

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Place Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK on Thursday, 25th September, 2025 at 12.00 pm

Councillors Present

County Councillor Jane Lucas (Chair)

County Councillors: Louise Brown, Emma Bryn, Tomos Davies, Lisa Dymock, Jackie Strong, Tudor Thomas, John Crook, Martyn Groucutt,

Also in attendance County Councillors: Paul Griffiths, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, Catrin Maby, Jill Bond, Rachel Buckler, Sara Burch, Jan Butler, Tony Easson, Christopher Edwards, Simon Howarth, Meirion Howells, Penny Jones, Malcolm Lane, Tony Kear, Su McConnel, Phil Murphy, M. Newell, Angela Sandles, Peter Strong, Frances Taylor and Ann Webb

Officers in Attendance

Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Craig O'Connor, Chief Officer, Place and Community Well-being
Deb Hill-Howells, Chief Officer Infrastructure
Madeleine Boase, Active Travel Officer
Louise Corbett, Strategy & Policy Officer - Affordable Housing
Mark Davies, Highway Development Manager
Sue Hall, Senior Planning Policy Officer
Andrew Jones, Head of Planning
Sarah Jones, Principal Planning Policy Officer
Rachel Lewis, Planning Policy Manager
Ross Price, Project Engineer (Flood Risk Management)
Kate Stinchcombe, Nature Recovery and Land Use Manager
Carl Touhig, Head of Neighbourhood Services
Nicholas Tulp, Head of Transport
Nia Watts, Senior Planning Policy and S106 Officer
Matthew Thomas, Trainee Planning Policy Officer

APOLOGIES: None

Note: the following minutes focus on the key points – for the full discussion, the recording of the meeting can be accessed here [Agenda for Place Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 25th September, 2025, 12.00 pm - Modern Council](#)

1. Public Open Forum

There was a significant public presence at the meeting with verbal statements made and written statements submitted, reflecting the following key points:

Dr Geoff Walker ~ Site HA11 – east of Burrium Gate)

Site Positives: The proposed development site is sensibly located on the edge of Usk, close to facilities, and has potential for reasonable road access, making it logical for further development.

Drainage Concerns: Significant issues with drainage (surface water and foul drainage) need to be resolved before permission can be granted. There is uncertainty about how previous drainage issues have been addressed, and the site's steep slope increases the risk of surface water runoff and flooding, which has already affected residents.

Access Issues: Access to the site is problematic. The short stretch of Monmouth Road may not support additional junctions, and access via Burrium Gate is considered highly undesirable for residents.

Both drainage and access solutions will require considerable expenditure, either from the developer or the County Council.

The development could proceed if drainage and access issues are fully resolved; otherwise, there is risk to current residents.

Gareth Williams - Lichfields: Barrett Redrow Homes and Simon Taber - Ecology Solutions ~ Site HA4, Leasbrook, Monmouth

There is a significant need for affordable housing in Monmouthshire, with the Council identifying a requirement for 148 new affordable homes per year in the Monmouth housing market area.

The Leasbrook site will provide 270 new homes, including 135 affordable homes, helping families who otherwise could not access the housing ladder.

Leasbrook is the only strategic housing allocation proposed in Monmouth and represents nearly half of the town's housing allocation.

The allocation is central to the LDP strategy, as Monmouth is a primary settlement and must contribute to meeting local needs.

Delivering new homes in Monmouth is challenging, requiring a balance between urgent housing needs and other considerations.

Necessary studies have been conducted in line with planning policy and professional standards, showing that Leasbrook can be developed with appropriate mitigation measures.

Proposed mitigation includes a new 25-metre tree line boundary and sustainable urban drainage systems.

He confirmed that Simon Taber would address ecology issues.

Jonty Pearce ~ Site HA4, Leasbrook, Monmouth

Wales is described as one of the most nature-depleted countries, quoting the Future Generations Commissioner.

Councillors face a stark choice: to destroy or save an environmentally sensitive site.

The Council and consultants claim limited bat activity, but the Dixon Bat Project recorded the rare greater horseshoe bat 893 times in August alone, averaging 26 recordings per night.

The site hosts 12 bat species, representing 80% of all bat species found in Wales, which is remarkable and worth saving.

The Council withheld the 2024 bat survey, which detected only two species and missed the soprano pipistrelle bats from a nearby maternity roost.

Natural Resources Wales did not agree with the conclusion that there would be no adverse effect on bats.

The issue should not be wildlife versus affordable housing, as selecting a different site could provide both.

Proceeding with the current plan risks legal challenges, including appeals and judicial review.

The evidence supports protecting the site, and the decision is in the Councillors' hands.

Rebecca Cunningham ~ Site HA4, Leasbrook, Monmouth

The RLDP is one of the most significant decisions the Council will make, and Councillors should keep this in mind.

The Scrutiny Committee received 15,000 pages of documents to review in just seven days, which is unrealistic for thorough consideration.

Over 4,000 responses were received from 900 individuals and organisations, with many objections from residents, statutory bodies, and other stakeholders.

Site HA4 faces major concerns from all directions, yet the Council responded with no changes, which is not meaningful consultation.

The Council's consultation report claims HA4 is environmentally viable, but its own evidence shows it is the most environmentally damaging option for Monmouth in terms of biodiversity, landscape, heritage, and farmland.

Developer reports do not reflect the true biodiversity of the site, and HA4 conflicts with the Council's own policies and strategies, including the Nature Recovery Action Plan and Green Infrastructure strategy.

The site is within 500 metres of the River Wye and adjacent to the Wye Valley Woodlands Special Area Conservation, and development would remove priority habitats, undermining conservation objectives.

The plan relies on vague mitigation promises, while proper green infrastructure should be embedded from the outset.

Ignoring consultation responses and misrepresenting evidence undermines scrutiny and democracy.

She urges Councillors to put aside political agendas, listen to residents, and ensure all evidence, including citizen science, is properly considered before moving the RLDP forward.

Ann Langford ~ video submission ~ Monmouth

Ann lives in Monmouth and expressed concern that Monmouth could be negatively impacted by surrounding housing estates and increased traffic if the proposed plan to build 270 houses, plus 110 more at the drilling estate, were to go ahead.

