

Bridgend County Borough Council
Local Housing Strategy 2016 – 2018

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1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this Local Housing Strategy is to respond to the housing needs of the County Borough by setting out the vision and direction for housing over the next 2 years. The strategy comes at a time of change and upheaval and addresses a number of the most significant challenges facing the Council and its partners and our communities. The strategy deliberately covers a relatively narrow timeframe, to allow for a comprehensive review to take account of the rapidly changing legislative environment, and housing market. It is our intention to incorporate the homelessness strategy within the housing strategy, when this becomes a legislative requirement in 2018.

The global economic crisis has had a severe impact on the housing sector over recent years, while the recession and the unequal recovery have been accompanied by reductions in the level of public spending which are set to continue for a number of years. At the same time, household incomes have fallen, while energy, food and transport costs have all added to the cost of living. This is compounded by welfare reform, which is estimated to have taken £55 million out of the local economy.

In this context, ensuring that the quantity and quality of housing meets the needs and aspirations of Bridgend County residents will be a considerable undertaking. Many of the challenges set out in this strategy reflect much wider social and economic issues.

Creating and sustaining strong, vibrant communities, and re-vitalising our town centres to ensure they are attractive places to live and work, requires the commitment and resources of a range of public and private sector agencies and, crucially, local people. Working in partnership to deliver housing services and to develop innovative solutions to address local housing needs is therefore an imperative.

The strategy sets out five key housing priorities, which will contribute to improving the quality of life for people within the county. These priorities underpin our work and the work of all our partners.

We want to ensure social inclusion and equality of access to services is at the forefront of everything we do. Therefore, the final strategy will be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) in order to ensure it does not adversely affect or discriminate against any equality group, and to consider how the strategy may help to promote equality of opportunity in the county. Through the consultation process, we will be seeking the input of residents, stakeholders and partners, into the EIA.

2.0 National and local plans and strategies

In developing this Local Housing Strategy, the requirements and guidance of the following national and local plans and strategies have been considered:

National plans and strategies:

- The National Housing Strategy for Wales: Improving Lives and Communities: Homes in Wales 2010
- Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales 2009-19
- Vibrant and Viable Places: New Regeneration Framework 2013
- Programme for Government 2011 - 2016
- Housing (Wales) Act 2014
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Renting Homes (Wales) Bill 2014
- Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan 2014-2016
- Wales Housing Management Standard for Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour 2008
- Supporting People Programme Grant Guidance Wales June 2013

Local plans and strategies:

- Bridgend County Together Single Integrated Plan 2013-18
- Corporate Plan 2016-20
- Local Development Plan 2006-21
- Strategic Equality Plan 2012-15

The Local Housing Strategy is also underpinned by a number of other Bridgend Council housing strategies and policies. These are:

- Private Sector Housing Renewal & Disabled Adaptations Policy 2015
- Social Housing Allocation Policy
- Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan 2014-17
- Adult Social Care Commissioning Plan 2010-20

3.0 Understanding the housing picture in Bridgend

The County Borough of Bridgend occupies a key location in South Wales, mid-way between Cardiff and Swansea. It has a population of 141,200¹ with 59,300² households. In 2014 there were estimated to be more people aged 65 and over (19.9%) living in Wales than children aged 0 to 15 (17.9%)³. The profile of the population in Bridgend has followed a similar pattern, and there are projected to be large increases in the number of single person and lone parent family households⁴.

The population of Bridgend County has grown from 128,700 in 2001 to over 139,200 in 2011. This 8.2% rise was the largest for any Local Authority in Wales except Cardiff. The population of Bridgend County is projected to increase by 11,600 people (8.3%) to over 151,000 between 2011 and 2036. The largest increase is projected in the older age bands.

The County Borough area can be identified in two parts. The southern part is a well-populated coastal belt including the town of Bridgend and the coastal town of Porthcawl, together with the M4 Motorway.

The northern part is a more rural, hilly and less accessible area, with three major valleys running north-south, the most westerly containing the town of Maesteg. There are major differences in house prices and economic conditions between the southern and northern areas.

There are an estimated 62,462 homes in the County Borough. Approximately 70% of these are owner occupied, 16% privately owned, and the remaining 14% rented from a housing association.⁵ In September 2003 the Council transferred its housing stock to Valleys to Coast Housing Association and therefore is no longer a social landlord and does not own any houses, flats or sheltered housing.

There are three housing market areas in the County Borough, namely; North consisting of Ogmore, Garw & Upper Llynfi Valley and Western Settlements (the lowest house prices); West consisting of Porthcawl and Rural (the highest house prices) and East consisting of Bridgend, Pencoed & Hinterland⁶.

The most expensive area was Coychurch (£295,050) and the least expensive was Lewistown (£46,000)⁷.

In 2014/15 most property sales in the County Borough involved semi-detached properties which sold for an average price of £136,931. Detached properties sold for

¹ Welsh Government 2014 Mid-year Population Estimates for Wales

² Welsh Government Household Estimates for Wales, mid-2013

³ Welsh Government 2014 Mid-year Population Estimates for Wales

⁴ Bridgend County Borough Council Local Housing Market Assessment Update 2012

⁵ Welsh Government Dwelling Stock Estimates for Wales 2013-14

⁶ Bridgend County Borough Council Local Housing Market Assessment Update 2012

⁷ <http://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices-in-Bridgend-County-of.html>

an average price of £225,736, while terraced properties sold for £99,580. Bridgend, with an overall average price of £150,834 was more expensive than nearby Rhondda Cynon Taff (£116,816) and Neath Port Talbot (£116,121), but was cheaper than the Vale Of Glamorgan (£220,280). During the last year, sold prices in Bridgend were up 5% on the previous year and 6% up on 2007 when the average house price was £141,670⁸.

