# Unity Square, Nottingham

## Key Issues

- Conservation areas.
- Grade I listed Nottingham Castle with implications on townscape and visual impacts.
- Adjacent to Nottingham's Midland Railway Station which is a Grade II* Edwardian building.
- Site within Flood Zone 2 and 3a.
- Important Regeneration zone.
- A requirement to integrate into the surrounding streetscene as well as compliment adjacent listed buildings.
- A small site, Screening was positive due to sensitive issues not site size threshold.
- Extant consent in place but readdressed EIA due to an updated scheme and requirement to assess the scheme on its own merits, not relying on the past consent.

## Purpose of the project

NJL Consulting were instructed to undertake the planning strategy and technical work to support an application to develop a new, modern and sustainable commercial ‘destination’ for the City of Nottingham. The courtyard scheme, focused on a high quality public square, enclosed by a Hotel, Office, Retail and Leisure uses.

## Description of the project

Submission of an Outline planning application to secure the delivery of a major regeneration scheme for the Southside Regeneration Zone, of Nottingham city centre.

The scheme comprises of:

- Hotel development of approximately 200 rooms
- 2,000 sq.m of shops, bars and restaurants at ground level
- 4,500 sq.m of leisure space suitable for a gym or crèche use
- Office development of approximately 27,000 sq.m
- New car parking of 190 spaces and areas of public realm
Lessons learnt

The scheme came forward as an outline planning application controlled by parameters. The planning submission, therefore, included fixed maximum parameters for certain key elements and those elements would be adhered to at the reserved matters stage.

This approach is common when the final design is not fixed and an assessment needs to be made on 'maximum' elements – such as height and floorspace. This provides an opportunity to assess the 'worse case' and 'likely' impact scenario.

The key issues with a parameter approach is that when a site is sensitive, as in this case, due to views from the Grade I Listed Castle and Grade II* Railway Station, the maximum parameters, which are a worse case scenario and are not necessarily going to be built, can be detrimental to the impact assessment.

By detrimental, it is meant that the impact assessments are assessing ‘maximum boxes’ and not a detailed, sensitive design. Detailed designs can show the design iteration in the form of mitigation such as incorporating sightlines and breaks in the built form, allowing long views through the development and design characteristics that are sympathetic to the surrounding heritage assets.

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The challenge was to allow flexibility in the final design on a commercial perspective, but also to provide confidence to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) that a scheme could be delivered which takes on board the concerns of both the LPA and English Heritages.

This was achieved by undertaking a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), along with a Heritage and Townscape Impact Assessment (HTIA), both of which fed into and influenced (through an iterative process) a Design Principles document which would provide guidance on the future design of the scheme.

This process gave a more detailed analysis of the constraints and opportunities on the site and allowed a design guidance document to be conditioned as part of the decision notice, subsequently enabling the LPA to have an element of control over the final design of the scheme, while giving future occupiers flexibility to bring forward a scheme at the reserved matters stage which fulfilled specific occupier/operator requirements in terms of floorspace and heights.

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