

Landscape and Visual and Green Belt Openness Rebuttal

Patshull Road, Albrighton, Shropshire.

On behalf of Boningale Developments Ltd.

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Appendix 1: Tranquility Plan

Appendix 2: Photowires and Photomontages

1. Introduction

1.1. This rebuttal responds to submissions from the Council as they relate to main issue no. 4: Character and Appearance (landscape and visual matters), and main issue no. 9: Green Belt, but restricted to matters of openness. The following documents are referenced:

- Proof of Evidence of Stephen Kirkpatrick;
- Proof of Evidence of Will Hossack; and
- 2 No. emails from Steven Sixmith (Shropshire Council GI Advisor) dated 14.08.2026 (CD17.4).

1.2. As part of this rebuttal in order to help address some of the matters raised in Mr Kirkpatrick's evidence, the following have been prepared and are appended to this rebuttal:

Appendix 1: Tranquility Plan; and

Appendix 2: Photowires and Photomontages.

1.3. Finally, this statement provides a brief response to the changes arising from the publication of NPPF (2026) (CD2.40) in relation to character and appearance, and green belt openness considerations.

2. Landscape and Visual Effects

2.1. This section covers matters raised in the proof of evidence of Mr Stephen Kirkpatrick.

Methodology and Assessment Approach

2.2. GLVIA3 deliberately avoids prescribing a universal matrix and there is no mandatory "Very Substantial" category, noting that the 2011 IEMA Report used by Mr Kirkpatrick to introduce this category predates GLVIA3 by 2 years and refers to all environmental studies covered by EIA development. The Appeal proposals have been confirmed (CD1.33) as not meeting the threshold for EIA. Consequently for these two reasons, I consider that Mr Kirkpatrick's use of a general EIA evaluation matrix has no relevance to this appeal.

2.3. The consequence of Mr Kirkpatrick's approach is to elevate visual effects to a level that is untenable. A 'very substantial' level of effect, greater than Major, would only be appropriate

for changes to the landscape that would be manifestly out of scale with their surroundings and affecting the highest sensitivity receptors e.g. oversized storage and distribution buildings in a small scale landscape, or commercial scale windfarms in close proximity to settlements. That is clearly not the case with the Proposed Development that is agreed by the Council to be located within a medium sensitivity landscape (Landscape Statement of Common Ground) and would predominantly comprise 2 to 2.5 storey residential development with some 3 storeys buildings as an extension to an existing settlement.

2.4. The criteria for assessing magnitude of visual change adopted by Mr Kirkpatrick at Annex 3 to the Landscape Statement of Common Ground, in contrast to the Appellant's methodology, do not fully reflect GLVIA3 requirements (paragraph 6.39–6.40) which include:

- identifying the degree of contrast or integration of any new features;
- the relative amount of time any changes would be experienced over;
- whether views would be full, partial, or glimpses; and
- geographic extent of change including angle of view, distance and extent of area over which changes would be visible.

2.5. The Council repeatedly places decisive weight upon selected locations where visibility is greatest. A representative viewpoint is not a receptor in itself and should not imply that the same magnitude applies throughout a road, footpath or settlement edge. The assessment must consider all of the elements of the GLVIA3 magnitude considerations, as set out above.

2.6. Current Landscape Institute guidance confirms that the focus of visual assessment should be the people experiencing the view, with viewpoints serving only as illustrations (LITGN-2024-01).

2.7. Mr Kirkpatrick's evidence identifies major effects on all the roads surrounding the Site, the settlement edge of Albrighton and also from public rights of way in the wider landscape. By contrast my evidence typically identifies moderate effects as the greatest change that would be experienced by visual receptors, with the exception of major adverse effects at Year 1 for users of the public footpaths at the southeast corner of the Site, where effects would reduce to a moderate level by Year 15 following the growth of mitigation planting. The deficiencies in

Mr Kirkpatrick's magnitude of change methodology may partially explain the different conclusions he reaches on visual effects, as he acknowledges at paragraph 3.1.1 of his proof.

