

MEMORANDUM

To: Naomi Reynard
Senior Planning Officer

From: Debbie Ealand
Housing Supply Officer
Ext: 4526

Ref: 25/03080/HYA

Date: 18th February 2026

Hybrid Application: Hybrid application for a residential-led development comprising residential (Use Class C3), educational use (Use Class F1), a community hub (Use Class F2) with associated new internal roads, access, parking, cycling infrastructure, landscaping and other associated infrastructure.

Full application comprises the construction of vehicle access and an active travel link via Mendip Way, with associated landscaping and drainage works.

The outline application, for which all matters are reserved except means of access, comprises the erection of up to 640 dwellings (Use Class C3), a site for a primary school, further land reserved for educational use (Use Class F1), a site for a community hub (Use Class F2), with associated infrastructure.

GA2, Land North-East of Great Ashby, Stevenage, Hertfordshire.

Dear Naomi,

Thank you for your memo dated 26th January 2026 in respect of the above hybrid applications.

The affordable housing requirement is 40% on sites which will provide 25 dwellings and above, 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 site is one of six Strategic Housing Sites in the Local Plan, Strategic Housing Site GA2 which is expected to deliver 600 new homes. The site is in Weston parish to the north-east of Great Ashby parish.

Where the development is completed in phases, it is expected that the 40% affordable housing affordable housing is delivered on each phase to ensure mixed and balanced communities.

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”.

The Local Plan recognises that there will be a substantial increase in the number of and proportion of older residents in North Hertfordshire and there is high demand/ need for retirement housing for both market and affordable tenures.

Planning permission for residential developments of 100 units or more will be granted provided that an element of accommodation within Use Class C3 for older persons housing is included under the requirements of Policy HS3(a) where this would be consistent with Policy HS4.

Policy HS4: Supported, sheltered and older persons housing says that planning permission for sheltered and supported housing in uses classes C2 and C3 will be granted where:

- 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).

There is also an increasing requirement for larger (3 and 4 bed) accessible and adapted homes to meet the needs of families with someone in the household having physical disabilities and / or limited mobility.

In accordance with Policy HS5: Accessible and adaptable housing, planning permission for major residential development will be granted where:

- a) applicants demonstrate that at least 50% of homes can be built to the M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable standard; and
- b) on schemes where 10 or more affordable units will be delivered, 10% of these can additionally be built to the M4(3) wheelchair user standard, where the district council is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in the dwelling.

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.”

Within the overall 40% affordable housing requirement a 65%/35% rented/intermediate affordable housing tenure split is required, in accordance with the Local Plan and the Developer Contributions SPD.

On a phased development it is expected that the 65%/35% tenure split is delivered within each phase to ensure mixed and balanced communities. Based on the provision of 640 dwellings overall, the affordable housing requirement would be 256 dwellings: 166 rented and 90 other intermediate 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:

166 x 7% x 1 bed flats (12)
166 x 9% x 2 bed flats (15)
166 x 22% x 2 bed houses (37)
166 x 50% x 3 bed houses (83) *
166 x 10% x 4 bed houses (16)
166 x 2% 5+ bed houses. (3)

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

90 x 22% x 1 bed flats (20)
90 x 15% x 2 bed flats (13)
90 x 43% x 2 bed houses (39)
90 x 20% x 3 bed houses (18).

* Evidence from the 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.

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

Following a PPA meeting with the applicant and based on the information above the housing mix detailed below would best meet the housing needs of North Herts Council.

For rented affordable housing (166 dwellings):

19% x 1 bed flats = 32

22% x 2 bed flats = 36

22% x 2 bed houses = 37

25% x 3 bed houses = 42 (including 2 x M4(3) wheelchair accessible homes) *

10% x 4 bed houses = 17 (including 2 x M4(3) wheelchair accessible homes) *

2% 5+ bed houses = 2.

*The remaining M4(3) dwellings would likely be one and two bedroom flats.

For affordable home ownership (90 dwellings):

22% x 1 bed flats = 20

15% x 2 bed flats = 14

43% x 2 bed houses = 38

20% x 3 bed houses = 18.

The affordable homes should be owned and managed by a registered provider, should be spread across the site/phase in small clusters and distributed across the site/ phase rather than be situated on one or two parts of it and should be physically indistinguishable from the market housing.

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 other intermediate affordable housing tenure.

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 council currently accept social rent and affordable rent for the rented tenure dwellings, although the 2023 SHMA provides evidence that many more people require social rented homes. It should be noted that the affordable rent for one and two bedroom dwellings should be no more than 80% of the equivalent local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).

For three bedroom dwellings the affordable rent should be no more than 70% of the equivalent local market rent (including service charges, where applicable) and for a four + bedroom dwellings the rent should be no more than the equivalent social rent (excluding service charges, where applicable) for a four + bedroom dwelling in the locality, to ensure affordability.

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 affordable housing units are required to meet the nationally described housing space standards.

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.

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