

**BARGOED TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN**



**ADOPTED PLAN**

**APRIL 2009**

**BIGidea** Bargoed

**Syniad Mawr** Bargoed

## **Preface**

This plan is an update of the 2003 Bargoed Town Centre Action Plan. It is intended to provide a context for an intense period of regeneration of the town centre over the next 3 years.

COPIES OF THE Plan can be obtained from;

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This Town Centre Action Plan was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Caerphilly county borough council at its meeting on . . .

# BARGOED TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN - 2009

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<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
1. The Need for a new Action Plan	4
2. Maintaining the Momentum	5
3. Why is Bargoed Town Centre so important?	9
4. Strategic Context and Policy Framework	10
5. Evidence Base	14
6. SWOT Analysis	17
7. Vision and Objectives	20
8. Town centre Strategy	21
9. Proposals	22
10. Implementation	27

## Plans:

1) Upper Rhymney Valley – Settlement Roles	9
2) LDP Spatial Strategy	13
3) 10, 20 and 30 minute drive times from Bargoed	18
4) Themed Areas	25
5) Proposals plan	26
6) Development Brief Masterplan for the Retail Plateau	29

## 1. The need for a new action plan

The announcement by the Welsh Assembly Government that funding would be provided for Bargoed's long-awaited relief road highlighted the need for an up to date action plan for the regeneration of the town centre to take advantage of the road scheme. The result was the Bargoed Town Centre Action Plan which was approved in August 2003.

Since that time events have moved rapidly on and there is now a need to update the Action Plan to take account of;

- A major study of the regeneration potential of the town centre carried out by consultants Camlin Lonsdale in 2005. The main proposals in the study were approved by the Council's cabinet in September 2005.
- The increasing importance of Bargoed in regional and sub-regional strategies including the Heads of the Valleys Programme.
- A wider role for Bargoed envisaged in the Council's emerging Local Development Plan.
- The imminent completion of the road scheme – 'Angel Way' in 2009
- Commencement of the latest European Union structural fund programme – the 'Convergence' programme from 2007 to 2012.
- The Development Brief for the 'retail plateau' (2007)

Most of the new proposals in this plan have therefore already been approved by the Council but there is a need to consolidate these decisions into an overall strategy for the town centre by updating the 2003 plan.

## The Purpose of the Action Plan

This Action plan has three main purposes;

- 1) To provide a comprehensive framework for the regeneration of Bargoed town centre
- 2) To provide support and a context for bids for grant aid for the regeneration process
- 3) As supplementary planning guidance to the approved Unitary Development Plan and the emerging Local Development Plan
- 4) To promote Bargoed town centre as an investment opportunity for the private sector

## 2. Maintaining the Momentum

For nearly 100 years the prosperity of Bargoed depended on the local collieries, which employed thousands of workers in their heyday. Following the closure of the last colliery in 1977, Bargoed suffered from a steady spiral of decline. Since 1994 substantial steps have taken place to reverse this trend and lay the foundations for a sustainable prosperous future for the town and the surrounding communities that depend on Bargoed for shops and services.

- 1994-2000 (in two phases) the £14 million Bargoed Colliery Reclamation Scheme funded by the Welsh Development Agency. This removed the colliery buildings and spoil tip and created the landform for a relief road and new development.
- Commercial Improvement Grants to shopfronts in the town centre. From 1987 to 2005 113 improvement grants totalling £873,296 were implemented.
- 1998 and ongoing – Development of the Parc Coedtir country park. - 89 hectares of country park centred on the River Rhymney and linking the communities of Bargoed, Aberbargoed, Gilfach and Britannia
- 1999 - the Bargoed town centre Northern Car Park scheme, which provided a high quality enhanced 170 space car park for the town centre incorporating a new viewing platform overlooking the valley.
- 1999 - CCTV introduced into the town centre to help combat anti-social behaviour.
- 2000 - Bargoed steps - a spectacular new improved pedestrian link from the enhanced car park to the main shopping street. Complemented by the provision of 20 disabled parking spaces and ramped route to the town centre.
- 2000 - Bargoed northern railway station enhancement, including a new disabled lift/bridge across the railway lines plus a taxi rank and environmental enhancements.
- 2001 - Bargoed Northern Gateway - a vastly improved entrance to the northern part of the town centre, opening up spectacular views of St Gwladys Church through replacing run down and derelict commercial premises with a landscaped car park, bus stop and disabled ramp access to the Church.
- In 2004 a Town Centre Development Manager was appointed for the principal main towns in the county borough, including Bargoed.
- 2004 onwards - Following the appointment of the Town Centre Development Manager, a programme of annual events has been initiated including 'Bargoed Big Bed' and 'Bargoed Big Screen'. In addition a new town centre 'brand' was developed, 'Bargoed's Big Idea' which has been successfully rolled out across a number of different marketing platforms including; lamppost banners, window stickers and a 'Windows Of Opportunity' document.
- Minor environmental improvements to spaces in the town centre have been carried out ahead of the road scheme including the paved space in front of the SPAR shop (2006) and a

## BARGOED TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN - 2009

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landscaped area in place of the demolished 45 Hanbury Road (2007).

- In 2005 The Council and the WDA employed consultants Camlin Lonsdale to study the regeneration potential of the town centre. Their proposals included a radical and spectacular proposal for demolition of town centre properties, including the library and their replacement by a huge multi-level mixed use development. This aspect of the plan was subsequently approved by the Council
- In 2006 the Council started acquiring 13 properties required to be demolished to allow the ambitious retail redevelopment scheme to go ahead with the help of a grant from the Heads of the Valleys Programme.
- In 2007 work finally commenced on the two-year construction programme for the relief road, to be named 'Angel Way'. The scheme, significantly titled 'The Greater Bargoed Community Regeneration Scheme' includes spectacular structures bridging the river Rhymney and the railway line.
- As part of the same contract, work commenced on creating the 2.2 hectare 'Retail Plateau' for development in the south of the town centre.
- Complementing the new road network has been a significant improvement in the rail service to Bargoed in 2007. The town is now the only major town in the Heads of the Valleys Programme Area to have four trains an hour to Cardiff. In 2008 the carriage capacity of trains on the Rhymney Valley line was increased from two to four, doubling the passenger capacity of each train.
- 2007 & 2008 With support from the Heads of the Valleys Programme, housing associations have acquired run down properties in the town centre for renewal and new uses, including the relocated health facilities and town library, which are being facilitated by the United Welsh Housing Association.
- 2007 - The Council and the Welsh Assembly Government commissioned consultants Barton Willmore to draw up a detailed brief for the retail plateau at the southern end of the town centre and employed Cooke and Arkwright to market the site to prospective developers. Consultants also provided an Arts Strategy for the town centre.
- Thirteen development companies expressed an interest in the site as a result of the marketing exercise and from these a short list of five was invited to make formal bids and proposals for the site, based on the brief.
- In 2008 a 'Preferred Developer' was approved for the scheme. The Council and its partners will work with the Preferred Developer to deliver a high quality comprehensive retail and leisure development by 2012.
- In late 2008 the conversion of the former job centre into a new home for the town's health centre was completed and the health facilities were able to relocate from the old library building.
- November 2008 also saw the opening of 90% of the Angel Way relief road.

