

MEMORANDUM

To: Alex Howard
Senior Planning Officer

From: Debbie Ealand
Housing Supply Officer
Ext: 4526

Your Ref: 24/01444/FP

Date: 1st August 2024

Full Planning Permission: Erection of 14 dwellings (including affordable housing) including creation of access from Ashwell Street, footpath link to Lucas Lane, public open space and soft and hard landscaping, biodiversity enhancement and, associated infrastructure on land north of Ashwell Street, Ashwell.

Land Between Huntsridge and Ashwell House, 5 High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire/

Ref: 24/01444/FP

Dear Alex,

Thank you for your memo of 10 July 2024 in respect of the above application for full planning permission.

The affordable housing requirement is 25% on sites which will provide between 11 and 14 dwellings, in accordance with the Local Plan.

Ashwell is a Category A village and there are no allocated sites in Ashwell in the Local Plan. The site is within the village boundary in the conservation area that covers much of the central part of the village.

The preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence. This should be adequate and proportionate, focused tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned, and take into account relevant market signals, 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 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A rural Housing Needs Survey (HNS) was undertaken in Ashwell in 2008, so this would now be considered very out of date.

The conclusions of HNS identified a total need of 32 units over a five-year period, with 16 units required within the two years following the survey.

Since the publication of the survey report three schemes at 61 Station Road, land at Walkdens and land rear of Claybush Road have delivered 34 affordable units.

Based on the provision of 14 new dwellings, the council's affordable housing requirement is 25%, which equates to 4 affordable dwellings.

Within the overall affordable housing requirement, the council requires a 65% rented/ 35% other forms of affordable housing tenure mix, in accordance with the Local Plan, the 2016 Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Assessment (SHMA) Update and the Developer Contributions SPD. This equates to 3 rented units and 1 other affordable housing tenure unit.

The 2016 SHMA Update recommends a greater proportion (59%) of one and two bedroom homes for rent, and a smaller proportion (41%) of three and four bedroom homes for rent. For other forms of affordable housing, the figures are reversed with 36% one and two bedroom homes and 64% three and four bedroom homes.

The Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan (ANP) was made on April 2022 and Policy ASH2: Housing mix of the ANP identifies a greater need for one, two and three bedroom dwellings across all tenures. This is to meet the needs of single people, couples, and smaller families in need of affordable housing or entering the market and for older people wishing to downsize.

The applicant is proposing the provision of four affordable housing units to meet the council's policy requirements.

There is disparity between the planning statement and the plans, but the applicant is proposing a two bed bungalow to M4(3) standard, as part of the affordable housing provision, which is welcome. In addition, the application should include 50% of all homes to M4(2) standard to meet requirements of Policy HS5: Accessible and adaptable housing.

Based on the applicant's proposals, evidence in the SHMA and the ANP the rented dwellings should comprise: 1 x two bedroom bungalow M4(3) standard, 1 x two bed house and 1 x three bedroom bungalow and the intermediate affordable housing dwelling should comprise 1 x two bedroom house.

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).

In June 2021, the Government introduced a policy requiring 25% of affordable housing provided to be First Homes. First Homes can be considered on merit where the overall proportion of affordable housing that can be achieved on site will not be adversely affected and the Local Plan requirement for 65% of affordable homes for rent is met. The other affordable housing unit could be delivered as a First Home to meet this requirement.

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).

For three-bedroom dwellings the affordable rent should be no more than 70% 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 the nationally described housing space standards.

The two bedroom houses should be allocated/ sold to applicants with a local connection to the parish of Ashwell, in the first instance. The bungalows should be allocated to applicants with the highest housing need, in the district, for this type of accommodation.

Ashwell parish is in a protected area 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