

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council



Tonyrefail Town Centre Regeneration Strategy

Final Report



7 June 2006

Report no: 001-NE02552-NER-02



Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council



Tonyrefail Town Centre Regeneration Strategy

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Report no: 001-NE02552-NER-02

Date: 7 June 2006

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Commission

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council commissioned Hyder Consulting (UK) Ltd in June 2005 to produce a Regeneration Strategy for Tonyrefail Town Centre. The brief set the task of formulating a fully costed strategy for the regeneration of Tonyrefail, setting the context for new development opportunities and creating a thriving and vibrant town centre which meets the needs of the expanding population in the area.

1.2 The Study Area

The study area has been defined for the purposes of developing the strategy as the area centred on Mill Street and Waunrhydd Road and the western end of the High Street. It includes the leisure centre area and park and sites to the east of Mill Street such as the community centre. The study area is shown in Figure 1.1.

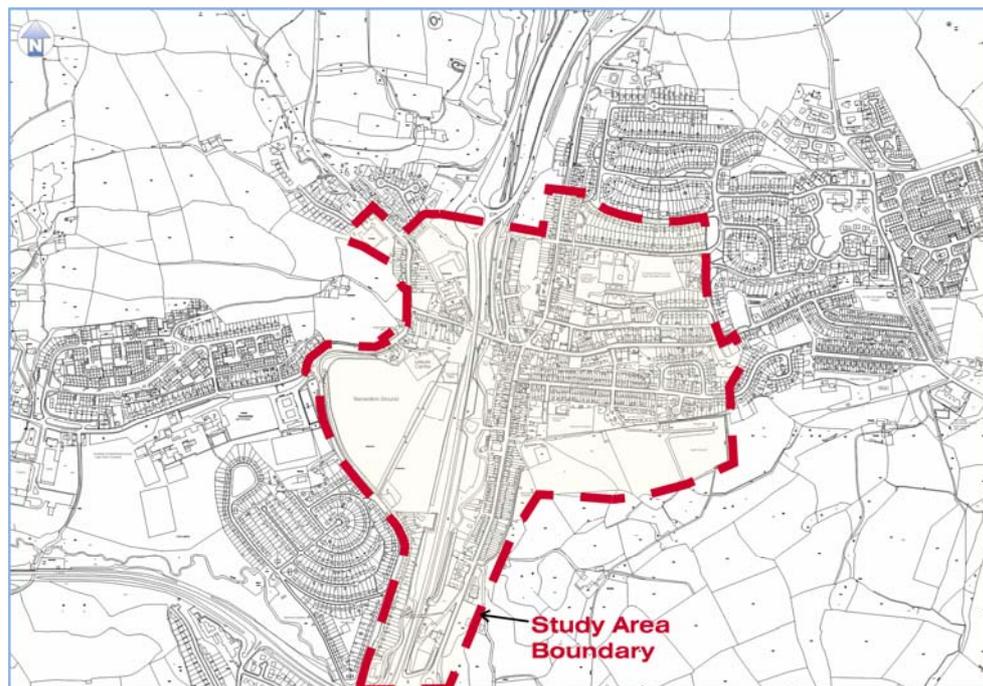


Figure 1-1 Study Area

1.3 The Need for the Regeneration Strategy

The town centre is a traditional shopping area, which has served the community well but suffers from a poor quality environment, lack of parking, some vacant/ dilapidated shop units and a general lack of investment. Yet the town of Tonyrefail as a whole has recently experienced rapid growth in housing. This should provide an opportunity for additional users to be attracted to the centre but there are concerns that many new residents do not use the centre. Moreover, at the same time, the large retail developments at Talbot Green are said to have drawn shoppers away from Tonyrefail.

The time is opportune to develop a regeneration strategy for the town centre to secure investment and ensure that in the future it is an attractive centre, providing a place in which local residents chose to live, work, shop and undertake leisure activities.

1.4 Site Appraisal and Consultation Approach

The multi-disciplined approach to the study has been to undertake a systematic series of appraisal tasks and consultation exercises in order to gain an appreciation of key issues affecting Tonyrefail Town Centre, its businesses and residents. From the series of tasks a holistic costed strategy has been formulated for the area over the next ten years.

Key elements of the study approach have included:

- Local area appraisal – including land use, streetscape character, historic features, quality of the public realm, social and community facilities, building condition, servicing and parking issues, pedestrian environment and commercial uses;
- A review of the socio-economic and policy context for Tonyrefail, including 2001 Census information, housing and planning policies and strategies;
- Consultation with key stakeholders – including local traders, shoppers, residents and relevant Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council officers.

1.5 Consultations

The aim of the initial consultations was to gain an understanding of the key problems affecting Tonyrefail from a local perspective and identify any measures, which have previously been implemented or are planned for the foreseeable future. The key issues raised throughout the various consultations were then taken into account in the development of ideas. A full list of those who were involved in the initial consultation exercises is presented in [Appendix A](#).

Based upon the results of the initial consultation work and site appraisals, a series of draft ideas were developed to address the key opportunities and constraints identified. These ideas were presented to the public in the

form of an exhibition on the 24th and 25th February 2006. Following the exhibition, the comments have been assessed and the ideas developed into the Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan for the Town Centre.

1.6 Status and Structure of the Report

This report is the final report of the study. It comprises the appraisal work, results of the surveys, sets out the vision and objectives, the regeneration strategy, results of the public consultation and action plan to take the strategy forward. The structure of the report is as follows:

Section Two: Provides contextual information to the study, outlining the socio-economic characteristics and policy and strategic context.

Section Three: Provides a detailed appraisal of the town centre including a brief overview of the history of Tonyrefail before exploring the architectural features, streetscapes, land use functions and movement of vehicles and pedestrians.

Section Four: Presents the Vision for Tonyrefail and details the proposals for the regeneration of the town centre.

Section Five: Summarises the response of the public to the exhibition.

Section Six: Provides an Action Plan of phased and costed projects for the next ten years.

2 Context

2.1 Administrative Boundaries

The Unitary Authority of Rhondda Cynon Taff comprises 53 electoral divisions and has the second largest population of the 22 Unitary Authorities in Wales at 231,946. The study area itself is made up of both the Tonyrefail East and Tonyrefail West electoral wards. These two wards are bordered by or are close to the electoral wards of Gilfach Goch, Graig, Beddau, Llantrisant Town, Llanharan, Cymmer and Brynna.

2.2 Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics

2.2.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of 1991 and 2001 Census data for Tonyrefail East and West Wards. The review is based upon data from both the Economic Renewal Action Plan for Area 9 and data obtained from Nomis, the official labour market statistics website.

The section briefly reviews and compares statistics relating to population, age profiles, workforce characteristics and deprivation indices.

2.2.2 Population

Combining data for Tonyrefail East and West Wards, the total population of the study area in 2001 was 11,032. The area has seen a rise in total population of 5.1% since 1991 when numbers stood at 10,473. This compares to the Authority wide data, for which there was a population increase of 2.8% between 1991 and 2001. The higher level of growth in Tonyrefail is due to significant new housing developments, arising from the areas proximity to major road links, which provide high-quality access routes to the main employment centres throughout South East Wales, together with the supply of suitable land for development.

2.2.3 Age Structure

Table 2.1 shows the age structure of Tonyrefail East and West in 1991 and 2001. One of the main changes between 1991 and 2001 was a reduction in numbers of people aged 18-29.

Table 2-1 Age Structure 1991 / 2001

Age Structure (% Total Population)	Tonyrefail West		Tonyrefail East		RCT
	1991	2001	1991	2001	2001
0-4	6.6	7.1	8.2	6.2	6.0
5-15	14.5	16.7	15.2	15.7	14.9
16 – 17	2.7	2.7	3.0	2.8	2.6
18 – 29	18.7	13.8	19.6	13.8	14.9
30 – 44	19.2	22.6	21.3	21.6	21.1
45 – 59	20.7	18.2	19.2	20.8	19.2
60 – 74	12.5	12.4	9.2	13.6	13.7
75+	5.2	6.5	4.2	5.5	7.7

Source: Nomisweb

A number of differences are also apparent between the two wards of Tonyrefail. For instance where the proportion of persons aged 0-4 has increased in Tonyrefail West, the proportion in Tonyrefail East has declined. Similar variations can be seen in the 45-59 age group, and the 60-74 age group. The data shows a general rise in the proportion of older persons in both Tonyrefail East and West. There has also been an increase in the number of people below the age of 15 in Tonyrefail West. Overall there is a high proportion of children and young people in the town compared to the County Borough, particularly in Tonyrefail West and a lower proportion of people of retirement age.

2.2.4 Employment / Qualifications

Employment data for Tonyrefail is shown in Table 2.2. The differences between Tonyrefail East and West are evident from the data. The most obvious variation between the two wards is the higher percentage of retired persons and students within Tonyrefail East. The wards have lower than the national average levels of economic activity, but also of unemployment.

Table 2-2 Employment Data

Employment Data (% Total Population)	Economically Active (16-74)	Unemployed	Retired Persons	Students
Tonyrefail East	56.9%	3.3%	13.2%	3.8%
Tonyrefail West	57.2%	3.2%	11.7%	3.3%
RCT	57.2%	3.6%	13.7%	5.1%
Wales	61.0%	3.5%	14.8%	5.1%

Source: Nomisweb

A slightly higher proportion of the population in Tonyrefail West than East have no qualifications. This is also reflected in the numbers with lower level qualifications, although the proportion of those aged 16-74 with higher-level qualifications is the same for both wards. Both Tonyrefail East and West have an overall lower level of qualifications amongst the population than the averages for the Borough and Wales.

Table 2-3 Levels of Qualifications

Qualifications (% of Population age 16-74)	No Qualifications	Lower Level Qualifications	Higher Level Qualifications
Tonyrefail East	52%	38%	10%
Tonyrefail West	54.3%	35.7%	10%
RCT	48.2%	38.8%	13%
Wales	40.2%	42.4%	17.4%

Source: Nomisweb

2.3 Deprivation Issues

Table 2.4 illustrates data taken for the 2005 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD). This index differs to that produced in 2000 as it uses 'lower super output areas (SOA)' instead of electoral divisions and is smaller in spatial scale. Tonyrefail contains a total of 7 SOA's including Tonyrefail West 1-3 and Tonyrefail East 1-4. The new index that certain parts of Tonyrefail differ considerably in terms of overall deprivation score with Tonyrefail East 3 SOA ranking the highest, which is interesting as this part of the town is not in the Communities First area. This area scores most poorly in terms of employment, health and education.

Table 2-4 Index of Multiple Deprivation (Rank in Wales)

LSOA name	Overall Rank	Income Rank	Employment Rank	Health Rank	Education Skills and Training Rank	Housing Rank	Physical Environment Rank	Geographical Access to Services Rank
Tonyrefail East 1	356	610	209	251	372	623	646	1667
Tonyrefail East 2	400	1087	344	62	700	856	533	453
Tonyrefail East 3	81	56	59	266	162	746	1279	1667
Tonyrefail East 4	1443	1666	765	1333	1277	1772	601	1027
Tonyrefail West 1	276	555	259	95	313	310	1281	1306
Tonyrefail West 2	655	1063	568	344	640	1238	380	660
Tonyrefail West 3	97	262	92	68	57	585	1019	1667

Source: WIMD 2005

2.4 Policy Context

This section considers the Regeneration Strategy within the context of local planning policy and local authority strategies, including:

- Taff Ely Local Plan (2003);
- Local Transport Plan (Annual Progress Report, 2004);
- Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council Community Plan 'A Better Life';
- Rhondda Cynon Taff Economic Regeneration Partnership: Economic Regeneration Strategy 2004-2014; and
- Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council Area Regeneration Partnership Initiative (Area 9)

2.4.1 Taff Ely Local Plan (Adopted 2003)

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council has adopted an updated version of the 'Taff Ely Local Plan' covering the period 1995-2006, which forms the statutory plan until the Local Development Plan is in place. This adopted plan identifies key areas for development restraint, renewal and opportunity, and encourages development on gateway and nodal sites and

within town centres. The following section provides a summary of planning policies relevant to the Tonyrefail area.

Objectives for Tonyrefail Town Centre

Within the Local Plan, the Tonyrefail policy area consists of the Community Council areas of Gilfach Goch and Tonyrefail and approximates the old Tonyrefail and Gilfach Goch Local Plan area.

The fact that the former mining communities have not merged into a continuous built up area creates a distinctive feature in the region. The area has many advantages including the surrounding countryside, which is of special landscape value, the relative lack of topographical constraints to development and the improved accessibility since the upgrading of the A4119 Rhondda – M4 road. The Local Plan states:

“The main task for this area is to provide the development opportunities and urban renewal schemes necessary to secure local employment and to strengthen the local communities”.

Environmental Policies

Chapter two of the Plan explores environmental policies for the authority. The section recognises the development constraints in many locations, which are caused by the topography of the landscape, and it is concluded that Taff Ely’s environment (built and natural) has been very much influenced by this topography. The rural land is seen to provide important visual separation between the more built up areas and development and infrastructure forming primarily along the valley floor. The authority also contains many historic buildings and monuments, which again contribute to the environment within towns throughout the region.

There are a number of areas surrounding Tonyrefail designated as a ‘Green Wedge’ under Policy EN4. The principle behind such designations is to avoid coalescence of settlements and maintain the character of the land that separates built up areas for visual and amenity reasons. Green wedges that are within or adjacent to the study area include GW1-GW4 and GW6).

There are also a number of Special Landscape Areas designated around the study area under Policy EN5. The main area designated is overlapped slightly by GW6 (mentioned above) and is located along the A4119 corridor between Tonyrefail and Edmondstown. This area is described as an ‘attractive broadleaf wooded valley with numerous watercourses’.

Design and Conservation Area Policies

The policies of the County Borough Council pay particular attention to the design and landscaping of proposed developments. All development proposals should demonstrate appreciation for the surrounding areas and ensure high standards in design. The height of new buildings should also be sensitive to the character of the surroundings and the disruption of skylines and important vistas should be avoided.

This general view on design is reflected throughout the following policies. Policy EN31 focuses on shop front design and states that new shop fronts will be permitted where they harmonise the buildings traditional appearance, retain any good architectural qualities, avoid disruption to existing detailing and proportions, retain existing window openings above ground floor and provide wheelchair access. Policies EN34-42 address the provision of advertisements and should be taken into account when proposed new build/ conversion, especially on the main shopping streets.

Policies EN51 and EN52 relate to developments in listed structures and structures of local value. EN51 states that the authority will not allow development in listed buildings that will adversely affect the architectural value and EN52 states that development that destroys or damages buildings of value will also not be permitted.

Policy EN59 covers urban open space. The policy states that development will not be permitted if likely to result in significant loss of undeveloped areas within the settlement boundary that make an important contribution to the character and visual amenity value of the surrounding area (pg. 55).

Business, Industry and Storage Policies

The plan sets out policies in regards to business, industry and storage, recognising that the major concentrations of manufacturing activity are within the Treforest Industrial Estate and the Llantrisant area, assumed to include Tonyrefail. This is strongly related to both the availability of flat land and accessibility to the M4 corridor. A number of sites are identified within the Tonyrefail policy area for B1 and B2 development under policy E1. The sites identified include allocations equating to 61.3 hectares of land allocated for B1 and B2 uses within or close to Tonyrefail, although none of them are within the town centre.

Policy E4 relates to the existing industrial sites within Taff Ely and allows for redevelopment, extensions, conversions and infill development to maintain or enhance sites. The sites to which this applies within Tonyrefail include, Gilfach Road, Gelligron Terrace and Dinas Isaf.

Business, industry and storage development on unallocated land is covered in Policy E8 which states that this will be permitted if proposals are for redevelopment, conversion and extension of existing premises; are not likely to cause increased detriment to residential amenities; and includes business developments with light traffic generation providing that there would be limited effect on the environment.

Housing

With regard to housing, Policy H1 identifies 44.97 hectares of land for 975 units on 17 sites within the Tonyrefail policy area, many of which have been implemented.

