

# Upton, Northampton

## Key details

<b>Name</b>	Upton Sustainable Urban Extension
<b>Location</b>	Northampton
<b>Number of dwellings</b>	1,382
<b>Date first homes sold</b>	2005 (Site A completed in 2007)
<b>Homes delivered to date</b>	Nearly all of them, except the local centre on the Weedon Road
<b>Percentage of affordable homes</b>	22% affordable homes
<b>Average house price</b>	£246,000
<b>Land dedicated to vehicles</b>	32%
<b>Road vehicle trips forecast</b>	Access roads into and out of Upton predicted to have peak hour traffic flows of 1,165 (AM) and 1,961 (PM) <sup>1</sup>
<b>Parking provision</b>	Initially 1.5 spaces per dwelling, raised to 2 spaces in later phases
<b>Walking distance to railway station</b>	40 minutes
<b>Size of site</b>	40 hectares
<b>Housing density</b>	Parcel density 52 dph; (35 dph gross density across whole site)
<b>Planning guidance</b>	PPG3



<sup>1</sup> From July 2002 preliminary transport report

## Background and context of development

The Sustainable Urban Extension at Upton is one of a large number of Urban Extensions planned around the fringes of Northampton. Several other schemes on land immediately surrounding Upton are in various stages of development or planning, and Upton will represent Phase 1 of Northampton's new South West District.

Upton is located on former farmland close to the River Nene in the west of Northampton. The land was acquired by Northampton Development Corporation, then in 1985 transferred to English Partnerships (formerly the Commission for New Towns). Outline planning permission for Upton was first granted in 1997. The plans followed a typical car-dominated paradigm of cul-de-sacs and distributor roads.



In 2001, the Upton Working Group was formed, incorporating EP, Northampton Borough Council, the Prince's Foundation, and a design team led by EDAW. A series of Enquiry by Design exercises were carried out with the aim of demonstrating best practice in sustainable urban growth. This led to a number of major design changes. The envisioned local centre was moved to Weedon Road (the dual carriageway at the northern boundary of the site) to allow the scheme to integrate with the other developments taking place nearby. The road network was reshaped to improve connectivity and enable the incorporation of an attractive network of SUDS installations. The housing density was increased to an average of 52 dwellings per hectare, with variation in housing type, size and tenure. Provision for public transport, pedestrian and cycle links was improved.

Design codes were produced for Upton, requiring a comprehensive set of environmental standards. The scheme is divided into eight Sites and the required standards vary from site to site, but all dwellings were required to meet the BREEAM/EcoHomes 'Excellent' rating and NHER rating 10, to reduce CO2 to less than 20kg/sq.m/yr, and to reduce mains water consumption. Features installed include PV systems, micro CHP, rainwater harvesting, passive solar design, and solar water heating.

The resulting development contains an eclectic mix of housing styles with different developers selected for each of the eight sites within Upton. The more upmarket properties are concentrated in the southern portion close to or overlooking Upton Country Park. Affordable homes are pepper-potted throughout each of the constituent sites and have been transferred to a social housing landlord. Social integration appears to have been a challenge at Upton and some residents have complained about issues such as foreclosures, litter and groups of young people on the streets. Tenure-blind design was specified, so that affordable housing and market housing would not appear outwardly different, to avoid social stigma being attached to particular dwellings or areas within the site. However on some streets there's a noticeable difference in appearance between the larger terraced houses and the entrances of the flats that are contained within the same terraces.

Upton is located only 2.5 miles from the centre of Northampton and a cycle route along the River Nene connects it to the town centre. However, Upton is physically separated from the rest of the urban area by two major roads, and this appears to promote car-based travel. Weedon Road, along the northern perimeter of Upton, was 'downgraded' from a 50mph arterial road to a 30mph boulevard, but still severs Upton from neighbouring areas.



The 'High Street' acts as a spine through the centre of the development, connecting a large central square and a second leafier square containing a children's playground. Currently there is a distinct lack of community facilities along this High Street, with just a single convenience store and community centre towards the southern end. The only non-residential building close to the central Upton Square is the new primary school, and pedestrian footfall here appears limited. This could change when the nearby commercial development on Weedon Road is completed, and in time Upton may become a centre for Northampton's new South West District.



## Public Realm

<b>Urban trees</b>	In some areas
<b>Grass verges</b>	Green swales run down the centre of many streets as part of the SUDS scheme
<b>Front gardens</b>	No, but houses on some streets have narrow private strips
<b>Back gardens</b>	Yes, but fairly small as parking courts take up most of the space inside the residential blocks



## Public transport, walking and cycling accessibility

A new bus route, funded by the developer, provides buses from Upton to Northampton town centre and railway station every 20 minutes. The first buses started running (at a lower frequency) once 10 homes were occupied. The Dedicated Bus Service contribution specified in the section 106 agreement was expected to fund a bus service following tight criteria, with a steadily increasing frequency pattern as more houses were completed, ultimately reaching a 10 minute frequency once 700 dwellings had been completed. It is unclear whether the bus service will eventually be increased to this frequency.

