

PLANNING & HERITAGE STATEMENT

PLANNING APPLICATION FOR RETENTION OF THE
CHANGE OF USE OF STABLES TO STABLES AND
KENNELS LAND AT TOWCESTER RACE COURSE,
LONDON ROAD, NORTHAMPTON NN12 6LB



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Planning Statement is prepared by Aida McManus of AM Planning Consultants Limited on behalf of our client Mr F Hesketh (the `applicant`). I hold an Honours degree in law, a Master's degree in Town Planning, an Enforcement Certificate from Cambridge University and am a Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (MRTPI) and National Association of Planning Enforcement (NAPE). I am the Managing Director of AM Planning Consultants Limited, and have over 20 years' experience in planning, within both local authorities and in private practice
- 1.2. The detailed planning permission is for the retention of a change of use of the stables to mixed use as stables and kennels.

2. Background

- 2.1. The applicant was unaware that a change of use of the stables to a mixture of stables and kennels would be require due to the fact that there were no external alterations to the stables, and both uses are for the housing of animals. This application has been delayed due to the Covid restrictions and staff being furloughed until such time as operations are back to normal and the architect could visit the site.
- 2.2. During this period the owners allowed mobile testing units to be sited and used by the general public on the site to assist in establish a healthy future for the community.
- 2.3. However, they have now resumed operations of the site and wish to regularise the situation.

3. Planning History

- 3.1. There is an extensive planning history for the site, and I have set out the relevant applications which relate to the use of the site for greyhound racing in the table below.

Application ref. no.	Proposal	Decision
S/2011/1219/MAF	Construction of greyhound race track & associated infrastructure	Approved 28.02.12
S/2012/0544/MAF	Variation of condition 12 and 14 of S/2011/1219/MAF to allow use of the approved race track & lighting for greyhound racing up to three times in a calendar week	Approved 27.07.12

	between the hours of 18:00 to 23:30, at least one of which will be Saturday)	
S/2014/2025/MAF	Variation of conditions 12 &14 S/2012/0544/MAF to allow use of the approved greyhound race track and associated lighting for racing up to three times in any calendar week (at least one of which will be Saturday) between the hours of 6:00pm to 11:30pm to between the hours of 10:30am and 11:30pm	Approved 19.01.15
S/2015/0032/MAF	Non material amendment to S/2011/1219/MAF (Construction of greyhound race track and associated infrastructure) The inclusion of Astroturf pathways across the middle of the track, inclusion of concrete pads and the relocation of a television.	Approved 05.02.15
S/2015/3020/MAF	Variation of Condition 10 (Hours and frequency of operations to planning permission S/2014/2025/MAF (Greyhound race track) to increase the number of meets to up to four times in any calendar week (at least one of which will be Saturday)	Approved 04.05.2016
S/2015/3063/MAF	Variation of condition 2 (plans) of approved application S/2011/1219/MAF (Construction of greyhound race track and associated infrastructure) to regularise the 2no. lighting columns which have been erected and to regularise the luminaires implemented (Retrospective)	Approved 23.12.15
S/2016/1800/MAF	Variation of Condition 8 (hours and frequency of operations) to planning permission S/2015/3020/MAF (Greyhound Race Track) to alter hours from 10:30am to 9:00 am	Approved 16.09.16
WNS/2021/1983/MAF	Variation of condition 1 (plans) of S/2016/1800/MAF To narrow the track by 1m (retrospective)	Approved 8.02.22

3.2. From the above information it is established that the greyhound race track can operate between the hours of 9.00am and 11.30 pm holding meets up to four times in any calendar week (at least one of which will be Saturday).

4. Application Submission Documents

4.1. The following documents accompany this application:

- Planning & Heritage Statement
 - Location and Site Plan Drawing No. 21-046-101
 - Existing Stables and Kennel Floor Plan Drawing No. 21-046-102
 - Existing External Stable and Kennel Elevation Plan Drawing No. 21-046-103
 - Existing Internal Stable and Kennel Elevation Plan Drawing No. 21-046-104

5. The Site and Surrounding Area

- 5.1. The application site comprises Towcester greyhound Racecourse which is set within the Grade II* Historic Park and Garden of Easton Neston House. Easton Neston House is located in the central-northern part of its park, with the main greyhound racecourse occupying approximately the southern third of the park
- 5.2. Access into the site is via three entrances, two from the A5 and the third from the Shutlanger Road in Heathencote. The site is bounded by the A5 to the south-west, Heathencote and surrounding farmland to the south-east with the formal gardens of Easton Neston house to the north. The main area of car parking is located at the north-eastern corner of the site close to the access from the Shutlanger Road. The approved greyhound racing track is located in the southern corner of the horse racing track.
- 5.2. The stable and kennel buildings are located to the north of London Road (A5) and comprise of a large external building with a clock tower on the northern corner and two further buildings inside of the internal yard area.
- 5.3. The Environmental Agency data shows that the site is within Flood Zone 1, which has a low probability of flooding.

