



**RISCA AND PONTYMISTER
TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN
2014 – 2019**



DRAFT (January 2014)

Preface

This plan is an update of the 2002 Risca and Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan. This is intended to provide a context for regeneration of the town centre over the next 5 years.

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1. The need for a new action plan

- 1.1. Risca is recognised as a Principal Town within the Adopted Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan and plays an important sub-regional role in relation to shopping, employment, leisure and tourism.
- 1.2 In recent years, Risca and Pontymister have benefited from substantial public and private sector investment with the conversion 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.
- 1.3 However it has been difficult to secure external funding for regeneration activity in Risca, as it is not a Welsh Government Strategic Regeneration Area. Since the 2002 Risca/Pontymister Town Centre Action Plan was adopted, a number of its targets have now been met, mainly with the aid of the private sector, which have served to strengthen the town's overall offer.
- 1.4 There is now a need to build upon this investment and capitalise on the opportunities available by incorporating these into a comprehensive and up to date action plan that will be endorsed by Caerphilly County Borough Council as its agreed strategy for the regeneration of Risca and Pontymister.
- 1.5 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. Funding has been secured to undertake Flood Alleviation works in 2014/15. The plan recognises this by putting forward a number of key development sites that will become more attractive to the private sector upon completion of this work.

The purpose of the Action Plan

- 1.5 The purpose of this Action plan for Risca and Pontymister is:
 - 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 it's identified roles and functions in order to respond appropriately to the economic, social and environmental needs of the town.

2. The Study Area

- 2.1 The plan below defines the action plan area boundary. It centres on the main shopping street, Tredegar Street in Risca and Commercial Street in Pontymister, which runs parallel with the river. It extends to the Risca Longbridge Sports Field to the north and the Rowecord site as the boundary to the south.
- 2.2 The study area is much broader than that of the LDP Principal Town Centre boundary as wider developments are encouraged to support the commercial centre. The town centre must accommodate a diversity of uses to enable it to prosper and this boundary offers the required scope to do this, building upon the potential residential, industrial, tourism, leisure and commercial uses that could be implemented on the periphery of the town centre boundary.

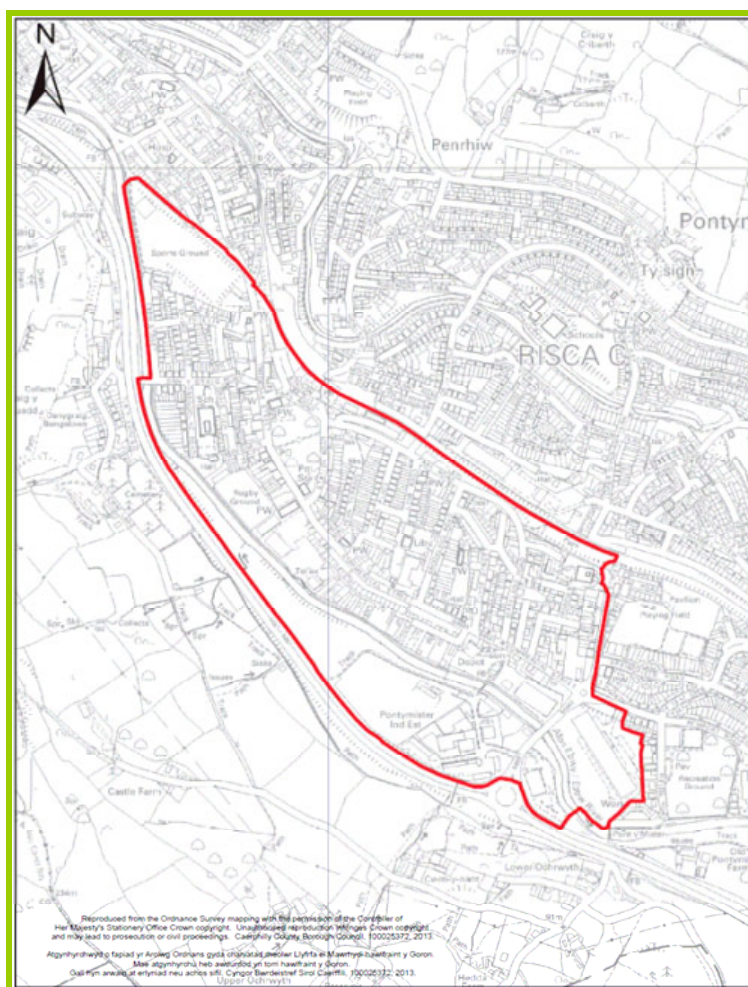


Figure 1 - Risca Town Centre Action Plan Boundary

3. Re-gaining the Momentum

- 3.1 In recent years, Risca and Pontymister have begun to capitalise on its proximity to the M4 corridor and the cities of Cardiff and Newport. Investment into the town includes the opening of a Tesco Extra foodstore and conversion of the Palace Cinema into a library and customer first centre with adjoining new One Stop shop. There is also a new railway station with park and ride facilities, which brings significant connection opportunities to the town.
- 3.2 With increased development pressures and because of its location, this action plan seeks to exploit these opportunities whilst ensuring that the town is protected from over development and negative environmental effects. The implementation of a Flood Alleviation Scheme will help to unlock development sites and encourage private sector investment to be the main regeneration driver for Risca, which if focused correctly, will allow Risca to flourish.
- 3.3 The commercial function of Risca has been overshadowed to some extent by the growth in nearby centres of Newport and Blackwood. Taking advantage of the town's large catchment population and its position, this action plan seeks to restrict the commercial leakage, in order to attract inward investment and improve the attractiveness of the area to residents and visitors alike. There will be a need to re-consider Risca's role and to focus in on the most beneficial uses for a number of development sites within the study area.
- 3.4 Within this area the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan (LDP) seeks to exploit the redevelopment of existing brownfield sites, and does not propose the release of any substantial new greenfield land to accommodate future growth. Furthermore the LDP recognises that scope exists to exploit the close proximity of the Town to the highly successful Cwmcarn Forest Drive and to improve linkages to the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, both of which attract significant numbers of visitors to the area each year.



4. Why Risca Town Centre is so important

- Risca/Pontymister is a focus for shops and services for a large area of the Southern Connections Corridor within the Lower Islwyn area. As such it is designated as a 'Principal Town' in the adopted LDP for Caerphilly County Borough where there is substantial room for growth.
- Risca has a population of 11,693¹ with a core catchment population of 30,660².
- Risca/Pontymister is located near to the M4 corridor and has good road links to Newport and Cardiff via the A467. The town also boasts a rail line to Cardiff and benefits from the Blackwood to Newport bus passing through the town every 10 minutes.
- Its proximity to Cwmcarn Forest Drive, the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal and the importance of Tredegar Park within the town affords significant potential to attract visitors into the town.
- The regeneration of the Palace Cinema and the new Tesco Superstore have the potential to draw more residents to the area increasing footfall in the town .
- The natural setting of the town and the nearby riverside, offers the centre the potential to become one of the most attractive towns in the county borough. This opportunity has not always been realised in the past and must be developed in order to enhance the future of the town centre. For example one of the most significant geographical features, the river Ebbw, has not always been integrated into developments, with much of the built environment turning its back to it.



¹ 2011 Census population data for Risca East and Risca West

² CACI Risca Market Summary 2010

5. The Strategic Context and Policy Framework

5.1 Preparation of this action plan has taken into account national, regional and local planning policies.

Planning Policy Wales

5.2 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. Chapter 10 of PPW relates to Planning for Retail and Town Centres. This action plan will work towards meeting the following PPW objectives:³

- Secure accessible, efficient, competitive and innovative retail provision for all the communities of Wales, in both urban and rural areas;
- Promote established town, district, local and village centres as the most appropriate locations for retailing, leisure and other complementary functions;
- Enhance the vitality, attractiveness and viability of town, district, local and village centres;
- Promote access to these centres by public transport, walking and cycling.

The Wales Spatial Plan

5.3 Risca is located within the South East Wales – Capital Region.

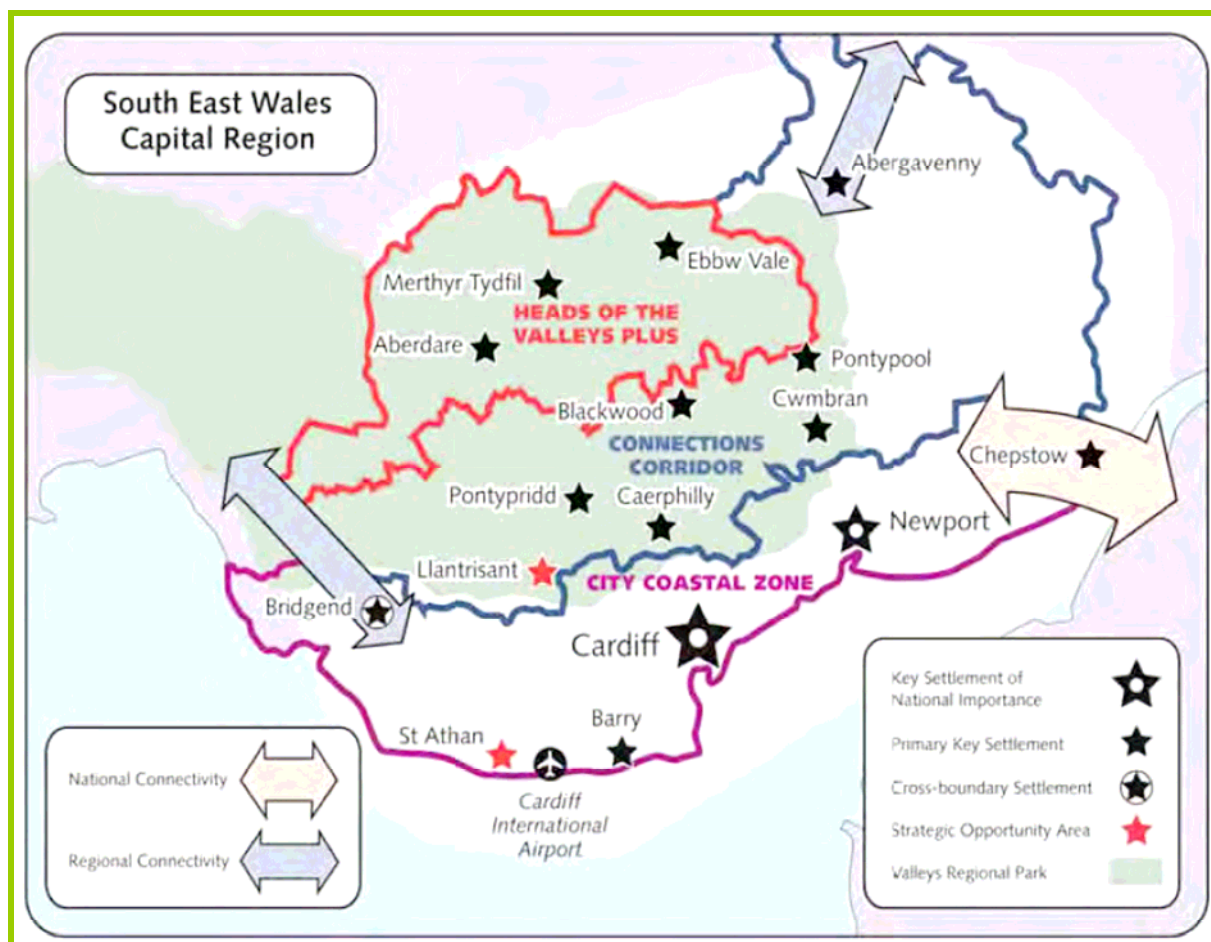


Figure 2: South East Wales Capital Region (Wales Spatial Plan 2008)

