

**NORTHAMPTON MEDIEVAL HERITAGE REGENERATION  
PROJECT:  
FRIENDS OF NORTHAMPTON CASTLE**

PROJECT PROPOSAL  
March 2012

# **NORTHAMPTON MEDIEVAL HERITAGE REGENERATION PROJECT**

## **PROJECT PROPOSAL TABLE OF CONTENTS**

		<b>Pages</b>
<b>Section One</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Section Two</b>	<b>Organisational Background</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Section Three</b>	<b>Project development</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Section Four</b>	<b>Strategic Aims and Principles</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Section Five</b>	<b>Project details</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Section Six</b>	<b>Market</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Section Seven</b>	<b>Finance</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Section Eight</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>Castle Ward Boundary</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Appendix B</b>	<b>Medieval Hub Location</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Appendix C</b>	<b>Castle Gardens Planting Plan</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Appendix D</b>	<b>NORTHAMPTON'S RICH MEDIEVAL HERITAGE document</b>	<b>31</b>

## Section One

### Summary

The main aim of the Marefair Heritage-Led Regeneration Project is to revive Marefair in West Northampton, into a thriving, living space that promotes the rich heritage of the town. Marefair lies within Castle Ward, an area which was not only the centre of medieval Northampton but also held a position of national historical importance as the seat of Parliament. Today Marefair is a busy thoroughfare providing access between the train station and town centre, however it is not an area where people stop to spend time; businesses along the street struggle to survive whilst the large office block Castle House has failed to attract tenants and has lain empty for the past few years.

Through this project we plan to inspire civic pride among residents of Northampton and stir the imaginations of visitors through accessible, community-based approaches to preserving and exploring the town's medieval heritage. The numerous points of historic interest along Marefair are ideally suited to developing the street into a historic gateway leading towards the town centre from the train station and from the site of a number of proposed new developments, thus more effectively linking these developments with the traditional town centre. The project will bring together the local community with developers, local businesses and statutory partners in a redevelopment which will increase a sense of local identity, while promoting tourism and enterprise.

The Project encompasses a number of inter-linked initiatives together comprising the development of a Medieval Heritage Hub centred round St Peter's Church, listed as one of the best Parish Churches in the country and the site of developing community interest and activity. Each initiative has stand-alone benefits for Northampton's heritage and for the local community but when taken forward together the impact and social returns will be considerably more powerful. The separate initiatives are to:

- Restore Northampton Castle to public recognition and enjoyment. This will be achieved through community archaeology digs at the green-space beside St Andrews Road, uncovering and preserving the remnants of the Castle buildings which lie under this area and the development of a landscaped medieval garden to replace the unused tarmac car-park on Chalk Lane;
- Replace the vacant Castle House office block with a 'Plaza' to provide a social, cultural and leisure focus to the street, providing opportunities for community micro-enterprises to serve the space and for promotion of the arts through performance and open air exhibition space. The Plaza will be designed and developed to be sympathetic to the stunning medieval architecture of St Peter's Church opposite and is a possible site for the relocation for the extant Castle Postern Gate during redevelopment of Northampton Station;

- Develop Hazelrig House or another venue on Marefair into a Medieval Heritage Resource Centre providing a focus for promotion of Northampton's rich medieval history, educational opportunities and further employment and enterprise.

The Medieval Heritage Hub will provide the following benefits to the town of Northampton and the local community:

- o Greater visibility for Northampton's currently 'hidden' medieval past;
- o Increasing the numbers of local people accessing and enjoying their heritage;
- o An improved sense of place for residents of Castle Ward, one of the more disadvantaged areas of Northampton, leading to less anti-social behaviour in public areas;
- o More volunteering and community involvement opportunities;
- o Links with schools, adult learners, community organisations and further & higher education through a proactive programme of activities and events;
- o Opportunities to promote the performing and visual arts;
- o Opportunities for local social and micro enterprise growth to service the Hub's green-spaces and resource centre;
- o Increased trade for businesses along Marefair;
- o An increased tourism profile and higher numbers of visitors into Northampton.

The regeneration of Marefair is timely given the number of developments at various stages of planning for the adjacent area including:

- Creation of an enterprise zone to the south west from St Peters Way;
- Establishment of a University "innovation centre" on the south of the Black Lion Hill junction;
- Renovation of the railway station including conversion of the site into office and retail space.

There is a need to link these developments with the traditional town centre, but in its current state Marefair is poorly equipped to do this. Any regeneration of this area must be led by the need to preserve and celebrate its heritage. Northampton's CAAP (Central Area Action Plan) states the need to protect the town's historical buildings while the community benefits of heritage led regeneration are well evidenced.

We are proposing that a feasibility study is carried out and a Mairfair Partnership set up to take forward the project. The Partnership should involve NCC, NBC, WNDC, local businesses, local residents, the Castle Partnership, Northampton University, Northampton Arts Collective, the Friends of St Peter's and the Churches Conservation Trust as well as the wider Northampton community. Consultation on the project will itself be an opportunity to raise the profile of Northampton's heritage and involve local citizens in shaping plans to strengthen their own community. The involvement of statutory partners and of WNDC will ensure that the development of the Hub supports Council and County Council strategic priorities and adds value to the redevelopments planned for West Northampton.

The aim is to develop a Heritage Hub that not only boosts the local economy and creates jobs but is sustainable and self-financing through tourism and leisure linked to medieval Northampton and heritage-inspired arts, crafts and culture.

**"Northampton Castle is a historic site of prime importance; it would be tragic if it were to be lost forever. I applaud the work of the Friends of Northampton Castle in lobbying for its excavation and for the regeneration of the area that would surely follow; and I urge everyone to support them in this venture." Alison Weir, Historian.**

## **Section Two**

### **Organisational background**

#### *2.1 Friends of Northampton Castle (FONC)*

The Friends of Northampton Castle is a working group dedicated to making sure that the importance of Northampton's medieval heritage is recognised and celebrated. We hear too often that our Castle has been lost, that nothing remains. In fact there is a great deal of the Castle left under the surface which could be both explored and restored if there was the will to do it. FONC works with Churches Conservation Trust and the Friends of St Peter's Church and together we hope to bring new life to this great period in our local history. The Friends of Northampton Castle hope to develop a membership organisation supporting research, educational and cultural activity around the Castle site.

#### *2.2 Friends of St Peter's*

The Friends of St Peter's is a society dedicated to the preservation and promotion of this early 12<sup>th</sup> century church of outstanding beauty and great historical significance. The Friends was formed in 1995, just before St Peter's ceased to be an Anglican parish church, so that there should be a local organisation devoted to its care, to promote wider knowledge and research, and to encourage greater social use of the Church. The Friends voted at their AGM in July 2011 to amend its objects to include the wider promotion of Northampton's medieval history and the Friends of Northampton Castle presently operate under the umbrella of the Friends of the Church.

#### *2.3 The Churches Conservations Trust (CCT)*

CCT is the national charity protecting historic churches at risk. They have saved over 340 buildings which attract 1.5million visitors a year. Their unique collection of English parish churches includes irreplaceable examples of architecture, archaeology and art from 1,000 years of history. CCT was established by the 1968 Pastoral Measure: Ecclesiastical, Church of England law which is also approved by Parliament. Without them the irreplaceable buildings they look after might have disappeared entirely. Instead many have once again become the focus of active community life. Discussions are underway between CCT and FONC for the joint development of an interpretation centre for the medieval heritage hub.

#### *2.4 Spring Boroughs Residents' Association (SBRA)*

St Peter's Church is located in close proximity to the Spring Boroughs Residential Housing area which is recognised by Central Government as being in the top 5% nationally in terms of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. The population is characterized by low income households with a higher than Northampton and regional average of people from ethnic minority groups and has a high transient population. Springs Boroughs has a high percentage of social housing, and the area also houses a higher than average number of residents with special needs.

The Friends of St Peters work closely with SBRA to ensure the opportunities provided by the Church are inclusive of and respond to need within the local community. The aim of SBRA is to promote, support, develop and improve for the residents of Spring Boroughs their conditions of life, and the safe and quiet enjoyment of their homes, environment, community, common facilities and amenities.

