

---

**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation**

Sir Andrew Watson  
Chair, CPRE Warwickshire  
(By email)

10 May 2021

Dear Sir Andrew

### **Review of Population Estimates and Projections produced by ONS**

Following my letter to you on 3 December 2020, I am pleased to let you know that we have [published our findings today](#) concerning the population estimates and projections produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

It is not within our remit to regulate operational decisions made by government or local authorities, nor to form judgements on decisions made about government policy. Therefore, this review has solely focused on the population estimates and projections produced by ONS in the context of the principles in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Our review considered the population estimates and projections independently of the specific issues that were raised to us by individual areas. During our review, we conducted our own research and spoke to a number of expert demographers, academics and representatives from local government. We found that the population estimates for some cities such as Coventry, did seem to be inconsistent with, and potentially higher than, local evidence would suggest. This also appeared to be the case in a number of smaller cities with large student populations. Our review expands on this point further and also on our other findings. ONS has tried to tackle the limitations around data on highly mobile groups such as students and have acknowledged that there are issues.

As we have outlined in our letter to ONS, we feel that ONS did not adequately consider your concerns and more needs to be done to investigate the root and scale of the issue associated with students and outward migration. We expect ONS to report back to us with its plans for addressing our findings in July 2021. Our review recommends that ONS should work with you as it continues to develop new population estimates through its transformation programme.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson  
Director General for Regulation