

MEMORANDUM

To: Naomi Reynard
Senior Planning Officer

From: Debbie Ealand
Housing Supply Officer
Ext: 4526

Your Ref: 25/01696/OP

Date: 30th July 2025

Outline Application: Outline application for the erection of up to 130 dwellings with public open space, landscaping, sustainable drainage system (SuDS), and associated works with all matters reserved save for access.

Land Southeast of Holwell Road and North of Hambridge Way, Pirton, Herts.

Ref: 25/01696/OP

Dear Naomi,

Thank you for your memo of 18 July 2025 in respect of the above application for outline planning permission.

The affordable housing requirement is 40% on sites which will provide 25 dwellings or more, in accordance with the Local Plan. Within the overall affordable housing requirement, the Council requires a 65% rented/ 35% affordable home ownership or other forms of affordable housing tenure mix, in accordance with the Local Plan and the Developer Contributions SPD.

The North Herts District and Stevenage Borough Councils SHMA Update 2023 shows a need for a 65% Social Rented/ 15% Affordable Rented/ 20% Affordable Home Ownership tenure mix.

Pirton is a Category A village and there are no allocated sites in Pirton in the Local Plan. The site is beyond the village boundary in Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt; an area of rural restraint.

Policies SP5: Countryside and Green Belt and CGB1: Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt apply.

Policy CGB2b: Community facilities, services and affordable housing in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt says that planning permission for community facilities, services or affordable housing in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt will be granted adjoining Category A villages if

- a) It meets a proven local need as identified through a parish survey or other relevant study;
- b) There are no reasonable alternate, suitable and available sites:

- i. within the defined boundaries of the relevant Category A ; or
- ii. otherwise within a reasonable travelling distance (by various modes) of the location where the need has been identified;

The preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence. Strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment to determine the minimum number of homes needed, in accordance with the NPPF.

Paragraph 63 of the NPPF says “Within this context of establishing need, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. These groups should include (but are not limited to) those who require affordable housing; families with children; older people (including those who require retirement housing, housing-with-care and care homes); students; people with disabilities; service families; travellers; people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes”.

Paragraph 66 of the NPPF says “Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed, planning policies and decisions should expect that the mix of affordable housing required meets identified local needs, across Social Rent, other affordable housing for rent and affordable home ownership tenures”.

Paragraph 64 of the NPPF says “Where a need for affordable housing is identified, planning policies should specify the type of affordable housing required, and expect it to be met on-site unless:

- a) off-site provision or an appropriate financial contribution in lieu can be robustly justified; and
- b) the agreed approach contributes to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities.”

A rural Housing Needs Survey (HNS) was undertaken in Pirton in 2010, so this would now be considered very out of date.

The conclusions of HNS identified a total need for 11 units over a five-year period, with 7 units required within the two years following the survey.

Since the publication of the survey report two schemes at the former Elm Tree farm and Priors Hill Pirton have delivered 39 affordable homes which has met this need. Most of the affordable homes were rented tenure with the conversion of shared homes to rented tenure due to lack of demand and affordability for local people.

If approval of the scheme can be justified, based on 130 dwellings, the affordable housing requirement would be 52 dwellings; 34 rented and 18 affordable home ownership/ other affordable housing tenure.

The 2023 North Herts & Stevenage Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) update for the 65% rented tenure shows the following mix best meets housing need:

34 x 7% x 1 bed flats (2)
34 x 9% x 2 bed flats (3)
34 x 22% x 2 bed houses (8)
34 x 50% x 3 bed houses (17) *
34 x 10% x 4 bed houses (3)
34 x 2% 5+ bed houses. (1)

For the 35% affordable home ownership tenure the 2023 SHMA shows the following mix best meets housing needs:

18 x 22% x 1 bed flats (4)
18 x 15% x 2 bed flats (3)
18 x 43% x 2 bed houses (8)
18 x 20% x 3 bed houses (3).

* Evidence from the North Herts housing register suggests the number of three bed houses recommended in the SHMA is greater than required and there is higher need for two bedroom family homes and some need for larger (4+ beds) family homes. A reduction in the number of three bedroom houses and the provision of more two bedroom houses would therefore be considered favourably.

The Pirton Neighbourhood Plan (PNP) was made on 27 April 2018. Policy PNP 1 - Meeting Local and Wider Needs says that “a residential development proposal will be supported if:

- 1.1 It is within the development boundary of the village as shown on the map on page 3 of the Plan.
- 1.2 It is for no more than 30 houses on any one development site.
- 1.3 It has regard to the needs of young families looking for 2/3 bedroom properties which may include semi-detached and terraced housing.
- 1.4 It has regard to the need for homes suitable for down-sizing and lifetime occupation by the elderly, including bungalows and sheltered accommodation.
- 1.5 It provides a mix of homes (including the provision of self-build plots where appropriate) which include an element of social and affordable housing as specified in the NHDC Local Plan and in accordance with local needs, taking into account the high market value of property in Pirton in relation to the average salary.
- 1.6 The affordable housing is subject to a Section 106 legal agreement or planning conditions ensuring that it remains an affordable dwelling for local people in perpetuity.
- 1.7 All proposed developments have plans and methodology agreed with NHDC at the outset, on how the construction will be carried out, with the minimum of impact on the community.”

Policy PNP 2 - Design and Character says that “residential development proposals will be supported if they are in accordance with the guidance contained in the Pirton Character Assessment”.

There is a growing need for larger (3 and 4 bed) M4(3) wheelchair adapted homes for rent which we will seek to deliver through the requirements of Policy HS5: Accessible and adaptable housing of the Local Plan.

The definition for affordable housing includes housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers).

Any affordable homes should be owned and managed by a registered provider, be evenly distributed on the site, rather than on one part, and be physically indistinguishable from any market housing.

The 2023 SHMA provides evidence that many more people require social rented homes (65%), and this tenure is recognised in the NPPF. To meet the Council's housing needs all the rented units must be set at Social Rents to ensure affordability and all rents must be within Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, in accordance with the Local Plan, the Council's Tenancy Strategy and the Developer Contributions SPD.

The nationally described technical housing standards provide the nationally recognised standards for bedrooms, storage and internal areas in new dwellings across all tenures. All the affordable units are required to meet the nationally described housing space standards.

Registered Providers (RPs) and developers alike are not keen on mixed tenure blocks of flats and any flats for rent would need to be separate from any flats for affordable home ownership/ other affordable housing tenure.

Parking courts are not desirable as there is often limited, or no natural surveillance and residents prefer to park outside or near to their homes. To minimise on street parking, parking spaces should be provided in front of or adjacent properties with good natural surveillance.

All affordable homes (except any built to M4(3) wheelchair accessible standards) should be allocated/ sold to applicants with a local connection to the parish of Pirton, in the first instance. M4(3) wheelchair adapted homes should be allocated to applicants with a local connection to North Herts district.

Pirton parish has Protected Area Status and staircasing on any shared ownership units is restricted to 80% in accordance with The Housing (Shared Ownership Leases) (Exclusion from Leasehold Reform Act 1967) (England) Regulations 2009.

Grant funding for the provision of affordable housing is not available on S106 sites, and any affordable homes should be delivered through planning gain alone.

The applicant will need to provide documentary evidence of any viability issues using a recognised financial toolkit, which the Council will have independently assessed at full expense to the applicant.

I hope this information assists you. Please contact me if you require any further information.

Regards

Debbie Ealand
Housing Supply Officer