

PONTYPOOL CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL & MANAGEMENT PLAN

**TORFAEN
COUNTY
BOROUGH**



**BWRDEISTREF
SIROL
TORFAEN**

Contents

Summary of special interest and value of the Conservation Area

1. Background

- 1.1 Current status of the Conservation Area
- 1.2 Statutory background
- 1.3 Planning policy framework – including Local Plan policies
- 1.4 Regeneration context
- 1.4 Purpose of this Conservation Area appraisal

2. Location and setting

- 2.1 Location and population
- 2.2 Townscape/Landscape setting

3. Historic development

- 3.1 Historic development of Pontypool
- 3.1 Archaeological significance

4. Character and appearance

- 4.1 General character and plan form
- 4.2 Key buildings and views
- 4.3 The public realm
- 4.4 Identification of Character Areas

5.0 Identification of conservation issues

- 5.1 General conditions SWOT
- 5.2 Positive issues and assets
- 5.3 Negative issues and problems

6.0 Policy guidance and design principles

- 6.1 CA development policy and design guidance
- 6.2 Policies for reuse and enhancement of existing buildings
- 6.3 Policies for new development
- 6.4 Management framework for the public realm
- 6.5 Guidance for key buildings, sites and public realm

7.0 Management recommendations

- 7.1 Decision making procedures
- 7.2 Planning measures
- 7.3 Enforcement strategy
- 7.4 Mechanisms for monitoring change
- 7.5 Urban design guidance
- 7.6 Community involvement
- 7.7 Resources needed in the Conservation Area

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Conservation policies
- Appendix 2: Listed Building information
- Appendix 3: Community consultation
- Appendix 4: Contact details

Summary of special interest & value of the Conservation Area

Pontypool was the first industrialised town of Wales. The town created wealth and offered expertise in ironworking and allied industries over a period lasting hundreds of years, from 1425 into the second half of the twentieth century.

Once part of Monmouthshire, Pontypool now lies within the administrative area of Torfaen. It has a catchment of approximately 40,000 people. Pontypool has suffered economic decline over the last 40 years from a loss of industry, and the growth of other nearby town centres.

In response to this, in 1999 Pontypool Community Council and Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) set up a regeneration partnership, involving a dedicated team of officers and the establishment of the Pontypool Regeneration Fund. The Regeneration Strategy has identified the need to develop Pontypool as a premier market town within the valley, using new leisure attractions, events and speciality retailing, as a focus for regeneration. The Conservation Area covering the town centre was established in 1984 and recognises the importance of the built heritage and architecture that Pontypool's history has created as potentially a major asset in achieving this regeneration.

The retention of the green 'Park' alongside the town by the Hanbury family and the later acquisition of the Park as 'the People's Park' in 1921, and the location of Pontypool itself at the edge of the Valleys area with the unspoilt countryside of the Usk valley close to hand, meant that to some extent it escaped the worst despoliation of the industrial revolution.

The aim of this Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan is to assist Torfaen County Borough Council to protect and enhance the built heritage of Pontypool, while enabling the public to recognise both the benefits of living in a Conservation Area and their own responsibilities for its future protection.

Within this boundary, Character Areas have been identified which provide examples of differing periods of development, their built form and their functions. An analysis of current conservation concerns identifies the positive assets and the negative issues. The assets include the heritage townscapes and the quality of the C19 and early C20 architecture and the views created by the adjacent river and park. Several negative factors are identified, particularly the impacts of economic decline which has left unused buildings and a remaining sense of neglect with examples of poor maintenance and repair which has led to deterioration and loss of some architectural and heritage details so resulting in a detrimental impact on the wider streetscape.

Management and enhancement proposals are described including: the identification of properties suitable for local listing; a review of the Conservation Area boundary with recommendations for changes; policies for maintenance and repair; policies for new development; the opportunities for enhancement; advice using design guidance, the consideration of permitted development rights within the Conservation Area; and the involvement of the community.

This Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan together with the Regeneration Strategy for Pontypool, should form a framework for the reuse and regeneration of the town centre. If Pontypool is to retain its historic and architectural significance, it is essential that investment should be concentrated first and foremost in the reuse of the historic building stock.

1. Background

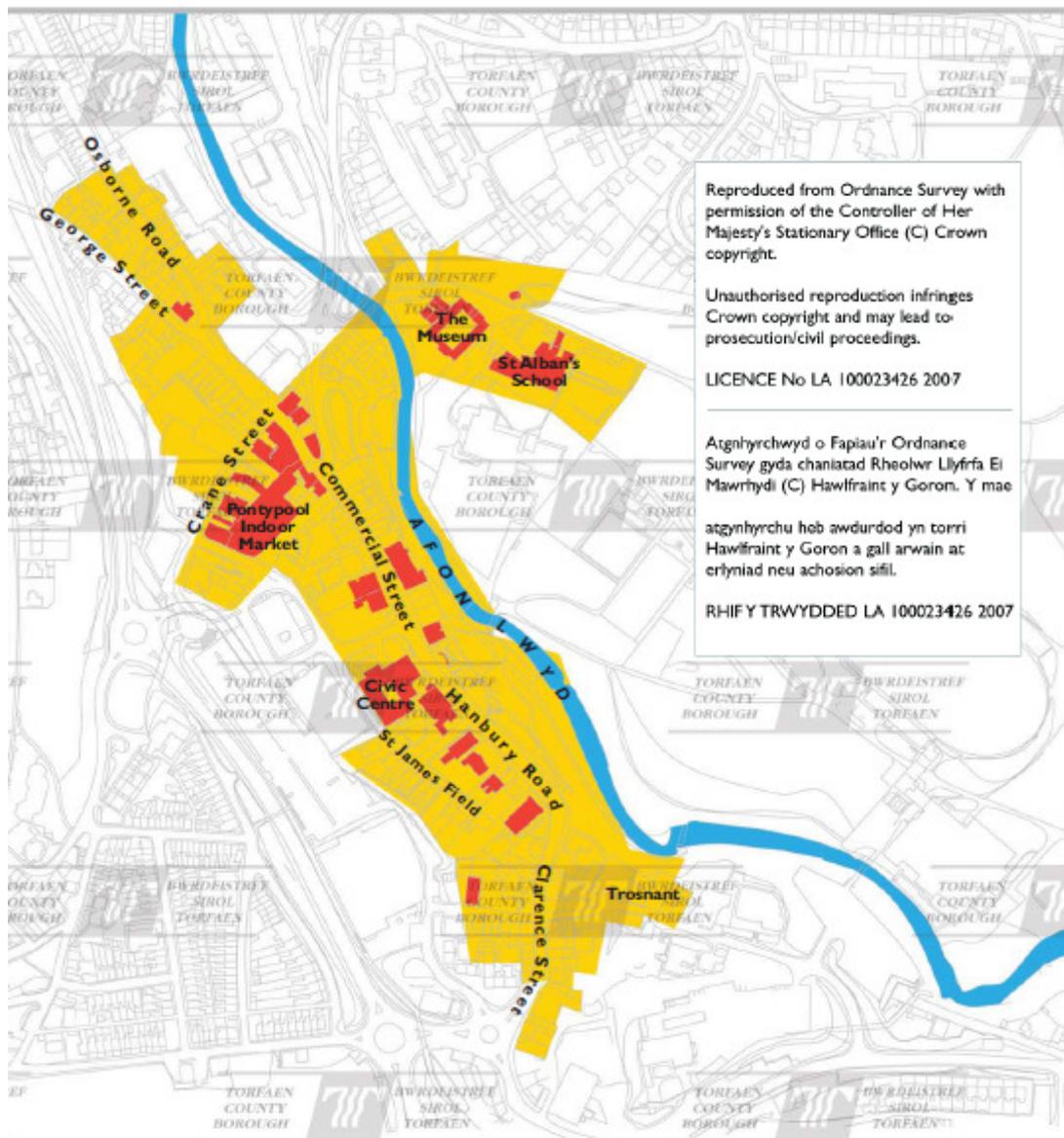
1.2 Current status of the Conservation Area

The linear Pontypool Conservation Area covers the centre of the traditional town - predominantly on the west side of the Afon Lwyd – except for the area around the Museum. It was designated in 1984 and includes 25 Listed buildings and structures. Figure 1.1 identifies the current boundary and highlights the statutory Listed buildings.

Recommendations for the adjustment of these boundaries are included in Section 7.2 but on publication of this document have not yet been adopted.

Pontypool Conservation Area and Listed Buildings

- Conservation Area
- Listed Buildings



1.3 Statutory background

Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967 and are defined as “*areas of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*”. Conservation Area designation is more dependent on the overall quality and interest of an area, rather than individual buildings, although it is common for such areas to contain a number of Listed Buildings.

Designation as a Conservation Area has a number of implications. Most importantly, Torfaen County Borough Council is required to give special attention to preserving and enhancing the Conservation Area while exercising their planning functions. In addition, planning consent must be gained for certain types of development which are elsewhere classified as permitted development, such as various types of cladding, dormer windows, satellite dishes and radio masts/antennae. Consent is further required for the demolition of buildings within Conservation Areas. Designation also brings controls over works to trees.

The protection of an area does not end with Conservation Area designation. Planning Policy Wales 2002 Section 6 “Conserving the Historic Environment” requires that Local Authorities prepare detailed assessments of the special interest, character and appearance of their Conservation Areas. This character appraisal defines and analyses the special qualities and the architectural and historic interest that warranted the Conservation Area designation. Section 6.3.2 states that “*Conservation Area character appraisals can assist planning authorities in the exercise of their planning and development control functions*”.

Local Authorities are under a duty from time to time to “*formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas*” - Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (LBCA)) Act 1990, s.71. This report responds to this requirement.

1.4 Planning policy framework – including Local Plan policies

The Pontypool Conservation Area lies within the coverage of the Torfaen Local Plan, adopted July 2000 and the Gwent Structure Plan. This provides the approved basis for development control policies. The plans have strong conservation / heritage policies, which seek to conserve and enhance the built environment especially in conservation areas and in relation to listed buildings.

The built environment conservation policies in the Local Plan are based on current government planning guidance and Welsh Office Circular 60/96 “Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology” and Circular 61/96 “Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas”.

Statutory planning policies affecting the urban areas are contained in sections of the Torfaen Local Plan (adopted 2000), which seeks to protect and enhance the role of Pontypool as a place to live, work and as a focus for new investment in retailing and leisure. These aims are included in the emerging Torfaen Local Development Plan 2006 – 2021 Preferred Strategy.

The existing Local Plan contains a number of policies that aim to protect the appearance, character and setting of Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. These include policies that support and elaborate the Gwent Structure Plan objective ‘*to protect sites and buildings of archaeological and conservation importance from inappropriate development and enhance their setting and character through a positive approach to conservation.*’

Policies H1 and H2 protect Conservation Areas through controls on development and demolition, or part demolition of any building or feature

Specific policies are identified for historic buildings and archaeology. In particular, both Policies H3 and H4 controlling development that affects Listed buildings and their settings. Archaeology is protected by Policy H6 covering both nationally and locally important archaeological remains, and where required, expects field evaluations and rescue of remains.

These policies are set out in full in the Adopted Torfaen Local Plan (2000) documents with similar approaches in the emerging Local Development Plan. The emerging Torfaen Local Development Plan 2006-2021, will on adoption replace the existing Adopted Torfaen Local Plan and Gwent Structure Plan as the development plan for the County Borough, and will guide the future use and development of land in Torfaen until 2021.

Welsh Assembly Government Planning Policy and TAN12 provide national planning policy guidance, and Design and Access statements are required in Wales for planning applications and Listed Building consents from June 2009. These cover accessibility; environmental sustainability; character; movement to, from and within a development; and community safety, and a revised version of TAN12 on design is to be issued. This will ensure that appropriate design principles and concepts have been considered and enable the particular concerns within the Pontypool Conservation Area as identified in this document to be applied.

It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to undertake a full appraisal of the Pontypool Conservation Area, the omission of any particular building, feature or space from the appraisal should not imply that it is of no interest.



Hanbury Road streetscape facing the Italian Gardens

1.5 Regeneration context

1.5.1 Recent Developments

Recently built schemes broadly fall into three categories:

1960-70's style development: These developments are all “of their time” with little or no effort to reflect or complement the historic fabric of the town. e.g. The Full Moon development, George Street/Commercial Street; Price Solicitors, Clarence Street/Hanbury Road Junction; and the Argos building at the top of Crane Street.



Price Solicitors

Civic Centre

Crane Street

Civic Centre: a post-war development also “of its time”, but more contextual, successfully reflecting some elements of the surrounding historic buildings, especially in terms of window design on the Hanbury Street elevation, and in the use of brick. It is recessed from the older Town Hall so it does not impose on the character of the Conservation Area when viewed from Hanbury Road.

1980s – 1990s ‘contextual’ developments: These seek to fit in with the historic setting by selecting and copying basic elements of the traditional architectural detailing of the buildings they have replaced, such as sash windows, painted render/stucco, or an overall vertical emphasis to the design. However, the copying tends to be inaccurate and unconvincing, with elements larger in scale to accommodate modern uses than the original buildings they replaced. This group includes the new Crane Street Development, new offices off Glantorfaen Road, and the infill building on the east side of Osborne Road. The net result of this approach is to produce an architecture that does not have a clear identity of its own and tends to produce a bland or uninspiring environment.

1.5.2 Regeneration programmes

The future context for the Conservation Area will be strongly influenced by the implementation of a range of current initiatives to enhance the physical and economic wellbeing of Pontypool and its town centre. The Pontypool Regeneration Partnership is coordinating the preparation and implementation of the likely actions. The following list identifies the current regeneration proposals which will promote economic improvements and can enable the heritage to be protected:

- Pontypool town centre Townscape Heritage Initiative
- Extension of the Neighbourhood Renewal Area into Pontypool Town Centre 2009 – 2013
- Pontypool Town Centre Regeneration Strategy and the North Torfaen Holistic Area Regeneration Plan – EU Convergence Funding
- Torfaen Landscape Action Plan – includes improving access to the Afon Llwyd
- Torfaen Heritage Strategy and Action Plan
- Valleys Regional Park Initiative
- Pontypool Indoor Market Development and Improvement Plan

1.6 Purpose of this Conservation Area appraisal

This Appraisal offers an opportunity to confirm the significance of Pontypool, as reflected in its built environment: at the same time, it gives an opportunity to inject a new direction and energy into the dual task of conserving heritage, and using heritage assets to help create or enhance wealth, ambition and opportunity for the town, into the future.

This Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan has been prepared in response to the guidance outlined above and, as such, discharges the Torfaen County Borough Council obligations and duties under the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990, as well as complying with Cadw's recommendations.

The Appraisal forms the basis for the Conservation Area Management Plan recommendations and the review of the Conservation Area boundary. The complete document will subsequently form a Supplementary Planning Guidance to the emerging Local Development Plan (LDP) and will be a material consideration when considering applications for development within the Conservation Area. This document offers guidance on the important issues but does not provide detailed Action Plan recommendations.



