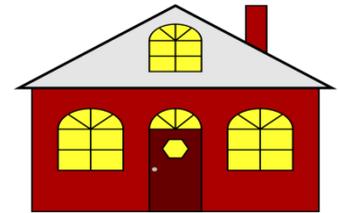


# Section 5.7a

## Title: Draft 1 Homes & Households

A home is a vital part of people's lives; it affects their health, wellbeing, quality of life and the opportunities available to them.



Housing is central to communities; it drives the demand for local services, shops and facilities and can attract outward investment. Without a settled home people may have difficulties accessing employment, education, training and health services.



Housing has an impact on the environment. Development needs to progress in a way that is sensitive to the local area, limits energy consumption and embraces a sustainable approach to planning and design.

The topography of Blaenau Gwent can bring challenges to housing developments in terms of the industrial legacy and the steep inclines - but in many ways these are the primary assets of the area in terms of heritage and superb scenery.



## Overview

- There are 32,367 dwellings in Blaenau Gwent.
- Approximately 5% are vacant, which is above the Welsh average of 4%, but this has decreased since 2001, where it stood at 6%.
- A large percentage of dwellings are terraced properties (average 52%) though there is considerable variation across the area – for example, 74% in Abertillery compared with 21.5% in Rassau:



Household Type	Blaenau Gwent	Wales
Detached house/bungalow	11.0%	27.7%
Semi-detached house/bungalow	26.7%	31.0%
Terraced house (including end terrace)	52.2%	27.8%
Purpose-built flats/tenement	8.0%	9.6%
Converted / shared house (inc. bed sits)	0.9%	2.4%
Flat in commercial building	1.2%	1.0%
Caravans/mobile home etc.	0.1%	0.4%

- Over 62% of residents are owner occupied, largely unchanged since 2001.
- BGCBC transferred its council accommodation to Tai Calon in 2010. The combined number of rented Council/Registered Social Landlord accommodation has dropped from 28.8% in 2001 to 24% in 2011.
- The number of people renting from a private landlord has risen significantly from 6.1% in 2001 to 11.4% in 2011.

Household Tenure	Blaenau Gwent	Wales
<b>Owner occupied households</b>	<b>62.1%</b>	<b>67.7%</b>
Own outright	32.9%	35.4%
Owns with mortgage or loan	29.1%	32.0%
Shared ownership	0.1%	0.3%
<b>Rented households</b>	<b>36.8%</b>	<b>30.6%</b>
Council (local authority)	11.1%	9.8%
Social landlord	12.9%	6.6%
Private landlord / letting agency	11.4%	12.7%
Private Other	1.4%	1.5%

Source: Office for National Statistics<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Note: whilst this return from the 2011 census suggests there is council housing provision, this represents a mis-understanding of tenure status amongst these residents as all local authority housing was transferred to a registered social landlord in 2010.

- In September 2016, the average house price in Blaenau Gwent was £76377.
- The average house price does not give a full picture of the affordability of privately owned housing, because these figures do not take into account average earnings. The Office for National Statistics have provided statistics which show that Blaenau Gwent has the most affordable housing compared with Local Authorities across both England and Wales.
- During 2015-16, there were 124 new build properties completed in Blaenau Gwent. This figure increased by 22 from 2014-15.
- According to the October 2016 Welsh Housing Quality Standard release, 5662 of Tai Calon's 6132 residences are compliant; none of the stock failed, with the remainder being judged 'acceptable fails'. This compares very favourably compared to other large scale voluntary housing transfers across Wales. Melin, Linc and United Welsh RSLs also have no non-complaint compliant stock.

### ***Energy efficiency***

- Blaenau Gwent ranks second in Wales for households that have central heating (99.2% up from 97% in 2001).



- In 2014, 535 megawatt hours of domestic gas and electricity were consumed in Blaenau Gwent. This figure has decreased by 17 since 2013. Blaenau Gwent households have consistently used less energy than the Wales average since records in 2010, though it is important to think about whether this is linked to fuel poverty.

### ***Accessibility***

- The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is available to owner occupiers, landlords and private tenants who may get assistance to carry out adaptations.



The table below shows the number of DFG grant has remained relatively stable over the last 5 years, though it has decreased relative to Caerphilly and Torfaen.

