



**Channels Residents
Community Group**

For Bellway at Channels Residents



**Bellway Channels Residents
Estates Report
July 2018**



Bellway at Channels Estates Report

Introduction

This document has been produced by residents of the Phase 1/2 Channels development (Aqua Verde and Eagle Rise) currently being constructed by Bellway (Essex).

A large number of residents have voiced their concerns in regards to the quality of the external hard and soft landscaping and indeed the subsequent management & maintenance of these areas. These concerns have been relayed to Bellway both directly and via their nominated Management company DJC Property Management, but unfortunately do not appear to have been acted upon.

This has prompted the creation of the **Channels Residents Community Group**, the aim of which is to ensure that all estate management is ultimately delivered in line with residents' expectations and that the residents have an estate to be proud of. Due to the large number of on-going concerns raised by residents, the group has created this document to formally highlight the shortcomings to the Managing Director of Bellway (Essex) and to exercise the right to request a meeting to discuss the issues and agree a suitable way forward for all.

Unfortunately the current state of external spaces (which purport to be finished) has created the perception of a lazy "that'll do" attitude from Bellway and this document provides evidence to support this perception. As such this document highlights the areas that:

- lack quality of design;
- lack pride in workmanship;
- lack general care and attention
- exhibit poor on-going maintenance;
- suggest non-compliance with the planning approval

All of the examples highlighted within this document represent real concerns as raised by residents and when they are combined with wider site issues, they suggest a general lack of quality throughout.

To assist in highlighting the concerns, we have included examples of similar areas on adjacent phases of the Channels development whereby due care and attention has produced a far better end result.

Collectively we as Bellway customers believe that the development has *not* been delivered in line with our expectations and indeed as was sold to us by the sales team. The unwillingness to engage on these issues is festering a strong feeling of anger & resentment amongst residents and is what has driven the creation of the Community Group and the need to formally address all issues with Bellway via this report.

Noting Bellway's standing within the residential developer community and as an active member of Home Builders Federation star rating scheme for customer satisfaction, we are surprised and disappointed to be in this situation. However this is an opportunity for Bellway to engage and put things right.



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1: General Estate Landscaping

There are many instances throughout the development where land was clearly not (and is still not) fit for handover to DJC Property Management. The majority of land has not been appropriately prepared or maintained prior to handover and indeed residents *do not accept* that our management fee should be used to undertake remedial work when all land handed over should have been left in a fit for purpose state by Bellway.

A recurring theme throughout the development is poorly finished landscape edges, excessive large weed areas, builder's debris and poor installation and management of new trees.

Residents are fully aware that due to the habitat previously in place throughout the area in which the Channels development now occupies, the estate was never going to include "manicured" communal areas and the type of landscaping observed in other developments such as Beaulieu. However the residents do not accept that the current state of affairs is in keeping with the planning requirements and demonstrates:

- Poor Installation;
- Zero Maintenance (prior to land handover);
- A total lack of care and attention;
- A lazy, "that'll do" attitude;
- Absolutely no care in the environment you are creating for your customers.

The management fee set by DJC Property Management does not extend to remedial works (and nor should it) and is merely sufficient to cover agreed maintenance as dictated by the Landscape and Nature Conservation Management Plan, which itself was drawn up in line with planning conditions.

Bellway are therefore wholly liable and have sole responsibility to make good these areas and ensure they are fit for purpose as denoted in the planning approval. The management fee paid by residents to DJC Property Management must not be used for this purpose.

The Community Group Executive Committee now has a good working relationship with DJC Property Management and group representatives have also met with the appointed ecologist. Residents are no longer prepared to accept explanations that suggest the land is presented in line with the ecology plan as we are now fully apprised of those requirements.

The following examples evidence the key themes noted above. Please note that these are representative examples of issues throughout the development and are *not* exhaustive.