2. Location and setting

2.1 Location and population

Pontypool is set at a mid point in the Lwyd Valley, the most easterly of the industrialised valleys of South Wales.

Pontypool developed following the linear form of the valley, with a broadly north-south orientation. The town grew up on the western bank of the river, with Pontypool Park, owned by the Hanbury family (the owners of the local ironworks) occupying the valley floor and eastern slopes. The close proximity of Pontypool Park to the town centre, enables the park to contribute towards the character and setting of the town and the Conservation Area.

Though the population of the town is over 36,000 people, the catchment population is limited by the nearby and larger service and commercial centres of Cwmbran and Newport. Travel to work even includes Cardiff and Bristol and this restricts the opportunities for employment expansion around Pontypool.



2.2 Townscape/Landscape setting

Pontypool is a linear settlement with notable views from the town centre to the east over the parkland towards wooded open country. This setting gives the town a more unique quality than many Valley towns surrounded by bare hillsides.



The Conservation Area follows the linear route northwards from the roundabout in the south, between the large supermarket and the well treed route of the Afon Lwyd, with the Park on the east side of the town centre.

Historically the town has been constrained by the steep escarpment to the river to the east, and defined by the canal to the west. Today, the town centre boundary is more clearly defined by the A4043 to the west, beyond which, land uses are dominated by typical C19 residential valley terraces, which contribute towards the character of the western skyline. The town centre broadens where it is joined by Market Street and Crane Street, but is generally no more than two streets in width.

The river represents a key feature within the Conservation Area and has both separated and joined the town and park. The town started with settlements at two crossing points of the Afon Lwyd, at Pont ap Hwyl, and Trosnant, with the settlements eventually merging and the linear link becoming the town centre for Pontypool.

The creation of the Park and its planting provided protection for the ironmasters from views of the industry and town, and now the preservation of the Park lends considerable quality to the character and appearance of Pontypool. The proximity of the Park to the Conservation Area give Pontypool a unique quality which is enhanced by the impact of the trees. They enhance the wider views across the Park to the countryside beyond and also form an essential part of the townscape within the Conservation Area including the banks of the river; Park Road and Rosemary Lane; Hanbury Road; and the Italian Gardens. Trees have been recently planted along the pedestrianised length of George Street.

3. Historic development

3.1 Historic development of Pontypool

The Afon Lwyd and the Park have helped shape Pontypool and given it a unique form. In 1801 Pontypool was described by Archdeacon Coxe as a 'perpendicular cliff', rising above a 'torrent'¹: This topography created a barrier to eastward expansion and the present bridge probably marks an earlier fording point. Once a bridge was established, a catalyst for trade at the site was created.

The name Pontypool is either a corruption of Pont ap Hwyl or a reworking of the name of the other bridge called Pont poell.

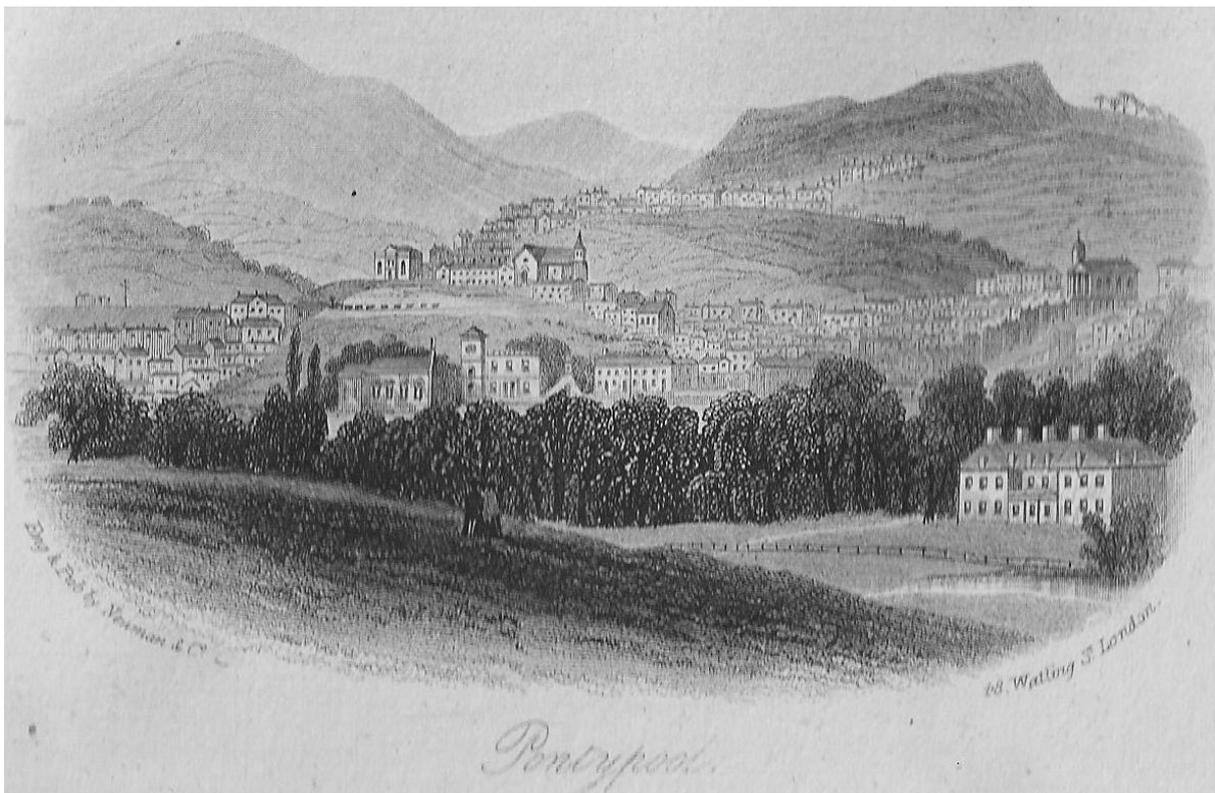
The subsequent development of the town has been influenced by two major factors - the introduction, in the late middle ages and an early date for Wales, of an iron industry exploiting local iron ore, wood, and water power; and the influence of the Hanbury family and their choice of a site for the house of the ironmasters in what is now the Park area.

Pontypool claims to be the home of the Welsh iron industry. Forges have been in existence in the town since 1425 on the banks of the Afon Lwyd at Pontymoel. The Earl of Pembroke leased out the rights to dig and carry away iron ore and coal and to construct furnaces on the land around Pontypool in 1576 to a group including Robert Hanbury – the first of the influential Hanbury family to make an impact on Pontypool. The first forges and furnaces were built in Trevethin in 1576 and soon after in Trostant.

The town of Pontypool grew when Richard Hanbury bought land locally in 1588 and constructed another [ironworks](#). John Hanbury, born 1664, decided to take up residence in Pontypool in order to supervise the works personally. He built Park House overlooking the ironworks, but on the east bank of the river. The Park was originally laid out in 1703 as a private estate. It was not until the 1829 that the Hanbury family removed Park Forge to consolidate their landscaping, thus finally delivering the clear-cut separation of town and industry and of the Park.



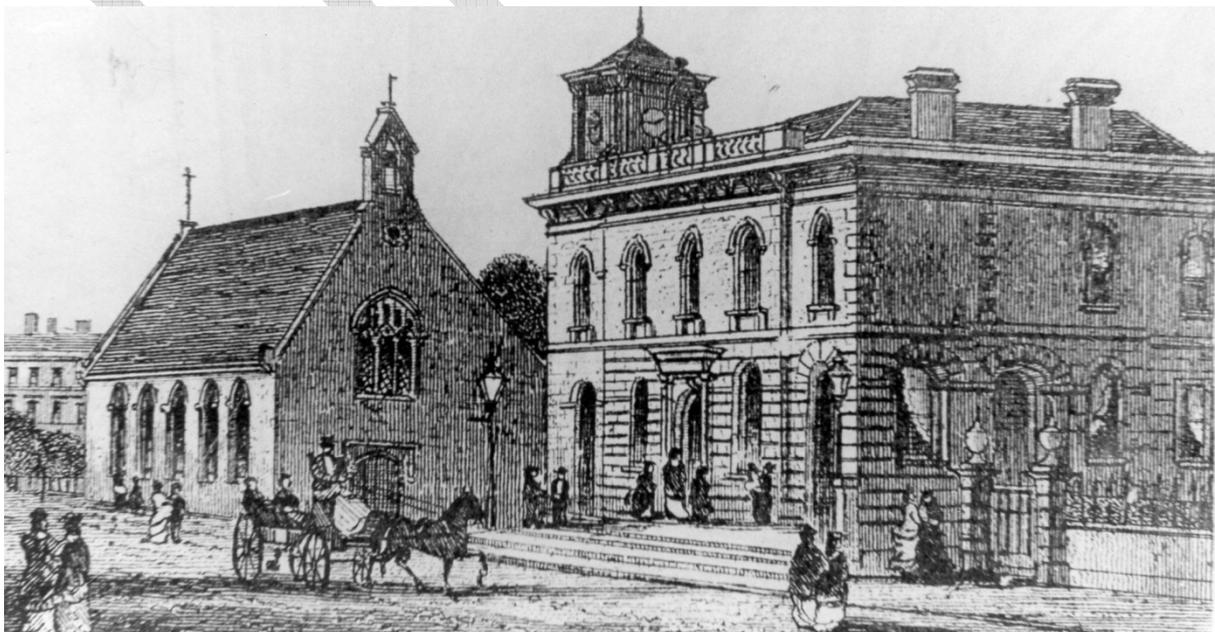
Pontypool Park House



View of Pontypool from the east showing the separation of Park House from the town by the line of trees following the Afon Lwyd.

By 1740, the scarcity of timber for charcoal for use in the furnaces caused a serious decline in the iron industry and there were only two surviving furnaces in Monmouthshire. The introduction of coking coal for smelting the iron ore opened up the industry again and the industrial revolution changed the fortunes of Pontypool.

The pig iron produced at the Blaendare works, or the Old Furnace, was carried by pack horses down Sow Hill, across the Market Place and down Crane Street from where it went through Trosnant to the Park Forge or up George Street to the Osborne Forge. These locations and routes remain in the current town centre Conservation Area.

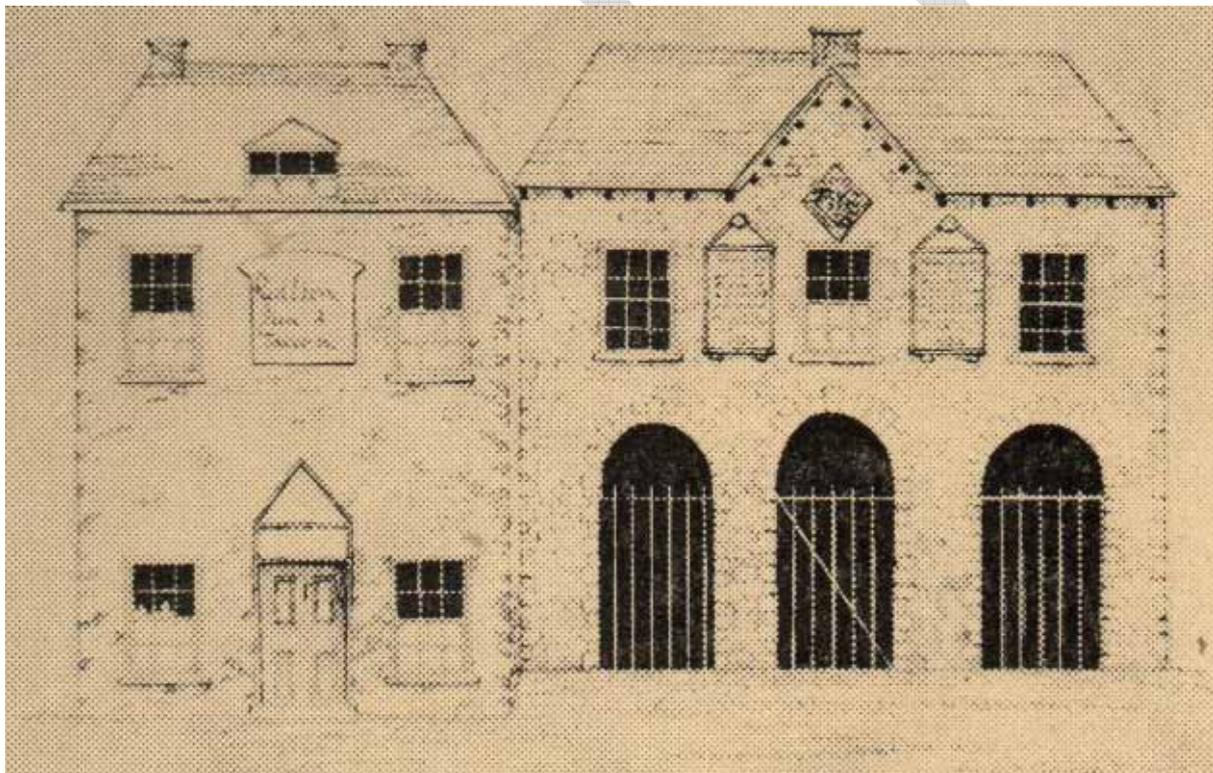


The Hanbury family were well established in the Park by the time that the use of coke as a fuel became dominant, and the scale of operations, especially after the arrival of the canal, was such that the impact of their own industry on their domestic existence became truly inescapable. The duality of expanding industry with the growth of the town, and an attractively landscaped, established estate, has shaped Pontypool.

In addition to the iron and coal industries, Pontypool became notable for the production of iron [japan](#)-ware with its decorated, lacquered style. It differed from that produced in other centres because of its brilliance and ability to withstand heat.

Within the town, the possibilities for growth were constrained by the river to the east and by the rising contours of the hills to the west. The linear shape also reflects a traditional development pattern of a commercial centre developing along a main through route, in this instance serving settlements higher up the Lwyd valley, including Blaenavon.

Apart from the cluster of early to mid C19 civic buildings on Hanbury Road, the distribution of historic buildings in the centre suggests a pattern of steady development and redevelopment over the years, with evidence of consistent moderate wealth creation from at least 1730 – the Corn Exchange, until the 1930s. The linear growth pattern of Pontypool was constrained by the contours, the railway, the canal, the location of the forges, the river and the Park.



The Old Cornmarket, Commercial Street

John Hanbury, 1853 – 1921, and MP for Monmouthshire, tended only to use Park House as a shooting party retreat, but he best remembered for his generosity towards the people of Pontypool – gifts included the land for Pontypool Hospital, West Monmouthshire Grammar School, Pontypool Library, Pontypool Market, and the fine natural Park which has become the cornerstone of Pontypool's heritage.

The ownership of the Park passed to the local authority in 1921 and became 'The People's Park'. This development further reinforced Pontypool's unique structure, greatly extending the public realm of the town.

