PLANNING AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

Refurbishment of the existing internal space at Northamptonshire Central Library,
Abington Street, Northampton, NN1 2BA

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning and Heritage Statement has been prepared to support a Listed Building Consent application for refurbishment of the existing internal space to the front of the building, so that the Registration Department can operate from this space at Northamptonshire Central Library, Abington Street, Northampton.

1.2 This Statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which states that special regard must be given by the Authority in the exercise of planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing Listed Buildings and their setting, and Conservation Areas and their setting respectively. Its purpose is to explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed works, having particular regard to the context and layout of the building.

1.3 The purpose of the Statement is to review the prevailing policies and other material considerations that are relevant to the determination of the Listed Building Consent and to present a case for granting permission.

2. THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

2.1 The site is located within the Central Area of Northampton as defined on the Proposals Map of the Northampton Local Plan (1997), the Central Area Action Plan Boundary and Town Centre Boundary as defined in the Central Area Action Plan (2013). Further, the Northampton Central Library and adjoining properties fronting Abington Street and St Giles Street, are identified as a ‘Strategic Development Site’ within Central Area Action Plan (2013).

2.2 Northampton Central Library is located on the south east side of Abington Street, Northampton. Abington Street is one of the main shopping thoroughfares into and out of Northampton Town Centre. The site is located within the Primary Shopping Area, and on the pedestrianised part of Abington Street.

2.4 The building was designed by local architect Herbert Norman and construction was completed in 1910. The building is Grade II Statutory Listed. It has a classical stone front, constructed in a Neo-Georgian style. The building is two storeys in height and also has a basement level. The front façade features two, two storey front projecting bays. Four statues (John Dryden, Thomas Fuller, George Washington and Andrew Carnegie) line the front of the building. The Weldon Stone finish, and ornate cornicing and ledges give the building a grand and important presence on Abington Street. Internal features of special regard include a marble staircase.
2.5 The Listing details for the building state – ‘Classical stone front. 2 storeys and basement. Interior: marble staircase, well plan’. The building was Listed in 1975 (09/01/1975 – List entry ID - 1372156). The site is not located in a Conservation Area.

2.6 Northampton Central Library first opened in Abington Street in 1910. The library was first started in 1876 in the Town Hall, and in 1883, it relocated to Guildhall Road into the present Museum building. By 1904 the Museum needed more space so a site was purchased in Abington Street. The site in Abington Street had previously been used as the depot for the horses that pulled the horse drawn trams in the town.

3. **PLANNING POLICY**

3.1 The starting point for assessing development proposals is the Development Plan. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states “If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.” The Development Plan for this proposal consists of the Core Strategy and saved policies from the Local Plan.

3.2 In addition, the Government’s National Planning Policy Framework is an important material consideration for determining planning applications along with supplementary guidance produced by the Local Planning Authority.

**West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (Adopted December 2014)**

3.3 Policy SA – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development – When considering development proposals the relevant Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals for sustainable development will be approved and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

3.4 Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in other local plans and neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.5 Policy N1 – The Regeneration of Northampton: The regeneration of Northampton will be supported by a focus on Northampton’s town centre and central area for office, retail, leisure and service development, providing high quality urban design and public realm and protecting its heritage assets and historic character through managed change.

3.6 Policy S10 – Sustainable Development Principles - Development will:

i) protect, conserve and enhance the natural and built environment and heritage assets and their settings;

3.7 Policy BN5 – The Historic Environment and Landscape – Designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings and landscapes will be conserved and enhanced in recognition of their individual and cumulative significance and contribution to West Northamptonshire’s local distinctiveness and sense of place.
3.8 In environments where valued heritage assets are at risk, the asset and its setting will be appropriately conserved and managed.

3.9 In order to secure and enhance the significance of the area's heritage assets and their settings and landscapes, development in areas of landscape sensitivity and/or known historic or heritage significance will be required to:

1. Sustain and enhance the heritage and landscape features which contribute to the character of the area including:
   a) Conservation Areas;
   b) significant historic landscapes including historic parkland, battlefields and ridge and furrow;
   c) the skyline and landscape settings of towns and villages;
   d) sites of known or potential heritage or historic significance;
   e) locally and nationally important buildings, structures and monuments.

