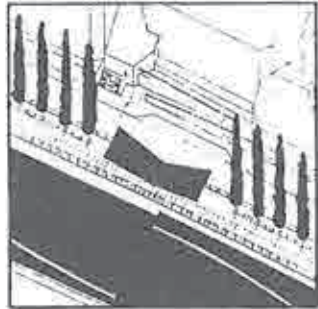
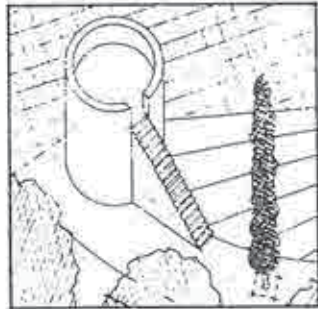
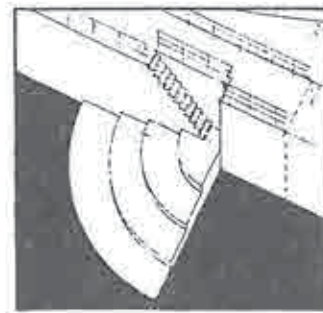


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Volume I Main Report



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T O W N C E N T R E S T U D Y

Bridgend County Borough Council

Welsh Development Agency

Bridgend Town Centre Study

Final Report

October 1996

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PREFACE

The measure of any culture is in its towns and cities and a measure of a town or city's greatness is to be found in the quality of its public places, its parks and squares - those places where people gather for celebration, recreation or contemplation.

Bridgend's recent history is characterised by a retreat from the public realm by those citizens, institutions and activities which make the town centre a place of belonging and civic identity. The forthcoming completion of the Cross Valley Link Road will however release the potential for a new vision of the town as a place for people.

The intimate quality of the town centre's streets remains stubbornly intact and awaits a new generation of investment to capitalise on the removal of congestion. Despite its physical appearance, energy and exuberance are abundant in the town. When added to Bridgend's reputation for innovation and a clearly expressed desire to reclaim the public realm, these indigenous attributes provide the stepping stones to a future sense of purpose and a robust cultural identity.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Bridgend town centre is clearly not achieving its potential. It is a sub-regional centre favourably located some 30km from both Cardiff and Swansea but town centre facilities have failed to keep pace with the expansion of its residential population. The causes have been analysed in this Study and recommendations made on the basis of a strategy to improve the town's competitiveness.

The centre is currently suffering from problems common to many medium sized towns today - increased traffic makes shopping within the town centre unpleasant whilst provision of out of town alternatives attracts custom. As a crucial first step towards resolving the situation a new road scheme is currently under construction. The Bridgend Cross Valley Link (BCVL) will complete an inner relief road, remove the majority of through traffic movements and provide the opportunity for significant environmental improvements.

Taking advantage of the removal of traffic a primary physical objective is to identify the distinctive pattern of the town and reinforce the intimacy of the square and the street, making the centre an attractive place for pedestrians to circulate and congregate. This is a prerequisite for the development of social and cultural activity within the central area which at present is clearly missing.

By adopting a broad, responsive and collaborative approach to design, future proposals emerge from a true meeting of minds among those who plan, manage and ultimately use the town centre. Consultation meetings have therefore been held in Bridgend where the design and management of the town centre was open to criticism and discussion.

Assessment of the Town Centre

Its Character

Town centres serve many junctions for those who inhabit either the town or its rural and suburban surroundings. A healthy town will display diversity in the culture, institutions, commercial activities and open spaces it supports. Bridgend's town centre is struggling to achieve a high quality of provision of the various facets of town life - places of recreation, education and entertainment are lacking and very few people live within the centre.

The potential for Bridgend to reintroduce or regenerate missing or failing aspects of town life is clearly present. In so doing it must be remembered that the town centre is a 'place of assembly' and must be made fit for that purpose.

The topography of the town is very distinctive and is closely linked to its origins and evolution. Of particular significance are the River Ogmore, the railway and the modern highways which largely demarcate the town centre. Partly as a result, the central core pattern of pre-twentieth century streets and squares is remarkably intact - any approach to revitalising the centre should regard this as a great asset.

Other notable features are the small area of streets and squares at the bottom of Newcastle Hill, the area of monolithic buildings to the southeast of the core and the series of buildings of public importance alongside the river. All need to play their part in the revitalising of the town.

Town Centre Activities

The Study has reviewed the current characteristics of, and future opportunities for, shopping, working and living in the town centre. It has also considered entertainment, leisure and cultural activities.

A comprehensive assessment of the retail situation has been carried out embracing data on existing floorspace and trends, the conclusions from surveys of both shoppers and retailers, and an analysis of the catchment area. It is concluded that other than for bookshops, and arts and crafts shops, there are no major deficiencies in types of outlet. However, there is a clear lack of higher quality shops in the centre. Also, other than the Living Store, there is no major national variety or department store within the centre. If such a store could be attracted to the town it could anchor any new retail development scheme. However, this is unlikely to happen without major environmental and traffic related improvements and a general upgrading of the image of the town centre.

Bridgend has a substantial catchment population. However, there is significant leakage of expenditure to competing retail centres, particularly Cardiff and Swansea. Clawing back some of this expenditure would sustain a major new retail development.

A particular factor that emerged from the surveys was that shoppers currently combine food and non-food shopping and the loss of one of the major edge of town food retailers would be likely to have a detrimental effect on trade in the town centre. The principal improvements sought by shoppers and retailers alike relate to accessibility, congestion, pedestrianisation and car parking. Upgrading of the environment and the provision of additional retailers are also considered to be important aims.

The demand for office space in the Bridgend area is related primarily to local professional firms, satellite offices for financial services and local government and former public utilities. All these sectors are represented in the town centre to some degree.

Rental levels are currently low and new development by the private sector is unlikely to be viable. Nevertheless there may be prospects for some modest office development in the future primarily for local professional firms seeking expansion.

There is little evidence of people living in the town centre at present. Whilst there is only limited scope to incorporate new residential property within the area, residents could be encouraged by the conversion and utilisation of space above shops. Various constraints exist - however, these can be overcome in the majority of cases if a common purpose is shared by the parties involved. In particular the issues of parking, or non car-ownership conditions need to be addressed.

There are few existing leisure, entertainment and community facilities in the town centre other than a basic level of provision. In addition there are no major visitor attractions and no

quality hotels with conference facilities though there may be demand for this type of facility. Cultural activities have always contributed to the character and vitality of our towns, expressing what is particular to a place or its inhabitants. Such activities are at present lacking in Bridgend.

Movement

Bridgend is currently characterised by the congestion caused by through traffic forced to pass through the town centre. This, combined with the narrow footways in many of the streets, results in poor environmental conditions to the detriment of the viability of the centre. Relief is at hand through the construction of the Cross Valley Link road; when this is completed the flows through the centre will be significantly reduced even without further traffic control measures being taken.

A particular issue in Bridgend is the high number of licenced hackney carriages within the area which results in significant volumes of taxis within the town centre. Whilst at present these contribute to the congestion on town centre streets, they perform an important role within the transport hierarchy and appropriate facilities will be required in any future traffic regime.

Brewers and other operators run bus services to and from the town centre with the dominant movement being in the Coity Road direction. They currently suffer from delays due to the general level of congestion.

Wyndham Street currently serves as a terminus following the demise of the former bus station off Market Street. However a small new bus station has been provided as part of the redevelopment of the site, with access off Quarella Road - this should be operational by the time the BCVL is completed. Access will then be available from the new road by means of a 'left-in/left-out' junction so that routes for buses to and from the north and west will be available without the need to enter the town centre.

The railway station provides good connections to Swansea, Cardiff and London as well as more local destinations. However its location some 300 metres from the bus station discourages convenient interchange between the two forms of public transport.

No specific provision is currently made for cyclists in Bridgend. However proposals are being developed as part of the National Cycle Network strategy.

The town centre is served by both surface and multi-storey public car parks located primarily to the south and east. In addition various private car parks, particularly Tesco's, allow users to visit other locations in the town. A small number of limited-waiting on-street spaces are also provided.

Surveys show that there is considerable variation in the use of the car parks, with those nearest the centre - namely The Rhiw multi-storey and Brackla Street surface car parks - being most popular. It is also apparent that surface parking is, in general, more popular than multi-storey. A particular feature is the fact that the Brackla multi-storey car parks are underused due to their remoteness from the centre - they primarily serve the Brackla Centre with few users also visiting other locations.

The surveys also indicated a significant demand for parking by Orange Badge holders, both on and off-street.

It is concluded from the surveys and assessment of demand that the future total number of off-street parking spaces should be of a similar order to that available before the BCVL works. However, any new parking provision should be located to the north of the centre so as to be more convenient for the large proportion of traffic approaching from that direction.

Development Potential of Key Sites

An examination has been carried out of the development potential of the town centre. Opportunities for retail development are considered to be limited. Only one area appears to offer some scope for major additions to retail floorspace - to the south of The Rhiw around Nolton Street. Other areas, in particular Market Street/Wyndham Street, have potential for incremental upgrading of retail floorspace in association with environmental improvements.

Other sites, located away from the core area, are not considered suitable for retail development and scope for other town centre uses has been explored. Four potential town centre development sites have thus been identified for preliminary commercial appraisal - Elders Yard, Nolton Street, BT Site, and Allotment Gardens.

Elders Yard is constrained by existing rights of access and the presence of listed buildings. The site lends itself to refurbishment and, consequently comprehensive development is not practicable or realistically achievable. Preliminary appraisal of a scheme based on refurbishment of existing buildings for ground floor retail and first floor office use suggests that public subsidy would be required.

The *Nolton Street* site is located adjacent to the core shopping area, the Rhiw Centre and the Living Store and benefits from existing retail development proposals by a key land owner. The site offers the opportunity to extend the retail core and attract a major department store. However the costs of land acquisition and existing trading concerns limit the scope for comprehensive development. A possible way forward would be smaller scale piecemeal development of separate parcels of land and refurbishment of the Living Store. Whatever course is taken, some public subsidy is likely to be required.

The location of the *BT Site* outside the commercial core and slightly remote from the town centre does not lend itself to providing a logical extension to the prime retail facilities. Other users such as office, commercial leisure or civic leisure might be more appropriate but demand is low. There are major uncertainties about the availability and cost of acquiring this site. Were BT to be offered alternative premises elsewhere, or to move voluntarily, the costs of bringing the site into alternative use are likely to be extremely high and would require strong public and political support.

The *Allotment Gardens* site, including as it does the council depot, workshops and multi-storey car parks offers potential for a mixture of uses comprising social housing, leisure and car park. Relocation of the depot and workshops and demolition of the multi-storey car park would provide a large site suitable for such users and provide the opportunity to link into other environmental improvements proposed for the town centre. As land owner the Council

It is also proposed that the abutments and parapets of the new Water Street Bridge are enhanced to form a dignified bridge into the town, and that an intimate square be provided at the 'Angel' public house.

Extending the Town Centre

In conjunction with the release of development sites, it is proposed that the public realm be extended as a catalyst for the expansion of the town centre to its optimum size. The new 'quarter' of the town centre is marked by proposed 'Town Gardens' in the Brackla Street/Cheapside area. These will contain the existing police station and a new pavilion for varied social or recreational uses. The gardens will also contain a gathering place, or theatre, the only completely new place of public assembly within the centre.

A ground pedestrian ramp is proposed between Caroline Square and the Town Gardens. This will form both a physical and symbolic connection between the old and new parts of the town centre and assist the success of the new development.

A Cultural Strategy

A need has been identified for a venue to house cultural activity. However, in order to be sustainable it must be supported by sound policy ideas. The real opportunity in Bridgend is to bring about a new sense of citizenship through cultural activity. Contrary to local belief, the area as a whole is not culturally devoid of life but there is as a need to focus some of the existing cultural activities within the town centre.

The totality of a culture is more than the arts. It is the whole of the lived experience of a place including everyday life as well as fringe cultures. Bridgend's culture needs to be evident at street level in as many forms as possible and in ways which actively involve the local people as consumers, audience and participants.

A cultural policy should be developed drawing on existing expertise and specialist agencies. Partnerships should be developed with important local businesses and sponsorship sought for artistic projects and events. An arts venue should be provided to host a wide range of activities and a public art strategy developed to identify opportunities for artistic contribution to the redevelopment of the town centre.

Finally live events should be encouraged within the town centre as an effective way of bringing people into the town.

Town Centre Management

The improvements proposed for the town centre will only be fully successful if well maintained and managed. To this end it is recommended that serious consideration be given to town centre management for Bridgend, the form and resources available to be subject to discussions between the various interested parties.

Implementation

Four major factors will influence the implementation of the recommended strategy - the BCVL contract, the relationship between the various components, land assembly and the availability of finance. In particular the traffic management measures and subsequent highway treatments will have to await the removal of through traffic by the new road.

A possible phasing programme has been drawn up for the proposed works which are broken down into discrete elements. These reflect the need to monitor the traffic situation following the opening of the BCVL and then introduce new traffic management measures prior to carrying out environmental works. Improvements to the river could be carried out in parallel with this, but it is likely that the development of areas off the highway would come later following land assembly.

The suggested phasing is only intended to be indicative at this stage - actual implementation would have to be refined by more detailed investigation and development of the individual components.

Preliminary estimates indicate likely capital works costs of £7-8m with the funding gap in respect of the development sites a further £3m plus. Various possible sources of public finance which might be available include Strategic Development Scheme Grants, European Regional Development Fund, WDA, Wales Tourist Board, Cadw and the Environment Agency. The issue of funding is addressed in greater detail in a complementary funding report.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bridgend town centre is clearly not achieving its potential. It is a sub-regional centre favourably located some 30km from both Cardiff and Swansea but town centre facilities have failed to keep pace with the expansion of its residential population.
- 1.2 The causes have been analysed in this Study and recommendations made on the basis of a strategy to improve the town's competitiveness. An integrated approach has been provided by the Study team who have used their specialist skills to build on the special characteristics of Bridgend. Their aim is to establish stronger local identity and pride, and to identify alternative means of managing traffic movements and parking which will improve accessibility and enhance environmental quality. This in turn will improve the town centre's attraction to shoppers and visitors, and improve investor confidence.
- 1.3 The centre is currently suffering from problems common to many medium sized towns in the present day. These are related primarily to the increase in car use and consequent changes in retail patterns. On the one hand, increasing numbers of vehicles within the town centre streets make shopping there unpleasant and dangerous and discourage shoppers from visiting the centre. On the other hand, the provision of out-of-town retail facilities such as superstores, retail parks and, soon, 'factory-shopping', seduces the motorised shopper. In addition larger centres such as Cardiff and Swansea offer attractions to an increasingly mobile population.
- 1.4 The result is a vicious circle which needs to be broken.
- 1.5 As a crucial first step, a new road scheme is currently under construction. The Bridgend Cross Valley Link (BCVL) will complete an inner relief road for the town centre and remove the majority of through traffic movements. This will provide the opportunity for radical changes to the traffic pattern within the town, redressing the pedestrian/vehicle balance and improving the environment for shoppers. Positive improvements to the townscape will also be possible. They will enhance the appeal of the town and create a desirable place in which to shop and spend time.

