

Statement of Community Engagement

Land at Smithy Bridge Road, Littleborough

September 2022

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Engagement (SCE) has been prepared by Turley on behalf of Taylor Wimpey (the applicant).
- 1.2 This SCE forms part of a planning submission for the residential development of 199 dwellings and the first phase of a new residential relief road, to reduce congestion on the A58, on land to the west of Smithy Bridge Road, Littleborough.
- 1.3 Further details are provided in the accompanying technical reports submitted as part of the submission. This SCE should be read alongside these other technical documents.
- 1.4 The SCE provides a detailed record of the consultation activities that have taken place, the feedback received during the consultation period and how this has been considered as part of the preparation of the submission.

Background

- 1.5 Places for Everyone (PfE) is a long-term plan of nine Greater Manchester districts (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan) for jobs, new homes, and sustainable growth. It has been published by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) on behalf of the nine districts. Once adopted, PfE will:
 - set out how the nine boroughs should develop up until 2037;
 - identify the amount of new development that will come forward across the 9 districts, in terms of housing, offices, and industry and warehousing, and the main areas in which this will be focused;
 - support the delivery of key infrastructure, such as transport and utilities;
 - protect the important environmental assets across the city region;
 - allocate sites for employment and housing outside of the existing urban area; and
 - define a new Green Belt boundary for Greater Manchester.
- 1.6 The plan began in 2014 as the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) and was subject to public consultation in 2016 and 2019. Stockport Council withdrew from the GMSF in early 2020, and the remaining nine districts decided to continue to produce a joint plan, now known as Places for Everyone (PfE). The publication Version PfE was submitted for Examination in February 2022, of which the site is included as a proposed allocation for residential development of up to 200 dwellings (ref. JPA24 'Roch Valley').
- 1.7 The site lies adjacent to the stretch of urban area that extends between Rochdale and Littleborough and is located within an area that is functionally related to Rochdale.

- 1.8 A public consultation was undertaken on a previous planning application on the site for 200 dwellings in May 2018 (LPA ref. 19/0081/FUL).). This was promoted via a leaflet drop (to c. 1,500 households) and press release. A public exhibition was held at the Methodist Church in Smithy Bridge on 17th May 2018 and was attended by 165 people. In response to the consultation 65 items of feedback were received.
- 1.9 The planning application was submitted to Rochdale Council in 2019 and according to planning officers the planning application has received c.600 objections, a large proportion of these related to highways concerns. Further details on the planning history of the site is included within the accompanying Planning Statement.
- 1.10 Since the submission of the planning application, ongoing discussions with Council officers have taken place and it was agreed a revised planning application for the residential development of the site would be submitted.

Consultation activity overview

- 1.11 In order to engage on the proposed application submission, the project team delivered a engagement programme which included engagement and awareness raising with:
- Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC);
 - Littleborough Lakeside, Shore and West Littleborough and Smallbridge and Firgrove ward members; and
 - Local residents.
- 1.12 To ensure all groups had the opportunity to view and comment on the proposed plans a number of engagement methods were used, including:
- Pre-application discussions with RMBC officers.
 - Information shared with key local stakeholders, along with invitations to briefings and regular updates via email through the pre-application process.
 - Distribution of promotional material including leaflets delivered to 885 addresses in Littleborough.
 - Hosting a dedicated project website with various contact methods, including a Freephone telephone number and direct email address, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section and registration form for updates.
 - Hosting a live webinar and Q&A event, which was recorded and shared on the project website.
- 1.13 A total of 152 forms of feedback have been received, including 75 digital feedback forms, 15 emails, 2 telephone calls and 60 webinar questions which have all been considered.
- 1.14 All feedback received was taken into account and has been included in this report and summarised in Chapter 4.

- 1.15 In summary, the applicant considers that the pre-application engagement undertaken with the local community and stakeholders has been timely, meaningful and effective.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The applicant recognises that the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) places an emphasis on community involvement as an important part of the planning application process. To ensure the approach taken in the pre-application stages of this application is consistent with national and local guidelines, relevant policy was reviewed in full.
- 2.2 The Government's policy on community involvement is set out in a number of statutory and non-statutory documents, including the NPPF (2019) and the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). Guidance is also provided in the Rochdale Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement (August 2021)¹.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 2.3 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) ("the Framework") sets out that the planning system should be a collective enterprise with the purpose of helping deliver sustainable development.
- 2.4 Paragraph 39 specifically promotes early pre-application engagement and the front-loading of consultation and explains that applications that can demonstrate effective pre-application engagement should be favoured over those that cannot. The purpose is to better coordinate public and private resources and help identify issues that can be resolved at the pre-application stage. In addition, paragraph 41 states that as a result, the outcomes for the community are improved and the planning system is able to function more effectively and efficiently.
- 2.5 As set out in this Statement, comprehensive community engagement has taken place prior to the submission of the planning application, in full accordance with guidance set out within the Framework.

Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement (August 2021)

- 2.6 Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement guidance applicants should, *'explain their proposals, receive feedback on which they might be able to act, create an atmosphere of genuine interest in the views of the local community and provide more certainty about any level of concern and the issues of concern.'*
- 2.7 The project team reviewed both national and local guidelines on pre-application engagement before creating a bespoke engagement strategy as detailed in Chapter 3.

¹

[Statement of Community Involvement | Rochdale Borough Council](#)

3. Stakeholder and Community Engagement

- 3.1 The engagement strategy was developed with consideration of the Government's policy on community involvement and Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council's SCI (2021), as detailed in Chapter 2.
- 3.2 Details of the stakeholder engagement and feedback are detailed under the sub-headings below.

Pre-application discussions with Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council Officers

- 3.3 A formal request for pre-application advice was submitted on behalf of Taylor Wimpey in Spring 2022, and a series of meetings have been held with RMBC officers as part of a collaborative pre-application process. The principal areas of discussion during these meetings have included:
- Planning
 - Highways
 - Drainage
 - Design and Landscape
 - Biodiversity Net Gain
- 3.4 The pre-application advice received throughout has informed the finalisation of the development proposals and the final application submission.
- 3.5 Further details are provided in the supporting Planning Statement and Design and Access Statement, submitted as part of the planning application

Engaging with key stakeholders

- 3.6 Prior to contacting local residents, the applicant contacted key stakeholders via email (on 16th May 2022) to introduce the scheme and offer a briefing on the proposals.
- 3.7 A number of stakeholders were identified early on in the process as being key in the development of the proposals including:
- Wardle Shore and West Littleborough ward councillors
 - Littleborough Lakeside ward councillors
 - Smallbridge and Firgrove ward councillors
 - Littleborough Civic Trust

- 3.8 Wardle Shore and West Littleborough ward councillors met with Taylor Wimpey and members of the project team for a briefing on the scheme and a Q&A session on June 29th. Councillors had a number of questions about the design of the scheme, highways and pedestrian and cycle access.
- 3.9 The applicant also met with Smallbridge and Firgrove ward councillor John Blundell and planning officers on March 16th in his role as cabinet member to discuss the scheme design, highways and economic benefits.
- 3.10 A meeting with the Littleborough Civic Trust took place on 4 July 2022, where trust members received a briefing from members of the project team. A positive discussion was held, and the trust asked a number of very detailed questions about the scheme design, highways, flood plain impact and site access.

Engaging with the community

- 3.11 Engaging with the community was digitally-led. The process was focused on distribution of a leaflet, hosting a project website, a live webinar and Q&A session and FAQs in response to the key themes / questions asked. Further detail on these activities and feedback are summarised below.

Leaflets

- 3.12 To raise awareness of the proposed development and the consultation within the local community, an information leaflet was distributed to local residents.
- 3.13 The leaflet provided a summary of the proposals and directed residents to the project website in order to find out more, register to attend the webinar and provide their feedback. A Freephone telephone number was also included for those unable to access the internet.
- 3.14 Leaflets were sent to neighbouring addresses in Littleborough (885 addresses) on 16th May 2022. This area can be seen in **Figure 3.1** overleaf.



Figure 3.1 – Leaflet distribution area

Consultation website

- 3.15 A dedicated project page was held on Taylor Wimpey's website <https://www.taylorwimpey.co.uk/new-homes/rochdale/smithy-bridge> which included details of the proposals, the webinar and illustrative plans – along with contact methods for the consultation project team, which included an email address, Freephone consultation number and the ability to register for email updates.
- 3.16 The website was updated following the webinar to include FAQs section was also added to the website during the consultation period to respond to questions asked. This was updated through the process. Emails were sent to key stakeholders, along with those who had registered for the webinar and registered for website updates when any additional detail was added to the website.
- 3.17 Detailed screenshots of the website are included in **Appendix 2**.

