



MERTHYR INTERCHANGE LINK DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

MIL-ESA-XX-XX-RP-A-000010

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STRUCTURE & NARRATIVE OF REPORT

Report Structure

The report structure is based on the guidance outlined in the Design and Access Statements in Wales document as prepared for the Welsh Government by the Design Commission for Wales.

The document is split into the following parts:

PART 1:
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & BRIEF

PART 2:
SITE & CONTEXT ANALYSIS

PART 3:
DESIGN PROPOSAL

PART 4:
APPENDIX

Report Narrative

The Design and Access Statement is graphically arranged to clearly explain how the design proposal accounts for and addresses the Objectives of Good Design as set out in the Welsh Government's Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12: Design. The design has been guided by achieving these 5 objectives. In order to demonstrate how each objective has been considered, the report will answer a series of questions under each heading which provides opportunity to highlight key decisions and explain the reasoning behind each stage of the design process.



Objectives of Good Design as set out in the Welsh Government's Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12: Design.

The overall theme of the section will be indicated by a graphical thread along the base of the page. Where any additional elements are considered within the report content, a graphic as shown to the right will indicate which of the objectives is relevant. This will be accompanied by a combination of text and diagrams to concisely explain thought process and outcomes.

1

ACCESS

2

CHARACTER

3

COMMUNITY SAFETY

4

MOVEMENT

5

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

CHARACTER

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PART 4: STAGE 3 REPORT APPENDIX

See separate Appendix document for the following documents:

Building Services
Drainage
Highways
Structures
Lighting
Design Out Crime Officer Report
Ecology Technical Note
Road Safety Audit
Architectural

VISION STATEMENT

Provide Ease of Access for All

The design will consider access to the site in terms of circulation, routes, gradients, and materials in order to ensure safe, equal, and convenient access for all. Maintenance of any accessibility features will be assessed. The principles of inclusive design will be addressed and any engagement with access groups will be included.

Ensure Attractive and Safe Public Spaces

As the proposal includes a large area of public realm, the scheme will incorporate design measures to ensure safe and secure spaces. Natural surveillance, material selection, lighting and wayfinding will be carefully designed to discourage anti-social behaviour. Engagement with relevant consultees and the design response to any feedback will also be included.

Achieve Efficient Use and Protection of Natural Resources

The response to the Climate Crisis is an important aspect of the design which will influence a variety of features of the proposal. In order to improve energy efficiency, material choice will be considered to increase its lifespan and reduce maintenance needs. Bioretention features will be incorporated alongside both hard and soft landscaping to improve biodiversity.



Sustain and Enhance Local Character

The scale and proportion of the development will be in keeping with existing hierarchies, heights, and densities, whilst making clear the definition of public space. The proposal will strike a balance between retaining existing architectural heritage features, and improving the sense of place for users.

Promote Sustainable Means of Travel

By its nature, the proposal will improve pedestrian movement between the Train Station and High Street. The scheme facilitates improvements to an active travel network, providing for safe and direct routes which offer visible destinations for those using the spaces. The report will explore access points and safeguarding, with reference to relevant documentation such as the *Manual for Streets*.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & BRIEF



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, PROJECT BACKGROUND & BRIEF

Executive Summary

This document has been prepared on behalf of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council for the proposed redevelopment of the Merthyr Lower High Street into Merthyr Interchange Link.

The document demonstrates the suitability of the proposal for the site and its setting. It also explores how the local and historic context has influenced the design proposal. The report includes the assessment of the existing site and context, along with an outline proposal for the redevelopment of the Monique's site and a more detailed proposal for the public realm design.

This project presents the opportunity to introduce an open and inviting route from the High Street to the Train Station, across a gently sloping site. The Merthyr Interchange Link Project will remove select buildings to allow for a new access route. The additional access route will be accessible by pedestrians and cyclists to provide a vibrant and lively public realm. This will contribute to the much needed regeneration of the town and perform an important role for the local community and visitors of Merthyr Tydfil.

Project Background

Merthyr Tydfil is situated at the northern end of the Taff Valley, South Wales, approximately 30 kilometres to the North West of central Cardiff. The town centre stands on the East bank of the River Taff surrounded by a mountainous landscape setting. Historic road and rail links run through and into the town centre, including the Taff Valley Branch Railway Line, terminating at Merthyr Tydfil. The town contains the historic commercial, religious and administrative centre of the industrial district that developed between the mid-18th and early 20th centuries.

