

Taylor Wimpey

Chapel Lane, Widnes

SLR Project No.: 425.P01279.00002

25 February 2025

Revision: 01

RE: CHAPEL LANE ACCESS STRATEGY

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This technical note has been prepared by SLR on behalf of Taylor Wimpey further to a joint highways meeting with Halton Borough Council (HBC) and Knowsley Council (KC) on Wednesday 12th February 2025, and particular queries in relation to the proposed access strategy to serve the proposed development at Chapel Lane.

1.2 The description of the development is set out below:

'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 and emergency access on Chapel Lane (to be determined by Knowsley Borough Council only) and a secondary emergency access via Sandy Lane (to be determined by Halton Borough Council).'

1.3 The proposed development site is located to the north-west of the Widnes urban area. The 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 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 application red line boundary does not extend to the full extent of the allocation.

1.4 It should be noted that the DALP does not stipulate where the site access for the development should be located.

Proposed Access Strategy

1.5 The access strategy proposes a primary all-mode priority access junction to serve the development from Chapel Lane, in the form of a priority junction. Chapel Lane is subject to a 30mph speed limit in this location, and the junction has been designed to accommodate visibility splays suitable for the recorded 85th percentile speeds, which are marginally higher than 30mph.

- 1.6 An emergency access will also be provided to the north of the main site access on Chapel Lane. Use of this route by vehicular traffic would be restricted by bollards (or similar) but would allow unrestricted use by pedestrians and cyclists to access the site. The emergency access has been designed with a width of 4.8 metres to accommodate two-way traffic, in the unlikely situation of the primary access being blocked. Appropriate visibility splays can be accommodated for cyclists emerging from the emergency access, based on a 2.4m setback in line with LTN1/20 requirements and the recorded 85th percentile speeds on Chapel Lane.
- 1.7 The development will also internally link to the 3m shared-use route within the site, which runs parallel to the proposed spine road through the site. Furthermore, the development is providing a full highway corridor of 11.8m wide along the spine road, which offers flexibility in terms of emergency access.
- 1.8 In addition, an emergency access is proposed via Sandy Lane, exclusively for emergency vehicles, in the unlikely event of the primary access being blocked.

Principle of Single Access

- 1.9 The proposed primary access junction on Chapel Lane is within Knowsley Council's adopted highway network and has been designed in accordance with the Manual for Streets (MfS) and discussed as part of the pre-application process with the highway officers. HBC (Halton Borough Council) has provided comments on the design and raised the point on whether a single point of access for all modes is sufficient.
- 1.10 However, the guidance contained in MfS [Chapter 4: Layout and Connectivity: 4.2.5 (onwards)] discusses the importance of connecting development layouts to their surroundings to promote accessibility and functionality and makes no reference to development thresholds for the number of access points into a development. Instead, the focus is on connectivity and permeability with the surrounding areas, particularly in the interest of walking and cycling. This approach prioritises pedestrian and cyclist movements above vehicular traffic, reflecting our commitment to creating a more sustainable and accessible environment.
- 1.11 MfS Paragraph 6.7.3 emphasises the importance of providing adequate fire access without setting a threshold for the number of residential dwellings served by a single access; it prioritises pedestrian and cyclist accessibility to enhance overall safety and connectivity. Moreover, MfS advocates for a flexible approach to connectivity rather than prescribing a specific number of access points for developments. The ideal number can vary significantly based on factors such as the size, location, and context of the development. Instead of a one-size-fits-all rule, the guidance focuses on the quality of connections, including factors like pedestrian routes, safety, and overall integration into the surrounding area.
- 1.12 There is no technical design reason that an access from Chapel Lane is inappropriate to support up to 350 homes, on either highway safety or junction capacity grounds.
- 1.13 Notably close to the site and within Halton, there are several development that serve more than 300 dwellings from a single point of access. Examples include:
- Land at Westerhope Way – 309 dwellings (02/00147/FUL).



- Land at Parklands – 357 dwellings.
- Land at Radnor Drive – 390 dwellings.

1.14 The following examples are within the neighbouring authority of Knowsley, however there are plenty more examples across the rest of England and Wales where a single point of access has been accepted. Local examples include:

- 360 dwellings from a single signal-controlled access with Windy Arbor Road (Land North of M62 Motorway off Windy Arbor Road (Halsnead) & Knowsley Council reference: 18/00283/HYB) – no emergency access.
- 311 dwellings from a single point of access (East Halewood SUE Plot 4 & Knowsley Council reference: 19/00521/HYB).
- 289 dwellings off a single access (Knowsley Council ref: 04/00787/FUL).
- up to 220 dwellings from a single point of access (East Halewood SUE Plot 1 & Knowsley Council reference: 19/00521/HYB).

