

URBAN DESIGN CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Design Officer	Azhar Kapadi
Date	09.04.26
Application Reference	PL/2026/0193
Address	Land At The North Side Of Joseph Street, Middleton, M24 5SQ
Proposal	Erection of 4no, 3 bedroom dwelling houses with associated boundary treatments, landscaping and car parking

Reason(s) for Consultation

Building / Urban design

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 (BHL)

Local Policy:

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:

Oldham and Rochdale Urban Design Guide

Oldham and Rochdale Residential Design Guide

The Unitary Development Plan:

- G/BE/1 - Design Quality
- BE/2 - Design Criteria for New Development

Greater Manchester's Streets for All Design Guide

Places for Everyone (PfE) joint development plan

Scheme Image(s)



SUMMARY

The proposal would benefit from a more sensitive and coherent design approach, with improved detailing and a stronger response to the surrounding context. The current layout remains overly dominated by frontage parking. Materials and architectural articulation require significant refinement to ensure durability and visual clarity, with the elevation reading as fluent rather than busy or dominant.

I am unable to support the scheme in its current form. Any revised proposals should be re-consulted.

Existing Site

The site is located within a residential location within the defined urban area, occupying a corner plot site. The urban context is made up of predominantly of bungalow properties to the east, with two storey properties to the south and west.

Pre-Application Recap

This proposal is disappointing, particularly given the applicant's otherwise welcome engagement with the planning team. The application follows a previously withdrawn scheme and a subsequent pre-application submission (PREAPP/00100/25), which included an in-person meeting with the case officer.

Regrettably, many of the concerns raised at the pre-application stage remain unresolved and continue to be directly relevant to the current proposal.



1. Original Pre-App submission



2. During Pre-App submission – Changes made December 2025

For the last proposal (2), it was advised that whilst the principle appeared broadly acceptable, it would benefit from further refinement, particularly in relation to the roof form and overall design quality. The dwellings options work more effectively than the apartment option previously reviewed.

Design Policy

The Oldham & Rochdale Urban Design Guide states that ‘poor designs are unacceptable wherever they may be proposed’. This aligns with the NPPF requirement for new development to improve the character and quality of an area. This framework sets an expectation that good quality design will be approved while poor quality will be rejected. Good design should not just be for the short term but over the lifetime of the development.

Policy requires new developments in low-quality environments to set a higher design baseline and contribute positively to character and identity. The Urban Design Guide emphasises that high standards apply across all areas. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: ‘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;’ The Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan requires developments to demonstrate good design by creating visual interest in areas or buildings lacking character.

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.

Current Design

Parking

There is a clear departure from the parking strategy discussed at earlier stages, which was generally considered to be moving in the right direction. The BHL is explicit in stating that development should not be dominated by frontage parking; however, the current proposal is parking-led and results in the street frontage being overly dominated by parked vehicles.

The proposal now introduces two additional visitor parking spaces. This exacerbates an already unbalanced layout on a site where parking is visually and spatially dominant, to the detriment of frontage quality, legibility, and residential character.

Pre-App advice:

‘I will comment once revised proposals are submitted, but recommend incorporating soft landscaping to reduce the visual impact of hard surfacing. Parking along the frontage should be avoided. If the scheme is for social housing, there may be scope to reduce parking requirements, subject to case officer advice and confirmation that off-street provision is satisfactory.’

Roof form

Given the clear preference expressed at pre-application stage for a two-storey form with a traditional roof profile, any design approach seeking to utilise a third storey needed to be supported by a very high quality of architectural detailing. Throughout the pre-application process, traditional dormer forms were strongly discouraged. While, in principle, a carefully considered brick-framed dormer element introduced sparingly could be acceptable, this would need to be convincingly justified by a strong and coherent design rationale, supported by appropriate precedents.

Although an example has been referenced to illustrate this approach, there is limited confidence that the current proposal can deliver the required level of detailing or architectural quality. In this context, it would be preferable for the units to be reconfigured as two-bedroom dwellings arranged over two storeys only. This approach would also offer the additional benefit of potentially alleviating parking pressures across the site.