Webinar

- 3.18 A live webinar and Q&A session was held on Tuesday 24 May 2022 between 6pm-7pm.
- 3.19 The webinar included a presentation to take attendees through the details of the proposals, along with a live Q&A session where members of the technical team responded to questions.
- 3.20 43 zoom accounts joined the event. There was likely a number of people from a household sharing a screen to view the webinar.
- 3.21 A recording of the webinar was added to the project website following the event for those that were unable to attend. A notification was sent to website subscribers and

those who had registered for the webinar to let them know the recording was available to view.

- 3.22 60 questions were asked during the webinar. Many questions were responded to during the Q&A session. A detailed FAQs was added to the website to respond to the questions which were asked both during the event and more widely in the pre-application consultation period. The feedback received during the webinar is set out in Chapter 4.

4. Consultation Feedback

- 4.1 A total of 152 forms of feedback have been received, including 75 digital feedback forms, 15 emails, 2 telephone calls and 60 webinar questions which have all been considered.
- 4.2 The responses received have been summarised by theme in **Table 4.1** below. The themes have been set out in alphabetical order and not order of importance.

Table 4.1 – Summary of feedback

Theme	Summary of feedback
Affordable homes	Respondents queried whether affordable homes were included and whether the amount of affordable homes was policy compliant.
Drainage	Some respondents queried what the proposals were for SuDs, given the land is part of a local flood plain.
Ecology and biodiversity	Respondents queried what is being done to protect biodiversity and local wildlife, and what the net positive gain will be.
Green spaces / parks	One respondent queried where the parks were going to be as part of the developments
Heating	One respondent queried what heating is being provided for the new homes and how this will ensure the environment is protected.
Housing types and family homes	There was an interest in the types of housing that was being provided, and whether this included affordable homes as well as 'high quality' large family homes; the mix of detached and semi-detached properties; and whether two bedroom houses would be included. There was recognition that the scheme would bring forward much needed family homes.
Land ownership	There was interest in whether the Applicant owned the entire site and whether they would also be delivering the development. One respondent also flagged concerns that the land next their property is run down and overgrown but has been advised by the Council it is privately owned, with Taylor Wimpey registering a charge on the site.
Link road	Some respondents had queries about the proposed link road. These included concerns around the increased noise and nuisance the link road would create for local residents; queries around where the link road will be specifically; that the road would cause more congestion on Halifax Road and Albert Royds Street; that it will be a 'road to nowhere' as there are no timescales in place for the rest of the road.

Local services	Some respondents were concerned that the development does not consider existing strains on local services, including schools, GP surgeries, dentists and public transport. They wanted to know what was in place to ensure the new development could account for additional people in the area.
Local community projects	Some respondents queried whether there would be any support available for local community projects as part of the development
Places for Everyone	One respondent objected to the land being part of the Places for Everyone plan, and when no final decision on the GM plan has yet been made why is this proposal being brought forward now.
Principle of development	Some respondents did not agree with the principle of the development on the site.
Programme timelines	One respondent queried the expected completion date for the first and second phases of the development. Another queried when the planning application was being submitted.
Public Right of Way (PRoW)	Two respondents flagged that the proposals plan to open Holland Street as a walkway and this is not required as there are two established rights of passage on Brooklyn Avenue and Wurdle Farm Way.
Public transport / active travel	One respondent queried whether traffic modelling data had been considered in the planned development, in that it did not appear local infrastructure and public services had been considered in the development.
Site selection	Some respondents queried the rationale for the selection of this plot of land for the development. They were concerned at the loss of more 'green land' and that there are alternative brownfield sites that are suitable for development. They also said that the land in question is Protected Open Land and therefore should not be developed on.

5. Applicant's Response

- 5.1 All of the feedback received as part of the consultation has been considered during the evolution of the plans. Where respondents have contacted the project team through phone calls and emails, these have been responded to directly as well as below.
- 5.2 The Applicant's response to the key comments raised is summarised below in **Table 5.1**.