1.15 Other UK examples include:

- 395 dwellings from a single access & one ped/cycle/emergency access (Land off Hargreaves Road, Northwich & West Cheshire and Chester Council reference: 21/00055/FUL)
- 700 dwellings from a single access & two emergency only accesses (Somerdale, Keynsham & BANES reference: 13/01780/EOUT).
- 212 dwellings from a single access (Sudbrook Paper Mill & Monmouthshire Council reference: DC/2015/01184).
- 380 dwellings and up to 450 sqm Use Class E/F from a single access (Land West of Church Road, Bapchild, Tonge, Kent. Swale reference: 22/502834/EIOUT).

1.16 Furthermore, SLR successfully gained buy in from the Inspector on the Pickerings Farm, Penwortham Inquiry [App refs: 07/2021/00886/ORM & 07/2021/00887/ORM] for around 1,100 homes, by carefully illustrating the multi-faceted benefits from the vision-led approach, and how it supported National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other policy priorities. The inspector concluded that a vision-led masterplanning approach emphasising community design and health is preferable to a traffic-focused methodology, and it was demonstrated that a single point of access to large development is reasonable.

Design Parameters / Capacity

1.17 The primary access junction must operate within its theoretical capacity during peak periods. This access has been tested using industry-standard junction modelling software, indicating that the access junction on Chapel Lane operates well within its theoretical capacity. A maximum RFC (ratio of flow to capacity) of 0.49 is forecasted on any arm in the most intensive



test scenario, which means there is ample capacity still available at the junction, with a maximum forecasted queue of one vehicle on any one arm, and a delay of 16 seconds.

- 1.18 Furthermore, a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit (RSA) has been undertaken on the proposed site access arrangements, this concludes that the access and emergency access arrangements are safe and fit for purpose to serve the development.

Traffic Calming Measures

- 1.19 A simple T-junction has been provided to help keep vehicle speeds low along Chapel Lane and forms part of a wider traffic-calming package of works. Comments received from Active Travel England (ATE) indicated that the walking environment along Chapel Lane is perceived as hostile due to the narrow footways present in some areas, as well as recorded speeds that exceed the posted limit of 30mph. It is anticipated that the proposed junction will enhance the character and configuration of this part of Chapel Lane, thereby altering its rural nature at this location. In addition to the proposed access, an enhanced pedestrian environment will be achieved through the implementation of traffic calming features aimed at reducing vehicular speeds, which will include footway widening.

Site Layout

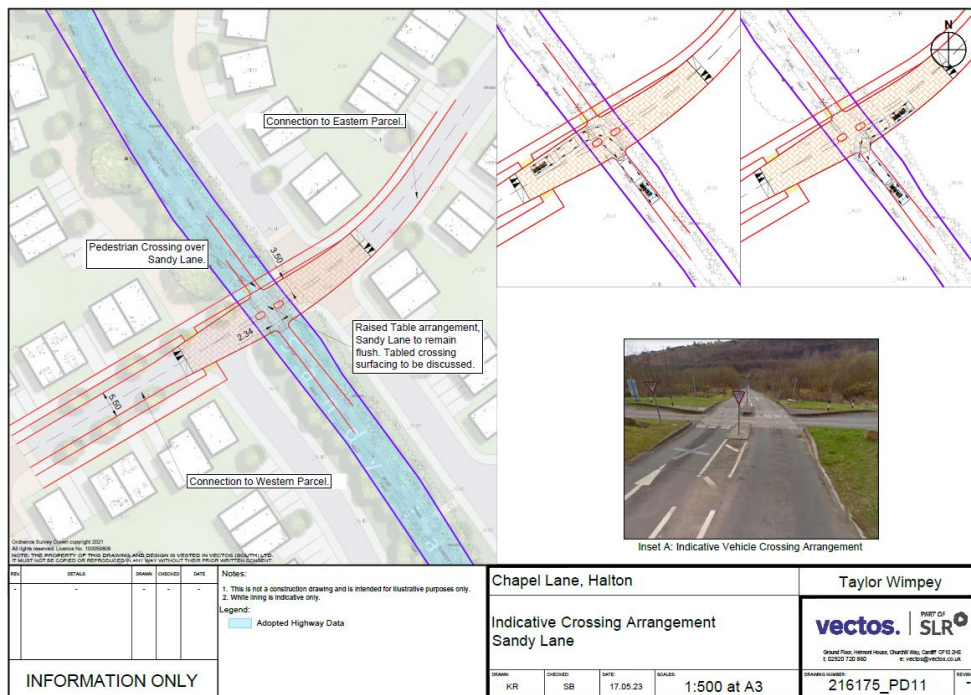
- 1.20 Furthermore, several loops have been created within the site, minimising culs-de-sac and providing ample opportunity to travel between the site and the many local facilities within Widnes by active travel modes. These connections will facilitate direct and safe links for people movement, integrating vehicular access with active travel modes, thereby addressing the need for more sustainable travel options in the proposed scheme.

