

Land south of Coate Road,
Devizes

**Response to
URBAN DESIGN COMMENTS**

(PL/2026/01963)

June 2026



Submitted Concept Masterplan
Feburary 2026

1. Introduction

This Response has been produced by Robert Hitchins Limited to respond to the Wiltshire Council Senior Urban Design Officer's consultation comments relating to the planning application at Land South of Coate Road, Devizes (ref: PL/2026/01963).

It is considered that the matters raised by the Urban Design Officer can be appropriately addressed through the Reserved Matters stage. The indicative masterplan, submitted with the application, and supporting information contained within this document demonstrate one potential approach to how these design principles could be successfully incorporated into the development.

This document should be read alongside the submitted Design and Access Statement (DAS) and the comprehensive package of supporting information accompanying the planning application, including the relevant technical and environmental assessments.



2. Design Information

	WDG - Design Objections	ROBERT HITCHINS - DESIGN RESPONSE
1	The proposed layout is overly reliant on cul-de-sacs, creating dead ends where turning heads and far ends are not visible from the junction with Coate Road. This is contrary to the Wiltshire Design Guide (WDG 5.1.8), which states that cul-de-sacs should be short and have their far end visible from a through-road junction. This approach would also conflict with Core Policy 57 (vii) and (ix), as it would undermine legibility and accessibility. The reliance on vehicle reversing and turning at the ends of cul-de-sacs to serve dwellings and refuse vehicles, together with the proliferation of communal bin collection points, has the potential to create avoidable inconvenience for residents. Such an arrangement aligns with Building for a Healthy Life examples of “what red looks like” (pp. 18–19), rather than the preferred “what green looks like” (pp. 16–17), which advocates well-connected streets at the edges of developments. The cul de sac led structure also undermines the ability of the proposed street network to function as a clear and legible hierarchy, as primary and secondary routes frequently terminate rather than forming connected through routes. To comply with the WDG and Core Policy 57, the main route should reconnect back to Coate Road, removing the long cul-de-sac and improving legibility and permeability. Please see screenshot below. If this is not feasible then an internal loop should be formed.	Whilst the WDG does not preclude the use of cul-de-sacs, the proposed arrangement has sought to ensure these remain short in length with turning heads visible from the adopted street network. The Reserved Matters stage provides the opportunity for additional adopted roads around edge of the scheme; these could be added to the layout as per the updated movement hierarchy plan opposite to create a loop within the scheme and greater permeability options. A second vehicular access on to Coate Road towards the eastern side of the application site is not feasible as the necessary visibility requirements cannot be met. This would mean safe and suitable access would not be achieved in this location. Furthermore, the introduction of another access in the east of the application site would urbanise the rural nature of Coate Road eastwards, something the local highway authority is keen to avoid. It is worth noting there is no objection on the current proposed access arrangements from the local highway authority.

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2	The proposed street hierarchy is not convincingly demonstrated. The layout relies heavily on curvilinear streets, which reduce clarity and contribute to disorientation. As set out in Building for a Healthy Life (pp. 57–61) and WDG 4.2 and 5.1, legibility is best achieved through straighter, more direct streets. Devizes has a clear local precedent for this approach, for example Victoria Road, which demonstrates straight through-routes contributing to attractive and legible streets. The immediate local context of Windsor Drive should not be used as a design precedent. Straighter streets would also allow clearer sightlines from the Public Right of Way (PROW) and pedestrian path junctions, reinforcing intuitive wayfinding. Please see screenshot below. Although the Design and Access Statement describes a hierarchy of primary, secondary and tertiary streets, this is not clearly expressed in the indicative masterplan, where routes of similar width, alignment and enclosure perform different roles. The avenue trees are welcomed however trees should not be limited to the avenue alone and are encouraged on all the streets unless there are clear justifiable reasons why this would be inappropriate. Please see NPPF section 136. It is worth noting that the preference is also for trees in the public realm and not private front gardens. More information is required to demonstrate the streets contributing to the character and place in accordance with WDG section 5 Movement or BfHL 'what green looks like' pages 52/53 and pages 64/65, 'Well defined streets and spaces' and 'Healthy Streets'.	The majority of routes within the scheme are straight with the only curvilinear road present being the main road into the scheme. As stated in Manual for Streets (7.4.3) "Evidence from traffic-calming schemes suggests that speed-controlling features are required at intervals of no more than 70m in order to achieve speeds of 20 mph or less. Straight and uninterrupted links should therefore be limited to around 70m to help ensure that the arrangement has a natural traffic-calming effect." The main road into the scheme is some 380m in length and thus invites 5 horizontal alignment changes (a change in horizontal alignment is preferred by highway authorities as opposed to speed bumps/cushions). Consequently, curvature has been used to enforce target speeds (e.g., 20 mph) by restricting forward visibility, as long, straight roads tempt drivers to speed, whereas bends make drivers slow down as they can't see far ahead. It is proposed that the main road would be curving and have a wider width with 2m green verge for tree planting, along with cycle and pedestrian access along its route creating a more spacious treed avenue character. Secondary and tertiary streets are shorter in nature allowing straighter routes and opportunity for views towards woodland to the south and the green buffer along the approved development to the north. Trees are not proposed in private front gardens but within public open space to ensure appropriate maintenance. Space for street trees is also encouraged in between parking bays where frontage parking occurs and in public open space verges alongside boundary walls.
3	BHL (p.17) discourages extensive use of private drives, which can frustrate pedestrian and cycle movement, particularly along site edges. Furthermore, the current layout does not adequately respond to pedestrian desire lines. To avoid frustrating pedestrian users, private driveways should connect, this could be for pedestrians only and not vehicles but clear legible sightlines should be present. See also SfHL Edge Lanes/Private Driveways (page 53).	Private driveways where present have been linked to increase pedestrian and cycle movement, particularly along site edges. Private driveways are not the predominant road use within the site so are not considered to be extensively used. But rather a mixture of adopted and some use of private driveways creating a hierarchy of streets that allows for a variety of road widths, textures, landscaping and materials.

