

Oldham and Rochdale New Build Research: Design Assessment

Final Report

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INTRODUCTION

Objectives and scope of this report

This report is part of a wider programme of research which seeks to explore the views on how residents within the various Oldham and Rochdale Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder areas view the process, and the implications, of new build development. The wider programme of research had the main aim of understanding how well new build schemes in Oldham and Rochdale were performing in providing good quality, well designed, cohesive communities where people wanted to live. There were four main objectives:

- To produce design assessments based on the 'Building for Life' (BfL) criteria of quality and design within the new build offer in Oldham and Rochdale, drawing out any differences between schemes
- To address the questions and issues leading from previous survey work and to provide the residents' voice to the design assessment of schemes
- To evaluate the impact of shared spaces in fostering community cohesion within the identified schemes and to evaluate the potential for shared spaces where these do not currently exist¹
- To evaluate the consultation and engagement carried out before, during and after development of each of the identified schemes in Oldham and Rochdale

This report deals specifically with the first objective. In addition to this report there are three further reports: one details the views of residents living within and alongside the new developments; one looks at specific issues around consultation and shared space; and the remaining report provides an overview and an analysis of issues arising over all schemes and linked into the findings from this design assessment.²

The Design Assessment

The Oldham and Rochdale Pathfinder is striving to set new standards of design, ensuring that new developments are of a high quality. However, design issues are multifaceted and include considerations such as the impact of design on community cohesion, physical integration with existing environment, community safety, and mobility. Currently little is known about if and how developments within the Oldham and Rochdale Pathfinder areas are achieving these standards and if developments are enhancing their local context.

The Building for Life (BfL) criteria were used informally in this research to assess the design qualities of the seven schemes. BfL is based on work commissioned and funded by the Housing Corporation and provides a comprehensive framework to assess excellence in housing design and celebrate best practice. It comprises a set of 20 criteria broken down into four main areas: Environment and Community; Character; Roads, Parking and Pedestrianisation; and Design and Construction. These criteria aim to embody the vision of what housing developments should be: functional, attractive and sustainable. New housing developments are scored against the criteria to assess the quality of their design.

¹ The term 'shared space' as used here relates to a broad range of places where people can gather and meet rather than the more narrowly defined concept as used in planning and engineering.

² The background to the wider research programme and the methodology for the research can be found in the report entitled *Oldham and Rochdale New Build Research: Resident Research*.

The design assessments were undertaken on the 7 pre-identified schemes across Oldham and Rochdale:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------|
| • Selwyn Street | OLS 1EG |
| • Stoneleigh | OL1 4LQ |
| • Devon/Norfolk Street | OL9 7BZ |
| • Block Lane | OL9 7BP |
| • Gale Street | OL9 7BP |
| • Langley Brooklands | M24 5RY |
| • Langley Lowther | M24 4SN |

The assessments were completed through a combination of site inspections and desk work. The Selwyn Street, Oldham scheme was used as a pilot to ensure that the assessment approach met the needs and expectations of the Oldham and Rochdale partners. Selwyn Street was visited on 4th December 2008. The remaining site inspections were carried out on Tuesday 10th February 2009. The desk work to assemble much of the statistical data was supported by staff from Oldham and Rochdale Partners in Action, who's help on this matter is acknowledged. In some cases designers and/or developers were contacted directly for this information. The assessments were carried out by Professor Steve Curwell, RIBA and Jemma Bowmaker. It should be noted that this work was undertaken before CABE established a national programme of training and accreditation and it is possible that some of the assessments may have been scored differently if they were undertaken by an accredited assessor.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings and key characteristics of the schemes are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Vital statistics of schemes							
	Selwyn St	Stoneleigh	Devon St	Block Lane	Gale St	Langley B'Lands	Langley Lowther
No. of dwellings	18	73	23	81	60	125	60
Location type	High density Inner urban	High density Inner urban area	Urban area	Inner urban area	Post-war overspill housing estate	Post-war overspill housing estate	Urban area
Criteria and overall scores							
Environment and Community	4.5	4.0	4.5	2.0	3.0	2.5	1.5
Character	5.0	4.5	5.0	0	5.0	0.5	0
Roads, Parking and Pedestrianisation	3.5	4.0	5.0	1.5	4.5	1.5	2.0
Design and Construction	4.0	3.5	3.0	1.5	2.5	1.0	1.0
Total (rank)	17.0 (2)	16.0 (3)	17.5 (1)	5.0 (6)	15.0 (4)	5.5 (5)	4.5 (7)

CABE give the following gradings to BfL scores and this approach has been used to assess the seven sites:

- **Very good (pass)** - 16/20 or higher
- **Good (pass)** - 14/20 or 15/20
- **Average (borderline pass or fail)** - 10/20, 11/20, 12/20 or 13/20 (none in this category)
- **Poor (fail)** - 9/20 or lower

The Very Good Schemes

- **Devon Street (17.5)**
- **Selwyn Street (17)**

Both schemes are very small (i.e. less than 25 dwellings) compared with most of the others in the study. They are both very good quality projects of great character that rework the terrace house concept for the 21st Century. Both schemes fit well within the urban grain of Oldham, and have an appropriate accommodation and tenure mix. The quality of the design and detailing is high in both schemes and they deploy a number of more advanced environmental features. Devon Street has a slightly better approach to integration of cars and car-parking, as well as being a more pedestrian-friendly scheme, which is why it scored slightly higher.

- **Stoneleigh (16)**

This is a much larger scheme than the Devon and Selwyn Street schemes (73 dwellings) and shows what can be done with larger infill development on a slightly larger site formerly occupied by a mill building. It generally complies with most of the assessment criteria

but the design is a little more restrained than the previous schemes and it does not perform so well in terms of the environmental criteria. Part of this project also has a good approach to stitching new development into the existing grain of terraced housing, but the assessors were less impressed by the overlarge apartment wing adjacent to Vulcan Street. The size is probably necessary to justify the investment in lifts for vertical circulation in this building which is a good feature for disabled access. This contrasts with the deck access approach used in Gale Street, Rochdale. Due to the less successful approach to the design of this part of the development the assessor considered marking down design quality criteria in what is otherwise a successful scheme. If this was done the scheme would score 15.5, which would move it into the “good” category. This is nevertheless still a creditable score.

The Good Scheme

- **Gale Street (15)**

Gale Street is a small scheme of similar size to the Devon and Selwyn Street schemes in Oldham. In architectural design terms it is equally enterprising exhibiting good distinctive character, and again showing how the concept of the terrace house can be enlivened for contemporary living. Here the apartment block is much more successful than at Stoneleigh, Oldham albeit on a much smaller scale, with a well designed deck access approach to the rear elevation. Thus the scheme meets most of the assessment criteria except in terms of the environmental criteria and the accommodation and tenure mix, where it scores less well.