## BARGOED TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN - 2009

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- Early in 2009 the first phase of the construction of the Retail Development Plateau was completed, including the exterior earth-reinforced retaining structure and 'town wall'.

The sum total of all these developments has been that by the end of 2009 the public authorities will have spent over £50 million in laying the foundations for the long term, sustainable regeneration of the town to make it a focus for the regeneration of the whole of the Upper Rhymney Valley. This will complement a £30 million redevelopment scheme to be implemented by the private sector.

## **Public Consultation before the update**

This plan is an update of the 2003 Town Centre Action Plan, which was the subject of extensive public consultation during its preparation. Subsequently the Camlin Lonsdale Study was produced, again following extensive consultation, both with the general public and with stakeholder groups such as the town council, the local access group and the chamber of trade.

Localised consultation exercises have taken place with residents and businesses in the vicinity of particular schemes, such as the landscaping of the No.45 Hanbury road site, resulting in significant changes from the original proposal.

Throughout this process, plans and proposals have been monitored by a town centre partnership – the Bargoed Town centre Management Group, on which sit representatives of the county borough council, the town council, the chamber of trade, the police, voluntary sector organisations and local residents.

A standing exhibition was set up in premises in Hanbury Road in 2007. Initially this showed progress on the relief road scheme but it is also being used to publicise and inform regeneration proposals, in particular the proposed retail and leisure redevelopment.

Working parties of officers from relevant council departments and public sector partners including the Welsh Assembly Government have been set up to monitor and co-ordinate the regeneration projects. Officers report regularly on progress to the Town Centre Management Group, the Council's Regeneration scrutiny Committee, The Greater Bargoed Partnership and the Heads of the Valleys Monitoring group.

## **Public Consultation on the Draft Town Centre Action Plan**

Formal consultation on the draft Action Plan took place over a six week period between September 1<sup>st</sup> and October 17<sup>th</sup> 2008.

The consultation included an exhibition in the then library building at Hanbury Square, presentations to key stakeholder groups, including the Chamber of Trade, the Town Council and the Greater Bargoed Partnership and general publicity through press releases and posters. The exhibition was manned for three days each week for two weeks of the six week consultation period.

The Plan's proposals were generally very well received and some small changes have been made to the draft plan in response to suggestions by consultees. A separate report on the consultation exercise, including a full list of representations and the Council's response to them, is available as a separate document.

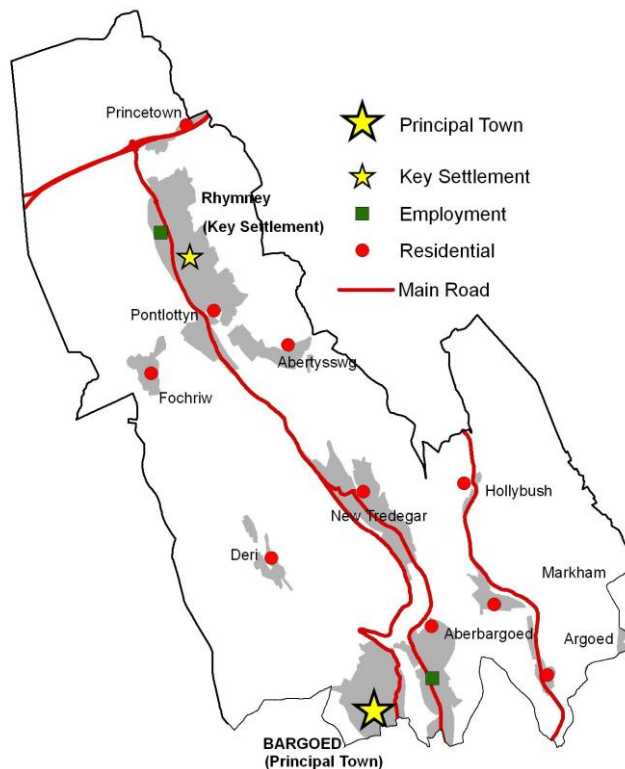
A further, separate consultation exercise took place in March 2009 on the proposed one-way traffic system and associated public realm improvements.



## 3. Why Bargoed Town Centre is so important

- Firstly, because it is the only ‘principal’ or district centre - ie the only centre which serves a wider locality than its immediate settlement - in the north of Caerphilly County Borough. It contains, for example, 156 Commercial premises, compared to 29 in the next largest centre in that area. The future prospects for the Upper Rhymney Valley are therefore bound up with the future of Bargoed and in particular its town centre.
- Secondly, in an area in which enterprise and business development is poorly developed, the centre contains over 100 independent, locally owned businesses. If an enterprise culture is to grow and thrive in the upper Rhymney Valley, Bargoed town centre is the obvious starting point.
- Thirdly, the town centre, being the most visited location in the upper Rhymney Valley, is inevitably a strong component of the overall image of the area as a whole. For regeneration to take hold in the area as a whole, there has to be change in image and confidence and the town centre has to be the focal point for this change.
- Fourthly, as the local district centre, Bargoed is the hub of the various transportation networks serving the area, particularly public transport and plays a crucial role in the general accessibility of services to the catchment population.
- Finally, the town centre is a focus of opportunity in an area of deprivation  
The above factors are responsible for the increased recognition in local and sub-regional planning and regeneration strategies of the importance and potential of Bargoed.

Fig. 1 – Bargoed in the context of the Upper Rhymney and Sirhowy Valleys



## 4. The Strategic and Policy Context

### The Wales Spatial Plan

Bargoed is located in the 'Heads of the Valleys Plus' Strategic Opportunity Area identified in the 2008 update to the Wales Spatial Plan. That documents states;- "Key valley settlements will have more affordable and attractive housing, a better range of local services and a variety of retail and leisure facilities".<sup>1</sup> The plan identifies 14 'hubs' – or Primary Key Settlements – in South East Wales. Bargoed is not among them but the Plan goes on to state; "A wide range of mid and upper Valleys towns need modern shopping, leisure, community and cultural facilities, more attractive and affordable housing, clean, vibrant town centres, accessible open countryside and employment opportunities"<sup>2</sup> The Bargoed Town Centre Action Plan is intended to address many of these objectives for the Mid and Upper Rhymney Valley.

