



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

16th OCTOBER 2018

PORTH TOWN CENTRE: DRAFT OUTLINE STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION, PLANNING AND HOUSING IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING, COUNCILLOR BEVAN

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1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- Set out a draft regeneration strategy for taking Porth Town Centre forward into the future that delivers economic growth and job creation.
- Seek Cabinet approval for the projects outlined in the draft strategy to be further investigated, consulted upon, developed and pursued, as appropriate.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the draft Porth Town Centre Regeneration Strategy.
- 2.2 Initiate a public consultation exercise on the draft Porth Town Centre Strategy and receive a further report detailing the results from the consultation exercise.
- 2.3 Agree to the further development of schemes and projects outlined within the draft strategy.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To continue to deliver on the Council's commitment to support the regeneration of town centres and encourage private sector investment in the high street economy, as set out in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's 2016-20 Corporate Plan "*The Way Ahead*".
- 3.2 To deliver this commitment and to tackle the many challenges currently faced by our town centres, the solution requires an integrated, co-ordinated and holistic approach to town centre regeneration that

harnesses the many exciting opportunities currently presented through the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 Town centres are facing a multitude of challenges to their future vitality and viability. Many of our High Streets are characterised by falling retail sales, reduced footfall, increased business failures and rising vacancies. The growth of internet shopping and multi-channel retailing also means that many retailers are actively seeking to reduce rather than increase their store portfolios.

4.2 Enabling vibrant and enticing town centres, with a strong offer, which recognises that they are at the heart of our communities is a clear commitment within Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's 2016-20 Corporate Plan "*The Way Ahead*". The plan also makes a commitment that they will benefit from investment to ensure an attractive environment exists for businesses, residents and shoppers.

4.3 To deliver this commitment and to tackle the many challenges currently faced by our town centres, the solution requires a sophisticated and sustainable approach to regeneration.

4.4 As such, the Porth Town Centre regeneration strategy sets out an integrated, co-ordinated and holistic approach to town centre regeneration that takes into account the distinctive role Porth has at the heart of the community and its important location for services, employment, housing and transport functions.

5.0 PORTH TOWN CENTRE: PROPOSED STRATEGY

5.1 In developing this strategy, it was important to understand the key challenges, but also the opportunities that exist in and around Porth that have the potential to support the regeneration of the town. These challenges and opportunities have been identified and categorised under the following themes within the main strategy (Appendix A).

- Connectivity
- Town Centre Gateway
- Car Parking
- Retail
- Housing

5.2 A summary of some of the key challenges identified during this process are set out below:

- A poor transport interchange exists between bus and rail services within the town. The current set up prevents a seamless transition for those who use the bus link service from the surrounding areas to the train service in Porth.
- Passengers using a connecting bus service to Porth train station currently have to pay separately for their bus and train journeys. This lack of integration is inconvenient for passengers and often results in them paying more for their journey. This is especially an issue for residents of the Rhondda Fach, Trebanog, Tonyrefail and Gilfach Goch as no rail link exists and therefore bus links to Porth Station are vital to allow commutable journeys.
- Porth Train Station and the approach to the station is currently aesthetically uninviting and very uninspiring. Many visitors travelling to the town will arrive at Porth without a real sense of arrival as the relationship between the transport interchange and the town is extremely poor.
- There are at present a number of prominent, vacant and under-used buildings in the vicinity of the train station and the town centre. Some of the buildings are seriously dilapidated and become local 'eyesores' and hotspot for anti-social behaviour resulting in the long term blight of the area, which is affecting inward investment, local businesses and property prices.
- Since 2011, Porth's town centre footfall has dropped year on year, from a weekly average of 13,210 to 9,274 currently.
- The Housing Market Needs Assessment has identified a need in Porth for more housing.

5.3 In addressing many of the challenges, the strategy sets out a number of opportunities that exist in and around Porth that have the potential to support the regeneration of the town.

5.4 A key opportunity that has been identified as part of this process which is pivotal to delivering this strategy, is the exciting opportunities currently presented through the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the Valleys Taskforce.

5.5 One such opportunity is the delivery of the South East Wales Metro as part of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, which will make substantial improvements to the connectivity by public transport across the region. As part of this development, Porth Train Station will see an increase in train services from two trains per hour to four trains per hour in each direction from 2022. This presents an excellent opportunity to capitalise on this investment to facilitate significant change and kick start the regeneration of Porth.

Proposed Vision

- 5.6 The proposed vision for Porth Town Centre is:

‘To transform Porth Town Centre into a prosperous and attractive town, which offers a wide range of opportunities for visitors, residents and businesses; anchored by Porth Transport Hub and a much regenerated Station Quarter’.

- 5.7 Central to the vision is the ability to create a sense of place by boosting the perception and experience of the town, generating a positive environment in which to live, work, visit and invest. The vision will help to rejuvenate and sustain the town centre, grow the local economy, increase job opportunities and provide for urban living. The renewal of key sites across the town, the development of the Transport Hub and Station Quarter will be the catalyst for such changes.

Strategic Objectives

- 5.8 To achieve this vision, the strategy is supported by a series of strategic objectives that will drive its delivery and translate directly into a series of projects and actions:
1. To improve connectivity with the town centre and surrounding areas through the development of a Transport Hub.
 2. To create the conditions for the town to become a thriving Station Quarter.
 3. To improve the key gateways into the town.
 4. To support the development of housing.
 5. To provide the conditions to strengthen employment opportunities.

Making it Happen – the Key Schemes

- 5.9 Achieving the vision and objectives for the town cannot be achieved with one simple scheme. Instead, it demands the implementation of a wide range of co-ordinated and integrated **physical** development projects. The draft Porth Town Centre Strategy takes each of these strategic objectives and sets out a wide range of projects and investment opportunities in more detail. This includes:

The development of a modern quality Transport Hub and Station Quarter that efficiently links commercial development with residential areas.

- 5.10 The delivery of this project will result in transformational change for Porth by improving the connectivity within the town centre and surrounding areas. This has the potential to attract more people to the

town to work, live, visit and invest therefore improving the footfall and the ability of the town to attract investment by creating jobs and homes. The potential also exists to create a modern well-designed arrival point that welcomes visitors, business people and residents, providing a high quality experience.

