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Matter A: Housing need and the housing trajectory (BDP policies PG1, TP28 & TP30)

Main issue: Does the Plan appropriately identify housing needs and does it seek to meet them in accordance with national policy?

Questions:

- 1) Is the Plan based on an objective assessment of the full needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area over the Plan period?
- 2) If not, what alternative objective assessment of housing needs should the Plan be based upon?
- 3) Does the Plan meet the full needs for market and affordable housing, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework*?

Currently the Birmingham Development Plan (BDP) does not utilize adequately objectively assessed evidence (OAE) to justify the decision to build 80,000 new dwellings. In this respect the plan does not meet the conditions of being positively prepared, justified, effective or consistent with national policy.

At present, in order to assess the housing needs of Birmingham, Birmingham City Council (BCC) have relied upon population projection figures from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) but these figures in themselves do not provide any OAE that building these dwellings will result in sustainable development (SD). In actual fact, the figures only indicate what level of economic migration might be expected if suitable accommodation was provided. Therefore, in the first instance, the BDP needs to make explicit that any decision to build additional housing would be to encourage economic migration and in turn encourage economic growth through population increase and secondly, the BDP needs to make explicit relevant OAE to show that this decision will likely result in positive social, economic and environmental SD outcomes.

At present, the plan does not refer to any OAE to show or prove that economic growth through population increase will result in SD. To the contrary, current statistics from the ONS show that in the period in which economic growth through population increase has been encouraged, this has had the effect of having a downward pressure on real net national disposable incomes and a downward pressure on the value of human and social capital. Similarly, the strategy of economic growth through population increase has resulted in an increased pressure on the availability of natural resources, an increased pressure on ecological ecosystems and an increased pressure on UK's ecological carrying capacity, which together has resulted in increased prices for energy and construction materials, a continued depletion of natural resources and the continued degradation of our green infrastructure. In all, current OAE shows that a strategy of economic growth through population increase has in fact reduced the standard of living for a great many of the UK population and so, far from seeing a positive effect on SD indicators, a strategy of encouraging economic growth through population increase has had negative effects (See appendices 1-3).

In conclusion, without adequate OAE to show that encouraging economic migration by increasing the housing stock of Birmingham which in turn has the objective of simultaneously encouraging economic growth through population increase, will indeed result in SD, the plan is not based on an objective assessment of the housing needs of Birmingham in order to achieve the goal of SD.

National policy clearly states that planning is to be in accordance with a presumption in favour of SD and so without adequate OAE to show that encouraging economic growth through population increase is able to fulfill SD objectives then the decision to build more dwellings in order to encourage population growth is unsound.

Proposed changes.

1. In order for the plan to meet the criteria of being positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy, then adequate OAE is required to show that encouraging economic growth through population increase will result in positive social, economic and environmental SD outcomes. This evidence alone will then provide justification for building additional dwellings for the purpose of facilitating population increase through economic migration.
2. If adequate OAE can be provided to justify a strategy of economic growth through population increase, then adequate OAE needs to be produced to show what level of economic growth through population increase will result in positive SD outcomes.
3. To produce adequate OAE to assess the vision and aspirations of local people in order to allow local people to shape their surroundings. To achieve this, I suggest BCC commission a Birmingham Peoples Referendum (BPR) to allow the people themselves to democratically decide what level of economic growth through population increase they wish for, accompanied by the above OAE in order to comprehensively inform the People of Birmingham the positive and negative SD impacts of economic growth through population increase.
4. Alternative to a BPR, once adequate OAE has been formulated, then a cost/benefit analysis can be conducted to determine what levels of population growth will have positive effects on SD indicators, if any.

Appendices

1. Measuring National Well-being: Insights across society, the economy and the environmental -May 2014.

Office of National Statistics <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/wellbeing/measuring-national-well-being/reflections-on-measuring-national-well-being--may-2014/info-insights-across-society.html>

2. Sustainable Development Indicators - July 2014.

3. British families will 'lose out' from influx of cheap labour from Romania and Bulgaria, Miliband admits in call to close low wages loophole – January 2014.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2534072/British-families-lose-influx-cheap-labour-Romania-Bulgaria-Miliband-admits-call-close-low-wages-loophole.html>