

Affordable Housing Statement Halsnead Farm, Whiston

1.0 Introduction

This Affordable Housing Statement is submitted in support of a full planning application for residential development at Halsnead Farm, Whiston (“the Site”). The application is submitted jointly by Starship Build Ltd and Onward Homes Ltd, with Onward acting as the Registered Provider (RP).

The proposed development comprises:

“Demolition of existing buildings and construction of up to 90 homes, creation of access from Fox’s Bank Lane, construction of internal roads and footways, landscaping, works to trees and associated works”

The scheme will deliver 100% affordable housing, contributing significantly to local housing need.

This presents an exciting opportunity to promote and enable Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) delivery across Knowsley and the wider Liverpool City Region, while also helping to build local capability in delivering higher-performing homes.

In doing so, we can help achieve better outcomes for our communities — improving financial resilience, health, and overall well-being.

As part of this proposal, Starship would highlight that our MMC Category 2 (Panellised) construction technology offers the following inherent benefits:

- Low embodied carbon
- Low operational energy use and carbon emissions
- EPC A for both Energy and Environmental factors (100+ score)
- Future Homes Standard compliant
- Upgradeable to Zero Bills accreditation
- Supports local skills and delivery capability, driving improved economic outcomes for Knowsley and the wider region

Faster, cleaner, and quieter build periods, reducing disruption to roads and neighbouring communities

2.0 Planning Policy Context

The affordable housing strategy has been informed by:

- Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy (2016)
- Knowsley Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024)

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

NPPF emphasises the importance of delivering a sufficient supply of homes, including

affordable housing for different groups. The Framework supports on-site provision and mixed communities, with flexibility to adapt to local circumstances.

Local Plan

Policy CS15 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy sets out the requirement for affordable housing on qualifying sites, typically at 25%. The policy encourages negotiation with developers and RPs to secure provision that meets local needs. The Halsnead Farm scheme exceeds this policy requirement by delivering 100% affordable housing.

Emerging policies continue to support affordable housing delivery, with emphasis on tenure diversity, accessibility, and sustainability. The Council may secure affordable housing via planning conditions or Section 106 agreements, depending on site-specific factors. It is a requirement of the applicant that the affordable housing requirement to this application is managed by way of a condition, not a S106; this is in order that they can meet Homes England funding criteria. Failing to meet this requirement might threaten the viability of the development.

3.0 Proposed Affordable Housing Provision

Tenure and Unit Mix

Table 1: Proposed Tenure & Unit Mix

Type	Number		Size	NDSS		Beds	Persons
A	14	Detached	121	121	100.00%	4	7
B1	2	Semi	79	84	94.05%	2	4
B2	1	Detached	79	84	94.05%	2	4
C	2	Semi	93	93	100.00%	3	5
D	8	Detached	84	84	100.00%	3	4
E	3	Semi	74	70	105.71%	2	3
F	6	Semi	72	70	102.86%	2	3
G	3	Terrace	72	70	102.86%	2	3
H	8	Semi	104	93	111.83%	3	5
I	2	Semi	84	84	100.00%	3	4
J	2	Semi	79	70	112.86%	2	3
1b2p	7	Flat	50	50	100.00%	1	2
1b2p OFD1 GF	1	Flat	51	50	102.00%	1	2
1b2p OFD1 FF/SF	2	Flat	53	50	106.00%	1	2
1b2p OFD 2 FF	2	Flat	60	50	120.00%	1	2
1b2p OFD 3 GF	6	Flat	50	50	100.00%	1	2
1b2p OFD 3 FF	8	Flat	53	50	106.00%	1	2
1b2p M43	3	Flat	61	50	122.00%	1	2
1b2p M43 OFD2	2	Flat	65	50	130.00%	1	2
1b2p M43 OFD	2	Flat	60	50	120.00%	1	2
2b3p	4	Flat	61	61	100.00%	2	3

The development will deliver 88 affordable homes across three tenures:

- Social Rent
- Rent to Buy
- Shared Ownership

All homes will:

- Meet Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS)
- Achieve EPC A ratings
- Comply with at least M4(2) accessibility standards and M4(3) in some cases.

