

PONTYPOOL
ONLY BOOGEY
THE WAY UP

Pontypool Town Centre Regeneration Strategy

The next 5 years

December 2009



LDĀDESIGN

foreword

By Chair of Pontypool Regeneration Partnership

Pontypool has many things that other, bigger towns in the Valleys would love to have – a fantastic Park, a beautiful River, a strong heritage and community, and many buildings of inherent quality. The many people who contributed their views in helping to shape this Regeneration Strategy for Pontypool Town Centre identified these things, and more, as great assets – but they also want to see better shops and car parking, properties that are used and cared for, and a greater diversity of facilities to enjoy.

This Regeneration Strategy, adopted by Torfaen County Borough Council in November 2008, sets out how we – the Council, its many partners and the people that live and work here – intend to make Pontypool a more prosperous and vibrant place over the next 15 to 20 years.

The Council is grateful – not only to the Department for Economy and Transport of the Welsh Assembly Government and the Pontypool Regeneration Partnership for helping to fund this important work – but also to the many people, businesses and organisations locally who attended meetings, completed questionnaires and gave up their time to help develop this Strategy.

There are exciting times ahead for Pontypool – I am sure that everyone involved in the town will play a positive part in taking the Strategy forward and help the town achieve its great potential.

Councillor John Marshall
Torfaen County Borough Council
Chair of the Pontypool Regeneration Partnership



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01 introduction

Background

Pontypool is a town of latent potential and inherent beauty. It was once a hub of industrial and creative activity with a flourishing indoor market, distinctive architecture and a beautiful park. It was industrious and active with a strong community spirit. Since the loss of traditional industries however, Pontypool has lost much of its identity and purpose.

The local community is concerned at this situation and there is a sense amongst many people that Pontypool has lost its way and offers little to encourage them to visit and use their town. However, Pontypool serves a catchment population of around 36,000 in mid and north Torfaen and has an important role in providing services and facilities for these communities, some of which are amongst the most deprived in Wales. Indeed, 3 Lower Super Output Areas adjacent or close to Pontypool Town Centre are within the 20% most deprived in Wales. Specifically, Trevethin is the most deprived ward in Torfaen and within the 10% most deprived wards in Wales.

The key issues facing communities around Pontypool Town Centre relate to low income, economic inactivity and poor attainment in education and training. These issues are inter-linked and are a major factor in reducing Pontypool Town Centre's vitality, viability and attractiveness as demonstrated by its performance against key indicators including:

- vacancy rates: these are currently 14.9% and are above the national average of 12% (2009);
- Zone A retail rents: Pontypool's Zone A Retail rents are static at an average £35 per sq ft in comparison to Abergavenny (static at an average £60 per sq ft) and Blackwood (rising at an average £45 per sq ft) (Colliers CRE In-Town Retail Report - Autumn 2007);
- state of environmental quality: the Torfaen Retail and Leisure Study, produced by GVA Grimley for Torfaen CBC in September 2007, identified the poor environmental quality of the town centre as being a major factor in having a negative impact on the retail performance of the town. The study highlighted the number of vacant units, the poor



condition of buildings and the domination of traffic in non-pedestrianised areas. The study recommendations include the need to make improvements to town centre property in order to encourage greater retail development and investment.

Pontypool, together with Cwmbran, is identified as a key settlement within the Wales Spatial Plan. The towns are strategically placed to capitalise on private sector investment and economic growth. By coordinating regeneration activity, Pontypool and Cwmbran can provide a hub of economic growth within the South-East Wales sub-region which will act as a driver for the long term regeneration of deprived communities throughout Torfaen and neighbouring areas.

Reflecting the Wales Spatial Plan, the emerging Torfaen Local Development Plan aims to ensure a network of integrated communities spreading growth and prosperity from the two key towns of Cwmbran and Pontypool to the rest of Torfaen. These towns

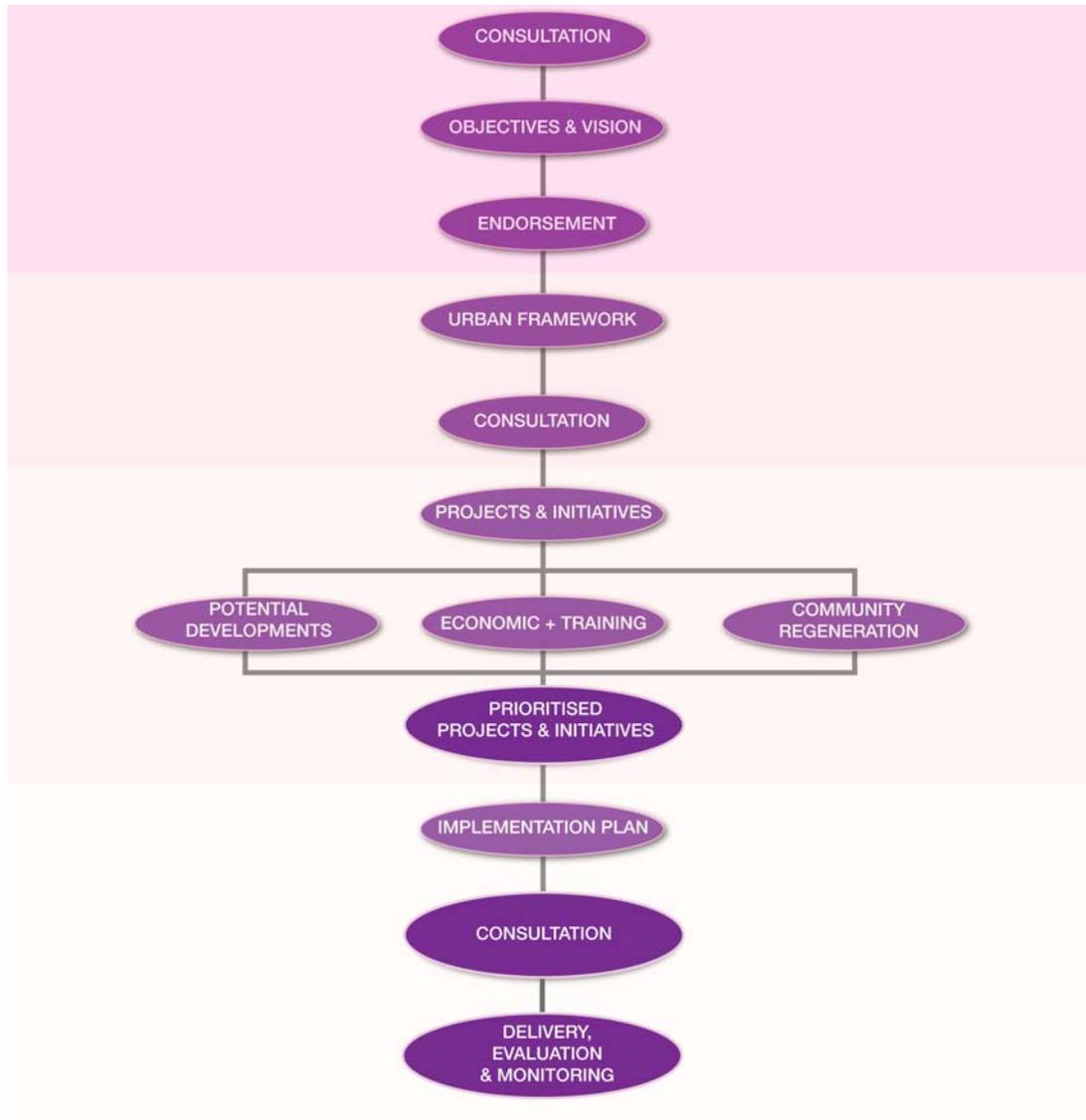
must be successful in their own right, with strong retail, commercial and leisure sectors and function as service hubs for their surrounding communities.

Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) and the Department for the Economy and Transport (DE&T) of the Welsh Assembly Government have commissioned LDA Design to prepare the Regeneration Strategy for Pontypool Town Centre. This Regeneration Strategy sets out a clear vision and framework, agreed with the local community, for the future of their town centre over the next 15-20 years.

This strategy not only identifies physical changes to improve the viability of the town, but also highlights ways in which the potential of people living around and using Pontypool can be maximised, providing an integrated approach to the town's regeneration. By implementing this strategy it will be possible to breathe new life into the town, enabling it to support the communities it serves and making it an energetic, viable, attractive and sustainable place again.

02 regeneration process

Regeneration Strategy Process



The process of preparing the Regeneration Strategy has been lengthy and comprehensive, involving a great deal of consultation and assessment along the way to make sure that emerging projects and initiatives are realistic, deliverable and relevant to the needs of the Pontypool community. They also need to be aspirational because the town needs to raise its game to compete more effectively with towns outside Torfaen.

The diagram on the opposite page indicates the process undertaken. There have been 4 key stages:

- defining Objectives and a Vision for the town to set out a clear direction and focus for the future;
- preparing an Urban Framework as a guide to future development within the town;
- identifying and prioritising Projects and Initiatives to bring about the regeneration of the town in accordance with the Vision and Objectives; and
- setting out an Implementation Plan as a basis for delivering the Projects and Initiatives, with particular focus on the next 5 years.

The structure of this report reflects that process.

Throughout the process, the Regeneration Team has engaged with a full cross section of the resident and business community: groups and individuals from different backgrounds, with different circumstances, needs, interests and concerns. All have been asked for their views and ideas since the Strategy belongs to the community and the community will need to play a significant role in achieving the Objectives. This included the participation of young people from the Traveller community and those excluded from school in a Visioning event during which they put forward their views on the type of town they would like Pontypool to become. The actions that are set out in this Strategy aim to provide for the needs of all groups, regardless of gender, ability, age, ethnicity or sexual orientation or belief.

Whilst the primary focus of the Regeneration Strategy is Pontypool Town Centre, the Strategy has been developed in the wider environmental and economic context of the town. Some of the Projects and Initiatives address broader issues that affect the whole of Torfaen, and others reflect the need for coordination between building projects in the town centre and potential developments nearby, in order to maximise the contribution to Pontypool's viability and vitality and, therefore, its ability to sustain itself.

Finally, on account of its local nature, its non-statutory status and the fact that it does not determine or allocate land for specific uses, it is not appropriate to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Strategy. However a Sustainability Appraisal has been incorporated throughout the process. The Vision and Objectives, the Framework and the emerging Projects were subjected to assessment against a range of criteria established to test their sustainability, using the Welsh Assembly Government's model. Issues of biodiversity, particularly along the Afon Lwyd and in the Park, energy generation, efficient use of resources, economic viability and social opportunity are all addressed in the Strategy, and Projects will need to take these issues into account as they are developed in more detail.

03 vision and objectives

The Vision and Objectives for Pontypool are drawn from the views of local residents, community groups, businesses and more strategic stakeholders gathered through meetings, public exhibitions, questionnaires, individual interviews and two interactive visioning events. The process is described in more detail in Pontypool Town Centre – The Future, October 2007.

The Vision for Pontypool Town Centre

Pontypool will promote innovation, enterprise and enjoyment in both business and leisure to become the creative heart of Torfaen and a focal point for creativity in the South Wales Valleys.

Creativity in Pontypool will be inspired by its beautiful setting, strong community, focused services and its valleys culture, resurrecting and enhancing the pioneering spirit and reputation for quality upon which the town was built.

The town centre experience will be transformed by bringing Pontypool Park and the Afon Lwyd river right into the heart of the town by the creation of better connections, creating a unique waterside and parkland setting in which cultural and business activities will flourish and contribute to the vitality of the town.

Diverse and interesting independent shops and businesses, a flourishing indoor market, new homes, distinctive buildings and safe, attractive streets and spaces, combined with traditional hospitality and a warm welcome, will attract more people to live, work and spend time in the town. The revitalised town centre and park will offer a range of activities and facilities for shopping, good food, entertainment and recreation that reinforce the special identity and character of Pontypool, and set it apart from other valley towns.

The role of Pontypool Park as the People's Park will be enhanced. It will continue to be a beautiful place to relax and enjoy life, and will connect more effectively with the river, canal and surrounding countryside, and will become a leading venue in South Wales for open-air sporting pursuits, cultural events and festivities.

A rejuvenated Pontypool will be well connected to its communities, the valley and beyond. The activities and reputation of the town will better reflect its position as an important gateway to the Blaenavon World Heritage Site, the Brecon Beacons National Park and the South Wales Valleys. Its distinctive character and offer will complement other towns and neighbourhoods in Torfaen, adding to the wealth of opportunity and interest, and highlighting Torfaen as a desirable destination for homebuyers, visitors and investors.

The Objectives

1. BRAND PONTYPOOL

We want Pontypool to have a unique, recognisable image and distinctive appeal



7. BUILDING PONTYPOOL

We want Pontypool to be renowned for its distinctive architecture and the quality of its streets and spaces



2. PROMOTE PONTYPOOL

We want to put Pontypool on the map



8. ACCESSIBLE PONTYPOOL

We want Pontypool town centre to be accessible to all, easy to move through and a comfortable environment for pedestrians and cyclists



3. WORK PONTYPOOL

We want to create a more dynamic and diverse economy that supports achievement of the objectives



9. SETTING PONTYPOOL

We want Pontypool to connect more effectively with the wider strategic green/recreation network and fantastic surrounding natural environment



4. REVITALISE PONTYPOOL

We want to reinvigorate Pontypool and bring the town centre back to life



10. MARKETPLACE PONTYPOOL

We want to bring the indoor market back to life



5. PEOPLE'S PONTYPOOL

We want Pontypool to be known for its social enterprise and entrepreneurship, where the local community delivers regeneration and takes ownership and pride in the town and emerging initiatives



11. GREEN PONTYPOOL

We want to realise the full potential of the Park



6. UNITED PONTYPOOL

We want there to be greater movement of people between the different parts of the town



12. BLUE PONTYPOOL

We want the Afon Lwyd to form a key part of Pontypool's future



04 the town centre framework

The town centre framework is intended to inform and guide the emergence of development proposals. Whilst it is not a statutory planning tool, it does illustrate the direction in which the town should be developed if the agreed Vision is to be delivered.