The Poor Schemes

- **Block Lane (5)**
- **Langley Brooklands (5.5)**
- **Langley Lowther (4.5)**

These three larger schemes, can be discussed together as they have very similar underlying development concepts and failings in terms of the assessment criteria. All three schemes follow the standard suburban commercial development pattern based on outmoded and some would argue misinterpreted understanding of the garden city concept that places a high priority on the needs of the private car and for the private garden. To a large extent this is being challenged by the BfL approach. All three projects have little distinctive character. Similar schemes could be found in most of cities of Britain. They fail in the majority of the criteria, in terms of community, character, urban design and environmental issues. Although the design and construction of individual dwellings is functional, fit for purpose, durable, reasonably well proportioned and built, the overall effect of these schemes provides little or no sense of place, and it is very questionable that “a significant proportion of home-buyers would have their spirits lifted by what is on offer” (quoted from the BfL Criteria 17: <http://www.buildingforlife.org/criteria/17>). The main criteria in which they all do well concerns adaptability. Generally the provision of private gardens in all three schemes means that it will be easy to adapt and expand the dwellings to meet future needs. None of the three schemes have been designed to address the principles established by BfL and so the assessors raise the question of why the designers appear to have deliberately ignored these matters. Is this because these schemes have not used public funding and so the schemes have gone forward on what the developer considers straight commercial criteria, or were the schemes

designed before the BfL criteria became an expected consideration in the design for public funded schemes?

Conclusion

Overall the assessments have indicated a deep contrast in the developments which have been designed with regard to the issues set out by the BfL criteria and those that were not. Since the assessments were carried out the assessors have learned that the schemes that exhibit the best features are, in fact, publicly funded, whilst those that exhibit weak characteristics are those that have been privately funded. This information was not divulged to the assessors prior to the assessments due to concerns, from the HMR team, over bias.

The weaknesses of the privately-funded schemes raises the ongoing debate between some private developers and the design professions over how best to meet householders' needs and the aspiration to improve the quality of urban design and housing that is encapsulated in the BfL criteria.

Reflections on the assessment process and limitations of the criteria

During the implementation of the criteria it is clear that the process itself, as well as the criteria used present a number of challenges. These challenges are as follows:

- The subjective nature of the assessment: Attitudes to design are notoriously subjective and it must be remembered that the assessor's judgement about what is positive or negative about a particular development, may not converge with what partners or residents think of the development (or indeed the developers themselves). Some of the assessments may have also been scored differently if they were undertaken by an accredited assessor.
- The size of the development: there may be some inherent discrimination in the implementation of the criteria depending upon the size of the development, for example it was difficult to score the criteria for a number of smaller schemes, i.e. criterion 9 (navigation) and criterion 14 (integration). This perhaps highlights that perhaps the BfL assessment criteria is better suited to larger developments and how it should be used for smaller schemes.
- Proximity issues: The assessors had to use their own judgement for terms such as proximity and whether the development was 'close to' certain facilities and amenities. In this case, the assessors deemed 'close to' as 5-10 minutes walk from the scheme. However, for the larger schemes it was difficult to determine where to measure this from, i.e. the middle of the scheme or either side.
- The difficulty of heterogeneity: All developments are unique however the criteria can be quite rigid. This emphasises subjectivity and raises questions such as: Should small schemes be expected to supply their own community facilities? Similarly, should the score be based on community facilities being close to the scheme rather than part of the development? The assessors used their judgement when such issues occurred and dealt with these on a case by case basis.

APPENDICIES:

SCHEME BY SCHEME REPORTS

Building for Life Assessment

Scheme:	Selwyn Street, Oldham
Postcode:	OLS 1EG
Project type:	Houses and pocket park
Location type:	Urban
Number of dwellings and tenure:	18: 4 sale; 10 affordable rent; 4 shared ownership
Dwelling type:	4 4-bed houses, 13 5-bed houses, and 1 7-bed house
Bed spaces:	138
Site area / density:	0.34 hectares, 53 units per hectare
Parking ratio:	2:1
Typical unit area:	99m ² (smallest 4-bed) to 158m ² (largest 7-bed)
Cost per unit:	From £98,832 (smallest 4-bed 6 person house) to £159,284 (largest 7-bed 11 person house)

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY

1. Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as school, parks, play areas, shops, pubs or cafés?	Score
<p>There are shops, a park and a pub, but there appears to be no local no café or play area. The latter is particularly an issue as the scheme is popular with families.</p>	0.5
<p>It is close to Oldham town centre. There is a Mosque within walking distance.</p>	
2. Is there an accommodation mix that reflects the needs and aspirations of the local community?	
<p>The scheme contains larger houses which meets the need of the local Asian community for larger family accommodation. This is backed up by consultation with a representative group of prospective tenants.</p>	1.0
3. Is there a tenure mix that reflects the needs of the local community?	
<p>Yes, there is a mix of sale, shared ownership and social rented housing</p>	1.0
4. Does the development have easy access to public transport?	
<p>Selwyn Street has frequent access to public transport meaning it is within 400m of a frequent bus route or 800m of a rail station or future Metrolink stop.</p>	1.0
5. Does the development have any features that reduce its environmental impact?	
<p>Yes, this is generally the case as there are wind turbines on 50% of the houses and solar panels on all of them.</p>	1.0
<p>The full score of 1 reflects Eco Homes excellent rating</p>	
<p>The houses all have a secure car port which also supplies a safe place to keep bicycles.</p>	
<p>Sub-total</p>	4.5

CHARACTER

6. Is the design specific to the scheme?	Score
<p>Yes. The use of a saw toothed roof profile, the use of rendering and the internal layout of the houses with undercroft carports provides a marked contrast to the original terraced houses that form the main context.</p>	1.0
7. Does the scheme exploit existing buildings, landscape or topography? Do buildings exhibit architectural quality?	
<p>Yes. There are two tiers of housing to accommodate the steep slope of the hill. This is reasonably well managed with appropriate fencing to reduce overlooking into the lower terrace. The houses exploit the good views from the upper floors over the town and surroundings. Furthermore, wind turbines have been installed in the upper tier of housing to exploit the windier conditions.</p>	1.0
<p>The overall quality is above that of standard private developments. The layout and mix give a well balanced appearance. The detailing is good presenting a harmonious appearance. The ironwork detailing of the security gates to each house is particularly good.</p>	
<p>The small park provides some level open space on a steep site.</p>	
8. Does the scheme feel like a place with distinctive character?	
<p>Yes, the houses are quite distinctive in terms of their architectural quality and the marked contrast with the existing grain of terrace houses works surprising well. This gives the development quite a distinctive character, which can be seen when one approaches the area from the town centre on foot via the pedestrian footbridge across the sunken ring road. The use of small scale wind turbines adds to the effect.</p>	1.0
9. Do the buildings and layout make it easy to find your way around?	
<p>The scheme is really too small to make this an important issue. It maintains the existing street pattern so from that aspect this is the case. The entrances to the houses are well defined.</p>	1.0

CHARACTER

10. Are the streets defined by a coherent and well structured building layout?	Score
<p>Again, as for criterion 9 the scheme is really too small but, in general, yes, there is a clear distinction between public and private space. It may have been better to position the houses so that they surround the park, rather than this being off to one side, where it seems a little out on a limb and in contrast to the original dense urban grain.</p>	1.0
Sub-total	5.0

