

PART 1 - Assessment Against the Slinfold Parish Design Statement (2006)

The Slinfold Parish Design Statement (2006) provides design guidance intended to inform how development proposals should respond to the established character of the parish. The site east of Hayes Lane is allocated for residential development within the Slinfold Neighbourhood Plan, and this representation does not object to the principle of development on the site. The purpose of this response is to consider whether the **form, layout and access arrangements** of the proposal accord with the design principles established in the 2006 Design Statement, particularly in relation to the character of the Downs Link and the rural edge of the village.

The current application seeks permission for the erection of 38 dwellings with access from Hayes Lane, together with internal estate roads, landscaping, open space and the diversion of Public Footpath No. 3782.

1. Character of the Downs Link

The 2006 Design Statement identifies the Downs Link as a key recreational route and states:

“No urbanisation or enclosure of the Downs Link through Slinfold. It must not become an ‘urban path’ in-between houses and factories.”

The allocation of this field establishes that development will occur in this location. The relevant issue is therefore whether the design of the development protects the established rural character of the Downs Link.

The submitted layout places estate development immediately adjacent to the Downs Link and introduces the primary vehicular access to the site in close proximity to the existing Downs Link crossing. The combination of housing frontage, estate roads and concentrated vehicular movements at this point would materially change the experience of this section of the Downs Link from a rural route at the edge of the village to one defined by adjoining residential development and vehicle activity.

The proposal does not demonstrate how the character of the Downs Link would be protected from urbanisation in accordance with the Design Statement.

2. Retention of the Character of Village Walks and Public Rights of Way

The Design Statement states that:

“The main village walks (circular via the Downs Link...) should be maintained, and retained in character.”

The application proposes the diversion and realignment of Public Footpath No. 3782, which currently runs directly south from the Downs Link, so that it follows the perimeter of the proposed housing layout before reconnecting to the wider footpath network. This alters both the alignment and the experience of the route, changing it from a direct rural footpath into one defined by the edge of estate development and internal roads.

As a consequence, the character of this village walk would not be retained as required by the Design Statement.

3. Roads, Traffic and Village Character

The 2006 Design Statement makes clear that traffic levels, road layout and highway design are integral to maintaining Slinfold’s rural character. It states that village roads and lanes should retain their green and rural feel and that new development should minimise adverse impacts arising from traffic and associated highway infrastructure.

The proposal concentrates all vehicular access to a 38-dwelling estate at a single point immediately adjacent to the Downs Link crossing and the junction with the existing footpath network. This introduces a concentration of turning movements, visibility requirements and highway infrastructure at a location currently experienced as part of the village’s rural edge and as an access point to the Downs Link.

While traffic generation may be acceptable in highway capacity terms, the Design Statement’s concern extends to the effect of traffic and road design on village character. The introduction of a widened estate access and associated vehicle activity at this location risks introducing an urbanising feature inconsistent with the objective of retaining the rural character of Hayes Lane and the Downs Link crossing.

4. Estate Form of Development and Assimilation into Village Character

The Design Statement recognises that developments introduced as a single estate can create uniformity of form and difficulties in assimilating development into the existing village structure. It emphasises that development should respect the established character and layout of the village and avoid forms that increase the perception of urbanisation.

The submitted layout represents a single estate-style form of development arranged around internal estate roads. This contrasts with the prevailing pattern of development along Hayes Lane, where development has historically occurred incrementally and retains a more informal village character. The

requirement for a single estate access of sufficient width to accommodate turning movements, together with associated visibility requirements and parking restrictions along Hayes Lane, would alter the existing street scene and reduce the informal roadside character currently present at this location.

Although the proposal indicates footways on one side of internal roads, reflecting existing village characteristics described within the Design Statement, the overall form and layout of the development would nevertheless read as a suburban estate rather than as a continuation of village grain.

