



NOVEMBER
2025

Affordable Housing Statement

GA2, Land North of Great Ashby

Iceni Projects Limited on behalf of
Picture Estates Limited

November 2025

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ON BEHALF OF PICTURE
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GA2, LAND NORTH OF GREAT ASHBY

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Affordable Housing Statement ('AHS') has been prepared by Icen Projects on behalf of Picture Estates Limited (the 'Applicant') in support of a hybrid planning application, part detailed and part outline (the 'Application'), submitted to North Hertfordshire District Council ('NHDC') for the residential-led development of land at GA2, Land north of Great Ashby (the 'Site'). This AHS should be read in conjunction with other planning documents, including the Planning Statement.

1.2 The Applicant is seeking hybrid planning permission (part detailed and part outline) for the following development ('Proposed Development') at the Site:

"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 for 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."

1.3 The purpose of this AHS is to set out the proposed approach to affordable housing as part of the Proposed Development in accordance with national and local planning policy and current affordable housing delivery in North Hertfordshire.

1.4 This AHS is structured to provide:

- An introduction to the planning application and description of the proposed affordable housing (Section 2);
- An overview of relevant policy and guidance (Section 3);
- Commentary on affordable housing need in North Hertfordshire (Section 4);
- An assessment of the proposed affordable housing against policy guidance and the wider planning priorities and objectives for the Site (Section 5);
- A summary of the overall conclusions (Section 6).

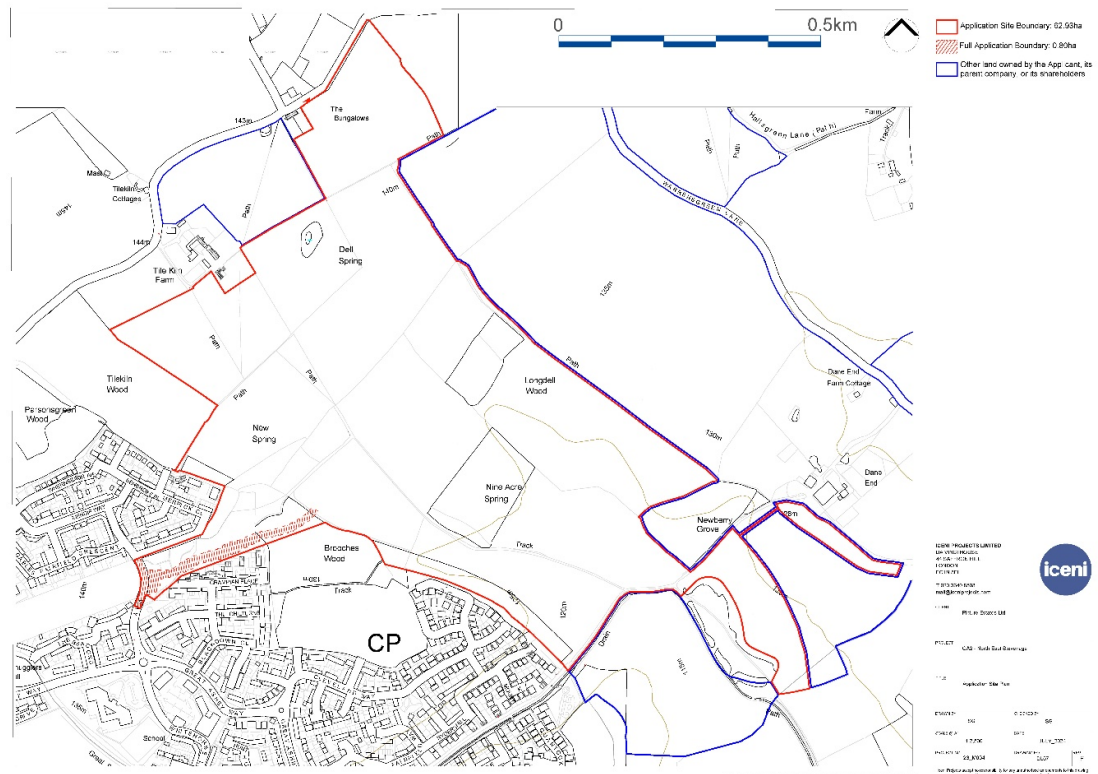
2. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