The estate is due to undergo major refurbishment to meet the nationally recognised Decent Homes Standard and development of Marefair would add value to this initiative.

2.5 *The Castle Partnership.* The Partnership made up of local residents and service providers in Castle Ward, brings considerable experience from previous community involvement initiatives upon which we propose to develop. The CASPAR + NR Programme which ran in Castle Ward from 2001 until 2009 aimed to engage the community and influence service providers to improve the local area. Activities run through the programme included:

- Provision of a wide range of services for young people which were praised by local residents and the Police;
- Production of a quarterly magazine for residents providing information on local events, groups and contacts;
- Clean and green initiatives including volunteer led clean up days and the development of an urban garden;
- The 'Am I Bothered' campaign aimed at raising awareness in the local community of neighbours who may be vulnerable;
- The Making Connections project to provide information, advice and guidance to residents, to enable them to take up skills and learning opportunities;
- Numerous other events such as the development of a popular luncheon club for elderly residents, the development of Home Safety Schemes in partnership with the Fire Service, Probation and Children's Centre, and the establishment of a residents' cycling group.

The programme evaluation reported a number of significant outcomes including:

- A drop in crime and anti-social behaviour;
- A rise in community engagement, with Residents Associations established in the four main areas of Castle Ward;
- Residents feeling safer and more satisfied with their locality: a survey of residents showed that 86% were satisfied with their area compared with an average of 57% across Neighbourhood Renewal areas in Northampton as a whole. Other results from the survey indicated that residents in Castle Ward now felt safer than in equivalent areas in the town, and that there was a high appreciation of the environmental work completed by CASPAR+NR.

### *2.6 Experience: partnership working*

The success of a project with as broad a scope as we are proposing is dependent upon good partnership working across sectors. This is something in which we have a proven track record. The CASPAR+NR programme is one example of complex and wide-ranging partnership arrangements between the community, the police, voluntary and statutory agencies. The CASPAR+NR Management Board comprised representatives from the Police, Northampton Borough Council, Northampton County Council, LHA-ASRA, the Primary Care Trust, Local Councillors, and residents drawn from the recognised Residents Associations. A key aim of the programme was to influence the delivery of mainstream services and the CASPAR+NR project provided successful examples in this regard, for example in its work with local Primary Schools to strengthen their contribution to community cohesion.

The Friends of St Peter's Church currently functions in partnership with the Churches Conservation Trust which holds over-arching responsibility for the Church building, necessitating good communication, clear governance and a shared sense of purpose. Between us we have existing partnership working arrangements with the University, Northampton Museum, Northampton Arts Collective and the Old Black Lion pub (who allow us use of their facilities). CCT has recently established links with WNDC. We would welcome the opportunity to strengthen our involvement with statutory agencies and the Development Corporation as well as local businesses.

## Section Three

### Development of Northampton Medieval Heritage Project

#### 3.1 *The Northampton's 'hidden' heritage*

##### 3.1.1 *Heritage Awareness*

Northampton holds a position of considerable historical importance which is widely unknown and which presents a major missed opportunity in terms of regeneration potential. The 2010 Heritage Counts report highlights new research showing that every £1 invested in the historic environment directly contributes on average an additional £1.60 to the local economy over a 10 year period. Set in the context of a major transformational project to the western gateway of the central area of Northampton, Marefair sits as a historic landmark which, with sensitive enhancement, could become a key cultural venue contributing to the regeneration of this important but neglected area of the town.

The 2010 Heritage Counts report research also demonstrated that investment in the historic environment improves public perceptions, increases civic pride and sense of identity. Almost every person surveyed in areas where investment had occurred agreed that investment has raised local pride in the area (92%) and helped to create a distinct sense of place. Heritage is central to community identity and is linked to achieving important social outcomes including:

- enhanced quality of life
- strengthened community identity
- improved self-esteem and self-confidence for individuals
- increased economic development
- greater health & wellbeing
- enhanced educational outcomes through the curriculum for excellence in schools
- increased community cohesion between incomers to the area and families who have lived in Northampton for many generations

“We see preservation of Northampton Castle as vitally important, both in terms of local and national interest. Many of the residents of Spring Boroughs just do not understand how important the castle was in the history of Northampton and the country. I firmly believe any re-creation/re-enactment of the castle would create a brilliant focal point for people of all ages and locations. Medieval History in Northampton is centred on Spring Boroughs! Let’s do

what we can to bring to life this little known aspect of our town and ensure the wider community are informed.” Spring Boroughs Residents’ Association

As part of the CASPAR+NR project a group of young residents made a series of short films documenting Northampton’s “hidden history”. The films explain how Northampton’s heritage had been built over and forgotten. In them the young film-makers interview local residents to find out what they know of the history behind where their homes stand and describe what once stood in the place of modern buildings such as the train station. The films are still available on the internet on YouTube and are continuously accessed by people linked to Northampton who want to find out about its past, including local school teachers, residents and people with family connections to the area.

Comments left by visitors to the web page include the following:

“hey this is cool....always wondered why Northampton had a castle yet no remains or landmarks.....still, dig up the car park and there will be plenty of history to show off!!“

“my dad told me that when he was digging the car park at the train station all u could hear was crunchin’ everywhere u stood, and that when they first discovered the bones they was told 2 keep quiet and just 2 lay over it because they didn’t want the work stopped.”

The people of Northampton want to know about and be proud of their past. Recently a pamphlet was brought out by London Midland encouraging heritage tourism along the rail network. The only historical attraction mentioned for Northampton is 78 Derngate. Given the historical significance of Northampton this speaks volumes about the neglect that our local heritage has suffered.

### *3.1.2 Planning and Development of Castle Ward area*

Those who are familiar with the historical importance of Northampton view planning and development initiatives both past and proposed to constitute an assault on the town’s assets, damaging and concealing what matters to the residents of the town. Despite the rich history of the western part of Northampton, planning and development of the area has ignored and undermined its heritage with what little survives deteriorating through lack of appreciation and understanding.

From the 1930s the area became subject to compulsory purchase orders with a view to slum clearance, interrupted by the war, but also by uncertainty over what to build instead. This led to extensive temporary use of industrial premises and temporary leasing of housing. Some areas were substantially cleared after World War II, notably northwards of St Mary’s Street, where dense housing was replaced by tenement blocks with more open space. Gradually the Victorian terraces were replaced entirely by a variety of well-intentioned but not always successful mini-communities whether low rise or high rise.

In the 1960s the areas immediately north and south of Marefair came in for attention. In 1963 began a series of proposals for the land south of Marefair, initially for a hotel, entertainment complex and shops, and then as offices for solicitors named Inns of Court. This sort of unresolved planning led to uncertainty and temporary use of premises that led to rapid decline in appearance and quality of living. Families were moved out of Freeschool Street and Gregory Street in March 1972, but the houses lay empty for several years, windows boarded up. The planners couldn't decide what to do. Demolition was piecemeal, some areas being cleared and locally developed, and others turned into car parks, or left as rubble deserts to become overgrown rubbish dumps cheek by jowl with new flats and offices. The north side of Marefair was rebuilt in the 1970s as high rise concrete and glass offices, but they were short-lived, largely abandoned by the 1990s, and replaced after 2000 by yet more ugly modern buildings, equally inappropriate and perhaps equally short-lived. The whole area continues to be blighted by planning uncertainty, although there have been local initiatives to strengthen communities and improve appearances.

### *3.1.3 Focus of existing heritage projects*

There is a common interest in expanding attention to Northampton's medieval past shared by other, linked, heritage attractions in the town. Northampton Museum currently has a gallery dedicated to the early origins of the town that links closely with the area around Northampton castle and St Peter's Church. This part of the gallery displays items from the 1960s digs at the castle site and later digs around the area of the church, and includes artefacts such as keys, pottery and fragments of intricately-carved stones. This gallery indicates the importance of the Castle Ward area in Saxon, Norman and Medieval times. However only a small fraction of the artefacts are on display and the Museum's education programme which includes both workshops and outreach does not cover Northampton Castle. Officers at Northampton Museum would welcome the development of a Heritage Resource Centre with capacity to promote this important aspect of local heritage.

