

3. OVERVIEW / PROFILE OF MONMOUTHSHIRE

- 3.1 This section provides a broad introduction to the plan area, outlining the key environmental, social and economic characteristics of Monmouthshire **and sets out the County's main spatial issues**. The data in this section generally relates to the County as a whole and therefore includes that part of the Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP) that lies within Monmouthshire. Data that relates to the Monmouthshire Local Planning Authority Area only (i.e. excludes the BBNP area) will be identified where appropriate in the text.

Geographical Context

- 3.2 Located in South East Wales, Monmouthshire occupies a strategic position between the major centres in South Wales and the South West of England and the Midlands. The County shares a border with the neighbouring local planning authorities of Newport, Torfaen and Brecon Beacons National Park in Wales and Gloucestershire, the Forest of Dean and Herefordshire in England, with Severn crossing links to South Gloucestershire.
- 3.3 Monmouthshire covers an area of approximately 88,000 hectares (880 square kilometres) with an estimated population of ~~88,000~~¹ **91,323**¹, 7.9% of which resided within the BBNP area of the County in ~~2006~~ **2011**. It is a predominantly rural county with only ~~45%~~ **53%** of the total population living in wards defined as being in urban areas (i.e. with a population of more than 10,000). The main settlements in the County are Abergavenny, Chepstow, Monmouth, Caldicot, Usk and Magor/Undy.
- 3.4 The County has a distinctive identity arising from its location in the borderlands between England and the industrial heartland of South Wales. An integral element of Monmouthshire's distinctive settlement pattern arises from its historic market towns and villages and their relationship with the surrounding rural areas.
- 3.5 The County is noted for its rural beauty and has a rich and diverse landscape stretching from the coastline of the Gwent Levels in the South of the County, to the uplands of the Brecon Beacons in the north and the picturesque river corridor of the Wye Valley in the east.
- 3.6 Given its location on the border between Wales and England, the County is easily accessible from the rest of Wales by the M4, A40, A449 and A4042 and from England by the M4 and M48 Severn Bridges and the A48, A40 and A465. The good road transport links connect the County to major population centres such as Cardiff, Newport and Bristol.
- 3.7 Monmouthshire is served by a number of both local and national bus routes. The towns of Abergavenny, Chepstow and Monmouth all have bus stations with bus services extending to the surrounding towns and villages and to the wider sub-region, including Bristol, Cardiff, Gloucester and Newport.

¹ ~~2009 Mid Year Estimates~~ **2011 Census**

3.8 In terms of rail provision, Monmouthshire has four stations, at Caldicot, Chepstow and Severn Tunnel Junction in the south of the County and Abergavenny in the north.

Key Environmental Characteristics

3.9 As a largely rural county Monmouthshire has major landscape resources and is home to internationally and nationally designated landscapes ranging from the Wye Valley AONB to the east and the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Blaenavon Industrial World Heritage Site to the north west. The Monmouthshire UDP designated four areas as Special Landscape Areas (SLA), covering a total area of 40,559 hectares and accounting for around 55% of the total local planning area within Monmouthshire.

3.10 However, many areas outside designated landscapes support more features of natural and cultural significance per square kilometre than are found within them. This diversity and richness is recognised by the high and outstanding evaluations of landscape quality as identified by LANDMAP (CCW's nationally recognised methodology for landscape assessment) which sets Monmouthshire's landscape baseline amongst the highest in Wales.

3.11 The landscape and countryside of Monmouthshire is therefore important in contributing not only to the health and well-being of Monmouthshire's residents but in supporting the tourist economy.

3.12 Monmouthshire contains a relatively high proportion of good quality agricultural land. It also has a high proportion of farming land – more than double the Welsh average. Approximately three-quarters (~~75%~~ **77.1%**) of the County's farming land is identified as grassland, which although high is lower than the Welsh average (~~89%~~ **89.9%**). In contrast, the proportion of land used for crops and horticulture (~~17%~~ **16.7%**) is significantly higher than the Welsh average (~~6%~~ **5.5%**).