- 5.11 The strategy has identified the site currently occupied by the Alec Jones Day Centre as having the potential to accommodate a new Transport Hub. This site is ideally positioned for a Transport Hub; housing a bus interchange, taxi rank, cycle racks and linking to the train station and the park & ride. The site covers approximately 1,700 sq m allowing for the delivery of a new fit for purpose bus station, which will act as a catalyst for a much-regenerated *Station Quarter* with a mix of commercial, retail, office and residential developments.

(Appendix 1 within the strategy document includes a map outlining the proposed area for the transport hub and station quarter).

- 5.12 The development of a Transport Hub at this site would provide an integrated and improved interchange that aligns both the bus and train stations that will allow them to cope with future, increased passenger numbers and increased services, whilst offering easy access to the whole public transport network. Opportunities to encourage active travel through improved pedestrian and cycle routes and the creation of cycle docking facilities will also be a key feature of the Transport Hub development.
- 5.13 This project will also seek to work with Transport for Wales to develop an integrated ticketing system that offers local residents and visitor's simplicity, convenience and value for money across the bus and rail services serving the metro. This would address the current issue of passengers using a connecting bus service to Porth train station and currently have to pay separately for their bus and train journeys.

The development of Porth Plaza into the Community Hub for Rhondda South.

- 5.14 The opportunity exists for Porth Plaza to be developed as a Community Hub to provide a range of Council services from the same location. This will provide direct access to many of the services residents need on a daily basis as well as providing opportunities to receive business support, employment support and information, advice and assistance on a range of issues that affect people's quality of life and well-being.
- 5.15 Community hubs provide a focal point and facilities to foster greater local community activity and bring residents, the local business community, and smaller organisations together to improve the quality of

life in their areas. This development, located in the heart of the town centre, would bring more residents into the town; improving footfall levels and potential spend at local businesses.

- 5.16 In developing Porth Plaza into a Community Hub, it is also proposed to re-locate the services currently provided by Alec Jones Day Centre to the new Community Hub. The current Day Centre is currently underutilised with an average of 27 meals served per day. The co-location of services within Porth Plaza will enable the Council to provide a café style food outlet where food is available throughout the day, including hot meals. Residents and community groups would continue to have access to rooms to meet and the activities currently delivered as part of the Day Centre offer.
- 5.17 Bringing the current Day Centre services together with other services will provide a better offer and create economies of scale in terms of staffing and building costs. Making better, more cost effective use of our community assets and reinvesting resources in new or retrofitted, fit for purpose buildings will enable services to be sustainable in the longer term.

The provision of additional long and short term parking to accommodate the future regenerated Porth Town centre.

- 5.18 Improving the car parking offer throughout the town will improve the quality of infrastructure needed to support town centre investment and also allow visitors and shoppers to enjoy improved access to the town whilst creating a more positive experience.

Extending the current Park and Ride provision within the town centre.

- 5.19 The development of a **Phase 2 park and ride** facility is currently in the early stages of development and will be progressed during 2018 with completion expected in 2019. The facility aims to provide a further 72 (circa) parking spaces, taking the overall park and ride offer in the town to almost 150 parking spaces.

The redevelopment of existing underused, disused and derelict buildings throughout the town to create housing, office and retail accommodation.

- 5.20 A number of properties close to the train station and at key locations throughout the town centre have the potential for mixed-use development, with commercial and retail opportunities on the ground floors and the reuse of vacant floor space at upper levels, suitable for residential use. Converting unused or underused commercial space

into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the town.

Explore opportunities to relocate Council Staff into Porth Town Centre.

- 5.21 As part of the Council's proposal to transform Adult Social Care, Bronwydd House, which currently houses over 200 Council employees, has been identified as a site for extra care housing developments. As such, the first phase of this project will be to explore opportunities to relocate these staff to underused or vacant office space/premises within Porth Town Centre. This will generate footfall into the town that has the potential to enhance the town centre economically.

Public realm improvements.

- 5.22 The enhancement of the town centre streets and spaces as part of the Station Quarter and Transport Hub developments will raise the quality, value and confidence in the town. This will create a far more attractive environment for shoppers and visitors to the town, and enhance the town's distinctiveness.

The introduction of the Town Centre Maintenance Grant.

- 5.23 The Town Centre Maintenance Grant will provide financial support to town centre traders / landlords (including vacant properties) to undertake minor improvements and maintenance works which will improve the external front elevation of town centre properties. The scheme will contribute to a positive impact on the street scene, creating a more attractive and vibrant environment which has the potential to increase retail spend and stimulate further private sector investment.

The redevelopment of the former Porth Junior school site for residential use.

- 5.24 The development of new residential units within Porth will help diversify the existing housing stock, promote housing in sustainable locations that are well served by public transport; and increase the footfall into the town centre.

Developing extra care housing for the elderly and vulnerable.

- 5.25 The economic value of this development will be beneficial to the town as older people will be able to live within and be part of thriving local communities, including the town centre, and increase regular daily footfall to benefit the mix of local independent traders and national retail chains.

Next Steps

- 5.26 The draft strategy sets out some clear next steps and an implementation plan that cover each project, along with an indication of the delivery timescales and which strategic objective the project supports.
- 5.27 A critical next step that has been highlighted in the implementation process is the need to carry out a public consultation on the draft strategy. To achieve the best results we will talk to the appropriate people and organisations to benefit the project development. Involvement of stakeholders and our residents is vital in ensuring that our regeneration projects deliver the best possible outcomes.
- 5.28 It is therefore proposed that Cabinet initiate a consultation exercise on the draft Porth Town Centre Strategy and that the results of the consultation be reported back to Cabinet for their consideration.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An equality Impact Assessment form (EqIA) screening form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full report is not required at this time.

7.0. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Prior to the Porth Town Centre Strategy going public, the Council have engaged with Alec Jones' family regarding the proposals to relocate the Day Centre to the new Community Hub in Porth Plaza. If the proposals are agreed by Cabinet, the Council will work with the family to look at how it can recognise the name and contribution made by Alec Jones going forward.
- 7.2 No further consultations have taken place at this stage; however, the report proposes that Cabinet initiate a public consultation exercise on the draft Porth Town Centre Strategy over a 6 week period. This will include a focused service user consultation on the specific proposals to relocate the services currently provided by Alec Jones Day Centre to the new Community Hub at Porth Plaza. The results of this consultation will be reported to Cabinet for their consideration.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications in developing this outline strategy for Porth, but as the opportunities are developed, the financial implications will be fully assessed, and where appropriate reported to Cabinet.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 There are no current legal implications, but as the opportunities are developed, the legal implications will be fully assessed.

