

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

Place Scrutiny Committee ~ Feedback from the committee on 10th October 2024

Note: This provides feedback from the committee. It does not serve as a verbatim record of the meeting. The minutes of the meeting will provide a fuller discussion, or please access the recording of the meeting:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=le1EoOVikQo&list=PLlmqn4nAaFJAaDA9m3C2P8ZdJsca-bkSU&index=18

Report Item 3: Public Open Forum

The Chair noted receipt of 15 written submissions objecting to site CS0270 in the plan, and a further two objecting to land at Mounton Road and land west of Usk, Penperlleni. Three members of the public spoke at the meeting about CS0270, in particular, raising a number of concerns:

- Sufficiency of infrastructure, how homes will be zero carbon when the developer has not committed to it until 2050, potential increases in phosphate discharge which already exceed permissible levels, questioning whether sufficient funds will be available, asking why the 270 homes can't be added to Abergavenny, and suggesting it is too far from the town centre for walking or cycling whereas at Abergavenny the homes would be closer to the train station.
- Noting that CS0270 is a special site given its beauty and location, its importance to the greater horseshoe bats, its visibility from the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and proximity to a scheduled ancient monument, objecting to the loss of prime agricultural land – suggesting that CS0274 would therefore be a better alternative.
- Raising concerns about traffic emissions and air quality monitoring in Monmouth, suggesting that the current methodology is flawed and lacks sufficient data on real or projected emissions.

Report Item 4: RLDP Deposit Plan

Key points raised by the Committee Members:

Significant discussion took place, with the following questions and key points raised by the Committee for consideration by the Cabinet Member:

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- Regarding CSO270, what will be the impact of the influx of residents from the rollover sites from the previous LDP of 280 homes, and how will this affect the number of vehicles on the roads?
- Is the 5.8-hectare candidate employment site sufficient to provide enough employment opportunities to potentially fill the new homes in order that Monmouth's residents fulfil the criterion of living sustainable lifestyles? What about the further exacerbation of road congestion?
- How does Monmouth qualify as a sustainable development considering the severe lack of public transport links?
- Why is the local transport strategy not bundled with the RLDP documents, and are transport assessments not conducted until the planning stage?
- What processes can be put in place to mitigate the potential harms caused by the post-development loss of green spaces, which could increase surface runoff and intensify flooding?
- Will the dark skies policy be enough to mitigate the harms caused to the greater horseshoe bats, considering the urbanisation of the site and the loss of their feeding locations?
- Has the landowner of CS0293 agreed to the masterplan, and is CS0213 indeed within Monmouth Housing Association's control?
- Is the Council prepared to use compulsory purchase orders (CPOs) as a policy principle to advance key strategic developments?
- A member noted the importance of achieving a balance between housing and employment land across the county, and emphasised the importance of integrating travel infrastructure in Abergavenny, especially given concern about crossing the A465
- Can the committee have reassurance about travel connections if the Abergavenny East development goes ahead?
- A member expressed concern about the significant infrastructure gaps in areas like Monmouth, Caldicot, and Chepstow, particularly in terms of transport, healthcare, and education. They expressed concerns about the practicality of walking and cycling for working couples and young families and the lack of clear commitments and timelines for improving infrastructure
- How will the plan ensure that communities won't see even more strain on services?

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- How can the committee endorse the plan with large gaps e.g. the lack of an in-depth viability statement, especially for major sites?
- How will the cost of 50% affordable housing and net zero carbon ready homes be borne?
- Why is Caldicot East/Portskewett being earmarked for such a significant share of the county's housing needs? What is the rationale behind concentrating development in an area with already limited amenities?
- How does the Council plan to avoid the risk of Monmouthshire becoming more of a commuter zone than it already is?
- Can the committee have clarity on the land grade for the employment land being proposed north of the Portskewett site?
- Can members have clarity about farmers being kept up to date, as at least one local farmer has reported that he is unaware of the proposals?
- A member raised concerns about the traffic congestion at High Beech Roundabout in relation to the Mountain Road site and suggested that sites in Chepstow should be contingent on High Beech roundabout improvements.
- A member expressed concern that there are so few references to road infrastructure in the main body of the report.
- Are the 26 houses at the Shirenewton site in addition to the 11 houses previously planned at Clearview Court? How will concerns about sewage capacity in the area be addressed?
- A member emphasised the need for affordable housing to be available to local people in the Shirenewton area and suggested a mix of housing sizes, including three-bedroom homes, to accommodate young families.
- A member emphasised the need to encourage more working age people and retain younger people in the county
- How will the public consultation for the RLDP ensure that the voices of people who are intended to benefit from the plan be heard, particularly working-age people and those with young children?
- Can we have reassurance that the RLDP will protect the Nedern and the living levels?
- A member expressed concerns about the removal of habitat in relation to CS0270, and the claim that a buffer would improve it, and expressed concern about the best quality land being removed.

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- A member expressed concern about the visibility of the site from the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the effect on the view when entering Monmouth.
- Concerns were expressed about traffic congestion issues at the proposed site, given the increase in cars, as well as pollution, and it was asked how the exit on to Hereford Road can qualify as an emergency exit.
- Would it be possible to extend the consultation period?
- Can the affordable housing really be considered as such, and will there be an impact on Section 106 money?
- Can there be any guarantees that the site will not grow further?

The Chair thanked the officers and Cabinet Member for the report and their responses to the committee's questions, and thanked the public for their contributions. The Chair reminded members and the public that the committee does not have decision-making powers but noted that when put to a vote, four members of the committee were not in favour of the plan in its current form (with 4 members for, 1 member having left early). The committee's feedback and the submissions from the public will be sent to the Cabinet Member and officers for their consideration.