2.1 This section provides an overview of the Site, its wider context and the Proposed Development.

The Site

- 2.2 The Site extends to 62.93ha and is located to the northeast of Great Ashby, a civil parish which adjoins Stevenage to the northeast at Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid Reference (NGR) TL262278.
- 2.3 The Site comprises eight arable fields/parts of arable fields, two fields/parts of fields used for grazing, and two woodland blocks, as well as an area of recreational land located under the pylon and overhead powerline corridor, which leads east towards the Site from Mendip Way.

Figure 2.1: Site Boundary



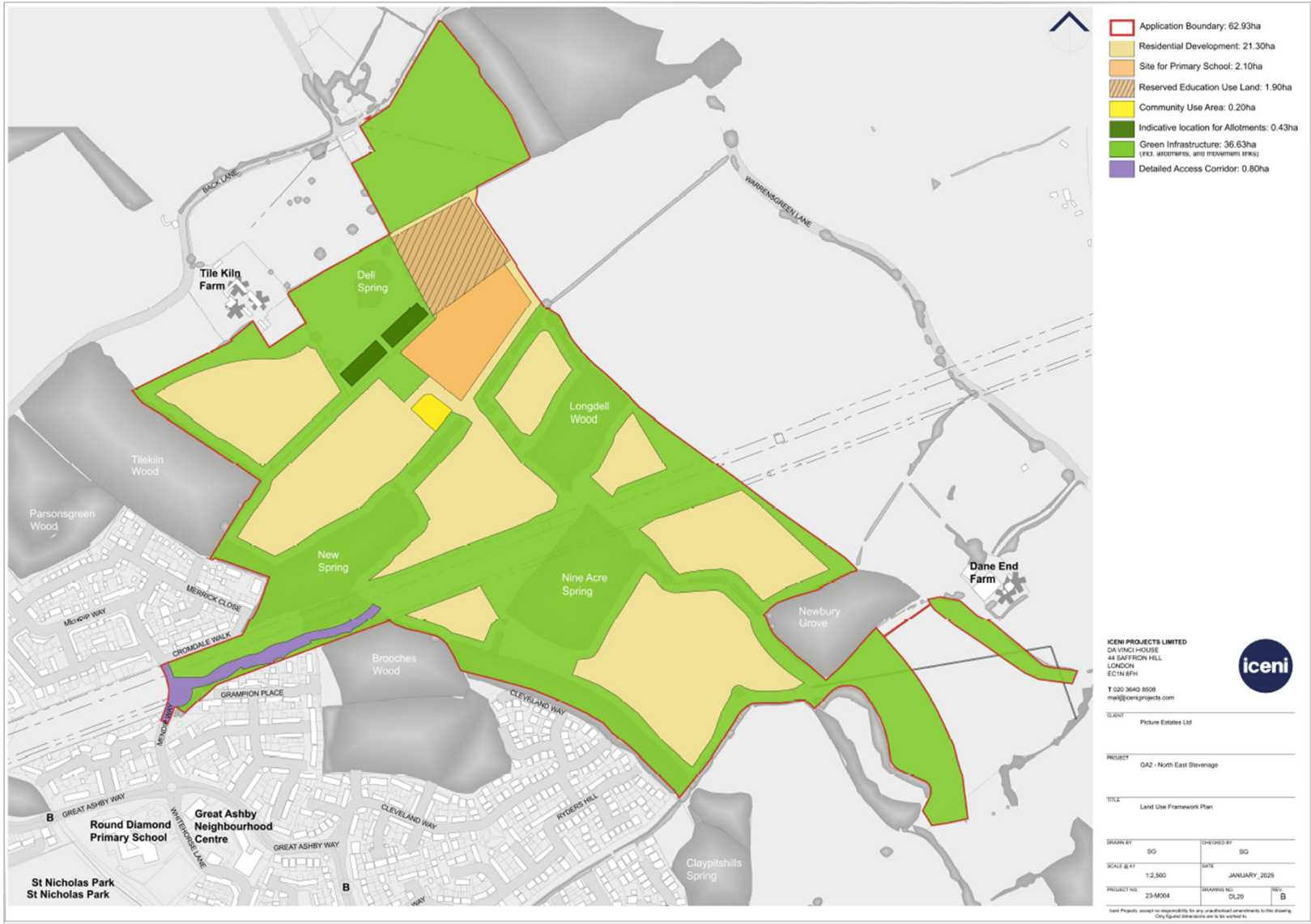
Proposed Development

- 2.4 A full assessment of the Proposed Development is contained within the Design and Access Statement, prepared by Iceni Projects. This section of the AHS should be read in conjunction with the plans and drawings submitted as part of the application.

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- 2.5 The Application is a hybrid planning application with part being applied for in detail (the 'Detailed Component') and part being applied for in outline (the 'Outline Component'). The Applicant is seeking detailed permission for access into the Site from Mendip Way and associated landscaping, an emergency access point off Warrengreen Lane and an active travel access point from Merrick Close.
- 2.6 Outline planning permission is sought for all other matters; layout, scale and appearance, reserved for future approval.
- 2.7 This planning application seeks hybrid planning permission for the following:
- "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 for 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."*
- 2.8 The Land Use Framework Plan submitted with this planning application (Figure 2.2) shows the key elements of the Proposed Development:
- 21.30ha of residential development land;
 - A 2.1ha site for a primary school and a further 1.9ha of reserved land for educational uses;
 - A 0.2ha site for a Community Hall;
 - 36.63ha of green infrastructure, including the retained woodland, hedgerows, trees and Dell Spring, as well as large new areas of open space and planting; and
 - Allotments: 0.43ha.
- 2.9 Up to 640 residential dwellings are proposed (Use Class C3), including 40% affordable housing and 6 self-build plots. The total proposed residential area extends to 21.30ha. Residential areas will be spread across the Site.
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- 2.10 The Proposed Development would provide a primary school, as well as additional land for education use (Use Class F.1). The 2.1ha site would accommodate a 2FE primary school. There is additional land reserved for education use, which extends to 1.9ha. The proposed primary school, as well as the additional land reserved for education use, are both situated within the north east of the Site, adjacent to Dell Spring.
