BECKET’S PARK
NORTHAMPTON

STAGE 3:
DEVELOPMENT OF PREFERRED MASTERPLAN
August 2008
BECKET’S PARK, NORTHAMPTON

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August 2008
Halcrow Group Limited

For Northampton Borough Council
BECKET’S PARK, NORTHAMPTON

Stage 3:
DEVELOPMENT OF PREFERRED MASTERPLAN

Contents Amendment Record
This report has been issued and amended as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Signed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Draft for Comments</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>CJT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Final</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>CJT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive summary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Report</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims and Objectives of Stage 3 Masterplan Development</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision for the Park</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masterplan Development</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification and Development of Options</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Options against Key Objectives</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Preferred Masterplan</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details of Preferred Masterplan</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Options Appraisal</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Funding</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for Money</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational Costs and Funding</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Proofing</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Policy Evaluation</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masterplan Delivery</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1 - Environment Agency Northampton Vision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2 – Funding Matrix</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"Becket’s Park is our town centre park. It should be a place for people of all ages to relax and spend some time, daytime, weekend and evenings. Soon it will be at the heart of major developments to provide new places for people to live and work. Becket’s Park will be a key reason why people will want to live and work in our town centre and close to our riverside.

This Masterplan is an exciting project to breathe new life into Becket’s Park and its riverside and to end a long period of neglect. The river and park will create a gateway to the centre of Northampton, contributing to our town’s regeneration. It will contribute to the local economy, creating a place that people will go out of their way to visit.

This project will create a new focus to the River Nene, opening up access to the river and strengthening links through the town, ensuring that Northampton makes the most of the river at its heart.

This is a vision for Becket’s Park which is realistic and achievable. With the help of all of those who have an interest in and around Becket’s Park, we intend to make this reality.

As Northamtonians and users of Becket’s Park we are proud to be involved in this project.”

Trini Crake
Portfolio Holder for the Environment

Richard Church
Portfolio Holder for Regeneration
Acknowledgements

We wish to thank everyone who contributed to the Becket’s Plan Preferred Masterplan development process. In particular, we are grateful to all the stakeholders and consultees, both groups and individuals, who attended the various events, gave good advice, voiced their opinions and answered all our questions. Thanks also to NBC officers and members of the steering committee for their guidance.

The Halcrow team was assisted by GVA Grimley, D5 Architects and the public artists Eaton and Waygood Associates.
Executive summary

1 Introduction

This is a summary of the Becket's Park Stage 3 Development of Preferred Masterplan Report dated August 2008. The full report sets out the process and findings of the studies that have been carried out by Halcrow Group Ltd to develop the Preferred Masterplan as commissioned by Northampton Borough Council. The annotated version of the Preferred Masterplan is attached for information.

2 Vision for the Park

Through extensive consultation with stakeholders, the clear Vision is that Becket's Park should be “A Park for Everyone” and “High Quality, Innovative and Sustainable”.

3 Masterplan Development

The development of the Preferred Masterplan was a three stage process: Stage 1 was the carrying out of baseline studies and assessments and identification of options and opportunities; Stage 2 was the evaluation and development of the various options that had been identified; Stage 3 was the refining of the preferred option to include broad costings. These stages were all undertaken with the benefit of extensive consultation with stakeholders and the final preferred option was approved in July 2008. This option has been drawn up and the final report has been completed.

4 Evaluation of Options against Key Objectives

Key Objectives for the Masterplan were defined prior to the commencement of the studies, and the options and final Preferred Masterplan have been evaluated continually against these objectives. The Stage 3 Report concludes that the Preferred Masterplan meets or exceeds all the Key Objectives.
Details of Preferred Masterplan

Urban and Landscape Structure: The historical layout of the park has been broadly respected, maintaining the grand lines of avenues and vistas and the asset of the green, open space at the centre of the park. Additionally, an important visual link from the high point of the park towards Delapre Abbey to the south has been established, and which should be carried through the proposed Avon redevelopment site. The park will provide a variety of facilities and spaces within which many different activities, formal and informal recreation can be enjoyed. The land uses and activities have been organised to create a number of activity zones bringing together compatible uses. These comprise:

- Visitor centre hub with café, information centre, restaurant, pub and health spa
- Display gardens including exhibition and contemplation areas
- Plaza for events and displays
- Residential development - townhouses forming western boundary of park
- Marina (Environment Agency project) with moorings, chandlery, facilities for boaters, boat sales and hire
- Play areas for all ages
- Health and wellness garden with pensioners' play and fitness equipment.

Buildings: The new buildings in the park will be contemporary landmarks of excitement and relevance, with positive ecological and sustainable credentials and where situated within the flood plain it will be elevated on 'stilts'. The existing Sea Cadets base will be refurbished or re-built.

Bridges, Gateways and Landmarks: New pedestrian and emergency / disabled access bridges are planned as part of the wider development proposals to provide easier access to and from the town centre. These will be designed to provide dramatic and welcoming entrances and landmarks and will create a positive image for the park. Artist-designed gateways at the park’s four main points of entry are also proposed to attract people and define the spirit of Becket’s Park to the visitor.

Water and Water Features: The river is the main water element but the boating lake is also a valuable, though underused and neglected, asset. The Environment Agency intends to develop the boating lake into a new marina with 60+ moorings which will provide the catalyst for new facilities and other riverside amenities to be developed which will encourage river users to spend time in the town. The theme of water and its historic importance to the town will be incorporated into the detailed designs through terracing to the river edge thus improving access to the water, water features, interpretation and public art, wildlife and sustainable use of the resource.

Street Furniture: A range particular to Becket’s Park of high quality will be installed.

Public Art and Interpretation: Public art will be an integral part of the landscape structure of the new park. Public art elements will mark gateways, create landmarks and vistas and will provide interpretation, signage and other details.

Cultural Heritage: A comprehensive cultural interpretive network will be established, highlighting features such as Becket’s Well and other archaeological artefacts.

Transport and Links: The objective is to maximise sustainable links to the surrounding area. A new network of shared-use footpaths for pedestrians and cycles is proposed. Kiosks will provide details of sustainable transport options to and from the park. Vehicle access into the park will be for emergency, maintenance and service vehicles only and parking will be restricted. Ten access points into the park will be redesigned and improved.
Health, Sport, Play and Leisure: Health and well-being underpin the approach to the development of the design of the Preferred Masterplan. The design allows many different activities to take place, from informal sitting, gathering, walking, cycling and running to new play areas for children from toddlers to teens, fitness equipment for older people, boating, Tai’chi, yoga, dance, art, music and drama. A Health and Wellness garden is also proposed near the hospital site. A skatepark can be accommodated within the layout but will need to be subject to further studies.

6 Options Appraisal

A value for money solution for Becket’s Park will be developed. Two options have been appraised: Option A includes the residential units, commercial floorspace, marina and a variety of associated facilities and landscape improvements and Option B includes the same elements plus the skate park. Option B costs are considerably higher than Option A costs due to the skatepark. Expert opinion states that the proximity of a skatepark to high-end commercial uses may have detrimental effects on the value of the scheme. Therefore the funding gap is much greater for Option B than for Option A. A number of potential funding streams have been identified. New jobs will be generated and the scheme will bring several qualitative benefits such as reduction in crime, health improvements, bringing people together and fostering social ties. Companies are attracted to locations that offer well-designed, well-managed public places and these in turn attract customers, employees and services.
7  **Sustainability Proofing**

A Sustainability Proofing exercise has been carried out alongside the development of the Preferred Masterplan using core objectives. The project team has embedded sustainability into the proposals from the earliest stage. Many opportunities have been identified and these will be carried forwards to the next stage of the process.

8  **Planning Policy Evaluation**

The Preferred Masterplan conforms to all levels of planning policy from national to local level because the development proposed for Becket's Park has sought to balance the need for development with the need to protect and enhance the local environment.

9  **Masterplan Delivery**

The property market in the UK is currently uncertain due to the economic climate. In order to provide NBC with the most advantageous method of capitalising on the proposed commercial and residential elements of the proposals for Becket's Park, a site disposal strategy has been produced.

In order to obtain the outline planning consent which will be required for prospective operators, a number of further studies and investigations will need to be carried out. These will enable detailed plans to be drawn up. Further discussions should be held with potential 'end users' to firm up their requirements and the financial terms of any leases upon which they would transact. Following receipt of an outline planning consent the opportunity could then be marketed by way of inviting Expressions of Interest from developers, utilising agreed Procurement Procedures.

10  **Conclusion**

A clear and viable vision for the future of Becket's Park has been secured through the development of the Preferred Masterplan. This vision has been arrived at through several years of extensive assessment, consultation and evaluation and has now been demonstrated to be desirable, feasible and deliverable. However, the practicalities of further consultation, site-specific studies and assessments, detailed design, planning processes and the securing of funding will require additional work.

The conclusion of the development of the Preferred Masterplan is one of many steps in a long process. As large-scale strategies are explored in more detail, issues emerge which may not have been identified in the initial stages. The vision and goals are clear, but the route to their attainment needs to be carefully planned. The collective will and enthusiasm to implement the Becket's Park project for the wider profitability of the town and its surrounds are unequivocal.

August 2008
1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Report
In March 2008, Halcrow Group Ltd was appointed by Northampton Borough Council (NBC) to produce a detailed Masterplan for Becket’s Park with the future aim of securing funding and implementing the proposals.

This report sets out the process and findings of the studies that have been carried out to develop the Preferred Masterplan.

For background information on the study and its aims and objectives, the Stage 1 Baseline Report (Halcrow June 2008) should be referred to. This provides a comprehensive overview of the existing situation by way of a full review of existing data, site survey and appraisal, issues and constraints, socio-economic analysis and funding regimes, opportunities and a preliminary economic analysis of key uses for Becket’s Park.

The Stage 1 Report formed the basis for the Stage 2 Options Development and Appraisal Report (Halcrow June 2008) which set out the interim process of the development of options and ongoing evaluation of the proposals against the key objectives. This report has in turn formed the basis for this third and final stage, Stage 3 Development of Preferred Masterplan.

1.2 Aims and Objectives of Stage 3 Masterplan Development
The aims and objectives of Stage 3 are as follows:
- Production and submission of Final [or “Preferred”] Masterplan
- Production and Submission of Final Stage 3 Report, to contain Economic Appraisal and Sustainability Proofing.

1.3 Vision for the Park
One of the key objectives of Stages 1 and 2 was to define a Vision for the park. Through extensive consultation with stakeholders, the clear Vision is that Becket’s Park should be

“A Park for Everyone”
and
“High Quality, Innovative and Sustainable”
2. Masterplan Development

2.1 Identification and Development of Options
Following the Stage 1 Baseline Studies, Stage 2 commenced in mid-May 2008 with a Design Workshop attended by the design and evaluation team members, the client, and representatives from the steering group which is overseeing the process. The opportunities which had been identified during Stage 1 were discussed and debated and those which fulfilled the criteria set out in the brief and Key Objectives and which had been broadly endorsed during the stakeholder consultation events were approved for further evaluation in Stage 2.

Stage 2 involved more in-depth analysis of the various options in terms of their appropriateness and robustness in a number of areas and these are discussed in more detail in that report. Further public, internal and external consultation was carried out including an exhibition of the options at an event held in Delapre Park on June 14th 2008.

The findings presented in the Stage 1 Report were re-evaluated and updated where necessary to take into account the ongoing assessments. Plans and illustrations of the alternative layouts based on these options were produced.

The original intention of Stage 2 was to identify two or three different layouts, the different elements of which would need to be more fully evaluated and either discounted or included in the Preferred Masterplan at the end of Stage 2. When the various opportunities were drawn up on the site plans, however, it was evident that none were mutually exclusive and all could potentially be included in the final design. It was therefore agreed that two options would be presented, Option A to illustrate the layout without a skate park and Option B with a skate park; but whether or not the skate park was taken forwards – the issues surrounding this element are discussed in more detail later in this report – all the other opportunities would be incorporated into the Preferred Masterplan, subject to the outcome of the last stage of economic appraisal, cost estimates and identification and evaluation of potential sources of funding.

2.2 Evaluation of Options against Key Objectives

The Key Objectives for the Becket’s Park Masterplan were identified at the outset of the study and the proposed options have been continually evaluated against these Objectives, as set out in detail in the Stage 2 Options Development and Appraisal Report (Halcrow June 2008).

The results of the evaluation process are set out below:

2.2.1 Design Philosophy
There has been unequivocal support from stakeholders and consultees for high quality, contemporary design that should be applied to all elements of the park, from built structures and landscape to signage and public art. Becket’s Park provides an opportunity to set high standards that will define Northampton town’s aspirations for the future. When the Avon, Nunn Mills and Ransome Road developments to the south are implemented, Becket’s Park’s identity and character will change from an under-used park at the town’s edge to an important and strategic green open space at the centre of an intensively developed, 21st century townscape (see Figure 1: Existing situation – aerial photograph). The Park cannot be designed in isolation from its surroundings and the ongoing, widespread initiatives in the area, therefore the masterplanning team has taken an extensive overview of the wider context and considered the Park’s contribution to Northampton and the region as a whole.

The design philosophy for the Park is based on a firm commitment to quality and is robust enough to positively influence that of future developments in the surrounding areas. Most important is the need for the Becket’s Park proposals to form an integral part of the process of developing any brief and design guidance for the adjacent sites.

A strong design philosophy is to form the basis for a holistic approach to proposals.

This section presents a series of broad design principles, based upon the previously described study objectives. The results of stakeholder consultations and options assessment has led to the formulation of a clear design philosophy based upon the concept of a ‘Park for Everyone’.
Figure 1  Existing situation - aerial photograph
Becket’s Park must be planned, designed, maintained and managed to provide a high quality, diverse, readily accessible and safe landscape that is available to all groups of users. It is to be treated as an essential, multi-functional community facility which will cater for a range of events and activities and have a selection of well-used facilities that meet local needs.

In order to successfully integrate a range of different uses and activities it is important to adopt an holistic design approach in which the different parts of the park are woven together into a ‘seamless’ landscape design.

A comprehensive approach to the redesign of the park is required in order to fully realise the potential of this important green space and respond to community demand for new facilities. It is essential that the park regeneration is tackled on a range of fronts addressing both physical design issues and the promotion of new activities, events and community involvement.

It is also important that the design of the park is fully integrated with the surrounding area. In particular, the numerous development sites in the immediate vicinity of the park need to be strongly linked to the park, both in terms of physical connections such as cycle and footpaths and also in terms of compatible uses and activities and character.

The quality of public open space is a key aspect of urban design. The aim for designers is to create a linked network of diverse public spaces including both green spaces and more urban public spaces such as squares and pedestrian streets. This part of Northampton has a range of existing public spaces which will be augmented by new development opportunities in the Avon/Nunn Mills area.

The open space network should be multi-functional and incorporate ecological assets, activity areas, recreational facilities and be linked with routes for walking and cycling. The aim is to provide attractive green transport corridors and leisure routes. In this respect Becket’s Park forms part of a series of ‘events’ and a network of spaces accommodating different activities linking the town centre with the river corridor. By creating a series of linked ‘waterside spaces,’ it is possible to create spaces to stop, and features for people to see.

New public space should be designed to be purposeful, meaningful, well integrated, and with a distinctive identity. A strong network of public open space is important both in terms of human use but also in terms of protecting ecological systems and processes.

Diversity should be considered in relation to people and their activities as much as to built form and public spaces. Built form helps shape the life of a place, but it is people who add liveliness and fun. Variety is fundamental to creating a place with its own character, visual interest and activity. Accordingly, a well functioning place should cater for a range of lifestyles and activities, and should respond to the local community.

2.2.2 Sustainability

As set out in the Stage 1 Baseline Report, in line with best practice, an ongoing Sustainability Proofing exercise has been undertaken in line with the development of the Preferred Masterplan to help embed sustainability into all aspects of the plan.

The Sustainability Proofing methodology is set out in Chapter 4.

Sustainability is to be at the core of the design principles and objectives

The park must be sustainable in the long term. The key elements to be considered are:

- Sourcing of materials (i.e. minimising length and number of vehicle trips)
- Energy efficiency and renewable energy
- Sustainable drainage
- Life time environmental costs of materials used.

Materials: The design will address sustainability issues through the specification of long-lasting, durable and robust materials, thus taking account of lifetime costs and not just simply construction costs.
Adaptability: New development needs to be flexible enough to respond to future changes in use, lifestyle and demography. This means designing for energy and resource efficiency, creating flexibility in the use of property, public spaces and service infrastructure and introducing new approaches to parking. New buildings within and adjacent to the park should be flexible to accommodate changes of use and circumstances through changing social, technological and economic conditions. This should be achieved not just in terms of building design but particularly in the issues which affect the public realm such as the overall layout and the type of activities and uses provided.

Maintenance and management: Good maintenance is an essential part of creating a 'cared for' environment. The Preferred Masterplan will embrace sustainable management and maintenance approaches. Management and maintenance should be considered from the outset, and the design should consider how the development will function over time and what the maintenance implications are likely to be. Recycling facilities for day-to-day waste should also be incorporated into the park.

2.2.3 Water

Water is the main asset and is to be exploited fully

Water is integral to the design of Becket’s Park. The central location of Becket’s Park and its waterfront on the River Nene between the town centre and new development on the Avon/Nunn Mill’s/ Ransom Road sites makes the park a key strategic space. Indeed, the strategic importance of the river corridor, which is a central, linking element through Northampton, is recognised in most of the current local and regional initiatives. One of the key objectives of the development of the park is to encourage visitors from the river corridor to make more use of the town, and one of the main aims of the Preferred Masterplan is to change the river from acting as a barrier to movement in this area, to being a central focus and linking element for the whole town. The aim is to create a vibrant park and waterfront area which promotes activity and creates a greater sense of community safety.

The marina proposed by the Environment Agency will act as a draw to river users and attract more people into the park from the town and vice versa. It is therefore seen as an integral element of the Preferred Masterplan.

