

Landscape and Visual Proof of Evidence

Patshull Road, Albrighton, Shropshire.

On behalf of Boningale Developments Ltd.

Volume 1: Text

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Contents

1.	Introduction.....	3
2.	Development Proposals	11
3.	Landscape Effects.....	21
4.	Visual Effects.....	27
5.	Green Belt Openness.....	36
6.	Interested Party comments.....	39
7.	Summary and Conclusions.....	41

Appendices (see Separate Volume 2)

Figure 1: LIDAR ZTV with 2 storey buildings at Year 1

Figure 2: LIDAR ZTV with 2 storey buildings at Year 15

Figure 3: LIDAR ZTV with 3 storey buildings at Year 1

Figure 4: LIDAR ZTV with 3 storey buildings at Year 15

Figure 5: Summer and Winter photos (Viewpoints 1–20)

Figure 6: Visibility Sections

1. Introduction

Witness Background

- 1.1. My name is Neil Robert Furber and I am a Senior Director at Pegasus Group. I hold a Bachelor of Science (Dual Hons) in Landscape Design and Plant Science from Sheffield University (1992–1995) and a Postgraduate Diploma in Landscape Architecture from Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education (1997). I became a Chartered Landscape Architect of the Landscape Institute in 2002.
- 1.2. I have acted as a landscape expert witness on many occasions for both developer and Local Planning Authority clients since 2002. Until recently, I was a Supervisor employed by the Landscape Institute for 8 years, where I assessed the submission of candidates and their mentors seeking to become Chartered Landscape Architects. I have also had inputs at the consultation stage of a number technical guidance notes issued by the Landscape Institute.
- 1.3. I have over 25 years' continuous experience as a Landscape Architect working on a wide variety of projects across all the major development sectors, including extensive experience of the landscape design and assessment of many consented residential developments on both greenfield and brownfield sites. These developments have been at varying scales and include input at key stages of the South Worcester Sustainable Urban Extension, the Ashford Barracks redevelopment in Kent and the Longbridge car factory mixed-use redevelopment in the Midlands.
- 1.4. Over the past few years I have been involved in the landscape assessment and design of residential schemes across Shropshire and South Staffordshire, a number of projects which are still to be determined. I was the landscape lead consultant and expert witness on the 70 unit residential scheme for full planning permission at Tilstock for Boningale Developments Limited that was consented following public inquiry in October 2025 (CD16.1).
- 1.5. The evidence which I have prepared and provide in this Proof of Evidence is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution. I also confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

Material Submitted

- 1.6. Pegasus were instructed by Boningale Homes Limited, a sister company of Boningale Developments Ltd, in early 2024 to prepare the landscape design and assessment submission for the application and were subsequently appointed to prepare this Proof of Evidence and appear at the Public Inquiry.
- 1.7. I was responsible for the preparation of the submitted Landscape and Visual impact Assessment (“LVIA”– CD11.3) assisted by colleagues with the baseline aspects of the assessment and the supporting illustrative material. I visited the Site and surrounding area in early March 2024 and captured the photography. The LVIA was undertaken in accordance with best practice guidance and describes the surrounding landscape context with an assessment of the effects of the scheme upon landscape and visual receptors with reference to the Indicative Framework Plan (CD6.9).
- 1.8. An Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (CD11.31) and Environmental Enhancement Strategy (EES) (CD11.32) were prepared in 2024 by Chartered Landscape Architects at Pegasus, with my input. This plan and strategy provide information on a potential landscape strategy that could be developed further as part of a reserved matters application were the scheme to be granted permission. The EES defines a series of site character areas and explains how the landscape strategy relates to planning policy, site constraints and opportunities, landscape character, ecology, recreation and public art.
- 1.9. Minor changes were undertaken in July 2026 to both the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (CD11.17) and Environmental Enhancement Strategy (EES) (CD11.18) in order that they better aligned with the Illustrative Framework Plan (CD6.5) and the updated Parameter Plan (CD6.6). The changes comprised:
 - Minor changes to the indicative play strategy that would be further detailed as part of any reserved matters planning application;
 - Minor update to the southern extent of the School site and addition of indicative vehicular access; and
 - Small extension of BNG area to the southeast of the Site on land within the client ownership to reflect updates to the BNG strategy.

- 1.10. I have reviewed the minor changes to the updated Parameters Plan (CD6.6) and updated Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (CD11.17) in light of the original LVIA assessment and confirm that there would be no changes to the level of effects that have been identified for each landscape and visual receptor scoped into the assessment.
- 1.11. I was the joint-author of the Pegasus Green Belt assessment (CD11.13) and associated appendices (CD11.14–CD11.16) that was prepared in March 2025 following publication of the updated Planning Practice Guidance Note on Green Belt (CD2.21).

Consultation Responses

- 1.12. A review of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was undertaken by ESP Ltd on behalf of Shropshire Council (CD17.3). In response, I prepared a clarification note (CD11.12) that concluded that no revisions to the LVIA were necessary and that many of the issues raised by ESP Ltd, fell outside the scope of an outline planning application and could be dealt with as part of a future reserved matters submission.
- 1.13. The original Environmental Enhancement Strategy (EES) (CD11.32) appears not to have been considered by ESP Ltd during its review. I requested that the Council consider the EES and confirm whether its findings alter any of the concerns expressed within the review.
- 1.14. An area of disagreement concerned the absence of a separate assessment of construction phase effects. Pegasus notes that the LVIA expressly assessed operational effects at Year 1 and Year 15 only, explaining that construction effects are temporary, short-term and are typically addressed through a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). Because the application is in outline form, construction methodology and mitigation measures would be developed and agreed through conditions attached to any planning permission and subsequently secured through the reserved matters process. I consider that construction impacts are unlikely to exceed the effects identified for Year 1 following completion, and therefore the worst-case scenario has already been assessed. Measures such as temporary bunding, hoarding and tree protection in accordance with BS5837 would be incorporated into a CEMP if consent were granted.
- 1.15. In relation to criticism that the study area had not been defined, my response referred to the LVIA's identification of a preliminary 2-kilometre radius study area that was used to assess baseline conditions, planning policy context, nearby settlements and publicly accessible

views. I therefore conclude that the extent of the assessment area was clearly stated and no additional clarification is required. The fact that single public right of way just outside the 2km boundary was scoped into the assessment doesn't alter my judgement that the appropriate receptors were scoped into the LVIA.

- 1.16. ESP Ltd questioned the robustness of the landscape assessment and suggested that separate consideration should be given to effects at Year 1 and Year 15. I rejected this criticism and explained that separate assessments at Year 1 and Year 15 are only necessary where landscape receptors materially change over time. Permanent effects associated with alterations to land cover, topography and water features do not vary between Year 1 and Year 15 and consequently retain the same assessment outcome. The LVIA already distinguishes between the immediate effects of tree and hedgerow removal and the longer-term benefits resulting from replacement planting. I therefore maintain that the LVIA appropriately and adequately addresses both short-term and long-term landscape effects without requiring additional assessment.
- 1.17. ESP Ltd requested that additional viewpoints should be included near individual residential properties, including locations north of representative Viewpoint 6 and adjacent to The Sheiling on Cross Road. I disputed the need for these additional viewpoints and cited established planning principles that there is no private right to a view with reference to Landscape Institute guidance distinguishing public visual effects from private residential amenity considerations (TGN 02/19 – CD11.23). I noted that residential properties were not identified as separate visual receptors and that the Council has not requested a specific Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA). Consequently, it is considered that additional viewpoints centred on individual dwellings would not materially assist understanding of the development's visual effects.
- 1.18. ESP Ltd raised concerns regarding the consistency of magnitude of change assessments between viewpoints. Pegasus refers to recent Landscape Institute guidance which emphasises that visual assessment should focus primarily on receptors, namely the people experiencing the view, rather than on viewpoints themselves (para 6(7) TGN 2024-01 – CD11.20). Viewpoints are described as illustrative tools used to demonstrate effects experienced by receptors. I explained that differences in magnitude ratings between viewpoints arise because receptors experience the development differently. In the example cited by ESP Ltd views associated with Viewpoint 1 are experienced fleetingly from a footway

and road junction, whereas other viewpoints represent different circumstances. Pegasus therefore concludes that the LVIA methodology is consistent and accords with accepted professional practice.

