

Monmouthshire Replacement Local Development Plan

**PREFERRED STRATEGY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

June 2021

Executive Summary

Replacement Local Development Plan

- i. The Council is preparing a Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) for Monmouthshire (excluding the part of the County that is within the Brecon Beacons National Park). The RLDP will identify where and how much new development will take place during the 'Plan period' (2018-2033). It will allocate land for development, identify areas to be protected, and contain policies to guide decisions on applications for planning permission. We aim to adopt the RLDP in autumn/winter 2023.
- ii. The Council has now reached the Preferred Strategy stage of the development plan process. This is the first of the statutory consultation stages in the RLDP process. However, a number of earlier pre-deposit plan preparation stages have been undertaken which have informed the Preferred Strategy. The first stage involved the preparation of an Issues, Vision & Objectives Paper. This was first published in January 2019 and amended in June 2019 to reflect the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in May 2019. A review of the Issues, Vision and Objectives was also undertaken in June 2020 in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and incorporated into the Review of RLDP Issues, Vision and Objectives and Evidence Base in light of Covid-19 during September 2020. This concluded that the Plan's Issues, Vision and Objectives remain relevant to Monmouthshire with a number of issues and objectives now considered to have increased emphasis and importance consistent with the priorities identified in the Welsh Government Building Better Places Covid-19 recovery document published in July 2020. The Issues, Vision and Objectives Paper has been updated to reflect the vision for the Preferred Strategy and issues that have emerged since the original version.
- iii. The Plan had progressed to the Preferred Strategy stage of the RLDP process in March 2020. Non-statutory consultation on the Growth and Spatial Options took place between July and August 2019 and statutory consultation on the RLDP Preferred Strategy and the Second Call for Candidate Sites commenced during March 2020. Progress on the RLDP was subsequently paused in March 2020 because the Covid-19 pandemic meant the Preferred Strategy public engagement events could not continue in the format prescribed in the Delivery Agreement. Following advice from the Minister for Housing and Local Government¹, the decision was subsequently made to cease the Preferred Strategy consultation and second call for candidate sites on 20th July 2020. This enabled the Council to undertake a review of the RLDP issues, vision, objectives and evidence base² in terms of sensitivity to the consequences the Coronavirus pandemic before progressing with Plan preparation. This review was agreed by Council in October 2020.
- iv. In August 2020 the Welsh Government published a correction to the 2018-based population and household projections, which comprise important new evidence that require consideration and form the starting point of the Plan's evidence base. This

¹ Minister for Housing and Local Government Letter to Local Authority Leaders and Chief Executives National Park Authority Chief Executives – Planning System and Covid19, 7th July 2020

² Monmouthshire RLDP Review of Issues, Vision and Objectives and Evidence Base in Light of Covid-19 (September 2020)

resulted in the need to revisit the Growth and Spatial Options and Preferred Strategy stages of the RLDP process. The Growth and Spatial Options Paper (December 2020) was prepared and subject to non-statutory consultation for a 4-week period in January and February 2021. The outcome of which has informed and helped shape the Preferred Strategy (June 2021).

What is the Preferred Strategy?

- v. The Preferred Strategy is the first statutory stage in the RLDP preparation process. It provides the strategic direction for the development and use of land over the period 2018-2033. The overall purpose of the Preferred Strategy is to:
- Identify key issues, challenges and opportunities for the County.
 - Develop a vision and set of objectives for the RLDP that respond to the key issues, challenges and opportunities.
 - Set out the Preferred Strategy including the scale of future growth in population, housing and jobs and establish the spatial distribution of growth.
 - Set out strategic policies that will deliver/implement the strategy.

Preferred Strategy – Sustainable & Resilient Communities Strategy

- vi. The Sustainable and Resilient Communities Strategy promotes and supports a level of housing and employment growth that will be distributed proportionately³ across Monmouthshire up to 2033. The Strategy assists in addressing the demographic and affordability challenges facing the County and ultimately seeks to deliver the Council's core purpose to build sustainable and resilient communities that support the well-being of current and future generations. The Strategy conforms with Policy 1 of Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (hereafter referred to as Future Wales 2040) which is the highest tier statutory development plan (Welsh Government, February 2021) and supports sustainable growth in all parts of Wales that seeks to address local aspirations and need. The Strategy also meets a key 'Test of Soundness' of ensuring that the Plan's vision and strategy are positive and sufficiently aspirational. A Self-Assessment of the Preferred Strategy against the Tests of Soundness is published alongside this document, which includes an assessment of the Strategy's general conformity with Future Wales 2040. This demonstrates that the Preferred Strategy and the stages undertaken and processes followed to reach this stage are 'sound' and that the Strategy assists in the delivery of the Future Wales policies and is in general conformity with its overarching strategy.
- vii. A summary of the key points of the Strategy is set out in Box 1.

