

Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) for the Monmouthshire Replacement Local Development Plan

Initial ISA Report - Non-Technical Summary

Monmouthshire County Council

June 2021

Quality information

Prepared by	Checked by	Verified by	Approved by
Rosie Cox Environmental Planner	Alastair Peattie Associate Director	Nick Chisholm-Batten Associate Director	Nick Chisholm-Batten Associate Director
Chris McNulty Senior Environmental Planner			

Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Name	Position
V1	19/05/21	Draft for client review	Rosie Cox	Environmental Planner
V2	22/06/21	Final for consultation	Alastair Peattie	Associate Director

Prepared for:

Monmouthshire County Council

Prepared by:

AECOM Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited
3rd Floor, Portwall Place
Portwall Lane
Bristol BS1 6NA
United Kingdom

T: +44 117 901 7000
aecom.com

© 2021 AECOM Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited. All Rights Reserved.

This document has been prepared by AECOM Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited ("AECOM") for sole use of our client (the "Client") in accordance with generally accepted consultancy principles, the budget for fees and the terms of reference agreed between AECOM and the Client. Any information provided by third parties and referred to herein has not been checked or verified by AECOM, unless otherwise expressly stated in the document. No third party may rely upon this document without the prior and express written agreement of AECOM.

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction.....	1
2.	Plan-making/ ISA up to this point	8
3.	Appraisal findings at this stage.....	24
4.	Next steps and monitoring.....	29

Introduction

1. Introduction

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on an Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) in support of Monmouthshire County Council's Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP). ISA fulfils the requirements and duties for Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA), Health Impact Assessment (HIA), Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIA) and Well-being of Future Generations (WBFG).
- 1.2 ISA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives in terms of key sustainability issues. The aim of ISA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative impacts and maximising positive impacts. Through this approach, the ISA for the RLDP seeks to maximise the development plan's contribution to sustainable development.
- 1.3 As identified above, the ISA seeks to fulfil the requirements and duties for SA, SEA, EqIA, HIA, WLIA and WBFG. The approach is to fully integrate these components to provide a single assessment process to inform the development of the RLDP. A description of each of the various components and their purposes is provided below.
- 1.4 The Initial ISA Report and this Non-Technical Summary is published alongside the RLDP Preferred Strategy. Any representations received will be taken into account and a revised ISA Report and Non-Technical Summary will be published subsequently alongside the Deposit RLDP.
- 1.5 ISA reporting essentially involves answering the following questions in turn:
 1. What has plan-making/ ISA involved up to this point?
 - Including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.
 2. What are the appraisal findings at this current stage?
 - i.e. in relation to the Draft Plan (i.e. the Preferred Strategy).
 3. What happens next?
 - What steps will be taken to finalise (and monitor) the plan?
- 1.6 Each of these questions is answered in turn below. Firstly though there is a need to set the scene further by answering the questions i) What is the plan trying to achieve?; and ii) What is the scope of the SA?

What is the RLDP seeking to achieve?

- 1.7 Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) is in the process of preparing a Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) for the County (excluding the area within the Brecon Beacons National Park). The RLDP will cover the period 2018-2033 and will be the statutory land use plan to support delivery of the Council's purpose of helping to build sustainable and resilient communities that support the wellbeing of current and future generations. The RLDP will set out land use development proposals for the County and will identify where and how much new development will take place over the Replacement Plan period. It will also identify areas to be protected from development and provide policies against which future planning applications will be assessed. The RLDP will build upon the current LDP which covers the period 2011-2021.

Vision

- 1.8 The vision clarifies the core purpose of the RLDP and provides a framework for developing the Preferred Strategy and future detailed policies. The vision set out in the adopted LDP 2011-2021 has been reviewed and updated to take account of the issues, challenges and opportunities facing the County and reflects key elements of the PSB Well-being Plan and Corporate Business Plan. The Vision has been reviewed in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and is considered to remain relevant and appropriate.

By 2033 Monmouthshire will be a place where:

- 1) People are living in sustainable, resilient communities that support the well-being of current and future generations and are more inclusive, cohesive, prosperous, vibrant and balanced demographically. Both urban and rural communities are well-connected with better access to local services and facilities, open space and employment opportunities.***
- 2) Communities and businesses are part of an economically thriving and well-connected County.***
- 3) The best of the County's built heritage, countryside, landscape and environmental assets have been protected and enhanced to retain its distinctive character.***
- 4) People enjoy healthier, more sustainable lifestyles with improved access to public transport and active travel opportunities and have a minimised impact on the global environment.***

The spatial implications of achieving this Vision will be that by 2033:

Monmouthshire will have grown sustainably, with a proportionate distribution of new homes and jobs across the most sustainable settlements, which are supported by amenities and infrastructure with the delivery of affordable housing to meet local needs.

Development will have contributed to facilitating sustainable lifestyles by delivering high quality places that promote low carbon developments with an appropriate mix of uses and that are well-connected both digitally and physically to the wider area in terms of character, environment and movement by public transport, walking and cycling.

Objectives

- 1.9 In order to address the key issues/ challenges and deliver the vision, 17 objectives have been developed for the RLDP, which build upon the Adopted LDP objectives and the well-being objectives set out in the Monmouthshire Well-being Plan. The objectives were subsequently reviewed and revised following the climate emergency declaration in May 2019. They were also reviewed in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and endorsed by Cabinet on 17th June 2020 and by Council (October 2020) as remaining relevant.
- 1.10 As with the RLDP issues, the objectives set out in **Table 1.1** below have been grouped in alignment with the seven well-being goals as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and are aligned with the RLDP issues, the main policy themes identified in Planning Policy Wales (PPW11) and the Monmouthshire Well-being Plan objectives.

Table 1.1 RLDP objectives

RLDP Objective Number	Headline	RLDP Objective
A Prosperous Wales (Well-being Goal 1)		
Objective 1	Economic Growth/ Employment*	To support a thriving, well-connected, diverse economy, which provides a range of good quality employment opportunities to enable and encourage indigenous business growth and attract inward investment and competitive innovative businesses in appropriate growth sectors, including through the provision of start-ups and grow on spaces.
Objective 2	Retail centres*	To sustain and enhance the County towns of Abergavenny, Chepstow, Monmouth, Caldicot and Usk as vibrant and attractive retail centres serving their own populations and those of their surrounding hinterlands, along with increasing the potential customer base through future growth whilst recognising that the role of these centres is evolving.
A Resilient Wales (Well-being Goal 2)		
Objective 3	Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and Landscape*	To protect, enhance and manage Monmouthshire's natural environment and ecosystems. This includes, the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the County's other high quality and distinctive landscapes, protected sites, protected species and other biodiversity interests, along with the connectivity between them by creating new linkages for them to adapt while at the same time maximising benefits for the economy, tourism, health and well-being.
Objective 4	Flood risk	To ensure that new development takes account of the risk of flooding, both existing and in the future, including the need to avoid inappropriate development in areas that are at risk from flooding or that may increase the risk of flooding elsewhere and the need to design development to appropriately manage surface water run-off.
Objective 5	Minerals and Waste	To meet the County's regional and local obligations to manage and dispose of its waste and to safeguard and exploit its mineral resource in a sustainable fashion.
Objective 6	Land	To promote the efficient use of land, including the need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maximise opportunities for development on previously developed land, whilst recognising that brownfield opportunities are limited in Monmouthshire. • protect the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land whilst at the same time recognising that this will not always be possible given high proportion of BMV land in the County and the limited opportunities for brownfield development.
Objective 7	Natural resources	To promote the efficient use of natural resources including providing increased opportunities for water efficiency, energy efficiency, renewable energy, recycling and waste reduction.
A Healthier Wales (Well-being Goal 3)		
Objective 8	Health and Well-being*	To improve access for all to recreation, sport, leisure activities, open space and the countryside and to enable healthier lifestyles.
A More Equal Wales (Well-being Goal 4)		
Objective 9	Demography*	To increase opportunities for the younger population to both live and work within Monmouthshire to assist in ensuring a balanced demography.
A Wales of Cohesive Communities (Well-being Goal 5)		
Objective 10	Housing*	To provide a level of housing that is sufficient to provide a wide ranging choice of homes both for existing and future residents, while ensuring that local needs for appropriate, affordable and accessible housing are met as far as possible, particularly in towns

RLDP Objective Number	Headline	RLDP Objective
		but also in rural areas, so long as such housing can assist in building sustainable balanced communities.
Objective 11	Place-making	To promote good quality sustainable places through design, layout and mix of uses that enhance the character and identity of Monmouthshire’s settlements and countryside; create attractive, safe and accessible places to live, work and visit; and promote people’s prosperity, health, happiness and well-being.
Objective 12	Communities	To build sustainable resilient communities where people have good access to employment, shops, housing, public transport, active travel, healthcare, community and cultural facilities.
Objective 13	Rural Communities	To sustain existing rural communities as far as possible by providing development opportunities of an appropriate scale and location in rural areas in order to assist in building sustainable rural communities and strengthening the rural economy.
Objective 14	Infrastructure*	To ensure that appropriate physical and digital infrastructure (including community and recreational facilities, sewerage, water, transport, schools, health care and broadband etc.) is in place or can be provided to accommodate new development.
Objective 15	Accessibility	To seek to reduce the need to travel by promoting a mix of land use allocations and improved internet connectivity, and where travel is required, to provide opportunities for active travel and integrated sustainable transport.
A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Thriving Welsh Language (Well-being Goal 6)		
Objective 16	Culture, Heritage and Welsh Language	To protect and enhance the built environment, culture and heritage of Monmouthshire for the future while maximising benefits for the economy, tourism and social well-being, including supporting and safeguarding the Welsh Language.
A Globally Responsible Wales (Well-being Goal 7)		
Objective 17	Climate Change*	To strive to limit the increase in global temperatures to 1.5°C, supporting carbon reduction through a variety of measures including the use of renewable energy, the design and location of new development, encouraging balanced job and population growth to reduce out-commuting, the provision of broadband connectivity to reduce the need to travel, the provision of ultra-low emission vehicle charging infrastructure to reduce emissions and improve air quality, and the provision of quality Green Infrastructure.

* indicates the Objective has increased emphasis and importance in light of Covid-19

What is the scope of the ISA?

1.11 The scope of the ISA is essentially reflected in a list of sustainability objectives, developed subsequent to a 'scoping' process (which included consultation on the scope of the SA in 2018). Taken together, these objectives indicate the parameters of ISA, and provide a methodological 'framework' for appraisal.

Table 1.2: ISA framework

ISA theme	ISA objective
Economy and Employment	<p>Deliver sustainable economic growth by strengthening the local economy and capitalising on the opportunities associated with the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, promote tourism and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres</p> <p>Increase the range and quality of employment opportunities within Monmouthshire to meet identified needs.</p>
Population and Communities	<p>Provide a sufficient quantity of good quality housing in a range of types and tenures that allows people to meet their housing needs and supports economic growth and prosperity.</p> <p>Through place-making and sustainable design maintain and enhance the visual character and distinctiveness of the built environment to create great places to live. Support and promote the distinctive character of local communities.</p>
Health and well-being	To improve physical and mental health and wellbeing by encouraging healthier lifestyles, quality living environments and community safety..
Equalities, diversity and social inclusion	To reduce poverty and inequality; tackle social exclusion and promote community cohesion.
Transport and Movement	To improve access for all to jobs, services and facilities in a way that reduces reliance on car use through improving infrastructure and promoting active travel, whilst also ensuring access to high quality digital communications and utilities.
Natural Resources (Air, Land, Minerals and Water)	<p>To reduce all forms of air pollution in the interests of improving local air quality.</p> <p>To use land efficiently by prioritising development on previously developed land, using existing land efficiently and protecting where possible higher grade agricultural land.</p> <p>To ensure that primary materials and minerals are managed in a sustainable way, including through the implementation of a circular economy by waste reduction, re-use and recycling.</p> <p>To maintain and improve the quality of ground, surface and coastal waters and the quantity of water available including potable water supplies, ground water and river levels.</p>
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	To conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity within and surrounding Monmouthshire.
Historic Environment	To conserve and enhance the significance of the County's historic environment, cultural assets (including the use of the Welsh language) and heritage assets and their settings
Landscape	To protect and enhance the quality and character of the best of Monmouthshire's landscape, including its contribution to the setting and character of settlements.
Climate Change	To promote and encourage energy generation from renewable sources and energy efficiency.
Flood Risk	Ensure that new development is designed and located to avoid the risk of flooding and ensure the risk of flooding is not increased elsewhere.

**Part 1: What has Plan-making/
ISA involved up to this point?**

2. Plan-making/ ISA up to this point

- 2.1 The review of the Local Development Plan has been underway since 2018, with a wide range of evidence produced to inform the development of the RLDP. **Table 2.1** sets out the key RLDP and SA Documents published along with dates for consultation. The RLDP documents and the evidence base (including the ISA Reports) can be viewed and downloaded on the Council's website.¹

Table 2.1: RLDP and SA stages

RLDP Documents & Consultation	ISA Documents & Consultation
	ISA Scoping Report Sent to statutory consultees for consultation from 26 th October to 30 th November 2018.
Issues, Vision and Objectives Paper (January 2019 as amended June 2021)	
Growth and Spatial Options Paper Public consultation from July to August 2019	
Preferred Strategy Public consultation from 09 March to 20 April 2020 (Consultation paused due to Covid-19. Consultation was ceased following advice from the Minister for Housing and Local Government (7th July 2020)	Initial ISA Report and NTS Public consultation from 09 March to 20 April 2020 (Consultation paused due to Covid-19. Consultation was ceased following advice from the Minister for Housing and Local Government (7th July 2020)
RLDP Review of Issues, Vision, Objectives and Evidence Base in light of Covid-19 (September 2020) This Review was agreed by Council on 22 October 2020 and submitted to the Welsh Government in accordance with Ministerial advice	
Revisited RDLDP Growth and Spatial Options Consultation Paper Public consultation January to February 2021	ISA of Strategic Options Report Public consultation January – February 2021 on the revisited RLDP Growth and Spatial Options

- 2.2 This part of the Non-Technical Summary sets out the work undertaken in 2018 – 21 that led to the development of the Preferred Strategy document that is currently the focus of the appraisal (see Part 2, below) and currently published for consultation. Specifically, in-line with regulatory requirements (Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations), there is a need to explain how work was undertaken to develop and then appraise reasonable alternatives, and how the Council then took into account appraisal findings when finalising the draft plan for publication.
- 2.3 This part of the Initial ISA Report and this Non-Technical Summary presents information regarding the consideration of reasonable alternatives. This information is important given regulatory requirements.²

¹ <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-development-plan-revision/>

² There is a requirement for the SA Report to present an appraisal of 'reasonable alternatives' and 'an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with'. Whilst this report is not the SA Report, it is appropriate to present this information nonetheless for the benefit of stakeholders.

