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| Torbay Local Plan 2012-30 Housing Update: Call for Evidence and Sites  Regulation 18 Consultation. March 2021 | |

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# Torbay Local Plan 2012-30 Housing Update

## Regulation 18 Issues and Options and Call for evidence.

## Summary

This document is a “call for evidence” in relation to the update to the [Torbay Local Plan 2012-30](https://www.torbay.gov.uk/council/policies/planning-policies/local-plan/local-plan/)[[1]](#footnote-1). The council has resolved to update policies for the supply of housing (rather than carry out a wider update of local plan policies). Whilst the government has proposed to introduce comprehensive planning reforms, it has specifically asked local planning authorities not to stop work on development plans[[2]](#footnote-2).

In particular, evidence is sought on the following:

* The council’s approach of following the standard method of assessing housing need as a guide to housing needed within the existing Plan period of 2030
* Evidence about Torbay’s capacity to accommodate development.
* A “call for sites” as part of the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/council/policies/planning-policies/helaa/>
* Other issues that the Local Plan Update should address

More information, including background reports are available online at <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/council/policies/planning-policies/local-plan-update/>

## Introduction

The Torbay Local Plan 2012-30 (The Local Plan) reached its fifth anniversary in December 2020. Local Authorities are required to review local plans at least every five years, and update them if necessary.

Cabinet considered a review of the Local Plan in November 2020, including an assessment of how far the Plan could be treated as being up to date. The main issue identified was the shortfall in housing delivery against the Local Plan’s housing requirement, and the introduction in national policy of a standard method for assessing housing need.

Cabinet resolved to assess whether the local plan’s housing figure should be updated in line with the most recent standard methodology housing figure. This would require an update to Local Plan Policies SS1, SS12 and SS13. There may be a consequential impact on other policies dealing with housing supply, particularly Policy SS2 and neighbourhood area policies (SDT1, SDP1 and SDB1)[[3]](#footnote-3).

## Standard Method Housing Need

The government requires housing need to be determined on the basis of the standard method unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach [[4]](#footnote-4)

Cabinet on 18 February 2021 resolved to accept the Standard Method as a starting point for assessing housing need to 2030. This figure is very similar (although derived differently) to the outstanding Torbay Local Plan requirement. Both require about 6,000 dwellings to be provided by 2030[[5]](#footnote-5). The link in the footnote sets out in more detail how the standard methodology figure is calculated.

The Standard Methodology Local Housing Need figure is specified in the online Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and takes the 2014 based household projections for the next decade as a baseline and adds an upwards adjustment based on housing affordability. The Standard Method figure changes, particularly in response to affordability ratios; but in Torbay the 2021 figure is 586 dwellings per year.

Whilst this is an increase in the headline figure in the Local Plan’s housing trajectory set out in Policy SS13 (p92 of the Local Plan); the Local Plan figure requires a backlog of under completions to be met[[6]](#footnote-6). Figure 1 shows the calculation of the Local Plan housing requirement compared to the Standard Method figure.

### Figure 1 Local Plan Requirement Verses Standard Method[[7]](#footnote-7)

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|  | **Local Plan Requirement 2020-2030** | **Standard Method Local Housing Need 2020-2030** |
|  |  | 586 dwellings per year |
| 2020/21- 2021/2: 2 years @ 495 dwellings per year | 990 |  |
| 2022/23 to 2029/30 (8 years @ 555 dwellings per year | 4,440 |  |
| Plus backlog of undersupply 2012-20 (578 dwellings) | 578 | Backlog is not initially counted under the standard method. |
| **Outstanding housing figure 2020-30** | **6,008** | **5,860** |

## Need verses Capacity

Housing need is not the same as capacity. Although the Local Plan and Standard Method figures are similar (at 2020), they are derived differently. The current Local Plan figure is a requirement: i.e. a figure that takes broader constraints and policy considerations into account. The Standard Method is simply a national formula derived figure based on (2014) household projections and affordability. It does not take environmental constraints, economic factors or similar matters into account.

It may be that Torbay’s capacity constraints prevent this level of growth being achievable. Evidence is also sought in relation to this matter.

Additionally, comments are sought from the development industry and other about market capacity/ effective demand. We are aware that Torbay’s housing completions have consistently been lower than the standard method figure despite housing land being allocated for development.

## The Plan Period

A substantively different plan to that adopted in 2015 would require the plan period to be rolled forward to provide at least 15 years post adoption. However, accepting the Standard Method figure and seeking to bring additional development land forward to meet that number does not change the substance of the Local Plan, and therefore it is proposed to keep the existing Plan period of 2030. This is only possible because the Standard Method housing need figure (at 2020) is similar to the current Local Plan’s housing requirement.

## Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)

The HELAA will assess all options for meeting housing need. It will assess the suitability of land within Torbay for development. This includes re-considering land that has previously been assessed but rejected. It doesn’t necessarily mean that such land will be now considered to be suitable for development: but the HELAA is required to be a “leave no stone unturned” exercise. A HELAA is not a policy document and does not commit the council to proposing sites for development. The HELAA will however form the basis of making site allocations for consultation as part of the plan making process.

## Call for Evidence

In preparation for the Local Plan Update, a call for evidence is being carried out. If you own or are aware of sites which may have development potential, please notify us at [Future.Planning@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:Future.Planning@torbay.gov.uk) . Further details including a “call for sites” template are available at <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/council/policies/planning-policies/helaa/>.

This will take forward the earlier evidence provided for the Local Plan (at the time this was Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) from 2013[[8]](#footnote-8)) which is available on-line.

Evidence and views are also sought about Torbay’s scope and capacity to meet the standard method level of growth, as well as other issues and options that the council should consider as part of its Local Plan Update. It will be noted that the primary focus of the update is on housing supply, and other matters identified may need to be considered at a later review of the Plan. However, existing land designations may need to be amended to accommodate the housing development required - should the capacity exist and it be considered appropriate to do so.

The Torbay Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment is available on-line: <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/council/policies/planning-policies/local-plan/local-plan/> A refreshed SA Scoping Report is also available and SA of Alternative Options will be published shortly at <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/council/policies/planning-policies/local-plan-update/>.

## Next Steps

The results of this consultation and call for sites will be used to inform the Local Plan Update site allocations draft plan (Regulation 19). This will be supported by a Sustainability Appraisal report on both the options considered and specific site proposals.

This will either make site allocations to achieve the standard method level of need or as close as possible within capacity limits.

If meeting the Standard Method is not possible, for example due to environmental constraints, the Council will need to reassess its housing requirement, for example as part of wider Duty to Cooperate discussions with neighbours. This may result in the need for a further "issues and options" consultation.

This Plan will be the subject of consultation, and if necessary modification. It will then be submitted for examination by a Planning Inspector. The stages of plan preparation are summarised below.



## Dates for Comments

This consultation runs from Monday 22nd March 2021 to Tuesday 4th May 2021. Please provide comments by 23:59 on 4th May, preferably by email to [Future.Planning@Torbay.gov.uk](mailto:Future.Planning@Torbay.gov.uk) or alternatively in writing to: **Local Plan Update, Spatial Planning, Torbay Council, Floor 2 Tor Hill House, Castle Circus, Torquay, TQ2 5QW.** (Please note that due to current Pandemic restrictions, electronic communication is preferred if possible).

If promoting development sites, it would be very helpful if you could complete the template at: <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/council/policies/planning-policies/helaa/> . For complex or larger sites you may find it beneficial to appoint a planning agent.

1. This consultation is being carried out under Regulation 18 of the Local Plan Regulations [The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (legislation.gov.uk)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/767/regulation/18) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-for-the-future> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The record of decision and background information including the review of the local plan are available at:

   <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/DemocraticServices/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=3986>

   and <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/DemocraticServices/documents/b35750/Item%208%20Local%20Plan%20Review%20Local%20Development%20Scheme%20-%20Local%20Plan%20Working%20Party%20Recommendations%20Tues.pdf?T=9> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. NPPF paragraph 60 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The minute of decision are available at <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/DemocraticServices/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=4018>

   The accompanying report, which sets out how the Standard method calculation is derived is available at: <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/DemocraticServices/documents/g10002/Public%20reports%20pack%20Thursday%2018-Feb-2021%2017.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>

   The base date for the update is 2020-30: although from April there will be 9 years of Plan period remaining i.e. 2021-30. It is not proposed to extend the Plan period; although we welcome comments on this matter. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The backlog of under completions must be met over the next five years (“The Sedgefield method”). An alternative approach of meeting the backlog over the remainder of the Plan period (“The Liverpool Method”) must be agreed at Local Plan Examination stage. It makes no difference to the requirement over the Plan period.

   The Calculation is as follows: Household Projections (2014 based) 2020 = 62,940, 2030= 67,631 i.e. a growth of 4,691 households over 10 years. This gives **a baseline figure of 469 dwellings per year.**

   **Adjustment factor.** The latest published (2019) median affordability ratio for Torbay is 7.99 (that is median house prices were 7.99 times median work-based earnings). This gives an adjustment factor of 1.25 (7.99-4)/4 x0.25 +1 = 1.249. The baseline of 469 multiplied by the adjustment factor of 1.25 indicates a figure of 586 dwellings per year. This is the minimum Local Housing Need figure. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Note: DPA+ Dwellings per year. At 2021/2 the Local Plan requirement will be 6,008 minus completions at 2020/21. Due to the Pandemic these are expected to be low e.g. 150 dwellings. The standard method figure would be 586 x 9= 5274. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 2013 SHLAA website link : https://www.torbay.gov.uk/council/policies/planning-policies/evidence-base-and-monitoring/ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)