

**BONINGALE HOMES ALBRIGHTON SOUTH OVERDEVELOPMENT –
MEETING 16th MAY**

Attendees

Mark Pritchard – MP for Telford and Wrekin

Nigel Lumby – Shropshire Council and Albrighton Parish Councillor

George Thompson – Managing Director of Boningale Homes

Dean Trowbridge – Development Director for Boningale Homes

Co-Chair & Members of Albrighton Village Action Group (AVAG) Committee

Circa 300 Residents from Albrighton and surrounding areas, many of whom could not fit into the main hall.



Introduction by Mark Pritchard

The meeting was opened by Mark Pritchard and he extended a welcome to all attendees.

He said that he knew Albrighton well and he is against the proposed development by Boningale Homes on Green Belt land adjacent to the village. The main reason he wanted to hold the meeting was in view of the number of comments he had received expressing concerns about the proposed development.

He commented that the numbers attending showed the strength of feeling within the village.

He also wanted to put on record a thank you to Matt, Charlie, Russ and Dipika, leading members of AVAG, for the work they have done so far, and he commented on how quickly and professionally the Action Group had been set up.

Presentation by Nigel Lumby - Shropshire Council and Albrighton Parish Councillor

Nigel spoke about the local plan and what will happen once Boningale Homes submit a planning application.

He did confirm that he was also against the proposal and cited the reasons as the Green Belt and the fact that it is not in the local plan. Also the poor connectivity to Albrighton.

The land proposed for this development was actually taken out of the 2006 local plan when it was reviewed by the Planning Inspector, on the basis that it was not a suitable place to develop. The reasons given were that it was not connected to Albrighton and in the future would allow developers to 'further infill' on more Green Belt land.

NPPF (the National Planning Policy Framework) is the framework where in locally prepared plans provision is made for sufficient housing and other developments in a sustainable manner. Basically this is Central Government telling local governments that they need to build 'X' amount of houses on their land. This is why we have the issue with West Midlands, they are saying that we need to contribute some of our development to offset theirs, as they are unable to build the number of houses in their current plan.

At the moment our local plan runs to 2028, however the Developers are going to say that it is now coming to the end of its useful life.

A decision was made by the Government to scrap the old planning system because it was taking up to 4 years to complete plans, a new system has been in place for 2 years and Shropshire Council are currently working on a new plan.

However, until this is complete the original old local plan is still valid until 2028.

Nigel went on to explain that Shropshire council have tried their best to put a new local plan in place but so far have been stopped because it is continually being thwarted by Developers who are using lawyers to challenge what is being suggested.

It was also held up last year with queries from the Inspectorate, but it has now been agreed the one thing that needs to be reassessed is the sustainability plan which is basically how many houses need to be included in the plan. 500 additional houses have now been included and the plan is now out for Public Consultation for resubmittal to the Inspectorate.

Nigel also explained that once the Planning Application is submitted by Boningale Homes, it will be reviewed firstly at a Parish Council meeting and will then be considered at a Shropshire Council Meeting. Nigel said it should be rejected by both on the grounds that it is Green Belt Land and not included in the local plan.

Boningale Homes would then submit an appeal which would go to an Appeals Inspectorate.

At this stage they will need to demonstrate the following,

- The local plan is out of date, not literally because the current plan goes up to 2028, however, they will try to prove that the plan has been overtaken or that it does not cover a 5 year housing supply with insufficient number of dwellings.
- They may use the fact that Solar farms have already been built on Green Belt Land. However Green Belt land can be used for special circumstances and Solar Farms, because they produce Electricity are classed as special Circumstances.
- They could also quote other “Special Circumstances”, some of which are as follows

Overall shortage of housing in a particular area / Shortage of affordable housing. However in Albrighton Boningale Homes are already building the development called Millfields which includes affordable housing therefore providing Albrighton with its housing allocation,

A secondary School being built could make a difference. Currently 450 children are bussed from Albrighton to Idsall School this may no longer be necessary and would save the council money. Also a secondary school would be built as an academy so there would be no cost to the council as it would all be centrally funded.

