

SIR FYNWY

MONMOUTHSHIRE



# Monmouthshire Well-being Assessment 2022



## Version Control

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|------------------|--|
| Title            | Well-being Assessment                              |
| Purpose          | To provide evidence base for Well-being Assessment |
| Owner            | Head of Policy Performance and Scrutiny            |
| Approved by      | Draft  |
| Date             | March 2022   |
| Version Number   | 2.0  |
| Status           | For approval                                       |
| Review Frequency | Annual   |
| Next review date |  |
| Consultation     | January – February 2022                            |

The well-being assessment is made up of different parts:

- Gwent as a whole (see [www.gwentpsb.org/well-being-plan/well-being-assessment](http://www.gwentpsb.org/well-being-plan/well-being-assessment) for more details of the Gwent well-being assessment)
- Monmouthshire as a whole
- 5 local areas within Monmouthshire centred around Abergavenny, Monmouth, Usk, Chepstow, and Caldicot.

A summary of the Monmouthshire well-being assessment is also available. To see further analysis please visit [www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/our-monmouthshire](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/our-monmouthshire)

# The heart of Monmouthshire

## Environmental Well-being

This area is characterised by rolling hills, productive farmland and many patches of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, some of them of significant size.

The area also includes steep hillsides marking the edge of the uplands of Brecon Beacons National Park to the northwest. The River Usk is a dominant feature, flowing through the centre of the area.

*"I really value the wide open spaces, green places, beautiful woodlands and scenery where I live"*

The area is largely rural, with the small market town of Usk being the largest settlement, followed by the large village of Raglan.

The River Usk is designated as a Special Area of Conservation for its clean and natural state and the important fish species it supports, although as described previously there are significant concerns about water quality in the River Usk from phosphates. Despite the River Usk's designation as a Special Area of Conservation, to protect the species in it, it is classed as Moderate quality under the EU Water Framework Directive. These waterbodies have to improve to at least 'good' by 2027.<sup>1</sup> The Olway and Gavenny tributaries face several diffuse rural pollution pressures.<sup>2</sup> Land in this area is mainly Grade 3 or 4 under the Agricultural Land Classification, and the relatively intensive agriculture in this rural area means that the county's largest Nitrate Vulnerable Zone has been designated near Raglan.<sup>3</sup> Under the EC Nitrates Directive, Nitrate Vulnerable Zones are designed to protect waters against nitrate pollution from agricultural sources, such as fertilizers and slurry, and are required to have an Action Programme.<sup>4</sup> There is also one Groundwater Source Protection Zone in the northwestern corner of this area along Mynydd Garnlochdy.

The area has 5 SSSIs of importance at a Wales level, including geological sites, a bat site and Llandegfedd Reservoir, the majority of which is in Monmouthshire and has become an important site for overwintering wildfowl since its construction in 1963. This is the largest body of open freshwater in the county.<sup>5</sup>

There are 161 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, mainly ancient woodland and neutral grassland. The woodland areas near Usk are relatively close together, and there is potential to improve their connectivity by linking them together.

Threats to habitats in this area include:

- The River Usk is subject to abstraction for water supplies and is at risk of low flows and quality as a wildlife resource in the future if pressure on it increases.
- Poor connectivity of woodland sites.
- Pollution from agriculture.
- Tree disease may cause further fragmentation of woodland parcels.

- Habitat loss due to development.

The town of Usk has 7 amenity greenspaces, so is well provided for, although there are only 2 natural green spaces, and the quality of amenity greenspace in Usk is generally low. Raglan has no parks or gardens and only one natural greenspace. So, despite the rural nature of the area around Usk, the provision of good quality greenspace is relatively low. Provision for outdoor sports is particularly deficient in these rural areas.<sup>6</sup> ~~There are 385km of public rights of way in the area enabling local people and visitors to explore the countryside.~~

The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal creates a valuable wildlife corridor with many trees with Tree Preservation Orders, and the A40 also has clusters of Tree Preservation Orders, as do trees at Goytre House and the nearby villages. Many trees around Usk benefit from protection, as they are important for the setting of the historic town and provide links to woodlands on the outskirts.<sup>7</sup>



*Source: [www.uskinbloom.org.uk](http://www.uskinbloom.org.uk)*

Also important to the visual amenity of Usk are the flowers planted as part of Usk in Bloom, and the more natural wildflower mixes sown as part of Monmouthshire's Pollinator Policy. Since its formation in 1982, Usk In Bloom has worked tirelessly to improve Usk through planting trees, shrubs, bulbs and floral displays, whilst addressing environmental issues and preserving wildlife, and working with young people. Due to these efforts, Usk has won gold for 38 consecutive years for the Wales in Bloom Large Village category.<sup>8</sup>

Bridge Street in Usk (A472) is one of only two Air Quality Management Areas in the county, with the area regularly exceeding nitrogen dioxide emissions caused by traffic through the town. Heavy goods vehicles travelling through the town and along the A472 contribute approximately 25% of the nitrogen dioxide.<sup>9</sup> The volume of traffic on Bridge Street in Usk is relatively high; queuing traffic, and the fact that the street is relatively narrow, give rise to the excess of the annual mean nitrogen dioxide objective. Nitrogen dioxide harms health, causing and

exacerbating breathing problems.<sup>10</sup> An Air Quality Action Plan is in place and seems to be having an effect since 2019 was the fifth continuous year with no excess of the nitrogen dioxide annual levels.<sup>11</sup> Some measures were put in place during lockdown to allow residents to shop and use the pavements whilst still socially distancing. While the main elements of that have been removed, some elements such as a 20mph speed limit and stopping parking near the takeaway have gone some way to reducing congestion.<sup>12</sup>

The River Usk has a broad flood plain and is prone to flooding, and although development has traditionally avoided the natural flood plain, Natural Resources Wales class it as high risk of flooding, based on the number of properties in a community likely to be flooded.<sup>13</sup> Usk town is protected by flood defences, but several roads in the area are flooded by tributaries to the Usk such as the Olway at Llanllowell. A total of 2,164 people and 921 properties in this area are at low risk of flooding by rivers, and 26 properties and 120 people are at High or Medium risk of surface water flooding.<sup>14</sup> In February 2020, around 24 properties were flooded in Usk, 12 residential properties and 2 commercial properties in the Llanbadoc area were flooded, plus 11 properties in the Llanvihangel Gobion and Kemeys Commander area.<sup>15</sup>



Source: [www.jtallet.co.uk/usk/floods/photo\\_flood\\_52\\_page.htm](http://www.jtallet.co.uk/usk/floods/photo_flood_52_page.htm)

## Economic Well-being

House prices in this area are very high: its wards have the highest average price in Monmouthshire with 2 among the 10 most expensive in the county.<sup>16</sup>

Usk has experienced consistently high retail vacancy rates when compared to the other centres. However, as of 2020, only 9.8% of its units were vacant, the second-lowest of the 5 areas, and the lowest number since 2014. Usk is the only town in Monmouthshire that saw a fall in vacancy rates in 2020, while the rates in Raglan have remained at the same level as the year before.<sup>17</sup>

*"It's important to have more shops and facilities so we don't have to travel out of the village"*

*"I want to feel that the community and businesses are thriving"*

In this area, 4% of the working-age population receive employment-related benefits, with 6% considered to be income deprived. 20 people are claiming Job Seeker's Allowance or Universal Credit for unemployment, of which 5 are aged 16-24. 8.4% of children are in low-income families.<sup>18</sup>

Given these figures, Usk and Raglan have the lowest proportion of deprivation, compared to the other four areas of Monmouthshire. In this area, 15% of households are below 50% of the median income for the UK, and 20% are below 60%, as compared with 17% and 22% respectively for Monmouthshire, and 25% and 33% for Wales as a whole.<sup>19</sup>

## Social Well-being

The heart of Monmouthshire has a population of 10,476, the least populated of the five areas. The area has the smallest proportion of children, at 13.2%, and is home to the highest proportion of people aged 65 and over, at 29.3%.

None of the small areas in the Heart of Monmouthshire appears in the 20% most deprived areas in Monmouthshire, despite access to services being an issue, particularly outside the main town of Usk. Average travel time to several services in Heart of Monmouthshire, as classified by the Wales index for Multiple Deprivation, are amongst the highest in the county, and higher than the average for Wales, particularly for public transport travel times.<sup>20</sup>

In the heart of Monmouthshire, 81% of people's health is reported as good or very good. The community of Usk reports the lowest (73.4% in Usk 1) and the highest (85.7% in Usk 2) within this area. Goetre 2 has a higher than Monmouthshire average (589.6) rate of cancer incidence (683.3).<sup>21</sup>

Note that Community Safety data for the heart of Monmouthshire is included in the data for Monmouth and surrounding area.

