Review of Research on
Migration Influences and Implications for
Population Dynamics in the Wider South East

Providing state of the art evidence
to local authorities in the East of England

Report to the East of England Local Government Association

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Foreword: Aims and Issues for the Project

The aim of this project for the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) is to meet the need for authorities across the Wider South East (WSE) to understand the dynamics of migration – so far as possible from existing research and readily available data – particularly in relation to implications of future growth of the capital. Its institutional context is a development of joint work with the Greater London Authority, London Councils and South East England Councils to enable possible collaboration on strategic issues of common concern, between WSE authorities, during the production of the next London Plan, on which work is currently underway.

A specific concern noted in the brief is that the Mayor of London’s initial (October 2016) consultation document – A City for All Londoners expressed a desire to contain/accommodate most/as much as possible of its growth within London, rather than all of such growth as had been indicated in previous London Plans. What this difference may actually mean or signal is not clear, for a couple of reasons. One is that (as the brief says) adopted and emerging local plans elsewhere in the WSE ‘already incorporate elements of growth from London through established migration trends’. Another is that, in practice, since establishment of the GLA, rates of house-building in London have consistently fallen short of the targets set out in Mayoral Plans, though its population growth rate has not. In effect then the city’s growth has actually been accommodated, though not as successive Plans have intended.

EELGA’s brief draws an implication from the Mayor’s consultation document that the amount of migration from London to be incorporated in future plans for other parts of the WSE ‘may increase’. Whether (and in what ways) that is the case potentially involves issues of planning policy (including what ‘London’s growth’ should mean) that are outside the remit of this report. The Mayor’s document does, however, certainly open up a set of analytic issues about how London and other sub-regions of the WSE interact in terms of population movements – via their overlapping housing and labour markets - that have been substantially ignored in previous rounds of the London Plan.

1 The Wider South East is a territory covering that of the Greater London Authority and of the (surrounding) former Government Office Regions of the East of England and the South East.
3 The actual statement in the brief is: ‘whilst current adopted and emerging local plans already incorporate elements of growth from London – largely through existing migration trends – there is a clear indication that these rates may increase’. Such increases might be in terms of: actual rates of net inflow (as compared with recent experience); or in official projections of these (as compared to previous sets of projections); and/or in what areas are normatively expected to provide for.
At a more technical level, thought about these issues has also been stimulated by some new sets of London population projections - with comparable ones for all WSE districts (GLA, 2017) - affected to varying degrees by an apparent return, after an interruption of 5-10 years, to the high rates of net out-movement from London to the rest of the UK (notably other areas within WSE). Assessing the appropriateness of these projections is not part of our brief. But, by trying to understand what has caused the rather large fluctuations in London migration during the last 15 years or so, we hope to clarify what the implications may be of taking some or all of this period as a baseline for the population forecasts adopted in the London Plan and others within the WSE.

Empirically then (and because of the availability of a consistent ONS data-set) a particular focus will be on the years from 2001, to provide a context for judgements about the implication of working with particular base periods, by looking at the ups and downs of London migration since the last Census. To put these in a longer term context, and assess what might be ‘normal’ for areas in the WSE, our discussion of migration trends/patterns in chapter 4 also looks at a period of up to 40 years, for which a consistent (though less detailed) demographic data-set is now also available.

Substantive work on this report was completed in early September 2017, before publication of the GLA’s new set of population and household projections, and well before that of the Mayor’s Housing Strategy and New London Plan – of which no account could therefore be taken in this Technical Report.

Though primarily a review of ‘the state of the art’ in terms of migration research relevant to areas in the Greater South East, it was evident that within the last 20 years or so, the balance of research work had shifted from domestic (within UK) movements to newer/enhanced international flows. To fill some of this gap, this report also contains summaries of new and ongoing work by the authors (some undertaken specifically for this report), for which full research papers/documentation are not yet available – though publication of much of it is planned for 2018.

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4 GLA demographers have worked up projections based on 5, 10 and 15 year base periods, taking the middle set as their central forecasts, on the (reasonable) basis that ‘For a long-term projection informing strategic planning, a migration rate which is representative of the character of migration across a full economic cycle is, more robust than one which captures only part of that cycle’ (GLAI, 2017, p.2).
Glossary of Abbreviations

A8 and A2: The two groups of Eastern and Central European countries acceding to the European Union, whose citizens were granted access to work in the UK; the first group (notably Poland) in 2004; the second group (notably Romania) effectively from 2014.

BRES: Business Register and Employment Survey, a regular ONS survey of employers, providing establishment level data on employee numbers by industry and broad occupation.

CBD: Central Business District, defined by function rather than area.

CML: Council of Mortgage Lenders.

DCLG: Department of Communities and Local Government.

DfT: Department for Transport.


GLA: Greater London Authority.

GVA: Gross Value Added, a conventional measure of economic output, adapted from the older Gross Domestic Product.

LADs: Local Authority Districts, i.e. boroughs, county districts and unitary authorities.

LFS: Labour Force Survey, a large scale quarterly household survey undertaken by the ONS, also forming the basis of the Annual Population Survey.

LSOA: Lower Super Output Areas, the lowest level of aggregation of output areas for which consistent data are provided in successive Censuses (from 2001).

NINO: National Insurance number, referring to counts of National Insurance Numbers/certificates issued to migrant workers on first entry to the UK labour market.

NOMIS: National Online Manpower Information System, an ONS gateway to local labour market and population data.

NUTS: Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics, (acronym from the French version) a set of Europe-wide territorial grouping, at different levels (from 1 to 4), developed and regulated by the European Union.

OMA: The Outer Metropolitan Area, a ring of areas around London (with which it forms the London metropolitan region), first defined by government statisticians in the 1960s.


OWSE: The Outer Wider South East, that part (or ‘ring’) of the WSE beyond the OMA.

QLFS: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, i.e. results from the Labour Force Survey published for specific quarters rather than calendar years.

RoWSE: The Rest of the Wider South East, excluding (only) London, i.e. the former South East and East of England Government Office Regions.

RUK: The Rest of the UK, (generally) excluding both the WSE and its fringe.

TfL: Transport for London.

SWSE: The Still Wider South East, an ad hoc area used in this report, which adds a Fringe of counties and districts in adjoining regions to the north and west of the Wider South East.

TTWA: Travel to Work Areas, defined by ONS on the basis of Census data, to distinguish areas which are relatively independent in commuting terms, with most local residents working within the area, and most local workers living within it.

WSE: The Wider South East, including Greater London and the areas of the former Government Office Regions for the South East and East of England.