

## 3 The Regeneration Strategy

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### 3.1 The Vision

Our vision for Llantrisant's Old Town centre is to create:

**“a vibrant town centre that is renowned for its historic interest, high quality environment, attractive shops, places to eat and visit, while being an accessible, safe and successful place in which to live and carry out business.”**

The vision will be realised by:

- Protecting and positively utilising cultural heritage assets;
- Creating a dynamic and high-quality mixed-use town centre;
- Improving the movement network to facilitate access; and
- Improved cultural and community amenities.

The realisation of the vision should promote a positive image for Llantrisant's Old Town as a key gateway and attractor for the Rhondda Cynon Taff area, bringing additional visitors and spending to the town and as a result attracting additional private investment. It will lead to a better place to live for local people, with an improved environment, increased range of community facilities and attractions, better managed traffic and parking and a greater degree of pride in the town.

### 3.2 The Strategy

The strategy takes account of the constraints and opportunities identified within the appraisal of the town centre and translates the vision into a co-ordinated framework for the future regeneration of Llantrisant's Old Town centre. The strategy comprises four strands and sixteen projects which together provide a ten-year plan of action for the town and is illustrated in Figure 3.1.

#### Protecting and Positively Utilising Cultural Heritage Assets

The strategy will seek to protect and make best use of the heritage resources of Llantrisant's Old Town centre, by:

- Consolidating, excavating and interpreting the Castle, with consideration of development of a tower to provide a visitor attraction and extensive views (**Project H1**);
- Developing the Guildhall as a heritage museum and archive centre (**Project H2**);
- Establishing a historic core zone with high-quality public realm, and review of planning policies and enforcement (**Project H3**, including four elements);
- Providing a fitting entrance to the town at Southgate (**Project H4**);
- Developing a town trail linking heritage features and the surrounding natural environment (**Project H5**).

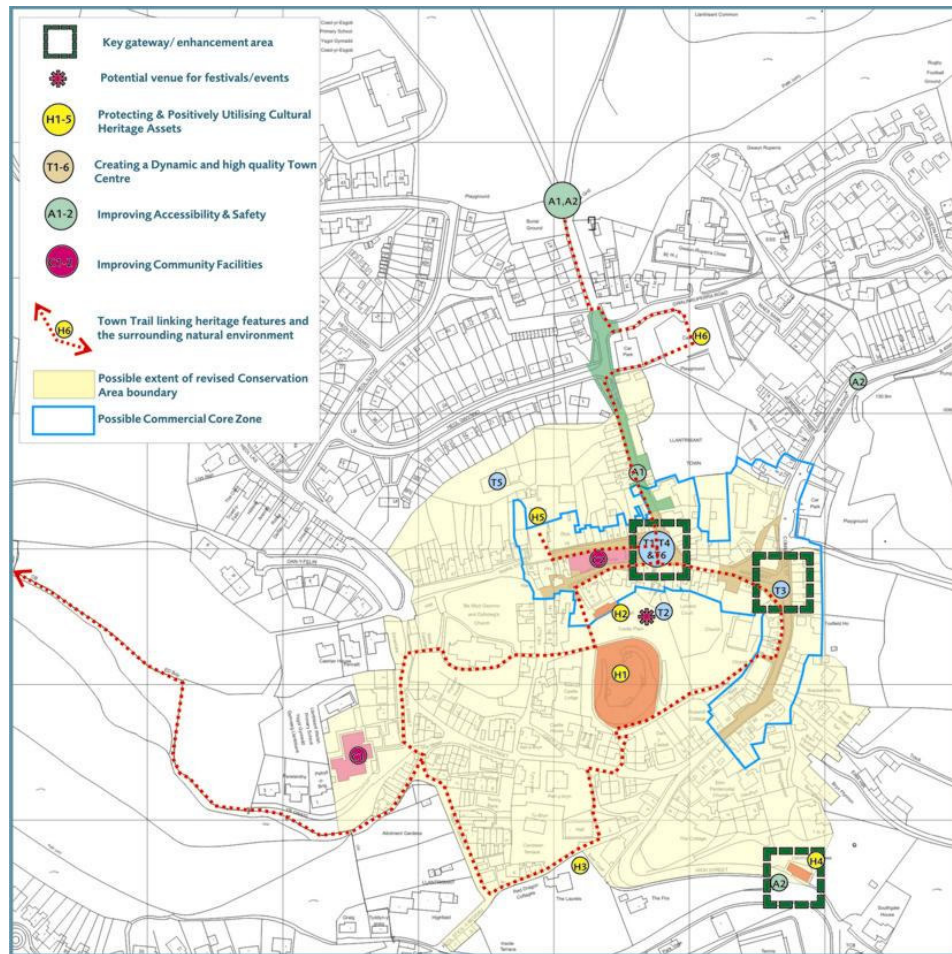


Figure 3-1 The Regeneration Strategy

## Creating a Dynamic and High-quality Town Centre

The strategy will seek to create a dynamic and high quality town centre, by:

