

Aspirational Housing Research



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1 Introduction

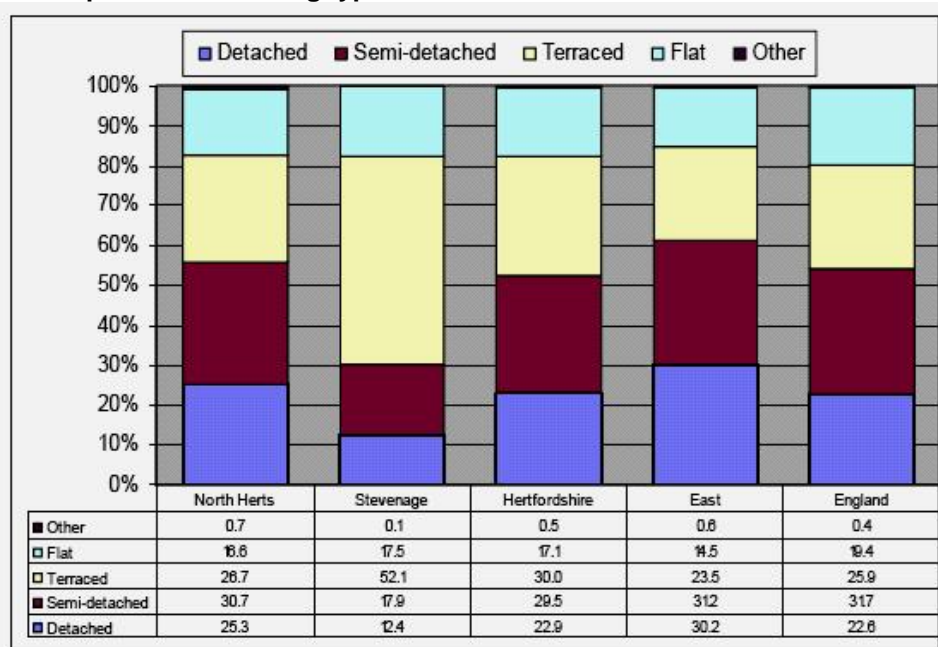
- 1.1 It is important to gain a full understanding of the housing market, in order to prepare local planning documents which are sound, and which ensure that all needs are met. This research will support policies within the Local Development Framework (LDF) by providing an evidence base for aspirational housing requirements within the town.
- 1.2 The existing housing stock in Stevenage is skewed significantly towards smaller homes ~ more than half the stock is terraced. This, along with the findings of other studies and anecdotal evidence suggest that there is a lack of homes suitable for higher earners in Stevenage. These are referred to as 'aspirational homes'.
- 1.3 Aspirational homes are key to attracting a balanced socioeconomic population. However, by their nature they can conflict with the East of England Plan's requirement to maximise dwelling densities in new development. It is therefore important to identify whether or not the market exists for them before encouraging their development, to ensure that valuable land is not misused. It is also important to provide a precise definition or set of criteria for inclusion in the LDF and to provide a clear steer for developers.
- 1.4 The objectives of this research are to;
 - Provide contextual information on the current housing stock and population in Stevenage;
 - Investigate what an aspirational home is and to provide a clear and concise definition;
 - Identify what and where the market is for aspirational homes is in Stevenage;
 - Identify future housing sites where aspirational homes would be suitable; and
 - Identify the number and percentage of aspirational homes which could be provided.
- 1.5 The evidence for this report is drawn from:
 - Census and monitoring data collected by Stevenage Borough Council;
 - Evidence studies carried out to inform the Local Development Framework (LDF); and
 - Interviews with local estate agents.

2 Current context

Stevenage housing stock

- 2.1 Although it is now more than eight years old, Census data provides a useful baseline for gathering information on housing stock. There are two reasons for this:
- It provides detail and coverage that cannot be replicated in other studies; and
 - The 2001 survey date ties in with the start of the East of England Plan period, and therefore also the start of the plan period for the LDF.
- 2.2 Census data shows that only 12% of homes in Stevenage are detached. This compares to a 22% Hertfordshire average. This is close to half of the Hertfordshire figure, which is a significant difference. The current supply in Stevenage is also less than half the level available in neighbouring North Hertfordshire District.
- 2.3 Only 18% of homes in Stevenage have six or more rooms, compared to 24% in Hertfordshire as a whole, 25% in North Hertfordshire and 29% in East Hertfordshire.

Figure 1: Proportion of housing types



Source: Crown Copyright © Census 2001

Reproduced from North Hertfordshire & Stevenage Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2008)

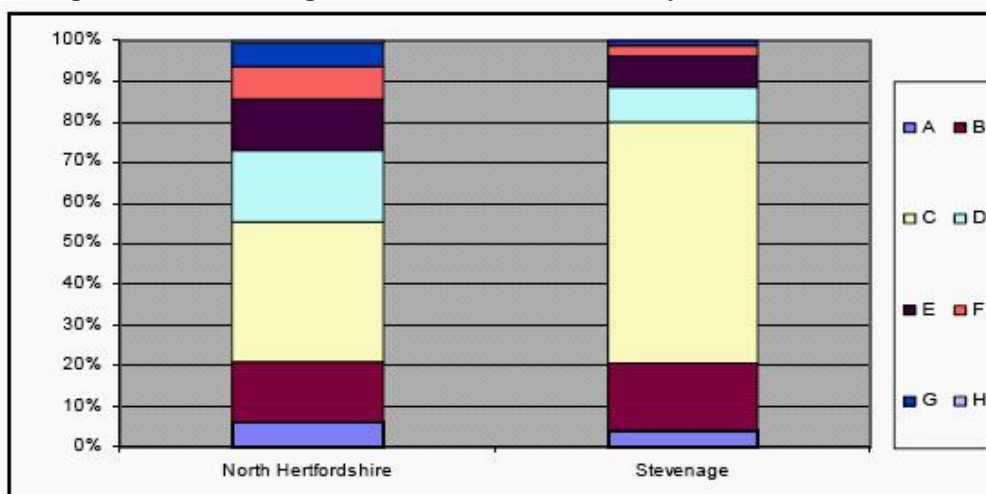
- 2.4 The stock of terraced properties within Stevenage dominates the market significantly. 52% of homes are terraced, more than double the regional and national average. Of the 354 local authorities in England, only four have a higher proportion of terraced homes than this¹.
- 2.5 Stevenage has the lowest property prices in Hertfordshire for all types of housing².
- 2.6 There is also a considerable discrepancy in Council Tax bands³. Just 1% of homes in Stevenage are in bands G or H. This is, by some distance, the lowest proportion in Hertfordshire and compares to a County-wide figure of 9%⁴.

¹ 2003 administrative geography. 2001 Census Table KS16. Pendle (58.6%), Hyndburn (54.3%), Barking & Dagenham (54.1%) and Kingston-Upon-Hull (53.5%) have a higher proportion of terraced homes.

² House Prices in Hertfordshire No33, Hertfordshire County Council, July 2009

- 2.7 There is also a significant difference in the proportion of homes within tax bands A – C, with Stevenage seeing nearly 80% of houses within this range, compared to around 55% in North Hertfordshire District and 40% in the County as a whole.

Figure 2: Housing stock in Stevenage and North Hertfordshire by council tax band.



