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Planning Policy – Draft Local Plan
West Northamptonshire Council
One Angel Square
Northampton
NN1 1ED

TEL 01604 880163
www.argroup.co.uk

By email: planningpolicyconsultation@westnorthants.gov.uk

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Dear Sirs

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN – OBJECTIONS BY COLLINGTREE PARISH COUNCIL IN RESPECT OF THE PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ALLOCATION ON COLLINGTREE PARK GOLF COURSE AND THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON THE VILLAGE

I act for Collingtree Parish Council and strongly object to the proposed allocation of part of the existing Collingtree Park golf course for residential development. I therefore object to Policy N6(xx) and to Policy N19 although other policies are also relevant to this objection and are referred to below. The Local Plan proposes to allocate some 300 houses on the area shown in Policy N19. Our objection seeks the deletion of the proposed allocation as it is considered to conflict with the strategy and with the objectives of the Local Plan. The Parish Council also supports the objections made against the proposed allocation on behalf of Collingtree Park Golf Course by the Golf Club.

It is considered that the allocation for residential development will effectively remove a significant part of the existing structural green space designated in the Joint Core Strategy within the SUE. When considering the significant development of some 1000 houses allocated in the SUE together with more recent residential allocations identified in the Northampton Local Plan Part 2, the loss of the golf course land will have a major harmful impact on Collingtree and the area. The cumulative impact of the total development of the area up to the motorway and south west of junction 15 is significant on the village and surrounding roads and area and it is now even more important to retain this structural green space to ensure an enhanced environment as identified in the JCS is possible. The retention of the golf course as structural green space or local green space is of critical importance to the parish.

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The cumulative impact of the proposed development of the SUE together with the development of sites allocated in the Local Plan Part 2 and beyond the M1 junction is a major concern for the Parish Council and has been raised in correspondence with the Council. I refer to these matters later in this letter.

It is considered that with the deletion of the proposed allocation from the Local Plan, there is an opportunity to designate the area as a local green space. I refer also to this matter below.

In addition, there is a need in the Parish Council's view that Collingtree should be classified as a 'other village' in Policy R3. While the development of the SUE is already part of the areas growth, the inclusion in Policy R3 of the village would continue to protect important areas of land outside of the confines such as the structural green space provided by the golf course.

I will deal with the proposed allocation in relation to current and proposed planning policies. Before I do so, I summarise the importance of the golf club to the area and community.

Importance of retaining the golf club and course

Collingtree Park Golf Course is an important and widely used local and regional recreational facility and the proposed allocation will cause the loss of an important leisure and community facility as well as the loss of the existing and valued green space within this part of Northampton.

Collingtree Park Golf Course opened in 1990 as part of the wider Collingtree Park residential and leisure development in Northampton. The course was conceived as a championship-standard parkland course integrated within the Collingtree Park residential development, with housing arranged around the fairways. It currently provides an 18-hole championship course. It has hosted professional tournaments, establishing its reputation within UK golf, notably the European Tour British Masters and also European Seniors Tour events. This history reflects the quality of the course design and its standing within the region.

In 2020, members acquired the operating assets of the club and the key elements of the restructure included Members purchasing the operating assets of the golf club, the club entering into a 25-year lease agreement with the landowners and the establishment of a member-controlled structure to operate the club. This transition involved significant financial contributions from members, legal restructuring and negotiation of a long-term lease arrangement. The restructuring ensured the continued operation of the golf course as a sporting facility. The club operates as a member-controlled golf club, with day-to-day management undertaken by Silbury Golf 2020 Ltd. There are some 600 members, more than 100 junior members and more than 100 senior members. The course is open to both members and visitors.

The course hosts county and regional competitions, local and club competitions and corporate golf days. In addition, the clubhouse hosts weddings, private functions and corporate events. The facility attracts and supports a wide demographic to host sporting events, hold social gatherings and be located as a community centre for local residents.

The importance of the golf club in the area is obvious, and it is understood that the club is currently undertaking a significant course redevelopment programme with investment of approximately £3 million. The programme includes course improvements, reconfiguration of certain holes and landscape and drainage improvements. Following completion, the course will remain an 18-hole championship-length

course (approximately 6,700+ yards). This level of investment reflects a long-term commitment to the continued operation of the golf course.

The proposed allocation for residential development will destroy a major part of the green space and very likely lead to the closure of the golf club and loss of an important leisure, sporting and community facility. The facility continues to operate as a viable and active sporting venue serving a wide cross-section of the local community.