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Trees – Niblick Green



The majority of the trees in this area are not planted straight, are insufficiently supported, are surrounded by weeds and are clearly not maintained. It is completely unacceptable that trees can be planted and left in such a fashion and the result of them eventually failing was inevitable. *Note: The left and centre examples are the same tree and the trunk finally snapped in late June 2018 with only the lower portion remaining.*



Link to Bridle Path at bottom of Fairway Drive





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Communal Area at bottom of Fairway Drive

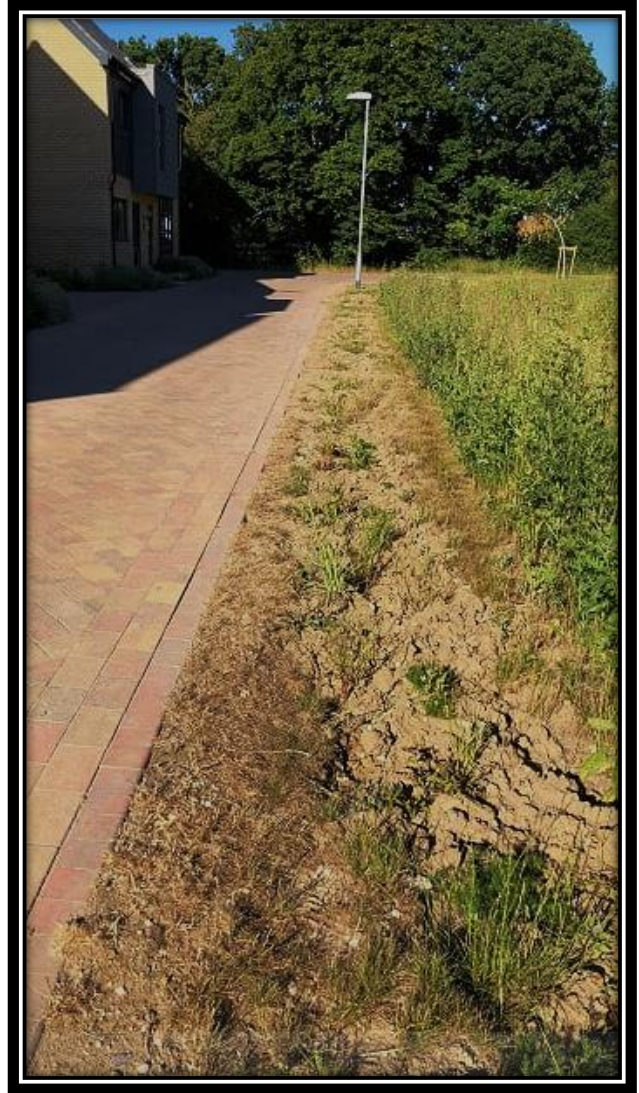


Example of Unfinished Landscaping and Uncontrolled Weed Growth



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Unfinished Landscape Edges & Uncontrolled Weed Growth: Niblick Green



There are a number of swales throughout the development. The above examples are at Niblick Green and residents are aware that these must be maintained as wild flower meadows (as confirmed by the ecologist) and as such they will include some wild weeds.

However the unfinished and unsightly landscape edges have been left in a terrible state (including builders debris in places) with no care, attention or consideration for the environment being created for customers.



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Unfinished Landscape Edges & Uncontrolled Weed Growth: Niblick Green



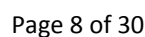
Unfinished Landscaping & Uncontrolled Weed Growth: Fairway Drive



The bank that backs onto the Bridle Path along Fairway Drive is supposed to be meadow grass with new trees planted to create hedgerow. This area has been left to become completely over run with thistle weeds which have prevented anything else from growing and it looks a complete mess. A number of the newly planted trees were knocked down during construction, many others have failed and there is builders debris mixed in with the earth. The landscape edge is uncontrolled and as such weeds and grass are encroaching onto the road.

