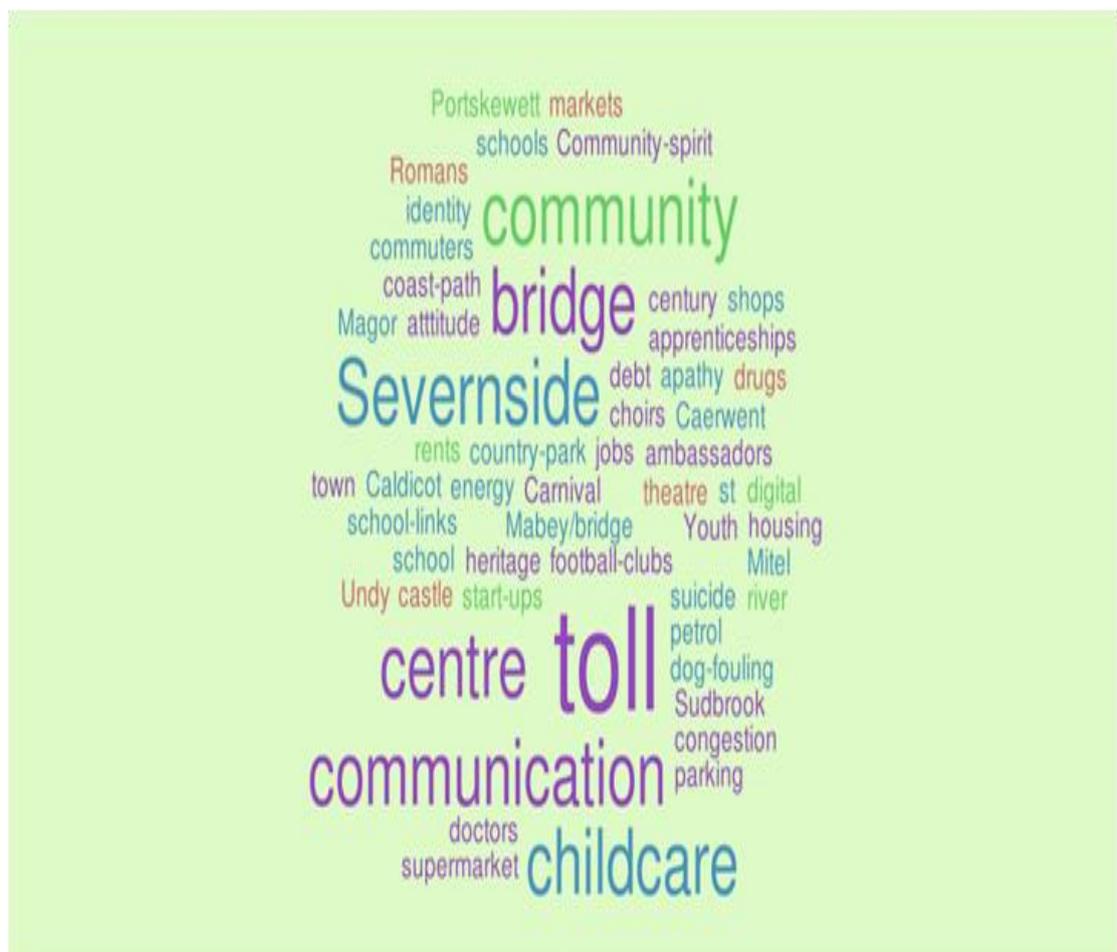


Seven for Severnside

The Plan for a Better Severnside



Consultation Draft – October 2012

Navigant Consulting

Introduction

Monmouthshire County Council is changing. Under the banner 'Your County, Your Way' the Council has embarked on a journey of cultural and organisational change to enable it to respond creatively to the needs and aspirations of the communities of Monmouthshire.

As part of this process, the Council aims to create opportunities that empower local communities to shape and enhance their future prospects, supported by the council but with residents, community organisations and the business community taking the opportunity and responsibility to themselves in order to realise their shared aspirations and ambitions for their area.

To support this, earlier this year, the Council commissioned Navigant Consulting to undertake the development of a 'Plan for Severnside'. At the heart of this approach is a recognition that plans, projects and programmes are too often dealt with in isolation. Instead, an integrated approach is needed which draws on the priorities and concerns of the local community and brings together a range of initiatives to address these.

The aim of the 'Plan' is to provide a route map of clear projects and interventions that, together, can make a significant contribution to making a Severnside a better place for those who live, work and come to the area. The 'Plan' is not a statement of lofty ambitions but is focussed on getting things done with the community and its representatives, and is about the partnerships and practical steps needed.

This document, then, sets out the proposed priority interventions for Severnside. Together this programme of interventions would make a significant contribution to the economic, social and environmental performance and progress of Severnside and the quality of life of its communities.

These interventions draw from and build on current programmes and projects that are proposed or underway in Severnside. It identifies how these may be enhanced to ensure their greatest potential is realised, and how they may support and reinforce each other.

The intention of the Plan is not to seek to capture all the different initiatives that can and will play a part in the area's progress over coming years but instead to deliberately focus on those areas and on the initiatives that have the greatest potential to bring about positive change and to act as a catalyst for greater benefits in the future.

Development of the plan followed extensive consultation with community groups, residents, town and community councils, and local businesses. Your views and comments at this stage will help finalise proposals before they are considered by the County Council.

Seven for Severnside

This section provides a summary of each of the seven priority interventions: That is the projects, programmes and actions that are planned to make an important difference to Severnside.

More detailed information about each of the interventions is provided later in the document.

The Seven priority interventions are:



Severnside Community Campus

- A new campus in Caldicot for secondary education, lifelong learning, community facilities and services



Caldicot Town Centre Regeneration

- Integration of the new Superstore and a Partnership to revive the Town Centre



Welcome to Severnside

- Capitalise on Severnside's position as a Gateway to Wales and on its environmental and heritage assets



Better Homes in Severnside

- Estate regeneration , environmental improvement and estate remodelling



Enterprising Severnside

- Building on the area's economic strengths and creating the conditions for new enterprise



Strategic Opportunities in Severnside

- Assuring sustainable development of key strategic sites in the area



Making it Happen

- Partnership Structures and approach to deliver the plan

Sevenside Community Campus

To aspire to create a Community Campus for Sevenside that provides facilities for secondary and lifelong education, public and community services and a hub for community and leisure activities

Purpose	<p>A Sevenside Community Campus has the potential to serve as a focal point for the community life of Caldicot and Sevenside, providing spaces for learning, personal and community development and engagement. Schools, and in particular secondary schools, are at the heart of communities and the Campus will build on this, extending engagement and access to the wider community in Sevenside.</p> <p>The aim is to provide the extensive facilities for the Sevenside and to provide improved and more efficient services for the community. The Campus will be located close to Caldicot town centre, and will be an important element in its wider revitalisation.</p>
Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redeveloped secondary educational provision • Provision for lifelong learning • A community facilities hub • One-stop customer access for range of public and community services • Business Incubation and Enterprise • Commercial provision, lettings and income maximisation • Leisure services integration
Linkages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Campus will be located close to the new Superstore and has the potential to support the Town Centre's Regeneration, through public realm improvements, and renewable energy integration • There are links to the Enterprising Sevenside theme through the curriculum, lifelong learning and business incubation services • The integration of services within the Campus will support cross-departmental service delivery and access.
Delivery	<p>A dedicated Project Board will be established, including school and community representation, supported by the County Council's 21st Century schools team. There may potential in the medium-term for a community social enterprise to be established. The new Campus could be established in 2016.</p>

Regenerating Caldicot Town Centre

To revitalise Caldicot Town Centre and integrate it with the new Superstore to maximise retail, economic and regeneration benefits, and to establish a Town Centre Partnership

Purpose

Caldicot and Severnside need a revitalised and thriving Town Centre that provides an attractive and popular focus for shopping, amenities and services for residents of the Severnside area.

The provision of a new supermarket will bring additional visitors and retail activity to Caldicot and could act as a catalyst for the area's regeneration. This will depend on its successful integration with the town centre, but also an overall plan for the enhancement and functioning of the existing centre. This plan needs to provide for environmental upgrading, improved pedestrian linkages, a strengthening of the existing retail offer, and arrangements for a partnership to promote the centre and lead the realisation of its potential.

Elements

- A Town Centre Regeneration Plan
- Superstore Integration and pedestrian linkages
- Complementary supermarket and town centre offers
- Protocol for use of vacant retail units
- Environmental improvements
- A Town Centre Partnership

Linkages

- The Town Centre Partnership will link to the arrangements for Making it Happen.
- The Campus and its range of facilities could together bring more visitors and greater activities to the town centre.

Delivery

The County Council will be initially responsible for the establishment of the Town Centre Partnership.

A Regeneration Framework and Action Plan will be put in place by early 2013.

Welcome to Severnside

To maximise the benefits of Severnside's strategic position as the entry point to Monmouthshire and Wales by fully utilising its heritage and environment assets, improving the visitor offer and stimulating tourism service business and job creation

Purpose	<p>The delivery of a complementary set of activities to support the growth of the tourism sector in the local economy, which in turn support business development and job creation. This could develop a greater sense of pride and identity in local places and improved services for residents and visitors alike.</p> <p>Severnside is uniquely positioned to benefit from the place advantage it enjoys as the first and last landfall for visitors to Wales arriving and leaving via the Second Severn Crossing. The development of a Destination Plan for Monmouthshire, the opening of the Wales Coast Path, plans to develop Caldicot Castle and Country Park and improved awareness of local heritage and environment opportunities will put Severnside on the map of local, regional and national tourism attractions.</p>
Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Caldicot Castle and Country Park linked to wider heritage offer in surrounding settlements • Opening of and linkage to the Wales Coast path • Landmark/arrival structure near Magor encouraging short-stay traffic in the local area • Development of motorway services offer at Magor • Targeted business development support to visitor-orientated business growth including provision of better marketing information • Festival of the Coast
Linkages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To Enterprising Severnside through business and economic development.
Delivery	<p>Project development is underway and is being led by the Countryside, Regeneration and Tourism/Enterprise department of the County Council.</p>

Better Homes in Severnside

Estate regeneration and targeted redevelopment to provide quality homes in an improved environment in Caldicot

Purpose

To revitalise the residential estate to the north of Caldicot.

To invest in and improve the environment and to investigate opportunities for remodelling to improve the sustainability and mix of housing. These physical interventions will be allied to a programme of community involvement and socio-economic measures.

