

MONMOUTHSHIRE LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND CAPACITY

MAIN SETTLEMENT SUMMARIES

Report
for
Monmouthshire County Council

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. White Consultants were appointed on 28 May 2010 to provide summaries for the landscape sensitivity and capacity for each main settlement based on the final report in October 2009 and a workshop presentation in December 2009.
- 1.2. Each settlement is addressed in turn in alphabetical order. The terms used are the same as for the main landscape sensitivity and capacity report and definitions of high to low sensitivity and capacity can be found in the glossary in that report.

2. Abergavenny

Settlement Summary Description

- 2.1. Abergavenny is located at the junction of the A40[T] and the A465 in the Usk valley on the south eastern edge of the Black Mountains. It has been the largest town in Monmouthshire since the 16th century and acts as a commercial and social focus for the north western hinterland of the county and beyond.
- 2.2. The first evidence of settlement go back to the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. The Romans recognised the strategic importance of the location. A fort was built by the Usk and it was a centre for ironmaking. In Norman times a castle, Benedictine priory and the Church of St. John were established and the town grew to become an administrative, market and manufacturing centre.
- 2.3. Today there is still a livestock market in the town. The main focus and core, though, is along Cross Street, with its two/three storey shops and hotels and some fine buildings, some Georgian, dominated by the Town Hall with its distinctive landmark tower and copper roof. Other features include the church and remains of the priory and smaller narrow streets of character such as Nevill Street. Materials are primarily painted render with some stone. The castle is a focus for visitors lying on the edge of the Usk floodplain with the remnants of the town wall running to the west. Commercial enterprises and car parking have created awkward and unsightly back areas in places. The railway station on the Newport to Shrewsbury railway lies on the eastern edge of the town.
- 2.4. The town is well defined by the Usk floodplain to the south but has expanded predominantly in the 20th century to the north and west. The railway along with the steep sided Gavenny River valley provide a barrier to the east. The more genteel suburbs of the town rise north west towards Sugar Loaf Mountain. The Hill Education Centre in its grounds provides a soft edge to the town. The most recent housing estates have climbed the slopes to the north west. Overall, housing is broken up by larger uses such as the old hospital at Parc Pen-y-fal, the 'new' hospital at Nevill Hall with its chimney to the south west, schools and parks. Further development to the south of the Usk such as a superstore and housing is beginning to erode the separation between Llanfoist and the town, although the river corridor with its attractive stone bridge does form a break.

Landscape Character

- 2.5. The settlement lies on river terraces of sands and gravels, some of glacial origin, with the alluvial valley floor of the powerful River Usk to the south. The river cuts through the surrounding uplands to the west with the red sandstone mountains including the Sugar Loaf to the north and the limestone massif of the Bloreng to the south. To the east, there are the distinct outliers of the Black

Mountains- the Ysgyryd Fawr and Ysgyryd Fach, separated from the town by the Gavenny valley. The uplands, along with the Usk, define the character of the town forming a strong backcloth. A gentle saddle of land rises to the north separating the Usk and Monnow catchments.

- 2.6. The landscape is predominantly pastoral with well maintained irregular fields on the steeper slopes and damper areas, and rectilinear and arable use on the better drained gentle slopes. Boundaries tend to be low cut hedges with trees and some fences. There are small deciduous woodlands particularly along the watercourse corridors and higher hillsides but the most noticeable woodland is the plantation that clothes Ysgyrd Fach. Riparian vegetation along the Usk defines its course and is an important landscape element.

- 2.7. The A40[T] to the south creates a wide, busy, transport corridor which, with adjacent pylons, reduces the tranquillity of the southern environs of the town.

Main Constraints/Designations

- 2.8. The Brecon Beacons National Park wraps around the settlement from the Ysgyryd Fawr to the north west round to the Sugar Loaf, the Usk valley to the west and the Blorengge to the south. With the exception of the Hill Education Centre and Nevill Hall Hospital, the designation does not touch the town, separated by a buffer of fields. The Blaenavon World Heritage Site lies to the south encompassing the Blorengge. An SLA lies east of the railway line. There is an extensive Conservation Area which includes the core of the town, castle, Usk and valley floor south of the town and plus the older housing running up to the Sugar Loaf and also the old hospital. There are many listed buildings, mainly within the Conservation Area, but also surrounding the town such as at Llantilio Pertholey. The Usk is a pSAC and SSSI and there is floodplain along the river and to the north along the Afon Cibi. Amenity Open Space is located along parts of the Usk valley floor and in other open spaces, such as parts of the Gavenny valley.

Relationship of settlement to landscape

- 2.9. The town generally has a positive relationship with the Usk. The valley floor provides a very important green edge to the town providing a setting and allowing views to the town centre and local recreation as a green corridor. The town climbs to the west and north west but has a positive edge around the Hill Education Centre and settlement to the southwest. This provides a soft, well treed transition to the neat pastoral fields which form part of the setting of the mountains and the National Park. The town edge along the steep Gavenny valley sides provides an informal edge generally respecting the landform and integrated with tree cover.
- 2.10. The Nevill Hall Hospital complex provides a large cluster of buildings with a chimney which draw the eye in views across the Usk valley although is fairly well integrated by trees. The expansion of Llanfoist south of the Usk is reducing the separation between the settlements. The A40[T] forms an intrusive and noisy edge to the town to the south east. The more recent expansion of the settlement to the north west creates a noticeable and raw edge on the hill slopes and threatens to impinge adversely on the designated hillsides. Older housing on the northern edge of the town at Mardy is discreet but forms a bland linear edge.

Landscape sensitivity

- 2.11. There are four areas around the settlement that are considered to have high sensitivity. The hillsides associated with the Sugar Loaf in the National Park are prominent and open. The steep pastoral slopes to the south of Llanfoist form the

lower part of the Bloreng by the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal and are also prominent. The slopes of the Ysgyrd Fach provide a strong backcloth to the settlement to the east with intrinsic qualities of woodland and pasture. The River Usk valley floor/floodplain south of the town centre forms an important green corridor setting to the castle and listed buildings and is within the Conservation Area.

