gateways** into the centre and at key locations within the development;
• creation of **active frontages** with public uses such as retail and leisure uses, and building entrances at key frontages to encourage public activity on the street;
• the creation of a **major public piazza space** on the riverside to provide a public focus for the development and be a **major new destination in the town centre**;
• to **connect the development across the river** using new and existing bridges to improve connectivity through the site and also encourage use of Foot Meadow Park by people within the development;
• creation of a **strong new landscape with formal street trees** to define the major routes, gardens, formal squares and courtyards to create a rich, colourful and distinctive setting for development;
• to **protect and exploit key view corridors** from and to the development, including views of St. Peters Church from the site and across the site, and views of key prominent buildings from the main approaches to the site;
• an **access strategy** that works to the existing major points of access into the sites, with parking and servicing provided on plot and in a way which minimises its impact on the quality of the external environment; and
• creation of a **network of footpath routes** through and within the development to encourage connections to the waterside.

The framework provides a guide and checklist against which development proposals should be judged. Options will exist in interpreting these requirements and the master plan, while developed with the support of the client group and in consultation with stakeholders, represents one interpretation of how best to meet the urban design objectives; other options will exist and may be equally suitable.
Urban Design Framework Principles
Land Use

The land use proposals are shown in the table and illustrated on the plan.

The key uses are described below.

Hotel
Two hotels are proposed to meet the potential for a high quality conference hotel in the centre and a smaller gateway hotel near the station. The Conference Hotel is located on the south side of the river and provides for around 250 bedrooms with conference facilities on the ground floor along with bars, restaurants and delegate rooms. These public rooms overlook the river and proposed new piazza square created on the river side. The hotel is accessed off Towcester Road and will be a prominent landmark building in the centre.

The second gateway hotel offer potential for between 50-75 bedrooms and is located at a prominent western gateway to the centre and close to Castle Station. This site would have a pedestrian access from the street and road access through the site. Parking could be accommodated on ground level.

Residential Apartments
Three apartment buildings are proposed along the St. Peters Way frontage overlooking St. Peters Church and green. These combine to create a continuous edge and enclosure to the street with breaks for access and for views through the site. The proposals assume parking is located at ground level, which is mostly below the level of the road. The buildings would front onto the street with access from street level. Retail and leisure uses are proposed at the key corners to the buildings to enliven the routes into the site and also provide activity along St. Peters Way itself.

A gateway apartment building is also proposed near to Towcester Road Bridge and overlooking Foot Meadow Park. The building rises towards the road and helps frame the view along Tanner Street to St. Peters Church.

Apartments are also a feature of the eastern development with a major apartment building fronting the river near the Towcester Road Bridge. This building is four storeys and south facing and would continue residential uses along the riverside. The L shaped building combines with the other buildings in this group to define an internal street network which leads towards the piazza space. The residential apartment building would have service and parking uses on the ground floor with accommodation above and would also have retail and leisure uses on the frontage to the piazza.

Two apartment blocks are also proposed on the south side of the development. These blocks combine with the hotel and business centre to create a large urban square, which encloses parking and a garden area. The blocks would be accessed from the service road but would also provide pedestrian access from Towcester Road.

Residential Town Houses
Town houses are proposed along the riverside on the western site. The town houses would be developed close to the river’s edge and overlook the river and Foot Meadow Park. The town houses are planned as three bed units in two terraces, totalling 22 units. Terraces and balconies would exploit the sunny southern outlook and river and park views. Parking and non-habitable rooms would be at ground level. No general public pedestrian access is proposed along this riverside edge, instead the main pedestrian and cycle movement would
Land Use
be into Foot Meadow Park across new bridges and then under Towcester Road bridge to connect with the piazza, and onwards along the river on the current routes.

**Offices**

Offices are proposed on the western site and the eastern site, north and south of the river.

A major landmark office building is proposed at the junction of Towcester Road and St. Peters Way. This might form a single building or a series of buildings combining to create an office complex. It is important that the building has a strong gateway presence to the junction as the building will be visible in routes north south and east west through the centre. We have shown a single building with a central atrium although other configurations could meet these objectives. Access would be via St. Peters Way and Tanner Street with operational parking at basement level.