Policy H4 addresses residential development on unallocated land and states that residential development and replacements for existing housing, within the defined settlement boundaries will be permitted subject to a range of criteria. The policy also emphasises the need for community and

utility services to be accessible and readily/ economically provided, and access obtained in accordance with the standards required by the local highway authority. It also states that new development should not be detrimental to local residential amenity, and provide adequate private and public amenity open space within the curtilage and as part of the overall scheme, including adequate car parking, and that it does not conflict with policies to protect the environment.

Policy H5 then sets out the authorities commitment to the improvement of older housing stock. This policy emphasises that such works will be supported through housing renovation grants subject to external design in keeping with the traditional character of buildings.

Retailing

The County Borough Council, through the Local Plan support the concept of town centre management and are committed to examining ways to work in partnership with the private sector to enhance and promote the character, atmosphere and facilities in town centres to increase vitality, attraction and viability.

Tonyrefail is included in Policy S5 as a Central Shopping Area where retail development (Class A1) including redevelopment and changes of use will be permitted, subject to satisfactory building and shop front design, service access and parking provision. Within this area, policy S7 also applies, allowing the development of uses A1, A2 and A3 dependant on impact and design satisfaction.

Policy S10 defines the Council's view on the development of premises serving food and drink within the central shopping areas, again stating that such development will be permitted subject to satisfactory building and shop front design, service access and parking and landscaping. There would also have to be no unacceptable detriment to the environment or residential amenity.

A policy relating specifically to Tonyrefail is S14, which covers the role of markets within settlements. It is proposed that the present markets in the town be retained in retail use. This currently takes place on the Rhondda Bowl car park.

Community and Educational Services

Policy C1 provides the authorities general policy in relation to community services and states that proposals that extend the range and quality of community buildings will be permitted provided that, no detriment to residential amenities would result, and safe and convenient pedestrian links to residential areas in the catchment of the facility exist or are proposed.

Policy C9 relates specifically to Tonyrefail and identified a site adjacent to 26 High Street, which is reserved for a permanent library. This has been overtaken by recent proposals to develop a new library as an extension to the leisure centre.

Recreation and Tourism

The Local Plan has a number of objectives for recreation and tourism in the Taff Ely area. These include:

- To encourage provision and enhancement of public indoor and outdoor sports and recreation facilities related to identified community needs and up to the given standards;
- To prevent development of urban open space except for public open space uses;
- To enable public enjoyment of the countryside; and
- To encourage provision of tourist accommodation and attractions consistent with protection of the environment.

Policy R5 relates to Parks and Informal Amenity Areas and states that 'Proposals for new, upgraded or extended parks, local nature reserves, "pocket parks", kickabouts, and informal links to the countryside will be permitted, provided that no unacceptable detriment to residential amenities or nature conservation would result and there is satisfactory access on foot, and if appropriate cycle provision is provided'.

Within the same chapter the protection of existing outdoor leisure facilities is also covered by policy R7. This policy protects facilities by ensuring that proposals involving the loss of part or all of any sports grounds, play grounds, parks, "pocket parks", amenity open spaces, kickabout areas, allotments or similar public open spaces will not be permitted, except as part of a scheme which enhances provision of the same facility in the same neighbourhood and includes acceptable proposals for future use of the existing site.

Parking

The Local Plan recognises that very few parts of Taff Ely have been developed to meet the current demand for parking and are consequently experiencing congestion on residential streets. Although this is the case in Tonyrefail, the Plan also recognises the impacts, which can arise through the provision of extra parking in terms of increased congestion on the highway network and environmental pollution. The Local Plans objective in relation to parking is therefore; *"to make provision for short stay parking for shoppers and visitors, in preference to long stay parking for employees"* (Para 9.4, pg 133).

The Local Plans objectives through parking policies are very much therefore to provide short term parking in car parks conveniently located for the shopping areas of towns whilst reducing on street parking in built up areas and encouraging alternative modes of transport.

Transport Improvements

The Local Plan suggests a number of priorities for transport infrastructure improvements. Policy T2 specifies that land has been safeguarded within the Tonyrefail policy area for footway provision on the B4564

Hendreforgan; road-junction improvements at the Dyffryn Terrace / Penrhiwfer road junction and footway provision on Francis Street in Thomastown.

The proposed extension of the cycle path and community route from Talbot Green to Thomastown is near to the study area. This is intended to provide residents with a safe and alternative route to the A4119 travelling between Tonyrefail and the Llantrisant area.

2.4.2 Local Transport Plan (Annual Progress Report, 2004)

The Council's Local Transport Plan was published in August 2000 and is updated by the 2004 Annual Progress Report.

The work of the Regional Public Transport Strategy and Local Authority Bus Strategy, which includes major enhancements to regional bus and rail networks as identified within the Adopted Local Plan is recognised within the LTP. With regards to this, the Council commissioned external consultants to undertake a comprehensive study into longer-term development of community transport within the RCT area, including necessary sources of funding, the potential role of the voluntary sector and improving information provision and standards (paras 1.8-1.9).

The important role of town centre partnerships (with the Chamber of Trade and other organisations such as the police and the WDA) is established in the LTP. These are funded by the National Assembly for Wales' Local Regeneration Fund (LRF) for town centres such as Porth and Mountain Ash.

The LTP also identifies the importance of Safer Routes to Schools which include highway improvement schemes (such as 20mph zones, new and widened footways, safety barriers and traffic calming measures). In 2004, a consultation programme with local schools was launched, with newsletters provided to local schools to explain the Safer Routes to Schools strategy and how schools can get involved. Preceding this, the Council launched a "Home to School Transport Information Pack" (2003) for eligible school pupils travelling on contracted bus services, including a "Getting to School Safely" leaflet, free bus passes, timetable information, operator details and contact numbers. To address safety and anti-social behaviour on school bus services, a working partnership was formed with the Police, Fire Services, Road Safety Team and bus operators.

The Local Road Safety Grant from the National Assembly for Wales has enabled a significant programme of road safety and traffic management schemes to be implemented throughout the RCT area in 2003-2004, which has included implementing new traffic-controlled junctions, pedestrian crossings, footways and safety fencing.

2.4.3 Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Community Plan “ A Better Life”

The community plan was developed to set out the following vision for improving the Borough over the next ten years:

“Rhondda Cynon Taf will be a community where everyone who lives, works in or visits the area will enjoy the benefits of a better quality of life, achieving their potential, while helping to develop and protect the area for the benefit of others” (pg.3; “A Better Life”).

The Plan is based around five key themes of: safer communities, living space, health and well-being, boosting the local economy, and learning for growth. The following key issues affecting the RCT area are identified below (pgs. 6-7):

- **The area’s growing diversity.** Rhondda Cynon Taff is a series of small communities, rather than one single (homogenous) area. That diversity is a clear strength, but has implications for flexible, local service delivery, for effective communication links across the area, and for action to maintain town centres as vibrant public places for shopping, for work, for recreation, entertainment and cultural activities.
- **The changing local economy.** Rhondda Cynon Taff is successfully transforming itself from an economy based on heavy industry to one which has a more diverse range of job opportunities, which are attractive and accessible to the widest cross section of the population. These include the creation of new jobs in specialised growth areas, such as new media and tourism.
- **The changing social characteristics.** Reflecting local patterns of economic change, areas of growing affluence exist near the M4 corridor, while significant areas of disadvantage remain to be tackled – particularly in the northern valleys. The loss of traditional employment has contributed to a stubborn residue of social deprivation, leaving some communities feeling vulnerable and excluded. Promoting fairness and equality of opportunity in the development of all communities is a key challenge.
- **The health of communities.** The disparities in health levels require urgent mutual action to develop new, more effective forms of primary care and health promotion.
- **Prospects for young people.** Children reflect the recent changes in the area. Many now move on to further/higher education, but others, notably in disadvantaged areas, are starved of prospects for the future. 30% of young people’s education is provided through the medium of Welsh, a distinct characteristic which enhances prospects for the future.
- **Reconciling rapid social and economic change with protecting the most vulnerable.** Supporting everyone to play a full part in, and benefit fully from, the social and economic future of the area is a continuing need.

- **Understanding and promoting Rhondda Cynon Taff's place in the world.** Recognising the need to respond to new regional, national and global challenges, and to influence others positively to recognise the unique attributes on offer as a place to invest, work in, live in, and visit.

Key actions to be implemented by 2008 include the following objectives:

- Establishing a new, integrated, multi-agency Community Safety Service – including piloting the introduction of new “Police community support officers” (who will be focused particularly on dealing with nuisance and anti-social behaviour); revamping the Area Crime Watch Co-ordinators service to promote greater community involvement.; and extending the use of CCTV where need is identified and a measured contribution to safety is possible,
- Improving public transport services and creating a Community Transport service in every area, to limit growth in car use.
- Ensure there is adequate access to recycling services and facilities for every resident and business, and promote cleanliness and recycling by organising annual campaigns.
- Enhance the streetscape, including the provision of better lighting.
- Produce a Health, Social Care and Well-Being Strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taff that addresses identified needs in tackling economic inactivity, improving mental health, support for children, better access to services, maintaining independence and, increasing healthy environments.
- Research and address the causes of economic inactivity, and establish and implement community/ area action plans that support the objectives of “A Better Life” at local level, including promoting the success of local business,
- Support higher and further education establishments to play a direct role in supporting local prosperity, and encourage a higher proportion of pupils and adults with a minimum of Level 2 attainment in literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, and increase investment in early years and parent education programmes.
- Recognise that schools are key players in the delivery of the Community Plan, by encouraging and developing their use as important centres for the communities.

2.4.4 Rhondda Cynon Taff Economic Regeneration Partnership Economic Regeneration Strategy 2004 – 2014

This regeneration strategy represents the framework for improving the economy of Rhondda Cynon Taf between 2004 and 2014, based upon the following vision:

“Rhondda Cynon Taf will be a community where everyone who lives, works, or visits the area will enjoy the benefits of a better quality of life,

achieving their potential, while helping to develop and protect the area for the benefit of others”.

Key objectives are to create more ‘quality’ jobs and increased employment opportunities in a strong prosperous, self-reliant local economy, to improve and revitalise local towns, villages, streets and homes through new development which is sympathetic to the environment, and creating vibrant communities with a viable long term future. There are also seven action areas identified, including:

- **Creating more varied and stronger businesses** by helping businesses start-up, growing local businesses, exporting to the World, supporting e-commerce and creating vibrant commercial centres.
- **Tackling economic inactivity** by providing support for adult returnee’s, helping hard to reach groups return to work, and those with physical and mental ill-health return to work.
- **Stimulating community enterprise** by creating enterprising community ventures, promoting social entrepreneurship, and supporting community networks.
- **Promoting smarter working** by tackling future skills needs, targeting skills gaps in high growth sectors, and training entrepreneurs and managers, making learning fun and making better use of the college and university.
- **Improving where people live** by improving the quality of our living spaces, revitalising communities, working to provide better transport, recycling waste and improving e-connections.
- **Spending public money locally** by creating more effective ways of buying goods and services locally, encouraging private sector contractors to use local goods and skills and services, training local people, and improving management skills in local firms.
- **Promoting a positive image** by marketing Rhondda Cynon Taff, attracting inward investment, promoting heritage through new and existing tourist attractions and creating a visible ‘sense of arrival’.

2.4.5 Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Area Regeneration Partnership Initiative (Area 9)

Within the County Borough twelve Economic Renewal Areas have been identified (see Figure 2.1). The local authority has then developed “Action Area Plans” for each of the twelve areas, focussing on securing economic, social and environmental regeneration including short, medium and long term objectives and linked to the quality of life indicators within the Council’s “Community Plan”.

Tonyrefail East and West wards are identified as two of three wards in “Economic Renewal Action Area 9”. The area also includes the Gilfach Goch ward and has a total population of 14,469 (2001 Census, ONS).

Within the Area 9 Action Plan are a number of key issues identified as currently affecting the area. These issues include:

- Lack of car parking in Tonyrefail and overall cleanliness and protection of the environment in the area;
- Lack of policing, problems with substance misuse, traffic management issues and antisocial behaviour;
- Deprivation, high rate of short and long term incapacity and drug and alcohol misuse;
- Concerns over the number of good quality jobs and occurrence of new business in the area; and
- Limited additional educational / recreational opportunities, low levels of qualifications and issue of barriers preventing training.

Taking into consideration these issues, the local partners and working groups have produced the following objectives for the area:

- To improve Tonyrefail Town Centre by making it a more attractive and easily accessible place to shop through the implementation of refurbishment and environmental improvements and the building of a new car park;
- To develop the town centre of Tonyrefail to enable it to compete with neighbouring shopping areas; and,
- To provide improved football facilities on the Hendreforgan playing fields.

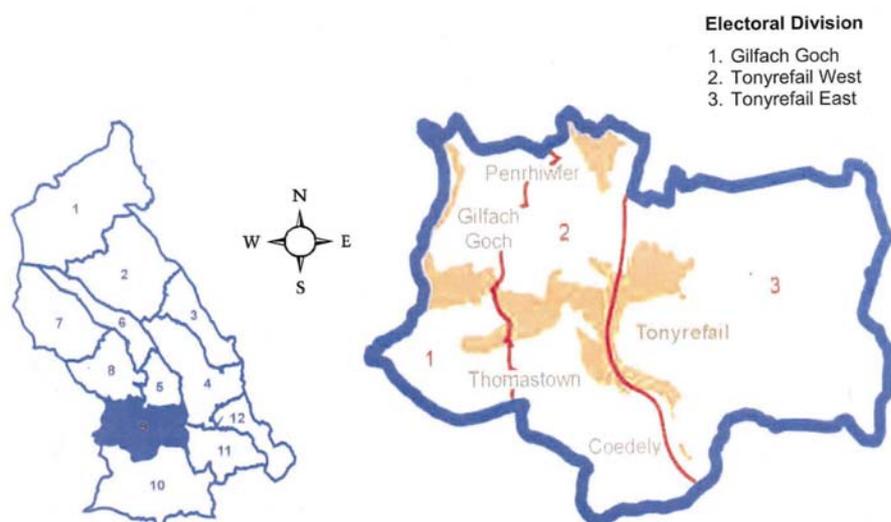


Figure 2-1 Area 9 Economic Regeneration Area including Tonyrefail

Key issues of concern within Regeneration Area 9, within which Tonyrefail lies are associated with:

- Transport: There is no access to the main town of Pontypridd and there are no rail services, bringing a reliance on the bus services.

- Economic Regeneration: Area 9 performs below average on a number of economic regeneration indicators with lower than average incomes.
- Economic Regeneration: Area 9 has relatively low business densities with 15.6 businesses per 1,000 people compared to 22.1 for RCT.
- Health and Well-being: Area 9 scores poorly with regards to health and well-being of the population. There are a high proportion of people whose ability to work is hindered by long term illness and the area also has the joint highest levels of babies born with low birth weight.
- Education: The area performs poorly at Key Stage 2 level and is the worst performer at GCSE level with 28% of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE's grades A*-C. The area also performs below average at A-level and some 47.5% of the workforce has no formal qualifications.
- Environment: The proportion of unsuitable housing in the area is slightly above average.

Within Tonyrefail the key issues of concern include:

- Community Safety: Tonyrefail East has a high burglary incidence rate at 3 per 1000 of the population whereas Tonyrefail West has the lowest occurrence of reported crime in the area.

The Regeneration Strategy aims in particular to tackle the first two points of the Action Plan.

3 Town Centre Appraisal

3.1 Introduction

The following section provides a comprehensive review of the historical development of Tonyrefail town centre, which has contributed to the physical development of the settlement and provided the features found in the town today. Subsequent to this overview, the section explores the remaining historical and architectural features, streetscapes, land use functions and movement appraisal. The overall aim of the section is to provide an understanding of the past and present and the constraints and challenges that the town centre faces in the present day.

3.2 Historic Context

Tonyrefail is an industrial village situated four miles north west of Llantrisant at the head of the Ely Valley and entrance to the Rhondda Valley.