- A further agreement could be that the development would be significant in meeting the housing needs of the West Midlands. However this requirement has already been met elsewhere in Shropshire and should not involve any more houses in Albrighton.

Nigel stressed how important it is to have an up to date local plan in place because without it the NPPF can say that as long as its sustainable, local authorities have to say yes to building.

Mark Pritchard also commented that the local plan is there to protect communities and that is why it is essential that an up to date plan is in place.

Presentation by Matt – Albrighton Village Action Group – Co Chair

Matt spoke about the Action group and how the residents of Albrighton can help in our fight to stop the proposed development.

He expressed his thanks to the Albrighton Village Action Group and informed the audience that all members of the committee were happy to answer any of their queries regarding this proposed development.

Whilst there are a lot of emotional reactions to this development, Matt made it clear that we would not win this fight by using ‘emotional’ arguments, i.e. money, greed, ruining family legacies, arrogance, attitude etc. Whilst these are all real concerns our objections to the proposed development have to be based on ‘Material’ Facts / Considerations.

He also made clear to Boningale Homes that even if they changed the plans, i.e. fewer houses, we would still fight against the development of this Green Belt land - if even one house is proposed on Green Belt.

Matt explained that there are four ways that everyone can help to stop this proposed development.

1 - OBJECT TO THE PLANNING APPLICATION

As soon as Boningale Homes submit the planning application, AVAG will review the documents and issue advice on our Website on how you can object. We also intend to set up drop in sessions to give

advice and guidance, particularly on what is meant by Material Facts / Considerations. Please look out for posters around the village giving dates / locations of the drop in sessions.

You will be able to object either Online or in writing.

To send a strong message we need to send as many objections as possible.

2 - SUPPORT THE NEW LOCAL PLAN BY 11TH JUNE

A Local Plan is a legal requirement, every County has to have one in place. This plan sets out the number of new homes and how they are going to be developed so there is sustainable building in each area. It's a longstanding plan and is very important as it sets out the future development plan for Shropshire. For Albrighton the housing plans are;

- 771 homes, of which 257 are already built or under construction, i.e. Millfields, Phase 1,2, 3 already approved and planning for Phase 4 to be submitted soon.

We do not need more homes than this.

- Land has been allocated for Millfields, Wain Estates, Cross Road and Kingswood Road. The Wain Estates development is for 150 homes just to the East of Millfields.
- Land has been allocated on Cross Road and Kingswood Road and is safeguarded for development after 2038, Proposals are for 160 homes on Cross Road which is actually right next to the development being proposed, and a further 150 houses on Kingswood Road.

The Shropshire Plan reviews development in the whole of Shropshire:

It clearly shows that the Boningale Homes proposed development is on Green Belt and should be retained as such. It goes on to say that there is no potential for housing on this site, there is a high level of harm to the countryside and poor connectivity to Albrighton.

The plan also refers to the unmet need of West Midlands and Shropshire's agreement to take 1500 homes, and it specifically says that there are more appropriate places to build homes than on this Site, for example the Old Ironbridge Power Station - brownfield land, Tasley and Shrewsbury. None of this is Green Belt.

SUPPORTING THE NEW LOCAL PLAN WILL HELP WITH THE FIGHT TO STOP OVERDEVELOPMENT OF GREEN BELT LAND AROUND ALBRIGHTON.

We will also put details on our Website as to how you can support the Local Plan.

3 - DONATE TO HELP US FIGHT THIS PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Matt said Thank You to everyone who has donated, so far we have raised over £3,000. Unfortunately this is not going to be enough to cover any Legal fees we may face, so we are raising our target to £20,000. We may have to raise this again, if needed, to ensure we can carry on our fight.

Please do what you can to help us - and donate on the table in the foyer if you can.

