

Chapel Lane Revised Submission Report

Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd

20 January 2025

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This revised submission report has been prepared to comprehensively set out Taylor Wimpey's changes to the proposed Chapel Lane development in response to the formal comments received from Halton Borough Council and Knowsley Borough Council and to assist Officers at both Council's in their determination of the scheme. The report also outlines slight amendments to the red line boundary to incorporate additional frontage along Chapel Lane and provide an emergency access.
- 1.2 The outline application was submitted on the 25th May 2023 and validated on the 14th June 2023. The application seeks the development of up to 350 dwellings and associated works including landscaping. The application site forms the majority of two allocated sites in the Adopted Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan for up to 432 dwellings.
- 1.3 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. Knowsley Borough Council will act as the determining authority for the junction design/ arrangement and emergency access on Chapel Lane only. Halton Borough Council will determine all other outline proposals, including the proposed emergency access via Sandy Lane and will be the principle determining authority.
- 1.4 Since the addition of the emergency access from Chapel Lane, the description of development has been amended to read as follows:
- "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)"*
- 1.5 A number of meetings have taken place between the applicants, appointed consultants and both Councils to address consultation comments, in particular to resolve highways comments. The applicant has worked constructively with the Council to overcome and agree issues which were previously raised in relation to the application.
- 1.6 The applicant has prepared reports, assessments and drawings to address a number of issues highlighted by the Council. Technical reports have also been updated where necessary to incorporate the amended red line boundary and emergency access. Full details of the resubmission are set out below as follows:
- 1 Illustrative Masterplan dwg ref. 22_009_005_Rev G prepared by eSCAPE;
 - 2 Parameters Masterplan dwg ref. 22_009_004_Rev M prepared by eSCAPE;
 - 3 Site Boundary Plan dwg ref. 22_009_002 Rev H prepared by eSCAPE;
 - 4 Design and Access Statement (December 2024) prepared by eSCAPE;
 - 5 Transport Assessment Addendum (December 2024) prepared by SLR;

- 6 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (December 2024) prepared by Randall Thorp;
- 7 Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (December 2024) prepared by Cotswold Archaeology;
- 8 Technical Advice Note (September 2023) prepared by Cotswold Archaeology;
- 9 Preliminary Arboricultural Impact Assessment (December 2024) prepared by Urban Green;
- 10 Phase II Geoenvironmental Site Assessment (December 2024) prepared by E3P;
- 11 Ecological Assessment (December 2024) prepared by Ecology Solutions;
- 12 Biodiversity Net Gain Report (December 2024) prepared by Ecology Solutions;
- 13 Flood Risk Assessment (December 2024) prepared by AJP; and,
- 14 Noise Impact Assessment (December 2024) prepared by Hepworth Acoustics.

2.0 Planning Policy Update

- 2.1 The Halton Local Plan was adopted prior to the submission of the original application and the submission took regard of all adopted policies. There have been no material changes to local policy which needed to be considered as part of this revised submission.

NPPF 2024

- 2.2 At the time of the submission of the Chapel Lane application in May 2023, the most recent iteration of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published in July 2021. During the initial determination stage of the application, the Framework was revised in September and December 2023. However, a new NPPF was published in December 2024 which proposed significant changes to national policy and emphasises the increased delivery of homes across the country. The revised Framework is a material consideration in the determination of the Chapel Lane planning application.
- 2.3 The overarching aim of the Framework remains the delivery of sustainable development through economic, social and environmental objectives. However, a number of key changes have been made to the December 2024 revision. The changes relevant to the Chapel Lane application are outlined below.
- **Highways:** Paragraph 109 states that transport issues should use a ‘vision-led approach’ to identify transport solutions that deliver well-designed, sustainable and popular places. Paragraph 116 states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.
 - **Design:** Further detail is provided at paragraph 137 with respect to design. The amendments state that applicants should, where applicable, provide sufficient information to demonstrate how their proposals will meet the design expectations set out in local and national policy.

