

URBAN DESIGN CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Design Officer	Michael Atkinson-Smith
Date	07.07.25
Application Reference	25/00566/REM
Address	Approval of Reserved Matters (access, appearance, landscape, layout, and scale) on outline permission ref 24/00805/OUT for an employment unit with parking and service yard, open storage area, access, landscaping and associated infrastructure
Proposal	Plot H4, Heywood Distribution Park, Pilsworth Rd, Heywood OL10 2TT

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](#).

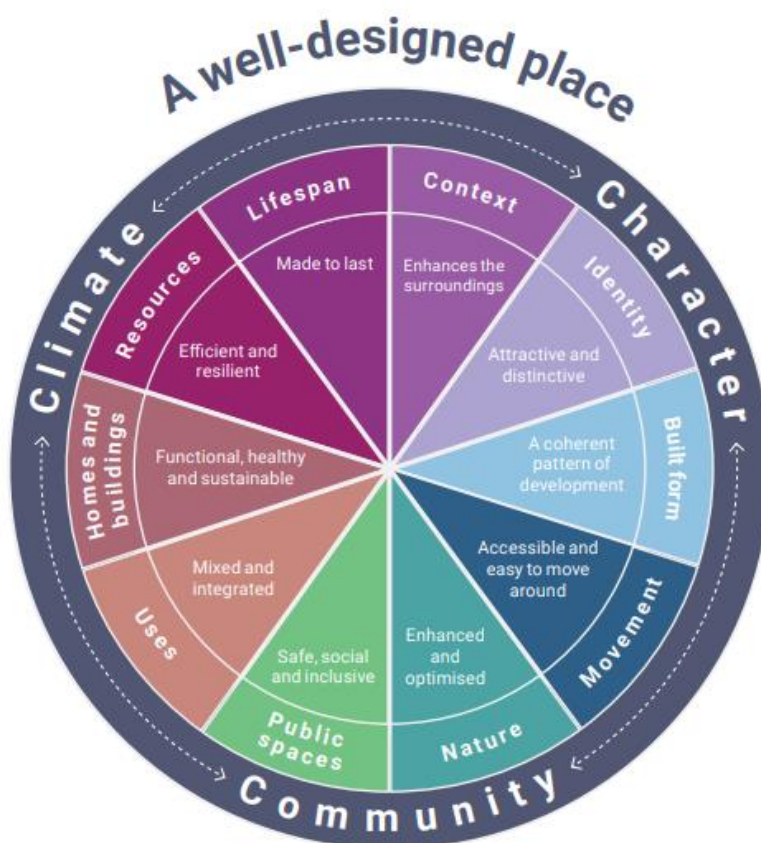


Figure: The ten characteristics of a well-designed place

Source: National Design Guide, 2021

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Consultation Assessment

The application proposal represents a speculative large light industrial / storage & distribution use in an established business park. Whilst the scheme put forward differs significantly from that granted outline planning permission under application ref. 24/00805/OUT, I'd offer no overall in-principle urban design objection to a variation of the scheme.

However, please note the following general design comments:

- The design detailing of the corner main entrance could be improved and expanded upon. It's inescapable that the proposal represents a large building with a significant landscape impact, but more could be made of the feature entrance to mitigate this harm and create a landmark feature with an increased amount of decorative detail. The outline planning permission parameters are noted, so there's no potential within this application to exceed them, but I'd encourage that this element is looked at again and reviewed. The goal should ideally be to create a prominent feature entrance that has some landscape presence as it will be seen from afar, whilst also ensuring a welcoming entrance sequence. Much greater articulation of the south facing façade would be especially welcomed. The graduated colour scheme for the elevational colour treatment is not entirely necessary across the entirety of the building; instead, budgetary design resource could be directed towards the most prominent areas of the proposed building.
- Access and turning radii look to be tight, although this is a matter to be picked up by the LHA.
- I'd encourage the provision of an easily accessible cycle storage facility that doesn't rely on stacking if possible. Ideally, the proposed shelters would be built to reflect the design of the building. Space for internal cycle parking and employee showers/locker facilities would be the preferred option to encourage regular use. TfGM guidance is relevant - [Travel planning for employers | Bee Network | Powered by TfGM | Travel Plan Toolkit - Resources - Example measures - Parking](#)
- For the number of employees proposed, no outdoor space has been provided for employee wellbeing and outdoor amenity at break times. This represents a significant issue for any future occupier as employees require external space to enjoy their amenity time. Provision of suitable working conditions is widely accepted as a solid means to ensure workforce retention and reduce ongoing recruitment and retention costs. Ideally, any catering and staff break areas would open out into a communal landscaped area, with a roof space also representing a potential option.
- Given the amount of floorspace, office space and car parking provision proposed, the provision of only two kitchenettes to serve the potential workforce looks to be a notably low level of provision. It's not immediately clear from the floor plans where workers within the warehouse that aren't office based would store or eat their lunch without entering into office spaces or visit an easily accessible toilet.
- Full details of plant & equipment to be installed alongside lighting details should be secured through condition. The aim should be to reduce noise & light pollution, whilst also providing a visually pleasing facility. Any noise mitigation through acoustic barriers must be of a high design quality.
- The proposed 4.5m high acoustic barrier has the potential to be unsightly for the occupiers of surrounding residential properties. To reduce the level of visual harm, a landscaped bund with a fence atop may be a more suitable option. Further consideration should be given to this particular element and additional information provided within the application, including section drawings.
- The wider site includes a controlled access with supervised gates. Whilst therefore security installations are likely to be minimal, any proposed installations could affect the overall building design. To avoid future planning issues, this issue should be considered at an early stage.
- Pedestrian accessibility to the main entrance must be carefully considered. The parking layout as proposed is likely to result in pedestrians taking the shortest possible route via the car park,

plus the proposed pedestrian route to the main entrance of the building would be unattractive as a result of the stacked bicycle storage and interaction with an HGV egress route. I'd encourage that the applicant re-considers the arrival sequence for pedestrians and visitors, including consideration of visitor parking close to the entrance. Regardless of the industrial park setting, the core urban design principle of ensuring effective pedestrian desire lines still applies.

- Car parking spaces would appear to have been designed to the minimum standard. Provision of some larger spaces to reflect often larger vehicles should ideally be considered. In the current layout, safe and direct pedestrian access from the eastern end of the proposed car park would appear to be somewhat limited.
- The proposed landscaping scheme indicates tree planting in places that trees are unlikely to be able to grow or be even planted. Similarly, the proposed flowering lawn mix would require on ample sunlight grow, which would be largely absent across the eastern section of the proposed landscaping.
- The proposed grasscrete fire track separating the proposed building from the proposed concrete open storage area is likely to be unworkable from a maintenance perspective over the long term and appears to offer no real benefits. The finish would also not be appropriate from an emergency egress point of view for certain users, including those in wheelchairs.
- The proposed open storage area appears to have little functional relationship with the proposed building and would rely on a secondary gate for access.

Summary

The scale of the proposed building would result in knock-on impacts that reduce the amount of space available to ensure adequate access, functionality and workforce amenity issues. The design detailing would also benefit from further work, especially in relation to the main entrance & arrival sequence and the southern elevation.