

## Landscape Note

**On behalf of Robert Hitchins Ltd with reference to planning appeal:**

**APP/B1605/W/21/3273053 Land at Oakley Farm, Cheltenham**

1. During the Highways evidence the Appellant has explained why the gradients being sought by GCC are unduly onerous and why it is not necessary to apply them to this scheme if the appeal was to be allowed. However, if the Inspector was to disagree with the Appellant in that regard and he was minded to impose a condition to secure GCC's preferred gradients, then it can be demonstrated that the site is still capable of accommodating this scale and form of development with the same landscape and visual mitigation objectives.
2. This landscape note has been prepared to accompany the Alternative Illustrative Masterplan (drawing 18017.202) to demonstrate how this could be achieved. It nonetheless remains the view of the Appellant that approach in the national guidance Manual for Streets 2 should be applied.
3. The access roads have been accommodated by cutting into the existing slope in a number of locations to achieve the desired gradients. Where the existing slope has been cut, the resulting batter will not exceed a 1 in 3 gradient. This creates a slope which can be managed as grassland as originally intended in the appeal proposals. If gradients are not imposed by condition then the requirement for cut and fill will be much less.
4. Drawing 18017.202 however, illustrates that excessive engineering operations would not be required. The marginal amendment to the layout (which is just one example of how the development could be delivered), in horizontal alignment within the residential parcel allows for the road to follow the contour without excessive cut and fill and the proposed dwellings can be accommodated comfortably within the requirements of the Parameter Plan. This would not be detrimental to the delivery of the site or add to potential visual harm beyond that already assessed. Although some earth working operations will be required, beyond the footprint of the main areas of built form, this is predominately contained to the areas adjoining the access road as it passes through the proposed open space in the south of the site adjoining Harp Hill. The landscape design objectives set out in the previously submitted landscape strategy remain unaltered. The illustrative network of paths remain virtually unchanged and the design intention to achieve an open space of natural appearance remains practical and achievable.
5. One difference that has been accommodated within the illustrative strategy is a reduction in the proposed tree planting along the proposed route of the access roads. The cutting of the road into the existing slope creates an obvious opportunity to mitigate effects of vehicles using the road, creating robust screening when viewed from Harp Hill and from potential residential properties adjoining. A number of proposed trees have been retained on the first road bend off Harp Hill to mitigate potential visual effects of vehicles entering into the appeal site immediately leaving the highway at Harp Hill. Cutting of the access road into the natural slope will result in operational phase landscape and visual effects no greater than already assessed. This is because of the limited time required to achieve restoration of a grass sward over land disturbed to achieve required batters. From longer distance views from within the AONB, the engineered cutting will not be identifiable once grass sward has been re-established along the margins of the access road.

6. This alternative illustrative masterplan retains the openness of the upper slope as fully intended in the original appeal proposals to mitigate landscape and visual effect and maintain the setting of the reservoir heritage assets. The road layout remains entirely within the Highway Corridor Flexibility Zone as shown on the Access and Movement Parameter Plan.
7. The proposed tree belt that separates the main areas of built development from the upper slope public open space is retained but has been adjusted to respond to the alterations to the layout of the access road. The changes to the layout of the road do not have any implications to the effectiveness of this screening belt to achieve the mitigation objectives.
8. Layout and level changes within the lower slope development area are contained and would in my opinion not result in landscape or visual effects different from those assessed and presented and considered by the appeal. Similarly, the changes to the access road within the area of upper slope public open space will in my opinion not result in any changes to those previously assessed and considered at the appeal.
9. Drawing 18017.202 Alternative Illustrative Masterplan remains an illustrative drawing only, showing how landscaping can achieve design and mitigation objectives identified in the original landscape assessment. Detailed landscape proposals which consider species type, planting size, planting location and long term management will remain for consideration and approval at a later date as a reserved matters application.

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11<sup>th</sup> October 2021