

URBAN DESIGN CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Design Officer	Azhar Kapadi
Date	22.12.25
Application Reference	25/00798/FUL
Address	Jamia Masjid Chashtiah Mosque, 49 - 53 Milkstone Road, Rochdale, OL11 1EB
Proposal	Redesign of the front elevation including alterations to fenestration, erection of 4.8m high minaret to roof. Installation of solar panels and the application of white render to both front and rear elevations

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](#).

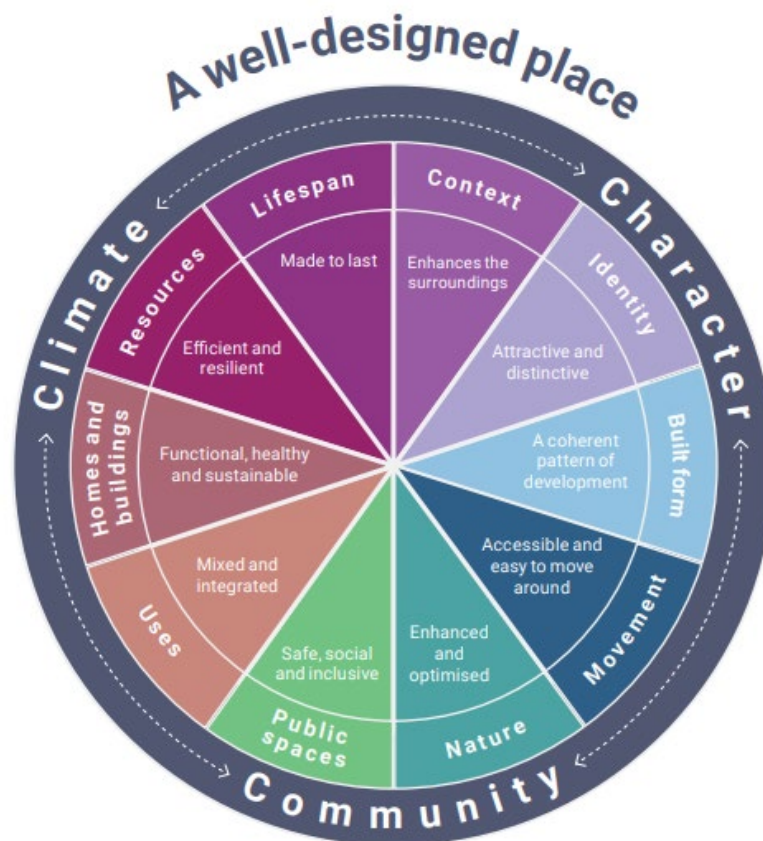


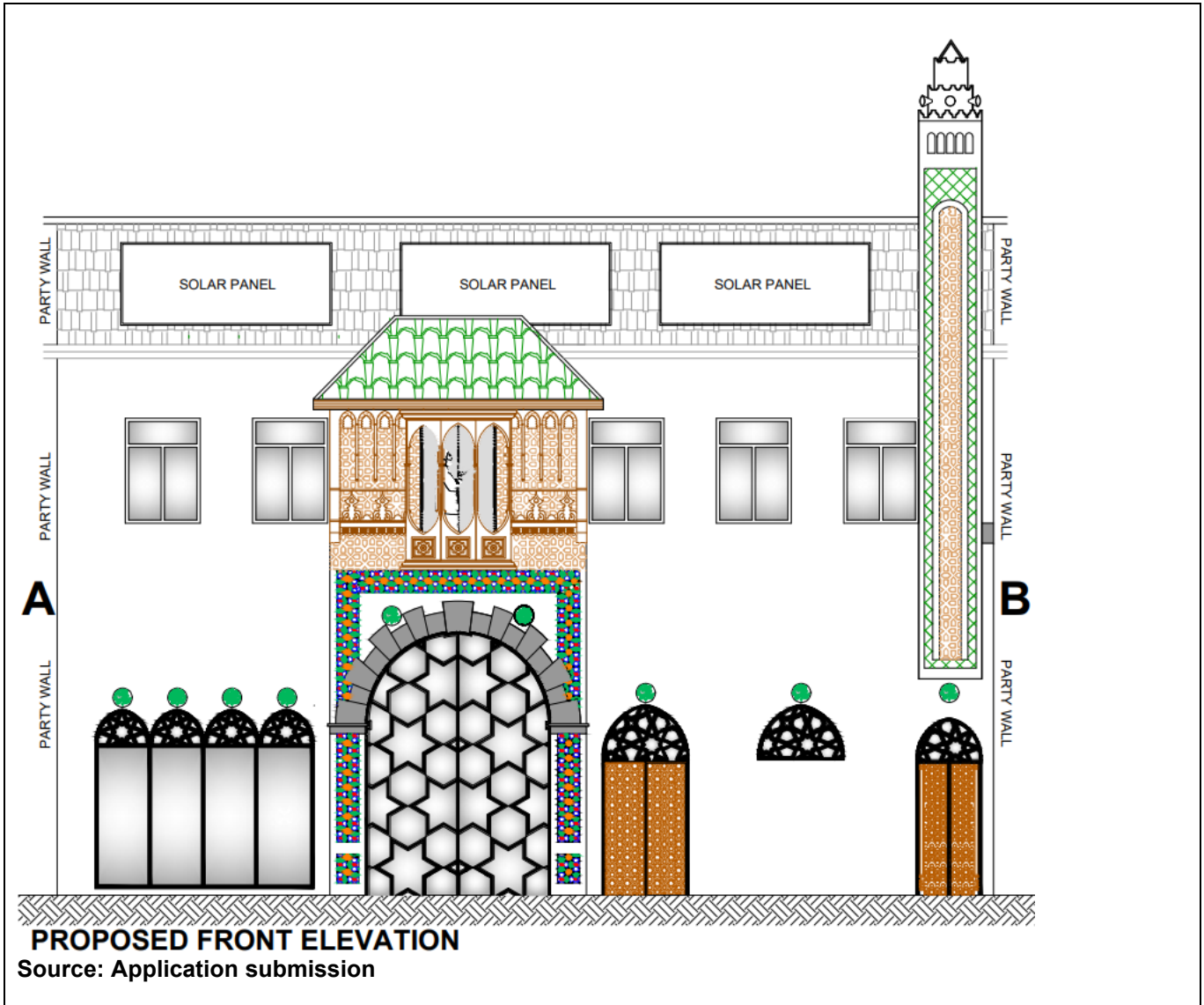
Figure: The ten characteristics of a well-designed place

