

Sizes of homes

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Chapter 29. Size of homes

29.1 Summary

Social Rented

Data from Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix (HSSA) returns shows a high need for one bedroom properties, but CORE data on the size of properties let shows that proportionately more two bedrooms are let. It is not possible to determine whether this is due to stock availability of relative priority (are larger households in more urgent need than smaller ones?)

® The Choice Based Lettings System will provide richer data than that currently available and should help to answer some of these questions.

Intermediate tenures

In the sub-region as a whole almost two-thirds of the households registering an interest some form of intermediate tenure require a one bedroom property. Intermediate purchasers are permitted to buy one bedroom more than they require, and only 15% of purchasers buy one bedroom properties. More than half (52%) buy two bedroom properties. Again, this may be due to stock availability, but preference may also be a factor. Chapter 21 *Current affordability and income* shows that in general the rent for a one bedroom property is roughly the same as shared ownership costs for a two bedroom property and some people may be using the tenure to buy an extra room.

There are very few larger intermediate sales. This is partly because very few larger intermediate homes are built, but also this model of tenure gets most interest from smaller households (single people and couples without children). However in the sub-region as a whole at least 16% of those on the intermediate register require three bedrooms or more.

Private sales

There is no data on the stock profile of private stock by number of bedrooms, only by number of rooms at the time of the last Census. In the sub-region as a whole, just under half (47%) of the properties sold between 2004 and 2007 were three bedroom houses.

There were more smaller properties sold in Cambridge City than elsewhere in the sub-region. The City generally has smaller properties (see Chapter 11, *Dwelling profile and occupation*) while South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire have a larger stock profile and therefore more larger properties are sold in these districts.

New developments

So far there have been two surveys of new developments (Cambourne and new developments in Huntingdonshire). These both show that owner occupiers tend to live in larger properties than all other tenures. However, there are significant numbers under occupying in several sectors. The highest level is in owner occupied properties, followed by private rented properties then thirdly the intermediate tenures. The under occupation can be considerable, such as 22% of single owner occupiers in the Huntingdonshire survey being in 4-bed properties. There is little under occupation in social rented housing.

29.2 Introduction

This chapter looks at the current pattern of sizes of homes in number of bedrooms based on tenure. This chapter shows that there are a range of factors influencing how people occupy homes of different sizes – tenure, stock availability and market behaviour or aspirations all affect the size requirements of a household, so it is not a straightforward matter. Some modeling has been done on the future mix by size (see the forthcoming Appendix 21, The Size Guide Toolkit), which attempts to take these factors into consideration.

At the time of the last Census (2001) people were asked for the number of rooms in their house. In more normal terms people talk about the size of homes in terms of number of bedrooms. Household size and structure affects housing need, but for owner occupation is particular is aspiration rather than need driven and when they have the choice, most people will choose the largest home they can reasonably afford. Sections 5 and 6 of Chapter 10: *Demographic context and forecasting* provide information on demographic projections by household type.

This chapter looks at housing needs registers and intermediate tenure registers, analysing the sizes of homes people need (or are registered for) and at the pattern of lettings of affordable homes by numbers of bedrooms. Finally, the chapter considers results of our new development surveys which gather information about the households living in newly built homes, and the number of bedrooms they occupy.

29.3 Social Rented Needs Register

Tables 1 and 2 show the 2007/08 housing needs register split by size. This shows a high demand for 1 bedroom properties (around 52% of the sub-regional register). This gives a rough idea of need, but is influenced by individual district letting policies. It also does not show the urgency of need by size.

® Data from choice based lettings will be able to demonstrate both need in terms of size and “need” by level of urgency and will be added in future.

Table 1: Social Rented Register by Size, 2008

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	Unspecified	All
Cambridge	3,879	1,332	570	177	26	5,984
East Cambridgeshire	837	460	203	85	18	1,603
Fenland	851	614	277	60		1,802
Huntingdonshire	828	915	279	156		2,178
South Cambridgeshire	1,148	1,802	585	91		3,626
Forest Heath	781	264	109	39	37	1,230
St Edmundsbury	2,881	1,232	865	110		5,088
Sub-Region	11,205	6,619	2,888	718	81	21,511