The scheme includes a mix of typologies including courtyard and mews-style homes, designed to foster community interaction and support placemaking. A proportion of homes will be fully wheelchair accessible (M4(3)), with the remainder meeting enhanced accessibility standards (M4(2)).

The scheme is being designed to meet “zero bills” standards, through a partnership with Octopus Energy, meaning that residents will not incur energy costs for heating, hot water, or electricity under normal usage conditions. This is achieved through a combination of high-performance building fabric, air source heat pumps, solar PV arrays, and smart energy management systems. The zero-bills approach aligns with national sustainability goals and supports residents by reducing cost-of-living pressures. It also contributes to the long-term affordability and environmental performance of the development, reinforcing its suitability for Homes England funding and its alignment with Knowsley Council’s climate and housing strategies.

Tenure Justification and Policy Alignment

The proposed tenure mix includes Social Rent, Rent to Buy, and Shared Ownership. While this mix does not fully align with current policy expectations, it reflects emerging guidance and local housing need.

Recent announcements from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), including the Pennycook statement, indicate a shift toward 60% Social Rent as a fixed expectation for new affordable housing schemes. The Halsnead Farm proposal is being reviewed in light of this guidance, and the final tenure split will be agreed with Knowsley Council.

Onward’s housing register data supports the inclusion of a significant proportion of Social Rent homes, particularly larger family units. Demand for 4-bedroom homes is high, and the scheme may be adapted to include these subject to viability.

In response to feedback received during the meeting with Knowsley Council on 12th September, it was confirmed that the proposed tenure mix could be effectively managed through a robust Local Lettings Policy. This policy will include measures to limit the number of car-less occupants, thereby supporting the overall sustainability and accessibility objectives of the scheme. By ensuring that households with appropriate transport needs are prioritised, the development can better integrate with existing infrastructure and reduce potential pressure on local services. This approach complements the scheme’s design principles, which promote walkability, access to public transport, and low-carbon living, and will be developed in close collaboration with the Council’s housing and planning teams.

4.0 Delivery Strategy

Registered Provider Partnership

The affordable housing will be delivered in partnership with Onward Homes, who will acquire the freehold interest in the site and enter into a Design and Build contract with the developer. Onward will retain ownership and management responsibility for all affordable homes.

Funding and Planning Mechanism

The scheme is being part-funded by Homes England. To comply with funding requirements, the affordable housing provision will be secured via a planning condition, rather than a Section 106 agreement.

Proposed Planning Condition

“The affordable housing provision shall be provided in accordance with the approved Affordable Housing Statement, dated September 2025. This condition shall cease to apply to any dwelling in respect of which full equity has been acquired or a statutory right to buy has been exercised.” This approach ensures clarity, flexibility, and compliance with funding requirements.

5.0 Management and Affordability

Lettings and Sales

Shared Ownership units will be sold with initial equity shares between 10–75%, with staircasing permitted to 100%. This is a requirement of Homes England funding.

Rent to Buy units will be let at 80% of market rent to allow tenants to transition to ownership over time.

Lettings Management and Tenant Selection

Onward Homes will take full responsibility for the allocation and management of all affordable homes. Lettings will be administered in line with Onward’s standard policies, with consideration given to a Local Lettings Policy developed in collaboration with Knowsley Council.

This policy will aim to ensure a balanced and sustainable community, taking into account factors such as household composition, employment status, and car ownership. Priority may be given to households with demonstrable local connections or specific housing needs.

Onward will work closely with the Council’s housing team to ensure the lettings approach aligns with local priorities and addresses concerns raised during pre-application discussions.

6.0 Mortgagee Exemptions

The affordable housing provisions shall not be binding on:

- Mortgagees, chargees, or receivers acting to realise their security
- Tenants who have exercised statutory or voluntary purchase rights
- Shared ownership leaseholders who have staircased to 100% equity

8.0 Conclusion

The Halsnead Farm development will deliver 88 high-quality affordable homes, exceeding policy requirements and supporting Knowsley Council's housing objectives. The scheme:

- Aligns with national and local planning policy
- Supports inclusive, sustainable communities
- Is fundable via Homes England
- Will be delivered and managed by Onward Homes

The Applicants are committed to working with Knowsley Council to finalise the tenure mix and delivery mechanism, ensuring the scheme remains responsive to local needs.