Conclusion

The 2006 Slinfold Parish Design Statement establishes clear expectations that development adjacent to the Downs Link must protect its rural character, that principal village walks should be retained in character, and that development and associated road infrastructure should not increase the perceived urbanisation of the village edge.

While development of the allocated site is accepted in principle, the current proposal raises significant concerns in relation to the estate form of development proposed, the concentration of vehicular access adjacent to the Downs Link crossing, and the diversion of Public Footpath No. 3782. In its current form, the proposal does not demonstrate how the design and layout adequately protect the character of the Downs Link or reflect the village-scale principles set out in the 2006 Design Statement.

PART 2 - Assessment Against the Proposed Updated Slinfold Design Statement (2026)

An update to the Slinfold Design Statement is being prepared to update and consolidate the 2006 Design Statement in light of development that has taken place within the parish over the intervening period. The update reflects experience of how recent development has affected village character and seeks to clarify and reinforce existing design principles rather than introduce new requirements.

Prior to preparation of the updated document, the continuing relevance and importance of the principles contained within the 2006 Design Statement were considered at a public meeting of residents. The updated Design Statement therefore reflects both established guidance and locally expressed priorities regarding the protection of village character, rural edges and the Downs Link.

The allocation of land east of Hayes Lane for residential development is accepted. The relevant consideration is whether the **form, layout and access arrangements** of the current proposal accord with the clarified design principles contained within the updated Design Statement.

Status of the Proposed Updated Design Statement

The proposed updated Slinfold Design Statement has not yet been formally adopted or published and it is recognised that the applicant could not have been expected to have regard to its detailed wording at the time the current proposal was prepared. The updated document is not therefore relied upon as introducing new policy or additional requirements.

The relevance of the updated Design Statement in this context is that it clarifies and makes explicit a number of design principles that were already present within the 2006 Design Statement, particularly in relation to the protection of the rural character of the Downs Link, the avoidance of urbanisation at village edges, and the integration of new development with the existing village form. The assessment set out below should therefore be read as demonstrating continuity of established design guidance rather than the application of new or retrospective standards.

Overarching Design Principles

The proposed updated Design Statement makes explicit a number of overarching principles that were implicit within the 2006 Design Statement and reflected in its guidance on village character, rural setting and the avoidance of urbanising forms of development. In particular, the updated document identifies that:

- Slinfold should remain a small and integrated village within a large rural parish;
- urbanisation of village edges and rural routes should be avoided; and
- new development should be harnessed to the best effect of the community rather than creating isolated or inward-looking estates.

These principles reflect the underlying intent of the 2006 Design Statement, which consistently emphasised the retention of rural character, the avoidance of estate-style suburbanisation, and the importance of development assimilating into the existing village form. The updated Design Statement therefore clarifies and makes explicit design expectations that have long informed development within the parish.

When assessed against these clarified principles, the current proposal's single estate layout, concentrated vehicular access adjacent to the Downs Link crossing, and internalised form of development do not demonstrate integration with the existing village structure. Instead, the layout reads as a discrete estate at the edge of the settlement, contrary to the stated objective of maintaining an integrated village form and avoiding urbanisation of the rural edge.

1. Character of the Downs Link

The updated Design Statement reinforces the requirement that development adjacent to the Downs Link must protect its rural character and avoid urbanisation.

The submitted layout places estate development directly alongside the Downs Link and introduces the primary vehicular access at the point where the Downs Link meets Hayes Lane. This concentrates housing frontage, estate roads and vehicular movements at a location currently experienced as part of the village's rural edge. The proposal does not demonstrate how the character of the Downs Link would be protected in accordance with the updated Design Statement.

2. Village Edges and Form of Development

The updated Design Statement places greater emphasis on the importance of development integrating with the existing village form and maintaining a soft transition between built form and countryside. It reflects experience of recent development within the parish and seeks to avoid layouts that introduce a suburban estate character at village edges.