- 1.6 Bridgend town centre is remarkably compact and well contained within clearly defined boundaries. The railway, A473 dual carriageway and the River Ogmore serve to prevent the all too prevalent sprawl which characterises the recent evolution of so many town centres. Gaps are, however, beginning to appear in the town's tight knit fabric which threaten to destroy its coherence and potential charm. A primary objective therefore is to map the distinctive pattern of the town and reinforce, or where necessary reintroduce, the intimacy of the square and the street.
- 1.7 Bridgend, like many British towns, has suffered from a drift of population from centre to suburb in recent years as centrally provided civic functions have been dissipated. This has coincided with an increase in technology in the home, with video, television and computers providing people with sources of information and entertainment without the need to meet others. Other factors such as the development of out of town shopping and suburban leisure centres have contributed to a situation where Bridgend town centre no longer functions as a cultural focus for the community.
- 1.8 The character of the centre is one of intimate scale. It is unsuited to large scale development but will be much improved by proposals to limit the amount of traffic within the core, giving pedestrians more confidence and security. This shift of priority from cars to the pedestrian is a prerequisite for the development of social/cultural activity within the central area.
- 1.9 Recent experience in South Wales and elsewhere has demonstrated the effectiveness of an 'environment led' process of regeneration. Bridgend expresses very loudly the need for such an approach but also possesses additional strengths which will inspire the confidence to undertake the proposals that emerge from the project.
- 1.10 An important factor in ensuring success is to avoid the potential divergence or duplication of effort on the part of various agencies involved. The Study has therefore aimed to provide a lucid, practical and sophisticated framework within which specific and sharply focused proposals for the identified key areas of the town centre can be rapidly and cost effectively carried out.

- 1.11 It is generally accepted that environmental designs arising from a process which engages the end users are better informed and therefore more successful than those which do not. By adopting a broad, responsive and collaborative approach to design, future proposals emerge from a true meeting of minds among those who plan, manage and ultimately use the town centre.
- 1.12 In the case of Bridgend, a consultation process has been adopted to determine the feelings and views of local people. Consultation meetings have been held where the design and management of the town centre was open to criticism and discussion.
- 1.13 An Interim Report was prepared in January 1996 recording the data collection, site appraisals and consultations that had taken place and identifying the potential opportunities for Bridgend. It discussed potential options for the town centre and suggested a possible future strategy to be developed in the final stage of the Study.
- 1.14 The proposals put forward within that report reflected the information given to members of the relevant authorities at a presentation on the 30th November 1995 and which was in general favourably received.
- 1.15 This Final Report builds on the findings of the Interim Report, develops the recommended strategy and deals with implementation issues.

2 THE CHARACTER OF THE TOWN CENTRE

2.1 Town centres serve many functions for those who inhabit either the town or the rural and suburban surroundings. A healthy town will display diversity in the culture, institutions, commercial activities and open spaces it supports.

2.2 Broadly, these may be referred to as the 'Five Facets of Town Life' which are categorised as follows:

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|--|
| ● | Spiritual Force | Places of worship |
| ● | Temporal Power | Places of administration and government |
| ● | Economic Energy | Places of trade |
| ● | Cultural Expression | Places of recreation, education, and entertainment |
| ● | Residential Occupation | Places to live |

2.3 Bridgend's town centre is struggling to achieve a high quality of provision for any of these facets and some, notably cultural expression and residential occupation are almost completely absent. The locations of 'spiritual force' and 'temporal power' have become progressively severed and remote from the centre and play little part in the day to day life of the town (Figure 2.1).

2.4 The lack of any places of entertainment, recreation or education beyond the pubs and the library creates a cultural emptiness where there should be life and a confident expression of the town's identity. It is difficult to discover what Bridgend is about by visiting the centre. Within the county borough as a whole it is possible to see film, theatre, go to a concert or festival, see an exhibition or attend adult education classes in a multitude of subjects. It is not possible to do any of these in the centre of Bridgend.

2.5 The potential for the town to reintroduce or regenerate these missing or failing components of its anatomy is clearly present however. When seen as part of a strategy which recognises the importance of a sustainable public realm, the purpose of future initiatives and investment becomes clearer still. Above all, the value of a town centre is in its capacity to permit large numbers of people to

- gather for a range of activities which are essential to healthy society. In short the town centre is a **place of assembly** and must be made fit for that purpose.
- 2.6 The topography of the town, as illustrated in Figure 2.2, is very distinctive and is closely linked to the town's origins and evolution. High ground to the northwest and southeast is occupied by the settlements of Newcastle and Nolton or 'Old Town'. Between these lies the flood plain of the River Ogmore partly occupied by the commercial core of the town centre with its market, shops, council offices, transportation routes and termini. To the north and south of the centre lie the recreation grounds of The Brewery Field and Newbridge Fields.
- 2.7 At the heart of the town, and giving the town its name, is the original crossing point of the Ogmore. The stone pedestrian bridge, once part of a pilgrims' route to the west, exemplifies the potential for Bridgend to develop a new pedestrian network connecting the Old Town and Newcastle by negotiating the 'islands' which occupy the valley bottom. These features are identified on Figure 2.3.
- 2.8 Bridgend is physically and visually divided by the river, and in particular its recent flood defences, and by the railways. The town centre's isolation from surrounding areas will become more acute following the opening of the BCVL. These linear elements largely demarcate the town centre. They limit the spread of the centre and restrict access to it, but in doing so they promote a recognisable concentration of core activity. The links over, through and under the linear elements are therefore, to a great extent, the means of access into the town centre. In order to improve and expand, it is crucial that the town centre successfully resolves its relationship with these powerful forces on its margins and that the points of passage through them are dignified, legible and as numerous as possible (Figure 2.4).
- 2.9 A diagram of the **urban typology** of the town centre (Figure 2.5) shows several important elaborations on the basic textbook pattern of central business district surrounded by urban and suburban residential areas. These features reveal much about the uniqueness of Bridgend town centre and the current situation in its development:

- The central core pattern of pre-twentieth century *streets and squares* is remarkably intact. This is partially due to its containment by the river and railway and its continued success as a retail centre. Any approach to revitalising the centre should regard this as a great asset.
- The Nolton Street corridor into the town from the south retains the distinct form of a town shopping street. However, there is potential for a fracture to develop in this homogeneous form around the Brackla Street junction. Development here should integrate rather than separate further.
- At the bottom of Newcastle Hill there is a small area of *town streets and squares* which is becoming ever more isolated from the core by successive highway developments and the imminent removal of the Embassy Bridge, also known as the New Bridge. It is important for this area to remain true to its urban form and not be relinquished to suburbia.
- The riverside approach to the town centre along Quarella Road has been compromised by the flood defences and will now be severed by the BCVL.
- The huge BCVL Tremains Road roundabout accentuates the division caused by the railway at the northeast approach to the town. This 'draws in' the edge of the town centre to the north end of Derwen Road.
- To the immediate southeast of the core there is a large area of *monolithic* buildings on land formerly occupied by heavy industry. This is of great importance to the town because it is the only piece of land with development potential which is adjacent to the prime area, and not separated from it. However, access from the main retail area via the Nolton Street/Brackla Street junction is too protracted and improved connections should be achieved in order to successfully extend the centre in this direction.

• There is a series of islands on the valley bottom formed by the alignments of major highways and the meandering river with its flood defences. The flat ground here has given rise to large buildings, mostly of public importance, and is occupied by recreation grounds as it opens out to the north and south. The town would benefit from a more coherent relationship between these *riverside pavilions* and the activity within the core area. There is also great potential for the idea of *pavilions in riverside parkland*.

3 ACTIVITIES OF THE TOWN CENTRE

3.1 This chapter reviews the current characteristics, recent trends and future opportunities of the principal town centre activities and uses:

- shopping
- working
- residential
- entertainment/leisure and culture

Shopping in Bridgend

3.2 This section looks at the characteristics of retailing in the town centre. It describes:

- the floorspace, development trends and market indicators
- competing centres
- the existing policy framework
- the main conclusions from two important surveys - the shoppers survey and the retailers attitude survey
- the conclusion from the catchment area analysis for Bridgend
- the key retail issues that need to be addressed.

Retail Floorspace and Retail Outlets

3.3 Bridgend is described as a sub regional centre in the Ogwr Local Plan (April 1995), lying midway, in terms of function and size, between the regional centres of Cardiff and Swansea, and the town centres of Porthcawl and Maesteg. The old Mid Glamorgan County Council estimated that the total retail floorspace of Bridgend was 22,650 sq metres (net) in 1995. To understand how this compares with competing centres in the retail hierarchy, it represents about a fifth of the floorspace in Cardiff (120,000 sq metres net) and three times the amount of floorspace of Maesteg (7,050 sq metres net).

philosophy is to ensure that the character of each street is appropriate to the role which it is playing, so that motorists and pedestrians can readily understand the situation. A hierarchy of four street types has therefore been developed, ranging from full vehicular access to complete prohibition.

The strategy includes full pedestrianisation, except for service access at specified times, of Adare Street, Dunraven Place (north) and sections of Elder Street. Nolton Street, Derwen Road, Market Street (west), Dunraven Place (south) and Queen Street will remain open to traffic though with appropriate treatment to discourage excessive speed. These will allow access to the town centre - northbound along Derwen Road, southbound along Dunraven Place - without encouraging through traffic or recirculation within the centre.

Other streets, notably Caroline Street and Wyndham Street, will be closed to traffic during main shopping hours but open during the evenings to encourage better use of the town centre after hours.

Some limited on-street parking is proposed on Derwen Road and taxi ranks and disabled parking spaces will be provided where appropriate.

The above proposals support the concept of new squares and pedestrian connections, in particular a pedestrian spine route through the centre linking with the Brackla Street area. Important 'squares' which it is proposed should be developed to return life and interest to the centre are Dunraven Place, with a new dignified platform for the cenotaph, 'Caroline Square', the geometric and circulatory hub of the extended town centre and 'Nolton Circus', a landmark at the southern approach.

Elders Yard should be developed as an intimate environment primarily for pedestrians, and other open spaces are proposed at Market Street/Quarella Road, the north end of Derwen road and at the railway station.

Embracing the River

This requires bold contemporary civic architecture and engineering on a grand scale to enter the realm of the flood defences and the major highways in order to mark the edge of the town centre and to celebrate the river as an intrinsic part of Bridgend.

The most potent symbol of the revitalisation of the town centre is a new contemporary footbridge rising from Dunraven Place and alighting on a long platform at the western side of the river. This will overlook the new road towards the bottom of Newcastle Hill and afford views of the river both upstream and downstream. It is proposed that the river itself be significantly improved to make it an interesting feature of the town. The river bed will be extensively articulated to give rise to weirs, pools and cascades and access down to the water will be provided for recreational purposes wherever possible.

A cantilevered causeway overlooking the river is proposed along Angel Street with a square formed opposite the entrance to the council offices providing a formal setting and a place for civic ceremony.

has a key role in bringing about development of this site. Assuming minimal land assembly costs no public subsidy should be required.

Future Direction

It is concluded that Bridgend town centre is in a typical spiral of decline - it is struggling to achieve a higher quality of provision of various aspects of town life, and some are almost totally absent. There is a need to revive a sense of pride in the town, to improve the environment for users and to thereby restore confidence and encourage investment.

Two major keys to a strategy of improvement are seen to be the relationship of the town to its river and the removal of barriers between parts of the town centre, which inhibit cohesion and expansion. These issues need to be addressed as a priority in conjunction with measures to restore the balance between pedestrians and vehicles and the encouragement of development of key sites.

In addition to these physical aims it is important not to forget the human dimension and the need for the provision and co-ordination of cultural activities. The development of a cultural policy is essential if Bridgend is to fully establish a recognisable identity.

Recommended Strategy

A broad strategy for the town centre has been drawn up embracing new development proposals, management of traffic, environmental improvements and a positive approach to cultural issues.

New Development

The most suitable area for the expansion of the prime retail facilities is to the south-east of the Rhiw Centre. Development of this site on Nolton Street is therefore seen as an important element of the strategy - it not only increases the area of shopping but helps to link the Brackla Centre to the core. Development of Elders Yard for small scale shops, restaurants and offices, and the incorporation of environmental improvements will make a significant contribution to upgrading the town centre.

Though there are major uncertainties about cost and acquisition, the BT Site is ideally located for a mixed development scheme and will contribute to the linkage between the existing core and the expansion of the town centre to the south-east.

The peripheral Allotment Gardens site should be developed for housing, leisure or community uses and will complement other environmental improvements within the centre.

Enhancing the Town Centre

The intention of the strategy is to enhance and animate the network of spaces within the existing centre. To achieve this the penetration of traffic is minimised where practical and appropriate whilst retaining some access for servicing, disabled motorists, taxis and limited on-street parking. A design concept has been developed to discourage speed throughout the area and create a safer and more pleasant environment for pedestrians. The proposed

- 3.4 Floorspace has been broken down into three categories:
- comparison (durable) goods outlets - predominantly selling non-food goods (primarily use classes A1)
 - convenience goods outlets - predominantly selling food (primarily use classes A1)
 - service outlets - banks, building societies, restaurants, takeaways (primarily use classes A2 and A3).
- 3.5 Figures on floorspace and retail units for these goods categories have been derived from GOAD survey data (Chas E Goad Ltd, 1994). The floorspace data relates to the footprint of retail outlets.

Table 3.1
Floorspace data

	No. of Retail Units (1994)	Floorspace
		(sq m - footprint)
Comparison	160	30,000 (54%)
Convenience	22*	6,900* (13%)
Services	86	12,000 (22%)
Miscellaneous	4	1,700 (22%)
Vacant	35	4,300 (3%)
Total	307	55,000 (100%)

Source: GOAD - 1994

** Does not include Tesco edge of centre store, Hyper Value and Kwik Save*

- 3.6 The proportion of comparison floorspace approximates to the national average for town centres. Convenience floorspace is lower than the national average, although if the Tesco and Kwik Save edge of centre stores were added to the GOAD figures it would be close to it. Bridgend has slightly more service sector floorspace than the national average.