Destination	Company	Route numbers	Weekday daytime frequency	Weekday evening frequency	Saturday frequency	Sunday frequency	Travel time	Location of bus stop	Last return bus time
Northampton town centre	Stagecoach	15	Every 20 minutes	Hourly	Every 20 minutes	Every 30 minutes	16 minutes	Two within development	22.54
Northampton train station	Stagecoach	15	Every 20 minutes	Hourly	Every 20 minutes	Every 30 minutes	13 minutes	Two within development	22.57

In the spaces behind each block of houses are private parking courts, with designated parking spaces for each house. On-street parking is quite limited and the streets are mostly fairly narrow and pedestrian-friendly. In the early phases parking was set at one designated space per dwelling plus an on-street allocation of 0.5 visitor parking spaces per dwelling. This was seen by some residents as

inadequate, with parking occurring in undesignated spaces and on pavements. In later stages provision was increased to 1.5 designated spaces plus 0.5 visitor spaces per dwelling.

Pedestrian and cycling accessibility around the development is good, with an easily navigable street layout, some car-free public spaces, and easy access to the new Upton Country Park. The new primary school has lots of covered cycle parking.



## Local Facilities

The main local centre planned within the development is the Weedon Road frontage, which is currently under construction. Other than this, there is a primary school with attached nursery in the centre of Upton, a community centre and a convenience store. Upton Country Park borders the development and has been developed as part of the scheme.

Type of facility	Plans and current state of progress within development	Built yet within site?	Closest example	Estimated time to reach nearest example outside development			
				Walking	Cycling	Driving	Public transport
Convenience store	One within development; shops under construction at Weedon Road	Yes					
Café /	Under construction at	No	Starbucks,	12 mins	5 mins	4 mins	10 mins,

<b>restaurant</b>	Weedon Road (mentioned in 2002 planning consent)		Sixfields retail park				bus no. 15
<b>Drinking establishment</b>	Under construction at Weedon Road (mentioned in 2002 planning consent)	No	Sixfields Pub	14 mins	4 mins	3 mins	10 mins, bus no. 15
<b>High street shops</b>	Shops under construction at Weedon Road (there will be 300 sq m of small retail units, plus offices and cafes/restaurants)	No	St James	29 mins	8 mins	8 mins	10 mins, bus no. 15
<b>Supermarket</b>	Weedon Road frontage will be limited to 'small retail units' (possibly including a convenience store)	No	Sainsbury's Gambrel Road	17 mins	5 mins	4 mins	9 mins, bus no. 15
<b>Nursery</b>	Little Wiggles Nursery integrated into Upton Meadows Primary School	Yes					
<b>Primary school</b>	Upton Meadows Primary School next to Upton Square (first opened in 2006 in temporary accommodation)	Yes					
<b>Secondary school</b>	Not provided within development	No	Duston School (Quinton House private school is closer)	33 mins (or 9 mins)	12 mins (or 3 mins)	6 mins (or 3 mins)	13 mins, bus no. 15
<b>Park</b>	Upton Country Park has been created as part of the scheme	Border of site					
<b>Playground</b>	Provided in development (Clickers Place)	Yes					
<b>Playing fields</b>	At the Elgar Centre (£20 charge for matches)	Yes					
<b>Tennis courts</b>	Not provided	No	Duston United tennis club (private)	32 mins	12 mins	16 mins	No direct link
<b>Leisure centre</b>	Not provided	No	Duston Sports Centre (or private Nuffield Health)	34 mins (or 16 mins)	12 mins (or 5 mins)	8 mins (or 4 mins)	No direct link (or 6 mins, bus no. 15)
<b>Swimming pool</b>	Not provided	No	Duston Sports Centre (or private Nuffield Health)	34 mins (or 16 mins)	12 mins (or 5 mins)	8 mins (or 4 mins)	No direct link (or 6 mins, bus no. 15)
<b>Wildlife area</b>	Upton Country Park has been created as part of the scheme	Border of site					
<b>Community Centre</b>	Elgar Centre opened Spring 2011	Yes					
<b>Daytime / evening classes</b>	Elgar Centre	Yes					
<b>Medical facilities</b>	A site for 'general medical facilities' was reserved in the 1993 Local Plan	No	St Luke's Primary Care Centre, Duston	25 mins	9 mins	5 mins	No direct link

<b>Post office</b>	No plans known	No	St James post office	29 mins	8 mins	8 mins	10 mins, bus no. 15
<b>Library</b>	No plans known	No	St James Library	29 mins	8 mins	8 mins	10 mins, bus no. 15
<b>Co-working space</b>	Weedon Road frontage will contain office space and live/work units	No	Spencer Parade, Northampton	55 mins	17 mins	14 mins	23 mins, bus no. 15



## Developer contributions

The Section 106 contributions were agreed on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2000. A supplementary agreement was set out with the new planning consent in 2003. This was then subject to variations in 2015 cancelling the Park and Ride Startup Contribution and amending the agreements relating to the Country Park and community facilities. The Community Infrastructure Levy was not used in Northampton at the time Upton was developed.

