

MEMORANDUM

To: Naomi Reynard
Senior Planning Officer

From: Debbie Ealand
Housing Supply Officer
Ext: 4526

Your Ref: 24/02889/FP

Date: 29 January 2025

**Full Planning Permission: Residential development of 281 dwellings and associated roads, parking, realignment of Back Lane, drainage, landscaping, open space, servicing facilities and associated works
Land at Roundwood, Back Lane, Graveley, Hertfordshire.**

Case Ref No: 24/02889/FP

Dear Naomi,

Thank you for your memo dated 10 January 2025 in respect of the above application for full planning permission.

The affordable housing requirement is 40% on sites which will provide 25 dwellings and above, in accordance with the Local Plan.

Great Ashby is a relatively new parish. Formerly part of Graveley parish and a small strip of Weston parish, the parish covers the residential area adjoining Stevenage.

There are two sites allocated in Great Ashby in the Local Plan expected to deliver a total of 930 new homes. The application site is allocated, site GA1 and is expected to deliver 330 new homes.

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.

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 (including Social Rent); families with children; looked after 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".

The Local Plan recognises that there will be a substantial increase in the number of and proportion of older residents in North Hertfordshire and there is high demand/ need for retirement housing for both market and affordable tenures.

For residential developments of 100 units or more planning permission will be granted where an element of accommodation within Use Class C3 for older persons housing is included under the requirements of Policy HS3(a) where this is consistent with Policy HS4.

Households with an older person may include someone with a physical disability and/ or limited mobility. In accordance with Policy HS5: Accessible and adaptable housing, planning permission for major residential development will be granted where:

- a) applicants demonstrate that at least 50% of homes can be built to the M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable standard; and
- b) on schemes where 10 or more affordable units will be delivered, 10% of these can additionally be built to the M4(3) wheelchair user standard, where the district council is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in the dwelling.

Paragraph 64 of the NPPF says “Where a need for affordable housing is identified, planning policies should specify the type of affordable housing required (including the minimum proportion of Social Rent homes 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.”

Within the overall 40% affordable housing requirement a 65%/35% rented/ intermediate affordable housing tenure split is required, in accordance with the Local Plan and the Council’s Developer Contributions SPD and the 2016 Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Update.

Based on the provision of 281 dwellings overall, the affordable housing requirement would be 112 dwellings: 73 rented and 39 intermediate tenure.

Within the 65% rented affordable housing element the following tenure mix best meets housing needs, as identified in the 2016 SHMA:

- 21% x 1 bed flats (15)
- 12% x 2 bed flats (9)
- 26% x 2 bed houses (19)
- 35% x 3 bed houses (26)
- 6% x 4+ bed houses. (4)

Within the 35% intermediate affordable housing element the following tenure mix best meets housing needs as identified in the 2016 SHMA:

8% x 1 bed flats (3)
8% x 2 bed flats (3)
20% x 2 bed houses (8)
54% x 3 bed houses (21)
10% x 4+ bed houses (4)

A 2023 North Herts and Stevenage SHMA update has been adopted and identifies a different tenure mix for both rented and affordable home ownership tenures to that of the 2016 SHMA. The affordable housing requirements are in accordance with previous advice based on the 2016 SHMA and local information of housing need in the district particularly in respect of the rented homes.

Evidence from the housing register suggests the number of three bed houses recommended in both the 2016 and 2023 SHMAs is greater than required and there is high housing need for smaller homes for rent including two bedroom family homes and a need for larger (4+ bedroom) family homes for rent. The provision of an increased number of two bedroom homes and fewer three bedroom houses is therefore considered favourably.

In addition, there is a growing need for larger (3 and 4 bed) M4(3) wheelchair adapted homes, for families, which we will seek to deliver through the requirements of Policy HS5: Accessible and adaptable housing.

For intermediate affordable/ shared ownership tenure there is a greater demand for one and two bedroom homes and some demand for three bedroom homes. Recently registered providers have struggled to sell four bedroom shared ownership homes to local families due to a lack of demand and affordability.

There have been extensive discussions with the applicant, during the pre-application workshops on the affordable housing provision and mix including size, type, tenure and layout. The applicants affordable housing proposals as set out in the table at 6.5.2 of their planning statement is accepted as agreed in the workshops. This includes eleven homes to M4(3) wheelchair user standards; two of which are houses.

The affordable homes should be owned and managed by a registered provider, should be spread across the site in small clusters rather than be situated on one or two parts of the site and be physically indistinguishable from the market housing.

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 tenure.

Where a need for affordable housing is identified the definition in Annex 2 of the Framework should be applied to the type of affordable housing required.

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).

Housing for rent (65% of overall affordable housing) includes Social Rent and other affordable housing for rent which meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider; and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households.

Housing for Sale (35% of overall affordable housing) includes Discounted market sale housing and other affordable routes to home ownership including shared ownership, shared equity and rent to buy.

The Council currently accepts social rent and affordable rent for the rented tenure dwellings, although the 2023 SHMA shows that a large majority of households will require social rent as social rent has lower weekly rents than affordable rent.

Where affordable rented tenure is provided 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 dwelling 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 these standards.

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 or adjacent properties with good natural surveillance wherever possible.

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