

Note to CRHB, March 2017.

Review of Hometrack subscription.

General subscription (HIS)

- Our HIS subscription comes up at the end of March (that's the district and ward level data, NOT comparables).
- This will cost £8,000 + VAT for 31/03/2017 – 30/03/2018 for the sub-region and informs the SHMA and housing market bulletins, as well as specific reports ad hoc and data for rural housing needs surveys, completed by Mark Deas at Cambs ACRE.

Comparables

- The comparables for all 8 districts, plus HIS for the Ermine Street additional area subs expires on the 29th June 2017.
- Comparables gives us a "street level" dataset for all our districts, plus some further ones Ermine Street buys properties in. This provides price, type, size, date of last transaction data and enables a map and pdf report to be produced when examining a particular development site.
- Hometrack can either bill us in June '17 for a further 12 months (£5,500), or they would prefer to tie this into the "8 district" agreement, deducting what we have already paid covering March to the end of June 2017 so the bill for "the rest of 2017/18" would cost £4,126. Then (if we continue with it) the next year it would go back to £5,500 covering 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.
- Suggested split of £4,126 at 64:36
- Housing sub-region pays **£1,486**
- Ermine Street pays **£2,640**

Total cost for comparables for 8 districts plus Ermine Street area = £4126. Overall, with HIS, CRHB pays £9,486 and Ermine Street pays £2,640. This gets us to March 2018.

Users

Who are the users for comparables, and their area of interest...

	Job title	Organisation	Responded?
Caroline Hannon	Housing enabler	Peterborough & East Cambridgeshire	
Claire Burton	Planning policy officer	Huntingdonshire	
Dave Burkin	Development Implementation and S106 Monitoring Officer	Forest Heath	
David Ousby	Housing Development Officer (Growth)	South Cambridgeshire	✓
Duncan Vessey	New Business Initiatives Manager	Ermine Street	✓
Emma George	Business Support Officer	Ermine Street	✓
Frank Mastrandrea	Housing enabler	Huntingdonshire	
Gareth Durrant	Principal Planning Officer - Major Projects	West Suffolk	✓
Helen Reed	Housing strategy manager	Cambridge City	✓
Julian Adams	Housing enabler	Cambridge City	✓
Julie Fletcher	Head of Housing Strategy	South Cambridgeshire	✓
Julie Salisbury	Housing Strategy and Development Officer	West Suffolk	
Kat Webb	Research Officer	Cambridgeshire County Research Group	✓

	Job title	Organisation	Responded?
Kim Langley	Strategy & Enabling Officer	Forest Heath	
Mark Deas	Rural housing enabler	Cambridgeshire ACRE	✓
Martyn Hilliam	Housing Policy Officer	Ermine Street	
Olivia Manton	Housing enabler	Fenland	✓
Sue Beecroft	CRHB, housing coordinator	CRHB	✓

Feedback on the comparables system

I asked all the users this question...

We've been subscribing to Hometrack Comparables for about 6 months now.

I wanted to find out whether you are using it, whether you need any help with it, and what your initial thoughts would be on continuing to subscribe in future.

Don't feel you have to write a long essay, but if you can get back to me via email with any thoughts I'd be most grateful, as come the end of March I would like to know whether we are going to plan to keep using comparables, or just stick with the "basic" housing intelligence system, not the "street level" data.

To Ermine Street partners: this will be a decision for yourselves because you pay for "your districts" but I thought it might be useful to compare thoughts on the subject.

Also if people are struggling with it and need more help using the system, I can help get that in place.

Responses so far (still some to come, but gives an impression...)

