SPRING BOROUGHS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
SUBMISSION

EMPLOYMENT TECHNICAL PAPER
June 2015

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Spring Boroughs Neighbourhood Plan covers the period 2014 – 2029, and incorporates some local policies including employment (AB Policy 1).

1.2 Following consultation which took place in spring 2015, AB Policy 1 was modified to read:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AB Policy 1: North West Spring Boroughs</th>
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<td>Develop existing employment area in north-west plan area (Area 1) for housing.</td>
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This area is currently in employment use and is designated for continued employment use in the Central Area Action Plan. However, the Neighbourhood would support proposals for housing in this area subject to such development fulfilling the criteria in both Policy OP1 and OP2 (housing) so that future development would contribute to the provision of a range of housing types and tenure including 3 bedroom affordability family home with outside private space, for families already settled here.

2 POLICY CONTEXT

a Central Area Action Plan (CAAP, 2012)

2.1 Part of the site covered by AB Policy 1 above is designated for employment purposes in the Central Area Action Plan (adopted January 2013). Policy 24 of the adopted plan focuses on Spring Boroughs, which provides a list of priorities including the following:

- The potential to incorporate a wider range of uses within the area, particularly increased employment opportunities, taking into account its location as an edge of town centre site and Castle Station

2.2 In promoting this site for housing development, the policy is therefore a departure from the adopted CAAP.

b National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012)

2.3 Policy 22 of the NPPF states “planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. Land allocations should be regularly
reviewed. Where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities

c West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS, Dec 2014)

2.4 The JCS contains strategic policies which are relevant and needs to be taken into consideration in this Neighbourhood Plan. The key policies are:

Policy E1: Existing Employment Area (extracts)

To help support a vibrant, successful and developing local economy, existing and allocated employment sites and industrial estates across West Northamptonshire will be retained for uses within use Classes B1, B2, B8 and appropriate non-B employment generating uses.

Change of use to other (non-employment generating) uses will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that the site is no longer economically viable for employment purposes in the long term, there is a clear conflict with adjoining uses, or its release would offer significant benefits to the local area.

Policy S7: Provision of jobs

Provision will be made for a minimum net increase of 28,500 jobs in the period 2008 – 2029 in order to maintain a broad balance between homes and jobs and to maintain a diverse economic base.

d Policy Assessment

2.5 In 2014, the University of Northampton prepared a research note titled Implementation of New Housing Opportunities in Spring Boroughs1. This research surveyed potential housing sites and recommended the allocation of sites for housing and employment development. Consequently, AB Policy 1 of the Spring Boroughs Neighbourhood Plan seeks to support housing developments on an allocated employment site between Grafton Street and Spring Lane. To mitigate the loss of this employed land, the Plan seeks to divert employment use to land at Andrews Road, currently occupied by the Super Sausage Café/ Lorry Park/ Plumbing Supplies (site ref. 2, hereafter referred to as the Super Sausage site).

1 Implementation of New Housing Opportunities in Spring Boroughs, University of Northampton (2014) is provided as supporting document, reference EB/H2.
**i Status of the employment site**

2.7 The Grafton Street / Spring Lane employment site is allocated for employment use in the adopted Central Area Action Plan. However, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to change this allocation in support of housing development. This is considered acceptable because Policy E1 of the JCS states that change of use will be resisted where it can be demonstrated that the site is no longer economically viable for employment uses or that its release would offer significant benefits to the local area.

2.8 The Forum has sought to gather evidence which justifies that the site is no longer viable for employment uses. A survey\(^2\) was undertaken on the 15\(^{th}\) June 2015 and the following were its key findings.

2.9 Some of the properties located on the employment site are occupied by uses which are not covered by the B Use Classes Order (namely offices, general industrial and warehousing). There are examples of permissions being granted for change of use from employment to alternative uses including consent for a dance studio. For Collingwood Business Centre, the building had less than 30% occupancy in 2012 (evident from a planning application) and despite efforts in advertising, the owner had limited interest.

**ii Significant benefits of housing to the local area**

2.10 The evidence base contained in the Neighbourhood Plan demonstrates Spring Boroughs is the most overcrowded area in Northampton, with 88% of residents having only 2 or fewer bedrooms and 96% do not live in a house with garden. This means that the residents of Spring Boroughs do not have access to larger family dwellings. The local residents have identified an immediate and urgent need to provide family housing with gardens to relieve this overcrowding issue. Evidence is available in the housing technical paper\(^3\).

2.11 In bringing forward a site for housing, this means that the residents of Spring Boroughs will have an opportunity to access much needed housing (especially for families), which will be a significant benefit to them.

**iii Deliverability of Super Sausage site for employment purposes**

2.12 The Super Sausage site is currently occupied by a café “Super Sausage”, a lorry park and car wash. The site is owned by Northampton Borough Council and is leased to the operator on a short term basis. The site is severed from the rest of the housing areas (existing and proposed) within Spring Boroughs by virtue of St Andrews Road, and the lorry park itself is located on low amenity value waste ground covered in gravel. Since the site is located on an area which is primarily occupied by business operators (including railway freight and passenger industry), it was considered that this site could continue to be used for employment purposes and potentially be redeveloped for other suitable employment related use.

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\(^2\) *Spring Boroughs Business Survey (June 2015)* is a supporting document assigned reference EB/E2.

\(^3\) *Spring Boroughs Neighbourhood Plan: Housing Technical Paper (June 2015)* is a supporting document, assigned reference EB/H1.
Furthermore, the site is in close proximity to the Waterside Enterprise Zone. Allocation of the Super Sausage site for employment uses would therefore free up the existing allocated employment area within Spring Boroughs for housing, where there is a much needed proven demand for this use.

iv  **Availability of employment opportunities**

2.13 Spring Boroughs Neighbourhood Planning Area is sandwiched between the town centre and the railway station, which means that the local residents have access to employment opportunities both within the town centre and within the Enterprise Zone (which was designated in August 2011). They are therefore within walking distance to the town centre and the Enterprise Zone. There are various projects currently being undertaken or have been completed within the town centre as part of the Northampton Alive programme, including the proposed Vulcan Works scheme and the Premier Inn hotel development which will offer employment opportunities. The Enterprise Zone accommodates a range of employers who now have access to simpler planning rules, allowing them to expand their operations without planning permission (within a specified threshold). Any expansion plans could potentially result in additional employment opportunities for residents. The University of Northampton will also be relocating its campuses into the town centre, allowing people to access education within walking distance, which will improve their opportunities for gaining and sustaining employment.

v  **Job creation**

2.14 The delivery of housing will also create jobs in the construction industry whilst adding to the amount of local labour supply. The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy seeks the delivery of 28,500 jobs over the plan period (Policy S7) and this will contribute to the delivery of jobs, whilst retaining and potentially increasing job opportunities on the Super Sausage site.

vi  **Housing Land Supply**

2.15 Housing development on this site will also contribute to the delivery of the Council’s 5 year housing land supply. In 2014, the Council’s 5 year housing land supply report demonstrated that this cannot be met. In delivering housing schemes in Spring Boroughs, there is an opportunity for bullet point 1 of CAAP Policy 24 (Spring Boroughs) to be met in terms of encouraging a more balanced community through appropriate provision of housing types and tenures.

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