Landscape Strategy

- 2.8. Mr Kirkpatrick repeatedly describes the landscape strategy of perimeter native woodland belts as having the effect to "wall-in" the proposed built development. Apart from this being pejorative rather than professional language, I note that boundary planting is a conventional means of reinforcing landscape structure, screening, filtering and softening views of development, defining a new settlement edge and providing both ecological and public amenity benefits.
- 2.9. Belts of woodland planting are also already present in the wider landscape including around the southern edge of Cosford Airfield, south of the A464 opposite the Site, and also further afield where belts of woodland link to larger blocks of woodland (see Figure 6 LVIA).
- 2.10. Planting is said by Mr Kirkpatrick to be harmful because it encloses and truncates views, but also ineffective because built development remains readily noticeable. As demonstrated by the photomontages (Appendix 2), where planting restricts views of built development it has little additional truncation effect of the view that inevitably occurs from the built development. Unlike Mr Kirkpatrick's evidence where there is no change between the year 1 and year 15 assessment, the appellant acknowledges residual adverse change to views from all receptors, relative to the baseline, however with reference to GLVIA3 magnitude of effect considerations, as set out above, the degree of contrast is reduced and consequently the degree of adverse effects is also reduced.
- 2.11. It is difficult to understand the rationale set out by Mr Kirkpatrick at 3.7.2 of his proof that he considers that the removal of surface water flowing across the fields would result in an adverse landscape character and ecology effect in terms of "*appreciating the seasonal change to the landscape*". Given that there is no public access across all but the southeast corner of the Site and some part of local roads are subject to seasonal flooding, I don't understand the rationale for the change being considered negative. The wet grassland, wildflower meadow and marginal planting within and bordering the SUDs basins will contribute to Biodiversity Net Gain and the Site would be open to public access where the seasonal changes in water levels within the SUDs basins could be appreciated. Some areas

of the SUDs basins could be created as permanent water features as part of the reserved matters detailed design.

Landscape Effects

Tranquillity

- 2.12. At para 3.10.2 Mr Kirkpatrick describes '*a sense of tranquillity away from Holyhead Road and the roads that define the Albrighton settlement edge*'; however with the exception of the public footpaths at the southeast corner of the Site that are close to existing highways, the land within the Site is not publicly accessible. In addition, an independent assessment of tranquillity by CPRE indicates that the whole Appeal Site has a below average tranquillity (**Appendix 1**).
- 2.13. Baseline tranquillity is also relevant for assessing the likely impacts of lighting and activity from the Proposed Development on the wider landscape where Mr Kirkpatrick unrealistically suggests at his para 5.1.12 that it is a material consideration that street lighting would detract from the quality of the night-time landscape from views more than 2km distant in the wider landscape, with reference to Viewpoint 12.
- 2.14. The concerns on street lighting impact are based on no nighttime assessment and in the absence of any proposed lighting scheme, which would be usual for an outline application.
- 2.15. With reference to Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 31-002-20191101 of Government planning practice guidance on light pollution¹ (CD2.43) covering the identification of factors that can be considered when assessing whether a development proposal might have implications for light pollution, I conclude that none of these factors would apply to the Proposed Development. i.e.:
- a) The new development, is unlikely to materially alter light levels in the environment around the site and/or have the potential to adversely affect the use or enjoyment of nearby buildings or open spaces;

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/light-pollution> (CD2.43).

- b) The impact of new lighting would not conflict with the needs of specialist facilities requiring low levels of surrounding light (such as observatories, airports and general aviation facilities);
- c) the proposed development is not in or near a protected area of dark sky or an intrinsically dark landscape where new lighting would be conspicuously out of keeping with local nocturnal light levels, making it desirable to minimise or avoid new lighting;
- d) given the potential to adopt a bat friendly lighting spectrum, the proposed development is unlikely to have a significant impact on any protected wildlife site or species; and
- e) the proposed development is unlikely to include smooth, reflective building materials, including large horizontal expanses of glass, particularly near water bodies.