The large area of land at the west of the development contains open space which is not designated as one of the many ecology areas throughout the development and as such this open space is used extensively by residents. This area is noted on Bellway marketing material as public open space and the area of land that it sits within forms part of the site-wide 'Strategic Area' as defined by the Site Management Plan.

We note that the area was to receive “WG20 rich lawn meadow grass seed” and extensive planting as noted on the Acer Landscapes drawing below as provided by Ptarmigan Land:



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It is therefore extremely disappointing to see the poor state in which this area of land was handed over to DJC Property Management for ongoing maintenance. DJC Property Management have attempted to improve the situation however this is not what the management fee should be used for (as previously noted on Page 3) and in any case the budget is not sufficient to deal with the underlying issues that are flagged below. This mirrors the general themes noted on Pages 3-7 in relation to landscaping concerns across the development.

It is clear that there has been a lack of care in relation to planting and maintenance, there is a lack of defined boundaries and the area has been left in a very poor condition. For example the grass seeding is sporadic at best and the area is full of aggressive weeds. It is not acceptable that the resident's estate management fee should be used to pay for the strimming of these weeds when they should have been removed properly at the outset and the land fully grass seeded prior to handover. Additionally it is not evident that any additional planting (in line with the aforementioned Acer Landscapes approved plan) has actually taken place.

It is also extremely alarming to see the amount of builder's debris which has just been abandoned on the site by Bellway including bricks, lumps of concrete, brick ties and until recently barbed wire. The area of open space is used by many residents including children and dog walkers and as such it has been left completely unfit for use and quite frankly an accident waiting to happen.

The following examples evidence the sporadic seeding, extent of weeds and other issues noted above. Please note that these are representative examples of issues throughout this area and are *not* exhaustive. It does however highlight the general lack of care in appearance and minimal approach from Bellway to what should have been a beautiful open space for residents to enjoy.

Example 1



Example 2



Example 3





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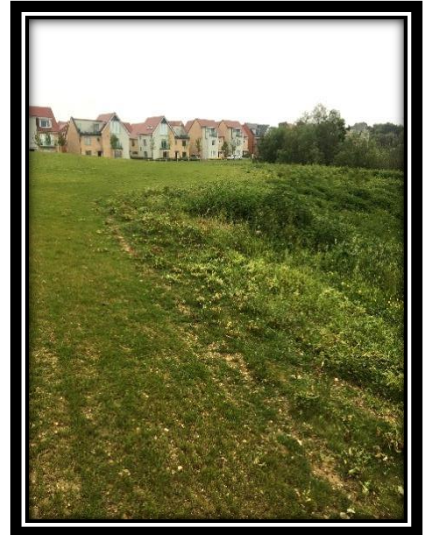
Example 4



Example 5



Example 6



Example 7



Example 8



As stated in the Acer Landscapes planting plan, the area was to receive “WG20 rich lawn meadow grass seed”. The examples above demonstrate what has been deemed acceptable by Bellway for handover and public use.

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There have been a number of trees planted and below left is a photo of one example. Alongside this is an example of how Croudace have planted their trees on the adjacent site. The clear (and quite frankly embarrassing for Bellway) differences are listed below. In addition we believe that 3 of the *new trees* planted in this area are already dead which further evidences the lack of attention or ongoing maintenance.

Bellway Channels Site Tree



Croudace Channels Site Tree



- The Croudace tree is planted straight whilst the Bellway tree is not and Acer have attempted to straighten at least 3 times unsuccessfully;
- The Croudace Tree pit is clearly edged and maintained whilst the Bellway pit is sporadically seeded and full of weeds;
- Croudace have added mulch to tree pit, Bellway have done nothing;
- The Croudace Tree has a neat timber tree support whilst Bellway added the horizontal element as an afterthought when tree was almost at 45 degrees;



The landscaping in this entire area must be fully reviewed by Bellway to provide assurance that there has been no breach of their obligations in relation to planning approval and the issues noted above must be made good to ensure the area is fully fit for public use. Once all issues have been dealt with the area must be appropriately maintained by DJC Property Management.