The existing Train Station is located centrally to the town centre, however disconnected to the High Street and Bus Station. The arrival and way-finding is unclear and obscure. There is an opportunity to improve arrival to the town centre by supporting a space for activity that animates the area upon arrival to the town. The scheme will open up the High Street connection and will be centred around the inclusion of a high quality Public Realm that unites and integrates the whole with the existing historic High Street.

The proposals have been developed with the town centre regeneration of Merthyr Tydfil as its focus, in alignment with the Merthyr Tydfil Regeneration 15 Year Masterplan (2035), prepared by The Urbanists and Mott MacDonald.

Project Brief

The project brief comprises of the following key elements:

- To open up a new public realm space to better connect the station to the High Street by demolishing select buildings.
- New 'place-making' design to improve access and wayfinding for this part of the town.
- To improve the experience of travellers entering and navigating through Merthyr Tydfil.
- To interpret the significance of Merthyr Tydfil's historic High Street and its importance.
- To develop an outline proposal to replace Monique's with a suitable and sensitive scheme.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED WORKS

Proposed Works:

A summary of the proposed works includes the following items:

Demolition

- Demolition of Peacocks building.
- Demolition of British Red Cross building.
- Demolition of the Monique's building.

Public Realm

- Introduction of new public realm space between Masonic Street and High Street.
- Relocation of existing sub station.
- Re-building of Monique's into an attractive corner plot.

Principles of Proposed Works:

The preservation of character assets, fostering a revitalisation of the high street, economic growth, and the long-term sustainability of the high street environment are all key drivers.

The proposed plan involves the demolition of the Peacocks and red Cross buildings, paving the way for the establishment of a vibrant public realm that visually connects with the train station. Unfortunately due to the state of disrepair Monique's has fallen into it will also need to be demolished. The intention is to obtain outline planning consent to re-build Monique's into a purpose built corner plot replicating the Victorian style character of the existing building. The adjacent structure, Sunflower Cafe, will frame and support the newly opened public realm with a newly rendered facade facing the public realm.

This transformation seeks to breathe new life into this area of the town, ensuring that both existing buildings and proposed public realm contribute to the activation of the street frontages.



Stage 3 Aerial Visual - South end of High Street

EXISTING BUILDINGS

Removal: Peacocks and British Red Cross

The two existing buildings identified for removal sit between Monique's to the north and Sunflower Cafe to the south. In their current condition Peacocks and British Red Cross are of limited to low architectural value, ageing and maintained to a low standard, adding little visual appeal to the High Street. The proposal explores the removal of these two buildings, which will allow the creation of improved connectivity between the High Street and Masonic Street.



Photograph of Existing High Street from Masonic Street and Swan Street Junction

Removal: Monique's

The removal of Monique's has been driven by its current condition which means it's not economically viable to save. There is extensive damage to key structural elements of the existing building. The outline planning application will seek to re-create Monique's Victorian style into a purpose built corner plot that interacts with High Street and the newly formed public realm. Monique's will be a shell and core proposal at this stage while the Council seeks to collaborate with a developer on its use.