ROADS, PARKING AND PEDESTRIANISATION

11. Does the building layout take priority over the roads and car-parking, so that the highways do not dominate?	Score
There is an issue of tenants parking on the street instead of in the car ports attached to the houses but it is not clear if the designers could have done anything to alleviate this problem. However, more could have done to make the scheme less car-friendly, e.g. by pedestrianising one of the side streets.	0.5
12. Is the car parking well integrated and situated so as to support the street scene?	
The car parking is well-integrated in that it is provided in under-crofts to the houses as part of the accommodation so that cars can be parked off street. However, the streets are still dominated by cars because most owners or tenants do not use some or all of the off-street spaces provided, in some cases parking on the pavement. So that in many ways parked cars detract from the street scene. One possible cause is the large family size so that there are more than two cars per household. Also the existing terrace houses have no obvious off street provision. It might have been possible to close off the cross street at its mid point to make parking here and to improve the hard landscape to widen the pavement in a way that discourages parking in front of the houses.	0.5
13. Are the streets pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly?	
The designers worked with what was there and haven't change the streets in any way, but this could also be deemed a negative as no pedestrian areas were added, nor any traffic calming measures. No cycle paths were added but this isn't necessary considering the size of the scheme. The points at 12 also apply here.	0.5
14. Does the scheme integrate with existing roads, paths and surrounding development?	
Yes, as little of the existing pattern has been changed.	1.0
15. Are public spaces and pedestrian routes overlooked and do they feel safe?	
All houses look on to the street and the park is overlooked by houses, creating a safe and secure environment	1.0


DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

16. Is public space well designed and does it have suitable management arrangements in place?	Score
Overall, the public space does seem well designed, for example, anti-graffiti measures and limited amount of flora to ease management issues. Suitable management arrangements assumed due to well-tendered public space.	1.0
17. Do the buildings exhibit architectural quality?	
Yes – the design and detailing are clearly of our time. The house layouts are functional and seem to fit the needs of larger family's well. Perhaps the living rooms should have been slightly larger but this is the only negative point. The use of the saw tooth roof creates a contrast with the existing grain of pitched roof terraced houses, but this still seems to work well. The proportion is good and the detailing of the buildings looks clear and durable. That of the ironwork to the gates and fencing is especially good. Overall the effect is both striking and harmonious.	1.0
18. Do internal spaces and layout allow for adaption, conversion or extension?	
It is clear from the internal house plans that a more open-plan layout can be achieved on the ground floor by knocking through walls, and there is scope to add one extension at the back of the house and one at the side by enclosing the car port / under-croft.	1.0
19. Has the scheme made use of advances in construction or technology that enhance its performance, quality, and attractiveness?	
There are no obvious signs of the use of advances in construction e.g. prefabricated panels/wood frame construction.	0
20. Do buildings or spaces outperform statutory minima, such as Building Regulations?	Score
Wind turbines and solar panels have been installed and, as far as we can see, there is good natural light. EcoHomes excellent award implies better than standard performance.	1.0
Sub-total	4.0
Total	17.0

Building for Life Assessment

Scheme:	Stoneleigh, Oldham
Postcode:	OL1 4LQ
Project type:	Infill development
Location type:	Urban
Number of dwellings and tenure:	73 dwellings: mix of sale and rent
Dwelling type:	42 x flats 2B, 12 x 2B, 12 X 3B, 7 x 4-bed houses
Bed spaces:	264
Site area / density:	1.02 hectares, 73 dph
Parking ratio:	133%

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY

1. Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as school, parks, play areas, shops, pubs or cafés?	Score
 <p data-bbox="954 349 1308 887">There is a primary school immediately adjacent to the scheme (see photo) as well as a convenience store and fast food outlet within a couple of minutes walk. There is a pub on the high street (within 5-10 mins walk). Afghan Park is about 10 minutes walk from the development and this has a games area but no playground. The Home Zone area within the scheme could function as a play space for children.</p>	0.5
2. Is there an accommodation mix that reflects the needs and aspirations of the local community?	
Yes, there is a reasonable mix comprising 2 bed flats, 2 and 3 bed houses, and there are seven 4-bed houses.	1.0
3. Is there a tenure mix that reflects the needs of the local community?	
Yes, there is a mix of properties for sale and rent.	1.0
4. Does the development have easy access to public transport?	
There is a bus stop around the corner within 2 mins walk and more options on the nearby Ripponden Road (3-4mins)	1.0
5. Does the development have any features that reduce its environmental impact?	
Eco-homes rating of very good. There is evidence to show the development used timber frame construction, extra insulation in the roof space and slightly larger windows to capitalise on passive solar. There is also permeable parking, a cycle store, composting bins and an area designated for recycling. However, there is no evidence of any renewable energy technologies.	0.5
Sub-total	4.0

CHARACTER

6. Is the design specific to the scheme?	Score
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Yes, the scheme provides an interesting mix of terraced property with a larger apartment block specifically designed for this site. The E shaped layout is well considered and is very appropriate in the context providing a secluded and secure area to the rear.

1.0

7. Does the scheme exploit existing buildings, landscape or topography? Do buildings exhibit architectural quality?	
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The context is made of new factory units on the edge of an area of existing terraced housing. The terraced house form is used on the arms of the E and fit well into the existing street scene. On the other hand the apartments are piled up to four floors on the base of the E and this is a little too high in relation to the immediately adjacent original small terraced houses (see photo). It may have been better to slope the roof of the block down to the scale of the latter at this end of the elevation. Similar coloured bricks and stonework to that of the original terraces close by means that the scheme has a harmony with the context.

0.5



8. Does the scheme feel like a place with distinctive character?	
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Yes, while the scheme has a number of details and material texture and colours sympathetic with the original, surrounding terraced houses, it also includes some original design features such as a non-standard roof design and balconies some houses and most flats.

1.0

CHARACTER (Stoneleigh)

9. Do the buildings and layout make it easy to find your way around?	Score
It is really too small a scheme for this to be an important issue but yes, the E shaped layout works well and is very legible.	1.0
10. Are the streets defined by a coherent and well structured building layout?	
Again, the scheme is very well considered with the taller flat blocks located on the main road with a car park at the back, while the houses are set back within the Home Zone located in one of the spaces in the E layout.	1.0
Sub-total	4.5

ROADS, PARKING AND PEDESTRIANISATION

11. Does the building layout take priority over the roads and car-parking, so that the highways do not dominate?

Score

Yes, in particular the Home Area zone is designed to give priority to pedestrians whilst also providing safe parking for residents. However, it could be argued that more could have been done with the car park serving the flats, especially as many of the flats have balconies that look over this space. Could it have been made more into a more interesting courtyard with some planting or could the Home Zone have at least been extended into this space? (see photo)

0.5



12. Is the car parking well integrated and situated so as to support the street scene?

Yes, this is definitely the case with the housing as parking spaces are outside the houses and part of the Home Zone (see photo below). However, it is felt that the car park attached to the rear of the flats does not particularly add anything to the scheme apart from providing car parking provision. A bit of a lost opportunity?

