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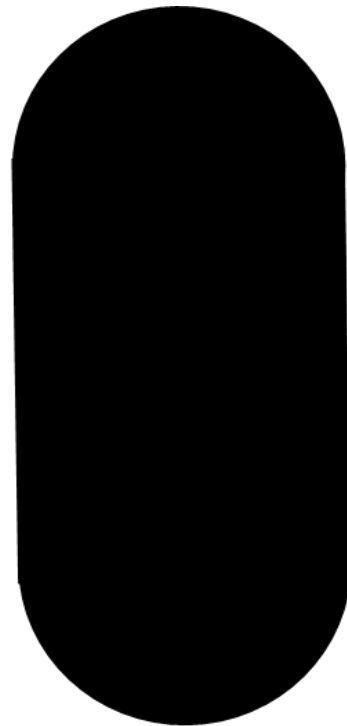
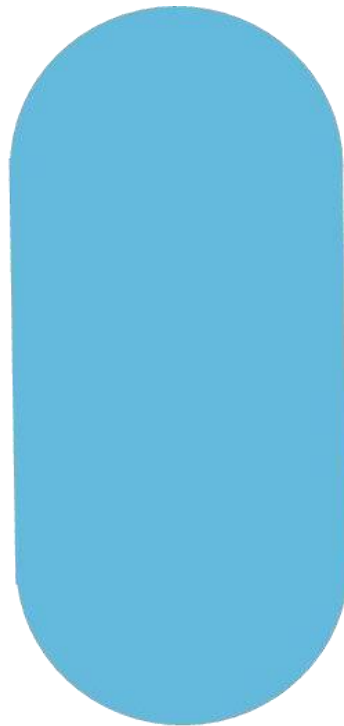
## **Shropshire Local Plan Review**

**Examination in Public**

**Matter 2 – Development Strategy**

**Boningale Homes Ltd**

**September 2024**



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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This response to Matter 2 of the Inspectors' MIQs in respect of the Shropshire Local Plan Review (SLPR) Examination in Public has been prepared by Marrons on behalf of Boningle Homes Ltd. Marrons have been instructed to appear at the Examination on behalf of Boningle Homes Ltd.
- 1.2. This hearing statement should be read alongside previous representation to the further consultation (A155 within GC52) submitted by Marrons on behalf of Boningle Homes Ltd and should be considered in the context of support for a plan led system.
- 1.3. Acting on behalf of our clients, Marrons will attend the Matter 2 Hearing Sessions and will make further oral submission on behalf of our client. This statement outlines Boningle Homes' comments in respect of Matter 2, with responses to the Inspectors' MIQs (Matter 31) set out below.
- 1.4. Boningle Homes are a local housebuilder based in Shropshire and are currently building out a high-quality development at 'Millfields' in Albrighton. They are actively promoting land at Albrighton South (Site Ref 36a/36b) and land at Tilstock Road, Tilstock.
- 1.5. The Albrighton South site is subject to a live planning application (24/02108/OUT), which demonstrates that the site is available, achievable and deliverable in the short-term.
- 1.6. In order to assist the Inspectors', the contents of this submission and the submissions made in respect of other Matters, demonstrate that the submission version of the Plan Review is not, in our assessment capable of being found sound, without significant additional evidence and the identification of additional sites to accommodate housing growth over the Plan period.
- 1.7. These submission reflect the recent position outlined by Housing Minister Matthew Pennycook and the Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate with regard to the continued use of 'pragmatism' in the Examination of Plans and the recognition that any fundamental issues or areas of additional work that require a pause of more than six-months in the Examination process, should indicate that a Plan is not capable of being found sound. As such aligned with the above consideration, in the current context, we do not believe that the Plan is capable of being found sound, especially given the prolonged Examination process and the continued failure of the Council to plan to meet the need of their local communities.
- 1.8. We consider that the Sustainability Appraisal process is totally flawed, to the extent that it is unlawful, as it does not meet the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 ("the SEA Regulations").

There has been a failure to consistently and robustly consider reasonable alternatives contrary to Regulation 12 and Schedule 2, paragraph 8. As such we do not consider that the Plan is capable of being found sound. If however, the Inspectors' are minded to find the Plan sound, as a minimum, the Council should recognise that my clients land at Albrighton should be allocated for development or identified as a reserve site or safeguarded for future development, notwithstanding that Very Special Circumstances have been set out within the Planning Statement of the live planning application that justify release of the land from the Green Belt to accommodate much needed residential, employment and infrastructure provision, without delay.

## 2. Issue 1 – Whether the Development Strategy is justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

### 1. Do any of the policies in the Plan require updating as a result of changes in national planning policy since the previous hearings in July 2022?

- 2.1. We note that the Inspectors have issued a note (ID44) which makes it clear in respect of the forthcoming changes to national policy, which is expected to come into force in December 2024, that the Government will require time to review the consultation submissions after the end of September, when the Framework modifications are available for consultation, before publishing an updated version. The current expectation is that there would be transitional measures in place, as stated in the consultation document, even if that version were to be released during the hearings.
- 2.2. This would imply that the July 2021 Framework would still apply to this Plan.
- 2.3. It is however pertinent to note that the revisions to the NPPF are significant for Shropshire. In addition to reversing the modifications made to the current NPPF by the previous Government, which includes making the use of the standard method for determining minimum housing requirements, mandatory again, the consultation suggests a new standard method calculation.
- 2.4. Along with ensuring the delivery of 1.5 million new homes over the next five years, the primary objective of the new proposed standard method is to ensure that all areas contribute to meeting the nation's housing needs rather than drastically undershooting local ambition in some areas. This will result in a more balanced distribution of homes across the nation by placing homes where they are most needed and least affordable.
- 2.5. Aligned with the below in respect of Green Belt, and through removing some of the provisions under Paragraph 61 of the NPPF<sup>23</sup>, only where very significant 'hard constraints' can be evidenced to the Planning Inspectorate, will a housing requirement below that generated through the standard method be considered appropriate. Given the constraints and opportunities for growth present across Shropshire, we do not consider that there is any prospect of 'hard constraints' being evidenced to justify deviation from the new method output.
- 2.6. Turning to the new local housing need figure derived from the proposed standard method, alongside the consultation on the reforms to the NPPF, the Government have published details of the outcome of the new calculation, and for Shropshire, we can see a very significant increase in the minimum number of houses to be planned for on an annual basis.