Establishing the Reasonable Alternatives

Initial ISA of growth options (March 2020)

- 2.4 Monmouthshire, Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent County Councils jointly commissioned Edge Analytics to prepare a range of demographic, housing and employment growth scenarios to inform the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP). A total of 20 different demographic-led, housing-led and employment-led scenarios were generated for Monmouthshire. From these, eight growth options were selected for consultation, comprising of 2 low, 3 mid and 3 high growth options, as set out in the Growth and Spatial Options Paper (June 2019), which was published for consultation from July to August 2019.
- 2.5 In light of the consultation responses received, informal feedback from Welsh Government officials, which indicated a lack of confidence in economic-led projections and a concern regarding ambitious LDPs, and the Council's further consideration of the options, a decision was taken to commission Edge Analytics to model an additional demographic-led scenario to address two of the key issues/ challenges facing the County in relation to retaining/ attracting younger adult population age groups and improving labour force retention.
- 2.6 The eight growth options identified in the June 2019 Consultation Paper together with the additional scenarios modelled by Edge Analytics (Growth Option 5A and Option 5A+) were assessed through the ISA in early 2020. For the purposes of the ISA process, the ten growth options were grouped together into three distinct options (Option 1 (Low Growth), Option 2 (Medium Growth), and Option 3 (High Growth)) to allow for a proportionate and meaningful appraisal to be carried out.

Revised growth options (December 2020)

- 2.7 The Council has since revisited the Growth and Spatial Options stage of the RLDP process due to the publication of updated key evidence. Namely, in August 2020 the Welsh Government published corrected 2018-based population and household projections.
- 2.8 The Welsh Government population and household projections form the starting point for the RLDP evidence on growth levels, onto which policy choices can be added as needed, for example to ensure that the County's identified issues are addressed, objectives met and vision achieved. The 2020 publication of corrected Welsh Government 2018-based population and household projections comprise important new evidence that requires consideration to ensure that the evidence base for the RLDP is robust and based on the most up to date information.
- 2.9 To take account of the latest evidence, an Updated Demographic Evidence Report (November 2020) was prepared by Edge Analytics, which sets out a range of updated growth options for the RLDP.³
- 2.10 A total of fourteen different scenarios have been generated for Monmouthshire, together with further sensitivity testing for all of the demographic and dwelling-led scenarios with regard to household formation and commuting ratios. From these fourteen different scenarios, six growth options were selected for further testing through the ISA. In addition to the initial modelling, all six selected options have been the subject of additional testing to establish the impact on demography, dwellings, household formation and employment of an affordable-housing policy-led strategy.
- 2.11 The six growth options identified in the Growth and Spatial Options Paper (December 2020)⁴ are presented in Table 2.1 overleaf.

³ Updated Demographic Evidence Report (2020) [online] available at: <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/plan-preparation/development-of-an-evidence-base/>

⁴ Monmouthshire County Council (2020) Growth and Spatial Options Paper [online] available at <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/plan-preparation/growth-and-spatial-options/>

Table 2.2: December 2020 growth options

Growth Option	Type of Scenario	Population Change 2018-2033	Population Change %	Average Net Migration per annum	Household Change 2018-2033	Household Change %	Dwellings per annum	Dwellings 2018-2033	Jobs per annum	Jobs 2018-2033
1. Balanced Migration (with added policy assumptions) (Net Nil Migration (MR, CR_R), AH)	Demographic	-5,110	-5.4%	108	-240	-0.6%	-17	-255	-120	-1,800
2. WG 2018-based Principal Projection (AH)	Demographic	6,047	6.4%	818	3,749	9.3%	262	3,930	208	3,120
3. WG 2018-based Principal Projection (with added policy assumptions) (WG 2018-based Principal (MR, CR_R), AH)	Demographic	6,147	6.5%	825	4,551	11.3%	318	4,770	265	3,975
4. Dwelling-led Average (based on dwelling completion rates) (Dwelling-led 5 year average, AH)	Dwelling	10,641	11.3%	1,110	5,628	14.0%	402	6,030	364	5,460
5. Population-led (with added policy assumptions) (PG Long Term (adjusted) (5yr) (MR, CR_R), AH)	Demographic	12,443	13.2%	1,223	7,255	18.1%	507	7,605	481	7,215
6. Employment-led projection (with added policy assumptions) (Radical Structural Change Higher (CR_R), AH))	Employment	17,403	18.5%	1,524	8,653	21.6%	604	9,060	642	9,630

Location of growth

Initial ISA of spatial options (March 2020)

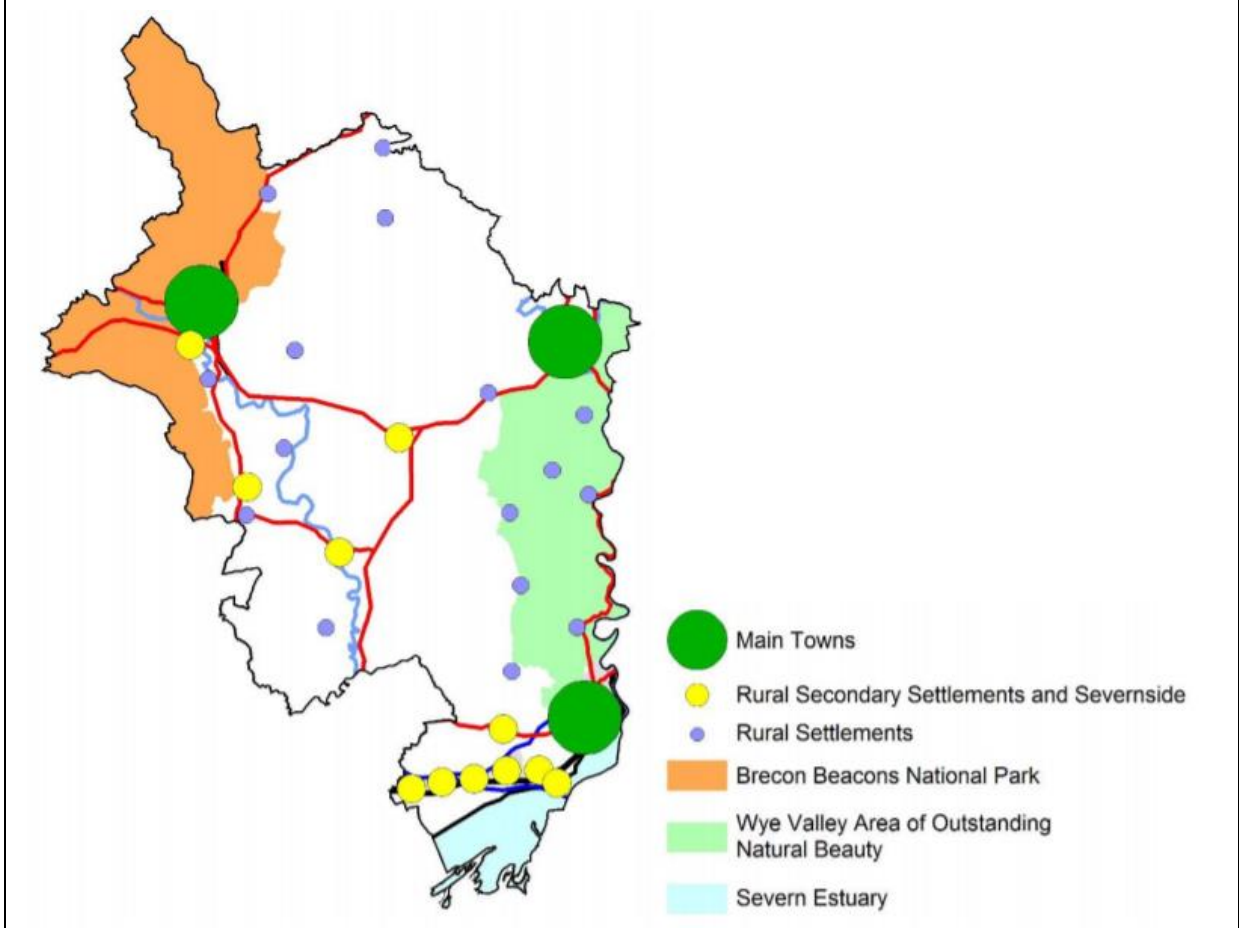
2.12 A total of eight Spatial Options were initially considered and included in the long list of spatial options (set out in Appendix 4 of the Growth and Spatial Options Consultation Paper, July 2019) but three were discounted prior to consultation as they were not considered to be genuinely realistic options. Accordingly, five spatial options were consulted on as part of the Growth and Spatial Options Consultation. Subsequent to this, as with the growth options, two additional spatial options were identified in light of consultation responses and emerging national policy at the time. These seven options were considered through the ISA process in early 2020.

Revised spatial options (December 2020)

- 2.13 As highlighted above, the Council is revisiting the Growth and Spatial Options stage of the RLDP process following the publication of the corrected Welsh Government 2018-based population and household projections in August 2020. The RLDP spatial options previously considered have been reassessed to identify suitable options for consideration as part of this process. Two of the options considered in the 2019 consultation included a new settlement. These have since been discounted as the Welsh Government deemed them contrary to national policy set out in PPW (Edition 11) which states new settlements should only be proposed as part of a joint LDP, SDP or the NDF. An additional option, which focuses growth in the North of the County, has been included as a result of consultation responses on the 2019 Growth and Spatial Options.
- 2.14 Accordingly, a total of four broad Spatial Distribution Options remain relevant and have been taken forward as realistic options. These are set out overleaf.

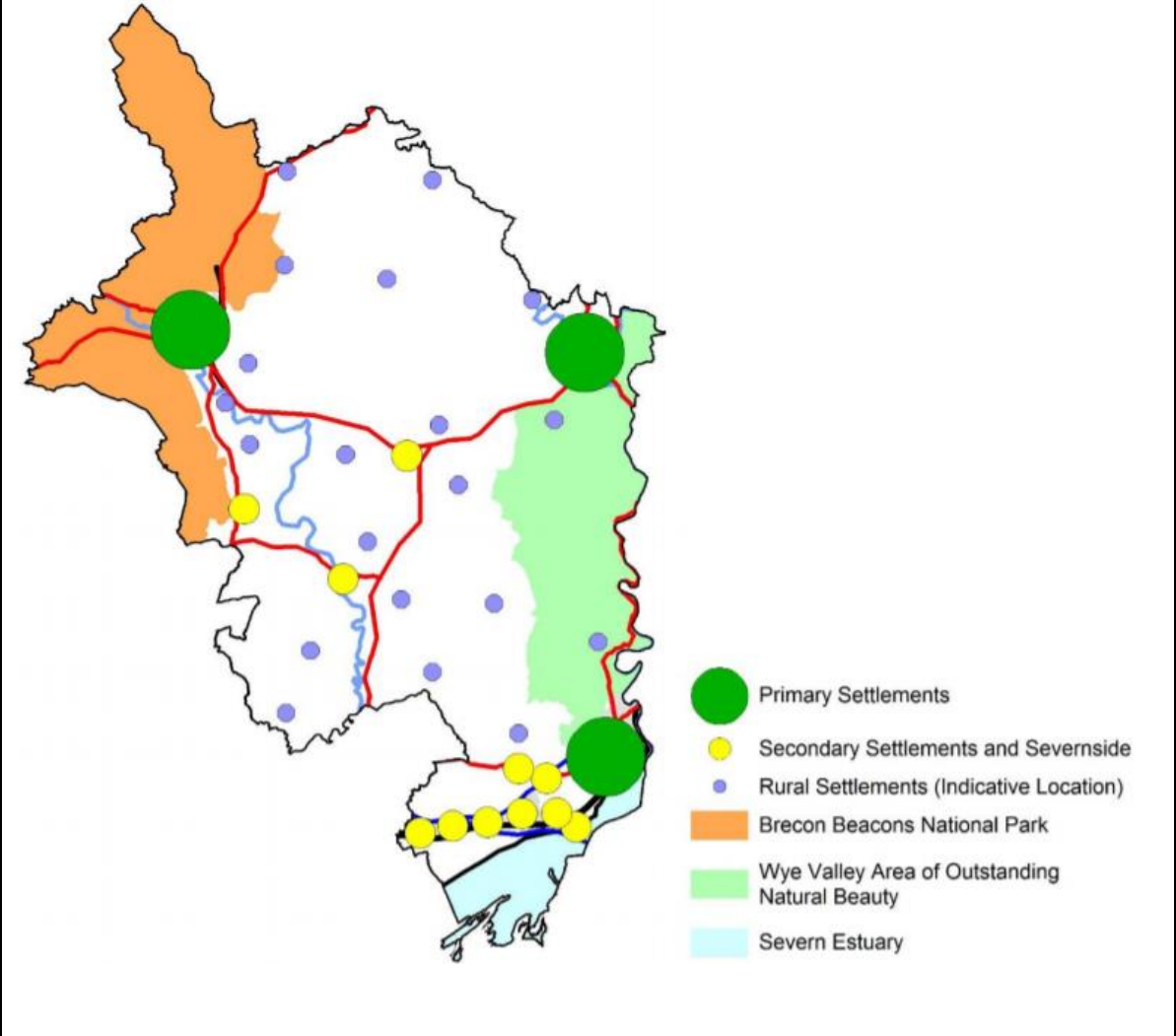
Option 1: Continuation of the existing LDP Strategy - Growth would be distributed around the County with a particular focus on Main Towns, with some development in Severnside and some development in the most sustainable rural areas to enable provision of affordable housing throughout the County. New residential development would be accompanied by new employment opportunities, where possible.