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4	There is no direct pedestrian connection to the public right of way to the south. As a result, pedestrians must either walk along Coate Road (a national speed limit road) or detour northwards through the site and back round on to the PROW where the pedestrian and cycle route crosses it. A direct pedestrian and cycle connection at the south-eastern corner should be provided to encourage active travel and improve access to the PROW and destinations to the east, including the Brownie and Guides Hut. While the indicative masterplan shows a potential pedestrian and cycle link across Coate Road, this currently appears to lead toward a private drive/the frontage of a dwelling on the northern side. Connections should be planned holistically, having regard to the approved development to the north, to ensure legible, coherent and well-overlooked links between the two schemes. Preference would be for this crossing to be located where it could connect to a movement corridor within the northern development.	The Public Open Space plan (page 10) demonstrates how an informal footpath could be incorporated within the landscape buffer along the southern edge of the scheme. This route has the potential to connect play areas and where the topography allows link to the PROW (Dev 165) in the south-eastern corner of the site. The potential pedestrian and cycle link across Coate Road adjoins the circular pedestrian/cycle link within the approved scheme to the north. It is not intended to link to private driveways or the frontage of dwellings (see Movement Hierarchy Plan (page 4)) but would connect to the cycle/pedestrian movement corridor within the northern development.



Precedent images of Swales



Vinyette demonstrating how re-orientation of units creates overlooking of POS

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5	Both Building for a Healthy Life and the Wiltshire Design Guide (Sections 6.3 and 6.5) expect sustainable drainage to be integrated into streets and open spaces as multifunctional green and blue infrastructure using a combination of wetlands, rain gardens, small ponds, and permeable surfaces, rather than appearing as isolated or engineered features. At present, it is unclear how SUDS will meaningfully contribute to placemaking or street character. The pumping station is located at the main entrance to the site, which represents a poor townscape response for a key gateway and risks undermining the sense of arrival. The pumping station should be relocated away from the principal entrance. If this is not feasible, clear reasoning must be provided and detailed information on its scale, enclosure, materials and landscape treatment should be secured at outline stage to demonstrate that it will not detract from the character or legibility of the entrance. Introducing greater multi functional landscape areas into the development would help improve legibility by creating a break in the streetscape and allowing for framing of views. This would also be an attractive landscape feature to orientate houses around, please refer to p57 of BfHL. The scheme indicates a small central open space; however, this appears remote from many of the new residents and not well-overlooked. Its scale and enclosure are unlikely to encourage activity, play or social interaction. This aligns more closely with BfHL red examples of poorly performing incidental spaces, rather than the preferred green approach of well overlooked open spaces that contribute to legibility, neighbourhood identity and encourage activity. It would be preferable for the smaller play area to be located to the east part of the development with a link to the larger play area proved across DEV165 from the western dwellings. See below example in Castle Cary of a scheme which organises homes around landscape spaces to help define two separate areas of the development which are recognisably different. The provision of woodland planting along the southern and eastern boundaries is welcomed in line with Wiltshire forming part of the newly established Western Forest, a National Forest initiative that aims to significantly increase canopy cover across the region. The objectives of National Forests are a material planning consideration under NPPF (2024) paragraph 152.	The swale running along the northern edge of the scheme offers the opportunity for habitat creation supporting biodiversity. The presence of tree and shrub planting along with species rich grasslands could be included providing not just movement and feeding corridors for wildlife, but a habitat network that provides residents with opportunities to interact with nature on a day to day basis. Precedent images of how the swale could potentially look within the scheme (as detailed at RMA stage) are shown on page 8. The pumping station is sited within a feasible location in the low part of the scheme. The planting of a suitable hedge along the perimeter fence will enclose and effectively screen the facility ensuring a green, verdant entrance into the scheme. The small central open space allows for additional tree and shrub planting along the route of the main road. This will provide a 'green break' along the road enhancing the avenue character of this road. The re-orientation of the units (as demonstrated in the vinyette on page 8) show how this space could be well overlooked, contribute to legibility and encourage small scale activity. There is the potential for an additional smaller play area to be located within the eastern part of the scheme within the large area of public open space proposed. The location of this play area has been shown on the POS plan on page 10.



