



Local Housing Market Assessment 2017/18 – 2022/23 Summary Document



Local Housing Market Assessment Summary

1.1 Purpose of Document

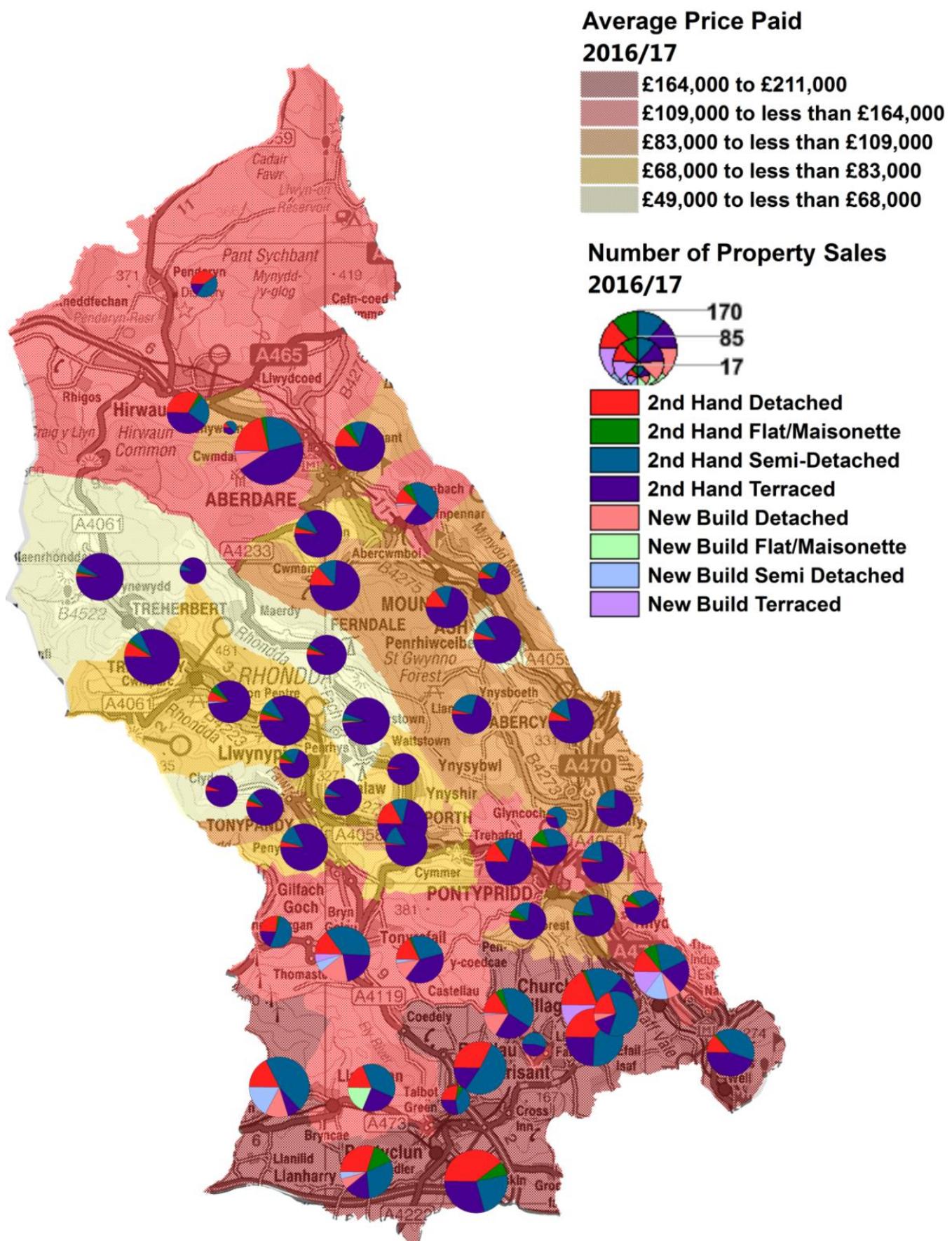
This document provides a summarised overview of the current Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) for ease of reference. The LHMA utilised the Welsh Government methodology to assess the housing market within Rhondda Cynon Taf from 2017/18 – 2022/23. A range of socio-economic, demographic and property data were used to inform the Assessment in order to provide detailed insights into the mechanics of the local residential property markets. A series of focus group sessions were also held with older residents to bolster the qualitative evidence in relation to this client group's specific housing needs.

1.2 Home Ownership Market

Overall, the LHMA revealed stark differences in housing market buoyancy across the County Borough; with demand in Taf being relatively higher than across the remainder of the locality. Throughout 2016/17, the average price paid for residential properties in RCT was £114,000; ranging from £50,000 in Tylorstown to £210,000 in Pontyclun. These clear borough wide differentials are displayed in Figure 1, with average prices paid for properties in Rhondda and Cynon typically achieving 60% and 40% of those in Taf, respectively.

Interestingly, whilst average prices paid in Rhondda and Cynon have not yet reached the 2007/08 peak hitherto, Taf prices once again peaked in 2014/15 and have now surpassed 2007/08 values. The 2016/17 average for Taf as a whole (£154,000) is, in fact, the highest ever recorded. There are nonetheless several 'hot spots' in both the Rhondda Valley (such as Porth and Treorchy) and the Cynon Valley (such as Aberdare and Cwmbach), where properties fetch slightly higher prices than in the surrounding areas. However, Taf prices are rapidly ascending, fuelled significantly by the Help to Buy Wales Scheme, which has led to many first time buyers purchasing larger property types right up to their margins of affordability. New build properties usually attract a premium and this has been around 30% for a typical semi-detached house in RCT over the last eight years. This new build uplift has remained proportionately constant despite the ascension in house prices.