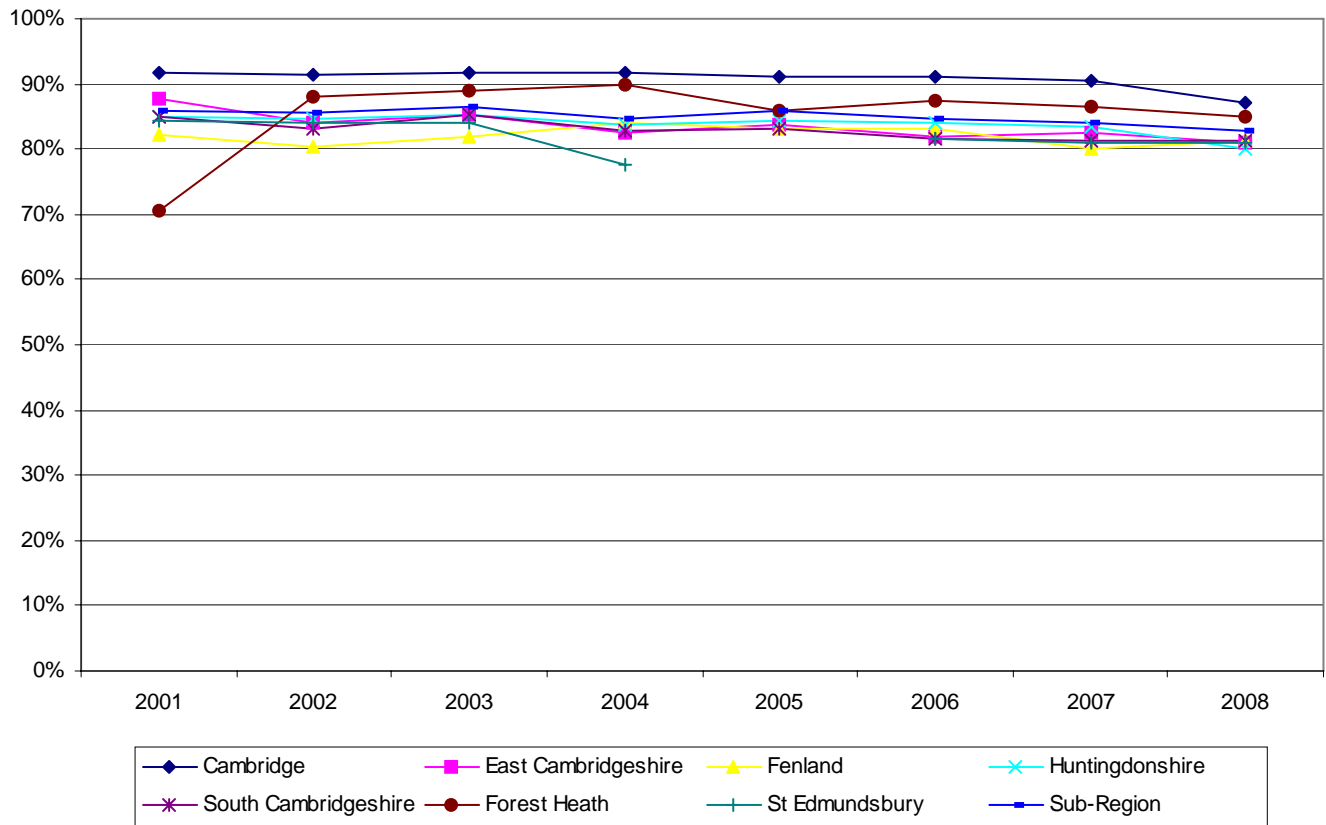
Source: HSSA

Table 2: Social Rented Register by Size, 2008 (% rounded)

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	Unspecified	All
Cambridge	65%	22%	10%	3%	0%	100%
East Cambridgeshire	52%	29%	13%	5%	1%	100%
Fenland	47%	34%	15%	3%	0%	100%
Huntingdonshire	38%	42%	13%	7%	0%	100%
South Cambridgeshire	32%	50%	16%	3%	0%	100%
Forest Heath	63%	21%	9%	3%	3%	100%
St Edmundsbury	57%	24%	17%	2%	0%	100%
Sub-Region	52%	31%	13%	3%	0%	100%

Source: HSSA

Fig 1: Percentage of 1 and 2 bedroom properties need 2001-2008 by district



Source: HSSA

Prior to 2005, data was only available for 1 and 2 bedrooms combined. From 2006, this was split. Fig 1 shows that over the past 8 years, the proportion of need for smaller properties has been fairly consistent (roughly between 80%-90% of the total register in all districts). Between 2007 and 2008, the percentage of smaller properties needed decreased slightly in favour of larger properties (with three or more bedrooms) in several districts, but the current split between smaller and larger properties is still within the normal range for all areas. There is no data available for 2005 in St Edmundsbury.