³ Proportionately' is deemed to mean that the level of growth directed toward a settlement will be proportionate to its population size. To calculate the proportion of development to be directed toward a settlement only the population of those settlements included in the Sustainable Settlement Appraisal has been used to contribute to the total population figure for the County. This takes into account the large areas of Monmouthshire which are rural and as such these areas would not be expected to have any significant development

Box 1: Sustainable and Resilient Communities Strategy

In order to deliver the Sustainable and Resilient Communities Strategy the RLDP will:

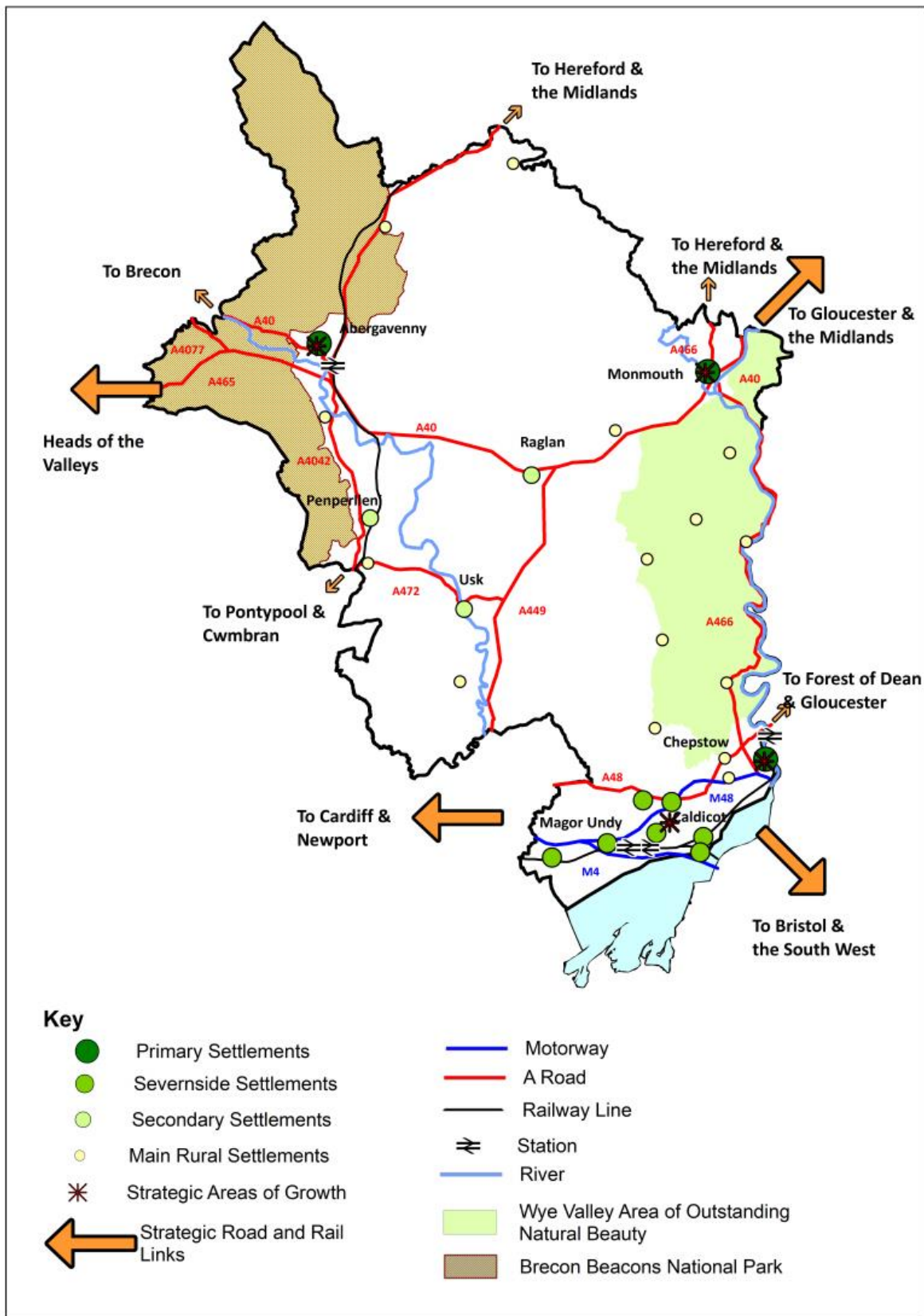
- Make provision for a total of **8,366 homes to deliver a housing requirement of 7,605 homes** (this provision is based indicatively on a 10% flexibility allowance which will be given further consideration and refined at Deposit Stage). This level of housing growth will enable the provision of market and affordable housing in both urban and rural areas and, importantly, provides the opportunity to address the unbalanced demography, improve labour force retention by retaining/attracting younger adult population age groups and assists in addressing the County's housing affordability challenge. Taking account of the existing housing land supply and projected windfall delivery, the RLDP will need to **allocate sufficient land to accommodate 3,658 homes**.
- Provide the **planning policy framework to enable the provision of 7,215 additional jobs**. This level of job growth aligns with the projected population and housing growth and takes account of adjustments to household membership rates for key younger age groups and a reduced level of commuting by retaining more of the resident workforce and growing our working age demographic. There has been a fundamental shift in working practices since the start of Covid-19 pandemic with an increased propensity to work from home/remotely. It is expected that this trend will continue over the longer term and in accordance with Welsh Government's ambition of 30% of the Welsh workforce working from or near home is something that we wish to encourage and enable. This provides residents with the opportunity to both live and work in the County in this new way, providing a flexible approach to achieving this level of job growth, whilst also achieving the Welsh Government and Council's aim of reducing the need for commuting. This approach will help to reduce congestion, emissions and pollution, improve the work-life balance for employees and employers, support local businesses/services and enable the creation of sustainable vibrant communities and '20 minute neighbourhoods'⁴.
- Address economic growth and resilience within the County through the **provision of a sufficient range and choice of employment land**. To enable this a minimum of 43ha of employment land will be allocated to support the provision of industrial and business development (classes B1, B2 and B8 of the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order 1987), the location of which will be determined in the Deposit Plan. Other key employment sectors including retail, tourism and agriculture will also be an integral part of the County's economy and supported through the policy framework in the Deposit Plan. This approach reflects the priorities and aims identified in the Council's Economic Ambition Statement and Investment Prospectus.