- 1.19. In response to criticism regarding the omission of direction-of-view information, I note that the relevant Landscape Institute guidance (TGN 06/19 – CD11.24) is currently under review. I concluded that the combination of viewpoint coordinates, panoramic photography and annotated site references provides sufficient information to allow readers to understand the location and orientation of each view.
- 1.20. ESP Ltd. also referred to the absence of a cumulative impact assessment. I responded that the proposal does not constitute Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development and the Council acknowledged that a cumulative assessment was not required in this case. On that basis, Pegasus concludes that no further work is necessary.
- 1.21. With regard to landscape mitigation, ESP Ltd. suggested strengthening roadside hedgerows adjacent to properties on Patshull Road and requested additional information relating to planting proposals. Pegasus accepts that further opportunities for hedgerow reinforcement could be explored and agrees that detailed planting specifications, species schedules, densities and implementation details would ultimately be required. However, such information is appropriately provided at reserved matters stage rather than as part of the current outline application.
- 1.22. The final section of the clarification note addresses policy concerns raised under Policies CS5, CS6, CS17, MD2 and MD12 but lacks any rationale. In relation to Green Belt policy and environmental protection policies, I considered that ESP did not identify what specific adverse effects are regarded as unacceptable, nor what additional mitigation would be necessary to render those impacts acceptable. Similar concerns are raised regarding references to sustainable design and natural environment policies, where I questioned why further construction-stage information would be necessary at outline application stage. I considered that detailed landscape design measures would be secured through reserved matters and therefore the ability of the scheme to achieve broad policy compliance should be assessed in that context.
- 1.23. Overall, I concluded that the submitted LVIA is proportionate, methodologically sound and compliant with professional guidance and that the concerns raised by ESP Ltd. either stem

from misunderstandings of the assessment methodology or seek information that would ordinarily be provided at later stages of the planning process. It was concluded that no further assessment work or supporting material was required to inform the likely landscape and visual effects.

Reasons for Refusal, Main Issues and Committee Report

- 1.24. The full reasons for refusal (RfR) are set out in the Council's Statement of Case (CD3.2), with RfR 1 being relevant to landscape and visual matters, with my emphasis underlined:

"The Proposed Development site is wholly located in Green Belt countryside outside of any settlement development boundary which is not safeguarded or allocated land, and is not regarded as being grey belt.... In addition to the proposal being inappropriate development in the Green Belt, it would result in harm to the character and appearance of the area.The Proposed Development will conflict with Policies CS1, CS3, CS5, CS6 and CS17 of the adopted Shropshire Council Core Strategy, and MD1, MD3, MD6, MD7a and S1 of the SAMDev Plan, in addition to the policies within the NPPF taken as a whole. Even in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and associated tilted balance, it is not considered that the benefits of the scheme warrant a departure from the Development Plan."

- 1.25. The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area is identified as main issue no. 4 in the Inspectors Post CMC Note (CD1.9).
- 1.26. RfR 2 covers Green Belt which repeats the assertion that the Council do not regard the Site as grey belt and Megan Wilson for the Appellant covers these considerations in her planning evidence (CD1.10). In the event that the Inspector were to agree with the Council that the Site was not grey belt and the proposals were therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt, Megan Wilson demonstrates in her evidence why the Appellant considers that the Proposed Development should be approved under Very Special Circumstances (VSC). In this context with reference to my Green Belt Assessment (CD11.13), my evidence summarises the impact of the Proposed Development upon the spatial and visual aspects of openness in order to inform the VSC case. Green Belt matters as far they concern planning analysis and judgements are covered in the evidence of Ms Megan Wilson (CD1.10).
- 1.27. Harm to the openness of the Green Belt if the proposal were to be considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt is covered under Main Issue no. 9 in the Inspectors Post CMC Note (CD1.9).

Committee Report (CD1.6)

- 1.28. The Committee Report did not consider that the responses and actions tabled in the Landscape and Visual Clarification Note adequately responded to the original concerns on some LVIA matters, however the Committee Report considered that the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan is a 'generally well considered scheme'. It stated at paragraph 4.1.12:

"The methodology of the LVIA generally follows national guidance. The landscape assessment results are not robust at present and should be expanded to take account of 'Stages in the project life cycle' (GLVIA3). There is no assessment of effects during the construction phase which may give rise to major adverse visual impacts from some receptors. Additional and alternative viewpoints are identified for inclusion in the LVIA. Minor amendments are required to the LVIA and LVIA Figures to ensure that the results can be relied upon to assess whether the proposals comply with Local Plan policies relating to landscape and visual matters. The Illustrative Landscape Masterplan is a generally well-considered scheme, further details would be required to expand it into a final Landscape Plan. The assessment of landscape and visual effects fails to demonstrate that the unacceptable adverse environmental impacts will be adequately mitigated in land designated as Green Belt."

Rule 6 Statement of Case (CD3.3)

- 1.29. Paragraph 4.4 states that ADAG will present evidence to show that the proposed development cannot be accommodated in this location, without unacceptable impacts on the surrounding area. No reference is made to character and appearance or landscape and visual impacts in their Statement of Case.
- 1.30. Commentary has been provided by the Rule 6 party on the scale of the Proposed Development however this is specifically related to sustainability (at paragraphs 4.6 and 4.7), and existing facilities (paragraph 4.13), and not character or appearance.

Scope of this Evidence

- 1.31. In addressing the reasons for refusal and main issues identified by the Inspector that are relevant to my area of expertise, I have supplemented my evidence with more detailed Zones of Theoretical Visibility of different building heights based on LiDAR data and also including the growth of proposed woodland mitigation at Year 15 (**Figures 1-4**).

- 1.32. As requested by the Inspector, I have also updated the photography that now includes summer views, in addition to the original winter views taken in early March 2024 and these are displayed sequentially in order that the seasonal effects of vegetation cover can be appreciated (**Figure 5**).
- 1.33. Given the level of disagreement in the Landscape Statement of Common Ground (CD4.9) and in order to assist the Inspector's assessment on the extent of visibility of the Proposed Development, I have prepared a series of visibility sections from key viewpoints (**Figure 6**). These cross sections have focussed on the viewpoint locations where the difference in visual assessment conclusions, as set out in the Landscape Statement of Common Ground (CD4.9) were the greatest between the Council and the Appellant.
- 1.34. Buildings on the visibility sections have been shown at maximum heights i.e. 3 storey (12.3m high) and 2.5 storey (9.2m), recognising that many of the buildings across the Site would be at 2 storey with some single storey elements. Proposed planting has been shown at Year 15 with street trees at 8m tall and native woodland 9-10m tall. From past experience I consider that these growth rates are realistic based on a range of stock sizes at planting and inclusion of some faster growing species such as birch, willow and aspen, in addition to slower growing species such as oak.
- 1.35. To clearly demonstrate the implications of the outline landscape strategy, with particular reference to perimeter planting and integration with highways and drainage considerations, my evidence at Section 2 expands on the landscape design principles of the scheme contained in the EES and LVIA.
- 1.36. My evidence provides reasoned justification at Sections 3 and 4 as to why I assess, in accordance with best practice guidance, that the Proposed Development would have only localised adverse effects upon landscape character and visual amenity beyond the site boundary, that would be reduced over time by the landscape mitigation strategy that has guided the development layout. At Section 5, I cover Green Belt Openness, and at Section 6 I set out my response to Interested Parties comments.

