

# Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan Housing Background Paper



Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group September 2015



## Contents

1. Introduction .....	2
2. The adopted North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy .....	2
3. Establishing a housing target for Wollaston .....	4
4. The North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.....	5
4. Achieving the Housing Requirement in Wollaston .....	8
5. Conclusion.....	9

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This background paper has been prepared by Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on behalf of Wollaston Parish Council. It forms one of a suite of supporting documents submitted with the Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) to the Borough Council of Wellingborough. The report provides an overview of how the housing target for the Plan period to 2031 has been determined. This is of particular importance in the absence of an up-to-date strategic policy covering housing distribution in the adopted Development Plan. In addition, the background paper indicates how the Plan makes provision for the required scale of growth.
- 1.2 The paper summarises the considerations that have been taken into account during the preparation of the Plan. It should be read in conjunction with other documents that also comprise the evidence base including:
- [North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy \(2008\)](#);
  - [North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011 – 2031. Pre-Submission Plan including focused changes \(2015\)](#);
  - [Wollaston Rural Housing Survey \(2012\)](#);
  - [Rural Housing Targets for Wellingborough's Principal Villages \(2014\)](#);
  - [North Northamptonshire Housing Background Paper \(2015\)](#);
  - [North Northamptonshire Joint Committee 4<sup>th</sup> September 2014. Report on draft vision and outcomes and policies and text on spatial strategy and housing](#); and
  - [Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire \(2013\) and the Summary of Responses to the Questionnaire \(2014\)](#)

## 2. The adopted North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy

- 2.1 The Plan must have regard to national policies and advice, which is primarily set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) respectively. The NPPF explains that the ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the local area and neighbourhood plans must therefore be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan.
- 2.2 It is further explained in paragraph 9 of the Neighbourhood Planning section of the NPPG that a neighbourhood plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in force. The Borough Council has advised that at the present time this consists of all policies in the 2008 adopted North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (CSS).

- 2.3 The CSS plans for a step-change in the rate of house building between 2001 and 2021 to provide not only for the indigenous population but also to contribute to meeting housing shortages in the greater south-east of the country. The scale of growth in the CSS was dictated by the East Midlands Regional Strategy; it requires provision to be made for 52,100 new dwellings across North Northamptonshire (i.e. the area covered by Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering and Wellingborough Councils) focused primarily on the three Growth Towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough with limited development in the villages. For Wellingborough the requirement has been set at 12,800 homes of which 11,590 are to be directed to the town with an indicative further 1,210 in the rural area, including Wollaston.
- 2.4 The CSS indicates that provision for this growth should be made in Development Plan Documents (DPD). However, a DPD has not been adopted by the Borough Council and the proportion of the rural housing requirement in the CSS to be directed to Wollaston has never been clarified.
- 2.5 Information supplied by the Borough Council indicates that between 2001 and 2015 a total of 1,051 new homes were completed in the rural area (i.e. approximately 88% of the requirement of 1,210 homes) and there are a further 606 outstanding commitments. This is more than sufficient to meet the rural housing requirement in the CSS. Whilst approximately 13% of the population of the rural area of the Borough lives in Wollaston, more than 20% (216) of all rural housing completions have taken place in the Parish.
- 2.6 Whilst the delivery of housing in the rural area has been strong, the number of new homes delivered in Wellingborough town has been significantly below target with about 24% (2,769) of the required number of 11,590 dwellings completed by 2015. Difficulties in achieving the target have resulted from the economic downturn of the recent past and delays in bringing forward two urban extensions to the north and east of the town.
- 2.7 In addition, the planning context has changed radically - the Regional Strategy for the East Midlands was revoked in 2013 as part of the Government's planning reform programme to decentralise the planning system and give local councils responsibility for strategic planning in the region. The Government has also abandoned the 'Sustainable Communities Plan' which identified and supported North Northamptonshire as a 'Growth Area' for the focus of infrastructure investment and economic development alongside major housing growth.
- 2.8 The weight given to policies in the adopted CSS depends on their consistency with the NPPF. In respect of housing requirements, the CSS is not considered by the local authorities in North Northamptonshire to be consistent with the NPPF and the required amount and distribution of new housing is therefore being reassessed as part of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS).