The town centre framework is made up of 5 themed frameworks which together provide the physical structure to support the charter and appearance of the town, its function and operation.

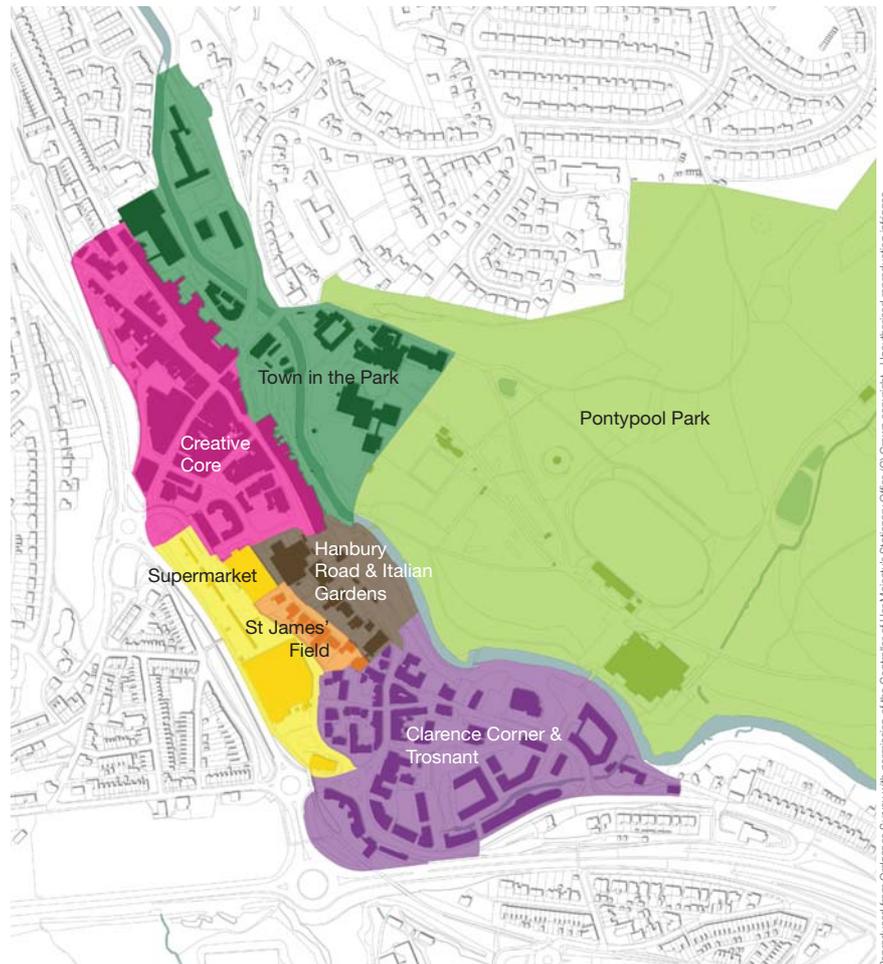
Character and Landuse Framework

In planning for the future, Pontypool should be considered as a number of areas, each with its own distinct image and identity. This will reinforce the town's inherent qualities and character. Within each area future development proposals need to be assessed on the basis of how well they contribute to the desired land use based on existing planning policies and character described for that area. The descriptions set out for each of the areas are not intended to be prescriptive but are meant to convey the urban qualities that should be maintained or sought over time.

The key areas are:

- The Creative Core;
- Clarence Corner and Trosnant;
- Hanbury Road and Italian Gardens;
- St James' Field;
- Supermarket;
- Town in the Park; and
- Pontypool Park.

The desired land use and character for these areas are described on the following pages.



The Creative Core

The main retail and commercial heart of the town. A vibrant, colourful and diverse hub of activity throughout the day and evening that celebrates and supports niche shopping and creative businesses. For the shopper or visitor it will be a place to browse, linger and meet friends within a high quality, pedestrian friendly environment. Entertainment and good quality restaurants/cafes will attract visitors to the Creative Core and encourage them to stay and explore through out the day and into the evening. The Creative Core will also be a lively and attractive place to live with easy access to a full complement of local facilities. The core will incorporate a centralised business support facility, encouraging business development, new ideas, nurturing new enterprise and potentially housing a new business forum and chamber of trade.

Clarence Corner and Trosnant

Clarence Corner and Trosnant will become an important hub for town living and business. Characterised by a network of enclosed, well defined streets and spaces and a sensitive mix of old and high quality new architecture, this area will provide homes, offices and workspace that capitalise on both its town centre and river/parkside location.

Clarence Corner/Trosnant will appeal in particular to those with an interest in active lifestyles, healthy living and high quality sustainable development, tying into the Park, the Active Living Centre, the river corridor and the wider landscape and recreation/leisure opportunities.

Clarence Corner is one of the few places in Pontypool where a significant amount of new development can take place. Development here has the opportunity to change perceptions of Pontypool and what it has to offer, particularly as a desirable place to live and visit and a location in which to invest.

Hanbury Road & Italian Gardens

Hanbury Road has a very strong character and ‘civic image’ which should be protected and enhanced. The street will see increased activity as a result of new development at Clarence Corner/Trosnant and a regenerated Creative Core. The Italian Gardens are an important local reference and should become a great ‘civic’ urban green space that brings together the town centre, park and river.

St James’ Field

St James’ Field is a small but distinctly different area characterised as a quiet predominantly residential cul-de-sac but also including a dentist, dance school and entrance to a children’s nursery. It is not proposed to change the character of this area but to emphasise its green and tranquil qualities.

Supermarket

Tesco forms a hub of activity at present for shoppers and school children, providing facilities not currently found elsewhere in the town centre. It is an asset to the town centre and improved linkages will enhance its role as an integral part of the town.

Town in the Park

This area currently lacks a clear identity and has become fragmented, feeling somewhat like the ‘back of town.’ This area will become a well treed, leafy green environment bringing unity to its various uses. Buildings will be set within a leafy riverside setting bringing together Pontypool Park, the Afon Lwyd and the town centre.

Pontypool Park

A beautiful parkland that promotes both active pursuits and quiet informal recreation. Pontypool Park will become a centre for outdoor pursuits within Torfaen and attract people from far and wide to enjoy its diverse leisure and recreational facilities. The Park will be a renowned venue for events and festivals attracting people to the town and putting Pontypool on the map. Crucially, Pontypool Park will continue to be a resource for the local community, providing a range of facilities for the health and well being of all ages. The historic and listed status of the Park will be respected and promoted.