Table 3: Average size of properties needed 2005-2008

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	Unspecified
Cambridge	69%	21%	8%	2%	0.3%
East Cambridgeshire	55%	27%	13%	4%	0.3%
Fenland	50%	32%	16%	2%	
Huntingdonshire	56%	27%	11%	6%	
South Cambridgeshire	37%	41%	15%	2%	
Forest Heath	67%	19%	9%	4%	1%
St Edmundsbury	50%	31%	16%	3%	

Source: HSSA

Table 3 shows the data for the four years where 1 and 2 bedroom properties have been split. In all areas except for South Cambridgeshire, most of the need was for 1 bedroom homes.

29.4 Lettings by size

Data on lettings is currently taken from CORE. This does not include the household structure of lettings in 2007/08 in each district (see chapter 17 *Social rented housing turnover, registers and lettings*, Table 10). This shows that in the sub-region as a whole, 39% of general needs lettings were to single people, 14% were to couples, and 43% of lettings were to household including at least one child. Not all lettings are recorded in CORE (for example smaller housing associations are not obliged to complete returns, so some data is missing). As with information on register, lettings information should be improved by the data from Choice Based Lettings. Tables 4 and 5 below show the number of general needs lettings by size reported in each district.

Table 4: Lettings by size and district

	Cambridge City	East Cambridgeshire	Fenland	Huntingdonshire	South Cambridgeshire	Forest Heath	St Edmundsbury	Sub-Region
1 bed	195	86	134	126	162	148	156	1,007
2 beds	130	151	147	192	315	122	165	1,222
3 beds	78	80	96	110	140	53	123	680
4+ beds	4	8	3	12	17	11	10	65
All	407	325	380	440	634	334	454	2,974

Source: CORE 2007/08

Table 5: Lettings by size and district (%)

	Cambridge City	East Cambridgeshire	Fenland	Huntingdonshire	South Cambridgeshire	Forest Heath	St Edmundsbury	Sub-Region
1 bed	48%	26%	35%	29%	26%	44%	34%	34%
2 beds	32%	46%	39%	44%	50%	37%	36%	41%
3 beds	19%	25%	25%	25%	22%	16%	27%	23%
4+ beds	1%	2%	1%	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%
All	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: CORE 2007/08

Table 6: Lettings and registered need by size and district

	1 bed		2 beds		3 beds		4+ beds	
	Register	Lets	Register	Lets	Register	Lets	Register	Lets
Cambridge	69%	48%	21%	32%	8%	19%	2%	1%
East Cambridgeshire	55%	26%	27%	46%	13%	25%	4%	2%
Fenland	50%	35%	32%	39%	16%	25%	2%	1%
Huntingdonshire	56%	29%	27%	44%	11%	25%	6%	3%
South Cambridgeshire	37%	26%	41%	50%	15%	22%	2%	3%
Forest Heath	67%	44%	19%	37%	9%	16%	4%	3%
St Edmundsbury	50%	34%	31%	36%	16%	27%	3%	2%

In all areas, there were proportionately more lets to 2 and 3 bedrooms than need for these types of property, which suggests that the need for these sizes of properties was more urgent than the need for one bedrooms, where there was a higher percentage of registered need than lettings.

29.5 Intermediate tenures and size

Data is available on the household structure of people in need of intermediate housing and people who have been recently housed in this type of tenure. This data is provided by Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association, the HomeBuy Zone Agent at the time (March 2008). Orbit First Step took over as Zone Agent in April 2009.

Table 7: Intermediate register – household structure

	Cambridge City	East Cambridgeshire	Fenland	Huntingdonshire	South Cambridgeshire	Forest Heath	St Edmundsbury	Sub-Region
Single person	188	67	17	80	162	36	67	617
Couple, no children	80	43	10	60	103	34	54	384
Family with 1 child	43	15	10	24	41	16	26	175
Family with 2 Children	23	17	6	16	36	8	11	117
Family with 3 Children	7	6		5	11	1	5	35
Family with 4 or more children	3		1	2	1		1	8
Lone Parent with 1 child	16	17	4	18	24	9	14	102
Lone Parent with 2 Children	13	11	4	18	13	12	1	72
Lone Parent with 3 Children	1	4			11		2	18

	Cambridge City	East Cambridgeshire	Fenland	Huntingdonshire	South Cambridgeshire	Forest Heath	St Edmundsbury	Sub-Region
Lone Parent with 4 or more children					1			1
Other	4	3		1	8		3	19
Sharers	7	3	2	5	8	1	1	27
Total	385	186	54	229	419	117	185	1575

Source: BPHA, Mar 2008

Assuming one bedroom per child and one per adult or adult couple, the need breaks down as shown in table 8.

