

Development Management Planning Application Consultation – Urban Design Comments

To: Development Management

From: Planning Policy (Urban Design)

Date: 9 March 2021

Ref: DC/21/01110/RM

Location: Phase 2B, Land at NW Haverhill, Ann Suckling Road, Little Wratting

Summary

This urban design response relates to the proposed residential development of 127 dwellings at Phase 2B in North West Haverhill and reviews the Design, Access and Compliance Statement – DACS, Site Layout Plan, Character Area Plan, Streetscenes and Massing Plan submitted in January 2021.

Overall, in terms of context and character, the design evolution is very clear although some re-definition is suggested for some of the proposed character areas. It is also recommended that 3D visualisations are provided of key focal points to understand what these spaces would look like at street level. In addition, although the DACS refers to a context-led analysis, there is a lack of a characterisation analysis of Haverhill.

In terms of access and movement, Figure 20 is too tightly restricted around the red line boundary and a wider context plan is required to understand connectivity to the surrounding neighbourhoods of Haverhill.

In terms of scale and massing, the overall bulk and massing of the 4 storey blocks are reduced due to the flat roof profile and the density steps down to 2-3 storeys creating a more dynamic roof profile. It is therefore considered that these are acceptable in urban design terms and act as effective gateway features and wayfinding markers creating a greater sense of arrival.

The proposed Urban Square and Neighbourhood Square achieve one of the key structuring principles of the adopted Masterplan which is the creation of informal local squares, creating a clear hierarchy of routes and spaces. The proposed mews also creates a human scaled character area and pedestrian priority space. The elevation of Streetscene E however differs from Streetscene C which shows a more continuous frontage of the linked terraces and both plans should be consistent. In the mews, ground level tree pits are also preferred and would create more of an open feel and less of a barrier to movement compared to brick planters.

In terms of courtyard spaces and parking, the flats over garages (FOGs) help to animate the courtyard spaces, provide natural surveillance and create a more permeable development. In terms of the revised design for the Neighbourhood Square, the view of the square from The Avenue terminates with a row of parking bays and it is recommended that this is reviewed to create a more attractive vista stop.

Context and character

Generally, the design evolution is very clear from the DACS which has benefitted from a collaborative approach between the Council and the design team from the outset. The development has well-defined character areas, although the character area plan does not include the Urban Boulevard and it is recommended that the Urban Boulevard, Avenue and Urban Square character areas are re-defined as shown in Figure 1 below:



Figure 1 – Character Area plan

It is also recommended that 3D visualisations are provided of key focal points such as the Urban Square and Neighbourhood Square to understand what these spaces would look like at street level.

Local design references such as mews courts and FOG examples are also welcomed. However, although the DACS refers to a context-led analysis, there is a lack of a characterisation analysis of Haverhill. This would provide a greater understanding of key character traits and development patterns within the historic core of Haverhill and surrounding area which have informed the designs.

Access and movement

Figure 20 (Pedestrian connectivity through the site and to wider development) is too tightly restricted around the red line boundary and a wider context plan is required to understand connectivity to the surrounding neighbourhoods of Haverhill. The DACS could also emphasise that the rear parking courts also contribute to additional site permeability creating informal routes for pedestrians through the development.

Scale and massing

The 4 storey apartments exceed the maximum 3.5 storeys for vista stops indicated in the adopted Masterplan and Design Code. However, it is considered that the elevations and streetscene drawings indicate that the overall bulk and massing of the 4 storey blocks are reduced due to the flat roof profile and the density steps down to 2-3 storeys creating a more dynamic roof profile. It is therefore considered that these are acceptable in urban design terms and act as effective gateway features and wayfinding markers creating a greater sense of arrival.

Streets and spaces

The proposed Urban Square and Neighbourhood Square achieve one of the key structuring principles of the adopted Masterplan for land at North West Haverhill which is the creation of informal local squares, creating a clear hierarchy of routes and spaces.

Street types and materials: Extract of the mews

The proposed mews also creates a human scaled character area and pedestrian priority space and the built form responds to level change as illustrated in the adopted Masterplan. The elevation of Streetscene E however differs from Streetscene C which shows a more continuous frontage of the linked terraces and both plans should be consistent.

SCC have indicated that estate railings are not preferred as people grow things up and through them which overgrow the footway. Even something soft like a clematis can encroach 300mm and more 'avoidance' space is needed if the vegetation is wet.

