



Planning Committee Report

Committee Date: 6th December 2021

Application Number: WNN/2021/0797

Location: Former Hardingstone 9 Hole Golf Course, Houghton Hill, Northampton

Development: Formation of 5no cycle trails, routes and associated works including car parking, landscaping and ecological enhancements to facilitate the use of former nine hole golf course as a bike park

Applicant: West Northamptonshire Council

Agent: APC Planning

Case Officer: Adam Smith

Ward: Delapre and Rushmere Unitary Ward

Referred By: Assistant Director of Place & Economy

Reason for Referral: Major application

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION: GRANT PERMISSION SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS

Proposal

The application seeks planning permission for the formation of 5no cycle trails, routes and associated works including car parking, landscaping and ecological enhancements to facilitate the use of the former nine hole golf course as a free to all bike park.

Consultations

The following consultees have raised **concerns or objections** to the application:

- Battlefield Trust
- Cllr Emma Roberts
- Hardingstone Parish Council
- Northamptonshire Badger Group
- Ramblers Association

The following consultees have raised **no objections or are in support** of the application:

- Arboricultural Officer
- Archaeological Advisor
- Conservation Officer
- Ecological Advisor
- Environment Agency
- Environmental Health
- Far Cotton and Delapre Community Council
- National Highways
- Natural England
- North Northamptonshire Council
- Northamptonshire Police
- Sport England

26 letters of objection have been received and 96 letters of support have been received.

Conclusion

The application has been assessed against the relevant policies in the NPPF, the adopted Local Plan and other relevant guidance as listed in detail at Section 8 of the report.

The key issues arising from the application details are:

- Principle of Development
- Ecology and Green Infrastructure
- Conservation Area and Setting of Listed Buildings
- Archaeology – Northamptonshire Battlefield
- Residential Amenity and Antisocial Behaviour
- Parking, Public Rights of Way and Highway Safety

The report looks into the key planning issues in detail, and Officers conclude that the proposal is acceptable subject to conditions.

Members are advised that the above is a summary of the proposals and key issues contained in the main report below which provides full details of all consultation responses, planning policies, the Officer's assessment and recommendations, and Members are advised that this summary should be read in conjunction with the detailed report.

MAIN REPORT

1. APPLICATION SITE AND LOCALITY

1.1 The application site comprises a former nine hole golf course to the north side of Hardingstone village together with Eagle Drive, the car park for Delapre Golf Course and the connecting underpass which runs under the A45.

1.2 The former golf course neighbours the A45 and part of Brackmills Industrial Estate to the north and Hardingstone village to the south. It predominantly falls in land levels from the south to the north, with the western half also falling in land levels from the west to the east and includes undulating features. The former golf course has become somewhat overgrown since it use ceased some 6 years ago, but features of the golf course are still readily discernible on site such as tees/greens, the tree lined fairways, crossings of the footpaths and sections of boundary netting. In addition, there are a number of informal trails running across the site indicating its current use by walkers and cyclists as well as wildlife.

- 1.3 The site is adjacent to the Hardingstone Conservation Area and a small part of the site is in the Conservation Area boundary which extends along public footpath KN4, a historic path that linked the estate village to Delapre Abbey known as the Port Way. In addition, there are several listed buildings on Back Lane which back onto the site and it is close to the registered site of the Battlefield of Northampton.
- 1.4 Two public footpaths, KN4 and KN5, run from Back Lane across the centre of the site and through the underpass to Delapre Abbey. Footpath KN4 is open to Back Lane whereas Footpath KN5 has a kissing gate at its entrance to Back Lane.
- 1.5 The site is bordered to the south east by Houghton Hill, a shared pedestrian and cycle way which forms part of the Norbital, a circular cycle route around Northampton that connects residential areas with areas of employment and education such as the University of Northampton and Brackmills.

2. CONSTRAINTS

- 2.1. The application neighbours and includes part of the Hardingstone Conservation Area; several listed buildings on Back Lane back onto the site; the site is close to the Registered Battlefield of Northampton; and two public footpaths cross the site.

3. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1. The application seeks planning permission for the formation of 5no cycle trails, routes and associated works including car parking, landscaping and ecological enhancements to facilitate the use of the former nine hole golf course as a free to all bike park.
- 3.2. The use of the site for cycling purposes does not require planning permission, as such a use would fall within the definition of outdoor sport or recreation which is the same use as the existing lawful golf course use. However, the proposed cycle trails and associated works require planning permission because they comprise engineering operations.
- 3.3. The works the subject of the application include:
 - Multiuser green trail – A dual direction cycle route across the site, connecting Houghton Hill to the underpass under the A45.
 - Red, black and blue grade off-road mountain bike trails for different abilities
 - Dual tracks to allow head-to-head riding
 - Collection areas (5 in total) where riders can meet to discuss the next section of track and coaching can be provided
 - Climb sections
 - Mountain bike skills area
- 3.4. The off-road trails, collection areas and skills area would be constructed from compacted granite aggregate, with the off road trails measuring approximately 1.5m in width and utilising the existing topography of the site incorporating a range of features from berms (banked corners), rollers (humps) and tables (jumps), and rock drops & gardens (where rocks spill over the trails).
- 3.5. The green multiuser trail would be a 3m wide trail that would follow the contours of the lower part of the former golf course.

- 3.6. There would be no lighting or speakers across the site, but signage would be provided through the trails to identify grades, directions, and restrictions/warnings.
- 3.7. Measures would be incorporated on the trails where the routes cross the footpaths, such as the use of boulders to provide pinch points and/or chicanes, and during the course of the application the applicant has agreed to the installation of a kissing gate style feature at the entrance to public footpath KN4 from Back Lane.
- 3.8. The proposal includes a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy, including the enhancement of 12.891ha of habitats with provisions for habitat creation and long-term management, as well as Construction and Environmental Management Plan and Construction and Ecological Management Plan.
- 3.9. The application documents detail that informal mowed paths would also be provided to allow for permissive pedestrian access within the site.
- 3.10. In addition, the submissions detail that 40 car parking spaces during the week and 60 car parking spaces at the weekend would be available for users of the mountain bike park on a pre-booked basis in the existing car park at Delapre Golf Club. In addition, the submissions detail that the toilets and restaurant facilities at the golf club would be available for cyclists.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1. There is no planning history directly relevant to the proposal.

