

# Belfast Housing Land Availability Summary Report

2015/2016



**Belfast**  
City Council

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Historic Housing Monitor .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. Methodology.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4. Summary Tables and Graphs .....</b>	<b>3</b>
4.1 Settlement Summary.....	3
4.2 Urban Footprint Summary.....	4
4.3 Land Use Zoning Summary.....	5
<b>Appendix A: Comparison of historic housing land availability monitor data.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Appendix B: Summary Methodology.....</b>	<b>11</b>

# 1. Introduction

As part of the preparation of a new Local Development Plan (LDP) for the Belfast, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for NI (September 2015) outlines a 'plan, monitor and manage' approach to ensure that, as a minimum, a 5 year supply of land for housing is maintained. It states that monitoring should be an ongoing process with annual reporting and review. As a minimum, it states that monitoring must include:

- The housing land supply at the beginning and end of the annual reporting period;
- The number of net additional units built during the annual reporting period; and
- The number of net additional housing units built in the period since adoption of the local plan.

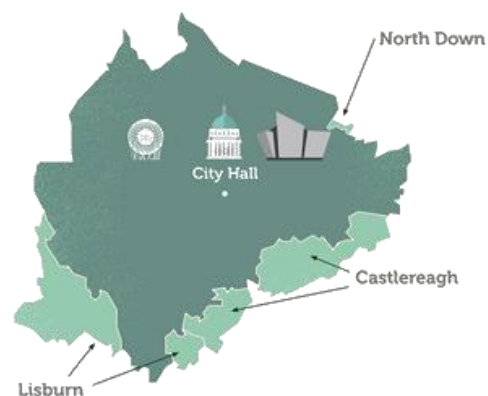
The primary purpose of the Housing Land Availability Monitor's (referred to as the 'Housing Monitor') is to inform the formulation of the Council's new LDP. However, it will also help the Council identify where a shortfall in potential land supply might exist and can inform house-builders on the availability of land that may be suitable for housing.

The information collated will allow a clear view of the overall progress in meeting the housing objectives of the existing development plan and in identifying issues likely to require intervention. For example, a need to release phased housing sites in order to maintain a 5 year supply of available housing land, or the release of a site providing for a particular housing need.

The Planning Act (NI) 2011 requires that Belfast City Council to make an annual report to the Department for Infrastructure outlining the extent to which the objectives set out in the LDP are being achieved. As the Council are currently preparing the first new LDP for Belfast under this new legislation, the production of Annual Monitoring Reports has not yet commenced. Instead, annual Housing Monitor reports are being published by the Council until the new LDP is adopted.

## 2. Historic Housing Monitor

The Council assumed responsibility for planning from the DOE on 1 April 2015 as part of the Government's reform of local government. At the same time, the number of councils in Northern Ireland reduced from 26 to 11 and our city boundary expanded to take in around 53,000 additional residents, 21,000 households and 1,000 business



premises. The new areas were formally parts of Lisburn City Council, Castlereagh Borough Council and North Down Borough Council.

Monitoring of housing delivery has been on-going across the Region since the late 1990s, under the responsibilities of the former Department for Environment's (DOE) Planning Service. Summary Reports for the Region, including a breakdown within the old Belfast local government district, are available from the NI Planning Portal<sup>1</sup> to cover the period from 2004 to 2013.

However, the historic DOE monitoring outputs cannot be directly compared to the housing monitor information presented in this report for three important reasons:

1. The revised District boundaries mean that the geographic area covered in the two monitoring regimes differs. Within the prior DOE Summary Reports, the equivalent area is covered within the Settlement totals for Belfast and part of Castlereagh, Lisburn and North Down; and
2. The two housing monitor regimes cover different annual periods. The Housing Monitor for the new Belfast district operates with a baseline position of 1 April 2015, the point at which with the Council assumed responsibility for planning. Each annual report therefore covers the period from 1 April to 31 March of the following year. The DOE housing monitor operated with an annual year from 1 August to 31 July of the following year. The most recent report produced for 2013 covered the period ending 31 July 2013.
3. The Council have reviewed the methodology previously followed by DOE and have updated the processes to improve efficiency and accuracy of data. This reflects the improved access the Council has internally to building control data, as well as changes made to prevent potential pitfalls, such as ensuring that housing monitor sites on which non-residential development has commenced is removed at the earliest opportunity.