10.0 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

10.1 The delivery of this strategy will contribute to the Council's corporate priorities:

- Economy – building a strong economy
- People – promoting independence
- Place – creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work

10.2 Enabling vibrant and enticing town centres, with a strong offer, which recognises that they are at the heart of our communities is a clear commitment within Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's 2016-20 Corporate Plan "The Way Ahead".

10.3 The strategy is consistent with the sustainable approach promoted by the well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act through the five ways of working:

- Long term – the objectives identified, and the actions that will deliver these objectives, are part of a longer-term vision of enhancing Porth and builds upon the long term vision of the Council.
- Prevention – the strategy recognises that there are a number of challenges that need to be addressed in order to achieve the vision. The projects identified will respond to these concerns in order to ensure that they don't get worse or occur in the first place.
- Integration – the projects identified in the strategy will help deliver a number of the objectives identified within the Council's Corporate Plan. A key feature of the strategy is to ensure the approach to regenerating Porth is joined up, integrated and co-ordinated.
- Collaboration – intrinsic to this approach is collaboration with other public services and third sector organisations.
- Involvement – communities will be involved with the delivery of a full public consultation to obtain the views of wider stakeholders.

10.4 This approach makes a direct contribution to the seven national well-being goals, in particular a prosperous Wales, a resilient Wales, a healthier Wales, a Wales of cohesive communities and a more equal Wales.

11.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 The report sets out a draft regeneration strategy for taking Porth town centre forward into the future that delivers economic growth and job creation.
- 11.2 The draft outline strategy includes a wide range of activity which is both short and long term for delivery involving a range of partners. It is both ambitious and realistic in its approach and achieving the vision and objectives for the town cannot be achieved with one simple scheme. Instead, it demands the implementation of a wide range of co-ordinated and integrated physical development projects.
- 11.3 The delivery of these projects would result in **transformational change** for Porth by improving the connectivity within the town centre and surrounding areas. This has the potential to attract more people to the town to work, live, visit and invest therefore improving the footfall and the ability of the town to attract investment creating jobs and homes.
- 11.4 As Porth is the gateway to the two Rhondda Valleys this transport interchange will not just benefit the residents of Porth but will also have a positive impact on a much wider population.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

16th OCTOBER 2018

CABINET

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION, PLANNING AND HOUSING IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING, COUNCILLOR BEVAN

Item: **PORTH TOWN CENTRE: DRAFT OUTLINE STRATEGY**

Background Papers

None.

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Enabling vibrant and
enticing town centres,
at the heart of our
communities.

**STRATEGY
2018/19**



**PORTH
TOWN
CENTRE**



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

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Introduction

Enabling vibrant and enticing town centres, with a strong offer, which recognises that they are at the heart of our communities is a clear commitment within Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's 2016-20 Corporate Plan "The Way Ahead". The plan also makes a commitment that they will benefit from investment to ensure an attractive environment exists for businesses, residents and shoppers.

To deliver this commitment and to tackle the many challenges currently faced by our town centres, the solution requires a sophisticated and sustainable approach to regeneration.

As such, this regeneration strategy sets out an integrated, co-ordinated and holistic approach to town centre regeneration that takes into account the distinctive role Porth Town Centre has at the heart of the community and its important location for services, employment, housing and transport functions.

Pivotal to this strategy is the key aim to harness the many exciting opportunities currently presented through the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, the Valleys Taskforce and the Council's Strategic Opportunities Area approach to regeneration and provide a framework for taking Porth forward into the future that delivers economic growth and job creation. A range of projects and investment opportunities in and around Porth town centre is included in the framework; many of which can be delivered within the short to medium term, whilst others will be longer-term schemes.

PORTH TOWN CENTRE: The current challenges and opportunities

In developing this strategy, it is important to understand the key challenges, but also the opportunities that exist in and around Porth that have the potential to support the regeneration of the town.

These challenges and opportunities have been identified and summarised under the following themes:

- **Connectivity**
- **Town Centre Gateway**
- **Car Parking**
- **Retail**
- **Housing**



Connectivity

Transport is fundamental to connecting people, businesses and services; whether it is connecting people to jobs, education, leisure or community facilities, or connecting visitors and residents.

Porth is a key settlement identified within the County Borough's Northern Strategy Area, as set out in the Council's Local Development Plan. It is regarded as the gateway to the Rhondda Fawr and Rhondda Fach valleys because both valleys meet at Porth, and it is reasonably well connected with Pontypridd and Cardiff via the A4058 and the A470 (see appendix 1 for a map of Porth Town Centre and the focus for this strategy). However, the A4058 south of Porth experiences daily high volume traffic as it leads to Pontypridd and the A470 to Cardiff.

Porth train station is located on the Treherbert line, with two trains per hour running from Porth into Cardiff. The National Cycle Network 881 connects to the station via an off-road dedicated cycle/footway route that connects from the southbound platform northward up the Rhondda Fach. According to the Office of Rail and Road, in 2016/17 there were 341,742 entries and exits at Porth station, making it the 33rd (out of 222) busiest in Wales.

Porth also benefits from an established, **but at capacity**, Park and Ride facility conveniently located adjacent to the train station. The £1.8M scheme, opened in the summer of 2016, provides 73 park and ride spaces together with improved disabled access, cycle parking and improved access to the station.

However, a poor transport interchange still exists between bus and rail services within the town, with bus stops currently located along Pontypridd Road and Porth Street (B4278), several hundred metres from the train station with no accessible taxi rank or cycle storage. This current set up prevents a seamless transition for those who use the bus link service from the surrounding areas to the train service in Porth. This is especially an issue for residents of the Rhondda Fach, Trebanog, Tonyrefail and Gilfach Goch as no rail link exists and therefore bus links to Porth Station are vital to allow commutable journeys.

In addition to this, passengers using a connecting bus service to Porth train station currently have to pay separately for their bus and train journeys. This unintegrated approach is inconvenient for passengers and often results in them paying more for their journey. The current deregulated bus market makes it difficult to achieve an integrated approach.

Opportunity

Porth's key location and its train station is seen as one of the town's greatest assets – many similar sized towns in the UK do not benefit from such connectivity, and it is therefore fundamental that such an asset is capitalised upon.

Major infrastructure projects are an instrument for kick-starting regeneration with train stations, and their surrounding environments, increasingly seen as the steer for regeneration programmes as previously inaccessible land is unlocked and dilapidated buildings bought back into use.

