

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT ADDENDUM

Former Clough Mill, Clough Road, Slaithwaite - Planning Application 2025/93543/W

Design Evolution and Response to Officer Comments

1. Purpose of this Addendum

This Design and Access Statement Addendum has been prepared to explain the further design review undertaken following discussions with the Council regarding the orientation of the proposed houses, the character of the Clough Road frontage, natural surveillance, parking and landscaping.

The Applicant understands the Council's objective of ensuring that the development makes a positive contribution to the Clough Road street scene, particularly given the role of Clough Road as an approach into Slaithwaite from the north.

The Planning Officer has specifically questioned whether some of the proposed dwellings could be reorientated to face Clough Road and positioned closer to road level, thereby creating a more conventional active frontage. The Officer has also requested greater use of habitable-room windows within side elevations to improve surveillance.

The Applicant understands the principle behind this request and has not simply dismissed it.

A number of layouts and architectural approaches have been explored throughout the two-year design process and the evolution of the scheme, including arrangements in which dwellings address Clough Road more directly.

Having considered those alternatives against the site's topography, residential amenity, highways requirements, engineering implications, landscape constraints, solar orientation and development viability, the Applicant considers that the principal orientation now proposed provides the better overall design solution.

2. Understanding the Clough Road approach

The Applicant recognises the Council's view that the appearance of the site from Clough Road is important, including for people arriving into Slaithwaite from the north.

The existing site is currently undeveloped former mill land. Redevelopment therefore provides an opportunity to make a substantial improvement to the appearance of this part of Clough Road.

However, the existing local townscape is not characterised exclusively by houses presenting principal front elevations directly towards the highway.

Immediately beyond the application site at Crowther Close, buildings already present gable and side elevations towards the road. The wider Slaithwaite context is also strongly

influenced by topography, stone walls, changes in level, buildings of different orientations and development which responds to the steep valley landscape.



The design response should therefore create an attractive entrance into Slaithwaite whilst responding to the actual physical and townscape characteristics of the site, rather than imposing a conventional frontage irrespective of the site's considerable level constraints.

3. Alternative layouts have been explored

The current layout has not been reached without considering other approaches.