### The Convergence Framework for South East Wales

The new European Structural programme, termed the 'Convergence Fund' spans the period 2007-2013/15 and presents a major opportunity for town centre regeneration. The whole of Caerphilly county borough is included in the Convergence area but the Framework document which provides guidance for the "Physical Regeneration" Priority, including town centres, prioritises the "most deprived areas" which are also "areas of opportunity". Bargoed fits this profile perfectly and is included in a list of 44 deprived settlements in Wales that will together receive at least 80% of the funding for the 'Physical Regeneration' priority of the Convergence Programme.

Caerphilly county borough has collaborated with five other Valleys local authorities and the then Department of the Economy and Transport to produce a joint programme for the Physical Regeneration Priority, entitled the "Valleys Renaissance". The Regeneration of Bargoed is a major project within this collaborative programme.

### The Heads of the Valleys Programme

The Heads of the Valleys Programme is a long term initiative sponsored by the Welsh Assembly Government to regenerate some of the most deprived areas in Wales over the period 2006-2021. In the Programme's emerging spatial strategy, Bargoed is recognised as one of 11 key 'hubs' in the programme area, providing jobs and services for the Upper Rhymney Valley (population 30,000). By April 2008, the Heads of the Valleys Programme had already invested nearly £2 million in key projects in the regeneration of the town centre.

Holistic Regeneration Action Plans (HARPs) are being drawn up to guide future funding support from the Heads of the Valleys and other regeneration programmes. The proposals of this action plan will contribute towards the HARP for the Upper Rhymney Valley.

### Caerphilly county borough Community Plan

One of the main Regeneration objectives of the Caerphilly county borough Community Plan is to "*support town and village centre and other area based regeneration and develop sustainable*

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<sup>1</sup> People, Places, Futures: The Wales Spatial Plan 2008 Update Consultation p.99 para 19.4

<sup>2</sup> *ibid* p. 100, para. 19.7

# BARGOED TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN - 2009

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*tourism opportunities*”<sup>3</sup> The Bargoed Town Centre Action Plan is specifically mentioned as part of the Community Plan’s Town and village centre ‘beacon’ project.

## **Caerphilly county borough regeneration strategy**

The Council’s regeneration strategy – “The Smart Alternative” covers a ten year period from 2003 to 2013. One of its six priorities is to “re-establish town centres as foci of economic activity”. The Bargoed Town Centre Action Plan is also referred to in the context of implementing the Strategy.

## **The Unitary Development Plan**

The Council’s current land use policy document is the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) which was approved by the Council in 2003. Policy R1 of that plan identifies Bargoed as a district centre and proposal R3(1) specifically identifies a site to the south of the town centre for retail development.

THIS ACTION PLAN IS PREPARED UNDER POLICY DC4 OF THE UDP, WHICH PROVIDES FOR SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE TO COMPLEMENT THE UDP<sup>4</sup>.

## **Caerphilly county borough council Sustainability Strategy**

This Action Plan will make a significant contribution to the county borough council’s sustainability aspirations by;

- regenerating the town centre and the local economy
- providing services locally for the residents of Bargoed and the Upper Rhymney Valley
- Developing of ‘brownfield’ land in a sustainable way
- Improving public transport infrastructure and pedestrian environments
- Encouraging healthy lifestyles by providing pedestrian and cycle links between the town and local country parks

## **The Local Development Plan**

The Council is currently developing its Local development Plan (LDP) which will eventually replace the UDP as the land use policy document for the county borough. A Preferred Strategy for the LDP was published for public consultation in April 2007 and The Deposit Plan was published for consultation on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Bargoed is one of two town centres in the Plan (the other is Caerphilly itself) identified for major retail development and is the only centre in the county borough to also be identified for major leisure facilities.

Aberbargoed, across the valley from the town centre, and linked to it by the new road, is set to be a significant location for residential development over the next 15 years with several major housing sites totalling over 500 dwellings identified in the Deposit Local Development Plan.

This Town Centre Action Plan is intended to provide Supplementary Planning Guidance to policy CW26 of the LDP when it supersedes the UDP. In the interim it will supplement policy DC4 (above) of the UDP.

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<sup>3</sup> Caerphilly county borough community plan 2004 p.7

<sup>4</sup> Caerphilly county borough Unitary Development Plan p.34

## BARGOED TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN - 2009

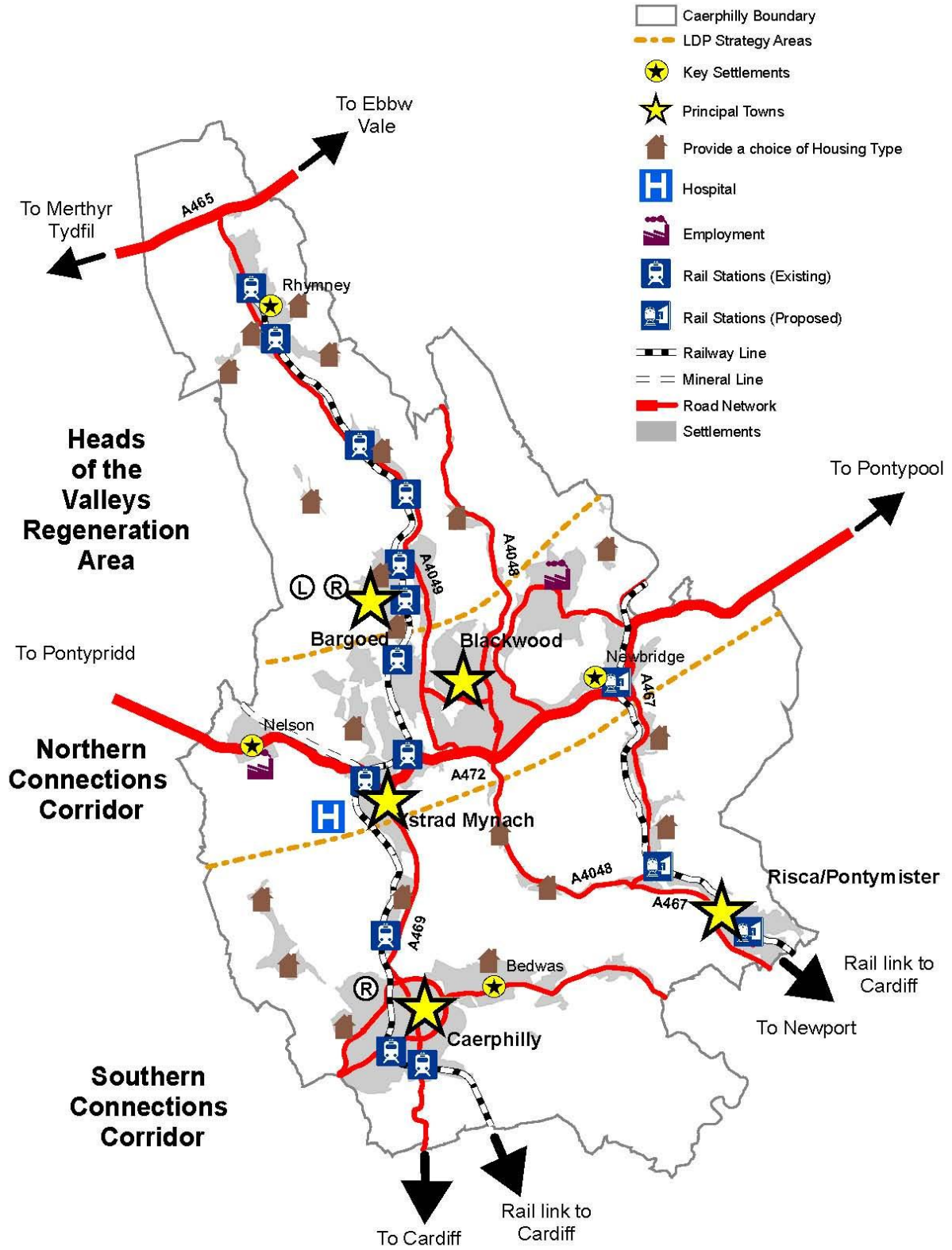
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This Action Plan will give a provide a context in particular for the following LDP proposals;

