

## Housing Development in Cambridgeshire 2013

### Introduction and key findings

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief commentary on the progress of housing development in Cambridgeshire. The report is based on data that was collected with a nominal survey date of 31 March 2013, and prepared by the Policy and Monitoring team at Cambridgeshire County Council. The Policy and Monitoring team carry out the annual development survey, working closely with colleagues from the District Councils. Where possible each site in Cambridgeshire with outstanding planning permission for housing development is visited and the development progress recorded. The survey of housing development covers a range of dwelling types, including houses, flats, affordable housing, and gypsy and traveller pitches. Following the survey, the data is carefully analysed and checked, then any anomalies are followed up by contacting the site developer or District Council. This survey forms part of a much wider area of work undertaken by the Policy and Monitoring team, encompassing business, industrial, retail, leisure, hotels, student housing, renewable energy, community, education and other types of development.

The key findings from the 2013 housing development survey are:

- The number of dwellings completed remains low, completions in 2012-2013 have fallen when compared to last year – **Section 1**.
- The number of new starts on site in 2012-2013 was 3,109. Although still comparatively low this represents an increase on previous years and the highest number of new starts since 2007-2008 – **Section 2**.
- Of all the dwellings completed only 13.78% were affordable, a large decrease on the previous year's performance. The 332 affordable completions is the lowest number of completions recorded between 2002-2013 – **Section 3**.
- 50 additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches were provided in the County; the majority of these in South Cambridgeshire – **Section 4**.
- 52% of new homes were built on previously-developed ('brownfield') land – **Section 5**.
- The average density of new development remains fairly stable – **Section 6**.
- Completions in 2012-2013 showed a further substantial decrease in two bedroom dwellings continuing a trend that has been underway for several years – **Section 7**.

### 1 - Dwelling Completions

The number of houses built during 2012-2013 (2094) has fallen when compared with the previous year. The completion total continues to fall short of the levels seen in the years from 2005 to 2008 prior to the recession, reflecting the continued slow and uncertain performance of the construction sector and wider economy. Completions for 2012-13 are at their lowest rate for over ten years and are half the amount of only five years ago.

While the total number of housing completions in Cambridgeshire for the year up to 31 March 2013 remains low, the district breakdown shows that this slowdown in building rate is not uniform across the County. The number of dwellings completed in Fenland is the highest recorded since 2008, completions in Cambridge City also increased. Huntingdonshire has seen the biggest slump in house building when compared to previous years – falling from 873 in 2011-2012 to 418

this year. East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire have also seen falls in the number of completions.

<b>Table 1. Dwelling Completions (NET) In Cambridgeshire (2002-2013)</b>												
	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2002-2013
<b>Cambridge City</b>	287	505	601	731	629	521	588	287	390	331	482	<b>5352</b>
<b>East Cambridgeshire</b>	591	608	401	796	687	756	466	204	368	369	288	<b>5534</b>
<b>Fenland</b>	697	733	635	781	757	921	308	243	295	209	319	<b>5898</b>
<b>Huntingdonshire</b>	578	576	698	742	651	728	815	798	795	873	418	<b>7672</b>
<b>South Cambridgeshire</b>	653	979	571	877	924	1274	610	611	656	671	587	<b>8413</b>
<b>Cambridgeshire</b>	2806	3401	2906	3927	3648	4200	2787	2143	2504	2453	2094	<b>32,869</b>