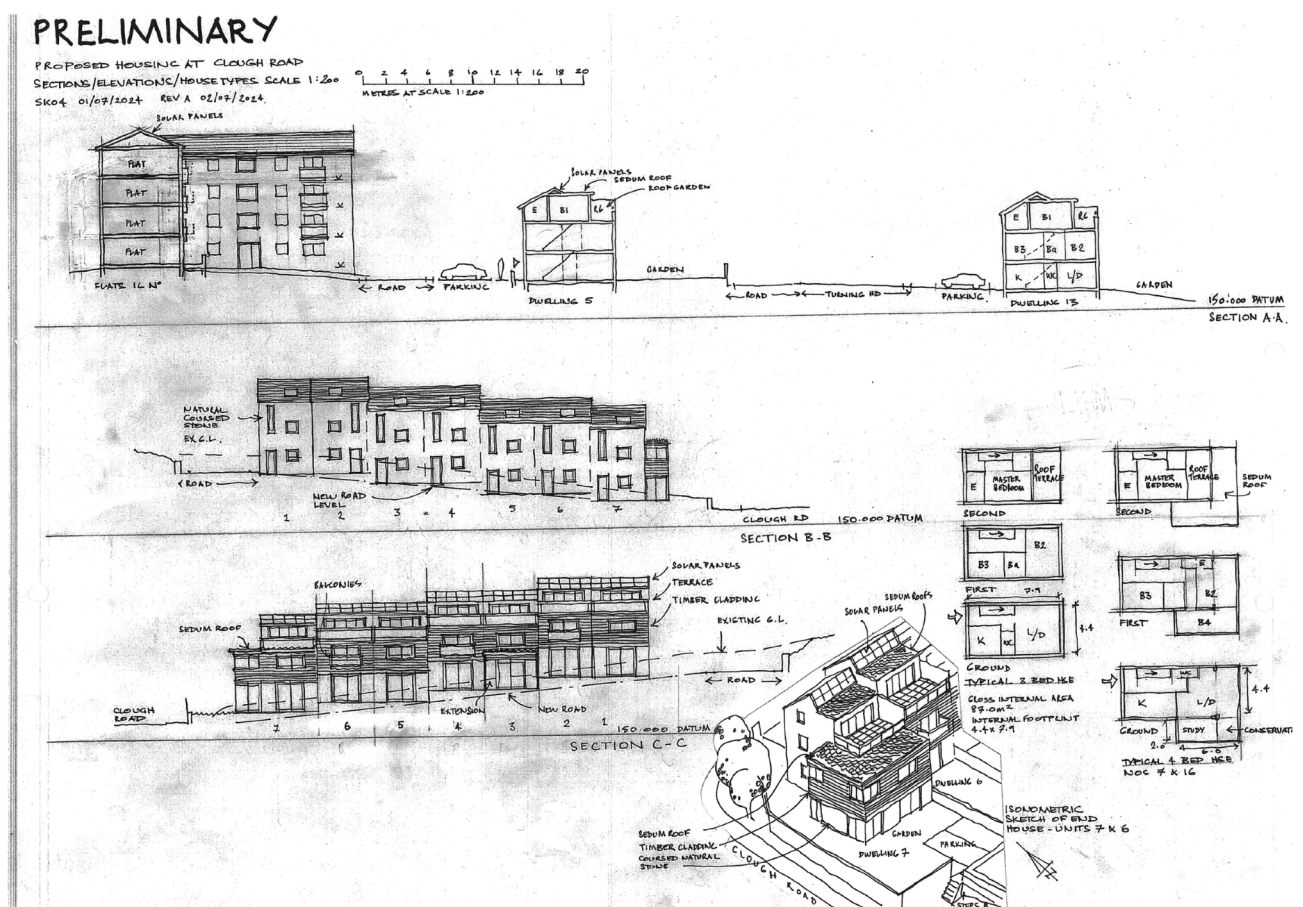
The design team has reviewed earlier proposals for the site, previous application layouts and a series of internal design studies to understand whether a more conventional Clough Road-facing form of development could be achieved.

3.1 Early architectural study – July 2024

An early preliminary study explored a substantially different architectural response to the site.

The July 2024 drawing included apartments presenting a gable end towards Clough Road and more contemporary housing forms incorporating roof terraces, sedum roofs, timber cladding, balconies and solar panels.

Bill Best drawing - SK04, 01.07.2024



This study is useful because it demonstrates that a more direct relationship between buildings and Clough Road has formed part of the design exploration from an early stage.

