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| To: Development Management - Planning | From: Sharon Forde |
|  | Housing Strategy Officer |
|  | Ext:1646 |

Your Ref: **3/23/1447/OUT** Date: 22 August 2023

**Land East Of The A10 Buntingford Hertfordshire**

Outline planning for the development of 350 dwellings, with up to 4,400 sqm of commercial and services floorspace (Use Class E and B8) and up to 500 sqm of retail floorspace (Use Classes E) and other associated works including drainage, access into the site from the A10 and Luynes Rise (but not access within the site), allotments, public open space and landscaping

Thank you for inviting me to comment on the above application

**Affordable housing contribution**

In accordance with District Plan Policy HOU3 approved October 2018 the scheme should deliver 40% affordable housing. Therefore, based on 350 dwellings overall, 140 affordable homes should be provided.

**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.

This equates to 105 homes for affordable rent and 35 homes for low-cost home ownership. Our preferred low-cost home ownership tenure is shared ownership.

**Property type and size**

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 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.

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.

Additionally, two bed flats for affordable rent are not the most suitable dwelling type for the majority of households in need of a two bed affordable rent property as these households tend to include young children. Therefore, it is preferred that the number of two bed flats for affordable rent delivered on a development are kept to a minimum.

Where shared ownership is concerned, flats, particularly one bed 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.

**Property size and layout**

When carrying out the allocation of affordable rented housing the council will select households comprising of the maximum number of persons permitted according to size of the dwelling to occupy them. Thus, the affordable units should meet the Government’s Technical Housing Standards – nationally described space standard.

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.

**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.

**Accessible housing**

A proportion of affordable housing should meet Building Regulations Requirement M4 (3): Category 3 – Wheelchair User Dwellings. The evidenced need is for 15% of affordable homes to meet this standard.

It is preferred that M4(3) dwellings have a secure private garden.

**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 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