



ET Planning

Proof of Evidence

Client:

Albrighton Development Action Group

In respect of PINS Ref. 6007402

Appeal by Boningale Homes

Tom Ryan **BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

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CIL | Enforcement | Land Promotion | Planning | Sequential Tests | Viability

CONTENTS

01 INTRODUCTION	1
02 THE REASONS FOR REFUSAL	3
03 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT	5
04 ADAG'S CASE.....	20
05 THE PLANNING BALANCE & CASE SUMMARY	32

01 Introduction

- 1.1 This Proof of Evidence is provided on behalf of Albrighton Development Action Group ('ADAG'). ADAG have been granted Rule 6 status to the live planning appeal relating to Land at Patshull Road, Albrighton, Shropshire ('the Site') (PINS appeal ref. 6007402) for the following development:

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

- 1.2 I, Thomas Ryan, have been appointed by the ADAG to provide evidence in support of their case in this Appeal. I hold over 7 years of professional planning experience. I am a Principal Planner at ET Planning Ltd, an independent planning consultancy established in March 2017 which is registered with the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). I have worked with ET Planning for over 1 year. Prior to this, I was a Senior Planner at Savills. I hold a Bachelor of Science Honours degree in Real Estate and a Master's Degree in Spatial Planning and Development, both awarded by the Henley Business School, University of Reading. I am also a Chartered Member of the RTPI.

- 1.3 I am familiar with the Appeal site and the surrounding area, having conducted a physical site visit with ADAG, and have made myself aware of the planning policy background and relevant issues to this Appeal.
- 1.4 The evidence provided is my true and professional opinion.
- 1.5 A description of the site, its planning history, and a summary of the proposed development subject to this refusal are provided within ADAG's Statement of Case, which is to be read in conjunction with this Proof of Evidence.
- 1.6 A separate Proof of Evidence in support of the ADAG's case is also provided by John Russell of JR Transport Planning in respect of Highways. These two Proofs submitted on behalf of the Rule 6 Party are to be read in conjunction with each other.
- 1.7 Matters regarding Housing Land Supply have been addressed in a Statement of Common Ground between ADAG and Appellant which is dated 10 July 2026.
- 1.8 This Proof of Evidence does not contain any comments on the new NPPF (17 August 2026). A separate addendum note will be prepared, as confirmed by PINS, covering ADAG's position in relation to the changes in the new NPPF.

02 The Reasons for Refusal

2.1 The refusal reasons on the Decision Notice are read as follows:

1. *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. **Development in this location would be incompatible with the principles of sustainable development in that it would undermine the development strategy set out in the adopted Shropshire Council Core Strategy and Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan which seek to facilitate residential development within a sustainable settlement hierarchy.** 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 wider benefits of this BMV land have not been recognised, nor has it been demonstrated that development of this site is necessary in preference to poorer quality land or land outside the Green Belt, therefore effective use of the land has not been made in accordance with NPPF paragraph 187b), and Sections 11 and 13. Less than substantial harm to the significance of the Boningale Conservation Area and Grade II Listed Lea Hall and Barn has been identified, and **whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal offers a number of wider local community benefits beyond the site itself, these have not been identified as responding to a local need. The adverse impacts of this unsuitable location would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development contrary to the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF.** 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 [emphasis added, see para. 4.2 below].*
2. *The Local Planning Authority has accorded substantial weight to the high level of harm which would result from the loss of this 48 hectare section of the West Midlands Metropolitan Green Belt through the proposed development. The proposed development site is within a*

parcel of Green Belt characterised by agriculture, tree lines and cover, and an absence of urbanising influences which make a strong contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas and to assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The proposed development site is not regarded as grey belt and consequently the proposed development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It is therefore, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and prejudicial to the reasons for including land within it. It does not constitute any of the exceptions to inappropriate development identified in paragraphs 154 or 155 of the National Planning Policy Framework and the circumstances advanced in the application are not considered to amount to the very special circumstances required to overcome an objection to the high level of harm identified. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Shropshire Council Core Strategy Policy CS5, SAMDev Plan Policy MD6 and the guidance set out in Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 2.2 The Rule 6 Party will focus its evidence specifically on the areas highlighted in **bold** in the first reason for refusal as detailed above, having appropriate regard to the weight to be afforded to other material considerations.