5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Statutory Duties

- 5.1. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2. Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities when considering development that affects a listed building or its setting to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
- 5.3. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities when considering development to pay special attention to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Development Plan

- 5.4. The Development Plan comprises the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) which was formally adopted by the Joint Strategic Planning Committee on 15th December 2014 and which provides the strategic planning policy framework for the District to 2029, together with the Saved Policies of the Northampton Local Plan (1997). The relevant planning policies of the statutory Development Plan are set out below:

West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) (LPP1)

5.5. The relevant policies of the LPP1 are:

- SA – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- S1 – Distribution of Development
- S10 – Sustainable Development Principles
- BN1 – Green Infrastructure Connections
- BN2 - Biodiversity
- BN3 – Woodland and Enhancement and Creation
- BN5 – The Historic Environment and Landscape
- BN7 – Flood Risk
- BN9 – Pollution Control
- RC2 – Community Needs

Northampton Local Plan – Saved Policies

5.6. The relevant Saved Policies of the Northampton Local Plan are:

- E20 – New Developments (Design)
- E26 – Conservation Areas

Material Considerations

5.7. Below is a list of the relevant Material Planning Considerations

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- Biodiversity SPD
- Hardington Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan
- Northampton Local Plan Part 2 (2011-2029) (Emerging) (LLP2)

Following the decision at the Full Council on 18 January 2021, the former Northampton Borough Council submitted the Northampton Local Plan Part 2 (2011 – 2029) and supporting documents to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (now Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) on 4 February 2021 for examination. This is in accordance with Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

In line with Paragraph 48 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the policies contained within the emerging Northampton Local Plan Part 2 are therefore a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The weight afforded to the policies relevant to this application are set out below:

- Policy 2: Placemaking (Moderate weight)
- Policy 3: Design (Moderate weight)
- Policy 4: Amenity and layout (Moderate weight)
- Policy 6: Health and Wellbeing (Significant weight)
- Policy 7: Flood Risk and Water Management (Significant weight)
- Policy 23: Sports Facilities and playing pitches (Significant weight)
- Policy 27: Green Infrastructure (Significant weight)
- Policy 29: Biodiversity (Moderate Weight)
- Policy 31: Designated and Non-Designated Heritage Assets (Significant weight)
- Policy 32: Sustainable Transport and Travel (Significant weight)
- Policy 33: Highway Network and Safety (Significant weight)

6. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

6.1 Below is a summary of the consultation responses received at the time of writing this report. Responses are available to view in full on the Council's website.

Consultee Name	Comment
Arboricultural Officer	<p>No objection to the principle of the development of the site as proposed on the basis of the arboricultural information provided during the course of the application.</p> <p>Tree protection measures are required where the development could be considered to have an impact upon a significant arboricultural feature, for example the individual retained trees T2 and T3, but less concerned where the routes may pass through copses as the visual impact of any loss will be less than if a single isolated tree were to be removed.</p>
Archaeological Officer	<p>To the north of the A45 is Delapre Park and the area of the Battle of Northampton (1460), now designated a Registered Battlefield. The area of the proposals is outside the designated battlefield area and likely to have been peripheral to the battle, thus related artefacts could be expected in the overburden where this has not been disturbed by previous landscaping. Remains of other periods may also be present.</p> <p>In this case, given the nature of the development, intrusive groundworks should be monitored by an archaeological contractor to allow the investigation and recording of any sub-surface features present; the monitoring should include checking the upcast from groundworks by eye and with a metal detector, in case of surviving items relating to the battle.</p> <p>The proposed development may have a detrimental effect upon surviving sub-surface archaeological remains. Such effects do not represent an over-riding constraint to development provided that adequate provision is made for the investigation and recording of any remains so affected. To secure this, a suitable condition for a programme of archaeological should be attached.</p>
Battlefields Trust	<p>The proximity of the proposed development to the nationally important Registered Battlefield of Northampton (1460) is noted, but it is judged that the plans would have a less than substantial impact on the setting of the battlefield. In these circumstances, it is for the local planning authority to weigh the public benefits of the proposed development with the harm to the heritage when making a planning decision.</p> <p>Given the proximity of the proposed development to the battlefield, the possibility that defeated Lancastrian forces were pursued in the direction of Hardingstone, and the Battlefields Trust recommends that those areas where topsoil is to be removed are metal detected in advance of work taking place to recover any battle related remains. The full extent of the battlefield at Northampton is unknown and battlefield archaeology is typically found unstratified within the</p>

	<p>topsoil. In these circumstances, a metal field detecting survey would ensure any battle remains are located and recorded and improve understanding of this important site of conflict.</p>
<p>Cllr Emma Robert</p>	<p>Concerned regarding nature protection, archaeological preservation and appropriate funding.</p> <p>Consultation needs to be thorough and inclusive. The previous public consultation was some time ago and this is a subject that will divide many people. If the application goes ahead, local people and historians need to be involved in shaping the idea. We have to ensure we secure all of the right funding and are working with all the right partners to make this work. An area of this nature could be a great addition to supporting Health & Wellbeing activities in the area, but only if done correctly.</p> <p>Appropriate archaeological and environmental conditions must be added to ensure any work done is respectful of the area in which the site sits and whilst common reporting may not show a need, we must listen to those who have studied the battle sites for many years. Sympathetic work must be done, and consideration should be given to how we can promote history around the area in conjunction with the modern use intended for it.</p> <p>Before planning is considered a discussion should take place directly with local groups who can add opinion to this.</p>
<p>Conservation Officer</p>	<p>The application relates to the site of the disused former 9-hole golf course at Hardingstone. The open aspect of the land provides the backdrop to Hardingstone Conservation Area and is a positive feature that contributes to the setting of the village. The land is crossed by the Port Way, a historic path that linked the estate village to Delapre Abbey.</p> <p>There has been extensive pre-application discussion on the proposed use. The layout has been designed to minimise the impact on the setting of the Conservation Area and on the Port Way. The retention of the open aspect of the land will help to preserve the contribution it makes to the setting of Hardingstone village. The potential level of harm to the setting and character of the conservation area through the creation of the trails and the activity itself would be “less than substantial” and, in accordance with national planning policy, should be weighed against the wider public benefit of retaining recreational use of the land.</p> <p>Overall, consider that the proposed use would have an acceptable impact on the character and appearance of Hardingstone Conservation Area and would not harm the setting of nearby listed buildings. Therefore, no objection to the proposal.</p>
<p>Ecology Advisor</p>	<p>The submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Ecological Impact Assessment reports are satisfactory.</p> <p>In addition, the Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEcMP) and Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy have been updated to</p>

	<p>account for the presence of badgers in light of new evidence from the Northamptonshire Badger Group and should be conditioned as compliance conditions.</p> <p>The Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy sets out how a net biodiversity gain would be delivered; this should be supported by pre-occupation conditions for a detailed soft landscaping plan and a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP).</p> <p>The potential for biodiversity enhancement in the heart of the town is very much welcomed, and with it a 30-year commitment to habitat management. This is an unusually long time scale and the opportunity for long-term management and monitoring continuity is quite exciting.</p>
Environment Agency	No comments.
Environmental Health	No objections subject to the amended Construction Environmental Management Plan being secured by condition and details of electric vehicle charging points should be secured by condition.
Far Cotton and Delapre Community Council	The Community Council supports this application and, on balance, having reviewed all the documentation believes this will be a good development for the local area
Hardingstone Parish Council	<p>The Parish Council does not object to this application, but has grave concerns regarding the following matters</p> <p><u>Controlled access</u> Concerned that the site will have no access controls and can be used at all times and in particular that this could result in the site being used late in summer months and with little supervision this could lead to there being antisocial behaviour “out of hours”. Also, if there is no controlled access, the site will become open to motorised bikes, which will bring late night visits and the noise associated with it.</p> <p><u>Houghton Hill entrance</u> The plans show entry to the site via Houghton Hill as this is part of the national cycling network. This is however also a footpath used by pedestrians and already cyclists can travel at speed here due to the hill; there needs to be plans put in place to ensure that the increased numbers of cyclists cannot go too fast to endanger other users of the area.</p> <p><u>Pedestrian Footpaths</u> There are two ancient footpaths that run across the site. It is important that pedestrians have priority on these footpaths. If there are cycle lanes that cross them, from one trail to another, then there must be some way to slow cyclists down so they must stop to give way to pedestrians. We understand that there are plans for boulders, but this may not be enough and that the design should be made so that cyclists will have to stop rather than slow down, and preferably underpasses should be built for cyclists with bridges for</p>

pedestrians so that the two cannot cross and are entirely separate. In addition, to protect these footpaths, there needs to be kissing gates or similar at Back Lane where footpaths KN4 and KN5 lead to the site. There are already signs saying that they are not for cyclists, but this does not stop bikes and brings other safety risks.

