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Land at Chapel Lane, Widnes Planning Statement

Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd

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Contents

1.0	Introduction	1
	Application Submission	1
	Procedural Matters	2
2.0	Site Description and Background	5
	The Site	5
	Site Surroundings and Context	6
	Planning History	6
3.0	Proposed Development	7
	Use and Amount	7
	Layout	7
	Design and Appearance	8
	Access and Parking	8
	Landscaping and Open Space	9
4.0	Planning Policy Context	11
	Introduction	11
	Adopted Development Plan	11
	National Planning Policy and Guidance	12
5.0	Planning Assessment	14
	Principle of Residential Development	14
	Affordable Housing and Housing Mix	15
	Layout and Design	16
	Open Space	18
	Highways and Transport	19
	Environmental Matters	22
	Infrastructure	27
	Energy and Sustainability	29
	Conclusion	30

6.0	Sustainable Development Principles	31
	Introduction	31
	Economic Role	31
	Social Role	32
	Environmental Role	33
	Conclusion	34
7.0	Conclusions	35

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Lichfields on behalf of Taylor Wimpey UK Limited [Taylor Wimpey] to assist Halton Borough Council's consideration of an outline planning application for the site at Chapel Lane, Widnes [the Site].
- 1.2 The proposed development site forms the majority of two allocated sites in the Adopted Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan [DALP] (2nd March 2022) for the delivery of up to 432 dwellings. The Site is identified on the Site Location Plan (Dwg. No. 022-009-P002 Rev E).
- 1.3 The proposed description of development is:
- “Outline planning application (with all matters other than access reserved) (to be determined by Halton Borough Council only) for the development of up to 350 dwellings, public open space, landscaping and associated infrastructure works. Full details for site access arrangements via a new junction on Chapel Lane (to be determined by Knowsley Borough Council only) and emergency access via Sandy Lane (to be determined by Halton Borough Council).”*
- 1.4 The Site is predominantly situated within Halton Borough Council authority area. However, the Chapel Lane highway fronting the Site is adopted public highway controlled by, and located within, the jurisdiction of Knowsley Borough Council. This is shown on Dwg. No. 022-009-P002 Rev E. The outline application will therefore be cross-boundary. Further detail on the proposed cross boundary procedure is set out later in this Planning Statement.

Application Submission

- 1.5 The following plans are submitted with the planning application:
- 1 Site Location Plan (Dwg. No. 022-009-P002 Rev E);
 - 2 Parameters Masterplan (Dwg. No. 022-009-P004 Rev F);
 - 3 Landscape Masterplan (Dwg. No. 526B-19A);
 - 4 Access Drawings (Dwg. No's. 216175_PD03 Rev E and 216175_PD07).
- 1.6 This application is supported by the following documents:
- 1 Completed application form and covering letter prepared by Lichfields;
 - 2 Planning Statement (this document) prepared by Lichfields;
 - 3 Draft S106 Heads of Terms prepared by Lichfields;
 - 4 Statement of Community Involvement (April 2023) prepared by Lexington;
 - 5 Design and Access Statement (April 2023) prepared by eSCAPE;
 - 6 Transport Assessment (May 2023) prepared by Vectos;
 - 7 Travel Plan (May 2023) prepared by Vectos;

- 8 Flood Risk Assessment (May 2023) prepared by AJP;
- 9 Noise Impact Assessment (April 2023) prepared by Hepworth Acoustics;
- 10 Air Quality Assessment (July 2022) prepared by Ensafé;
- 11 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (with additional Appendices) (January 2023) prepared by Randall Thorp;
- 12 Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (April 2023) prepared by Cotswold Archaeology;
- 13 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (April 2023) prepared by Ecology Services Ltd; accompanied by:
 - a Breeding Birds Survey Report (April 2023)
 - b Environmental DNA (eDNA) Survey Report for Great Crested Newt (April 2023)
 - c Hedgerow Regulations Assessment Survey Report (April 2023)
 - d Water Vole Survey Report (April 2023)
 - e Badger Survey Report (April 2023)
 - f Bat Transect & Automated Survey Report (April 2023)
 - g Wintering Bird Survey Report (April 2023)
- 14 Preliminary Arboricultural Assessment (May 2023) prepared by Urban Green;
- 15 Sustainability Statement (January 2023) prepared by Award Energy Consultants;
- 16 Phase 2 Geo-environmental Assessment (January 2023) prepared by e3p.

Procedural Matters

Environmental Impact Assessment

- 1.7 A formal Environmental Impact Assessment [EIA] Screening Request has been prepared under Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 [the EIA Regulations]. A Screening Request was sent to the Council to ascertain whether there is a requirement to undertake an EIA in respect of the proposed application at Chapel Lane.
- 1.8 The development is one to which the 2017 Regulations apply because it falls into Part 10(b) of Schedule 2 as a project including more than 150 dwellings. For Schedule 2 developments, the 2017 Regulations require that an EIA be undertaken where “*the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location*”.
- 1.9 The Screening Opinion received from Halton Borough Council (3rd August 2022) confirms that the proposed development falls under part 10 (b) of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations 2017 and concludes that the proposal is not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects from an EIA perspective and therefore an EIA is not required.

- 1.10 The EIA Screening Request letter was also provided to Knowsley Borough Council on 25th November 2022. Knowsley Borough Council confirmed via email on 29th November 2022 that they agreed with Halton Borough Council's assessment that an EIA is not required.

Cross Boundary Procedure

- 1.11 The proposed development will require highways works along Chapel Lane to facilitate the proposed vehicular access to the site. The required highway works fall within Knowsley Borough Council's administrative boundary. The application will therefore be cross boundary in nature and Taylor Wimpey has agreed in advance with the respective Councils the procedure for submission of the application.
- 1.12 It has been agreed that submission will follow the standard procedure as set out within the Planning Practice Guidance¹ [PPG], for application sites which are situated on land that falls within the boundary of more than one LPA. Identical applications will be submitted to each LPA, identifying on plans which part of the site is relevant to each authority. The application will be submitted to Halton Borough Council, and a duplicate application will then be submitted to Knowsley Borough Council separately.
- 1.13 The scope of determining powers has also been agreed in advance with both authorities. Knowsley Borough Council will act as the determining authority for the junction design/arrangement on Chapel Lane only, as the highways works associated with the development would fall within its authority area. Halton BC will determine all other outline proposals, including the proposed emergency access via Sandy Lane. Knowsley Council will be a statutory consultee to Halton Council on the overall application including the content of the Transport Assessment.

Pre-Application Engagement

- 1.14 A pre-application meeting between TW's appointed highways consultant (Vectos) and Halton Borough Council's Highways Officers was held on 1st July 2022. A further pre-application meeting was held with Knowsley Borough Council (Highways and Planning) on Friday 4th November 2022.
- 1.15 Details of the extensive community consultation undertaken by TW is set out in the accompanying SCI.

Structure of the Report

- 1.16 The following sections of this report are structured as follows:
- 1 Section 2.0 - describes the application Site and its surroundings and sets out the relevant planning history;
 - 2 Section 3.0 - provides a summary of the development proposals;
 - 3 Section 4.0 - sets out relevant national and local planning policy;
 - 4 Section 5.0 - assesses the proposed development against the development plan and other material considerations;

¹ Paragraph: 011 Reference ID: 14-011-20140306

- 5 Section 6.0 - considers the compliance of the proposed development with the principles of sustainable development; and
- 6 Section 7.0 - provides conclusions on the proposed development.

2.0 Site Description and Background

The Site

- 2.1 The Site is located to the north-west of the Widnes urban area, within the Borough of Halton and on the boundary with Knowsley Council. The application site is situated within the boundary of two separate allocations for residential development within the adopted Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan [DALP] (March 2022) under Policy RD1 (Residential Development Allocations). The Site Location Plan (Dwg. No. 022-009-P002 Rev E) identifies the location and extent of the Site.
- 2.2 The allocations comprise two separate land parcels separated by Sandy Lane, (Site Ref. W4 to the west of Sandy Lane and Site Ref. W5 to the east). The allocations, when added together, identify a capacity of 432 dwellings and can be delivered in a co-ordinated manner.
- 2.3 It should be noted that the application site does not include the whole of the allocation. However, as set out in further detail within the accompanying Design and Access Statement (paras. 4.23 and 4.25), the proposed development has been planned to allow the future development of the remaining land within the allocation (outwith this application boundary) to be brought forward separately.
- 2.4 The Site has few notable features and comprises approximately 14 hectares (ha) of agricultural land in low intensity uses such as grazing and pasture.
- 2.5 The Site is bounded to the:
- 1 North by Alder Brook which is marked by mature trees and a hedgerow. There is open countryside beyond the brook;
 - 2 East by an area of young self-seeded woodland situated adjacent to Queensbury Way;
 - 3 South by the curtilage of residential properties along Old Upton Lane; and,
 - 4 West by Chapel Lane and a group of modern and traditional farm buildings fronting onto Chapel Lane (Rose Farm).
- 2.6 The Site is not located within a Conservation Area and there are no listed buildings or scheduled ancient monuments within the Site.
- 2.7 The Site is bisected by Sandy Lane from north to south, an adopted country lane which is now closed to traffic and is used as an amenity foot/cycle path. Sandy Lane is currently subject to a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) that restricts any vehicles travelling along or across the carriageway with the exception of emergency vehicles and therefore is promoted as a traffic-free active travel link.
- 2.8 A Public Right of Way [PRoW] (W/16) runs east to west through the site, to the west of Sandy Lane, providing a connection to Chapel Lane. A further PRoW (W/12) to the north east of the site adjacent to the site boundary provides walking and cycling connections from the site to Queensbury Way. A ditch lined with intermittent trees and hedgerows runs alongside the path. There are also three ponds within the Site.