Source: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

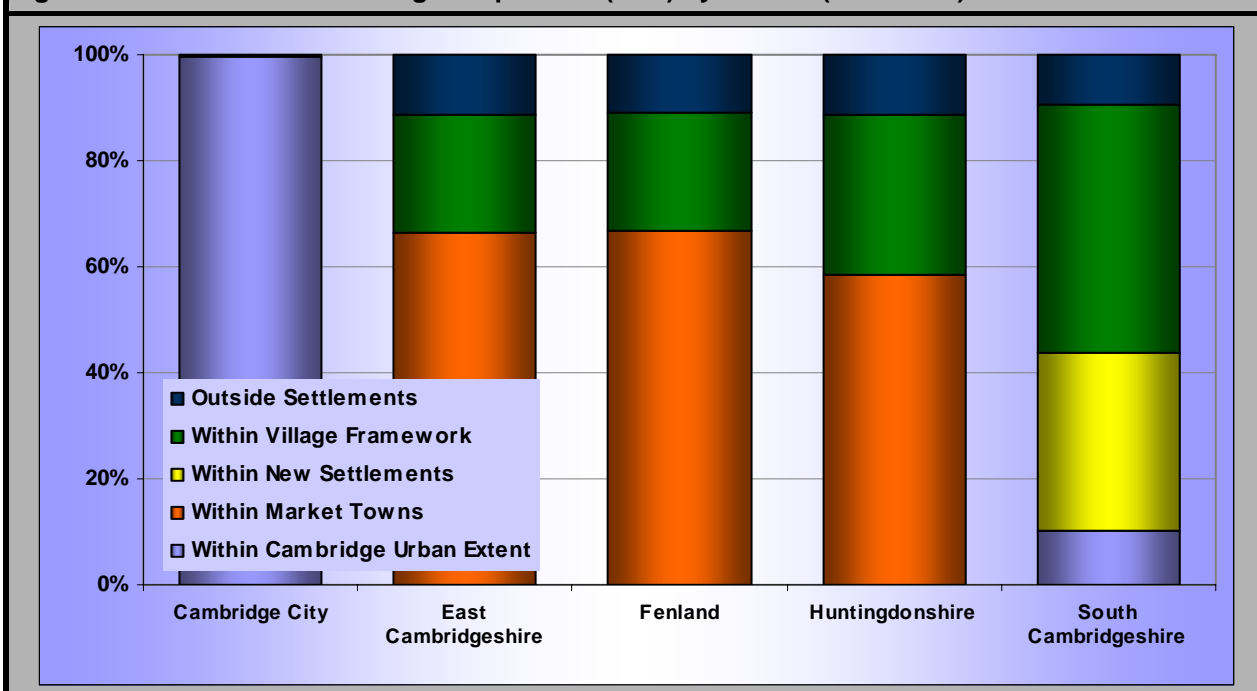
Closer analysis of the completion data reveals that large sites (sites of over 100 dwellings) have contributed to just over half of new dwellings built in Cambridgeshire in the monitoring year with 1343 dwellings completed on these sites. The sites that provided the greatest number of dwellings are shown below in Table 2 along with a visual assessment of most recent development progress. In most cases building rates on these sites has remained at a similar rate compared to what was observed the year before. However, as in the previous year, there were no major sites in Fenland with a significant number of completions in 2012-2013.

<b>Table 2. Large Sites with Significant Number of Dwelling Completions (2012-2013)</b>			
DISTRICT	LOCATION	COMPLETIONS 01/04/2012-31/03/2013	VISUAL ASSESSMENT 31/03/2013
<b>Cambridge City</b>	NIAB Site, Cambridge	49	Work Ongoing
	Cambridge Fire Station	98	Site Complete
<b>East Cambridgeshire</b>	Mill Corner, Soham	33	Work Ongoing
<b>Huntingdonshire</b>	Loves Farm, St Neots	60	Work Ongoing
	Riverside Mill, Little Paxton	45	Work Ongoing
<b>South Cambridgeshire</b>	Cambridge Southern Fringe Sites	210	Work Ongoing
	Cambourne	151	Work Ongoing
	High Street, Longstanton	136	Work Ongoing
	Orchard Park	34	Work Ongoing, nearing completion
	Ermine Street, Papworth Everard	78	Work Ongoing

Source: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

The completion data may also be categorised by spatial distribution. Figure 1 shows the proportion of new dwellings in each district that have been built either within urban area or village boundaries, or outside of these designated development areas. The patterns of development in East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, and Huntingdonshire are very similar, with the majority of new dwellings built within the market towns. South Cambridgeshire does not have any market towns, so the majority of new development has been within villages and the new settlement, Cambourne. It is interesting to note that all four of the rural districts show a very similar proportion (approximately 10%) of development outside urban or village boundaries. This reflects current planning policy that tends to discourage such locations for development.