The Urban Framework

The Urban Framework sets out the desired structure of the town - those elements that allow people to easily understand a place and find their way around. A town with a clearly expressed urban structure will also have a strong image and identity.

The Urban Framework for Pontypool simply identifies the proposed main streets and spaces that form the basic skeleton of the town, landmarks, activity hubs and arrival points. If change strengthens the character of these key elements then the image, identity and legibility of the town will be gradually enhanced. In practice this means:

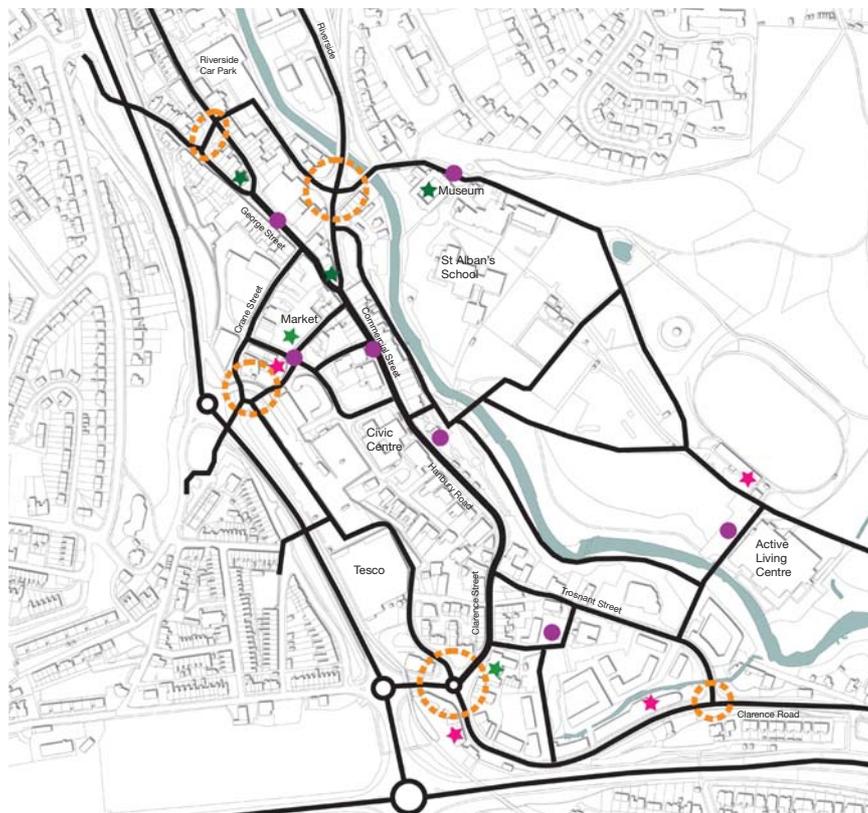
- ensuring that buildings of an appropriate design, scale and use address the key streets and spaces;
- protecting and emphasising the key views to landmarks;
- ensuring that building uses, movement and the treatment of the public realm support active hubs and streets;
- ensuring that arrival points are well designed, attractive and make it easy for people to orientate themselves.

Key routes that help define legibility

Important routes that define the structure of Pontypool and the way people understand the town. The scale and design of buildings and the way these streets are treated in terms of paving, cross sections and street furniture should strongly define and strengthen these important routes and their desired character.

Arrival points

are the areas where people feel they have arrived at Pontypool town centre and where the design of buildings and public spaces are of sufficient quality to create a strong positive lasting impression and to encourage people to investigate Pontypool further rather than just passing by. These arrival points should also help people to orientate themselves and clearly understand the way to their desired destination.



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Landmarks

- ★ - existing
- ★ - proposed

are prominent visual features that help people to orientate themselves and help identify an area and remember it. These are visual external references that the observer does not necessarily enter but are simply defined physical objects such as a building, bridge, tree or monument. Landmarks should be located to attract attention and encourage people to move along the streets to investigate. They should also positively contribute to the public spaces and streets.

Key activity hubs

are spaces within the town centre that will be a particular focus and concentration for activity. They are a type of landmark but whilst landmarks are distinct visual elements, an activity hub is a space that people enter into and interact with. Activity hubs should be supported by building uses which should also be active and open up onto the space. Activity hubs should be places where there is a lot of movement and often the intersection of a number of routes. The way the space is treated should also ensure that they are uncluttered and allow for a variety of uses.

Public Realm Framework

Public Realm is defined as the 'space between buildings' - the streets and spaces which form the structure of the town and the way it is perceived. For a town to be easy to understand and find your way around it is important that there is a clear 'Hierarchy of Streets', where the street cross-sections, design, surface material and street furniture clearly defines the role that the street plays and its desired function. Below is a summary of Public Realm principles and the Street Hierarchy.

■ Primary Urban Spine

High quality urban spine passing through very strongly defined character areas, creating a sequence of experiences, whilst still reading as a unified element that runs through the length of the town. The Primary Urban Spine is the main route through the town that defines the way that visitors and local people understand the town.

■■■ Primary Pedestrian

Primary Pedestrian Streets are the main pedestrian routes within the town that define the way that visitors and local people will understand and move through the town on foot and where the public realm is geared to creating a high quality pedestrian environment.

■ Entrance/Exit Streets

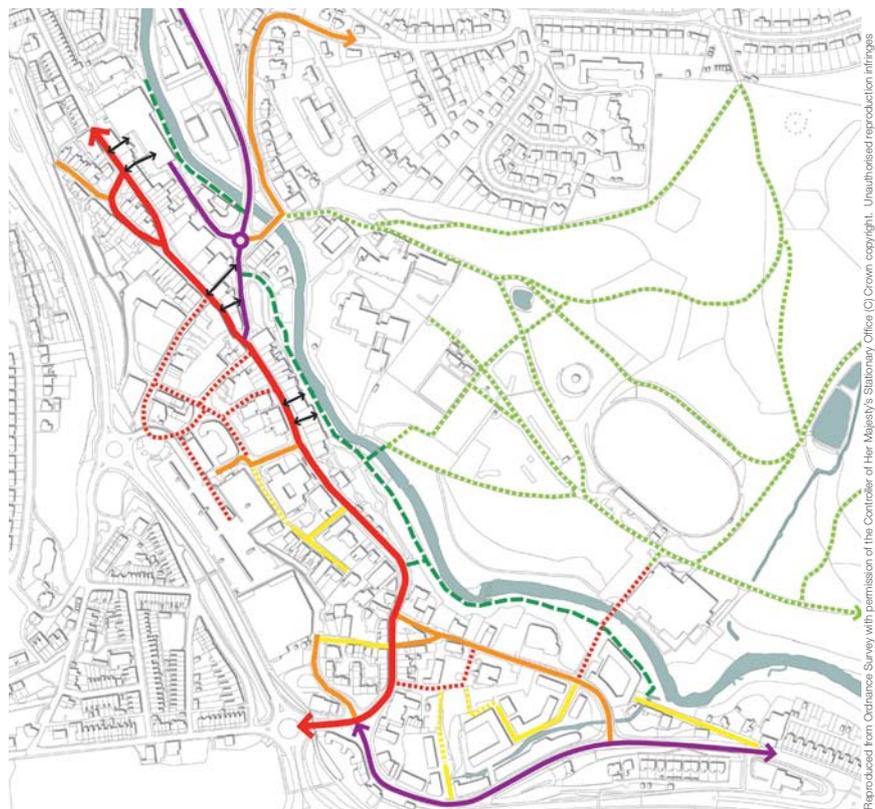
Along with the Primary Urban Spine, these streets form the main routes into and out of the town centre. The approach roads need to be designed to have well-defined, attractive frontages to adjacent properties. Landscape, street furniture and surfacing should create a very clear legibility and help define the routes to the main car parks.