- 2.9 The Site is located within Flood Zone 1 and has a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of flooding. The Site is not located within an AQMA.

Site Surroundings and Context

- 2.10 The Site is situated on the northern edge of Widnes some 2.2km from the town centre. It lies to the north of Upton Grange, between Chapel Lane and Queensbury Way.
- 2.11 There are existing residential properties to the south, west and east of the Site, and any proposed housing development will therefore reflect the size and scale of existing dwellings in the surrounding area.
- 2.12 The surrounding environs and wider landscape are protected by a number of Local Wildlife Sites, one of which (Alder Brook) partly lies along the northern boundary. There are no landscape designations within proximity to the Site.
- 2.13 As set out earlier, the Site forms part of two separate allocations from the Adopted Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (2022) albeit both allocations abut each other. The application site does not extend to the full extent of the allocation boundary. The easternmost part of the allocations contains a self-seeded woodland which is excluded from the application area. There is also a small area to the south of the allocation which lies outside of Taylor Wimpey's control and outwith the application boundary. This can be identified on the Constraints and Opportunities Plan within the accompanying DAS.

Planning History

- 2.14 A review of the Council's online planning register indicates that there have been a number of historic applications on the site (provided in Appendix 1). However, they are not considered relevant to the proposed application.

3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1 This section sets out a detailed description of the proposed development which should be read in association with the accompanying planning application documents and the submitted Parameters Masterplan (Dwg. No. 022-009-P004 Rev F). The Parameters Masterplan will be tied to the planning permission by condition and all reserved matters will be required to accord with that Masterplan.

Use and Amount

- 3.2 The Site comprises 14.11 hectares of land (excluding Sandy Lane, Chapel Lane and Old Upton) for the provision of 350 homes. 8.85 ha of land comprises of development parcels and 5.26 ha of land is allocated to green infrastructure and other infrastructure associated with residential development such as roads, play areas, footpaths and utilities. The scheme will also provide a number of areas containing Public Open Space and Recreation for informal play in accordance with the adopted planning policy.
- 3.3 The proposed development will comprise 2 and 2.5 storey housing (1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom properties) with 2.5 storey dwellings strategically located to create landmark features in the development. The exact housing mix will be agreed at the reserved matters stage. The proposed development will be designed to encourage active travel modes with an emphasis on walking and cycling.
- 3.4 The scheme will provide up to 20% affordable housing which is dispersed across the site, in accordance with the provisions set out in the Halton DALP (DALP Policy CS[R]13: Affordable Homes).

Layout

- 3.5 The proposed scheme has been designed to integrate seamlessly with the wider surroundings in order to create a high quality sustainable residential neighbourhood.
- 3.6 Key features include:
- 1 The northern boundary of the site has been sensitively designed at a lower density with a generous landscaped buffer to soften the urban rural fringe;
 - 2 A Sustainable Drainage System consisting of two new attenuation ponds, swales and water meadow style inundation zones;
 - 3 A simple route hierarchy comprising avenues, streets, lanes, shared drives, footpaths and cycleways to increase the permeability through the Site;
 - 4 Areas of public realm in the form of shared Squares and Mews created at key junctions;
 - 5 A new area of Public Open Space and Recreation to the north west of the Site;
 - 6 Planting will be incorporated into the proposals to encourage biodiversity as well as a range of attractive and accessible green spaces;
 - 7 The three ponds present within the site will be retained and enhanced and buffered by areas of greenspace;
 - 8 Retention of the existing Public Rights of Way (W/12 and W/16); and

- 9 Comprehensively prepared to allow the future development of the remaining land within the allocation (outwith this application boundary) to be brought forward.

- 3.7 The density of the site will increase around the proposed squares and mews and then reduce in density towards the eastern, western and northern fringes to create a sub-urban/rural fringe edge. The site can accommodate 350 dwellings equating to a gross density of 25 dph and a net density of 40dph. Homes on the rural interface of the site will not exceed 25dph to create a soft incremental transition.
- 3.8 A Design and Access Statement has been prepared to accompany the application and provides further detail on the key features of the proposed development.

Design and Appearance

- 3.9 The high quality design of the Site will respect the local character of the area and successfully integrate the existing landscape features into the new development. Rather than creating character areas on the site, the character has been defined by the nature of the street hierarchy. Therefore, each street character will be differentiated in terms of street widths, surface materials, enclosure, density of homes, landscape treatments, planting species and boundary details. This approach to character will create a unique development and aid in the sites legibility.
- 3.10 To complement the edge-of-settlement countryside character of the surrounding neighbourhoods, the site will predominantly feature 2 storey dwellings. Up to 2.5 storey elements will only be used as landmark features in squares and at junctions and/or within gateway locations.
- 3.11 Matters of architectural design are reserved but any future reserved matters applications will utilise the local design related policies and design guidance to create architectural forms which will sit well in the context and local vernacular of the wider town and ensure the use of high quality materials.

Access and Parking

- 3.12 The proposed development comprises 350 dwellings accessed via Chapel Lane. The planning application is in outline with all matters reserved except access.
- 3.13 The Site is well located in terms of access and connectivity to local amenities and facilities and is designed to integrate with the existing transport links in this area of Widnes.

Vehicular Access

- 3.14 A priority junction with a ghost-island right-hand turn lane arrangement is proposed from Chapel Lane with appropriate visibility splays provided, as follows:
- Looking left out of the access, visibility splays of 2.4 metres x 53.5 metres can be achieved, in line with recorded northbound 85th percentile speeds of 35.2mph.
 - Looking right out of the access, visibility splays of 2.4 metres x 50.8 metres can be achieved, in line with recorded southbound 85th percentile speeds of 34mph.
- 3.15 The new junction will lead onto the new main spine road through the site which will be 5.5 metres wide with two metre footways on both sides of the road. The footways will connect

to the existing footway on Chapel Lane. To the north, the footway will be required to be reduced to around 1.4 metres in width for a short length to provide appropriate carriageway curve widening.

- 3.16 Emergency access points will be provided via Sandy Lane and will be restricted for the use of blue light vehicles only whilst allowing free access to active travel users. The emergency access would only be necessary in the case of a 'blue light' emergency and the primary vehicular access being blocked to emergency vehicles for any reason. As such, it is highly unlikely that the emergency access will be required. It is proposed that the emergency access points are controlled by collapsible bollards or similar as per the Council's preferred method of restriction.
- 3.17 A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit has been undertaken on the proposed site access arrangements, which concludes that the access and emergency access arrangements are safe and fit for purpose to serve the development.

Pedestrian and Cycle Access

- 3.18 In addition to the emergency access and vehicular access, new pedestrian and cycle access points are proposed along Sandy Lane which provides a traffic free route connecting to Old Upton Lane and the built-up area of Widnes. The existing PRow network throughout the site will be maintained and enhanced in order to promote active travel as a first choice.

Parking

- 3.19 Car and cycle parking for the site will be provided in accordance with the Council's Parking Standards within the DALP including providing the requisite number of visitor parking spaces. The development will provide an average of 2 spaces per dwelling. This is considered to be an appropriate level of provision in light of the Site's location. Parking will be an integrated element in the design of the layout with a mix of on-street, frontage, side and garaged parking.
- 3.20 Electric vehicle (EV) charging will be provided on site for all dwellings.

Landscaping and Open Space

- 3.21 A Parameters Masterplan and Landscape Masterplan (Dwg. No. 526B-19A) illustrate the proposed landscaping strategy for the Site.
- 3.22 The Site will be comprehensively landscaped to enhance its visual appearance, assimilate with its surroundings and promote biodiversity net gain. All planting introduced to the Site will be native and locally appropriate to enhance biodiversity. Green infrastructure will cover a sizeable proportion of the site and will accommodate play areas, and new ecological habitats.
- 3.23 The development will feature an arrival open space at the site entrance off Chapel Lane which will be planted with species rich grassland and framed by native tree planting.
- 3.24 Existing vegetation including field boundaries, linear tree belts, vegetation along Alder Brook and PRow W/16, as well as the group of trees surrounding the ponds would be substantially retained. Landscape buffers and green infrastructure will surround these

existing features to allow adequate set-back distances and to accommodate suitable Root Protection Areas.