03 Relevant Planning Policy Context

- 3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan is therefore the starting point for the assessment of the Appeal.
- 3.2 Nevertheless, when assessing all relevant material considerations, it is necessary to weigh the different benefits of the proposal.
- 3.3 In assessing the planning balance, ADAG will only comment on the significance of weightings covered within their evidence and set out within their Statement of Case. ADAG will defer all other weightings to the Council, to which ADAG endorse. This is agreed between ADAG and the Appellant at paragraph 1.5 of the Statement of Common Ground.
- 3.4 In relation to the weight given to the different benefits and harms of the proposal that ADAG have prepared evidence on, the following weighting descriptions have been applied, as follows, in order of significance:
- Significant;
 - Moderate;
 - Limited;
 - Neutral.

3.5 The Development Plan documents relevant to this Appeal comprise the Core Strategy (2011), the Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan (2015) and the Adopted Policies Map.

3.6 The 'made' Albrighton Neighbourhood Plan 'Light' (June 2013) is of relevance as a material consideration, however is not considered a Development Plan document under the Localism Act.

Shropshire Core Strategy (March 2011)

3.7 ADAG consider the following list of Core Strategy policies relevant to the determination of the Appeal:

- Policy CS1 – Strategic Approach
- Policy CS3 - The Market Towns and Other Key Centres
- Policy CS5 - Countryside and Green Belt
- Policy CS6 - Sustainable Design and Development Principles
- Policy CS7 - Communications and Transport
- Policy CS8 - Facilities, Services and Infrastructure Provision
- Policy CS9 - Infrastructure Contributions
- Policy CS11 - Type and Affordability of Housing
- Policy CS15 - Town and Rural Centres

3.8 The additional following list of Local Plan policies were relevant to the determination of the planning application, but are not considered fundamental to ADAG's evidence at this Appeal Inquiry:

- Policy CS11 - Type and Affordability of Housing
- Policy CS17 - Environmental Networks
- Policy CS18 - Sustainable Water Management

Core Strategy Policies

3.9 Core Strategy Policy CS1 confirms that 27,500 homes shall be provided over the plan period from 2006-2026. The policy confirms that Shrewsbury will be the focus for growth, with Market Towns and Key Centres accommodating around 40% of Shropshire's residential development over the plan period.

3.10 The policy then divides the housing requirements into spatial zones. Albrighton falls within the East Shropshire spatial zone where 3,025 – 3,575 dwellings and 30 - 40 hectares employment land are to be located. The East Shropshire spatial zone has the lowest allocation of housing across the five different spatial zones. This is to reflect the "*different characteristics, pressures, travel-to-work patterns, environmental and policy constraints*", as identified in paragraph 4.13 of the supporting text for this policy. Table 1 of the supporting text for this policy provides the settlement strategy and groups together Market Towns and Key Centres within Tier 2.

3.11 Policy CS3 elaborates on the requirements for Market Town and Key Centres. The policy is explicit in stating that *"Balanced housing and employment development, of an appropriate scale and design that respects each town's distinctive character and is supported by improvements in infrastructure, will take place within the towns' development boundaries and on sites allocated for development"*.

3.12 Importantly, Policy CS3 lists the Market Towns and Key Centres and provides information on the scale of development expected at each settlement and spatial zone. Notably, within the Eastern Shropshire spatial zone, there is clear separation between the scale of development expected at Bridgnorth (Market Town) and Albrighton (Key Centre). The policy confirms that Bridgnorth "will provide a ***focus for development***", whereas Albrighton "will have *development to meet local needs*, respecting their location in the Green Belt" [emphasis added].

3.13 In addition, Table 2 of Policy CS3 provides more detail on the indicative number of homes at each Market Town and Key Centre. An extract of Table 2 is provided in figure 1 below.

Table 2: Policy CS3 and Indicative Scale of Development

Market Towns & Other Key Centres	Policy CS15 Centres		Indicative relative levels of housing development 2006 - 2026		
	Principal centre	District centre	>1,000 homes	500 - 1,000 homes	<500 homes
North West Shropshire					
Oswestry	■		■		
Ellesmere		■		■	
North East Shropshire					
Whitchurch	■		■		
Market Drayton	■		■		
Wern		■		■	
Central Shropshire					
Minsterley / Pontesbury		■			■
Southern Shropshire					
Ludlow	■			■	
Craven Arms		■			■
Church Stretton		■			■
Bishop's Castle		■			■
Cleobury Mortimer		■			■
Eastern Shropshire					
Bridgnorth	■			■	
Shifnal*		■		■	
Much Wenlock		■			■
Broseley		■			■
Highley		■			■
Albrighton*		■			■

* not including military needs

Figure 1 – Table 2: Policy CS3 and Indicative Scale of Development

3.14 Focussing on the Eastern Shropshire spatial zone, it is clear from the Table 2 extract that fewer than 500 homes are expected to be delivered at Albrighton over the plan period. In addition, the indicative number of homes anticipated at Albrighton falls below the numbers projected at both Bridgnorth and Shifnal (between 500 – 1,000 homes). The number of homes anticipated at Albrighton is in fact on a par with the level of growth expected at Much Wenlock, Broseley and Highley.