The average rental price in the County Borough is £641 per calendar month and the median rental price £569 per calendar month⁹. Based on an average household income of £25,009, households need to spend 31% of their income on housing costs, which is higher than the 25% used in the standard model, but more in line with alternative thresholds that have been recorded by some households in the private rented sector in the County Borough, and have also been found to occur in other parts of Wales¹⁰.

There is an estimated annual requirement of 1,762 affordable units per year throughout the County Borough, however, by assuming that households are able to afford to spend a greater proportion of their household income on housing costs, and by accepting that the private rented sector via Local Housing Allowance is a short-term solution to housing those requiring affordable housing, the estimated annual requirement reduces to 292 units per year¹¹.

There are 8,635 social housing properties in the County Borough. These consist of 92 bedsits, 1759 one beds, 3307 two beds, 3347 three beds, 124 four beds and a small number of four, five and six beds. 466 of these social housing properties are sheltered housing units specifically allocated to older persons. In addition, there is an Extra Care Housing scheme in Kenfig Hill called Llys Ton consisting of 31 two beds and 8 one bed flats. Extra care is primarily for people aged 50 or over, who have a need for housing related support or more suitable housing and a need for help with personal care¹².

There are currently 1,293 applicants on the Bridgend Common Housing Register. 870 of these applicants require a one bed, 214 require a two bed, 121 require a three bed and the remainder require a four bed or larger¹³. With 67% of applicants requiring a one bed and 17% requiring a two bed, there is a clear need for smaller one and two bedroom accommodation, especially as there have only been 151 allocations to a one bed social housing property in the past twelve months. However, this need should be balanced with the need to provide and develop larger sustainable accommodation that meets the needs of households as they grow.

⁸ <http://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices-in-Bridgend-County-of.html>

⁹ http://www.home.co.uk/for_rent/bridgend/current_rents?location=bridgend as at 04-11-15

¹⁰ Bridgend County Borough Council Local Housing Market Assessment Update 2012

¹¹ Bridgend County Borough Council Local Housing Market Assessment Update 2012

¹² Bridgend Social Housing Stock in 2015

¹³ Bridgend Common Housing Register as at 04-11-15

Over the past five years homelessness presentations have been falling in the County Borough. In 2008/09 there were 1014 presentations which fell to 346 in 2012/13. However, in 2013/14 there was an increase with 369 and this increase has continued into 2014/15 with 488 presentations. This may be as a result of a number of factors including an ongoing legacy of economic downturn and austerity. During this time there has been an increasing focus on the prevention of homelessness, and this must continue with renewed vigour if the increase in presentations continues.

Private sector dwellings in the County Borough are in a poor condition with 60.8% of requiring urgent repairs while 72% require basic repairs. The average cost per dwelling of urgent repairs (i.e. those needing to be done within the next year) was £1,226. The average cost per dwelling of basic repairs (i.e. all work needing to be done within the next five years) was £2,144¹⁴.

Households are defined as in fuel poverty if they need to spend more than 10% of their income on all household fuel use, in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime. Overall, 6,826 private sector households in the County Borough are in fuel poverty, representing 13.4% of private sector households. Households in the private rented sector are most likely to be fuel poor, with 30.7% of those in the private rented sector in fuel poverty. In terms of household type, lone parent households are particularly likely to be fuel poor with almost 40% of these households in fuel poverty¹⁵.

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2014 identified two wards (three Lower Super Output Areas) in the County Borough that rank within the top 100 most deprived wards in Wales. The most deprived ward identified was Caerau in the Llynfi Valley (the fifth most deprived Lower Super Output Area in Wales). The Caerau ward including the village of Nantfyllon was declared a Housing Renewal Area in 2006 for a ten year period. Caerau is a Communities First Cluster area.

As at year ending June 2015, 7.1% of population of people of working age in the County Borough were unemployed. This was slightly higher than Wales as a whole which was 6.7% and higher than the UK rate of 5.7%.

¹⁴ Bridgend County Borough council Private Sector House Stock Condition Survey 2009

¹⁵ Bridgend County Borough council Private Sector House Stock Condition Survey 2009

4.0 The challenges ahead

These external influences that will impact on the delivery of the strategy are as follows:

Political

- **Government austerity measures** – these include welfare reform and the ongoing cuts in funding for local authorities, reducing the support available to help households to maintain their existing and future housing, and increasing homelessness presentations.
- **The proposed Local Government Reorganisation** – the uncertainty of the shaping of the future political landscape could have an impact on service delivery.
- **Welsh Government funding changes** – lower levels of Social Housing Grant for building new homes will mean new, innovative ways of financing affordable housing will have to be explored.

Economic

- **Household Income** – Government austerity measures could result in a considerable reduction in the level of financial support to many of the most financially deprived households in Bridgend. It should be noted, however, that older people have been largely protected from welfare reform changes, in contrast to young people and adults of working age.
- **Housing Supply** – as the Council transferred its housing stock to Valleys to Coast Housing Association in 2003, it no longer builds new affordable housing. There is a greater reliance on partner organisations, including the private sector, to meet this need.
- **Housing Stock** – the requirement of housing association partners to bring all housing stock up to Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) is a costly exercise, especially non-traditional housing e.g. steel framed. In addition, there are considerable costs in maintaining ageing housing stock.

Social

- **Increasing population** – an increasing older population will have to be encouraged to take proactive steps to move into suitable housing as needs change, particularly older owner-occupiers with equity in their properties. Some of the older housing stock is unable to be adapted at a reasonable cost.
- **Household makeup** – the majority of households requiring social housing are single persons, resulting in a greater demand for smaller properties. Bridgend has relatively low levels of such accommodation.
- **Homelessness** – with strengthened duties in the new Housing (Wales) Act 2014 it is expected that there will be a greater demand on resources in preventing and relieving homelessness.

- **Supporting People** – The Supporting People budget for Wales for 2015/16 of £124.4m represents a 7.4% overall reduction on the previous year. The SPPG allocation for Bridgend for 2015/16 is £5,816,385.26 which represents a reduction of 5.45% in funding. This trend is expected to continue increasing pressure on vulnerable groups that require support.

Technological

- **Digital exclusion** – with the introduction of Universal Credit and “Digital by Default” there is a greater need to ensure people are not digitally excluded.
- **Digital technology** - has the potential to deliver efficiencies in the way vulnerable people are supported to maintain their tenancies.
- **Social media** – with the increased use of social media there is also the risk of an increase in online crime and offending behaviour.

Legal

- **Housing (Wales) Act 2014** – there is a new strengthened duty on local authorities to take reasonable steps to prevent and relieve homelessness, with an emphasis on prevention and service user engagement.
- **Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014** – there is greater emphases on ensuring services are more person centred, promoting independence and reducing reliance on more intensive services.
- **Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015** – there is a new strengthened duty on local authorities to prevent, protect and support victims as early as possible.

Environmental

- **Property condition** – as properties age they can become more costly to maintain, often falling into disrepair with associated health consequences for the owners.
- **Empty Homes** – empty homes are a wasted resource and are often left in a poor state of repair which can lead to graffiti, vandalism and other forms of anti-social behaviour. They can also have a negative impact on the look and feel of a community.
- **Fuel Poverty** – poor housing can be extremely energy inefficient. Households on low incomes have difficult choices to be made in terms of heating their homes or spending their income on other necessities.

In light of the budgetary constrictions facing all local authorities, which impact on all residents, partners and stakeholders, it is vital to focus on:

- Partnership working, especially with the private rented sector;
- Collaborative working across a local, regional and national level;

- Shifting the balance back onto individual and families, to take proactive steps to manage their housing needs as they change; and
- Making the best use of the resources we have.

With this in mind, the strategy has been developed in partnership with internal Council partners, housing associations, private sector landlords, and the third sector.

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5.0 Our achievements

We have already come a long way in meeting the challenges ahead, and it is important to reflect on recent achievements since the last Local Housing Strategy was introduced in 2009.

- 640 affordable housing units delivered.
- 1,298 Disabled Facilities Grants delivered.
- 317 empty properties brought back into use.
- The number of households presenting as homeless reduced from 665 in 2009/10 to 488 in 2014/15, a reduction of 27%. In addition, the number of households for whom homelessness was prevented increased from 113 to 178 in the same period, an increase of 58%.
- A significant reduction in the spend on bed & breakfast accommodation from £710,175 in 2009/10 to £226,962 in 2014/15.
- The development of a Common Housing Register and Social Housing Allocation Policy that ensures that allocation is driven by housing need. The Accessible Homes Register has also been made part of the Common Housing Register.
- Area renewal investment of over £6.1m in the Caerau ward.
- Housing Options Website which includes an online waiting time calculator that enables people to get an estimate of how long they may have to wait for social rented accommodation, together with the ability for private sector landlords to advertise their available properties.
- The adoption of the Local Development Plan in 2013.
- Successfully obtained Welsh Government “Vibrant & Viable Places” funding of £5.978m to regenerate the Bridgend Town Centre.
- Capital grant funding of £116,000 from Welsh Government for the development of a domestic abuse one stop shop located within the Civic Offices.
- £27m of Social Housing Grant (SHG), including an additional £1.1 million to deliver smaller social housing properties, to negate the effects of the welfare reforms.
- Opened Ty Ogwr which provides 16 units of supported temporary accommodation and support and training opportunities for single homeless persons.
- Opened the Kerrigan Project to provide 5 units of supported accommodation for persons who are vulnerable and need a high level of support.
- Recommissioned Supporting People services including the provision of a holistic domestic abuse service and the learning disability service, which account for almost half of the Supporting People budget.

6.0 Our vision and key housing priorities

Our vision is:

“To ensure that Bridgend County is a place that people want to live in, where there is a choice of good quality, affordable, and sustainable housing, appropriate to the needs of each household”.

Taking reasonable steps to help prevent homelessness is fundamental to the housing vision, especially in light of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

The housing vision for Bridgend will be delivered through five housing priorities. Setting out the housing priorities allows resources and work streams to be directed towards these priorities and enable the Council to focus work with partners in the public, private and voluntary sector to achieve them.

Our Priorities

- Priority 1 Take reasonable steps to help prevent homelessness
- Priority 2 Make the best use of existing homes
- Priority 3 Work with partners to deliver the right type of new housing
- Priority 4 Help vulnerable people stay as independent, safe and secure as possible in accommodation that meets their needs
- Priority 5 Create sustainable town centres through housing led regeneration

Priority 1

Take reasonable steps to help prevent homelessness

Why is this important?

The Welsh Government is committed to improving housing services and support¹⁶.