The theme of water and its historic importance to the town has been incorporated into the Preferred Masterplan through improved access to the river frontage by terracing, opening up views to the water, water features, interpretation and public art, wildlife and sustainable use of the resource.

2.2.4 Clear Identity for the Park

This links to the section on Design Philosophy above.

A clear identity is to be created through distinctive landmarks, building, structures and artwork throughout

Respecting Context and Character: Good design comes from a thorough understanding of place and context. The CABE publication ‘By Design’ (2000) and the English Partnerships and Housing Corporation publication ‘Urban Design Compendium’ (2000) both promote the importance of context in urban design. The analysis of the existing character of Becket’s Park forms the basis for developing a distinctive identity for the park.

A new identity for Becket’s Park will be primarily based upon the formulation of new activity areas, which respect the landscape character of the park and integrate new uses, activities and facilities into the overall landscape. In particular, the location of key landmarks and the definition of strong views and vistas will be a key tool in creating a positive identity to visitors from the wider area.

The park’s identity will also be created through distinctive buildings, new gateway features, structures and artwork throughout. Local distinctiveness will also be strengthened by the use of a unified palette of good quality materials, and the introduction of an appropriate range of park furniture, planting, lighting and signage and public art.
In terms of public art, the best process for making this happen is the development of the preferred design and detailed proposals through an in-depth Public Art Strategy. In order for maximum benefits to be enjoyed throughout the area, the Art Strategy for Becket’s Park should be intrinsically linked with a wider Art Strategy for the river corridor, town and surrounding areas. As previously stated, public art can bring together a wide range of initiatives, from skills training and education to commerce and events.

Preliminary ideas for iconic gateway and other art features have been produced. Public Art, as noted throughout this report, is an important element which can link otherwise disparate features.

Image and Brand: In order to create a distinctive brand for Becket’s Park and this stretch of the Nene Valley corridor it is important that the redesign of Becket’s Park is associated with a quality product. This is not only in terms of new design work and materials, but also in terms of the activities and future maintenance.

The main aim is to make the park and river corridor associated with positive activities and identified as a key tourism and leisure destination point. By improving access and key views to the adjacent development area, the park and river corridor can once again become a central part of the Northampton townscape and create a more positive image for this area.

Gateways and Landmarks: The way the park is perceived by new visitors is very important, and first impressions can be decisive. Gateways play an important role in creating attractive and inviting entrances to parks, which encourage visitors to enter.

A unique identity for the park and the river corridor can be achieved by enhancing existing landmarks and by creating new ones. Landmarks such as distinctive buildings, or features of a building, help to provide reference points and enhance the legibility of a town. Landmark buildings are often used to terminate vistas along key vistas, to define key pedestrian routes, and are placed at key nodal points such as road junctions and gateways.

The presence of landmark buildings and important public spaces help assist legibility for both local people and visitors alike. The public realm can also incorporate public art, both as part of street furniture, and also as individual pieces.

Landmark buildings provide the opportunity to make an architectural statement by providing a focus and vertical emphasis to the landscape. The treatment of these buildings should be in keeping with their townscape and landscape role in terms of scale, materials, style and detailing.

Recognisable landmarks should be developed at key locations, such as corners, to enhance the legibility of the built environment and assist people in building a coherent ‘mental map’ of their neighbourhood. Developments should also define vistas and focal points and all routes should be legible for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists who use the area. Public art can also play an important role in creating local landmarks and should be located at key locations.

Linkages Improved
This objective is also linked to the water-related objectives, and covers transport.

Linkages will be improved, to be comprehensive and cohesive, and with clear signage and interpretation

The objectives were set out to ensure that linkages to the surrounding development, the town and wider river corridor were clearly identified and provided. The aim was also to improve linkages for all modes of transport, with particular emphasis on more sustainable modes of transport to and from Becket’s Park.

The Preferred Masterplan has identified key linkages to the existing transport infrastructure and to existing areas of demand, namely the following:

- Northampton Town Centre;
- Retail / Residential Development to the west of Becket’s Park;
- Hospital site to the northeast of Becket’s Park; and
- Proposed Employment / Residential development to the south of the River Nene.
The identified routes have been considered and measures identified to provide or enhance any existing routes.

These links into the park and throughout the park itself (between the proposed amenities and access points) will be clearly defined through ‘gateway treatments’ and appropriate levels of signage.

**A Legible Layout:** The Preferred Masterplan proposals aim to promote walking, cycling and public transport as the principle means of access to the park. The Preferred Masterplan provides a network of routes for pedestrians and cyclists within the park and ensures that these are strongly linked to the surrounding area. The aim is to provide direct, safe and legible linkages between the river corridor, the town centre and the surrounding area. New development presents an opportunity to create new bridges or crossing places over the river and to enhance existing crossing facilities. It is essential that these new links are integrated into the wider pedestrian and cycle network and are closely related to emerging development proposals.

**Figure 2** Existing situation - surrounding areas

**Signage and Interpretation:** A key aim of the Preferred Masterplan is to provide a coherent approach to the provision of interpretation boards and finger-post signage in the park. A clear, new signage strategy will need to be developed and implemented to ensure the successful and optimum use of the new and improved links. Signage should promote local destinations and facilities and provide information of interest to visitors. Interpretation has also been identified as an important new element within the park, giving relevant and interesting references and links to local history and culture, wildlife, water and other features. Examples include Becket’s Well, the town ditch, the Mackintosh House and local theatres. Both signage and interpretation strategies should be undertaken in close collaboration with the future Art Strategy and branding for the park and, very importantly, with other agencies and stakeholders outside the park study area.

**Activities and Events**

*Activity will be encouraged through the creation of interactive and passive places and spaces for walking, cycling and local events*

The consultation processes and assessments have resulted in a clear need and support for the park to provide a variety of facilities and spaces within which many different activities and events can be enjoyed, although there was consensus during consultation that Becket’s Park was not the optimum venue for large-scale organised events since other parks in Northampton fulfil this role more appropriately.

The Preferred Masterplan aims to create a vibrant park and waterfront by promoting appropriate activities and land uses to ensure that the public realm is well-used. This is to be achieved by the provision of a series of new educational, play and leisure facilities which promote activity and provide a series of key destination points throughout the park. The location of particular activities together seeks to cluster compatible uses and minimise any potential conflicts between users.

Land use significantly affects the way the public realm is used. It is important that proposed uses within and adjacent to the park are people-generating uses, in order to encourage increased activity throughout the day and into the evening.
BECKET’S PARK NORTHAMPTON - STAGE 3: DEVELOPMENT OF MASTERPLAN

The Preferred Masterplan seeks to promote the park as a venue for a range of activities from sport to education, from play to informal leisure and relaxation, making them relevant to the local communities and – most importantly - to the changing way people will live in the 21st century. The park should also be designed and managed to be socially inclusive, promoting and supporting social interaction and being accessible to all potential users.

2.2.7 Environmental Improvements for Wildlife

Environmental improvements for wildlife will be created and improved through habitat creation, restoration and enhancement.

The Preferred Masterplan aims to protect and enhance existing habitats where appropriate, and to promote the interpretation and understanding of the importance of wildlife along this stretch of river corridor. Environmental improvements for wildlife will occur through appropriate habitat creation, restoration and enhancement. The natural resources of the river and lake will be exploited to create an exemplar sustainable community facility.

2.2.8 Safety

To design the public realm to address issues of community safety and reduce opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour with the context of good urban design principles.

Safety and Security: Design has a crucial role to play in delivering and creating a safe and secure environment. Addressing safety and security issues should be seen in the context of wider urban design objectives. A primary aim of the Preferred Masterplan is to ensure that the park feels safe and secure by promoting natural surveillance and activity.

In April 2004 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Home Office published the Government’s guidance on safety and security in the built environment, ‘Safer Places’. The document sets out the seven attributes of urban design that are particularly relevant to crime prevention:

1. **Access and Movement**: places with well defined routes, spaces and entrances that provide for convenient movement without compromising security;
2. **Structure**: places that are structured so that different uses do not cause conflict;
3. **Natural Surveillance**: places where all publicly accessible spaces are overlooked;
4. **Ownership**: places that promote a sense of ownership, respect, territorial responsibility and community;
5. **Physical Protection**: places that include necessary, well-designed security features;
6. **Activity**: places where the level of human activity is appropriate to the location and creates a reduced risk of crime and a sense of safety at all times;
7. **Management and Maintenance**: places that are designed with management and maintenance in mind, to discourage crime in the present and the future.

Natural Surveillance: Sensitive urban design can contribute significantly to reducing actual and perceived crime within a neighbourhood. The informal security afforded by busy places and spaces which are well overlooked will help nurture an inherently safer and more appealing environment. Any development should maximise opportunities for overlooking and contribute to a well-defined and visible public realm. Mixing uses and providing a greater variety of activities in new development will encourage natural surveillance. Natural surveillance in the form of doors and windows overlooking streets and pedestrian routes, (and therefore creating activity throughout the day and evening) are essential in making these routes safe and comfortable for a user. Boundary treatments should not impede or prevent visual permeability / surveillance of the public realm. The design of the Preferred Masterplan is intended to reduce the current problems of anti-social activity in the park through this approach.
2.2.9 Flood Risk

To address flood risk in the design of the park and ensure that the existing level of flood risk is not worsened in the area.

The aim of the Preferred Masterplan is to respect the existing River Nene floodplain by locating the majority of new buildings outside the 1 in 100 year (+20%) flood plain boundary. The exception to this is the visitor centre which is considered a building use compatible to waterside recreation uses.

It is planned that the design of the visitor centre will be worked up in partnership with the Environment Agency to ensure that the building has exemplary green credentials and is seen as best practice in terms of addressing flood risk and climate change issues. A key aspect of the design of the buildings will be to address flood storage issues.

Flood extents on the Becket’s Park site have been derived using the English Partnership’s hydraulic model of the Upper Nene, for the case that the English Partnerships Upton Flood Attenuation Area (FAA) scheme upstream of Northampton is implemented (due to complete in autumn 2008). The Upton FAA scheme acts to reduce flood levels in Northampton compared to the situation before its implementation. The Becket’s Park site would not be developed until the Upton FAA scheme has been completed. The derived flood extents are for the 200-year and 1000-year return period floods with climate change allowance.

Land in Northampton within the 200-year flood extent is considered to be in PPS25 flood risk Zone 3 and land between the 200-year and 1000-year flood extents to be in Zone 2. Subject to consultation with the Environment Agency, the part of the site inside the 200-year return period flood extent shown could therefore be considered to be in Zone 3, and the part between the 200-year and 1000-year return period flood extents in Zone 2. Zone 3 is partitioned into Zones 3a and 3b where 3b is the functional floodplain (the part within the 20-year return period flood extent or designed to flood during extreme events).

PPS25 specifies appropriate development types for each flood risk zone. However, to direct development away from higher flood risk areas the PPS25 sequential test should be passed to demonstrate that there are no reasonably available alternative sites within lower flood risk zones. Northampton Borough Council’s redevelopment of Becket’s Park arguably has no alternative locations. The sequential test should also be applied to locating development within a site.

For Zone 2, all development types are considered appropriate except for highly vulnerable (defined in PPS25), for which the PPS25 exception test would have to be passed. For Zones 3a and 3b water compatible development is considered appropriate with less vulnerable development also appropriate for Zone 3a. The exception test would have to be passed for more vulnerable development in Zone 3a.
2.3 Development of Preferred Masterplan

The elements included in Stage 2 Options A and B were re-evaluated and refined in order to produce a draft Preferred Masterplan. This draft Preferred Masterplan was presented to stakeholders on 23rd July 2008. It was subsequently approved, and then agreed that subject to some minor adjustments, the final Preferred Masterplan should be taken to completion.

2.4 Details of Preferred Masterplan

The section below describes the different elements of the Preferred Masterplan in more detail. The proposals are shown on Figure 5: Annotated Masterplan and Figures 6-8: Axonometric and Perspectives.

2.4.1 Urban and Landscape Structure

The historical layout of the park has been based upon a simple diagonal structure (as seen from historic maps) providing an east-west route linking to the former railway station to the west of the park, and a north-east to south-west route linking to the river, with angled vistas. As the park developed, a towpath along the waterfront was constructed providing an additional east-west route.

The Preferred Masterplan aims to respect this historic layout. The diagonal structure provides direct routes through the park and important vistas have been created by the planting of tree avenues. Additionally, an important link from the southern edge of the town towards Delapre Abbey to the south has been identified. The main axis of this link runs predominantly through the Avon and Ransome Road sites and in this respect is beyond the remit of the Becket’s Park proposals. However, the Preferred Masterplan has respected this visual axis from the highest part of the site (almost opposite Becket’s Well) and the landscape scheme keeps a clear visual corridor from north to south towards Delapre.

Land uses and activities: The consultation processes and assessments have resulted in a clear need and support for the park to provide a variety of facilities and spaces within which many different activities can be enjoyed. The approach to the Preferred Masterplan has been to consider both purpose-built elements and spaces for specific activities as well as flexible spaces within which singular or group activities and events and exhibitions can take place.

The land uses and activities have been organised to create a number of activity zones or hubs bringing together compatible uses. These uses are not only considered compatible in terms of the specific activities (e.g. clustered quiet/contemplative uses) but also in commercial terms (e.g. residential clusters with pub, restaurant and health spa). The zones are set out below:

- Visitor centre hub
  - Café/Information centre/Restaurant
  - Pub/Restaurant
  - Health spa

- Display Gardens
  - Exhibition garden
  - Contemplation garden

- Plaza and Events Area
  - Civic space for eventsDISPLAYS

- Residential
  - Town houses forming western boundary of park

- Marina area
  - Moorings
  - Chandlery
  - Facilities for boaters
  - Toilets
  - Boat sales/Boat hire

- Play facilities
  - Skateboard park
  - Children’s play areas
  - Adventure play area

- Health area
  - Health and wellness garden
  - Pensioners play and fitness equipment.
Figure 4  Preferred masterplan with land use zones
Figure 5  Preferred masterplan Annotated
Figure 6  Preferred masterplan axonometric
The location of these activity areas has also been considered in terms of their adjacency to other areas, such as the health garden’s proximity to the hospital. Similarly, the location of more commercial uses on the western side of the park will take advantage of their location adjacent to the marina, food retail store and a direct route between the southern development areas and the town centre.

It should be emphasised that the success and uptake of many such activities can only be guaranteed so far by design, and it is recommended that in the future, initiatives are set up that encourage and allow local people, groups and clubs to operate in these spaces on a regular basis, with good management and publicity (for example, a park newsletter, website, posters etc.), and networking. Mention has been made by stakeholders of water-based regattas which took place in the park in the past and this should be investigated further by the appropriate parties.

The green, open space at the centre of the park is recognised as a very important asset which should be conserved. Both visually and physically it adds a great deal to the quality of the area. The Preferred Masterplan has retained the integral openness of this part of the park, and has relocated the optional skatepark from previous iterations to relate more closely to more active uses such as the children’s play areas.

The existing bowling greens and tennis courts in the park have been reported as being under-used and financially unviable to maintain and run. Consultation indicated a strong preference for these facilities to be removed in order to make way for new features. The equipment in the children’s play area is in good repair but the location of the area could be moved to improve axes through the park.
Figure 9  Concept detail image - the central avenue, looking West
Figure 10  Concept detail image - Exhibition gardens
Figure 11  Concept detail image - Contemplation garden (with town sump)
2. **Buildings**

Strongly contemporary in design, the new suite of park buildings takes advantage of the opportunity to create further new landmarks within the park. There is a tradition of park buildings embracing everything from pavilions to bandstands with an often distinctive architectural slant. Taking this forward into a new building cluster for Becket’s Park will be a particular design challenge. Through considerations of this architectural heritage of park building, current issues of sustainability, and the likely uses of the buildings, it will be possible to deliver buildings of excitement and relevance, with positive ecological and sustainable credentials. As with recent building in places such as the Eden Project it would be desirable to utilise wind and solar technologies to add to the innovative nature and landmark qualities of the buildings. Materials such as stainless steel, glass and timber, as well as green roofs and even the use of some recycled materials, could all be utilised. An illustration of the building concept is shown on Figure 12: Buildings overview and Figure 13: Café overlooking river – concept image.

In response to the proposals developed through Stages 1 and 2 of the feasibility study, the Preferred Masterplan identifies a number of key buildings that will establish Becket’s Park as a major recreational gateway to Northampton and provide a necessary funding stream for the development of the park landscape and river frontage. The buildings proposed comprise the following:

**Residential Development:** It is proposed that the land to the west and north of the park along the old railway embankment be planned for residential development. This will create an urban edge to the park with active frontages along the primary route from the town, through the park to the new bridge linking with the marina development and the future Nunn Mills development. The lower section of housing will also contribute to the public plaza and events area.
The residential block will replace the existing railway embankment and continue from the existing river front residential development. Block 1 closest to the river will comprise a minimum of 11 no., 3 storey (3 bedroom) town houses with views looking over the river and the public plaza. Block 2 will comprise a minimum of 12 no. 3 storey (3 bedroom) town houses leading up to Victoria Promenade and forming part of the park entrance gateway to the new central avenue. The residential units are based on a total floor area per unit of 1750 sq ft. The total site area identified for the residential development is approximately 37461 sq ft (excluding the area required for the vehicle access).

As part of the Preferred Masterplan it is proposed that a new access road be created as the primary emergency, service and maintenance vehicle access to the park. This route would also provide vehicle access to serve the new residential development. However this new route would require negotiation with the adjacent land owners as it lies outside the land owned by NBC.
Leisure Development: The new east / west street runs from the entrance to the park from Victoria Promenade in front of the residential blocks and down through the public plaza and on to the river. The new leisure buildings are thus located to address both the river frontage and the new plaza.

Leisure building 1 is to be developed as a pub/ restaurant (Pitcher and Piano or similar) and offers a total of 5800 sq ft on two floors (ground 3200 sq ft/ first 2600 sq ft). External seating areas are available on the public plaza at ground floor level and on the private terrace at first floor level to facilitate outdoor eating / drinking, taking advantage of the location and views.