3.7 There has been a small increase in retail outlets in Bridgend in recent years.

Table 3.2
Increase in Number of Retail Outlets

	1986	1989	1994
Comparison	157	160	160
Convenience	32	28	22
Services	67	73	86
Total	256	261	268

Source: GOAD

3.8 However, within the three retail categories there has been a noticeable increase in service sector outlets and a decrease in convenience goods outlets. These figures broadly accord with national trends in town centres where there have been similar changes in these sectors. Appendix A outlines changes from GOAD figures by outlets during this eight year period. The principal findings from this more detailed analysis are that:

- there is a predominance of retailers selling low to middle range quality durable goods and a shortage of outlets selling high quality goods
- there is only one major variety store in the centre (the Living Store)
- newsagents and butchers have been the principal losses from the convenience sector in recent years
- the representation of footwear and clothes outlets is slightly higher than the national average
- within the service sector there are slightly higher representations of building societies, hairdressers and travel agents than the national average
- there is a deficiency of bookshops, and art and crafts shops compared to the national average.

Table 3.3
Number of Vacant Units

	1986	1989	1994
No. of Vacant Units	29	24	35
Per cent of all Units	10.1	8.4	11.5

Source: GOAD

- 3.9 Vacancy levels have risen in recent years, although the proportion of retail units vacant is slightly below the national average (13%). The average size of vacant retail premises is small (estimated to be around 23 sq metres net by Mid Glamorgan County Council). Vacant units are predominantly located outside the prime pitch area. Given the size and location of the majority of these units they are unlikely to be attractive to multiple retailers seeking representation in Bridgend.

Development Trends

- 3.10 There has been relatively little investment in the town centre during the last 10 years.
- During the 1980s there were new retail developments in the prime retail areas (Caroline St and Adare St) and the development of the Brackla Centre in a secondary location.
 - During the 1990s there has been only one development scheme, this being in a tertiary location - the old bus station site off Market St. This development was grant aided and is still not fully occupied.
 - The Rhiw Centre was refurbished in the early 1990s.

A more detailed list of major retail developments is contained in Appendix B.

- 3.11 In contrast there has been major retail development recently at out of centre locations. Bridgend Retail Park and Waterton Retail Park, developed principally within the last five years, are the principal locations for out of centre stores selling comparison goods. In the convenience sector Tesco and Sainsbury also have stores located in out of centre sites.

Table 3.4
Out of Town Retail Centres

LOCATION	COMPARISON STORES (M ² NET)		CONVENIENCE STORES (M ² NET)	
	EXISTING	PROPOSED	EXISTING	PROPOSED
BRIDGEND RETAIL PARK	3950	2000(approx)	4500	-
WATERTON RETAIL PARK	4230	-	-	-
SARN PARK	-	8000(approx)	2400	-
PYLE	-	-	3300	-
TOTAL	8180	10,000	10,200	-

- 3.12 Total out of centre floorspace (net) for comparison goods almost matches that within the town centre. With the development of the Pines Factory Outlet scheme out of centre comparison floorspace will be almost double that within the town centre. To appreciate the relative scale of out of centre floorspace a comparison can be made with national figures where out of centre retailing currently accounts for around 15% of all retail floorspace. The threat of out of centre development on the town centre has already been recognised in the Local Plan, but there would appear to be a need for proactive measures, which are explored later, so that the town centre can effectively compete with retail parks.

Market Indicators

- 3.13 Primary, secondary and tertiary areas of the town centre are identified in Figure 3.1. These definitions are used by retailers and the property industry to describe the relative strength of locations by reference to the number of multiple retailers, rental levels and pedestrian flows.
- 3.14 The prime pitch retail area takes in Adare St, Caroline St, and the recently refurbished Rhiw Shopping Centre. The majority of Bridgend's 32 multiple

retailers are located in this area which is characterised by few vacancies and a proportionally high level of outlets within the service category. Zone A rental levels within this area range from £40 to £65 per sq ft, relatively high compared with other similar sized centres in South Wales. Yields range from 6.5% to 8% in the prime pitch area, which is around the average for a town of this size and suggests that there is investor confidence in this area. The rapid turnover of vacant premises within the prime pitch confirms these findings.

- 3.15 The secondary retail area takes in Dunraven Place, Wyndham St, Derwen Road, the northern part of Nolton Street and the Brackla Centre. Rental levels are significantly lower in these areas, at around £20 to £40 sq ft. Vacancy levels are higher, there are few multiple retailers and there is little evidence of major investment in recent years. Nevertheless given current pedestrian flows and the relationship to the prime pitch area, there would appear to be potential to upgrade part of the secondary area, particularly around Nolton Street.
- 3.16 The tertiary area takes in part of Nolton St and Market St. It is characterised by a relatively poor quality environment with evidence of a lack of investment. There are no multiple retailers in these areas although vacancies do not appear to be significantly higher than the secondary area. Traders in these areas include take-aways and pubs; charity shops; specialist retailers (craft shops and hobby shops) and second-hand goods shops.
- 3.17 Ownership within the centre is varied (see Figure 3.2). The principal property company and pension fund ownerships are within the prime pitch area. Local investor and owner occupation predominates in the secondary and tertiary areas.

Competing Centres

- 3.18 The growing threat of out of centre stores in Bridgend has already been referred to. In addition, on the outskirts of Cardiff, the retail park at Culverhouse Cross is also likely to draw significant trade from the Bridgend catchment area, particularly due to the presence of a Marks and Spencer store.
- 3.19 Cardiff is Bridgend's primary source of competition (see shopper survey and catchment analysis later in this section). It has benefited from major new city centre retail developments in recent years including the Capitol Centre and

Queens Arcade, while the provision of a wide range of entertainment and eating out facilities increases the likelihood of people combining trips to Cardiff for other purposes in addition to shopping.

- 3.20 Bridgend also competes with Swansea. Again there have been major retail developments in Swansea in recent years and investment in road links have made it more accessible to Bridgend's catchment population.
- 3.21 Local competing centres include Maesteg, Porthcawl and Cowbridge. These centres function at a different level, as recognised in the Ogwr Local Plan. They have few multiple retailers and primarily serve the every day basic needs of the local catchment population. Nevertheless these centres have some important assets which are currently lacking in Bridgend. Porthcawl benefits from a centrally located museum and a well provided tourist information centre. In addition, environmental improvements and pedestrianisation have been provided in the centre. Maesteg benefits from a recently installed CCTV system and consequently there has been a noticeable fall in the crime rate in the centre. Cowbridge is characterised by a wide range of specialist independent retailers selling high quality goods such as clothes, shoes, antiques etc, as well as a range of restaurants and bars. Cowbridge is likely to draw expenditure from that section of the population within Bridgend's catchment who are seeking these types of retail outlets and services, and cannot find them in Bridgend.
- 3.22 Neighbouring centres including Pencoed, Aberkenfig, Pyle and Kenfig Hill have been described in the Economic Strategy for Mid Ogwr (EDAW/CR Planning - 1995). These are neighbourhood centres made up primarily of local independent retailers. They serve a very local catchment for everyday needs.

Policy Framework

- 3.23 Bridgend is identified as a sub regional centre in the recently adopted Ogwr Borough Local Plan (April 1995). The plan seeks to concentrate retail units, in particular those selling durable goods, in established commercial centres, such as Bridgend. In Bridgend itself policies seek to control the development of non-retail uses, such as building societies and fast food outlets, within the prime retail area which is defined as Adare St, Caroline St, The Rhiw Centre and The Brackla Centre. The Plan also encourages improvements to the environment in

- town centres, including traffic management (servicing arrangements, car parking and pedestrianisation) and grant assisted improvement schemes.
- 3.24 Sites are identified for further investment, including five sites in Bridgend. One of these sites has now been developed, although only with the aid of grant assistance - the bus station and depot site off Market St. The other sites allocated for redevelopment or refurbishment for leisure and entertainment have not been progressed in terms of development proposals.
- 3.25 The Plan encourages large scale retail development to locate in out of centre areas. These are the established sites of Waterton Retail Park and Bridgend Retail Park. The Plan seeks to limit the type of non convenience goods that can be sold at these retail parks to a range of bulky goods, electrical products, motor vehicles, toys and shoes. Other forms of retail development would be assessed against criteria to assess the impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre, the impact on the road network, accessibility by public transport and environmental impact.
- 3.26 A factory outlet development at Sarn Park - 'The Pines' - has recently been granted permission under the above Local Plan criteria. It will incorporate 15000 sq metres of retail floorspace offering discounted clothes, shoes and household goods.
- 3.27 There are other key issues which would appear to be particularly relevant to the problems facing Bridgend, which are not fully explored in current Local Plan policy but could be addressed in future revisions to the Plan or in other policy documents. These include:
- the role of town centre management to maintain and improve the environment of the town and to market and promote the town centre
 - the identification of sites for mixed use development and redundant buildings/upper floors of shops appropriate for conversion to residential uses
 - the need for an integrated approach through a transport strategy for traffic calming, pedestrianisation, goods delivery, improvements to public transport, and car park management and pricing.

Shopper Surveys

- 3.28 Two shopper surveys were undertaken, one within the town centre and the other at two retail parks. Their purpose was to help the Study team understand the characteristics of shoppers in Bridgend: how they travel, why they shop there, what they buy, where else they shop, and what improvements they would like to see in the centre. They also provided information on the origins of shoppers in relation to the catchment areas.
- 3.29 The shopper survey within the town centre was undertaken on Thursday 26th and Saturday 28th October 1995. Two hundred and sixty nine people were interviewed face to face, interviews being conducted at 10 locations throughout the town centre. The majority of respondents were visiting Bridgend in order to shop. A full analysis of this survey is contained in Appendix C and a summary is contained in Table 3.5.
- 3.30 The survey showed that Bridgend centre primarily serves a local catchment population, incorporating the Bridgend urban area, the rural hinterland and the northern valley settlements. People shop in Bridgend primarily because it is convenient; it is near to where they live and has a sufficient range of shops to meet their basic needs. Most of these shoppers use the centre frequently, the majority travelling to the centre at least once a week. Although most people travel there by car, a significant proportion use buses or walk to the centre.
- 3.31 The survey shows that food based shopping trips are almost as important as non-food based shopping trips. However, it should be borne in mind that a significant proportion of the respondents used the Tesco car park so that the results may be weighted somewhat towards food shopping at Tesco. In addition a large proportion of shoppers combine non-food and food based shopping. Shoppers using the edge of town food stores are likely to be an important source of trade for town centre retailers and the loss of one of these food stores could have a detrimental effect on town centre trade.
- 3.32 Secondary to food, shoppers are primarily using Bridgend to purchase clothes and shoes. On the survey days relatively few shoppers were purchasing electrical goods or household/DIY goods and the competing out of centre facilities may be drawing a significant proportion of this trade.

multiple retailers and on comparison goods retailers. An assessment of the results is contained in Appendix D.

- 3.38 The main conclusion from the survey is that the town is in need of strengthening in order to attract new multiple retailers. It is particularly important to attract an anchor store - an established and prestigious chain store which would in turn attract other retailers.
- 3.39 Accessibility and car parking were highlighted by both existing retailers and those retailers not represented as being important issues which required improvement. Pedestrianisation was considered to be especially important for existing retailers; in particular a large proportion of the retailers on both Caroline Street and Adare Street were seeking pedestrianisation of those streets.
- 3.40 Retailers, particularly the higher quality ones, recognised that the image of the town was poor. They perceived that there was a need for a major 'face lift' to improve the town and to attract a more diverse range of shoppers from the surrounding catchment population. Nevertheless the survey did show that existing traders are performing relatively well and this provides a strong base from which the centre can expand.

Catchment Analysis Findings

- 3.41 A primary and secondary catchment area has been defined around Bridgend town centre (see Figure 3.3) and the full results of a strategic catchment analysis are given in Appendix E. The vast majority of expenditure within Bridgend town centre is drawn from the primary catchment area with lower levels of expenditure drawn from the secondary area. The areas have been defined on the basis of the relationship of the town to other competing centres, transport routes into the centre, previous studies (including the Pines application material) and discussions with local estate agents. The proportion of expenditure drawn from the areas will differ with respect to the type of goods purchased.
- 3.42 Bridgend town centre has a large catchment area population. The population of the primary area approximated to 84,300 in 1995, and that of the secondary area approximated to an additional 98,800. A sub-regional shopping centre would be expected to serve a catchment area of around this size.

- 3.43 It has been estimated that Bridgend town centre only retains a relatively small percentage of comparison goods expenditure from its primary and secondary catchment areas. This approximates to around one third of expenditure from the primary area and around 7% of expenditure from the secondary area. Two thirds of expenditure from the primary area currently flows out to other centres, principally Cardiff and Swansea. There is likely to be the potential to claw back some of this lost expenditure to Bridgend. The amount that can be achieved will be dependent on a number of factors including additional retail floorspace, and environmental and traffic improvements in the town centre.
- 3.44 Expenditure retention for retail parks has been estimated to be higher than the town centre - is around 50% for the primary area and around 8% for the secondary area. Expenditure retention for convenience shopping at large food stores has been estimated to be even higher - around 75% for the primary area and around 17% for the secondary area.
- 3.45 Given the low expenditure retention levels for Bridgend town centre, reliance cannot be placed on growth in expenditure and population in the primary and secondary areas to provide the basis for significant additions to retail floorspace. It has been estimated that only around 1,300 sq metres of new floorspace in Bridgend centre could be attributed to growth in expenditure and population between 1996 and 2001.
- 3.46 If Bridgend centre is to grow significantly in the next decade then the town centre will need to claw back expenditure currently lost to other centres. It has been estimated that a 10% claw back from the primary area and a 3% claw back from the secondary area could support around 4,000 sq metres of new floorspace (net), without significantly affecting the trade of existing retailers.
- 3.47 The retailers survey, which obtained information on a confidential basis, concluded that there are a number of multiple retailers, including a variety store, seeking representation in Bridgend. A new retail development in the right location would meet this demand and assist in clawing back trade currently lost to other centres.
- 3.48 As the shopper survey and the retailers survey have shown there is also a need for investment in Bridgend, beyond the development of a new retail scheme, in

order for the centre to compete effectively with other centres. Environmental improvements, new facilities and amenities would not only enhance the prospects for new retail development but also provide a stimulus for clawing back expenditure currently lost to competing centres.

Conclusions on Shopping in Bridgend

3.49 From the above analysis the following issues for retailing in Bridgend have been identified:

- Other than bookshops, and art and craft shops, there are no major deficiencies in types of outlet.
- There is a clear lack of higher quality retail outlets in the centre.
- Other than the Living Store there is no major national variety or department store within the centre. If such a store could be attracted to the centre it could anchor any new retail development scheme.
- There is interest shown by a number of multiple retailers and a variety store in locating in the town centre. The right type of premises, in terms of size and quality and the right location, in terms of proximity to the prime pitch area, will need to be brought forward in order to attract retailers of this type.
- Multiple retailers selling higher quality goods and a prestige variety/department store are unlikely to be attracted to the centre without major environmental and traffic related improvements and a general upgrading of the image of the town centre.
- Bridgend has a substantial catchment population. The majority of expenditure flows from the primary catchment area, corresponding to the urban areas of Bridgend, the rural fringes and the valley settlements.
- There is a significant leakage of expenditure from both the primary and secondary catchment areas of Bridgend to competing retail

facilities. Clawing back some of this expenditure (at least around 10%) would sustain a major new retail development.