Figure 1 Average Ward Level Price Paid for Properties by Property Type



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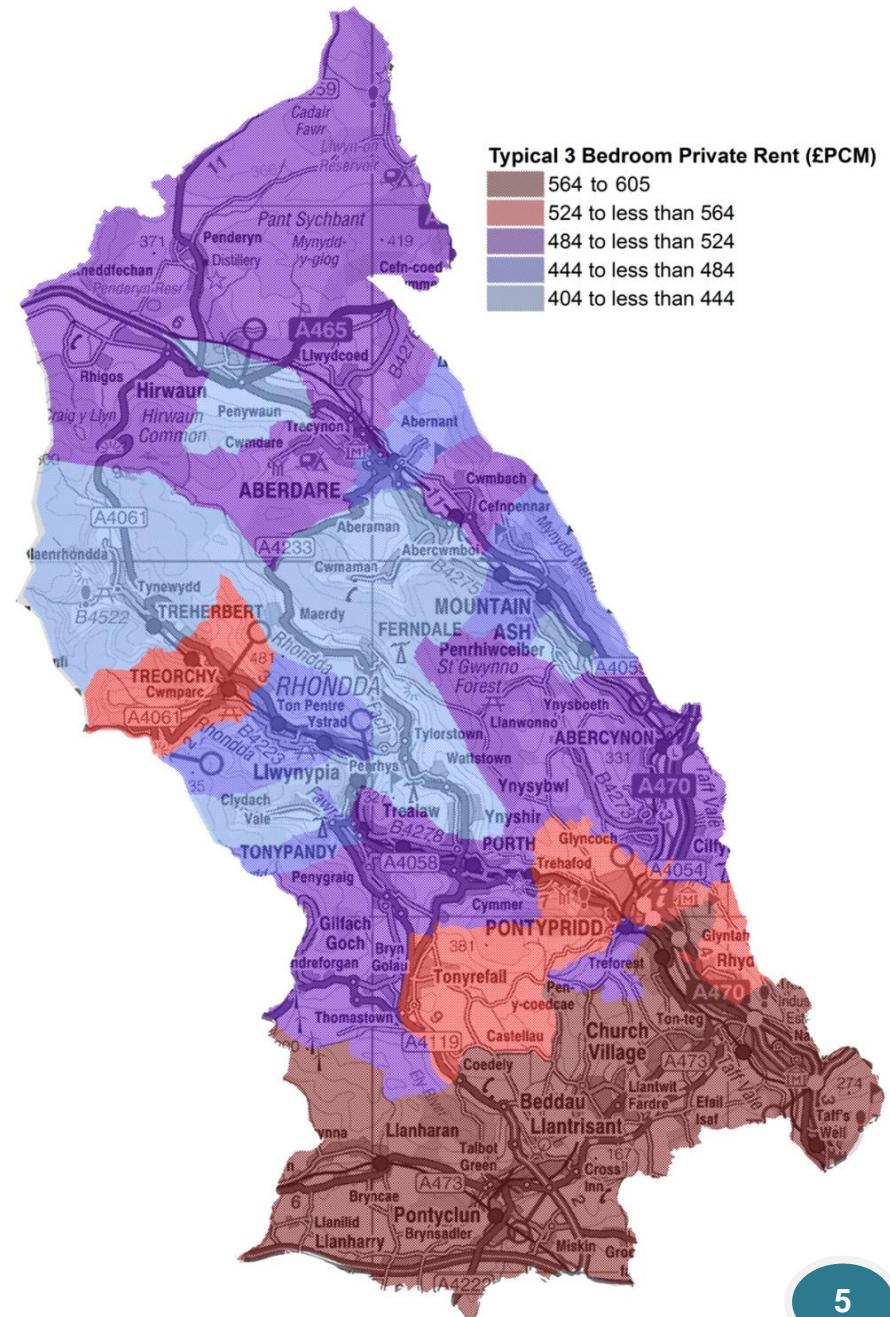
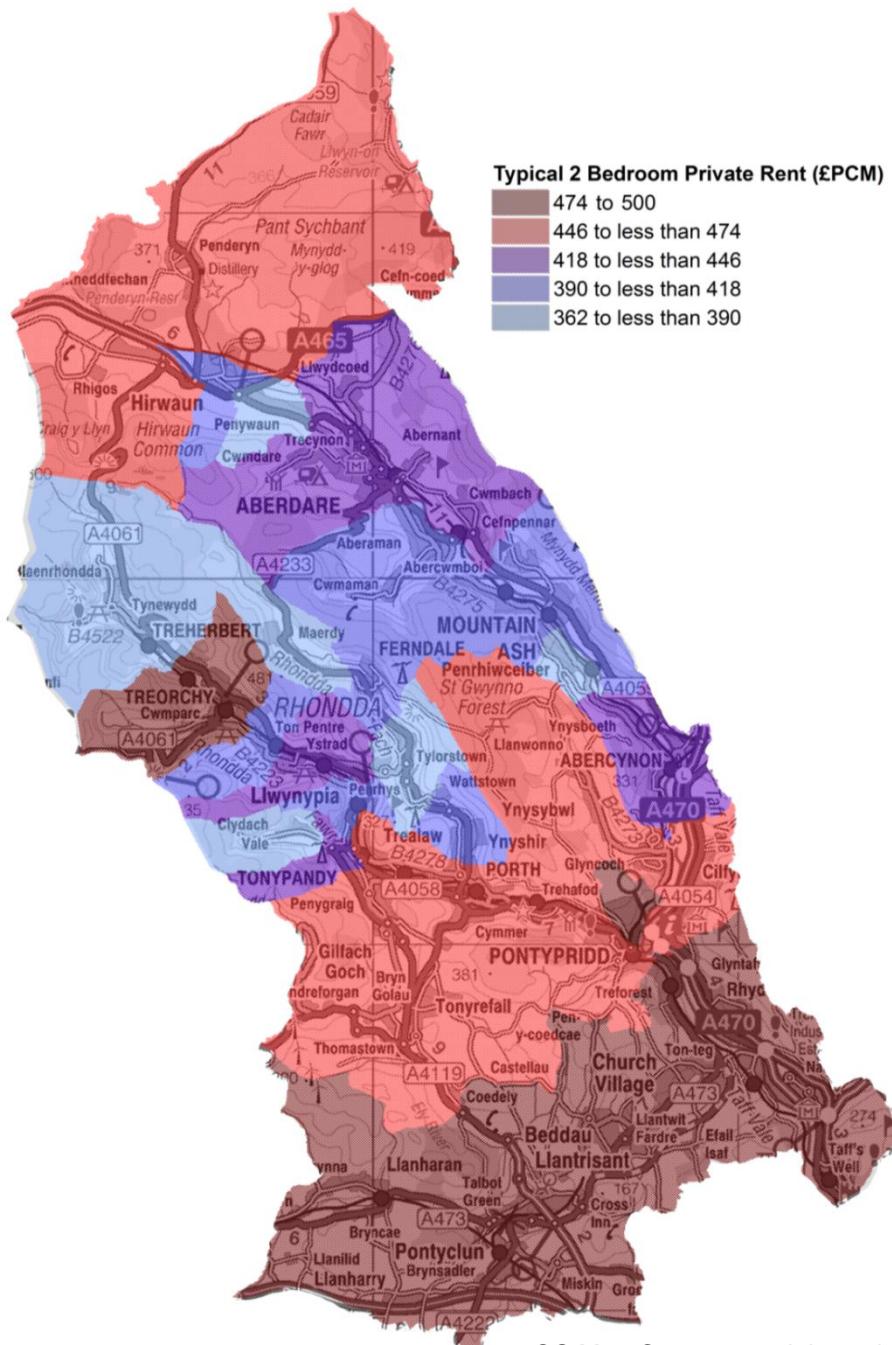
A related issue is the variance in household income across RCT and the affordability of housing in different areas. According to the Office for National Statistics, typical gross annual household income in RCT is £30,160, varying from £47,320 in Llantwit Fardre to £23,920 in Treherbert. There are undoubtedly spatial linkages between higher income levels and higher house prices, with a distinct cluster of higher household incomes found in the south of Taf. However, house price to income ratios are also far greater across Taf, rendering affordability more of a significant issue in many parts of this vicinity. Elsewhere, the strength of existing local connections are plainly evident; generating strong localised housing markets in parts of the Rhondda and Cynon Valleys. Indeed, housing markets are far more intricate in the Valleys and householder perceptions of market boundaries can be particularly small.