- 3.25 Existing features including Alder Brook, the drainage ditch which runs alongside PRow W/16 and the field ponds will be conserved and enhanced. Provision of open space around the existing retained ponds and throughout the proposed development will be included to allow for the incorporation of new waterbodies for sustainable urban drainage consisting of new ponds, swales and water meadow style inundation zones.
- 3.26 A green corridor will be provided along the route of the PRow W/16 and Sandy Lane creating a softer urban edge to protect the visual amenity of the routes. The existing hedgerow field boundary running adjacent to PRow W/16 will be enhanced with the provision of new hedgerow planting to the west of Sandy Lane using native species.
- 3.27 Pockets of woodland within the landscape buffer running along Alder Brook, using a 'wet woodland' mix of willow, alder, ash and birch would be incorporated. Woodland within the north-eastern corner of the site will integrate with the existing woodland to the east of the site and would filter views of the built form.

4.0 **Planning Policy Context**

Introduction

- 4.1 Section 70(2) of the 1990 Act and Section 38(6) of the 2004 Act states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Adopted Development Plan

- 4.2 The Development Plan for the Site comprises the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan [DALP] which was adopted March 2022 and sets out the long-term spatial vision, strategic priorities and policies for future development in the Borough to 2037.
- 4.3 The proposed development site forms the majority of two allocations (Policy RD1) within the DALP for the collective delivery of up to 432 dwellings.
- 4.4 Policy RD1 [Residential Development Allocations] identifies sites for residential development to meet the needs over the plan period and the identified requirement for new housing. Included in the policy is the identification of two parcels of land (Site Ref. W4 to the west of Sandy Lane and Site Ref. W5 to the east) which the proposed development site is situated within.
- 4.5 The following DALP policies are also of relevance to the outline planning application:

Strategic Policies

- 1 Policy CS[R]3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
- 2 Policy CS[R]12: Housing Mix and Specialist Housing
- 3 Policy CS[R]13: Affordable Homes
- 4 Policy CS[R]15: Sustainable Transport
- 5 Policy CS[R]18: High Quality Design
- 6 Policy CS[R]19: Sustainable Development and Climate Change
- 7 Policy CS[R]20: Natural and Historic Environment
- 8 Policy CS[R]21: Green Infrastructure
- 9 Policy CS23: Managing Pollution and Risk

Residential Development

- 10 Policy RD4: Greenspace Provision for Residential Development

Connectivity

- 11 Policy C1: Transport Network and Accessibility
- 12 Policy C2: Parking Standards

Environmental

- 13 Policy HE1: Natural Environment and Nature Conservation

- 14 Policy HE4: Greenspace and Green Infrastructure
- 15 Policy HE5: Trees and Landscaping
- 16 Policy HE7: Pollution and Nuisance
- 17 Policy HE8: Land Contamination
- 18 Policy HE9: Water Management and Flood Risk

General Requirements

- 19 Policy GR1: Design of Development
- 20 Policy GR2: Amenity
- 21 Policy GR5: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

National Planning Policy and Guidance

- 4.6 The most recent iteration of the National Planning Policy Framework [the Framework] was published in July 2021. The Framework and the National Planning Practice Guidance [the Practice Guidance] are important material considerations in the determination of the planning application.
- 4.7 The overarching aim of the Framework is to proactively deliver sustainable development to support the Government's economic growth objectives. The Framework [§ 8 & 9] identifies three overarching dimensions to achieving sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways.
- 4.8 The Framework [§11] establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It states that for decision taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.
- 4.9 The most relevant policies to this development include:
 - 1 Promoting healthy and safe communities (Chapter 8.0);
 - a Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places [§92].
 - 2 Promoting sustainable transport (Chapter 9.0);
 - a Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of development proposals so that the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed [§104].
 - 3 Making effective use of land (Chapter 11.0);
 - a Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land to meet the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions [§119].
 - b The Framework seeks to promote the development of under-utilised land, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained [§120].

4 Achieving well-designed places (Chapter 12.0);

- a Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments are visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and history, establish or maintain a strong sense of place and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible [§130].

4.10 A consultation on proposed changes to the Framework commenced in December 2022 and closes in March 2023. The consultation seeks views on proposed changes to the Framework, with the proposed reference to 'beautiful' design potentially relevant for the determination of this planning application.

Supplementary Planning Documents

4.11 The following Halton BC Supplementary Planning Documents are of relevance to the outline planning application:

- 1 Design of Residential Development SPD; and,
- 2 Designing for Community Safety SPD.

5.0 **Planning Assessment**

- 5.1 This section of the report considers the compliance of the proposed development with the relevant policies of the statutory Development Plan and SPDs, alongside the Framework as a material consideration.

Principle of Residential Development

- 5.2 Policy RD1 'Residential Development Allocations' identifies a number of Strategic Housing Locations and allocations for residential development to assist in the delivery of the requirements set out in Policy CS(R)3.
- 5.3 The Site forms the majority of two allocations within Policy RD1 for the notional capacity of 432 dwellings (Parcel refs. W4 and W5).
- 5.4 Policy CS(R)3 Housing Supply and Locational priorities states that a total of 8,050 new homes will be delivered from a variety of sources over the plan period including housing allocations identified in Policy RD1.
- 5.5 The delivery of the Site for residential development will form an important contribution towards the Council's housing land supply and will assist in meeting the Council's housing requirement set out in Policy CS[R]3 as it will deliver up to 350 new homes.
- 5.6 It is also considered that the development of the site for residential purposes is entirely appropriate when considered in the context of the surrounding environment, as the proposed development will deliver a sustainable residential extension to Widnes.
- 5.7 In summary, the proposed development will deliver:
- 1 A new housing development within a sustainable and highly accessible location;
 - 2 A natural, residential extension to Halton;
 - 3 A scheme that is in close proximity to public transport links as well as local services and facilities which will encourage travel by non-car modes of transport;
 - 4 High-quality family housing with attractive landscaping;
 - 5 A scheme which has regard to the local vernacular and character of the area and not cause harm to the amenity of residential properties; and
 - 6 A development which will not impact on any ecological or landscape designations.
- 5.8 In the context of the above, the principle of development of the site for housing is therefore in accordance with policies RD1 and CS(R)3. The Site does not have a site specific policy included in the DALP associated with its delivery. Instead, the general policies contained within the Plan guide the development of the site. The remainder of this section addresses the relevant policies within the DALP.
- 5.9 Part 3 of Policy RD1 also states that residential development on Green Belt sites, or former Green Belt sites allocated in this Plan, will need to provide appropriate mitigation for the loss of Green Belt land in line with NPPF requirements. This is discussed later in this section (Green Belt Compensatory Measures).

Affordable Housing and Housing Mix

Affordable Housing

- 5.10 The DALP Policy CS(R)13 seeks to ensure that affordable housing is provided on residential schemes of ten or more dwellings or over 0.5 hectares in size. It sets out that Strategic Housing Sites (those identified on the Policies Map) are required to deliver 20% affordable housing and the overall number of affordable housing units should be provided as approximately 74% affordable or social rent and 26% intermediate (including affordable home ownership) unless evidence demonstrates otherwise.
- 5.11 The Site proposes to deliver 20% affordable housing in line with the requirements for Strategic Housing Sites under Policy CS(R)13. The tenure of affordable dwellings will be provided at the reserved matters stage and will be split in accordance with the requirements of CS(R)13 as stated above.
- 5.12 Affordable housing provision within the development is therefore in accordance with DALP Policy CS(R)13 (Affordable Homes).

Housing Mix

- 5.13 The DALP Policy CS(R)12 'Housing Mix and Specialist Housing' seeks to ensure developers have regard to locally arising needs for dwellings of different size and type. It states that *'on sites of 10 or more dwellings, the mix of new property types delivered are encouraged to contribute to addressing identified needs (size of homes and specialist housing) as quantified in the most up to date Strategic Housing Market Assessment, unless precluded by site specific constraints, economic viability or prevailing neighbourhood characteristics'*.
- 5.14 The most up to date Strategic Housing Market Assessment [SHMA] is the Mid-Mersey SHMA (January 2016). The SHMA concludes that the following mix for market and affordable dwellings is appropriate:
- 1 beds: 15%
 - 2-beds: 30%
 - 3-beds: 40%
 - 4-beds: 10%
- 5.15 The proposed development will deliver a mix of homes including 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom homes. The exact mix of dwellings will be confirmed at the reserved matters stage in accordance with the mix outlined in the most up to date SHMA as required by DALP Policy CS(R)12.