Elements

- Comprehensive regeneration plan for north Caldicot residential area
- Community Engagement
- Environmental Improvements
- Socio-economic Interventions
- Potential for estate remodelling to provide sustainable housing

Linkages

- Links through employment and training opportunities to Enterprising Severnside and to the Severnside Community Campus

Delivery

A Partnership project between the County Council, Town Council and Monmouthshire Housing Association (MHA), in consultation with the local community

Enterprising Severnside

To build on the diverse economic base of Severnside and create the conditions for further new enterprise to flourish in key sectors including in the green and digital industries

Purpose	<p>To strengthen the economy of Severnside, building on existing economic strengths, diversifying the local economy and increasing employment opportunities within the area.</p> <p>To establish the conditions that will encourage greater enterprise and to support the development of a strengthened enterprise culture amongst the Severnside population. To support the creation of a chain of opportunities for employment and training, creativity and innovation, business start-up and growth and inward investment.</p> <p>To position Severnside’s economy so that it is able to positively respond to the challenging and changing economic conditions it will face, enabling the area to realise locally the ambitious visions set out in the County’s Digital and Green Deal frameworks.</p>
Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local supply chain development in key sectors • Supporting infrastructure development for high-quality broadband and flexible accommodation options • Pre incubation and move on incubation support for new businesses • A Youth and Community enterprise culture change programme
Linkages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the Severnside Community Campus, including the enterprise curriculum and business incubation • To Town Centre Regeneration and new business opportunities • To the Strategic Opportunity sites and their economic and employment potential
Delivery	<p>Implementation to be led by Monmouthshire Enterprise, and the County Council’s Community Interest Company, CMC²</p>

Strategic Opportunities in Severnside

To develop a holistic view of the potential contribution of the future development of two strategic sites in Severnside in responding to evidenced community needs

Purpose	<p>To undertake a comprehensive and inclusive process to develop plans for the two largest strategic development sites in the areas at Crick Road and Rockfield Farm.</p> <p>To ensure, through this process, that their development addresses wider community needs and priorities and that the development of these sites contributes to the quality of life of residents in the area. The approach will include assessment of the costs and benefits of different development approaches and outcomes.</p>
Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing composition and nature/character of development • Appropriate economic and employment uses • Mixed use master planning taking account of site contexts in relation to neighbouring community impact and evidenced needs • Cost /benefit analysis of sustainable development options • Strategic site development and delivery
Linkages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To Enterprising Severnside, with the potential to provide economic and employment benefits • To Better Homes for Severnside through the provision of new mixed-tenure homes on these sites
Delivery	<p>To be delivered by the County Council’s Corporate Estates Team, leading a process of community consultation and engagement.</p>

Making a Better Severnside

To establish arrangements for the ownership and delivery of the 'Plan for a Better Severnside' that provides for community involvement, partnership governance and commitment, an enhanced capacity for cross-departmental working at an area level, and a delivery agent for the plan

Purpose	<p>To establish arrangements that will assure the delivery of the Plan and the priority interventions within it.</p> <p>Overall ownership of the plan and responsibility for its delivery, and over time its review and revision, will rest with a Partnership Programme Board. This will bring together political and community representatives and key stakeholders in Severnside and in relation to the priority interventions.</p> <p>To develop cross-service and cross-organisational working arrangements, and a supporting culture to provide for locally tailored arrangements and improved service delivery.</p> <p>To establish a delivery agency within CMC² to provide coordination and capacity for the plan's realisation.</p>
Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership Programme Board • Integrated Service and Project Delivery - Reintroduction of area working as a corporate approach, learning from previous experience • Deployment of Communities First principles as part of mainstreaming learning from N.Abergavenny • Implementation agent - Severnside Sustainable Development agency, within CMC2
Linkages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To all the coordination and delivery of all the proposed interventions
Delivery	<p>The County Council will build from the existing Severnside Regeneration Board to establish the Partnership Programme Board, who will be responsible for putting in place arrangements for cross-service delivery and the plan's implementation</p>

PUTTING THE PLAN INTO ACTION

The table below sets out the main initial stages for the seven priority areas. This will be developed further by the lead delivery agents and by the Partnership Board. More details about the approach to delivery and the lead parties responsible for each area are set out in the relevant section.

Priority	2012	2013/1 st half	2013 / 2 nd half	2014/1 st	2014/2 nd	2015
Community Campus	Feasibility Study	Design and Procurement	Design and Procurement		Construction	Construction and completion (2016)
Town Centre Regeneration	Initiate Town Centre Partnership	Develop Regeneration Plan	Begin Plan implementation	Public Realm Improvements	Town Centre Promotion	Supermarket Opens
Welcome to Severnside	Destination Plan and Team established	Integrated action plan				
Better Homes in Severnside	Initiate community engagement	Estate studies and Regeneration Plan developed		Environmental improvements and socio-economic interventions		
Enterprising Severnside	Establish Team	Develop action plan	Implementation			
Strategic Opportunities		Set vision and consultation process	Commence Consultation	Develop Options	Design development	Planning
Making it Happen	Develop arrangements	Board and delivery arrangements	Manage strategic delivery			

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

A number of consultation questions are set out below. If you would like to respond to some or all of these questions or if you would like to make any other comments on this draft Plan please complete the Consultation Form which you will find on the website.

Your views, comments and ideas are of great value and will be considered carefully in finalising the Plan for a Better Severnside.

Q What are your views on the Priorities set out and the proposals for the Delivery of the Plan?

The Interventions

- What do you think of the seven priorities for Severnside?
- How do you think they will make a contribution to addressing the key issues for the area?
- Are there other priorities that need to be addressed?
- What do you think these are and why are they important?

Delivering the Plan

- What do you think the coordination of the overall plan and its delivery - eg. Partnership Board?
- Who do you think should be on that Board - Council and Community Representatives, the Business Community? Any others?
- Have you any comment on the outline programme?
- Have you any suggestions that might help to ensure the plan is successfully delivered?

Q What are your views and comments on the specific Priority Interventions?

A few specific questions are asked below but you are welcome to make any comment you wish – in particular how do you think the proposed interventions could be made most effective?

Sevenside Community Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Which are the most important facilities and services for the campus to provide?
Town Centre Regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What more could be done than is suggested to create a thriving town centre? What else is needed?
Welcome to Sevenside	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What else could be done to attract visitors to the Sevenside area?
Better Homes in Sevenside	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What other housing issues need to be addressed in Sevenside?
Enterprising Sevenside	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What else could be done to support enterprise and business growth?
Strategic Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do you think the community should be involved in developing plans for these sites?

Q Have you any other comments or suggestions to improve the plan for a better Sevenside?

Please complete the response form online or download the form and send your comments to:

Sevenside Community Campus

Project Definition / Objective

To aspire to provide a Community Campus for Sevenside that provides facilities for secondary and lifelong education, public and community services and a hub for community and leisure activities for the area.

Purpose

A Sevenside Community Campus has the potential to serve as a focal point for the community life of Caldicot and Sevenside, providing spaces for learning, personal and community development and engagement. Schools, and in particular secondary schools, are at the heart of communities, through their engagement with young people and their parents. The Campus will build on this, extending engagement and access to the wider community in Sevenside. The project will not affect the timing of planned central improvements to secondary school facilities but will aspire to build on these for the wider benefit of Sevenside.

The co-location and integration of a range of services will enable the provision of a greater range and scale of facilities for use by the community of Sevenside. It will also provide efficiencies in service delivery, through for example shared customer access and shared premises management. The Campus will be located close to the town centre, and will be an important element in its wider revitalisation.

Context

Caldicot Secondary School is scheduled for redevelopment as part of the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools Programme.

The current school is located very close to the town centre and also close to the Caldicot Leisure Centre which provides sports facilities to the school as well as to the wider community. The school premises are not in good condition, with the technology block in poor condition and revenue funding for maintenance is limited with expenditure limited to health and safety matters.

The school site includes extensive playing fields and cricket pitches. Part of the playing-fields along Woodstock Road is to be sold for redevelopment as a Superstore. The school is well-regarded and was assessed as good with many outstanding features when last inspected in 2007/8 but the more recent Welsh Government assessment placed the school in band 5 which in part reflects the level of deprivation for some of its intake area.



Figure: Plan of existing Caldicot School site

Project Description

The project is to establish a Community Campus in Caldicot on the existing school site which co-locates and integrates a range of educational and community facilities and services for the Severnside area.

Renewed provision for secondary school education in a state-of-the-art setting is the central purpose of the new campus, but the aim will be to extend the range of facilities and services provided and to maximise access for Severnside residents to these.

It is intended that the range of accommodation and facilities provided will be available to provide for lifelong learning through adult education services and self-directed learning. This could include access to ICT suites, craft workshops facilities, assembly and meeting rooms, and other facilities. etc.

Business incubation and start-up services could also be provided, to promote the theme of enterprise and its links to education and community activity. The provision of a crèche within the Campus and a café could be explored. These facilities could provide additional vocational opportunities and help raise educational achievement by pupils.

Community access for leisure, cultural and other activities will be central to the role and function of the new Campus. This will include access for voluntary sector organisations, community groups and individuals. It could also include the commercial letting of facilities to generate revenue. There are limited places available for members of the community to gather or congregate and the potential provision of a larger assembly hall for large community events, and potentially to serve as a theatre and cinema should be explored.

The role of the campus could be further enhanced by the integration of other public services and the Authority is actively looking into these options to include both internal and externally provided facilities. The potential to integrate Monmouthshire County Council's One-stop shop will be explored, to provide a single access point for information about a range of services. There may be potential to re-provide the town's library within a new library facility accessible to both the school and the wider community. The role of the Campus would be further enhanced by the integration of other public services. Youth services could potentially be integrated within the Campus. The possible co-location of primary health care services should also be explored. There may also be an opportunity to provide an access point for housing services.

There may be future scope to renew or improve the existing leisure centre but it may not be feasible to bring forward this element within this project. There may, however, be opportunities to optimise the existing integrated use of these facilities by the school community and the wider community should be examined.

As part of the Business Case for the Campus, other options are also being explored for further collaborative education provision on the site of the campus. These options may provide opportunities for further land based capital receipts or for re-alignment of funding.

A section of the existing school's playing fields are planned to be sold for development for a superstore. This development includes extensive car parking provision and the potential shared provision and use of car-parking facilities between the campus and superstore could be explored. To compensate for the loss of playing-fields a 3G pitch – which is suitable for all-weather round-the-year use - is due to be provided. These changes, and the development of the Campus, will require reconfiguration of the existing playing-field provision to optimise use and access and there may be scope for limited land-release to support the funding and development of the Campus.

The project is not concerned simply with the location and provision of the services described, but with premises and operational management arrangements that are effective and conducive to achieving the desired outcomes. To this end it is proposed to explore new management models. The Campus could provide an opportunity for a social or community enterprise to have overall responsibility for the management of the premises. This organisation would promote community access and services and for developing commercial revenue-streams.

The governance of such an organisation could take a number of forms, depending on its legal structure, with representation from the school, the county and town and community

councils, and community stakeholders. This breadth of ownership would assure continued commitment to the plural and flexible use of the Campus and its development over time to reflect the changing needs and priorities of the Severnside area.

Contribution to Outcomes

The Severnside Community Campus has the potential to have a number of significant positive impacts.

Educational Attainment: Educational outcomes are of critical importance to the life-chances of young people in the Severnside area. There is a strong evidence-base linking the quality and suitability of educational premises and facilities to educational attainment. An internal assessment of the current premises suitability (using the Educational Impact Model – or EIM) gave it a very low score of 38% (compared with 80% for a typical new-build school). The need to renew and improve the existing secondary school premises is recognised within MCC's 21st Century Schools programme and in the award of Welsh Government capital funding to support the renewal of the secondary school estate.

Lifelong Learning and Education: The economy of South-East Wales, and the Bristol city-region is undergoing significant change with a continuing movement away from traditional industries and the growth of technology-based and environmental industries and increased economic stimulus provided by creative industries, micro-enterprises and self-employment. These changes require access to high quality skill and training opportunities in order to secure employment and to support career development. The provision of formal and informal adult educational facilities and programmes within the Campus can make an important contribution to this end.

Enterprise: The work of Venture Wales (for example at Innovation Park) and others demonstrates the successful contribution that can be made to business start-up, incubation and growth through the provision of support and networking services. Severnside currently has a relatively low density of employment and low level of self-employment. Such services will also give real expression to the theme of enterprise within the school curriculum, and opportunities for vocational and business development for pupils and school-leavers.

Community Cohesion and Enrichment: The Campus will provide a focal point for the community of Severnside. Enlarged and high quality provision for cultural, leisure and community activities will increase the depth and range of organised and informal community activities and their reach within the community and encourage greater contact, communication and cohesion across the wider community.

Service Delivery: Citizens and customers experience of council and other statutory services is often fragmented. The Campus can build on the current work of the One-stop shop to provide an access-point to a wide range of services in Severnside, including crime and community safety, health, education and housing. Services provided by the voluntary and community sector could also be integrated providing a seamless point of access and these arrangements would also support devolved service development and community involvement in the delivery of services.