- 2.12. The rest of the surroundings to the settlement are considered to be high/medium sensitivity. The open countryside to the north and east is separated from the settlement by the railway and A465 Hereford road. It forms part of the setting to Ysgyrd Fawr in the National Park and to Ysgyrd Fach, and Coldbrook Park is a remnant historic park and garden to the south. The Gavenny Valley is steep sided with an attractive mosaic of woodland and pasture and an attractive watercourse. North of Abergavenny, the lower lying rural pastoral landscape provides part of the setting to the Ysgyrd Fawr and Black Mountains. The rural slopes directly north west and west of the settlement are open and prominent and lie adjacent to the Conservation Area.
- 2.13. To the south, the Usk valley floor forms part of the continuum of the unspoilt rural river corridor, partly floodplain, and lies in the National Park to the west. The southern slopes of the Usk valley provide a gap between Abergavenny and Llanfoist and contribute to the setting of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site, National Park and canal. The mosaic of woodland and small pastures have positive intrinsic qualities providing a transition from the valley floor to the upland of the Bloreng.

Landscape capacity for housing

- 2.14. There are two areas that are considered to have medium capacity. The area to the north of Mardy, though in the main acting as setting to the Black Mountains, includes an area adjacent to the settlement which is well contained by tree cover, south of Ty Gwyn Hall, which may be an opportunity. West of Llanfoist, the majority of the area is prominent as the lower slopes of the Bloreng but there may be an opportunity east of the plant nursery at a lower level.
- 2.15. Areas of medium/low capacity lie to the north east, west and south of the settlement. The Gavenny valley's small scale mosaic landscape with steep slopes would be unable to absorb large scale development but small-scale opportunities may exist. East of the A465, the open countryside is distinctly separated from the settlement providing the setting for the Ysgyrd Fawr. However, Maindiff Hospital may provide limited opportunities although constrained by the well treed parkland character which should be retained. The Usk valley floor and lower sides away from the town centre are generally constrained by rural character, the role as floodplain, and as green corridor although there may be limited opportunities in places close to the settlement edges.
- 2.16. Areas of low capacity are in many locations around the settlement indicating its constrained nature. The slopes to the north west and west towards the Sugar Loaf are an exposed and prominent location in, or directly adjacent to, the National Park. The narrow and steep Gavenny Valley running to the north to Llantilio Pertholey is intrinsically sensitive and acts as setting to the church. The open countryside east of the railway is mostly low capacity due to its clear separation from the settlement and its setting to Ysgyrd Fawr and the role of Ysgyrd Fach as backcloth to the town. The Usk valley floor is an open green corridor and mainly floodplain which act as a setting to the town and any development would significantly affect its character and reduce the gap between Abergavenny and Llanfoist. The steep slopes south of Llanfoist are

distinctly rural and unsuitable for housing adjacent to the National Park and canal.

3. Caldicot

Settlement Summary Description

- 3.1. Caldicot is a large commuter settlement located on B4245 but set between three major transport corridors- the M48 to the north, the mainline railway between London and Swansea directly to the south and the M4 further south bordering the Severn estuary. Its original core is to the east, once being a medieval township with a fine Marcher castle. Much of this remains and is a popular local visitor attraction set above the Nedern Brook within a well treed country park. The original core itself is linear and consists of church and two storey stone and render cottages with a mix of slate and pantile roofs, indicative of the location on the edge of the levels. The settlement expanded significantly in the 20th century largely consisting of estate housing development focussed on a new retail centre. Development appears only to be stopped by the M48 and railway. The commercial/industrial area to the south east joins the built form of the settlement to Portskewett.

Landscape Character

- 3.2. The settlement lies on land gently rising above the Gwent Levels on river terraces and moraines. Low rounded limestone hills lie just to the north and east with a quarry just to the north. The Nedern Brook with its distinctive, flat floodplain, cuts through the hills flowing to the Severn and defining the eastern edge of the settlement. Landcover to the east is dominated by pastoral fields with a mix of low cut and outgrown hedges and rough grazing in parts of the floodplain. Deciduous woodlands on small sinuous steep slopes define the edge of the Nedern valley floor. The levels to the south are relatively flat with reens, outgrown hedges and pylons. A golf course lies on the hills to the north, with maturing tree cover. The tranquillity of the overall area is significantly disrupted by the M4 as well as by the M48 to the north and the railway which cut east west through the landscape acting as significant barriers as well as corridors.

Main Constraints/Designations

- 3.3. The castle is a SAM and also part of a Conservation Area along with the old core of Caldicot. Other SAMs lie around the Nedern Brook valley sides. Listed buildings are scattered in and around the eastern edge of the settlement. The levels to the south are a landscape of outstanding historic interest and partly SSSI. Floodplain is evident on the levels but also along the Nedern Brook valley floor [an SSSI to the north east] and to the south west of the settlement. Dewstow House on rising ground to the north west is listed and has an associated listed historic park and garden. Green wedge designation lies to the west between railway and M48 and to the east north of Portskewett. Allotments and open spaces to the north are amenity open space.

Relationship of settlement to landscape

- 3.4. The castle and its surrounding well treed grounds/country park form an attractive edge to the settlement with the green corridor of Nedern Brook running north with its distinctive flat valley floor and steep wooded slopes in places. The old core of the settlement merges into this informally. The open

space and allotments on the northern edge form a tree edged buffer which is important in containing the settlement and screening views from the north.

- 3.5. The mainline railway contains the settlement physically to the south which is positive although there are clear views of the estate housing which, as to the west, forms a relatively harsh and unmitigated straight edge. The commercial and industrial units to the south east are partly mitigated by planting but are apparent on the approaches. The settlement breaches the skyline of rising ground when viewed from the north and east and this is likely to be compounded by development allocation spilling down the hill eastwards towards Nedern Brook, although this will be halted and mitigated to an extent by existing valley side woodland.

Landscape sensitivity

- 3.6. Three areas are considered to be of medium sensitivity. The gently undulating area between Caldicot and Rogiet forms an important pastoral green gap between the settlements, maintaining their identity, but is affected by adjacent housing estates and the M48. The area east of the Nedern Brook valley floor is sensitive to the north due to valley side woodland and well maintained pastures but this reduces to the south west where there is greater influence of development in a contained valley with slightly degraded boundaries. Caerwent Quarry is a degraded landscape although regrowth of vegetation softens the stone faces to an extent.
- 3.7. Most of the rest of the settlement environs are considered to be high/medium sensitivity. The Nedern valley acts as setting to the castle and other SAMs as well as having a distinct valley floor and floodplain [an SSSI], prominent wooded valley sides and is used partly for recreation. The open space to the north of the settlement forms an important treed buffer between the M48 and housing which also is locally used. The open countryside to the north of the M48 is separated from the settlement by the road, is often prominent hillside/backcloth and includes skyline. The levels, north and south of the railway line are floodplain, used for recreation, and, to the south form part of the visual continuum of the levels landscape along the Severn estuary.
- 3.8. The castle and surrounds are considered to be high sensitivity due to the historic significance and setting of SAM and listed buildings. The levels south of the railway are also considered high sensitivity due to their distinct flat, open character, separated from the settlement.