3.13 Monmouthshire has major biodiversity and nature conservation resources, a number of which are internationally or nationally recognised. The Monmouthshire Local Planning Authority (LPA) area contains the following resources:

- The Severn Estuary is designated as a Special Area for Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (**SPA**), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Ramsar Site (Wetland of international importance).
- Four other Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) – namely the River Wye, the River Usk, the Wye Valley woodlands and the Wye Valley bat sites.
- 49 nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) – covering some 2,087 hectares. Most are woodland or grassland sites with others designated for their wetland or geological interest.
- Two National Nature Reserves – Fiddler's Elbow (woodland) and Lady Park Wood.
- Local Nature Reserve at Cleddon Bog
- Approximately 650 non-statutory Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) predominantly in relation to grassland and ancient and semi-natural woodland areas. (The SINCs project will extend to the surveying of other habitats over the duration of the plan period).

- A wide range of species (including rare /protected species) and many important habitats.
- 3.14 The statutory sites cover 6,432 hectares, or 7.6% of the LPA area; 3,664 hectares of which comprises the Severn Estuary SPA.
- 3.15 The Monmouthshire LPA area has a rich built heritage and historic environment which includes:
- 31 Conservation Areas – designated for their special historic or architectural interest, covering some 1,648 hectares in total.
 - 44 Historic Parks and Gardens – identified as having a Special Historic Interest, covering 1,910 hectares.
 - 3 Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest identified by Cadw within the Monmouthshire area – namely parts of Blaenavon, the Gwent Levels and the Lower Wye Valley.
 - Approximately 169 Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
 - Approximately 2,200 Listed Buildings, of which 2% are Grade I, 10% are Grade II* and 88% are Grade II. Of note, around 176 Listed Buildings have been identified as being at risk.
- 3.16 The Monmouthshire LPA area has approximately 150 hectares of mainly rural commons and an additional 3,550 hectares of Forestry Commission woodlands which are designated as open access sites. There is also a Country Park at Caldicot. One of the main ways in which the residents of Monmouthshire can enjoy the built heritage, historic environment, landscape and biodiversity of Monmouthshire is through public rights of way. These have positive effects on health, social progress and general well-being. Public rights of way include 1,499km of footpaths, 71km of bridleways, 84.5km of restricted byways and 1.5km of unrestricted byways. These public rights of way are complemented by permissive paths. The County has three long distance regional trails (Usk Valley, Wye Valley and Three Castles walks) as well as the national trail (Offa's Dyke Path). The County also provides the start of the all-Wales coastal path. In addition, there are two national cycle routes within Monmouthshire, both of which run from Chepstow. The countryside access opportunities available in the County are one of its key assets, sustaining tourism and providing opportunities for economic regeneration.
- 3.17 Water quality and quantity are generally good; although there are ~~nine~~ **five** ground water source protection zones in the LDP area that need particular safeguarding from pollution².
- 3.18 In terms of flooding, areas of Monmouthshire which are vulnerable have been identified – these include most of the Gwent Levels and the flood plains of the Rivers Usk and Wye and their tributaries. There are however, flood defences within the towns of Chepstow, Monmouth and Usk.
- 3.19 Air quality in Monmouthshire generally meets current standards, although there are two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) within the County, where

² Environment Agency ~~2010~~ **2013**

objective levels of nitrogen dioxide may be exceeded. These are at Bridge Street in Usk and Hardwick Hill/Mount Pleasant in Chepstow.

- 3.20 Monmouthshire's greenhouse gas emissions are predominantly due to road transport (~~42%~~ **39%**), followed by industrial /commercial end users (31%) and domestic sources (27%)³. In ~~2008~~ **2010**, the County recorded 2.7 domestic tonnes per capita of carbon dioxide, broadly in line with the Welsh average of ~~2.6~~ **2.5**.
- 3.21 The Monmouthshire Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy has not identified any sites as being contaminated.
- 3.22 Minerals extraction is limited in Monmouthshire, however ensuring a sustainable supply of aggregates is important for the South Wales economy. The County has sufficient reserves to enable it to provide more than its per capita contribution to the region although there is a need to balance this against environmental consequences.
- 3.23 There are two limestone quarries in Monmouthshire – the Livox and Ifton Quarries. The former is within the AONB and its existing planning permission expired on December 31st 2011. ~~A current application relating to the quarry has yet to be determined.~~ **A planning application to renew this permission has been refused.** Ifton Quarry benefits from a current planning permission. Additional limestone resources exist in the southern part of the County but the area is generally sensitive in terms of environmental capacity. There are no significant sources of secondary aggregates in the area. There is a sufficient land bank of permitted reserves to meet the requirements of government policy.
- 3.24 There are no permitted land based sand and gravel sites in Monmouthshire and there is only one marine sand-dredging site at Bedwin sands.
- 3.25 Household waste arisings from refuse collections in Monmouthshire totalled ~~28,218~~ **31,133** tonnes by ~~2009/10~~ **2011/12**. Over the ~~six~~ **nine** year period to ~~2010~~ **2012**, the County's household waste generation has ~~declined at an average rate of 5.6% in line with the South East region as a whole~~ **the percentage of the County's household waste generation being sent to landfill/incineration has declined by 56%**.
- 3.26 Monmouthshire has made good progress in the promotion and the recycling and composting of waste. In ~~2009/10~~ **2011/12** ~~41%~~ **55%** of the County's municipal waste stream was being recycled/composted thus ~~meeting~~ **exceeding** the target of at least ~~40%~~ **55%** recycling/composting, ~~with a minimum of 15% recycled and 15% composted~~ **by 2012/13**.
- 3.27 There is however, a pressing need to reduce reliance on landfill, particularly as the majority of the County's waste destined for landfill is transported outside the County. Accordingly, the second area of targets to be met is the diversion of waste from landfill in particular green waste – referred to as biodegradable

