
Shaping Elmbridge

A New Local Plan



Frequently asked questions

What is the Local Plan?

The Local Plan decides how the communities and places of Elmbridge will develop over a 15-year period. It will tell us how many houses we need, how much employment land we need, how much infrastructure we need as well as indications for where it should go and how we can best protect our environment. When adopted it will guide decisions on whether or not planning applications should be granted and it should be the overarching framework for any [Neighbourhood Plans](#).

Why have a Local Plan?

The Local Plan is a statutory requirement and the Government has made it clear that all local authorities must have an up-to-date plan and it must be pro-growth. The [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) explains that 'The planning system should be genuinely plan-led. Succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings' (NPPF, p8).

What evidence do you have to show Elmbridge's development needs? Where can I find these documents?

The evidence base is the collection of documents we use to inform the development of policy for the Local Plan. It is generally research work, either produced by the council or specialist planning consultants, and uses a clear and established methodology where appropriate so that the conclusions it reaches are transparent. These evidence base documents help us to write policy from an informed perspective, alongside other considerations like the results of consultations and national policy.

In terms of the Borough's housing need, the number of new homes that we need is determined by a nationally set calculation, known as the 'standard methodology'. This is based on nationally published population and household projections. Although the council objected to the introduction of this method in the past, the Government expects us to prepare our plan to meet this housing requirement in full.

The [evidence to inform the Local Plan](#) is available to view on our website

What will happen if we don't prepare a new Local Plan?

The Local Plan is a statutory requirement and the Government has made it clear that all local authorities must have a to-up-date plan.

Failure to do so could lead to intervention whereby the Government writes our Local Plan and policies. Without a new plan we could find ourselves unable to resist unacceptable development or refused applications being granted on appeal. This could result in unplanned development in unsustainable locations.

What is the status of the existing Local Plan?

The set of adopted documents (Core Strategy, Development Management Plan, Developer Contributions SPD, Design and Character SPD and Flooding SPD) still represents the council's Local Plan. These documents will remain the primary source of local policy until the new Local Plan is at an advanced stage of preparation.

The new Local Plan will replace the policies in the Core Strategy. We will also need to update our Development Management Plan as this contains the detailed day-to-day planning policies on matters such as design, density, changes of use, parking provision and adverts against which planning applications and enforcement action is assessed. These policies will ensure that the right homes are built and that we create high quality places to live and work.

Will all the existing polices be changed?

We will be reviewing all our existing local policies and while much of the content is still relevant it is likely that there are aspects that require updating or re-writing altogether to reflect more recent national policy and current local circumstances.

Who decides if the Elmbridge Local Plan is acceptable?

An independent Planning Inspector will examine the plan through a formal 'Examination in Public' to assess if it has been prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements and whether it is 'sound'. To be found 'sound', the Local Plan must be:

- positively prepared
- justified
- effective
- consistent with national policy

Following the examination, the Inspector makes recommendations to the Secretary of State and the local planning authority about whether the local plan should be adopted, or any changes should be made. If changes are required further consultation is necessary. If the plan can be adopted, it would need to be formally decided by the council.