Homelessness is defined as when a person “has no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere which is available for his or her occupation and which that person has a legal right to occupy. A person is also homeless if he or she has accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or the accommodation is a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel or adapted for human habitation (such as a caravan or house boat) and there is no place where it can be placed in order to provide accommodation. A person who has accommodation is to be treated as homeless where it would not be reasonable for him or her to continue to occupy that accommodation”¹⁷.

Reasons for homelessness include; lack of security of tenure with parents, relatives or friends; breakdown of relationship with partner (sometimes as a result of domestic abuse); violence or harassment; mortgage or rent arrears; loss of rented or tied accommodation; current property unaffordable or unsuitable and; being discharged from prison, care, hospital or the armed forces.

Many people address their own homelessness without recourse to Council support. For example, young people remain at home to save money for a deposit on a rented flat; older people downsize and move closer to services; people seek help to find alternative properties from letting agents if their landlord seeks repossession. We need to encourage more people who can do so, to manage their housing needs for themselves, and become more self-reliant.

However, homelessness is not always a housing issue. Many people who already have secure accommodation are unable to sustain it because of issues such as mental or physical illness, a disability, or substance misuse.

It is important to prevent or relieve homelessness for those who are unable help themselves, because being homeless or threatened with homelessness can have a major impact on a person’s and / or their family’s quality of life, especially their health. It can hinder a person’s ability to obtain or sustain employment, or access education and training opportunities. These factors can also have an adverse impact on the economy and increase pressure on local authorities’ services.

Being homeless or threatened with homelessness can sometimes lead to offending behaviours which increases the burden on the resources of other services, such as the Police and the Prison Service, and has wider implications on our communities.

¹⁶ Programme for Government 2011 - 2016

¹⁷ Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness 2015

Homeless people are also significantly disadvantaged in terms of access to services, especially mainstream healthcare services such as a GP. However, when street homeless persons do access healthcare services it is usually at a more critical stage which places an even greater burden on limited healthcare services.

A key challenge of the Welsh Government is ensuring that everyone can receive the help they need to prevent them from becoming homeless¹⁸. To achieve this, housing services need to be easily accessible, readily available, and designed around and responsive to the needs of the people who use them. This requires a renewed focus on the assessment of needs of persons who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and should be used as the basis for personal housing plans, with the goals of addressing any related support needs and securing stable housing circumstances. Taking reasonable steps to help prevent homelessness can empower people to have more choice, make their own decisions and retain control of their lives. This is both the responsibility of the homeless person and the Local Authority.

The Supporting People Programme commissions and provides housing-related support “to help vulnerable people develop or maintain the skills and confidence necessary to live as independently as possible. It has housing, and preventing homelessness or people living in inappropriate institutional settings, at its core. Support can be offered to anyone eligible, regardless of their tenure”¹⁹. The programme requires that local authorities should ensure that, where appropriate, preventing homelessness is a distinct service aim.

Therefore, prevention through early identification and intervention is a housing priority for the Local Authority, rather than attempting to relieve the homelessness after it has occurred. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities “to help to prevent applicants who are threatened with homelessness from becoming homeless”. However, where homelessness cannot be prevented, the amount of distress, deprivation and disadvantage that can be caused should be kept to an absolute minimum.

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 also requires all local authorities to carry out a homelessness review and formulate a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review. The Act stipulates that the homelessness strategy must be adopted in 2018.

Preventing youth homelessness has a role to play in this, as does tackling poverty and social exclusion. Financial exclusion is a major cause of poverty and deprivation, and often results in homelessness because of the ability to obtain or maintain accommodation e.g. rent and mortgage payments, and the ability to sustain accommodation e.g. paying bills.

¹⁸ Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales 2009 – 2019

¹⁹ Supporting People Programme Grant Guidance Wales June 2013

What will we focus on?

- **Providing a holistic housing solutions service** – we will provide an all-encompassing housing solutions service that delivers comprehensive sustainable housing solutions that are tailored to the individual's needs and circumstances. The service will be easily accessible, widely publicised and somewhere people can go for the right advice, support and assistance with any housing related issue. A holistic service will enable improved access to housing solutions such as the private rented sector.
- **Providing financial inclusion advice** – we will refer and signpost to financial inclusion and debt management services to ensure that households are able to secure and retain their accommodation. All housing organisations have a role to play in this early intervention, in particular those that are landlords in the County Borough.
- **Improving partnership working with the private rented sector** – key to preventing homelessness is having a range of accommodation options and the private rented sector is a crucial and increasing element in the provision of housing. Bridgend has developed one of the largest landlords' forums in Wales and we will continue to work with the Forum landlords to expand the availability of private rented sector properties.

The duty to licence and register private sector landlords and their properties introduced by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, will encourage partnership working and improve standards in the private rented sector for both the tenant and the landlord. The Council will actively promote this legal requirement.

We will work more closely with landlords to improve their perception and understanding of vulnerable and homeless people. Likewise it is important to market the private rented sector so it is the 'tenure of choice' rather than the last resort, to relieve the demand for social housing.

- **Increasing accommodation options** – in particular for those groups for whom insufficient accommodation is available such as for younger persons. We will seek to actively encourage tenants to consider the benefits of shared accommodation, in particular those persons under the age of 35 who receive a reduced rate of Local Housing Allowance and for whom other options could be unaffordable.

We will look to develop innovative housing options to facilitate the successful transition of young people leaving care, into independent accommodation, with support.