Ann highlighted that Statistics Wales projects a 5% population growth for Monmouthshire from 2018 to 2033, which aligns with past trends, but stated that the plan proposes a 15% increase in

housing, which she believed to be excessive. The plan would lead to more pollution and traffic, especially as many new residents would likely commute to the M4 corridor for work.

Ann noted that Monmouth already experiences traffic congestion, particularly at the Dixon roundabout, suggesting this would worsen with new developments.

She mentioned potential problems with increased sewage affecting the River Wye.

Ann concluded that the proposed growth is unnecessary and called for a rethink, emphasising that only 5% growth is needed, not 15%.

Frank Brehany ~ Monmouth Air Quality

Frank, a Monmouth resident and legal activist with extensive experience in stakeholder reports on consumer and chemical compound issues, raised concerns about air quality at the HA4 site. He stated that his previous submissions and communications with the Council had not been properly addressed or included in the Consultation Report.

Frank criticised the Council's reliance on the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) standards, which only monitor nitrogen dioxide and do not use the discretionary or precautionary principles allowed.

He advised that objections about air quality were met with a standard response that impacts would be assessed at the planning application stage, which he felt was inadequate and delays addressing the issue.

He advised that his submission on air quality was eventually included in the meeting pack after he complained, but he clarified that his comments were about air quality, not water.

He highlighted that the council's response claimed air quality monitoring methods are outside the RLDP process, which he sees as inconsistent, given that methodology is crucial for future assessments.

Frank emphasised that only monitoring one contaminant does not provide a comprehensive picture of air quality, and without a proper baseline, future assessments are unreliable.

He urged the Council to adopt robust scientific principles and engage meaningfully with residents on air quality before advancing the RLDP, warning that failure to do so would be remembered as a fundamental oversight.

Rob Elliott ~ Monmouth Air Quality

Rob expressed concern about increased road traffic from the proposed housing development at HA4/CS-0270, particularly at the Dixon Road junction, which already experiences significant idling and heavy vehicle traffic.

He warned that more houses would mean more cars and lorries, leading to increased air pollution from particulates, noise, and vibrations, especially affecting children passing through the area.

Rob argued that the solution is not more housing on greenfield sites but a national sustainable population policy for a stable future environment.

He requested that all Councillors be made aware of these concerns.

Barwood Land ~ HA3 – Land at Mounon Road, Chepstow)

The submission supported the draft allocation of site HA3 (Mountain Rd, Chepstow) in the RLDP and appreciated the Council's work on the plan.

They emphasised that the site has been rigorously tested and scrutinised, with clear policy requirements to ensure high-quality, sustainable development.

The development would deliver 146 new homes (half affordable), a hotel, and a specialist care home, supporting independent living, job creation, and the local economy.

More than half the site would remain undeveloped, providing extensive open space, parkland, and long-term ecological protection with significant biodiversity net gain.

The new homes and buildings would be energy efficient, built to last, and designed for a “20-minute neighbourhood” with easy access to shops, services, and sustainable transport options.

Features would include electric vehicle charging, broadband, a mobility hub, and measures to reduce car reliance and carbon footprint.

Barwood Land has received strong interest from care home providers and hotel operators and is committed to working with the Council and community to deliver the site's vision and maximise benefits.

Richard Liddell ~ HA3 – Land at Mounon Road, Chepstow)

Richard is an architect and planning consultant with long-standing experience and local ties, living next to the Mounon Road site.

He outlined the planning history, noting the Mounon Road site has been designated as a green wedge since 1981 to prevent urban sprawl and protect open land around Chepstow.

He referenced multiple planning policies and structure plans over the years that reinforce the need to maintain this green wedge, including the Monmouthshire LDP and specific policies like LC6.

Richard highlighted a 2024 Council screening application that concluded development would have a significant adverse impact on the valued landscape, biodiversity, and cultural links.

He described the site as a key part of Chepstow's countryside setting, visible to those entering the town, and important for maintaining its market town character.

Richard advised he had conducted a local petition, finding that 70% of nearby residents are opposed the development (46 houses were visited, with 32 responses received). He suggested the majority of Chepstow's population are against it.

He argued there is no need to use this site for development when alternatives exist, and noted that as recently as 2024, Council officers were against development due to significant adverse impacts.

He concluded that the proposal contradicts established planning policies and the majority of local opinion, without addressing additional concerns like traffic and pollution.

Zoe John - Monmouthshire Housing Association ~ HA1 - Land to the East of Abergavenny

Zoe spoke on behalf of Monmouthshire Housing Association and landowners regarding the site, which is allocated for 500 homes, with 50% affordable housing, a mixed-use neighbourhood centre, park and ride, and B1 uses.

The allocation followed detailed dialogue with officers and was informed by consultation feedback.

The site will be a well-connected, sustainable, and deliverable urban extension, contributing significantly to Monmouthshire's housing needs.

An independent viability assessment confirmed the site is deliverable, considering infrastructure and build costs.

Monmouthshire Housing Association is committed to delivering the site as allocated, bringing economic, environmental, and social benefits, especially in addressing affordable housing needs.

Adoption of the RLDP will support more housing, jobs, and economic prosperity.

Requested support and endorsement for the RLDP to realise its benefits for Monmouthshire.

William Morgan - Raglan village ~ proposed solar panels and extension to the existing enterprise park

William and his family farm the land proposed for solar panels and the expansion of Raglan Enterprise Park. He stated there had not been any prior consultation before receiving notification.

The Enterprise Park extension would be inconvenient but potentially manageable; however, the solar panel project would be disastrous for their dairy business.

Their farm prioritises wildlife habitat, maintaining wide and tall hedgerows, which could reduce solar panel efficiency due to shading and debris.

Installing solar panels would undo years of regenerative farming, harm soil quality, and make grazing impossible, especially at night, as 80% of their night grazing land would be lost.

Crossing the road to access remaining fields is unsafe for cows, especially in poor visibility, increasing the risk of accidents.

The loss of grazing land would end their dairy business, resulting in at least four local job losses and wider impacts on secondary sectors.

