

**SUBJECT: REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (RLDP)
PREFERRED STRATEGY**
MEETING: COUNCIL
DATE: 26 October 2023
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement of the post-consultation updates to the Preferred Strategy summarised in paragraph 3.9 as the basis for the ongoing preparation of the Deposit Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Council endorses the updates to the Replacement Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy summarised in paragraph 3.9 as the basis for the ongoing preparation of the Deposit Plan.

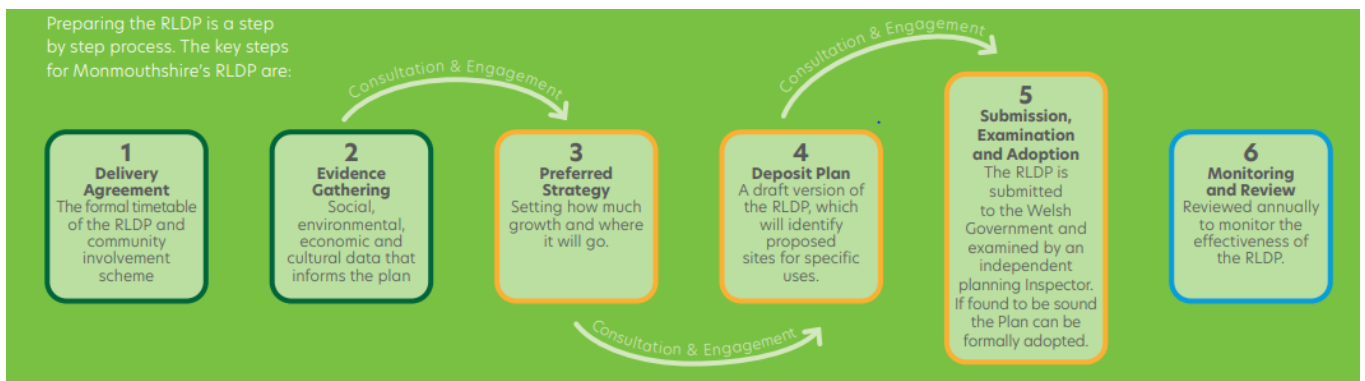
3. KEY ISSUES:

Background

- 3.1 The Council is preparing a Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) for the period 2018 to 2033. The RLDP is a key Council policy document that allocates land for development, designates areas for protection and contains policies to provide the basis for deciding planning applications. It will cover the whole of the County except for the part within Brecon Beacons National Park. The current adopted LDP covered the period 2011-2021 but remains the planning policy framework for making decisions in Monmouthshire until the adoption of the RLDP.
- 3.2 The RLDP will identify where and how much new, sustainable development will take place to 2033, underpinned by a clear and robust evidence base. Early stages of the project identified 38 issues facing the communities we serve, based on a range of evidence including responses to consultation on the Public Service Board's Local Wellbeing Plan.
- 3.3 The seventeen Plan objectives are grouped to reflect the seven wellbeing goals (they are not listed in order of importance). As the Plan has developed, three core objectives have become apparent: delivering affordable homes to help address inequality, rebalancing the County's demography to ensure communities are socially and economically sustainable, and responding to the climate and nature emergencies to ensure proposals are environmentally sustainable. Consequently, new site allocations will be required to have 50% affordable housing, with net zero carbon homes and be well connected via non-car modes of transport.
- 3.4 Figure 1 below shows the key steps in the RLDP process. Although the Preferred Strategy is the first statutory consultation stage in the RLDP preparation process, the

Council chose to engage from the outset and consulted on the issues, vision and objectives, and the growth and spatial options stages.

Figure 1: Key Steps in the RLDP Process



RLDP Preferred Strategy

- 3.5 The Preferred Strategy provides the strategic direction for the development and use of land in Monmouthshire (excluding the area within the Brecon Beacons National Park) over the Plan period 2018 to 2033 and identifies how much sustainable growth is needed and where this growth will broadly be located. Its preparation has been guided by a framework of key inputs that includes national legislation/policy, local and regional policies/strategies and an evidence base relating to key local issues for the Plan to address. It provides the strategic context for the preparation of more detailed policies, proposals and land use allocations which will be included in the Deposit RLDP, which will be accompanied by an Infrastructure Plan, Local Transport Plan and Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy. The Deposit Plan will be reported to Council in Spring 2024 seeking endorsement for public consultation. The Local Transport Plan and Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy will be the subject of Member seminars, scrutiny and political reporting in coming months.
- 3.6 The overall purpose of the Preferred Strategy is to:
- identify key issues, challenges and opportunities for the County (see Section 3 of the Preferred Strategy);
 - set out a vision and objectives for the RLDP that respond to the key issues, challenges and opportunities (see Section 4);
 - set out the scale of future growth in population, housing and jobs and establish the spatial distribution of growth (see Section 4); and
 - set out the Preferred Strategic Site Allocations and strategic policies to deliver/implement the strategy (see Section 5).
- 3.7 At its meeting on 1st December 2022, Council endorsed the Preferred Strategy for public consultation for an eight-week period between Monday 5th December 2022 and Monday 30th January 2023). This included:
- Direct contact with statutory consultees and those stakeholders who have asked to be included on the RLDP database (1000+ contacts);
 - Members' Workshop 2nd November 2022 (hosted by Place Scrutiny Committee);
 - Place Scrutiny Committee 10th November 2022;
 - Internal discussions within the Council through an officer workshop, Department Management Team and Senior Leadership Team;

- Eight RLDP Preferred Strategy Drop-in Sessions during December 2022 – January 2023;
- Two virtual events open to all during December 2022 – January 2023; and
- Virtual event for Town and Community Councils in December 2022.