Through Cardiff Capital City Deal there is an exciting opportunity to facilitate significant change and kick start the regeneration of Porth, which has the potential to provide resources to unlock significant economic growth, delivering jobs and private sector investment. The City Deal Investment Fund will also facilitate the delivery of the South East Wales Metro, which will make substantial improvements to the connectivity by public transport across the region

The Metro will focus on modernising the core valley lines resulting in far more frequent and faster trains in and out of Cardiff. As part of this development, Porth Train Station will see an increase in train services from two trains per hour to four trains per hour from 2022. This presents an excellent opportunity to capitalise on this investment and transform Porth into a key **Transport Hub** and open up the possibility of a much-regenerated **Station Quarter**.

The development of Porth as a Transport Hub would provide an integrated and improved interchange that aligns both the bus and train stations that will allow them to cope with future, increased passenger numbers and increased services, whilst offering easy access to the whole public transport network. Opportunities to encourage active travel through improved pedestrian and cycle routes and the creation of cycle docking facilities will also be a key feature of the Transport Hub development.

Furthermore, one of Transport for Wales's strategic goals is to achieve a fully integrated, joined-up transport system with integrated ticketing. This provides an opportunity to work with Transport for Wales to develop such scheme that offers local residents and visitor's simplicity, convenience and value for money across the bus and rail services serving the metro. This would address the current issue of passengers using a connecting bus service to Porth train station and currently have to pay separately for their bus and train journeys.

Alongside this, developing and investing in the delivery of **park and ride enhancements** would also provide transportation and environmental benefits. In particular, an extended Porth Park and Ride facility would attract drivers from a wide catchment area, significantly shorten vehicular journeys, improve accessibility to areas of employment by sustainable travel, reduce congestion on the local and strategic highway network and improve air quality.

The delivery of these projects would result in **transformational change** for Porth by improving the connectivity within the town centre and surrounding areas. This has the potential to attract more people to the town to work, live, visit and invest therefore improving the footfall and the ability of the town to attract investment creating jobs and homes.





Town Centre Gateways

The gateways to a town are what visitors see first and create the perception of what can be expected from the rest of the town. The appearance of gateways can be used to raise the profile of the town, increasing the awareness as an attractive and worthwhile place to visit and invest.

Stations are intrinsically attached to their local community and act as a gateway to both town and railway. Porth station gateway extends westwards along Station Street to the junction with Hannah Street. Porth Train Station and the approach to the station is currently aesthetically uninviting and very uninspiring. Many visitors travelling to the town will arrive at Porth without a real sense of arrival as the relationship between the transport interchange and the town is extremely poor.

In addition to this, there are at present a number of prominent, vacant and under-used buildings in the vicinity of the train station and the town centre, specifically Station Street and Hannah Street. Some of the buildings have seriously dilapidated and become local 'eyesores' and hotspots for anti-social behaviour resulting in the long term blight of the area, which will affect inward investment, businesses and property prices.

Opportunity

The station is an important gateway into the town. With the development of the metro and Porth as a Transport Hub, there is an excellent opportunity to transform the area into an attractive, modern and well-designed arrival point for residents and visitors to the town with enhanced public realm and improved signage and infrastructure (soft landscaping).

Developing the area around the Train Station and Transport Hub into a **Station Quarter** would provide a fitting gateway into Porth, creating a fully integrated, accessible and welcoming town centre with a focus on the redevelopment of key buildings that offer diverse uses. Commercial, office, retail and residential developments in the Station Quarter and town centre has the potential to strengthen the existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base. Converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the town.

Retail

As with many of Rhondda Cynon Taf's town centres the main economy of Porth is retail, with the centre of Porth home to the shopping district based around Hannah Street, with other businesses mainly located on nearby Pontypridd Road and Porth Street.

Town centre retail is facing a multitude of challenges to their future vitality and viability. Many of our High Streets are characterised by falling retail sales, reduced footfall, increased business failures and rising vacancies. The growth of internet shopping and multi-channel retailing also means that many retailers are actively seeking to reduce rather than increase their store portfolios.

Porth's town centre footfall has dropped year on year from 2011, from a weekly average of 13,210 to 9,274 currently, although the vacancy rate in 2017 was 11.6%, which is below the Welsh average of 13% but slightly higher than the UK average of 11%.

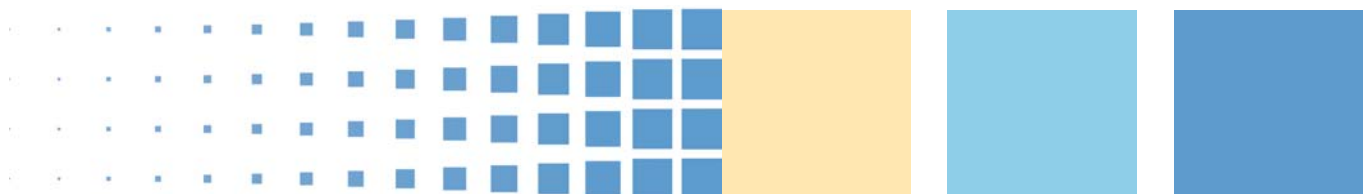
Over recent years, three national banks have closed their branches in the town leaving it without a single bank. Traders firmly believe that this has affected and contributed to the decline in footfall which has had a negative impact on local businesses.

Opportunity

The Transport Hub has the potential to attract new economic investment to the Station Quarter, town centre and surrounding area with the development of mixed-use neighbourhoods and multi-functional buildings within a few hundred metres of the station. There is the potential to incorporate quality, town centre accommodation, which is attractive to young professionals, and the development of retail units suitable for entrepreneurs, small businesses and start-ups.

As part of the Council proposals to transform Adult Social Care, Bronwydd House, which currently houses over 200 Council employees, has been identified as a suitable site for extra care housing developments. As such, an opportunity exists for many of these staff to be relocated to underused or vacant office space/premises within Porth Town Centre. Locating over 200 Council staff into Porth Town Centre will not only bring back to use one or a number of vacant buildings but will also generate footfall into the town that has the potential to enhance the town centre economically.

A further opportunity to locate public sector services within the town also exists with the Council's commitment to develop Community Hubs across the borough. Due to Porth's pivotal location and soon to be improved transport links, it is ideally placed to provide the Community Hub approach to serve the Rhondda South. The hub will provide a range of services such as business support, employment support and information, advice and assistance on a range of issues. This development, located in the heart of the town centre, would bring more residents into the town; improving footfall levels and potential spend within local businesses.