Landscape capacity for housing

- 3.9. One area is considered to have medium capacity. This is east of the commercial estate, east of Crick Road, due to its enclosure by landform and visual association with the industrial estate and housing.
- 3.10. Some areas are medium/low capacity. The valley side of the Nedern Brook is prominent in views from the east with woodland on steep slopes. The valley north of the M48 is partly floodplain and acts as open countryside which housing would disrupt. The quarry is in open countryside and acts as skyline though may have limited rural housing opportunities.
- 3.11. The green gap between Rogiet and Caldicot is also medium/low capacity and should be retained for its visual and amenity function, as well as acting as floodplain to the south. However, the estate settlement edge to Caldicot is stark and abrupt. The only development that may be acceptable may be one which improves the settlement edge, retaining the vast bulk of the area as multi-functional open space [eg for food, recreation, visual amenity, floodplain and nature conservation etc].

- 3.12. Most areas are considered to be low capacity for housing. The castle and environs including the Nedern Brook valley are highly sensitive due to the historic designations and their setting, the SSSI and floodplain, as well as the local recreational use, which development would adversely affect. The green gap between the settlement and M48 has no capacity for housing as an important locally used green buffer on a skyline. The open countryside to the north of the M48 is prominent and provides the setting for historic features. The Gwent levels to the south are distinctly separated from the settlement by the railway and M4 and any development would compromise this pattern. It would also detract from the openness and distinctive coastal landscape character as well as encroach on floodplain in most parts.

4. Chepstow

Settlement Summary Description

- 4.1. Chepstow lies on the A48 linking Gloucester and Cardiff at the once lowest crossing point on the River Wye. The M48 now passes south of the town running across the Wye and Severn on the original Severn Bridge. The A466 runs to the west of the town linking it with Monmouth. Chepstow's strategic location has spawned forts from the Iron Age at the Bulwarks, through Roman times to the dramatic Norman castle on a bluff above the river north of the town centre. Over the centuries Chepstow has thrived as a market town and light industrial centre and has also served as a port. The Gloucester railway has also contributed to the town's prosperity.
- 4.2. There is an extensive historic town centre focussed on a linear series of streets running down to the distinctive iron town bridge and the Wye. There are two and three storey buildings with a mix of character including Georgian. Recent town centre improvements have enhanced the public realm. Industry and commerce uses and buildings still feature strongly along the Wye itself, south of the town centre. In the 20th century the settlement has expanded to the north and west, but to the south in particular, partly as a dormitory settlement for Bristol. Recent development is extending west beyond the A466 into the valley of the Mounton Brook. Commercial warehousing has extended the built form south of the M48 onto the levels.

Landscape Character

- 4.3. The settlement lies on the western slopes of Wye which are of conglomerate and limestone expressed in a series of river cliffs. There are lower lying flat areas in the valley south of the town bridge. To the north of the settlement the land rises towards the Trellech plateau with wide views to the south and west. To the west the land rolls over towards the catchment of the Mounton Brook. The slopes become gentler south of Pwllmeyric becoming part of the Gwent levels which wrap around the settlement to the south.
- 4.4. There are extensive parklands with mature trees and pasture at Wyelands to the west and Piercefield to the north. The latter is now partly taken up by the Chepstow racecourse with its stands and gentle grassed slopes. The valley of the Mounton Brook is a mosaic of woodland and pasture on rolling landform. The Wye valley is enclosed with cliffs and woods on high points and slopes which enhance its dramatic qualities. The Caldicot levels wrap around the settlement to the south along the Severn Estuary and the Wye banks. Much of the open space near the Wye is used for informal recreation and sport.

Main Constraints/Designations

- 4.5. The Wye Valley AONB runs north of the town bridge including the castle and wraps around the northern part of the settlement to include the Mownton Brook valley. The area of outstanding historic interest hugs the Wye valley itself. The town has a Conservation Area with numerous listed buildings and the castle and the Bulwarks fort are SAMs. There is a Conservation Area around Wyelands abutting the A466 and associated with this parkland and Piercefield Park there are many listed buildings and structures. The Wye is a pSAC and SSSI running onto the RAMSAR site of the Severn Estuary. The levels are floodplain which also impinges on the riverside in the town. There is a green wedge to the west of the settlement and amenity open spaces to the south and east.

Relationship of settlement to landscape

- 4.6. The towns relationship with the Wye is dramatic. The castle on its bluff overlooking the river and dominating the town, and the old bridge, are highlights. The river side is generally positive around the town centre but deteriorates in places with commercial buildings not addressing the river attractively. The wooded outcrops around the Bulwarks are positive elements as is the open space along the river from the south. The western boundary of the town is highly linear, hemmed in by the A466, but this provides a clean cut buffer and edge with the historic park to the west. The race course is a positive transitional edge to the settlement to the north although its associated car parking is a minor local detractor.
- 4.7. The southern edge of the settlement with commercial properties adjacent to the M48 is raw and the warehouses on the levels impinge on the character and openness of the area. The expansion of housing to the north west is starting to impinge on the Mownton Brook valley and the landscapes to the west within the AONB.

Landscape sensitivity

- 4.8. Two areas are considered to be of high sensitivity. The open parkland of Piercefield Park with the adjacent wooded steep slopes to the north of the settlement form an important part of the Wye valley and are in the AONB. The levels to the south are of historic interest and are floodplain, with sensitive features such as reens, and form the eastern extremity of the open levels landscape, acting as a distinctive setting to the estuary.
- 4.9. The rest of the environs of Chepstow are considered to be high/medium sensitivity. The race course is an open green sweep and forms part of Piercefield Park visually. The north western areas form part of the Wye Valley AONB and are undulating and hilly rural pastoral areas enclosed by strong woodland with some long views to the west across Mownton Brook valley and further south across to the Severn Estuary. The Conservation Areas of Mownton, around Wyelands, with its parkland and listed buildings, have sensitive settings. The latter is open and sweeps down to the levels with long views south. Mathern is also a Conservation Area with historic character set with open countryside on a slight rise above the levels. The green corridor along the Wye to the south east forms an important green corridor along the river and is well used for informal recreation.

