

Myth of high Guildford housing requirement - now exploded!

GGG have now had official public confirmation that Guildford's Local Plan housing numbers are overstated. Ed Humpherson, Director General for Statistics Regulation- referring to the housing requirement – said:- "***estimates have been overstated in Guildford***".

GGG was consulted by the OSR (Office for Statistics Regulation) in their review of ONS (Office of National Statistics) population estimates. Ramsey Nagaty (leader of Guildford Greenbelt Group) and other **GGG** members were part of the consultation panel, working with other campaigners across the country. The ONS estimates are used as the basis for projected housing requirements in Local Plans. Most of the participants in the review were from local authority areas with relatively large student populations like Guildford (including Coventry, which has had wide involvement & publicity on this). Participants argued that the ONS population estimates substantially overstated population figures and their future trajectory.

Following initial workshops, Ramsey Nagaty, **GGG** leader, ensured that Guildford Borough Council asked to be formally included in the review process (a request which was supported by Joss Bigmore R4GV). David Reeve - a former **GGG** councillor - put in written representations to the OSR showing problems with the ONS population estimates. These issues fundamentally challenge the need for several thousand dwellings planned during the Local Plan period.

Guildford (and Coventry, and other university towns) have a large percentage of foreign students and a low birth rate. The statistical analysis doesn't sufficiently take account of foreign students leaving, and assumes that most stay. This inflates the apparent housing requirement, giving an excuse for overdevelopment. GBC could have chosen to apply constraints, to the housing number—constraints are allowed under the NPPF for Green Belt, for the AONB, and for the special protection areas – but the planning team chose not to do this or not sufficiently.

The results of the OSR review were issued last Monday (10th May). Ed Humpherson (the OSR Director General for Regulation, was quoted in the Times and in the Daily Mail as well as in their report, saying that "***estimates have been over-stated in Guildford***".

The Inspector who examined Guildford's plan stressed that his remit was only to check that the local plan was "sound", not that it was the best or even a good plan for Guildford. Since the housing numbers are now discredited, Guildford's plan cannot now be considered sound.

I am now calling for an early move in correcting the error. It is time for an immediate proper review of the Local Plan with the aim of reducing the housing target to reflect the new statistics. This will have the benefit of challenging some of the allocated housing sites within the local plan.

GGG - working for a better Guildford.

Ramsey Nagaty party leader Guildford Greenbelt Group

NOTE: The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body at arm's length from government whose role is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of [official statistics](#) that 'serve the public good'. It encompasses the [Office for National Statistics](#) (ONS) which is the largest producer of official statistics in the UK, and the [Office for Statistics Regulation](#) (OSR) which is its regulatory arm whose task is effectively to act as a quality watchdog overseeing ONS.