Low level brick planters are also shown on the Extract of the mews plan although on the Site Layout plan these are replaced by street trees, and consistency is needed in how these plans are presented. Ground level tree pits are also preferred and would create more of an open feel and less of a barrier to movement compared to brick planters.

Courtyard spaces and parking

Within the courtyard spaces, the flats over garages (FOGs) help to animate these spaces, provide natural surveillance and the courtyard spaces help to create a more permeable development. In terms of the revised design for the Neighbourhood Square, the view of the square from The Avenue terminates with a row of parking bays and it is recommended that this is reviewed to create a more attractive vista stop (please see suggestion in Figure 2 below).

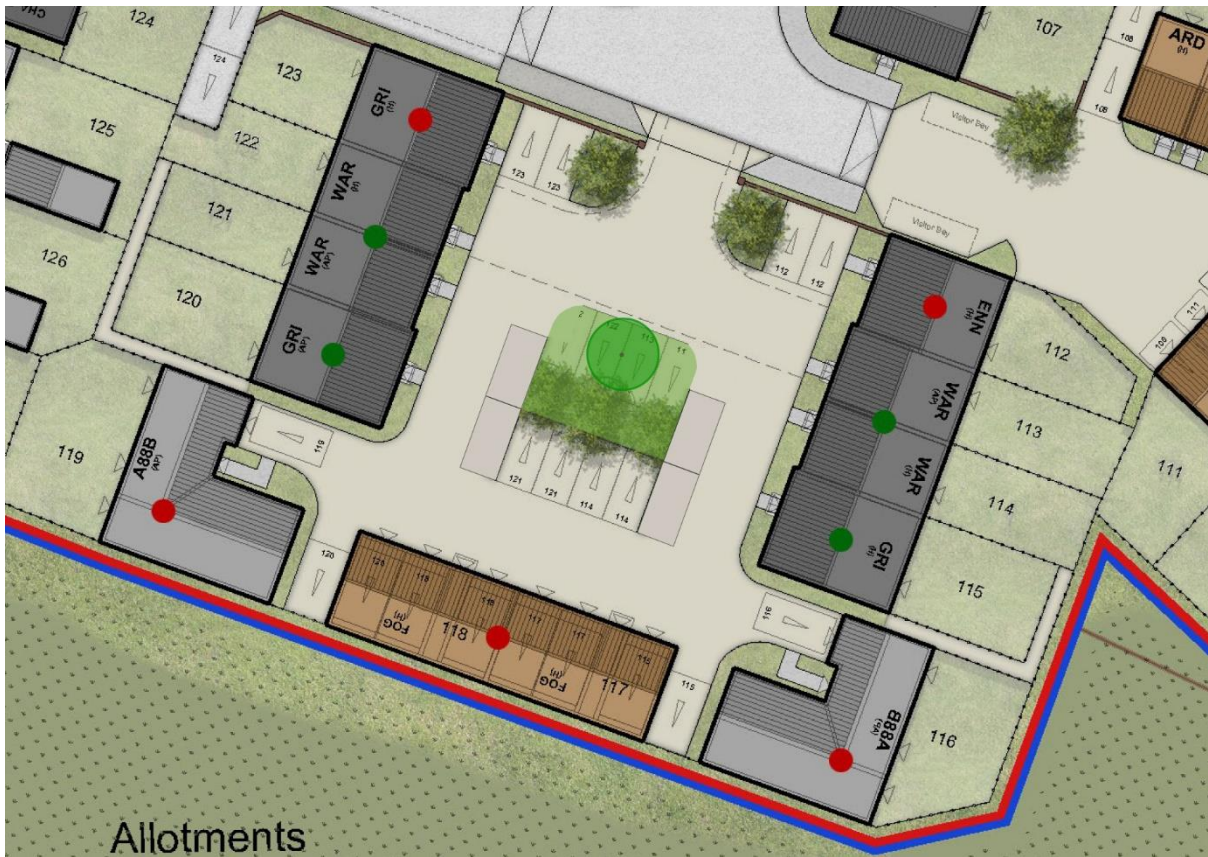


Figure 2 – Neighbourhood Square

Finally, a general comment is that on p.21 (6.4 Hierarchy of streets) of the DACS and p.23 (6.5 Scale and massing) references are made to Village Square rather than Urban Square.