



HOUSING NEED



A key role of the Local Plan for Epsom & Ewell is to establish the overall requirement for housing over the plan period and identify enough land for development to meet this requirement.

This is done by gathering a sound collection of evidence that provides information about the Borough's future housing needs. A large amount of information has been published nationally outlining the need to build more homes. This information is useful but the authority also undertakes extensive local research to ensure policies and strategies meet local needs. The two main documents that help to inform this process are the [Strategic Housing Market Assessment \(SHMA\)](#) and the [Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment \(SHLAA\)](#).

WHAT IS A STRATEGIC HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT?

A Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is a key piece of evidence that we are required to produce by national planning policy. The SHMA sets out information on the Borough's future housing needs. This including the scale, mix and tenure of houses that are likely to be required by different groups of people in the community.

The latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Epsom & Ewell was published in September 2016, and was prepared by CobWeb Consulting. It is considered to have been soundly prepared and is up to date in terms of its assumptions and conclusions.

WHAT IS THE HOUSING MARKET AREA?

The SHMA sets out our Housing Market Area (HMA). It is defined as: The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, the Borough of Elmbridge and the District of Mole Valley (September 2016). Our four authorities are identified as a single HMA because of the strong migration linkages, house price patterns and commuting links.

WHAT IS OBJECTIVELY ASSESSED HOUSING NEED AND HOW HAS IT BEEN CALCULATED?

'Objectively assessed housing need' (OAHN) is the amount of new housing that a community is likely to need. It is calculated using nationally-published population statistics and household projections, taking account of population change, economic growth forecasts and affordable housing needs. The OAHN figure does not take account of any other planning policy considerations, such as the availability of housing land and infrastructure.

Government guidance states that the OAHN figure should be unbiased and that the Local Plan should be doing all it can to meet that need in full. However, it should not be treated as a target as it does not take into account any local constraints to development such as market capacity or environmental designations.

HOW MANY NEW HOMES ARE NEEDED?

For Epsom & Ewell, the SHMA confirmed that there is an overwhelming need for market housing which totals 7100 new homes 2015- 2032. This figure equates to 418 new homes per year. More detailed information on the figures are available on our website within the [SHMA document](#)

The Government has recently published its own [indicative calculation](#) for each local authority in the country. Their indicative figure has been calculated using their own formula, which they are proposing be introduced as a standard national methodology for calculating OAHN. Their indicative figure identifies a 39% increase in our OAHN, which equates to 579 new homes a year.

WHAT IS A FIVE YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY?

The need to identify a 'five year supply' of deliverable housing land is a requirement of national planning policy. There are clear rules for including or not including sites in the five year supply calculation.

To be 'deliverable', sites should offer a suitable location for development, be available now and be achievable with a realistic prospect that new homes will be built within five years and, in particular, that development of the site is economically viable. Sites with planning permission should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that schemes will not be implemented within five years.

National planning policy advises that where a 'five year supply' cannot be demonstrated, local planning policies for the supply of housing are considered 'out-of-date' and applications must be considered in the context of the national 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

In practice, this means that significant weight must be placed on granting planning applications for new housing unless any adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework or specific policies in the Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

The lack of a five year supply could also have a significant bearing on the outcome of planning appeals, where a developer seeks to challenge refusal of a planning application by the Council. Without an up to date local plan and a sufficient supply of housing sites there is a risk that all proposals for new housing could be allowed, at appeal, regardless of their location.

WHAT ABOUT AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

The need for 'affordable homes' in Epsom and Ewell is acute. The existing affordable housing stock turns over at roughly half the national average. Basically once allocated a home, tenants are either reluctant or unable to move on. This is a clear symptom of under-supply. Our evidence shows that the Borough continues to be an unaffordable area to live in, as does much of the south east of England and this is a key concern for the Council.

The SHMA identifies a need for 274 new affordable homes each year. This equate to 65% of our overall housing need. The greatest need is for social rented homes, followed by a lesser need for affordable rented. The highest demand is for affordable 2 bedroom homes.

In the past we have struggled to deliver the affordable housing as we need. Meeting our current target of 35% has been challenging. Our latest needs calculation shows an even higher need so it is very important that we carefully consider how we can deliver this in the future.

DO WE CONSIDER THE NEEDS OF GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS?

The Epsom & Ewell Traveller Accommodation Assessment identifies the future accommodation needs up to 2032, which has been produced in accordance with national guidance. Our evidence shows that there is no identified need for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches to meet the accommodation needs of the travelling/ nomadic Gypsy & Traveller Community. However, our Assessment did identify the need for 27 additional pitches for 'non-travelling' members of our Gypsy & Traveller community. Although this need does not fall within the planning definition of 'Gypsy or Traveller need', as set out by the government, we believe that we have a duty to consider their needs, as we would with any other type of specialised housing. We propose to consider this specialised accommodation need alongside the OAHN; when considering the location of future housing in the borough.

WHAT IS A STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (SHLAA)?

[A Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment \(SHLAA\)](#) is a technical study that assesses sites for their potential to be brought forward to provide new housing. It helps the Council to decide whether there is an adequate supply of deliverable sites to meet the Borough's identified housing needs. A SHLAA does not allocate land for development or grant planning permission but identifies its 'potential' for future housing development. A SHLAA is required by national policy.

Our SHLAA considered sites, primarily within the built up area and looked very hard for potential opportunities for future development.

WHAT DOES OUR SHLAA SAY?

We looked extensively for new potential housing sites and encouraged land owners, agents, communities and other interested parties to promote sites for new homes. However, our SHLAA only identified 61 opportunity sites across the Borough. These sites could potential delivery 1819 new homes over the next 15 years. Of these, 221 new homes could be delivered within the next five years. This only provides a 1.3 year housing land supply when assessed against our OAHN figure. Consequently, Epsom & Ewell would achieve less than 40% of the projected housing need. This would result in a significant shortfall of housing sites, which would equate to 4,381 homes across the next plan period.

More information can be found on our [website](#)

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR LOCAL PLAN?

Our current housing policies are out of date and no longer conform to national planning policy.

Whilst the need figure of 418 new homes per year is a starting point it does not represent a target. We are a small Borough and we have lots of constraints. Nearly half of our land is Green Belt and a significant proportion has important environmental designations which prevent development coming forward. Pressure on existing infrastructure and facilities is high and has limited capacity to accommodate more growth.

However, there is a national shortage of new homes and the government and their Planning Inspectors have made it clear that Local Plans must do all they can to significantly boost housing supply and they should seek to meet their housing need figure, in full.

Existing infrastructure is also under pressure and the amount of new homes needed will require significant infrastructure improvements and investment.

We need to make some tough choices and consider how we can address this significant shortfall in housing land supply. We need to decide where new homes in the future should be located within the Borough.