

# **CORTON PARISH PLAN**

**CORTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**2 SEPTEMBER 2009**

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## Evidence-base

The material which follows derives from a total of fifty-seven individual submissions made by local residents. Twenty-seven of these derived from a series of requests (made in the *Coastline* village magazine) for local people to make their opinions known concerning the nature of the community in which they lived and the way they thought it ought to develop. The other thirty were the result of a *pro forma* (see the Appendix) created by a member of the Parish Council and circulated to every house in the village. In two cases, people responded both to the initial request for material and to the *pro forma*, with a certain variation in content in each document.

The overall level of response from people was thus very disappointing, when a total parish population of about 1,100 is taken into account and some 450 houses in the main built-up area of the village. Having said that, the overall quality of many of the submissions was high, running in some cases to three or four sides of A4, detailed in content and well argued. There was also a sufficiently broad range of topics itemised to make the production of a parish plan worthwhile. The evidence-base may have been small, but a number of common themes were apparent and these reflect aspects of the way that residents view their community and wish to see it develop.

A breakdown of the responses collected (counted as fifty-five in number to allow for the two people who responded twice) shows that nine of them were joint submissions from married couples. For statistical purposes, in analysing age-group and gender factors, the number of people making contributions to the raw data can therefore be counted as sixty-four. In broad terms of age-group, there were thirty-six submissions from retired people (56.%), twelve from those in employment (19%), six from young people at the pre-teen or teenage stage (9.4%) and ten anonymous returns from people whose age-profile could not be determined (15.6%). The loading at the upper end of the demographic profile not only reflects Corton's status as a "retirement village", but perhaps also resulted from people no longer in employment having more time to make submissions.

As far as gender is concerned, there were twenty-three responses from adult males (eighteen retired, five working), twenty-five from adult females (eighteen retired, seven working), two from boys, four from girls and ten anonymous ones where gender could not be established. Thus, there is not a great deal of disparity between the sexes, with twenty-five males identifiable in the data-gathering process (39%) and twenty-nine females (45%). A satisfactory degree of gender-balance is desirable in producing a document of this nature, to take account of differing attitudes and perspectives in male and female patterns of thought.

## **Overall View**

The general consensus was that residents are happy living in Corton. They like the “small village” atmosphere and, most importantly, felt that it was a safe environment in which to live and raise a family, owing to its relatively low crime figures (tribute was paid to the contribution made by the neighbourhood policing team). Even though the place is a village in the true sense of the word, however, it is no longer linked electorally with neighbouring rural communities, as it has for some years formed part of the urban ward of Gunton and Corton, represented by two councillors serving on Waveney District Council. Parish Council representatives do, however, continue to attend meetings of the Northern Parishes Liaison Group, to keep in touch with what is happening in the Lothingland rural neighbourhood.

Residents are aware that Corton has a number of valuable assets (both financial and social) – for example, a large playing field, a successful village school, historic buildings, areas of woodland and a tourist trade. However, they also know that, in order to develop the full potential of these assets, some positive changes do need to take place – changes which, in their opinion, would improve the village both for the residents of today and for future generations.

This parish plan is the synthesis of all the data collected, with equitable representation made of varying points of view and, wherever possible, with consideration given to the context of the local area in which Corton is situated and to elements of the planning framework established by the district council. The document also includes aspects of village life and experience not contained in the submissions made by residents, but which are worthy of recognition and which have significance within the community. The information it contains was accurately represented at the time of writing, but a number of situations will inevitably change with the passage of time.

## **Village Hall**

The Village Hall (or, more correctly, the Village Room) featured prominently in most people’s submissions, with the frequent comment that nearby car-parking capacity was inadequate for users of the facility. Most respondents said that the building should be sold to Suffolk County Council to facilitate expansion of the school, with the money raised being used to construct a new, purpose-built facility of some kind.

Only two people thought that the Village Hall should not actually be sold for school expansion, but that it should be leased instead.

Residents requested a Village Hall to be proud of – one with ample car-parking, with improved heating and lighting, and with internet facilities. Its location would be one where sports activities could take place, with tennis being top on the list of the activities requested. It was also envisaged that a youth club might be held there for teenagers, with computer games and other facilities, and with the opportunity for younger residents to become more involved in community affairs. There were also requests for a venue where art and craft sessions could be held, with formal instruction in practical skills included. The possibility of a “drop-in” coffee shop, where people both young and old could meet and socialise, was also raised as a possibility.

It is clear that residents want a modern, fit-for-purpose Village Hall, which would act as the real heart of the village, with modern facilities and lots of car-parking space. Further to the range of activities already mentioned were keep-fit sessions, weekly carboot-sales/fleamarkets and even farmers’ markets. There were also a few requests for a new village shop to be part of the hall, with post office facilities on offer.