Geographical Extent of Changes to Landscape Character

- 2.16. The Council combines areas with materially different relationships to the Site, including locations separated by roads, field boundaries, existing development and mature vegetation, and relies upon places of greatest visibility to characterise the entire area.
- 2.17. Mr Kirkpatrick expands the “immediate context” to include Green Lane, fields and properties along Holyhead Road, parts of Boningale, the surroundings of Lea Hall (private) and land east of Newhouse Lane. He then applies a high magnitude of change across that enlarged receptor and concludes that major adverse effects would remain at Year 15, ignoring the influence of the growth of mitigation planting that would notably reduce the influence of built form set back into the Site, as demonstrated in my visibility sections in my evidence and the visualisations from Viewpoints 1 and 7 at **Appendix 2**.
- 2.18. My evidence adopts a graduated distinction between the Site, its immediate vicinity and the wider countryside. It recognises a major adverse effect within the Site, a moderate adverse effect in the immediate vicinity at Year 1 reducing to minor adverse at Year 15, and negligible effects upon the wider countryside.
- 2.19. The updated LiDAR ZTVs, summer photography and visibility sections provide evidence demonstrate a localised visual envelope and further reduction following establishment of

mitigation planting. This evidence is reinforced by the visualisations from selected viewpoints (**Appendix 2**).

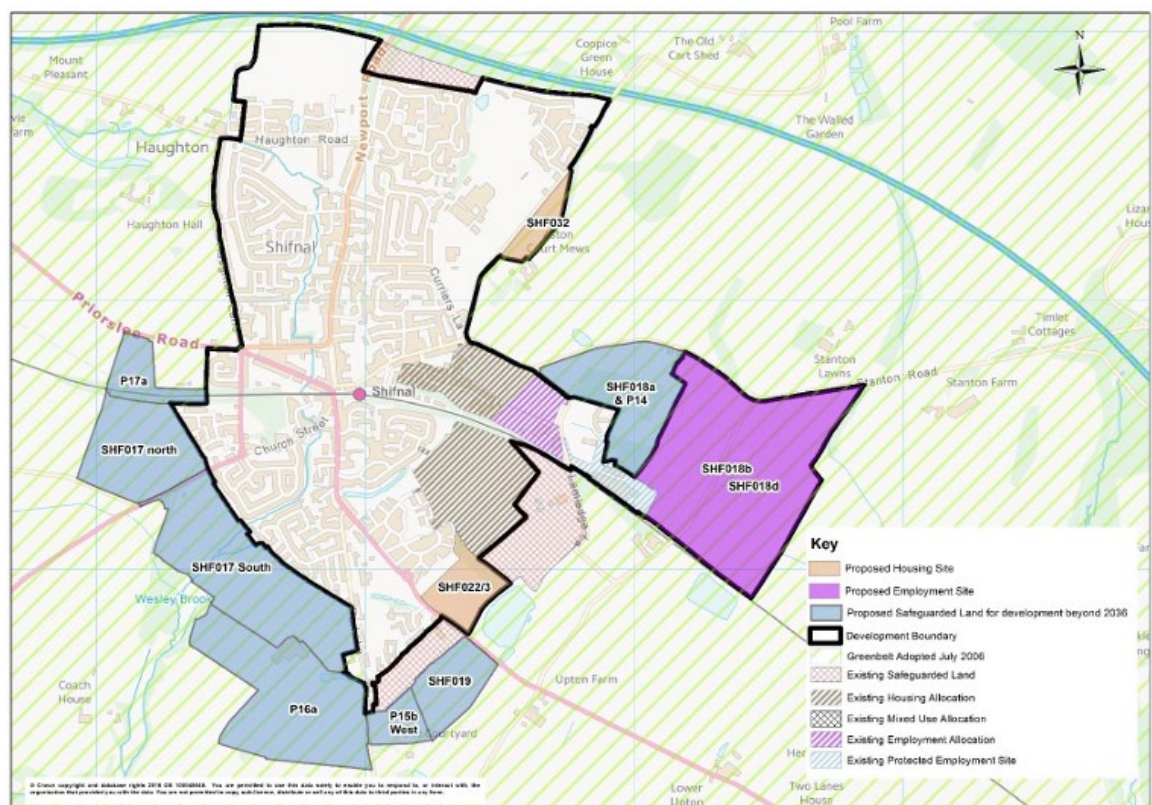
- 2.20. The Council predicts moderate adverse landscape character effects across the wider countryside while accepting negligible or no effects at a number of more distant visual receptors. Where visibility is intermittent, screened, oblique or negligible over large parts of the wider landscape, a moderate change to the wider landscape as a whole is not a conclusion that is supported by the evidence base.