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3: Street Trees (Fairway Drive)

The development has a small number of street trees, primarily located on Fairway Drive. It is abundantly clear that the Street Trees in Fairway Drive are far from what could be considered as complete. Protection measures are only in place in one location, tree grids are missing and the pits are full of weeds.

The inconsistency and level of presentation in this regard is poor at best and the images below highlight how the “completed” roads on the adjacent **Croudace** site are finished in comparison to the Bellway site. As you will note a high level of care has been taken in presentation by Croudace, with colour and materials coordinated, and we would question why Bellway have not applied the same.

Croudace Street Trees – Example 1



Croudace Street Trees – Example 2





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Bellway Street Trees (Fairway Drive) – Example 1



The example above shows a circular tree pit with an uncoordinated tree grill colour & poor installation which introduces potential Health & Safety trip hazards. Moreover this is unsightly and looks ill-considered.



Bellway Street Trees (Fairway Drive) – Example 2



The example above shows a square tree pit, although the protection is missing completely. A timber insert is in place, which protrudes above the finished level of paving, creating a trip hazard. Consequently, this is being walked across, parked on and again looks poorly considered.



It seems odd that the trees pits along the road are a different shape, one circular and the other 3 square. This looks like an error and something that has not been fully considered or coordinated during the design and construction process. Please note that the approved planning drawing on the portal by Robert Hutson Architects (reference 790-PL-33-E) indicates circular pits to all the trees.

We, your customers, walk or drive past these 'features' every day and the complete lack of care, consideration and attention to detail in this regard is extremely disappointing and unacceptable.

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4: Roads (Quality & Maintenance)

Our understanding is that *all* roads on the Phase 1/2 Bellway development are due for adoption by Highways. The estate management charge that residents pay to DJC Property Management does not cover anything in relation to roads and therefore until such time that the roads are fully adopted, Bellway is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance.

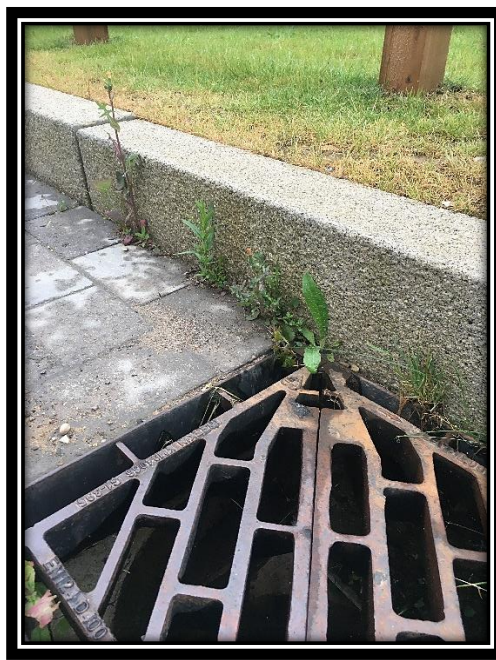
The state of the roads (including dual use footpaths) is a major concern in terms of quality, general maintenance and indeed weed control. The examples below highlight the condition that the 'new' roads are currently in, and this situation is prevalent throughout the development.

Notwithstanding the fact all finished roads should have been subject to on-going maintenance by Bellway, any further delay in appropriately managing their upkeep will mean that remedial action, particularly in relation to weed control, will be far harder to implement.

Weed Control - Example 1



Weed Control - Example 2



Weed Control - Example 3



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For reference, the text passage below in italics was taken from the Council website and is a strategy that residents would expect to be adhered to as a minimum:

“Weed Spraying - We spray weeds in urban areas to limit the damage they cause on the road and footway surfaces, it also improves the appearance and usability of the highway.