**Figure 1. Distribution of Dwelling Completions (NET) by District (2002-2013)**



Source: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

## **2 - Dwelling Commitments and New Starts**

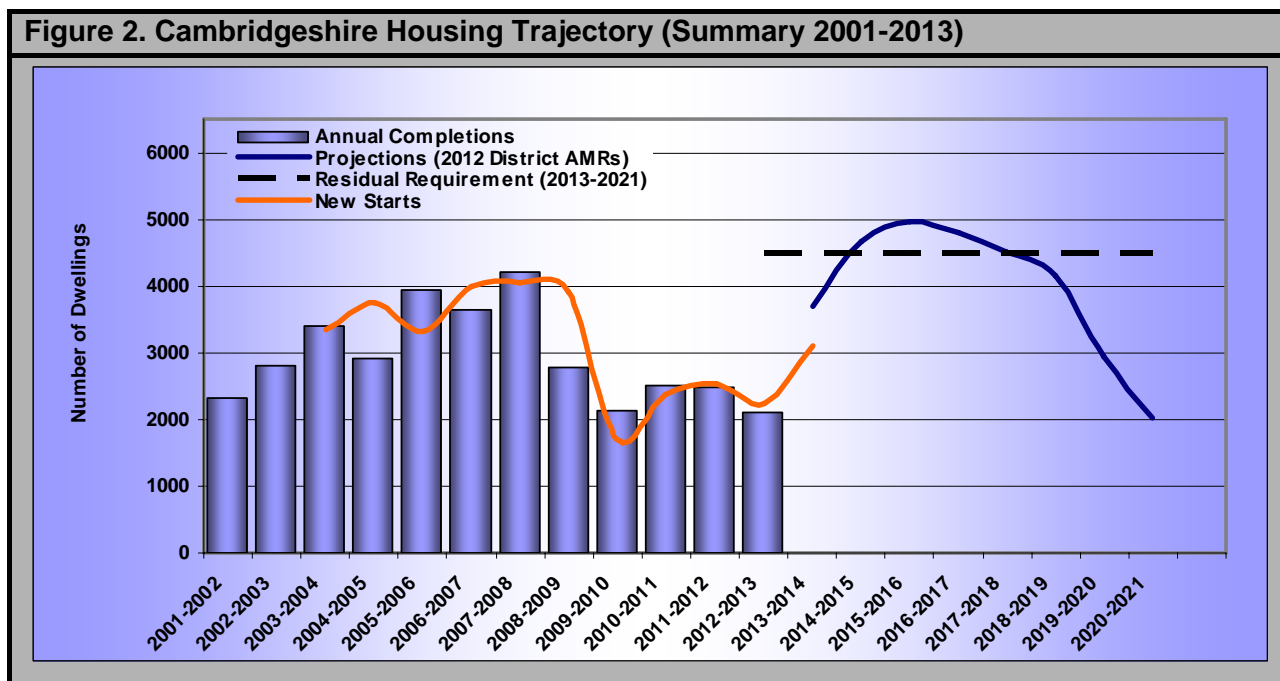
Table 3 below shows the current number of extant planning permissions and the number of sites formally allocated for construction of housing in the City and District Council Local Plans. The number of outline planning permissions has increased when compared to the previous year as allocations at North West Cambridge have now been granted outline planning permission. The total number of planning permissions is now higher than at any point in the last 7 years. It would be expected that the number of allocations will rise in the next few years as the City and District Authorities allocate new sites within their new Local Plans.

**Table 3. Dwelling Commitments in Cambridgeshire at 31 March 2013 and Previous Years**

	OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION	FULL / RESERVED MATTERS PERMISSION, NOT STARTED	PERMISSIONS, UNDER CONSTRUCTION	TOTAL PLANNING PERMISSIONS	ALLOCATIONS WITH NO PLANNING PERMISSION	TOTAL COMMITMENTS
31/03/2006	5954	6219	2872	15,045	25,126	40,171
31/03/2007	6635	5863	3263	15,761	21,195	36,956
31/03/2008	3859	7850	2974	14,683	20,042	34,725
31/03/2009	3328	8525	1898	13,751	24,314	38,065
31/03/2010	3671	7592	2117	13,380	28,671	42,051
31/03/2011	6350	5847	2131	14,328	24,353	38,681
31/03/2012	5841	5644	1875	13,360	21,566	34,926
31/03/2013	7806	5293	2893	15,992	19,368	35,360