Home ownership proportions recorded by the 2011 Census were highest in South East Taf; with nearly 90% of households owning their own home in Tonteg and Llantwit Fardre. This is not surprising given income levels in this vicinity, but also due to the ‘commuter belt effect’. Conversely, areas such as Rhydyfelin and Penywaun together with Treforest had the lowest proportions of home ownership in 2011. The former two areas have the highest proportions of social housing in the locality and the latter area is dominated by private rental properties to principally cater for the student market. However, the student market in Treforest is declining, which presents opportunities for diversification.

1.3 Private Rented Sector

Correspondingly, the number of households renting in the private sector doubled from 2001 to 2011, meaning 15% of households resided within the sector in 2011. The majority of this growth occurred in the south of County Borough, with localities such as Talbot Green and Church Village witnessing nearly 300% growth since 2001. However, the historically large private rental markets in the centre of the Rhondda and Cynon Valleys still accommodate the greatest number of households renting privately overall. Fundamentally, the local private rental market is dominated by three bedroom houses in almost every area and there is a distinct lack of smaller properties.

Figure 2 Typical 2 and 3 Bedroom Private Rents, 2017

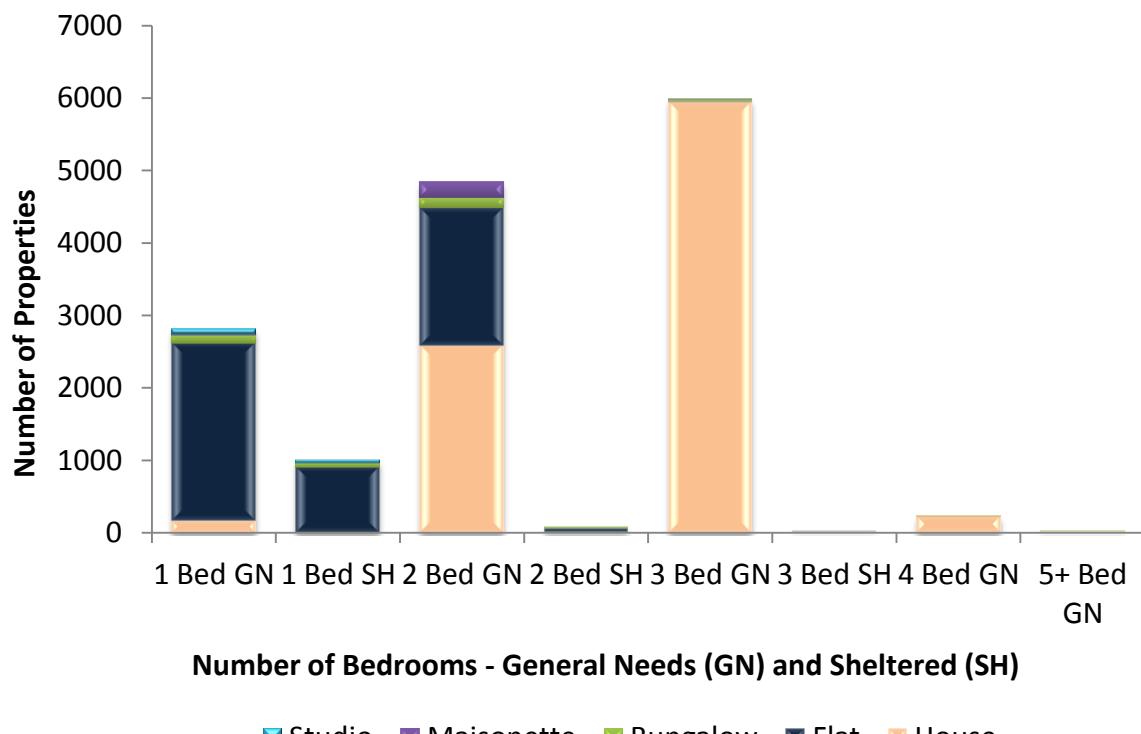


As Figure 2 reveals, two bedroom properties in Rhondda and Cynon attract a private rent of £360-390 pcm, compared to £400-£440 for three bedroom properties. There is undoubtedly a premium in Taf (£500pcm for two bedroom properties and £600pcm for three bedroom properties), and this sector of the rental market is growing exponentially at present. The loosely defined Broad Rental Market Areas (BRMAs) used to calculate Local Housing Allowance (LHA) fail to take these housing market differentials into account by arbitrarily grouping Rhondda with Taf and Merthyr with Cynon. The resultant LHA rates are therefore far below typical market rents in Taf by up to £200 per month for certain property types. This renders working in partnership with private landlords very challenging.