The eastern site north of the river contains three linear office buildings that combine with the residential building to form a Y shaped arrangement that defines a min pedestrian route through to the riverside. The three buildings are 4 storeys with basement parking which would be accessed from Towcester Road and via St. Peters Way near the Carlsberg entrance. The entrances to the buildings could be located at the ends of the buildings fronting the main streets and also within the internal street where the corners of the buildings coincide, to create a main foyer space. Retail and leisure uses would also be located at the ends of the buildings and along the internal street.

**Offices are also proposed south of the river.** There we propose a business centre development, which provides smaller scale, ‘own front door’ office space and flexible, managed spaces for smaller businesses.

We have also explored the opportunity for a further office building on the B&Q site which also fronts the riverside. This site allows development north and south of the river to be completed and provides an opportunity to mark the route of pedestrian movement along the river from the town centre with a landmark building.

**Retail and Leisure uses**

Small scale retail uses and cafes, bars and restaurants are proposed to frame the main piazza space at the office quarter, and at key corner locations along St. Peters Way to overlook the street and make it more attractive to use. Retail uses might include a convenience store and specialist shops but should meet local needs rather than compete with the town centre retail core. Leisure uses could include cafes, bars, pubs and restaurants. The aim is to build up a critical mass of new restaurant uses to create an evening destination on the waterside. The hotel on the south side is also seen as contributing to this potential with its own restaurants and cafes etc. located to relate well to the river and piazza. Potential may exist for a feature café at the heart of the piazza.

The former gas works offices on St. Peters Way is a prominent building which also offers potential for leisure and retail re-use.
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Development Plots
Building Heights

The building heights across the site are planned to reflect the prominence of certain parts of the development in the structure of the main views, and also to exploit the views across the site to and along the river, and across the park. The predominant building height is four storeys with emphasis provided to exploit key views to key locations within the development.

The key emphasis through variations in the building height are proposed at:

• the gateway hotel as the western gateway to the centre to mark this prominent location in views of the centre;
• the residential blocks on St. Peters Way are raised up and have a ‘penthouse’ level to overlook the three-storey town houses towards the Foot Meadow Park and river;
• the apartment building on the western side near Towcester Road bridge;
• the corners to the hotel offering higher level views into the centre;
• the leading corner to the business centre offices as a main gateway feature; and
• the corner of the office building on the south side of the river seen in long views from St. Peters Way and a marker to the route alongside the river.

The aim is also to exploit the advantages of large flat roofs for amenity spaces for the use of residents and employees. These can either be as gardens or possibly for recreation areas. The roofs may also be used to locate solar water heaters and photo-voltaic panels and for water catchment for grey-water recycling systems.
Building Heights
Landscape and Public Realm

The landscape and public realm proposals have an important role in setting the character and quality of the development. For the riverside to be attractive to investors and to the public then the public realm must be of the highest quality, with robust natural materials used for hard landscaped areas and high quality trees softening and adding colour. The public realm should be designed as a piece, that is, as a comprehensive unified scheme with materials carried through between sites. The landscape and public realm surfaces will help ensure the scheme reads as a single development. The public realm should be simple, uniform and high quality, and be designed to allow access for all.

The main piazza at the heart of the scheme is a major new public space for the town centre and focus for public activity on the site. The proposals provide for a lowering of the riverside to meet the water on the south facing, sunny-side of the river, with a series of broad sweeping terraces, which allow people to sit out and enjoy the river. How this space might be designed is illustrated later in this report.

Garden areas are proposed within the courtyards formed by the buildings which will provide semi-private space for the use of residents and employees of the development. On the south side the courtyard also contains car parking associated with the development but should also allow for a central garden space to be created.

The planting should be rich, colourful and distinctive, and be designed to provide visual interest throughout the year. The strong landscape structure against the simple, robust character of the buildings would create a striking and distinctive effect.
Landscape and Public Realm
Indicative Flood Defence Strategy

The site includes important flood defences that protect large parts of the central area of Northampton. The defences either need to be retained as they are or the site will need to incorporate defences that protect the site and surroundings to the similar 1 in 200 year event level. Consultations with the Environment Agency considered how the development itself might incorporate the defences in a way that makes them less obtrusive and also allow access for pedestrians to the riverside. This explored the buildings themselves providing the defence ‘wall’ in combination with connecting walls and embankments between the buildings, and gates that would shut (in the event of a flood warning) between open streets.