- 2.11 The Proposed Development would provide a community hub (Use Class F.2) immediately west of the proposed primary school, in the north eastern area of the Site, adjacent to Dell Spring. The community hub would extend up to 0.2ha (2,000sqm equivalent) and would be for flexible community use. The exact use of the community hub will be determined through future reserved matters applications.
- 2.12 The Proposed Development is the product of an iterative design process that has evolved through input from NHDC. It is important to note that the Applicant engaged in a pre-application discussion with NHDC on Built Form, Sustainability and Energy Strategy and Affordable Housing on 5 November 2024. A meeting note distributed by the Council following this meeting is appended to this report as A1 for completeness.

Figure 2.2: Land Use Framework Plan



3. PLANNING POLICY

- 3.1 This section is structured to provide an overview of the relevant national and local policy that establishes affordable housing requirements.

National Planning Policy

- 3.2 An updated National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') was published in December 2024.
- 3.3 Paragraph 20 of the NPPF places a requirement on authorities to set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development and, in particular, make sufficient provision for housing, including affordable housing.
- 3.4 Paragraph 35 requires Development Plan documents to set out the contributions expected from development. This should include setting out the levels and types of affordable housing provision required, along with other infrastructure (such as that needed for education, health, transport, flood and water management, green and digital infrastructure). Such policies should not undermine the deliverability of the plan.
- 3.5 Paragraph 64 of the NPPF states that where there is a need identified for affordable housing, the affordable housing should be provided on-site, except in justified circumstances.
- 3.6 The definition of affordable housing included within the Glossary (Annex 2) of the NPPF includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate tenure housing as affordable housing i.e. housing provided to eligible households whose needs are not otherwise met by the market.
- 3.7 The NPPG provides guidance on viability for the purposes of plan making and individual application sites' development management. The viability section of the NPPG was most recently updated on 12 December 2024.