3.8 The consultation resulted in approximately 220 responses to the Preferred Strategy and 650 representations on the Candidate Sites register. Of significant note, the Welsh Government Planning Division's response is supportive (**Appendix 1**).

3.9 As a result of the consultation, it is proposed to make a small number of key changes to the Preferred Strategy as set out below and as highlighted in an updated tracked changes version of the Preferred Strategy (**Appendix 2**) and shown in an easy read guide (**Appendix 3**):

- a. The factual update to include of 2022/23 data in the spatial distribution of housing table (Table 2, page 39 of the updated tracked changes Preferred Strategy at Appendix 2);
- b. Identification of a strategic site in Monmouth (pages 58 and 62 of the updated tracked changes Preferred Strategy at Appendix 2) in response to Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water investment and Welsh Government advice, together with changes to how the 'bonus sites' (page 37 of the updated tracked changes Preferred Strategy at Appendix 2) are factored into the housing figures;
- c. Changing the proposed strategic site in Chepstow (pages 58 and 61 of the updated tracked changes Preferred Strategy at Appendix 2);
- d. Increasing the proposed flexibility level from 10% to 15% and consequential adjustments to the spatial distribution of housing table (Table 2, page 39 of the updated tracked changes Preferred Strategy at Appendix 2) from the changes above;
- e. Enhancing the sustainability credentials and energy efficiency of the homes that are constructed to be net zero carbon homes rather than net zero ready homes to ensure that homes built within Monmouthshire do not result in additional carbon emissions in the atmosphere.

3.10 This report seeks Council endorsement of the updates to the Preferred Strategy as the basis for the Deposit Plan. Any proposed changes arising from Preferred Strategy consultation responses relating to the issues, vision, objectives and strategic policies will be included in the Deposit Plan. The Deposit Plan will be reported to Council in Spring 2024 for endorsement for public consultation.

Updated housing data

3.11 Each year, data is collected on housing completions and planning permissions. With time, homes will be completed on known sites with planning permission (existing commitments), existing LDP allocations and on small/windfall sites. As a result, homes will move left into the 'completions' column (red arrows). This table remains 'live' until the RLDP is at examination in public.

Settlement	Total Commitments			Preferred Strategy		Total Housing Provision 2018-2033*
	Completions 2018- 2023	Existing Commitments	LDP Rollover Allocations	Total Allowances (Small Sites; Windfalls)	RLDP New Housing Allocations (Dwellings)	



Monmouth

3.12 The Preferred Strategy consultation in December 2022 and January 2023 proposed no new site allocations in Monmouth, or within the upper River Wye catchment north of Bigsweir Bridge, and also assumed no existing planning permissions or small/windfall sites can come forwards. This approach was taken due to the lack of an identified strategic solution to the treatment of phosphates at the Monmouth Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW) within the Plan period.

3.13 It did, however, identify three sites as ‘bonus sites’ at paragraph 4.8 (not counted as part of the 5,940 homes) that would provide a small contribution to urgently needed housing, should a phosphate solution be found:

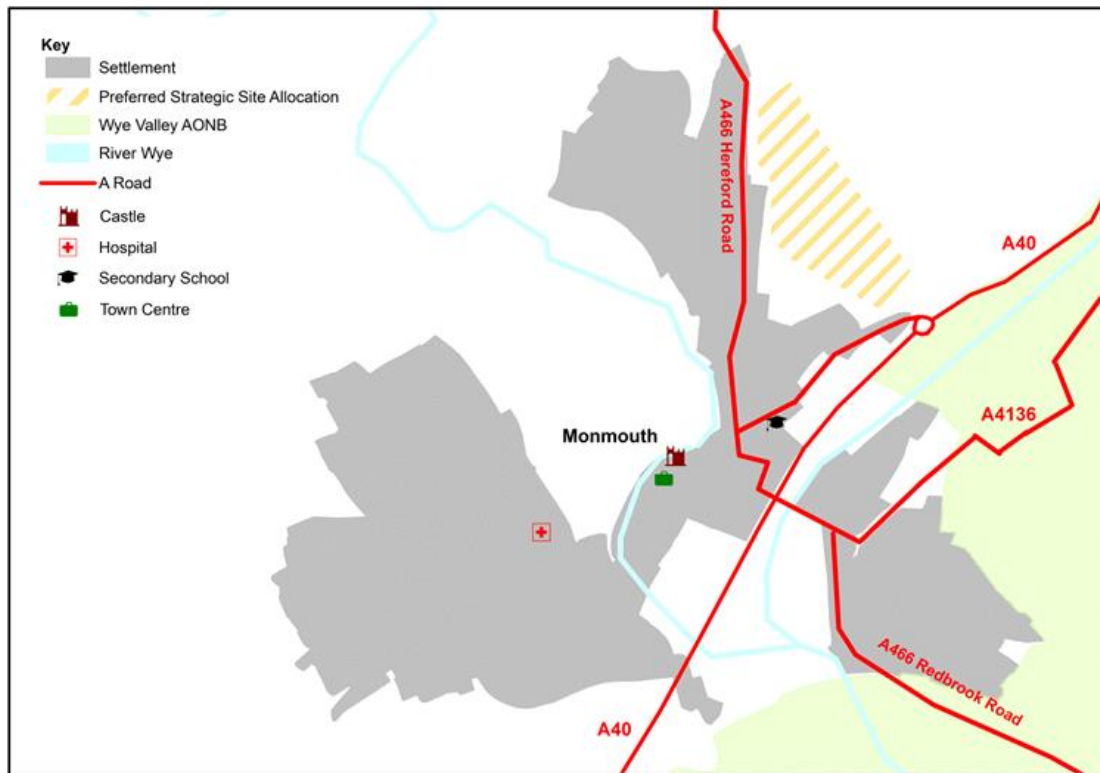
- Current LDP allocation at Tudor Road, Wyesham;
- Current LDP allocation at Drewen Farm, Monmouth; and
- Land at Rockfield Road with current planning application.

3.14 The Welsh Government’s response letter advised that new site allocations should be made in Monmouth on the basis that sufficient certainty is provided by DCWW’s planned improvements at the Monmouth Wastewater Treatment Works by 31st March 2025:

“Due to high phosphate levels in the Wye and Usk Welsh Water has made a commitment to improve the Wastewater Treatment facilities in Monmouth and Llanfoist. Improvements to both works are currently subject to design and regulatory approval. On the basis that improvement to both works to remove phosphates are planned it is appropriate to identify new affordable housing led allocations in both Monmouth and Abergavenny in the Deposit plan.”

3.15 The Welsh Government’s confidence in the removal of this spatial and environmental constraint means the RLDP should now allocate new affordable housing-led development within Monmouth. This will assist in addressing the Plan’s key objectives, including the delivery of much needed new affordable homes in the town, and allowing development that supports the economic growth of the area.

3.16 In response, it is proposed to identify a new strategic site at Leasbrook, off Dixon Road in Monmouth for approximately 270 homes.



3.17 This new Monmouth strategic site is in addition to the three legacy sites named in paragraph 3.13 above, which can no longer be defined as ‘bonus sites’ but become a mix of commitments and a new allocation. These sites now count as part of the housing numbers in Table 2 on page 35 of the updated tracked changes Preferred Strategy at Appendix 2:

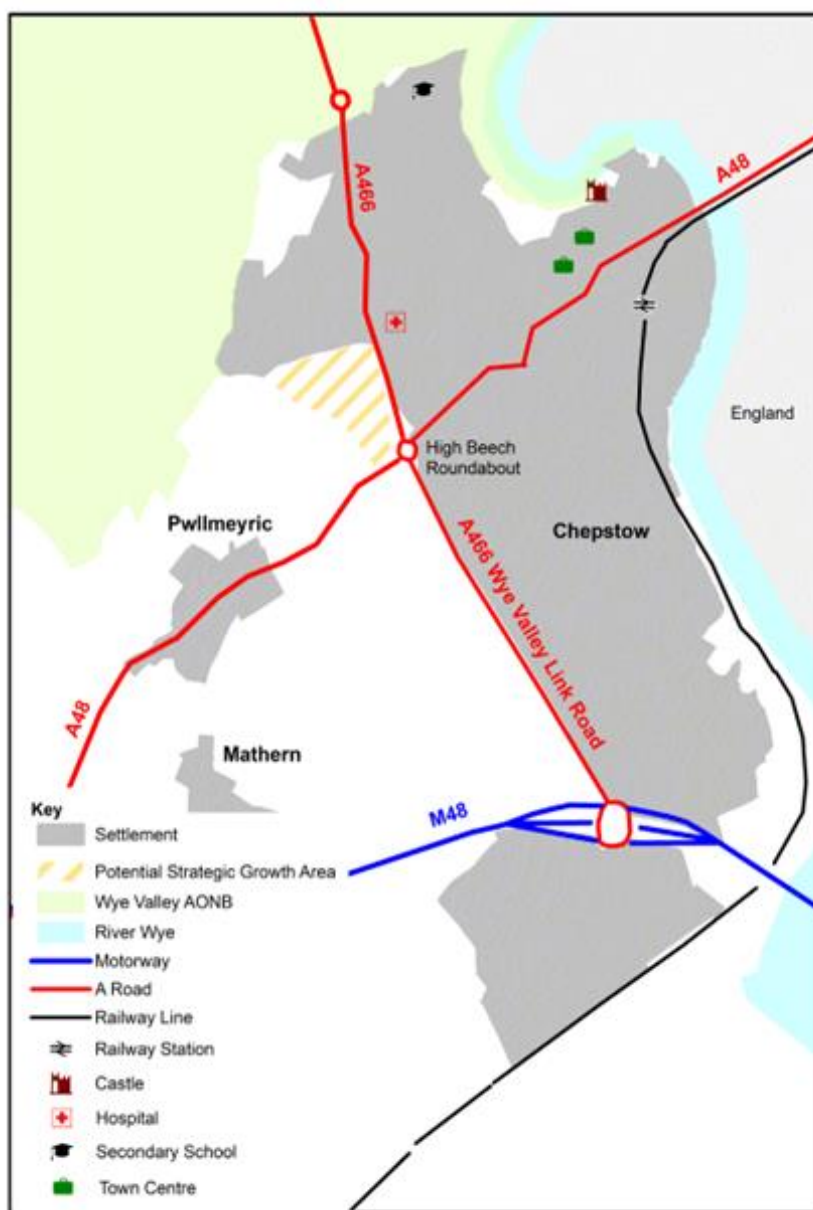
- Drewen Farm, Monmouth (adopted LDP site carried forwards) – approximately 110 homes
- Tudor Road, Wyesham (adopted LDP site carried forwards) – approximately 35 – 50 homes
- Rockfield Road, Monmouth (land with planning permission) – approximately 70 homes
- Rockfield Road, Monmouth (new allocation) – approximately 60 homes