Another area of medieval importance in Northampton is Delapre Abbey on the southern entrance to the town. The Friends of Delapre Abbey (FoDA) and NBC are engaged in funding bids for the abbey focused primarily around making the listed building watertight and opening up function rooms. There is a sizeable amount of voluntary work going on in rescuing the walled garden and water gardens within the estate. It is a good example of a community led history project in Northampton and proves the capacity of local people to get behind a heritage activity. With the passage of time it should be possible for a town centre heritage project to work with the group on joint promotions of Northampton's medieval heritage working in a mutually beneficial partnership.

## *3.2 Heritage Enthusiasm*

There is clearly a considerable amount of enthusiasm and interest towards Northampton's heritage as indicated by the number of local history groups and society's active in the town including: Friends of St Peter's Church, Friends of Northampton Castle, Heritage Hunters, St Ragenar's Study Group, and Friends of Delapre Abbey. A Facebook group called Northampton Past has a staggering 1,802 members. CCT and the Friend's of St Peter's worked collaboratively with Northampton Museum on an exhibition about the castle held over the summer 2011 in St Peter's Church. During the two weeks that the exhibition was on visitor numbers to the Church tripled, reflecting the interest that the castle holds.

### *3.3 Development of Northampton Medieval Heritage Project Proposal*

This proposal has been developed in collaboration between a number of local groups with an interest in the regeneration of Marefair through preservation of Northampton's medieval heritage including Spring Boroughs Residents' Association, Northampton Past and The Friends of Northampton Castle working under the joint umbrella of the Friends of St Peter's and the Churches Conservation Trust. It gives voice to a shared and strongly felt emotion that Northampton Castle should be restored to the map.

## **Section Four**

### **Strategic Aims and Principles**

#### *4.1 Strategic aim*

The aim of this proposal is to regenerate Marefair as a mixed-use historic urban quarter using an approach designed to promote the archaeological, architectural and historic character and significance of the area.

#### *4.2 Regeneration Themes*

The proposal has been shaped by identified needs to regenerate Marefair under the following themes:

- Quality of Environment- to improve the quality of the public realm along Marefair and create an attractive environment which promotes confidence in the area.
- Business Development and Enterprise- to support the survival and development of existing businesses and promote the formation of new community-led businesses, thus extending enterprise opportunities to Northampton residents as well as to the incomers attracted through the proposed enterprise zone.
- Re-Development- to secure the use of historic buildings and sites for purposes that are appropriate to and promote rather than detract from and conceal their history.
- Access to Opportunity- to improve training and employment opportunities in Castle Ward.
- Arts, Culture and Tourism- to promote the area as a centre for heritage-inspired arts, culture and tourism.

#### *4.3 Development Principles*

The proposal is underpinned by the following development principles:

- Extend the retail core east from Gold Street;
- Create a leisure/cultural corridor running along Marefair;

- Promote the nearby public transport nodes and related heritage tourist attractions to the east and south of the town centre to act as magnets and increase pedestrian flows and footfall throughout the area;
- Improve the spaces between buildings along Marefair to enhance the attractiveness of the area and bind the various elements of the Heritage Hub together.

#### *4.4 Goals and Outputs*

The success of the regeneration initiative will be measurable according to the following goals and outputs:

- Jobs Created
- Training Weeks
- New Business Start Ups
- Buildings Brought Back into Use Appropriate to their Historical Importance
- Private Investment Attracted

#### *4.5 Local and National Strategic priorities*

This proposal will contribute towards the meeting of a number of NBC strategic priorities. The Central Area Action Plan aims to create a framework for high quality employment, retail, housing, leisure, cultural development and investment and in doing so to “be very careful to protect and enhance the nest of our heritage assets”. The Sustainable Community Strategy describes developing Northampton as a place of “PRIDE” and, as indicated by the level of heritage enthusiasm on the one hand and grievance against insensitive planning and development policies on the other, this could be achieved through investment in preserving the town’s heritage. The proposal meets a number of Corporate Plan objectives including:

- CP4 Helping create a clean, green and safe Northampton through
  - Encouraging community involvement in creating a green and clean town
- CP5 Delivering inviting and enjoyable open spaces through
  - Helping create new and regenerate open spaces for community use
- CP6 Driving the development of a confident, ambitious and successful Northampton through
  - Promoting and supporting the development of a vibrant town centre
  - Supporting sustainable growth for local business
  - Regenerating key sites
  - Developing awareness of the town as a great place to live, visit and work
  - Promoting the town’s heritage, cultural and social opportunities

The NBC Anti-Social Behaviour Policy mentions environmental improvements to deter anti-social behaviour or reducing its likelihood by altering or improving aspects, which this proposal constitutes. The fact that this proposal has been put together by the local community at our instigation and the level of community involvement included throughout will support the key principles of the Council's Community Engagement Strategy, namely to build:

- Strong communities who can form and sustain their own neighbourhoods
- Active communities where people are supported to improve quality of life in their own communities
- Influential communities where all sections of the community feel they have opportunities to be involved in decision-making

On a national strategic level, this proposal fits with central government initiatives aimed at transferring power to local citizens such as Big Society and the Localism Bill.

## Section Five

### Project details

#### 5.1 *Historic Northampton*

##### 5.1.1 *Medieval Heritage*

Heritage is an important asset to explore, conserve and celebrate. Whilst this is true for all communities, the medieval heritage of Northampton is particularly rich and varied and the value of many its heritage assets is recognised in a national context.

The strategic location of Northampton made it desirable territory and following the departure of the Romans, the Saxons and Danes fought for supremacy over the area. Northampton rose to prominence under the Normans who left a legacy of magnificent buildings including several impressive churches and Northampton Castle, built on the site of an existing Saxon wooden stronghold. Interestingly, the castle also doubled up as a trading centre under the Normans and became host to Parliament, in 1131. The city of Northampton continued to prosper in the twelfth century, becoming the third largest town in England. Owing to the town's strong defences and its large Castle (fourth largest in England) many events of historical importance happened here including the trial of Archbishop Thomas Becket at the Castle in 1164. King John visited the Castle 30 times during his reign and spent about £300 on it. In 1205 he moved the Treasury to the Castle. In 1215 John was besieged in the Castle by the Barons for 15 days. Following his surrender negotiations were made which led to the proclamation of Magna Carta. In 1380 Parliament met at the Castle and imposed the Poll Tax that led to the Peasants' Revolt against Richard II and in 1381 the last Parliament was held at the Castle.

##### 5.1.2 *Historical Tourism*

Northamptonshire attracts numerous tourists with an interest in local history, but Northampton does very little to encourage them into the town. American tourists for example, visit Althorp and Sulgrave Manor, but although George Washington's ancestor Lawrence Washington was Mayor of Northampton and Benjamin Franklin's father was born at Ecton, American visitors do not see the town as of historic interest.

The Naseby Battlefield site museum project has now received planning permission and will no doubt attract visitors with an interest in the English civil war and military history. Northampton town centre could benefit from the increased tourism by enhancing the visibility of its role in the civil war and in its most significant battle. As well as the legend that Oliver Cromwell stayed at Hazelrigg House before the battle there is considerable historical evidence that the wounded were tended here. The "sighting" of the Castle and

town walls was, of course the direct result of the townspeople's support for the Commonwealth cause.

Though the project we envisage is centred on Northampton's medieval heritage it offers real opportunities to highlight our role as a town in these later events of huge constitutional and religious significance. It also offers opportunities to engage with people both locally and internationally who want to trace their own family lineage.

## 5.2 *St Peter's Church*

St Peter's Church is one of the few buildings in the town not to have been destroyed by the fire of 1675 and is an outstanding element in the rich heritage of Northampton. It is a Grade 1 listed, 900 year old Norman church, on the site of an earlier Saxon Minster. It was restored in the 1850's by Sir George Gilbert Scott and is one of the finest examples of Norman architecture in England. It stands to the west of Northampton town centre, beside the buried remains of a possible Saxon palace and is a historic remnant of the Saxon settlement of Hamtun. The present church is thought to have been built as a chapel to the major medieval castle. The west window in the tower of St. Peter's Church was a large processional arch in the past and almost certainly used for Royal processions. It is known that both the King and Queen had their own personal chapels in the Castle, but there is no record of a church. Considering its proximity to the Castle it is reasonable to assume that the church was a Royal Church at the time. No doubt such people as Kings Henry I and II and John worshiped here and possibly Thomas Becket.

