

Newport City Council

Do they have the capacity to meet social and affordable housing targets?



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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to determine whether Newport will have the infrastructure and capability to meet social and affordable housing targets. These have been set by the Welsh Government. The research began with an introduction to Newport, and how it has changed over the years. The report then continues to define affordable and social housing and why this report is necessary. After some secondary research, it was understood that during the years 2011 – 2026, 8,901 social, affordable homes are to be built. The report then analyses in detail Newport City Councils LDP which specifies areas of housing development in Newport, and legislation towards aiding the construction of affordable, social houses. After all research was undertaken, it was concluded that Newport will be unable to meet the demand which was set by the Welsh Government. This was due to a lack of funding, appropriate legislation, and the negative impact of the 'help-to-buy' government scheme taking housing stock out of the system. To help solve some of the potential shortfall, the report's recommendations include increased legislative impacts on house builders requiring them to build social affordable homes on large sites, removing tax levies on affordable social homes and changing the rules upon the 'help-to-buy' scheme which is taking the housing stock of local councils who receive no financial aid in return.

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1.0 Newport History

1.1 History of Newport

Newport is located on the River Usk, South Wales. The River Usk is one of the main reasons that Newport has become as prosperous as it is today. Newport was one of the most important areas in Wales for large scale coal and steel production. This allowed them to expand rapidly in the 19th century, helped by the industrial revolution, from a small sea-side area to a prosperous town. The town became known for its 'modern docks' which shipped 6 million tons of coal every year in the early 20th century (Newport.gov.uk, 2017). Wales hit their peak production of coal in 1913 with the coal totalling 57m tons (BBC.co.uk, 2008). These docks became vital as more goods were delivered down the River Usk from other areas in Wales. Barracks from the war have remained in Newport and are among the best-preserved military sites within the UK.

Newport became a city in 2002 (BBC News, 2002). It is now the third largest city in Wales only behind Cardiff and Swansea. Now in the 21st century, Newport's economy is based upon the city centre, and two large business centres based around the M4 which run next to Newport. The M4 which travels from London across to Swansea has greatly benefited Newport as it has allowed for easier access for people and goods.

1.2 Demographics of Newport

Newport has been steadily growing year on year since the 19th century. It has an estimated population of 149,148 people in mid-2016 (Statswales.gov.wales, 2017).

