

To: Development Management - Planning

From: Sharon Forde

Housing Strategy Officer

Ext:1646

Your Ref: **3/24/0966/OUT**

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Land North Of A507, West Of A10 Buntingford

Outline planning application for development of up to 600 dwellings (C3), elderly accommodation (C3), Mixed Use Local Centre (including flexible use E, F and Sui Generis), First School, informal and formal open space, associated works and infrastructure including a new access from the A507 and pedestrian bridge over the A10, with all matters reserved except access

Affordable housing contribution

District Plan Policy HOU3 Affordable Housing

In accordance with District Plan Policy HOU3 approved October 2018, the scheme should deliver 40% affordable housing. Therefore, based on 600 dwellings, 240 affordable homes should be provided.

The Class C3 elderly accommodation should also provide an affordable housing contribution.

Tenure

Within the overall affordable housing provision, the council requires a tenure mix of 84% rented/ 16% other intermediate tenure. However, we are mindful of the NPPF which requires 10% of the housing on all developments to be for affordable home ownership. In these circumstances, we will accept 75% rented and 25% affordable home ownership.

The council's preferred affordable home ownership product is shared ownership.

Property types

Table 14.2 in the District Plan sets out the evidenced affordable housing need, by size, type and tenure, across the district for the plan period. Although this may be used as a guide, it cannot be reliably utilised to identify housing needs on a site by site basis.

East Herts Council is the strategic housing authority for the district. As such it is crucial that the delivery of affordable housing as a whole is taken into consideration i.e. what has been/will be delivered on other developments.

As a result of entirely flatted developments and high levels of flats on new developments, there has been a significant over provision of flats in recent years. This over provision is particularly notable for affordable rented dwellings.

Additionally, there has been a significant under provision of 4 bed houses.

Where shared ownership is concerned, flats are not popular with buyers. Consequently, we have experience of being forced to allow them to be sold to households with no connection to the district due to lack of interest.

To achieve anything close to the evidenced need in terms of property types and sizes, future new development that is capable of delivering houses will need to deliver dwellings of this type in excess of the proportions set out in table 14.2 of the District Plan.

There are currently 516 households on the housing register who have selected Buntingford as one of their areas of choice (NB households frequently select many areas and it cannot be assumed that they will bid on properties in any particular area).

Households on the housing register who have selected Buntingford as one of their areas of choice

Bedroom need	No. of households	Household includes a dependent child (%)	Household has a high housing need (%)
1 bed	228	-	11
2 bed	141	87	21
3 bed	127	98	46
4 bed	16	100	50
5 bed	4	100	50
All	516		

The council will seek to meet the needs of households with the greatest level of need in the first instance. The table below shows households who have selected Buntingford as one of their areas of choice and have a high housing need. Accordingly, the greatest need is for houses suitable for families with children.

Households on the housing register with a high housing need who have selected Buntingford as one of their areas of choice

Bedroom need	No. of households	Household includes a dependent child (%)
1 bed	25	-
2 bed	30	73
3 bed	58	97
4 bed	8	100
5 bed	2	100
All	123	

As shown in the table below, despite the higher housing needs of households with children and those requiring larger homes, properties that become available for letting are disproportionately smaller and 50% are flats. There tends to be a higher turnover of smaller properties as the household's needs are more likely to change e.g., increases in the number or ages of children and the coupling up of single person households. There were no lettings to households in need of 4 bed dwellings. Four bed dwellings of this size are scarce, hence the need to secure new build dwellings suitable for larger families, despite the relatively low number of households in need of dwellings of this size.

General needs lettings in Buntingford 01/04/2023 - 31/03/2024

Property size	Flat	House	Bungalow	All
1 bed	15	1	2	18
2 bed	7	8	-	15
3 bed	-	13	-	13
4 bed	-	-	-	-
5 bed	-	-	-	0
All general needs	22	22	2	46
Sheltered 1 bed	2	-	2	4
Sheltered 2 bed	-	-	-	-
All sheltered	2	-	2	4
All lettings	24	22	4	50

The below table shows new build dwellings delivered in Buntingford between 01/04/2017 and 31/03/2024. A total of 227 homes for rent have been delivered, of which 67% were one or two bed dwellings, just under 50% were family sized houses and 40% were flats. No new build four bed houses for rent have been delivered in Buntingford.

New build affordable dwelling for rent delivered in Buntingford 01/04/2017 - 31/03/2024

Property size	Flat	House	Bungalow	All
1 bed	51	-	15	66
2 bed	40	36	9	85
3 bed	-	73	-	73
4 bed	-	3	-	3
5 bed	-	-	-	-
All	91	112	24	227

The most pressing need is for family sized houses. Although the number of households needing 4+ bed is relatively low, properties of this size are scarce, and we are unlikely to be able to meet their needs without the provision of new build homes of this size.