Leisure building 2 is to be developed as a health spa (Dove Health Spas or similar) and is again located on the northern edge of the plaza to define the space and optimise river views whilst allowing visible connection with the park to the north. This building offers a total of 4000 sq ft on two floors (ground 2100 sq ft/ first 1900 sq ft).

Leisure building 3 is the main park building and is located on the south-eastern edge of the public plaza addressing the square, the river and the park to the north. This building is located in the flood plain and is therefore built on ‘stilts’ to raise it above the flood level. The building is built off a deck that starts on the square and continues out over the river to provide seating areas for the café / restaurant. The building is to be developed to provide a park café, information centre, interpretation and toilets at ground floor level with a high quality first floor restaurant with riverside views and terraces.

This building offers a total of 6800 sq ft on two floors which has been split up as follows:
Ground floor café/coffee shop (Costa Coffee or similar) - 1300sq ft
Ground floor interpretation and information centre including toilets - 1900 sq ft
First floor restaurant (Pizza Express/Ziggy’s or similar) - 3600sq ft.

Environment Agency Building: The existing EA building on the small island located adjacent to the lock would be re-opened by the EA to provide information specifically about the river and the marina and to manage boat hire and river taxis from this location. It is also the intention of the EA to create a picnic area on the existing green space to the south west of the building. Funding for this work is envisaged to be part of the marina development and therefore sourced through the EA.
Sea Cadets Base: The Sea Cadets currently occupy a building to the south of the proposed marina development. It is considered appropriate that they remain in this location as their activities are widely supported and are considered to be in keeping with the intended marina and riverside focus of the park. Whist this is the case, the quality of the building will not be of sufficient quality within the context of the proposed redevelopment of the park and it currently belies the quality of the contribution to the local area of the organisation. It is therefore proposed that funding be found as part of the project to refurbish or re-build the facility to bring it in line with the wider development.

Building Design Philosophy: It is envisaged that the leisure buildings would be designed as a complementary group of buildings that respond to their riverside setting and are located around the public plaza creating a double frontage to address both the park and the river. The buildings should be contemporary in appearance reflecting the aspirations for a park that meets future needs and provides something for everyone. The mix of uses is based on an initial market analysis and on the type of up-market developments that would complement the reinvention of the park and create a desirable destination venue for park users, boaters (and future residents of the marina), local workers and other visitors to the area.

The main park building (leisure building 3) is constructed within the flood plain area and is therefore elevated above this level on ‘stilts’ to allow flood water to flow beneath the building. The building entrance from the public plaza starts above the flood plain from an external deck area that extends through the building and out to form external terraces over the new pool adjacent to the river edge. In order to continue the riverside walk across the new pool, it is envisaged that a low level boardwalk, elevated over the water, will pick up the end of the river edge and continue to the lock-side, passing under the new footbridge. The new bridge link giving access to the marina island also starts from the deck on the public plaza side. The bridge should be designed for primarily pedestrian access with sufficient capacity to allow for emergency and service vehicle access.

The residential buildings should also be designed to create a contemporary appearance that reflects the quality and aesthetic for the park and the other buildings proposed. The buildings should be designed to maximise the riverside and park views with a quality appropriate to their setting.

Materials: It is envisaged at this stage that the leisure buildings would be constructed using a steel frame to allow large glazed areas at ground and first floor level. Solid areas could be a mix of insulated render and timber cladding.

Sustainability: The new buildings should be designed to integrate renewable energy and minimise the carbon footprint. Possible considerations could be as follows:

- Ground or river source heat pumps
- Rain-water harvesting (could be used for grounds irrigation as well as toilet flushing etc)
- Solar collectors.

These should be considered in addition to high levels of insulation, maximum use of natural daylight and ventilation in order to minimise energy usage. Consideration should also be given to the choice and sourcing of construction materials to minimise embedded energy in transportation and manufacture. Waste recycling bins should also be incorporated into the buildings and the wider park environment where possible.
2.4.3 Bridges, Gateways and Landmarks

Four key gateway locations have been identified. These areas should be redesigned to provide welcoming entrance points and create a positive image for the park.

In addition, the introduction of new bridges presents an opportunity to create new landmarks. In particular, the new crossing to link the park, the marina and the Avon site to the south has the potential to be designed as an important gateway structure, and will be an especially important landmark for boat users. This bridge should be integrated into the design of the café/restaurant/information centre.

Whether or not funding for such features can be secured, either in the short or long term, other less “grand” features such as street furniture, lighting and materials should still be developed alongside or as a part of an Art Strategy.

New Bridges across River Nene and Bedford Road: These bridges have the potential to be definitive feature gateways into Becket’s Park and landmarks to raise awareness to those passing both by car and boat. They will be clearly seen from many points around the site both now and into the future. This is an opportunity to achieve dramatic and evocative landmarks and not simply utilitarian structures of a ubiquitous design. Therefore a bridge design of the highest visual and structural quality must be developed and the design team, which should include an experienced public artist, will collaborate to achieve this. The bridges must be exemplars of the design quality to be found elsewhere in the park and crossing over them should raise the expectation and excitement of the visitor.

In raising the profile of Becket’s Park throughout its regenerative development, each project/item achieved on the ground within the implementation programme is a positive PR opportunity. Therefore any landmark structure, whether a bridge, gateway, building or landscape feature/area has to have a strength of design and the “wow factor” to capitalise on this.

An illustration of a high quality, artist-designed bridge is shown on Figure 15: Illustrative bridge concept.

Figure 15 Illustrative bridge concept

Landmark Gateways: Parks invariably have well defined boundaries and entrances often incorporating a mix of railings, walls, hedges, trees and gates defining the space and acting as a clear separator and buffer from the surrounding environment. Becket’s Park is no different from this, though the existing boundaries and gateways are fragmentary and ill-defined at best, and as the strong awareness of the vehicular activity of Victoria Promenade/Bedford Road testifies, perform poorly as a buffer both visually and aurally.

The establishment of a bold edge treatment to define the boundaries around the sides leading down to the River Nene, both through landscape and architecture, will work in concert with the design of new gateways. These will be contemporary and dramatic in concept, drawing attention to the park and exciting and enticing the visitor to enter. They will be in contrast to the previously implemented new entrance at the western end of the park off Victoria Promenade which is traditional in design, undersized and does little to alter entrenched perceptions of Becket’s Park. The change in the offer to visitors of a new Becket’s
Park must be advertised loudly by the highly visible and clearly identifiable design of the gateways.

Developed through a strong group design approach, the gateways should be a combination of access gateway and artwork potentially incorporating security features, signage and lighting. The role of the artist in the design of these elements and other features throughout the park will be as part of a team approach to provide integrated design solutions and to avoid a separation between public art, architecture, and landscape. Specific focus on labelling of ‘public art’ should be avoided to defer a critical “knee jerk reaction”; rather, emphasis should be placed on appropriate design solutions for the elements needed to regenerate the park.

Thematic sources for inclusion in detailed design concepts are readily available from within the site. These can include exploration of the natural flora and fauna found along and in the river and its margins, as well as the local history of the site and its adjacent areas. Some of these will also provide good material for descriptive interpretation provided through a cohesive interpretation strategy. Concepts developed as examples so far show how water margin plants can influence the design of gateways as well as lighting columns and landmarks (see Figure 16: Illustrative public art installations 1 and Figure 17: Illustrative public art installations 2).

The gateways can link and complete the boundary design whether it be hedge, railing or embankment. Materials should be robust, high quality and of low maintenance such as stainless steel or other non-ferrous materials, or should be mild steel coated with hot sprayed zinc, bronze or copper. As shown, economy can be achieved through the repeat use of a modular unit in various configurations. The incorporation of low voltage LED lighting can add interest and varying effects, being inexpensive to run and maintain while adding to the feeling of security in the park.

The Rush (or Juncus) Gateway feature could be located at the east, west and north entrances in varying configurations to account for the varying topography and landscape design arrangements. Whilst varied in arrangement, the regular element used would give cohesion to the branding and identity of the park to those passing along Bedford Road and Victoria Promenade.
Landmarks: As discussed above, the gateways can and should be landmarks in their own right if they are to attract and define the spirit of Becket’s Park to the visitor. They are combined entrance, advertising hoarding and welcome sign. However, it will be of benefit to provide elements which are more obviously landmarks and which, within the context of the park design, draw the eye, close the vista or hold the space, or a combination of all these.

The high point of the park, at the junction of Victoria Promenade, Bedford Road and the access routes into the town centre, is an important site for a landmark linked to a redesigned gateway. The provision of a prominent feature landmark and gateway here will act as a fulcrum from which the park fans out down to the river and to which major footpaths connect.

A columnar light beacon is suggested here (see Figure 18), and its prominence would not only enable it to be highly visible from within the park but also from further afield at important points such as Delapre Park. This would create visible connectivity between the two parks and the new development zones between, signalling the route and access into the town centre. The beacon would be animated throughout the day and night by the incorporation of multicoloured LED lights, creating a dramatic, twinkling effect. It would be possible to link the beacon to aspects of the Thomas Becket connection with imagery woven into the design of the landscape setting and the structure at lower level. Its closeness to the site of the new viewing and interpretation platform for Becket’s Well would provide opportunities for relating the design of the two sites. For example, ribbons of carved text on the Becket theme could extend and weave between these locations (see Figure 19).
Though the existing Becket’s Well cannot be moved, it will be desirable to bring the spring into the park at this point and create a water feature that could itself link a number of areas within the park. The design of this can provide a variety of points of interest with cascades, jets, gushers and rills linked to a variety of landscape treatments. The water cascade would extend from the Beacon/ Becket’s Well platform down into the exhibition gardens, finishing in a recreated pool near to the western gateway. The associated public art detailing to the cascade such as the text elements referred to above would also be supported in the exhibition gardens by smaller pieces of sculpture sited in relation to floral displays, for example. These could be provided by relocating those existing sculptures currently sited in the park.

Public artworks of the appropriate scale can also be used within the park to create landmarks that again draw the eye, close the vista along an avenue, or create a focus within a subsidiary space, or a combination of these. A variety of relevant themes can be explored: the Spirit of the River, the botanical, and the historical for example. They should be of contemporary design in keeping with that suggested overall for the masterplan proposals.

Two examples have been illustrated (see Figure 19): the Juncus sculpture at the intersection of the bridge with the riverside walk exploring the botanical theme; and the Bull sculpture commemorating the history of the park land as common grazing. In the former, the use of stainless steel and low voltage LED lighting will create a dynamic focal point of interest and incident within the park, and could be integrated with interpretation of the natural history of the Nene Valley.

In the latter, the Bull sculpture (see Figure 20) would again create a strong landmark and focus within the park, positioned adjacent to the open grassland - originally called Cow Meadow before it became Becket’s Park. Though more traditional in feel, this would still be a strong contemporary example of figurative sculpture cast in bronze. The plinth would provide a good opportunity for graphic interpretation panels giving historical information about the park, especially related to livestock and the earlier use of the nearby Morrison’s supermarket site as a cattle market.
2.4.4 Water and Water Features

Historically, water – both its presence and its lack in terms of supply – has played an important role in Northampton’s development. 2011 will mark the 250th anniversary of navigation to the town centre and plans are underway to celebrate this event.

The river itself is the main water element but the boating lake is also a valuable, although underused and neglected, asset. The Environment Agency intends to develop the boating lake into a new marina with 60+ moorings and these proposals were welcomed by the majority of stakeholders during consultation. This site has been identified as a strategic location within Northamptonshire for river-based activities by the Agency. Anecdotal evidence suggests that anti-social behaviour and lack of facilities discourage boat users from stopping and taking advantage of the town’s offer. A marina would provide the catalyst for new facilities and other riverside amenities to be developed which will encourage river users to spend time in the town. This would potentially generate increased income and would help support other commercial activities within the park.

The EA produced a vibrant and informative document for a river trip in July 2008 during which the vision for Northampton and its waterways was set out. The document explains the philosophy behind the creation of the proposed marina and the stimulation of economic regeneration in and around the river for the benefit of the town. With their kind permission it is attached at Appendix 1.

The marina is an integral element of the Preferred Masterplan. In addition, the associated uses, for example the potential for water taxi travel linking into Becket’s Park (representing another form of waterside use and sustainable transport), are all in keeping with the Key Objectives.

The establishment of the marina gives rise to the following opportunities:

- Waterside Café/Information centre/Restaurant
- Chandlery
- Facilities for boaters encouraging them to stay and spend (and return)
- Commercial / retail – food shops etc.
- Water taxi / river bus
- Toilets
- Boat sales
- Boat hire
- Links with Sea Cadets
- Enhanced wildlife habitats
- Tourist / visitor information centre
- Inland Waterways Association and other national events.

When the southern side of the river is developed, the river itself will become the central focus for the area, and its assets must be both protected and capitalised on. Analysis of the character, topography and layout of Becket’s Park shows that as the park is at the town’s edge, so the river is at the park’s edge and is marginalised both physically and visually. The aim of the design process has been to maximise all of the park’s current resources and create new ones that provide the best and most appropriate uses for the most people.

One of the primary aims is to create improved visual access to the river and Becket’s Park by strengthening important views and vistas and promoting local landmarks as focal points. This has led to the proposal for an iconic new building at the water’s edge with a “dual frontage”, so that one side is a waterfront setting and the other is a park setting, thus providing the link between water and landscape.
One of the key objectives of the development of the Park is to encourage visitors from the river corridor, and from the southern development areas, to make more use of the town. The river corridor currently acts as a well-used east–west pedestrian and cycle link. It is essential that the Preferred Masterplan, and other development proposals, provide new crossing points across the river. A new river crossing is essential to link development to the south to the town centre and help boost the town’s economy. It is important that the design of new crossing points are refined in consultation with relevant stakeholders and taken forward in tandem with the development proposals to the south of the river.

The local Sea Cadets have a facility on the island within the park confines. The facility is well used and seems appropriate to the context and should be supported within the strategy for the park. The Sea Cadets are a vibrant and active organisation locally and their continued existence and use is an important contributor to any success of the regeneration proposals for Becket’s Park.

The existing buildings are understood to be “adequate” but are not of a quality that enhances the desired image of the new Becket’s Park and they would benefit from replacement or considerable refurbishment. This proposal has been incorporated into the Preferred Masterplan.

The theme of water and its historic importance to the town should be further incorporated into the detailed designs through improved access to the river frontage (terracing – see Figure 22, steps, landscape design), interpretation, water features, interpretation and public art, wildlife and sustainable use of the resource. Historical water features on or close to the site include Becket’s Well and the town ditch and “pond” or sump.

While it is not possible to move Becket’s Well into the park, its influence can be significant in becoming the origination of water features that create links through the park, implying a strong connection to the river. The fall of the land from well to river assists this process and would enable a visually exciting cascade with other associated water features and effects. This would create a dynamic centrepiece to the more intimate and detailed exhibition garden area within the park with a range of shrub, perennial and annual planting, as well as the inclusion of both permanent and temporary sculptures. Other forms of public art such as text and lighting effects may also be pertinent to the water features.

The design of the cascade would influence and determine the layout of the adjacent hard and soft landscape areas. Ramped and stepped paths would guide the pedestrian through the site while linking with areas for seating and contemplation. This will act as a welcome contrast to the more open grassed areas of the main parkland.

A water feature at the approximate location of the pond into which the town ditch once drained has also been suggested (see Figure 10: Garden of Contemplation), and appropriate interpretation would be included to mark the site.

As with all water features, the design will require close attention in association with water feature specialists in order to assure ease of operation and future maintenance. This will be essential, as water features that become troublesome due to poor design or lack of ongoing regular maintenance are unsightly and send out completely the wrong signals to park users.
Figure 23  **Street Furniture - Creating a balanced composition:**
Integration of furnishings and materials is essential in creating a brand that people will remember and talk about with their friends and family.

- To successfully discourage littering, bins should be carefully located near to intensive areas such as access points and plazas.

- Bollards can be used to warn where differing transport routes meet, but they should be used sparingly.

- Careful choice of material and finish will discourage vandalism and graffiti.

- Cycle racks can be provided to encourage cyclists to stop and take a break in the park.

- Branding - Well thought out and unique elements are more interesting and create associations with a place.

- Seating needs to be comfortable and durable. Location of seating should complement views, events spaces and be placed at regular resting points.

- Good signage should be accurate, comprehensive and easily to read with strong contrasts between background, text and arrows.

- Strong signage visually represents a brand, advertising what the park is about.
2.4.5 Street Furniture

The requirement for extensive public seating, railings, bollards and lighting all provides a further opportunity to develop the design of a range particular to Becket’s Park. This will further reinforce the environmental design quality and special characteristics of the park and enhance the regenerated sense of place. In certain instances it will be possible to incorporate interpretation, letter-cut text and graphic imagery in the street furniture to again reinforce the park’s branding and unique style.

Attention will need to be paid to the management and maintenance aspects of the park and allowances made to replace with like-for-like in the future. Figure 23 shows examples of the range of street furniture reflecting the level of quality of design to be achieved.

2.4.6 Public Art and Interpretation

The legibility of the park and its links to the wider urban realm of the town will be reinforced and enhanced by the incorporation of stand-alone public art and an artistic contribution to the integrated design team process. This will ensure that public art is an integral part of the landscape structure of the new park and not an applied after-thought. Within the park design the public art elements will mark gateways, create landmarks and close vistas whilst also providing interpretation and signage details to the pedestrian spaces and riverside walkways. All opportunities to incorporate public art - both large and small scale relevant to the location - will be pursued to enrich the physical environment and the visitor experience.

It will be essential to undertake a detailed public art study for the park, exploring and detailing the opportunities related to the masterplan. These opportunities will be linked to the requirements for the urban and landscape structure, gateways and landmarks, street furniture and lighting, signage and interpretation, and the historical and cultural heritage.