3.0 Design and Layout

- 3.1 To date, no comments have been received by HBC or KBC on the indicative design and layout of the proposed scheme. Based on the time since the masterplan has been submitted and the opportunities that the Planning Officers have had to review, we have assumed that it is accepted.
- 3.2 Only slight amendments have been made to the masterplan since its original submission. The indicative masterplan has been amended in line with comments received from highways officers to incorporate more loops and less cul-de-sacs within the development.
- 3.3 An updated site boundary plan (Dwg ref. 002-009-P002 Rev H) has been prepared to align with the land ownership boundaries and to incorporate an emergency access from Sandy Lane. The proposed red line boundary along Chapel Lane, Sandy Lane and Old Upton Lane has been updated and extended to align with the adopted highway boundary.
- 3.4 This updated site location plan has been incorporated into updates of the technical reports listed in the introduction to ensure they are consistent with the new red line boundary.

4.0 Highways

- 4.1 Consultation responses to Halton Borough Council were received from National Highways (27.06.23 and 20.09.23), WSP on behalf of National Highways (June 2023 and 19.09.23) Active Travel England [ATE] (06.07.2023) and HBC Highways (25.09.23). Consultation responses to Knowsley Borough Council were received from National Highways (27.06.23) and KBC Highways (25.09.23). Further responses were received from National Highways on the 20th September 2023 and 21st June 2024.
- 4.2 Following submission of the application, a number of meetings have taken place between HBC, KBC, ATE, National Highways and Taylor Wimpey to discuss comments on the scheme. The most recent meeting took place between SLR, HBC, KBC, Taylor Wimpey and Lichfields on the 8th October 2024. During this meeting the updated access arrangements, proposed offsite active travel improvements and treatment of Chapel Lane and Sandy Lane were discussed prior to the submission of this report.
- 4.3 SLR has prepared a Transport Assessment Addendum [TAA] (December 2024) to respond to discussions that have taken place to date. The TAA outlines changes made to the access, updates made to the original application submission and confirms the agreed position with National Highways. The TAA should be read in conjunction with this section of the report.

National Highways

- 4.4 SLR produced two technical notes addressing National Highways holding objections which are included in Appendix A and B of the TAA. Following the issue of these notes, National Highways agreed that the development would have minimal impact on the M62 junctions and lifted their holding objection in June 2024 (Appendix C of the TAA).

Development Proposals

Looping

- 4.5 During the determination of the application HBC has advised that there was opportunity to incorporate multiple loops into the site layout to improve permeability for pedestrians and cyclists. The updated illustrative masterplan has therefore incorporated loops.

Access

- 4.6 Following discussions with HBC, KBC and ATE, the access has been amended to incorporate their comments. In summary, the following changes have been made as outlined in the TAA:
- The priority junction has been designed to serve the development with appropriate visibility splays in line with recorded 85th percentile speeds;
 - The ghost island right-turn lane has been removed as it is regarded unnecessary for capacity purposes. This has enhanced the environment for pedestrians and cyclists and allows for the incorporation of traffic calming measures.
 - The junction has been relocated further south on Chapel Lane.

- SLR has prepared an indicative traffic calming strategy which includes footway widening on Chapel Lane which is available at figure 4.3 of the TAA. This strategy does not form part of the resubmission.
- An audit was undertaken of the proposed access arrangements utilising the ATE route checker tool.
- An independent Stage 1 Road Safety Audit has been undertaken on the updated proposed site access arrangement and concludes that the access is safe and fit for purpose to serve the development.

Sandy Lane

- 4.7 Sandy Lane is well used by existing local residents and is designated and promoted as a traffic-free active travel link between Cronton and Widnes. The Lane is subject to a Prohibition of Driving Order (except for emergency vehicles).
- 4.8 Discussions with HBC and KBC confirmed that officers want to improve the accessibility credentials of Sandy Lane whilst retaining its rural character. Sandy Lane is a unique opportunity for the site and one that the applicant is keen to maximise and incorporate within the overall development proposals.
- 4.9 The illustrative masterplan which accompanies this resubmission demonstrated that there are active frontages/ shared driveways onto Sandy Lane, allowing for natural surveillance along this section and reducing the need for additional lighting. There are multiple opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists to cross Sandy Lane.
- 4.10 The existing barriers at the northern and southern ends of Sandy Lane will be replaced, in agreement with HBC and KBC to ensure that they are LTN 1/20 compliant. The Lane will be accessible to all, including non-standard cycles and mobility scooters whilst retaining suitability for horse riders and deterring motorbikes/scooters. The barrier would also need to allow emergency vehicles to gain access to the emergency access on Sandy Lane.
- 4.11 The detailed design of Sandy Lane is likely to be secured via a Section 278 agreement which can be considered in detail at Reserved Matters stage.

