

MEMORANDUM

To: Anne McDonald
Principle Planning Officer
Development Management

From: Debbie Ealand
Housing Supply Officer
Ext: 4526

Your Ref: 25/02547/FP

Date: 11th November 2025

**Full Planning Permission: Residential development of 36 no. dwellings including creation of vehicular access off Station Road, associated parking, drainage, amenity space and landscaping.
Land to the south and east of Senuna Park, Station Road, Ashwell,
Ref: 25/02547/FP**

Dear Anne,

Thank you for your memo of 27 October 2025 in respect of the above application for full planning permission.

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.

Ashwell is a Category A village and there are no allocated sites in Ashwell in the Local Plan. The site is beyond the village boundary in Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, an area of rural restraint.

Policies SP5: Countryside and Green Belt and CGB1: Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt apply.

Policy CGB2b: Community facilities, services and affordable housing in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt says that planning permission for community facilities, services or affordable housing in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt will be granted adjoining Category A villages if

- a) It meets a proven local need as identified through a parish survey or other relevant study;
- b) There are no reasonable alternate, suitable and available sites:
 - i. within the defined boundaries of the relevant Category A ; or
 - ii. otherwise within a reasonable travelling distance (by various modes) of the location where the need has been identified;

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.”

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 to meet this need.

A further 28 dwellings are nearing completion in Station Road which will deliver 28 dwellings overall; 17 private and 11 affordable housing units. The is the scheme known as Senuna Park and the affordable housing units include 4 x 1 bed flats and 3 x 2 bed houses for rent and 1 x 2 bed house and 3 x 3 bed houses for shared ownership sale.

Another rural HNS was undertaken in 2024. The data shows a significant demand for one and two bedroom homes for elderly downsizers, particularly bungalows and sheltered accommodation. Elderly homeowners would not qualify for rented affordable housing or shared ownership homes, but a housing

association could provide discounted market sale or a market scheme providing bungalows.

There is also high demand for one bed homes for younger single person households who are working.

A specific housing need has been identified for rented accommodation comprising 2 x 2 bed adapted bungalows and a 4-bedroom home for a family with a disabled child, which highlights the importance of integrating accessible designs into new developments.

The need for 3 bed houses is only two, but these are both owner occupiers (including one elderly downsizer) and as indicated above neither would qualify for traditional affordable housing.

The HNS report indicates a total of 28 dwellings, both market and affordable to meet housing need in the parish and the applicant is proposing the provision of 36 new dwellings.

The 2023 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Update identifies a need for a greater proportion (62%) of larger homes (three + bedrooms) and 38% one and two bedroom homes for rent. For affordable home ownership the SHMA identifies a need for 80% one and two bedroom homes and only 20% for three bedroom homes.

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 for rent.

Policy HS2: 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 Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan (ANP) was made on April 2022.
Policy ASH1 LOCATION OF DEVELOPMENT

A Development in the neighbourhood area will be focused within the extended settlement boundary shown in Figure 4.1 where it complies with all relevant policies in the development plan and the NPPF.

B Within the extended settlement boundary, proposed developments on brownfield land will be particularly supported.

C Development proposals outside the proposed extension to the settlement boundary shown in Figure 4.1 will not be supported unless:

- (i) They are in accordance with Saved Plan (1996) and Emerging Local Plan policies in respect of appropriate uses in the countryside; or the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area; or
- (ii) where relevant, the development brings redundant or vacant historic buildings back into beneficial re-use; or
- (iii) they relate to necessary utilities infrastructure and where no reasonable alternative location is available; or
- (iv) they are on sites allocated for those uses in the North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan or its successor.

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.

Policy ASH2 HOUSING MIX

A Proposals for housing development should contribute towards meeting the existing and future housing needs of the neighbourhood area. Developers of major developments should submit a neighbourhood area-specific Affordable Housing and Dwellings Mix Strategy with any planning application. The Strategy should set out identified housing needs within the neighbourhood area, taking account of Housing Survey 2015 conclusions or any more recent local survey, and demonstrate how the proposed development addresses those needs. In particular the Strategy must show how the proposal:

- (i) meets the needs of older residents (aged 60+) and younger people entering the housing market both in general terms and through the delivery of one- and two-bedroom houses in particular; and
- (ii) helps to address housing under-occupancy in the Parish.

B Development proposals which include a significant proportion of one-, two- and three bedroom dwellings for sale or rent within the lower quartile of local cost will be particularly supported.

C Where appropriate development proposals for housing development should provide affordable housing to development plan standards.

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.

The applicant has not provided a tenure plan showing the tenure of the affordable homes, and their proposals **do not meet the needs** identified in the recent housing needs survey or requirements of the ANP for market or affordable housing.

Policy does not allow for all the affordable homes to be available for rent, but a registered provider struggled finding applicants with a local connection to North Herts district to purchase the 3 bed shared ownership homes on a recent

development in the village.

To meet housing needs the affordable housing should comprise 5 x 1 bed flats, 3 x 2 bed houses and 1 x 4 bed house (M4(3) wheelchair accessible) for **social rent** and 4 x 2 bed houses and 1 x 3 bed house for affordable home ownership.

The developer should consider the provision of more bungalows and/or two bedroom houses for market sale to meet the needs of elderly downsizers who wish to remain in the village. This would assist in freeing up larger homes which are currently underoccupied.

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 reference to mews houses is misleading as some of these homes appear to be flats according to the plans, not houses. The application form is incorrect and should show the following 5 x 1 bed flats and 3 x 2 bed flats and 2 x 2 bed houses and 4 x 3 bed houses. In addition, the affordable housing is clustered together away from the market housing which does not provide a mixed and balanced community. The affordable housing comprises terraced housing and flats and the market housing is all detached dwellings. As stated the applicant's current proposals do not meet housing need.

Two bedroom 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 separate spaces to be used for homeworking and/ or children doing homework.

The 2023 SHMA provides evidence that many more people require social rented homes, and this tenure is recognised in the NPPF. If the development is considered acceptable the nine rented homes should be let at social rents, 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.

All affordable homes should be allocated/ sold to applicants with a local connection to the parish of Ashwell, in the first instance.

Ashwell parish has Protected Area Status 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