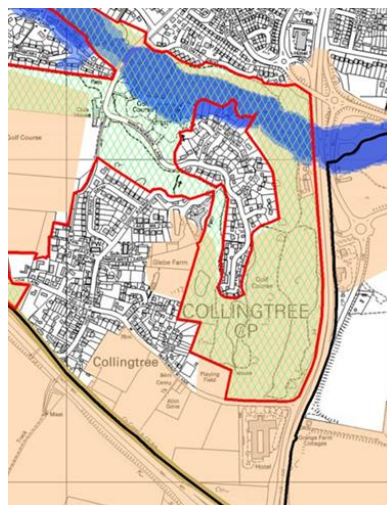
Secondly, it is important also to consider the current planning status of the golf course area.

West Northamptonshire JCS and Northampton Local Plan Part 2

In the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, the golf course forms part of the Northampton South SUE. The SUE covers an area between the existing urban edge of Northampton to the north and the M1 motorway to the south. The village of Collingtree and the residential area at Collingtree Park lie to the east of the site whilst the western edge is formed by strong field boundaries.

The allocated SUE includes the existing Collingtree Park Golf Club which was reconfigured and retained as part of the proposal. Most of the remainder of the allocation is (was) agricultural land under pasture and arable cultivation. Within the site the land slopes gently down from the south west to the flood plain of the Wootton Brook. Through the reconfiguration of the golf course, noted as a compatible use within a flood plain area, it was considered that the development of the SUE would provide a positive environmental impact to flood alleviation from the Wootton Brook on the surrounding area. An area of the site is designated as a County Wildlife Site, which includes Wootton Brook and associated water bodies.

Policy N5 in the adopted Joint Core Strategy sets out the required elements of development. Importantly criterion e) refers to structural greenspace and wildlife corridors as indicated on the policies map (an extract is shown below with the existing golf course designated as structural green space) and criterion f) to open space and leisure provision. There is also reference to flood risk management and surface water management from all other sources and to provision of necessary infrastructure. The maintenance of this structural green space is important with the Golf Club playing a vital part in the planning of a sustainable SUE. The addition of golf course land for development undermines the ability to comprehensively plan development in this area and loses important open space, sporting facilities and community facilities. It places more pressure on Collingtree village.



The Golf Course plays a vital part in the overall strategy for the SUE and provides a widely used facility as an important asset to the town and the local community. The allocation now proposed in the new local plan will destroy the Club and the associated facilities and services. The management of this important green space will be lost.

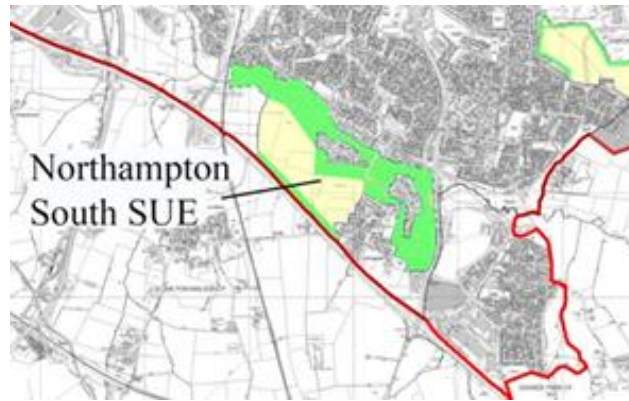
The issues raised by proposed allocation together with the development of the SUE land and other sites are major concerns to the Parish Council. The Parish Council recently outlined some of these concerns following on from discussions relating to the disposal of land within the identified SUE. In particular, there are concerns with infrastructure and amenities with this proposal doubling the population of this part of Collingtree. It is considered that there needs to be considerable work on the existing infrastructure in terms of the roads, footpaths/walkways and traffic flow. Ash Lane and the Ash Lane/A45 junction are heavily used and there is already considerable congestion at peak times. Amenities in this area are minimal the nearest shop is at least a 30-minute walk away. There is no doctor's surgery with the surgeries that serve the existing residents currently oversubscribed. There are no public transport links. The Parish Council notes there are no proposals for a school on this development.

There is the need to improve the sports facility that sits opposite the planned SUE site. The Pavilion and Sports Ground are heavily used both in the summer for cricket and tennis and the winter for football. Parking at the site is minimal and this results in much on street parking at the evening and weekends. The Parish Council would welcome support in creating a barrier/defined border between the road and the sports field, perhaps if the road is widened and the footpaths more defined. The Sports Field is used by children, the safety of increasing traffic needs considering.

