

APPENDIX 1



Risca and Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan Public Consultation 2014

Background

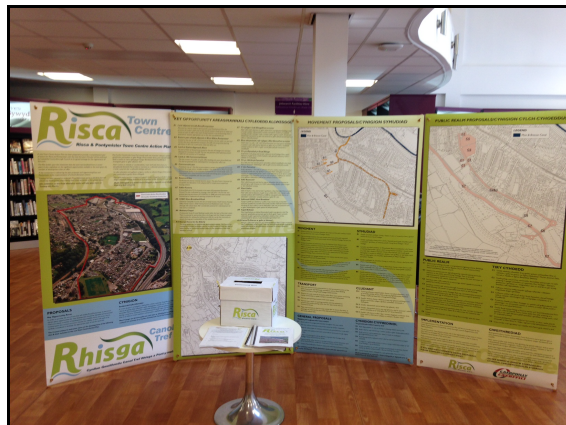
A public consultation exercise was carried out between 19th February and 12th March 2014 on the draft Risca and Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan. The public consultation exercise offered local people a chance to have their say on the draft plan, which includes a number of key development sites and various proposals, which seek to provide a framework for the regeneration of the town centre.

The following organisations/community representatives were also notified of the consultation by email:

- Risca West Town Council
- Risca East Community Council
- Chris Evans MP
- Gwyn Price AM
- Ty Sign Partnership Group
- The Bird Group
- Gwent Police – Risca Neighbourhood Policing Team
- Councillors for Risca East and Risca West
- Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development
- Risca Chamber of Trade

Officers also attended the Risca West Town Council meeting on 8th April and Risca East Community Council meeting on 16th April 2014.

Copies of the plan were available to view at Risca Library and on the Council's website. In addition, a public exhibition was on display at Risca Library between 28th February and 8th March 2014.



APPENDIX 1

The exhibition was publicised in the South Wales Argus newspaper, on the Council's website and posters were displayed in Risca Library and Tesco. In addition, posters were distributed by email to retailers and businesses in the town.

Urban Renewal Officers manned the exhibition on the following dates:

- Tuesday 4th March 2pm – 5pm
- Thursday 6th March 3.30pm – 6.30pm
- Saturday 8th March 10am – 1pm

Approximately, 66 people visited the manned exhibitions.

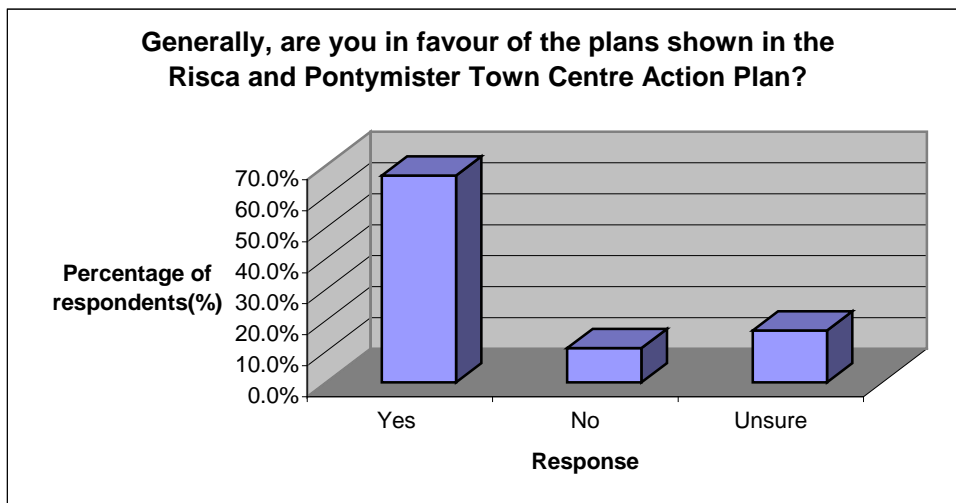
Comment forms were provided encouraging people to offer their views on the action plan and to return completed sheets by the 12th March. In total, 18 comment forms were returned. It should be noted that the comments provided are not representative of the whole community, given the low survey return.

The Results

The Comment Sheet asked the public:

“Generally, are you in favour of the plans shown in the Risca and Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan?”

Over half of respondents answered yes (66.7%), 11.1% no and 16.7% were unsure.



Respondents were also asked,

“Are there any other proposals that you feel should feature in the plan?”

66.7% of people gave suggestions which included:

- Change the pedestrian crossing at the Risca House/Rolling Mill end of Commercial Street to a light control pelican crossing as traffic coming down towards Newport cannot see people crossing.
- More proposals for leisure/recreational sites. Less focus on new houses.
- Too many of these areas are being used for building houses. We need developments to bring in permanent employment. We also need further green areas for recreational purposes.
- Skateboard Park, 3G pitch to increase local activities for teenagers/children.

APPENDIX 1

- Safer routes to schools for Ty Isaf Infants School.

Respondents were asked, “Are there any proposals within the plan that you do not support?” A number of responses were given including:

- Too many housing plans
- Do not shut down back of Commercial Lane, could be tidied up but leave for commercial use - it does give people a living.
- I do not see the point in building more houses and encouraging people to come into this area when there is not adequate entertainment provided. We do not want to go to Newport/Cardiff for our enjoyment.

A detailed account of representations made and Council responses follows below.

1. PROPOSAL A4 (Land at 106 Commercial Street)

The landowner of the site supports the identification of the land at 106 Commercial Street as a ‘key opportunity area’ and wished to highlight that the site is being promoted via the ongoing LDP review for formal allocation for residential development. The landowner however wishes for the Action Plan to specifically refer to the comprehensive redevelopment of the site for residential purposes in addition to the planning permission, which already prevails.

The landowner also indicates that whilst the completion of the flood alleviation works will allow more efficient use of the land for residential purposes. The Council will need to take a pragmatic approach in terms of the consideration of development density together with planning obligations, which will need to be cognisant of the remediation costs together with the provision of the riverside walk and potentially the relocation of the public car park from Mill Street in the event that this site is redeveloped.

The landowner further highlights that whilst they control part of the site excluding the existing accountant’s office and the public car park, that in this regard a phased approach to the redevelopment of the site should not be discounted given the fragmented land ownership arrangements. And that whilst it is acknowledged that the Draft Action Plan confirms the Council’s intent to use Compulsory Purchase Order powers in order to secure the relocation of the existing accountants office, this should not hinder the submission of a planning application for the remaining site under the control of the Bird Group in the event that it can be demonstrated that the proposed design and layout is compatible with the subsequent phased redevelopment of the remaining site area.

In addition, it was highlighted that in respect of the proposed landscape improvements set out within Appendix 4 of the draft Action Plan, any works which affect The Bird Group land holdings should not be at the expense of the development objectives. In this regard the landowner would be happy to discuss in more detail the precise extent of the land holdings and the nature of any wider landscape/public realm improvements to ensure that such work does not hinder the regeneration and redevelopment objectives for the key opportunity areas within the draft Action Plan.

APPENDIX 1

Risca Town Council suggest that as the houses have not been built; perhaps the allocation for housing favours a majority of 1 or 2 bedroom houses/flats or apartments.

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

Support is welcomed from the landowner. With regards to the request for the action plan to specifically refer to the 'comprehensive redevelopment of the site for residential purposes', the plan will be updated to include a clearer reference.

With reference to the point on 'the council will need to take a pragmatic approach in terms of the consideration of development density together with planning obligations'. This will be dealt with through the Development Management process as a matter of course and therefore the Action Plan will not be modified in this respect.

For clarity in relation to Compulsory Purchase Order, the Council has indicated in the Plan that consideration would be given to CPO and would therefore not hinder a developers plans for a phased development approach. In response to the landowner's proposals for a phased approach to the redevelopment of the site due to the fragmented land ownership of the site, for clarity a reference will be inserted into the supporting text to show that a phased redevelopment of the site could be considered.

With relation to the final point of wider landscaping/public realm improvements, it would be the Council's intention to work with the landowner to discuss any wider improvements that could enhance not only the development of the site but the surrounding area. This would be done with consideration to the development objectives.

With regards to the Town Council's suggestion of housing tenure, this will be determined through Planning Policy and through the Development Control process.

2. PROPOSAL A2 (Eastern part of land adjacent to River Ebbw, Pontymister)

The landowner of the site supports the identification of the land as a 'key opportunity area' and highlights that the site is being promoted via the ongoing LDP review for formal allocation for residential development.

The landowner of the site wishes to point out that whilst the completion of the wider flood alleviation works in 2015 will allow more efficient use of the site for residential development and as a consequence improve the viability of the site, it should however, be noted that the LDP allocation together with the extant planning consent satisfy the requirements of TAN15 (as previously endorsed by NRW) and in this regard the development of the site is not contingent upon the flood mitigation works currently being pursued by NRW.

The Action Pan should specifically refer to the comprehensive redevelopment of the site for residential purposes in addition to the planning permissions, which already prevails.

Whilst the completion of the flood alleviation works will allow more efficient use of the land for residential purposes, the Council will need to take a pragmatic

APPENDIX 1

approach in terms of the consideration of development density together with planning obligations which will need to be cognisant of the remediation costs together with the provision of the riverside walk and potentially the relocation of the public car park from Mill Street in the event that this site is redeveloped.

Risca Town Council highlighted that they are in full support of the proposed care home, retail and office development at this site.

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

The plan will be revised to highlight that land parcel reference A2, satisfies the requirements of TAN15 and that the development of the site is not contingent upon the flood mitigation works being carried out by NRW.

With reference to the identification of the site for residential purposes, the action plan will be updated to clearly recognise the site for residential use.

With reference to the point on 'the council will need to take a pragmatic approach in terms of the consideration of development density together with planning obligations'. This will be dealt with through the Development Management process as a matter of course and therefore the Action Plan will not be modified in this respect.

3. PROPOSAL A3 (Land at Station Approach)

Risca Town Council suggest that as the houses have not been built; perhaps the allocation for housing favours a majority of 1 or 2 bedroom houses/flats or apartments.

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

The housing tenure has been determined through planning application reference 12/0531/OUT, which has been approved.

4. PROPOSAL A5 (Commercial Lane)

One resident stated that Commercial Lane should not be shut down. They suggested that it could be tidied up but asked that it be left for commercial use as it does give people a living.

Risca Town Council highlighted that Commercial Lane is identified as a development area and that the northern part of this area could be as a roundabout or turning circle, thus making access and egress into Commercial Lane safer. Consideration must be given to enforcing vehicle weight and size restrictions, as it also serves a residential area.

APPENDIX 1

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

The plan does not suggest that Commercial Lane will be shut down but recognises a need in the long term for a comprehensive redevelopment, which would aim to target commercial uses more compatible with its town centre location. Any redevelopment is unlikely in the short term.

The plan identifies that access to the lane is poor and as a result any redevelopment would need to address this issue, taking into consideration the points raised by the Town Council in relation to vehicle restrictions etc.

5. PROPOSAL A8 (CCBC Sites, Brookland Road)

Risca Town Council suggest that the Family Centre, Adult Training Centre and Adult Day Centre should be left as they are. The site does offer potential for redevelopment but for community caring usage, and not housing.

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

The Council acknowledges the importance of the facilities on this site and fully support their continued function with Risca Town Centre. Their relocation would only be supported if a more suitable, accessible and central location became available within the town centre that would then open up the site for an alternative form of development.

6. Comments on housing proposals

Most of the key opportunity areas within the plan contain proposals for housing. Many residents raised concerns that the plan includes too many housing proposals.

Some residents highlighted that with the additional housing, there will be more demand for schools, doctors surgeries, dentists etc and questioned whether the town has adequate provision to cater for the additional need.

A number of residents stated that instead of housing, the sites should be developed to provide employment for local people, e.g. offices, shops etc. Local people highlighted that more proposals are needed for leisure/recreation with less focus on new housing that will not only provide employment but provide youth facilities for the area so that local people do not have to travel to Newport or Cardiff.

Concerns were also raised on the fact that more houses will mean more cars on the roads generating congestion.

The Risca Town Council note that they fully support housing on the Rowecord site. However, as highlighted above they note concerns that additional housing will put an even greater strain on our current Doctors and Dental surgeries. Similarly, there are only 2 primary schools and an infant school in the area, which are fully subscribed, and rejecting pupils within catchment. Therefore it would be an essential requirement as part of the S106 agreement for the Housing developer to provide a primary school and large medical and dental surgeries of this site.

APPENDIX 1

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

Formal allocation of sites is determined through the Local Development Plan (LDP) process. A review is currently underway in which housing in Risca and Pontymister will be reviewed and revised allocations will feature in a new LDP Deposit Plan, which the public will be able to comment on.

Some of the key opportunity areas do not have formal allocations under the Adopted LDP and therefore there is no reason why uses other than housing could not be taken forward.