### 3. Establishing a housing target for Wollaston

- 3.1 In order to determine robust and justified housing figures for the largest villages in the Borough, including Wollaston, the Borough Council has undertaken work in partnership with the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit. This work led to the preparation of a paper<sup>1</sup> which concluded that 160 new homes should be built in Wollaston between 2011 and 2031 to meet local needs whilst ensuring that Wollaston remains rural in character.
- 3.2 As a starting point the methodology adopted in the paper apportioned the housing requirements arising from natural change in the existing population (i.e. with zero net migration), plus a share of the back log of housing need identified on the housing need register. Local factors were then considered in turn to gauge how realistic these apportioned targets were in relation to each settlement, including comparison to past housing completions, the level of housing potential identified through the SHLAA<sup>2</sup>, the level of extant commitments, a local housing needs survey<sup>3</sup> and environmental factors and other constraints which may restrict housing development.
- 3.3 This process was further aided by dialogue with Parishes which provided a further input of local aspirations. In November 2013 the Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group issued a questionnaire to all households in the Plan area. It was explained in the questionnaire that the Plan must provide for the amount of housing required by the CSS. It was noted that the CSS is under review and that whilst the number of new homes to be built in Wollaston between 2011 and 2031 had not been decided it was likely to be at least 160. Residents were asked for their opinion on whether the Plan should provide for more than the minimum housing requirement and where the homes should go. The responses were summarised in a report<sup>4</sup>. Approximately 70% of respondents thought that the Plan should provide for the minimum amount of housing whilst a further 27% thought that a greater level of housing should be provided with the remainder undecided.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Borough Council of Wellingborough \(2014\). Rural Housing Targets for Wellingborough's Principal Villages.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit \(2013\). 2011 North Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Borough Council of Wellingborough \(2012\) Wollaston Rural Housing Survey](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Wollaston Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group \(2014\). Summary of responses to the questionnaire](#)

## 4. The North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy

- 4.1 The JCS, which will replace the CSS, was submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination at the end of July 2015<sup>5</sup> and may be adopted by April 2016. In accordance with the NPPF the housing requirements in the JCS are based on the objectively assessed needs of the area. Consequently, the scale of provision will be less than in the adopted CSS. The JCS indicates that provision should be made for 7,000 dwellings in the Borough of which 2,500 and 4,500 are required between 2011 and 2021 and between 2021 and 2031 respectively. However, the JCS maintains the urban orientated focus of development with 5,750 of these homes to be directed to the town of Wellingborough. In the case of Wollaston provision is required for 160 new dwellings between 2011 and 2031. The figure of 160 new homes is therefore consistent with the housing target used in the Neighbourhood Plan
- 4.2 Whilst a draft Neighbourhood Plan is not tested against the policies in an emerging Local Plan (i.e. the policies of the JCS) the NPPG ([Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 41-009-20140306](#)) states that ‘It is important to minimise any conflicts between policies in a neighbourhood plan and an emerging Local Plan. This is because section 38(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the conflict must be resolved by the decision maker favouring the policy which is contained in the last document to become part of the development plan’. In addition, ‘the reasoning and evidence informing the Local Plan process may be relevant to the consideration of the basic conditions against which a neighbourhood plan is tested’.
- 4.3 In 2012 the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (JPU), which is responsible for the preparation of the JCS, undertook consultation on an Emerging JCS<sup>6</sup>. Draft Policy 10 identified Wollaston as one of several ‘Principal Villages’ which would act as a focal point ‘for development to meet local needs arising in the rural area unless these can be met more sustainably at a nearby larger settlement’. Some partner local planning authorities and Parish Councils, including Wollaston, expressed concern about the implications of identifying Principal Villages in the JCS. In particular, the Parish Council commented that the designation of Wollaston was likely to increase development pressure on the village and requested that the JCS should indicate that Wollaston would not have to provide for growth in excess of that required to meet its own local needs.
- 4.4 The precise scale of growth to be provided in the rural area and more specifically at Wollaston was not set out in the Emerging JCS and whilst a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), published in 2012<sup>7</sup>, provided a

