



The countryside charity Bedfordshire

CPRE Bedfordshire Briefing Document

Bedford Borough Council targeted by Government for massive and unsustainable housing growth.

CPRE Bedfordshire, the countryside charity, has compared Bedford Borough Council's (BBC) Housing Target, which has been calculated by using the Government's much discredited **Standard Method** algorithm, to the Housing Targets of other surrounding Local Authorities (LAs).

The results are astounding

BBC's Housing Target of 1,275 new homes per year for the next 20 year duration of its new Local Plan 2040 currently out for consultation, has been revealed as:

- One of the highest of any LA in the south East of England outside of the Greater London Metropolitan area.
- It is higher than that of the city of Cambridge or any Local Authority in Cambridgeshire.
- Higher than the Housing Target of the city of Oxford or any LA in the county of Oxfordshire – in fact, it is almost double the Target of each LA in Oxfordshire
- BBC's housing target is over 30% higher than that of Huntingdonshire District Council, part of Cambridgeshire, and around 18% higher than that of South Cambridgeshire Council. Both of these Cambridgeshire LA's have similar populations to that of Bedford Borough.
- The counties of Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire are more than twice the size of Bedfordshire which is one of the smallest counties in England.
- BBC's Housing target is 31% higher than that of North Hertfordshire, 180% higher than East Northamptonshire, 142% higher than Kettering and 266% higher than Wellingborough.

A CPRE Bedfordshire spread sheet with the detailed comparisons is included as an appendix at the end of this document.

CPRE Bedfordshire fully recognises the need for new homes for the people of Bedford Borough and in particular affordable homes and homes for social rent, but the enormous target of 1,275 per year or 25,500 new homes over the 20 year Plan period, will destroy huge areas of countryside, causing immense environmental degradation at a time of Climate Change when every hectare of agricultural land will be needed to grow food.

Around 70% of the 25,500 new homes are to be built to encourage a huge population migration into the Borough from elsewhere in the UK as part of the Government's OxCam proposals – this is unsustainable.

As is now agreed by all except Government, the Standard Method algorithm is based on inaccurate and outdated 2014 ONS Housing Formation data – if up to date 2018 data is used the Target would be reduced to around 900 new homes per year or less.

The Mayor of Bedford, Dave Hodgson has said that he is not happy with the Standard Method but as far as we are aware has done absolutely nothing to challenge Government on this matter.

We believe that this is because he has already signed up to the Government's OxCam proposals including this massive housing target without telling the electorate of Bedford Borough.

The question for the Mayor and BBC is where precisely do they stand? If they are opposed to the Government's Standard Method housing target, what do they intend to do about it? – our countryside and biodiversity is precious.

Notes

1. Full details of the Housing Target for every LA in England can be found here:

<https://lichfields.uk/grow-renew-protect-planning-for-the-future/how-many-homes-the-new-standard-method/#section10>

This data, from the Lichfield Planning Consultancy, was prepared a few months ago and shows a BBC target of 1,300 new homes per year. The figure of 1,275 new homes per year used by BBC in their Local Plan uses the latest housing affordability data which has reduced the target by approx. 2%.

2. A clear explanation of the Standard Method" algorithm and how it is has been calculated for Bedford Borough can be found in the BBC Local Plan 2040 support document, "Local Housing Need Assessment", Chapter 6, page 70. The document was prepared for the Council by ORS, a highly regarded demographic company. This can be found here:

<https://edrms.bedford.gov.uk/OpenDocument.aspx?id=5ldjMgTIHCsbg2t72iJU%2fg%3d%3d&name=Bedford%20LHNA%202021%20-%20Final.pdf>

3. For further comment please contact Paul Jenkins on paul.jenkins@cprebeds.org.uk

Appendix - Number of new homes to be delivered per year by Local Authority calculated using the Government's Standard Method Algorithm

		Target of new homes to be delivered per year	Bedford's target is
Bedford Borough Council		1,275	
Cambridgeshire LAs	Cambridge City	658	93% higher
	East Cambridge	597	114% higher
	Fenland	538	137% higher
	Huntingdonshire	976	30.6% higher
	East Cambridgeshire	1,085	17.5% higher
Oxfordshire LAs	Oxford City	603	111% higher
	Cherwell	756	69% higher
	South Oxfordshire	608	110% higher
	Vale of White Horse	661	92% higher
	South Oxfordshire	563	126% higher
North Hertfordshire		973	31% higher
Northamptonshire LAs	East Northamptonshire	457	180% higher
	Kettering	526	142% higher
	Wellingborough	348	266% higher

Data source: Lichfield Planning Consultancy