Figure 2.1: Option 1



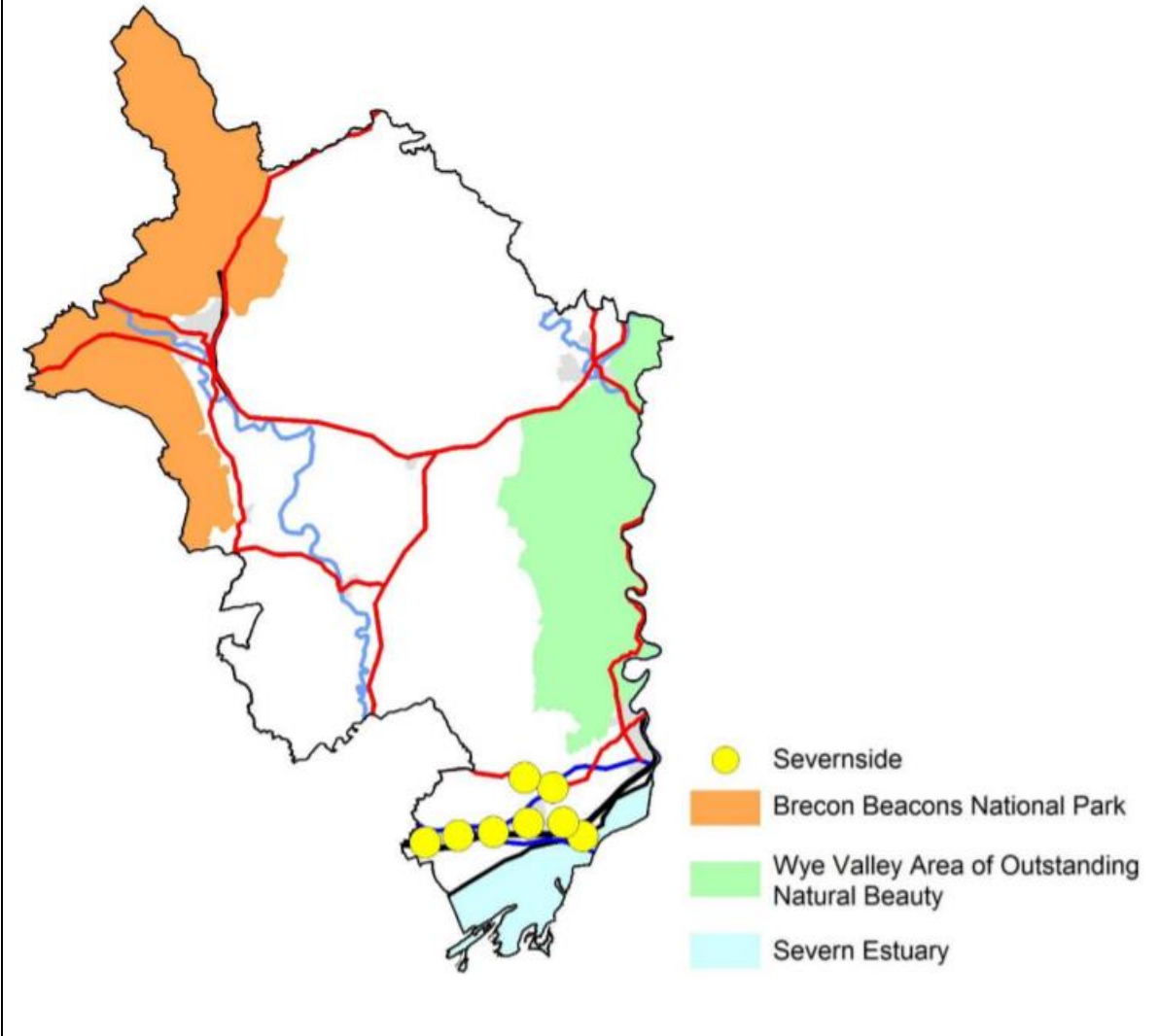
Option 2: Distribute Growth Proportionately across the County's most Sustainable Settlements - Growth, including jobs and affordable housing, would be distributed across the County's most sustainable settlements, with the level of growth proportionate to that settlement's size and amenities, affordable housing need as identified in the LHMA, the capacity for growth and/or the need for development to sustain the community.

Figure 2.2: Option 2



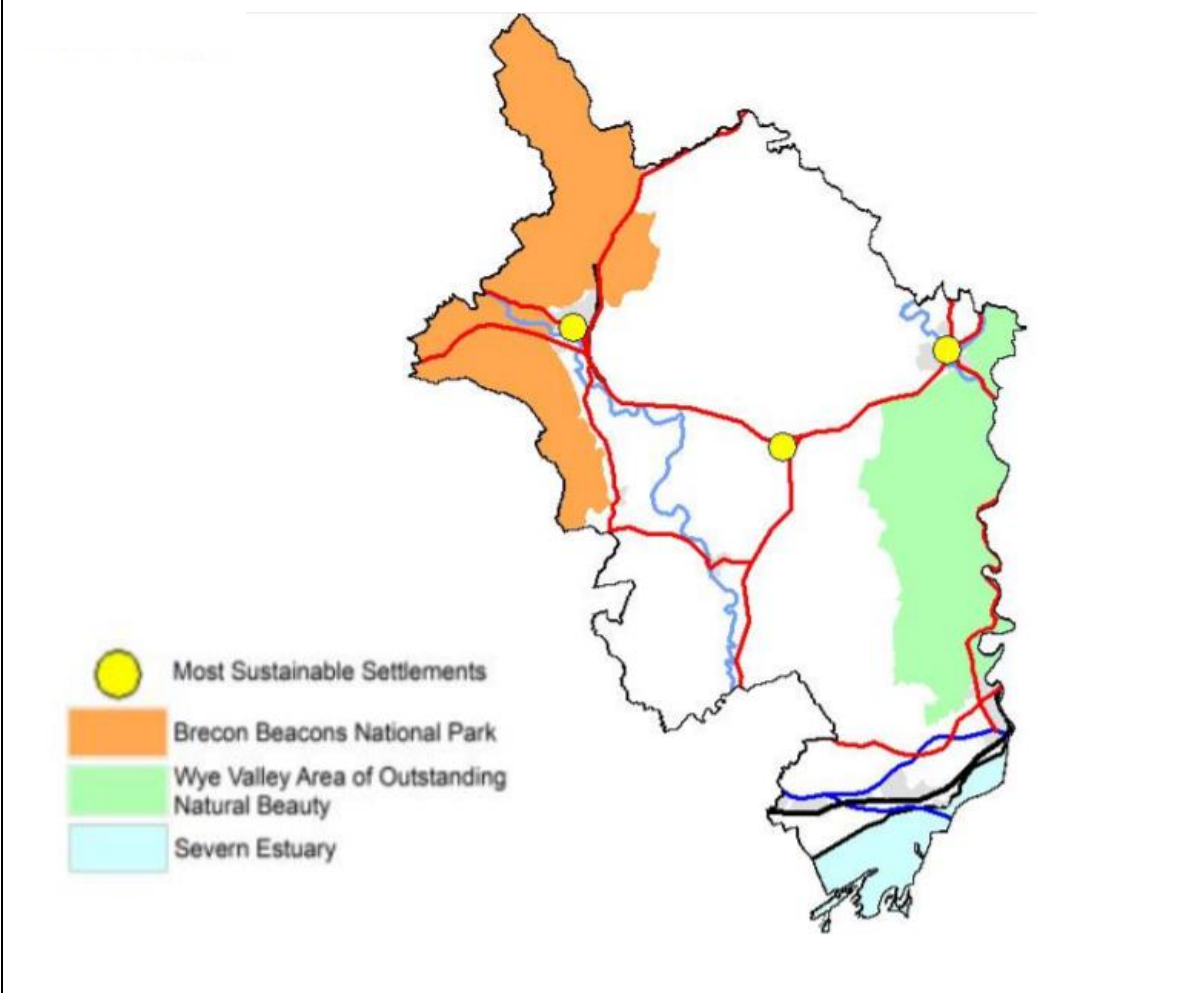
Option 3: Focus Growth on the M4 corridor - Growth would be predominately located in the South of the County in the Severnside area close to the M4/M48, to capitalise on its strategic links to the Cardiff Capital Region and South West England, existing economic opportunities and regional infrastructure connections, including via the South Wales Main rail line at Severn Tunnel Junction. Affordable Housing would be directed to those sustainable areas in the south of the County identified in the LHMA as having the greatest housing need.

Figure 2.3: Option 3



Option 4: Focus Growth in the North of the County - Growth would be predominantly located in the most sustainable Settlements within the North of the County to capitalise on its strategic links to the Heads of the Valleys and wider Cardiff Capital Region via the A465, and towards Herefordshire via the A449 and A40, along with rail links to Newport, Cardiff and the North via the Welsh Marches line. Affordable Housing would be directed to those sustainable areas in the north of the County identified in the LHMA as having the greatest housing need.

Figure 2.4: Option 4



Strategic growth areas

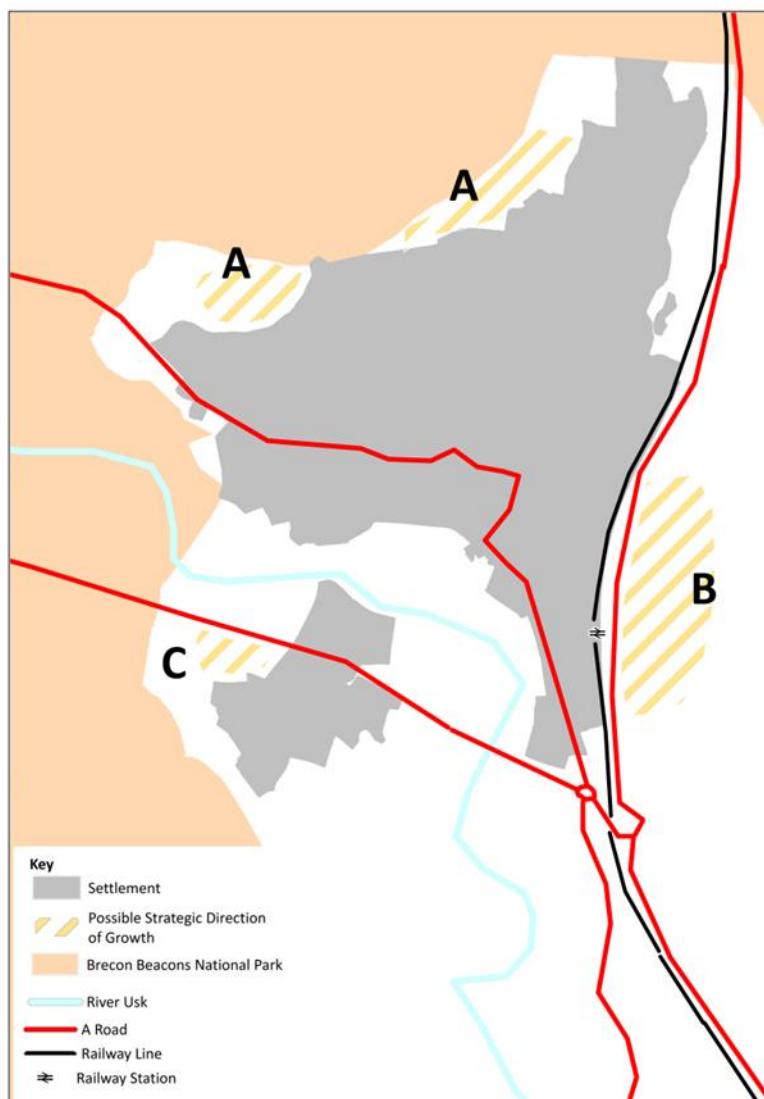
- 2.15 The Council has identified a number of potential strategic growth areas for each of the Primary Settlements and Severnside. To inform these possible strategic growth areas a high level assessment of sites submitted during the Initial Call for Candidate Sites was undertaken by the Council to identify those sites which could contribute to delivering the level of growth (housing and jobs) required to deliver the Preferred Strategy. At the present time only strategic sites and sustainable urban extensions of around 8ha in size and above have been considered.
- 2.16 The identified strategic growth areas are considered by the Council in theory to have the potential to underpin the Spatial Strategy, by accommodating growth and focusing development within those settlements and areas which are identified as the most sustainable locations. It is important to note that at this stage no decision has been made by the Council in terms of preferred strategic growth areas or sites and that not all sites will be selected for inclusion in the Deposit Plan, as their combined capacity exceeds the number of dwellings needed to meet the residual housing provision. A second Call for Candidate Sites will be undertaken following the publication of the Preferred Strategy and further site options which are compatible with the Preferred Strategy could be submitted at this time. The final selection of sites for the Deposit Plan will be dependent on further detailed assessment work, including:
- The ability to deliver the level of supporting infrastructure required;
 - A masterplanning process to ensure they create sustainable, cohesive, well-designed places delivered through a strong placemaking approach; and
 - A financial viability assessment to ensure sites are deliverable within the Plan period.
- 2.17 The potential strategic growth options are identified below.

Abergavenny and Llanfoist

2.18 Three possible strategic growth areas/ options for Abergavenny and Llanfoist have been identified at this stage and are set out below and illustrated in **Figure 2.5**:

- A. Land north of Abergavenny;
- B. Land to the east of the A465; and
- C. Land between the B4246 and Heads of the Valleys Road.