William noted inconsistency, as another local farmer was refused permission for solar panels, while his younger family-run business faces closure if the project proceeds.

He raised concerns about increased flood risk from water runoff due to the solar project.

William supports clean energy but suggests solar panels should be placed on buildings or car parks, not productive farmland.

He argued the project contradicts the Well-being of Future Generations Act by threatening young farmers' livelihoods and local food security.

He urged reconsideration of the project to allow his family to continue producing local food.

Gareth Barton – Turley ~ speaking in relation to several sites

Gareth represented Richborough, promoters of the Showground site, part of the strategic allocation east of Caldicot. He emphasised the collaboration with site owners and other promoters.

He acknowledged the significant work and challenges in preparing the LDP, highlighting the ambitious nature of the plan, including 50% affordable housing and high sustainability standards.

He stated that the allocation is supported by extensive technical work and consultation, covering flood, drainage, ecology, landscape, transport, heritage, and infrastructure.

He explained that a master plan and policy HA2 guide the allocation, with ongoing opportunities for engagement and input during detailed design and planning applications.

He outlined key benefits: the site is the most appropriate location for strategic allocation in Caldicot/Sevenside, as it is partly brownfield, will deliver zero carbon homes (50% affordable), a new primary school, employment, a multi-use games area, and a neighbourhood centre.

He highlighted the substantial open space and green infrastructure, with no built development in flood zones or west of the former Ministry of Defence (MOD) railway line, protecting the castle setting and ecological designations.

Gareth spoke of the integration with active travel improvements and contributions to bus services for connectivity. He encouraged the committee to endorse the work and support the LDP as it moves forward.

Catherine Blyth - Asbri Planning ~ (EA1 - Employment Allocations (Site Ref. EA1L: Land at Former MoD Site, Caerwent; HA9 - Residential Allocations - Land at Former MOD, Caerwent; EA1B - Poultry Units, Rockfield Road, Monmouth)

Catherine represented two site promoters: the mixed-use allocation at the former MOD Training Centre in Caerwent (HA9) and the employment allocation at the former poultry units, Rockfield Rd, Monmouth.

In terms of the former MOD Training Centre, she emphasised it is a brownfield site, which is vacant, and unused, which is proposed for 20 affordable and 20 open market homes plus flexible office workspace.

She noted extensive survey and assessment work has been done to show the site can be acceptably developed, with further work planned at the application stage, including biodiversity protection and enhancement.

She stated the site promoter looks forward to working with the authority to deliver homes and jobs on a sustainably located brownfield site.

For the former poultry units at Rockfield Rd, she stated it is a deliverable and viable employment allocation on brownfield land in a sustainable location, able to provide high-quality employment space and meet demand for office accommodation in Monmouth.

Catherine mentioned that there were no objections to the poultry units allocation and the promoter looks forward to progressing the site and working with the authority.

Lynne Garnett - Travelling Ahead

Lynne supported the inclusion of land in the RLDP for a future Gypsy and Traveller site in Monmouthshire.

She highlighted the Council's statutory legal duty under the Housing Act to provide for Gypsy and Traveller communities, which remains unmet.

She emphasised the importance of identifying and setting aside land to address this unmet need.

Michelle Morgan - Monmouthshire Housing Association

Michelle spoke on behalf of Monmouthshire Housing Association, the largest registered social landlord in Monmouth.

She stated there are over 3,900 households on the Council's affordable housing waiting list, including 203 accepted as homeless.

She highlighted that 52% of applicants have a recognised housing need, including homelessness, medical/welfare needs, and overcrowding.

She stated that 76% of applicants are of working age, with 52% in employment, highlighting affordability issues in the county.

She identified that the highest demand for affordable housing is in Abergavenny, followed by Chepstow, Caldicot, and Monmouth.

She advised that 51% of applicants require one-bedroom accommodation, with 70% of those being of working age.

Last year, 423 homes were allocated, with 51% going to homeless households.

On average, 98 bids are received per property advertised, showing high demand.

Wait times for high-need applicants are 12 months or more, varying by property type and area.

She shared two case studies: one case where social housing had prevented a family breakdown and another case where a working individual remains unable to secure housing despite numerous bids.

Michelle concluded that there is significant need for affordable new homes, which the replacement local development plan aims to address.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Place Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme and Action List

A reminder was given that the Welsh Water site visit for Committee Members would take place on Thursday 2nd October at 1pm.

In relation to the Action List dated 10th July: Car parking information would be sent to the Committee, a meeting to discuss Osbaston Road being arranged.

Action Scrutiny: Animal Welfare team/RSPCA to add to the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

4. Council and Cabinet Work Planner

Noted.

5. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes were confirmed as a true and accurate record.

6. Deposit RLDP

Cabinet Member Councillor Griffiths introduced the report as follows:

- He emphasised the committee's role in scrutinising whether the consultation report is full and fair, with amendments possible based on scrutiny outcomes.
- He stated the plan's first objective is to make more housing affordable, noting half the county's population cannot afford open market homes and a third cannot afford "affordable" homes.
- He highlighted urgent need for social rented housing, referencing Michelle Morgan's earlier contribution.
- He explained the plan will provide 2,000 homes, with 1,000 affordable and 660 for social rent, requiring 50% affordable housing from landowners.
- He noted Monmouthshire is the first in Wales to require 50% affordable housing, with financial plans supporting this.
- He discussed demographic challenges: an aging population, declining school and working-age populations, and the need for more young people to sustain communities.
- He stressed the plan's climate change objective, requiring all new homes to produce as much energy as they consume via solar panels and high build standards.
- He praised high-quality housing design, referencing the Chepstow Brunel Quarter development as an example.

- In terms of concerns relating to traffic impacts, he stated that the Chepstow development did not worsen traffic flows.
- He noted the plan's provision of 50 hectares for economic development to support business growth and employment.
- He summarised the strategic objectives as being 50% affordable housing, 100% net zero housing, and sustaining towns and villages.
- He advised he was committed to responding to scrutiny and keeping focus on strategic objectives.

Andrew Jones delivered a presentation and provided an overview of the deposit RLDP consultation report, explaining its purpose to inform the committee about public consultation results and engagement with the community and stakeholders. He outlined the report's contents: bodies consulted, number of representations, steps taken to publicise and engage, summary of main issues raised, and recommendations on how to address representations.