3.15 Therefore, although Policy CS1 groups Market Towns and Key Centres together within the settlement hierarchy, there is a clear distinction between the anticipated extent of growth and location of housing within this settlement tier.

3.16 Furthermore, Table 2 introduces the overlap between Policy CS3 and Policy CS15. Policy CS15 relates to Town and Rural Centres and makes the distinction between Principal Centres (Bridgnorth – for the Eastern Shropshire spatial zone) and District Centres (Albrighton, Shifnal, Much Wenlock, Highley and Broseley – for the Eastern Shropshire spatial zone).

3.17 Policy CS5 confirms that new development will be strictly controlled in accordance with national planning policies protecting the countryside and Green Belt. Areas of safeguarded land are reserved for potential future development at Albrighton, as identified on the Policies Map (see figure 2 below).

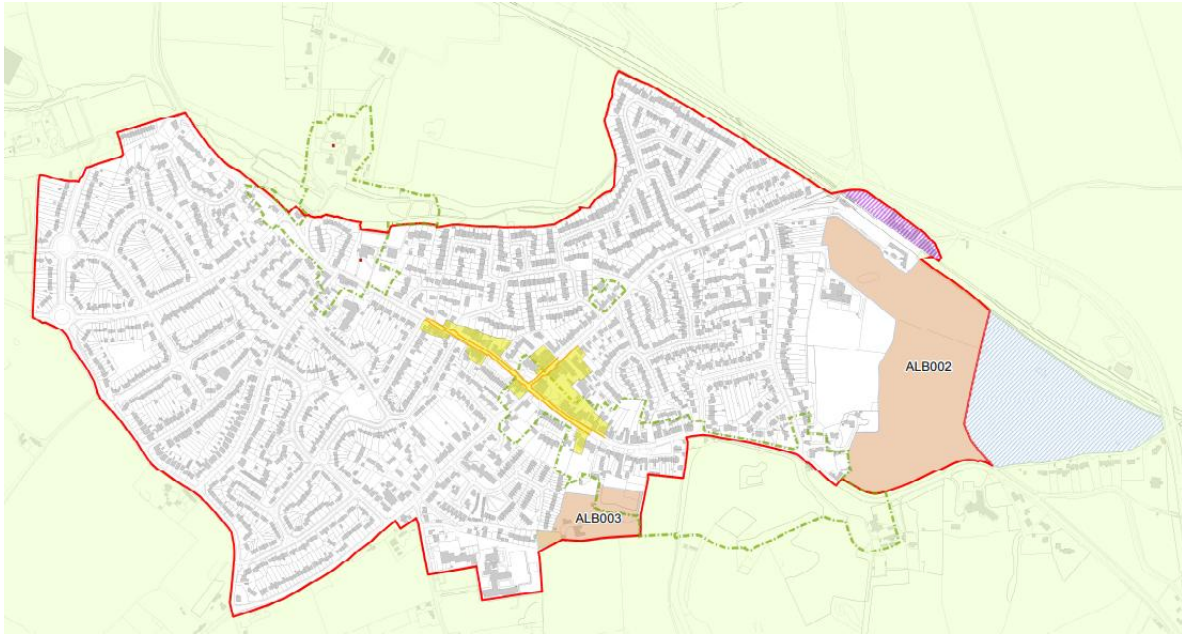


Figure 2 – Policies Map Extract

3.18 Policy CS6 relates to sustainable design and development principles and requires that *"proposals likely to generate significant levels of traffic to be located in accessible locations where opportunities for walking, cycling and use of public transport can be maximised and the need for car based travel to be reduced"*.

3.19 Policy CS7 confirms that new developments should promote a sustainable pattern of development. This includes improving accessibility, managing the need to travel, offering options for different travel needs and reducing the impacts of transport.

3.20 Policy CS8 requires that new developments *"facilitate the timely provision of additional facilities, services and infrastructure to meet identified needs,*

as outlined in the LDF Implementation Plan whether arising from new developments or existing community need, in locations that are appropriate and accessible". Policy CS9 relates to contributions towards infrastructure as a result of new development proposals.

Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan
(December 2015)

3.21 ADAG consider the following list of SAMDev policies relevant to the determination of the Appeal:

- Policy MD1 - Scale and Distribution of Development
- Policy MD3 - Delivery of Housing Development
- Policy MD8 - Infrastructure Provision
- Policy S1 - Albrighton

3.22 The additional following list of SAMDev policies were relevant to the determination of the planning application, but are not considered fundamental to ADAG's evidence at this Appeal Inquiry:

- Policy MD2 - Sustainable Design
- Policy MD6 - Green Belt
- Policy MD7a - Managing Housing Development in the Countryside
- Policy MD12 - The Natural Environment
- Policy MD13 - The Historic Environment

SAMDev Policies

3.23 Policy MD1 confirms that sustainable development will be supported having regard to Policies CS2, CS3 and CS4 respectively and to the principles and development guidelines set out in Settlement Policies S1-S18 and Policies MD3 and MD4.

3.24 Policy MD3 relates to the delivery of housing development. The policy states that *"the settlement housing guideline is a significant policy consideration. Where development would result in the number of completions plus outstanding permissions providing more dwellings than the guideline, decisions will have regard to:*

- i. *The increase in number of dwellings relative to the guideline; and*
- ii. *The likelihood of delivery of the outstanding permissions; and*
- iii. *The benefits arising from the development; and*
- iv. *The impacts of the development, including the cumulative impacts of a number of developments in a settlement; and*
- v. *The presumption in favour of sustainable development".*

3.25 In relation to the settlement housing guidelines, paragraph 3.21 of the supporting text confirms that *"The guideline is not a maximum figure but development going beyond it by too great a degree could result in unsustainable development that stretches infrastructure and community goodwill towards breaking point".*

3.26 Policy MD8 relates to infrastructure provision and confirms that where there is a critical infrastructure shortfall, appropriate phasing will be considered in order to make development acceptable.

3.27 Policy S1 relates to the Albrighton town development strategy. The policy confirms that Albrighton will provide around 250 dwellings over the plan period. Land to the east of site ALB002 (Land east of Shaw Lane) is safeguarded for the village's long-term development needs and would provide approximately 180 homes. The policy confirms that the Albrighton Neighbourhood Plan 'Light' is a key evidence base document underpinning this policy and all development proposals should have regard to this document.

Adopted Policies Map

3.28 The Adopted Policies Map identifies the Site as being outside of a defined settlement, and therefore within countryside and the West Midlands Green Belt. The Site is not allocated for residential development.

Other Relevant Documents & Material Considerations

3.29 The following documents have relevance to ADAG's case:

- National Design Guide (2021);
- 'Planning for Walking' published by the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation ("CIHT Walking Guidance"), April 2015;

- the provisions of LTN1/20 or the (CIHT) 'Guidelines for Providing Journeys on Foot' (2000); and
- Hierarchy of Settlements Topic Paper (August 2020).

Emerging Local Plan

3.30 The Council has recently withdrawn its Emerging Local Plan. A Local Development Scheme (May 2026) has been published confirming commencement on a new Local Plan will begin in September 2026, with Adoption anticipated for March 2029.

3.31 It was however agreed at the 12th February 2025 Council Cabinet Meeting that the Evidence Base supporting the withdrawn Emerging Local Plan (but not the Withdrawn Plan itself) forms a material consideration in decision making on relevant planning applications, to support the implementation of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

3.32 The weight accorded to different policies and evidence base documents is always a matter for the decision maker in line with paragraph 49 of the NPPF. Policies will generally gain weight as they progress through the process of consultation and Examination, particularly where they do not attract objections. Policies that closely accord with adopted policy in the existing Local Plan may also merit more weight. The Emerging Local Plan is currently at its very early stages. In light of this, it is considered that

only *limited weight* can be afforded to the Emerging Plan at the time of writing.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

3.33 For the avoidance of doubt, references to the NPPF in this Proof are made in respect of the December 2024 revised publication. An addendum will be prepared setting out ADAG's position in regard to the new NPPF (17 August 2026 version).

3.34 It is not considered necessary to repeat individual sections of the NPPF at length, however the following chapters have particular relevance in the determination of the Appeal:

- Section 2 (Achieving Sustainable Development)
- Section 4 (Decision making)
- Section 5 (Delivering a sufficient supply of homes)
- Section 6 (Building a strong, competitive economy)
- Section 8 (Promoting healthy and safe communities)
- Section 9 (Promoting sustainable transport)
- Section 11 (Making effective use of land)
- Section 12 (Achieving well-designed and beautiful places)
- Section 14 (Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change)
- Chapter 13 (Protecting Green Belt land)
- Section 15 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment)

- Section 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment)

Consistency of the Development Plan with the NPPF

3.35 Paragraph 232 of the NPPF confirms that existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted/made prior to the publication of the NPPF. Instead, due weight must be given to them according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF, and the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given.

