

Elmbridge Local Plan Examination

Response to Inspector's Stage 2 Matters - Matter 2

The approach to housing need

Mactaggart & Mickel Strategic Land

Representor Number 41089281

25 March 2024

LICHFIELDS

Lichfields is the pre-eminent planning and development consultancy in the UK

We've been helping create great places
for over 60 years.

lichfields.uk

© 2024 Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners Limited (trading as "Lichfields"), All Rights Reserved, is registered in England, no. 2778116.
Registered office at The Minster Building, 21 Mincing Lane, London EC3R 7AG.
Formatted for double sided printing.
Plans based upon Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of His Majesty's Stationery Office.
© Crown Copyright reserved. Licence number 10007707
68406/01/JF/TJ
30364593v1

1.0 **Matter 2 The approach to housing need**

Issue 4: Is the approach to calculating the level of housing need over the Plan period justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

Questions

1.1 In establishing the amount of housing to be planned for, paragraph 61 of the Framework advises that strategic policies should be informed by a local housing needs (LHN) assessment, conducted using the standard method unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach. The Council has followed this guidance and calculated the LNH to be a figure of 647 dpa or 9705 dwellings over the Plan period. Are there any exceptional circumstances which would justify and alternative approach?

- 1.1 While the Council has followed the standard methodology to establish the local housing need, it is clear from the evidence provided in support of the Plan that it has chosen not to follow the Government's guidance on considering where it may be appropriate to consider whether actual housing need may be higher than set out in the standard method calculation¹.
- 1.2 Firstly, although the PPG makes clear at paragraph 11 that past under-delivery of housing is accounted for in the affordability uplift element of the standard method, the circumstances around under-delivery in Elmbridge are acute and chronic. As the LHN sets out at paragraph 5.37 and Table 3, there has been an under-delivery of over 2,400 homes against the relevant standard method calculation over the period 2014/15 to 2020/21. That represents 25% of the overall level of housing need across the 15 year plan period and we argue this is of a magnitude that ought to be taken into account in setting the local housing need of the Borough.
- 1.3 Secondly, the Council has decided not to take on any un-met need from neighbouring authorities as referred to be paragraph 010 of the PPG². The duty to cooperate is both a legal-compliance matter as well as a soundness issue under paragraphs 35 and 61 of the Framework. In applying the government's policies it is noted that at this point the exercise is 'policy-off' and so it is not assumed that an LPA would necessarily go on to provide for the total level of locally assessed need. There may be constraints that mean that delivery of the total level in a sustainable manner cannot be achieved.
- 1.4 The evidence from the Duty to Cooperate exercise shows that whereas several neighbouring LPAs have chosen to plan for their entire local housing need, the Council has decided not to do so, but it also shows that there is un-met need from other LPAs which the Council could and we say should have added to its assessment of local housing need in order to follow the process of positively planning for the needs of the wider community under the Duty to Cooperate.

¹ Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 2a-010-20201216

² Ibid.

- 1.5 The other LPAs with unmet housing needs are summarised within the Exceptional Circumstances Case (2022) (ref. OTH043). The latest position is summarised below:
- Epsom & Ewell are currently at the Regulation 18 stage of their Local Plan and the housing need is 10,368 dwellings over the plan period. The planning supply of housing is 5,869 therefore there is significant unmet need with a shortfall of 4,499 dwellings.
 - In Mole Valley District Council the housing need is 8,664 over the 19 year plan period. The Council's planning supply is 6,384 dwellings resulting in an unmet need of 2,280 dwellings.
 - In Spelthorne Borough Council the housing need is 9,270 over the plan period and the planned supply is 8,931 which results in an unmet need of 339 dwellings.
- 1.6 Paragraph 6.30 (ref. OTH043) confirms that "these authorities have reached varying stages in the Local Plan preparation process, but a best estimate is that there will be an unmet need of approximately 11,500 dwellings arising from neighbouring authorities, and those in the Housing Market Area (HMA), over a fifteen-year period".
- 1.7 We therefore consider that the level of need at this policy-off point should be the addition of the figure derived from the standard method (9,705 over the Plan period) to which should be added the historic under-supply of 2,433 as set out in the LHN Table 3 and some proportion of the unmet need identified from neighbouring LPAs.
- 1.2 Paragraph 61 of the Framework goes on to state that in addition to the local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for. Has the Council done this?**
- 1.8 Paragraph 6.35 of TOP001 states that the approximate level of overall unmet need from neighbouring authorities including those within the HMA over a fifteen year period is 11,500 homes. The data behind this is at Appendix B of TOP001 but it is not entirely clear how the figure has been arrived at. Nevertheless, and even if that figure can be relied upon, it is unclear how the Council has taken this into account within the evidence base.
- 1.9 There are various SoCG with neighbouring authorities in which Councils acknowledge that they cannot support each other in meeting unmet housing needs. While we can see a proffered justification for not releasing any Green Belt land to contribute towards meeting locally assessed need (principally in TOP001), this is not a clear rationale for setting aside all or part of the identified figure of 11,500 homes in paragraph 6.35 of TOP001.
- 1.10 We cannot see evidence that the Council has taken unmet needs into account in determining the level of housing to be planned for as required by paragraph 61 of the Framework and this contributes to the reasons why we consider that the Plan has not been positively prepared under paragraph 35 of the Framework, nor has its preparation met the guidance at paragraph 61.

