

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

Appeal by: Boningale Developments Ltd

Outline application to include access for a mixed-use development comprising up to 800 no dwellings, a care home of up to 80 units, a secondary school and local centre with associated access, infrastructure, landscaping and drainage

PROOF OF EVIDENCE

EDWARD WEST BA(Hons), MCD, MRTPI

Planning Inspectorate Appeal Reference: 6007402

**Shropshire Council Planning Application Reference:
24/02108/OUT**

Shropshire Council Appeal Reference: 26/03479/REF



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Relevant Core Documents	Reference
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – December 2024	CD2.1
Shropshire Council Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted February 2011)	CD2.2
Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan (Adopted December 2015)	CD2.3
Shropshire Council Regulation 19: Pre-Submission Draft of the Local Plan 2016 - 2038	CD2.4
Adopted Development Plan Policies Map- Albrighton Inset	CD2.18
Shropshire Council Notice to Commence Preparation of the Shropshire Local Plan (May 2026)	CD2.28
Shropshire Council Plan-Making Timetable Version 1 (May 2026)	CD2.29
Shropshire Council Draft Shropshire Community Hierarchy	CD2.30
National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026)	CD2.40
Shropshire Council Local Plan and NPPF Position Statement (12th February 2025)	CD2.41
Statement of Common Ground - Planning Addendum	CD4.5

1. Introduction

Qualifications and Relevant Experience

- 1.1. This Proof of Evidence has been prepared by Edward West BA (Hons), MCD, MRTPI, Planning Policy and Strategy Manager, on behalf of Shropshire Council.
- 1.2. I hold a post graduate Masters in Civic Design (MCD) from the University of Liverpool, completed in 2006. I have been a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (MRTPI) since 2008.
- 1.3. I worked for Shropshire County Council between 2004-2009, as a Policy Assistant and Assistant Planning Policy Officer within the Planning Policy Team. After Local Government Reorganisation in 2009, I have worked within the Planning Policy Team at Shropshire Council, working in Senior and Principal roles before becoming the Planning Policy and Strategy Manager in 2019. I have accumulated over 20 years' professional planning experience.

Involvement in the Appeal Scheme

- 1.4. I have been asked by the Council's Development Management team to contribute evidence in support of the Council's case regarding planning policy context.

Scope of Evidence

- 1.5. This proof of evidence provides information on Shropshire's adopted Development Plan, including identification of those planning policies most important in determining whether the principle of development on the appeal site is supported by the adopted Development Plan. In doing so the Proof deals solely with **Main Issue 3**: 'whether the proposal would accord with the spatial strategy in the development plan',
- 1.6. This proof therefore provides my professional opinion on:
 - a. Whether the appeal site is an appropriate location for the development, having particular regard to relevant provisions of the adopted Development Plan.

- b. The consistency of the adopted Development Plan with the December 2024 version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (CD2.1)
 - c. The status of Shropshire's Withdrawn Local Plan (CD2.4), its evidence base, and the emerging Local Plan
- 1.7. It is noted that a new NPPF was published by the Government on 17th August 2026. Given the timing of submissions, it has not been possible for me to consider the new NPPF in relation to my evidence in any depth. It is recognised therefore that an addendum to this proof of evidence may be required ahead of the public inquiry sessions in September.
- 1.8. This proof does not provide a detailed consideration of the development proposal, aside from its location and proposed scale and mix of uses, nor does it discuss the overall planning balance, which are both issues discussed in Ms Parker's Proof of Evidence. Evidence on the Council's housing land supply position has been provided Mr Dan Corden.

Endorsements

- 1.9. The evidence I have prepared for this Planning Inquiry is true and has been prepared in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution. I confirm the opinions expressed are true and professional opinions.

2. The Development Plan

Introduction

- 2.1. Sections 70(2) and 79(4) of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) (as amended) and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) (as amended) state that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 2.2. Paragraph 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – August 2026 confirms that *“the planning system should be genuinely plan-led”*, whilst Paragraph 3 confirms that *“Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”* It also states that *“the national decision making policies in this Framework are a material consideration in making these decisions and should be read alongside the policies in the development plan”*.
- 2.3. I therefore consider the development plan remains the correct starting point for taking decisions on planning applications. This remains the case even in circumstances where all or part of the development plan is considered out of date, for instance because the policies are deemed inconsistent with more recent versions of the NPPF, and/or where the Council cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites. In all cases it is incumbent upon the decision maker to attach appropriate weight to the development plan.