³ DECC, ~~2008~~ **2010**

municipal waste (BMW). The Welsh Government has set threshold limits for the amount that the County can take to landfill – 29,202 tonnes in 2005/06 reducing annually to 9,500 tonnes in 2020. In ~~2009/10~~ **2011/12** Monmouthshire landfilled ~~14,173~~ **20,361** tonnes and thus ~~was nearly 31% below its allowance~~ **is slightly below its allowance**. Given the lack of suitable sites in Monmouthshire, all household/commercial waste not recycled or composted is disposed to landfill outside the County, although Monmouthshire is currently in partnership with four other local authorities to deliver a long-term waste management procurement plan.

Key Social Characteristics

- 3.28 Monmouthshire's population stood at ~~88,000~~ **91,323** in ~~2009~~ **2011**. The population has been increasing steadily, up ~~6.2%~~ **7.6%** between ~~1991 and 2001~~ **2001 and 2011** compared with the Welsh average of ~~2.4%~~ **5.5%**. ~~There has been a further increase of 3.7% between 2001 and 2009, representing an annual growth rate of about 373 or 0.4%.~~ This increase is wholly attributable to inward migration, with natural change showing negative growth. ~~Chepstow, Rogiet, Monmouth and Magor/Undy have experienced the highest levels of in-migration, while some rural areas have actually experienced out-migration.~~
- 3.29 The County has a low population density of ~~4~~ **1.1** persons per hectare – significantly lower than the South East Wales average of ~~4.6~~ **5.3** persons per hectare – reflecting the area's rural nature. As would be expected, population densities are highest in the main settlements of Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow, Magor/Undy and Monmouth.
- 3.30 The County has a relatively high proportion of older age groups and a lower proportion of younger adults compared with the UK and Welsh averages.
- 3.31 Average household size ~~has continued~~ **was predicted** to decline contributing to an increase in the number of households. The Welsh Assembly Government's 2003 household projections anticipated an additional 108,900 households being formed across South East Wales between 2003-2021 (18.6% increase), reflecting the net effect of births, deaths, migration and the trend towards smaller households.
- 3.32 More recently the Welsh Assembly Government has published 2008-based household projections at Local Authority level. These project an additional 5,211 households being formed across Monmouthshire between 2008-2021 – during this time the average household size is projected to fall from 2.27 persons to 2.08.
- 3.33 In recent years annual housing completions in the Monmouthshire LPA area have averaged ~~342~~ **310** per annum (~~2001-2011~~ **2013**), although there have been significant annual variations ranging from 522 completions in 2001 to 158 in 2009/10.
- 3.34 Of the ~~3,423~~ **3,719** dwellings completed between 2001 and ~~2011~~ **2013**, ~~14.9%~~ **15.8%** were classed as affordable. However, when considering completions on developments of more than 10 the figure increases to ~~24.5%~~ **22.8%**.