The origins of the meaning of 'Tonyrefail' has been given many interpretations over time, the most common of which is Ton meaning a raised or sloping field and efail meaning a smithy. The meaning of the word is therefore believed to be 'The Smithy of the raised or sloping field' and relates to the original smithy, which was located where the Post Office now stands.

The historic context of Tonyrefail town is greatly connected with that of the Prichard family, known locally as 'The Prichards of Collenna' due to the family linkages with Collenna House, a three storey mansion (now farmhouse) built in 1093, overlooking the village of Tonyrefail. The Welsh Noble Einion-ap-Collwyn built the house and it is to him that the Prichard ancestry can be traced back to Norman times.

Tonyrefail was once a self-contained village encircled by farms, many of which date back to the 17th century and are still in existence. The village used to contain a Cord Factory, a Nail Factory, a Candle Factory, a Woollen Mill and a Flour Mill. These industries undoubtedly located in the village due to plentiful supply of water from the Ely River. For many years a large pond existed which provided a swimming area in summer and skating rink in winter. Alongside the factories there were also a number of blacksmiths, carpenters shops, wheelwrights, bake-houses, saddleries and resident tailors.

Although work and services were plentiful, living conditions were poor for many in Tonyrefail. In the early days of the village all inhabitants were Welsh speaking, and it was not until the construction of the railway in 1860 and the advent of coal that the area became bi-lingual.

In the early 17th century coal was mined by means of Bell Pits and the amount of coal mined would not of been of any great quantity. In the mid

1800's coal was still being mined in the vicinity but techniques, although advancing were slow and dangerous as coal was mined from the levels close to the valley surface.

The advent of the Ely Valley Railway Company brought an increasing number of mines to the area. The largest mines including:

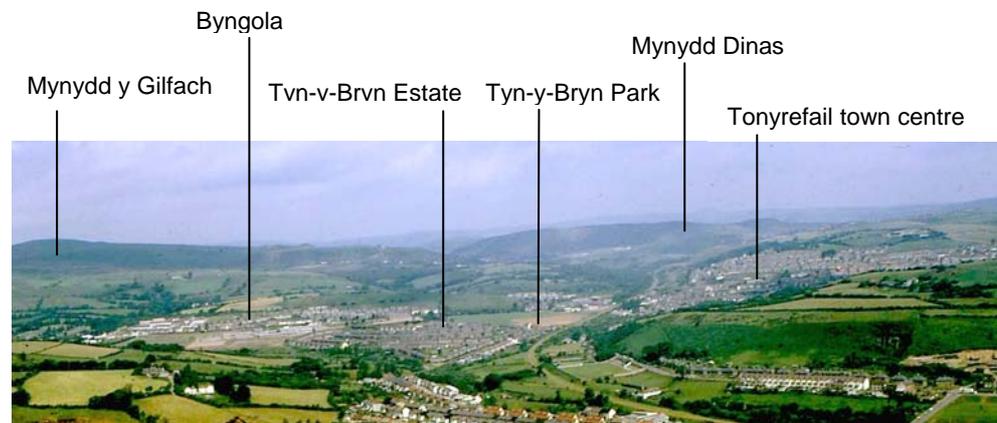
- The Glyn Colliery – opened in 1878 and employed about 400 men and boys producing approximately 3,000 to 4,000 tons of coal per week. Closed in 1903, the coal stack remained a landmark in Tonyrefail for many years.
- Collenna Colliery – opened in 1878 by the Glamorgan Coal Company. The colliery ceased to operate in 1912.
- Cilely – Cilely was sunk and opened in 1872. This colliery produced coal of extremely good quality and was included in the Admiralty list. At its peak Cilely employed 700 men and after changing ownership several times the pits were closed in 1959.
- Coedely Colliery – Sunk in 1901, Coedely was the biggest coal mine worked in Tonyrefail. At its peak the mine employed close on 2000 people.

With the coming into being of these mines, a huge building programme was implemented in Tonyrefail to provide homes for the influx of workers and it was at this time that the villages of Thomastown and Coed Ely came into existence.

As the population grew alongside coal the number of churches/ chapels in Tonyrefail also increased to meet needs with St David's Church being consecrated in 1903. The importance of the church within the village gave rise to musical interests among the community, and music and sport have always been, and still are popular within Tonyrefail's community. The town has produced many successful sporting teams, men and women, including Cliff Morgan, Ed Jenkins, Tom Thomas and the successful Ely Valley Bowls Club.

Since the war the town has experienced a surge in residential developments with new housing estates developed to the south west of Tyn y Bryn Park and to the east of the town centre. Today, the town is experiencing a wealth of modern residential developments due to land availability and good access to main conurbations within South East Wales.

3.3 Landscape Setting



View taken from lower slopes of Mynydd Portref.

The town is located within the Ely Valley and has developed on and around the slopes of the valley. The town is surrounded by the Dinas, Gilfach, Glyn and Portref mountains, which provide an attractive backdrop. Views of these mountains and mountains beyond i.e. Mynydd Maendy and Mynydd Hugh to the south can be experienced throughout the town. The setting of the town relates to its historical past initially being developed as a coal mining community, the coal mining industry gradually re-shaped the local landscape. However, Tonyrefail itself was largely unaffected by the re-forming nature of the industry.

The Ely river flows through the middle of Tonyrefail and this formed the divide between the east and west sides of the town. The A4119 now follows the route of the river through the town. This is a more distinctive feature than the river, which is largely overshadowed by the road development.

Although the majority of the town is located on the higher landscape slopes, the settlement's situation in the valley, being surrounded by the higher ground of the local mountains, provides it with sense of protection and seclusion. This is despite the town being very close to Llantrisant and Talbot Green and being fully accessible by main routes and in particular being dissected by the A4119. The surrounding physical local landforms have prevented the town being swamped by enclosing development and has therefore preserved its character and setting within the landscape.



Aerial Photo of Tonyrefail

3.4 Land Use and Function Overview

Tonyrefail town centre has a variety of land use functions ranging from typical town centre retail uses to small business and industrial units, residential properties and community facilities. This section provides an overview of the main land uses within the town centre.

Retailing

The main retailing and eating establishments within the town centre can be found on Mill Street and High Street. The area contains a number of attractive shop fronts and traditional residential properties as well as a number of run down facades in need of upgrading. The retail base within the town is fairly evenly split between premises selling convenience goods and those selling more specialist comparison items such as home furnishings, clothes and electrical goods.

The range of retail premises in the town provides the local population with some choice and complements the larger branded stores, located in Talbot Green, approximately 5 miles from Tonyrefail town centre. The town centre also contains a number of public houses and social clubs, a café and a number of hairdressers and beauty salons. The town's two major banks are located on High Street.

The Waunrhydd Road area of the town centre also contains commercial premises including a florist, hairdressers and a number of small private

offices. This area also hosts the towns weekly market on both a Tuesday and Saturday. This event is held within the car park of Rhondda Bowl.

Commercial Premises / Industry

The main commercial premises within the town are located in the Gelligron Estate and Del Guerra Court, accessed off Waunrhydd Road. The Gelligron Estate contains a few general repair garages, a maker of steel products, a caterer and computer repair centre. Del Guerra Court contains a number of small business units, which are currently occupied by a sign maker, loft conversion company, costume designers and makers, an insurance broker and renewable energy company. This site is a substantial local employment site.

Other commercial premises within the town centre area include garages off Prichard Street, the eastern end of High Street and Mill Street, a petrol filling station on Mill Street and builders' merchant off Station Road with storage areas and local deliveries. It would seem that the uptake of commercial and industrial premises is good within the town with the majority occupied.

Residential

Due to pressure for development sites within the local area and the completion of a number of residential developments surrounding Gilfach Goch and Tonyrefail West, house prices within the town centre have risen over recent years. The majority of Tonyrefail is residential in character with only Mill Street, High Street and Waunrhydd Road creating the retail core. Following the general national house price trends, average prices in Tonyrefail have risen from £36,623 in Apr – Jun 1995 to £111,229 in Apr – Jun 2005. Although prices in the area are now in line with those at a national scale, the amount of increase has been higher in Tonyrefail with prices in average for Wales rising from approximately £51,854 in 1995 to approximately £138,346 in 2005. The town contains both traditional housing styles within the main town centre, which contrasts in character with the more modern housing estates found on the outskirts of the town centre area and mid 1900's estates to the east and west of the town centre.

Recreation and Open Space

The main area of open space within Tonyrefail is Tyn-y-Bryn Park located next to the leisure centre. This provides the town with a large open space on which many sporting activities take place. The local football, rugby and cricket teams use the field. The park also contains a children's play area, in the south west corner near to housing. School children use the field as a path from the school into the town centre and it therefore provides a valuable space within the community.

There are a number of other green spaces throughout the town. The main rugby field is located off Prichard Street and is surrounded by green space

to the south. A second children's play area is located on the corner of Waunrhydd Road and Penrhiwfer Road.

The leisure centre is located next to the park off Waunrhydd Road and provides a range of leisure and recreational facilities including swimming pool, gym, health suite, sports hall, function room and indoor cricket area.

Occupying the adjacent site to the leisure centre is Rhondda Bowl, which provides the community with local ten pin bowling facilities. Although the focus of the facility is the league bowling it is open to the general public and again offers function room and bar facilities.

Community Facilities

There are a number of community facilities within Tonyrefail serving the majority of age groups. In addition to the leisure centre and bowling facility, the town also has a number of community halls and daytime facilities including:

- **Tonyrefail Day Centre** – Located on School Street this centre provides general support to those people attending to enable them to continue living at home while giving their carer a break.
- **Tonyrefail Community Centre** – Located on Prichard Street the centre houses a number of activities such as the Women's Institute.
- **Springhill Family and Activity Centre** – Located on Heol y Glyn the centre provides numerous services including:
 - After School Club
 - Youth Club
 - Toddler Group
 - Educational Support for children, and
 - 1 to 1 support for families experiencing difficulties.
- **Ely Valley Miners Welfare and Social Club** – Located on Mill Street the club offers a football ground, tennis courts, a licensed bar, and social space for community events. The club also hosts the Tonyrefail Gardening Club held fortnightly.
- **St Georges Community Centre** – A converted church at the lower end of Mill Street the centre provides visitors with a nutritional meal and social space in which to socialise and undertake activities such as reading, TV and Bingo.
- **Tonyrefail Youth Centre** – Based in Tonyrefail Comprehensive the youth centre provides a multi use facility for children and young adults.

Education and Health

Educational facilities within Tonyrefail include:

- Tonyrefail Nursery School on Martin Crescent,
- Tref y rhyg Primary School on The Avenue,
- Cwmlai Primary School on Penygraig Road,
- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg, located on School Street,
- Tonyrefail Comprehensive School on Gilfach Road, and
- Tonyrefail Adult Education Centre, located within the grounds of Tonyrefail Comprehensive School.

Local health centres and doctors surgeries include Park Lane Surgery, located on Mill Street.

The Royal Glamorgan Hospital located between Tonyrefail and Talbot Green is the general hospital for the town.

Churches and Chapels

There are a number of churches/ chapels within Tonyrefail Town Centre. The most prominent premise, which is now disused, is that of Capel y Ton, located on High Street.

In addition to the St David's Church in Wales, Tonyrefail has two main Baptist churches, the Salem Baptist Church and Tylcha Wen, located on Bethania Hill. The other church is the Bethel Pentecostal Church located on Mill Street.

3.5 Visual Appraisal

The following section provides a visual appraisal of all aspects of Tonyrefail town including buildings and commercial frontages, open space, landscape setting and town approaches.

3.5.1 Prominent and Historic Buildings



Ysgol Gynradd Cymraeg

St David's Church

There are a number of buildings within Tonyrefail that are of historical and local importance to the town or are good examples of specific architectural styles. Eleven buildings within the town are listed, however only two of these are situated within the study area.

Capel y Ton located in the High Street of the town is prominent in its location due to its raised position above the surrounding buildings. It was a Calvinistic Methodist chapel built in 1863. The earlier picture indicates the building before it was renovated in 1905.



Capel y Ton c.1893



Capel y Ton 2005

The building is Grade II listed (Listed 19.10.2000) as a well-preserved example of a chapel in a minimal classical style. The listing also covers the elaborate interior detail, which the clean lined exterior hides, although the quality of this is said to have diminished since the building has lain vacant.

The exterior grounds of the building comprises a stepped main entrance up to the chapel from the High Street with the remaining areas as an overgrown graveyard. Many headstones remain and are of local historical interest. The building is no longer in use but still holds a prominent position within the town and is a local landmark.

The second listed building within the study area is the 'Bingo Hall' located on the corner of Collenna Road and School Street. The building was originally a cinema built in 1914, formerly known as 'The Picture Theatre'. In 1983 the building was converted to a bingo hall. The building is listed due to its 'architectural and historical interest as an exceptionally rare example of an early cinema with a strong and prominent façade'.



The frontage of the building is orientated to the west facing away from the main town and is seemingly tucked away from view due to being located behind the public house, prominent on the corner of the square. However the cinema/bingo hall is visible to a degree from The Square and is more prominent within longer distant views around the town. The distinctive façade with

Bingo Hall 2005

large pilasters painted deep pink can be seen from the western side of the town as the building is situated on the higher slopes of Tonyrefail. In particular the building can be seen from Tyn y Bryn Park and from the A4119, the main route that bypasses Tonyrefail.



View of the Hall from Tyn y Bryn Park.



View of Hall from Cae'r-gwerlas- Isaf looking east along Waunrhydd Road



View from The Square

There are various other buildings throughout the town that add quality and visual interest to the streetscape. The prominent buildings are of a generally larger scale to those around them and therefore stand out in views from within the town. Many of the buildings have been standing for at least one hundred years and are still in constant use.



The former church at the southern end of Mill Street is now St. Gregory's Social Centre.



This chapel is slightly set back from the buildings surrounding it.

Commercial Frontages



Mill Street and the High Street within Tonyrefail form the main commercial centre of the town and this has helped to form some of the townscape character, from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the nineteen fifties through to the present day, as the images indicate below.



Mill Street c. 1900

(Image courtesy of www.Tonyrefail.org)

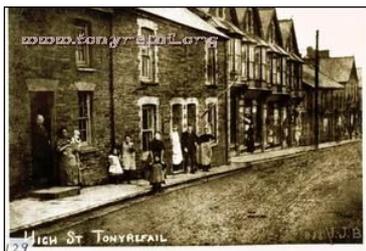


Mill Street c. 1955

(Image courtesy of the Francis Frith Collection)



Mill Street c. 2005



High Street c. 1900

(Image courtesy of www.Tonyrefail.org)



High Street c. 2005

The general streetscape within Tonyrefail has altered little since the turn of the last century, with many commercial properties retaining the original shop fronts and characteristic elements of a small town. The style of the

shop fronts is generally of the Neo Georgian period. The shopfronts mainly consist of elements, which frame the shop windows and entrance.

The vernacular buildings offer an attractive foil for the commercial frontages, which in turn complement the buildings within the town. The open glass fronts and colourful treatment to the elements of the traditional shopfront create an open and attractive character with the addition of visual stimulus whilst using/ traversing through the town.

The majority of frontages are in good condition and a number have been refurbished in keeping with the original buildings. There are a number of frontages however that require improvement throughout the town. These range from general maintenance improvements to redesign of shop fronts to complement the surrounding streetscape/townscape. Some fascias within the town are enlarged or the detail of the sign/signwriting is out of scale or style context with the local buildings and adjacent shops which interrupts the visual flow.

The image of closed shop shutters during the day provides a sense of 'run down town' that lacks a sense of security. The shutters themselves are also out of character with the local vernacular buildings and are un-inviting and untidy within the streetscape.



Mill Street – Example of good quality shop fronts



Mill Street – Example of poorly integrated shop front.



Mill Street - Example of good quality and characteristic shop front.



Waunrhydd Road - Example of poor frontages due to shutters being in permanent use.



The former Tonyrefail Library located within the High Street in poor condition adds a negative visual aspect to the streetscape.