Landscape capacity for housing

- 4.10. An area of high/medium capacity is located on the north western edge of the settlement and is apparently under pressure from recent housing development. The rural pastoral area is undulating and hilly, enclosed by strong woodland to

the north, but with some long views to the west across Moun-ton Brook valley and further south across to the Severn Estuary. It acts as a gap between the town and Moun-ton Conservation Area and part is within the AONB.

- 4.11. Areas with low capacity are around Piercefield Park and the racecourse due their openness and the effects on the setting of the parkland, Wye Valley and the AONB. The mosaic area to the west is sensitive due to its wooded character and the setting of the Moun-ton Conservation Area as well as being in the AONB. The Wyelands Conservation Area is open with parkland and along with the rural Mathern Conservation Area with its listed buildings would be sensitive to housing development in their settings. The Levels would be unable to accommodate housing in floodplain along the Severn and Wye due to openness, historic value and sensitive features such as reens.

5. Magor and Undy

Settlement Summary Description

- 5.1. Magor and Undy are located south of the M4 west of the second Severn crossing on land rising up from the Gwent levels. The villages used to be distinct medieval settlements but they are now merged into one by significant 20th century housing estate and ribbon development. Settlement has been located in the area since prehistory and was a medieval borough of some status related to mainly to a port on the Severn. The church of St Mary and the remains of a Procurators house at Magor bear witness to this.
- 5.2. The B4245 acts as a thread running through the main settlement but without an apparent centre or focus. The clustered core of Magor with its square lies to the south, sandwiched between the road and the mainline railway. Slate and pantile roofed 2 storey cottages with mainly render and stone walls give a distinctive levels character. The old smaller, linear village of Undy lies south of the railway focussed on a modest church, St Mary's, but is joined to the whole by ribbon development.
- 5.3. The most recent housing development rises to the east of the settlement and is prominent when viewed from the M4. A line of fields separate this and other housing from the motorway itself. Also prominent from the M4 is commercial development to the east focussed on a brewery but now expanded to include office development on the motorway junction. Services lie to the north of the junction, surrounded by strong screening embankments and planting.

Landscape Character

- 5.4. The gently rising and undulating landscape of low rounded hills is formed from limestone and glacial outwash and borders the alluvial coastal plain of the Gwent Levels to the south. St Brides Brook cuts through the higher hills from the north and dissects the settlement just east of the centre of Magor running south towards the Severn estuary. This has a small floodplain which broadens out to cover all the levels to the south. The land cover to the north and east of the settlement is open arable or improved pasture with low hedges and a limited number of trees but with a wooded backcloth to the north. To the west, Wilcrick Hill is a prominent knoll with a wooded summit surrounded by pastures. To the south, on the levels, the fields are drained with reens lined with overgrown hedges and willows producing a distinctive, more enclosed landscape. Smaller irregular fields lie around Undy with rectilinear fields to the east and west.

There is a small incursion of levels north of the railway which breaks up the settlement form. The M4 is a strong linear element to the north and, with the pylons to the south, reduce the tranquillity of the area.

Main Constraints/Designations

- 5.5. Special Landscape Areas lie to the north of the M4 and south of Undy and the railway line on the levels. The latter is also floodplain and SSSI and a landscape of outstanding historic interest for the most part. The centre of Magor is a Conservation Area and boasts several listed buildings which are also evident in and around Undy and to the east of Magor. Green wedge designation lies to the east between the railway and M4/M48.

Relationship of settlement to landscape

- 5.6. The settlement sits on slightly higher ground than the levels and, where there is loose form on its southern boundaries and along the stream corridor, there is generally a positive edge. The relatively straight unmitigated edge of housing development to the east is negative, being prominent in views from the east including the M4 on its gateway stretch into Wales. The brewery development impinges on Wilcrick Hill but has some design coherence. The recent commercial development on the junction is prominent and does not complement views to the hill from the M4. The services are now well screened from wider view and are a neutral element within the open countryside. The green corridor of rising land between the brewery and settlement positively buffers the settlement to the east.

Landscape sensitivity

- 5.7. Three areas are considered to be medium sensitivity- the strip of land between the M4 and the settlement edge, a small enclave of levels to the south of the settlement and former railway land to the east. The land by the M4 has a slightly degraded urban fringe character with limited tranquillity. More sensitive parts of this area are the valley sides and floor of St Bride's Brook and the skyline to the east. The disused railway sidings to the east are overgrown with vegetation and are of degraded character used for trail biking.
- 5.8. The rest of the surroundings of the settlement to the north, east and west are considered to be high/medium sensitivity. The rolling countryside to the north is considered to be of positive character open to view from the south and separated from the settlement. The western areas act as setting to Wilcrick Hill and provide a positive gap between industry and the settlement. The eastern areas provide a green gap of open countryside between Undy and the M4/Rogiet, overlooked by the M4.
- 5.9. The Gwent Levels are considered to be high sensitivity due to their distinct character of fields drained by reens on the floodplain.

Landscape capacity for housing

- 5.10. One area has medium capacity- the strip of land between the M4 and the settlement edge. This may be able to accommodate some development provided that buffers are maintained with the M4 and the skyline to the east and river valley to the west are avoided.
- 5.11. Areas to the north, east and the green gap to the west are considered to be medium/low capacity. This is because of their roles as green buffers to the east and west, the separation of open countryside from the settlement by the M4 to the north, and the potential prominence of development in these areas.

- 5.12. The area from Wilcrick Hill to the west wrapping around the southern edge of the settlement to just north of the railway line to the east is considered to be low capacity. This is due to the intrinsically sensitive landscape of the levels, the breaking up of the line of settlement north of the railway, the setting of Wilcrick Hill, and desirability of not encouraging linear development along the railway line to the east.
- 5.13. The main opportunity in landscape terms therefore lies to the north of the settlement in the shorter term. The area to the east may have potential in the longer term but is a prominent gateway area to Wales highly visible from the M4 and would have to reflect this while retaining a meaningful gap with Rogiet.

