

Cambridgeshire ACRE

Housing Need Survey Results Report for Meldreth

Survey undertaken in October 2017



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CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

Background to Affordable Rural Housing

Affordable housing is housing made available for either rent or shared ownership, based on the evidence of need, to those unable to afford market prices. One approach to delivering affordable homes in rural areas is through rural exception site policy. A rural exception site is a site used specifically for affordable housing in a rural community that would not normally be used for housing because it is subject to policies of restraint.

Affordable housing benefits from certain protections in rural areas. Tenants of rented properties cannot exercise their Right to Acquire within 'Designated Rural Areas' (generally settlements with a population of less than 3,000). Likewise, shared ownership properties cannot be purchased outright in 'Designated Protected Areas' (a similar list of rural settlements). The housing association restricts the amount of equity that the resident can own to 80 per cent or commits to buying back the property if the tenant has 100% ownership. These protections are designed to protect the stock of affordable housing in rural communities. Meldreth falls under both designations.

Planning conditions and legal agreements are used on rural exception sites to prioritise the occupation of property to people falling within categories of need and who can prove a local connection through family, residence or work. The Housing & Planning Act 2016 is likely to change some of the rules for rural affordable housing. For example the roll out of the voluntary Right To Buy for Housing Association tenants may limit the ability to retain affordable housing stock. However, until the Act is fully implemented the implications are not clear.

To be eligible for rental properties, applicants must complete an application form to join the local Housing Register and they would then be able to bid for properties through the choice based lettings scheme. To be eligible for low cost shared ownership properties, applicants must apply directly through the local Homebuy Agent. You can read more about choice based lettings and low cost home ownership in Appendix 1.

Context

Cambridgeshire ACRE was commissioned to carry out a Housing Needs Survey in Meldreth in August 2017 by Meldreth Parish Council. The survey was delayed until after the school summer holidays.

The specific aims of the survey were to gauge opinion on the value of developing affordable homes for local people in the parish and to determine the scale and nature of affordable housing need. However, the nature of the survey means that it also identifies wider market need such as, for example, downsizing. This is important because rural exception sites can now include an element of market housing to cross-subsidize the affordable houses. Therefore, the survey can also enable any market housing element to be tailored to local needs (though no controls will be applied).

This survey was carried out with the support of Cambridge Housing Society (a local housing association) and South Cambridgeshire District Council. The survey costs have been met by Cambridge Housing Society.

Methodology

Survey packs were posted to all 840 residential addresses in the parish on 29 September 2017. The survey packs included covering letters from Cambridgeshire ACRE and Meldreth Parish Council, a questionnaire, a FAQ sheet on rural affordable housing and a postage paid envelope for returned forms.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections:

- Part One of the survey form contained questions to identify those who believe they have a housing need. Respondents were also asked if they supported the idea of building a small affordable housing development in the village. All households were asked to complete this section.
- Part Two of the survey form contained questions on household circumstances and housing requirements. This part was only completed by those households who are currently, or expecting to be, in need of housing.

The closing date for the survey was Friday 20 October 2017. In total, 182 completed forms were returned giving the survey a 22 per cent response rate. Most of our Housing Needs Surveys achieve a response rate of between 20 and 25 per cent.

Meldreth Parish

Meldreth is a mid-size village in south Cambridgeshire. It lies to the north of the A10 (which by-passed the village in 1988) about five miles north east of Royston. Cambridge is about 15 miles north east of Meldreth. Melbourn, a larger village, is separated from Meldreth by the A10. Other near neighbours include the villages of Whaddon, Kneesworth, Bassingbourn and Shepreth.

Meldreth retains a range of village facilities

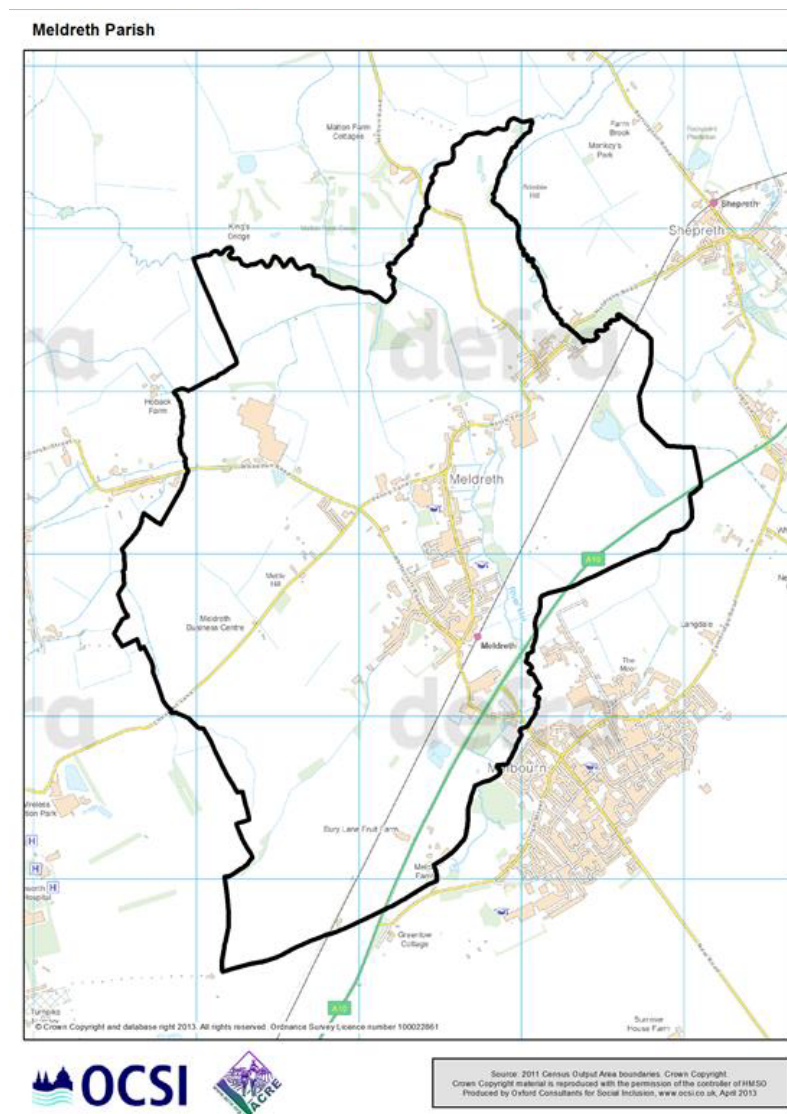


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Meldreth village hall © Copyright Maggie Smith and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence

Meldreth retains most of the services normally associated with a mid-size village. These include a primary school, pub and shop/post office. Other retail outlets include a takeaway and butchers. The village also has a church and village hall, and more unusually, a railway station at the southern end of the village which lies on the London to King's Lynn line. However, the village has no medical facilities and children travel to Melbourn or Bassingbourn for secondary education.¹



The latest estimates suggest that Meldreth had a population of almost 2,000 in 2015.² The village has experienced some rapid periods of development since the end of World War Two. In 1951 the population was only 636. However, until recently, the last 20 years or so have seen more muted growth. There are signs that growth has picked up a little in the last few years. Between 2011 and 2015 the population grew from 1,810 to 1,950.³

¹ www.meldrethhistory.org.uk

² 'Cambridgeshire County Council's Mid-2015 Population and Dwelling Stock Estimates', Cambridgeshire County Council (spreadsheet downloaded from <http://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/populationanddemographics>)

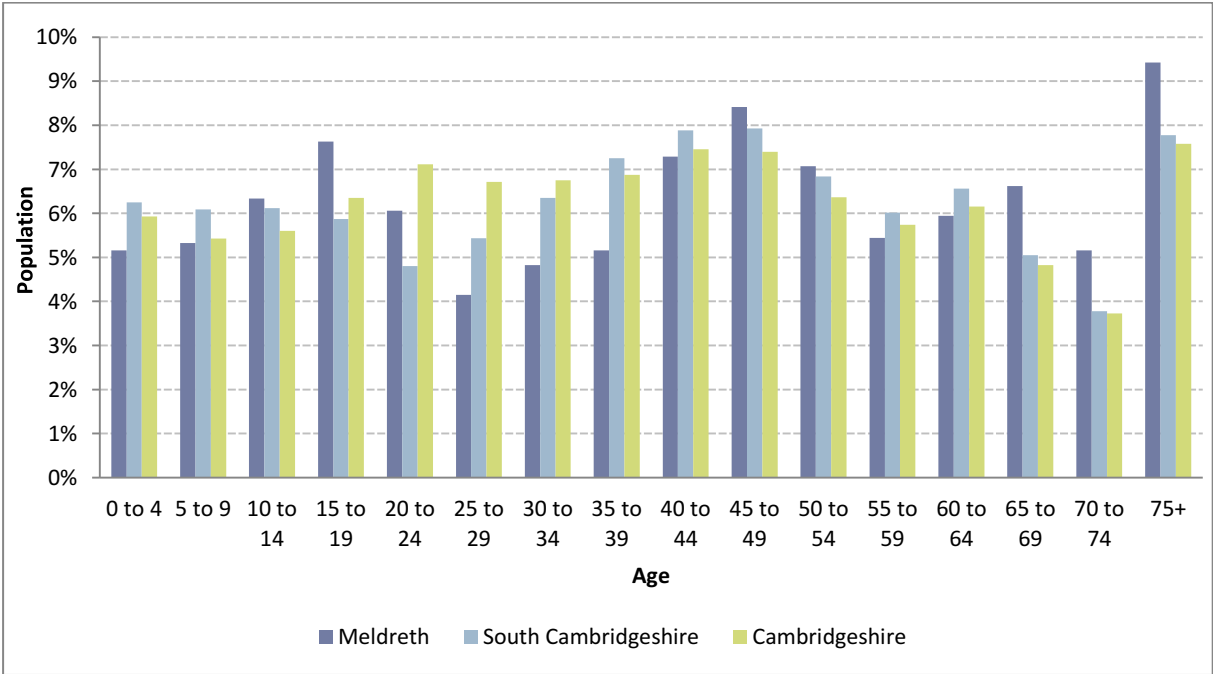
³ 'Cambridgeshire Population and Dwelling Stock Estimates: 1991-2010', Cambridgeshire County Council (July 2011)

This was matched by an increase in dwellings from 740 in 2011 to 800 in 2015.⁴ However, there are only commitments for a further eight dwellings which suggests recent growth levels may not be sustained.⁵ This is supported by the emerging Local Plan which identifies Meldreth as a ‘Group Village’. These are considered less sustainable locations for new development than ‘Major Rural Centres’ and ‘Rural Centres’ due to weaker local facilities.

“Development will not be permitted on sites capable of accommodating scheme sizes significantly larger than 8 or exceptionally 15 dwellings in Group Villages.”⁶

The parish is relatively affluent with low benefit dependency levels. There are particularly high levels of self-employment and public services employment among Meldreth residents. Health & Social Work and Education alongside Retail are the largest employment sectors. The proportions of people qualified to Higher Education level (34 per cent) and working in managerial and professional roles (46 per cent) are similar to Cambridgeshire as a whole.⁷ Meldreth is an attractive location for commuters due to the local railway station and easy access to Cambridge and Royston.

Meldreth population by age, 2011



Source: ‘Meldreth Parish Profile’, Cambridgeshire County Council (October 2014)

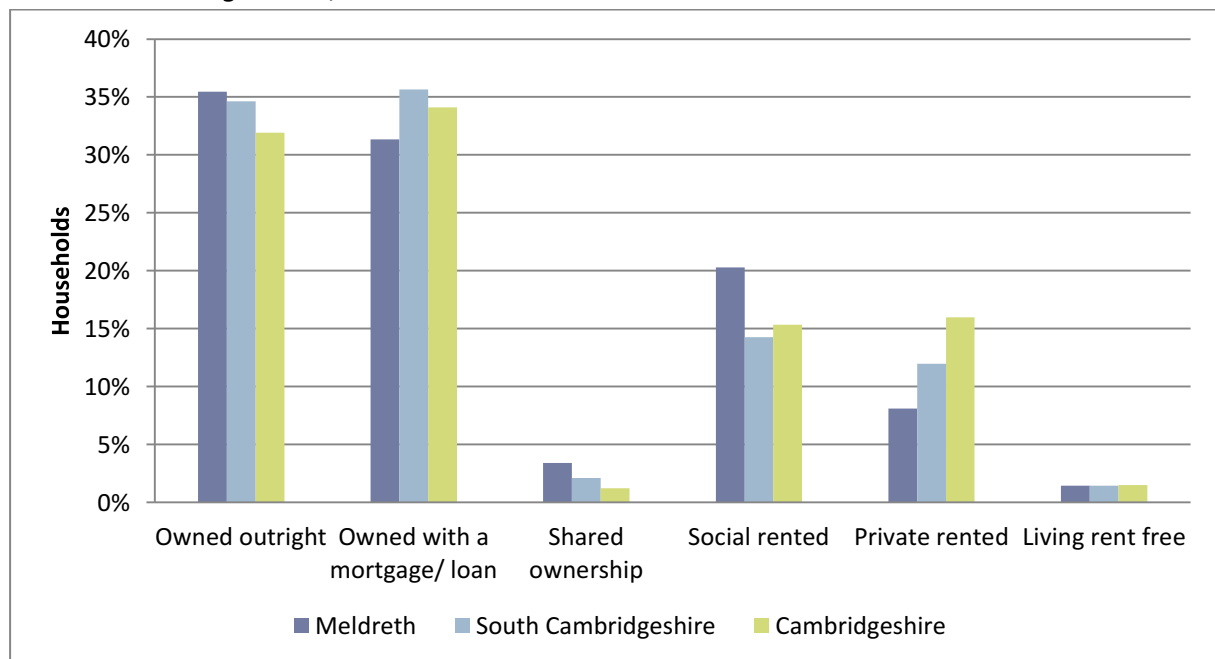
The age profile of Meldreth’s population has some significant differences from the South Cambridgeshire average. The proportion of school age children is broadly similar. However, the drop in numbers of people aged in their 20s which is typical of rural Cambridgeshire parishes appears a little later in Meldreth and isn’t apparent until the 25-29 cohort. It