Figure 2.5: Abergavenny strategic growth options

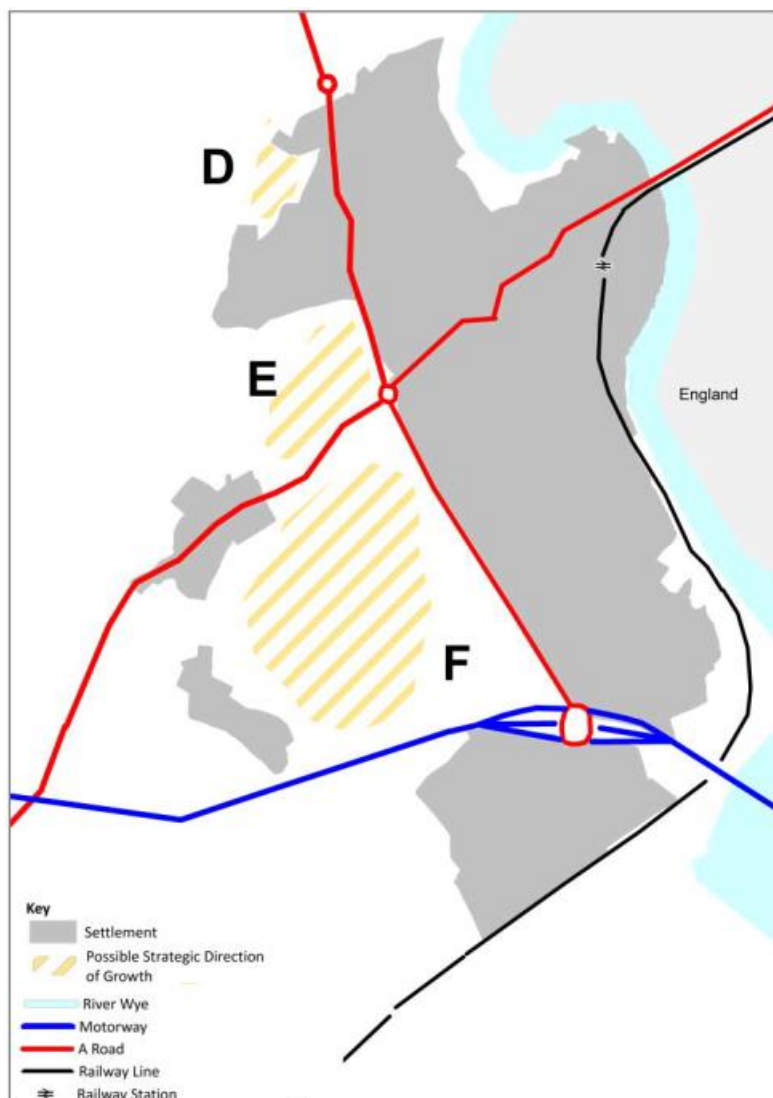


Chepstow

2.19 Three possible strategic growth areas/ options for Chepstow have been identified at this stage and are set out below and illustrated in **Figure 2.6**:

- D. Land north of the Bayfield Estate;
- E. Land between the Bayfield Estate and A48; and
- F. Land between the A48 and M48.

Figure 2.6: Chepstow strategic growth options

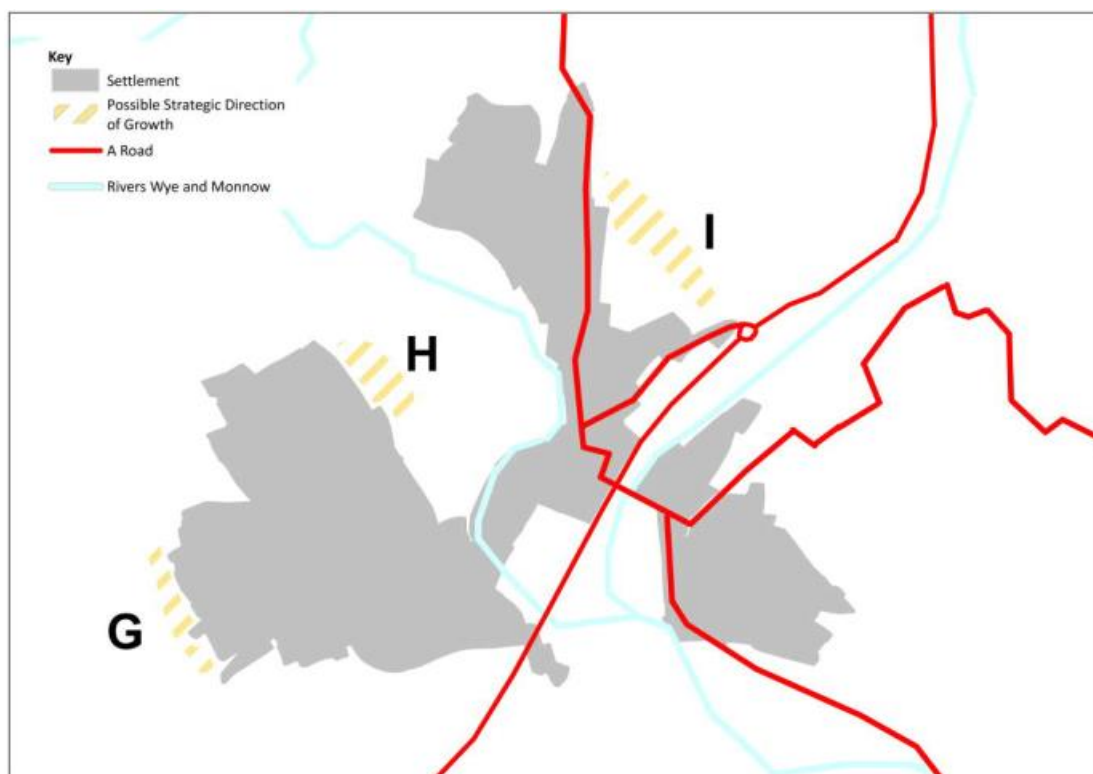


Monmouth

2.20 Three possible strategic growth areas/ options for Monmouth have been identified at this stage and are set out below and illustrated in **Figure 2.7**:

- G. Land west of Monmouth;
- H. Land central Monmouth; and
- I. Land north east of Monmouth.

Figure 2.5: Monmouth strategic growth options

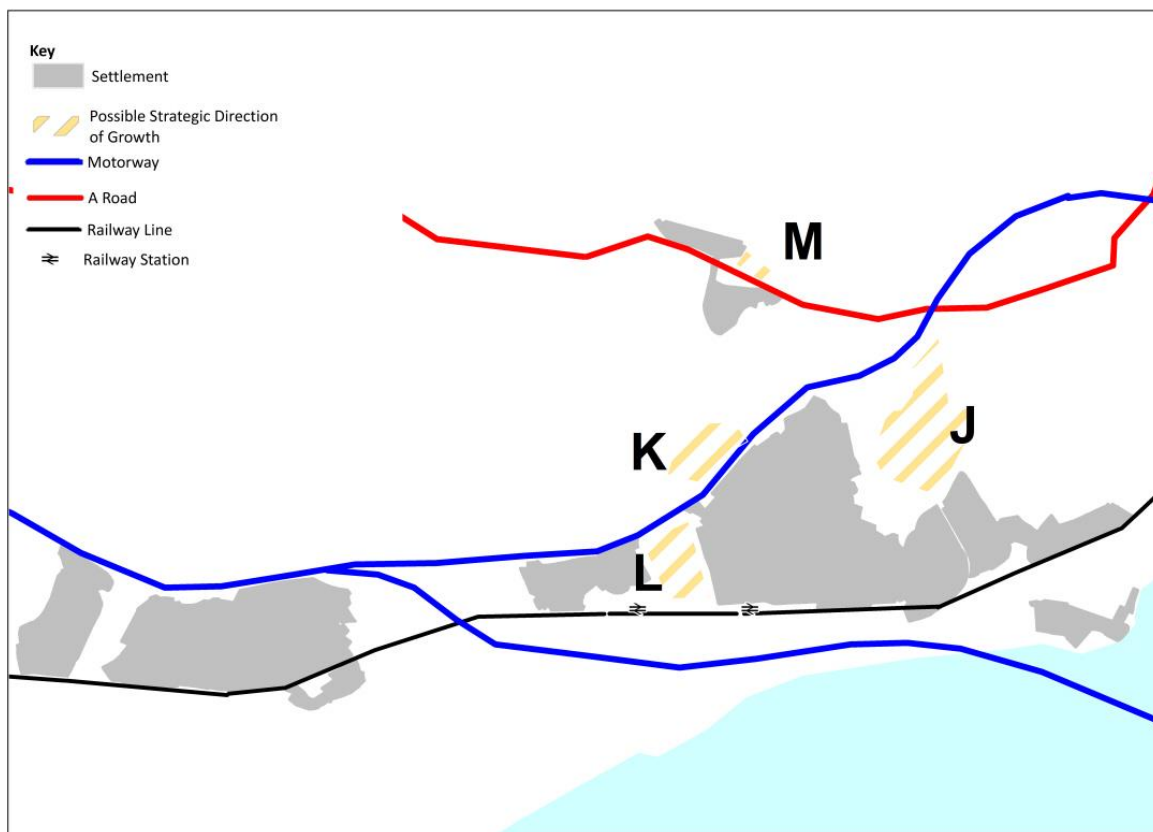


Severnside

2.21 Four possible strategic growth areas/ options for Severnside have been identified at this stage and are set out below and illustrated in **Figure 2.8**:

- J. Land north east of Caldicot;
- K. Land north west of Caldicot;
- L. Land west of Caldicot/ east of Rogiet; and
- M. Land east of Caerwent.

Figure 2.6: Severnside strategic growth options



Appraising the Reasonable Alternatives

- 2.22 The strategic options identified above were subject to a comparative appraisal under each ISA theme and summary findings are presented below.
- 2.23 The assessment examined likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives and themes identified through scoping (see **Table 1.1**) as a methodological framework. Based on the evidence available a judgement is made if there is likely to be a significant effect. Where it is not possible to predict likely significant effects on the basis of reasonable assumptions, efforts are made to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives in more general terms and to indicate a rank of preference. The number indicates the rank and does not have any bearing on likely significant effects. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between the alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of 'significant effects'. For example, if an option is ranked as 1 then it is judged to perform better against that ISA theme compared to an option that is ranked 2.

Level of growth

- 2.24 The six growth level options were subject to a comparative appraisal under each ISA theme and the summary findings are presented below.

Table 2.3: ISA summary findings for growth options

ISA theme	Rank/ significant effect	Categorisation and rank					
		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6
Economy and employment	Rank	5	4	3	2	1	1
	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
Population and communities	Rank	5	4	3	2	1	1
	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
Health and wellbeing	Rank	5	4	3	2	1	1
	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	No	No
Equalities, diversion and social inclusion	Rank	5	4	3	2	1	1
	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	No	No
Transport and movement	Rank	2	2	2	1	1	1
	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No	No
Natural resources (air, land, minerals and water)	Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Significant effect?	No	No	No	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Historic environment	Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Landscape	Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Climate change (including flood risk)	Rank	6	5	4	3	2	1
	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No	No

- 2.25 For ISA themes relating to natural resources, biodiversity, the landscape and historic environment; the nature and significance of effects will be dependent on where growth is located and how development is designed/ implemented. As the level of growth increases so does the likelihood that impacts will occur, and negative effects will arise. Residual effects in this respect are uncertain and will be better informed by consideration of the location of growth, the sensitivity of receptors, and the potential mitigation measures available. Lower growth options are ultimately ranked more favourably in respect of the potential environmental impacts, though it is also recognised that higher levels of development have further potential to deliver environmental enhancements/ improvements that could lead to positive effects.
- 2.26 At this stage there is no evidence to conclude that the higher levels of growth would result in a significant negative effect on biodiversity/ geodiversity, the landscape and historic environment. Given the limited brownfield resource in the County, development is likely to be primarily delivered on greenfield land, with residual negative effects likely. The significance of this effect will increase as the level of growth increases. There is currently uncertainty in terms of impact on important mineral resources and agricultural land until the location of growth is more defined.
- 2.27 Similarly, for the transport ISA theme, options proposing a higher level of growth are more likely to result in impacts on the local highway network through increased traffic and congestion; however, no evidence suggests impacts are likely to be of significance. Recent increases in homeworking as a result of the current pandemic are considered likely to prevail as a longer-term trend which will continue to support reduced congestion. Further, the higher growth levels are considered for their potential to deliver accessibility and infrastructure improvements and result in more self-contained communities, reduced levels of out commuting and modal shift, the importance of which have all been highlighted during the pandemic. As a result, higher growth options are ranked more favourably overall.
- 2.28 Option 1 is noted for potential negative effects of significance in relation to the ISA themes of economy and employment, population and communities, health and wellbeing and equalities, diversity and social inclusion. This is predominantly due to negative growth severely restricting opportunities to address a likely resultant demographic imbalance and economic decline. Under this option, a decline in younger age groups, particularly working age groups, is likely to result in job losses, and a decline in economic and local centres exacerbating rural isolation. This is particularly relevant to certain groups with protected characteristics, such as the young, elderly and disabled, who tend to be disproportionately affected by accessibility issues and the negative effects of transport infrastructure. Further, a lack of future development may not only severely limit opportunities to address changing housing needs in terms of types and tenures but is also likely to drive up house prices and exacerbate affordability issues.
- 2.29 The higher growth options (Options 5 and 6) are identified as performing better against ISA themes relating to the economy and employment, population and communities, health/ wellbeing and equalities as the additional growth provides an opportunity to deliver a greater range of new housing, employment opportunities and community infrastructure to meet the needs of the County.

Spatial strategy

2.30 Each of the four spatial strategy options were subject to a comparative appraisal under each ISA theme. The summary findings are presented below.

