

Priors Hall, Corby

Key details

Name	Priors Hall Sustainable Urban Extension
Location	Corby, Northamptonshire
Number of dwellings	5095
Date first homes sold	2010 (first parcel complete 2011)
Homes delivered to date	Around 700 completions (all in Zone 1); 618 occupied as of December 2016
Percentage of affordable homes	The 10% requirement for Zones 1 and 2 hasn't been met so far. The S106 agreement also details payments to Corby and East Northants Councils for off-site affordable homes provision
Average house price	£225,000
Land dedicated to vehicles	36%
Road vehicle trips forecast	AM peak 4,091; PM peak 5,753
Parking provision	Two spaces per dwelling plus garage
Walking distance to railway station	60 minutes
Size of site	420 ha; 164.1 ha for residential use
Housing density	Parcel density ranges from 8 to 133 dph, mean 31 dph; (gross density across whole site 12 dph)
Planning guidance	Initial consent may have been subject to PPG3; later variations NPPF
Developer's Catchphrase	"Modern. Sustainable. Village. Life."

Background and context of development

Priors Hall Sustainable Urban Extension is located on the north-eastern fringes of Corby, Northamptonshire. A small village at the start of the 1930s, Corby grew rapidly during this decade to become an industrial town, due to the establishment of a large integrated ironstone and steel works. In 1950 Corby was designated a New Town, heralding a second phase of expansion, with a car-based layout and some large areas of public open space. A high proportion of the new residents came to the area from Scotland. The steelworks continued to dominate employment in Corby until the decision was taken in 1975 to phase out production from the area. By 1981, the steelworks closure had led to the loss of 11,000 jobs, with devastating consequences for the town. Public health in Corby is poor, with low life expectancy, and problems such as high levels of inactivity, obesity, and smoking-related deaths.



Regeneration was initially promoted by the establishment of an Enterprise Zone and substantial European Community grants. In 2001 the urban regeneration corporation Catalyst Corby (now known as the North Northants Development Company) was founded, with plans to double the population to over 100,000 and create over 30,000 jobs by 2030. The aim is to use expansion as a means to fund the regeneration of the town, with recent developments such as the Corby International Pool being built with the funds from the sale of land to developers.

Corby is now the fastest growing English authority outside London. In the years prior to the 2008 credit crunch there were high expectations for the area, with land being bought up by speculators from London. Formerly dubbed the largest town in Western Europe without a rail link, Corby station opened in 2009. Keen to attract commuters to relocate to the town's new residential developments, in 2010 North Northants Development Company ran a £660,000 publicity campaign featuring Stephen Fry, in which North Northamptonshire was branded 'North Londonshire.' This campaign was said to directly result in the sale of ten properties at Priors Hall Park.

North Northamptonshire has been classified under the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan as part of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands growth area – one of four growth areas in the greater south-east. The Regional Strategy envisions North Northants accommodating 52,100 new dwellings and 43,800 new jobs between 2001 and 2021, with Corby seeing the highest growth rates. Priors Hall is one of a number of large urban extensions planned around the neighbouring towns of Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and Rushden.



The development site at Priors Hall is divided into three Zones. Zones 1 and 2 are located within the Borough of Corby, while Zone 3 is in East Northamptonshire. The site contains a mix of brownfield and greenfield land. The area forming the core of the site, including most of Zones 1 and 2, was formerly an ironstone quarry producing material for the steelworks in Corby. A gully runs down the centre of this area, separating Zones 1 and 2. Zone 1 lies closest to Corby itself, though separated from the town by a large industrial estate. This Zone includes the recently built Corby Business Academy. A district centre is planned for Zone 1, while Zones 2 and 3 will each contain smaller neighbourhood centres.



All of the houses built so far have been within Zone 1. This development has been branded Priors Hall Park, and is divided into three sectors, known as Town Gardens, Weldon Lakes, and Rockingham Gate. The gully that separates this area from Zone 2 has been recognised as a County Wildlife Site.

In 2013 there was a successful application for variations of conditions from the original outline planning application approved in 2007. A second application for variation of conditions was submitted in 2015. The main effect of these has been to sequentially increase the size of the residential parcels, especially in Zone 2, to accommodate the lower than planned density of the initial developments. The second application has seen strong objections from the local Wildlife Trust, since it would mean a further reduction in the size of the corridors of open space between some of the residential parcels, with loss of limestone grassland habitat.

House-building stopped between 2011 and 2013 due to the bankruptcy of the developers, with two of their contractors, including a major local company, going bust because of missed payments. The developers, BeLa Partnership Ltd and Corby Developments Ltd, went into administration in October 2016, leading to Priors Hall being overseen by administrators from Deloitte.