The collapse of demand for many of the traditional industries in Pontypool after WW1 and the competition from other centres led to dramatic changes in the local economy. The impact on the town centre as a shopping and entertainment attraction further deteriorated when the 1998 bypass diverted traffic away from the town centre. This added to the decline of many years and much of the old town centre was increasingly abandoned by both visitors and businesses.

Local closures included:

- the last coal mine in the area - Blaenserchan, closed in 1985;
- the pubs and hotels that have closed included the Crown Hotel, George Street – now a closed Woolworths, and the Clarence Hotel – now offices;
- many town centre shops have closed and are still empty – including the large Cooperative building on Commercial Street;
- the Pontypool & District Hospital – a particularly fine building, built 1913, closed in 1987 and demolished;
- and many places of worship.



Photographs of early C20 views along the main streets within the Conservation Area



Crane Street – with the Globe Hotel on right & / Crane Street - with the Baptist Church on the right and the Park in the distance. The properties on the left in both Crane St photos have been demolished and redeveloped.



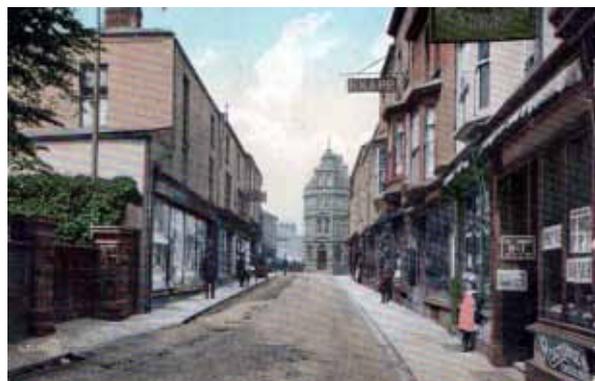
George Street



Clarence Street and the Clarence Hotel showing the entrance to the Conservation Area from Clarence Corner roundabout



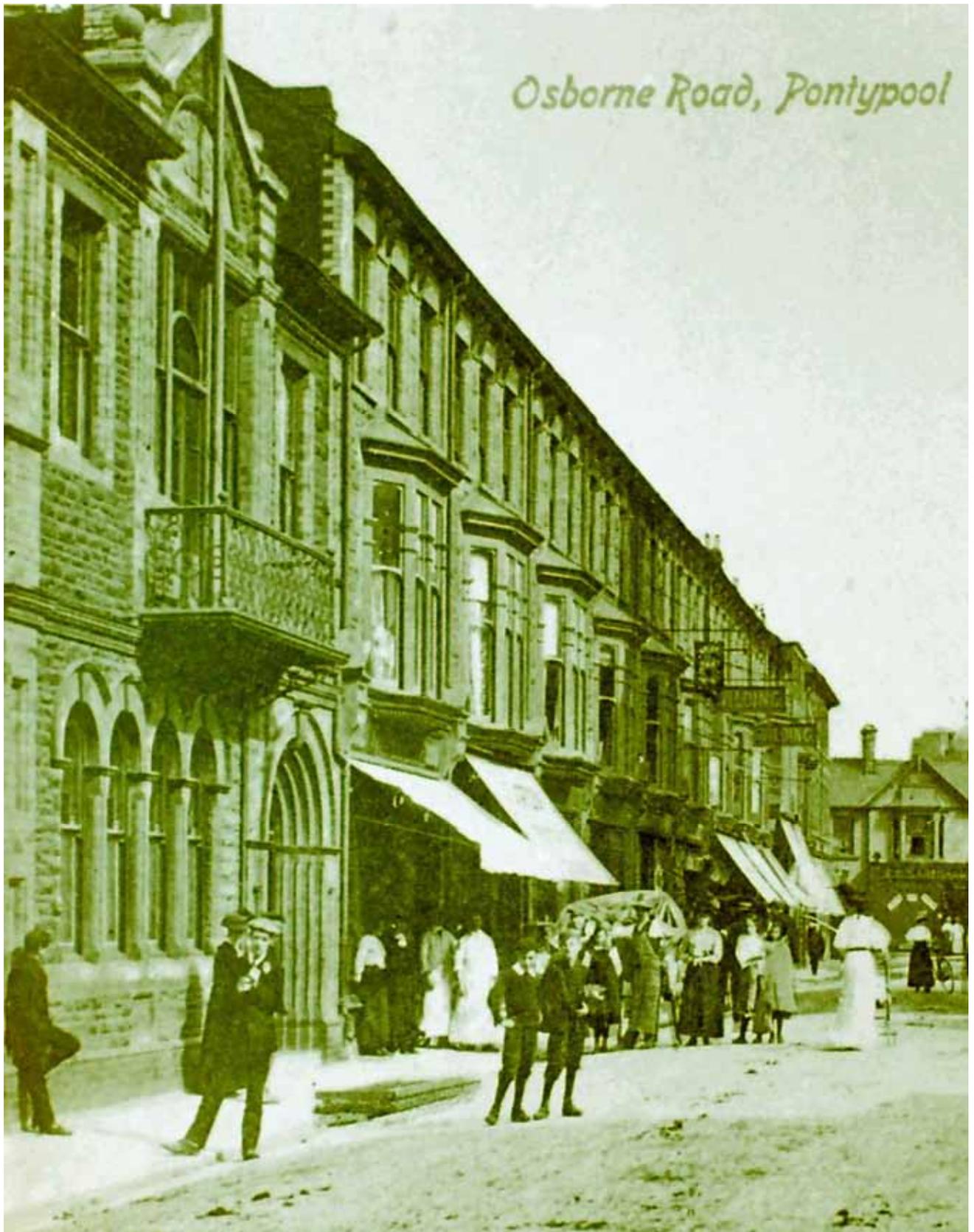
Market Street – view east to Commercial St /



Commercial Street – view north with the trees in the garden of Glantorfaen House on the left and the Barclays Bank building in the distance

Summary of the Historic Development of Pontypool

1425	David and Ieuan Graunt commence iron-making at small forges at Pontmoel by the Afon Lwyd
c1577	Richard Hanbury commenced iron production at Pontypool as one of several of iron making sites in the area
C16	The small settlement of Trosnant began to develop in association with the iron industry. During this period the ironworks were located in what is now Pontypool Park.
Late C16	Hanbury family operated ironworks including Pontypool & Trosnant
1680s	Hanbury family created 158 acre park on E side of Afon Llwyd.
Early C18	Thomas Allgood and his son Edward, manager in the ironworks, developed Japanning ²
Early C18	The Hanbury family had diversified into tin plating and under the management of John Hanbury (d.1734) the ironworks became one of the most important in Europe
1730	The Corn Market/ Exchange constructed
1756	Dr Richard Pococke described Pontypool as “a little compact town” in “a very romantic situation between the hills”
c1795	First deep coal mine sunk at Pontypool to serve Hanbury’s ironworks
1792-9	Construction of Monmouthshire Canal
1801	Archdeacon Coxe describes Pontypool as “a large straggling place containing 250 houses and 1500 souls” and referred to the “dusky aspect of the town occasioned by the adjacent forges”.
1803	Varteg ironworks commenced production
1807	Capel Hanbury Leigh went into partnership with engineers Watkin George and Robert Smith. The works were remodelled and relocated from the north to the south side of the Afon Llwyd- output doubled. Colliery at Glyn Pits sunk during this time to provide fuel for iron and tin works. The site of the earlier ironworks was replaced with a lawn
1799-1840	Population grew from 1472 to 14,942
1822	Process of Japanning ceased
1850s	Works leased to Ebbw Vale Company
1855	254 public houses and over 100 shops recorded in Pontypool
Late C19 - Early C20	Despite gradual relocation of industry from the centre of Pontypool the town grew and the town’s economy remained buoyant until after the Second World War, supported by a range of industries in the valley
1957	Tinplate manufacture at Pontypool Town Works ceased



3.2 Archaeological significance

Torfaen CBC is required to take archaeology into consideration as a material consideration when determining a planning application. Information on all known archaeological sites and finds in and around Pontypool is included in the Gwent Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), located at Gwent County Archives.

Planning Policy Wales 2002 identifies the key issues and policies related to Archaeology in Section 6. Conserving the Historic Environment and particularly 6.5 Development Control and the Historic Environment. These policies refer to Welsh Office Circular 60/91 Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology; and Circular 61/91 Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas.

The key considerations are that appropriate management is essential to ensure that the assets survive in good condition and where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation.

However there may also be significant hidden archaeological potential which could assist the understanding of the early urbanisation and development of this area.

Where a proposed development is likely to disturb the ground within the Conservation Area and affect archaeology, Torfaen CBC will require further information before determining a planning application as indicated in Torfaen Local Plan Policy H6. This may be required in the form of a desk based study or an archaeological evaluation. In order to protect the archaeological remains it is sometimes necessary to modify proposals or carry out an excavation before development takes place.



Torfaen Museum

4. Character and appearance

4.1 General character and plan form

The Conservation Area follows the linear form of the town centre, with the majority of the town's listed buildings located along the original through route of Clarence Street, Hanbury Road, Commercial Street and George Street.

Figure 1.1, shows the Conservation Area boundary with its listed buildings.

The description of the general character of the Conservation Area follows this route:

When approaching the Conservation Area from the south, the entrance to the historic core is introduced by the large and ornate former Clarence Hotel (now a mixed-use development). The character of **Clarence Street** is generally of small scale, two storey, locally run shops with residential units above. These properties were subject to an enhancement scheme in the 1980's, characterised by brown stained, timber and plywood shop fronts and windows, with cream painted rendered elevations, a treatment that today presents an unconvincingly uniform 'Victorian' theme, one that lacks variation, well-observed detail, and the significant survival of original material.

To the west of Clarence Street is the **Trosnant** area focused around Trosnant Street. Originally a centre of industrial activity, Trosnant was characterised by small cottage style dwellings. The early Japanning work began here as a cottage industry. Little is left above ground of either this industry or the early housing, although it is possible that below ground archaeology survives, and this might be of considerable importance.

As Clarence Street continues northwards, the historic core is interrupted by two modern buildings before Clarence Street broadens into **Hanbury Road**, with large stone civic buildings and churches to the west, and, through the trees, views across the Italian Gardens and into Pontypool Park to the east. It is this area, possibly more than any other area within the town which demonstrates the prosperity of Pontypool during the Nineteenth Century, mainly because of its generously proportioned public buildings, set in their own grounds, some of considerable architectural quality and variety, well constructed of a mixture of durable local sandstone and imported English oolitic limestone.

Continuing further North, Hanbury Road becomes **Commercial Street**, and the commercial core of the town is reached. The road narrows, and the shopping area is characterised by three storey buildings in a mixture of finishes including render, stone, terracotta and brickwork. Buildings on corner sites are often of considerable quality, some occupied by larger, stone faced bank buildings. The Eighteenth Century Corn Market building on Commercial Street is a key historic building, although inappropriately altered: the fine Greek Revival Baptist Chapel on **Crane Street** arguably the high point, architecturally, rivalled only by the Museum in the Park.

The Market Hall acts as a key focus to the network of historic fabric in this area, although architecturally, it is reticent when viewed from Commercial or Crane Street, accessed through relatively inconspicuous, narrow entrance points, easily missed by visitors.

The crossing of Commercial Street and Crane Street marks the historic centre of town, and was once known as "the cross". Crane Street here rises steeply to the west, whilst Lower Crane Street (now a passage with steps and ramp), and Park Road, take you eastwards to Pont ap Hwyl, and the river.

The north part of Commercial Street and the south part of George Street have been pedestrianised: historic shops to the west, modern shops to the east, partly enclosed at the northern end by the NatWest Bank, where the road forks, with Osborne Road continuing north and George Street bearing off uphill to the north west. George Street is the earlier of these two roads. As the heart of the town is left behind, the Conservation Area comes to an end at the old St David's Presbyterian Church-now flats, and the old Cinema, in Osborne Rd.

Osborne Road has some brick buildings of quality, generally occupied by local shops and services, although Wetherspoon's (a national public house chain) have recently located here. The scale of these buildings diminishes into terraced housing, which, while outside the Conservation Area, is of some quality.

The Conservation Area extends out eastward beyond Pont ap Hywel to include the **Museum and the old Hanbury mansion**, now a secondary school. This area has a distinctive character, more the product of its association with the Park than with the town. The river itself forms a vital, but presently underused, part of the Conservation Area.

4.2 Key buildings and views

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 illustrate the locations of the principal buildings in the townscape and the key views within the Conservation Area.

The large number of fine heritage buildings (many listed) in key locations and on corner sites along the main route through the Conservation Area provide important focal points in the townscape. The spacious quality of Hanbury Road, and its predominantly stone buildings, contrasts with the narrower streets, bordered by two and three storey rendered building, which dominate Commercial Street and the Market area. However, the quality of the architectural environment is raised in these streets by a number of stone buildings, several of which are banks on prominent corner sites.

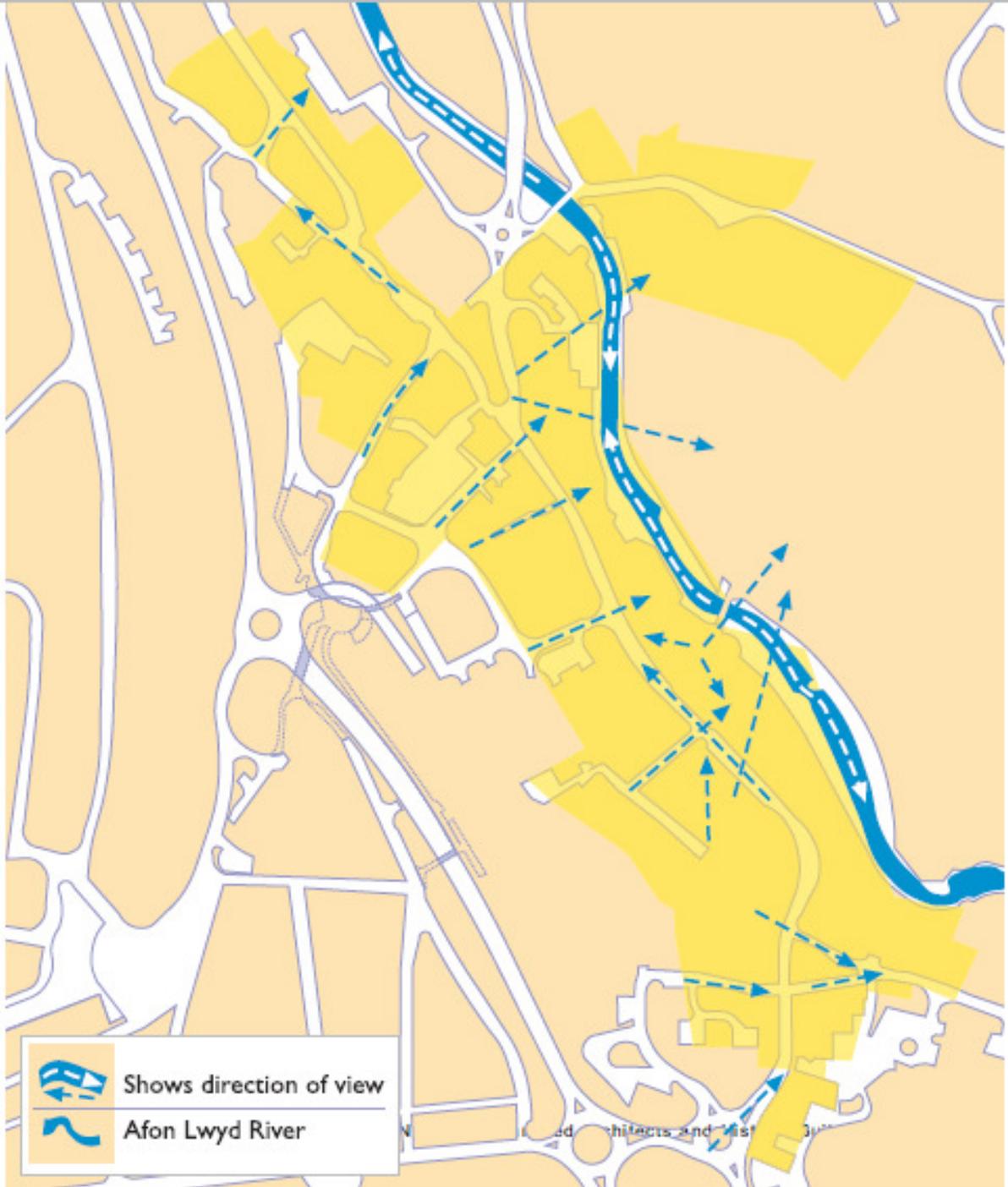
The sloping nature of the town enables views of the Park to appear between buildings. Hanbury Road, with its more spacious setting & civic scale is complemented by a wider view of the Park. Views also extend from across the river of the Italian Gardens and into the town.

