

HDC Local Planning Executive Advisory Panel
Wednesday 10th April 2013

Harborough Housing Requirements Study 2013

Introduction

The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) makes it clear that in order to boost significantly the supply of housing, Councils must ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing across the Housing Market Area (in Harborough's case this is Leicester and Leicestershire). The Core Strategy annual requirement of 350 dwelling reflects the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) 2009. However, this is due to be revoked on 12th April 2013. Therefore work on the new Local Plan requires a fresh, objective assessment of housing need in the District.

Leicestershire authorities commissioned a Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Requirements Study (GL Hearn) in 2011 to help define new housing requirements to 2031. This suggested a range of projections up to 477 dwellings a year for Harborough. This work was carried out prior to the introduction of the Framework and did not take into account 2011 Census data. It recommended that further work should be done in respect of establishing a realistic level of economic growth to plan for, housing land availability, infrastructure requirements and development constraints.

Towards the end of 2012, recognising the urgent need to start work on an up to date objective assessment of housing needs in the District, Task Panel took the proactive step of approving the commissioning of a Harborough specific Housing Requirements Study.

In November 2012, independent consultants, GL Hearn, were commissioned to produce a local assessment of housing requirements using up to date demographic data (2011 Census data where possible) and economic forecasts for the period 2011-2031. Building on previous experience from the 2011 study, the methodology was developed to reflect Harborough's local circumstances and issues. The brief also required housing land availability, local development constraints and wider housing market area dynamics to be considered.

The final Harborough Housing Requirements Study Executive Summary and Final Report are now ready for publication (see Appendix A and B respectively). This paper outlines its main findings, gives arrangements for publication and sets out what further evidence is needed to ensure that housing requirement figures for the new Local Plan are robust and defensible.

Key Points

The study takes forward the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Requirements Study (2011) and updates projections based on past demographic trends using more recent data including 2011 Census information where available. Three demographic based projections are presented reflecting differing levels of migration.

Figure 1: Demographic Projections

Projection	Housing Numbers		% Employment Growth 2011-2031
	Per annum	2011-2031	
PROJ 1 (Sub-National Population Projections) 638 people per annum	405	8,100	8.0%
PROJ 2 (10 year migration trends) 690 people per annum	410	8,193	8.2%
PROJ 3 (5 year migration trends) 640 people per annum	388	7,770	6.8%

In addition three economic-led projections are set out, reflecting differing levels of employment growth. These are based on the potential future performance of the District's economy and how economic growth in surrounding areas could influence housing needs in Harborough. The study acknowledges that the employment growth set out in projections A and B would likely need to be supported by a continued supply of land and demand for strategic distribution development close to the M1.

Figure 1: Economic-led Projections

Projection	Housing Numbers		% Employment Growth 2011-2031
	Per annum	2011-2031	
PROJ A (Jobs Baseline: Experian forecast based on past economic performance)	543	10,856	17.4%
PROJ B (Residents in employment: Experian forecast but takes into account commuting)	518	10,360	15.7%
PROJ C (L&L jobs: assumes Harborough will perform similar to Leicester and Leics)	433	8,661	9.9%

Drawing the projections together the Study recommends that, based on current evidence, provision of 440 homes per annum over the 2011-31 period would provide a positive, realistic and defensible framework for strategic planning. This figure falls within the range of recommended projections presented in the Leicester and Leicestershire Study 2011 but is less than the upper end of the previous forecasts.

Provision of 440 dwellings per annum would meet the District's own needs taking account of likely future migration, as required by the Framework. It would provide the ability to support employment growth moderately above the HMA average in line with past trends, and support around 10% employment growth over the plan period. It would also provide sufficient flexibility to take account of changes in market and other circumstances as the development of the plan progresses.

The Housing Requirements Study also looked at potential constraints in the District to accommodate development. It reviewed evidence in the Council's published Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2011 update) and carried out a high-level review of development constraints within the District. It concludes that Harborough has capacity to achieve 440 homes per annum and that there are no significant strategic constraints currently identifiable which could limit the overall capacity of the District to accommodate the level of housing recommended.

Next Steps

Whilst this study is an important piece of evidence in the determination of housing requirement figures for the new Local Plan, it is only part of the picture and further work both at the Housing Market Area level and within the Council needs to be carried out.

It is proposed that:

- the Housing Requirements Study and Exec Summary are made available on the website as soon as practicable, making it clear that:
 - it is a background evidence document in the preparation of the new Local Plan and does not represent Council policy;
 - the Housing Requirements Study will be considered along with other evidence on housing sites, transport, flooding and landscape issues to confirm if this level of development is achievable over the period to 2031; and
 - the Council also has to work with other Councils in Leicester and Leicestershire to make sure that all current needs are being met in the wider housing market area;
- HMA partner local authorities are pressed to commit to the preparation and commissioning of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which should identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the plan period. The

imminent revocation of the RSS on 12th April 2013 means that the availability of an up to date SHMA becomes an even more urgent proposition. This will be a key piece of evidence in fulfilling the Duty to Co-operate;

- An update to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment is carried out in the first quarter of 2013/14 in order to have a clear picture of the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified need for housing over the Local Plan period; and
- A clear steer is given to Development Control and Planning Committee as to the status of the Housing Requirements Study in the determination of planning applications, particularly in the absence of the RSS. Emphasis needs to be placed on the Core Strategy figures as the approved housing requirement figures both for monitoring and development control purposes.

Lesley Aspinall
Senior Planning Policy Officer
l.aspinall@harborough.gov.uk