4 - SIGN PETITION OR E-PETITION

The petition has already been signed by over 3000 people, this is equivalent to over 70% of the electorate in Albrighton and Donnington.

NOTE - Details on these four points can be found on our Website and Facebook page. Our web address is on the bottom of our flyers along with QR code.

Alternatively, you can email us or speak to one of the AVAG committee members.

One final point made by Matt was about a survey AVAG have conducted with residents of Millfields Estate, results of which will be included in our objections. One very salient point is the fact that a lot of residents were concerned over drainage and flooding issues.

To conclude, Matt asked for people who OPPOSE Boningale Homes proposals to stand up. In response everyone in the room - over 300 people (apart from Boningale Homes) stood up; and those who were already standing put their hands up. Matt said that this shows the Overwhelming Opposition to the proposals - not what Boningale Homes have incorrectly reported as being 'mixed' reaction

Presentation by Dean Trowbridge – Development Manager for the development - Boningale Homes

Dean confirmed that the proposed development would include the following,

- Circa 800 homes 20% of which would be affordable
- Green spaces for residents
- GP / Pharmacy / Minor Injury Unit
- Supermarket / Shared workspace
- Purpose built state of the art Secondary School for circa 650 / 750 students.
- New Care Facility
- Flex WorkSpace
- New Extended Bus Service
- Public Sports Facility

(At points during his section, members of the public laughed and shouted comments about how out of touch the proposals were).

The Development would also include some social and economic benefits

- Circa 1200 jobs generated from Construction site, new supermarket, GP surgery, school and Care Home
- £60.4M would be the value added to Shropshire economy each year
- £4.6M new homes bonus would be paid to Shropshire Council from Central Government to be spent how council wishes
- There would be an Additional £1.2M Council Tax each year.
- £6.7M on retail each year of which £2.6M would be spent in Albrighton

Dean also explained that a sustainability appraisal undertaken by Shropshire CC has confirmed that subject to Highways improvements, the site could accommodate 1500 dwellings safely. Dean said that their road design would reduce any significant impact on Albrighton,

He also tried to rationalise the reason why they were using Green Belt land, citing the need to meet the housing shortfall from the West Midlands, the fact that Brown Sites are difficult for Developers

due to their complex nature and increased costs, and also that the land being proposed for development does not qualify as the best farmland.

(Many of these points were audibly contested and mocked by members of the public whilst Dean was speaking)

Further points from the developers were as follows:

Taken from the National Planning Policy the government estimates that 300,000 new homes are needed each year. In the year 22/23 only 234,000 were built and again we are not on target for this year. Not building enough homes results in home ownership becoming unaffordable resulting in adults living with their parents for longer or living in substandard homes.

Albrighton has an ageing population and the provision of new family housing contributes to the long term vitality of the village.

Boningale Homes appreciate that this is not in the current Local Plan but in their view the plan is not adequate.

The planning application will be submitted in the next 2 weeks. It's expected that it will take the Council 3 weeks to validate and once validated the Council will start a 6 week public consultation phase. The application phase would run for 12 months. If it is eventually approved it is anticipated that multiple developers would be involved in the delivery with a construction time of between 5 – 10 years.

ACTION - Dean to share his Presentation with AVAG

Questions and Answers

NOTE – unless specified, questions answered by Boningale Homes

Answers are shown in *italics*

Question 1 – This is all about Housing, where is everyone going to work?

As part of the Shropshire Local Plan the proposed development is to meet the unmet need of housing in the West Midlands. In addition Shropshire have also taken 30 hectares of employment land, So people who will be living on this development will probably work in Albrighton or the West Midlands.

Question 2 – GP Practice –there is a National Shortage of GP's, Nursing Staff and Health Care Assistants – Where are staff coming from?

The Doctor Boningale Homes have on board says they have enough staff available. It would be a new state of the art GP Surgery.