Table 2.2: Summary appraisal findings for the spatial strategy options

ISA Themes	Rank/ Significant effects	Categorisation and rank			
		Option 1 - Continuation of the existing LDP strategy	Option 2 - Distribute Growth Proportionately across the County's most Sustainable Settlements	Option 3 - Focus Growth on the M4 Corridor	Option 4 - Focus Growth in the North of the County
Economy and Employment	Rank	1	1	2	2
	Significant effect?	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Uncertain	Uncertain
Population and Communities	Rank	1	1	2	2
	Significant effect?	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Uncertain	Uncertain
Health and wellbeing	Rank	1	1	3	2
	Significant effect?	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Uncertain	Uncertain
Equalities, diversity and social inclusion	Rank	1	1	2	2
	Significant effect?	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Uncertain	Uncertain
Transport and movement	Rank	1	1	2	3
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Natural Resources	Rank	1	1	3	2
	Significant effect?	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Rank	2	2	1	3
	Significant effect?	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Uncertain	Yes - Negative
Historic Environment	Rank	=	=	=	=
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Landscape	Rank	2	2	1	2
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Climate Change	Rank	2	2	1	2
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain

- 2.31 The appraisal found that there is little to differentiate between the options at this stage with regard to the historic environment ISA theme. This is given that all options have the potential to result in negative effects by directing development to areas that are sensitive in terms of heritage constraints; albeit in different areas of the County. However, it is recognised that mitigation could be provided and that development also has the potential to deliver positive effects environmental improvement/ enhancement measures secured at the project scale. The nature and significance of effects will be dependent on the precise scale and location of development.
- 2.32 While similar conclusions can also be drawn in relation to biodiversity (given the presence of international, national and local designations throughout the County Borough), options can be differentiated between in relation to nutrient neutrality implications on the River Wye and River Usk SACs. The RLDP HRA (2021) concludes that potential residential or employment sites in Abergavenny and Monmouth are likely to have nutrient neutrality implications, because they are served by WwTWs discharging into the upper reaches of both SACs. Option 4 directs the most growth to these Primary Settlements, followed by Options 1 and 2, and is therefore worst performing overall in terms of the biodiversity ISA theme.
- 2.33 In terms of the landscape and climate change themes, Option 3 directs development to areas of lower flood risk and that are less sensitive in landscape terms and is therefore considered to perform better compared to the other options. All other options focus development in areas that are of high flood risk (though it is anticipated that high flood risk areas would be avoided in line with national policy and sequential testing) and in close proximity to landscape designations with a higher likelihood of negative effect arising. Given that the precise location of growth is not known and further evidence base work is being carried out around landscape sensitivity, all of the options are found to have an uncertain effects in relation to the landscape and climate change themes.
- 2.34 In terms of natural resources, it is difficult to identify any significant differences between the options in relation to water resources and quality. Options 1, 2 and 4, are best performing in terms of utilising brownfield land and protecting Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land, and ensuring that air quality is not reduced throughout the County. However, it is recognised that there are limited opportunities for the regeneration of brownfield land so ultimately the majority of growth will be on greenfield and potentially agricultural land. Option 3 performs less well given it may also lead to the loss of significant greenfield/ BMV land and has the potential to adversely impact upon the Limestone Mineral Safeguarding Area present to the south of the County. All the Options have the potential for a significant negative effect against the natural resources theme through the potential loss of BMV agricultural land, although it is acknowledged that there is an element of uncertainty at this stage until the precise location of development is known.
- 2.35 Options 1 and 2 perform more positively and are found to have the potential for significant long term positive effects against ISA themes relating to population/ communities, health/ wellbeing, economy/ employment and equalities compared to the other options. They focus growth at the most sustainable Settlements where there is greater need and better access to public transport, existing employment and facilities/ services. The importance of high levels of local accessibility to open space, services and facilities have been highlighted through the current pandemic. It should be noted that there are some small differences between Options 1 and 2 in terms of how growth is distributed during the Plan period, but these differences are not significant enough to warrant one option being ranked higher or lower than the other against the ISA themes referred to earlier in this paragraph.
- 2.36 Option 3 capitalises upon opportunities associated with the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, the South East Wales Metro, and the continuing economic growth of the Bristol/ South West region. Whereas, Option 4 focuses growth to the most sustainable Settlements to the North of the County capitalising upon opportunities associated with the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, the A465, and towards Herefordshire via the A449 and A40 along with rail links to Newport, Cardiff and the North via the Welsh Marches line. However, limited growth to the rest of the County under Option 3 and Option 4 would restrict economic growth in the wider County, and would not assist in sustaining Monmouthshire's existing communities; exacerbating existing demographic issues and levels of out-commuting.

2.37 Consideration is also given throughout the appraisal to the recent publication of the Future Wales National Plan 2040 (National Development Framework (NDF) 2021) which indicates a desire to designate a Green Belt “*around Newport and eastern parts of the region*”. This is anticipated to include a large part of South Monmouthshire which, although it does not include any of Monmouthshire’s main towns, if implemented would significantly constrain future growth in this part of the County. Option 4 would accord with the direction of the Future Wales document, and therefore performs positively in terms of facilitating growth consistent with emerging National policy. PPW notes that longer term needs should be considered when considering the boundaries of Green Belt. Conversely Option 3 would direct growth to the south where the Green Belt is proposed through the Future Wales document. As all other options seek to disperse growth throughout the County, and a defined location has not yet been established for the Green Belt, it is difficult to make any definitive conclusions on the nature and significance of effects at this stage.

Strategic growth areas

2.38 Each of the potential strategic growth options were subject to a comparative appraisal under each ISA theme and the summary findings are presented below. It should be noted that in order to allow for a fair and comparative appraisal it was assumed that each strategic growth option could deliver the same quantum and type of development.

Abergavenny

Table 2.3: Summary appraisal findings for the strategic growth areas around Abergavenny

ISA Themes	Rank/ significant effect	Categorisation and rank		
		Option A	Option B	Option C
Economy and Employment	Rank	1	2	3
	Significant effect?	No	No	No
Population and Communities	Rank	1	2	3
	Significant effect?	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive
Health and wellbeing	Rank	1	2	2
	Significant effect?	No	No	No
Equalities, diversity and social inclusion	Rank	2	3	1
	Significant effect?	No	No	No
Transport and movement	Rank	=	=	=
	Significant effect?	No	No	No
Natural Resources	Rank	1	2	3
	Significant effect?	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Rank	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative
Historic Environment	Rank	2	1	3
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Landscape	Rank	3	1	2
	Significant effect?	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Uncertain
Climate Change	Rank	2	1	3
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain

2.39 No significant differences have been identified between Options for the Transport and Movement ISA theme.

2.40 All Options perform positively against the Population and Communities, Health and Wellbeing, Equalities, Diversity and Social Inclusion, and Transport and Movement ISA themes, given Options are connected with reasonable distance to Abergavenny town centre, its services and facilities, and sustainable travel. Option A performs most positively of the Options for the majority of ISA Themes discussed above given this Option is most well located in this respect; with Options B and C dissected from the town centre by the A465. However, Option C performs most positively against the Equalities diversity and social inclusion as this Option best supports deprived communities to the west of the town.

2.41 All Options perform negatively against the Natural Resources ISA theme given all Options would result in the loss of greenfield and BMV agricultural land, and would not contribute towards promoting the use of brownfield land. However, it is recognised that there are limited

- opportunities within the County for brownfield development and development on lower grades of agricultural land. Option A is best performing against this ISA theme as it has the greatest access to the town centre.
- 2.42 In terms of the Biodiversity ISA theme, Options are constrained in terms of internationally/ nationally/ designated assets/sites, with the potential for significant long term negative effects. Notably, significant negative effects are predicted for all options due to nutrient neutrality implications on the River Usk SAC. In terms of ranking the Options, Option C is the worst performing theme as it is within 200m of the River Usk SAC/ SSSI, however given the additional impact pathways identified through the HRA for the SAC (recreation and water quantity, level and flow), it is considered that Options A and B also have the potential to impact upon this European designated site.
- 2.43 Options are also constrained in terms of internationally/ nationally/ designated assets/sites under the Landscape and Historic Environment ISA themes. As with biodiversity, Option C is worst performing against the Historic Environment ISA theme given its proximity to the Blaenavon Industrial WHS and potential to affect internationally and nationally designated heritage landscapes. Option A also has the potential to lead to negative effects in this respect. In terms of Landscape, Option A is worst performing due to the potential impact on the BBNP, its open character and hillside setting. Option A is also worst performing given its 'high/medium' sensitivity to residential development; as set out in the Monmouthshire Landscape Sensitivity Update Study (2020). Option B is also identified as having 'high/medium' sensitivity to residential development.
- 2.44 The overall significance of effects against the Biodiversity, Landscape and Historic Environment ISA themes is uncertain at this stage, and will be dependent on the design/ layout and implementation of specific mitigation measures. Specifically, in relation to the emerging issue of nutrient neutrality in the River Usk SAC, Natural Resources Wales and Natural England advise that all residential development coming forward in the hydrological catchment of these riverine SACs will have to be phosphorus neutral and supported by nutrient budgets. It is also noted that there is the potential for positive effects to be delivered; i.e. through improved accessibility to, and enhancement of, designated assets.
- 2.45 Option C is worst performing of the Options in relation to the Climate Change ISA theme, given that a significant proportion of Option C is located within Flood Zones B/C, with the potential for long term negative effects. However as above, for all Options, effects against Climate Change are uncertain at this stage.

Chepstow

Table 2.6: Summary appraisal findings for the strategic growth areas around Chepstow

ISA Themes	Rank/ significant effect	Categorisation and rank		
		Option D	Option E	Option F
Economy and Employment	Rank	3	2	1
	Significant effect?	No	No	No
Population and Communities	Rank	=	=	=
	Significant effect?	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive
Health and wellbeing	Rank	=	=	=
	Significant effect?	No	No	No
Equalities, diversity and social inclusion	Rank	2	1	3
	Significant effect?	No	No	No
Transport and movement	Rank	=	=	=
	Significant effect?	No	No	No
Natural Resources	Rank	=	=	=
	Significant effect?	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Rank	1	2	3
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Historic Environment	Rank	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes - Negative
Landscape	Rank	2	1	3
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative
Climate Change	Rank	=	=	=
	Significant effect?	No	No	No

- 2.46 No significant differences have been identified between Options for the Population and Communities, Transport and Movement, Health and Wellbeing, Natural Resources, and Climate Change ISA themes.
- 2.47 All Options perform positively against the Economy and Employment ISA theme, Population and Communities, Health and Wellbeing, Equalities, Diversity and Social Inclusion and Transport and Movement ISA theme. In terms of Economy and Employment, Option F performs most positively given it is well connected with the M4 corridor, the Severn Bridge, and employment opportunities to the south of the town. In terms of Equalities, Diversity and Social Inclusion, Option E is best performing as it provides improved access for vulnerable groups to the town centre; supporting improved levels of deprivation.
- 2.48 All Options perform negatively against the Natural Resources ISA theme given all Options would result in increased vehicular use within Chepstow AQMA, and the permeant loss of BMV agricultural land /greenfield land. However, it is recognised that there are limited opportunities within the County for brownfield development and development on lower grades of agricultural land.

- 2.49 In terms of the Biodiversity, Landscape, and Historic Environment ISA themes; all Options are constrained in terms of internationally/ nationally/ designated assets/ sites, with the potential for significant long term negative effects. In terms of biodiversity, given the impact pathways identified through the HRA (2019), all Options perform equally in terms of impact on the Wye Valley Woodland SAC/ SSSI/ National Nature Reserve and the River Wye SAC/ SSSI. Option F is the worst performing against the Biodiversity ISA theme as there are areas of Ancient Woodland (and other habitats and associated species) present within the Option, with the potential for long term negative effects.
- 2.50 Option F is the most sensitive in terms of the historic environment as the growth area falls within a conservation area and contains 16 listed buildings. It is not possible to identify any significant differences between Options D and E at this stage in terms of the Historic Environment ISA theme; however, they are considered to be less likely to result in residual significant effects compared to Option F.
- 2.51 All of the options have the potential for a significant negative effect on the Landscape ISA them. Assuming that the same scale/ type of development would be delivered within the strategic growth areas, the differences identified between them at this stage mainly reflect the Landscape Sensitivity Update Study (2020) and findings. Option F is worst performing, given its 'high' sensitivity to residential development; followed by Option D given it is identified as having medium landscape sensitivity and located adjacent to the AONB.
- 2.52 The potential for Options to lead to significant effects against the biodiversity/ landscape/ historic environment ISA themes is uncertain at this stage, and will be dependent on the design/ layout and implementation of specific mitigation measures. It is also noted that there is the potential for positive effects to be delivered; i.e. through biodiversity net-gain, and the enhancement of designated assets. For all Options, effects against Climate Change are uncertain at this stage.

Monmouth

Table 2.7: Summary appraisal findings for the strategic growth areas around Monmouth

ISA Themes	Rank/ significant effect	Categorisation and rank		
		Option G	Option H	Option I
Economy and Employment	Rank	2	1	3
	Significant effect?	No	No	No
Population and Communities	Rank	2	1	1
	Significant effect?	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive
Health and wellbeing	Rank	1	1	1
	Significant effect?	No	No	No
Equalities, diversity and social inclusion	Rank	=	=	=
	Significant effect?	No	No	No
Transport and movement	Rank	=	=	=
	Significant effect?	No	No	No
Natural Resources	Rank	1	2	3
	Significant effect?	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Rank	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative
Historic Environment	Rank	1	2	3
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Landscape	Rank	1	2	2
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative
Climate Change	Rank	=	=	=
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain

- 2.53 No significant differences have been identified between Options for the Equalities, Diversity and Social Inclusion, Transport and Movement, and Climate Change ISA themes.
- 2.54 All Options perform positively against the Economy and Employment ISA theme, Population and Communities, Health and Wellbeing, Equalities, Diversity and Social Inclusion, and Transport and Movement ISA themes, given Options are connected with reasonable distance to Monmouth town centre, its services and facilities, and sustainable travel. Option H performs most positively of the Options for Economy and Employment, Population and Communities, and Health and Wellbeing ISA Themes given this Option is most well located in this respect. Option G also performs well due to its location adjacent to the Wonastow Estate employment site.
- 2.55 All Options perform negatively against the Natural Resources ISA theme given all Options would result in the loss of greenfield and BMV agricultural land, and would not contribute towards promoting the use of brownfield land. However, it is recognised that there are limited opportunities within the County for brownfield development and development on lower grades of agricultural land. Option G is best performing in this respect as it is the least constrained Option in terms of BMV agricultural land coverage. Option I is worst performing given it would result in the loss of higher quality agricultural land in comparison with Option H.
- 2.56 In terms of the Biodiversity ISA themes; all Options are constrained in terms of internationally/ nationally/ designated assets/ sites, with the potential for significant long term negative effects.