■ Secondary Streets

The principal role of these streets is for residents and business access with a secondary role for visitors. They should accommodate pedestrians and vehicles in a comfortable, well overlooked environment. These streets should have a strong character and well defined and enclosed by adjacent buildings and stone walls.

■ Tertiary Streets

Tertiary streets are primarily for residents or access only. These are well defined streets with strong character and aim to create an excellent environment for pedestrians and cyclists.



■■■ Tertiary Streets Pedestrian

Footpaths primarily for residents or access only. These are footpaths that do not form the main pedestrian routes through the town but are important in creating a permeable network of footpaths and allow local people choice and diversity of routes.

↔ The Alleys

Enhancing existing and creating new alleys to make them a distinctive feature of Pontypool and to create a permeable network of routes between the river/park and Urban Spine.

■■■ The Greenway

Key pedestrian/cycle route along the Afon Lwyd corridor forming an alternative route through the town. The Greenway can be divided into two distinct characters that require a different approach to its treatment. The Rural Greenway, between the Active Living Centre to Italian Gardens should retain a rural feel. The Urban Greenway from Italian Gardens to Park Road should have a more urban character although still retaining a leafy, riverside character.

■■■ Park routes

Retaining good quality paths through the park that continue to reflect its character and can accommodate pedestrian and cycle movement.

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Transport and Parking Framework

Transport Objectives

- to make the town centre a place where pedestrians have priority - reducing the dominance of cars and providing a safe, comfortable and high quality environment for shopping, browsing and socialising;
- to provide excellent access to and from the town centre by foot, bicycle and public transport;
- to provide a centralised bus hub that allows easy and safe access to and from the town centre;
- to improve connectivity between the town centre and the surrounding communities;
- to ensure appropriately located and managed car parking facilities.

Key Proposals

Pedestrianisation of Market Street:

Commercial Street and Park Road enhancement

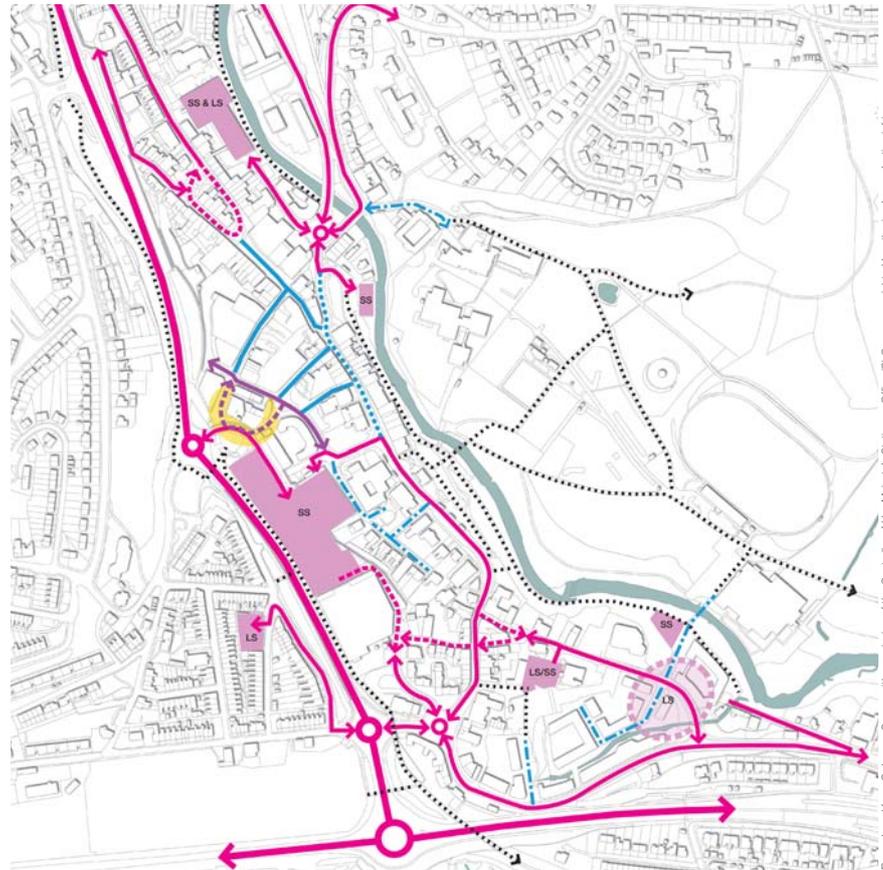
- Short term: to retain traffic so that passing trade is attracted, but to reduce its dominance, allowing the road to be narrowed and the pavements to be widened. Long term aim: to remove all traffic except buses. This longer term solution relies on Pontypool becoming an established centre with adequate long and short stay parking and a reduced reliance on passing trade.

Road infrastructure improvements - Includes the reconfiguration of Park Road/Riverside roundabout and Clarence Corner roundabout.

Improvement to signage - Improvements to signage in order to make people aware of what Pontypool has to offer, direct through traffic away from the town centre, direct traffic to appropriate car parks and visitors to local facilities.

Provision of a bus hub - To provide a single centralised location for all town centre buses to stop. The hub will provide facilities such as covered waiting areas and information on bus and train timetables and will offer interchange facilities to allow cyclists to park their bicycles and travel further afield on bus or taxi.

Improvement to bus services - Review of bus services, routes, stopping points and frequency to allow easy access between the town centre and surrounding



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communities and the wider area throughout the day and evening. Better integration of bus and train services should also be achieved.

Defining Taxi ranks - Locating taxi ranks at strategic locations along Osborne Road/George Street Loop and at 'The Link'.

Car Parking - Increasing long stay parking around the peripheries of the town centre and short stay parking within the town centre. New long stay multi-storey car park located within the Trosant area.

