

Consultation on draft Local Plan: comments from the Corby Glen Neighbourhood Plan Group on the proposed allocation of new housing to Corby Glen (Policy SKPR-247 – Land North of Bourne Road)

Whilst we accept the need to build more houses, requiring the allocation of additional dwellings in settlements across South Kesteven, we have serious concerns about the proposed allocation of 144 new homes to Corby Glen. These concerns are outlined below:

1. The new allocation comes on top of an ongoing 66% expansion of the village

In the existing Local Plan, Corby Glen received an allocation of 265 new homes, proportionally the biggest expansion of all the large villages, as was noted in the Inspector's report on the Plan. In the event, there has been a further development of 25 homes on top of this allocation. So leaving aside what is proposed in the new Local Plan, the village is currently set to expand from its original 440 to 730 homes over the next five years or so

Our recently completed Neighbourhood Plan was built around a core principle that the village requires both policies and time that allow it to adapt to this expansion. In other words, the village needs a "breathing space" before further large-scale development. The relevant section of our Neighbourhood Plan (see page 13) is as follows:

"...there is a strong argument to be made that, because around 290 new houses are committed in Corby Glen (a 66% increase on the 2011 dwelling stock of 440), the new Local Plan should not commit more (large scale) housing to Corby Glen. Such an argument will be based on the physical and social capacity of the settlement and the need for a reasonable period of time for the new development to become physically and socially integrated. Thus, it is intended that this Neighbourhood Plan will contain policies that support future small-scale developments in Corby Glen, but not large-scale housing expansion."

And on page 13 there is the following:

"The view of the Steering Group is that it cannot support further large-scale developments unless it is clear (through local discussions between SKDC, the Parish Council and village residents) that, despite the recent substantial housing allocation, there remains sufficient physical and social capacity for the expansion to be absorbed. The process of developing Neighbourhood Plan policies along these lines will inform comments from the Parish Council on the Draft Local Plan, when it is issued and, if necessary, to enable it to participate in Local Plan Inquiry/Examination."

We remain convinced that the impact of the current expansion needs to "work through" before a further large-scale allocation of houses to Corby Glen. The proposed additional 144 homes to the village in the new Local Plan will take the housing stock to 875 or more, even leaving aside windfall development. This means that the size of Corby Glen will have doubled over a 10 to 15-year time span, a far greater change than for any other comparable village in South Kesteven.

2. Negative impact on sustaining a thriving and inclusive community

The new Local Plan includes a vision for villages (see page 20) that "*all villages will retain their diversity and vitality, with thriving communities, well planned and carefully managed development*". We have grave doubts that this vision can be realised for Corby Glen, given the new housing allocation that is proposed. We accept that all villages must expand and change with time, and that Corby Glen has a long history of successfully absorbing change whilst retaining its essential character and identity. However, we consider that the village currently faces unprecedented challenges which will be made even more severe with the additional 144 home allocation that is proposed. Some of these challenges are outlined below:

- The speed of the ongoing and newly proposed expansion. A cohesive community requires active social networks and supportive groups that are welcoming to all, and encourage active participation and volunteering. Such networks and groups can become ineffective when faced with an overwhelming speed of change and no opportunity for consolidation and “bedding in”.
- The geographical separation of the ongoing Bourne Road developments from the village centre, such that pedestrians and cyclists must negotiate the busy A151 to gain access to the middle of the village. There is a risk that Corby Glen ends up with two separate communities to the detriment of both.
- The absence of any proposals regarding additional housing for the elderly, which means that elderly resident (who contribute much to village life) have limited options, and may have to leave the village.
- The likelihood that a significant number of the new houses may be given over to multiple occupation. Whilst multiple occupation is entirely acceptable, such households can find it difficult to establish the lifestyle and social activities they enjoy when located in a relatively isolated rural community.

3. Overloading of the village’s infrastructure

During the preparation of our recently made Neighbourhood Plan, it was clear that residents had serious concerns about the likely impact on services of the new developments to the south of the A151 (defined in the existing Local Plan, now under construction) and the further addition of 144 homes will make the situation worse. To give examples:

Shops: Corby Glen currently has two small general stores, both located in the village centre at considerable distance from the new developments. Should the allocation be approved, we feel that the development must include provision of a new retail outlet.

GP services: The village currently has two GP centres but there appear to be no plans for increasing their capacity to cope with the ongoing population growth, leaving aside this new allocation.

Village hall: It should be noted that whereas Corby Glen has two community buildings it does not currently have a conventional village hall (contrary to what is stated on page 203 of the new Plan). One of the village’s community buildings is owned and overseen by the Church, and the other houses a pre-school nursery (making it unavailable during the working day). The village does not have a dedicated community centre (as incorrectly implied on page 203).

Thus, our view is that the vision for the Larger Villages (see page 20) that they “will continue to provide the necessary day-to-day services to ensure rural communities have choice in terms of homes, work and recreation” will not be realised for Corby Glen.

4. Lack of employment opportunities

Under the section “Vision for South Kesteven (villages and countryside”, page 20, it is stated that “Villages will have sufficient jobs and homes for local people”. Given that little employment land is proposed outside of the district’s towns, we are concerned that few new jobs will become available in Corby Glen, or the surrounding villages. This makes it likely that Corby Glen will become a dormitory village, which will have a negative impact on community life and environmental sustainability.

5. Traffic and pedestrian safety

The evidence document that underlies our Neighbourhood Plan contains extensive information concerning traffic and pedestrian issues arising from ongoing Bourne Road developments currently under construction.

These included congestion in the village centre (associated with journeys to the primary school and shops), pedestrian safety in crossing the A151 (to access the village centre), and the potentially dangerous road junctions for joining and crossing the A151 (unchanged since the 1950's, despite the huge increase in traffic using the A151).

Whilst it is beneficial that the new allocation of 144 houses is on land to the north of the A151 (meaning that pedestrian/cycle access to the village for these residents will not require negotiating the A151), the increased journeys arising from the additional housing will only worsen the traffic problems.

Should the new allocation on the north side of the A151 be approved, we would urge that planners use the opportunity to create a safer walking/cycling route into the village centre for the ongoing developments to the north of the A151.

6. Community safety

If the new allocation goes ahead, then once the ongoing and proposed developments have been completed, the population of Corby Glen will have doubled to well over 2000. Indeed, this may be an underestimate, given that significant numbers of the new houses could be rented for multiple occupation. Additionally, the age profile of the village will have changed, with greater numbers of younger residents. Quite understandably, these will wish to spend their recreation time socialising in the village (unless they have a car and can travel to nearby towns) and, from experience elsewhere, this will have implications for community safety. Currently, there are no plans for having a police presence in the village. It is notable that the eventual size of Corby Glen will be comparable to the villages of Billingborough and Caythorpe which already have a police station or office.

8. Lack of Open Space

Our recently made Neighbourhood Plan highlighted the fact that Corby Glen falls below the Open Space standard as defined in the existing Local Plan (see Page 38 of the Neighbourhood Plan, and Pages 37-38 of the Evidence document). Whilst SKDC have completed an extensive evaluation of Open Space (the "Open Space Sports and recreation study" cited in the new Local Plan), this does not include a settlement-by-settlement breakdown. The new Local Plan contains no mention of the shortage of Open Space in Corby Glen and whether/how this will be addressed.

In conclusion, the Neighbourhood Plan Group have serious concerns about the proposed allocation of 144 houses to Corby Glen, as outlined in the new Local Plan. Should the allocation remain unchanged, we would urge that there are extensive discussions with the local community, the Neighbourhood Plan Group, and the Parish Council to find ways in which these concerns can be addressed.