⁴ ‘Table H1.2 Dwellings completed (NET) by Parish in Cambridgeshire (2002-2016)’, Cambridgeshire County Council (undated)
⁵ ‘Table H2.2 Dwelling Commitments by Ward/Parish in Cambridgeshire (2002-2016)’, Cambridgeshire County Council (undated)
⁶ ‘South Cambridgeshire Local Plan – Proposed Submission’, South Cambridgeshire DC, July 2013
⁷ ‘Rural Community Profile for Meldreth (Parish)’, Cambridgeshire ACRE/ OCSI, October 2013

remains noticeable until the 40-44 age cohort. Meldreth also has a particularly high proportion of people aged 65+. Twenty one per cent are aged 65+ compared with only 17 per cent in South Cambridgeshire. The high incidence of single person households in Meldreth is partly related to the high levels of older people.⁸

Owner occupation is the dominant tenure in Meldreth accounting for two-thirds of all households. The private rented sector in comparison is relatively small. Meldreth has retained a significant affordable housing stock. Most of this is rented although there is a significant minority of shared ownership accommodation. Some of the affordable housing has been developed as rural exception sites and will therefore prioritise people with a local connection to Meldreth. However, it should be noted that the majority of affordable housing will be allocated on a 'needs basis' to any applicants with a connection to South Cambridgeshire.

Meldreth housing tenure, 2011



Source: 'Meldreth Parish Profile', Cambridgeshire County Council (October 2014)

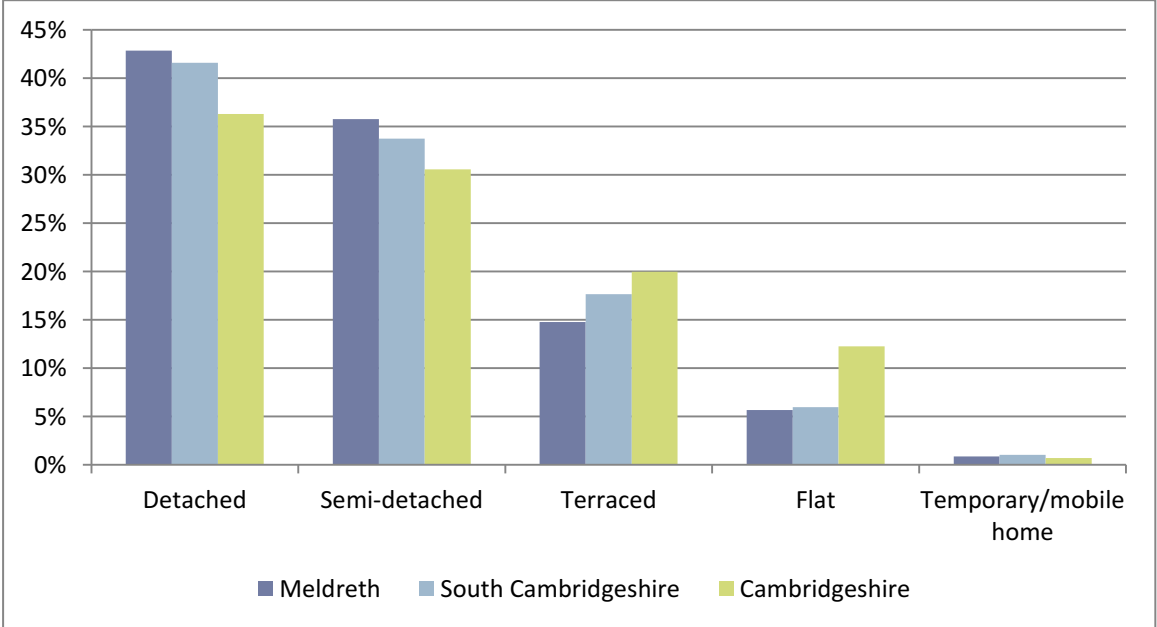
The number of affordable properties (rented or shared ownership) has risen slightly in the last few years from 167 in 2011 to 188 in 2016. In 2016 there were 19 shared ownership properties owned by Housing Associations and a further seven properties retained by South Cambridgeshire DC on an equity share basis.

Three quarters of dwellings in Meldreth are detached or semi-detached. However, there remains a significant element of terraced housing (15 per cent) in the parish. There is also a small element of flats (six per cent) in the parish. Many Cambridgeshire parishes are more dependent upon detached and semi-detached properties.

⁸ '2011 Census Profile: Meldreth', Cambridgeshire County Council via www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk (undated)

This relatively low dependence on detached properties (43 per cent) compared to other parishes means that the shortage of smaller properties is less marked. Twenty nine per cent of properties have two bedrooms or less (30 per cent in South Cambridgeshire). In contrast, 36 per cent have four bedrooms or more (34 per cent in South Cambridgeshire). Smaller properties play an important role in helping new entrants into the property market and older people to downsize.