Andrew summarised the RLDP's chronology, including key dates for strategy endorsement and public consultation. He explained that the deposit consultation had received about 950 individual correspondents and approximately 4,500 objections, supports, and comments, highlighting strong community engagement. He advised that responses had included general comments, objections, support and that there had been both concerns and support for the plan's aspirations. He advised the comments related to the following key consultation themes:

- Growth strategy - debate over whether growth is too high or too low
- Spatial strategy - concerns about disproportionate growth in the south and reliance on large sites
- climate change and net zero - support and concerns about policy links to flood risk and air quality
- The challenge of developing on greenfield land.

Andrew advised there had been concerns about the 50% affordable housing target's financial viability and questions about local allocation of affordable housing. He stressed that the RLDP is not just a housing plan but also addresses employment, with concerns raised about employment land projections and distribution.

He summarised recurring site-specific issues: loss of greenfield/agricultural land, impacts on ecology, highways, flooding, and sewerage. He also mentioned that concerns had been raised about the Gypsy and Traveller site allocation, including site suitability and proportionality. He highlighted issues raised about the Raglan solar farm sites, such as loss of agricultural land, surface water runoff, and biodiversity impacts. He advised that the feedback from the scrutiny committee would be reported to Council, and if endorsed, the RLDP will proceed to independent examination.

Councillor Paul Griffiths, together with Andrew Jones, Craig O'Connor, Sarah Jones, Deb Hill-Howells, Rachel Lewis, Ross Price, Colette Bosley and Kate Stinchcombe addressed Members' questions.

Questions/points raised by Committee Members

Councillor Davies

- He asked the cabinet member if they are familiar with the Gunning principles, which are legal tests for public consultation. He explained the Gunning principles and asked for tangible examples of where residents' views have directly and materially shaped the plan, rather than just being acknowledged. He asked if the cabinet member recognises that the lack of material change in the plan, despite consultation, raises questions about the credibility of the process and whether it meets the Gunning principles.

The cabinet member explained that detailed consideration was given to every response, but significant amendments to the deposit plan are not made at this stage; changes, if any, would occur during public examination by the inspector. He stated that the process is defined by law, involves copious consideration of public input, and that any significant changes would be determined during the examination by the inspector.

Councillor Lucas

- She asked for clarification on whether the plan has changed and grown since 2018, and specifically if there had been any significant changes to site allocations since the most recent consultation.

Craig confirmed there have been no changes in site allocations since the last consultation, though there have been changes to improve the policy framework, especially regarding climate change, but the evidence behind site allocations remains materially sound.

- Councillor Lucas asked if we have had 4000 consultation responses but no significant changes to the plan since then, whether residents would ask what the point was of a consultation, if the responses are not listened to and no changes are made?

Craig advised that the plan has developed and adapted since 2018, informed by public consultation, and that the amended version enhances the plan, but the technical evidence supports the soundness of the site allocations.

Councillor Griffiths added that all public input and council responses are on record and will be considered by the inspector at public examination. The process does not allow for significant changes at this stage by the Cabinet member, but the inspector can require changes if needed.

Councillor Brown

- She expressed concern about the viability assessment, stating it seemed overly optimistic and based on assumptions of rising house prices, and questioned whether it adequately covered infrastructure requirements.

Sarah explained that site-specific viability assessments have been done for each allocated site, including all policy and infrastructure requirements, and these have been independently verified. The detailed financial models are commercially sensitive but show the sites are viable.

- She raised concerns about the soundness of the plan, noting a large number of objections and questioned whether the plan is justified.

The officers reiterated that the evidence supports the soundness of the plan and that all objections and comments are recorded and will be considered during the examination process.

- Councillor Brown asked about traffic issues, referencing projected increases and the need for infrastructure studies, especially regarding pinch points like the Park Wall and High Beech roundabouts.

Debra explained that Welsh Government is developing options to improve active travel and traffic flow at High Beach roundabout, and the council is lobbying for a new link road from the B4245 to the M48 which will reduce pressure on the roundabout.

- Councillor Brown questioned why sites were not made contingent on road infrastructure improvements, as was done in previous plans.

Craig stated that access requirements are included where fundamental, and conditions for active travel links are specified for certain sites, such as Abergavenny East.

- She also raised concerns about the Mounton Road site in Chepstow, including traffic congestion, green wedge status, agricultural land, and viability, referencing past failed attempts to develop the site.

Craig explained that the green wedge designation is a local policy that has changed due to housing demand, and detailed site design and traffic issues will be addressed at the planning application stage. The site has been assessed as viable.

Councillor Brown commented that the Shirenewton site is unviable due to the sewage issue and referenced conversations with Welsh Water about how additional houses would exacerbate the issue whereby raw sewage overflows from manhole covers and is managed by the placement of straw bales. She also highlighted the frustration of residents who had spent considerable time taking part in the consultation exercise and that it appeared they had been ignored.

Councillor Dymock

Councillor Dymock thanked officers for their extraordinary efforts in putting the reports together, however, she expressed concerns about the process, including late document changes, limited time for public engagement, and the challenge for residents to digest large volumes of material, questioning how residents can be involved meaningfully in such circumstances. She suggested that the public drop-in session at Portskewett had confused residents, as maps were shown without certain sites, interpreted by residents as sites having been removed.

She advised that she supports affordable housing in principle but that she could not support the scale and the process of proposals proposed for HA2 (Portskewett, Leechpool, Sudbrook, Crick).

She highlighted infrastructure concerns, with Magor and Chepstow acting as bottlenecks, placing severe pressure on local roads (B4245, A48), with 1000 additional vehicles from Gypsy and Traveller sites, noting the number of motions having been brought to Council about potholes and dangerous roads.

She spoke of the risk of increased flooding in Caldicot through building on green fields, adding to the water and overwhelming the system. She sought clarification on how green spaces and flood-prone areas would be managed within the development.

She raised concerns that local GP and dental services are overstretched with people having to go to Newport for dental services.