- 3.35 Since 2001, ~~61%~~ **56%** of new completions in the Monmouthshire LPA area have been located at the four main towns (Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow and Monmouth) and ~~39%~~ **44%** at locations elsewhere in the County. The largest proportion of new completions since 2001 has been in the ~~Monmouth housing market area, while the proportion of total dwellings built in the Caldicot / Chepstow area has reduced over this period~~ **Chepstow/Caldicot housing market area, accounting for 42% of completions, with the Monmouth housing market area accounting for 37% of completions and the Abergavenny housing market area 21% of completions.**
- 3.36 The ~~2004~~ **2011** Census reported that ~~76.2%~~ **74%** of households in Monmouthshire were owner occupied – higher than in Wales as a whole.
- 3.37 Compared with the Welsh average, a large proportion (44%) of households in the County lived in detached properties while a low proportion (17%) resided in terraced properties.
- 3.38 ~~In the year to January 2011, the~~ **The** average house price in Monmouthshire **(based on sales & valuations in the 3 months to September 2013)** stood at ~~£246,154~~ **£248,500**, which represented an increase of 9% over the previous ~~twelve months~~ **compares to a regional average of £161,400**. Income has not been increasing at the same rate, with median annual earnings in the County of ~~£24,269~~ **£21,482 in 2012** resulting in an overall house price to income ratio of ~~6.4~~ **7.1**. This restricts the ability of those on low incomes to enter the housing market, indicating the relative lack of affordability of housing in Monmouthshire. ~~The recent recession is not thought to have improved the ratio significantly.~~
- 3.39 The spatial distribution of relative affordability of housing varies throughout the County, with a greater ratio in rural wards, particularly those to the north. In contrast, the ratio is smaller in the more urban southern wards.
- 3.40 Since the original joint Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) was undertaken huge changes have occurred in the economy and housing market of the UK which have major implications for Monmouthshire, and the local sub-market areas within it. The LHMA published in June 2010 updates a wide range of indicators to highlight how the housing market has changed since 2006. For the period 2010-2015 the report estimates a requirement for the provision of 29% affordable housing in Monmouthshire, with the model constrained to the current planned delivery target for the County.
- 3.41 The need for an increased level of affordable housing is further illustrated by the Common Housing Register, which stood at ~~2,440~~ **3,496** households at ~~March 2011~~ **November 2013**. This compared to a housing stock of ~~5,548~~ **5,925**.
- 3.42 Monmouthshire is generally a prosperous County offering a high quality of life for its residents. This is reflected in the ~~2008~~ **2011** Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation with none of the lower super output areas (LSOA) in Monmouthshire in the most deprived 10% in Wales. The three most deprived LSOAs in Monmouthshire are Cantref **2** (ranked ~~462~~ **459** out of 1896 in Wales) and Mardy **1**

(ranked ~~369~~ **286**) both in the north west of the County, and Overmonnow **2** (ranked ~~546~~ **520**) in the east.

- 3.43 Monmouthshire does however, have higher than average levels of deprivation with regard to access to services (predominantly within rural areas) and environment (predominantly in urban areas). Poor access to community facilities and declining local service provision is an issue for rural communities.
- 3.44 The Monmouthshire Recreation and Open Space Study (2008) shows that the County's main settlements are generally well served by both public open space and informal play spaces. There are, however, deficiencies in other provision including equipped children's play space.
- 3.45 Monmouthshire has four leisure centres – Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow and Monmouth – offering a variety of facilities including swimming pools, fitness suites, indoor sports halls and outdoor pitches. The Council also owns and manages a number of parks and open spaces. However, again poor access to community facilities and declining local provision is an issue for rural areas.
- 3.46 The health of Monmouthshire's population is generally better than the Welsh average, with greater life expectancies and higher proportion of residents classing themselves as being in good health (2004 **2011** Census). Fewer residents in the County suffer with a limiting long term illness compared with Wales as a whole.
- 3.47 The rate of reported crime in Monmouthshire tends to be lower than for Wales as a whole. Incidences of reported crime in the County follow the same pattern as within Wales, these include violence against the person and crime involving vehicle and other theft.
- 3.48 Monmouthshire has a well qualified and highly skilled workforce, with a higher proportion of its working age population qualified to NVQ Level 4 and above (~~39%~~ **33%** in ~~2009~~ **2011**) when compared with Wales as a whole (~~27.3%~~ **24.5%**) and surrounding authorities in ~~2009~~ **2011**. There is also a significantly lower proportion of its working age population with no qualifications (~~9.4%~~ **20.7%**) compared with the Wales average (~~14.8%~~ **25.9%**), although this varies throughout the County with higher levels recorded in urban areas (Green Lane, Dewstow, Lansdown and Overmonnow).
- 3.49 Monmouthshire has one higher educational establishment – Coleg Gwent at Usk which offers courses in farming, horticulture, equestrianism, rural activities and animal care.