2. Development Proposals

Introduction

- 2.1. A description of the Appeal Site (“Appeal Site / Site”) is set out at Section 3 of the Planning Statement of Common Ground (CD4.1) and a Summary of the Appeal Proposals is set out at Section 1.4 of the Appellant Statement of Case (CD3.1).
- 2.2. The Illustrative Framework Plan (CD6.5) and Parameter Plan (CD6.6) prepared by Marrons was informed by an Opportunities and Constraints plan (CD6.2). The supporting Guiding Design Principles and Contextual Responsiveness Document (CD6.4) describes how the Proposed Development would respect and respond to the character of the existing settlement.
- 2.3. The Proof of Evidence of Mr Luke Hillson for the Appellant (CD1.12) covers the existing built context and describes how the Proposed Development is considered to represent an appropriate extension to the village in terms of location, pattern, grain and density. A landscape-led approach to the site layout was adopted which incorporated green infrastructure corridors throughout the development, including retention of the majority of existing hedgerows and tree cover.

Construction Phase

- 2.4. Construction effects were not fully assessed in the original LVIA as the project was scoped as not requiring an EIA and insufficient information was available at the time to provide any useful assessment beyond the generic, which is typically the case with residential projects at outline application stage.
- 2.5. The following parameters with regard to the Construction Phase are summarised below.
- The Proposed Development is likely to be phased over a period of approximately 10 years (see CD6.7) with 100 units a year being the anticipated build-out rate;
 - The Spine road would be implemented as part of Phase 1 and would take construction traffic from the A464;
 - A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) would be a condition to any consent to minimise adverse effects upon existing vegetation to be retained

and to minimise the visual effects of the construction phase upon residents, road users, and local public rights of way users. There would also be consideration on the control of working hours and temporary lighting during hours of dusk in order to minimise adverse amenity effects and impacts on tranquillity;

- Temporary construction compounds would be located within the phases that are under construction and would be screened with hoarding where there are potential for views of construction activity from public and private visual receptors to minimise landscape and visual effects; and
- Where possible, advance planting of perimeter woodland would be adopted to minimise adverse effects upon the wider landscape of later construction phases.

2.6. In conclusion, the key aspects of the construction phase such as the removal of vegetation and modifications to ground levels have been covered as part of the Year 1 assessment in the LVIA. The additional landscape and visual impact of construction level effects as a result of construction activity and resulting temporary lighting and noise would be controlled to acceptable levels through the adoption of a CEMP condition.

Illustrative Landscape Design Strategy

2.7. My inputs into an integrated multi-functional green infrastructure (GI) strategy have involved liaison with the wider team including arboriculturalists, ecologists, highway and drainage engineers and urban designers.

2.8. The principles of the illustrative landscape strategy are set out in the EES (CD11.18) and shown on the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (CD11.17). The following section of my evidence provides a detailed description of the rationale for the landscape strategy, with a focus on perimeter planting that would provide screening and filtering of the new development in views from the surrounding landscape. The planting would also help define a new settlement boundary, aligned to existing road corridors.

2.9. The strategy for the public open space that includes improving public access to the Site whilst providing opportunities for play and public art is also briefly summarised.

Landscape Strategy at Site Perimeter

- 2.10. The following section of my evidence is illustrated with extracts (not to scale) from the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (CD11.17)

Southern Site boundary along the A464 Holyhead Road

- 2.11. The existing roadside hedgerow with trees that follows the Site boundary at the western end of the Site would be retained up to the new roundabout junction where the access road would require the removal of a section of hedgerow that typically does not contain trees. A group of trees to the southeast of the roundabout junction (G7) would need to be removed to accommodate the new SUDs and visibility splays. The mitigation for this vegetation loss would also reinforce the new settlement boundary and would comprise belts of new native woodland planting, up to 10m deep, set behind the visibility splays within the Site. The existing tree and hedgerow planting to the south of the A464 would also be reinforced with new planting (within the blue line land).



- 2.12. At the proposed roundabout junction, the need to protect the amenity of existing dwellings (Nos 4 and 5 Holyhead Road) has been recognised. The dwellings currently face directly onto the A464 and are only separated from the carriageway by a footway. As part of the new junction design, the existing road would be removed in this location, and new planting implemented to provide a screen between the two dwellings and the roundabout.
- 2.13. Further east along the A464, opposite Lea Manor Gardens, the existing tall hedge to the Site boundary would be maintained and gapped up where required. New built development would

be set back circa 20m into the Site and additional groups of tree planting around the SUDs features would help to soften any limited glimpses towards the upper storeys of new development that is likely to comprise buildings 1-2 storeys high.



- 2.14. North of Lea House and Lea Hall the Site boundary diverts from the A464 and follows field boundary planting beyond the property curtilages. East of the junction with Newhouse Lane the Site boundary rejoins the A464 where a low clipped hedgerow, depending on the time of year, currently allows views across the Site from the road corridor. In this location, a 30m deep woodland belt is proposed that would enclose an area of public open space including a SUDs basin. A 10m deep woodland belt would be located east of the junction with Newhouse Lane, between the curtilage of the existing property and the new road junction.



Eastern Site boundary including Newhouse Lane and the new Spine Road

- 2.15. The majority of the eastern boundary of the Site follows Newhouse Lane with the northern site boundary adjoining land that is subject to a planning application by Taylor Wimpey for housing and public open space (25/04584/OUT– the application was refused on 31/07/26). A plan of the 25/04584/OUT site relative to the appeal proposal is shown below.



- 2.16. The Site boundary along Newhouse Lane currently comprises a mature, clipped hedgerow with occasional hedgerow trees and groups of trees. The proposed built development would be set back into the Site and the illustrative proposals include a woodland belt, typically 10m in depth. At the southeastern end of the Site additional woodland planting is proposed along the new spine road to the west of New House Lane, which in conjunction with other native planting proposed to the east of the New House Lane corridor, would provide a strong new defensible boundary to the Green Belt. The new planting would also assist in softening and eventually restricting views of new built development on the Site from the wider countryside to the east of the Site.



Western Site boundary along Cross Road

- 2.17. The northern tip of the Site south of the mini-roundabout junction of Patshull Road and Cross Road is proposed as a community green space, mirroring the public open space to the east of Patshull Road that includes a small area of open space with picnic tables overlooking a pond.



- 2.18. The existing built development context further south along Cross Road includes intermittent ribbon development beyond the existing settlement boundary comprising residential dwellings, light industrial units and a commercial unit. There would be very limited opportunities for views of the proposed built development from the wider countryside to the east. Given the visual context and presence of this ribbon development between the Site and the wider countryside, extensive screen planting is not considered necessary along the western boundary.
- 2.19. The overall landscape strategy along the western site boundary is to retain the existing native hedgerow where possible and reinforce with additional planting where necessary including the introduction of new hedgerow trees within a 5m wide landscape buffer. The Proposed Development would be set back into the Site and tree planting along the new road and within the public open space would assist in integrating the Proposed Development into the local context.



Northern Site boundary

- 2.20. Mature field boundary hedgerows with trees follow the application boundary to the north of the site adjacent to potential development land subject to a planning application by Taylor Wimpey (25/04584/OUT) and Safeguarded land in the local development plan adjacent to Cross Road.
- 2.21. The existing vegetation would be retained with a circa 5m wide landscaped buffer adjacent to proposed residential development within the Site, noting that within the Secondary School Site the detailed layout would likely incorporate additional peripheral landscaping and playing fields.

