

Consultation Response to Draft Local Plan Regulation 18

This document is submitted as a formal response to South Kesteven District Council's Regulation 18 consultation on the Draft Local Plan. It outlines detailed objections to the proposed allocation of Site SKPR241 – land to the north of Church Lane, Great Gonerby – for housing development.

1. Environmental and Wellbeing Concerns

- Church Lane is a historically significant green lane, and the adjacent paddocks have been documented on maps for over 200 years.
- The Great Gonerby Walk along Church Lane is recognised in the SKDC Grantham Green Infrastructure Strategy. The walk attracts visitors from both within and outside the village due to its tranquil views of open green space and the church. Development would permanently erode this valued community asset.
- The proposed development would result in the loss of open green space, which is in breach of Policy EN3 on Green Infrastructure.
- The site forms part of an established natural landscape that includes protected views, biodiversity value, and long-standing hedgerow layouts.
- Wildlife habitat would be significantly harmed, with potential displacement or loss of foxes, bats, owls, badgers, and various birds and invertebrates.
- The peaceful and natural setting around Church Lane contributes directly to the health and wellbeing of local residents and visitors. Its loss would diminish community access to nature and quiet spaces.

2. Impact on Village Character and Heritage

- The proposed housing density is significantly higher than the established density of housing in the village, making it out of character and inconsistent with local architectural context.
- The development would compromise the historic layout of the village, including views, landscape patterns, and the setting of the Grade I listed church.
- Any enlargement of the Church Lane/High Street junction to accommodate development would directly threaten the historic Pinfold site and the village flagpole, which are central to local identity.
- The Conservation Area, long-established hedgerows, and historic footpaths would all be negatively impacted, resulting in a loss of the village's distinct rural heritage.

3. Traffic and Access Issues

- The site has previously been rejected for development (e.g., GGON06) due to poor vehicle access.
- While the Church Lane/High Street junction is claimed to have good visibility for vehicles, this does not apply to pedestrians, especially vulnerable users such as the elderly and children.

- The footpath leading from the church gate across High Street to Church Lane is a popular pedestrian crossing point, but it lacks direct sightlines. Residents currently rely on reflections in windows to judge approaching traffic.
- An increase in vehicle movements and any junction enlargement would make this crossing point significantly more dangerous and reduce safety for walkers, schoolchildren, cyclists, and runners.
- The development would add traffic to the already over-capacity and challenging junction at Belton Lane/Newark Hill.

4. Better Alternative Sites Exist

Objectors will point to the alternative development plans for land to the north of the village, which would be better suited for housing. The Parish Council is in discussions with the developers to find traffic solutions to minimise pressure on the Belton Lane/Newark Hill junction. This alternative site would then offer SKDC a higher number of dwellings, with a more appropriate infrastructure than at the Church Lane site and would allow development to align better with the existing character of Great Gonerby.

Conclusion

The objections to Site SKPR241 are extensive, well-supported, and based on both planning policy and detailed local knowledge. Development of this site would lead to the irreversible loss of a valued green space, harm to biodiversity and heritage, and introduce severe traffic and pedestrian safety risks. Local opposition reflects a strong desire to preserve the integrity and livability of Great Gonerby, while supporting more suitable development in alternative locations.

It is therefore recommended that South Kesteven District Council remove Site SKPR241 from the Draft Local Plan in exchange for the more sustainable alternative described above, for the long-term protection of a valued green space at the Church Lane Site.