6. The Proposal

- 6.1. The proposal is to change the use of the stables to a mixed use of stable and kennels. This is to allow flexibility in the operations of the site for both horse racing and grey hound racing.
- 6.2. No external alterations are proposed or have been undertaken to the buildings.

7. Planning Policy Framework

7.1. In preparing this Planning & Heritage Statement reference is made to the following national and local planning policies:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2021)
- West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) Dec 2014
- South Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2 2011-2029

8. National Planning Policy Framework

8.1. The National Planning Policy Framework was revised and published in July 2021 (NPPF) and replaces the original version of the NPPF, it came into effect immediately and it is a material consideration when determining planning applications. The following chapters and paragraphs are considered to be relevant to the consideration of this application and the approach authorities should take in respect to decision taking.

8.2. Paragraph 11. advises that at the heart of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means approving development proposal that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; and where there is no relevant development plan or the policies are out-of-date planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts in doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the framework are taken as a whole.

8.3. Paragraph 47 requires that planning application be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material consideration indicates otherwise within statutory timescale unless a longer period has been agreed.

8.4. Chapter 6 Building a strong, competitive economy supports the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business whilst taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development to encourage inward investment and address any potential barriers.

8.5. Chapter 8 promotes a healthy and safe community and should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other by achieving safe and accessible places, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion. Furthermore, to enable and support healthy lifestyles,

especially where this would address an identified local health and well-being need.

- 8.6. Chapter 9 promotes sustainable transport and takes into consideration that opportunities to maximise transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas when making planning decisions and policies.
- 8.7. Chapter 11 promotes and support the most efficient and effective reuse of land and buildings especially where they are for community services and would secure an alternative use.
- 8.8. Chapter 12 sets out the importance of well-designed places. Specifically, para. 126 encourages the creation of high-quality buildings which creates better places in which to live and work. Whilst para. 130 requires that decisions should ensure that development functions well and adds to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive, are sympathetic to the local character and history, are sympathetic to the local character and materials, along with optimising the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain appropriate development.
- 8.9. Chapter 15 supports the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment through the provision of biodiversity gain.
- 8.10. Chapter 16 supported the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.

9. NPPF and Development Rational

- 9.1. The proposal satisfies the requirements of the NPPF when read as a whole, and enables the applicant to provide safe and secure care for the greyhounds and horses whilst providing inward investment and local employment opportunities.
- 9.2. The proposal delivers sustainable development through:
 1. Building a strong, competitive economy by providing continued employment to the staff that care for the animals and maintain the site which enhances the local economy.
 2. Enable this recreation and leisure development to change and expand with market demand where the applicant's emphasis is to encouraging the local community to actively participate in events at the site thereby improving their physical and mental wellbeing.

3. Supporting a prosperous economy by employing local people to maintain and operate the facilities.
4. Encourage additional inward investment through the continued viable use of the site which brings additional income into the area to contribute to the local economy through the use of local facilities and services.
5. Promoting sustainable transport through the avoidance of bring the greyhounds on to and off the site and ensuring the feed, bedding etc is sourced locally. This also reduces stress to the animals and reduces the carbon footprint of the business.
6. Requiring good design through the reuse of the existing buildings without having to implement any external alterations to the building to ensure that there is no effect on the significance of the heritage assets.
7. Promoting healthy communities by encouraging local people, families and friends to participate in the racing and leisure activities held at the site. This will also enhance the community spirit in the area and encourage social inclusion and interaction of people of all abilities and backgrounds.
8. The stables had almost become redundant due to the change in use of the facility from horse racing to greyhound racing. Therefore, the reuse of the stables for the mixed use of stabling and kennelling of the greyhounds has avoided these buildings becoming redundant and disused.
9. Staff have been employed to take care of the greyhounds whilst they are in the kennels, feed is sourced locally to reduce the carbon footprint of the business.
10. Due to the provision of the kennels on site this has reduced the level of vehicle movements bring them onto and off the site. This for the greyhounds reduces their stress and ensure that they are continuously cared for in a suitable environment.
11. The social interaction between the owners and the visitors of the events has enhanced the community involvement in the support, employment and maintenance of the site.
12. The proposal will continue to secure the long-term viable use of the site.
13. This proposal accords with the NPPF when considered as a whole, and does not have any significant adverse impact which would demonstrably outweigh the benefits of granting planning permission.

