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Plan 6: Key views and Constraints
1.1 Nene Meadows is a centrally located area consisting largely of green space, lying immediately to the south east of Northampton’s town centre (see Plan 1). The area provides for a variety of leisure and recreation opportunities serving the needs of both the immediate town centre and the wider Northampton area. It also includes significant designations in respect of Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve and the registered Battlefield.

1.2 The adopted Central Area Action Plan (CAAP; January 2013) provides general policy direction for guiding future proposals within the area, principally through Policy 29 (Becket’s Park) and Policy 30 (Nene Meadows). The policies provide direction on the future land use and management of the areas known collectively as Nene Meadows. In addition, Policy 28 (Avon / Nunn Mills / Ransome Road) seeks to identify an effective link between Becket’s Park and Avon Nunn Mills to include river crossings. Para 6.72 makes reference to the role of Nene Meadows in providing greenspace for the Avon / Nunn Mills site.

1.3 The Borough Council has prepared a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), to accord with paragraph 6.82 of the CAAP and to build on the design principles contained in Figures 6.10, 6.11 and 6.12 of the adopted Plan. These figures provide additional information on the detail and type of development it expects within the Nene Meadows area. The SPD is not intended to be prescriptive, nor repeat the work already undertaken to inform the adopted policies. Instead, paragraph 6.82 states that an SPD will be prepared to amplify and give further direction to these policies. The aims of this SPD are to:

- Provide further guidance on how Policies 29 and 30 in the adopted Northampton Central Area Action Plan can be implemented within the site boundary for Nene Meadows, as well as providing for green space for the Avon Nunn Mills development
- Promote key interventions and projects that will realise the overall vision for the site
- Inform developers and investors of appropriate land use proposals for Nene Meadows
- Provide a clear framework that will assist in the determination of planning applications and negotiations for developer contributions, including those associated with environmental improvements and in lieu of on-site provision for open space
• Ensure that effective management measures are in place for areas which require protection, conservation and enhancement

• Provide clear direction to assist proposals for future funding streams / bids as well as setting out timelines for future delivery

1.4 This SPD has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulation 2012 (Part 5). Once adopted, it will carry significant weight as a material consideration when determining planning applications.

1.5 The Vision for Nene Meadows is that it will become a strategic leisure and recreation destination for Northampton’s residents and visitors. Becket’s Park will perform a role as a formal town centre park. This guidance provides land use proposals and detailed policy direction that will assist in delivering this Vision.

1.6 The following objectives have been informed through the Northampton Central Area Action Plan:

• Creating an accessible destination for leisure and recreation in Northampton and the wider area
• Significantly improving access and connectivity into and within Nene Meadows
• Protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural and built environment

1.7 This SPD is accompanied by a Community Impact Assessment, which identifies potential positive and negative impacts upon equality and diversity.

Prior to submitting any proposals or planning applications, developers and interested parties are advised to contact relevant organisations to discuss the contents of their proposals (see Appendix 2). This will ensure that any proposals and plans will contain the relevant information and requirements necessary for determining any future planning applications.
Plan 1:
Location within Northampton Borough
SECTION 2: PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

A National Policy

2.1 The Government published the National Planning Policy Framework in March 2012, which provides guidelines for the preparation of local plans and associated documents (NPPF paragraphs 17, 73, 109 and 126 refer). This Government requires local planning authorities to take account of, and support, local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs. In preparing plans, local planning authorities should also consider minimising impacts on ecology and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible. This can be achieved by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future development proposals. The aim should also be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment. In addition, the Government requires that a positive strategy for conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment be set out, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats.

B Strategic Policy

2.2 The West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (WNJPU) is responsible for the preparation of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (WNJCS). This is a local plan covering the administrative boundaries of Northampton, Daventry and South Northamptonshire. The WNJCS was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in January 2013 and the Examination process commenced in April 2013. The Inspector requested that further work be undertaken. Taking into account the time required to complete this additional work, the hearings will resume in March 2014. The Planning Inspector’s report is therefore expected in the Summer of 2014. The key policies influencing this SPD (subject to changes in the adopted version) are:

- **Policy BN4 (Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area):** seeks to ensure that when preparing development proposals, developers should demonstrate that their developments will not have significant adverse effects upon the integrity of the Special Protection Area and RAMSAR site. This includes any impact from increases in recreational activity.

- **Policy BN5 (The Historic Environment):** outlines the need to secure and enhance the significance of the area’s heritage assets and their settings

- **Policy BN7 (Flood Risk):** developers are required to comply with flood risk assessments and management requirements.
• **Policy S10 (Sustainable Development Principles):** seeks high standards of sustainable design to include aspects associated with safety, security, a sense of space, minimising waste and energy efficiency.

• **Policy S11 (Low carbon and renewable energy):** for residential developments, this policy seeks a minimum of Level 4 standard in the Code for Sustainable Homes and the zero carbon standard from 2016 (or national equivalent standard). For new non-residential developments over 500 sq.m gross internal floorspace, developers are required to achieve a minimum rating of at least BREEAM (BRE Environmental Assessment Method) very good standard (or equivalent) or any future national equivalent zero carbon standard from 2019.

C Local Policy

2.3 Nene Meadows is split into 3 character areas known as Becket’s Park, Midsummer Meadow and Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve. The key policies contained in the adopted CAAP affecting Nene Meadows are:

• **Policy 29 (Becket’s Park):** this policy promotes the delivery of a building (up to 500 sq.m) which will accommodate uses complementing the role of the park and its marina. Enabling development incorporating housing and office use are also promoted.

• **Policy 30 (Nene Meadows):** this policy outlines the vision for the Nene Meadows, stating that it will become a strategic leisure and recreation destination. To achieve this, the policy requires the creation of a Central Activity Hub in Midsummer Meadow, a comprehensive movement network of footpaths and cycleways to improve pedestrian and cycle accessibility around the site. It also requires improved access to areas beyond Nene Meadows, river crossings and the application of appropriate management techniques for the Local Nature Reserve and the Battlefield site. Remoulding of the landscape bund will also open up views of the area to Bedford Road, making it feel more secure.

• **Policy 29 (Avon / Nunn Mills / Ransome Road):** this policy seeks a comprehensive mixed use development on the site, to include housing commerce and educational uses. These are complemented by the requirements to provide green links between Becket’s Park, the site and Delapre Park. It also seeks the delivery of a continuous riverside path.

• **Policy 5 (Flood Risk and Drainage):** there are areas within the Central Area, including parts of the Waterside, which are at risk of fluvial flooding. This policy requires the submission of flood risk assessments which could assist with reducing the risk of off-site flooding.

• **Policy 8 (Safeguarded Public Transport Route):** reference is made to the need for safeguarding the former railway corridor within the site as a future public transport / cycle / walking route.
Appendix 1 provides a detailed replication of all the policies referred to above. It should be noted that any planning application coming forward will also have to conform to other development management policies contained in the adopted plans, including the Central Area Action Plan.

**D Northampton Corporate Plan 2012 – 2015**

2.4 Northampton Borough Council’s Corporate Plan sets out the Council’s priorities and explains what it wants to achieve over the next 3 years. The Plan also highlights progress made over the last year. The delivery of this SPD will contribute towards meeting some of the key priorities in the Borough Council’s Corporate Plan.

**Priority 2: Invest in safer, cleaner neighbourhoods**

Long term outcomes include a place where people want to visit and enjoy Northampton’s parks and open spaces.

**Priority 7: Promoting health and well-being**

Long term outcomes include promoting the health and well-being of residents through continued support of leisure opportunities in leisure clubs and the Leisure Trust.

**Priority 8: Responding to your needs**

Long term outcomes include making sure that the public are informed and engaged in service quality and design.