Linkages to Other Interventions

The Campus is envisaged to be located close to Woodstock Road, in close proximity to the site of the new superstore with improved linkages through to the high street. Its presence can give definition and coherence to this location and be an integral part of a hub of retail, education and community services that together draw residents of Caldicot, Severnside and visitors from further afield to the Town Centre.

Summary Business Case

Strategic

The intervention is concordant with Monmouthshire County Council's education strategy and 21st Century schools programme, and with the council's strategic direction to enable creative approaches to the co-production and delivery of services.

Economic

The planned renewal of the secondary school provides a singular opportunity to rationalise and realise greater economies of scale and efficiency in service capacity and delivery. The infrastructure required for secondary educational provision is capable of flexible use by a wider constituency and range of activities. Typically, limitations of design and access mean that school buildings and facilities remain a significantly under-exploited resource. Through integrated planning and operational management the full potential and wider social and economic benefit can be realised.

Financial

The Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools programme provides a significant level of capital funding for the renewal of the existing Secondary school estate which has to be matched by MCC. Approximately £20m in total is potentially earmarked from the £79m programme. This, however, is unlikely to be sufficient to fund the full aspirations for Campus as envisaged with previous cost estimates in the region of £35-£40m.

The built-form, its configuration and scale, will be important determinants of the cost of the development and will need to be examined and optimised through the feasibility stage. The council has begun examination of a 'standardised model' of new school building which may offer significant cost savings over traditional estimates. One option to be investigated is that of a staged implementation and modular development, to which the 'standardised model' could lend itself well. This option could provide a building design and structure that has the inherent capability for flexible use and progressive extension. The first priority would be renewal of the secondary education facilities with a high-level of community access and the progressive incorporation of other services and functions over time. While the full benefits may not be realised for a longer period, organic development may offer advantages of flexibility and demand-led growth and expansion.

The financial case will need further development. There are a number of potential additional sources of funding and these will need to be explored to build a robust funding plan for the Campus. These could include:

- Additional contribution from the County Council's Capital Programme

- Prudential Borrowing by County Council supported by commercial revenues including rental yields within the new campus.
- Land-value Release – There may be an opportunity to release land from the footprint of the current school buildings through a design that efficiently concentrates the campus premises, and potentially by building to a higher level. There may be opportunities to rationalise and upgrade the remaining playing-fields and release some land to generate value.
- The integration of other services which would release further land or capital, and generate efficiencies while providing the community with improved and more cohesive access to these services. For example if the existing One Stop Shop and library were integrated, their existing premises could be used for retail or commercial activities, which could provide a capital receipt to the scheme.
- Sponsorship – The Campus is intended to be a beacon for educational excellence and community provision which will attract a high profile as an exemplar. There may be scope to attract either individual philanthropic or commercial sponsorship of the Campus and a capital or revenue contribution.
- ESCO/energy-tariff – The potential to include on-site power and heat generation, which may be integrated with the new superstore and the leisure centre may be explored in order to reduce capital costs or generate revenue income

Lead Agents and Stakeholders

The Severnside community itself is the over-arching stakeholder in this project, concerned as it is with the provision of a breadth of community facilities and services for the area.

County, Town and Community Councils, and voluntary and community associations are key stakeholders, as is the business community with its particular interest in education and skills development, and enterprise. Wider engagement with the community should also be provided for.

Caldicot Secondary school, its Governors, Head and school establishment are a prime stakeholder in the project. Young people – current pupils and young primary school-age children – are key stakeholders.

Monmouthshire County Council is responsible, under the 21st Century Schools programme, for the renewal of its school estate, including Caldicot Secondary School. Within the council the 21st Century Schools team are the lead technical and service experts responsible for the development and delivery of the programme. The Programme is directed by a Project Board comprising Cabinet Members and senior officers.

Other council and service delivery partner stakeholders who will contribute expertise and inform the feasibility stage and project implementation include Leisure services, Library services, Adult Education, Monmouthshire Training, and Monmouthshire Enterprise.

A number of other stakeholders will be involved, initially at the scoping and feasibility stage, including other public services and organisations that may potentially provide services or activities within the campus.

Delivery

The 21st Century schools funding is available from 2014-21. Over the next year the council must develop the business case for its planned programme which will be subject to challenge. This is to provide assurance that the resources are addressing the parts of the school estate in the worst condition and that account is taken of where there are surplus places available. The renewal and redevelopment of Caldicot school is scheduled to commence from 2014.

It is important that a range of stakeholders are involved from the outset of the project. The County Council should explore how this can best be achieved. It may be through the Proposed Partnership Board, and could include a wider community / stakeholder reference group.

The Council is currently progressing a business case for the campus project. This business case will need to be approved by the Welsh Government before their funding can be released. It is currently anticipated, though, that a design and construction partner will be appointed in 2013 with a view to commencing construction work on the project in 2014 when that funding is expected to become available.

Regenerating Caldicot Town Centre

Project Definition / Objective

To improve the retail offer, performance and attractiveness of Caldicot Town Centre, maximising the potential benefits from the introduction of a new supermarket nearby.

Purpose

Caldicot and Severnside need a revitalised Town Centre that provides an attractive and popular focus for shopping, amenities and services for residents of the area. A cycle of gradual decline needs to be halted and reversed to progressively achieve a thriving town centre.

The provision of a new supermarket will bring additional visitors and retail activity to Caldicot and could act as a catalyst for the area's regeneration. This will depend on its successful integration with the town centre, but also an overall plan for the enhancement and functioning of the existing centre. This plan needs to provide for environmental upgrading, improved pedestrian linkages, a strengthening of the existing retail offer, and arrangements for a partnership to promote the centre and lead the realisation of its potential.

Context

Caldicot, as the County Town of Severnside, provides a range of services, facilities and retail provision for residents in the area. In contrast to the established market towns in the County, Caldicot has a relatively limited retail offer and consequently captures a relatively low-level of expenditure by residents, with a high level of leakage to other retail centres outside the area. The existing town centre has a somewhat tired and unappealing appearance.

In 2003 the County Council approved the disposal of four acres of the secondary school playing fields at the edge of the town centre for the location of a new superstore. A planning application was submitted in 2005 and, following public consultation, a revised application was submitted and consent was issued earlier this year.

The site was marketed in late 2011 and following evaluation of the bids received Asda have been selected as the preferred bidder. The new supermarket is due to open in March 2015.



Figure: Aerial photograph showing town centre and superstore site

A study by 'The Means' (a specialist consultancy) in 2009 set out a range of measures that could be introduced to strengthen the town centre in the context of the planned siting of a new superstore nearby.

Project Description

To ensure that the superstore contributes positively to the regeneration of the Town Centre it is essential that measures are taken to improve the attractiveness and retail offer of the town centre in advance of the superstore opening so that it is poised to complement the new supermarket and benefit from the increased number of visitors to Caldicot.

Regeneration Action Plan

An overall Regeneration Action Plan is required that sets out the range of measures that are required to revitalise the Town Centre. This will be based on a comprehensive overview of the town centre and its environs. Critically it needs to be informed by a conception of the town centre not as a shopping precinct but as the centre of the town in the broadest sense – where the community access a range of services, facilities and amenities and where residents come together to meet and interact, and to which they are attracted by the experience as well as the convenience of the location.

The regeneration action plan needs to be informed by an understanding of:

- how the centre currently operates, and the existing shopping and visitor experience
- the issues in relation to the integration of the supermarket, and the differentiation of the retail offer within the town centre to complement this

- the upgrading of the town centre, and issues of parking, access and movement to and across the area,
- the promotion and marketing of the centre.

A set of complementary measures will be required and these include:

Pedestrian Linkages

The new supermarket will be located close to the Town Centre, but there is a risk that existing shoppers could be drawn away from the high street. In order to maximise the potential benefits of the arrival of the superstore in the town it is essential that pedestrian connections from the Superstore site to the Town Centre are improved and that these are in place in advance of the superstore opening.

The supermarket needs to be oriented towards the town centre and be linked by short, attractive pedestrian routes. The current car parking provision off Woodstock Way needs to be rationalised and significant investment made in improving the environment, with the potential to create a new public space. The current use and operation of the one-stop shop and library should be considered in this context (and in that of the Community Campus).

Bus Service Improvements

It is intended to use funding linked to the planning permission for the new supermarket to improve the frequency and quality of bus service provision to encourage visitors to the town centre and its facilities. This will include enhanced services between Caldicot and Caerwent in the north, Sudbrook to the East and to Magor and Undy to the West.

Supermarket Operations

The range of products offered by the new store will be important in determining the degree to which the town centre can complement this offer, rather than be marginalised by it. Agreements, through the planning consent or the land sale agreement to limit its range and competition and leave space for complementary retail provision, should be considered. The supermarket operator should also be encouraged to maximise their use of local supply chains and suppliers for a proportion of their goods, and thereby stimulate local enterprise and businesses.

The car park will be operated as a short-stay shoppers' car park with a limit of 3 hours parking. There will be no charge. This is to encourage turnover, ensuring that people don't park up for the entire day. This should be of benefit to the town centre as a whole.

Town Centre Environmental Improvements

The current town centre is unappealing but with limited investment in the public realm, and potentially by the main retail property owners, the appearance of the area could be considerably enhanced. Improved street furniture, planting, including screen planting around the rear of shop parades, lighting and similar measures are needed to create an attractive environment.

Retail lettings

it is important to put in place measures to minimise the number and duration of vacant units as these have an adverse impact on the retail offer and perceptions of the centre. A protocol should be explored with the retail property-owners to make available vacant units for community and voluntary sector use, for tenancy-at-will arrangements for 'pop-up' shops and trial ventures, and for concessionary terms for the council to take the head lease of such units to facilitate these and like uses.

Town Centre Partnership

To arrest the decline of the town centre, and to coordinate and drive the strategy for its revitalisation a broadly-based partnership needs to be established. The model of a Business Improvement District may be relevant, as well as the U.S. Main Street programme and other exemplars.

This partnership will draw together retailers, the retail property-owners, the supermarket owner, town and community councillors, voluntary and community organisations and others supported by council officers. Creating such a partnership and building its capacity will take time and needs to proceed without delay in order to ensure that the town centre is poised to respond to the opportunities (and risks) presented by the opening of the superstore, and has had the opportunity to shape the preparations for this. A partnership co-ordinator could also be appointed and this should be integrated with the wider Integrated Area approach suggested for Severnside, and consideration should also be given to integrating this role with that of the Enterprise Facilitator suggested elsewhere.

Promotion and Marketing

A number of seasonal events are already staged in the Town Centre and these need to be built upon. A programme of events needs to be developed by the partnership within the context of a clear marketing strategy. Extended market-trading days, potentially with a focus on particular products, should be considered.

Contribution to Outcomes

Economy and Enterprise: The town centre's regeneration, allied to the new supermarket's opening, has the potential to increase retail activity and expenditure in the area. The supermarket will bring significant new employment, work-experience and training opportunities to the area. The provision of empty premises for temporary uses could stimulate enterprise and the superstore could provide supply-chain opportunities to local businesses and start-up ventures.

Community Cohesion and Enrichment: A thriving town centre can generate a strong commitment to the place and an allied sense of community belonging, commitment and engagement. Conversely a dilapidated centre produces alienation, anti-social behaviour and withdrawal. A revitalised Town Centre has the potential to foster a stronger identification with Caldicot, Severnside and facilitate increased social interaction and mutual aid. Proposals to accommodate voluntary and community groups in vacant units could also aid their viability and reach in the community.

Summary Business Case

Strategic

The deposit LDP identifies Caldicot as the County Town of Severnside within the retail hierarchy, and recognises the need to strengthen its offer and performance.

