

# **Alton**

## **Parish Housing Needs Survey**

**Survey Report**

**December 2015**

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## 1. Parish Summary

The parish of Alton is in Pewsey Community Area within the local authority area of Wiltshire.

- There is a population of 249 according to the 2011 Census, comprised of 115 households.<sup>1</sup>
- The parish has three villages; Alton Barnes, Alton Priors and Honeystreet all within the North Wessex Downs AONB. Road access to the parish is via the C8 Devizes to Pewsey road (west to east) and the C38 which connects to the A4 in the north at Fyfield and the A342 and A345 to the south.
- Geographically, the parish contains steep chalk downland to the north, which is designated a national nature reserve managed by Natural England. This provides land for grazing sheep and cattle along with recreational activities on the open access land and is crossed by several long distance footpaths. The area is very popular with walkers and holiday makers. On the south face of this escarpment is the Alton Barnes White Horse, one of the best chalk white horses in Wiltshire. Beneath the escarpment is very productive agricultural land in which the three villages are located. In the south of the parish the Kennet and Avon canal crosses this land at Honeystreet providing excellent views to the north.

Village	Facilities
Alton Priors	Post box, telephone box, All Saints Parish Church (redundant church), bus stop on request.
Alton Barnes	Post box, Village Hall, St Marys Parish Church, village playground, bus stop.
Honeystreet	Post box, telephone box, public house The Barge Inn, campsite, cafe, boat hire, Kennet and Avon canal, sawmill and store, bus stop.

## 2. Introduction

In the summer of 2015, Wiltshire Council's Development Officers discussed carrying out a rural housing needs survey with Alton Parish Council, to establish if there was a proven need for affordable housing in the parish and potentially to use the findings of the survey to inform the parish plan.

Such surveys assist officers in identifying those areas with the greatest housing problems so that scarce financial resources can be put to best use.

Experience has shown that these surveys need to be carried out at regular intervals if the results are to remain relevant in identifying trends.

- The Principal Development Officers are employed by Wiltshire Council's new housing team to assist in the delivery of new affordable housing.
- The Principal Development Officers work closely with rural communities, housing associations, local authorities and landowners to meet the affordable housing needs of rural communities.

<sup>1</sup> 2011 Census. <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

- The survey is funded by members of the Wiltshire Rural Investment Partnership (WRIP).<sup>2</sup>
- 'The Wiltshire Rural Investment Partnership brings together representatives from the economic development, regeneration, spatial planning, new housing and housing strategy teams of Wiltshire Council together with Registered Provider [housing association] partners and the Homes and Communities Agency to enable and promote the sustainable delivery of new build housing in the rural communities of Wiltshire.'<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Aim

The aim of carrying out the survey is to investigate the affordable housing needs of local people (or those who need to live in the parish) in Alton parish.

- 'Housing need' can be defined as the need for an individual or household to obtain housing that is suitable to their circumstances.
- It implies that there are problems or limitations with the household's current housing arrangements and that the household is unable to afford or to access suitable accommodation in the private sector.
- Such problems may be concerned with housing costs, size, location, layout, state of repair, or security of tenure either immediately or in the future.

### 4. Survey Distribution and Methodology

In order to carry out the housing needs survey, questionnaires were delivered to the Parish Council for distribution in September 2015.

To encourage a good response, households were given a pre-paid envelope in which to return the completed survey. The council applies the data protection policy to responses, ensuring that all survey responses remain anonymous.

Residents were asked to return the completed surveys in the pre-paid envelopes by 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015. The forms were recorded and analysed by the Housing Strategy and Knowledge Management departments at Wiltshire Council.

- A total of 116 questionnaires were distributed in the parish.
- Everyone was asked to complete the first section of the form.
- If a household considered itself in need, or likely to be in need, of affordable housing within the next five years, it was invited to complete the rest of the survey.
- There was an excellent response rate of 42.2% with 49 replies received.
- This report describes the views only of the residents who returned the questionnaires and these views may not be representative of the wider population of Alton.
- Five responses were made online.