Photograph of Peacocks



Photograph of Monique's



Photograph of British Red Cross

SITE & CONTEXT ANALYSIS



SITE CONTEXT

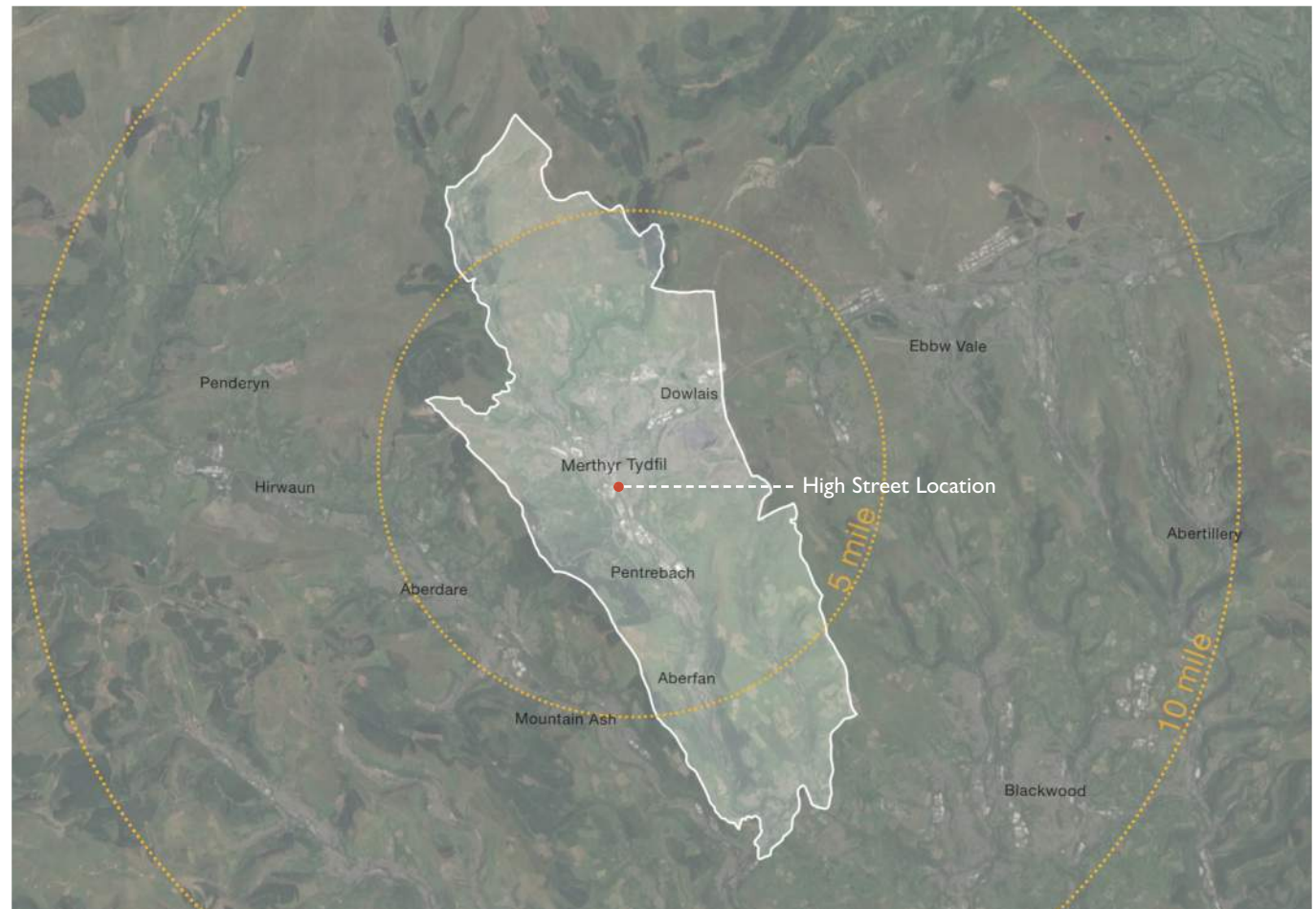
Merthyr Tydfil is a town of rich historical origins situated in the heart of the Welsh Valleys. With its significance deeply rooted in the industrial heritage of South Wales, Merthyr Tydfil stands as a testament to the region's resilience and transformation over the centuries.

Historically, Merthyr Tydfil played a pivotal role during the Industrial Revolution, earning the nickname "The Iron Capital of the World" due to its thriving iron and steel industry. The town witnessed innovation and technological advancements, leaving a lasting impact on the economic landscape of the Valleys.

In the present day, Merthyr Tydfil retains its historical charm while embracing modern developments. The town is a cultural hub with museums and landmarks that showcase its industrial past, allowing visitors to delve into the rich history that shaped the community.

Access to Merthyr Tydfil is facilitated by its strategic location within the Valleys, providing a gateway to the stunning landscapes that characterise the region. The town is well-connected by road and public transportation, making it easily accessible for both residents and tourists. Transportation networks, including rail and bus services, link Merthyr Tydfil to neighbouring towns and cities, fostering connectivity and enhancing the region's accessibility. This connectivity not only facilitates local commuting but also opens doors for businesses and trade, contributing to the economic vibrancy of the area.