GENDER RATIO, NEWPORT

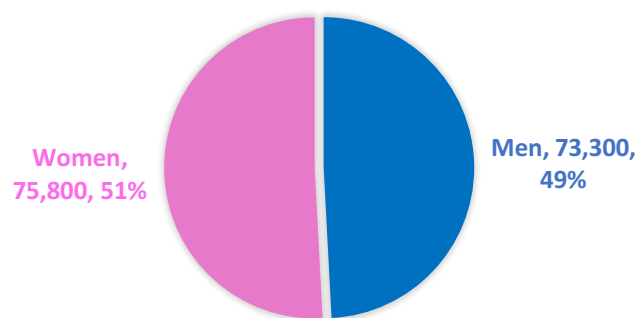


Figure 1: Gender Ratio, Newport

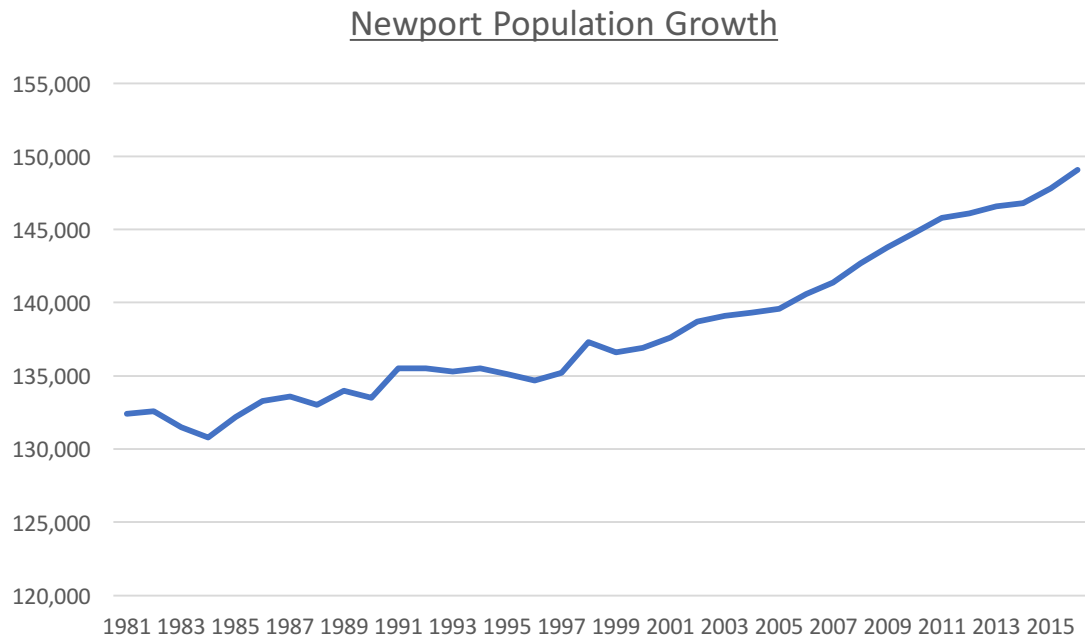


Figure 2: Newport Population Growth

62.4% of the population of Newport is of working age which is average for Britain. Unemployment in Newport is at 5.4% which is higher than both the Welsh and UK average of 4.7% and 4.6% respectively. Unemployment in men is significantly higher than women in Newport. In the 19th century the reason Newport was so prosperous was due to the coal mining. However due to the decline in mining, it now only accounts for 0.2% of all of Newport's jobs (Nomis, 2016).

2.0 Social and Affordable Housing

2.1 Social Housing Definition

'Social housing is let at low rents on a secure basis to those who are most in need or struggling with their housing costs' (England.shelter.org.uk, 2017). These types of properties are usually made available by councils or non-for-profit housing associations. The reason for this type of housing is to support people on low incomes and the law prohibits high rent increases therefore keeping these types of properties affordable.

This type of housing is usually in short supply due to high demand and shortage of supply of new builds. It is allocated not on a first come first serve basis, but is allocated on a points based need allocation system. There is usually a waiting list for people who have applied and have been ranked as eligible, and in order of need. As soon as a suitable property becomes available, the first person on that list will be offered the accommodation.

2.2 Affordable Housing Definition

Affordable housing does not have one singular definition. The government definition is; 'Affordable housing is social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households who's needs are not met by the market' (Gov.uk, 2017). Another definition is housing that is deemed affordable to those with a medium household income

as rated by national government (Bhatta, 2010). This however is a vague definition, as what can be 'deemed' affordable in one area, can be non-affordable in another. This therefore makes the term 'affordable housing' confusing to understand. Many councils often merge the two together and offer 'social and affordable housing'. This report believes that the best definition of affordable housing is; rents of up to 80% of market rent levels within the local area (House of Commons Library, 2017).

2.3 Are Social and Affordable Housing the same?

Some councils separate social housing and affordable housing and some blend the two together. Newport City Council seem to do the latter. They define both social housing and affordable housing as "below market rent" (Newport City Council, 2015). This therefore means that as this report specifically talks about Newport, it will be talking about social and affordable housing, as one.

2.4 Social and Affordable Housing Provision, Wales

In a report titled 'Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021' the Welsh government committed to providing an extra 20,000 affordable social homes (ASH) over the years stated (4,000 affordable homes per annum). In the year 2016/17, the total ASH built in Wales was 2,547. This was an increase of 6% from the previous term. 93% of all these ASH's were constructed by Registered Social Landlords (RSL) (Welsh Government, 2017). This is still far below the required level of 4,000 social homes. A large majority of all affordable housing in Wales is being constructed by RSL's rather than local councils.

2.5 Who Picks up the Shortfall of potential social tenants?

Demand consistently outstrips supply in the social housing market. If this is true then where do these individuals and families live prior to being offered a social housing opportunity? The private rental market is where they are housed. However, these properties can often be 1 bed flats for 3 or more people. This is an inappropriate property type for a family of 3 or more, but it can sometimes be the only way for families to be able to afford food and a roof over their families' head. This is often too expensive and therefore why they apply for social housing. As highlighted above, social housing is allocated upon a points based system. Due to a family already having a property, whether their finances are stretched thin or not, they will take longer to be offered a social home when compared to a family that is in crisis or homeless.