Elsewhere, insufficient effort appears to have been made to reduce the visual dominance of the roof. The repetition of the same dormer detail to the rear elevations is unnecessary and further reinforces this dominance. A more restrained approach, incorporating roof windows or rooflights to serve bathroom spaces, would be more appropriate.

Overall, a more considered and robust response to the roof design is required. This should include a reduction in the visual prominence of fascia and guttering and a reassessment of the roofing materials, with a view to whether a higher quality roof product could be employed to improve the overall architectural outcome.

Boundary Details

Boundary treatments are weak and exacerbated by extensive driveway areas. Improved soft landscaping, particularly along street-facing elevations, is required to better buffer parking and enhance the public realm.

Other Building Design

The stepped form at the centre of the building is unsuccessful, creating an awkward junction between the brick dormers and projecting bay elements. A consistent frontage across all four properties would be preferable and could be comfortably achieved given the depth available within the façade. The mirrored arrangement of the two central units does not read well, whereas the projecting bays and dormer elements are more successful when separated by a consistent and deliberate spacing.



Materials

The proposed cladding material is not supported and appears out of keeping with the established character of the area. It reads as visually poor, already tired elsewhere in the borough, and lacks longevity. A masonry-led approach, using brick and carefully considered brick detailing, would be more appropriate and contextually responsive. The current combination of materials results in a haphazard elevation that fails to sit comfortably within its setting and does not add visual interest. Improved architectural articulation is required, and the applicant would benefit from clearer architectural direction.

It would be premature to support the proposed materials without physical samples. A more engaging brick choice should be explored; a subtle multi-brick could offer a more successful transition between the flat engineering brick of nearby bungalows and the darker masonry of older surrounding properties.

Balconies

The balconies currently add little value to the façade and are not convincingly justified in relation to the local context. Insufficient detail has been provided, and their open-ended design raises concerns regarding future detailing and overall design quality. At this stage, they risk further diluting the coherence of the elevation rather than enhancing it.

Canopy / Entrance

Side access remains acceptable in principle; however, the proposed canopy is overly simplistic and reads as a typical volume housebuilder detail. There is scope to improve this element through more thoughtful detailing

and higher-quality materials, with a modest sense of depth or projection helping to create a clearer and more successful entrance.



Consider the window shape, size more carefully. Better detailing to coping, fascia, gutters etc are required and opt for brick cheeks to dormers



Trespa cladding will be considered to dominate the elevations negatively. A bay detail such as this would work better on a three storey gable structure but could still be interpreted with brickwork. Attempt to reduce the vertical emphasis of the elevations, consider detailing such as horizontal stepped brickwork



Basic canopy looks like poor volume housebuilder design. Can be improved with better detailing and materials



Design Access Statement

The proposal remains underdeveloped and lacks a coherent site-specific design approach. The supporting DA Statement is largely generic and does not clearly explain how the surrounding context has informed the design, nor does it justify any departure from it. As a result, there is no clear vision for how the proposal relates to, or positively reinterprets, its setting.

It was advised also;

‘Going forward – demonstrate a strong commitment to design, materials and detailing i.e. how do you avoid thick roof verges, dominating drainage pipes. Clarify window reveal depths, brick detailing proposed.’

This has not been forthcoming and remains an area unresolved in the scheme.

Other advice provided also notes:

‘Design inspiration should be drawn from positive local urban examples, reinterpreting distinctive architectural features to establish a strong design language. Where the context is weak, the proposal should aim to elevate architectural quality in line with policy.’

Strong architectural precedents—especially in detailing—should inform the design, and need not be limited to the borough.’

Other

- Some of the drawings / visuals are inconsistent. i.e. dormer cheeks shown in brickwork and in one other cgi this is shown in cladding.
- CGIs seem to show a completely different context – reiterating concerns about the lack of contextual site analysis.

The design remains some distance from an acceptable solution. The applicant would benefit from engaging an architect to explore a more site-responsive approach, supported by clearer design intent and a higher quality of detailing.