3.18 The impact of the phosphate restriction has been to significantly restrict housing provision in Monmouth to just 275 over the plan period 2018 to 2033 with no intended further development. The benefit of the restriction being lifted will be that the preferred strategy can allow the 301 homes to be built as provided in the existing LDP policy framework (and from existing allocations and consents as outlined in 3.17) and a further 330 to be provided as part of the Preferred Strategy on new affordable housing led site allocations.

3.19 Cumulatively, the phosphate solution for Monmouth requires the redistribution of approximately 630 homes from the housing total. Part of this redistribution is achieved by reducing the scale of new site allocations in Severnside by 375 homes, including reduction of the Caldicot East strategic site from approximately 925 homes to approximately 735 homes. Of note, the Caldicot East site remains large enough to warrant an on-site primary school.

Chepstow

- 3.20 It is proposed to swop the strategic site in Chepstow from Bayfield, as shown in the consultation version of the Preferred Strategy, to Mounton Road in this updated version. The number of homes would remain unchanged (approximately 145 homes).
- 3.21 On balance, it is considered that the benefits of the commercial development and associated job creation at the Mounton Road site outweigh the loss of higher quality agricultural land and encroachment into the existing green wedge separating Chepstow and Pwllmeyric, given the absence of alternative commercial sites and the importance of Chepstow for tourism as the gateway to the Wye Valley. It is considered that sufficient separation between Chepstow and Pwllmeyric would remain to prevent coalescence of the settlements. The site masterplanning will need to take account of land adjacent to Highbeech roundabout potentially needed for future improvements, as shown in past WeITAG studies.



Flexibility and consequential changes

- 3.22 It is proposed to increase the 10% flexibility rate to 15%. This increases the total number of homes planned between 2018 and 2033 from 5,940 (5,400 + 10% flexibility) to 6,210 (5,400 + 15% flexibility), adding 270 homes to the total. This ensures the strategic sites at Abergavenny East and Caldicot East are sufficiently large to deliver the required infrastructure whilst also allowing for the allocation of a handful of smaller sites across the County to sustain and enhance existing communities. Increasing the flexibility ensures that the plan is more robust and resilient as there is delivery in the short-term term while the large strategic sites take time to be developed out. An increased flexibility will result in the Plan being able to provide a range and choice of sites and ensure that the plan is not solely reliant on the delivery of larger strategic sites which are more complicated to develop. A range of smaller sites will ensure the delivery of much needed affordable housing after the adoption of the plan to start addressing this current unmet affordable housing need.

Net Zero Carbon

- 3.23 Concerns have been raised regarding the use of the phrase 'net zero carbon ready' due to the potential for new homes to comply with this policy with very minimal improvements beyond current Building Regulations requirements by relying on future grid decarbonisation, meaning homes need retrofitted improvements in the near future. It is therefore proposed to enhance the policy requirement for the environmental credentials of the new homes to be 'net zero carbon' rather than 'net zero carbon ready'. This would result in the new homes achieving a balance between the carbon emitted into the atmosphere, and the carbon removed from it. The objective is to ensure that the new homes constructed within Monmouthshire do not increase carbon emissions in the long term. Work is ongoing to investigate the specific detail of this planning policy considering the viability implications and delivery mechanisms associated with the aspiration to deliver this type of development at scale. The detail of the net zero carbon policy will be outlined within the Deposit Plan which will be subject to public consultation and engagement in Spring 2024.