As there is sufficient warning before a flood event occurs then the closing of gates would be acceptable and the proposals attempt to minimise the extent of the gated areas, as shown on the plan. With the gates open pedestrians would be able to walk freely within and between the development areas, and to the riverside areas. The gates would shut after a flood warning and this could be automated to ensure they close together.

Other manual solutions may also be possible. This approach is not dissimilar to that applied in low lying towns such as Kings Lynn. A detailed strategy will need to be developed and agreed with the EA when the final form of development is known.
Indicative Flood Defence Strategy
Access and Circulation

The main proposed points of access for vehicles are shown in the plan. These broadly follow the existing points of access into the site. Tanner Street is retained to allow vehicles to exit onto Towcester Road to then use the roundabout to head south.

Access to the eastern site is via Towcester Road and St. Peters Way access points. The access off St. Peters Way shares the junction with the Carlsberg brewery access and is off the public highway. This access would need to be investigated closely in the light of proposals to intensify vehicle movements at the brewery, the junction itself may need to be signalised at peak times.

The proposals provide for continuous pedestrian public access within the development and along the major street frontages of Towcester Road and St. Peters Way, connections through the sites to connect the town centre and riverside, and access along most parts of the riverside itself. The proposed improved bridge links will connect the development into Foot Meadow Park and encourage use of the park by residents and employees. The existing footpath along the eastern side of the site is retained, as is the bridge across the river.

Two new bridges are proposed to connect with Foot Meadow Park in the west, and the promontory to the park which projects under the Towcester Road bridge is also connected to the north and south banks of the river by new footbridges, allowing pedestrians to avoid a crossing of the busy road. The existing bascule bridge that connects the north and south sides of the gas works sites is also proposed to be retained. The attractiveness of this connection is important in ensuring development south of the river has high quality access to the north and the town centre, and for people to move easily between the two sides of the river.

No detailed traffic assessment has been undertaken of the development, however consultations with the Highways Authority (Northampton County Council) has demonstrated that the access strategy is in principle acceptable, subject to detailed traffic modelling, which would need to accompany a planning application.
Access and Circulation
Car Parking

Car parking provision is shown in the figure. The strategy is to provide parking under and within the building envelope where possible, particularly where the plots are constrained and where the land is at a premium. This will also ensure that the public realm areas are not dominated by parked cars, which will allow for a safe and attractive setting for the development.

There is a slight fall across the site from St. Peters Way to the riverside, which is equivalent to a single floor at the far western end of the site and about a half-floor across the former gas works site. This allows the development to use the change in levels and for parking to be located on the ground floor of the residential buildings fronting St. Peters Way and for a half basement to be developed as the development moves east. The development in the east allows for a single basement below the residential and offices on the northern side, and a combination of basement and surface parking for buildings on the south of the river. We expect remediation of the gas works to involve considerable excavation of the site which may allow the finished basement levels to be created at that stage, thereby saving some of the costs of constructing full basement car parks.
Parking
Phasing

The plan assumes that the site, north and south of the river, are re-developed on a comprehensive basis and that the existing uses are cleared completely. We do not feel there is a viable option for the site to be developed incrementally or for the gas works and gasometers to remain which would achieve the full potential of the site. The gasometers in particular sterilise a large portion of the site due to health and safety considerations and represent an eyesore which severely affects the potential for high quality investment elsewhere on the site.

Given the constraints affecting the site, and the challenges of establishing a new major development location against an uncertain market we therefore consider that a comprehensive approach, offering the site as a single mixed use opportunity, offers the greatest prospect of delivering against the overall objectives.

Once confirmation of the site is confirmed we expect development to proceed from the west to the east, and then from the north to the south. The phasing plans assumes five stages to the development. This allows the sites farthest from the gas works to be developed first while the gas works site is reclaimed.
Indicative Phasing
Preferred Option

View from the south-west of the office hub area
Preferred Option

View from the west of St. Peters Way and Foot Meadow Park
Preferred Option

View from the south
Preferred Option

View from the north-west of Western Gateway
Preferred Option

View along Towcester Road towards the bridge
Preferred Option

View along the river from Towcester Road Bridge looking west
Preferred Option

View of Central Plaza
Preferred Option

View along the river looking east
Preferred Option

View of central offices from Towcester Road
Preferred Option

View along St Peters Way from Carlsberg looking west
Sections

St Peters Way elevation looking south

Riverside elevation looking north