The steepness of the site has also affected the design of buildings. Many properties have a deceptive scale, displaying a modest one or two storey front elevation, but with three or four storeys to their rear. Key examples of this include the Market Hall (which has a sloping floor), Town Buildings, and the Free Press warehouses on Clarence Corner roundabout.

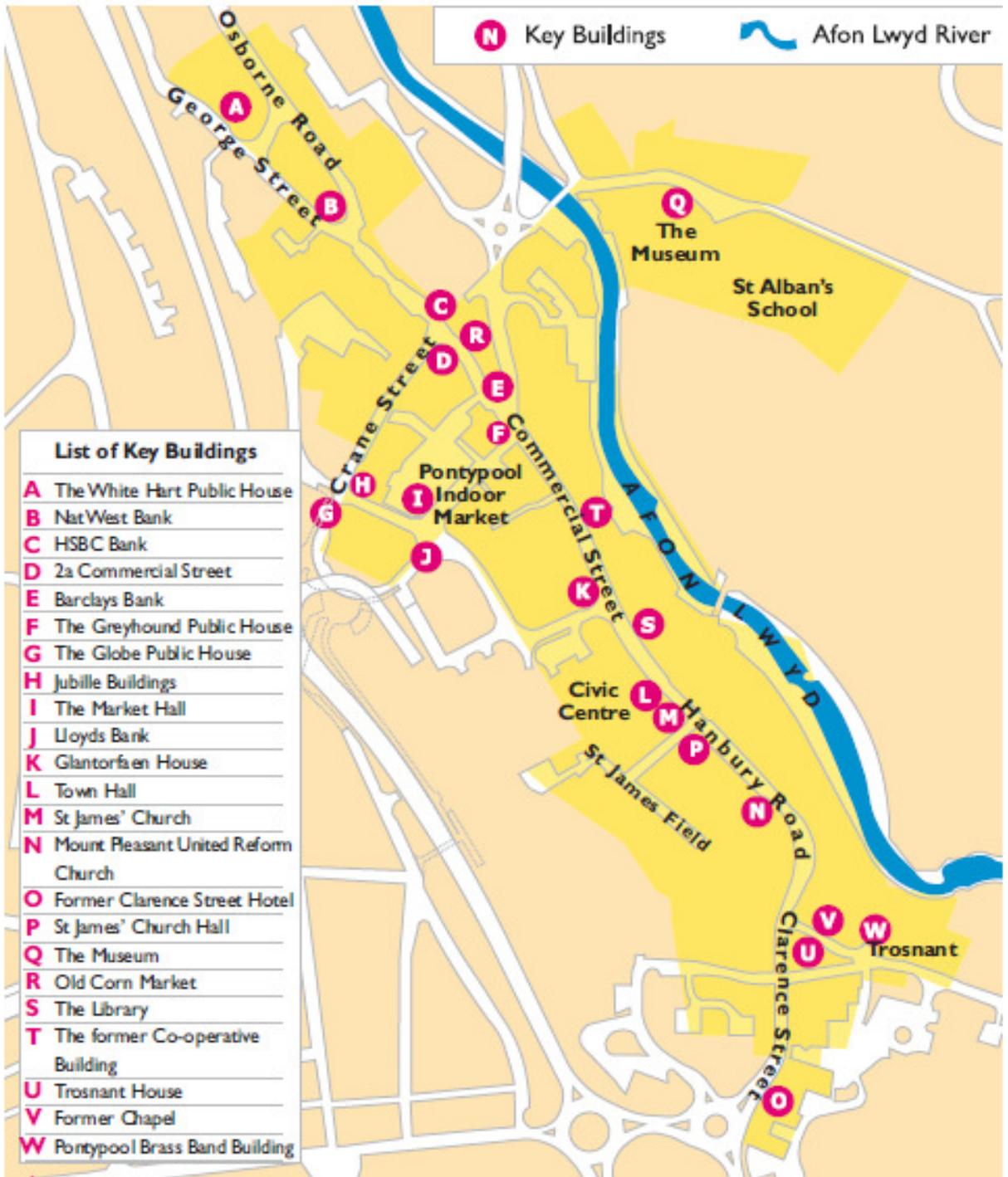
Around the Conservation Area, boundary, new development has tended to disjoint the original urban fabric, losing its cohesiveness and in many locations creating an unattractive setting.



Views



Key Buildings in the Townscape



4.3 The public realm

The 'public realm' – street, street furniture and lighting, planting, open spaces, public art, views, enclosure and townscape, and accessibility – is important to any town. Factors special to Pontypool town centre in this regard have been identified elsewhere in this appraisal:

- the presence of the Park, and its unique significance
- multiple views out from the town over the Park
- scope for public realm landscaping to enhance areas on the Conservation Area boundary, where the sense of enclosure derived from the original urban form may have been lost through modern redevelopment.
- and a need for a unifying public realm in the Conservation Area of varied and strongly designed buildings of different dates.

The current public realm within the conservation area contains a series of isolated design solutions from recent years, which have attempted to create a sense of place through small scale planting, and the use of natural paving materials and street furniture. In some areas good quality materials have been used in pursuit of a 'Victorian' theme though some examples do not respond well to their immediate locations.

Under-passes to the west of the conservation area offer a poor quality environment, and a visual barrier. Better signage, design and maintenance of the public realm is required in these areas to help off set these negative factors and to ensure that visitors to the town are aware of the routes that will lead them into the heart of the town.

4.4 Identification of Character Areas

This Appraisal and Management Plan is based on the analysis of the Conservation Area prepared in 2007 with nine Character Areas defined within the boundary.

The nine Character Areas are identified on figure 4.1 below:

The definition of Character Areas is to assist the description and analysis of the priority characteristics of the Conservation Area. These boundaries do not suggest a legal designation.

Character Areas have been identified as part of this appraisal:

- to enable the Conservation Area, its architecture and its historic development to be more easily understood;
- and to recognise the opportunities to maintain and enhance diversity within the Conservation Area t, thus invigorating its characteristics.

The Character Areas identified in this document were identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal 2007 and a further consideration of the boundaries and description will be needed at the next review.

Pontypool Conservation Area Proposed Character Areas

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
|  | The Museum and School |  | Hanbury Road and the Italian Gardens |  | Areas to be excluded from the Conservation Area |
|  | Osborne Road & George Street |  | St James' Field |  | Proposed addition to Conservation Area |
|  | Town Centre |  | Clarence Street and Trosnant |  | Proposed addition to Conservation Area |
|  | The Market Area | | |  | Clarence Corner Development Site |
|  | The River | | | | |

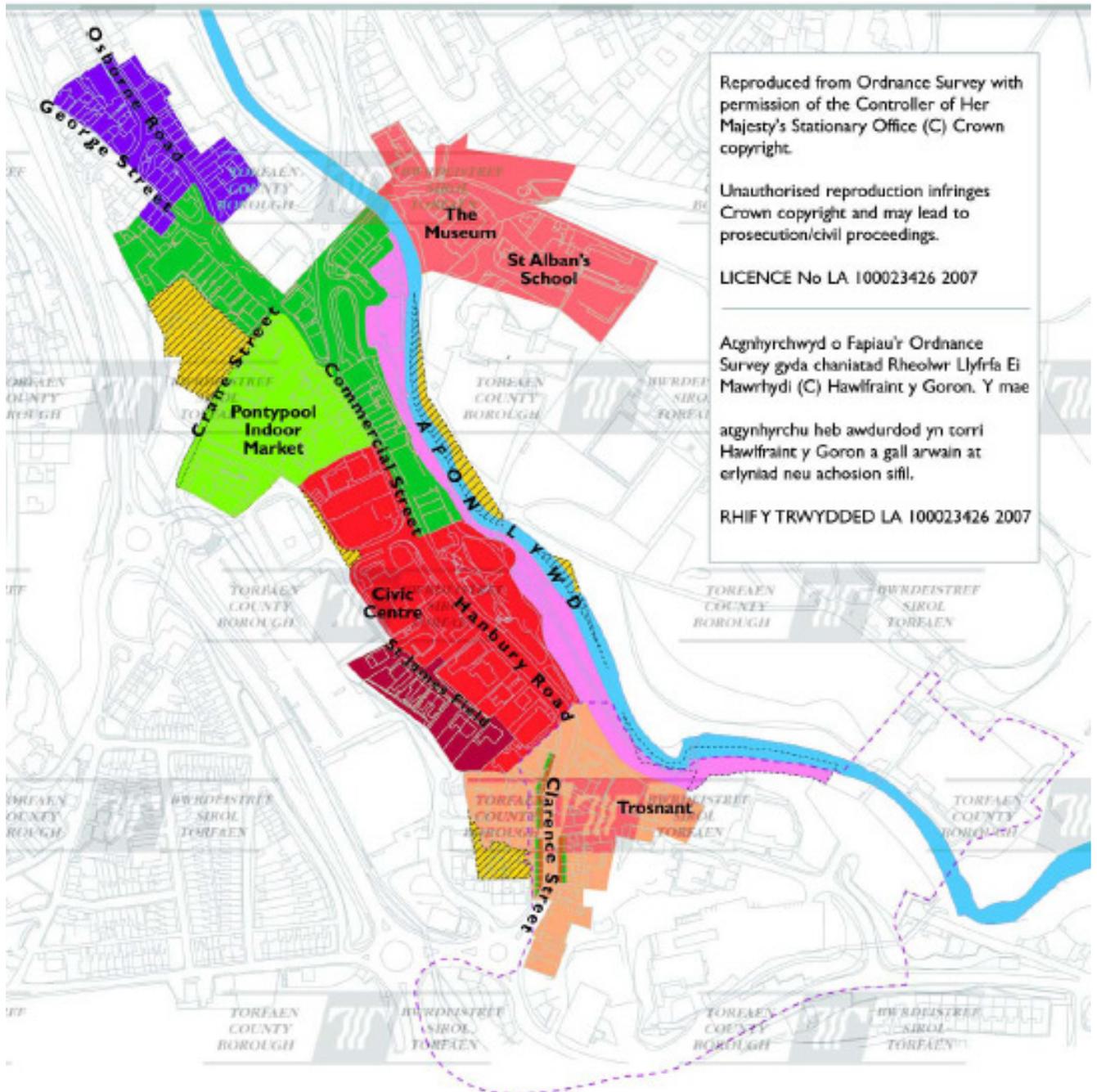


Figure 4.1 Pontypool CA Character Areas

4.4.1 The Town Centre Character Area

The Town Centre Character Area is important as a focus for frequent users and visitors. Historic maps of Pontypool show the commercial centre of Pontypool as the junction between Commercial Street and Upper and Lower Crane Streets.

This Character Area is visually contained to the north by the NatWest Bank building, and includes the west side of George Street, Park Road and the east side of Commercial Street to end with Pearl Assurance House in the south. The pedestrianisation of the northern part of Commercial Street, and its increase in width as it becomes George Street, together with familiar high street shops and banks, reinforces the feeling of being in the centre.

The success of this area in the past is reflected in the scale and design of its buildings which demonstrate that there was substantial redevelopment towards the end of the C19. This has resulted in the legacy of the variety of architecture from Victorian and Edwardian times which follows the traditional road alignments but has replaced earlier C18 development. Only the old Corn Market on Commercial Street remains from this earlier period. These buildings are a testament to Pontypool's success well into the C20 as the commercial centre for the Lwyd valley, despite the gradual exodus of industry.

The range of building designs creates significant townscape interest. The earliest surviving building in the town centre, the Corn Market, and once the grandest building, is now overshadowed by the larger banks, constructed generally in stone, and dominating the key corner sites – particularly the HSBC Bank on Commercial Street at the bottom of Crane Street, and Barclays Bank on the junction between Commercial Road and Park Street.



Route north along Commercial Street with the Barclays Bank building on the right and the Natwest building in the distance closing the view. The range of street widths and the focal buildings create significant townscape interest.

The gentle bends, the changes in width and the focal buildings which identify key locations along the spine route, create much of the townscape interest. For example, the Barclays Bank building forms an important closure to the southern end of Commercial Street when viewed from the south.



Views north and south along Commercial Street showing the townscape interest created by the bends and changing widths of the road, and the variety of historic buildings including the classical HSBC and the adjacent Corn Market building

The interest create by the range of heritage building types with their variety of scale, detailing and materials continues into the southern part of this Character Area where the two formal and imposing 1930s commercial buildings – the Co-op Building and the Pearl Assurance House link the commercial centre to the civic architecture on Hanbury Road.



Empty floor space including the Cooperative and Pearl Assurance buildings.

The historic impact of these notable townscapes and buildings is limited by the frequent poorly designed and re-styled shop fronts and signage, the loss of heritage detail on many buildings & the economic difficulties resulting in numerous empty properties & upper floors.

Key buildings in the Town Centre Character Area include:

- Natwest Bank, George Street
- HSBC Bank, Commercial Street
- Old Corn Market, 5, Commercial Street
- Barclays Bank, Commercial Street
- Cooperative Building, Commercial Street
- Pearl Assurance Building, Commercial Street

4.4.2 The Market Character Area

The Market Area is identified as a separate Character Area, although part of the town centre. With entrances onto four streets, the Market has an identity which consolidates its central role within the town to include the adjacent western side of Commercial Street, the southern side of Crane Street - up to the Globe Hotel, and all of Market Street.