0.5



ROADS, PARKING AND PEDESTRIANISATION

13. Are the streets pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly?	Score
<p>Yes, the Home Zone introduced makes the scheme pedestrian friendly so that cars do not dominate. Furthermore, a cycle store has been incorporated into the scheme. No cycle routes have been added but this is not necessary given the size of the scheme and its urban location not directly on a major thoroughfare.</p>	1.0
14. Does the scheme integrate with existing roads, paths and surrounding development?	
<p>Yes, again the scheme is quite small to judge, but it seems to integrate well with good, hard landscaping.</p>	1.0
15. Are public spaces and pedestrian routes overlooked and do they feel safe?	
<p>All properties look onto public spaces whether it be the main road, the Home Zone area, or the car park to the back. Overall the area feels very safe.</p>	1.0
Sub-total	4.0

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

16. Is public space well designed and does it have suitable management arrangements in place?	Score
Overall, yes, the hard landscaping is well-designed overall and is appropriate given the nature and size of the scheme. The hard landscaping also means there will be minimal need for maintenance. However, more could have been done with the communal car park; this is not necessarily well-designed.	0.5
17. Do the buildings exhibit architectural quality?	
Yes. The terraced houses and flats on the arms of the E layout are particularly good providing an interesting reworking of the terrace and fitting very well into the context in terms of the materials and textures, but nevertheless with some original features. The design of the apartment block is less well done, particularly the elevation to Vulcan Street which is a bleak flat elevation broken up with an irregular pitched roofline and an apparently illogical jumble of windows. More could have been done to model this façade to much better effect.	1.0
Nevertheless overall the quality of the design and detailing is above average.	
18. Do internal spaces and layout allow for adaption, conversion or extension?	
This is poor as there is no obvious space for people to extend, and adaptation is restricted, again, due to limited space and the overall efficient interior planning.	0
19. Has the scheme made use of advances in construction or technology that enhance its performance, quality, and attractiveness?	
This is okay but not exemplary. Timber frame has been used but this appears to be all.	0.5
20. Do buildings or spaces outperform statutory minima, such as Building Regulations?	
Extra insulation was added to the roof spaces and windows were enhanced in size to allow for passive solar gain; however, the amount of space in the houses is an issue and there is no evidence to show that there is good sound proofing (above the norm) between houses, especially given their close proximity to each other.	0.5
Sub-total	3.5
Total	16

Building for Life Assessment

Scheme:	Devon Street, Oldham
Postcode:	OL9 7BZ
Project type:	Small infill development Houses and pocket park
Location type:	Urban
Number of dwellings and tenure:	23 dwellings: 21 socially rented, 2 shared ownership
Dwelling type:	6 x flats 2B, 5 x 3B, 3 x 4B, 6 x 5B, 1 x 6B, 1 x 7B
Bed spaces:	130
Site area / density:	Unknown
Parking ratio:	Unknown

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY

1. Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as school, parks, play areas, shops, pubs or cafés?	Score
<p>There are two cultural centres, madrassa, a grocery store and a newsagent very close-by. There is some provision for recreation as part of the Home Zone area; however, there were no signs of a school or pub close by. It should also be noted that there is an area of land to the east of the site that has been earmarked for redevelopment but could have instead been made into a park with a designated play area.</p>	0.5
2. Is there an accommodation mix that reflects the needs and aspirations of the local community?	
<p>Yes, there is a good mix of housing types, especially considering the size of the scheme with anything from 2 bed flats to a 7-bed house.</p>	1.0
3. Is there a tenure mix that reflects the needs of the local community?	
<p>The development is made up of 23 properties consisting of houses for rent, shared ownership and outright sale suggesting a good tenure mix.</p>	1.0
4. Does the development have easy access to public transport?	
<p>Yes, there is a bus stop on Oxford Street very close –by, within a very few minutes walk.</p>	1.0
5. Does the development have any features that reduce its environmental impact?	
<p>Yes, eco-homes rating very good, and there are wood frame windows, wood cladding and timber frame construction. There are solar panels on most houses with one with a wind turbine. The designers have also made good use of passive solar gains with most housing facing in a SW direction, although it could be argued that some of the windows could have been bigger to maximise natural light.</p>	1.0
<p>It is not clear if there is provision for recycling area, composting or a cycle store, but its other features justify a good score.</p>	
<p>Sub-total</p>	4.5

CHARACTER

6. Is the design specific to the scheme?	Score
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The scheme is in a quite urban location composed of extensive Victorian terraced houses and former industrial premises now finding new uses, e.g., as a madrassa as well as some more recent 1970's infill/redevelopment. The scheme design provides and interesting reworking of the urban terrace that maintains the urban grain but is specific to its time.

1.0

7. Does the scheme exploit existing buildings, landscape or topography? Do buildings exhibit architectural quality?	
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Yes, the scheme is very much in-keeping with urban location. The two tier development maximises the slope of the site, with taller buildings on the upper tier and lower tier all orientated to maximise sunlight. However there is a compromise with some loss of the privacy of the lower tier houses through this. The buildings have a clear early 21st Century typology.

1.0

8. Does the scheme feel like a place with distinctive character?	
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Yes, the overall look and feel is positive and gives an "of its time" feel, rather than of simple reproduction of the Victorian context used in the earlier 1970's interventions. Clearly specifically designed with a quirky character of its own that nevertheless relates to, but does not copy, the existing buildings. Not standard house or apartment blocks. The scale and design of the apartments that mark the end of each terrace exceptionally well.

1.0

A number of well designed detailed architectural features are included with contrasting use of brick, render and wood cladding (see photo) as well as steel supports at the front of the houses. The rear elevation of one of the terraces (in Photo) could have usefully used laying or offsetting to improve the look, feel and ease of detailing of the mixture of cladding materials.



CHARACTER

9. Do the buildings and layout make it easy to find your way around?	
<p>As the scheme is a very small (three terrace infill) so navigation and orientation is not an issue. However the designers have maintained the urban grain very clearly which supports both the new work and the existing surrounding housing. The layout works well with distinctive, more prominent three storey apartment buildings bordering the main access road announcing the entrance to scheme and marking its boundary.</p>	1.0
10. Are the streets defined by a coherent and well structured building layout?	
<p>As mentioned in 9 the designers have maintained the urban grain which supports both the new work and the existing surrounding housing. The layout works well with distinctive, very well designed and more prominent three storey apartment buildings bordering the main access road announcing the entrance to scheme and marking its boundary.</p> <p>The use of the slope supports the passive solar objectives and the use of Home Zone areas means the scheme is clearly defined, see 11 below.</p>	1.0
<hr/> Sub-total	5

ROADS, PARKING AND PEDESTRIANISATION

11. Does the building layout take priority over the roads and car-parking, so that the highways do not dominate?

Score

Yes, pedestrians and building layout take clear priority over roads and vehicles. This is displayed through the use of Home Zone areas which incorporates parking and a recreation area, and this is supported by the design of the hard landscape, see 13 below.

1.0

12. Is the car parking well integrated and situated so as to support the street scene?

Yes, parking is very well integrated due to the layout and detailed design of the hard landscape. This forms part of the Home Zone area but this does not detract from the street scene and it is clear that it is also used as a recreation area (see photo). Three houses have garages but, again, this support the street scene quite well.

1.0



13. Are the streets pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly?

Yes, the design or the hard landscape dispenses with the carriageway clearly gives priority to pedestrians. This use of Home Zone areas means that cars do not dominate and the scheme is pedestrian and cycle friendly.

1.0

ROADS, PARKING AND PEDESTRIANISATION

14. Does the scheme integrate with existing roads, paths and surrounding development?	Score
Yes, again as the scheme is quite small this is not really an important issue, but it seems to integrate well with good, hard landscaping and some existing houses benefiting from the Home Zone areas (see photo in question 12).	1.0
15. Are public spaces and pedestrian routes overlooked and do they feel safe?	
Yes, all properties look onto existing roads or the Home Zone areas providing a safe and secure environment.	1.0
Sub-total	5.0

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

16. Is public space well designed and does it have suitable management arrangements in place?

Score

Overall, yes, the public space which includes the Home Zone areas is well-designed and appropriate given the nature and size of the scheme. The hard landscaping also means there will be minimal need for maintenance. However there are existing unused and derelict sites close-by which detract from this new high quality development.