Table 5.1 – Applicant's response

Theme	Feedback	Applicant's response
Affordable homes	Respondents queried whether affordable homes were included and whether the amount of affordable homes was policy compliant.	Rochdale Council has an affordable housing policy in place. Taylor Wimpey will look to provide the required level of affordable housing through a financial contribution, unless it is not viable to do so.
Drainage	Some respondents queried what the proposals were for SuDs, given the land is part of a local flood plain.	The Proposed Scheme will comprise include SuDs features to manage on-site surface water drainage such as the new attenuation pond. Furthermore, the Proposed Scheme will retain the existing river channel along the southern boundary. On-site attenuation capacity will be calculated using the latest climate change flooding scenarios.
Ecology and biodiversity	Respondents queried what is being done to protect biodiversity and local wildlife, and what the net positive gain will be.	The masterplan for the site is being designed to reflect the existing landscape features on the site, including trees and hedgerows. These will be retained, wherever possible. Where some loss is inevitable, adequate compensation can be provided elsewhere.. Extensive ecology surveys of the site have also been undertaken. Mitigation or compensation for any habitats or species that may be directly affected by the development will be integrated into the masterplan and an off-site mitigation strategy will be developed with Council Officers and Greater Manchester Ecology Unit.
Heating	One respondent queried what heating is being provided for the new homes and how this will ensure the environment is protected.	Taylor Wimpey propose to incorporate the following additional measures into the dwellings to reduce carbon emissions and energy demand including: Highly efficient space and hot water heating systems. These will be accompanied by

		thermostatic controls, zoned heating and programmers to ensure that heating is optimally controlled to use the least amount of energy. • High levels of insulation across all thermal elements within the build. • 100% dedicated low energy lighting. • Windows and doors will be a minimum of 30% more efficient than minimum standards with the Building Regulations. • All external light fittings will be provided with energy efficient light bulbs with appropriate control systems for efficient usage. • The benefits of passive solar design are well documented and have been considered by the design team of Taylor Wimpey. Sufficient glazing will be provided to the principal living rooms of each dwelling to ensure sufficient natural lighting, thus reducing the energy consumed in artificially lighting the room. In addition, it is well known that developments which are orientated to ensure that the principal glazed elevations are within 30 degrees of due south are most effective at utilising solar gain, thus reducing energy consumption. Where practicable and feasible this has been incorporated into the site design.
Housing types and family homes	There was an interest in the types of housing that was being provided, and whether this included affordable homes as well as 'high quality' large family homes; the mix of detached and semi-detached properties; and whether two bedroom houses would be included. There was recognition that the scheme would bring forward much needed family homes.	The proposal includes a planning application for up to 199 new family homes. The majority of the new housing will be two storeys, with the potential for some 2.5 storey homes to be provided in certain locations to add variety and as landmark buildings within the development. The mix of properties to be delivered on the site has been led by local policy and through dialogue with the local authority. Properties adjacent to existing dwellings have been selected to ensure the new development does not become overbearing in terms of massing and scale and affords privacy for existing residents in line with best design practices.
Land ownership	There was interest in whether the Applicant owned the entire site and whether they would also be delivering the development.	Taylor Wimpey has an option to purchase the site, subject to securing planning permission.

Link road	Some respondents had queries about the proposed link road. These included concerns around the increased noise and nuisance the link road would create for local residents; queries around where the link road will be specifically; that the road would cause more congestion on Halifax Road and Albert Royds Street; that it will be a 'road to nowhere' as there are no timescales in place for the rest of the road.	Places for Everyone outlines that the layout of the scheme should be designed in a way to deliver the initial eastern section of the residential relief road. Taylor Wimpey are committed to providing this initial section of the residential relief road and therefore it has been incorporated into the design of the scheme and will be located to the south of the proposed dwellings running east to west across the centre of the site and will also form the access to the development onto Smithy Bridge Road. The residential relief road is a key strategic piece of infrastructure proposed by Rochdale Council aimed at relieving congestion on the A58 and surrounding roads through connecting from Smithy Bridge Road to Albert Royds Street. Rochdale Council will deliver the subsequent phases of the relief road.
Local services	Some respondents were concerned that the development does not consider existing strains on local services, including schools, GP surgeries, dentists and public transport. They wanted to know what was in place to ensure the new development could account for additional people in the area.	The application site is within close proximity to the existing local shops and services of Smithy Bridge and Littleborough. New residents would support these existing services and potentially provide a means to growth. If necessary, Taylor Wimpey will provide financial contributions to Rochdale Council towards local services. The details of this will be agreed as part of the discussions on the planning application.
Places for Everyone	One respondent objected to the land being part of the Places for Everyone plan, and when no final decision on the GM plan has yet been made why is this proposal being brought forward now.	The site is included as a draft housing allocation in the publication draft Places for Everyone Plan for Greater Manchester (ref. JPA24 'Roch Valley'). This plan has now been submitted to the Secretary of State for examination and is due to be adopted in 2023.
Principle of development	Some respondents did not agree with the principle of the development on the site.	There is a recognised need to provide new homes in the area; Rochdale Council needs to provide around 500 new homes every year to meet its targets.

