

MEMORANDUM

To: Paul Chaston
Senior Planning Officer

From: Debbie Ealand
Housing Supply Officer
Ext: 4526

Your Ref: 25/03234/FP

Date: 30th April 2026

Full Planning Permission: Creation of 50 no. one, two, three and four bedroom houses and apartments plus associated landscaping, open space, roads, drainage and other infrastructure.

Land East of Bedford Road and North of The Priory School, Hitchin, Hertfordshire.

Ref: 25/03234/FP

Dear Paul,

Thank you for your memo of 13 April 2026 in respect of the above application for full planning permission.

The site lies beyond the settlement boundary of Hitchin in the Green Belt. Policy SP5 Countryside and Green Belt applies. Development proposals in the Green Belt will only be permitted where they would not result in inappropriate development and be judged against the policies of the NPPF to determine whether they are acceptable in principle.

There are seven allocated sites in and around Hitchin in the Local Plan, expected to deliver a total of approximately 971 new homes.

The affordable housing requirement is 40% on sites which will provide 25 dwellings or more, in accordance with the Local Plan. Within the overall affordable housing requirement, the Council requires a 65% rented/ 35% affordable home ownership or other forms of affordable housing tenure mix, in accordance with the Local Plan and the Developer Contributions SPD.

The North Herts District and Stevenage Borough Councils SHMA Update 2023 shows a need for a 65% Social Rented/ 15% Affordable Rented/ 20% Affordable Home Ownership tenure mix.

The preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence. Strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment to determine the minimum number of homes needed, 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 66 of the NPPF says “Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed, planning policies and decisions should expect that the mix of affordable housing required meets identified local needs, across Social Rent, other affordable housing for rent and affordable home ownership tenures”.

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.”

If approval of the scheme can be justified, based on 50 dwellings, including Golden Rules 50% affordable housing provision; 25 affordable dwellings, as proposed by the applicant, the table shows the mix that best meets housing need by size, type and tenure based on the 2023 North Herts & Stevenage Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) update in accordance with Policy HS2bii and HS3ii.

Size/type	65% social rent		15% affordable rent		20% affordable home ownership	
1BF	8%	1	5%	0	22%	1
2BF	9%	1	10%	0	15%	1
2BH	21%	4	23%	2	43%	2
3BH	50%	8*	52%	2*i	20%	1
4BH	10%	2	8%	0		
5BH	2%	0	2%	0		
Total	100%	16	100%	4	100%	5

* 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 could be considered favourably.

Note (i) affordable rents for 3 bed homes must be up to 70% of market rents (including service charges if applicable).

There is a growing need for larger (3 and 4 bed) M4(3) wheelchair adapted homes for rent which we will seek to deliver through the requirements of Policy HS5: Accessible and adaptable housing of the Local Plan.

Policy HS2b: Affordable housing ii. the housing needs of the area including needs identified by relevant local authority housing register data, Neighbourhood Plans and any settlement- or parish-level surveys or assessments and Policy HS3: Housing mix ii. the findings of the most up-to-date evidence including the most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment, the Council's Self Build Register and other relevant evidence of housing need.

The applicant's Planning Statement indicates a 65% rented/ 35% shared ownership tenure mix, in accordance with HS2bi, although the different tenures are not shown on the Detailed Layout plan.

Based on a 65% rented/35% shared ownership tenure mix the affordable housing requirements would be:

Size/type	65% rent		35% affordable home ownership	
1BF	7%	1	22%	2
2BF	9%	1	15%	1
2BH	22%	4	43%	4
3BH	50%	8*	20%	2
4BH	10%	2		
5BH	2%	0		
Total	100%	16	100%	9

The applicant's affordable proposals for the housing mix do not meet the Council's requirements for affordable housing as indicated above. The affordable homes include a larger number of flats than required and there are no affordable four bedroom houses.

Two bedroom flats are considered as family accommodation, and the open plan layout is not ideal for family living. In addition, there seems limited garden provision/ defensible space available for residents of the flats.

If the development proposals in the Green Belt are not deemed inappropriate development and the application is acceptable in principle the applicant needs to amend the affordable housing mix. The two flat blocks could be accepted, but the applicant would need to provide 2 x 4 bed houses for rent and 2 x 3 bed wheelchair accessible houses for rent including through floor lifts.

Based on a 65% rented/ 35% shared ownership tenure split the affordable housing should comprise 3 x 1 bed flats, 4 x 2 bed flats (Block A), 4 x 2 bed houses, 3 x 3 bed houses including two M4(3) wheelchair accessible and 2 x 4

bed houses for rent, and 4 x 2 bed flats (Block B), 4 x 2 bed houses and 1 x 3 bed house for shared ownership tenure.

The affordable homes should be let/ sold to applicants with a local connection to the district of North Hertfordshire.

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).

Any affordable homes should be owned and managed by a registered provider, be evenly distributed on the site, rather than on one part, and be physically indistinguishable from any market housing.

The 2023 SHMA provides evidence that many more people require social rented homes, and this tenure is recognised in the NPPF.

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) and for a four+ bedroom dwellings the rent should be no more than the equivalent rent (excluding service charges, where applicable) for a social rented home 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 the affordable units are required to meet the nationally described housing space standards.

Registered Providers (RPs) and developers alike are not keen on mixed tenure blocks of flats and any flats for rent would need to be separate from any flats for affordable home ownership/ other affordable housing tenure.

Parking courts are not desirable as there is often limited, or no natural surveillance and residents prefer to park outside or near to their homes. To minimise on street parking, parking spaces should be provided in front of or adjacent properties with good natural surveillance.

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