To help provide some comparison, the Council have been able to access the historic housing land availability monitor data from the former DOE Planning Service and have been able to re-model the findings dating back to 2004 using the new Belfast district boundary. A summary of this data is contained at Appendix A.

However, although this data then matches the new boundary, the annual periods still differ and there is no data published covering the period from 1 August 2013 to 1 April 2015. There also remain minor differences within the two methodologies that need to be borne in mind when comparing historic monitoring data to Council monitoring data produced since 1 April 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/dev\\_plans/policy\\_housing\\_availability.htm](http://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/dev_plans/policy_housing_availability.htm)

### 3. Methodology

The Housing Land Availability Monitor measures net gains in housing within the Belfast City Council boundary. It provides a snapshot of the amount of land available for new homes as of 1st April each year. The process followed to produce the Annual Housing Monitor is summarised at Appendix B.

The Monitor presents a register of potential housing land, based on current planning policy designations and planning permissions, rather than an accurate picture of viable housing land. An Urban Capacity Study will be undertaken from time to time to assess the suitability, availability and achievability of monitored sites to contribute to a viable 5 year supply of land.

### 4. Summary Tables and Graphs

The following summary tables detail the supply of housing for the Belfast district from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and provide a snapshot of the land remaining for housing and its associated potential capacity to accommodate new homes.

Future housing monitors will also include cumulative totals since the Council's housing monitor was established – i.e. 1 April 2015, the date at which the Council gained statutory responsibility for planning. This will remain until such time as an up-to-date Local Development Plan for the new district is adopted, establishing appropriate targets for the settlements within the District to be monitored.

#### 4.1 Settlement Summary

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the housing supply, land availability and capacity for future housing units for each Settlement within the Council's District. These include Belfast City and the three Small Settlements of Edenderry, Hannahstown and Loughview.

Belfast City is then further sub-divided into a number of settlement areas or sectors based on key designations within the prevailing development plan<sup>2</sup>. These areas include Belfast

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<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of the Housing Land Availability Monitor, the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2015 is utilised rather than the former Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) 2001. The adopted Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) was quashed as a result of a judgement in the Court of Appeal delivered on 18 May 2017 and, although this means the BUAP is now the statutory development plan for the area, the draft BMAP, in its most recent, pre-examination, form remains a significant material consideration in future planning decisions. Draft BMAP therefore refers to that which was purported to be adopted and not the pre-examination draft published in 2004.

City Centre, the Belfast Harbour Estate and Outer Belfast, which is defined as the area covered by the Settlement Limit of Belfast City outside of the City Centre and Harbour Area.

The data within the table is divided into the following columns:

- **Area Developed 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016** – the area of land in hectares (ha) developed during the current monitor year;
- **Units Complete 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016** – the number of dwellings completed during the current monitor year;
- **Available Potential (Hectares)** – the area of land estimated as available for additional dwelling completions within the monitored sites as at 1 April 2016;
- **Available Potential (Dwelling Units)** – the estimated number of dwellings that could be accommodated on the available potential land as at 1 April 2016; and

During the 2015/16 monitoring year 555 units were completed on 17.9 ha of land across the District. 436.8 ha of land remains, with potential capacity for 23,456 units. Within Belfast City, all but 4 of the total units completed were within Outer Belfast. 14,678 of the available potential units are within Outer Belfast, whilst 5,624 and 3,150 potential dwelling units remain in the City Centre and Harbour Area respectively. Hannahstown is the only other settlement to have seen any units completed and only 4 available potential units remain within the Small Settlements combined.

## 4.2 Urban Footprint Summary

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the housing supply, land availability and capacity for future housing units within Belfast City, further categorised into land within the identified 'Urban Footprint'<sup>3</sup> or Greenfield land. This only refers to Belfast City, given that the Urban Footprint is only defined in relation to settlements with a population greater than 5,000 people. This excludes Belfast's three Small Settlements.

In addition to the columns as described in Table 1 above, the **Units within the Urban Footprint (%)** row calculates a proportion of dwellings completed within the Urban Footprint during the current monitor year expressed as a percentage of the total number of dwellings completed.

