



FULL COUNCIL REPORT

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| Date Written | 3 rd August 2020 |
| Report Author | Zoe Thomas / Chris Long |
| Service Area | Community Regeneration |
| Exempt/Non Exempt | Non-exempt |
| Committee Date | 7 th October 2020 |

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

Merthyr Strategic Valley Hub: Placemaking Plan 2019 - 2035

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Placemaking Plan was commissioned by Merthyr Tydfil CBC, Welsh Government and Transport for Wales. It provides a plan for Merthyr Tydfil that is based on a shared ambition for the town and its role within the Capital City Region.
- 1.2 Transport is a key consideration for the Town Centre and a series of the projects identified in both the Placemaking and Delivery Plans either relate to transport enhancements or require adaptations to transport infrastructure to be fully realised.
- 1.3 This Placemaking Plan is the third iteration of the Town Centre Masterplans.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 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 7 core ambitions which will feature within the Placemaking Plan.
- 1.6 The delivery of two signature projects 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).

1.7 There are no financial implications on the authority. The commission of the Placemaking Plan was funded through the Welsh Government's Valleys Taskforce Team.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that

2.1 The content of the Merthyr Strategic Valley Hub: Placemaking Plan 2019 – 2035 be approved.

2.2 The actions identified in Section 5 of the report be approved.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

3.1 The Placemaking Plan was commissioned by Merthyr Tydfil CBC, Welsh Government and Transport for Wales. It provides a 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
- 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 will be informed by the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan (2006-2021) 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 either relate to transport enhancements or require adaptations to transport infrastructure to be fully realised.

3.5 This Placemaking Plan is the third iteration of the Town Centre Masterplan.

3.6 Firstly, 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.

- 3.7 Secondly, the Town Centre Regeneration Masterplan was developed in 2008 and gave rise to the creation of Penderyn Square, the Learning Quarter and the major transformation of Avenue de Clichy.
- 3.8 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.
- 3.9 The relocation of the Bus Station is one of the final projects from the 2008 review to be implemented and it is fitting that this forms the foundation for the next generation of strategic interventions in the Town Centre.
- 3.10 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 Merthyr Tydfil CBC Economic Recovery Plan.

4.0 MERTHYR TYDFIL PLACEMAKING PLAN

- 4.1 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 7 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 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)
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 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’ e.g. access to city life in Cardiff and access to the outdoor opportunities on Merthyr’s green and wild doorstep.

4.5 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 townscape, with specific focus on prominent Listed Buildings of social, historic or architectural merit (e.g, the YMCA, Miners Hall, Synagogue, etc)
- 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

4.6 The delivery of two signature projects 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).

4.7 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 consists 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.

4.8 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 consists of creating an improved strategic site allowing for greater connectivity and permeability.

5.0 NEXT STEPS

5.1 Once the Placemaking Plan has been endorsed by full Council, Merthyr Tydfil CBC will establish a working group meeting 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.

- 5.2 A detailed consultation will be held with key stakeholders once the plan has been endorsed. This will include Elected Members, Town Centre Partnership and local businesses.
- 5.3 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.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications on the authority. The commission of the Placemaking Plan was funded through the Welsh Government's Valleys Taskforce Team.

7.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

| | Positive Impacts | Negative Impacts | Not Applicable |
|---|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives | 3 of 4 | 0 of 4 | 1 of 4 |
| 2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement | 5 of 5 | 0 of 5 | 0 of 5 |
| 3. Protected Characteristics <i>(including Welsh Language)</i> | 2 of 10 | 0 of 10 | 8 of 10 |
| 4. Biodiversity | 1 of 1 | 0 of 1 | 0 of 1 |

Summary:

The main positive impacts are that the development of the Masterplan will support Well-being Objectives and Sustainable Development Principles through targeting economic growth, with a focus on the long-term sustainability of the Town Centre. The project will have a positive effect on the economy, socially and on heritage.

No negative impacts have been identified.

ALYN OWEN
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

COUNCILLOR GERAINT THOMAS
PORTFOLIO MEMBER FOR
REGENERATION AND PUBLIC
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 |

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.