³ Planning Policy Wales Edition 3 July 2010

This region's strategy vision is as follows:

“An innovative skilled area offering a high quality of life – international yet distinctively Welsh. It will compete internationally by increasing its global visibility through stronger links between the Valleys and the coast and with the UK and the rest of Europe, helping to spread prosperity within the area and benefiting other parts of Wales.”⁴

- 5.4 Three sub areas of the Capital Region have been identified: Risca lies within the Connections Corridor. This connection strip between coastal city growth zone and the restructuring area of the Heads of the Valleys (HoV) is generally increasing in prosperity. Priorities in the Spatial Plan centre on ensuring this growth continues. At the heart of the vision is a network of strong sustainable communities with settlements having a better range of local services and a variety of retail and leisure facilities. Each town needs to foster its own distinct sense of identity, building on its heritage, topographical features and culture, this being a key component in building confidence and helping to market a regional offer for inward investment.

Caerphilly Delivers – the LSB Single Integrated Plan

- 5.5 Caerphilly Delivers focuses on improving the quality of life for communities, delivered through the Caerphilly Local Service Board made up of the key partners namely the Aneurin Bevan Health Board, Gwent Police, Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations, and Welsh Government. The town centre action plan supports the five key outcomes of the Integrated Plan:
- Prosperous Caerphilly
 - Safer Caerphilly
 - Learning Caerphilly
 - Healthier Caerphilly
 - Greener Caerphilly
- 5.6 The role of town centres is specifically mentioned under the outcome of 'Prosperous Caerphilly' to:
- Continue to develop and improve town centres (subject to identification of appropriate funding).
 - Implement the Unique Places model of Town Centre Management in the Borough's principal town centres.

The Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan (LDP)

- 5.7 The LDP is the statutory framework for the development and use of land within the County Borough. The LDP is designed to be part of a package of documents and strategies that support and strengthen each other. The Risca Town Centre Action Plan 2013 has been prepared as a supporting piece of Supplementary Planning Guidance in order to set out a framework for the development and improvement of specific locations identified within the land-use framework in the LDP.
- 5.8 Specifically, this Action Plan has been prepared to provide greater guidance on the implementation of Policy SP4 of the LDP, which sets out a settlement strategy where Risca is defined as a 'Principal Town' serving the Lower Islwyn Area within the Southern Connections Corridor. The Council will seek to enhance Risca based

⁴ People, Places, Futures: The Wales Spatial Plan 2008 Update

on its identified “role and function in order to respond appropriately to the economic, social and environmental needs” of town (SP4 para 1.62).

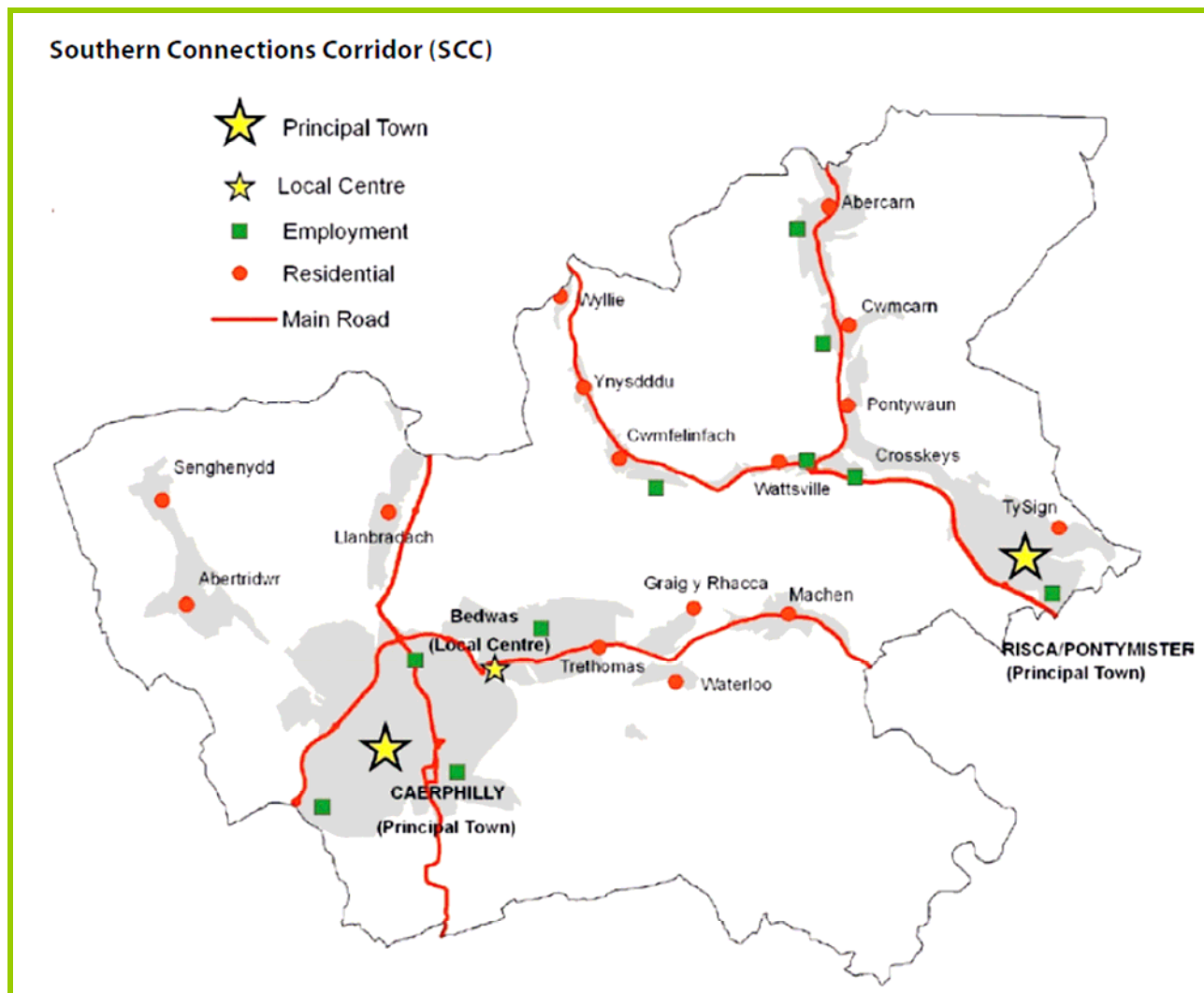


Figure 3: Southern Connections Corridor Strategy Area (LDP)

- 5.9 This Action Plan will provide a framework for the implementation of the following LDP proposals that are located within Risca and Pontymister:
- | | |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CM4.8 | Land adjacent to Lidl, Risca / Pontymister - <i>Retail</i> |
| HG1.52 | Land at Station Approach, Risca - <i>Housing</i> |
| HG1.54 | Eastern part of land adjacent to River Ebbw, Pontymister – <i>Housing</i> |
| HG1.55 | Suflex Factory, Pontymister – <i>Housing</i> |
| TM1.6 | Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, Crumlin Arm - <i>Tourism</i> |
- 5.10 **The most significant proposals identified within the LDP have already been delivered including the provision of a Tesco superstore at the former foundry site and the provision of a library and food store at the Palace Cinema.**
- 5.11 A Principal Town Centre Boundary has been defined under Policy CM 1.4. of the LDP. This boundary defines the area where retail policies aimed at protecting and enhancing the retail vitality and viability of the town centre will apply. A primary

retail area has not been designated which reflects the fact that there is a proliferation of various commercial uses throughout the town.

Caerphilly County Borough Improvement Plan 2009 - 2012 – Building Better Communities

5.12 The Council's Improvement Plan 2009 - 12 - Building Better Communities identifies the following priorities:

- To improve the look and feel of our streets;
- To increase the viability and vitality of our town centres.

5.13 One measure to increase viability of town centres is through the preparation of town centre action plans.

Caerphilly County Borough Regeneration Framework

5.14 The Council's Regeneration Framework focuses on a number of key priorities, comprising eight 'activity areas' within which regeneration activity can take place. The proposals and aspirations set out in this plan contribute directly to five of the eight priorities identified within the Regeneration Framework including:

- Strengthening Town Centres;
- Regenerating Communities and Raising Aspirations;
- Increasing Economic Activity and Addressing worklessness;
- Protecting and Developing the Economy;
- Connecting People and Places.

Caerphilly County Borough Council Sustainability Strategy

5.15 The proposals in this Action Plan will make a significant contribution to the Council's sustainability aspirations by helping to:

- Regenerate the town centre and the local economy;
- Provide services locally for the residents of Risca and the Risca basin;
- Improve public transport infrastructure and pedestrian environments;
- Encourage healthy lifestyles by providing pedestrian and cycle links between the town and local parks.

6. SWOT Analysis

6.1 Outlined below is a SWOT analysis of the town centre. It is important to note that it is not only the strengths of an area which offer an opportunity to support regeneration; weaknesses, if addressed, worked upon and turned around in an appropriate manner can also provide a valuable opportunity to support regeneration.