- Notably, significant negative effects are predicted for all options due to nutrient neutrality implications on the River Wye SAC. In terms of ranking the Options, given the proximity of Option I to the River Wye SAC/ SSSI and the Wye Valley Woodland SAC/ SSSI/ National Nature Reserve, and the biodiversity present at the Option itself, Option I is worst performing overall.
- 2.57 All Options are also constrained in terms of internationally/ nationally/ designated assets/ sites under the Landscape and Historic Environment ISA themes. As above in relation to biodiversity, Option I is worst performing against the Historic Environment ISA theme as there are numerous heritage assets present in close proximity to the Option (Monmouth (Dixton) Conservation Area to the south east of the Option (which contains two scheduled monuments and five listed buildings), and the listed buildings to the north west of the Option on the other side of the A466).
- 2.58 Options I and J perform equally against the Landscape ISA theme given both are identified as having high/medium sensitivity to residential development, and both are constrained by landscape designations (Option I is located adjacent to a Landscape of Outstanding or Special Historic Interest, while Option H is designated in the current adopted LDP as an 'Area of amenity importance).
- 2.59 The overall significance of effects against the Biodiversity, Landscape and Historic Environment ISA themes is uncertain at this stage, and will be dependent on the design/ layout and implementation of specific mitigation measures. Specifically, in relation to the emerging issue of nutrient neutrality in the River Wye SAC, Natural Resources Wales and Natural England advise that all residential development coming forward in the hydrological catchment of these riverine SACs will have to be phosphorus neutral and supported by nutrient budgets. It is also noted that there is the potential for positive effects to be delivered; i.e. through improved accessibility to, and enhancement of, designated assets.
- 2.60 For all Options, effects against Climate Change are uncertain at this stage.

Sevenside

Table 2.8: Summary appraisal findings for the strategic growth areas around Sevenside

ISA Themes	Rank/ Significant effects	Categorisation and rank			
		Option J	Option K	Option L	Option M
Economy and Employment	Rank	2	2	1	3
	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
Population and Communities	Rank	1	2	1	3
	Significant effect?	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive	Yes - Positive
Health and wellbeing	Rank	2	2	1	3
	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
Equalities, diversity and social inclusion	Rank	2	3	1	4
	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
Transport and movement	Rank	2	2	1	3
	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
Natural Resources	Rank	2	2	1	2
	Significant effect?	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Rank	3	2	3	1
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Historic Environment	Rank	3	2	1	2
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	No	Uncertain
Landscape	Rank	3	3	2	1
	Significant effect?	Yes - Negative	Yes - Negative	Uncertain	Uncertain
Climate Change	Rank	1	1	3	2
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain

- 2.61 All Options perform positively against the Population and Communities, Health and Wellbeing, Equalities, Diversity and Social Inclusion, and Transport and Movement ISA themes, given Options have good to reasonable access to services and facilities throughout the Sevenside area (notably Caldicot town centre), and access to the strategic transport network. Options have the potential to capitalise upon sustainable travel opportunities in the key Sevenside settlements (namely Caldicot and the Severn Tunnel Junction rail station in Rogiet), in addition to utilising the M4 corridor. This will provide access to wider employment markets, including opportunities associated with the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the South East Wales Metro. While positive effects are anticipated through all Options, Option M performs least well of the Options given its comparatively poor access to Sevenside centres, services and facilities; and relatively limited potential to capitalise upon the strategic road network.
- 2.62 In terms of differentiating between Options J-L for the above ISA themes, Option L is best performing given its location along the M4 corridor, nestled between Caldicot and Rogiet, and its ability to capitalise upon sustainable transport infrastructure and encourage modal shift. Option J and K perform relatively on a par, given reasonable access to services, facilities and the strategic road network/ sustainable transport opportunities.
- 2.63 All Options perform negatively against the Natural Resources ISA theme given all Options would result in the loss of greenfield and BMV agricultural land, and would not contribute towards promoting the use of brownfield land. However, it is recognised that there are limited

- opportunities within the County for brownfield development and development on lower grades of agricultural land. Option L is best performing against this ISA theme as it is well located in terms of potential to utilise sustainable travel and improve air quality; is the least constrained in terms of Grade 1 agricultural land coverage.
- 2.64 In terms of the Biodiversity, Landscape, and Historic Environment ISA themes; Options are constrained in terms of internationally/ nationally/ designated assets/ sites, with the potential for significant long term negative effects. Options J and L are worst performing against the Biodiversity ISA theme given the presence of the Severn Estuary SPA/ SAC/ Ramsar site/ SSSI within 900m and 1.2km of the Options, respectively. Option M is identified as best performing, given it is the least constrained of the Options in terms of potential impact on biodiversity designated sites, and overall biodiversity value.
- 2.65 Option J is also worst performing against the Historic Environment ISA theme given it may lead to some development within the Caldicot Conservation Area, which also contains Caldicot Castle Grade I listed building and Scheduled Monument; and would result in the loss of large areas of greenfield/ open space in the setting of the castle which is also a Country Park. Option L is the least sensitive in terms of the historic environment. Options J and K are worst performing in terms of landscape, given both have been identified through the Landscape Sensitivity Update Study (2020) as having 'medium-high sensitivity for housing development. Option K would extend development northwest of the M48 into the open landscape; while Option J would extend the settlement of Caldicot to the northeast, towards the settlement of Crick and extend development north of the Caldicot Castle Country Park (which is also a conservation area). Option L holds medium sensitivity to residential development, and may lead to coalescence between Caldicot and Rogiet, resulting in the loss of a multi-functional open space and designated 'Green Wedge'. Option M is best performing in this respect, although there remains the potential for residual minor negative effects.
- 2.66 The potential for Options to lead to significant effects against the Biodiversity, Landscape, and Historic Environment ISA themes is uncertain at this stage, and will be dependent on the design/ layout and implementation of specific mitigation measures. It is also noted that there is the potential for positive effects to be delivered; i.e. through biodiversity net-gain, and the enhancement of designated assets.
- 2.67 Option L is worst performing of the Options in relation to the Climate Change ISA theme, given that a significant proportion of Option L is located within Flood Zones B/C, with the potential for long term negative effects. However as above, for all Options, effects against Climate Change are uncertain at this stage.

Developing the Preferred Strategy

2.68 This Chapter presents the Council’s response to the alternatives appraisal and the Council’s reasons for selecting its preferred approach in light of alternatives appraisal and other factors.

The Council’s outline reasons for choosing the preferred strategy

2.69 It should be noted that the Council’s reasons for progressing or rejecting strategic options are presented in the Growth and Spatial Options Background Paper (June 2021) that is published alongside the Preferred Strategy. These outline reasons are repeated in the tables below. A decision in terms of preferred strategic growth areas has not yet been made, as a result outline reasons for the selection or rejection of strategic growth areas are not presented in this Chapter.

Level of growth

Table 2.9: Outline reasons for choosing preferred growth option

Options (type)	Outline reasons
<p>Option 1: Balanced Migration (with added policy assumptions)</p>	<p>Using the balanced migration option as the growth strategy for the RLDP would result in a negative residual dwelling requirement and adversely impact upon the Council’s strategic ambitions from both an economic and social perspective. This option would be in conflict with proposed key elements of the RLDP objectives and of all of the options performs most poorly against the ISA objectives. The combination of the decrease in the working age population cohorts and an increase in the 60+ age cohort would not drive economic growth/prosperity; rather it would result in an outflow of workers and residents from the County. This would result in implications in terms of retaining younger people within the County to live and work. The current pandemic has clearly demonstrated the importance of ensuring our communities are balanced and socially sustainable, particularly in terms of demography. This option would not address the demographic imbalance in the County.</p> <p>The lack of new homes would also impact negatively on the provision of affordable housing. A restricted supply of homes could lead to higher house prices, thus making the County even less affordable to the younger working age population and perpetuating the demographic imbalance. A decline in the working age population in the County with a declining work force unable to support local employment provision would lead to job losses and a negative impact on the local economy. This would provide little opportunity to create a thriving, well-connected, diverse economy, which is a key RLDP objective and has been highlighted as being of particular importance in light of the current pandemic. The unbalanced demographic and lack of housing and economic opportunities would impact on the ability of the Council to deliver its core purpose of building sustainable and resilient communities that support the well-being of current and future generations.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that as this growth option does not propose any further growth it is likely to avoid significant effects on factors relating to climate change. However, the RLDP must address the climate emergency whilst also delivering on other well-being aspects of the County, such as housing need, economic prosperity, and cohesive communities. Efforts to tackle climate change are wide-ranging and will require a co-ordinated approach to development including aspects such as active travel, green infrastructure, effective use of resources and land and flood resilience.</p>
<p>Option 2: WG 2018-based Principal Projection</p>	<p>Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 (February 2021) states that the latest Welsh Government local authority level Household Projections for Wales, alongside the latest Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) and the Well-being plan for a Plan area, will form a fundamental part of the evidence base for development plans. These should be considered together with other key evidence in relation to issues such as what the Plan is seeking to achieve, links between homes and jobs, the need for affordable housing, Welsh language considerations and the deliverability of</p>

the Plan, in order to identify an appropriate strategy for the delivery of housing in the Plan area. It goes on to say that appropriate consideration must also be given to the wider social, economic, environmental and cultural factors in a plan area in order to ensure the creation of sustainable places and cohesive communities. Planning authorities are tasked with assessing whether the various elements of the projections are appropriate for their area, and if not, should undertake modelling, based on robust evidence, to identify alternative options.

The underlying assumptions from the 2018-based projections were used to prepare this particular option with the addition of a level of affordable housing growth. However, as with Growth Option 1, using this scenario as the growth strategy for the RLDP would result in a negative residual dwelling requirement and adversely impact upon the Council's strategic ambitions, from both an economic and social perspective. This option would be in conflict with proposed key elements of the RLDP objectives and after option 1 performs the most poorly against the ISA objectives. The combination of the decrease in the working age population cohorts and an increase in the 60+ age cohort would not drive economic growth/prosperity; rather it would result in an outflow of workers and residents from the County. This would result in implications in terms of retaining younger people within the County to live and work. The current pandemic has clearly demonstrated the importance of ensuring our communities are balanced and socially sustainable, particularly in terms of demography. This option would not address the demographic imbalance in the County.

A decline in the working age population in the County with a declining work force unable to support local employment provision would lead to job losses and a negative impact on the local economy. This would provide little opportunity to create a thriving, well-connected, diverse economy, which is a key RLDP objective and has been highlighted as being of particular importance in light of the current pandemic.

The lack of new homes would also impact negatively on the provision of affordable housing. A restricted supply of homes could lead to higher house prices, thus making the County even less affordable to the younger age population and perpetuating the demographic imbalance. The unbalanced demographic and lack of opportunities would impact on the ability of the Council to deliver its core purpose of building sustainable resilient communities that support the well-being of current and future generations.

It is acknowledged that as this growth option does not require new allocations it is likely to avoid significant effects on factors relating to natural resources and climate change, however, the RLDP must address environmental and climate emergency issues whilst also delivering on other well-being aspects of the County, such as housing need, economic prosperity, and cohesive communities. Efforts to tackle climate change are wide-ranging and will require a co-ordinated approach to development including aspects such as active travel, green infrastructure, effective use of resources and land and flood resilience.

Whilst this option is considered by some in response to the consultation to represent a low-risk strategy at a time of unprecedented uncertainty, a Review of the Issues, Vision and Objectives was undertaken in June 2020 and concluded that they remain valid in light of Covid-19 and in some instances have increased in importance.

Following a review of the responses received in reply to the consultation on the Growth Options and in view of the negative impacts associated with this growth option and its poor performance against the RLDP objectives and identified ISA themes, it is not considered prudent to take this option forward as the preferred growth option for the RLDP

**Option 3: WG 2018-based
Principal Projection (with added
policy assumptions)**

Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 (February 2021) states that the latest Welsh Government local authority level Household Projections for Wales, alongside the latest Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) and the Well-being plan for a Plan area, will form a fundamental part of the evidence base for development plans. These should be considered together with other key evidence in relation to issues such as what the Plan is seeking to achieve, links between homes and jobs, the need for affordable housing, Welsh language considerations and the deliverability of the Plan, in order to identify an appropriate strategy for the delivery of housing in the Plan area. It goes on to say that appropriate consideration must also be given to the wider social, economic, environmental and cultural factors in a plan area in order to ensure the creation of sustainable places and cohesive communities. Planning authorities are tasked with assessing whether the various elements of the projections are appropriate for their area, and if not, should undertake modelling, based on robust evidence, to identify alternative options.

In common with Option 2, key assumptions from the 2018-based projections were used to prepare this particular option, with added policy assumptions to address the key issues that the County faces. Despite including the policy assumptions using this scenario as the growth

strategy for the RLDP would result in virtually no residual dwelling growth over the remainder of the Plan period and would thus adversely impact upon the Council's strategic ambitions, from both an economic and social perspective. This option whilst performing marginally better than options 1 and 2 against the ISA themes would be in conflict with proposed key elements of the RLDP objectives. The combination of the decrease in the population of the working age cohorts and an increase in the 60+ age cohort would not drive economic growth/prosperity; rather it would result in an outflow of workers and residents from the County. This would result in implications in terms of retaining younger people within the County to live and work. The current pandemic has clearly demonstrated the importance of ensuring our communities are balanced and socially sustainable, particularly in terms of demography. This option would not address the demographic imbalance in the County.