The listed Market Hall was built of cast iron, sandstone and brick between 1893 and 1894 by the Pontypool Local Board when the existing facility on this site became too small. Like many of the key buildings included in the Conservation Area, it is a testament to the prosperity of Pontypool in the late C19. The scale of this building is deceptive, and only really appreciated on entering the building. From Commercial Street or Crane Street the narrow entrances to the market can be easily missed by the visitor. The size of the Market Hall can be more readily appreciated from Market Street, although the changes in levels the building has to accommodate are not immediately apparent.



The south west entrance to the Market Hall on Market Street and the southern entrance below show the heritage qualities of the stonework and detailing.



Pontypool Market Hall with its elegant glazed single span roof

The south side of Crane Street, north of the Market, includes an attractive row of heritage buildings. The most impressive is the classical design of the 1847 Baptist church Grade II* Listed. At the top of the hill is the Globe Hotel and other Listed buildings of historic note include Manchester House, the Jubilee Building and at the Commercial Street junction – Lion House, a group of properties turning the corner.



Globe Hotel



Jubilee Building



Baptist Church



Lion House, all Crane St

The north side of Crane Street was cleared and redeveloped with rendered properties of appropriate scale, but lacking convincing proportions or detailing – except for the inappropriate size and materials of the Argos building with a frontage gap spanned by an ugly concrete frame.

All of the Commercial Street west side is Listed – the Lion House properties, the Greyhound Public House where the elevation steps forward, and the George Public House. In addition to the fine Market Hall, Market Street retains its heritage townscape with a number of traditional commercial properties, though some are in a poor condition, some vacant and others have vacant upper floors – as have properties on the Commercial Street and Crane Street elevations.



Key buildings in the Market Character Area include:

- Manchester House, Crane Street
- Jubilee Building, Crane Street
- Baptist Church, Crane Street
- Lion House, 1 – 6 Commercial Street/1 – 5 Crane Street
- Greyhound Public House, Commercial Street
- Pontypool Market Hall

4.4.3 Osborne Road & George Street Character Area

The southern commercial end of Osborne Road and the adjacent length of George Street are considered as one Character Area.

From the Natwest Bank building in the south, George Street narrows and begins to climb towards the bypass including a predominantly heritage townscape of modest buildings. The length of Osborne Road within the Conservation Area includes the three storey terrace of commercial buildings – mainly stone faced with first floor bays.



George Street from the NatWest building with a glimpse of Osborne Road on the right.



Impressive Victorian terrace of shops on Osborne Road losing some impact through replacement shop fronts and window frames with many examples of poor maintenance.



Osborne Road and George Street showing the continuation of George Street to the Crane Street/Commercial Street junction

Key unlisted buildings in the George Street and Osborne Road Character Area:

- 23 George Street - with original (probably pre-1850) sash windows on the top floor
- White Hart Hotel - The front elevation of this carries robust, mannerist detailing, over-painted terracotta
- Scala Cinema - an inter-war building of some character
- St. David's Presbyterian Church - converted to flats with the loss of some detail
- Osborne Road terrace of three storey shops.

4.4.4 Museum and School Character Area

The Museum and School Character Area includes the cluster of buildings at the northern entrance to the Park with the Ice House, stone wall and hill behind to the east, and the nearby Salvation Army Citadel and adjoining club on Park Road.



The historic part of the Listed RC School with the Museum beyond.



The stone entrance to the Georgian stable block now used as Pontypool Museum



Aerial view of the cottages, the Museum and the much extended school on the edge of the Park. The Ice House and park wall are among the trees above the entrance to the Museum

The school includes Park House – the Hanbury Mansion, first built in the early C18, but has been much altered and extended so as to be mainly unrecognisable. The Museum is set in a Georgian stable block with a central courtyard, a stone archway and cobbled walkway.

The Listed Ice House requires repairs but the imposing stone park wall at the top of the bank is leaning badly with failing buttresses and is at risk.

Key Listed buildings in the Museum and School Character Area:

- Pontypool Museum
- Roman Catholic School (once the Hanbury Park Mansion)
- Park Cottages (1 – 3), Park Road

4.4.5 The River Character Area

The whole length of the river lying within the Conservation Area has been identified as a Character Area because of its importance in the history of Pontypool.

The tree lined course of the river follows the spine roads through the town, though except where it borders the Italian Garden, the backs of buildings face onto this attractive route.

Traditionally the river has been a natural obstacle and topographical constraint in the development of Pontypool. It has created an effective barrier, with the line of trees adding to the seclusion for the Hanbury family in Park House and for the public today. The belt of trees has also provided the town centre with a visual landscaped edge.

Though there is a steep western bank towards the town, the fast flowing river has been subject to flooding and erosion of its banks. The trees and vegetation provide a habitat for wildlife.

An integrated management plan is required which links the opportunity for an improved riverside pedestrian route with the requirements for water and landscape management, and the needs of the wildlife while increasing the enjoyment of the people of Pontypool.



View of the Conservation Area across the tree lined route of the river from the Park

4.4.6 Hanbury Road and The Italian Gardens Character Area

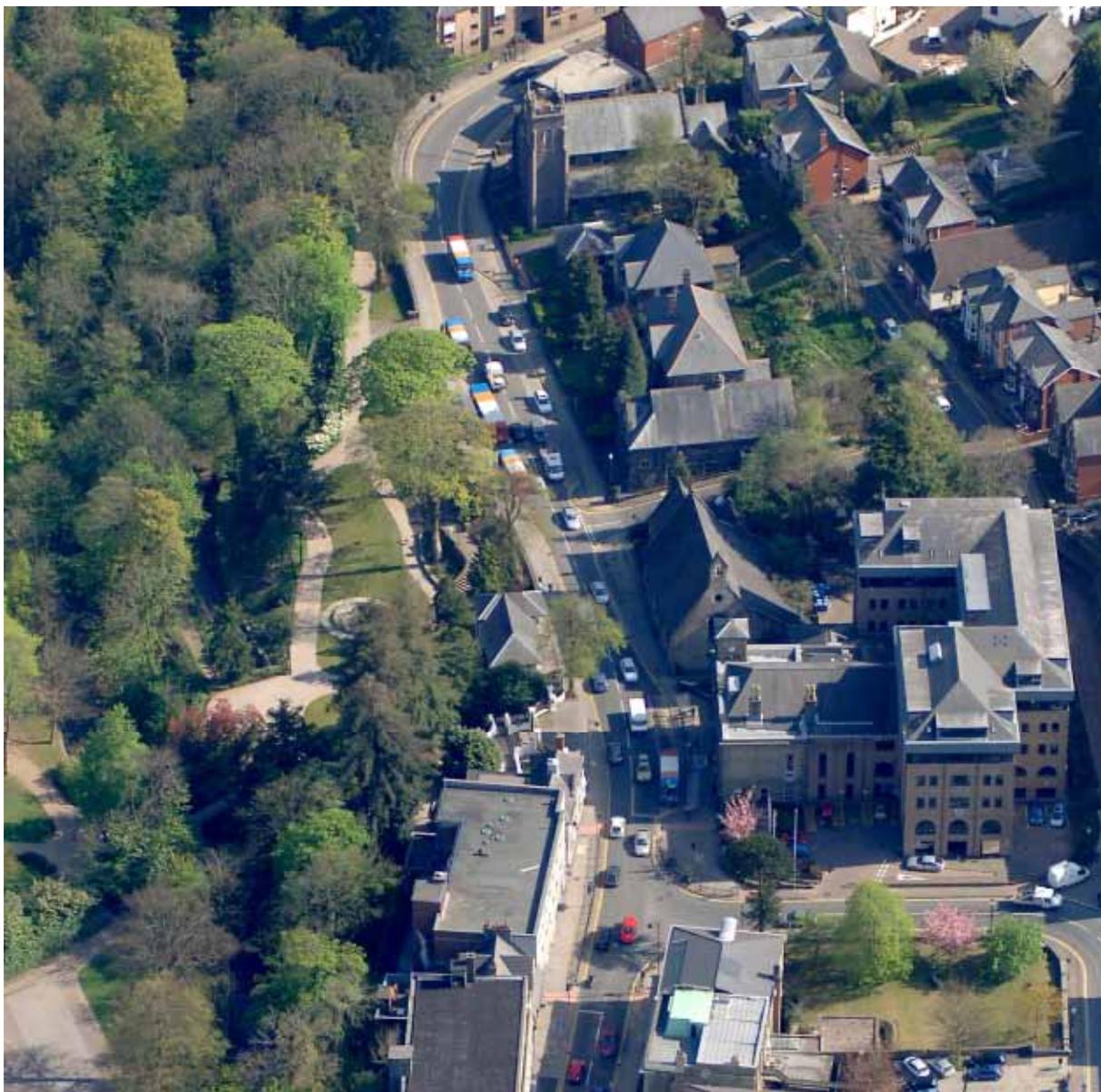
The widening of the southern end of Commercial Street signals the beginning of a most notable Character Area, characterised by the stone-built forms of the civic architecture overlooking spacious landscaped gardens.



View past the library and Town Hall towards Hanbury Road



The Italian Gardens set below Hanbury Rd & above the Afon Lwyd



Hanbury Road facing the Italian Garden with the Afon Lwyd hidden beneath the trees

The consistent use of stone with lighter Forest of Dean dressings to emphasise the detailing on the formal mix of mainly Listed buildings along the west side of Hanbury Road provides a grand entrance to the town centre. The range of public buildings is interspersed with three attractive Edwardian residences. Before the commercial centre is reached, at the end of the Gardens is a public lavatory and Pontypool library, both notable buildings and linked with the historic wrought iron gates to the Park.

The formal upper part of the Italian Gardens opens into the town along Hanbury Road. The view over the Park provides an elegant setting for the mainly Edwardian architecture.



The consistent stone buildings facing across Hanbury Road to the Italian Gardens & Park



View from the river bank across the Italian Gardens of the stone buildings on Hanbury Road

Key buildings in the Hanbury Road Character Area include:

- Pontypool Library, Hanbury Road
- Public lavatories, Hanbury Road
- Lloyds Bank, Commercial Street
- Glantorfaen House, Commercial Street
- Town Hall, Hanbury Road
- St James' Church
- St James' Hall
- St James' Vicarage
- Pontypool Registry Office
- Mount Pleasant United Reform Church, Hanbury Road

4.4.7 St James' Field Character Area

St. James' Field is a small residential cul-de-sac off Hanbury Road that forms a distinct Character Area of large semi-detached and detached Edwardian and 1920s houses. Most are in residential use, though some have incorporated other uses, ie. a dentist. The area represents a middle class enclave in what has always been perceived as an exclusive part of the town. It enjoys a quiet but central location off the busy centre of the town with good views eastwards over Hanbury Road towards the Park.



The row of properties on St James' Fields overlooks the rear of Hanbury Road buildings

Within this east facing row of houses is an attractive early C20 ambulance station (1912). Constructed of red brick and painted roughcast render with Forest of Dean dressings and slated roofs, it fits in well with scale, design and materials of the adjacent housing. Much of the environmental quality is created by the trees and gardens of properties on Hanbury Road and the views between the buildings of the Park.



Ambulance station set in the row of early C20 semi and detached houses.



View from St James' Field of the backs of properties on Hanbury Road and the Park

4.4.8 Trosnant and Clarence Street Character Area

Trosnant is one of the oldest communities in Pontypool. The area once contained a significant part of the town's industry, including the beginnings of the japanning industry. Clarence Street leads from the southern gateway roundabout of the Conservation Area and crosses Trosnant before connecting to Hanbury Road as the main town centre spine route.



The entrance to the Conservation Area is identified by the Listed Clarence Hotel, now converted for office space, and two empty commercial properties having some heritage interest. Clarence Street leads to the distant left through Trosnant.

Along both sides of Clarence Street, through Trosnant, the shop fronts were given a coordinated 'enveloping' scheme in the 1980s. The consistent detailing with white rendering and a brown paint and stain colour scheme represents an earlier approach to conservation which was assumed to recreate a 'Victorian' environment as a measure towards economic regeneration. This rather dull and unconvincing scheme leaves a problematic legacy. The detailing does not always represent the accurate reinstatement of a Victorian shop front, and much original detailing that might have helped given authenticity and interest to this street, has meanwhile been lost.



View along Clarence Street showing the length on either side that received the enveloping scheme. Unfortunately a number of the shops are now empty and maintenance is poor.



Examples of inappropriate detailing and monotonous use of materials and colours

Within Trosnant, on either side of Clarence Street, the decline of the relatively small scale industries embedded within the urban fabric has left this area rather fragmented with redevelopment of some sites removing much of the early heritage detail. The historic street pattern remains and it is important that any future development considers the potential for below ground archaeology, especially industrial archaeology.



Mix of heritage buildings, new development & empty sites throughout Trosnant



Former Friends Meeting House – now Pontypool Brass Band building

Key buildings in the Clarence Street and Trosnant Character Area include:

Clarence Hotel, Clarence Street
Former Friends Meeting House, Trosnant Street
Trosnant Hall, Trosnant Street
Former Zion Baptist chapel, Trosnant Street
and just outside the Conservation Area - the Grade II Listed Baptist Chapel, Bridge St



Former Clarence Hotel

5.0 Identification of conservation issues

5.1 General conditions SWOT

Pontypool Conservation Area includes the traditional streets through the town centre and historic buildings across the river on the edge of the Park. The protection and improvement of the heritage qualities is fundamental for the future of the local economy and the means to ensure its conservation. Although the majority of the historic townscape has been retained, there are a number of concerns for its future that need to be addressed. This Management Plan needs to build on the local strengths of the characteristics of the settlement to make certain the opportunities for its future are appreciated. The current concerns and problems identified require action to ensure the potential benefits for the residents and visitors to Pontypool are achieved.

The key issues affecting the management of the Conservation Area are:

Strengths:

- national significance of role of Pontypool in the industrial & political history of S Wales
- the importance, variety and considerable number of high quality late C19/early C20 historic buildings & townscapes;
- national significance of Pontypool Park;
- the distinctive form of the town mainly on one side of the river and facing the Park;
- the consistent integrated quality of the heritage environment;
- the notable Listed buildings providing focal points of interest including the Market Hall, Town Hall, Corn Market, Museum, Baptist Church and Banks;
- the landscape setting created by the Park as a back-drop to the town centre;
- the locational advantages for leisure and tourism – near the World Heritage Site, the Brecon National Park and the Wye valley;

Weaknesses:

- the decline in the local economy has led to socio-economic deprivation reflected in weak demand for local goods, services & property;
- low profitability of some businesses discouraging appropriate maintenance;
- visual impact of vacant shops and upper floors
- shop signs typically dominate shop frontages disrupting original architecture
- poor quality of replacement materials and detailing on many heritage buildings;
- lack of appropriate maintenance and care for heritage details;
- inappropriate designs and materials of some new and enveloping development;
- poor environments at 'gateways' to Conservation Area;
- enhancement of the public realm is confused and incomplete;
- car parking is limited and poorly advertised with lack of pedestrian signage
- limited or no rear delivery access to some shops

Opportunities:

- improved heritage building maintenance and management;
- further sensitive regeneration of key sites;
- reuse of underused and vacant floor space;
- to increase town centre economic viability and sustainability by targeting niche markets with development of specialist shopping and leisure sectors;
- marketing of town centre heritage with interpretation initiatives including walks tracing the history of the town, the park and its buildings;
- traffic and parking management to reduce adverse impacts;
- increase in planning and design controls and guidance;
- and increase access to the river by creating a walkway on the town side of the river.

