

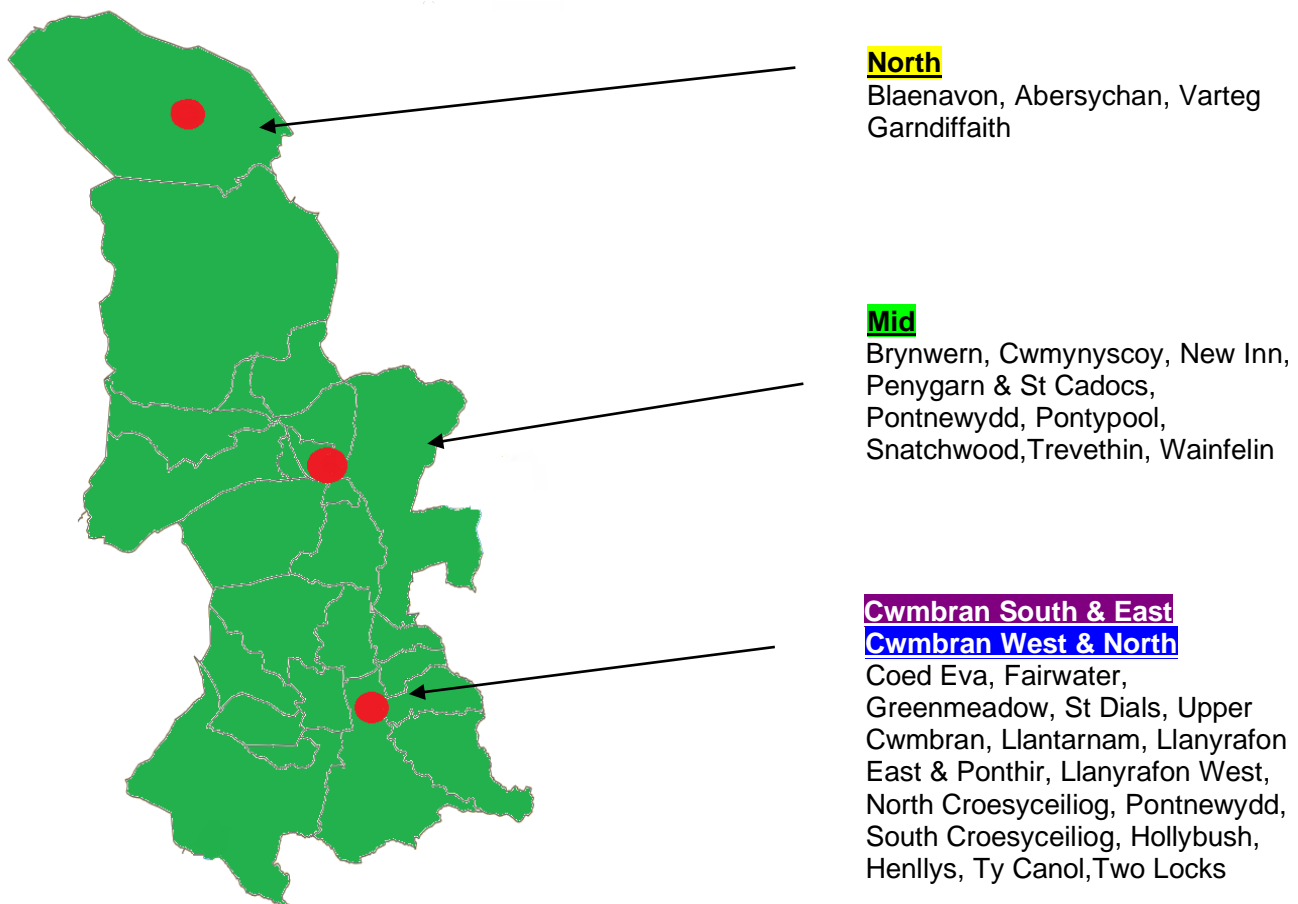
# Torfaen Affordable Housing Need Prospectus

Torfaen sits in the Southeast corner of Wales, with good access to the M4 motorway and easy access to other transport links. Once a thriving mining community, the decline of this traditional industry inevitably left its mark on the borough, especially in the North, but Torfaen has since diversified and developed its economy, making it a popular and vibrant place to live.