Parking

Concerned regarding proposed parking fees and how these will be managed; it would be better for free parking and an entrance fee to the site.

Whilst some may be willing to pay for parking, there will be many others that will not and will look for alternative places to park, which will inevitably include Hardingstone Village, near the footpaths mentioned above. These are roads that are already overcrowded as residents do not have off road parking. There are big concerns that bad parking on the High Street in Hardingstone will lead to the bus service being withdrawn as buses cannot get through. Other roads such as Back Lane and Ilex Close are not suited for on road parking either. These roads are already busy due to the use of the Village Hall, scouts, guides, the church, post office and The Sun pub

Risk Assessments and Insurance

Understand that the site will be open 24/7 and that there are no plans for marshals or similar to be monitoring the use of the site; unclear how risk will be managed if there is no supervision and whether any public liability insurance will be sufficient.

Lease

Details regarding the lease arrangements for the site are unclear but some concerns could be addressed via the lease and the sustainability of the site needs to be built into the lease.

Health and Safety

Concerned for the safety of our residents and users of the site. With a site such as this there are bound to be accidents from time to time, especially as there are concerns that there will not be enough supervision, but it is unclear what plans are in place should accidents occur including access by emergency vehicles.

Antisocial Behaviour

Concerned that if there is little supervision on the site, and there are no set opening hours then this will in turn lead to antisocial behaviour. People will only behave well if steered to do so, and this needs to be built in from the very beginning; bad behaviour breeds bad behaviour so this needs to be seriously considered and designed out before the site is opened.

The proposal is intended to be an attraction that not only brings people from local areas but also from neighbouring counties and as such it should be managed as such. There is a lot of funding being put into setting it up, and it would be a shame if antisocial behaviour prevented it from being a success in the long term.

<p>Highways</p>	<p>With regards to traffic movements and parking, the Local Highway Authority (LHA) is content that this application will not have an undue impact on the surrounding highway network. The trip generation will not be significant and many of those will be via bikes, due to the nature of the site. The site location is well connected to walking and cycling routes, meaning there is good access by bike from many areas of the town.</p> <p>The proposal for a two-way cycle link between Houghton Hill and the site entrance from the golf club car park is welcomed and will provide an invaluable link not just for users of the park.</p> <p>It has been noted that there are concerns that should Delapre Golf Club implement parking fees in the car park, this could deter users from parking there and push them to Back Lane which could be an issue. The LHA agree that this has the potential to increase some parking in the Back Lane area. However, it should be noted that by parking in the designated area users will have access to essential facilities. To further encourage usage, the LHA believes that a condition would be beneficial to include cycle parking close to the facilities, which would also help further focus vehicle parking to the designated area.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the above, it is inevitable that there will be some degree of parking associated with the site on Back Lane due to its proximity. However, as stated above, the vehicle trip generation will be relatively low and therefore the LHA does not believe that the proposed development will negatively impact upon highway safety.</p> <p>It has been highlighted that there is some inappropriate driving on Eagle Drive, however, the LHA does not believe that this application would result in a quantifiable intensification of use to that already permitted. Furthermore, as evidenced in the Transport Statement, there is no history of accidents at this location.</p> <p>With regards to the proposed and existing on site cycle / footway network, following discussions with our Public Rights of Way and Travel Choices departments and taking into consideration the safety requirements of the proposed and existing users, the LHA would make the following recommendations be agreed via conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Some form of barrier at the entrance to the footpath to prevent and deter cyclist would be beneficial. To this effect, a kissing gate arrangement without the gate would be suitable in this instance, coupled with a “no cycling” roundel. This will at least enforce cyclist dismounting at point of entry and will not create a barrier of entry for any other legitimate users. Furthermore, it will prevent motorcyclists using the tracks.2. The boulder chicanes on the downhill trails should include a post and rail fence alongside this feature to substantiate it and help ensure it remains in situ. This along with sufficient vision splays is enough provide an acceptably safe environment for all users.
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Local Lead Flood Authority	No comments received.
National Highways (formerly Highways England)	<p>The site would be accessed via Eagle Drive which is the western arm of the A45 Brackmills Junction and a maximum of 60 car parking spaces are included as part of the application, which form part of an existing car park and will be subject to a booking system.</p> <p>In addition, it is noted that the transport Statement sets out that at full capacity the site will generate 27 two way trips per hour, with two way trips less during peak hours – the Transport Statement figures have been reviewed and found to be acceptable.</p> <p>In light of this, it is considered that the proposal will not have a significant impact on the Strategic Road Network and National Highways raise no objections</p>
Natural England	Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on statutorily protected nature conservation sites or landscapes
North Northamptonshire Council	No objections or comments.
Northamptonshire Badger Group	<p>The original Ecological Impact Assessment found no evidence of badgers, however there are badgers sets and activity on / in the locality of the site and additional surveys should be undertaken. In addition, concerned about disruption during construction and the use of some of the collection area and trails; suggest park should be redesigned and a condition is required to protect badgers during construction.</p> <p>Recommend specific planting buffers including native fruit and nut trees / hedges to offer protection and seclusion.</p> <p>Question the need for some of the trails to go through areas of existing bramble and trees which offer foraging routes, seclusion and food.</p> <p>Concerned if tracks are used at night this will disturb badgers; night time use should be prohibited.</p> <p>Welcome additional habitat enhancements.</p>
Northamptonshire Police	<p>Northants Police has no objection to this application.</p> <p>This concept was shared with the local Neighbourhood Policing team at pre-application stage and they were very supportive. The area is used informally for this use at the moment and this application will formalise the existing use, become a destination for mountain biking and increase the numbers of people using the area thereby providing more capable guardianship and legitimate use of the space.</p> <p>This is something the local policing team could buy into right from the start to encourage cycle safety and security. They will also make use of it.</p>

<p>Ramblers Association</p>	<p>The Association has no objection to the application in principle and welcome that provision is to be made for permissive informal paths within the complex</p> <p>However, there is one matter of concern regarding the avoidance of conflict between pedestrians and cyclists at the points where the two trails and the two rights of way, footpaths KN4 and KN5, cross each other. It is noted that adequate visibility splays are to be provided and appropriate warning signs are to be erected but it is not explained how the trails are designed to slow down cyclists – it is essential that clarity is given on this point before approval is granted.</p> <p>In this regard, it is the Associations view that barriers should be put in place on the trails to form chicanes to ensure cyclists have to slow down – warning signs and visibility splays alone are inadequate.</p> <p>In addition, whilst the footpaths are well used they frequently become overgrown and surfaces are poor and, therefore, it is requested that the opportunity is taken to improve the experience of pedestrians by regrading them, removing encroaching shrubbery/foilage and resurfacing them to bring them up to standard in keeping with the remainder of the site.</p>
<p>Sport England</p>	<p>The proposed development does not fall within Sport England’s statutory or non-statutory remits and therefore Sport England does not have any planning comments on this application.</p>