3.36 ADAG accepts that Shropshire Council does not have a Five Years' Supply of Housing. Should the Inspector consider paragraph 11(d)(ii) be engaged following a conclusion that the land is Grey Belt (without prejudice to the separate case being presented by the Council – refer to the Council's Statement of Case (paragraphs 7.2.6 - 7.3.8)), then on the basis of a resulting tilted balance scenario, permission should be granted except where the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the NPPF when taken as a whole, with particular regard to the policies listed in that paragraph. Notably footnote 9 references 110 and 115 as key paragraphs to have regard to, as well as the resulting paragraph of 155(c) which draws upon whether development is in a sustainable location.

3.37 ADAG considers that, in view of the refusal reasons and the housing supply position, the Development Plan policies set out in paragraphs 3.7 and 3.21 are the most important for determining the Appeal.

3.38 It is acknowledged that, in view of the Council's shortfall of housing, that conflict with the housing figures set out in policies CS1, CS3, MD3 and S1 attracts limited weight and are out-of-date. However, this is not to say that the objective of these policies as a whole should also attract limited weight. This approach was taken in the appeal decision for Land opposite Limewood Farm (appeal ref. 6004355) where the Inspector concluded that despite the most important policies for determining the proposal being deemed to be out-of-date, this does not mean that they should be ignored in their entirety.

3.39 ADAG's view is that the spatial objective of these policies, in relation to where development should go, the settlement characteristics/ hierarchy and the capacity of each settlement for development is accurate and materially consistent with the NPPF. Paragraph 11d) ii)) is explicit that development should only come forward if it can be brought forward in sustainable locations that can absorb the extent and scale of development proposed.

3.40 For these reasons it is considered that the spatial objectives of these policies can be attributed significant weight, notwithstanding the five year

housing land supply position, in view of their material consistency with the relevant sections of the NPPF.

3.41 Therefore, on balance the spatial policies as a whole should attract moderate weight.

04 ADAG's Case

Settlement Sustainability

Refusal Reason 1 - Site Location and Form

- 4.1 The Appeal Site is a triangular-shaped greenfield site which comprises approximately 48 hectares of agricultural land. The Appeal Site protrudes to the south of Albrighton with only the top of the Site being located adjacent to the existing settlement and built development. The Site falls outside of a settlement boundary and is wholly located within the West Midlands Green Belt. The land is not allocated in the current or emerging Local Plan.
- 4.2 The Site is physically separate from the centre of Albrighton and proposes to extend development south of the village in an incongruous form, when compared with the existing development form of the village. This would result in an extended parcel of development into the Green Belt that is not bound on its southern, eastern or western sides by existing residential development. A Google Maps image of the Site clearly demonstrates this (see figure 3 below).



Figure 3 – Google Maps Image of Albrighton (star denotes approximate Site location)

- 4.3 From a spatial planning perspective, the adopted Core Strategy establishes a clear settlement hierarchy and spatial distribution of growth. Policy CS1 provides for 27,500 dwellings across Shropshire during the 2006-2026 plan period. Whilst Shrewsbury is identified as the principal focus for growth, approximately 40% of housing is directed towards the Market Towns and Key Centres.
- 4.4 Policy CS1 further divides Shropshire into five spatial zones. Albrighton lies within the East Shropshire spatial zone, where between 3,025 - 3,575 dwellings are planned over the plan period. Importantly, this is the lowest housing allocation of all five spatial zones, reflecting the area's *"different characteristics, pressures, travel-to-work patterns, environmental and*

policy constraints." The adopted strategy therefore intentionally seeks to regulate the overall scale of development within East Shropshire.

4.5 Whilst the Appellant places considerable emphasis upon Albrighton's position within the Market Town/ Key Centre tier of the settlement hierarchy, this represents only part of the story within the adopted Core Strategy. It is incorrect to conclude that all settlements within the Market Towns and Key Centres are intended to accommodate equivalent levels of growth.

4.6 Policy CS3 draws an explicit distinction between Market Towns and Key Centres. Within the East Shropshire spatial zone, Bridgnorth is identified as the principal focus for development, whereas Albrighton is explicitly described as a settlement that *"will have development to meet local needs, respecting their location in the Green Belt."* This wording is deliberate and reflects the different strategic role assigned to Albrighton.