Strengths

- Catchment area is large with 572,920 people within a 30-minute drive time of Risca;
- Good range of independent shops;
- “Risca Discover More” branding;
- Has an established town centre management function;
- Small annual town centre budget to cover maintenance issues;
- Go2Risca - The Council’s GO2 online digital town centre initiative established in the town;
- Good public transport links including a comprehensive bus network that serves the town plus a railway station and park and ride in close proximity;
- Key stopping point on the National Cycle Network Route 47;
- Close proximity to the M4 Corridor;
- Rural backdrop;
- Town bordered by the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal;
- Well used urban park located in the heart of the town centre, known as Tredegar Grounds Park;
- Located close to the Cwmcarn Forest Drive and its UK renowned mountain bike trails;
- Large landowner who is keen to engage with Caerphilly County Borough Council;
- Three supermarkets located within/on edge of the town centre: Lidl, Aldi and Tesco;
- New Library, Resource Centre and Customer First facility located within the centre of town at the Palace Cinema;
- Provision of children’s play area;

- A recently constructed purpose-built events site in the heart of the town;
- On street parking provided outside shops, beneficial to shoppers and businesses alike.

Weaknesses

- Lack of investment in the town centre;
- Lack of modern large retail units within the town centre;
- Linear town with an ill-defined centre;
- Weak leisure sector – lack of venues for evening entertainment i.e theatre/cinema that encourages use of the town centre at night;
- Entrance points to the town centre, lack identity and provide visually poor, unwelcoming approaches to it;
- Little investment in the town's public realm –dated streetscape;
- Flood Risk constraints as Risca/Pontymister sits within Zone C1 flood plain. Remediation works would be expensive;
- An extensive CPO may be required to put landbanks together for development;
- Marketing brand for the town limited – only locally recognised;
- No Wi-Fi capability currently within the town;
- Limited tourism / business offer at present;
- Lack of multiple retailers;
- Industrial area on the west bank of the River Ebbw is unattractive and visually intrusive;
- Industrial uses on Commercial Lane are of poor environmental quality and do not make the most of town centric location;
- River Ebbw is poorly integrated into the townscape with limited access, is poorly landscaped and much of the existing built environment turns its back to it;
- Lack of integration (footbridge) between the town and the foodstore on the former foundry site (a bridge has been required by planning agreement but at the time of writing has not been delivered);
- Large and prominent brownfield sites within the town remain undeveloped resulting in a feeling of neglect;

- 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;
- There is a lack of tourist accommodation to retain visitors within the area.

Opportunities

- Potential demand from immediate catchment area. 572,000 catchment population within 30 minutes drive time;
- A number of vacant sites lie adjacent to the river affording opportunities to include this significant geographical feature back into the townscape thereby improving its appearance and adding to the character of the town.
- Opportunity to improve the town centre offer through a variety of diverse uses e.g. education, leisure, health, childcare, etc;
- Opportunity to work with existing businesses in the town;
- Potential to enhance the entrance points to the town through small public realm interventions;
- Potential footbridge to link the Tesco foodstore more closely to the town;
- Capitalise on the expansion of Cwmcarn Forest Drive and proximity to the national cycle network to attract more visitors to the town centre and promote the tourism/cultural offer;
- Exploit opportunities afforded by the re-opening of the Ebbw Valley Rail line; (EVR)
- Build on the investment in the 'Metro' concept – Phase 1 Valleys electrification & Connecting Newport & Ebbw Vale;
- The potential re-opening of section/s of the Monmouthshire & Brecon canal;
- Capitalise on the proposals for a 'City Region' in South East Wales;
- Build on the close proximity with the city of Newport;
- Potential to improve ICT offer and infrastructure (4G services, Wi-Fi etc) within the town centre, creation of business hub;
- Potential to reduce pedestrian/vehicular conflict through public realm improvements - creating an attractive civic environment;
- Opportunity to address flood risk issues that affect a number of sites not currently being developed. There is also potential for CCBC Engineering Division and Natural Resource Wales to consider solutions to the flooding problems that arise from the storm drainage failing to discharge adequately to the river due to predicted river levels.

- Opportunity to develop vacant premises in or near to the town centre for employment, office and further retail services;
- Potential for CPO to facilitate redevelopment of key town centre sites;
- Opportunity to cater for commuters due to the new rail line linking Ebbw Vale and Cardiff (via Risca and Pontymister Station).

Threats

- Internet shopping;
- Economic down turn;
- Insufficient off-street / town centre car parking;
- Increasing vacancy rates;
- Reducing footfall;
- Out of town and city centre shopping with bigger and better retail experiences e.g. Spytty Retail Park, Newport and Cardiff City Centre;
- New train link to Cardiff, making access to Cardiff's retail offer easier for local residents;
- New developments in Newport may draw shoppers away in long term;
- Potential of flooding;
- Lack of funding to implement improvement schemes.
- Large-scale tree clearance in Cwmcarn Forest Drive due to a significant number of larch trees being infected by the Ramorum virus.
- Stagnant planning consents preventing regeneration activities to take place.

7. Vision and Objectives

Vision

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.

Objectives

1. Provide a mix of uses that will enable Risca / Pontymister to become a vibrant place in which to live, shop, work and visit.
2. Strengthen and enhance the tourism, leisure and recreational offer in Risca / Pontymister.
3. Enhance pedestrian linkages throughout the town, for example between the town's car parks and the retail centre, along the banks of the river and the Canal, and the retail centre.
4. Protect and enhance the town's built heritage including a number of listed buildings e.g. Bethany English Baptist Church, Risca Palace Cinema, Moriah Baptist Chapel and the Jubilee Statue, Tredegar Grounds.
5. Encourage use of sustainable travel e.g. public transport, cycling and walking.
6. Enhance the town's distinctiveness and sense of identity in order to differentiate the town from other shopping centres through the exploitation of existing unique townscape features such as Palace Cinema, Tredegar Park, the Canal and River Ebbw etc.
7. Monitor the economic health and vitality of the town centre and intervene where necessary.
8. Provide a high quality safe environment through the use of high quality design, materials and street furniture and through the application of the Council's sustainability criteria.
9. Facilitate the development of key opportunity areas within the town centre.
10. Maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of Risca town centre.
11. Encourage cycling through the provision of secure bicycle storage and cycling facilities and enhancing the link between the park and canal/cycle track.
12. Utilise destination management as a mechanism to attract and retain visitors to the area, thereby increasing footfall in the town centre.

8. Proposals

- 8.1 The primary focus for regenerating Risca and Pontymister is on the identification of a number of key development sites but also a mix of specific proposals highlighting the Council's policy aspirations for the town centre.
- 8.2 The proposals cannot be delivered without funding and/or investment. Significantly a number of the opportunity areas are located within the flood plain and require flood alleviation works to be completed in order to facilitate their development. It is therefore critical that the Council strives to work with the private sector and other interested parties and in particular, Natural Resource Wales in order to bring these proposals to fruition.

(Note: Where sites lie within the flood plain, a flood consequence assessment will need to be undertaken in order to demonstrate that the risk and consequences of flood can be managed to the satisfaction of the NRW and the local planning authority).

8a KEY OPPORTUNITY AREAS

- 8.3 In order to provide the mix of uses that will enable Risca / Pontymister to become a vibrant place, opportunities for new development should be identified and promoted. There are clearly a number of development sites available within the town centre, however given the current economic climate the viability of each will need to be carefully considered to facilitate the appropriate type of use for each site.
- 8.4 There is considerable scope within Risca/Pontymister to exploit the opportunities afforded by:
- The re-opening of the Ebbw Valley railway line and thus the much improved access to the area that this provides; and
 - The restoration of the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal, which will serve to attract visitors into the area.
- 8.5 Figure 4 identifies the Key Opportunity Areas throughout the town.

RISCA AND PONTYMISTER TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN 2014 - 2019

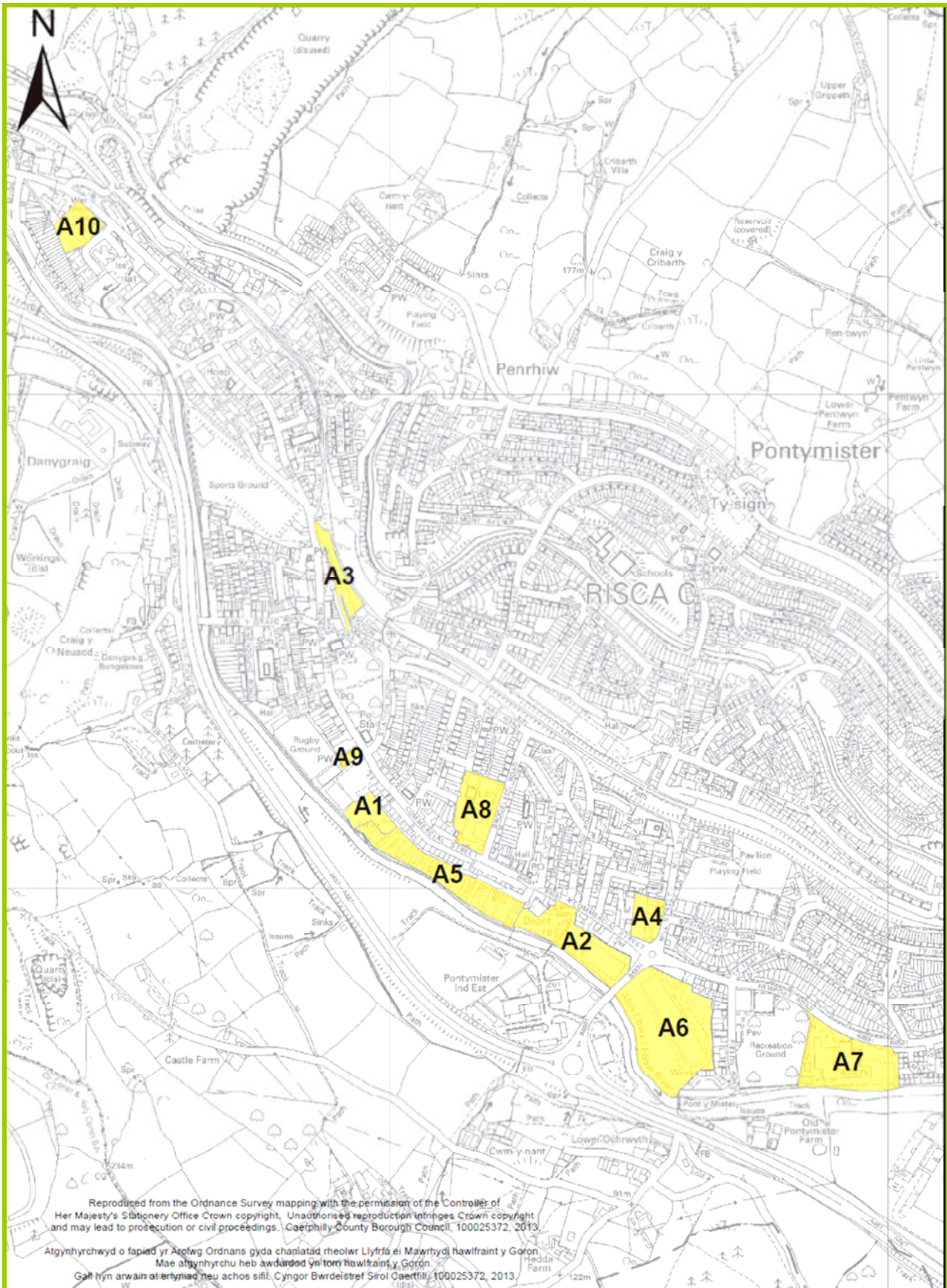


Figure 4 – Key Opportunity Areas

A1 Land adjacent to Lidl, Risca / Pontymister

The LDP allocates land adjacent to the Lidl supermarket (0.5ha) as a site for retail units (CM4.8). An outline planning application (07/1261/OUT) was approved in 2007 to construct two retail units with associated parking. Planning approval for the Tesco supermarket on the opposite side of the river (08/0568/FULL) included a footbridge that should connect these sites thus improving the retail linkage and access to a riverside walk. The footbridge link is still being worked upon. The provision of modern retail units in this central location with improved pedestrian linkages would serve to widen the variety of units on offer in the town and therefore enhance the retail offer within the centre.