Councillor Dymock also spoke about her concerns about the merging of Portskewett and Caldicot, which have distinct identities and the impact of large developments on the character of the area. She argued the proposals fail to respect balance and are not proportionable.

- Councillor Dymock asked what minor changes have been made to the RLDP as a result of consultation, excluding grammatical errors? How many of the 4000 responses were objections, and how many led to Council recommendations? She stated that if voices of 4000 continue to be overlooked, this would be remembered as a missed opportunity and a breach of trust. She suggested it was not too late to take the opportunity to listen and deliver a plan that genuinely takes account of residents, who have not felt listened to through the process.

Rachel stated that the number of objections and comments per policy is listed in Appendix 11 of the Deposit RLDP Consultation Report, with many objections expected for a plan of this nature. The schedule of minor changes (appended to the report) includes factual corrections and some minor policy wording changes, but no substantive changes to the plan.

- Councillor Dymock asked what consultation feedback has been meaningfully incorporated into the RLDP?

Officers responded that some minor policy wording changes were made in response to feedback (e.g., from NRW), but no substantive changes to the plan; stating that all responses are recorded and will be considered at examination.

- Councillor Dymock questioned on what evidence is the allocation of 770 homes to Portskewett/Crick judged proportionate, and why were no reductions proposed despite widespread objection? She argued that proposing such a huge number of houses on outskirts of struggling town centre is inconsistent with the growth strategy.

Craig cited the local housing market assessment, which evidences significant affordable housing need, and explained that the plan balances this need with environmental and demographic challenges.

- She questioned why the HA2 site is named "East of Caldicot" when it mainly affects Portskewett, despite requests to redefine it?

Craig acknowledged the concerns and reiterated the plan's intent to invest in the area and sustain community facilities.

- She also asked about the rationale for a potential waste management site in Crick and whether it relates to the capacity of the existing Five Lanes facility.

Craig clarified that the allocation is a planning requirement for employment/commercial land (B2/B8 use), not a specific proposal, and any future use would be subject to a planning application. There is no current proposal to replace Five Lanes.

- She asked how will flooding be managed, especially around the castle and in flood-prone areas?

Ross explained that new legislation requires sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) for all new developments, ensuring no greater runoff than current Greenfield rates, and no built development will occur on floodplains as per NRW maps and planning policy.

- Councillor Dymock also asked whether the Council or the developer will be responsible for managing water in flood-prone areas?

Craig confirmed that no built development will occur in floodplain areas, and SuDS will be managed and adopted by the council for the lifetime of the development.

Councillor Bryn

- Councillor Bryn raised her concern that the proposed level of growth is too high given falling birth rates and asked how it was determined that lower growth would increase the proportion of older people. She questioned how the plan ensures new homes will rebalance demography rather than increase in-migration and noted that more workers already live in the county than there are jobs.

Craig explained that modelling shows the proposed growth would increase the 30–46 age group, supporting working-age population and affordable housing needs. The plan includes policies to ensure a mix of housing types, aiming to retain and attract younger families and working-aged people.

- She asked whether concerns about sustainability and infrastructure, especially for sites other than Abergavenny (e.g., Monmouth), have been addressed, and referenced the impact of previous developments.

Craig stated that Monmouth, Caldicot, and Chepstow are considered sustainable settlements with existing services, and that site design and active travel links will address sustainability and integration.

- She noted the Wye Valley National Landscapes' objection to the Monmouth (HA4) allocation, citing lack of evidence and insufficient consideration of adverse effects, and asked what adjustments have been made to address these concerns, including the lack of a green wedge.

Craig responded that landscape officers and evidence indicate no significant adverse impact on the setting, and a 25m green buffer is planned. The site is considered the last possible development to the east due to ecological constraints.

- Councillor Bryn asked if a green wedge designation for Monmouth would be considered, as was done for Abergavenny.

Rachel explained that a green wedge was considered for Abergavenny because protection sites were submitted during the process, but we didn't receive any candidate sites for protection as green wedge in Monmouth.

- She also asked about the viability of the Shirenewton site due to sewage issues, density, and the presence of a main water pipe, and questioned the status of 11 houses with existing planning permission.

Craig responded that the site is viable, utility providers have not objected, and the development boundary has been changed to exclude the 11 houses with existing planning consent, which now need to be implemented under the current permission.

- Councillor Bryn questioned whether public engagement has been meaningful, noting that most responses resulted in "no change needed" and doubted whether the inspector would have time to consider all responses.

Officers stated that all responses are recorded and will be considered by the inspector during the public examination, and changes could occur at that stage if warranted.

Councillor Thomas

Councillor Thomas stated that he welcomed the plan in its overall terms, appreciating that there will always be difficulties, as there always are with change and development and that balances need to be made to secure the greatest benefit for the least pain.

He commented that Monmouthshire was an ageing county with affordability being difficult for younger people and felt that the plan would offer people the opportunity to buy or rent a house, with renting being the only option for many people in such an expensive county. He acknowledged that all members will have residents relaying their stories about not being able to afford a house with a garden for their children to play in. He suggested that whilst the Council cannot tell developers who to house, if Monmouthshire Housing Association could take the lead, people might be able to secure affordable housing and can continue with their lives.

- Councillor Thomas asked for reassurance that the Abergavenny East (HA1) site will be integrated into the town, with good active travel and access links, so residents are not isolated by the railway and A465.

Andrew confirmed ongoing engagement with Network Rail and Welsh Government Highways, and collaboration with the Design Commission for Wales to ensure the site is not a detached island. Technical studies show it is feasible to provide bridges and crossings, and the infrastructure costs are included in the viability assessment.

- He sought reassurance that the Monmouth (Leasbrook) site will help address falling school rolls and demographic challenges.

Craig stated that new housing will help sustain school populations and services by attracting and retaining young families, supporting demographic balance.

- Councillor Thomas asked if the Gypsy and Traveller site in the south of the county (7 pitches) will be established, sustainable, and integrated, noting the council's statutory and moral duty.

Craig confirmed a rigorous site selection process, that the site meets local need, and that it will be sustainable and deliverable if the plan is adopted.