1.0

17. Do the buildings exhibit architectural quality?



Overall Yes, the buildings do meet that hard to get accolade that “home-buyers would have their spirits lifted by what is on offer”. The overall design and detail is to a high standard. However it could be argued that the use of brick, timber cladding and render with galvanised steel features on some elevation is too much of a mix of materials. It might be better to allow one to dominate the design, as exemplified in the apartment blocks and close of the end of the terrace (see photo below).

1.0

18. Do internal spaces and layout allow for adaption, conversion or extension?

This is poor. The small sight and layout selected means that the spatial design of the dwellings is tight and there is little space for adaptation or extension in the small gardens. Extensions would occupy the whole of the small private space at the rear of the dwellings.

0

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

19.Has the scheme made use of advances in construction or technology that enhance its performance, quality, and attractiveness?	Score
This is quite good. Timber frame, wood window frames and wood cladding are used but that's about it as far as we can tell. The use of alternative and passive energy technologies is also good.	0.5
20.Do buildings or spaces outperform statutory minima, such as Building Regulations?	
Eco-homes rating of very good with super insulation, timber frame and passive solar design, but there is limited space inside the houses and little evidence of additional sound proofing between houses.	0.5
Sub-total	3.0
Total	17.5

Building for Life Assessment

Scheme:	Block Lane, Oldham
Postcode:	OL9 7BP
Project type:	Suburban housing estate
Location type:	Urban
Number of dwellings and tenure:	81 dwellings, all private
Dwelling type:	Detached, semi-detached, short terraces
Bed spaces:	Unknown
Site area / density:	Unknown
Parking ratio:	Unknown

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY

1. Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as school, parks, play areas, shops, pubs or cafés?	Score
There is a pre-school, a chemist, doctors' surgery, a pub and other community facilities within 5 minutes walk of the scheme. However, given the size and nature of the scheme we feel that some provision should have been made for a play area. There is Coalshaw Green Park, but this is more than 10 minutes' walk from the scheme.	0.5
2. Is there an accommodation mix that reflects the needs and aspirations of the local community?	
There are no flats but there are 2, 3 and 4 bed houses. Therefore there is little provision for singles or larger families.	0.5
3. Is there a tenure mix that reflects the needs of the local community?	
All private tenure.	0
4. Does the development have easy access to public transport?	
The scheme is designed around the car; however, there is a bus stop within 2 minutes walk (on Block Lane). A new tram stop is proposed within half a mile of the scheme. This will replace the existing heavy rail. No stations are planned in close proximity.	1.0
5. Does the development have any features that reduce its environmental impact?	
No environmental features could be detected from the site visit. No evidence has been supplied of any features.	0
Sub-total	2.0

CHARACTER

6. Is the design specific to the scheme?	Score
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No – the scheme is a traditional suburban housing estate using a small range of four developers' standard house types, but located in an urban area. 0

7. Does the scheme exploit existing buildings, landscape or topography?	
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The scheme is at the edge of an extensive area of traditional brick walled and slate roofed terrace housing of very urban character. It adjoins an area of development of more recent houses from the 1960's and an existing railway embankment. The scheme does not attempt to be in-keeping with urban character of the immediate local area and the road layout follows a quite different grain (see photo). The layout reflects the access needs of the road into the site and so not all buildings are orientated optimally for aspect and prospect and for solar gain. 0



8. Does the scheme feel like a place with distinctive character?	
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This is a standard developers' scheme with the repetition of standard house types with little attention given to the grain of surrounding area and house styles. So there is very little distinctive character and one does not feel that this is Oldham. It is clear that the designers have attempted to break or contrast with the style of the adjoining area of terrace housing. This was probably thought to be necessary to provide a new feel in the redevelopment and meet with developers' perceptions of current householder's expectations. It is an example of an executive housing estate using fairly standardised house plans that could be found anywhere in the country. 0

CHARACTER

9. Do the buildings and layout make it easy to find your way around?	Score
<p>No – the scheme has a slightly confusing layout using long cul-de-sacs so it's difficult to navigate. The layout is oriented towards access by motor vehicles. There are no distinctive features in the buildings or landscaping to aid navigation. For pedestrians there is no connection between the cul-de-sacs. Footpaths could have been included to make it easier to find alternative routes around and into adjoining areas but this may have made the scheme less secure. It is apparent that those householders at the furthest end of the site have problems with unwanted access from the railway embankment.</p>	0
10. Are the streets defined by a coherent and well structured building layout?	
<p>Again, no, the scheme is almost entirely cut off from its surroundings as there is only one entry access point, there are no through roads and there is only one pedestrian route from the estate via Hadfield Avenue to Block Lane in the south.</p> <p>The layout seems entirely arranged in order to maximise the number of units that can be accommodated on the site and the long way out of the site through the single access point will encourage use of the motor vehicle, even for short journeys.</p> <p>There is little sense of enclosure or place typical of many suburban schemes of this type.</p>	0
Sub-total	0

ROADS, PARKING AND PEDESTRIANISATION

11. Does the building layout take priority over the roads and car-parking, so that the highways do not dominate?	Score
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No – the scheme is very much designed around the car. The access roads do dominate the development

0

12. Is the car parking well integrated and situated so as to support the street scene?	
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Yes, for this type of housing estate the car parking does support the street scene adequately and is well integrated.

1.0

13. Are the streets pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly?	
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No. Due to the nature of the scheme it is not necessary to add specific cycle paths but it is very much designed around the car. Although the pavements seem wider than average for this type of development the pedestrian feels secondary. There is only one alternative pedestrian route in and out of the scheme so this is likely to encourage motor car use even for quite short journeys.

0



14. Does the scheme integrate with existing roads, paths and surrounding development?	
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No, not very well. Although the vehicular access is competently planned the scheme breaks the urban grain. In fact the suburban layout of the scheme cuts it off from the neighbouring areas as far as the pedestrian is concerned. A situation exacerbated by the railway embankment. Furthermore, existing footpath routes are not utilised.

0

ROADS, PARKING AND PEDESTRIANISATION

15. Are public spaces and pedestrian routes overlooked and do they feel safe?	Score
<p>This scheme feels quite safe due to the nature of cul-de-sacs and all houses look on to the street, however, this criterion is marked down because there is no through traffic, vehicular or pedestrian, could which provide extra security. Also rear gardens back onto some areas with high fences for privacy and narrow ginnels between fences to provide access to one or two rear entrances. These feel quite insecure and are clearly unused as a consequence. It would have been better to provide some through pedestrian routes in these areas.</p>	0.5
Sub-total	1.5