7. RESPONSE TO PUBLICITY

7.1. Below is a summary of the third party and neighbour responses received at the time of writing this report.

7.2. There have been some 95 letter of support which include the following comments:

- Proposal would be a valuable asset for immediate and wider community / town.
- It could be the jewel in Northampton’s crown that will provide a positive boost and puts the town on the map.
- Development would help promote the sport and build on the interest in the sport generating at the Olympics; offers the potential to generate world class athletes from Northamptonshire.
- It will provide a safe and interesting space for cyclists to enjoy the sport and develop skills.
- Opportunity to provide facilities for young people but will cater for both children and adults; allows mixing of age groups and will bring people from different backgrounds together.
- Will improve and encourage cycling / exercise / active and outdoor lifestyles with associated physical, mental health and well-being benefits that will reduce the strain on the NHS.
- Much needed recreation / cycling facility, only other off-road riding in the area is informal trails in local woods such a Harlestone Firs and Delapre Woods; there is a lack of cycle facilities in Northamptonshire.
- Proposal will reduce pressure on and damage to local woodlands by unofficial trails.

- Facility will reduce the need to travel long distances to access cycling facilities, reducing environmental impacts of travelling. Currently riders have to travel by car to places like Woburn, Chicksands, Sherwood Forest and Cannock chase to access facilities.
- Good for the local economy including golf club, Hardington village and the town in general; will encourage tourism and engagement with the town; will lead to the creation of jobs and volunteer positions for the upkeep of the trails; and will promote business opportunities in the cycling and sports / retail sector.
- Help build a community of cyclists in Northampton.
- Local mountain bike community would help maintain and develop facility moving forward.
- The area is already used by cyclists but to have trails kept in a good condition is a positive.
- A dedicated bike park will ensure that cyclists and walkers are safely separated to avoid accidents
- Important to secure maintenance and ensure that it is not abused as a free facility
- The development should include opportunities for full public access.
- As legitimate a use as a golf course
- Good use of a disused facility
- A place where nature can co-exist with humans.
- Preferable use to building houses on the site; rather than being developed for commercial or residential provides an opportunity to preserve a greenspace.
- The proposal would safeguard green areas and offers biodiversity enhancements
- This is an opportunity to link Hardington Pocket Park with Cherry Orchard park and the Delapre Park for the increasing population in the Hardington area; better access to the site will allow more people to enjoy it
- Good location well served by the cycle network such that vehicles are not needed to access the facility.
- Arrangement with golf club to provide facilities and parking should avoid parking issues in Hardington.
- Will encourage Northampton to become more green with further members of the public opting to commute by bike.
- An excellent opportunity to spend s106 contributions in a manner beneficial to residents.

7.3. There have been some 26 letters of concern / objection which include the following comments:

- Wildlife around Hardington is losing habitat and greenspace is being eroded due to surrounding developments and this site is one of the only remaining green areas.
- The site has rewilded itself over the past few years and become a haven for a huge variety of wildlife, including protected species such as bats and badgers
- Proposal contrary to national rewilding aims; area should be left for wildlife - Opportunity for urban rewilding and wildlife protection rather than a bike park.
- Better to protect site as a greenspace for wildlife and leisure use for everyone.
- Greenspace is important to address climate change.
- The site should not be seen as a derelict brownfield but rather a valuable wild green area that served a very different purpose to managed greenspaces in the area.
- Alternative brownfield sites would be preferable.
- Wildlife and protected species populations (e.g. bats and badgers) need due consideration.; additional ecological surveys are required to understand impacts on protected species.

- Proposed biodiversity enhancements are not very ambitious, and we should aspire to more; unclear how proposal will result in a net gain in biodiversity and tree impacts also unclear.
- Bike park will have an adverse effect on habitats and wildlife; it will cause ecological damage and disturbance to well established and diverse wildlife.
- Concerned cyclists may deviate from the trails, for example if the site becomes waterlogged, and will destroy habitats and aesthetics
- Suggested permissive mowed paths are essential but more details of these are needed to ensure that they are not lost as plans develop.
- Unclear whether pedestrian and dog walkers will be able to walk around site when route is finished; many local people walk the land and exercise their dogs and it is likely that less bikers will use the facilities than the current use by walkers.
- Scale of bike parking is such that it will not offer a challenging circuit; it will become a white elephant.
- Bike park will be detrimental to the village.
- Loss of a much loved area that residents use to relax and engage in mindfulness
- It has become a recreational facility for all ages and interests unlike a bike park that would just. It will only cater for a small part of society; bike park use would exclude many residents of Hardingstone.
- The site has historic significance from its proximity to the Battlefield of Northampton, within the eighteenth-century enclosure of Hardingstone's open field system and as a setting the conservation area and listed building.
- Concerned regarding proximity to Registered Battlefield and potential for damage to artifacts.
- Important the public footpaths and surrounding hedgerows on their routes are protected to preserve the historic environment and landscape.
- Opening times for the park should be restricted, with trails closed at night to prevent the anti-social behaviour in the area which is already a problem; Concerned regarding access to bike park at all hours resulting in late noise and anti-social behaviour / public disorder.
- Unclear how the park is to be "policed" as does not appear to be any provisions to encourage social responsibilities or penalties if not observed; inadequate controls for any anti-social behaviour.
- Unclear who to reports incidents to and how they will be addressed.
- Concerned bike park use will not be monitored 24/7.
- Alcohol should be banned on the trails.
- Concerned facilities will be used by off road motorcycles.
- Cyclists will likely be attracted to cafes and food outlets on the industrial estate, parking in Brackmills and generating litter.
- Waste bins should be provided for all the rubbish that will be generated by users.
- Unclear how site would be maintained; footpath maintenance should be included as part of any maintenance agreement.
- No speakers or lighting should be allowed on pollution and neighbour disturbance grounds.
- Riding at night with torches/lights will disturb residents and wildlife.
- Proposal will have a significant impact on way of life of neighbours.
- Many of the collection areas are too close to residential properties and on higher ground, and the trails are also not far enough away from house and lead close to properties. This will result in security, privacy, noise and disturbance/nuisance to properties adjoining and overlooking the site.
- Existing natural screens that also provide habitats for wildlife should be retained and enhanced to help with habitat, security, noise and privacy.
- Screening should be provided around collection points.
- Signage should restrict access to boundary areas.