Impact on Settlement Character

- 2.21. Apart from the 'new town' settlements, most settlements in the UK have experienced, incremental growth at varying rates over time, reflecting the demand for housing. The Guiding Principles Document at page 13 demonstrates the 20th century expansion of Albrighton more than trebled the size of the 19th century village.
- 2.22. In terms of Mr Kirkpatrick's reference to nucleated settlements in the landscape character type, the scale of the settlement growth proposed at the appeal site would not be uncharacteristic. My statement is evidenced by Council support for the expansion of Shifnal. Whilst Shifnal is a small town, not a village, and was slightly larger than Albrighton prior to its recent growth phase, it is nonetheless a nucleated settlement located in the same landscape character type as the Appeal Site and surrounded by Green Belt.
- 2.23. Shifnal was historically a small, nucleated settlement and has seen significant new housing development since 2010, after which it experienced strategic expansion associated with the Shropshire Core Strategy and SAMDev allocations. Shropshire Council in 2018 recognised that the release of Green Belt land was needed to meet what, were in 2018, significantly lower housing requirements than the current time.
- 2.24. With reference to the Shropshire Local Plan Review: Consultation on Preferred Sites November 2018 (Page 163–171 of CD11.27), the overall areas for the proposed employment and residential allocations in Shifnal totalled 46.3 hectares, and in addition a further 88.5 hectares was identified as safeguarded land. By contrast, Albrighton has seen very modest planned and unplanned growth since 2010. The total area of permitted schemes at Albrighton had a combined total of less than 10 hectares, including land north of Kingswood Road

(24/02662/OUT) and Land East of Shaw Lane (23/02095/OUT). For comparison, the Appeal Site covers 47.3 hectares.

- 2.25. The proposed pattern and quantum of development within the Appeal Site would be similar to the easterly expansion of Shifnal, promoted by the Council, with reference to the map at page 169 of CD11.27 (extract below). I note however that the Appeal Site would be contained by the A454 and woodland planting to the south, whereas at Shifnal the most easterly expansion, comprising a large employment site, is only partly contained by a belt of woodland planting with the remainder of the boundary crossing open farmland.



- 2.26. It is important to recognise that the perception of change to settlement pattern should predominantly be from how it would be experienced on the ground and not simply restricted to a two dimensional plan.
- 2.27. There would be no physical coalescence with the hamlet of Boningale and the limited intervisibility between part of the southern edge of the Proposed Development and Boningale would be very localised at Year 1, and further mitigated over time by the growth of a 30m deep woodland belt along the southern boundary of the Site.

- 2.28. In terms of perception of the Appeal Site from the existing settlement edge this would be limited and localised (Viewpoints 1 and 2). As part of the Proposed Development, less people in vehicles would travel along Patshull Road and Newhouse Lane. Gaps in existing hedgerows would be infilled and new native planting would be implemented to reinforce the green character of the routes.
- 2.29. New built form would be more clearly visible along Cross Lane, already bounded by ribbon development, in the form of residential and employment uses. Mitigation measures include retention of the majority of the boundary hedgerows and when combined with the new planting and flat topography, would restrict views of the full extent of the new development.

Visual Effects

Visual Magnitude of Change and Visual Effect

- 2.30. Mr Kirpatrick's additional annotation on the LVIA annotated views, covering what he claims to be the extent of built development visible, is a misrepresentation of the Proposed Development.
- 2.31. In order to illustrate a more accurate extent of built development visible, including the screening and filtering effects of existing and proposed planting, I have prepared a series of photowires and photomontages from representative viewpoints (**Appendix 2**). The reduction in visibility is also demonstrated at my Figures 1-6: LiDAR ZTV and Visibility Sections appended to my evidence.
- 2.32. By Year 15, woodland belts, hedgerow reinforcement and internal tree planting would reduce the proportion of built form visible, interrupt continuous rooflines and integrate development with existing vegetation.
- 2.33. At Viewpoint 1, the Council treats the change at one location as representative of Albrighton as a whole. My assessment of moderate adverse change considers the receptor experience along the publicly accessible settlement edge, the limited geographical area affected, and the nature of the incidental view through a gappy hedgerow across a mini-roundabout (See photowire from Viewpoint 1 at **Appendix 2**). By contrast the Council considers the change to views from the settlement as 'Very Substantial adverse' which is the highest level of possible impact.

