

URBAN DESIGN CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Design Officer	Azhar Kapadi
Date	02.05.25
Application Reference	24/01137/FUL
Address	Land At Salley Street,, Calderbrook, Littleborough, OL15 9NG
Proposal	Erection of new residential dwelling

Introduction

The [National Design Guide](#) sets out the ten characteristics of a well-designed place. Well-designed places have individual characteristics which work together to create its physical **Character**. The ten characteristics help to nurture and sustain a sense of **Community**. They work to positively address environmental issues affecting **Climate**. They all contribute towards the cross-cutting themes for good design set out in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#).

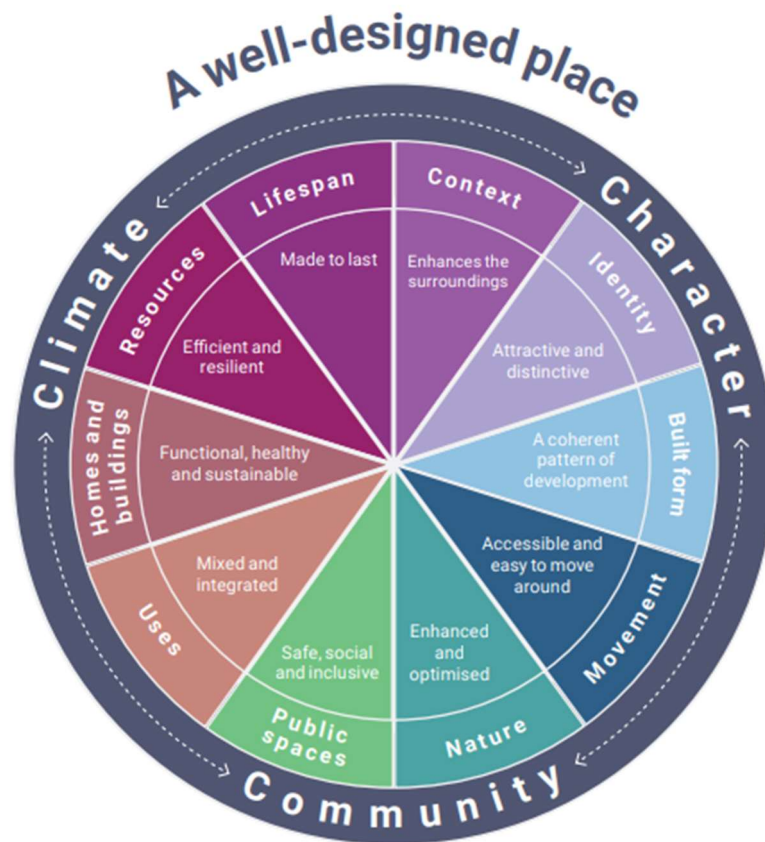


Figure: The ten characteristics of a well-designed place

Source: National Design Guide, 2021
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Reason(s) for Consultation

Building / Urban design

Scheme Image(s)



Source: Application submission

Assessment

This assessment has been made against:

National Guidance:

- The National Planning Policy Framework
- The ten characteristics of a well-designed place contained within the National Design Guide
- National Model Design Code
- Building for a Healthy Life design toolkit

Particularly, this application concerns itself with NPPF Paragraph 139b:

(b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.

Local Policy:

- Rochdale Core Strategy policies:
 - S03 – To improve design, image and quality of place
 - P2 – Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage
 - P3 – Improving design of new development
 - DMI (General Development Requirements)
- Supplementary Planning Documents:
 - Oldham and Rochdale Urban Design Guide

The Unitary Development Plan

- G/D/2 - Green Belt;
- D/4 - Control of Development in Green Belt – General;
- G/H/1 - Housing;
- H/3 - Residential Development Outside Allocated Areas;
- G/BE/1 - Design Quality;
- BE/2 - Design Criteria for New Development;
- G/BE/9 - Conservation of the Built Heritage; and

SUMMARY

The design, while unique in ambition, falls short in terms of deliverability, architectural cohesion, and contextual sensitivity. The drawing package is underdeveloped. Visual representations are inconsistent. Critical sustainability measures appear to be superficial. The proposal lacks the design quality and clarity required to justify development in the Green Belt and does not meet the expectations set out in local planning policy for high-quality, contextually appropriate development.

I am unsupportive of the proposal.

Policy

New development, unless it is required for agriculture, forestry or horticulture is normally resisted in the green belt unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated that outweigh the normal presumption against development.

Design policy

Policy P1 – Improving Image: Developments should improve the image of the area

Policy P2 – Protecting and Enhancing Character, Landscape, and Heritage: The design must protect and enhance the area's character, landscape, and heritage

Policy P3 – Improving Design of New Development: The design of new developments should be of the highest standard and integrate with the surrounding environment.

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF stresses that design should be of a high standard and must take into account local context, character, and heritage. Paragraph 139 gives weight to 'outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.'

PreApp Advice

The officer at the time strongly stressed the importance of referring the proposals to Places Matter (Design Review Panel). This has not been undertaken and the opportunity to improve the design has been missed.

