



Purpose of the advice note

This note is one of series of advice notes produced to assist applicants and their agents when considering proposals for new homes in Elmbridge during the preparation of the new Local Plan. The note focuses on understanding local housing need.

The council is committed to responding positively to the challenge of housing and affordability in Elmbridge and is working hard to progress a new Local Plan. The emerging outcomes from the plan preparation, in particular, the new evidence on housing need and land supply, are material considerations when considering current development proposals.

The number of new homes needed

In response to the national housing crisis, Government policy has focused on increasing housing supply and providing the right homes in the right places to meet housing need. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2018), requires Local Plans to meet their housing need unless NPPF policies indicate otherwise¹. It requires the council to calculate its local housing need² using a national standardised methodology. The latest published Local Housing Need Figure for Elmbridge is 612 homes per year.

This is significantly higher (29%) than the scale of need identified in the council's own evidence on housing need. Previously, the borough's housing need figure was calculated in the Kingston and North Surrey Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (2016) as 474 dwellings per annum.

Need for smaller homes

The SHMA (2016) is a relevant and up to date source of qualitative information regarding the size, type and tenure of homes needed in Elmbridge. The assessment concluded there is an overwhelming need for smaller new homes (C3 accommodation) and an acute need for affordable housing (primarily social rented tenure).

The housing need can be broken down by the size of homes required, Table 1 below, indicates that the primary need is for 1, 2 and 3 bedroom homes (99%) with just 1% being for 4 plus beds. The delivery of smaller homes will provide much needed choice and balance the supply in the housing market.

Table 1: Number of bedrooms needed

Number of beds	Percentage needed %
1 bed	28%
2 beds	42%

¹ Paragraph 11, NPPF, July 2018, gov.uk/government/collections/revised-national-planning-policy-framework

² Housing need figure is not an adopted housing target. The Core Strategy's adopted housing target is 225 dwellings per year, but this is out of date as it pre-dated the NPPF publication in 2012, a new housing target will be identified in the new Local Plan.

Number of beds	Percentage needed %
3 beds	29%
4+ beds	1%

In the past, the delivery of new homes in borough has been dominated by four or more bedroom properties and this is reflected in the data in the Authority Monitoring Report 2016-17³. The number of new four bed (plus) homes in the borough has already achieved over the 1% identified in the SHMA (2016). The continued oversupply of larger homes could further exacerbate affordability issues and going forward this size of home no longer positively contributes towards meeting local housing need.

Need for affordable homes

The SHMA identified that the borough has significant affordability issues with an acute need for affordable homes to meet identified need. The council's approach to affordable housing and affordable housing contributions is set out in Core Strategy Policy CS21 and the Developers Contributions SPD.

In relation to planning obligations on small sites of ten homes or fewer, based on the evidence set out in the Small Sites Exemption and the Vacant Building Credit Statement, the council continues to apply the full approach in Policy CS21.

Elmbridge's housing land supply

The Elmbridge Land Availability Assessment 2016 showed that there was not enough housing land in borough to meet need and specifically there was not a 5-year land supply against the needs figure identified by the SHMA. This assessment is currently being updated following the undertaking of a detailed search for suitable land across the borough. The latest land supply position against the standardised Local Housing Need Figure will be published in the council's Authority Monitoring Report due in December 2018.

The current Local Plan evidence indicates that there is a deficiency in the supply of housing land within the borough to meet housing need. As such, size, mix and housing type of proposed new homes must be carefully balanced against the current quantified and overwhelming demand as set out by the standardised Local Housing Need Figure and the SHMA 2016.

Meeting local housing needs

The council needs to ensure that the delivery of high quality new homes widens the tenures, types and sizes of homes currently available within the borough in order to meet the needs different households in our community. This means the delivery of smaller homes (1 to 3 bedrooms) and ensuring that residential development takes account of local need by giving a genuine choice of housing and helping create balanced, sustainable and inclusive communities.

Our existing local policies support the national approach in providing housing that meets identified housing need. Core Strategy Policy CS19 sets out the council's approach to securing a range of housing types and sizes on developments across the borough reflecting the most up to date evidence in terms of the size and type of new homes. This is further supported by Development Management Policy DM10 which requires residential development on sites of 0.3 hectares or more to promote house types and sizes that meet the most up to date local housing need whilst reflecting the character of the area.

³ Authority Monitoring Report, 2016-17, elmbridge.gov.uk/planning/local-plan

The limited supply of suitable housing land available for development in Elmbridge means it is vital that each residential scheme comprises of a mix of homes that makes a positive contribution to meeting local housing need. In line with NPPF paragraph 123, schemes that do not make efficient use of the land will be refused. Applicants will need to demonstrate why this approach is inappropriate using relevant evidence.

Understanding floor plans and meeting space standards

Development Management Plan Policy DM10 Housing states that all housing developments, including conversions, are required to comply with the Nationally Described Space Standard technical requirements.

Proposals for homes below these standards will not be considered acceptable. The current demand for housing and the land supply position will not be considered a justification to allow for substandard size units or over development.

To ensure that new homes positively contribute to meeting local housing needs in terms of their size, the council will consider any first floor and above rooms leading off a landing/hallway with a window and capable of accommodating a single bed as a bedroom.

Positive decision and plan making

The council is committed to positive plan making to respond to future development needs and is currently considering the level of growth that can be sustainably accommodated within the borough over the next plan period up to 2036.

The council is acutely aware of the high demand for new homes as identified by the national standardised methodology and in the SHMA. However, the borough is heavily constrained by land designations and, as such, the current supply of housing land is limited. The council is working hard to respond positively to the challenges through the Local Plan preparations.

Through the council's pre-application advice service, the council will pro-actively engage with housing developers, applicants and agents to encourage the submission of housing schemes that make a positive contribution to meeting local housing need.