

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Written	28 th January 2020
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Service Area	Community Regeneration
Committee Date	3 rd March 2020

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Town Centre Masterplan

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress made in relation to the development of a third iteration of a Town Centre Masterplan.
- 1.2 This report aims to make Scrutiny Members aware of the progress made into the development of a new Placemaking Plan and Delivery Plan that will inform future project development and delivery within the Town Centre.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 The content of this report to be discussed and noted.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Masterplan document was commissioned by Merthyr Tydfil CBC, Welsh Government and Transport for Wales. It provides a Placemaking Plan for Merthyr Tydfil that is based on a shared ambition for the town and its role within the Capital City Region.
- 3.2 The Placemaking Plan is one of three documents that will be developed for Merthyr Tydfil CBC providing an integrated framework for the strategic redevelopment of Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre. The suite of documents that will be presented once finalised includes:

- **Placemaking Plan** – A strategic document detailing the future vision of the Town with high level interpretation of areas of opportunities accompanied by a Baseline Review;
- **Supporting Evidence** – This will include a WelTAG Review (Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance), Commercial Advice and an Economic Impact Assessment all of which have been commissioned to support the creation of the Placemaking Plan; and
- **Delivery and Implementation Plan** – A document outlining the recommended interventions required to support delivery (confidential to the client team). This will be an evolving document in which projects can be added to / removed (as appropriate).

3.3 The Placemaking Plan was informed by the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan (LDP) 2006-2021 and will continue to be informed by the newly adopted LDP 2016 – 2031 drawing on the vision, strategies and key intervention areas to create a series of projects and specific interventions that inform a blueprint towards a future, successful Merthyr Town Centre.

3.4 Transport is a key consideration for the Town Centre and a series of the projects identified in both the Placemaking and Delivery Plans relate to either transport enhancements or require adaptations to transport infrastructure to be fully realised.

4.0 WHERE WE WERE

4.1 The Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil Masterplan was produced in 2002 and, at the time, represented a major shift in the commitment to the way that the Town Centre was managed and improved. This laid the basis for the café quarter and the extensive improvements to the spaces between the buildings and the public realm.

4.2 The Town Centre Regeneration Masterplan (the second plan) was developed in 2008 and gave rise to the creation of Penderyn Square, the Learning Quarter and the major transformation of Avenue de Clichy.

4.3 The previous plans for the Town are either now completed or undeliverable. The new masterplan will continue to build on the considerable and consistent project delivery over the last 18 years and will support the Town in becoming commercially viable and self-sustaining.

4.4 The relocation of the Bus Station is one of the final projects from the 2008 review to be implemented; it is fitting that this forms the foundation for the next generation of strategic interventions in the Town Centre.

4.5 The Placemaking Plan is part of a ‘family’ of policies and strategies which will shape decision making in Merthyr Tydfil over the next 15 years including the Local Development Plan, the Cyfarthfa Plan and the Economic Growth Strategy.

5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

5.1 Merthyr Tydfil CBC have reviewed the draft Placemaking Plan and a sign-off meeting has been scheduled for the end of February.

5.2 In order to identify the ambition for Merthyr in 2035 key issues and opportunities currently facing the Town have been considered. The process has resulted in the identification of seven core ambitions which will feature within the Placemaking Plan:

- The tourism capital of the Valleys and Beacons (centre for adventure tourism to the Heads of the Valley and the Brecon Beacons and as well as an internationally renowned destination for industrial and cultural heritage).
- A low carbon Town (which is designed for the 21st century's needs of low energy use, renewable energy, low environmental impact and adaptability)
- A destination for services (the focus for high quality public services for the communities of the County Borough)
- A better waterside Town (which makes full use of its location on the banks of the River Taff)
- A smart Town (a digitally fluent Town that businesses, public services and citizens can capture the benefits of technology and the application of data)
- An inclusive and engaging public realm (with inviting streets, squares and routes where people feel safe, welcomed and uplifted)
- A resilient Town (with a wide variety of activities and occupiers so that the Town is resilient to change and able to adapt to a rapidly changing world)

6.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

6.1 The vision for the Placemaking Plan is ambitious and long-term. It will be a plan for the next 15 years, a plan that has the potential to transform Merthyr Tydfil and the role that it performs for the Capital City Region and the people that it serves.