- The size of catchment population will, in itself, attract some developers. However it is not primarily size but socio/economic profile that influences multiple retailers and the prestige variety/department stores that are currently not represented in the town centre. Nevertheless the catchment analysis and shopper survey have shown that there is likely to be an element of the catchment population that would be attracted to stores of this type selling higher quality goods.
- Food shopping is important in the town centre. Shoppers currently combine food and non-food shopping. The loss of one of the major edge of town food retailers is likely to have a detrimental effect on trade in the town centre.
- Bridgend has some specialist independent retailers, mostly located within areas of relatively poor environmental quality (secondary and tertiary shopping areas).
- The principal improvements required by shoppers and retailers in the town centre relate to accessibility, congestion, pedestrianisation and car parking. Upgrading of the environment and the provision of additional retailers, in particular a national variety/department store are also considered to be important.
- There is notable deficiency of leisure and entertainment facilities and quality restaurants in Bridgend. Shoppers are more likely to make linked trips to other centres for these facilities.
- The proposed Pines development will have a more extensive catchment than the Bridgend area. However, as similar categories of goods will be sold, albeit in a different format, it will clearly draw some trade from retailers in the town centre.

Working in Bridgend

3.50 The office market has already been reviewed in the Sub Regional Study (EDAW/CR Planning 1995). The findings from this study were that demand in Ogwr comes from three main areas:

- local professional firms - accountants, solicitors etc
- satellite offices for financial services
- local government and former public utilities.

All these sectors are represented in Bridgend town centre to some degree.

3.51 Court Road/ Station Road is the principal office location for professional and business services. The majority of accommodation in this area is provided in converted residential properties, where take up appears to be relatively high. The notable exception is Derwen House, a three storey recently constructed office block, which is currently vacant.

3.52 The local government functions are primarily located to the west of the river and to the east of Brackla Street. Financial services and local businesses are also accommodated within purpose built offices above retail units at Wyndham House and Cambria House on Wyndham Street.

3.53 There has been very little recent office development in the town centre. The notable exception is the development of a small office unit on Queen Street currently occupied by the Hafod Housing Association. In addition the refurbishment of the police station on the corner of Court Road and Derwen Street for high quality office accommodation has recently been granted planning consent. Recently take-up in the Borough has been at out of centre business parks such as the Bridgend Business Centre, completed in 1991.

3.54 Rental levels for office development in Bridgend town centre are currently low (around £4.50 to £7.50 per sq ft). These values are significantly lower than competing town centres and out of centre locations see Table 3.6. EDAW/CR Planning concluded that new development in Bridgend by the private sector is not currently seen as viable.

Table 3.6
Rental Levels in Bridgend compared with Other Locations

	BRIDGEND	CARDIFF	SWANSEA	MERTHYR TYDFIL
TOWN CENTRE RENTS (PSF)	£4.75-7.50	£8.00-10.00	£6.00-7.50	£5.00-6.50
OUT OF CENTRE RENTS (PSF)	£6.60-8.00	£10 (Approx)	£6.00-6.50	£6.00-7.00

- 3.55 Nevertheless there are likely to be prospects for some office development in the future in Bridgend. This would be for local firms and professional services seeking improved or larger office accommodation. In addition there is the possibility that the new unitary authority will require additional or replacement office floorspace. New office accommodation could be provided in areas where the environment is to be upgraded so that a high quality working environment is provided for future occupiers. Given the current market indicators any office development in Bridgend is likely to be modest.

Living in Bridgend

- 3.56 Very few people live within the centre of Bridgend, although residential areas border the commercial area of the town centre both to the north and to the south. Figure 3.4 illustrates the scarcity of residential accommodation above the shops in the centre.

Planning Policy and Housing Supply

- 3.57 Sufficient land has been identified in the Ogwr Borough Local Plan to meet future requirements. Large areas of land primarily for family accommodation have been allocated to the north east and to the south west of Bridgend. It is anticipated that the development of each of these major allocations will continue beyond the plan period, thus helping to meet the need for housing in Bridgend beyond 2006. The Local Plan does not incorporate policies specific to the development of housing within the town centre although it does adopt a flexible approach to windfall/small scale development within the urban area of Bridgend. These small scale opportunities relate to redevelopments, conversions and change of use to residential uses of normally less than 10 units.

improvements required but recognised that the centre needed tidying up. Where specific measures were suggested the provision of new and improved toilet facilities were frequently mentioned, and with respect to entertainment facilities, a cinema was requested.

- 3.35 The surveys undertaken at the two retail parks (Bridgend Retail Park and Waterton Retail Park) on Thursday, 25th and Saturday, 27th April, 1996, focused primarily on non-food shopping, with only 25% of respondents shopping for food. The surveys found that shoppers at the parks are more likely to travel greater distances than those in the town centre - a larger proportion originate from the secondary catchment area, than is the case in the town centre. The retail parks, particularly Bridgend Retail Park, are well used by shoppers, with the majority of respondents stating that they visited them at least once a week.
- 3.36 Over 95% of the respondents travelled to the retail parks by car, with only 1-2% walking or using public transport. Just over half of the shoppers were aware that they could have purchased similar or identical products in Bridgend town centre, but had not because they considered the retail parks to be more attractive shopping destinations. Reasons respondents preferred to shop at the retail parks related primarily to the ease of parking (86%), the availability of free parking (57%) and the problems of congestion in the town centre (37%). Given these findings it was not surprising to find that improvements retail park shoppers would most like to see in Bridgend town centre, to persuade them to undertake more shopping trips there, related to traffic and transportation issues. Around one third of respondents sought more or better parking and one third requested free parking. Less traffic, better access, pedestrianisation and more shops were also frequently mentioned by respondents.

Retailers Survey

- 3.37 The retailers survey was undertaken in October and November 1995. Retailers represented in the town centre, and some not represented, were confidentially contacted by phone and were asked a number of standard questions. Twenty retailers currently represented in the town centre and 15 not represented cooperated in the survey. The survey primarily focused on the views of national

Table 3.5
Results of Town Centre Shopper Survey

Dates of Survey
Thursday 26th October 1995
Saturday 28th October 1995

ARRIVALS	On-foot	Car	Bus	Train	Taxi
	18%	58%	20%	1%	3%

CAR PARKS USED	Surface Brackla Street	Tesco	Rhiw	Kwiksave	Brackla Street	Quarella Road
	4%	41%	29%	3%	15%	8%

REASONS FOR VISIT	Food Shop	Other Shopping	Services	Work	Entertainment	Other
	56%	13%	12%	7%	1%	11%

SUGGESTIONS	Pedestrianisation	New/Better Bus Station	New/Better Toilets	Free Parking	Better Parking	Other
	13%	13%	8%	4%	4%	58%

DETAILS OF RESPONDENTS	Total	Male	Female	Average Age
	269	30%	70%	42

- 3.33 It was shown that Bridgend rarely attracts shoppers to the centre for the quality of its shops and its environment. In addition Bridgend has little to offer in terms of entertainment facilities, cultural facilities and eating places to encourage people to make linked trips to the centre. Competing centres such as Cardiff were clearly perceived to be more attractive in this respect.
- 3.34 Town centre shoppers' principal concerns relate to traffic and transportation issues. A large number of respondents were seeking improvements such as pedestrianisation, a new or better bus station and measures to relieve congestion. Shoppers were also seeking a better range of shops and a number specified that they would like a new variety or department store in the centre. Shoppers were not always specific about the type of environmental

Recent Trends

- 3.58 Although there has been little recent evidence of residential development in the town centre there has been activity on the periphery. There are plans to convert almshouses and a hospital to the north of the centre to residential use and private landlords have been active in converting larger houses to flats and bedsits for the singles and young couples market. In addition there has been recent interest shown by the private sector in utilising space above shops for residential accommodation, although planning permission for change of use has been refused for a variety of reasons, including the non-availability of parking spaces in the centre. To date there have been no grant assisted or Housing Association schemes for providing living accommodation above shops in the centre.

Opportunities and Constraints

- 3.59 There are large sites near to the centre which could be suitable for mixed development incorporating an element of residential accommodation. In addition there is space above shops, perhaps inefficiently used as storage (see Figure 3.4) which may be suitable for conversion to residential use. The principal constraints on the provision of further residential accommodation in the centre relate to the environment, finance, structural/operational issues and planning.
- 3.60 The environment of some parts of the town centre may not currently be appropriate for residential accommodation. The deterring elements of the centre do not relate only to the physical fabric but also to concerns and perceptions about noisy and disruptive activities. Figure 3.5 shows areas of the town which are renowned trouble spots at night, and streets where disruptive behaviour could occur. The flow of people between these areas can also result in an environment which would not be conducive to residential use.
- 3.61 Because of the above problems there may currently be a reluctance on the part of the private sector to invest in residential accommodation in the town centre. Nevertheless there is likely to be some interest from Housing Associations to provide accommodation primarily for single young people and young couples on their waiting list. Other sources of funding for 'living over the shop'

schemes can also be explored such as renovation grants from local authorities and conservation area related grants.

- 3.62 Some upper floors of properties may not be suitable for conversion to residential use in the town centre. Constraints relating to access to the upper floors, legal constraints, building regulation requirements, planning constraints and property management considerations may, in isolation or in combination, be insurmountable. In the majority of cases these constraints can be overcome if a common purpose is shared by the provider of the accommodation, the owner and the local authority. In particular the issue of parking can be addressed by revised policies on parking requirements and/or the consideration of tenancy agreements embodying a condition of non car-ownership.

Entertainment, Leisure, Tourism and Community Uses

- 3.63 There are few existing leisure, entertainment and community facilities in the town centre.

Restaurants and Pubs

- 3.64 Although there are a number of restaurants, cafes and take-aways, the centre is characterised by standard provision of British and ethnic catering. There is a noticeable shortage of quality and speciality restaurants and a number of national chains, such as Pizzaland and McDonald's, are not represented.
- 3.65 There is a relatively large number of public houses, some of which serve food and provide entertainment such as bands, quiz nights and Karaoke. However, there is a noticeable shortage of higher quality bars, wine bars or themed bars which would attract a more diverse and, perhaps, family-orientated clientele.

Leisure and Entertainment

- 3.66 The principal leisure and entertainment facilities other than restaurants and pubs are the bowling alley on Derwen Street, the night clubs scattered around the centre and the bingo hall on the north west edge of the centre. There are no cinemas, theatres or galleries in the centre.

Tourism

- 3.67 There are no major visitor attractions in Bridgend and it is unlikely that many tourists visiting the valleys and the coast for holidays would make a linked trip to Bridgend.
- 3.68 There is limited information on Bridgend. The only information that the well stocked Porthcawl Tourism Information Centre has on Bridgend relates to the recreation centre, located outside the town centre. The Sarn Service Area Tourist Information Centre adjacent to the M4 motorway also holds limited information.
- 3.69 Signage to the town centre is poor and interpretative information and signage within the centre is lacking.
- 3.70 There are no quality hotels with conference facilities within the centre although there may be demand for this type of facility to serve business visitors, as indicated in the Ogwr Tourism Study.
- 3.71 There are threats as well as opportunities associated with out of centre tourism schemes. A proposal for a multiplex cinema at The Pines limits the opportunities for a similar development in the town centre although signage and the provision of information at The Pines could result in linked trips to the town centre, perhaps utilizing a shuttle bus service.
- 3.72 The development and marketing of new tourist attractions near Bridgend, as identified in the Ogwr Tourism Study, could also result in linked trips to the centre.
- 3.73 Cultural activities have always contributed to the character and vitality of our towns, expressing what is particular to a place or its inhabitants through:
- its geographical location
 - its buildings
 - its traditions and stories
 - its local skills

- 3.74 Other towns in Wales have invested in cultural and leisure activities and as a result have now become recognised destinations for visitors:
- Llangollen - International Music Eisteddfod
 - Hay on Wye - bookshops & Literature Festival
 - Pwllheli - marina, sailing & chandlery
 - Brecon - Jazz Festival
- 3.75 What these examples show is that the success of a town is not solely dependant on its shopping and in fact its ability to trade and attract visitors may have more to do with its culture and character. While festivals and sports have a defined season, they have benefits way beyond their season through helping to sustain the local economy and by improving the wider public's perception of the town.

4 MOVEMENT IN THE TOWN CENTRE

- 4.1 Bridgend has a population of about 30,000 and straddles the A4063 and A4061 principal roads. Its commercial centre is located some 3km south of the M4 motorway. The A4063 to the west of Bridgend feeds into the Llynfi Valley, and the A4061 to the Ogmore Valley; both carry significant volumes of traffic. Limited crossing points of the River Ogmore and the main railway line means that much of the traffic moving between these two routes has to pass through the town centre. Congestion results both within the centre and on its approach roads and to ease this Mid Glamorgan County Council developed the BCVL scheme. Construction started in November 1995 and when it is completed through traffic will avoid the town centre. This will improve the environment and allow further enhancement measures to be introduced. It is on this basis that the Study has been commissioned.
- 4.2 Schemes for the town centre are to be developed whenever possible to allow for their phased introduction as sections of the BCVL are completed. It is therefore essential to appreciate not only current conditions within the town centre but also the future impact of the new road.
- 4.3 As stated above, traffic currently forced to pass through the centre generates congestion. The route used comprises the New Bridge across the River Ogmore and the one-way system formed by Market Street, Derwen Road, Wyndham Street and Dunraven Place. Delivery vehicles which unload, particularly on Market Street, impede the free movement of traffic. This has an immediate detrimental impact on the surrounding junctions and also affects bus services, the majority of which currently use Wyndham Street as a terminus.
- 4.4 The congestion at the river bridge is likely to encourage through traffic approaching from the south or west to use Nolton Street, entering the one way system at the war memorial before joining the A4061.
- 4.5 The main pedestrian routes to the town centre are identified on Figure 4.1, together with an indication of the percentage approaching along each route. This has been determined from pedestrian counts provided by Mid Glamorgan and supplemented with one hour counts undertaken by Arups. The predominant

movements occur at the junction of Merthyr Mawr Road and Nolton Street, the southern end of Quarella Road and Water Street at the river crossing.

