

Bridgnorth Plan Steering Group

Feedback on timescales for future national population projections and subnational population projections:

15 October – 12 November 2020

This document provides a response to the Office of National Statistics regarding their request for feedback regarding delivery of NPP and SNPP data for 2020.

It is submitted by:

- Clive Dyson, Chairman, (counc.clive.dyson@gmail.com) on behalf of:
- Bridgnorth Plan Steering Group
- The Steering Group is tasked with managing the development of a Plan for the Bridgnorth settlement, which has carried out consultation with residents and analysed the need for dwellings in the area. More information is available at www.bridgnorthtownplan.weebly.com.
- Our main use of population projection data is to understand likely population growth for Shropshire as a whole and to help determine, with other factors, a sensible level of population growth for the Bridgnorth settlement. See our response to question 2 below.

Section 6: Questions for users of national and subnational population projections

To determine the best route forwards on publication of national population projections and subnational population projections please provide us with your comments on the following:

1. What are your preferences around the timescales for future projections? Do you need 2020-based national and/or subnational population projections (please state when you would ideally need them) or would you prefer to wait until census data can be included? Do you have preferences for 2021- or 2022-based projections?
2. Why do you require national and/or subnational population projections? How will you use these?
3. What specifically do you require from national and/or subnational population projections? Please list any specific variant projections (excluding non-National Statistics variants) and tables that you require ([from the list of variants](#)). If it is possible, would a variant projection that potentially reflects the coronavirus (COVID-19) be beneficial?
4. Could a shorter release containing only datasets and information on how the assumptions were set meet your needs? (that is, without an accompanying statistical bulletin summarising the main findings).
5. What effect would it have on your use of 2020-based projections if it was decided to re-use 2018-based assumptions because of uncertainty over short- and longer-term demographic trends arising from the coronavirus (COVID-19)?
6. Do you have any other comments on national or subnational population projections?

Responses to key questions

1. Shropshire / Bridgnorth would need the 2020 based NPP and SNPP (and their derivative SNHP) projections as proposed in late 2021 or at your earliest convenience. The need arises because the SNPP/SNHP are proposed to be used by government to determine targets by English local authority area for future development. Subject to consultations which are currently concluding, and any subsequent legislation, many local planning authorities across England would be required to review their existing local plans in the early 2020's. Calculation of the planning authority's local housing need is a critical early step in plan preparation. Whilst production of projections using actual population data (as ascertained through the 2021 census) would be preferable to projections based on bi-annual population estimates these may not be available to an appropriate timescale to meet government timescales for the preparation of local plans.
2. Projections will be used to estimate population growth and help to validate the projections demonstrated in table 406 for household projections up to 2038 emanating from 2018 household projections. Validation and review of the plausibility of proposed projections from 2018 data will be carried out. This data (2020) will be reviewed against 2014, 2016 and 2018 data since significant differences in methodology have been implemented in 2018 that significantly impacts population projections and seems non plausible when projecting to 2038. The diagram below shows a simplified comparison of "housing need" (for the purposes of calculating local housing need) between 2018 based data and 2014 based data given the methodology changes implemented. Figure 1 demonstrates the concern regarding plausibility of projections when comparing 2014 data to 2018 data when projected to 2038. Here there is a 52% difference between the housing requirement which emanates from population prediction methodology. This difference seems to be driven by UK internal migration assumptions. Similarly, in terms of population change this is predicting over a doubling of the predicted population increase when compared to the current methodology. The plausibility of the current approach needs to be questioned and validated. Figure 2 comes from table MYEB2 of the ONS detailed dataset for the 2018 based projections, available at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesandnorthernireland>.

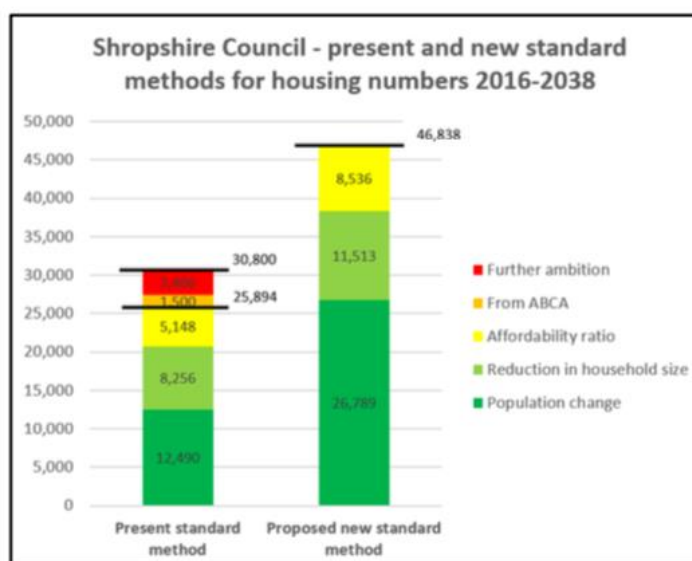


Figure 1: Housing Predictions 2018 and 2014 derived (CPRE data)

