

Large and small homes

- 3.183 Policy H7 seeks a mix of dwelling sizes where the following types of housing are proposed:
- self-contained houses and flats (Use Class C3);
 - houses and flats shared by 3-6 occupiers who do not live as a family but are long-term residents sharing some rooms and/ or facilities (small houses in multiple occupation or HMOs, Use Class C4); and
 - live/ work units, which are self-contained homes that include a dedicated work area (not in any planning use class, we will treat them as Use Class C3 when we apply Local Plan policies).
- 3.184 Policy H7 applies wherever there is development that affects the mix of dwelling sizes for these housing types, whether the development involves construction of new buildings, extensions, alterations, conversions or changes of use, or includes the creation of separate homes from ancillary residential accommodation. Other policies in this section provide more specific provisions relating to particular types of housing as follows:
- housing designated for occupation by older people, homeless people or vulnerable people – see Policy H8; and
 - housing that is generally restricted to occupation by students during term-time - see Policy H9.
- 3.185 Large and small homes are defined as follows:
- large homes are homes with 3 bedrooms or more; and
 - small homes are studio flats, 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom homes.
- (note – evidence on the need for homes of different sizes generally does not distinguish between studio and one-bedroom homes).

Policy H7 Large and small homes

The Council will aim to secure a range of homes of different sizes that will contribute to creation of mixed, inclusive and sustainable communities and reduce mismatches between housing needs and existing supply.

We will seek to ensure that all housing development, including conversion of existing homes and non-residential properties:

- a. contributes to meeting the priorities set out in the Dwelling Size Priorities Table; and
- b. includes a mix of large and small homes.

We will take a flexible approach to assessing the mix of dwelling sizes proposed in each development having regard to:

- c. the different dwelling size priorities for social-affordable rented, intermediate and market homes;
- d. any evidence of local needs that differ from borough wide priorities;
- e. the character of the development, the site and the area, including the impact of the mix on child density;
- f. site size, and any constraints on developing the site for a mix of homes of different sizes;
- g. the economics and financial viability of the development including any particular costs associated with it, having regard to any distinctive viability characteristics of particular sectors such as build-to-let housing; and
- h. the extent to which flexibility around the mix of market homes could secure the delivery of additional affordable housing.

- 3.186 Camden's existing stock of homes is made up largely of relatively small dwellings, particularly homes rented from Housing Associations and the Council. The 2011 Census indicates that 70% of Camden households live in homes with two bedrooms or fewer, rising to 75% for households in social rented housing. The 2011 Census indicates that 11.7% of households overall are overcrowded (bedroom occupancy ratio of -1 or lower), compared with 19.3% for households in social rented housing, and 5.7% for households in owner-occupation and shared ownership.
- 3.187 Census data shows that the average household size in Camden grew from 2.06 in 2001 to 2.18 in 2011. In the same period the proportion of 1-person households fell from 46% to below 41%. In 2011, Camden's household composition was 40.5% 1-person households, 42.6% households comprising one family only (including 19.0% with dependent children) and 16.9% other household types such as unrelated people sharing a flat. GLA household projections suggest relatively little change to this composition over the Plan period.
- 3.188 The Camden Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) calculates the likely requirement for homes of different sizes in the market and affordable sectors on the basis of the projected household composition over the Plan period, and the size/ tenure of dwelling that each household type is likely to occupy. The Camden SHMA indicates that the greatest requirement in the

market sector is likely to be for two- and three-bedroom homes, followed by one-bedroom homes/ studios. The greatest requirement in the affordable sector is likely to be for two and three-bedroom homes followed by homes with four bedrooms or more.

- 3.189 The Dwelling Size Priorities Table (Table 1) has been based on the outputs of the Camden SHMA, considered alongside the mismatch between the need for large affordable homes (indicated by overcrowding) and supply (indicated by average number of bedrooms per household) and the cost constraints on delivering large intermediate homes. Dwelling sizes are expressed in terms of number of bedrooms and distinct priorities are identified for market housing, intermediate housing and social-affordable rent.

