

KEEP OUR GREEN BELT GREEN (COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE)



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The myth of massive population growth in Coventry exploded today

The myth of massive population growth in Coventry – and the need to build houses in the Green Belt – has been exploded today by a significant report from the official Government watchdog which now requires the Office of National Statistics (ONS) to review its population projections on which future plans for thousands of new houses, many of them in the Green Belt, have been justified.

The report on 10 May by the Office of Statistics Regulation followed complaints to the UK Statistics Authority last November by CPRE-Warwickshire and the Coventry & Warwickshire Keep Our Greenbelt Green campaign. We submitted evidence to show that that population projections for Coventry produced by the Office of National Statistics were likely to have been over-stated. It was supported by local MPs and the West Midlands' Metro Mayor, Andy Street. It is these figures upon which the housing needs of Coventry and Warwickshire local planning authorities had been assessed and by which the numbers of new dwellings in current Local Plans were determined.

The Office of Statistical Regulation. (OSR) report of 10 May 2021 states: **“The [ONS] projections feed into local planning decisions which can have a long-term commitment and therefore the impact of issues can have far reaching consequences.”**

The OSR also states: “Our review was initiated in response to concerns raised with us in November 2020 regarding the population projections and mid-year population estimates for Coventry. The concerns were around the perceived inaccuracies of the population estimates on which the household projections and subsequent housing need are based.”

The OSR observes: “. . . there is a risk that ONS misses the bigger picture of what the population data inform and is not regularly sense checking what it does against local insight.”

It adds: “At the sub-national level, the accuracy of [future population] estimates is variable due to factors such as the size and mobility of the population in a given area. **We found that**

in some smaller cities that had a large student population [e.g., Coventry], the population estimates did appear to be inconsistent with, and potentially higher than local evidence suggests. . . . We expect ONS to report back to us with its plans for addressing our findings in July 2021."

Sir Andrew Watson, Chairman of CPRE Warwickshire, said "The Statistics Regulator's findings support our evidence and also emphasise that ONS projections affect local planning decisions and can have far-reaching consequences. Today, planning applications that would lead to thousands on houses being built on what was Green Belt around Coventry are on the verge of being granted on the basis of the flawed ONS population projections for Coventry. The planning authorities must now refuse the applications and review their Local Plans."

Note to Editors

The Planning applications on what was Green Belt land not yet granted permission are in the Keresley and Allesley Parishes within the City of Coventry, and at Burton Green and at Kings Hill in Stoneleigh Parish in Warwick District.

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