Source: North Hertfordshire & Stevenage Local Authorities

Reproduced from North Hertfordshire & Stevenage Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2008)

- 2.8 Even taking into account variations in house price across the County, this is a significant discrepancy.
- 2.9 Since 2001, only 13 housing completions (less than 1% of the total) have been placed in Council Tax Band G.
- 2.10 Over the last three years, more than three-quarters of housing completions have been for small (1-2 bed) units. In the last two years, the ratio of flats to houses was approximately 2:1. However in 2009 the ratio was closer to seven flats for every house built. This is above the need set out within the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (2008), which suggested that two thirds of housing delivered within Stevenage should be smaller units.
- 2.11 Indeed, the SHMA recognises that there is a significant stock imbalance and recommends that new development should contribute “large, high quality housing to provide a more sustainable community”.

Stevenage population and workforce

- 2.12 Monitoring data gathered by the Borough Council shows that the proportion of Stevenage residents qualified to NVQ Level 3 or above and NVQ Level 4 or above is consistently below the Hertfordshire average. The latest data shows 20% of the Stevenage population qualified to NVQ Level 4 measured against 34% in Hertfordshire⁵.
- 2.13 This is further supported by measures of job type. 11% of Stevenage residents are managers or senior officials, compares to 19% in Hertfordshire as a whole. The proportion employed in elementary occupations are 11% and 9% respectively⁶.
- 2.14 Resident-based earnings are around 95% of workplace-based earnings⁷. An Aspirational Homes Survey (2007) shows that the workforce who earn the higher wages within

³ Data collected by Stevenage Borough Council from Valuation Office website (www.voa.gov.uk), June 2009

⁴ The second lowest proportion is in Watford, 5%.

⁵ Annual Monitoring Report (2009)

⁶ Annual Monitoring Report (2009)

Stevenage tend not to live in the town. The Census showed that 55% of people that work in Stevenage also live in Stevenage. The Aspirational Homes Survey showed, that, amongst those earning more than £40,000, this fell to just 23%.

Conclusions

- 2.15 The contextual evidence demonstrates that the structure of the housing stock in Stevenage is significantly skewed away from larger, detached homes towards smaller, terraced housing. House price and Council Tax data both point towards a lack of more expensive homes.
- 2.16 The data also shows that, in comparison to both the town's workforce and Hertfordshire as a whole, the resident population of Stevenage is less qualified and employed in lower grade jobs.
- 2.17 The level of 'self-containment' is significantly lower among higher earners.
- 2.18 It is reasonable to draw a connection between these facts. This is supported by anecdotal evidence expressed in responses to LDF consultations. Local employers have cited the difficulty of attracting higher earners to live and work in the town.
- 2.19 PPS3 encourages sustainable communities, as well as a mix of residents, which this data does not support. This provides a key incentive for Stevenage Borough Council to encourage more aspirational homes to be built.

⁷ Annual Monitoring Report (2009)

3 Defining an aspirational home

- 3.1 Stevenage Borough Council's Core Strategy Preferred Options (November 2007) proposed the following definition of an aspirational home⁸:

Agents describe more expensive flats as having two bedrooms and two bathrooms, one en-suite, a fitted kitchen with high quality fittings and allocated parking.

More expensive homes are detached with four bedrooms and two bathrooms, one en-suite, three reception rooms, cloakroom, fitted kitchen, garage, two parking spaces and rear garden with privacy. Reception rooms should be at least 20 sq.m. and bedrooms should be at least 9 sq.m. In Stevenage such homes may have fewer rooms, a smaller garden and more neighbours than a similar home elsewhere in Hertfordshire.

- 3.2 Although this provides criteria to define aspirational homes in general, it states that this will not necessarily be the same for aspirational homes within Stevenage, where different (lower) criteria may apply. It, therefore, does not provide a clear steer for developers, and does not clearly determine where the boundary lies between aspirational and market homes within the town.
- 3.3 In order to refine this definition, evidence has been used from the interviews carried out with local estate agents, the Aspirational Homes Survey and a review of existing areas of aspirational homes within the town. This provides a combination of quantitative data and qualitative opinion. It is used to provide a definition which is specific to Stevenage.
- 3.4 Interviews were carried out with two agents who are active in the upper end of the market in Stevenage:
- Paul Mather, Director, Mather Marshall Estate Agents
 - Duncan Price, Branch Manager, Putterils Estate Agents.
- 3.5 During these interviews, the agents cited various examples homes within Stevenage they felt to be aspirational: Woodfield Road, Rectory Lane, Chancellors Road and Clements Place. The review of Council Tax data identified a number of streets (including those listed above) where most or all properties were in Bands G or H. Further details are provided in Appendix 1.

Aspirational Houses

Dwelling density

- 3.6 All of the research carried out emphasises that the layout and density of sites for aspirational housing is key to their success. Many qualitative responses within the Aspirational Homes Survey and both of the estate agents said that small, unique, developments, with individually styled housing and architecture, rather than large housing estate environments, are essential criteria for aspirational homes. Duncan Price stated that 'as soon as there are a lot of the same house, they are no longer aspirational, and the market disappears'.
- 3.7 A question on dwelling densities was not directly asked either as part of the Aspirational Homes Survey or in the interviews with Estate agents as it is difficult to obtain meaningful answers without a full appreciation of what different development densities look like.
- 3.8 In this case, it is probably more appropriate to specify a minimum and maximum density, based on the examples in Appendix 1.

⁸ This particular document generally referred to "more expensive homes".

- 3.9 National guidance also needs to be considered here as the East of England Plan asks for the 'maximum density appropriate to character of area and accessibility', and PPS3 sets a national indicative minimum of 30dph. Densities below this can be acceptable, but need to be justified.
- 3.10 Taking national guidance into account, it seems appropriate to push up the minimum density requirement, from the lowest 4dph measured in Rectory Lane, to 8dph ~ the low density examples at Sacombe Mews and Woodfield Road measured 7 and 9dph respectively. This should help to ensure that valuable land is not under-developed.
- 3.11 The examples in Appendix 1 (which includes the two schemes constructed since 2001 at Nicholas Place and Sacombe Mews) were generally less than 15dph, which is deemed to be the highest level if developments are still to achieve this 'small, unique feel'.

House type and number of bedrooms

- 3.12 Both of the estate agents interviewed were definite that the houses should be detached and have 4 or more bedrooms. This is also reflected within the Aspirational Homes Survey which found that 62% of respondents wanted detached properties, and over 56% would seek 4 or more bedrooms.

Number of bathrooms

- 3.13 In the Aspirational Homes Survey, 83.4% of people surveyed expected to have at least 2 bathrooms in their property – only 18.5% of these expected more than 2.
- 3.14 Information gathered from the interviews with estate agents provided a different outcome. Paul Mather was of the opinion that aspirational homes should have at least 3 bathrooms. Duncan Price did not provide a figure for bathrooms, as such, but expected at least 1 or 2 en suites to be provided.
- 3.15 The percentage of respondents who would seek more than 2 bathrooms is not exceptionally high, therefore to require at least 2 bathrooms seems a reasonable compromise; requiring a certain number of en suites, in addition to this, may be too prescriptive. However, developers may choose to exceed the requirements and provide en-suites, where possible.

House footprint

- 3.16 Paul Mather cited a house footprint of 3,000 square ft (279 m²) as a 'decent plot size', which would meet the requirements of an aspirational home. Duncan Price did not put forward a figure for this, and it was not a question asked within the Aspirational Homes Survey.
- 3.17 The house footprints of the aspirational homes examples are illustrated in the table below. Four of the examples had a minimum footprint of between 70 and 80m². However, the majority were again in excess of this and generally 100m² or more. This would be a more appropriate standard to apply.