- Encouraging new retailing and eating uses through planning policy, planning guidance and licensing (**Project T1**);
- Developing events and festivals to foster community involvement and attract visitors (**Project T2**);
- Enhancing the High Street (**Project T3**);
- Enhancing the Bull Ring (**Project T4**);
- Providing additional parking to the rear of Swan Street (**Project T5**); and
- Improving the management of the town centre environment (**Project T6**).

## Improving Accessibility and Safety

The strategy seeks to improve movement, road safety and access in the town centre by measures within enhancement schemes for the High Street and Bull Ring and by:

- Traffic Calming on the Northern Approaches (**Project A1**); and
- Signing Strategy (**Project A2**).

## Improving Community Facilities

- Develop the Old Victorian School Building as a community meeting place and arts centre (**Project C1**); and
- Increased scope for community craft activities in the Model House and longer-term redevelopment (**Project C2**).

## 3.3 The Projects

### H1: Llantrisant Castle

Llantrisant Castle is of considerable historic interest and is an under-exploited resource for the enjoyment of the public. The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument in the ownership and management of the local authority, with the surrounding Castle Green owned by the Town Trust. The remains are the only significant medieval monument in the Borough. Page and Dean Consulting were commissioned by the local authority to identify a way forward which both reflects the historic merit of the site and services to help the regeneration of this area of the county borough of Rhondda Cynon Taff. The desire of the Council was stated as to: “develop Llantrisant Castle as a major cultural venue in the ancient and historic town of Llantrisant”.

**Photo 3.1 The Castle Raven Tower (2005)**



**Photo 3.2 The Castle Green**



The draft final report of the study was produced in April 2005. It identifies that the castle site has been abandoned for many centuries although its interior was used as an allotment

garden in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The surviving masonry is in an extreme state of decay and under threat from a number of factors. The remains of the castle are the large ruinous fragment of a tower and a circuit of low overgrown walls. These stone remains lie within a number of impressive banks and ditches, which once may have belonged to a larger castle.

The report identified that the monument is at significant risk if nothing is done:

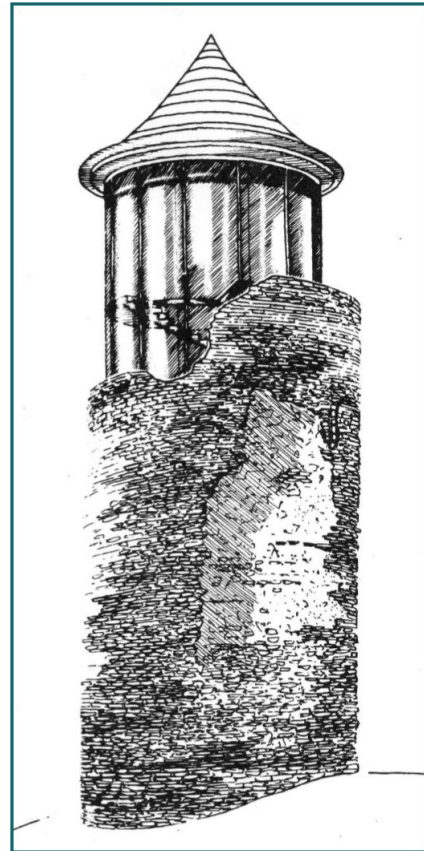
- The stonework is becoming dislodged and there is a possibility that there could be a catastrophic collapse of the larger masonry structures;
- the plant growth is visible all over the monument and this could lead to destabilisation of the standing walls and disturbance of the site;
- the opportunity for vandalism is significant and evidence that the site is being accessed raises a significant health and safety concern in conjunction with a threat to the monument fabric.

A range of options have been considered for the future of the monument and the options have been discussed by the sub-group of the Old Town Forum. There is an overriding consensus that doing-nothing is not an option. The monument will continue its decline, becoming a greater risk in terms of health and safety and increasing the potential for the people of Rhondda Cynon Taff to lose one of their major heritage assets.

