



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

**NORTHAMPTON
HOUSING ACTION PLAN (July 2022)**



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ONE INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1 The Government publishes the results of the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) for each local authority on an annual basis. The test was introduced by the National Planning Policy Framework in 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 do not need to do anything, but Councils that do not pass will need to undertake certain actions depending on the outcome of the test measurement.

1.2 The HDT covers the previous three financial years. For the 2021 measurement, the following years were assessed: 2018/19; 2019/20 and 2020/21. 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 follows:

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

**For the 2021 measurement, there is a reduction in period for measuring total homes required. Usually, this would be measured over a 3-year period, but an 8-month period has been used for the 2020/21 monitoring year. This is to account for the considerable variations in levels of housing delivery as local planning authorities and construction industry faced disruption on a national, regional and local level due to the pandemic. Additionally, an 11-month period has been used for the 2019/20 monitoring year. This was to account for the disruption to housing delivery and monitoring caused by the first national lockdown in March 2020.¹*

1.3 On 14 January 2022, the Government published its latest results. 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. Because between 85% and 95% of the target has been delivered, the Council was required by the Government to publish a Housing Action Plan for Northampton within six months of the publication of the test measurement. i.e. by 14 July 2022. Further information can be found in the Table 1.

Table 1:
Housing delivery test result and consequence (Northampton)

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Total homes required	Total homes delivered
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¹ [Housing Delivery Test: 2021 measurement technical note - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/104222/housing-delivery-test-2021-measurement-technical-note.pdf)

Number of homes required	796	731	503	2029	
Number of homes delivered	597	576	653		1826
Housing delivery test 2021 measurement	90%				
Housing delivery test 2021 consequence	Action Plan to be prepared				

Source: [2021 HDT Final Results .ods \(live.com\)](#)

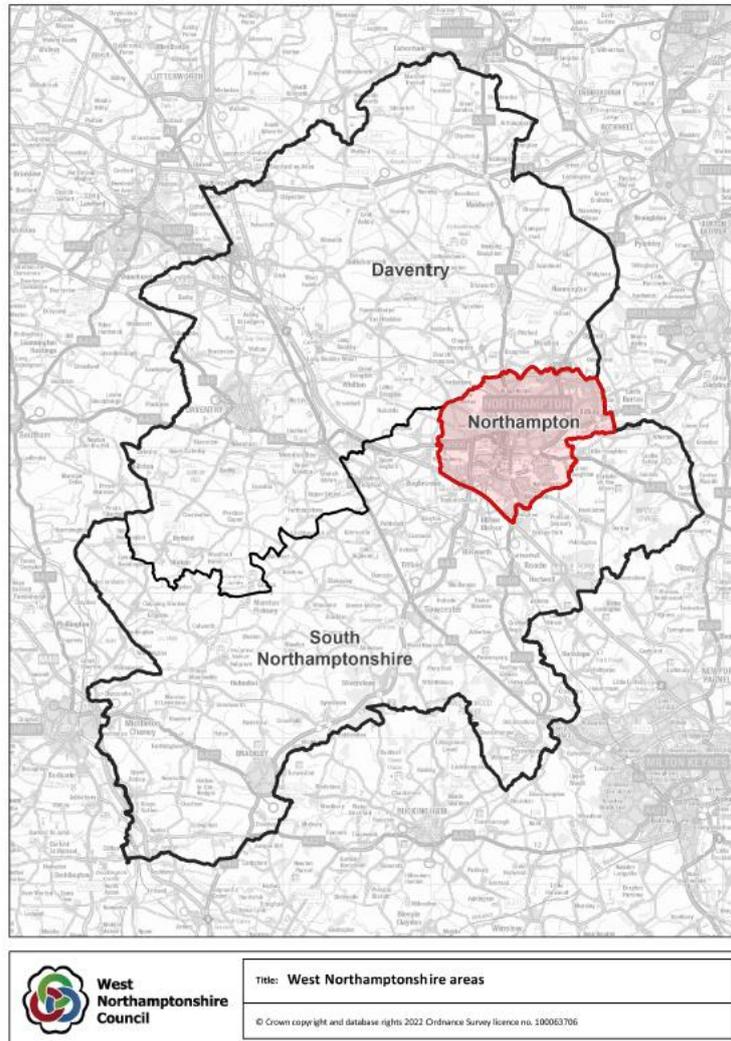
1.4 It should be noted that in April 2021, West Northamptonshire Council was formed, combining the previous local authorities of Northampton Borough, Daventry District, South Northamptonshire Councils and Northamptonshire County Council (see Map 1).