2. Demonstrate an appreciation and understanding of the impact of development on surrounding heritage assets and their setting in order to minimise harm to these assets; where loss of historic features or archaeological remains is unavoidable and justified, provision should be made for recording and the production of a suitable archive and report.

3. Be sympathetic to locally distinctive landscape features, design styles and materials in order to contribute to a sense of place.

   The retention and sensitive re-use of disused or underused heritage assets and structures is encouraged in order to retain and reflect the distinctiveness of the environment, contribute to the sense of place and promote the sustainable and prudent use of natural resources.

   Proposals to sustain and enhance the area's understanding of heritage assets, for tourism and historic interest as part of cultural, leisure and green networks will be supported.

Northampton Local Plan (Saved Policies) (Adopted 1997)

3.10 Local Plan Policy E23 (Historic Buildings) is not a saved Policy and has been replaced by Policy BN5 from the West Northamptonshire Core Strategy and national guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Central Area Action Plan - CAAP (adopted January 2013)

3.11 Policy 1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development - When considering development proposals within the Central Area, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Council will always work positively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that development proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of Northampton Central Area and the wider Borough.
Policy 18 – Abington Street East - The Northampton Central Library and adjoining properties fronting Abington Street and St Giles Street will be regenerated to:

- Retain, preserve and enhance the character of the Northampton Central Library building, and respect the setting of the Derngate and St Giles Conservation Areas.

- Provide up to 9,000 square metres gross/6,000 square metres net of comparison retail floorspace on land between Abington Street and St Giles Street.

- Provide the opportunity for the continued provision of the library and clinic services either within the regeneration site or elsewhere within the Central Area.

- Contribute to the improvement of the shopping frontages along Abington Street (primary shopping frontage) frontage and St Giles Street (secondary shopping frontage) through incorporating the principles of the Shopfront Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document.

The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) (henceforth referred to as ‘The Framework’)

The Framework was published on 27 March 2012 and replaced a whole range of Government policy. The document sets out the up to date national policy position and must, therefore, be used in the determination of this planning application. The most relevant sections are highlighted below.

To enable the determination of applications, the significance of any heritage assets affected needs to be described as part of the supporting information. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset’s importance (paragraph 128).

Paragraph 131 states that Local Planning Authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses, consistent with their conservation. It also identifies the desirability of new development, making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

When considering the impact of a proposed development or the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. Any harm or loss to heritage assets should require clear and convincing justification (paragraph 132).

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal (paragraph 134).


The guidelines set out in 2008 by English Heritage in The Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment include the following principles:
3.19 New work or alteration to a significant place should normally be acceptable if:

a) There is sufficient information comprehensively to understand the impacts of the proposals on the significance of the place;

b) The proposal would not materially harm the values of the place, which, where appropriate, would be reinforced or further revealed;

c) The proposals aspire to a quality of design and execution which may be valued now and in the future;

d) The long-term consequences of the proposals can, from experience, be demonstrated to be benign, or the proposals are designed not prejudice alternative solutions in the future.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 There is no planning history of relevance to the application site.

5. APPLICATION PROPOSAL

5.1 Listed Building Consent is sought for the construction of new metal stud partitions to form three new offices in the existing space at the front of the building. The new stud partitions would be solid (plasterboard) to a height of 2.6 metres, and from 2.6 metres to the ceiling would be glazed.

5.2 In addition, the existing entrance doors (in the right side front projecting bay) will be re-opened to provide additional access to the building. The existing access (in the left side front projecting bay), with existing ramped DDA access will retained.

