

<https://www.cpreherts.org.uk/news/latest-government-data-shows-fewer-houses-needed-in-hertfordshire/>



Latest government data shows fewer houses needed in Hertfordshire

6th September 2022

The March 2021 Census data confirms our concern that the use of outdated forecasts on household numbers is putting pressure on councils to over-estimate housing need in local plans leading to unnecessary destruction of the countryside.

The government's "standard method" of calculating housing need was introduced in 2018 and continues to be one of the most controversial aspects of national planning policy guidance. It is a 'one-size-fits-all' approach which requires councils to apply outdated household projection data from 2014 as a starting point for calculating housing targets in their local plans, despite the fact that more recent data is available from 2018.

In June of this year, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) released the first phase of results from its March 2021 Census. The Census data includes estimates of the number of households in each local authority area at March 2021. So we have compared the Hertfordshire 2021 household numbers from the Census with both the 2014-based and the 2018-based ONS housing projections for 2021.

Our analysis confirms that we were right to be concerned about local authorities' use of the out-dated 2014-based household projections for calculating housing need. The figures clearly show that for Hertfordshire, the number of households at the March 2021 Census was more than 30,000 lower than the 513,090 forecast in the 2014-based projections for 2021. By contrast, the projected number of households in the 2018-based forecast was much closer to the 2021 Census numbers at approximately 4,600 lower.

What conclusions do we draw from this?

Use of the 2014 ONS-based household projections have been shown to artificially inflate the calculation of housing need. We believe it is ludicrous that 2014 data is still being utilised by anyone in any land-use planning context. We continue to call on the government to update its national planning policy guidance and scrap this one-size-fits-all approach based on outdated data.

Local plan housing targets should be calculated by local planning authorities using the most recent data available and taking into full account local circumstances and constraints, including the need to uphold protections of designated land including the Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.