This is already being achieved through the continued creation of effective public dialogue in the decision making process to ensure developing policy and service delivery takes into account different needs.
E  Evidence Base

2.6 Policies contained in the Northampton Central Area Action Plan (which influenced the preparation of this SPD) have been informed by a range of evidence, including the following (in alphabetical order):

- **Avon Nunn Mills Development Parameters** (WNDC/NBC, 2011): this document was aimed at creating a synergy with existing and emerging masterplans, strategies and framework for the wider area, whilst providing a platform for discussion with landowners and partners

- **Avon Nunn Mills Strategic Development Framework** (LDA Design, 2010): WNDC appointed LDA consultants to prepare a development framework for an area south of Bedford Road and east of London Road known collectively as the Avon, Nunn Mills and Ransome Road site. It was aimed at providing a framework for which planning applications could be determined as well as informing the CAAP

- **Becket’s Park Masterplan** (Halcrow, August 2008): Halcrow was appointed to produce a detailed Masterplan for Becket’s Park with the aim of securing funding and implementing the recommended proposals
• **Nene Meadows Masterplan** (Nortoft, 2010): Nortoft was appointed by Northampton Borough Council and West Northamptonshire Development Corporation to undertake a masterplanning exercise for Nene Meadows. The contents of this document have been used to inform the formulation of policies within the CAAP

• **Northampton Cycle Development Plan** (Northamptonshire Highways, 2010): this document identifies opportunities to enhance the existing cycle network including cost-effective quick wins that have potential to increase accessibility

• **Northampton Town Transport Strategy (Fit for Purpose), Consultation Draft** (Northamptonshire County Council, September 2012): this strategy establishes Northamptonshire County Council’s vision for transport associated with the town

• **Northamptonshire Transportation Plan** (Northamptonshire County Council, 2012): this sets out the County Council’s strategic aims and goals for transportation in Northamptonshire. The objectives take account of potential funding levels available to the County over the next few years as well as providing a better understanding of the likely future demands which development will place on the transport network. This NTP is accompanied by a series of daughter documents which cover a range of topics.

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### SECTION 3

**HISTORY OF NENE MEADOWS, POLICY BACKGROUND AND LAND OWNERSHIP**

#### A. Historical Background

3.1 The area being planned for is known as Nene Meadows, and is located immediately to the south east of Northampton’s town centre. It lies within the boundary of the Northampton Central Area Action Plan. Nene Meadows is divided into 3 main character areas, details of which are provided in Section 4. The 3 character areas are:

- Becket’s Park (to the west)
- Midsummer Meadow (central location)
- Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve (to the east)
3.2 **Becket’s Park** is a traditional park lying adjacent to the River Nene. It was initially designed for promenading in 1783. The majority of the Park was also a designated “Cow Meadow” and used as a cattle grazing field. By 1937, Becket’s Park was an established urban park accommodating tennis courts and a bowling green (now disused). Today, it accommodates some formal children’s play facilities, tennis courts and a small pavilion/cafè (126sq.m in size). Substantial investment since 2009 has resulted in improved river frontages and footpaths, as well as the creation of a new marina within a former boating lake, opened in March 2011. Prior to the creation of the marina, Becket’s Park suffered from a comparative lack of investment and was perceived as underused. With the investment, referred to above and the need for both the river and the park to provide positive asset for the town centre; a strategy is required to be developed providing vision for assisting future direction and investment. This strategy will also need to improve links to the town centre and the wider area, generate more activity and enhance/supplement existing facilities.

3.3 **Midsummer Meadow** is primarily used for recreation, parking and as an events space. It once accommodated public baths / outdoor swimming pool which was opened in 1898 but subsequently demolished in 1983. It consists of predominantly mown grassland and natural/semi-natural open space. For many years, the site has been used to accommodate events such as circuses and the Dragon Boat race, attracting visitors from within and outside the Borough. The Council has recently invested in the creation of a new skatepark, which has proven to be very popular since its opening in July 2012. There is also an ironstone chimney located to the east of the skatepark, overlooking Bedford Road. With the developments expected in Avon Nunn Mills and Ransome Road (further details in Section 4), a new community is expected to settle in and use the area. There is an opportunity for Midsummer Meadow to capitalise on increased use from new visitors to the area. There will also be an opportunity for new developments to contribute towards the enhancement/supplementing of existing facilities and access improvements within and around Nene Meadows. Opportunities exist to widen the recreational offer to all age groups.

3.4 **Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve (LNR)** is one of Northampton’s 6 Local Nature Reserves and is by far the largest in the Borough. Within the Barnes Meadow LNR area, there are remnants of two disused railway lines. The first railway line to be built in Northampton ran from Blisworth to Peterborough and was built in 1845. The Midlands branch line to Bedford was opened in 1872. The LNR straddles the River Nene, which resulted in the site being transformed into a complex of permanent pools and seasonal wet scrapes over time. This has been particularly attractive to wildlife. In addition, the designated LNR site encompasses part of the Registered Northampton Battlefield, a designated heritage asset, acknowledging the battle that took place in 1460. This area has low usage, partly related to its need to not adversely affect the ecological interest it contains. Existing interpretation / information boards are limited in number and covered with graffiti, leading to general interpretation being poor. As with Midsummer Meadow, this area of land could capitalise on the development, mitigation and wider investment potential being provided by Avon Nunn Mills and Ransome Road, with the potential to secure funding for enhancements, security and interpretation. This is particularly significant
taking into account its location immediately to the north of Delapre Lake, Delapre Conservation Area and the complex of significant listed buildings centred on Delapre Abbey. Delapre Abbey is also the subject of a successful Heritage Lottery Fund stage 2 grant.

3.5 The River Nene, which lies along the southern boundary of Nene Meadows, and straddles the whole of Nene Meadows, is the 10th longest river in the United Kingdom. This stretch of the river has historically been very important to the economic development and prosperity of Northampton, particularly when navigation improvements meant that Northampton could be navigable from the sea. This facilitated the use of the river for transportation purposes. However, since its economic and transportation use ceased, the town has not historically capitalised on the recreational and leisure opportunities offered by the river, despite recent improvements such as the opening of the Becket’s Park Marina in 2011. The CAAP has sought to reverse this trend and build on recent improvements. This SPD presents an opportunity to incorporate the CAAP proposals which will contribute towards the recognition of the river, its accessibility, and riverside enhancements.

B Nene Meadows Policy Development

3.6 In preparing the CAAP and formulating the Nene Meadows policies, the Council commissioned consultants to undertake the preparation of masterplans for Becket’s Park and Nene Meadows.

3.7 Key to the evolution of the policies was a wide range of public consultation exercises, the outcome of which culminated in the adopted CAAP policies for Nene Meadows (Policies 29 and 30).

3.8 In summary, the consultation exercises revealed the need for improved leisure and recreational facilities located in Nene Meadows. However, there were also representations received which considered that the green corridor along the River Nene was a haven for wildlife, which should take precedence over any proposed recreational pursuits. There were also representations that sought to strengthen the protection of the area within the registered boundary of the historic Northampton Battlefield.

3.9 Further to the consultation process associated with the production of the Central Area Action Plan, additional consultation took place in relation to the future of Nene Meadows itself. All the recommendations and information obtained as part of this process have been used to inform the policy for Midsummer Meadow. A series of consultation events took place between the Autumn of 2009 and Summer 2010. These include the creation of technical and stakeholder / Member working groups, workshops and site visits. The outcome of these exercises has been compiled in a report prepared by Nortoft (2010).

C Land Ownership

3.10 The majority of Nene Meadows lies within the ownership of Northampton Borough Council. Land ownership (see Plan 2) can be divided into the following:
• The Borough Council owns Becket’s Park and most of Midsummer Meadow, as well as areas to the north of the river within Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve (with the exception of Nunn Mills Road).
• The remainder of Barnes Meadow lies within the ownership of Northamptonshire County Council.
• Midsummer Meadow car park is owned by the Homes and Communities Agency and leased to the Borough Council
• A small parcel of land along Nunn Mills Road is owned by Avon Cosmetics
• WNDC owns the land associated with the former railway

3.11 These land ownership details are correct as of January 2014. Interested parties are advised to contact the Land Registry for further details. There is also an adopted highway shown on Plan 2.

3.12 The proposals contained in this SPD are considered deliverable, with the majority of the enabling developments and proposals lying within land owned by the Borough Council.
SECTION 4: SITE APPRAISAL

A Site and Surrounding Areas

4.1 Nene Meadows occupies approximately 50 hectares of land and is split into 3 character areas: Becket’s Park, Midsummer Meadow and Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve (see plan 3). About 21.5ha of this land is designated as the Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve.

4.2 Nene Meadows is served by key secondary pedestrian and cycle routes, including a public right of way, and 2 road access points from Bedford Road. Nene Meadows also accommodates seating facilities along the routes / grassed area and information boards scattered at key points including entrances into Becket’s Park, Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve and the Registered Battlefield area.
4.3 The River Nene rises in Northamptonshire and flows through Northampton, Peterborough, Wisbech and Sutton Bridge before discharging into The Wash. The River Nene is now considered to be one of Northampton’s strongest and most distinctive assets.

4.4 There are physical constraints on the site, including flood zones and the risks associated with them (see Appendix 1). This means, for instance, that there will be a need to consider wetland storage areas and development which would be compatible with the land use proposed in Nene Meadows as well as existing biodiversity of the area. Despite its location adjacent to the core of the town centre, Nene Meadows provides an expanse of open space with excellent and commanding key views towards the River Nene and Delapre Lake. However, there are large underground and overhead power lines throughout Nene Meadows, which are the result of the uses associated with the former power station and the current electricity sub-station. This not only has a negative impact on the visual element of Nene Meadows but also on wildlife and birds. They also restrict the level of built development and schemes which can be accommodated on site (related opportunities and constraints are listed in Appendix 2).