The proposed development will ensure that a mix of new property types, sizes and tenures are delivered in order to address identified needs in the Borough and establish a mixed and sustainable community.

Layout and Design

- 5.16 The Framework² details that the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. In addition, it states that design is a key aspect of sustainable development; it should be visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and history, establish or maintain a strong sense of place and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible [§130].
- 5.17 DALP Policy CS(R)18 (High Quality Design) states that development design in Halton should be of a high quality, build upon an area's character, be adaptable to changing situations, and provide safe, healthy and accessible environments for all members of society. To meet these design principles, development proposals will be expected to implement current design guidance and principles such as guidance from Homes England, the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code and relevant SPDs. Policy GR1 (Design of Development) sets out that the design of all development must be of a high quality. DALP Policy GR2 (Amenity) ensures that residential proposals provide a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. This includes ensuring privacy, maximising daylight and sunlight and providing an adequate amount of amenity space.
- 5.18 The Halton Design of New Residential Development SPD seeks to improve the character and quality of an area through good design. There are a number of policies within the SPD that relate to the layout and design of the proposed development. Policy 1 (Character and Context) states that developments should have their own character whilst relating well to their context and proposals should have regard to the size, shape and topography of the site. Policy 2 (Connectivity and Movement) states that new developments should connect new and existing routes, prioritise the needs of pedestrians and cyclists and avoid isolated routes that are poorly surveyed. Policy 3 (Structure and Layout) states that public and private space should be clearly defined, links should be overlooked, and landmarks should be incorporated to aid with wayfinding.
- 5.19 The Designing for Community Safety SPD seeks to ensure that new developments create a safe, secure and pleasant environment. The SPD sets out a series of general development principles for residential development. This includes providing a mix of dwelling types, dividing large new developments into recognisable neighbourhoods and incorporating traffic calming measures where appropriate to minimise anti-social behaviour.
- 5.20 The proposals have been developed through an iterative design process in order to create a high quality, sustainable development which responds to the constraints and opportunities presented by the site. The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement prepared by eSCAPE (February 2023), which explains the design principles that underpin the proposed scheme. The proposed layout is shown on the Parameters Masterplan (Dwg. No. 022-009-P004 Rev F), and reserved matters will be required to accord with this plan.
- 5.21 The character of the neighbourhood to be created is principally a 2 storey development, based on the local context and has been designed to reflect the human scale of built form found in the surrounding neighbourhoods. In some instances, 2.5 storey dwellings are used as key landmarks through the Site.

² The Framework – [§126]

- 5.22 A green infrastructure network is provided which creates a green mesh over the various development parcels and retains the particular character related to the area and specifically existing site features such as the watercourses, field ponds, trees and hedgerows.
- 5.23 The green infrastructure will accommodate play areas and new ecological habitats. It will ensure the retention of the majority of the existing vegetation.
- 5.24 In addition to the green infrastructure is a finer grain network of movement routes including avenues, streets, lanes, shared drives, footpaths and footpath/cycleways, adding to the proposal's permeability. The primary element is the avenue which will act as the main route into and through the site.
- 5.25 The housing on the avenue will provide a clearly defined street frontage based around 2 storey residential units with some 2.5 storey landmark elements in key locations. From the avenue will include a series of streets and lanes which form the vehicle network, based around traditional streets and lanes, fronted and enclosed by 2 storey properties with landmarks created by 2.5 storey properties at corners and as header buildings.
- 5.26 Amenity footpaths and footpath/cycleways run throughout the green infrastructure network and provide connections between development parcels and out to the surrounding neighbourhoods and wider footpath network via Sandy Lane.
- 5.27 The design and layout of the development has also been assessed against the Building for a Healthy Life (BHL). The document is centred around how health can be improved through integrated neighbourhoods, distinctive places and streets for all.
- 5.28 In terms of health and accessibility, the proposed development is part of a wider well connected network of hierarchical routes that connect with existing neighbourhoods in the area. This network links with existing PRoWs and bridleways. The route network is safe and has good overlooking from surrounding development parcels. The proposed development provides dedicated walking and cycling routes through the green infrastructure as well as cycleways.
- 5.29 In terms of amenity, all homes have access to private or communal rear gardens of a good size and are not directly overlooked. Rear gardens ensure security and privacy. Houses face onto the street to provide natural surveillance and an active street frontage. The design of the development ensures that southern aspect homes are created where possible to allow good levels of natural light into the home.
- 5.30 Matters of architectural design are reserved but any future reserved matters application will utilise the local design related policies and design guidance to create architectural forms which will sit well in the context and local vernacular of the wider town.
- 5.31 As set out in detail with the accompanying DAS, the layout and design of the development is compliant with the relevant DALP Policies, the and the Council's Design SPDs.

Landscaping

- 5.32 DALP Policy HE5 'Trees and Landscaping' states that all development will be required to conserve and where appropriate enhance the character and quality of the local landscape. Development proposals will be required to include hard and soft landscaping that reflects the character of the area through appropriate design and management, is well laid out and

maintainable, achieves a suitable visual setting for the development, supports biodiversity, and, where appropriate, provides suitable and appropriate mitigation for the restoration of damaged landscape areas.

- 5.33 A Landscaping Strategy (Dwg. No. 526B-19A) has been prepared by Randall Thorp to accompany the outline planning application.
- 5.34 The proposed strategy provides a green space network based around the existing valued site features and reflects the character of the Site. Public areas are designed to be multi-functional open spaces to bring communities together and boost health and wellbeing. Multi-functional benefits would include space for recreation, areas for ecological enhancement, visual amenity and protection of existing landscape features.
- 5.35 Existing vegetation will be retained and enhanced as part of the proposals in order to retain wildlife habitat value and provide an established landscape character. Biodiversity is a key component to the landscaping scheme and a wider number of plants will be included to provide foraging potential for birds, invertebrates and mammals.
- 5.36 Trees, hedgerows and shrubs will be selected according to their presence on site, the surrounding area and within the region. The landscaped areas will be easy to maintain to ensure they mature well in the long term. There is a clear delineation between public and private space to provide clarity over management responsibilities.
- 5.37 Four landscape character areas are also proposed within the residential areas of the site. The character areas are designed to integrate the development into the surrounding area, and to enhance legibility and sense of place throughout the scheme. These are set out in detail within the accompanying DAS (Section 5.0).
- 5.38 The Landscaping Strategy demonstrates that the proposed development conserves and enhances the local landscape, reflects the character of the area, is easily maintained and supports biodiversity. Therefore, the development is acceptable compliant with the DALP Policy HE5.

Open Space

- 5.39 The Framework [§98] indicates that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation are considered important for contributing towards the health and well-being of communities.
- 5.40 DALP Policy CS(R)21 'Green Infrastructure' seeks to ensure that new development maximises opportunities to make provision for a high quality and multifunctional green infrastructure network. This includes protecting, enhancing and where possible creating linkages and connections between natural habitats and other landscape features. DALP Policy HE4 'Green Infrastructure and Greenspace' reiterates this by stating that all development where appropriate will be expected to incorporate high quality green infrastructure. This should enhance green infrastructure networks and create links, protect and enhance biodiversity, encourage physical activity and improve access for pedestrians and cyclists.

Policy RD4 'Greenspace provision for Residential Development' states that all residential development of 10 or more dwellings that create or exacerbate a projected quantitative

shortfall of greenspace or are not served by existing accessible greenspace will be expected to make appropriate provision for the needs arising from development.

5.41 A Green Infrastructure network covering 5.26 hectares (approximately 37% of the site) will include a variety of functions such as:

- 1 Public Open Space;
- 2 Play Areas;
- 3 Retained and new native trees and hedgerows;
- 4 Retained and new wetland habitats and new meadow habitats;
- 5 Orchards;
- 6 A sustainable urban drainage network, and;
- 7 Connections to the Public Right of Way network which runs through and across the site.

5.42 The Parameters Masterplan features a variety of accessible open spaces that provide for a wide range of inclusive recreational and play opportunities integrating formal and natural play features. Public areas are designed to be multi-functional open spaces and include spaces for recreation, areas of ecological enhancement, visual amenity and protection of existing landscape features.

5.43 A central LEAP will be situated in the most accessible location at Circus Green, ensuring a 400m walking distance catchment for the whole site. A supplementary trim trail will run parallel to PRoW W/16 comprising a linear arrangement of simple timber balancing and agility equipment for use by the whole community.

5.44 Further informal supplementary natural play elements in the form of boulders, stepping logs and 'fallen trees' will be provided along the Sandy Lane greenway to enhance the play value of the landscape in these areas.

5.45 The proportion of land proposed for each element of the green infrastructure outlined above will be developed in accordance with the standards outlined in DALP Policy RD4 at the reserved matters stage.

5.46 The proposed open space provision is therefore considered compliant with the policies in the DALP and the Framework.