Threats:

- continuing economic difficulties for shops and businesses may discourage further private investment;
- increase in unused buildings lead to sense of neglect and decline;
- resistance to appropriate controls on historic building maintenance and alterations;
- inappropriate designs of new infill buildings, extensions, shop fronts & alterations;
- increasing traffic movement and parking impact;
- lack of resources to maintain higher quality public realm within the Conservation Area
- continuing competition from out of town retailing and other nearby centres



Clarence Street

5.2 Positive issues and assets

The special heritage characteristics of interest that need to be protected and reinforced, include:

- **the Conservation Area** represents a good example of a successful industrial Valley town centre, predominantly rebuilt in the late C18 and early C19;



Osborne Road & George Street, on the left, leading into Commercial Street, with Park Street joining the Pont ap Hwyl roundabout to the east, and Crane Street and Market Street with its Indoor Market from the west.

- **the heritage qualities of the spine route through the Conservation Area** with its almost complete Victorian and Edwardian architecture and townscapes;



St James's Hall, St James's Church and the old Town Hall on Hanbury Road

- **the prominence of the river and park to the town centre** providing a unique setting and linkages into the Conservation Area;



The Italian Garden adjacent to Hanbury Road

- **individual incident buildings of note** of particular heritage merit and/or locational impact include: (see figure 4.2 for a more complete listing)

The Nat West Bank, George Street
The HSBC Bank, Commercial Street
Barclay's Bank, Commercial Street
Old Corn Market, Commercial Street
Baptist Church, Crane Street
Jubilee Buildings, Crane Street
The Market Hall, Market Street
Glantorfaen House, Commercial Street
The Library, Commercial Street
Former Cooperative Building, Commercial Street
Town Hall, Hanbury Road
St James' Church, Hanbury Road
St James' Church Hall, Hanbury Road
Former Clarence Street Hotel, Clarence Street
The Museum
Trosnant House, Trosnant Street



Pontypool library



Baptist Church, Crane Street

-
- **significant townscape groups of buildings:** the Victorian and Edwardian terraces of commercial buildings that line the principal roads within the Conservation Area, combine to create an attractive variety of scale, design and use of material - mainly built within a short period of urban growth;



Osborne Road



Commercial Street

- **and the impact of the important views to be protected include:** the views from within the Conservation Area into the Italian Gardens and the Park; the views of the town from the Park; the views along the spine road of Clarence Street, Commercial Street and George Street; and the views from the north and south 'gateways' when entering the Conservation Area.



The view eastwards down Crane Street to the Park and wooded hills beyond

5.3 Negative issues and problems

The key negative issues and problems within the Conservation Area are:

1. Examples of poor building alterations and repairs:

A number of buildings within the Conservation Area display a loss of some of their traditional heritage qualities that are gradually changing the overall historic townscapes. There are many cases where there is a need for statutory action. The main examples are:

- loss of heritage details and materials including low quality repairs;
- use of render and other non heritage wall finishes;
- use of inappropriate roof materials;
- replacement of front doors with inappropriate designs and finishes;
- replacement of painted wooden sash windows with aluminium / UPVC frames and different window bar designs;
- removal of heritage mouldings and other details;
- removal of chimney stacks and pots;
- addition of aerials and satellite dishes; and
- extensions and outbuildings of inappropriate design, scale and materials.

2. Replacement shop frontages and signage with inappropriate designs and materials have the most dramatic effect on the visual qualities of the Conservation Area. The eye level impact of the variety of bright colours of signs and the use of large areas of glazing is at odds with the traditional forms of the historic buildings.

A notable example is along Osborne Road terrace where the formal rhythm of a three storey Victorian terrace of shops is now disrupted by a non-unified approach to the repair, replacement and detailing of the shop fronts which has led to a dilution of the original design and a loss of heritage character.



These three adjacent buildings on Commercial Street display many of the concerns about poor building alterations and inappropriate replacement shop fronts. Loss of traditional window frames and window space; replacement roofing materials and loss of chimneys and pots; removal of heritage detail; and inappropriate/ unsightly replacement shop fronts and signage; with vacant floor space - demonstrate many of the problems seen throughout the Conservation Area.

3. Past enveloping schemes

In the early 1980's, enveloping 'group repair schemes' within the Conservation Area provided groups of properties with replacement roofing, fenestration, shop fronts and wall finishes. Although these buildings have been protected, much of the original character of the buildings was lost and the scheme has led to a dilution of the historic character of these parts of the town centre and the creation of a *'pastiche'* of a Victorian environment with inappropriate forms, designs and materials



Examples of the failure to respect traditional designs on Clarence Street

4. **The numerous unused buildings** throughout the Conservation Area detract from the visual qualities of the heritage environment and discourage new investment. Economic changes will be needed to assist and encourage reuse. Many shops have vacant floor space above ground floor and lack of economic returns is resulting in poor maintenance and inappropriate repairs.



Co-op building, Commercial St / George St / Commercial St / Clarence St

5. The impact of traffic movement and parking:

Moving vehicles can create congestion, noise and fumes, and danger. Access can be problematic in some parts of the historic town and a significant problem is the provision of parking spaces for cars and the short term requirements for buses and lorries. Along many roads the tight spaces do not provide room for on-street parking, and where feasible, the visual impact can be detrimental to the heritage townscape.

Congestion, vehicular movement and parking is a particular problem along the spine route through the Conservation Area where the narrow pavements limits the ease for visitors and residents to shop and affects their opportunities to appreciate the attractive qualities of this historic townscape.

Controls on car parking may contribute towards the limited use of town centre shops. Although parking is free in the multi-storey parks, they are often full. The Tesco car park is restricted to 3 hours which does not provide the incentive to use the town centre shops.

The narrow historic street layout also creates delivery access concerns and added congestion, particularly with traditional terraces of shops where rear lanes are no longer accessible, ie. the east side of Commercial Street.



Commercial Street

6. Impact of inappropriate new development designs within the heritage townscape:

Although the economic difficulties of the town have enabled the majority of the Conservation Area to retain its Victorian and Edwardian streetscapes, some examples of new infill development have been of inappropriate design quality which do not integrate with their adjacent heritage buildings.



George Street



Commercial Street



Crane Street

-
7. **Public realm:** There is no unified vision for the public realm. This has resulted in a confused and fragmented mixture of styles, materials and designs, with many areas lacking a 'sense of place'.

Currently the public realm includes a wide range of materials, largely unrelated. In total, some 14 different types of paving have been used. This results in an incoherent floor-scape that does not relate to the conservation area as a whole. Some areas of quality paving have not been properly maintained. There is a mixture of street furniture, some poorly positioned, resulting in street 'clutter'- this includes signage, seating, bollards and railings.



Signs on Crane St obstructing long views / Poorly laid and maintained paving on George St

There is a lack of tree planting and most shrub planting has little structural placement or seasonal interest. There is little visual or physical connection to the river or park.

8. **Economic difficulties and resulting vacancies and poor maintenance:** The decline in the prosperity of Pontypool over the last 50 years has led to the under-performance of the town centre economy. While there has been a small increase in the service and office sectors, there are a significant number of vacant shop units throughout the town.

Sustained action is required to ensure the town maintains (and improves) its position in the sub-regional hierarchy. The regeneration of the town requires increased use from its local catchment area and more visitors with a higher spend, in order that capital improvements are sustained in the longer term. The increasing accessibility to other retail centres and employment market adds to the poorer local economic conditions. As a result, the demand for the resulting value and returns from commercial buildings has been weak, and the subsequent lack of maintenance, low quality repairs and vacancies have had a detrimental effect on the Conservation Area qualities.



6.0 Policy guidance and design principles

'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance – for the sustainable management of the historic environment in Wales' Cadw Consultation Draft Jun 2009 identifies six key principles. These provide a basis for the policy and management recommendations identified in this document.

- Principle 1. Significant places will be managed to sustain their values.*
See sections 5 -7 the Conservation Area Management Plan, which identifies the key issues and opportunities for management of the area;
- Principle 2. Understanding the significance of places is vital.*
See section 4. Character and Appearance, which identifies the key significance of each Character Area;
- Principle 3. The historic environment is a shared resource.*
See section 6 identifying policies and design guidance for the future of all buildings and places within the Conservation Area;
- Principle 4. Everyone will be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment.*
In addition to the guidance in section 6, see section 7.6 Community Involvement for participation guidance;
- Principle 5. Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent and consistent.*
See section 7 – Management Recommendations, to identify the key actions to support the current Conservation Area planning procedures;
- Principle 6. Documenting and learning from decisions is essential.*
See section 7.4 – Mechanisms for Monitoring Change listing methods to inform both the community and the authorities.



6.1 Conservation Area development policy & design guidance

The application of policy and design guidance, both generic and local, with Conservation Area wide design advice and site specific recommendations, will need to be linked with the Local Development Plan as a Supplementary Planning Guidance. In addition to the recommendations listed in this document, the Conservation Area Design Guide provides advice to inform future planning and policy and to be fully effective for assist planning applications, and approaches described in the Heritage Lottery Fund document “Planning greener heritage projects” need to be incorporated where appropriate. The positive assets described in section 5. need protection, while the negative problems need to be resolved or limited.

The following framework provides a basis for the continuing improvement of the Conservation Area:

The following issues are discussed below in sections 6 and 7:

- Policy guidance for existing and new development in the Conservation Area
- Strategy for management and protection of the public realm
- Specific design guidance for selected sites and issues
- Coordinated decision making with additional controls
- and Community involvement

6.2 Policies for reuse and enhancement of existing buildings

In addition to the following notes, see the new Design Guide for development within the Pontypool Conservation Area which has been prepared as Supplementary Planning Guidance. The following notes highlight the primary considerations.

6.2.1 Approach to repairs and alterations

Design guidance to encourage residents to repair original elements in preference to replacement, and to advise on how repairs and alterations should be carried out is available from the TCBC Conservation and Development Control sections and the following websites: www.ihbc.org.uk/stitch_in_time/index.htm and www.maintainyourbuilding.org.uk Currently some minor alterations to unlisted buildings do not require planning permission and the results often compromise their historic interest and architectural integrity with an adverse impact on the historic townscape.

The proliferation of relatively minor building alterations is incrementally eroding the character and appearance of the Pontypool Conservation Area. Many modern alterations adversely affect the subtlety, balance and proportions of building elevations and can also be physically damaging to the fabric of historic buildings. Important original features threatened by such alterations include shop fronts, timber sash windows, projecting bays, doors and door cases, cast iron handrails, railings, balconies, rainwater goods, chimney pots and stacks and boundary enclosures.

It is important, therefore, that property owners and occupiers adopt the right approach to repairs and the replacement of features.

In the first instance, regular maintenance should be carried out to prevent, or at least delay, the need for more significant repairs. Repairs should only be undertaken where considered necessary to slow down the process of decay without damaging the character of the building. In the vast majority of cases, a traditional approach to repair should be adopted, replacing decayed material on a like for like basis.

In certain circumstances, decay may be so advanced that the fabric is beyond repair and the replacement of the features may be necessary. Care should, however, be taken to avoid the unnecessary loss of historic fabric. For example, the discrete insertion of modern draft seals can greatly enhance the performance of casement and sash windows in respect of heat retention and ease of use.

The following guidelines are intended to advise the residents and owners within the Pontypool Conservation Area of the general approach to be taken when contemplating external repairs or alterations. **A new Design Guide for development within the Pontypool Conservation Area has now been prepared as Supplementary Planning Guidance.** Owners and occupiers should, however, always seek the advice of the Council Development Control and Conservation Officers before carrying out works to their buildings.

6.2.2 Guidelines for external repair and alteration work

The following examples provide some guidance but further advice is available from TCBC Conservation and Development Control officers:

- *Roofs*

Pitched roofs are essential to maintain the traditional building forms. For the mid C19 buildings, slate is the predominant material, with tiles being used on later properties. Appropriate materials are needed for the period of each building. Welsh slate is essential for Listed buildings while reconstituted slate is acceptable on unlisted buildings. Concrete tiles are unacceptable as are roof lights on the front elevation of buildings.

- *Chimneys*

Chimneys requiring repair should be reinstated or rebuilt accurately to the original height and profile, in materials to match the existing, which in most cases in Pontypool, is brick. Original clay chimney pots should be replaced appropriately or reinstated where necessary.

- *Windows and doors*

Existing windows and external doors should be retained and carefully repaired wherever possible; it is important to retain and repair early surviving casements. In the Pontypool CA, most original windows on the older buildings, are of a timber sliding-sash design. If replacement is unavoidable, new windows should be accurate replicas of the original design, in both pattern and detail. PVC frames will fail to achieve these aims. Windows and doors should be painted and not stained. The openings should not be altered or replaced and reveals or setbacks should be retained.

- *Shop Fronts and signage*

The traditional shopfronts should be retained and opportunities to reinstate heritage designs should be required whenever alterations are proposed. New or replacement shopfronts and their signage should display good proportions, well thought out detailing and quality materials. They should respect the period of the building but simplicity of design often produces more convincing results than excessive Victoriana. Detailed drawings, particularly of joinery construction, should accompany applications for proposed new shop fronts.

- *Ironwork*

Decorative ironwork, such as railings should be retained and carefully repaired or if necessary, reinstated accurately to the original pattern and detail, in a similar material, usually wrought or cast iron. Replacements in mild steel often corrode very quickly.

- *Boundary Treatment*

Original walls, fences, railings and gates should be repaired to match the existing, or reinstated to the original design wherever possible. This is a particular concern where the original stone or brick walls have been replaced by other materials.

6.3 Policies for new development within heritage areas

Where inappropriate new development has occurred, such as Price Solicitors on Clarence Street, next to the Mount Pleasant church and the fine architecture along Hanbury Road, and where commercial or community developments using inappropriate forms, materials and detailing have been introduced, this has been detrimental to the streetscape, the heritage setting and the environmental qualities of the Conservation Area.

Individual infill developments reflect the taste and design approach of their eras, but where they have respected the principles of the historic building line, and of the scale, massing and form of their neighbours, they are generally absorbed into the streetscape with success.