The Square – Example of building in need of general maintenance.

3.5.2 Open Spaces



Tonyrefail has a very small number of open spaces with only one area designated as Urban Open Space (Tyn-y-Bryn Park as discussed previously). Other areas have been formed after the loss of previously placed buildings. This is particularly the case within the High Street where two areas of green space are located on opposite sides of the road. Shown in earlier images, buildings were located where these open spaces now exist. These spaces now however provide green breathing points in otherwise built up streets.

The open spaces and the park are generally in good condition however they do mainly consist of mown areas of grass with poor quality site furniture and minimal additions for visual interest.

Tyn y Bryn Park is used as a thoroughfare by school children from the secondary school and residents of the Tyn y Bryn estate. The park could be improved by a more structured approach and increase of planting. Plants can provide stimulus to all the senses, which can contribute, enormously to the enjoyment of a space. Seating areas could be increased and play facilities improved. Entrances to the park are dismissive of the historical context of the space, formally referred to as The Meadow, the park has always been open in some form. Improved signage to the park and entrance features could enhance its status within the town.



'The Meadow' Tonyrefail c. 1955 Image courtesy of www.tonyrefail.org



Tyn-y-Bryn Park (formerly the meadow) c. 2005



Access to Tyn-y-Bryn Park adjacent to Tonyrefail School on Tyn-y-Bryn Road.



Entrance point to the park adjacent to Tyn-y-Bryn estate. Signage is poor and out of scale and style of the park.



Entrance to park from leisure centre car park. This access does not feel positively inviting.



The site furniture within the green spaces are generally of poor quality, damaged, too little for site or lacking all together.



The waterways and channels within the town are overgrown and not utilised as a feature of the townscape. The Ely river flows through the town to the west of Mill Street. Although not a direct visual element of the town it could be enhanced and become a feature of it.



Damaged and detail in areas need attention, as these are in places dangerous and unattractive elements of the open space.



Open Space located adjacent to the High Street – Steep sloping area of neatly mown grass. This site has good views of the surrounding landscape/valley with views extending to Mynydd Maendy. The site can be accessed on three sides and can be viewed by a number of residential properties. The site could be

improved by increasing interest with planting and replacement of the site furniture.

Open space located on Waunrhydd Road – This. Area is close to the Waunrhydd Road Bus stops and lays adjacent to a small newsagents and other small shops. The space could be improved by a more structured layout, with surfaced access, seating and seasonal interest planting.



The general streetscape of Tonyrefail could be improved by the visual and physical stimulus and the positive social, economic and environmental benefits that green spaces can provide to a settlement. They help to form or emphasise the character of the area and form attractive linkages around the town, vital in improvement of the public realm.

3.5.3 Views



Due to the physical location of the town, split on different levels within the Ely Valley, views vary between long ranging views of the surrounding mountains and valley landscape to more inwardly facing views of the town centre on the hill. The following are descriptions of the most distinct views from Tonyrefail that extend beyond the town to the surrounding landscape.



From Tyn-y-Bryn Park views of the town can be seen against the backdrop of Mynydd y Glyn. The distinctive buildings of the Chapel in the High Street, the public house on The Square, the Bingo Hall/Cinema on Collenna Road and the Welsh medium Primary School can all be seen from this point, amongst the other buildings of the town. **(VP1)**

View Point 1 (VP1)



From Cae'r-gwerlas Isaf, the hill adjacent to Tyn-y-Bryn park good panoramic views of the surrounding landscape can be experienced. Views extend from this point across the park and Tyn-y-Bryn estate to Mynydd Hugh/Maendy and across the town with views looking directly along Wuanrhydd Road to the High Street and to the landscape beyond. **(VP2)**

View Point 2



From the open space within the High Street a panoramic view of the hill between Tonyrefail and Thomastown and Mynydd Portref beyond. Views can also be seen of the Taff Ely wind farm located on Mynydd Maendy. (VP3)

View Point 3



From The Square in Tonyrefail, looking south from the top of Mill Street a corridor view is experienced of the road flanked by the shops and houses located down the hill with the wooded hill between Tonyrefail and Thomastown in the middle ground and Mynydd Portref in the background. (VP4)

View Point 4

3.5.4 Pedestrian Routes



Pedestrian access around the town is quite free flowing with pavements on both sides of the roads and many access points off the main streets to the rear of properties or to the parallel streets. However, the quality of the access points is, on average, not high. Moreover, due to the physical restraints of the road system and buildings, pedestrian routes are often cluttered with signs, traffic light columns, bollards, lighting columns and other street furniture.

Pedestrian crossing points are not always well located. This is particularly apparent around The Square and the main commercial areas where crossings exist close to the main crossroads but are missing from further along the roads where pedestrians cross the road at various points.

Pedestrian access around the town could be improved by enhancing existing access points and pedestrian crossings and restructuring access routes. Measures to improve control of traffic flow alongside the promotion of movement around the town centre on foot or by cycle could benefit residents and users of the centre.



Access through to Parkland Crescent from the High Street opposite St David's Church.



Access from Mill Street adjacent to St Gregory's social centre to Tyлча Fawr and rear of Mill Street



Access from Parkland Way off Mill Street. The new access could have been kept in character with the town.



Pedestrian access off Mill Street near Parkland Way is unkempt and not well lit, with a feeling of lack of safety.



Some access points around the town create potential conflict between pedestrians and vehicle users.

3.5.5 Public Realm

The town has many attractive elements within it but there is a need for enhancement to improve the environment for users and the attractiveness of the shopping centre.

Enhancement of the public realm defines and improves the character and quality of a space and can be the key to the success of a place. The design details and materials used in a space can contribute to its popularity.

Public realm design must be related to the use of space and the character of the area to work successfully. There is no particular design style to the public realm within Tonyrefail. Elements such as paving change constantly throughout the town between tarmac and various different paving materials.

Pedestrian safety barriers are basic and of no visual quality, the small amount of lighting is of an industrial modern style out of keeping with the character of the town.



Leisure Centre/Bowling alley car park – This area is need of regeneration and improvement. Planting once implemented is now in poor condition and the image is one of untidiness.



Attention to design detail of routes and links to the street should be considered to improve the public realm, streetscape and access for all users.



The pavements around The Square are cluttered with signs, traffic lights, lighting columns, telegraph poles and exchange boxes. The public realm could be improved, making the streetscape more pedestrian friendly, by reducing the clutter.



The paving treatment used throughout the town constantly swaps between different materials. The tarmac surfacing that covers some areas has been repeatedly repaired and consequently looks patchy and reduces the quality of the streetscape. Continuity of paving and choice of material that is in character with the townscape could resolve this issue.



The pedestrian safety barriers that are located around The Square are out of character with the town due to the style chosen and of the bare metal finish. The barriers could also be raked to match with the contours of the street.



The bus stop waiting area is under the flyover and is a poor quality environment with no shelter from wind, limited from rain, poor ambience and no seating.

3.5.6 Approaches



The approaches into the town need improvement on the basis of creating an entrance into Tonyrefail, as currently there is no sense of arrival to the town. The lack of town name signage is apparent.



Access to Tonyrefail from the main junction at the southern end of Mill Street with the A4119 - There are no signs to indicate arrival to the town, and no landscaping or design feature relates to arrival. The new and stark wood panel fence is the most obvious visual element.



The Square is a prominent place for sense of arrival as it is the centre point of the commercial core. The buildings that surround The Square have been in existence for at least the last 100 years, which add to the character of the town. The junction is busy during the day and most traffic movements pass through it. Pedestrians also experience the sense of arrival and the pedestrian crossings close to the junction emphasise this. The sense of arrival could be improved by making a feature of The Square with improvements to the public realm and surface treatments to the junction.



The Square, Tonyrefail c. 1905



The Square, Tonyrefail c. 2005



The approach into the commercial core from Waunrhydd Road needs to be improved. As previously mentioned, the underpass of the A4119 currently houses two bus stops, one to either side of the road. People waiting under the underpass with no visible bus shelters or waiting areas does not give a positive sense of arrival to the town. To the

western end of the road there is an area of hardstanding with gravestones and an old play area located on the corner of Waunrhydd Road and Penrhiwer Road, this creates a negative visual element to the area and could be improved.

3.6 Movement Appraisal

The local highway network within the town centre consists of Mill Street, High Street, Waunrhydd Road and Collenna Road, all of which converge at the signalised junction at The Square area of the town centre. Sub standard in places, certain sections of the highway are in need of upgrading with intermittent footways, limited pedestrian facilities and difficult alignments and turning movements. The following section explores modes of movement and associated facilities around the town centre and draws upon the key problems being faced by the towns' various users.

3.6.1 Vehicle Movements

As briefly described above, the main vehicle movements are currently based around The Square signalised junction, along Mill Street, High Street, Waunrhydd Road and Collenna Road.

Mill Street – Current vehicle flows on Mill Street are frequently interrupted due to the occurrence of parking on waiting restrictions and the location of marked parking bays and single yellow lines. These problems combined allow only an effective 'one-way' flow up or down Mill Street, particularly at peak hours.

These problems are further compounded by the necessary presence of servicing vehicles on Mill Street, stopping to the front of retail premises, due to the lack of rear or dedicated servicing areas. The presence of national retailers in the town such as Spar and Co-operative Pharmacy means that servicing vehicles are often large articulated lorries, contributing further to movement restrictions along the main street.

Problems can also occur where Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV's) attempt certain turning movements from Mill Street into Waunrhydd Road and High Street due to the junction layout on The Square. It should also be noted that HGV's associated with the commercial premises on Mill Street use Prichard Street as a means of avoiding the signalised junction. In turn this usage results in the blocking of both Prichard Street and Mill Street to free flowing traffic.

High Street – High Street currently experiences similar problems to Mill Street, with flows interrupted or blocked by vehicles parked on waiting restrictions, particularly outside of the banks, which are located opposite each other on High Street. Servicing on the street is again a problem with both the Boars Head Public House and Edmunds Home Furnishings needing to service their premises on street near to the main town junction. This servicing also takes place in advance of the signals stop line, presenting a safety hazard. Again problems may exist where HGV's travel from High Street into Mill Street due to the restricted turning movements. This is especially a problem if vehicles queuing up Mill Street have passed the marked stop line.

Waunrhydd Road – Waunrhydd Road experiences fewer problems than the main shopping streets. Flows along the road are fairly free flowing and are only interrupted due to traffic signals on The Square. If there are a large number of right hand turners from Waunrhydd Road into Mill Street, a queue will form and can result in vehicles jumping the red light at the signals.

Vehicle movement is at times interrupted due to the location of bus stops on the road. At present stops are located directly opposite each other underneath the bypass. If buses travelling in opposite directions stop at the same time the road is effectively blocked and even when buses are staggered, vehicle movements are restricted to 'one-way'.

Collenna Road – Collenna Road experiences very few problems in relation to vehicular movements largely due to the absence of any retail units or serviced premises within the area. Due to the position of the road at The Square, in the main visibility is good and therefore turning movements are made easier. Queuing problems sometimes exist when vehicles parked on Mill Street and High Street restrict flows from the Collenna Road arm but this is seen as infrequent and only occurs during servicing of premises on High Street.

Side Streets – A number of side streets experience a knock on effect of the traffic issues on the main shopping streets and the lack of parking in the town centre area. The street perhaps which is impacted upon the most is

that of Prichard Street. Not only do town centre users park on this street, despite a large number of traffic orders, servicing vehicles of the Spar store also use the street as a turning place and a location from which to service the retail premises impacting on the capacity of both Prichard Street and Mill Street. Side streets off High Street also experience a large number of vehicles parking to use the town centre.

3.6.2 Off Street and On Street Parking

Due to the absence of a dedicated town centre car park in Tonyrefail, users currently use the car park outside of the Leisure Centre, Rhondda Bowl and the Gelligron Estate access road. The leisure centre car park provides 36 spaces, Rhondda Bowl provides 38 spaces, and car parks in the Gelligron Estate provide a total of 31 spaces (all unrestricted in times and free). This creates a 'shared' car park area between town centre users, those employed within the Gelligron Estate, leisure centre users and those using Rhondda Bowl. Although this only creates a problem for the leisure centre or Rhondda Bowl at their busiest times, the footway from the area into the town centre is restricted in width in places and is also along a steep gradient and therefore restricted for those with prams or wheelchairs or restricted in their ability to walk distances.

Due to the location of the car parks the issue of vehicle security is also of concern as the car parks are located away from the main thoroughfare and during quiet periods of the day will only have limited natural surveillance.

The car parks off Waunrhydd Road are well utilised during the day with approximately 60% of spaces within the leisure centre and Rhondda Bowl area full at mid morning and the parking in the Gelligron Estate full at a similar time.

Additional on street parking is available on some roads within easy access to the main shops and services. This includes:

- Two dedicated parking bays on High Street (1 hour time limit)
- One dedicated parking bay on Mill street (1 hour time limit)
- An area with no parking restrictions to the southern end of Mill Street, and,
- An area to the front of residential properties on Prichard Street with no parking restrictions.

Although these 'on street' parking places exist within the wider town centre, it is considered that parking for town centre users in close proximity to the shops is inadequate and options for a purpose built car park within easy access of the main retail core is a high priority.

The town centre contains a significant amount of parking restrictions with many of the main highways restricted by double and single yellow lines. The number of restrictions within the town contributes significantly to the fairly high incidence of illegal waiting, however the need for restrictions is clear when queuing and flow problems arise as a direct result of parking on

street. The traffic orders appear to be well managed with a visible warden presence, although at present the town only has a part time warden.

3.6.3 Pedestrian Movements

The close proximity of the main retail area to residential areas and the schools means that pedestrian movements within and around the town centre are high. Many of the local residents walk into the town, partly due to the proximity of it, but also due to the lack of central parking places. The main pedestrian movements are centred on the highways of Mill Street and High Street. However, there are also a high number of movements along Waunrhydd Road from the leisure centre area into the town centre. This route is also popular with school children from Tonyrefail Comprehensive accessing the town at lunch times and before and after school.

There are a number of points in the town centre where pedestrian/vehicular conflicts potentially occur. These need to be addressed in the interest of safety. The pedestrian crossings on both Mill Street and Waunrhydd Road for example do not follow the desire line of the pedestrian due to the stop lines on The Square being set back from the junction to allow for heavy goods vehicles and buses to turn. This is causing pedestrians to cross at points further from their desire lines, choosing not to use the formal crossings and increasing the incidence of pedestrian / vehicular conflicts. Conflicts are also increased in the town due to the high incidence of on street parking and parking on waiting restrictions. Due to the lack of formal crossings away from The Square, pedestrians must cross un-assisted. This movement is made difficult due to reduced visibility around parked and servicing vehicles.

3.6.4 Public Transport

There is no longer a railway connection to Tonyrefail and therefore the town relies on buses as its form of public transport. Services are provided by Stagecoach. The following services pass through Tonyrefail town centre:

- **Service 122*** – Cardiff to Tonypandy, travels along High Street and straight across the junction onto Waunrhydd Road (approximately half hourly, each direction).
- **Service 131*** – Cardiff to Maerdy, travels along Mill Street and straight over The Square onto Collenna Road (hourly).
- **Service 150*** - Porth to Evanstown travels along Waunrhydd Road and straight over The Square onto High Street (half hourly)
- **Service 151*** – Gilfach Goch to Pontypridd, travels along Waunrhydd Road and straight over The Square onto High Street (half hourly).
- **Service 152*/ 153*** – Tonyrefail Concorde Drive to Tonypandy, travels along Waunrhydd Road and straight across The Square onto High Street (two hourly).

- **Service 172*** – Aberdare to Porthcawl, travels along Collenna Road and makes a right turn into Waunrhydd Road (hourly).

* NB. All Services are return services.

The service list above illustrates the number of destinations accessible by bus from Tonyrefail. The majority of services run along High Street and Waunrhydd Road servicing stops along and off these routes. Bus stop locations are illustrated in Figure 3.4.



