



## **CABINET – 12TH JANUARY 2022**

**SUBJECT: DRAFT NEWBRIDGE TO RISCA CORRIDOR (LOWER EBBW AND SIRHOWY VALLEYS) MASTERPLAN**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To obtain Cabinet endorsement for the Draft Newbridge to Risca Corridor (Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys) Masterplan; and
- 1.2 To seek Cabinet approval to undertake a six-week public consultation exercise in respect of the plan between 19 January and 2 March 2022.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Caerphilly County Borough and the wider Cardiff Capital Region is in a period of transformative change. The need for a strategy to coordinate regeneration initiatives and capitalise upon funding streams is urgent to maximise the potential benefits to the County Borough.
- 2.2 The signing of City Deal and the Cardiff Capital Region Investment Fund signalled an unprecedented investment of £1.2 billion, to support the region's economic growth. The investment fund will be used to take forward a wide range of projects and schemes that contribute toward economic growth.
- 2.3 In terms of the Newbridge to Risca Corridor (Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys) the existing employment base and strong tourist economy are the foundation that present opportunities for economic renewal and growth and allied to additional funding streams, can promote the area as a major employment and tourism and recreation area. The Masterplan seeks to integrate the strong employment retail and tourism/recreational base to realise added benefit for economic recovery and growth.
- 2.4 The Draft Newbridge to Risca Corridor (Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys) Masterplan sets out a development strategy and Framework for delivering these outcomes and will form the basis for bids from funding streams for projects in the area. The Masterplan now needs to be the subject of public consultation to get input from our communities on the proposals.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That the Cabinet endorse the draft masterplan to allow public consultation to take place.
- 3.2 That the draft masterplan be the subject of a six-week public consultation between 19 January 2022 and 2 March 2022.

#### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To provide a policy basis for the future development and regeneration of the Newbridge to Risca Corridor (Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys).

#### **5. THE REPORT**

##### **Background**

- 5.1 The signing of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal signalled the intention of the 10 South East Wales local authorities to work together through joint enterprise, on issues of long-term development, infrastructure, land use, economic development and employment. It represents unprecedented levels of investment from the UK and Welsh Governments, as well as local authorities, and provides the vehicle for an integrated long-term approach to investment within the region. The City Deal agreement sets out a series of priorities and recommendations for the future growth and investment within the Cardiff Capital Region, of which Caerphilly County Borough is part.
- 5.2 The County Borough's regeneration strategy, 'A Foundation for Success', was approved in July 2018 and provides the strategic framework for regeneration activity over the five-year period to 2023. In addition to this, masterplans for Caerphilly Basin, Ystrad Mynach and the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration area, the first three in a suite of five masterplans designed to complement this strategy, were approved by the Council in July 2018, April 2019 and November 2020, respectively. These documents provide more detailed proposals for the regeneration and revitalisation of their respective areas.
- 5.3 There is an exciting opportunity to facilitate significant change through the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD), which will provide resources to unlock significant economic growth in the region, delivering jobs and private sector investment. Whilst CCRCD seeks to relieve pressure on Cardiff as its regional city it also seeks to promote growth in smaller towns and industrial communities to rebalance social justice and prosperity. This Masterplan seeks to provide a direction of travel to ensure a transition towards economic and social success.
- 5.4 The City Deal Investment Fund will also facilitate the delivery of the South East Wales Metro. And, whilst the Ebbw Vale railway line is not included in this round of Metro improvements, improvements to bus services, which provide a high level of accessibility throughout the area, are part of the overall package. Future phases of Metro development will include a review of the Ebbw Vale line and this will look at reinstating the link to Newport and consider the issue of increasing services on this line.
- 5.5 The Masterplan will form part of the implementation plan for 'A Foundation for Success', with the latter to be reviewed every five years. Whilst the Masterplan identifies investment and development opportunities within the Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys, the Council's Regeneration Project Board will prioritise projects and proposals for consideration by Cabinet in line with the Council's Corporate Objectives

and delivery will therefore be dependent on decisions made by Cabinet.

### **Draft Newbridge to Risca Corridor (Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys) Masterplan**

- 5.6 The Draft Newbridge to Risca Corridor (Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys) Masterplan has been developed with the following vision:

*“The masterplan area will capitalise on its position as a significant employment, retail, tourism and recreation centre, to be a vibrant place in which people will choose to live, work and spend their free time.*

*The area will provide housing that meets local housing needs through the redevelopment of derelict and vacant land, where possible.*

*The area will provide a wide range of employment opportunities based on a broadening of the employment base through more efficient use of existing employment sites and the redevelopment of sites and town centres for retail, service and commercial employment opportunities.*

*The main centres of Risca and Newbridge will be vibrant and attractive places that people will go to for recreation and relaxation as well as for shopping and accessing services. This will be done through diversification, redevelopment and environmental improvement that will provide a wider range of services and create an environment that will encourage the night-time and foundational economy.*

*The tourist economy will be strengthened through significant improvements to its main tourist attractions and through increased accessibility and interpretation that will make access between the attractions, the town centres and other destinations easier for all and will publicise and inform people of these links to maximise the benefits for the overall economy of the area.*

*The area will continue to be an attractive place to live, set in a quality landscape with integrated landscape, parks and the Sirhowy County Park providing a network of recreational spaces that will provide a range of opportunities for informal recreation and leisure, providing increased quality of life and well-being.”*

- 5.7 The Masterplan Vision is supported by a series of Objectives that set out the key elements of the approach to the area, and these will drive the delivery of a series of projects and actions that are set out in the Masterplan Strategy and Framework. that sets out the principles of how the area will develop over the time.