10. West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan December 2014

- 10.1. This section of the document will address the relevant policies contained within the above document.
- 10.2. **Policy SA 1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development** – This policy is satisfied due to the reuse of an existing stable building for a mixed use of stables and kennels. This has avoided the requirement to build additional building(s) on the site to house the greyhounds, and reduce the traffic movements to and from the site if they were to be kennelled elsewhere.
- 10.3. Due to the fact that the greyhounds do not need to be brought onto the site for each race meeting means that this avoids causing undue stress to the dogs. All feed and bedding are sourced locally to help to reduce the businesses carbon footprint.
- 10.4. Staff are employed to care for the dogs to ensure their health and wellbeing at all times, which contributes to increasing the employment opportunities for local people. Whilst the greyhound racing generates visitors to the area, in addition to providing a social and recreational activity which generates income into the local economy that can further be invested in the sites management and maintenance to secure it long term viability.
- 10.5. **Policy S10 – Sustainable Development Principles** – This policy is met due to the reuse of an existing buildings which did not require any external alterations to the original stable buildings, thereby protecting, and conserving the natural and built environment along with the heritage asset and its setting.
- 10.6. The proposed mix use will allow the applicant flexibility in the operation of the site in the future.
- 10.9. **Policy BN5 - The Historic Environment and Landscape** – this policy will be addressed in the Heritage Section of this document.
- 10.10. **Policy T5 – Towcester Racecourse** – this policy is satisfied due to the fact that the proposal reuses the existing stables as kennels by merely removing the partitional divides between the stables to form a kennel, thereby retaining the flexibility of the use of the buildings.

- 10.11. The mixed use also reduces the requirement to move the greyhounds on and off the site which avoids undue stress for the grey hounds and reduces the carbon footprint of the business.
- 10.12. The reuse of the stables as a mixed use of stables and kennels has not required any external alterations to be undertaken to the buildings. This means that no adverse effect has been caused by the change of use on the listed building or the registered park and garden of Easton Neston or their setting.
- 10.13. **Policy R2 – Rural Economy** -the reuse of the existing stable buildings has enabled the greyhounds to be maintained on the application site which has generated employing staff to care for the animals and ensure the welfare and wellbeing of the animals
- 10.14. Furthermore, the proposal sources local feed and bedding to ensure that the proposal contributes to the local economy. Whilst the greyhound racing generates visitors to the area and provides recreational and leisure activity for local residents.

11. South Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2

- 11.1. **Policy SS2: General Development and Design Principles** – the proposal will help to support and encourage inward investment into the area through the reuse of the existing stable buildings which have not require any external or internal alterations. This has avoided the requirement for additional new kennel buildings being proposed on the site, and will allow for the flexibility of the operations of the site.
- 11.2. The proposal has no greater impact of the local residents than the previous use as stables.
- 11.3. Due to the fact that the external appearance of the building has not been altered the use has no impact on the character or appearance of the site or the heritage assets
- 11.4. **Policy HE3: Historic Parks and Gardens & Policy HE5 Listed Building**– these policies will be address in the Heritage Section of this document.

12. Heritage Section

- 12.1. Para.194 of the NPPF requires an applicant should describe the significance of any heritage asset affected, including its setting to a level no more than is

sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. This is also reiterated in Policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Part 1 and Policy HE1 the Local Plan Part 2.

- 12.2. Fronting the A5 is the Grade 1 Listed chain gate and lodges and attached walls, piers, standards and chains as shown in Image 1. Below These were first listed on 1st December 1951 under Listing Entry 1041106



Image I. Google Image of Chained Gates and Lodges

- 12.3. The listing states: *Paulerspury A5 SP74NW (East side 4/36 The Chain Gate and lodges and 01/12/51 attached quadrant walls, piers, standards and chains (Formerly listed as Chain Lodge on Watling Street)*