Economic

A series of studies have concluded that the retail performance of the town could be strengthened by the introduction of a new superstore, through retaining a higher proportion of consumer retail expenditure locally, and through the additional trade generated from an increased number of linked trips to the supermarket and town centre. Without supporting investment in the town centre and its regeneration it is estimated that a significant proportion of existing trade may be lost to the town centre undermining further its economic sustainability.

Financial

The outline consent for the superstore will include some financial provision to improve the town centre, which will be available from 2014. There is provision for improvements to the public realm and pedestrian linkages and improvements to Newport Road. There is also funding to support the establishment and operation of a Town Centre Partnership. These funding streams could potentially be supplemented in a number of ways:

Business Improvement District (BID) Levy – This requires the support of a majority of retailers and is based on the rateable value of the unit. This would need to be set at a low level but could motivate greater ownership and commitment to the Town Centre Partnership and its activities.

Retail Property-Owners Contribution – The two main companies have a significant vested interest in the town centre's performance, as it will over time improve the value of their property-holdings and their income through fewer empty units. Recognising this they should be prepared to provide some funding to support the partnership's activities, as well as to invest in the quality and appearance of their own premises.

Committed Funding streams – There is evident merit in providing a source of income that reflects, and therefore, motivates, the success of the partnership's activities. This could, for example be from additional market-stall activity, or from a share of the rental income from one or more struggling retail units.

Welsh Government – The possibility of government funding support for the regeneration of the centre should be explored.

Linkages to other Interventions

This intervention integrates with the planning for the Severnside Community Campus with the potential to provide a shared public square and realm. Opportunities to integrate renewable energy generation and usage between the supermarket and campus should be explored. The Town Centre Partnership, and the facilitator should be integrated with the overall local coordination and management arrangements.

Lead Agents and Stakeholders

The superstore proposal is being over-seen by a Project Board of County Councillors with the support of relevant officers. A wider range of stakeholders, including local retailers, the preferred supermarket operator, community representatives and others will need to be engaged to establish the Town Centre Partnership.

Delivery

A lead MCC officer will be responsible for establishing the partnership and assisting it in developing its initial action plan. This process should begin immediately on selection of the preferred supermarket operator. The intention should be to establish the partnership within nine months, through a process of consultation and engagement, with it beginning work in early 2013.

Preliminary study of the key issues to inform and guide the regeneration action plan needs to begin at an early point, and can provide a useful engagement tool as the preparations for the partnership are progressed.

The physical works, including crucially the pedestrian links and environmental improvements should if possible be completed at minimum six months in advance of the supermarket commencing operation. The payments by the Superstore owner are expected to be triggered when construction begins and the council may want to consider providing bridging funding to ensure that the necessary linkages and improvements are in place in good time.

Welcome to Severnside

Project Definition / Objective

To maximise Severnside's strategic position as the entry point to Monmouthshire and Wales by fully utilising its heritage and environment assets, improving the visitor offer and stimulating tourism service business and job creation.

Purpose

Severnside is uniquely placed to benefit from the place advantage it enjoys as the first and last landfall for visitors to Wales arriving and leaving via the Second Severn Crossing. The development of a Destination Plan for Monmouthshire, the opening of the Wales Coast path and plans to develop Caldicot Castle and Country Park combine through this project to work with local heritage and environment opportunities in putting Severnside on the map of local, regional and national tourism attractions.

The development of a landmark entry structure in Severnside in support of the objective of drawing visitors to the local offer and signifying entry to a distinct nation is also an integral part of this proposal.

The primary purpose is the delivery of a complementary set of actions linked to the growth of the tourism sector in the local economy supporting business development, job creation , developing a greater sense of pride and identity in local places resulting in improved services for residents and visitors alike.

Context

Tourism is vital to Wales and Monmouthshire's economy in providing employment and enterprise opportunities. A wide range of businesses directly or indirectly benefit from visitor spending or supply and service the county's tourism industry, including the retail and catering sectors and food and drink producers. In 2010, Monmouthshire had an estimated 2 million visitors – of these 450,000 were staying overnight. They spent an estimated £150m in the county in 2010 – of this £108m was generated by staying visitors.

Tourism is a significant employer in Monmouthshire, with tourism-related employment accounting for 10.1% of jobs in the county. Direct and indirect visitor spending currently supports around 3,500 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs in the county. Approximately a third of these are in the accommodation sector.

Annual tourism revenue per head of resident population is £1700 in Monmouthshire. This is nearly a third higher than the average for South East Wales. The focus for the development of the tourism sector has been centred around the Wye valley and key events such as the Abergavenny food festival. There is the opportunity to promote an attractive offer in Severnside through combining a number of developments together in an integrated local programme which has the potential to see increased benefits to the Severnside economy.

The Destination Development Plan for Monmouthshire identifies a range of factors that contribute to positive forecasts for growth in tourism:

- The continuing popularity of the ‘staycation’
- An ageing UK population
- Short Breaks
- Tourism is becoming increasingly experiential
- Climate change
- Communication on the move
- Social networking will increase in importance

There is a recognition that the quality of the offer in Severnside will need significant improvement in terms of the range of accommodation available, the quality of attractions and the general image, range and presentation of local services and information for visitors

Project Description

The project is to structure and invest in a complementary range of opportunities designed to maximise Severnside’s strategic position as the entry point to Monmouthshire and Wales , fully utilising its heritage and environment assets, improving the visitor offer and stimulating resulting tourism service business and job creation. While important and with significant merit in their own right the collective impact of measures proposed by this project when packaged, programmed, refined and collectively marketed can realise direct benefits to local business and local communities achieving measurable outcomes that respond to issues identified in the baseline assessment of Severnside.

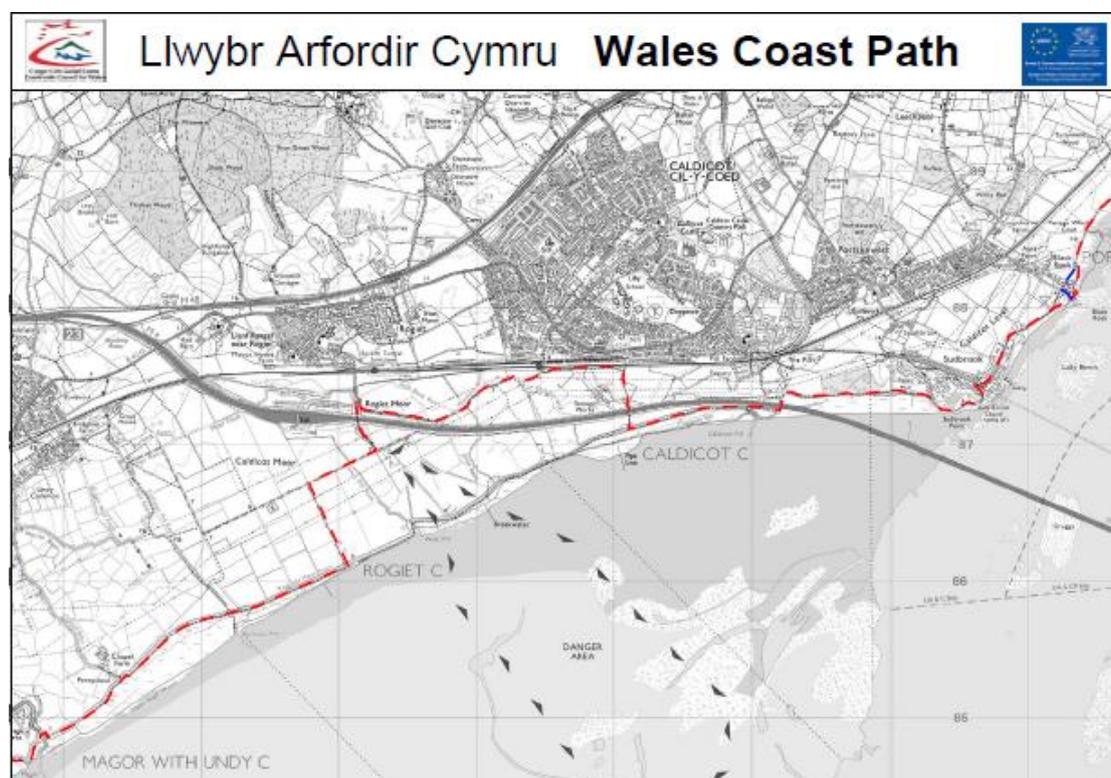


The Wales Coast Path has been developed by the Welsh Government in partnership with the Countryside Council for Wales, sixteen local authorities and two National Parks. In addition to funding from the Welsh Government and the coastal local authorities of approximately £2 million per year, the European Regional Development Fund has allocated nearly £4 million over four years in support of the project. Improvements to the quality and alignment of the route will continue during 2012 and 2013 to ensure that the path follows the Welsh coastline as closely as is safe and practical. Over time, the Wales Coast Path is expected to lead to the creation of circular coastal routes as links to the inland towns and villages are improved.

The idea was developed out of a desire to build on the economic success of the Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail and the Isle of Anglesey Coastal Path – both of which are major contributors to the visitor economy of Wales. While the Wales Coast Path is important for the Welsh economy, it is also seen as an important initiative in encouraging both locals and visitors to discover and enjoy Wales’ outdoor spaces and the benefits to health and well-being they can provide.

The whole path will be accessible to walkers and, where practical, some sections will also be suitable for cyclists, families with pushchairs, people with restricted mobility and horse riders.

The Path has been split into eight geographical areas including the South Wales Coast & Severn Estuary.



The first section of coast on the new path is in Severnside and will provide a natural destination for those completing a day or half-day section, and provide the opportunity to promote the area and raise its profile, and draw visitors on to the others attractions of Severnside.

Improvements to the Severnside section of the path have taken place in readiness for its launch in May 2012. Improvements will continue to be made to interpretation on the route itself, and to maximise the benefits to the wider area. Link and circular routes need to be developed that will draw visitors through to the Severnside settlements. As an example St Pierre golf club located close to the route as it comes out of its official Chepstow starting point have produced materials aimed at walkers to capture passing trade. Acting as a catalyst not only for physical improvements the path's opening is a major opportunity around which to base further development of this sector in the Severnside area.

Black Rock picnic site

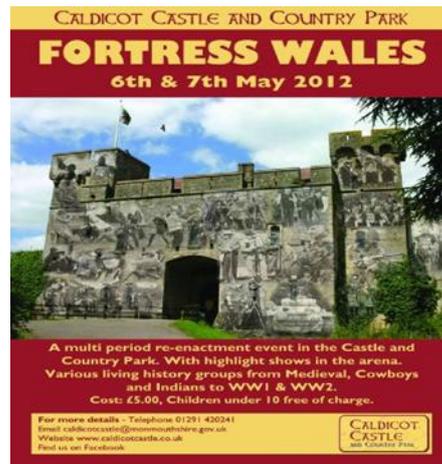
In the shadow of the Second Severn crossing Black Rock picnic site is on the Severn Estuary. It has panoramic views of the estuary and the Second Severn Crossing. There is a car park and information boards on site. There is also an information board describing a short circular 'Footsteps to Fitness' walk.

This location is a low cliff- top grassed site and is a good access point to paths along the coast, to the Severnside Trail. It is next to a long-gone railway crossing of the Severn Estuary. The Black Rock Lave Net fishery also takes place here. Investment is needed in the site to improve its attractiveness and accessibility with it also offering an opportunity for the development of a local cafe /catering business on the site.



Caldicot Castle and Country Park

Built between the 12th and 14th centuries Caldicot Castle is both large and impressive. The castle passed into royal ownership at the end of the 14th century through marriage and eventually came under the control of the Duchy of Lancaster. It was purchased in 1885 and subsequently restored by J R Cobb, who used it as a family home. The castle passed into public ownership in 1963 and is owned by Monmouthshire County Council. The castle is set in a fifty acre country park. The Council promotes a Castle and Country Park events programme and makes both venues available for event hire.



