

URBAN DESIGN CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Design Officer	Azhar Kapadi
Date	17.04.26
Application Reference	25/00405/FUL
Address	Land South Of Greenvale, Bamford, Rochdale
Proposal	Demolition of existing dwelling and construction of a residential development for 43 no. dwellings with access and associated works

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:

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

SUMMARY

This scheme fails to meet policy expectations for high-quality design; The housetypes remain overly generic, the layout is dominated by frontage parking, and several plots present weak, blank gable elevations contrary to *Building for a Healthy Life*. While some improvements have been made, further relatively straightforward changes are required for the scheme to be considered acceptable.

I am concerned that this approach would set an unhelpful precedent for design quality, both across the borough and for the remainder of the JPA allocation. Policy is clear that development should seek to raise design standards, not dilute them.

PfE Context

JPA.17 seeks to deliver up to 450 dwellings across the allocation with a focus on the delivery of larger, higher value dwellings, in addition to the significant enhancement of on-site sports pitches and the formation of a sports hub to serve the local community

PreApp

It was requested at the Pre-App stage for detail in respect of the design and appearance of dwellings that higher-value dwellings are completed to a higher architectural standard. Any development should be informed by a sound understanding of positive local characteristics and compliance with the relevant local and national design guidance. It was related that the site layout was at an unacceptable standard, heavily dominated by frontage parking, leaving little space for landscaping.

Earlier Design Comments

Landscaping, boundary treatments and organisation of plots across the development were all flagged alongside concerns about the generic and uninspiring house types. It was stated at this time:

'This makes the overall development appear very generic and uninspiring, failing to distance itself from a typical volume housebuilder prototype development. The lack of specific architectural features or varied articulation in the proposed elevations, results in a development that would be visually bland and fails to contribute positively to the area's sense of place, contrary to good design principles outlined in local and national policy.'

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.

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;'

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.

The revisions to the NPPF in July 2021 establish clearly that development which is not well designed should be refused, and conversely, significant weight should be given to development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design. The December 2023 revisions cemented the role of beauty in placemaking and the planning system; in support of this, the Government has produced a suite of guidance documents including Building for a Healthy Life (BHL), the National Model Design Code (NMDC) and the National Design Guide (NDG) which form a material consideration in the assessment of the design of development proposals, and aid Local Authorities and developers alike in understanding if development proposals are well-designed.

JPA17

JPA17 requires:

- excellent design and sustainability through masterplanning and the use of design codes for the whole site

- development that responds positively to landscape character, setting, and the wider qualities of the area
- delivery of a high-quality place, not simply housing numbers

If the design quality threshold is not met, it is entirely reasonable to conclude that the scheme:

- fails to establish a positive new character, and
- risks harm to the quality and perceived value of the area, contrary to the allocation's intent.

Without improvements to the design, the threshold for high quality design is unable to be supported.

Given Bamford's status as a prosperous and desirable part of the borough, the design of the proposed housetypes could be more ambitious and better aligned with local expectations.

Layout

There are concerns regarding the visual amenity of the site entrance. The substation is overly prominent and would benefit from improved screening, such as hedge planting, to better integrate it into the streetscape.

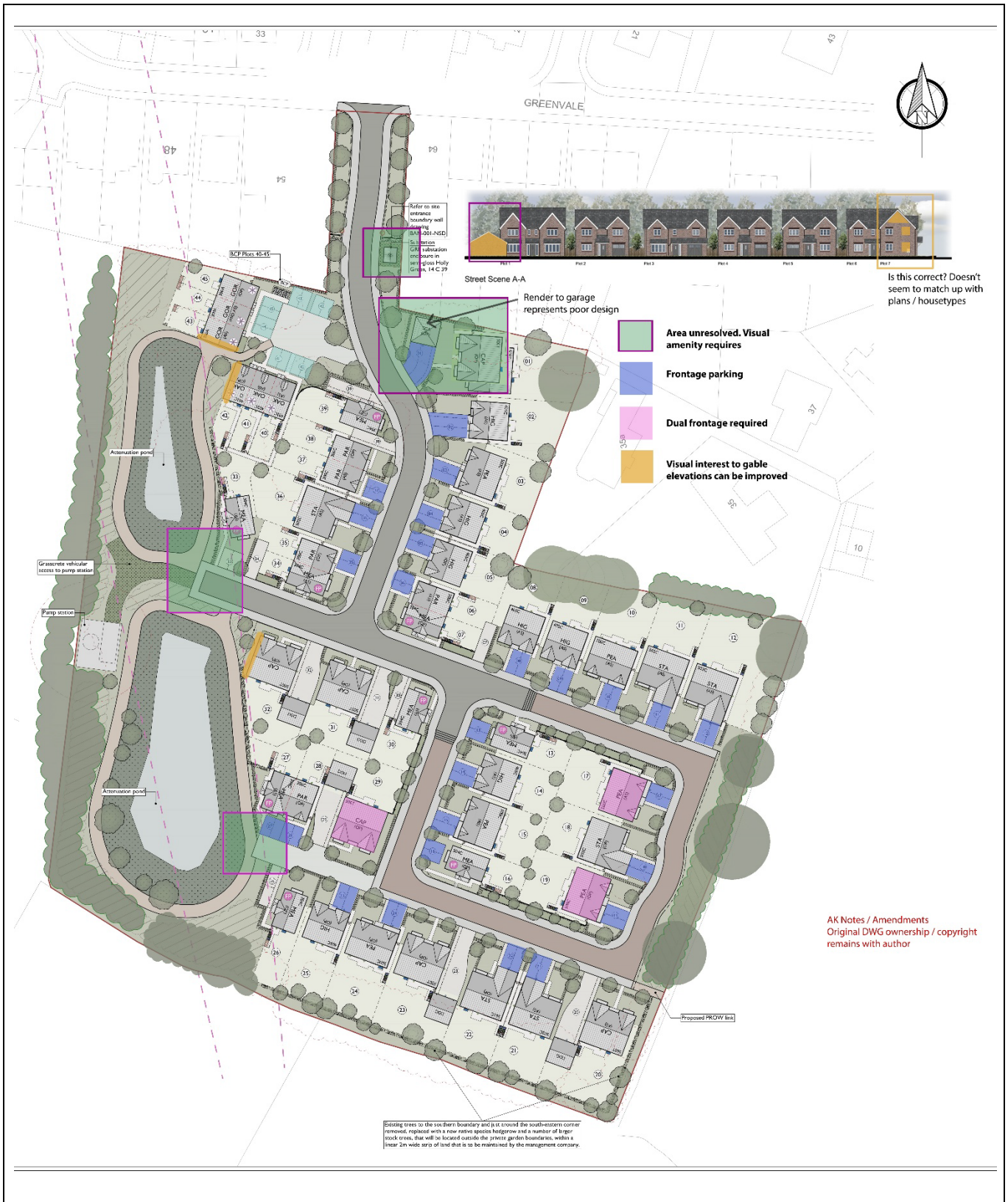
Plot 01 has an awkward access arrangement that is unnecessarily dominated by a large garage and parked vehicles. This could be resolved by repositioning the dwelling and incorporating a single side garage, resulting in a less cluttered frontage and a larger, more usable rear garden.