Source: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

The latest housing trajectories produced by District Councils in Cambridgeshire, provide some estimate of when new housing development is expected to be completed over the next ten years. This is shown graphically in Figure 2 alongside information about annual dwelling completions and annual figures for the number of dwelling starts up to 31 March 2013. The number of new starts in 2012-2013 has increased to its highest level (3109) since 2007-2008. Although still considerably below the number of new starts recorded on site between 2004 and 2008 the increase in 2012-2013 represents a considerable increase in new starts. This increase in new starts could represent an increasing confidence in the regional economy and construction sector.



Source: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

### 3 - Affordable Dwelling Completions

A lot of progress has been made in increasing the supply of affordable housing in all Districts in Cambridgeshire over the past ten years. However, in the last monitoring year the percentage of affordable completions was very low at 13.8% as shown in Table 4. The site monitoring showed that on many sites the affordable elements were built out during the height of the recession when it was harder to sell private houses, but builders still received grant on completion on handover of affordable dwellings. This would also explain the higher than average affordable completions in previous years. This drop is concerning given the need, particularly in the south of the County, to provide a choice of housing tenures for lower paid workers.

	2002 - 2003	2003 - 2004	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007	2007 - 2008	2008 - 2009	2009 - 2010	2010 - 2011	2011- 2012	2012- 2013	2002- 2013
<b>Total Completions</b>	2971	3594	3164	4182	3934	4469	3170	2451	2731	2663	2410	<b>35739</b>
<b>Affordable</b>	417	604	638	957	861	842	918	834	797	604	332	<b>7804</b>
<b>% Affordable</b>	14.04%	16.81%	20.16%	22.88%	21.89%	18.84%	28.96%	34.03%	29.18%	22.64%	13.78%	21.84%

Source: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

#### **4 - Provision for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople**

The Traveller Needs Assessment that was undertaken in 2006 identified the need for provision of additional residential pitches for Gypsy and Traveller caravans and plots for Travelling Showpeople. The provision of a pitch is recorded as the date when the pitch is completed and available for occupation. A record 50 new pitches, 33 of these in South Cambridgeshire, were created in 2012-2013, although none have been recorded in Cambridge City since 2006 as shown in Table 5.

<b>Table 5. Additional Pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show People (NET) in Cambridgeshire</b>									
	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2005-2013
Cambridge City	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Cambridgeshire	2	0	2	7	2	6	0	3	22
Fenland	0	0	3	0	2	9	2	0	16
Huntingdonshire	0	1	0	0	0	0	8	14	23
South Cambridgeshire	3	1	5	8	1	0	11	33	62
<b>Cambridgeshire</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>123</b>