- **Developing a homelessness strategy** – we will undertake a homelessness review to examine the activities that contribute to the achievement of the prevention of homelessness. This will take into consideration the levels, and likely future levels of homelessness, the accommodation and support that are available for people who are or who may become homeless, and the resources available to the local authority and its partners. The review will enable more detailed objectives and actions to be identified when developing the homelessness strategy, in order to contribute to the prevention of homelessness.
- **Developing a holistic approach to dealing with domestic abuse** – we have commissioned an inclusive Domestic Abuse Information and Advice Service that assesses risk and danger for service users, provides emergency accommodation as a last resort, and additional advice and support to remain at home, where appropriate. We will continue to ensure that this service adapts to the needs of service users.

Priority 2

Make the best use of existing homes

Why is this important?

The Welsh Government is committed to improving the quality of housing²⁰.

There are an estimated 62,462 homes in the County Borough. The private rented sector makes up 16% of these homes, which is slightly higher than Wales as a whole where the private rented sector makes up 14% of homes. 70% of homes in the County Borough are owner occupied and 14% are social rented from a housing association²¹. With a limited supply of social rented housing in the County Borough and affordability often being a barrier to home ownership (the average house price being £150,834²² and the average household income being £25,009²³), many households are reliant on the private rented sector to meet their housing needs.

Bridgend has over 1100 homes²⁴ being empty for six months or more at any time and although this is the average level, when compared to the rest of Wales, the number is still too high. Whilst it is accepted that there are homes waiting to be rented or sold, it is the longer term empty homes that are the most urgent to deal with, homes which may be derelict, unfit, severely neglected and in need of substantial repairs. Problematic empty homes become a focus for vandalism, arson, illegal waste, drug and alcohol abuse and other criminal activity as well as being a wasted asset.

Poor quality and poorly maintained housing can have a detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of occupants and on the quality of life in an area. 60.8% of private sector dwellings in the County Borough require urgent repairs while 72% require basic repairs. The average cost per dwelling of urgent repairs (i.e. those needing to be done within the next year) was £1,226. The average cost per dwelling of basic repairs (i.e. all work needing to be done within the next five years) was £2,144²⁵.

It is estimated that a total of 5,864 households in the County Borough are living in unsuitable housing, with overcrowding and support needs / mobility needs being the greatest reason for the home being unsuitable. However, it is likely that some of the unsuitability can be resolved in the current accommodation without a need to move²⁶.

²⁰ Programme for Government 2011 - 2016

²¹ Welsh Government Dwelling Stock Estimates 2013-14

²² <http://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices-in-Bridgend-County-of.html>

²³ Bridgend County Borough Council Local Housing Market Assessment Update 2012

²⁴ National Performance Indicator 2015-16

²⁵ Bridgend County Borough council Private Sector House Stock Condition Survey 2009

²⁶ Bridgend County Borough Council Local Housing Market Assessment Update 2012

What will we focus on?

- **Bringing empty properties back into use** – By bringing an empty property back into use it will; increase the supply of good quality affordable housing; contribute to strong balanced housing markets and community sustainability; give owners choice by improving sales potential or providing rental income rather than allowing properties to become wasted assets; and reduce the risk of vandalism, arson or squatting and the fear of crime. We will continue to promote the take up of empty homes grants and loans schemes.
- **Working with partners to maximise the use of existing stock** – we will seek to actively encourage landlords to make better use of their existing stock, such as creating single person shared housing from the conversion of their empty or difficult to let properties. This will also increase the level of suitable, affordable accommodation to assist in meeting the duties of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

We will explore the re-letting of existing social rented homes as intermediate rent which would diversify the housing mix available in an area and provide greater rental income for private landlords and Housing Associations²⁷.

- **Promoting energy efficiency** – improving the condition of housing through more energy efficient measures can improve energy efficiency ratings and thus lower running costs for households. Energy efficient homes can also reduce carbon dioxide emissions, which can help to tackle climate change, exemplifying sustainable development in practice. We will promote energy efficiency measures to households in the County Borough.
- **Improving the conditions of private sector housing** – we will seek to encourage private sector properties to be brought up to a satisfactory standard of repair where possible and economically viable, through the Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy.

²⁷ Bridgend County Borough Council Local Housing Market Assessment Update 2012

Priority 3

Work with partners to deliver the right type of new housing

Why is this important?

The Welsh Government is committed to increasing the supply and choice²⁸.

The housing market is a major driver of the economy. New house building not only increases the supply of good quality housing, it also creates jobs and generates revenue. We are committed to facilitating more housing in a choice of tenures, types, sizes and locations that meet local needs and is affordable for our residents. This includes social rented housing, intermediate rented housing and low cost home ownership, but could also include specialist accommodation such as extra care housing.

Local Authorities play a key role in stimulating growth in the housing market. Delivering the right type of new housing, in terms of tenure and dwelling size, is essential in order to meet housing need. Providing a sufficient range of accommodation is also essential to adequately house each household type and balance the housing stock. It is anticipated that there are an estimated 7,250 inadequately housed households in the County Borough, the majority being single pensioners and lone parents (the number of lone parent households and single person households is expected to increase)²⁹.

The challenge is to deliver the right homes in the right places. In terms of affordable housing, it is important that authorities have an appreciation of the demand for different dwelling sizes and types of housing (i.e. intermediate and social rented) in relation to supply so that an appropriate mix can be negotiated on new sites³⁰.