It was advised the applicant should give regard to the character and layout of Salley Street and the adjacent row of terraced properties (9-19 Salley Street) which are a non-designated heritage asset. The layout of Salley Street has a linear form and any development upon the site should not detract from the existing street scene. Caution was given regarding the use of mock chimney shafts in referencing the railway history of the site.

I agree with this guidance, as there is already a well-established and appealing urban character in the area. If new development were to be proposed, it would make sense to continue this existing pattern along Salley Street, where homes are traditionally positioned close to the street." Such an arrangement / layout would however be challenging for a bespoke home. The proposal sets the

dwelling back from the main road and opts for a curvilinear form, which is a departure from the existing urban setting. Furthermore, the curved flat roof form is disruptive in this context.

Design Strategy

The design forays into a very different style contesting the form, vernacular and character the surrounding area. The plot is not isolated and is very much seen in the context of other buildings. This dwelling will be experienced 'close up' from Salley St. and from the bridleway running immediately north of the site / rear of the plot.

The context leans towards promoting an architectural vernacular that prioritises rectilinear lines and materials including local stone. The designer has committed their strategy on a curved building design, stating '*a rectangular or squared form did not aid the design*'. I would disagree with this and as it has not been tested it cannot be dismissed.

The curved form of the proposal would conflict with the existing buildings in the vicinity and introduce a form and layout that is foreign to its surroundings. I feel a less intrusive design would help settle the building in the area more successfully.

There are certain contexts where this approach could work, but I do not think this approach would work for this site. In some ways this design would be easier to argue in a truly isolated site where the respective design would be uninterrupted with surrounding built environment examples.

Sustainability

The submission references sustainability measures such as ground source heat pumps and photovoltaic panels; however, further detail is needed to understand how these are integrated into the design. For example, it would be helpful to clarify where these systems are located and whether any plant space has been allocated within the building to accommodate the necessary equipment. As presented, these measures appear to be listed without clear evidence of meaningful integration, which raises concerns about whether sustainability has been fully considered as a core aspect of the proposal. Additionally, the visual impact of photovoltaic panels should be carefully addressed, particularly given the importance of preserving the area's character

Design Realisation

During our site visit, it became clear that the actual topography and appearance of the land differ significantly from what has been depicted in the submission. To accommodate both the proposed building and a ground source heat pump system, it appears that extensive excavation of the entire plot would be required. While the drawings attempt to reflect the site's natural gradients, the transitions between these levels and the building itself risk appearing artificial once constructed.

Several practical and technical questions remain unanswered:

- *How will the green roof in this area be managed to blend seamlessly with the surrounding natural landscape?*
- *What maintenance strategy is in place for this green roof?*
- *How is the land's declivity, as well as that of the roof, proposed to be constructed?*

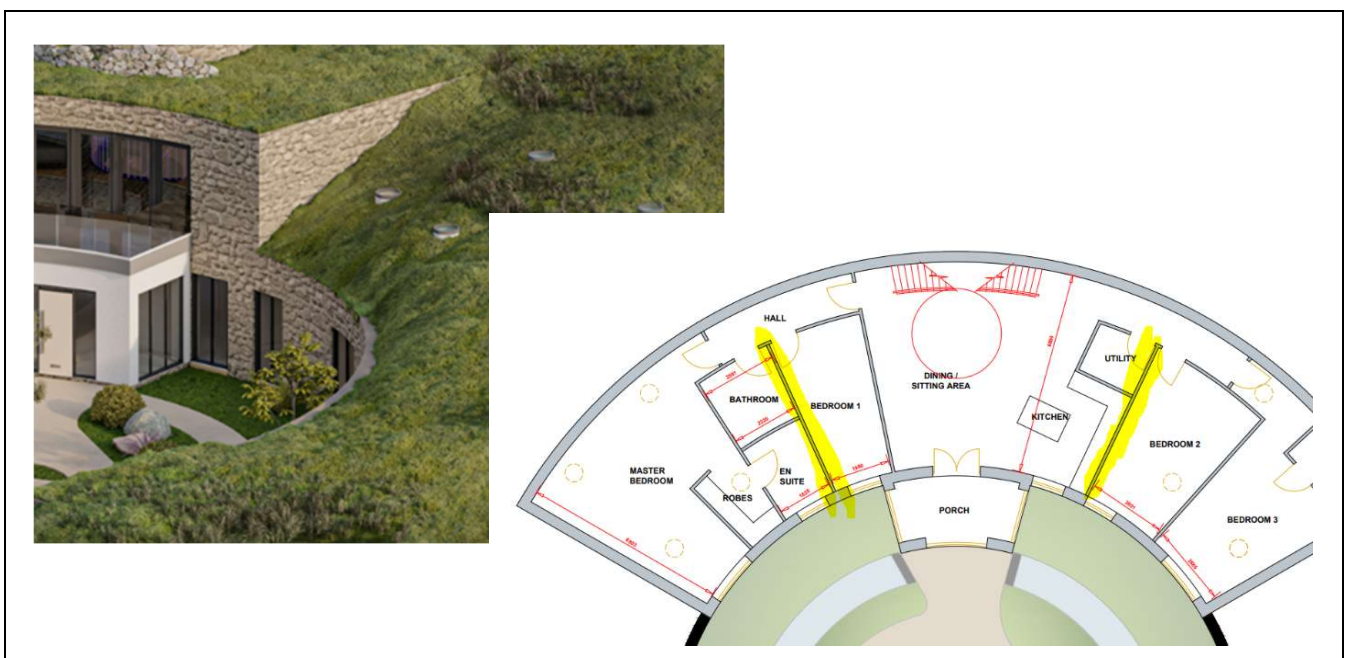
Constructing such a form will likely require a significant structural solution capable of bearing substantial loads. Based on the current drawing package, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate the design team's ability to deliver these complex elements effectively. As a result, there is concern that the final outcome may dilute considerably from what has been illustrated, potentially resulting in visual and ecological harm to the Green Belt and the character of the area.