2.6 Why is there a lack of Affordable Housing?

There are multiple reasons for a lacking supply in ASH however in recent years the governments 'Right to Buy' measure has increased pressure on the housing stock. Right to buy is a scheme set up by the government in an aim to offer discounted priced social homes for sale to the residents renting them. Social tenants are offered a discount of up to £104,900 (Righttobuy.gov.uk, 2017). This, although a good idea to help people with a poorer financial position get on the property ladder, has affected councils and their social stock in a negative way. For example, Newport could offer a family of 3 a social home to rent. After 5

– 10 years the family may have saved up enough money to buy their property through the ‘Right to Buy’ scheme. Newport Council cannot do anything to stop this. The real problem however is that when this happens, Newport will lose a social home, and the money towards the house will not go to Newport council, but to the Government. This means that Newport will lose the complete value of the property and the property itself.

3.0 Has Newport met Previous Housing Targets?

3.1 UK Previous and Current Housing Targets

In many areas of life, people often look back at history, as a guide to the future. For example, the government for the UK have promised to build a minimum of 250,000 homes in 2015/16 to alleviate the housing crisis we’re facing. This target has constantly been missed by a large margin. Now the government claim they will build 300,000 homes every year from 2018 onwards (BBC News, 2017). With a poor track record of achieving its housing targets, there is little confidence in this being achieved without significant government investment.

3.2 Newport’s Historical Housing Targets

The need for social and affordable housing was previously recognised in Newport’s Unitary Development Plan (UDP) from the years 1996 – 2011. The report recognised the 7,452 people who were actively waiting for a social/affordable property. However, the main problem is that during the period of this report Newport Council said that it “does not seek to prescribe a target for affordable housing provision”. They then continue to say that “it is clear that there is a significant need” for social and affordable housing provisions (Newport City Council, p61, 2006).

Looking back, Newport Council had optimistically targeted 440 homes each year to be constructed between the years 1996 – 2001. This is a total of 2200. They mention in their report that 400 homes a year would most likely be sufficient also but the extra 40 homes a year would be beneficial for the long-term increase in population. The actual number of properties built between the years 1996 – 2000 was 2234 (Newport City Council, p58, 2006). This is 34 more buildings than the optimistic target that Newport Council set. This is positive as it shows that Newport City Council are focused on achieving the targets that they set out in their development plans and it also shows that they have the infrastructure in place, to achieve their targets.

4.0 Newport’s Housing Future

4.1 Newport Council - Unitary Development Plan

Newport’s UDP had run from 1996 – 2011. Newport has now superseded this with their latest Local Development Plan which this report will follow in more detail.

4.2 Newport Council - Local Development Plan

4.2.1 Housing Provision

Newport's Local Development Plan (LDP) 2011-2026 for housing, states that it aims to create "an adequate supply of land for housing in the most sustainable locations, and to ensure that the quantity, quality, and variety of housing provision meet the needs of the population" (Newport City Council, 2015). The LDP also estimates that at least two large estates in the city will need regeneration. **Newport have estimated that 10,350 homes will need to be constructed over the time-period 2011-2026**, and an increase of 7,400 new jobs to meet demand. The number of ASH's required to be built, is included within the figure of 10,350. The housing requirement has been broken down in figure 3.

Population, Dwelling Requirements and Employment Projections							
	2011		2016		2021		2026
Total Population	137,432		138,481		145,490		153,030
Dwellings	61,888		63,896		68,109		72,212
Jobs	67,873		69,426		72,529		75,205
		2011-16		2016-21		2021-26	
House Building Requirement		2,008		4,213		4,103	
Annual Requirement		402		843		821	

Figure 3: (Newport City Council, 2015)