- 4.6 Although carriageway widths are generally adequate for the current level of traffic, pedestrian footways are substandard varying between 1.5 and 2.0m in the town centre. The footway width along the southern end of Nolton Street is less than 1.5m, forcing pedestrians on occasions to use the carriageway which is only 5.5m wide at this area. The eastern end of Market Street has no footway on its southern side; pedestrians therefore have to cross the road to gain access directly to the business premises or walk in the carriageway.

Traffic Circulation

Base Traffic Levels

- 4.7 Traffic flow levels within the town centre both at present and, more particularly, following completion of the BCVL have been derived from a SATURN traffic model of Bridgend. This model was developed by Mid Glamorgan County Council to assist in analysis of the new major highway proposals.
- 4.8 The details of the model and of the test runs are given in Appendix F. They show heavy traffic flows currently passing through the town centre - 14000 and 7000 one-way daily traffic movements in Market Street and Wyndham Street respectively, and 16000 two-way in Nolton Street.
- 4.9 Following completion of the BCVL flows will be significantly reduced, according to the model, even without any other traffic control measures being taken, i.e. with the current traffic circulation pattern as shown on Figure 4.2. However, they are still considered to be at an unacceptably high level for a satisfactory town centre environment. For example, residual one-way daily traffic levels of 6000 and 5000 are predicted in Market Street and Wyndham Street respectively, and 10000 two-way in Nolton Street.

Deliveries

- 4.10 Delivery vehicles currently enjoy unrestricted access to the town centre apart from Adare Street, for which an all day restriction operates on Saturdays. In many areas deliveries take place on the street, and at locations such as Dunraven Place this can restrict the free flow of traffic. Service yards located adjacent to Elder Street serve a limited number of stores on Caroline and Adare Streets. The Rhiw centre has a basement service area which is accessed from The Rhiw. All delivery vehicles from this centre normally leave via Water Street and Angel Street, west of the town, though the current construction of the new river bridge means that temporary arrangements are in place. The service areas are indicated in Figure 4.2.

Taxis

- 4.11 Taxi ranks are located at various strategic locations around the town, providing a total of 26 spaces. They are indicated in Figure 4.2. A sample count at the War Memorial on Friday 11th November 1995 recorded a total of 126 taxi movements during the period 14.30 to 15.30. This would indicate a high turnover at the taxi ranks although it is suspected that some fares may also have been picked up on the street.
- 4.12 Discussions with both operators and licensing officers confirm a high number of hackney carriages operating in Bridgend - between 120 and 160. It has been a deliberate policy of the local authority to encourage hackney carriages rather than private hire vehicles, as they are readily recognisable and are able to pick up on street. In any case, under current legislation the number can only be limited with the benefit of an expensive survey of demand for taxi services.
- 4.13 The provision of special late evening ranks associated with nightclubs was suggested by the operators, but the licensing officers did not think this necessary in view of the ability to pick up on street. In addition the locations of prime demand frequently change as clubs are constantly starting up and closing down.
- 4.14 However, it was agreed by both operators and licensing officers that suitable locations for taxi ranks should be provided in conjunction with any new traffic

circulation arrangements. Current numbers of spaces and similar penetration of the town centre should be maintained if possible.

Public Transport

- 4.15 A number of bus operators run services to Bridgend, Brewers being the main one. Wyndham Street currently serves as a terminus following the demise of National Welsh which operated a bus station off Market Street. This site has recently been redeveloped and incorporates a small bus station, although it is not yet in use.
- 4.16 The distribution of the bus services are indicated on Figure 4.3. It can be seen that the dominant movement is to and from Coity Road. As buses currently have no option but to penetrate the town centre, they are inevitably subject to delays at peak periods because of the general level of congestion.
- 4.17 It is anticipated that the new bus station will be operational by the time the BCVL is completed. At this stage access will be available from the new road by means of a 'left-in/left-out' junction. This means that routes for buses to and from the north and west will be available without the need to enter the town centre, although this will entail longer journey lengths. The few services running to the south and east may still need to penetrate the centre where there are pick up and set down stops on Nolton Street.
- 4.18 The new bus station is in the same location as that used for buses over many years but it is by no means ideal. Although it is not central its position on the edge of the town centre could be acceptable as the town is not very large. However, it lies 300 metres from the railway station and so discourages convenient interchange between the two public transport modes.
- 4.19 The railway station serves not only Great Western (Intercity) trains between Paddington and Swansea via Cardiff, but also the recently reinstated local services between Maesteg and Cardiff. To encourage greater use of the services, and public transport in general, better interchange between train and bus is a desirable aim.

Cyclists

- 4.20 No specific provision is currently made for cyclists within Bridgend town centre and this mode of transport is seriously disadvantaged by the existing traffic conditions.
- 4.21 As part of the National Cycle Network strategy it is proposed that a subsidiary cycle route will broadly follow the route of the River Ogwr, crossing the BCVL by means of a 'toucan' crossing and skirting the town centre by way of Angel Street. It is intended that links be provided from this route into the town centre and to the railway station utilising both the new footbridge, which is to replace the Embassy Bridge as part of the BCVL scheme, and the replacement Angel Street Bridge.

Possible Enhancements

- 4.22 In view of the anticipated traffic conditions and irrespective of other aspects of environmental improvement, it was considered appropriate to examine ways of regulating traffic movement within the town centre. A shift of priority from cars to pedestrians is seen as a prerequisite for the development of social/cultural activity within the centre. The various options considered are described in detail in Appendix F. They include closure, except for servicing, of Adare Street, Queen Street and either Wyndham Street or Market Street. These closures would be in association with clockwise or anti-clockwise circulation around the central area and the possible closure of Nolton Street, near The Rhiw, to through movement.
- 4.23 A further option has also been considered which further restricts access to Caroline Street. This allows pedestrian domination during shopping hours and prevents the recirculation of vehicles searching for parking spaces within the centre.
- 4.24 Analysis of a selection of these options using the model shows a further reduction of flow levels within the town centre. However, it must be stressed that the current model was not designed for analysis at this level of detail and it is not really the most appropriate tool to use. The results therefore must be treated as only indicative and it is strongly recommended that a traffic survey of

the town centre is carried out following completion of the BCVL scheme to enable the effects of subsequent traffic measures to be fully assessed.

- 4.25 Bearing in mind the above, the model tests have been used together with professional judgement to formulate an appropriate traffic regime which would be compatible with other proposals for the town. This preferred option is shown on Figure 4.4.
- 4.26 Analysis of the critical junctions has also been carried out, as described in Appendix F, to ensure satisfactory functioning of the system.

Car Parking

Introduction

- 4.27 The town centre of Bridgend is served by both surface and multi-storey car parks located primarily to the south and east. In addition, temporary car parks on land acquired for the BCVL provided additional spaces to the north of the centre before the start of construction.
- 4.28 The private car parks belonging to Tesco, British Rail (Railtrack) and Kwik Save allow users to undertake visits to other locations in the town. However the British Rail car park has a pricing regime that discriminates against shoppers and the two foodstores have signing to indicate that the car parks are for customer use only. In addition we understand that Tesco hopes to install a new control system which will ensure that most of their car park users are customers, although they may still also visit other locations in the town centre.
- 4.29 The location and capacities of the off-street car parks are shown on Figure 4.5. It should be noted that the car parks at Quarella Road, Tondu Road, Morfa Street and Tremains Road are affected by the BCVL scheme with a consequent loss of approximately 200 spaces. Depending on location the public car parks are designated long and short stay and the current charging rates are shown in Table 4.1, though Orange Badge holders are allowed to park free.

Table 4.1
Car Parking Charging Policy

	Car Park	Designation	Charging Policy			
			Monday - Friday	Saturday		
1	Tremains Road	Short Stay	0 - 1 hour	40p		
2	Rhiw combined surface and multi-storey		1 - 3 hours	80p		
			3 - 4 hours	140p		
3	Brackla Street - surface		4 - 6 hours	270p		
4	Brackla multi-storey (short stay)		over 6 hours	400p		
5	Recreation Centre				0 - 1 hour	40p
6	Tondu Road	Long Stay			1 - 3 hours	80p
7	Tremains Road		before 1pm - 110p		over 3 hours	110p
8	Brackla multi-storey (long stay)		after 1pm - 70p			
9	Leisure Pool					
10	Bowls Hall					

- 4.30 A limited amount of on-street parking for a maximum of 30 minutes is provided on Adare Street, but as it is in the centre of the town demand is high and all 15 spaces are rapidly filled during normal shopping hours. A further 13 on-street parking places are available on Station Hill and Court Road although they are probably used mostly by visitors to the commercial premises in this area. On-street parking is also available on Merthyr Mawr Road, but these spaces are limited in number and remote from the centre.

Existing Car Parking Characteristics

4.31 Information on parking numbers and patterns has been derived from a number of sources:-

- Car Park Survey, 3rd November 1995
- Mid Glamorgan County Council data, October 1991
- Shoppers Survey, October 1995
- Survey of Disabled Parking, 11th November 1995

The 1991 County Council data was used to assist with interpretation of the 1995 survey information as the NCP car park on Quarella Road had just been closed at the time of the survey to allow construction of the new road.

4.32 The resulting information on car-park usage is shown on Figure 4.5. It can be seen that there is considerable variation, with those car parks located nearest the centre - namely the Rhiw multi-storey and Brackla Street surface car parks - having the greatest use. In addition it is apparent that surface parking is more popular than multi-storey parking with a particularly heavy demand for the Brackla Street site.

4.33 Interestingly, the results of the shoppers survey do not reflect the apparent popularity of the Brackla Street car park although interviews were held throughout the town centre. The survey did however confirm the relative popularity of the Rhiw multi-storey car park which was second only to Tesco's car park. As previously discussed the latter is a special case and indeed 60% of users shopped only within the Tesco store. The shoppers survey also confirmed that the Brackla multi-storey car parks primarily serve the Brackla Centre, with few users also visiting other locations in the town centre. This reflects their more remote location.

4.34 It can be seen from Figure 4.5 that reserved spaces are available in most off-street car parks for disabled drivers or passengers who hold Orange Badges. In the case of multi-storey car parks these spaces are located on the lower floors close to the entrances. A total of 42 reserved spaces is available in the public car parks near the town centre and it was observed that during the period of the survey most were occupied. In addition, registered disabled drivers are allowed to park on-street in limited waiting areas for up to 3 hours. The survey

undertaken on 11th November 1995, as summarised in Table 4.2, found a total of 76 Orange Badge holders parked on-street within the town centre. The streets most popular with disabled motorists were Caroline Street, The Rhiw, Cheapside and Angel Street.

Table 4.2
Record of Disabled Parking On-Street

Street Name	Number of Orange Badge Holders
New Bridge	2
Dunraven Place	2
Queen Street	4
Water Street	0
The Rhiw	9
Quarella Road	0
Market Street	6
Wyndham Street	6
Elder Street	3
Adare Street	6
Caroline Street	10
Derwen Road	3
Station Hill	0
Court Road	2
Nolton Street	1
Brackla Street	2
Cheapside	8
Merthyr Mawr Road	5
Free School Court	0
Angel Street	7
Cross Street	0
TOTAL IN TOWN CENTRE	76

Notes

1. Information based on a sample count between 13.00 - 14.00 on Friday 11 November 1995
2. No attempt has been made to ensure that the Orange Badges are being used legitimately

Parking Demand

- 4.35 The above information gives a background to the demand for car parking in Bridgend and suggests that, before work started on the BCVL, car parking supply more than met demand. For the purposes of future parking strategy, however, other indicators of demand have been examined to ensure the robustness of any recommendations.

- 4.36 The level of parking demand in a town centre can be influenced by various factors including car ownership, the number and mix of retail outlets, the dispersal of population and the level of public transport. However, as a guide, reference has been made to the 'Parking Guidelines' prepared by the Standing Conference on Regional Policy in South Wales, as revised in 1993. These relate parking provision to the gross floor area of the different categories of land use. The standards are only given for non-central locations, as town centre parking is assumed to be by public provision. The lower value in a given range has therefore been used to reflect the higher anticipated proportion of public transport and walk trips to a town centre destination.
- 4.37 A breakdown of the different categories within the town centre, as derived by GOAD, was discussed in Section 3 and is repeated in Table 4.3. This table also shows the appropriate parking standard adopted from Section 5.2 of 'Parking Guidelines' and the resulting spaces required.

Table 4.3
Parking Demand

Category	Gross Floor Area (m ²)	Parking Standard (m ² /parking space)	Parking Spaces Required
Food/Convenience	6900*	40	172
Comparison	30,000	40	750
Services etc.	13,700	40	340
Occupied Total	50,600	-	1260
Vacancies	4,300	40	108
Total	54,900	-	1368

* Excluding Tesco, Hyper Value and Kwik Save

- 4.38 In general the implied reduction in required spaces due to shared trips (ie. more than one shopping destination in the town centre) would be compensated for by the additional length of stay required. The number of available public car parking spaces before work started on the BCVL was 1440, of which 770 were in use during the recent survey. Whilst much higher occupancy would be

expected during the Christmas period the general conclusion is that the supply of off-street parking spaces at that time was sufficient.

- 4.39 It is also important to consider the appropriate location for the parking facilities. The surveys indicated that the multi-storey car parks on Cheapside were particularly under-used, and although this was no doubt largely due to their distance from the town centre it was also likely that their location to the south of the town was an important factor.
- 4.40 Using the matrix of zone to zone movements within the Bridgend Traffic Model developed by Mid Glamorgan County Council, a directional split of traffic approaching the town centre can be obtained. This analysis shows that the A473, A4061 and A4063 (north), all of which lead to the north and west of the town centre, contribute over 70% of the traffic. This contrasts with major car park capacity at present being located towards the south and east. In addition the Rhiw multi-storey car park, whilst situated to the south west, is at present only accessible from the south although completion of the BCVL will improve matters by opening it up from the west.
- 4.41 It is concluded, therefore, that the future total number of off-street car parking spaces should be of a similar order to that available before the BCVL works, i.e. the current shortfall of 200 spaces should be made up. Any new parking should be located to the north of the centre so as to be more convenient for the large proportion of traffic approaching from that direction.

5 DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF KEY SITES

Selecting Sites for the Development Appraisal

5.1 The development potential of the centre was examined through a review of :

- sites already identified for development in the Ogwr Local Plan
- sites where there was active developer interest
- areas on the fringe of the core retail area where there could potentially be scope for redevelopment and consequential enhancement of property values

5.2 Opportunities for retail development were limited. Redevelopment to the north of the core, between Market Street and Wyndham Street, was rejected for a number of reasons:

- fragmented ownership - a large number of private and institutional owners would need to be bought out
- the shape of the site and difficulties in accommodating large units with rear servicing suitable for occupation by multiple retailers
- the low levels of pedestrian flows, particularly to the eastern end of Market Street and the difficulties of attracting further pedestrian flows to this end of town. An anchor store would be necessary, or additional car parking, to uplift flows, and a suitable site for these facilities could not be identified

5.3 Other fringe areas - such as Dunraven Place and Derwen Road were rejected as potential retail redevelopment areas because of a combination of:

- the contribution to the historic townscape
- their relationship to the town centre and the difficult of integrating them into the core retail area

5.4 Only one area of the centre appeared to offer some scope for major additions to retail floorspace. This was to the south of The Rhiw around Nolton Street. Other areas of the centre, in particular the Market Street/Wyndham Street area

had potential for incremental upgrading of retail floorspace in association with environmental improvements.