- 2.34. At Viewpoints 7 and 8, the Council assess 'Very substantial adverse' Year 1 effects from short sections of footpath close to the proposed spine road. Woodland belts would substantially reduce housing visibility by Year 15 (see photowire from Viewpoint 7 at **Appendix 2**), while the road crossing would remain apparent, supporting my residual moderate adverse effect, however the effect assessed by the Council remains Very Substantial adverse.
- 2.35. At Viewpoint 12 (See photomontage at **Appendix 2**), the Site forms only part of a broad panoramic scene containing pylons in the foreground and middleground of the view, the RAF Cosford hangar and the H.L. Smith depot beyond the Site. New development would sit below the horizon against a backdrop of existing vegetation. The Council's major adverse effect contrasts with my assessment where I consider oblique distant glimpses of the proposed development would constitute a negligible adverse effect.
- 2.36. Along the A464, visibility varies substantially between Viewpoints 9, 13, 14 and 17 and road users would experience views fleetingly. I consider there would be a moderate effect at Year 1, reducing to minor effect at Year 15, and this assessment better reflects the receptor experience than the Council's assessment that the effects would be major adverse at Year 1, remaining unchanged by Year 15, despite the growth of mitigation planting. The changes are illustrated in my visibility sections (Figure 6 of my evidence) from Viewpoints 9 and 17, noting that at viewpoints 13 and 14, views of new development would be fully restricted by a 30m deep woodland belt.
- 2.37. For Cross Road, Patshull Road and Newhouse Lane, my evidence recognises clear changes at junctions, gaps and spine-road crossings but also accounts for existing hedgerows, retained trees, ribbon development and reduced vehicular traffic where lanes would become green routes. Replanting hedgerow gaps with native shrubs and trees would substantially reduce views of the new built development over time.

3. Green Belt Openness Effects

Introduction

- 3.1. This section responds only to Mr Hossack's proof of evidence, restricted to his assessment of Green Belt openness. It does not address submissions on whether the Site is considered grey belt, Green Belt purposes, or the overall planning balance.

Spatial openness

- 3.2. The Appellant accepts an inevitable reduction in spatial openness within the Site. The disagreement with the Council is the degree of harm and its geographical significance. Mr Hossack treats the quantum of built form and permanence as substantially determinative, but gives insufficient weight to containment, relationship to Albrighton and the retention of sizeable undeveloped areas within the scheme (Hossack, paras 5.18–5.24).
- 3.3. The proposal is physically related to the existing settlement edge, safeguarded/potential development land and existing ribbon development, rather than being an isolated incursion. A notable part of the Site remains undeveloped as public open space and Green Infrastructure, with existing vegetation retained and strengthened.
- 3.4. The new outer edge of the expanded settlement would follow recognisable road corridors and would be reinforced by woodland and hedgerow planting. Those features do not remove spatial harm, but they materially contain its perception and define a durable new settlement edge.
- 3.5. The Appellant's reference to the proportion of the wider Green Belt is not advanced as a mathematical answer to openness (Hossack, para 5.19). It is context for the geographical extent of change. The correct conclusion is that spatial openness is reduced materially within the Site, but the effect on appreciation of the remaining Green Belt is limited and localised.

Visual openness

- 3.6. Whilst Mr Hossack is correct that openness is not synonymous with landscape quality and that absence of visibility does not remove spatial harm. However, he then underplays the evidence on the actual visibility of the development when judging the visual aspect of openness (Hossack, paras 5.11–5.17 and 5.25–5.39).

- 3.7. Existing hedgerows, trees, landform and built development already limit the opportunity to appreciate the Site as part of a wide, continuous Green Belt. Updated LiDAR ZTVs appended to my evidence (Figures 1–4), demonstrate that potential visibility beyond the Site is geographically localised and reduces further with the proposed planting. Much theoretical visibility is over private farmland without public access.
- 3.8. The Appellant does not claim that planting restores openness. It reduces the proportion and prominence of built form and therefore the visual perception of openness harm over time. Mr Hossack’s criticism (Hossack, paras 5.25 and 5.38), that visual openness must include views from private land does not alter the physical visibility evidence. Public viewpoints are used to understand how openness is experienced, while the ZTV and sections test the wider geographical envelope. There is no evidential basis for converting unexperienced theoretical visibility across private fields into “substantial” visual harm.

