

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE LOCAL PLAN HOUSING NUMBERS

- 1. Have we used the Government's household projections in our calculation?** Yes. The 2012 based Sub-National Household Projections released by the Department for Communities and Local Government on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2015 forms the starting point for the calculation<sup>1</sup>.
- 2. Why are we not using the household projections as the sole basis for calculating our housing need?** Because the Government guidance<sup>2</sup> states, *"household projections produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government should provide the starting point estimate of overall housing need"*.
- 3. Why are the Government household projections considered to require further adjustment?** Because the Government advice<sup>3</sup> states that the projections may require adjustment to reflect household formation having been suppressed historically by housing undersupply and worsening affordability. There is debate over this but a number of Government planning inspectors have taken the view that there has been a suppression of demand which is not accounted for in the household projections.
- 4. What other factors should we take into account?** One of the issues we have to consider is the purpose of the National Planning Policy Framework. It is clear that the Government's intention is to "boost significantly"<sup>4</sup> the supply of housing to meet housing demand (including demand arising from household formation) and address affordability.
- 5. What are the main population factors that lead to a revision of the housing need?** One of the main issues in Staffordshire Moorlands is the ageing population (it is forecast to have the highest proportion of over 85 year olds in Staffordshire). Older

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<sup>1</sup> Staffordshire Moorlands 2012-based SNHP Update: Implications of the 2012-based SNHP, Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners, 3 July 2015

<sup>2</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments/methodology-assessing-housing-need/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments/methodology-assessing-housing-need/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/delivering-sustainable-development/6-delivering-a-wide-choice-of-high-quality-homes/>

populations tend to have higher growth in households. In Staffordshire Moorlands there is forecast to be a tripling in the number of men over 90 years old between 2012 and 2031, whereas the percentage of men and women aged between 40 and 55 declines by a fifth in the same period. Unsurprisingly this results in average household size reducing significantly.

6. **What other considerations do we need to take into account when calculating the housing need?** In addition to the demographic trends the calculation needs to take into account the economic growth ambitions of the District. There are a range of scenarios in the calculation ranging from high growth to stabilising the number of jobs at the current level. Because of the ageing population in Staffordshire Moorlands our economy will require new workers to come into the area to fill the jobs being vacated by the retirement of our ageing workforce. This will require more housing to accommodate these new workers.
7. **What is the range for our objectively assessed need?** It is somewhere between 220 dwellings per year and 460 dwellings per year. To stabilise the workforce at the current level will require 320 new homes per year.
8. **Why can't we just take the lowest figure as our housing need figure?** If we were to choose a figure substantially lower than the top end of the range whilst also preparing to keep employment at broadly the same level then we would need to justify how we would avoid the negative impacts of lower housing. These impacts include not providing sufficient homes for the new workers that are needed to replace the ageing workforce in Staffordshire Moorlands. Government policy is to support economic growth and we would not be contributing to this if we allowed our economy to decline because of a lack of workers in the area.
9. **I have heard that we can choose which housing figure to put before the Planning Inspector and he or she has to accept it.** No it is not true. The figure has to be produced using the Government guidance and will be challenged by the Inspector and others at the public inquiry (as has happened at Cheshire East and Derbyshire Dales). If the figure has been produced in a way that does not

conform to the guidance then the Local Plan may be significantly delayed.

**10. Are we discussing with other neighbouring Councils about whether they can take our housing need?** Yes we are having these discussions under the duty-to-cooperate. However the Government guidance is clear that we have to meet our housing need within our own area if possible:

- “local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area;
- Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless:
  - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
  - specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted..<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/>