An analysis of the gaps between each tenure shows that there is a large rental gap between the social rented sector and private rented sector, more so in the West and the East of the County Borough than in the North. This indicates that intermediate housing priced within this gap, and set at or below the appropriate Local Housing Allowance, could potentially be useful for a number of households³¹. Intermediate housing is "housing at prices and rents above those of social rent but below market prices or rents"³².

There is an estimated annual requirement of 1,762 affordable units per year throughout the County Borough, however, if we assume that households are able to afford to spend a greater proportion of their household income on housing costs, and accept that the private rented sector via Local Housing Allowance is a short-term

²⁸ Programme for Government 2011 - 2016

²⁹ Bridgend County Borough Council Local Housing Market Assessment Update 2012

³⁰ Technical Advice Note 2 (TAN2) Planning and Affordable Housing 2006

³¹ Bridgend County Borough Council Local Housing Market Assessment Update 2012

³² Technical Advice Note 2 (TAN2) Planning and Affordable Housing 2006

solution to housing those requiring affordable housing, the estimated annual requirement reduces to 292 units per year³³.

The Bridgend Local Development Plan makes provision for the development of 9,690 new dwellings in Bridgend County Borough up to 2021 to accommodate the anticipated population growth. Of these new dwellings “an appropriate mix of dwelling size, type and tenure including approximately 1,370 units of affordable housing will be delivered through the planning system to meet the needs of the County Borough”³⁴.

However, demand on the Bridgend Common Housing Register consistently shows the need for more smaller (one and two bedroom) accommodation and there are concerns with regard to the limited supply of these properties; this is likely to be exacerbated by the potential impact of universal credit and direct payments to households, rather than housing benefit/ rent payments being made direct to landlords.

What will we focus on?

- **Undertaking a Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA)** – in line with Welsh Government guidance we will undertake a biennial LHMA in order to provide robust housing evidence that will inform future local housing and planning strategies and policies.
- **Undertaking a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)** – delivering the right type of new housing is not just about building new homes. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires all local authorities to carry out an assessment of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. “An understanding of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation issues is essential to make properly planned provision and avoid the problems associated with ad hoc or unauthorised provision”³⁵. Historically, Bridgend has been a place through which gypsies and travellers pass en route, along the A48. We have also successfully met need by permitting settled accommodation and permanent pitches through the planning system, enabling better integration of gypsies and travellers with permanent residents, and we believe this to be a good solution for Bridgend. We will take forward the recommendations of the GTAA and seek to meet evidenced future needs in a similar way.
- **Maximising new intermediate rented housing** – we will pursue the development of intermediate rented housing. A number of households could afford intermediate rent at 70% - 80% of the average market rent³⁶. The Welsh

³³ Bridgend County Borough Council Local Housing Market Assessment Update 2012

³⁴ Bridgend Local Development Plan 2006 – 2021 p.57

³⁵ Undertaking Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments May 2015

³⁶ Bridgend County Borough Council Local Housing Market Assessment Update 2012

Government's "Rent First" model could be particularly beneficial at providing rented housing at intermediate rents, giving tenants the opportunity to buy their home outright in the future.

- **Ensuring there is provision for low cost home ownership** – we will continue to explore varied models of provision to help people to be able to purchase their own home, especially first time buyers.
- **Maximising the use of Social Housing Grant (SHG) and other grants** – the development of social rented housing in Wales has traditionally been supported by public subsidy in the form of SHG, although the reducing availability of SHG has meant that alternative funding models for affordable housing are increasingly being utilised in many areas. We will seek to maximise the level of SHG and other housing grants together with exploring new and innovative forms of finance in order to increase the numbers of new social and affordable housing.
- **Making best use of Section 106 Agreements to facilitate new accommodation and regeneration** – “Where a local need is demonstrated, the Council will expect an appropriate element of 'affordable housing' to be provided on sites capable of accommodating 5 or more dwellings or exceeding 0.15 hectares in size”³⁷. We will continue to maximise the provision of affordable housing on sites. However, where developers cannot provide the required proportion of affordable housing on new developments, monetary payments in lieu of housing provision will be used to develop new affordable housing elsewhere.
- **Ensuring the right type and size of new housing is built** – 67% of applicants on the Bridgend Common Housing Register require a one bed property. Therefore, our focus of development will be to provide small to medium sized properties. However, to ensure sustainability of new developments an appropriate mix will be determined on a site by site basis to reflect the needs of the community.
- **Ensuring there are appropriate services in place** – in determining new social and affordable developments we will ensure that the long term sustainability is addressed. We will ensure that new housing is developed where there are sufficient services, such as access to transport, GPs, health services, schools, shops and access to employment and training.

³⁷ Bridgend Local Development Plan 2006 – 2021 p.61

Priority 4

Help vulnerable people stay as independent, safe and secure as possible in accommodation that meets their needs

Why is this important?

The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring people receive the help they need to live fulfilled lives³⁸.

The Supporting People Programme funds housing related support to help vulnerable people live as independently as possible, for a number of groups, including;

- People fleeing domestic violence
- People with learning disabilities
- People with mental health problems
- People with substance misuse issues
- People with complex needs including ex-offenders
- Vulnerable single young people who require support
- Homeless or potentially homeless people who require support
- Single and teenage parents
- Older people

The pressure on the Supporting People Programme is expected to continue for the foreseeable future which means that plans for the commissioning of new services are likely to be limited and the focus will be on value-for-money efficiencies and innovative support services in order to maximise the impact of the Programme.