However if retail interest is not forthcoming, there is potential for residential use on this site or another use appropriate to this location subject to agreement from Natural Resources Wales.



A2 Eastern part of land adjacent to River Ebbw, Pontymister

Located at the southern entrance to Risca, this visually prominent brownfield site comprises the former Bird's factory to the rear of 139 –153 Commercial Street, a former public car park and nursery to the rear of the Risca House pub.

The site is bounded to the south by the River Ebbw, and to the east by the Pontymister Link. The site is allocated for housing in the LDP (HG1.54) and was granted planning permission in 2011 (11/0446/FULL) for a care home, retail A1 & A3 and office use. The approved care home proposal included gardens to the rear

that were set back from the river to allow for the provision of a riverside walk. Any new proposals that transpire will similarly need to ensure that the proximity to the river is integrated into the design of the site. The retail units with offices above were set at right angles to Commercial Street creating a visual opening taking the eye into the A2 site and adding visual interest to the linear street scene.



Figure 5 - Visual depicting care home submitted in planning application 11/0446/FULL

This site also offers potential to provide a better positioned public car park than the one situated at Mill Street, which features within proposal A4.

To date this site has not been developed. There are a number of factors for this, not least is the economic downturn, which has made the economic development of this site marginal. It is anticipated that as a consequence of the flood alleviation scheme progressing, that this site will become increasingly viable and thus more attractive to the private sector.

A3 Land at Station Approach, Risca

An area of 0.5ha of disused land, located to the east of Tredegar Street with access from Park Road, has been allocated for housing in the LDP (HG 1.52). The site was granted outline planning consent (12/0531/OUT) in 2012 for the erection of 15 dwellings and benefits from being closely located to the main shopping street.

A4 Land at 106 Commercial Street

This is a prominent site located at the junction of Commercial Street and Mill Street. This corner site located at a key gateway to the town consists of a public car park, office building and vacant land that was partly occupied by housing before being demolished. This site has potential to be redeveloped for housing and/or office use.

Opportunities will need to be explored for the continued provision of car parking either on or off site as an integral part of any redevelopment scheme. One option would be to relocate the car park to the A2 site (Eastern part of land adjacent to River Ebbw, Pontymister) where it would be better located for shoppers.

The 2011 permission granted for the site at A2 does include a car park, also designed to open up Commercial Street to address the linear weakness listed in chapter 6.



The land at A4 includes an existing office building close to the corner. The low flat roofed building is not of architectural merit and would not be easy to incorporate into the redevelopment. Because of its prominent position it would adversely affect the comprehensive redevelopment of the site. It would therefore be necessary to seek relocation of the offices (by negotiation or Compulsory Purchase Order) or by inclusion within the redevelopment scheme.

A comprehensive design would be required for the redevelopment of this site to help reinforce the entrance point into Risca and Pontymister. The roundabout junction that adjoins this site would also benefit from substantial upgrade in order to provide a welcoming approach into the town centre and to improve pedestrian movement between this development site and the town. Draft ideas for the Mill Street roundabout can be found in Appendix 3.

A5 Commercial Lane

Commercial Lane is a backland area of 1.7ha, which accommodates a variety of small-scale commercial, business and storage units in variable condition, open storage yards, private garages, workshops and a small residential mobile home site. The area is in multiple ownership and accessed by a narrow lane running to the rear of Commercial Street. The whole area is of low visual and environmental quality and access to the lane is poor. The uses are predominantly industrial and not suited to this backland location within the centre of town. It is also one of the areas that present one of the poorest visual outlooks along the banks of the River Ebbw.



In the long term, the lane and various land parcels would ideally need to be redeveloped into a more functional and visually stimulating space. However the current layout does not easily lend itself to rationalization. There is also a need to introduce uses that are more compatible with the town centre. In order to deliver this, Compulsory Purchase Orders would be required and in the current economic climate funding is unlikely to be forthcoming. As a result, the area should be identified as an area for environmental upgrade in the short term. An interim upgrading may include landscaping along the riverbank with planting designed to break up and screen the industrial units. If funding were to become available at a future date there would be a need to develop a comprehensive improvement scheme for Commercial Lane.

A6 Rowecord Site

The Rowecord site has recently become vacant following the administration of Rowecord Engineering. It is one of a number of industrial engineering sites that over the years has vacated this side of the river. The site of over 3ha is in a visually prominent position at the southern entrance to Pontymister adjacent to the river. As with A2 it is an important improvement opportunity. The site is bounded by the river and by residential uses and leisure. This parcel of land has no specific land allocation in the adopted LDP but is likely to form part of the LDP review in 2014. Some commercial uses if accommodated on the site, could cause conflict given its proximity to residential properties.



A mixed tenure waterfront housing scheme (subject to the completion of appropriate flood alleviation works) with complementary leisure facilities and open space provision, would more satisfactorily blend in with the residential surroundings. The site also offers the opportunity to open up access along the river and could provide a riverside walk from Fields Road through to the B4591 and over to the A2 site where it would continue alongside the river to the old Tesco footbridge and then along the existing Tesco section of the riverside walk.

Given the proximity to the Mill Street Roundabout and Pontymister Link Road, any development here should contribute to making an improvement to the visual quality of the boundary with the adjacent road. Additional tree planting would prove beneficial to improve air quality and create an enhanced welcome into the town from the dual carriageway, as detailed in Appendix 3.

A7 Suflex Factory

A brownfield site of 2.1ha, located to the west of Pontymister Recreation Ground and east of an existing residential estate 'Maple Gardens'. It has a significant frontage onto Newport Road to the north and a similar sized boundary with the Ebbw to the south. The site is allocated for housing in the LDP (HG 1.55). The site was granted planning permission (07/1524/FULL) in 2008 and works have recently commenced to implement the planning consent for 87 homes.



Figure 6 -Proposed Site Layout as submitted in planning application 07/1524/FULL

The approved layout of this site is an example where a waterfront design should take account of its geographical location to both uplift visual attraction and to add character. It is reflective of design considerations and opportunities at other sites such as A1, A5, A2 and A6. It is also to be noted that at the southwestern corner of the site there is a footpath link to the public right of way along the river through the recreation ground. This public right of way goes onto Fields Road where it would be possible to continue the envisaged riverside walk described in A6.

A8 CCBC Sites, Brookland Road

A town centre site in the ownership of CCBC close to the shopping centre and located within a residential location. A Youth Centre, Housing Office, Family Centre, Adult Training Centre and Reablement team currently occupies the buildings and provides much needed services to the local population. One of the buildings is vacant as a consequence of the relocation of Risca Library to the Palace Cinema. The site although well utilised does offer considerable potential for redevelopment. Opportunities to relocate these uses to an alternative town centre location could be explored, with a view to releasing this attractive site for residential development or another use appropriate to the location.



A9 **Bethany Chapel**

Bethany Chapel located next to Lidl is a substantial Grade II Listed Building located within the heart of the town centre. There is potential for partnership links to be forged with the Chapel to explore opportunities for utilising the building more fully for use by the community to ensure the long-term sustainability of this valuable historic asset.



A10 Ty Darran Home for the Elderly

The Ty Darran residential care home became vacant in 2010. Although outside of the town centre boundary, this large site located next to the Health Centre in the north of the town has considerable development potential. The Council are considering a number of possible uses for the site, however it would lend itself to either housing or community facilities subject to the completion of the flood alleviation scheme.

8b MOVEMENT



Figure 7 – Movement Proposals that can be identified on a Plan

- B1** Enhance movement between the shops and the park, making it easier to cross the busy main road of Tredegar Street.
- B2** Improve linkages between the town centre and its car parks with improved signage and pedestrian access, particularly the link between Tredegar Terrace and Tredegar Street.
- 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.