Councillor Jackie Strong

Councillor Strong highlighted the four aims of the RLDP: increasing affordable housing, addressing demographic imbalance, tackling climate change, and supporting employment. She emphasised that other Councillors had spoken about disenfranchised residents in consultation, but of the large number of people on the housing waiting list, how many of them were aware of the RLDP consultation or participated in it.

She stressed that whilst Monmouthshire has a reputation as a desirable place for retired people, there is a need to attract and retain working-age people to support services and the local economy. She cited demographic changes in Caldicot, with a growing proportion of older residents, and argued that the RLDP is needed to allow young people to stay, return, and raise families locally.

She acknowledged concerns about the Caldicot/Portskewett site, welcomed officer reassurances on flooding and drainage, and supported the inclusion of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

Councillor Strong stated that the new housing in Severnside would bring opportunities for improved infrastructure, such as a new health centre, active travel, and possibly a new link road.

She advised that in the 1970s, Caldicot had a population of 7% over working age, but that this is now 25%, so there is a desperate need to do something to ensure those who have had to move out of the county due to affordability, can come back and that the only way to achieve that would be to approve the RLDP.

She concluded with strong support for moving forward with the RLDP to address housing and demographic challenges and thanked all the officers who had been involved in drafting the plan.

Councillor Lucas

- Councillor Lucas asked about the current price of an affordable house, the required income to afford such a mortgage, and how many local jobs can sustain that level of income.

Craig explained that 50% of new housing will be handed to social housing associations for social rent and low-cost home ownership, with options for different income levels. The average house price in Monmouthshire is about £400,000, but affordable housing options are designed for lower incomes. Craig offered to follow up with more data.

- She raised concerns about losing affordable housing stock when owners buy out shared ownership and asked how this is being addressed.

Craig stated that affordable housing will be managed by housing associations, ensuring continued availability for those on the waiting list, and that various tenure options will be provided.

- Councillor Lucas questioned how sustainable drainage (SuDS) can be approved for 270 houses in Monmouth when individual infill plots have faced issues.

Craig responded that Ross's team has reviewed drainage strategies for all sites and is satisfied that SuDS can be implemented for the larger developments, though acknowledged some infill plots were incompatible with new legislation.

- She challenged the description of Monmouth's approach as "excessive field areas" and expressed concern about losing green space, especially the visual impact when entering Monmouth.

Craig acknowledged the importance of green space and explained that the RLDP aims to balance development with landscape protection, including green infrastructure policies and buffers.

- Councillor Lucas asked if pre-planning engagement with MCC has occurred for the Monmouth (HA4) site, similar to Abergavenny.

Craig confirmed that pre-application discussions and master planning have taken place for strategic sites, including Monmouth, with input from the Design Commission for Wales.

- She also requested clarification on how citizen science bat surveys (e.g., 893 greater horseshoe bats in one month) have been considered, and whether the 25m buffer is sufficient.

Craig stated that citizen science data was forwarded to consultants (Acom) for an addendum to the Habitats Regulations Assessment, and that the plan includes strong mitigation measures and policy protections for bats and other ecology. Kate Stinchcombe presented supporting evidence and mapping.

Councillor Davies

- Councillor Davies asked about the evidence supporting the delivery and viability of the Abergavenny East development, referencing concerns from the Colebrook estate about land allocation and viability. He requested clarification on how the Council intends to address these concerns.

Councillor Griffiths explained that the site's financial viability has been independently tested and verified, and that the Council is confident in its deliverability. He acknowledged the Coldebrook estate's ownership of part of the land and their alternative proposal, but stated the Council prefers the MHA-

promoted site for its better integration with the town. The inspector will consider both proposals during examination. Craig added that MHA has evidence the site can be delivered without the Coldebrook land, and ongoing discussions may resolve the issue.

Councillor Howells

- Councillor Howells questioned how the proposed development at Burrium Gate would ensure existing drainage and sewage issues, especially surface water runoff and flooding, are not worsened? He asked what guarantees could be given to Monmouth Road residents who have experienced historic problems?

Ross Price explained that the site will be subject to SAB (Sustainable Drainage Approval Body) approval, requiring runoff to mimic the natural drainage regime and not increase downstream risk. Recent drainage works and potential future natural flood management will help. On-site drainage will use permeable paving, swales, and basins, improving water quality and biodiversity.

- He asked whether the 1.7 hectares of developer land below the 40mm ridgeline would be sufficient to accommodate 40 homes and supporting infrastructure while protecting hedgerows and biodiversity?

Officers responded that the plan would require SAB approval and biodiversity measures as safeguards.

- Councillor Howells asked how the development would ensure Usk's existing infrastructure (GP services, air quality, road capacity) could cope with additional pressures from new residents and vehicles?

Craig stated that health infrastructure is managed by the Health Board, which is consulted and can request Section 106 contributions if needed. No evidence currently suggests the proposed housing would have a significant impact on infrastructure.

- He asked in respect of Little Mill, how the proposed development would address existing concerns about infrastructure capacity, including drainage, surface water runoff, and adequacy of the local water treatment?

Ross confirmed Little Mill would also require SAB approval for drainage. Craig reiterated that the need for affordable housing is high, and the plan aims to sustain existing services.

- Councillor Howells queried whether given another site in Little Mill is already consented for 15 homes (60% affordable), and the nearby 800-home development in Mamhilad (now quashed), how the need for an additional 20 homes would be justified?

Craig stated there is significant need for affordable housing in Usk and Little Mill, as shown by the local housing market assessment.

- Councillor Howells asked if councillors were to vote in favour of the RLDP, would it still need approval by an independent examiner for Welsh Government? Would all sites still require outline planning, and would developments then require full Monmouthshire planning approval?

Craig confirmed that after Council approval, the RLDP goes to Welsh Government for independent examination. No sites have outline planning consent; all will require full planning applications and public consultation before development.

Councillor Bond

- Councillor Bond commented on the need for development, affordable housing, and infrastructure in Caldicot, and expressed support for the RLDP's approach.

She stated that as a Caldicot resident, she understood the views of those who do not want more houses in area but commented that there was a need to consider younger people's development, looking to the longer term to provide for working families and to address the falling school roll. She highlighted her concerns that more funding was needed for Caldicot and that there was a desperate need for an M48 trunk road and for Net Zero homes.