![Photo: Frozen River Nene](image)

4.5 In addition, the Sustran’s¹ National Cycle Route 6 passes through this area of Northampton. This route includes the 16 mile Brampton Valley Way between Northampton and Market Harborough. This route, together with other public rights of way network and cycle routes combined form a network of multi-functional green spaces which provide traffic free cycling and walking routes as well as acting as

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¹ An organisation aimed at enabling people to travel in ways that benefit both their health and the environment
significant wildlife corridors. Nene Meadows remains a significant contributor to the strategic green infrastructure network.

4.6 Plan 4 indicates a variety of uses that lie within and adjacent to Nene Meadows, as follows:

- As discussed earlier, Nene Meadows currently accommodates tennis courts, the Marina, car parking, and open space (which has been used as event space) and an ironstone chimney, as well as key designations such as the Local Nature Reserve and the Registered Battlefield. There are also existing cycle and pedestrian routes on site.

- **To the south:** this area accommodates Avon’s European Headquarters, the disused Avon manufacturing unit, a disused pumping station, a Grade II listed former locomotive shed and former industrial units within Ransome Road and London Road. Further south lies Delapre Lake and Delapre Park Conservation Area, as well as the remainder of the Registered Battlefield (237 ha in total). Within Delapre Park Conservation Area lies Delapre Abbey, a Grade II* listed building, which is the subject of a successful significant Heritage Lottery Fund bid.

- **To the west:** this area accommodates Morrisons supermarket and some housing development.

- **To the north west:** this area accommodates a mix of uses comprising housing, multi storey car parking and University student accommodation.

- **To the north:** mixed use comprising Northampton General Hospital, St Andrews Hospital, residential apartments, offices and car sales fronting the A428 Bedford Road.

- **To the east:** the A428 leads to the A45 and Barnes Meadow interchange, and beyond that, the Nene Whitewater Centre Rushmills Sports Centre and some mixed commercial uses. Further east lies the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits, which have been designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA). At their closest points, it is only a distance of about 880 metres between the Barnes Meadow LNR and the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA.
Plan 4:
Existing uses within Nene Meadows and surrounding uses
4.7 In addition, there are designations and future proposals (the latter being referred to in paragraphs 4.20 to 4.22) outside the Nene Meadows boundary that will influence the proposals contained within this SPD and future planning applications. These are (in alphabetical order):

- **Delapre Park Conservation Area and historic assets**: there is a need to ensure that any future proposals will not have a negative impact on the setting of this Conservation Area. The Conservation Area was designated in July 2007, and covers an area of approximately 20 hectares. It includes Delapre Park and Delapre Abbey, a Grade II* listed building and one of Northampton’s most important historic building. Additional funding for the restoration of this listed building has been achieved through the Heritage Lottery Fund (see para 4.22). Further information on Delapre Park Conservation Area can be found by accessing the following link:
  
  http://www.northampton.gov.uk/info/200207/building_conservation_and_trees/1443/delapre_park_conservation_area

- **Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area**: Nene Meadows is located within the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area (NIA), which is one of 12 NIAs designated by the Government. It is anticipated that these NIAs will improve wildlife habitats (through the creation of more and better connected habitats which provide space for wildlife to thrive and adapt), help people (recreation opportunities, flood protection, cleaner water) and unite local communities, landowners and businesses through a shared vision for a better future for people and wildlife. The proposals contained in this SPD will contribute towards meeting these aims through the delivery of a shared vision and a set of objectives which will secure regeneration without compromising the function and setting of Nene Meadows. (for further information, view: www.nenevalleynia.org)

- **Northampton Battlefield**: part of the designation is included in Nene Meadows. The Battlefield’s registered boundary extends to a much wider area south of Nene Meadows into Delapre. The Northampton Battlefield is a designated heritage asset of the highest significance and is included in the national Heritage List of England. The Borough Council has appointed consultants to prepare a Conservation Management Plan for the Battlefield and this is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2013. The potential existence of archaeology on Nene Meadows and beyond will therefore need to be explored as part of any future planning application affecting the area.

- **Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone**: the Enterprise Zone was designated in August 2011 and stretches from the western edge of Northampton right across the town centre. Nene Meadows lies just to the north of the eastern stretch of the Enterprise Zone. Further information on the Enterprise Zone can be found by accessing the following link:
Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits: these former gravel pits are located to the east of Nene Meadows (about 900 metres) and the A45 interchange. Designated as a Special Protection Area on the Register of European sites in accordance with Regulation 13 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. It has also been listed as a Wetland of International Importance under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat 1971 (the “Ramsar Convention”) (for further information, view:


4.8 Nene Meadows also sits within Northamptonshire Vales National Character Area and further information on this can be found by accessing:

4.9 In preparing this SPD, due consideration has been given to the impact of the proposals on these important designated areas and recreational facilities, and to make sure that they complement their aspirations and objectives.

B Character Areas

4.10 As highlighted, Nene Meadows consists of 3 key character areas: Becket’s Park along the west, Midsummer Meadow in the centre and Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve / Northampton Battlefield to the east. Below are more detailed descriptions of each of the character areas.

Becket’s Park

4.11 As indicated in Section 3, Becket’s Park is a traditional Victorian park located adjacent to the River Nene. It is bounded and crossed by formal mature ornamental tree lined avenues and well maintained grassland, and a disused railway embankment along the western side. There are footpaths and cycle routes within Becket’s Park which link it with the town centre and the rest of Nene Meadows. In addition, there are seating areas overlooking the river.
4.12 Becket’s Park accommodates a 78 berth marina with associated facilities including electricity, potable water, security lighting and rubbish disposal points. It provides short term vehicular access for off-loading by boat users. The construction of Becket’s Park Marina was completed in March 2011. It is a managed facility. However, Becket’s Park generally suffers from anti-social behaviour and the marina is fenced off from the rest of Becket’s Park for security purposes. The security and fencing elements can look cluttered and unwelcoming. Opportunities arise, as part of the improvement of the public realm, to soften the visual appearance at the Becket’s Park entrance of the marina without compromising people’s personal safety.
4.13  Becket’s Park is naturally split from Midsummer Meadow by Nunn Mills Road, which serves Midsummer Car Park and Avon’s European Headquarters.

**Midsummer Meadow**

4.14  Midsummer Meadow runs along the northern bank of the River Nene and extends north along Bedford Road. It accommodates a:

- Mixture of parking (currently 213 spaces for cars, and 4 spaces for coaches). This car park could be relocated further east to accommodate the development of a new link road (discussed in para 4.12). Part of the car park is currently contracted to Northampton General Hospital for use by staff. As part of any future reconstruction, consideration should be given towards improving layout and incorporating soft landscaping
- Partly mowed grass and natural / semi-natural open space. The open space is used occasionally for events. Opportunities may arise to improve facilities for hosting such events
- State-of-the-art skate park (Radlands Plaza) which is approximately 1,500 sq.m. This skate park was formally opened in the Summer of 2012 and is built for skateboarders, roller bladers and stunt scooters. There are opportunities to enhance facilities, for the benefit of existing and future users of Midsummer Meadow
Also located on site is an ironstone chimney which is currently managed and maintained by Anglian Water. This forms part of the old sewage works adjacent to Bedford Road. It is the only surviving structure from the 1862 pumping station built for a 12 horsepower steam engine. The chimney, which is about 50 – 60 ft high, is currently being considered for inclusion in the Borough Council’s locally listed buildings. It shows considerable weathering and is in need of repair and protection.
Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve

4.16 Barnes Meadow is a designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and is separated from Midsummer Meadow by the River Nene and the dead arm of the River Nene. The Local Nature Reserve is about 21.5 ha in size and covers almost half of the SPD area. This area is primarily wet and marshy grassland and is a haven for wildlife including migrant birds, herons and kingfishers. Great crested grebes and terns can also be seen feeding from the River Nene. The site contains flowering plants such as clovers, trefoils and purple-loosestrifes which attract bees. Nationally, bee populations are threatened by a number of factors, and their numbers are in decline. Much of the Barnes Meadow LNR is grazed by cattle, at a low density, in order to create and maintain a more botanically diverse sward structure.

Photo: Barnes Meadow

4.17 The Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust is responsible for the management of the LNR. The site is considered to be a fragile and diverse wetland site. The site is not excessively used by members of the public and impact of visitors on the site is considered low. However, there are problems associated with existing visitors who
stray from the public footpaths, ignore the signage and let their dogs off the lead. They stray into sensitive wildlife areas, causing disturbance to species and nesting birds.

