

## Comments for Planning Application DC/21/0110/RM

### Customer Details

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### Comment Details

Commenter type: member of the Public and neighbour.

Stance: Customer objections comments and questions to the planning application.

The following is put forward with a view to enhancing the feel of Haverhill as a town to live in and thrive.

**Date 09/03/2021**

### Our objections cover the following points

Overall design and density - across site objections and (1)

The gateway proposition - (1)

Housing distribution - (2)

Landscaping - (3)

### Specific Objections to 2B proposal:

#### 1) *The 4 storey 'Gateway' proposition.*

We have strong objections concerning the building of such a dominant feature for various reasons.

*Style:* The style of the 4 storey component of this 'gateway' wall is not in keeping with the building statement for the area, and rather than being a character feature, appears to be a forced statement that unsuccessfully attempts to marry two very different styles of building. The contemporary 'flat roofed apartments forming the 'gateway' looks awkwardly 'tagged on' to buildings of a more local vernacular style. The visual impact is overbearing and out of character with its surroundings; this 4 storey component fits more with urban development rather than a country town. This proposal is in direct conflict with The Design, access and compliance statement for 2B:

*"High ground at the eastern part of the site, north of Boyton Hall, is more visually sensitive and should be considered during the development of the masterplan" (P6) and "The Council would not be supportive of 4 storey elements particularly on the northern parcel" (P11)*

Justification for building the 'gateway', given by Persimmon, is to create an entrance and presence for the development as part of the 'character build'. This main claim is not

satisfactory because it results in buildings totally out of scale and style for this 2B area; the claim would appear to be more about achieving higher density and profit.

Further justification is that it is the same height as the Persimmon three and a half storey build. However, the visual impact of the flat roof building will be very dominant and bulky on the skyline, creating the feeling of a huge wall or obstruction.

From the design code of 2015, where 'contemporary' 3 story flat roof buildings are shown attached to 2 story pitch roof buildings the heights have crept up to 4 storey 'contemporary' flat roof buildings shown against 3.5 story (pitch roof) buildings. This is a significantly different intention and of serious concern.

In Persimmon's design plan, they claim to endeavour to compliment the town's character in their present developments; there are some 3 storey buildings such as Barclay's in the middle of the town, however, these are individual buildings and not creating solid blocks as is seen the 'Gateway' entrance to the 2B section.

*Objection to: Density per Hectare (DPH):* It is also important that building a residential area should be developed in a way that creates a sense of wellbeing and allow communities to thrive. The density of housing in this area is high (Higher than in the 1st phase of building). This is not in keeping with statements about being sensitive to an area and there are great concerns that such density results in huge compromises about parking and communal areas, which could inherently result in many social problems for the area compromising safety and wellbeing.

The apparent adherence to the outline plan concerning density for the 2B area has created great difficulties in solving the problems of creating a phase of development which respects the neighbourhood it is placed in, creates suitable housing for a community and is appropriate for the size and topography of the site and surrounding landscape. There appears to be clear conflict about how to resolve the difficulties of reconciling the aspirations and density of housing with the topography and nature of the 2B plot, resulting in unacceptable compromises to achieve 'initial' targets. It is very much hoped that some flexibility concerning the density targets will be revisited and made appropriate.

*The 3 storey buildings in phase 1 are already prominent on the sky line seen from Withersfield and surrounding areas.*

## **2) Housing distribution:**

Affordable housing and rental properties are in concentrated clumps in two areas of the 2B development. A more mixed design approach throughout the development, a strategy which is recognised as a way of fostering a healthy community would help to create a balanced, supportive community. On the Boyton Hall Estate where we live, the very mixed arrangement of four bed roomed, three bed roomed and one bed roomed houses has proved to be a successful mix creating a harmonious community. On the 2B proposal, there seems to be a particularly concentrated group of larger houses arranged down both sides of the build rather than a more mixed approach.