Public Realm

Urban trees	In the sections already built these are concentrated in outward-facing areas, with very few trees within the main networks of streets. In some of the later stages, more street trees are planned.
Grass verges	Again, very few except in outward-facing areas in the sections already built (more planned in later stages)
Front gardens	Not in most sections built so far
Back gardens	Yes

Public transport, walking and cycling accessibility

There is currently no bus service within the development. The closest bus stop is at Corby Enterprise Centre, a five minute walk from the centre of the currently developed area close to Town Gardens.



According to the 2004 Transport Assessment, a bus service to Priors Hall could come close to reaching commercial viability. The assessment assumes 10% modal share for external trips by bus and 4% modal share for internal trips, meaning Priors Hall would generate 3540 trips per day. Applying the £1 flat rate fare scheme currently operating in Corby, and adding in the demand forecast on other parts of the corridor between Corby town centre and the development, this means a new bus service could generate £594,000 p.a. in revenue.

The transport assessment proposes a frequency of six buses an hour between Priors Hall Zone 1 and Corby, with some continuing to Zone 2 and others to Zone 3. These would operate from 0700 to 1900, Monday to Saturday, and would provide access to bus routes within 400m of all dwellings. It also proposes the extension of the hourly Corby – Northampton X4 service to the development, and the possible re-routing of the hourly X4 Peterborough – Northampton service to serve Priors Hall. It is noted that phasing of these bus services during the construction phase of the development is important to ensure a successful service, but a phasing strategy is not provided in this document. At

the present time, however, the only improvement that has taken place is the extension of the X4 Corby – Northampton service to Corby Enterprise Centre, just outside Priors Hall.

Walking and cycling measures proposed in the transport assessment include links within the development and a shared footway/cycleway along the road linking Priors Hall with the centre of Corby.

Destination	Company	Route numbers	Weekday daytime frequency	Weekday evening frequency	Saturday frequency	Sunday frequency	Travel time	Location of bus stop	Last return bus time
Corby town centre	Stagecoach Midlands	X4, 2, 2A, 67 (Carter's Travel)	Every 30-60 mins	One bus after 6.30pm	Hourly	None	16 mins	Corby Enterprise Centre	22.30
Corby train station	Stagecoach Midlands	X4, 2, 2A, 67 (Carter's Travel)	Every 30-60 mins	One bus after 6.30pm	Hourly	None	13 mins	Corby Enterprise Centre	22.33

Local Facilities

There are currently very little in the way of local facilities within the development. There are plans for a district centre in Zone One and neighbourhood centres in Zones Two and Three, but there is not yet a timescale for the construction of these centres. None of the Reserved Matters applications relating to the district and neighbourhood centres have been submitted yet. These applications are required to be submitted by 2022, but the developer may apply to change this condition to extend the deadline.

There is a park close to the main access point of the development, in the 'Town Gardens' area, which contains an amphitheatre feature. In September 2016 the primary school within Zone One opened; this has a community centre and a nursery attached to it. Temporary playing fields were also constructed in 2016. There is also a rather forbidding looking temporary play area.



Type of facility	Plans and current state of progress within development	Built yet within site?	Closest example	Estimated time to reach nearest example outside development			
				Walking	Cycling	Driving	Public transport
Convenience store	Shops will be built in 'district centre' and 'neighbourhood centres'	No	Londis, Weldon	21 mins	7 mins	4 mins	No direct link
Café / restaurant	A3/A4/A5 land uses planned in 'district centre' and 'neighbourhood centres'	No	JD's Breakfast House, Weldon	21 mins	7 mins	4 mins	No direct link
Drinking establishment	A3/A4/A5 land uses planned in 'district centre' and 'neighbourhood centres'	No	Shoulder of Mutton, Weldon	20 mins	6 mins	6 mins	No direct link
High street shops	'District centre' will contain over 8,000 sq m of A1/A2/A3/A4/A5 floor space.	No	Willow Place Shopping Centre, Corby	75 mins	22 mins	10 mins	25 mins (incl. 6 min walk)
Supermarket	May be provided within 'district centre'	No	Asda Corby	46 mins	14 mins	7 mins	14 mins
Nursery	Attached to the new primary school	Yes	Corby Business Academy Town Gardens				
Primary school	Three to be built within development, the first opened in Sept 2016	Yes					
Secondary school	Opened in 2008 within development footprint	Yes					
Park	Extensive 'informal open space' planned within development, including Town Gardens park in Zone 1	Yes					
Playground	Temporary play area	Yes					
Playing fields	Various planned within development, temporary pitch completed August 2016	Yes					
Tennis courts	No plans known	No	Corby Tennis Centre	80 mins	22 mins	11 mins	60 mins (incl. 23 min walk)
Leisure centre	A 400 sq m Community Sports Pavilion is proposed within Zone 2 of the development	No	St James Leisure Centre	61 mins	18 mins	8 mins	26 mins (incl. 13 mins walk)
Swimming pool	No plans known	No	Corby International Pool	73 mins	22 mins	11 mins	23 mins (incl. 7 min walk)
Wildlife area	County Wildlife Site will be contained within development when complete	Yes (not yet open)	The Gully				