- HG1.20 Bargoed Retail Plateau housing site
- CM1.1 Bargoed town centre retail boundary
- CM4.2 Foodstore, Retail, Cinema, residential
- CN5.1 Commercial Opportunity Area
- CF1.10 Hanbury Road Baptist Church library proposal
- TR1.5 cycle links to Bargoed town centre
- TR4.2 Bargoed station Park and Ride

# BARGOED TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN - 2009

Fig. 2 Local Development Plan Strategy Diagram



## 5. Evidence Base

Detailed information on the current situation in Bargoed can be found in the Background Reports to this plan (listed on page 22). This section of the plan contains a brief summary of the principal findings of the Background Reports.

### Economic Development

Bargoed sprang into existence towards the end of the industrial revolution following the opening of local collieries in the 1880s. These collieries and in particular Bargoed colliery, formed the foundation of the economic base of the town for nearly a hundred years, until Bargoed colliery closed in 1977.

The Bowen industrial estate at Aberbargoed, developed following the closure of the colliery, is now the only significant employment location area in the locality for manufacturing and distribution businesses.

The town centre was a thriving and important retail and service centre during this period but later declined rapidly in parallel with the decline of the coal industry. The town centre remains an important location for service sector jobs however.

In 2001 the largest employment sector for Bargoed residents was manufacturing (22%) but retailing (17%) was also important. The adjacent wards of Gilfach and Aberbargoed had higher percentages in manufacturing (23% and 31%).

### Socio-economic Analysis

Bargoed and the other 12 wards in the Upper Rhymney and Sirhowy valleys in the Heads of the Valleys programme area are all 'Communities First' wards. That is, they were all classified as deprived for the purposes of the Welsh Assembly Government's regeneration programme. In 2005 a new classification of deprivation was calculated, based on 'Local Super Output Areas (LSOAs)' which are smaller units than wards. There are 4 LSOAs in Bargoed ward, 2 in Aberbargoed and 1 in Gilfach. Two LSOAs – Bargoed 4 (mainly the Gilfach Bargoed estate) and Aberbargoed 2 (south of Bedwellty Road) were among the 10% most deprived areas in Wales in 2008.

In general, economic inactivity rates, the proportion of the population without qualifications and those with limiting long term illness are much higher than the Welsh average in Greater Bargoed, contributing to a picture of multiple deprivation that characterises the Upper Rhymney Valley as a whole.

Car ownership was significantly lower than the Welsh average in 2001. 26% of Welsh households did not have access to a car in Wales but 37% do not have a car in Bargoed, 35% in Gilfach and 41% in Aberbargoed. Consequently public transport provision is particularly important in this area. Levels of home ownership were around the Welsh average of 71% except in Aberbargoed (58%).

# BARGOED TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN - 2009

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## **Retail analysis**

### Footfall info / CACI reports and Drivetime maps

Bargoed is one of six town centres in Caerphilly county borough that are regularly surveyed and monitored. A survey of town centre properties in Bargoed in 2006 identified 156 commercial properties of which 59 were shops, 65 were 'A3' units (pubs, cafes and takeaways) or service premises such as banks and estate agents and 32 were vacant. The units are generally very small however – the net floorspace totals only 10220 square metres (2004). There are very few modern commercial premises in the town and hardly any with rear servicing.

In 2006 the vacancy rate was 21%

The county borough carries out triennial health checks on all six centres, involving extensive telephone and on street surveys and pedestrian flow counts. The latest survey was carried out in June 2006 and makes generally grim reading for Bargoed. The surveys show that:-

- The proportion of the catchment area buying their weekly convenience goods in Bargoed has fallen consistently from 22% in 1994 to 12% in 2000 and only 0.8% in 2006<sup>5</sup>.
- Bargoed maintained its modest share of non-food trade (between 10 and 13%) from 1994 to 2003 but by 2006 this too, had slumped, to 8%
- The proportion of residents regarding the town centre "favourably" declined steadily from 39% in 1994 to 20% in 2000 before reviving slightly to 26 % in 2003. Even so, this was by far the lowest approval rating of the six town centres in the county borough (the next lowest was 56% whilst the highest was 80%). In the 2006 survey, however, the popularity of the town centre hit a new low of 13%.
- 49% of persons interviewed in the town centre had arrived on foot - by far the greatest proportion of any of the six centres, while the proportion arriving by car or van was 30% - low compared to other centres.
- Despite it's location on a railway line, only 2% had arrived by train, compared to 16% by bus.

## **Leisure facilities**

Bargoed has a major park at Heolddu on the western edge of the town and a council run leisure centre also at Heolddu. Although it contains the only swimming pool in the Upper Rhymney Valley, the leisure centre is 30 years old and is part of a comprehensive school and so only available to the public outside of school hours.