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<sup>2</sup> The members of WRIP that contribute to the survey funding are Wiltshire Council and six Registered Providers of social housing (housing associations) - Aster, GreenSquare, Guinness, Stonewater, Selwood Housing and Wiltshire Rural Housing Association.

<sup>3</sup> Para 1.1, 'Purpose', *Terms of Reference for the Wiltshire Rural Investment Partnership*. Full WRIP membership: Wiltshire Council, Aster, Wiltshire Rural Housing Association, GreenSquare, Guinness, Stonewater, Selwood Housing, the Homes and Communities Agency, and the Wiltshire Community Land Trust.

## 5. Key Findings

This report is divided into two parts. The first section looks at existing households in the parish in order to provide a description of the current housing in Alton. This section also describes the levels of new housing, if any, which would be supported by respondents to the survey.

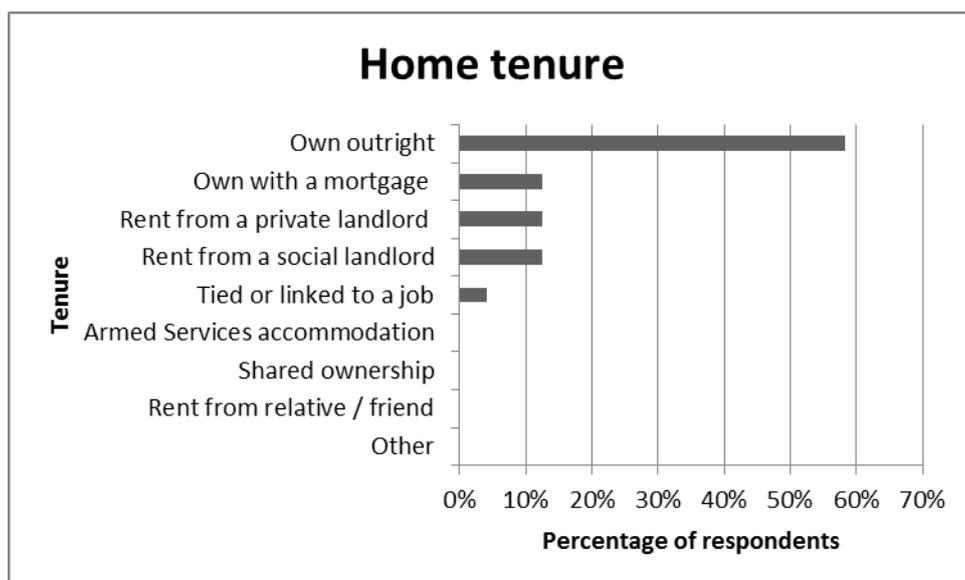
The second section examines the households who have declared a need for new housing in Alton. The section begins by describing the overall need for both market and affordable housing in the parish. A financial assessment is then made in order to determine the numbers of households who have a current need for new affordable housing. The results of this assessment are summarised in the recommendations of the report (Section 8).

### Part One – Households currently living in the parish

The first question asked on the survey was whether the respondents' home in Alton was their main home. 93.6% of those who replied said that it was.