93.1% of the 535 units completed within Belfast City were built on land within the Urban Footprint. Of the remaining potential dwelling units, 92.8% remain within the Urban Footprint.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Urban Footprint is defined within the Regional Development Strategy 2035 as "the continuous built-up area of the settlement." Housing built in the open countryside is not included. The urban footprint currently used was identified by the former Department for Regional Development (DRD) in January 2001.*

### 4.3 Land Use Zoning Summary

Table 3 provides a breakdown of the dwelling units completed broken down by the type of land use zoning within the prevailing development plan within each settlement or settlement area. Table 4 provides the capacity for future dwelling units on the same basis as Table 3. The data within these tables is divided into the following columns:

- **Land zoned for housing** – the number of units completed and the remaining potential units on land allocated for residential use within the prevailing development plan;
- **land zoned for mixed use** – the number of units completed and the remaining potential units on land zoned for mixed use development, which includes an element of residential development within key site requirements;
- **All other land** – the number of units completed and the remaining potential units on any other land not falling within the first two, which include non-zoned land and land zoned for non-residential uses; and
- **Proportion of Zoned Land (%)** – the proportion units completed and the remaining potential dwelling units on both housing or mixed use zoned land expressed as a percentage of the total number of dwellings completed.

26.3% of the dwelling units completed during 2015/16 have been delivered on zoned land, with 27.3% within Belfast City and no units on zoned land within the small settlements. The number of units completed on all other land was 409 dwellings.

Of the remaining potential available for future dwellings, 39.9% is currently zoned for housing or mixed use. 5,200 of the available 23,456 potential dwelling units can be delivered on land zoned for housing and 4,165 units on land zoned for mixed use. In comparison, 14,090 of the remaining potential units can be provided on all other land.

Table 1: Settlement Summary 2015/16

Settlement	Area Developed (Hectares) 01-04-15 to 31-03-16	Units Complete 01-04-15 to 31-03-16	Available Potential (Hectares)	Available Potential (Dwelling Units)
<b>Belfast City</b>				
Outer Belfast	16.8	531	312.3	14,678
City Centre	0.4	4	37.7	5,624
Harbour Area	0	0	86.4	3,150
<b>Belfast City Total</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>436.4</b>	<b>23,452</b>
<b>Small Settlements</b>				
Edenderry	0	0	0	0
Hannahstown	0.7	20	0.3	3
Loughview	0	0	0.1	1
<b>Small Settlement Total</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>DISTRICT TOTAL</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>555</b>	<b>436.8</b>	<b>23,456</b>

Table 2: Urban Footprint Summary 2015/16

Settlement / Area	Area Developed (Hectares) 01-04-15 to 31-03-16	Units Complete 01-04-15 to 31-03-16	Available Potential (Hectares)	Available Potential (Dwelling Units)
Urban Footprint	14.9	498	367.1	21,752
<i>Units within the Urban Footprint (%)</i>	-	<i>93.1%</i>	-	<i>92.8%</i>
Greenfield	2.3	37	69.3	1,700
<b>Belfast City Total</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>436.4</b>	<b>23,452</b>



Table 3: Land Use Zoning Completed Units 2015/16

Settlement / Area	Units Complete 01-04-15 to 31-03-16				
	Land Zoned for Housing	Land Zoned for Mixed Use	All other land	Total	Proportion on Zoned Land (%)
<b>Belfast City</b>					
Outer Belfast	122	20	389	531	26.7%
City Centre	4	0	0	4	100.0%
Harbour Area	0	0	0	0	n/a
<b>Belfast City Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>27.3%</b>
<b>Small Settlements</b>					
Edenderry	0	0	0	0	n/a
Hannahstown	0	0	20	20	0%
Loughview	0	0	0	0	n/a
<b>Small Settlement Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>DISTRICT TOTAL</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>555</b>	<b>26.3%</b>

Table 4: Land Use Zoning Remaining Potential Units 2015/16

Settlement / Area	Remaining Potential Units				
	Land Zoned for Housing	Land Zoned for Mixed Use	All other land	Total	Proportion on Zoned Land (%)
<b>Belfast City</b>					
Outer Belfast	4,448	1,140	9,090	14,678	38.1%
City Centre	752	0	4,872	5,624	13.4%
Harbour Area	0	3,025	125	3,150	96.0%
<b>Belfast City Total</b>	<b>5,200</b>	<b>4,165</b>	<b>14,087</b>	<b>23,452</b>	<b>39.9%</b>
<b>Small Settlements</b>					
Edenderry	0	0	0	0	n/a
Hannahstown	0	0	3	3	0%
Loughview	0	0	0	0	n/a
<b>Small Settlement Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>DISTRICT TOTAL</b>	<b>5,200</b>	<b>4,165</b>	<b>14,090</b>	<b>23,455</b>	<b>39.9%</b>

## Appendix A: Comparison of historic housing land availability monitor data

Table A1 summarises the number of units completed each year within the new Belfast district in comparison to that previously published by DOE. Table A2 summarises the proportion of units delivered within the existing urban footprint within the two boundaries. These are then illustrated in Figure A1 and Figure A2 respectively. Please note that these figures utilise the original DOE survey periods ending 31 July each year.