1.4 Social Rented Sector

Unlike the private rented sector, the social rented sector hasn't changed considerably in net size over the last decade. There are nearly 15,000 social rented homes within the locality; just over a thousand of these properties being sheltered accommodation units (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Social Rented Stock in Rhondda Cynon Taf



Source: RSL Stock Lists

As in the private rented sector, there are more three bedroom houses than any other unit, accounting for 40% of the stock, although stock levels are certainly not uniform across the locality. Areas such as Rhydyfelin (7%) and Aberdare West/Llwydcoed (7%) have a high proportion of stock, whereas other areas such as Rhigos (0.20%), Llantwit Fardre (0.23%) and Pontypridd Town (0.28%) have very minor levels of existing social rented provision. There are also lower proportions of smaller one bedroom units for social rent across RCT generally speaking.

These phenomena are noteworthy due to the mismatch between social housing supply and geo-demographic housing needs. Ultimately, there is a prevalence of smaller households seeking accommodation in areas where properties are in scarce supply and/or turnover less frequently. This creates social housing pressures across much of Taf and certain ‘hotspots’ within the Valleys such as Porth, Treorchy and Aberdare. This latter trend does create very intricate housing markets in the social rented sector. For example, a comparison between each household’s correspondence address and first choice area on the Common Housing Register revealed that the modal relocation distance varies significantly by Borough. In Taf, the distance is widest at 0.83 miles, shrinking to 0.32 miles in Cynon and to less than a fifth of a mile in the Rhondda Valleys. Accommodation is both scarcer and in higher demand in Taf, accompanied by wider interconnected housing markets along the A470 and M4 corridor. However, the perceived housing markets in the Valleys are often so minuscule that they consist of certain streets or even parts of streets in some instances. This is a particularly unique characteristic of the locality, reflecting how far different households rely on local family support networks and also longstanding territorial mindsets. Accommodation is also in greater supply meaning households can exercise a greater degree of choice over the properties they are able to access.

1.5 Demographic Trends

Over the last two Census periods, there was a 5.4% increase in households residing within RCT; with total household numbers increasing from 94,546 in 2001 to 99,663 in 2011. However this growth occurred disproportionately by tenure and area. The documented growth in households renting privately is one major cause, and there has also been a significant amount of household growth in the owner occupied

sector in Taf. This is an interesting trend as past surveys habitually found most households wished to remain in their current area, although net household growth has been very much supply led.

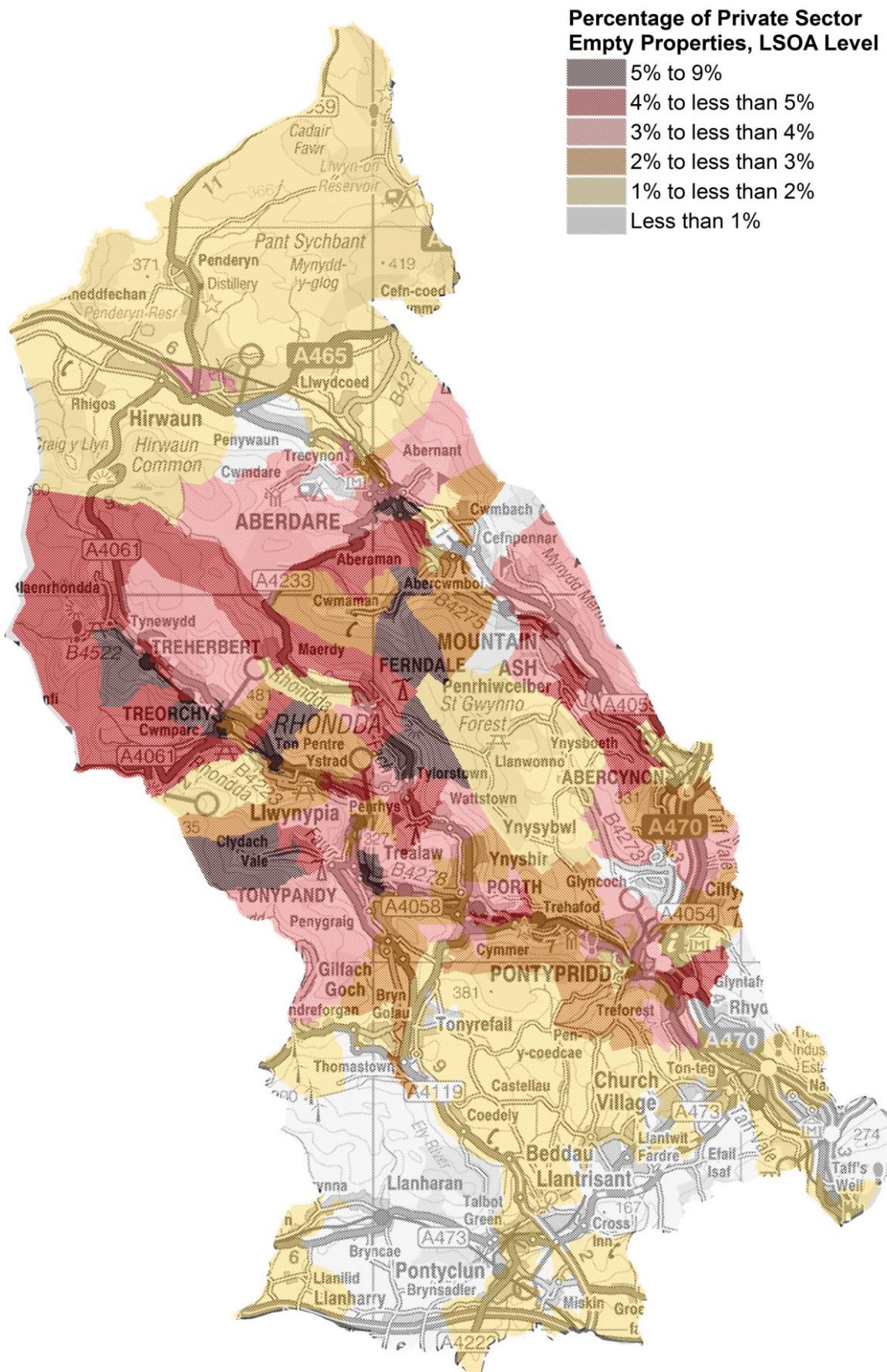
In order to predict future household formation rates, the LHMA analysed different household projection variants provided by Welsh Government. The 'higher' 2014 based variant was utilised to factor in an element of economic aspiration over and above recent build rates. This variant projects that 3,216 households will form in RCT from 2017 to 2022. Most of the growth over this time is expected to come from additional single person households, two person households without children and lone parent households with 1 child. Conversely, larger households are set to remain stable or decline over the next five years. These projections are primarily set to be driven by the 30-34 age group, which is to be expected with young adults remaining at home with their parents for longer, delays in forming relationships, longer spells in education, welfare reforms and greater lone parenthood rates.