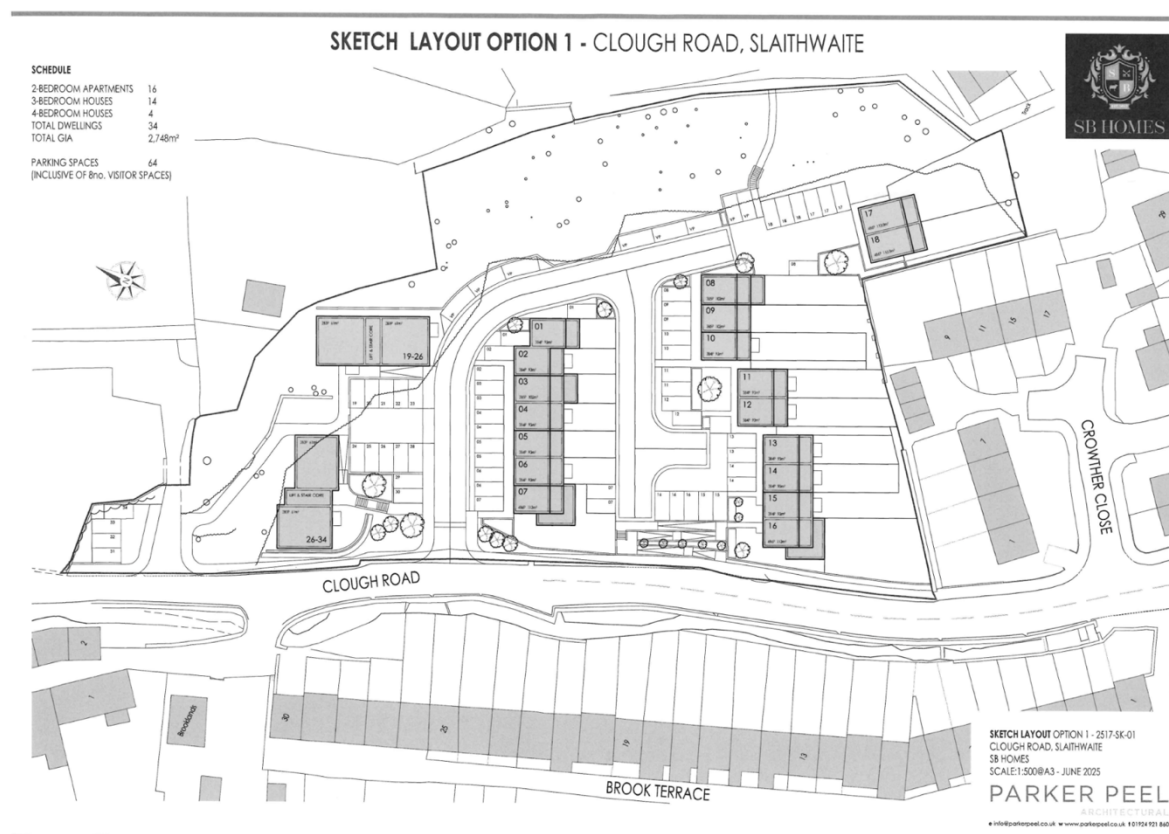
However, the approach was subsequently refined. The more contemporary architectural language was simplified to respond more closely to the established Colne Valley character, including a more traditional material palette and simpler window and roof treatment.

The sedum-roof approach was also removed as the design evolved.

3.2 Parker Peel Sketch Layout Option 1

A subsequent Parker Peel sketch layout again tested a materially different arrangement of development.

The drawing shows 34 dwellings and demonstrates the extent to which different relationships between the apartment building, houses, parking, access and Clough Road were considered before the current layout evolved.



3.3 Specific appraisal of turning the southern houses

More recently, the design team specifically tested the Planning Officer's suggestion by examining what would happen if the southern group of houses were turned through approximately 90 degrees.

The appraisal sketches expressly identify an **“examination of former plots 8 to 16 turned through 90°”**, together with the resulting garden, parking and retaining-wall arrangements.



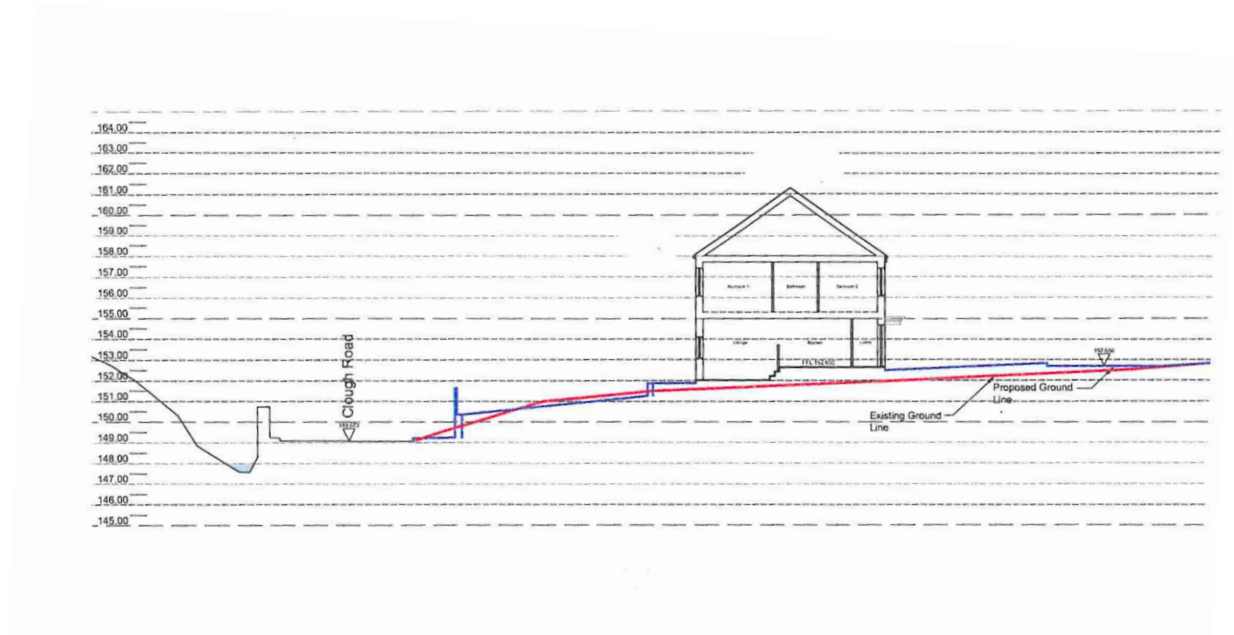
The Applicant is not relying simply upon an assertion that the Officer's suggested arrangement would not work. An alternative arrangement has actually been drawn and considered.