Car Parking

The provision of town centre parking can be considered as customer service, the aim of which is to provide good access to the town for residents, workers, shoppers and visitors.

Porth Town Centre currently benefits from a mixed but limited parking offer with two main public car parks; one short-stay in West Taff Street (up to 2 hrs) offering 30 spaces and one long-stay in Foundry Place offering 46 spaces. Both car parks are located in the south of the town which provides the main route of access into the town for vehicles. An additional 35 limited waiting spaces (1 hour, no return within 1 hour) area also available throughout Hannah Street.

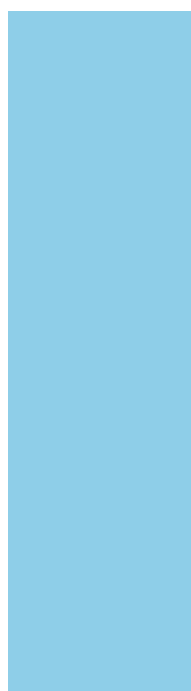
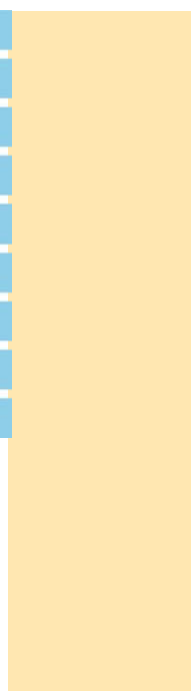
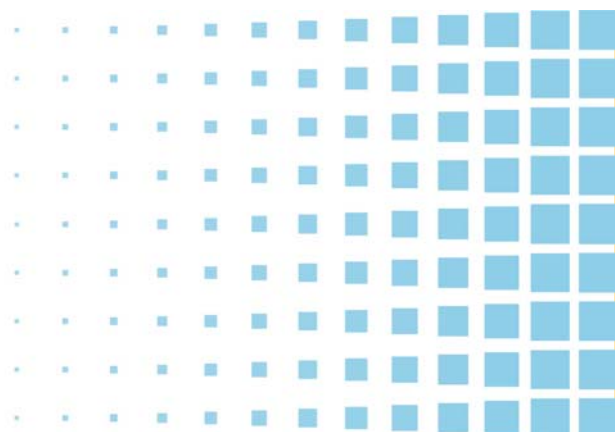
Although a decision made by the Council in 2017 to introduce free parking across many of its towns, including Porth, has gone some way to improving the parking offer, a lack of physical parking still exists which presents a challenge and acts as a barrier for those accessing the town.

Opportunity

Improving the car parking offer throughout the town will improve the quality of infrastructure needed to support town centre investment and also allow visitors and shoppers to enjoy improved access to the town whilst creating a more positive experience.

Whilst it is envisaged that the enhancements to public transport as part of the Metro will increase the number of people travelling to and from Porth by public transport, the potential relocation of 200 Council employees to the town centre, means that there is still a need for additional car parking.

The availability of quality parking in the right locations play a key role in the perception and attractiveness of the town centre and in turn is fundamental to increasing footfall. Throughout the town there are a number of vacant sites that have the potential to provide further car parking spaces.



Housing

The 2015 Mid-Year Population Estimates indicated that Porth had a population of 6,000 people living in different areas of the town, namely Birchgrove, Britannia, Glynfach, Llwyncelyn, Mount Pleasant and Porth town centre.

Porth has habitually been identified as a mid-housing market area across Rhondda Cynon Taf in recent Local Housing Market Assessments. It is known locally as the 'Gateway to the Valleys', due to its pivotal position at the foot of the Rhondda Fawr and Rhondda Fach, rendering it one of the higher demand parts of the Rhondda specifically.

The Council's annual Housing Market Needs Assessment has identified a need in Porth for one bedroom apartments, plus four units for Low Cost Home Ownership comprising a mix of two and three bedroom houses. Furthermore, and as part of the Council's approach to Transforming Adult Social Care and the development of extra care housing, it has been estimated that Rhondda Cynon Taf will need a further 220 extra care housing units to meet the needs of an increasingly older population. In relation to Porth, it is estimated that an additional 60 units will be required to meet the needs of the community.

Opportunity

The development of new residential units within the town centre and surrounding area would help diversify the existing housing stock, promote housing in sustainable locations that are well served by public transport; and increase the footfall into the town centre. This type of accommodation is likely to appeal to young professionals who may be unable to afford the house prices for similar accommodation in Cardiff. The increase in train services from Porth to Cardiff as part of the metro development would make living in Porth an even more attractive proposition.

Furthermore, as part of Pontypridd's Regeneration Strategy, Transport for Wales is committed to locating approximately 500 staff to the new Taff Vale office complex on its completion in 2020. Given Taff Vale's close proximity to Porth, and the forthcoming Metro programme which will improve connections between Pontypridd and Porth, it is not inconceivable to envisage an increased demand for housing in the Porth area.

To accommodate this potential demand, a number of properties close to Porth train station have the potential for mixed-use development; with commercial and retail opportunities on the ground floors and the reuse of vacant floor space at upper levels for residential use. Such opportunities can help to seamlessly integrate retail, open market sale and affordable units for rent within the town centre. The incorporation of additional residential units can provide natural surveillance of the streets when retail outlets are closed and help to combat the issues associated with a transient evening population. This can make a positive contribution towards the ongoing regeneration of the town centre, improve commercial property vacancy rates and increase regular daily footfall. Furthermore, such developments also present an opportunity to support growth and investment in the Town Centre by increasing the potential pool of labour for traders and providing job opportunities for the residents, closer to home.

As previously mentioned, Bronwydd House in Porth has been identified as a suitable location for an extra care development. This site has been identified as it is close to the town centre, has good access to transport, health services and local amenities, and the site is of sufficient size to deliver an aspirational offer with good social and community opportunities for residents in the scheme and surrounding area. The economic value of this development will be beneficial to the town as older people will be able to live within and be part of thriving local communities, including the town centre and increase regular daily footfall to benefit the mix of local independent traders and national retail chains.

VISION AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this section is to set out the kind of place that Porth could become if it positively harnesses its assets and effectively co-ordinates the regeneration effort.

The Vision:

‘To transform Porth Town Centre into a prosperous and attractive town, which offers a wide range of opportunities for visitors, residents and businesses; anchored by Porth Transport Hub and a much regenerated Station Quarter’.

