



**REX**

**v**

**CONNOR CHAPMAN & THOMAS WARING**

**SENTENCING NOTE**

1. Shortly before midnight on Christmas Eve last year, the Lighthouse Pub in Wallasey Village was busy with revellers enjoying the season and looking forward to Christmas Day. For a short time six of them, separately, found themselves outside at the front of the building. They were Elle Edwards, Jake Duffey, Kieran Salkeld, Harry Loughran, Liam Carr and Nicholas Speed. They were not all together, they just happened to be there. What you did Connor Chapman to those six victims was as wicked as it was shocking.
2. You murdered Elle Edwards, bringing an end to her young life; you attempted to murder Jake Duffey and Kieran Salkeld, causing them very serious injuries; you wounded both Harry Loughran and Liam Carr and you caused injury to Nicholas Speed. How did you do that? You obtained a sub-machine gun loaded with 12 bullets and prepared yourself to fire all of them, at close range, at the six of them. Your intention was to murder Jake Duffey and Kieran Salkeld but you didn't care who else would be killed. That is why you fired all of the bullets at the group. I am satisfied that you are a highly dangerous man.
3. In this trial we have all watched the CCTV and sound recording of that shooting. It is utterly shocking. You carefully planned a revenge attack in gang rivalry. You had no thought at all for any one else, least of all to innocent people. The risk of all six being murdered by you was as substantial as it was obvious, but you didn't care.

4. After the shooting you drove straight to the home of your friend Thomas Waring, where you believed you could safely hide the stolen Mercedes car you had used to drive to the shooting, also the submachine gun which you asked Waring to look after and at least one of the gloves you wore in the shooting, which later produced gunshot residue evidence. You spent the days afterwards removing or destroying evidence that would identify you as the gunman. You washed the clothes you wore, other clothing and shoes were removed from your home before the police searched it and you destroyed your mobile phone.
5. Six days later, on the New Years Eve, together with Waring you returned to where the Stolen Mercedes had been hidden; it was near to where he lived in Barnston. Then the both of you drove the Mercedes to a remote place and set fire to it, to destroy any evidence that the car might have to identify you, Chapman, as the murderer.
6. The background to these offences as we have heard lies in violent criminal gang rivalry between those connected to the Woodchurch Estate and others connected to the Ford Estate on the Wirral. You Chapman were very actively involved in the Woodchurch gang, whilst you, Waring, were associated with that gang. The violence included shootings during 2021 and 2022 and created very substantial concern to the people of Merseyside. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> December last year, one of your associates was attacked by Jake Duffey and Kieran Salkeld in the street. They were part of the Ford Estate gang. When you learned of that you decided on revenge, in premeditated and carefully planned murder of Jake Duffey and Kieran Salkeld.
7. You used a stolen Mercedes A Class car with false registration plates, which you often used for your drug dealing. You disguised yourself with dark clothing, a mask, a hood and gloves. You obtained a sub-machine gun and a loaded magazine with 12 bullets. When you left your home on the Woodchurch Estate to carry out the shooting, you took care to avoid security cameras on neighbouring properties. Once you reached Wallasey Village where you knew Jake Duffey and Kieran Salkeld were to be, you waited almost three hours, carrying out reconnaissance as you drove to six different positions, until you reached the car park close to the front door of the Lighthouse,

where you hid inside your stolen car, waiting for your moment. Then, at 11.52pm shortly before midnight, when the Lighthouse was full of people and standing outside at the front was the group of six, from a hidden position at the side of the building you burst forward to be as close as a few metres to fire the submachine gun. Elle Edwards was killed instantly, you hit five others with the bullets all of them might easily have been killed also. As you ran back to your car, you fired the last few shots at the group and then drove away at speed to the safety, as you planned it, of Thomas Waring's home.

8. I am satisfied that that you asked Waring to look after the gun, and that you asked him to help to destroy the stolen Mercedes six days later. As the Jury have found, you Waring knew that Chapman had carried out the shooting and that he had murdered Elle Edwards, when you agreed to help in the disposing of the car. You also knew that the police wanted to arrest Chapman.
9. The murder of Elle Edwards has caused profound and permanent grief to her family and great shock to the entire community. She was a very much loved young woman, in her prime, killed by you Chapman when you were prepared to kill anyone in your determination for gang revenge. This court has heard exceptionally moving statements from Elle Edward's family, by her father, brother and Grandmother. They will never be able to come to terms with what happened to Elle.
10. The seriousness of this offence of Murder (Count 1) is very substantially aggravated by the following evidence:- the choice of weapon, which was exceptionally dangerous; the location of the offence with many people present on Christmas Eve; the background of criminal gang violence; the substantial preparation and premeditation; the removal or destruction of important evidence, including the car, phones and clothing as well as the washing of clothes; the fact that you were the subject of Criminal Gang Injunctions and, as you told the Jury, you were dealing in Class A drugs.

