

Corporate Scrutiny Committee – 12 April 2022

Written question from Huw Jenkins of Freshwater to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Why are we setting targets which are not based on local need?

Our local population declines as young people leave and the overall population increases as retired people and second homeowners move in (DIPS 2.18). The age demographic in Freshwater, with corresponding demands on the health sector, is 40% over 65 – the 8th oldest village in England. Coupled with exceedingly poor employment prospects, this is an unsuitable area for development that will only perpetuate the ageing population. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities said: 'Protecting the cherished countryside and green spaces is our priority' – yet we are planning to build on greenfield sites next to AONBs on a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The world is at a tipping point with climate change, yet we carry on regardless!

Response

The draft IPS looks at housing need on an island wide level and is supported by a comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment, originally undertaken in 2018 and subsequently updated in 2022. The HNA documents will be published as part of the evidence base alongside the Regulation 19 submission version of the IPS should Full Council decide to accept the recommendation to publish.

It is recognised that the mix of housing is critical for a number of reasons. The proposed policies of the IPS steer development towards new homes that are needed by Islanders and are more affordable for Islanders. These can contribute to addressing the age profile of Freshwater by attracting younger residents to the village and by providing affordable and accessible new homes to the village's existing younger residents.

If adopted the IPS will provide the strategic context for planning decisions and local communities can then expand as they see necessary in neighbourhood plans, which could include addressing localised issues such as second home ownership.

The draft IPS has been revised to better reflect the Island's Biosphere status, which recognises the interaction between humans and the environment and the appropriate balancing between the two. The IPS is committed to protecting the best and protected landscapes, as evidenced by no proposed allocations located within the AONB. The draft IPS also includes a dedicated AONB policy (something that the current Core Strategy does not have), which has been prepared in collaboration with the AONB Partnership.