4.18 The southern half of Barnes Meadow LNR is included in the registered boundary of the Battle of Northampton, which took place in 1460 as part of the battle of the War of the Roses. This is a designated heritage asset of the highest significance, and has been included in the National Heritage List for England. The area also has archaeological potential as many artefacts have been found on site (www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk). Interpretation of the site is poor. It would be beneficial for interested parties to access technical information contained within the Historic Environment Records, as this will assist with ideas on how to capitalise on the existing material.

4.19 There is an opportunity to capitalise on the conservation and educational values offered by the wildlife of Barnes Meadow LNR and its historic element within the registered boundary of the Battle of Northampton.

4.20 Along the southern boundary lies the non-operational railway line, safeguarded in the CAAP for sustainable transport in the form of public transport, walking and / or cycling. In November 2012, the Office of Rail Regulation granted consent to Network Rail to delete the lines from the operational network and to dispose of the land in question. This provides an opportunity for the CAAP’s policy for this non-operational line to be delivered for sustainable transport purposes.

C Current Projects and Proposals

4.21 There are a variety of on-going regeneration projects and proposals surrounding Nene Meadows which will have an impact on the future direction, policy and funding of the Nene Meadows area. These include:

a) Development within Avon Nunn Mills: this relates to an area to the south of Nene Meadows, located within the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone. It is about 20 hectares in size and currently accommodates the Avon European Headquarters, a disused cosmetics factory and a former power station. An outline planning application was submitted in March 2013 by Pegasus Group on behalf of Taylor Wimpey, Persimmon, and Avon Cosmetics Ltd for the comprehensive redevelopment of a the Avon Nunn Mills site for a mixed use neighbourhood comprising residential (up to 750 dwellings), commercial (up to 10,000 sq.m of offices and light industry), mixed use local centres (about 0.3 ha), public open space and associated infrastructure. A full planning application for the change of use and conversion of the Grade II listed locomotive shed, together with a Listed Building Consent application for the works was submitted at the same time
which is expected to be used for community uses and celebrate the heritage of the site.

b) Development within Avon Nunn Mills: N/0213/0912: land for redevelopment, Avon Nunn Mills / Ransome Road (approved in principle on the 17th December 2013) - Outline planning permission for redevelopment of the site as a new campus for the University of Northampton, including site clearance and enabling works comprising remediation and re-levelling of the site, demolition of all buildings on the site (except the Grade II listed structures). This application was approved in principle subject to S106 and reserve matters relating to layout, scale, appearance and landscaping. Guidelines on these are found in the land use principles section of this Nene Meadows SPD. The proposal includes:

- up to 40,000 sq.m university floorspace;
- up to 15,000 sq.m university expansion floorspace;
- up to 35,000 sq.m commercial (B1 offices) floorspace;
- up to 3,550 sq.m of retail floorspace (up to 1,800 sq.m of A1, up to 150 sq.m of A2 and up to 1,600 sq.m A3/A4);
- up to 1,500 beds student accommodation;
- up to 760 car parking spaces for University use;
- up to 1,100 car parking spaces for commercial / leisure use;
- a hotel of up to 7,000 sq.m (up to 150 bedrooms);
- sports hall and floodlit sports facilities;
- reuse of listed locomotive shed (520 sq.m) and curtilage of listed building;
- an energy centre of up to 600 sq.m;
- a new road bridge and junction on to Bedford Road including reconfiguration of Midsummer Meadow car park;
- a new pedestrian foot / cycle bridge connecting the site to Becket's Park; and retention of the existing access via Nunn Mills Road at land for.

c) Development within Ransome Road: this sits adjacent to Nunn Mills, and is about 23 hectares in size. It is currently a large disused area of land, previously occupied by a mix of industrial units, a breakers yard and a landfill site. This land is owned by the Homes and Communities Agency. The site has been allocated for residential with ancillary community facilities. There will also be provision for a new primary school.

d) New access road: planning permission for the development of a new road connecting Nunn Mills Road and Ransome Road has been granted. In implementing this approval, the Midsummer Meadow car park would be reconfigured. However, alternative arrangements for a north south access road have been proposed as part of the planning application for the University site, as discussed in b) above

e) New boat restaurant: planning permission has been granted for the provision of a boat restaurant, which will be located on the section of the river
4.22 Once implemented, these projects will result in more occupants / residents who will live near to and frequently visit Nene Meadows. This will have an impact on the movements within and into Nene Meadows, usage, security and potential disturbance. It is therefore imperative that the recreational and leisure requirements are met, without compromising the security, environmental, conservation and heritage aspects of the area and/or cause unnecessary disturbance to wildlife. There will also be potential for people to appreciate the recreational and conservation values of Nene Meadows and the wider area.

4.23 In addition to the above, there are other projects which will either influence or be influenced by the proposals contained in this SPD, including:

- The Borough Council has been successful in its funding bid (£3.6 million) for second round submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund for Delapre Abbey. The objective of this funding application was to sympathetically restore Delapre Abbey and establish both the Abbey and its surroundings as a nationally significant and inspiring heritage asset. This is expected to be achieved by securing and restoring the fabric of the Abbey; as well as promoting its history and architecture, and promoting its association with the registered battlefield site and Eleanor Cross.

- The Borough Council has appointed consultants to prepare a Conservation Management Plan for the Northampton Battlefield site. The aim is for the Plan to set out the significance and heritage sensitivity of the asset and the cumulative value of the heritage asset, with a view to identifying a policy framework for the appropriate conservation and land management of the Battlefield site. In considering the significance of the Registered Battlefield a strategy for the future conservation and management of the site can be developed. The findings of this report will be considered at the Council’s Cabinet in January 2014.

4.24 Nene Whitewater Centre: there is a need to ensure that any future development within Nene Valley integrates and enhances the development of this regional sporting facility within the wider context of Nene Meadows.
4.25 Taking into consideration the opportunities offered by Nene Meadows, there is potential to ensure that the objectives and vision for this area complement those proposed for neighbouring sites. This integrated approach will ensure that Nene Meadows and the wider area are capable of sustainably serving both existing and future residents, commercial occupiers and visitors.
Vision

5.1 The strategic planning vision for the Central Area is that it will become the principal urban area for West Northamptonshire and beyond, and will be firmly established as the economic and cultural centre for the County of Northamptonshire. In the Central Area Action Plan, it states that there will be a new focus for Waterside, through the enhancement of a long neglected asset, making it a new destination for employment, living and leisure. With a new marina at its heart, Nene Meadows has a major role to play in delivering this aim for the Waterside area. The Central Area Action Plan also provides policy direction for future land uses, including the Vision for Nene Meadows.
The Vision

**Nene Meadows** will become a strategic leisure and recreation destination, incorporating a wider range of leisure and recreational facilities as well incorporating a sustainable movement network into and across the area.

**Becket’s Park** will be developed to enable it to perform its role as the pre-eminent formal town centre park, accommodating enhanced leisure facilities to complement the marina as improvements to its recreational offer, and capitalising on its riverside location.

5.2 Although parts of the Nene Meadows area has its own individual and unique role and purpose, there are parts of the area which are underused, where future potential can be maximised. With the expected increase in Northampton’s living, working and studying population; particularly to the south of Nene Meadows; there is an opportunity to improve existing recreational provision and ancillary facilities in the area to cater for increase demand.

5.3 Evidence obtained from the preparation of the Central Area Action Plan shows that Nene Meadows faces a number of issues associated with security and disturbance. There is a need for investment to open up the area and increase local leisure opportunities, improve wildlife potential and safety and encourage safe and through people movement. Investment is also required to improve the condition of local footpaths and cycleways. Also of significance is the need to educate people on the nature conservation and historical values of the site and its surrounding area to secure its future protection.

5.4 This SPD illustrates development and land use principles to guide developers in terms of acceptable land uses and developer contributions. In preparing this SPD, a range of objectives have been developed for Nene Meadows. These were developed utilising the information obtained from the CAAP and Nene Meadows consultation exercises and policy formulation. The objectives have been prepared to ensure that the vision for the Nene Meadows is met. Each of the development and land use principle outlined in Section 6 will meet at least one of these objectives, in contributing towards meeting the Vision for Nene Meadows.
Objectives for Nene Meadows

5.5 The objectives for Nene Meadows are:

- **To ensure that Nene Meadows becomes a strategic leisure and recreation destination, accessible by all**, through the provision of facilities which will both enhance and complement existing and surrounding uses.

- **To secure improved and enhanced accessibility and connectivity into and within Nene Meadows, and strengthen its link to the town centre** by building on and developing additional pedestrian / cycle routes which are both attractive and safe to use.