Key Economic Characteristics

- 3.50 In ~~2009~~ **2011**, Monmouthshire had a working-age **total** population **aged 16-74** of ~~53,800~~ **66,107** (~~61.2%~~), of which ~~70.1%~~ **62.8%** were in employment – higher than the rates recorded in surrounding authorities and Wales as a whole (~~66.6%~~ **66.7%**).

- 3.51 Monmouthshire is reliant on the public sector and services for employment. The public administration, education and health sector accounts for the largest proportion of jobs (~~33.7%~~ **33.3%**). The distribution, **retail**, hotels and restaurants sector also accounts for a significant proportion of jobs in the County, with ~~28.6%~~ **27.4%** of Monmouthshire's jobs in this sector (~~ABI-2008 Business Register & Employment Survey 2012~~). There is a higher proportion employed in these sectors (~~62.3%~~ **60.7%**) compared with Wales as a whole (~~55.9%~~ **55.8%**). Tourism, as part of the services sector, is also important in the County accounting for ~~40.1%~~ **12.1%** of jobs, higher than the Welsh average (~~8.6%~~ **9.6%**) There are fewer jobs in energy /water and manufacturing than there are proportionally in Wales.
- 3.52 The number of people economically inactive in the County stood at ~~13,800~~ **20,835** in the year to ~~September 2010~~ **2011** which equates to ~~25.4%~~ **31.5%** of the working population **aged 16-74**. This is below the Welsh average (~~27.3%~~ **39.5%**) and those recorded in neighbouring authorities. At ~~February 2014~~ **October 2013**, Monmouthshire had a claimant count unemployment rate of ~~2.2%~~ **2.0%** - again this is significantly lower than that recorded in both Wales (~~4.0%~~ **3.4%**) and neighbouring authorities. There are, however, higher pockets of unemployment within parts of the County.
- 3.53 The County had ~~3,840~~ **3,720** active enterprises in ~~2009~~ **2011**, nearly a third **27%** of which were in the property and business services sector. ~~Over 97%~~ **Nearly 99%** of the County's businesses are classified as small (i.e. up to 49 employees). Over the 10 years to ~~2008~~ **2011**, the County recorded a higher business stock growth (~~25.8%~~ **11.7%**) than Wales as a whole (~~18.5%~~ **9.1%**). Monmouthshire has experienced growth in ~~six~~ **eight** of ~~nine~~ **fourteen** sectors, with the greatest increases in the ~~banking, finance and insurance and public administration,~~ **property business services, hotels and catering and** education and health sectors, while there has been a decline in the number of manufacturing businesses.
- 3.54 Jobs in Monmouthshire are characterised by low average wages **when compared with the average wage of those resident in the County**.
- 3.55 The ~~2010~~ **2011** Annual Labour Force Survey/**Annual Population Survey**, which is a sample of the working population, indicates that ~~57%~~ **56%** of the County's residents work in the area – less than the Welsh average (~~74%~~ **72%**). The remaining ~~43%~~ **44%** of residents work outside of Monmouthshire, indicating high levels of out-commuting. The main areas for out-commuting are Newport (~~3,500~~ **4,200**), Torfaen (~~2,000~~ **2,500**) and Cardiff (~~2,200~~ **1,700**), with a further ~~7,000~~ **7,500** commuting outside Wales, reflecting Monmouthshire's location as a border authority.
- 3.56 Overall, Monmouthshire had a net outflow of ~~1,900~~ **400** commuters – with ~~17,400~~ **17,900** commuting out of the Authority to work and ~~15,500~~ **17,500** commuting in. There is significant in-commuting from Newport (~~2,600~~ **2,400**), Torfaen (~~2,400~~ **2,500**), Blaenau Gwent (~~2,700~~ **2,200**), other Welsh authorities (~~2,800~~ **4,500**) and from outside of Wales (~~5,000~~ **5,900**). In addition, a relatively high proportion of Monmouthshire's residents travel long distances to work, with a high usage of the

private car. Heavy reliance on the private car and limited opportunities for public transport is a particular issue in rural areas.