Summary

- 3.24 As a result of the above proposed changes, the updated Preferred Strategy:
- **Makes provision for approximately 5,400 – 6,210 homes over the Plan period 2018-2033¹** (Strategic Policy S1). This includes approximately 1,580 – 1,910 affordable homes (Strategic Policy S6). As there are currently approximately 4,085 homes in the housing landbank², **land will be allocated for approximately 1,660 – 2,125 new homes**, including 830 – 1,065 new affordable homes.
 - Sets out the planning policy framework to **enable the provision of approximately 6,240 additional jobs** (Strategic Policy S1) **by allocating sufficient employment land and by including policies to facilitate economic growth** (Strategic Policy S12). The RLDP will be supported by an Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy.
 - **Focuses growth in the County's most sustainable settlements of Abergavenny, Caldicot (including Severnside), Chepstow and Monmouth** (Strategic Policy S2). **Preferred strategic sites** are identified to expand the Primary Settlements of Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow and Monmouth

¹ The flexibility allowance will be given further consideration and refined at Deposit stage.

² As the Plan period has already begun (2018) some of the homes in the landbank have been built, are under construction or have planning permission. The landbank figure also takes into account windfall sites and small sites.

(Strategic Policy S7). Other detailed site allocations will be set out in the Deposit RLDP.

- Limits the impact of climate change by ensuring **new homes are net zero carbon and well connected with existing settlements**, providing attractive and accessible places to live and work.
- **Sets out strategic policies** on a range of topic areas, reflecting the four placemaking themes in Planning Policy Wales (PPW)³.

3.25 The tables below summarise the indicative spatial distribution of the proposed housing growth over the Plan period. There are different components that contribute towards the 6,210 homes (5,400 plus 15% flexibility), some of which are within the influence of the RLDP, and some that will happen regardless.

3.26 The first table below shows the spatial distribution of the new site allocations in the RLDP: these are the 2,125 homes that the RLDP directly influences, of which 1,063 (50%) would be affordable homes.

Summary of Indicative Spatial Distribution of New Housing Site Allocations*

Settlement	Preferred Strategy		Total homes on new site allocations 2018-2033*
	RLDP new homes on strategic sites in Preferred Strategy	RLDP new homes on other allocated sites to be identified in Deposit Plan	
Abergavenny (incl. Llanfoist)	500	100	600
Chepstow	145	0	145
Monmouth (incl. Wyesham)	270	60	330
Caldicot (incl. Severnside)	735	90	825
Secondary Settlements	0	120	120
Rural Settlements	0	105	105
Total	1,650	475	2,125

*Figures include an indicative 15% flexibility allowance which will be subject to further consideration and refinement at Deposit Plan stage. The spatial distribution may alter following detailed site assessment work.

3.27 Policy S7 identifies Preferred Strategic Site Allocations for expanding the Primary Settlements of Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow and Monmouth (second column in the table above). These sites are detailed below:

Details of the Preferred Strategic Site Allocations

Site Name	Candidate Site Reference	Size (Ha)	Proposed Use	Approximate no. of homes within Plan period
Abergavenny East	CS0213	24.75	Mixed Use: Residential, Employment, Retail, Leisure, Education and Community Use	500
Mounton Road, Chepstow	CS0165	12.8	Residential	145
Leasbrook (land north of Dixton), Monmouth	CS0270	12.5	Residential	270
Caldicot East	CS0087 CS0251	94.57	Mixed Use: Residential, Employment, Retail, Leisure	735

³ PPW edition 11, WG, February 2011.

- 3.28 The exact distribution of growth will be determined following the assessment of candidate sites which will inform the Deposit Plan. Members will be aware that a significant number of candidate sites were submitted by landowners/developers for potential inclusion in the RLDP. Only a small number of these candidate sites will be required in addition to the strategic sites identified above. Decisions on whether or not to allocate particular sites for development in the settlements will also depend on such issues as their impact on the physical form of the settlement, placemaking, carbon footprint, landscape setting, environmental constraints and infrastructure capacity. The Deposit Plan identifying all site allocations, designations and policies will be subject to political reporting in Spring 2024 to seek endorsement for public consultation.
- 3.29 The table below shows the 4,085 homes that will happen regardless, comprising:
- 1,922 homes already built since 2018
 - 933 homes on sites that already have planning permission and will realistically be built by 2033
 - 145 homes on the two existing LDP allocations in Monmouth referred to in paragraphs 3.17 and 3.18 above, and 15 homes on an existing LDP allocation in Little Mill
 - 1,010 homes on small sites and windfalls within settlement boundaries.

Approximately 847 of these would be affordable homes.