Table 1: Dwelling Size Priorities

	1-bedroom (or studio)	2-bedroom	3-bedroom	4-bedroom (or more)
Social-affordable rented	lower	high	high	medium
Intermediate affordable	high	medium	lower	lower
Market	lower	high	high	lower

- 3.190 The Council acknowledges that there is a need and/ or demand for dwellings of every size shown in Table 1. We expect most developments to include some homes that have been given a medium or lower priority level. However, the Council has prioritised some sizes as high priority (primarily on the basis of a high level of need relative to supply). We will expect proposals to include some dwellings that meet the high priorities wherever it is practicable to do so. In the social-affordable element we will give particular priority to large homes (with three or more bedrooms) at or around the level of guideline targets for social rents, as resources and development viability permit.
- 3.191 Having regard to criteria (c) to (h) in Policy H7, the Council acknowledges that it will not be appropriate for every development to focus on the higher priorities in the Table 1. However, we consider that each development should contribute to the creation of mixed and inclusive communities by containing a mix of large and small homes overall, in accordance with clause (b). Where possible a mix of large and small homes should be included for both the social-affordable rented and the market housing. In accordance with clause (b) the Council will also generally resist development proposals for self-contained general needs housing that contain only one-bedroom and studio flats.
- 3.192 Between 2001 and 2011 an increase in the proportion of one-person households in Camden and a reduction in average household sizes was consistently anticipated by population projections and failed to materialise. This mismatch between expectations and outcomes suggests that projections around dwelling size requirements are fraught with difficulties, especially in the context of rapidly rising housing costs. Consequently, any more detailed percentage aims for specific dwelling sizes will be provided in our supplementary planning document Camden Planning Guidance on housing where they can be rapidly reviewed to reflect changing circumstances. Camden Planning Guidance on housing currently indicates that the Council will aim for at least 50% of social-affordable

rented dwellings in each scheme to be large homes, and on the basis of mismatches in the existing stock we expect to retain this aim.

- 3.193 The Council will be flexible when assessing development against Policy H7 and the Dwelling Size Priorities Table. The mix of dwelling sizes appropriate in a specific development will be considered taking into account the character of the development, the site and the area. The following paragraphs set out a number of the relevant considerations. Please see our supplementary planning document Camden Planning Guidance on housing for further details.

Character of the development, the site and the area, and child density

- 3.194 Where a development involves reuse of an existing building, this may limit the potential to provide a range of dwelling sizes. Issues that can arise include the creation of access via an existing staircase or lift, respect for the integrity of existing structural walls and patterns of windows, changes in floor level, and significant features in heritage assets (including listed buildings and conservation areas) that may restrict alterations.
- 3.195 Flexibility around dwelling sizes may also be required to achieve rational layout and the best possible accessibility arrangements. Adjustments to the mix may be needed to satisfy design and amenity concerns, such as minimising noise disturbance between flats – see also Section 7 of the Plan on design and heritage. The Council is working to return vacant properties to use, and will use flexibility in Policy H7 to ensure that layout difficulties which limit the introduction of large homes do not prevent empty properties from returning to use, particularly upper floors above commercial premises.
- 3.196 Where a development is for the conversion of existing homes (including the creation of self-contained homes from residential accommodation that is ancillary to another use), the Council will seek to minimise the loss of market homes with 3 bedrooms, particularly where the 3-bedroom homes have access to outside space. Conversions involving affordable housing should retain or re-provide any existing large affordable homes unless the creation of small homes will allow the release of other large affordable homes that are currently under-occupied. Conversions that involve the loss of existing homes should also comply with “Policy H3 Protecting existing homes”.
- 3.197 When considering the proportion of large homes appropriate within a specific development, we will take account of any features that make the development particularly suitable for families with children. We will also take into account the flexibility that larger dwellings create for other types of households, allowing for arrangements such as shared households and adults caring for elderly or infirm relatives. A number of features are listed here that help to make developments suitable for children to live in, and where a number of these features are present we will expect the inclusion large homes, and particularly seek the inclusion of

four-bedroom social-affordable rented homes. Child-friendly features include:

- the potential to provide space on site where children can play (open space or private amenity space);
- dedicated children's play space available nearby;
- a number of homes with direct access to the street, private amenity space or open space;
- no direct access to a major road;
- a limited number of homes served from each internal corridor and each communal staircase or lift; and
- potential to provide a broad range of dwelling sizes in the development appropriate for new families with very young children and established families with older children.