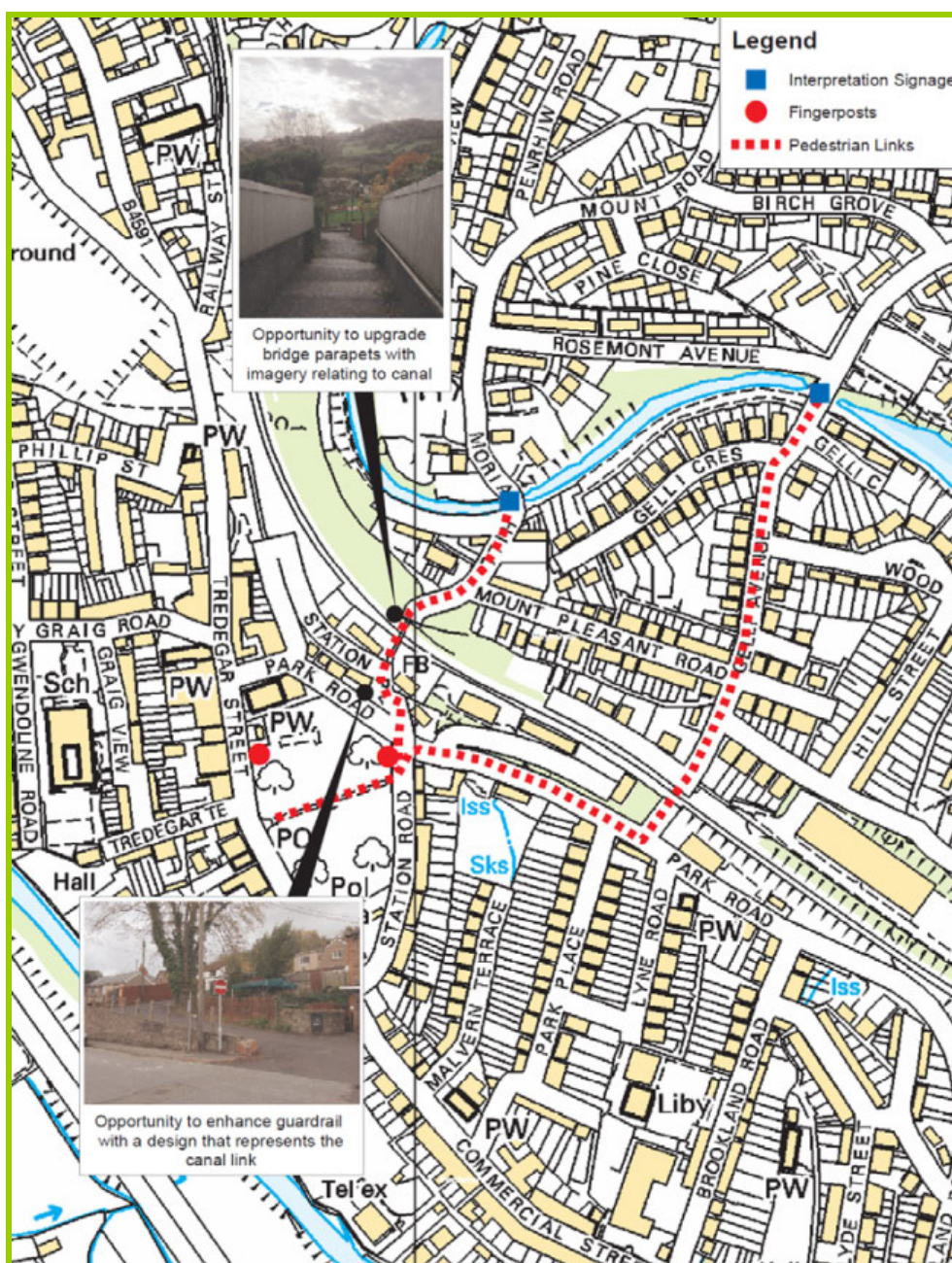


Figure 8 – Canal to Town Centre Link - Opportunities

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- B4** Improve linkages and signage between the train station and the town centre (through Park Road and Maryland Road) in order to improve the physical relationship between the two and integrate the train station into the town centre.
- B5** Build a pedestrian footbridge across the River Ebbw between the Tesco and Lidl stores and a footpath connection through the Lidl site out onto Commercial Street, to improve connectivity between the town centre and the Tesco superstore.
- B6** Enhance the potential of riverside walks along the River Ebbw, joining up the extant sections such as Tesco Riverside walk and Recreation Ground walk. There is also opportunity to enhance the appearance of this visual asset including landscaping alongside the river to add significant character to the town and to help screen some of the unattractive buildings and land parcels to the rear of Commercial Street. The improvement of the river and its surroundings can help offer a unique selling point for the town. There are a number of opportunities for joining up the route along the River Ebbw as shown on the plan below.

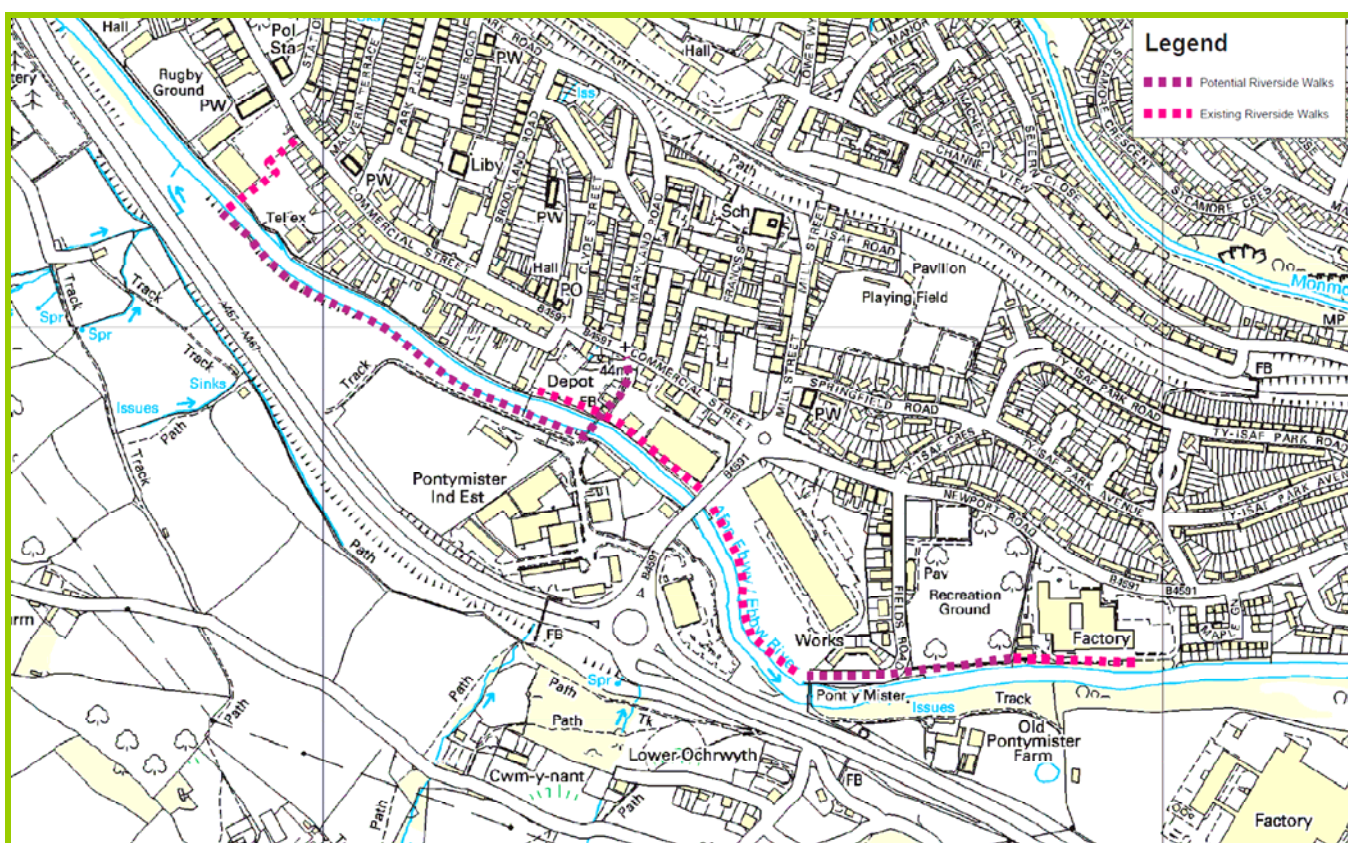


Figure 9 - Existing and Potential Riverside Walks

8c PUBLIC REALM

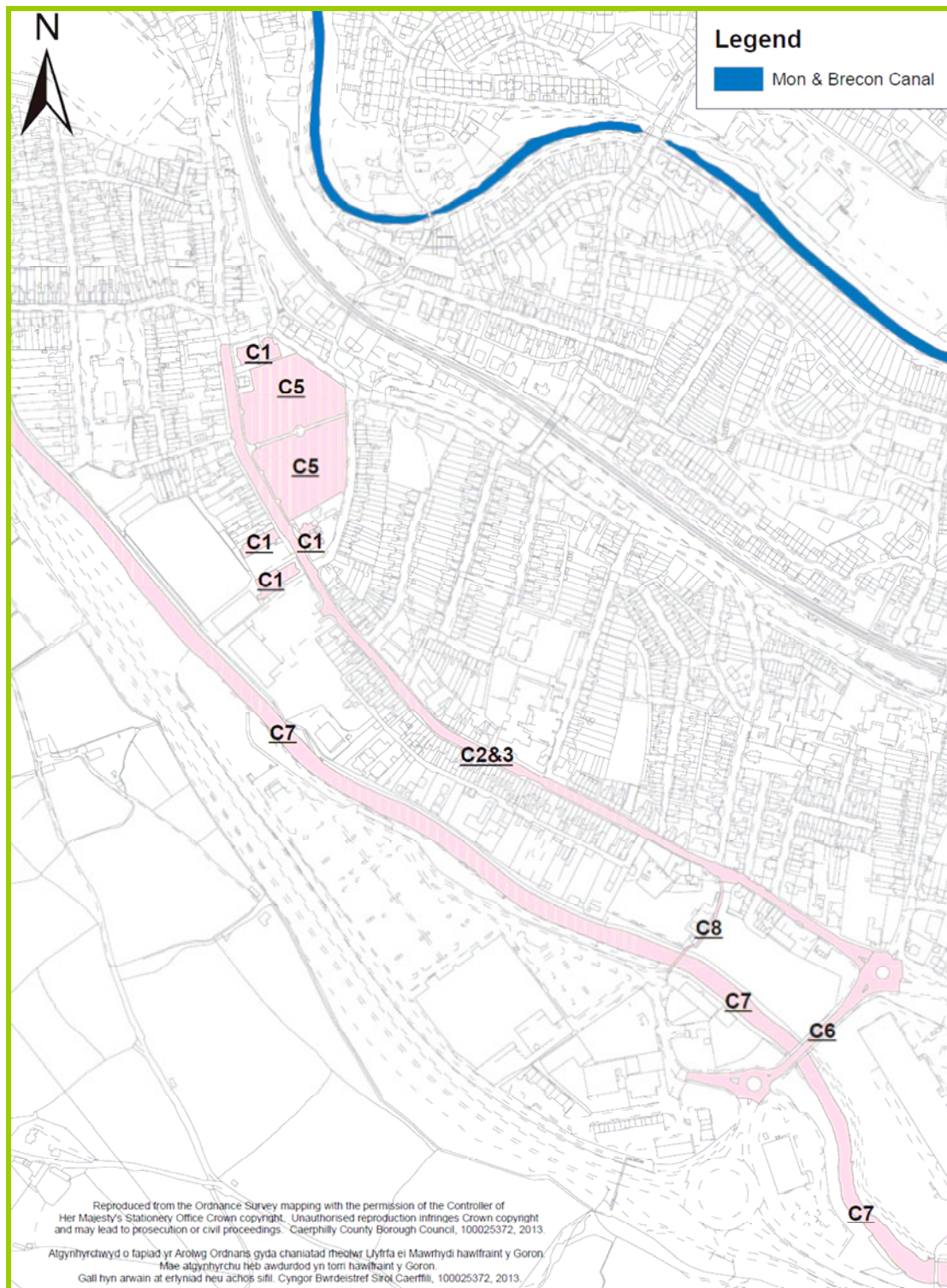


Figure 10 – Public Realm Proposals that can be identified on a Plan

- C1** Enhance key buildings through a comprehensive lighting scheme. Buildings that could be lit include: Moriah Baptist Church, Palace Cinema, Police Station and Bethany Baptist Church. Energy efficient lighting would be encouraged such as solar powered lighting on the building exterior.