## **Lack of Street sketch from Ann Suckling Road:**

Since summer, 2020, a street sketch from Ann Suckling Road of the 2B site (and also,

originally of the 2A site as it went through the various planning processes) has been requested on several occasions by councillors and local residents. This still appears not to have been produced. This is a key viewing point and having access to this will play an important role in helping everyone understand the visual impact and scale of the whole estate on the skyline as well as the neighbouring houses and cottages. Only a few street views from the interior of the development have been shown at presentations but none from Ann Suckling Road.

**The present deadline for comments and objections does not take in to account that this key piece of information is missing.**

### **3) Landscaping:**

The lack of more intimate, informal communal areas within each development section for adults and children continues to be of concern. This is even more of a concern when we see that there are no footpaths alongside the internal roads of the estate. Presently, there is only one very small area that can be shared by the community, apart from the car parking areas and one grassed area, that appears to be a deeper grassed verge with a few trees in front of one house. It seems ironic that the building plans that apparently warrant a huge 'Gateway entrance', do not also require a communal 'internal green area' to support the same community.

To illustrate the point, by contrast, the Hanchett End development in Haverhill (leading from Applecross Road) has some creative, generous landscaping with undulating grass areas, including trees grouped together rather than just narrow, flat grassed areas with the occasional tree planted. Also, in Burnt Lane, a very small residential road within the development, there are two reasonably sized communal grass areas with one area having two park benches as well as other grassed verges and shrubs.

The areas, Phase 1, Phase 2A and Phase 2B of the Boyton Development, with a considerable amount of more housing, seem to have almost no such areas contained within them. This is hardly future proofing, for the wellbeing of the community. The question is how are such areas possible on one estate but not on this one. We are informed by Persimmon representative, that such areas are available on other parts of the development but this is no substitute for more localised informal communal areas. In fact, we need both. Our concerns about this are as a result of our own experience here, in Boyton Hall estate, where lack of such communal, informal areas has created difficulties for families when children try to find places to play together without having to undertake a 'trek' to a formalised playground. Other neighbours state that such areas are sorely missed when trying to raise children safely but also allowing some freedom and independence.

*Play/ Recreation Areas:* At what point will the recreation and play areas adjoining phase 1 and 2, be complete? In Phase one, children have now been without an area to play for two years, with no completion of play areas in sight. With more dense areas of housing being built on 2A at present and potentially 2B houses following, there should be an assurance and commitment to make sure these areas are functioning and serving the growing local community. A statement from the Persimmon Design Plan is attached.

P99 Design Code 'The potential of natural play is considerable and will greatly enhance the value of the development. The definition of play has shifted, instead of defining play as just physical movement – such as running, jumping, sliding, swinging, rocking etc. – play is now understood to be more holistic and more about learning about the world through imagination, role play, discovery, adventure and creative activity. Therefore, the application of natural play principles across the Linear parks will create the setting to inspire creative play'

A link has been included which may be helpful in showing how places for recreation and play should be integral and more intimate to the living areas being created.

(Set children free: are playgrounds a form of incarceration?)

[https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/feb/25/set-children-free-are-playgrounds-a-form-of-incarceration?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/feb/25/set-children-free-are-playgrounds-a-form-of-incarceration?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other) )

### **General observations relevant to the 2B proposal:**

*Persimmon's 2015 design Plan:* It should be noted the illustrations in the design plan create an image of open space and well spaced housing which can be deceptive. Walking around Persimmon buildings on Plot One, where density is less, some areas appear very concentrated and dense which does not bode well for the reality of the completion of the proposed 2B build.

*Central Plaza* From the design plan, 2B is one part of an area known as Boyton Place. It seems important to mention this as the concept seems to be one of a town with dense housing towards the centre (the plaza) radiating out to less dense housing on the periphery. The pictures in the design plan are of a huge plaza to be found in a large town/city centre. It is understood that these are terms of reference but such a grand plan seems to be out of scale with this area and in direct conflict with other statements in the design plan about building with sensitivity and in keeping with a market town. In Persimmon's own advertising for their development, Haverhill is described as 'a charming market town'.