3.198 There are relatively few opportunities in Camden for housing development that will provide more than one or two of these features. The Council does not consider that the absence of any or all of these features justifies the omission of large homes from a development, and the all criteria in Policy H7 should be fully considered.

3.199 High child densities can cause difficulties in some circumstances, typically where large numbers of children in the same age-group grow up in an environment with limited safe external recreation space. We will take account of existing child densities in an area and the likely child density of the proposals, and consider whether mechanisms such as a sensitive lettings policy should be used to manage child density, or whether a reduced proportion of large homes would be appropriate.

Development economics, financial viability, and demand

3.200 As indicated in the paragraphs supporting Policy H1, the Council intends to be flexible in pursuit of its policy objectives, and will take into account the findings of our monitoring of housing supply in the light of economic circumstances. These paragraphs note specifically that the Council may vary the range of home sizes sought in order to maximise housing delivery.

3.201 Large affordable homes are expensive to build relative to their rental value and are challenging to provide under the current grant framework, but they are a high priority for the Council and the London Plan. The demand for market homes of different sizes can vary across the borough and change quite rapidly, so that small homes generate higher values per square metre in some circumstances, and large homes generate higher values per square metre in others. The Council recognises that the rigid application of dwelling size priorities can prejudice the financial viability of a development, and will consider adjusting the mix of dwellings (particularly the mix of market dwellings) in order to achieve the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing floorspace on the site.

3.202 The Council may support development that exceeds our affordable housing target and provides affordable housing for a particular group e.g. intermediate housing designed to provide discount home ownership for first time buyers. When considering such proposals we will operate Policy H7 flexibly having regard to the needs and financial resources of the intended occupiers.

Housing for older people, homeless people and vulnerable people

- 3.203 Policy H8 relates to all housing designated for occupation by older people (people who are approaching pensionable age or have reached it) and housing designated for occupation by homeless people and vulnerable people who need support to enable them to live safely. Such housing is often referred to as 'supported housing'.
- 3.204 Examples of types of housing designated for older people, homeless people or vulnerable people include:
- sheltered housing - clusters of accommodation where people live independently in self-contained homes where low intensity support is available, sometimes on-site (usually within Use Class C3);
 - extra-care homes – also independent living in self-contained homes, but designed to enable provision of higher intensity care as occupiers' needs increase, with on-site care usually available. On-site facilities may also provide support for older people in the wider community. Shared lounges and other social and leisure facilities are sometimes provided. Care home accommodation may also be included on-site (extra-care homes are usually within Use Class C3, but this may vary depending on the level of self-containment of the homes and the level of care provided);
 - care homes where higher intensity care is available 24 hours – commonly bedsit rooms with shared lounges and eating – this may involve residential care only, nursing homes staffed by qualified nursing staff, or dual-registered care homes where medical assistance is provided to occupiers that need it (care homes are usually within Use Class C2);
 - small supported living schemes – homes shared by no more than 6 people living as a household with support available, sometimes on-site (within Use Class C3); and
 - hostels occupied by people with a shared support need (typically more than 6 people), most commonly homeless people (hostels are outside any use class).
- 3.205 Policy H8 does not address homes that happen to be occupied by older people or people with support needs, but are not designated for use by these groups. Specifically, other policies deal with:
- hospitals, religious orders and boarding schools – see Policy C2;
 - hostels aimed at tourists and backpackers – see Policy E3; or
 - student housing – see Policy H9; or
 - houses, flats and other hostels shared by 3 or more occupiers who do not live as a family but are long-term residents sharing some rooms and/ or facilities (such as bedsits and hostels for migrant workers) – see Policy H10.
- 3.206 The term 'vulnerable people' refers to a very broad group of people who need some kind of support with their living arrangements. Examples include people using mental health services, people with learning disabilities, looked-after children/young people leaving care, people at risk of domestic violence, people with alcohol or drug dependencies, and ex-offenders. Often individuals have multiple support needs, such people with both physical and learning