⁴ 20 Minute Neighbourhoods are strong, well connected neighbourhoods where people live within a 20 minute walking distance of key everyday services. The RLDP supports a placemaking approach to future development and the concept of 20 minute neighbourhoods.

- Distribute growth proportionately across the County's most sustainable settlements. Whilst housing and employment growth will be focused on the higher tiers of the settlement hierarchy, appropriate growth will also be channelled to the County's most sustainable rural settlements to facilitate the creation of sustainable and resilient communities throughout Monmouthshire.

Collectively these measures will help us to fulfil our core objectives and create sustainable and resilient communities where an enhanced economically active aged population can both live and work in the County through supporting/enabling remote and home working and local jobs in a range of sectors. Fundamentally, the Strategy will address the Council's key climate change objectives and reflect national planning policy placemaking principles whereby commuting/the need to travel is reduced and residents can access and support services/businesses locally, thereby enabling sustainable and vibrant communities.

Preferred Strategy Key Diagram



Sustainable and Resilient Communities Growth Strategy

- viii. The Preferred Growth Strategy makes provision for a total of 8,366 homes to deliver a housing requirement of 7,605 homes over the Plan period 2018-2033 (this provision is based indicatively on a 10% flexibility allowance which will be given further consideration and refined at Deposit Stage). This results in a growth of the County's population of 12,443 (13.2%) and households of 7,255 (18.1%) over the Plan period.
- ix. The Growth Strategy is based on a population-led scenario with added policy assumptions to address the County's key demographic and affordability issues. The policy assumptions adjust in-migration rates to reflect local trends over a five-year period (2015-2020) to take account the removal of the Severn Bridge Tolls, increase the household formation rates for three key younger age groups and reduce commuting ratio assumptions to reflect the Council's aim of addressing the unbalanced demographic in the County by retaining younger age groups and reducing out-commuting. The latter aligns with Welsh Government's long-term ambition of 30% of Welsh workers working from home or near home and the Welsh Government's transport policy hierarchy which seeks to reduce the need to travel in the first instance, followed by active travel, then public transport, then the private car. The strategy also incorporates an affordable housing policy-led element which aims to meet 10% of the Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) need arising from this option on housing sites which deliver 50% affordable housing. Further detail on this scenario is set out in the Edge Analytics Report - Updating the RLDP Demographic Evidence Report, November 2020 - and the Growth and Spatial Options Background Paper (June 2021).