These trends, coupled with smaller household sizes across all housing markets are noteworthy, as there is often a significant contrast between what such households need (i.e. smaller 1 bedroom units) and aspire to (i.e. larger under occupied houses). However, the extent of terraced housing (over 50% of the total dwelling stock) in RCT does undoubtedly limit choice for households in many localised markets, and affordability considerations increasingly signify need for smaller units to address the stock imbalance.

1.6 Empty Properties

Indeed, empty properties are a significant local issue and there were nearly 3,000 private sector homes vacant for six months or more across the County Borough in April 2016. Figure 4 depicts the percentage of all dwellings that were long term empty homes on 1st April 2016 by Lower Super Output Area.

Figure 4 Percentage of Private Sector Empty Homes by LSOA, 2016



Data Source: Council Records.

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Figure 4 provides a useful representative comparison of private sector empty homes between areas, which is not otherwise enabled by looking at the quantity of properties alone. This issue is most acute within several parts of the Rhondda, and qualitative research has revealed this is often because properties were originally bought as an investment, are being renovated or are due to be sold or rented. However, there are issues with empty properties in nearly all markets. Hence, whilst proportions are generally lower across Taf, such properties tend to be empty for reasons other than low demand (i.e. inheritance, sentimentality and probate cases), thus rendering it more difficult to bring them back into beneficial use.

Empty properties can attract crime, vandalism and anti-social behavior, thereby contributing to a sense of deprivation in communities. Bringing empty properties back into beneficial residential use can not only combat these issues but also encourage other investment and ultimately help to meet housing need by increasing latent supply alongside new build. The Council is working proactively to bring empty properties back into beneficial use to help boost local housing markets, bolster housing options and stimulate community regeneration. A range of schemes are available locally, including:

- The Empty Property Grant for potential residents to carry out essential repairs to help render an empty property suitable for long term habitation
- The Interest Free Loan Scheme to assist landlords and investors to renovate properties for sale or rent
- The Homestep Plus Scheme for first time buyers to purchase a previously empty property on a shared equity basis

The Council remains committed to encouraging the re-use of private sector empty properties and it is important to emphasise that provision of new build housing is not the only means of increasing housing supply.

1.7 Headline Housing Need

Whilst assessing the housing market as a whole, the LHMA identified a shortfall of 737.51 affordable units per annum from 2017/18 to 2021/22 based on the existing backlog of need, projected newly arising need and supply due to come forward over the next five years. This housing need shortfall comprises 467.47 social rented units

and 270.04 intermediate units (primarily in the form of Low Cost Home Ownership - LCHO). It is important to emphasise that the headline housing need figure should not be considered an annual delivery target or even the solution to the affordability issues within the County Borough. It instead indicates the scale of housing market failure within RCT, which the Council will seek to address through a range of market interventions as far as practically possible.

Moreover, this headline housing need figure also distorts differences in the numerous housing market areas across RCT. There is undoubtedly a mismatch between the locations and types of many existing social rented units and the geographically laden housing needs of local households requiring assistance. Equally, the need for intermediate housing is far more significant in the south of RCT, which is unsurprising given the larger house price to income ratios previously outlined. Hence, more consideration should be given to the specific need identified by property type, property size and tenure across each Housing Market Area (HMA) to enable effective strategic planning. This is displayed in Table 2 and Figure 5 overleaf.

The HMAs have been defined geographically based on longstanding local knowledge and research into the natural, functional areas where people currently live and would be willing to move home. They are essentially based on clusters of wards in recognition of the fact that housing markets are not constrained by administrative boundaries. A number of key factors have been taken into account when defining these areas, including the broad price of housing (to consider 'transferability' within the market) and major transport links by road or rail (to take account of commuting patterns). As previously shown, primary preferences of certain client groups may well centre on a smaller geographical radius. However, planning for additional affordable housing provision needs to be conducted at a scale suitable to consider the costs and benefits of increasing supply (i.e. land availability, viability, dwelling vacancy rates and potential impact on housing need deficits).