Figure 3: House footprint of aspirational homes examples

	Minimum footprint	Maximum footprint
Chancellors Road	75m ²	115m ²
Clements Place	120m ²	155m ²
Mathews Close	80m ²	120m ²
Rectory Lane	70m ²	200m ²
Sacombe Mews	120m ²	135m ²
Woodfield Road	80m ²	130m ²

Rear garden size

- 3.18 A 'reasonably sized' rear garden was cited by both estate agents as an essential criterion for an aspirational home though they could not be too specific in providing an ideal size or an exact figure. This was also not something which was asked within the Aspirational Homes Survey.
- 3.19 The garden sizes from the identified examples are shown below. The sample is too small to take an average, as substantially different figures (such as those in Rectory Lane) would skew the results. The results show a minimum garden size of 160m².
- 3.20 However, the majority of rear gardens provide (significantly) in excess of 200m² and this is probably a more representative standard.

Figure 4: Rear garden sizes of aspirational homes examples

	Minimum rear garden size	Maximum rear garden size
Chancellors Road	170m ²	240 m ²
Clements Place	165m ²	720 m ²
Mathews Close	160m ²	310 m ²
Rectory Lane	1400m ²	1900 m ²
Sacombe Mews	290m ²	640 m ²
Woodfield Road	400m ²	1500 m ²

Parking provision

- 3.21 The survey data suggests that, in total, 63% of respondents would seek 2 parking spaces, either off street or in the form of a double garage. In addition, a further 6% would seek 3 or more off street parking spaces.
- 3.22 In terms of the type of parking required, 68% respondents would seek a garage, with the majority of these wanting a double garage.
- 3.23 Duncan Price was of a similar opinion; that parking for at least 2 cars would be essential and that a double garage was preferable. However, he suggested that many people, when looking for aspirational homes, do require more than just two spaces.
- 3.24 Where a double garage is not to be provided, in order to retain the 'exclusivity' of the development, it may be appropriate to provide more than 2 parking spaces.
- 3.25 A minimum requirement of 2 parking spaces will be required.

Gated developments

- 3.26 There were mixed feelings about whether or not developments should be gated. Duncan Price and Paul Mather were both of the opinion that gating developments was necessary in gaining this 'executive' estate reputation which has previously been discussed. However, the Aspirational Homes Survey indicated that around half the respondents did not feel that this was required, and would rather be a part of the wider community.
- 3.27 In design terms, gated developments go against the requirements of Stevenage Borough Council's Design Guide SPD; therefore it would not be appropriate to demand these.

Set back distance

- 3.28 Although set back distances were not discussed directly with the estate agents, looking at the examples that they put forward of aspirational homes, it is clear that setting the houses back from the roadside is a common feature.

3.29 The minimum set back distances for each of the Stevenage examples have been calculated. As this was not brought up as a critical element of an aspirational home, the smallest distance of 3m will be used as a minimum requirement.

3.30 It is likely that the incorporation of other features, such as driveways to meet parking requirements, could result in this standard being exceeded by 'default'.

Locational requirements

3.31 One of the main outcomes of the interviews carried out with local estate agents was that location was the key factor in determining the success of aspirational housing. Both emphasised that aspirational housing would only be 'saleable' in certain areas of the town. Paul Mather stated 'demand is definitely location-based'.

3.32 They also both had the same opinion on where these locations were. The Old Town and Stevenage periphery were put forward as the primary locations, with specific emphasis on the northern boundary (within the area covered by the joint Stevenage and North Herts Action Plan (SNAP)) and on the very southern tip out towards Hertford (just before Hooks Cross).

3.33 Paul Mather indicated that, where sites were not available on the periphery, there was a general preference for sites in the northern parts of the town, rather than the south.

3.34 The Aspirational Homes Study reiterates this, as when respondents were asked where in Stevenage they would ideally move to, nearly 30% said the Old Town and just over 16% said new neighbourhoods either to the West or the North of the town. As figure 5 demonstrates, only 11 of the 145 respondents who answered this question, had a preference which was not one of these locations.

Figure 5: Responses to question 'Where in Stevenage would you ideally move to?'

Location	%	N ^{os.}
No preference	46.9	68
Old Town	29.0	42
New neighbourhood to the West	9.6	14
New neighbourhood to the North	6.9	10
Chells Manor	3.4	5
Great Ashby	1.4	2
Symonds Green	1.4	2
Chells	0.7	1
Longmeadow	0.7	1
Total	100.0	145

Reproduced from Aspirational Homes Survey (2007)

3.35 Both the Aspirational Homes Study and SHMA also state that the urban expansions to the West and North of Stevenage provide an ideal way to incorporate aspirational homes and provide this balanced mix of housing.

3.36 When asked about suburban or central locations, a large majority (81.7%) responded that they would like to live in a 'suburban' area. This also ties in with the findings above, as the areas which offer a 'suburban' environment are likely to be on the outskirts of Stevenage, where more land is available.

- 3.37 There is also a general desire to diversify Stevenage's housing stock. As such, the site search should not necessarily be restricted to these locations and should consider the provision of aspirational housing on other appropriate sites.

Aspirational Flats

- 3.38 The estate agents agreed that, currently, no demand exists for large, high specification flats. This was reflected within the Aspirational Homes Survey, where only a small proportion of respondents (7%) said they would be looking for a flat or penthouse as their idea of an aspirational home.
- 3.39 Having said this, recent developments such as ICE in the Old Town, do demonstrate a demand for higher-specification flats, even though this particular example would not necessarily qualify as aspirational.
- 3.40 In addition, the emerging LDF for Stevenage sets out a radical programme of growth and regeneration. As such, it is considered that there is potential future demand for aspirational flats based on:
- The transformational regeneration of the town centre, to include a significantly enhanced retail offer (in terms of both quality and quantity) and 'evening economy' uses;
 - The subsequent redevelopment of the leisure park to provide a high-intensity, mixed-use residential and office hub; and
 - Other schemes further afield such as the major regeneration of the Kings Cross / St Pancras area which will provide substantial new office development and stimulate demand for accommodation within reasonable commuting distances⁹.
- 3.41 As such, it is important that aspirational flats are not completely precluded on the basis of current perceptions and market analysis.
- 3.42 With aspirational flats, it is more difficult to prescribe standards as examples are not as readily available. However, based on the Council's aspirations and an analysis of examples in other authorities¹⁰, it is possible to provide some broad guidelines. Further details of the examples are provided in Appendix 2.

Locational criteria

- 3.43 Executive or penthouse flats are most likely to be provided on the upper floor(s) of multi-storey flatted developments. These are usually in central locations with good accessibility to public transport.
- 3.44 In Stevenage, the most likely locations for aspirational flats are considered to be the town centre, the leisure park and other edge-of-centre locations, particularly those in between the town centre and Old Town High Street.

Apartment type and size

- 3.45 Executive apartments are typically two- or three-bed. An analysis of recent flatted developments in Stevenage shows the standard market size of a two-bed flat to be in the region of 55-75m². It would be reasonable to require aspirational flats to require significantly in excess of this amount.

⁹ Peak-time trains connect Stevenage to Kings Cross in less than half an hour.

¹⁰ This includes schemes in St Albans, Chelmsford and Reading.

- 3.46 Of the examples reviewed, the executive apartments typically provided in excess of 85m² of floorspace. A number of flats provided 100m² or more of floorspace. Duplex accommodation and / or useable, private outdoor space may be provided (either as part of this floorspace requirement or in addition to it).
- 3.47 Although outside the direct control of the planning process, high-specification finishes are clearly an important feature of flats of this type.

