

## National Grid Site Planning Narrative

### 1 Introduction

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The main policy focus to date has been the conflicting policy allocation set out in Policy 27 of the Central Area Action Plan. It is not the purpose of this paper to provide a representation on the soundness of this policy with respect to Carlsberg's expansion aims. This paper aims to provide an internal clarification of Carlsberg's proposed development of the 'National Grid' site, and in doing so an insight into planning, environment and urban design context of the site. Importantly, this paper provides a more appropriate strategy for the development of the site, and in doing so assists in advocating Carlsberg's proposed use of the site.

### 2 Planning and Environmental Context

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#### 2.1 Site Context

The site sits within an industrial area contained by the River Nene corridor and the A5123. It is located within close proximity to the Northampton Railway Station and the town centre.

Visibility of the site is limited by the surrounding built form and vegetation with the main views of the site being along St. Peters' Way, Towcester Road, Horseshoe Street, from the bridge over the River Nene and from within the River Nene corridor. The location of the site provides an opportunity to respond in different ways to the urban frontage along the A5123 and the green edge along the River Nene.

Symbolic of the area is its industrial uses; the Carlsberg Brewery dominates the skyline and provides industrial architecture, promoting the brewing traditions of the town. As acknowledged in the Northampton Character Assessment<sup>1</sup>, the Carlsberg Brewery is a dominant complex of buildings and structures designed by the Danish architect Knud Munk and have been standing since the early 1970's. Importantly, the assessment identifies the Brewery as a positive contribution to the visual appearance of the town. It is considered that the Carlsberg Brewery provides a distinct character area of Northampton, boasting industrial heritage and complimented by the River Nene, meandering through this character area. The Northampton Character Assessment refers to the 'Brewery District' as a character area also. It is considered that it is this character that should be retained and improved through the continued vitality expansion of the industrial uses and the enhancement of the waterside as a key piece of green infrastructure accessible to pedestrians and cyclists.

#### 2.2 Planning Context

Carlsberg operate long standing major industrial premises within Northampton, with ambitious expansion plans that are considered to enable the Northampton Brewery to be one of the most efficient brewery operations in the world. It is thereby appropriate to consider Carlsberg's development plans against local, regional and national planning policy and best practice guidance.

Most recently, national planning guidance has been provided by the publication of the draft National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework provides an up to date response to the recent economic climate and the need to facilitate sustainable growth. In doing the

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<sup>1</sup> Supporting evidence to the draft Central Area Action Plan

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framework provides what can be seen as positive statements around the planning and determination of development proposals and the Planning Inspectorate has now confirmed that Draft NNPF is a material consideration in planning matters. This specifically states that:

Local planning authorities should:

- prepare Local Plans on the basis that objectively assessed development needs should be met, and with sufficient flexibility to respond to rapid shifts in demand or other economic changes
- approve development proposals that accord with statutory plans without delay;

Planning should be genuinely plan-led, with succinct Local Plans setting out a positive long-term vision for an area.

- planning should proactively drive and support the development that this country needs. Every effort should be made to identify and meet the..., business, ...development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth. Decision-takers at every level should assume that the default answer to development proposals is "yes", except where this would compromise the key sustainable development principles set out in this Framework
- planning policies and decisions should take into account local circumstances and market signals.... Plans should set out a clear strategy for allocating sufficient land which is suitable for development in their area, taking account of the needs of the.... business community"

Planning for prosperity is a key part of the framework, marking the Government's commitment to securing sustainable economic growth, in particular the *"urgent need to restructure the economy, to build on the country's inherent strengths and to meet the twin challenges of global competition and of a low carbon future."*

With regard to the current national planning policy framework, Planning Policy Statement 4 is of particular significance and advocates the case for sustainable economic development. Policy EC10 states that *"local planning authorities should adopt a positive and constructive approach towards planning applications for economic development. Planning applications that secure sustainable economic growth should be treated favourably."* The policy progresses to provide a number of impact consideration to which proposals should be accessed. Of particular significance is whether the proposal secures a high quality and inclusive design which takes the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of the area and the way it functions, the impact on local employment and the impact on economic and physical regeneration of the area.

As required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (s.38 (6)) if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for Northampton currently consists of the adopted Local Plan and the East Midlands Regional Plan. However once adopted, documents plan documents within the Local Development Framework will form part of the statutory development plan, including the Central Area Action Plan and the Joint Core Strategy. Currently both documents are material to any development proposals, and will therefore be considered in the preparation of a scheme.