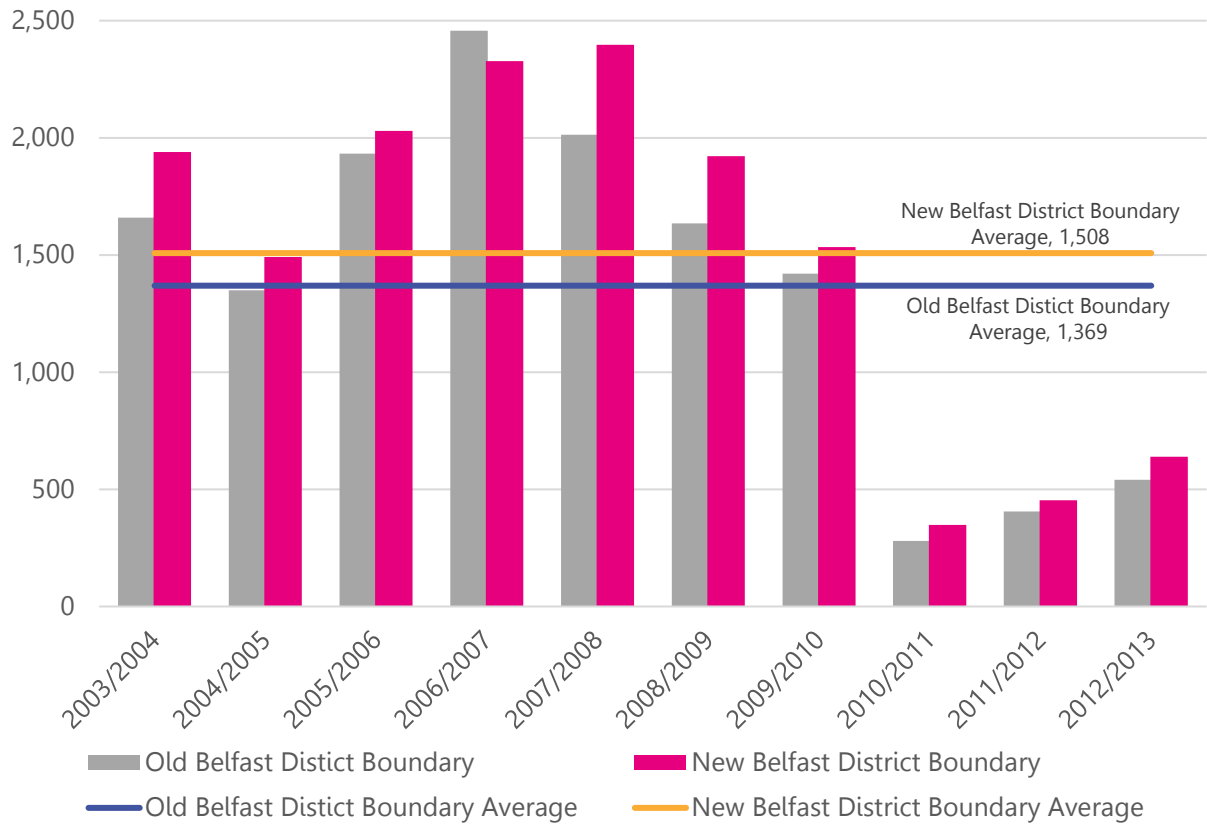
**Table A1: Total number of units completed per according to the old and new Belfast Local Government District 2004-2013**

Year	Old Belfast district boundary (pre-2015)	New Belfast district boundary (post-2015)
2003/2004	1,660	1,939
2004/2005	1,349	1,492
2005/2006	1,932	2,030
2006/2007	2,457	2,328
2007/2008	2,013	2,397
2008/2009	1,635	1,922
2009/2010	1,421	1,534
2010/2011	280	348
2011/2012	406	453
2012/2013	541	639
<b>Total 2003-13</b>	<b>13,694</b>	<b>15,082</b>
<b>Annual Average</b>	<b>1,369</b>	<b>1,508</b>