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6	The masterplan should make more use of landscape to create interesting focal points, particularly at the end of streets or cul de sacs. WDG points 5.2.7 and 5.2.8 notes the importance of adding interesting and attractive focal points, this could be a significant tree, or artwork. The view to the PROW and woodland planting is welcomed however this is the same view for five streets therefore consideration should be given to add variety here which will aid legibility and a sense of place. This could also be supported by creating north-south green links incorporating street trees and SUDS at street level in line with point 2.	The applicant agrees that the inclusion of ornamental / feature trees to create focal points at the end of streets or cul de sacs will add visual interest and wayfinding opportunities. Trees with distinctive foliage, form, autumnal or spring interest, such as those shown in the photos below could be detailed within the landscaping design and planting specification at RMA stage of the application.
7	The layout raises concerns in relation to the Building for a Healthy Life “Back of pavement, front of home” principle. In several locations, homes appear to not show a considered space in front of homes, with a strong boundary treatment and opportunity for integrated storage, ie cycle waste or utility. The scheme appears to align with ‘what red looks like’ p85 of BfHL. Precedent image on p46 of the Design and Access statement is exactly what should be avoided	As this is an outline application, detailed boundary treatments, landscape design, planting specification and cycle and bin waste storage will appropriately be secured through the Reserved Matters submission.
8	Although the Design and Access Statement refers to perimeter block principles, the indicative masterplan presents a fragmented arrangement of individual dwellings rather than coherent blocks defining streets and spaces. This risks weakening enclosure, natural surveillance and the clear definition of public and private realms, contrary to WDG 4.2.5 and BfHL ‘Well defined streets and spaces’. A coherent street hierarchy would help create well defined streets in line with BfHL.	There is the potential for linked garages and some terraced units along the main road to create stronger frontage to ensure continuity of block. While along the scheme edges more fragmented arrangements allow for more tree and shrub planting and hence a merging of development into the countryside edge.



Ornamental / Feature trees



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9	Key building locations are identified on the indicative masterplan; however, there is insufficient clarity in the DAS or other information that would secure their scale, form, massing, and architectural quality. In the absence of defined controls, it is unclear how these buildings would achieve a genuinely significant or landmark role. This does not yet accord with BfHL guidance on 'A Memorable Character', which emphasises the importance of clearly articulated focal buildings and spaces, nor with the Wiltshire Design Guide expectations for destinations, landmarks and focal points, which require landmark buildings to be defined through their form, setting and contribution to legibility. The scale, form, massing and architectural character of these key buildings should be presented to ensure they are fit for purpose as a key landmark building in the locations suggested. This could be controlled through appropriate parameter(s) plans. Worth noting the Devizes Neighbourhood plan also notes that 'Design and Access statements for new developments should demonstrate how they will reinforce the character of the area.'	This comment is noted by the applicant and could be further addressed at RMA stage of the application.
10	Currently the scheme does not meet the high standard of design and place shaping required by Core Policy 57, Wiltshire Design Guide or Building for Healthy Life. The scheme's reliance on cul de sacs, curvilinear streets and private drives undermines legibility, connectivity and pedestrian priority. Currently landscaping is an afterthought on the periphery of the site. The scheme should be reconsidered to bring landscaping into the design at street level which would be beneficial to the sustainable urban drainage systems and improve user legibility. Limited information is provided at outline stage on built form parameters, massing or character. In the absence of clearer urban design parameter(s) plans, there is insufficient certainty that the reserved matters stage would deliver development that responds positively to local character. I would however draw the applicant's attention particularly to the WDG section 4.0 Built Form and BfHL Distinctive Places 'what green looks like' for development proposals.	The applicant considers that the submitted illustrative masterplan demonstrates an appropriate response to the opportunities and constraints of the site. The proposed development establishes a clear movement hierarchy, integrates significant areas of public open space and green infrastructure, and provides flexibility for further refinement through the Reserved Matters process. The applicant has carefully considered the Urban Design Officer's comments and, where appropriate, has identified opportunities to further strengthen the scheme at Reserved Matters whilst maintaining the overall design principles.

Robert Hitchins Ltd
The Manor, Boddington, Cheltenham,
Gloucestershire, GL51 0TJ
Web: www.robert-hitchins.co.uk

Prepared by Robert Hitchins



Robert Hitchins
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