Highways and Transport

5.47 A Transport Assessment (May 2023) and Travel Plan (May 2023) have been prepared by Vectos to support the application proposals. The proposals have been prepared to ensure compliance with DALP Policies CS(R)15 (Sustainable Transport), C1 (Transport Network and Accessibility) and C2 (Parking Standards).

5.48 The DALP seeks to encourage and enable a shift to more sustainable modes of travel through ensuring a successful sustainable transport network is in place CS[R]15 (Sustainable Transport) states that development proposals should ensure that a development is accessible by sustainable transport methods such as walking, cycling and public transport. This includes reducing the need to travel by car and encouraging

sustainable transport modes. The Council expects developments to be located where there is public transport accessibility and good walking and cycling links.

5.49 Policy C1 (Transport Network and Accessibility) outlines the necessary objectives require in ensuring that a successful sustainable network that prioritises walking, cycling and public transport. The Council will support development where the internal layout, access and highway network is safe, attractive in character, functional and accessible for all users and does not discourage existing and proposed users. The development must also not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

5.50 Policy C2 (Parking Standards) states that all developments must provide a level of safe, secure, accessible and viable parking. The Policy seeks to ensure that all development provides an appropriate level of safe, secure, accessible and viable parking. The design and layout of the proposed parking must enable and encourage the maximum use of sustainable modes of transport, including provision for cyclists and ultra-low emission vehicles. Appendix D of the DALP sets out the Parking Standards for residential developments. For dwelling houses in non-town centre locations, the parking standards are as follows:

- 1-bedroom: 1 parking space
- 2 to 3 bedrooms: 2 parking spaces
- 4+ bedrooms: 3 parking spaces

5.51 The Framework places an emphasis on sustainable transport modes stating that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of development so that the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed [§104].

Access and Highways

5.52 Vehicular access to the Site will be from Chapel Lane via a new priority junction. The junction has been demonstrated to be safe, fit for purpose and will cater for the capacity of the development, with significant spare capacity and minimal queuing on Chapel Lane. Emergency access points and additional active travel links will be provided via Sandy Lane and via existing PRoWs. Vehicle speeds are kept low throughout the proposed development through the use of shared spaces and road geometry.

5.53 New pedestrian and cycle accesses are proposed along Sandy Lane which provides a traffic free route connecting to Old Upton Lane and the built-up area of Widnes. The existing PRoW network through the site will be maintained in order to promote active travel as a first choice.

5.54 The impact of the proposed development on the local highway is demonstrated to be minimal. The effect on highway capacity is not significant and is therefore considered acceptable. The balance of highway capacity on the local road network and providing for local living and mobility has been considered and is policy compliant.

5.55 There is no technical design reason that an access from Chapel Lane is inappropriate to support up to 350 homes from Chapel Lane, on either highway safety or junction capacity grounds. The provision of new pedestrian and cycle accesses ensures that the walking and cycling network is maintained. Therefore, the proposal accords with DALP Policy C1 as the

development encourages walking and cycling and there is no unacceptable impact on highway safety.

Public Transport, Cycling and Pedestrian Arrangements

- 5.56 The Transport Assessment is accompanied by a Travel Plan (May 2023). The Travel Plan sets out a long-term strategy to facilitate and encourage modes of travel to the site by sustainable means, which reflects current central and local government policy as well as the objectives behind this development. The Travel Plan aids in encouraging sustainable travel for short journeys and shared or public travel for longer journeys. A Travel Plan Coordinator will be appointed as part of the Travel Plan.
- 5.57 The Site is located in a sustainable location approximately 3km northwest of Widnes town centre and Chapel Lane and Sandy Lane connect the site to the nearby settlements of Parklands and Cronton.
- 5.58 The nearest bus stop to the site is located within a 13-minute walk and 4-min cycle from the centre of the site. Widnes Railway Station is located within a 30 minute walk or 10 minute cycle. Local primary and secondary schools, local food shops and Highfield Hospital are also accessible by foot (15-30 minutes) or by bicycle (under 15 minutes). This ensures that future residents have the opportunity to access key services via active travel modes.
- 5.59 The development proposals include connections to the existing pedestrian and cycle networks in the vicinity of the site and off-site pedestrian improvements to provide continuous pedestrian routes between the site and local facilities. This will further encourage trips to be made by active travel.
- 5.60 With the changing nature of travel, which has been accelerated by the Covid-19 events, accounting also for generational mindsets and the changing priorities reflected in policy, the potential to create sustainable travel habits for all residents from the outset is excellent. Therefore, delivery of this sight ought to see far fewer vehicular trips than forecasted.
- 5.61 The proposed development has demonstrated that it is accessible by sustainable transport methods such as walking, cycling and public transport and is already situated in a location with good existing public transport links by active travel modes. The proposed development is therefore compliant with the DALP (Policy CS(R)15).

Parking

- 5.62 The number of allocated parking spaces will be confirmed at the reserved matters stage in line with the requirements set out in Appendix D of the DALP.
- 5.63 In addition, electric vehicle (EV) charging will be provided on site at individual dwellings. To facilitate convenient ownership and use of bikes by residents, an on-plot parking space is proposed to be provided for each dwelling.
- 5.64 Therefore, the proposed parking provision is compliant with the DALP Policy C2 by ensuring an appropriate level of parking is provided, whilst also providing space for bicycles and ultra-low emission vehicles.

Conclusion

- 5.65 The proposed development will be designed to promote travel choice where possible, encourage sustainable travel for short journeys, and shared or public transport for longer journeys.
- 5.66 The Site is conveniently connected to local services and connections to the existing pedestrian infrastructure will be provided to facilitate use of these amenities. The development proposals seek to enhance this connectivity to ensure that, where short journeys occur, undertaking them by active travel modes is the first choice. On the basis of the above, the proposals accord with DALP Policies CS(R)15, C1 and C2.

Environmental Matters

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 5.67 DALP Policy CS(R)20 (part 4) 'Natural and Historic Environment' states that the landscape character and condition as informed through the Halton Landscape Character Assessment will be promoted and sustained. New developments will be expected to have particular regard to these landscape character strategies and guidelines.
- 5.68 The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment [LVIA] (January 2023) prepared by Randall Thorp. The LVIA identifies and assesses the anticipated effects resulting from the development on the character and features of the landscape and on people's views and visual amenity. The LVIA notes that:
- 1 The Site sits within the Floodplain Farmland Landscape and North Widnes Farmland Landscape character areas in the Halton Landscape Character Assessment. The LVIA states that the scale and type of the development is appropriate to that of the surrounding area in regards to the two character areas. It is therefore considered that the susceptibility to change is low-medium.
 - 2 Potential landscape effects would be confined to the Site itself and the immediate local area. The effects on landscape features range from minor adverse to minor beneficial as a result of the proposed development. However, potential landscape effects would be confined to the site itself and the immediate local area.
 - 3 The visual envelope is limited to a local area and there are a small number of visual receptors.
 - 4 Views of the proposed development would be experienced from the PRoW W/16 which runs through the Site. There would be the loss of some longer views from the route and the views would be partially enclosed by proposed housing, although the majority of the route would be set within a green corridor.
 - 5 Upon maturity of the planting within the green corridors the views of housing would be softened resulting in moderate adverse long-term permanent residual visual effects.
 - 6 Upon maturity of the proposed landscape within the buffers and alongside the route views Sandy Lane would be substantially filtered resulting in minor-moderate adverse, long-term and permanent visual effects.

- 7 Residual effects on the views from other roads and footpaths within the vicinity would be negligible.

5.69 Overall, there would be no landscape or visual reason why the proposals would not be acceptable. The LVIA demonstrates the Halton Character Areas that cover the Site will be promoted and sustained. Therefore, the landscape character in the area will not be adversely impacted. It is therefore considered that proposed development complies with the DALP Policy CS(R)20.

Trees

5.70 DALP Policy HE5 'Trees and Landscaping' states that planning permission will normally not be permitted where the proposal adversely effects, trees, woodlands and hedgerows which are protected by a TPO; are ancient woodlands or veteran trees; in a conservation area; or within a recognised Nature Conservation Asset. There will be a presumption in favour of the retention and enhancement of existing trees and where development is likely to result in the unavoidable loss of trees then this will need to be addressed through appropriate mitigation.

5.71 The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Arboricultural Assessment [PAA] (May 2023) prepared by Urban Green. The PAA notes the following:

- 1 There is one Tree Preservation Order within the site (TPO 119);
- 2 There are no conservation areas enforced within the site;
- 3 The tree cover comprises mainly of high-quality individual trees and moderate quality natural colonisation woodland;
- 4 Trees along the boundary of the Site are visually important in terms of their contribution to the character and appearance of the area. Trees internal to the Site provide less visual amenity but are still quality specimens which should be retained.