Meldreth housing type, 2011



Source: 'Meldreth Parish Profile', Cambridgeshire County Council (October 2014)

Local Income Levels and Affordability

Buying on the Open Market

A review of property estate agent websites identified eight properties currently on the market in Meldreth. The lowest priced property is a 2 bed end terrace @ £250,000 followed by a 3 bed semi-detached house @ £310,000. The remaining properties ranged from £350,000 to £1,200,000.⁹

The lowest priced properties for sale in Meldreth



3 bed terrace, Gables Close, Meldreth for sale @ £250,000 www.zoopla.co.uk



3 bed semi, Elin Way, Meldreth for sale @ £310,000 www.zoopla.co.uk

Sales over the last year were also reviewed to draw a larger sample. This identified a further 15 properties. The lowest price sales were on Housing Association schemes and were believed to involve shared ownership properties (where the price only reflects the share of the property purchased) and have been excluded. As a result the lowest priced sale was a 2 bed bungalow @ £141,000 and a 3 bed semi @ £248,000. There were only four properties sold for less than £300,000 with five sold for over £500,000.

Lower priced properties sold in the last year in Meldreth



2 bed bungalow, Whitecroft Road, Meldreth sold @ £141,000 (May 2017) www.rightmove.co.uk.



2 bed semi, Elin Way, Meldreth sold @ £248,000 (January 2017) www.rightmove.co.uk.

The reliability of these prices can be further corroborated by considering them alongside published house price data by Hometrack (see Table 1) to provide an indication of entry level

⁹ www.zoopla.co.uk and www.rightmove.co.uk (as at 6 December 2017)

prices in the Meldreth housing market. Hometrack data covers the larger area of Meldreth ward. This includes the parishes of Meldreth and Shepreth.

The unavailability of a lower quartile price estimate for a 2-bed house in Meldreth highlights the shortage of smaller properties on the market. Overall, the data suggests that prices in Meldreth ward are broadly similar to nearby villages and probably a little higher than South Cambridgeshire as a whole.

Table 1: Lower Quartile Property Prices by ward, April 2017 – September 2017¹⁰

	2-bed house	3-bed house	4-bed house
Bassingbourn	£235,750	£300,000	£427,500
Fowlmere & Foxton	£272,500	£411,713	£765,000
Melbourn	£288,125	£316,500	£427,500
Meldreth	n/a	£310,000	£467,500
Orwell & Barrington	£310,000	£320,000	£463,750
South Cambridgeshire	£235,000	£300,000	£400,000

Note: Data are an average of house price sales over a six month period. Prices can fluctuate from one period to another due to the low level of sales involved. Nevertheless, the prices do reflect actual sales and valuations.

Taken together these data can be used to build a picture of local prices. Table 2 has been constructed from the discussion above. Affordability is assessed in the context of three price levels. Some standard assumptions about deposits and mortgages are applied to calculate the minimum salary needed to purchase these properties. A price of £140,000 is the lowest price sale in the last 12 months for a property that does not appear to a shared ownership sale. A price of £235,000 is the lower quartile price for a 2-bed house in South Cambridgeshire. And £310,000 is the lower quartile price for a 3 bed house in Meldreth.

Table 2: Annual Income requirements for open market properties

House Price	Deposit required (assume 15% required)	Annual income required (based on mortgage lending principle of 3.5 x income)	Monthly mortgage payment ¹¹
£140,000	£21,000	£34,000	£564
£235,000	£35,250	£57,071	£1,287
£310,000	£46,500	£75,286	£1,698

¹⁰ Hometrack Intelligence Service (Meldreth ward includes the parishes of Meldreth and Shepreth)

¹¹ Source: www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk – mortgage calculator based on 3% repayment mortgage repaid over 25 years

Even at an entry level price of £140,000 an annual income of £34,000 would be required on the assumptions used. To put this in context, a household with two people working full-time and earning the 'national living wage' will earn about £30,000 per annum.¹² An income of about £75,000 would be required to purchase a 3 bed property.

It should be remembered that a household's ability to buy is also dependent on them having saved an appropriate deposit. The calculations presented here assume a mortgage to house value of 85 per cent. In other words, the purchaser can raise a deposit of 15 per cent. It may be possible to secure a mortgage with a lower deposit but this will require even higher income levels. Clearly, many existing owner occupiers in Meldreth will have significant housing equity. However, young people seeking to leave the parental home or those in the rented sector may not.

Every household has its own set of unique circumstances. Therefore, the assumptions set out above are just that; working assumptions. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to conclude that many low income households with a connection to Meldreth have little chance of being able to set up home in their own community without some kind of support.

Buying in Shared Ownership

Shared ownership gives the opportunity to 'part buy' and 'part rent' a home. This means if a household can't afford to buy a property outright they may be able to afford to buy a share in a property. The initial share purchased can be as low as 25 or 30 per cent. At a point when the household can afford to, they can choose to buy a further share of the property.

Where a property has been built on a rural exception site, the maximum percentage that can be owned is 80 per cent so that the property always remains available as affordable housing and can never be sold on the open market.

Shared ownership housing schemes are tailored for people who cannot afford to buy a suitable home by outright purchase, and who are in housing need. When someone moves out of a shared ownership property, their property will either be offered to the housing association to find a buyer or it may be advertised in the local estate agents. On rural exception sites, people with a local connection to the parish will always have priority.

Shared ownership affordability will be heavily influenced by the share of the property purchased. The purchaser must provide an appropriate package of deposit and mortgage to cover the cost of the share purchased. Rent would be paid on the unsold equity at a rate of 2.75 to 3.00 per cent. It is also likely that a small service charge would be applicable. However, these charges represent a significant subsidy in comparison with comparable market rents which makes shared ownership an attractive option for some households.

As already noted, there were estimated to be 19 shared ownership properties in Meldreth in 2016 in addition to seven shared equity properties. The review of recent sales has highlighted that sales do occur. The actual cost of purchasing a shared ownership property will be dependent upon the size of share purchased which will in turn affect the level of rent

¹² <http://www.livingwage.org.uk/>. The national living wage currently pays £7.50 per hour but only applies to those aged 25 and older

payable. However, shared ownership is likely to be a cheaper alternative to outright purchase.

Renting

Table 3 shows the typical cost for renting privately and compares this with the typical rental cost of a new Housing Association property. The Government has taken steps to bring social housing rents closer to private sector ones, with rents for new tenants set at up to 80 per cent of the amount you would have to pay in the private sector.