4.7 Table 2 of Policy CS3 reinforces this distinction by identifying indicative housing numbers for each settlement. Whereas Bridgnorth and Shifnal are expected to accommodate between 500 and 1,000 dwellings during the plan period, Albrighton is expected to deliver fewer than 500 dwellings. Indeed, the scale of development anticipated at Albrighton is comparable with Much Wenlock, Broseley and Highley, rather than the Market Towns within this table.

4.8 Whilst Table 2 should not be treated as a ceiling or an absolute in being determinative of sustainability, nevertheless Policy MD3 expressly identifies the scale of exceedance as a significant policy consideration and requires assessment of benefits, delivery, impacts and cumulative effects. The magnitude of the proposed exceedance is therefore relevant evidence of whether the scale of development is proportionate to Albrighton, including whether it can be accommodated sustainably.

4.9 The Hierarchy of Settlements Topic Paper (August 2020, page 25) which forms part of the evidence base to the withdrawn Plan, confirms at Table 10 that the direction of travel for Albrighton is that it is still to be classed as a Key Centre and not envisaged to accommodate growth at the same extent of the Market Towns. In addition, the Topic Paper confirms that Albrighton has a 'dwelling estimate' of 2,205 dwellings, accommodating a population estimate of 4,870 inhabitants. The Appeal scheme (at 800 dwellings and a 80-bed care home) would represent a hugely disproportionate increase above the existing housing provision at Albrighton:

- 40% of the existing 'dwelling estimate';
- 43% of the existing 'population estimate' (based on a national average of 2.4 persons per household); and
- 176% of the settlements 'development guideline'.

4.10 To further emphasise the scale of growth appropriate to Albrighton, Table 2 draws upon Policy CS15 to differentiate between Principal Centres and District Centres. Within East Shropshire, Bridgnorth is identified as the Principal Centre, whereas Albrighton is identified as one of several District Centres alongside Shifnal, Much Wenlock, Highley and Broseley.

4.11 This illustrates that Albrighton occupies a more modest strategic role within the East Shropshire spatial zone, as opposed to what is being suggested by the Appellant. It is clear the settlement performs an important local function, which could support appropriate levels of growth in line with Policy CS3 which *"are of an appropriate scale and design that respects each town's distinctive character"*. However, the Core Strategy is clear that Albrighton is not intended to accommodate development comparable to that expected within the Principal Centres.

4.12 Consequently, although Market Towns and Key Centres are grouped together within the settlement hierarchy for strategic purposes, the Development Plan explicitly differentiates between their respective functions and expected levels of growth. The adopted Core Strategy therefore does not support treating Albrighton as a principal location for strategic-scale housing growth.

4.13 Instead, the Development Plan establishes a coherent and consistent strategy for Albrighton. Whilst recognising its role as a Key Centre, the

adopted policies clearly envisage development that responds to local needs, respects the Green Belt and remains proportionate to the settlement's role and infrastructure capacity.

4.14 The Appeal proposal for up to 800 dwellings (and an 80-bed care home) would fundamentally alter that strategy. It would deliver a scale of growth significantly beyond that envisaged by Policies CS3, MD1, MD3 and S1, undermine the hierarchy established through these policies, and conflict with the spatial planning objectives that direct larger-scale growth towards more appropriate settlements. This strategic conflict remains an important consideration notwithstanding the current housing land supply position and forms a central component of ADAG's case in support of the Council's first reason for refusal.

4.15 The Appeal scheme would therefore be contrary to Core Strategy policies CS1 and CS3, as well as SAMDev policies MD3 and S1 (with moderate weight given to each of these policies).

Site Sustainability

Refusal Reason 1 – Sustainability Credentials of the Appeal Site

4.16 In respect of site sustainability, a separate Highways Proof of Evidence has been prepared by John Russell of John Russell Transport Planning Ltd. This Proof does not seek to repeat specific content provided within that

Highways Proof, however it will aim to summarise the case from a planning perspective.

4.17 Influential to the sustainability credentials of the site are paragraphs 110 and 115 of the NPPF. Paragraph 110 of the NPPF requires significant development to be focused on locations which are, or can be made, sustainable by limiting the need to travel and offering a “*genuine*” choice of transport modes. Paragraph 115 requires sustainable transport modes to be prioritised, having regard to the type and location of development, and that safe and suitable access can be achieved for all users. Parts a) and b) of paragraph 115 are relevant to ADAG’s case.

4.18 The NPPF therefore requires significant development to be focused on locations which are, or can be made, sustainable by limiting the need to travel and offering a “*genuine*” choice of transport modes. For the reasons provided below, and in the corresponding Highways Proof of Evidence, the evidence concludes that the Appeal Site does not meet that test.