Where new development is proposed it is important that it is guided by sound principles of urban design, as well as sympathetic detailing in relation to its historic context. All forms of new development within the Conservation Area should:

- Preserve and reinforce the distinctive pattern of traditional development, including street patterns, open spaces and trees, plot boundaries & boundary treatments.
- Have regard for existing building lines & the orientation of existing development.
- Reinforce the distinctive architectural character of the particular Character Area of the Conservation Area, through an informed understanding of its building forms and styles, features and materials. Pastiche forms of development and the superficial echoing of historic features in new buildings should be avoided.
- Respect the scale and massing of surrounding buildings. It is essential that new development is not out of scale with existing buildings by way of its height, floor levels, size of windows and doors, overall massing and the roofscape.
- Maintain key views and vistas within, into and out of the Conservation Area.
- Where possible, minimise the visual impact of parked vehicles and the provision of parking areas on the streetscape and landscape setting of historic buildings.



Examples of successful new development fitting in with traditional buildings – lower Crane St where appropriate scale and materials have been used, and the Council office extension.

Where new development is proposed for areas that are adjacent to the Conservation Area, it will be equally important for care and consideration of the impact of the intended urban design and detailing.

Where appropriate, all forms of new development should respect the principles listed above, with particular concern to:

- Ensure new development continues the local scale, form and materials in order to reinforce the distinctive architectural character of the Character Area. This is particularly important with roof lines, their height and materials because of their visibility from the sloping land;
- Consider the impact of new development on key views and vistas;
- Ensure that new road layouts and parking arrangements have a limited impact on the streetscape qualities of the locality. Sensitive layout, designs and landscaping are required to reduce the areas of tarmac and lines of parked cars;
- Omit rooftop aerials and satellite dishes and ensure that electricity and telephone service links are underground so as to avoid unsightly new wirescapes.

New, high quality designs may be appropriate in the Conservation Area, but the concern must be to avoid incongruous and low grade development.

6.4 Management framework for the public realm

The public realm has the potential to make a significant contribution to the appearance and use of the Conservation Area. By creating a high quality, attractive streetscape, a better stage can be created for appreciating the Georgian, Victorian, Edwardian and Twentieth Century architecture of Pontypool's many fine historic buildings.

Old photographs of Pontypool town centre show the simple uncluttered designs throughout the public realm. Present day use of these areas including the needs of vehicular use and parking, pedestrian only routes and the supporting street furniture and signage create new requirements where there are few traditional answers.

The treatment of the spaces between the buildings are critically important in the overall quality and character of the Conservation Area and need to follow sound principles of urban design and respect for the heritage qualities of each Character Area. Specific issues to be addressed include:

- Context - an appreciation of the local setting and identity of an area coupled with a sympathetic choice of materials and details to respond to, and reinforce, the local character of the place.
- Creating spaces and places - the degree of openness or enclosure of a space, together with its scale, form and massing, helps to give it a character and identity and reinforces issues of safety, security, comfort, variety and interest.
- Encouraging activity - active frontages help promote on-street activity and vibrancy as well as providing over-looking and natural surveillance to a space or street.
- Variety and interest - like the buildings in a street scene, the public realm needs as much careful consideration of the balance of uniformity and variety, to create a range of opportunities and settings for a variety of users, amenities and social groups.

A Public Realm strategy and action plan 2010, is being prepared which will provide guidance with materials, designs and management advice. It will be important that this guidance looks to the future, by providing a high quality setting that builds on the historic character and distinctiveness of the Character Areas within the town centre and at the same time creates a strong framework for future conservation and development.

A simple palette of materials, planting and street furniture should be considered for the Conservation Area as a whole to limit the current confusion of solutions.

6.4.1 Paving

Future paving should seek to create a more uniform 'floor-scape' throughout the public realm, to provide a more neutral setting for the historic buildings of Pontypool. While much of the recent paving work might be kept, future work could focus on the use of a unifying background of the local Pennant stone paving.

'Shared Space Schemes', where kerbs are omitted in favour of traffic management controls, such as the northern end of Commercial Street, can provide an improved pedestrian experience but can also raise concerns for the visually impaired. These designs will need appraisal with careful selection of materials to both enhance the setting and aid vehicular and pedestrian movement.

It is essential that any future paving work be well specified and laid with appropriate maintenance. The cost of high quality materials suitable for a Conservation Area can be relatively expensive, but if well specified and laid, should offer a long service life.

6.4.2 Street furniture

The historic town had few examples of street furniture or signage. As a result there is little guidance for new designs. The priorities will be for a common approach throughout the Conservation Area which provide non-intrusive designs that respect their heritage settings. Some current locations within the town centre are notable for the clutter and confusion of street furniture, signs and surfaces. A coordinated approach is needed which limits the impact of these public realm items and creates an appropriate setting for the historic buildings and townscapes.

6.4.2 Trees/Vegetation:

A palette of trees, shrubs and groundcover planting should be configured and used to create a coherent green landscape structure throughout the Conservation Area. Trees and shrubs should be carefully selected in terms of suitability, for instance mature heights. Relevance of species to the area needs to be considered, with a preference for indigenous trees. Tree locations must be determined, and necessary tree pit construction carried out, to prevent root invasion to building foundations, and conflicts with underground services.

There are limited opportunities to increase the number of 'green' spaces in the town centre, Existing sites should be re-examined and re-designed using an agreed palette of proposed hard and soft landscape materials. There is a potential for more strategically placed street trees within the area, to give a 'greener' feel.

6.4.4 Public Art

Public art provides an opportunity for the public realm to respond to the heritage and the community of Pontypool. There is an opportunity for artists to become involved with the heritage of the area if included within the public realm design team to ensure artworks are fully integrated and to give them the opportunity to respond to particular locations.

6.4.5 Access

The Conservation Area, including access to the Riverside, has a range of access issues that need improvement and resolution. The key concerns relate to:

- Over-steep ramps without realistic landings, or landings too far apart;
- poorly designed handrails, some lacking a run-on at the end of flights of steps;
- steps with inadequate goings or excessive risers, or risers of unequal height;
- poor contrast in paving materials, or inadequate lighting;
- pavements too narrow or slippery with some rough or irregular paving;
- insufficient dropped kerbs and some unnecessary obstacles along pedestrian routes.

These comments are indicative, and generalised, and not intended to be exhaustive: if considered appropriate, a new Access Audit of the public realm within the Conservation Area should update the findings and recommendations of the audit completed in 2004.

6.4.6 River environment

There are unique opportunities to enhance the public realm in the area on the Conservation Area side of the river including:

- the enhancement of the river environment through landscaping improvements and an increased level of maintenance, to better realise its potential as a dramatic and picturesque asset;
- the improvement/replacement of the footbridge, to better connect the Park, Italian Gardens and town;
- and the completion of a comfortable, safe to use, exciting and useful river walk, stretching the entire length of the Conservation Area.

The Afon Lwyd Access Feasibility Study (2003) drew attention to:

- the river being of great significance to the history of Pontypool;
- 'existing public access [to the river] is good although not encouraged', and that the river has 'fragmented riverside access which feels unsafe';
- and the potential for the river to again become central to the life of Pontypool, by creating a spinal, pedestrian/cyclist's route along the riverbank - a vital part of the public realm.

6.4.7 Management of the public realm

A clear management strategy will need to be in place for the maintenance of the enhanced public realm appropriate for the Conservation Area. A coordinated approach by all relevant agencies concerned with the town centre services will be required. Examples of issues of concern that will need to be addressed include:

- ensuring utility/services contractors reinstate paving and other surfaces to a high standard and ensure similar materials are used when repairing/replacing;
- cleaning lichen and chewing gum off paving;
- discouraging dropping of litter and chewing gum;
- early repair of any damage - graffiti, broken slabs, failed planting or failed lighting.

6.5 Guidance for key buildings and sites

The following indicative list identifies a number of key buildings, sites and projects requiring action within the Pontypool Conservation Area. The Pontypool Town Centre Regeneration Strategy 2008 provides guidance on projects and this selection identifies those of importance for the protection and reuse of the Conservation Area. Selected public realm projects will be defined in greater detail in the forthcoming Town Centre Public Realm Strategy 2010.

The selected site specific projects, whose improvement may also require public consultation, and could have a significant impact on achieving the Conservation Area objectives include:

6.5.1 Tackling unused prominent buildings

Investment to reuse the historic building stock must be seen as a priority. A number of key historic buildings are at risk and others which are empty have a significant adverse impact on the heritage townscape. Immediate action is needed to prevent the further deterioration of some buildings, e.g. St. James Church. Without viable uses it will be difficult to maintain these critical buildings.

A programme of bringing vacant buildings back into use is required and the proposed HLF Townscape Heritage Initiative 2010-2015 should enable a significant number of historic properties to be repaired, reinstated and reused.

Potential buildings include:

- Lion House (1,2,4 & 6 Commercial Street and 1,3 & 5 Crane Street);
- St James' Church, Hanbury Road;
- The Former Market House, 5 Commercial Street;
- The Globe Hotel, Crane Street;



St James' Church



Lion House



Former Market House



The Globe Hotel

6.5.2 Replacing inappropriate shop fronts and signage:

The visual impact of inappropriate replacement and badly maintained shop frontages and signage detracts from the heritage environment. The quality of shop fronts is an important indicator of the prosperity of the town, and at present too many unsightly frames and signs detract from the qualities of the historic townscapes.

In nearby Blaenavon, this concern has led to a significant programme of improvements on Broad Street which have had a considerable impact on the Conservation Area. The reinstatement of original Victorian designs have been achieved with grant funding and it is hoped that a significant number of shops in Pontypool will be able to benefit from Townscape Heritage Initiative funds to restore the historic townscape. Guidance on appropriate designs will be available in the Conservation Area Design Guide and from TCBC officers. It will be important that all future changes to shop fronts and signage within the Conservation Area provide detailed planning applications with full joinery details.

Properties are in need of replacement shop fronts throughout the Conservation Area – examples include:

- 27,29 & 31 Commercial Street;
- 1,3,5,7 & 9 Crane Street;
- 3&5 George Street;
- 132,134 & 136 Osborne Road.



5 Commercial Street – Former Market House



Impact of external shutters and boxes



Osborne Road – impact of inappropriate signage and shop fronts on heritage terrace

6.5.3 Improving arrival gateways to the Conservation Area

The arrival points for both the town centre and the Conservation Area need to be of sufficient quality to encourage investigation of the historic town. Though both are historic areas in the development of the town, the Clarence Corner area in the south and the roundabout at Pont ap Hwyl at the northern end of Pontypool's spine route, they do not announce that these are important gateways and both lack the necessary townscape value and attributes. Both areas require urban design action plans that respect their historic context.



Clarence Corner gateway – the refurbishment of the buildings within the Conservation Area need further quality development around this entrance that positively addresses Clarence Rd



Pont ap Hwyl – the first view of the town centre shows the unattractive rears of buildings on George Street. This unacceptable elevation has been alleviated by one facing building.



Park Street – the entrance view into the town centre is spoiled by the appearance of the rear elevations and the unfortunate corner location of a C20 building on the Market St junction.

6.5.4 Improving Traffic Management and Signage

The main road through the Conservation Area is heavily used, the traffic creating a constraint for the improvement of both the appreciation of the Conservation Area and commercial regeneration along the streets it affects. The pavements are narrow and pedestrian flow is awkward.

Further consideration should be given to a traffic management scheme from Clarence Street to Pont ap Hwyl and connecting streets, which should:

- encourage a reduction of traffic;
- provide appropriate parking places which do not impact on the historic townscapes;
- widen pavements to increase pedestrian use and appreciation of the heritage; and
- improve movement signage with sensitive designs to reduce streetscape impact while directing both pedestrians and drivers to the important destinations.



Commercial Street – a busy vehicular route with narrow pavements discouraging pedestrian window shopping or appreciation of the historic buildings.



Crane Street – the visual clutter of road signs detract from the heritage townscape and views

6.5.5 Design of the Public Realm

In association with the review of the street signage, a reassessment of the potential for improving the public realm is being prepared as a Public Realm Strategy 2010. The Town Centre Regeneration Strategy has identified the following areas for future action as a basis for this action plan, and a selection of the key opportunities for the protection and enjoyment of the Conservation Area from this document are listed below:

- George Street enhancement;
- Pedestrianisation and improvements to Market Street;
- Town wide environmental improvements;
- Commercial Street / Park Road improvements;
- Footpath link along the Afon Lwyd on the western bank of the river for the full length of the Conservation Area;
- and as proposed in the Conservation Area Appraisal 2007 - the potential for a new footbridge at the Italian Gardens as a landmark structure to replace the current utilitarian design.

In a Conservation Area with such a range of architectural styles and the current variety of the public realm designs, an agreed palette of materials should be developed for the Pontypool Conservation Area. These could be based on locally sourced pennant sandstone, and the use of an iron based material for street furniture – traditional materials in this area. Elements should be simple in design, so that they unify rather than compete with the rich variety of materials and designs used on the buildings.



Commercial Street – a route requiring a redesigned public realm



George Street – confusion of materials, some badly laid with examples of poor maintenance

7.0 Management recommendations

7.1 Planning Measures

All Torfaen County Borough Council departments involved in decisions affecting change within the Conservation Area should understand the significance of the Conservation Area designation and work corporately in a team approach to ensure that development decisions are appropriate for the historic context and will not damage the heritage fabric or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Further procedures to ensure consistent decision making need to be identified to implement the following recommended policy concerns to maintain the character of the area through extra controls:

7.1.1 Local listing in the Conservation Area

The purpose of Conservation Area designation is to provide added protection for the many buildings which do not possess the individual characteristics suitable for Statutory Listing. This appraisal provides the opportunity to provide additional recognition for a Local List of heritage structures and buildings having local historic or architectural value, group value, or visual interest as part of the setting of Listed buildings, though not on the Statutory List.

The following properties are worthy of additional protection by being included on a Local List. This selection will be reviewed during public consultation:

7.1.2 Reassessment of the Conservation Area boundary

The Pontypool Conservation Area was designated in 1984. The 2007 Conservation Area Appraisal reconsidered the boundaries and suggested that adjustments should be made to include an additional area along the river bank and exclude areas lacking appropriate heritage qualities:

The river boundary:

The eastern boundary of the Conservation Area generally follows the route of the river. The current line includes narrow strips on the eastern bank and omits a small area on the western bank. There has been consideration about including all of the Park within the Conservation Area, as the significance of the urban morphology of Pontypool can only be fully legible when the historic town centre and Park are viewed together.

It is proposed that this boundary follows the central line of the river. This will provide a clear boundary to the historic built environment and will provide an opportunity for future reassessment of the status of the Park if additional controls are required. In addition a short length of the river bank to the east of Trosnant is recommended to be included so as to provide an extension to the proposed west bank footpath.

Bridge Street/Clarence Street boundary:

Currently the Conservation Area boundary extends some considerable distance beyond the south side of Bridge Street with the boundary now crossing the recent housing scheme - Aneurin Bevan Court. Numbers 1 and 2, Bridge Street are two older houses within the current Conservation Area and while they offer an appropriate scale, they have been heavily refurbished and have lost most original external detail and are flanked on either side by recent two-storey maisonettes. There is limited benefit in leaving these buildings within the Conservation Area.