We aim to spray the weeds three times in the growing season. The first spray usually starts in May but this depends on the weather and weed growth. We can only spray when the weeds are growing and in dry weather conditions. The second and third sprays usually taking place in July/August, with the last in September. Some local councils may fund additional weed spraying in their area.

To kill the weeds we use systemic spray that once absorbed by a plant gradually kills it, including its roots. The sprays we use are safe to use on the highway with no lasting action.”

We also note that several of the roads throughout the development have been used as ‘haul roads’ for construction traffic access during the build process. Whilst we as residents reluctantly accept this, it is fair to say that roads have clearly been damaged by construction vehicles and as such all damage must be made good prior to Bellway leaving the site.

Damage to Block Paved Roads – Example 1



Damage to Block Paved Roads – Example 2



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There are in addition many areas where the standard of installation and finish for block paved roads is not acceptable and there is a risk that highways may not accept them for adoption. The standard is truly shocking in some areas and can be seen throughout the development with the most recently laid areas of Fairway Drive providing many examples of uneven surfaces, dropped paving and gaps between blockwork. The resultant 'finished' roads are clearly the output of a job that has been rushed with complete lack of pride in the work.

Finish of Block Paved Roads – Example 1



Finish of Block Paved Roads – Example 2



BS 7533, Pavements constructed with clay, natural stone or concrete pavers refers to codes of practice. Indeed suppliers such as Marshalls suggest joints are to be "between 2mm-5mm". The examples around the site are numerous and far in excess of this, plus paving 'cuts' are of a very poor standard and therefore Bellway have fallen below minimum standards and codes of practice.





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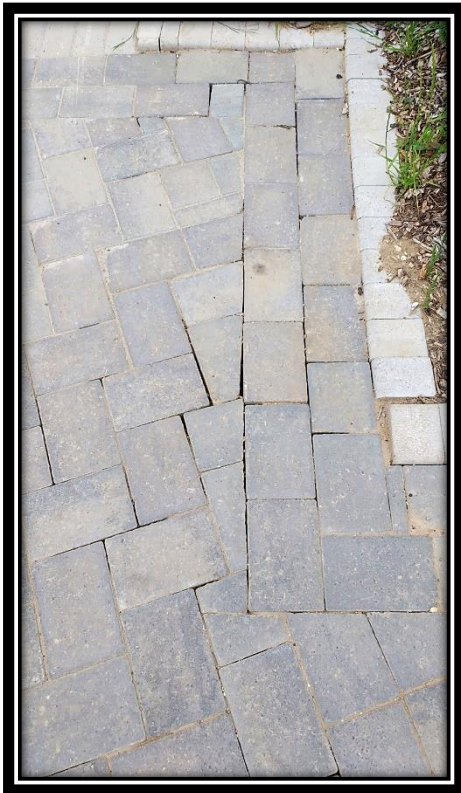
Finish of Block Paved Roads – Example 1a



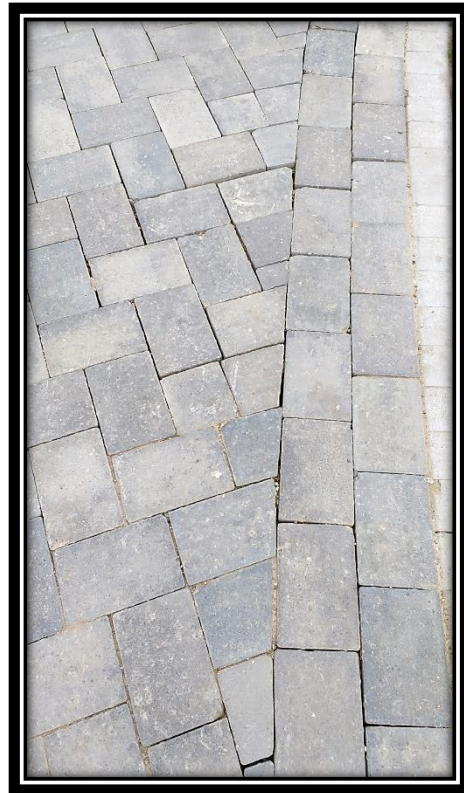
The example on the left is the same location as shown in 'Example 1' above. The original image was captured at the beginning of June 2018 and the latest image was captured at the beginning of July 2018. There has been no adverse weather during this period.