## Cultural Well-being

The heart of Monmouthshire is another area where the built and physical landscape plays an important role in people's lives and culture. This includes the River Usk, Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal and Goytre Wharf on the canal as well as many rural walks and stunning landscape.

The area also has a rich built heritage including Raglan Castle, Twyn Square, Usk Sessions house and many churches.

The heart of Monmouthshire has no Welsh medium educational provision. Access to this education requires an 11 mile journey to Abergavenny, or can be accessed in neighbouring authorities. Interestingly, this area has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest proportion of population that can speak Welsh (10.2%), as well as those who can speak, read and write Welsh (7.4%).<sup>22</sup> With no Welsh language group based centrally in Usk, a journey to nearby Abergavenny would provide residents with the best opportunity to join in with such a group.



With 66.7% declaring themselves Christian, this is above the Monmouthshire average, and the highest of all 5 areas. 1.3% of the population stated that they were of a religion other than Christian. This area has the highest proportion of population in Monmouthshire declaring themselves as of white ethnicity (98.7%).<sup>23</sup>

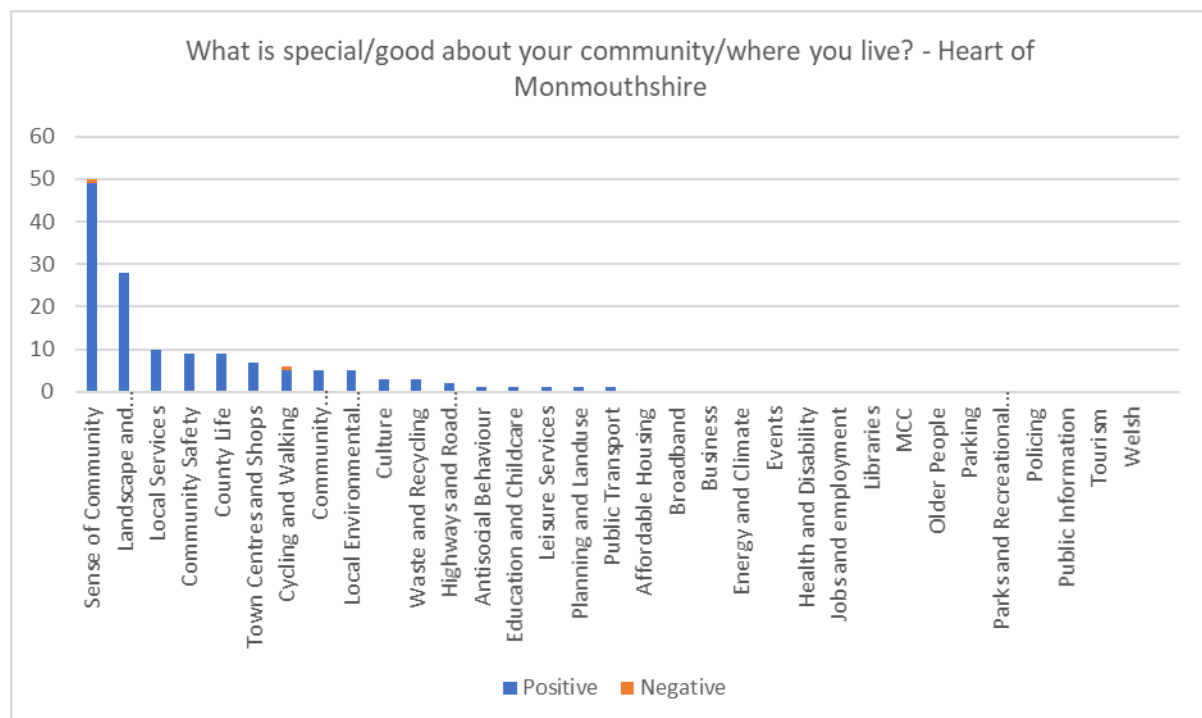
The area, mainly around the towns and villages has many local festivals, events and activities; Usk Rural Life Museum is also in the area. The Usk Show is a yearly one-day agricultural show that draws exhibitors, traders and visitors to the area every September.