- Volume of riders expected at the park is not compatible with wildlife or other public users.
- Health and safety concerns including riders may not wear helmets, inexperienced riders may ride unsuitable trails, there is no out of hours monitoring and unclear house emergency vehicles would access the facilities – Park should include check in systems, safety stewards, safety briefings and monitoring of riders.
- The footpath in Back Lane needs a gate to stop cyclists that already come down the footpath extremely fast; it is a footpath not a cycle track and the use of the footpaths by mountain bikes needs to be prevented
- More robust barriers at entrance to footpaths are needed than kissing gates to prevent bikes accessing the footpaths and discourage use of Hardingstone for parking; bikes can be lifted over kissing gates
- Potential for accidents where cyclists cross public rights of way; measures need to be put in place to ensure cyclists give way to pedestrians - riders need to have no choice but to dismount at the footpath crossings.
- Bike tracks should not cross the footpaths on safety grounds; bikes will not slow down.
- The section which allows riders to race each other should be resited to the wider and open areas of the site further away from footpaths
- Proposal will result in more cyclists using the Houghton Hill cycle route; there are currently issues with the speed of cyclists using this route and resulting near misses and accidents with pedestrians – Concerned proposal will exacerbate this and will leave less room for pedestrians on Houghton Hill
- Houghton Hill would have a potentially dangerous staggered junction between the new cycle trail and the entrance to the country park.
- Houghton Hill is a former road and whilst not wide enough for vehicles to pass, car frequently try to use it to access Brackmills despite signage at the top of the hill and must reverse causing safety issues and damage.
- Consideration should be given to the following works to Houghton Hill: separate cycle and pedestrian lane; widening the lane; introduction of bollards at the top of the hill; increased signage; and improved drainage to ensure safe during winter.
- Vegetation needs to be cut back on Houghton Hill to ensure that there is sufficient space for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Hardingstone will be spoiled with a constant stream of cycles and parked cars.
- There are major parking problems in Hardingstone and if people have to pay to park for this new facility or pre-book parking they will instead park in the village to access it for free; if parking was free for the facility or access to the park was via a permit system then parking in Hardingstone may not be a problem
- Parking is free for golfers, unclear why not also free for cyclists.
- Parking is a particular issue on the High Street, Back lane and Ilex Close in Hardingstone; and this will be exacerbated by the proposal.
- The local bus company have threatened to remove the bus service to Hardingstone due to obstructions caused by parking.
- Proposal will also cause traffic and pollution issues in Hardingstone
- Car parking spaces at golf club may be insufficient if facility is a success.
- Concerned proposal will exacerbate existing speeding problems on Eagle; measures are needed on Eagle Drive to slow cars down accessing the car park.
- The site historically has drainage problems and risks being churned up by cyclists.
- Underpass by the golf course car park regularly floods.
- Runoff would likely increase from the site and impact on adjacent commercial units.
- Issues with engagement with the village community; the proposal and meetings regarding the scheme have been poorly publicised.

- 7.4. In addition, there have been a further 5 letters of comment received that raise comments only relating to the potential for archaeological remains to be present on the site relating to the Battle of Northampton and stress the need for archaeological investigations.

8. APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

- 8.1. The application site is an existing area of open space with a lawful use as a golf course. In planning terms, both the existing lawful use and the proposed bike park use of the land fall within the definition of outdoor sport and recreation and the proposal would not result in the loss of the open space. Therefore, there is no material change of use of the land involved in this application and planning permission is not required for the use of the site as a bike park.
- 8.2. The elements of the proposal requiring planning permission comprise the proposed bike trails and associated works. The off-road trails would be 1.5m in width and the multi-user trail would be 3m in width. The trails, collection area and skills area would be constructed of crushed stones and would utilise the existing topography of the site and incorporate features such as berms (banked corners), rollers (humps) and tables (jumps), rock drops & gardens (where rocks spill over the trails) and boulder pinch points and chicanes. There would be no lighting or speakers across the site, but signage would be provided through the trails to identify grades, directions, and restrictions/warnings. Informal routes within the site would also be provided for pedestrians to ensure existing access for walkers to the site is not lost.
- 8.3. The proposed works would support access to and the use of the site for sport and recreation, with associated health, well-being and community benefits and, therefore, are acceptable in principle under the development plan.
- 8.4. In addition, the proposal would accord with emerging Policy 6 of the Northampton Local Plan Part 2 which seeks to promote active and healthy lifestyles and access to green spaces and sports facilities.
- 8.5. The proposal would also accord with national planning guidance in the NPPF, which details in paragraph 98 that access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change.

Ecology and Green Infrastructure

- 8.6. Policies BN1, BN2 and BN3 seek to enhance existing green infrastructure, woodland areas and biodiversity as well as safeguard protected species. Emerging Policy 27 of the Northampton Local Plan part 2 similarly requires the protection, management and maintenance of existing green infrastructure assets to enhance their multifunctionality.
- 8.7. The application site comprises an area of open green space and has been accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Ecological Impact Assessment, Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy, Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEcMP), Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan. In addition, following representations from the Northamptonshire Badger Group, an additional Badger survey has been undertaken and, as a result, both the Construction Ecological Management

Plan and Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy have been updated during the course of the application.

- 8.8. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Ecological Impact Assessment identify that the key ecological features on the site in relation to the proposed works comprise two ponds, woodlands, hedgerows, scattered trees and semi-improved grassland and that these features have the potential to support bats, terrestrial mammals (e.g. badgers and hedgehogs), herpetofauna (i.e. reptiles and amphibians), nesting birds and invertebrates. In addition, these documents recommend a CEcMP to mitigate any impact on protect species and habitats during the construction phase and that the scheme should include the provision of biodiversity/habitat enhancements and measures to secure long term habitat management.
- 8.9. A badger survey undertaken during the course of the application also identifies the presence of badgers on / in the locality of the site, however no active setts were identified within 30m of the proposed bike trails, collection areas or skills area, which is the standard protection zone normally implemented around an active sett. Whilst acknowledging the potential for additional small setts and foraging activities in the site, the survey concludes that providing that the trail creation works are undertaken under the supervision of an experienced Ecological Clerk of Works in line with the submitted CEcMP, and additional planting is secured by condition, then there will not be unacceptable impact on badgers and relevant legislation will be complied with.
- 8.10. It should be noted that the submitted CEcMP includes a requirement for the appointment of an Ecological Manager and a suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works. Furthermore, it categorises the site into three zones based on a traffic light system, with specific measures for each zone including for example no work allowed in the identified red zones without the prior consent of the Ecological Manager and all work in this zone is also required to be monitored by the Ecological Clerk of Works. In addition, as part of the measures to avoid/reduce construction impacts, it includes requirements for pre-commencement surveys for bats, badgers and other species.
- 8.11. The Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy sets out that the development would result in partial losses of some areas of habitats (dense scrub, lines of broadleaved trees, neutral semi-improved grassland, plantation broadleaved woodland, semi-natural broadleaved woodland and species-rich defunct hedgerow) within the site. However, the area of these habitats that would be lost would be very small, with areas of all these habitat types also retained and enhanced and, overall, a total of 12.891 hectares of habitat across the site would be enhanced such that there would be a net increase in biodiversity. This includes the creation of 2.64 hectares of neutral grassland to replace existing tall ruderals, which will increase the overall biodiversity value of the site by providing suitable resources for use by a range of protected and notable species/species groups, as well as Species of Principal Importance such as grass snakes, and contribute to Northamptonshire's BAP targets.
- 8.12. The Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan provides information for the long-term management (i.e. not less than 30 years and preferable for the entire operational lifespan of the proposed development) of landscape/habitat features on the site and seeks to secure ongoing monitoring and management to ensure the net gain in biodiversity is achieved and habitats are maintained at a high level of ecological conservation value.