- 5.5 Other sites, including sites identified in the Local Plan, located away from the core area were not considered suitable for retail development. Scope for other town centre uses were explored on these sites.

Development Appraisals

- 5.6 Four potential town centre development sites have thus been identified for preliminary commercial appraisal, as shown in Figure 5.1. These are:

- Elders Yard (mixed use)
- Nolton Street (retail use)
- BT Site (mixed use)
- Allotment Gardens (mixed use and car park)

- 5.7 The mixture of uses and scale of development has been derived from earlier research and an appreciation of the potential offered by each site. In conducting the preliminary appraisal a number of key assumptions were made regarding costs and values. In addition, an assessment was made of the development context in terms of land assembly and other factors which will impact on the extent to which the schemes can be realised.

Site 1 - Elders Yard

Development Context

- 5.8
- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Site Area | 24,750 sq.ft. (2,300m ²) excluding road |
| Floorspace proposed (gross) | 15,750 sq.ft. (1,450m ²) |
| Description | Strategic site within the retail core of the town centre. Surrounded by existing development on three sides, restricting the amount of new floorspace that could be provided |

Potential Use	Outdoor market stalls or eating places. Listed cottages suitable for a community facility (eg. a museum), speciality shops or high quality eating places.	
Key Assumptions	Land Acquisition	£ 250,000
	Rental	£ 10/sq.ft. retail/restaurant £ 6/sq.ft. office
	Yield	10% retail/restaurant 9% office
	Building Cost	£ 30/sq.ft. retail £ 45/sq.ft. office
	Developers Margin	15%

Development Potential

- 5.9 This site is currently in three separate ownerships, two private and one institutional and site assembly is likely to be problematic. Parts of the site have recently been acquired by developers who have their own ideas about the area and the institutional owner in particular has expressed strong reservations about the proposals. There are existing rights of way across the yard to commercial premises in Adare Street and Caroline Street and any development proposal affecting car parking and loading areas included in existing occupational leases are likely to give rise to compensation claims. In addition retailers in Caroline Street might be forced to close if rear access is lost.
- 5.10 Demand for retail space is likely to be from local operators only, rather than national multiples or speciality shopping. Office demand is generally low although there is possible demand for good quality space within the centre with car parking and flexible terms. Demand and returns on a leisure use, such as a museum, are not known but could enhance commercial development.
- 5.11 Notwithstanding difficulties in land acquisition, site assembly costs might be in the order of £ 200,000+, excluding compensation claims for loss of access.

Conclusion

- 5.12 Existing rights of access to the yard limit the area which could be developed without potentially costly compensation claims. In addition, in view of the listed buildings, this site lends itself to refurbishment. Consequently, comprehensive development is not practicable or realistically achievable. Any scheme would require public subsidy. Preliminary appraisal of a scheme based on refurbishment of the existing buildings for ground floor retail (A1 and A3) and first floor office use suggests a subsidy of £ 200,000+ (excluding external works and fitting out).

Site 2 - Nolton Street Area

Development Context

5.13

Site Area	84,770 sq.ft. (7,875m ²) excluding road										
Floorspace proposed (gross)	40,000 sq.ft. (6,500m ²) excluding Nolton Arcade and Co-op building										
Description	Located adjacent to core shopping area, The Rhiw Centre and Co-op Living store. Current high levels of pedestrian flows. Existing retail development proposals by key land owner. Redevelopment would require relocation of existing trading shops.										
Potential Use	11 retail units (including 20,000sq.ft. (1,860m ²) unit on two floors for variety/department store)										
Key Assumptions	<table> <tr> <td>Land Acquisition</td> <td>£ 2,000,000+</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rental</td> <td>£ 25/sq.ft. retail £ 5/sq.ft. department store</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Yield</td> <td>9% retail/restaurant 7% department store</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Building Cost</td> <td>£ 60/sq.ft. department store £ 40/sq.ft. retail</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developers Margin</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> </table>	Land Acquisition	£ 2,000,000+	Rental	£ 25/sq.ft. retail £ 5/sq.ft. department store	Yield	9% retail/restaurant 7% department store	Building Cost	£ 60/sq.ft. department store £ 40/sq.ft. retail	Developers Margin	15%
Land Acquisition	£ 2,000,000+										
Rental	£ 25/sq.ft. retail £ 5/sq.ft. department store										
Yield	9% retail/restaurant 7% department store										
Building Cost	£ 60/sq.ft. department store £ 40/sq.ft. retail										
Developers Margin	15%										

Development Potential

- 5.14 The site is in multiple ownership with numerous freehold and leasehold interests. Consequently land assembly for comprehensive development will probably require use of compulsory purchase powers. Site acquisition is complicated by existing profitable trading concerns on the site and site assembly costs (excluding the Co-op Living Store and Nolton Arcade) may be in the order of £ 2m+.
- 5.15 There is potential demand from a department store but there needs to be an appropriate package of incentives and this type of store is only likely to pay a low nominal rent. There is the potential to achieve prime pitch retail rents but this requires quality development combined with a suitable traffic management solution.

Conclusion

- 5.16 This site offers the opportunity to extend the retail core and attract a major department store retailer. The costs of land acquisition and existing trading concerns limit the scope for comprehensive site development. Given the complexity of ownership/leases on the site it is not possible to estimate the level of public sector subsidy needed to facilitate development. Smaller scale piecemeal development of separate parcels of land and refurbishment of the Co-op store provide a possible way ahead.
- 5.17 Even if the garage and adjoining retail units, together with those on Nolton Street, could be acquired for about £ 2m, preliminary appraisal suggests that the level of subsidy required may still be in the order of £ 500,000. With lower rents or higher yields this figure could increase significantly.

Site 3 - British Telecom Site

Development Context

5.18

Site Area	96,880 sq.ft. (9,000m ²) excluding road
Floorspace Proposed (gross)	
Description	Site in current use, by BT
Potential Use	Residential, offices, retail, entertainment/leisure, bus station (relocation)

Development Potential

5.19

The site is currently in three ownerships but there are complications in land assembly for development. The BT site provides an exchange centre and repair/maintenance centre. Relocation of the exchange would be costly. The engineering company on the remainder of the Brackla Street frontage is also a trading concern. Development of this site without the benefit of a pedestrian link from the site through to Court Road will require access across land currently outside the control of British Telecom. This is likely to result in claims from existing occupiers.

5.20

The location of the site, outside the commercial core and slightly remote from the town centre, does not lend itself to providing a logical extension to the prime retail facilities. Other uses (office, commercial or civic leisure) might be more appropriate but demand is low. There is demand for a site of up to three acres for commercial leisure such as bingo but the costs of relocating existing businesses mean such development is very unlikely to come forward without substantial public sector support.

Conclusion

5.21

There are major uncertainties about the availability and cost of acquiring the BT site. Relocation costs alone might be in the order of £ 2m but without a firmer figure it has not been possible to calculate the level of public subsidy needed to achieve development of this site. Were BT to be offered alternative premises elsewhere, or to move voluntarily, the costs of bringing this site into alternative

use are likely to be extremely high and would require strong public and political support.

Site 4 - Allotment Gardens

Development Context

5.22

Site Area	7 acres (2.8 ha)
Floorspace proposed (gross)	Social housing (50 units) Bingo (3.5 acres)
Description	Allotment gardens, council depot, workshops, multi-storey garage
Potential Use	Residential, leisure, community
Key Assumptions	Land Acquisition nil (No income from car park/allotments. Alternative site for depot. No relocation costs for workshops)
	Land Value £ 150,000 - £200,000/acre social housing £ 300,000/acre bingo

Development Potential

- 5.23 The site is owned by Bridgend County Borough Council and is in current use as allotment gardens, a council depot, workshops and a multi-storey car park. Because of the need to find alternative allotments, and the statutory procedures connected with allotment acquisition, development may be delayed.
- 5.24 Inclusion of the council depot and workshops (as set out in the Council's planning brief) and the adjacent multi-storey car park offers potential for a mixture of uses on the site comprising social housing, leisure and car park.
- 5.25 This edge of centre site appears particularly appropriate for social housing as opposed to general private housing and there may well, in any case, be difficulties in attracting a major private housebuilder to the site.

- 5.26 There is demand for leisure use in the town. Multi-screen cinema operators have shown a desire to locate on the edge or out of town and therefore the prospects for attracting an operator in town are limited. However, there is demand for bingo facilities.
- 5.27 The site also offers potential as a surface car park, complemented by part-time use as an open air market, if not prevented due to its proximity to the Market Hall. The former would solve a perceived car parking problem in the town centre and the latter would produce a short term income. Longer term development would also be facilitated by this interim use.

Conclusion

- 5.28 The site offers potential for short and longer term development. The existence of the multi-storey car parks and other surrounding uses may constrain development for housing, so the site may be better suited for commercial leisure use in the longer term. Relocation of the depot and workshops and demolition of the multi-storey car park would provide a much larger site which might lend itself to a wider range of uses as well as provide the opportunity to link into other environmental improvements proposed for the town centre.
- 5.29 As the land owner, the Council has a key role to play in bringing about development of the site. The feasibility of any development will depend very much on the Council's aspirations in terms of value and the cost of providing alternative allotments. This will also affect the timing of any development. Assuming minimal costs of site assembly, this site could be developed without additional subsidy although this will depend on the stance adopted by the council on its existing land assets.

6 FUTURE DIRECTION - KEY ELEMENTS

- 6.1 It is concluded that the town centre is struggling to achieve a higher quality of provision for the various facets of town life, and some are almost totally absent. Some parts of the centre are underused, due to perceived remoteness, with a consequent reduction in quality of environment which in its turn further dissuades use. Bridgend town centre is in a typical spiral of decline.
- 6.2 There is a need to revive a sense of pride in the town, to improve the environment for users and to thereby restore confidence and encourage investment. It is important to establish a coherence to the town centre, focused on features which are unique to the town, whilst at the same time allowing sufficient expansion to accommodate investment opportunities.
- 6.3 Two major keys to a strategy of improvement are seen to be the relationship of the town to its river (and in particular to the crossing point which inspired the town's name) and the removal of physical and visual barriers between parts of the town centre, which inhibit cohesion and expansion. These issues need to be addressed as a priority in conjunction with measures to redress the balance between pedestrians and vehicles and the encouragement of development of key sites.
- 6.4 In putting together the various elements of a future strategy a number of possible proposals were considered but rejected, as listed below:
- Culverting the river so as to remove the eyesore of the utilitarian flood protection walls. Concern about the appearance of the river and its effect on the town's image have been uppermost in the Study Team's mind. If no way of ameliorating the current appearance could be found, hiding sections of the river completely was seen as a possible solution. However, it is considered that worthwhile enhancements can in fact be achieved within the riverbed to significantly improve the appearance.

- Shopping development on the site of the allotment gardens. As this site is peripheral to the centre it is unlikely that expansion this far could be sustained and it might also draw investment and shoppers from the centre, to the detriment of the overall health of the town.
- Major redevelopment at the east end of Market Street and Wyndham Street. As described in Section 5, the fragmented nature of ownerships in this area and its location at the edge of the town centre make it an unlikely candidate for wholesale development.
- Major redevelopment, incorporating the listing buildings, in the Elders Yard area. Only limited development opportunities are envisaged due to the servicing needs of surrounding premises, as described in Section 5.
- Wholesale pedestrianisation of the town centre. It is considered that the needs of access, the disabled and taxis are better served by a hierarchical approach with only full pedestrianisation in a limited number of streets. This would also retain more 'life' within the centre.
- Complete closure to traffic of Nolton Street adjacent to The Rhiw. Whilst providing an ideal pedestrian link from the Rhiw Centre, and possible adjacent development, to the Brackla area, this is felt to result in an undesirable severance of the south of the town centre from the north.
- Comprehensive environmental improvement of the southern section of Nolton Street. Whilst desirable in principle it is considered difficult to achieve much of value due to the continuing needs of traffic and the narrowness of carriageway and footways. However, it could be reviewed following the implementation of improvements to Coychurch Road.

6.5 The possibility of retaining the BT buildings on Brackla Road was considered, in view of the high cost of acquisition. However, this was seen as so

detrimental to the achievement of the overall strategy that it was rejected. Redevelopment of this site has already been identified in the Local Plan and it therefore forms part of the recommended strategy.

- 6.6 The keys to a successful strategy for Bridgend Town Centre have thus been identified as the following elements.

The Resolution of the Town Centre

- 6.7 The diagram in Fig. 6.1 shows the overall strategy behind the proposed physical interventions into the fabric of the town.

- **MARK THE TOWN CENTRE**
The establishment of a legible edge to the town centre which embraces the River Ogmore
- **ENHANCE THE TOWN CENTRE**
The improvement of the existing streets and squares within the existing town centre
- **EXTEND THE TOWN CENTRE**
The expansion of the town centre to the south-east

The Future Concept

- 6.8 Fig. 6.2 shows the extent of the existing retail and commercial core together with its potential size following successful expansion into the Brackla Street area. The philosophy of providing new squares and pedestrian connections for the expanded centre is illustrated in Figure 6.3.

The Nine Sponsors of Bridgend

- 6.9 A principal objective of the proposed strategy is to clearly define the edge of the town centre and to mark the crossing points or thresholds which give access to the civic and commercial core. An opportunity arises here to celebrate the recolonisation of the town centre by its citizens in a manner unique to Bridgend.

- 6.10 Eight threshold sites have been selected where major pieces of civic architecture or sculpture can be erected as celebratory icons or 'sponsors' for the town. A ninth site completes the composition by placing a central icon in the new town gardens - the heart of Bridgend's reclaimed public realm. The location and identity of each sponsor is shown in Figure 6.4.
- 6.11 Each of the NINE SPONSORS OF BRIDGEND is an abstract character embodying idealised qualities. The ultimate meaning of the word *sponsor* is to *promise solemnly* and is therefore concerned with voluntarily binding relationships. In this instance, Bridgend can be a sponsor for its inhabitants while the citizens in turn may sponsor their hometown. The Nine Sponsors of Bridgend are a collective symbol of commitment to this ideal. They promote qualities which individuals bring to the town and which the town can inspire in its people.