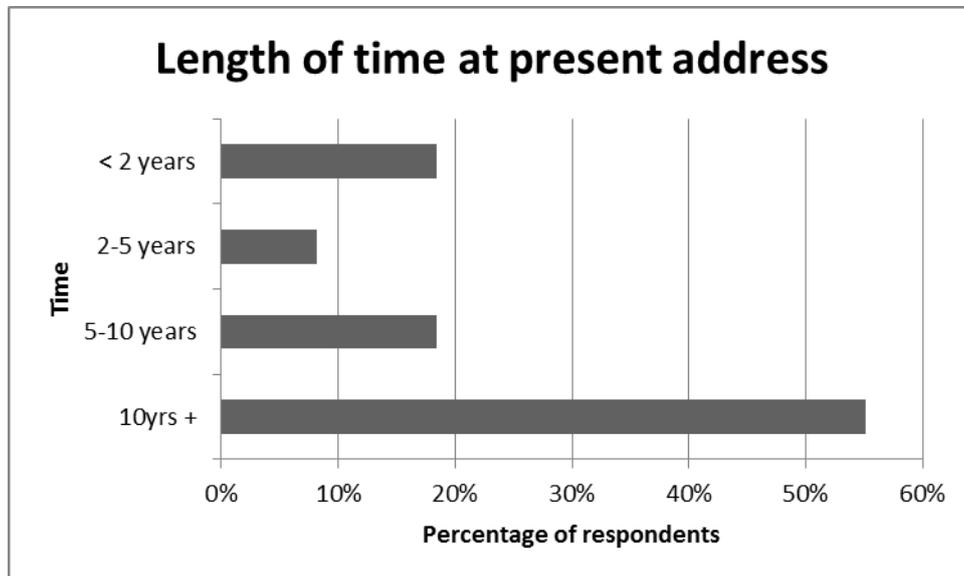
The 2011 Census data for Alton indicates that 60.9% of households in the parish were owner-occupying, 19.1% were renting from social landlords, 17.4% were privately renting and 2.6% of households were living rent free.<sup>4</sup>

The chart below shows the tenure of respondents to the survey. The majority (70.8%) of respondents were owner-occupiers, while 12.5% of respondents were living in socially rented properties, 12.5% were renting from a private landlord or letting agency and 4.2% were living in accommodation tied to their employment. These results indicate a bias in the survey responses toward those living in owner-occupied homes and the rest of this section should be read with this in mind.



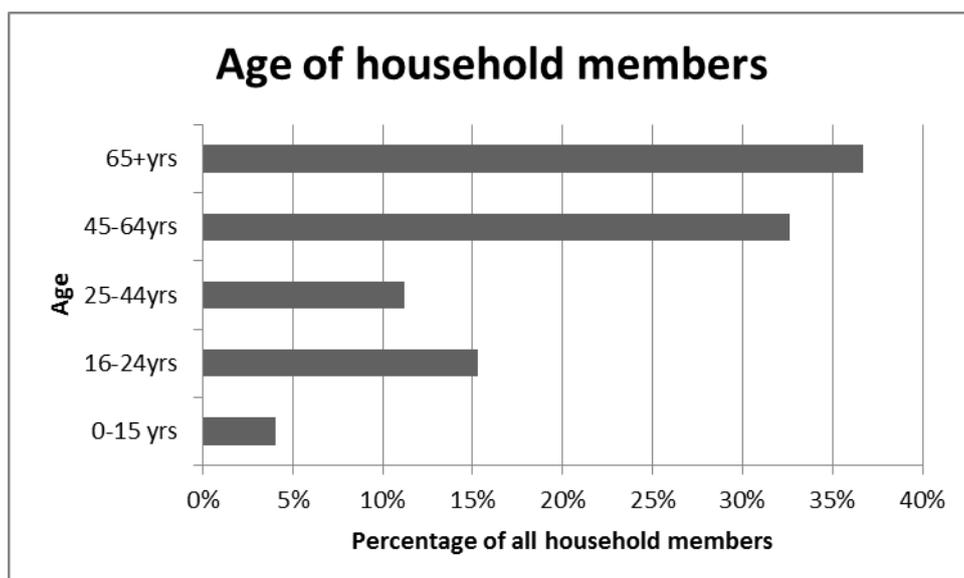
<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

The chart below indicates the length of time that respondents have lived in their current home. It shows that the majority of people who responded to the survey have lived in the parish for more than ten years, which is appropriate for the high levels of owner occupation among survey respondents:



Many respondents to the survey lived in large family homes, with 22.9% of respondents having four or more bedrooms in their property. 41.7% lived in three bedroom homes and 35.4% had two bedrooms, while no responses were received from households with only one bedroom.

The spread of ages recorded in the survey indicates that around a third (36.7%) of respondents' household members were aged 65+:



As shown in the chart above, there were significant numbers of households responding to the survey with members aged 16-64. This indicates a spread of different household types in

Alton, from older person households with fewer members, to some younger households with children.