- 3.57 The longer term trend, however, indicates that there have been more people commuting into the County than commuting out, with the number of years of net in-commuting outnumbering those of net out-commuting over the period ~~2003-2010~~ **2002-2011**.
- 3.58 Notably, ~~42.9%~~ **8.9%** of the working age population worked from home in ~~2004~~ **2011**, with the majority of home working concentrated in rural Monmouthshire.
- 3.59 Tourism plays a significant part in the Monmouthshire economy particularly in assisting the diversification of the rural economy. There were over two million visitors to the County in ~~2010~~ **2012**, with tourist expenditure amounting to nearly ~~£150m~~ **£158m** thereby supporting ~~3,000~~ **2,700** jobs⁴. The majority of direct tourist expenditure in the County is accounted for by food and drink, followed by accommodation and shopping.
- 3.60 The Monmouthshire Employment Sites and Premises Review carried out in 2008 noted that the County had almost 70 hectares of employment land made up of 17 allocated sites in the Unitary Development Plan. Based on a historic take-up rate of 1.95 hectares per year, therefore, there was enough land to meet need to 2021 and far beyond. The majority of this employment land (39.02 hectares, or 56%) was in Magor, allied to the M4 corridor. There were issues regarding the distribution of employment land, therefore, and, while Monmouth and Abergavenny had reasonable amounts of land (7.8 hectares and 6.5 hectares respectively), one of the main settlements, Chepstow, had only one site of 0.3 hectares remaining. Subsequently, a resurvey identified that an additional 14.3 hectares could be added to the land supply in Chepstow, although 10.3 hectares of this has received planning permission for new premises to accommodate the expansion and possible relocation of Fairfield Mabey from the town centre.
- 3.61 The main retail centres in the County are at Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow and Monmouth. There are local centres at Magor, Raglan and Usk and a number of smaller neighbourhood centres in the main towns of Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow and Monmouth.
- 3.62 Over the past 10 years there has been a marked decrease in the amount of floor space accounted for by convenience uses in the central shopping areas of the main towns. There has also been a decline in the amount of vacant floor space over this period. Average footfall in the main retail centres has remained fairly stable over this period, although Abergavenny has experienced a decline since 2000. This indicates that in general the town centres are reasonably healthy, although they remain vulnerable to out-of-town retail developments.

⁴ STEAM Report ~~2010~~ **2012**

SPATIAL ISSUES

3.63 While each town and village in Monmouthshire is distinctive and has its own particular issues that need to be dealt with in the LDP, it is considered appropriate to conceptualise the local planning authority area as having three broad categories of settlement:

- Monmouthshire's historic market towns of Abergavenny, Chepstow and Monmouth. These are the County's longest established settlements that have developed over many years to have a wide range of opportunities for employment, shopping, community facilities and public transport.
- The newer settlements in the south of the County Severnside where recent high levels of residential growth have taken place without the employment local jobs and community infrastructure facilities to match. The area benefits, however, from a strategic location at the 'Gateway' to Wales with good access to the employment markets of Newport, Cardiff and Bristol. These are the 'Severnside' or M4 corridor group of settlements of Caldicot/Portskewett, Magor/Undy, Rogiet and Sudbrook.
- The rural area, containing the small town of Usk and larger villages of Raglan and Penperlleni but mainly consisting of a large number of small villages, widely dispersed around the County and lying in areas recognised for their high quality landscape, including part of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The County's Main Settlements

3.64 Chepstow in ~~2004~~ 2011 had a population of ~~40,800~~ 12,350, living in just under ~~4,800~~ 5,400 dwellings. It is well located on the motorway system with good road (including bus) links to Newport, Cardiff, the Bristol area, and other parts of England. It also has good rail links to Newport, Cardiff and Gloucester. There are consequently substantial daily flows of commuters to and from the town. The A48, which provides the main link between the southern part of the Forest of Dean and the motorway network, passes through the town and creates problems of community severance. Part of the route is also designated as an Air Quality Management Area.

3.65 Chepstow has a substantial employment base, and areas close to the town centre contain major industrial employers. It acts as a retail, recreational, health care and educational centre for its hinterland, which extends over the border into Gloucestershire and, within Monmouthshire, includes the villages of Mathern, Pwllmeyric, Shirenewton and St. Arvans. Chepstow is also an important tourist destination, particularly focussing on its nationally important Castle and the town's position as a gateway for Tintern and the Wye Valley. The town centre benefited from environmental improvements in 2005. The town centre itself is a Conservation Area. Development in recent years, for housing and employment, has mostly been at some distance from the town centre and rail station, but relatively close to the motorway junction.

