Identifying land with potential for housing development

Introduction

This note explains issues arising in identifying land to meet the need for housing development. In order to reach a decision on the amount and location of housing development for the Borough the Council needs to consider what land is available, whether it is suitable for housing and constraints or opportunities that may affect prospects for development.

Housing Land Availability

To find out about potential housing land availability in the Borough, the Council commissioned an independent study. This sought to identify and assess land in an objective, consistent and transparent way according to whether it is available, suitable and achievable through a process known as ‘Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.’ A total of 297 areas of land were assessed from a variety of sources. These include Brentwood Urban Capacity Study (2002); records of sites with existing or previous planning consents; and land put forward through an open ‘Call for Sites’ exercise (November-December 2009) or other discussions with the Council. It is important to note that just because a site is included in the Assessment, this does not mean that it will be allocated for development.

Key findings

- 65 sites assessed as having potential for residential development (note these are not allocations or a presumption in favour of permission being granted); the remainder discounted
- A range of different types and sizes of site identified including small, medium and large sites
- Sufficient brownfield land exists to meet housing requirements until 2020, assuming requirements remain at the level of the East of England Plan, ie 170 homes a year
- After 2020, we may need to consider using greenfield land for housing development. Before this could happen, a Green Belt review would need to be carried out to identify the most sustainable option(s)
- The study assumes 780 new homes will be built on windfall sites (sites which unexpectedly become available as a result of intensification, conversions and changes of use), based on 10 years historic windfall completions, ie the number of homes built on windfall sites over this period

Housing Capacity

The ‘Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment’ estimates capacity up to 2031 but represents a ‘snapshot in time’ of potential housing land that may be available. It will need updating periodically since, over time, sites will be developed and others will come forward. Constraints associated with some discounted sites may in future be overcome and allow for potential development.

Assessments were carried out in isolation from the need to find land for other purposes and do not take into account the capacity of local infrastructure, such as schools, roads, sewers and water, gas or electricity supplies, to cope with development - all factors that could affect the capacity of a particular site and/or total capacity for the Borough. The Council will need to consider these broader aspects in reaching a decision on which sites to allocate for development.