<b>Contribution</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Paid to</b>	<b>Current status / Payment Plan</b>
<b>Bus priority contribution</b>	Construction of a bus priority link and bus priority measures	£900,000 + % increase in Index since 1998	Northamptonshire County Council	£90,000 initial payment; £450,000 prior to completion of 200



				properties; £450,000 prior to completion of 400 properties
<b>Changing room contribution</b>	Provision of changing rooms on the playing fields land	£125,000 + % increase in Index since 1998	Northampton Borough Council	£168,074.32 paid in 2003 on the transfer of the playing fields land, then £138,000 returned by NBC for the construction of the Elgar Centre, which contains changing rooms.
<b>Community Hall contribution</b>	Provision of a non-profit community hall	£350,000 + % increase in Index since 1998	Northampton Borough Council	CANCELLED, because the landowners constructed the Elgar Centre
<b>Country Park contribution</b>	Capital costs and maintenance of Country Park Land Phase I Scheme	£163,557 capital cost plus £163,557 commuted maintenance payment + % increase in Index since 1998	Northampton Borough Council	Paid when the Country Park Land Phase I is transferred to the Borough
<b>Country Park Works and Maintenance Contribution</b>	Capital costs and maintenance of Country Park Land Phase 1 and/or Phase 2 and/or adjacent land	£1,132,000	Northampton Borough Council	Paid in 2015 on date of agreement
<b>Dedicated bus service</b>	A bus service between the site and Northampton town centre at a specified frequency	£650,000 + % increase in Index since 1998	Bus operator	Detailed specification of bus services including 10 minute Mon-Sat frequency after completion of the 700 <sup>th</sup> property.
<b>Interpretation centre contribution</b>	For interpretation facilities within the Country Park	£65,000 + % increase in Index since 1998. When there is planning permission for an Interpretation Centre and construction is set to commence; or on the 5 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the transfer of the Country Park Phase I land.	Northampton Borough Council	PAID. No interpretation centre has been built other than the Elgar Centre.
<b>Park and Ride startup contribution</b>	To contribute towards the development of a Park & Ride scheme	£100,000 + % increase in Index since 1998	Northamptonshire County Council	CANCELLED in 2015. There no longer appear to be any plans to build a Park and Ride facility
<b>Play facility maintenance contribution</b>	For maintenance of the play facility	£54,227 + % increase in Index since 1998. After maintaining the play facility for one year (having built them within two years of the Initiation of the Development)	Northampton Borough Council	NOT PAID – replaced with Country Park Works and Maintenance Contribution
<b>Playing fields maintenance contribution</b>	For maintenance of the playing fields	£223,940 + % increase in Index since 1998. After maintaining the playing fields for one year (having built them within two years of the Initiation	Northampton Borough Council	NOT PAID – replaced with Country Park Works and Maintenance Contribution



		of the Development)		
<b>School contribution</b>	For the construction and fitting out of a school	£2,014 per completed property + % increase in Index since 1998	Northamptonshire County Council	On the completion of each 100 properties the contributions for these properties are to be paid
<b>SUDS commuted maintenance sum</b>	For the maintenance the SUDS	£562,145	A newly formed SUDS management body	On the transfer of liability for the SUDS to the new management body
<b>SUDS contingency sum</b>	Contingency payment for the maintenance of the SUDS	£56,215	Northampton Borough Council	Contingency sum for if the management body should fail
<b>Traffic calming measures</b>	Traffic calming measures required as a consequence of the development	£50,000 + % increase in Index since 1998	Northamptonshire County Council	On the initiation of development
<b>Weedon Road / Upton Way roundabout works</b>	For Weedon Road and Upton Way roundabout works	£30,000	Northamptonshire County Council	On the grant of planning permission

## Summary

At Upton we have a much higher quality development than was initially earmarked for the site. The changes facilitated by the Upton Working Group, with a process including Enquiry by Design exercises and the development of a Design Code, led to a more pedestrian-friendly layout, an innovative SUDS scheme and a range of other sustainability measures. There is a good bus service and an attractive country park borders the new homes.

The site felt rather empty when I visited, with a lack of people walking the streets. This may be because the local centre, where nearly all the shops and businesses will be sited, was not yet complete. Unlike at Poundbury, this is one of the last sections to be built. The current 'high street' makes an attractive pedestrian route through Upton, but doesn't really function as a high street since it only contains one shop. The major roads and out-of-town style trading estates that cut off Upton from other parts of Northampton may also encourage people to drive rather than walk or cycle. Parking spaces in Upton are mostly provided in courts behind the houses, leaving the streets themselves quite car-free and green. However, residents were unhappy with the lack of parking in the early phases, and in the later phases parking provision was increased.