- 3.66** Chepstow ~~has~~ had a level of self-containment (the ratio of residents living and working in the settlement to the total of number of residents living in that settlement who are in work) of 48% in 2001. 41% of the workforce ~~travels~~ travelled less than 5 kilometres to work.
- 3.67** The town adjoins, across the River Wye, the villages of Tutshill, Sedbury and Beachley, where policy decisions are a matter for Forest of Dean District Council ~~within the overall Regional Spatial Strategy for South West England~~. Forest of Dean ~~has recently published and consulted on its Publication Draft~~ adopted its Core Strategy in February 2012, which contains proposals for only limited development in those villages but substantial growth at Lydney, which also connects to the motorway system through Chepstow. Monmouthshire Council has commented on this to Forest of Dean.
- 3.68** Chepstow is proposed in the Wales Spatial Plan as a sustainable location for further growth. Future development is constrained by a number of factors. The area immediately north of the town lies within the Wye Valley AONB. Land to the west of the A466 is currently protected by a 'green wedge' policy to ensure the town's physical separation from Pwllmeyric and Mathern. South of the A48, the undeveloped land is also within a conservation area and, in part, within a designated historic park or garden.
- 3.69** Abergavenny, including Mardy, in ~~2004~~ 2011 had a population of ~~43,600~~ 14,000, living in around ~~5,700~~ 6,600 dwellings. It has good public transport links by rail to Newport, Cardiff, and the Midlands of England, and good road links to Cwmbran, Newport, Monmouth and the motorway system. It has a particularly important strategic role on the Heads of the Valleys road and through its links to Brecon and Mid Wales.
- 3.70** The town has a significant local employment base, including high proportions working in the health and education sectors and a growing emphasis on food production and processing. It acts as a retail, health, education and cultural centre for an extensive rural area, including the eastern part of the Brecon Beacons National Park and the north-western part of Monmouthshire. The town is attractive to tourists, particularly with the growth of its annual food festival. Regeneration of the centre is taking place, with the proposed redevelopment of the cattle market which is to be relocated. The Brewery Yard, to rear of the Town Hall and Indoor Market has been recently redeveloped. The town centre itself is a Conservation Area.
- 3.71** Abergavenny ~~has~~ had a self-containment ratio of 53% in 2001 ~~with~~ and 45% of the workforce ~~travelling~~ travelled less than 5 kilometres to work.
- 3.72** The A465 separates the town from Llanfoist to the south, and partly defines the town edge to the east. The built-up area to the north and west extends close to the National Park boundary, and Llanfoist adjoins the Blaenavon World Heritage Site. The floodplain of the River Usk is another constraint on development to the south of the town and at Llanfoist. Despite these constraints, Abergavenny is proposed in the Wales Spatial Plan as a sustainable location for further growth.

- 3.73** Llanfoist is a village that had ~~870~~ 1,200 people living in ~~360~~ 550 dwellings in ~~2004~~ 2011, although in recent years it has taken some of Abergavenny's suburban growth and also contains a supermarket that serves the town as a whole, together with the surrounding area.
- 3.74** Monmouth in ~~2004~~ 2011 had a population of ~~8,900~~ 10,100 living in almost ~~4,000~~ around 4,500 dwellings. It acts as the main retail, educational, and cultural centre for an extensive rural area, including much of north-eastern and central Monmouthshire, and extending into the Forest of Dean and Herefordshire. In comparison with other towns in Monmouthshire it is the most self-sufficient in employment terms, although its key strategic location on the road network between Newport, Abergavenny and the Midlands has also encouraged the growth of long distance road commuting. In 2001 ~~it has~~ it had a self-containment ratio of 60% ~~with~~ and 44% of the workforce ~~travelling~~ travelled less than 5 kilometres to work. Although the town is not connected to the rail network, it has good bus services to the South Wales cities and into Gloucestershire and Herefordshire.
- 3.75** The town centre, with a relatively large number and good range of shops and restaurants, and a theatre, cinema, and museum, is an attractive focus for the surrounding area. The town centre itself is a Conservation Area. In 2004, a second bridge over the River Monnow into the town centre was opened, enabling improved access and the pedestrianisation of the historic bridge. The town is located on the edge of the Wye Valley AONB, which immediately adjoins the built-up area, and is an important centre for tourist visits.
- 3.76** The A40 separates the town centre from the River Wye. Away from the historic centre, development has historically taken place avoiding areas with the greatest risk of flooding, in three suburbs – to the north in the Osbaston area, to the south east across the Wye at Wyesham, and to the south west and west at Overmonnow, including the recently developed Rockfield estate.
- 3.77** Future development at Monmouth is constrained by a number of factors. There are extensive areas of flood plain close to the town centre, in the Wye valley between the centre and Wyesham, and in the Monnow valley between the Rockfield road (B4233) and Osbaston area. The Wye Valley AONB adjoins the town in the Wyesham area.
- 3.78** Caldicot in ~~2004~~ 2011 had a population of just ~~under 10,000~~ over 9,600 living in just ~~over 4,000~~ under 4,200 dwellings. It is the main town in the M4 Corridor ('Severnside'). To the east the town effectively joins the village of Portskewett – around ~~1,550~~ 1,300 people living in just ~~over~~ under 600 dwellings. The village of Sudbrook is nearby with just over ~~400~~ 300 people living in ~~440~~ 130 dwellings. To the west, Caldicot is separated by an important green wedge from Rogiet (~~1600~~ 1800 people living in ~~640~~ 730 dwellings), which in turn is separated by a green wedge from the single