Central to the vision is the ability to create a sense of place by boosting the perception and experience of the town, generating a positive environment in which to live, work, visit and invest. The vision will help to rejuvenate and sustain the town centre, grow the local economy, increase job opportunities and provide for urban living. The renewal of key sites across the town and the development of the Transport Hub and Station Quarter will be the catalyst for such changes.

Strategic Objectives:

To achieve this vision and address many of the challenges identified in section 2, this strategy is supported by a series of strategic objectives that will drive its delivery and translate directly into a series of projects and actions:

- 1 To improve connectivity with the town centre and surrounding areas through the development of a Transport Hub. This includes:**
 - Developing a modern quality transport interchange to efficiently link commercial development with residential areas that capitalises on and maximises the opportunities being presented through the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, specifically the delivery of the South East Wales Metro.
 - Work with Transport for Wales to develop and introduce a fully integrated, smart ticketing scheme that offers local residents and visitor’s simplicity, convenience and value for money across the bus and rail services serving the metro.
 - The provision of additional long and short term parking to accommodate the future regenerated Porth town centre.
 - Extending the current Park and Ride provision within Porth.

2 To create the conditions for the town to become a thriving Station Quarter. This includes:

- Optimising the area around the station and proposed transport hub to create a thriving hub of enterprises.
- Targeting existing underused and vacant buildings around the station and proposed Transport Hub to create modern mixed-use accommodation that is attractive to young professionals and units suitable for entrepreneurs, small businesses and start-ups.
- Transforming the perception of Porth from a peripheral town into a fully integrated part of the Cardiff Capital Region.
- Creating the conditions to attract and develop new amenities.

3 To improve the key gateways into the town. This includes:

- Creating a fully integrated, accessible and welcoming town centre with a focus on the redevelopment of key buildings, which offer diverse uses, on the main approaches into the town.
- Creating a modern well-designed arrival point for residents and visitors to the town, with particular focus on the Transport Hub and Station Quarter.
- Introducing a Town Centre Maintenance Grant to provide financial support to traders/landlords (including vacant properties) to undertake minor improvements and maintenance works which will improve the external front elevation of town centre properties.
- Public realm improvements including the creation of new public spaces.

4 To support the development of housing. This includes:

- Identifying key residential opportunities, including vacant properties that need redeveloping or renovating, that can be unlocked to create the best mix of private and affordable housing.
- Improving the standard of existing housing and broaden the mix of housing through new developments.
- Developing extra care housing for the elderly and vulnerable, which provides affordable, flexible and adaptable accommodation that meets the criteria for lifetime homes.

5 To provide the conditions to strengthen employment opportunities. This includes:

- Strengthening employment opportunities through investment in disused and underused sites and the development of a Transport Hub and thriving Station Quarter.
- The development of a Community Hub to provide a range of Council services from the same location. This will provide direct access to many of the services residents need on a daily basis as well as providing opportunities to receive business support, employment support and information, advice and assistance on a range of issues that affect people's quality of life and well-being.
- Connecting people to opportunities; getting residents to work, education and training, connecting businesses with suppliers and customers, as well as providing easy access for visitors.

MAKING IT HAPPEN THE KEY SCHEMES

This Porth Town Centre Strategy is both ambitious and realistic in its approach. Achieving the vision and objectives for the town cannot be achieved with one simple scheme. Instead, it demands the implementation of a wide range of co-ordinated and integrated physical development projects.

The following projects have therefore been identified that, if delivered, will be the most effective at bringing about the desired change in Porth:

Project One

The development of a modern quality Transport Hub and Station Quarter that efficiently links commercial development with residential areas.

The delivery of this project will result in transformational change for Porth by improving the connectivity with the town centre and other areas. This has the potential to attract more people to the town to work, live, visit and invest therefore improving the footfall and the ability of the town to attract investment creating jobs and homes. The potential also exists to create a modern well-designed arrival point that welcomes visitors, business people and residents, providing a high quality experience.

This strategy has identified the area currently occupied by the Alec Jones Day Centre as having the potential to accommodate a new Transport Hub. This site is ideally positioned for a Transport Hub; housing a bus interchange, taxi rank and cycle racks, and linking to the train station and park & ride. The site covers approximately 1,700 sq m allowing for the delivery of a new fit for purpose bus station, which will act as a catalyst for a much-regenerated Station Quarter with a mix of commercial, retail, office and residential developments. (Please see appendix 1 for map outlining the proposed area for the Transport Hub and Station Quarter).

The development of a Transport Hub at this site would provide an integrated and improved interchange that aligns both the bus and train stations that will allow them to cope with future, increased passenger numbers and increased services, whilst offering easy access to the whole public transport network. Opportunities to encourage active travel through improved pedestrian and cycle routes and the creation of cycle docking facilities will also be a key feature of the Transport Hub development.

This project will also seek to work with Transport for Wales to develop an integrated ticketing system that offers local residents and visitor's simplicity, convenience and value for money across the bus and rail services serving the metro. This would address the current issue of passengers using a connecting bus service to Porth train station and currently have to pay separately for their bus and train journeys.

This project contributes towards the delivery of all objectives outlined in this strategy and will act as a catalyst for further investment and all proposed projects.

Approximate implementation times scales:
Short to medium term (0-6 years)

Project Two

The development of Porth Plaza into the Community Hub for Rhondda South.

The opportunity exists for Porth Plaza to be developed as a Community Hub to provide a range of Council services from the same location. This will provide direct access to many of the services residents need on a daily basis as well as providing opportunities to receive business support, employment support and information, advice and assistance on a range of issues that affect people's quality of life and well-being.

Community hubs provide a focal point and facilities to foster greater local community activity and bring residents, the local business community and smaller organisations together to improve the quality of life in their areas. This development, located in the heart of the town centre, would bring more residents into the town; improving footfall levels and potential spend within local businesses.

In developing Porth Plaza into a Community Hub, it is proposed to re-locate the services currently provided by Alec Jones Day Centre to the new Community Hub. The current Day Centre is currently under utilised with an average of 27 meals served per day. The co-location of services within Porth Plaza will enable the Council to provide a café style food outlet where food is available throughout the day, including hot meals. Residents and community groups would continue to have access to rooms to meet and the activities currently delivered as part of the Day Centre offer.