- **To protect, conserve and enhance the natural and historic environment, strengthen its educational and conservation value and increase biodiversity** by effective management of the existing Reserve and Battlefield site as well as providing information through better signage.

- **To provide for high quality enabling development** which will contribute towards the delivery of key objectives for Nene Meadows as a strategic leisure and recreation destination.
SECTION 6: DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USE PRINCIPLES

6.1 The design, development and land use principles outlined in this section build on the objectives identified in Section 5. These principles have been used to inform the future land use proposals for Nene Meadows. These principles are illustrated in Plan 5 and are aimed at ensuring that future land uses on Nene Meadows are provided in a manner which will enhance on site facilities as well as improve accessibility and safety. These are to be achieved without compromising the biodiversity and green infrastructure links. The proposals are also intended to complement the proposals planned for the surrounding area.

6.2 The focus for key changes in land use lies primarily within Becket’s Park and Midsummer Meadow, whereas Barnes Meadow is proposed largely for protection and enhancement, therefore minimising disturbance to its local wildlife habitats and heritage.

6.3 The development principles and land uses are:

| Principle 1 | Providing appropriate built development in Becket’s Park |

6.4 There will be opportunities for providing built development in Becket’s Park, capitalising on its location adjoining the town centre. Built development will contribute to the requirements for either housing or office schemes within the Central Area.

6.5 Built development should include:

- Building a facility of up to 500 sq.m – this will be developed to support the leisure and economic success of the Becket’s Park marina. The building could be used for any of the following: café, restaurant, retail, bike hire and associated recreation and leisure uses

- Areas for built development – there will be opportunities to develop 3 or 4 storey housing including affordable housing. The Becket’s Park Masterplan proposes the development of 23 townhouses. Alternatively, the area could be developed for 2 or 3 storey offices

6.6 Development should be positioned along the south western fringe of Becket’s Park, allowing a natural continuity to the built environment, whilst capitalising on the views to Becket’s Park and the marina. Building design needs to be in harmony with the immediate surroundings.
6.7 One option for vehicular access into the development site would be from the road south of Morrison’s petrol station, via the roundabout off Morrison’s access road.

6.8 A green frontage should be retained (which also complements the riverside setting) and/or enhanced between the Park and the built environment to mitigate the impact of the proposed buildings on the Park and to increase biodiversity benefits.

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**Principle 2**

Creating a Central Activity Hub in Midsummer Meadow

6.9 A Central Activity Hub in Midsummer Meadow will play an essential role in the promotion of Nene Meadows as a strategic leisure facility. It could perform the role of an Interpretation Centre and an initial One Stop Shop for visitors to Nene Meadows, and complement other existing and emerging visitor centres within the vicinity.

6.10 This Central Activity Hub should accommodate:

- a visitor centre which will provide an educational and community resource for residents and visitors alike
- cycle hire and changing facilities
- ancillary café and licenced bar facilities
- public convenience, which should be integral to one of the buildings connected to the Central Activity Hub and accessible only from this building
- ancillary retail of up to 250 sq.m to include provisions and services related to the proposed development

6.11 The Hub should be complemented by parking facilities for cars and bicycles, and accessed from Bedford Road.

6.12 An indicative boundary is shown in Plan 5, which includes the Radlands Skatepark Plaza. Radlands Plaza should be enhanced to meet the growing requirements of visitors. The Hub will incorporate this use as part of the wider community resource for residents and visitors.

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**Principle 3**

Improving event space and enhancing recreational facilities in Nene Meadows

6.13 Midsummer Meadow currently provides space for seasonal events which have proven to be popular with Northampton residents and visitors. Midsummer Meadow will continue to be the key location for supporting such events. There are
opportunities to provide permanent on site utilities to support these events including electricity source and facilities for waste.

6.14 Existing attractions within Becket’s Park and Midsummer Meadow are proposed to be complemented by new facilities including a floating restaurant.

6.15 There are opportunities to capitalise on the existing offer, by:

- Providing enhanced recreational and leisure facilities in Becket’s Park, creating an active space which can be used all year round. Maximising opportunities offered by this location, close to the town and the marina, will also encourage linked trips into the town centre.

- Providing enhanced recreational and leisure facilities in Midsummer Meadow, adjacent to the Central Activity Hub, which could include additional play facilities, to improve the area as an attraction for wider age groups.

- Providing additional recreational space within the quieter areas of Barnes Meadow including heritage and wildlife trails. Its location adjacent to areas for wildlife conservation means that only limited provision can be permitted to minimise wildlife disturbance.

Principle 4
An accessible, integrated and informative Nene Meadows

6.16 Although there are existing footpaths and cycleways within Nene Meadows, there are opportunities for improvement so that more people can enjoy the facilities without causing disturbance to wildlife. A comprehensive movement network of footpaths and cycleways to improve the existing pedestrian and cycle accessibility within and around Nene Meadows and to areas beyond including the town centre, Delapre to the south, and to the new developments proposed within Avon, Nunn Mills and the Ransome Road area will be supported. This will accord with the movement framework contained within the Central Area Action Plan.

6.17 It is essential that any proposal to improve accessibility does not lead to significant and unacceptable levels of wildlife disturbance and potential ecological imbalance. It should equally not lead to the disturbance of heritage assets. The proposals therefore comprise a small scale selection of additional connections and increased footpaths network.

6.18 The proposals for improved accessibility incorporate a range of requirements including improvements to the existing key pedestrian and cycle routes (see Plan 5), and signage. This involves enhancements and improvements to the quality of the provision, particularly along National Cycle Route 6 and associated crossings.

6.19 There will be requirements to increase linkages across the River Nene, allowing connectivity north and south of Nene Meadows from Avon Nunn Mills.
These new river / road crossings should result in sustainable and improved connectivity north and south whilst increasing accessibility to the town centre through linked trips. The key requirements are:

- To improve the access to and from the existing cycleway that runs on the southern side of the river alongside Barnes Meadow. Clearly defined footpaths / cycleways along with additional signage will be installed to promote sensitive use of the area.

- An additional formal pedestrian access, proposed along the northern boundary of the Local Nature Reserve, with the intention of facilitating the new recreational / heritage pursuits as well as directing people to the viewing platforms.

- Three new river / road crossings (cyclists / pedestrian bridges) across the River Nene should be provided to enhance movements between Avon Nunn Mills and Becket’s Park; the new development site in Avon Nunn Mills and Midsummer Meadow; and areas north and south of Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve as shown on Plan 5.

- As a gateway, the new road bridge should be designed in a manner that complements the scale of the surrounding area, and should be elegant but not iconic. The new road bridge should not detract from the openness of Midsummer Meadow and Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve. It should be appropriately illuminated and sensitively designed to minimise adverse impact on the surrounding area including wildlife and biodiversity.

6.20 This SPD does not promote improved links along the northern fringe beyond the A45 Barnes Meadow Interchange because of its potential impact on the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area. As this site is already suffering from inappropriate access, affecting feeding waders and ducks, any increased access from Nene Meadows to the SPA will exacerbate the issue.

6.21 In addition, existing and future linkages from and into Nene Meadows via main routes such as Victoria Promenade, Nunn Mills Road and Bedford Road will need to be improved and strengthened, to allow for ease of north – south movement, complementing the east – west connectivity proposed for enhancements in para 6.17. In implementing the new access road from Bedford Road to Ransome Road, there is an opportunity to provide cycle and pedestrian routes as part of the objective to create an active frontage.

6.22 There will be a requirement for car parking provision to continue within Midsummer Meadow. The location will be realigned as a result of the proposed road between Bedford Road and the Avon Nunn Mills development site. There will be a requirement to improve the design and layout of the new car park, incorporating soft landscaping and improved lighting.

**Principle 5**

**Improvements to the public realm**
6.23 The public realm needs to improve to attract more visitors to the Nene Meadows area. However, proposals need to be undertaken in a sensitive manner that does not adversely affect the Local Nature Reserve and its associated wildlife, and the Battlefield area.