11. Apart from your age at the time of offending, being 22, you are now 23, there is no significant mitigation. Whilst young age can be significant, in the circumstances of your offending Chapman, it carries little weight.
12. I must sentence you Connor Chapman not just for this very serious offence of Murder, but also for the two offences of Attempted Murder (Counts 2 & 3), two offences of Wounding With Intent to Cause Grievous Bodily Harm (Counts 4 & 5), an offence of Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm (Count 6) and Possessing a Firearm together with Possessing Ammunition, both with Intent to Endanger Life (Counts 7 & 8). I must also sentence you for an offence of Handling Stolen Goods, which concerns the stolen Mercedes A Class. For reasons that will become clear, I will pass concurrent sentences on all of these offences, but the seriousness of all your offending will be reflected in the sentence I impose on Count 1, Murder.
13. The sentence for Murder is Imprisonment for Life. I must then decide if I must impose a Whole Life or a Minimum Term which you will serve. The difference is whether your offending is so exceptionally serious in the context of the gravest of Murder Offences, that you should serve the whole of your life in custody, rather than a very long term. Whilst I am sure that there are some who would readily consider that a Whole Life term should be imposed, I have concluded that your offending is on the cusp between a Whole Life and a very long Minimum Term. In the circumstances I cannot conclude that a Whole Life term, as a sentence of last resort for the very gravest of murders, must be imposed.
14. The Starting Point in fixing the Minimum Term, which is the period that you must serve in custody before you might seek to be released, is 30 years on Count 1. I must increase that term, firstly to reflect the factors which increase its seriousness and, secondly, to reflect the other offences including two offences of Attempted Murder. I take into account also, to the limited extent that it provides any mitigation, your age. Accordingly, I increase the Minimum Term to, firstly, 36 years and, secondly, up to 48 years which reflects your total offending.

15. So that it is understood by you Connor Chapman, as well as those who are observing, it means that you will have to serve 48 years in custody before you could apply for release. If you are ever released, and considering your dangerousness that might never happen, you will be on licence for the rest of your life and subject to recall to prison if you breach the terms of that licence.
16. I must also impose the sentences to be served at the same time as your sentence on Count 1. On Counts 2 and 3, being for Attempted Murder, I am satisfied that each of these offences require separate sentences of Imprisonment for Life under section 285 Sentencing Act 2020. They are for a Schedule 19 offence and you are a Dangerous Offender, given the circumstances of these Attempted Murder offences and the Murder of Elle Edwards. They fall within Category A2 under the guideline with a Starting Point of 30 years, which I increase on each to 33 years to reflect the aggravating factors I have identified for Count 1. There is little by way of mitigation. I must then fix the minimum term, which I set at 22 years. Accordingly, the sentences for Counts 2 & 3 are concurrent sentences of Imprisonment for Life with a minimum term of 22 years. This means that you will have to serve three Life Sentences concurrently.
17. On Counts 4 & 5, s18 Wounding with intent, they fall within Category A3 of the guideline. Adjusting the Starting Point to reflect aggravating and mitigating factors, I impose 7 years' imprisonment concurrently.
18. On Count 6, s47 Assault, which falls within Category A3, I impose 18 months' imprisonment concurrently.
19. On Counts 7 & 8, offences of Possessing a Firearm and of Possessing its ammunition, both being Category 1A offences under the guideline, I impose 15 years imprisonment concurrently with each and all other sentences.
20. Handling Stolen Goods, I impose 3 years imprisonment concurrently, as a Category 2A offence.

21. Stand up Connor Chapman. I sentence you as follows:-

- On Count 1 to Imprisonment for Life, with a Minimum Term to serve in custody of 48 years, less 176 days served on remand.
- On Counts 2 & 3, concurrent sentences of Imprisonment for Life under s285 Sentencing Act 2020, with minimum Terms of 22 years.
- On Counts 4 & 5, concurrent sentences of 7 years imprisonment.
- On Count 6, a concurrent sentence of 18 months imprisonment.
- On Counts 7 & 8, concurrent sentences of 15 years imprisonment.
- For the Offence of Handling Stolen Goods, a concurrent sentence of 3 years imprisonment.

Take him down.

22. Thomas Waring you are aged 20, as you were when you committed your offences of Possessing a Prohibited Weapon (Count 9) and Assisting an Offender (Count 10). You committed also the offence under s49 Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, in respect of which you pleaded guilty. I am satisfied that you were asked by Chapman to help him after he carried out the shooting. You were not involved in what he did. However, you knew that he had carried out a shooting when you met him at your house in the early hours of the 25<sup>th</sup> December, a short time after the shooting. You agreed to look after the sub-machine gun until it was later taken away, as undoubtedly it was and has not been recovered by the police.

23. That firearm was a prohibited weapon because of its rapid fire facility and was a Type 1 Firearm under the guideline. I accept that this offence falls within Category 3A and that the Starting Point for sentence is 6 years, with a statutory minimum sentence of 5 years custody. I see no reason to avoid that minimum term. Your previous convictions do not significantly aggravate the offence seriousness. Taking into account your age, therefore, I reduce that sentence to 5 years from the Starting Point in respect of Count 9.

24. For the offence of Assisting an Offender, Count 10, I am satisfied that the offending by Chapman was very grave which you knew. I am also satisfied that your assistance was important and that it significantly damaged the interests of Justice, because it was the car used to carry out the shooting. Accordingly, your culpability was high and the harm caused was at least medium, set against the maximum sentence of 10 years under the Criminal Law Act 1967. There is no sentence guideline for this offence. The appropriate sentence, before taking into account your age is 6 years, which I reduce to 5 years for your youth.
25. It is necessary for your offences to be served consecutively, that is to say one after the other, because they are clear and separate acts; one to possess the firearm and the other to help destroy the car. However, I will reduce your total sentence under the Totality principle to 9 years.
26. I impose a concurrent sentence of 12 months custody for the offence under s49 of the 2000 Act, having taken into account your late guilty plea
27. Stand up Thomas Waring. I sentence you to 5 years custody on Count 9 and 4 years custody on Count 10, to be served consecutively, a total sentence of 9 years. I impose a concurrent sentence of 12 months for the s49 offence. You will serve half of that sentence, less 120 days on remand. Take him down.