



Adult Care Services
Hertfordshire County Council
Farnham House
Six Hills Way
Stevenage
SG1 2ST

Email: Growth@hertfordshire.gov.uk

21st May 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: 25/01014/FP - Land At Birchwood And Silverdale And Three Trees And Willow Close, Old Charlton Road, Hitchin, SG5 2AJ

I am writing to North Herts Council to set out Hertfordshire County Council's position in relation to the above named site.

It is our understanding that the site is being proposed for 35 Retirement Living Apartments.

Policy Position

The county council's current policy for older people's housing is to seek the provision of Nursing Care at 45 units per 1,000 head of population aged over 75 and Residential Care at 20 per 1,000 head of population aged over 75.

These figures reflect the [county council's policy](#) to support a general increased provision of specialist housing. This also echoes the national government position which seeks to emphasise the key importance of the provision of housing for older people, as well as the findings of the Older Persons Housing Taskforce.

A report published on the 26 November 2024 by [The Older Persons Housing Taskforce](#) stresses the need for age-friendly and dementia friendly housing to be built to ensure that older people can live with dignity, independence, and wellbeing in their later years.

- The county council seek to reduce the reliance on residential care in most instances with a strategy of reducing this provision and steering it towards

housing with care which is suitable for both low, medium and high levels of care. This type of housing ensures that the most appropriate and enabling environment is provided, allowing residents to stay within their own homes throughout their lifetime, including those who develop dementia, whilst also allowing general needs housing to be released back into the market. As such, the county council are particularly supportive of additional provision of this type where there is an established need for it and where it accords with the definition set out in the Planning Practice Guidance:

Extra care housing or housing-with-care: This usually consists of purpose-built or adapted flats or bungalows with a medium to high level of care available if required, through an onsite care agency registered through the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Residents are able to live independently with 24 hour access to support services and staff, and meals are also available. There are often extensive communal areas, such as space to socialise or a wellbeing centre. In some cases, these developments are known as retirement communities or villages - the intention is for residents to benefit from varying levels of care as time progresses.

- The county council are also supportive of the provision of very specialist accommodation such as nursing and dementia care.

Need

The county council have undertaken an assessment of need for all types of accommodation in each local authority and based on an expected population growth in those aged over 75 of 20,531 people by 2042, have identified a future need of 819 units of housing with care, 269 nursing care beds and a surplus of 183 residential care beds. On this basis alone, the county council would support either housing with care or nursing care at this development, however these figures are dependent on the delivery of other similar schemes that may come forward sooner.

While this provides a mathematical assessment of need based on certain assumptions other real-world evidence such as vacancy rates, waiting lists and rate of sales/lettings can also indicate demand (or lack of) for specialist housing for older people and should be a consideration for the council. Equally, a mathematical surplus does not suggest that the existing provision should be automatically reduced. Evidence of vacancy rates and sales/letting rates may often be a sign of the age and/or quality of accommodation and should be a consideration for the council.

Other Considerations

- To ensure that specialist housing schemes meet the definitions set out within the PPG, particularly in relation to CQC registered on-site care and support, the county council would encourage the LPA to secure provision through an appropriate planning obligation or condition. The county council have drafted template S106 wording for this purpose.
- The county council would encourage the LPA to ensure that any provision of specialist accommodation includes an element of affordable housing or off-

site contribution. With any off-site contribution to be used towards alternative affordable specialist housing schemes.

- The county council look more favourably on accommodation in sustainable locations and those that provide a range of facilities on site. It should have access (ideally within 500m) to public transport links and community facilities such as a GP surgery and shops. It would also benefit from providing a range of social and communal facilities, to ensure delivery of a high standard of accommodation. A full list of facilities and recommendations can be found in the county council's [Service Provision and Placemaking Guide](#).
- To ensure, wherever possible, that communities are suitable for a range of ages, larger strategic developments should seek to include an element of specialist housing for older people. The county council would also encourage a range of typologies, built form and tenures at a more local level and would broadly support any diversification of supply particularly where there is an identified need and where very specialist accommodation is included.
- The council should encourage the redeployment of any surplus stock to other tenures or levels of care in the first instance.
- The county council would also encourage the council to seek as much development to be built to M4(2) standards as possible, as well as seeking an element of M4(3), to ensure accommodation is better equipped to respond to changing needs. Although it is recognised that the provision of both affordable housing and M4(2)/M4(3) compliance have ramifications to a site's viability.

There is a need in Hitchin for good quality specialist housing which includes on-site CQC registered care and support and that meets the recommendations set out in Hertfordshire County Councils Service Provision and Placemaking Guide. Having this care and support on site ensures residents who develop care needs, including dementia, can remain within their home for as long as possible. Having reviewed the details of this scheme, whilst it in part meets the recommendations, the county council is unable to give support due to the lack of care and support on site including associated staff facilities.

Should you require further information or to discuss the county council's position please contact growth@hertfordshire.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

Ryan Foss
Business & Development Project Manager