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

16. Is public space well designed and does it have suitable management arrangements in place?	Score
There appears to be no public space other than the streets. The ownership of the parking and lawns to the front of the properties is not defined. Maintenance of these areas appears to be well managed (it is assumed by the residents?).	0
17. Do the buildings exhibit architectural quality?	
The overall impression is poor. This is a typical developers' scheme with little variety, but for this kind of development the architectural quality and detail is fair. The individual dwellings are fit for purpose, durable, reasonably well proportioned and built, but the overall effect of this scheme is not particularly pleasing to the mind and the eye. The dwellings will cater for the residents' basic needs but the scheme as a whole has little sense of place and it is questionable that "a significant proportion of home-buyers would have their spirits lifted by what is on offer". The designers have at least resisted the temptation to add "mock-tudor" or other reproduction stylistic features and the detailing is relative honest to the construction and materials.	0.5
18. Do internal spaces and layout allow for adaption, conversion or extension?	
This criterion scores well as there is generous space in the house panning for adaptation and a lot of space between and behind the dwellings in the reasonably sized gardens that provide opportunities to extend for most of the houses.	1.0
19. Has the scheme made use of advances in construction or technology that enhance its performance, quality, and attractiveness?	
No – it fits with the standard design of this type, i.e. brick, block cavity construction, with standard pitched roofs. There is no evidence of new technologies..	0
20. Do buildings or spaces outperform statutory minima, such as Building Regulations?	
No, adheres to standard building regulations but nothing more (assumed).	0
Sub-total	1.5
Total	5.0

Building for Life Assessment

Scheme:	Gale Street, Oldham
Postcode:	OL9 7BP
Project type:	Small infill development
Location type:	Urban
Number of dwellings and tenure:	20 dwellings: all private
Dwelling type:	12 x flats 2B, 8 x 3B
Bed spaces:	76
Site area / density:	0.18ha, 111 dph
Parking ratio:	110%

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY

1. Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as school, parks, play areas, shops, pubs or cafés?

Score

There is a post office just around the corner, and a Tesco Express, pub, off license, Chinese and fish and chips, all within 5 minutes walk. This is a small green piece of land formed by a square of bungalows to the rear of the scheme which could be used as a play area(see photo).

1.0



2. Is there an accommodation mix that reflects the needs and aspirations of the local community?

There are 2 bed flats and 3 bed houses but no larger properties. This is a very small scheme, however other small schemes assessed have made a contribution to the wider need for larger (ie. 4-5 bed) units.

0.5

3. Is there a tenure mix that reflects the needs of the local community?

No, it is all social rented.

0

4. Does the development have easy access to public transport?

Yes, access is very good. There is a bus stop within two minutes walk (on Whitworth Road). Location means that journey time to central Rochdale is short.

1.0

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY

5. Does the development have any features that reduce its environmental impact?	Score
<p>Some environmental friendly features have been used like timber frame construction and cladding, locally sourced brick and stone, and passive solar design, but the insulation provision is standard, there are no alternative energy technologies, rainwater collection and compost bins.</p> <p>The site is very small so there is little scope for expanding or improving the biodiversity, however there is very little planting in the small area to the rear which is devoted to hard standing for cars.</p>	0.5
Sub-total	3.0

CHARACTER

6. Is the design specific to the scheme?

Score

Yes, very good reworking of terraced house concept (see photo) in half of the scheme with adjoining small, but neat apartment block celebrating the road junction. The material selection and design with contrasting brick and render gives distinctive character. Clearly designed specifically with it's a character of its own that relates to but does not copy the existing buildings. Not standard house or apartment blocks.

1.0



7. Does the scheme exploit existing buildings, landscape or topography?

This is a very small scheme and in this circumstance it responds well to the context. The form of the streets is maintained and the terrace part of scheme sits well beside the existing terraces as well as the existing square of bungalows forming a green space at the rear. So the scheme relates to and utilises the existing green area well. The first impression from the front elevation is that the apartment block on the corner of Whitworth Road and Gale Street is slightly too high in the context of the adjoining stone and brick terraces, but due to the gentle slope down the site this provides better enclosure to the rear, separating this space more effectively from the busy Whitworth Road. On balance it forms a reasonable compromise. Thus overall the scheme responds to and reinforces the local buildings and location well.

1.0

CHARACTER

8. Does the scheme feel like a place with distinctive character?	Score
<p>The overall look and feel is positive and gives an “of its time” feel, rather than of straight reproduction. Clearly specifically designed with a character of its own that nevertheless relates to, but does not copy, the existing buildings. Not standard house or apartment blocks.</p> <p>A number of well designed detailed architectural features are included with contrasting use of brick with smaller areas of cladding and render that contribute to the overall effect. Some houses overlook and contribute to the enclosure of the existing green area to the rear.</p>	1.0
9. Do the buildings and layout make it easy to find your way around?	
<p>Yes, it is very clear, but it would have been difficult to do otherwise with such a small scheme.</p>	1.0
10. Are the streets defined by a coherent and well structured building layout?	
<p>Again, it is a small scheme, but the building layout makes sense with the flat block on the corner of the junction of Whitworth Road and Gale St., especially in terms of safe access to the rear car parking from the busy Whitworth Road. A ginnel gives pedestrian access to from Gale Street to the small square made by the existing bungalows at the rear.</p>	1.0
Sub-total	5.0

ROADS, PARKING AND PEDESTRIANISATION

11. Does the building layout take priority over the roads and car-parking, so that the highways do not dominate?

Score

Given the nature of the site with a small scheme on a busy road the option to maintain the existing building line and form is the correct one. So, in general, the building layout takes priority with well-integrated car parking at the back of the development.

1.0

12. Is the car parking well integrated and situated so as to support the street scene?



Yes, overall the car parking is well-integrated for the size of scheme. From the front the car parking is well concealed and so supports the existing aspect and restrictions on the busy main road (Whitworth Street). Due to the small site the car parking is slightly obtrusive at the rear (see photo). However overall the layout provides a reasonable compromise and the parking does not seriously detract from the overall design of the scheme.

1.0

13. Are the streets pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly?



Yes, because the scheme is on a busy road, the designers have seen fit to add a cycle route as part of the scheme (see photo). It does seem pedestrian friendly as well with a footpath at the side of the scheme and adequate provision for pedestrians on the main busy road.

1.0

ROADS, PARKING AND PEDESTRIANISATION

14. Does the scheme integrate with existing roads, paths and surrounding development?	Score
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Yes, the scheme is generally in-keeping with surrounding terraces and roads, although the block of flats would have been better positioned or proportioned so that it does not impact on the smaller terraced houses on Gale Street (see photo). The scheme fits well with the open aspect square formed by the bungalows to the rear.

1.0



15. Are public spaces and pedestrian routes overlooked and do they feel safe?	
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The block of flats and houses either overlooks the main road and private car park; however, the pathway (ginnel) between the flats and the end of the terrace on Gale Street which gives pedestrian access to the square at the rear, is not overlooked and there is no street lighting on this. Otherwise the parking area at the rear is well overlooked from the apartment block.

0.5

Sub-total

4.5

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

16. Is public space well designed and does it have suitable management arrangements in place?	Score
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Yes, for the size of the scheme there is adequate hard landscaping. The scheme seems to depend largely on the LA support; however there are no signs to suggest there are unsuitable management arrangements in place as all public spaces seem well-tended.

1.0

17. Do the buildings exhibit architectural quality?	
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As mentioned in 6 and 8 above the scheme is specifically designed with a character of its own that nevertheless relates to but does not copy the existing buildings. Overall architectural quality is particularly good. Both front and rear elevations provide a lively appearance with a good mix of brick and render on the houses (see photo). The deck access to apartments is well designed using galvanised steel with a lightness of touch that does not provide a visual barrier to prospect from the rear of the apartments. The apartment block provides a good visual symbol to mark the secondary junction at Gale Street. The weakest part is the slight jarring of the three story apartment block in juxtaposition with the post office that now terminates the stone terrace on Gale Street. Detail design is good.