### 2.3 Environmental Considerations

The proposed development will be guided by the environmental context of the site and surrounding area. The following are required to progress to a final scheme and support the submission of a planning application:

- **Noise impact** – key sensitive receptors include the existing brick building to the north of the site and the proposed pedestrian riverside walkway area. Acoustic barriers could be included within the proposed development to mitigate noise spillage.
- **Ecology** – a full appreciation of any habitats and species within proximity to the site will enable suitable mitigation measures to be incorporated into the design.
- **Heritage** – an insight into the potential for heritage assets within the site area will ensure that the development does not impact upon significant heritage assets.
- **Flood risk** – the site benefits from flood defence infrastructure to the River Nene, and as such is classified as an area that is unlikely to flood except in extreme conditions. The chance of flooding each year is 0.5% or less. Nevertheless due to the site size and proximity to the river a flood risk assessment is required to inform the design.
- **Hydrology and geology** – an investigation of potential land contamination would be undertaken to ensure that the scheme
- **Landscape and visual impact** – a detailed assessment will guide the detailed massing and scale parameters.
- **Air quality** – potential impact on air quality may need to be assessed.
- **Heritage assessment** -to ensure that any relevant heritage assets are suitably incorporated into the proposal

## 3 Proposed Scheme

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### 3.1 The proposed development

The proposed development consists of a new palette storage building, a beer destruction facility and keg storage area. The scheme will also provide improved access routes, with vehicle access to the south of the site, linkages to the existing Carlsberg site and importantly an extension to the existing footpath to provide pedestrian access to an enhanced river side.

The existing National Grid building would be demolished as part of the remediation and clearance of the site. It is acknowledged that the existing brick building on the northern frontage of the site is identified within the draft Central Area Action Plan, as a building to be retained. This building could be retained with Carlsberg's proposals or alternatively could be replaced to provide a high quality office frontage. The indicative masterplan shows the replacement of this building with offices as an option. Should the existing Brewery Social Club be retained there is an opportunity to extend the activities of Bridge Street to the South Bridge over the River Nene to include the Brewery Social Club area.

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## **3.2 Site Layout**

The proposed main building is for palette storage and repair, and would be located to the south of the site, with a maximum height of 14 metres. The massing and alignment of this building responds to the existing urban form. The indicative masterplan shows the proposed beer destruction plant behind this main building to the south. This could be located elsewhere, and the plan provides an option. The storage keys would be located in the central and northern part of the site, as it is important for safety and environmental reasons that these are kept at some distance from the river. The Kegs would be a maximum height of 5.5 metres.

## **3.3 Access**

### **3.3.1 Pedestrian access**

The plan identifies a range of pedestrian access routes around the site. To the south west, the Nene Way national trail heads north towards the site before crossing the river and heading south. From the crossing point a pedestrian / cycle route provides a connection between the River Nene and St. Peters' Way. To the west of the site a pedestrian / cycle route provides a link alongside the River Nene from Towcester Road to St. James' Road by the railway station. There is an opportunity to the south of the site to provide a new pedestrian / cycle link between the Nene Way and Towcester Road, creating a link to the railway station in the process.

Existing green infrastructure around the site is mainly focused on the River Nene corridor with some vegetation located along St. Peters' Way and Towcester Road around the various car parks and buildings.

Enhancing pedestrian access and green infrastructure around the site is considered a key design principle and an opportunity in Carlsberg's development of the site. The indicative layout plan illustrates the potential for a new footpath along an enhanced river side, with the intention of 'inviting' people to the River Nene, with a green buffer zone to provide screening and enhance the river side environment.

The creation of the green buffer zone will screen and mitigate the industrial buildings, ensuring that the development proposals do not stifle the opportunity for an improved pedestrian access along the River Nene, whilst allowing access to an area iconic of Northampton's industrial heritage. The scheme will allow for the rediscovery of the 'waterside' area and work to ensure that the development does not prevent the opportunity for enhanced access to this area.

### **3.3.2 Vehicular**

The plan identifies three potential vehicular access points to the site, one from St. Peters' Way and two from Towcester Road. A new vehicular access road would be developed off St Peters' Way to the south of the site, with a gatehouse upon entrance to the site.