Offsite Active Travel Improvements

- 4.12 During a meeting with officers at HBC, KBC and ATE on the 25th September 2023, it was agreed that the level of contributions provided per dwelling at the Chapel Lane development should be proportionate to that of the level of contribution per dwelling which have already been agreed and accepted at the SRL7 sites.
- 4.13 The TAA addendum sets out a series of active travel improvements that are being proposed in line with discussions with HBC and KBC. These improvements do not form part of the planning application but are for the consideration of the Councils. In summary, the following options have been proposed as illustrated in figure 5.1 of the TAA:
- A zebra crossing at Cronton Road / Hall Lane Junction
 - A pelican crossing at Queensbury Way adjacent to PRoW W/12
 - A toucan crossing at Queensbury Way / Old Upton Lane to upgrade the existing pedestrian refuge island

- A zebra crossing north of the Parklands junction

4.14

The proposed offsite active travel improvements would encourage a modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport. The measures/ contributions set out above are reasonable and proportionate in line with other sites contributions in Widnes.

5.0 **Trees and Hedgerows**

Issue

- 5.1 A consultation response was received from Knowsley Borough Council's Environmental Sustainability Service on the 6th July 2023. The response requested that historical data was obtained to determine if the hedgerow that borders Chapel Lane is classed as a 'historically important hedgerow'. The response also requested an updated Preliminary Arboricultural Assessment [PAA] to include the hedgerow that borders Chapel Lane.

Response

- 5.2 An updated PAA (December 2024) prepared by Urban Green accompanies this revised submission report to include the updated red line boundary and parameters masterplan. The updated PAA includes an assessment of the hedgerow that borders Chapel Lane (Hedgerow H149). H149 is classified as a Category B hedgerow.
- 5.3 The updated survey assessed ninety-two individual trees, fifty tree groups, five hedges and two woodlands. The tree cover comprises mainly of high-quality individual trees and moderate quality naturally colonised woodland.
- 5.4 A Technical Advice Note (September 2023) prepared by Cotswold Archaeology accompanies this report. The note states that the eastern and western hedges along Chapel Lane are identified as 'historically important' under the 1997 regulations. The value of the hedgerow system is 'low', as it is of post-medieval date. The objective with 'important' hedgerows is to emphasise retention and a degree of removal is normally achievable whilst still retaining overall legibility.
- 5.5 The proposed development largely retains the 'important' hedgerows within the masterplan and this emphasis on retention retains the overall intelligibility of the hedgerow pattern. The small amounts of removal required by the proposed development does not impact the ability to understand the previous landscape character. The note concludes that the proposed development will not result in harm to the overall heritage significance of the 'important' hedgerow system within the Site.

6.0 Flood Risk and Drainage

Issue

- 6.1 A consultation response was received from the LLFA (Halton) on the 27th November 2023 and a response was received from the LLFA (Knowsley) on the 26th July 2023. LLFA (Knowsley) stated they had no objection in principle. Additional comments were made by United Utilities on the 27th June 2023, however their response stated that their comments could be dealt with by a condition. In summary, the following comments were made by the LLFA (Halton) in relation to the site:
- Groundwater – question whether the high-water table would cause issues for the infrastructure required for the development.
 - Discharge location – existing watercourse/ ditch which crosses through the site had not been referred to.
 - Runoff Rates - calculation for QBAR is based on the total site area (13.97ha) and the LLFA would require the impermeable area only (8.38ha - 60% of total site area) to be used in the calculation of QBAR.
 - Assessment of SuDS - request that the attenuation volume calculations be updated with an accurate volume estimation based on an updated greenfield runoff rate; request SuDS features are considered where surface water runoff is attenuated closer to the source rather than piped to a singular attenuation feature; and, require a plan showing exceedance routes should the surface water system be overwhelmed or fail.