There is a consensus that as a minimum, a full archaeological study should be undertaken to investigate the site. Page and Dean recommended that this could be carried out in association with local schools and University archaeological departments. It would entail fully revealing major parts of the site, fully recording of all features and storing 'finds'. Remains would either then be covered up or require consolidation. Full consolidation would conserve and preserve the monument to its fullest extent and be the type of works normally associated with a Monument in Care.

Following consolidation, the consultants believe that the "finest interpretative experience, enjoyment and understanding of the Castle is to see both the Castle's plan and surrounding landscape from the viewpoint of the top of the Raven tower (as Richard de Clare once did). The new tower would reflect the dimensions of the original's footprint, providing a focus for the site and a subtly lit yet striking beacon to the surrounding area at night." A narrow tower would have a viewing platform, lift, stairs and toilets. A wider tower would also provide some interpretation space.

Figure 3.2: Page and Dean Consulting's Ideas for the Castle Tower



It is recognised that securing a future for the Castle and maximising its visitor potential is a key part of the regeneration of the town and could bring significant benefits in terms of increased visitor numbers and associated spending in the town. The Page and Dean report does not however estimate visitor numbers. Assuming that there is a charge for entry of £1.00 to climb the tower, the number of visitors might be in the order of 25,000 to 30,000, taking into account the catchment population and what the Castle would provide to the visitor compared to competing/ other south Wales castles. Visitor numbers are unpredictable however and depend greatly on the marketing initiatives. The benefits arising from the visitors for the town will depend on the extent to which there is additionality to visitors to the Model House.

The new glass, steel and timber clad tower would provide additional support to the upstanding monument but would need to be vandal proof and careful consideration given to long term maintenance and sustainability. No estimates of ongoing maintenance liabilities, insurance's and security were made in the feasibility study.

To take the project forward, Scheduled Monument Consent will be required from Cadw, and given the radical interpretative suggestion for the tower, this could be a risk to taking forward the project. The other risk will be funding, as at present funding opportunities are uncertain for a project of this scale and nature. Therefore, whilst recognising that further development of the Castle site could bring regeneration benefits to the town centre, it is recommended that the project is undertaken in two phases, with the construction of the glass tower being a later possible phase for the site.

### Capital Cost

#### Phase 1

Scheduled Monument Consent and Funding Applications	£10,000
Archaeological investigations and Full Consolidation	£150,000

#### Phase 2

Narrow Width Tower	£1,001,000
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### Funding

Possible sources of funding for Phase 1 of the scheme are Cadw and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

### Lead Partner

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council.

## Project H2: The Guildhall Museum and Archive Centre

The Guildhall is a Grade II listed building, rebuilt in 1773 with a corn market beneath. The building originally formed the fourth side of a market square with stalls around the other sides. In 1896 the corn market was converted to a library and reading room. It is listed as “a carefully designed public building retaining its character and for its historic interest”.



**Photo 3.3 The Guildhall 1900**



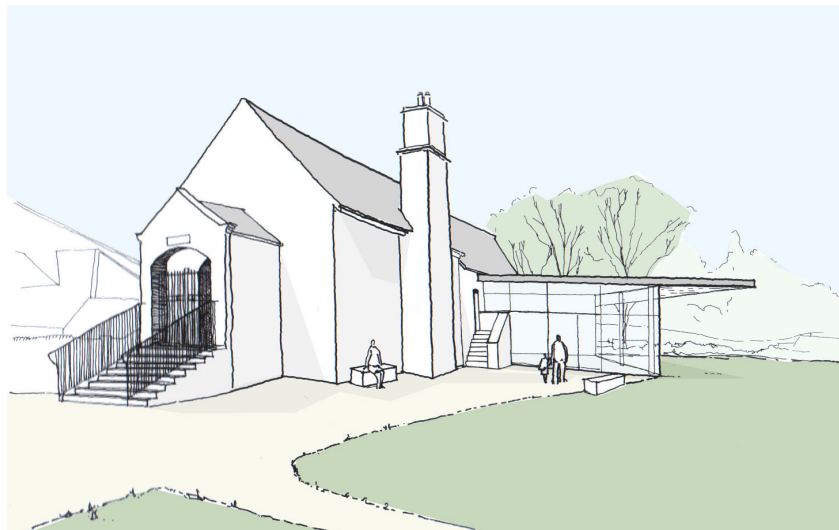
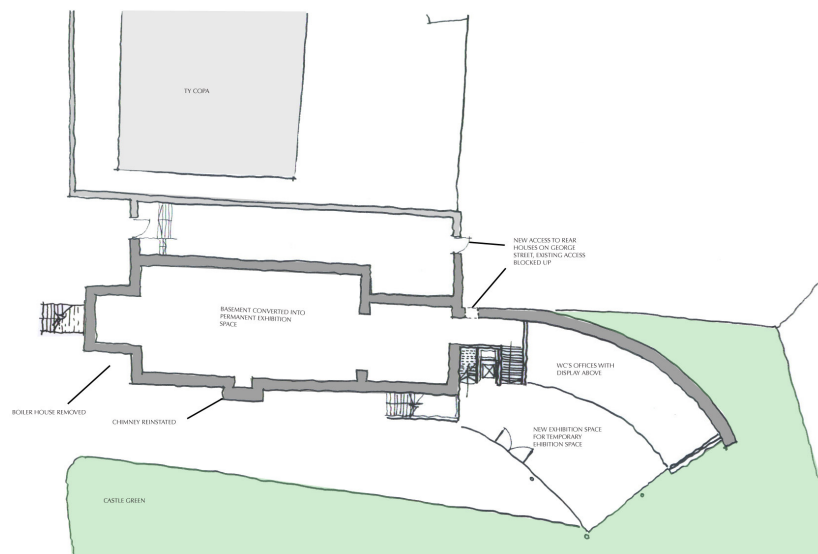
**Photo 3.4 The Guildhall 2005**