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- 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.
- C3** Introduce new traffic measures to encourage slower speeds to provide a pedestrian friendly environment.
- C4** Introduce a 'street café' scheme through Commercial Street and Tredegar Street allowing café owners to put tables and chairs on the footway.
- C5** Enhancement Projects within Tredegar Park e.g. commemorative artwork, additional tree planting to give age diversity and insure against potential devastation given age of existing tree stock.
- C6** Enhance the approaches of Risca and Pontymister at Pontymister Industrial Estate and Pontymister Link Road, particular attention should be given to the roundabout and how it can cater for improved pedestrian movement between the town centre and the residential areas.
- C7** Carry out environmental improvements along the river corridor to improve the amenity value of the River Ebbw and to help screen the industrial area beyond.
- C8** Create a strong pedestrian corridor linking Tesco's bridge with the town centre

8d TRANSPORT

- 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.
- D2** Enhance the cycle routes and footpaths within Risca town centre, connecting nearby communities to public transport, tourism and employment.
- D3** Improve cycle parking provision in the town centre.
- D4** Improve town centre car parking provision with the potential to accommodate public parking within the 'D2' opportunity area on Commercial Street.
- D5** Make improvements to the bus stop outside Spar to ensure the safety of passengers by reducing the size of the adjacent parking bay and extending the double yellow lines.

8e GENERAL PROPOSALS applying throughout the town centre

- E1** Events will be encouraged and expanded throughout the town centre.

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- E2** The town will be marketed to the private sector for further investment.
- E3** Measures will be taken to minimise crime and anti-social behaviour in the town.
- E4** The vitality and viability of the town centre will be monitored through regular surveys.
- E5** Subject to funding, grants will be offered to improve shop frontages along Tredegar Street and Commercial Street.
- E6** Improve signage within the area to increase awareness of local attractions such as the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal and Cwmcarn Forest Drive.
- 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.

9. Implementation

- 9.1 The implementation of this Town Centre Action Plan will be co-ordinated by the Urban Renewal section of Caerphilly County Borough Council's Regeneration and Planning Division.
- 9.2 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 in order to implement key proposals of this action plan.
- 9.3 Public investment will also be sought but given the current constraints on public expenditure, proposals will be implemented as and when funding opportunities arise.
- 9.4 A number of successful partnership projects have been delivered in the county borough's town centres in recent years and it will therefore be beneficial in approaching third sector organisations to assess the potential in Risca and Pontymister.

Appendix 1 – The Current Situation

- 1.1 This section of the plan contains a summary of the principal findings of various statistics and surveys analysing the current situation in the town centre. Both Risca and Pontymister are located with the ward of Risca West, which has a population of 5229 (Census 2011).

Socio-economic Analysis

- 1.2 In 2005 a new classification of deprivation was calculated, based on Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), which are smaller units than wards. In 2011, none of the LSOAs within Risca and Pontymister were identified within the 10% most deprived category - Overall Index of Multiple Deprivation.
- 1.3 However, the LSOA of Risca West 2 (ranked 96) and Risca West 3 (ranked 110) were identified within the top 10% most deprived category – Physical Environment domain, 2011. The indicators used for the Physical Environment domain are:
- Air quality
 - Air emissions
 - Flood risk
 - Proximity to waste disposal and industrial sites
- 1.4 The following plan identifies areas affected by the LSOA for the physical environment, which shows that the main shopping streets and areas within the town centre boundary are situated within these LSOA's and that there is a need to upgrade the physical environment within the town centre.



Figure 11 – Lower Super Output Areas - 10% most deprived category – Physical Environment domain

- 1.5 Levels of home ownership identified within 2011 census are lower than both the county borough and Welsh average. In Risca West 67.7% of homes are owner occupied whilst in the county borough it is 69.8% and in Wales 68.8%.

Retail analysis

- 1.6 The CACI Market Summary Report 2010 raises some interesting points on the retail market in Risca. It is worth noting though that this was undertaken prior to Tesco's opening in the town.

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- Risca/Pontymister is ranked 159th of Welsh Retail Footprint Centres, positioned above Llantwit Major, Ferndale, Crickhowell and just behind Newbridge ranked 151st.
- £2.49m comparison spend per annum with 50.9% of total market potential.
- 17th in Welsh ranking of local centres behind Newbridge, Llanrumney Cardiff and Dowlais.
- 509th in UK ranking of local centres.
- Total catchment population of 76,859

1.7 Risca is one of six town centres in Caerphilly county borough that are regularly surveyed and monitored. The surveys are based upon the town centre boundary as defined in the LDP, and not the action plan area boundary.

1.8 A survey of town centre properties in Risca in 2013 identified 110 commercial properties which includes 51 A1 (shops), 9 A2 (Financial and Professional Services), 20 A3 (Restaurant and Cafes) and 10 Sui Generis i.e Amusement centres, taxi ranks etc.

Vacancy rates:

1.9 The vacancy rate (2013) is currently 9%, 1% lower than the previous year.

1.10 Triennial health checks on the town centre are carried out as well as regular shopper attitude surveys. The latest shopper attitude survey was carried out in 2010. The survey shows that:

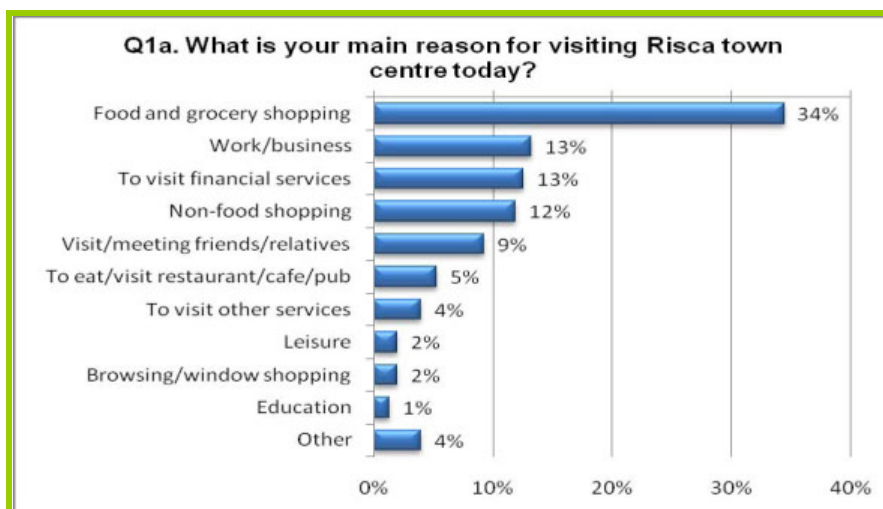
1.11 Household telephone survey:

- 70% of respondents buy the food and groceries in Newport whilst only 12% do so in Risca
- Only 4% of respondents choose Risca to purchase non-bulky non-food items, with people favouring Newport and Cardiff.
- Only 1% of respondents choose Risca to purchase bulky non-food items such as carpets and white goods. Again, Newport is the favoured location by 40% of respondents.
- 48% of respondents visit Risca because it is close/convenient to home, 15% to visit a particular shop. Very few highlighted that it was because of a good choice of shops or the town had good character/atmosphere.
- Respondents were asked how favourably they would rate Risca as a place to shop, using a scale from very favourable to not at all favourable. The table below shows the percentages of respondents who have rated Risca as very, or fairly, favourable over the various waves. As can be seen, on this scale, Risca scored 40%, which is a decrease of 13% from 53% in 2006.

Approval Rating for Shopping						
	1994	1997	2000	2003	2006	2010
Risca	61	62	55	56	53	40

1.12 On Street Survey:

- The table below shows the main reason for visiting Risca. It reveals that very few visit for leisure purposes.



- Over two-fifths of respondents travelled to Risca by foot (41%), a quarter travelled by bus (25%) and a further quarter travelled by car as a driver (25%).



- 1.13 Those who travelled by car were asked where they parked; the most common locations were on street (62%, compared to 70% in 2006) followed by Lidl (17%, compared to 15% in 2006) and a public car park (15%, compared to 6% in 2006)
- 1.14 Over half of respondents travel between five and ten minutes to get to Risca town centre (46%) whilst 31% travel less than five minutes. These figures are in line with previous years. Although there is a large catchment population with 30 minutes drive time, Risca is failing to attract people from these locations. Only 23% travel time 11-30 minutes.
- 1.15 Visitors particularly liked, 28% location/convenience, 12% range of shops, 11% choice of shops, 9% personal safety

Leisure facilities

Open and Play Space

- 1.16 Risca has a moderate offer in respect of leisure facilities. The town benefits from the Tredegar Park situated within the heart of the town centre providing valuable green space. There is also the Ty Isaf Recreational Ground to the south and Risca Longbridge Fields to the north. Risca Leisure Centre is located outside of the town centre within the comprehensive school site at Ty-sign. Risca Rugby Club sits between the riverside and the rear of Tredegar Street shops, and between residential properties and the Lidl foodstore.

Commercial leisure

- 1.17 Risca has a small number of cafes and the nighttime offer is limited with a few pubs and a couple of restaurants. There is low usage of the town outside normal shopping hours although there is a catchment population that can be attracted to supporting a successful evening economy. In terms of hotel accommodation, Risca town centre is underrepresented. There are no hotels or guesthouses within the town centre boundary, although there are a handful located in more rural areas.

Public facilities

- 1.18 The public transport infrastructure is significant to the success of the town. With bus and rail services for the town, this provides modern public transport facilities close to the shops and services. The National Cycle Route runs through the town providing opportunities for alternative sustainable transport.
- 1.19 The library has relocated to the centre of town and provides valuable footfall into the commercial centre.
- 1.20 The town has public conveniences adjacent to the park.

Tourism

- 1.21 The town is located in close proximity to Cwmcarn Forest Drive and the canal. However, visitors to the town do not benefit from this proximity as the town lacks any signage and visibility to promote these assets.