5.72 The following recommendations were made based on the findings:

- 1 All specified tree work is to be carried out in accordance with BS 3998:2010 Tree Work – Recommendations.
- 2 The Local Authority is consulted before any tree works are undertaken, permission is not needed where tree work is required to implement an approved planning application;
- 3 Pruning is to be carried out with regard to the standards laid out in BS3998:2010. Pruning of third-party trees should be agreed with the tree owner;
- 4 Where possible proposed structures should be outside Root Protection Areas [RPAs];
- 5 Category A and B trees should be retained where possible and any works within their RPAs should be undertaken in a sympathetic manner;
- 6 Future development within the Site should retain the early-mature to mature groups of trees along all the boundaries of the site.

5.73 The proposed development will seek to retain TPO trees and hedgerows as part of any future reserved matters application.

- 5.74 In accordance with the policy, and the findings and recommendations in the report, the proposed development accords with DALP Policy HE5. I

Ecology

- 5.75 Policy CS(R)20 'Natural and Historic Environment' sets out a hierarchal approach to the protection, nature conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity. This includes sites of international importance, sites of national importance and sites of local importance. Opportunities to enhance the value of Halton's natural assets should be taken. Policy HE1 'Natural Environment and Nature Conservation' states that any development which may affect a designated natural asset will be considered in line with the mitigation hierarchy of avoidance; minimisation; mitigation; and, compensation.
- 5.76 Paragraph 174 of the Framework seeks to enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.
- 5.77 The proposed development is designed with the aim to meet the requirement for a net gain in biodiversity and has been developed in accordance with DALP Policies CS[R]20 and HE1.
- 5.78 An Ecological Appraisal (April 2023) has been prepared by Ecology Services Limited to accompany the planning application. The report identifies the baseline ecological conditions of the site and of wildlife habitat bordering the site and identifies any potential constraints to the development proposals.
- 5.79 The appraisal found that there were no European, National or Local designated sites within 2km of the Site.
- 5.80 The site is not subject to any statutory designations for nature conservation. However, it does lie within a Natural England Impact Risk Zone associated with Mersey Estuary Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site (c 3.5km south of the site). The surrounding environs and wider landscape are protected by a number of Local Wildlife Sites, one of which (Alder Brook) partly lies along the northern boundary. The appraisal found that there will be no direct impacts on these sites apart from Alder Brook, which is of low ecological value.
- 5.81 The proposed development primarily impacts on grassland, retaining the ponds, Alder Brook and the majority of the hedgerows and trees. Buffers of greenspace have been retained around ponds and between development areas and the woodland and Alder Brook.
- 5.82 Retained grassland will be enhanced to compensate the loss of grassland within the site and compensatory planting will be provided to address loss of trees and short sections of hedgerow.
- 5.83 Appropriate mitigation measures will need to be implemented regarding invasive species present within the site.
- 5.84 Bat surveys confirmed a bat roost in one of the agricultural buildings within the site to the south-west. A Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation License accompanied by an appropriate mitigation and enhancement scheme will be required if works are to be undertaken that impact the bat roost, either directly or indirectly. All the trees with bat roost potential will be retained.

5.85 The findings and recommendations in the Ecological Appraisal have detailed mitigation and protection measures on the site that provide opportunities to enhance the value of Halton's natural assets in line with the mitigation hierarchy.

5.86 Overall, it is considered that the proposed development is compliant with DALP Policies CS[R]20 and HE1 and the Framework.

Compensatory Green Belt Improvements

5.87 Part 3 of Policy RD1 states that residential development on Green Belt sites or former Green Belt sites will need to provide appropriate mitigation for the loss of Green Belt land in line with the requirements of the Framework [§142].

5.88 The development proposal incorporates Green Belt compensatory measures as the Site was removed from the Green Belt and allocated for residential development in the Halton DALP. This includes:

- 1 Enhancement of the existing PRoW running through the centre of the Site;
- 2 Footpath links to the existing PRoW to the north-east of the Site;
- 3 Pedestrian and cycle connections from the Site onto Sandy Lane and active travel routes south into Widnes and to the north to Cronton;
- 4 A comprehensive landscaping scheme incorporating extensive tree, shrub, bulb and aquatic planting;
- 5 The delivery of POS including gardens, natural and semi natural open space, amenity space and children's play areas;
- 6 Biodiversity Net Gain through on-site improvements.

5.89 The proposed development therefore accords with the Framework [§142] and DALP Policy RD1 by supporting the delivery of Green Belt compensatory measures.

Noise

5.90 DALP Policy CS23 'Managing Pollution and Risk' and Policy HE7 'Pollution and Nuisance' look to ensure that development takes into account the adverse effects arising from pollution and nuisance. Policy CS23 states that development proposals should not exacerbate and where possible, should minimise noise pollution. Policy HE7 states that where applications for development identify risks that would negatively impact on the quality of the environment through noise nuisance, they must be accompanied by an appropriate impact assessment and where necessary demonstrate mitigation measures. Development will be permitted providing that noise nuisance is not likely to cause a significant increase in ambient noise levels for either day or night time conditions.

5.91 The Framework states that development should mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impact resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life [§185].

5.92 A Noise Assessment (April 2023) has been prepared by Hepworth Acoustics with regards to DALP Policy CS23 (Managing Pollution and Risk) Policy HE7 (Pollution and Nuisance) and the Framework to accompany the planning application.

- 5.93 The accompanying Noise Assessment concludes that:
- 1 The road traffic noise exposure levels on the western and eastern boundaries of the site fall into the 'low' risk category of ProPG in the daytime and between the 'low' to 'medium' risk categories at night.
 - 2 Traffic noise levels do not impose any significant constraints to residential development of the site, but traffic noise levels in areas nearest to Chapel Lane and Queensway do need to be taken into account and noise mitigation provided where necessary.
 - 3 Subject to the outline recommendations for mitigation measures the potential noise impact from road traffic would not result in any unacceptable harm to residential amenity by reason of noise disturbance.
 - 4 An appropriate acoustic ventilation of the nearest habitable rooms to the Chapel Lane and Queensway is provided to protect the amenity of the new residents.
- 5.94 It is therefore considered that the proposed development complies with the adopted Plan [DALP Policies CS23 and HE7] and the Framework³ as the proposed development is not expected to have a significant adverse impact on health or quality of life and provides appropriate mitigation measures where necessary.

Air Quality

- 5.95 DALP Policy CS23 'Managing Pollution and Risk' states that development proposals should not exacerbate and where possible, should minimise, all forms of emissions. DALP Policy HE7 'Pollution and Nuisance' states that where applications for development identify risks that would negatively impact on the quality of the environment through air pollution, they must be accompanied by an appropriate impact assessment and, where necessary, demonstrate that mitigation measures have been incorporated. Planning permission will be granted for development providing that levels of air borne pollutants caused by the proposed development does not exceed statutory guidelines unless appropriate mitigation measures are agreed.
- 5.96 An Air Quality assessment (July 2022) has been prepared by Ensafé with regards to DALP Policy CS23 and HE7 to accompany the planning application. The accompanying Air Quality Assessment concludes that:
- 1 Due to the scale of the development, there is potential for the proposals to cause impacts at sensitive receptors during the construction and operational phases due to fugitive dust emissions from the Site. It is considered that the use of good practice dust control measures would provide suitable mitigation for a development of this size and nature and reduce potential impacts to an acceptable level.
 - 2 Dispersion modelling was undertaken to quantify annual mean NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentrations across the application site. The dispersion modelling results indicated that annual mean pollutant concentrations (NO₂, PM₂ and PM_{2.5}) across the application site were below the relevant Air Quality Objectives at proposed sensitive locations. The site is therefore considered suitable for proposed end use without the implementation of protective mitigation techniques.

³ The Framework [§185]

- 3 Predicted impacts on annual mean NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentrations as a result of operational phase exhaust emissions were predicted to be negligible at 34 sensitive receptor locations within the vicinity of the site.
- 4 Additionally, the assessment concluded that impacts on pollutant levels were predicted to be not significant at all sensitive locations in the vicinity of the site.

5.97 Mitigation techniques have been recommended for the construction and operational phases which will ensure that there are negligible air quality impacts. It is therefore considered based on the assessment results that the proposed development complies with the DALP Policies CS23 and HE7 and the Framework⁴.