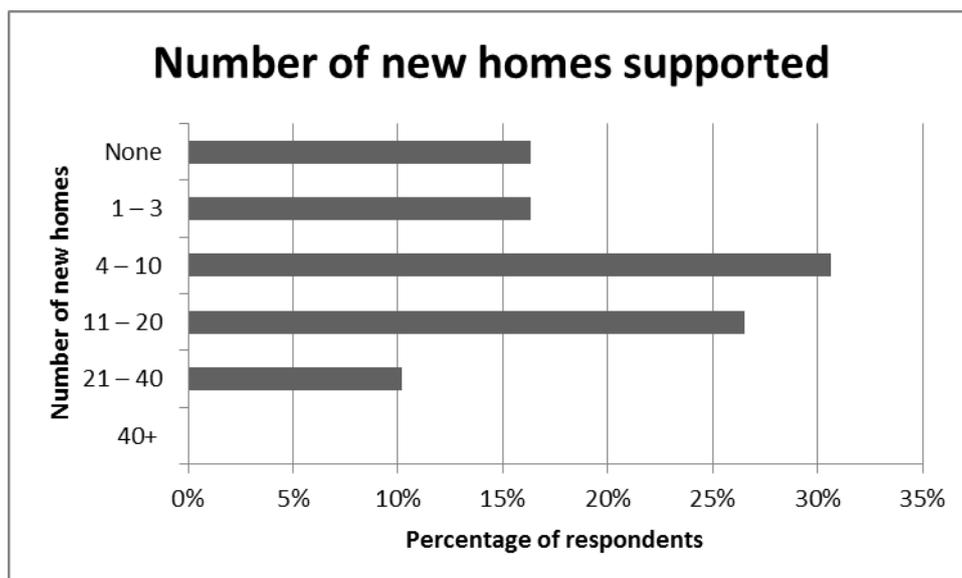
The distance travelled to work can also be a good measure of the sustainability of local housing development, as more people working locally can indicate an ongoing need for local housing. The table below shows how far people in the respondents' households travelled to work:

Persons in household	Distance to work				Total
	Up to 2 miles	2 - 10 miles	10 - 50 miles	50 miles +	
Person 1	5	7	11	3	26
Person 2	2	5	8	2	17
Person 3	0	1	1	0	2
Person 4	0	1	0	0	1
Person 5	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>46</b>

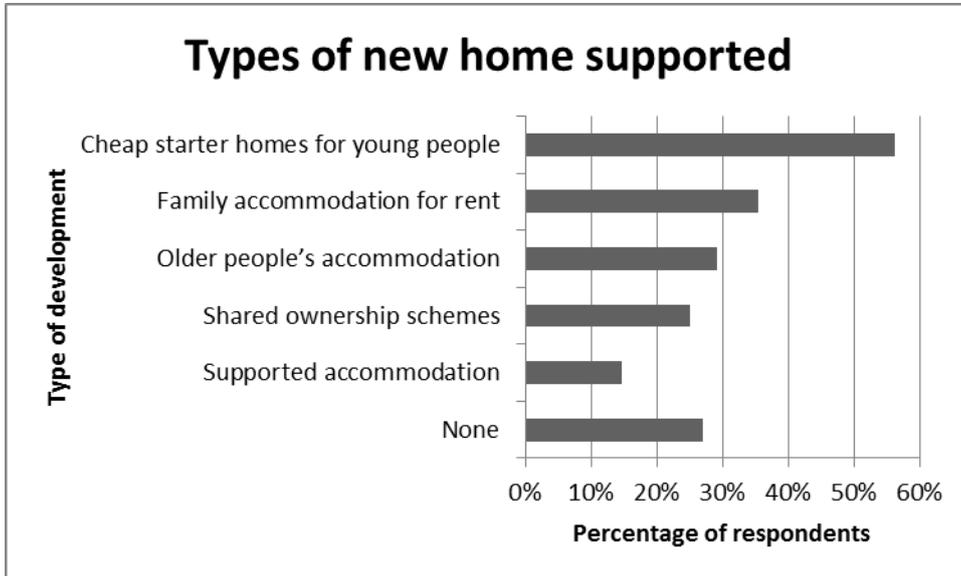
These results suggest a mixed level of sustainability for new housing development in Alton, indicated by the survey respondents' access to local sources of employment. While 45.7% of the households' working members usually travel less than ten miles to their place of work, 54.3% travel more than that, suggesting a potential lack of more local sources of employment.