The building comprises two floors, an upper storey and a basement level, with ground level in between the two floors. The upper floor is the base for the meetings of the Town Trust and comprises a large hall, office and toilet. The basement level is currently used by an after school club, which is anticipated to cease with the relocation of the Welsh Medium Primary School. The building is owned and managed by the Town Trust for the use of the community.

There is potential to significantly enhance the role of the Guildhall – currently an under-used but attractive asset in order to sustain its use for the future and provide a centre to develop

understanding of the town's heritage and an archive base for the Freemen of Llantrisant. Figures 3.3 and 3.4 show how the building could be sensitively refurbished and extended. The building could comprise an exhibition area on the ground floor, shop and toilets and the main hall and archive room upstairs. There would need to be a lift providing access for all to the areas of the building, which would enable fuller use of the public hall. The main public room upstairs could be reinstated to its historic character, removing modern 'improvements' such as opening up the ceiling and fireplace.

**Figure 3.3 and 3.4: Ideas for Refurbishing and Extending the Guildhall**



The museum could contain the material currently housed in the upper floor of the Model House (the Royal Mint and Llantrisant History display), artefacts recovered from the Castle

site during excavations, the Dr William Price artefacts held by the National Museum at St Fagan's and other local history collections held by the Town Trust.

The Royal Mint curator has expressed a willingness to consider the relocation of the display to a new facility. The Mint also has an archive collection in Llantrisant of all British coinage and other items of national importance, previously held in the Tower of London. This is not on display to the public due to its value but if it could be achieved would be a display of considerable importance. The possibility of having replicas or selected coins on a roving exhibition at the Guildhall could be a significant draw to visitors.

The Town Trust hold copies of the documents held by the Glamorgan Record Office relating to the Freemen of the town. An archive centre could be established to provide a base for people exploring their roots and local history, giving access to the information.

The number of visitors such centres attract varies widely depending on a range of factors including the intrinsic interest of the place and the displays, the level of tourist activity in the area, charging policy and visitor awareness. Typically, a centre might attract 10-20,000 visitors.

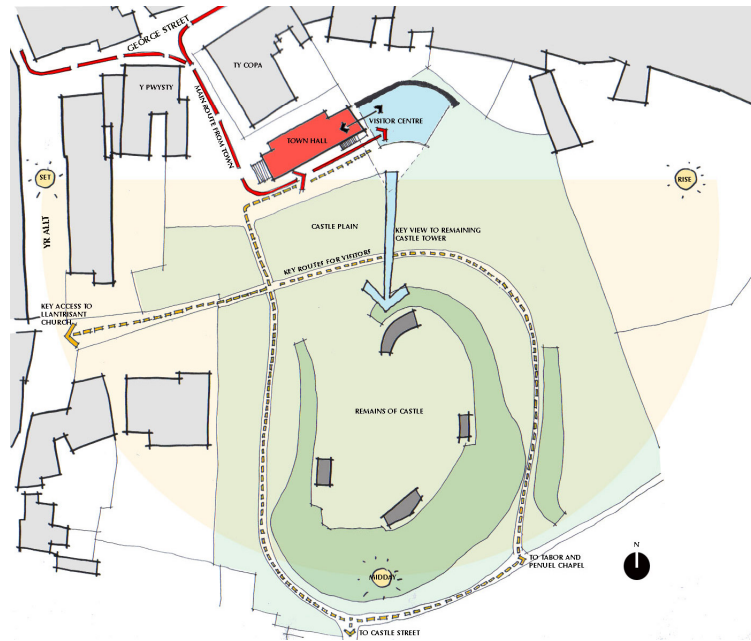
Such centres are rarely viable as a commercial operation, but depend on local authority contributions and voluntary support. There would appear to be two options for the establishment of such a centre/museum, namely:

- The Borough Council could establish it as a local museum and take on the responsibility for operating and maintaining it, with the cost falling on the local authority; or
- The Town Trust could establish the centre, with the bulk of the effort in maintaining and opening the centre resting with volunteers. Curatorial help and some financial support could be sought from the local authority.

There is limited scope for generating ongoing funding. Around half of museums make a charge for entrance, although the national average for museums and galleries is less than £1 per head. If a charge were to be levied at Llantrisant it would be unrealistic to charge more than a £1 and even that figure could reduce visitor numbers. There is a further complication in that the exhibition at the Model House is currently free to visit. A majority of museums have a retail outlet, but the income from such an operation in Llantrisant is likely to be limited. Thus support from the Borough Council and/or other interested parties such as the Mint is likely to be required to underpin the operation of the Centre. The scope for attracting visitors however will be dependent on the scale of the museum. If there is a significant input of artefacts from the Royal Mint it could attract high numbers of visitors, being of more regional/ national importance than local.

The development of the Guildhall would not only protect and conserve an important Grade II Listed Building in public ownership but would open up the building into the Castle Green and thus support the development and interpretation of the Castle for visitors.





**Figure 3.5: Analysis of the Castle and Guildhall Area**

The next stage in developing the project would be the production of a business plan and detailed design, prior to making funding applications. The revenue implications of operating a museum would need consideration and it is likely that the Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC would need to make a commitment to its future operation, although the Town Trust would be the most appropriate vehicle for taking the project forward. It is assumed that the Town Trust would remain the owners of the building.

### Capital Cost

The detailed feasibility and business plan aspects would cost in the region of £30,000.

The estimated cost of extending and refurbishing the building and fitting out an exhibition would be dependent on the outcome of the feasibility study.

### Funding

Funding for the feasibility study to progress the project could be sought from the local authorities Community Regeneration Fund, if submitted by the Town Trust.

Capital funding might be available through the Heritage Lottery Fund “Your Heritage” scheme. This provides grants of between £5,000 and £50,000 to support community – focused heritage projects. To qualify for a grant, projects should conserve and enhance the diverse heritage or encourage communities to identify, look after and celebrate their heritage or both. Projects should also ensure that everyone can learn about, have access to, and enjoy their heritage. A larger grant of between £50,000 to £1 million requires that the collection on which it is based is of recognised importance, which could apply if the collection of the Royal Mint were to be placed on public display.

CyMal is a department of the Assembly charged with supporting Museums, Galleries, Libraries and Archives, based in Aberystwyth. It does operate small grant schemes

supporting particular aspects of museums and archives conservation. Normally, museums need to be registered under the Museums Accreditation scheme to be eligible, and it is not certain at present as to whether the Llantrisant project would be eligible for any of the current schemes.

Other sources of funding could be from private grant making trusts, the Town Trust (through donations/ fund raising) and the local authority.

#### Lead Partner

Llantrisant Town Trust

### H3: The Historic Core

The historic core of the town centre suffers from a number of issues, which are detrimental to its quality and character. This includes:

- Poor quality public realm including inappropriate paving and street furniture, inadequate footways, poor lighting and clutter of signage and road markings;
- A number of buildings in prominent locations that are derelict, under-utilised or in a poor state of repair;
- A loss of original architectural detailing from facades, including those of some listed buildings;
- The introduction of inappropriate features to buildings, such as roller shutters and PVC windows.

The problems of the historic core need to be addressed through a co-ordinated range of measures. With regard to the public realm, concepts for the key areas of the High Street/ Commercial Street and the Bull Ring have been developed as individual projects. It is recommended that in addition:

- The extent of the Conservation Area is reviewed and consideration is given to the introduction of an Article 4 Direction within the core of the town;
- There is a programme to tackle the prominent, derelict, under-utilised buildings or those in poor state of repair;
- The level of enforcement of planning regulations is increased; and
- Supplementary Planning Guidance is developed to advise property owners on the types of features and materials that are appropriate for the town centre, as well as appropriate materials for the public realm;

Together these measures would ensure that future development takes place in a manner that conserves and enhances the conservation area and that the current eyesore properties and sites are enhanced to make an appropriate contribution to the character of the area.

