

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MB/CS/3772/13

Lord Dafydd Elis -Thomas, AM
Chair - Environment & Sustainability Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

13 September 2013

Dear Dafydd

**Environment and Sustainability Committee
Local Development Plans – Population and Household Forecasts**

Thank you for your letter dated 6 August regarding the Environment and Sustainability Committee's recommendations into the use of population and household forecasts in the preparation of Local Development Plans (LDPs).

I was particularly heartened with your key conclusion that it is practically feasible for local planning authorities (LPAs) in Wales to produce their own population and household forecasts. Confirmation of this point from the committee validates the existing policy approach set out in Planning Policy Wales (PPW) that LPAs can indeed deviate from our latest population and household projections where their evidence indicates otherwise. The critical point is to ensure that the evidence is credible and robust. To assist LPAs in their deliberations regarding housing provision in LDPs, the Welsh Government has made the model and data underpinning the latest projections available to all LPAs across Wales.

In response to the two specific recommendations from the committee, both are linked to work currently underway, notably how cross boundary planning issues will be dealt with through the proposed Planning Reform Bill (Recommendation 1) and potential variations on how population and household projections are considered (Recommendation 2).

With regard to Recommendation 1, a Consultation Paper and Draft Planning Reform Bill are due to be published later this year, based on a raft of evidence, including that of the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) Report. The IAG Report did indeed conclude that a wider approach than the current LDP process should be considered to better address cross boundary issues, such as identifying housing provision both collectively and on an individual LPA basis. This will be one of several issues addressed in following draft Bill and, consultation paper. I will report back to the committee how current concerns are proposed to be addressed towards the end of 2014, as indicated in your letter.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400
Correspondence: Carl.Sargeant@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Printed on 100% recycled paper

Secondly, Recommendation 2 does raise issues beyond my portfolio. Jane Hutt AM, Minister for Finance, has responsibility for publication of population and household projections for Wales. There have been fifteen LDP public hearing sessions where questions surrounding the components of population and household modelling have come under scrutiny, mirroring evidence presented to the committee. Officials from Planning Division and Welsh Government statisticians who produce the population and household projections for Wales are acutely aware of these issues, specifically the time span regarding specific data sets used in the methodology.

Local authority Population Projections for Wales (2011-based) were published on 23 July 2013. Following consideration from a technical working group these are based on data on births, deaths and migration in the 5 year period up to mid-2011. Variant projections (2011-based) are due to be published in late September. These will include a variant based on longer time trends for migration.

The technical group comprising both sets of officials and experts from LPAs will continue to consider the most statistically prudent way to move forward in the future. It is vital that any proposals are statistically robust and I will, as you have indicated in your letter, report the outcome of this technical analysis to the committee by the end of 2014.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Sargeant', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration