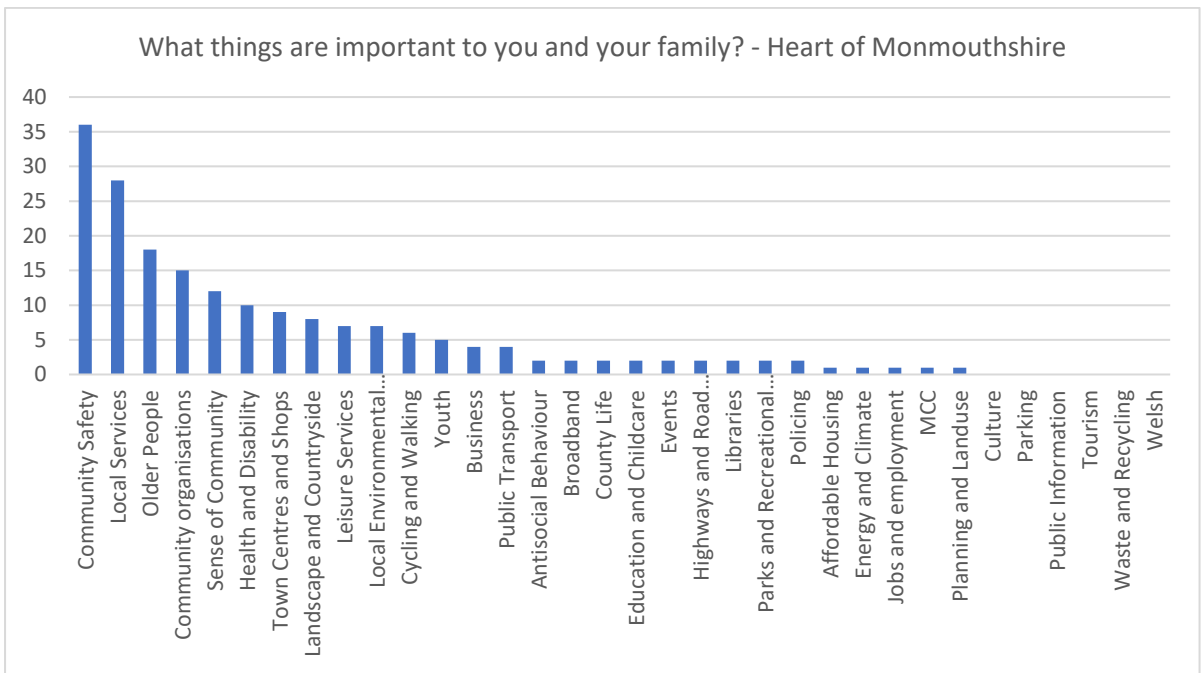
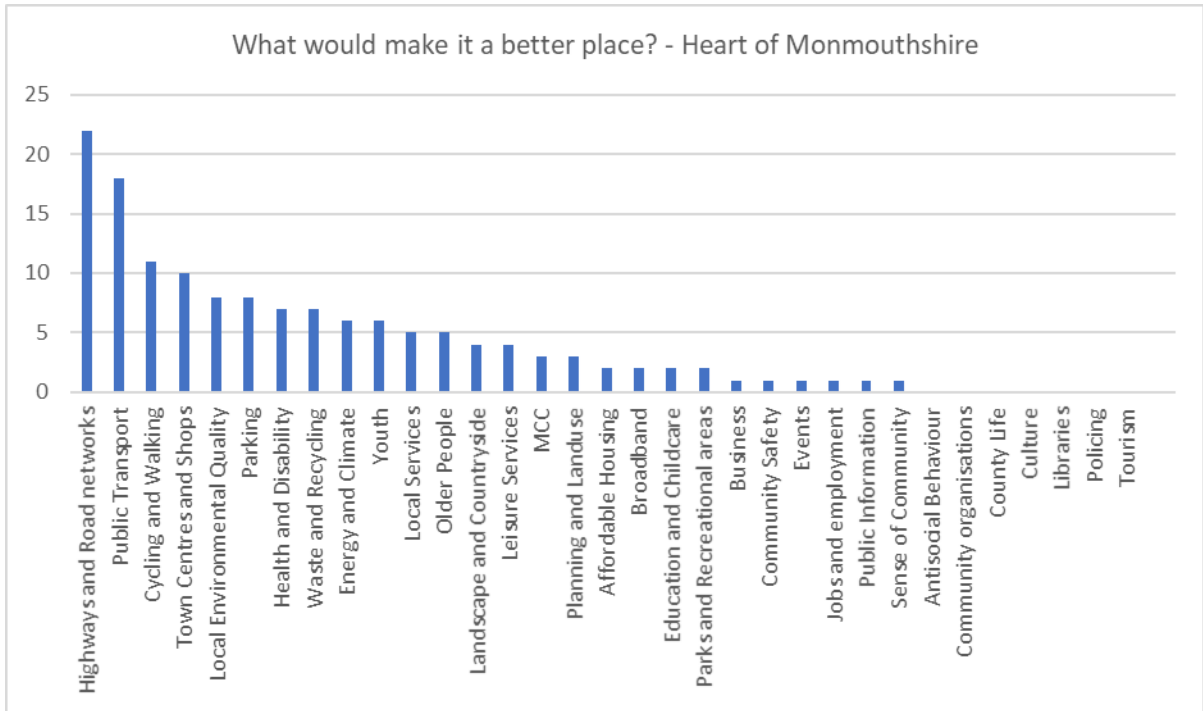
There is very limited public transport provision in the heart of Monmouthshire. Travel time to leisure facilities in the heart of Monmouthshire is poor; on average, it takes over two hours to travel to a sports facility on public transport (124 minutes), which is well above the average for Wales of 55 minutes. Similarly, private travel time of 26 minutes is well above the Wales average of 10 minutes.<sup>24</sup> Travel time to a public library is also long, taking 73 minutes on public transport and 14 minutes on private transport.<sup>25</sup> The average public travel time to a secondary school is 90 minutes, with the majority of children travelling to either Abergavenny, Monmouth, or Caerleon Comprehensive in Newport.