Response

- 6.2 An updated FRA and accompanying appendices have been prepared by AJP to address the comments made by Halton LLFA. The updated FRA was issued to both Council's on 26th January 2024. Since this submission, the FRA was updated on the 20th December 2024 to reflect the amended site boundary.
- 6.3 In summary, the following queries have been confirmed and changes have been made in response to the LLFA:
- 1 **Discharge location** – Confirmation that the ditch will remain and will be culverted where necessary.
 - 2 **Runoff Rates** - Greenfield runoff calculations have been updated using the impermeable area only to determine the proposed discharge area for the site.
 - 3 **Assessment of SuDS** –The attenuation calculations have been updated based on the revised greenfield runoff calculations. As the application is outline and not at the detailed design stage, a flood route exceedance plan has not been confirmed as this would be dictated by the proposed finished levels and highways/ drainage levels.
- 6.4 In addition, regarding water quality, the proposed pond will be sufficient to protect watercourse quality from pollutants.

7.0 Ecology

- 7.1 Responses were received from Natural England (29.05.23) and MEAS (19.07.23) to both Councils. No issues arose from these responses. MEAS requested that the biodiversity metric assessment and net gain strategy report referred to in the ecological appraisal were submitted.
- 7.2 Previously, the Site had been subject to an initial habitat survey in August 2022. Following the submission of the application, Ecology Solutions have prepared an Ecological Assessment and BNG Report and Note in June 2023 (which has been subsequently updated in December 2024 to include the updated red line boundary for the emergency access off Chapel Lane).
- 7.3 Updated specific surveys were undertaken with the application site in respect of bats, breeding birds and badgers, as well as consideration of the potential for the application site to support other protected and notable species/ groups. The bungalow building (Building B4) which is included in the amended red line boundary was assessed as part of the updated survey.
- 7.4 To summarise the Ecological Assessment notes the following:
- There are no statutory or non-statutory designated sites of nature conservation interest situated within or immediately adjacent to the site boundary;
 - The majority of the site comprises intensively managed arable grassland which is of negligible ecological value, with trees, hedgerows, a treeline and ponds of relatively greater value; and,
 - Subject to the adoption of the mitigation measures outline in the report, it is not considered that there are any overriding constraints to the Site coming forward from an ecological perspective.
- 7.5 Furthermore, initial surveys undertaken by the previous ecologists in 2022 identified a roost in one of the buildings. Additional bat surveys undertaken in 2023 confirmed that no buildings or trees within the application site were recorded to have developed suitable roosting features for bats. A license therefore would not be required to be conditioned in line with the MEAS consultation response from July 2023. Instead, the Ecological Assessment states that a precautionary approach is still upheld and the buildings on site will be subject to an internal and external assessment by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to demolition to check for the presence of bats. If bats are found to be present then a licence from Natural England may be required. However, based on the 2023 survey results this is considered unlikely.
- 7.6 The BNG assessment used the most recent version of the DEFRA metric to conclude that when considering the most recent survey data and development proposals, the results of the updated BNG analysis work demonstrate that the Site is currently able to deliver net-gains to biodiversity on site of +16.68% for area-based habitats and +14.43% for linear based habitats.

8.0 **Public Comments, Cronton Parish Council and Whiston Town Council Response**

- 8.1 During the determination of the application public comments were received by both Councils. In summary, the key themes that emerged from the comments were loss of Green Belt land, ecology, local infrastructure, pollution and affordable housing.
- 8.2 A consultation response and accompanying appendix was received from Cronton Parish Council on the 3rd July 2023. The response focused on loss of Green Belt land, local infrastructure, ecology and hedgerows.
- 8.3 An objection was also sent to KBC by Whiston Town Council. KBC shared this comment on July 18th 2023. The Town Council stated that the access and egress of the site which falls within Knowsley will not be viable as it is a 'country lane' and does not have the infrastructure to deal with the increase in vehicles.
- 8.4 These themes are discussed in turn.

Traffic and Congestion

- 8.5 A number of comments were concerned with the safety of the site entrance and requested why an access point in the local authority area of Halton was not being used. Cronton Parish Council and Whiston Town Council questioned the use of a single access point.

Response

- 8.6 Taylor Wimpey's transport consultants have prepared a package of potential traffic calming measures at the site entrance which accompany this report. Following the submission of the application, the masterplan has been amended to incorporate an emergency access point from Chapel Lane.

Loss of Green Belt land

- 8.7 The response from the Parish Council and a number of public comments were concerned with the loss of Green Belt land and argued that there was a sufficient supply of urban land to meet housing needs.