Figure 3-1 Traffic Restrictions, Parking and Bus Stop Locations

3.7 Summary

Through conducting a detailed appraisal of Tonyrefail Town Centre it is apparent that certain aspects of the town are in need upgrading or redesign. The list below provides a summary of the main issues and constraints, along with opportunities that have arisen during appraisals:

- Lack of car parking associated with the town centre area;
- Condition and design of a number of commercial premises within the town;
- Parking restrictions and lack of servicing areas on both Mill Street and High Street causing congestion and queuing;
- Lack of formal pedestrian crossing points in the town away from The Square;
- Intermittent footways and lack of formal bus shelters / seating along Waunrhydd Road;
- No formal signage on any approaches into the town;
- A number of redundant / underused buildings within Tonyrefail that need a future use;
- The leisure centre / Rhondda Bowl area is dated and in need of upgrading;
- Although the town has a number of community buildings and facilities there seems to be limited provision for youth in Tonyrefail.

3.7.1 Opportunities

- There are a number of opportunities to utilise certain redundant buildings for future uses;
- There is an opportunity to develop the site of the former pallet warehouse off Mill Street;
- There is the opportunity to provide youth facilities in the vicinity of the leisure centre and Rhondda Bowl;
- Opportunities exist to alter the junction layout on The Square, dependent on future developments elsewhere in the town; and
- Opportunities exist to improve the quality and design of commercial frontages and open spaces along the main shopping streets.

4 Public Consultation

4.1 Introduction

A public consultation of the initial ideas for Tonyrefail Town Centre was held within a vacant shop unit on Mill Street on Friday 24th and Saturday 25th February 2006. The exhibition was advertised in local shops and in the press prior to the event, invitations were sent to the relevant stakeholders who were consulted during the course of the study and a leaflet was distributed to local residents by the local traders'. Members of the study team were on hand at the exhibition to receive comments and explain ideas to the community.

The exhibition was very well attended with just over 200 people visiting to view the draft proposals. Although this number was not reflected in the number of comments forms received (total of 43), this indicated a general acceptance of the proposals. Moreover a strong degree of engagement was felt over the course of the exhibition, with many ideas and positive comments verbally received.

4.2 Support for Ideas

Table 4.1 illustrates the proportion of those responding to the public consultation who either strongly supported or supported the proposed projects. The majority of proposals received considerable support from the community. The remainder of this section outlines in more detail the responses received in relation to the individual projects.

Table 4.1: Support for Proposed Projects

Project	Support
S1: Improving Car Parking	
Site 1: Station Road (30 Spaces)	76.7%
Site 2: Rear of High Street Properties (20 Spaces)	67.4%
Site 3: Community Centre (20 Spaces)	37.2%
Site 4: Warehouse Site (85+ Spaces)	60.5%
Site 5: Riverside Site (50 Spaces)	51.2%
S2: Riverside Development	
Option 1: Small Scale Food Store & Parking	39.5%
Option 2: Mixed Use Development	37.2%
S3: Improvements to Commercial Properties	69.8%
E1: Mill Street Enhancement	90.7%
E2: Enhancement of Waunrhydd Road	81.4%

E3: High Street Open Space	90.7%
E4: Town Centre Approaches	88.4%
C1: Leisure Centre and Tyn y Bryn Park	90.7%
C2: Youth Facilities	83.7%

The projects individually receiving the most support are listed below, although it does not include the need to improve car parking as the support was split between different options:

- Mill Street Enhancement;
- High Street Open Space;
- Leisure Centre and Tyn y Bryn Park; and
- Town Centre Approaches

4.2.1 Improving Car Parking

Table 4.2 illustrates opinions from the public consultation in relation to car parking options for the town centre. The five sites presented are shown in order of support. The site at Station Road clearly received the greatest amount of support from the public. Sites at the rear of High Street Properties and on the Old Warehouse site also received majority support.

Table 4.2: Opinions on Car Parking Options

	Support	Disagree	No Opinion
Site 1: Station Road	76.7%	11.6%	11.6%
Site 2: Rear of High Street Properties	67.5%	11.6%	20.9%
Site 4: Warehouse Site	60.5%	27.9%	11.6%
Site 5: Riverside Site	51.2%	30.2%	18.6%
Site 3: Community Centre	37.2%	34.9%	27.9%

4.2.2 Riverside Development

When asked about development along the riverside, on the site of the old warehouse, responses were mixed. Two options were put forward: a foodstore with extended car parking for the town centre and a mixed use scheme of foodstore and housing with car parking only to serve the development. Both schemes received a similar amount of support, however a fairly high proportion of those who responded did not agree with development on the site. A number of those disagreeing with proposals on the site expressed concerns that a store development would not only increase traffic flows along Mill Street but would also threaten the future of

Kwiksave in the town. Concerns came particularly from residents in the immediate vicinity of the site.

Table 4.3 Riverside Development

	Support	Disagree	No Opinion
Option 1: Small Scale Food Store	39.5%	39.5%	20.9%
Option 2: Mixed Use Development	37.2%	34.9%	27.9%

4.2.3 Improvements to Commercial Properties

The proposal to provide design guidance and grant funding for commercial properties within the town was strongly supported by respondents: 69.8% of people were in support of such a project, while only 11.6% disagreed with the proposal.

4.2.4 Mill Street Enhancement

Figure 4.1 below illustrates the responses received in relation to the Mill Street Enhancement. An overwhelming proportion of the local community supported ideas proposed for Mill Street, although no differentiation was made between the two options for one way or restricted two way. There were concerns raised however as to the impact of displaced traffic on the adjacent residential streets. It is interesting that the consultation revealed that none of the respondents disagreed with proposals for Mill Street.

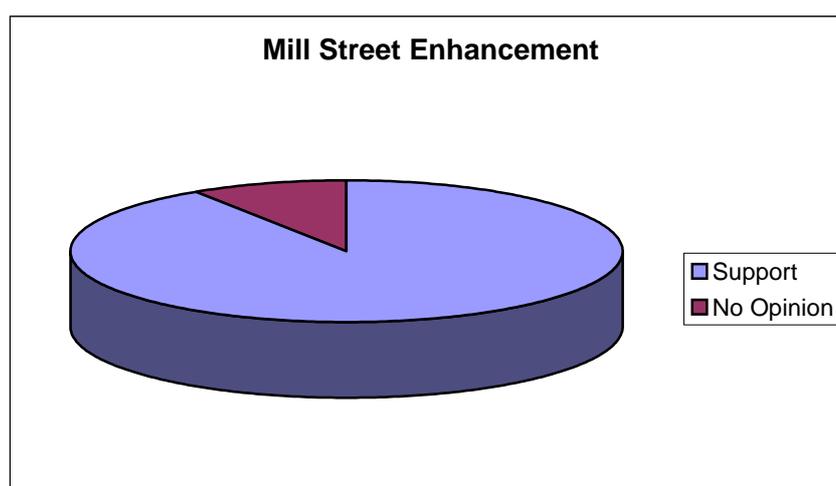


Figure 4-1 Mill Street Enhancement

4.2.5 Enhancement of Waunrhydd Road

When asked to comment on proposals for Waunrhydd Road, support was very high, with 84.1% of respondents were in support of the proposals with the remaining 18.6% of respondents providing no opinion. None of the respondents disagreed with proposals for any reason.

4.2.6 High Street Open Spaces

Figure 4.2 illustrates the opinion of respondents in relation to proposals put forward for the open spaces along High Street. Just over 90% of responses were in support of such improvements with only 2.3% of respondents disagreeing with proposals. A number of respondents commented on the need to include the renovation/ re-use of the chapel on High Street in any proposals for the area. This issue was raised frequently in discussions during the exhibition.

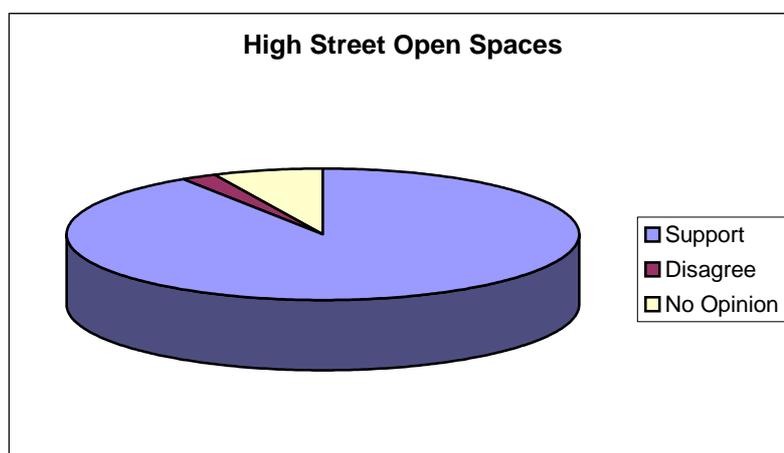


Figure 4-2 High Street Open Spaces

4.2.7 Town Centre Approaches

As with the above projects, proposals to enhance the approaches to the town centre received a great deal of support from the community. 88.4% of respondents were in support of such proposals with only 4.7% disagreeing with the project.

4.2.8 Leisure Centre and Tyn y Bryn Park

The proposals put forward for the Leisure Centre and Park area included proposals drawn up by Rhondda Cynon Taff for the extension of the existing library facility and provision of library space, café and improved sports facilities. Responses received in relation to both proposals were very positive. Just over 90% of responses were in support with no respondents disagreeing with proposals.

Table 4.4 Leisure Centre and Tyn y Bryn Park

	Support	Disagree	No Opinion
Leisure Centre & Tyn y Bryn Park	90.7%	0.0%	9.3%

4.2.9 Youth Facilities

Table 4.5 illustrates the response in relation to the proposals for the provision of youth facilities behind the Rhondda Bowl. The majority of respondents were in support of proposals (83.7%). Those who disagreed with the project raised concerns of staffing and management of such an area and also the safety of the footpath between the town centre and Tynybryn area. Although these concerns were raised, those who disagreed with the project did not state that they were not against the provision of facilities in principle.

Table 4.5: Youth Facilities

	Support	Disagree	No Opinion
Youth Facilities	83.7%	9.3%	7.0%

4.3 General Comments

A number of respondents during the public exhibition made general comments in relation to the projects suggested, along with the wider development of the town of Tonyrefail. Comments included:

- Concerns over private ownership of the access road for the Non Political Club and the Leisure Centre;
- The need to involve the youth and the wider community in any development of proposals;
- The need for effective management and maintenance of the youth facilities;
- Concerns over extra traffic on Mill Street, generated by the development of the Riverside Site;
- Concerns over the safety of the footpath connecting the Town Centre and Tynybryn area if the youth facility is built;
- Concerns over the effect of the one way system on bus services;
- The need to complete the new library / leisure centre proposals due to the growth in the settlement;
- The need to negotiate a new use for Capel y Ton on High Street;
- Concerns over the future of Kwiksave if a new store were to locate in the town;
- The need to enforce the use of off street car parks and stop people waiting on street; and

- The general feeling that the community would like to see projects started in the near future.

4.4 Conclusion

It is clear from the summary above that the majority of projects proposed at the public exhibition received the support of the local community. Where there was a number of options put to the community, the consultation process revealed the preferred choices of the community, which can now be considered.

5 The Regeneration Strategy

5.1 The Vision

Our vision for Tonyrefail Town Centre is to create:

“ A high quality town centre environment with services and facilities for the local community, easily accessible by all modes of transport as well as a safe and successful place to live, work and carry out business”.

This vision will be realised through:

- Ensuring the town is a strong shopping and service centre;
- Creating a high quality, safe and accessible town centre environment; and
- Supporting the wellbeing of the town.

The realisation of the above vision should provide the town with a greater ‘sense of place’ along with improved parking facilities and a more pleasant shopping environment, which may bring increased numbers of visitors to the town and attract additional private investment. The vision will lead to a better place in which to live and work with an improved town centre environment, containing an enhanced range of facilities and amenities, better managed traffic and parking and a greater sense of place for both local people and visitors.

5.2 The Strategy

The overall strategy for regeneration within Tonyrefail takes account of the constraints and opportunities identified through the appraisal and consultation process and the comments made by the public during the exhibition (as discussed in the previous section). The strategy seeks to translate the ‘vision’ into a co-ordinated framework for the regeneration of Tonyrefail Town Centre. Containing three strands with ten main projects, the strategy provides a ten-year plan of action for the town, as illustrated in Figure 5.1.

Ensuring the Town is a Strong Shopping and Service Centre

The strategy will seek to achieve this through:

- S1 Improving Car Parking
- S2 Riverside Development
- S3 Improvements to Commercial Properties

Creating a High Quality Town Centre Environment

The strategy aims to create this high quality environment through:

- E1 Mill Street Enhancement
- E2 Waunrhydd Road Improvements
- E3 Enhancement of High Street Open Spaces
- E4 Town Centre Approaches
- E5 New Uses for Redundant Historic Buildings

Supporting the Wellbeing of the Community

The strategy seeks to support the community by improving the:

- C1 Leisure Centre and Tyn-Bryn-Park
- C2 Youth Facilities

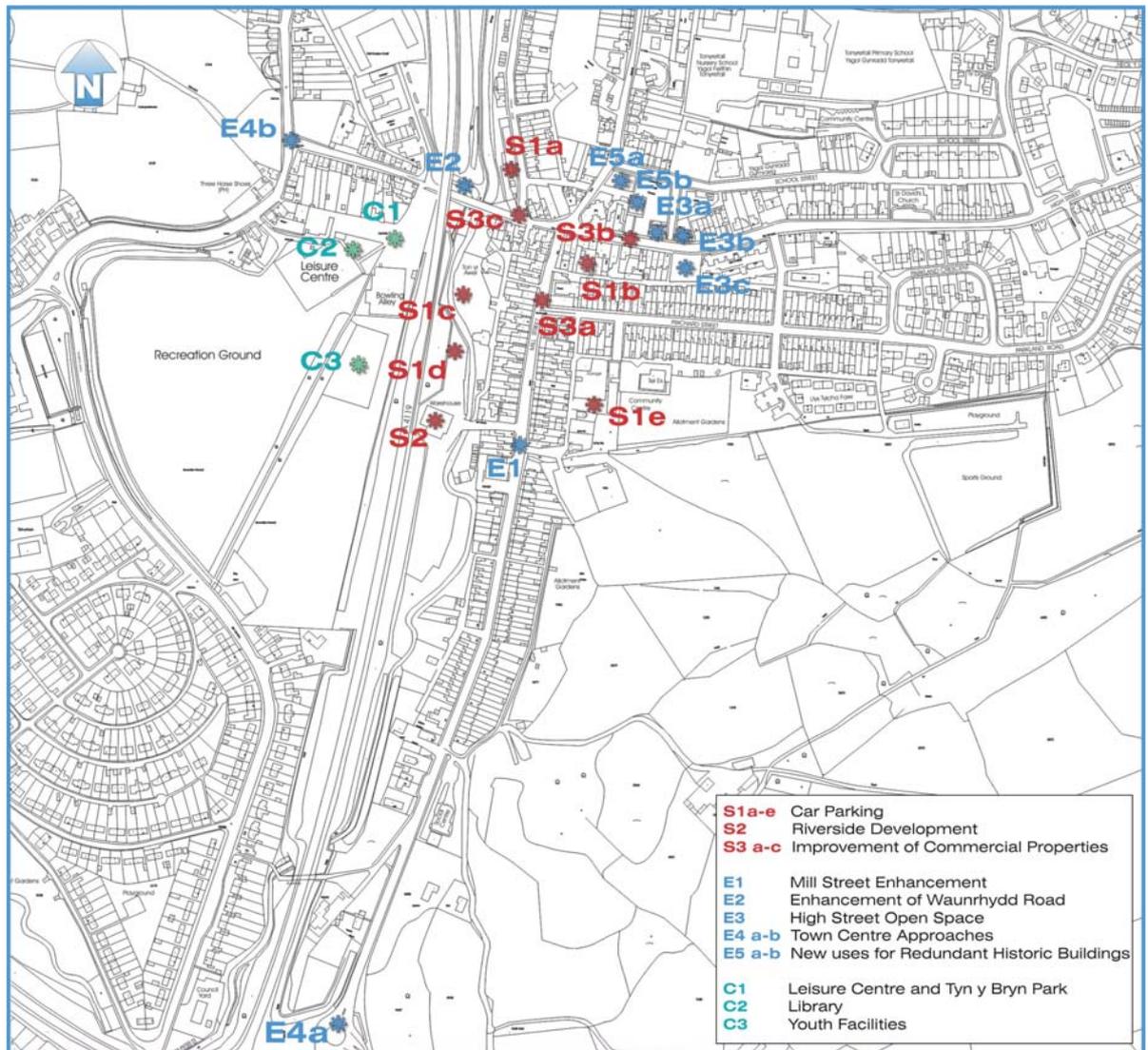


Figure 5-1 The Strategy

5.3 The Projects

The ten projects are discussed in the following section. They form recommendations for the most appropriate way forward in the light of the technical work and consultation undertaken during the study. The estimated capital costs, possible funding sources and lead partners are discussed in Section Six, the Action Plan.