The Local Housing Market Assessments (LHMA) has identified that a total of 690 dwellings are to be constructed each year in Newport. This can be compared to Newport City Councils estimates shown in figure 3 above. 593 of these dwellings are to be designated to be affordable. That equals to 86% of all housing that will be built during the years 2011 – 2026 (Newport City Council, 2015). They go on to say that they feel that this sort of level will "not be possible" to achieve. Newport City Council have agreed on the provision of 10,350 homes during the 15-year period, and so the annual requirement for 2011-16 has been set at 402, 2016-21 at 843 and finally 2021-26 at 821 homes. Although **the total ASH's required from their research to be built during the 15-year period is 8,901**, Newport Council have proposed that 10-40% of all new builds will be made ASH with an aim to reduce the number of ASH being required. This will therefore mean that Newport will not be able to reach their original target of 8,901 and will be estimating to reach a lower target of between 890 - 3,560 over the 15-year period (between 10% and 40% of the original target).

4.2.2 Current Housing Estimates, Newport

Newport have estimated the number of homes which will be built from 2013 to 2026. They have used information from 'Planning Portal' and examined which applications have been accepted and how many dwellings are on each site. They have also used averages over the past 13 years to create an estimate for the total homes to be built which will show them whether more will need to be done to meet the targets mentioned in 4.2.1. This information however shows an extra 12% on the provision of 10,350, which will ensure flexibility in achieving the provision set. Figure 4 shows more detailed information on the housing estimates.

Housing Supply 2011 - 2026	
Source	Anticipated Supply
Total Completions 2011 – 31/03/2013 (all residential completions)	805
H1 Sites – Units Remaining 2013 – 2026	8847
Units under construction @ 01/04/13	203
Small sites (below 10 units) for 13 years 2013 – 2026 (41 per annum)	533
Windfall Allowance (10 units or more units) for 13 years 2013 – 2026 (95 per annum)	1235
Total	11,623

Figure 4: (Newport City Council, 2015)

Appendix 1* shows the location of these developments and a table stating the exact number of dwellings on each site. The total number of affordable houses within the H1 developments (sites with equal to or over 10 dwellings), is 1,547 over the period 2011 – 2026. This is far below the 8,901 affordable houses said to be required during the same period. The current amount of affordable homes that have been delegated on these sites only totals 17.5% of housing, far below the 86% that Newport City Council have said they require but still within the 10%-40% they have now targeted.

4.2.3 Future Affordable Housing Locations

Newport's LDP states that all new housing sites that contain 10 dwellings or more (Windfall), will be required to offer affordable housing. Target areas have been identified and these can be found on figure 5. The percentage number is the amount Newport has delegated to each area from its provision.

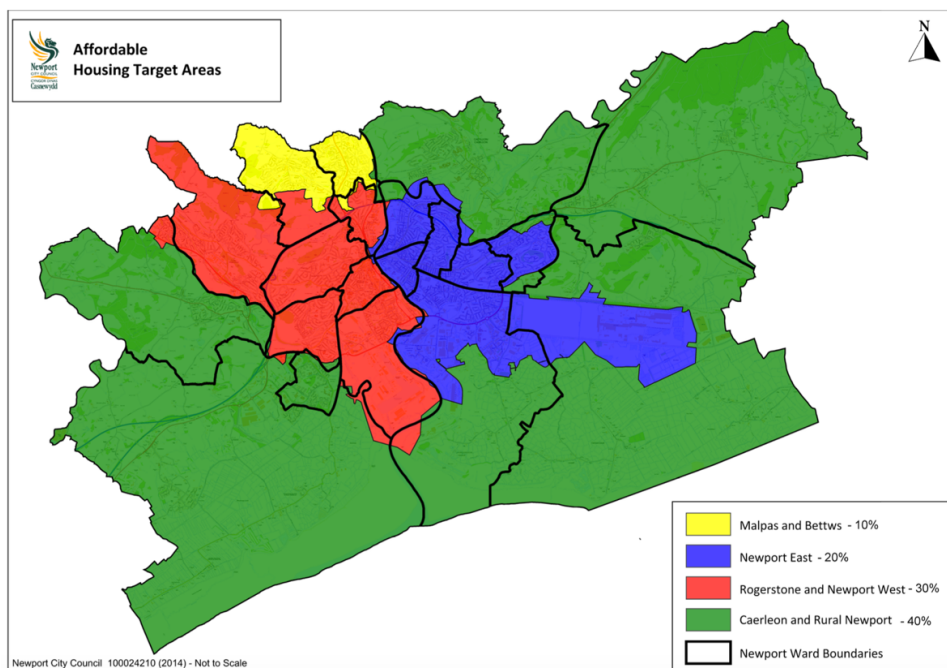


Figure 5: (Newport City Council, 2015)