Summary of Indicative Spatial Distribution of Housing Commitments provided by the existing Local Development

Settlement	Housing Commitments			Allowance for small sites & windfalls	Total housing commitments 2018-2033*
	Completions 2018- 2023	Existing Commitments	LDP Rollover Allocations		
Abergavenny (incl. Llanfoist)	486	77	0	240	803
Chepstow	315	170	0	165	650
Monmouth (incl. Wyesham)	267	81	145	86	579
Caldicot (incl. Severnside)	591	587	0	192	1,370
Secondary Settlements	104	38	0	79	221
Rural Settlements	159	40	15	248	462
Total	1,922	993	160	1,010	4,085

- 3.30 It is hoped that the breakdown shown in the tables above clarifies for Members the significant contribution the new site allocations for 2,125 homes make towards delivering the Council's objectives for affordable housing delivery and demographic balancing.

Supporting Documents

- 3.31 The December 2022 Preferred Strategy consultation included the publication of the Initial Integrated Sustainability Appraisal Report (ISA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The ISA and HRA are iterative processes and will be updated as the RLDP progresses towards adoption. The Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) incorporates Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Well-being of Future Generations Assessment (WBFGA), Health Impact Assessment (HIA), Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) and Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIA). The ISA assesses the extent to which the emerging proposals and policies will help to achieve

the wider environmental, economic, social and cultural objectives of the RLDP. The next versions of the iterative ISA and HRA will be published at Deposit Plan stage in Spring 2024 as part of the public consultation on the next stage of the Plan-making process.

- 3.32 The Deposit Plan will be accompanied by an Infrastructure Plan, setting out what is needed to support the development of the allocated sites, and will sit alongside the Local Transport Plan and an Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy. Together, these Plans will seek to deliver on the Council's economic ambition and its core purpose of becoming a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

General Conformity with Future Wales 2040: the National Plan and 'Soundness'

- 3.33 The Welsh Government response agrees that the level of growth set out in the Preferred Strategy is in general conformity with Future Wales' overall strategy. Although Monmouthshire is not within the national growth area identified in Future Wales 2040: the National Plan, our evidence shows that the proposed level of growth is essential to deliver our local evidence-based issues and objectives and to ensure the RLDP is 'sound'. It is supported by Future Wales policies 3, 4, 5 and 7, which support public leadership and the use of public land to deliver on ambitious affordable housing targets, demographically balanced rural communities, the rural economy and the delivery of affordable homes. The growth strategy will assist in addressing our core issues without harming or compromising Welsh Government's objectives for the wider South East Wales region. The updates do not change this position.
- 3.34 The updated Strategy continues to meet the key 'Tests of Soundness' of ensuring that the Plan is locally specific, addresses key issues, is supported by robust, proportionate and credible evidence, and the Plan's vision and strategy are positive and sufficiently aspirational.

Consultation responses

- 3.35 A summary consultation report is attached at **Appendix 4** (response to the Preferred Strategy) and **Appendix 5** (response to the Candidate Sites register). The consultation resulted in approximately 220 responses to the Preferred Strategy and 650 representations on the Candidate Sites register. Any proposed changes arising from Preferred Strategy consultation responses relating to the issues, vision, objectives and strategic policies will be included in the Deposit Plan for scrutiny in Spring 2024. The Deposit Plan will then be reported to Council in Spring 2024 for endorsement for a statutory six-week public consultation.

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

- 4.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) sets out the requirement for all LDPs to be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA). All formal stages of the RLDP will be subject to an Integrated Sustainability Assessment (ISA) (including Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Well-being of Future Generations (WBFG), Health Impact Assessment (HIA), Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), and Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIA)). The ISA findings have informed the December 2022 Preferred Strategy and will be used to inform detailed policies and site allocations in the Deposit Plan, in order to ensure that the Plan will promote sustainable

development. The Initial ISA Report was published alongside the December 2022 Preferred Strategy. The next iteration will be at Deposit Plan stage.

- 4.2 An Equality and Future Generations Evaluation (including equalities and sustainability impact assessment) is attached to this report at **Appendix 6**.

Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting

- 4.3 There are no safeguarding or corporate parenting implications arising directly from this report. The RLDP will provide affordable homes, delivery and allocation of which should be cognisant of the needs of children leaving care.

Socio-economic Duty

- 4.4 The RLDP seeks to tackle inequality, specifically by seeking to address house price unaffordability, which currently prevents some of our communities accessing suitable homes within the County. This is likely to benefit younger people, who in turn will make our ageing communities more socially and economically balanced and more sustainable. Good quality and affordable homes are important in achieving poverty reduction and equitable prosperity, and supporting the best start in life. Good spatial planning helps to build cohesive communities. The provision of affordable homes combined with policy interventions in relation to the requirement of a mix of market housing will increase opportunities for those in poverty to access safe, secure and suitable homes. In accordance with the WBFGA, the RLDP also seeks to prevent future problems and will therefore continue to avoid new development in flood risk areas and will seek net zero carbon ready development to help address the climate and nature emergencies and also tackle issues such as fuel poverty.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Option	Benefit	Risk	Comment
Council endorses the updates to the RLDP Preferred Strategy as the basis for continuing to develop the Deposit Plan.	Work on the Deposit Plan can continue, including the accompanying Infrastructure Plan, Local Transport Plan and Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy. The RLDP timetable in the Delivery Agreement is adhered to and progress is made to Plan adoption, following which sites can be delivered and outcomes secured, including delivery of affordable homes.		This is the preferred option. The updates to the Preferred Strategy, as drafted, is considered to promote an appropriate level and spatial distribution of housing and employment growth for the County to 2033, which will assist in delivering the Council's objectives and addressing the core issues of delivering essential affordable homes, responding to the climate and nature emergencies. It responds to consultation responses.
Council endorses some but not all of the updates to the	Depending on the proposed updates agreed, it may be	Depending on the proposed updates rejected, it might be	

