

URBAN DESIGN CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Design Officer	Azhar Kapadi
Date	12.02.26
Application Reference	PL/2025/1221
Address	Land off Hareshill Road North, South Heywood, Rochdale
Proposal	Reserved matters application for access, layout, scale, appearance and landscaping for 186 residential dwellings and associated works pursuant to hybrid planning permission 16/01399/HYBR

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](#).

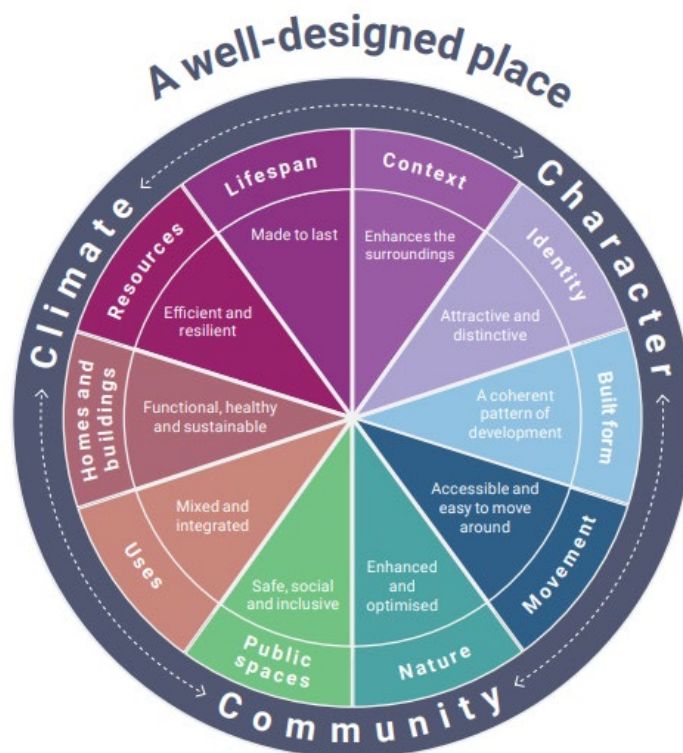


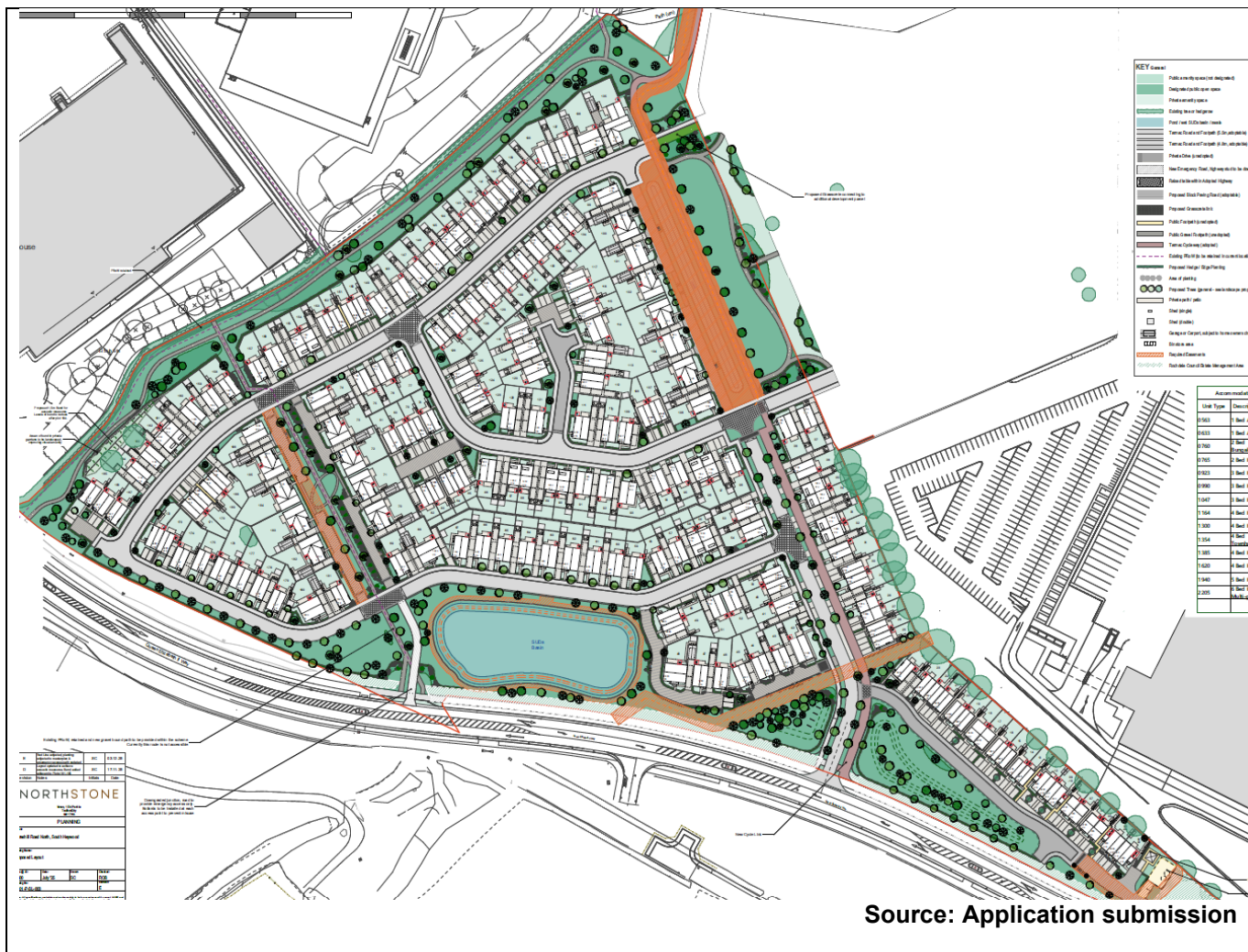
Figure: The ten characteristics of a well-designed place