## Engagement responses

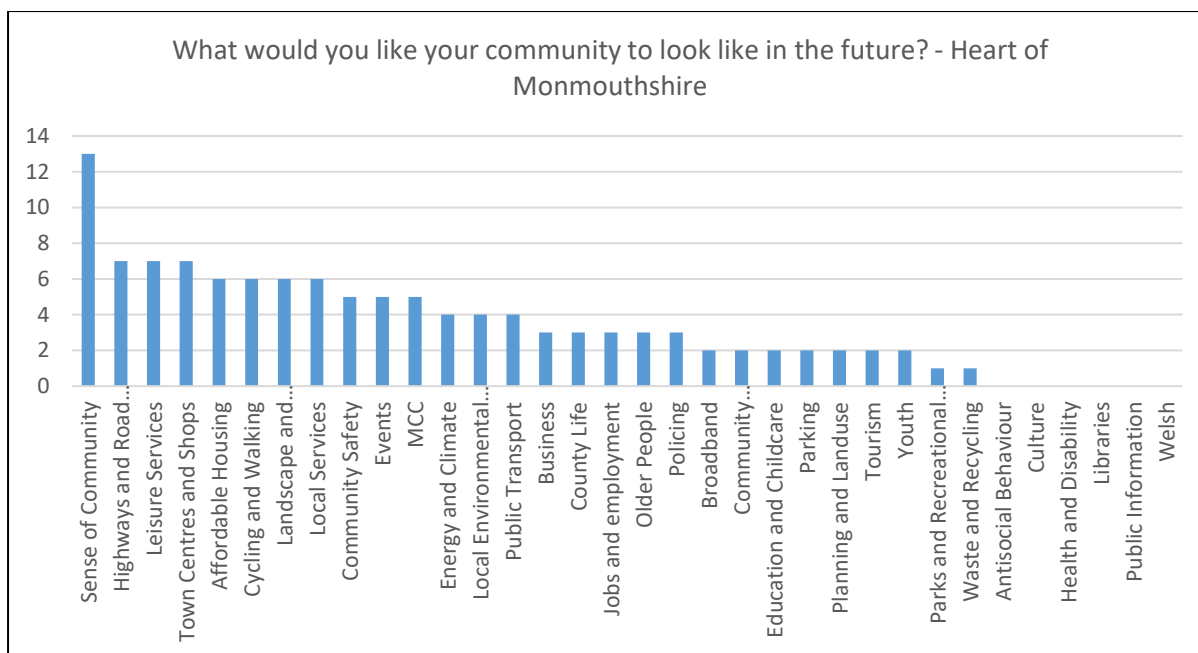
A summary of the responses from the area to some of the engagement exercise questions is provided. To make it easier to analyse the many diverse comments that were received to the open-ended questions that were asked, comments were grouped into categories or themes. This allows us to identify some of the most common themes that respondents in the area mentioned.