Notwithstanding the poor quality of finish noted above, this example provides further evidence to support the lack of upkeep and maintenance generally around the development and on-going damage caused by construction traffic.

Finish of Block Paved Roads – Example 3



Finish of Block Paved Roads – Example 4





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Finish of Block Paved Roads – Example 5



Finish of Block Paved Roads – Example 6



Finish of Block Paved Roads – Example 7



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There are also potential design flaws in the roadway design, the best example being at a junction on Fairway Drive where each section of road slopes to one central point. Even with a couple of hours of relatively light rain, water drains from each section of road and pools at the junction in addition to water draining from the bank behind. On a number of occasions the water has covered over half of the road and on one occasion was lapping at the front gardens of the two houses that sit on the junction. This has been reported to the Bellway Site Team by multiple residents on multiple occasions, by all accounts was a known flaw and yet to date (6 months after first reports), nothing has been done.

Roadway Flooding – Example 1a



Roadway Flooding – Example 1b



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5: Roads (Name, Street Signage & Markings)

Throughout the development there are several dead end/cul-de-sac or 'no through road' scenarios such as those found along Fairway Drive however none of these are reflected within the road name signage. The plot numbering is confusing at best and only relatively recently has plot specific signage been introduced. That said visitors to the development including delivery drivers, refuse collectors, taxi drivers and unfortunately the emergency services are still getting lost. This is completely unacceptable.

Further to discussion with Chelmsford City Council, we understand that examples below are now standard fitting. We note that this has been incorporated where appropriate on *all* other new developments throughout the county and the examples below were taken from Broomfield & Little Waltham.

Street Signage – Example 1



Street Signage – Example 2



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Bellway Street Signage – Example 1



The example on the left is a 'dead end' scenario in Fairway Drive without the appropriate signage.

The 'dead end' signage in this specific location was added retrospectively by Bellway after residents complained of visitors getting lost, delivery vehicles not finding addresses and emergency services actually having to stop and ask for directions.

The solution provided by Bellway is an afterthought and a throwback to the 1970's. Moreover, all dead end scenarios have not been addressed. This is unacceptable.

Bellway Street Signage – Example 2



The example on the left exhibits none of the requisite standardisation and even a different font type.

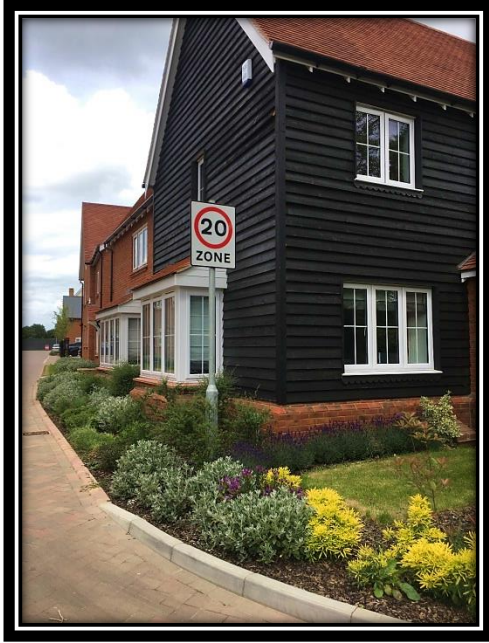
This further highlights inconsistencies and a general lack of care for the appearance of the development.



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Street Signage – Example 3



Other than a *single speed limit sign* at the entrance of the Bellway development, there is nothing else. As such residents consider the current signage as not appropriate for the development.