### H3(1) The Conservation Area

The boundary of the Llantrisant Old Town Conservation Area currently extends to include the whole of the town (including the modern housing developments and Leisure Centre area at the bottom of the hill) and the majority of the Common. The Taff Ely Local Plan acknowledges that:

“part of the Llantrisant Conservation Area – the town centre – is also worthy of special consideration for further environmental protection. It is intended that legislation to control development in part of the area, to be defined after survey, should be tightened by the imposition of an Article 4 Direction” (pg. 48).

This policy, to impose an Article 4 Direction has not been implemented.

It is considered that the current extent of the boundary is too extensive and diminishes the importance of the designation and the ability to control development within it. There has been an evident lack of enforcement within the Conservation Area, due it appears from a lack of a designated Conservation Officer for the authority as well as lack of guidance on appropriate development.

The Conservation Area either needs to be reduced in size to focus on the historic core and Article 4 Direction should be imposed, in accordance with the Local Plan policy. The inclusion of the common areas also appears unnecessary as they are subject to other landscape and environmental designations. Figure 3.6 illustrates a possible boundary for a Conservation Area, including the historic core and adjacent areas, the development of which has an impact on the historic character of the town centre.

#### Capital Cost/ Funding and Lead Partner

The review of the Conservation Area and imposition of Article 4 directions would be led by the Planning Authority, as part of the Local Development Plan process.

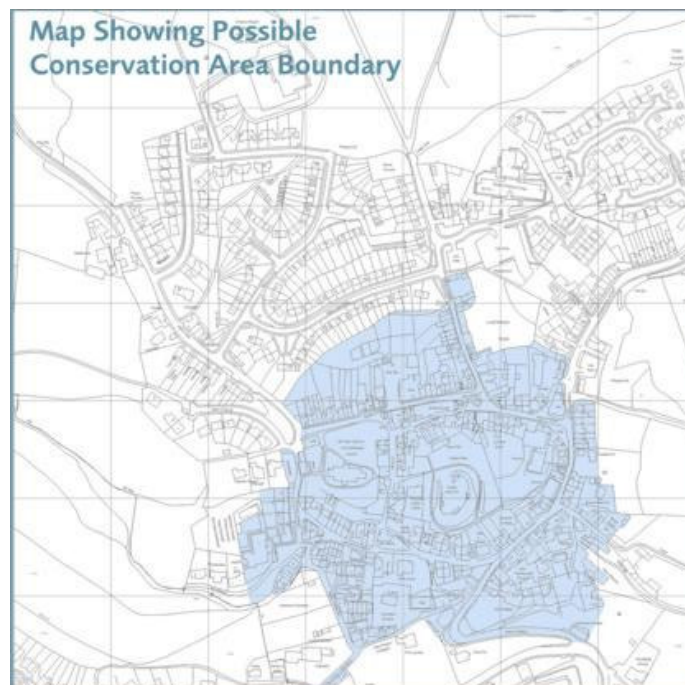


Figure 3.6: Possible Boundary of the Conservation Area

### H3(2) Tackling Prominent Buildings

There are a number of buildings in prominent locations within the town centre which are derelict, under-used or suffering from neglect. These buildings present a very negative appearance of the historic town and some of the buildings are also of architectural/ heritage importance whose loss or partial loss would be detrimental. The 16 buildings are highlighted on Figure 3.7. They have been selected following the appraisal of existing facades as well as consideration as to their prominence within the historic core.

Figure 3.7: Prominent Buildings Requiring Attention





**Photos 3.5 and 3.6: Two focal buildings in need of investment**

There is a need for the buildings to be brought back into use and refurbished and architectural features restored. In the case of those known as 'New Buildings', the properties are of inappropriate modern and dilapidated design and would be best demolished and the site redeveloped, putting back a frontage to the street. The Southgate Cottage is a small unit that could best be redeveloped as part of the whole with the adjacent shop and flat.

The buildings are in a variety of private ownership's and therefore redevelopment will require the investment of their owners. The public sector can best assist through design guidance and planning regulation (as discussed elsewhere). However, the sites are very prominent and have been eyesores in the town for a considerable length of time. It is considered that grant funding is required, from the local authority and WDA under current programmes. It is also likely to be necessary to increase the level of required grant over and above that currently available. This is particularly the case given that there is a need to reinstate buildings to a high standard in a manner that enhances the Conservation Area.