Respondents were also asked whether anyone currently living in their household would need separate accommodation in the parish now or in the near future, to which 6.4% of respondents (three households) answered 'yes', indicating a low level of sustained need for housing in the parish.

Respondents were then asked how many new homes they would support being built in the parish. A majority of respondents (83.7%) were in support of some new housing in Alton, with the most popular option (30.6% of respondents) being for between four and ten new homes. 16.3% of respondents were opposed to any new housing in Alton parish:



Respondents to this section were finally asked what types of housing development, if any, they would support. The types of housing considered most needed in Alton by the survey respondents were affordable starter homes for young people (56.3%) and family accommodation for rent (35.4%). Full results are given in the chart below (more than one answer could be given):

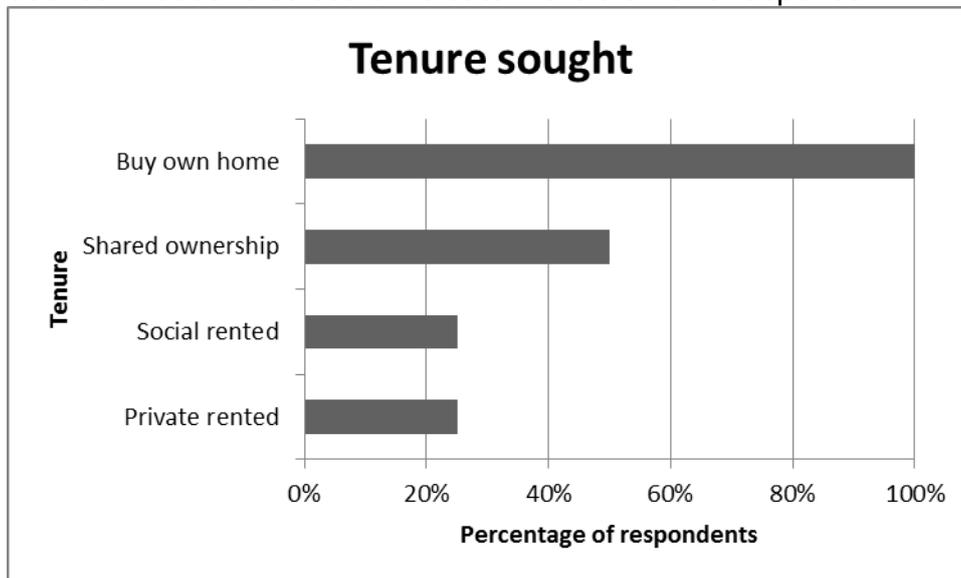


## Part two – Households requiring accommodation in the parish

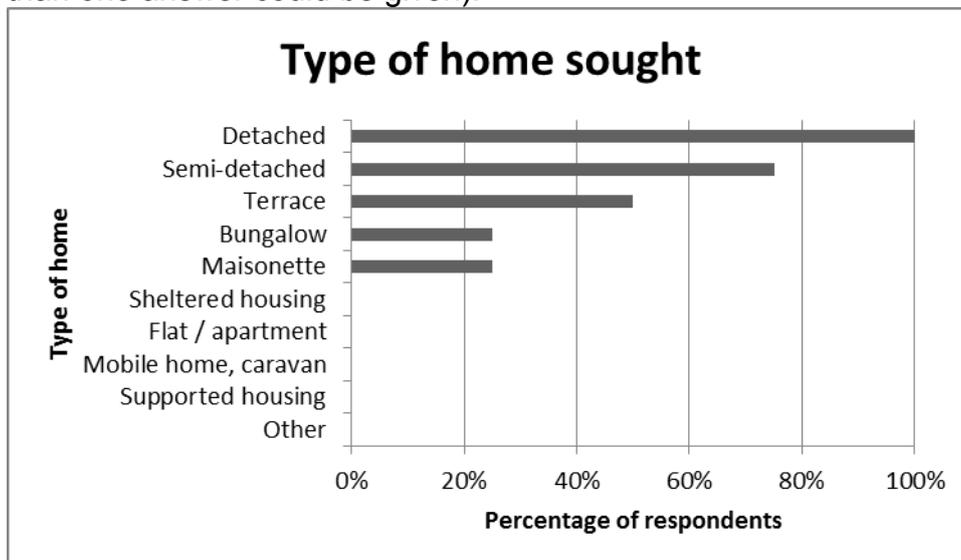
This section of the report looks initially at all the responses to section two of the survey in order to give a broad picture of the need for both market and affordable housing in the parish. A financial assessment and an evaluation of the current affordable housing in Alton are then made in order to describe in more detail the need for specifically affordable (i.e. non-market) housing.