Bringing the current Day Centre services together with other services will provide a better offer and create economies of scale in terms of staffing and building costs. Making better, more cost effective use of our community assets and reinvesting resources in new or retrofitted, fit for purpose buildings will enable services to be sustainable in the longer term.

Approximate implementation times scales:

Short term (0-3 years)

Project Three

The provision of additional long and short term parking to accommodate the future regenerated Porth Town centre.

Improving the car parking offer throughout the town will improve the quality of infrastructure needed to support town centre investment and also allow visitors and shoppers to enjoy improved access to the town whilst creating a more positive experience.

A number of key sites with the potential to provide further car parking throughout the town will be explored and a feasibility study carried out with a view to developing them in a way that compliments the current offer and ensures a flexible and balanced parking offer exists for those who visit, work and shop in the town.

Approximate implementation times scales:

Short term (0-3 years)

Project Four

Extending the current Park and Ride provision within the town centre.

The completion of the town's first park and ride facility in 2016 resulted in the creation of 73 new parking spaces adjacent to the train station. This has gone some way to creating a more integrated transport interchange in the town, however with plans to increase the frequency of the train service to Treherbert to four trains per hour (north and southbound) from December 2022 as part of the South Wales Metro, the demand for an additional park and ride facility is highly likely.

With this in mind, a project to develop a **Phase 2 park and ride** facility (north of the current facility) is currently in the early stages of development and will be progressed during 2018 with completion expected in 2019. The facility aims to provide a further 72 (circa) parking spaces, taking the overall park and ride offer in the town to almost 150 parking spaces.

Approximate implementation times scales:
Short term (0-3 years)

Project Five

The redevelopment of existing underused, disused and derelict buildings throughout the town to create housing, office and retail accommodation.

A number of properties close to the train station and at key locations throughout the town centre have the potential for mixed-use development, with commercial and retail opportunities on the ground floors and the reuse of vacant floor space at upper levels, suitable for residential use.

Commercial, office, retail and residential developments in the Station Quarter and town centre has the potential to strengthen the existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base. Converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the town.

Approximate implementation times scales:
Short to medium term (0-6 years)

Project Six

Explore opportunities to relocate Council Staff into Porth Town Centre.

As part of the Council's proposal to transform Adult Social Care, Bronwydd House, which currently houses over 200 Council employees, has been identified as a site for extra care housing developments. As such, the first phase of this project will be to explore opportunities to relocate these staff to underused or vacant office space/premises within Porth Town Centre.

Locating over 200 Council staff into Porth Town Centre will not only bring back to use one or a number of vacant buildings but will also generate footfall into the town that has the potential to enhance the town centre economically.

Approximate implementation times scales:
Short term (0-3 years)

Project Seven

Public realm improvements.

The enhancement of the town centre streets and spaces as part of the Station Quarter and Transport Hub developments will raise the quality, value and confidence in the town. This will create a far more attractive environment for shoppers and visitors to the town, and enhance the town's distinctiveness.

Approximate implementation times scales:
Short to medium term (0-6 years)

Project Eight

The introduction of the Town Centre Maintenance Grant.

The Town Centre Maintenance Grant will provide financial support to town centre traders / landlords (including vacant properties) to undertake minor improvements and maintenance works which will improve the external front elevation of town centre properties. The scheme will contribute to a positive impact on the street scene, creating a more attractive and vibrant environment which has the potential to increase retail spend and stimulate further private sector investment.

Approximate implementation times scales:
Short term (0-3 years)

Project Nine

The redevelopment of the former Porth Junior school site for residential use.

The development of new residential units within Porth will help diversify the existing housing stock, promote housing in sustainable locations that are well served by public transport; and increase the footfall into the town centre.

The former Porth Junior School site has the potential to address much of the prevailing housing need in the area through the development of one bedroom apartments and two, three and four bedroom houses, but also provides scope for sustainable tenant progression on site.

Approximate implementation times scales:
Short to medium term (0-6 years)

Project Ten

Developing extra care housing for the elderly and vulnerable.

Bronwydd House in Porth has been identified as a key site for extra care developments. This site has been identified as it is close to the town centre, has good access to transport, health services and local amenities, and the site is of sufficient size to deliver an aspirational offer with good social and community opportunities for residents in the scheme and surrounding area.

The economic value of this development will be beneficial to the town as older people will be able to live within and be part of thriving local communities, including the town centre, and increase regular daily footfall to benefit the mix of local independent traders and national retail chains.

Approximate implementation times scales:
Medium term (4-6 years)

NEXT STEPS

To realise these opportunities the Council will:

Consult the right people at the right time...	to achieve the best results we will talk to the appropriate people and organisations to benefit the project development. Involvement of stakeholders and our residents is vital in ensuring that our regeneration projects deliver the best possible outcomes. We will be continuing to work with local businesses, education institutions, training providers, the housing sector, individuals and communities to shape and support projects for the benefit of everyone.
Work in partnership...	with the right people and organisations at the right time. This will include the Council and other public sector bodies including Welsh Government and the private sector.
Put in place the best delivery arrangements...	that will make sure that we work with partners to project manage delivery effectively, ensuring that we drive the most successful outcomes.
Source funding and investment...	in a timely and creative way so that we can develop the most effective financial packages to ensure projects can go ahead.
Develop effective business cases...	for individual projects and initiatives to ensure that they are viable and cost effective, deliver the optimum benefits and outcomes and are sustainable into the future.
Monitor and evaluate...	so that we will ensure that we are able to improve delivery by understanding and learning from good practice and challenges experienced.
Review and consider available opportunities...	new opportunities often arise and some identified now, may become more difficult to achieve. We will review and appraise the portfolio of projects regularly.



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The implementation plan sets out each project, along with an indication of the delivery timescales and which strategic objective the project supports.