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

Building / Urban design

Scheme Image(s)



Assessment

This 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

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
 - S03 – To improve design, image and quality of place
 - P1 – Improving Image
 - P2 – Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage
 - P3 – Improving design of new development
 - DMI (General Development Requirements)
- Supplementary Planning Documents:
 - Northern Gateway Development Framework
 - Oldham and Rochdale Urban Design Guide
 - Oldham and Rochdale Residential Design Guide

Greater Manchester's Streets for All Design Guide

Emerging Planning Policy - Places for Everyone (PfE) joint development plan

SUMMARY

The scheme shows well-designed elevations and an acceptable overall layout that reflects earlier engagement sessions. Conversely, the materials strategy weakens overall placemaking. With improvements to the brick choices and a more considered colour approach, this issue can easily be resolved.

The adopted highway and cycleway through the site needs further resolving / clarification.

As it stands however, I am unsupportive of the application due to the material palette presented in this proposal. Please reconsult.

Context

The application follows on from the Hybrid Outline Planning Permission (16/01399/HYBR) approved 31st March 2020. The scheme has evolved following earlier pre-application discussions and a site visit to a Northstone construction site in Horwich. On balance, we considered the proposal to be in a suitable position to progress to the reserved matters stage, where we can examine the finer details in greater depth.

Design Evolution

We have worked closely with the applicant to focus on key areas of the site. Overall, the design approach to the elevations has been received positively. In recognising this, there has been some flexibility applied to certain features of the signature Northstone houstypes. The applicant has responded constructively to our guidance, which includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- Ensuring visual interest is incorporated into blank and side elevations that would not typically serve as primary elevations.
- Introducing a mix of parking arrangements to avoid situations where all parking spaces are positioned solely to the front of properties.
- Limiting the use of dormers to remove them from key front-facing dwellings
- Creating a stronger frontage through an appropriate housing mix and variety of houstypes at prominent points within the layout, particularly those that face outward or form the first impressions of the site.