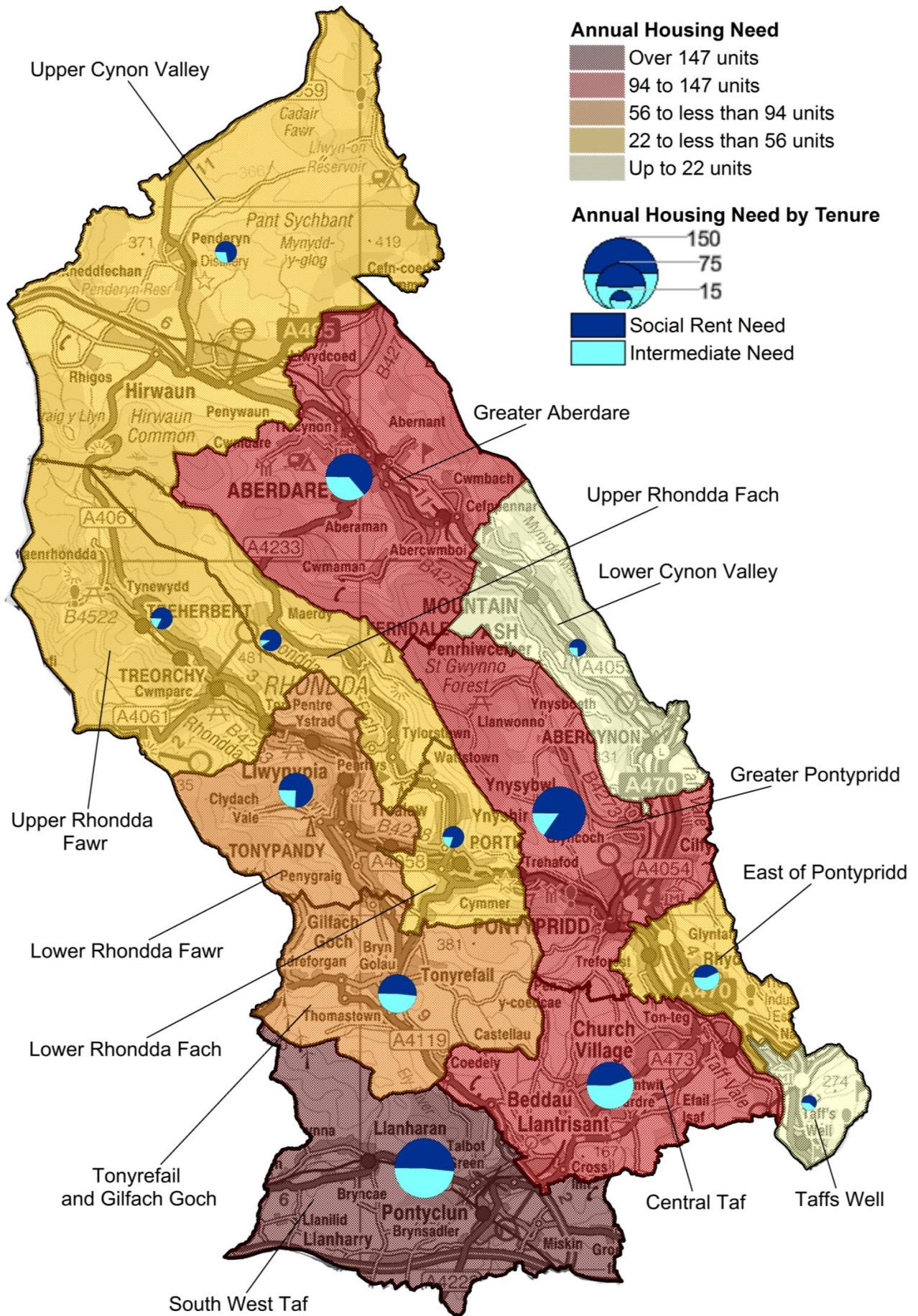
Table 2: Net Annual Need for Affordable Housing by Type and Sub Housing Market Area, 2017/18 – 2022/23

Housing Market Area	General Needs Social Rent						Accessible Social Rent					Sheltered Social Rent		Intermediate	Total
	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	6 Bed	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	1 Bed	2 Bed		
1. Upper Cynon Valley	17.8	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.20	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.20	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7.21	25.41
2. Greater Aberdare	55.86	N/A	1.17	1.63	0.40	N/A	0.60	0.40	0.40	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	34.39	94.85
3. Lower Cynon Valley	11.00	N/A	N/A	0.20	0.20	N/A	0.40	0.40	0.20	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.28	16.67
4. Greater Pontypridd	78.42	13.43	3.35	0.83	0.80	N/A	N/A	1.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	17.89	115.72
5. Lower Rhondda Fach	16.83	N/A	N/A	0.80	0.20	N/A	0.60	1.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.93	24.35
6. Upper Rhondda Fach	18.41	0.01	1.25	0.14	N/A	N/A	0.60	0.20	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.30	22.92
7. Upper Rhondda Fawr	16.01	2.02	N/A	N/A	0.40	N/A	0.20	0.40	N/A	0.20	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.27	23.50
8. Lower Rhondda Fawr	38.15	1.43	0.49	0.75	0.40	0.20	0.60	N/A	0.40	N/A	0.20	N/A	N/A	13.76	56.37
9. Tonyrefail and Gilfach Goch	34.13	N/A	N/A	0.09	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.20	N/A	N/A	N/A	31.99	66.42
10. South West Taf	61.35	11.57	N/A	0.42	0.60	N/A	1.20	0.60	0.60	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	71.40	147.74
11. Central Taf	34.06	3.11	2.91	0.39	0.40	0.20	0.80	0.40	0.20	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	52.39	94.86
12. East of Pontypridd	14.05	0.14	N/A	0.30	N/A	N/A	0.60	N/A	0.20	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	20.04	35.33
13. Taffs Well	4.86	2.37	0.64	0.11	N/A	N/A	0.20	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5.21	13.38
Total	400.9	34.08	9.81	5.66	3.60	0.40	5.80	4.40	2.20	0.40	0.20	0.00	0.00	270.04	737.51

N/A signifies the Assessment has not identified need for additional units of this type over the LHMA period

