

**CAERAU WARD
NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL ASSESSMENT
PROPOSAL FOR DECLARATION OF A HOUSING
RENEWAL AREA**

BRIGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Executive Summary

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CAERAU NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL ASSESSMENT

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

1.1 Background

This Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment Study was undertaken by Geoffrey Cheason Associates in collaboration with Katherine Hughes Associates and Lapidar Ltd. The Study was commissioned by Bridgend County Borough Council Housing & Community Wellbeing and comprised of a physical survey, data collection, analysis and wider consultation. The Assessment was undertaken in two phases; the first phase covered the north of the Caerau Ward and the second the south of the Ward. The survey and wider consultation was carried out during February to July 2006.

1.2 Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment

A neighbourhood renewal assessment provides evidence in support of declaring a housing renewal area, which forms part of the local authority's Local Housing Strategy. Local authorities are required to periodically review the housing needs in their areas and as part of this review are required to compile and update reliable information with a view to preparing their Local Housing Strategy.

A housing renewal area seeks to:

- make the area a place where people will choose to live;
- improve housing and general amenities of an area where social and environmental problems are combined with poor housing;
- develop partnerships between residents, the private sector and the local authority;
- support regeneration, including mixed use development, and
- increase confidence in the future of an area and through this help reverse any process of decline.

The Caerau Ward comprises two villages, Caerau to the North of the Ward, which is a Communities First Area and Nantyffyllon, an older settlement to the South. The two villages merged to become one Ward in 1999.

The area that has been the subject of this study was initially chosen by Bridgend County Borough Council from various published data as follows:

- Caerau Ward has a population of 7,026 and was identified as being the 2nd most deprived Ward in the County Borough (Census 2001) and as the most deprived Ward according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2005.

- Caerau Ward has 2,868 residential properties. The 1998 Welsh House Stock Condition Survey identified that 9.8% of occupied properties were unfit. The tenure mix of households within the Caerau Ward shows that 76% are owner occupied, 13% are rented from Housing Associations and 11% are rented from private landlords.
- 31% of the population of the Caerau Ward has a long-term limiting illness, 17% are permanently sick or disabled and 18% are in poor health. The Ward has a high number of people with no qualifications and low numeracy and literacy skills. (*Census 2001*)

The primary objective of the study was to determine the condition of the private housing stock in the Caerau Ward, including ascertaining whether the levels of disrepair, statutory unfitness and social need (disadvantage) fall within the criteria specified by the Assembly Government for declaration of a Renewal Area. It has also sought to build on the findings of the published data as above and to see if it can effectively contribute to support the overall regeneration of the area.

2. NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL ASSESSMENT AREA

2.1 Location

The attached site plan of the Caerau Ward shows the overall boundary of the proposed housing renewal area.

2.2 Boundary

The proposed renewal area boundary should:

- be outward looking not just to delineate the housing within the area;
- encompass physical facilities which are related to the social, commercial and industrial functions of the area;
- be drawn with a view to identifying opportunities. Areas of vacant or derelict post industrial land should be considered for inclusion because of their development potential;
- include all pre 1919 housing;
- include the stock transfer estates of Caerau Park and Tudor Estate (both included in the V2C Estates Improvement Programme), Blaencaerau Estate;
- include all appropriate areas of poor environmental and amenity value.

2.3 Linkages to other Initiatives

There are a number of regeneration initiatives being undertaken in the Caerau Ward that complement the designation of a NRA. They include:

- Physical Regeneration Improvement agenda emerging from the Communities First process;
- V2C Pilot Estate Project (including the environmental improvement agenda into the WHQS initiative);
- the development of a new community focused school, and
- Youthworks provision.

3. MEETING THE CRITERIA FOR HOUSING RENEWAL AREA STATUS

The designation of a housing renewal area requires that the criteria laid down in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, Welsh Office Circular 59/96 as amended in the Regulatory Reform Order on Housing Renewal dated July 2002 be met. The aim is to seek to confirm the high levels of unfitness and deprivation in the Caerau Ward as indicated by the 2001 Census and the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2005.

3.1 Property Inspection and Assessment

The first part of the data gathering exercise has sought to identify the households that require works for one or more of the purposes mentioned in sections 12, 17, 27, or 60 of the 1996 Housing Act.

Surveyors undertook a 100% external survey of properties in the proposed housing renewal area and a 10% sample internal inspection. The surveys confirmed that there were sufficient levels of disrepair throughout the survey area to bring the properties within the designated assessment criteria.

3.2 Socio-economic Household Survey

A parallel socio economic survey on a 20% sample was undertaken mainly by door to door interviews supported by a limited postal survey in the north of the Caerau Ward on the advice of the Communities First Partnership. In the south of the Ward a 100% postal survey was undertaken.