The Shropshire Adopted Development Plan

- 2.4. The adopted Development Plan for Shropshire consists of:
- **The Core Strategy (2011) (CD2.2)**: which sets out the vision, strategic objectives, broad spatial strategy, and strategic policies.
 - **The Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan (2015) (CD2.3)**: which provides detailed development management and settlement policies to guide future development and identifies site allocations, as illustrated by a Policies Map.

- **'Made' Neighbourhood Development Plans.** There are currently nine 'made' Neighbourhood Development Plans and several more in preparation, but none of these cover the appeal site.
- 2.5. The adopted Development Plan is intended to be read and applied as a whole.
- 2.6. It is acknowledged that both the Core Strategy and SAMDev Plans are time expired in relation to the specified growth requirements established for Shropshire in policies Core Strategy policy CS1 and SAMDev policy MD1, and the individual settlement policies set out in Policies S1-S18 of the SAMDev Plan. Within the context of decision making, I consider this does have practical implications for the application of SAMDev policies MD3 and S1 which my proof will cover. However, whilst the Plan is time expired, policies within it remain the adopted spatial expression of how growth should broadly be accommodated and the role settlements have in achieving this to sustain a sustainable pattern of development.
- 2.7. It is also recognised that both the Core Strategy and SAMDev Plan were adopted prior to the December 2024 version of the NPPF. In line with Paragraph 232 of the NPPF, and to inform this appeal, the Council and appellant have considered the consistency of the relevant policies of the development plan and the NPPF. This schedule can be viewed in section 12 of SoCG Planning Addendum (CD4.5). I agree with the Council's conclusions in CD4.5 in that the policies most important remain consistent with the NPPF.
- 2.8. It is accepted that currently the Council cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites. As such, in line with paragraph 11 d) and footnote 8 of the Dec 2024 NPPF (CD2.1), the most important policies for the determination of this appeal, including policies involving the provision of housing, are deemed out-of-date. This was also the position at the point of the original decision on the appeal site. My colleague Mr Dan Corden is covering specific issues relating to the Council's housing land supply position.

3 Main Issue 3: Whether the proposal would accord with the spatial strategy

Core Strategy

- 3.1 The Core Strategy (CD2.2) was adopted in March 2011. It provides the strategic element of the Development Plan for the County. In broad terms the Core Strategy establishes the overall level of housing and employment development in the Plan period (April 2006-March 2026); identifies Shrewsbury as the Strategic Centre and a network of 17 Market Towns and Key Centres; provides the strategic policy context for encouraging appropriate development in the rural area; provides a broad division of growth between these areas; and provides a series of planning policies for the assessment of planning applications.
- 3.2 The Core Strategy policies I consider most relevant to this appeal and which are relevant to the specified main issue are Policy CS1: Strategic Approach; Policy CS3: The Market Towns and Other Key Centres; and Policy CS5: Countryside and Green Belt.
- 3.3 It is acknowledged that the Core Strategy was prepared and adopted before the introduction of the NPPF in March 2012. In line with Paragraph 232 of the NPPF due weight should still be given to development plan policies adopted prior to the publication of the Framework in accordance with their degree of conformity. It is considered that all the policies referred to in para 3.2 remain consistent with the NPPF for the reasons outlined in section 12 of the SoCG Planning Addendum (CD4.5).

SAMDev Plan

- 3.4 The SAMDev Plan was adopted in December 2015. It seeks to contribute towards and facilitate the delivery of the strategic priorities and strategy (including the overall housing and employment requirements) set out in the Core Strategy.
- 3.5 The SAMDev policies I consider most relevant to this appeal and which are relevant to the specified main issue are: MD1: Scale and Distribution of Development; MD3: Delivery of Housing Development; MD6: Green Belt; MD7a: Managing Housing Development in the Countryside; and S1: Albrighton Area.