Table 8: Bedroom need by district, intermediate tenures

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 or more beds	Unspecified	All
Cambridge	70%	15%	9%	3%	3%	100%
East Cambridgeshire	59%	17%	15%	5%	3%	100%
Fenland	50%	26%	19%	2%	4%	100%
Huntingdonshire	61%	18%	15%	3%	3%	100%
South Cambridgeshire	63%	16%	12%	6%	4%	100%
Forest Heath	60%	21%	17%	1%	1%	100%
St Edmundsbury	65%	22%	6%	4%	2%	100%
Sub-Region	64%	18%	12%	4%	3%	100%

Source: BPHA, Mar 2008

The bedroom standard for overcrowding is slightly less generous than the assumptions used above, e.g. says that children of a similar age and the same gender are alright to share. However, in the intermediate schemes available, 1 bedroom more than is needed is permissible. So a couple or a single person would be allowed a maximum of two bedrooms and this may be a more attractive option if they can afford it.

CORE records information about intermediate housing sales as well as social lets. As with the data on social lets, it may not be complete, but gives an idea of the structure of sales.

Table 9: Intermediate purchasers by household structure

	City	East Cambridgeshire	Fenland	Huntingdonshire	South Cambridgeshire	Forest Heath	St Edmundsbury	Sub-Region
Single person	34	8	3	29	12	10	13	109
Couple	21	8	5	16	15	3	7	75
Family 1 child	4	2	2	4	2	1	2	17
Family 2 children	4	1	4	2	3		1	15
Family 3	2							2

	City	East Cambridgeshire	Fenland	Huntingdonshire	South Cambridgeshire	Forest Heath	St Edmundsbury	Sub-Region
children								
Family 4 children							2	2
Lone parent 1 child	2	3		1	1	1	1	9
Lone parent 2 children	1			2	1	1	2	7
Lone parent 4 children							1	1
Other	4	1		5	4	1		15
Total	72	23	14	59	38	17	29	252

Source: CORE

Proportionately more single people and couples buy intermediate products than are registered. Fewer families and lone parents buy than are registered. Table 10 shows sales by number of bedrooms

Table 10: Intermediate sales by number of bedrooms

	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	All
Cambridge	33%	40%	26%	0%	100%
East Cambridgeshire	9%	48%	43%	0%	100%
Fenland	0%	43%	57%	0%	100%
Huntingdonshire	7%	61%	31%	2%	100%
South Cambridgeshire	0%	66%	34%	0%	100%
Forest Heath	29%	53%	18%	0%	100%
St Edmundsbury	7%	55%	31%	7%	100%
Sub-Region	15%	52%	32%	1%	100%

Source: CORE

The number of sales is influenced by what is built (as well as the number of lettings being influenced by what is available at the time). The majority of sales are of two bedroom properties in all districts except Fenland (where there were 14 sales in total). There are very few sales of larger properties because there were very few built. Given the proportionately large amount of singles and couples buying, there were comparatively few properties sold with 1 bedroom. These are both areas with high rent levels, which may be one reason why smaller properties sold better in these areas than elsewhere, but it may also be that more properties of this size were built in these districts. Even with the relatively high proportion of one bedroom sales in these area, in both districts there were more sales of two bedroom stock, which indicates a preference for an extra bedroom when it is within budget.

29.6 Private sales

There is very little data available about what size properties different types of households buy. Generally people will buy the largest property available to them that they are able to afford.

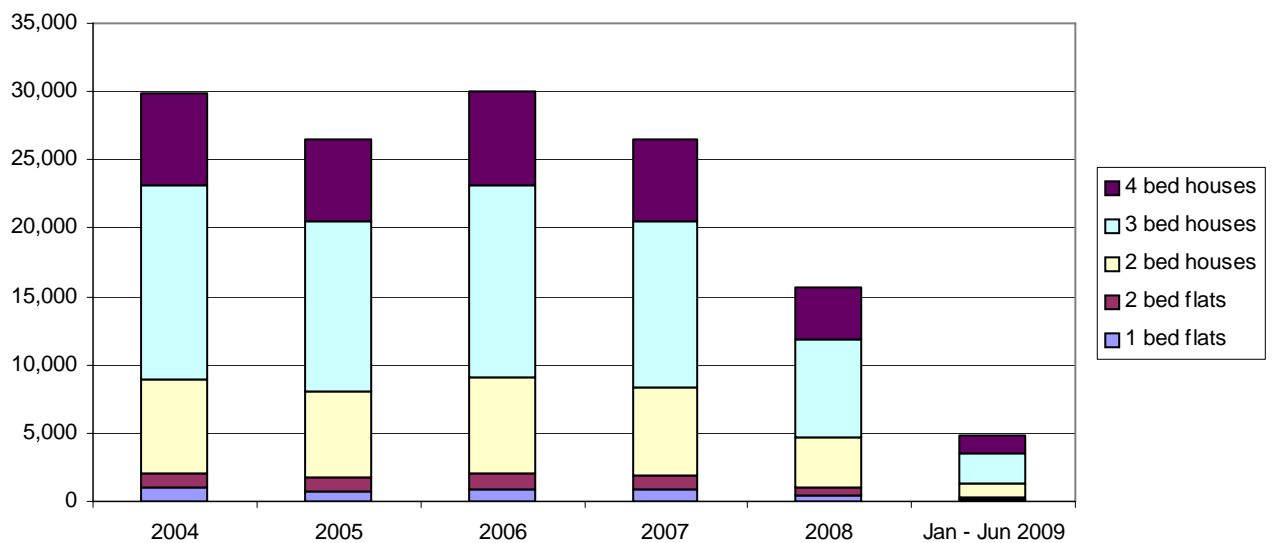
Hometrack provides sales and valuation data on the number of properties sold by size and