6. Monmouth

Settlement Summary Description

- 6.1. Monmouth lies at the confluence of the Wye and Monnow rivers on the A40[T] between Abergavenny and Ross on Wye. It is an historic town, formerly a Roman base and a Norman border stronghold, at a strategic location at two river crossing points and on a key communication route. The town was once an iron making centre and in post-medieval times became known for woollen manufacture and leather. The town was once the county town and still contains many expressions of its importance.
- 6.2. The castle, now used as a regimental HQ, lies high above a bend on the River Monnow. The town walls are extant in places and the distinctive defensive arched Monnow bridge is a local landmark and a gateway to the west of the town centre. The fine wide shopping street of Monnow Street has many fine rendered buildings between 2 and 4 storeys high, culminating in the town square and attractive stone Shire Hall and Punch House pub. The spire of the church of St Mary acts as a focal point to the north east while the wooded hillside of St Dial's Wood acts as a visual stop to the south west. The surrounding tight irregular street pattern has a strong historic character. Monmouth School is an imposing presence in the south eastern part of the town centre, visible from the busy dualled A40[T], which squeezes between the town and the River Wye and its narrow stone bridge. The town centre is partly buffered from the A40[T] by the playing fields at Chippenham with their surrounding trees.
- 6.3. The town has expanded incrementally, mainly in the 20th century, to absorb the settlements of Osbaston to the north, Wyesham across the Wye to the east and Overmonnow to the south west. The ribbon development on the ridge to Buckholt is particularly prominent. The housing estates overall have a limited sense of place. Commercial development lies on flat land to the east at Wonastow and along the Wye at Wyesham. A narrow corridor of green remains along the Wye either side of the bridge. To the north, the settlement encloses the sweep of the River Monnow and its strong green corridor.

Landscape Character

- 6.4. The town is characterised by distinct valleys surrounded by a strong backcloth of hills. The valley floors are alluvial while the settlement lies on sand and gravel river terraces. The wide and powerful Wye has a flat open floodplain south of the town while the River Monnow has gently sloping valley sides. The surrounding hills are old red sandstone. The Kymin is particularly pronounced and prominent to the east with its wooded mosaic character and distinctive cottages high on the hill. The steep, partly wooded, ridge to the north rises towards Buckholt. To the south, the hills and valley sides are lower, although

the minor steep ridge of St Dials Wood to the south is very important in enclosing, and acting as a backcloth to the settlement. The A40[T] has to pass through a short tunnel to negotiate the landform. Kings Wood to the west is also a positive backcloth with gently sloping arable and pastoral field rising up to it. Farming is mainly pastoral with arable on gentle sloping well drained areas generally with low cut hedges, some with trees, or fences such as south of Wyesham. In addition to the surrounding hills, woodland can also be found on the steep valley sides adjacent to the Monnow, north of the town.

Main Constraints/Designations

- 6.5. The area is covered by many constraints. The Wye Valley AONB includes the Wye valley to the north east and south east but excludes Wyesham and the Wye corridor adjacent to the settlement. The Lower Wye Valley Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest includes the town as well as the Wye valley. An SLA wraps around the town from the north to the west and south linking into the AONB and including the River Monnow valley. The castle is a SAM. Conservation Area status covers the town core, Overmonnow and extends northwards to include the River Monnow and part of its valley floor. There are numerous listed buildings in the Conservation Area and occasionally outside including the bridges over the Wye and Priory Farm. The Wye is an SSSI and the valley floors are floodplains. A SINC lies at Wonastow field. Playings fields are generally Amenity Open Spaces including Chippenham, as is the green corridor running north of the town along the Monnow valley.

Relationship of settlement to landscape

- 6.6. The town has an attractive and generally positive relationship with River Monnow and its green corridor to the north of the town which penetrates into the town centre with views out and public access. Key landmarks are the church of St Marys, the castle and the Monnow bridge. Views to the hillsides around the town are an important part of its character along streets and across green spaces. The fields and open spaces along the Wye form an important green corridor between the settlement and Wyesham, which though impinged upon by development and the A40[T], provide a setting for the river and National Trail and allow views along the valley and to the surrounding hillsides. The ridge with St Dial's Wood provides a very positive closure of the view from Monnow Street and the ridge forms an important physical limit to the town to the south. Housing in large gardens along Watery Lane to the west provides a green edge to the settlement with established gardens and vegetation in large house plots.
- 6.7. Wyesham has expanded up the hillsides towards the Kymin and to the south east and the industrial uses near the Wye are unsightly, both impinging on the character of the Wye Valley. The A40[T] is a major detractor and reduces the tranquillity of this edge of the town. The ribbon development on the ridge skyline on the Hereford Road towards Buckholt is prominent. The industrial estate at Wonastow is a minor detractor to the west. The recent housing to the north forms a raw settlement edge at present.

Landscape sensitivity

- 6.8. Two areas are considered to have medium sensitivity. They lie adjacent to the expansion of the town to the north and west of Wonastow. Though the Offa's Dyke National Trail passes through the area it is generally contained by landform to the north and west and most of the fields are rationalised arable fields adjacent to a raw settlement edge to the north or commercial estate to the south. There are smaller irregular fields with strong hedgerows with some intrinsic character. The land rises to the west towards Kings Wood and is considered less sensitive in the flatter areas to the east.

- 6.9. There are four separate areas considered to be of high sensitivity. The wooded mosaic slopes of Kings Wood to the west, St Dial's Wood to the south and land rising towards the Kymin to the east form positive, unspoilt prominent backcloths to the settlement. The valley floor of the River Wye to the south forms a strong green corridor, partly floodplain, separating Monmouth and Wyesham and acting as a distinct setting to the river and view corridor with distinct features such as a viaduct.
- 6.10. All other areas are high/medium sensitivity. The river corridor along the River Monnow to the north forms an important setting to the town core and acts as a view corridor penetrating the settlement and is used for recreation. The rising land acts as an unspoilt skyline when viewed from the east and west and further north separates the settlement from the rural area around Rockfield. The River Trothy corridor to the south has a distinctly rural, intimate character and is separated from the settlement by a wooded ridge, although has reduced tranquillity next to the A40[T]. The road also reduces the tranquillity of land west of the River Wye but the area acts as part of an important green corridor along the river, acting as setting for the Wye Valley Walk and separating the two settlements. The areas on the low valley sides to the south also perform these functions and lie partly within the AONB. The rural ridge slopes east of the settlement are locally prominent and open with sensitive features such as Dixon Conservation Area and the Priory farm house. The hill and valley sides to the north east are well managed open countryside.