- 3.6 Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy sets the overall strategic approach for the County, including establishing the broad strategic distribution of growth between Shrewsbury, the Market Towns and Key Centres, and the rural area. The policy sets out that between 2006-2026 around 27,500 new homes and around 290 hectares of employment land will be delivered in Shropshire. In achieving this overall pattern of growth, the policy states around 40% of Shropshire's residential development will be accommodated within identified Market Towns and key Centres over the plan period. Whilst the Plan is time expired, policies within it remain the adopted spatial expression of how growth should broadly be accommodated and the role settlements have in achieving this to sustain a sustainable pattern of development.
- 3.7 Policy CS3 of the Core Strategy identifies Shropshire's network of Market Towns and Key Centres, with Albrighton identified as serving this role in the eastern Shropshire, alongside Shifnal. The policy states that Albrighton will have development to meet local needs, respecting its location in the Green Belt. No changes to Green Belt boundaries were proposed as part of the adoption of the Core Strategy. Whilst no settlement housing figures were proposed for Albrighton in the Core Strategy, table 2 to the explanatory text (page 51) provides an indicative level of growth of below 500 dwellings over the plan period.
- 3.8 Policy MD1 of the SAMDev Plan complements Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy, addressing the scale and distribution of development. It directs sustainable development towards Shrewsbury, the Market Towns, Key Centres and the Community Hubs and Community Cluster settlements.
- 3.9 Schedule MD1.1 of Policy MD1 confirms Albrighton's status within the Market Town and Key Centre category. Policy S1 of the SAMDev provides the development strategy for Albrighton Town. S1.1 (1) states: *"Albrighton will provide for local needs, delivering around 250 dwellings over the plan period. Local needs will predominantly be met on two allocated sites, with small scale windfall development within the development boundary making up the balance"*. Whilst the Plan is time expired, policy S1 remains the adopted spatial expression of the role of Albrighton in sustaining a sustainable pattern of growth.

- 3.10 Policy S1.1 (2), Schedule S1a and the adopted development plan policies map (CD2.18) identify land allocated for housing development to support the delivery of the settlement's housing guideline, namely ALB003 land at White Acres for 20 dwellings; and ALB002 Land east of Shaw Lane for 180 dwellings. Policy S1.1 (3) establishes the land east of ALB002, identified on the Policies Map, is to be safeguarded for long term development needs.
- 3.11 The appeal site does not form any part of the two site allocations for Albrighton, nor does any part of the site fall within identified safeguarded land to meet the longer-term development needs of Albrighton beyond the plan period, i.e. post 2026. The site falls outside the adopted development boundary for Albrighton as established in S1.1 and the adopted Policies Map. Therefore, the site is located in a countryside location against the development plan's policies and falls entirely within the Green Belt.
- 3.12 It is therefore important to determine the site's conformity with the development plan's policies relating to managing development in the countryside and Green Belt.

Development in the Countryside and Green Belt

- 3.13 Policies CS5 of the Core Strategy and Policies MD6 and MD7a of the SAMDev Plan establish the policy approach for managing development within the 'countryside' and the Green Belt.
- 3.14 Policy CS5 states "*New development will be strictly controlled in accordance with national policies protecting the countryside*". It goes on to state that "*within the designated Green belt in south-eastern Shropshire, there will be additional control of new development in line with government guidance in PPG2*". Whilst it is recognised that PPG2 has been replaced by the NPPF and NPPG, I consider the policy remains consistent with the NPPF by requiring the decision maker to refer to national policy in their considerations.
- 3.15 Whilst this proof acknowledges the basic principle that the appeal site is located within the defined Green Belt, and therefore the application of policies CS5 and MD6 are relevant, the detailed assessment of the Green Belt, including the consideration of Green Belt principles, are

dealt with by Mr Hossack in a separate proof of evidence on behalf of the Council.