- ↔ two way - all vehicles
- one way - all vehicles
- ↔ two way - bus, taxi and access only
- one way - bus, taxi and access only
- ⋯ long term pedestrianisation and bus only
- ⋯ access only
- pedestrian and loading only
- ⋯ key cycle/pedestrian routes
- car parking -
- LS - long stay
- SS - short stay
- ☺ proposed bus hub

Green Infrastructure Framework

The Green Infrastructure Framework looks at how Pontypool sits within and relates to its wider landscape and surrounding leisure resource as part of the Valleys Regional Park. The key proposals for Pontypool's setting and recreational green space are summarised below:

The River Corridor

Proposals for the river corridor include:

- extending access along the currently inaccessible stretch of river behind the buildings on Commercial Street to link into existing riverside routes;
- improved signage and surfacing to existing paths to encourage greater use of the river corridor;
- enhance the waterside environment through appropriate management and maintenance;
- exploring opportunities for using the river to produce electricity. This could also be combined with some form of interpretation of the river's history and wildlife;
- forming part of a wider riverside link connecting Pontypool to surrounding settlements and open space;
- design and lighting will be sensitive to protected species.

Pontypool Park

Proposals for the park include:

- restoration/enhancement of existing features including the lakes, shell grotto, ski slope, the rugby ground stands/buildings and formal recreation facilities including tennis and bowls;
- promotion of the Park as a centre for outdoor pursuits and for events;
- introduction of greater diversity of leisure activities and recreational facilities to cater for all;
- potential for a new landmark building in the tradition of the folly and shell grotto but expressed through modern architecture. It could function as the Parks outdoor pursuits centre and incorporate an information point, education and interpretation centre, public conveniences and facilities such as bike hire and a leisure retail unit;
- setting up a 'Parks Association of Friends' comprising people who have a passion to see the Park move forward and help support and finance its future;
- new landmark footbridge to link the town centre (via Italian Gardens) to the Park.

These proposals will take full account of the Park's historic and listed status.

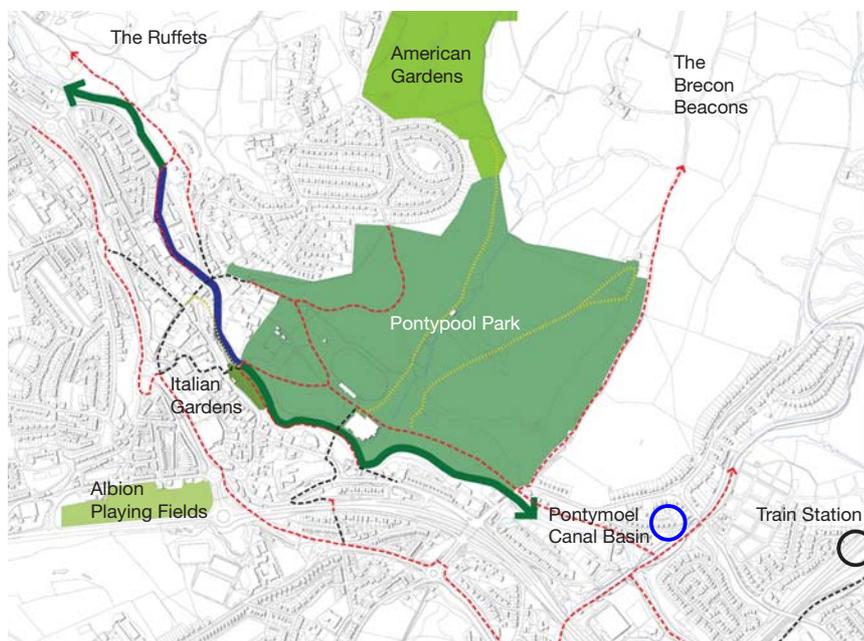
'Rural River'

'Urban River'

Key cycle and pedestrian routes

Key pedestrian only routes

Key pedestrian and cycle friendly routes



Italian Gardens

The Italian Gardens is a critical space at the interface between the Park and the town centre and is important to bringing the town centre and Park together. The Italian Gardens should be enlivened as part of the riverside walk, and potentially include a cafe/restaurant space and an outdoor green amphitheatre that will cater for both formal performance and informal sitting and leisure.

Management and removal of some vegetation within the Italian Gardens is required to open up views of the Gardens and Park from Hanbury Road.

Albion Fields

Albion Fields provides an important formal recreational space within Pontypool and this

function should be retained and potentially enhanced.

Surrounding Destinations

There are a number of key recreation destinations surrounding Pontypool. Raising awareness and improving pedestrian and cycle links to these destinations will help create a strong pedestrian and cycle network around the town and promote health, leisure and education. These destinations include:

- The Brecon Beacons;
- Llanedgfedd Reservoir;
- Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal - Pontymoel Canal Basin;
- The American Gardens;
- The Folly; and
- Glynn Pits.

05 the people framework

Alongside the Town Centre Framework, the strategy recognises the importance of developing people to ensure that there are sufficient skills, expertise and confidence within the local community to support the regeneration process and to take advantage of employment and training opportunities that arise.

The People Framework consists of two elements: the Community Regeneration Plan and the Economic Strategy.

The Community Regeneration Plan

The plan relates the provision of facilities to needs identified through the public consultation process. This includes:

- establishing a facility for young people in the town and providing them with the capacity to undertake its management;
- establishing a focal point for cultural and community activity, potentially run by local people as a social enterprise;
- developing Pontypool Indoor Market and Outdoor Market as a focus for healthy eating initiatives;
- introducing mechanisms for local people to become more involved in the delivery of regeneration projects.

Community Pride and Safety

For Pontypool Town Centre to thrive in the future, it is essential that perceptions about the town change. It is clear from the public consultation process that many people regard Pontypool as not having much to offer in the way of facilities and shops; that it has a run-down feel created by vacant and poorly maintained properties, as well as litter problems and low quality street surfacing; and that it suffers from problems associated with anti-social behaviour.

The Strategy aims to restore confidence in the town by addressing these issues and its success will often depend on people's support in making change happen.

Pride in the town will not only come from an improvement in its physical appearance, with vacant shops replaced by new, successful businesses, but also from cultural and community activities and facilities that give a sense of life and vibrancy. Greater involvement from residents, employers and traders will be encouraged to instil new energy in Pontypool Town Centre.

Further steps will be taken to provide a feeling of safety in the town centre with Torfaen County Borough Council working in partnership with the Police, Community Safety Partnership and businesses to introduce appropriate measures such as:

- upgrading / extending CCTV coverage;
- improving lighting in car parks;
- coordinating the Storenet system between the police and other users.

The Economic Strategy

Chamber of Trade

The establishment of a Chamber of Trade, or similar organisation, is a key element of the People Framework to enable the business community to play a central role in the regeneration of Pontypool Town Centre. It is important that the business community itself drives the establishment and organisation of the Chamber, with support from the public sector where appropriate. The Chamber could provide the following:

- a forum for sharing expertise and collaborating on business issues;
- business-to-business networking opportunities;
- cost-effective procurement of shared services (for example marketing);
- organising and promoting activity to support the vitality of the town centre;
- identifying skills requirements to sustain businesses in the town.