Leisure facilities in the town centre are poor with only two pubs and no cinema, theatre, night club, bowling or bingo hall.

There is also the developing asset of the Parc Coedtir – a large country park located between Bargoed and Aberbargoed, criss-crossed by footpaths and cyclepaths.

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<sup>5</sup> The survey took place just after the closure of the Kwik Save store and before the opening of the foodstore that replaced it. That undoubtedly accounts for the almost complete absence of convenience trade in the town

## BARGOED TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN - 2009

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### **Public facilities**

In 2008 the town centre contained one of three principal public libraries in the county borough. The library building also housed the county borough's local history centre and contained limited health facilities. There are public toilets at the Hanbury Square bus station.

All these facilities are proposed to relocate in the Action Plan. The health facilities have already relocated to the former job centre building, which has been completely renewed inside and out. The library has moved to temporary premises in St Gwladys Church Hall pending conversion of Bargoed Baptist Chapel as a library and Local Authority 'Customer First' facility. The Local History Centre has re-located temporarily to New Tredegar museum. It will eventually return to the new library in Bargoed. The public toilets will be replaced by new toilets at the new bus station at the northern end of the town centre.



## 6. SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

- The new relief road, Angel Way provides fast and easy access to the town centre, and has relieved the town centre of through traffic.
- A new 2 hectare plateau for retail and leisure development has been created at the southern end of the town centre. It has direct access from Angel Way.
- Status as a district centre or 'hub' for shops and services in sub-regional and local plans
- large number and variety of shops and service units for a district centre.
- Four per hour train service to Cardiff and good bus links
- extensive walk-in trade from adjacent high density residential areas.
- retains a number of national chain stores.
- Town centre now overlooks an attractive country park instead of the colliery complex and tip
- Independent retailers supported by an active Chamber of Trade
- Town Centre Manager
- Programme of events to help promote the town

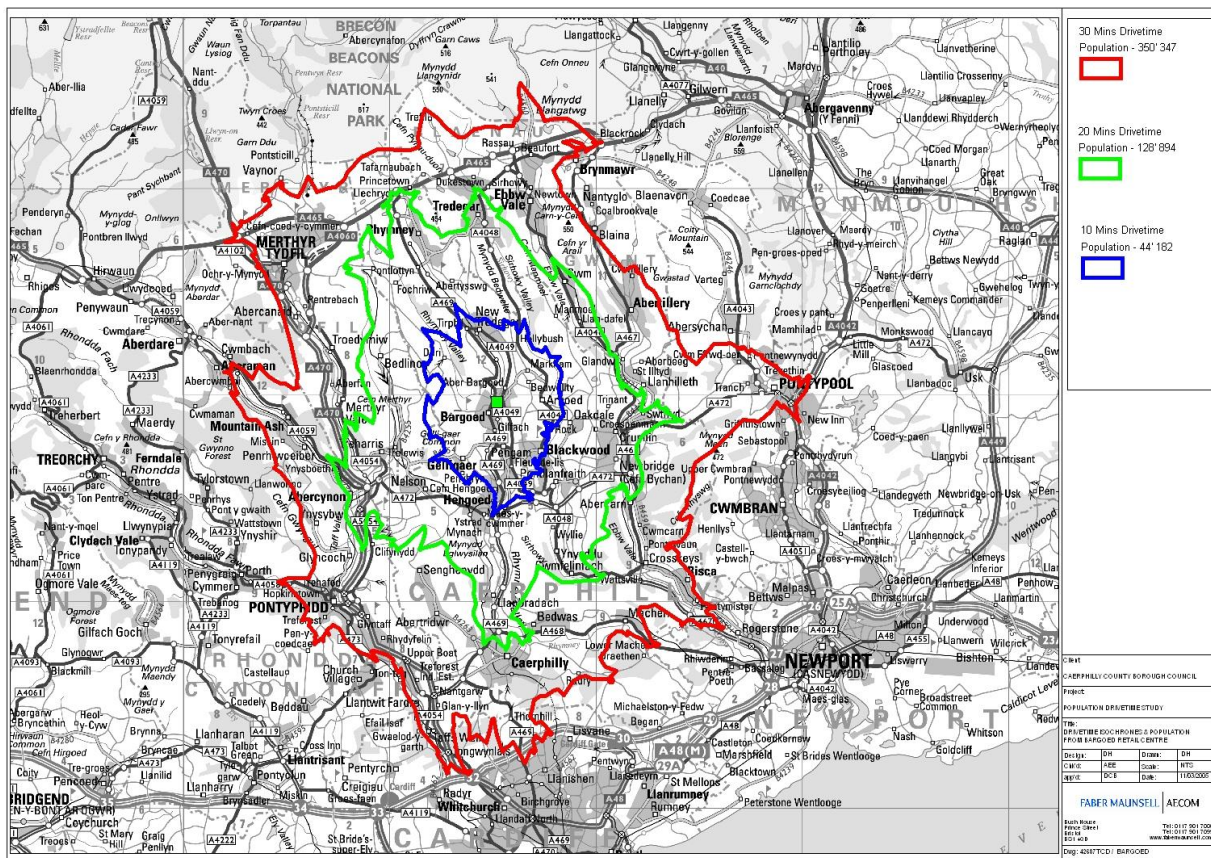
### Weaknesses

- Most town centre businesses are in small, 100 year old premises
- Lack of larger units to accommodate national retailers
- lack of investment in new shopping provision whilst competing centres have grown.
- no modern food store with associated parking.
- high vacancy rate - too many commercial units overall.
- very poor and worsening image amongst both users and non-users of the town centre.
- declining patronage from the catchment population.
- narrow, congested highway system in the town centre - the shopping streets are dominated by through traffic with shoppers confined to narrow pavements.
- a linear, "strung out" shopping centre with no obvious "heart".

# BARGOED TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN - 2009

- lack of amenity space in the town centre.
- congested bus station.
- big changes in level between main car parks and shopping areas with poor links between them in the north.
- bus station and railway station located at opposite extremities of the town.
- Very poor but visible environment at rear of properties east of Hanbury Road/High Street

Fig. 3 10, 20 and 30 minute Drive times from Bargoed (pre-Angel Way)



## Opportunities

- Demand Potential from 44,000 catchment population within 10 minute drive time, 129,000 within 20 minutes and 350,000 within 30 minutes. (see plan above)
- Accessibility from rest of Rhymney Valley through increased frequency of rail services and capacity of trains.
- Increased interest from the private sector attracted by £30million town centre redevelopment scheme.