As a postscript, it is worth noting that the Village Hall was built in 1890 for the self-improvement of local men, serving initially as a reading-room and meeting-place. It was part of a programme of works by Jeremiah James Colman, the Norwich mustard manufacturer (who had a cliff-top residence in the village), aimed at creating a “model village” and good domestic conditions for his employees. A bowling-green to the rear of the premises added further to leisure opportunity.

By a conveyance of January 1934, Alan Colman (grandson of the benefactor) donated both hall and green to Corton Parish Council, on condition that both facilities be run for the benefit of local residents by a separate management committee – presumably, to ensure that too great a concentration of power was not placed in the hands of the Parish Council. This publicly elected body is trustee of the premises and has responsibility for appointing the management committee (of no more than seven persons), which is itself meant to be representative of the different user-groups.

[*Note:* negotiations are currently being carried out with the Charity Commission for England and Wales, and with Suffolk County Council, for the latter to acquire the Village Hall and adjacent bowling green on a ninety-nine year lease. The intention is for the premises to become part of Corton VCP School, following an increase in the number of pupils created by the age-of-transfer to secondary education being raised to eleven years and by the consequent disappearance of middle schools. The hall would be converted within its existing shell into an assembly area and dining space, but remain available for community activities when not required for educational purposes. The bowling green will remain in use for an interim period, until a replacement has been provided on the Playing Field. In retaining the freehold, and having the hall modernised and made fit for purpose by another agency (something which it cannot

itself afford to do), the Parish Council believes that it is acting in the best interests of this important charitable amenity and of the village's residents.]

## **The Pit**

From the responses received, everyone seems disappointed with The Pit, with little to say in its favour. Following the removal of unsafe play equipment, it is felt that the area has lost its appeal, even its identity and purpose, and that local children do not appear to be interested in it.

There were a number of requests for more play equipment to be located there: swings for older children, a big slide, see-saw, roundabout, tyre-swing, zip-wire and fixed goal nets. There were also several suggestions that the village bowling-green be transferred to this site, with car parking available along the roadside or on The Pit itself.

A further opinion expressed was that the area could be transformed into a new village green, with attractive landscaping and planting, and with ample seating for residents and visitors alike. It was also proposed by some people that half of The Pit should be sold for housing development, with the money raised being used to create a specialist play-area.

Something further needs to be said regarding this green area, in the middle of the village, adjacent to the south side of Station Road not far from its junction with The Street. Two hundred years ago it was a sand/gravel pit belonging to the parish Surveyors of Highways, from which materials were dug for the repair of local roads. Long after this period of use, and following the Local Government Act of 1894, it became the property of the Parish Council. Many generations of Corton children enjoyed it as "Nature's playground", before infill with all kinds of waste during the post-war period made it less and less suitable for such activity. During the 1970s and 80s the area was progressively filled with soil and levelled off, before being grassed over and used as a play area.

The Pit is about one and a half acres in size and the Parish Council's possessory title to it was confirmed in July 2005. It is currently registered as Open Space. There is potentially a good deal that could be done with the land, but little funding at present to achieve much. One possibility is the attainment of planning permission for a building plot at the eastern end, which is mainly solid ground rather than grassed-over infill. The revenue raised by sale of the land might then enable something imaginative and worthwhile to be carried out. In the meantime, the *Police arish* Council has allocated the sum of £5,000 (£2,000 from Section 106 Money, £3,000 from its own budget) to be spent on providing play equipment aimed at younger children – this to be located at the area's western end.

What is not in doubt is that The Pit forms a valuable open area in the middle of the village, in terms of landscape amenity, with the potential to make an enhanced contribution to community use and enjoyment.

## **Playing Field**

A large number of respondents agreed that the Playing Field was an exceptional asset, considering its size in relation to that of the village. At just over ten acres, it is the largest village playing field in Suffolk. It was given to the Parish Council by the Colman family of Norwich, mustard manufacturers, because of their long connection with the village, and a lease agreement of July 1965 (renewable after sixty years) established that the facility be run by a separate management committee for the benefit of parishioners – a similar arrangement to the administration of the Village Room (five of this committee have to act as trustees). At the moment, use is mainly devoted to local league football – but, without the hire of pitches, there would be little or no revenue to make the field viable. In terms of football alone, Corton Playing Field makes an important contribution to the provision of suitable venues in the Waveney area – and, without it, fixture commitments would be challenged.