The Council has recently brought the castle and country park together as an operational unit to maximise the benefits that can arise from this key heritage and tourism asset. The castle is an accredited Visit Wales visitor attraction and an accredited museum. The Council also intends to seek 'Green Flag Award' status in 2013 for the Castle & Country Park (which it already holds for the Old Station Tintern visitor attraction) after the preparation of a new management plan.

The Council has appointed a new catering contractor for the castle to provide quality visitor catering and to re-establish a vibrant events catering programme for weddings, banquets and other events to ensure optimum use of the castle's facilities and to support the local economy and the future development of the castle.

The Council is intending to prepare management and business plans for the castle and country park to establish a development programme. To assist in this process it has recently

established an advisory forum, bringing together interested parties from the local community, tourism, conservation, and heritage sectors.

These aspirations are within the context of a lack of investment in the recent past, leading to visitor facilities and visitor interpretation which fall well below modern standards and expectations. Current visitor figures to the castle are low, in the order of 22 - 25,000 per annum. Visitors to the country park are much higher, but are currently un-quantified.

Planning Solutions Ltd have been appointed to produce an audience development, interpretation and visitor management plan for the Castle and Country park as a precursor to funding applications for improvement to the Heritage Lottery fund and others.

This development will also provide opportunities for Caldicot Town centre, local services and surrounding attractions which will in turn require their improvement to provide a positive visitor welcome and experience.

Festival of the Coast /Local Heritage stories

The Destination development plan identifies the off-peak opportunities afforded by the development of local festivals .The concept of a Festival of the Coast is under consideration possibly linked to the annual Severn bore combining heritage stories crossing centuries of historic narrative including the Roman dock in Sudbrook/Portskewett and Norman and medieval structures in Magor, with a portrayal and celebration of coastal living. Community involvement in the planning and delivery of the Festival would further develop a shared Severnside identity bringing together the collective interest in local history and community celebration that exists in the distinct settlements.

Landmark/Arrival structure

Work was undertaken in 2007 to develop a 'Landmark' project for Severnside recognising its strategic location as the entry point for Wales. The Red Cloud developed by Marks Barfield architects attracted great interest and support from the local community but was ultimately unsuccessful in attracting Lottery funding from a strand set up specifically for these type of large public art structures. The Severnside plan will be the mechanism by which the funding for this project could be realised.



As a contribution to the tourism project package the Red Cloud offers the reason to leave the motorway and visit Severnside itself as a destination. While the original site was carefully chosen it is suggested that a more accessible site between Caldicot and Magor is identified in order to realise the wider benefits such a structure might bring in terms of increased visitors. The post-Olympic funding environment, private sponsorship and fund raising through the Severnside Community Interest Company (CIC) create a different although no less challenging climate for innovative project ideas such as this. Linking the design to the spirit of enterprise at work in Severnside and incorporating renewable energy and /or digital features representing future sector growth offer other avenues for funding innovation.

Magor services

There is significant scope to improve the reception to Severnside, Monmouthshire and Wales on offer at the Junction 23 A of the M4. The concept of a Welcome to Wales visitor hub highlighting local services and attractions is consistent with offers on entry to Scotland and England by road. Roadchef, the owner /operator of the junction services, have indicated their willingness to discuss any proposed hub concept that might complement their planned improvements.

Transport and access

The capacity and accessibility of transport connections to, and within the Severnside area is of critical importance to the sustainable and successful growth of the visitor economy in Severnside.

This will be supported by the proposed development at Severn Tunnel Junction station, and the schemes for a new M48 Link Road. A full appraisal of the scheme has been undertaken by the County Council covering not just the transport benefits, but the wider social, economic and environmental benefits, and these proposals are likely to form part of a bid to the Welsh Government for delivery in either in 2013/14 or 2014-15. There is also potential for alternative use of the former MOD Railway line to Caerwent.

These key transport initiatives depend on external funding and support and the case for these may be strengthened by the potential identified for growth in the tourist economy, as well as in employment and enterprise within Severnside.

Targeted business support

Underpinning the Tourism development intervention is a need to target available business support at existing and emerging visitor services businesses to raise awareness of opportunities, support funding applications for accommodation improvement and encourage integrated marketing and cross referral effort.

Integrated marketing

Better definition and presentation of the Severnside offer in terms of its position in the wider Monmouthshire tourism platform with distinctive identification of the area under the Monmouthshire umbrella emphasising the “Wales arrival” USP.

Contribution to Outcomes

The Severnside Tourism intervention has the potential to have a number of significant positive impacts.

Business Growth and new jobs: Increasing confidence of existing operators in the Severnside areas and creating the environment for new business starts.

Increasing visitors: The Severnside area (both sides of the estuary) has a potential day visitor catchment of nearly 1 million people. By encouraging leisure based visits increased awareness of what the area offers as a place to live, work and invest will be secured

Community Cohesion and Identity: The progressive roll out of the elements of this intervention will assist efforts to increase confidence and pride in the area.

Health and well-being: Improvements to local walking routes and their promotion will see a greater awareness amongst the local population of what the area can offer and encourage participation and development of local walking groups.

Linkages to Other Interventions

The Castle and Country park elements of this intervention support the Town Centre Regeneration and Community Campus proposals for Caldicot. The focus of the tourism sector in this intervention complements the Enterprising Severnside approach. The Making Severnside Better delivery approach will provide the means to finance project elements through sources of funding not available to the local authority. The project makes a direct contribution to Enterprising Severnside in its focus on better utilising the assets of the community to promote sustainable economic growth and jobs. The new Wales Coast Path, the Gwent Levels, Caldicot Castle and Country Park, and the untold heritage story of the local communities will be utilised to further enhance the number and yield of visitors to the area and secure their positive experience and future return. Communities have come together to put the area on the map as an entry point to Wales and highlighting all the best that Wales has to offer. The project will be able to ensure that new and existing tourism related businesses and local communities take advantage of these unique locational and cultural assets, growing and creating new jobs by supporting more integrated marketing, interpretation and asset development. The recent Big Tent event held in Caldicot also highlighted the opportunity for some form of local heritage festival as a key opportunity for further development.

The improved walking and cycling offer the Wales Coast Path and loops and links to Severnside settlements also has a link to thinking around the Strategic Opportunities intervention – Crick Rd in particular. Improvements leading to expansion of services at Severn Tunnel junction will also boost the numbers of visitors attracted to the area and supporting visitor infrastructure at the station will improve the offering for commuters and visitors alike.

Summary Business Case

Strategic

The intervention complements the Monmouthshire County Council's Destination Development Plan and the wider Wales Economic strategy focusing on the tourism economy as a key sector.

Economic

Improved profile and packaging of a visitor offer will result in increased day visitor and short stay spend, encouraging further business creation, local supply chain development and inter-trading.

Financial

Significant capital investment from the Welsh Government has already been attracted to the area to improve the Severnside sections of the Coast path with future investment available for further improvements and progressive maintenance dependent on a strong business case from local partners. This package approach which seeks to maximise the economic impact of the Coast path as key element of a wider range of measures will enhance Monmouthshire's position in seeking funding for further improvements.

Investment in Caldicot Castle and country park will be the subject of a funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund and Cadw following the completion of the recently commissioned review by Planning Solutions Ltd

Private sponsorship of the Landmark structure will combine with charitable trust funding, enabled through Severnside CIC.

Lead Agents and Stakeholders

Tourism and Countryside departments of the local authority, local tourism services business and attractions, local historical societies and interested community groups in Caldicot, Magor, Sudbrook and Caerwent, and community walking groups.

Delivery

Initially a cross department team will be established comprising officers from Tourism, Enterprise and Countryside services with further support from the Severnside CIC (see Making a Better Severnside). This group would take forward a series of initiatives as outlined below, but these should be viewed and approached as an integrated and mutually-reinforcing package.

Coast Path

Building on the launch of the Wales Coast path, develop a plan of action and activities to encourage linked walks and travel from the coast path throughout Severnside. This could include loop trails from the Coast Path through Severnside, and build on the Monmouthshire Walking Festival (June 2012) which has one walk from Caldicot Castle to Coast Path, to develop a regular programme of guided walks/events for high-season. Organised walks and

tours along the path could also be developed through a local branch of Ramblers Cymru and through local volunteers. Local guides should be brought together to enhance and co-ordinate the offer through an on-line resource through the Coast path and MCC websites.

Monmouth's Wiki town development should be developed to upgrade local information and develop Severnside's overall web presence for the benefit of local communities and visitors

Festival of the Coast

As part of the MCC Destination development plan local festivals action theme work should begin with the four town councils and local groups to scope the shape, character and timing of the "Festival of the Coast" confirming its relationship to the Castle, Country park and Coast path development along with bringing to life local heritage stories in Sudbrook, Magor and Caerwent.

Caldicot Castle

Act on findings of Castle and Country Park audience development study in developing funding applications to Heritage Lottery fund and Cadw.

Landmark Structure

The original proposals for the Landmark structure should be revisited and site locations identified that respond to the Coast path development, and the optimum location to draw visitors into Severnside and connections on to other attractions. A review of potential sponsors and charitable trust funding sources will be undertaken, and funding applications taken forward.

Magor services

Build on recent improvements and approach Welsh Government to support development of Welcome to Wales offer and within that the Severnside welcome component.

Better Homes for Severnside

Project Definition / Objective

To regenerate the housing estate in north Caldicot to provide a high-quality and environment and address less sustainable housing.

Purpose

The focus of this project is the residential area to the north of Caldicot which was largely built in the 1960s and 70s by the Council. The area's environment is no more than adequate and requires investment and improvement to realise its potential. The area is, in the context of Monmouthshire, relatively deprived and physical interventions will be allied to a programme of community involvement and socio-economic measures. The estate may benefit from minor remodelling to improve the estate's design, with consideration of options for less sustainable housing with high voids and turnover, in unsustainable flatted blocks.

Context

Monmouthshire Housing Association (MHA) was established to take transfer of the council's housing stock. It owns approximately 850 properties in the Severnside area and is by far the largest provider of affordable housing. Around 500 of these properties are general needs housing, 200 OAP designated and 120 sheltered units are provided across three schemes.

In Caldicot MHA own and manage almost 600 units, around 15% of the total housing in the town, with 423 general needs units, 97 OAP-designated properties and 73 sheltered units. This stock is concentrated in the estate to the north of the town centre, bounded by the motorway to the north, Newport Road to the west and extending beyond Sandy Lane to the east. MHA previously had a management-base in Caldicot and has provided service-access points through the council's one-stop shops but have concluded that residents' preferred means of contact is by phone or through personal visits.

The public realm in the area presents a tired and uninspiring appearance. The estate roads, street furniture, grassed and play-areas are functional but no more. Scattered garage blocks are partly-used but dilapidated in appearance. Whilst not presenting a picture of neglect or dereliction, the area equally fails to provide an environment of interest or quality.

A large proportion of the properties are semi-detached houses. Many of these have been sold under the Right to Buy. The MHA-owned properties are in reasonable condition and have largely been brought up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS).

There is a large row of flatted blocks comprising c.100 units on Oakley Way at the northern boundary. These are 2-bed units and have a high turnover and generate some management problems and anti-social behaviour. The form and appearance of these blocks detract from the wider estate.

At the north-east corner of the estate there is a sheltered scheme, Brookside, which comprises 43 bed-sit and 1-bed units. These are becoming increasingly unpopular, in particular the bedsit units which fall short of accepted standards. The scheme carries voids continually and recently as many as a quarter of the units were vacant. The scheme adjoins an open grassed area in council ownership.