type. Fig 2 shows the number of sales by type over the past 5 years.

In the Cambridge sub-region as a whole, between 2004 and 2007 there were between 25,000 and 30,000 properties sold. In 2008 there were just over 15,000 sales and a further decrease is anticipated in 2009 based on the half year data currently available. The data for the period covered shows that three bedroom properties sell well, but also make up a large proportion of the stock from estimates of the last Census¹.

There is very little change in the balance of what is sold over time. During the current recession, there has been a slight decrease in the proportion of 1 and 2 bedroom properties sold and a slight increase in the percentage of 4 bedroom homes sold. This is because the first time buyers and buy-to-let purchasers who typically buy this size of property have been more adversely affected by restricted access to credit than existing owner-occupiers.

Fig 2: Sales by size and type, Cambridge Sub-Region



Source: Hometrack

Cambridge City has a different stock profile to elsewhere in the sub-region, i.e. a high proportion of flats and smaller properties, for example outside the city between 6% and 10% of properties had 3 rooms or fewer at the time of the last Census, compared to 20% in the city. In the rest of the sub-region 1 bed flats account for between 2% and 3% of sales – in Cambridge City properties of this kind make up almost 10% of sales.

¹ The Census asked households for the number of rooms, including living rooms, kitchens and bedrooms, but not bathrooms or hallways. If five rooms properties are taken as an approximation of three bedroom properties, these are the most common size for properties.

Table 11: Average % of properties sold by size and type, July 2003 – Jun 2009

	Cambridge City	East Cambridge-shire	Fenland	Huntingdonshire	South Cambridge-shire	Forest Heath	St Edmundsbury	Sub-Region
1 bed flat	9%	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	3%
2 bed flat	13%	3%	1%	3%	2%	4%	3%	4%
2 bed house	19%	25%	28%	19%	21%	36%	23%	23%
3 bed house	44%	46%	50%	47%	45%	42%	50%	47%
4 bed house	15%	24%	19%	28%	30%	15%	22%	23%

Source: Hometrack

Forest Heath has the highest proportion of two bed house sales. Again based on the Census, Forest Heath has the largest proportion of four room properties of all the districts so it is likely to be increased because of what is on offer.

South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire have a high proportion of 4 bedroom house sales compared to other districts. Huntingdonshire has a high percentage of properties with six rooms compared to other districts but this is not true of South Cambridgeshire. Four bedroom properties here might sell well because of a low percentage of four bedroom stock in the city. The relative affordability is also likely to have an effect here as four bed houses in the city are very expensive.

29.7 New Development Surveys - introduction

In 2006, the County Council's research group surveyed households in the new town of Cambourne to gather information about the types of households that were moving into the area, where they were coming from. A similar survey was subsequently carried out for eight developments across Huntingdonshire in 2007.

® Further New Development Surveys are planned at other new developments across the sub-region. Surveys are planned for Fenland and East Cambridgeshire in 2009/10.

29.8 New Development Surveys - Cambourne

The following table looks at the household structure and number of bedrooms for each tenure type in the survey area for Cambourne.

Table 12: Owner occupier households by number of bedrooms, Cambourne

	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	5 beds	6 beds	All
Single	20%	28%	34%	15%	1%	1%	100%
Couple	3%	19%	45%	24%	8%	2%	100%
Several Adult Household	0%	0%	17%	41%	34%	7%	100%
Adult(s) + 1 child	0%	3%	43%	38%	13%	2%	100%
Adult(s) + 2 children	0%	0%	14%	56%	25%	6%	100%
Adult(s)+ 3 or more children	0%	0%	11%	53%	28%	8%	100%
Total	4%	12%	33%	34%	14%	3%	100%

Source: Cambourne new development survey, 2006

Of 540 owner occupier respondents, around two thirds lived in either 3 or 4 bedroom properties. Three bedroom houses were the most common size for both single people and adult couples with no children. Only 15% of households with children lived in houses with three bedrooms or fewer.