1.5 The Government has indicated that for authorities that have recently reorganised to form new unitary or single tier authorities, the following applied to 2020/21 and it is expected that the same could be applied in 2021/22:

Local authorities who formed new authorities (unitary or new lower-tier authorities) can choose to have their Housing Delivery Test published using their former authority boundaries or their new unitary boundaries for the purpose of the measurement until the fifth anniversary of the new authority's existence. Local authorities have the option to choose either approach over this period².

² [Housing Delivery Test: 2021 measurement technical note - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Map 1 West Northamptonshire areas



Aims of this report

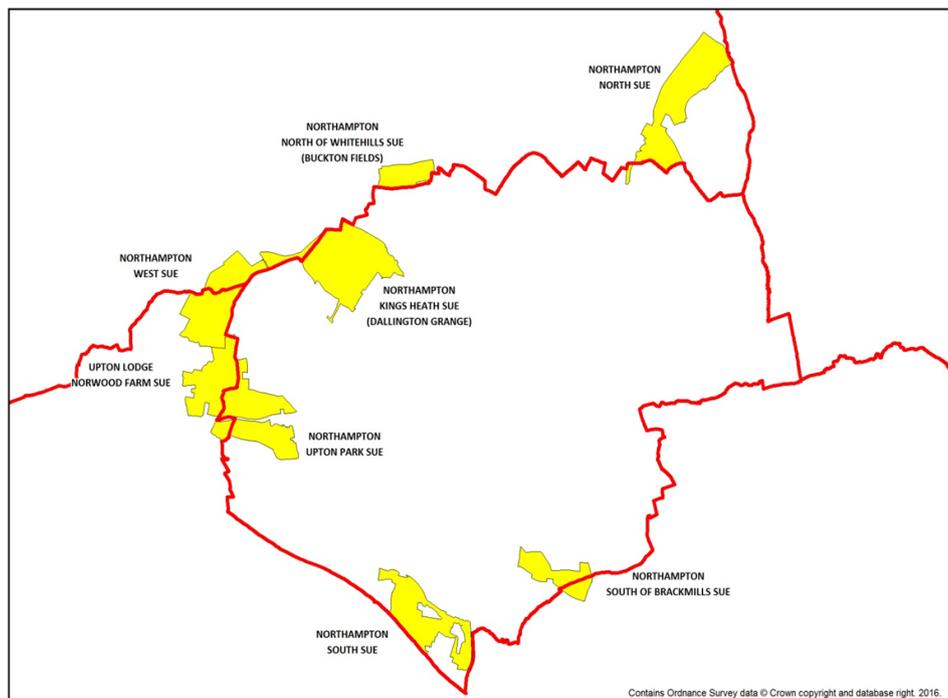
1.6 The aims of this report are to:

- identify the root causes for the housing under delivery
- identify key actions which could be undertaken to ensure that every effort is made to enable housing delivery and to meet the targets set out in the development plan
- set out the timeline when these actions are expected to begin

TWO POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 As part of its strategy to meet Northampton's housing needs to 2029, the Joint Core Strategy allocated Sustainable Urban Extensions in the Northampton Related Development Area (see Map 2), which includes the whole of the former Northampton borough and adjoining parts of the former Daventry District and South Northamptonshire Council areas (see Map 2). The strategy was heavily reliant on these SUEs providing the numbers of dwellings needed. In Northampton itself, about 7,100 dwellings (or 37%) were expected to be delivered by those parts of the SUEs in the former borough, out of the total of 18,870 dwellings.

Map 2
Sustainable Urban Extensions in and around Northampton



2.2 The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy set out housing trajectories for the NRDA, Northampton and those parts of Daventry and South Northamptonshire not in the NRDA.