	<b>Blaenau Gwent</b>	<b>Caerphilly</b>	<b>Torfaen</b>	<b>Monmouthshire</b>	<b>Newport</b>
FY 2010-11	121	198	124	110	158
FY 2011-12	113	182	123	98	131
FY 2012-13	100	187	122	91	157
FY 2013-14	117	187	144	88	209
FY 2014-15	116	207	141	88	156

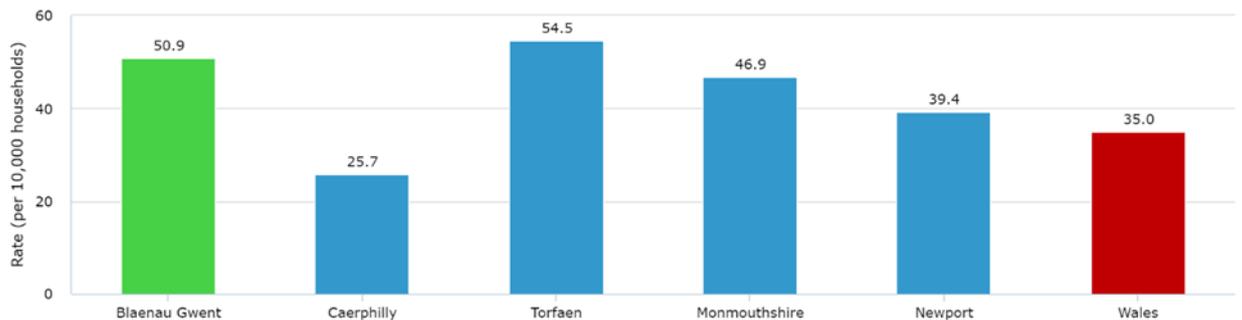
### ***Gypsy and traveller accommodation***

- There are currently 20 Local Authority authorised gypsy and traveller pitches with a further 7 on gypsies’ own land and deemed “unauthorised development”. Local Authorities have a duty to undertake gypsy and traveller accommodation assessments under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

### ***Homelessness***

- Blaenau Gwent has above the Wales average for the number of homeless people decided to be eligible and in priority rate (4.77 compared to 3.89). It is also the highest in Wales for the number of households assessed as threatened with homelessness within 56 days (86.7 per 10,000 households, compared with the Wales average of 53.7). However, in 2015/16, the rate of households for whom homelessness was successfully prevented (for at least 6 months per 10,000 households) was 51%. This is high compared to other local authorities in the region, where the lowest was 26%. The Wales average for the same period is 35%.

Rate of households for whom homelessness was successfully prevented for at least 6 months per 10,000 households - FY 2015-16



Source: Welsh Government (WG)

## **The story behind the data**

Working in partnership with other public, private and third sector organisations, local authorities play a lead role in developing an approach to housing across all tenures, to ensure the delivery of more integrated housing and related

services to meet local need. *More than Homes* is the Local Housing Strategy for Blaenau Gwent (2014 – 2018).

Many of the housing challenges that Blaenau Gwent resound across Wales, and non-devolved UK welfare policy also has a direct and indirect impact.

Key challenges include:

- **Housing demand:** The demand for housing continues to outstrip supply across the UK, and the current economic climate has increased the demand for affordable housing. The Welsh Government havehas pledged to deliver an additional 20,000 affordable homes during the next term of Government, of which 6,000 will be Help to Buy.

Attracting investment to the area and creating jobs goes hand in hand with attracting investment for housing development. Currently there is more social housing development in Blaenau Gwent compared to the market sector. Whilst a spread of housing investment is preferable, with more market sector developments, the current position has several positive benefits in terms of the ability to dictate housing access and energy efficiency standards and ensuring a higher percentage of smaller homes/ bungalows and affordable homes.

For those in owner occupied housing, whilst the average house price is amongst the lowest in Wales, given that many households in the Borough have an average annual income of £20,000, housing remains relatively affordable.

- **Private rented sector:** The private rented sector is growing nationally, and people need reassurance and protection to be able to live in a good standard of accommodation, with fair terms and conditions. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 introduced compulsory registration for private rented sector landlords and letting agents, and the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 has been designed to provide clarity of rights and responsibilities for both tenants and landlords. As part of this, the 'Rent Smart Wales' scheme will, for the first time, allow local councils to fully identify all of the private rented properties within their local area, making it easier for them to work closely with landlords on ensuring high rental standards are being met. The number of people in rented accommodation has almost doubled in Blaenau Gwent between 2001 and 2011. The condition of private sector dwellings is an area of concern, particularly for lower value rental

homes, and this sector needs to be closely monitored through implementing this new housing legislation.



**Homelessness:** Existing changes to the welfare system will continue to have an impact on tenants, landlords and local authorities, and further changes by the

UK government are to be introduced, which are likely to have a particularly negative affect on people aged under 35. Transitional funding from the Welsh Government to help address the impact of welfare reforms will cease after 2017/18. This needs to be very closely monitored, to avoid a reduction in the positive performance of Blaenau Gwent in preventing homelessness.

