



## REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 1ST APRIL 2014

**SUBJECT: RISCA AND PONTYMISTER TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN**

**REPORT BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consult with Members on the draft Risca and Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan 2014 which will act as Supplementary Planning Guidance and as a framework for the regeneration of the town centre.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 A draft Risca and Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan has been developed by officers and consultation has been carried out with key stakeholders. A public consultation exercise has recently been completed and comments are being fed into the final plan. As part of the wider consultation, Members of this committee are being asked to comment on the draft plan, which is attached to this report (Appendix 1).
- 2.2 Following the completion of the wider consultation programme, the plan will be presented to Cabinet before going to Full Council for adoption.

### 3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- The Wales Spatial Plan
- 3.1 Risca is located within the 'Connection Corridor' of the South East Wales – Capital Region. With its key strategic location on the A467 and its railway link to Cardiff, Risca and Pontymister can play an important role in forging the strong links between the Valleys and Cardiff that the Wales Spatial Plan seeks to achieve.
- CCBC Community Strategy
- 3.2 One of the main Regeneration objectives of the Caerphilly county borough Community Strategy is to "support town and village centres and other area based regeneration and develop sustainable tourism opportunities." The Risca and Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan is specifically mentioned as part of the community plan's town and village centre 'beacon' project.
- Local Development Plan
- 3.3 Risca is identified as a 'Principal Town' in the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP), which states; - *"Risca / Pontymister is the main centre for services in this district... The commercial function of the area is largely overshadowed by its close proximity to Newport and to some extent Blackwood. However the possibility exists to restructure the town centre to attract inward investment and improve the attractiveness of the area to residents and visitors alike."*

The Risca and Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan, when it is adopted, will form supplementary planning guidance to the LDP.

#### 4. THE REPORT

##### **Purpose of the Risca and Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan**

- 4.1 An update of the 2002 document, the draft plan acknowledges the substantial public and private sector investment brought into the town in recent years, with the opening of the Palace Cinema into a library/learning resource centre and the opening of a Tesco food store on the edge of the town centre. The plan recognises the need to build upon this investment and capitalise on the opportunities available by incorporating these into a comprehensive and up to date action plan. The plan will be endorsed by Caerphilly County Borough Council as its agreed strategy for the regeneration of Risca and Pontymister.
- 4.2 A crucial factor in the regeneration of Risca and Pontymister in the coming years is the implementation of a Flood Alleviation Scheme that will help to unlock development sites. The plan recognises this by including a number of key development sites that will become more attractive to the private sector upon completion of this flood alleviation work.
- 4.3 The Town Centre Action Plan has seven main purposes:
- (1) To set out a comprehensive strategy and proposals for the successful regeneration of Risca town centre.
  - (2) To provide supplementary planning guidance to the adopted Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan (LDP) in order to assist in the determination of planning applications.
  - (3) To market a number of development sites within Risca/Pontymister as a suitable investment opportunity for the private sector.
  - (4) To expand on the potential for the town to benefit from its proximity to the Monmouthshire and Brecon canal, River Ebbw and Cwmcarn Forest Drive, ensuring that new developments integrate these important natural assets.
  - (5) To provide evidence and a framework for funding bids to deliver the proposals contained within this Action Plan.
  - (6) Promote the role of Risca and Pontymister town centre as a 'Principal Town Centre' and to meet the needs of its catchment population within the Southern Connections Corridor of the Borough.
  - (7) To enhance Risca and Pontymister based on its identified roles and functions in order to respond appropriately to the economic, social and environmental needs of the town.
- 4.4 The plan outlines the importance of Risca and Pontymister town centre to the wider economy and contains an appraisal of the current situation in Risca, including socio-economic and retail analysis. The plan includes a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis which helps set the objectives and proposals for the town.
- 4.5 The Plan's overarching vision is:

##### **“Risca Town – Discover more...**

*A safe, people friendly, desirable and attractive place to shop and visit, with a high quality public realm and integrated multi-functional green spaces. An economically strong centre which has embraced change and diversified to meet the changing needs of the area, with a wide range of facilities and services, including new independent shops, enhanced cultural*

*provision and a family-focused evening economy which satisfies the demands of the resident population and increasing visitors to the area”*

4.6 As a strategy for regeneration, the plan identifies a number of key opportunity areas, which will improve the overall mix of uses within the town centre. These are:

- Land adjacent to Lidl, Risca / Pontymister
- Eastern part of land adjacent to River Ebbw, Pontymister
- Land at Station Approach, Risca
- Land at 106 Commercial Street
- Commercial Lane
- Rowecord Site
- Suflex Factory
- CCBC Sites, Brookland Road
- Bethany Chapel
- Ty Darran Home for the Elderly

Proposals for these key opportunity areas can be found on pages 19 – 26 of the Town Centre Action Plan document (Appendix 1).