Public Open Space and Access

- 2.22. Both Patshull Road and New House Lane are proposed to be downgraded to footpath/cycleways with vehicular access to the existing dwellings only. Existing vegetation along both routes would be retained, managed and reinforced with new planting where required including the gapping up of hedgerows with new shrubs and the planting of hedgerow trees.
- 2.23. The spine road and main streets within the development blocks would be tree lined to comply with the NPPF (2024). The root protection areas to all existing trees to be retained

would be respected in line with the Arboricultural Assessment (CD10.1–10.3). I also consider that with appropriate species choices, adequate separation would be possible between new tree planting and proposed buildings. I also consider that adequate maintenance access to SUDs would be possible, subject to detailed design at a reserved matters stage.

- 2.24. A community orchard has been shown in the place of allotments within the central open space and would be accessible via the footway on the spine road. Should the Council decide as part of a reserved matters application that allotments are preferred in place of a community orchard, it is noted that there are several areas of open space, in addition to the central open space that could accommodate this requirement.
- 2.25. SUDs basins and swales would be planted with wet meadow grassland and marginal planting in the wetter areas to enhance amenity and biodiversity value.
- 2.26. Grassland would comprise a mix of mown amenity grassland, tussocky meadow (that is longer, less frequently cut and has higher biodiversity value) and wildflower meadows at key locations. The precise seed mixes appropriate to the soil type would be agreed as part of a reserved matters application e.g. the sandstone would indicate acid grassland and heathland could be recreated.
- 2.27. In terms of public access, the detailed proposals would be agreed as part of the reserved matters application. The public footpaths at the southeast corner of the Site would be maintained on their current alignment and would including a crossing of the new spine road. As detailed in the transport evidence of Ms Meer (CD1.11) there would be a continuous shared footway/cycleway adjacent to the spine road to at least one edge of the carriageway that links to the residential elements to the amenities internally and to 'green routes' that lead to the local highway network. 'Green routes' would be established along Patshull Road and New House Lane by restricting vehicular traffic to the existing small number of dwellings along the route.

Play Areas and Public Art

- 2.28. A Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) is currently shown in the central open space. The NEAP adjoins the southern edge of an existing tree group and is orientated to allow some overlooking from nearby dwellings to the east, with an appropriate buffer zone.

- 2.29. In addition to the NEAP, it is likely to be proposed and agreed at reserved matters stage that a range of other opportunities for play including Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP) and Local Areas for Play (LAP) would be included. There is also the opportunity for informal play-as-you-go opportunities along footpaths throughout the site providing easily accessible play.
- 2.30. Public art could be incorporated within the public open space, taking inspiration from surrounding landscape, noting that these features could function as placemaking or directional features or guides, and/or the art features could respond to the defined character of each housing parcel they sit beside.

3. Landscape Effects

Introduction

- 3.1. Section 4 and 5 of the LVIA (CD11.1) sets out the assessment of effects upon Landscape elements and landscape character. The following section draws out the key conclusions of that assessment, providing further clarification where necessary in light of my response to the ESP Ltd Review (CD17.3).
- 3.2. GLVIA3 (CD11.19) at paragraph 5.1 states:

“An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on landscape as a resource. The concern here is with how the proposal will affect the elements that make up the landscape, the aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape and its distinctive character.”

Baseline

- 3.3. The Site lies outside of any statutory or local/non-statutory landscape designations.
- 3.4. The Site is located within the Green Belt, which is a planning, not a landscape, designation.
- 3.5. The Site on the southern edge of the settlement of Albrighton is formed of two distinct parcels of land. The northern tip of the western Site parcel abuts the current development boundary for Albrighton, as defined in the Policies Map for the Local Plan 2016–38. The northern boundary of the eastern parcel is set back from the existing development boundary of Albrighton and adjoins land which is designated as ‘Safeguarded Land’ (P36 / ALB014) and land that is subject to a planning application for residential development by Taylor Wimpey (25/04584/OUT). (see Figure 2 of the LVIA – CD11.2).
- 3.6. The western Site parcel is broadly triangular and bounded by Cross Road to the west, Patshull Road to the east and the A464 Holyhead Road to the south. The eastern Site parcel is located between Patshull Road and New House Lane, excluding the land between the residential property of Oaklea and Lea Hall (see Figure 2 of the LVIA – CD11.2).
- 3.7. There are several residential properties along Cross Road to the west that represent ribbon development extending south of the existing settlement boundary of Albrighton. In addition to residential dwellings there are several large industrial-type sheds at the Enterprise

Business Park. There is also a commercial unit (Albrighton Feeds shop) that lies at the southern end of Cross Road, adjacent to the A464.

- 3.8. There are a number of scattered residential properties along Patshull Road that passes through the centre of the Site outside the application boundary. Dwellings are also located to the east of the Site along Newhouse Lane and to the south along the A464 Holyhead Road. Lea Farm and Lea House and their associated curtilage lie beyond the application Site.
- 3.9. The full details of the existing tree and hedgerow planting within and adjacent to the Site is covered in a separate Arboricultural Assessment (CD10.1). In summary, the planting across the Site is largely confined to field boundaries where it is present as hedgerows of varying heights with occasional hedgerow trees.
- 3.10. The Site is currently maintained as private arable farmland and there is currently no formal authorised access to the site such as designated Public Rights of Way (PRoW) apart from the southeastern corner of the Site, east of Newhouse Lane where the proposed spine road crosses a public footpath (the public footpath route would be maintained).
- 3.11. As described in the LVIA (CD11.1), there is little variation in landform across the site, with the height of the land sitting between approximately 90–100m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). Within 1km of the site, the topography is similar, with little variation and a gently undulating character. Beyond 1km to the east of the site, the change in topography is more dramatic, with the land rising to a wide plateau at approximately 140–160m AOD near the settlement of Kingswood Common (see Topography Plan at CD11.4).
- 3.12. The levels of tranquillity and the perceptual aspects associated with the Site are influenced by the Site's proximity to the A464 Holyhead Road, Cross Road, Patshull Road, and Newhouse Lane. The noise from passing traffic forms a backdrop whilst walking the PRoW routes in the locality. The Site and the immediate landscape context were not noted as being highly tranquil or for having particularly remote qualities during the Site visits.
- 3.13. The LVIA (CD 11.3) at Section 5, sets out the context of the Appeal Site in relation its location within the 'Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau' National Landscape Character Area (CD11.12), and the 'Sandstone Estatelands' Landscape Character Type (LCT), as described in the Shropshire Landscape Typology (2006) (CD11.13). The 'Settled Estatelands' LCT records how the historical evolution of the landscape culminated in rapid change in the later 20th century

because mechanisation and agricultural subsidies favoured an intensive arable regime creating the current pattern of enlarged fields.

3.14. The character of the site and local countryside is not of such value that it has warranted a statutory or non-statutory landscape designation, and the landscape has no features that would indicate a 'valued' landscape in the context of the now superseded paragraph 187(a) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024 (CD2.1).

3.15. The Shropshire Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Study (CD11.11) states under the heading of Landscape Sensitivity that:

“The character of the parcel is stronger around Albrighton Hall and its Conservation Area and Boningale Conservation Area. However, as a large proportion of the parcel is of typical rural character and there is a large network of roads running throughout the parcel, overall the sensitivity of the landscape to change arising from new housing is medium...”

3.16. For all of the above reasons, I consider that the Site is of medium value, representing an area of pleasant, but unremarkable landscape with a connection to the existing settlement edge.

Direct Effects upon Landscape Elements

3.17. The existing arable land cover of the Site is of medium sensitivity. The construction would involve the phased clearance of the existing land cover which would result in major adverse effects, although they would be localised to each phase. Once the landscape proposals have been implemented, the operation phases of the development would have some beneficial effects upon the land cover, however inevitably the quantum of built form and hardstanding relative to the baseline conditions of an undeveloped field would represent a major adverse change. This level of change is to be expected with any similar mixed use development on a greenfield Site, even when not subject to any landscape designations.