The development of leisure facilities in the town will rely on private sector interest. The works proposed in the plan aims to make the town more attractive to private developers.

With reference to the Town Council's concerns over new housing putting a strain on schools and medical centres and the suggestion for s106 monies to build new facilities – this would be dealt with as part of the planning application process and the new Community Infrastructure Levy charging system.

7. Mill Street traffic

Many residents raised concerns over traffic along Mill Street and the impact this has on Ty Isaf Infants School. Residents reported speeding traffic along Mill Street. One resident suggested that Mill Street should be one way.

Another reported that it has become extremely dangerous for children to cross the road and that a pedestrian crossing is needed as there is no patrol crossing. It was further highlighted that people ignore the double yellow lines making it extremely dangerous/difficult to get to school on foot.

Some residents reported that car parking on Mill Street has increased since the train station opened as it easier to access the other side of the line for Cardiff bound travellers. Consideration should be given to implementing a safe routes to school project.

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

It would not be possible/feasible to make Mill Street one-way only. The location of the school and suggestion of a pedestrian crossing is unlikely to meet the criteria for a pedestrian crossing. There is a large amount of on-street parking outside the residential properties that would be affected by the zig-zags associated with a crossing.

A 20mph limit/zone/ Safe Routes in Communities scheme could be considered providing the school prepared a School Travel Plan. The vacancy for the School Crossing Patrol at Ty Isaf has recently been filled and should be in operation as of 6th May 2014.

APPENDIX 1

8. General traffic concerns

A number of other concerns relating to traffic in Risca and Pontymister were raised.

Ty-Isaf Park Avenue: - One resident stated that Ty-Isaf Park Avenue should not be a through road for Newport Road. With no traffic restrictions in Ty Isaf Park Avenue, drivers travel too fast along this road and that it needs to be made safer.

Pedestrian crossing Commercial Street: - One resident suggested changing the pedestrian crossing at the Risca House end of Commercial Street to a light control crossing as vehicles travelling towards Newport cannot see people crossing.

Bus stops: - A number of residents highlighted problems with the bus stop outside the Spar/Post Office noting that it is inadequate and that too many buses stop there. If more than one bus pulls up then the last bus cannot stop near the pavement. This causes difficulties for disabled passengers. One resident noted that the Ty Sign bus stops there for 3/4 minutes and it would be better for passengers if the stop for Ty Sign moved to a location near Lidl's.

Graig View: - One resident suggested that Graig View be turned into a one-way system for traffic.

Roundabouts at Foundry Road, High Trees, Cotswold Way and Pontymason Lane:
- Replace these junctions with STOP signs.

Maryland Road: - One resident stated that traffic needs to be slowed down along Maryland Road as cars race along the street.

APPENDIX 1

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

Ty-Isaf Park Avenue: -Ty Isaf Park Avenue is subject to a 30mph limit and there is no evidence to support that there are significant traffic problems in this area.

Pedestrian crossing Commercial Street: - There are two crossings at the southern end of the town, both zebras and are deemed fit for purpose. Zebra crossings give priority to pedestrians whereas a pelican/puffin crossing gives priority to traffic.

Bus stops: - Proposal D5 identifies improvements to the bus stop outside the Spar as the concerns over the bus stops are recognised by the Council. The stop does not currently lend itself to the two types of operation in Risca – those buses that operate through Risca and need to pick up and set down quickly. The other are those that operate to Ty Sign that wait a short time. In addition, there are too many buses stopping for the available space. It is however a busy stop and important to the local economy and therefore any move or long term alteration needs to be carefully considered. The Council is currently in the process of lengthening the bus stop, however at the busiest times there still won't be enough space for all of the buses. The creation of a second stop may help to alleviate the problem but splitting the services to another stop could equally cause problems by removing more parking and be detrimental to many people who use Risca as an interchange

Graig View: -Being made one-way in from Tredegar Terrace is supportable and could be investigated.

Roundabouts at Foundry Road, High Trees, Cotswold Way and Pontymason Lane: - Although these locations are outside of the Town Centre boundary, a response is provided. The mini-roundabout at High Trees/Cotswold Way was provided as a speed reducing feature in advance of the traffic calming measures (road humps) and therefore an alternative speed reducing feature would need to be provided in its place if it is to be removed. The mini roundabout at Foundry Road is deemed to be the most appropriate solution for the junction.