---

<sup>5</sup> [North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit \(June 2015\). Pre-Submission Plan as amended by Focused Changes](#)

<sup>6</sup> [North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit \(2012\). North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031. Emerging Draft for Consultation.](#)

<sup>7</sup> [North Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update \(2012\) and North Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update \(2015\)](#)

strategic assessment at the housing market level (i.e. North Northamptonshire) and for the local authority area, it did not include an assessment at the Neighbourhood Plan level. The Borough Council, with the assistance of the Parish Council, therefore undertook a rural housing survey (see paragraph 3.2) to assess the housing requirements of existing residents of Wollaston over a 5 year period and to inform the level of housing to be provided in the Plan.

- 4.5 In addition, feedback received by the JPU at an advisory meeting with a Senior Planning Inspector in October 2012 indicated that the JCS should be clearer on the role of the rural areas in the spatial strategy by identifying housing requirements that will enable subsequent Part 2 Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans to identify sites for the required level of development<sup>8</sup>.
- 4.6 The JPU worked with the Borough Council and other local authorities in North Northamptonshire to consider possible approaches to defining rural housing requirements. It was concluded that the diversity of the villages in terms of their scale, character, development opportunities and proximity to towns, means that housing requirements must be determined locally rather than through the JCS<sup>9</sup>.
- 4.7 However, at paragraph 5.17 of the Joint Committee report of 4<sup>th</sup> September 2014 (see footnote 8, below) it was concluded that there should be a partial exception to this approach in the Borough of Wellingborough due to the pressure for development in the villages arising from delays in delivering housing sites at Wellingborough town. The report further comments that this has increased the scale of development, particularly at the four largest villages of Earls Barton, Finedon, Irchester and Wollaston, to a level that is unlikely to be sustained by windfall developments over the plan period to 2031. Consequently, it was concluded that the JCS should identify housing requirements for these four villages where the scale of growth is likely to be of strategic significance (i.e. in excess of 100 dwellings over the plan period).
- 4.8 The Joint Committee report further concluded (paragraph 5.18) that the JCS should endorse the locally assessed housing requirements for Earls Barton, Finedon, Irchester and Wollaston contained in the paper on rural housing targets (see paragraph 3.1, above) in order to clarify the level of growth anticipated at these settlements over the plan period and to help safeguard against significantly higher levels of development (other than small scale in-filling/ redevelopment opportunities or rural exceptions schemes) which, in line with the spatial strategy, should be directed to more sustainable locations at the nearby Growth Towns of Wellingborough and Rushden.
- 4.9 The Joint Committee report further indicates (paragraph 5.23) that the JCS supports a localism approach in the rural area and does not assign any village

---

<sup>8</sup> [North Northamptonshire Joint Committee 4<sup>th</sup> September 2014. North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Review: Draft vision and outcomes and policies and text on spatial strategy and housing](#)

<sup>9</sup> [North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit \(2015\). Housing Background Paper](#)



the role of meeting more than its own locally arising need for housing. It concludes that 'In view of this, and the conclusion that the scale of development to meet locally assessed needs is only likely to be of strategic significance at the four largest villages, there is not considered much to be gained by the JCS distinguishing Principal Villages in the settlement hierarchy. It is self-evident which are the largest villages with most facilities but the response to the Emerging JCS from the LPA's and Parish Councils highlighted concerns that identifying these as Principal Villages will result in additional development pressures if they are seen as sequentially preferable locations (after the Growth Towns and Market Towns) for meeting wider development needs.'