3.18. Based on the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (ILMP) (CD11.17), just over 1/3rd of the site area could be dedicated to public open space and green infrastructure elements, with the remaining 2/3rds of the site comprising built form and roads, however this figure also includes private gardens and any landscaped areas such as playing fields associated with the school site. In my experience, the broad quantum of public open space and built development is typical of similar greenfield developments that I have worked on. The ILMP is only illustrative

however the principles will be captured by a condition that will require reserved matter applications to be broadly in accordance with the ILMP. The evidence of Ms Wilson (CD1.10) addresses the means by which the reserved matters applications can be in accord with the ILMP.

- 3.19. In terms of landform, the Site is gently sloping and only minor changes to site levels are proposed to accommodate the housing, roads and paths, with localised excavation needed for the shallow SUDs basin. Given that the sensitivity of the landform is assessed to be low and there would be a low magnitude of change, I judge the overall effect to be minor adverse.
- 3.20. The Site includes a number of small waterbodies and drainage ditches, which are assessed as being of high sensitivity. The proposals have ensured that these existing features have been accommodated within the layout. The introduction of sustainable drainage systems, including attenuation basins and swales within the open space would represent a moderate beneficial effect.
- 3.21. The Proposed Development would result in retention of the majority of the tree cover across the Site including trees within mature hedgerows, protected during the construction phase with measures to comply with BS: 5837 (CD10.1). The initial loss of trees and hedgerow sections to accommodate the Proposed Development would result in a negligible to minor adverse effect. The increase in tree cover proposed as part of the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (CD11.17) would comprise a gain of approximately 3.2 hectares of woodland and approximately 1,270 individual trees. Whilst the ILMP is only illustrative, the principles would be captured by a condition that would require reserved matter applications to be broadly in accordance with the ILMP. Collectively it is assessed these additions would represent a low magnitude of change and a moderate beneficial effect, when established. New hedgerow sections proposed would result in a low magnitude of change and a minor beneficial effect, once established.
- 3.22. There are no existing PRow or public access within the Site apart from a section of public footpath at the southeastern end of the Site that connects Holyhead Road and Newhouse Lane. During the construction phase of the access road, it is predicted that there would be temporary closure or diversion of this route for a short period of time. The Proposed Development accommodates the route on its current alignment with a crossing of the new access road. Upon completion, the notable increase in public access across the Site, including walking routes, would be beneficial and available for the wider community.

- 3.23. During the construction period changes to landcover and to a lesser degree topography and would be locally apparent, however due to the phased nature of development and the adoption of a CEMP, matters that could result in adverse landscape and visual effects such as the loss of existing vegetation intending to be retained or the visibility of construction activity not screened by hoarding, would be consequently minimised by the adoption of best practice measures to minimise effects (i.e. the CEMP). In reality, the lack of public access across all but a localised part of the southeastern corner of the site and the adoption of perimeter hoardings in key locations around the phases under construction would have an important role in minimising adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity, beyond the phase being actively constructed.

Landscape Character Effects

Site level

- 3.24. The Site would change from open fields to a mixed use development, albeit within a well-considered, landscape-led site layout that would allow notable green infrastructure enhancement. The magnitude of change would be High and when combined with the Medium sensitivity established as part of the baseline analysis (see paragraphs 5.27 to 5.32 of the LVIA – CD11.1), would result in a Major adverse effect on landscape character within the Site boundary.
- 3.25. This assessment conclusion is an inevitable result of a GLVIA 3 LVIA methodology and is comparable with many larger housing and mixed-use developments that have been granted planning permission on greenfield sites. Of greater relevance to this appeal is the particular context of the Site and the landscape led design of the Proposed Development that has carefully reflected the surrounding landscape and townscape context. Further details have been set out in Section 2 of my evidence and also in sections 5, 6 and 7 of the Appellants Masterplanning Statement (CD.1.12).

Immediate Vicinity of the Site

- 3.26. Adverse effects upon landscape character would also be experienced in the immediate vicinity of the Site, however these effects would be minimised as a result of the mitigation strategy adopted. The mitigation strategy includes retaining existing planting where possible, setting development back from the Site boundary, and adopting a mitigation planting

strategy that strengthens existing planting and proposes additional planting that is deliverable with highway and drainage constraints.

- 3.27. The opportunity to perceive indirect effects upon landscape character from lighting or increased traffic movements in the context of the A464 would be localised and most apparent at the new roundabout junction. The growth of perimeter mitigation planting would, over time, further reduce the perception of the Proposed Development, from relatively few locations in the surrounding countryside, and these changes are assessed in the following visual effects section of my evidence.
- 3.28. Whilst the effects of the Proposed Development on the immediate vicinity of the Site were not separated in the LVIA from the effects experienced at a Site level, I assess that at Year 1 there would be a medium magnitude of change to the landscape character in the immediate vicinity of the Site at Year 1 resulting in a moderate adverse effect that by Year 15 would reduce to a low magnitude of change and a minor adverse effect following the growth of mitigation planting.

Wider Countryside

- 3.29. In terms of indirect effects upon landscape character of the wider countryside, beyond the Site and its immediate vicinity, the Proposed Development would typically appear well contained by existing hedgerows and trees along the majority of the Site perimeter, further strengthened by the proposed native woodland belts and hedgerow reinforcement measures.
- 3.30. The key characteristics of the wider countryside context within the '*Sandstone Estatelands*' LCT and other LCTs in the study area would not be altered. Consequently, the Proposed Development would have a negligible effect upon the landscape character of the wider countryside, beyond the immediate vicinity of the Site.

4. Visual Effects

Introduction

- 4.1. Section 6 of the LVIA (CD11.1) sets out the assessment from the key visual receptors. The following section of my evidence draws out the key conclusions of that assessment, providing further detail where necessary in light of my response to the ESP Ltd Review (CD11.12 and CD17.3).
- 4.2. My visual assessment references the updated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) utilising LIDAR data (**Figures 1-4**) and the photography has been updated to include summer in addition to winter views (**Figure 5**). The LIDAR ZTVs account for actual existing vegetation and building heights and illustrate a much reduced potential for theoretical visibility beyond the Site boundary than the original ZTV (Figure 5 of the LVIA – CD11.5).
- 4.3. The ZTV of 2 storey development without the growth of mitigation planting (**Figure 1**), less than 20% of the highest part of the proposals would generally be visible beyond the Site boundary. The ZTV at **Figures 3 and 4**, were run at three stories across all development parcels because the precise locations of three storey buildings within the development parcels are unknown. The resulting ZTVs consequently represents an unrealistic scenario because three storey buildings would only ever be a minor component of the overall built development. Nonetheless, the ZTV indicates a localised visual envelope, particularly when it is considered that most of the theoretical visibility indicated would cover private farmland where the public have no access.
- 4.4. When the growth of mitigation planting is factored in, the geographical extent of visibility is even further reduced, particularly in summer, noting that there would also be a reduction in winter due to the depth of the new woodland belts that would heavily filter views (**Figures 2 and 4**).
- 4.5. The recently obtained summer photography has been presented alongside the original winter photography for reference (**Figure 5**). The updated photography is a useful record of the level of existing screening around the perimeter of the Site and wider landscape but does not change the assessment conclusions reached in the original LVIA which presented winter views and included professional judgement to account for the increased screening role of trees and hedgerows when in leaf.