The Heritage Lottery Fund's Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) provides a possible vehicle for injecting additional funding to achieve redevelopment of the eyesore buildings. THI is for projects to regenerate the historic environment in towns and cities, seeking to repair buildings, which make up the special architectural character of historic urban areas, with a view to bringing derelict and under-used buildings back into practical use. As such the THI programme could be appropriate for Llantrisant.

A THI would need to achieve maximum benefit for available funding by focussing on a small number of key buildings, which would make the largest difference to the town. It is recommended that the properties identified in Figure 3.7 could provide the basis for a THI funding bid.

The first stage is to prepare and submit a bid for THI funding. It needs to be recognised however, that following an initial visit to the town, the HLF indicated that "the case for demonstrating economic need appears to be marginal". Moreover, it was highlighted that the local authority must show a corporate approach to the management of the Conservation Area and that any bid should be "modest and focussing on small parts of the town". Nevertheless, a THI scheme would be of significant economic benefit, complementing the public realm investments and new attractions and projects in the town and bringing back into use prominent and eyesore buildings.

### Capital Cost

The cost of improvements to the properties identified would be estimated as part of the preparation of a Stage One THI Bid. The cost of the preparation of a Stage One THI Bid would be in the region of £30,000, if undertaken using external consultants.

### Funding

A successful THI would require a common fund including monies from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and other possible sources such as Physical Regeneration Funds, Welsh Development Agency Town Improvement Grant, ERDF/ Local Regeneration Fund and Cadw. The projects would also involve private funding from the property owners. It is assumed that funding for bid preparation could involve some of these funding sources.

### Lead Partner

Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC, Development and Regeneration.

## H3(3) Conservation Area Enforcement

The level of enforcement of planning regulations in the Conservation Area appears low and there are a number of examples where no enforcement action has been taken against prominent changes to facades. While it is appreciated that this has arisen due to the considerable workload pressures experienced within Development Control, common to many local authorities, there is an urgent need for a greater focus on planning regulation within the Conservation Areas if the Old Town is to have any features of merit preserved for the future. This issue is also of key importance to funding partners such as the Heritage Lottery who need assurance that the planning team are fully on board and pro-active in providing design and conservation advice and enforcement. The most effective way forward is likely to be the appointment of a designated Conservation Officer, who can have responsibility for overseeing all proposed development within the Conservation Areas.

### Capital Cost/ Funding and Lead Partner

This is a project which requires consideration by the local planning authority and would have wider implications for the County Borough, not just Llantrisant town centre.

## H3(4) Supplementary Planning Guidance

There is a need for Supplementary Planning Guidance relating to the appropriate use of materials and detailing in the Conservation Area. This should be aimed at property owners to advise on what is allowed or not as well as guide all public sector investment affecting the public realm. Such guidance would be best prepared as part of the Local Development Plan process and may apply to the Conservation Areas across the County Borough.

Following the appraisal work as part of this study, the following are recommended as appropriate paving and street furniture that could be used to inform Supplementary Planning Guidance:

- Paving is undertaken in natural Welsh Pennant stone;
- Careful attention should be paid to detailing of paving schemes, which makes the difference between a scheme of quality or one that jars with the adjacent buildings;

- Lighting should be incorporated on buildings where possible;
- Key buildings should be floodlit where possible, notably the church and Castle;
- Street furniture should be simple, uncluttered and not of a particular historic period. Contemporary styles can be appropriate within historic core zones if appropriately designed, scaled and massed to not overwhelm the historic environment in which they are located.

Consideration should also be paid in all public realm and building improvements to enhancing access for those with mobility restrictions (including wheelchair and push-chair users), and those with mobility or sight/hearing difficulties) along these routes, with the use of appropriate-placed tactile paving and dropped kerbs which complement the established historic paving materials. However, key “character” pedestrian routes, such as along Yr Allt and Heol-y-Beilliau should ideally not be changed, and should be maintained to preserve their distinctive, even though the cobbles and steep topography would prevent some people with mobility restrictions to walk along these routes.

#### Capital Cost/ Funding and Lead Partner

Again this is a project that requires consideration by the local planning authority and would have wider implications for the County Borough, not just Llantrisant town centre.

## H4: Southgate

The Southgate entrance to the town is of historical importance, being the place where tolls were formerly collected (the origin of the ‘Freemen’ who were people entitled to pass freely through the tolls) and today presents the first impression of Llantrisant Old Town for visitors as well as residents in the wider Taf Ely area.