4.7 In addition, targeted proposals have been evolved from the overarching vision; under the themes of Movement, Public Realm, Transport and General Proposals. Some of them are outlined below:

- B3 Increase movement of pedestrians from the National Cycle Network and Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal to the town centre encouraging cyclists/walkers to spend time in the town. The route along Station Place and Moriah Hill could be enhanced with interpretation to make it interesting and provide a resting point along a steep route. There is also opportunity for interpretation in Tredegar Park to promote the Canal.
- C2 Enhance the streetscene by upgrading paving materials paying particular attention to the public space fronting Tredegar Park to provide improvements for pedestrians and to fully integrate the park and town as one, encouraging café culture, events etc.
- D1 Carry out environmental enhancements to the key entrance points of the town, in particular the Mill Street roundabout, area at Risca Building Supplies and Dan y Graig Road/Tredegar Street junction. These enhancements will provide a welcoming approach into the town centre and will aim to discourage through traffic.
- E7 Conduct Flood Alleviation Works in conjunction with Natural Resource Wales. A flood alleviation scheme is being developed to reduce the flood risk in Risca, which will consequently help to remove blight that is affecting several parcels of land available for development. The detailed plan for this scheme will be available from the Council once it has been finalised in Spring 2014.

#### **Consultation on the draft plan**

4.8 Key internal stakeholders have been consulted and their comments taken into account in updating the plan. Wider public consultation has taken the form of a public exhibition within the town's Library along with copies of the document available to review at the Library and on the Council's website.

4.9 Officers are currently reviewing feedback from the public consultation exercise and amendments will be made to the plan accordingly. Below are a few of the comments received to date:

- *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.*
- *Risca used to be a vibrant community. A retail park would benefit the people of Risca. We need more facilities for young people such as a cinema, bowling etc.*
- *Safer routes to schools for Ty Isaf Infants School. There is currently no crossing patrol and crossing Mill Street is extremely dangerous. There is heavy traffic on the road, some of which drive at speed and people ignore the double yellow lines making it extremely dangerous/ difficult to get to school on foot.*
- *I do not see the point in building more houses & 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. It's taking money from Caerphilly County and depositing it into Newport/Cardiff to pocket. Make profit not only by business transactions but by giving something back to the people.*
- *Anything that brings a better quality of life/wellbeing is welcomed i.e the walks and cycle routes. All in all, great positive plans for Risca's future.*

4.10 The plan will also be updated to reflect comments from Members, with the final document then being submitted to Cabinet and Council for adoption as supplementary planning guidance.

### **Implementation**

4.11 The implementation of this town centre action plan will be co-ordinated by Caerphilly County Borough Council's Regeneration and Planning division.

4.12 The private sector have played a pivotal role in the regeneration of the town in recent years and it is envisaged that the Council will continue to build on this momentum in order to implement key proposals of this action plan.

4.13 Public investment/funding will also be sought but given the current constraints on public expenditure, proposals will be implemented as and when funding opportunities arise.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no significant equalities implications associated with the report.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The Plan implies substantial capital expenditure over the next five years and beyond. No funding has been secured for the proposals outlined in the plan and therefore full implementation of the proposals will depend heavily on the support of the private sector and external funding sources.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 None

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

8.1 The action plan reflects responses from key internal stakeholders and the plan will be updated to take account of responses from the public and Members before being directed to Cabinet and Full Council.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 Members' comments on the draft Risca and Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan are invited prior to referring the Plan to Cabinet and Council for formal adoption.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 In order to provide member input into the consultation process on the draft plan.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000.

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Background Papers/Appendix 1: Draft Risca and Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan 2014