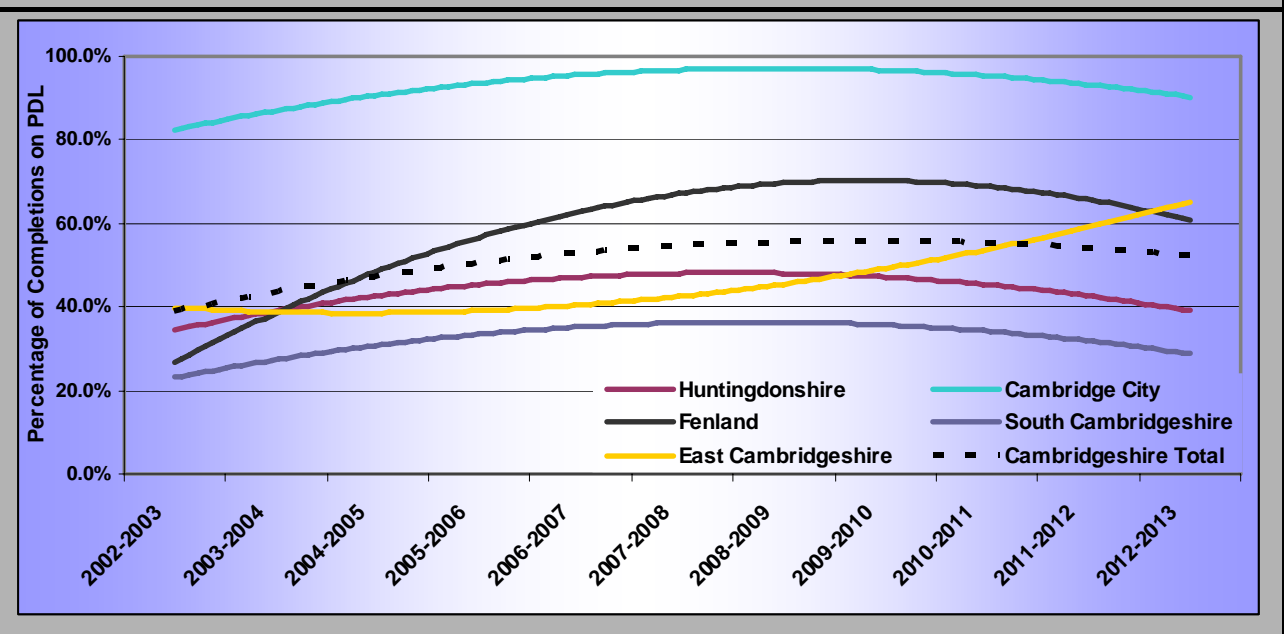
Source: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

#### **5 - Dwelling Completions on Previously Developed Land (PDL)**

The percentage of dwelling completions on PDL in each District in Cambridgeshire is shown as a trend in Figure 3. Overall there has been an increase in the number of completions on PDL since 2001, although it should be noted that the percentage of completions on PDL are falling again in Cambridge City, East Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire. Completions on PDL in Cambridge City have remained well above the previous strategy target of 60%, while in Fenland there has been an increase from around the 30% mark to slightly over 60%, perhaps due to increased development in the market towns. The numbers in Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire have remained lower. This may be attributed to the large number of completions on the extension to St Neots (Huntingdonshire), and at Cambourne, Longstanton, and the Cambridge Urban Fringe (South Cambridgeshire), all of which are large green field development sites.

Source: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

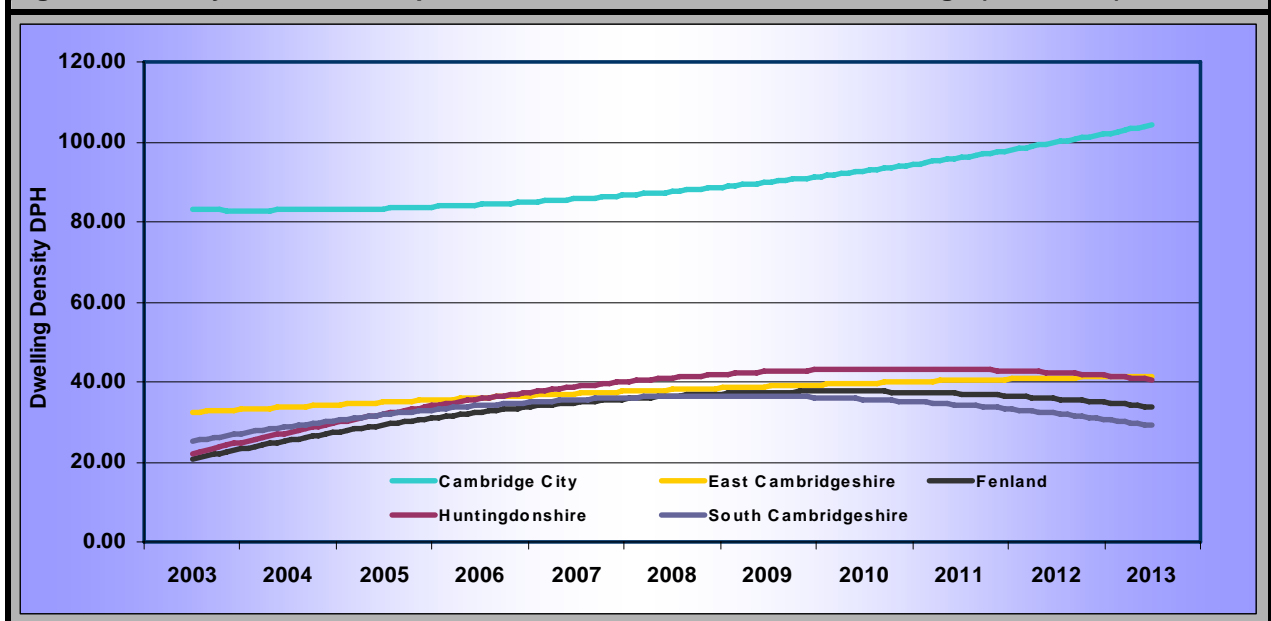
**Figure 3. Percentage of Dwellings Completed on Previously Developed Land (PDL) 2002-2013**



