

MEMORANDUM

To: Anne McDonald
Principal Planning Officer

From: Debbie Ealand
Housing Supply Officer

Your Ref: 25/02885/OP

Date: 25 June 2026

Outline Application: Erection of up to 41 dwellings with associated infrastructure and open space (all matters reserved except means of access).

Land at Mill Lane, London Road, St Ippolyts, Hitchin, SG4 7NN

Case Ref No: 25/02885/OP

Dear Anne,

Thank you for your memo of 12th June 2026 in respect of the above application for outline planning permission following amendments to the application.

The affordable housing requirement is 40% on sites which will provide 25 or more dwellings, 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.

St Ippolyts is a parish to the south of Hitchin. As well as St Ippolyts village it includes Gosmore and the southern part of the urban area of Hitchin. The parish includes a significant rural area, especially to the south of the village.

Whilst St Ippolyts and Gosmore are perceived as separate villages, it is hard to say where one ends and the other begins. The core of St Ippolyts is around the church on the hill to the east and the core of Gosmore is along Gosmore High Street to the west.

St Ippolyts & Gosmore is classed as a Category A village, with the boundary drawn to include the main built area of both settlements. The settlement boundary is shown on the Policies Map within which development will be allowed.

There are two allocated sites in St Ippolyts and Gosmore expected to deliver 52 new homes. Another allocated site in the parish has been included in the allocated sites for Hitchin.

The site is beyond the village boundary in the Green Belt in an area of rural restraint. The location of the site would effectively join the town of Hitchin with the village of Gosmore

Policies SP5: Countryside and Green Belt and Policy CGB2a: Exception sites for affordable housing in the Green Belt apply. Policy SP5 explains that proposals within the Green Belt will be judged against the policies of the NPPF to determine whether they are acceptable in principle.

Policy CGB2a: Exception sites for affordable housing in the Green Belt says that planning permission for limited affordable housing in the Green Belt adjoining Category A villages will be granted provided that the land is identified for such development in a Neighbourhood Plan or:

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 settlement; 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 (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.”

A rural Housing Needs Survey (HNS) was undertaken in St Ippolyts in 2012 and is very out of date.

The conclusions of HNS identified a total need of 18 units over a five-year period, including 6 x 1 bed , 11 x 2 bed and 1 x 3 bed homes mainly for rented tenure, with only 1 x 2 bed home for shared ownership.

Three Local Plan allocated sites in the parish at land south of Waterdell Lane (SI1), land south of Stevenage Road (SI2) and land north of Pound Farm (HT2) have been granted permission and will deliver 58 affordable homes.

If the application is considered appropriate in the Green Belt, based on the provision of 41 new homes and a 50% affordable housing requirement, in accordance with Golden Rules, the affordable housing requirement would be 21 dwellings ($41 \times 50\% = 20.5$ rounded up): 14 social rented and 7 other intermediate affordable/ affordable home ownership housing tenure.

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

14 x 7% x 1 bed flats (1)
14 x 9% x 2 bed flats (1)
14 x 22% x 2 bed houses (4)
14 x 50% x 3 bed houses (7) *
14 x 10% x 4 bed houses (1)
14 x 2% 5+ bed houses. (0)

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

7 x 22% x 1 bed flats (2)
7 x 15% x 2 bed flats (1)
7 x 43% x 2 bed houses (3)
7 x 20% x 3 bed houses (1).

*Evidence from the Council's housing register suggests the number of three bed houses suggested in the SHMA is greater than required and there is greater need for two bedroom family homes and a need for larger family homes (4+ bedrooms). In addition, there is a growing need for larger (3 and 4 bed) M4(3) wheelchair accessible homes which we will seek to deliver through the requirements of Policy HS5: Accessible and adaptable housing.

The affordable homes should be owned and managed by a registered provider and should be evenly spread across the site in small clusters rather than be

situated on one or two parts of the site. This is to ensure mixed and balanced communities rather than concentrations of affordable housing. ■

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 2023 SHMA provides evidence that many more people require social rented homes so the 65% rented accommodation should be let 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.

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 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 St Ippolyts, in the first instance. M4(3) wheelchair adapted homes should be allocated to applicants with a local connection to the North Hertfordshire district.

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.

Issues of viability must be proven with robust documentary evidence using a recognised financial toolkit. Any financial viability assessment submitted will be independently tested at full cost to the applicant.

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

Regards

Debbie Ealand
Housing Supply Officer