

Design Officer	Azhar Kapadi
Date	14.03.25 29.04.25 Set 2 Comments
Application Reference	24/01262/FUL
Address	Village Hotel Bury, Waterfold Business Park, Rochdale Rd, Bury BL9 7BQ
Proposal	Erection of a 34-bedroom extension to existing hotel and associated works

SUMMARY

Provide additional details or clarification regarding the strategy at the hedgerow/tree boundary. The front elevation requires further refinement, and removing the stair tower from the extension, as previously suggested, would more effectively demonstrate better design quality.

In reviewing the designer's comments and clarification drawings, please find my observations below. I would like to emphasize that, despite the designer's seemingly hostile response, our goal is to support applicants in delivering higher-quality schemes within the borough.

Previous comments left in for reference.

Boundary

Apologies if this has been misunderstood; the latest drawings clarify that the hedgerows at the boundary line are being retained. There is an annotation indicating the removal of one tree out of the six shown on the plan; however, it appears there are actually seven trees along this stretch. Please update the drawings to reflect this accurately.

Elevation B illustrates the retained hedgerow. However, this entire area requires further clarification, as the hedgerows vary in type, height, and density. These variations will impact how the development is screened. Therefore, it would be helpful to indicate the height of the hedgerows on the drawing, to clarify how much of the elevation will be obscured. If beneficial, you could compare the existing elevations with the current hedgerow/tree buffer and contrast this with the new proposal. Similarly, it would be advantageous to show a site plan of the existing conditions, indicating the trees and hedgerows, alongside the proposed site plan.



Loss of Stair Tower

Including the existing stair tower in the new proposals creates an awkward and elevated transition, resulting in a larger, blank façade and a more disrupted roofline. While I appreciate the designer's rationale for symmetry, the transition and extension of the front façade would be far more effective if we omit the stair tower, as demonstrated in my revised design. The updated elevations and visuals I've provided offer a notable improvement by creating a more continuous, smooth transition from the existing structure to the new extension.

Furthermore, removing the stair tower would provide a larger buffer to the boundary, which would help reduce the visual dominance of the rear/ side extension.

Regarding the concern that *"the loss of the stair tower not only exacerbates the unbalancing of the elevation..."*, the unbalance is most noticeable in the designer's introduction of columns and an underpass. Continuing the articulation of the main elevation from the old to the new without the stair tower, and with a smoother transition, would help mitigate these concerns.

From a logistical perspective, the construction management plan should consider alternative options to address the potential difficulties associated with the closure of the external stair. Specifically, could an external escape stair be maintained, with this part of the elevation completed last, to minimize disruption?



Proposal



Suggestion

Other

As noted earlier, there are several clarifications required regarding the hedgerows. However the, in terms of visual interest, this updated Elevation B represents an improvement over the earlier proposal.

For elevation C, could you please clarify what material is shown in grey?

Additionally, could you confirm whether the soffit has a different material trim? The current drawings suggest it is brick.

PREVIOUS CONSULTATION RESPONSE 14.03.25

SUMMARY

It is disappointing to see this application go backwards from what was submitted at Pre-App stage. This is a weak design response characterised by unsightly elevations. Advice provided at PreApp stage regarding boundary actions has been neglected. The design needs to be rationalised to something closer to what was discussed at Pre-App.

Pre-Application

Summary: *The general design principles for extending the existing hotel based on the Pre-App seem rational. The approach to create a scale and form of development that relates to the existing built form is suitable but there are improvements that can be made where the elevations are monotonous. From a design perspective, if the applicant is constructive with the feedback I have provided I am unlikely to have any major reservations going forward.*