Services and support need to be person-centred and focused on the outcomes each individual wants to achieve, building on the strengths and capacity each person can bring. Maximising each person's independence and keeping them connected to their families and communities, where possible, delaying their reliance on more intensive and costly interventions is paramount.³⁹

The population is ageing⁴⁰ and we need to enable old people to be as self-reliant as possible. Being in the right kind of housing has a huge part to play in this and as our resources diminish, there will be an increasing requirement for older people, supported by their families, to plan appropriately for old age. Together with our partners, we have a key role to play in facilitating the delivery of more accessible accommodation, suitable for an ageing population. Historically, we have been used to thinking about this in terms of smaller accommodation, but in future, we may also need to think about larger family accommodation, with separate but linked older

³⁸ Programme for Government 2011 - 2016

³⁹ Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

⁴⁰ Welsh Government 2014 Mid-year Population Estimates for Wales

person's accommodation, i.e. the 'granny flat'. The Private Sector Housing Renewal & Disabled Adaptations Policy recognises that people wish to remain as independent as possible in their own homes and therefore makes provision for financial assistance in order to carry out both minor and large scale adaptation works.

Addressing poverty and deprivation is fundamental in helping vulnerable people stay as independent as possible in accommodation that best meets their needs. Welfare reforms can have a major impact on young people living in low income households and poor housing and worklessness impact on the lives of people in the most disadvantaged areas.

A clear link has been shown between levels of deprivation and the health of the population, as people in deprived areas tend to age quicker, develop diseases earlier and die younger. Qualitative evidence of the extent to which the population of the County Borough suffers from poor health is provided in the Authority's Local Housing Market Assessment 2009. The highest categories of households needing support are shown as those having a physical disability, medical condition, and frail older people. Promoting good health, both mental and physical can, therefore prevent more intensive and costly services.

The promotion of good wellbeing, for example, access to green spaces, access to parks, local shops, and transport (for employment) can help mitigate poor mental and physical health. The availability of such amenities is important for all areas of the County Borough and not just for those that have higher levels of deprivation. Ensuring that people are not fearful of accessing public space and facilities in their communities and can enjoy their own home environment without fear of disturbance or harassment is also essential.

We live in increasingly diverse communities where both ethnic and generational differences are present. Our communities consist of people with different experiences, cultures and backgrounds, and it is important that we live alongside each other with mutual understanding and respect. This is often referred to as community cohesion.

A cohesive community is one where hostility, prejudice and discrimination are not accepted, where everyone has a strong sense of belonging, and most importantly, where everyone is safe⁴¹, within and between communities.

The Welsh Government specifically wants to⁴²:

- Address the level of crime and fear of crime
- Address harm associated with substance misuse
- Address and prevent of young offending
- Improve safety in communities

⁴¹ Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan 2011 - 2016

⁴² Programme for Government 2011 - 2016

- Improve the resilience of communities

Bridgend is a low crime area and has seen significant reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour since 2009; however we continue to work to address levels of crime and anti-social behaviour through early engagement and effective partnership working.

Not all anti-social behaviour is criminal in its nature, however all anti-social behaviour increases fear of crime and reduces their confidence that crime is being tackled. Whilst addressing anti-social behaviour is not solely a housing issue, as a key member of the Community Safety Partnership, we need to jointly monitor, share views, resources, engage and build trust with communities, promote positive behaviour and respond to anti-social issues appropriately.⁴³

What will we focus on?

- **Ensuring the Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan (LCP) is designed to meet the needs of vulnerable people** – we will review the LCP to ensure that appropriate housing related support services are commissioned to meet the spectrum of needs of vulnerable people, in order to help them to attain and retain the skills and confidence to obtain and sustain accommodation. We will recommission services to achieve greater value for money whilst providing a level of support to enable those supported to gain greater independence.
- **Developing a single access point into supported housing (The Gateway)** - it has been recognised that a more co-ordinated approach to allocating supported housing vacancies is required to ensure that the needs of individuals are better matched to placements. We will develop a single access point into supported housing, floating support services and move-on to independent accommodation.
- **Redevelopment of the Council's homelessness hostel** – the current homelessness hostel is approaching the end of its useful operable life in its current form; repair costs are mounting and in order to bring it up to modern standards, considerable expenditure will be required. We will seek, in partnership with housing association partners, to pursue the re-provision of the hostel to ensure that it meets modern standards and is flexible for the changing needs and requirements of those requiring emergency accommodation.
- **Developing older person housing** – Bridgend has an increasing population of older persons for whom suitable accommodation is in limited supply. In line with local and national policy we will seek to enable older persons to remain as independent as possible for as long as possible in their own homes. In this we recognise the need to develop flexible services to ensure the most effective use

⁴³ The Wales Housing Management Standard for Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour 2008

of the resources available. We will seek to develop suitable older person accommodation to meet these needs, such as the provision of Extra Care housing, similar to that already provided at the Llys Ton Extra Care scheme in Kenfig Hill.

- **Providing appropriate adaptations in the home** – The Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy sets out the assistance provided by the Council and its partners to address poor and hazardous housing conditions and to enable the homes of disabled and elderly people to be adapted to meet their needs. We will review the assistance we provide to ensure it is appropriate and suitable to meet the needs of households accessing our services so that they can remain in their own homes and maximise their independence.
- **Addressing poverty** – we will seek to promote and maximise financial inclusion and digital inclusion, to raise the aspirations of communities and give them opportunities they may not have had i.e. employment and training opportunities, confidence raising, basic skills support. We will utilise programmes such as Communities First, Families First, Flying Start to assist in tackling persistent poverty and the causes of poverty – this also links with “take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness” housing priority.
- **Reducing fuel poverty** – the high cost of energy can make a real difference to people on low incomes. We will raise awareness and educate households so they can help themselves and understand the tools they need to manage their energy consumption, for example, smart meters or shopping around for the best energy prices.
- **Delivering community cohesion** – we will work towards delivering the outcomes of the national Community Cohesion Plan by increasing awareness of cohesion issues such as hate crime and anti-social behaviour. We will work towards increased reporting of these issues when they occur, and seek to break down misconceptions, tackle negative stereotypes and build good relationships. We will ensure effective cohesion that reflects the diversity of the County Borough through our policies and services.