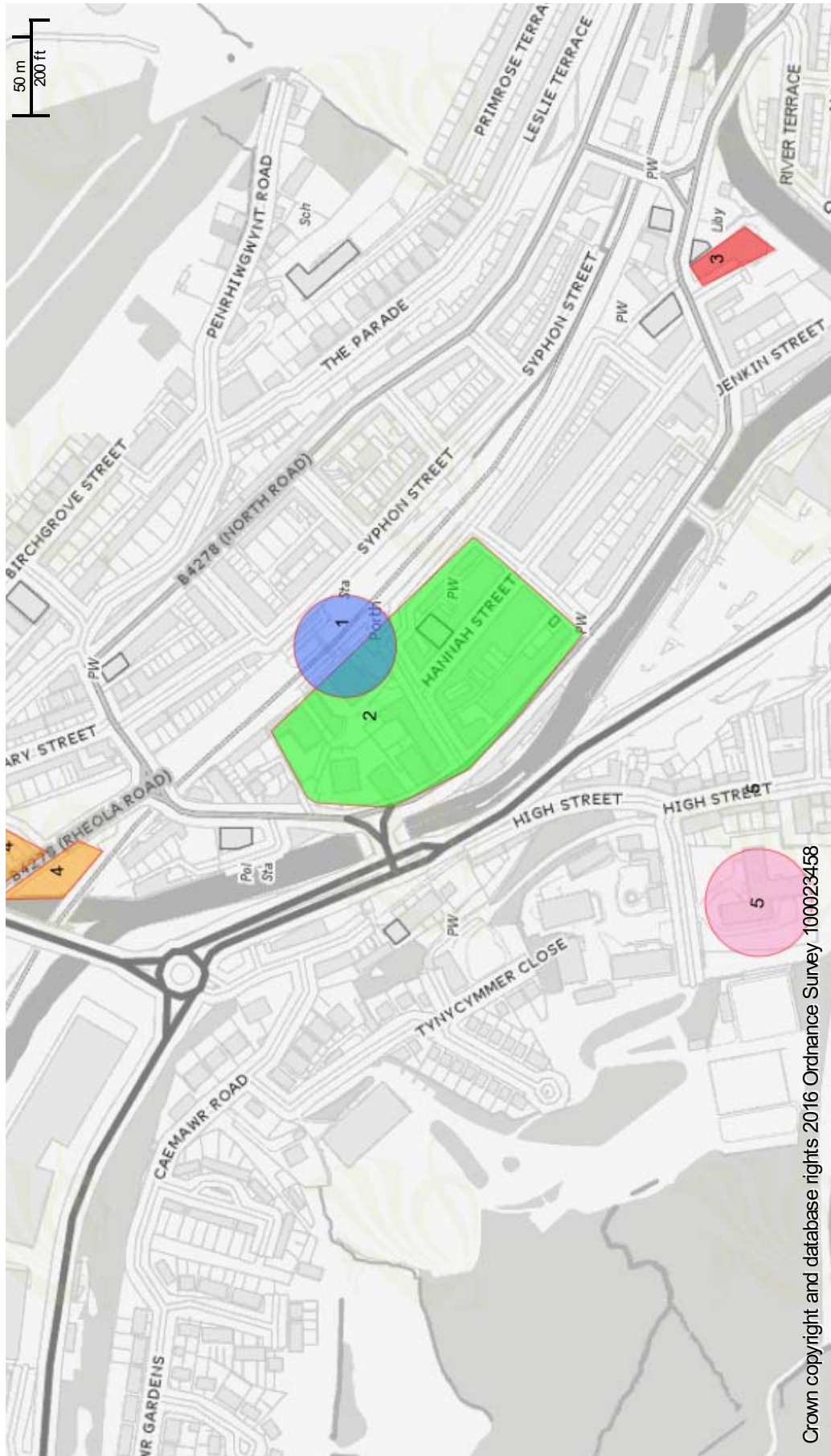
	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE MET					SHORT TERM 0-3 yrs			MEDIUM TERM 4-6 yrs			LONG TERM 7+ yrs		
			1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2
ONE	The development of a modern and quality Transport Hub and Station Quarter that efficiently links commercial development with residential areas.	The Transport Hub will provide an integrated and improved interchange that aligns both the bus and train stations that will allow them to cope with future, increased passenger numbers and increased services, whilst offering easy access to the whole public transport network.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									
TWO	The development of Porth Plaza into the Community Hub for Rhondda South.	The opportunity exists for Porth Plaza to be developed as a Community Hub to provide a range of Council services from the same location. The co-location of public and voluntary sector services within the town will result in increased footfall.	✓				✓									
THREE	The provision of additional long and short term parking to accommodate the future regenerated Porth Town centre.	Improving the car parking offer throughout the town will enhance the quality of infrastructure needed to support town centre investment and also allow visitors and shoppers to enjoy improved access to the town.			✓		✓									
FOUR	Extending the current Park and Ride provision within the town centre.	The completion of the town's first park and ride facility in 2016 resulted in the creation of 73 new parking spaces adjacent to the train station. A project to develop a Phase 2 park and ride facility is currently in the early stages of development and will be progressed during 2018 with completion expected in 2019.	✓		✓		✓									

	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE MET					SHORT TERM 0-3 yrs			MEDIUM TERM 4-6 yrs			LONG TERM 7+ yrs		
			1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
FIVE	The redevelopment of existing underused, disused and derelict buildings throughout the town to create modern, housing, office and retail accommodation.	A number of properties close to the train station and at key locations throughout the town centre have been identified as being suitable for mixed use development.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									
SIX	Exploring opportunities to relocate Council Staff into Porth Town Centre.	Bronwydd House which currently houses over 200 Council employees, has been identified as a site for extra care housing developments. As such, an opportunity exists for many of these staff to be relocated to underused or vacant office space/premises within Porth Town Centre.	✓	✓	✓		✓									
SEVEN	Public realm improvements.	The enhancement of the town centre streets and spaces as part of the Station Quarter and Transport Hub developments will raise the quality, value and confidence in the town.			✓											
EIGHT	The introduction of the Town Centre Maintenance Grant.	The Town Centre Maintenance Grant will provide financial support to town centre traders / landlords (including vacant properties) to undertake minor improvements and maintenance works which will improve the external front elevation of town centre properties.			✓	✓										
NINE	The redevelopment of the former Porth Junior school site for residential use.	The development of new residential units within Porth will help diversify the existing housing stock. The former Porth Junior School site has the potential to address much of the prevailing housing need in the area through the development of one bedroom apartments and two, three and four bedroom houses.				✓	✓									
TEN	Developing extra care housing for the elderly and vulnerable.	Bronwydd House in Porth has been identified as a key site for extra care developments. This site has been identified as it is close to the town centre, has good access to transport, health services and local amenities.	✓				✓									



Appendix

Porth Town Centre Zonal Map



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KEY: 1. TRANSPORT HUB ZONE 2. STATION QUARTER 3. COMMUNITY HUB 4. PROPOSED PARK & RIDE 5. EXTRA CARE FACILITY

Scale: 1:3622

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