- 4.10 Consultation on the Pre-Submission JCS<sup>10</sup> took place at the beginning of 2015. Policy 29 requires provision to be made for new housing as set out in Table 5, including 160 new homes at Wollaston. Policy 11 and Policy 29 further indicate that other than small scale infilling or rural exception schemes, development in excess of this figure will only be permitted where tested and supported through Part 2 Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans.
- 4.11 Paragraph 216 (Annex 1) of the NPPG indicates that weight should be given to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:
- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
  - the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
  - the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 4.12 Whilst consultation on the Pre-Submission JCS resulted in several respondents from the development industry seeking an increase in the overall quantum of housing development in the JCS and more emphasis on housing in the rural area, there were no specific objections to the planned scale of growth in Wollaston. A number of focused changes to the Pre-Submission Plan were the subject of consultation between June and July 2015. However, these changes did not affect either Policy 11 or Policy 29 of the JCS. The focused changes were incorporated into the Pre-Submission JCS which was submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination at the end of July 2015.
- 4.13 The stage reached in the preparation of the JCS and the absence of any objections to the amount of development proposed at Wollaston indicate that considerable weight should be given to the policy to provide for 160 dwellings at Wollaston.

---

<sup>10</sup> [North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit \(2015\). North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031. Pre-Submission Plan](#)

## 4. Achieving the Housing Requirement in Wollaston

- 4.1 Policy H1 of the Neighbourhood Plan indicates that provision is made for the assessed housing need of 160 homes in Wollaston between 2011 and 2031. However, the policy enables this figure to be exceeded where the proposal relates to a small site within the Village Boundary or a rural exceptions housing site. Table H1 of the Plan, which is reproduced below, sets out how this level of growth will be provided for.

<b>Table H1</b>	<b>Dwellings</b>
Housing need 2011 – 2031	160
Housing completions 2011 - 2014	28
Under construction (April 2014)	4
Existing commitments not yet started (April 2014)	6
Housing allocations in the Plan:	
Land East of Hookhams Path (Policy HA1)	80
196 Hinwick Rd (Policy HA2)	2
190 Hinwick Rd (Policy HA3)	2
Total housing allocations plus existing commitments	122
Residual requirement	38

- 4.2 Information on housing completions and commitments supplied by the Borough Council indicates that 38 new homes were built between 2011 and 2014 in Wollaston and a further 10 were either under construction or had planning permission. The Plan makes provision for a further 84 homes on 3 allocated sites at Hookhams Path and Hinwick Rd. The residual requirement of 36 new homes is expected to be provided on windfall sites.
- 4.3 It is explained at paragraph 3.86 of the adopted CSS that the indicative rural housing figure of 1,210 dwellings for the Borough is ‘a realistic estimate of potential supply from windfall sites consistent with the urban-focused strategy’. The Pre-Submission JCS also indicates at paragraph 9.20 that Neighbourhood Plans can include a windfall allowance where there is compelling evidence that this will continue to provide a reliable source of supply.
- 4.4 Evidence demonstrates that windfall sites have regularly become available in Wollaston. Between 2011 and 2014, 26 of the 28 completed dwellings were on windfall sites. During the last 10 years a total of 60 homes have been developed on windfall sites within the Plan area. However, such sites represent a finite resource and their availability is likely to decline over the Plan period. For the purposes of the Plan, a decline of approximately two thirds in the recent scale of windfall provision has been allowed for. The resultant figure of 49 homes, reduced to 39 to take account of the 10 dwellings in table H1 on windfall sites either ‘under construction’ or ‘not yet started’, represents a very modest figure of about 2.3 new dwellings each year over the remainder of the Plan period.

## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Without the provision of an up-to-date housing target for Wollaston in the adopted CSS, the Steering Group has worked with the Borough Council and JPU to ensure that the housing need for Wollaston has been objectively assessed and that the required growth is reflected in both the JCS as submitted to the Secretary of State and in the Plan. The stage reached in the preparation of the JCS and the absence of any objections to the amount of development proposed at Wollaston indicate that considerable weight should be given to the policy to provide for 160 dwellings at Wollaston. Whilst the NPPF enables the Plan to provide for more than the minimum required level of development, account has been taken in the Plan of the community's wish to limit new housing to the quantum specified in the JCS.

