

Future Housing Need – Hertfordshire: 2020 – 2036

1. Introduction

This note is prepared to provide evidence of the inappropriate use of housing need projections in the Local Plans being prepared by several Hertfordshire Local Planning Authorities (LPAs). CPRE Hertfordshire calls for the use of up-to-date projections which will have significant implications for housing targets in Local Plans.

Presently, LPAs are directed by the Government to use what is referred to as the “Standard Method” which is a formula for the calculation of the number of housing units that will be needed in the future. The “Standard Method” uses population and household change projections provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

2. Impact of revised ONS figures

In 2020 the ONS updated its projections using a 2018-year base confirming a trend for much lower household formation than previously in Hertfordshire and elsewhere. However, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) continues to direct LPAs to use 2014-year based projections when applying the “Standard Method” and this is leading to higher than necessary housing figures being included in Local Plans throughout the County.

Previous versions of the NPPF indicated that LPAs should use the “latest information available” for the calculation of housing need but in 2020 the NPPF was revised to emphasise the use of 2014-year based projections. This was a retrograde step and has led to serious implications for Hertfordshire Local Plans in preparation.

Table 1 below shows the impact of using 2014-year based projections as opposed to 2018-year based figures for housing need. The figures show significant and meaningful reductions for Hertfordshire and when the “Standard Method” is applied, using the 2018-year based projections, the total annual housing need for Hertfordshire is **reduced by 60%**.

CPRE Hertfordshire believes that the use of 2014-based projections **cannot be justified** in Local Plan making, as it leads to unnecessary housing land allocations in the Green Belt and open countryside. The implications for each LPA in terms of housing need calculated by the “Standard Method” are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Annual Housing Need comparing 2014 and 2018-based projections as the starting point

Local Authority	Annual Household Change	Annual Housing Need	Annual Housing Need	Annual Need Reduction	Local Plan Annual Target
	2022 – 32	Current Standard Method	Current Standard Method	with 'up to date' figures	(adopted or emerging plans as of October 2020)
	ONS Baseline Projections	2014 based	2018 based	2014-based to 2018-based	
	2018 based				
	1	2	3	(2-3)	4
Broxbourne	82	623	124	-499 (-80%)	454
Dacorum	344	1,018	482	-536 (-53%)	756
East Herts	442	1,032	682	-350 (-34%)	839
Hertsmere	206	724	288	-436 (-60%)	599
North Herts	289	979	405	-574 (-59%)	845
St Albans	213	890	298	-592 (-65%)	913
Stevenage	133	458	165	-293 (-64%)	380
Three Rivers	138	633	193	-440 (-70%)	514
Watford	108	781	151	-630 (-81%)	577
Welwyn Hatfield	311	887	435	-452 (-51%)	632
Hertfordshire	2266	8025	3223	-4,802 (-60%)	6,509

3. Implications for Hertfordshire Local Plans

Local Plans in Hertfordshire are at different stages of preparation, and where plans have been adopted (Broxbourne, East Herts, and Stevenage), the figures provide an indication of the impact of using up-to-date projections. Welwyn Hatfield and North Herts Local Plans were prepared according to an earlier version of the NPPF and use various methods for assessing housing need.

In each case, however, application of the more recent projections would have profound implications for housing need which should be taken into account in Local Plan preparation and reviews. ONS 2018 based projections confirm concerns in Hertfordshire that local plan targets may be far more than the latest research shows is needed, with associated **unjustified loss of Green Belt.**

NOTES:

1. The tables show the results of calculations of Housing Need (as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance), using the current 'Standard Method' set out in that Government guidance using 2014-based and 2018-based ONS Household Projections.
2. The proposed housing requirement or target included in each Council's latest emerging or adopted Local Plan is stated for comparison (Table 1 column 4). The figures are annual because plans have different end dates.
3. In accordance with the NPPF, Councils should decide how much of the housing need they provide for in the context of other planning policies and considerations such as Green Belt and environmental constraints.