4. The fundamental difficulty – site levels

The principal reason why a conventional Clough Road frontage does not work successfully is the site's topography.

The land rises substantially from Clough Road into the site.

At the southern end, around Plot 16, the development platform is approximately **4 metres higher than Clough Road.**



Turning the house through 90 degrees does not remove that level difference.

A house could face the road architecturally, but it would still sit materially above it.

To produce a conventional relationship between house, garden and road, one of three things would therefore have to happen.

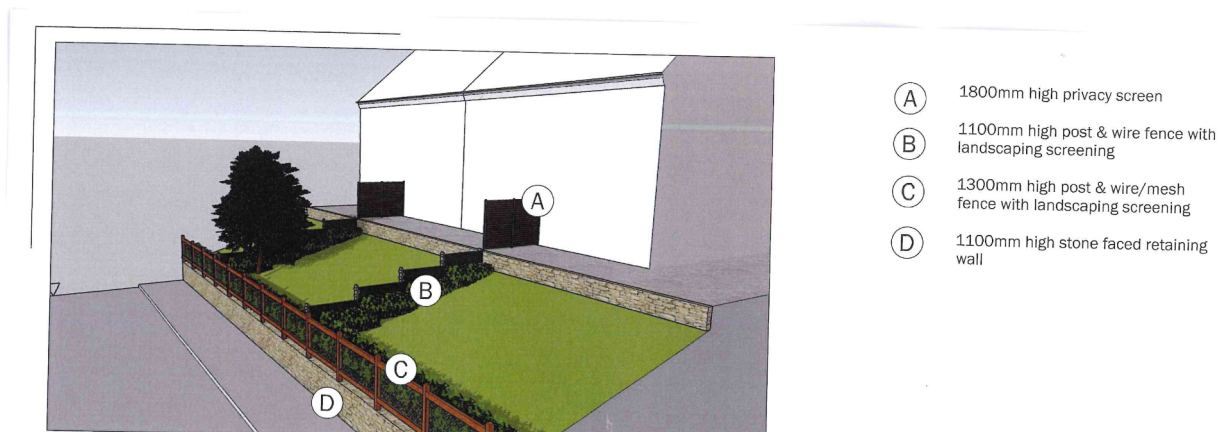
Option A – retain the existing slope

The garden would fall steeply towards Clough Road.

The design appraisal indicates that in parts of this frontage the garden would fall by approximately **2 metres over around 6 metres**.

For a family house, that produces substantially less useful private amenity space.

A technically defined garden is not necessarily a practically usable garden. A steep garden of this nature is less suitable for everyday family activity, children's play, seating and general recreation.



Option B – create a level garden

The alternative is to retain the land and create a reasonably level garden.

That requires a substantially greater retaining structure towards Clough Road.

In parts of the southern frontage this could approach approximately **3 metres**, before the additional boundary treatment necessary to provide privacy and safety to the garden above.