built-up area of Magor with Undy to the west (together having a population of just under 6,000 people in ~~2,250~~ 2,400 dwellings).

- 3.79** The area is very well located on the motorway system, with good road (including bus) links to Newport, Cardiff, the Bristol area, and other parts of England. However, the only motorway junction is at Magor. Caldicot and Rogiet (at Severn Tunnel Junction station) have rail links to Newport, Cardiff, Bristol and elsewhere.
- 3.80** The area has an important role as the gateway to Wales on the M4 and rail system. Substantial recent development has occurred in Caldicot, Magor, Undy, Rogiet and Portskewett. Caldicot and Magor have significant employment bases, although they also have the characteristics of a 'dormitory' area with high amounts of out-commuting. Despite the low levels of self-containment, however, the Severnside area is extremely well located to the nearby employment markets of Newport, Cardiff and Bristol.
- 3.81** Caldicot town centre, with its educational and other facilities, serves the whole area but under-performs in retail terms. Local services and facilities also exist at Magor and to a lesser extent in the other villages. Although the area is not a major tourist destination, Caldicot Castle is an important local attraction.
- 3.82** Future development in Caldicot and the Severnside area is constrained by a number of factors, including the M4 and M48 to the north and the railway line, the Gwent Levels and tidal flood plain to the south.
- 3.83** Within the central area of Monmouthshire, the two largest settlements are Usk and Raglan. Usk in ~~2004~~ 2011 had a population of about ~~2,300~~ 2,800 in just ~~over~~ ~~1,100~~ 1,200 dwellings. Its town centre serves a wide rural hinterland, although it lacks many of the facilities of larger towns, such as a supermarket and secondary school. Raglan is a smaller centre of about ~~1,145~~ 1,180 population living in just under ~~500~~ 580 dwellings. Both Usk and Raglan are well located in relation to the road system and have good bus links, especially on the Newport to Monmouth route. Raglan has good links via the A40 and A449 to Newport, Abergavenny and Monmouth. Usk is close to the A449 and also to Pontypool. However, neither settlement is connected to the rail network. Both settlements have a role as tourist centres, and Raglan Castle is an important attraction.
- 3.84** Penperlleni has a population of around ~~1,200~~ 1,300 in around 570 dwellings. It is also a relatively large village, north-west of Usk between Abergavenny and Pontypool, and has mostly been developed relatively recently. It has a good range of village facilities and good bus links.
- 3.85** There is significant employment at Usk, but all three settlements are attractive to long distance road commuters. In 2001 ~~Levels~~ levels of self-containment are stood at just under 40% in Usk, 35% in Raglan and 20% in Penperlleni.

3.86 If the settlements described above are excluded then there are only ~~three~~ five other villages in the Monmouthshire LPA area that have a population of over 500 – Caerwent (~~950~~ 1,030 in 2004 2011), Shirenewton/Mynyddbach (~~580~~ 660), Llandogo (550), Little Mill (510) and St Arvans (~~570~~ 760). There are ~~40~~ 11 other villages with a population of between 250 and 500 and ~~44~~ 9 with a population of between 100 and 250. This leaves ~~22~~ 18 further villages that have been identified in the Monmouthshire UDP as being suitable for development, although most of these would only have been considered appropriate for minor infill development.