Maryland Road: -A speed survey would be needed to quantify speeding traffic.

9. Lighting

One resident stated that there is no street lighting with Tredegar Grounds Park, which is of concern during the evenings.

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

The Council's Parks Department has no provision to pay for the energy or maintenance costs each year associated with installing further street lighting. Furthermore, whilst lighting would give security to users walking through the park, it would encourage greater use in the evenings/nighttime possibly leading to anti social behaviour issues.

10. Artwork

One resident asked that the Cuckoo monument at Pontymister be re-sited possibly placed in the centre of the roundabout adjacent to Aldi, rather than let it be left ignored in its current position.

APPENDIX 1

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

A Section 106 legal agreement stipulated the location for the artwork and its location is therefore fixed.

11. Study Area

Risca Town Council highlight that the study area disregards the development site identified as A7 – Suflex site and suggests that the study area should be extended to include The Welsh Oak public house (renown as the place the Chartist stopped for refreshments in 1839). It would also include the former site of Keith Russell Garage/Pontymister Service Station, Tan y Bryn. Furthermore, the western edge of the study area is the railway line, and if the Crumlin Arms of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal is recorded as a Tourism Opportunity TM1.6, then it should be in the Study Area.

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

The Suflex site has been included as a 'key opportunity area' although outside of the main study area/town centre boundary because of its ability to generate and deliver regeneration benefits to the town centre. A7 within the plan will be amended to highlight that it is outside of the study area.

The Welsh Oak public house and Service Station Tan y Bryn are both located south of the main retail and commercial town centre area. The Welsh Oak for example has a registered address of Rogerstone. Therefore these sites are excluded from the study area. The southern boundary at the Rowecord site is identified as a suitable point where the town centre ends and the residential community area begins. Town centre boundaries are intended to define the main retail and commercial area of a town and need to reflect the main extent of the commercial facilities of the town and normally accord with the extent of buildings or associated land.

The western edge of the study area is demarcated as the railway line again for the reasons outlined above. The plan does however include for capitalising on the town's proximity to the canal. The plan specifically identifies links at Park Road, Gelli Avenue and Station Place/Moriah Hill as important routes to improve the connectivity between the canal and the town centre. Furthermore, the canal is recognised within the Council's core policy – the Local Development Plan as a Tourism Opportunity TM1.6.

12. Signage

Risca Town Council have outlined that more brown, directional and welcome signs to the town centre are required at the station, for those on foot and at three main access points into Risca:

1. By the Welsh Oak on Risca Road (welcome sign)
2. On the by-pass, junction to Crosskeys (directional sign)
3. On the roundabout off the A467 (Welcome and directional sign)

APPENDIX 1

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

Signage proposals are included in the plan, namely proposal B2, B3, B4 and E6 which aim to improve movement between the town and the train station, for those on foot and to increase movement between the canal and the town centre.

The three suggested signs are outside of the town centre boundary but the suggestions have been forwarded to Transportation Engineering for consideration with comments below.

A Welcome sign already exists at Welsh Oak. Signing the Town centre at the Welsh Oak is unnecessary as drivers have little choice other than to proceed north to the Mill Street roundabout. However advance and directional signs as well as the roundabout do need consideration at and on the approaches to this roundabout.

Signs on A467 at Crosskeys deliberately do not sign Risca & Pontymister to prevent through traffic. Drivers are directed via Pontymister entry off A467. The Town centre is signed off of the A467 Pontymister roundabout.

However there is not a Welcome to Pontymister sign. This might be sited between the A467 roundabout and the Pontymister Ind. Est. roundabout.

13. SWOT Analysis

Risca Town Council believe that GO2Risca digital is a weakness at this time and not a strength, however with further development we agree that it has the potential to be a good opportunity for local businesses.

Signage, or the lack of, is a weakness in/ to and around the Town Study Area.

The risk of flooding will be alleviated when Phase 1 is completed. Members do not support Phase 2.

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

GO2Risca is considered a strength because it provides an important web facility that was not previously available. However, the Council acknowledges that further development is required to provide further potential for businesses.

Signage is identified as a weakness within the plan; "There is a lack of signage to link the town to surrounding attractions and a lack of interpretation material for important landmarks within the village."

The Council acknowledges that Risca Town Council does not support phase 2 of the proposed flood alleviation works.