- 3.16 Whilst advocating strict control in order to support the aspirations of other parts of the Development Plan, Policy CS5 recognises that it is important to support Shropshire's large rural area, and therefore encouragement is provided to development proposals which maintain and enhance countryside vitality and character where they improve the sustainability of rural communities by bringing economic and community benefits. In achieving this, the policy identifies the specific types of development where there is support in principle. With regards to the types of housing specifically identified, Policy CS5 states that these are dwellings to house agricultural, forestry and other essential countryside workers and other affordable housing to meet a local need. The only non-affordable housing that is identified as a component of improving the sustainability of rural communities within Policy CS5 is conversion schemes.
- 3.17 Policy CS5 is considered to remain in strong conformity with the NPPF. Both seek to support sustainable rural development whilst safeguarding the intrinsic character of the countryside. In particular, the permissive nature of CS5 towards local needs affordable housing is aligned with the ambition of paragraph 82 of the NPPF to support opportunities to bring forward rural exception sites that will provide affordable housing to meet identified local needs.
- 3.18 Policy MD7a of the SAMDev Plan (CD2.3) expands upon the policy approach for those areas in the 'countryside', stating *"Further to Core Strategy (CD2.2) Policy CS5 and CS11, new market housing will be strictly controlled outside of Shrewsbury, the Market Towns, Key Centres and Community Hubs and Community Clusters"*.
- 3.19 Policy MD7a then addresses the forms of residential development suitable within the 'countryside', namely suitably located affordable exception site development and market residential conversions. Specifically, Policy MD7a states *"Suitably designed and located exception site dwellings and residential conversions will be positively considered where they meet evidenced local housing needs and other relevant policy requirements."*
- 3.20 Policy MD3 of the SAMDev Plan deals specifically with the delivery of housing development, and therefore must be read alongside several

other policies, including Policies S1, CS2, CS3, CS5, MD1 and MD7a the Development Plan. Part 2 of policy MD3 states that the settlement housing guideline is a significant policy consideration and provides the criteria to assess applications where the guideline for a settlement has been exceeded. Conversely, part 3 of the policy provides the considerations where a settlement housing guideline appears unlikely to be met. In both cases, given the time expired nature of the settlement guidelines it is not considered possible to practically apply parts 2 and 3 of this policy. Part 1 of the policy states that *“residential proposals should meet the design requirements of relevant Local Plan policies and on sites of five or more dwellings, include a mix and type of housing that has regard to local evidence and community consultation”*. Given part 1 of the policy does not deal specifically with settlement housing guidelines, it is considered appropriate to apply this part of the policy to decision making, although it is considered its scope falls outside the consideration of conformity with the spatial strategy.

- 3.21 Policy MD6 of the SAMDev Plan covers Green Belt. It states, *“in addition to meeting the general requirements that apply in the countryside as set out in Policies CS5, MD7a and MD7b, development proposed in the Green Belt must be able to demonstrate that it does not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt”*. The appeal site and its proposed uses do not align with either of the types of development the policy specifically seeks to support in the Green Belt, i.e. limited infill in identified community hubs or clusters; or development on previously developed sites, which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

4 The Withdrawn Local Plan and the Emerging Local Plan

Withdrawn Local Plan

- 4.1 Shropshire Council submitted a draft Local Plan (2016-2038) (CD2.4) to the Secretary of State for examination on 3 September 2021. Unfortunately, in March 2025 the Inspectors recommended the withdrawal of the draft Plan from the examination, with the Council formally agreeing to do so on 17 July 2025.
- 4.2 The views of the Examining Inspectors following the Stage 2 hearing sessions are included in CD2.23. I consider the key area of disagreement between the Council and the Examining Inspectors was the manner in which the Council proposed to accommodate an agreed level of unmet need from the four Black Country authorities. The Examining Inspectors sought the inclusion of additional sites solely to accommodate this unmet need as a clear distinction from identified allocated sites to accommodate Shropshire's needs. I therefore do not consider the level of growth or proposed site allocations proposed to accommodate Shropshire's needs was a fundamental point of disagreement.
- 4.3 Upon the withdrawal of the draft Local Plan, the agreed position between Shropshire Council and the four Black Country authorities fell away. New Duty to Cooperate discussions between Shropshire Council and the Black Country authorities will take place as part of the new Local Plan processes. As such, there is currently no agreed position in either an adopted or emerging Local Plan that Shropshire will accept unmet housing or employment needs from the Black Country authorities or any other neighbouring or closely related local planning authority area.
- 4.4 Ahead of the formal withdrawal of the Local Plan in February 2025, in response to ongoing challenges with the Examination and the position with the Council's housing land supply, the Council's Cabinet agreed that the evidence base supporting the draft Local Plan (2016-2038) should be a material consideration in decision making on relevant planning applications. This Cabinet report is included as CD41. In agreeing this position, it was recognised this would mean giving positive consideration to the draft site allocations

