

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

28 June 2022

Councillor Rebecca Breese

Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Built Environment and Rural Affairs

Report Title	Northampton Housing Action Plan
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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Housing Action Plan

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek Members' approval on the contents of the Housing Action Plan and its publication on the website in line with Government requirements.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Every year, the Government publishes the results of the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) for each local authority. The test was introduced by the National Planning Policy Framework (2018). It seeks to measure the rate at which new homes are created in a council's area against the authority's housing requirement over a three-year period. Councils which pass the test (this equates to at least 95% of the required housing numbers to be delivered) do not need to produce a housing action plan, but Councils that do not pass will need to undertake certain actions depending on the outcome of the test measurement.
- 2.2 On 14 January 2022, the Government published its latest results for the housing delivery test for the three years ending April 2021. Northampton was required to deliver 2029 dwellings over the three-year period, but managed to deliver only 1826 dwellings, which is 90% of the required number. As a consequence, the Council is required to publish a Housing Action Plan for Northampton which demonstrates what actions it will take to ensure that housing delivery will meet the 95% target required by the Government.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee approve the Housing Action Plan for publication on the Council's website, in line with Government requirements.

4. Reason for Recommendations (NOTE: this section is mandatory and must be completed)

- 4.1 To accord with Government requirements.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 Every year, The Government publishes the results of the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) for each local authority. The test was introduced by the National Planning Policy Framework (2018) and seeks to measure the rate at which new homes are created in a Council's area against the authority's housing requirement over a three-year period. Councils which pass the test, which requires that at least 95% of the required dwellings are delivered, do not need to do anything. However, Councils that do not pass need to undertake certain actions depending on the outcome of the test measurement. The actions required are dependent on the delivery test result. As Northampton only delivered 90% of its requirement, the Council is required to publish an Action Plan which explains why delivery was less than expected and what actions will be taken to ensure that the situation improves. This needs to be published within six months of the results being made available. Therefore, this Housing Action Plan must be published by the 14 July 2022.
- 5.2 The HDT covers the previous three financial years. For the 2021 measurement, the following years were assessed: 2018/19; 2019/20 and 2020/21. Because this period is prior to the Vesting Day for West Northamptonshire Council, the Government carried out separate housing delivery tests for Northampton, South Northamptonshire and Daventry. The Daventry and South Northamptonshire areas both passed the housing delivery test. The Housing Delivery Test

compares the net homes delivered over three years to the homes required over the same period. The formula for calculating the latest test was as follows:

Housing Delivery Test (%)= Total net homes delivered over 3 year period divided by the total number of homes required over 2 year 7 month period

- 5.3 The report is required to provide explanations as to why housing delivery was below 95%. The Housing Action Plan outlines the key reasons including the slow delivery of the Sustainable Urban Extensions. This slower rate of growth can be attributed to two reasons. First, when the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy was being prepared, there was an expectation that the market conditions would remain at a high rate and high housing numbers could continue to be delivered. That proved to not be the case. Secondly, resources within the Council's Northampton Development Management section continued to be very stretched and this impacted on the time taken to approve planning applications.
- 5.4 A series of actions has been suggested in the Action Plan including an outline of the opportunities presented by the creation of West Northamptonshire Council to replace the previous sovereign councils. Opportunities in terms of shared resources, the appointment of new recruits and the potential to consider planning performance agreements form part of the actions to help improve housing delivery rates in Northampton. Also of importance is the role that the Regeneration team play in delivering housing as part of the wider regeneration schemes.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 The Government requires housing action plans to be published where housing delivery over the last three years has not met the 95% target. This Northampton Action Plan will need to be published by 14 July 2022.
- 6.2 If Members agree to publish the Housing Action Plan, then the Government's requirement will be met. There will be clarity in terms of how Northampton will capitalise on the opportunities provided by the creation of West Northamptonshire Council by creating more certainty for developers and landowners, as well as details on what actions the Council will take to improve the environment in which delivery rates can improve.
- 6.3 If Members choose not to publish the Action Plan, then this will contravene the Government's requirement.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 The council's costs will be covered by the finance already agreed to recruit new members of staff to deal with planning applications.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 The Government published these housing delivery tests results in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2018).

7.3 Risk

7.3.1 There are no significant risks arising from the publication of this report.

7.4 Consultation

7.4.1 Internal consultation with colleagues in Development Management were undertaken.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.5.1 Not applicable.

7.6 Climate Impact

7.6.1 The report seeks to identify actions which will result in increasing housing delivery rates in Northampton. Any housing developments will need to comply with updated planning policies including the Northampton Local Plan Part 2 (currently undergoing examination) which contains policy guidelines which address climate change issues and how schemes can be delivered in a sustainable manner.

7.7 Community Impact

7.7.1 The report seeks to identify actions which will result in increasing housing delivery rates in Northampton. This will ensure that Northampton's housing requirements will continue to be met.

7.8 Communications

7.8.1 The Housing Action Plan will be published on the website in line with the council's communications and accessibility guidelines.

8. Background Papers

8.1 Northampton Housing Action Plan (July 2022)