- **Housing Quality:** There is an ongoing need to improve old stock to meet quality and energy efficiency standards. Whilst adding a distinctive character to the area, the dominance of older terraced housing does bring challenges in terms of maintenance and energy efficiency. Consultation is underway by the Welsh Government to put the Welsh Quality Housing Standard 2008 standards onto a firmer footing. The data shows that Blaenau Gwent is performing relatively well in relation to the current standards.
- **Energy efficiency:** In 2010 BGCBC together with United Welsh showcased Wales' first zero-carbon award winning house. In 2015/16 BGCBC was successful in securing almost £2.7 million in capital funding in 2015/16 from the *Warm Homes Arbed* programme, which levers energy company obligation funding into Wales to achieve energy savings in energy inefficient homes. That said, there are still housing challenges for Blaenau Gwent in terms of the high number of older terraced housing stock, where lifting energy standards can be challenging.
- **Gypsy and traveller accommodation:** Local Authority based Gypsy and traveller accommodation has varied in number since 2010 from between 18 and 22, and generally there have been few or no unauthorised sites recorded. In relation to current demand, BGCBC's 2015 'Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment' outlines their approach to managing this and the Authority is still awaiting feedback and sign off from the Welsh Government.

- **Access and support:** A range of housing support is available to those with health and social care needs within Blaenau Gwent, the main vehicle being **Supporting People**; details of this are outlined in the regional Population Needs Assessment (PNA).



The PNA also highlights the importance of **Care and Repair** services and the multi-agency **In One Place** Programme (a collaborative approach launched in 2014 to improve the provision of accommodation).

**Managing Accessible Housing:** BGCBC does not have a formal Accessible Housing Register. Need is managed through local Housing staff meeting regularly with Occupational Therapists to consider adaptation requirements and priority need and looking for solutions through new build or liaising with RSLs. The alternative of an Accessible Housing Register would require additional resources to administer.

The number of Disabled Facilities is likely to drop in future as the resource available for this has been reduced from £750,000 in 2015/16 to £675,000 for 16/17, linked to required Council spending reductions. This is something that requires review.

## **The impact of demographic change**

In Blaenau Gwent, accommodation for older people can be particularly affected by some of factors raised above, such as the steep land and the older housing stock.



The impact of changing demographics on the profile of tenure has also been raised, with potentially larger numbers living in the private rented sector in future. As older people represent a very significant and growing percentage of the local population this is something that cannot be ignored in terms of the range, location and quality of accommodation available. The Ageing Well in Wales (AWW) programme also highlights the importance of housing for older people and the negative impact on physical and mental health where quality, affordable accommodation is not in place.

Blaenau Gwent has an ageing population and the proportion of the population with a Limiting Long Term Illness is likely to increase. Blaenau Gwent needs to increase the level of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

funding that has been accessed, (which is high compared to other Local Authorities). A recent report by Care and Repair in England highlights that the amount of DFG funding available is significantly less than the amount required to support eligible individuals. There is research evidence that shows that home adaptations save public money in a number of ways and is an important component in promoting the wellbeing of future generations – supporting the fundamental principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act.

Other forms of accommodation for older people to suit different levels of need are also a key part of future planning. It has been the policy of Blaenau Gwent for some time to maintain older people in their own homes for as long as possible, and as a result of this work there has been a reduction in the number of residential homes, and a move towards developing more supported living options. Currently, there is a waiting list and increasing demand for these types of supported housing developments.

## What we know from engagement



Most of the people who commented about housing were concerned about:

### AVAILABILITY



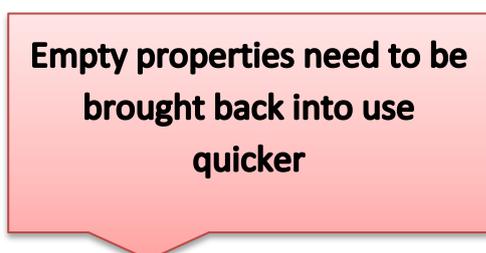
### QUALITY



### ACCESSIBILITY



### AFFORDABILITY



## **What we know from existing research**

The Welsh Government recently set up an Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population which is advising the Minister with responsibility for Housing. The Expert Group recently issued a summary of findings from engagement with older people across Wales, which amongst other things highlighted the need for better information in relation to housing needs and housing stock, better integration, improved joint working and planning processes. They also stress the issues of location and mobility and of older people getting around *outside* of their home and ensuring housing policy and resources are better aligned with health, Social Care and Well-being of Future Generations policy.

### ***What this tells us about Well-being in Blaenau Gwent***

- Continue to consider housing in relation to the wider development of Blaenau Gwent's economy, establishing a balanced market with a good level of availability of affordable homes.
- Promote the building of energy-efficient Lifetime homes.
- Ensure new developments have effective links to transport and community facilities, in particular any supported housing for older people.
- Explore creative options for accommodating people in future, such as house shares.
- Homelessness needs to be very closely monitored with potential need for further investment, to avoid a reduction in the positive performance of Blaenau Gwent in preventing homelessness.
- Consider the need for a Gypsy Traveller transit site in Blaenau Gwent, to avoid unauthorised pitches.
- Invest in adaptations for disabled/ older people, to enable independence and benefit from longer term savings: through review of the Disabled Facilities Grant levels; promoting care and repair services, and considering the business case for investing in an Accessible Housing Register.
- Monitor the rise of rented accommodation and ensure legislation to protect tenants is implemented to best effect.