(It should be noted that the door to door survey was undertaken during the working day and those people found at home were mainly the elderly, the housebound and residents not at work).

4. SURVEY FINDINGS

The Survey was undertaken in two parts, the north of the Caerau Ward was surveyed from February 2006 to May 2006 and the south of the Ward (Nantyffyllon) between June and July 2006.

The Survey findings support the 2001 Census data and meet the current published Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment criteria for declaring an area for housing renewal. The survey findings and are summarised below.

4.1 External Inspection Survey

The external inspection found that the majority of disrepair was focused on replacement roof coverings and the poor maintenance of rainwater goods, external walls and boundary walls. It also found that:

- Repairs to a significant number of properties have replaced slate with concrete tile roof coverings that may (and probably will) exceed the safe weight limits of the existing timber roof structure. It is also anticipated that many properties will have inadequate or no party walls in the roof space, common in older terraced properties.
- The removal of chimneys was a consistent feature throughout the survey area being replaced with often poorly installed metal flues. The majority of retained chimney stacks require attention to flashings or pointing.
- The majority of the properties surveyed had 75%+ replacement UPVC double glazed windows and doors.
- Significant numbers of properties have boundary walls and retaining structures in need of repairs or rebuilding. (This will require a robust approach to the problems of the property boundaries to the rear lanes).

4.2 Internal Inspection Survey

The internal inspections found levels of internal disrepair that focused on observed and reported localised problems, such as damp associated with defective flashings, defective pointing or render, rising damp from ground water and inadequate associated drainage.

4.3 Energy Efficiency Survey

The survey found low levels of insulation in external walls in all pre-1919 terraced housing giving rise to condensation problems that are affecting people's health, wellbeing and life styles. Internal inspection also identified that many gas heating installations are now more than 25 years old. Initial discussions have taken place with the leading agencies, including British Gas, the EAGA Partnership and Warm Wales with a view to establish schemes for improving properties that have been identified as

having heating, insulation and other energy efficiency requirements in the Renewal Area.

4.4 Socio-economic Survey

The socio economic survey found high levels of deprivation throughout the survey area including significant reliance on benefits, high levels of sickness, disability and problems with mobility, high levels of property, vehicle and drug related crime and concerns about vandalism, anti-social behaviour and ‘fear of crime’ in specific locations.

The business survey demonstrated low levels of economic participation and lack of interest in business enterprise, social enterprises or new business activity.

The community group survey pointed to low levels of participation and social inclusion, combined with concerns about lack of opportunities and places for social interaction, especially for young people.

4.5 Environmental Survey

The streetscape survey showed an average of poor quality pavements and roads in a poor state of repair. It also identified poor access to amenity and green spaces and consistently high levels of day time on-street parking. Generally low levels of litter problems, vandalism and dog fouling were found. Caerau Road was noted as scoring the highest (poor to very poor on nearly all counts) with low quality to the buildings, the road and pavements, on-street parking and traffic speeds.

4.6 Housing Market Surveys

The housing market survey in north of the Caerau Ward suggests that the most popular segment of the private sector housing market is the investment property. Most properties priced at around £50,000 to £60,000 are sold as soon as they go onto the market, often destined for the private rented sector. This suggests that the north of the Caerau Ward is perceived as a place where “other” people are expected to live.

The housing market survey in the south of the Caerau Ward suggests that properties in good condition sell quickly at a price at around £100,000 for a 3 bed property. Many community buildings and high street shops have recently been converted into dwellings.

5 RECOMMENDATION

The study confirms high levels of property disrepair and social deprivation in the Caerau Ward and, as indicated by the 2001 Census, the area meets the requirements for the declaration of a renewal area.

The recommendation of the assessment is that Bridgend County Borough Council should declare Caerau Ward as a housing renewal area in accordance with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 that a housing renewal area is declared and the period for which the area should be a renewal area is for a minimum of 10 years.

6 APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 Primary Proposals

The success of the housing renewal area programme will be measured critically on the extent of the repairs and improvement to the residential property. The Caerau Housing Renewal Area Strategy is a property/housing led initiative and it is only through this that environmental works can be funded and initiated.

Successful housing renewal areas rely on building sufficient confidence amongst local people to invest in home improvements, developing sufficient momentum to sustain investment by local residents in the property market, ensuring that local people have access to resources to participate. Public intervention must also be mindful of the commitment to social inclusion and equalities issues and to sustainable development.