Therefore, using the information available the number of affordable/social homes to be built in each area of Newport are as follows;

- Maplas and Bettws – 890
- Newport East – 1,780
- Rogerstone and Newport West – 2,670
- Caerleon and Rural Newport – 3,560

(The data above has been calculated under the estimation of 8,901 ASH to be required)

4.2.4 Construction Levy's in Newport

Newport enforces a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This levy has been introduced for the benefit of the local community and it means that financial contributions can be secured from developers (Newport.gov.uk, 2016). These levys are also different in the separate areas shown on the map above. They are charged in £/sm. The charges are as follows;

- Maplas and Bettws - £60psm
- Newport East -£45psq
- Rogerstone and Newport West - £20psm
- Caerleon and Rural Newport - £60psm

This data shows that for developers the most expensive areas to build will be Maplas and Bettws, and Caerleon and Rural Newport. The report follows on to mention that apartments will be charged at £0psm meaning cheaper option for house builders (Newport.gov.uk, 2016).

4.3 How has Newport Calculated their Housing Provision?

A report titled 'Local Housing Strategy 2012-17' (LHS) has provided the information to Newport City Council on their provisions estimated. The report has been based around Newport. The introduction explains the reason and requirement for more housing. It explains that the estimated increase of 4% population growth per annum, will be the main driving force for the required increase in construction over the next 3 years up to 2020. A key point they mention is that more people live alone with an expected increase of 65+ year olds. This will therefore mean more housing required and more affordable homes as single people will have less financial help alone (Local Housing Strategy, p4, 2012). In 2012, 16% of the population were aged 65 and over but by 2033 this is expected to increase to 22% showing a need for the increase in properties. Other statistics in the report show that Newport increased their affordable housing stock by 686 units between 2007 – 2011 which was the second highest increase within Wales. This shows that Newport are serious about achieving their ASH target which is encouraging for the proposed future increase in ASH stock.

4.3.1 Who Will Build these Houses for Newport?

The LHS explains that to build the number of properties stated above, the local council, Newport City, will partner with housing associations and local housing developers to construct the ASH's. However, looking at Appendix 1's* table, you can see some housing developments that contain proposals of 500, 600 and in one case 4000 properties. This is not possible for small local construction companies and so the large housebuilders will play a large role in the construction of these large developments. There are reports of sites being developed by Barratt Homes, who offer new homes for 5% deposits which can help first time buyers, and Redrow Homes, who have only recently completed a development in Newport called Carnegie Court, Bassaleg. These large housebuilders will play a key role in aiding Newport City Council to reach their housing targets. However, the residents of Newport will need to accept the increase in construction to help Newport. Redrow Homes had applied to build a total 170 homes in Newport to which residents objected against. Redrow had appealed but were unsuccessful to residents' joy (ShropshireStar, 2017). This was due to residents feeling that the greenfield site was a good source of natural wildlife and they did not want a new housing development. If this happens too often, Newport will not meet their targets as the small housebuilders will not have the resources to build 100+ houses on a single site.

4.3.2 Are these Houses Sustainable for the Future?

Once these homes are built, constructing them to be sustainable and energy efficient is not viewed as vital as meeting their targets set. This is because the councils only aim will be to meet their building targets, not whether the buildings are sustainable or not. However, if these homes are built to a low quality, they may only last 20-40 years which will create further long-term issues. Currently, building regulations is all that is in place legislating house builders. More can be done to help make our new homes sustainable for the future. The previous Labour government, in 2006, pledged that from 2016 onwards, all new build homes should be built to a zero-carbon level. However, this did not materialise and the conservative government scrapped this in 2015 as they did not think it was achievable (Oldfield, 2015).