6.24 The public realm within Nene Meadows can be improved and public safety increased through:

- Additional lighting (using modern low energy designs) along existing and proposed footpaths and cycleways that will make the routes feel more secure and also minimise disturbance to bats and other wildlife
- Additional street furniture / seating areas within the proximity of the new recreational areas and information centres
- Increased soft landscaping with Nene Meadows, particularly within areas where increased activity is expected. This will create a more attractive and pleasant social, leisure and recreational space
- Improved soft landscaping along the Bedford Road frontage
- The new access road (Bedford Road to Avon Nunn Mills development site) should be designed in a manner which capitalises on the recreational and leisure offer within Nene Meadows through the incorporation of tree lined gateway – creating a boulevard effect – making it a safe and pleasant experience for users
- The new access road should also enable pedestrians and cyclists to cross, securing a continuity of a green connection between Becket’s Park and Midsummer Meadow
- Nene Meadows and its surrounding area accommodate some of Northampton’s heritage assets including the Ironstone Chimney, the Nunn Mills former power station and the World War II pill boxes. There are opportunities for promoting some small scale public art which capitalises on these assets and additional interpretation boards

6.25 The location and types of lighting are to be strategically positioned so as not to result in a detrimental impact on existing wildlife, focusing primarily within Becket’s Park and the western part of Midsummer Meadow. Negative impacts caused by light pollution could potentially confuse the wildlife’s natural patterns; deter foraging in established areas and affect breeding cycles. Consideration needs to be given to the effective management of these lights by using appropriate low and shielded artificial lighting and to turning off the lights in certain areas to allow for naturally dark habitat.

6.26 Viewing platforms should be placed in sensitive locations within the southern fringe of Midsummer Meadow, and the northern fringe of Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve, to capitalise on the views to the Reserve, the River Nene and Delapre to the south.
Improvements to education, conservation, biodiversity and heritage

6.27 Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is currently managed by the Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust, on behalf of Northampton Borough Council. In designating Local Nature Reserves, the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 imposes a statutory obligation and responsibility on the Council to protect and enhance the “special” natural features, which have formed the basis for declaration. The Borough Council will continue to work with the Trust in discharging its obligations.

6.28 There needs to be clear information provided for pedestrians and visitors about the role of the LNR, and the importance of this wetland site. Visitors also need to be encouraged to stay within the defined routes and not stray.

6.29 Part of the area where the action associated with the Battle of Northampton is located within the Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve (LNR). Securing the protection and enhancement of the LNR will provide the added security required for the nationally important Battlefield area.

6.30 The information boards associated with both the Local Nature Reserve and the Battlefield will require updating and improving. The siting of information boards will need to be sensitively undertaken to maximise interpretation and understanding of both wildlife and heritage assets. Biodiversity in Northamptonshire is under severe pressure and the boards can play a crucial role in delivering this message to a wider audience. In addition, the Council is in the process of preparing a Conservation and Management Plan for the Battlefield. It provides information on the nationally and locally designated sites within 1 km of the approximate central grid reference for the study area, and utilises pre-existing records on protected and notable habitats and species as provided by the Northampton Biodiversity Records Centre. All planning applications will need to ensure that their proposals are in conformity with this Plan, once it is finalised.

6.31 Enhancements to the River Nene which will involve improvements to the river environment itself will be positively welcomed. For instance, there is scope to develop a more natural river margin by adjusting the management between the river and the footpath through sowing a wildflower mix in a strip along the riverbank. Any proposals will need to be in accordance with the proposals outlined in the Water Framework Directive and the Northampton Urban Water Framework Directive Study (December 2012) and/or any subsequent updates. The WFD for Northampton identifies opportunities for developing wetland at the former course of the River Nene south of Midsummer Meadow.

Principle 7
Promoting Design Excellence and Sustainable Development
6.32 Design will play a crucial role in the implementation of this SPD, ensuring that future development sits positively alongside and complements the recreational space and areas of significant national heritage and conservation interests.

6.33 To ensure that design principles form an integral part of the proposal, the following applies:

i  **Built development and active frontages**

6.34 All built development in Becket’s Park will have active frontages facing the Park / Marina area, providing passive surveillance of the public realm and the park and enhancing the sense of security for both pedestrians and users of the marina. It will also create a more vibrant scene, with signage and interpretation, encouraging linked trips to the town centre and other visitor destinations in the locality.

ii **Built development and flood risk**

6.35 Any new built development should comply with the recommendations set out in the draft Developer Guidance Notes to the CAAP Policy 5: Flooding and Drainage (Halcrow, April 2013), and / or any subsequent updates. They should not pose an unacceptable risk of pollution to groundwater from sewage effluent, trade effluent and / or contaminated water surface.

iii **Sustainable measures**

6.36 All buildings should be built utilising sustainable measures and renewable resources. Developers are required to ensure that their built developments are designed to improve environmental performance, energy efficiency and adapt to future changes of use. Maximising the opportunities offered by renewable energy technologies, as well as reusing existing structures, are strongly supported.

6.37 In terms of standards:

- Residential schemes are required to achieve a minimum of Level 4 (Code of Sustainable Homes), or
- Non-residential schemes of over 500 sq.m are required to achieve a minimum rating of at least BRE Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) very good standard or equivalent

iv **Improved personal safety**

6.38 A combined approach associated with improving the connections within Nene Meadows whilst opening up the area as a whole so it can be seen and is accessible from Bedford Road means that Nene Meadows will become a safer place to visit. An “open” feel to the area is paramount to improving perception of personal safety. Remoulding the bund to the east of the area will open up the site from Bedford Road and improve safety in Nene Meadows.
6.39 Improved surveillance particularly in connection with the pedestrian link from Avon Nunn Mills, the marina and Becket’s Park will be required to ensure that personal safety of users is provided.

v Design

6.40 Any new built infrastructure, including the bridge, should be designed to a high quality specification, and in a manner that is elegant but not iconic, to avoid competing with the character of Nene Meadows. The openness of the area should not be compromised. It should also contribute to improving and enhancing the attractiveness of existing key routes.

6.41 New development (and any new or enhanced facilities) will need to have due regard to the setting of the battlefield and Local Nature Reserve as well as consider any archaeological impacts.
Plan 5: Design, development and land use principles (indicative drawing)
SECTION 7: IMPLEMENTATION, PHASING AND DELIVERY

A Progress Update

7.1 Key to the delivery of the proposals contained in this SPD will be the continuing development of partnership working between public, private and voluntary sectors; with effective community engagement. This has been demonstrated, for example, through the progression / delivery of:

- Becket’s Park Marina (£2.15 million): a partnership between Northampton Borough Council, West Northamptonshire Development Corporation, the Environment Agency and the River Nene Regional Park. The Marina is now managed by the Environment Agency

- Radlands Skatepark Plaza in Midsummer Meadow, funded by Northampton Borough Council (£250,000), designed by Wheelscape and skatepark users in Northampton. Young people, including those from the Northampton Action Skate Group, were key to the engagement process that led to the delivery of the skatepark

7.2 The Borough Council, in partnership with stakeholders such as the Environment Agency, are actively progressing some of the key elements of this Masterplan. In addition, the Borough Council continues to fund key projects for the benefit of residents, including the £150,000 set aside to provide facilities for users of Radlands Skatepark Plaza and Midsummer Meadow. This was completed in the Summer of 2013. Additional funding to enhance the skatepark is also being sought.

B Phasing

7.3 The delivery of the Central Area Action Plan is phased into 3 five year plans, which are:

- Up to 2016
- 2016 – 2021
- 2021 – 2026

7.4 Delivering the priorities outlined below (table 1 refers) within the specified timescales will result in meeting the objectives for Nene Meadows. All the proposals have the potential to be delivered by 2021. It is accepted that most of the objectives referred to are likely to require funding from both the public sector as well as developers.
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<th>Table 1: Phasing Priorities</th>
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<td><strong>Midsummer Meadow</strong></td>
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<td>Central Activity Hub in Midsummer Meadow</td>
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<td>River crossing</td>
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<td>Additional recreational spaces including rope courses</td>
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<td>Benches, bins and information boards</td>
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<td>Footpaths/cycleways improvements</td>
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<td><strong>Becket’s Park</strong></td>
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<td>Enhanced recreational area and ancillary leisure including additional play facilities and fitness equipment</td>
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<td>River crossing</td>
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<td>Improved surveillance</td>
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<td>Appropriate enabling built development</td>
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<td><strong>Barnes Meadow</strong></td>
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<td>Additional recreational space incorporating heritage trails</td>
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<td>Viewing platform</td>
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<td>Bird hide</td>
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C Funding Sources

7.5 The delivery of the SPD has been prepared in conformity with the policies of the Northampton Central Area Action Plan. There are a variety of options in terms of funding sources which can be sought / applied for to deliver this SPD. These include:

i Developer Contributions

7.6 Policy 36 of the Northampton Central Area Action Plan provides the basis for seeking contributions in relation to infrastructure delivery (http://www.northampton.gov.uk/info/200205/planning_for_the_future/1748/central_area_action_plan_caap).