Training and Skills

The strategy creates the potential for linking training and employment opportunities to physical regeneration opportunities. Projects involving the refurbishment and reuse of vacant property in the town centre provide the opportunity for construction-based and specialist building conservation skills training, reflecting the status of the town centre as a Conservation Area, with a concentration of listed buildings.

The Strategy seeks to develop greater coordination between regeneration bodies, training providers and training schemes to enable companies and trainees to:

- undertake additional and / or specialised training;
- provide apprenticeship opportunities;
- increase the number of local companies able to undertake specialised work.

Pontypool Indoor Market

The Market is identified in the strategy as providing a low/cost and low/risk hub for new retail business and to establish a broader package of support to enable this to happen. It can also act as a focal point for the promotion of other training and skills initiatives and a potential venue for the delivery of appropriate related training.

06 the projects & initiatives

The projects and initiatives identified in the Regeneration Strategy represent an integrated approach to improving the sustainability of Pontypool Town Centre.

Prioritisation of Projects and Initiatives

The Regeneration Strategy identifies a long list of 85 Projects and Initiatives that, if implemented, would contribute significantly to achievement of the Vision, helping Pontypool to fulfil its true potential. All of them make a positive contribution to at least one, and usually several, of the Objectives for Pontypool Town Centre Regeneration.

These Projects and Initiatives are categorised under 3 headings:

- Town Centre Development projects;
- Economic Strategy initiatives; and
- Community Regeneration Plan initiatives.

Whilst there is no specific 'Environmental Strategy', many of the Projects and Initiatives make a major contribution towards environmental and ecological objectives, particularly in connection with Pontypool Park and the Afon Lwyd, as detailed in the main Regeneration Strategy document, which incorporates information on all of the 85, setting out Target Outcomes and Actions in some detail.

This long list has been evaluated against a set of criteria that assess the level of benefit derived, against the cost incurred in delivery. This is a basic cost benefit analysis designed to provide some understanding of the value-for-money of different actions. The criteria used were:

- contribution towards achieving the agreed Objectives for the town's regeneration;
- ability to build local confidence in the regeneration process;
- delivery time - affected by planning, political will, land ownership, market conditions;
- anticipated scale of the public subsidy (based on rough order costings) - representing the opportunity cost of intervention; and
- the sustainability, in its broadest sense of making Pontypool more able to sustain its recovery and future growth and therefore encompassing community, economic and environmental sustainability.

As a result of the exercise, 41 Projects and Initiatives have been prioritised for implementation. The full information on each of the prioritised Projects and Initiatives is included in the Implementation Plan in the main Regeneration Strategy document. Each is recorded under the Objective to which it makes the most significant contribution. Most of the proposed actions contribute to several of the Objectives. The Implementation Plan records the Target Outcome, key Actions and Lead Organisation for all 41 prioritised Projects and Initiatives, along with an indication of the delivery timescale and rough order requirement for public funding. The Implementation Plan will need to be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains relevant, robust and deliverable, and so that it is able to respond to changing circumstances. This is addressed further in the Monitoring and Evaluation section.

It is very important to note that ALL of the Projects and Initiatives on the long list were worthwhile, realistic and deliverable proposals. The fact that they have NOT been prioritised does not mean that they are not worth pursuing. Each one is worthwhile and should be progressed in parallel wherever resource allows, but priority should be given over to resourcing those Projects and Initiatives listed in the Implementation Plan.

Similarly, should NEW proposals emerge, they too should be assessed. If public intervention is required, they should be evaluated against the same criteria as above in order to ascertain a measure of priority for public funding. If they are private development schemes requiring no financial support, they should be assessed against the Objectives to make sure they are delivering all they can to the Regeneration of Pontypool.

This document lists the prioritised Projects and Initiatives for the next 5 years.

Prioritised Projects - The Next 5 Years

Physical projects:

U4. George Street Enhancement - creation of pedestrianised streets with 'flush surface' paving, uncluttered, and a comfortable place to shop and sit. Improved loading/deliveries access.

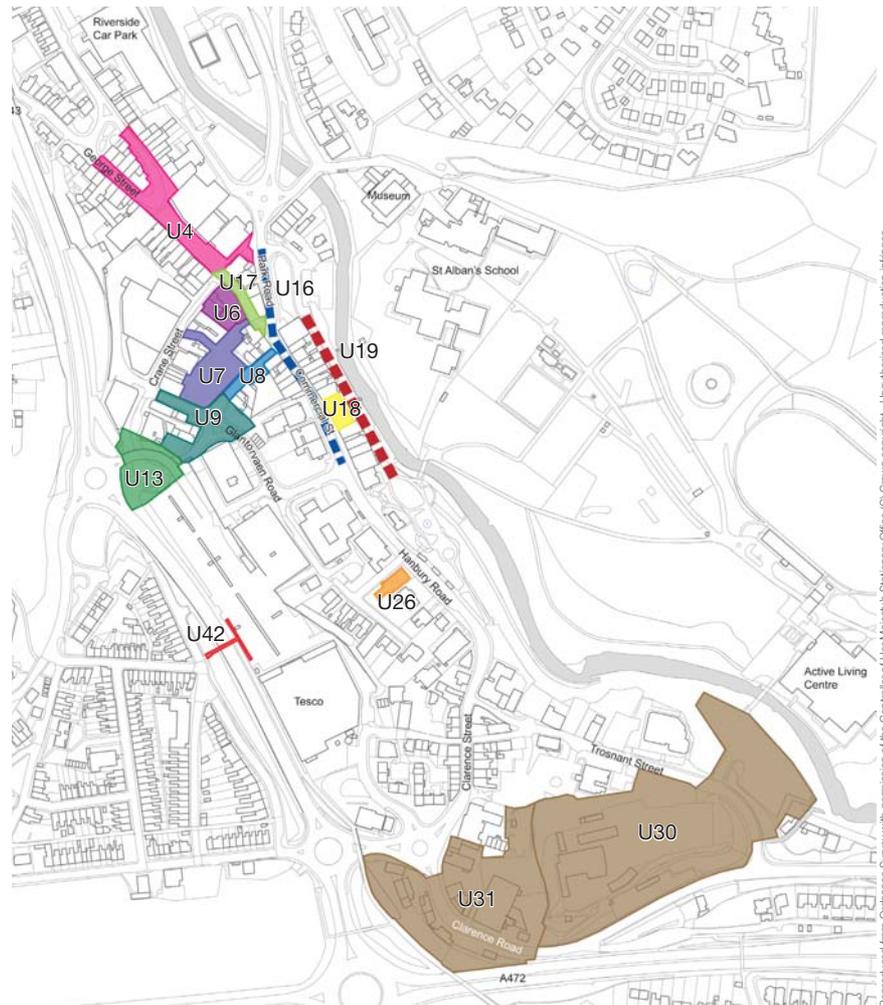
U6. Refurbishment and reuse of vacant space within Lion House - bringing more life back into the centre by introducing residential or office use on upper floors of this important building.