There were many suggestions as to how this facility could be improved. Again, villagers thought there was insufficient play equipment on it. There were requests that more equipment be installed in the present location, then the area fenced off to stop dogs fouling there – something which should not happen, but does. It was even suggested that a section of the playing field could be fenced off for dog-walkers and the remainder of the field designated for recreational sports use only. It was also suggested by several people that the village bowling green be relocated to this site. One possible location was in the north-west corner, with high chain-link fencing surrounding it and with the installation of CCTV cameras, attractive landscaping and lots of seating.

Most people suggested that a new village hall should be built on the field, replacing the rather “tired” pavilion – with the possibility of a café and public toilets being installed in one part of the structure. There were also requests for tennis courts, more seating around the field, a fenced community football pitch with stationary goals, an all-weather-surface pitch, and ample car-parking to cater for sports events, sports teams, visitors and holidaymakers. Some respondents suggested that antique fairs, car boots and farmers’ markets might be held on a regular basis.

A number of residents said that they would like to see better general landscaping of the Playing Field, including the planting of trees along the northern and eastern sides. They wanted the field to be a real focal point for the village. It was also asked if drainage on the field, on its eastern side near The Street, could be improved.

Many of the ideas above are sensible and creative, but any scheme to revitalise the Playing Field and extend its use and appeal will rely heavily on outside funding.

There is a real need for someone within the village community (or outside of it), with the expertise required, to co-ordinate funding bids and make the presentations in the correct way. One possible means of raising revenue, in order to be able to seek match-funding from outside agencies, is to seek planning permission for suitably-sized plots in either the north-western or south-western corners of the field (or both), on which single dwellings might be built. The present Playing Field Committee wants to extend the appeal of the field and improve facilities, but it all comes down to how any improvements can be financed.

[*Note:* The most recent development has been the decision by the sub-committee, formed to consider ways of achieving this, to commission a feasibility study from Kam Ltd., of Alfreton, Derbyshire – a sports consultancy company that specialises in accessing funding sources appropriate for community projects.]

## **Corton Woods**

There were a number of requests for more to be made of Corton Woods, mainly by creating a nature trail, with educational notice boards telling people about the trees and wildlife present – the kind of information available in Gunton Wood. Recreational days out in the woods seemed to be a popular idea, with more seating provided to cater for users. It was felt that the area as a whole could be a fine place for families to enjoy Nature and learn more about it. One perceived need was for the layout of paths in the wood to be displayed on boards, so that people could find their way around more easily.

Most of the Corton Woods area, which is accessible to the public, lies in the neighbouring parish of Gunton – though before boundary changes it had been situated in Corton. It belongs to Waveney District Council and is managed on its behalf by a local group of volunteers, acting on advice from the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. Together with adjacent areas of grassland lying to the south and west of the trees, the total area open to the public is around twenty acres. It was once coastal heath, but nineteenth century planting with mainly native species turned it into a largely deciduous plantation (alder, ash, beech, birch, chestnut, hazel, hawthorn, lime, oak, sycamore etc.) with some evergreen presence (holly, holm oak and Scots pine).

It is an amenity much enjoyed by local people and visitors alike and, with a continuing programme of appropriate management, can be improved further. One specific feature that will require attention in the next few years is the large pond at the southern end, because there is a danger of it becoming choked with weed and algae during the summer months. Another possible development is the classification of the main north-south trackway through the middle of the wood as a footpath, as a means of raising its status and promoting use of the wood itself among a greater number of people

Apart from any significance as a local leisure amenity, Corton Woods are also important as a wildlife haven, with a varied flora and fauna and with an important role to play for certain species of bird on the spring and autumn migrations.

## **Corton Beach and the Naturist Section**

All residents who commented on the Naturist Beach area wanted it re-designated for general use, with the naturists relocated elsewhere. One person felt it had legitimised lewd behaviour in the locality and did not fit with the original concept of a naturist beach. It was common opinion that the facility, as it currently operated, acted as an unpleasant and upsetting surprise for holidaymakers and was not safe for families or children. Local people felt uncomfortable with the number of single males in the surrounding area and some dog owners did not walk along this stretch of beach and cliff any more. Concern was also raised regarding possible damage to the local holiday industry because of all the unsavoury activity that went on. One person even suggested clearing clifftop vegetation along Corton Road to stop unacceptable behaviour and using part of the area as a nature activity-centre for tourists and local families.