Response

- 8.8 The site is allocated for residential development in the adopted Local Plan (site ref. W4 and W5) and no longer constitutes Green Belt land. The Inspectors' Report on the Local Plan acknowledged that Green Belt release would be required to meet the local housing needs of Widnes and maintain its population. The Report stated that sites only within the urban area of Widnes could not be relied on and concluded that the housing need for Widnes can only realistically be met by allocating strategic sites on land currently within the Green Belt.

Ecology

- 8.9 The response from the Parish Council and a number of public comments were concerned with the removal of existing vegetation and species on the site including roosting bats and great crested newts.

Response

- 8.10 Although it is acknowledged that some vegetation will need to be removed to facilitate housing, the development has been designed to incorporate existing vegetation where possible. In addition, compensatory planting will be provided to address the loss of any trees and short sections of hedgerows.
- 8.11 The proposed green infrastructure network will cover 5.14 hectares of the site, equivalent of 36% of the whole site area. This network will accommodate new ecological habitats.
- 8.12 The initial 2022 presence / absence surveys did not identify any evidence of roosting bats within the trees of the site. It was confirmed that a bat roost was found in one of the buildings. An updated habitat survey was undertaken in June 2023 which no longer identified any evidence of roosting bats in the buildings or trees.
- 8.13 Further surveys were undertaken that confirmed great crested newt, badger and water vole are likely to be absent at the site.

Local Infrastructure

- 8.14 The response from the Parish Council and a number of public comments were concerned with local infrastructure capacity as a result of the proposed development.

Response

- 8.15 The Inspectors' Report for the adopted Local Plan noted that the site was chosen to be released from the Green Belt in part because of its existing connectivity to day-to-day services and facilities. Therefore, the site was allocated because of its sustainable location and access to existing local infrastructure.
- 8.16 In addition, the scheme has received support from a new Dental Practice (Cronton Dental Practice) which has since opened during determination of the outline application. This new dental practice is within walking distance of the development and therefore will be accessible by active travel such as walking and cycling, thus reducing reliance on the car.

Pollution

- 8.17 A number of public comments referred to noise and air pollution associated with the construction phase of the site and once the development was occupied.

Response

- 8.18 From the outset, the development has been designed to encourage active travel and sustainable transport modes. 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. As such, travel by non-car modes of transport has been encouraged.

- 8.19 In regard to pollution caused by the construction phase, if planning permission is granted the development will be subject to a construction management plan. This plan would limit the effects of dust and noise pollution from construction on existing residents.

Affordable Housing

- 8.20 A number of public comments sought clarity on the provision of affordable housing at the development and wanted to see affordable housing maximised on site.

Response

- 8.21 The proposed development will deliver 20% affordable housing in line with the policy requirements in the Local Plan. Once the application progresses to reserved matters stage, a more detailed breakdown of the tenure of affordable housing including affordable or social rent and intermediate (including affordable home ownership) will be detailed.
- 8.22 The proposed development will therefore contribute to both the market and affordable housing needs of Halton.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 In summary, Taylor Wimpey and its consultants have worked together to address comments made on the Chapel Lane scheme and have prepared an amended planning pack to incorporate a secondary emergency access from Chapel Lane. A number of meetings have taken place with HBC, KBC and relevant consultees to address any issues with the scheme and work towards agreed solutions. Following these meetings, Taylor Wimpey has produced a number of revised technical reports and drawings to address the issues and make the scheme compliant with the Councils' development plans.
- 9.2 The Site forms the majority of two allocated sites in the adopted DALP for 432 dwellings and represents a sustainable location for residential development in Halton. This revised submission report has demonstrated through the submission of additional accompanying information how the proposed development is fully compliant with the provisions of the development plan. 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 and should be expediently approved.

Birmingham
0121 713 1530
birmingham@lichfields.uk

Edinburgh
0131 285 0670
edinburgh@lichfields.uk

Manchester
0161 837 6130
manchester@lichfields.uk

Bristol
0117 403 1980
bristol@lichfields.uk

Leeds
0113 397 1397
leeds@lichfields.uk

Newcastle
0191 261 5685
newcastle@lichfields.uk

Cardiff
029 2043 5880
cardiff@lichfields.uk

London
020 7837 4477
london@lichfields.uk

Thames Valley
0118 334 1920
thamesvalley@lichfields.uk

@LichfieldsUK

lichfields.uk