THREE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM OF UNDER DELIVERY IN NORTHAMPTON

3.1 Table 2 below shows the dwelling completions in Northampton between 1st April 2011 and 31st March 2021. This shows that housing completions were 4,278 dwellings below the housing requirement to 2021.

Table 2
Housing completions and delivery in Northampton to 2021

	Housing Requirement 2011-2021	Actual Completions (Net Additions) 2011-2021	Housing (Net Additions) 2011-2021	Delivery of Dwellings compared to the Requirement
Total dwellings	11,236	6958		-4,278

3.2 Table 3 sets out the Joint Core Strategy trajectories and shows that there have been significant shortfalls in delivery over a number of years both in Northampton and the wider NRDA.

Table 3
Housing requirement for Northampton and the wider NRDA 2011 - 2029

Year	Total Dwellings expected in Northampton	Total Dwellings delivered in Northampton	Total Dwellings expected in the NRDA	Total Dwellings delivered in the NRDA
2011/12	423	423	423	423
2012/13	516	516	516	516
2013/14	785	834	785	834
2014/15	1,039	877	1,129	877
2015/16	1,132	739	1,392	883
2016/17	1,292	831	1,742	1,174
2017/18	1,426	866	1,981	1,086
2018/19	1,544	589	2,154	794
2019/20	1,588	578	2,418	742
2020/21	1,491	653	2,291	942
2021/22	1,355	1,156	2,130	1,517
2022/23	1,278		2,123	
2023/24	1,025		1,875	
2024/25	900		1,735	
2025/26	875		1,600	
2026/27	815		1,565	
2027/28	695		1,370	

2028/29	694		1,244	
Total 11-29	18,873		28,473	

FOUR ROOT CAUSES OF UNDER DELIVERY IN NORTHAMPTON

4.1 The housing delivery trajectories set out in the JCS were heavily influenced by economic conditions and intelligence at the time it was being progressed. The view was taken that housing delivery rates would recover from the low base caused by the economic downturn of 2008, reaching levels exceeding 1,000 dwellings per year from 2014/15 to 2023/24. In practice, these delivery rates did not materialise. A major reason for this is that there has been very slow progress in housing delivery at the SUEs on which Northampton's housing numbers have been so heavily reliant. It is inevitable that larger developments take longer to build out than smaller ones for reasons including the need to negotiate complex Section 106 Agreements to provide the necessary infrastructure. Because a high proportion of its housing is to be delivered through large SUEs, Northampton has been disproportionately affected by this. This effect has been further exacerbated by the less favourable market conditions that have existed locally in comparison to the more rural parts of West Northamptonshire where delivery has more closely followed the trajectories set out in the JCS.

4.2 Table 4 shows in detail how slow the rates of housing delivery were at the SUEs in Northampton over the three years from 2018/19 to 2020/21. The table clearly illustrates that the developments at the SUEs have not progressed as rapidly as predicted and shows the annual completion rates which are lower than the trajectory. For instance, for Northampton South SUE, approval has been granted for the first phase of the scheme in 2017, but only 98 had been completed by 2021/22. For the South of Brackmills SUE, reserved matters were approved in 2019, and only 41 of the 385 dwellings approved have been completed to date.

Table 4
Northampton related Sustainable Urban Extensions – Completions

SUE name	Planning Permission	Capacity	Planning Status	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	Total Completions	Remaining
N5 – Northampton South SUE	N/2013/1035 OL approved for 1000	651	C	0	0	0	0	0	651
	Phase 1 - N/2017/1566 RM approved for 349	349	C	0	0	0	98	98	251
N6 – Northampton South of Brackmills	N/2013/0338 OL approved for 1000	615	C	0	0	0	0	0	615
	Phase 1 - N/2019/0048 RM approved for 385	385	C	0	0	0	41	41	344

	N/2017/1369 OL approved for 115	115	C	0	0	0	0	0	115
N7 – Kings Heath SUE	N/2014/1429 OL approved for 3000	3000	C	0	0	0	0	0	3000
N9 – Upton Park SUE	N/2011/0997 OL approved for 1000		C					0	
	N/2018/0426 RM approved for 860	860	C	0	0	4	130	134	726
N9A – Northampton Upton Lodge SUE	N/2017/0091 OL AIP for 1400	1400	C	0	0	0	0	0	1400
	N/2018/0774 Full approved for 118	118	C	0	0	33	64	97	21
	N/2010/0301 Full approved for 80	80	C	0	0	0	0	80	0