From an economic perspective, Merthyr Tydfil has experienced diversification, shifting away from its industrial roots to embrace emerging sectors. Despite facing economic challenges, the town has actively sought investments in areas such as tourism, retail, and services, contributing to the development of a more diverse and sustainable economic environment. As part of a strategic masterplan, Merthyr aims to not only improve its economic vitality but also enhance its appeal as a prominent and attractive town for residents and visitors alike.



Merthyr Tydfil County Borough



Distance Radius

Location Plan - Merthyr Tydfil County Borough

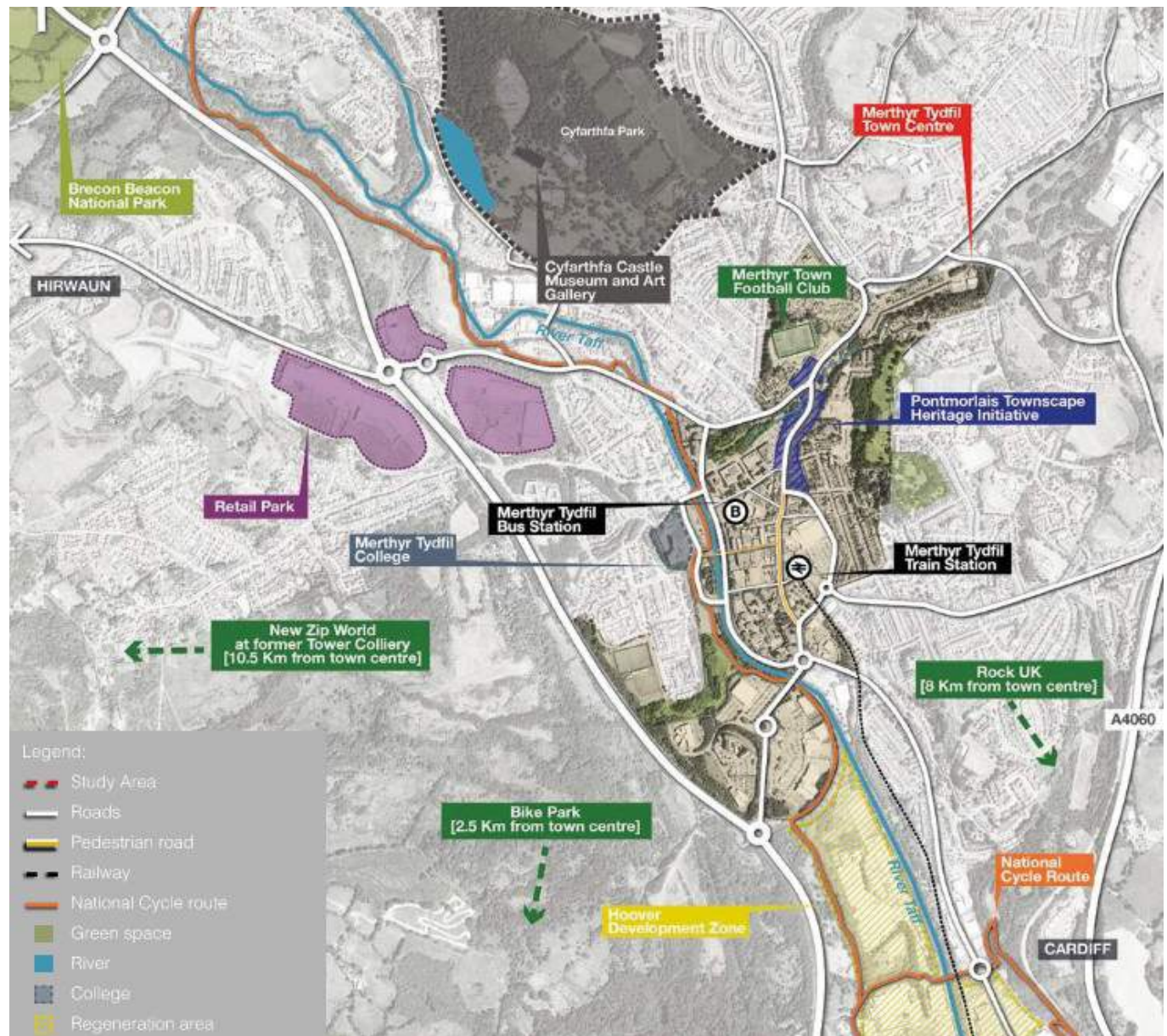
MASTERPLAN VISION STATEMENT

Merthyr has prepared a 15-Year Placemaking Plan, a collaborative initiative between the County Borough Council, the Welsh Government, and Transport for Wales, which seeks to address the decline of high