

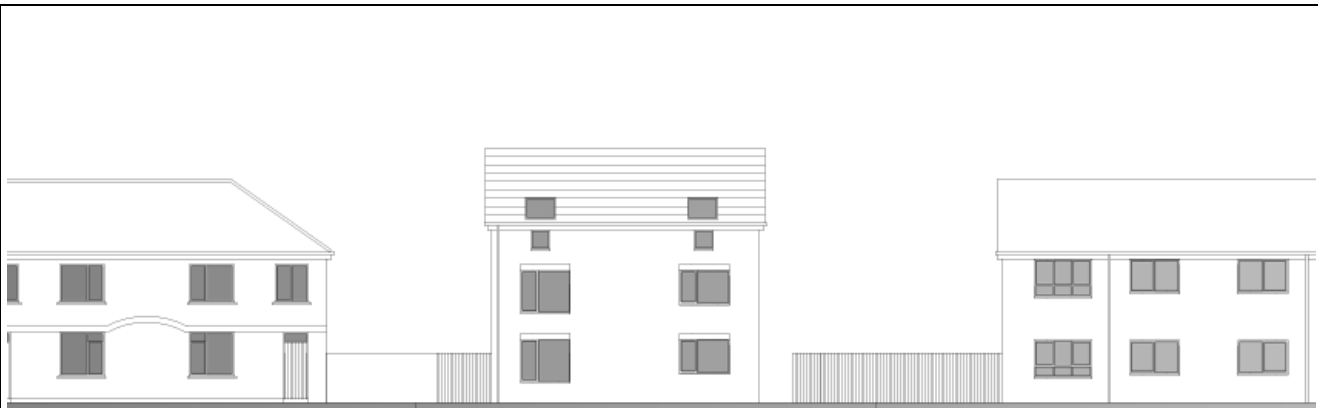
URBAN DESIGN CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Design Officer	Azhar Kapadi
Date	29.09.26
Application Reference	PL2026/0728
Address	Land adjacent to 23 Grove Road, Middleton, Manchester, M24 2LZ
Proposal	Erection of three storey building comprising 6 x 1 bedroom flats with associated car parking and boundary treatment

Reason(s) for Consultation

Building / Urban design

Scheme Image(s)



Source: Application submission

Assessment

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
- Supplementary Planning Documents:
 - Oldham and Rochdale Urban Design Guide
 - Oldham and Rochdale Residential Design Guide

Places for Everyone (PfE) Joint Development Plan
Greater Manchester's Streets for All Design Guide

SUMMARY

The proposal is overly large for the plot, dominated by frontage parking, and lacks any coherent architectural approach. The elevations are remarkably poor, failing to respond to local character or create a positive addition to the street scene, despite the concerns raised at pre-application stage.

I am unsupportive of the proposal. The scheme does not adequately satisfy local and national design policy.

DESIGN POLICY

Rochdale Core Strategy (2016)

C3 requires a high standard of development and layout that produces attractive places.

Policy DMI Requires all development proposals to demonstrate that they are of a high-quality design and take the opportunity to enhance the quality of the area.

Policy PI – Improving Image: 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.

Policy P3 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.

National Planning Policy Framework

Policy DP3 requires development proposals to respond positively to their context and create well-designed places through high-quality architecture, built form, landscape and public realm design. Development should reinforce local character and identity whilst contributing positively to the overall quality of an area. Development proposals that are not well designed should be refused.

Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan BE/2:

Development proposals will be required to demonstrate good design by:

- a) Ensuring that they are compatible with or improve their surroundings by virtue of their scale, density, height, massing, layout, materials, architectural style and detail and means of enclosure
- b) Creating visual interest in areas or buildings lacking character

Urban Design Guide SPD (Oldham & Rochdale)

- Emphasises contextual design, active frontages, and material quality
- Encourages early engagement and use of CGIs to communicate design intent

Residential Development SPD (2016)

- Sets expectations for layout, scale, massing, and boundary treatments
- Advocates for private entrances and garden spaces where appropriate

CONTEXT

There is little evidence that the applicant has meaningfully responded to the design advice provided at the pre-application stage. Given the concerns raised previously regarding scale, proportions, elevational treatment and relationship to local character, it is disappointing that the scheme has not evolved positively and, in some respects, appears to have regressed.

DESIGN

Scale

The proposal appears overly large for the plot, resulting in a building that is unduly dominant within the street scene. The three-storey form is uncomfortable in its context and exacerbates concerns regarding scale and massing.

Layout

Frontage parking dominates the proposal and detracts from the quality of the street scene. Whilst some parking within the front curtilage may be acceptable, there has been little attempt to retain or reinforce the landscaped character of the area. The result is a harder, more visually intrusive form of development that sits uncomfortably within its surroundings and creates a disruptive infill plot.

Elevations

The fenestration is one of the weakest aspects of the scheme. Window openings appear randomly positioned, with little regard for alignment, proportion or composition. The elevations lack any discernible order and fail to relate to one another in a coherent manner. The relationship between the upper-floor windows and the roof form is particularly awkward, giving the impression of an unresolved design.

There is also little confidence that the proposed materials will significantly improve the scheme. Beyond a reference to red facing brickwork, no meaningful design rationale or detailing has been provided. The application lacks any real site analysis; the proposal lacks the architectural features commonly found within the local context, such as brick detailing, banding, articulated openings, bays, chimneys or variations in brickwork treatment.

It appears the designer possibly has taken inspiration from the building south of the site (No.135/137) and even then, they have not managed to capture the composition and discipline of the windows.

The elevations lack any coherent design approach. They are inconsistent and bear little relationship to one another, never mind the wider street scene. The three-storey form is not working and only serves to emphasise the awkward proportions of the building. There is also a notable lack of visual interest, with no meaningful articulation, depth or architectural features to break up the massing, resulting in a flat and uninspiring appearance.

General Approach

There is a clear lack of design rigour throughout the submission, reflected in both the quality of the proposal and the limited detail provided. Even the submitted elevations contain basic labelling errors, which does little to inspire confidence.