Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Corby Local Plan Part 2 Publication Draft

Consultation under Regulation 19 of Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

Submission of the Department for Education

1. The Department for Education (DfE) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of planning policy at the local level.

2. Under the provisions of the Education Act 2011 and the Academies Act 2010, all new state schools are now academies/free schools and DfE is the delivery body for many of these, rather than local education authorities. However, local education authorities still retain the statutory responsibility to ensure sufficient school places, including those at sixth form, and have a key role in securing contributions from development to new education infrastructure. In this context, we aim to work closely with local authority education departments and planning authorities to meet the demand for new school places and new schools. We have published guidance on education provision in garden communities and securing developer contributions for education, at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/delivering-schools-to-support-housing-growth. You will also be aware of the corresponding additions to Planning Practice Guidance on planning obligations, viability and safe and healthy communities.

3. We would like to offer the following comments in response to the above consultation document.

Soundness

4. As you will be aware, the primary focus at this stage of the Local Plan’s preparation is on the soundness of the plan, with regard to it being positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. The following detailed comments set out DfE’s view of the plan’s soundness in respect of education provision.

5. DfE supports the Council’s allocation and safeguarding of land for schools as set out in the following policies:
• **Policy 3 – Secondary School Opportunity Site**

6. DfE makes the following comments on *Chapter 4 Securing Infrastructure and Services*:

- Northamptonshire County Council have identified that there is a pressing need to provide a new secondary school to serve Corby. Northamptonshire’s forecast is that ‘the total number of students attending a Corby area secondary school is set to increase by an unprecedented 36% in the period ending September 2026’. The shortfall in places is anticipated to peak in 2022/3, when there will be a deficit of 203 places (equivalent to 7 forms of entry).

- On behalf of the Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust, LocatED was commissioned in January 2017 by the Department for Education (DfE) to find and acquire a 6 hectares (15 acres) site for a 1,200-pupil secondary school, plus 300-pupil sixth form. LocatED have undertaken a comprehensive assessment of potential sites within the search area. A number of potential sites were identified, the highest ranked site that is available and deliverable is the site located at Oundle Road North. The site at Oundle Road North is identified as an opportunity site in *Appendix 5 – Policies Maps* of the local plan. However, the DfE requests that a modification be made to Policy 3 to identify this site as the preferred location for the Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust School. This will help demonstrate that the Plan has been positively prepared to meet the area’s objectively assessed school infrastructure needs, as assessed by Northamptonshire County Council. In addition, this will also help to demonstrate that the Plan’s approach is justified and effective, as Oundle Road North is one of the few sites that is sustainable, suitable and deliverable within the plan period.

**Developer Contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

7. One of the tests of soundness is that a Local Plan is ‘effective’, meaning the plan should be deliverable over its period. In this context and with specific regard to planning for schools, there is a need to ensure that education contributions made by developers are sufficient to deliver the additional school places required to meet the increase in demand generated by new developments. DfE notes that Corby have produced a Planning Obligations SPD (Adopted April 2017) which will reflect Local Plan review priorities, and the Council will implement/review CIL rates to ensure appropriate rates are levied and the right infrastructure is secured across the borough (paragraph 2.3.1 – 2.3.3).

8. Local authorities have sometimes experienced challenges in funding schools via Section 106 planning obligations due to limitations on the pooling of developer contributions for the same item or type of infrastructure. However, the revised CIL Regulations remove this constraint, allowing unlimited pooling of developer contributions from planning obligations and the use of both Section 106 funding and CIL for the same item of infrastructure. The advantage of using Section 106 relative to CIL for funding schools is that it is clear and transparent to all stakeholders what value of contribution is being allocated by which development to which schools, thereby increasing certainty that developer contributions will be used to fund the new school places that are needed. DfE supports the use of planning obligations to secure developer contributions for education wherever there is a need to mitigate the direct impacts of development, consistent with Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations.
Forward Funding

9. In light of Policy 3: Secondary School Opportunity Site, DfE loans to forward fund schools as part of large residential developments may be of interest, for example if viability becomes an issue. Please see the Developer Loans for Schools prospectus for more information. Any offer of forward funding would seek to maximise developer contributions to education infrastructure provision while supporting delivery of schools where and when they are needed.

Conclusion

10. Finally, I hope the above comments are helpful in finalising Corby Borough’s Local Plan, with specific regard to the provision of land for school infrastructure.

11. Please notify DfE when the Local Plan is submitted for examination, the Inspector’s report is published and the Local Plan is adopted.

12. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries regarding this response. DfE looks forward to continuing to work with Corby borough to develop a sound Local Plan which will aid in the delivery of new schools.

Yours faithfully,

[Redacted]

Forward Planning Manager - North

Web: www.gov.uk/df