U7. Bringing the Indoor Market back to life - to reinvigorate and bring it back to being a hub of activity within the town centre. It should be a place to buy quality local produce and enable flexible use of the space for community events and activities.

U8. Pedestrianisation and improvements to Market Street - enforcement of pedestrianisation with allowance for loading and marked spaces for disabled parking.

U9. New Market Square - a new town centre square that emphasises and celebrates the importance of the Indoor Market. A new hub of activity, helping to sustain the market and businesses in Market Street. Highway space would be reduced to give greater pedestrian priority.

U13. Making the Link and establishing the Bus Hub - create a well designed, high quality space at 'The Link' incorporating new 'bus hub' to drop people at the heart of the town. Location for an innovative exciting feature visible from Tesco car park and the A4043 that will draw peoples attention. This could take the form of a canopy suspended from the flyover.



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U16. Commercial Street/Park Road improvements

- to transform Commercial Street into a safe and comfortable shopping and business environment. This is likely to require a two stage approach:

Short term aim: to retain traffic so that passing trade is attracted, but to reduce its dominance, allowing the road to be narrowed and the pavements to be widened.

Long term aim: to remove all traffic except buses. This longer term solution relies on Pontypool becoming an established centre with adequate long and short stay parking and a reduced reliance on passing trade.

U17. Park Road bus stops - short term measure to relieve congestion on Park Road by creating a bus pull in on Park Road.

U18. Restoration and reuse of Hypervalue building - as an important building along Commercial Street and the river corridor. Possible uses include a place for small creative industries to start up, a new 'knowledge hub' incorporating the relocated library or a place for the voluntary sector to co-locate creating a 'one-stop' shop.

U19. Pontypool's 'Urban River' - creation of a new footpath link along the 'Afon Lwyd' from the Italian Gardens to Park Road, overlooked by cafes, shops and businesses. Works would include refurbishment to adjacent buildings, management of vegetation and the riverside environment and would be dependent on full consideration of ecological requirements.

U26. Restoration of St James' Hall for community use - restoration for potential venues for community facilities and events/auditorium.

U30. Eastern Trosnant redevelopment - undertake a contamination study and flood consequence assessment to determine options for uses and viability.

U31. Western Trosnant Redevelopment - undertake a contamination study and flood consequence assessment to determine options for uses and viability

U41. Town-wide environmental improvements - A number of simple interventions to improve the town centre environment, including: chewing gum removal from pavements; maintenance and upgrade of shrubberies and painting railings and bollards.

U42. Refurbish the bridge to Tesco car park - Minor works to refurbish the pedestrian bridge over the by pass.

Economic and community projects:

- Utilise the Indoor Market as a low cost, low risk business start-up venue, with a package of business support, working with training providers and other agencies.
- Develop links with community organisations and healthy living initiatives to utilise the Indoor and Outdoor Markets as a source for affordable fruit and vegetables.
- Improve the coordination of training, and skills development initiatives with regeneration activity to improve the effectiveness of transition from training to employment.
- Encourage community-led initiatives to drive social enterprise in Pontypool Town Centre.
- Devise and implement a programme for bringing back vacant buildings in the town centre back into use, working with organisations such as Pontypool Development Trust and Housing Associations.
- Implement short term Community Safety measures including upgrading and repairing CCTV, and linking Storennet system to CCTV.

- Establish a focal point for community and cultural activities, potentially run by local people as a social enterprise and skills development initiative.
- Work with Pontypool Youth Council (and others) to explore ways in which young people can help support and organise cultural activities in the town centre.
- Implement a litter prevention project.

Illustrative Masterplan

The plan below shows just one possible way that Pontypool Town Centre could look in 15 - 20 years time if all potential development projects were implemented. It has no formal planning status.



07 monitoring and evaluation

Review of the regeneration strategy

The Regeneration Strategy will be reviewed, by an independent body, on a 5 yearly basis. This will allow sufficient time for resourcing and structuring to be put in place, and for a range of improvements to be initiated. Positive change will start to become evident in this time period. Review will enable overall success to be assessed and will provide an opportunity to adjust the town's direction in the light of a new set of circumstances, if appropriate.

The established Vision, Objectives, Framework, Projects and Initiatives should only be changed where they are proven not to be working, or where more effective solutions can be clearly demonstrated.

Due to the long interval between these reviews, an understanding of progress will be built up through interim annual reviews, undertaken by the Pontypool Regeneration Delivery Team. These annual reviews will assess progress against the agreed outcomes (below). They will also: assess progress on individual prioritised Projects and Initiatives; consider progress on other long list Projects and Initiatives; and consider the merits of supporting new emerging proposals. The annual review will need to recommend to the Pontypool Regeneration Programme Board any changes in priority.

Progress will be monitored and evaluated against an agreed set of measurable Outcomes. These will indicate progress against the Regeneration Strategy Objectives and will reflect the agreed priorities. The set of Outcomes and their precise target values, will be agreed with the Programme Board once the priorities have been finally approved, but are expected to address the following:

- the level of user confidence in the town based on questionnaire survey;
- retail turnover in relation to floorspace to indicate the level of activity and vitality;
- footfall in the town centre, at key locations including the Indoor Market;
- the level of business representation to indicate demand from retailers and businesses wanting to locate to the town;
- the proportion of vacant property in the town centre;
- diversity of uses in the town centre;
- the number of people employed in the town centre;
- the proportion of people moving from formal training programmes into employment;
- the number of people using the Park;
- pedestrian flows between the Park and the town centre;
- the diversity of activities available in the Park;
- the number of people arriving in Pontypool by modes other than the car;
- questionnaire survey of the perception of safety;
- offending and reoffending levels.

Each of these needs to be measured now to form a baseline.

08 the next steps

Where do we go from here ?

The Pontypool Town Centre Regeneration Strategy is both ambitious and realistic in its approach. It is based on community need and aspiration and aims to improve the standard of facilities, service, product and environment in the town in order to attract more expenditure since that is what Pontypool needs to improve and sustain its prospects. That cannot be achieved with one simple scheme - instead it demands the implementation of a wide range of coordinated physical development projects and economic and community initiatives.

There is a lot to do. The list of Projects and Initiatives for delivery in the first 5 years is extensive and, in addition, there is much to be done in the short term to align the longer term schemes for delivery beyond 5 years. The resources now need to be committed to implement the actions that are essential for Pontypool's revival.

The Implementation Plan is derived from comprehensive study and realistic assumptions about deliverability, but as the principal public sector agencies, the Council and DE&T will now need to explore with stakeholders HOW projects can be progressed and whether they may wish to be considered for public funding support. Eligibility for funding sources such as the Townscape Heritage Initiative and Convergence Fund need to be confirmed as a priority in order that applications can be progressed within established timescales.

The process of preparing this Strategy has itself helped in the regeneration of the town, by raising awareness, boosting confidence and giving some hope that the future prospects will be brighter. The Pontypool community must now become fully engaged in the delivery of the Strategy, since it is a Strategy derived from their needs and delivering their future.

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