streets. Developed by The Urbanists, Mott MacDonald, and Alder King, this masterplan serves as a replacement for the 2002 Regeneration Plan.

By 2035, the plan envisions transforming the city centre into a dynamic hub featuring residential, office, leisure, and retail spaces, complemented by new plazas, green areas, and an active riverside. **The overarching objective is to establish an inviting, safe, and uplifting environment characterized by appealing streets and squares.**

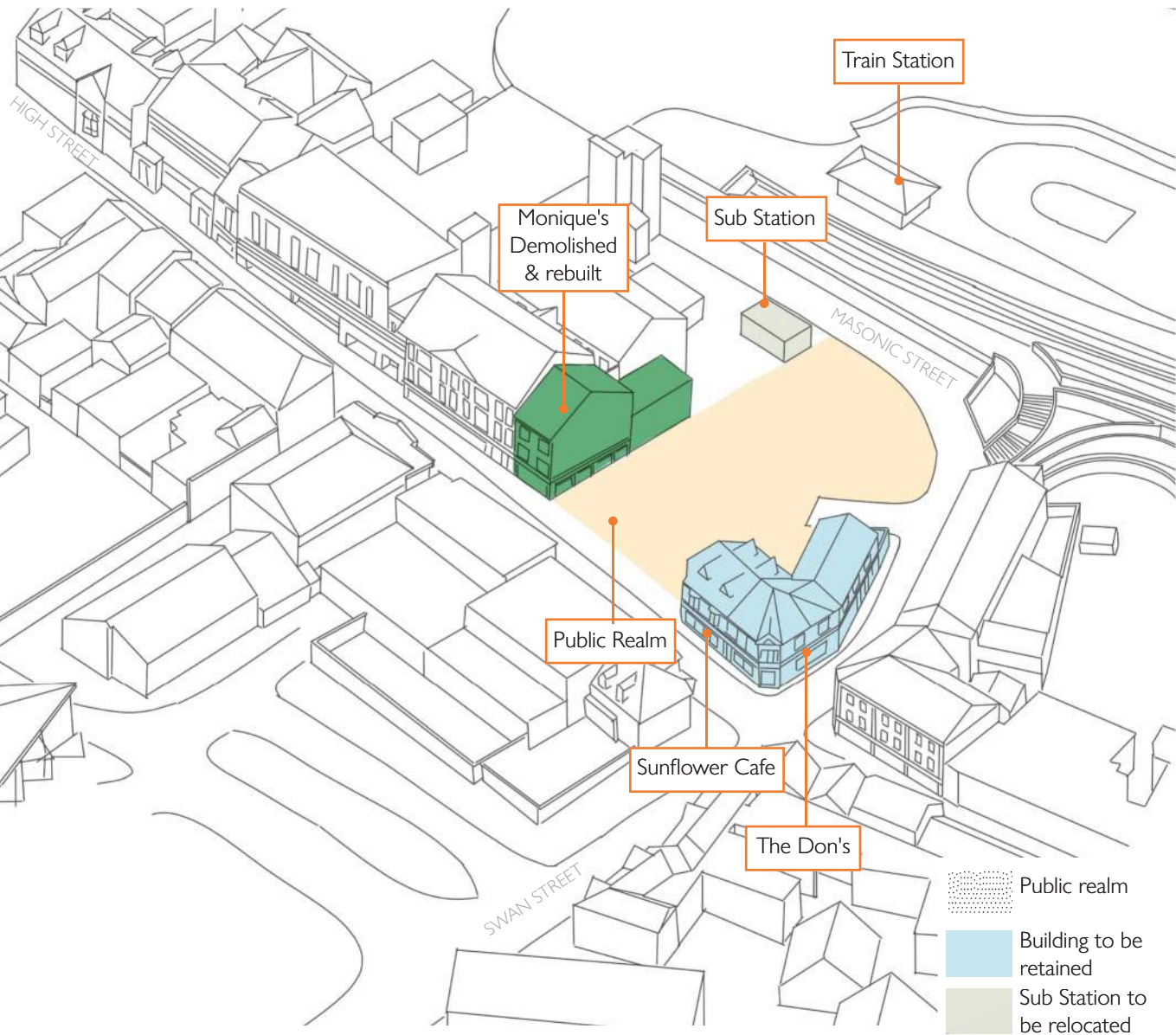
Key elements of the proposal include the renovation and enhancement of façades along the High Street, a focus on revitalising the traditional townscape, particularly listed buildings, and the diversification of offerings in the town centre. The also plan aims to increase the number of homes, hotels, and workspaces within the town centre, as well as improve pedestrian and cycling routes.