The borough is approximately 15 miles in length from North to South, has a population of circa 92,300 residents (40,000 households) and contains 3 main towns; Blaenavon in the North, Pontypool in the centre and Cwmbran in the South. These 3 towns have their own unique characters and despite the short distances that exist between them, their own distinct housing markets.

Below illustrations displays the 3 town locations and breakdown of sub-market areas.

Figure 1 Map of Torfaen



The average income in Torfaen is currently £31,117 compared to a national average of £33,077.<sup>1</sup>

However, Torfaen still contains areas of deprivation and poverty, with 3 of its 60 lower super output areas ranked within the 10% most deprived in Wales and 19 areas ranked within the 20% most deprived in Wales.

## Section 1 - Strategic Housing Priorities

Torfaen's priorities for the delivery of social housing are:

<sup>1</sup> Nomis – Earnings by Place of Residence 2023 – Gross Weekly Pay Full Time Workers;  
<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157402/report.aspx?town=torfaen#tabearn>

- Deliver new affordable housing to meet identified needs across the borough
- Promote mixed tenure development to encourage community integration and regeneration
- To deliver bespoke supported accommodation in line with social care and health needs

## **Section 2 - Housing Need, Demand and Priorities**

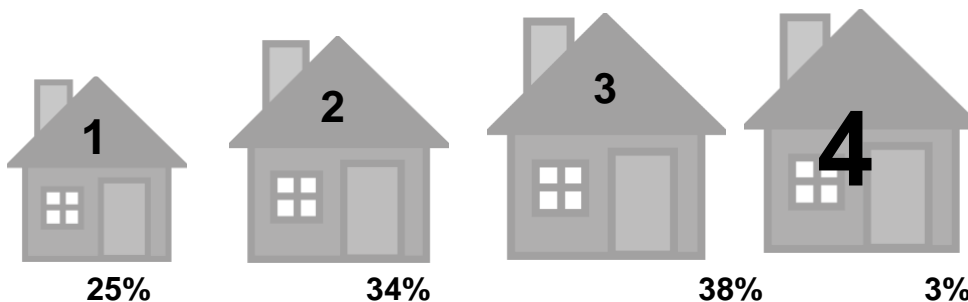
### **Current Social Housing Stock**

There are approximately 10,000 social housing properties in Torfaen. This accounts for 24% of the overall housing stock in the county, compared to a Welsh average of only 10%. This is the highest proportion of social housing stock per local authority in Wales and has resulted in a greater dependency locally on social housing.

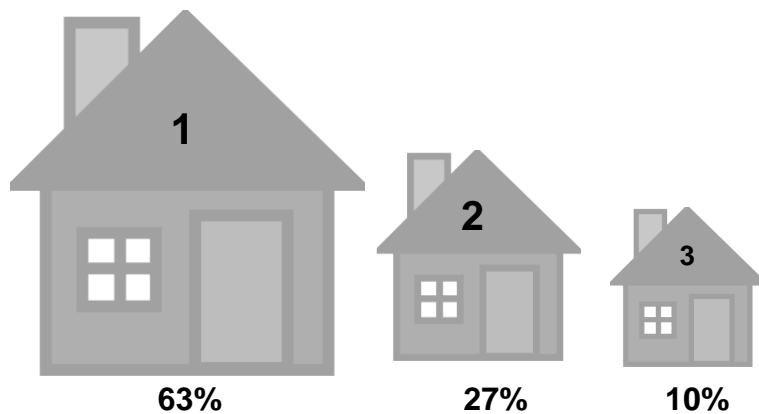
<b>Sub Market Area</b>	<b>Stock (%)</b>	<b>Households (%)</b>
Cwmbran South & East	26.72	26.75%
Cwmbran West & North	28.39	26.45%
Mid Torfaen	28.61	32.30%
North Torfaen	16.28	14.50%