## BARGOED TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN - 2009

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- Plans for one-way traffic system and much better shopping street environment once relief road has removed through traffic
- Potential for business to take advantage of views over country park to the east of the town centre
- Location of new bus station next to rail station will provide potential transport interchange.
- Northern part of the town centre has the potential to offer a good environment for employment with excellent transport access in proximity to town centre facilities and a country park

### **Threats**

- Competing retail and leisure centres, at e.g. Merthyr and Blackwood.
- Threat from proposals for out of town retail development
- Internet shopping
- The 2008-? Recession

### **Conclusion**

There are numerous measures which indicate that Bargoed is the most vulnerable of the County Borough's shopping centres with local residents being attracted to other nearby retail areas. The centre still retains a wide variety of shops and services but desperately needs a modern food store and associated car parking. It has also yet to realise its potential as a centre for jobs and enterprise in the area.

Great opportunities are opening up for Bargoed, however, thanks to extensive investment in basic infrastructure over the past 15 years, with strong signs of interest by the private sector in investing in the town and surrounding area.

## 7. Vision and Objectives

### **Vision**

An economically strong, accessible and vibrant town centre which provides a focus for shopping, entertainment and public services for the Upper Rhymney Valley in a spectacular and sustainable high quality environment.

### **Objectives**

1. To secure a major foodstore 'anchor' for the town centre.
2. To provide and support a wide range of other shops and services in to the town centre.
3. To begin to establish Bargoed as a major centre for leisure & recreation
4. To begin to establish Bargoed as a centre for office based employment and tourism
5. To reduce the impact of traffic and create a pedestrian dominated town centre.
6. To facilitate pedestrian movement within the town centre and particularly between existing shops and car parking areas.
7. To encourage retail, leisure and employment investment in the town centre.
8. To provide improved public services in the town centre
9. To protect and enhance the town's built heritage
10. To improve the built environment and enhance areas of public open space in the town centre and the approaches to it
11. To protect key areas from theft and vandalism
12. To improve public transport facilities and accessibility to them.
13. To secure a 'balanced' town centre, both in terms of the mix of shops and facilities offered by the centre and in terms of the location of new developments and improvements.
14. To ensure that any new development is of high design quality and meets the Council's sustainability criteria and principles.
15. To monitor the economic health and vitality of the town centre

### **8. Town Centre Strategy**

There is a danger that the spectacular development planned for the southern part of the town centre could exacerbate the continued decline of the northern and central areas. Therefore this plan includes significant proposals to regenerate the other areas of the town centre. Building on the investment in public transport facilities in the north of the town centre, efforts will be made to establish a Business Quarter there for office developments and small businesses and services. The move of the library and provision of a customer first centre to the Hanbury Road Baptist chapel will be a boost for the central area, as will improvements to the pedestrian environment of Hanbury Road itself and to the rear of properties overlooking Parc Coedtir.

Though not rigidly defined, there should emerge three complementary zones in the town centre, with major national retailers and leisure facilities in the south, an employment and enterprise zone in the north and a 'traditional' town centre in the middle, offering a mix of public facilities, independent locally owned shops, cafes and restaurants, many of the latter taking advantage of the views from the rear of properties overlooking Parc Coedtir. In this central historic core of the town the emphasis will be on maintaining and developing the distinctive character of Bargoed. In this way Bargoed should be able to offer modern retail and leisure facilities and an excellent location for business growth without becoming an 'anywhere clone town'.

## 9. Proposals [relevant objectives in brackets]

### 9a DEVELOPMENT

- D1 Phase 2 of the 'Retail Plateau' will include the demolition and clearance of properties, including the town library building, the creation of an access road around the eastern perimeter of the site and the creation of a temporary car park at the southern end of the site. [1,2,3,7]
- D2 A major retail and leisure development will be sited on the 'Retail Plateau' including 500 parking spaces, which will be linked to Hanbury Road through a pedestrian street and by escalators or lifts within the development. It will be developed in accordance with the development brief for the site approved by the Council. [1,2,3, 6]
- D3 The Hanbury Road Baptist Chapel will be converted to house the town's library and family history centre and a customer first centre for public access to Council Services. An area for worship will also be provided within the building. [8,9,13]
- D4 Retail development is now suggested for the former cinema site in Hanbury Square, in accordance with the Plan's strategy for this part of the town centre. Although the site had planning consent for offices, it has not been implemented and once the Bargoed Retail Plateau development is open there should be increased demand for retail space in this part of the town centre. Offices or other ancillary town centre uses could be accommodated on upper floors. [ 2,4,7]
- D5 A 'Business Quarter' is designated east of High Street in which office developments and other service sector employment will be encouraged. The area is one of the best locations in the county borough for access to public transport, being close to the rail and bus stations, proposed park and ride facility and cyclepath network. It will have direct access from Angel Way. [4, 13]
- D6 Public toilets will be provided in the vicinity of the new bus station in the north, replacing those to be removed from the old bus station at Hanbury Square. [8]

### 9b MOVEMENT

- M1 Hanbury Road and High Street will be made one-way in a northerly direction following completion of Angel Way. This will facilitate the Plan's public realm proposals for those streets and Hanbury Square. [5]
- M2 A new bus station will be created at the Northern end of the town centre, close to the railway station to help create a transport interchange. Secure bike stands, shelters, waiting areas, a taxi drop off point and public toilets will be provided here. [12, 13]
- M3 new bus stops will be created on the one-way system to improve public transport access to town centre shops and services. [12,13]

## BARGOED TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN - 2009

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- M4 A pedestrian link will be created between High Street and the new bus station culminating in a small public space. Two properties in High Street will be demolished to facilitate this. [10,12]
- M5 A 'Park & Ride' car park will be created at Bargoed railway station to accommodate commuter parking south east of the station, as part of the comprehensive transport interchange. The car park will have direct access off the Angel Way northern roundabout [12]
- M6 The town's railway station and bus station will be linked to the long distance cyclepath network. A cycleway/footpath will be constructed within the Parc Coedtir country park and, via the town centre bus and railway stations, link with the cycle path to the Darran Valley country park. [3, 13]
- M7 A 3 metre wide 'promenade' will be created along the eastern edge of the retail plateau, next to the 'town wall' and overlooking the Valley below. It will culminate in a 'Belvedere' or viewpoint, overlooking Parc Coedtir and link up with the existing footpath around the Hanbury Road car park. A new footpath will link the car park to the bus station and transport interchange. A continuous walkway will thereby be created along the eastern edge of the town centre, forming part of a wider network of paths in and around Bargoed.
- M8 The feasibility of road and traffic management improvements in the area north and west of High Street will be investigated. [5]
- M9 Bargoed railway station and approaches will be improved and enhanced. [10, 12]
- M10 Gilfach railway halt and approaches will be improved and enhanced as a public transport gateway to Parc Coedtir and to the south of the town centre. [10, 12]
- M11 An Interim Parking strategy will be implemented to provide alternative temporary parking provision in the south of the town centre while existing or former car parks are being redeveloped. Sites will include the southern part of the retail plateau, Hanbury Square (after removal of the bus station and before redevelopment as a new square) and the former Central Hall site. In the north a temporary car park will be provided west of the new bus station pending redevelopment of the proposed Business Quarter.

