

## **Independent Research Commissioned by the Isle of Wight CPRE Finds the Draft Island Plan’s 10,125 Housing Target to be Based on Flawed Statistics and Methodology**

**Newport, October 4<sup>th</sup> 2019** – The Isle of Wight CPRE today published the “*Review of demographic change in the context of Housing Need for the Isle of Wight*” by Piers Elias, a respected independent demographer. The report clearly shows that the housing target of 10,125 derived under the Standard Methodology<sup>1</sup>, which forms the basis of the Isle of Wight Council’s Feb-19 draft Local Plan, is based on flawed statistics and methodology.

The expert report further reveals that the planned development would not only destroy hundreds of acres of much loved Island countryside, but also drive further demographic imbalance whilst failing to serve the needs of Islanders young or old.

Key findings of the report include:

- 1) The statistics and methodology used to derive the 10,125<sup>1</sup> housing target are seriously flawed**
  - a. Outdated population forecasts are being used. Using the most recent population forecasts results in a substantially lower housing “need”;
  - b. The Plan’s projections assume a too high vacancy rate on new dwelling constructions therefore leading to an over-estimation of additional housing “need”;
  - c. Unattributable population change may also be driving an over-estimation of housing “need” by as much as 75 dwellings per annum; and
  - d. This is even before considering the demographic imbalance driven by the nature of the Island’s housing demand requiring policy makers to differentiate between local housing needs and external housing demand of those looking to move here.
  
- 2) Net migration is the only driver of population increase forecasted in the Plan**
  - a. The Plan’s forecast 11,950 increase in the Island’s population is ENTIRELY driven by net migration to the Island.
  - b. This new housing is not planned for Islanders – it is housing to satisfy the desire of people to move to the Island, often to retire.

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<sup>1</sup> The Feb-19 draft Local Plan originally included a housing target of 9,615 which has since been increased to 10,125 under a revised Standard Methodology assessment.

**3) The draft Plan fails to provide for Islanders young and old**

- a. Under the draft Plan, by 2034 almost 50% of the population of the Isle of Wight will be over 55 (median age 54), compared to 35% across the UK, potentially worsening the existing effects of demographic imbalance – such as low wages, health vulnerabilities and public service pressures; the Standard Methodology for assessing housing needs fails to recognise this demographic imbalance.
- b. Policies should instead be pursued to provide for Islanders young and old already living here, rather than perpetuating current demographic trends; these should include developing smaller houses more suitable for newly forming young households and properties appropriate for downsizing retirees.

**4) Affordability as justification for increasing house supply is misplaced**

- a. Migration within the UK is adding to the ageing of the Isle of Wight by taking away the younger working population (median age 29 for those leaving the Island) and adding to the older age groups (median age for those moving to the Island is 42).
- b. 11 out of the top 15 local authorities to which people are migrating are less affordable than the Isle of Wight.
- c. This suggests that housing affordability is not the primary reason for young people leaving the Island.

**5) There are other exceptional circumstances that may well limit the deliverability of housing**

- a. Such factors include an array of fixed Island infrastructure such as transport networks, fixed utility infrastructure (e.g. water transfers from the mainland will have to increase 4-fold by 2050) and fixed cross-Solent transport links.

The full report is available at [www.isleofwight.cprelocalgroups.org.uk](http://www.isleofwight.cprelocalgroups.org.uk).

Therefore the Isle of Wight CPRE supports the Isle of Wight Council's intention to challenge these flawed central government-driven housing targets and conduct its own evidence-based assessment of real local housing need. The Isle of Wight CPRE now calls on:

- 1) The Isle of Wight Council to put forward the most compelling case possible for exceptional circumstances to de-couple the Island's housing strategy from the flawed Standard Methodology for assessing housing need;
- 2) The Isle of Wight Council to put *local need*, not *external demand* at the centre of its revised housing strategy, genuinely serving the needs of Islanders living here whilst respecting the level of greenfield protection our unique Island landscape deserves; and
- 3) Central Government to honor its commitment to the Island via an "Island Deal" to include freedom from the constraints of the Standard Methodology for assessing housing need, which is ill-suited to the Island's unique circumstances.

Commenting on the report, Ian Wellby, Trustee of the Isle of Wight CPRE said:

*“This report lays bare the fact that the draft Island Plan, driven by national housing targets, suggests greenfield building on an unprecedented scale – not for Islanders but to serve those wanting to move here. It shows the current Plan to be based on a flawed central government formula, particularly ill-suited to our unique Island circumstances. Concreting over our countryside will fail to serve the needs of Islanders young and old. It shows that we are already a very imbalanced demographic on the Island, and if we are building thousands of homes for retirees to move here, the situation will only get worse – placing significant strain on our already stretched social services. This is a highly undesirable projection and requires policy intervention. We should be focused on providing a smaller number of properties to serve the needs of those living here – be they young Islanders newly forming households, or elderly Islanders looking to downsize into more suitable accommodation. Housing ‘need’, given policy intervention, cannot be predicted by a flawed “cookie cutter” central government methodology.”*

*“Thousands of Islanders are speaking up against overdevelopment across our precious Island. Thousands responded to the Isle of Wight Council’s consultation on the draft Local Plan – the vast majority speaking out against overdevelopment and urbanisation they simply don’t want. Hundreds have filled venues across the Island to hear Bob Seely MP campaign against large-scale housebuilding which is not for Islanders, and many thousands more have signed his petition. Thousands regularly object to large-scale greenfield developments destroying their local countryside – but without a revised Local Plan all are powerless to act against large developers forcing unsuitable developments on us.”*

*“The Isle of Wight Council is listening to Islanders - we welcome the Council’s recently announced intention to challenge these flawed central government-driven housing targets, and conduct its own evidence-based assessment of local need. The Council must now deliver, and dedicate sufficient resources to put forward the most compelling case possible for exceptional circumstances to de-couple Island housing policy from the flawed central government-derived Standard Methodology for assessing housing need. Islanders young and old deserve a bespoke housing policy that serves real local housing need whilst recognising the constraints of fixed Island infrastructure and protecting our unique landscape.”*

#### **ABOUT THE ISLE OF WIGHT CPRE’S ISLAND PLAN CAMPAIGN**

The CPRE is campaigning in response to the Isle of Wight Council’s Feb-19 draft Local Plan, which proposed building around 10,000 new homes in a 15 year period, destroying hundreds of acres of much-loved Island countryside. The organisation is calling on the Isle of Wight Council to revisit the draft Plan, seeking exceptional circumstances from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and adopt a better local Isle of Wight Plan founded on:

- Protecting the Island’s rural landscape with a presumption against greenfield development in all but exceptional circumstances;
- Focusing on the housing needs of Islanders and promoting more balanced Island population demographics; and
- Supporting a vibrant and balanced Island economy.

### **ABOUT PIERS ELIAS**

Piers Elias has a joint honours degree in Mathematics and Economics (Loughborough, 1981-84) and has over 21 years' experience in Local Government working for the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit and then the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (now Tees Valley Combined Authority). His main role is to provide demographic insight and projections for school rolls, electors for Ward Boundary reviews, household, population and labour force projections for Local Plans and the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Strategy. He currently works as an independent demographer providing advice and guidance on a range of demographic issues including projections and methodology. During his time in Local Government he sat on Office for National Statistics (ONS) working groups for small area estimates, Local Authority population estimates and Census definitions. He was also the Local Authority lead on the Central and Local Information Partnership (CLIP) Population sub-group for 10 years and is well versed in ONS methodology.

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