Delivering the Residential Growth

- x. The overall housing provision figure of 8,366 homes (including an indicative 10% flexibility allowance) will be delivered through a number of housing supply streams. These include existing commitments that have planning permission, Adopted LDP Rollover sites, and an allowance for windfall and infill sites such as barn conversions and development sites that emerge throughout the life of the Plan. Combined these account for 4,708 homes. The remaining 3,658 homes will be delivered on new allocations to be identified in the Deposit RLDP.

Economic Growth

- xi. The RLDP is underpinned by a level of growth that seeks to address the issues currently impacting on economic growth such as a shrinking working age population and high levels of out-commuting. The Sustainable and Resilient Communities Strategy provides the policy framework to enable the provision of 7,215 additional jobs over the Plan period (481 jobs per annum). It should be noted that not all of these jobs will be in planning B-class uses⁵ and will be delivered through a range of sectors such as tourism, leisure and retail. This will be achieved by enabling economic growth through supporting the delivery of the priorities and aims identified in the Council's Economic

⁵ B-class uses refer to industries such as manufacturing, offices and warehousing.

Growth and Ambition Statement, maximising opportunities from CCR City Deal, targeting growth in key economic sectors and providing appropriate employment land in the right locations.

- xii. Whilst the Strategy projects a significant growth in jobs over the Plan period, it is becoming widely accepted that the fundamental shift in working practices experienced as a legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic, with a significant increase in people working from home/remotely, has made it less important where some jobs are located as employees no longer need to commute for work in many cases. This has provided the opportunity for many people to live and work in the same location via a new remote working approach

- xiii. The Preferred Strategy aims to build on this shift and the benefits that have occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic, as recognised in Welsh Government’s Building Better Places response to Covid-19. This acknowledges that even when all restrictions are lifted, the impacts on people working from home are likely to have longer term impacts on where and how we work. In this respect, these changes have opened up new opportunities for jobs to be secured through the increased propensity to work from home/remotely, including via community-based remote working hubs. It is expected that the trend for increased home and remote working will continue over the longer term in accordance with Welsh Government’s ambition of 30% of the Welsh workforce working from or near home. While it will not be possible for all employment sectors to work from home/work remotely, policy support requiring broadband connectivity and supporting the provision of local remote/agile community-based working hubs will enable those who can and choose to do so.

Sustainable and Resilient Communities Spatial Strategy

- xiv. The Preferred Spatial Strategy seeks to distribute development across the County in a proportionate manner that reflects and address the aims of the overarching Sustainable and Resilient Communities Growth Strategy. The level of residential growth will be proportionate to a settlement’s size and amenities and will reflect affordable housing need as identified in the LHMA in both urban and rural areas. The Spatial Strategy seeks to focus new development on the primary settlements of Abergavenny (including Llanfoist), Monmouth (including Wyesham) and Chepstow and the Severnside area, together with a proportionate amount of growth to the lower tier settlements to support sustainable rural communities. The exact distribution of development will follow in the Deposit RLDP following the second call for candidate sites and subsequent site assessments.

- xv. The spatial framework for distributing growth in the County has regard to the overarching principles of Future Wales 2040 by guiding growth towards building sustainable places that support placemaking principles but applied within a Monmouthshire setting to reflect the predominantly rural context. In this respect, the

dominant role of the County towns of Abergavenny, Chepstow and Monmouth and the Severnside Area focused on the town of Caldicot, provide the focus of urban growth within a Monmouthshire context. This will be supported by an appropriate level of growth in the smaller settlements and a number of rural settlements to facilitate the creation of sustainable and vibrant rural communities consistent with the aims of Policy 4 – Supporting Rural Communities of Future Wales 2040 (February 2021).

- xvi. The Strategy also has regard to Policy 34 of Future Wales 2040 which requires the South East Wales Strategic Development Plan to identify a Green Belt to the north of Cardiff, Newport and the eastern part of the region to manage urban form and growth.

Economic Growth – Land Requirement & Spatial Distribution

- xvii. The Council has commissioned the preparation of an Employment Land Review (ELR). This involves undertaking a review of employment forecasts and land requirements for the Plan period 2018 – 2033. The study recommends that a forecast scenario based on past employment land take-up rates is adopted for the RLDP. This provides a minimum requirement of 43ha of land for traditional B use class industries such as manufacturing and warehousing, including a five-year buffer to allow for choice and uncertainty in forecasting.
- xviii. Employment growth will be directed to sustainable locations across the County, which will assist in reducing the need to travel and levels of out-commuting and promoting self-contained communities which are also key objectives of the RLDP. As above, it is recognised in light of Covid-19 there has been a fundamental shift in working patterns with an increase in home and remote working, which is likely to continue over the longer term, and will further reduce commuting levels and support/enable self-contained communities. The spatial distribution of employment allocations will be set out in the Deposit RLDP and will be consistent with the spatial strategy and commensurate to the level of housing growth proposed for an area.
- xix. Details of employment land allocations and existing protected sites will be provided in the Deposit RLDP, along with criteria setting out the exceptional circumstances in which the loss of existing industrial and business sites or premises will be considered acceptable. The Plan will also include policies that allow for the assessment of non-B use class industries such as leisure, retail and tourism to facilitate job growth in these key economic sectors.