Conclusions

- 3.48 The analysis above has used a variety of quantitative and qualitative sources. Based on the findings, criteria for aspirational homes and broad guidance for aspirational flats has been generated. These should be considered for inclusion in the Council's Core Strategy or other relevant LDF documents.
- 3.49 To be considered aspirational, homes should be:
- Built in small, high-quality groups rather than forming a large-scale estate;
 - In suitable Old Town, suburban and edge-of-town locations;
 - Low density, typically between 8 and 15 dwellings per hectare;
 - Set back from the road by at least 3m, but typically in excess of 5m
 - Detached, with at least four bedrooms and two bathrooms;
 - Sited on large plots with a built footprint generally in excess of 100m² and rear gardens of at least 200m²; and
 - Provided with at least two-off street parking places, preferably in the form of a double garage.
- 3.50 To be considered aspirational, flats should:
- Be in an accessible location with good access to the town centre and railway station;
 - Be on the upper floors of multi-storey developments;
 - Provide at least 85m² of floorspace and 100m² or greater if this is considered appropriate;
 - Consider the provision of private outdoor space; and
 - Be internally finished to a high specification.
- 3.51 These are generally considered to be minimum criteria. In appropriate circumstances it may be reasonable to expect (or require) developments to provide homes that exceed the standards that have been suggested.

4 Market demand and land supply for aspirational housing

- 4.1 Having established the criteria for aspirational homes, it is important to determine whether these requirements are deliverable in terms of market demand, dwelling densities and national policy guidance.

Market perception of demand

- 4.2 The SHMA states that even though future demographics indicate that a significant proportion of smaller units will be required, there is also “a real need to deliver a high proportion of larger properties, in high quality environments”.
- 4.3 Both of the estate agents were definite in saying that there is a, currently unmet, demand for aspirational homes. Duncan Price suggested that the market for aspirational homes had fallen by less than the general market in the current economic climate. Both estate agents agreed that when aspirational homes in Stevenage come onto the market, because of the limited choices available there is always a lot of interest and high offers are generally received for these.
- 4.4 The East of England Plan requires 16,000 new homes to be built in an around Stevenage between 2001 and 2021. Both estate agents were asked what proportion of these they thought should be aspirational. Paul Mather was of the opinion that it should be around 100-200 homes, where as Duncan Price gave a figure of 2-3,000. These are obviously significantly different estimates. This difference in opinion could be caused because Putterills deals with a higher proportion of the existing aspirational homes market within Stevenage, and so may perceive the market to be higher than Mather Marshall, although this is purely speculative.
- 4.5 The minimum (100 homes) figure put forward, represents just 0.6% of the 16,000 housing figure, where as the maximum figure of 3,000 homes represents 18.8% of the total.
- 4.6 The Aspirational Homes Survey also provides an indication of the possible market for aspirational homes. 76% of those questioned said the image of Stevenage would influence their decision about living there while 62% cited improvements to the town centre as a factor that would encourage them to live in the town.
- 4.7 It is important to note that this survey was restricted to people who work in the town and earn more than £40,000 per year. Therefore the figures quoted only relate to higher earners and not the proportion of the whole population.
- 4.8 Aspirational housing will be needed to support the overall improvement of the town and will be essential for attracting current commuters to reside in Stevenage.

Land take and density

- 4.9 Government guidance is clear that the efficient use of land is a key consideration and sets a national indicative minimum to achieve thirty dwellings per hectare of land (dph)¹¹. The East of England Plan requires new development to be delivered at the highest possible density commensurate with considerations of design and accessibility.
- 4.10 There may be a small number of exceptions where it is appropriate to permit lower density development. However, in the main, any policy requirements relating to aspirational homes should ensure that sites can still be developed at an overall density of (at least) 30dph.

¹¹ Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3)

- 4.11 It is also important that there is not a severe disparity between the densities of aspirational and non-aspirational homes as this would be unlikely to work well in design terms.
- 4.12 This is not a significant issue in relation to aspirational flats. Flatted schemes, particularly in central locations, are typically built well above minimum densities¹². A slight reduction in the number of units that might result from providing aspirational flats would not significantly affect this.
- 4.13 It would also be difficult to prescribe a set percentage target for aspirational flats. This is because the proportion of aspirational flats that can be achieved will largely be determined by the proposed building height(s) and footprint(s).
- 4.14 A worked example is included in Appendix 2 for illustrative purposes. This shows that providing aspirational flats on the top floor of a block would provide 6-15% aspirational housing and reduce the overall yield by between 4% and 11% dependant on building height.
- 4.15 It should be borne in mind that large-scale flatted developments will consist of a number of blocks of different footprints and heights. In these instances, it might not be appropriate or desirable to seek aspirational homes in all blocks. As such, the impact on overall yield is not likely to be significant while estimates of aspirational homes should be based on, or even slightly below, the lower end of the percentage range identified above.
- 4.16 For sites where houses are to be provided, density is an important consideration. A number of theoretical scenarios have been tested to see what density ranges and percentages of aspirational homes can be achieved, without requiring an excessive density on the remainder of the site. These are based on the density requirements set in Section 3 and summarised in the tables below.

Figure 6: Average non-aspirational housing density required to achieve 30dph across a site as a whole

		% Aspirational housing			
		5	10	15	20
Density of aspirational homes	8	35	43	58	96
	10	34	39	46	60
	12	33	36	41	48
	15	32	34	36	40

Figure 7: Average non-aspirational housing density required to achieve 35dph across a site as a whole

		% Aspirational housing			
		5	10	15	20
Density of aspirational homes	8	43	56	87	>100
	10	40	48	63	93
	12	38	45	53	65
	15	38	41	46	52

¹² Stevenage Borough Council have permitted a number of flatted schemes in excess of 100dph. The highest intensity developments have been at or above 250dph.

Figure 8: Average non-aspirational housing density required to achieve 40dph across a site as a whole

		% Aspirational housing			
		5	10	15	20
Density of aspirational homes	8	51	72	>100	n/a
	10	48	60	85	>100
	12	46	54	68	96
	15	44	49	57	69

- 4.17 As would be expected, the density required on the non-aspirational element of a site increases as the aspirational proportion increases and the aspirational density decreases. Clearly some of the examples above would not be acceptable in design terms ~ 10% provision of aspirational housing at 8dph would require the remainder of a site to be developed at 72dph to achieve an overall density of 40dph.
- 4.18 However, as a general rule, the tables suggest that a proportion of aspirational housing can be achieved at the densities set in Section 3 without unduly compromising densities on the remainder of a site. They show that 10% aspirational housing can be achieved in most instances. In some cases 15% or even 20% aspirational housing could be achieved without an adverse effect on densities.
- 4.19 However, these are purely mathematical calculations of density. It is important to determine whether these would work 'on the ground'. The table on the following page applies a 10% aspirational housing requirement to a variety of site sizes to determine whether this would be appropriate.
- 4.20 It confirms that, on the majority of sites, 10% of dwellings could be aspirational homes without compromising the densities and styles that would be required on the rest of the site. This figure should be used as a starting point for negotiation recognising that:
- On the largest sites and in new neighbourhoods, this would require a significant number of aspirational homes. This could result in providing homes that the market cannot support and / or large areas of aspirational homes, contrary to the criteria set in Section 3. A lower proportion of aspirational homes should be acceptable in these instances;
 - On some, mainly smaller, sites it may be appropriate to seek a higher proportion to create viable numbers of aspirational homes. On the smallest sites, 100% provision could be sought as an exception to national policy guidelines on density where they would complement the prevailing character, diversify existing stock or lead to the best solution for the site.