- 8.13. The submitted ecological assessments have been reviewed by the Council's Ecological Advisor and found to be acceptable. Furthermore, the Council's Ecological Advisor welcomes the potential for biodiversity enhancements offered by this scheme and, in particular, advises that the 30 year commitment to habitat management provides an exciting opportunity for long term management and monitoring on this site. The Council's Ecology Advisor advises that this can be secured via conditions to require compliance with the submitted Construction Ecological Management Plan and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan and the submission of a detailed soft landscaping scheme together with a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan. Indeed, the Construction Ecological Management Plan will ensure habitats and wildlife are protected during construction, the soft landscaping scheme will ensure the new planting, features and enhancements are provided and the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan and Landscape and Ecology Management Plan will ensure that habitats are improved and maintained for a 30 year period.
- 8.14. Overall, the proposed development would result in a net increase in the biodiversity value of the site, with a long-term commitment to habitat management to the benefit of green infrastructure, and would not result in an unacceptable impact on protected species or loss of habitats subject to conditions.

Character of Area, Conservation Area and Setting of Listed Buildings

- 8.15. Saved Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan places great importance on the quality of design of new developments and is in conformity with the NPPF which advises that planning should always seek to secure high quality design.
- 8.16. In addition, the site backs onto the Hardingstone Conservation Area to the southern side and the site falls within a small section of the Conservation Area, known as the Port Way, which extends along public footpath KN4. There are also several listed buildings on Back Lane which back onto the site. As such, Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 require special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area and to preserving the setting of the listed building, with the NPPF detailing that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets.
- 8.17. The Conservation Officer raises no concerns regarding the setting of the listed buildings and advises that the open aspect of the land provides the backdrop to Hardingstone Conservation Area, with Port Way comprising an historic path linking the village to Delapre Abbey as well as an entrance to the Conservation Area.
- 8.18. The design and layout of the bike park has been designed to minimise the impact on the open landscape setting of the Conservation Area and on the Port Way. Indeed, the trails, collection and skills areas are generally set away from the boundaries with the Conservation Area and utilise the existing contours and features to integrate the trails into the landscape, with some modest new features incorporated as part of the trails, such as banked corners, jumps, boulders and small signs. Furthermore, the trails would be constructed of crushed stone and would be limited in width, with the off-road trails generally having a width of 1.5m. The wider multiuser green trail would be set on the lower areas of the site, well away from the Conservation Area and adjacent to the vegetation running along the northern boundary of the site. In addition, there would only be a limited number of small collection points, with the larger skills area also set away from the Conservation Area.

- 8.19. The trails would cross the lower part of the historic Port Way, with some associated loss of trees and vegetation. However, whilst this would give rise to some harm, the crossing points of the Port Way would be at the extremity of the Conservation Area at some distance from the edge of the village and the alignment of the historic route would be unchanged. Any fencing required as part of measures to slow riders or deter cycle access to the footpaths would need to be appropriate to the open character of the site, such as post and rail type fencing, and this could be secured by condition.
- 8.20. The trees on the site would also help to provide some integration of the trails into the landscape, although there would be some limited areas of tree loss, such as where trails pass through copses of trees as well as where they cross footpaths such as the Port Way as detailed above. However, the Council's Arboricultural Officer has reviewed the proposal and raises no objection, noting that the visual impact of any such losses will be less than if a single isolated tree were to be removed. However, the Council's Arboricultural Officer does suggest the implementation of tree protection measures for some individual retained trees, such as trees T2 and T3, which can be secured by condition together with details of replacement tree planting as part of the landscaping condition.
- 8.21. Overall, it is considered that the proposal would retain the open character and aspect of the land and would help to preserve the contribution it makes to the setting of Hardingstone village. The potential level of harm to the setting and character of the conservation area through the creation of the trails would be "less than substantial" under the definitions in the NPPF and, in accordance with national planning policy, should be weighed against the wider public benefits. In this instance, it is considered that the benefits, which include retaining and enhancing the recreational use of the land with associated health, well-being and community benefits and the long-term benefits to biodiversity and green infrastructure, outweigh the harm. Therefore, the proposal would have an acceptable impact on the character and appearance of Hardingstone Conservation Area and would not harm the setting of nearby listed buildings.

Archaeology

- 8.22. The application site is located to the south of the A45 and to the north of the A45 is Delapre Park, which comprises the area of the Battle of Northampton (1460), now designated a Registered Battlefield.
- 8.23. The application has been subject to several representations relating to the potential for battlefield archaeology to be present on the site, including from the Battlefield Trust and the Council's Archaeological Advisor. Indeed, the Council's Archaeological Advisor advises that the site is likely to have been peripheral to the battle, thus artefacts could be expected and remains of other periods may also be present where this has not been disturbed by the previous landscaping of the golf course. The proposed development may therefore have a detrimental effect upon surviving sub-surface archaeological remains. However, the Council's Archaeological Advisor details that such effects do not represent an over-riding constraint to development provided that adequate provision is made for the investigation and recording of any remains so affected. As such, subject to a condition to secure such archaeological works, no objections are raised to the proposal on archaeological grounds.

Residential Amenity and Antisocial Behaviour

- 8.24. Saved Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan and the guidance in the NPPF seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.
- 8.25. Concerns have been received regarding the potential for the proposal to give rise to impacts on neighbouring properties and the wider community, including concerns relating to privacy, noise and disturbance/nuisance, security and antisocial behaviour.
- 8.26. The proposed trails and collection areas would all be set in from the boundaries of the site with neighbouring residential properties, with separation distances from dwellings to the collection areas varying from between 26.5m to 59.5m. Furthermore, the collection area and trails located closest to residential properties would generally be on parts of the site that previously comprised active parts of the golf course. In addition, all these areas could presently be used for cycling purposes without the need for planning permission and are close to existing informal trails used by walkers and cyclists on the site. As such, it is considered that the proposal would not generate unacceptable privacy, noise, disturbance/nuisance or security impacts.
- 8.27. In respect of noise and disturbance/nuisance, it must also be noted that the scheme has been reviewed from a noise and activity perspective by Environmental Health and found to be acceptable subject to a condition to secure the implementation of the Construction Environmental Management, which include measures to limit the construction impacts on neighbours such as restrictions on the hours of work.
- 8.28. Turning to antisocial behaviour and security, including the potential for motorised vehicles using the facilities, Northamptonshire Police and Environmental Health have reviewed the application and raise no objections to the open to all nature or the layout of the proposal. Moreover, the local Neighbourhood Policing team are very supportive of the application, advising that the proposal would increase the numbers of people using the area thereby providing more capable guardianship, natural surveillance and legitimate use of the space. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal would offer some benefits to community safety and serve to discourage unauthorised and undesirable uses of the site.
- 8.29. Finally, it should be noted no external lighting is proposed as part of the application and this can be secured by condition.
- 8.30. Overall, therefore, it is considered that objections cannot reasonably be sustained to the proposal on the grounds of privacy, noise and disturbance/nuisance, antisocial behaviour and security.

Parking, Public Rights of Way and Highway Safety

- 8.31. The NPPF seeks to support sustainable forms of transport and in Paragraph 111 advises that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. In addition, Paragraph 100 of the NPPF details that planning decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.