Proposed Use

5.3 The new offices and other superficial refurbishment works (furniture refit) would allow the Registration Department to operate from the building. The Customers, Culture and Place division comprises a range of services that any residents can access as the mandatory provider or through choice. These services include:

- Registration Service
- Library Service
- Outdoor Learning
- Country Parks
- Northamptonshire Sport
- Knuston Hall
- Adult Learning
- Nourish (school meals)
- Archives and Heritage Service

5.4 Collectively these services are referred to as “universal services”. The director is currently exploring how these universal services can work together more effectively to improve the wellbeing of the citizens of Northamptonshire and what changes to make to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
5.5 The Director of Public Health and Wellbeing is keen to continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the relationship between Registration and Libraries. While the principal benefit is improving the county’s wellbeing outcomes by increasing the number of citizens being introduced to wellbeing services, further benefits include:

- Increasing the viability of the library by increasing visitor numbers.
- Contribute to the Asset Utilisation strategy by rationalising accommodation
- Increasing customer choice and service availability
- Contributing to locality-based service provision.
- Improving efficiency and reducing costs in the Registration Service

Registration Offices in Towcester, Corby and Oundle have already moved into their respective libraries, allowing this work to scale up.

5.6 One opportunity that has already been identified and developed relates to new-born babies. The Registration Service meets the parents of nearly every baby that is born in the county or lives in the county. The Library Service has objectives to enrol as many residents as possible into library membership and to enrol as many new babies as possible into Children’s Centre services. Statistics demonstrate that at these locations over excess of 80% of birth registrations now result in a referral to the Library Service. Further development opportunities are currently being reviewed that will enhance this function further.

5.7 Careful and conscious attention has been given in regard to the location of the registration offices within the Library for the following reasons:

- to minimise changes to the existing structure of the building
- provide immediate public accessibility and visibility from both main access points
- enable combined Library and Registration management from a centralised reception area
- minimise adverse background noise created by Children’s Rhyme Time activities and other events located in the centre of the Library
- separate member of the public attending to register still births from the main Children’s area of the Library
- enable the continued use of current shared public space within the library

5.8 Following the successful migration of the 3 Registration Offices above, the use of a Public Health Grant has recently been approved to fund construction work to move the first of the remaining four Registration Offices into their geographically closest large library. The first office will be in Northampton, and the remaining three, subject to validation of the work are Kettering, Wellingborough and Daventry.

6. **JUSTIFICATION**

**Principle**

6.1 Northampton Central Library was built as a public library and opened in 1910. It has been used as a public library for the entirety of the intervening period. Its significance is enhanced by the fact that it has survived so well in such a prominent position. The building is, therefore, historically important and also socially provides a valuable resource to the local population.
6.2 Policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Core Strategy supports the sensitive re-use of heritage assets and structures in order to retain and reflect the distinctiveness of the environment, contribute to the sense of place and promote the sustainable and prudent use of natural resources. This approach is supported at a national level by the National Planning Policy Framework which emphasises the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

6.3 In this respect, the proposed works, which would upgrade and better utilise the existing floor space at the front of the building, would breathe new life into the building, providing the Registration Department with modern working facilities, to the benefit of the local community (users of the Library and other services – see para 5.3 – 5.7 above), and securing the building’s preservation as a community resource for the long term future.

**Heritage & Impact on the Significance of the Building**

*Impact upon the Setting*

6.4 The proposed works do not affect the exterior of the building and, therefore, do not impact on the significance or setting of the heritage asset when viewed externally from Abington Street.

*Impact upon the Building*

**New Offices – Partition Walls**

6.5 The internal works involve the construction of new stud partition walls which would be solid (plasterboard) to a height of 2.6 metres, and above that glazed to the ceiling. A metal frame would be constructed and fixed to the existing walls, floor and ceiling. The plasterboard and glazing would then sit within the frame.

6.6 Although it could be considered to compromise the integrity of the present format, the proposal to subdivide the existing floor space improves the viability of the room without impacting on the historic fabric. It is noted that the applicant entered into pre-application discussions with the Council’s Listed Building Officer (Anna Ross) prior to submitting this application, where the principle of the works was agreed.

6.7 The partitions have been carefully positioned to avoid conflict with the existing windows at the front of the building. The present windows will remain unchanged and the spaces between them provide a natural point of subdivision for the three offices. Consequently, the metal frame and stud partitions can be positioned on the existing mullions, without touching the glazing or the existing detailing surrounding the window frames.