Community Centre	Attached to the new primary school	Yes					
Daytime / evening classes	At the new community centre	Yes					
Medical facilities	A doctors' surgery is planned in the 'district centre'	No	Weldon Surgery	21 mins	7 mins	4 mins	No direct link
Post office	No plans known	No	The Jamb, Corby	52 mins	15 mins	10 mins	16 mins
Library	No plans known	No	Corby Library	74 mins	22 mins	11 mins	25 mins (incl. 9 min walk)
Co-working space	Corby Enterprise Centre opened in 2011	Yes (next to site)	Corby Enterprise Centre				

Developer contributions

There are a large number of section 106 obligations (see table below). However, since the developers went into administration in October 2016, future contributions became subject to negotiation, so the obligations listed below can be taken only as a guide.

A £15,000 public art project for the development has been commissioned by Fermynwoods Contemporary Art. The artwork will 'create a visual or narrative link between [the] three villages', thus the installation will visually link the three parts of the development built so far. The work is due to be completed in April 2017.

There are seven road junctions affected by the development and contributions will be expected for improvements to some of these junctions. There is also potential dualling of two sections of highway. Section 106 contributions include a payment towards the realisation of the Travel Plan targets. Northamptonshire County Council will be responsible for the implementation, monitoring and achievement of these.

In the past, s106 bus contributions from Northamptonshire urban extensions were not ringfenced and at Priors Hall these were lost the first time the developers went bankrupt. Section 106 monies from Priors Hall and other Northamptonshire urban extensions were put into a combined fund, £6.5m of which went towards the Corby Northern Orbital Road. This is a major new road which currently doesn't go anywhere because its fourth phase is not complete. Another £16m from this fund was expected to go towards the £32m Corby Southern Relief Road, but some of these contributions are still owing.

Stagecoach received one years s106 funding in 2011-12 (£80,000), to pay for an hourly bus service, and in fact ran a half-hourly service.

Obligation	Purpose	Amount	Paid to	Current status / Payment Plan
Off-site affordable housing	To fund affordable housing within Corby	£2,995,000	Corby Borough Council	£1 million within 28 days of agreement; £1 million on anniversary of above date; £995,000 prior to occupation of 1400 th unit. £2,045,000 paid so far.
Community facilities	To build two community facilities and transfer ownership to the council	£1,000,000 community facility contribution plus 50% of maintenance contributions for each (£30,000 for first facility)	Corby Borough Council	Obtain planning permission for the first community centre by 31/08/2015. Pay community facility contribution prior to occupation of 1501 st dwelling
Education provision	To build two primary schools and transfer ownership to the council. Contributions towards one secondary school	Secondary school contribution up to £7.5 million	Northants County Council	County Council to review secondary school places demand prior to occupation of 3500 th dwelling. First primary school now built; second to be built by August after occupation of 2000 th dwelling.
Highways Infrastructure and Public Transport	Towards realisation of travel plan targets	£15 million in total, but part can be offset by developer costs incurred in creating Corby Northern Orbital Road	Northants County Council	£1.65 million on commencement of development; £3.85 million by Jan 2010 or occupation of first residential unit; £4 million by second anniversary of occupation of first residential unit; \$4.5 million by occupation of 2500 th unit or Jan 2013; £1 million by occupation of 4350 th unit or Jan 2016
Police facility and CCTV	Provide community police base. Pay contribution for CCTV and ANPR	£405,300		£90,000 by April 2014; three more payments when 800, 1600 and 2400 dwellings are occupied.
Water cycle strategy contribution		£74,120		By 31/12/2015. Must also undertake any required infrastructure improvement works
Public art	For on- and off-site public art	£100,000. Work on-site is also being carried out by the developer	Corby Borough Council	£50,000 by April 2013; £50,000 by April 2014.
Planning obligation monitoring officer	Towards the cost of the officer		Corby Borough Council	£66,000 on April 2009 then £30,000 each year for the next ten years
Development control officer	Towards the cost of the officer		Corby Borough Council	£150,000 on April 2009 then £50,000 each year for the next ten years
Section 106 Monitoring Officer Contribution		£48,000	East Northants	£4,800 at the commencement of development then £4,800 per year
Fire and Rescue Contribution	To contribute towards the fire and rescue service	£67,620	East Northants	Prior to occupation of the 300 th dwelling

Summary

Priors Hall is one of the most ambitious developments in Northamptonshire. It has been dogged by delays and uncertainty at various points, and the current financial woes of Northamptonshire County Council will cause further concern.

The area is separated from Corby by a large industrial estate, with no attractive cycle or walking route to the town. In promotional materials for Priors Hall Park, the developers make almost no mention of Corby, instead being keen to emphasise the rural Northamptonshire setting and the ability to commute to London by road or rail. However, 8 years after the first houses were occupied there are still very few facilities on site, with not a single shop, cafe or pub.