Table 3 includes data for Meldreth and neighbouring Melbourn as data is not available for Melbourn for some property sizes due to the low levels of transactions. Using Melbourn as a proxy suggests that the Local Housing Allowance would not be sufficient to cover the cost of any sized property at an ‘affordable rent’. Our review found only one property currently available to rent in the private rental market. This was a 3 bed detached house @ £288 per week. This is well above both the Local Housing Allowance rate and the maximum rent that would be charged as an affordable rent.¹³

Table 3: Comparison of property rental costs in Meldreth and Melbourn wards, October 2016 – September 2017¹⁴

No. of Beds	Typical market rent per week (median rent)	Entry level rent per week (30 th percentile)	Housing Association Maximum affordable rent per week (80% of median market rent)	Local Housing Allowance 2017-18 (applicable from 1 April 2017)
1	na/	na/	na/	£126.05
2	£253/ £208	£253/ £203	£202/ £166	£144.96
3	na/ £225	na/ £220	na/ £180	£168.45
4	na/ £323	na/ £318	na/ £258	£224.70

Note: Melbourn figures have been included as data is not always available for Meldreth due to low sample sizes. The Meldreth figure is presented first followed by the Melbourn figure.

Social rented properties are also in reasonable scarce supply. Between March 2008 and December 2013 there were 59 properties became available in Meldreth (about 10 per year). They attracted an average of 39 bids each (compared with 54 per property across South Cambridgeshire as a whole).¹⁵ Turnover may have increased slightly in recent years. Between

¹³ www.nestoria.co.uk, www.zoopla.co.uk and www.rightmove.co.uk (as at 6 December 2017)

¹⁴ Hometrack Intelligence Service. Meldreth ward includes the parishes of Meldreth and Shepreth. Melbourn ward includes the parishes of Great Chishill, Little Chishill, Heydon and Melbourn)

¹⁵ ‘Parish Profiles’, Cambridgeshire County Council Research Group, October 2014

April 2013 and March 2016 there were 21 Local Authority rented properties and 21 Housing Association rented properties relet .¹⁶

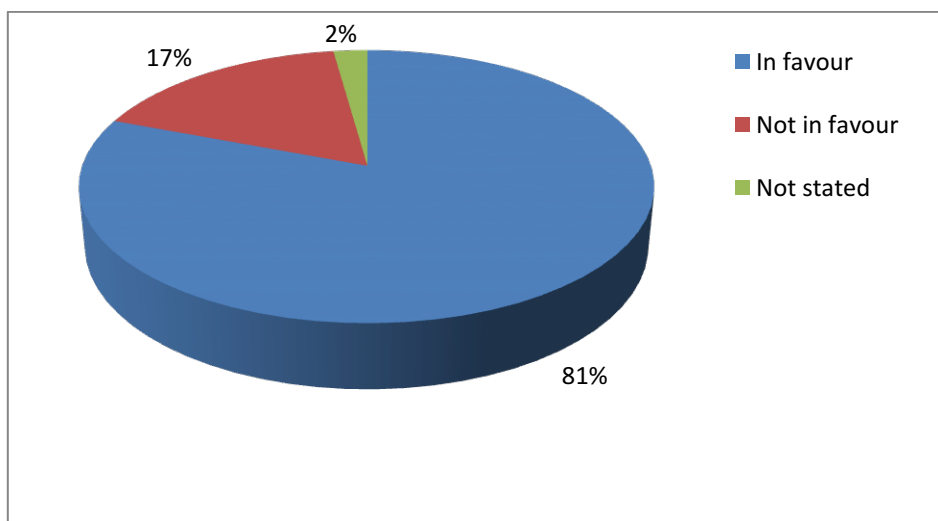
¹⁶ *'Housing Statistical Information Leaflet'*, South Cambridgeshire District Council, October 2016

RESULTS FROM PART ONE – VIEWS ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTIFYING THOSE IN HOUSING NEED

Views on Affordable Housing Development in Meldreth

All respondents to the survey were asked if they would be in favour of a small development of affordable homes for local people within the parish. Eighty one per cent of respondents supported the principle of such a development and 17 per cent were opposed. Two per cent did not state an opinion. The results are illustrated in Figure 4. The level of support for affordable homes is slightly higher than we have found in other local surveys in Cambridgeshire. Support is typically in the range of 55-75 per cent.

Figure 4: Attitude towards affordable housing development



Many respondents chose to include additional comments to qualify their answers. A selection is presented here, grouped by theme. They highlight some of the key issues that concern local people.

There was a clear recognition of the affordability challenges faced by young people and families:

- *I am in favour of affordable homes, rented or shared, co-operative ownership for families who cannot afford private housing on the open market, particularly single parents with children under 5*
- *Having been able to remain local myself, having bought a house 20 years ago, I appreciate how difficult the situation is now. It seems unfair that young people can't so easily buy locally now. So, if the housing really will be affordable, then it seems right to approve*
- *We strongly support small sustainable developments which are affordable*
- *Definitely. Mainly for village people or their very close relatives who might want to move nearer for mutual support*

- *I would happily support affordable housing also for people outside of the parish moving in. Cambridge is a high growth area and immigration needs to be supported for those moving here for work*

Some respondents were able to relate the issue to their own family circumstances. These focused specifically on the challenges facing young people:

- *Our children are currently teenagers but may possibly be in need of local housing in the next 8 years. Local affordable homes for local young adults is the only way of ensuring the continuing success of villages like Meldreth*
- *What is the definition of 'small' development? I have 8 grandchildren locally 4 of whom live in Meldreth. I would love them to be able to 'afford' to buy or rent here when the time comes for them to leave home*
- *This has come too late for my family who moved away some years ago, due to the high cost of housing in this area. Now widowed, I live here alone. I hope that other families can now benefit from truly 'affordable' housing*
- *My son moved to Suffolk many years ago as housing was cheaper there*

Some support was caveated around issues such as scale, location, and long term affordability. There was no consensus on a definition of 'small' but there was a clear expectation that any scheme should not have an adverse impact on the character of the village or its infrastructure by virtue of its size:

- *Key words here are a small development for people with a local connection. Meldreth is a village that has kept a friendly village atmosphere and culture. This will be unbalanced if not a small development and for local connections*
- *As long as it's small and is wholly affordable*
- *'Small' is the operative word. Infrastructure in mind. Also, housing should not be 'stuck out on a limb' but integral to the village*

For some, location was simply a generic factor to take into account. Others made specific suggestions of potential sites or constraints that should be considered in considering different locations:

- *Depending where located*
- *In practice, support depends on the location of any rural exception site. It is not possible to say 'yes' or 'no' without knowing this*
- *There is a plot between Meldreth and Shepreth that if the council allowed it to have change of use for housing it would be a good place to build homes*
- *Affordable homes should be on mains gas supply in order that the tenants/ owners can choose their supplier. Burtons, in Meldreth, is on flo gas which is expensive and it is not possible for the occupiers to change to another supplier. Very unfair that low income folk have to pay more*