Preferred Strategy set out in paragraph 3.9	possible to continue work on the Deposit Plan without requiring a restart. Advice will need to be sought as applicable.	necessary to cease work on the RLDP and start again. Advice will need to be sought as applicable.	
Council does not endorse the updates to the RLDP Preferred Strategy.		If all of the updates to the Preferred Strategy are rejected, work on the RLDP will need to start again resulting in a significant delay in adopting the Plan and delivering outcomes including affordable homes.	

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Officer and consultant time and costs associated with the preparation of the revised Preferred Strategy will be met from the Planning Policy budget and existing LDP reserve.
- 6.2 Delivery of the RLDP, once adopted, will need to be accompanied by a range of infrastructure provision including transport, education, health care, leisure and affordable housing. The infrastructure requirements will be identified in the Infrastructure Plan and updated Local Transport Plan accompanying the RLDP. Although it is expected that most of this infrastructure would be funded via S106 planning contributions (or possibly a Community Infrastructure Levy), there may be a requirement for Council expenditure to assist in providing some infrastructure or in bringing some sites forwards. This might include the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) and/or potential commercial investment to provide 'shovel ready' sites or business premises. There may also be grant funding available. The Council's commitment for 50% affordable housing provision on new site allocations may require Welsh Government policy position changes on use of Social Housing Grant or other public sector funding. This commitment could have financial implications for the Council of reduced land sale receipts and the potential need to CPO sites to bring them forward. This approach is supported by Future Wales 2040 Policy 3 which supports public leadership and the use of public land to deliver on ambitious affordable housing targets.

7. CONSULTEES

- Cabinet
- SLT
- Communities and Place DMT
- Community consultation and engagement from Monday 5th December 2022 and Monday 30th January 2023. The Welsh Government's response is provided at Appendix 1 and summaries of representations on the Preferred Strategy and Candidate Site Register are provided at Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 respectively. This report seeks Council endorsement of the updates to the Preferred Strategy as the basis for the Deposit Plan. Any proposed changes arising from Preferred Strategy consultation responses relating to the issues, vision, objectives and strategic policies will be included in the Deposit Plan. Candidate Sites comments

will help inform which sites are included in the Deposit Plan. The Deposit Plan will be reported to Council in Spring 2024 for endorsement for public consultation.

- Member workshops 12th July 2023 and 10th October 2023
- Place Scrutiny Committee 26th September 2023 (feedback below):
 - After a lengthy discussion, the committee concluded that it would not endorse the amendments, based on the following concerns:
 - Concerns around infrastructure and the potential impacts on existing residents, and from new residents coming into the area – transport, and education and health capacity
 - There are some serious concerns around the saturation of smaller areas: 850 houses are proposed for the south of the county and 607 houses proposed for the north. Considering we are such a large county it is suggested that those be spread out more evenly
 - Members would like to see a strategy that is not so car-dependent. They want the road network to be improved but not be relied upon so heavily. As these proposals stand, residents will have to rely on car transport
 - Concerns about the MOD and what it means for local residents
 - The suggestion that we be more creative: to look at exception plans which will work with Affordable Housing organisations
 - Members felt we need to protect agricultural land
 - Members want to explore whether there are any more brownfield sites across the county – are we sure that we've exhausted those possibilities
 - A member asked what modelling had been undertaken to look at traffic volumes increasing around certain areas
 - Concerns about the lack of active travel in the south of the county
 - Doubts that the proposals align with the council's declaration of a Climate and Nature Emergency
 - Strenuous concerns about the impact of the proposals on the Highbeech roundabout at Chepstow and a resultant increase in congestion and traffic problems in that area

7.1 The Scrutiny Committee discussion raised a number of important points as summarised above. In terms of the spatial distribution of growth, the Scrutiny Committee was advised of the Welsh Government response to the Preferred Strategy consultation. The Welsh Government supports the proposed level of growth as being justified by the need to significantly increase the supply of affordable housing, supports the focus of the proposed growth on the most sustainable towns with a higher proportion of growth in Caldicot, but advised that the planned Wastewater Treatment Works improvements at Monmouth provide sufficient certainty of a solution to phosphates issue and that site allocations should be made in Monmouth (Annex 1 paragraph 5 and Annex 2 paragraph 6 of the Welsh Government's letter attached at Appendix 1).

