



PRESS RELEASE

Guildford Society's Detective Work Uncovers Major Local Plan Flaw on Housing Numbers

Guildford, Monday 2 June 2014: The Guildford Society (GSoc) has been vindicated in its claim that there is an error in the population projection on which the new housing number is being based in the draft Local Plan.

Last week the Office of National Statistics (ONS) revised the projected 2021 population for Guildford downwards by almost 5,000, following the GSoc challenge made through the good offices of Anne Milton MP.

The reduced projection has an immediate impact on the new housing number, potentially reducing the annual need by between 2-300 homes on early recalculations.

Guildford Borough Council (GBC) is currently working to a figure of 652 new homes per annum over the Plan period. This is a figure many believe to be too high (and does not reflect constraints on development flowing from inadequate infrastructure and the borough's Green Belt setting).

GSoc first highlighted the anomaly in the population numbers last September. In its submission to GBC on the latter's consultation on 'Issues & Options' in November, GSoc again pointed to the clear error in the baseline data. The Society's work is headed by Executive Lead, Julian Lyon, who says: 'It was clear to see. The figures for the 19-30 age group was skewed by an incorrect assumption that university and other HE students would be staying on in Guildford after graduating. No other university town's figures, that we could see, exhibited the same anomaly. That alone should have alerted the planners and their consultants to shortcomings in the statistics base. More detailed examination is required of the impact of the changed projection, especially on the likely reduced level of affordable housing needed in the borough.'

Bill Stokoe, Chairman of the Society, comments: 'I am very concerned that the professional planners of GBC and, more particularly, their hired expert consultants had not identified the problem earlier. There is so much heat around the housing number issue, so their oversight is all the more disturbing. We had pointed it out on more than one occasion. It begs considerable questions over the quality of other elements of the evidence base, which we have also queried.'

GSoc will be following developments in the new housing number issue closely over the next few weeks. The recent demand by GBC Scrutiny's Committee's for a reassessment by the GBC planning team of the new housing number has been vindicated by the latest ONS population projections and the Society is pleased to have played its part in challenging this fundamental data.

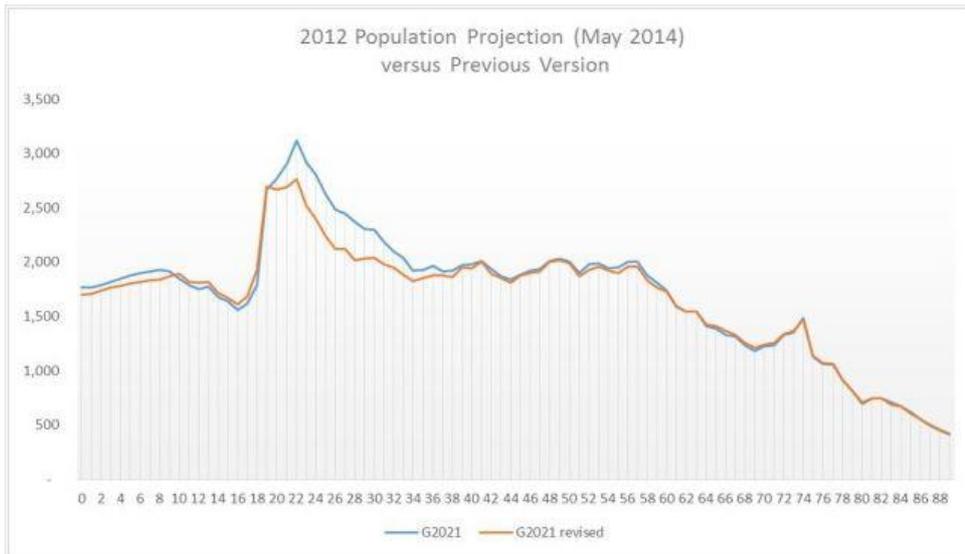
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Notes for Editors

1. For a fuller explanation, see <http://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk/New-ONS-adjustment-should-mean-fewer-new-homes-for-Guildford.html>
2. The ONS revision shows:



3. The Society speaks up for Guildford's past, present and future.
4. The Society's website is at www.guildfordsociety.org.uk