Table 13: Social rented households by number of bedrooms, Cambourne

	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	5 beds	6 beds	All
Single	37%	60%	3%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Couple	31%	46%	23%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Several Adult Household	0%	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%	100%
Adult(s) + 1 child	8%	75%	13%	4%	0%	0%	100%
Adult(s) + 2 children	0%	22%	78%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Adult(s)+ 3 or more children	0%	0%	60%	40%	0%	0%	100%
Total	19%	47%	29%	5%	0%	0%	100%

Source: Cambourne new development survey, 2006

Of the households who responded to the survey, 112 were renting from either a housing association or South Cambridgeshire District Council. Nearly half (47%) were living in 2 bedroom properties. There were no households living in properties with more than 4 bedrooms. Forty-six percent of households included at least one child, compared to 42% of owner occupiers.

Table 14: Intermediate households by number of bedrooms, Cambourne

	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	5 beds	6 beds	All
Single	7%	86%	7%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Couple	20%	50%	10%	20%	0%	0%	100%
Several Adults	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Adult(s) + 1 child	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Adult(s) + 2 children	0%	67%	0%	0%	33%	0%	100%
Adult(s)+ 3 or more children	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Total	12%	67%	9%	9%	3%	0%	100%

Source: Cambourne new development survey, 2006

There were 33 respondents from intermediate tenures. The zone agent allows intermediate households to buy/ rent properties with one more bedroom than is “needed”. Around 72% of households in this tenure were single people or couples with no children and a bedroom “need” of 1, but just over two thirds of intermediate sales were of two bedroom properties.

Two bedroom properties were also the most common size for the 66 private renters who responded to the Cambourne survey. As with the intermediate households, a large proportion (71%) of private renters were either single people or couples.

Table 15: Private rented households by number of bedrooms, Cambourne

	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	5 beds	6 beds	All
Single	19%	56%	22%	4%	0%	0%	100%
Couple	0%	50%	40%	5%	5%	0%	100%
Several Adult Household	0%	0%	33%	67%	0%	0%	100%
Adult(s) + 1 child	0%	22%	67%	11%	0%	0%	100%
Adult(s) + 2 children	0%	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%	100%
Adult(s)+ 3 or more children	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Total	8%	42%	39%	9%	2%	0%	100%

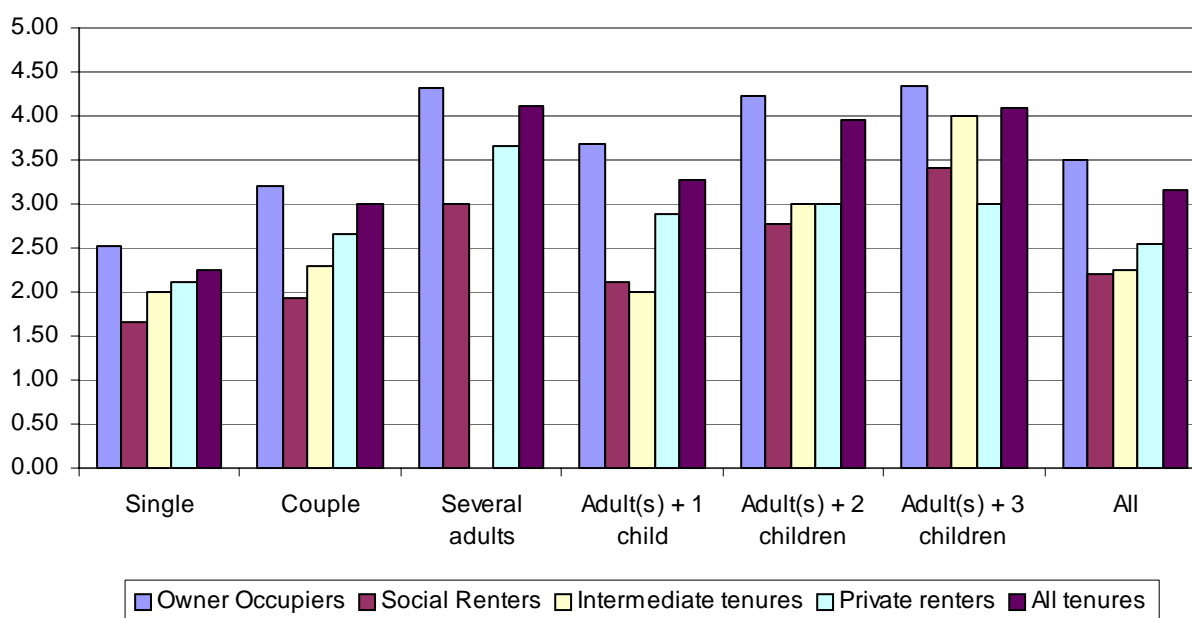
Source: Cambourne new development survey, 2006