6.2 The vision for Merthyr Tydfil is achievable partly because of the things that are changing around the Town Centre. Leisure, Tourism and destination lead developments are already happening and the future of the Town can be confidently based around this as a theme.

6.3 There is a feeling that greater connectivity through the Metro will amplify the interest in Merthyr Tydfil as a visitor destination as well as an attractive residential location where citizens can have the 'best of both worlds' eg. access to city life in Cardiff and access to the outdoor opportunities on Merthyr's green and wild doorstep.

6.4 It is anticipated that the delivery of the key projects that will be delivered over the next 15 years will:

- Deliver large-scale mixed use developments on the riverfront kick-starting the riverside regeneration
- Establish better gateways into the Town
- Deliver improved regeneration between public transport modes
- Convert traditional buildings with new active uses
- Consolidate the high street retail offer around Tesco and St. Tydfil's Shopping Centre
- Revive the Town's traditional landscape
- Exploit any opportunity to create new recreational spaces, uses and connections to the river to enhance the relationship between the Town Centre and the river.
- Provide better pedestrian routes and spaces
- Create spaces for social and cultural events
- Develop a stronger digital presence and brand

- Bolster private sector sentiment towards Merthyr Tydfil so that conversion / development becomes viable without any public sector intervention

6.5 The delivery of signature projects which are essential to the success of the Placemaking Plan. These projects are the most ambitious in terms of impact and would serve to transform Merthyr Tydfil and the role that it currently performs in the Capital City Region. These projects are the Glebeland Site (current Bus Station site) and the Train Station (Interchange Corridor).

6.6 Due to its strategic location, Glebeland Site acts as the catalyst project to reshape the Town Centre while accelerating the regeneration of the riverside. The proposal consist of the development of the current Bus Station site and the adjoining green land into a mixed use scheme that delivers high quality homes and office spaces, while ensuring riverside activation through unique food and retail offer.

6.7 Merthyr Train Station is located close to the Town Centre. The present configuration doesn't allow for a clear sense of arrival and direction, hindering the reshaping of Merthyr Tydfil into a tourist destination. The scheme consist in creating an improved strategic site allowing for greater connectivity and permeability.

7.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT

7.1 The client group consisting of Merthyr Tydfil CBC and Welsh Government are to sign off the Placemaking Plan so the final version is available to share both internally and externally to key stakeholders.

7.2 To meet with the Design Commission for Wales as a key stakeholder for a design review to be undertaken on the Masterplan. This is a key requirement of Welsh Government as part of the commission to ensure this organisation is engaged with appropriately.

7.3 Once the Placemaking plan is finalised, the Urbanists along with Merthyr Tydfil CBC will present the plan with Welsh Government officials to discuss policy direction and potential funding programmes that can be accessed in the future to deliver key projects identified within the Delivery Plan.

7.4 To ensure that the Urbanists engage with Ian Ritchie Architects the team commissioned to develop The Cyfarthfa Plan to ensure that both masterplans are complementary and synchronise with each other. This is an imperative action to ensure that both plans have the same aspirations for the Town Centre.

7.5 A detailed consultation will be held with key stakeholders one the plan is finalised. This will include Elected Members and the Town Centre Partnership.

7.6 Review and identify actions for the two key identified projects namely Glebeland Site and Train Station in order to progress with the development stages of both projects.

8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

8.1 The work being undertaken to support the further re-development of the Town Centre has been identified as one of the key projects supporting the delivery of the Working Life theme contained within the Merthyr Tydfil Corporate Wellbeing Plan.

The project offers clear evidence to support how the Council is aiming to help people feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses, with a developing, safe infrastructure which makes Merthyr Tydfil an attractive destination.

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PROTECTION

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No