7.2 The updated Preferred Strategy allows for housing and employment growth in Monmouth, resulting in a redistribution of growth and a reduction in the scale of the strategic site at Caldicot East and Severnside overall (new allocations reduced from 1,200 homes to 825 homes), as described in paragraph 3.19.

7.3 In terms of the concerns regarding infrastructure provision and the desire for development that is not car-dependent, Scrutiny Committee was advised that growth is focused on the County's four most sustainable towns to maximise access to amenities and reduce the need for car-based travel by ensuring sites are well-connected. All of the proposed strategic sites are included on the Council's Active Travel Integrated Network Maps, and the Design Commission for Wales is supporting the Council and site promoters to masterplan the strategic sites. By focusing growth

on strategic sites, there is greater opportunity to address infrastructure requirements via the scale of development, for example a new on-site primary school at Caldicot East. Distributing the growth on smaller sites throughout the County would not bring those benefits, but would result in increased infrastructure pressure and car dependency. Discussions with the Welsh Government regarding Highbeech improvements are ongoing.

- 7.4 To encourage the promotion of sustainable communities where residents can live and work in the same area and the need to travel is reduced, housing growth will be accompanied by a commensurate amount of employment land across the county, details of which will be provided in the Deposit Plan. Work on the Infrastructure Plan, Local Transport Plan and Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy are ongoing and will inform the Deposit Plan, which will be subject to political reporting in Spring 2024 prior to consultation.
- 7.5 The proposals presented to Scrutiny Committee indicated that 100 additional homes would be added to Caldicot East to accommodate service families linked to the MoD's proposed barracks at Caerwent. In response to Scrutiny Committee concerns about this additional housing, it is now proposed that the 100 service family homes will be provided via the proposed market housing at Caldicot East shown in the housing figures rather than via an additional 100 homes. As a result, this no longer forms a recommendation at paragraph 3.9 of this report.
- 7.6 Scrutiny Committee was advised that the Deposit Plan will include a policy to facilitate an appropriate level of affordable housing exception sites.
- 7.7 The Scrutiny Committee was advised that the choice of strategic sites, and future selection of candidate sites for inclusion in the Deposit Plan, must carefully balance a range of competing issues. The County has a high proportion of best and most versatile agricultural land, and in some instances that land forms the best option for development. Members are reminded that at present just 3% of the County is defined as 'built urban', and the RLDP would increase this to approximately 3.6%. The use of brownfield will continue to be prioritised over greenfield sites, however there are few such sites available. The Scrutiny Committee was reminded that a specific call for brownfield sites had elicited few suggestions and that those possibilities have been fully explored.
- 7.8 With regards the Scrutiny Committee's concerns about compatibility of the updated Preferred Strategy with the Council's climate and nature emergency declarations, the consultation version of the Preferred Strategy was accompanied by an Integrated Sustainability Appraisal, as detailed at paragraph 4.1 of this report. This is an iterative process and will be updated at Deposit Plan stage in Spring 2024. Members will also be away of the RLDP policy requirement for new homes to be net zero carbon, and of the legal requirement for all development proposals to provide for biodiversity net gain.
- 7.9 The Scrutiny Committee welcomed the provision of easy read guides at earlier stages of the RLDP and asked that this be continued. In response, an easy read guide reflecting the updates to the Preferred Strategy is attached at Appendix 3.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- RLDP Preferred Strategy (December 2022)
- Integrated Sustainability Appraisal Report (AECOM, December 2022)
- HRA of the Monmouthshire RLDP Preferred Strategy (AECOM, December 2022)
- RLDP Delivery Agreement (December 2022)

- Monmouthshire RLDP Demographic Update Report (Edge Analytics, November 2021)
- Sustainable Settlements Appraisal (December 2022)
- Growth and Spatial Options Paper (September 2022)
- Housing Background Paper (December 2022)
- Employment Land Review (BE Group, October 2022)
- Issues, Vision and Objectives Paper (Updated December 2022)
- Monmouthshire 2040: Our Economic Growth and Ambition Statement (November 2019) and supporting MCC Economies of the Future Reports (2018)
- Candidate Sites Register (February 2022)
- Candidate Sites High Level Assessment (August 2022)
- Local Housing Market Assessment 2020-2025
- LDP Annual Monitoring Reports (2014-2021)

9. AUTHORS:

Mark Hand
Head of Placemaking, Regeneration, Highways and Flooding

Craig O'Connor
Head of Planning

Rachel Lewis
Planning Policy Manager

10. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 07773478579
markhand@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Tel: 07816175737
craigoconnor@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01633 644827
rachellewis@monmouthshire.gov.uk

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1: Welsh Government Planning Division's response to revised Preferred Strategy 26th January 2023

APPENDIX 2: RLDP Preferred Strategy with post-consultation updates highlighted

APPENDIX 3: Updated easy read guide

APPENDIX 4: Summary of consultation responses relating to the Preferred Strategy

APPENDIX 5: Summary of consultation responses relating to the Candidate Sites register

APPENDIX 6: Equality and Future Generations Evaluation