6.8 The metal frame would be attached to the walls, floor and ceiling using limited fixings and, therefore, can be installed without harming the fabric of the building. Given the nature of the partitions and the limited number of fixings required, they are completely reversible. The partitions (plasterboard) would have an acceptable finished appearance, sympathetic to the historic integrity and character of the inside of the building. Further details of the proposed finish and glazing can be provided at conditions stage if necessary. The partitions would not, therefore, adversely affect the special architectural or historic interest of the
Listed Building, the historic integrity of the Listed Building, or any features of architectural or historic interest, that it possesses.

6.9 The glass partitions, above the plasterboard walls, would give the offices a lightweight appearance, and would preserve views of the existing ceiling and original detailing on the inside of the building. Further, it would allow light from the front windows to reach the rear parts of the room. This would ensure the proposal preserves the historic features of interest, but also allows sufficient levels of light in to the reception area to be maintained, ensuring the area remains usable for both staff and visitors.

Furniture Refit

6.10 The proposed furniture refit would involve superficial works that would not need to be fixed to the existing floor or walls and, therefore, could be easily removed.

Reinstatement of Existing Access

6.11 Reinstating the original access not only revitalises the tradition of the building, but allows for a more innovative use of the existing floor space. This would only enhance the appearance and functionality of the building and would have no impact on the exterior. The existing panic bars would be replaced with new block and pull handles and push plates. These would better respect and be more sympathetic to the character and integrity of the building. The existing entrance barriers would be repositioned.

Access

6.12 Reinstating the original access (in the right side front projecting bay) would ease pedestrian access to the building, providing two routes of entry and egress. The existing access (in the left side front projecting bay) with ramped DDA access would be retained.

Ventilation

6.13 Xplair Digitemp internal air conditioning units will be installed together with NWAN36 900mm Ceiling Sweep Fans to help control the current solar over heating of the front of the Library. Normal air conditioning units where discounted as no external louvres will be permitted to the front of the building and any vertical routes of ducting is not viable.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Listed Building Consent is sought for the construction of new stud partition walls which would be solid (plasterboard) to a height of 2.6 metres, and above that glazed to the ceiling. In addition, a furniture refit is proposed and the existing pedestrian access (in the right side front projecting bay) would be reinstated.

7.2 The proposed works would upgrade and better utilise the existing floor space at the front of the building, providing the Registration Department with modern working facilities to the benefit of the local community (users of the Library), and securing the building’s preservation as a community resource for the long term future.
7.3 The proposed works would have no adverse effects on the historic integrity of the Listed Building and its setting, nor to any features of architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

7.4 The proposal is considered to comply with the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and relevant Core Strategy, Development Plan and Central Area Action Plan policies.
Digitemp.
Beyond air conditioning.
Say goodbye to unsightly and noisy air conditioning units.

Traditional split system air conditioning units can be:

❌ Unsightly.
Where the air conditioning unit is visible externally, this can compromise a property’s aesthetic qualities – not to mention any building regulations that may be in place.

❌ Noisy.
Loud conventional air conditioning units can disturb daily activities – or worse, a good night’s sleep.

❌ Difficult to install.
Fitting a traditional split air conditioning system calls for complicated work on external walls – and often on high floors – making for a time and labour intensive installation.

The revolution in air conditioning starts here.

Introducing Xpelair Digitemp.

Slim, quiet and So Simple to install.

Xpelair Digitemp is an innovative solution to year-round climate control. It eliminates the need for an outdoor condensing unit, providing a self-contained system that’s ideal for both light commercial and domestic applications. It’s sleek, it’s quiet and it’s So Simple to install. And, while it’s optimising the internal temperature, it’s dehumidifying and purifying the air too. It’s truly a game changer.
Digitemp is available with a cooling function only, or with heating and cooling for a complete climate control solution. And both are available in two capacities to suit a range of requirements.

The Digitemp range.  
Digitemp is available with a cooling function only, or with heating and cooling for a complete climate control solution. And both are available in two capacities to suit a range of requirements.

