

Electorate Forecasting Model Overview

As part of the preparation work for the electoral review, a model has been prepared for forecasting future electorate numbers for various geographical tiers, from polling district up to borough ward and Borough Council level, for the period required by the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBCE) for England (2023-29).

The key data inputs into the model (though not an exhaustive list) are:

- Office for National Statistics (ONS) data on numbers of residential properties at Output Area (OA) level as of March 2010. OAs are very small geographical areas created by ONS for statistical purposes (Cheshire East contains over 1,000 OAs).
- Electoral Register data on elector numbers, both currently (mid-2023) and for earlier years (2017-22).
- Data from the Strategic Planning Team's housing database, covering housing completions from April 2010 up to March 2023 and forecasts of future housing completions up to the end of the electoral forecasting period (December 2029). Adjustments are made to allow for the more recent (2022/23 year) housing completions evidence that has been collected by the Strategic Planning Team since the Borough Council's last publication of housing forecasts (for its [Housing Monitoring Update](#), in February 2023). Windfall sites are excluded, because of uncertainty as to when and where such developments will occur.

The model's methodology takes account of the latest published LGBCE guidance on electorate forecasting and the forecasting approach used by Cheshire West and Chester Council for its electoral review in 2017-18, as well as the methodology adopted for the electorate forecasts for Cheshire East's recently-concluded Community Governance Review. The LGBCE has already seen a detailed draft report setting out Cheshire East's methodology and the Commission is happy with our intended approach, which is summarised below. *(It should be emphasised that, as of late July, the model is still undergoing tests and checks and the outcomes of those may necessitate further adjustments to the model's assumptions and calculations, though these adjustments are likely to be minor in nature.)*

- The model generates electorate forecasts initially for borough wards:
 - The ONS housing stock figures are aggregated to borough ward level, to produce estimates of the number of residential properties as of 2010.
 - Housing database data on 2010-23 completions and forecasted future completions (net of demolitions/ other housing losses) are added to the 2010 housing stock estimates, to produce forecasts, at borough ward level, of the number of residential properties up to 2029.
 - Estimates are made, for each borough ward, of the electors per property ratio (the average number of electors per residential property) in recent years, using a combination of the Electoral Register data and the ONS/ housing database data on numbers of residential properties.
 - For the first year of the forecast period (2023), the assumed electors per property ratio for each borough ward is based on the average ratio for recent years, rather than basing it solely on the latest year's ratio (which could be unrepresentative). For 2024 onwards, it is assumed this ratio falls very slightly, which reflects Local Plan demographic modelling and Census evidence that household size and the average number of adults per residential property in Cheshire East tend to decline gradually over the long term.
 - Future changes in the number of electors are estimated by applying the projected electors per property ratios for each borough ward to the forecast (net) increase in that ward's residential dwelling stock. However, in the case of expected future developments of specialist housing for older people, where the ratio will be very different, a separate assumption is made (of one elector per property, or one per bedroom in the case of communal care establishments). For the same reason, a separate assumption is also made for houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).
 - The resulting electorate forecasts for borough wards are adjusted, to ensure they tally with the actual (Electoral Register) numbers of electors in each ward as of July 2023.

- The electorate forecasts for the borough wards are aggregated, to produce forecasts at Borough Council level.
- Forecasts are then generated for each polling district, by taking its mid-2023 number of electors from the Register and adding on the forecast increase in electors over the 2023-29 period. This increase is calculated by taking the forecast increase in the polling district's housing stock over the 2023-29 period and multiplying this by the projected (2029) electors per property ratio for the local borough ward (but again making different assumptions for older people's housing and HMOs, as noted above). The resulting forecasted numbers of electors for each borough ward's polling districts are then adjusted (constrained) so that they sum to the forecast number of electors for that borough ward. (The forecasting methodology takes account of the fact that some housing development sites span two or more polling districts and the model consequently estimates the proportion of those sites' housing that is expected in each polling district.)
- Forecasts for other electoral tiers are generated by aggregating the (constrained) polling district forecasts to parish ward, parish and parish council level.
- The resulting forecasts are checked against other demographic evidence (including ONS' latest subnational population projections (SNPPs) and other ONS population data) and alternative assumptions are tested (such as constraining the electoral forecasts to the SNPPs), to check they are robust and more credible than potential alternative methodologies.