The submitted proposal adopts a single estate-style layout served from one vehicular access point adjacent to the Downs Link crossing. This creates an abrupt transition between countryside and development and results in a layout that reads as a self-contained estate rather than as an extension of the existing village grain along Hayes Lane.

In this respect, the proposal conflicts with the clarified objective of avoiding urbanising forms of development at sensitive village edge locations.

3. Public Rights of Way and Village Walks

The updated Design Statement continues to emphasise the importance of maintaining the character and connectivity of public rights of way, particularly those connected to the Downs Link.

The proposed diversion of Public Footpath No. 3782 alters the existing direct alignment and routes the path around the perimeter of the estate. This changes the character of the route from a rural footpath into one defined by residential development and estate roads, and does not demonstrate how the existing character of the route would be maintained.

4. Implications for Design Approach

The updated Design Statement reflects the conclusion, reached through review of development over the past twenty years and through public engagement, that development should integrate with village form rather than adopt a standard estate layout.

The current proposal is fundamentally based on a single estate access and internalised layout. The resulting concentration of vehicular access adjacent to the Downs Link crossing, together with the estate form of development, is at odds with the design approach reinforced in the updated Design Statement. The issues identified arise from the underlying layout and access strategy rather than from matters capable of resolution through minor amendment.

Conclusion

The proposed updated Design Statement reinforces long-established principles relating to the protection of the Downs Link, the maintenance of rural village edges, and the integration of new development with existing village form. These principles reflect both the 2006 Design Statement and experience of development within the parish over the intervening period.

The current proposal does not demonstrate compliance with these clarified principles. In particular, the estate form of development, the concentration of vehicular access adjacent to the Downs Link crossing, and the diversion of Public Footpath No. 3782 indicate that a more fundamental reconsideration of layout and access would be required in order to achieve a design consistent with the updated Design Statement.

PART 3 - Overall Conclusion

The allocation of land east of Hayes Lane establishes that residential development will take place on this site. The issue arising from the current application is therefore not the principle of development, but whether the proposed layout, access arrangements and relationship to the Downs Link accord with the established design principles that have guided development in Slinfold since the adoption of the 2006 Slinfold Parish Design Statement.

The 2006 Design Statement places clear emphasis on retaining the rural character of the Downs Link, maintaining the character of village walks, avoiding urbanisation at village edges, and ensuring that new development assimilates into the existing village form rather than creating isolated estate-style development. The proposed updated Design Statement does not introduce new requirements but makes these long-standing principles more explicit, reflecting both the experience of development over the intervening period and community consultation undertaken as part of the update process.

In its current form, the proposal does not demonstrate how these established principles would be achieved. The estate-based layout, the concentration of vehicular access adjacent to the Downs Link crossing, and the diversion of Public Footpath No. 3782 collectively result in a form of development that would materially alter the character of this part of the village edge and the Downs Link. These issues arise from the underlying layout and access strategy rather than from matters capable of resolution through minor amendment or condition. Accordingly, while development of the allocated site is accepted in principle, a fundamental reconsideration of the layout and access arrangements would be necessary in order for the development to proceed in a manner consistent with the established design guidance for Slinfold.

In the absence of such a fundamental reconsideration of layout and access, the proposal would not adequately demonstrate compliance with the established design principles of the Slinfold Parish Design Statement and would therefore give rise to significant concerns in respect of design and character.

Parish Council Closing Statement (Alternative Version)

The Parish Council recognises that the site east of Hayes Lane is allocated for residential development and supports the delivery of new housing in principle. However, both the 2006 Slinfold Parish Design Statement and the proposed updated Design Statement make clear that development in this location must protect the rural character of the Downs Link, maintain the character of existing village walks and integrate with the established form of the village rather than introduce a standard estate layout. In its current form, the proposal does not demonstrate how these objectives would be achieved.

The Parish Council therefore considers that a fundamental reconsideration of the layout and access arrangements is required in order to bring forward development of the site in a manner consistent with the agreed design guidance for Slinfold.