Importantly, the Applicant is **not arguing that retaining walls are unacceptable**.

Retaining structures are unavoidable on this site and are characteristic of the steep-sided Colne Valley.

The question is their **height, continuity and visual effect**.

The current streetscene accommodates the level change through a combination of stepped natural-stone retaining structures, planting, railings, garden areas and pedestrian breaks.



By contrast, creating level gardens to a continuous row of Clough Road-facing houses would materially increase the amount and/or height of retaining structure required along the road.

It would therefore resolve one aspect of the Officer's concern - orientation - while potentially worsening another: the visual dominance of engineered retaining structures.

The Officer has previously expressed concern regarding the height and prominence of retaining walls and their potential contribution to an oppressive pedestrian environment.

Option C – lower the houses towards Clough Road

The third alternative would be to lower the dwellings substantially towards road level.

That would simply move the engineering problem elsewhere.

Significant excavation and retaining structures would then be required behind the houses as the land rises into the development.

It would also make the relationship between the first and second rows of development considerably more difficult.

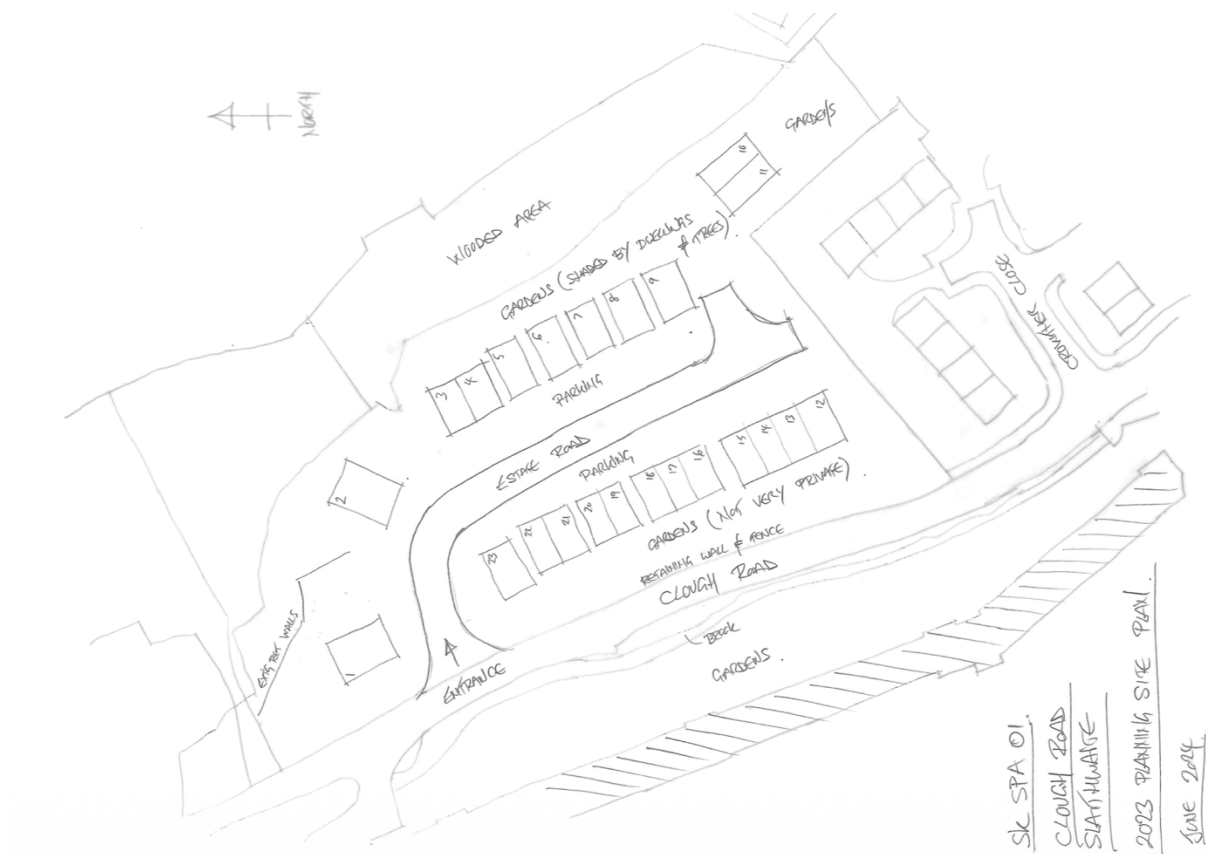
For these reasons, the level difference cannot be designed away merely by rotating the houses.