A new primary school is currently being developed on Green Lane in the centre of the area to provide premises for the merged Green Lane Junior and West End Infants School. The Welsh Medium School, Ysgol-y-Ffin is sited in the area in unprepossessing premises and it is understood that larger alternative premises may be required in the future.

Project Description

The project is to devise and implement a broadly-based regeneration plan for the residential estate that raises its quality, performance and sustainability. Such an integrated approach will combine physical, socio-economic and community initiatives.

Effective community engagement and ownership is fundamental to the purpose and outcomes of the project. Residents, MHA tenants, private owners and those renting in the area will bring their local intelligence and understanding of the area and its issues to the design and implementation of the measures required. A clear engagement strategy predicated on community empowerment will underpin the project's development and realisation.

The quality of the public realm is critical in defining the character and nature of a place and both reflects and generates commitment to an area. It is apparent that that the estate environment needs to be significantly improved. This will require cooperation and investment by MHA and by the council. Standards will need to be set for different elements of the public realm allied to a plan for on-going management and maintenance. Opportunities to coordinate and integrate such arrangements between the council and MHA should be explored, as well as the community involvement in the design, monitoring and potentially the delivery of such services, and the attendant training and employment opportunities that may arise.

Housing Management and maintenance arrangements should also be reviewed with the community, to identify areas for improvement, local devolution and tailoring, within the framework of MHA's operational structure.

The redevelopment of the Green Lane school site presents an opportunity to maximise community access and a natural focus for community activities in the immediate locality and these opportunities should be examined and secured.

Levels of economic inactivity and unemployment, though not exceptional, are higher in the area than elsewhere in the county, and wage levels are similarly low by comparison. MHA, Monmouthshire Training and other partners are already doing much work in this area and this regeneration context provides an opportunity to intensify and target this work, and to extend its reach and effectiveness. Opportunities for employment (and self-employment, enterprise and training) through the regeneration project, through the Better Severnside interventions and more generally should be explored and developed.

Welfare Benefit reforms, and in particular the introduction of Universal Credit from 2013 and the associated total benefits cap, and Housing Benefit reductions for under-occupation

will impact on a number of households, both here and more widely. Targeted advice on financial inclusion, benefits and housing options should be provided.

There should be a clear strand of focus on young people in the area and their needs, in particular for safety, play and congregation and they should be closely involved in the development of the scheme.

Parts of the housing on the estate currently raise issues about their sustainability and options need to be developed with residents and the wider community to address these.

Contribution to Outcomes

The regeneration project has the potential to have a number of positive impacts:

Enterprise, Employment and training: Economic activity levels are relatively low and assistance could be effectively targeted through the project, and a range of training, apprenticeship, employment and self-employment opportunities could be generated from the scheme and housing improvement works.

Community Cohesion and Enrichment: The project could build community capacity, commitment and self-reliance through effective engagement and involvement leaving a lasting legacy.

Service Delivery: The project presents an opportunity to engage residents in the design and delivery of local services and to model and pilot new approaches to local management and maintenance that may have wider application.

Housing: A significant contribution could be made to better meeting housing needs, and there may be potential new housing, and possibly mixed-tenure housing.

Linkages to Other Interventions

There are clear connections, in the principles of approach to community engagement and local service delivery to the overall framework and arrangements proposed for Making a Better Severnside. There are also potential links to the educational and training activities of the Severnside Community Campus.

Summary Business Case

Strategic

The potential provision of additional infill housing supports the housing targets of the deposit LDP. The project contributes to the aims of the Local Housing Strategy for Monmouthshire 2007-12, including A Better Environment, Stronger and Safer Communities and Lifelong Learning and Experience.

Economic

The proposed partnership approach, between the council and MHA may offer benefits through improved efficiency and economy across services and through the combination of land resources.

Financial

The costs of the project have not been estimated at this point. It will require in the first instance in-kind contributions of staff time and resource to establish the project.

MHA are currently developing a 3-year investment plan for environmental improvements across their stock and estates and this scheme would be a priority within that. The capacity of the council to supplement this from capital and revenue resources will need to be examined.

Financial appraisal of options for refurbishment, remodelling and redevelopment will need to be undertaken. The investment of council land in the Brookside scheme will need to be evaluated in this context and the potential to provide additional affordable housing and potentially in an end-development receipt.

Lead Agents and Stakeholders

The council and MHA, together with the community itself, are core stakeholders for this project. Without that partnership and mutual commitment the project will be of considerably less value and impact. Within the council the housing service will be a lead agent, but a range of other service areas will need to contribute to its successful development. Within MHA a dedicated senior lead will be required supported by the organisation more widely. Other partner organisations and service providers will also be stakeholders to the project.

The options of refurbishment and potential redevelopment will impact on all the residents of the area and they must be effectively consulted but these will in particular impact on those who are currently resident in Oakley Way and Brookside and a separate consultation strand will be required.

Delivery

Responsibility for the project should from the outset be vested in a joint council-MHA team. This needs to initiate a process of community engagement, drawing at first on ward members and active local residents to further frame the project and devise the wider engagement with the community.

If development of new or replacement housing is considered the best approach following consultation and appraisal, a partnership or joint venture with a suitable and progressive developer may bring additional development and commercial expertise. Procurement of such a partner should be undertaken at an early stage in the scheme development.

Enterprising Severnside

Project Definition / Objective

To create the conditions and maximise the opportunities for enterprise to flourish in Severnside and to exploit the opportunities presented by new digital and green technologies to support sustainable economic development.

Purpose

Increased enterprise and entrepreneurial activity has the potential to strengthen the economy of Severnside, building on existing economic strengths, diversifying the local economy and increasing employment opportunities within the area.

The aim is to establish conditions that encourage greater enterprise and support the development of a strengthened enterprise culture amongst the Severnside population. It will support the creation of a chain of opportunities for employment and training, creativity and innovation, business start-up and growth and inward investment.

Severnside's economy needs to be able to respond positively to the challenging and changing economic conditions it will face. It needs to be able to capitalise on its inherent strengths, and realise locally the opportunities recognised within the County's Digital and Green Deal frameworks.

Context

In order to enable Monmouthshire to positively navigate a path in the 'new world' of more for less and challenged resources to support the development of sustainable communities, the Council's Cabinet has prioritised 3 main areas of policy and service development:

- Protecting the vulnerable
- Investing in learning
- Encouraging enterprise

Aligned with these guiding priorities is a newly emerging vision for the county that promotes an integrated approach to social, economic and physical transformation and seeks to firmly establish Monmouthshire as the 'green and connected Gateway to Wales'.

Severnside's economy continues to experience significant change as along with Monmouthshire and Wales it is buffeted by the impact of the global recession and a double dip recession in the UK. Recent analysis of the resilience of Welsh counties abilities to resist and mitigate the worst effects of the recession indicated an encouraging picture for Monmouthshire as the "most resilient county in Wales" (Experian 2012).

Monmouthshire's Green Deal and Digital Deal frameworks are a key part of the council's progressive vision for the county's economy. These recognise that a sustainable economy must be grounded in its relationship to the social and physical context in which it seeks to grow. Preliminary proposals have been developed, with Torfaen Council, for a Virtual Enterprise Zone which recognises the potential in such an approach.

Monmouthshire, in a Welsh context, is a relatively affluent county with an unemployment rate of 2.9% compared to 4.4% in the rest of Wales. 80% of Monmouthshire's working age population are economically active compared with 75% in the rest of Wales. Managerial and professional occupations account for 50.8% of employment compared with 38.3% for Wales; 18% are in administrative / skilled occupations (23.2% Wales); 14.6% retail/service sector (17.2% Wales) and 16.3% semi/unskilled (21.1% Wales). The gross weekly full time pay of residents is also higher than the national average at £541.80 (£425.30 Wales). There is 40% outmigration to work; 54% of whom are managers.

In Severnside, Magor in particular experiences significant out of area commuting on a daily basis to Bristol, Newport and Cardiff. Employment continues to recover from the impact of the closure of Llanwern steelworks but the advent of distribution warehousing and encouraging local growth in manufacturing has helped mitigate some of this impact with the local economy holding its own in comparison to other parts of South Wales.

Severnside is relatively well-off compared to Wales but less affluent than Monmouthshire as a whole and there are pockets of deprivation in the area, especially in Caldicot. Wages and incomes are, however, relatively low for those who live and work in the County. Local wage rates vary significantly with the average for Severnside below the Monmouthshire average at £446.25. This is a result of the wide range of occupational sector distribution between the various wards that make up Severnside. Most significant, as an example, is the gap in professional and managerial occupations in Mill Ward as compared to Green Lane and Dewstow.

The local economy of Severnside, with its strong transport connections and greater proximity to the economic hubs of the Cardiff City-region, and Bristol are also important in shaping the economic context for the area, and may offer greater growth opportunities under the county-wide frameworks.

Severnside has a relatively low employment density, with a high-level of out-commuting. The area's population is projected to grow over the next decade through inward migration and the local economy will need to see corresponding expansion.

While planning policies are restrictive, the environment and landscape are an important asset and need protecting. Severnside's economic challenges therefore mirror those for Monmouthshire as a whole but provide the local ingredients to make a concerted local effort to secure measurable impact and wider benefits.

Competitive, high value-added and knowledge-based industries will be of crucial importance. Land based activities (agriculture and timber) will also remain important as will manufacturing. Tourism will remain an integral and important part of the local economy.

The professional and business services, fashion, cultural/craft/TV/film industries and e-commerce and tele-working may have potential. Entrepreneurship is low in Monmouthshire but qualifications and skill levels are high although less so in some parts of Severnside. There is a need for a wider range of job opportunities and some re-skilling, especially in ICT. School-leavers need to be retained in the County and encouraged to return after obtaining skills. The take-up of digital technologies amongst business and the community needs encouraging.

Large-scale new investment in industrial property is required, especially the provision of sub-divisible 30,000 sq ft units for manufacturing, and the supply of offices also needs improving; Public transport across the area needs improving to serve the economy better.

Project Description

The intervention is to support greater enterprise and in particular to harness the potential for economic activity of green and digital industries. It will translate County' and Wales' objectives for growing enterprise into the local Severnside context, and address the issues identified in the baseline analysis and integrate with the other key interventions. The elements are:

- Low Carbon Severnside
- Digital Severnside
- Start-up Severnside

Low-Carbon Severnside

To draw together all the available opportunities to promote commercial and domestic energy efficiency, and renewable energy business development.

A Severnside targeted, structured programme promoting the cost and carbon saving benefits available to residents from the forthcoming UK Green Deal programme, alongside the new Energy Company Obligation(ECO), together with Welsh Government funding to social housing available via the Arbed programme, and enabling maximum possible take up across Severnside from these programmes.

These programmes can have significant economic and employment benefits. 5,000 loft insulations in Severnside would create over 50 jobs, save £1m per annum for residents and cut CO2 emissions by 4,000 tonnes. Such programmes in a domestic context can also play an important part in reducing fuel poverty and providing significant local job and training opportunities with provision developed in conjunction with Monmouthshire training.

The feasibility should be examined of incorporating renewable energy facilities, such as Combined Heat and Power (CHP) and wind-turbines, in the planned Community Campus, the new Superstore and in new housing developments in the area.

A strategic partnership should be established with renewable energy companies such as Mabey Bridge to explore community wind-turbine and business park shared mini-turbine projects. Severnside industrial and commercial property should be promoted as a proximate location for suppliers to the sector and as a start-up location for reuse and recycling businesses. Job and training Opportunities will be developed with Monmouthshire Training to target opportunities in renewable and energy efficiency installation e.g. with RSLs in the deprived areas of Severnside.

Incentivising measures in new build homes, retro-fit of existing stock, solar schools, energy/advice support for SMEs, development of reuse/recycle business in the private and not for profit sectors and community energy savings schemes will together put Severnside on the map as the County's first Low Carbon zone creating a sense of shared pride and well-being, stimulating further community action in this field.

