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Chapter 5. "Robust and credible"

5.1 Summary

Housing markets are dynamic and complex. Because of this, strategic housing market assessments (SHMAs) will not provide definitive estimates of housing need, demand and market conditions. However they can provide insights into how housing markets operate- both now and in the future.

They should provide a basis on which planning and housing policies can be developed, by considering the characteristics of the housing market, how key factors work together and the probable scale of change in future housing need and demand.

5.2 Robust and credible - what does it mean?

SHMAs are a crucial aspect of the evidence needed to prepare regional spatial strategies, local development documents, regional housing strategies and local housing strategies.

From a planning perspective, planning guidance emphasises the importance of policies being founded on a thorough understanding of an area's needs, particularly opportunities and constraints. At the earliest stage of preparing local development documents, planning authorities should gather evidence, including an understanding of the housing required in their communities. However strategic housing market assessments are only one of several factors that should be taken into account when determining housing provision figures or the right mix of housing.

A robust and credible evidence base is necessary for a plan to be sound. For an independent examination into the soundness of a Development Plan Document, a strategic housing market assessment should be considered robust and credible if it provides the core outputs and the requirements of all of the process criteria in Core Outputs and Process Checklist below.

One of the key aims of the new planning system is to involve local communities and stakeholders from the earliest stages of plan preparation, which includes work like strategic housing market assessments. This will help minimise potential objections to the policies proposed, as stakeholders will have had the opportunity to express their concerns during the preparation of the assessment itself.

Whether a strategic housing market assessment is based on secondary or survey data should not be a factor in determining whether it is robust and credible. No one methodological approach or use of datasets will result in a definitive assessment of housing need and demand. The quality of the data used is the important consideration in determining whether an assessment is robust and credible, rather than its nature¹.

In the table below we have attempted to state what action we have taken and what information we have used to fulfill each of the CLG criteria.

¹ Summarised from " *Strategic Housing Market Assessments: Practice Guidance*" CLG, 2007.

5.3 Project Team response to the CLG criteria

Core outputs	References
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimates of current dwellings in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Size ▪ Type ▪ Condition ▪ Tenure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully covered in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Size, type and tenure: Chapter 11, Dwelling Profile and Occupation ▪ Condition: Chapter 12 Housing Stock Condition.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of past and current housing market trends, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Balance between supply and demand in different housing sectors ▪ Price / affordability • Description of key drivers underpinning the housing market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current market trends covered in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Balance of supply and demand: Chapter 15 The private rented market; Chapter 16 The buy-to-let market; Chapter 17 Social rented housing turnover; registers and lettings; Chapter 18 Homelessness; Chapter 19 Register for intermediate housing ▪ Price / affordability: Chapter 13 Current property prices; Chapter 14 Changes in prices from 2001 to 2006; Chapter 20 Purchasers of intermediate housing; Chapter 21 Current affordability and income. • Drivers summarised in Chapter 25, Key drivers for the housing market and building industry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimate of total future number of households, broken down by age and type where possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included in chapter 10 Demographic context and forecasting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimate of current number of households in housing need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included in chapter 27 Identifying housing need.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimate of future households that will require affordable housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included in chapter 27 Identifying housing need.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimate of future households requiring market housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included in chapters 9 Economic context and forecasting; 10 Demographic context and forecasting; 22 Planning for housing delivery; 23 Past and future housing delivery; 26 Developing mixed, balanced communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimate of the size of affordable housing required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included in chapter 29, Future sizes of homes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimate of household groups who have particular housing requirements e.g. families, older people, key workers, black and minority ethnic groups, disabled people, young people, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included in chapters 31 BME housing issues; 32 Introduction to migrant worker housing issues; 33 Gypsy and Traveller housing issues; 34 Housing for different household types; 35 Disability and housing issues; 36 Rural housing

Process checklist	References
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approach to identifying housing market area(s) is consistent with other approaches to identifying housing market areas within the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-referenced postcode house price information with travel to work areas, see chapters 7 Defining housing markets using commuting patterns; and 8 Defining housing markets using wards.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing market conditions are assessed within the context of the housing market area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included in Section 3 The current housing market and specifically in Chapter 25, Key drivers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involves key stakeholders, including house builders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up a three-tier project structure, as described in chapters 3 Project structure and accountabilities and 4 The participation ladder, which actively involves all key stakeholders and provides information to those unable to participate more fully. Account of consultation and its effects included in Appendix 10 Outcomes of consultation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contains a full technical explanation of the methods employed, with any limitations noted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included in Chapter 27 Identifying housing need Appendix 13 The technical appendix and Appendix 15, The Change Log.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumptions, judgements and findings are fully justified and presented in an open and transparent manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included in all chapters, clearly quoting source data and including commentary and areas for further future investigation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses and reports upon effective quality control mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included in Appendix 11 Quality Assurance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explains how the assessment findings have been monitored and updated (where appropriate) since it was originally undertaken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans to update and re-publish included in Chapter 3 Project structure and accountabilities, Appendix 15 The Change Log. Change control log devised for every page in the SHMA to enable consistent updating in future. Full-time researcher recruited to provide consistency and understanding of the housing market, and the data used, into the future.