5. Consequences for the second row of housing

Turning the frontage houses also has consequences beyond the Clough Road edge.

A conventional road-facing arrangement pushes development further east into the site.

That brings the second row closer to retained trees and the wooded eastern boundary and creates a poorer relationship between houses, gardens and landscape.



It would also result in parts of the second row and their gardens being more heavily shaded.

The current layout allows considerably greater visual permeability through the development towards the wooded valley landscape.

A conventional perimeter-block approach would be more enclosed and would sacrifice part of that openness.

6. Solar orientation, amenity and views

The orientation of the current houses was also deliberately selected to maximise environmental and residential amenity benefits.

The current layout allows the principal private gardens, terraces and balconies to benefit from a broadly southerly orientation.

The Supporting Planning Statement already explains that an east-west arrangement associated with Clough Road-facing houses would provide less favourable sunlight to front and rear elevations, whereas the current orientation provides south-facing amenity space and long views down the valley.

This is particularly valuable on this site.

The outlook includes the wider Colne Valley and the listed Crimble Viaduct, providing a distinctive sense of place.



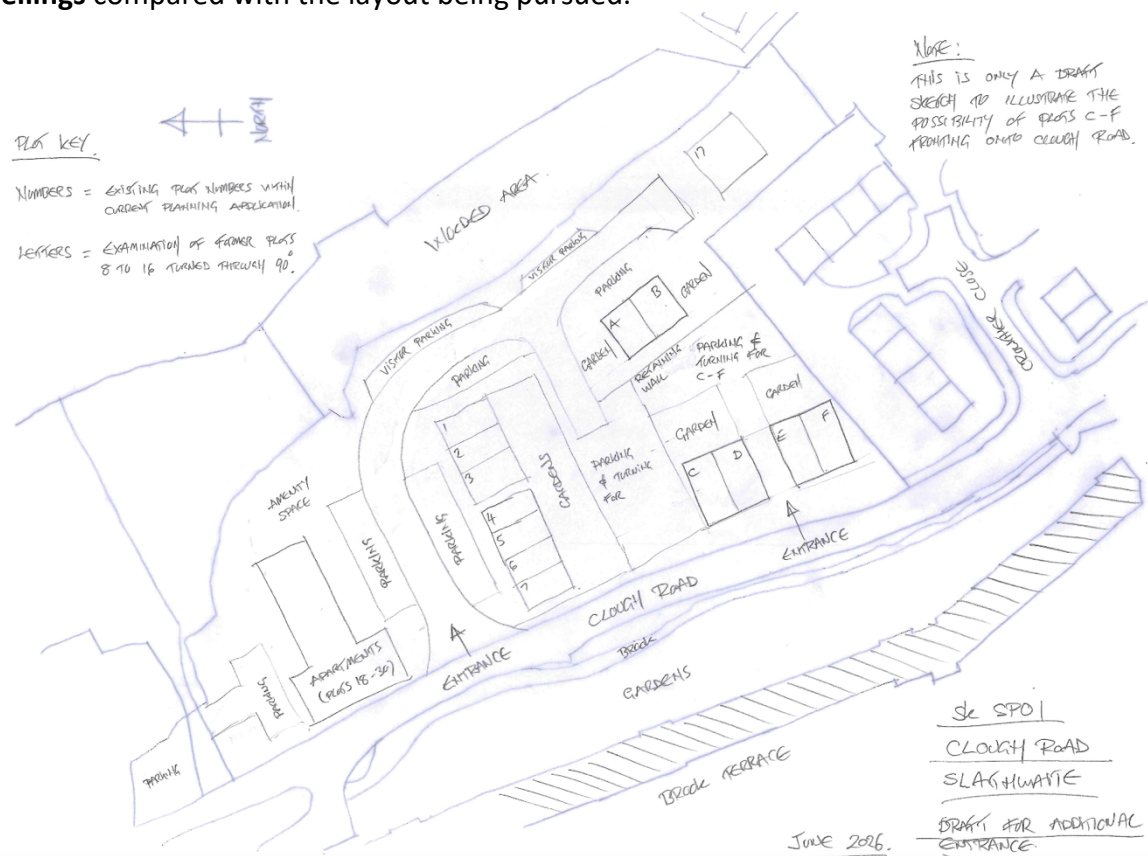
The terraces and balconies have deliberately been positioned to take advantage of this outlook.