A physical 3D model of the scheme would be a valuable tool to better communicate how the proposed building integrates with the landscape. This would help clarify the practical challenges of achieving the landscape continuity suggested in the visuals.

There is also concern that, if approved in its current form, the scheme will result in a high volume of discharge conditions, many of which may lead to design changes. To provide greater certainty and reduce risk during the post-approval phase, it would be far more appropriate for the application to be front-loaded with detailed information such as material specifications, structural details, and service integration at this stage, rather than deferred to later conditions; this would offer far greater clarity and confidence in the deliverability of the scheme.

Key technical aspects also remain unclear:

- *The construction details for the external walls and green roof should be provided.*
- *It is not evident whether any structural studies have been undertaken to assess the load-bearing capacity of the roof system.*
- *The side walls, which would logically function as retaining walls, are not shown as such in the plans, potentially compromising the usability of adjacent internal spaces.*
- *No plant space is indicated for the required services (e.g., for photovoltaic panels or the ground source heat pump), which raises further concerns about service integration.*
- *Internally, the layout presents practical challenges. Although circular rooflights are proposed, most rooms rely primarily on the curved south-facing wall for natural light. Given the depth of these spaces, it is likely that the interiors will be dark and shaded in reality.*



Other Design Considerations

Chimney Shaft Reference

The proposal's reference to the ventilation chimneys of the Summit Tunnel is unconvincing. The original structures are defined by their materiality, scale, and engineering presence. In contrast, the reinterpretation through a minor rooftop feature feels forced and superficial. Rather than strengthening the design, it weakens its architectural narrative. Similarly, the inclusion of a partial stone wall on the roof is quite random. It does not convincingly reflect the natural landscape and may be perceived as a disjointed or contrived element.

Porch Design

The entrance area, particularly the porch, is one of the weakest architectural elements of the scheme. Although render exists within the wider context, it is generally associated with poorer examples of development. The porch also appears disjointed in form and does not contribute positively to the overall composition of the building.

Entrance Gate and Boundary Treatment

The centrally positioned, set-back electric gate departs from the typical boundary treatments along Salley Street and appears inconsistent with its setting. Furthermore, the dry stone wall boundary abruptly terminates rather than continuing along the full frontage of the site. This lack of continuity represents a missed opportunity to tie the scheme more firmly to its context and appears as a weak design resolution.

Front Garden and Street Level Visibility

The proposed outdoor seating area at the front of the dwelling raises concerns, though it may be partially screened from public view. However, the prominence of the entrance gate particularly as much of the ground floor is likely to be obscured from street level will be highly noticeable. A street scene elevation taken from the highway would have been beneficial in understanding the visual impact of the proposal in its immediate context.

Drawing Information

The architectural drawing package submitted is generally to a poor standard. When these drawings have been supplemented with greater visual representation (cgis) they are misleading. The cgis at pre-app were more accurate in showing the site size and context; the current cgis are misrepresentative, appearing to show the development much more isolated than it really is.



I would also expect further exploration into the materials and details to demonstrate outstanding design. At the moment, the intention for primary materials are expressed but the finer architectural quality is missing. *For example, what is the detailing when stonework meets openings? What is the recess detailing at windows? Is there any further architectural detailing considered? What is the strategy at the parapet? How is draining managed when the site is so undulating?*

This clarity should have been provided as part of the application, in order to demonstrate the expectations for exceptional design quality. Without such clarifications, I have little doubt the design can be constructed as visualised.

Conclusion

The current submission leaves numerous questions unanswered, and the level of drawing detail does little to alleviate these concerns. Views from the public footpath along Higher Calderbrook Road will likely be adversely affected, and despite attempts to integrate the scheme into the hillside, its presence will remain prominent. This raises ongoing concerns about the impact on the Green Belt.

Although the proposal may be described as unique, it falls short of delivering the architectural quality necessary to be considered "outstanding." The design lacks cohesion and appears at odds with its context, particularly given the area's existing architectural merit. Rochdale's Core Strategy (Policy DMI) emphasises the importance of high-quality design that enhances the built environment and responds sensitively to context. On balance, this proposal does not meet that standard. It feels