Whilst welcoming the idea of a community space, it is unclear from the concept plan how it will be used; many shopping precincts in estates around Haverhill are often struggling to thrive. What will be different in this one, especially if it is the actual scale shown in the illustration. The function and purpose of this area has direct bearing on the rest of the residential building radiating from it, including the apparent justification concerning density of housing in 2B.

### ***Linked Planning Matters***

Allotments/Community Orchard:

Although this is not directly part of 2B it is so integrally connected that it is noted here.

We are not sure at what point the decision about choosing between a communal orchard and allotments was decided about the space facing on to Anne Suckling Road. Although we enthusiastically support the idea of allotments being integrated in to the plans for the area,

this particular position does not seem ideal. Instead, a communal orchard with mixed trees would be a space that could be enjoyed by the new and existing community, rather than restricted access for only a small group of people who would have allotments. This will also filter out sound and air pollution for the 2B section of the estate and create a greener tree lined boarder on Ann Suckling Road and be more in keeping with the current borders of Anne Suckling Road. Such a group of trees will be the only significant group of trees or green area running east to west from Ann Suckling Road through the estate. Trees running in this direction will certainly have a huge effect on softening and greening the landscape as well as creating a bridging corridor for insects and other wildlife. Some discussions with neighbours suggest that such a move would be greeted favourably.

**Attenuation Basin** We're not sure when, or even if this will come up for discussion; however, it is as with the area above, integral to the estate, existing and new. Will this area be a landscaped nature area to be worked in as a feature part of the proposed community area / centre? We understand that the attenuation basin's main function is for holding land flood drainage water; however, it would seem ideal to build on this required basin and construct a feature out of the existing environment, that can enhance the area and its use as an outdoor recreational space, that can be used throughout the year. There is a feature of this type, which could be used as a model, in the Research Park in Haverhill.

**There is also a good sketch shown on P99 of the design code which alludes to this sort of development. It would be a shame to lose this good idea in the process of building.**

**Anne Suckling Road** We continue to be concerned about the proposed and developing use of Anne Suckling Road and would like some clarification as to whether our objections to this in previous planning meetings are still considered as we move forward; or whether we need to re-submit these objections at every stage. We are concerned that Anne Suckling road It should be restricted to public transport connections only.

**The Planning Process** Despite lockdown and the difficulties which arise for people gathering and meeting, the planning process seems to simply roll on. An example of this, presumably because not everyone is working, is that emails are no longer sent to announce the next stage in the process. This is a concern, particularly as so many houses are being built around Haverhill. We believe that the community can be better supported in their participation in the planning process; lock down or no lockdown. We will be sending a separate note to West Suffolk Planning Officer and the Democratic Officer.

**Haverhill Infrastructure** There are several issues to mention here which just seem to be 'hanging' unanswered:

**Water Pressure:** There has been a continuing difficulty relating to water pressure at higher elevations around Haverhill but particularly in parts of Boyton Hall. As this development (2B) is on top of the hill beside the water tower, houses and flats in particular will be higher than tower. Is this low pressure problem being addressed? How will existing premisses be affected?

**Road network - too and through Haverhill** Area 2B which we address in this application is only part of a massive band of housing being built around the north of Haverhill with

approximately 4000 new homes to be constructed along with schools etc. It is well documented that the roads from Haverhill to Cambridge and Bury are notoriously problematic. The relief road completion continuous to be a concern, however, even with this in place there are still around 4000 additional families which will be using local roads and the volume of traffic will increase considerably. What plans are being implemented to deal with this?

*Medical and Social Services:* These are already very stretched in Haverhill. An additional 4000 households, around 10000 people with a variety of medical and social needs means that our present support services including Doctors' Surgeries, Fire Brigade, Social Services, Policing, Teachers etc. Again, what plans are being implemented to deal with this?