	Feedback	Overall
David Ousby	I might go for weeks without using it (and forget the password and have to be reminded... again) but when I do use it, it's for a piece of work where I really need the data. For example last week I needed to know sales values for houses in Cottenham and needed a reasonable sized data set, which I was able to do by running reports for 2 bed, 3 bed and 4 bed houses to get enough data points. The resulting data is to be used as part of a proof of evidence in a planning appeal. Generally for a dataset to be sufficiently robust to give a 95% confidence interval 100 data points or more are needed. Last week I also used it to look at rental and sales values for 2 bed flats in Cambourne as part of a viability assessment for proposed developments on the High Street. Being able to select more than 100 records that can then be exported to excel and filtered would be useful. Also there seems to be more address point detail in the excel export than the pdf export; however the pdf export provides a map showing the comparable address points. Being able to have more detail in the pdf export would be good.	●
Duncan Vessey	Help!! Emma will be talking to David Ousby asap. We do need more training though, may be one to one!!	●
Emma George	I am really excited about what it can offer us unfortunately I just haven't had the time to do it justice and get to grips with it. I was going to spend some time with David Ousby here who is very skilled with it to see if he can help me get what I want from it - I know the information is there, but it's like anything you need time to use and practice with it. If after spending some time with David I am still struggling (I think it will be ok) I might invest in some further training. I would be keen to see it extended as I think it will be a valuable tool in supporting the investments we make as a company and for audit purposes	●
Gareth Durrant	My need to use the software is sporadic and I have not needed it yet. I'm probably not the best person to feed back on it.	●
Helen	To be honest I haven't used it, but I also wasn't able to do the training so I'm not clear	●

	Feedback	Overall
Reed	just how useful it might be i.e. "I like the idea of Hometrack comparables but need more training"!	
Julian Adams & HDA	Being honest, I have not had the need to use it in my current role so far but I know that colleagues in the HDA have found it very useful and have commented... <i>I have been using it to collate data for scheme specific viability assessment reports and to date found it very useful. I am also using it to collate data on a quarterly basis, extracting specific information relevant to the team.</i> <i>Sue is always very helpful whenever I need support. In terms of frequency I would say I have logged on to use the system once per month on average.</i>	●
Julie Fletcher	Although I haven't used it personally, I know David in particular finds it a really useful resource. I think as we start to look at other tenures, such as Starter Homes and private affordable rent it will be used increasingly more, so I am all for keeping the subscription.	●
Kat Webb	While we haven't had cause to use the Comparables feature recently, I do think it could be really useful for more detailed analysis in future so hope (fingers crossed) we keep access!	●
Mark Deas	I haven't used the comparables option. I haven't used Hometrack much recently as I've not undertaken any HNS. However, like the proverbial London bus I now have a queue of about six. My main focus is on presenting parish scale information. With Hometrack I'm using ward level as the best proxy. I probably could derive more local data from the comparables option but I'm not sure I could justify the extra time for what would only be contextual information.	●
Olivia Manton	I've just left you a message, because I did use Hometrack the other day and had some difficulty when using the comparable function. I wanted information on properties in Coldham, Wisbech and I couldn't raise any data for that area. Later I managed to get two properties up, but it didn't seem consistent. It is a very small rural village so it could be that many of the properties there are rented or haven't had any movement for a while, but it seemed strange that nothing came up. Similarly I found it hard to raise properties in surrounding areas on a consistent basis, so I wanted to check with you that I am doing it correctly. But otherwise it would potentially be a useful tool! I'd be grateful if you could call me to discuss either today or tomorrow. (I will be in on Friday this week).	●
Sue Beecroft	I don't use comparables as much as I use HIS (our existing subscription. But I do think it can support officers across the area, being able to access data which would otherwise be time consuming to collate from other sources (Like land registry etc). Anything which helps check developers viability assessments and the data they use for the task, cannot be a bad thing IMHO.	●
	Total red	0
	Total amber (includes, like the idea, need more training)	4
	Total green	7

Would like to invite CRHB:

- To approve renewing the general subscription to Hometrack HIS for 2017/18 and
- Give a steer as to whether to renew comparables for 2017/18.
- If renewal is agreed, I will make sure there is further support and training arranged to help people make best use of the comparables system.

Sue Beecroft, 2nd March 2017.