The Croudace development at Channels has appropriate speed limit signage at key junctions, and repeater signs throughout, which is depicted in the example on the left.



There is a complete lack of road markings or signage around the junction between Aqua Verde & Eagle Rise at the entrance to the estate which causes confusion and is potentially very dangerous. Whilst residents accept that the road is unfinished, the poor markings and lack of signage have been in the same state for 2 years which is unacceptable and we are aware that accidents have occurred.

Lack of Road Marking/Signage



Vehicles should indicate to turn right after entering the estate and wishing to proceed along Fairway Drive however the road looks as if the opposite is true i.e. the need to indicate left to proceed to Aqua Verde.



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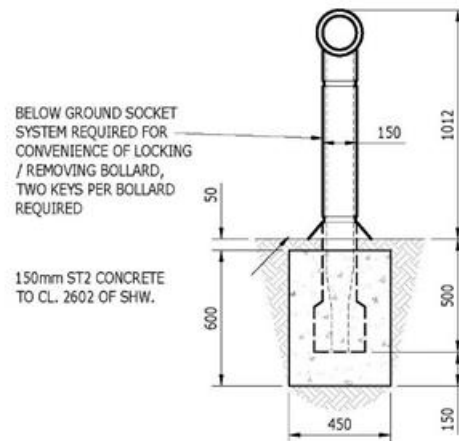
6: Street Furniture

Throughout the development there are a number of bollards that have been installed for demarcation purposes, primarily where vehicular access stops and pedestrian only access begins.

Unfortunately, the style of bollard in Fairway Drive is inconsistent with the rest of the development and is not in accordance with approved Highway design. The bollards at the end of Fairway Drive do not have reflective signs for cyclists and pedestrians which is dangerous after dark. It is clear that vehicles cannot see the bollards and residents have witnessed cars almost striking these as a consequence.

Notwithstanding the need to comply with best practice in relation to design, residents expect that the look and feel of the estate should be consistent and maintained throughout and this again is indicative of the general lack of care and attention to detail in finishing the development.

Bellway Street Furniture – Approved Bollard Design



BOLLARD DETAIL
(1:20)

Reflective signs are to be minimum
150mm deep

The example above represents an 'approved' design that Bellway were to incorporate across the development and which meets current Highway standards for bollards within a shared surface situation, i.e. no designated foot path and kerb, which is essentially the scenario we have at Fairway Drive.



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The above requirement is also reflected in the Essex design guide and as such residents would expect Bellway to adhere to the same standards throughout. However the bollards in place in Fairway Drive are *not* in line with the approved standard.

Bellway Street Furniture – Example 1



Bellway Street Furniture – Example 2



The examples above are only at Fairway Drive and are not as approved standards. Following complaints, reflective tape was added however even this has not been carried out properly.



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7: Street Lighting

There are several examples of street lights throughout the development (primarily in Niblick Green and the communal green area) which have never worked and are badly hoarded off. This has been the case for many months, the areas are a complete mess and ruin the look of the development.

Unfinished Street Lighting – Example 1



Unfinished Street Lighting – Example 2



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8: Considerate Constructors Scheme

The Community Group notes that Bellway have registered the site under the 'considerate constructors' scheme however having reviewed the minimum requirements of the scheme, we would question whether Bellway have indeed adhered to these, particularly the items highlighted on the following page.

Residents that have had to endure driving through Fairway Drive over the past 2 years would almost certainly not agree that Bellway have adhered to minimum requirements. Additionally roads are often left in an appalling condition overnight and during weekends. The roads are covered in mud and builders debris which make them unsightly and dangerous for vehicles and pedestrians alike. Residents have been advised that roads are cleaned 'every day', however, we can assure you that they are *not*.

