

Lucy Staves

From: DUNCAN BISATT <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 13 June 2016 09:22
To: Planning Policy
Subject: NBC Local Plan consultation
Attachments: Planning Submission 13th June 2016.pdf

Please see attached letter.

Regards

Duncan Bisatt



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Number Nine
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Date 13th June 2016

Planning Policy Team
Northampton Borough Council
The Guildhall
St Giles Square
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Dear Sirs

Northampton Local Plan – Issues and Options - Cultural Quarter

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Northampton Arts Collective Limited which operates under the name of NN Contemporary Arts to provide comments on the issues and options paper recently published by NBC as part of the forthcoming review of the Northampton Local Plan.

NN Contemporary Arts is a registered charity based at No 9 Guildhall Road. It provides a range of facilities and support for Northampton's cultural and creative sector. At its heart is the critically acclaimed independent gallery space that regularly hosts visiting exhibitions for both national and international artists. The building also houses the 'Project Space' which enables artists who usually work in small studio spaces to use the larger facilities to strengthen and develop their body of work. It is also a prestigious achievement on an artist's CV. NN also has a number of artist's studios and a café space which provides safe and affordable facilities

NN also works closely with the University of Northampton providing opportunities for students on the Fine Arts and other courses to experience the practical operation of a real gallery through volunteering and internships. The presence of NN is part of a cultural network which encourages graduates from UoN to continue and base their practice in Northampton. We also run seminar courses on how to turn those creative practices into functioning businesses.

NN hosts a varied programme of activities throughout the year which are open to all; whether they be an introduction to the use of oil paints for budding artists or creative writing. These form part of the overall artistic programme which is supported financially by Arts Council England. There is something for everyone.

NN fully support NBC in the creation of the Cultural Quarter in the town centre based upon a strong and vibrant range of facilities that are the envy of many towns – The Royal and Derngate Theatres; Errol Flynn cinema; NN; 78 Derngate and the Museum and Art Gallery at its heart. Additionally the exciting new cultural additions proposed by the redevelopment of the Vulcan works will only strengthen and enhance the Quarter making the area significant attraction for residents and visitors. It is the diversity of the offer from all of these significant cultural assets that need to be celebrated and enjoyed and enhanced through strong policies within the new Local Plan.

It is also widely recognised that our traditional town centres are in a period of great change, with the impact of the internet on traditional retailing models, and that towns will need to diversify and grasp new opportunities to make them attractive. Northampton is well placed to both support its retail offer but also, and this, we do not think has been fully recognised at the planning policy



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level, to tap into and to maximise the significant economic and regenerative potential of its cultural and creative sectors. The Cultural Quarter has the potential to be a major regional draw with its current, and future, facilities and the new Northampton Plan should both reflect this current activity and aspire to the future.

The issues and options paper was silent on the role of the creative and cultural sector, which we consider to be a missed opportunity. The Plan should contain detailed policies that define the vision and objectives for the Quarter; give it a clear identity and support its continued expansion. Support, from a policy perspective, must be given to the protection of this area and the facilities that contribute to it, and its ability to grow and develop.

Apart from the traditional plan policies which talk about the Town in terms of statistics and land allocations, we think it should be a key focus of the Plan to address the need to develop a sense of place in Northampton. If businesses are to be attracted to take up the proposed developments and people are to be willing to buy the houses and relocate to Northampton, they need to see the Town as a desirable place in its own right which can be distinguished from other competitor locations. Culture and the arts must be a highly visible part of this identity.

I think that you will agree that NN Contemporary Arts plays a major role in the provision of significant cultural assets within the Town Centre. We are proud of our record and we are proud of the support that we can give to the cultural and creative community within Northampton now and into the future.

NN Contemporary Arts look forward to working with NBC on the evolution of the new plan and look forward to a strong, dynamic and successful Cultural Quarter enshrined in the new Plan.

[REDACTED]
Chair
Northampton Arts Collective Limited