Potential development sites

- 4.21 Planning policies for Stevenage are being replaced in a new set of plans called the Local Development Framework (LDF). The Core Strategy is the most important plan in the LDF as it sets out the vision and objectives for the future development of Stevenage, and will show how the housing targets within the East of England Plan will be met.

Site size (hectares)	0.25	0.5	0.75	1	2	5	10	50	100	150
Dwellings required to meet 30dph minimum	8	15	23	30	60	150	300	1500	3000	4500
Density of aspirational (dph)	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
<i>% aspirational</i>	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%
<i>No aspirational</i>	1	2	2	3	6	15	30	150	300	450
<i>No market</i>	7	13	20	27	54	135	270	1350	2700	4050
<i>density of other housing (dph)</i>	56	52	42	43	43	43	43	43	43	43
Density of aspirational (dph)	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
<i>% aspirational</i>	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%
<i>No aspirational</i>	1	2	2	3	6	15	30	150	300	450
<i>No market</i>	7	13	20	27	54	135	270	1350	2700	4050
<i>density of other housing (dph)</i>	42	39	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
Density of aspirational (dph)	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
<i>% aspirational</i>	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%
<i>No aspirational</i>	1	2	2	3	6	15	30	150	300	450
<i>No market</i>	7	13	20	27	54	135	270	1350	2700	4050
<i>density of other housing (dph)</i>	38	35	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34
Suggested % of aspirational homes	100%		10%-20%					5-10%		
Justification	<p>Providing aspirational homes at 8dph would push densities too high on the smallest sites.</p> <p>In all of these examples, the number of aspirational homes may be too small, creating pairs or one-off homes in between market housing. Using the whole site for aspirational homes as an exception to normal policy requirements would be more appropriate.</p>		<p>A 10% requirement on sites of this size would generally provide a reasonable number of aspirational homes without significantly raising market densities. Indeed, if aspirational housing is delivered at 12dph or 15dph a higher proportion could be easily achieved. This might be particularly appropriate for sites in the 0.75-1ha range to create a viable enclave of aspirational housing within a development site.</p>					<p>Providing 10% aspirational homes on larger sites is easily achievable. However, this would result in significant numbers of aspirational homes in one location. This could flood the market, and would not supply 'small, exclusive estates'. If too many homes are provided, there is a danger of losing the exclusivity and individuality, which are essential features of an aspirational home.</p> <p>Asking for a lower percentage would be more appropriate in these cases.</p>		

Figure 9: Testing aspirational housing requirements against site size

- 4.22 Five additional plans are being produced which set out detailed policies and land allocations for specific areas in and around Stevenage;
- Site Specific Policies (SSP)
 - Old Town Area Action Plan (OTAAP)
 - Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP)
 - Gunnels Wood Area Action Plan (GWAAP)
 - Stevenage and North Herts Area Action Plan (SNAP)
- 4.23 Between them, these are required to allocate enough sites to meet the housing targets set out in the East of England Plan. In the period 2001 to 2021:
- 6,400 new homes are required within the Stevenage Borough boundary; and
 - A further 9,600 homes are required to the west and north of Stevenage on land within North Hertfordshire District.
- 4.24 The East of England Plan also sets out how housing targets should be calculated for the period after 2021. Using this advice, a total of 20,800 new homes will need to be planned for in and around Stevenage between 2001 and 2026.
- 4.25 To help identify sites that might be used to meet these requirements, Stevenage Borough Council and North Hertfordshire District Council have carried out a joint Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). This is updated annually.
- 4.26 The results have been used to inform the distribution of new homes within Stevenage Borough and identify housing allocations in pre-submission plans¹³. Sites identified for allocation in the Site Specific Policies DPD and the Old Town Area Action Plan and potential sites in the town centre and SNAP area have been assessed to determine whether or not they would be suitable for aspirational housing. This has included consideration against the locational criteria set out in Section 3 of this document along with further sites specifically identified by the estate agents.
- 4.27 The following pages detail the suitable sites, along with a brief explanation as to what it is that makes them appropriate locations for aspirational housing.

¹³ Housing background paper, 2010

Ferrier Road

SHLAA ref: 003

- On Stevenage periphery;
- Opportunity to provide outlook over Green Belt land / woodland / park;
- Reasonably sized site (>1ha) to provide a mix of housing.



Town centre

SHLAA ref: 121

- Central, accessible location;
- Aspirations for significant regeneration;
- Opportunity to provide aspirational flats in high-density development.



Leisure park

SHLAA ref: 125

- Central, accessible location;
- Adjacent to train station;
- Aspirations for high-density, mixed-use redevelopment;
- Opportunity to provide aspirational flats.



Park Place

SHLAA ref: 126

- Central, accessible location;
- Aspirations for significant regeneration of adjacent town centre;
- Opportunity to provide aspirational flats.



Broad Hall Centre and adjacent amenity land

SHLAA ref: 201

- Within Conservation Area;
- Popular area adjacent to Shephall Green;
- Cited as a good location by one of the estate agents;
- Large, detached houses in the surrounding area including listed buildings;
- Reasonably sized site (>1ha) to provide a mix of housing.



Ambulance and Fire Station

SHLAA ref: 216

- Central, accessible location;
- Aspirations for significant regeneration of adjacent town centre;
- Opportunity to provide aspirational flats.



Longfield Fire and Rescue Centre

SHLAA ref: 217

- Close proximity to Old Town area;
- Reasonably sized site (>2ha) to provide a mix of housing.



Collenswood School site

SHLAA ref: 303

- Adjacent to more recent development at Poplars;
- Opportunity to provide outlook over adjacent playing fields;
- Reasonably sized site (>2ha) to provide a mix of housing.



Lonsdale School site

SHLAA ref: 304

- Opportunity to provide outlook over adjacent playing fields or park;
- Reasonably sized site (>2ha) to provide a mix of housing;
- Opportunity to diversify housing stock in this area of town.



Thomas Alleyne School site

SHLAA ref: 307

- Identified as a very good location by one of the estate agents;
- Old Town location, within Conservation Area;
- Adjacent to large houses at Olde Swann Court which sell well on the open market;
- Bordered by protected Ancient Lane;
- Listed properties on site would provide basis for individually styled properties



Saffron Ground

SHLAA ref: 408

- Accessible location between town centre and Old Town;
- Aspirations for significant regeneration of adjacent town centre;
- Other medium- to high-rise developments in the vicinity;
- Opportunity to provide aspirational flats.



Antelope House

SHLAA ref: 410

- Accessible Old Town location;
- Other new, medium- to high-rise developments in the vicinity;
- Opportunity to provide aspirational flats.



Land at Hertford Road

SHLAA ref: 601

- Identified as a suitable site by one of the estate agents;
- Close to the Stevenage periphery;
- Suburban feel to the neighbourhood;
- Outlook over open space and brook;
- Reasonably sized site (>2ha) to provide a mix of housing



Land at Edmonds Drive

SHLAA ref: 602

- On the Stevenage periphery;
- Outlook over Green Belt land;
- Identified by one estate agent as a good location;
- Large detached properties adjacent to site in East Herts District;
- Reasonably sized site (>3ha) to provide a mix of housing



Land south of A602

SHLAA ref: 604

- Identified as an excellent site by estate agents;
- On the Stevenage periphery;
- Large site (around 20ha) meaning a mix of housing can be provided.