1.0



18. Do internal spaces and layout allow for adaption, conversion or extension?	
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The internal layouts are well designed and exhibit the efficient spatial planning for both the houses and flats. For the houses there is only a small back yard and limited space for future expansion inside, so this aspect does not score well. However this is to be expected with such a tight site.

0

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

19. Has the scheme made use of advances in construction or technology that enhance its performance, quality, and attractiveness?

Score

0.5



Yes, this aspect is quite good with the use of timber frame, wooden window frames and a system built top storey to the block of flats (see photo). There is no application of advanced services beyond current standard.

20. Do buildings or spaces outperform statutory minima, such as Building Regulations?

No Eco-homes assessment was carried out for this scheme, and there is no evidence of additional insulation over standard requirements. The space planning is efficient there is limited space so it will be difficult to improve the performance in the future. So, overall, this has to score zero.

0

Sub-total

2.5

Total

15

Building for Life Assessment

Scheme:	Langley Brooklands, Rochdale
Postcode:	M24 5RY
Project type:	Redevelopment of part of estate
Location type:	Post-war overspill housing estate
Number of dwellings and tenure:	125 dwellings: all private
Dwelling type:	12 x flats 2B, 2 x 2B, 109 x 3B, 2 x 4B
Bed spaces:	Unknown
Site area / density:	Unknown
Parking ratio:	Unknown

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY

1. Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as school, parks, play areas, shops, pubs or cafés?	Score
<p>There is a large community park adjoining the development but there is no play area for children. There are two community centres within 5 minutes and there is also a school, library and Surestart centre within the immediate area. The district centre is about 5-10 minutes walk depending on where exactly you live in the estate. However, there is no shop, pub, takeaway, etc within walking distance. A shop within the scheme would be warranted given the size of the estate.</p>	0.5
2. Is there an accommodation mix that reflects the needs and aspirations of the local community?	
<p>There is a block of 2-bed flats, but 87% of the properties are 3-bed houses. The development is orientated towards “standard” family size.</p>	0.5
3. Is there a tenure mix that reflects the needs of the local community?	
<p>The new development is all private; however the scheme has retained some of the existing RSL properties of around 60 units, so overall there is a mixture.</p>	0.5
4. Does the development have easy access to public transport?	
<p>There is a bus stop (on Mardale) within 5 minutes walk of majority of the development.</p>	1.0
5. Does the development have any features that reduce its environmental impact?	
<p>There are no signs of any features that reduce its environmental impact with traditional brick houses, and this was confirmed by the Langley Neighbourhood Project Officer.</p>	0
<p>In fact the scheme uses uPVC windows throughout, with extensive (excessive?) use of concrete fencing to provide privacy to side and/or rear gardens. It is of low density with relatively inefficient land use.</p>	
<p>Sub-total</p>	2.5

CHARACTER

6. Is the design specific to the scheme?

Score

No, the development uses a small range of standard house types and is very much a “standard” commercial developer scheme in style, feel and layout that might be anywhere in the UK. Little attempt is made to respect either the traditional nature of the wider area nor the existing 1950’s social housing which it has partially replaced and still adjoins. Some might argue that the overall design of the 1950’s scheme has more coherence. For example, in what appears to be an entirely arbitrary manner some houses have red roof tiles, of which it can be argued are much more synonymous with housing developments in the other regions of England (see photo).

0



7. Does the scheme exploit existing buildings, landscape or topography?

The scheme keeps some of the existing buildings and existing road layout from the previous social housing scheme. 0.5

A number of new roads have been added to provide access to several new cul-de-sacs. On the whole the houses are not orientated to optimise solar gain.

8. Does the scheme feel like a place with distinctive character?

The scheme breaks the mould of social housing but replaces it with standard property developers’ scheme. It has little character of its own. 0

CHARACTER

9. Do the buildings and layout make it easy to find your way around?

Score

No, it is easy to lose bearings and the lack of through roads mean that navigation on foot is difficult. Except for the one slightly larger three story block of flats on a key corner/road junction in the scheme there are no visible landmarks to aid navigation. And in fact the block of flats is so nondescript that it does not really help with way finding. In fact the scheme could usefully have used a shop, pub or community centre and play area as a central feature to give some urban design focus.

0

10. Are the streets defined by a coherent and well structured building layout?

10a – enormous forecourts

0



No, there are some empty green spaces and some houses with enormous forecourts (see photo 10a), so the layout does not even seem to be motivated by maximising the number of units around standard cul-de-sac and access routes for motor vehicles. The result is no sense of place or enclosure, and the opportunity to create a village green feel in the less dense areas has been overlooked (although it could be argued that this approach might not really be appropriate in suburban Middleton). Overall there appears to be little logic in the layout apart from some well-considered smaller units relating to existing buildings (see photo 10b for example of this).

10b – new bungalow replicating existing bungalows



Sub-total

0.5

ROADS, PARKING AND PEDESTRIANISATION

11. Does the building layout take priority over the roads and car-parking, so that the highways do not dominate?	Score
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No, this is very much a suburban housing estate layout with large roads and little to orientate. 0

12. Is the car parking well integrated and situated so as to support the street scene?	
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Yes this is okay with car parking outside each house. The hard standing for cars is well arranged with the exception of the huge forecourts shown in photo 10a. In the assessors' view, car parking such as this does not support the street scene which is why the scheme does not warrant the full mark. 0.5

13. Are the streets pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly?	
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Traditional pavements which are a bit wider than the norm but the scheme is ultimately designed around the car and not pedestrian and cycle friendly. Extra traffic calming should have been provided. 0

14. Does the scheme integrate with existing roads, paths and surrounding development?	
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The retention of some of the original layout has been necessitated by the retention of some of the original LA houses (presumably those that had transferred to private ownership) means that there is some integration with the existing grain. As shown in photo 10b the scheme does integrate with these existing houses relatively well – another example is shown in the photo below of a standard 70's/80's semi-detached house. However, many new roads, especially cul-de-sacs have been added and a number of the original off road pedestrian routes been cut. 0.5



ROADS, PARKING AND PEDESTRIANISATION

15. Are public spaces and pedestrian routes overlooked and do they feel safe?	Score
<p>Generally yes, but in the cul-de sac areas the houses are orientated to provide overview of the public space. However the lack of through roads in the majority of the area means there is a lack of people and traffic for surveillance. Also, in some of the through routes, the backs of the properties are orientated to the street with high fencing which further undermines surveillance from householders. Street lighting appears to be adequate.</p>	0.5
Sub-total	1.5

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

16. Is public space well designed and does it have suitable management arrangements in place?	Score
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There is very little public space except for the community park which existed before. The few patches of green area there are do not seem especially well-tendered or well-designed (see photo in question 14 for example). The adjoining large public park is okay but not well-designed and isn't maintained to a high enough standard considering the size of the population it serves (see photo below of the park).

0



17. Do the buildings exhibit architectural quality?	
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This is a typical developers' scheme with little variety.

0

It is fair to say that the individual dwellings are fit for purpose, durable, reasonably well proportioned and built, but the overall effect of this scheme is not pleasing to the mind and the eye. The dwellings will cater for the residents' basic needs but the scheme as a whole has little sense of place and it is questionable that "a significant proportion of home-buyers would have their spirits lifted by what is on offer".