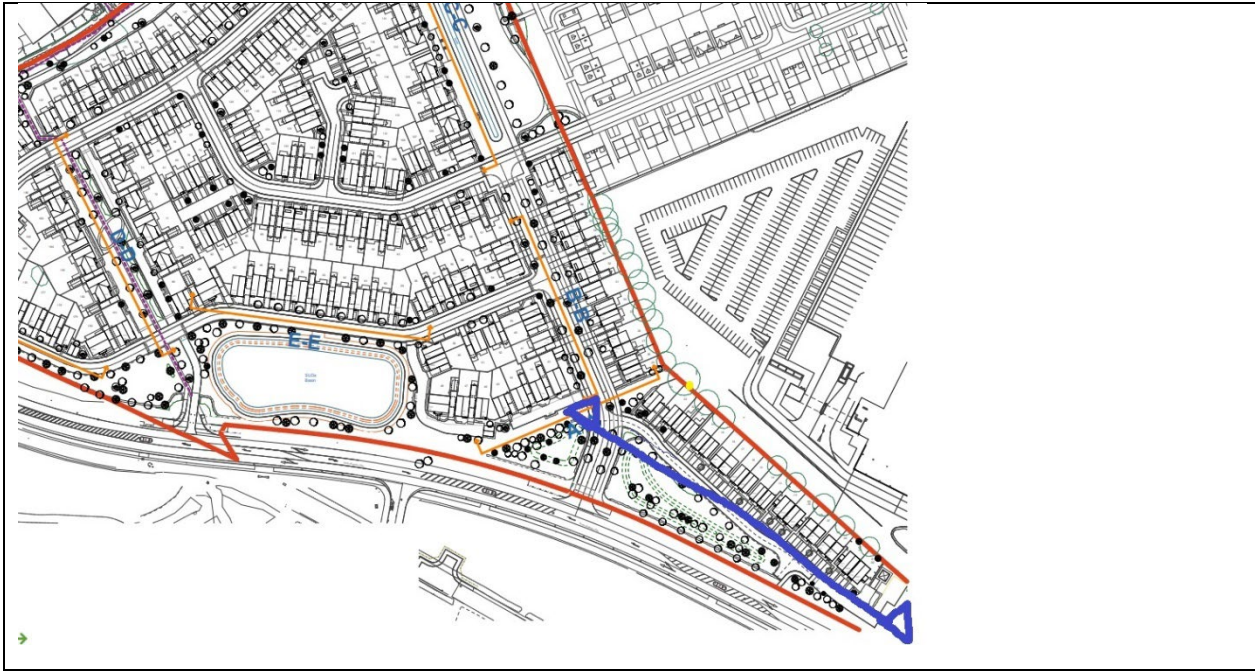
Revisions to the NPPF since the outline planning and a care not to reference weaker nearby developments as positive precedents have been reiterated to the applicant.

At the pre-application stage, the importance of materials was emphasised. Several houstypes were shown to us at the Horwich site, notably those featuring higher-quality brickwork. However, the proposed brickwork strategy for other areas of the development was unclear at that time, with indications that availability and supply were still being investigated.

Further Information:

It would be particularly helpful to have coloured street elevations. In the absence of this, and with the accepted caveat the colours shown do not exactly match what is proposed, I have assigned some colours to help me visualise the elevations presented. This task has flagged some concerns, discussed later in the report.

Provide a street elevation of the homes to the east of the site (see below) to include the substation and outline of industrial units to the rear. Confirm if any of these are affordable housing plots.



Materials

Brick Types

The design statement reads, 'The material selection provides an opportunity to place-make and create a strong character, identity and legibility throughout the development'. Having reviewed the proposed brick types, my initial impression is that they are underwhelming and require improvement.

The selection put forward is clearly drawn from the lower end of value engineered products and does not reflect the design quality expected for new developments across the borough. Several concessions have already been made on the flagship housetypes and architectural expression, and a further reduction in material quality should not be acceptable. Brick types 3 are received positively - please clarify if buff brick 3 was used at Horwich site. If so, this is deemed acceptable, but this should be combined with a darker mortar.



Red brick 1
Wienerberger Crofters Medley
(preferred)



Red brick 1 substitution
Wienerberger Chepstow Multi
(reserve)



Red brick 2
Wienerberger, Old Eccleston



Red brick 2
Wienerberger, Retro Cottage
Stock



Buff brick 1
Wienerberger Oatmeal Buff
(preferred)



Buff brick 2 substitution
Blockley's Wrekin Buff
(reserve)



Buff brick 2
Wienerberger Rothesay blend



Buff brick 3
Vandersanden, Majestic

I am willing to reserve final judgement once sample panels are produced. Sample panels should allow the full relationship of materials to be reviewed. This includes the brickwork with actual mortar colour and joint profile, the possibility of trialling different mortars, window frame or frame samples positioned alongside the brickwork and the inclusion of roof tile and cladding samples. This stage may also be conditioned by the planning officer if considered appropriate. Pragmatically speaking, brick types 1 and 2 for both red and buff colours respectively are not being received positively.

