

You may have noticed in our November update that there were a lot of 'ifs, buts and maybes'! Well, this month's news is similarly inconclusive and could be summarised with the phrase 'Beware of moving parts'!

However, there have been some key developments. It is not clear yet what these will mean for Albrighton. Even our professional consultants are advising us that we can only wait and see, as there are so many planning and political factors at play.



### What has happened over the last month?

Three Boningale Homes Planning Applications have been refused by South Staffordshire County Council. These relate to Kiddemore Green, Brewood (85 homes & 80 bed care home), Coven Road, Brewood (45 homes) and Boscobel Lane, Bishopswood (100 homes and a shop). The decisions were made by Planning Officers, not by Councillors at Planning Committee meetings.

**Will Boningale Homes go to Appeal?** We are waiting to see if Boningale Homes will launch appeals with the Planning Inspectorate against these three refusals. They are extremely expensive. They have 6 months to do so, (approx. April 2025).

### What do the South Staffordshire refusals mean for Albrighton South?

Not a lot in reality. As we are in a different county, the Albrighton decision will be made by the Shropshire Council planning officer - Lynn Parker and her team; and probably by the 11 Shropshire Councillors of the Shropshire South Planning Committee. Although it is reassuring that South Staffs Planning Officers have not been convinced by Boningale Homes' arguments, the Albrighton South development is significantly bigger and more complex, by including a school, supermarket, local centre and care home in order to argue that the development is needed due to 'Very Special Circumstances'.

### What's happened with Albrighton South Planning Application 24/02108/OUT?

Boningale Homes submitted more documents in September on various aspects including landscape and visual impact, the Public Consultation objections, planning policy, flood risk & drainage and other responses from Shropshire Council. This resulted in a further period of public consultation which finished on the 26th of October.

**More objections!** During this additional consultation period, more objections were raised by AVAG committee members and other members of the public, taking the total number of objections to a whopping 1120.

**More supporting comments!** About 25 comments supporting Boningale Home's proposals were submitted in the last month, taking the grand total to just 28. You might ask where these comments came from. It appears that all of them were submitted by a consultancy called Just Build Homes, which Boningale Homes has employed to generate support. Amazingly, this seems to be an acceptable practice in the planning industry.

Just Build Homes cold-called people in lots of areas (not just Albrighton), and talked to them about the national 'housing crisis', and attempted to promote the idea of building houses and schools. The calls failed to mention the many negative impacts that the proposals would have, including the fact that these buildings would be on prime agricultural Green Belt land. The calls concluded by asking for support for the application. Some people agreed although we have heard of many refusals, and some of them were not very polite! We wonder how much Boningale Homes paid Just Build Homes for these 25 supporting comments?

We don't know where the people they spoke to actually live, and we do not recognise the names of any of them. Take a look on the Shropshire Council website to see if you recognise them!

### More documents submitted to Shropshire Council:

**Active Travel England** have asked for further assessment and revisions to demonstrate the Public

Transport Strategy for the housing proposals, and show how to increase the proposed 2% - 3% increase in walking, wheeling and cycling trips, also how to introduce traffic calming measures on Cross Road.

**Developing Highways** responded to the Boningale Homes Transport Assessment. This seemed positive in lots of areas, but asked for further information about road layouts, a junction capacity assessment, refuse collection arrangements, trip generation numbers not adding up, and more information about the timing of building the development in relation to other housing developments.

**Shropshire Local Plan hearings stopped abruptly.** The Stage 2 Hearings started on the 15th of October. Participants included Shropshire Council, the Government's Planning Inspectorate, and developers, as well as organisations opposing the Local Plan. AVAG supports it. We were all expecting them to be continuing into early December, however events took an unexpected turn...

AVAG attended the key sessions in the first two weeks, and witnessed extensive technical evidence submitted by organisations and developers including Boningale Homes, much of this attacking the Council's strategy. Shropshire Council Planning Policy Team led by Eddie West held its own in response, answered strongly and defended themselves throughout. The Examining Inspectors led by Louise Crosby appeared to be patient, impartial and professional.

Then a few days later the Planning Inspectors wrote to Shropshire Council (ID46) saying that they have 'significant concerns about the soundness of the Plan in respect of a number of areas'. They said that they would explain these concerns in detail in a letter as soon as possible; so by the time this article is published we may know more. We will monitor this closely and publish the details on our website and Facebook Group as soon as we know them. <https://albrightongreenbelt.co.uk/>

**The Government's National Planning Policy Framework** consultation responses are still under review. The Government confirmed in the October Budget that it intends to respond to any proposed changes before the end of the year and to confirm pro-growth reforms to the planning system.

**Beware of moving parts!** We are learning that there are many important factors which affect housing policy and the progress of planning applications like Albrighton South. AVAG thanks you for the overwhelming support we have received from people in Albrighton, Donington and Boningale in 2024. Have a very happy Christmas with your families and friends, (make a New Year resolution to donate to our fighting fund), and be prepared for whatever happens next in 2025!