The interior boasts a glorious collection of outstanding Norman arches carved with foliage, scrollwork, birds and beasts. Other highlights include carved wooden pews and monuments including the bust of William Smith, the father of British geology and an unusual tomb stone which is believed to be that of St Ragener.

The Churches Conservation Trust is currently working on an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. By encompassing the cultural heritage of the area, CCT aims for St Peter's to become an integral part of the tourism offer for Northampton. It is planned to develop the site as a heritage attraction and cultural venue, attracting increased visitor numbers from wider and more diverse groups. It is proposed to encourage community involvement and participation in the rich local heritage of the church and surrounding area through providing learning opportunities such as educational tours, talks and workshops for all ages in inspiring surroundings. The project will highlight the architectural, archaeological, cultural and community relevance of St Peter's and provide recognition of the site as an integral part of Northampton's heritage. Meanwhile, work is being done on promoting interest in the archaeology of the area alongside volunteers from FONC.

## 5.3 *Old Black Lion Pub*

An additional prominent historical feature of Marefair is the Old Black Lion Pub, one of the contenders for the oldest pub in town. Documentary evidence date it back to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century but the proximity to the site of the Castle suggest the presence of some sort of drinking establishment in this location since the Middle Ages. The properties which comprise the current Pub are both Grade II Listed Buildings.

Due to its unfavourable location along Marefair the pub is unable to sustain continuous business despite recent refurbishment and investment. The regeneration of Marefair would certainly encourage business to this historic, pleasant and sizeable establishment.

#### *5.4 Hazelrig House*

Hazelrig House is one of Northampton's oldest buildings. It is a Tudor town house dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and provides a fine example of Elizabethan architecture. It was certainly a prestigious dwelling and would have stood out from the mainly thatch and timber buildings that would have stood around it when it was built. The house was one of the only buildings to escape the Great Fire of Northampton, September 1675. Early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was divided into three separate dwellings, and subsequently (sometime before 1886) reduced in width from 5 gables to the present 3 gables when part was demolished.

The House has been known as Cromwell House owing to the rumour that Oliver Cromwell spent the night there before the Battle of Naseby (June 1645).

Northampton Borough Council acquired Hazelrig House in 1980. It is currently leased out to a children's nursery.

#### *5.4 Proposal*

We are proposing that a feasibility study is carried out to look into the development of a Medieval Heritage Hub centred round St Peter's Church, incorporating the above-mentioned heritage attractions, exposing Castle remains and creating a historic gateway into the town.

##### *5.4.1 Partnership*

A Marefair Partnership will lead the strategic direction of the heritage-led regeneration project, in consultation with local residents and the wider community. The Partnership will involve NCC, NBC, WNDC, local businesses, Spring Boroughs Residents' Association, Northampton University, Northampton Arts Collective, the Friends of St Peter's and the Churches Conservation Trust as well as the wider Northampton community. The development will be as much community as heritage led and consultation and community involvement will be key features of the initiative from the feasibility study through to

operational delivery where community start up enterprises will be involved in carrying out development activities.

#### *5.4.2 Community Archaeology*

It is proposed to restore the extant site of Northampton Castle to public awareness and enjoyment. The area of the surviving Castle remains are largely unknown to local people, or visitors to the Town. Much of the stone remains uncovered during the 1961-65 excavations still lies beneath the soil and grass now covering the site. If these remains were exposed and consolidated with mortar within a lawn a few inches below the present level they would provide a striking exhibit of interest to residents and visitors alike. Such a project could involve volunteers from the community. Plans of the 1961-65 excavations are available and it could be possible to extend the work to involve areas previously unexcavated. By using community volunteers and retired, professional archaeologists, at least one of whom worked on the original dig, labour costs would be minimal. Tools, cement, sand and turf could be supplied by local firms.

Linked to this and building in even wider community involvement, it is proposed to organise and promote a Castle Ward "Big Dig": households within the Ward would be encouraged to excavate a one metre square hole on their property and record and save everything uncovered. The material and features would be examined and interpreted by local archaeologists and printed reports given to the household.

Outcomes for both these initiatives will include community involvement of all ages, local ownership of the heritage, the potential to find new archaeological features and evidence, increased interest in Northampton's heritage and tourism and raising the profile of the Town as an important Saxon/Medieval heritage site. Artefacts discovered through the community archaeology projects will be displayed within the Heritage Resource Centre.

#### *5.4.3 Castle Gardens*

In addition to exposing castle remains it is proposed to plant a landscaped medieval garden to replace the under-used car-park on Chalk Lane. This area has a reputation for anti-social behaviour such as drug dealing, street-working and aggressive begging. The wide open areas of empty tarmac need to be brought into positive community use and aesthetically enhanced in order to promote confidence in Marefair. Plans for a Castle Garden have been drawn up by a qualified landscape architect with knowledge of medieval planting.

The creation of a medieval garden will build on the Clean and Green work of the CASPAR+NR project by involving local residents in the upkeep of the area and provide opportunities for community enterprise start-ups to take over the maintenance of the Gardens. Community involvement and benefits from the redevelopment of the Chalk Lane car-park into attractive Castle Gardens will encourage greater respect for the area and lessen anti-social behaviour.

The Gardens will not only grow medieval plants and vegetables but also provide information about medieval gardening and diet both on-site and through the Heritage Resource Centre on Marefair. Medieval recipes will be prepared from the produce and will be on sale alongside medieval cooking classes through the Heritage Centre thus creating income generation to sustain the Heritage Hub. This will provide an added educational attraction for which Northampton Castle can become known. The enterprise will moreover be community led and utilise the cooking skills which the CASPAR+NR project discovered among residents of Spring Boroughs.

#### *5.4.4 Castle Plaza*

Castle House has no architectural value, has been empty for a long time and represents a poor addition to the route from the Railway Station to the Town Centre. If this building was demolished it would not only enhance the view of St. Peter's Church, but if converted into a Plaza with seats and trees it would also allow one to view most of the important heritage features in the immediate area. Our vision is for a "scoop" built into the plaza providing an accessible amphitheatre style area similar to that outside City Hall in London but in local materials. The area could be used for open air performance and exhibition space, thus encouraging people to stop and spend time on Marefair instead of simply quickly passing through it between the town and the station. This would encourage business and also provide opportunities for enterprises to service the area with refreshments, particularly in the warmer weather. The Plaza will be designed and developed to be sympathetic to the medieval architecture of St Peter's Church opposite and is a possible site for the relocation for the extant Castle Postern Gate during possible redevelopment of Northampton Station.

#### *5.4.5 Medieval Heritage Resource Centre*

It is proposed to bring buildings on Marefair back into a use appropriate to their historical and architectural significance in Northampton. A Heritage Resource Centre will provide facilities meeting educational, social and leisure needs for residents of and visitors to the town, including:

- Interpretation boards explaining the history of the area and Castle lay-out
- Space to display the artefacts stored at Northampton Museum relating to Northampton Castle not currently on display
- A facility to profile new research into medieval Northampton. At present Northampton, although of great historical importance, is largely missing from the historical record because of a lack of investment in profiling the town's history.

- Space for temporary exhibitions exploring the importance of diversity within Northampton's history including the town's significant Jewish past and working with the Northampton Black History Group
- A facility for researching family history and genealogy which is increasingly gaining in interest
- Meeting space for the plethora of local heritage groups
- A base for a programme of heritage volunteer activities led by local historians to collect and analyse local historical evidence
- Venue for talks and lectures on medieval Northampton
- A medieval gift shop and café

The Resource Centre will be staffed through an enterprise initiative aimed at providing training and employment opportunities for local people currently out of work, building on the volunteer programme that has been developed at St Peter's Church.

## **Section Six**

### **Target market**

#### *6.1 Main target market*

The main target market for the Medieval Heritage Hub will be the general population of Northamptonshire which stands at around 683,800 and which is growing: Northamptonshire was officially the second fastest growing county over the 5 years from 2004-2009.

