

## **‘Sustainability is integral to our design philosophy’**

For Chalet Hotels Limited, architecture is not an aesthetic overlay—it is a strategic discipline that determines how an asset performs over decades. As the company expands across varied geographies—from dense urban districts to climate-sensitive leisure destinations—its approach to design partnerships reflects a clear philosophy: prioritising alignment over authorship.

The emphasis is on long-term collaboration, contextual intelligence, and the integration of sustainability, operational efficiency and guest experience. In this framework, design becomes a calibrated balance between emotion and economics—where every material choice, spatial configuration and partnership decision ultimately influences durability, adaptability and long-term value.

Excerpts from the interview:

How does Chalet Hotels Limited select architectural and design partners across its pan-India portfolio?

We work with reputed consultants from both Indian and international markets, selecting partners based on proven experience in luxury and upper upscale hospitality. Brand recommendations also help ensure alignment with global standards and design intent.

However, our focus is not on one-off engagements. We prioritise long-term, sustainable collaborations. Several consultants continue to work across multiple Chalet projects, reflecting the consistency and trust built over time.

Why does alignment in design philosophy matter more than a firm’s visual signature?

For enduring partnerships, shared thinking matters more than stylistic identity. When delivering multiple projects together, the conversation moves beyond aesthetics to encompass constructability, efficiency and cost optimisation.

A distinctive visual language has value, but what matters more is a consultant's ability to understand our operational priorities, work within our development framework, and consistently balance creativity with performance. Alignment becomes critical when managing scale, complexity and multiple timelines.

When assigning partners to urban versus leisure destinations, what strengths do you prioritise?

There is no rigid distinction. Both Indian and international firms bring strong capabilities across typologies. Our selection depends on brand positioning, site complexity, project scale and overall vision.

Whether it is a high-density urban development with structural constraints or a leisure asset that must integrate seamlessly with its natural surroundings, we prioritise contextual expertise and relevant experience above geography.

How do climate, materials and cultural context influence projects in markets like New Delhi Aerocity, Mumbai, Goa and Khandala?

Climate and site conditions heavily shape design and material decisions, particularly with an eye on long-term operational performance and sustainability.

In New Delhi Aerocity, buildings must respond to both extreme heat and severe winters. Coastal markets like Goa and Mumbai demand specifications that withstand humidity and salt exposure. In hill destinations such as Khandala, monsoon intensity and temperature fluctuations require distinct planning.

With extreme weather events becoming more frequent, this sensitivity is no longer optional—it is fundamental. Each market demands a tailored response that respects environmental realities while ensuring efficient hotel operations.

Can you share an example where site realities reshaped the design brief?

This happens more often than not. We begin with a high-level brief covering key count, facilities mix and overall vision. But the final built form evolves in response to site-specific realities.

Whether deciding on basement construction versus vertical expansion, determining building orientation, planning arrival levels or responding to soil conditions and access constraints—site dynamics influence every major decision. Flexibility in adapting to these variables is essential to deliver an asset that performs effectively, both on paper and in practice.

How do you balance brand-mandated guidelines with Chalet's priorities around longevity and functionality?

Most global brand standards enhance efficiency, comfort and sustainability—values closely aligned with our own philosophy.

Where differences arise, we engage in constructive dialogue with brand partners, ensuring deviations are supported by site constraints or long-term performance considerations. The objective is shared: delivering assets that succeed operationally and commercially over time.

From a developer's perspective, what design decisions most often compromise operational efficiency?

Operational efficiency directly affects both guest experience and profitability, so compromise is rarely intentional.

One area requiring careful optimisation is non-revenue space—back-of-house areas, support zones and circulation corridors. We work within strict area-per-key norms to maximise capital and operational efficiency. However, during repositioning or expansion, public areas often change while back-of-house functions remain static, potentially creating bottlenecks.

Recognising this, we now design with future adaptability in mind, ensuring flexibility is embedded into the original planning.

Why embed sustainability at the planning stage rather than treat it as a standalone layer?

Sustainability cannot be retrofitted meaningfully at the end of the process. Integrating it from day one—through orientation, massing, planning and material selection—ensures measurable long-term impact.

Late-stage additions often increase cost and dilute effectiveness. By embedding sustainability early, we reduce energy consumption, enhance efficiency, and strengthen asset resilience over its lifecycle.

How do design partnerships help balance experiential impact with financial discipline?

Hospitality architecture sits at the intersection of emotion and economics. We create spaces that influence first impressions, comfort and memory—the emotional drivers of guest experience.

Simultaneously, we remain accountable for efficiency, compliance, constructability and long-term performance—the economic drivers of returns.

Strong design partnerships enable us to manage this dual mandate. The right consultants understand not only how a space should feel, but how it must function under real operating conditions. They bring discipline, insight and innovation at every stage.

As Chalet expands, how will the role of architects evolve?

Architects and designers will play an increasingly strategic role in protecting long-term asset value.

Their contribution extends beyond aesthetics to lifecycle thinking, future-proofing, operational integration and sustainability performance. In a rapidly evolving market, design must anticipate flexibility, shifting guest expectations and environmental realities.

Ultimately, successful hospitality architecture is measured not only by how an asset opens—but by how it performs years later. That is where the real value of thoughtful, aligned design partnerships lies.