In addition, the use of render to the garages, aside from the front elevation, is poor design practice. Render has limited durability and weathers poorly, particularly when set against brick and stone. Its use in this context weakens the overall quality and cohesion of the development and does little to enhance its appearance. This affects Plot 01 more than Plot 20/23 due to visibility.

It appears trees have been taken out of private curtilage and maintained at street edges which helps reinforce the boundary edges in a softer intervention. Features such as estate railings are welcomed and add some character to the development. The tree lined approach into the site is welcomed although a single footpath would have looked more natural and rural.

The footpath arrangement around the SuDS area appears unresolved where it meets the highway. In particular, there is a conflict between the footpath and the access road to Plot 27, which requires reconsideration.

The applicant has not addressed concerns about the over-proliferation of frontage parking that dominates the development.



Housetypes

The change in tenure and the courtyard-style arrangement is an improvement on the previous layout, which suffered from an unresolved orientation and poor outlook. However, the quality of the house types significantly undermines this area. The tight layout results in an overly dominant parking courtyard with very limited landscape buffering. Regardless of tenure, planning policy promotes tenure blindness, and there are straightforward ways this area could be improved.

House type 402C, the Oakrise, is particularly weak, with an over-dominant roof, poorly detailed dormer and unbalanced proportions -it really is something we should be discouraging. House types 40 to 45 would benefit from a more cohesive architectural approach, and the lack of urban design input is evident. For house type 300A, the brick detailing on the front elevation should be realigned to correspond with the porch. Given the prominence of this housing range at the front of the development, if the house types cannot be revised, the introduction of stone detailing should be strongly considered to improve quality.

Dual Aspect

I welcome the dual aspect units which better address the street and this is something that really should have been addressed from the start if the BHL was heeded. There are still however some houstypes that have not been addressed i.e. Plot 17, 19 and 29 which leaves a blank elevation, weak corner and a poor outlook for plots facing it. This is something quite simple to address and the designer should consider how the gable elevations in these instances can be improve through additional glazing and brick detailing to add visual interest.

The street elevation from Plots 20-16 introduce two wide breaks (at plot 20 /23 respectively). This interruption could be minimised if this was a single lane parking width and a single garage instead. However, the change in materials across the houstypes somewhat differentiates this somewhat.

Materials

The introduction of a broader material palette is both necessary and welcomed. The proposed use of stonework adds variety and helps introduce balance and visual interest to what is otherwise a fairly bland development. Its use is strongly encouraged, particularly as it would better reflect the character of this part of the borough. It is important that this is delivered as high-quality natural stone rather than an artificial alternative. If secured, this approach would help offset some of the weaknesses identified in the house types.

If solar panels are going to be added, they should be neatly integrated and discreetly concealed within the roof slopes.

Sample Panels / Going Forward

Prior to the commencement of any above-ground works, scaled sample panels of the proposed external walling should be erected on site. These should clearly show the brick and or stone, mortar, and be capable of being properly assessed alongside the proposed window frames, glazing and associated detailing. The panels should be of sufficient size to demonstrate coursing, brick detailing, and the true depth and finish of window reveals.

In addition, physical samples of the proposed roof coverings and all materials used to porch areas should be provided.