in the withdrawn Local Plan should they come forward as planning applications. For the avoidance of doubt the appeal site was not included as a draft allocation in the withdrawn Local Plan.

Emerging Local Plan

- 4.5 In accordance with Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 (the Regulations), the Council gave notice of its intention to commence the preparation of the next Shropshire Local Plan on 8th May 2026 (CD2.28). The new Plan will cover the period to 2046. A Plan-Making Timetable was published in May 2026 (CD2.29) covering a 30 month period from September 2026 to March 2029, with an additional mandatory four-month scoping period between May-September 2026.
- 4.6 The Council has recently completed a 'Scoping' consultation as part of the early preparatory work for the Plan. As part of this, the Council prepared a new draft community hierarchy (CD2.30), which will influence the future consideration of reasonable options. The draft community hierarchy continues to recognise Albrighton's position as a Key Centre.
- 4.7 The Council intend to pass through Gateway 1 in September 2026 which will formally commence the 30 month preparation process. The plan making timetable indicates the Council will consult on the 'content and evidence' stage of Plan making in May 2027. I can confirm it is the Council's intention to use this stage of plan making to set out draft county wide housing and employment requirements; draft settlement specific housing and employment requirement; and draft site allocations.
- 4.8 To support this new Local Plan process, a fresh 'call for sites' exercise was carried out between 10th July 2025 and 2nd October 2025. The appeal site was submitted to the Council as part of this process. Across Shropshire over 900 sites have been submitted for assessment.
- 4.9 Whilst it is acknowledged it is too early in the new plan making cycle to establish firm growth strategies for settlements, in light of the

significant nature of the appeal site, and for illustrative purposes only, it is considered helpful to set out the potential growth scenario for Albrighton were it is assumed the town continues to serve a similar role (and percentage share of growth) as in the adopted spatial strategy, but within the context of delivering the County's new Local Housing Need (LHN) of 2,046 dwellings per annum as calculated using the national Standard Methodology (SM). This concludes that for the 20 year period between 2026 - 2046, Albrighton's growth would be 372 dwellings from a total LHN of 40,920 dwellings over the 20 year period.

- 4.10 It is acknowledged the Council has not yet established growth options for the emerging spatial strategy, or selected a preferred option - this will happen in May 2027. However, I consider it is important to recognise that the scale of growth proposed on the appeal site would represent a very substantial upward shift in residential delivery in Albrighton, far in excess of that envisaged in the current spatial strategy for the settlement established in policies CS1, CS3, MD1 and S1 of the development plan, even when factoring in the delivery of the updated LHN.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Having taken into account the relevant policies set out in the Core Strategy and SAMDev Plan, I consider that the appeal site does not conform to the spatial strategy for the area as defined by the adopted development plan. The appeal site is located outside the adopted development boundary for Albrighton, no part of the site is within an adopted site allocation, and the proposed use does not conform with the development plan's approach to managing development in the Countryside and Green Belt.
- 5.2 Specifically, I take this view based upon consideration of the site against Core Strategy Policies CS1, CS3 and CS5 and SAMDev Policies MD1, MD6, MD7a and S1, and having considered the location of the site relative to Albrighton Town, and consideration of the scale and mix of uses proposed.
- 5.3 I have recognised that the development plan is time-expired. However, the spatial strategy does not support the scale of housing proposed in the appeal scheme. I consider it to disproportionately large to the role of Albrighton as set out in policies CS3 and S1 of the development plan.