Local Planning Policy

- 3.8 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan was adopted in November 2022, replacing the saved policies of the District Plan Second Review with Alterations (1996). The Local Plan sets out the spatial strategy and the vision for the District for the period 2011-2031, by identifying how and where new homes, jobs and infrastructure will be delivered.
- 3.9 A key component of the Council's vision is housing growth and the release of land to provide new homes for the District. There are six Strategic Housing Sites allocated in the Local Plan, defined as

sites providing 500 or more homes and making a substantial contribution towards housing requirements.

- 3.10 GA2 is one of these six strategic allocations, intended to deliver approximately 600 homes. These six sites collectively contribute 7,700 homes to the housing strategy.
- 3.11 The allocation requires a masterplan to be agreed with NHDC before a planning application is submitted. On 29 November 2024 a Strategic Masterplan Framework was agreed with NHDC and adopted as a material planning consideration for the Site. Further details are provided in the Planning Statement.
- 3.12 Policy SP8 'Housing' sets out a requirement for provision of 13,000 dwellings over the 2011-2031 plan period, equivalent to an average of 650 dwellings per annum. Affordable Housing is highlighted as one of the key challenges in the Local Plan - paragraph 2.71 states that there is a need for more affordable housing. Part f of Policy SP8 sets out the Council's affordable housing target. The policy supports a range of housing tenures, types and size measured against targets to provide 33%, with targets to deliver up to 40% 'where viable'.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

- 3.13 In January 2023, NHDC adopted a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) relating to Developer Contributions. The SPD does not form part of the Development Plan but builds on Local Plan Policies like Policy HS2.
- 3.14 The SPD sets out the requirements relating to infrastructure, education, health, biodiversity, affordable housing, highways, drainage and open space. This document includes an affordable housing calculator detailing the target affordable housing requirements. The general approach is to round the required number of affordable units to the nearest whole number.
- 3.15 NHDC expects affordable housing and the key provisions related to affordable housing to be secured via Section 106 agreements.

4. AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEED

The North Hertfordshire District and Stevenage SHMA (2023)

- 4.1 The North Hertfordshire District and Stevenage Borough Councils Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Update 2023 provides the most recent affordable housing need figures for the district. The SHMA identifies a total affordable housing need of 3,190 dwellings from (2022-2031). Against the district's total housing need of 7,888 for the remainder of the Local Plan period, this study indicates a need for 40.4% affordable housing in the district.
- 4.2 The SHMA demonstrates a particularly high need for Social Rent units. The complete breakdown of affordable housing need is included in the table below.

Table 4.1 Need for Affordable Dwellings by Tenure

Bedrooms	Percentage
Social Rent	65%
Affordable Rent	15%
Affordable Home Ownership (including First Homes)	20%

- 4.3 Figure 62 of the 2023 SHMA provides an overview of the overall need for affordable units by property size in North Herts:

Table 4.2 Need for Affordable Dwellings by Property Size

Bedrooms	Percentage
1-bedroom	5.9%
2-bedrooms	12.7%
3-bedrooms	18.8%
4+ bedrooms	3.9%

- 4.4 Discussions on affordable housing with NHDC confirmed that there will not be a sharing arrangement between Stevenage Borough Council and NHDC to deliver affordable housing. As such, only NHDC's affordable housing need has been considered.

Affordable Housing Delivery

- 4.5 The latest Annual Monitoring Report ('AMR') (2023-2024) states that in the latest monitoring year, the Council fell below this target of 33% *'achieving only 19% affordable housing completions'*.