Initial thoughts:

Red brick 1 Crofters Medley	Unconvinced
Red brick 1 substitution Chapstow Multi	Try darker / red shade mortars (will have to review via a panel but unconvinced at the moment)
Red brick 2 Old Ecclestone	Unconvinced - confirm mortar
Red brick 3	Suitable as per Horwich example.
Buff Brick 1 Oatmeal Buff	Not acceptable, probably not even worth building a sample panel for.
Buff Brick 2 Rothesay Blend	Unconvinced but willing to review a sample panel.
Buff Brick 2 substitution – Blockleys Wremlin Buff	Not acceptable, probably not even worth building a sample panel for.
Buff Brick 3	Suitable but confirm mortar

It should also be noted that delays or difficulties in sourcing a suitable brick will not be considered an acceptable justification for lowering the agreed material standard. The need for a consistent and credible material palette has been highlighted throughout, particularly for the principal frontages identified at pre-application stage, and this remains essential to delivering the intended character of the development.



Highlighted in blue is where Brick 3 occurs in the context of outward / entrance frontages.

Elevation / Colour Mix Arrangements

I can't see a clear strategy for colours or materials. On a scheme of this size, you would normally expect some variation across roof and elevation treatments. Using a single roof colour is not an issue in itself, but when the brick palette is restricted to buff and red, the elevations need to be handled carefully because the brickwork will carry a large part of the visual character.

A scattered use of brick types can work, but only if the brick has enough texture and variation to give the elevations depth. Brick 3, for example, shows more tonal variation and could support changes in colour more effectively. Simply switching between brick colours is rarely enough unless the bricks themselves have a strong grain or contrast.



During the engagement process, the area referenced above was repeatedly identified as a key frontage, forming the outward impression of the scheme. The housetypes here have improved, and the introduction of stronger gable-fronted forms has helped establish a clearer and more consistent street scene. However, the proposed colour choices and brick types do not complete that ambition; they undermine what could otherwise be a successful frontage. To assist this point, see examples below:

For Sections CC and DD, the larger housetypes and better-quality brick make the mixed colour approach work, and the housetype-brick pairings (e.g. 1940 V1 with Red Brick 3, 1620 V6 with Buff Brick 3) read consistently.

In Section EE, the lack of a stronger brick choice makes the colour mix feel scattered, and although the frontages themselves are well designed, the colour arrangement seems disjointed.



