

Identifying a Rural Housing Target for the Joint Core Strategy

Consultation took place on an emerging Joint Core Strategy (JCS) from Aug – Oct 2012. The consultation was useful in obtaining feedback from stakeholders while the plan is at an informal stage and there is flexibility to make changes and identifying areas of the plan which can be refined, and where further work and change is needed.

Alongside consultation on the emerging JCS, the JPU had the benefit of an advisory meeting with a Senior Inspector from the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) on the 18th October 2012. The Inspector stressed that his advice was based on a limited review of material provided and should not be treated as prescriptive or necessarily resulting in a sound and/or legally compliant plan. Nevertheless the views expressed provided a valuable insight into the way that PINS is addressing issues in the light of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), imminent revocation of Regional Strategies and the localism agenda.

One of the particular policy areas highlighted where further consideration and work is required to justify or refine the approaches proposed in the emerging JCS is

- Reconsidering the implications of identifying “Principal Villages” and whether it is necessary to include rural housing targets in the JCS to provide strategic guidance for site specific/neighbourhood plans (Policies 10 and 29)

Identification of a rural housing target would provide greater strategic direction to the spatial distribution of development and provide greater clarity for Neighbourhood Plans to be prepared without waiting for the districts to produce local plans.

CSS Review - Emerging Targets

The JPC Committee of 31st Jan 2013 (Item 5) considered the possibility of revised housing targets. These are as follows:

	Minimum Requirement	Strategic Opportunity
N/Northants	30430	40500
Wellingborough (19%)	5782	7700

These have **not** been formally agreed and are subject to change, but are used for the purpose of this paper.

Setting targets for villages - Options

Scenario A

Assumption: Retain urban oriented focus in adopted Core Spatial Strategy (CSS)

Adopted CSS distribution: Rural - 1210 (9.45%)
Urban - 11590 (90.55%)

	Minimum Requirement	Strategic opportunity
Rural	546	728
Urban	5236	6972
*Divide rural target by 4 principal villages	137	182

*Hypothetical – only gives a working figure

Issues:

- the rural-urban split is arbitrary, not evidenced based and unlikely to be supported

Scenario B

Assumption: split on basis of population distribution

Census 2011		
Area	Population	%
Borough	75 356	100
Town	49 087	65
Rural	26 269	35

	Minimum Requirement	Strategic opportunity
Borough	5782	7700
Rural	2024	2695
Urban	3758	5005
*Divide rural target by 4 villages	506	674

*Hypothetical – only gives a working figure

Issues:

- because there is a large proportion of the population living in the rural area this gives very high figures for the rural area. This would be contrary to the JCS vision of urban oriented growth focused on the growth towns.

Scenario C

Assumption: Identify a figure based on need for the rural area from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (<http://www.nnjpu.org.uk/publications/docdetail.asp?docid=1261>) split on the basis of population distribution. SHMA natural change with backlog relates most closely to 'local need'.

Natural Change with Backlog from SHMA for the Borough	5256	
Rural	1840	35%
Urban	3416	65%

It could be argued that the rural figure of 1840 should be used for both the minimum requirement and strategic opportunity figures as the town is the focus for growth beyond natural change and not the villages.

	Minimum Requirement	%	Strategic opportunity	%
Borough	5782		7700	
Rural	1840	32%	1840	24%
Urban	3942	68%	5860	76%
*Divide by 4	460		460	

* Hypothetical – only gives a working figure

Issues:

- because there is a large proportion of the population living in the rural area this gives high figures for the rural area. This would be contrary to the JCS vision of urban oriented growth focused on the growth towns.
- A method needs to be established to distribute this figure across the rural settlements. Divided equally between the principal villages would be 460 dwellings each. Divided by proportionate size of the village based on dwellings in the parish would be Earls Barton 534 (29%), Wollaston 350 (19%), Irchester 488 (26.5%) and Finedon 469 (25.5%).

