

SUBJECT: FOREST OF DEAN LOCAL PLAN 2021 – 2041 SECOND PREFERRED OPTION CONSULTATION RESPONSE
MEETING: PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE: 26 September 2022
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to allow the Place Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to scrutinise the proposed Council response to the Forest of Dean Local Plan 2021 – 2041 Second Preferred Option consultation, ensuring that this reflects the interests of Monmouthshire’s communities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To scrutinise the proposed response to the Forest of Dean Local Plan 2021 – 2041 Second Preferred Option consultation.

3. KEY ISSUES:

Background

- 3.1 The Forest of Dean Local Plan will set out how the Forest of Dean (FoD) will develop over the 20 years to 2041, help deliver new homes and jobs and safeguard environmental assets. The Local Plan will allocate land for new housing and employment, to provide for future needs of local communities within the Forest of Dean District Council’s area. It will also set out the limit to the extent which towns and villages can grow into the surrounding countryside.
- 3.2 The FoD District Council is currently consulting on their Second Preferred Option which sets the overall approach for the Local Plan period of 2021 – 2041 and includes the following development themes:
- Major development at Lydney to support an enhanced role as a focal point for the FoD. This will include the realisation of existing development commitments and mixed development on new land beyond them, as well as making better connections to nearby communities. The town itself will accommodate at least 33% of the new development proposed in the Local Plan in a location presently accommodating about 14% of the current FoD population.
 - Development of land at Newent to support a mixed-use site, to include improvements to circulation and transport and complimentary facilities to the centre.
 - Redevelopment for mixed uses and regeneration of land at the MoD Beachley Camp.
 - Sustainable mixed-use developments at major villages and towns and at selected villages

- 3.3 The FoD Strategy suggests a level of development that will include around 7,500 new dwellings. This figure includes existing commitments (i.e. homes built since 2021, those under construction now and sites that already have planning permission) as well as new allocations as detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – General distribution of new housing in the FoD emerging Strategy

Location	Total New Housing Allocations	Existing Committed Developments	Total New Homes 2021-2041
Lydney	1,326	1,134	2,460
Newent	600	376	976
Beachley	600	0	600
Cinderford	100	569	669
Coleford	107	487	594
Major Villages	907	321	1,228
Other Villages	554	138	692
Total	4,194	3,025	7,219

- 3.4 The official deadline for comments on the FoD Local Plan Second Preferred Option is Monday 26th September 2022. The FoD has nevertheless allowed an extended deadline for comments to be received by end of Friday 7th October 2022.

Monmouthshire County Council response to FoD consultation

- 3.5 The proposed consultation response consists of a multi-disciplinary approach combining comments from a number of Council departments. A copy of the full response is included in Appendix 1.
- 3.6 As a Council we want to be a supportive neighbour and not seek to hinder the needs of the FoD as it plans for future development. We respect its view that its residents' needs are best met by focussing development along the Severn estuary. Nevertheless, the response recognises there is a need to protect the interests of Monmouthshire's communities and the potential impact on Chepstow and surrounding areas therefore needs to be carefully considered.
- 3.7 There is an existing commuter flow of residents from the south of the FoD along the A48, through Chepstow, and on to the M48 as they seek access to Bristol or Newport and Cardiff. This traffic flow adds to congestion on the A48 and the A466 as it approaches the M48, both of which are trunk roads for these relevant stretches through Monmouthshire. Additional development between Lydney and Chepstow will exacerbate existing traffic issues in Chepstow. Without mitigation, it will worsen existing problems at the A48 Hardwick Hill air quality management area, aggravate existing blight and severance, and increase road congestion on the A48, High Beech roundabout and the A466.
- 3.8 To this end, the Council's response includes an expectation that the FoD Local Plan will offer measures which will mitigate the increase in congestion around Chepstow. The response emphasises that the Council cannot support the proposed Plan unless it is accompanied by a comprehensive and funded package of transport improvements that avoids aggravating these existing problems. A list of potential integrated packages of transport improvements is below:

The integrated package of transport improvements should include:

- A high-quality network of walking & cycling routes that provide excellent links between Tutshill, Sedbury & Beachley and Chepstow town centre and railway station, potentially including a new active travel bridge linking Sedbury and the Mabey Bridge development site in Chepstow. Land is available within that development site for the bridge to land;
- A park and ride railway station east of Chepstow to enable travellers to Cardiff and Bristol to take the train before travelling through Chepstow;
- Improved frequency and reliability of train services (this could link to proposed improvements via the South Wales Metro project). MCC seeks assurances from the Department for Transport that it will work with Transport for Wales to increase the frequency of trains stopping at Lydney and Chepstow. The frequency is currently at most hourly, at times two hourly;
- A frequent and reliable local bus network linking Tutshill, Sedbury & Beachley and Chepstow town centre and the rail system;
- The Chepstow Traffic Relief Road proposal. Funding from National Highways is required for a traffic relief road from the A48 east of Sedbury across the River Wye to Thornwell in Chepstow and the M48. The estimates that various consultant reports provide indicate a cost of £150 million with 90% of the cost falling on National Highways. MCC is supportive of such a scheme and has reserved a route for such a by-pass through Thornwell. MCC would urge the Welsh Government to match in a proportionate manner funding made available by National Highways. The relief road would be likely to pass through a number of important designated sites. The impact of the proposed route on the River Wye, Severn Estuary European Marine Site and Warren Slade/Parc Redding will need to be fully considered and assessed.

Next Steps

- 3.9 Feedback from the Place Scrutiny Committee will be included as necessary to the consultation response and submitted to the FoD before the extended deadline of Friday 7th October 2022.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 4.1 A Future Generations Equality Impact Assessments evaluation has not been completed for this report, because the report relates to MCC's response to the Forest of Dean District Council's Local Plan, rather than an MCC decision or policy. Moreover, the Wellbeing for Future Generations Act does not apply in England. However, the principles behind the evaluation and impact on protected characteristics have been considered when drafting the proposed response.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 5.1 As this relates to a consultation response the only alternative option would be to not submit a response. It is considered a doing nothing approach would not protect the interests of Monmouthshire residents.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no resource implications associated with the consultation response.
- 6.2 There will be however be resource implications if some of the proposed integrated package of transport improvements are implemented, for example funding from MCC and other bodies for the potential Chepstow traffic relief road.

7. CONSULTEES

- MCC officers from various service areas including planning, highways, transport and environmental health and countryside.
- Cabinet Member for Sustainable Economy, Deputy Leader
- Place Scrutiny Committee 26th September 2022

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Forest of Dean Local Plan - Second Preferred Option July 2022](#)

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APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1: Proposed Monmouthshire County Council Response to consultation