- 8.32. The application site is well connected into the local cycle network, with the site neighboured by cycle route 539 (Norbital - a circular route around the outskirts of Northampton) which runs along Houghton Hill and connects into National Cycle Route 6 such that there is good access to the site by bike from many areas of the town. The connectivity of the site to and use of these cycle routes is welcomed by the Local Highway Authority and accords with the guidance in the NPPF to promote sustainable forms of transport. Furthermore, the proposal for a two-way cycle link between Houghton Hill and the site entrance from the golf club car park is also welcomed by Highways and considered to provide an invaluable link not just for users of the park. As such, whilst the concerns received regarding the proposal increasing the use of the cycle route on Houghton Hill exacerbating conflicts with pedestrian are noted, objections cannot be reasonably raised to this on planning grounds.
- 8.33. The application submissions detail that 40 car parking spaces in the week and 60 car parking spaces at the weekend would be available in the car park at Delapre Golf Course on a prebooked basis. In addition, it is noted that the Transport Statement sets out that at full capacity the site will generate 27 two way trips per hour, with two way trips less during peak hours.
- 8.34. With regards to traffic movements and parking, both the Council's Highway Engineer and National Highways (formerly Highways England) are content that this application will not have an undue impact on the surrounding highway network, noting that that trip generation will be not be significant and many of those will be via bikes, due to the nature and location of the site.
- 8.35. It must be acknowledged that the Council's Highway Engineer notes that should Delapre Golf Club implement parking fees in the car park, then this has the potential to increase some parking in the Back Lane area. However, the Highway Engineer highlights that parking in the golf club will allow access to essential facilities at the golf club and recommends the imposition of a condition to secure cycle parking close to the golf club facilities to further encourage the usage of the car park. A condition is also recommended that full details of the car parking spaces to be provided in the Delapre Golf Club car park are secured by condition. Notwithstanding this, the Highway Engineer acknowledges that it is inevitable that there will be some degree of parking associated with the site in Hardingstone due to its proximity. However, on the basis that the vehicle trip generation would be relatively low, the Highway Engineer considers that the proposed development would not negatively impact upon parking and highway safety in the village.
- 8.36. Turning to the existing public rights of way running across the site, footpaths KN4 and KN5, whilst it would not be reasonable to seek the upgrading of the surfacing of these routes as part of the application, the Highway Engineer advises that a form of barrier at the entrance to footpath KN4, such as a kissing gate arrangement without the gate, should be introduced together with signage on safety grounds to deter cyclists without creating a barrier to legitimate users. In addition, the Highway Engineer advises that the boulder chicanes suggested where the downhill trails cross the footpaths should include a post and rail fence together with sufficient vision splays to provide an acceptably safe environment for all users. These measures can be secured by condition to protect the rights of way.
- 8.37. Overall, subject to conditions, the proposal is considered to promote sustainable forms of transport and no objections are raised on the grounds of parking, highway safety and rights of way.

Other Considerations

- 8.38. The application site is not in Flood Zones 2 or 3 and therefore is at low risk of flooding. However, the application site exceeds 1ha in area and has therefore been accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and details of surface water drainage. The submissions set out that the trails will be constructed of crushed stone such that they will be semi-porous and no formal drainage will be provided with the trails simply edge drained as appropriate such that surface water will continue to drain in a natural manner. The Environment Agency raise no objections to the application. In addition, whilst no consultation response has been received from the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) to the current application, the approach in the FRA was found to be acceptable by the LLFA during pre-application discussions. Therefore, no objections are raised to the application on the grounds of flood risk and surface water drainage.
- 8.39. It is noted that Environmental Health are seeking the provision of electric vehicle charging points in the car park of the golf club. However, as the proposal would not increase the existing parking provision on site and is intended to serve a free for all and not a commercial facility, it is not considered that it is unreasonable or necessary to seek such provisions in this instance.
- 8.40. The representations relating to leases and insurance matters are not material planning considerations
- 8.41. The comments regarding emergency vehicle access and health and safety are noted. However, it must be acknowledged that mountain bike riding can be undertaken on the site without the need for permission and the purpose of the trails is to provide safe maintained routes for cyclists catering for different abilities, with all trails to be graded and signed appropriately and it is recommended that a signage scheme is secured by condition. Furthermore, the proposal would increase the numbers of people using the area thereby providing more capable guardianship and natural surveillance as noted by the Police.

9. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1. The development is not CIL liable.

10. PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

- 10.1. The proposal would support access to and the use of the site for sport and recreation, with associated health, well-being and community benefits and would result in a net increase in the biodiversity value of the site, with a long-term commitment to habitat management to the benefit of green infrastructure. In addition, the scheme would promote sustainable forms of transport and, as part of a part of a balanced assessment would not result in any unacceptable impacts on heritage assets, residential amenity, parking, highway safety, rights of way or flood risk. As such, the development is in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies S1, S10, BN1, BN2, BN3, BN5, BN7, BN9 and RC2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Policies B14 and E20 of the Northampton Local Plan.

11. RECOMMENDATION / CONDITIONS AND REASONS

- 11.1. The proposed development is recommended for approval subject to the following conditions:

Time Limit

(1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Approved Plans

(2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the attached schedule of approved plans.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to accord with the terms of the planning application.

Programme of Archaeological Work

(3) No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This written scheme will include the following components, completion of each of which will trigger the phased discharging of the condition:

- (i) fieldwork in accordance with the agreed written scheme of investigation;
- (ii) post-excavation assessment (to be submitted within six months of the completion of fieldwork, unless otherwise agreed in advance with the Planning Authority);
- (iii) completion of post-excavation analysis, preparation of site archive ready for deposition at a store (Northamptonshire ARC) approved by the Planning Authority, completion of an archive report, and submission of a publication report to be completed within two years of the completion of fieldwork, unless otherwise agreed in advance with the Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded and the results made available, in accordance with Policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Paragraph 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Construction and Environmental Management Plan

(4) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (as amended October 2021).

Reason: To minimise the impact of the development during the construction phase in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

Construction Ecological Management Plan

(5) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained within the submitted Construction Ecological Management Plan reference RT-MME-156069-01 Rev C dated November 2021.

Reason: To safeguard protected species and biodiversity in accordance with Policy BN2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. Pre-commencement condition to ensure that ecological surveys are undertaken before development commences.

Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan

(6) The development shall be implemented and maintained in accordance with the details contained in the submitted Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan reference RT-MME-156069-02 Rev A by Middlemarch Environmental Ltd and dated October 2021

Reason: In the interest of biodiversity and to secure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with the requirements of Policies BN1 and BN2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

Arboricultural Method Statement

(7) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained within the submitted Arboricultural Method Statement (as received on 21 October 2021).

Reason: In the interests of biodiversity and to securing a good standard of development in accordance with Policies BN1, BN2, and BN3 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

Landscape and Ecological Management Plan

(8) Prior to the use of the trails hereby permitted, a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to and be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The content of the LEMP shall include the following.

- a) Description and evaluation of features to be managed.
- b) Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management.
- c) Aims and objectives of management.
- d) Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives.
- e) Prescriptions for management actions.
- f) Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five-year period).
- g) Details of the body or organization responsible for implementation of the plan.
- h) Ongoing monitoring and remedial measures.

The LEMP shall also include details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured by the developer with the management body(ies) responsible for its delivery.

In addition, the plan shall set out (where the results from monitoring show that conservation aims and objectives of the LEMP are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme.

