

# Cardiff Council grossly overestimates the city's growth figures

Campaign groups in Cardiff are worried that land owners and developers will be given permission to build unnecessary houses on sensitive greenfield sites because the local authority has ignored the findings of the latest census.

Radyr & Morganstown Local Development Group has examined the recently published 2021 census figures, establishing that growth in the number of households in Cardiff is significantly lower than the projections used for the existing 2006-2026 Cardiff Local Development Plan (LDP).

Specifically, the census shows that, in 2021, there were 147,300 households against a prediction of 165,523.

The current proposal for Cardiff's Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP), covering 2021-2036, uses the higher figure as a starting point for the plan and continues to predict a higher rate of growth than is the case.

Furthermore, the council frequently claims that Cardiff is one of the fastest growing cities in the UK. This is no longer true. Cardiff is not even the fastest

growing city in Wales. 168 local authorities in England and Wales had a faster growth in population between 2011 and 2021.

The existing LDP states: 'These official figures show a 42% rise in Cardiff's population for the period 2008-2033 and a 33% rise for the plan period 2006-26 for which the plan makes provision.'

In fact, the population increase from 2011 to 2021 was only 5%.

Peter Fortune, previously a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and a Principal Planner in Cardiff City Council, and member of the Radyr and Morganstown group says:

"The consequences of using the wrong base figures are severe. The next stage of the RLDP process (in January 2023) will decide on the level of growth in the city over the next 15 years and consult on sites already put forward by land owners and developers to cope with the current forecast growth.

However, few, if any, of these new sites will be required as there is sufficient land already allocated for development to cover the period up to 2036.

Granting permission to develop land when that is unnecessary will result in the loss of much needed agricultural and leisure area spaces. And will unnecessarily increase pollution, decrease biodiversity and potentially cause environmental damage such as flooding."

"It is essential that Cardiff bases its development plans on real figures rather than spurious aspirations," he adds.

"Developers are, of course, keen to see new areas, right across Cardiff, designated for development as they can then 'cherry pick' the best sites - often on greenfield land - in advance of building on less attractive sites in the existing LDP."

He continues,

"It is very worrying that Cardiff appears to be disregarding the census figures and is pressing on with the next stage of the RLDP without rebasing its plan. Many areas of Cardiff have been shocked at some of the sites that have been put forward - some of which

encroach on SSSIs - for development in the RLDP. That is certainly the case for north west Cardiff, where there are already mounting problems with traffic management and lack of infrastructure. Issues that were raised by stakeholders, and ignored by Cardiff Council during the consultation period for the existing LDP."

Cardiff Civic Society supports RMLD group's demand that Cardiff Council reassess the city's growth figures.

Chair, Nerys Lloyd-Pierce, says,

"We challenge the council's claim that it can only meet the city's housing need by approving more greenfield strategic sites.

The need is for more affordable housing, which could be achieved by enforcing the requirement for developers to deliver a high number of affordable homes in the developments they are given permission for. Another issue is empty properties - there are thousands around the city - the council needs to use its powers to bring these back into use.

The council has form on putting developers' needs before those of citizens. For the health and wellbeing of its citizens, Cardiff cannot afford to lose more green space. Compared to other comparable cities, such as Birmingham, Nottingham, and Glasgow, Cardiff has a shortage of green space. Birmingham has 15.58 per cent publicly available green space, Nottingham has 15.34 per cent, and Glasgow, 13.49 per cent. Cardiff has just 8 per cent. Cities such as Nottingham and Belfast are busy increasing green space, while Cardiff council appears to be determined to take it away. We have a climate and biodiversity crisis to contend with; the council cannot simply carry on as if these two emergencies are not happening."

## NOTES TO EDITORS

Prepared by Peter Fortune, giving his analysis of the census figures.

Peter is a member of the Radyr & Morganstown Local Development Group, which is associated with a number of other groups in NW Cardiff.

Their website (<https://radyr.org.uk/clubs/rmldgroup/>) states:

The Radyr and Morganstown Local Development Group (RMLDG) is an independent group of local residents which has come together to be informed, and take positive action on matters relating to the development of our Capital City. In particular, we have particular interest in the production of the Cardiff Council Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP), and how it will affect both the area of Radyr & Morganstown and the whole of north west Cardiff. In doing this, we have joined forces with other groups in NW Cardiff, namely:

- The North West Cardiff Group
- [St Fagans Community Council](#)
- [Danescourt Community Association](#)
- Rhydlafer Residents' Group
- [The Radyr & Morganstown Association](#)

Along with

\*Cardiff Civic Society

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for more information.

**RADYR & MORGANSTOWN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT  
GROUP**

## UPDATE ON POPULATION FIGURES

1 The preliminary figures for the 2021 census were recently released. They indicate that the population of Cardiff was 362,400 and the number of households was 147,300.

2 Stats Wales projections of population for Cardiff in 2021 were 367,190 and for the number of households 165,523. So there is a reduction of almost 2% in the actual figures against the projection in terms of the population but a 12% reduction in the number of households.

This figure for Cardiff's households is very interesting. It shows a percentage growth of only 3.3% which is lower than the figure for Wales as a whole (3.4%), and lower than surrounding local authorities: Newport (8.1%), Vale of Glamorgan (7.5%) and Bridgend (6.6%).

3 Initial comments from planning consultants highlight the increase in household size across the whole of England and Wales, bringing to an end the long decline in household size.

4 It is the number of households which is significant for the LDP and the RLDP as that determines the number of dwellings required.

5 The current LDP (to 2026) was required by Welsh Government to be based upon the official projections

for setting levels of growth in LDPs and makes it clear that any departure from these figures should be fully justified by demonstrable evidence. (Para 4.13 LDP)  
"These official figures show a 42% rise in Cardiff's population for the period 2008-2033 and a 33% rise for the plan period 2006-26 for which the plan makes provision."

**In reality, the population increase from 2011 to 2021 was actually only 5%.**

6           Currently it is not possible to estimate the population growth beyond 2021 because the detailed components of the population change from 2011 to 2021 are not yet available. However, it is possible to suggest that the reduction in the actual against the projected is due to reduced internal and international migration, which would be unsurprising due to Brexit and COVID.

7           Welsh Government projections have previously indicated that the number of households in Cardiff would increase by 37% between 2008 and 2026 from 136,741 to 187,302 households. According to the Welsh Government projections, this is driven partly by in-migration (particularly net international migration), partly by natural population increase (fewer births than deaths), and partly by a decline in average



household size with over three quarters of the growth being for 1 and 2 person households. (Paragraph A3.6 LDP)

Just to restate, the census figures show that there were only 147,300 households in 2021, a significant reduction against the earlier projections.

There is already enough land allocated in Cardiff for 19,486 households. At the rate of growth in the number of households between 2011 and 2021 that is enough land for 15 years of growth.

Furthermore, in the 2011 census, of 148,093 houses, 6.042 were unoccupied (4 per cent). Should the same percentage of empty dwellings be applied to the 173,736 allocation, this gives us 166,786 available for households to occupy.

## 8 In Summary

	2021	Stats Wales
Projection for 2021	2011	
Population		362,400
367,190	345,442	
Households.		147,300
165,523	142,557	

**Current LDP basis to 2026                    187,302    (later  
revised by Stats Wales to 177,592)**

At the moment, and based upon the figures currently available, it is clear that there is no basis for any of the growth focused Strategic Options included in the RLDP.