Southgate is a poor gateway to the town, with a number of issues:

- Signing for the Old Town faces east when most people unfamiliar with the town would arrive from the A4119 to the west;
- The Grade II listed Southgate building is derelict and in an advanced state of decay;
- The shop premises have a poor façade;
- There are no facilities for pedestrian crossing, yet people walking to the leisure centre and the lower part of the town needs to cross Talbot Road in the vicinity of the High Street/ Talbot Road junction;
- The poor alignment of the junction, and heavy flows of traffic making the turn from High Street to Talbot Road, leads to considerable queuing back up the High Street, particularly in the morning peak period.

A number of ideas have been considered and the junction has been modelled using junction software to assess whether a traffic signalised junction would cater more appropriately for traffic levels and pedestrian movements. However, it is our opinion from the assessment that the implementation of a traffic signalised junction will have minimal impact on the local highway network in terms of operational capacity. The possibility of a mini-roundabout or change in priority have also been considered but neither would improve safety or pedestrian movements. It is therefore considered that the most appropriate option would be to explore the possibility of a pelican crossing facility on Talbot Road, together with the proposed traffic

calming measures on the High Street to deter unnecessary traffic movements through the town centre.

**Photos 3.7 and 3.8: The Southgate Junction – poorly signed and with a prominent derelict building**



Ideas for the Southgate buildings are presented in Figure 4.8. The most viable use for the listed building would be rebuilt as residential, including a re-configuration of the adjacent commercial unit to residential. This would create a more fitting entrance to the town centre and preserve the listed building for the future. It is also considered that the modern extension detracts from the original form and scale of the building and its removal would enhance the entrance to the town. The future of the premises does however depend on the aspirations of the property owners. As noted in Project H3(2), this would be an appropriate project for THI.



**Figure 3.8: Ideas for Southgate Buildings**



New Gateway signing should be provided at the junction, facing both east and west and of a design suitable to announce to the visitor that they are entering an historic town.

### Capital Cost

The cost of a new pelican crossing and gateway signing is estimated as £25,000.

### Funding

Redevelopment of the cottage and adjacent property would be the responsibility of the private sector, with THI/ local authority grant funding support. There might also be Cadw funding available as it is a listed building.

The pedestrian crossing and signing proposals would be most appropriately funded by the Highway Authority.

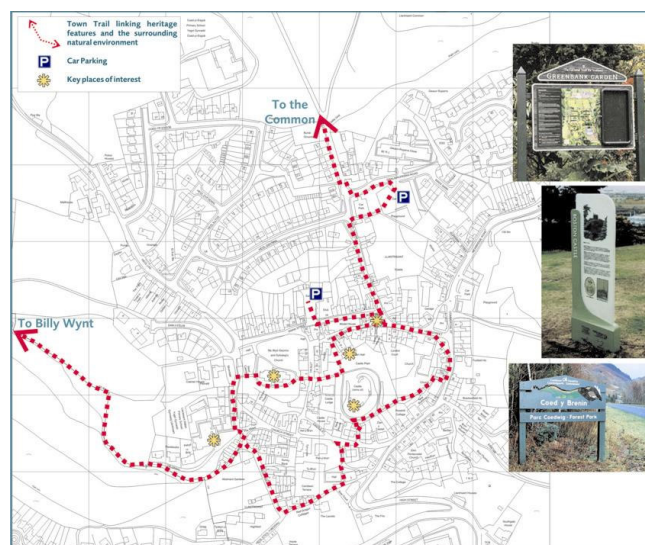
### Lead Partner

Rhondda Cynon Taff Highways in partnership with Development and Regeneration.

## H5: Heritage and Countryside Trail

The experience of Llantrisant for the visitor could be enhanced by the development of a town heritage trail with linkages to the surrounding countryside. This would link landmark historic features (such as St Illtyd Gwenno and Dyfodwg’s Church, the Guildhall, the Castle, Dr William Price’s memorial statue and the old water pumps) to Hen Felin Wynt and the Common. The development of a Trail would require sensitively-designed signage, interpretation features to explain the main site’s history, and the production of a leaflet available through tourist information points and local businesses. A trail leaflet was produced some years ago by the local traders and could form the basis of a new trail leaflet, together with the leaflet produced by the tourism businesses identifying the history of the key buildings.

Figure 3.9: Town Heritage and Countryside Trail



### Capital Cost

The production of a leaflet, pedestrian signing, interpretation boards at five locations and a preliminary sum for any works required to facilitate access to local landmarks (improved pathways for example) is estimated to cost £25,000.

### Funding

Funding possibilities include the Community Council, local traders, the Wales Tourist Board (depending on grant programmes as it becomes part of the Assembly) and the Heritage Lottery Fund.