The Sponsors are:

The Harbinger	Prophetic, Progressive, Persuasive. <i>The Old Bridge.</i>
The Carrier	Bearer of burdens, Helper through weakness. <i>The New Bridge.</i>
The Pilot	Guiding, Knowledgeable. <i>Quarella Road/Market Square.</i>
The Sentinel	Watchful, Protective. <i>Derwen Road Railway Bridge.</i>
The Dignitary	Welcoming, Dignified, Influential. <i>Station Square.</i>
The Warder	Responsible, Authoritative. <i>Brackla Street Bridge</i>
The Standard Bearer	Inspirational, Upholder of values. <i>Nolton Circus.</i>
The Mentor	Philosophical, Cultural, Wise. <i>Water Street Bridge.</i>
The Jester	Domestic fun but a teller of home-truths. <i>The Town Gardens.</i>

The Human Dimension

6.12 While there may be capital projects associated with cultural industries, the most important ingredient is the human potential of the community and its ability to play an active role in changing the town for the better. Increasingly, our towns and cities are turning to the arts as a means of harnessing that human potential for several reasons:

- Enhancing social cohesion
- Promoting interest in the local environment
- Improving local image
- Building private and public partnership
- Exploring identities
- Adopting visions for the future

6.13 Festivals and other cultural events can bring people together as has happened in Bradford and Nottingham with their multi-ethnic carnivals. Community theatre in Belfast has been instrumental in bringing both Catholic and Protestant communities together.

6.14 The regeneration of Bridgend town centre is a tangible aim but it must secure the support of local people. Economic regeneration is not an end in itself. People and the quality of the lives they will lead in the future must also be considered. If regeneration is carried out with local backing then it stands a good chance of being sustainable. Cosmetic solutions which are seen to come from external sources are often met with resentment or even hostility.

Identity and Distinctiveness

6.15 Bridgend lacks a coherent policy for the provision and co-ordination of cultural activities. The drafting and implementation of such a policy will be essential if the town is to establish a recognisable identity.

6.16 Identity is by definition a statement of uniqueness. The new cultural policy should help to draw out the distinguishing characteristics of Bridgend and should include proposals for public art as an interpretive tool to create a more tangible expression of identity.

- 6.17 The process through which art and architecture is commissioned needs to be an integral part of the planning process. Artists have unique skills in interpreting places and giving form to ideas. Their creativity should be harnessed in design collaborations with architects, landscape architects, planners and the public.
- 6.18 A comprehensive view must be taken of the art-forms which make up the cultural infrastructure. These will include drama, literature and music as well as the visual arts. Where opportunities arise, cultural initiatives may integrate with community, educational and even commercial activities
- 6.19 The identity of Bridgend needs to be examined but it is not necessarily a fixed entity. With proper planning it will be possible to draw on the more vivid aspects of the town's past or present, embracing, for example, the pub culture and youth cultures as an asset rather than an irritant.

7 RECOMMENDED STRATEGY

- 7.1 Our recommended strategy for Bridgend Town centre is illustrated in Figure 7.1. This draws together and enhances the key elements identified in the previous section.
- 7.2 The various aspects of the strategy are described in more detail in the following paragraphs.

New Development

- 7.3 The improvement of the town centre's prime retail facilities is key to strengthening the performance of Bridgend as a sub-regional centre, thereby reducing leakage to other centres and encouraging further development. Our analysis of current levels of demand has shown that there is interest from multiple retailers in the town centre if the right conditions are created. Also the survey has shown that an anchor store such as a variety store would be interested in a core area location.
- 7.4 Environmental improvements and the provision of property and sites of a sufficient size and quality are key to realising the retail potential of the centre. Given these considerations and constraints relating to the historic environment and built form the most suitable area for the expansion of the town centre's prime retail facilities is to the south-east of the Rhiw Centre (Site 2 - Nolton Street Area). Our initial assessment of the feasibility of undertaking development at Nolton Street has shown however that it is unlikely that development would proceed without public intervention and subsidy.
- 7.5 Development sites have also been assessed for Elders Yard, the British Telecom site to the north of Brackla Street and for the allotments to the south of Cheapside. These sites are similar but not identical to those identified in the Ogwr Borough Local Plan. The survey and market analysis has indicated that these sites are unlikely to be suitable for major retail development, although small scale retail development may be possible on some. We therefore recommend that other uses are considered for some of these sites that will bring other forms of benefits to the centre. These are listed below in order of priority,

with respect to criteria on commercial feasibility and benefits that development will bring to the centre.

- a. **Site 1 - Elders Yard.** The site is centrally located within the town centre with potential to provide an improved pedestrian link to other core areas. Development for small scale retail units, restaurants and offices and environmental improvements of the Yard would make a significant contribution to upgrading the town centre. Improvements and development are likely to require a subsidy (see Section 5), although the scale of this subsidy is likely to be relatively small, compared to other sites assessed.
- b. **Site 4 - Allotment Gardens and adjoining land.** This site should be relatively easy to bring forward given that it is all within Council ownership. The site is likely to offer potential for housing, leisure or community uses and a surface car park if the right type of environment is created. The relocation of the council depot and the workshops and the demolition of the multistorey car park would assist in creating this environment and would also provide the opportunity to link the site to other environmental improvements proposed for the town centre. Assuming minimal costs for site assembly and relocation of uses the site could be developed without additional subsidy.
- c. **Site 3 - British Telecom Site.** This site is ideally located for a mixed development scheme incorporating the environmental improvements recommended. There are though major uncertainties about the availability and cost of acquiring the site. Relocation costs for the BT building itself is likely to preclude development. Even if BT were to relocate voluntarily the site acquisition and development costs could be significant.

Vehicle and Pedestrian Movement

- 7.6 The preferred traffic regime discussed in Section 4, forms part of the recommended strategy and is incorporated in Figure 7.1. It is based on the philosophy of minimising traffic penetration of the town centre where practical

and appropriate, whilst retaining some access for servicing, disabled motorists, taxis and limited on-street parking. It is in any case considered desirable to retain a degree of vehicular penetration, particularly during non-working hours, to provide an element of life and vibrancy to areas that could otherwise appear deserted and uninviting.

- 7.7 The recommended circulation pattern is designed to minimise the attraction of town centre routes to through traffic movements. Hence, Derwen Road and part of Court Road are proposed to carry northbound traffic only, as such traffic can only turn left where it joins the BCVL; the more direct southbound movement is prohibited.
- 7.8 In addition, the proposals have been developed to keep junction conflicts to a minimum, particularly as the junctions tend to be areas of significant pedestrian movement.
- 7.9 The form of design is intended to discourage speed throughout the area and create a safer and more pleasant environment for pedestrians. The proposed philosophy is to ensure that the character of each street is appropriate to the role which it is playing, so that motorists and pedestrians can readily understand the situation. To achieve this, a hierarchy of four street types is proposed ranging from full vehicular access to complete prohibition. Typical cross-sections of each category are shown in Figures 7.2 to 7.5.
- 7.10 The 24-hour free-access streets (Figure 7.2) are, on the face of it, similar to conventional streets. However, the extensive lengths which are one-way have a restricted carriageway width of only 3m, with adjacent bays where appropriate, and raised platform areas occur at junctions and main pedestrian crossing locations. These features have the effect of dissuading unnecessary vehicular use and reducing speeds.
- 7.11 The limited free-access streets (Figure 7.3) are intended to be for pedestrians only during main shopping hours, but open to traffic during the evenings and on Sundays. The design concept therefore embodies clearly defined carriageways and footways, but with no vertical kerbs so as to facilitate pedestrian use. Again, the narrow carriageways and layout are introduced to inhibit speed.

- 7.12 The third category (Figure 7.4) represents the more conventional pedestrianised street with limited servicing hours and hence is continuously paved from wall to wall with no carriageway demarcation. The final category (Figure 7.5) applies to lengths of street where there is no vehicular access and in which a purely pedestrian environment can be created.
- 7.13 The recommended treatment of the streets in the town centre respects the concept of new squares and pedestrian connections heralded in Figure 6.3; the former are largely paved with subsidiary traffic routes through them in some cases, the latter utilise those streets given over predominantly to pedestrian use.
- 7.14 The recommended strategy also includes a crucial new pedestrian route between Caroline Street and the Brackla Street area, to complete the main spine. In addition there would be a subsidiary link, if it could be achieved, beside the National Westminster Bank in Adare Street through to Derwen Road.

On-Street Uses

- 7.15 Section 4 identified a demand for taxi facilities and on-street parking spaces for disabled motorists within the town centre. The recommended strategy provides a similar number of taxi spaces to existing, distributed around the town centre. In particular, the Elder Street rank is replaced by a facility on Dunraven Place (South) and the Adare Street rank by spaces on Market Street and Derwen Road. In addition, further facilities are provided on the new dedicated loop road around the 'Theatre'.
- 7.16 Similarly, provision for disabled motorists and on-street loading is made by means of dedicated bays distributed around the town centre highway network.
- 7.17 It is considered that the provision of some on-street parking spaces would be to the benefit of the town centre in allowing motorists intending only a short stay to conveniently park without charge. It is proposed that available spare carriageway width on Derwen Road be used for this purpose, with length of stay initially restricted to one hour. This period is perhaps long, bearing in mind the size of the town, and a shorter period (eg 30 minutes) could be considered if enforcement was practical. The use of Derwen Road for this purpose would

also help to bring some activity into this area and would be particularly attractive if the proposed pedestrian link to Adare Street could be achieved.

Public Transport

- 7.18 For the foreseeable future, buses will continue to utilise the existing new bus station and will be little affected by the proposed traffic measures; as noted in Section 4 the majority of routes will enter and leave the bus station by means of the BCVL. However, those few routes serving the south will be able to pass through the town using Derwen Road to reach the bus station and Market Street/Caroline Street on the way out.
- 7.19 In the long term, it is recommended that consideration be given to the possibility of a replacement bus station on part of the British Telecom site with access from Brackla Street. This site would have the dual advantages of providing good interchange with the adjacent railway station and being more central to the expanded town centre area.

Cycle Provision

- 7.20 As mentioned in Section 4, there are aspirations to provide a new cycle route along the west side of the River Ogwr with links into the town centre. In the view of the Study Team, the provision of both the route alongside the river and crossing via the footbridge would be very difficult to achieve with the present design of footbridge and ramps; apart from alignment issues the width between parapets is inadequate for shared pedestrian and cycle use.
- 7.21 It is proposed as part of the recommended strategy to provide sufficient width alongside the river to accommodate both cyclists and pedestrians. However, it is not considered appropriate to use the footbridge as a link into the town centre. It would be difficult to achieve without considerably increased width and would be contrary to its role as a recreational, as well as crossing, facility for pedestrians.

- 7.22 It is therefore proposed that the link into town should be by means of the new Angel Street Bridge (Water Street Bridge) and Queen Street. Cyclists can then safely use the highway network within the town centre, which will have only low traffic flows in a traffic-calmed environment.
- 7.23 Cycle parking racks should be provided as part of the environmental improvement works at appropriate locations in the town centre such as Caroline Street/Queen Street and, say, Wyndham Street/Derwen Road junctions.

Off-Street Parking

- 7.24 In Section 4 it was concluded that the future total number of off-street car parking spaces should be of a similar order to that available prior to the current BCVL works, ie some 1400 to 1500, which means the provision of some 200 additional spaces. However, a significant recommendation was that a larger proportion of available spaces should be located to the north of the town centre.
- 7.25 One factor which will be helpful in this respect is the future accessibility of the Rhiw multi-storey car park from Angel Street and hence the A4063. The recommended strategy proposes closure of the existing access route from Nolton Street.
- 7.26 Implementation of the recommended strategy would also result in the removal of the 126 surface car-parking spaces at Brackla Road so as to construct an integral part of the link between Cheapside and the rest of the town centre. On the one hand, the fact that there is better integration will result in more efficient use of the Brackla multi-storey car parks which will no longer appear so remote.
- 7.27 On the other hand, the removal of these spaces will reduce the oversupply of spaces to the south of the centre. However, replacement elsewhere will be required.
- 7.28 It is proposed therefore, as part of the recommended strategy, that consideration be given to the provision of some further car parking capacity on the north side of the town centre. This issue will be addressed further in a complementary parking study which considers the parking situation in more detail.

- 7.29 Before the permanent resolution of this issue a number of currently proposed temporary car parks north of the BCVL, most notably the old Brewery site which can accommodate nearly 200 spaces, will be of value, particularly as overspill during times of peak demand. In the longer term this Brewery site could perhaps be considered as a long-stay, commuter car park.
- 7.30 The existing pricing policy seems generally satisfactory, utilising as it does a progressive charging system for short-stay parking with appropriate levels in the more distant long-stay car parks. However, the conditions and layout of the multi-storey car parks should be improved, if the town centre is to become more attractive and we would suggest, therefore, that a greater proportion of the receipts should be used on the facilities.

Environmental Improvements

- 7.31 The objectives of investing in the public realm of the urban fabric are:
- To respond to the advantages of reduced traffic congestion
 - To reverse the trend of shopping away from the town centre
 - To re-establish a healthy balance between the “five facets of town life”
 - To establish the future viability of the centre by indicating its optimum size
 - To reclaim the town centre as a place of assembly by providing a robust and elegant public realm which embraces the River Ogmore
- 7.32 Improvements to the public realm of the town centre fall into three areas:
- EMBRACING THE RIVER - MARKING THE TOWN CENTRE**
STREETS AND SQUARES - ENHANCING THE TOWN CENTRE
THE TOWN GARDENS - EXTENDING THE TOWN CENTRE
- 7.33 All of these proposals are shown on the recommended strategy plan, Figure 7.1. Figures 7.6, 7.7 and 7.8 illustrate key parts of these environmental proposals.

Embracing the River

- 7.34 This requires bold contemporary civic architecture and engineering on a grand scale to enter the realm of the flood defences and the BCVL in order to mark the edge of the town centre and to celebrate the river as an intrinsic part of Bridgend.

The Old Bridge and the Harbinger

- 7.35 The Old Bridge is the most potent historical symbol of Bridgend and as such should be maintained as living history. To the western side there is a stone platform as a base for a tall column, The Harbinger, to announce the 'new' Bridgend. It is a persuasive symbol of prophecy and progress and is particularly prominent to those travelling on the BCVL. There are steps down into the river. This imagery of proclamation and baptism is most appropriate to a site once occupied by St John's Cottage.

The New Bridge

- 7.36 The most potent symbol of the revitalisation of the town centre. An elegant contemporary structure rises from Dunraven Place on the eastern bank and alights on a long platform at the western side. This structure is cantilevered from a massive stone wall at the elbow of the river. It affords views upstream and downstream and overlooks the BCVL towards the bottom of Newcastle Hill. There are substantial ramped and stepped abutments at each end. To through traffic on the BCVL this architecture is clearly legible as the riverside edge to the town centre. The design of the bridge is inspired by the idea of The Carrier, a St Christopher figure who is a bearer of burdens and a helper through weakness to strength.