Determination of planning applications

4.3 The previous Northampton Borough Council Development Management team delivered a 100% response rate in determining planning applications for major housing development within the statutory timeline over the 3-year period. However, for the large housing sites, many of the applications dealt with were approvals in principle, such as the outline planning application for Upton Lodge SUE with negotiations ongoing regarding the Section 106 agreement, or outline approvals, such as Dallington Grange (or Kings Heath Sustainable Urban Extension) where a reserved matters application is yet to be submitted.

FIVE

THE SITUATION IN 2022

5.1 The outcome of the latest housing monitoring exercise shows that completion rates have increased for the year 2021/22. Table 5 below shows that the completion rates have increased to above 1,000 for the first time, in 2021/22. It is expected that, following the recent increase in completions, the Housing Delivery Test for the 2021/22 will be 95% or more.

Table 5
Housing completions

Year	Completion
2017/18	866
2018/19	589
2019/20	578
2020/21	653
2021/22	1,156
Total	3,842

5.2 Regarding the determination of planning applications, matters are looking less favourable, for the period 2021/22, 77.2% of planning decisions were delivered within the statutory timescale. This can be attributed to the impact of transitional effects with the move from three local planning authorities to one, and higher than normal staff turnover.

SIX

ACTIONS FOR IMPROVING DELIVERY

Overview

6.1 This section sets out a series of actions that the Council is already undertaking and new actions that it will take to seek an uplift in delivery rates.

West Northamptonshire Council

6.2 The Council published its first Corporate Plan in 2021. The plan sets out six priorities including the delivery of thriving towns, through sustainable planning for growth. The Council continues to identify ways to support growth including the aim to complete an infrastructure road map, through the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan, to support development.

6.3 This will give certainty to developers that the Council supports growth and will continue to work in partnership with the relevant sectors to deliver growth.

Progression of the Northampton Local Plan Part 2

6.4 The hearing sessions of the Northampton Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2) took place in November 2021. This followed the submission of the Northampton Local Plan Part 2 for independent examination in February 2021.

6.5 The LPP2 is still going through examination. The Plan includes the proposed allocation of 53 sites for residential development. These sites were allocated following a rigorous assessment of over 500 sites. Developers, landowners and site promoters were invited to submit their sites for development allocation consideration as part of the Local Plan Call for Sites exercise in spring 2016. The sites which were subsequently selected for allocations have gone through a sustainability appraisal process, habitats regulations assessment and a viability assessment. In undertaking the assessments, the Council worked closely with site promoters and landowners to ensure that the allocations were deliverable and developable. Statements of Common Ground were also agreed for the larger sites.

6.6 In January 2022, the Planning Inspectors issued their [post hearing letter](#), indicating that the plan was capable of being found sound and that proposed main modifications would need to be prepared and released for public consultation. They indicated that this should only be undertaken once the Mitigation Strategy for the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area had been adopted. The Mitigation Strategy was adopted on 16 March 2022.

6.7 Subject to the views of members, the Proposed Main Modifications to the LPP2 are expected to be released for public consultation in the summer of 2022.

6.8 This demonstrates that the Council is progressing well towards the adoption of an updated local plan, thereby providing certainty to developers in terms of allocations and the determination of planning applications using an up-to-date Part 2 Plan based on recent evidence. The Council continues to work closely with developers and

landowners through the annual housing monitoring exercise, the preparation of the strategic plan for West Northamptonshire and the progression of its updated Local Plan.

Housing land availability monitoring

6.9 The Council continues to monitor progress in housing delivery. In preparing the LPP2, the Council agreed a number of Statements of Common Ground (SoCGs) with developers regarding housing delivery numbers and timescales on their sites. Importantly these identify any barriers to delivery. The Council can then identify areas where it might be able to assist through funding or collaborative working. From April 2022, the Council will seek to agree SoCGs for all sites of 50 or more dwellings in Northampton. The Council will increase its monitoring of sites of 50 dwellings or more to twice a year so it can continue to ascertain progress made in the housing development environment.