- She questioned whether the need for a school and leisure centre improvements would be assessed as part of the planning process and stated enhancements were needed.

Craig confirmed that the leisure centre's condition is recognised and will be addressed, and that a primary school is proposed within the Caldicot/Portskewett development, with infrastructure needs to be assessed as planning progresses.

Councillor Buckler

- Councillor Buckler asked how the Council could ensure that the 50% affordable housing target will not be reduced by developers later, as has happened in the past?

Councillor Griffiths and Craig stated that, unlike previous plans, the 50% affordable housing is a non-negotiable requirement in this RLDP, supported by viability assessments. Any future attempt by developers to reduce this would be refused by the planning committee, and the planning inspector would support the Council's position if the plan is adopted as sound.

- She asked why there had been so few material changes to the plan despite nearly 1,000 public responses and concerns from statutory bodies?

Officers and the Cabinet Member Councillor Griffiths explained that while factual and minor policy wording changes were made, no substantive changes to the plan were deemed necessary based on the evidence and consultation responses. They confirmed that all comments and objections will be considered by the independent planning inspector during the examination process.

- Councillor Buckler questioned how infrastructure and service needs (roads, schools, healthcare, public transport) would be realistically funded and delivered?

Officers responded that the plan includes infrastructure proposals, and their delivery will be assessed and secured through the planning process and Section 106 agreements as developments come forward.

- Councillor Buckler commented that the RLDP process and documentation are difficult for the public to navigate and understand and asked how it could be made more accessible?

Rachel acknowledged the volume and complexity of documentation, explaining it is governed by Welsh Government legislation and regulations, which require this level of detail.

- Councillor Buckler commented that in her view, the plan is unbalanced, with disproportionate growth and employment land allocated to the Severnside area, especially Magor with Undy. She argued that the proposed large-scale growth appeared to be driven more by targets than the actual capacity of communities and countryside to absorb such change, with roads and infrastructure already under pressure.

Craig clarified that the employment land allocations in Magor and Undy are not new but have been in place since 2014, and their location is strategic due to proximity to the M4 and Welsh Government guidance.

- She highlighted her concerns about the impact of extant planning permissions and the use of land for waste sites, especially regarding Planning Policy Wales 12.

Craig stated that the employment allocations are existing, and any new uses (such as waste) would be subject to the planning application process and relevant policy compliance.

- Councillor Buckler questioned the plan's approach to open space designations (e.g., land above Penny Farthing Lane), adding that there is scepticism that issues will be resolved at the planning application stage.

Craig reiterated that open space and other site-specific issues will be addressed through the planning application process, with public consultation and committee scrutiny.

- She also commented that the plan does not reflect the current situation with the Severn Bridge and its impact on local traffic and infrastructure.

Craig and his colleagues replied that infrastructure needs and impacts are considered in the plan and will continue to be addressed through ongoing engagement with Welsh Government and infrastructure providers.

- Councillor Buckler added that there is a lack of confidence that infrastructure will follow development, based on previous experience in Magor with Undy.

Craig responded that infrastructure requirements are set out in Appendix 8 of the plan and will be secured as part of the planning process for each development.

Councillor Taylor

- Councillor Taylor stated that the RLDP process is too complex and documentation-heavy for the public to engage meaningfully with and asked how the process could be made more accessible.

Rachel responded that the process is governed by Welsh Government regulations, which require this level of documentation, and acknowledged the challenge.

- She questioned the value of public and councillor input, noting almost 1,000 responses but very few material changes to the plan.

Officers acknowledged the concern, reiterated that the process is set by regulation, and that all responses are considered, but substantive changes are limited by the evidence base and process.

- She commented that the plan feels unbalanced, with disproportionate growth and employment land in Severnside (especially Magor with Undy and Caldicot). She argued that those with concerns are not unaware of the need for affordable housing in the county, but that there were still some flaws in the plan which made it difficult to support.

Craig clarified that the employment allocations in Magor with Undy are not new but carried over from the previous LDP, and that the location is strategic due to transport links.

- She raised her concerns about large-scale industrial development on the Gwent Levels, with 50% of county's industry on the levels and adjacent to SSSI. She questioned the rationale and policy compliance and commented that it was a lazy approach, disproportionate and contrary to ecological goals, querying how it fits with Planning Policy Wales 12?

Craig responded that these are existing allocations, not new, and highlighted ongoing work with Welsh Government to provide additional protection for the Gwent Levels.

- Councillor Taylor stated that the designation of open space above Penny Farthing Lane, arguing it is usable and should be protected as usable space and asked for its redesignation. She expressed her doubt that issues would be resolved at the planning application stage, based on previous LDP examination experience.

Officers reiterated that detailed issues will be addressed at the planning application stage, as per the process.

- She asked how the plan addresses current Severn Bridge issues and the impact of toll removal on local infrastructure. She highlighted that it had been anticipated that there would be an increase in traffic, compromising the bridge in the longer term and asked how any of these issues would be mitigated.
- *Deb Hill-Howells advised Members that there is on ongoing work with National Highways to address bridge restrictions and future solutions and clarified that these are being actively managed.*

- Councillor Taylor questioned the lack of mitigation for infrastructure issues, expressing concern that development will outpace infrastructure delivery.

Craig referenced Appendix 8 for infrastructure requirements and ongoing lobbying with Welsh Government for improvements.

Penny Jones

- Councillor Jones raised her concerns about the housing project in Raglan. She stated that the total number of houses would exceed 100, which matches a previously refused application. She questioned the Sustainable Settlement Appraisal (SSA): asking who is responsible, how decisions are made, what evidence is used, and whether ongoing developments in Raglan were considered.

Rachel explained the SSA is based on a regional methodology developed by the Southeast Wales Strategic Planning Group, using quantitative data on transport, services, and employment, and confirmed Raglan is identified as a second-tier settlement. She offered to send the link to the methodology. Craig confirmed the housing allocation for Raglan has been halved from a previous proposal, now at 54 homes, with half being affordable. this and highlighted the benefit of affordable housing for the community.