Section EE: Proposal



Section EE: Possible Alternative shown is an improvement



H Elevation/Section C-C, 1:200



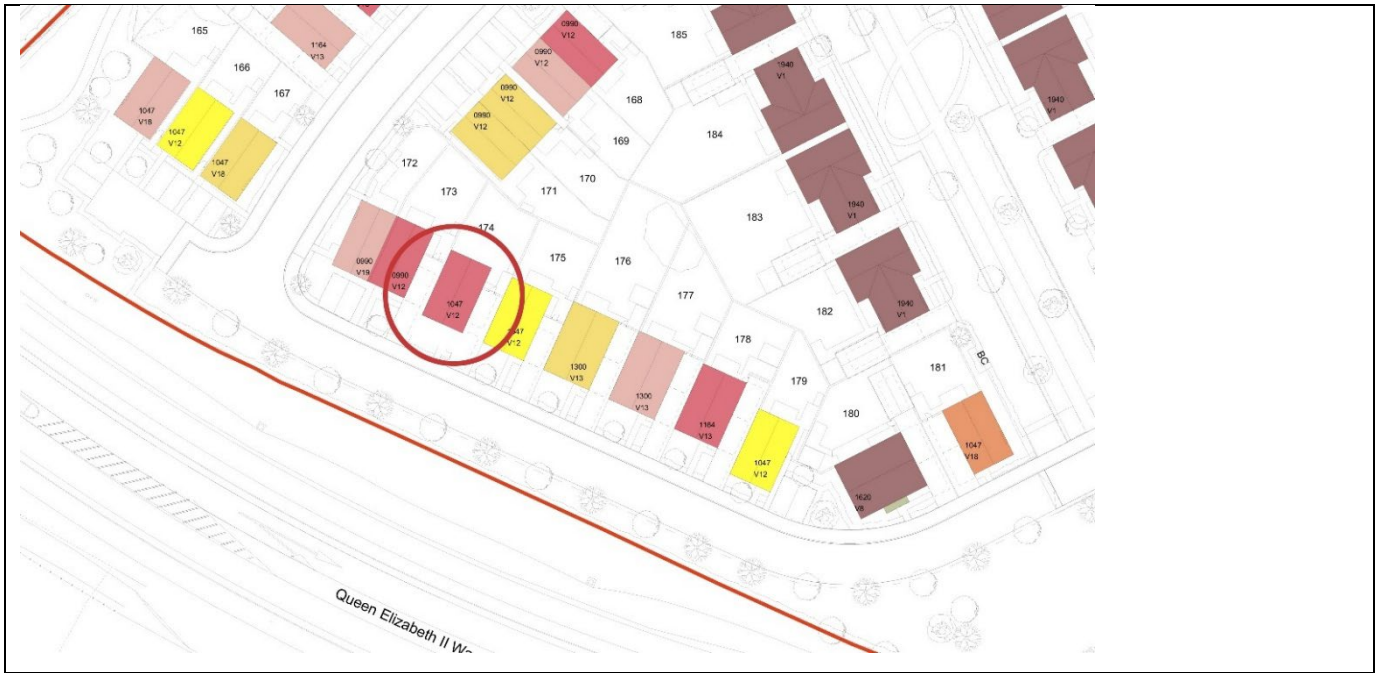
H Elevation/Section D-D, 1:200

Section CC / DD

The planned conversion of the sales office to a bungalow, entirely clad in hardie plank will appear conspicuously different to the rest of the housetypes. The introduction of a sole bungalow alone, however, already creates that impression. I will therefore refer back to the planning officer to exercise their judgement regarding material finishes to this.

Layout

The majority of the layout arrangements were resolved at the pre-application stage. I have noted, however, that Plots 179 and 174 project forward from the rest of the street. For Plot 179, this is acceptable as it helps to achieve adequate rear garden space and can be read as part of a corner transition, particularly as Plot 180 also steps forward. In contrast, the bookend approach does not work for Plot 174. This plot is neither located at a corner nor at the end of a run, and its forward projection appears unnecessary, disrupting the established street line. Pulling Plot 174 back to align with its neighbouring properties (as below) would be a more logical approach, with no adverse impacts on parking or garden space, while also improving the visual outlook for Plot 173.



Consider if the path between Plot 157 and 158 can be adjusted as to improve privacy to Plot 157.

There seem to be quite a few advertisement posts in some of the nicer parts of the site. It may be worth reviewing this so they don't distract from those positive areas or feel too concentrated.

Cycleway materials

It was mentioned at the pre-app stage; the proposed cycle route is a key opportunity to promote active travel and should be treated as such. Standard tarmac, while functional, offers limited visual quality and risks blending the cycleway with vehicular roads, weakening the movement hierarchy. To support cycling as a positive, sustainable mode, the surface should be materially and visually distinct. This is being discussed with the Highways Engineer about what could be a suitable proposal which offers durability and differentiation and has been acknowledged by the applicant in the supporting documents.

Adopted highway and cycleway route

A more detailed section is required through the highway and cycle path to clearly show kerb locations and the relationship to the adjoining houses, driveways and footpaths. It would be helpful to see two versions of this section: one taken through a driveway and one taken where no driveway is present. Although a section is provided on drawing SH01-P-SS-001, a closer-scale, more detailed section would be beneficial for this particular part of the layout.

With one side of the street lacking a footway, we need to understand how the thresholds between the carriageway, cycle path, landing strips and private driveways work. This will need further scrutiny with Highways, particularly in assessing whether a contrasting surface material for the cycleway is still appropriate without an accompanying footway. What is the strategy for crossover of adopted pavement meeting the cycleway? The sequence of tarmac road, dropped landing zone, cycle path and multiple driveway crossings must be reviewed to ensure safety is not compromised. This should be considered alongside the *Greater Manchester Streets for All Design Guide*.

This zone requires further testing, and there may be scope to adapt the current layout or review the cycleway width to determine whether a footpath could be incorporated. Crossing points also need to be more direct and safer; diagonal crossings should be avoided, and landing strips may need extending to achieve horizontal crossings.

While physical separation between the highway and cycle path has visual benefits, the user experience for cyclists with frequent level changes caused by numerous driveways needs to be acknowledged and assessed. This section will therefore require additional consultation / with Urban Design Team and Highways.



Can you confirm whether dropped kerbs will be shown in the Section 38 submission? Given the complexity of this interface, it may be worth including this detail at this stage for this specific area.