Land west of Bragbury Lane

SHLAA ref: 820

- On the Stevenage periphery;
- Adjacent to large homes at Bragbury End
- Small site (<0.5ha) meaning 100% provision as an exception to density guidelines would be most appropriate.



- 4.28 In addition to the sites that have been identified in this document, the SHLAA also considers land and sites that could be used to deliver the new neighbourhoods to the north and west of Stevenage that are required by the East of England Plan. These will be planned jointly by Stevenage Borough Council and North Hertfordshire District Council through the Stevenage and North Herts Action Plan (SNAP).
- 4.29 The SNAP area has been generally identified as a good location to provide aspirational housing by the estate agents, the SHMA and the aspirational homes survey. As such, most of the sites in this area that have been identified as potential development sites in the SHLAA are considered to be suitable locations to accommodate aspirational homes¹⁴. These sites are identified in the table below.

Figure 10: Potential aspirational housing sites in SNAP

Site Ref	Site location
SNAP 2	Land North East of Stevenage 2
SNAP 5	Land North East of Stevenage 5
SNAP 6	NES3
SNAP 7	Land North of Stevenage
SNAP 9	Land West of Stevenage
SNAP 14	Land at Chesfield Park

Windfall sites

- 4.30 It is difficult to provide a set of criteria for windfall sites where aspirational housing should be required or would be acceptable, as it will be heavily dependent upon individual site characteristics, and the general feel of the area. However, from the evidence found within this report, it is likely that suitable sites will meet at least one of the following criteria;
- Located in the Old Town;
 - Located on the periphery of the town or in other areas where a suburban / edge of town 'feel' can be achieved (e.g. adjacent to open spaces);
 - Located within a Conservation Area;
 - Be in an area where aspirational homes already exist; or
 - Be in close proximity to listed buildings, or involve the conversion of a listed building.
- 4.31 Some broad locations where, subject to all other relevant policy considerations, aspirational homes could be considered suitable are shown on the map on the following page.

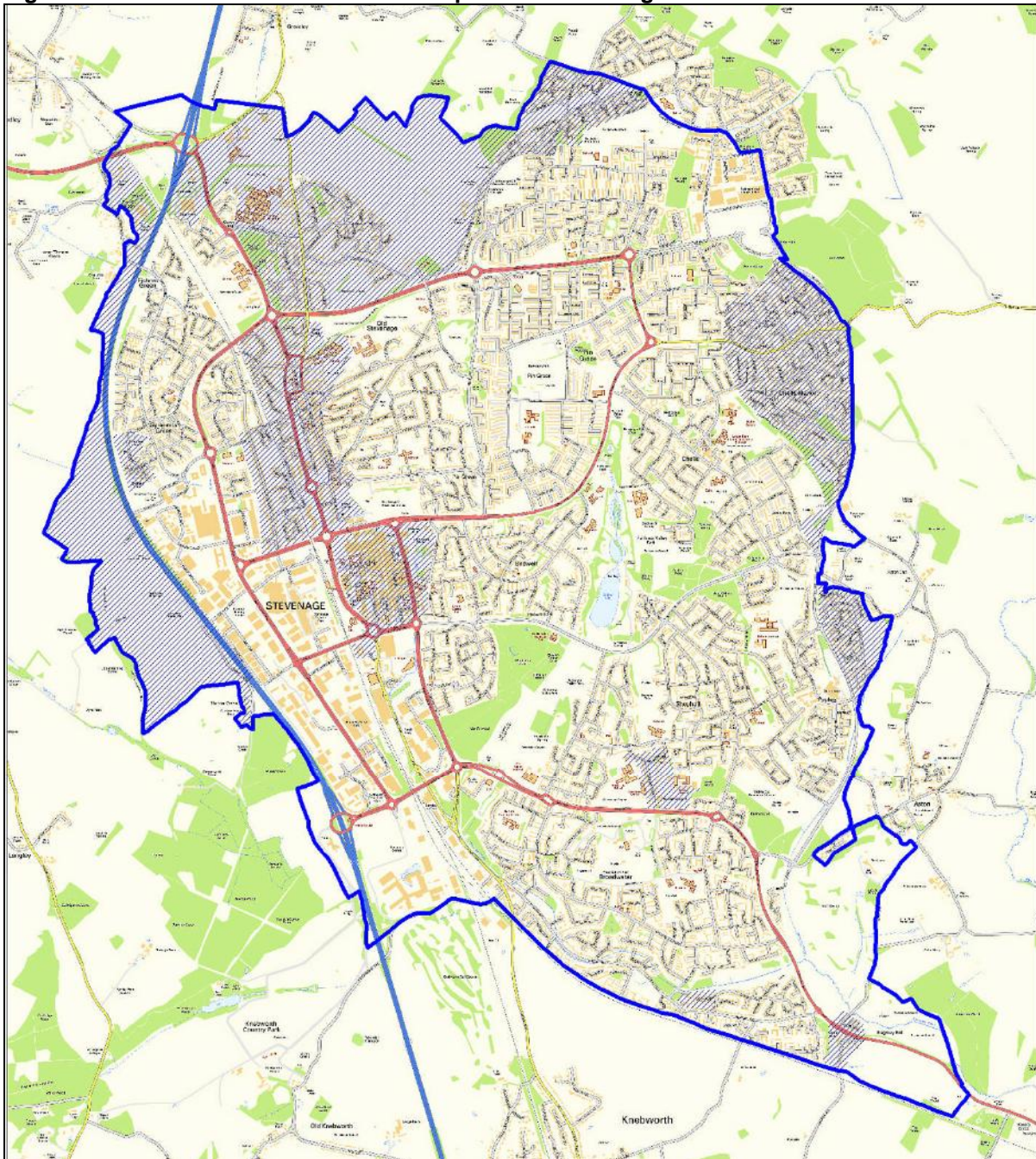
Conclusions

- 4.32 This section has assessed the practicality of delivering aspirational homes on development sites. It demonstrates that there is a demand for aspirational housing in Stevenage, as evidenced by the interviews with estate agents and, to a lesser extent, the findings of the aspirational homes survey.
- 4.33 The assessment of land take and density shows that the 8-15 dwelling per hectare range suggested as a key criteria in Section 3 can be delivered without compromising national policy guidance on the efficient use of land for housing development.
- 4.34 It also determines that a phased, or tiered approach to aspirational housing would be most appropriate. 10% provision is likely to be appropriate on most sites, recognising that

¹⁴ Sites SNAP 8, SNAP12 and SNAP 13 have been excluded to prevent an overestimate. Our housing background paper identifies that these sites may not be allocated for housing.

- On the largest sites and in new neighbourhoods, this would require a significant number of aspirational homes to be provided in the same location. This could result in the provision of homes that the market cannot support. It would also run against the criteria set in Section 3. A lower proportion of homes, in the region of 5%, should be sought in these instances;
- On some, mainly smaller, sites it may be appropriate to permit up to 100% aspirational homes. These should be allowed as an exception to national policy guidelines where they would complement the prevailing character, diversify existing stock or lead to the best solution for the site; and
- In accessible locations, where purely flatted developments are proposed, the proportion of aspirational homes that can be achieved will largely be determined by the proposed building height(s) and footprint(s).