Table 16: All households by number of bedrooms, Cambourne

	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	5 beds	6 beds	All
Single	22%	43%	24%	9%	1%	1%	100%
Couple	6%	26%	40%	20%	7%	1%	100%
Several Adult Household	0%	3%	22%	42%	28%	6%	100%
Adult(s) + 1 child	2%	20%	38%	28%	9%	2%	100%
Adult(s) + 2 children	0%	5%	24%	45%	20%	5%	100%
Adult(s)+ 3 children	0%	0%	24%	49%	20%	6%	100%
Total	7%	22%	32%	26%	10%	2%	100%

Source: Cambourne new development survey, 2006

Fig 3: Average number of bedrooms by household structure and tenure, Cambourne



Source: Cambourne new development survey, 2006

Owner occupiers on average live in larger properties in terms of number of bedrooms than people in other tenures. Social renters live in the smallest properties, even though there were proportionately more larger households in this tenure than all the others.

29.9 New Development Surveys - Huntingdonshire

Table 17: Owner occupier households by number of bedrooms, Huntingdonshire

	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	5 beds	6 beds	All
Single	9%	28%	40%	22%	1%	0%	100%
Couple	1%	15%	34%	46%	4%	0%	100%
Several Adults	0%	0%	30%	57%	8%	5%	100%
Adult(s) + 1 child	0%	3%	24%	60%	10%	3%	100%
Adult(s) + 2 children	0%	0%	10%	72%	15%	3%	100%
Adult(s) + 3 or more children	0%	0%	6%	69%	13%	13%	100%
Total	2%	11%	28%	50%	7%	2%	100%

There were 548 households who responded to the Huntingdonshire new developments survey. Just under 37% included at least one child. More than half of those who responded from this tenure lived in properties with four or more bedrooms.

Table 18: Social rented households by number of bedrooms, Huntingdonshire

	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	5 beds	All
Single	82%	18%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Couple	33%	58%	0%	0%	8%	100%
Several Adults	0%	67%	33%	0%	0%	100%
Adult(s) + 1 child	8%	85%	8%	0%	0%	100%
Adult(s) + 2 children	0%	22%	56%	22%	0%	100%
Adult(s) + 3 or more children	0%	25%	50%	25%	0%	100%
Total	41%	41%	13%	4%	1%	100%

Source: Huntingdonshire new development survey, 2007

Of the 69 social renters who responded, none lived in homes with 6 bedrooms. Eighty-two percent of respondents from this tenure lived in either one or two bedroom properties.

Table 19: Private rented households by number of bedrooms, Huntingdonshire

	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	5 beds	All
Single	7%	47%	20%	27%	0%	100%
Couple	0%	60%	30%	10%	0%	100%
Several Adults	0%	0%	33%	33%	33%	100%
Adult(s) + 1 child	0%	20%	20%	60%	0%	100%
Adult(s) + 2 children	0%	25%	50%	0%	25%	100%
Adult(s) + 3 or more children	0%	0%	33%	67%	0%	100%
Total	3%	38%	28%	28%	5%	100%

Source: Huntingdonshire new development survey, 2007

Around 38% of the 40 respondents who were renting privately lived in two bedroom properties, but a significant proportion (59%) were living in homes with three or more bedrooms.

Table 20: All households (including intermediate tenures) by number of bedrooms, Huntingdonshire