- She also questioned the need for an industrial site in Raglan, given it already accommodates Tier 2 settlements, and expressed concern about its location on farmland near the historic town and castle, with the area being reliant on tourism. She asked whether it could be justified and if it was just a convenient expansion site.

Craig stated the site is ideally located on the strategic network (A40/A449), provides job opportunities, and there is local business interest in the site.

- Councillor Jones stated that whilst renewables and low-carbon sites are important, she was strongly opposed to the solar park proposal, arguing it would destroy a profitable dairy farm and a family business, and questioned why prime farmland is being used, taking away a livelihood in a rural county. She reiterated that the farm is not just rich farmland but a rare dairy farm, and argued the industrial site is not needed by Raglan residents, as there are already other sites and the area is not known for unemployment. She stated that residents do not any employment in that area as it is reliant on tourism, with transport being dangerous on that stretch of road. She expressed concern that very few changes made, or comments been acted on and that

the family had not been consulted. Councillor Jones sought assurance that Will Morgan and his family would be consulted about the solar park's impact on their business and land and their concerns addressed in terms of water run-off and the cattle crossing.

Craig acknowledged the issue was emotive and confirmed he had contacted the Estates Team to ask them to discuss alternatives with the family and noted that Monmouthshire has a high proportion of best and most versatile (BMV) land, so some use for renewables may be necessary.

Councillor Kear

- Thanked officers for all the work involved in bringing the plan to this stage, but shared concerns around the volume of documentation. He cited that flooding concerns in Usk are a major concern and residents feel their views have been ignored. He commented on dental services and surgeries being unable to cater for additional demand. He added that he felt the two sites proposed were unviable and not in the right location and that there had not been any public support at the public sessions held.

Councillor Newell

- Councillor Newell advised that a resident had contacted him asking why the Bat report from the Dixon Bat Project sighting 893 greater horseshoe bats was omitted from the consultation and asked that officers provide an explanation via email (**Action: Craig O'Connor**).

Councillor Butler

- Councillor Butler raised supplementary concerns about the proposed development HA12 (land west of Tremor Asgall, Penperlleni/Goetre Fawr), specifically regarding access to the site. She noted residents' strong opposition to suggested access via Trem yr Ysgol, as the land is privately owned and maintained by residents who have a covenant for its protection and questioned the viability of this access. She highlighted that the alternative access being considered is directly off the A4042 trunk road, which has double-blind bends and a 50-mph speed limit, making it dangerous, especially for a development likely to attract young families. She requested sight of the transport assessment as soon as it is available. **Action: Craig O'Connor.**
- In terms of HA12 (land west of Trem yr Ysgol, Penperlleni/Goetre Fawr), Councillor Butler also questioned whether 50% affordable housing is viable

for a small development of 42 houses, and whether such a high percentage would deter open market buyers. She read a submission from a resident outlining his concerns which included legality of access, impact on amenities, potential damage to trees and wildflower meadow, road width, Welsh Water's comments on pipe capacity, flooding from canal overflow, and increased traffic on School Lane, warning of potential legal challenge by residents.

- She stated that she supported the principle of a small development (42 houses, 50% affordable) due to local need for two- and three-bedroom homes but raised major concerns about site access and questioned how sure officers are that the site is sound and deliverable.
- *Craig explained that the developer claims to have right of way over the land in question, and both access options (via Trem yr Ysgol and the A4042) are being explored. Legal and engineering issues (including covenants, road width, and water pipes) will be fully scrutinised at the planning application stage and by the inspector. Craig acknowledged there is a legal dispute to be resolved and that if access is ultimately deemed unacceptable, the development would not proceed. He confirmed that engineering solutions for water pipes and flooding would be addressed in the detailed planning application and that no building would occur within 3 metres of the water main. He reiterated that the site is considered deliverable based on current evidence, but if access proves unviable, the development would not proceed. He invited residents to submit any further technical information about access, clarifying that while the consultation period is closed, technical evidence can still be considered for this specific issue.*

Councillor Sandles

- Councillor Sandles read two letters on behalf of residents who could not attend, both highlighting the urgent need for affordable housing for young people, care leavers, and those with additional needs in Monmouthshire.

The first submission - Jake, 19, care leaver in Monmouth: Jake is about to leave foster care and has secured an apprenticeship. He would like to stay in Monmouthshire near his support network, but he cannot afford local rent. He has no family safety net and he needs affordable safe housing to become independent. He supports the development plan for creating more affordable homes, which would give care leavers like him a real chance to stay in the county and build their lives.

The second submission - a parent of four young men, including two foster sons: The eldest son is 27 and has autism and wants to live independently, but remain close to family for support. The second son is 25 and has Attention Deficit

Hyperactivity Disorder. He works full-time but cannot afford to live locally and needs family support. The eldest foster son is 19 and has no chance of returning to his birth family. He wants to remain in the area for support and is employed and progressing well. The youngest foster son is 18 and has complex needs and will need to remain with the family until suitable local supported housing is available. The lack of affordable housing makes independence difficult for all four young men, especially those with additional needs. They welcome the RLDP's commitment to increasing affordable homes and urge the Council to deliver on this ambition, as it would transform their futures and allow them to contribute to the community.

Chair's Summary:

The Scrutiny Committee's role was to consider the Consultation Report. Full Council will consider whether to submit the RLDP to the Welsh Government for independent examination when it meets on 23rd October 2025. The Chair recognised the scale of the public consultation that was undertaken and thanked everyone involved and the residents for attending and speaking in the Public Open Forum.

With reference to the report's recommendations to:

- Consider whether the Deposit RLDP Consultation Report reflects the consultation process
- Provide comments and observations on the consultation report prior to Council consideration on whether to endorse the RLDP

The Chair summed up many of the key points relating to the consultation process itself and some of the observations from Councillors who had spoken on behalf of their residents. The Committee agreed that in order to provide full and balanced feedback, the complete minutes of the Place Scrutiny Committee's meeting on 10th October 2024 and those of the meeting held on 25th September 2025 would be appended to the final consultation report that is taken to Council on 23rd October 2025. **Action: Craig O Connor.**

7. Next Meeting: 9th October 2025 (Special)

The meeting ended at **6.53 pm**