Figure 11: Broad locations for windfall aspirational housing



5 Quantifying the amount of aspirational housing that can be achieved

- 5.1 The final stage of this study is to provide an estimate of the overall capacity for aspirational housing. This can be used to inform targets and / or policy requirements in LDF documents. Estimates have been derived from the findings of Sections 3 and 4 of this study.
- 5.2 The table on the following page details the town sites identified in Section 4. It sets an appropriate density and aspirational housing target for the whole site. From this an estimate of aspirational yield is produced.
- 5.3 Using this method it is estimated that **168** aspirational units could be provided from sites in and around Stevenage (excluding the SNAP area).
- 5.4 For sites in the SNAP area, an aspirational housing target of 5% has been used across all sites. This reflects the (generally) larger size of sites in this area and the criteria and advice in Sections 3 and 4.
- 5.5 As a result, the site densities and yields in the SHLAA have been carried forwards. This reflects the findings of Figures 8-10 which demonstrate the 5% provision would only require a slight increase in densities on the remainder of the site.
- 5.6 In reality, it may be preferable (either on the part of the local planning authorities or developers) to group or concentrate aspirational homes in particular locations, particularly where more than one of the identified land parcels forms a single development. However, the same overall level of provision should be sought.
- 5.7 An additional 'unallocated' yield has been attributed to the SNAP area. The SHLAA identifies that it has not identified enough specific sites in the SNAP area to meet the housing targets for new neighbourhoods in North Hertfordshire to 2026. The 'unallocated' yield represents the shortfall and is included to prevent an underestimate.
- 5.8 This information is summarised in the table below. It shows a potential yield of **733** aspirational units from the SNAP area. Again, this is likely to be at the very top end of what is achievable.

Figure 12: Potential aspirational housing sites in SNAP

SHLAA ref	Site location	Yield	% Aspirational	Number aspirational
SNAP 2	Land North East of Stevenage 2	2,575	5%	129
SNAP 5	Land North East of Stevenage 5	475	5%	24
SNAP 6	NES3	300	5%	15
SNAP 7	Land North of Stevenage	3,000	5%	150
SNAP 9	Land West of Stevenage	5,000	5%	250
SNAP 14	Land at Chesfield Park	210	5%	11
-	Unallocated yield	3,083	5%	154
			Total	733

* SHLAA shortfall of 2,683 units plus an additional 400 units as sites SNAP 8, SNAP 12 and SNAP 13 have been excluded. The anticipated yield from these sites would need to be met elsewhere.

Figure 13: Estimates of aspirational housing capacity – non-SNAP sites

SHLAA ref	Site	Suggested site density	Yield	% Aspirational	Number aspirational	Conformity with SHLAA / notes
003	Ferrier Road	35dph	40	10%	4	The SHLAA estimated yield using a density of 42dph. 10% aspirational provision at 12-15dph would mean the remainder of the site being developed at around this density.
121	Town centre	-	850	4%	34	The current town centre application is unlikely to be proceeded with. This figure is considered a realistic estimate of residential capacity.
125	Leisure park	>150dph	350	4%	14	Yield and density as per SHLAA.
126	Park Place	250dph	135	-	0	Negotiations are ongoing for a revised application. Securing aspirational flats on this site is considered unlikely given the advanced stage this site is at.
201	Broad Hall Centre and adjoining land	30dph	32	10%	3	The SHLAA estimated yield using a density of 35dph. 10% aspirational provision at 12-15dph would mean the remainder of the site being developed at around this density.
216	Ambulance and fire station	106dph	44	4%	2	Yield and density as per SHLAA.
217	Longfield Fire & Rescue	40dph	107	10%	11	The SHLAA estimated yield using a density of 52dph. 10% aspirational provision at 12-15dph would mean the remainder of the site being developed at around this density.
303	Collenswood School	35dph	89	10%	9	The SHLAA estimated yield using a density of 40dph. 10% aspirational provision at 15dph would mean the remainder of the site being developed at around this density.
304	Lonsdale School	40dph	92	10%	9	The SHLAA estimated yield using a density of 52dph. 10% aspirational provision at 12-15dph would mean the remainder of the site being developed at around this density.
307	Thomas Alleyne School	25dph	70	15%	11	Yield and density as per SHLAA. A higher proportion of aspirational housing could be sought on this site, reflecting its prime location in the Old Town.
408	Saffron Ground	189dph	89	4%	4	Yield and density as per SHLAA.
410	Antelope House	189dph	121	4%	5	Yield and density as per SHLAA.

SHLAA ref	Site	Suggested site density	Yield	% Aspirational	Number aspirational	Conformity with SHLAA / notes
601	Hertford Road	35dph	80*	10%	8	The SHLAA estimated yield using a density of 42dph. 10% aspirational provision at 12-15dph would mean the remainder of the site being developed at around this density.
602	Edmonds Drive	30dph	89*	10%	9	The SHLAA estimated yield using a density of 35dph. 10% aspirational provision at 12-15dph would mean the remainder of the site being developed at around this density.
604	Land south of A602	30dph	400	10%	40	The SHLAA estimated yield using a density of 30dph. This assumed the provision of aspirational housing. A range of aspirational housing types could be provided without requiring densities in excess of 40dph on the remainder of the site.
820	Land west of Bragbury Lane	15dph	5	100%	5	The SHLAA estimated 13 units could be provided. However, this is a small site so 100% provision would be appropriate.
Total					168	

* updated information has allowed the amount of land likely to be available for housing development to be calculated more accurately.

- 5.9 The final source of aspirational housing is from windfall development. This is development on sites that have not been specifically identified or allocated for housing.
- 5.10 **12** net additional aspirational housing units have been built on windfall sites since the start of the plan period in 2001. These were on two schemes at Bragbury House (6 net additional units, completed 2006/07) and Nicholas Place (6 net additional units, completed 2007/08)
- 5.11 This represents only a very small proportion of all housing completions (less than 1%). As a result, no specific additional allowance has been made in these calculations. However, in accordance with the broad locations identified in Section 4, this is not to say that no windfall aspirational housing schemes will occur.

Conclusions

- 5.12 Based on the criteria established in Section 3 and the site and density findings in Section 4, a potential aspirational housing capacity of **913** units has been identified in and around Stevenage over the period 2001-2026. This consists of:
- Non-SNAP sites: 168 units
 - SNAP sites: 733 units
 - Windfall sites 12 units
- 5.13 Of the 913 units, it is estimated that 58 would be flats with the remaining 855 houses.
- 5.14 If fully realised, this would represent just under 4.5% of the 20,800 new homes that must be provided between 2001 and 2026 in Stevenage Borough and on land surrounding the town in North Hertfordshire District.
- 5.15 However, this is based on all sites achieving the full 'potential' for aspirational homes identified in this paper. It is recognised that other constraints or planning demands may make this unachievable on some sites.
- 5.16 As such, an indicative target to make between 3.5% and 4% of total dwelling provision¹⁵ is considered more realistic. This would equate to between **728** and **832** aspirational homes being provided in the wider Stevenage area.
- 5.17 Assuming that new aspirational houses fell within Council Tax bands G or H this would help to increase the proportion of homes in these bandings. It would also help to address the other socio-economic factors identified in Section 2 by attracting a higher proportion of senior staff to live and work in the area.

¹⁵ That is, including development around Stevenage Borough in neighbouring North Hertfordshire District.