Strategic Policies

- xx. The main document also contains several Strategic Policies which form the framework for implementing and delivering the Preferred Strategy of the RLDP. A list of policies contained within the Preferred Strategy is set out below:

Preferred Strategy - Strategic Policies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ S1 – Strategic Sustainable and Resilient Growth ▪ S2 – Spatial Distribution of Development – Settlement Hierarchy ▪ S3 – Sustainable Placemaking & High Quality Design ▪ S4 – Climate Change ▪ S5 – Infrastructure Provision ▪ S6 – Delivery of Homes ▪ S7 – Affordable Homes ▪ S8 – Strategic Development Sites ▪ S9 – Gypsy and Travellers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ S10 – Sustainable Transport ▪ S11 – Retail & Commercial Centres Hierarchy ▪ S12 – Community and Recreation Facilities ▪ S13 – Employment Sites Provision ▪ S14 – Rural Enterprise ▪ S15 – Visitor Economy ▪ S16 – Sustainable Waste Management ▪ S17 – Minerals ▪ S18 – Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Nature Conservation

Supporting Documents

- xxi. The RLDP is accompanied by an Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA), which considers the environmental, equalities, health and well-being impacts of the Plan, and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The ISA and HRA are working documents, updated as the RLDP progresses. The RLDP will also be accompanied by an Infrastructure Plan, setting out what infrastructure is needed to support the development of the allocated sites, and an updated Local Transport Plan and Economic Strategy. Together, these Plans will seek to deliver on the Council's economic ambition and its core purpose to build sustainable and resilient communities that support the well-being of current and future generations. The Deposit Plan will also designate land for protection and identify search areas for renewable energy and will be accompanied by a Green Wedge Review and Renewable Energy Assessment. There are also a range of technical Background Papers to provide additional detail on the evidence and methodologies used in developing the Preferred Strategy.

Consultation Arrangements

- xxii. Community and stakeholder involvement is invited during the eight-week statutory engagement and consultation on the Preferred Strategy between **Monday 5th July and Tuesday 31st August 2021**, whereby comments will be invited on the consultation questions set out in the Preferred Strategy. Our consultation and engagement arrangements have been revised in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and reflect the Coronavirus Regulations (2020) and recent Ministerial advice⁶. We have reviewed the use of digital involvement options to provide communities with information and the

⁶ Minister for Housing and Local Government Letter to Local Authority Leaders and Chief Executives National Park Authority Chief Executives – Planning System and Covid19, 7th July 2020

ability to engage with the RLDP in a virtual manner. Further details are provided in the Revised Delivery Agreement (October 2020). Engagement/consultation will take place via:

- Notifying all parties on the RLDP database of the consultation;
- Planning Policy Officer attendance at Area Cluster meetings during July and August 2021;
- A Members' Workshop in June 2021 (hosted by the Economy & Development Select Committee);
- Scrutiny by Economy & Development Select Committee in July 2021;
- Internal discussions within the Council through an officer workshop, Department Management Team and Senior Leadership Team;
- Two Webinar Sessions during July 2021
- Several RLDP Preferred Strategy Drop-in Sessions during July-August 2021. Should there be a further lockdown due to the Coronavirus pandemic, these drop-in sessions will be replaced by additional virtual events. Full details of venues and dates are available on the Council's Current Consultations page of the website.
- We will seek to engage with seldom heard groups in particular young people, via the Youth Council and going into secondary schools, and Gypsy and Travellers via the GTAA work and reiterating the opportunity to promote sites during the Second Call for Candidate Sites.

xxiii. The closing date for the submission of comments is midnight on **Tuesday 31st August 2021**. For details of how to respond to this consultation please see the Planning Policy Current Consultations page on the Council's website. Feedback from the consultation/engagement on the Preferred Strategy will be considered and set out in the Consultation Report on the Preferred Strategy. This consultation report and the Preferred Strategy with any necessary amendments will be reported to Council in approximately November 2021 to seek approval of the Preferred Strategy. The Deposit Plan will then be prepared and considered by Council prior to a statutory six-week consultation and engagement period in Summer 2022.