

MEMORANDUM

To: Alex Howard
Senior Planning Officer

From: Debbie Ealand
Housing Supply Officer
Ext: 4526

Your Ref: 25/00015/FP

Date: 7 May 2025

**Full Planning Permission: Change of use of ground floor cycle/bin/flat storage area to one 2-bed flat (Development already carried out)
Apartment 1, Platinum Court, 10 The Mead, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 1EY
Case Ref No: 25/00015/FP**

Dear Alex,

Thank you for your memo of 30 April 2025 in respect of the above application for full planning permission.

Full Planning Permission for residential development comprising of three blocks of flats providing 21 dwellings at 65 Bury Mead Road, Hitchin was granted permission under application ref: 18/02433/FP.

The affordable housing requirement is 35% on sites which will provide between 15 to 24 dwellings, in accordance with the Local Plan.

There are seven allocated sites in Hitchin in the Local Plan, expected to deliver 971 new homes. This site was not an allocated site and was within a designated employment area, part of which is designated for business use only.

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."

Based on the provision of 21 dwellings overall, seven affordable homes should have been provided: five for rent and two for shared ownership tenure. However, you will see from the excerpt from the planning officers report, below, that the council accepted a commuted sum in lieu of the affordable housing provision.

4.3.12 Affordable housing

In line with the Emerging Affordable Housing Policy HS2 it would be the case that the Council would require 35% of the 21 flats to be affordable and as such the following breakdown would normally be sought: 7 dwellings (5 rented and 2 intermediate affordable tenure).

4.3.13 However, in order to support the re-use of brownfield land, paragraph 63 of the revised Framework suggests that, where vacant buildings are being redeveloped, any affordable housing contribution should be reduced by an amount proportionate the existing gross floor-space of the existing buildings. Having considered the calculations provided by the applicant I agree with their conclusion that the affordable housing on site should be reduced by approximately 85% thereby leaving the affordable housing requirement as one unit. In the context of this particular scheme I consider that one unit would be impractical and therefore, following discussion with the Housing Supply Officer the Council has agreed a payment of £26,182.55 in lieu of on-site affordable housing provision.

Based on the provision of 22 dwellings overall the affordable housing requirement would have been for eight affordable homes: five for rent and three for shared ownership.

On this basis reducing the affordable housing by 85% would still result in the provision of one affordable unit and so I would assume no uplift in the commuted sums payment if my understanding is correct.

4.3.15 Car parking/ cycle storage

According to the Council's Vehicle Parking at New Development SPD September 2011 each two bedroom flat should have a minimum of two car parking spaces and each one bedroom flat should have a minimum of one car parking space, and 0.25 visitor spaces. 1 secure covered cycle parking space is required for each property. This would equate to a requirement for 40 car parking spaces and 21 secure cycle parking spaces. The scheme delivers 42 car parking spaces and sufficient cycle parking and is therefore compliant with the Council's policy regarding this matter.

Whether the loss of the cycle/bin/flat storage is acceptable given 4.3.15 of the planning officers report, is another matter.

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

Regards

Debbie Ealand
Housing Supply Officer