1.3 A number of the Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) with neighbouring authorities have raised concerns regarding the intensity of housing need within Elmbridge and its wider housing market area, and the implications of the spatial strategy adopted which may exacerbate unmet need across the areas and place additional pressures on other areas. Is this a legitimate concern and are these concerns supported by evidence?

- 1.11 Yes, this is a legitimate concern and there is evidence to support this. The Council accept that Elmbridge has one of the highest average house prices in the South East and that affordability levels are amongst the highest in Surrey (ref. TOP001, Para 6.41).
- 1.12 EBC's Statement on Affordable Housing Provision on Small Sites (update)(2021) confirms that Elmbridge Borough had the 8th highest average (mean) house price across the entirety of England in 2019/20, with all the seven higher price Local Authority areas being in London (Para 5.3). In addition, the need for affordable homes within the borough is not uncommon amongst neighbouring Surrey Authorities or London Boroughs (Para 5.18 HOU001).
- 1.13 TOP001 (paragraph 6.35) identifies that within Elmbridge's Housing Market Area and Elmbridge's neighbouring local planning authorities, there is an unmet need of approximately 11,500 dwellings. In reviewing the sources of this overall figure it is relevant to note that while some LPAs such as Epsom and Ewell Borough Council indicate likely unmet needs from their administrative area, others such as Woking and Guildford Borough Council have concluded that they can meet their own needs and have done so through a combination of redevelopment of brownfield land and the release of Green Belt.
- 1.14 Elmbridge's proposed growth strategy focuses on delivering development and increasing capacity in its existing urban areas. This approach provides for 6,785 dwellings, 70% of the local housing need figure. This leaves a local unmet housing need of circ. 2,920 dwellings over its plan period. This approach self-evidently fails to address Elmbridge's need let alone make any contribution to the unmet need of neighbouring authorities and will therefore exacerbate unmet need across the neighbouring LPAs.
- 1.15 The Council's own evidence within the submitted SoCG shows that other LPAs have identified the concern raised in this question, for example EEBC considers that wider unmet needs (of the HMA and Neighbouring Authorities) should be appropriately considered in determining whether exceptional circumstances apply to justify altering Elmbridge's Green Belt boundaries to meet the borough's housing needs (whilst protecting the character of its existing communities) and not continue to add to the wider unmet housing needs and if possible, assist to help in meeting the wider unmet need as well.
- 1.16 Exceptional Circumstances Case (Green Belt) (ref. OTH043) states at Paragraph 6.31 that "officers' do consider that the level of need arising from the borough and its neighbouring authorities in combination with the potential unmet need from both Elmbridge Borough and neighbouring areas, adds to the evidence and justification for exceptional circumstances to amend the Green Belt boundary."
- 1.17 This confirms that there is evidence to support the concerns raised by Neighbouring Authorities as the unmet need could have provided justification for exceptional circumstances to amend the Green Belt boundaries.

Word count: 1,281

the first two years of life. The first year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The second year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The third year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The fourth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The fifth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The sixth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The seventh year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The eighth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The ninth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The tenth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The eleventh year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The twelfth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The thirteenth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The fourteenth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The fifteenth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The sixteenth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The seventeenth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The eighteenth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The nineteenth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The twentieth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The twenty-first year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The twenty-second year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The twenty-third year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The twenty-fourth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The twenty-fifth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

The twenty-sixth year of life is the most critical period for the development of the brain.

Birmingham

0121 713 1530

birmingham@lichfields.uk

Edinburgh

0131 285 0670

edinburgh@lichfields.uk

Manchester

0161 837 6130

manchester@lichfields.uk

Bristol

0117 403 1980

bristol@lichfields.uk

Leeds

0113 397 1397

leeds@lichfields.uk

Newcastle

0191 261 5685

newcastle@lichfields.uk

Cardiff

029 2043 5880

cardiff@lichfields.uk

London

020 7837 4477

london@lichfields.uk

Thames Valley

0118 334 1920

thamesvalley@lichfields.uk

@LichfieldsUK

lichfields.uk