#### *6.2 Additional target markets*

As well as attracting a cross-section of the general public for leisure purposes, the Heritage Hub will be a focus for lifelong learning and will be an important resource for both the formal education sector and informal learning linked to projects, membership of local heritage organisations and individual interests. The outreach work of the Hub will target particular sections of the local population including teenagers, older people, disabled people, ethnic minority communities, people without cars and unemployed people. A further significant market will be tourists including visitors to Northamptonshire with a general interest in heritage and those for whom the resource centre will be a particular draw (e.g. genealogists, historians, academics).

#### *6.3 Inclusion*

The aim of the project is to be as inclusive as possible and encourage those who have not been actively involved to participate in and enjoy their heritage. Groups that might not traditionally make use of the facilities will be targeted and links will be made between different groups to encourage cross-generational work and incomer/establishment community interaction and exchange. Target groups will include:

- Those who have recently settled in Northampton including economic migrants
- Young people aged 16-25 including youngsters not in education, employment or training in line with the Council's NEET strategy
- Families with young children including single parent families
- School population
- Older people
- Volunteers

- Northampton residents in the CDE social category
- Tourists

## **Section Seven**

### **Finance**

#### *7.1 Funding the project*

The proposed development of an Enterprise Zone and Innovation Centre will bring investment to Northampton. Local residents view the development as an assault on the historical character of Northampton which they already consider to have been the victim of neglect in the planning and development the town. It is proposed to use investment from the Enterprise Zone and other proposed developments to finance capital works and start-up costs for the creation of a Medieval Heritage Hub and regeneration of Marefair. This will demonstrate a commitment to the welfare of the local community and to the preservation of Northampton's heritage while boosting the local economy and creating employment and enterprise opportunities. A feasibility study will identify additional sources of external funding in addition. Support for the development of local enterprise is a key objective of this initiative and linking with Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership the study will propose the development of a programme to support local entrepreneurs to set up their own independent micro-businesses to serve the commercial opportunities presented by the project. The programme will sign-post to existing support, advice and financial assistance.

#### *7.2 Business planning*

A feasibility study and business plan for the project now need to be carried out to calculate the start up, capital and on-going running costs for each separate element within the Hub. The study will also identify income generation and funding opportunities and establish how the Hub can become self-sustaining through provision of tourism, leisure and educational facilities.

## Section Eight

### Next Steps

#### *8.1 Feasibility study*

Volunteers have worked hard to develop this proposal in consultation with local residents and community members. In order to progress our ideas a feasibility study is needed to work out details including the full cost of the proposal, potential sources of funding for the development, income and expenditure for the on-going running of the Medieval Heritage Hub and governance and management arrangements.

There is wide community support for this proposal which is seen as a development led by and for the people of Northampton. It is therefore imperative that there is good community involvement throughout and informing each stage of the feasibility study.

In order to ensure the project achieves its social and economic aims to maximum effect, it needs to be tailored around the community it is designed to serve, taking account of the particular skills and interests that exist within the local community and which can be utilised and celebrated within the shaping of the initiative.

The study will also need to consider links with related initiatives that do not fit strictly within the scope of the Medieval Heritage Hub, for example any development of Northampton station will be of relevance given its location over a significant portion of the castle site.

#### *8.2 Feasibility Study Scope*

The scope of the study will include:

- Identifying good practice examples of heritage and culture led regeneration including the established practice of developing of Heritage Resource Centres in areas of historic importance in Scotland
- Identifying gaps in existing heritage and culture led regeneration that we can seek to address through this project with University linkages
- Mapping the full range of current heritage initiatives in Northamptonshire and establishing their relationship to the project, ensuring complementary involvement and avoiding any duplication
- Linking with the cultural sector in Northampton to scope the cultural potential for this project

- Working with Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership and enterprise partners to develop a micro-enterprise programme proposal linked to the development of the Medieval Heritage Hub
- Making links with local businesses, ensuring the project fits with their interests and identifying routes for continued partnership working and joint involvement
- Establishing effective, accessible channels for community involvement at every level of the project (see below)

### *8.3 Feasibility Study Contents*

- 1) Detailed description of each of the separate elements of the Hub including:
  - plans and drawings
  - list of partners and description of their involvement
  - start up costs to build/develop
  - external funding opportunities
  - assessment of enterprise opportunities
  - ongoing running costs against estimated income generation.
- 2) Overall budget showing how much is needed for the development of the entire Hub.
- 3) Governance and management arrangements:
  - how a partnership would work and who would be involved
  - how the development will be managed
  - who will be responsible for the ongoing management of the Heritage Hub
- 4) Monitoring and Evaluation – how we will record and demonstrate the positive outcomes that the project achieves. Heritage and culture-led regeneration and ways to measure their social and economic benefits are areas of current academic interest. The feasibility study would identify how the project can link with university research to profile the achievements of the project and influence planning and regeneration across the country.

### *8.3 Community Involvement*

Community involvement to be achieved throughout the feasibility study process through:

- Ongoing monthly Friends of Northampton Castle meetings
- Website and Facebook page with links to related websites including Northampton Past
- Sustained outreach to local heritage groups and residents associations to seek input and update on developments
- Series of themed stakeholder focus groups bringing together individuals and organisations with an interest in particular aspects of the Hub, eg gardening/art and culture/heritage resources/archaeology
- Youth involvement initiative to ensure the voices of local disadvantaged young people are included in the development of the project
- Regular meetings of a steering group for the project to comprise representation from the heritage organisations behind the proposal, statutory partners, local businesses and community groups
- Support from popular figures to encourage interest in the initiative, for example Alison Weir, as well as more local personalities.
- Information and events will be tailored to respective audiences in recognition of the wide ranging interests in this project. Accessibility issues will be considered and information will be available to meet the needs of heritage academics on the one hand and lay members of the community on the other. Inclusion and access are key principles underpinning our vision for the Heritage Hub and would be applied to the process of consultation as much as to the vision we are working towards.

### *8.4 Financing the feasibility study*

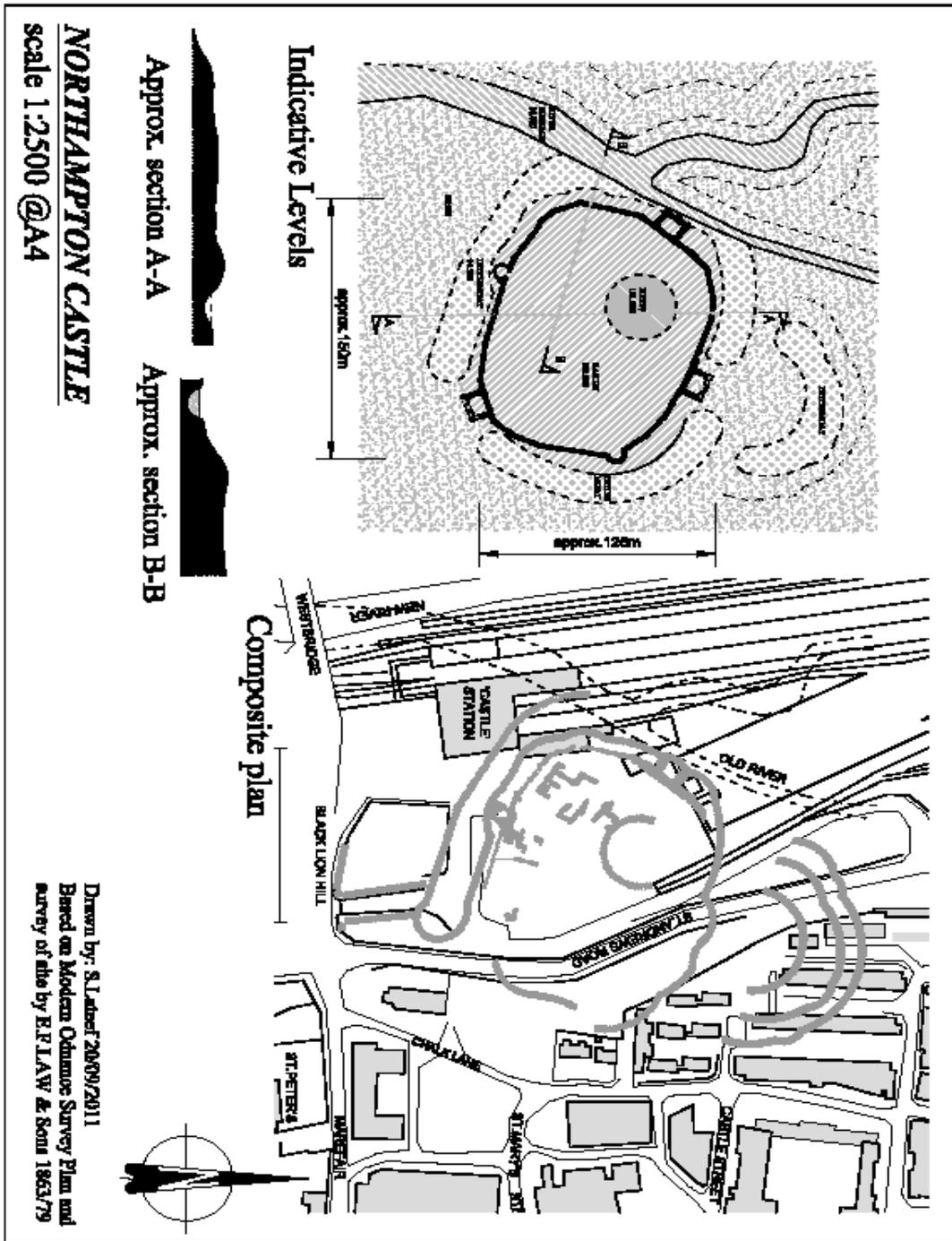
A detailed feasibility study will ensure that the project is viable and is planned to maximise its outcomes within an economically efficient framework. We are unfortunately not in a position to resource the study ourselves and we are therefore calling upon stakeholders and statutory partners to demonstrate goodwill by supporting this next stage. The costs involved are very low, affordable even in these austere times, as we show below.