Catchment population

- 1.22 Drivetime catchments show places that can be reached within a specified time from a particular point. The drive time catchment for Risca in 2005 indicates that 25,973 people live within 10 minutes drive time of the town, with 159,564 people and 572,920 people living within 20 and 30 minutes drive time respectively.

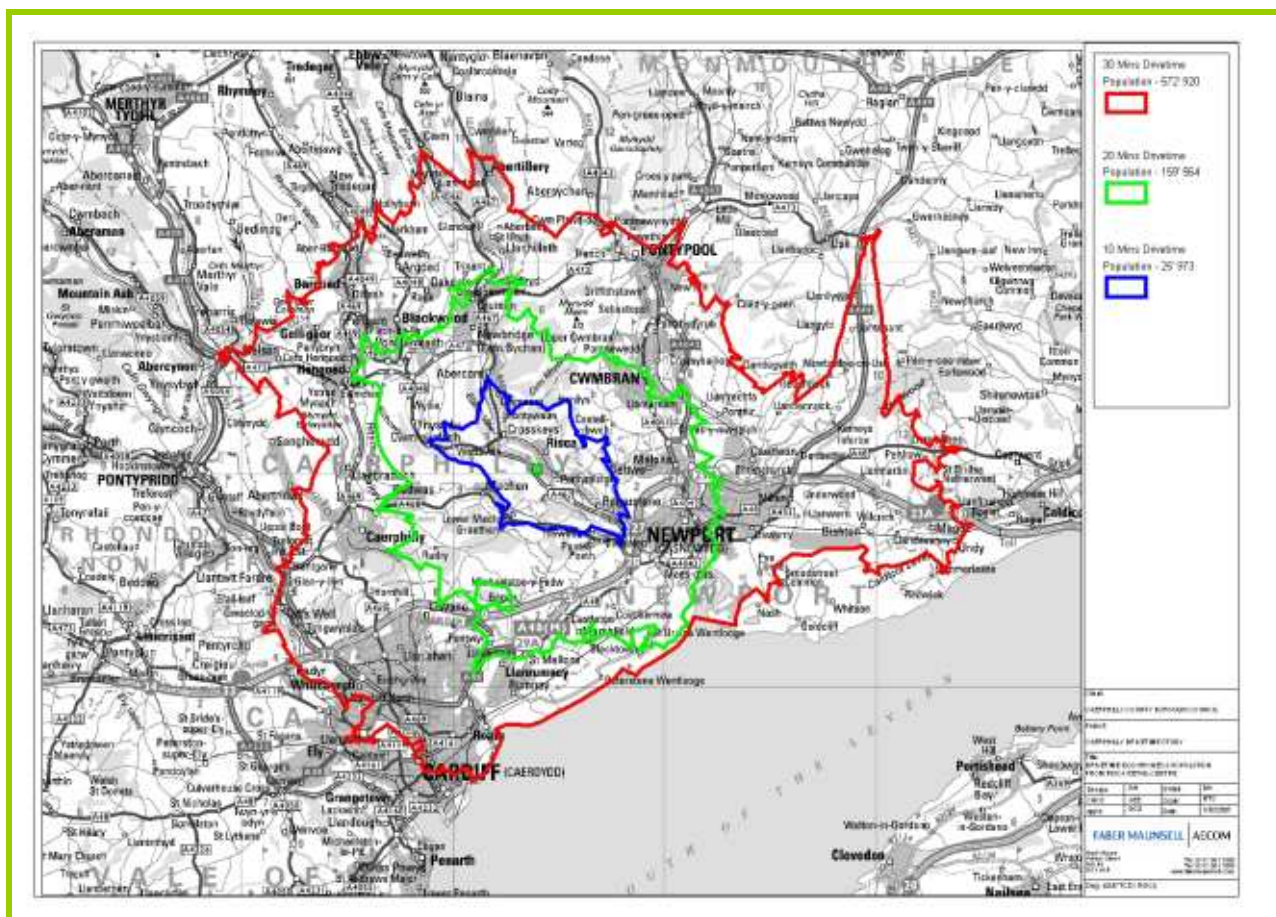


Figure 12: Risca Drive Time Zones

1.23 Risca is also well served by public transport both rail and bus. The travel times for key journeys is shown in the table below.

Journey	Bus Network	Rail Network
Risca to Cardiff	55 mins	30 mins
Risca to Ebbw Vale	55 mins	31 mins
Risca to Blackwood	30 mins	N/A
Risca to Newport	20 mins	N/A
Risca to Newbridge	15 mins	14 mins

Figure 13: Public Transport Travel Times

RISCA AND PONTYMISTER TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN 2014 - 2019

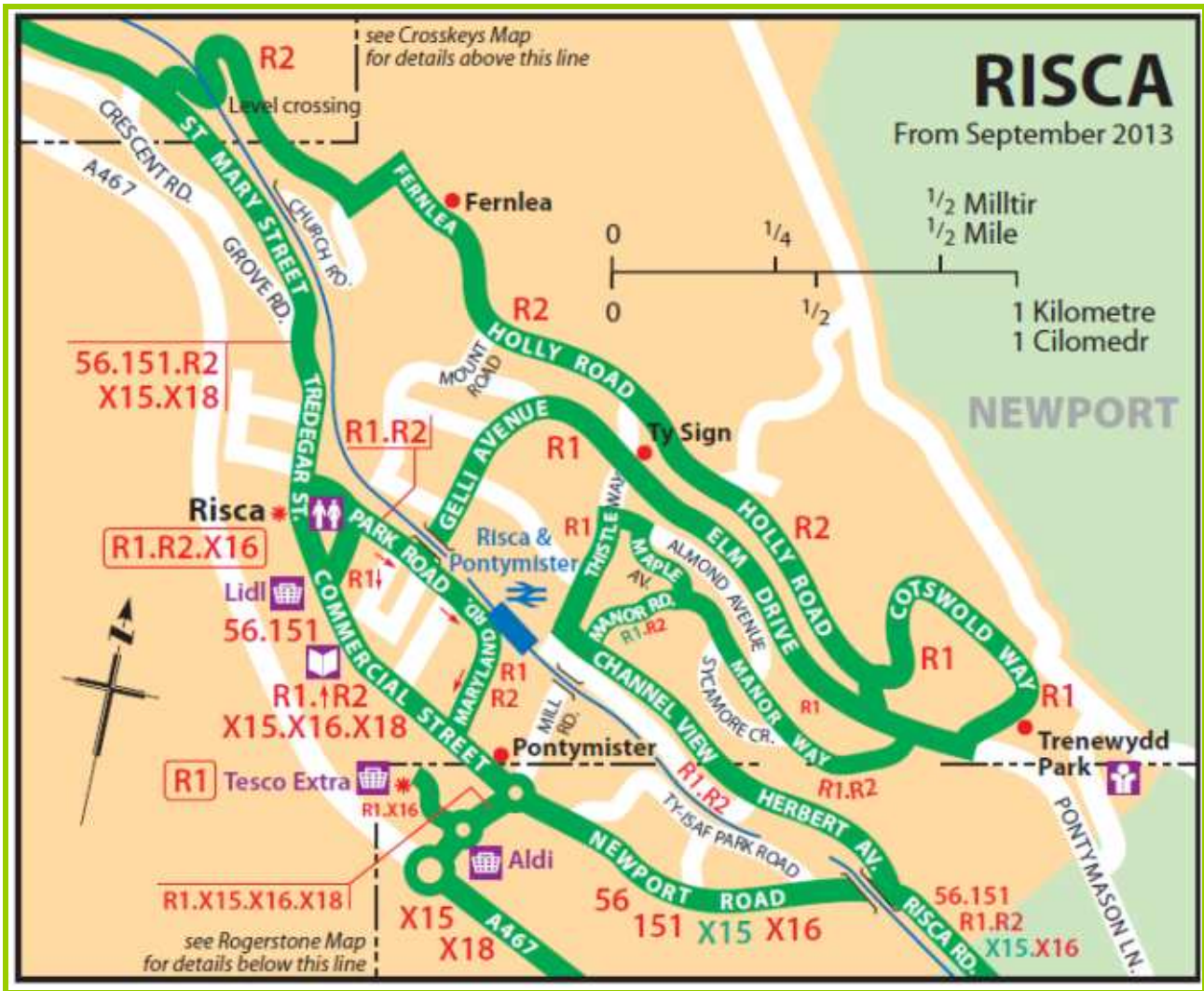
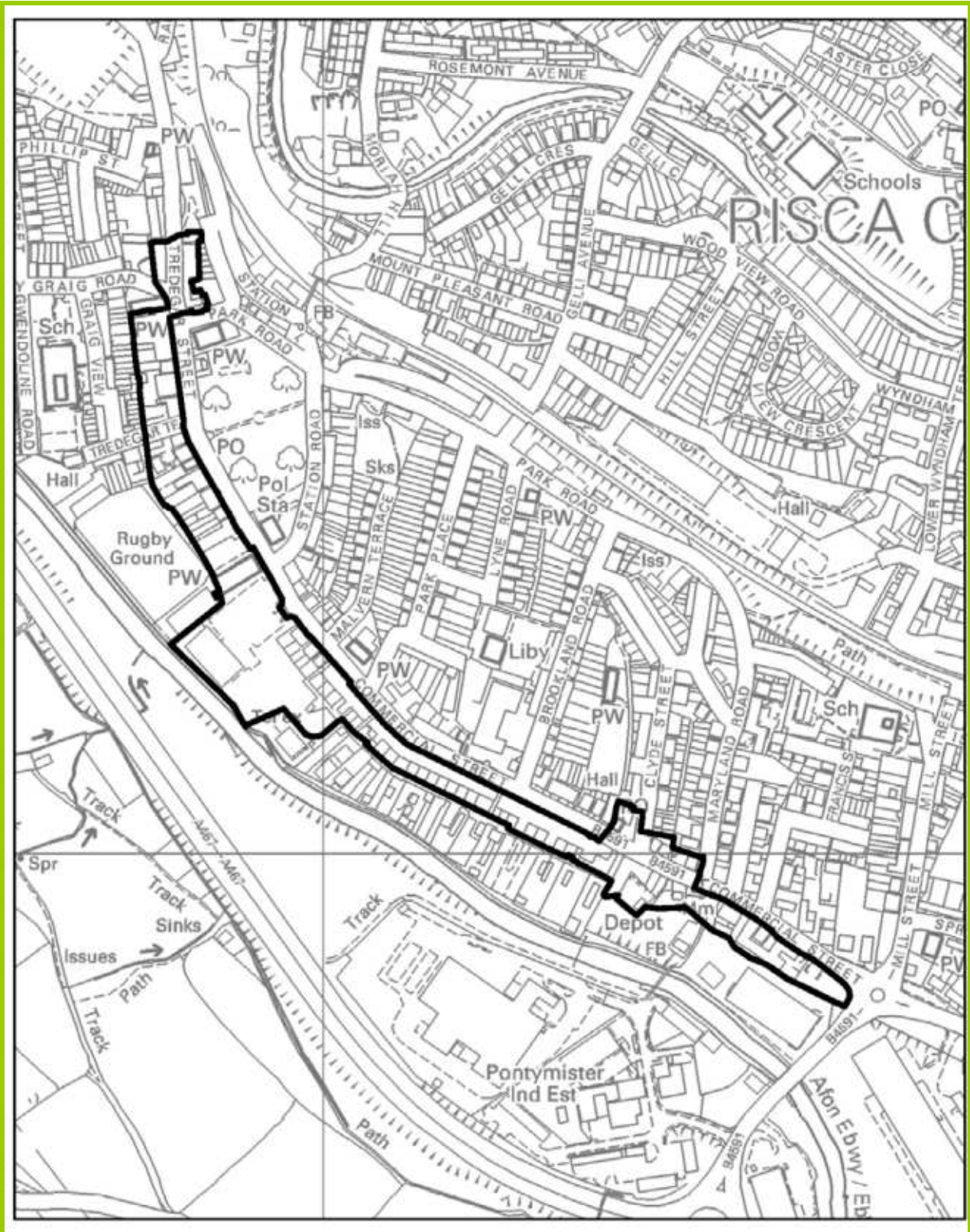