- 2.7. The revised standard method indicates a minimum, baseline requirement of some 2,059 dwellings per year for Shropshire, against the current standard method figure of 1,070 dwellings per year. This is a minimum increase in need of some 989 dwellings per year.
- 2.8. Notwithstanding the fact that we do not consider that the Plan is capable of being found sound, if the Inspectors' are minded to find the Plan sound, there should be regard to the likely need for an immediate review, and the benefits associated in this context, to identifying reserve sites and safeguarded land for future development.
- 2. Is it proposed that the overall spatial strategy and broad distribution of growth set out in Policy SP2 will remain the same following the additional work? If not, how would it change and are the changes justified, effective and consistent with national policy? Are any consequential changes to Policy SP2 or the supplementary text required?**
- 2.9. There should be sufficient flexibility established within the identified settlement hierarchy to recognise that there are inconsistencies with assessment of the settlement hierarchy on the basis of Green Belt within the authority. Indeed, settlements that are located within or adjacent to the Green Belt, have had their position within the settlement hierarchy and growth attributed over the plan period, artificially reduced.
- 2.10. Notwithstanding this, Albrighton is recognised as sustainable settlement, adjustment should be made to the quantum of development proposed within Albrighton.
- 2.11. We have identified a range of concerns relating to additional growth in Bridgnorth, Shrewsbury and Ironbridge to accommodate unmet need, however, as a minimum the Council will need to, through modification to update the strategy as a matter of course.
- 3. Are the areas identified to meet the Black Country unmet housing needs justified and appropriate?**
- 2.12. No the area and sites identified to accommodate unmet need arising from the Black Country.
- 2.13. The environmental and social benefits of situating growth in areas with the greatest physical association with the BCWMCA—especially areas with strategically important road and rail links—are not sufficiently acknowledged in the assessment of sites to contribute to unmet need, as detailed within the updated additional SA. The reality remains that the best locations for meeting unmet needs, like P3b Albrighton South, have been left out of the Plan due to the environmental effects of development within

the Green Belt; however, the SA ignores the environmental and social effects of development outside the Green Belt, which is physically farther away from the BCWMCA, including the inescapably greater number of private vehicle trips and the more frequent trips made by residents to return to their homes.

2.14. Despite the narrow definition of environmental benefit and harm, the SA does not give enough weight to economic and social objectives. The socioeconomic benefits of providing housing and job growth in the most suitable locations to fulfil unmet need are not sufficiently taken into account in the Plan making process as outlined in the SA.

2.15. As is set out in our Matter 1 Statement, we have identified a concerning number of inconsistencies in the assessment of sites within GC44. Through the updated SA, a series of sites have been identified to accommodate the proposed 1,500 dwelling contribution to the Black Country. These are:

- BRD030 – Taskey Garden Village, Bridgenorth: 600 dwellings;
- SHR060, SHR158 and SHR161 – Land between Mytton Oak Road and Hanwood Road, Shrewsbury: 300 dwellings.
- IRN001 – Former Ironbridge Power Station: 600 dwellings.

2.1. Turning first to assessment of each of these sites set out within the updated additional SA, and my client land at Albrighton South (P36a and P36b), the Council's own assessment of the contribution that each site can make to addressing the Black Country's unmet need demonstrates significant inconsistencies and very accurately demonstrates that the choice of sites to accommodate unmet need does not reflect the most suitable locations for development to accommodate unmet need.

**Table 1: Assessment of contribution to meeting Black Country's Need (Table 12.1 of update additional SA).**

Criteria	BRD030	SHR060	IRN001	P36a/P36b
Settlement Contribution	Fair	Fair	Poor	Fair/Good
Black Country Conclusion	Fair	Good	Poor	Fair/Good

2.2. It is therefore noteworthy that the Council neglected to consider their own evidence and reflect through the SA the importance of accommodating growth, including the environmental benefits of accommodating unmet need in the areas with the closest physical relationship to the Black Country, in the context of an authority that has accepted that there are exceptional circumstances that warrant the release of land from the Green Belt.

**4. Has meeting some of the housing and employment needs of the Black Country led to the need to release or safeguard more land from the Green Belt? If so, what are the exceptional circumstances for doing this?**

- 2.3. The Council have provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that Exceptional Circumstances exist for release of land from the Green Belt.
- 2.4. By virtue of proximity to the Black Country and the Birmingham Green Belt, the simple reality is that the locations most suitable for accommodating unmet need are those located within the Green Belt.
- 2.5. The Green Belt in areas such as Albrighton, has artificially restricted development in otherwise sustainable settlements, and indeed the knock on implications of this, in the long-term is population and service decline. In taking this approach, the Council is failing the existing and future populations such as Albrighton.





 **Marrons**

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