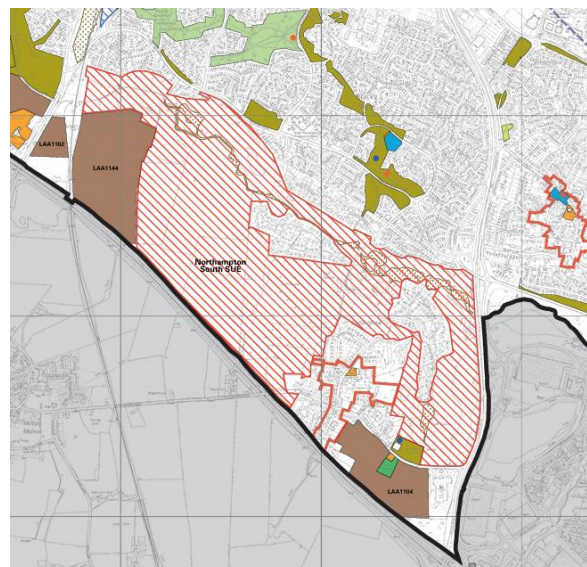
It is considered also that careful consideration needs giving to the environmental impact this will have on Collingtree, careful noise and air pollution needs consideration, we note the discussion of a proposed bund that could be developed into a pocket park style green space. The existing trees and vegetation need protecting and adding to, the local wildlife needs consideration.

These issues are specific to the impact of a planned SUE. The addition of the golf course land adds unacceptable cumulative impacts on Collingtree and the existing open space and facilities offered by the golf club are critically important to reducing the harm caused by the developments already approved.

The additional developments around the village are identified in the Northampton Local Plan Part 2 (March 2023). Importantly, the policies map indicates the existing SUE and does not alter the status of the golf course as part of the structural green space and wildlife corridor. An extract from the adopted Local Plan Part 2 shows the SUE.



The extract below from the Local Plan Part 2 policies map indicates the additional housing areas allocation in the adopted plan. These additional areas add to the cumulative impact on the village as described above. It is vital to adequately plan these developments but also critical to continue to safeguard the golf course and the green space it provides in a major developing area around Collingtree.



I now summarise the proposed allocation and assess this against the relevant planning policies.

I also assess the opportunity to designate the course as a local green space to be protected through the new local plan and therefore provide certainty for this important leisure and community facility and for the enhancement of the character of the area.

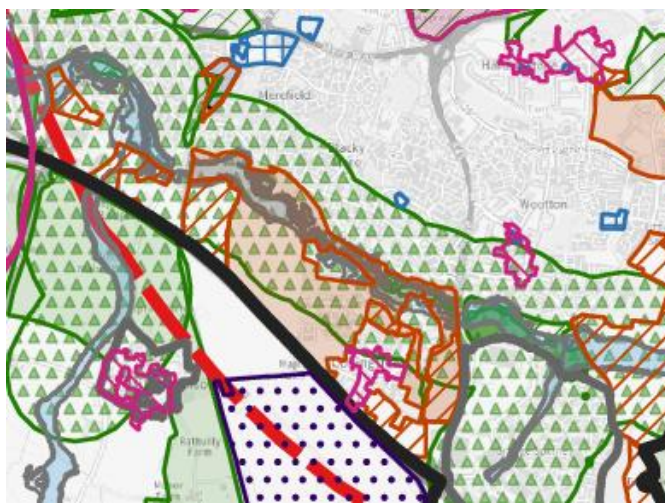
Proposed new Local Plan allocation

The new local plan sets out the proposed allocation in Policy N6(xx) and Policy N19. There is no assessment of the importance of the facility with only limited reference to landscape, flooding and biodiversity. Nowhere in the proposed policies and text is the impact on the Golf Club or community facility acknowledged, the effective loss of the facilities and the present contribution it makes to the character of the area adequately considered. The new local plan appears to have taken the ‘call for sites’ as the only relevant matter. The local plan has missed the real importance of the land which forms the course as an important structural green space in the SUE as recognised in the Joint Core Strategy. The

impact on the Club and its extensive contribution to the community is completely ignored and given the additional areas selected for new development, the protection of the course and its future is now critical.