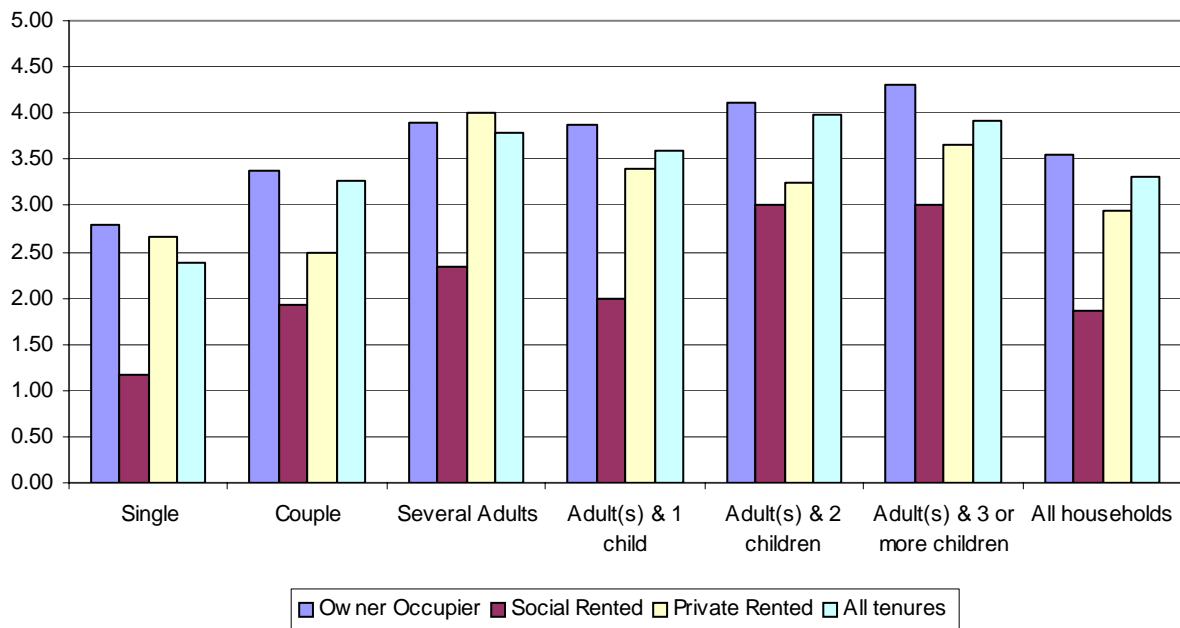
	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	5 beds	6 beds	All
Single	22%	43%	24%	9%	1%	1%	100%
Couple	6%	26%	40%	20%	7%	1%	100%
Several Adult Household	0%	3%	22%	42%	28%	6%	100%
Adult(s) + 1 child	2%	20%	38%	28%	9%	2%	100%
Adult(s) + 2 children	0%	5%	24%	45%	20%	5%	100%
Adult(s)+ 3 children	0%	0%	24%	49%	20%	6%	100%
Total	7%	22%	32%	26%	10%	2%	100%

Source: Huntingdonshire new development survey, 2007

Only three of the 10 intermediate tenure responses in the Huntingdonshire survey provided sufficient evidence on household composition and number of bedrooms. Therefore, there is too little information from which to draw any conclusions about this tenure on its own.

The most common size property overall was three bedroom homes. All of the people living in six bedroom properties were owner occupiers.

Fig 4: Average number of bedrooms by household structure and tenure, Huntingdonshire



Source: Huntingdonshire new development survey, 2007

Again, owners generally live in larger properties than people in other tenures, and social renters live in smaller properties despite having large households.

29.10 New development surveys - Under occupation

The two surveys carried out so far both show that owner occupiers live in larger properties than all other tenures. However, there are significant numbers under occupying² in three tenures: owner occupiers, private rented tenants, and, in Huntingdonshire those in intermediate tenures. In general, there is a higher level of 'under occupation' shown in the Huntingdonshire survey.

In Cambourne, 15% of single owner occupiers and 24% of couples live in 4-bed houses. In the Huntingdonshire survey the figures are higher still, with 22% of single owner occupiers and 46% of couples living in 4-bed houses.

In general there is a lower level of under occupation in the private rented sector, although the profiles are different in the two survey areas. In Cambourne, only 4% of singles and 5% of couples are in 4-bed properties, though 22% and 40% respectively are in 3-bed properties. In the Huntingdonshire survey, 27% of singles and 10% of couples are in 4-bed properties.

Intermediate tenures show considerable under occupation, though at a lower level again. In Cambourne, no singles and 20% of couples in intermediate tenures are in 4-bed houses, with 7% and 10% respectively in 3-bed. In Huntingdonshire 9% of singles and 20% of couples are in 4-bed houses with 24% and 40% respectively in 3-bed. Reasons for this under occupation were not explored in the survey and the situation may not be comparable to the 'fully' private sector tenures.

Assuming that the 'under occupation' occurs because of individual choice, then social rented housing appears to be much more controlled, as would be expected from the existence of allocation policies designed to manage this limited resource. Only 3% of singles and 23% of couples in social rented in Cambourne were in 3-bed properties with none in 4 or more bed properties. In Huntingdonshire, no singles or couples were in properties larger than 2-bed except for an anomalous 8% of couples in 5-bed properties. Presumably, that last figure is either for a specific reason or is dubious. However, the figures for social rented properties suggest that the needs of many of these tenants will change over time. For example, in Cambourne, 22% of families with 2 children are in 2-bed properties. Assuming the children are very young there is no overcrowding, but there may be a need for extra bedrooms as the children grow older.

² 'Under occupation' here simply means having more bedrooms than might be expected given the size and structure of the household – e.g. any single person with more than one bedroom.