The greatest proportion of social homes are located in the South of the borough (Cwmbran South & East and West & North), where the number of households is also highest. However, there is also a mismatch between the type and size of the current housing stock compared with the current demand for housing required by applicants on the housing register, especially for 1 bed properties. This mismatch of stock versus demand can be seen clearly in the infographic below: (Feb 2020)

### **Social Housing Stock**



### **Social Housing Need (Common Housing Register February 2020)**



## Housing Market Assessment Summary - July 2024

Demand for affordable housing remains an area of pressure in Torfaen, with house prices preventing many households from meeting their housing need via the open market. Despite prices dipping during 2008 and 2011, house prices have continued to rise steadily with an average property in July 2024 costing £196,045.

Torfaen, in line with the rest of the UK, has seen house prices and rental values continue to rise, often outpacing increases in income. This has resulted in continued levels of high demand for assistance accessing housing, especially in the South of the borough, with applications for Low-Cost Home Ownership and Intermediate Rent having increased significantly since the previous LHMA.

The findings from the Local Housing Market Assessment suggest that there is currently a significant demand for smaller units of accommodation, however, analysis of past allocations has shown that more 1 bed properties are allocated each year in Torfaen than other property sizes, indicating a high level of turnover, the local authority aims to provide 50% of all social housing as 1 bed units on new sites, thereby continuing to deliver substantial levels of provision for smaller accommodation.

The table below brings together the different levels of housing need by tenure, based on the principles and findings outlined in this LHMA and estimates that Torfaen needs to continue to provide **315** affordable housing units per annum if it is to meet the backlog for housing and adequately address future levels of demand.

Area	Social Rented	Low-Cost Home Ownership	Intermediate Rent	Torfaen
Torfaen	201	57	58	315

To ensure sustainable communities are created the following information should be considered when developing scheme proposals.

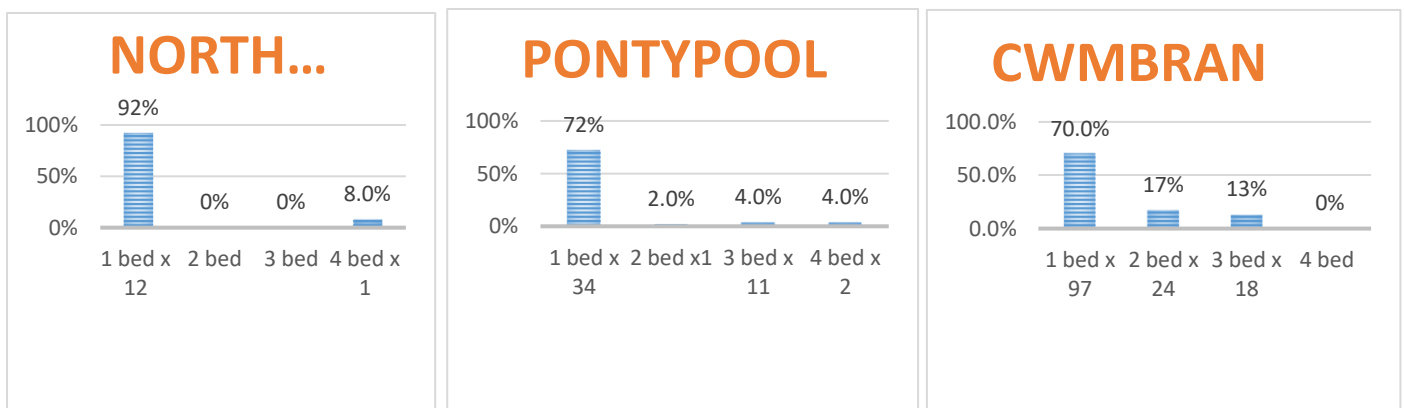
- **Social Housing** – all schemes should include a mix of unit's size and type agreed by the Local Authority in line with the most up to date Local Housing Market Assessment. **On all new developments all ground floor accommodation i.e. flats/bungalows should be wheelchair accessible with wet rooms NOT bathrooms.**
- **Older Persons** – currently there is low demand for further older persons housing, this is due to a high level of voids in current retirement housing. Consideration will be given to applying a local letting plan to properties on new build sites, where it is considered suitable for older people or avenues of redevelopment of existing retirement schemes
- **Supported Housing/Specialist Provision** - all of the below will be highlighted as and when required and identified by internal departments or external partners
  - Learning Disabilities
  - Mental Health Difficulties
  - Domestic Violence
  - Ex-offenders
  - Drug & Substance Misuse
  - Young Vulnerable