Infrastructure

Flood Risk

- 5.98 Policy HE9 'Water Management and Flood Risk' states that development will only be permitted where it would not be subject to unacceptable risk of flooding from all sources and would not unacceptably exacerbate risk of flooding elsewhere. Within Flood Zone 1, a Flood Risk Assessment will be required for development proposals of 1ha or more.
- 5.99 The Framework reiterates that areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, should not increase flood risk elsewhere and should manage risk from all sources [§159 & §160].
- 5.100 A Flood Risk Assessment [FRA] has been prepared by AJP (May 2023) to accompany the planning application. The report has been prepared in accordance with DALP Policy HE9 (Water Management and Flood Risk).
- 5.101 The Site is located within flood zone 1 and has been deemed to have a low risk of flooding from rivers and surface water, a low to medium risk of flooding from groundwater at the surface, a low risk of flooding from the land, a low risk of flooding from reservoirs and no risk of flooding from the sea.
- 5.102 Mitigation measures have been proposed for low risk of flooding from the land and groundwater in the FRA.
- 5.103 Appropriate design and construction of drainage systems will ensure there is no increase in offsite flood risk that would otherwise impact downstream areas.
- 5.104 The FRA has assessed flood risk from all sources and confirmed that the site is located in flood zone 1. The proposed development will not contribute further to flood risk in accordance with the DALP and the Framework.

Surface Water and Foul Water Drainage Strategy

- 5.105 Policy HE9 'Water Management and Flood Risk' states that new development will need to ensure that there is adequate surface water and foul drainage capacity to serve the development. All development proposals must demonstrate how they will manage surface water run-off as close to its source as possible. Applicants wishing to discharge to a public

⁴ The Framework [§186]

sewer will need to submit clear evidence demonstrating why alternative options are not available.

5.106 The drainage strategy for the site is provided in the Flood Risk Assessment (May 2023) prepared by AJP. The report notes that:

- 1 Site-wide drainage systems are proposed to drain the foul and surface water flow arising from the proposed development and where possible, existing drainage networks will be utilised.
- 2 There are no local adopted surface water drainage systems or highway drains within the development.
- 3 Surface water should be discharged to a watercourse or waterbody under an Environmental Permit. The nearest waterbody is the Alder Brook on the northern boundary of the Site. The surface water network shall consist of oversized pipes and manholes with an online SUDS pond.
- 4 In it is considered that SUDS infiltration is not feasible, therefore the surface water runoff is designed to discharge to the public sewer.
- 5 Part H of the Building Regulations state that discharging foul water to a public sewer is the most preferred method. Foul Water will discharge to the existing United Utilities foul water sewer to the north west corner of the development.

5.107 The proposed development introduces site-wide drainage systems to drain the foul and surface water flows arising from the proposed development and where possible utilises existing drainage networks. The report demonstrates that infiltration is not viable as required by DALP Policy HE9 and therefore surface water flows will be discharged to a water course and public sewer. It is therefore considered that the drainage systems have the capacity to serve the development and therefore the proposed development is compliant with the DALP.

Ground Conditions

5.108 DALP Policy HE8 'Land Contamination' states that an applicant proposing development on, or near a site, where contamination may potentially exist, should carry out sufficient investigation, so as to establish the nature, extent and significance of the contamination. The investigation should have regard to the compatibility of the intended use with the condition of land; the environmental sensitivity of the site; and after-care measures where appropriate should include details of a programme of implementation.

5.109 The application is supported by a Phase II Geo-environmental Survey prepared by E3P (January 2023). The report notes that:

- 1 There are no present or historical landfill sites located within 500m of the Site.
- 2 The Site is located within a Coal Mining Reporting Area although it is not located within an area deemed as high risk.
- 3 The proposed development is not located within the Cheshire Brine Compensation District, therefore is unaffected by brine workings.

- 4 Chromium VI, Lead and Asbestos were identified in concentrations that exceed the screening criteria for residential use. Delineation and segregation will ensure that impacted material is placed in an area of reduced sensitivity.
- 5 Completion of ground gas monitoring is required, ensuring water is removed from wells beforehand. If high concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane persist removal of the source may be required to mitigate risk.

5.110 The finding and recommendations in the Geo-environmental Survey demonstrate that the nature, extent and significance of contamination on the site has been sufficiently investigated. Where concentrations were incompatible with residential use, mitigation has been recommended to remove any risks. Therefore, the proposed development complies with the DALP.

Heritage and Archaeology

5.111 DALP Policy CS[R]20 'Natural and Historic Environment' states that the Borough's historic environment, heritage assets and their setting will be conserved and enhanced and opportunities to enhance them will be encouraged. Policy HE2 'Heritage Assets and the Historic Environment' reiterates the need to conserve and enhance heritage assets in the Borough. It states that development proposals will be required to safeguard or enhance listed buildings.

5.112 A Historic Environment Assessment has been prepared by Cotswold Archaeology (April 2023) to accompany the planning application.

5.113 The assessment identifies the archaeological baseline of the Site, identified the sites capacity for change and made recommendations for design and assessed the impact of the initial parameters masterplan.

5.114 There are no previously recorded non-designated heritage assets within the Site. A number of hedgerows have been identified within the Site which qualify as important hedgerows under the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations Act; however, they are of low heritage value and will not be harmed by the proposed development.

5.115 A generally limited potential is identified for archaeological remains across the Site. The available evidence does not indicate a potential for remains of a value which would compromise a constraint to the development of the Site.

5.116 The western edge of the Site is retained as open green space enabling the historical view of Grade II Listed Redmyre to be retained and its significance preserved resulting in no harm to the Listed Building.

5.117 To summarise, there are no non-designated heritage assets within the Site and the view of the Grade II Listed Redmyre will be retained. It is therefore considered on the basis on the findings of the assessment that the proposed development is complies with DALP Policy CS[R]20 and HE2.

Energy and Sustainability

5.118 The DALP sets out that all new development should be sustainable and be designed to have regard to the predicted effects of climate change. DALP Policy GR1 Part 4 'Design of

Development' states that all major development proposals involving the construction of new buildings must demonstrate how sustainable design and construction methods will be incorporated to achieve resource efficiency and resilience to climate change. DALP Policy GR5 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy' states that the incorporation of renewable and low carbon energy into development will be encouraged, especially when concerning major developments.

- 5.119 A Sustainability Statement (January 2023) has been prepared by Award Energy Consultants to accompany the planning application. The application proposals have been prepared to ensure compliance with DALP Policies GR1 and GR5.
- 5.120 Predicted Carbon Emissions for each dwelling type of the development is anticipated to achieve carbon emission reductions over and above the requirements of Building Regulations Part L1a 2013. The proposed enhanced specification achieves significant reductions in Fabric Energy Demand over Part L1a 2013, ensuring that sustainability is built into the dwellings to last the lifetime of the development.
- 5.121 Further energy efficient measures are incorporated into the development to reduce carbon emissions and energy demand. The measures include high levels of insulation, air tightness, highly efficient heating systems and dedicated low energy lighting.
- 5.122 A commitment to obtaining responsible sourcing certification for at least 90% of the building elements of each building is being implemented to reduce the environmental impact of the proposed development.
- 5.123 The proposed development includes eco-sanitary ware and restricted flow rates will be introduced into the design of each development to obtain the appropriate level of water efficiency. This will achieve a higher level of efficiency than that required by the Building Regulations (2013).
- 5.124 To summarise, in accordance with the Council's sustainability requirements the sustainability statement demonstrates that the enhanced fabric specification of the housing proposed for Chapel Lane reduces both fabric energy demand and carbon emissions over the Building Regulation (2013) requirements. The development has also been delivered in accordance with the Future Homes Standard pathway. The development proposal demonstrates that reducing the demand for energy has been prioritised in the first instance. Therefore, the development is compliant with DALP Policies CS[R]19, GR1 and GR5.

Conclusion

- 5.125 This section has demonstrated that the proposed development accords with the relevant policies of the adopted Development Plan. There are no other material considerations which indicate that permission should not be granted in accordance with Section 70(2) of the 1990 Act and Section 38(6) of the 2004 Act.

6.0 Sustainable Development Principles

Introduction

- 6.1 This section considers the compliance of the proposed development with the principles of sustainable development as set out in the Framework. It demonstrates that the proposals perform a positive economic, social and environmental role and should be given significant weight in the planning balance.

Economic Role

- 6.2 The proposed development will contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy. In particular, the proposals will bring a number of economic and fiscal benefits in terms of job creation and increased expenditure in the local economy. This will benefit Halton which ranks 39th out of 317 local authorities on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD2019) and where 18.7% of the population are economically inactive⁵.

Economic Benefits During Construction

- 6.3 A number of economic benefits arise from the proposed development during the construction phase. Construction employment for the proposed development has been estimated based on a construction cost of approx. £41 million, based on standard building costs for residential development using the BCIS Comprehensive Building Price Book. The total construction cost has been divided by the average total purchases of goods, materials and services per construction employee in the North West. Therefore, approximately 104 temporary construction jobs would be created by the development.
- 6.4 The majority of the benefits of housing construction are retained in the UK economy. It has been estimated that in 2009 less than 8% of the construction sector's supplies were imported; which compares favourably to other sectors for example nearly 28% in the UK car manufacturing sector.
- 6.5 National construction firms use a combination of their own permanent workforce and local contractors on projects, with a proportion of construction workers drawn locally. Based on experience elsewhere, it is reasonable to expect that a proportion of the construction jobs created by the proposed development will be taken up by the local workforce, particularly if measures are in place to encourage local recruitment and to raise local skill levels.
- 6.6 In addition, it is also likely that some businesses in the local area, (as well as the North West economy generally), would benefit from the trade linkages that would be established to construct the proposed development. This means that further indirect jobs would be supported locally from suppliers of construction materials and equipment. Local businesses would also benefit to some extent from temporary increases in expenditure as a result of the direct and indirect employment effects of the construction phase (e.g. construction workers visiting local shops and other facilities).
- 6.7 Additional employment opportunities would result in terms of indirect and induced jobs. For example, as a result of businesses in the local area benefiting from the trade linkages that would be established to construct the development.
- 6.8 Annual Gross Value Added [GVA] estimated to be created during construction (as a result of direct, indirect and induced jobs) is estimated at around £16 million.

