

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: Response to Local Plan (Part 2) Options consultation paper
Date: 31 October 2016 10:23:36
Attachments: [LOCAL PLAN RESPONSE 2016.docx](#)

Dear colleague

I enclose our response to your consultation. I will deliver a signed, hard copy to the Guildhall tomorrow. Could you please acknowledge receipt. thank you
Dr Marie Dickie OBE

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The Friends of Northampton Castle
www.NorthamptonCastle.com



[REDACTED] or c/o [REDACTED]

Dear colleague (s)

LETTER OF RESPONSE TO LOCAL PLAN (PART 2) Options Consultation paper.

The Friends of Northampton Castle are responding to the consultation, although we have not been directly asked to do so. We note that the paper despite its title offers no options as such.

Since 2011 FONC has campaigned for “Northampton’s Past to be Part of its Future”. We have worked closely with the Northampton Alive programme, with NCC and NBC on the development of a heritage gateway in Northampton (Cabinet papers to both NBC and NCC/ June 2013)and made a significant contribution to ensuring that the new Northampton Railway station buildings and environs reflected the history of the site, as well as Northampton’s remarkable contribution to medieval England. We continue to advocate that listed buildings and archaeology in the vicinity be given greater prominence and interpretation, so that Northampton’s history as a Royal Borough, as a medieval centre of government, as a prosperous economic centre and the site of one of the earliest medieval universities in England is better understood and celebrated.

We recognise that the creation of the new Local Plan takes place in a context of a drive for housing development. However, we would argue that the imperative for housing development should not be at the expense of a Vision for Northampton as a place of both innovation and history. We have noted with concern that the new Vision for Northampton in 2029 makes only glancing reference to the role of the history of the town (final paragraph – Northampton will blend...distinctive historical character) whereas in July 2004 in the NBC Draft Core Strategy preferred options and proposals – a much shorter vision statement talked about “a place where history and innovation co-exist”. We believe that the centrality of history to the earlier vision should be maintained and indeed, improved upon.

We feel that a lack of clarity in the Vision is reflected also in the number of objectives and the way they have been derived from the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. Fewer Objectives more firmly entrenched in the Northampton experience, would give this document more resonance with local people and make it more capable of being delivered. We are pleased that one of the objectives is Heritage number (8) but sorry to see that the wording is watered down even from the earlier 2004 objective(6) which states that “ the Borough’s cultural heritage, including Conservation areas, listed buildings and archaeology will be protected and enhanced”.

We believe that there is a great gap between the policies which underpin the planning process and the management of the delivery of the vision. In terms of the historical heritage there is a desperate need to go beyond a simple acknowledgement of the presently listed and scheduled and well beyond the strictures of the planning regime around archaeology. These protective measures are

primarily designed to ensure that features of outstanding national or international interest are not interfered with, in the case of archaeology there is an even more limited regime (only ensuring that an investigation takes place before development). These rules are not designed to ensure that heritage assets, designated and un-designated, are able to play a part in economic and cultural regeneration or in the promotion of social cohesion. Yet there is ample evidence that economic prosperity and social cohesion benefit from a strong sense of local identity and pride built around the history of the area. In order to achieve that benefit Northampton Borough needs a heritage plan. We would strongly urge that the Borough to create such a plan in consultation with interested groups and individuals as soon as possible. The imperative for housing development should not be at the expense of the Vision for Northampton as a place of both innovation and history.

Northampton has begun to have some success in its Vision for an innovative town with the promotion of a Cultural Quarter, the creation of the Waterside Enterprise Zone and bringing the University of Northampton into the centre of town. It is now the time to balance that with an equally vigorous promotion of its historical roots.

We would like to make one final point. We have been working with the Spring Boroughs Neighbourhood Forum as they developed the Neighbourhood Plan for the area. This has been approved through both a referendum and by the Council. The exercise has been detailed, prolonged and very democratic. The Neighbourhood Plan specifically proposes that an urban park with significant opportunities for heritage interpretation be developed in the area of the plan. It would be helpful to see that aspiration reflected in the new Local Plan. This would not only provide some evidence that the Localism Act has begun to enable a more democratic planning process, but would be an exemplar for the way in which heritage can act as a regenerator, in a socially deprived area of high density housing.

Yours faithfully

Dr Marie Dickie OBE for The Friends of Northampton Castle.

31st October 2016.