To ensure the integration of public art into the fabric of the park it will be important for artists to be part of the design teams detailing the phased elements linked to the categories outlined above. An ongoing collaborative design approach where an artistic input is valued will ensure a design for the park greater than the sum of its parts; a two way process where public art, architecture and landscape design will be cooperatively influential on each other. This will avoid producing public art for its own sake rather than in the wider service of creating an exciting new Becket’s Park as part of the positive regeneration of the riverside and as a gateway into the town centre.

Figure 24 A successful art strategy where artistic thinking is deeply incorporated into the design process.
[Integration of art and landscape : Thomas Heatherwick’s Blue Carpet Newcastle]
Using public art will help emphatically define the park and its access routes through enhanced gateways, landmarks, and signage, for example. This will create a more legible environment for resident and visitor alike. Strong visual and physical links between the residential and business districts to the south side of the river, including Delapre Park, will encourage pedestrian access into and out of the town centre. The regenerated attractiveness and individual attractions of Becket’s Park enhanced by the unique qualities of public art can reinforce the economic benefits and interchange between the river corridor and the town centre.

Public art can positively contribute to the clear legibility of the park and its connections to the surrounding areas. In this way landmarks and signage should not be underestimated for the important role they play in establishing strong environmental legibility with routefinding and waymarking at its heart.

Routes through the park can be defined and enhanced with public art. This design approach can be influential when applied to lighting columns, including special illumination effects provided by LED fittings; street furniture using robust but high quality materials and incorporating text and interpretation where necessary; and signage and interpretation at appropriate points, both to give directions and information about heritage and cultural details of the park and surrounding attractions. It should also be noted that the floorscape detailing of both major and minor paths as well as public spaces is an opportunity for including public art elements (e.g. the Becket’s Well texts).

The overall branding of Becket’s Park will be an important element of the signage and interpretation strategy. The branding design could be developed through a competition aimed at local schools and colleges with the added advantage of raising the profile of the park with young people with its associated positive press. The branding would be applied to the website, newsletter, posters, flags and the exhibition about the River Nene corridor that might be a permanent feature within the new main pavilion building in association with a tourist information / visitor centre.

As well as the general branding of Becket’s Park there will be opportunities for the use of colourful graphics throughout the park on a more ad hoc basis. For example flags and banners can offer a colourful animated focus in the park in association with gateways, public spaces and major routes. Designs could again be produced through liaison with local schools, colleges, youth and community groups, possibly on a rolling programme so that as each series of banners wears out physically they are replaced by new designs. Once the banner/flag poles are installed the cost of manufacture would be relatively inexpensive and could be an attractive sponsorship opportunity for local business. It is interesting to note that the quality standard for public parks and green spaces is the Civic Trust’s Green Flag Award and it is to be hoped that following the implementation of the regeneration plan Becket’s Park would achieve this accolade.

The signage and interpretation of a more permanent nature will encompass route marking, wayfinding and interpretation of the history, culture and biodiversity of the park and its environs. A strategy identifying signage and interpretation requirements and opportunities will be required in order to identify a detailed design brief. This strategy will identify locations and type of signage/interpretation necessary, content of interpretation, materials, and colour scheme, as well as identifying opportunities for idiosyncratic interpretive approaches (e.g. see Becket’s Well text in paving). It will also identify sources of interpretation information and imagery as well as any requirement for specialist authors of historical or botanical information.

The introduction of new sculpture as features/focal points within the park has been discussed previously. These would be planned for and integrated into the overall masterplan design and seen as part of the structure of the landscape. Such features would both influence and be influenced by the detailed landscape layout. However, to date two sculptures have been introduced into the park as part of earlier initiatives linked to the Spirit of the Valley Millennium Arts project in 2000. Made of mosaic and stainless steel respectively, they seem out of scale within the existing park and relate poorly to the landscape layout. It will be important out of respect to these artworks to relocate them within the new masterplan layout in a way that is sympathetic to them, is more balanced in terms of scale, and mutually enhances the sculptures and the setting.
The area laid out as exhibition gardens, where the layout is small scale and intimate with a wide variety of planting designs and areas for seating and contemplation, would be an ideal location for these sculptures. They may even be the precursor for a number of other small-scale artworks commissioned over a period of time, exemplifying the classic relationship of garden design and sculpture. It may be possible for some spaces to be left vacant for temporary artwork displays. Again this would be a possible opportunity for interaction with local college students or local professional artists to showcase their work via an ongoing managed scheme such as that administered by the organisation ‘Open Spaces Open Places’ based in the town.

The new pavilion buildings proposed for the park will have a variety of uses and attractions to achieve viability. A range of facilities and attractions here will encourage the use of the park and act as a draw for visitors. Some facilities for tourism-related businesses could be a desirable contribution to the list of attractions. These could include some craft workshops with a craft retail outlet/exhibition gallery which could also have some links with the nearby 78 Derngate, possibly acting as an extension to the gallery and retail facilities there. Links with academic institutions could be facilitated through the provision of educational facilities such as meeting/conference rooms for field studies or visiting groups. These could cater for both arts and natural sciences students exploring the River Nene valley.

Workshop facilities could also be provided for skills training or skill days for a variety of activities using the area for inspiration such as painting, drawing, woodcarving, willow weaving, natural history studies, craft papermaking etc. Historical research for local history students could also be facilitated, for example, field walking in connection with the Thomas Becket, the Battle of Northampton, and the history of the river and its industries. Given the poor access and lack of topographical remains of the Battle of Northampton a large-scale model diorama explaining the battle with background multimedia contextual and interpretive displays would provide an additional public attraction. This could also be linked to historical re-enactment events in the park and generally raise the profile of the battle and the importance of Northampton in the medieval period. A diorama of Northampton as a medieval town with its walls and castle, abbeys and churches could also be included, and artefacts loaned from the museum could provide additional historical and archaeological displays.

2.4.7 Biodiversity

The creation of new habitats for wildlife was not seen as a high priority by many of the stakeholders, perhaps because, as previously stated, it is recognised that the intensive redevelopment of land to the south will put pressure on existing habitats and make it unlikely that extensive new terrestrial habitats could be successfully established in the park.

Although it may be perceived otherwise, the current wildlife interest in and around the lake is low due to stagnation, poor water quality and human disturbance. The biodiversity of the lake can be improved when the marina is created by way of “soft”, less intensively managed riparian edges. The marina will also breach the bank which will improve water circulation and quality. Non-uniform profiles, structural diversity of vegetation and buffers to reduce disturbance will also encourage wildlife. Specific enhancements for otters, water vole, bats, birds, invertebrates (including white-clawed crayfish) and fish could be included following consultation with statutory bodies and the Wildlife Trust.

Existing biodiversity will be protected and enhanced and the natural resources of the river can be exploited to create an exemplar sustainable community facility. The strategic importance of the river corridor to nature conservation is recognised and priority should be given to maintaining and enhancing this key habitat. A habitat management plan should be devised to maximize the potential for biodiversity on the site.
2.4.8 **Cultural Heritage**

The cultural heritage of Northampton and its district is extensive as a result of the town’s distinguished history. A number of themes and events have already been touched on in reviewing the possibilities for public art and interpretation linked to Becket’s Park. It will be possible in most instances to incorporate information/interpretive displays at appropriate locations in the area and these can be linked back to exhibitions in the park pavilions. In this way a comprehensive cultural interpretive network can be established.

In certain instances, features occur within the park. These comprise both existing and either indeterminate or lost, and all would benefit from interpretation and possibly reinstatement. For example, though Becket’s Well is outside the park it will benefit from added focus and interpretation from within the park as it is currently adversely affected by close proximity to the busy Bedford Road. The development of a viewing platform with interpretation, as well as a water feature related to the spring which can form a focus within the exhibition gardens, will help restore the importance of Becket’s Well in the context of the park. In addition, the incorporation of Becket’s words cut into the paving will also act as an expressive and dramatic means of interpreting the Becket connection in the park design (see Figure 14: Becket’s Well overlook – concept image and Figure 25).

Also there was an ancient barrow in the park which was levelled in the 19th Century and a pond at the end of the town ditch to the west end of the park. As previously mentioned, the intention is to restore or recreate the latter as a new water feature and possibly as a concluding feature to the water cascade within the exhibition gardens in association with further interpretation features. According to some sources, Becket and Henry II met to reconcile their differences in the meadow that later became Becket’s Park; again this provides a subject for interpretation and educational exploration. Another subject worthy of exploration is Becket’s link with water. According to local historian David Blackburn, Becket translates into ‘Little Stream’ which may be a play on words, but nonetheless a number of legends associated with him relate to water. Due to these he became forever associated with water following his beatification and canonisation, with his hospitals being built on bridges over water as at Canterbury and Northampton, and with bridges and of course wells being so named.

It is likely that further research will produce a wide range of cultural and historical threads that may contribute both to the physical design and interpretation of the new Becket’s Park further contributing to the development of a park for everyone.

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**Figure 25** Becket’s Well overlook concept image
2.4.9 **Transport and Links**

The aim has been to maximise sustainable links to the surrounding area, including the Hospital site, Northampton Town Centre, residential areas and existing sustainable links as well as within Becket's Park itself. Transport considerations are shown on Figure 27 overleaf.

**On-site transport facilities:** A new network of shared use footpaths for pedestrian and cycles is proposed throughout Becket’s Park in-line with anticipated desire lines to provide direct access to the proposed facilities and existing external links.

Several ‘Choice’ areas are provided at the key access points into Becket’s Park. This will allow people entering the area to make a free choice in relation to the direction they want to go. These ‘Choice’ areas are naturally where several footpaths merge.

Any future ‘information kiosk’ located within Becket’s Park would provide details of all the sustainable transport options available to/from Becket’s Park. Information will include the following:

- Nearest bus stops and services;
- Location of Northampton Railway Station, timetable information and routes from the station to Becket’s Park;
- Convenient and direct walking and cycling routes to/from Becket’s Park; and
- Location of cycle parking facilities.

This information would also need to be included on any location plans situated across the park.

**Vehicle access into Becket’s Park** will be for emergency, maintenance and service vehicles only. Parking will also be restricted across Becket’s Park with only disabled parking spaces available directly outside the proposed amenities and parking associated with any residential buildings (in accordance with Northamptonshire Supplementary Planning Guidance on parking, March 2003 and complementary to the surrounding area). The proposed marina will be serviced by water access and supplies will also be provided via water access. Emergency and access for disabled users will be via the new bridge.

**Access points:** Access into Becket’s Park will be provided as per the ten access points marked on Figure 27. Access point ‘1’ will cater for vehicle access however this is subject to further discussions as detailed below.

The location of the proposed new access from the west to Becket’s Park is shown on Figure 27. The access road would provide an alternative vehicle access to Becket’s Park and allow the existing vehicle access (straight onto Victoria Promenade to the north) to be re-designed and focussed on the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. It would also reduce the potential conflict at this location between vehicles and sustainable transport users. Figure 32: Access points – Illustrations shows an example of the existing situation where conflicts occur and also shows examples of good practice.

This proposed route would provide the primary emergency, maintenance and service vehicle route into Becket’s Park and also serve any car parking associated with the residential elements of the Masterplan and disabled car parking associated with the amenities within Becket’s Park.

However, land ownership is an issue and Northampton Borough Council (NBC) only owns the land as shown on Figure 18. Therefore to provide vehicle access at the proposed location would require further negotiations / buying land from the private owner of the area shaded blue on Figure 25.
Figure 27  Transport considerations
It is considered that by providing the link between the two sites it would prove to be beneficial to both parties and the amount of traffic that would need to use this link would be minimal and unlikely to cause any impact on the roundabout junction to the north. It is also highly unlikely that any disruption would be caused for visitors to the retail park as a result of the new link. Minimal land take would also be required to facilitate the link, although this is subject to future discussions and detailed design issues.

If vehicle access is not possible due to land ownership issues, several alternatives would be possible; however this would rely on the existing vehicle access into the park continuing to provide the main access into Becket’s Park for emergency vehicles. As stated previously this has associated conflicts of interest and safety issues and therefore is not ideal. Alternative options would be as follows:

- **Access 4**: Proposals for a toucan crossing to link the park with the residential area to the north and the existing footpath linking to Scholars Court. This would serve a dual purpose of providing a key link to the north and direct access into the park from the north and secondly, and importantly, slowing traffic down along this section;

- **Access 5**: Potential to upgrade existing pedestrian / cycle crossing facilities to provide more direct and convenient access into Becket’s Park;

- **Access 6**: A new pedestrian / cycle link to the hospital is subject to the proposed masterplan for the hospital area. At this stage, one option would be for a footbridge to link the two areas that would be fully accessible from both directions;

- **Access 7**: This area currently has planning permission for a revised layout which includes a signalised junction with toucan crossing facilities. There are also proposals for a separate footbridge to the west of Nunn Mills Road. It is recommended that further consultation is carried out with the planning authority to highlight the potential conflict with this new layout and the proposed masterplan for the Becket’s Park area. The aim at this location is to have a ‘Choice’ area for pedestrians / cyclists entering Becket’s Park and the current layout of the proposed footbridge would severely restrict desire lines and movements at this point. The ideal situation would be for the footbridge to tie-in with the riverside Nene Way route and sweep round to provide pedestrians coming from the south of the River Nene similar ‘Choices’ in terms of movement. In addition to the signalised crossing, further consideration should also be given to the through movement for people utilising the Nene Way route. This could be facilitated by ensuring that the design of the proposed new Nunn Mills Road bridge allows enough height for the existing Nene Way route to pass underneath it. If this preferred option was not possible, a raised table at a narrower point in the carriageway could be implemented on Nunn Mills Road to benefit people using the Nene Way route;

- **Access 8**: As per ‘Access 7’ this is subject to the future layout of the footbridge and would provide a new pedestrian / cycle access directly between the new development south of the River Nene and Becket’s Park;

Details of the remaining eight access points are detailed below:

- **Access 3**: Downgraded (subject to future discussions as outlined above) to provide a dedicated pedestrian and cycle access only. This will tie-in with the existing signed cycle route linking to the town centre;
**Access 9:** A new footbridge to link Becket’s Park, the marina and the new development south of the River Nene. This would provide a direct and convenient pedestrian and cycle access to / from the south of Becket’s Park. This would also provide residents (south of the River Nene) with the most direct and convenient route to the Town Centre; and

**Access 10:** Existing pedestrian and cycle access point linking into Nene Way to the west of Becket’s Park along the north side of the River Nene.

**Car parking:** On-site car parking will be provided for disabled users only. Becket’s Park is situated within short walking distance of three main car parks – Midsummer Meadow, St John Surface and St John Multi-Storey. It is therefore considered appropriate that these facilities could be used by people who needed to drive to Becket’s Park. With much of the activity at Becket’s Park taking place outside of the typical peak periods, there should be capacity at these local car parks to cater for the demand. This will ensure that only priority parking (i.e. disabled parking spaces) is required within Becket’s Park.

**Figure 28** The Eastern entrance to Becket’s Park is very unpleasant (even dangerous) for pedestrians and cyclists

**Figure 29** A good example of priority cycle crossing

**Figure 30** A good example of a toucan crossing

**Figure 31** A good example of a mixed crossing
Figure 32  Access points
2.4.10 Health, Sport, Play and Leisure

Health and well-being underpin the approach to the development of the design of the Preferred Masterplan. The provision of a large open space where a wide variety of leisure-based activities can take place is a great asset to an urban area and the intention for Becket’s Park is that it will be the perfect venue for predominantly informal recreation.

This section describes the landscaped open spaces throughout the park in which healthy activities can take place.

As previously mentioned, the existing central grassed area is visually and physically a great asset to the park and will be retained. Here, people can sit, gather, talk, lie on the grass, kick a ball around and walk their dogs. This space could also accommodate small-scale public social events such as concerts.

The decision to remove the existing tennis courts and bowling greens has been arrived at through extensive consultation and although there is inevitably a level of demand for such facilities, especially the tennis courts, during popular events such as Wimbledon, the interest is always short-lived and the cost of maintenance does not justify their retention.

It should be noted that the best use of the park will not simply be through the facilities installed. The design objective has been to provide areas in which different activities can take place such as Tai’chi, yoga, dance, art, music, drama etc. but these activities can only develop through management and organisation, therefore the concept of permanent, dedicated, personal and informed park management for this type of use is essential; links with local groups and clubs should be established. The more the park is used for this type of activity, the more interest it will generate and the more pleasure and success it will deliver.

Walking and cycling will be encouraged through the park with good connections and signage to the wider strategic transport network beyond. Boating and river transport will also be a key activity that will generate wide interest, especially if links with the Sea Cadets are maintained and promoted.

A clear need was identified for a wider range of play activities than exists at present and therefore different and separate play areas for toddlers, 5 – 8, 8 – 14 and older teenagers have been provided. All the play areas have been located to the eastern end of the site, in order to minimise conflicts of use between the various park activities, such as quiet sitting areas and high-end restaurants. The range of play areas is comprised of:

- Toddlers – The existing play equipment is in good condition but the current siting of this facility conflicts with the new overall park design structure and it has therefore been relocated slightly further south from its present location. The existing equipment and fencing would be checked for health and safety requirements and then reinstalled. The design of the play space itself needs to be considered in more detail with the objective of aiding small children’s development of both spatial and social awareness. It should provide a colourful and friendly atmosphere, with features such as sculptures of cartoon animals and plants. New, more interesting coloured safety surfacing should be laid and small changes in level, small mounds and undulations created which could be used to create ‘play landscapes.’ Shelter and seating will be provided for parents/guardians who will need to watch over the children.

- Ages 5 – 8: This age group needs to be catered for at Becket’s Park and a new play area is proposed which allows for imaginative role play and the development of social skills. Elements will be as adaptable and integrated as possible and will allow several different kinds of activity, including low-height walkways, ropes, huts and slides. Seating will also be provided. This play area is situated next to the toddler’s play area so that both age ranges can be supervised at once.
Figure 33  Play equipment enjoyment for all ages

Landform can be utilised and integrated with equipment, providing a dynamic and robust environment.