- 1. **Upper Cynon Valley:** Hirwaun, Penywaun & Rhigos
- 2. **Greater Aberdare:** Aberaman, Aberdare & Cwmbach
- 3. **Lower Cynon Valley:** Abercynon, Mountain Ash & Penrhiewceiber
- 4. **Greater Pontypridd:** Cilfynydd, Glyncoch, Graig, Pontypridd Town, Rhondda, Trallwn & Ynysybwl
- 5. **Lower Rhondda Fach:** Cymmer, Porth & Ynyshir
- 6. **Upper Rhondda Fach:** Ferndale, Maerdy & Tylorstown
- 7. **Upper Rhondda Fawr:** Pentre, Treherbert & Treorchy
- 8. **Lower Rhondda Fawr:** Clydach Vale, Llwynypia, Penygraig, Tonypandy, Trellaw & Ystrad
- 9. **Tonyrefail & Gilfach Goch**
- 10. **South West Taf:** Brynna, Llanharan, Llanharry, Pontyclun & Talbot Green
- 11. **Central Taf:** Beddau, Church Village, Llantrisant, Llantwit Fardre, Tonteg & Tynant
- 12. **East of Pontypridd:** Hawthorn, Rhydyfelin & Treforest
- 13. **Taffs Well**

Figure 5 Net Annual Affordable Housing Need by Tenure 2017/18-2022/23



1.7.1 Social Rented Housing Need

Social rented need is greatest in South West Taf, Central Taf and Greater Pontypridd; particularly for smaller units. Conversely, much of the Rhondda and parts of the Cynon Valley have far lower levels of need for additional social rented provision given the well documented mismatch between supply and demand. Nonetheless, there are still pockets of housing need for smaller units in these areas, which reflects the dominance of three bedroom terrace properties and the minority of options for smaller households. The one bedroom need has therefore not been created by the removal of the Spare Room Subsidy and there has actually been a growing need for smaller properties over the last decade, reflecting societal trends.

It is thus paramount that smaller units are prioritised for delivery in an affordable housing context. In some areas, there is little social rented need other than one bedroom properties, and thus, smaller scale developments, or clusters of smaller units amongst larger market housing may be required. Whilst it would not be advisable to commence a large scale development programme of small units, it is imperative that schemes are weighted appropriately as part of a range of different unit mixes on sites. This will allow for sustainable tenant progression and help foster mixed, integrated communities. Conversion of existing larger properties or empty buildings can equally contribute to this housing need.

1.7.2 Intermediate Housing Need

Given the aforementioned analysis of rents in RCT, there is currently no gap to introduce an intermediate rental product in the locality. Therefore, the predominant intermediate need is for LCHO provision, for which the LHMA identified a need for 270 units per annum; the highest ever identified. This reflects the growing difficulties that first time buyers face in accessing mortgages on the open market, with wage inflation failing to keep pace with rising house prices. As one would perhaps expect, the highest need for LCHO products is in South West Taf and Central Taf, where house price to income ratios are that much higher, meaning a larger proportion of newly forming households are priced out of the mortgage market. However, there is also significant scope for this tenure in Greater Aberdare and Tonyrefail / Gilfach Goch, where discounted market prices would still have a large impact on affordability.

Housing need statistics, market trends, household formation rates and recent LCHO sales all signify that a mix of 2 and 3 bedroom houses is optimal to balance LCHO provision and ensure sustainable accommodation is provided for first time buyers. Eligibility is integrally dependent on affordability, and, as the LHMA has shown, LCHO products need to be secured at 60-70% of market value to ensure the product remains usefully affordable for the client group. Lower equity percentages (from 60%) are necessary across much of South West Taf, Central Taf and Taffs Well; where house price to income ratios are higher and first time buyers struggle the most to access home ownership. It is also primarily for this reason that apartments are not suitable for LCHO in this area as the monthly service charge can have a large impact on affordability.

1.7.3 Accessible Accommodation for Social Rent

The need for accessible accommodation was assessed slightly different to general needs social rented accommodation. Applicants waiting for accessible accommodation were separated into two categories; those requiring minor retrofit adaptations (included in the general needs calculations) and those with acute need requiring a purpose built accessible property. Therefore, whilst the net annual need for accessible accommodation (13 units) appears small, the needs of such households are so acute that they will not be met by the existing housing stock turning over. Equally, there is a scarcity of suitable accommodation in the private sector, especially considering some of the households are larger families. The high priority nature of this specific element of housing need can thus not be emphasised enough. Whilst no significant clusters of housing need for accessible accommodation were identified in any particular part of the County Borough, there is a need for some form of adapted accommodation in all HMAs.

1.7.3 Older Persons' Accommodation

Furthermore, there is an ageing population in RCT and more than one in five people are projected to be 65 plus by 2022. Until recently, there were few housing options locally for this age group apart from sheltered accommodation, which has habitually been a stigmatised tenure. Whilst there is no identified need to construct additional sheltered complexes, the qualitative research has demonstrated that there is a clear purpose for this product in the local housing market and many of the negative

perceptions of sheltered accommodation stem from ill-founded rumour, fear and worry. Many tenants actually felt more empowered and less vulnerable since they moved out of their own homes and into sheltered accommodation, which is a key finding of this research.

RSLs have carried out extensive work rebranding and refurbishing existing sheltered schemes, which has had a positive impact and started to reverse some of these negative perceptions. Two Trivallis schemes have also recently been redeveloped in Beddau and Rhydyfelin; incorporating a mixture of one and two bedroom apartments with kitchens, living space, walk-in showers, balconies and roof top gardens. The Rhydyfelin scheme also houses a new library as well as a multi-use commercial space. These changes have helped re-stimulate demand, again signifying that the solution lies in upgrading existing sheltered schemes rather than providing additional supply.

Options for older people further been bolstered through the provision of Hafod Care's 40 unit extra care scheme in Talbot Green, which promotes independent living with care and support services that can increase or decrease as the individual's needs change. It is suitable for single people or couples, where one or both have need of more supportive accommodation. Further diversification of this housing sector to include additional extra care facilities and moderately priced later living schemes would also help to enhance choice for older people; alongside existing sheltered housing provision.