The following graphs show the themes that were used to categorise the comments, and where appropriate, whether these were more positive or negative in response is provided.









<sup>1</sup> Public Service Board Monmouthshire Environmental information for well-being assessments, NRW

<sup>2</sup> Public Service Board Monmouthshire Environmental information for well-being assessments, NRW

<sup>3</sup> Public Service Board Monmouthshire Environmental information for well-being assessments, NRW

<sup>4</sup> Nitrate Vulnerable Zones

<https://naturalresources.wales/water/quality/nitrate-vulnerable-zones/?lang=en>

<sup>5</sup> Monmaps Countryside Layer

<sup>6</sup> MCC Open Space Study Ashley Godfrey Associates, 2008

[www.planningpolicy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/MonmouthshireOpenSpace-Dec08.pdf](http://www.planningpolicy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/MonmouthshireOpenSpace-Dec08.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Monmaps Countryside Layer

<sup>8</sup> [www.uskinbloom.org.uk](http://www.uskinbloom.org.uk)

<sup>9</sup> Air Quality Action Plan for Usk, Monmouthshire, September 2009

[www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2013/08/Usk-Action-Plan-Final-September-2009.pdf](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2013/08/Usk-Action-Plan-Final-September-2009.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Statement On The Evidence For The Effects Of Nitrogen Dioxide On Health

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/411756/COMEAP\\_The\\_evidence\\_for\\_the\\_effects\\_of\\_nitrogen\\_dioxide.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/411756/COMEAP_The_evidence_for_the_effects_of_nitrogen_dioxide.pdf), Public Health England 2015

<sup>11</sup> MCC 2020 Air Quality Progress Report

[www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2021/01/MCC-AQ-APR-2020.pdf](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2021/01/MCC-AQ-APR-2020.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Shop Local: Usk

[www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/shop-local/usk](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/shop-local/usk)

<sup>13</sup> Public Service Board Monmouthshire Environmental information for well-being assessments, NRW

<sup>14</sup> Monmouthshire Flood Risk Management Plan

<sup>15</sup> Section 19 Flood Investigation Report, Llanbadoc, Usk

[www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2021/08/Llanbadoc-Usk-S19-Report-Feb-2020.pdf](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2021/08/Llanbadoc-Usk-S19-Report-Feb-2020.pdf);

Winter Flooding 2019/2020 Summary of Main Impacts and Actions

<sup>16</sup> UK House Price Index summary: July 2021

[www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-house-price-index-summary-july-2021](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-house-price-index-summary-july-2021)

<sup>17</sup> MCC 2020 Retail Background Paper – March 2021

[www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2021/05/Retail-Report-2020.pdf](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2021/05/Retail-Report-2020.pdf);

MCC Adopted Local Development Plan 2011-2021 Annual Monitoring Report

[www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2020/12/AMR-2019-2020.pdf](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2020/12/AMR-2019-2020.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Profiling Places: Usk

[www.profilingplaces.wales/Data.aspx?place=W37000103](http://www.profilingplaces.wales/Data.aspx?place=W37000103)

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<sup>19</sup> MCC 2020 Retail Background Paper – March 2021

[www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2021/05/Retail-Report-2020.pdf](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2021/05/Retail-Report-2020.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Indicator Data by Lower Layer Super Output Areas – Access To Services Domain

<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Welsh-Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation/WIMD-Indicator-data-2019/indicatordata-by-lowerlayersuperoutputarea-accessstoservicesdomain>

<sup>21</sup> Indicator Data by Lower Layer Super Output Areas – Health Domain

<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Welsh-Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation/WIMD-Indicator-data-2019/indicatordata-by-lowerlayersuperoutputarea-healthdomain>

<sup>22</sup> Census 2011

<sup>23</sup> Census 2011

<sup>24</sup> Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/welsh-index-multiple-deprivation/?lang=en>

<sup>25</sup> Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/welsh-index-multiple-deprivation/?lang=en>