

MATTER 8 PROVISION & DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSING (20 June 2012)
Representor Nos 2827777 & 320641

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MATTER 8 - PROVISION AND DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSING– POLICY CS15

Housing Provision
Issue 1

Would the Council's modified Plan (December 2011) result in a serious undersupply of housing?

1. On the contrary we consider that the proposal for 26, 400 homes is excessive.

2. It does not seem logical that the North Somerset Core Strategy, which was agreed as sound by the Planning Inspector and was adopted in April 2012, where population increase for 2008-2033 was forecast by the ONS (2008 based projections, May 2010) as 82,800, projects new housing provision of 14,000, while South Gloucestershire, whose population growth for the same period was forecast as 73,300, proposes almost twice that figure.

3. South Gloucestershire cannot be immune from the most recent predictions on the short to medium term economic climate, with increased acknowledgement of double dip recession and the threat of "stagflation", not to mention the Eurozone "crisis". So even were higher than average numbers of jobs created in the area, a substantial proportion are likely to be taken by existing residents of South Gloucestershire and neighbouring areas who are seeking employment. Additionally the type of proposed employment created in the aerospace and high tech. industries is frequently filled by contract workers who are not resident – the scale of non resident employees is recognised in the CS and illustrated in the RTPI Map for England p.16 (Long distance commuting by wards) published in March 2012. Such in-commuting is by choice not through lack of housing.

**4. Student numbers are one of the many other variables whose pattern is changing. It is unrealistic to expect that the high level of growth in South Gloucestershire of the past 20 years will continue. The evidence is to the contrary. For example the closure of courses and declining student numbers were reported in Western Eye March 19th 2012, which states that recent figures have revealed the number of prospective students at the University of the West of England have dropped by almost 14%.
<http://www.westerneye.net/news/2012/03/decline-in-applications/>**

This compares with UCAS data giving the UK average decline as around 7% .

While many students live in halls of residence in the first year, they frequently occupy domestic dwellings in subsequent years. Falling numbers of staff and students will reduce demand and free up existing housing, especially in areas in the vicinity of UWE.

5. Given the widely acknowledged complexities of determining housing need and demand, the unknown implications for housing choice of the large projected rise in the over 75 age group and the uncertainties of the level of economic growth and job creation which will influence housing demand during the short to medium term of the CS period, the North Somerset approach of setting a proposed housing figure which is feasibly achievable and which will be reviewed in 2016 and 2021 seems to offer a much more "sound" approach.

Issue 2

How significant are current economic circumstances on the overall level of housing that is feasible during the plan period - could the amount of housing proposed in either the draft Regional Strategy or the Secretary of State's proposed alterations be delivered if targets were increased to these levels?

1. We consider that such targets are no longer applicable. Additionally if completions over 30 years average 1,240 pa during a period when there have not been any obvious restriction on land availability it is not conceivable how a markedly greater level of housing provision could be feasible during current short/medium term economic conditions. The current situation in the Spanish housing market demonstrates the risks of applying a misguided strategy which leads to overprovision of housing.

2. The argument is often put forward that housebuilding stimulates economic growth. However research published in the February 2012 document Inexpensive Progress by Vivid Economics on behalf of CPRE, the National Trust and the RSPB concludes that even the provisions of the Draft NPPF, which contained a higher level of stress on development than the final version, would be unlikely to have much effect on growth or employment in the short term.