The orientation enables principal terraces and balconies to take advantage of long views across the Colne Valley, including towards Crimble Viaduct, reinforcing the relationship between the development and its distinctive landscape setting.

7. Development capacity and highways consequences

Alternative layouts also have implications for the efficient use and viability of the site.

The road-facing option examined by the design team results in a loss of approximately **three dwellings** compared with the layout being pursued.



More importantly, the arrangement creates considerable difficulties in accommodating parking and turning movements within the southern part of the site.

The Officer's earlier comments acknowledged that any access arrangement involving Clough Road would need sufficient space for vehicles to turn rather than reverse onto or from Clough Road.

On this constrained and steeply sloping part of the site, the available space must accommodate houses, usable gardens, parking, vehicle manoeuvring, retaining structures and pedestrian routes.

The alternative frontage therefore cannot be considered in isolation from those requirements.

8. Plot 7 – further design testing

The Applicant has also looked specifically at Plot 7 because its position provides an opportunity to strengthen the Clough Road frontage without changing the orientation of an entire row of housing.

Additional habitable-room glazing towards Clough Road is proposed in order to increase overlooking and natural surveillance.

A number of alternative roof and elevation treatments have also been considered.

Hipped roof

A hipped roof towards Clough Road has been considered as a means of reducing the visual emphasis of the gable and helping the building address both Clough Road and the internal street.

However, this would result in the loss of the upper-level roof terrace.

The terrace is an important element of the dwelling's private amenity provision and takes advantage of the site's southerly orientation and long-distance views.

On balance, the loss of that amenity is not considered justified solely to alter the roof form.

Turning the end dwelling towards Clough Road

The possibility of orientating the end dwelling itself towards Clough Road has also been explored.

However, given the footprint, levels and roof geometry, this results in an excessively high and dominant roof pitch and does not provide a satisfactory architectural solution.

Accordingly, the preferred approach is to retain the current orientation whilst strengthening the elevation addressing Clough Road.

9. Plot 16 – active elevation

At the southern end of the frontage, Plot 16 sits above Clough Road.

For the reasons explained above, it cannot realistically be repositioned to create a conventional house-at-pavement-level relationship.

However, its Clough Road-facing elevation can be made more active.

Additional habitable-room glazing is therefore proposed to improve natural surveillance and ensure that the elevation is read as an intentionally designed secondary frontage rather than a blank gable.

This directly responds to the Officer's request for more habitable-room windows to corner and side elevations.



10. The apartment building already provides active frontage

It is also important that the Clough Road frontage is considered **as a whole**, rather than only by reference to the orientation of the houses.

The apartment building at the northern end of the site presents a substantial principal elevation towards Clough Road.

Earlier design studies demonstrate that this relationship with the road has been a longstanding feature of the scheme.

The current streetscene similarly identifies the apartment building as the principal apartment frontage to Clough Road.



The development therefore does not comprise an entire road frontage of inactive gables.

Instead, it comprises a sequence of:

- a substantial active apartment frontage;
- landscaped and stepped frontage treatment;
- pedestrian connections;
- garden areas;
- side elevations incorporating overlooking; and
- strengthened active elevations at Plots 7 and 16.

That is a more accurate description of the proposed Clough Road relationship.