**6 - Density of New Developments**

Since 2001 there has been a substantial increase in the average density of new housing. The dwelling density in Cambridge City has risen to an average of 82 dwellings per hectare (dph). In the rural districts, densities are much lower, but have risen from averages of around 25 dph in 2001 to on average 30 dph in 2013. The now abolished Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) stated that housing development should “achieve the highest possible net density appropriate to the character of the locality and public transport accessibility”. Along with the RSS housing density targets have been abolished, but are monitored as local indicators by the District Councils.

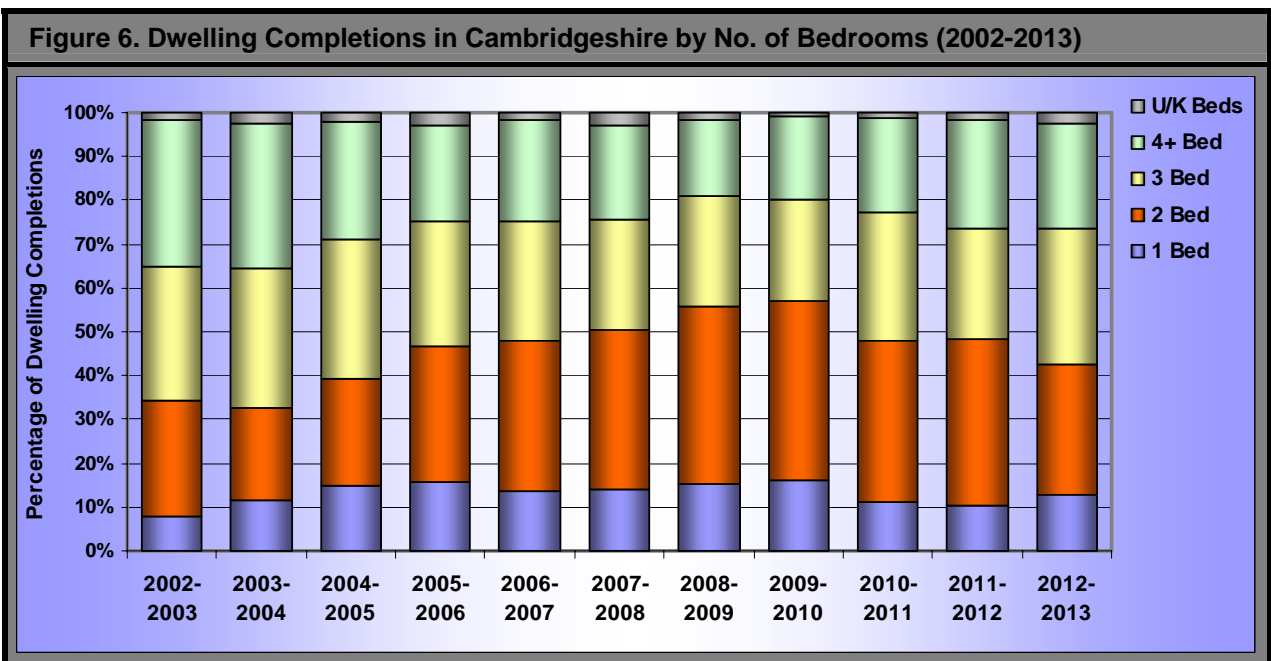
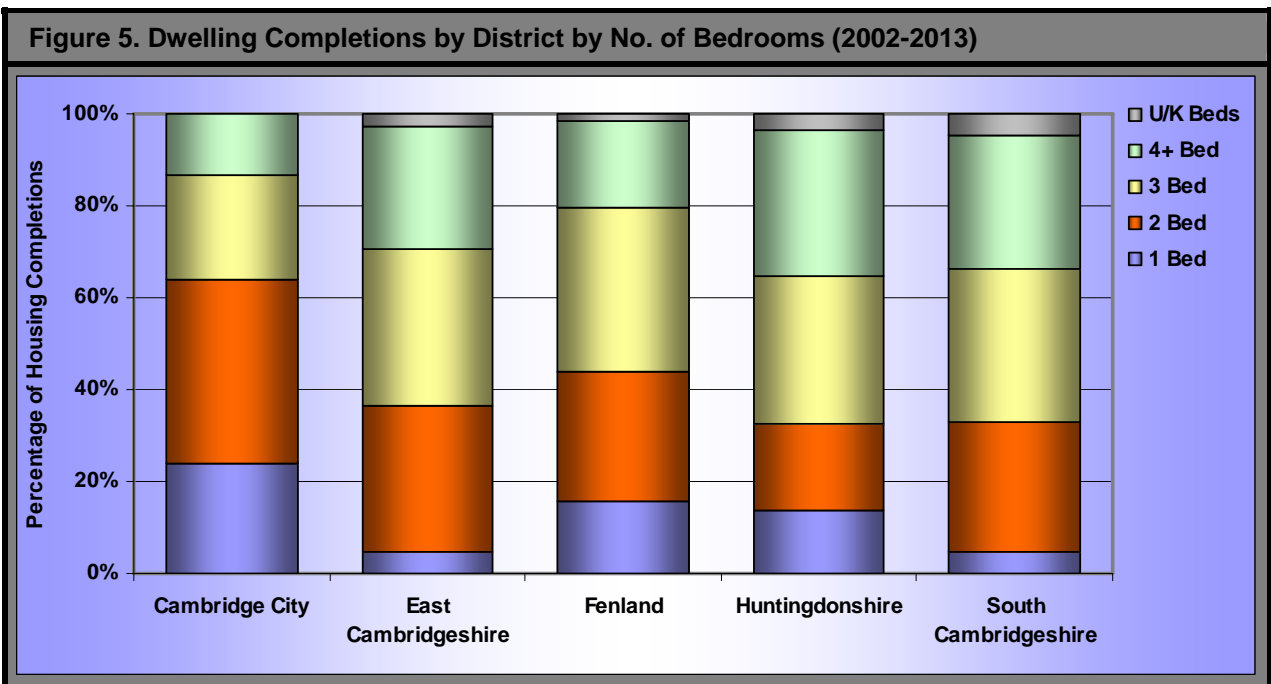
**Figure 4. Density of New Development on Sites Greater than Nine Dwellings (2002-2013)**



Source: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

### 7 - Size of Completed Dwellings

Figure 5 illustrates a District breakdown of dwelling completions by number of bedrooms to give an indication of the distribution of new dwellings by type and size. It is apparent that the proportion of one and two bedroom dwellings that have been completed in Cambridge City is much higher than in the other four more rural districts where there are much higher proportions of three and four-plus bedroom dwellings. This is likely to be due to a number of factors, such as the size and value of sites, as well as the demand for higher numbers of flats and smaller residences within the urban area. Figure 6 demonstrates that over the whole County, the proportion of one and two bedroom dwelling completions steadily increased from approximately 30% in 2001-2002, to approximately 50% in recent years, mainly at the expense of the larger four or more bedroom houses, although in the past few years this trend seems to be reversing again.



Source: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk). U/K Beds = Unknown number of Bedrooms.

***Further information***

This report has given a brief summary of the main findings emerging from the Policy and Monitoring Team's annual survey of housing development within Cambridgeshire. In addition to this, the team are involved in a wide range of other survey work, as well as more frequent surveys of larger housing sites within the County.

For more information on the findings of this report, or on the general work of the team, please contact:

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