Four respondents replied to this section of the survey, indicating their need for housing in Alton.

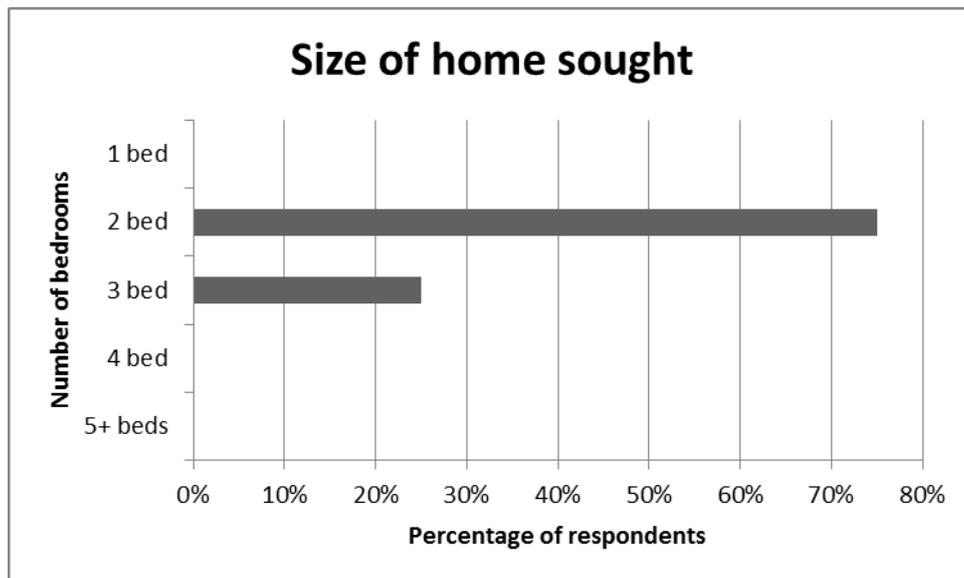
The respondents requiring accommodation in the parish were asked what type of tenure they sought. The expressed need was for all types of tenure, with purchased homes the most desired. Households could indicate more than one response:



Respondents to this section were also asked what type of housing they required. The most sought-after type was detached properties. Full responses are given in the chart below (more than one answer could be given):



In terms of size, the most popular option was for two bedroom homes. No need was declared for homes with one bedroom, or with four or more bedrooms:



The respondents were then asked if there was a lack of suitable existing housing in Alton to meet their needs, to which all four households answered ‘yes’.

In order to assess the need for **affordable** housing in Alton, it is necessary to consider the equity, income and savings levels of respondents. Please note that due to the need to preserve the confidentiality of respondents, only a short summary of the financial assessment is presented below.

None of the households responding to this section of the survey reported having equity in an existing property, and the estimated levels of savings among the respondents were low, with only one household declaring more than £10,000 in savings. Income levels were more varied, ranging from less than £17,000pa to more than £50,000pa.

Comparing income, savings and equity levels with affordability in Alton suggests that all four households would require public assistance in order to achieve their required housing and so would be considered ‘in housing need’ as defined in Section 3 of this report. These households inform the recommendations of this survey for new affordable housing in Alton, presented in Section 8.