- **Empty Properties** – should be considered for purchase and renovation to utilise as social/intermediate rent and LCHO
- **Existing Dwellings** – these units will be supported via the process currently in place for TACP and SPOT purchase via SHG. The RSL should discuss with the LA prior to purchasing units to ensure there is demand for the type of unit and location
- **Homebuy** – this will be delivered via recycled capital grant funding
- **Mortgage Rescue** – this will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, where extensive works to raise standards (costing 50% of the market value of the property) will not be considered
- **Regeneration of town centres** – consideration will be given for conversion of existing town centre buildings into residential.

### Section 3 - Programme Development Plan Schemes

The Local Authority will priorities schemes which are in the highest demand area and can demonstrate they meet the desired mix and tenure.

The table below identifies the demand for unit type across the Borough and in line with the Local Housing Market Assessment.



- Whilst one bed units are the demand in all sub market areas the Local Authority is conscious of the implications of high number of one beds on new development. Therefore, it is essential that the RLS works with the LA on scheme mix and tenure.
- It should be noted that in the North of Torfaen there could be opportunities to redesign existing larger properties to meet the one bed demand. Discussions should be held with Housing on this option
- For both one and two bed properties consideration should be given to both flats, houses and bungalows.
- Bariatric compliant units are becoming ever more in demand, where possible these units should be included on new build sites for both one and two bed units.
- Schemes should be discussed at the earliest opportunity with the LA this can be via the fortnightly meetings or by arranging a separate meeting.

Priority area will be made on the highest – low priority; –

- Proposed unit size and mix (flexibility will be considered due to site constraints).
- Deliverability – land ownership, tender, package deal etc.
- Requests for bespoke accommodation will be circulated to all RSL partners via email, highlighting the scheme/unit required, location, funding and timescales required.
- Proposals submitted will be considered against points above.

#### **Section 4 – Monitoring and Governance**

The PDP will be reviewed on a regular basis, schemes may need to be moved around within the programme as and when necessary, this will be done in discussion with RSL's/the council.

The Housing Manager/Enabling officer will meet individually with all partner RSL's on a fortnightly basis to discuss sites submitted for inclusion in the PDP or which are already agreed.

In addition, all RSL's operating in Torfaen along with Welsh Government will be invited to attend a quarterly RSL Development meeting.

The purpose of these meetings will be to discuss the PDP, proposed schemes, ongoing schemes and to address any planning/policy issues.

Dates of these meetings will be coordinated by the Housing Enabling Officer, all parties will be expected to attend the meetings or a nominated representative. It is imperative that these meetings go ahead to ensure continuity and spend of the SHG programme.

A memorandum of understanding is in place between all developing RSL's. The purpose of the document is to have in place an agreed process for new affordable housing schemes which require Social Housing Grant. To ensure that a fair and equitable process is in place for the distribution of grant to those developing RSL's.

#### **Declaration of interest**

*It is recognised that conflict of interest may occur during meetings, particularly, where Grant funding streams are involved, and so Members must declare any conflict of interest at every meeting.*