It was agreed that the rest of the limited beach-area at Corton had poor access to it and that signing was also of an insufficient standard. There were requests for access-slopes at Baker's Score and Tibbenham's Score to be installed, so that disabled people, cyclists and elderly holidaymakers could enjoy the seaside more. Seating was also requested at the top of Tibbenham's Score, with general upgrading of this particular location to match what had been done at Baker's Score, with its two viewing-areas. There were requests for both areas to be better landscaped and maintained, and a number of complaints were made concerning the amount of litter deposited along the seawall – especially fishermen's rubbish, left behind after angling sessions.

[*Note:* since the data was collected for this document, Waveney District Council has taken the decision to close the Naturist Beach area, as from 1 November 2009, and to relocate it.]

## **Sea Defences**

The whole matter of sea defence has to be set within the context of the Shoreline Management Plan, drawn up some years ago. The strategy, basically, is to defend the village frontage for the foreseeable future with a concrete seawall (given a notional life-span of twenty-five to thirty years) and rock apron, but to leave the cliff-line to the north of the village to erode by natural processes. Such a course of action may eventually have a material effect on one of the parish's three large holiday camps, Broadland Sands – to say nothing of Anglia Water's emergency pumping station on Besoms Loke (parish footpath No. 5).

Local opinion places a good deal of importance on sea defences of some kind being maintained – certainly along the main built-up area, but also to the north of Baker’s Score. The vulnerability of clay cliffs is recognized – but there is also the feeling that if the former groyne field were to be reinstated, beach levels would begin to be restored. There is no doubt that groynes do assist the process of accretion and that the best form of defence for a cliff is a beach.

Concern was expressed at the possible long-term scouring effect of the northern beach at Corton (and also at neighbouring Hopton), caused by construction of the Yarmouth Outer Harbour. There were also comments made on the “mortgage blight” currently suffered by property-owners on the east side of Corton Street, where a notional fifty-year line to show the possible future position of the cliff (edging the eastern margin of the carriageway), has caused problems for people wanting to sell and purchase houses. It may well be that the west side of The Street will soon be similarly affected – if, indeed, it isn’t already. One accurate indicator of the extent of the erosion which took place during the Twentieth Century is the distance between the remnants of the old Colman sea wall (started in 1876) and the present-day cliff base.

A further factor to be considered in the erosion of Corton cliffs is the part played by surface water drainage, which causes seepage through the glacial clay and creates instability along the face. This has been exacerbated over the years by developers not taking account of old, established drainage systems, which took the water away westwards by a system of ditches and culverts. A number of these have been cut through and backfilled, forcing the water towards the cliff-face.

As a concluding comment, it is perhaps worth requesting that both district and county councils having vulnerable coastlines should consider lobbying national government for effective sea defence schemes (in terms of cost and erosion-prevention) to prevent further loss of land. If the Dutch are capable of protecting their country, with its vulnerable topography, it should not be beyond the wit of the English to do the same!

## **Public Transport**

Residents would like new, interactive timetable display signs for the village, to show if buses are running on time. It was also requested that a timetable be placed in the bus shelter adjacent to The Pit, in Station Road. Some residents felt that it was unclear as to where exactly buses stopped in some parts of the village – though, generally speaking, the stops are well indicated. Other people were unhappy that unsuitable buses, with too high steps for the elderly and disabled, are being used on the village routes. A free bus to the Tesco store was also requested – as was the provision there of some kind of cover at the stop, to give shelter to people during periods of wet weather.

For the most part, Corton is well served by its buses, especially on weekdays, being on a direct route between Lowestoft and Martham and also being able to access other services which call at the Tesco store, a mile or so away near the A12. Use of the buses is noticeable among residents who have retired from employment and who carry concessionary passes and also among visitors staying at Warner's holiday camp (now known as Corton Classic Resort) – many of whom, again, make use of their passes. Problems of reliability in the service are caused from time to time by buses being delayed by traffic build-up in Great Yarmouth *en route* to Lowestoft.

## **Education**

Residents were very pleased with the excellent village primary school (Church of England Voluntary Controlled) and wanted it to stay open and expand, seeing it as a means of encouraging more young families into the village. The pupils receive an excellent education, both in terms of formal lessons and via the wide range of activities which take place beyond the classroom. OFSTED inspection reports reflect the school's strength and it is a vital part of the village's life. Because of its success, a number of the children attending are out-of-zone admissions and their being brought and collected by car can cause traffic problems on roads close to the school at drop-off and pick-up times.

With the age-of-transfer from primary to secondary education now having been changed in the Northern and Western areas of Suffolk, from nine years of age to eleven, and with the consequent abolition of middle schools, Corton Primary School will see an increase in its number of pupils from about seventy at the present time to 100+ by September 2011. One means of achieving this enlargement is for the LEA to acquire the Village Room and Bowling Green. The former, in being converted to a school assembly and dining hall, would be modernised to an acceptable standard and still be available for community use – something which is encouraged by current government policy.