Scenario D

Assumption: apportionment of the SHMA figure, allocation on the basis of principal villages to absorb own proportion of natural change plus backlog based on Council Tax registrations January 2013.

Village	No. Dwellings in Parish	No. Dwellings in Borough	%	Natural Change + backlog SHMA	Dwellings	% increase in dws
Earls Barton	2435	34376	7.08	5256	372	15
Wollaston	1569	34376	4.56	5256	240	15
Irchester	2214	34376	6.44	5256	339	15
Finedon	2126	34376	6.18	5256	325	15
Total					1276	

Issues:

- Need to decide whether a figure should be calculated for the remainder of the rural area e.g. based on an assumption of past windfalls or whether this figure becomes the total for the rural area. Housing delivery in the remaining villages would be through windfalls and exceptions policy.

Scenario E

Assumption: extrapolate most recent housing needs surveys over the plan period. Assume most recent survey is valid for 5 years

Village	5 yrs	10 yrs	15 yrs	20 yrs	% increase
Earls Barton (2012)	64	128	192	256	10.5
Wollaston (2012)	39	78	117	156	10
Irchester (Draft 2013)	38	76	114	152	6.9
Finedon (2010)	14	28	43	56	2.6
				620	

Issues:

- This assumes needs will follow existing trends
- Finedon survey is due to be updated shortly
- Whilst market housing was included in the survey it relates principally to affordable needs.

Scenario F

Assumption: continuation of past completion trends

Housing Completions by Parish 2001 - 2012

Village	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08*	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Row Total
Bozeat	3	2	17	2	2	17	11	8	7	4	21	94
Earls Barton	19	16	3	30	21	10	6	4	4	7	2	122
Easton Maudit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ecton	4	0	-1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Finedon	6	0	30	14	32	38	39	5	31	8	3	206
Great Doddington	17	3	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	2	5	32
Great Harrowden	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Grendon	1	2	0	1	10	0	1	3	0	0	0	18
Hardwick	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	0	0	0	7
Irchester	9	2	3	2	8	19	1	20	7	2	0	73
Isham	0	1	2	1	-1	2	3	3	1	1	0	13
Little Harrowden	7	5	0	3	10	1	1	0	8	0	0	35
Little Irchester	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	25	0	0	29
Mears Ashby	2	1	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	11
Orlingbury	8	2	1	0	2	20	1	1	1	3	0	39
Strixton	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Sywell	3	6	0	3	0	0	0	1	-1	11	1	24
Wilby	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Wollaston	36	49	36	22	18	2	8	5	4	7	17	204
Villages Total	116	90	92	83	103	112	81	56	88	45	51	917
Wellingborough Town Total	190	85	188	332	242	280	393	239	63	65	71	2,148
Borough Total	306	175	280	415	345	392	474	295	151	110	122	3,065

Village	Completions 2001- 2012	% of total rural	Average pa	2011 - 2031	% growth of the village from dwellings at Jan 2013
Earls Barton	122	13%	11	220	9%
Finedon	206	22%	19	380	18%
Irchester	73	7.9%	7	140	6%
Wollaston	204	22%	19	380	23%
Total				1120	

Issues:

- The average figure for the whole period is considered more representative of long term trends compared to using the 'peak' or 'slump' average.
- This assumes a continuation of past trends. Several sites involved factory conversions and these options are no longer available.
- Irchester has historically taken a low amount of growth and Wollaston and Finedon a large amount of growth. Continuation of past trends would see significant proportionate expansion at Wollaston.
- Finedon figure includes 68 affordable dwellings. Discounting affordable housing, the average would be 13, giving a total of 250 between 2011-31.

Other Issues for Consideration:

An important consideration when analysing the above options is the availability and deliverability of opportunity sites in the Borough. In respect of the 4 principal villages, the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) provides the evidence as shown in the table below.