### **9c PUBLIC REALM**

- PR1 Hanbury Road and High Street will be comprehensively improved through pavement widening, restrictions on traffic and parking, enhanced paving and street furniture to provide an attractive, pedestrian friendly environment. [5,6,10]
- PR2 The existing bus station area at Hanbury Square will be replaced by a public square, restoring the area to its traditional role as the heart of the town, opposite the entrance to the proposed new shopping development. The Square will be fronted to the east by a bus stop and a wide pavement, which could serve as a space for events or a small market. [5,10]

## BARGOED TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN - 2009

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PR3 Subject to the agreement of the relevant owners and occupiers, the rear of properties and garden areas on the East side of Hanbury Road/High Street, overlooking Parc Coedtir will be improved with the help of grants and comprehensive enhancement schemes. [10]

### **9D GENERAL PROPOSALS applying throughout the town centre**

G1 The town centre will be marketed to the private sector for further investment [7]

G2 Measures will be taken to minimise crime and anti-social behaviour in the town centre. [11]

G3 The Vitality and Viability of the town centre will be monitored through automatic footfall counters and regular surveys. [15]

G4 The provision of tourist information in the town centre will be encouraged [4]

G5 All development approved in the town centre will have to comply with the Council's and the Welsh Assembly Government's sustainability policies. [14]

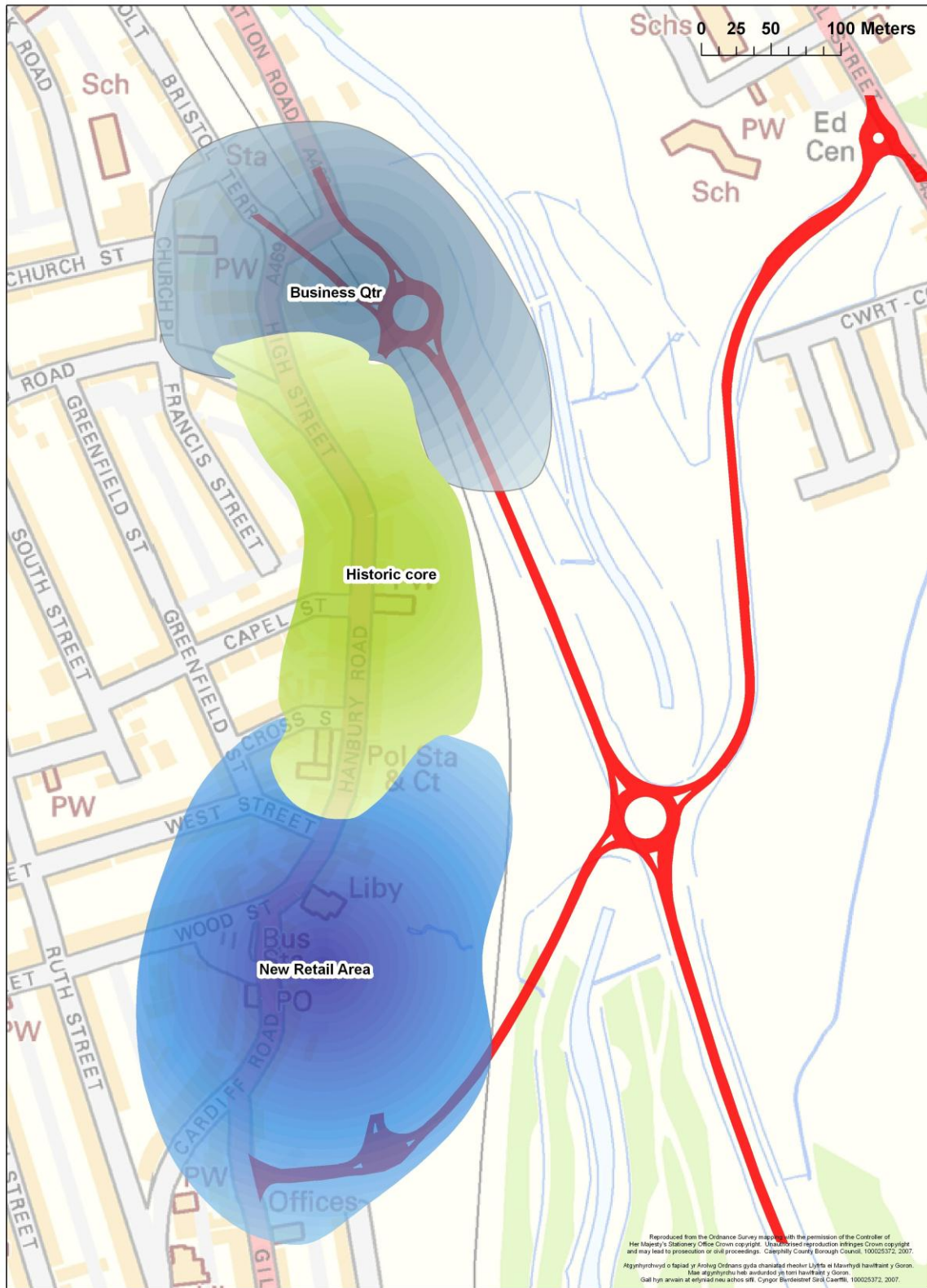
G6 Artwork will be incorporated into key spaces, buildings and street furniture in the town centre in accordance with the Bargoed Town Centre Arts Strategy. [10]

G7 Subject to the agreement of the relevant owners and occupiers, key buildings in the town centre will be enhanced through grant aid. [9,10]