Corton School does, in fact, already make its facilities available to the wider community, both in the evenings and at weekends – with the added advantage of the playground being used for car-parking. The headteacher is fully aware of the school's value as a focal point for village activity and keen to maintain this aspect of its existence. She is also cognizant of the value of involving the children, wherever possible, in a wider experience than that prescribed by the academic curriculum alone. One possible development in this matter is the suggestion that the school should hire a plot on the village allotment area as a means of instructing pupils in basic gardening techniques and encouraging "green living".

## **Roads and Pavements**

There was general agreement that car-parking caused a problem along The Street and also in Mills Drive on some occasions when the Playing Field was in use. Apart from the matter of any traffic congestion, there was also periodic obstruction caused by some vehicles parking on pavements – thereby making passage difficult for the elderly, mothers with prams and the disabled. The Street constitutes an historic problem, being no longer adequate for the demands made on it. It is narrow for most of its length, especially between the Methodist Chapel and *The White Horse* public house, and a number of the residents have limited capacity to park their cars off the carriageway.

There were many requests for a 20 MPH speed limit along The Street, in view of its narrow nature, the limited visibility caused by parked cars and the tendency for some people to ignore the present 30 MPH mandatory limit. The Parish Council formally requested this in 2007 and Suffolk County Council placed a camera near the entrance to Mill Lane to monitor vehicle speeds in both directions. They proved, on average, to be just below 30 MPH, but only because the camera was set up (against local recommendation) in the narrowest part of the highway, instead at either the northern or southern ends. The need for a 20 MPH limit remains.

The placing of a speed camera was also suggested near to the A12/Corton Long Lane junction (where a number of accidents have occurred), to reduce the speed of vehicles coming off the dual carriageway and travelling in a southerly direction. Another solution might be to position the 40 MPH sign further to the north, along the dual carriageway, in order to give drivers more time to reduce their speed.

A further suggestion in the cause of road safety was that double yellow lines be introduced on the corner of The Street with Station Road. This is a busy junction, with bus stops nearby and with the thoughtless parking of cars in evidence from time to time as people visit the *New China* take-away restaurant.

There were repeated requests for a pavement to be constructed from the last cottage in Church Lane up to the parish church itself. Local people felt that this was a dangerous stretch of road, especially on dark winter evenings. Another suggestion was for a footpath to be introduced, routed alongside the Almshouses and through to Church Lane, with the exit at Mollhills Pond gateway. The idea of a footway of some kind to link the village with St. Bartholomew's Church is a sound one, as the present physical separation between the two (though not great, in terms of distance) is sufficient to prevent one becoming an integral part of the other. It would also be helpful to have the parish church indicated by some signage in the village itself, as visitors sometimes get the building confused with the Methodist Chapel.

Other comments on the general subject of road safety included requests for the cycle-lanes on Corton Long Lane to be removed, as the road was not considered wide enough for them (though other respondents wished to see them retained) and the provision of a cycle-way alongside the A12 dual carriageway, to link with that joining Hopton-on-Sea and Gorleston. The latter idea is particularly sound, as there seems

little prospect at present of the proposed Sustrans cycle-route being constructed across agricultural land lying to the west of the village. There were also critical remarks made about the decayed state of certain pavement areas in the village – especially those on Station Road.

## **Footpaths**

The footpaths in the parish at large attracted little comment, which perhaps reflects how much (or how little!) they are used by residents. At the same time, they remain an important part of the community's history and heritage. All eight paths (two of which lie within the built-up area of the village) are registered on the County's definitive map. The two most used are probably Nos. 3 and 4, the former of which links the village with the A12 across open fields, the latter providing a more secluded and shaded route to the Stirrups Lane railway bridge. Spending restraints in local government are fully understood, but it would be helpful if the County Council could fund some kind of routine maintenance of these two particular paths.

Also of some importance in the local framework are the courtesy paths laid out by Anglian Water around its large sewage treatment works. These are of considerable amenity value and bring a new perspective to the local landscape for those people who walk them. They also serve to aid observation of an interesting and varied local wildlife in terms of both fauna and flora.

## **Street Lighting**

Opinion was unequivocal, by those people who hold this view, that the standard of street lighting in Corton was poor – with at least one respondent raising the matter of health and safety issues. The current scheme was introduced during the 1960s and is below the standard required for an urban environment. However, there were residents who felt that the provision was adequate and more suited to a village environment than a full urban scheme would be. There was even one respondent who thought that no street lighting at all would produce more of a rural ambience and create a traditional atmosphere long-since destroyed.