A number of concerns were expressed about affordability, ensuring homes remained affordable in perpetuity and the need for market homes to cross-subsidize:

- *These properties should remain within an 'affordable homes' market not sold on into the general housing market. No more homes should be built than schools and doctors can cater for locally*
- *The devil is in the detail (Note: ref to private houses in the question)*

- *Whilst recognising the need for affordable housing I would like to see more developments for rental only as I feel this is the greater need at present*
- *As long as they are not sold off like council homes which would defeat the object of homes for local people*
- *I am in agreement only if the small development is wholly affordable homes: there is far too much private housing going on for the profit of developers leading to unwanted expansion from outside area*
- *Only if the houses are actually affordable ie. social rent. 'Affordable' housing is not where Housing Associations are asking for £600+ a month for rent*
- *They must be very affordable and at a sensible rent*

It was also important to some that any 'local priority' system should be strictly adhered to:

- *Provided they are only for local people with connections with Meldreth*
- *So long as it stays for local people only and only a small development*

Infrastructure constraints were also a concern to some. Respondents highlighted a wide range of issues including the train station and its car park, the lack of medical facilities and the primary school capacity:

- *Only provided amenities are developed to cope and roads are made safer, footpaths more available etc etc. Currently I don't believe our village infrastructure can cope with more houses, cars etc*
- *But I would be nervous about parking facilities at Meldreth and Royston train stations*
- *Within the village envelope as long as there are school places available and other facilities, eg. doctor, can cope*
- *Any scheme would need to ensure that the local infrastructure could support the number of homes to be developed*
- *In principle I am not against the provision of affordable homes but I think that infrastructure and facilities need to be improved if there is to be any significant development. The village has no doctor's or dentist's. There are no local buses and although there is a railway station, the car park is now too small to meet demand. Some roads lack pavements and speeding traffic is a problem*
- *What is 'affordable'? Would links to the railway station be considered? What services are to be included in the planning?*

Those opposed to the idea of a development of affordable homes for local people focused on three issues: the adverse impact on the scale and character of Meldreth; infrastructure capacity issues; and the lack of need for this housing:

- *No, I moved to this village as it is a nice small local community and schools good. More houses would certainly ruin this village. We have one small shop, one pub and one primary school - it would put strain, and even if they did put towards schooling it would ruin primary school as a nice small village school. Meldreth would not be the village it is so loved to be*
- *We already have several developments and would like to keep Meldreth a small village*
- *Meldreth is already over-developed and threatened with an even larger development which will ruin Meldreth as a village*
- *Not enough amenities, eg. school, doctors - traffic already overloading roads!*

- *There is a significant strain on local services, specifically doctors and schools. The large development already progressing in Melbourn is already providing these perceived 'needs' of the local community. There is no need to develop Meldreth*
- *There are not enough schools and shops here for more people. There would be more cars, Drs surgery are full and not able to take any more people and Dentists*
- *There is enough housing of all types in the area now. The school is beyond capacity and there are not enough facilities to support any further residents*
- *There is already one/two such developments and affordable homes are involved in planning applications of which there are already too many in the village*
- *The village has its fair share of affordable homes. Bartons, Melrose, Elin Way, Whitecroft Road, St Mary's Way. It is not always the case that people with Meldreth connections are offered these houses*

There were also some negative comments about the impact of affordable housing on local communities:

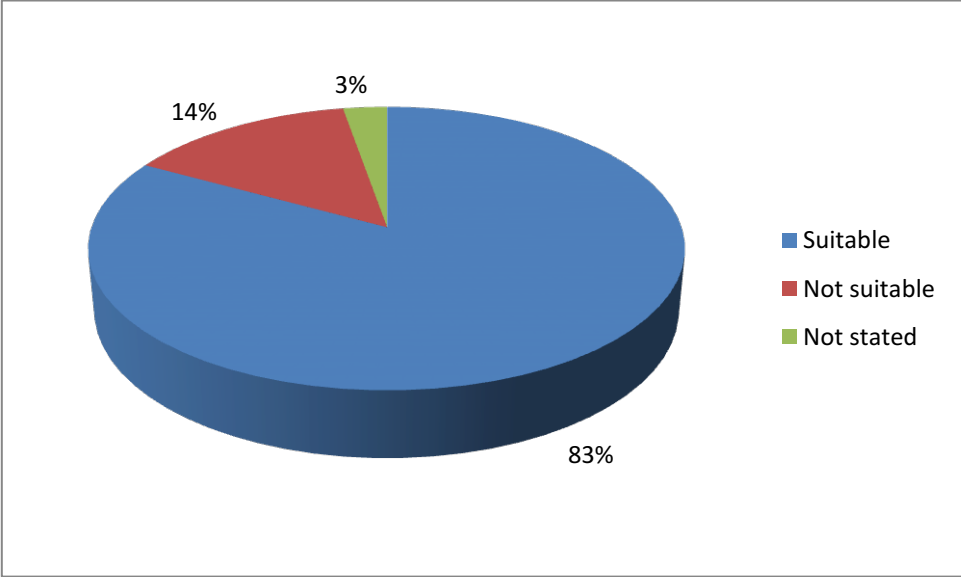
- *Our experience of living on a mixed tenure housing estate was not good. The affordable and social housing tenants did not look after their properties and displayed a high level of anti-social behaviour. It would be a shame for this to happen in such a lovely village as Meldreth*
- *1. Would bring down value of privately owned homes. 2. why?*
- *My husband and I have worked extremely hard and stewarded our finances wisely such that we could afford a home. There are very many people I know, like myself, who are hardworking professionals who cannot afford to get on the market. And yet, schemes like this one allow people who have not worked as hard, or taken care of their finances, to purchase homes. This scheme is proposing to be biased towards people with 'local connections'. The council should be encouraging developers to build and sell in the market to meet needs of people who actually have earned it! I am personally disgusted by this proposal!*

The survey has revealed a wide range of opinions. There is strong support for the idea of affordable homes for local people in principle. However, respondents have flagged a number of valid concerns that will have to be taken into account if a scheme is to be progressed. These concerns can often be ameliorated with a well-designed scheme in a suitable location and of an appropriate scale. However, for some, no scheme is likely to be acceptable. The Parish Council will need to balance these views when deciding how to proceed.

Suitability of Current Home

Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not their current home was suitable for their household's needs. Figure 5 shows that 83 per cent of respondents felt their current home is suitable for their household needs, with 14 per cent indicating that their current home is unsuitable for their needs. (Three per cent did not answer the question) The 14 per cent of respondents who indicated that their current home is unsuitable for their needs equates to 26 households.