West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan

6.10 The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS, forming the West Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 1) was adopted in 2014.

6.11 A Strategic Plan is currently being prepared to replace the JCS, covering the whole of the West Northamptonshire area, including Northampton. It has reached the Options stage of the plan preparation process. Included in the progress to date is a strategic land availability assessment, a process which invites landowners and developers to put forward their sites for consideration for strategic development allocation.

Developers Forum

6.12 A Developers Forum was established by Northampton Borough Council, which brought together a wide range of developers with interests in land within its administrative boundary.

6.13 The Council will re-introduce the Developers Forum, and will invite developers and site promoters to a quarterly meeting with relevant representatives from the Council including officers from Development Management, Planning Policy and Assets.

Development Management

6.14 West Northamptonshire Council is in the process of reviewing how its planning services can be reconfigured.

Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs)

6.15 PPAs have not been entered into in recent years in the Northampton area. The key reason for this is that there were insufficient staff to provide a dedicated service. As part of the review of its planning services the Council will explore opportunities to make PPAs available in the Northampton area in future.

Fast-tracked planning decision making

6.16 Whilst there may be opportunities to assess whether certain applications can be prioritised, conditions simplified or their discharge phased, the Northampton area team does not currently have a fast-tracked system for determining planning applications. The team aims to ensure that the conditions are not too onerous, and that these conditions are phased. This is another area in which the opportunity arises to consider a new approach across West Northamptonshire, which would fast-track the decision-making process to enable development to commence within a shorter timescale.

6.17 The local authority is reviewing its resources, back-office systems and processes to ensure that more planning applications can be determined within the statutory period. The issue remains that there are problems associated with resources which will hopefully be addressed as progress is made with reviewing the Development Management team structure across West Northamptonshire and recruiting to vacant posts.

Regeneration

6.18 West Northamptonshire Council has an ambitious programme for regeneration. This includes promoting land in Council ownership, securing the funding and delivery of key projects including those within the Enterprise Zone (see map below). Whilst the majority of the projects are to do with developments for commercial use, there are some where residential schemes are included. Examples include Four Waterside and Northampton Railway Station. In addition, the departure of large retailers from the town centre including Debenhams, British Home Stores and Marks & Spencer provide further opportunities for housing to be included in any redevelopment / conversion schemes. The Debenhams site, for example, has approval for the demolition of the existing building and redevelopment of the site for purpose-built student accommodation (except for the ground floor).

Map 3:
Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone



6.19 The Council also successfully secured funding to regenerate the Market Square, the largest market in England. It is anticipated that this project will complete within the next 2 to 3 years.

6.20 These efforts, which involve partnership working with the private sector, will not only regenerate the town but also increase its attractiveness as a destination of choice for both homeowners and investors. This could potentially lead to housing developments being delivered more quickly to meet ongoing demand.

Planning Policy Committee

6.21 The Committee was established as part of the new Committee structure for West Northamptonshire. The Committee will continue to support policy documents which will contribute towards the improvement and delivery of key actions including local plans and neighbourhood plans, both of which will incorporate housing delivery within their policies.

Summary of Actions

6.22 The table below summarises the actions and proposed timeline when the action is expected to start.

Table 6
Summary of actions

Action	Activating year		
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Restructure (and recruiting to vacant posts) within West Northamptonshire Council	✓		
Adopt the Northampton Local Plan Part 2	✓		
Examination of the Strategic Plan			✓
Housing monitoring to be undertaken twice a year	✓		
Create a Developers and Site Promoters Forum	✓		
Development Management improvements to the decision-making process	✓		
Regeneration Projects promoted by the council			✓

SEVEN

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

Northampton Local Plan Part 2 progress

7.1 Consultation on the Proposed Modifications is expected to take place in the summer of 2022. The Local Plan is expected to be adopted within this financial year, therefore providing greater certainty for developers in terms of housing allocations and clarity in terms of development management policies.

Housing monitoring

7.2 This will be undertaken on a bi-annual basis. This will ensure that the Council monitors progress of housing deliver effectively. Developers will continue to be contacted with regards to housing delivery status as well as the signing of annual Statements of Common Ground.

Developer Forum

7.3 This will be formed within the financial year, with meetings expected to take place every quarter.