
Shaping Elmbridge

A New Local Plan



Frequently Asked Questions

About the Local Plan

What is the Local Plan?

- The Local Plan will set out a strategy that aims to meet identified needs for new homes, jobs, community facilities, roads etc., whilst seeking to protect our natural, built and historic environments.
- It looks forward fifteen years until 2035, providing a vision as to what kind of place Elmbridge Borough could be.
- The goal is to achieve a future for the Borough where people have more opportunities to live and work in Elmbridge as well as enjoying good access to community facilities.

Why is a new Local Plan being prepared now?

- There is a significant undersupply of housing across the country and in particular across London and the South East of England. In Elmbridge it is expected that we will need to build a further 9480 new homes by 2035.
- Due to this undersupply the Government is committed to significantly increasing house building and has challenged Councils to meet the housing needs for their areas.
- We also need to respond to local evidence on the need for increasing job opportunities and retail provision etc.
- To plan positively for the future of the Borough and to keep important decisions about future development locally rather than risking Government interventions.

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

- The Government will intervene and appoint another body, such as the Planning Inspectorate or County Council, to prepare one for us.
- We could also be forced to work with another local authority or authorities to prepare a joint strategy.
- The longer we leave these decisions we expose ourselves to challenge from developers seeking to build in places that are inappropriate.

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.
- The new Local Plan will not replace the majority of documents and will only replace the Core Strategy once adopted, which is likely to be in 2018.
- Until this adoption date, the emerging Local Plan is a material consideration in decisions about planning applications, although the weight it can be afforded at this early stage is limited.

About the Consultation

What is the purpose of this consultation?

There are three clear purposes of this consultation:

1. To engage local people, groups, businesses and others on the options for new development over the next 20 years.
2. To identify the challenges that the Local Plan needs to address in terms of housing need, economic development, habitat protection etc.
3. To identify a potential strategy to respond to these challenges.

What stage of plan-making is this?

- This is the first stage of plan-making, formally known as the Regulation 18 consultation.
- It is a time to consider the broad direction and approach to a development strategy and identify the key issues the Plan should address.
- At this stage detailed policies and site allocations are not included. These will feature in the next consultation on the preferred approaches in the summer 2017.

Will there be additional opportunities to take part in shaping the Local Plan?

- Yes. This is the first stage. There will be at least one additional consultation stage on the Local Plan next year before the plan is submitted to Government for examination by an independent Inspector.

The content of the Strategic Options consultation document

Why are we proposing options that amend Green Belt boundaries?

- The Government are forcing all authorities to consider all options for meeting their development needs including, the consideration of Green Belt amendments.
- 10 of the 11 Surrey boroughs and districts have either finished a review of the Green Belt in their area or have at least started the process.
- Guildford, Runnymede and Woking are all planning to release some Green Belt land within their areas to accommodate an increase in housing delivery.

- This is not just restricted to Surrey and the South-East. All 10 local authorities in the city region of Greater Manchester are amending Green Belt boundaries to accommodate up to 60,000 homes over the next 20 years.

What housing needs are other areas facing?

- The under supply of housing is a national problem with figures of up to 250,000 new homes per annum being quoted to keep up with demand.
- In comparison to neighbouring authorities, Elmbridge has a 'mid-point' housing need which is generally proportionate of the Borough's size, existing population and the overall sub-urban and semi-rural character.
- Local authorities with a more urban character and which are larger in size (both geographical and population) are facing much higher housing numbers than Elmbridge. For example, if the following local authorities were to meet their housing needs they would have to provide:
 - Guildford – 13,860 homes
 - Kingston – 14,384 homes
 - Spelthorne – 15,140 homes
 - Woking – 10,340 homes
 - Waverley – 10,380 homes

What are the benefits of the approach we are proposing?

- Our preferred approach seeks to balance the needs for housing whilst recognising there are constraints on development within the Borough.
- The protection of Green Belt remains a key priority however; the proposed strategy recognises that there are areas of land currently designated as Green Belt that are no longer meeting the purposes.
- This approach therefore seeks to utilise these areas and provide not only an increase in housing supply, but provide for the types of homes required by our communities.
- This includes smaller homes, more affordable properties and opportunities for self / custom house building.
- This approach will also protect the character of the urban area and maintain our existing settlement pattern.
- It enables infrastructure provision to be provided alongside developments where there is the space to provide the essential services and importantly, it will allow us to continue to plan for our communities.