		The site is very well located for residential development. It is close to a good range of shops, services and employment opportunities. The site is also highly accessible by public transport with regular bus services and Smithy Bridge train station, which is within close proximity of the site.
Programme timelines	One respondent queried the expected completion date for the first and second phases of the development. Another queried when the planning application was being submitted.	The planning application is due to be submitted mid-September. Construction is expected to begin in early 2024, taking approximately 5 years to complete.
Public Right of Way (PRoW)	Two respondents flagged that the proposals plan to open Holland Street as a walkway and this is not required as there are two established rights of passage on Brooklyn Avenue and Wurdle Farm Way.	The existing PRoW within the site will be diverted through a PRoW diversion application (Section 257 of the Town and Country Planning Act (as amended)). This is also being discussed with the Council's PRoW Officer. The proposed new route of the existing ProW will facilitate safe pedestrian and cycle travel around the site and surrounding area. . It will also allow for safe and direct passage from Halifax Road, towards the Train Station.
Site selection	Some respondents queried the rationale for the selection of this plot of land for the development. They were concerned at the loss of more 'green land' and that there are alternative brownfield sites that are suitable for development. They also said that the land in question is Protected Open Land and therefore should not be developed on.	The site is identified as Protected Open Land in the Council's Unitary Development Plan, which was adopted in 2006. This meant that it was not expected to be needed to be developed to meet housing needs up to 2016, but may need to be developed to meet needs beyond that time. The Council has accepted that some Protected Open Land needs to be used to meet housing demand. There is a recognised need to provide new homes in the area; Rochdale Council needs to provide around 500 new homes every year to meet its targets. The Smithy Bridge site is not part of the Green Belt. The site is included in the Places for Everyone Plan for Greater Manchester, as a proposed allocation for residential development of up to 200 dwellings (ref. JPA24 'Roch Valley'). It has been identified as such since October 2016. The Places for Everyone Plan has now been submitted to the Secretary of State for examination and subsequent adoption.

Evidence prepared by the Council indicates that the number of houses that could be built on brownfield sites would fall short of the identified needs for new housing. It is therefore necessary to consider 'releasing' some greenfield sites for housing.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The Applicant has undertaken a comprehensive process of application consultation with key stakeholders and the local community.
- 6.2 As a result of the engagement process, the project team has gained a better understanding of the local context and increased awareness of the proposals.
- 6.3 The applicant considers that the pre-application engagement undertaken with the local community and stakeholders has been timely, meaningful and effective.

Appendix 1: Consultation Website



Thank you for visiting the website, where we are sharing our update on plans for new homes to the west of Smithy Bridge Road, Rochdale.

We have been working with Rochdale Council and we remain committed to delivering a number of local benefits for Rochdale residents, alongside the delivery of new high-quality homes. The development of homes in this location will generate employment opportunities during construction, bring increased spend to local shops and services generated by the new residents as well as Council Tax revenue which can be invested in improvements to the local area.

The period for providing feedback on this consultation has come to an end. If you would like to get in touch with us regarding this project, you can contact us by email at contact@smithybridgeconsultation.co.uk.

Following the consultation deadline, we will collate all feedback received. Once we have finalised our plans for the site, we will submit a planning application to Rochdale Council who will undertake their own consultation on the application.

Get in touch

Smithy Bridge Road, Littleborough,
Rochdale, Greater Manchester, OL15
8QF

Register Interest

Some images are used for illustrative purposes only and include optional upgrades at additional cost.
Development managed by Taylor Wimpey Manchester.



Our proposals for Smithy Bridge

Homes proposed

The land at Smithy Bridge Road is located to the north east of Rochdale town centre, to the east of Smallbridge and to the south of Littleborough.



The plans are for a high-quality residential neighbourhood, respectful of the site's location on the edge of Littleborough. The delivery of this development would contribute to Rochdale Borough Council's target of building around 500 homes every year to meet local demand.

The plans include:

- 199 new family homes (a reduction on the previous scheme)
- New landscaping and public open space
- A new link road to relieve congestion on the A58.

Rochdale Council recognises this opportunity and the contributions the proposals at land west of Smithy Bridge Road can make to meeting the housing needs of the Borough and Greater Manchester as a whole. This is recognised through the proposed allocation of the site for around 200 homes in the emerging Places for Everyone Plan for Greater Manchester. It's important to understand that the site is not and has never been part of the Green Belt.

Our proposal features



Homes
proposed



Design and
character



Community
benefits



News



Frequently
Asked
Questions