

Donyatt

PARISH COUNCIL

Somerset Planning - South Team
Council Offices
Brympton Way
Yeovil
BA20 2HT
Email: Planningsouth@somerset.gov.uk

29th August 2023

Dear Sirs,

Re: Planning application no:16/0SS00OUT, Proposed development of 400 houses off Canal Way, Ilminster.

I am writing, as Chairman of Donyatt Parish Council, and as a 'potentially affected' neighbouring community, with comments regarding the proposed development of 400 houses off Canal Way, Ilminster, by Persimmon Homes, application no.16/05500OUT.

Overview:

The proposed development is for 'up to 400 houses', if a developer says 'up to 400 houses' then it will be as close to 400 as they can physically squeeze onto the site, in order to make as much profit as possible.

Make no mistake, this development is not being carried out for the benefit of the Ilminster community but for Persimmons' shareholders alone.

The current population of Ilminster is around 5,800, at an average of 2.5 people per household, the development will add **a minimum** of around 1,000 extra people to Ilminster's population, **an increase of over 17%**.

Could any community, anywhere in the country, absorb an increase in population of this magnitude? By the way, this does not take into account further developments planned for Ilminster, for example off Shudrick Lane.

If all of these developments go ahead this could increase the population of Ilminster by 20-25%!

This will completely change the character of Ilminster, which is currently a relatively unspoilt local market town.

Infrastructure:

The average number of vehicle visits per household per day in the UK is somewhere between 3 and 4, an extra 1,000 houses will mean an increase in traffic along Canal Way in the order of 3,000 to 4,000 vehicles per day (residents and delivery vehicles).

This will undoubtedly increase over time as more 'on-line' purchasing takes place and public transport availability worsens.

The current **road infrastructure** was never designed for this, towards Ilminster town centre there is already congestion caused by parked cars on the road opposite the park, hampering access for emergency vehicles attending fire/medical events along Canal Way.

Also the already congested, dangerous and overcrowded Southfields roundabout will not be able to cope with the extra traffic volumes as new residents head out of town to their places of work, as Ilminster will never be able to employ all these extra people.

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From a **Donyatt Parish perspective**, the local (rural) road network will have more vehicles using it, outlying parts of the Parish, such as Sea and Peasmarsh, **which currently have no speed limits below the national 60mph limit**, will become rat-runs as Ilminster roads become more congested.

There is already a significant 'speeding' issue through Donyatt, despite the current 30 mph limit. This, combined with current vehicle volumes through the village approaching 14,000 per day, will only get worse if you add more vehicles into the mix.

Doctors' and Dentists' surgeries are already working to capacity with many not able to take on any more patients, those that remain are virtually impossible to book an appointment with, a population increase of over 17% will only exacerbate this already unacceptable situation.

It's not just Ilminster residents that use these and other facilities in the town, many outlying villages depend on them too and will also be adversely affected as the residents of the new development swamp local services in large numbers.

Local schools will be faced with up to several hundred extra pupils to accommodate, in reality this potential increase in pupil numbers should warrant a new school being built in Ilminster, I doubt there are any plans to build one.

There is only one **supermarket** of any size in Ilminster (Tesco). For those of us who shop there the car park is invariably full or nearly full.

Street parking in the town is already severely limited, 400 new houses could mean up to any extra 400 vehicles travelling into the town centre to do their shopping.

The current **water supply, wastewater and sewage systems** will not cope without **substantial improvements** to the current infrastructure. There is already local talk of sewage, from other recent developments along Canal Way, seeping onto the very site where Persimmons plan to build yet more houses.

The site is currently agricultural land, this absorbs surface water which is dissipated over many acres, the development will replace this with several acres of tarmac and concrete with the potential for localised flooding with the increasing heavy rainfall we are experiencing.

Have any provisions been made for this within Persimmon's plans for the site?

Overspill into neighbouring communities:

The South-Western boundary of the proposed development borders the northern boundary of the **Parish of Donyatt** at the communities of **Coldharbour** and **Park Lane**. There is no space in the proposal, in the form of open land, between the development and the parish of Donyatt.

The local section of the National Cycleway, which runs from Chard to Canal Way at Ilminster is already very popular with walkers, cyclists, families with prams and horse-riders as it is a Bridleway as well.

On a fine day, the Cycleway can have several hundred people using it, I know this as I am also the local Ranger for Sustrans.

The current mix of numbers and user types can be accommodated, but if 400 new houses produce several hundred extra people wanting to use the Cycleway then it will be stretched beyond capacity, increasing the likelihood of accidents involving cyclists, horses, walkers and Mums with small children and prams.

Add into this mix several hundred new dogs from the development and horse-riders trying to negotiate even more people, dogs and cyclists, what is currently a peaceful place to be would become very busy.

The National Cycleway is used (illegally) by motorcyclists as a rat-run from Ilminster to Chard, to avoid the very busy Southfields roundabout or simply because they are often neither insured or taxed, this will only worsen if this development takes place, more motorcyclists will mean more accidents involving walkers, cyclists and horse-riders.

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Apart from the Cycleway, the increase in population and the movement of people in larger numbers will particularly affect the residents of Park Lane and Church Street in Donyatt and the small community of Coldharbour which will be right up against the new development.

In our view, there should be a substantial buffer-zone between any new development *off* Canal Way and these neighbouring communities, in order to retain the separate identities of those communities.

This won't however stop people getting onto the Cycleway in increasing numbers, increasing the potential for **anti-social behaviour** affecting parts of Donyatt, which currently is relatively free of this menace.

Finally, there will be a negative impact on the nature reserve at Herne Hill which is relatively unspoilt and enjoyed by local walkers in relatively small numbers.

As Herne Hill is very close to the proposed development, the potential for a huge increase in footfall through the woods at Herne Hill will be great, with the resulting negative impact on the site and the wildlife within.

loss of Agricultural land:

One lesson that the war in Ukraine has taught us is that, as a nation, we need to be more self-sufficient in the production of food and energy.

What possible justification is there in selling off twenty one hectares of perfectly good productive agricultural land for housing development, once the land has been built on it can never be re-claimed for agriculture, if future generations find it necessary to do so.

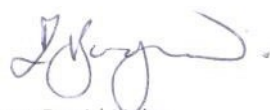
Is this really the legacy we want to leave to our children and grandchildren?

Notwithstanding all of the other points I have outlined above, this issue alone should be the subject of serious debate as to whether this development, on this site, should go ahead at all.

Those opposing this development will take no satisfaction at all in saying "we told you so" in a few years time when all of the outcomes we have predicted become reality!

In summary, it is our view, as a local parish, for whom this development could have some potentially serious impacts, with absolutely no perceived benefits, that this development should not take place at all and should never be granted permission to go ahead.

Yours faithfully,



pp David Light
Chairman Donyatt Parish Council

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