Landscape capacity for housing

- 6.11. Two areas are considered to have medium capacity. The area west of Wonastow has some capacity providing development avoids the rising land to the west and avoids significant effects on Offa's Dyke footpath and the SINC. The already allocated site north of housing at Wonastow is considered acceptable but further housing should be avoided closer to the National Trail or near to Rockfield Road.
- 6.12. There is a sweep of land considered to be of medium/low capacity running along the Monnow valley penetrating into the town from the north. It is a strong green, rural corridor which has maintained its integrity between the river and Rockfield Road and allows views out from the town core. It also forms an unspoilt local skyline and has sensitive elements such as listed structures, woodland on steep valley sides and floodplain. Overall, housing expansion in the area would adversely affect the area's integrity and qualities and it therefore only has very limited opportunities for carefully sited single dwellings of rural character.
- 6.13. All other land is considered to be of low capacity. The hillsides surrounding the town including Kings Wood, St Dial's Wood, the Kymin, and east of the Hereford Road are considered to be prominent and open to view. The Wye valley corridors are also open and provide an essential setting to the river, town and a separation between settlements, as well as serving partly as floodplain, which housing would adversely affect. The gently rising land around Croft-y-Bwla is highly rural, separating the town from the rural hinterland to the north while the rural Trothy valley to the south is separated from the town by a wooded ridge and housing would be out of place.

7. Penperlleni

Settlement Summary Description

- 7.1. Penperlleni is located on the busy A4042 road linking Newport with Abergavenny on the undulating western fringes of the Usk valley. Its origin may be related in part to housing built to house workers of the Tintern Wireworks at nearby Monkswood. The Brecon and Monmouth Canal lies to the west.
- 7.2. The modest main village core is to the south, east of the Goytre Inn, with hall and school and mixed age two storey houses and stone, render and slate terraces. Another small older loose cluster lies around the render and slate chapel to the north on Capel Ed Lane. Between these older areas there is a series of 20th century housing estates constrained by the railway to the east but flanked by hedged pastures and woodland to the north and west. Some housing spills over the railway to the south east culminating in a council estate.

Landscape Character

- 7.3. The area is a gently undulating lowland landscape of moraines and sands and gravels associated with the River Usk which lies some way to the east. The land rises to the west beyond the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal to the backcloth of the red sandstone ridge. A series of small streams run north of the settlement and also to the south with poorly drained land along the railway. The landscape is generally pastoral with irregular fields bounded by a mix of low cut hedges with trees and outgrown hedges. There is mixed plantation woodland north of the village, and woodland and trees associated with the railway, canal and streams.

Main Constraints/Designations

- 7.4. An SLA lies just to the north east of the settlement while the National Park lies some distance to the west. Fields north and west of the village are SINC's and the playing fields in the village are Amenity Open Space. Walnut Tree Farm and Goytre House Farm are listed along with structures such as bridges on the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal.

Relationship of settlement to landscape

- 7.5. The meadows to the west of the village, along with tree cover, provide an attractive edge to the village acting as a buffer with the A4042. The stream and woodlands integrate the settlement to the north and the edge of the settlement around the chapel forms a permeable edge with views out to open countryside. The low key incremental edge to the east around Walnut Tree Farm forms an attractive approach.
- 7.6. The edge of the estate to the north west [off Chapel Mead] is rather hard and raw at present. The straight edge of the settlement along the railway appears awkward although has the merit of forming a clear boundary. The small estate at Frondeg to the south is prominent in the minor valley landscape although is mitigated to an extent by mature trees.

Landscape sensitivity

- 7.7. All the area around the village is considered to be high/medium sensitivity. To the north, the woodland integrates and screens housing estates and the stream with its riparian vegetation provides enclosure and has intrinsic value. The landscape opens up to the west with views across the irregular pastoral landscape to the national park ridge beyond the 'Mon and Brec' canal. The meadows between the A4042 and the settlement provide a positive well treed setting as well as having intrinsic qualities as SINC's, while the houses sit within large discreet plots. To the east and north east, the landscape is open countryside of pasture and woodland generally well separated from the settlement.

Landscape capacity for housing

- 7.8. Most areas around the settlement are of medium/low capacity. The area to the north has positive intrinsic qualities which should be retained, including the open edge but there may be some potential for housing west of Chapel Mead. West of the settlement there may be limited opportunities within existing housing plots. To the east, some very minor incremental development may be acceptable while retaining the separation between Walnut Tree Farm and the village proper.
- 7.9. Two areas have low capacity for housing. To the north along the railway, the pasture slopes north, physically and visually separated from the settlement by the road and vegetation. Housing here would significantly extend the settlement. To the west the open pastoral landscape has a role as setting to the 'Mon and Brec' Canal and national park. Any housing would impinge on the area's open rural character and significantly extend the settlement.

8. Raglan

Settlement Summary Description

- 8.1. Raglan is located just south of the A40[T] between Monmouth and Abergavenny just west of its junction with the A449[T]. The settlement was once a borough of significance associated with Raglan Castle, founded in Norman times. Being the headquarters of the royalists in the Civil War, the castle was slighted afterwards and from then on declined. The multi -period castle now sits on a hill dominating the surrounding landscape.
- 8.2. The busy A40[T] separates the castle from the village cutting through the connecting road- Castle Hill. The settlement is on the gentle slopes of two minor valleys with a traditional core based around the High Street with a church and modest, mainly two storey buildings mostly rendered with some of stone and brick. The centre is surrounded by a series of housing estates, particularly to the north, south and west. These are bounded by the A40[T] and by the Usk Road bypass to the west.

Landscape Character

- 8.3. The gentle topography of this lowland landscape is defined by the underlying Raglan Marls carved out by the Nant y Wilcae and the Barton Brook. These streams have winding courses with riparian vegetation and flat floodplains which form the edge of the settlement to the south and south east. The land use tends to be pastoral and there are overgrown hedges and fences. The land rises to the north and also to the south with a mix of arable and pastoral fields with low hedges. This land cover also extends to the east and west on better drained ground. Narrow bands of woodland are found on the steep slopes defining the valley south of the settlement. The A40[T] and A449[T] run close to the settlement and reduce the tranquillity of the area to an extent.

Main Constraints/Designations

- 8.4. The castle and village are in a Conservation Area and the castle is also a SAM. There are a scattering of listed buildings in the settlement and around the castle and associated farm. The valley floors are designated as floodplains.

Relationship of settlement to landscape

- 8.5. The relationship of the castle to its surroundings is generally positive as it dominates its hilltop and open setting. It is adversely affected by the A40[T]

which reduces tranquillity and cuts off its historic connection with the settlement. The valley floors to the south and south east provide a generally positive edge, with a loose, informal edge character connecting the settlement to the surrounding landscape. The views across the floodplain to the wooded slopes south of the Nant y Wilcae are positive.

- 8.6. The urban fringe character in places along Barton Brook is mildly detractive. The straight edges of the settlement defined by roads to the north and west are slightly harsh although provide a clean, well defined edges.

