

Bradford Local Plan Examination in Public

Comment regarding the addition of further UPC to the Bradford population projections produced by the ONS

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Date: 18th March 2015

Background:

Bradford Council has accepted population projections from its Consultants, Edge Analytics, which include additional immigration which it has added to the ONS projections. This is problematic since the ONS projections already factor in immigration (based, primarily, on historic trends). The inclusion has led to their increasing the housing requirement figure substantially.

The justification the Council has used for the addition is that the 2011 Census showed Unattributable Population Change occurring between the 2001 and 2011 Census dates. It is seeking to argue that these people are, by and large, immigrants whose presence was not captured between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses and who, therefore, were not factored into mid-term adjustments to projections issued by the ONS. It further argues that such 'unexpected' immigrants will be likely to arrive in corresponding numbers in future years (across the period covered by the Local Plan). The difficulty in assuming this is that the 2011 Census captured immigrants arriving between 2001 and 2011. There is no reason to suggest that 'unexpected' immigrants will arrive in Bradford in numbers in future and neither Edge Analytics, nor the Council, have presented any.

In addition, having contacted the ONS directly and spoken to Denise Williams I am now aware that the ONS has a reasonable explanation for the discrepancy between the projections based on the 2001 Census and the actual count at 2011. This explanation is set out in the extract overleaf.

Office for National Statistics, May 2005

Pgph 6: 'The 2001 Census in England and Wales under-estimated the population by around 275 thousand people, even after the initial adjustment for undercount. The 2001 Census collected information from usual residents only, with no attempt to collect information from visitors. This lack of visitor information has been perceived as a weakness of the 2001 Census, and it has been suggested that many people may have chosen to classify themselves as visitors in order to avoid completing a census return. It was decided to review all options for enumeration base before deciding on the appropriate base before deciding on the appropriate base for 2011.'

The document goes on to recommend that the 2011 census capture usual residents plus visitors to avoid this problem. This was in fact done, hence the 275,000 person discrepancy between projected and actual population size.

Ms Williams also informed me that Local Authorities might, on the basis of evidence or knowledge that was additional to that already used in formulating ONS projections, be justified in making adjustments to them. The example she used was that if the Council knew of a major commercial investment locally it might be justified in assuming the population would rise beyond the predicted level because of jobseekers moving into the area. The Council and Edge Analytics have not produced any such evidence and have already made adjustments to the projections based on economic factors that might lead to a growth in employment.

She also drew my attention to an anomaly in the data associated with the mid-term population estimates between the 1991 and 2001 Censuses. These are based on data captured from other sources (such as GP registrations and numbers on electoral rolls) at fixed points. In addition to enabling a check as to whether the population size is likely to match what was predicted these estimates are also used to adjust the projections. In Bradford's case there was a substantial discrepancy between the projected population and the mid-term estimate, with the latter being lower than expected. As a consequence the forward projection from that point to the 2001 Census was lowered. Ms Williams informs me that this would suggest that population growth between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses may not be as large as it appears and that Bradford might well be justified in reducing the estimates of future growth below that in the ONS figures. Put simply, this particular combination of anomalies makes it probable that the actual population increase between the 2001 and 2011 Census counts was not as great as it appears from the counts themselves. The people were here before 2001. If this is the case current ONS projections

will be inflating numbers because they are based on the increases observed between the two most recent censuses.

NB The most likely explanation for the unusually low population mid-term 1991-2001 estimate is that people left the record by removing themselves from the Electoral Roll in a bid to avoid the Community Charge which was introduced in 1991. As we've already seen, people were then able to remain out of the record by claiming they were 'visitors' and not completing a Census form in 2001 but were counted at 2011 because of the change to the enumerator.

There is also an additional problem in relation to the data presented by Edge Analytics in its update on housing requirements: The Bradford District Housing Requirement Study Updated Demographic Analysis and Forecasts (September 2014). The population figure for the 2011 Census point and upon which further calculations are based is given in the report as 522,542. The actual count was 517,000. The starting point for Edge analytics calculations is therefore already inflated. This represents 2,300 households if one uses the figure of 2.4 people representing an 'average' household size.