Sandy Lane

- 1.21 Sandy Lane currently is well used by existing local residents and is signed as part of 'Cranton Pathways', designated and promoted as a traffic-free active travel link that forms part of the wider network between Cranton and Widnes, it is subject to a Prohibition of Driving Order (except for emergency vehicles). It is surfaced and wide enough to allow pedestrians and cyclists to use the route with little, if any conflict. A scheme has been prepared showing the extent of widening required to 3 metres to make it LTN 1/20 compliant for its length.
- 1.22 The lane would generally remain rural in nature but there will be more activity within the section of red line within Halton, as this will allow connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists. The Illustrative Masterplan shows active frontages/shared driveways onto Sandy Lane, allowing for natural surveillance along this section and reducing the need for providing additional lighting on Sandy Lane itself. It also demonstrates that there are multiple opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists to cross Sandy Lane.
- 1.23 In addition, the indicative arrangements for crossing Sandy Lane from the western to the eastern parcels of the development is shown in **Figure 1**.



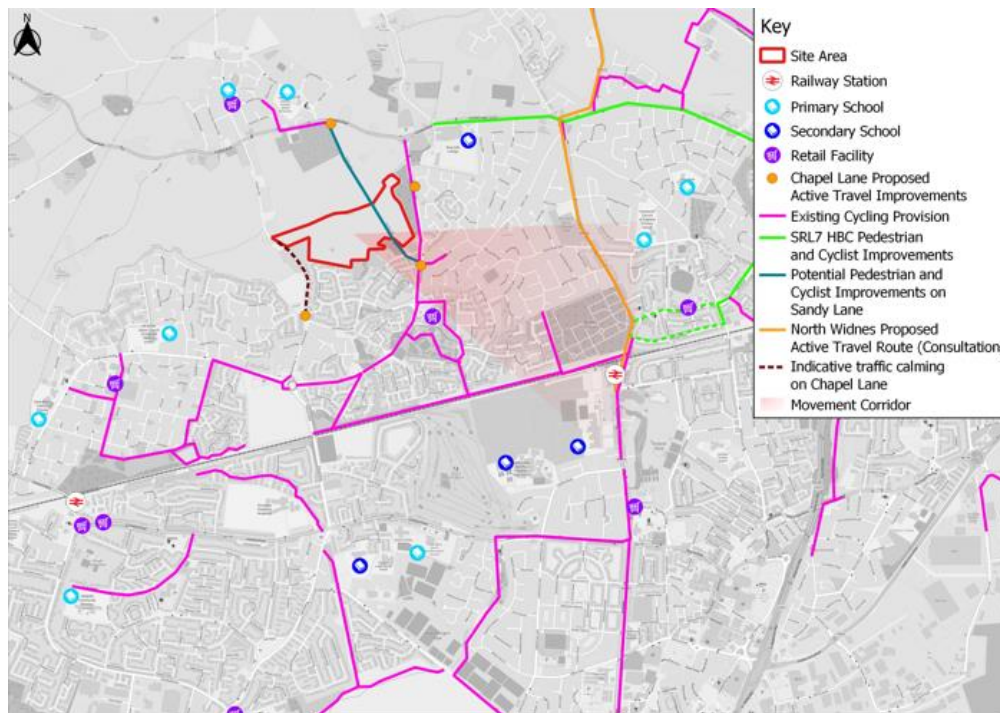
Figure 1: Sandy Lane Crossing Arrangements



- 1.24 The crossing has been designed to allow priority for pedestrians and cyclists on Sandy Lane travelling north to south, or vice versa. The turning movements from the site onto Sandy Lane are restricted by the carriageway width and physical traffic islands.
- 1.25 An emergency access is also proposed via Sandy Lane, exclusively for emergency vehicles in the unlikely event of the primary access being blocked. This access is not intended for residents' secondary use with motorised vehicles. Pedestrians and cyclists will also be able to use this access. Separate legal advice has been sought which supports the feasibility of utilising Sandy Lane as an emergency access, and a vehicular cross-over.
- 1.26 A package of measures to bolster the active travel connections from the site to key destinations and locations in the area has been developed. These measures are comprehensive and are in addition to the enhancements proposed on Sandy Lane. Cyclists will have access to largely traffic-free routes, including Sandy Lane towards Queensbury Way, allowing convenient travel to the town centre within approximately 11 minutes. **Figure 2** details existing and proposed walking and cycling facilities demonstrates connectivity to essential services in nearby areas like Cronton, Hough Green, and Upton Rocks. Overall, these local improvements are regarded as reasonable and proportionate contributions toward fostering sustainable transport modes in Widnes.