Figure 5: Suitability of current home



Those stating their current home is unsuitable were asked to indicate the reasons why. Respondents were allowed to give more than one reason for unsuitability, so all responses are recorded. In total 53 reasons were reported.

Figure 6: Reasons why current home is unsuitable

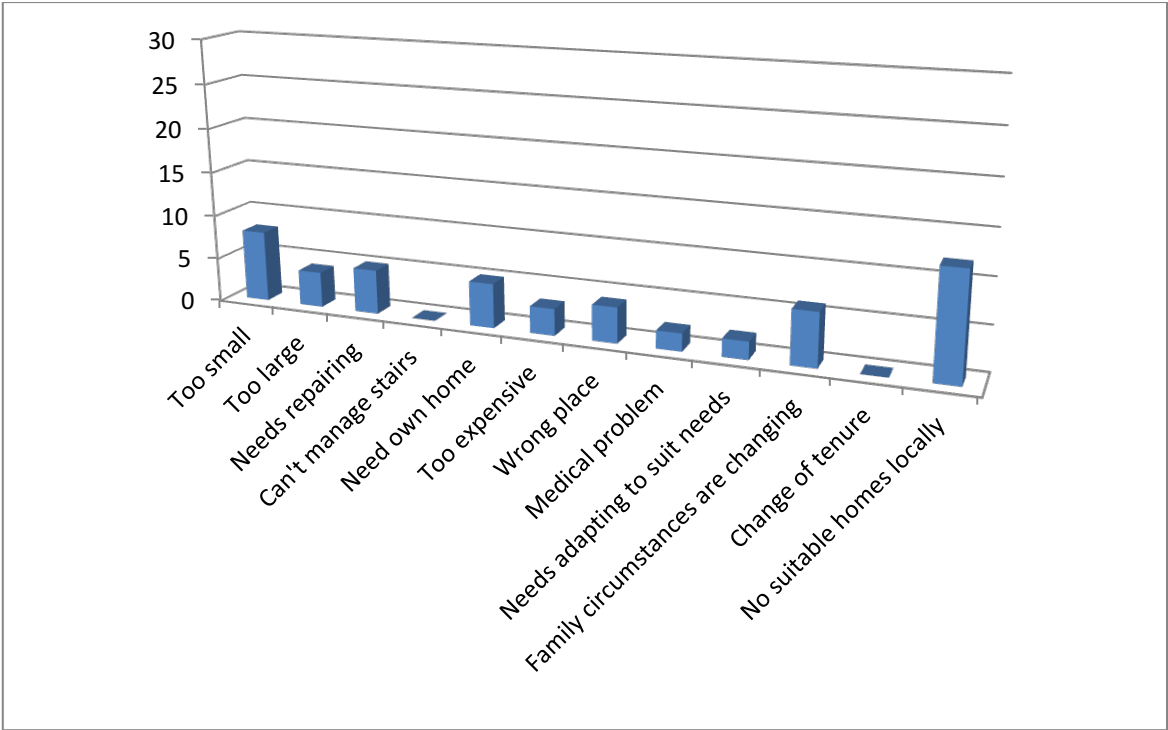


Figure 6 illustrates the reasons respondents gave for their current home being unsuitable. The most commonly cited reason was 'want to move but there are no suitable homes available locally'. The next most common reasons were 'Too small' and 'Family circumstances are changing'. This range of reasons particularly reflects the challenges faced

by young people. (In parishes where the predominant issue is older people looking to downsize factors relating to health issues and the property being too large come to the fore)

RESULTS FROM PART TWO – IDENTIFYING CIRCUMSTANCES AND REQUIREMENTS

Part Two of the Survey was only completed by those respondents who had indicated that their current home is unsuitable for their household's needs and who are therefore potentially in housing need. Responses to Part Two were made on behalf of 26 households.

An assessment of each response has been undertaken by Cambridgeshire ACRE and a decision made regarding whether the household can be considered a potential candidate for affordable housing in Meldreth based upon, for example:

- evidence of local connection,
- eligibility for affordable housing,
- particular medical and welfare needs,
- housing tenure and location preference.

Following this assessment, 11 households were considered to be potential candidates for affordable housing in Meldreth. The remainder were excluded for a variety of reasons. The most common reason was that people were looking to resolve their housing issues through the open market (within Meldreth). A few households were seeking to leave the parish or were not considered eligible for affordable housing. Lastly, a couple of respondents provided insufficient information to allow a reasonable judgement to be made.

The remainder of this section sets out the overall findings regarding those found to be in need of affordable housing in Meldreth. It should be noted that the results are based on those households completing the Housing Needs Survey. In practice, the total level of housing need (set out in the Summary and Recommendation section) is usually greater due to the addition of Housing Register data. The composition of the households from the two sources may, and often does, vary.

Local Connection to Meldreth

Residence and family connections

Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they currently live in Meldreth or whether they had family connections to the parish. Table 4 reveals that all respondents bar one live in the parish. This is not surprising as the survey was only distributed to parish addresses. Those living outside of the parish, but with a local connection, were dependent on 'word of mouth' about the survey from family, friends or work colleagues. The Housing Register, considered later, is a better source of need from non-residents. Half of the households had lived in the parish for more than 15 years.

Eight out of 11 households have family living in the parish. In most cases this includes parents although in a couple of instances the local connection is through children or siblings.

Table 4: Length of time living in the village

	Frequency
Less than 1 year	0
1-5 years	3
5-10 years	0
10-15 years	2
More than 15 years	5
Don't live in parish	0
Total	10

Household Composition

The survey sought to understand the gender, age and status of those who might potentially live in any affordable housing built as a result of this survey.

Number of people who will make up the household

Table 5 sets out the number of people making up each household. The survey identified a mix of need spanning single person households and families including, in two cases, a family of six people.

Table 5: Number of people in the household

	Frequency	No of people
1 person	5	5
2 people	0	0
3 people	2	6
4 people	2	8
5 people	0	0
6 people	2	12
7 people	0	0
Not stated	0	0
Total	11 households	31 people

Gender and Age

The gender balance of the new households will be broadly balanced with slightly more males than females. This is due to more of the children in the family households being male. The family composition of some of the households means that many of the inhabitants will be relatively young. About a third will be children aged under 16 and, in total, half will be aged under 24. In contrast, only two inhabitants would be aged over 50.