The introduction, in places, of new units which throw the light downwards and therefore limit upward glare is to be welcomed. Hopefully, these will eventually replace all of the older variety of street-light.

## **Holiday Industry and the Local Economy**

Residents were generally pleased that holidaymakers enjoyed staying in Corton and found social contact with them friendly and beneficial. The three big holiday camps particularly (Broadland Sands, Corton Classic Resort – formerly Warner's – and

Waterside Park) were felt to be a great asset to the community and the income generated in the local economy, as well as the employment created, was seen as being of some importance. It is also worth remembering that without the capital value of the two camps situated within the village itself, the sea wall protecting the cliff would probably not have been built.

One area of expressed concern was the current status of Waterside Park, where a change in planning consents some years ago effectively allowed residential use of the site to be practised – both by individual chalet owners and by the parent company. This even extends to people being able to designate what were originally intended as holiday units only as their electoral address(es). The other matter which causes a certain degree of unease in the village is the use of some dwellings on the site as a base for migrant workers of various kinds, often on short-term contracts of one kind or another.

## **Architecture and Housing Development**

Most respondents who commented did not wish to see the village undergo any large-scale expansion, but had reservations about infill development resulting from the sale of garden-plots. Any properties that are built in the future should be more sympathetic to their surroundings, with a better standard of design. At the same time, the comment was made in some quarters that Corton does lack affordable housing for the younger element of its population – though it is difficult to see how this can be provided within existing planning parameters. Sheltered accommodation (with warden) for a number of elderly people is provided by the Corton Almshouse Charity at St. Bartholomew's Court, where a complex of well-designed bungalows, using traditional materials, shows what can be achieved in terms of appropriate build.

It was clear from the comments made that residents do not wish to see Corton greatly expanded, in the manner of Carlton Colville or Hopton-on-Sea, and value their village environment in its present form. However, it was also recognised that some increase in the number of dwellings was inevitable. Within the context of Waveney District Council's Local Development Framework, no major expansion is envisaged for Corton at the time of writing – part of an overall intention to maintain a strategic gap between the large built-up areas of Lowestoft and Gorleston/Great Yarmouth. Two possible areas for housing development (to the north of the main village area and to the north of Blundeston Road) were indicated in LDF documentation published during 2008, but have since been withdrawn. It remains to be seen what further changes (if any) are mooted, as planning policy develops to meet both local and national requirements.

## **The Colman Legacy (Buildings)**

There were a number of comments made regarding the older houses and cottages in the village and the need to give these some kind of recognition and protection. Jeremiah James Colman, the Norwich mustard manufacturer, lived in a large, cliff-side house in the village from 1869-1898 and, during that time, shaped the community in such a way that his influence still remains as one of the dominant visible features. It is desirable that this architectural legacy is duly acknowledged.

Like many reforming Nonconformist industrialists of the time, Colman felt it incumbent upon him to improve the lives of his employees – not only in their domestic situation, but also in their social and moral condition. In the case of Corton, this took the form of creating a “model village” of sorts, with the construction of distinctive, good-quality buildings. Coming a generation later than what had been achieved by Samuel Morton Peto at Somerleyton in “picturesque” pseudo-Tudor style, Colman’s creation is no less impressive.

Indeed, the overall collection of buildings is far more comprehensive than what was constructed at Somerleyton – and, up till now, the exterior appearance of most of them has not been radically altered or compromised. The Colman estate, in terms of bricks and mortar, may be summarized thus: sixteen semi-detached workers’ houses (mainly in the village, but with two units located in the wider parish), four coastguard cottages, head gardener’s bungalow, gamekeeper’s cottage, village room (usually referred to as the “village hall”), coffee-house (now converted into dwellings), Methodist chapel and village school. It may not be possible to get any one of these buildings listed in its own, individual right, but it would be good to have the whole collection given some kind of protection under a local listing. Thus would an important social and architectural creation be given the recognition it deserves.

## **Local Services**

Many residents still miss the village post office, which closed some years ago, both in terms of the service it offered and the social ambience it created. The possibility of a mobile post office has been investigated, but there are three sub-post offices within a two-three mile distance of Corton and this means that Royal Mail will not provide a mobile facility (the matter has been investigated). Some respondents speculated as to whether the local Tesco branch could have an in-store post office. There was even the suggestion that post office services might eventually be available from a new village hall/community centre, if one were to be built.