- 4.6. The visibility cross sections from key viewpoints (**Figure 6**) include the viewpoint locations where the difference in visual assessment conclusions, as set out in the Landscape Statement of Common Ground (CD4.9) were the greatest between the Council and the Appellant.
- 4.7. I have focussed my evidence upon receptors where a Moderate or greater visual effect has been assessed at Year 1 given that lesser effects are unlikely to influence the decision making. I have also included receptors where the Council has assessed a Moderate or greater visual effect in the Landscape Statement of Common Ground. The full assessment of visual receptors scoped into the assessment is set out at Table 2 of the LVIA (CD11.1).
- 4.8. My approach to visual assessment reflects the updated advice from the Landscape Institute in TGN-01-2024 (CD11.20) which states at paragraph 6(7) on page 16 that:

"The focus of the visual assessment should be the visual receptors (i.e. the people as set out within paragraph 6.31. of GLVIA3). The purpose of viewpoints is covered at paragraph 6.19 (i.e. for illustration of the visual effects)."

Public Views from Albrighton

- 4.9. The assessment in the submitted LVIA focuses on public locations within the settlement where the proposals would be visible, in accordance with latest best practice guidance in LITGN-2024-01 (CD 11.20) which states at 6(1) and 6(4) on page 15:

"An LVIA should consider views from local communities focusing on the way that a community currently experiences views from public locations such as streets and open spaces and how those will change. Views from houses and individual properties are a matter of private amenity, noting that it is an established planning principle that there is no right to a view..."

LVIA relates to public amenity – the value of the view to the public – and RVAA relates to private amenity – the value of the views to those who live there."

- 4.10. Notwithstanding the advice from the Landscape Institute, in the context of this appeal, matters related to private views were raised in the ESP Ltd Review (CD17.3). The design of the Proposed Development has ensured that there would be appropriate separation between existing properties and the new dwellings to maintain privacy of all residents. In this context I do not consider that a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) in accordance with

TGN 02/19 (CD11.23) is required and there has been no specific request for such a survey from the Council.

- 4.11. Views towards the Site from much of the village are restricted by the built form of the settlement and by intervening planting. The ribbon development along Cross Lane including residential properties are outside the settlement boundary. Views from the southern built-up edge of Albrighton are illustrated by Viewpoint 1 (Cross Road at the junction with Patshull Road) and Viewpoint 2 (Cross Road) (see **Figure 5**). The visibility section from Viewpoint 1 (**Figure 6**) demonstrates the role of mitigation planting in reducing visibility of the new built development over time from the mini-roundabout junction. In addition, the visibility sections illustrate how the set back of the school buildings into the Site would be restricted by intervening planting at Viewpoint 2 (**Figure 6**).
- 4.12. There would be occasional, partially restricted views of the proposed residential development set back into the Site beyond a new community open space. The magnitude of change from publicly accessible areas on the settlement edge including the open space with picnic tables south of Cross Road would be low and the effect moderate adverse, reducing further following the growth of mitigation planting, particularly where views are experienced from the footway near the mini roundabout junction between Cross Road and Patshull Road.

Users of Public Footpath 0102/9/1

- 4.13. Public Rights of Way are a common occurrence at the edge of settlements. Unless routes are promoted as part of any regional or national recreational walk, it is likely that their value is confined to the local community.
- 4.14. Figure 6 of the LVIA (CD11.6) illustrates the route between Newhouse Lane near the northeastern corner of the Site and the wider public rights of way network on the edge of Albrighton. Representative Viewpoint 5 (**Figure 5**) is located on slightly higher ground and set back from Newhouse Lane. The sensitivity of users of the public footpath are assessed as high.
- 4.15. The visibility section from Viewpoint 5 (**Figure 6**) demonstrates the role of existing hedgerow and tree planting along Newhouse Lane in partially restricting views at Year 1. At year 15 the proposed mitigation woodland planting and other tree planting would further reduce visibility of the new built development.

- 4.16. There would be a low magnitude of change at Year resulting from intermittent views of new residential development and the proposed buildings on the school site (the latter being set behind the potential development land outside the Site). The proposed buildings on the Site would be set behind and between intervening mature trees and hedgerows. The changes would be experienced in the context of existing scattered residential development of a low density along Newhouse Lane and Patshull Road. The overall effect would be moderate from this localised section of the public footpath route. By Year 15 the magnitude and overall effect would reduce to a negligible level, as a result of the proposed reinforcement of existing field boundaries and a new woodland planting belt to the edge of the Site along Newhouse Lane.

Users of Public Footpaths O111/4/1 and O111/3/1

- 4.17. Figure 6 of the LVIA (CD11.6) illustrates the two parallel footpath routes that connect Newhouse Lane and the A464 near the southeastern corner of the Site. Representative Viewpoint 7 is located from footpath O111/4/1 within the Site near the route of the proposed spine road and Viewpoint 8 is taken from footpath O111/3/1 east of the Site. The sensitivity of users of the public footpath is assessed as high.
- 4.18. The visibility sections from Viewpoints 7 and 8 (**Figure 6**) demonstrates the limited role of existing hedgerow planting along Newhouse Lane in restricting ground level views of the Proposed Development at Year 1. At year 15 the proposed mitigation woodland planting and other tree planting would substantially reduce visibility of the new built development.
- 4.19. There would be a medium magnitude of change at Year 1 resulting from views of the upper floors and roofscape of the proposed residential development above the existing hedgerow along Newhouse Lane. Users of public footpath O111/4/1 would cross the new access road c.50m east of Newhouse Lane. The overall effect would be major adverse from these short sections of the public footpath route.
- 4.20. By Year 15 the magnitude would have reduced to a Low level as a result of the growth of the proposed woodland belts that would largely screen views of the new built development, noting the outline of the roofscape is likely to be perceptible in winter. The new access road would remain visible from a section of public footpath O111/4/1, most apparent where the route crosses the highway. The overall residual effect would be moderate adverse.

Users of Public Footpath O111/1/1

- 4.21. Figure 6 of the LVIA illustrates the routes that connects Woodhouse Lane and the rights of way network at the southeastern edge of Albrighton. Representative Viewpoint 10 is located circa 580m east of the Site on slightly elevated ground. The sensitivity of users of the public footpath are assessed as High.
- 4.22. The visibility section from Viewpoint 10 (**Figure 6**) demonstrates the role of existing hedgerow and tree planting along Newhouse Lane in partially restricting views at Year 1. At year 15 the proposed mitigation woodland planting and other tree planting would notably reduce visibility of the new built development.
- 4.23. There would be a low magnitude of change at Year 1 resulting from views of the upper floors and roofscape of the proposed residential development, visible obliquely from the route and set above the existing hedgerow along Newhouse Lane and against a backdrop of existing vegetation on the horizon. The movement of vehicles on the new access road would be perceptible, and the overall effect would be moderate adverse.
- 4.24. By Year 15 the magnitude would be negligible and overall effect negligible adverse, as a result of the growth of the proposed woodland belts that would largely screen views of the new built development and the access road, although the outline of the roofscape could be perceptible in places in winter.

Users of Public Bridleway Perton 19

- 4.25. Figure 6 of the LVIA illustrates the bridleway that connects the A464 and the rights of way network within Wrottesley Park. Representative Viewpoint 12 is located more than 2km east of the Site on elevated ground with oblique views towards the Site set within the context of foreground pylons. The sensitivity of users of the public footpath is assessed as high.
- 4.26. The visibility section from Viewpoint 12 (**Figure 6**) demonstrates the role of proposed woodland planting in restricting views of the Proposed Development at Year 15, although in other locations existing planting along New House Lane would also help partially restrict views of the Proposed Development. Views of new built development would be set well below the horizon against a backdrop of existing planting. Given the intervening distance and oblique nature of the view, that is only available for part of the bridleway (as indicated by the ZTVs at

Figures 1–4), the magnitude of change and overall effect is assessed as negligible at both Year 1 and Year 15.