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- 4.6 Local Plan **Policy HS2** requires development proposals of 25 or more dwellings to deliver 40% affordable units. Policy HS2 requires the split to be 65% rented and 35% other forms of affordable housing.
- 4.7 The Council's Authority Monitoring Report 2023/24 ('AMR') dated May 2024 clarifies that the authority cannot currently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land, as the AMR identifies a supply position of **3.9 years**.
- 4.8 There is a significant under provision of affordable housing across the district. This is further qualified in a recent appeal decision (June 2025)¹, where an Inspector wrote: *"The evidence suggests the Council has not met its targets in delivering affordable housing over recent years"*.
- 4.9 The AMR goes on to say that the Council have fallen below the plan's target, and this is '*partially attributed to the delay in larger allocated sites coming forward which would provide 40% affordable housing*'.
- 4.10 NHDC's most recent Authority Monitoring Report (2022-2023) indicates that the Council has not achieved its target for affordable housing delivery. Only 148 affordable units were completed during the monitoring year, amounting to 31% of housing completions delivered as affordable against a target of 33%. In fact, NHDC has not been able to meet this target during any monitoring year from 2011-2023 across the plan period to date, illustrating a consistent shortfall.
- 4.11 The Authority Monitoring Report attributes the shortfall in affordable housing delivery to a delay in larger allocated sites coming forward, which were expected to provide 40% affordable housing. This is significant as the Core Strategy expects 75% of its established housing target to be met through such sites.
- 4.12 It is also important to consider NHDC's affordable housing delivery in the context of the district's wider housing delivery overall as affordable housing is expected to be a proportion of this. NHDC's latest five-year housing land supply (5YHLS), which was published in March 2024, determined that the district can only demonstrate a position of **3.9 years**. NHDC, therefore, cannot demonstrate an adequate supply of housing overall. Furthermore, this calculation is now considered out-of-date as the revised NPPF (2024) has introduced the Standard Method for calculating housing need. Under this method, NHDC's housing need has now increased by 76% from 580 dpa to 1,018 dpa, adding increased pressure to the already insufficient 5YHLS.

¹ 3349177

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- 4.13 Due to the district's lack of housing provision overall and affordable housing in particular, an estimated 1,908 households in North Herts are known to have been living in unsuitable housing in 2023 or were unable to afford housing. There was thus an identified net need from 1,227 households in North Herts for affordable housing in the most recent monitored year.

5. ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSAL

Overview

- 5.1 Despite the increasingly challenged economic climate, the Applicant is committed to delivering 40% affordable housing on-site. The provision will follow the required tenure split, comprising 65% rented and 35% other forms of affordable housing. This equates to 166 rented and 90 other affordable homes.
- 5.2 As the layout is a reserved matter, the location of affordable housing will be agreed at the reserved matters stage. Nevertheless, the Proposed Development is likely to include a mix of flats and houses in response to local need. It is anticipated that affordable housing will be delivered in each construction phase to ensure mixed and balanced communities.
- 5.3 Ultimately, the final tenure split will be informed by local needs and recent national planning policy changes. The tenure mix will be discussed with NHDC and secured via a S106 legal agreement.

The Proposed Development will represent a significant contribution to the Council's affordable housing need where a significant shortfall has been consistently identified.

Meeting with NHDC Housing Officer

- 5.4 Following pre-application discussions with the Housing Officer in November 2024, an updated memorandum issued in May 2025 in response to the Applicant's draft application submission confirmed the Council's expectations for affordable housing delivery on the Site. The memorandum is appended to this AHS.
- 5.5 Following a review of the 2023 North Herts & Stevenage Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and in consideration of the pre-application meeting, the Housing Officer outlined the housing mix which would best meet the needs of NHDC. The desired mix for both rented and other affordable housing is provided in Table 5.1 and 5.2.