S1: Car Parking

Car parking within Tonyrefail has been highlighted as an issue concerning many local residents and businesses. Many of the towns main streets are often congested as a result of parked cars and although parked traffic does reduce the speed of passing vehicles, it can, at the same time cause an

obstruction, interrupting traffic flows and causing large queue backs, especially during peak periods.

There is a real need in Tonyrefail for some town centre parking provision, primarily for the use of shoppers and other short stay town centre users.

Various options for parking provision in the town centre were presented to the public in the exhibition, each with advantages and disadvantages. On consideration of the response, as well as feasibility issues, it is recommended that the best option would be to provide a new car park on Station Road. There is potential for a 30-space car park with vehicular access from Station Road and pedestrian access from Waunrhydd Road.

The site is a relatively easily developable strip of land with limited physical constraints. It has good pedestrian access to the core of the shopping centre and adequate visibility for vehicles to safely leave the car park and Station Road can be achieved. It is recognised however that the site is in private ownership. The achievement of the car park would be subject to the acquisition of the site, and require an alternative location for the existing activities of the site owners (builders merchants) in Tonyrefail or within a reasonable proximity to the town.

Given the constraints to taking the Station Road site forward for a car park, it is considered that the option of providing a car park on the riverside site as part of a foodstore represents an appropriate alternative (the foodstore and parking are discussed under Project S2). The riverside site provides the potential for an 85+ space car park shared with a small foodstore, with vehicle access from Mill Street. The site gives an opportunity to provide a public use car park as part of a development. The land is currently vacant and good pedestrian linkages could be achieved into Mill Street with a new river footbridge and improved routes to the north into the shopping street. However, the car park is dependent on commercial development taking place and it is likely to require a secondary vehicle access using third party land from Mill Street, including a river bridge.

It is recommended that both options are further explored. If both car parks came to fruition, this would not be a disadvantage, rather an advantage for the town centre. The two preferred options are illustrated in Figure 5.2.

Implementation Issues

The first step in achieving the car park on Station Road will be to initiate a dialogue with the site owners and for the authorities Business Support team to assist in finding an alternative site for the business. Following clarification on the way forward, it will be necessary for detailed design work and costing for the proposal to take place by the Highway Authority.

The implementation of the alternative site by the riverside will be dependent on the private sector taking forward a retail scheme for the site. This is discussed more fully in Project S2.

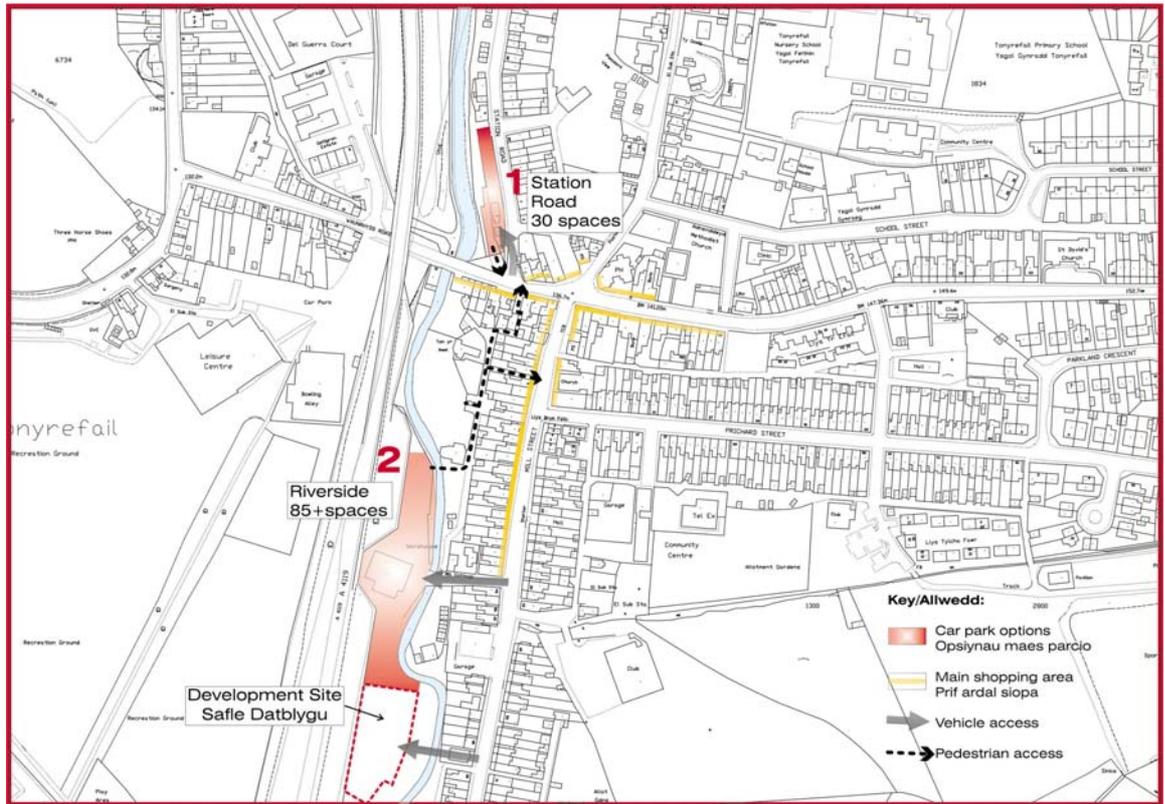


Figure 5-2 Car Parking Options

S2: Riverside Development

The Riverside area lies on the site of the former pallet warehouse in the town, west of Mill Street. It provides a good opportunity for development in a town centre location, whilst improving the environment and use of land alongside the river.

There is considered to be potential for an additional small foodstore in the town centre, complementing the existing shops and attracting more shoppers back into the centre. The riverside site could provide a site for a small foodstore (10,000 square feet) and associated parking, with good pedestrian linkages to Mill Street. It is possible that through negotiation, the number of parking spaces provided could be increased to provide for public use of the car park for the town centre, as well as the stores requirements. This would enable improved shopper parking to be provided mainly by the private sector, as discussed in Project S1. It would also be possible for a mixed-use scheme to be taken forward, providing the foodstore and associated parking together with a small number of residential units.

The site is in private ownership and has planning permission for residential units, with the intention that the land will be sold as self-build plots. It is likely that the value of the site for retail and parking would be lower than for residential and there may be a need for public funding support to take

forward the retail proposals, particularly in terms of access requirements. It is recommended that the possibility of the foodstore development is further explored to facilitate the development. In the event that the foodstore does not come to fruition, the use of the site for residential would be an alternative, ensuring that this prominent site does not remain vacant and derelict.

The development of a foodstore is likely to require a secondary access for vehicles due to the limited width and visibility from the current access from Mill Street. One option would be from Mill Street over the river, at the location of the tin building, formerly a chapel. This would enable an in-out arrangement to be put in place or separation of service vehicles. Traffic signals are likely to be necessary on Mill Street because of restricted visibility for emerging traffic and these might need to be linked to a traffic signal controlled access on Mill Street to the south, should the Non-Political Club site and surrounding land be brought forward for development.

Figure 5.3 illustrates a small foodstore with servicing area and car parking. The number of car parking spaces is higher than required for the store alone and the car park could be used by the public for shopping in the town centre.

Implementation Issues

The site is in private ownership and as such its development will be dependent on the decisions of the land owner. It is anticipated however that the development of retail and car parking on the site is likely to require an element of public sector support. This is considered to be appropriate given the potential regeneration benefits for the town centre – notably increased expenditure on convenience shopping by drawing people back into the town centre and multiplier effects for other town centre traders, as well as the benefits of improving car parking opportunities for the town.

The local authority could form a role of facilitation of the scheme. The first action could be to hold discussions with the land owners/ promoters of the existing housing proposal for the site, involving planning, highways and funding officers from the authority, in order to agree a way forward.

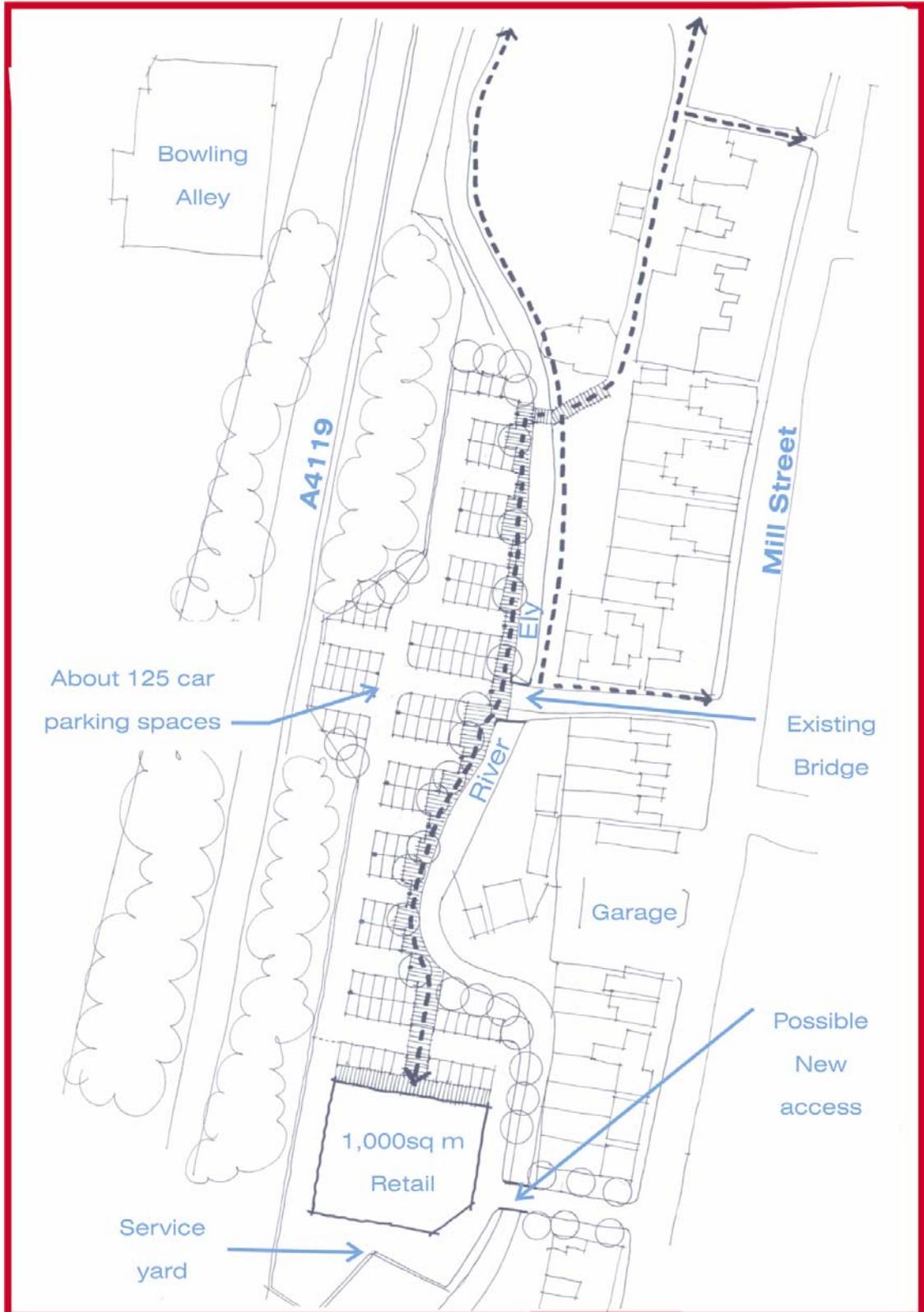


Figure 5-3 Riverside Development: Small Food Store and Parking for Store and Town Centre

S3: Improvement of Commercial Properties

There has been considerable investment in a number of shops in the town centre but given the age of commercial premises along both Mill Street and High Street and the lack of investment in the town in past years, many are in need of façade/ premises improvements.

Illustrated below are some good quality examples of improvements as well as traditional design and appearance in the town.



Good Quality, Improved Facades on Mill Street

Design guidance and a targeted grant programme to improve commercial properties would benefit the overall environment of the town as well as the attractiveness of the centre to investors. Rhondda Cynon Taff has already declared a Commercial Improvement Zone in Tonyrefail, within which grant assistance is offered to help business people to improve their commercial properties and to offer advice on appropriate improvements that protect and enhance the traditional character of the area. Design guidance has been produced in the form of a leaflet providing advice for shopkeepers and developers, which is appropriate to Tonyrefail. Figure 5.5 shows the extent of the Commercial Improvement Zone where assistance is available (subject to availability of funds).

Implementation Issues

The existing scheme is in place and operated by the local authority, but this should be supplemented by a focussed programme for Tonyrefail shop fronts as part of the overall regeneration strategy given that Commercial Improvement Grants are very competitive across the County Borough. Promotion of the scheme could be undertaken by the Business Support Unit of the authority, with an individual visit to premises to discuss opportunities for improvements.

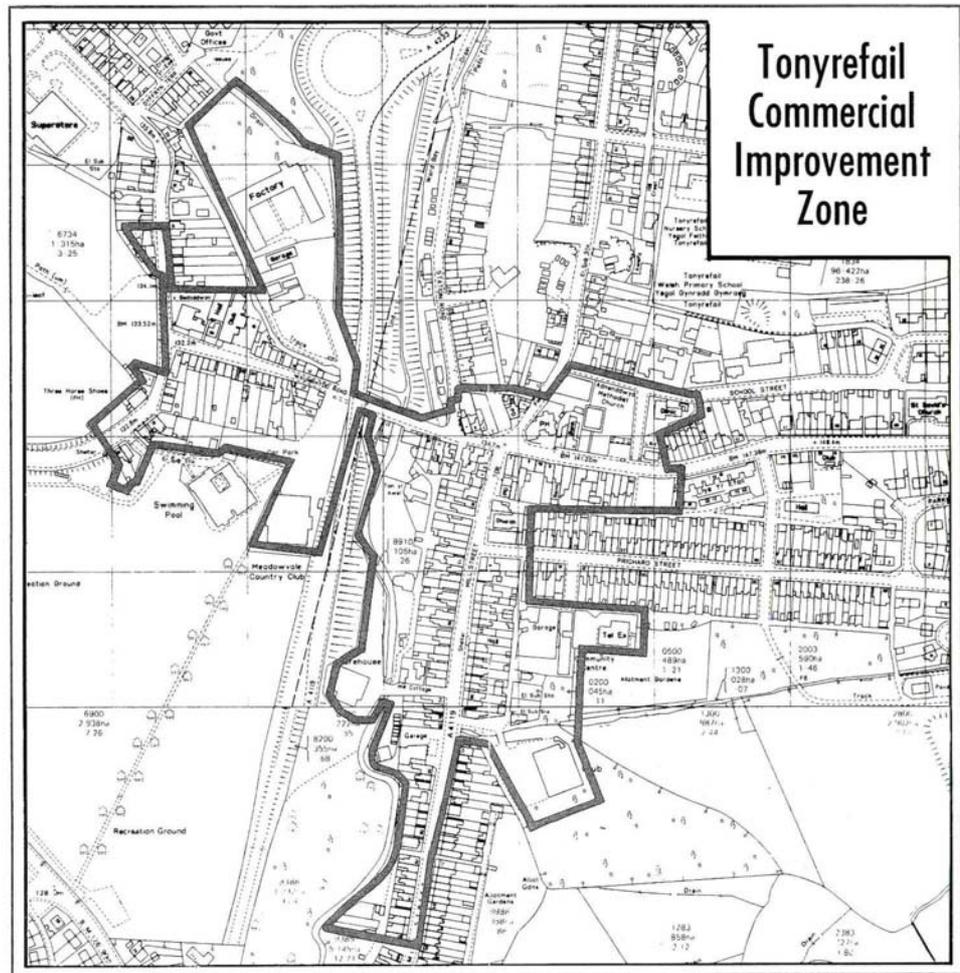


Figure 5-4 Tonyrefail Commercial Improvement Zone

E1: Mill Street Enhancement

Mill Street provides both the towns' main thoroughfare and retail area. The shopping street suffers from a poor pedestrian environment, lack of servicing provision, lack of short-term parking and some localised congestion. At the northern end of Mill Street is the Square, which represents the focal point of the town centre as well as a cross roads for traffic. The level and complexity of traffic movements, steep gradients, narrow footways, poorly located crossing points and servicing needs of the area mean that the environment for pedestrians and shoppers is in need of improvement.