Toddlers need vibrant colours and a safe friendly atmosphere when developing their spatial and social awareness.

Older children like to have a more challenging and exciting space to explore.

Teenagers require more targeted activities and somewhere they can socialise.

Play equipment for the elderly is serious stuff. Controlled exercise helps maintain balance and control of the body, reducing the risk of falls.

Local groups should be encouraged to have special days for fun creative exercises within the play areas.

Play equipment needs to be safe but also a lot of fun or it won't get used.

Involving local children in the design process will increase a sense of ownership and should create a more unique experience.
Ages 8 – 14: This age group will benefit most from an adventure play area, which encourages play and fitness levels from basic to more advanced, allowing a level of involvement and wide range in age. This area will have more exhaustive activities where the older children will be able to push themselves physically, testing out their abilities. This approach allows for competition without exclusion. The adventure play area is situated north of the “Central Avenue”, but in the same zone as the rest of the play facilities. It is recommended that equipment is selected through consultation with children – either individually or through schools and groups such as Cubs and Guides / Scouts etc. – so that a sense of ownership and protection of the new equipment is engendered.

Teenagers: The design of this area will need very careful consideration to avoid being “dismissed” or not respected. The involvement of local teenagers will be required to help develop a good brief for the design. Specific activities will be included, possibly multi use goals, areas to sit with shelter, and some basic exercise equipment such as soft floors and bars. The teenagers zone is situated below the skatepark area (see below).

Examples of types of play equipment that should be considered at Becket’s Park are shown on Figure 33.

In addition, a range of fitness equipment for older people is proposed. Such equipment is gaining in popularity and is a good way to encourage mobility in those who may not otherwise get much exercise. It is also considered to be great fun and can bring old and young together. This is to be located near the eastern edge of the park.

The design includes a proposal for a new “Health and Wellness” garden. This would be located opposite the hospital site on the Bedford Road boundary of the site to the east. It is hoped that a pedestrian link across this road to the hospital site can be established and this garden would provide a quiet space for rest, relaxation and recuperation. It could also incorporate exhibitions of medicinal plants and herbs. Planting should be used in various heights at the edges of this area to allow views across to the park beyond as well as creating sheltered, intimate areas.

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2.4.11 Skatepark

The previous reports have set out in some detail the background to the proposal for a skatepark in Becket’s Park. It must be reiterated here that there has been widespread support for the skatepark during consultation, and from a design point of view it has been demonstrated that it can be designed to integrate successfully with the overall park concept and complement other uses. The skatepark would not only attract skateboarders, it would also be available for use by bladers, BMX bike riders and Trials bike riders. It would be able to stage major, international events especially if and when skateboarding becomes an Olympic sport – such an advancement would undoubtedly raise the profile of the sport and increase demand. Anecdotal evidence also indicates that it is an appealing spectator sport, not just for teenagers but for old and young.

There is the opportunity for the skatepark to be designed as a community project, with the collaboration of professional skatepark designers. Suggestions of design ideas from consultees have been forthcoming, for example incorporating representations of local archaeological features and cultural heritage and art by local artists into the layout.

The Stage 2 Options Appraisal process identified a number of issues relating to the inclusion of the skatepark. The two main points are as follows:

1. The view of GVA Grimley is that in their experience, potential operators will see the skatepark as a detractor and will therefore be unlikely to come forwards with expressions of interest if the skatepark is a committed part of the scheme.

2. No studies have been carried out to assess the optimum location for a new skatepark in Northampton. Without such studies, it is currently not possible to justify Becket’s Park as the best place for the skatepark.

Our recommendation at the end of Stage 2 was that notwithstanding the points made above, the Preferred Masterplan should still include the area set aside for the skatepark, since it would be short-sighted at this stage to discount it as an option. The Masterplan therefore shows a 3000m² skatepark (which is comparable in size to the new Olympic-size skate park in Shanghai). Once the Preferred
Masterplan has been approved and is ready to be taken forwards for funding applications and at the point when expressions of interest from operators are invited, consultation will be needed to confirm or reassess the view that operators would be put off. Prior to this, however, a study should be carried out to assess the options for skatepark sites in the area, with a clear brief drawn up by consultees and interested parties including the Police. Should such a study conclude that Becket’s Park is the best site, this will add weight to the proposal for it to be included.

It must also be noted, however, that the cost of implementing the skatepark – when based on the above assumptions – leaves a considerable funding gap. This is set out in detail in Chapter 3 Options Appraisal.

2.4.12 Soft Landscape Design

The concept of the “soft” elements of the landscaped areas and open spaces has been developed to complement the overall urban and landscape structure and high quality vision. The central green open space has been retained and since the underlying historic structure of the park has been respected, many of the original avenues have been retained. Clumps and groups of trees particularly on the western side of the park, and some along the path to the east of the central space will be removed in order to accommodate the new facilities and paths. It is important to take a long-term view about tree planting. Many of the existing species are either short lived (e.g. poplar and birch) or subject to diseases and fungal attacks which are affecting trees nationally (e.g. horse chestnut). Climate change will also need to be taken into account in the future and trees more appropriate to these changing conditions will need to be considered. Existing trees should be surveyed in accordance with the British Standard BS5837: 2005 – Trees in Relation to Construction: Recommendations in order to ascertain their health and longevity. A long-term tree strategy should then be drawn up to ensure that as the existing trees start to decline, the recommended trees are planted in their place. The new Central Avenue (see Figure 9: Central avenue looking west) should be planted with appropriate long-lived species such as lime.

A contemporary approach to landscape design has been adopted for the proposed Exhibition Gardens (see Figure 10: Exhibition Gardens – concept image) and Garden of Contemplation with pool (see Figure 12). It is hoped that through collaboration with institutions such as Moulton College, these gardens can be maintained throughout the year to show how to garden sustainably, for example, and to teach people about plants adapting to climate change. Edible and medicinal plants could also be included and this could be a resource for schools and clubs.

In principle, old fashioned shrubberies, beds and borders will be avoided – these have connotations for security and maintenance and are often litter traps. But where such features form part of the overall design concept, such as in the Health and Wellness Garden, the planting will be maintained to a high level. Figure 34 shows examples of the approach to soft landscaping that will be adopted for Becket’s Park. A long term management plan with annual maintenance schedules will need to be produced alongside the detailed designs and ideally should be the responsibility of the dedicated Park Manager.
Suitable trees will be carefully chosen to be successful and healthy for generations to come.

Healing gardens use shade and colour to create a relaxing calming atmosphere to reduce the stresses of a hospital visit.

Display gardens can be created and managed by external specialists who want to show off their talents, providing a unique point of interest in the park.

Play planting needs to be colourful, robust and above all safe. Thorny and poisonous plants should obviously be avoided.

Planting defines spaces and views with complex form, colour and shade.

Some of the most striking contrasts are made between the complexity of planting and the simplicity of hard materials.

Outdoor play connects children with the physical world. Planting can provide an introduction to natural elements within urban environments.

Contemporary planting design follows a more natural flowing composition with layers of texture, form and colour.
1. Options Appraisal

3.1 Introduction
The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how a value for money solution for Becket’s Park can be created, and to set out how the most viable option can be developed. Two possible options have been appraised for the project in terms of costs and benefits to ensure that the recommended actions provide value for money for any public investment in the scheme.

Option A includes 23 residential units, 16,600sq ft of commercial floorspace, a 65 berth marina and a variety of associated facilities and landscape improvements.

Option B is as above but with a skate park.

This chapter will first look at the costs and values of both options. It will then identify potential public sources to fund the different elements of the options. Thereafter, the chapter presents an assessment of the likely benefits of the project leading into an appraisal of the value for money of any public investments in the options. The chapter also gives due consideration to the operational costs of the Becket’s Park proposals.

3.2 Costs
The costs for the options A and B have been assessed. The table below shows the cost summaries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost elements</th>
<th>Option A</th>
<th>Option B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landscape works</td>
<td>2,190,000</td>
<td>2,190,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skate Park</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundry structures</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service works</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract preliminaries &amp; fees</td>
<td>399,750</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency allowances</td>
<td>306,475</td>
<td>406,475</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,371,225</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,621,225</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that the above table does not include any cost estimates for the proposed marina or new bridge crossing from the park to the marina. This element of the scheme is being driven forward by the Environment Agency. In addition, the above costs do not include any estimates for the following elements, as they are not viewed as essential deliverables:

- New gateway features or major pieces of public art
- New terraced edge to river frontage
- New pedestrian bridge link over road to hospital site.

It is also assumed that the new bridge link over the River Nene to the Avon site will be funded by others.
This is not least because in the current economic climate it is considered unlikely that costs for these ‘less essential’ elements of the masterplan could be funded through developer contributions from developers working on and around Becket’s Park, or from public monies. Should more funding be available through private or public sources, the above elements could be delivered to improve the quality of experience at Becket’s Park (see Section 3.4 below).

3.3 Values

The values of residential and commercial plots at Becket’s Park have been estimated by GVA Grimley. According to GVA Grimley, a skatepark on the site will have detrimental effects on the value of the scheme as this formula is currently untested in the market. It is anticipated that the value will be low or even nil with a skatepark. This in turn means that the funding gap is much greater for option B than for option A. At the next stage of development of the Preferred Masterplan, Northampton Borough Council will be searching for developers to respond to and / or provide potential development briefs. At this stage, it will then be possible to test the market to see if the skatepark is a viable option and will provide value for money.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Costs, Values and Funding</th>
<th>Option A</th>
<th>Option B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>£3,371,225</td>
<td>£4,371,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Values</td>
<td>£1,900,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for funding / financial gap</td>
<td>£1,471,225</td>
<td>£4,621,225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Northampton Borough Council is likely to be testing the options by inviting developers to submit formal bids or development briefs. It is strongly recommended that formal testing of the market for a skatepark at Becket’s Park is undertaken at this stage. Responses from developers will clearly indicate the viability and development potential of a skatepark on the site. ¹

3.4 Capital Funding

It is important to note that the funding process is relatively dynamic. The level of funding available depends not only on the prevailing economic conditions, but also the objectives and thematic priorities supported by respective funders. The amounts available through various thematic funding sources changes quite frequently. In addition, there is a risk that at the time a funding application is made for this project, the information presented in this section is out of date.

It is therefore recommended that the information presented in this report is viewed as indicative and revisited prior to any specific applications to potential funders. The table below presents the most likely funding sources for the Becket’s Park scheme in the current state:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Streams</th>
<th>Option A</th>
<th>Option B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EMDA</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moulton College (exhibition gardens)²</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Council (public realm improvements)³</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S106 contributions ⁴</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIF / GAF ⁵</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skate park funding / community investment ⁶</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total funding required</td>
<td>1,470,000</td>
<td>4,650,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of different funding organisations have been identified as potential sources of funding for the various elements of Becket’s Park. Details of all funding sources appraised are presented as an annex to this document – see Appendix 2 Funding Matrix. This section presents a summary of the most likely funding sources.

¹ Please note that this is an outline estimate and not a ‘Red Book’ compliant land valuation.
fund the whole project. The main criteria for the funding are that the project will contribute to the growth of Northampton; however, it should be noted that this fund is very frequently over-subscribed, therefore this may hinder the application. It has therefore been discounted as potential funding for Option A at this stage (although it should not be ruled out), but Option B could in all probability not go ahead without it.

Discussions with the East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) suggest that the proposals for Becket's Park will be eligible for The High Quality Workspace Initiative. This initiative is based on five distinct priority sectors: Transport Equipment, Construction, Food/Drink, Healthcare, Science and Technology. Although there are no specific criteria for this funding stream, the success of a project application is based on an assessment of the project's merits. However, it is worth noting that mixed-use schemes are often funded through this scheme. Depending on the nature of the applicant, EMDA are able to fund up to 100% of the project costs although match funding is preferable.

Another potential fund sourced by EMDA is the Waterside Investment Initiative. However, it appears that funding would not be available for Becket's Park as it is not in the geographic area which is being supported by the fund.

There are numerous programmes within the National Lottery that could assist with funding various elements of the project. However, they are extremely popular and frequently over-subscribed. For these reasons, they have been discounted as a potential funding source for the Becket's Park scheme. They should not, however, be ruled out.

The Arts Council's Grants for the Arts programme is a potential source of funding for public art in Becket's Park. Organisations can apply for grants of up to £100,000 but 10% of the costs of the project must be funded from another income. The project must meet at least one of their criteria. The complexities involved in the application process and the small scale of funding available makes the Arts Council's Grants an unattractive source for the Becket's Park proposals. For these reasons, they have been discounted as potential funding. They should not, however, be ruled out.

The Community Investment Fund could be used to fund the Skate Park in Option B. Projects must be able to demonstrate how a significant increase in participation would be achieved, explain how it could be sustained and make a commitment to monitoring and evaluating the benefits. Projects should demonstrate how they will increase participation by encouraging more people to become involved in sport, increasing skill levels, increasing the numbers and quality of available coaches, and improving support to volunteers. Although they have a very tough target to meet in terms of increasing participation, it is important that we do not just consider 'quick fixes' and lose sight of the need to ensure they balance their investment in areas of greatest need as opposed to areas of greatest capacity. The minimum amount to apply for is £10,000 and there is no maximum.

Planning obligations or Section 106 contributions are agreements between local planning authorities and developers, negotiated in context of granting planning consent. The agreements provide a means to ensure that developers contribute towards infrastructure and services that local authorities deem to be necessary to facilitate proposed developments. Contributions may be either in cash or in kind. National standards suggest that seeking contributions from developers for provision and maintenance of open space in the form of local parks, district parks, play areas etc, is required to provide the necessary community infrastructure. Planning policies for Northampton suggest a provision rate of 1.6ha per 1000 residents as well as proposed developer’s contributions at 100% for development of the open space and maintenance costs for 40 years. An estimate of contribution levels has been made but this will ultimately be subject to negotiation between the parties.

Discussions are currently being held with Moulton College about delivering the ‘exhibition gardens’ element of the Becket’s Park proposals. These early consultations suggest that the College are keen to set up and operate such a facility on the site. Hence, Moulton College would consider covering all development and operational costs for the ‘exhibition gardens’. It is strongly recommended that Northampton Borough Council and any developers on the site keep the College involved through the design and development stages.
3.5 **Benefits**

The benefits have been assessed for the different options and they can be classified in two different elements – quantitative and qualitative. These are summarised below.

3.51 **Quantitative Benefits**

**Jobs Generated:** The provision of new floorspace will lead to the creation of new jobs and subsequent benefits for Northampton’s economy. The total employment floorspace created as a result of the redevelopment of the Becket’s Park site will create an estimated 86 gross jobs (under both options). These have been calculated using OFFpaT guidance and are summarised in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building no</th>
<th>Land use type</th>
<th>New gross internal floorspace area sq ft</th>
<th>Employment Density</th>
<th>Employment Impact (in terms of Gross Full Time equivalents or FTEs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leisure Building 1</td>
<td>Bar/Restaurant</td>
<td>5800</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure Building 2</td>
<td>Spa/Fitness Suite</td>
<td>3163</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure Building 3</td>
<td>Coffee Shop</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Employment Density taken from OFFpaT guidance based on research undertaken by Arup for English Partnerships, 2001)

**Additional Economic Output:** Additional employment created on the site will create economic additionality for the Borough’s economy. At the Northamptonshire’s current per capita average GVA of £18,298, the 86 gross new jobs will create additional GVA of £1.6 million pounds on an annual basis for Northampton’s economy.

The Value of Public Space highlights that better managed public spaces in town centre locations can increase local trade by up to 40%. Applying this as an assumption to the current annual shopping expenditure of £51.9 million in Northampton, it is estimated that the Becket’s Park proposals can bring a further economic additionality of approximately £20.7 million per annum.

Hence, the Becket’s Park proposals can generate approximately £22.3 million of additional economic output for Northampton’s economy (under both options).

**Housing units created:** There are two blocks of townhouses planned as part of the Becket’s Park redevelopment. In total there will be 23 units built as part of Option A. The housing development might be unviable under Option B.

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2 Sourced from Northamptonshire Observatory (2005 estimate)
3.52 Qualitative Benefits
Along with the quantitative benefits stated above, the scheme is expected to bring with it a number of qualitative benefits. The socio-economic baseline (see Stage 1 Baseline Report, Halcrow, June 2008) highlights that the resident population of the Becket’s Park context area suffers from high levels of crime and poor health. Good quality open spaces can assist in reducing crime and fear of crime and can also have a positive impact on health. Safe, clean spaces encourage people to walk more and therefore offer significant health benefits. Evidence suggests that parks are also beneficial to psychological health. Review of good practice guides such as The Value of Public Space (CABE) and the Economic Impact of the Public Realm (EEDA) suggest that an improved public realm results in positive impact on the physical and mental health of local residents.

Guidance on public open space also suggests that public spaces, when designed properly, can bring communities together and foster social ties. Such spaces shape the cultural identity of an area and are part of its unique character and provide a sense of place for local communities, which in turn promotes social inclusion and generates community cohesion. Within this context, an active Becket’s Park can play the role of being a focal point for the interaction and cohesion between new and existing communities.

The social benefits mentioned above can also result in economic benefits such as an increase in productivity of the workforce and less sick leave being taken. Good quality public space also has a positive impact on inward investment; The Value of Public Space suggests that companies are attracted to locations that offer well-designed, well-managed public places and these in turn attract customers, employees and services. The document also suggests that green spaces increase commercial trading in an area by 40% which could equate to the current expenditure stated in the report of £51.9 million increasing to £72.66 million. Improving open space also has a positive effect on visitor perceptions of the area which would contribute to the economic vitality of Northampton. A well-designed and maintained public landscape also offers very clear benefits to the local economy in terms of stimulating increased house prices, since house-buyers are willing to pay higher prices to be near quality green space.

3.6 Value for Money
This section looks at two key quantitative measures and the qualitative outputs that justify public spend on the Becket’s Park Scheme.