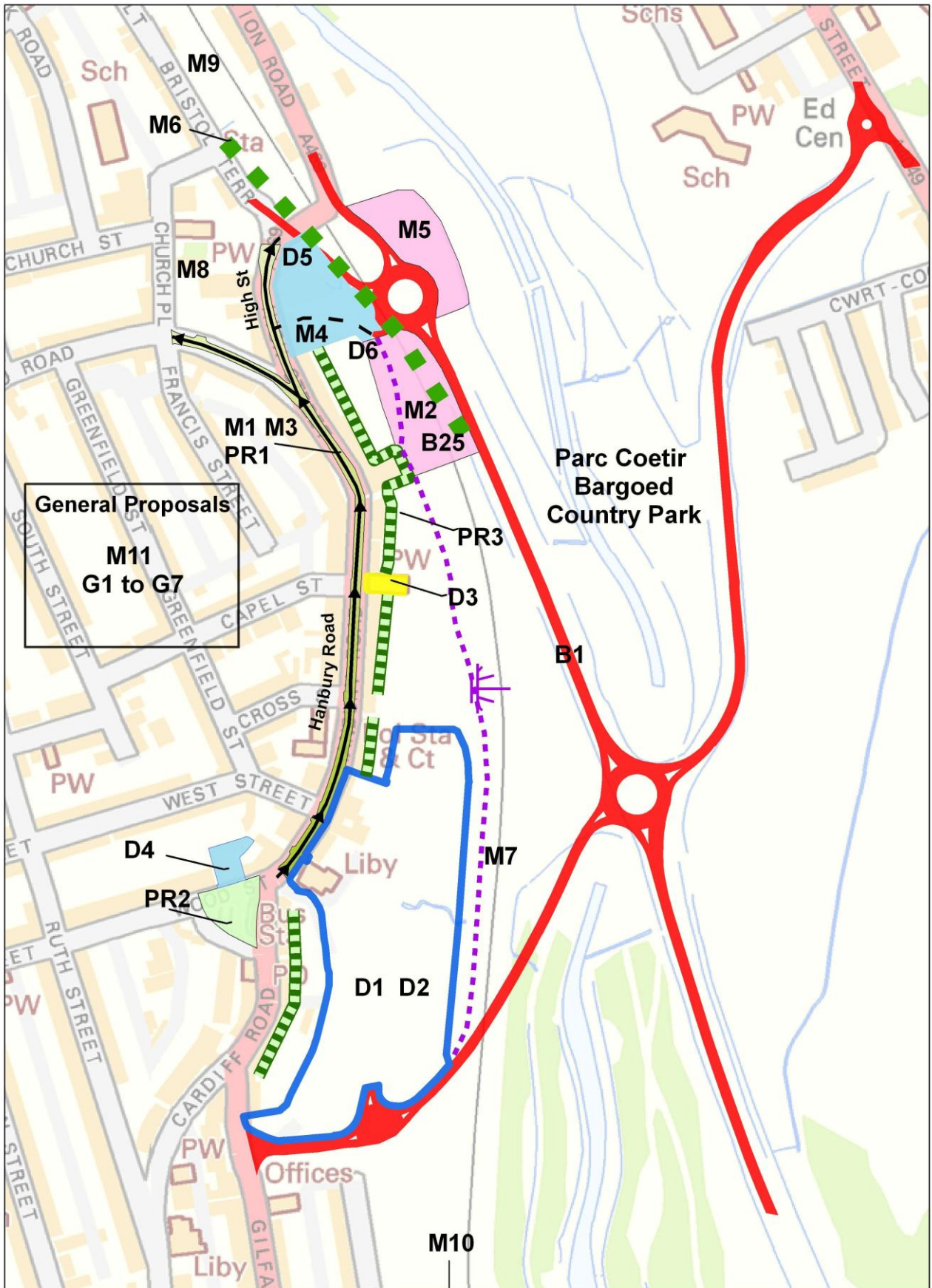
# BARGOED TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN - 2009

Fig. 4 Themed Areas in Bargoed Town Centre



# BARGOED TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN - 2009

Figure 5 Bargoed Town Centre Action Plan 2009 Proposals Map



## 10. Implementation

The implementation of this Town Centre Action Plan will be co-ordinated by Caerphilly county borough council's Planning Division and the Welsh Assembly Government's Department of Transportation and Strategic Regeneration. Both the Council and the Welsh Assembly Government have already invested immense resources in Bargoed in order to create the conditions for successful regeneration of the town and are determined to see the final phases through to completion as proposed in this plan.

It is envisaged that the private sector will play a prominent role in implementing key proposals of this action plan, in particular the major retail and leisure redevelopment at the southern end of town but also through investment in existing premises elsewhere in the town.

Other partners will include the United Welsh Housing Association and the Heads of the Valleys Programme. The latter has provided funds for the former to acquire and refurbish key buildings in the town centre.

### Funding

Further grant aid will be sought from the Heads of the Valleys programme but also from the new European Convergence Fund and, where appropriate, bodies such as Cadw or the Lottery funds. Mainstream funding will be provided by the Welsh Assembly Government's Department of the Economy and Transport regeneration budget and the Council's Urban Renewal budget.

### Phasing

Implementation of the Action Plan's many proposals will be dependent on funding decisions but the intention is to complete most of the proposals in the period 2009 to 2012. Some of the proposals are imminent and have been worked up in some detail while a few will be subject to further studies and assessments before they can be firmed up. The economic recession that began in 2008 is of unknown duration but is likely to affect the speed of private sector investment in the town centre.

Any phasing plan must therefore be provisional on the above but at the time of Plan approval, the most likely phasing of the Plan's main proposals is as follows;

**2009** Completion of; Angel Way; retail plateau phases 1 and 2 (proposal D1); new toilets (D6); One-way system (M1); new bus station (M2); bus station-High St link (M4); Walkway and Belvedere (M7); Interim car parks (M11). Start on; the new library (D3); Park & Ride (M5); High Street improvements (PR1);

**2010** Completion of; Park & Ride (M5); High Street improvements (PR1); Start on; Retail Plateau shopping and Leisure complex (D2); Hanbury Road improvements (PR1);

**2011** Completion of; the new library (D3); Hanbury Road improvements (PR1); Start on; Hanbury Square civic space (PR2)

**2012** Completion of Hanbury Square civic space (PR2) and the Retail Plateau shopping and Leisure complex (D2)

The remaining proposals will be implemented when and as the funding and the opportunity arises.

## **Appendix    Background reports**

1. Bargoed Shoppers' survey 2006 [information report]
2. CACI appraisal of Bargoed Town Centre [information report]
3. Donaldsons report [information report]
4. Camlin Lonsdale study 2005 [part approved as Council policy]
5. Bargoed Retail Plateau Development Brief (Barton Willmore) 2007 [approved policy]
6. Bargoed Design Guide 2007 [approved policy]
7. Bargoed Public Arts Strategy 2007 [approved policy]
8. Report on consultations on the Draft Bargoed Town Centre Action Plan [information report]

**Fig. 6** Development Brief Masterplan for Bargoed Retail Plateau  
(to be superseded by Developer's Plans once they have planning consent)