Feasibility Study Budget – 6 month project

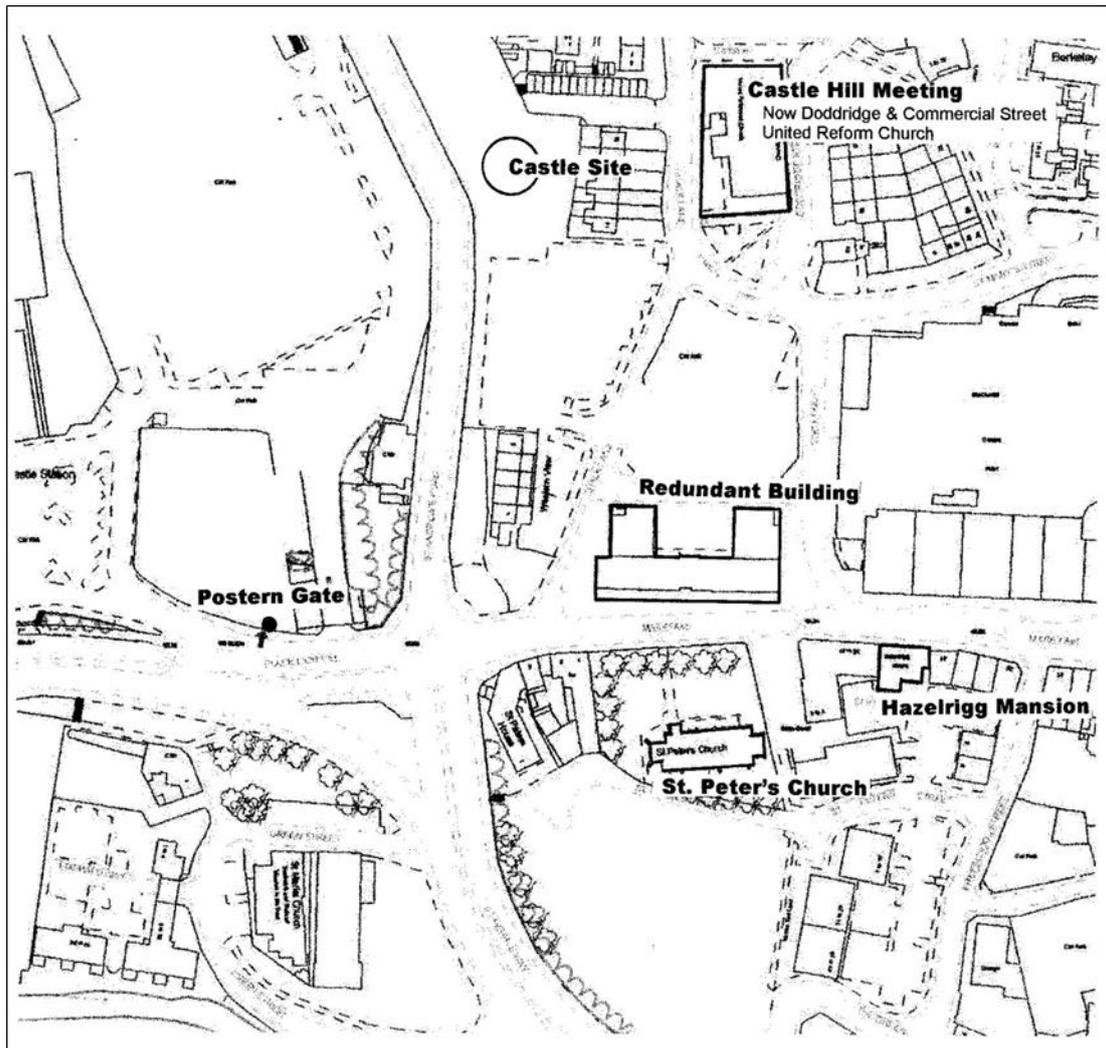
Consultant	7500
Steering group meetings/focus groups (venue hire, travel...etc)	500
Youth involvement activities	2000
Materials and stationery	500
Total	10,500

The Costs of losing this great opportunity for Northampton to recover its lost Castle and its town pride are enormous.

