

Mathern Community Council Feedback in respect of the 'Monmouthshire Replacement Local Development Plan' Consultation, June 2019.

The Council has reviewed the above noted plan and considered the Growth and Spatial options presented. We provide here our feedback on the preferred options from those presented in the Consultation but would note the following key facts that influence our thinking, particularly in respect of our area: -

1. It is noted that there has been a 23% increase in traffic in and around the Chepstow area as a result of the removal of the Severn Crossing Tolls. There is no doubt that a key factor causing this is inward migration of people working in the Bristol area and wanting to live in Wales as result of generally lower housing costs but also the beautiful environment and quality of life.
2. There has been debate about a relief road/bypass for Chepstow for many years now and outline survey work we believe is underway. There are no budget, proposals or consultations on routes taking place. It must realistically be assumed therefore that any such relief road/bypass will not be delivered within the life of the new Local development Plan.
3. Hardwick Hill in Chepstow has air polluted in excess of the World Health Organisation limits at present with no proposal in place to remedy. A further 324 homes have been approved for the bottom of Chepstow despite this factor. Two large housing developments are also underway in Tutshill. A huge development of over 800 houses is planned for the Beachley Army Barracks site plus substantial plans to provide significant new homes in Lydney.
4. Proposals had been approved for a route for the M4 Relief Road round Newport, but this has now been dropped by the Welsh Government after the change in First Minister. This despite significant resources being invested in pre-construction designs and procurement. Congestion on the M4 through Newport is now significantly greater since the removal of the Severn Bridge Tolls with regular, almost daily, tailbacks to Magor Services. There is no plan in place to resolve this and it must be questioned if one could be implemented within the life of the Replacement Local Development Plan.
5. Monmouthshire as a County is essentially a rural one with certain key towns as noted in the consultation. It has the capacity to provide certain employment opportunities within the County, but a significant number of the people work in the Bristol and Cardiff conurbations yet reside in Monmouthshire. This is a huge positive which does not seem to be focussed on in the options presented. People tend to spend where they live and not necessarily where they work. This should provide opportunities in leisure, restaurants and retail, employing local people. Those moving to the area appear to be younger in age group. Green belts or green wedges should not be eroded under any new plan or areas of Monmouthshire, particularly in the south, will merge together losing their unique identities.
6. The provision of public transport does not focus on the above facts meaning that those living within the County must rely on the car as first provision. This may be because of remote rural locations or the lack of joined up thinking between neighbouring Counties. Park and ride schemes for instance into the neighbouring cities for commuters is not mentioned at all but could better satisfy the objectives of the LDP.

7. The correlation between projected houses built and jobs generated, or vice versa, must be questioned as used in the replacement LDP options. The evidence base for such projections do not seem relevant to Monmouthshire as a County.

With the above factors in mind, it is our view that as a County we should not stand still or regress, but we should focus on what is possible and what is not. This is where reality lies.

Major traffic infrastructure changes have proved to be political footballs and despite positive support have not been delivered. Without these any high growth strategy in our view is unrealistic, ideological and not deliverable.

To answer the specific questions posed in the Consultation document: -

Do you agree with the Councils preferred growth option 5?

No.

What is your preferred growth option and why?

We would favour option 3 for the Growth Option which provides above average housing growth and supports employment growth. It also protects the environment and quality of life that people live in Monmouthshire for. It respects the fact that some key high density sites are being developed on our borders with other Counties (ie the Newport Llanwern site, Beachley Army Barracks site and in Lydney). Although this option refers to an employment growth projection, it does provide for extra housing to accommodate inward migration. Any supporting Infrastructure Plan to this proposal should focus on public transport solutions and removal of car parking charges in towns to promote local growth, improve the environment and reduce the pressure on current infrastructure (including transport, education, health and public services). Regarding affordable housing, this can be delivered through appropriate planning controls on new developments and release of public land to housing associations.

How will this growth option address the issues Monmouthshire is facing?

It will not put unrealistic pressure on the existing infrastructure and with careful integration with public transport strategy is achievable. It will not promote the scale of development that would spoil the reason people want to live in Monmouthshire, maintain its rural character in a sustainable form. It promotes sustainable growth in terms of housing and employment. It avoids overdevelopment of the South Wales region and a joining up of existing conurbations.

Do you agree with the Councils preferred Spatial Option 2?

No.

What is your preferred spatial option and why?

Regarding the Spatial Options, we would favour option 1 which mirrors the current plan by focusing development on Primary settlements and sustainable rural areas. This plan protects green belt and green wedge areas. We do not believe that a new settlement is need in the south of the County particularly with the development on the old Llanwern Steelworks site and Beachley Arm Barracks, which border our county. Similarly, in adopting option 3 on the Growth Option such large developments should not be necessary.

How will this spatial option address the issues Monmouthshire is facing?

It will support and enhance the natural beauty of the County, promoting leisure, tourism, restaurant and retail opportunities. Sustainable growth in our primary settlements and rural areas will help to make local stores, businesses and services more sustainable and viable. This option better takes account of what is happening over our borders and allows the County to capitalise on that, not just replicate the same provision. Regarding infrastructure enhancements to support any developments, this plan would allow resources to be focused on specific projects in key developments as against spreading resources across the whole county. This plan plays to the strengths and assets of the County.

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