Newport City Council have attempted to keep a minimum 80% of new developments with 10 or more dwellings to be developed on brownfield sites. Their report which was undertaken to measure how near they are to their targets shows that 99.9% of all developments in the last year were undertaken upon brownfield sites with only 1 development undertaken on a greenfield site. This is showing great success for sustainability of the land around Newport and should continue in the following years.

4.3.3 Code for Sustainable Homes

The Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) was introduced in 2009. CSH was introduced to create a standard for all new homes across the UK. It was introduced by the government in an aim to reduce carbon emissions nationwide. 43% of the total carbon emissions emitted in the UK was from buildings (Gov, 2017). This is such a large proportion that if the government could create legislation forcing house builders to create energy efficient homes in the future, the future carbon footprint by the UK would be reduced dramatically.

However, the government has now withdrawn the CSH as they did not meet their target of all new builds to be zero carbon. This is very disappointing as not only would the environment benefit from new legislation against carbon emission but people would see a reduction in utility bills.

5.0 Will Newport meet their Housing Targets?

5.1 Annual Monitoring Report – Private and ASH

In October 2017 Newport released their annual monitoring report which gives a brief update on many areas of Newport but specifically their LDP. Under the housing provision section, you can see the number of homes built to date and therefore estimate whether they are on track to build their target number of homes. See figure 6 for the total number of homes built to date in Newport (Inc. ASH).

Year	Required Rates	Actual Annual Delivery	Delivery Against Annual Required Rates	Running Total	Delivery Against Cumulative Required Rates
2011	358	402	+44	402	+44
2012	717 (+359)	403	+44	805	+88
2013	1290 (+573)	389	-184	1194	-96
2014	1955 (+665)	595	-70	1789	-166
2015	2837 (+882) ¹	908	+26	2697	-140
2016	3773 (+936)	952	+16	3649	-124
2017	4678 (+905)				
2018	5641 (+963)				
2019	6553 (+912)				
2020	7325 (+772)				
2021	8008 (+683)				
2022	8687 (+679)				
2023	9307 (+620)				
2024	9881 (+574)				
2025	10,350 (+469)				

Figure 6: Housing Completions to date

Although in the last two years Newport have exceeded their targets, they are still below their cumulative target for the previous four years. Appendix 2* clearly shows a graph separating the number of ASH against every 100 private homes in different areas of Wales.

5.2 Annual Monitoring Report – ASH

Figure 7 is showing the building completions for all ASH in Newport.

Year	Affordable Housing (10+ units sites)	Small Site allowance	Total
2011 – 12	75	1	76
2012 – 13	56	1	57
2013 – 14	16	1	17
2014 – 15	96	1	97
2015 – 16	149	1	150
2016 – 17	170	5	175
Total	565	10	575

Figure 7: ASH Completions to date

A total of 15% ASH dwellings were completed in Newport in the last 5 years. This is within the 10% – 40% area Newport predicted. If they keep going at the same rate, at the end of the 15-year period Newport will construct a rough high total of 1,552 which is much lower than the 8,901 said to be required.

6.0 Conclusion

To conclude, this reports main aim was to analyse whether Newport will be able to keep up with ASH demand. It was clear early on that they would not meet the demand of the 8,901 ASH. Newport City Council addressed this issue, and said that they could not meet demand in their LDP. Although they are currently within their revised estimate of between 10% - 40%, this is just too vague and a more exact number of ASH to be built would be more beneficial. Since Newport have used such a wide margin, it means that there is no motivation for the council to reach a certain level, and this has been proven as only 15% of all dwellings over the last 5 years have been ASH. If a more exact target, such as 35%, 40%, 50% was used, then more effort and more results would be shown.

7.0 Recommendations

1. A recommendation would be to create an exact percentage for the number of dwellings to be required for ASH use as highlighted above. This would certainly create a clearer focus and provide a motivation to create more ASH from the council's point of view.
2. Removing the levy for dwellings that are designated to be ASH would also increase the number of properties being constructed. This would benefit small house builders and large house builders also who may include more ASH to lower costs on large development jobs.
3. Finally, another potential aid would be for the government to change the rules regarding 'Help to Buy'. Perhaps the money that is received from the social renters could be gifted back to the council which can be put towards constructing new social homes or towards RSL's tax breaks.

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Appendices included in hard copy