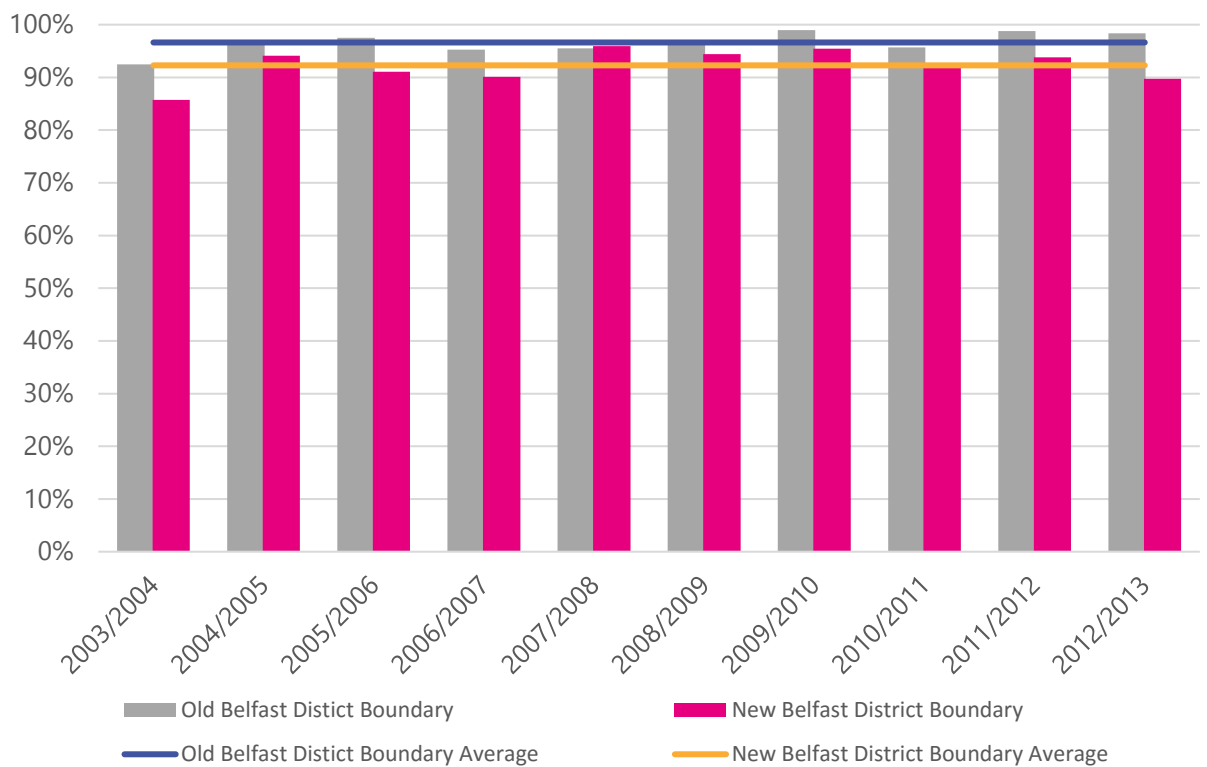
**Table A2: Proportion of dwellings within the Urban Footprint according to the old and new Belfast Local Government District 2004-2013**

Year	Old Belfast district boundary (pre-2015)	New Belfast district boundary (post-2015)
2003/2004	92.47%	85.71%
2004/2005	96.66%	94.10%
2005/2006	97.52%	91.08%
2006/2007	95.27%	90.12%
2007/2008	95.53%	95.91%
2008/2009	97.00%	94.38%
2009/2010	98.94%	95.44%
2010/2011	95.71%	92.53%
2011/2012	98.77%	93.82%
2012/2013	98.34%	89.75%

**Figure A1: Total number of units completed per according to the old and new Belfast Local Government District 2004-2013**