7.7 In addition, the Borough Council adopted a Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in February 2013, which assists developers and applicants in identifying the amount of financial obligation required to deliver and maintain infrastructure requirements including public open spaces (http://www.northampton.gov.uk/info/200205/planning_for_the_future/1746/). This SPD includes requirements associated with management of the facility for which contributions are being sought. This will complement the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

7.8 The Council is developing a series of regeneration projects, which contribute to the delivery of the Nene Meadows Vision. These include projects within Northampton Alive such as Grosvenor Centre redevelopment and the proposed developments at Avon Nunn Mills / Ransome Road http://northampton.searchimprove.com/search.aspx?&pckid=1610317951&aid=471434&sw=Northampton+Alive

ii Community Infrastructure Levy

7.9 The Borough Council is working towards the implementation of a Community Infrastructure Levy. A Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule was published in February 2013.

iii Other key funding sources:

There are other potential funding sources including:

- Lottery Funding
- Heritage Lottery Funding (for example, Parks for People)
• Possible partnership funding from West Northamptonshire Development Corporation, Primary Care Trust, NHS Foundation Trust and Sport England
• Biffa Award
• SUSTRANS
• Working with smaller community groups

**Management**

7.10 It is important for all existing and emerging visitor centres to promote the various activities that Northampton has to offer, therefore creating a holistic approach towards improving visitor offer and experience.

7.11 Efforts to manage the parks to achieve Green Flag status will be strongly supported.
REFERENCES

National Policy Documents

- National Planning Policy Framework (CLG, March 2012)

Strategic Policy Documents

- West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (WNJPU, Submission December 2012)

Local Policy Documents

- Northampton Central Area Action Plan (NBC, adopted January 2013)
- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (NBC, May 2013)
- Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (NBC, adopted February 2013)
- Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (NBC, consultation draft February 2013)
- Northampton Corporate Plan 2012 – 2015
- Delapre Park Conservation Area leaflet 2011

Technical Studies / Evidence Base

- Conservation Management Plan for the site of the Battle of Northampton, final draft (LUC, November 2013)
- Central Area Action Plan Drainage Strategy Phase 1: Developer Guidance Notes (Halcrow, April 2013)
- Northampton Central Area drainage assessment (Halcrow, August 2012)
- Northamptonshire Transportation Plan (March 2012)
- Avon / Nunn Mills / Ransome Road Parameters (WNDC / NBC, July 2011)
- Northamptonshire Cycle Development Plan (MGWSP / NCC, Nov 2010)
- A Character Assessment & Tall Buildings Strategy for Northampton’s Central Area (Space, June 2010)
- Nene Meadows Masterplan (Nortoft, 2010)
- Becket’s Park Embankment Site – Viability Assessment (WNDC/NBC/CBRE Dec 2010)
- Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study (Living Landscapes Consultancy Ltd, February 2009)
- Becket’s Park Masterplan (Halcrow, March 2009)
- Landscape Options Appraisal (Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust and Parklands Consortium Limited, October 2009)

Websites
• Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area (www.nenevalleynia.org)
• SUSTRANS National Cycle Route 6
• http://www.rivernenergionalpark.org/images/DROP_BOX/Northampton%20Urban%20Study%20ConsDraft%20v2%5b1%5d.pdf
• http://www.northamptonshirebiodiversity.org/default.asp_PageID=6.html
## GLOSSARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>CAAP</td>
<td>Central Area Action Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>LNR</td>
<td>Local Nature Reserve</td>
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<td>SPA</td>
<td>Special Protection Area</td>
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<td>SPD</td>
<td>Supplementary Planning Document</td>
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<td>WNDC</td>
<td>West Northamptonshire Development Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>WNJCS</td>
<td>West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>WNJPU</td>
<td>West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit</td>
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APPENDIX 1: RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

A National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (CLG, March 2013)

Para 17: there are 12 land use planning principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking, including the need to take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs

Para 73: access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and wellbeing of communities

Para 103: requires applicants for planning permission to submit a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) when development is:

- Greater than one hectare located in Flood Zone 1 defined by Technical Guidance to the NPPF as having a low probability of flooding. The proposed scale of development may present risks of flooding on-site and/or off-site if surface water run-off is not effectively managed
- Located in Flood Zone 2 or 3 defined by Technical Guidance to the NPPF as having a medium or high probability of flooding

Para 109: the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils
- Recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services
- Minimising impacts on diversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures

B Strategic Policy

2.2 The West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (WNJPU) is responsible for the preparation of a West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (WNJCS), covering the administrative boundaries of Northampton, Daventry and South Northamptonshire. The WNJCS has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate and will be examined in April 2013. The key policies influencing the Masterplan are:
Policy BN4: Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area

New development will need to demonstrate through the development management process that there will be no significant adverse affects upon the integrity of the Special Protection Area and RAMSAR site and the species for which the land is designated including the loss of supporting habitat and impacts due to water runoff, water abstraction or discharges from the foul drainage system either as a direct result of the development alone or in combination.

New development will need to demonstrate that the impact of any increased recreational activity (indirect or direct) on the Special Protection Area and RAMSAR site will not have a detrimental impact. Any development that will lead to an increase in recreational activity on the Special Protection Area will be required to include necessary mitigation including development of and implementation of habitat and access management plans.

In order to protect sightlines for birds included within the Special Protection Area and RAMSAR site designations, new development within a 250 metre zone of the Special Protection Area…..must undertake an assessment to demonstrate that it will not have a significant adverse effect on birds within the Clifford Hill Basin or, if directly adjacent to existing buildings, should reflect surrounding building heights.

Policy BN5: THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT (extracts)

Designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved and enhanced in recognition of their individual significance and contribution to West Northamptonshire’s local distinctiveness and sense of place…….

Proposals to sustain and enhance the area’s understanding of heritage assets, for tourism and historic interest as part of cultural, leisure and green networks will be supported.

Policy BN7: FLOOD RISK

Development proposals will comply with flood risk assessment and management requirements set out in the NPPF and technical guidance to the NPPF to address current and future flood risks with appropriate climate change allowances.

A sequential approach will be applied to all proposals for development in order to direct development to areas at the lowest probability of flooding unless it has met the requirements of the sequential test and the exception test as set out within Table 6 (http://www.westnorthamptonshirejpu.org/connect.ti/website).

All new development, including regeneration proposals, will need to demonstrate that there is no increased risk of flooding to existing properties, proposed development is
(or can be) safe, and shall seek to improve existing flood risk management. All proposals for development of 1 hectare or greater in Flood Zone 1, 2, 3A or 3B must be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment that sets out the mitigation measures for the site and agreed with the relevant authority.

A Flood Risk Assessment must also accompany proposals where it may be subject to other sources, and forms, of flooding or where bodies have indicated that there may be drainage problems.

In order to meet the exception test, development must:

- Demonstrate that the development provides wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh the flood risk, and
- Be located on previously developed land, and
- Be accompanied by a site specific flood risk assessment must demonstrate that the development will be safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere and where possible, reduce flood risk overall

Where flood risk management requires the use of sustainable drainage techniques to manage surface water run-off, these should:

- Separate surface water from foul and combined sewers, and
- Be accompanied by a long term management and maintenance plan.
- Protect and enhance water quality

The design standard for the Upper Nene catchment (through Northampton and within the Nene catchment upstream of Northampton) is the 0.5% probability (1 in 200 chance of occurring in any year) event plus climate change. Surface water attenuation should be provided up to this standard.

**Policy S10: Sustainable Development Principles (extracts)**

Development will:

- Achieve the highest standards of sustainable design incorporating safety and security considerations and a strong sense of place
- Be designed to improve environmental performance, energy efficiency and adapt to changes of use and a changing climate over its lifetime
- Make use of sustainably sourced materials
- Minimise resource demand and the generation of waste and maximise opportunities for reuse and recycling
- Be located where services and facilities can be easily accessed by walking, cycling or public transport
- Maximise use of solar gain, passive heating and cooling, natural light and ventilation using site layout and building design
- Maximise the generation of its energy needs from decentralised and
renewable or low carbon sources
- Maximise water efficiency and promote sustainable drainage
- Protect, conserve and enhance natural and built environment and heritage assets
- Promote the creation of green infrastructure networks, enhance biodiversity and reduce the fragmentation of habitats, and
- Minimise pollution from noise, air and run off

Policy S11: Low carbon and renewable energy (extracts)

Proposals should be sensitively located and designed to minimise potential adverse impacts on people, the natural environment, biodiversity, historic assets and should mitigate pollution. In addition, the location of wind energy proposals should have no significant adverse impact on amenity, landscape character and access and provide for the removal of the facilities and reinstatement at the end of the operations.

All new residential developments (including mixed use) are required to achieve a minimum of Level 4 standard in the Code for Sustainable Homes and to achieve the zero carbon standard from 2016 or national equivalent standard, including where appropriate a contribution to community or private energy funds.

All new non-residential developments over 500 sq.m gross internal floorspace are required to achieve a minimum rating of at least BREEAM (BRE Environmental Assessment Method) very good standard (or equivalent) or any future national equivalent zero carbon standard from 2019.