Permanence and Activity

- 3.9. The development would be permanent and would generate more activity than agricultural use. Those matters are accepted. They do not, however, establish the degree of openness harm without considering where activity would be perceived and how it would be contained (Hossack, paras 5.40–5.44).
- 3.10. Vehicle activity is concentrated on the spine road and access points. The majority of perception from the wider Green Belt would be screened or filtered by retained and proposed vegetation.
- 3.11. Patshull Road and Newhouse Lane are converted to Green Routes with through traffic removed, reducing traffic activity along those corridors and increasing walking and cycling opportunities.
- 3.12. The scheme replaces private farmland with accessible open space and new pedestrian routes. Activity associated with recreation and public access is a Green Belt benefit, even though it forms part of a permanent mixed-use development.

4. Green Infrastructure comments

- 4.1. The Council Green Infrastructure comments comprise two emails from Steven Sixsmith dated 14 August 2026 (CD17.4).
- 4.2. It is unclear why the comments from Mr Sixsmith are being raised at such a late stage, particularly as he has been advising myself on green infrastructure matters on other outline planning applications in Shropshire much earlier this year. Mr Sixsmith comments also contrast with the Committee Report, where the provision of further details was always recognised, and it was stated at para 4.1.12:
- "The Illustrative Landscape Masterplan is a generally well-considered scheme, further details would be required to expand it into a final Landscape Plan."*
- 4.3. The application is in outline and the Parameter Plan fixes the principal disposition of land uses and development zones, while the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan and Environmental Enhancement Strategy demonstrate one way in which the landscape framework could be delivered. Detailed street typologies, path alignments, planting layouts, play provision, SuDS design and the treatment of the school, care home and local centre remain matters for subsequent approval.
- 4.4. The Council requests stronger connections between streets, internal open spaces and perimeter corridors (CD17.4). The Appellant evidence already establishes the strategic network: retained and reinforced hedgerows; woodland belts along Newhouse Lane and the A464; Green Routes along Patshull Road and Newhouse Lane; tree-lined principal streets; SuDS corridors; and links to the wider highway and footpath network. Detailed secondary links can be fixed through reserved-matters layouts without altering the development parameters.
- 4.5. The request for additional street trees and shade along walking routes is consistent with the Appellant strategy, which already anticipates tree-lined streets, woodland, hedgerow trees and a community orchard (CD17.4 – GI Comments 1, pages 2–3). The detailed locations, species and service clearances are covered at reserved matters stage.
- 4.6. The suggestion to distribute SuDS through permeable paving, tree pits, rain gardens and swales is a detailed design opportunity, not evidence that the outline drainage and landscape strategy is deficient (CD17.4 – GI Comments 2, page 1). The Appellant's landscape strategy

already proposes basins, swales, wet meadow and marginal planting to provide amenity and biodiversity benefits.

- 4.7. The Council seeks clearer demonstration of LAP, LEAP, NEAP, youth and informal recreation catchments and references local and national standards (CD17.4 – GI Comments 1, page 3; GI Comments 2, pages 1–2). My evidence identifies a NEAP, potential LEAPs and LAPs, play-on-the-way opportunities and flexibility to accommodate allotments or other open-space uses. There would also be flexibility to accommodate a MUGA if required e.g. to the south of the school. Flat informal recreation areas can be incorporated within the substantial open-space network when detailed levels and drainage are designed.
- 4.8. The detailed play typology, catchments and equipment can be secured through a combined open-space, play and phasing condition.
- 4.9. In conclusion these late comments from the Council should be considered as detailed observations upon how the illustrative scheme might be developed at the reserved matters stage, rather than evidence that the outline parameters are incapable of delivering an acceptable green infrastructure strategy. An appropriately worded condition requiring the landscape scheme to be broadly in accordance with the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan, is proposed.



Appendices (see separate Volume 2)

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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