Landscape sensitivity

- 8.7. The majority of the landscape surrounding the settlement is considered to be high/medium sensitivity as open, rural countryside, some within the setting of the castle. The exceptions are land to the east contained to an extent by the A449[T] and A40[T] and land to the west, just north of the A40[T], both of which are considered medium sensitivity. These areas are open countryside but are affected by the major roads and commercial development respectively.

Landscape capacity for housing

- 8.8. Land north of the A40[T] is considered low capacity as it is open countryside clearly separated from the settlement by the A40[T] within the setting of the castle and is partly on rising prominent land. The rising land to the south is also low capacity as it is separated from the settlement by the Nant y Wilcae and is relatively prominent locally and open countryside. The valley floors and land to the west are considered medium/low capacity due to floodplain, riparian character and open character separated from the settlement respectively. The land to the east of the settlement is considered medium capacity as, though its acts as the open countryside setting to the castle and Conservation Area, its tranquillity is affected by the busy, major roads and has limited intrinsic qualities.
- 8.9. The main opportunities therefore lie to the east of the settlement in the shorter term. Land to the west may have potential in the longer term with strong rural planting infrastructure. Any development should not harm the Castle or Conservation Area and their settings.

9. Rogiet

Settlement Summary Description

- 9.1. Rogiet is a small settlement located on the B4245 but set between three major transport corridors- the M48 to the north, the mainline railway between London and Swansea directly to the south and the M4 to the south and west. Its original core is around St Mary's Church and Manor House Farm which form a distinctive cluster sitting on slightly rising land above the Gwent levels. Severn Tunnel junction station lies to the south east with associated infrastructure and commercial development while railway related stone cottage terraces lie to the west divorced from the village. The settlement expanded significantly in the 20th century with estate housing development. This now links the old core with the semi-derelict Ifton Manor with its fine chestnut avenue to the east and the B4245 to the north. The historic settlement of Llanfihangel Rogiet lies in open countryside to the west, focussed on the landmark of the now derelict St Michaels Church and all Angels.

Landscape Character

- 9.2. The settlement lies on land gently rising above the Gwent Levels on river terraces and moraines. To the south is the flat landscape of the Gwent levels interrupted by the transport corridors. To the north of the M48 there is a backcloth of rounded limestone hills with a quarry. Pastoral fields lie on land to the east with overgrown hedges and form an important gap between settlement and railway to the south east. A mixed arable and pastoral landscape with low hedges lies to the north and west. Trees are generally sparse although there are significant woods on the hills to the north, for the most part screening Ifton quarries. The pastoral levels south of the railway have been significantly modified by railway sidings, now reclaimed as amenity open space, and by the M4 and related infrastructure including the tolls.

Main Constraints/Designations

- 9.3. The levels south of the railway are a Special Landscape Area and are part of the landscape of outstanding historic interest to the south east. SLA designation also covers the hills to the north west. Llanfihangel and its surrounds are a Conservation Area. St Marys Church, St Michaels Church and all Angels, the Old Court at Llanfihangel and their associated features are listed. The levels are floodplain including areas north of the railway, south east of the settlement. Green wedge designation lies to the east and west between railway and M48.

Relationship of settlement to landscape

- 9.4. St Mary's Church and associated farm complex form an attractive cluster set on rising ground although the estate housing to the north and east and railway and rough ground to the south detract from this. The settlement cluster of Llanfihangel also forms a positive set of elements within its semi-rural setting. The chestnut avenue north of Ifton Manor is a positive remnant feature. The green corridor running around the south eastern edge of the settlement with associated tree cover softens the settlement edge although the recent pollarding of poplars is very unsightly.
- 9.5. The eastern edge of the settlement is straight and stark with little mitigation. The southern edge along the railway is dominated by unsightly commercial development associated with the railway.

Landscape sensitivity

- 9.6. Four areas are considered to be of medium sensitivity. The railway land to the south west of the settlement is overgrown and unsightly but forms part of the open setting of listed buildings and Conservation Area. The narrow strip of land separating the settlement from the M48 to the north lacks tranquillity but forms an important gap offering visual amenity along the B4245 between the settlement and the M48. Land including Ifton Quarries to the north of the M48 is degraded by extraction but still forms an important local skyline with woodland which has intrinsic value. The gently undulating area between Caldicot and Rogiet forms an important pastoral green gap between the settlements, maintaining their identity, but is affected by adjacent housing estates and the M48.
- 9.7. The sensitivity of the rest of the landscape around Rogiet is considered to be high/medium sensitivity. This includes all the levels related landscapes [also north of the railway line] due to its role as floodplain and forming part of a continuum of open low lying landscape along the coast with sensitive elements such as reens. The area south east of the settlement is pasture as well as amenity space separating the settlement from the railway line. The area around Llanfihangel forms part of the setting for the settlement and Conservation Area,

maintaining some rural character. The hills north of the M48 are an unspoilt rural rising backcloth with well maintained hedges and deciduous woodland.

Landscape capacity for housing

- 9.8. There are three areas of low capacity. These are the levels landscapes south of the railway as containing amenity open space, floodplain and of generally open character as part of the levels. The linear strip of railway land has low capacity as part of its role as open setting to the Conservation Area and listed buildings and to avoid significant extension of the settlement westwards. The strip along the M48 to the north could not accommodate development without loss of openness and its function as a green buffer.
- 9.9. Other areas are medium/low capacity. The area around Llanfihangel is sensitive due to the Conservation Area but there may be opportunities to improve the Rogiet's western settlement edge in perpetuity to provide a well treed and indented edge as well as improvements to the church which should be put into beneficial use, perhaps with very sensitive enabling development. The hillside north of the M48 is open, prominent countryside separated from the settlement by the M48 and has no expansion opportunities.
- 9.10. The green gap between Rogiet and Caldicot is also medium/low capacity and should be retained for its visual and amenity function, as well as acting as floodplain to the south. However, the estate settlement edge to Caldicot is stark and abrupt. The only development that may be acceptable may be one which improves the settlement edge, retaining the vast bulk of the area as multi-functional open space [eg for food, recreation, visual amenity, floodplain and nature conservation etc]. The area to the south east of the settlement should be retained as a well used open local landscape and floodplain.

10. Sudbrook

Settlement Summary Description

- 10.1. Sudbrook is a small and highly distinctive settlement that lies on the Severn estuary just north of the second Severn crossing but accessed only by a cul de sac minor road. It has a long history of human occupation with the remains of an Iron Age promontory fort, once guarding the crossing to Portskewett, and subsequently occupied by the Romans. There is small scale housing by the fort, a church and a jetty to the east. In the 19th century the Severn Tunnel was constructed with associated infrastructure such as pumphouse and terraced workers housing extending the settlement to the west, along the line of the underground railway. A large paper mill, now defunct, was subsequently built on the south western edge of the settlement.