3.61 Quantitative outputs
• Cost per job created
The table below shows the cost per job created. It demonstrates that Option A provides significantly better and acceptable value for money of public investments than Option B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Option A</th>
<th>Option B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Funding / Cost</td>
<td>£1,471,225</td>
<td>£4,621,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs created</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost per job</td>
<td>£17,107</td>
<td>£52,513</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Additional GVA generated for every £1 of public spend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Option A</th>
<th>Option B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Funding / Cost</td>
<td>£1,471,225</td>
<td>£4,621,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional GVA / Economic Output (p a)</td>
<td>£22,300,00</td>
<td>£22,300,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Additional Annual Economic Output

| for every pound of public spend | £15.16 | £4.83 |

3.62 Qualitative outputs

Qualitative outputs need to be taken into account as well as the quantifiable ones. They can also be used to justify public intervention for a project. They include reduction in crime in the area and also the delivery of significant health benefits. Good quality public spaces will foster social ties and generate a sense of place for local communities; this in turn promotes community cohesion. For young people, the park provides opportunities for fun, learning, collaboration, social interaction, exercise and the chance to experience the natural environment.

3.7 Operational Costs and Funding

There are three main elements to the operational costs for the Becket’s Park project. These are as follows:

**Open space, play areas and public realm:** These will cost approximately £50k per annum. This is for maintenance only and does not include any other elements such as security etc. We propose that these costs are funded from the commercial and residential occupiers. GVA Grimley, our market experts, are of the view that such an approach is viable, as high quality public open space will bring increased trade for commercial operators and maintain high residential property values.

**Development zones (commercial and residential):** We expect this to be the responsibility of the operators of the commercial and residential zones as owners of the land. The costs for this have not been assessed at the time of writing.

**Exhibition Gardens:** Moulton College have been informed of the Exhibition Gardens and discussions have taken place about them paying for the management of these gardens. Further discussions are necessary between the key decision makers at Northampton Borough Council and Moulton College.

**Health and Wellness Garden:** We propose to hold discussions with the hospital to establish whether they will maintain this facility.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has shown the social and economic benefits that good quality open spaces can deliver. Two options have been appraised and it is highlighted that Option A is clearly deliverable. However, it also shows that Option B does not deliver good value for money as the skatepark increases costs. Nor does the skatepark generate direct quantifiable benefits and this assessment concludes that it is highly likely to reduce values generated from the sale of residential land. The financial gap is significantly higher for Option B. The way around this would be for the skater community to be asked to formalise the activity as a charitable trust as this would allow it to attract funding for the development and operation of the skatepark.

As a first step, NBC needs to test the impact of housing land values as a result of the skatepark through direct negotiations with developers and if in principal a skatepark is unlikely to have an impact on values, then the viability for Option B will be improved.

Also, if NBC can attract more funding for Becket’s Park, they can deliver the desirable but “non-essential” elements which have at present, been left out of the final costings.

Further, in order to increase chances of attracting public funding like EMDA and CIF, it is vital that the funding applications demonstrate how the delivery of the Becket’s Park project in its entirety will deliver social and economic benefits for the town as opposed to each of the separate elements of the project.
4 Sustainability Proofing

4.1 Introduction
In the initial stages of planning for this project it was ascertained that the Preferred Masterplan was not a Supplementary Planning Document and therefore did not legally require a Sustainability Appraisal (SA). For this reason a full SA was not deemed necessary. In lieu of this SA, a ‘Sustainability Proofing’ exercise was seen as the most appropriate course of action. The SAs of Northampton Borough Council’s Core Strategy and their Central Area Action Plan already contained a framework of SA ‘objectives’, covering various environmental, economic and social issues. In order to avoid duplication, and following SA guidance, these existing objectives were used as the basis for the ‘Sustainability Proofing’ exercise. The proofing involves examining the Preferred Masterplan at various stages of its development and attempting to predict any impacts under each of the fifteen environmental, economic and social SA objectives. Cumulative and synergistic impacts have been and will continue to be considered.

An initial list of opportunities under each of the SA topics was drawn up and circulated to the project team in order to embed sustainability into the Preferred Masterplan at an early stage. Following the production of two illustrated design options for the park, a summary of the possible sustainability impacts of each option was produced as part of the Sustainability Proofing exercise. This summary was written using advice specific to Becket’s Park received from Natural England.

4.2 Stage 1: Baseline Report
Sustainability Opportunities: Using the previously developed SA objectives, as described above, as a framework in which to appraise the Becket’s Park Masterplan, a list of opportunities was drawn up. These are shown in the table overleaf:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability Proofing – Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4.3 Consultation Outcome
Two of the statutory consultees to be consulted by anyone carrying out Sustainability Appraisals in England, the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural England (NE), were approached to offer input into the sustainability proofing of the Preferred Masterplan. Two other organisations were also approached to provide specific input into the sustainability proofing, as described below. Comments from all of these consultees have been incorporated into the sustainability proofing work to date and will continue to inform any future sustainability proofing work on the Preferred Masterplan.

- **Environment Agency:** The EA was approached with particular regard to flood risk in the park and surrounding area. The following comments regarding PPS25 were provided:


  ‘As this information has been requested for a Flood Risk Assessment you should be aware that by supplying the information we have not made any assessment of the suitability or otherwise of any proposed development at this site from a flood risk perspective.

  Planning Policy Statement 25 (PPS25) ‘Development and flood risk’ requires Local Planning Authorities to apply a risk-based ‘sequential test’ with the aim of steering development to Flood Zone 1 wherever possible.

  We strongly recommend that you contact the Local Planning Authority to ascertain the likely outcome of a sequential test for this site before committing monies to a detailed flood risk assessment.

- **Natural England:** Draft maps for Becket’s Park (Options 1 and 2), together with initial sustainability proofing work (Table 4.1: Sustainability Proofing Opportunities) was sent to NE as part of the consultation process. NE made some comments regarding Green Infrastructure to emphasise that Becket’s Park could assist in the dispersal and natural migration of species between the park and sub-regional ‘green corridors’. Ecological connectivity
was already an SA objective under the ‘Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna’ topic but these comments were noted and emphasised in subsequent sustainability proofing comments. More general comments from NE on the sustainability proofing were as follows:

‘The sustainability proofing document appears to pick up most of the things that we would expect to see, we are particularly encouraged to see an objective on climate change adaptation.’

**Other consultees:** Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust was contacted with regard to ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the Masterplan. It was established that, although Midsummer Meadow is no longer seen as potentially in the Becket’s Park study area, any future links with this area should be maximised. This may significantly improve wildlife corridors and the integrity of habitats. Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre highlights part of the Midsummer Meadow area as being a potential wildlife site, which adjoins the existing Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve. Connections between these areas that are free from development could have significant biodiversity value. Becket’s Park Island was also listed by the Biodiversity Records Centre as being a potential wildlife site.

In stage 2 of the Preferred Masterplan development an option of building a concrete skatepark in Becket’s Park was put forward by the Masterplan team. A manufacturer of skateparks, ‘HAGS,’ was consulted in order to obtain more information that would be relevant to the possible sustainability impacts of building, operating and decommissioning such a park. Subsequently, a short report on the possible sustainability impacts of a concrete skatepark was produced and circulated to the Masterplan team.

### 4.4 Stage 2: Concept Proposals

Concept proposals for the park were drawn up by the Masterplan team after a consultation event in Becket’s Park, a project team meeting and liaison with all interested parties. The following options were the result of this process.

**Concept Proposals - Option A**

Many of the proposals for this option fulfilled the sustainability objectives set out in Stage 1. General comments were provided on the topics below. These have been summarised as follows:

- **Drainage.** The potential for the use of permeable, easily drained or natural surfaces and the avoidance of soil sealing and/or compaction was described.

- **Buildings.** The potential for high quality park buildings potentially being a showcase for sustainability, particularly if they were to use recycled construction materials, have composting and recycling facilities and consider using green roofs, solar panels or other initiatives that are innovative. Such measures were seen as potentially leading to increased footfall in the park. However, the park buildings also have the potential to cause a significant environmental impact if environmental considerations are not taken into account.

- **Concrete.** The impact of using materials such as concrete (high carbon dioxide use in production) or materials that are not recycled or recyclable was highlighted.

- **Waste disposal.** The disposal of materials at the end of their lifetime should be taken into account. Life Cycle Analysis should be used to aid choice of materials and design.

- **Vehicle trips.** The number of vehicle trips needed in the construction of the park buildings should be taken into account and their impact on local roads, dust and air quality assessed.

- **River Access.** Access to the river should be encouraged but there is a danger of making the access routes too manufactured and sterile. Access routes should aim for shallow graded natural river banks where possible to maximise opportunities for wildlife. ‘Wild’ areas that are left relatively undisturbed by people should also be created for wildlife conservation. Shallow banks and wild areas around the edges of the new marina should also be created where possible.
Concept Proposals - Option B
The proposals for Option B mostly also have good opportunities for sustainability that meet many of the criteria set out under the sustainability objectives. The same issues and opportunities described above for Option A also apply. However, the key difference with Option B is the inclusion of a skatepark in the proposals. This was examined separately for sustainability impacts and a separate summary of the sustainability impacts of the skatepark was provided. This included potential impacts on trees, landscape, drainage, pollution and end of life disposal.

4.5 Stage 3: Preferred Masterplan Development
A further sustainability proofing, again using the sustainability objectives as a framework, has been undertaken to assess how well the Preferred Masterplan addresses sustainability and to help to identify opportunities for further embedding sustainability. It is understood that the development of the marina in Becket’s Park would be an Environment Agency project which would undergo a separate feasibility study and environmental assessment.

4.6 Summary and Recommendations
Various recommendations have arisen as a result of the Sustainability Proofing exercise. The principal recommendations from a sustainability proofing point of view are that the Masterplan adheres to the SA Objectives and opportunities provided in Table 4.1. In summary, there are significant key opportunities (i.e. not exclusive) for the park to:

- Be seen as an environmental or sustainability ‘showcase’, particularly with respect to the development of new buildings.
- Connect wildlife areas of the park with other local nature conservation areas, either through proximity or physical links. Undisturbed natural habitats, including river banks, should be retained or enhanced wherever possible.
- Enhance biodiversity through initiatives such as bat and bird boxes, creation of otter holts etc.
- Implement a biodiversity management plan.
- Adapt to climate change by choosing species that may be resilient to the effects of a changing climate. A ‘tree strategy’ for the park could also be developed for the park to help conserve existing trees and introduce new, more appropriate species. This could be done as part of a wider long-term environmental strategy that would also protect or enhance soil, landscape and other resources. Such a strategy should be developed in consultation with Natural England and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust.
- Promote links between the hospital and the park.
- Establish ‘exhibition gardens’ that could be developed in association with local horticultural colleges, such as Moulton College. Such gardens could demonstrate the growing of food, wildlife friendly species or climate resilient species.
- Maximise bus travel and walking and cycling opportunities and minimise private vehicle trips within and around the park.
- Use products and surfaces in the park that have undergone a ‘Life Cycle Analysis’ (where possible) to aid choice of materials and limit end of product life waste. This would include products associated with any potential skatepark.
- Use permeable or natural, free-draining surfaces where possible.
- Use the park as an education resource – for example, to demonstrate sustainable living, or using public art with a sustainability theme.

It is also recommended that a flood risk assessment is carried out with significant input from the Environment Agency. This could be used to inform building design and location and the overall layout of the park.
Planning Policy Evaluation

As part of the Stage 1 Baseline Report, a thorough planning policy appraisal was undertaken. This chapter analyses these policies in light of the Preferred Masterplan. The following development plan documents were appraised as part of the stage 1 baseline report:

- National Planning Policy Guidance (Sustainable Communities Plan, PPS 1 & PPG 17)
- Milton Keynes Sub Regional Strategy (2005)
- Northamptonshire Structure Plan (2001)
- Northampton Borough Council Local Plan (1997)
- Local Development Framework (Draft West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy).

The proposals conform to the overall aims of PPS 1 because it states: ‘Planning should facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development by making suitable land available for development in line with economic, social and environmental objectives to improve people’s quality of life’. The Preferred Masterplan is proposing to improve the quality of Becket’s Park by introducing sympathetic development, which will provide facilities that have been identified as being needed by the local community. As such, it is considered that the proposals are in accordance with PPS 1.

PPG 17 states ‘open space, sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives, which include health and well being’. The Preferred Masterplan will help support the Governments objectives.

One of the aims of RSS 8 is to ensure that all development in the area enhances the East Midlands to become a region where communities are sustainable, and environmental, social and economic well being is evident. The Preferred Masterplan will meet this aim. Furthermore RSS 8 identifies the provision of a green infrastructure as an essential element of delivering sustainable communities. Again, this will be complied with.

Policy 34 of RSS 8 promotes the development of River Corridors for recreational purposes including the Nene Valley. Policy 38 also states: ‘developments should include provision for children’s play and informal recreation’.

In conclusion, the Preferred Masterplan will help to deliver the RSS 8 objectives by helping to support sustainable communities and improve the quality of the green infrastructure.

Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub Regional Strategy (2005)
MKSM states that the two key requirements of sustainable communities are: a safe, healthy local environment with well designed public and green space; and urban areas that relate to the surrounding landscape and contribute to maintaining and enhancing assets as a cultural and recreational resource, and as resources for biodiversity. The Preferred Masterplan will help meet these two requirements.

Northamptonshire County Structure Plan (2001)
Within the Northamptonshire Structure Plan there are a number of policies that support riverside development; these include Policies RT3 and RN2. Paragraph 15.9 states: ‘although much of the River Nene flows through open countryside, a number of urban areas border the River and have stretches of riverside frontage. On the whole these are poorly utilised and attractive, yet have potential for enhancement’. The structure plan goes on to state in the next paragraph (15.10) that ‘Local Planning Authorities will identify measures and opportunities for improving the quality of the urban riverside environment, particularly through redevelopment and enhancement, and ensuring that development is of a particularly high standard and in keeping with a riverside location’. In light of the above, the Preferred Masterplan is in accordance with the Structure Plan.
Within the adopted local plan there are a number of land use designations that affect Becket’s Park. These include: Greenspace (Policy E6), Locally Important Landscape Area (Policy L17), River Valley Policy Area (Policy L16, L29 & E2) and Site of Acknowledged Nature Conservation Value (Policy E1). The Local Plan sets out that development within these areas will not be granted if it has a detrimental impact upon the area. However, these policy designations do not preclude development.

The adopted Local Plan recognises the need to improve the visual character of the riverside and enhance the landscape along the River Nene including securing and improving public facilities where appropriate, having regard to the landscape character. In addition, Policy L17 states ‘Planning Permission will be granted for development associated with the leisure use of the River Nene’. Further L29 states ‘In granting planning permission for any major development in the River Policy Area the Council will seek the provision of new facilities where appropriate which are of benefit to tourism’.

Policy L16 states ‘within the River Policy Area planning permission will not be granted for development other than agriculture, leisure or recreational uses’. In the main the proposals are in compliance with this policy, however, some retail development has been included, which is not in accordance with this policy. Nevertheless, because the retail element is only an incidental part of the whole scheme it is considered to be acceptable.

Local Development Framework
There are no policies within the Local Development Framework documents that the proposals for Becket’s Park can be assessed against.

Local Strategies and Other Initiatives
The proposals for Becket’s Park are in accordance with the various local strategies for the area and in accordance with the River Nene Waterside Master plan (2005).

Summary
The Preferred Masterplan conforms to all levels of planning policy from national to local level because the development proposed for Becket’s Park has sought to balance the need for development with the need to protect and enhance the local environment.

The Masterplan hereby produced will provide users of Becket’s Park with the facilities that they have identified as being appropriate within this area and which have been agreed with the Local Planning Authority.
6. Masterplan Delivery

6.1 Disposal Strategy

We are currently experiencing an uncertain property market due to the UK's economic climate and therefore there is a high degree of concern shown by developers who do not wish to undertake speculative work. Therefore in order to provide NBC with the most advantageous method of capitalising on the proposed commercial and residential elements of our proposals for Becket's Park, we advise the following site disposal strategy.

Whilst we have undertaken as part of our brief an 'initial market testing' to ascertain the level of potential demand from the leisure industry (bar/restaurants, cafes etc) and received encouraging results, we are not able at this stage to provide architectural floor plans of any proposed development, timings of construction and possession and other important facts (including planning consent) which will be required for these operators to make firm commitments.

Similarly we consider that developers will require the comfort of knowing not only the demand from 'tenants', but whether there is also a good chance of receiving a detailed planning consent.

In order to obtain even an outline planning consent we are aware that a number of reports and investigations will need to be carried out and submitted with any application in order to satisfy the Planning Authorities. Such reports would include an Environmental Flood Risk Assessment for the proposed scheme, ground investigations, highways and transportation assessments as well as investigations into legal title particularly as this is Command Land.

We therefore suggest that prior to marketing the commercial and residential opportunities at Becket's Park that NBC obtain authorisation to undertake the necessary investigations in order to prepare these reports and obtain an Outline Planning Consent for a mixed use scheme on this site. In order to facilitate this they may need to employ external consultants to carry out this work.

In tandem with these proposed plans being produced more detailed discussions could be held with potential ‘end users’ to firm up their requirements and the financial terms of any leases upon which they would transact.

Following receipt of an outline planning consent we advise that the opportunity could then be marketed by way of inviting Expressions of Interest from developers, utilising agreed Procurement Procedures.

In order to assess the marketability of this opportunity to developers we suggest that a two-staged procurement strategy be instigated, which would briefly involve the following:

a) Stage 1 - This would involve advertising the opportunity and inviting Expressions of Interest from potentially interested developers/operators. Developers would complete a Pre-Qualifying Questionnaire and make initial comments on the Outline Planning Consent.