The sight of builders debris and rubbish in areas of the development that should be kept tidy, especially as a number of them are stated to be ecological areas, is a frequent occurrence. During March, residents of Fairway Drive collected 2 large sacks of builders rubbish from the ecological area that backs onto the bridle path including paint pots, rags and empty cement bags which were entangled in the shrubs and trees. Most recently builders rubbish has been seen in the main lake at the entrance to the development, an area that this is specifically flagged as a key ecology area.

Builders Rubbish – Example 1a



Builders Rubbish – Example 1b



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As a further example, on the afternoon of 4th July an extremely large tarmac lorry, for which the blocked paved roads are clearly not suitable or wide enough, caused damage to a resident's garden. There was no notification, no apology and in fact a response which implied it must have been non-construction traffic. This is yet another example of a total lack of care and attention, plus respect for your customers.



Code of Considerate Practice

Considerate constructors seek to improve the image of the construction industry by striving to promote and achieve best practice under the Code.

The Code of Considerate Practice outlines the Scheme's expectations and describes those areas that are considered fundamental for registration with the Scheme.

The Code is in five parts and contains a series of bullet points. Each section of the Code contains an aspirational supporting statement and four bullet points which represent the basic expectations of registration with the Scheme.

The Code of Considerate Practice applies to all registered sites, companies and suppliers regardless of size, type or location.

Care about Appearance

Constructors should ensure sites appear professional and well managed

- Ensuring that the external appearance of sites enhances the image of the industry.
- Being organised, clean and tidy.
- Enhancing the appearance of facilities, stored materials, vehicles and plant.
- Raising the image of the workforce by their appearance.

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Respect the Community

Constructors should give utmost consideration to their impact on neighbours and the public

- *Informing, respecting and showing courtesy to those affected by the work.*
- *Minimising the impact of deliveries, parking and work on the public highway.*
- *Contributing to and supporting the local community and economy.*
- *Working to create a positive and enduring impression, and promoting the Code.*

Protect the Environment

Constructors should protect and enhance the environment

- *Identifying, managing and promoting environmental issues.*
- *Seeking sustainable solutions, and minimising waste, the carbon footprint and resources.*
- *Minimising the impact of vibration, and air, light and noise pollution.*
- *Protecting the ecology, the landscape, wildlife, vegetation and water courses.*

Secure everyone's Safety

Constructors should attain the highest levels of safety performance

- *Having systems that care for the safety of the public, visitors and the workforce.*
- *Minimising security risks to neighbours.*
- *Having initiatives for continuous safety improvement.*
- *Embedding attitudes and behaviours that enhance safety performance.*

Value their Workforce

Constructors should provide a supportive and caring working environment

- *Providing a workplace where everyone is respected, treated fairly, encouraged and supported.*
- *Identifying personal development needs and promoting training.*
- *Caring for the health and wellbeing of the workforce.*
- *Providing and maintaining high standards of welfare.*



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9: Bellway Website Statement

The following statement appears on <http://www.bellway.co.uk/about-us>

Our high standard of service and build-quality is endorsed by our customers, 9 out of 10 of which would recommend buying a new home from Bellway to a friend. Although a major developer, we have not lost sight of what is important to our purchasers. Operating via nineteen regional divisions and employing local people allows us to stay close to our customers and take key decisions about design, materials and specification in response to local demands; another example of how, by putting buyers at the heart of our business, we have built a reputation you can rely on.

Based on the content of this document, and the experiences of residents which can often be observed via social media, the Community Group (on behalf of the residents it represents) would strongly disagree.

10: Conclusion & Next Steps

It is clear from the evidence presented in this report that residents have legitimate concerns and the fact that a Community Group has been formed to deal with the issues demonstrates the strength of feeling in relation to how Bellway has managed many aspects of the Channels Phase 1/2 development.

In order to work towards resolving *all* of the issues, the Community Group request a detailed, full site 'walk around' with Bellway executives where *every* issue can be logged and crucially actions agreed with defined milestones and deadlines demonstrating how each issue will be dealt with.