4.19 In regard to walking accessibility, the Appeal Site is separated from the principal services and facilities within Albrighton. From the approximate centre of the Site there are no existing facilities within the recognised 800m walkable neighbourhood, as advocated by the National Design Guide and CIHT guidance. In addition, although land is safeguarded for a proposed local centre and secondary school, these facilities do not presently

overcome this deficiency because their phasing is not secured and there are concerns over their delivery (refer to the Education SoCG between the Appellant and the Council, as well as within 'Shropshire Council's Response to Inspector Note of 22nd July 2026' (dated 5 August 2026)).

4.20 In relation to cycling accessibility, there is no existing cycle infrastructure connecting the Appeal Site to the centre of Albrighton. The corresponding Highways Proof of Evidence prepared by John Russell confirms that the Appellant has not assessed the surrounding highway network against the guidance set out in LTN 1/20, nor demonstrated that traffic conditions would support inclusive cycling. The evidence set out in John Russell's Highways Proof of Evidence therefore concludes that cycling is unlikely to represent an attractive and realistic travel choice for the majority of residents.

4.21 Lastly, in relation to public transport provision, existing bus stops are beyond reasonable walking distance and services are limited in frequency and operating hours. In addition, an operational bus service serving the development is not presently secured through the S106 from first occupation or throughout its lifetime. The railway station is remote from the Appeal Site and the hourly service represents a limited level of public transport provision. The Highways Proof of Evidence prepared by John Russell concludes that there would be heavy reliance on journeys by private car and this is reflected in existing travel patterns in the area.

4.22 Accordingly, the Highways evidence concludes that the Appeal Site has not been demonstrated to be a location which is, or can be made, sustainable in transport terms and would not provide the genuine choice of transport modes. The Appeal proposals therefore does not represent transport-sustainable development contrary to paragraphs 110 and 115(a) of the NPPF. Furthermore, the absence of suitable protection for cyclists would not be conducive to safe and suitable access by this mode contrary to paragraph 115(b) of the NPPF.

Refusal Reason 1 – Proximity to Services and Facilities and Provision of Community Benefits

4.23 Policy CS15 establishes a hierarchy of town and rural centres across Shropshire, recognising the different retail and service functions performed by settlements.

4.24 The Design and Access Statement (CD6.1 - pdf page 19) submitted by the Appellant displays at 5.5 the land use parameters for the proposals. Notably, this includes 1.1ha of safeguarded land for a local centre.

4.25 Policy CS15 recognises that relatively modest out-of-centre facilities can materially affect the function of smaller settlements such as Albrighton. The Appeal proposal therefore requires consideration not simply of the

floorspace proposed, but of the wider effect of creating an entirely new focus for day-to-day activity outside the existing centre of Albrighton.

4.26 It is noted that the Appellant's case resides on the justification that collectively these elements (housing, care home, local centre, secondary school etc.) are intended to create a self-contained neighbourhood capable of meeting many of the day-to-day needs of future residents. The Appellant presents these facilities as a public benefit. However, from a spatial planning perspective, they also fundamentally alter the way in which the settlement would function. No clear evidence has been provided by the Appellant to conclude that the services and facilities coming forward do not affect existing services on the High Street. Rather than reinforcing Albrighton's existing centre, the proposals therefore risk establishing a distinctly separate activity hub on the southern edge of the town.

4.27 Limited information has been provided by the Appellant on the type and extent of services and facilities proposed as part of the local centre and when these services and facilities would come forward. As limited evidence has been provided, the impact of the local centre on the existing services and facilities within Albrighton has not been appropriately assessed.

4.28 In addition, as set out in the corresponding Highways Proof of Evidence prepared by John Russell, these uses generate regular daily trips and, when

considered cumulatively, create a focal point for movement and activity independent of the existing High Street.

4.29 The Development Plan consistently promotes growth that supports and strengthens existing settlements. Policy CS3 envisages development meeting local needs within Albrighton, whilst respecting its Green Belt location. Policy S1 similarly provides for proportionate growth integrated with the existing settlement. Neither policy envisages the creation of a substantial new neighbourhood physically separated from the established centre of Albrighton by approximately one kilometre to the south.

4.30 The Appeal proposals therefore represent a scale of development that move beyond a straightforward extension to Albrighton. They introduce the principal components of an independent community. Future and existing residents would have opportunities to use the proposed facilities within the development, however the impact of this on the existing facilities has not been assessed.