Digital Severnside

Developing a 'Digital Severnside' is fundamental to the success of the Better Severnside approach. The strategic location the area enjoys must be capitalised on by realising its digital capacity and resulting potential.

Central to the concept of personal enterprise is the ability to access and distribute product and intellectual capital. Residents and businesses need to remain at the forefront of ICT access to assure the sustainability of the local economy.

Increasingly permeating every aspect of daily life the ability of the community to access services, develop skills, business ideas and interact digitally is crucial to enabling active, engaged and prosperous lives. Avoiding any danger of digital exclusion and creating the infrastructure and premises for digital companies to be attracted, grow and cluster in Severnside are the two key objectives of this element.

The Digital framework for Monmouthshire seeks to ensure the best quality access to next generation broadband services for the widest possible cross-section of the community. Ensuring the population of Severnside is able to benefit from county-wide initiatives in ICT skills development and broadband access will be a key component in delivering an Enterprising Severnside.

Mitel as a key partner and the Castlegate business park owners support the principle of developing space at favourable terms to encourage digital industries to grow and cluster, and there is potential to link with the Alacrity boot camp based in Newport. Development of small digital start-ups on-site at Mitel has been proven to be extremely successful with all parties welcoming the opportunity for collaboration with each other and a blue chip organisation this environment provides. Further development of this approach in office space at Castlegate will develop and grow the significance of this cluster approach even further. As the start-ups created by the Alacrity project grow and seek to move on from a Newport base the Castlegate opportunity will encourage digital SMEs to seek out Severnside as the location of choice for next stage growth and collaboration opportunities.

The positioning of local business networks on the web, designing 21st technology applications across the Community Campus and enabling Severnside as the next new generation broadband area of Monmouthshire will be key.

Start – up Severnside

The enabling capacity of new technologies, and the challenges presented by changing economic conditions are driving increasing consideration of self-employment and business start-up. Demand for start-up advice from local business advice providers is at a previously unknown high.

Creating the environment for capturing these potential start-ups in the Severnside area is a key objective. Provision is needed in Severnside for small-scale, easy-in easy-out office space/units through the adaptation of existing units at Castlegate and Pill Rd and accompanied by pre-incubation support.

Consideration should be given to the recruitment of an Enterprise Facilitator for Severnside. This could draw on the model developed by the Sirolli Institute or be adapted. Such an would work in the community to stimulate business start-ups, working with local businesses

and others to help individuals by removing barriers to enterprise and business growth to build profitable, self-sustaining businesses.

The new Severnside Community Campus will have the theme of enterprise at its core with potential for business start-up and incubation support services, and the potential to integrate the theme of enterprise within the curriculum should be explored.

Developing community-orientated social enterprises in Severnside, operating on a 'not for profit' basis in meeting service demands provides a further opportunity. In addition to this enabling young people to meet their needs/aspirations through targeted youth enterprise initiatives is an additional feature of Start-up Severnside.

The intervention will also explore the impact of options for abolition or targeted reinvestment of Second Severn Crossing toll revenue in Severnside economic and social mitigation projects. This can inform Welsh Government negotiations with DFT and bridge operators in advance of the current contract's end in 2014/15.

Contribution to Outcomes

'Enterprising Severnside' will make a major contribution to the success of the overall approach of the Better Severnside plan delivering stronger indigenous business growth, more jobs potentially targeted at local people through customised training, stronger community identity with organisations able to better respond to community needs

Business Growth and new jobs: Increasing confidence of existing operators in the Severnside areas and creating the environment and stimulus for new business starts.

Community Cohesion and Identity: The progressive roll out of the elements of this intervention will assist efforts to increase confidence and pride in the area.

Linkages to Other Interventions

Linking new business starts to the opportunity afforded by the education and leisure services at the Community Campus will be an important opportunity. The reconfiguration of Caldicot Town centre will also provide further stimulus for enterprise in terms of niche retail and pop-up style outlets .

As described previously the step up in growth for tourism services linked to Welcome to Severnside opens up growth for new and existing accommodation and visitor services business opportunities. The Strategic opportunities intervention offers the chance to shape new communities based around increasing home-working, growing the digital economy in Severnside.

Transport improvements, as identified elsewhere within the Plan, will also be critical factors in enabling and maximising enterprise and employment growth and encouraging inward investment in the area.

Summary Business Case

Strategic

Encouraging Enterprise is a key strategic objective of the County Council. Placing Severnside at the centre of the short and medium term implementation of the Green and Digital deal frameworks will be crucial to securing progress across the whole plan.

Economic

More jobs, business starts and local employment, reinforcing recognition of the area as one of the best business locations in Wales.

Financial

Clearly the development of the UK Government's Green deal will present a significant opportunity for organising residents, RSLs and businesses locally to collaborate in maximising access to resources for installation of renewable technologies. Partnerships with Digital infrastructure providers have proven successful In Monmouth in upgrading the local digital offer. Severnside should be the next area to explore this approach with partners.

Investment in upgrading business incubation and enabling local enterprise facilitation will open up commercial and grant-funding opportunities for CMC2 to explore

Lead Agents and Stakeholders

The recent reorganisation of Monmouthshire Enterprise, Adventa and CMC2 combined with the 'Making a Better Severnside' intervention put CMC2 at the centre of leading the area-based responses set out in this intervention

Delivery

It is proposed to establish a CMC2 – Severnside division. This will provide a distinct capacity within CMC2 to focus on an integrated approach to Severnside that is commercially aware and entrepreneurial. It will provide the flexibility of response, access to other funding sources and above all local co-ordination and drive.

An early focus, facilitated by the County Council and other agencies would be to undertake research and consultation with 'next-generation' entrepreneurs – those in the latter stages of their schooling, in their first job, those without current work and training, and those contemplating starting a business of their own. Contact with and through the youth service, careers services, the secondary school and more widely should be undertaken.

Low Carbon Severnside

CMC2 will lead on raising awareness of the Green Deal opportunity in Severnside in conjunction with the MCC Housing department and RSLs optimising new funding routes in a local context (Arbed, UK Green deal etc) and identifying the local economic benefits in supply chain , installation and construction . A Severnside Low carbon area action plan will be the result including the highlighting of opportunities to the wider business and residential community and specific projects to realise economic and community benefits.

Digital Severnside

CMC2 should initially broker a partnership discussion between Mitel and Castlegate agents regarding the scope of proposed further incubation developments prior to further contact with the Alacrity foundation. Subsequent to this the targeted marketing and phased implementation of potential incubation space would be led by CMC2 in partnership with the other stakeholders.

Start up Severnside

MCC/CMC2 should investigate the successful deployment of the Enterprise facilitator model in Blaenau Gwent and consider engagement of the Sirolli foundation to explore its application in Severnside as a pilot for possible wider development across the County.

Strategic Development Opportunities in Severnside

Project Definition / Objective

To develop a holistic view of the potential contribution of the future development of two strategic sites in Severnside in responding to evidenced community needs.

Purpose

Severnside's strategic location presents opportunities and challenges in terms of securing sustainable development and an improving quality of life for the majority of its residents. The main purpose of this intervention is to develop a process that considers the two main proposed strategic sites in the areas (as outlined in the draft LDP) in terms of their managed development to address wider community need in terms of the key issues affecting sustainable development.

It is recognised that the managed release of the Council's interests in these sites may affect the level of potential receipt available from purchasers and integral to the intervention will be development of a mechanism for assessing the cost/benefit outcomes of options arising from the proposed master-planning of the two sites.

Context

The draft LDP identifies two development sites in Severnside as strategic sites with the potential to contribute to achieving the overall housing requirements for the County during the proposed implementation period of the LDP. Severnside has experienced significant residential growth in the last 20 years and the proposed strategic sites are located in proximity to two communities that have been the focus for this growth –Magor/Undy and Portskewett.

The potential regional significance of the provision of employment land for development in Severnside to improve the balance between local employment and out-commuting and service regional economic development is a further pressure on any proposed use for the sites. There are, however, employment sites in the vicinity of both settlements.

The main challenge for these sites which have been designated potentially for mixed-use will be to secure the development of accompanying community infrastructure to support any increased development in these communities. Identifying what the shape, size and character of these improvements might be should be informed by a holistic approach that includes but extends beyond traditional issues such as green space, roads, schools and services, - and appraises how to mitigate impacts and maximise benefits to the Severnside area more fully.

An important consideration in the development of these sites will be to maximise the use of sustainable transport modes, with measures to reduce car journeys, through bus services and appropriate local provision of services and amenities. The connection of these sites to strategic transport nodes – such as the Severn Tunnel Junction – and their impact on capacity will also need careful assessment.

Summaries of the Severnside strategic sites outlined in the draft LDP set out below describe the scope and status of the sites to help inform the nature of the proposed intervention.

Crick Road



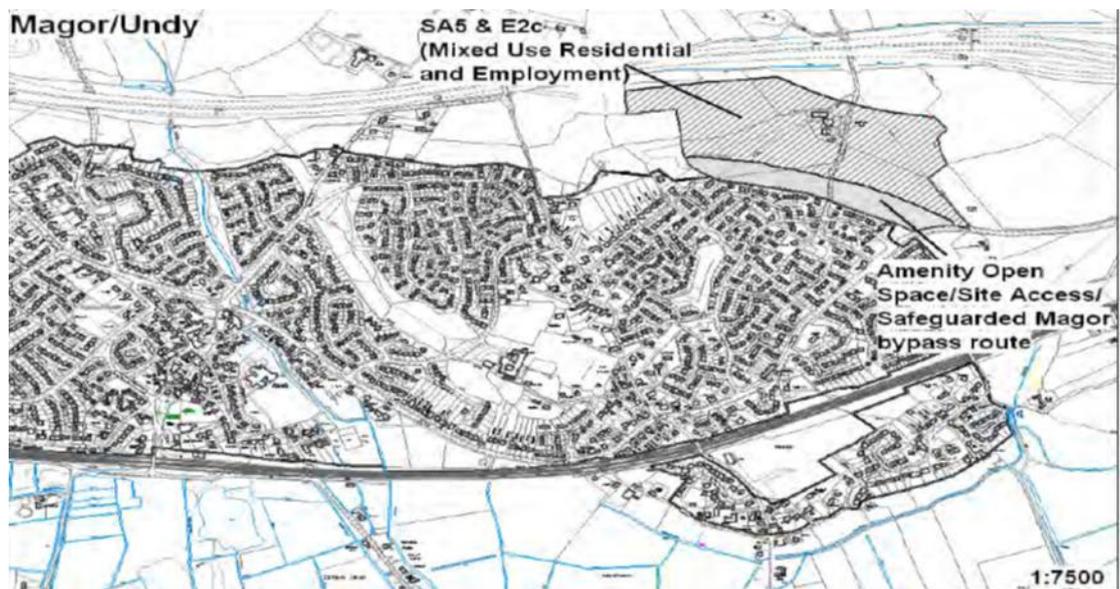
This is a 9.6 hectare site. It is anticipated that there the market would respond positively to its residential allocation but its mixed used status in the draft LDP requires detailed consideration of the employment and other service uses.

Informing this consideration in the context of the wider Better Severnside approach will require vision, options development and risk/benefits assessment of relative land values. Developing an informed holistic view of this strategic site could help inform the treatment of other smaller candidate sites in the immediate vicinity. As an example, promoting specific

requirements in terms of residential design and construction (e.g. Code 5 energy efficiency) would contribute to housing targets and the low carbon Severnside intervention.

Careful appraisal will be required of the financial viability of different approaches, taking account of affordable housing requirements under national and local planning policy and building regulations requirements.