Enhancement of Mill Street and the Square requires consideration of options for traffic flow. Various ideas have been examined to improve the environment of the street and The Square, including making Mill Street one way south to north, reducing turning movements at The Square and

maintaining all turning movements but implementing some minor improvements to the public realm.

It is recommended on balance, that the option that would be likely to bring some overall benefits to the junction and traffic in the town centre would be reducing some of the turning movements at The Square. Banning of the right turn from Waunrhydd Road to Mill Street and the left turn from High Street to Mill Street, for example, would enable the number of phases of the traffic lights to be reduced, with pedestrian crossing time during other traffic movements rather than an all red phase. This could potentially have the effect of reducing traffic queuing at the junction and pedestrian waiting times to cross Mill Street. Alongside changes in the traffic arrangements, there would be the opportunity to improve the surface treatment to The Square area of the town to provide for freer movement of pedestrians across the junction, some widening of pavements in the area to improve pedestrian safety and environment and the provision of some servicing bays on Mill Street. Figure 5.5 illustrates potential public realm improvements and changes in turning movements.

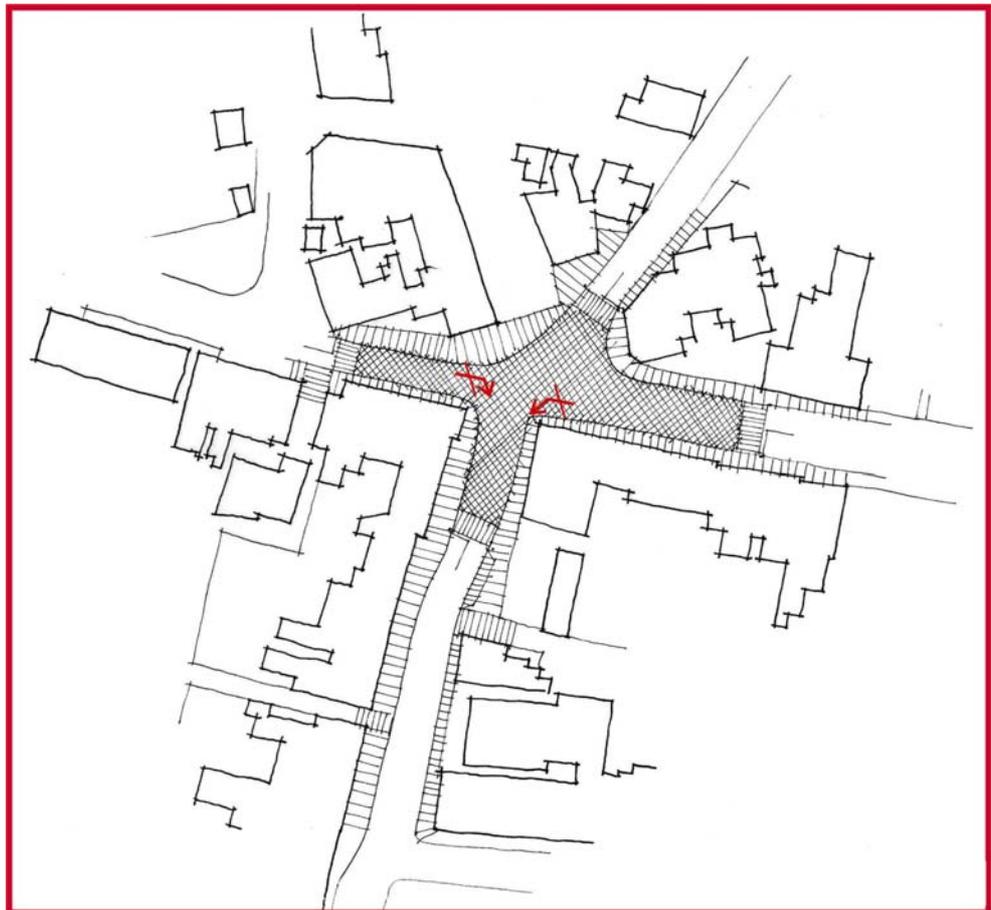


Figure 5-5 Potential Improvements to Mill Street and the Square (showing potential banned turns)

Reducing the turning movements requires an alternative route for traffic currently making the movements that would be altered. One possibility would be a link road as illustrated in Figure 5.6, connecting High Street to Mill Street on the east side of the town centre. Such a link would be dependent on development taking place to the south of the town centre due to land ownerships and funding. The section of a link from High Street to Prichard Street using the existing road would need to be one way only (north to south) as the egress for traffic onto High Street has poor visibility, or there would be a need for traffic signals.

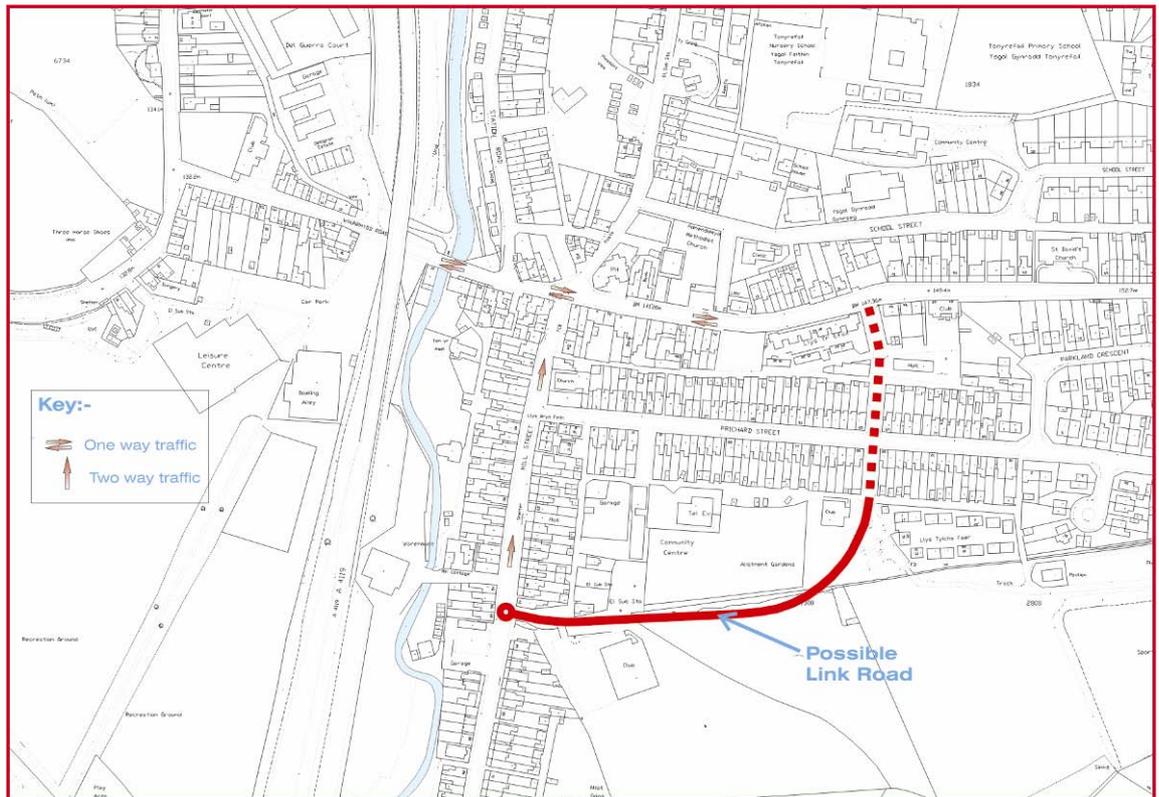


Figure 5-6 Possible Link Road

The option is considered to be preferable to a one way on Mill Street. Making Mill Street one way from south to north from the junction with Prichard Street (south to north), would allow for an enhancement of the street including widening of pavements to provide for an improved pedestrian environment and the provision of servicing bays and short term parking on Mill Street. The option would also require a link road and it is considered that it would place an undue amount of additional traffic on such a link, which is steep in places and through a residential area and would also involve the diversion of bus services and heavy goods vehicles currently travelling south on the High Street.

If the link road does not take place, then all traffic movements must remain as they are at present in the Square. This would mean that the public

realm improvements could be made but the pedestrian benefits at the junction would be more limited.

Implementation Issues

In the short term, the upgrading of the public realm can take place with no change to the junction movements. The alteration to the traffic movements can be implemented in the longer term if and when a link road can be provided. The link road will be dependent on whether or not any development takes place to the south of the town centre, which would need a new access road from Mill Street and could provide a connection to the High Street on the east side of the town centre.

E2: Enhancement of Waunrhydd Road

Waunrhydd Road is a poor quality approach into the town centre. The area on the north side of the street is an overgrown area with no footway and passengers wait for buses in an unattractive environment under the flyover. There is an opportunity to enhance the area to provide a continuous footpath from the flyover to Station Road, a lay-by for buses with a shelter and a focal seating area with landscape planting.

Enhancement ideas are shown in a plan in Figure 5.7 and a sketch in Figure 5.8. The proposal will involve a new footbridge to be provided across the river and new fencing of the area. If the potential new car park takes place on the west side of Station Road, there will also be a need to incorporate a pedestrian link from the seating area through to the car park.

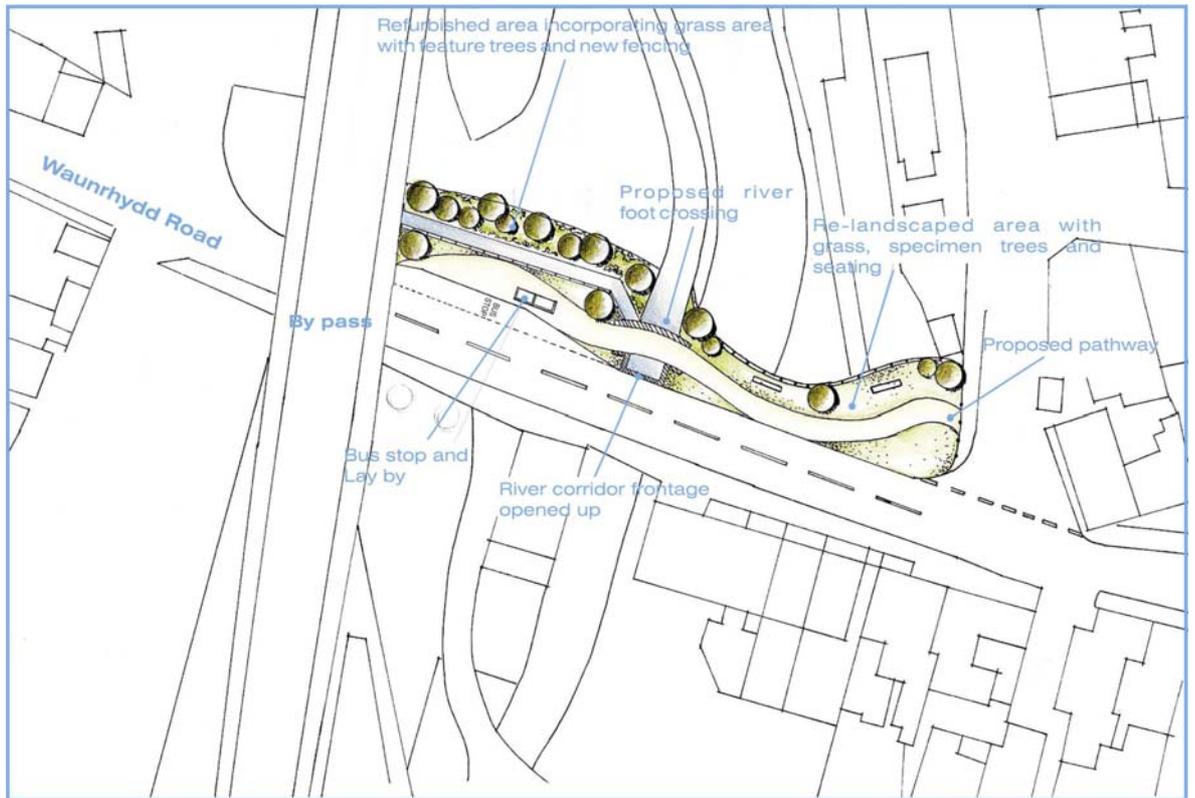


Figure 5-7 Enhancement of Waunrhydd Road



Figure 5-8 Sketch of how Waunrhydd Road could Look

Implementation Issues

The scheme proposed is on land in the ownership of the local authority and requires detailed design and costing to take forward as an enhancement project, most appropriately within Environmental Services.

E3: Enhancement of High Street Open Spaces

There are opportunities at the western end of the High Street to provide a series of linked public open spaces, providing an attractive place for meeting and sitting within the town centre as well as visual improvements. Figures 5-9 and 5-10 show ideas for the enhancement of the site of the former library, the former chapel and the open space on the south side of the road:

- The former library site is no longer in the ownership of the authority, but if the site were purchased and the building were demolished, a small landscaped seating area could be provided as a break in the densely built up nature of High Street. The bus shelter could be incorporated into the site, thus giving a wider pavement for pedestrians.
- The area of open space on the other side of the street is bland but there are good views out across the town. The site could be enhanced with some tree planting, boundary walling and new seating area.

- The former chapel is listed but is now derelict and various options are being investigated for its re-use. The potential for re-use, and the visual appeal of the building could be enhanced if the headstones in the graveyard could be relocated, possibly against the boundary wall, to create a memorial garden. This might be open for access to the community, depending on the use of the building.



Figure 5-9 Enhancement of High Street Open Spaces



Figure 5-10 Sketch of High Street Open Spaces

Implementation Issues

Implementation of ideas for the open space on the south side of High Street requires only design work as it is in the ownership of the local authority. The graveyard surrounding Capel y Ton is owned by the Presbyterian Church in Wales who are seeking new uses for the building. Any scheme for creating a garden/ sitting area with some public access will depend on the uses of the building and need to be taken forward by the landowner. It is envisaged that it could be a memorial garden, whereby the graves are retained but some memorials retained as features within the site and others taken elsewhere. The creation of a public open space on the site of the former library would require either an agreement with the owner or acquisition/ lease of the site.

E4: Town Centre Approaches

There is a need to improve the main access points in Tonyrefail and provide the town with a greater sense of place and arrival. This could help to give the town centre more identity.

There are currently no signs upon entering the town displaying the town name and landscaping and design features are also lacking on the main approaches. The most prominent access points include the southern end of Mill Street and Waunrhydd Road, the main town access off the A4119 and the main access from Gilfach Goch and The Square.

