

New Local Plan Evidence Base



**Strategic Housing
and Employment Land
Availability Assessment
(SHELAA) 2017**



1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) is a technical study which assesses the potential availability of land in the district for meeting the need for new homes and jobs. The SHELAA will form an important part of the evidence base for the Council's new Local Plan, examining the suitability, availability and achievability of land in the district to meet identified development needs.
- 1.2 The SHELAA is not a one-off study however; previous land availability assessments for the district have been published in 2009 and 2012, with updates included in successive Authority Monitoring Reports (AMRs). The SHELAA will therefore be kept under review and updated periodically to reflect the availability of new evidence and changes to both local and national policy, which could impact on the appropriateness of sites for meeting needs. The purpose of the SHELAA is only to guide and inform the plan-making process; the SHELAA will not allocate sites for development, nor will it set specific policies.

2 Policy Context

National Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2012, followed by the Planning Practice Guidance in 2014; both these documents supersede previous guidance on how to undertake land availability assessments. As a Local Planning Authority, we are required to undertake these types of assessments to inform decision-making on planning policy development. The NPPF, at paragraph 158, requires Local Planning Authorities to ensure that their assessment of, and strategies for, housing, employment and other uses are integrated, and based on adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics of the area.
- 2.2 The overarching policy requirements in the NPPF for land availability assessments are found within paragraphs 159 and 161. Paragraph 159 of the NPPF requires that Local Planning Authorities have a clear understanding of housing needs in the area, and that they should prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to fully assess their housing needs, whilst working with neighbouring authorities to reflect cross administrative boundary housing markets. A SHMA has been prepared (and, where appropriate, updated) for the South Essex Housing Market area¹ which sets out the objectively assessed needs for housing. Paragraph 159 goes on to require Local Planning Authorities to prepare a "Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified need for housing over the plan period". The key tests when assessing the potential for a site to be delivered for new homes are, therefore, whether a site is likely to be available, suitable and viable to be delivered over a period of time. Within this context paragraph 47 of the NPPF distinguishes between sites which are considered to be 'deliverable' for the first five years of the Local Plan and 'developable' (beyond five years); this is further defined in footnotes 11 and 12 of the NPPF.

¹ www.rochford.gov.uk/new-local-plan-evidence-base