Thus, the primary proposals focus on the following:

- maximising the investment in home improvements (e.g. by a focus on the external fabric, encouraging resident participation, securing support for vulnerable groups, ensuring added value / leverage for environmental works);
- ensuring a challenging but not over-ambitious programme of home improvements and a commitment to completing the whole project programme;
- a commitment to quality (e.g. implementing a robust building specification and design standards for the renewal area);
- ensuring resident participation and, where appropriate, their financial contribution to the renewal scheme (e.g. maximising income, maturity loans, credit union, etc);
- encouraging the engagement of vulnerable elderly and disabled people in home improvements and adaptations so as to ensure their capacity to remain at home leading independent lives (e.g. support from Bridgend Care and Repair Agency and other support organisations);

- a commitment to achieving best practice in home energy efficiency schemes (e.g. to promote the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) initiative and work with national energy agencies to address issues associated with fuel poverty);
- updating the design and layout of residential streets where necessary to improve residents' safety including the strategic sighting of dropped kerbs to assist disabled mobility, improving the management of refuse and recycling collection and improving car parking capacity;
- a commitment to working with other tenure groups to secure the improvement of the public and private rented sector (this will involve integrating home improvements and energy efficiency schemes with the WHQS and V2C Estate Improvement Programme);
- linking in and complementing the wider regeneration agenda for the area to ensure that a strong physical social and economic base is created.

Measures of the success of the above will include:

- (1) The number of properties that are improved.

(The renewal programme will have to carry out works to an average of some 200+ properties a year over 10 years assuming a typical take up at nominally 90%+ of eligible households. In the peak years 3 -5 the number of properties being repaired could rise to 300+)

- (2) Participation levels by particular cohorts – for example, pensioners, disabled, frail elderly / vulnerable, private landlords, financially needy and BME. There could also be targets for Bridgend County Care & Repair /Credit Union / Social Enterprises
- (3) The general movement in the level of house prices (above overall market trends)
- (4) The proportion of private housing purchased for owner-occupation rather than as an 'investment property' for the rental market
- (5) The proportion of new households (aged 20-35) that commit to purchase in the area
- (6) Take-up of energy efficiency / HEES grants
- (7) Streetscape improvements across tenures [e.g. KWT NEAT measures]

6.2 Secondary Proposals Supporting the Housing Renewal Area

Critical mass within the housing renewal area will not be achieved unless the scheme is supported by other strategic objectives that make it viable and sustainable. Listed below are objectives that will add substance to the housing renewal area. Their aim is to make the villages of Caerau and Nantyllyllon places where people *want* to live. These proposals involve a commitment to supporting/enhancing existing and developing policies as follows:

- the Housing and Community Wellbeing 5 year Local Housing Strategy and the Housing Service Plan 2006-2009 (e.g. priorities include increasing the supply of affordable housing, supported housing, and housing options for those in housing need and preventing and addressing homelessness (including youth homelessness));
- land use and development policies set out in the strategic framework of the Unitary Development Plan / Local Development Plan and ancillary guidance (e.g. policies for change of use of shops and public buildings to residential use, parking guidelines, use of S106 planning agreements, housing design, etc.);
- an urban design strategy to put back a heart into the village of Caerau (i.e. restoring the Station Hotel, tin shops, surrounding area near the access road to the proposed new primary school) and improved settlement boundary definitions across the ward;
- a strategy for redundant, under-used and vacant buildings and land, which takes account of identified local needs in determining new uses (e.g. conversion of a redundant chapel as a hostel for young people, as a learning centre or library);
- economic development policies to ensure a vibrant local economy (e.g. supporting local /social enterprises, credit unions, local business forums) ensuring a more attractive, vital and viable commercial improvement area (e.g. new CIA grants, reducing the number of vacant shops, flexible options for downsizing shopping centre, shuttering scheme), supporting local employment (e.g. through procurement policies and local training);
- a sustainable environmental and transport agenda, as set out in the Local Transport Plan (e.g. local parking schemes, traffic management, public transport / taxis, community transport schemes) and other policies and programmes (e.g. the provision of local food co-ops);
- Bridgend Community Safety Partnership's strategy and action plan – including measures to tackle high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour (e.g. criminal damage, car crime, drug related crime) or prevent crime (e.g. lighting, CCTV, litter-prevention schemes, community punishment schemes, youth diversion);
- public health agenda (e.g. the removal of nuisances, vermin, noise, unsafe buildings, fly tipping, etc);
- equalities policies and commitment to a social equality agenda (e.g. to engage BME groups and ensure disabled access to public transport and shops);
- health, social care and well being, (e.g. provision of specialist accommodation for older people, if required);
- a play and leisure strategy (e.g. providing spaces for sport and recreation, playgrounds and community activities);

- the Communities First Programme (e.g. activities to support the Communities First Action Plan in Caerau (the north of the Ward) and supporting citizenship involvement and participation).