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<th>Model</th>
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<th>Description</th>
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<td>Digitemp WA210N</td>
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<td>2.7kW Air-conditioning unit 2.5kW Heating unit</td>
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As a very rough guide, the 2.3kW unit is typically installed in rooms up to 15m², while the 2.7kW units are installed in rooms up to 25m². Room size should be used for guidance only.
A closer look at the benefits.

Sleek styling inside. Discreet design outside.

With its sleek, contemporary design, Digitemp blends seamlessly with any room style or décor. What’s more, by combining the indoor and outdoor units in one innovative, self-contained system, Digitemp eliminates the need for an outdoor condensing unit. All that’s visible externally are two 6” grilles (inlet and exhaust) – discreet in comparison to standard fixed air conditioning units. This makes Digitemp an ideal solution in circumstances where it’s necessary to maintain a building’s external aesthetics – and can even avoid the need for planning permission on some listed buildings.

Highly efficient and ecological.

Digitemp boasts a Class ‘A’ rating for energy efficiency, generating nearly 3kW of heating/cooling energy for every 1kW of power used. The high-efficiency heat pump consumes just 40% of the electricity required by conventional electric heaters. Plus, Digitemp uses refrigerant gas R410A that’s free from chloride and won’t contribute to ozone depletion. So relax: while delivering maximum performance for minimum cost, Digitemp is safeguarding the environment.

Innovative filtration system.

Digitemp has an innovative multi-filtering system. An electrostatic filter removes small particles such as smoke, dust, pollen and pet hair to prevent allergic reactions. At the same time, an activated carbon filter eliminates bad odours and deactivates harmful gases. This is climate control and air quality management in one clever package.

Multi-function remote control.

The multi-function remote control allows all Digitemp functions to be activated within a range of eight metres. With its ergonomic grip and easy operation, the remote control makes Digitemp the ultimate in climate control convenience.
Truly quiet running.
So quiet, you won’t even know it’s there. Digitemp incorporates Xpelair’s innovative Ghost™ Air Movement Technology to deliver truly quiet running as low as 29 dBA@3M. So it won’t disturb daily activities, like meetings or conference calls in commercial applications. Homeowners, or those staying in hotel accommodation, will appreciate its ‘sleep’ mode. This increases the temperature setting gradually, while guaranteeing reduced noise – because a good night’s sleep starts with a peaceful bedroom.

Quick and easy installation – high or low level.
Fitting is So Simple: the self-contained unit can be installed from inside the building. All that’s required is the creation of two 6” holes and connection to an electrical supply. This simplicity translates into speedy and cost-effective installations versus comparable split systems. There’s no need for complicated work on external walls or high floors, making Digitemp the ideal solution for apartments and multi-storey locations. What’s more, Digitemp can be modified for high or low-level installation with ease – simply reverse the casing to accommodate the change in airflow.

Year-round climate control.
Digitem is available as a cooling only option. Or, for year-round climate control, there’s a cooling and heating option. And both are offered in two capacities to suit a range of requirements. So there’s no need to specify traditional heaters in a project as well as an air conditioning unit; Digitemp does it all.

So Simple maintenance.
Digitem has been designed to make maintenance a breeze. The filters are located in the air intake on top of the unit, providing easy access. Simply lift the air flap then pull out the double filter and it’s ready for cleaning. It’s So Simple.
More visual appeal. Less installation cost.

By removing the need for a large, unsightly, external condensing unit, not only does the Digitemp look far more discreet from the outside, it makes installation and maintenance so much easier too. Especially at high levels. And because it can be completely fitted from the inside – it further cuts installation costs and times.

Xpelair Digitemp

Plan view.

Operating Limits (Dry Bulb).

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<th>Maximum Operating Temperature in Cooling Mode</th>
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Technical Data.

Dimensions.

![Diagram of dimensions](Image)

**Specification.**

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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The unit is supplied with flexible PP sheets that can be folded to the required size of the holes. The two hole diameters are for flexibility. Applicable to all models.
Improving population health and well-being with innovative and energy efficient indoor air quality and air comfort solutions.