

C/o Yr Hen Felin, Upper Bridge Street Newport SA42 0PL

 June 2019

Dear Newport resident on the electoral roll for Newport Ward area,

We are writing to you to seek your view on whether or not **all new housing** in Newport **should be restricted to those who occupy it as their main or principal place of residence**

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) is replacing its Local Development Plan (LDP) – the official document that sets out planning policies for the National Park, including Newport, until 2031.

According to Government population predictions, the number of households actually needed in Newport over the LDP period will reduce from the number already existing, but the National Park argues that we will still need to allow more new market housing to be built just in order that that market housing will “cross-subsidise*”* affordable housing.

So, at present the National Park strategy planning policy for Newport will allow more new market housing to be built without any controls restricting occupancy.

The trouble is, if current trends continue, if there are no *occupancy controls* on all new market housing, much of it is likely to be hoovered up as second homes or investment properties. Whilst there are no *occupancy controls,* there is also no incentive for developers to provide the sort of housing that Newport needs– starter homes; suitably designed houses for older people to down-size into (releasing larger houses for family homes); houses for those who have lived in the countryside to move into town, closer to services; affordable live/work units for aspiring entrepreneurs; self-build opportunities etc -

Newport has a very high proportion of second homes - over 37% of households were “*Household spaces with no usual residents*” according to the 2011 census. 8.6% more residents had a second address - with their Newport residences only occupied for part of the year, compared with an equivalent 4% for the whole of Wales. Between 2001 and 2011, the rate of increase in homes in Newport that were unoccupied for most of the year was more than double – 150% more than - the rate of increase of homes occupied all year round. Look at Phillips Yard – the only housing development completed recently – Every one of those new houses is not lived in all year. In addition, more than half the market houses on the Feidr Eglwys site currently being developed will be large and detached on their own plot of land and with 4 bedrooms. How many people who live and work here can afford them? How many more such large houses do we need?

9% of Newport resident households already have 5 bedrooms or more compared with 4% for the whole of Wales. There are very high house values/prices in Newport. In 2011, 66% of all households were within council tax bands E to G compared with only 25% nationally. But, a high proportion of local jobs here are in tourism and are low paid/part time/seasonal. The housing affordability ratio in Newport is thus exceptionally high. We do not need more large houses which people on local wages cannot afford.

In addition, Newport’s potential for growth is extremely limited because landscape and infrastructure sensitivities prevent much more development, and it is vital therefore that the few opportunities that do exist, especially those convenient to the Town Centre, are restricted to, and designed to meet the needs of, people who will live here. Swallowing up new housing by people who do not live here must not continue to happen and could be prevented here, if we can persuade the planners to modify their Newport Strategy Policy to apply an *occupancy control*, restricting use to those who will live here.

Newport Town Council proposed to the National Park such an amendment to Policy as long ago as 2016, introducing an *occupancy control* to restrict new housing to permanent residents. Newport Area Environment Group (NAEG) then proposed that a Referendum be held to assess residents’ view on modifying Newport’s housing policy in this way, and this was supported at 2 public meetings in 2017 and is still supported by Newport Town Council.

The current “Deposit” or (final draft) Version of the National Park Replacement LDP is being put before a Government Inspector very soon – when there will be the opportunity to try to persuade the Inspector that the Strategy Policy for future housing for Newport should be more appropriately written to actually meet Newport’s needs and support sustainability of this community. NAEG will present the case for amending the planning policy for new housing for Newport to the Inspector.

A democratic mandate achieved by way of a supportive local Referendum result on this issue will be an essential limb to successfully bringing change about.

NAEG therefore requests that you – being both a resident of Newport and a member of Newport’s electorate - answer, sign and return the attached referendum question.

Thank you for participating



Sandra Bayes, Secretary, Newport Area Environment Group

Sandrabayes1@btinternet.com 01239 820889

Newport New Housing Referendum

**Would you agree to a planning policy put in the ‘new’ Development Plan applicable to Newport that restricts the occupancy of all future new housing given planning permission to those who would make it their principal or main place of residence alone?**

**NO**

**YES**

**Please place a cross “X” as appropriate**

I am a Newport resident on the electoral roll for Newport Ward

(Signature)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Please put this response in the envelope provided and either put it in the box in, or post it to, Newport Post Office by Friday 21st June 2019** We apologise that we are unable to provide postage stamps for this purpose.

**Please note**

Your contact details will not be used for any other purpose than to ascertain the validity of including your response

This is **not** an official local survey, sometimes called a ‘Community Poll’, organised via either the Newport Town Council, or the Pembrokeshire County Council, or otherwise. It **is** a local ‘Community Referendum’, organised by Newport Area Environment Group - a local community group comprising wholly of local people who volunteer their time. As such, the results will not have any force of law or other official or statutory status. However, NAEG hopes they will represent a fair overview of the popular position, as adopted by residents who are local electors, registered in Newport ward Members of the Town & County Council will be invited to be present as invigilators or observers at the count, and the counted ballots will be retained until the final Local Development Plan is adopted, after which they will be destroyed.

**NAEG June 2019**