The approved plan will be implemented and maintained thereafter in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interest of biodiversity and to secure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with the requirements of Policies BN1 and BN2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

Soft Landscaping Scheme

(9) Prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted, a detailed scheme of soft landscaping for the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include, where present, the location and species of any existing trees and hedgerows on the land and details of any to be retained and a tree planting method statement including details of tree pits. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the first use of the trails hereby permitted or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner, and which shall be maintained for a period of five years; such maintenance to include the replacement in the current or nearest planting season whichever is the sooner or shrubs that may die are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased with others of similar size and species.

Reason: In the interests of amenity, biodiversity and green infrastructure, and to secure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with Policies S10, BN1 and BN2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Saved Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan.

Informal Pedestrian Routes

(10) Prior to the first use of the trails hereby permitted, full details of informal routes for pedestrians within the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the first use of the trails hereby permitted and retained thereafter.

Reason: To support access to and the use of the site for sport and recreation in accordance with the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Car Parking

(11) Prior to the first use of the trails hereby permitted, full details of the car parking spaces to serve the bike park shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved car parking spaces shall be available prior to the first use of the trails hereby retained and shall be retained thereafter for users of the bike park in the accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development does not prejudice the free flow of traffic or conditions of highway safety in accordance with Policy S10 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

Bicycle Parking

(12) Prior to the first use of the trails hereby permitted, full details of facilities for the parking of bicycles shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved cycle storage shall be provided prior to the first use of the trails hereby permitted and shall be retained thereafter.

Reason: To ensure the provision of adequate facilities and promote sustainable forms of transport in accordance with Policy S10 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Public Right of Way Entrance and Signage

(13) Prior to the first use of the trails hereby permitted, full details of a kissing gate style feature together with appropriate signage to be provided on the entrance to Public Right of Way (KN4) from Back Lane shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The approved feature and signage shall be installed in accordance with the approved details prior to the first use of the trails hereby permitted.

Reason: To protect and enhance the public rights of way and promote sustainable forms of transport in accordance with the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Public Rights of Way Crossing Points

(14) Prior to the construction of all the crossing points of the Public Rights of Ways within the site by the proposed cycle trails hereby permitted as shown on Drawing No. 21-103 (08) 002, full details of all the crossing points shall be submitted to and approved in writing. The development shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details prior to the first use of the crossing points by cycles and thereafter the crossing points shall be retained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To protect and enhance the public rights of way and promote sustainable forms of transport in accordance with the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Cycle Trail Junctions

(15) Prior to the construction of the junctions of the bike trails with the multi-user (green) cycle trail hereby permitted as indicated on Drawing No. 21-103 (08) 002, full details of the design of the junctions shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The development shall be constructed and retained thereafter in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of safety and to promote sustainable forms of transport in accordance with the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.

External Lighting

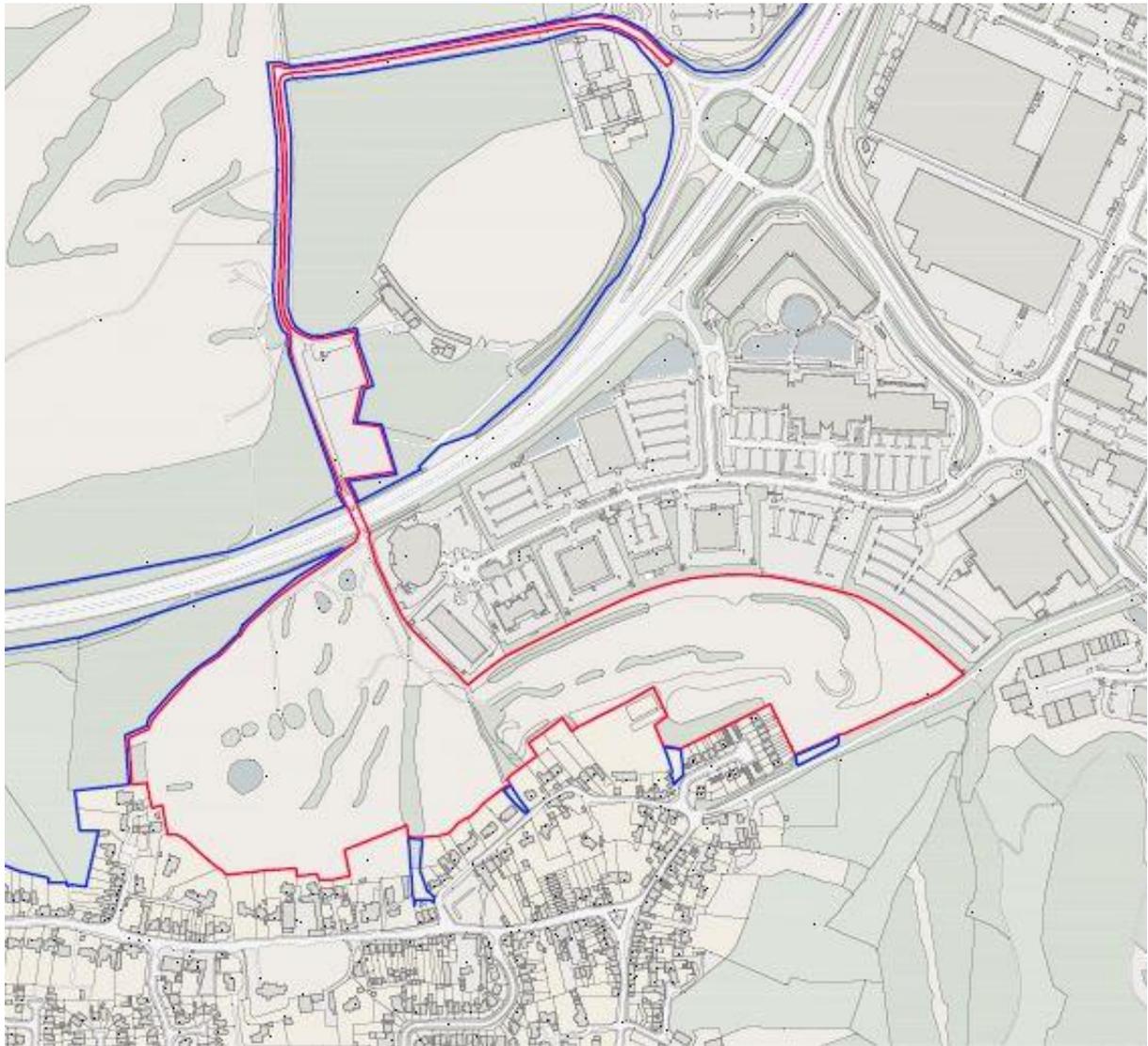
(16) No external lighting shall be installed along the route of the trails hereby permitted as indicated on Drawing No. 21-103 (08) 002

Reason: In the interests of amenity and biodiversity in accordance with Policies S10, BN1 and BN2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Saved Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan.

Signage Scheme

(17) Prior to the first use of the signage hereby permitted, full details of signage to be provided across the site to identify grades, directions, and restrictions/warnings shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved signage shall be installed prior to the first use of the signage hereby permitted and retain thereafter

Reason: In the interests support access to and the use of the site for sport and recreation in accordance with Policy S10 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Title: Houghton Hill

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Date: 18-11-2021

Scale: 1:5,054 @A4

Drawn: M Johnson