The successful implementation of the housing renewal area will also depend on:

- a partnership approach between public sector agencies, the private sector and the local community to give strong leadership and effective co-ordination of resources;
- a commitment to drawing in local resources to use the housing renewal area as a vehicle for regeneration and social inclusion (i.e. to maximise leverage and added value, use of grants and other sources of funding);
- a commitment to the principles of sustainable development (i.e. supporting local provision where possible, supporting social inclusion, limiting the use of non-recyclables, energy efficiency schemes etc);
- a Renewal Area Partnership Board to facilitate a coordinated regeneration agenda and enable a flexible, positive approach to new development opportunities.

7 NEXT STEPS

Tasks for Bridgend County Borough Council, the Renewal Area Partnership Board and the Housing Renewal Area Team are specified below:

1. Bridgend County Borough Council should declare the Caerau Ward as a housing renewal area.
2. BCBC should designate or appoint an Area Renewal Officer, identify an Area Renewal Team and identify a site for an Area Renewal Office in Caerau.
3. Bridgend County Borough Council should set up a Caerau Ward Renewal Area Partnership consisting of officers from the Council and relevant stakeholders to consider proposals and develop an Action Programme.
4. The Renewal Area Partnership should draw up and agree a preferred ‘model’ specification for works to all properties to act as a quality benchmark for the renewal programme, including:
 - agreeing a quality building specification (deciding on standards, focusing on external repairs, etc)
 - deciding on an appropriate approach to energy efficiency
5. BCBC / the Renewal Area Partnership should develop a plan for programme maximisation including:

- deciding on an appropriate level of household and landlord contribution. It is proposed that the level be set at no more than 15% for owner occupiers and no more than 25% for private landlords.
6. BCBC should develop a strategy for early wins to demonstrate commitment to the renewal area programme. A group of 8-15 properties should be identified to form the first block repair. These properties should be visible to a wide cross section of the residents and thus able to make a first impact in the area to demonstrate the objectives of the scheme.
 - It is recommended that the properties opposite the square at 2-7 Navigation Terrace and Duffryn Road in Caerau north would be ideal, although there are other suitable small runs of terraced housing in the higher numbers of Hermon Road.
 7. BCBC should appoint consultants to undertake the necessary survey and design work to enable the early works expenditure (2006-07 programme).
 8. The Renewal Team should develop a marketing plan to promote the renewal area, including:
 - developing a 'marketing / communication plan' including newsletters, exhibitions, etc. to promote the renewal area;
 - setting up ways of informing and communicating with residents and local businesses;
 9. The Renewal Team should develop formal consultation arrangements for residents and local businesses.
 10. The Renewal Team should develop a policy to support the engagement of vulnerable groups in the renewal area, including:
 - working with Bridgend County Care and Repair Agency and other appropriate organisations to assist residents less able to cope with the administration and financial implications of home repairs, including finding the most appropriate source for loans if required.
 - working with people with financial difficulties to enable them to engage in the renewal area.
 11. Set up a monitoring procedure to evaluate the programme with regular reporting to the Renewal Area Partnership Board. Set targets and milestones to achieve a realistic 3 year programme post completion of first years pilot.

7.1 Priorities for First Year Pilot 2006-7

1. Identify 2007-2009 works packages for the renewal area. The recommendations are as follows:
 - Early works in the north of the Ward should give priority to the inclusion of Caeraru Road, upper Hermon Road, Treharne Road, George Street, Victoria Street and Metcalf Street.
 - Early works in the south of the ward should give priority to the older terraced properties in Picton Street, Union Street and John Street.
2. The achievement of supporting proposals for the renewal area will be in accordance with the works schedule.

8. CONCLUSION

The Caeraru Ward meets all the requirements for a housing renewal area to be declared and it should significantly improve the quality of life of local residents.

It is critically important to the success of the housing renewal area that all parties have a clear understanding of how the renewal area with its focus on private sector home improvements can add value to the wider regeneration agenda and community plan.

Caeraru north is a place where the only significant current investment is as a place where other people will live particularly in rented accommodation. The profile of Caeraru north in particular needs to be raised and to attract investment to become an attractive and viable community where people themselves want to live.

Partnership working is essential. Home improvement on its own will not attract a critical mass of significant inward investment to bring confidence, wealth and wellbeing to the area. A range of components are required to add value to the investment in the bricks and mortar of the housing renewal area, for example, private sector business investment, community safety, environmental improvements, sustainable living, and confidence. The whole of the partnership needs to be greater than the sum of the parts – achieved through synergy, co-ordinated development, and leverage.

There needs to be commitment to and clear strategies for social inclusion, equalities and sustainable development – with measures in place for ensuring participation in the renewal area irrespective of disability, infirmity, financial capacity, housing tenure, learning disability or race.

There should be a system in place for monitoring and evaluating the success of the renewal area.

Geoffrey Cheason Associates: July 2006 - exec summary