⁵ <https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/research-officer/14577>

Economic Benefits after Completion

- 6.9 Once the dwellings are occupied, residents will require decorators, plumbers, gardeners and other such services. Residents moving to the development from outside the local area will also create additional demand for facilities such as shops, restaurants etc., resulting in additional local economic benefits.
- 6.10 It is estimated that the development could generate around £4.7 million net additional expenditure based on the total annual expenditure arising from new residents. A significant proportion of this expenditure could be retained locally within the surrounding town centres, providing a valuable source of trade for local businesses and helping to sustain retail related employment. This additional spend could support 57 additional jobs in the local area.

Labour Market Flexibility

- 6.11 Housing supply can play a key role in the flexibility of the local labour market, which itself is an important component in local economic competitiveness. This is because a shortage of housing, or a lack of affordability, can act as a barrier to accessing employment opportunities. It can also result in long-distance commuting and unsustainable travel patterns.
- 6.12 The proposed development would contribute to the market and affordable housing needs of Halton, helping to support sustainable access to local employment opportunities.

Fiscal Benefits

- 6.13 The scheme would also generate £547,336 per annum in Council Tax receipts once the units are complete. The total fiscal benefits resulting from the development represents a considerable source of income at a time when Local Authorities are dealing with the realities of substantial budgetary pressures.

Social Role

Supply of Housing

- 6.14 The proposed development would assist Halton Borough Council in meeting its housing requirement of 350dpa, whilst securing sustainable patterns of growth and development.

Meeting Housing Needs

- 6.15 The application proposals will help meet the needs of the present and future generations for housing. The proposed development will include a mixture of dwelling types and sizes to reflect local housing requirements, the detail of which will be provided at reserved matters stage.
- 6.16 It is proposed that 20% of the dwellings on the whole of the site will be affordable housing in accordance with the provisions of the DALP. House prices are 5.47 times the earnings in 2021 in Halton⁶, therefore the provision of high-quality affordable housing will help to alleviate this issue in the Borough and assist with the affordable housing waiting list.

⁶ <https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/research-officer/web-housing-and-debt>

Location and Form of Development

- 6.17 The Framework sets out that planning decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, are safe and accessible and enable and support healthy lifestyles.
- 6.18 The proposed development will comprise a high-quality built environment and has been designed to meet the needs of the area and complement the character of the surroundings. The proposed development will provide a suitable range of dwellings in various types, sizes and tenures to meet the needs of the local population and establish a mixed and sustainable community. The detailed housing mix will be agreed at reserved matters stage.
- 6.19 The proposed development will provide numerous health benefits, providing opportunities for social interaction between new residents and encouraging healthy, active lifestyles. The proposed open spaces successfully extend the existing network in the area, and open spaces within the site will be accessible to the public, adding to the recreational and natural features available in the area.
- 6.20 The development will be designed to encourage the use of active travel modes with emphasis on walking and cycling, with a pedestrian and cycle network created throughout the site utilising the existing PRoW and Sandy Lane.
- 6.21 Extensive areas of Public Open Space across the site will provide opportunity for informal recreation and play and further support and enable healthy lifestyles for new and existing residents.

Environmental Role

- 6.22 The Framework sets out that the planning system should seek to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, and mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- 6.23 The documents submitted with the planning application demonstrate that the proposed development will not harm the natural, built or historic environment and will help to improve biodiversity as well as using natural resources prudently and addressing climate change through the design of the proposed dwellings. In particular:
- 1 The proposed development scheme will have an overall positive ecological impact. The site will enhance existing grassland on the site and introduce compulsory planting to mitigate the loss of trees and short sections of hedgerow;
 - 2 The proposed development will deliver improved open space and recreational routes throughout the site and to the surrounding area, including policy compliant POS provision;
 - 3 The site is sustainably located in terms of access and connectivity to local amenities and facilities by both walking and cycling, nearby bus stops and a train station allow for the opportunity to utilise sustainable methods of transport;
 - 4 Taylor Wimpey will ensure the incorporation of water and energy efficiency measures through construction and operational phases and will adopt best practice measures in relation to the reuse and recycling in construction both in the selection of materials and management of residual waste. This may include:
 - a Timber frame construction;

- b The use of low embodied energy materials sourced locally, or the reuse of existing resources where practical;
 - c Energy efficient heating systems; and,
 - d Water efficient sanitary.
- 5 Taylor Wimpey will incorporate 90% responsibly sources materials in each dwelling in the development. Their national policies promote the reduction and effective management of construction related waste. These policies include:
 - a Sharing materials such as soil and aggregate between sites and to sort waste on and off site to divert waste from landfill.
 - b The reuse and recycling of wooden pallets is encouraged to reduce the amount of wood waste sent to landfill.
 - c Working closely with suppliers to minimise and recycle packaging.
 - d All construction activities will be carried out to minimise dust, fumes, discharges and any other form of pollution on site.

6.24 On this basis, the proposed development will not result in an unacceptable impact on any environmental resources and will have some benefits.

Conclusion

6.25 It is concluded that the proposed development performs a positive economic, social and environmental role and comprises sustainable development in accordance with the provisions of the Framework [§8].

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The starting point for the consideration of the development proposal must be whether proposals comply with the Development Plan. In this case the relevant policies are contained within the Halton Delivery and Allocations Plan [DALP] (2nd March 2022).
- 7.2 The proposed development site forms the majority of two allocated sites in the Adopted DALP for the delivery of up to 432 dwelling under Policy RD1. The Site was allocated as it was considered a sustainable location for residential development in Halton and the principle of development is therefore firmly established.
- 7.3 There is no site specific policy in the DALP relating to how the site should be delivered and where it should be accessed from. The Framework states that development should only be refused on highway grounds where there is an unacceptable impact on highway safety or a severe impact on the road network. As illustrated in the accompanying TA, the proposed access arrangement from Chapel Lane is entirely appropriate to serve the proposed development and support up to 350 homes from Chapel Lane, in terms of both highway safety and junction capacity.
- 7.4 There are also key material considerations which support the grant of planning permission:
- 1 The proposed development of this site represents a high-quality sustainable development as it will deliver significant economic, social and environmental benefits as identified in the Framework.
 - 2 The proposed development will support a mixed and sustainable community by providing much needed housing in Halton;
 - 3 The proposed development will provide 20% affordable housing provision which will help to address the affordable housing waiting list in the Borough;
 - 4 The proposed development will provide significant social and economic benefits through the supply of new housing;
 - 5 There will be a limited impact on the environmental role of sustainable development by enhancing existing ecological features and implementing mitigation measures. The development will also incorporate energy efficient design principles.
- 7.5 Overall, the proposals will provide-high quality market and affordable housing, as well as facilitating the delivery of significant economic investment. There is no reason why the application should not be determined positively as it is acceptable from a policy perspective and in highway safety terms.
- 7.6 This planning statement demonstrates that the proposals fully accord with the Halton DALP. There are also a number of other material considerations which support the proposed development. In accordance with Section 70(2) of the 1990 Act and Section 38(6) of the 2004 Act, the proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable.

Appendix 1 Planning History

Application Ref. No	Description of Development	Decision
00/00504/OUT	Proposed erection of replacement dwellinghouse at Site of Former Cottage Farm 161 Upton Lane Widnes Cheshire	Approved 09 October 2000
00/00730/OUT	Outline application for one detached dwelling at Land Adjacent To 161 Upton Lane Widnes Cheshire	Approved 23 January 2001
09/00068/AGR	Prior notification of agricultural development consisting of erection of agricultural storage building at Rose Farm 28 Chapel Lane Widnes Cheshire WA8 4NX	Decision issued 16 March 2009
99/00319/FU	Proposed construction of Upton Rocks Distributor Road and associated works on Land Between Queensbury Way and Cronton Lane Widnes Cheshire	Approved 14 September 1999
93/00111/AGR	Prior notification of agricultural development consisting of the construction of a barn at Rose Farm 28 Chapel Lane Widnes Cheshire WA8 9NX	Decision Issued 05 March 1993

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