It is recognised in the proposed policy that there are flooding issues. Indeed the larger area considered for residential development is the first area to flood. To develop this part of the golf course would require major infrastructure to enable the development and to protect existing development. There is also only a brief mention to biodiversity. Again, the local plan has not assessed the impact which the proposed development will have in destroying an existing leisure facility and the business and therefore on the management of the site and the retention of the environmental features.

The extract below from the policies map in the new local plan shows the proposed allocation. As can be seen, the majority of the proposed area for development is part of the Nene Valley Nature Improvement area designation.



Policy N19 as proposed states that

‘Collingtree Golf Course Site N19 is allocated for residential development.

A. Proposals for this site must be informed by a Masterplan agreed by the Council that must demonstrate how the site can come forward comprehensively.

B. Proposals for this site will make provision for all of the following:

i. Approximately 300 dwellings; ii. Development which is consistent with the diagram shown in Figure 15; iii. Appropriate infrastructure including education provision; iv. A sustainable and integrated transport network, incorporating safe and direct walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport routes, with strong connections to nearby neighbourhoods, the town centre and surrounding green corridors; and v. A comprehensive green and blue infrastructure network, retaining and enhancing the Wootton Brook corridor, Local Wildlife Site, existing hedgerows, trees and wet grassland, together with structural green space and wildlife corridors that integrate with the wider Northampton South SUE; and

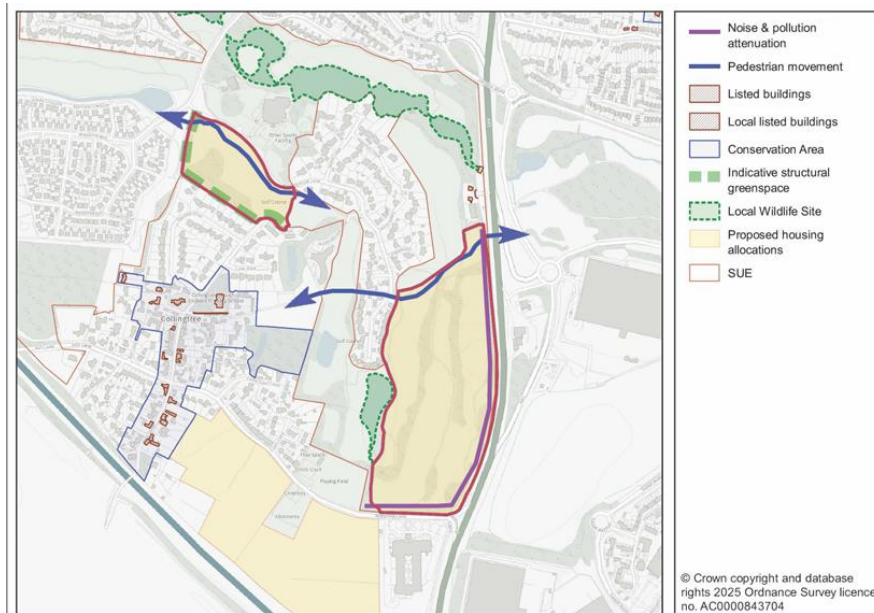
C. Proposals for site will be informed by assessments and suitable mitigation related to: 136 i. A heritage and archaeological assessment; ii. Landscape and visual impact: A landscape impact assessment (LVIA), informing site layout, structural planting, and measures to minimise visual intrusion. Development must

retain and reinforce existing strong boundary features to limit wider visual impacts and ensure that new built form integrates effectively with the surrounding landscape character especially Collingtree village; iii. Ecological impact: An Ecological Impact Assessment identifying the site's habitats, species and ecological connectivity, including the section of the Wootton Brook and associated grassland designated as a Local Wildlife Site; iv. Highways and Transport: A Transport Assessment and Travel Plan demonstrating safe and suitable access for all users, and capacity at key routes and junctions. This includes A45, Junction 15 of M1, Windingbrook Lane and Rowtree Road; v. Flood Risk and water and water recycling infrastructure: A site specific flood risk assessment and management measures, including sustainable drainage system and opportunities for natural flood management along the Wootton Brook corridor, addressing surface water, fluvial risk and any risk from other sources; and vi. Noise and Air Quality: including noise and air quality impacts arising from the M1, A45 and local road network.

D. Applications will need to consider the recreational impact of the development on the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area. Liaison with Natural England and the council will be required at the outset to establish the type of specific on-site open space that is required. This could include a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) or Accessible High Quality Semi Natural Greenspace) or other agreed typology.'