Appendix 1:

Existing examples of Aspirational Housing in Stevenage

Chancellor's Road

Sample area: 0.39 hectares

Number of homes: 6

Density (approx): 15 dph

House types: Detached

Building footprint: 75-115 m²

Rear garden: 170-240m²

Minimum rear garden depth: 12m

Setback: 5-10m from road

Council Tax: Band G



Clements Place

Area: 0.5 hectares

Number of homes: 7

Density: (approx): 14dph

House types: Detached

Building Footprint: 120 – 155m²

Rear Garden: 165 – 720m²

Minimum rear garden depth: 10.5m

Setback: 3 -15m from road

Council tax band: Band G



Mathews Close

Area: 0.84 hectares

Number of homes: 15

Density: (approx): 18dph

House types: Detached

Building Footprint: 80-120m²

Rear Garden: 160-310 m²

Minimum rear garden depth: 10m

Setback: 3-15m from road

Council tax band: Band G



Rectory Lane

Sample area: 1.41 hectares

Number of homes: 6

Density (approx): 4 dph

House types: Detached in substantial plots

Building footprint: 70-200m²

Rear garden: 1400-1900m²

Minimum rear garden depth: 45m

Setback: 10-15m from road

Council Tax: Band F / Band G



Sacombe Mews (Bragbury House)

Area: 0.65 hectares

Number of homes: 6

Density: (approx): 9dph

House types: Detached

Building Footprint: 120 – 135m²

Rear Garden: 290-640 m²

Minimum rear garden depth: 14m

Setback: 5-8m from road

Council tax band: Band G



Woodfield Road

Sample area: 1.54 hectares

Number of homes: 11

Density (approx): 7 dph

House types: Detached in substantial plots

Building footprint: 80-130m²

Rear garden: 400-1500m²

Minimum rear garden depth: 17m

Setback: 8-13m from road

Council Tax: Band F / Band G



Appendix 2

Examples of aspirational flats

St Albans City Station

- Large development adjacent to station
- 353 units in total
- 16 private units with a floor area in excess of 85m²
- 4 private units with a floor area in excess of 100m²



Marconi Plaza / Kings Tower, Chelmsford

- Development containing new bus station, shops and luxury apartments
- Completed 2007
- Includes duplex / penthouse accommodation on the upper floors



© Trevor Wright

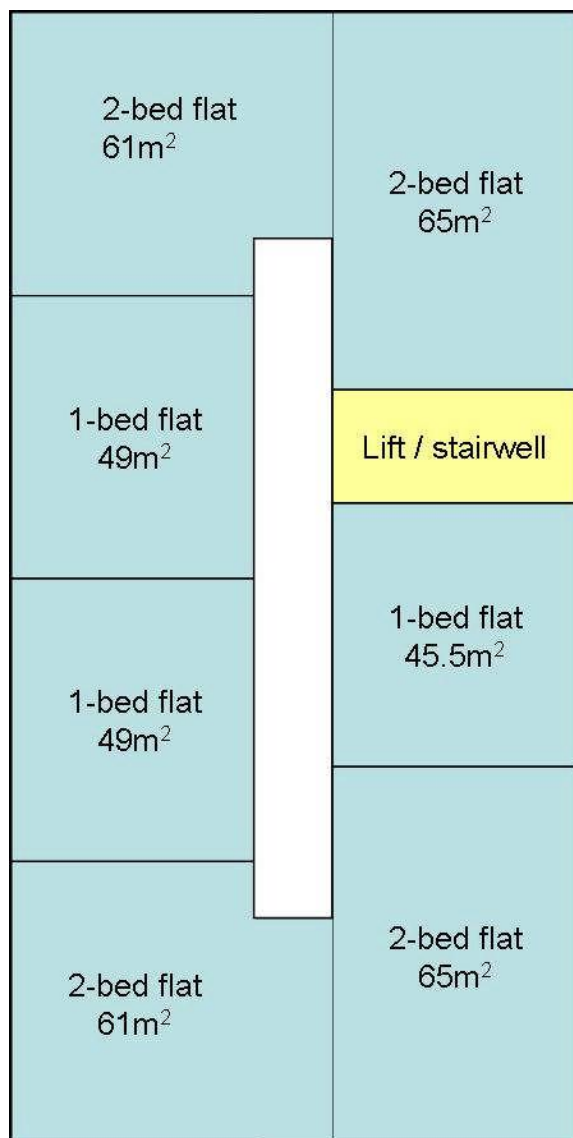
20 Kennet Street, Reading

- Development containing apartments with commercial uses at ground floor
- Includes units with floor area in excess of 95m² on top floor.

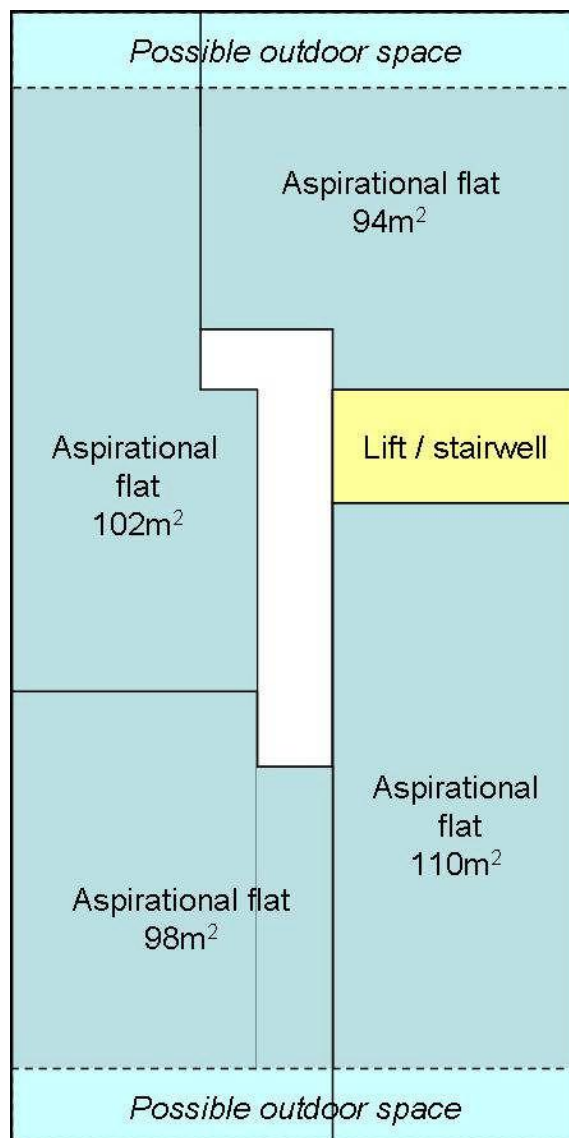


Worked example of aspirational flat provision

The indicative floorplans below show how aspirational flats might be provided. The table beneath demonstrates the impact of providing aspirational flats in terms of unit numbers. Clearly, this is only one layout out of many possible designs and aspirational flat provision will need to be considered on a site-by-site basis. However, the figures provide a useful indication of what might be achievable to inform estimates of overall aspirational supply.



Indicative floor layout – lower floors



Indicative floor layout – top floor

1:200

Storeys	Potential Units (with no aspirational flats)	Potential Units (with aspirational flats)	No of aspirational flats	% aspirational	Reduction in units with aspirational
4	27	24	4	15%	-11%
5	34	31	4	12%	-9%
6	41	38	4	10%	-7%
7	48	45	4	8%	-6%
8	55	52	4	7%	-5%
9	62	59	4	6%	-5%
10	69	66	4	6%	-4%

No of units assumes one less unit being provided on the ground floor to accommodate entrance / foyer area