Gateway and lodges. 1822-3 by John Raffield for third Earl Pomfret. Limestone ashlar and Coade stone, rendered brick, concealed lead roofs. Central gateway joined to one-unit lodges by colonnades. Gateway has round-headed arch with impost and console keyblock flanked by unfluted Corinthian columns supporting entablature with cock's head crest in frieze above columns, a blank panel above with arch and topped by swagged urns either side of arms of Earl Pomfret with lion supporters, earl's coronet and motto "HORA E SEMPRE". Capitals, crests, urns and arms of Coade stone, the latter inscribed on base "CROGGAN/LATE COADE" to left, "LONDON" to right and 1822 in middle. Lower 5-bay colonnades extend either side of gateway to lodges either end, the central bay of each wider with pedestrian gate and incised panel lintel; unfluted columns, composed capitals in Adam style, full entablature with bucrania in frieze above columns either side of central bay which is topped by large oval urn, flanked by swagged urns, all of Coade stone. Ornamental gates and railings of cast iron with spear finials. Square one-storey one-window lodges have round-headed sash-windows with impost, recessed in round-headed arches. Plinth, moulded within arches. Moulded sill band within arches. Frieze and cornice, blocking cornice with acroteria and reclining deer facing outwards in Coade stone. Sides of lodges are rendered to imitate ashlar and have 4-panel doors to inner sides behind colonnades. Elevations to park similar to front but topped by large Coade stone urns with

flame finials. Quadrant walls of rendered brick, stone coped, extend from lodges to stone piers with attached low cast-iron standards supporting chains which form boundary to area of grass either side of drive. Design exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1825, constructed as the principal entrance to the park of Easton Neston house and now also the main entrance to Towcester racecourse. (Buildings of England Northamptonshire, p.205; Howard Colvin, 'A Dictionary of British Architects', 2nd Edition, 1978, p.669).

- 12.4. The application site also lies within the Grade II* Easton Neston Park and Gardens which were first listed on 25th June 1984 under Listing Entry No. 1001032.
- 12.5. The history of the site and an abridge description are cited below as the full listing is quite lengthy:

Richard Empson, Henry VII's notorious Treasurer, received licence to crenellate and impark Easton Neston in 1499, but forfeited his possessions when attainted in 1510. In 1530 the manor was sold to Richard Fermor, a successful Merchant of the Staple of Calais. It was his descendant Sir William Fermor (d 1711), MP for Northampton and a prominent politician, who rebuilt the house at Easton advised by his first wife's kinsman Sir Christopher Wren. In the event work only began following his second marriage in 1682, to Catherine, daughter of the third Lord Poulett. Fermor was created Baron Lempster in 1692, and in the same year made a financially advantageous third marriage to Sophia, daughter of the Marquis of Carmarthen. This may have prompted the radical alterations to the house which followed, although another factor may have been a desire to house properly the major part of the great collection of antique sculpture known as the Arundel Marbles which Fermor bought in 1691. William's son Thomas (d 1753), created met William Kent in Rome in 1718 and later employed him at the house.

The family retained the house until 1857 when it passed on the death of the fifth Earl to his sister's son Thomas Hesketh, sixth Baronet, of Rufford in Lancashire, who made Easton his seat. In 1935 Sir Thomas Hesketh was created Baron Hesketh. Easton remains in private hands in 1998.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Easton Neston House stands within its landscape park on the north side of Towcester, from which it is separated by a branch of the River Tove. Suburban growth began to extend in the mid 1990s along the west side of the old A43 (reduced to minor road status by a new by-pass further to the north-west) which bounds the park to the west. To the south-west the park runs up to the northern edge of the town and outside that to the A5. To the east and north the park boundary follows field edges. The area here registered is c 300ha.

- 12.6. Para 199 of the NPPF requires that when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, and this is irrespective of the potential harm.

- 12.7. Due to the fact that the proposal is merely a change of use of the stable's buildings to a mixed use of stables and kennels without requiring any external alterations to the buildings, no greater harm is caused to either the listed building or the park and garden than currently exists. Therefore, less that significant harm will result from this proposal.
- 12.8. The proposal will preserve the setting of the heritage assets in accordance with Policies BN5 of the WNJCS, Policy HE1, HE3 and HE5 the Local Plan Part 2.

13. Conclusion

- 13.1. As stated above the proposal will preserve the setting of these heritage assets and not result in a detrimental impact on local residents and neighbours.
- 13.2. The proposal maintains the health and wellbeing of the greyhounds and horses whilst utilising existing buildings to avoid additional buildings being required on the site.
- 13.3. In addition, the proposal generates employment and income into the local economy.
- 13.4. This proposal accords with the provisions of NPPF and Local Planning Policies and will not result in any adverse impact, which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of granting planning permission.