Dependent upon the outcome of the response which would be marked against agreed criteria, we would down-select developers prior to proceeding to Stage 2, providing shortlisted developers with a detailed Development Brief which would include the full Outline Consent and set out the aspirations of the Borough Council and Stakeholders, including the design criteria and other related matters.

b) Stage 2 - From the design and financial submissions received, a shortlisted developer would be chosen as the ‘Preferred Developer’.

Notwithstanding the above we are aware that for NBC to pre-fund the receipt of a successful Outline Planning Consent (with all the inherent costs of carrying out the necessary reports and investigations as outlined previously) may be a cause of concern.

It would be hoped that any receipts from the disposal of the site would enable NBC to recover these costs (as well as benefit from any residual profits).
However, in order to offset the requirement for pre-funding an outline consent, we would recommend that exploratory discussions were held with WNDC to ascertain the potential for the Preferred Developer of the Avon and Nunn Mills developments being required (under a Section 106) to either physically build or make a major contribution to the costs of the proposed development in Becket’s Park.

By making the development a condition of any planning consent for the larger mixed use development of the Avon site, it could provide the much needed regeneration into the southern side of the Canal/River Nene which would act as a gateway to any proposed development upon the Avon site.

6.2 Recommendations for Further Work and Studies
The Preferred Masterplan has been approved by and delivered to NBC. There is now likely to be a process of further consultation with stakeholders to agree the way forwards.

During the development of the masterplan, several issues have arisen which were outside the scope of this commission but which nonetheless will need to be dealt with during the next stage of the process and ideally prior to any planning applications or seeking of expressions of interest from other parties. Several of these issues will need to be dealt with through further surveys, studies and assessments. Most have been identified in the text but are summarised right:

6.2.1 Masterplan Refinement
In order to establish the feasibility of and refine the proposals set out in the Preferred Masterplan, it is recommended that the following surveys, studies and assessments are carried out:

- Ground investigations
- Engineering and structural surveys (embankment, walls etc.)
- Phase 1 & Phase 2 Habitat Surveys
- Tree surveys in accordance with British Standard
- Flood modelling and Flood Risk Assessment
- Traffic surveys and modelling
- Utilities and services – check capacity / relocation etc.
- Establishment of Legal Title
- Environmental Risk Assessment

6.2.2 Planning
It is recommended that the Becket’s Park masterplan is formally adopted by NBC as Supplementary Planning Guidance. Following this one or several outline planning applications would be submitted to agree the details of the masterplan. An outline planning application can be submitted with some or all matters reserved. Screening should be carried out to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required.

6.2.3 Sustainability
If the Becket’s Park Masterplan is formally adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, the Masterplan will be subject to a full Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which will provide a far more detailed sustainability analysis of the Masterplan than the ‘proofing’ exercise undertaken thus far. Under Section 39(2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 Sustainability Appraisal is mandatory for new or revised SPDs. The SA will build on the previous Sustainability Proofing work and the Sustainability Appraisals of Northampton Borough Council’s Core Strategy and Central Area Action Plan. It will also comply with the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (European Directive 2001/42/EC).
6.2.4 Detailed Designs

The detailed design process (which may in part be carried out during the development of plans for outline consent), will need to be informed by several in-depth and site-specific studies. Other strategies and plans will need to be drawn up once the detailed designs have been drawn up in sufficient detail. These are likely to include:

- Public Art Strategy
- Sign Strategy
- Branding Strategy
- Events Strategy
- Park Management Strategy and establishment of Park Manager
- Environmental Management Plan
- Tree Planting Strategy
- Long term Management Plan
- Annual Maintenance Schedules
- Habitat Management Plan
- Design Guides and Codes
- Interpretation Strategy
- Design and Access Statements.

6.2.5 Consultation

It is recommended that the public are kept informed throughout the life cycle of the next stages and involved where possible in some of the design aspects of the park such as play areas, gardens and establishment of wildlife habitats. Programmes for schools such as ‘Learning Through Landscapes’ and artists’ residencies are a good way of engendering a sense of ownership and pride in the new park for years to come.
7 Conclusion

A clear and viable vision for the future of Becket’s Park has been secured through the development of the Preferred Masterplan. This vision has been arrived at through several years of extensive assessment, consultation and evaluation and has now been demonstrated to be desirable, feasible and deliverable. However the practicalities of further consultation, site-specific studies and assessments, detailed design, planning processes and the securing of funding will require further input.

The conclusion of the development of the Preferred Masterplan is one of many steps in a long process. As large-scale strategies are explored in more detail, issues emerge which may not have been identified in the initial stages. The vision and goals are clear, but the route to their attainment needs to be carefully planned.

The collective will and enthusiasm to implement the Becket’s Park project for the wider profitability of the town and its surrounds are unequivocal.
APPENDIX 1

Environment Agency Northampton Vision
Northampton Vision – helping to create a better place in which to live, work and relax

Thank you for joining us on our Boat Trip today.

We would like to thank all our partners in pulling this day together, especially, St John Ambulance for the use of their boat and crew.

The Environment Agency, in partnership with several organisations, including Northampton Borough Council, has been developing a project to regenerate the River Nene through Northampton.

This is an exciting opportunity for you to discuss the proposals, which include a marina and water taxi, and which have the potential to place Northampton on the map as a strategic inland waterways destination.

Itinerary
10:30-10:45 Make your way along the river front, from Midsummer Meadow car park, to Northampton (Nene) Lock in Beckett’s Park to embark on to the St John Ambulance Boat at the disabled access mooring just above the lock.
10:45-11:00 Short presentation on the Waterway proposals for Northampton from the Environment Agency and Northampton Borough Council.
11:00-15:30 Travel along the River Nene, between the Grand Union Canal and Northampton Washlands, and experience Northampton through a boater’s eyes. Learn about the heritage of the area and sites of local importance and interest though several short talks. Discuss the opportunities for increased use of the waterway with partners.
15:30 Disembark the boat back at Northampton Lock.

Refreshments and a buffet lunch will be provided on the boat.

customer service line 0870 506 5068
incident hotline 0800 5070 60
floodline 0845 928 1188
www.environment-agency.gov.uk
Northampton Vision - executive summary

Putting Northampton on the Inland Waterways' map

Northampton is a perfect location for Waterway Regeneration. To the west, the Northampton Arm of the Grand Union Canal, connects to the National Canal Network with over 3000 km of waterway. To the east, Northampton sits at the head of the River Nene and is the 'Gateway' to over 400km of stunning waterway along the River Nene and into the Fens.

The number of boats using the River Nene has increased year on year for the last 10 years. In addition, The Environment Agency is currently improving and extending the Eastern network through the Fens Waterway Link Project that, in the next 10-15 years, will create a waterway connection from Lincoln to Ely. This will significantly increase the numbers of boats traveling through the Fens and along the Nene to Northampton. However, the people of Northampton will only realise the full benefit of the waterfront if the area is attractive and inviting to visitors.

Northampton Borough Council’s Development Framework and Masterplan for Northampton’s Waterside (2005) concluded that the waterfront has been neglected and is a poor quality environment that few people wish to visit.

However, the area has enormous potential and the Vision Statement from the Beckett’s Park Masterplan (2008) states that:

'The park must not only attract tourists and visitors, particularly river users, but also cater for the needs and aspirations of local people. It must include something of value for all ages, abilities and interests. Beckett’s Park should be
A Park for Everyone'.

As part of the wider Regeneration Programme, we now have a unique opportunity to work together to address past problems and place Northampton on the map as an important strategic inland waterways destination. The proposed marina in the disused rowing lake adjacent to Beckett’s Park is seen as a key element in delivering this vision and stimulating economic regeneration in and around the river. The year round presence of boats, and associated activity, will transform the area and create a family friendly atmosphere: a ‘must stay’ destination for boat users and a great place to visit for local people.
Northampton Vision – the benefits

Marine and associated facilities

- The disused rowing lake at Beckett’s Park will be transformed into a 50-60 berth marine, consisting of both long and short-stay moorings. This will revitalise the area for the people of Northampton, with the benefits of added security.
- 500 metres of short-stay moorings will be created along the River Nene waterfront at Midsummer Meadows, encouraging visiting boaters to stop and explore Northampton.
- Much needed improved navigation, sanitary, such as pump-out, water points, empty disposal, and rubbish collection, will be provided in an eco-building.
- Direct employment opportunities will be created through the provision of a lock keeper/information officer and a small chandlery.
- The marine is a key element in unlocking wider economic opportunities in relation to tourism, potential hire boat and water taxi businesses, and the generation of spend by boaters.
- An information centre will be created, encouraging visiting boaters and the local community to learn more about the area.
- ‘Green electricity’ will be generated from a water turbine on site, or other sustainable energy sources.
- St John Ambulance will be provided with an offline, safe and secure mooring for their boat.
- Improved access/egress will be created for the Northamptonshire Sea Cadets Head Quarters.

Unlocking the potential for Northampton to host riverside festivals and events

- 2011 is the 250th anniversary of the River Nene becoming navigable from Northampton to the Wash: an improvement which at the time facilitated rapid commercial growth of the town. This anniversary presents an ideal opportunity to invite the Inland Waterway Association to hold its 2011 National Festival and Boat Show at Beckett’s Park/Midsummer Meadows. This prestige event is likely to attract in excess of 30,000 visitors over the three days of the festival.
- The IWAS Festival will need to be supported by the provision of moorings and sanitary facilities. We aim to deliver the marina and its associated facilities by 2011.
- St John Ambulance have indicated that they would organise a flotilla of boats as part of the 2011 celebration, each boat carrying a section of a sculpture (or similar) which could be assembled in Beckett’s Park as an iconic memorial to the 250th anniversary.
- Northampton could host its own annual river festival; open air concerts, fairs and other riverside events that will attract people to this improved location.
- There are many benefits to the local economy from holding such events, from sponsorship and partnership working, to promoting businesses and products, to activities and actual onsite involvement during an event.

Improving the Quality of Life for the people of Northampton

- We will create a place that people want to visit. The public are attracted to boats and to those who have little interest in boating itself enjoy strolling along, or sitting beside, a river and looking at boats.
- The view of boats will be clearly visible from the entrance to Beckett’s Park and will lure the public to this Green Space where they will be met with other attractions that this project aims to deliver or facilitate. We want them to be able to take a ride along the river in a water taxi, enjoy a drink on the café terrace overlooking the river, visit the information centre and learn about the history of the river, its navigation and industry; learn how to operate a lock, learn how green electricity is generated; or simply take a walk or cycle along riverside footpaths and cycleways.
- The project, which will link in with regeneration and improvements to the wider area, will encourage use by the local community and help to inject a certain pride, making the area a pleasant and safe green space for all sections of the community.

An improved and enhanced reputation for Northampton

- We aim to unlock the potential that Northampton is currently missing from its ideal location between the canal network to the west and a network of navigable rivers to the east. Northampton is and will increasingly become one of the main Gateways between the two waterway networks.
- Our aim is to make Northampton a must stay inland waterway destination by transforming the riverside as part of the wider master planning and regeneration of the centre of Northampton.
- Developers will be able to ask premiums for properties that have a direct view of the marina. Existing property prices are also likely to benefit from a more pleasant outlook.
- The project aims to create jobs and businesses in their own right, but even more so as part of the wider Waterfront Regeneration Programme, being a key element that will stimulate inward investment into the town and the region.
- The area has previously suffered from criminal and antisocial activities but will be permanently changed and previous criminal and anti-social activities driven out, by changing the character of the area with the all year round presence of boats and visitors.
Northampton Vision - creating an Inland Waterway destination

Northampton is the perfect location for Waterway Regeneration. It is the 'gateway' to Anglian Waterways for all craft travelling from the National navigation networks.

The Northampton waterfront has been neglected over the years and the area has a poor reputation, but we have the opportunity to regenerate the area and put Northampton back on the waterway map – for all the right reasons.

By providing boating facilities, such as a marina, Northampton can become a desired and secure destination for boaters.

The River Nene
Originally used for commercial purposes, today the River Nene is predominantly a recreational waterway and is one of the most beautiful and natural navigations in the country, offering a wealth of heritage and conservation sites.

It is an important regional navigation, linking the Grand Union Canal to the River Great Ouse, via the Middle Level.

The River Nene rises in sources near Badby, Naseby and Ufford and becomes navigable at Northampton where these tributaries combine. The Environment Agency navigation starts at the junction with the Northampton Arm of the Grand Union Canal near Cotton Lock, and extends for 147km to Bevis Hall, just upstream of Wisbech.

The Boating Community
The river through Northampton has a poor reputation within the boating community being associated with both criminal and anti-social activities.

Boaters are reluctant to moor in Northampton and visitors will often pass through in the very early hours of the morning to avoid problems. Clearly this is not how we wish to present the Gateway to the Environment Agency navigation, and it does not reflect the River Nene as a whole.

By working together with our partners and providing secure boating facilities, such as a marina, Northampton can reap the rewards of becoming a desired destination for boaters.

Market need
Moorings on the River Nene are at a premium, with existing marinas and boat clubs virtually full. The number of boats using our waterways has steadily increased over the last ten years and we receive weekly enquiries about mooring availability.

Nationally, it is estimated that there is need for 11,000 additional moorings across the country’s waterways. Whilst most people live relatively close to their mooring, there is some market evidence that if the moorings are put in place people will travel surprisingly long distances for them. Most boaters prefer off river moorings within the security of a marina. Both long and short stay (visitor) moorings are required.

Safety first
The proposed marina will offer safe moorings for boats in times of high river flows; times when navigation is dangerous.

Our aim is to put Northampton back on the boaters map, for all the right reasons.
Nene Vision – Beckett’s Park Masterplan

The park must not only attract tourists and visitors, particularly river users, but also cater for the needs and aspirations of local people. It must include something of value for all ages, abilities and interests. Beckett’s Park should be A Park for Everyone.

In January 2005, Northampton Borough Council received the final report titled ‘Development Framework and Masterplan for Northampton’s Waterside’. This commission was steered by Northampton Borough Council (NBC), River Nene Regional Park, Environment Agency, English Partnerships, with extensive consultation with all stakeholders who have an interest in the Nene Valley River Corridor from Deenton Mill Reservoir in the east, to Barnes Meadow on the west side of Northampton.

The report concluded that:

‘Over the years the development of Northampton has turned its back on the river. This has meant that one of the town’s main assets has been neglected with little investment. The result is a poor quality environment where there is little activity and not a place many people wish to go.’

The main issues identified were as follows:

- Water is the river corridor’s main asset and is not fully exploited.
- The footways/cycleways are in poor condition and have an uninspiring nature with poorly defined, discontinuous access and little or no signage or interpretation.
- There are a lack of amenities or well designed spaces and facilities for activities.
- Several existing and new landmarks are needed to give the river corridor identity and cohesion, such as the lift tower and Carlsberg Brewery.
- The community need to be involved in giving a sense of ownership.

The report reiterates that Beckett’s Park is an important gateway into the river corridor from the town centre. It is the link between the proposed developments at Avon/Nunn Mills and the town centre. To make the area a major landmark it is suggested that the following be provided:

- A new multi purpose facility.
- The use of a contemporary functional design, which would emphasise the park’s links with water and sustainable materials.
- Landmarks to mark gateway to the river corridor.

In December 2007, Northampton Borough Council was awarded funding from Northampton Enterprise Limited to undertake some of the works recommended in the Waterside Northampton Report. NBC set aside some money to carry out a ‘Detailed Master Plan’ in Beckett’s Park.

The Plan aims to be innovative, forward thinking, not only in design but construction, in order to develop Beckett’s Park into a vibrant and attractive area, which could then attract further investment and cultural activities as well as ‘able to consider and develop sustainable transport links in an exciting way, providing a route to employment areas or to designed leisure spaces’. It is made up of the following stages:

- Stage 1: Baseline Analysis and Extensive Consultation.
- Stage 2: Options Development and Appraisal including commercial evidence for emerging options.
- Stage 3: Development of a detailed Masterplan.

Stages 1 and 2 of the Masterplan have been completed with Stage 3 due to be completed in August 2008.

Beckett’s Park: Option A

Beckett’s Park: Option B
Northampton Vision - Inland Waterways Association Festival

IWA FESTIVAL 2007 held on the Great River Ouse at St. Ives

Every year, on August Bank Holiday, the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) hold their National Festival & Boat Show.

The Festival is held at different locations around the UK and is one of the key annual waterway events. It is very popular and regularly attracts over 500 boats and brings together people and organisations to highlight the benefits of using waterways for a wide range of activities, from inland shipping to pleasure cruising, canoeing, cycling and other recreational activities.

Last August the IWA Festival was held at St Ives in Cambridgeshire, which was a fantastic event with large crowds, colourful boats, interesting demonstrations and tasty food. The actual festival event was blessed with wonderful weather — although the preceding weeks were very different. Many boats were delayed by countrywide flooding at some point in their travels.

Yet despite this attendance was up, in excess of 25,000 visitors, as well as 350 visiting boats and 400 tents and caravans. The majority of the visiting boats travelled from the National Canal Network, through Northampton and down the River Nene, to the River Great Ouse.

The IWA Festival held on the Northampton Waterfront in August 2011?

Northampton Vision - Spalding Water Taxi

Introduction
August 2005 saw the launch of the Spalding Water Taxi Service, taking shoppers, visitors and tourists between Springfields (Outlet Shopping Centre and Festival Gardens) and Spalding town centre.

The success of the Water Taxi Service has been beyond expectations. The Water Taxi Company are now expanding the business into other areas, including boat building and possibly water taxis in Peterborough.

The Spalding Water Taxi Company is a joint venture between South Holland District Council, Broadgate Homes Limited, and Thornfield Properties plc (developers of Springfields Outlet Shopping & Festival Gardens), with the Environment Agency’s support and funding from Lincolnshire Enterprise and Leader Plus.

The service operates from April to October each year and tickets are available at locations in the town centre and various points at Springfields. All of the boats are electrically powered and environmentally friendly and the service provides disabled access on two of the craft. The boats are named after local flowers grown in the Spalding area (Beauty, Gold, Queenie and Tulip).