These requirements will apply unless it can be demonstrated that they would make the development unviable.

C Local Policy

2.3 Nene Meadows is located within Northampton's Central Area boundary. Northampton Borough Council was responsible for preparing the Central Area Action Plan (CAAP), which was adopted in January 2013. The key policy affecting Nene Meadows is:

Policy 28: Avon / Nunn Mills / Ransome Road (extracts)

Avon / Nunn Mills / Ransome Road will be developed in a comprehensive and complementary manner to function as a single new community, consistent with the development principles shown in Figure 6.10 of the adopted CAAP. Subject to site specific Flood Risk Assessments, development will:

- Comprise up to 2,000 dwellings of a mix of sizes, types and tenures, although it is anticipated that the majority of the site area will be family orientated housing
• Provide an overall average of 55 dwellings per hectare, but allow for a range in density related to appropriate character areas across the site

• Provide approximately 16,000 square metres of additional floorspace to meet identified strategic employment requirements and as a gateway to the site along the river front, educational use connected with the University of Northampton would also be acceptable in principle

• Generally two to four storeys in height, with the taller buildings facing along principal movement routes, the gateway and the river’s edge, although it is considered that without prejudice to the requirements of tall buildings, the opportunity for some taller landmark buildings exist appropriate to the location of the site

• The provision of a public space consistent with the Public Realm Implementation Framework

• Sensitively restore and provide a long term viable use for the Grade II listed former train workshop within an appropriate setting

• Include neighbourhood retail and commercial leisure facilities consistent with providing an attractive living and working environment

• Make provision for a two form entry urban primary school, a community facility that can accommodate faith groups and a site for a pre-school nursery

• Deliver a strategic green space corridor with associated footpaths and river crossings to effectively link, through the site, Becket’s Park and Delapre Park

• Deliver a continuous riverside path that will link in with the existing footpath and cycleway networks and incorporate new pedestrian and cycleway river crossings to Midsummer and Barnes Meadow as defined in Figure 6.12 of the CAAP

Policy 29: Becket’s Park

Becket’s Park will be developed in a manner consistent with the development principles contained within Figure 6.12 of the adopted CAAP. It will accommodate:

• A building (up to 500 sq.m) containing uses appropriate to the role of the park and its marina, such as a café / restaurant / retail / bike hire / leisure opportunities, together with potential park warden accommodation and office interpretation space

• Enhance pedestrian cycling routes throughout the Park, but in particular along the eastern edge to provide the strategic link between Avon / Nunn Mills, the
Marina and St John’s

- Additional facilities for activities that encourage greater use of the park and the river including visitor moorings, access for canoes and other vessels
- Enabling development of three to four storey housing or two to three storey office along its western edge with a frontage that positively overlooks the Park, replacing the former St John’s railway line embankment

**Policy 30: The Waterside Nene Meadows**

The Nene Meadows will become a strategic leisure and recreation destination and developed in a manner consistent with the development principles contained within Figure 6.13 of the adopted CAAP. It will:

- Within Midsummer Meadow, a central activity hub with provision for a visitor centre, café and licenced bar facilities, changing facilities, hire facilities eg cycle, retail (up to 250 square metres) and an indoor activity area to accommodate play / parties / meeting rooms will be provided together with recreation and leisure facilities appropriate to the scale and location of the site

- Incorporate a comprehensive movement network of footpaths and cycleways to improve pedestrian and cycle accessibility around the site and to areas beyond

- Incorporate a river crossing, close to the A45 flyover, to join the separate sites of Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve and strengthen links through to Delapre Lake, and incorporate pedestrian and cycle crossing

- At Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve, ensure appropriate management techniques are applied to maintain and improve the Reserve’s status and improve public access and interpretation of the site, where appropriate, using boardwalks and bird hides

- Remoulding of the earth bund that runs along the edge of Bedford Road east of Cliftonville Road

- Provide a range of smaller scale interventions that increase the opportunities for leisure and recreation

- Ensure the appropriate management and interpretation of the Battle of Northampton

**Policy 5: Flood Risk and Drainage (extracts)**

Considering the likely impact of new development and of climate change, the following Central Area sites in areas at risk of fluvial flooding are considered...
appropriate for development subject to detailed Flood Risk Assessments commensurate with the level of risk posed to the site:

- The Waterside: Brampton Branch St Peter’s Way
- The Waterside: Southbridge West
- The Waterside: Avon / Nunn Mills / Ransome Road

A Flood Risk Assessment must also accompany proposals within the Central Area that may be subject to other sources and forms of flooding where other bodies have indicated that there may be drainage problems. Flood Risk Assessments will be in accordance with the requirements of the Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Northampton (specifically Table 12.1) and demonstrate that betterment has been sought to reduce the risk of off-site flooding.

**Policy 8: Safeguarded Public Transport Route**

Within the existing railway corridor identified on the Proposals Map, sufficient land will be safeguarded for its use as a continuous public transport / cycle / walking route between Brackmills and Castle Station.
APPENDIX 2

Opportunities and constraints

Opportunities

- Nene Meadows accommodates a large area of underused space and opportunities are available to maximise the potential of the site, and increase the attractiveness of the area as a destination of choice for recreational pursuits
- Capitalise on key views
- Nene Meadows is located within close proximity to Delapre Conservation Area to the south, incorporating part of the Historic Battlefield. There is an opportunity to capitalise on its setting and contribute to its enhancement and better reveal, conserve and enhance other heritage assets. The Registered Battlefield lies partly within the SPD area and extends further south and west
- Increase visitor numbers and integrate this with visits to the town centre by increasing recreational and associated ancillary activities, improving personal safety, enhancing public realm and increasing connectivity within and into the site
- Improve movement within the site through the creation and improvements of pedestrian and cycle paths and permeability within and to adjoining sites
- Integrate with the surrounding proposals and projects including those within Avon Nunn Mills
- Majority of the site is within public ownership, predominantly the Borough Council’s, so the opportunity to work in partnership and deliver projects
- Restore the iron stone chimney
- Improve education on conservation matters through a more effective management and enhancement of Barnes Meadow Local Nature Reserve
- Improve the signage interpretation for the Battle of Northampton and other heritage assets
- Improve habitat alongside the Nene. Opportunity to consider sympathetic greenspace management which could be delivered on the Midsummer Meadows site alongside more formal areas and management
- Undertake a sensitive removal of the electricity pylons to enhance the views

Constraints

- Majority of Nene Meadows is located within Flood Zones 2 and 3, which restricts the type of development that can be built
- Loss of events space for Midsummer Meadow following the development of a new link road and the required re-siting of the Midsummer Meadow car park
- There are large underground and overhead power lines throughout the site, attributed to the former power station adjoining the site as well as the presence of an existing electric sub-station
- There are restrictions associated with its proximity to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA / RAMSAR
• There exists some areas of high sensitivity for nesting birds which act as a barrier to improved pedestrian movement
Plan 6:
Key views and constraints
## APPENDIX 3: LIST OF CONTACTS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
<th>CONTACT DETAILS</th>
<th>WEBSITE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northampton Borough Council (Planning Policy)</td>
<td>01604 837 279</td>
<td><a href="http://www.northampton.gov.uk">www.northampton.gov.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Northampton Borough Council (Built Environment and Heritage)</td>
<td>01604 837 637</td>
<td><a href="http://www.northampton.gov.uk">www.northampton.gov.uk</a></td>
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<td>Northampton Borough Council (Development Management)</td>
<td>01604 838 915</td>
<td><a href="http://www.northampton.gov.uk">www.northampton.gov.uk</a></td>
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<td>Northampton Borough Council (Regeneration)</td>
<td>01604 838 950</td>
<td><a href="http://www.northampton.gov.uk">www.northampton.gov.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Northamptonshire County Council (Parks)</td>
<td>01604 889478</td>
<td><a href="http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk">www.northamptonshire.gov.uk</a></td>
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<td>Northamptonshire Council (Archaeology)</td>
<td>0300 126 1000</td>
<td><a href="http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk">www.northamptonshire.gov.uk</a></td>
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<td>West Northamptonshire Development Corporation</td>
<td>01604 586 601</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wndc.org.uk">www.wndc.org.uk</a></td>
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<td>Northamptonshire Police</td>
<td>101 (non emergencies and enquiries)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.northants.police.uk">www.northants.police.uk</a></td>
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<td>Environment Agency</td>
<td>01536 385 116</td>
<td><a href="http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk">www.environment-agency.gov.uk</a></td>
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<td>English Heritage</td>
<td>01604 735 400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anglian Water</td>
<td>08457 919155</td>
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<td>Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust</td>
<td>01604 405 285</td>
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