

MEMORANDUM

To: Sarah Kasparian
Senior Planning Officer

From: Debbie Ealand
Housing Supply Officer
Ext: 4526

Ref: 25/02794/RM

Date: 19th March 2026

Reserved Matters: Reserved Matters for - Construction of Phase 1 Residential comprising 236 dwellings, associated road, drainage, servicing/utilities infrastructure, landscaping and open space provision of Hitchin Meadows, Dane Walk and Stotfold Linear Park in accordance with condition 3 of 18/01154/OP (and the partial discharge of associated conditions 7,9,10,11,12, 13, 19, 21).
The outline application was EIA development and an ES was provided. An EIA update note is provided with this Reserved Matters application.
Highover Farm, Highover Way, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 0RQ
Case Ref No: 25/02794/RM

Dear Sarah,

Thank you for your memo of 27 February 2026 following amendments to the above reserved matters planning application for phase 1 and discharge of condition 3 of application 18/01154/OP.

The applicant is required to provide 40% affordable housing across the site and on each phase unless otherwise agreed with the Council in accordance with 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 of Schedule Two of the s106 Agreement.

On each phase the owner shall ensure that within the overall affordable housing at least 65% of the affordable housing units will be social and affordable rented and 35% will be intermediate units unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Council in accordance with 1.2 of Schedule Two of the s106 Agreement.

Based on the provision of 236 dwellings the affordable housing requirement is 95 dwellings: 62 rented and 33 intermediate tenure.

Within the 65% rented affordable housing element and in accordance with 1.3.1 of the s106 Agreement the rented affordable housing should comprise:

21% x 1 bed flats (13)
12% x 2 bed flats (7)
26% x 2 bed houses (16)
35% x 3 bed houses (22)
6% x 4+ bed houses. (4)

Within the 35% intermediate affordable housing element and in accordance with 1.3.2 of the s106 Agreement the intermediate/ affordable home ownership housing should comprise:

8% x 1 bed flats (3)
8% x 2 bed flats (3)
20% x 2 bed houses (7)
54% x 3 bed houses (17)
10% x 4+ bed houses (3)

The applicant is proposing the provision of 95 affordable units including 68 for rent and 27 for intermediate housing tenure; a 72%/ 28% tenure mix which could be accepted as this complies with the s106 as at least 65% of the affordable housing units are available for rented tenure.

However, the percentages by size and type of units proposed by the applicant differs significantly from the percentages above. The applicant is proposing a far greater number of flats particularly for rent and there is concern as to whether this provides mixed and balanced communities.

The applicants' proposals are:

Within the 65% rented affordable housing:

31% x 1 bed flats (21) out of 33 sitewide in the s106
16% x 2 bed flats (11) out of 22 sitewide in the s106
35% x 2 bed houses (24) out of 47 sitewide in the s106
12% x 3 bed houses (8) out of 64 sitewide in the s106
6% x 4+ bed houses. (4) out of 11 sitewide in the s106

Within the 35% intermediate affordable housing/ affordable home ownership:

7% x 1 bed flats (2) out of 8 sitewide in the s106
26% x 2 bed flats (7) out of 8 sitewide in the s106
0% x 2 bed houses (0) out of 19 sitewide in the s106
52% x 3 bed houses (14) out of 53 sitewide in the s106
15% x 4+ bed houses (4) out of 10 sitewide in the s106

Evidence from the North Herts 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.

The Council may consider the proposed scheme as acceptable based on a greater need for two bedroom houses instead of three bedroom houses, but it is unlikely that the Council will approve a higher number of one and two beds flats than allowed for in the s106.

Therefore, the impact of the proposed scheme mix by size, type and tenure will need to be taken into consideration on future phases to meet the requirements of the s106 Agreement.

To meet the requirements of the s106 Agreement future phases of the scheme will need to accommodate:

Within the 65% rented affordable housing:

12 x 1 bed flats
11 x 2 bed flats
23 x 2 bed houses
56 x 3 bed houses (although the Council may accept more 2 bed houses instead)
7 x 4+ bed houses.

Within the 35% intermediate affordable housing/ affordable home ownership:

6 x 1 bed flats
1 x 2 bed flat
19 x 2 bed houses
39 x 3 bed houses
6 x 4+ bed houses

The affordable homes should be owned and managed by a registered provider and should be evenly spread across the phase/site in small clusters rather than be situated on one or two parts of the phase/site. This is to ensure mixed and balanced communities rather than large concentrations of affordable housing.

The affordable housing should be situated at equally attractive locations on the site with good access to transport, facilities/ services, open space, schools and employment and be physically indistinguishable from the market housing, avoiding design which excludes or stigmatises.

There is a concentration of affordable housing in the central part of the site south of the road, with only a smaller number of homes on the northern side of the road and the affordable housing is not evenly distributed across the development site for phase 1.

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.

Two bedroom houses and flats are let to families and there is a requirement for accommodation to provide a kitchen/ dining room and separate living room or a living room/ dining room with a separate kitchen rather than one large open plan space. This better enables privacy/ separate spaces to be used for homeworking and/ or children doing homework.

The provision of balconies for two bedroom flats provides defensible private space for families and the opportunity to dry clothes outside and these are required living standards.

The Council's requirements for two bedroom homes are not met as the layout of the two bedroom flats and two bedroom houses is open plan and there are no balconies. There seems little or no defensible outside open space for the residents of the flats.

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 these comments are useful, but please contact me if I can provide any further information.

Kind regards

Debbie Ealand
Housing Supply Officer