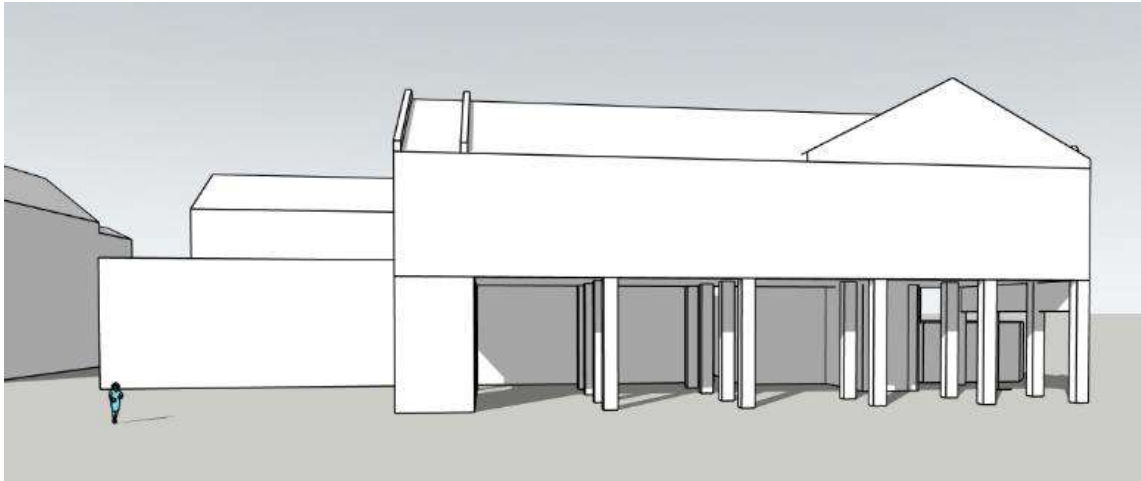
The building footprint has increased with the capacity increasing from 27 beds to 34. The design and massing of the extension has however been poorly compromised in order to accommodate this. It was considered at that time, monotonous elevations needed to be improved and the building footprint should move inwards from the site boundary and maintain the tree/ landscaped buffer to the neighbouring site. The design statement has highlighted design related comments I made but very little has been done to address them.

1. Scaling and Massing: Scale back at boundary

Comments at Pre-App (Scale back the hotel slightly at the boundary line in order to retain the buffer of trees along this boundary) are still pertinent and have not been addressed. Massing has simply increased and now there is an unobstructed view of many columns. This is visually poor and incongruent to the rest of the building, emphasised with the absence of the tree buffer.

This is a boundary with an established tree line / hedgerow which is an attractive buffer between the neighbouring businesses and helps create a verdant visual break between the the larger village hotel complex and the low rise buildings such as Waterfold Farm Inn. Natural landscaping across the business park should be preserved where possible.

Furthermore, the general scale and massing was considered acceptable at pre-app stage because it continued the scale and massing of the existing hotel. This was considered acceptable on the basis that any development was set back from the boundary line.

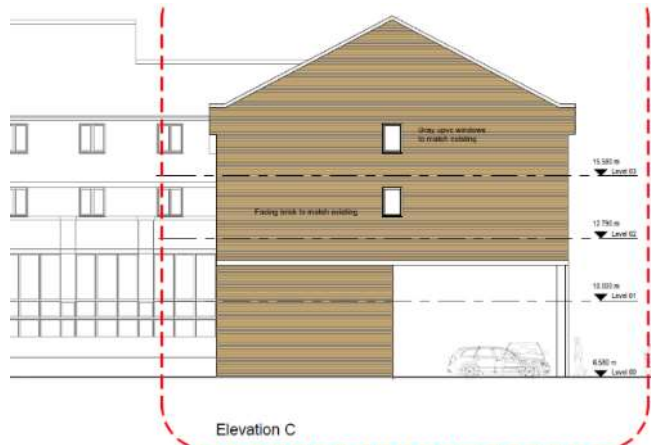


2. Materials and Elevations

In the proposal, the existing façade continuation now introduces a break disrupting the overall elevation. Additional architectural details are needed to soften the area dominated by columns. Simple architectural details can easily be introduced to the front elevation whereas the approach to the side /rear elevations appear represent a particularly poor design response. Thankfully, the existing elevation has some design features which the designer has largely employed but as the elevations turn the corner, any appreciation for visual amenity has been forsaken. These elevations in particular are not harmonious and do not positively improve the surroundings.



Elevation B is overly dominating, characterised by unsightly large columns that are no longer screened



Due to a lack of articulation and detail, the elevations look something more reminiscent of poor student housing scheme or a prison building. Refer back to preapp comments on how to improve this.



The design sets a bad precedent for future development and risks employing some of the poor features in the examples above.

Design Policy

Whilst we do not expect an award winning design here in this location we would still expect to see an approach to good quality design. The extension can better respect the architectural character of the existing hotel, ensuring the development enhances the appearance of the area, in line with the NPPF's design objectives. Only the front elevation has been given any serious consideration in terms of context and the negative impact of a monotonous, elevated façade has been overlooked.

The revisions to the NPPF in July 2021 establish very clearly that development which is not well designed should be refused.

Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping*

The design is seen as visually poor and inconsistent with its surroundings. The building is characterised by poorly executed materials, unattractive building facades and overall, the design feels disjointed. Policy DMI in Rochdale's Core Strategy calls for all new developments to respond positively to their context, integrating seamlessly with the local character and enhancing the area's identity.

Whilst this response may appear quite critical, it has been with the consideration of trying to be helpful with considerable assistance given to help improve the elevations and highlighting the weaker parts of the proposal.

There is a scheme that can work for this site but changes need to be made so it is appropriate.