A decline in the working age population in the County with a declining work force unable to support local employment provision would lead to job losses and a negative impact on the local economy. This would provide little opportunity to create a thriving, well-connected, diverse economy, which is a key RLDP objective and has been highlighted as being of particular importance in light of the current pandemic.

The lack of new homes would also impact negatively on the provision of affordable housing. A restricted supply of homes could lead to higher house prices, thus making the County even less affordable to the younger working age population and perpetuating the demographic imbalance. The unbalanced demographic and lack of opportunities would impact on the ability of the Council to deliver its core purpose of building sustainable resilient communities that support the well-being of current and future generations.

Whilst this option is considered by some in response to the consultation to represent a low-risk strategy at a time of unprecedented uncertainty, a Review of the Issues, Vision and Objectives was undertaken in June 2020 and concluded that they remain valid in light of Covid-19 and in some instances have increased in importance.

Following a review of the responses received in reply to the consultation on the growth options and in view of the negative impacts associated with this growth option and its poor performance against the RLDP objectives and identified ISA themes, it is not considered prudent to take this option forward as the preferred growth option for the RLDP.

**Option 4:
Dwelling-led Average (based on
dwelling completion rates)**

This option goes some way to addressing our issues and meeting our objectives in comparison to options 1 to 3, and performs well against the ISA themes. However, at this level of growth the impacts on addressing the issues and meeting our objectives are limited. This option represents a continuation of the dwelling growth rates from the past 5 years, i.e. 'business as usual'. With the addition of the affordable housing policy-led element, this would result in average dwelling completions of 402 dpa over the Plan period which is below the adopted LDP dwelling requirement of 450 dpa. Growth at this level would result in a continuation of the trend towards an ageing demographic in the County. Whilst there is growth from a larger number of age groups, the level of growth coming from the younger age groups is at a low level. The majority of population growth is still coming from the over 60 age groups, with the 45-59 age groups declining, again resulting in an unbalanced demographic. Whilst this option projects a growth in jobs of 5,460 jobs, in terms of the average number of jobs in the County, this option still projects a lower level than over the previous 15 years. This would again result in implications in terms of retaining younger people within the County to live and work. The imbalanced demographic and lack of housing and economic opportunities would impact on the ability of the Council to deliver its core purpose of building sustainable and resilient communities that support the well-being of current and future generations.

Following a review of the responses received in reply to the consultation on the growth options and in view of the negative impacts associated with this growth option and its performance against the RLDP objectives and identified ISA themes, it is not considered prudent to take this option forward as the preferred growth option for the RLDP.

Option 5: Population-led (with added policy assumptions)

Growth Option 5 - Population-led projection (with added policy assumptions) is the Council's preferred growth option. It performs the most positively against the RLDP objectives and better overall against the ISA themes than any of the other five options. This option provides a level of growth that would best address the County's key issues/challenges and meet the RLDP objectives, it is considered to be sufficiently ambitious and robustly justified. This option shows significant progress in achieving a more balanced demographic with an increase in the working age cohorts, it will also drive economic growth/prosperity providing the opportunity to create a thriving well-connected diverse economy, which is a key RLDP objective.

This level of growth will enable the provision of a sufficient range and choice of homes, both market and affordable, the need for which has been heightened by the current pandemic. This option will also assist in ensuring our communities are balanced and socially sustainable, particularly in terms of demography, which is a key RLDP objective and the importance of which has again been clearly demonstrated during the current pandemic.

The level of employment growth under this option will assist in reducing the need to travel / levels of out-commuting, and promote self-contained communities. There has been a fundamental shift in working practices since the start of the 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 the level of job growth under this option, whilst also achieving the Welsh Government and Council's aim of reducing the need for commuting. Appropriately located growth will increase the customer base and workforce, supporting local facilities, businesses and services and enable the creation of sustainable vibrant communities and '20 minute neighbourhoods'. The increased reliance on access to local facilities and services during the current pandemic, has highlighted their importance to our communities. This option would best meet the needs of and support the communities of Monmouthshire by providing a level of growth which will provide opportunities to secure affordable housing, improvements to infrastructure and potential to maximise opportunities to secure and/or enhance green infrastructure, public open space and recreation provision throughout the County.

Following a review of the responses received in reply to the consultation on the growth options and its performance against the RLDP objectives and identified ISA themes this option remains the Council's preferred option. Overall, this option is considered to be the most conducive to achieving the RLDP vision and the Council's core purpose of building sustainable and resilient communities across Monmouthshire.

Option 6: Employment-led (with added policy assumptions)

This option results in substantial growth in the County's population and would be a significant uplift on the current dwelling delivery levels. It would result in a positive impact on demography with an increase in the number of older and elderly people living in the County balanced against an increase in the working age groups and greater provision of dwellings and jobs increasing the opportunities for the younger population to both live and work in Monmouthshire. The current pandemic has demonstrated the importance of ensuring our communities are balanced and socially sustainable, particularly in terms of demography. It would provide a level of housing that is sufficient to provide a wide ranging choice of homes for both existing and future residents. The level of growth would provide opportunities to secure more significant affordable housing through the planning system. The current pandemic has emphasised the need to ensure the provision of a range and choice of homes (housing mix) in future housing developments to address the County's affordability issues and to build sustainable and resilient communities throughout Monmouthshire.

There is a high level of job creation combined with a reduction in the commuting levels from those recorded at the time of the 2011 Census so an increased amount of the employment generated would be for residents of the County. However, there is a level of ambiguity with regard to the employment-led options given the uncertainty associated with economic forecasts, particularly in the current economic climate surrounding Covid-19 and Brexit and their potential future impact on the national and local economy. The Council recognises that this option performs strongly against the RLDP Objectives and ISA themes, however, it is considered in the ISA that Option 5, by more closely aligning with past delivery rates presents a more realistic option. Informal feedback from Welsh Government officials has also indicated a lack of confidence in economic-led projections. Whilst the Council has an aspiration to create a thriving well-connected, diverse economy and is making progress towards this goal, it recognises the uncertainty around the effects of the employment-led scenarios on population/housing growth when

compared with the demographic and housing-led options. Considering this the Council does not propose to use an economic-led scenario as a basis for the preferred growth option.

- 2.70 The Growth Options presented provide alternative growth strategy options to inform the level of dwelling and employment provision within the RLDP, having regard to national policy, the evidence base and policy aspirations. Based on the assessment set out above, Growth Option 5 Population-led projection (with added policy assumptions) is the Council's preferred Growth Option.
- 2.71 Growth Option 5 would provide the level of growth that will help to deliver the Council's core purpose of building sustainable and resilient communities for current and future generations. Fundamentally, this option will enable the provision of a sufficient range and choice of homes, both market and affordable, the need for which has been heightened by the current pandemic. This option will also assist in ensuring our communities are balanced and socially sustainable, particularly in terms of demography, which is a key RLDP objective and the importance of which has been clearly demonstrated during the current pandemic.
- 2.72 Likewise, the level of employment growth will assist in reducing the need to travel / levels of out-commuting, and promoting self-contained communities. Whilst this option projects a significant growth in jobs, with an increase of 7,215 jobs over the Plan period, there has been a fundamental shift in working practices since the start of the 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 the level of job growth under this option, whilst also achieving the Welsh Government and Council's aim of reducing the need for commuting. This in turn will 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'. 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 employment hubs will enable those who can and choose to do so. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected home-buying trends with an emphasis on quality of life, house size and access to outdoor green space rather than a focus on commuting times. Monmouthshire is a very attractive proposition and stands to gain from an increased economically active population without the associated problems of increased commuting, and local businesses and services would benefit from increased custom and footfall with workers spending their wages in local businesses rather than in the town/city in which they previously worked.
- 2.73 Appropriately located growth will increase the customer base and workforce, supporting local facilities, businesses and services. The increased reliance on access to local facilities and services during the current pandemic, has highlighted their importance to our communities. This option would best meet the needs of and support the communities of Monmouthshire by providing a level of growth which will provide opportunities to secure affordable housing, improvements to infrastructure and potential to maximise opportunities to secure and/or enhance green infrastructure, public open space and recreation provision.
- 2.74 Overall, Growth Option 5, Population-led projection (with added policy assumptions) best meets the RLDP objectives without adverse impacts on the climate emergency objective and is considered to be the most conducive to achieving the RLDP vision and the Council's core purpose of building sustainable and resilient communities across Monmouthshire.

Location of growth

Table 2.10: Outline reasons for choosing preferred spatial option

Options (type)	Outline reasons
<p>Option 1: Continuation of the Existing LDP Strategy</p>	<p>A continuation of the existing strategy performs well against both the RLDP objectives and the ISA themes and addresses many of the key challenges and issues facing the County. It is considered that the existing LDP Strategy is working well, as demonstrated in the LDP Annual Monitoring Reports. While growth would be primarily directed towards the Main Towns which are the County’s most sustainable settlements, any infrastructure capacity issues and potential environmental impacts would need to be addressed as part of the Plan preparation process.</p> <p>Whilst the existing strategy is working well in terms of housing delivery in the County’s Main Towns and Severnside it is recognised that the proposed level of growth in rural areas has not been fully achieved and the overall delivery of affordable housing as a result has not been sufficient. In addition, although housing is being delivered on the strategic sites, the provision of employment opportunities on these sites has not been fulfilled for all of the Strategic Mixed-use sites, with only Wonastow Road delivering employment uses on site to date. It is recognised that there is a need to link housing and employment growth and any future employment allocations will be based on the findings of the Employment Land Review and other Council aspirations.</p> <p>Following a review of the responses received in reply to the consultation on the Spatial Options and in view of the assessment above, it is not considered prudent to take Spatial Option 1 forward.</p>
<p>Option 2: Distribute Growth Proportionately across the County’s most Sustainable Settlements</p>	<p>This option would provide proportionate growth in the County’s most sustainable urban and rural areas, in accordance with the Sustainable Settlement Appraisal. It is considered that this spatial option provides a land use framework that will help deliver the Council’s core purpose of helping to build sustainable and resilient communities for current and future generations. Fundamentally, this option will enable the provision of a sufficient range and choice of homes, both market and affordable to be provided throughout the County’s most sustainable settlements, the need for which has been heightened by the current pandemic. This option will also assist in ensuring our communities are balanced and socially sustainable, particularly in terms of demography, which is a key RLDP objective and the importance of which has been clearly demonstrated during the current pandemic. Likewise, it addresses employment growth and resilience by directing growth to sustainable locations across the County, which will assist in reducing the need to travel/levels of out-commuting and promoting self-contained communities. It is, however, recognised that there has been a fundamental shift in working practices since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic with an increased propensity to work from home/remotely. It is expected that this trend will continue over the longer term which will help reduce commuting levels over the Plan period and in turn reducing 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’. Appropriately located growth will increase the customer base and workforce, supporting local facilities, businesses and services. The increased reliance on access to local facilities and services during the current pandemic has highlighted their importance to our communities. This option would best meet the needs of and support both the urban and rural communities of Monmouthshire.</p> <p>Overall, Spatial Option 2 is considered to be the most conducive to achieving the RLDP vision and the Council’s core purpose of building sustainable and resilient communities across Monmouthshire.</p>
<p>Option 3: Focus on M4 Corridor</p>	<p>Whilst the focus of growth on the M4 corridor would provide an opportunity for building sustainable communities and potential infrastructure improvements in the South of the County, it would not address market and affordable housing, social or economic needs across all areas of the County, as growth would be focused in t Severnside. This option would have a wider negative impact on sustaining communities in other areas of the County due to the lack of growth and associated opportunities in these areas. Following a review of the responses received to the consultation on the Spatial Options and in view of the assessment above, it is not considered prudent to take this Spatial Option forward.</p>

Options (type)**Outline reasons****Option 4: Focus the North of the County**

Whilst the focus of growth in the North of the County would provide an opportunity for building sustainable communities and potential infrastructure improvements in the North of the County, it would not address market and affordable housing, social or economic needs across all areas of the County as growth would be focused in the North of the County. This option would also have a negative impact on sustaining rural communities, due to the lack of growth and associated opportunities in these areas. Following a review of the responses received to the consultation on the Spatial Options and in view of the assessment above, it is therefore not considered prudent to take this Spatial Option forward. Further details are set out in the Growth and Spatial Options Background Paper.

- 2.75 The Spatial Options presented provide alternative spatial strategy options for accommodating growth, having regard to the evidence base and policy aspirations. Based on the assessment set out above, Spatial Option 2 to Distribute Growth Proportionately across the County's most Sustainable Settlement is the Council's preferred Spatial Option. Spatial Option 2 is considered to be the most conducive option for achieving the Council's core objective of building sustainable and resilient communities across Monmouthshire and was the most supported option in response to the consultation as well as performing well in relation to the RLDP objectives and Initial Integrated Sustainability Appraisal. It is considered that Spatial Option 2 is the Council's preferred Spatial Option for accommodating growth, having regard to the evidence base and policy aspirations.
- 2.76 This option would provide proportionate growth in the most sustainable urban and rural areas, in accordance with the Sustainable Settlement Appraisal. It is considered that this spatial option provides a land use framework that will help deliver the Council's core purpose of helping to build sustainable and resilient communities for current and future generations. Fundamentally, this option will enable the provision of a sufficient range and choice of homes, both market and affordable to be provided throughout the County's most sustainable settlements, the need for which has been heightened by the current pandemic. This option will also assist in ensuring our communities are balanced and socially sustainable, particularly in terms of demography, which is a key RLDP objective and the importance of which has been clearly demonstrated during the current pandemic. Likewise, it addresses employment growth and resilience by directing growth to sustainable locations across the County, which will assist in reducing the need to travel/levels of out-commuting and promoting self-contained communities. It is, however, recognised that there has been a fundamental shift in working practices since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic with an increased propensity to work from home/remotely. It is expected that this trend will continue over the longer term which will help reduce commuting levels over the Plan period and in turn 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'. Appropriately located growth will increase the customer base and workforce, supporting local facilities, businesses and services. The increased reliance on access to local facilities and services during the current pandemic has highlighted their importance to our communities. This option would best meet the needs of and support both the urban and rural communities of Monmouthshire.
- 2.77 In addition to this, the ISA analysis ranks Spatial Option 2, along with Spatial Option 1, as performing the best overall. The findings in the ISA note that while there are some small differences between Options 1 and 2 in terms of how growth is distributed during the Plan period, these differences are not significant enough to warrant one option being ranked higher or lower than the other against the ISA themes. Accordingly, Spatial Option 2 performs positively overall, and is found to have the potential for significant long term positive effects against the ISA themes relating to economy/employment, population/communities, health/wellbeing, and equalities compared to the other options. The ISA notes that this option will likely positively address existing demographic issues, encouraging younger people to reside and work in the County. This option would perform positively in terms of providing housing to meet the identified needs of the County and would provide affordable housing throughout the settlement hierarchy, ensuring a range and choice of homes are delivered, particularly where there is a need for affordable housing, to assist in regaining a balanced population.