Figure 2: Existing and Proposed Walking and Cycling Provision



- 1.27 There are various facilities that could be used frequently by residents located in Cronton (schools and eateries), Hough Green (schools, nurseries, community centre, bank, health centre) and Upton Rocks (convenience shops GP surgery, pharmacy, eateries), which can be accessed via walking and cycling routes accessed via Sandy Lane to Upton Rocks / Hough Green, to the north of railway line and beyond.
- 1.28 Additionally, it is important to note that the proposed permeability of the site for active travel users supports active travel and placemaking objectives in designing for places and provides for a 20-minute neighbourhood as is best practice. Furthermore, given the site's allocation within the Halton Borough Council's Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (adopted March 2022) the Authority have already recognised the sustainability credentials of the site. The site provides good connectivity, delivered through multiple access points for pedestrians and cyclists at the forefront.

Access onto Queensbury Way

- 1.29 Taylor Wimpey do not have ownership of the land to the east of the site. However, as demonstrated in the TAA addendum an access point off Chapel Lane (including an emergency access point) has been demonstrated to be safe and appropriate for the form and scale of development proposed and an access to the east is not required. Taking into consideration the sustainable nature of the site, the quantum and nature of the pedestrian and cycle links and the proposed off-site highways improvements, it is not considered that a secondary access would enhance connectivity and permeability to the east of the development more than that already proposed. The layout of the site (which is in outline) is not considered to prevent a link to the remaining allocation and would not prejudice any future connections to Queensbury Way.



- 1.30 Furthermore, it should be noted that the DALP sets out no requirement for vehicular access to be provided from Queensbury Way. At no point during the identification of the site as a possible allocation, the preparation of the DALP or throughout the Examination process was a requirement dictating the access arrangements for the site deemed necessary to guide the site's delivery. The site was not allocated on the premise of access being derived from the east over the west. There is therefore, no policy basis to resist the site being accessed (for vehicular traffic) from Chapel Lane.

Summary and Conclusion

- 1.31 This technical note prepared by SLR on behalf of Taylor Wimpey outlines the appropriateness of a single vehicular access point for a proposed residential development located north-west of the Widnes urban area and addresses concerns regarding access to Queensbury Way.
- 1.32 The primary access strategy centres on a priority junction on Chapel Lane, designed to accommodate visibility splays based on recorded 85th percentile speeds, demonstrating adherence to road safety standards. An emergency access is proposed to the north, segregated for vehicular and active travel modes, compliant with LTN1/20 regarding visibility splays for cyclists. An additional emergency access via Sandy Lane is also proposed.
- 1.33 The proposed access strategy is designed with reference to the guidance contained in Manual for Streets (MfS). This is evidenced by the multiple access points proposed, including those for active travel modes. This is aligned with the focus on connectivity and permeability, and the provision of a 20-minute neighbourhood. Furthermore, the development's allocation within the DALP, which emphasises sustainability credentials, underscores the site's suitability for residential development.
- 1.34 The proposed development prioritises sustainable travel. With multiple access points for pedestrians and cyclists and comprehensive off-site active travel improvements, the scheme fosters direct and safe links to local amenities, supporting active travel and placemaking objectives, and promoting a 20-minute neighbourhood concept. It also supports the council's sustainable transport initiatives.
- 1.35 The note addresses concerns about a second access to the east of the development site. The technical note argues that an access point off Chapel Lane, including an emergency access point, has been demonstrated to be safe and appropriate for the form and scale of development proposed with an independent Stage 1 Road Safety Audit. Given the sustainable nature of the site, the quantum and nature of the pedestrian and cycle links and the proposed off-site highways improvements, it is not considered that a secondary access would enhance connectivity and permeability to the east of the development more than that already proposed.
- 1.36 In conclusion, the proposed access strategy for the residential development, which includes a primary access point from Chapel Lane and emergency access options via Chapel Lane and Sandy Lane, provides a safe, sustainable, and Manual for Streets (MfS) compliant solution for accommodating up to 350 homes. The design prioritises connectivity and safety, featuring appropriate visibility splays according with recorded speeds marginally exceeding the 30mph limit. It also includes footway improvements and traffic calming measures to create a safer walking and cycling environment. The rationale for rejecting an access point onto Queensbury



Way is supported by land ownership constraints, while the Chapel Lane access effectively meets the development's needs. Overall, this strategy aligns with the requirements of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (DALP) and broader planning objectives, demonstrating a commitment to promoting sustainable transport and connectivity within the area and additionally, examples within neighbouring authorities and across the UK underscore that a single point of access can be effectively managed to support residential developments, thereby reinforcing the proposed access strategy's viability.





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