

By Email: savannah.cobbold@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Ref. SMcA/NW Haverhill
Date: 10th May 2024

Savannah Cobbold
Planning Department
West Suffolk House
Western Way
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 3YU

Dear Ms Cobbold,

Re: Objection to Planning Application Ref. DC/24/0366/FUL for a convenience store and drive-through coffee shop with associated parking and landscaping (following demolition of existing public house) at the Fox Public House, Haverhill Road, Little Wratting, Suffolk, CB9 7UD.

Persimmon Homes (Suffolk) wishes to formally object to planning application reference DC/24/0366/FUL for the reasons outline below.

Background

Full planning permission for the construction of a relief road and associated works and Outline Planning Permission for (i) Residential development (ii) primary school (iii) local centre including retails and community use (iv) public open space (v) landscaping and (vi) infrastructure, servicing and other associated works was granted on 27th March 2015 (Ref. SE/09/1283) at Land north-west of Haverhill, Little Wratting, Haverhill.

Persimmon's development, Boyton Place, will provide circa 1100 new homes and our vision is to create an exciting new community which includes a successful local centre to support the new community. Reserved matters have been approved the infrastructure to serve the development, residential phases 1, 2a, 2b, 3b and 6 as well as a play park and open space. Approvals have thus far been granted for 575 dwellings, many of which are occupied. Discussions for Phase 3a which incorporates a Local Centre are at an advanced stage with West Suffolk Council with an application due to be submitted in June 2024. The proposals include a supermarket and commercial floorspace with a combined total area of 539 sq.m.

Persimmon Homes is aware of a further development at north-east Haverhill for a further 2,500 dwellings, primary schools, employment and two local centres (Ref. DC/15/2151/OUT) which is well under way.



The provision of local centres secured through these developments is supported in the West Suffolk Local Plan (including the Former St Edmundsbury Area Core Strategy (2010) and Haverhill Vision 2031 (2013)) and draft policies in the West Suffolk Local Plan Review (Regulation 19).

Further retail development such as that proposed would harm the viability of the local centres which are to be brought forward through the aforementioned planning permissions.

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The application contains very limited information regarding the proposals and makes no mention of the strategic allocations which are located in close proximity to the application site in an out of centre location which is not allocated for development.

Loss of a Public House

The proposals would lead to the loss of a public house (albeit currently vacant) contrary to planning policy which seeks to retain such uses. NPPF paragraph 88 specifically promotes the retention of accessible local services, including public houses. No justification has been supported for its loss (such as marketing/viability). The public house could be better used to serve the new communities that are being created.

Out of centre/edge of centre location

The proposals include the provision of a foodstore and a drive-through coffee shop totaling 574 sqm (internal) of town centre floorspace. Policy DM35 of the Joint Development Management Policies Document states that proposals for main town centre uses which are not in a defined centre and not in accordance with an up to date Local Plan must apply a sequential approach in selecting the site, demonstrating that there are no suitable, viable and available sites in defined centres or on the edge of local centres.

Considering the proximity of the site to Boyton Place and Great Wilsey Park, it is our view that the sequential test cannot be passed, as there is a suitable, viable and available site which would better accommodate the proposed main town centre floorspace. No sequential or impact assessment has been undertaken to justify the retail provision.

Consequently, approval of the proposals as submitted could jeopardise securing a future foodstore tenant in the approved local centres.

Lack of Retail Impact Assessment

Policy DM35 of the Joint Development Management Policies Document states that proposals for over 1,000 sqm gross floorspace outside of Haverhill town centre and for proposals over 300 sqm gross floorspace outside all other defined centres requires an impact assessment to be undertaken to demonstrate that the proposals will not have a significant adverse impact on the viability and vitality of town centres.

It is acknowledged that the proposal does not reach the 1,000 sqm threshold as specified in the policy. However, given the proximity of the site to the local centre at Boyton Place (and that of the Local Centre at Great Wilsey Park) cumulatively, the 1000 sq m threshold has been breached and therefore a retail impact assessment should be undertaken.

Approving out-of-centre retail floorspace at The Fox Public House would have an adverse impact on the viability of existing and emerging local centres, which would have knock-on longer term impacts on successful placemaking at Boyton Place and Great Wilsey Park. Securing retail tenants for the local centres will be critical in making these vibrant and sustainable community hubs.

I would request that the Council give due regard to the above points when making its decision.

Yours faithfully,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the Head of Planning.

Head of Planning

PERSIMMON HOMES LIMITED
SUFFOLK REGION