Detailing is poor with features seemingly added as appliqué with little attention to corners, roof lines and how the building meets the ground. Use of material colour and texture is also ill considered.

18. Do internal spaces and layout allow for adaption, conversion or extension?	
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The internal layouts conform to current standards for efficient spatial planning however this aspect scores well because there is a lot of external space around and between dwellings providing large potential for extension. In fact, some houses have already extended at the back or into garages.

1.0

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

19.Has the scheme made use of advances in construction or technology that enhance its performance, quality, and attractiveness?	Score
Nothing that can be detected. Traditional brick construction has been used with no additional features.	0
20.Do buildings or spaces outperform statutory minima, such as Building Regulations?	
No, this is traditional housing development which has only adhered to standard building regulations of the time.	0
Sub-total	1
Total	5.5

Building for Life Assessment

Scheme:	Langley Lowther, Rochdale
Postcode:	M24 4SN
Project type:	Infill development
Location type:	Redevelopment of post-war overspill housing estate
Number of dwellings and tenure:	60 dwellings: all private
Dwelling type:	5 x 2B, 55 x 3B
Bed spaces:	Unknown
Site area / density:	Unknown
Parking ratio:	Unknown

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY

1. Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as school, parks, play areas, shops, pubs or cafés?	Score
Access to facilities is reasonable; the scheme is within 10min walking distance of a local district centre with pharmacy, grocer, pub and school, but it is lacking any nearby public space. There is a golf course to the rear of the properties to the edge of the development but this is not accessible to residents.	0.5
2. Is there an accommodation mix that reflects the needs and aspirations of the local community?	
Limited – there are no flats and no 4+ bed houses. The development seems to be aimed solely at normal family size with no provision for singles or larger households.	0
3. Is there a tenure mix that reflects the needs of the local community?	
All private.	0
4. Does the development have easy access to public transport?	
There is a bus stop on Wood Street within 5 minutes walk of the development.	1.0
5. Does the development have any features that reduce its environmental impact?	
No, there is no evidence of any features that reduce its environmental impact.	0
Sub-total	1.5

CHARACTER

6. Is the design specific to the scheme?	Score
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No, it is a standard developers' scheme with the repetition of standard house types with little attention given to the grain of surrounding area and house styles. It is clear that the designers have attempted to break or contrast with the style of the adjoining 1950's LA overspill estate design. This was probably thought to be necessary to provide a new feel in the redevelopment and meet with developers' perceptions of current householder's expectations. What results is even less sense of the locale and some might argue that the overall design of the 1950's scheme has more coherence.

0

7. Does the scheme exploit existing buildings, landscape or topography?	
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No, this is very poor as most of the houses are not orientated to make best advantage of the good views nor to optimise solar gain. The layout is motivated by maximising the number of units around standard cul-de-sac access routs for motor vehicles.

0

8. Does the scheme feel like a place with distinctive character?	
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This type of development with 'Mock Tudor' overtones is similar to many developments and could be anywhere in the country. It is in no way distinctive (see photo).

0



CHARACTER

9. Do the buildings and layout make it easy to find your way around?	Score
<p>It is a small scheme oriented towards access by motor vehicles using standard cul-de-sac layout. There are no distinctive features in the buildings or landscaping to aid navigation. For pedestrians there is no connection between the two main cul-de-sacs so foot access between the two areas of the estate is blocked.</p>	0
10. Are the streets defined by a coherent and well structured building layout?	
<p>No, this is a standard suburban estate layout using cul-de-sacs with poor orientation and a lack of fluidity in pedestrian movement, as already discussed. It will encourage use of the motor vehicle, even for short journeys.</p>	0
<p>In fact there is little sense of enclosure or place typical of many schemes of this type –see 17.</p>	
<hr/> <p>Sub-total</p>	0

ROADS, PARKING AND PEDESTRIANISATION

11. Does the building layout take priority over the roads and car-parking, so that the highways do not dominate?

Score

As already mentioned this is very much a car-orientated development. The access roads do dominate the development

0

12. Is the car parking well integrated and situated so as to support the street scene?

Yes this is okay with garages and high level of car parking provision at each house as befits this type of development.

1.0



13. Are the streets pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly?

As the scheme is so vehicle friendly it compromises on the pedestrian dimension. Although the cul-de sac layout does not have very long access length on the day of inspection vehicle speeds were observed to be excessive so more effective traffic calming should have been provided. Even though there are adequate footways besides the access roads the pedestrian feels secondary. There are no specific cycle ways in the development or in the adjacent estate. Therefore this is not a pedestrian or cycle friendly scheme

0

ROADS, PARKING AND PEDESTRIANISATION

14. Does the scheme integrate with existing roads, paths and surrounding development?	Score
<p>The vehicular access is competently planned; however the scheme breaks the sub-urban grain of the earlier social housing and is not well-integrated in terms of making the best use of all the existing route possibilities, particularly for pedestrians. For example, there is no through vehicle or pedestrian access between the old and new phases of the scheme, so in order to visit either side you would have to walk/drive all the way round.</p>	0.5
15. Are public spaces and pedestrian routes overlooked and do they feel safe?	
<p>This is okay as most of the houses face on to and overlook the streets, but there is no through access to vehicles and pedestrians, which limits surveillance. A small number of properties have their rear aspect to the street with high fencing to provide privacy to the rear garden, which reduces surveillance possibilities in some areas.</p>	0.5
Sub-total	2.0

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

16. Is public space well designed and does it have suitable management arrangements in place?

Score

No specific public areas are provided in the scheme but as mentioned it does back onto to a golf course. What little public space that there is available appears to be SLOP (space left over after planning) around the access from the existing social housing estate. These areas appear to have poor maintenance arrangements in place. This is probably due to uncertainties over who is responsible for the fringe areas between the new redevelopment and the existing LA estate.

0

17. Do the buildings exhibit architectural quality?

Quite poor. Very poor interpretation of Mock Tudor with these features applied in timber onto the base of brick-block construction. The houses are in small cluster blocks with varied heights and although this provides some variety to the elevation, the repeat of the blocks undermines this.


0

Whilst It is fair to say that the individual dwellings are fit for purpose, durable, reasonably well proportioned and built, the overall effect of this scheme is not pleasing to the mind and the eye. The dwellings will cater for the residents' basic needs but the scheme as a whole has little sense of enclosure or place typical of many schemes of this type. Whilst the varied height might give contrast here, the juxtaposition of the small number of standard blocks creates a disjointed feel and overall sense discontinuity. Whilst the individual blocks give some variety it is questionable that "a significant proportion of home-buyers would have their spirits lifted by what is on offer".

Detailing is poor with features seemingly added as appliqué with little attention to corners, roof lines and how the building meets the ground. Some of the Mock Tudor timber detailing is already suffering from weathering (see photo).



DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

18. Do internal spaces and layout allow for adaption, conversion or extension?	Score
This scores well because there is a lot of space between houses that provides potential for extension. In fact, some houses have already adapted the garage into living space (see photo).	1.0
	
19. Has the scheme made use of advances in construction or technology that enhance its performance, quality, and attractiveness?	
Traditional brick block construction has been used with no additional energy or construction features.	0
20. Do buildings or spaces outperform statutory minima, such as Building Regulations?	
No, this is a “traditional” commercial housing development which has only adhered to standard building regulations of the time.	0
Sub-total	1.0
Total	4.5