Priority 5

Create sustainable town centres through housing led regeneration

Why is this important?

The Welsh Government is committed to support housing-led regeneration in communities⁴⁴.

Housing, whatever the tenure, is a major contributor to physical and community regeneration. Town centre living is a marker of urban renaissance. Evidence suggests that the growth of town centre living reflects underlying performance and accelerates it. Town centre living is part of a package of regeneration measures: flats, shops, offices, public space.

New housing can help to improve town centres, central neighbourhoods become safer and more vibrant and town centre residents help blur the edges between the daytime and evening economies. Residents in town centres help the local service economy, particularly restaurants and bars and although they make up a relatively small share of total spending, they help attract more businesses into the area, and with them, more visitors. Bridgend town centre in particular has a number of vacant properties which could be better utilised and help to portray a more positive image of the town centre.

There are also some wider catalyst effects of such housing on the labour and investment markets. Renewed town centres help graduate retention and support the growth of key sectors that rely on a supply of skilled workers. Investor interest is also informed by economic progress and projections of future growth.

There is scope to maximise the development of town centres for key workers and prospective first time buyers, however developers should provide a mix of flats and larger, family-friendly housing around the edges of the core town centres to ensure longer term sustainability of the area.

Equidistant between Cardiff and Swansea, Bridgend town centre is an investment priority for regeneration and has recently received £5.9m under the Welsh Government's Vibrant and Viable Places Programme. The funds will be supported by public and private investment and will be used to develop the Rhiw Gateway in partnership with a housing association. The Rhiw Gateway has four elements:

- delivery of affordable town centre homes;
- improvement of temporary and permanent parking to help the Town Centre to compete with out-of-town retail parks;

⁴⁴ Programme for Government 2011 - 2016

- improvements to the traditional indoor market, which will help support local jobs and small businesses; and
- a new retail/community/arts space.

A mixed use regeneration scheme is planned on the waterfront in Porthcawl. The scheme will involve 1050 new dwellings for the whole of the Porthcawl Waterfront up to 2021, with an additional 300 dwellings anticipated to be delivered beyond this. New retail, leisure and commercial development is also proposed.

There is an outline planning consent which includes 20% affordable housing in Phase 1 of the scheme.

In Maesteg, a mixed use regeneration scheme is being developed on the former Revlon factory site, involving over 100 new homes and retail and commercial uses. Added to this, work is underway, supported by a Welsh Government loan, to remediate land for housing uses.

What will we focus on?

- **Encouraging the regeneration of Bridgend town centre and its periphery –** we will support the Vibrant & Viable Places Programme by seeking to increase the supply and standards of housing in Bridgend town centre, through the encouragement of new developments and the conversion of existing units, in partnership with housing associations and the private sector. In particular, we will work in partnership to target corporately identified properties in the town centre and utilise available funding to enhance its viability and vitality, for example by bringing empty flats above shops back into use via the Homes in Towns Grant (HITs).
- **Encouraging the regeneration of Porthcawl town centre and its periphery -** the regeneration of Porthcawl town centre and its periphery, and in particular the coastal frontage, is a key element in the future development of the area as a sustainable seaside resort. This will be achieved through a combination of quality design of buildings and the surrounding environment, comprising residential, leisure, cultural, tourism and retail uses. We will seek to encourage the development of housing both in the private sector and through local housing association developments. We will continue to promote the take up of empty homes grants and loans schemes.
- **Encouraging the regeneration of Maesteg town centre and its periphery –** Building on the work undertaken to regenerate the Maesteg market and town centre we will continue to support this regeneration through encouraging the private sector and housing associations where a housing need is identified. Our focus will be on the Ewenny Road, Llynderw School and western plateau sites. We will also continue to promote the take up of empty homes grants and loans schemes.

- **Working closely with housing association partners** – Bridgend has a good record of partnership working and innovation when it comes to housing development and has a strong history of attracting additional finance and income for housing development and investment in the County Borough. We will encourage our partner housing associations to produce more affordable homes within the town centre areas through various sources of funding, including Social Housing Grant and Section 106 contributions.
- **Promoting brownfield regeneration over greenfield new build** – the reuse of brownfield and under-utilised land is viewed as key to creating a more sustainable pattern of development. We will seek to promote the development of land within urban areas, especially on previously developed brownfield sites, before considering the development of greenfield sites⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Bridgend Local Development Plan 2006 – 2021

7.0 Monitoring progress

The Regeneration and Development Business Plan will specify the actions and performance indicators, which will contribute towards achieving the priorities within this strategy. The business plan is prepared on a 3 year cycle and updated each year. The actions within the plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis, and those of corporate importance will be reported to Cabinet through the quarterly Corporate Performance Assessment.

The Community, Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CEL) will receive regular updates on performance against key indicators and project milestones.

The strategy will be reviewed in 2018, following the production of the Local Housing Market Assessment, to ensure that it reflects the housing needs of the borough.

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