Users of A464 Holyhead Road

- 4.27. Users of the A464 Holyhead Road are represented by Viewpoints 9, 13, 14 and 17 (see **Figure 5**) and the sensitivity of road users is assessed as medium. On the approach to the Site from the east, views towards the Site are frequently restricted by roadside planting and built development to the extent that it is not until road users get close to the junction with Church Lane that the rising ground of the Site along New House Lane is clearly visible but this would only be experienced in winter when hedges are cut back (Viewpoint 9 – **Figure 5**). Passing the Site itself, there are open views across the eastern parcel of the Site, particularly in winter, where the A464 follows the southern boundary for approximately 200m (Viewpoints 13 and 14 – **Figure 5**), however these views are relatively fleeting in nature for people travelling in vehicles.
- 4.28. Views of the western parcel of the Site from the A464 are more limited, noting on the approach to the Site topography screens views until close to the junction with Green Lane. The Albrighton Feeds Store and attached dwelling are located in front of the western end of the Site that is screened by these buildings and a conifer hedge. Passing the Site, a tall hedge typically screens views of the ground within the Site and views of the land within the Site are restricted to field access points (Viewpoint 17 – **Figure 5**).
- 4.29. The visibility sections from Viewpoints 9, 14 and 17 (**Figure 6**) demonstrates the varying role of existing hedgerow planting along the road corridor in partially restricting some views at Year 1. At Year 15 the proposed mitigation woodland planting and other tree planting would notably reduce visibility of the new built development.
- 4.30. At the eastern parcel, new built development would be set approximately 150m from the road corridor behind new planting, comprising a 30m deep woodland belt, and public open space. Passing the western parcel of the Site, the change would be most apparent from the new roundabout junction and approaches to it, where the existing hedgerow would be removed and new residential development would be clearly visible, set behind new planting. Given the relatively fleeting nature of views, as part of a longer journey, the overall magnitude at Year 1 is assessed to be medium and the overall effect would be moderate adverse.

- 4.31. By Year 15, the growth of the proposed woodland belts and groups of tree planting along the southern boundary of the Site would substantially reduce views of the built development from the A464. Views of new built development would be most apparent from a relatively short section of the A464 on the approaches to the new roundabout junction, although visibility of built form would be restricted by the growth of the aforementioned planting. The overall magnitude of change would be low and the effect minor adverse.

Users of Patshull Road

- 4.32. Patshull Road passes north-south between the two main development parcels of the Site and connects Patshull Park, approximately 1.5km south of the A464 Holyhead Road with Cross Road at the southern edge of Albrighton. Users of Patshull Road are represented by Viewpoint 6 (**Figure 5**) noting that views towards the Site from Viewpoint 16 to the south of Holyhead Road are very restricted as set out in the LVIA (CD11.3). The sensitivity of road users is assessed as Medium.
- 4.33. It is noted that Patshull Road as part of the Proposed Development would be downgraded and would only be open to existing residents of scattered dwellings. Consequently, the numbers of people experiencing the views from vehicles is likely to reduce. The conversion to a 'green lane' is designed to encourage pedestrian use and cyclists.
- 4.34. At the northern end of Patshull Road (**Viewpoint 6**) new residential development would likely front onto a new internal access road replacing intermittent baseline views of an open field and scattered built development along Cross Road. Views across the Site are, however, more typically prevented by an existing mature hedgerow and trees. At Year 1 an overall medium magnitude of change would be experienced from the northern end of Patshull Road resulting in moderate adverse effects.
- 4.35. By Year 15, the growth of new infill hedgerow and tree planting would further reduce the proportion of built development visible and help further integrate the built development within the wider landscape context. An overall low magnitude of change for the route is predicted resulting in minor adverse effects.

Users of Cross Road

- 4.36. Cross Road connects the A464 Holyhead Road to the south of the Site with the centre of Albrighton, approximately 0.8km from the northern boundary of the Site. Users of Cross Road

are represented by Viewpoint 3, noting that Viewpoints 1 and 2 are also located on Cross Road. Views from this section of Cross Road have been assessed under the more sensitive Albrighton settlement edge receptor above to avoid double counting. The sensitivity of road users is assessed as medium.

4.37. At the southwestern end of Cross Road there is a c.30m long gap in the hedge that allows views across the Site (Viewpoint 3 – **Figure 5**). Elsewhere along Cross Road, views of the Site are currently typically restricted by tall hedgerows. The proposal to create a new access junction into the Site and new footway along the northern c.250m of Cross Road would result in the removal of the existing hedgerow and views of new built development in the context of existing ribbon development on the opposite side of the carriageway. The greatest changes to views would be localised and perceived from the northern end of the route in association with the new junction. An overall medium magnitude of change at Year 1 is predicted, with a moderate adverse effect.

4.38. At Year 15, the growth of the new replacement hedgerow planting set behind the new footway at the northern end of Cross Road would help integrate the proposals within the wider landscape context. New built development, most typically the upper stories, would be most visible at the new junction and northern end of the road opposite the existing built development. An overall low magnitude of change for the route is predicted with a minor adverse effect.

Users of Newhouse Lane

4.39. Newhouse Lane passes along the eastern edge of the Site and connects the A464 Holyhead Road with Cross Road within the built up southern edge of Albrighton. Users of the single-track Newhouse Lane that is bounded by hedgerows and very narrow verges are represented by nearby viewpoints taken from safe locations i.e. the wide road verge of the A464 near the junction with Newhouse Lane (Viewpoint 13 – **Figure 5**) and a public footpath a short distance to the east of Newhouse Lane (Viewpoint 7 – **Figure 5**). The sensitivity of road users is assessed as medium.

4.40. It is noted that Newhouse Lane as part of the Proposed Development would be downgraded and would only be open to existing residents of scattered dwellings. Consequently, the numbers of people experiencing the views from vehicles is likely to reduce. The conversion to a 'green lane' is designed to encourage pedestrian use and cyclists.

- 4.41. At Year 1, views from the central and southern parts of the Lane would include the upper parts of the proposed residential development set above the retained sections of the roadside hedgerow. There would be clear views into the Site at the new spine road crossing. The overall magnitude of change from the route is considered to be medium and the effect moderate adverse.
- 4.42. By Year 15, the growth of the woodland belt and tree planting within the Site would reduce the proportion of built development visible and would help integrate the proposals within the wider landscape context. An overall low magnitude of change is predicted with a minor adverse effect.

5. Green Belt Openness

Introduction

- 5.1. The Appellants case, set out in the evidence of Ms Megan Wilson (CD1.10), is that the Site is grey belt and that the appeal scheme would not be inappropriate development. In the event that the Inspector disagrees with the Appellant it is necessary for the special circumstances case to be set out, and as part of this the harms are weighed against the benefits. Ms Megan Wilson sets out the planning case for Very Special Circumstances (VSC).
- 5.2. In this section of my evidence, I summarise the findings of Section 5 of my Green Belt report (CD11.13) that covers harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
- 5.3. Planning Practice Guidance on Green Belt (CD2.21)¹ notes that when assessing the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, it requires a judgement based on the circumstances of the particular case. By way of example, the courts have identified several matters which may need to be considered in making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to:

“Openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume.

The duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness; and

The degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation ”

Spatial Aspect of Openness

- 5.4. The removal of the Site from the Green Belt would have an inevitable effect upon the spatial aspect of Green Belt openness, however the proposal would:
- a) cover only 0.2% of the Green Belt within Shropshire;
 - b) be physically well related and connected to the existing adjoining village edge to the north, safeguarded land and potential development land controlled by another developer;

¹ CD2.21 – Paragraph 001 Reference ID: 64-001-20190722

c) comprise a notable extension of Albrighton that would be in keeping with the historical pattern of growth, noting expansion occurred relatively recently during the latter part of the 20th century with extensive development of modern housing estates west and southwest of the historic core (see page 13 of the Guiding Design Principles Document – CD6.4);

d) include notable areas of undeveloped land as public open space, incorporating existing planting and enhancing green infrastructure including public access; and

e) the new settlement boundaries would follow existing features on the ground including road corridors where existing hedgerows and tree planting would be predominantly retained. The site boundaries including the new spine road at the southeast corner of the site would be reinforced by new planting, typically comprising woodland belts.