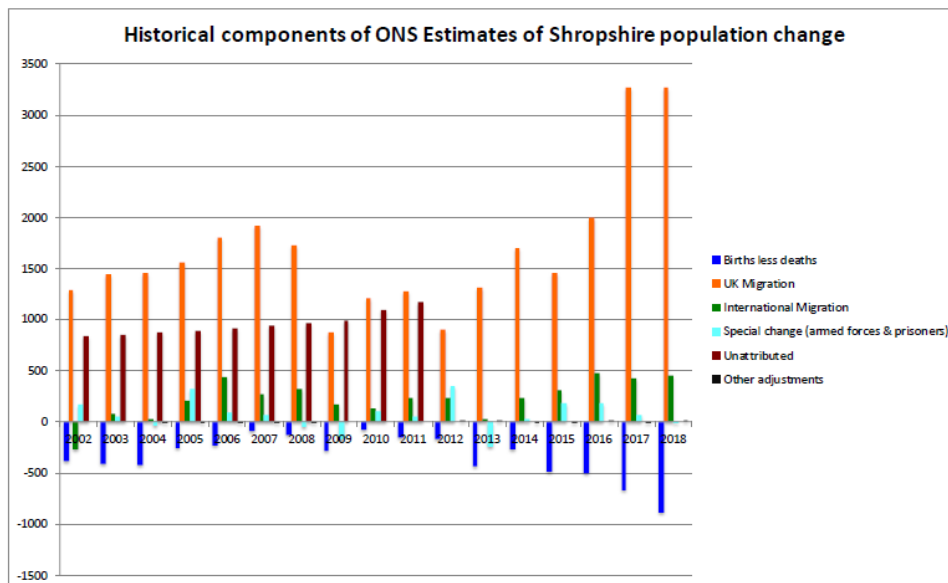


Figure 2: Population estimates 2018 data

3. Standard tables are acceptable, as long as they cover the base data that is used as a pre-cursor to defining table 406 for household projections. Even though household projections are out of scope source data will either validate or invalidate 2018 household projections for Shropshire. Naturally data will reflect reduced house building due to Covid, potential unforeseen reductions in population and reduced migration trends.
4. A shorter release just focussing on Shropshire would be adequate as long as it covers a review of plausibility in terms of assumptions and highlights how the analysis has been validated and alternative approaches compared. A review using other averaging methods would be acceptable such as, exponential moving averages.
5. Fundamentally the 2018 NPP and SNPP data does not seem plausible when we compare 2018 household projections to 2014 and 2016 data. There is a large departure in growth that will have a significant impact on Shropshire. A critical review of the methodology for Shropshire is required. We would not recommend re-use of the assumptions in the 2018 methodology, basing long term projections on just 2 years' estimate of internal UK migration. A closer look at long term and short-term trends is required, with potential consideration of techniques such as exponential moving average methods which could account for both long term and short-term peaks in trends.
6. The 2018 methodology seems to depart significantly from the methods used for 2014 and 2016 projections. Our investigation seems to highlight that this could have resulted from a method change.

See the ONS note on [methodology](#):

"Prior to the 2018-based population projections, internal migration used five-year averages based on the NHS Patient Registration Data System (NHS PRDS), NHS Personal Demographics Service (NHS PDS), NHS Central Register (NHS CR) and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data. Following the discontinuation of the NHS CR in February 2016, the 2018-based population projections' internal migration data use two-year averages based on NHS PDS and HESA data.

The decision to use two-year averages for internal migration in the 2018-based population projections was because analysis conducted by the ONS showed the new methods used

for the years ending mid-2017 and mid-2018 were more accurate and robust at picking up moves. There is a chance that using only two years of data will create unusual averages for local authorities experiencing abnormal migration patterns over this short period. However, we decided that although there may be risks associated with this change, the general increase in accuracy outweighs any impacts on individual local authorities."

Additionally, a closer look at Shropshire Councils Projected, realistic delivery capacity of dwellings is needed, as published in the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) dated March 2018. It is assumed that internal UK migration into Shropshire (mostly from neighbouring local authority areas) is driven by housing delivery. If this is the case, the interaction of the population estimates and projections with the process for determining local housing need creates a feedback loop in which successful delivery of housing produces a requirement that higher housing delivery is also needed in the future. Potentially using a 2-year horizon, for population growth prediction, of data rather than a 5-year (or longer) horizon could lead to significant over prediction of housing need. Significant dwelling delivery was seen in 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 however this building rate was significantly higher than the previous decade and surpassed the Housing requirement.

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/media/7231/amr-2017-18.pdf>

Table 11: Housing Trajectory

Financial Year	Housing Completions	Projected Delivery	Housing Requirement ¹
2006/07	1,228		1,190
2007/08	1,106		1,190
2008/09	1,265		1,190
2009/10	1,112		1,190
2010/11	984		1,190
2011/12	724		1,390
2012/13	847		1,390
2013/14	1,079		1,390
2014/15	1,155		1,390
2015/16	1,402		1,390
2016/17	1,910		1,390
2017/18		1,600	1,390
2018/19		1,600	1,390
2019/20		1,600	1,390
2020/21		1,650	1,390
2021/22		1,650	1,530
2022/23		1,650	1,530
2023/24		1,650	1,530
2024/25		1,650	1,530
2025/26		1,650	1,530

¹The annual housing requirement has been calculated using the trajectory for the phased release of housing land, identified within Core Strategy Policy CS10 and its supporting text.

Figure 3: Table 11 From AMR report dated March 2018 Shropshire Council

We would welcome open discussion regarding the 2020 NPP and SNPP data methodology to be adopted, discussion of how the model has been validated and how realistic the model is for Shropshire when compared to UK-wide growth prediction.