The Green Belt Boundary Review (GBBR) identifies 13 weakly performing Local Areas however only 3 are identified in the Consultation Document for potential release.

What is happening with the remaining 10 Local Areas?

- As this consultation focuses on the strategic issues, we have only identified the three weakly performing areas that are key to significantly increasing our housing land supply and meeting our housing needs.
- Having undertaken assessments of each area of Green Belt identified as being weakly performing we identified only three where we consider there to be development opportunities.

- Development in the remaining 10 parcels is prevented by constraints such as its location in the flood plain or its status as a Park or Garden of Historic Interest, or they are considered to be too small as to any reasonable scope for new strategic development.
- Following this consultation the Council will need to consider whether these should remain as Green Belt or whether an alternative designation, such as Local Green Space, would be more appropriate.

Will the Council consider smaller amendments to the Green Belt boundary in addition to those identified in the consultation document?

- The Council will need to look at amending minor anomalies at the next stage in the preparation of the Local Plan. Such anomalies include where the Green Belt boundary runs through the middle of a garden or building and will aid both residents and the Council when applying policy appropriately.
- The Council also expects small development proposals to be proposed through this consultation in Green Belt not identified as being weakly performing. Such proposals will be considered following the consultation and any amendments consulted on within the next consultation in the summer of 2017.

What about Infrastructure?

- More houses will add to the pressure on existing infrastructure. Schools will be a key focus but we will also need to ensure that improvements are made to the road network, public transport, health provision, community facilities and leisure facilities.
- In particular the impacts of additional development on both local and strategic road networks will be considered through detailed modelling. This modelling will be used to identify congestion hotspots and outline potential solutions.
- As with our current approach, we will continue to seek contributions from developers to help deliver new infrastructure.
- We will also review our current Community Infrastructure Levy charges and to ensure the necessary resources are available to support infrastructure improvements

How to get involved

Where can I find out more information about the new Local Plan and the consultation?

- More details about the new Local Plan including the official timetable (the Local Development Scheme) can be obtained from the Local Plan web page: www.elmbridge.gov.uk/planning/local-plan/
- Details about this specific consultation including the 'Strategic Options' document itself can be obtained from the consultation page: consult.elmbridge.gov.uk/consult.ti
- The consultation document is available to view at the Council's offices at the Civic Centre and at libraries throughout the Borough.
- There will also be public exhibitions at the following venues:

| Date | Time | Venue |
|-----------------------------|-------------|--|
| Tuesday 10 January | 7-9pm | Lecture Hall, 1st Floor Weybridge Library |
| Wednesday 11 January | 7-9pm | Cobham Community Centre |
| Thursday 19 January | 7-9pm | Hinchley Wood Secondary School |
| Monday 23 January | 7-9pm | Cecil Hepworth Playhouse (Walton) |

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------|--|
| Thursday 26 January | 7-9pm | Civic Centre, High Street, Esher |
| Saturday 4 February | 10-2pm | Civic Centre, High Street, Esher |

An exhibition will be permanently displayed throughout January and up until 24 February 2017 in the Civic Centre Reception, Esher under the stairwell to the right of the entrance.

How can I take part in this consultation?

We would encourage you to submit your comments online using the consultation portal at: consult.elmbridge.gov.uk/consult.ti

Alternatively, you can fill out a response form and submit responses via:

- E-mail – planningpolicy@elmbridge.gov.uk
- By post - submit responses to the questionnaire to: Planning Policy, Planning Services, Elmbridge Borough Council, Civic Centre, High Street, Esher, Surrey, KT10 9SD.

A copy of the response form can be downloaded from the consultation portal at: consult.elmbridge.gov.uk/consult.ti

All responses must be made in writing.

When is the deadline for comments?

- The consultation is open for ten weeks from 9am on Friday 16 December 2016.
- The deadline for the submission of comments is 4pm on **Friday 24 February 2017**.

What happens after my comments have been made?

- We will consider all the comments once the consultation has closed.
- We will prepare a statement responding to the issues raised and how we will seek to address them.
- We will then prepare a more detailed plan which will be published for consultation in the summer 2017.