Visual Aspect of Openness

- 5.5. The opportunity to appreciate the visual aspects of openness associated with the Site is limited. From the relatively few locations where parts of the ground level of the Site are clearly visible, and the sense of openness associated with the Site is often restricted by mature roadside hedgerows and tree cover.
- 5.6. The introduction of the Proposed Development on the Site would inevitably reduce the sense of openness associated with the Site, however this perception would be highly localised and typically restricted to the immediate context of the Site.
- 5.7. The vehicle movements associated with the Site access would be restricted to a short section of the route east of Newhouse Lane, although over time this would be reduced by the growth of woodland planting. Any perception of activity within the Site, including vehicle movements, would from the majority of locations within the wider Green Belt, be predominantly screened by the hedgerows along the site boundary that would be retained and/or reinforced by mitigation planting.
- 5.8. The sense of visual openness associated within the wider Green Belt landscape would remain materially unchanged with the Site developed and removed from the designation.
- 5.9. In conclusion, the removal of the Site from the Green Belt would have a limited effect upon the appreciation of the openness of the remaining Green Belt, due to a combination of local landform, intervening built development and mature vegetation. In close proximity to the Site,

the perception of the loss of openness would be very localised. Mitigation planting would over time reduce the proportion of built development perceived, and whilst visual openness would be reduced, the resulting change would be consistent with the character of the wider landscape. There would be a limited impact upon views across the wider Green Belt landscape.

6. Interested Party comments

6.1. Ms Wilson in her Planning evidence (CD1.10) at Table 14 provides a summary of interested party comments, which in relation to landscape matters comprise:

- The Proposed Development would erode the rural character of Albrighton; and
- The proposals would significantly harm existing resident's quality of life due to the loss of green, open space.

Rural Character

6.2. In relation to rural character, section 3 of my evidence sets out the impact of the Proposed Development upon landscape character. In summary, I conclude that the Site would change from open fields to a mixed use development, albeit within a well-considered, landscape-led site layout that would allow notable green infrastructure enhancement. There would be a major adverse effect on landscape character within the Site boundary which is an inevitable result of a GLVIA 3 methodology and is comparable with many larger housing and mixed-use developments that have been granted planning permission on greenfield sites.

6.3. Indirect effects upon landscape character within the immediate vicinity of the Site are considered to be moderate adverse at Year 1, reducing to a minor adverse effect following the growth of mitigation planting. Beyond the immediate vicinity of the Site, the Proposed Development would have a negligible effect upon the landscape character of the wider countryside.

'Loss of Green Open Space'

6.4. In relation to the 'loss of green open space', it is relevant to recognise that the majority of private farmland that comprises the Appeal Site has no public access, with the exception of a short section of a public footpath O111/4/1 that crosses the proposed spine road, southeast of Newhouse Lane. However access would be maintained as part of the Proposed Development. The adverse visual effects that would be experienced from this public footpath and other receptors are set out in Section 6 of my evidence noting that in all locations the growth of mitigation planting would reduce the adverse effects to a moderate level or less.

6.5. As part of the Proposed Development, notable areas of new public open space with native planting that would reflect the character of the surrounding countryside, would be provided.



This green open space would be accessible to existing residents, in addition to future residents of the Proposed Development.

7. Summary and Conclusions.

- 7.1. The following summary has been produced to comply with the requirements of PINS procedural guidance.
- 7.2. This Landscape and Visual Proof of Evidence has been prepared by Neil Furber, a Senior Director at Pegasus Group on behalf of Boningale Developments Ltd, in support of an appeal relating to a mixed-use development at Patshull Road, Albrighton.
- 7.3. My evidence considers the landscape and visual implications of the Proposed Development, together with its effects on Green Belt openness, in response to the Council's reasons for refusal concerning character and appearance and Green Belt matters.
- 7.4. I am a Chartered Landscape Architect with over 25 years' experience and extensive involvement in residential development and public inquiry work. The evidence is prepared in accordance with my professional guidance and represents my independent professional opinion.
- 7.5. The appeal proposals comprise an outline application for up to 800 dwellings, a care home, a secondary school and a local centre, together with associated infrastructure, landscaping and drainage. My evidence is informed by the Pegasus Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that I co-authored, together with updated material including LiDAR-based Zones of Theoretical Visibility, summer photography and visibility sections.
- 7.6. The Site lies on the southern edge of Albrighton and comprises gently undulating agricultural land defined by hedgerows and occasional trees. It is located within the Green Belt but is not subject to any landscape designation and is assessed as being of medium landscape value, reflecting a typical rural landscape influenced by surrounding roads and scattered built development.
- 7.7. The landscape assessment identifies that the proposed development would result in a substantial change within the Site itself, giving rise to a major adverse effect on landscape character. This change at the level of the Site is recognised as an inevitable consequence of green field development, and is not an unusual result, occurring with similar developments on green field sites.

- 7.8. Beyond the Site boundary, landscape effects are more limited. In the immediate vicinity, and moderate adverse effects on landscape character are predicted at Year 1, reducing to minor adverse effects by Year 15 as mitigation planting becomes established. Within the wider countryside, effects are assessed as negligible due to the degree of containment typically provided by existing vegetation, topography and the proposed landscape framework.
- 7.9. The Proposed Development has been designed with a landscape-led approach, incorporating notable green infrastructure including the retention of existing hedgerows, new woodland belts and strengthened boundary planting. A notable proportion of the Site is proposed as public open space, consistent with comparable developments, and this plays a key role in integrating the scheme into its surroundings.
- 7.10. In terms of visual effects, updated ZTV analysis demonstrates that visibility of the proposed development would be relatively limited and localised. The extent of visibility is modest and would be further reduced through the establishment of mitigation planting over time.
- 7.11. The assessment concludes that moderate adverse visual effects would arise at Year 1 for a number of local receptors, including users of nearby roads, public rights of way and the settlement edge. In a small number of locations, short sections of footpaths at the southeast corner of the Site would experience major adverse effects at the outset due to proximity to the Proposed Development, including the spine road.
- 7.12. These visual effects are, however, localised and would reduce over time as planting matures. By Year 15, the majority of effects would reduce to minor adverse or negligible, with built development largely filtered or screened by established vegetation.
- 7.13. My evidence also considers the impact of the proposals on Green Belt openness, distinguishing between spatial and visual aspects. While the development would reduce openness within the Site itself, this effect represents a very small proportion of the overall Green Belt.
- 7.14. I consider that the Proposed Development would form a logical and contained extension to Albrighton, with clear and defensible boundaries created by existing landscape features, reinforced by new planting.
- 7.15. In visual terms, the perception of openness is already limited in many locations by vegetation, landform and existing built development. Any additional effect arising from the Proposed

Development would be localised and would diminish over time as mitigation planting establishes.

- 7.16. Overall, my assessment concludes that the Proposed Development would introduce notable change within the Site and would have some localised adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity. However, these effects would be limited in extent, typical of development of this nature and capable of effective mitigation.
- 7.17. In conclusion, I assess that there would be localised landscape and visual effects that have been minimised by the landscape led design approach. I consider that the Proposed Development could be satisfactorily accommodated within the wider landscape context and would have only a localised effect upon the spatial and visual aspects of Green Belt openness.



Appendices (see separate Volume 2)

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

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