Where flats are concerned, there is a high number of households with a need for a one bed flat. However, households in need of one bed accommodation tend to have a lower housing need and dwellings of this type and size have a relatively high turnover.

There is very little need for two bed flats.

Property size and layout

District Plan Policy DES4 Design of Development

(f) All new residential developments should meet the requirements of Policy HOU7, and ensure all internal rooms are of an appropriate size and dimension so that the intended function of each room can be satisfactorily achieved. All dwellings shall be identified by their square metreage

As advised in the East Herts Affordable Housing SPD, applicants should look to the Nationally Described Space Standards for guidance as to what might be considered a minimum satisfactory size.

The SPD sets out criteria to ensure that the design, layout and size of affordable housing provides a dwelling that suits the need of the household it is providing for and delivers the greatest opportunity for longevity within the unit:

One bed dwellings should be suitable for 2 persons, two bed dwellings suitable for 4 persons, 3 bed suitable for 5 persons and 4 bed suitable for 7+ persons. Second and subsequent double bedrooms should be capable of accommodating two single beds and this should be demonstrated in the floor plans.

The applicant should take into account that all dwellings with two or more bedrooms should be suitable for households that include young children. It should be borne in mind that the council does not allow households allocated to affordable rented housing to have spare bedrooms so the dwellings will be fully occupied.

The applicant could consider advice from The Housing Health and Safety Rating System Operating Guidance when designing the layout of dwellings for affordable rent.

- Within a dwelling there should be sufficient space for the separation of different household activities, either by physical separation or by a clearly defined space within a larger space. The degree of separation is partly dependent on the number of people who can be expected to share the space, and whether or not they are expected to be part of the same household.
- Open-plan arrangements may be acceptable for dwellings for a single person or for a couple, but not for dwellings intended for larger households.
- For larger households, physical separation of living, cooking, dining and even sleeping areas is more necessary. For such household, bedrooms should lead off a circulation space, and should be large enough to be useable for sleeping and for study or relaxing away from the other members of the household.
- As well as sufficient sleeping space, there should be a living area of sufficient size for the household. Indoor and outdoor play and recreation space is necessary in accommodation housing children. Outdoor play space should be readily visible from within the dwelling and safely separated from public and neighbouring areas.

Affordability

All rents, inclusive of service charges should be within Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates for the Broad Market Rental Area in which they are situated, and this should be secured in the legal agreement.

Shared ownership must be affordable to households with a maximum income of £80,000.

Shared ownership rents should be set at a maximum of 2.75% of unsold equity and this should be secured in the legal agreement.

The shared ownership lease should be in the form of the Homes England Model Shared Ownership Lease, and this should be secured in the legal agreement.

Wheelchair user dwellings

District Plan Policy HOU7 Accessible and Adaptable Homes

In order to ensure delivery of new homes that are readily accessible and adaptable to meet the changing needs of occupants, and to support independent living, the Council will require that:

(a) all new residential development should meet the Building Regulations Requirement M4(2): Category 2 – Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings; and

(b) on sites proposing 11 or more gross additional dwellings, a proportion of dwellings will be expected to meet the Building Regulations Requirement M4(3): Category 3 – Wheelchair User Dwellings, where appropriate.

The evidenced need is for 15% of affordable homes to meet M4(3) standard.

Wherever possible M4(3) dwelling should have a secure outside space.

Integration

The affordable housing units should be integrated into the open market housing development using appropriate design methods, i.e. tenure blind, and 'pepper-potted' across the site in clusters appropriate to the size and scale of the development.

On sites incorporating 30 or more residential units affordable housing should be provided in groups of no more than 15% of the total number of units being provided or 25 affordable units, whichever is fewer.

Market and affordable flats should be in separate blocks and not mixed. Wherever possible rented flats should be in a separate block from any intermediate affordable/ shared ownership flats as RPs are not keen on mixed tenure blocks.

Additional information

The affordable homes should be owned and managed by a registered provider (RP).

The registered provider will be required to enter into a nomination agreement with the council and this should be secured in the legal agreement.

The applicant should provide an affordable housing statement that includes:

- The intended number, type, tenure, size (sq metres, beds and number of persons) per unit

- The proportion of affordable housing to meet Building Regulations M4(3) Wheelchair User Dwelling standard
- Site plans that identify the affordable units by tenure
- Floor plans for the affordable dwellings that demonstrate that second and subsequent double bedrooms can accommodate two single beds

Yours sincerely

Sharon Forde

Housing Strategy Officer