Table 5.1 Proposed Housing Mix (166 rented dwellings)

Bedrooms	Percentage	No. Units
1-bedroom flats	19%	32
2-bedroom flats	22%	36

2-bedroom house	22%	37
3-bedroom house	25%	42
4-bedroom house	10%	17
5+ bedroom house	2%	2

5.6 The Housing Officer indicated the following mix for other affordable homes.

Table 5.2 Proposed Housing Mix for other affordable homes (90 dwellings)

Bedrooms	Percentage	No. Units
1-bedroom flats	22%	20
2-bedroom flats	15%	14
2-bedroom house	43%	38
3-bedroom house	20%	18

5.7 A proportion of the dwellings will be Lifetime Standard homes, to accommodate people of various ages and abilities. At least 50% of units will be built to M4(2) Accessible and Adoptable standards.

5.8 The design will distribute 'tenure-blind' affordable housing across the Site, ensuring that the elevational treatment and materials of affordable housing will be indistinct from that of market housing.

5.9 We note the Council's preference for tenure size and mix to be fixed at outline stage. In light of this, we confirm that the Housing Officer's stated preferences on tenure split, dwelling mix and accessibility standards are fully noted and will form the basis for further detailed discussion as part of the S106 negotiations.

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- 5.10 We also acknowledge the points raised around phased delivery, distribution and clustering of affordable homes, M4(2), M4(3) requirements and management arrangements. These matters will continue to be engaged with as the scheme and Heads of Terms progress.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 This Affordable Housing Statement has confirmed that there is an existing shortfall in the delivery of affordable housing in NHDC. The district has consistently fallen short of its affordable housing targets since 2011. Despite significant housing supply in pipeline, there has been a delay in larger allocated sites coming forward.
- 6.2 The proposals will therefore make a significant, positive contribution to the district's supply of affordable housing, providing up to 256 new affordable dwellings that are policy-compliant and attuned to local needs. The Proposed Development's affordable housing proposal is considered to be a significant benefit in the planning balance.
- 6.3 The tenure, size and mix of affordable housing units will be determined during the S106 negotiations.

A1. COUNCIL PRE-APPLICATION NOTE (NOVEMBER 2024)

GA2 Land off Great Ashby Way, Great Ashby, Hertfordshire. Meeting date: 5th November 2024

The North Herts District and Stevenage Borough Councils Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Update 2023 identifies a need for 40.4% affordable housing in North Herts with Figure 64 on page 66 showing a need for 65% Social Rented tenure, 15% Affordable Rented tenure and 20% Affordable Home Ownership (including First Homes) tenure mix.

Within the overall 40% affordable housing provision the Council's expectation is that 65% of the affordable housing will be rented and 35% other forms of affordable housing in accordance with Policy HS2 of the Local Plan and the Developer Contributions SPD.

Based on the provision of 640 dwellings the affordable housing requirement would be 256 dwellings: 166 rented and 90 other affordable housing tenure.

For the combined rented affordable housing, the 2023 SHMA identifies the following mix to best meet housing needs:

7% x 1 bed flats
9% x 2 bed flats
22% x 2 bed houses
50% x 3 bed houses
10% x 4 bed houses
2% 5+ bed houses.

Evidence from the Council's housing register suggests the number of three bed houses suggested in the SHMA is greater than required and there is greater demand for two bedroom family homes and a need for larger family homes (4+ bedrooms). In addition, there is a growing need for larger (3 and 4 bed) M4(3) wheelchair accessible homes which we will seek to deliver through the requirements of Policy HS5: Accessible and adaptable housing.

Based on the information above including evidence from the 2023 SHMA and the Council's housing register and the provision of 640 homes overall the following mix will best meet the Council's affordable housing needs:

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 M4(3) wheelchair accessible homes) *
10% x 4 bed houses = 17 (including 2 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) as identified in the 2023 SHMA for North Herts:

22% x 1 bed flats = 20

15% x 2 bed flats = 14

43% x 2 bed houses = 38

20% x 3 bed houses = 18.

Debbie Ealand
Housing Supply Officer

A2. COUNCIL MEMORANDUM (MAY 2025)