Landscape Character

- 10.2. The settlement lies on a small, low promontory culminating at Sudbrook Point on the Severn Estuary, of sands and gravels over sandstone. To the north of the settlement is the slightly rising land of the Caldicot Level while the flat alluvial coastal plain with reens of the Levels proper lies to the west. The field pattern is generally rectilinear with low hedges or fences. A poplar plantation borders the settlement and estuary to the south west. While the paper mill dominates the settlement itself, overall the second Severn Crossing on the vast, exposed sweep of the Severn Estuary, is the dominant feature in the local landscape/seascape.

Main Constraints/Designations

- 10.3. The Severn Estuary is a RAMSAR site, a pSAC and SSSI. The fort is a SAM and the tunnel pump and fan house are listed. The landscape of outstanding historic interest lies to the west and south, along the estuary. Floodplain runs along the levels to the south west.

Relationship of settlement to landscape

- 10.4. The fort and remains of the Holy Trinity church have a very strong sense of place and exposed scenic qualities overlooking the Severn estuary and the second Severn bridge. The pumping station and associated tunnel infrastructure to the north are also distinctive but indicative of a different era.
- 10.5. The linear terraced housing forms an abrupt, though distinct edge to the north. The paper mill is a detractor but is partly balanced and mitigated by the poplar plantation to the west.

Landscape sensitivity

- 10.6. The fort is high sensitivity due to its historic and landscape character and value and its prominent location at Sudbrook Point.
- 10.7. The rest of area around the settlement is high/medium sensitivity. The area to the west is on the Levels floodplain with reens and acting as part of the continuum of the Levels along the estuary forming part of the view corridor from Portskewett to the coast. The area to the north forms part of the green corridor linking the levels to the east and west and acting as a green gap between Portskewett and Sudbrook.

Landscape capacity for housing

- 10.8. All areas around Sudbrook have low capacity. The fort has no capacity for housing as a SAM. The levels are floodplain of open character while any housing on the area to the north would reduce openness and close the gap between the settlements, impinging on the green corridor.

11. Usk

Settlement Summary Description

- 11.1. Usk lies on the A472 road, just west of the A449[T] in the Usk valley between Newport and Abergavenny. It is an historic market town lying at a crossing point on the flood plain of the River Usk. It originated in Roman times as the first border fortress in the county. Its strategic location also merited a castle built by the Normans on the rising ground north of the town centre. A Benedictine priory was also located in the town. Though having some early industrial associations the town has acted as a market town for centuries and its well preserved core is a local attraction.
- 11.2. The core of the town lies to the east of the Usk on the floodplain with a street running to the fine stone bridge from the Twyn, a square, to the east. The streets in the core are narrow with a mix of fine buildings of architectural note including three storey townhouses and stone terraced cottages. The castle to the north is shrouded in trees. Expansion has been in most directions with housing to the east and south on the floodplain and more recently to the north, on rising ground. Commercial uses lie predominantly west of the Usk and a prison lies on the southern outskirts.

Landscape Character

- 11.3. The town is dominated and defined by the powerful River Usk which has created the valley landscape and now flows with flood embankments on both sides. The settlement is on the alluvial floodplain with surrounding hills just north of the River Usk's confluence with the Olway Brook. The wooded pastoral mosaic of the hills of the Gwehelog and Llanbadoc lie to the north east and west respectively. The more regular field pattern of the fertile alluvial floodplains with a mix of larger, drained arable and pastoral fields lie along the valley bottoms to the north west, south and east.

Main Constraints/Designations

- 11.4. The town is surrounded by Special Landscape Areas on the hills to the north, south east and west. The town itself is a Conservation Area, excluding housing to the north east and the commercial area to the west, with numerous listed buildings. The castle, priory and Roman fort remains are SAMs. Much of the town and adjacent valley floor is designated floodplain.

Relationship of settlement to landscape

- 11.5. The town has a generally positive relationship with the River Usk, with its bridges, paths, and its banks by the town core and around the Island recreation ground. The wooded hills to the north and west, in particular, provide a positive backcloth to the town on the valley floor, enclosing development. The castle, though screened by trees forms an important feature linking directly into the countryside to the north. The remains of the priory and Roman fort maintain a positive and open rural character on the south east side of the town. The dismantled railway line with its strong vegetation cover helps to screen and contain the settlement on the approaches from the north west along the A472.
- 11.6. The spread of housing up the north/north eastern slopes threatens the contained character of the settlement. The older linear development alongside the Usk northwards on the Abergavenny Road has undue visual impact and is a poor precedent for expansion north within the valley. The commercial area to the west is a detractor but at least is contained by physical features- the river and steep slopes.

Landscape sensitivity

- 11.7. The majority of the environs of the settlement including the valley floor and hills to the north and south east are considered to be high/medium sensitivity. The valley floors are sensitive due to floodplain, generally open character and the historic features and their setting to the south east of the town- the priory and fort remains. The hills rising up from the valley floors perform an important role for Usk in providing unspoilt, tranquil and rural backcloths. In the case of the northern hills these link into a castle and contribute to its setting.
- 11.8. The steep wooded mosaic hills to the west are considered high sensitivity due to their particular prominence and slopes.

Landscape capacity for housing

- 11.9. The majority of the environs of the settlement are considered to be low or medium/low capacity. The medium/low capacity areas include the Usk valley floor to the west of the settlement lying south of the dismantled railway, the Olway Brook valley floor to the east and the hills to the north. The Usk valley floor to the west, though enclosed and generally screened from wider view, has intrinsic rural qualities complementing the steep wooded valley sides to the west. The adjacent settlement is linear in character and any housing here would significantly change the character of this side of the Usk which is divorced from the main town. The Olway valley floor is generally open with water courses and riparian vegetation which provide a positive entrance to the town from the east. The hills to the north act as setting to the castle and to the town generally and are prominent in wider views.
- 11.10. The low capacity areas include the hills to the west, most of the Usk valley floor and the rising land to the south east. The Usk valley floor to the north is floodplain and is separated from the settlement while to the south is generally open and flat acting as a setting for historic features. The hills act as prominent wooded backcloths and are separated from the main settlement.
- 11.11. There are no clear opportunities for expansion of the settlement in terms of landscape effects. The areas of slightly higher capacity may have minor opportunities with part of the area to the west of the Usk being the most discreet in landscape terms but is least connected to the town.