What is the lighting strategy to this area?

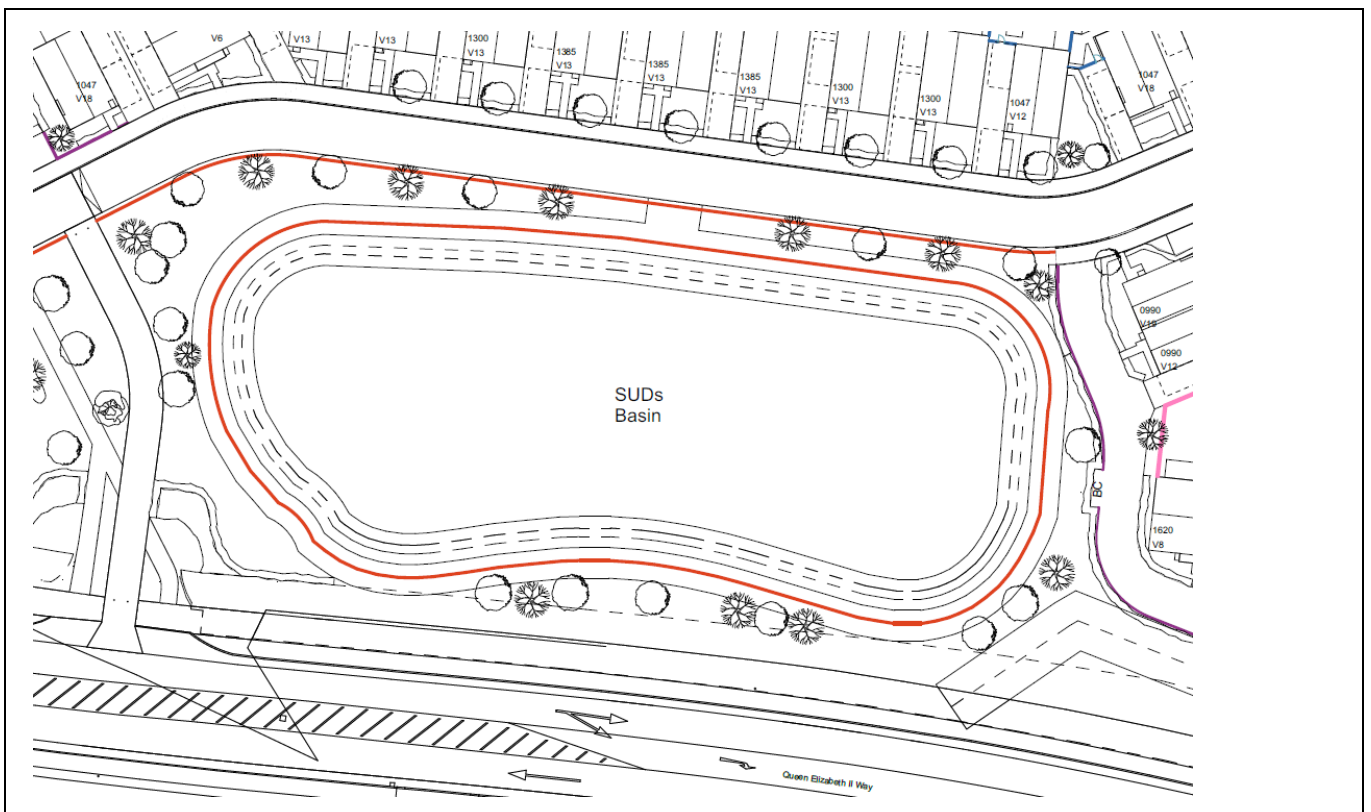
Transition between materials

We would like to see clear and well-designed transitions between different surface materials. For example, where tarmac adoptable footpaths or roads meet private shared-surface areas, a demarcation strip or border detail should be introduced to avoid an abrupt material change.



Boundary Treatments

Please clarify why there is a perimeter fence circling the SUDs Basin. There is an adequate boundary at the adopted highway and I am concerned two fences in such close proximity brings forth visual clutter and maintenance issues. It appears linked to the gas easement possibly, but this typically would not require enclosure.



Retaining Walls

Provide a section through the plots where retaining walls are included within gardens i.e. Plot 62 / Plot 91. The retaining walls recently added to the submission refer to the detail but being able to see this context is important.