## 6. Affordability

In order to investigate affordability, further research has been carried out on house prices in the area.

It is possible to estimate the average property prices in the Alton area:<sup>5</sup>

<b>Bedrooms</b>	<b>July 2015 – Sept 2015</b>
1	£207,300
2	£280,200
3	£347,400
4	£528,800
5+	£796,800

### Example calculation for a mortgage

Typically, a household making a single application can obtain a mortgage of 3.5 times their annual income, or 3x annual income for joint applications. Households would generally expect to need a deposit of around 15% of the total price.

If an average two-bedroom property sold in Alton costs £280,200 then a household may require £42,030 as a deposit. Annual household income would have to be at least £68,049 for a single applicant or £79,390 for joint applicants. The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings indicates that the gross annual median income of employed persons in Wiltshire in 2013 was £19,524.<sup>6</sup>

- It would be unlikely that a household would be able to purchase a property in this parish without a large deposit, some equity in an existing property or a substantial income.
- First time buyers would generally struggle to meet the criteria necessary for obtaining their own home.
- In some cases intermediate housing (shared ownership or low cost market housing) would be a suitable option, whilst in other instances affordable rented accommodation would be appropriate.

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<sup>5</sup> House price estimates from the Mouseprice local area guide to the SN8 postcode area, [www.mouseprice.com/area-guide/average-house-price/](http://www.mouseprice.com/area-guide/average-house-price/) . Please note that the SN8 postcode covers a wider area than Alton parish and that there may be significant internal variation in house prices.

<sup>6</sup> Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2013, Table 7.7a, Gross annual pay of employed persons, Office of National Statistics, <http://www.ons.gov.uk> . Note that while the mortgage calculation refers to household income, i.e. to the combined income of all persons in the home, the ASHE figure refers to individual income.

## 7. Summary

This survey's recommendations (see Section 8 below) concentrate on those households who are unable to afford accommodation on the open market.

This is just a quarter of the research needed for this assessment: the Housing Register of Wiltshire Council, the local Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the advice from allocation staff who manage the Register must also be taken into account.

- In October 2015, there were no households on the Wiltshire Council Housing Register seeking affordable accommodation with a 'first preference' for Alton parish.<sup>7</sup>
- The 2011 Census recorded twenty two social homes in the parish.<sup>8</sup> These properties represent 19.1% of the total housing in Alton, which is higher than the Wiltshire affordable housing average of 14.7%.<sup>9</sup>
- The social housing in Alton had a 4.5% re-let rate in the past year: from the third quarter of 2014/15 to the second quarter of 2015/16 inclusive, only one social home was re-let in the parish.<sup>10</sup>
- The relatively high levels of social housing in Alton combined with the current low (zero) 'first preference' need on the Housing Register suggest that **one** of the households responding to section two of this survey and in need of affordable accommodation could meet that need through accessing the existing social housing of the parish.

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<sup>7</sup> Wiltshire Council, Housing Strategy, live tables.

<sup>8</sup> Table QS405EW, 2011 Census: Tenure – Households, English parishes / Welsh communities.

<sup>9</sup> Table QS405EW, 2011 Census: Tenure – Households, local authorities in England and Wales.

<sup>10</sup> Wiltshire Council, Housing Strategy, live tables.

## **8. Recommendations**

This survey's recommendations concentrate on households unable to afford accommodation on the open market.

The following indicates the minimum need over the next three years for new affordable housing development in the parish, based on the responses to the survey. Please note that this report provides a description of the affordable housing need only of those who responded to the survey, and as such may underestimate the total affordable housing need in the parish. As described in Section 7, the survey is only a quarter of the evidence required to fully assess housing need in the parish. Wiltshire Council's Housing Register, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, and the advice of allocation staff who manage the Register **must** also be taken into account in properly determining local housing need.

### **Subsidised rented housing**

- None

### **Shared ownership / Discount market units**

- 2x two bedroom homes
- 1x three bedroom home

### **Sheltered housing for older people**

- None