The sketches (Figures 5.11 and 5.12) illustrate ideas for both the Mill Street and Waunrhydd Road town centre approaches. Proposals include signage and appropriate landscaping to provide a sense of arrival in the town.

The Mill Street approach from the roundabout is a long straight street, which encourages traffic to approach at speed and there is little visual evidence to suggest that the town of Tonyrefail has been entered. The sketch illustrates the possibility of reducing the width of the carriageway on either side of the carriageway at the gateway to encourage traffic to slow, although it is not suggested that this would be a one-way/ traffic priority measure.

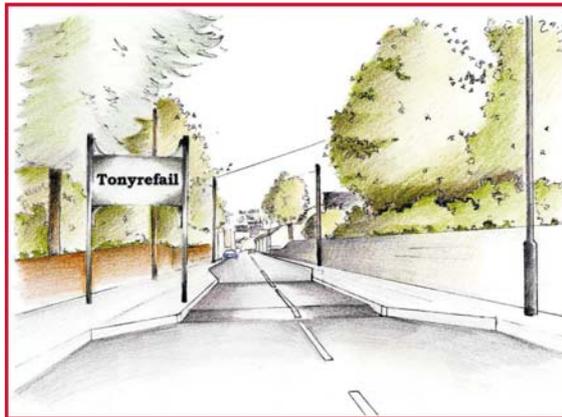


Figure 5-11 Mill Street Approach



Figure 5-12 Waunrhydd Road Approach

Implementation Issues

Implementation of improvements to the approaches is relatively straightforward and requires only design work involving the Highway Authority and potentially representatives of the local community to determine sign designs. This could be via the Community Council or Area Regeneration Partnership for example.

E5 New Uses for Redundant Historic Buildings

Capel y Ton and the former Bingo Hall are both listed buildings which are currently vacant. They are important buildings in the history of Tonyrefail and are prominent in the present townscape. It is important that they are protected for the future. Many members of the public highlighted the Chapel in particular as of importance in their personal history and commented that the building must be saved.

The owners of both properties are actively seeking new uses for the buildings. Within the context of the strategy, new uses of a community or public nature have not been identified which would suit the buildings. There are various possibilities, such as conversion to offices or residential and some possible interest has emerged in the establishment of a children's play centre.

It is recommended that the owners are assisted in undertaking a feasibility study for each building, to assess the current building state, potential future

uses, provide an indicative business plan and identify potential funding sources. The priority might first be the Chapel as it is in such a poor state of repair.

Implementation Issues

The onus is clearly with the owners in terms of investigating future uses, but the local authority could possibly assist with help and advice in the process of a study.

C1: Leisure Centre and Tyn-y-Bryn Park

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council are proposing to extend the leisure centre building to improve the leisure facilities and provide a new 'state-of-the-art' library for the town, alongside a crèche, café and additional car parking. Images of how the new facility could look are included below.



Alongside these improvements, it is recommended that the car parking area and entrance to the park be improved. Figure 5-13 shows the proposed extension to the leisure centre, car park enhancement and park entrance improvements, including:

- Provision of a rear access lane with tree screening for properties backing onto the car park from Waunrhydd Road;
- Narrowing of the route through the car park with traffic calming features to deter traffic speeding through the area; and
- Tree planting and paving.

The plan also illustrates proposed youth facilities as discussed in Project C2.

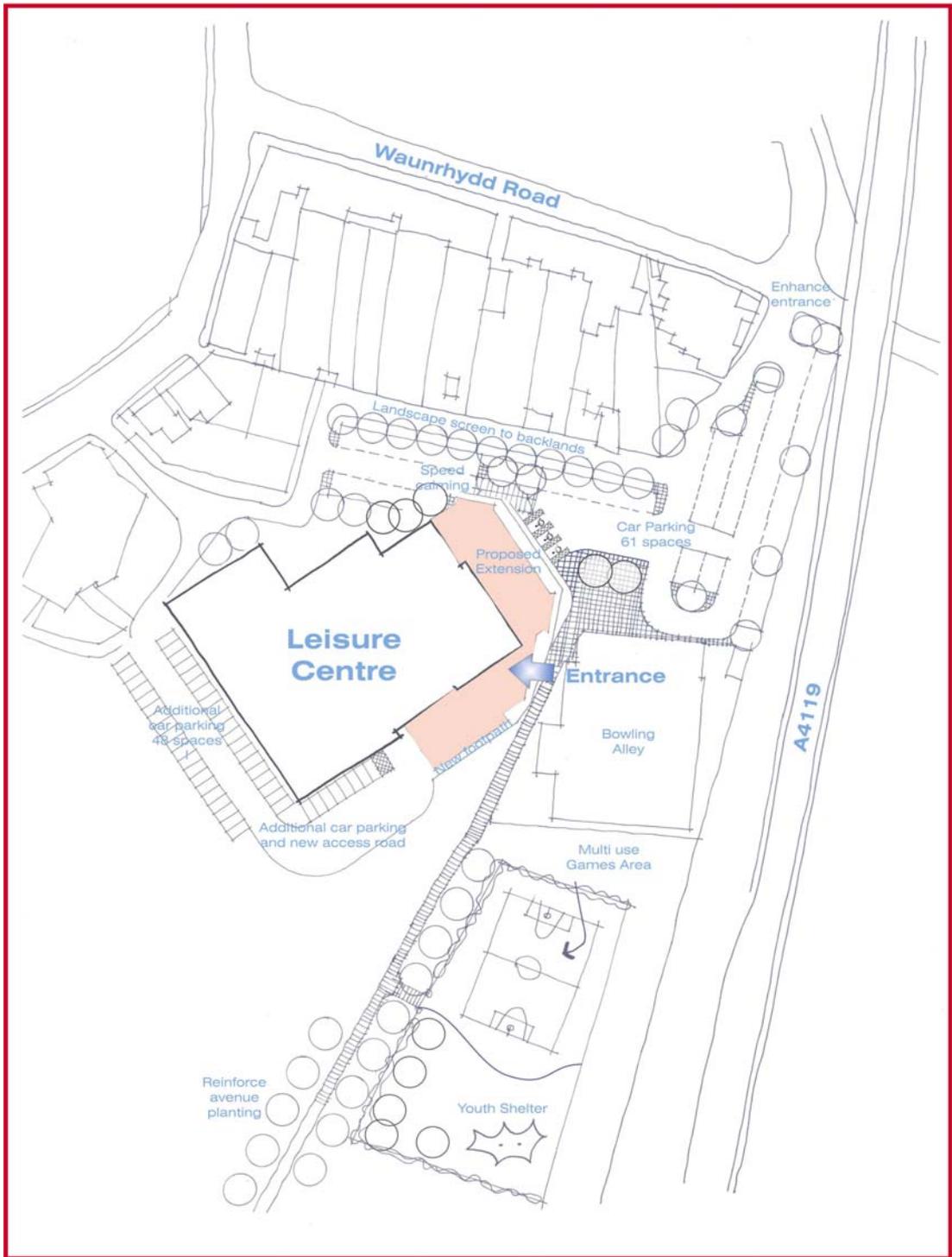


Figure 5-13 Leisure Centre and Youth Facilities

Implementation Issues

The enhancement and extension of the leisure centre has already been the subject of a detailed feasibility study undertaken by the leisure department within the local authority and this provides a sound basis on which to move forward. The proposals for the car park will require further design work and should ideally be undertaken at the same time as the extension of the leisure centre building. Discussions could also take place with the owners of the Rhondda Bowl with a view to integrating their car park into the overall enhancement scheme.

C2: Youth Facilities

There is limited informal provision for young people in the town and issues have been raised of problems of anti-social behaviour in certain areas of the town where young people congregate.

The provision of an area with facilities for young people, which could provide something to do could improve the quality of life for young people as well as enable anti-social behaviour issues to be managed and reduced.

It is suggested that the area of scrubland on the west side of the park could provide a good location for a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and a teen shelter (see Figure 5-13). Youth facilities at the suggested location would not affect many residential properties yet could be informally supervised.

MUGAs can be developed in various sizes and configurations, but generally provide a fenced, hard surface suitable for informal kickabout incorporating basketball and football nets. Seating may be provided as part of the facility and it would need to be lit to enable safe evening use. Teen shelters can be a metal or tensile structure with seating underneath, providing a sheltered, partially enclosed meeting point. They can be purchased with a plain roof suitable for painting by local young people in an appropriate design.

Implementation Issues

The site identified is in the ownership of the local authority, forming part of the park. In terms of implementation, ideally young people should be involved in the planning and provision of the facility to give a sense of ownership and pride in keeping up the facility. If there were to be a voluntary sector organisation prepared to take on the project to implement and manage, this would open up additional funding opportunities.

6 Action Plan

6.1 Introduction

The strategy for the town centre can only be realised and bring the regeneration benefits for Tonyrefail if there is an action plan in place to bring forward projects to implementation. This section discusses the issues and then includes in Table 6-1 a list of the projects identifying phasing/priorities, implementation/ funding issues and budget costs for each project.

6.2 Implementation and Funding

The issues associated with implementation of each of the projects are discussed in Section Five and summarised in the Action Plan table, including potential lead partners for each project.

The achievement of the projects will of course be reliant on the availability of funding. It is appreciated that local authority and external sources of funding are limited and subject to significant pressures. Moreover, regeneration funding is in a state of considerable uncertainty at present, given a number of factors, notably:

- the end of the European Objective One Programme for West Wales and the Valleys in 2006 and an emerging programme for Convergence Funding from 2007-2013;
- the restructuring of the Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPB's), with the Welsh Development Agency, Wales Tourist Board and ELWa becoming part of the Welsh Assembly Government; leading to changes in WAG funding and uncertainties over what will happen to former WDA programmes.
- the closure of Welsh Assembly Government regeneration funding (Physical Regeneration Fund and Local Regeneration Fund) for new applications, whilst consideration is given to aligning future regeneration schemes with the emerging convergence programme.
- Given the uncertainties, it is difficult to be prescriptive regarding appropriate sources of funding for the Tonyrefail strategy and projects. However, it is anticipated that there will be funding streams available for regeneration projects from the Welsh Assembly Government and the new Convergence programme.

It is considered that the most effective way to achieve funding for the Tonyrefail projects will be to present them as a regeneration strategy for the town, as a single package for funding, rather than as stand alone projects which may not be eligible for funding in isolation. Some projects are likely to have to be complemented by Local Authority funding, for the elements of schemes that are statutory responsibilities. The elements of the strategy that could be most appropriately packaged together for regeneration funding would be:

- Station Road car park and pedestrian links (S1);
- Infrastructure works associated with the riverside development (S2);
- Additional funding for shop fronts to supplement the Business Support Team's Commercial Improvement Grant (S3);
- Enhancement of the public realm and junction modifications in Mill Street (E1);
- Enhancement of Waunrhydd Road (E2);
- Enhancement of the High Street Open Spaces (with the exception of the Chapel gardens, which depend on the future building use) (E3);
- Town Centre Approaches (E4); and
- Improvements/ enhancement of the Leisure Centre/ Rhondda Bowl car parks (C1).

In addition to the projects listed above, it is anticipated that there will be substantial elements of private funding contributing to the riverside development. Moreover, the most likely sources for funding for a link road and the library/leisure centre improvements are from developers, directly as a necessary part of the development or through S106 monies.

There are various potential sources of funding for youth sports facilities, notably the Sports Council for Wales for the MUGA. There may be additional opportunities of funding from charitable trusts if the facility is taken forward by a voluntary sector organisation.

External funding for feasibility work for the two listed buildings in private ownership will be more difficult to obtain and will require the assistance of the Regeneration and Resources team from Rhondda Cynon Taf to help identify opportunities for funding as they are available. It is not possible to identify implementation funding for these buildings until a decision is made on the use, although due to the buildings listing there may be potential for a contribution from CADW.

6.3 Project Costs

Costs for the various projects are budget costs estimated by Hyder Consulting at 2006 prices and include contingencies, preliminaries and design fees. The costs do not include service diversion and traffic management costs, land acquisition, adverse ground conditions, the need for retaining structures or major earthworks. It is assumed that all drainage can be accommodated in the existing sewerage system. Certain costs, such as for the extension to the leisure centre building, have been made available by the relevant departments of the local authority. All costs exclude VAT.

6.4 Phasing/ Priorities

The Strategy has identified ten projects and areas for change. The changes will not happen overnight and therefore it is necessary to prioritise and phase the Action Plan. It is important that there is evidence of some initial improvements in order to give credence to the Action Plan and to act as a catalyst for the more significant improvements. The phasing has been divided into three – short, medium and long-term and is based on the comments from the public exhibition, project costs, implementation issues and likely funding opportunities:

- Short term: 2006 - 2007
- Medium term: 2008 - 2010
- Long term: Beyond 2010

The projects that could be achieved in the short to medium term include the promotion of grants for commercial properties, feasibility studies for new uses for historic buildings and the provision of youth facilities. The latter was identified as a priority by members of the public and could be achieved in the short term, representing a 'quick win' for the town centre, demonstrating progress. Projects placed later in the phasing will require action in the short term to enable development to take place in the medium or long term.

6.5 The Way Forward

The first step in taking the strategy forward will require endorsement of the strategy as the overall way forward and communication with the community as to the feedback from the results of the public exhibition and final projects.

The implementation of the strategy as a whole will require a co-ordinated approach, bringing together the various departments of the local authority with private land owners, traders', residents and other stakeholders such as the local schools and police. There is a need for this process to be overseen and facilitated to ensure that progress is made and communicated to the community. The mechanism for achieving this is a decision for the local authority. It could for example, be undertaken by officers of the authority or by a body such as a town forum or the existing Area Regeneration Partnership.

Table 6-1: Action Plan

Ref	Project	Description	Budget Cost	Phasing	Potential Funding Sources	Lead Partner
S1	Improving Car Parking	Development of car park on land off Station Road.	£150,000 (not including land acquisition or business relocation)	Medium Term	Regeneration Funding	Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Environmental Services
S2	Riverside Development	New foodstore and associated parking, including new access and junction on Mill Street	£360,000 (provision of access and cleared site for development)	Medium Term	Private Sector/Regeneration Funding	Private Sector
S3	Improvements to Commercial Properties	Direct promotion to property owners of Commercial Improvement Grants and allocation of budgets to Tonyrefail.	£50,000 per annum	Short Term	Existing RCT Commercial Improvement Grant/Regeneration Funding	Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Business Support
E1	Mill Street Enhancement	Enhancement of the public realm and junction surfacing (short term). Provision of link and reduction in traffic turning movements (longer term)	£90,000 (public realm improvements only)	Short Term (part) Long Term (full)	Regeneration Funding/Developer Contributions (new link)	Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Environmental Services
E2	Enhancement of Waunrhydd Road	Provision of bus lay-by, footpath, fencing, landscaping and seating area	£90,000	Medium Term	Regeneration Funding	Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Environmental Services
E3	Enhancement of High Street Open Spaces	Enhancement of two open spaces on High Street including former library site and open space to the south.	£80,000 (not including acquisition of former library site)	Medium Term	Regeneration Funding	Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Environmental Services
E4	Town Centre Approaches	Provision of town signs and kerb build out on Mill Street approach	£30,000	Medium Term	Regeneration Funding	Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC/ Community Council

E5	New Uses of Redundant Historic Buildings	Feasibility studies for new uses for Capel y Ton and Bingo Hall	£25,000	Short Term	Private Sector	Private owners
C1	Leisure Centre and Tyn-y-Bryn Park	Extension of leisure centre building to provide library, crèche and café, improvement of leisure centre, car park enhancement and improvements to park.	£1,800,000 (Library & Life Centre Extension) £510,000 (Works to Leisure Centre) £120,000 (Car Park)	Medium to Long Term	Regeneration Funding/ Developer Contributions	Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Leisure Services/ Libraries
C2	Youth Facilities	Provision of youth area in Tyn-y-Bryn Park including teen shelter and MUGA	£240,000	Short to Medium Term	Sportslot/ Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC	Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Leisure Services