Apart from the regular fortnightly visit of the County Council’s library van, many respondents felt that the village was lacking in services in a number of areas. Shop provision was poor, with the small store located at Waterside Park (formerly Waterside Village) being somewhat spasmodic in operation and limited in the stock it carried. Newspapers were available from it when it was open, as indeed they are from the in-house shop at Corton Classic Resort. Two public houses, *The Corton Hotel* (formerly *The Hut*) and *The White Horse*, continue to function at the present time,

offering their hospitality to local people and visitors alike, while the *New China* take-away restaurant is another popular amenity.

In spite of the recycling scheme currently operated by District and County councils, a number of respondents felt that recycling facilities in the village were poor in one specific area: the disposal of large items. The possibility of having a refuse lorry visit the village at regular intervals was suggested, so that people who cannot get to the recycling depot in Pakefield could rid themselves of unwanted material.

## **Law and Order**

The efforts of the neighbourhood policing team are appreciated by residents, with regular visits by the Police Community Support Officer being valued not only in the cause of crime prevention and detection, but also in the matter of fostering community relations. The parish is relatively low in criminal activity, with a substantial proportion of the crimes committed being associated with the holiday park referred to earlier, where a quasi-residential status leads to a certain degree of itinerancy and the problems associated with it.

## **General Village Environment**

There was common consensus that dog-fouling and the deposition of litter were notable (and noticeable) problems in Corton. The main litter “hotspots” were identified as being in the vicinity of the take-away restaurant and at the bus-stops, and at least part of the problem was felt to be the shortage of suitable litter-bins in the village itself. There is no such excuse to be made in the matter of dog-fouling, because Corton is well provided with dog-waste bins and a number of residents do use them regularly. As always, it is people lacking in a sense of responsibility or civic pride who seem content to pollute their home environment without any apparent concern for the effects.

A number of people felt that verges and hedges are not sufficiently well maintained and that some parts of the village look scruffy. The question of garden hedges overhanging pavements and causing partial obstruction was specifically referred to and means of rectifying the problem suggested by seeking parish council or district council intervention. One possible means of raising the overall appearance of the village was for it to be entered into one of the “In Bloom” or “Best Kept” competitions – though the mechanics of organising this were not considered.

Further ideas for the enhancement of the village’s visual quality included the planting of trees, wherever suitable, and the removal of grass-cuttings from both verges and those small open areas tended by the district council. It was also felt that a number of drain-heads and gulleys needed cleaning out – especially along The Street – to

prevent the unnecessary build-up of surface water. And there was a specific request that no more sections of ditch be filled in anywhere along Corton Long Lane.

A certain body of opinion felt that something could be made of the village's history, especially the connections with the Colman family. There were a number of requests for display boards to be sited in suitable places to provide information on aspects of Corton's past. Some residents thought it might be possible for the holiday camps to have an historical leaflet available for their guests, telling them something of the place in which they were staying. Another idea was that plaques could be placed on certain buildings in the village, reflecting their historical significance. There was even the suggestion that a village museum might be established for the benefit of local residents and holidaymakers alike.

The village allotments, on its northern edge adjacent to Church Lane, were seen as an asset. The area comes under the aegis of the Poor's Land Trustees and the demand for plots has increased in recent years. There is further land available to create more plots, should the need arise.

## **Rural Environment, Farming and the Countryside**

The majority of the material in this document has been concerned with the main, built-up area of the village, but outside of these bounds Corton is still very much a rural parish – with most of the available acreage devoted to agriculture. It would, therefore, be remiss to make a statement concerning the nature of the community, without taking into account at least some aspects of the surrounding countryside.

One recent idea in Waveney District Council's Local Development Framework, mooted as a possible future development, has been relocation of the Lowestoft and Yarmouth Rugby Union Football Club from its present headquarters to one or other of two areas of farmland: the first immediately west of the village and north of Corton Long Lane, the other east of the A12 and north of Doles Wood. Either of these sites would result in an unwelcome intrusion into an otherwise open rural environment – to say nothing of the extra motor traffic generated by those people using the amenities. Also worthy of consideration is the matter of good-grade agricultural land being taken out of use at a time when national self-sufficiency in certain areas of food production is likely to become increasingly important.

Another unwelcome possible development of recent years was the exploratory move made by a Lowestoft engineering firm to site two large wind turbines in the vicinity of St. Bartholomew's parish church. Leaving aside the benefits of "green energy", wind generation is still far from being a proven and reliable producer of electricity because of gearbox failure on the turbines (witness Gulliver!) and the siting of the pylons needs to be done with sensitivity shown for the local environment. In the opinion of a number of local people, Corton "did its bit" for the Lowestoft area generally when the community had to accept the construction of a large sewage

treatment works ten years ago. Therefore, any further large-scale engineering works will not be regarded as welcome.