4.31 Separately, it is noted that the Appeal proposals only safeguard land for a local centre and secondary school, and therefore the delivery of these services and facilities depend on the take-up from a suitable development partner and the Education Board. There is a clear risk that this could delay the delivery of these services and facilities for future residents of the Site.

4.32 Indeed, there may even be a scenario where the land for the local centre and secondary school is not taken up at all and these scenarios require further clarification and certainty from the Appellant. This is evidenced through the Education SoCG between the Appellant and the Council, as well as within 'Shropshire Council's Response to Inspector Note of 22nd July 2026' (dated 5 August 2026) which provides further information on healthcare and education needs and local capacity.

4.33 Notwithstanding the above, it is understood that discussions surrounding the S106 and its mechanisms will occur during the Inquiry proceedings. However, at this stage there is a lack of certainty as to what the proposals for the local centre would comprise, the impact they would have on existing services and facilities in Albrighton, and how and when the local centre and secondary school would be delivered. If the Inspector is minded to allow the Appeal, then firstly the impacts on the existing facilities need to be assessed fully, and if found it is acceptable in planning terms, these services and facilities should be delivered at the first phase of development to mitigate any potential adverse impacts of their delay.

05 The Planning Balance & Case Summary

- 5.1 In assessing the planning balance, ADAG will only comment on the significance of weightings covered within their evidence. Other matters (relating to Green Belt, Landscape and Heritage etc.) has not been covered as ADAG will not be preparing specific evidence on these matters. ADAG will defer to the Council's position on these matters.
- 5.2 In reaching my assessment of the planning balance, I recognise that Shropshire are experiencing a shortfall in housing land supply. I also recognise the planning policy implications of this as well as the various other potential elements of the proposal for which positive weight can be attributed.
- 5.3 The Appeal proposals would deliver up to 800 dwellings (as well as affordable housing), an 80-bed care home, education provision, public open space and supporting infrastructure, all of which attract weight as public benefits if delivered. However, these benefits must be assessed against the substantial policy conflict arising from the proposals and the risk of unacceptable impacts to existing services and facilities.
- 5.4 In relation to the evidence produced by ADAG, this planning balance will focus on locational sustainability, active travel and conflict with the Development Plan.

- 5.5 In relation to locational sustainability, a key thread running throughout the NPPF (explicitly paragraphs 110 and 115, as well as paragraph 11d) ii)) is that development should only come forward if it can be brought forward in sustainable locations that can absorb the extent and scale of development proposed. This is emphasised in the Land opposite Limewood Farm (appeal ref. 6004355) and Land to the north of Leicester Road (appeal ref. 3369148) appeal decisions.
- 5.6 In practical terms, NPPF paragraphs 110 and 115 requires development to be focused on locations which are, or can be, made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This requires a practical assessment of the development as a whole, including its scale, the distribution of uses, accessibility by different modes, likely travel behaviour, and the extent to which proposed measures are deliverable/ can be secured. The Highways evidence prepared by John Russell concludes that the Appellant has not demonstrated that the Appeal Site is a location which is, or can be made, sustainable in transport terms and would not provide the genuine choice of transport modes, in accordance with these requirements.
- 5.7 The Appeal scheme therefore conflicts fundamentally with the adopted spatial strategy. It proposes strategic-scale development at Albrighton, notwithstanding the Development Plan's clear intention that the settlement

should only accommodate growth meeting local needs, whilst respecting its Green Belt location. The scale of development, equating to approximately 40% of the existing housing stock and significantly exceeding the indicative development guideline for the settlement, would undermine the established settlement hierarchy and the planned distribution of growth.

5.8 The proposals would also create a substantial new neighbourhood physically separated from Albrighton's existing centre. Rather than reinforcing the vitality and viability of the established centre, the proposed local centre and associated community facilities would establish a competing focus for day-to-day activity, contrary to the objectives of Policies CS3 and CS15.

5.9 In terms of the overall planning balance for locational sustainability, the most important spatial policies for determining this Appeal should be attributed moderate weight given the continued relevance of the spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy. However, the degree of conflict with these policies is significant and whilst the proposed housing and associated facilities attract weight, they do not outweigh the substantial harm arising from the departure from the adopted spatial strategy, the disproportionate scale of growth proposed for Albrighton, and the adverse effects on the planned function and role of the existing settlement.

5.10 I therefore invite the Inspector to consider this planning balance in light of the other matters related to this Appeal (Green Belt, Landscape and Heritage etc.).

5.11 I therefore respectfully request that the Inspector dismiss the Appeal.



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