2.78 Overall, this option is considered to be the most conducive to achieving the RLDP vision and the Council's core purpose of building sustainable and resilient communities across Monmouthshire.

Part 2: What are the ISA findings at this stage?

3. Appraisal findings at this stage

- 3.1 Part 2 of the ISA Report and this Non-Technical Summary answers the question - What are appraisal findings at this stage? - by presenting an appraisal of the Preferred Strategy Document. Summary findings of the appraisal are presented below.
- 3.2 The ISA found that the Preferred Strategy has the potential for significant positive effects in relation to the economy and employment and population and communities ISA themes. It proposes a level of growth to meet the needs of communities during the plan period and distributes it according to the settlement hierarchy, the majority of growth being focussed at settlements where there is good access to sustainable transport modes and existing facilities/ services/ employment opportunities. Where possible, it takes advantage of opportunities being presented through the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and South East Wales Metro.
- 3.3 The Preferred Strategy also has the potential for positive effects in relation to socio-economic objectives through maintaining and enabling the sustainability improvements that have arisen from the Covid-19 pandemic. The Preferred Strategy supports the delivery of priorities identified in the Welsh Government Building Better Places Covid-19 recovery document published in July 2020, which seeks to capitalise upon high levels of home working and reduced out-commuting. It is expected that the trend for remote working will continue over the longer term in accordance with Welsh Government's ambition of 30% of people working from or near home. This will reduce out-commuting without the need for all of the jobs growth to be physically located within the County and will support healthy placemaking. Indirect positive effects are also anticipated in relation to the wider ISA framework; including health and wellbeing, transport and movement, and climate change.
- 3.4 The ISA also found that there is the potential for a significant long term positive effect on the transport and movement ISA theme. Growth is being distributed according to the settlement hierarchy with the majority of development directed towards the higher tier settlements where there is better access to sustainable transport modes and wider infrastructure. At a strategic scale it takes advantage of opportunities arising from the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and South East Wales Metro proposals, whilst at a settlement specific scale it provides for opportunities to enhance and extend the Active Travel Network and integrate new development into it.
- 3.5 As no specific sites/ allocations are identified at this stage, the ISA was not able to predict or draw any definitive conclusions in relation to the nature and significance of effects that are likely to arise in relation to the remaining ISA themes. The appraisal highlighted the potential for both positive and negative effects on the remaining themes depending on the precise location of growth and scale of development at the sites. Candidate sites will be considered through the ISA process in due course and the findings will inform the development of the Deposit Plan.
- 3.6 **Table 3.1** below sets out a summary of the appraisal findings for the Preferred Strategy 'as a whole' against each ISA theme.

Table 3.1: Summary appraisal findings

ISA theme	Commentary	Residual significant effect predicted at this stage?
Economy and employment	<p>The Preferred Strategy proposes the delivery of new employment land and homes to meet identified needs and provide flexibility during the plan period. Growth is being distributed according to the settlement hierarchy with the majority of development directed towards the higher tier settlements where there is greater need and better access to sustainable transport modes and wider infrastructure. The Preferred Strategy takes advantage of the proposed South East Wales Metro rollout to Monmouth, Chepstow and Abergavenny (later in the plan period) and it also looks to capitalise on Monmouthshire’s strategic location within the Cardiff Capital Region, between the Great Western Cities and Bristol/ SW region, and its access to the M4, M48 and mainline rail corridors to take advantage of local and regional economic opportunities. As a result, it should help to consolidate the existing high economic rate, further increase economic activity and potentially reduce out-commuting. Alongside supporting the development of new employment in job growth sectors (new technologies and advanced manufacturing, IT and cyber security, tourism and low carbon sustainable technologies) it will be vitally important to support and enhance education and skills related infrastructure in these areas to ensure that people have the right skills for these roles.</p>	Yes - Positive
Population and communities	<p>The Preferred Strategy proposes the delivery of new housing and employment land which meets and exceeds Monmouthshire’s objectively assessed housing need. By taking a settlement hierarchy-led approach to distributing housing growth the Preferred Strategy focuses growth at locations which are best served by existing services, facilities and community infrastructure. This will help ensure that the majority of growth is located in reasonably close proximity to shops, schools, employment and healthcare whilst also providing opportunities to deliver new community infrastructure on or off site as necessary. The proportionate distribution of growth means that whilst the majority of growth is delivered at the most sustainable settlements, the smaller rural and remote settlements still receive some new growth and the associated benefits, particularly by introducing additional housing choice for first time buyers and elderly rural residents who may otherwise have found it challenging to remain living in their communities. By doing so it is considered that the Preferred Strategy will have associated benefits for the Council’s social objectives, including meeting the housing needs of different groups within the community, building sustainable communities and sustaining rural communities. The strategy also incorporates an affordable housing policy-led element, which will help to address the demographic and affordability challenges facing the County having a long term positive effect.</p>	Yes - Positive
Health and wellbeing	<p>The Preferred Strategy proposes distributing growth according to the settlement hierarchy with the majority of development directed towards the higher tier settlements where there is greater need and better access to sustainable transport modes and wider infrastructure. This will likely present opportunities to link new development with the existing walking, cycling and Green Infrastructure networks at each of the settlements, whilst also offering potential to secure enhancements to these networks through the development process. It is recognised that Monmouthshire is a largely rural plan area and in this context many of the smaller settlements which are allocated a small proportion of growth are unlikely to support walking and cycling access to services. Despite this it is important that such settlements receive the benefits of some growth to sustain their vitality. The Preferred Strategy directs the majority of housing growth to settlements with the widest range of healthcare facilities and requires that such facilities are enhanced as necessary through the development process to continue to provide a high quality service.</p>	Uncertain
Equalities, diversity and social inclusion	<p>The Preferred Strategy’s proportionate distribution of growth means that small rural communities will see some of the benefits of development, including the potential for delivering affordable housing in rural areas which could help to sustain the vitality and viability of rural settlements. A thriving hierarchy of settlements across the plan area will be an important aspect of tackling inequalities and deprivation within Monmouthshire in terms of ensuring access to employment, education and services at or near where the need for</p>	Uncertain

ISA theme	Commentary	Residual significant effect predicted at this stage?
	<p>them arises. The affordable housing policy-led strand of the spatial strategy will also help to address the demographic and affordability challenges facing the County with a positive effect on this ISA theme. The Preferred Strategy also includes policy requirements which could help to deliver new or enhanced infrastructure, including education and training, across the plan area to help address deficiencies in provision. Additional policy requirements could help to create and sustain accessible, inclusive places through the development process which promote social inclusion and remove barriers to access. However, at this stage of plan making details on some key aspects of tackling inequality remain uncertain.</p>	
Transport and movement	<p>The Preferred Strategy gives great weight to the Active Travel Network and the importance of directing growth to locations which can either integrate with the existing network or enhance and extend the existing network in order to link with services and facilities. Growth is being distributed according to the settlement hierarchy with the majority of development directed towards the higher tier settlements where there is better access to sustainable transport modes and wider infrastructure. The distribution of growth also enables the Preferred Strategy to take advantage of the proposed South East Wales Metro rollout to Monmouth, Chepstow and Abergavenny (later in the plan period). The Preferred Strategy looks to capitalise on Monmouthshire's strategic location within the Cardiff Capital Region, strategic location between the Great Western Cities and Bristol/ SW region, and its access to the M4, M48 and mainline rail corridors which is an important element in ensuring the plan area's continued integration into the Cardiff Capital Region and beyond. At a strategic scale it takes advantage of opportunities arising from the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and South East Wales Metro proposals, whilst at a settlement specific scale it provides for opportunities to enhance and extend the Active Travel Network and integrate new development into it.</p>	Yes - Positive
Natural resources	<p>As no specific sites/ allocations are identified at this stage, it is difficult to predict or draw any definitive conclusions in relation to the nature and significance of effects that are likely to arise in relation to the Natural Resources ISA theme. While there is a need to conserve natural resources, it is recognised that there are limited opportunities within the County for brownfield development and development on lower grades of agricultural land. The nature and significance of effects are dependent on the precise location and scale of growth.</p>	Uncertain
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<p>As no specific sites/ allocations are identified at this stage, it is difficult to predict or draw any definitive conclusions in relation to the nature and significance of effects that are likely to arise in relation to the biodiversity and geodiversity theme. However in light of the emerging issue regarding nutrient loading in the River Wye and Usk SACs, preliminary phosphorus calculations for Abergavenny and Monmouth (AECOM, 2021) found that potential residential or employment sites in these settlements are likely to have nutrient neutrality implications because they are served by WwTWs discharging into the upper reaches of both SACs. Monmouthshire's main settlements are further constrained by other sensitive receptors in close proximity to the main settlements where the majority of growth is being directed. As a result, there is the potential for impacts on these receptors as well as a number that are located further away through various impact pathways. These sensitive receptors will need to be taken into account through the Council's candidate site appraisal process and inform the allocation of sites in the Deposit Plan. The Preferred Strategy includes policies that seek to protect and where possible enhance the natural environment and seek to mitigate the impacts of proposed development on biodiversity and geodiversity. Taking the above into account, an uncertain effect is identified at this stage. The nature and significance of effects are dependent on the precise location and scale of growth.</p>	Uncertain
Historic environment	<p>As no specific sites/ allocations are identified at this stage, it is difficult to predict or draw any definitive conclusions with regards to the nature and significance of effects that are likely to arise in relation to the historic environment theme. There are a number of designated heritage assets within and surrounding the main settlements where the majority of growth is being directed. As a result, there is the</p>	Uncertain

ISA theme	Commentary	Residual significant effect predicted at this stage?
	<p>potential for impacts on these sensitive receptors, including their setting. The historic environment, including designated heritage assets, will need to be taken into account through the Council's candidate site appraisal process and inform the allocation of sites in the Deposit Plan. The Preferred Strategy includes policies that seek to protect and where possible enhance the landscape and historic environment. Taking the above into account, an uncertain effect is identified at this stage. The nature and significance of effects are dependent on the precise location and scale of growth. The Preferred Strategy is not likely to have any direct or significant effects on the Welsh language - indirectly the proposed delivery of housing and new jobs to meet needs as well as wider infrastructure has the potential for minor positive effects on the Welsh language.</p>	
Landscape	<p>The Preferred Strategy proposes the delivery of new employment land and homes to meet identified needs and provide flexibility throughout the plan period. Growth is being distributed according to the settlement hierarchy with the majority of development directed towards the higher tier settlements given the findings of the Sustainable Settlement Appraisal (2021). However, these locations (notably Abergavenny, Chepstow and Monmouth) are constrained in terms of proximity to nationally designated landscapes; the Wye Valley AONB and Brecon Beacons National Park. Preferred Strategy policies seek to ensure that development retains and enhances the key landscape areas, and the overall landscape character and rural setting, to reduce the extent and significance of the inevitable effects of the required growth. Notably, Strategic Policy S4 ensures that new development incorporates the principles of sustainable place-making and good design. While there is the potential for residual negative effects given that the Preferred Strategy is directing growth to settlements that are close to sensitive receptors, ultimately the nature and significance of effects are dependent on the precise location and scale of growth.</p>	Uncertain
Climate change	<p>The Preferred Strategy directs growth at settlements where there are areas of high fluvial and surface water flood risk; however, it is recognised that national planning policy and guidance via the PPW and Technical Advice Note 15 requires development to be directed away from the highest risk areas. The distribution of growth to the higher tier settlements could theoretically maximise the potential to seek strategic scale opportunities for delivering innovative renewable energy generation, such as combined heat and power (CHP). However, the overall quantum of growth proposed is relatively low in absolute terms, particularly once commitments have been taken into account, as a result it is not clear whether there will be meaningful opportunities to seek such schemes in practice. This will likely become clearer once a more definitive position is known in relation to the Strategic Growth Areas and specific site allocations.</p>	Uncertain

Part 3: What happens next?

4. Next steps and monitoring

- 4.1 Part 3 of the Initial SA Report and this Non-Technical Summary explains the next steps in the plan-making/ SA process.

Next Steps

- 4.2 The Initial SA Report and this Non-Technical Summary will accompany the Preferred Strategy for public consultation from Monday 5th July 2021 to Tuesday 31st August 2021. Any comments received will be reviewed and then taken into account as part of the iterative plan-making and ISA process.
- 4.3 The representations received along with further evidence base work, including further ISA work, will inform the development of the Deposit RLDP which is scheduled to be published for consultation in the summer of 2021. An updated ISA Report will accompany the Deposit RLDP for consultation.

Monitoring

- 4.4 Monitoring measures will be established within the next version of the ISA Report to address the potential significant effects associated with the Deposit version of the plan. No measures have been identified at this stage, as the Deposit RLDP is yet to be prepared.