The Grand Causeway and Ogwr Square

- 7.37 A civic celebration of the river. A causeway overlooking the river, raised above flood defence level, runs on the east side of Angel Street. A cantilevered structure widens this tree-lined promenade. Ogwr Square crosses Angel Street and promotes a formal setting to the council offices and provides a place for civic ceremony. A broad canopy further articulates this arrangement.

Water Street Bridge

- 7.38 The western threshold to the town centre. The abutments and parapets are enhanced to form a dignified bridge into the town, not least from the seat of local government. The imagery of the bridge is concerned with The Mentor, who signifies culture, philosophy and wisdom. The tree lined riverside promenade continues southwards towards Newbridge Fields.

The Angel

- 7.39 A threshold between the civic urban forms of the town centre edge and the domestic architecture of Newcastle Hill. A high wall creates an intimate square giving a shielded environment in which the public house and shops can flourish. A high beacon complements The Harbinger on the other side of the road and marks the continuing 'pilgrims route' between the Old Bridge and Newcastle Hill.

The Ogmore

- 7.40 A civic celebration of the river. The river bed is extensively articulated to give rise to weirs, pools and cascades. Access down to the water is provided for recreational purposes wherever possible. All the bridges and walkways are above flood defence level and afford dramatic, intriguing and relaxing views of the water.

Streets and Squares

- 7.41 The enhancement and animation of the network of spaces within the existing centre. The streets are refined and dignified in design as befits an important town. There is however an expression of the robust and exuberant character peculiar to Bridgend.

Dunraven Place

- 7.42 The civic heart of Bridgend. The ground plane is articulated to emphasise a long public gathering place. At the southern end, on a new dignified platform, is the cenotaph. The New Bridge rises from the north end.

Elders Yard

- 7.43 A market place. An intimate environment with small scale developments and an emphasis on bringing activity out into the street wherever possible. The square is essentially designed for pedestrians. It is a delightful 'discovery' in the pedestrian network through the town.

Market Square and Quarella Road

- 7.44 The northern threshold to the town centre. The bus station marks the edge of the centre and formally addresses the square as a place of arrival. The Pilot, who is guiding and knowledgeable, is associated with the square and is a symbol for successful and safe passage to and from the town.

Derwen Square and the Railway Bridge

- 7.45 The north-eastern threshold to the town centre. A minor circus marks the connection between the shopping streets and the continuous traffic of Derwen Road and Station Hill. The widened street is furnished with trees and benches to make a dignified setting for the adjacent buildings. This approach to the centre is symbolically monitored by The Sentinel, who is watchful and protective of the town.

Station Square

- 7.46 A place of arrival, departure and interchange. Countless precedents show the potential of this classic urban form. The design of the square is inspired by the notion of The Dignitary, who symbolises welcoming, diplomacy and influence.

Caroline Square

- 7.47 The geometric and circulatory hub of the proposed town centre. It is transformed into a predominantly pedestrian square through reduced carriageway widths and the remodelling of the land on the east side. The Tap is retained on a new plinth. Formal steps and terraces in front of the Cottage Hospital terminate the vista eastwards up Caroline Street.

Nolton Circus and The Rhiw Steps

- 7.48 A landmark at the southern approach to the town centre. A huge monument, The Standard Bearer, is visible from as far as southern Nolton Street, Brackla Street Bridge and the Derwen Road railway bridge. It symbolises inspiration and the upholding of values. Nolton Street leading northwards towards

Caroline Square is widened, allowing a broad boulevard enjoyable to pedestrians whilst maintaining two-way traffic. The steep eastern end of The Rhiw has become a grand flight of steps opening out onto Nolton Circus at the top.

The Town Streets

- 7.49 As already described, the grid of streets is redesigned to cater for an optimum balance of vehicles and pedestrians. Vehicular traffic is restricted enough to develop a more spacious and invigorating pedestrian environment whilst still allowing vehicles to circulate effectively. Vehicular penetration of the town is increased during non-working hours by opening some streets thus encouraging recreational and cultural activity within the centre. Consistent patterns of paving and furnishings render streets legible to pedestrian and motorist. A coherent system of signage and road markings make the streets safe and practical whilst not compromising the elegance of the streetscape. Trees, benches and other furnishings are introduced in quantity where appropriate.

Arcades, Passageways and Alleyways

- 7.50 The permeability of the town centre is further enhanced by making and upgrading connections wherever possible.

The Town Gardens

- 7.51 The public realm is confidently extended as a catalyst for the expansion of the town centre to its optimum size. A grand contemporary scheme constitutes a new 'quarter' to the town centre. It complements what Bridgend currently offers and provides balance and wholeness to the urban fabric and life in the town.

The Ramp

- 7.52 The symbolic connection between the current town centre and the new parts of the town centre. A grand pedestrian ramp rises from Caroline Square to the Town Gardens. It is a transition from the enclosure of the historic pattern of streets and squares below up to the contemporary grand civic gestures above. It also opens hitherto unseen views between Brackla Avenue and Caroline Square.

The Town Gardens

- 7.53 A place of grandeur, delight, novelty, recreation and relaxation. This is the major *grand project* of these proposals. An avenue of large trees encircles and defines The Gardens from the top of The Ramp to the Brackla car parks. The gardens are inhabited by The Theatre, the police station and The Pavilion. Each animates, provides stewardship for and gives purpose to the gardens in its own way. The adjacent existing buildings have their prospects transformed. Redevelopment and new building around the park will enjoy a dignified and high profile setting. One layer of symbolism in the design of the gardens is provided by The Jester, who is not only a source of regal fun but also a teller of home-truths.

The Theatre

- 7.54 A place of cultural expression. This is a sizable and dramatically laid out public square capable of holding large gatherings and performances. It is the only completely new place of public assembly within the centre. This is where Bridgend will express its culture and its confidence, both in the provision of the square and the activities within it.

The Pavilion

- 7.55 A building within the gardens. Its varied uses will promote the social, recreational and cultural life of the town.

Brackla Bridge and Brackla Avenue

- 7.56 A formal *allee* entering the town centre from the east. Broad pavements allowing a generous avenue of large trees and formally laid out street furniture stretching from Tremains Road down to Nolton Circus, passing through the Town Gardens. The parapets and abutments of Brackla Street Bridge are remodelled to signify passage to and from the town centre. The redesign of the bridge is concerned with the idea of The Warder who symbolises responsibility and authority.

A Cultural Strategy

- 7.57 In the interim report we identified general opportunities for public art within the central core of Bridgend as well as describing the need for cultural activity to bring a diversity of social life and vitality back to the town. At that time

problems appeared to be most easily solved by the creation of a venue to house cultural activity throughout the day and night. This proposal remains valid. However, in order to be sustainable and to fully answer the needs of Bridgend, it must be supported by sound policy ideas which can form the foundation of a cultural policy for Bridgend as a whole.

7.58 The real opportunity in Bridgend is to bring about a new sense of citizenship through cultural activity. A review of arts development activities in Ogwr published in 1995 identified a host of successful arts activities within the County Borough, embracing the visual arts, theatre, music, street entertainment, craft work, literature and public art, many of which have an element of active participation. At present these activities are centred in a variety of buildings and locations but exclude the centre of Bridgend. Contrary to local belief, the area is not culturally devoid of life; however, there is a need to focus some of the existing cultural activities within the town centre.

7.59 While we would have no hesitation in proposing a specific venue-based cultural facility, that proposal would not in itself provide the whole solution. A recognition is needed at policy level by the new Bridgend Authority that cultural activity is an essential element of a successful and vital town.

7.60 The development of a cultural policy would provide the framework for assessing the need/demand for cultural activity, along with administrative resources to ensure that it happens. A cultural policy for Bridgend would include an examination of:

- its artistic or archaeological history
- its built form and architectural heritage
- its landscape and landmarks
- its public space
- its indigenous and recent ethnic traditions
- its local products and services
- its literary, musical and performing arts
- its leisure, sport and entertainments
- its sub-culture
- its civic traditions, festivals and rituals

The Role of Town Centre Management

7.66 Our discussions with retailers, the Chamber of Trade, the Town Council and The Civic Trust has shown that there is support for better management of the centre. Town Centre management can take a variety of forms and can be financed in a number of ways - for instance:

- An officer can be appointed from within the local authority who would be responsible for management issues
- A working group can be established
- A manager can be appointed - solely responsible for Bridgend or alternatively for a number of centres in the vicinity. The position could be funded by contributions from the private sector and from the local authority.

7.67 With respect to Bridgend, management could address a number of issues including:

- Liaison with community groups and the police
- Liaison with retailers, other business interests and the Chamber of Trade
- Liaison between departments within the local authority, including leisure services, Highways and Environmental Health
- Production of promotional and marketing material including guides and maps
- Co-ordination of development initiatives and provision and maintenance of services - to ensure that disturbance to retailers and shoppers is minimised
- Consultation and fund raising for initiatives, including CCTV, street furniture etc

- Co-ordination of street cleaning and policing of fly-posting
- Co-ordination of events, including seasonal promotions and street theatre.

7.68 We recommend that serious consideration is given to town centre management for Bridgend. Initial discussions could take place with The Association of Town Centre Managers and with key retailers, such as Boots, who are active in the promotion of such initiatives. The form of management and the resources available from the local authority and from private sector could then be gauged through further discussions with retailers and other town centre interests.

8 IMPLEMENTATION

Planning Policy Issues

8.1 Ogwr Borough Local Plan was adopted in April 1995 and the new unitary authority will be updating this plan in due course to cover the period up to 2011. Meanwhile some issues can be addressed through the preparation of planning and design briefs. The following key planning issues have been identified during the study:

- The need to identify a site which can realistically be taken forward, probably through partnership arrangements, for retail development and extension to the core shopping area. The Nolton Street site identified in this report could fulfill this role. A focused planning brief for this area should be prepared in advance of submission of a planning application.
- The need to have firm policy to resist further out of centre development which could threaten the vitality and viability of the centre and deter future investment. The retail impact of proposals, such as the 200,000 sq ft retail and leisure development including cinemas, shopping village and restaurants at Pencoed, will need to be assessed. The cumulative impact of several out of centre schemes will also need to be considered as this could potentially have a devastating impact on the centre and prejudice the development of additional retail floorspace in the town centre.
- The need to ensure that a distinction is made in policy terms between different areas of the centre. Mixed development schemes including residential and leisure uses may be more appropriate in more peripheral areas of the town, such as the allotment gardens.
- Consider the scope of policy directed towards improving and extending the range of leisure and cultural facilities in the town centre

- Consider the scope of policy to encourage living above the shop schemes.

Phasing

8.2 Four major factors will influence the implementation of the recommended strategy:-

- The BCVL contract
- The relationship between the various components
- Land assembly
- The availability of finance.

8.3 In particular the traffic management measures and subsequent highway treatments will of necessity have to await the removal of through traffic by the new road. Conversely, the alternative footbridge proposals would ideally be carried out as part of the current highway contract, procedures permitting (see Appendix I).

8.4 Figure 8.1 indicates a possible phasing programme for the proposed works which are broken down into discrete elements. A firm timescale has purposely been omitted from the diagram to reflect the uncertainty about availability of funding. However, the proposed phasing reflects the need for initial traffic orders and traffic management measures, prior to physical improvements, and incorporates the recommendation that a traffic monitoring study be carried out once the BCVL is open. It also acknowledges, by the use of broken lines, the uncertainty surrounding the proposals requiring land acquisition.

8.5 At this stage the suggested phasing is only intended to be indicative of the way in which the strategy could be carried out. Actual implementation, assuming approval of the strategy, would have to be refined by more detailed investigation and development of the individual components.

Indicative Costs

- 8.6 Preliminary cost estimates have been derived for the various acquisitions and public realm works included in the recommended strategy. These are shown in Table 8.1 and are necessarily only 'broad-brush' indicators of likely cost at this stage. It can be seen that capital works costs are considered to be in the order of £7-8m with the funding gap in respect of the development sites a further £3m plus.

Table 8.1
Cost of Proposals (£m)

Description	Public Subsidy	Construction Cost
New Bridge and North Dunraven Place		0.7*
The Harbinger and Platform, Grand Causeway		1.5
The Angel, Area north of Council Offices, Water Street Bridge		1.0
Introduce new Traffic Management Proposals in town including Essential Minor Civil Works		0.03
River Works		0.7
Improvements to roads that are closed to traffic - Adare St., Market St., Wyndham St., Elder St., Cross St and The Rhiw		1.4
Acquire Living Store (Site No.2)	0.5	-
Caroline Square within highway, Brackla Street/ Nolton Street		0.25
Upgrade all outstanding roads in town		0.75
Acquire B.T. site and adjacent works (Site No.3)	2.0+	-
Modify Brackla Street, close Cheapside		0.25
Acquire Elder Yard (Site No.1) and develop	0.2+	-
Develop Theatre, link to Theatre, Brackla Street and complete Town Gardens		0.75
Acquire and develop allotment gardens (site No.4)	-	
Coychurch Road improvements (to remove traffic from Nolton Street and Brackla Road)		Not costed
TOTALS	2.7+	7.33

* If not included as part of BCVL contract, zero if included

Financing the Strategy

- 8.7 There are various possible sources of public finance for improvements in the town centre, some of which are described below:
- 8.8 **Strategic Development Scheme Grants.** These provide support for projects which promote economic development, environmental and social development and which benefit areas of social need. They are of particular assistance to local authorities for major capital projects which are part of an overall strategy for a specific area, such as a town centre. The scheme should ideally attract significant private sector involvement to add value to the public sector investment.
- 8.9 **European Regional Development Fund.** Bridgend is within an 'Objective 2' area and hence is eligible for funding to support capital projects leading to the creation or protection of permanent jobs or for investment in infrastructure. These include improvements in transport links, tourism projects, site provision and environmental improvements. The maximum rate of structural funding intervention in Objective 2 areas is 50% of the total project cost. ERDF is administered through the Welsh Office.
- 8.10 **Welsh Development Agency.** In recent years the WDA has provided funds for specific town centre development and renewal schemes, often carried out in co-operation with local authorities.
- 8.11 **Other Sources.** The Wales Tourist Board provides grants for visitor facilities and other tourist projects. Grants will also be available from Cadw for improvements to historic buildings and monuments and historic buildings at risk. In addition, contribution towards improvements related to the river may be available from the Environment Agency (formerly National Rivers Authority).
- 8.12 The issue of funding is addressed in greater detail in a complementary funding report.