### **Consultation to date**

- 5.8 The draft masterplan has been the subject of extensive engagement with ward members, the council officers listed under section 11, and the Scrutiny Committee. The observations made during this initial period of consultation have helped to shape the current draft. For instance, the updated draft mentions the possibility of building affordable *and/or* sheltered housing at Ty Darran, Risca. The previous draft referred only to affordable housing. The observations have also prompted officers to change the title of the draft masterplan. The term ‘Newbridge to Risca Corridor’ has been replaced with the more geographically descriptive ‘Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys’. However, this is only the start of the process, and the intention is now to publish this draft document to enable any interested residents / groups / businesses to contribute to its further development.

## **Conclusion**

- 5.9 The central theme of the Masterplan is to engender economic and employment growth through maintaining and enhancing the existing employment base, particularly focussing on growing the tourist economy and attaining additional benefit through integrating these with other services and attractions to maximise the benefits.
- 5.10 By putting in place a framework for investment and regeneration within the Newbridge to Risca Corridor (Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys) that seeks to take forward these priorities, as well as implementing those of 'A Foundation for Success', the Masterplan has the ability to help bring about transformative change in this part of the County Borough.

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in respect of this report.

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 The Masterplan sets out a series of broad projects and proposals that will deliver a vision for the masterplan area. A key underlying theme of the Masterplan is to reduce inequality, particularly through the generation of new job opportunities through enhancements in the existing employment base, the tourist economy and the town centre and foundational economies. The Masterplan also seeks to increase accessibility throughout the masterplan area making it easier for everyone to access their required services and facilities.
- 7.2 The masterplan identifies broad level projects and proposals and the IIA has not identified any adverse impacts in respect of these. As the proposals come forward to implementation the detailed projects will be the subject of IIA that will pick up any impacts and propose mitigation where more details are known.
- 7.3 Overall the Draft Newbridge to Risca Corridor (Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys) Masterplan does not give rise to any issues in respect of the IIA.

### **Link to the Full IIA**

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/caerphillydocs/ia/ccbc-ia-form-draft-report>

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Funding sources (where known) for specific projects are identified in Section 7 of the Masterplan. Decisions on the funding and delivery of individual projects will be made by Cabinet, based on the Council's Corporate Priorities, and will be reported separately.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 All consultee comments have been considered and, where necessary, incorporated into this report.

10.2 The Scrutiny Committee made the following observations on 30 November 2021:

*The scrutiny committee members suggested that the photograph on the front of the consultation document could better reflect the whole area under the plan (possibly by using a composite image).*

*Members welcomed the document and sought clarification on how the consultation will be carried out particularly the ease with which residents can access and submit comments. They were advised that it is intended to use an online version however it is hoped that local shops and businesses in key areas will be asked to advertise the consultation as well. Officers stated that they would also welcome suggestions from Members on making the public aware. The recent changes to the Covid -19 pandemic situation were discussed and the potential impact on the consultation.*

*A Member asked if the new arrangements for town centre management groups would be in place for this consultation. The committee were advised that a town centre stakeholder event could be organised to coincide with the consultation in the area.*

*The scrutiny committee highlighted the reference at 6.73 in the report where it states that the Ty Darren site will be used for affordable housing and queried if this was correct as it was understood to be for sheltered accommodation. Members were advised that this will be checked and the Masterplan updated if needed ( see para 5.8).*

*Clarification was sought on how the Towns and Settlements areas are described in the document and it was clarified that the terminology used is in accordance with the Settlement Hierarchy identified in the Local Development Plan, and the masterplans are supplementary planning guidance documents to the LDP.*

*The scrutiny committee acknowledged the few amendments that had already been identified by consultees to the report in respect of Wyllie, Babel Chapel and the community gardens in Waunfawr and were assured that the amendments to the Masterplan would be included in advance of consideration by Cabinet.*

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Local Government Act 2000

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Consultees:

Councillor Mrs Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Performance, Economy and Enterprise  
Councillor John Ridgewell, Chair Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee  
Cllr Mike Adams, Vice-Chair Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Relevant ward members:  
Councillor Adrian Hussey  
Councillor Leeroy Jeremiah  
Councillor Gary Johnston  
Councillor Ross Whiting  
Councillor Nigel George  
Councillor Arianna Leonard  
Councillor Philippa Leonard  
Councillor Bob Owen  
Councillor Denver Preece  
Councillor Andrew Whitcombe  
Councillor Julian Simmonds

Christina HARRY, Chief Executive  
David Street, Corporate Director Social Services & Housing  
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director Education & Corporate Services  
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director Economy and Environment  
Steve Harris, Head of Finance and S.151 Officer  
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer  
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services  
Rhian Kyte, Head of Regeneration & Planning  
Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure  
Mark Williams, Interim Head of Property Services  
Robert Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community & Leisure Services  
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer  
Mike Headington, Green Spaces and Transport Services Manager  
Jeff Reynolds, Sport & Leisure Facilities Manager  
Fiona Wilkins and Jane Roberts-Waite, Housing  
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning & Strategy  
Ryan Thomas, Planning Services Manager  
Allan Dallimore, Regeneration Services Manager  
Phil Griffiths, Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager  
Clive Campbell, Transportation Engineering Manager  
Claire Davies, Private Sector Housing Manager  
Jared Lougher, Sport and Leisure Development Manager

Background Papers:  
A Foundation for Success

Appendices:  
Appendix 1 Draft Newbridge to Risca Corridor (Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys)  
Masterplan