Rockfield Farm



Another Greenfield site comprising 10.4 hectares on the north-eastern side of Undy. The extent of the site has been limited by a safeguarding area for the M4 Relief Road to the north and amenity open space and a safeguarding route for a Magor/Undy by-pass to the south. Options for M4 widening outside Severnside are being led by the Welsh Government and may give cause to revisit the safeguarding element to the site and consider its wider position in relation to the existing local settlements that have experienced significant residential growth in the last 10 years. The proximity of the motorway junction and the concern amongst the community for more sustainable forms of development makes the site an ideal candidate for assessment under this intervention.

Again, careful appraisal will be required of the viability and potential receipt from different approaches in the context of overall development costs and requirements.

Project Description

The project is to develop a systems approach for informing a detailed consideration of strategic sites in relation to the key objectives and intended outcomes for the Better Severnside Plan and inform a holistic master-planning approach to their development. The intervention can act as pilot for potential wider application in Severnside, the rest of Monmouthshire and help inform development of planning policy in Wales.

A staged approach is outlined below. This will be implemented by a cross-departmental team led by Estates.

Stage 1 – Determining scope and vision

Understanding the potential footprint, restrictions, local and county context and opportunity in addressing identified community needs. Confirming market interest and potential values.

Stage 2 – Evidence gathering and options development

This will draw on the LDP evidence-based with additional necessary investigations and studies to help inform the development of vision options. The preferred options will be subject to cost/benefit analysis and financial appraisal, before selection of a preferred approach and preparation of a masterplan for each site in consultation with the community

Stage 3 – Application development and submission

The masterplan for each area will be subject to approval by the Planning Committee. Following approval holistic development briefs will be developed.

Stage 4 – Release, Monitoring and evaluation

Development agreements and continuing monitoring of preferred option implementation

Contribution to Outcomes

The Severnside Strategic sites intervention has the potential to have a number of significant positive impacts.

Business Growth and new jobs: Securing an employment component to the sites that would be focused around the growth sectors identified in the Green and Digital deal frameworks

Community Cohesion and Identity: Detailed consideration of the integration of new development with the neighbouring community addressing shared needs for service and facility improvement will secure improved community cohesion and protect local identity.

Linkages to Other Interventions

There are linkages to the Enterprising Severnside and Better Homes for Severnside interventions. Improvements leading to extension of rail services at Severn Tunnel junction will have a significant impact on the sustainable travel options available to development at the sites.

Summary Business Case

Strategic

The current position of Severnside is a reflection of the absence of strategic thinking in the past regarding the impact of development decisions locally and in the rest of the county and

the resulting unintended consequences in terms of the current and future sustainability of Severnside.

Whilst focused on the two strategic site the development of this process would be intended to help inform any strategic investment or development decision affecting the settlements in order to secure their direct contribution to meeting identified needs.

Economic

Detailed consideration of the type of employment use on the strategic sites in terms of the target growth sectors can contribute to securing growth and/or location specific decisions by relevant companies, resulting in potential cluster opportunities

Adopting a more holistic approach to the future development of the two sites will secure contributions to addressing community needs by informing the range and type of housing, employment and community services required at each.

Financial

Taking time to consider a wider construct of best value will need investment in developing and validating appropriate master-planning for each site. Expectations of Land value receipts would need to be kept under review and discounted where wider benefits of sustainable land use are identified and evidenced.

Lead Agents and Stakeholders

Corporate Estates, Community groups, Town and community councils

Delivery

Initially a cross department team led by Corporate estates with involvement from Enterprise and Traffic and Transport Policy/Passenger Transport within the Council.

Technical and/or masterplanning support will need to be commissioned. The wider objectives for preferred development will need to be developed in meeting identified community needs. The process throughout will involve a wide cross section of stakeholders.

Making a Better Severnside

Project Definition / Objective

To establish a mechanism for delivering the 'Seven for Severnside' plan that introduces enhanced capacity for cross-departmental working at an area level within MCC and joint working with public and private partners and the community by establishing a Partnership Programme Board and an identified agency/CIC to provide the impetus, capacity and coherence necessary to realise the plan and meet evidenced community needs.

Purpose

While the other strategic interventions understandably focus on the strategic opportunities for change informed by needs identified in the baseline each of them is dependent on something even more significant – a change to a collaborative culture to get things done and the means by which change is delivered.

The fundamental nature of this aspect to the Plan's overall approach and the challenges informing its development require its consideration and identification as a strategic intervention in its own right. Successfully achieved it will have a far greater impact on the future development and quality of people's lives in Severnside than any other single individual intervention.

Change requires vision, leadership, the effective deployment of resources (both human and financial) and a platform where progress can be encouraged, monitored and adjusted to suit evolving circumstances. The complexity of successfully managing the interdependent aspects of economic, social and environmental change has escaped the ability of government silo-oriented structures and single issue interested communities. This results in an inability to channel resources to effectively tackle deficits in a timely manner resulting in increased polarity in the service and life experience of communities.

If the principles and interventions developed through this plan are to be more than words on a page or recommendations in another report then the development of a coherent entity that owns the plan and leads its further development and implementation is a necessity.

Context

The development of a Single Integrated Plan for Monmouthshire and footprints for regional working across the wider Gwent area brings the need for some form of area-based, community-led change structure into sharp focus, securing local responses at a population level (10,000 plus) able to justify flexibility in responding to need.

The Communities First programme in Monmouthshire will end in 2012/13 as North Abergavenny will no longer qualify for this level of support. There is, however, an opportunity to learn from this type of community-centred change and adopt some of its principles in meeting the Severnside area's needs.

The County has operated a corporate form of area working in the past and currently services an Area committee for the Severnside area. Reflecting on these experiences will be

important in terms of informing a future mechanism for securing area-led change. A Severnside Community Forum also promised much but then ceased to operate as a result of an inability to secure resources and as a result retain the interest and enthusiasm of community members.

A Community Interest Company, CMC2 was recently established to operate across the whole of Monmouthshire to developing and self-financing and profit-making responses to economic and social need and opportunity. This company could potentially act as a key agency for Severnside's future economic development within the context of this plan.

It has become clear from community consultations during this study that despite the existence of a good number of committed, innovative and enthusiastic groups with good ideas for delivering change there is a lack of capacity to secure aspirations and translate ideas into funded, delivered projects. This leaves the population of Severnside with a perception, real or imagined, that the area is left behind at best and ignored at worst when resource decisions are made and new infrastructure or initiatives are developed.

This may be partly explained by the ineligibility of most of the area for key funding sources such as Rural Development Programme, EU Convergence funding and Communities First. The baseline for this study has however confirmed the challenges the area faces and the pockets of deprivation, particularly in Caldicot, that remain hidden to a great extent in the minds of funders and policy makers on a county, regional or national level.

Not peculiar to Severnside is a sense of confusion and some frustration amongst the local population that signposting and access to help is not user-friendly. The concept of Local Area Co-ordination, currently being developed by Adult Services seeks to enable connections between those in need and services that meet that need through improved information and signposting. The Better Severnside Plan provides an ideal context for evidencing the wider benefits of this approach to the broadest cross section of the local population.

The area clearly experiences different service outcomes to the rest of the County, its socio-economic and demographic profiles point to distinctive aspects requiring differentiated attention and its unique location calls for a specific focus to enable it to realise its potential.

Project Description

The intervention will work with public sector partners, council departments, ward members (through the Severnside Committee), businesses, town and community councils and community organisations to establish a collaborative area governance, planning and community involvement structure supported by a dedicated area delivery development entity. The arrangements will draw on and develop community capacity, enable co-design and co-production of services and local co-ordination of services.

This Severnside model will challenge the traditional approach to solving urban and rural development problems, which focuses service providers and funding agencies on the needs and deficiencies of neighbourhoods, towns and villages. Instead this approach will capitalise on community assets as key building blocks in sustainable urban and rural community revitalisation efforts. These community assets include the skills of local residents, the power of local associations, the resources of public, private and non-profit institutions and the physical and economic resources of the area.

The Severnside Development approach will work on three levels:

Severnside Partnership Programme Board: To provide overall governance and ownership of the Better Severnside Plan and other initiatives and interventions developed over time. Its purpose would be to mobilise partners and the community around a system of Local Area Co-ordination in Severnside bringing collective agency and community resources to bear in addressing challenges and realising opportunities. The board would be a successor body to the existing Severnside Regeneration Group, with a membership of around ten acting as a core executive, meeting monthly with a wider forum meeting twice a year encompassing the full range of service and community interests.

The board would relate to county project and programme boards charged with tackling issues across Monmouthshire advocating Severnside issues and responding to requests for information on how to secure local delivery and proportionate outcomes.

Integrated Service and Project Delivery Team: Mobilising MCC departments around Better Severnside delivery – using Your County, your way and intrapreneurs to respond to local need and opportunity on a cross-departmental basis. Lead officers for Seven for Severnside projects will form a joint project team under the leadership of a member of the Corporate Management team.

Sustainable Severnside Ltd: Developing the capacity of CMC2 to work at an area level with the Severnside community building on the skills of a refocused Communities First programme. This could potentially include use of an ABCD (Asset-Backed Community Development) approach. The key functions of this dedicated capacity would also include

- Responsibility for co-ordinating delivery of the plan
- Leading town centre partnership development and implementation
- Delivering Enterprise facilitation

It is proposed, provisionally through the structure of CMC2 that a dedicated position is established with responsibility for overall coordination of the plan’s delivery, with accountability to the Partnership Programme Board.



Contribution to Outcomes

The Making a Better Severnside intervention will be central to the delivery of all the proposed interventions and outcomes.

Linkages to Other Interventions

This approach will be the over-arching delivery mechanism for the plan.

Summary Business Case

Strategic: The approach complements development of the Single Integrated Plan and the evolving role of CMC2.

Economic: The intervention will promote increased co-ordination, targeting and take-up of services resulting in increased value for money.

Financial: The primary contributions will be in-kind through the commitment of council and partner officer resources and by community organisations and residents. The position of local coordinator will have a financial implication but this could potentially be part-funded through incorporation of the town centre partnership coordinator role.

Lead Agents and Stakeholders

The stakeholders for this intervention will be extensive with CMC2 acting as lead agent.

Delivery

Severnside Integrated Service and Project delivery team – MCC corporate management team in conjunction with the LSB establish a multi-disciplinary team drawn from housing, health, education, environment and police to consider service adaptation and integration at the area level. The team would be serviced by the dedicated capacity created by the formation of Sustainable Severnside CIC

Severnside Partnership Programme board – Following the drafting of a terms of reference on acceptance of the plan, recruitment of key representatives from the public, private and third sectors would take place with a view to the board being led by a dynamic and visionary chair. A core executive of no more than 10 people would drive plan implementation with a wider forum of interested groups meeting twice a year.

The relationship between the board and the Severnside Area Committee would be explored and confirmed with relevant member representation on the board secured. The board would be the monitoring vehicle and accountable body for the Better Severnside plan with all partners affording it appropriate status in their governance and decision-making structures. The Integrated Service Team and Sustainable Severnside Ltd would report to the board. Linkages and accountabilities with other County project and programme boards

would be mapped and clarified as part of the establishment of the Severnside Programme board.

Sustainable Severnside Ltd - Following discussion with CMC2 and subsequent consideration by their board the addition to their core staff or the establishment of a separate entity to service a “Severnside division” will be confirmed. As in every aspect of CMC 2 operations the operating costs for Sustainable Severnside would need to demonstrate cost neutrality in terms of accessing grant aid and other revenue streams for all staff and activity.

An early opportunity to consider the integration of Communities First capacity into CMC2’s structure to operate on an area basis would provide the necessary funding (exit funding from Welsh Government) and experience to take forward local actions. The dedicated lead capacity could progress town centre management/partnership development and Severnside Enterprise facilitation functions.