(NOTE – it was later established that the Doctor mentioned was not from Albrighton's existing practice and that the Shaw Lane Surgery does not support this development)

Question 3 – There are rumours, understand it is Bradford Estates, that some are questioning the veracity of numbers

Standard methodology can be applied to calculate Housing numbers in a local plan, Shropshire Council have used a high growth option and we don't believe this is an error in the number of homes they have calculated

Question 4 - Lives in Shaw Lane – Traffic congestion with School and Doctors is tremendous.

Also most developers put out plans with a large number of dwellings, then after consultation reduce the numbers and get away with it. Can the developers confirm that they will not be amending numbers,

Can we also have reassurance that any staffing for the new GP Surgery would be put into place before the Development was started.

Developers confirmed No intention to reduce number of dwellings. The numbers have been calculated in a way that they can deliver on the community benefits they are proposing,

From previous meetings they have been made aware of the congestion problems in Shaw Lane and this is one of the reasons they have suggested a new GP Surgery to relieve the pressure on Shaw Lane Practise

(Fact check note - Boningale Homes proposed improvements previously as part of Millfields - but this has not materialised).

They said that they have been speaking to a Doctor who sees the opportunity to take over and lead a new practice, so they are confident that they can deliver.

The new GP practice along with other Community services would not be in place before build. A signed section 106 legal agreement would be set up before the development starts, which provides contractual 'triggers' for commercial benefits to be delivered.

Question 5 - Won't building a new Doctors Surgery and a new School move traffic problems to Cross Road?

The new School would be accessed off a new spine road designed to accommodate the traffic. Also, the school would be designed with Drop Off and Pick Up points.

Question 6 - Why haven't the problems in Shaw Lane been resolved within the original plans for Millfields,

Millfields was an allocated site which had policies attached to it which could not be changed. None of the policies identified Shaw Lane as an issue,

Question 7 – Addressed to Mark Pritchard - Why is it always Green Belt Sites that developers want to build on – shouldn't we be using Brown Sites

Mark confirmed he would answer this question in his closing summary,

Question 8 – Supporting children with additional needs and mental health issues, by taking away Green Belt we are reducing their opportunity for good mental health, this is reinforced and supported by the Princess of Wales. Research also shows that green belt is vital for good mental health.

Development of this site would result in Green Space, there would be 37 acres of Public Open Space and green infrastructure for people to enjoy and explore.

Question 9 – Local resident objected to the Shaw Lane development (now known as Millfields) because he thought it was unfair. Eventually the development went to Boningales who ended up getting the land back. What Boningales are now trying to do to the village is also totally unfair.

Jessops wanted to access Millfields from Shaw lane, this was why it was rejected, on a highways issue. Boningales moved the access to Millfields to Kingswood Road which was acceptable.

Question 10 - Understand that the proposed Development will be built by several different builders, does this mean that you will have no obligation to put the infrastructure in place,

There will be multiple builders involved but the obligations to deliver infrastructure will remain. As mentioned previously a Section 106 will be in place which will apply contractually to all developers on the site.

Question 11 - Why are you still including the unmet homes from the West Midlands in your plans when the Shropshire plan has already identified that these would be taken by Shrewsbury and Ironbridge Power station site.

Dean alleged that the Planning Inspector has told Shropshire to find additional sites to accommodate the West Midlands needs.

(Note that this was audibly contested by members of the public in the room).

Question 12 – It has been stated that Brownfield Sites are not suitable because they would over intensify the population of those areas.

How is that different from you increasing the density of the population of Albrighton by building 800 homes?

Brown Sites are challenging because they have high remediation. They believe it's OK to increase the density of Albrighton because it's sustainable, if they can't prove it's sustainable they won't get planning permission.

Question 13 - You said that access to the new properties and the school would be via a new spine road. Can you guarantee that the majority of people from the new development will not be driving through the village.

They have carried out Traffic impact and Transport and Highways assessments which show that there will be some impact on the village, but it has been assessed as 22% increase through Albrighton, with 78% going south on the new spine road.