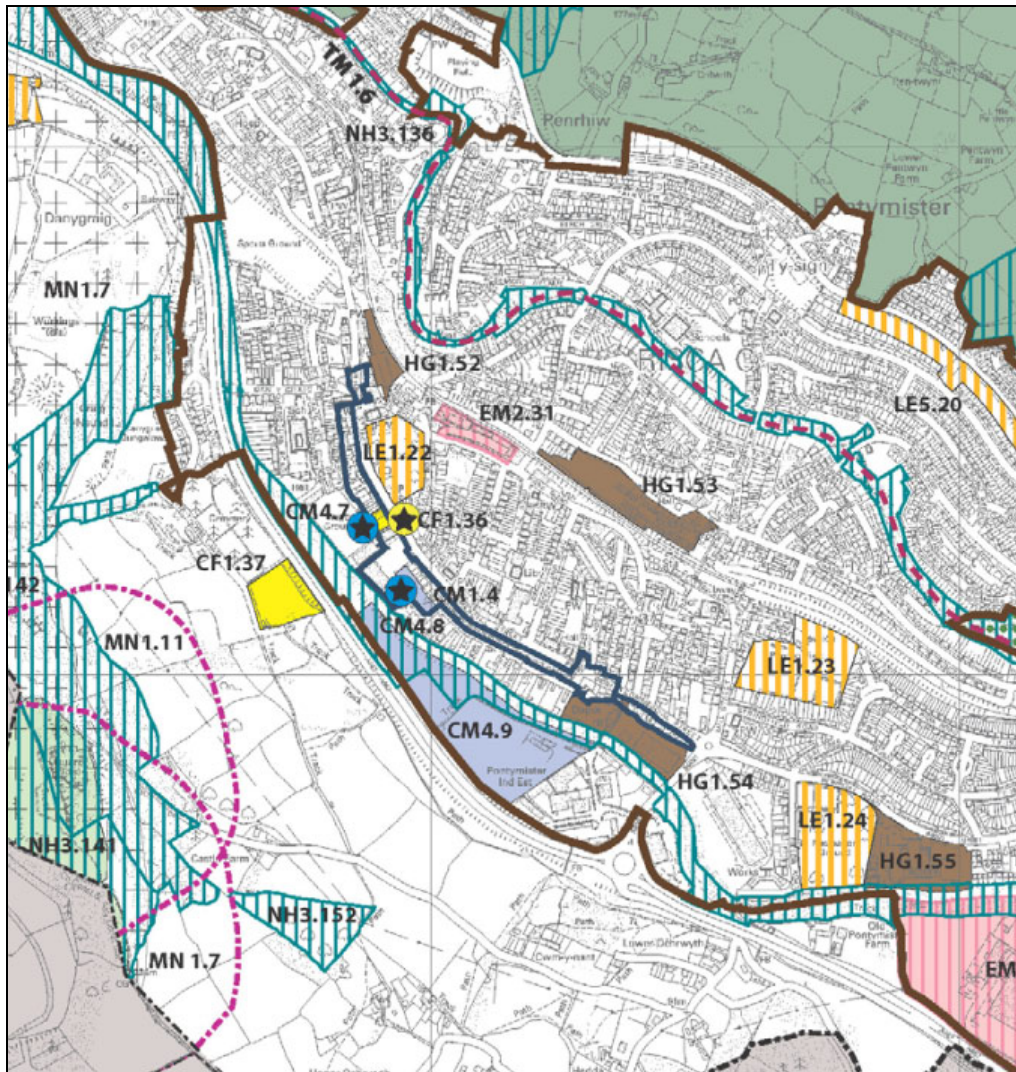
Figure 14: Bus network serving Risca and Pontymister

Appendix 2 – LDP Town Centre Boundary

CM1.4 - RISCA / PONTYMISTER PRINCIPAL TOWN CENTRE BOUNDARY



Appendix 3 – LDP Proposals Map



Legend for Proposals Maps	
CCBC Boundary	Tourism TM1
Boundary between maps	Tourism Route TM1
Brecon Beacons National Park	TRANSPORT
Settlement Boundary	Road Improvements TR5, 6 & 7
HOUSING	Road Junction Improvements TR5 & 6
Housing HG1	Cycleways TR1 (Indicative Alignment)
CW12 Affordable Housing Exception Sites Policy Applies (Rural Settlements)	Railway line TR2
EMPLOYMENT	Rail Station TR3
Employment Allocations EM1	Park and Ride TR4
Employment Site Protection EM2	COMMUNITY FACILITY
RETAIL	Community Facility CF1
Principal Town Centre CM1	WASTE MANAGEMENT
Retail Warehouse Park CM2	Minerals and Waste Handling WM1
Retail Primary Area CM3	MINERALS
Commercial Development CM4	Mineral Site Buffer Zone MN1
Commercial Opportunity Area CM5	Coal Safeguarding Area MN2
LEISURE	Area of Protection for Sand and Gravel MN2
Leisure LE1, 2, 3 & 4.	Limestone Safeguarding Area
COUNTRYSIDE	Sandstone Safeguarding Area
Green Wedge S11	MIXED USE
SLA - Special Landscape Area NH1	Mixed Use - e.g. Commercial & Housing
VILL - Visually Important Local Landscape NH2	
SINC - Site of Importance for Nature Conservation NH3	

Note: In addition to the site specific proposals shown on this Proposals Map reference should be made to the general policies in the Written Statement relating to the Whole Plan area.

RISCA AND PONTYMISTER TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN 2014 - 2019

Appendix 4 – Risca and Pontymister Town Centre – Analysis and First Draft Sketch Ideas



Aerial photo shows how much space is taken up by highway and its paraphernalia, with a detrimental affect on local amenity. This area is in need of reconfiguring to harness the potential for an "entrance" to this village, showcasing its desirable qualities for residential and leisure use.



Unappealing, traffic dominated area with no sense of identity - no sense of entering a village/town and no awareness of the high quality urban area further along the road



Turn the corner and the underlying beauty of this area, its hills and tree lined streets are undermined by the highway. It is very wide, dominated by white lines and signs, and presents a significant barrier to pedestrians.

Risca Pontymister Town Centre - Analysis
& First Draft Sketch Ideas

Landscape Section, Caerphilly County Borough Council
December 2013

RISCA AND PONTYMISTER TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN 2014 - 2019



First draft Sketch looking into village across the river bridge

Unappealing, traffic dominated area and pedestrian unfriendly. This view fails to give any sense of identity and undermines the value of the landscape setting beyond.

A fairly easy design response here would be to create a tree lined avenue, with substantial sized trees rather than the usual small street tree. As the sketch shows, this focuses the eye and reflects the beauty of the rural setting. It also functions as an air filtration, significantly reducing air borne particulates created by traffic on the adjacent busy road. This could benefit the physical and emotional health of the residents and other pedestrian using the village. There are plus points for wildlife with this scenario too.

Risca Pontymister Town Centre - Analysis
& First Draft Sketch Ideas

Landscape Section, Caerphilly County Borough Council
December 2013

RISCA AND PONTYMISTER TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN 2014 - 2019



The semi-detached housing abuts the main highway and has views out across a large expanse of tarmac - the equivalent of 4 lanes. There is sufficient room here to sub-divide the space using trees to create a more domestic scale to the residential area, providing a calmer zone, filtered of air borne particulates. This also enhances and defines the entrance to the community, with the added advantage of an element of traffic calming brought on by a perceived reduction of space.



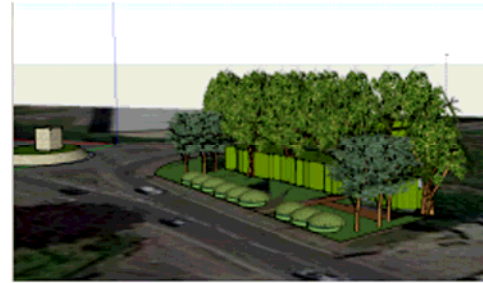
Potential view from housing back towards the river bridge and its avenue of trees

First draft Sketch looking north

Risca Pontymister Town Centre - Analysis & First Draft Sketch Ideas

Landscape Section, Caerphilly County Borough Council
December 2013

RISCA AND PONTYMISTER TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN 2014 - 2019



Draft ideas for enhancing the under-used green space at the start of the village, providing a human-scale, aesthetically rich environment whilst providing a screen for the less interesting parts of the petrol filling station beyond. The benefits of pleasing green space for the community are both physical and psychological. Linking this space with the riverside walk would only add to those community benefits



General overview of the junction with a semi-enhanced roundabout. Consideration should be given to rethinking the whole of the design of this area, perhaps along more "Hamilton Bailey" principles. A focal building is shown at this important focal point along the river bridge and into the village - this is merely a sketch of a two storey building that addresses the space in artistic urban design manner. No proposals exist for this space.

Risca Pontymister Town Centre - Analysis
& First Draft Sketch Ideas

Landscape Section, Caerphilly County Borough Council

December 2013