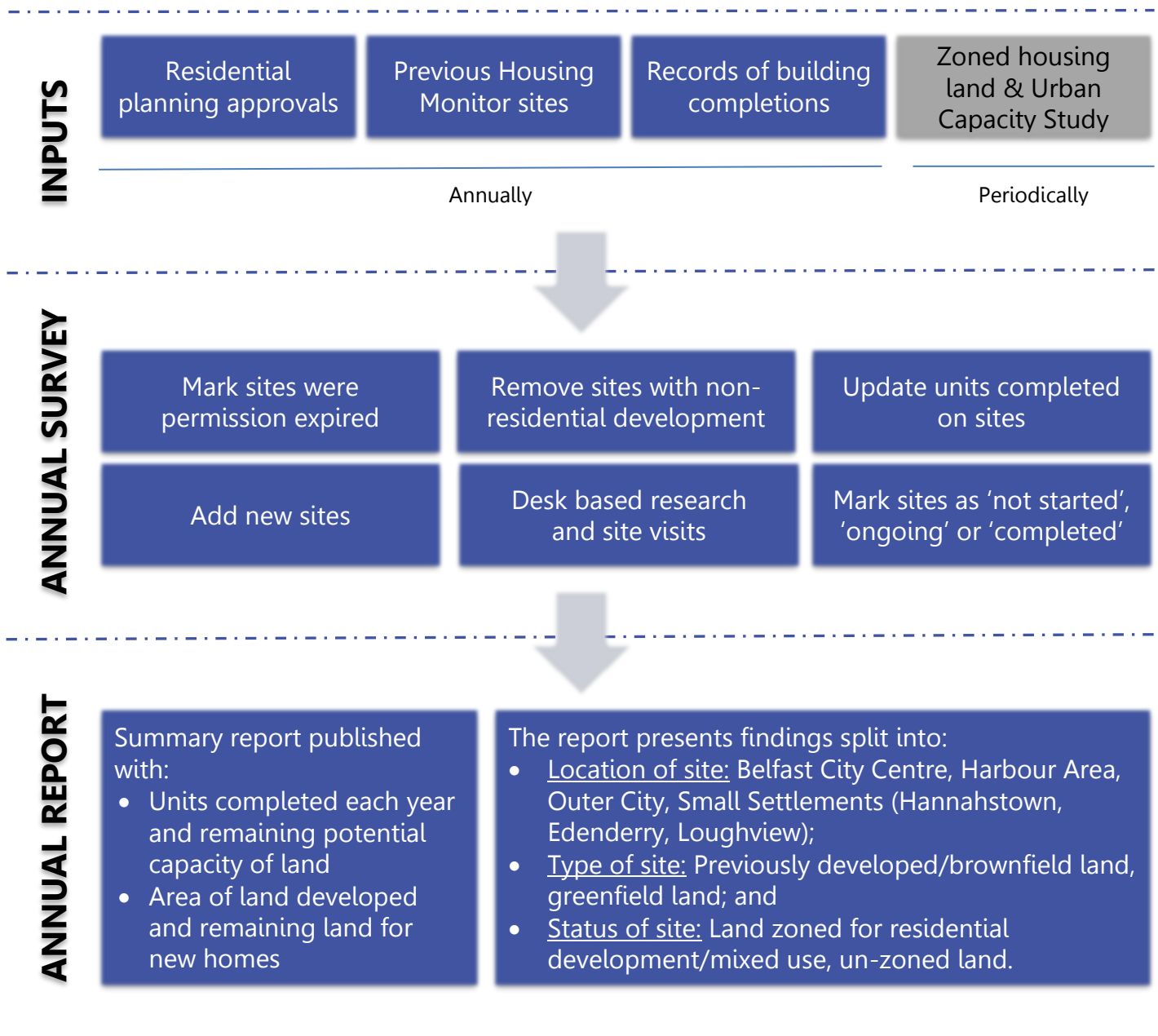
**Figure A2: Proportion of dwellings within the Urban Footprint according to the old and new Belfast Local Government District 2004-2013**



## Appendix B Summary Methodology

The Housing Land Availability Monitor measures net gains in housing within the Belfast City Council boundary. It provides a snapshot of the amount of land available for new homes as of 1st April each year. The Monitor demonstrates the presence of an adequate and continuous supply of housing land in the city and provides evidence to inform the preparation of the Local Development Plan and to make planning decisions.

The Monitor presents a register of potential housing land, based on current planning policy designations and planning permissions, rather than an accurate picture of viable housing land. An Urban Capacity Study will be undertaken from time to time to assess the suitability, availability and achievability of monitored sites to contribute to a viable 5 year supply of land.



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