11. Parking and landscaping – a further option has been tested

The Planning Officer has also expressed concern regarding long runs of parking and has requested greater landscaping between parking groups.

Following the latest discussion, the Applicant asked its transport consultant to investigate whether the pedestrian areas adjacent to the access could be narrowed in order to move parking and create additional landscaped breaks.

That option has now been specifically reviewed.

Kirklees Highways' latest requirement is for the access to have a minimum **5.5m carriageway with 2m footways on both sides**, together with 10m kerb radii to enable refuse vehicle access.

The transport consultant has advised that submitting a revised layout which removes part of that footway provision is unlikely to be well received by Highways and also raises issues regarding safe pedestrian access to front doors.

A Type C shared-surface arrangement is potentially available under the Highway Design Guide because the development generates fewer than 100 vehicles per hour. However, the transport consultant has advised that this would require the **whole site to be redesigned around a materially different highway arrangement**, and has identified the competing demands between Highways and the desire for additional landscaping.

The inability to create additional landscape breaks at the entrance is therefore **not because the option has not been considered**.

It is a consequence of the current highway design requirements.

The Applicant will nevertheless continue to maximise planting and screening wherever this can be accommodated without compromising the required pedestrian and highway infrastructure.

12. Balancing density, amenity and openness

The layout also needs to be considered in the context of the competing requirements placed upon the site as a whole. The development is expected to make efficient use of this sustainable brownfield site and achieve an appropriate residential density, whilst at the same time accommodating the required level of parking, an internal roadway and pedestrian infrastructure, usable private gardens, landscaping and appropriate separation between buildings.

These requirements inevitably compete for the available developable area. Reducing density may create additional space and openness, but would make less efficient use of the site. Conversely, increasing separation between buildings without reducing the number of dwellings would place greater pressure on garden sizes, parking provision, landscaping and the internal highway arrangement.

The current layout has therefore been developed as a balance between density and openness, rather than seeking to maximise either in isolation. In particular, the orientation and spacing of the buildings retains views and visual permeability through the site towards the wooded eastern boundary and wider valley landscape, which helps prevent the development from feeling unduly enclosed despite the number of competing requirements which must be accommodated.

13. Overall design balance

The design process demonstrates that there is no single layout response which optimises every design objective.

A frontage of houses facing Clough Road would create greater conventional street enclosure.

However, on this particular site that benefit comes with consequential disadvantages:

- considerably more difficult level relationships;
- steep or heavily retained gardens;
- potentially larger retaining structures;
- poorer family amenity space;
- reduced solar orientation;
- loss of important valley views;
- a more constrained relationship with trees and the eastern landscape edge;

- parking and manoeuvring difficulties;
- reduced development capacity; and
- substantial changes to an internal highway arrangement which has already evolved in response to Highway Authority requirements.

Conversely, retaining the present orientation allows those constraints to be managed more successfully, while the underlying objectives of active frontage and natural surveillance can still be strengthened through targeted architectural intervention.

The Applicant has therefore chosen not simply the layout which maximises frontage to Clough Road, but the layout which achieves the best overall balance of design, amenity, landscape, highways, sustainability and engineering considerations.

14. Conclusion

The Applicant understands and has carefully considered the Council's concerns regarding the appearance and activity of the Clough Road frontage.

Road-facing houses have not been dismissed as a matter of preference.

They have been explored through several stages of the design process, including early architectural studies, alternative masterplans and a specific appraisal of turning the southern houses through 90 degrees.

Those exercises demonstrate why a conventional Clough Road-facing arrangement is particularly difficult on this steeply sloping site.

The preferred response is therefore to retain the principal orientation while improving the relationship with Clough Road through:

- the substantial existing apartment frontage;
- additional habitable-room glazing to Plots 7 and 16;
- careful treatment of prominent side elevations;
- stepped natural-stone retaining structures;
- visually permeable railings;
- landscaping and planting;
- pedestrian breaks through the frontage; and
- the retention of south-facing gardens, terraces and balconies benefiting from sunlight and valley views.

The result is considered to provide a more successful overall response to this challenging brownfield site than the wholesale reorientation of the housing.