Village	Category 1 capacity	Category 2 capacity	Category 3 capacity	Total 1 +2	Total 1 + 2 + 3
Earls Barton	65	430	3039	495	3534
Finedon	17	954	476	971	1447
Irchester	0	695	1835	695	2530
Wollaston	13	115	1219	128	1347
Total	95	2194	6569	2289	8858

All the sites and their respective SHLAA categories are shown on the attached plans.

Issues:

- The SHLAA shows that a vast amount of sites are potentially available. Category 1 & 2 are assessed as the least constrained and most deliverable, but category 3 sites could also be developed if constraints can be overcome. The SHLAA does not however indicate which sites should be allocated for development.
- The sites were also assessed by the Borough Council in the Wellingborough Rural Housing Allocation Methodology and Site Selection (2010) Background Paper. (https://www.wellingborough.gov.uk/downloads/download/1949/wellingborough_rural_housing_allocation_methodology_and_site_selection) This assessment assessed very few sites as having severe constraints where development would be undeliverable.

In addition to the land supply issues, the preferred option must be balanced against other considerations to ensure a sustainable approach is taken. These include:

- Local Issues
- Local surveys
- Capacity of services or facilities
- Policy considerations

Further work is required to quantify these issues but the following can be identified:

Village	Issue
Earls Barton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared. 3 options have been consulted on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Option 1 dispersed 50 -105 dwellings ➤ Option 2 Northern 150 - 250 dwellings ➤ Option 3 Southern 200 - 400 dwellings Initial results favour option 2, then 1. A figure above 250 dwellings would therefore not be supported locally. • Growth should be constrained to ensure that there remains rural separation between Wellingborough and Northampton. • The Parish Council has previously supported the need for improved sports and recreation facilities to the north of the village – a planning application has been approved, but delivery has not been secured. • Lack of parking in the centre of the village has been identified as a key concern.
Finedon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a history of past mining in the vicinity and this may have an impact on the deliverability or viability of development. • Growth to the south west should be constrained to ensure that there remains rural separation between Wellingborough and Finedon. • The Parish Council have expressed concern about the amount of flats recently developed in the village.
Irchester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared • The Parish Council and Sports Association have previously expressed a desire for improved sports facilities within the village. • There has been significant opposition to development south of the village through the Site Specific Plan and to an application for development north of the village (currently the subject of an appeal).
Wollaston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared • Sites around the village are being promoted by the Duchy of Lancaster.

Summary & Conclusion

The table below summarises all the options

Village	A*	B*	C*	D	E	F
Earls Barton	182	674	460	372	256	220
Finedon	182	674	460	325	56	380
Irchester	182	674	460	339	152	140
Wollaston	182	674	460	240	156	380
Total	728	2695	1840	1276	620	1120

* based on strategic opportunity figure and spread evenly across the 4 principal villages

Scenario A is not evidence based and therefore should be discounted, but is useful for comparison purposes. Scenarios B & C would not fit the strategy of urban oriented growth and should therefore also be discounted. Scenarios D and E give the best indication of local needs using local evidence. Scenario F shows past trends, but may not be representative of future land availability.

The final figure should be a locally evidenced figure based on an assessment of apportioned need and factoring in local information and constraints, alongside the overall strategy of the plan. It should also take account of local aspirations.

Suggested figure for consultation?

Village	2011- 2031
Earls Barton	?
Finedon	?
Irchester	?
Wollaston	?
Total	?

The final figures would be from a base date of 2011 and therefore existing commitments can be taken from this figure for the purpose of identifying how much land should be allocated in Neighbourhood Plans or Local Plans.

Village	Net Commitments April 2012
Earls Barton	30
Finedon	47
Irchester	9
Wollaston	11
Total	97

The above figures do not take account of the Compton Way appeal in Earls Barton for 65 dwellings. As an example only, if the final target for Earls Barton was 250 the amount to be provided in the Neighbourhood Plan on new sites would be 155 dwellings (250 – 30 – 65).