(Note that this was audibly contested by members of the public in the room).

Question 14 - As you can see the room is full of passionate people with more people outside in the rain. We have a member of the AVAG who spoke passionately against the development, however as developers, your presentation was scripted and mumbled, on a scale of 1-10 how has this gone?

George Thompson said that it was unfortunate that they had not been able to present their presentation on the projector which had been updated to reflect comments previously made by the community.

(Fact check note - Boningale Homes had requested access to a projector at short notice but this had not reached the Red House team. AVAG brought their own IT equipment to the meeting to project their presentation - which could not connect to Boningale Homes laptop).

George said that he had grown up in the village and comes from a family that believed in progress both social and economic. He knows that a lot of people feel that Albrighton should not change but said that with the community benefits their development proposes, i.e. Care Home, School, Supermarket etc, he thinks this will provide progress.

When challenged about Boningale Homes previously buying land in order to protect the village, he replied – “not that he was aware of”.

Question 15 – Owner from Millfields, when he purchased his house, he was told that at some point solar panels would be fitted, 150 houses now built but not 1 solar panel.

Also, a new school sounds good, but not every child on the development will be going to secondary school. What about primary schools, the two in the village are already full where will primary school children go.

Schools will be assessed by the Education Authority as part of the Planning Application, If there isn't enough capacity, they would have to make financial contributions for them to take additional capacity.

Question 16 - Question for the Action Group. In your presentation you said that if we wanted to object, our objections had to be based on Material facts. What about our village culture, we don't want houses on Green Belt land and a shopping centre, why is this not a good argument?

A – Matt from AVAG replied that the Planning Officer and Inspector will only make decisions based on material considerations. We know people are upset by this proposed development, we understand, but that is the way the planning process works.

Question 17 - Born in this village – I am from Shropshire not the West Midlands and very proud to be from Shropshire. Question to Developers where do you live and how much development has there been where you live?

In the National Planning Policy Framework, there is a strong duty to cooperate with other Councils. Shropshire have taken 1500 unmet needs of the West Midlands and this needs to be accommodated as close to that district as possible.

George said he lives in village and comes from a family who believes in progress. Dean said he lives in Nottingham.

(Fact check note - it is understood that George spends a lot of time living in Norfolk - a long way from Albrighton)

Summary from Mark Pritchard

Mark thinks we established that the overall view from Albrighton is that this proposed development is not welcome.

He thanked everyone for their good questions and commented that whilst we talk about the impact on schools, roads etc, it really is a battle cry for the very heart of green England.

These meetings are going on throughout the country, and of course we support housing, but it has to be in the right numbers in the right place.

So, when our guests (Boningale Homes) suggest we are not for progress, we are but in the right places preferably Brown field sites. Think about social justice, it cannot be right for people living in urban areas seeing brown sites left derelict and over grown and not being regenerated.

People move to Shropshire for a semi rural life style and they are welcome here. However, when moving to a rural environment they want to see Green Belt which is protected. Mark is going to fight all the way to ensure that happens.

The village has changed over the years and will continue to do so. 770 houses planned, part of which are for after 2038, this is known as organic growth. This proposed development is too many homes in the wrong place and the wrong time. It's speculative over-development.

Local planning processes are in place and that is where developers should start, not by proposing speculative developments.

Mark has been authorised to tell us that the leadership at Shropshire Council is very concerned about this planning application and are minded not to support it, however the planning committee has to do its work independently.

Mark will however support the AVAG, all the village, and the local Parish Council to ensure Shropshire Council Planning are aware of the strength of feeling.

If the Application is rejected by the council, developers could appeal, it could then go all the way to the Secretary of State and Mark, if Mark is still our MP, will make representation to the Secretary of State to ensure this application is declined.

Mark says he has looked at many Green Belt issues in Shropshire and this has to be one of the worst cases of abuse of the development process.