1.8 Purpose of Assessment and Key Policy Considerations

The LHMA assessed the various components of the housing market in RCT across each varied locality. This was achieved by analysing socio-economic and demographic statistics relating to the housing market, carrying out qualitative research and conducting a quantitative assessment of housing need. The LHMA replaces the last internally produced assessment (2014/15) in forming part of the evidence base for the Corporate Plan, Housing Delivery Plan and Local Development Plan. Operationally, it provides a tool to negotiate affordable housing provision on planning applications, allocate Social Housing Grant and inform strategic housing priorities at the local level.

1.8.1 Low Cost Home Ownership Product

The local LCHO scheme branded as ‘Homestep’ has been operating in RCT since 2007 and has helped nearly two hundred first time buyers access home ownership. The scheme has primarily offered properties for sale at 70% of the open market value, although recently, newer schemes have had to be offered at lower equity percentages in higher priced areas to render the product affordable for the client group. Indeed, the LHMA conducted a refreshed analysis of local incomes and house prices (with a new build uplift) to ascertain affordability levels in different parts of the locality, concluding that a 70% equity mortgage is still unaffordable across much of Taf. In fact, a large proportion of households would need a 60% of market value LCHO product to access home ownership. It is thus recommended that, depending on sale price, any LCHO products secured in South Taf be made available from 60% of market value to ensure the product remains affordable for the client group.

1.8.2 Need for Smaller Affordable Housing Units

Much of the need for affordable housing consists of smaller one and two bedroom units for social rent across many parts of RCT. There can sometimes be a misconception that this need has merely been created by the removal of the Spare Room Subsidy and that delivery of such units is a short term, reactive response to this policy change. However, in reality, this need reflects societal trends in household composition and the high prevalence of single person households, single parent households and households comprising of couples with no children. Indeed, there

has been a growing need for smaller properties over the last decade in RCT, which has simply been masked through under-occupation in the recent past.

It is therefore paramount that smaller units are prioritised for delivery in an affordable housing context. In some areas, there is little social rented need other than one bedroom properties, and thus, smaller scale developments, or clusters of smaller units amongst larger market housing may be required. Discussions with housing managers have revealed that one bedroom walk up flats are wholly preferable to blocks with communal spaces to minimise management issues, avoid expensive service charges and maximise tenant sustainability. Provision of these units should therefore be prioritised. Conversely, two bedroom flats should be avoided where possible as they are largely unsuitable to meet the needs of couples with children. Single people and couples without children are essentially unable to under-occupy such properties without covering the previous Spare Room Subsidy, thereby presenting affordability challenges for benefit dependent households. Two bedroom houses are far more suitable for this purpose and sustainable in the long term.

1.8.3 Older Persons' Accommodation

Building new sheltered schemes is not justifiable at present, although the qualitative research has demonstrated that there is undoubtedly a clear purpose for this product in the local housing market despite local stigma. Priority should thus be given to rebranding and/or upgrading existing schemes to further build on existing work already carried out. This includes various improvement works (updating bathrooms, fitting new kitchens and upgrading heating etc), redevelopment and diversification (converting schemes into community hubs, accommodating households with support needs and such like). It has also proved effective to hold well publicised open days to dispel myths and concerns; especially by utilising testimonies from existing residents to change perceptions in lower demand areas. It is recommended that this best practice is continued to further help reverse the stigmatisation of this tenure.

Moreover, until recently, sheltered accommodation has been the only tailored option available to older persons within RCT and there is still need to diversify the options for this growing client group across the County Borough. Diversifying this sector of the local market to include alternatives such as additional extra care facilities and

moderately priced later living schemes may help to enhance choice for older people. Indeed, the qualitative research found there a gap in the market for the latter.

1.8.4 Private Rented Sector

With limited capital investment and the effects of welfare reform, it will prove highly difficult to meet housing need solely through new social rented provision in the short to medium term. The private rented sector could help address this shortfall, although at present, it is dominated by three bedroom houses in almost every market area. This renders the sector largely unsuitable to house the many smaller benefit dependent households in housing need.

One priority is therefore to promote the lack of smaller units across many market areas to local landlords and encourage them to invest in one and two bedroom units. Treforest in particular has a high proportion of 4-5 bedroom properties licensed as Houses in Multiple Occupation due to the historically strong student market. However, with reported diminishing demand for student accommodation, there is a need to re-balance the local tenure and diversify the product on offer. The Council has already developed a number of initiatives to help work more closely with local landlords; such as re-establishing the landlord forum, providing a landlord liaison service, improving online presence, enhancing tenant referral processes and introducing a voluntary property accreditation scheme.

However, this recommendation will always be hampered by the current LHA policy and the artificially low rate caused by the illogical grouping of Rhondda and Taf within a single BRMA. A further priority must therefore be to monitor the status of the BRMA and process for calculating LHA; ensuring that local representations are made when possible.

1.8.5 Diversify New House Building

Over the past several years, construction of larger, more expensive house types have become increasingly commonplace locally, fuelled primarily by the Help to Buy Wales Scheme. Whilst the scheme has undoubtedly helped a significant proportion of households meet their preferences, statistics show that many have borrowed close to their margins of affordability to secure a 75% mortgage. This may be feasible in the short term, yet could have implications after year five when the

additional interest repayments commence and household circumstances may change.

One further recommendation is thus for house builders to pursue a more balanced mix of units on new build sites, to include smaller, more affordable market properties. Indeed, this recommendation applies equally in the context of older people. Qualitative research with households aged 50+ revealed a desire for house builders to incorporate a greater range of property types in their schemes; to include bungalows, flats and houses. The sheer lack of housing options in the locality was deemed a particular flaw of the local housing market at present, and whilst provision of affordable housing does help to address this imbalance in one respect, there is also a need for more housing options in the new build sector. Such solutions are not only limited to traditional methods of construction and can be delivered through more innovative approaches, often at a faster rate with lower environmental impacts.