The Water Taxi has been instrumental in the regeneration of the waterfront in Spalding, which lies on the route of the Fens Waterways Link. The taxi’s have attracted large numbers of people to the area and introduced many children to the excitement of boating.

New Trips
Due to the success of the venture a new service offering trips to different parts of the River Welland has recently been launched.

The 30 minute trip takes in some of Spalding’s historic sites and buildings, as well as wildlife along the river corridor.

Conclusion
The water taxi has been very successful and has attracted huge interest from members of the public. Since it’s launch in 2005 an there has been an average of 25,000 passengers a year bringing in £32,000 a year. In addition, private hire increases this to around £75,000 per annum. This not only provides an economic boost to the local community but benefits a diverse range of people and businesses, locally and further afield.

For further information contact:
Spalding Water Taxi Co Ltd on 01778 705053 or visit www.spaldingwatertaxi.co.uk
Northampton Vision - Fens Waterways Link progress

Boston Lock

Boston Lock, the first step in creating the Fens Waterways Link, is well underway and is in fact ahead of schedule.

The lock is a substantial structure and the base slab alone involved over 80 lorry loads of concrete. At present, steel reinforcing is being set as the lock slabs are prepared for more concrete. You can watch progress by logging on to the webcam that is publicised on the Fens Waterways Link webpage:


Still from this Webcam are being recorded to form a time series that will be used for future promotion and publicity.

![Construction progress at Boston Lock](image)

Boston to Spalding Link

Following on from Boston Lock, the next step is to connect Boston with Spalding. This is currently being developed, with the technical study underway.

This is a very exciting project that will bring together flood risk management and environmental improvements along with the recreational benefits.

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Northampton Vision - attendees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alastair Winder</td>
<td>Team Leader, Development Control</td>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Hall</td>
<td>River Inspector</td>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy Baxendale</td>
<td>Area Manager</td>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry Green</td>
<td>Personnel Director of IWA Festivals</td>
<td>Inland Waterways Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cllr. Ben Smith</td>
<td>Deputy Leader of Council</td>
<td>Northamptonshire County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Thornely</td>
<td>Team Leader, Planning Liaison</td>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Joyce</td>
<td>Regional Chair of the Grand Union Junction</td>
<td>Inland Waterways Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candy Reed</td>
<td>Recreation Officer</td>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Roux</td>
<td>Regeneration &amp; Renewal Officer</td>
<td>Northampton Borough Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chris Read</td>
<td></td>
<td>Northampton Sea Cadets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Swain</td>
<td>Planning Liaison, Technical Specialist</td>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire Blacker</td>
<td>Planner</td>
<td>CB Richard Ellis Ltd on behalf of Garbe (Avon site)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Moore</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Recreation, Fisheries &amp; Ecology Regional Advisory Committee for the Environment Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwin Wallace</td>
<td>Events Director</td>
<td>Inland Waterways Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halina Davies</td>
<td>Urban Renaissance Manager</td>
<td>East Midlands Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harj Dhaliwal</td>
<td>Director of Infrastructure Delivery</td>
<td>West Northants Development Corp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irven Forbes</td>
<td>Waterway Operations Manager</td>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Ogle</td>
<td>Regeneration &amp; Renewal Officer</td>
<td>Northampton Borough Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith Crawford</td>
<td>Asset System Management, Technical Specialist</td>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynda Payton</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>Inland Waterways Association - Northampton Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michel Kermou</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>River Nene Regional Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil Dodson</td>
<td>Principal Planner</td>
<td>Northampton Borough Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cllr. Richard Church</td>
<td>Regeneration Portfolio</td>
<td>Northampton Borough Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Humphrey</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>Northampton Sea Cadets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam Goodall</td>
<td>Programme Consultant</td>
<td>Capita Simon on behalf of West Northants Development Corp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuart Docker</td>
<td>Regeneration &amp; Renewal Officer</td>
<td>Northampton Borough Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue Cant</td>
<td>Team Leader, Nene Waterway</td>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cllr. Timmy Crake</td>
<td>Environment portfolio</td>
<td>Northampton Borough Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica Price</td>
<td>Team Leader, Environment Manager</td>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I love my journey to work on the water taxi. It's a great way to start and end the day.

I really enjoy eating on the floating restaurant.

We like to look at the boats moored in the marina and along the river.

Our school came here to learn how green electricity is being generated – it was really great!

Beckett's Park and Midsummer Meadows are new great places to hold riverside festivals and events.

I love my morning jog on the riverside path.

We really enjoy sitting on the café terrace looking out over the boats and the river.

Our new home has a great view over the marina.

My young children were so excited travelling on the water taxi.

It's so easy to cycle along the river.

You can see the boats almost from the centre of town.
### Funding Matrix

(Footnotes)

1. Funding between £250,000 - £5 million available however £1 million for this project generates good value for money.

2. Initial consultation with Moulton College indicates an interest in setting up and managing the exhibition gardens. Further discussions to be organised by Northampton Borough Council.

3. Up to £100,000 available for public realm improvements from County Council.

4. S106 developer contributions for Avon and Nunn Mills sites.

5. Available for projects which tie in to the growth of Northampton.

6. Possibility of attracting funding for skate park if skater community form a charitable trust.
## Funding Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund</th>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>Application to Becket’s Park</th>
<th>Conditions/Criteria</th>
<th>Who can apply?</th>
<th>How Much Funding is Available?</th>
<th>Timescale/Process</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Growth Area Funding</strong></td>
<td>Potentially fund the whole project</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EMDG - High quality workspace initiatives</strong></td>
<td>There are a number of priorities but mixed-used schemes are often funded. There is no specific criteria for this. Dependent on individual projects.</td>
<td>100% of project costs. Funding usually between £250,000 – £3 million</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EMDG - Waterside investment initiatives</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Grants for the Arts, Arts Council England</strong></td>
<td>Individuals, arts organisations, local authorities and other public organisations, partnerships, collectives, regional and national organisations, organisations whose normal activity is not arts-related, including voluntary and community groups.</td>
<td>Public art</td>
<td>Grants for the Arts is used to help Arts Council England to achieve its aims. These are: - Help more people to take part in the arts - Provide opportunities for arts and young people - Help the development of artists and arts organisations and the creative economy - Involve the arts and artists in creating vibrant communities - Allow artists to work internationally. International artists to work in England, and artists from here and abroad to work with each other - Create opportunities to promote and collaborate - Develop the performance and productivity of arts organisations and the arts sector.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum £200. Maximum £100,000 to organisations. Average grant size is £18,000.</td>
<td>Six weeks for applications for over £5,000. Twelve weeks for applications for over £5,000.</td>
<td>An application form can be downloaded from the arts council website at <a href="https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/grants-and-support/grants">https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/grants-and-support/grants</a>. A hard copy can also be requested by calling 0845 300 6200.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access to Nature</strong></td>
<td>Funding will focus on three main themes: Community awareness and active participation Education, learning and volunteering Welcoming, well-managed and</td>
<td>A project revolving around the natural environment. See <a href="http://www.natureengland.org.uk/services/grants-and-support/consultation-outcomes.htm">http://www.natureengland.org.uk/services/grants-and-support/consultation-outcomes.htm</a> for more details on the types of projects that can be funded.</td>
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</table>

### Not applicable to Becket’s Park

- Community groups governed by a written constitution. Registered charities and trusts, statutory bodies, schools, colleges, local authorities, town and parish councils, health organisations, Companies that are not
- Between £2000 - £20,000. A contribution will also be received from the applicant. The amount will depend on the amount of funding sought. See website

For more information call the Chichester Space Advice Line on 0845 367 67 71 or visit the website at [www.natureengland.org.uk](http://www.natureengland.org.uk).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wildlife-rich Places</th>
<th>Wildlife-rich Places</th>
<th>Wildlife-rich Places</th>
<th>Wildlife-rich Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within these themes, grants will be awarded to organisations who can demonstrate that their project will deliver one or more of Access to Nature’s five main outcomes:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 1. A greater number and diversity of people having improved opportunities to experience the natural environment. | 2. More people having opportunities for learning about the natural environment and gaining new skills. | 3. More people able to enjoy the natural environment through investments in access to natural places and networks between sites. | 4. Richer, more sustainably managed natural places meeting the needs of local communities.  
| 5. An increase in communities’ sense of stewardship of local natural places, by establishing strong partnerships between communities, voluntary organisations, local authorities and others. | All projects must meet outcome 5 and at least one other outcome. | All projects must meet outcome 5 and at least one other outcome. | All projects must meet outcome 5 and at least one other outcome. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awards for All</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The fund is for people to take part in arts, sport, heritage and community activities, and projects that promote education, the environment and health in the local community.</td>
<td>This could fund a variety of different small community-oriented projects</td>
<td>The grant will have to be used within one year.</td>
<td>Not-for-profit groups or a parish/town council, school or health body.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Esmee Fairbairn</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundation aims to improve the quality of life throughout</td>
<td>There are a few different strands but the strand most relevant to this project.</td>
<td>Eligible activities include the preservation and enhancement of open space, and good management of woodlands, gardens and</td>
<td>Esmee Fairbairn supports registered charities and not-for-profit organisations. We make</td>
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<tr>
<th>Organisation/Programme</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Eligibility</th>
<th>Application Process</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SITA Trust Enhancing Communities Programme</td>
<td>Enhancing Communities is the name of SITA Trust's funding programme for community improvement projects. We can support projects around landfill sites owned by the waste management company SITA UK. We support projects that make physical improvements to community facilities, sports projects and historic buildings/structures. Projects need to be within 10 miles of a landfill site or 25 miles for biodiversity projects. Not for profit organisations, community groups, parish councils, local authorities and charities. Small grants schemes: £30,000 for projects not exceeding £20,000. Large grants scheme: £50,000 - £500,000. You will be contacted either by phone or arrangements for a site visit will be made. You will be notified in writing within two weeks of a board meeting stating whether your application has been successful.</td>
<td>Email. Generally expect to make a preliminary decision about whether to take it further within a month. If expressed as interest, a final decision could take a further four months, so it would be best to factor a total of two months into your planning – particularly if you are assessing a grant of more than £75,000. <a href="http://www.sitatrust.co.uk">www.sitatrust.co.uk</a></td>
<td>Tel: (01454) 282910 Fax: (01454) 269180 Email: <a href="mailto:sita.trust@bc.co.uk">sita.trust@bc.co.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Billaward</td>
<td>Support projects which enhance biodiversity and/or communities. Possible improvements to community buildings, outdoor recreation facilities and/or improvements to open space. The main criteria are: The project's site is within 10 miles of a landfill site; The project's site is also within 10 miles of a landfill site; Grants are awarded to projects that provide or improve community spaces. Cultural facilities and places for outdoor recreation. This includes improvements to community buildings, open space and will benefit local people of all ages. There will be a minimum of 100 days of full public access to the project per year. Any Billaward grant will be used for site-based improvement work, not for equipment or running costs. Billaward is unable to fund costs to help an existing facility meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act; Full eligibility criteria available on the web.</td>
<td>Small Grants Scheme: £150,000 - £500,000. You can submit your completed application to us anytime from April 2006 to June 2010, except for Flagship Applications. Flagship projects are assessed twice a year. Application deadline for submission is 17th October 2006 for a stage one application. Flagship projects will be assessed by a two-tier assessment process. Initially applicants will be asked to submit a First Stage Proposal. The Billaward Board will decide whether it wishes to invite a full application. There is no deadline for these completed forms. They are processed on a rolling programme and will be considered at the next available board meeting. The next deadline is 17th October 2006 for the stage one application.</td>
<td>Tel: 01636 670900 Email: <a href="mailto:billaward@nest.org">billaward@nest.org</a>. Website: <a href="http://www.billaward.org">www.billaward.org</a></td>
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<td>Community Spaces Programme</td>
<td>The Community Spaces programme will help community groups create or extend their spaces. Could possibly be used to fund nature conservation activities. The Community Spaces programme aims to: Create better local environments. Not for profit community groups. This may include community groups governed by a written constitution allowing it to do. Minimum £50,000 Maximum £620,000 Average less than £50,000. All applications need to go through a two stage process. Stage one assessed within 8 weeks of receipt of application.</td>
<td>Visit the Community Spaces website at <a href="http://www.community-">www.community-</a></td>
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<td>Parks for People</td>
<td>Landfill Communities Fund</td>
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<td>The three-year joint initiative between Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund (BLF) helps with the restoration and regeneration of public parks and gardens, including squares, walls and promenades in England.</td>
<td>Whenever waste is heated in the ground by a landfill site operator (LSO), a landfill tax is payable by the operator to Panormos and Excise. The Landfill Communities Fund allows a LSO to divert up to 8.5% of this tax, as a credit, to certain types of academic, commercial or community projects. The scheme is voluntary and regulated by a Government agency called Enfiest.</td>
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<td>You can apply through this programme if your project is concerned with a public park and you are a not-for-profit organisation, and you need a grant of between £250,000 and £5 million (including development grant). You will also have to show that your community values the park as part of their heritage, and that it meets local social, economic and environmental needs and the park actively involves local people.</td>
<td>The land cost potentially be used to fund the nature conservation element and/or cycle paths. Eligible projects might include: Follow the links below to see pictures and further information: - community halls, scout &amp; guide halls etc. - play areas - measures - conservation and bio-diversity projects on public or private land - permanent or mobile skateboard parks or cycle tracks - paths (which are not a statutory responsibility) - sites and buildings of historical and/or architectural interest</td>
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<td>Although we expect most applications through this programme are expected to be funded by local authorities, applications from other not-for-profit organisations that own public parks are also welcomed. $250,000-5 million. You will need to raise at least 25% of your project costs from other sources, either as cash or non-cash contributions (this is in your partnership funding). At least 5% of this partnership funding must be cash from your own resources.</td>
<td>Most grants are between £5,000 and £50,000 depending on the type of project, its location, proximity to a landfill site, local project cost and the proportion of matching funding, particularly local fundraising.</td>
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<td>Deadline for stage one applications is Sept 2008. For more information or to apply for a grant see: <a href="http://www.hlf.org.uk/English/Grant/ApplyingForGrants/Parks+for+People/">http://www.hlf.org.uk/English/Grant/ApplyingForGrants/Parks+for+People/</a></td>
<td>You should be aware that making a successful application for Landfill Communities Fund is often, but not necessarily, a slow process. Community First has time to establish that a project is eligible under the Enfiest regulations and then a considerable amount of information has to be collected to make an application to an LSO. The procedures regarding applications to an LSO vary from one to another. Most LSIs only hold their selection meetings on a quarterly, or even a half yearly, basis. Many applicants are unsuccessful even where they have an excellent project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heritage Lottery’s Townscape Initiative</td>
<td>Through our Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) programme, we make grants that help communities to regenerate conservation areas displaying particular social and economic need throughout the United Kingdom (except the Channel Islands and Isle of Man). It encourages partnerships to carry out repairs and other works to a number of historic properties within those areas, and improve the quality of life for all those who live, work or visit there. It appears that there are some heritage sites to the west and therefore this fund may be applicable.</td>
<td>The schemes to deliver the following outcomes: Preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of conservation areas affected by high levels of deprivation and in need of regeneration. Bringing historic buildings back into appropriate and sustainable use. Swinging the character of conservation areas through increasing training opportunities in heritage skills; increasing community participation; and improving approaches to conservation management and maintenance. We give priority to areas demonstrating high levels of deprivation and in need of regeneration.</td>
<td>They fund schemes which promote benefits for the public and which are not intended primarily for private gain. Highest priority is given to applications from not-for-profit organisations. Applicants could include: single organisations, for example local authorities or building preservation trusts; a partnership of organisations that have their own written constitutions, for example local regeneration companies; and, locally and over the wider area, partnerships, where one member will apply to us and be responsible for managing the scheme on behalf of everyone involved. If the lead applicant is not the local authority, the planning authority must be an active member of the partnership. The planning authority must confirm high level commitment to the scheme including a commitment to adequate staff resources, and to the use of statutory powers such as imposing Article 4 directions and using enforcement action (see <a href="http://www.planningportal.gov.uk">www.planningportal.gov.uk</a>). Grants are available between £500,000 and £2 million. You have to contribute at least 25% of the total value of the common fund from other sources. The common fund does not include contributions from property owners to the cost of works to their properties. Simply because the scheme is so competitive.</td>
<td>The national batch deadline for 2006 town-round applications is 30 November. Decision will be made in these applications in April 2005. All applications are assessed in two rounds. This is so you can apply at an early stage in planning your scheme and get a commitment from HL when you send in your proposal in greater detail. The first round is competitive and assessed in a national batch. If you receive a first-round pass, you will need to develop your scheme further within a 12-month development phase and then send in a detailed second-round submission. The second round is not competitive; a grant will be offered to your scheme if it meets our criteria and priorities, and provides the information and level of detail required.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Investment Fund</td>
<td>The Community Investment Fund focuses investment into projects and programmes that help create an active nation through sport and active recreation. Look for projects that seek to involve the whole community, particularly hard-to-reach groups, that match regional priorities laid out in our plans for sport, and that recognise the wider benefits of sport and activity in terms of</td>
<td>This could potentially fund things like play facilities or a skate park or any other facilities which could increase participation</td>
<td>Projects must be able to demonstrate how a significant increase in participation would be achieved, explain how it could be sustained and make a commitment to monitoring and evaluating the benefits. Projects should demonstrate how they will increase participation by encouraging more people to become involved in sport, increasing skill levels, increasing the numbers and quality of available coaches, and improving support to volunteers. Although they have a very tough target to meet in terms of increasing participation, it is important that we do not just</td>
<td>Most organisations that have a written constitution, memorandum and articles of association, or were established by statute or statutory powers Minimum £10,000 Maximum £50,000 10 working days for an enquiry and eight weeks for a full application. There are two application stages for this programme: initial enquiry and full application.</td>
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### Key:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most likely funding source</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possible funding source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More research to be done</td>
</tr>
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</table>

- consider 'quick fixes' and lose sight of the need to ensure they balance their investment in areas of greatest need as opposed to areas of greatest capacity.