It is proposed that the rectangular area to the south of Bridge Street, shown on Figure 7.1 is excluded from the Conservation Area. The proposed boundary will run along the south side of Bridge Street, then south along the rear garden fence of Numbers 16-30 Clarence Street.



Anuerin Bevan Court development to the left of Clarence Street.

Crane Street boundary:

Since the Conservation Area was designated, the north side of Crane Street has been re-developed. The boundary currently runs through this new development, on the line of the party wall separating 'Farmfoods' from 'Wilkinson'.

Though this development respected the scale of the surrounding streetscape, it presents a 'contextual' style that avoids a strong architectural statement and is neither contemporary architecture nor an accurate recreation of traditional styles. As a result, the current boundary does not include an area of heritage value and will make the logic of the Conservation Area harder to understand.

It is proposed that the whole of the new development on the north side of Crane Street is now excluded, with the boundary re-aligned to the rear of the plots of the commercial properties along George Street, and then to run along the N side of Crane Street.

Other boundaries:

It is proposed that all remaining boundaries of the Conservation Area follow the line of the current designated area.

Clarence Street Corner & the Clarence Street Development:

The boundary line at Clarence Corner should remain unchanged as this should help secure the quality of any new design for this area. Conservation Area Consent (CAC) will be required for any proposed demolition of the former "Free Press buildings" only when a detailed and satisfactory planning application for this site has been received.

George Street/Osborne Road:

As the Conservation Area essentially covers the commercial and civic centre of the town, apart from the small residential enclave of St James' Field, there is logic in including the predominantly commercial heritage buildings on the southern lengths of both George Street – up to the fly-over, and Osborne Road – omitting the residential area, without extending the boundary.

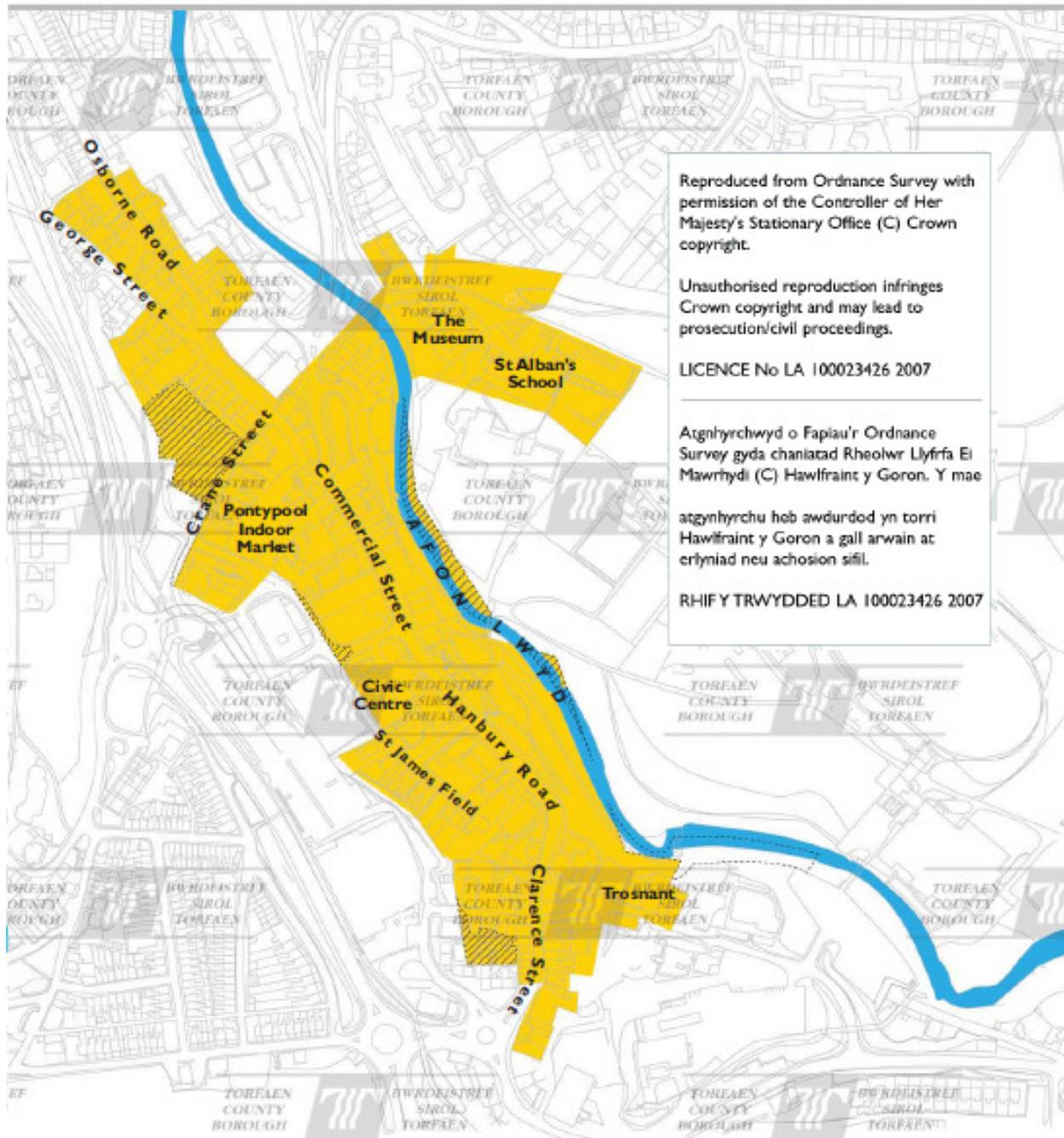
Park Road:

The area to the west of the river includes two buildings with heritage character on the north side of Park Road which are isolated from the west bank Conservation Area by the road junction and roundabout, and only maintain a link along the north side of the driveway leading to the museum and school.

These buildings should remain within the Conservation Area as the area is shown developed on early maps, they have heritage character, and together they create an end for views across the bridge from the town. Their retention in the Conservation Area may assist the design of the needed redevelopment of this gateway area.

Proposed Boundary Changes

- Pontypool Conservation Area
- Areas to be excluded from the Conservation Area
- Proposed additions to the Conservation Area



7.2.3 Article 4 Directions and Permitted Development

Article 4 Directions can be imposed by local planning authorities to control certain alterations to dwellings that would otherwise be automatically 'permitted development' under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 and not requiring planning permission. This extra planning control is primarily used where the character of an area of acknowledged importance would be threatened.

Thus, for example, the replacement of windows, doors, roof coverings etc. can come under planning control, the object being to prevent works that are considered to be damaging or inappropriate to the historic fabric or features of the buildings and historic townscapes.

It should be noted that such a Direction only applies to properties in use as dwellings and particularly terraces as a grouped unit of development. Most of the built development within the Conservation Area is in commercial use which does not have the same permitted development rights as residential property and is therefore less at risk from inappropriate changes and loss of heritage character. More effective compliance is now required on commercial properties.

It is recommended that an Article 4 (2) Direction is imposed on all residential properties throughout the Conservation Area. The aim is to help prevent further deterioration of the heritage details of the area and the degradation of the historic townscape.

The classes of currently permitted development proposed be covered by the Article 4 (2) Direction include:

- Enlargement, improvement or other alteration to the public face of a building;
- Design and materials utilised for walls, windows, doors and rain water goods;
- Addition or material alteration to the shape, volume or materials of the roof;
- Erection, construction, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure;
- Cladding of any part of the exterior with artificial stone, timber, plastic or tiles;
- Rendering or painting of the exterior masonry/brickwork of the building;
- Paint colours for existing painted surfaces to be in accordance with a design guide pallet of colours;
- and installation, alteration or replacement of a satellite antenna, etc.

The Torfaen Local Plan 2000 identifies the importance of protecting the quality and character of a Conservation Area - Policy H1 (A+B). The implementation of an Article 4(2) provides increased protection especially where there is the threat from small scale unsympathetic works. A public consultation exercise will consider these issues and identify the additional responsibilities and benefits for owners and occupiers of properties within the Conservation Area.

7.3 Enforcement strategy

Torfaen County Borough Council Development Control Officers with Conservation Officers and legal advisors, can pursue a programme of appropriate legal action using powers available under Sections 48 and 54 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 where this may be deemed necessary.

The powers available to Local Authorities, that Torfaen CBC are prepared to use, include:

- Taking enforcement action against unauthorised development – planning contravention notices / breach of condition notices / enforcement notices / stop notices / and injunctions;
- Serving Repairs, Urgent Works and Section 215 notices;
- Compulsory Acquisition orders; and
- Building Preservation Notices which extend Listed Building control over unlisted buildings for an interim period.

Buildings and sites, which though outside the Conservation Area are adjacent to the boundary, must be considered as part of its setting and therefore similar planning considerations need to be applied.

7.4 Mechanisms for monitoring change

Principle 6: Documenting and learning from decisions is essential. Cadw 2009

A regular review of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will be required to encompass changes and new priorities.

A key tool to monitor changes could include a new dated photographic survey of the Conservation Area.

Further historic research on the town centre will be beneficial. Though few detailed historic drawings, paintings or engravings have survived of the earlier town, there are an impressive number of detailed photographs which are available to inform the accurate restoration of properties constructed after 1850.

Torfaen County Borough Council with assistance from members of the Pontypool Regeneration Partnership and Torfaen Museum Trust should ensure that a systematic collection of information on the changing historic character within the Conservation Area is assembled – possibly kept at the Museum.

In order to ensure Torfaen Council's commitment to promote equality of opportunity for all citizens, Equality Impact Assessments will need to be prepared for the implementation of all significant policies and projects identified in this Management Plan.

7.5 Urban design guidance

The future protection of the Conservation Area will require further detailed policy and technical guidance to ensure future change and development is appropriate for the heritage context.

A Design Guide for development within the Conservation Area has been prepared to provide a basis for appropriate changes to buildings and new development. Though this provides general guidance the future protection of the built heritage, the Conservation Area will require detailed policy and technical design guidance advice to ensure future change and development is appropriate for the heritage context.

There is a specific need for detailed Planning Guidance Notes to be prepared which set out the principles with good practice examples identified. The following list identifies priority topics for specific guidance within the Conservation Area:

Shop fronts: with advice on traditional designs to discourage inappropriate designs and materials in Conservation Areas – currently being prepared.

Terrace extensions and infill: identifying appropriate scale and forms of development.

Advertising: with recommendations on scale and design when used on shops, commercial properties and stand-alone hoardings within a Conservation Area – currently being prepared.

Aerials and dishes: advice on location and scale of apparatus to be used.

Streetscape manual: with Conservation Area specifications for paving, parking arrangements, street lighting and furniture, etc.

Security – shutters, alarms, security lighting, CCTV cameras, etc: that identifies inappropriate locations and suggests preferred designs and installations for different types of property – currently being prepared.

Needs for disabled: advice on accessibility around the public realm and into public buildings.

7.6 Community involvement

Principle 4: Everyone will be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment.

The success of this document, and ultimately, the regeneration of the town, must lie with many different people and organisations, working together in partnership. It is essential that views and opinions are sought from both those who live, work and visit Pontypool: and from the local and national organisations which have a responsibility towards the well-being of the town. This allows this Management Plan to consider all the issues which impact on the town, and which effect its future management and prosperity. Consultations were therefore undertaken as part of the production of this document.

Details of the consultation exercise, and the responses received, can be found in the Appendix.

7.6.1 Community consultation and engagement

The development of this Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been assisted by a local consultation process including advice from local representatives, responses to a local exhibition and public meetings.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' (PPG 15) advises that authorities consider setting up Conservation Area Advisory Committees, both to assist in formulating policies for the Conservation Area, and as a continuing source of advice on planning and other applications that could affect an area.

Continuing community review and involvement will be managed by Torfaen County Borough Council with assistance from members of the Pontypool Regeneration Partnership and the Town Council to provide the basis for review and pro-active promotion of the conservation aims and any other heritage initiatives within the Conservation Area.

7.6.2 Training and learning

An associated element of the management plan will be to incorporate local education and training measures as they will be necessary to sustain a conservation based approach to the long-term management of the area.

Torfaen Council is keen to ensure that there are: appropriate skills available in the community; a proper awareness and understanding of the area's conservation value; that conservation standards are implemented to ensure protection and enhancement; and residents responsibilities are understood.

A number of initiatives are proposed in addition to the consultation processes, to provide these wider skills and appreciation which will be based on:

- Conservation focussed initiatives can be coordinated through the Pontypool Regeneration team to develop local strategies for conservation training with assistance from Torfaen Training – the vocational training arm of Torfaen CBC. This could include the delivery of training services, basic skills provision, widening participation in education & training and workforce development training. Torfaen Training can identify training places for local contractors and tradesmen on building skills training courses with conservation techniques.
- Regeneration, Conservation and Development Control officers will be encouraged to attend relevant conferences and appropriate continuing professional development. Conservation education 'days' are proposed for Members. Torfaen CBC conservation specialists will be available to provide expert advice to applicants and their professional advisers;
- The Pontypool Regeneration team have a local base and will be available to provide information and advice to the public. Guidance documents will be available to the public including this Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, and the Conservation Area Design Guide.
- Heritage material describing the Conservation Area and target properties will be researched with a programme of interpretation, which may include walks, school visits etc. The involvement of Pontypool museum will be encouraged;
- It will be important that the initiatives to increase public awareness are actively promoted by the Town Council, and that they support the approach adopted by Torfaen CBC for the Conservation Area.

7.6.3 Equalities impact assessment

Equality and Community Cohesion Impact Assessment or Equality Impact Assessments are an important part of the Council's commitment to promote equality of opportunity for all Torfaen citizens. The Council needs to consider diversity when developing, delivering and reviewing policies and services to ensure we meet the needs of all our citizens. Equality Impact Assessments provide a systematic process to doing this and therefore will help to improve service delivery and employment practice.

Action to implement any of the proposed Conservation Area management policies will require such an impact assessment.

7.7 Resources for implementation needed in the Conservation Area

Torfaen County Borough Council will identify the necessary resources to sustain the historic environment and manage the Conservation Area and will, where appropriate and funds are available, coordinate such works with the Pontypool Regeneration Partnership. A framework of need will be identified from this Management Plan and the Town Centre Regeneration Strategy 2008, including the implementation of policies both to achieve the heritage aims and to ensure the impact of a conservation led approach to economic development and regeneration.

Priority management time and skills will be required from all agencies working in the Conservation Area to implement the decision making procedures and policy changes, to ensure effective monitoring and enforcement, to prepare technical guidance and to inform the community. Additional capital funding will be needed to ensure appropriate heritage standards for both public and private expenditure on the built environment. The Conservation Area Design Guide identifies many of the priorities.

Heritage Lottery Fund Townscape Heritage Initiative funding from various sources will assist these aims from 2010 - 2015 with grant aid towards historic building restoration and reuse, plus supporting specialist management time.

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Conservation policies
- Appendix 2: Listed Building information
- Appendix 3: Community consultation
- Appendix 4: Contact details



Pontypool library. Hanbury Road.