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

Building / Urban design

Scheme Image(s)



Assessment

This application 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
- Greater Manchester Streets for All Design Guide

Local Policy

This list is not exhaustive of the local & national policies and Supplementary Planning Documents that are relevant to the consideration of the planning application.

- Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan
- Rochdale Core Strategy policies
- Supplementary Planning Documents:
 - Oldham and Rochdale Urban Design Guide
 - Oldham and Rochdale Residential Design Guide

SUMMARY

Due to the errors within the submission and the weak, pastiche design approach that would result in a discordant addition to the street scene, I would advise the applicant to withdraw the scheme. It would be far more beneficial for any façade improvements to be developed in tandem with the planned regeneration works for the street, and in particular the emerging programme associated with the Milkstone Road / The Curtain Theatre.

The application fails to meet local and national design policy. I would be unsupportive of the proposal.

Pre-Application (September 2024)

NPPF Paragraph 40:

Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.

The site proposal would have benefited from a formal pre-application process, particularly given the significant weaknesses in the design response.

Drawing Information

The plans and elevations do not align i.e. windows shown incorrectly.

Certificate A has been signed based on the site edged red. However, the site edged red excludes the proposed balcony and no notice has been served on RBC, making the application therefore invalid in any case.

Street elevations are required to see the proposal in context.

Design Policy

Rochdale's Core Strategy (Policy DMI) places strong emphasis on high-quality design that responds positively to its context and enhances the built environment.

Policy P3 of the Core Strategy acknowledges that good design will improve the image and attractiveness of the borough as a place to live, work and visit. This policy requires all new developments to adhere to high quality design and enhance the borough's identity and sense of place, by respecting context where it is positive and having regard to the scale, density, massing, height, layout, landscape, materials and access of surrounding buildings and areas in general.

Policy PI Improving Image: (Rochdale Core Strategy) Developments should improve the image of the area. Poor or unremarkable design that does not elevate the local image or contributes negatively to the streetscape could be rejected.

Approving marginal or poor design because the existing situation is degraded is contrary to planning policy. New development is expected to elevate the quality of the public realm and contribute positively to its surroundings - not to reinforce or legitimise a low-quality baseline.

DESIGN

Milkstone Road exhibits a wide and often incoherent mix of architectural styles, many of which have evolved in a piecemeal and visually discordant manner. As a result, the street lacks a cohesive or distinctive architectural character of merit. Despite this, there are isolated buildings of note — including the application building and its two immediate neighbours — which provide some localised architectural interest.

The Rochdale Development Agency has identified this part of Milkstone Road as an area in need of regeneration, with an emerging cultural and arts programme centred initially around the theatre. The applicant may not be aware of this wider context, and the current application will understandably be assessed on its own merits. However, there is a valuable opportunity to explore how the artistic activity associated with the theatre could be meaningfully connected with the masjid. The planning officer is best placed to advise whether this is best pursued through a pre-application process or a series of dedicated workshops.

Turning to the design itself, the proposal appears to mimic a North African mosque typology, resulting in a literal pastiche that sits uncomfortably within its context and does not build upon the positive features of the existing building. The wholesale removal of the brick façade through extensive render, together with the omission or downgrading of window details, horizontal banding, lintels and cills, suggests an attempt to replicate Moroccan-Andalusian architecture rather than respond to the local streetscape. This reflects a missed opportunity to draw on relevant precedents and the more successful elements of the surrounding context.

Beyond the diluted treatment of existing features, the design overcompensates with superficial references; the most prominent example, a mock mashrabiya. This reinforces these concerns and introduces further issues of appropriateness. Based on the material submitted, there is no realistic confidence that the scheme could be constructed to anything approaching the level of craftsmanship implied by the chosen precedent — nor would pursuing that stylistic route be appropriate in this context in any case. Similarly, the proposed minaret, which would likely be unsuitable in this setting,

lacks a coherent scale and proportion in relation to the host building, resulting in an unbalanced composition.

Ultimately, the architectural language is incongruous and lacks coherence, with individual elements on the façade failing to relate meaningfully to one another even before considering the wider street scene. Any future proposal should take proper account of the host building and its status as a NDHA. This is not to suggest that creativity or contemporary expression cannot be introduced; rather, such interventions must be grounded in the building's existing character.

There is genuine potential to introduce visual interest through carefully considered use of Islamic art, pattern or colour in a way that enhances, rather than conflicts with, the established fabric. This would be far more successful if explored in tandem with the emerging signage and façade works associated with the Curtain Theatre, where a coordinated approach could produce a more coherent and contextually sensitive outcome.

Please reconsult me regardless of which approach the applicant opts for.