

MEMORANDUM

To: Andrew Hunter
Senior Planning Officer

From: Debbie Ealand
Housing Supply Officer
Ext: 4526

Your Ref: 25/01014/FP

Date: 27 May 2025

Full Planning Permission: Erection three storey building comprising 35no. retirement living apartments with associated communal areas, landscaping and parking following demolition of existing buildings.

Land at Birchwood and Silverdale and Three Trees and Willow Close, Old Charlton Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 2AJ.

Ref No: 25/01014/FP

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your memo of 14 May 2025 in respect of the above application for full planning permission.

The affordable housing requirement is 40% on sites which will provide 25 or more dwellings, in accordance with the Local Plan.

There are seven allocated housing sites in Hitchin in the Local Plan, which are expected to deliver approximately 971 new homes. The site is not an allocated site and is located within the Town Centre boundary of Hitchin, adjacent the conservation area opposite offices/ employment.

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 (including Social Rent); families with children; looked after 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 (including the minimum proportion of Social rent homes 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.”

The applicant proposes to provide 35 x one and two bedroom retirement flats following demolition of the four bungalows on the site.

Within the overall affordable housing requirement, a 65%/35% rented/ other intermediate affordable housing tenure split is required, in accordance with the Local Plan and the Council’s Developer Contributions SPD.

The affordable housing requirement is for 14 dwellings; 9 for rent and 5 for other intermediate affordable housing/ affordable home ownership.

The 2023 North Herts & Stevenage Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) update recommends a greater proportion (62%) of three + bedroom homes for rent, and a smaller proportion (38%) of one and two bedroom homes for rent. For intermediate affordable homes/ affordable home ownership, the figures are reversed with 80% one and two bedroom homes and only 20% three bedroom homes.

Where a need for affordable housing is identified the definition in Annex 2 of the Framework should be applied to the type of affordable housing required. 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).

The Local Plan does recognise that there will be a substantial increase in the number of and proportion of older residents in North Hertfordshire and there is demand across all tenures. Individual proposals will be assessed having regard to Policy HS4: Supported, sheltered and older persons housing.

Planning permission for sheltered and supported housing in use classes C2 and C3 will be granted provided that:

- a) there is good access to local services and facilities;
- b) the site is well served by public transport;
- c) appropriate levels of on-site landscaping, amenity space and car parking (for residents, visitors and staff) are provided; and
- d) it would accord with Policy HS3(b).

The affordable homes should be owned and managed by a registered provider and be physically indistinguishable from the market housing.

The Council will accept social rent and affordable rent for the rented tenure dwellings, but it should be noted that the affordable rent for one or two bedroom dwellings should be no more than 80% of the equivalent local market rent (including service charges, where applicable) to ensure affordability and all rents must be within Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, in accordance with the Council's Tenancy Strategy and 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 these standards.

Registered Providers (RPs) usually prefer any affordable units/flats, particularly for rent, to be in a self-contained block, with their own entrance as this works better in terms of management and maintenance. In addition, service charges costs for affordable housing residents are generally cheaper in self-contained blocks as RPs are often able to negotiate their own service contracts or use their in-house maintenance teams.

The applicant is not proposing the provision of affordable housing and there is provision within (Local Plan) Policy to consider off-site delivery and/ or a commuted sum in lieu of affordable housing, in exceptional circumstances.

There is uplift in the provision of affordable homes for off-site delivery and for commuted sums in accordance with 5.2.10 of the Council's Developer Contributions SPD.

If a commuted sum is accepted the commuted sum payable, in accordance with 5.2.25 and 5.2.26 of the Developer Contributions SPD, will be:

$$35 \times 0.67 \times £123,000 = £2,884,350.00$$

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