

The Chepstow Society is concerned with protecting and improving the amenity of the Chepstow area, and improving awareness of the town's historic and environmental importance. Many of our members live in the Forest of Dean area.

The proposals set out for major housing development at Lydney and Beachley are unacceptable. They will have seriously damaging effects on Chepstow, as well as areas along the A48 corridor in the Forest of Dean, which have not been adequately addressed.

An undue emphasis has been placed on the importance of developing brownfield sites, specifically at Beachley. Where- as in that case – brownfield sites are poorly located in relation to existing infrastructure, they are not environmentally sustainable. The inevitable effect of the suggested development at Beachley, at the rate envisaged, will be to increase road traffic and pollution in and around Chepstow, including Sedbury and Tutshill within the Forest of Dean. This will disadvantage existing residents of those areas – and, importantly, will add to existing road congestion and be a serious disincentive to those wishing to invest in the area. If people cannot get into or out of the Forest easily, predominantly by road, they will not visit the area as tourists or invest in its businesses.

An excessive level of housing development is proposed at Lydney – 33% of new housing for a town with 14% of the area's households. Again, it is inevitable that this will lead to unnecessarily high levels of road traffic and congestion on the A48, particularly heading towards or away from the M48 and M4 at Chepstow.

There needs to be better integration within the Forest of Dean area itself between land use proposals and transport. We have not seen any clear explanation of how existing transport proposals in the area relate to the development suggested. While development at Lydney and Beachley could theoretically, and perhaps in practice to some extent, contribute towards improvements in public transport, the bulk of the traffic generated is likely to use the already heavily congested highway network.

Forest of Dean Council must also take more responsibility for integrating their development and transport proposals with those on the adjoining Welsh side of the Wye. Historically, responsibility for bridges over the Wye has been shared between Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire, but while the highway infrastructure at Thornwell for a bypass link is already largely in place, the link that

is required between the eastern end of a new bridge and the A48 east of Sedbury – as set out in the Ove Arup study in 2021 – will require investment by the English authorities. Such investment is urgently required, but it seems unlikely that the development itself will contribute to the necessary extent.

If the English authorities are not prepared to contribute their share towards providing solutions for the highways issues that now beset Chepstow and adjoining areas, the level of housing development proposed at Lydney and Beachley must be reduced.

We endorse many of the statements in the report to Monmouthshire County Council's Place Scrutiny Committee on 26 September, in particular the need for a comprehensive and funded package of transport improvements that avoids aggravating existing problems in and around Chepstow, Sedbury and Tutshill. The integrated package of transport improvements should include: -

- A high-quality network of walking and cycling routes... between Tutshill, Sedbury, Beachley and Chepstow town centre and railway station....
- A park and ride railway station east of Chepstow...
- Improved frequency and reliability of train services... stopping at Lydney and Chepstow [and] a frequent and reliable local bus network linking Tutshill, Sedbury, Beachley and Chepstow town centre and the rail system;
- The Chepstow Traffic Relief Road proposal. Funding from National Highways is required for a traffic relief road from the A48 east of Sedbury across the River Wye to Thornwell in Chepstow and the M48. The estimates that various consultant reports provide indicate a cost of £150 million with 90% of the cost falling on National Highways. MCC is supportive of such a scheme and has reserved a route for such a bypass through Thornwell. MCC would urge the Welsh Government to match in a proportionate manner funding made available by National Highways...