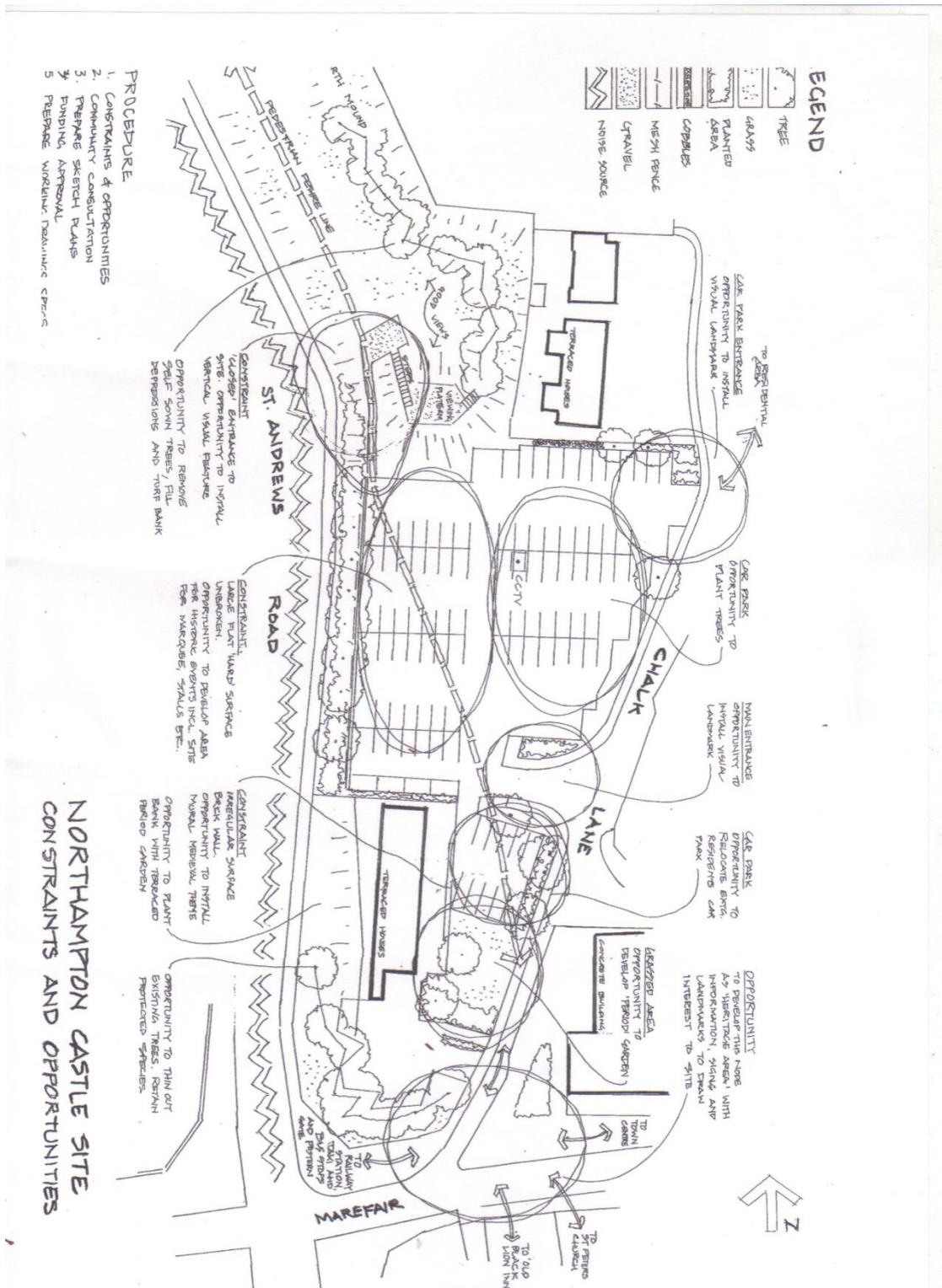
Appendix A: Castle Ward Boundary



Appendix B: Medieval Hub location



# Appendix C: Castle Garden Plans



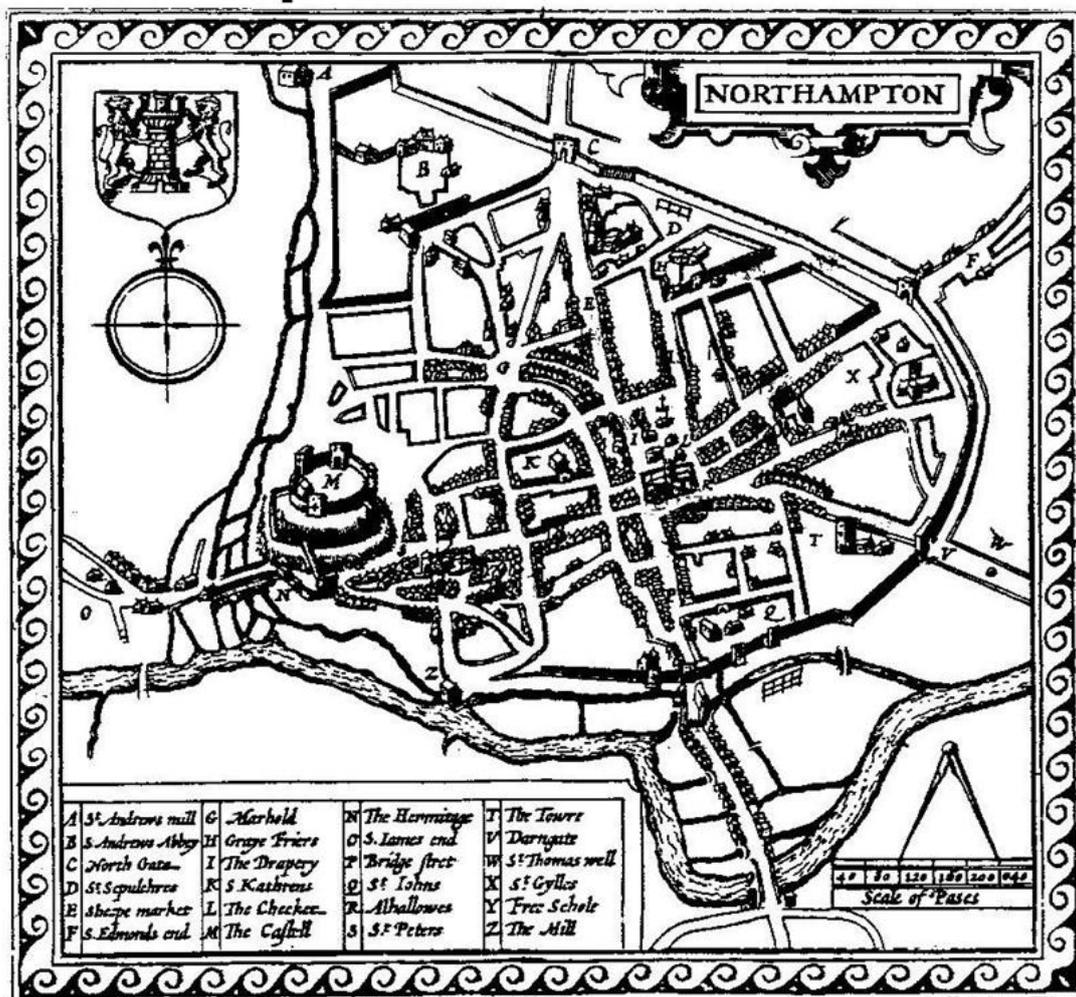
## Appendix D: NORTHAMPTON'S RICH MEDIEVAL HERITAGE.

Area/Context:

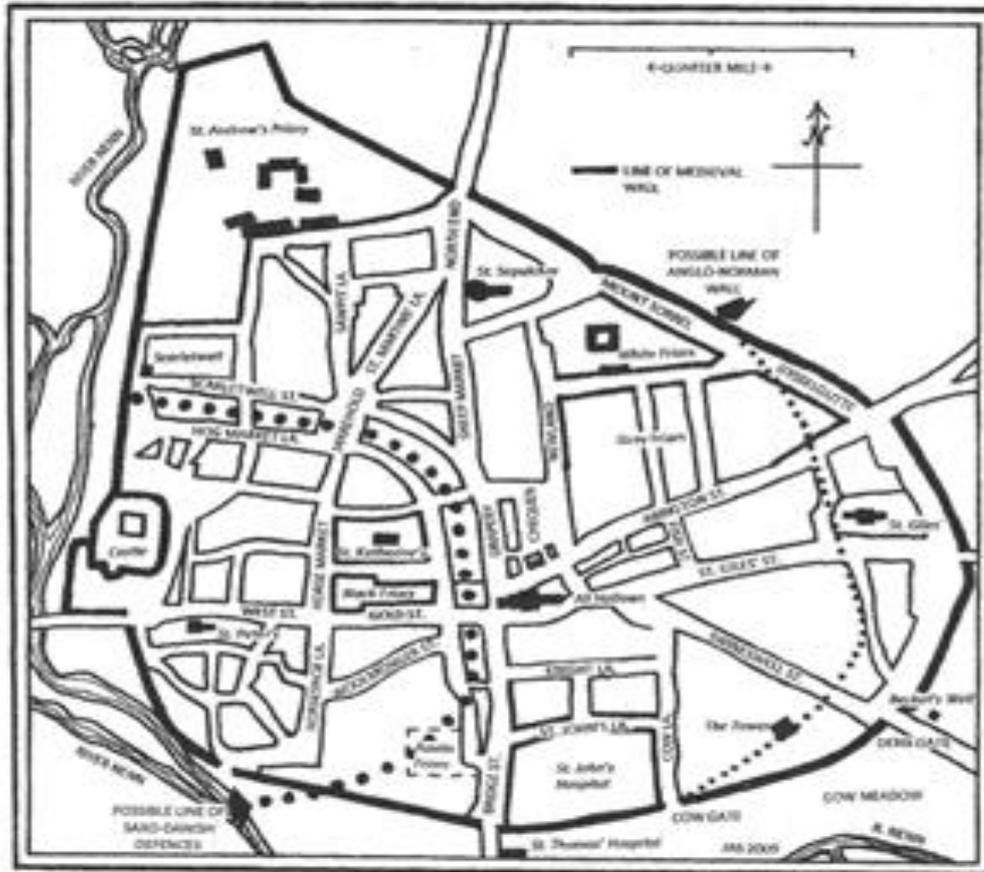
This document is primarily concerned with the future of the Castle, but to put it into context we need to define the Town for the purpose of this account.