Even though the farmland is comparatively open and exposed, owing to the progressive grubbing-out of hedges in the decades following World War II (this being done in the cause of arable efficiency and allowing the use of increasingly large machines), there are certain areas of deciduous plantation which have a high species count in terms of both flora and fauna. Not only do native and migrant birds find refuge there, but roe deer and badgers are also resident in two specific locations. The family which farms the majority of the land in the parish is aware of the value of wildlife diversity and is creating a series of buffer zones around the edges of certain fields, where cultivation is abandoned and Nature allowed re-assert itself.

A hedgerow survey of the parish (which was undertaken in the summer of 2008 as part of the Suffolk county-wide scheme) shows that the parish, while not generously endowed with hedges, has a sufficient surviving number of them to make a worthwhile contribution to wildlife conservation – as well as providing an insight into the historical evolution of the local landscape. The Sewage Treatment Works (which was referred to earlier), after undergoing an initial period of visual and ecological “rawness” in the adjacent countryside, is beginning to merge into its surroundings. The landscaping and planting carried out, though in need of some remedial work in places, has been generally successful – and the walks laid out for members of the public are both instructive and enjoyable. The main need currently is for Anglian Water’s landscape contractors to give the paths and access gates regular attention, in order to keep them easily passable.

In conclusion, the one remaining comment to be made concerning the rural environment in Corton is a negative one – and one that would be made in a number of other local communities. It concerns the tendency for people (largely from outside the parish) to use certain out-of-the-way areas for fly-tipping all kinds of domestic refuse and trade-waste. The main “blackspots” are the large lay-by beside the A12, to the north of Corton Long Lane, the Stirrups Lane railway bridge gateway and the access road to the former sewage treatment works (now a pumping-station) on Besoms Loke. It is worth noting that the Waveney District Council Cleansing Department is usually quick to clear up any mess that is reported. One means of solving the problem at the second of the three locations mentioned would be for Anglian Water to acquire the infilled former railway line to the east of its sewage treatment works and make the area secure.

## **Organisations and Interest Groups**

The village has a number of formal bodies, societies and committees, as listed below:

Bingo Club

Bowls Club

Brownies Group

Coastline Art Group

*Coastline* Magazine (catering for Corton and Hopton-on-Sea)

Corton Football Club

“Corton the Act” (occasional drama/entertainment group)

Dog Walkers’ Group

Happy Circle (elderly persons’ social group)

Methodist Church Council

Mother and Toddler Group (Methodist Chapel)

Parochial Church Council (St. Bartholomew)

Parish Council

Playing Field Committee

Poors Land and Almshouse Trusts (allotments and sheltered housing)

School Governors

Seltic Football Club (Sunday League)

Tai Chi Group

Textile Group (craft fellowship)

Village Hall Management Committee  
Wives Group  
Woods Group

## **Appendix**

### **Corton Parish Council Needs Your Help!**

Your Local Parish council is trying to produce a Parish Plan. Due to the small amount of responses so far we are now writing to all Corton residents personally in a bid to have enough opinions to complete your Parish Plan.

#### **So what exactly is a Parish Plan?**

A Parish Plan determines the future of your community and how you can change it for the better. It is a document that sets out a vision for the future of a parish and outlines how that can be achieved in an Action Plan.

#### **What has a Parish Plan got to do with me?**

Everything! As a resident, this is one of the few chances you have to say what you think about your village. Your views are very important to us and to the future generations of the village. Without your help we cannot proceed to make positive changes.

#### **What am I supposed to write?**

You need to think about all aspects of our village. **How you think it could be improved and, most importantly, why.** There are no right or wrong answers; we need to hear what you have to say. To give you some ideas, here is a list of things which you might like to include with your ideas. All we ask is if you could spare the time to jot down your thoughts. It does not need to be laid out in a professional letter or to be presented as an essay. Simply a few ideas on a piece of paper will do. Here are some subjects you might like to include: The Playing Field, The Pit, The Village School, The Village Hall, The Bowling Green, Corton Woods, The Nudist Beach, The Public Beach, Access to the Beach, Sea Defences, Bus Stops and Bus Services, Litter, Car Parking, Play Equipment for Local Children, Seating, Dog Fouling, Housing, Allotments, Facilities available for the Young and the Elderly, the list is endless.....So please put pen to paper and write to us. **You can use the reverse of this letter if you like.**

[Space left for responses.]

[Space left for responses.]

**Please use additional paper if required.**

Thank you for your valued opinions. Responses can be returned to:

David Butcher 2 Gladstone Road, Corton.

Patricia Smith 8 Corton Long Lane, Corton.