Table 6: Age profile of residents

	Frequency
Under 16	11
16 - 24 years	5
25 - 29 years	4
30 - 39 years	3
40 - 49 years	6
50 - 54 years	0
55 - 59 years	1
60 - 64 years	1
Over 65 years	0
Not stated	0
Total	31 people

Status

Table 7 shows the economic status of potential householders. All but two of the working age are currently in employment. One household includes a disabled person with a partner who acts as a carer. In labour market terms, both are classified as economically inactive.

Table 7: Status of people in the household

	Frequency
Employed	16
Unemployed	0
Economically inactive	2
Student	2
Child	11
Retired	0
Not stated	0
Total	31 people

Property Type, Size and Tenure

The survey allowed respondents to indicate the type (e.g. house, bungalow, flat, etc.), size (in terms of number of bedrooms) and tenure they would prefer. However, in concluding what type, size and tenure of properties should actually be built, this report's recommendations are based on actual need rather than respondent aspirations. This analysis has been done by reference to South Cambridgeshire District Council's Lettings Policy Document.¹⁷ The results are presented in the next section.

¹⁷ 'Lettings Policy Document', South Cambridgeshire District Council, 2015

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

This report has been informed by primary data (the Housing Needs Survey) and secondary data (local house prices, Census, Housing Register). The report has identified a significant affordable housing need in Meldreth parish.

Pre-Existing Evidence from the Housing Register

The local Housing Register was searched for households in need of affordable housing who either live in Meldreth or have a local connection to the Parish. There are 40 households on the Register that meet these criteria.¹⁸ Twenty-eight of these households live in Meldreth. The remaining 12 have a local connection through family, employment or previous residence.

This data has been combined with the results of this survey in order to calculate overall need.

The properties that would need to be built and then let out through a Housing Association to accommodate those households on the Housing Register are as follows¹⁹:

1 bed		2 bed		3 bed		4 bed		5+ bed		Total
F/H	B	F/H	B	F/H	B	F/H	B	F/H	B	
15	3	19		2		1				40

Findings from the Housing Needs Survey

The Housing Needs Survey conducted in Meldreth identified 11 households in need of affordable housing. Six of these households stated that they were already on the Housing Register and have therefore been excluded from the tables below.

Three of the remaining five households would require a rented property from a Housing Association. The properties that would need to be built to accommodate these households are as follows:

1 bed		2 bed		3 bed		4 bed		5+ bed		Total
F/H	B	F/H	B	F/H	B	F/H	B	F/H	B	
1	2									3

Another two households were considered suitable candidates for shared ownership as follows:

1 bed		2 bed		3 bed		4 bed		5+ bed		Total
F/H	B	F/H	B	F/H	B	F/H	B	F/H	B	
		1		1						2

¹⁸ Housing Register data provided by South Cambridgeshire DC, November 2017

¹⁹ Codes used are F (Flat), H (House) and B (Bungalow)

Open market housing

The primary purpose of a Housing Needs Survey is to identify need for affordable housing. However, the survey does provide an opportunity to collect broader housing needs within the community. In practice, the identification of market housing need is probably less comprehensive as some households will not see the relevance of the survey. Nevertheless, the survey does give an insight into market demands and, usefully, illustrates the differences between affordable and market housing demand.

The survey identified six households seeking to find a market home in Meldreth. There was no particular pattern to this demand which included families seeking larger accommodation, older people seeking to downsize and younger people wanting to leave the parental home. The majority were seeking relatively large dwellings – 3 or 4 bed houses.

There were also a couple of households seeking to address their needs through the private rental market. It is not known why they were not prepared to consider an affordable housing option. These households, plus one other, did express an interest in Starter Homes. However, no Starter Homes have yet been built (anywhere in the UK). Interestingly, the survey found no evidence of a demand for downsizing from older people. (One couple were looking to downsize by leaving the parish).

Conclusion

In aggregate, there 45 households identified as being in need of affordable housing who either live in, or have a local connection to, Meldreth:

1 bed		2 bed		3 bed		4 bed		5+ bed		Total
F/H	B	F/H	B	F/H	B	F/H	B	F/H	B	
16	5	20		3		1				45

Recommendation

To fulfil all current and immediate housing need in Meldreth, 45 new affordable homes would have to be built. This is significantly greater than a typical rural exception site in Cambridgeshire. However, schemes are usually designed to be smaller than the estimated need to improve the chances of all homes being allocation to a household with a local connection.

Furthermore, the scale, design and location of any scheme will need to adhere to the planning policy contained within the Local Development Framework and draft Local Plan for South Cambridgeshire District Council on rural exception sites. Further discussions between the parish council, Cambridge Housing Society and South Cambridgeshire District Council should help inform the proposals for any potential scheme and to ensure that local lettings are maximised.

APPENDIX 1: CHOICE BASED LETTINGS AND LOW COST HOME OWNERSHIP

Most people access affordable housing through either the Choice Based Lettings or Low Cost Home Ownership schemes. These prioritise people with the greatest level of need. Rural exception sites differ in that they prioritise local connections to a parish over level of need.

Choice Based Lettings



Home-Link is the Choice Based Lettings scheme for the Cambridge sub-region. Choice Based Lettings aims to make the application process for affordable rented housing easier and to give people more choice about where they live. Housing is allocated on a 'needs basis'. In other words, those people that have the greatest level of need and have been in need for the longest time are given priority. Everybody on the Housing Register is assessed and placed into a band of need. Band A is the greatest level of need. Band D is the lowest.

The scheme means there is just one Housing Register for the Cambridge sub region with only one form to complete. When applicants are accepted onto the Register they are told what Band they have been assigned to, what size and types of property they can apply for and which areas they can apply in. Generally people can apply for properties within the Local Authority in which they reside. If the person has a local connection to other areas (through, for example, work) they may be able to apply in these areas as well. A small proportion of properties in every Local Authority are set aside for applicants living anywhere in the Cambridge sub region.

A distinctive feature of rural exception sites is that they have a 'local connection' condition attached to all affordable dwellings in perpetuity. This means that priority will always be given to people with a local connection to the parish even when their level of need is assessed to be lesser than other potential applicants.

Low Cost Home Ownership



Ownership'.

bpha, the government-appointed Help to Buy Agent, responsible for marketing all low cost home ownership schemes in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, offers a Shared Ownership scheme called 'Help to Buy Shared

People buy a share in a property built by a housing association and pay a subsidised rent on the part that they do not own. They can buy an initial share of between 25% and 75% of the property and pay rent on the remaining share.

In some shared ownership schemes, the householder can buy additional shares until they own the property outright. This is known as 'staircasing'. However, on rural exception sites ownership is limited to 80% to ensure the dwellings remain 'affordable' in perpetuity. Again, priority is given to people with a local connection to the parish.