Alderman Frank Lee published in 1954 a theory as to the development of Northampton that has, where it has been tested by archaeology proved to be basically correct. He thought that the Town's development could still be seen in the street plan.<sup>1</sup> This can be shown by reference to Speed's Map of 1610, the earliest map of the Town along with an explanatory map for comparison (Maps 1 and 2).

Map 1, Speed 1610



Map 2, Northampton Medieval Town evolution.



For the purpose of this account 'Town' refers to the area of the Medieval and Saxon Town shown on the two maps above.

Standing structures:

Over the years much of the old Town has been lost – not the least through the Great Fire of 1675 that destroyed more than half the Town and the rapid expansion of Northampton in the latter half of the 19th century.

We have four surviving ancient churches: -

- Holy Sepulchre (St. Sep's) c1100
- St. Peter's c1160
- St. Giles early 12th century
- All Saints; base of tower c12 century (the rest dates from after the great Fire 1675)

We also have two secular buildings of age.

- St John's Hospital founded around 1138 part of which survives and is now the Church Restaurant in Bridge Street.

- Hazelrigg Mansion, Elizabethan, of which three bays out of the original five survive is located a few yards east of St. Peter's Church.

Near to both Hazelrigg Mansion and St. Peter's Church are the surviving remains of the Castle, although these are not a standing structure they could become more prominent in the future, see below. There are many other important sites within the Town, but nothing above ground, some of which have been given signs e.g. Site of St Andrew's Priory, Grafton Street.

#### Events and Persons:

The Castle became Royal in 1154 and so did the Town (Borough) as attested on our Town arms that still bear the two Royal lions. Because of its strong defences and large Castle (fourth largest in England) many events of historical importance happened here. Some of the ones associated with the Castle are: -

- 1122 Henry I celebrated Easter at the Castle.
- 1157 Henry II held a great Council here.
- 1164 Trial of Archbishop Thomas Becket at the Castle.
- 1174 King received William the Lion, King of Scotland as a prisoner at the Castle
- 1176 Henry II held a Great Council here. Between 1142 and 1176 there had been 6 Royal visits.
- 1177 Royal repairs and alterations to the Castle and again in 1185.
- 1199 – 1216 Reign of John.  
King John visited the Castle 30 times during his reign and spent about £300 on it.
- 1205 King John moved the Treasury to the Castle.
- 1215 Castle besieged by the Barons for 15 days, gave up.  
Negotiations between King John and the Bishops and Barons led to the proclamation Of Magna Carta. Local Jewish population sought refuge in the Castle during the siege.
- 1215 At the signing of the Magna Charta Northampton was one of the four Royal Castles given up by John.
- 1264 Second Barons War, Castle held by Simon de Montford. King Henry III captured the Castle.
- 1328 The Treaty of Northampton. Edward III gave up his right to the overlordship of Scotland.
- 1380 Parliament met at the Castle and imposed the Poll Tax that led to the Peasants' Revolt.
- 1381 The last Parliament held at the Castle.
- 1460 Henry VI stayed at the Castle the night before the Battle of Northampton. Henry lost and was captured by the Earl of Warwick.
- 1662 Charles II orders the Castle and Town walls slighted, i.e. made useless for defence, because of our support of Parliament during

the Civil War.

“His Majesty is content yt so much of it should remain as is necessary for ye shelter of ye Justices in ye Bench.”

Only “part of the Castle walls” were pulled down, and the remains continued as the Court and Gaol.

1675 Castle ceases to be the County Gaol and the new Sessions House built in George Row 1676 (result of The Great Fire 1675).

1813 The Crown ceased to own the Castle when some 13 lots went on sale.

1852 Part of the Castle site was brought by the London & North West Railway Co with the line to Market Harborough opened in 1859.

1861 Robert Haselrig sold the rest of the Castle he owned to Samuel Walker who later sold it to the L&NW Railway Co.

1863 E. F. Law & Son surveyed Castle.

1870 (circa) Number of photographs taken of the Castle remains

1876 L&NWR bought the rest of the Castle and despite local petitions for its preservation development went ahead.

1879 Demolition of most of the Castle to build Castle Station.

Recovery of Postern Gate; re-built into station boundary wall.

1879 Photographs of the demolition taken. Further surveys of features uncovered by Law and Sir Henry Dryden. Many finds eventually deposited in Northampton Museum.

1960s Archaeological excavations (1961-65) of part of the Castle remaining in the eastern portion. Later NDC carried out further work in the area.

The alternative name for Hazelrigg Mansion is “Cromwell House” – he is supposed to have slept here the night before the Battle of Naseby, this is unlikely because of the distance involved, but he may have stayed here as the Town supported Parliament.

The west window in the tower of St. Peter’s Church was a large processional arch in the past and almost certainly used for Royal processions. It is known that both the King and Queen had their own personal chapels in the Castle, but there is no record of a church. Considering its proximity to the Castle it is reasonable to assume that the church was a Royal Church at the time. No doubt such people as Kings Henry I and II and John worshiped here and possibly Thomas Becket.

Archaeological potential:

Excavations in the past attest to the heritage buried beneath our feet including the Castle demolition in 1879 and the partial excavation of the surviving eastern part 1961-65, also the work by Northampton Development Corporation Archaeological Unit in the 1970s and ongoing investigations since. Recent work by Marcus Roberts and J Trails has located evidence of the Medieval Synagogue and the Jewish burial ground. Three sites are likely to be developed in the near future. The Railway Station

is to be rebuilt, giving an opportunity to investigate the remains of the Castle under the yards adjacent to the Station along with a chance to extract cores from the old river bed diverted for the station in 1879. These will provide valuable environmental information about Northampton's past.

The Fishmarket site will probably supply us with information about our Medieval Synagogue of potentially international importance and material from the Saxon Town ditch which runs through the site, with more environmental information.

Tanner Street may provide more evidence of the nature of the Saxon and Medieval Town defences in that part of Town and possible insights into the Town Mill.

Opportunities:

Investigating the Railway Station will provide good publicity not only for the Town, but also for Railtrack and give them material for a theme that is sure to attract tourists. Residents are in favour of renaming the station "Northampton Castle Station" which would also help.

The site of the eastern part of the Castle partially excavated in the 1960s could be exposed by lowering the soil level and cementing the surviving walls, ovens &c. together and grassing between, giving the public a chance to appreciate at least some of our Castle and a chance to stand in the eastern part of the Great Hall where Tomas Becket was tried!

All this would add greatly to the interest and status of the Western Gateway into Northampton.

The Synagogue probably lies off Sheep Street, or if not, on the corner of Bradshaw Street and Silver Street. In either case the 'Bus Interchange development would be an opportunity to preserve any substantial remains beneath the site so they could be viewed by visitors, similar to the sort of thing at York.

The Medieval Jewish burial ground will, we hope, in the future be marked by a memorial, again an attraction for visitors to the Town.

Sanaa Lateef and myself of the Friends of Northampton Castle are at the moment working on a virtual model of the Castle around 1300. When this is completed we hope to put it on the Internet for people to explore.

These ideas along with others such as the Boot & Shoe Quarter will assist in bringing Northampton to the attention of more people and help to realise the rich past of our town.

References:

1. Lee, Frank 1954 A New Theory of the Origins and Early Growth of Northampton. Archaeological Journal Vol. CX, Royal Archaeological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.
2. Giggins B. 1999: Northampton's Forgotten Castle – An overview of the extent to which the archaeological and historic documentation can re-create the structure, development and function of this once famous Royal fortress. Unpublished MA Dissertation, School of Archaeological Studies, University of Leicester.
3. See J Trails at [jtrails.org.uk](http://jtrails.org.uk).
4. Quote from 'The Ruins of the Old Castle Northampton' Association of Architectural Societies Reports and Papers 15. Law E. 1879-80.  
"The excavations were commenced on the western side of the site, and have been carried down to a depth required to form the plateau of the new railway station. This plateau is within a few inches of the bottom of the footings of the old wall, greater part of which is now removed." (My italics).  
"The old wall" referred to here is probably the substantial, buttressed wall to the north-west which included the recovered Postern Gate and featured in so many of the old photographs. What is clear is that some of the Castle does remain beneath the site of the present station and car-park.

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November 2011