The proposals set out in this policy are considered to meet spatial objectives 1, 9, 10 and 12 of the new local plan. However, there is no assessment on the impact the loss of the golf course has on objective 1 due to flooding, objective 2 due to impact on green infrastructure, on 7 for health and well-being, 8 due to impact on services and business and objective 10 in terms supporting communities. In my view, the failure to adequately assess the importance and contribution of the Golf Club and this green space undermines the local plan strategy. The cumulative impact on Collingtree has been ignored.

The image below is from the proposed new local plan for Policy N19. The majority of the proposed allocation is subject to flooding and if it were possible to apply the sequential test (Policy PL5 in the local plan), the site would not be selected when assessed against other opportunities. The proposed development does not meet the spatial objectives and as I have said above, the development of the allocation shown would destroy the Golf Club, the business and community and leisure benefits. It would lead to wider unacceptable impact by the development of the SUE and additional housing sites allocated in the Part 2 Local Plan.



I now deal with assessing the proposed allocation against other policies in the new local plan. Essentially, I consider the proposed allocation conflicts with the local plan itself.

I consider that the proposed allocation of the golf course conflicts with Policy PL6, Placemaking, design and amenity. The loss of the leisure and sports facility caused by the allocation will not meet Criterion C and E of the Policy. In proposing the allocation, it demonstrates little understanding of the physical, social, economic and environmental characteristics of the site and the business. In addition, development conflicts with criterion I and criterion J due to the loss of a recreational facility, impact on health and well-being and loss of the opportunities provided to all ages through the current Club.

The proposed allocation is contrary to the aims of Policy PL8 with the impact on health and well-being, loss of sports facilities and an important green space. It is also contrary to Policy PL10 due to the loss of the sports facility. There is no alternative for the Club.

The proposed allocation also conflicts with Policy PL13 in terms that development is inappropriate in the green space.

Policy N1 sets out the spatial strategy for Northampton. Criterion A indicates the importance of enhanced development and enabling the maximum number of people to have access to facilities locally. Criteria Biii and Biv refer to maximising opportunities and their retention.

The proposed allocation conflicts with these policies and with the objectives of the local plan. The allocation will alter the character of the area. The golf course provides an important facility which should be protected and an important structural green space. It's role in the SUE will be permanently lost if the allocation is included for development.

I referred earlier to the importance of the golf course as open space and green space. I consider that it is important to assess if the site was designated as local green space in the local plan. This is not a necessary action as part of our objection and the deletion of the proposed allocation, but given its current role as

structural greenspace, it is beneficial to designate the area to retain the benefits and enhance the character of the area.

Local Green Space

The current golf course land is important to the local community. It is in close proximity to the community it serves, is special to the local community and holds a particular local significance for its beauty, historic significance, recreational value and richness of its wildlife. With the existing housing around the site, and the concerns raised by the Parish Council, its retention and protection is logical and sound planning.

Classification of the Village

It is considered that the classification of Collingtree should be as a 'other village' and included in Policy R3 of the Local Plan. This would not undermine the SUE or land identified in the Part 2 Local Plan but would ensure protection for the core of the village and the important green space provided by the golf course.

Summary

On behalf of Collingtree Parish Council, I strongly object to the proposed allocation of part of the existing golf course for residential development. I therefore object to Policy N6(xx) and to Policy N19 although other policies are also relevant to this objection as referred to above. The local plan proposes to allocate some 300 houses in the area shown in Policy N19. The cumulative impact of the proposed additional development together with the SUE land and sites allocated in the Part2 Local Plan is unacceptable for Collingtree.

Our objection seeks the deletion of the proposed allocation as it is considered to conflict with the strategy and with the objectives of the Local Plan. The proposed allocation will effectively destroy the golf course and successful business. Collingtree Park Golf Course is an important and widely used local and regional recreational facility and the proposed allocation will cause the loss of an important green space within this part of Northampton which is subject to increased pressure on the village.

The proposed allocation should be deleted from the local plan.

It is considered that with the deletion of the proposed allocation from the Local Plan, there is an opportunity to designate the area not for any development but as a designated local green space. I have referred to this above. It is considered the village could be included in Policy R3.

I trust our objection will be considered and I am happy to meet and discuss this further if possible.

Yours faithfully



Nigel Ozier BA (Hons) MRTPI
Director Planning and Development.

Nigel.ozier@argroup.co.uk