At the heart of the initiative is the Merthyr Interchange Link development, which serves as a focal point for new development. The design of the High Street plays a crucial role in unifying various aspects of the masterplan.



The Urbanist's Vision Masterplan

LOWER HIGH STREET VISION



3D Aerial Showing Proposed Demolition and Renovation Areas

Vision
The Merthyr Interchange Link project is dedicated to the revitalisation of the High Street, with a focus on connecting the train station to the commercial space, thereby establishing open and accessible links.

Currently, the lower high street contends with underutilised buildings that lack architectural significance, resulting in adverse effects on the quality and character of the high street. The proposal is focused on strategic removal and preservation of character assets ensuring long term sustainability of the high street environment.

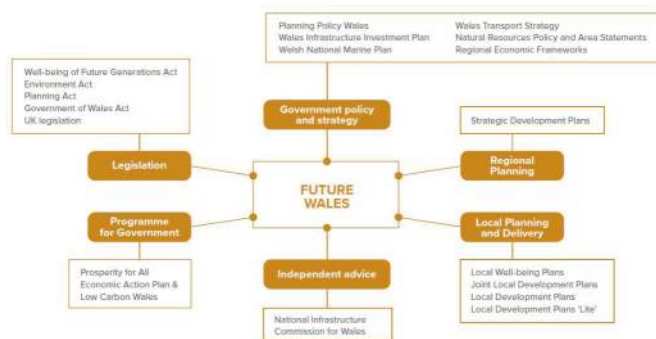
The project integrates with the high street, uniting the public transport hub and commercial space through the incorporation of public realm design. This landscaping strategy introduces green elements, nurtures biodiversity, and enhances the well-being of the transient space. The public realm will function as an extension of the commercial spaces, providing breakout and outdoor areas.

PLANNING CONTEXT

Local and National Planning Policy

The following provides a summary of the planning policies (both national and local level) which are relevant to the proposals. An assessment of the application against the Development Plan policies are outlined below. The development plan relevant to the site consists of the following:

- **Future Wales - The National Plan 2040 (2021):** A national development framework setting the direction for development in Wales to 2040. A spatial development plan with strategy for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, achieving de carbonisation and climate resilience, developing strong ecosystems and improving health and well-being within communities.
- **Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan 2016-2031:** The Local Development Plan (LDP), sets out planning policies and allocates sites for different types of development.
- **Merthyr Tydfil Adopted Replacement LDP 2016-2031 Proposals Map (January 2020)**



Model of Future Wales Influence

The following are 'material considerations' which are relevant to the proposals:

- **Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 (February 2021):** Sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. It is supplemented by a series of TANs, Welsh Government Circulars, and policy clarification letters, which together with the PPW provide the national policy framework for Wales.
- **Welsh Government's Net Zero Strategic Plan (September 2022).**
- **TAN 12: Design (2016).**
- **TAN 24: Historic environment (Welsh Government, 2017). Supersedes Welsh Office Circular 61/81.:Amended by Welsh Office Circular 1/98:** Sets out advice on legislation and procedures relating to historic buildings and conservation areas. The TAN provides specific guidance on how the planning system considers the historic environment during development plan preparation and decision making on planning applications.
- **Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area, Character Appraisal (2009):** Identifies the appropriate boundary of the Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area and to define the key positive characteristics that contribute to its special historic or architectural interest. It also identifies issues that detract from the character and appearance of the area. In line with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act.
- **The Welsh Government policy, Manual for Streets and its companion guide Manual for Streets 2:** Guidance to assist those in the planning, construction and improvement of streets to deliver more contextually sensitive designs.
- **Technical Advice Note 15 (TAN 15): Development, flooding and coastal erosion:** This TAN provides technical guidance which supplements the policy set out in PPW in relation to development and flood risk, and development and coastal erosion. It provides a framework within which the risks arising from river, coastal and surface water flooding and coastal erosion can be assessed, as well as advice on the consequences of the risks and adapting to and living with flood risk.

National Planning Policy

The Planning Policy Wales (PPW) document sets out land use planning policies and provides the policy framework for the preparation of local planning authorities' development plans. This document sets out the underlining basis for the formulation of development management policies and can therefore be a 'material consideration'.

Paragraph 1.2 states that "The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation and resultant duties such as the Socio-economic Duty. A well-functioning planning system is fundamental for sustainable development and achieving sustainable places."

Paragraph 1.18 states that "Legislation secures a presumption in favour of sustainable development in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise to ensure that social, economic, cultural and environmental issues are balanced and integrated."

Paragraph 1.22 states that "Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the adopted plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

Active and Social Streets

Paragraph 4.1.19 states that well-designed, people orientated streets are fundamental to creating sustainable places and increasing walking, cycling and use of public transport. New development should improve the quality of place and create safe, social, attractive streets where people want to walk, cycle and enjoy, and children can play. Paragraph 4.1.20 explains the design and layout of streets must give a high priority to their role as public spaces and meeting the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users, reflecting the principles of the sustainable

transport hierarchy. 4.1.21 encourages that well integrated green infrastructure, such as SUDS, street trees and verges, not only create a pleasant environment but can also achieve a range of other benefits, including pollutant filtering, urban cooling, water management and habitat creation. Such features should be included as part of a well-designed street layout.

Tourism

Paragraph 5.5.1 highlights tourism as being vital to economic prosperity and job creation in many parts of Wales. Tourism can be a catalyst for regeneration, improvement of the built environment and environmental protection. The planning system encourages tourism where it contributes to economic development, conservation, urban regeneration, and social inclusion.

Energy

Paragraph 5.7.1 states that development should be designed to be energy efficient. Low carbon electricity must become the main source of energy in Wales. The Welsh Government expects all new development to mitigate the causes of climate change. Paragraph 5.8 supports development that has very high energy performance and is adaptable to the current and future effects of climate change through the incorporation of effective mitigation and adaptation measures.

Design Choices to Prevent Waste

Paragraph 5.12.1 promotes the use of fewer resources and seeks to reduced waste. Paragraph 5.12.5 states that development proposals should incorporate design features and materials which enable flexibility and adaptability throughout the design life of a building, and which enable re-use upon deconstruction. Paragraph 5.12.6 goes on to encourage the reuse and recycling of material available locally.

Listed Buildings

Paragraph 6.1.10 states that there is a general presumption in favour of the preservation and/or enhancement of a listed building and its setting. For any development proposal affecting a listed

building or its setting, the primary material consideration is the statutory requirement to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Conservation Areas

Paragraph 6.1.14 recognises that there should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of conservation areas including their settings. Paragraph 6.1.16 states that preservation or enhancement of a conservation area can be achieved by a development which either makes a positive contribution to an area's character or appearance or leaves them unharmed. Mitigation measures can also be considered which could result in an overall neutral or positive impact of a proposed development in a conservation area.

Green Infrastructure

Paragraph 6.2.1 defines green infrastructure as a network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places. Component elements of green infrastructure can function at different scales. At a local scale, it might comprise parks, fields, public rights of way etc. The planning system should protect and enhance green infrastructure assets and networks.

Securing Biodiversity Enhancements

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) 11 Paragraph 6.4.2 identifies that the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduced an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (Section 6 Duty). It is recognised that the planning system has a key role in helping to reverse the decline in biodiversity and increasing resilience of ecosystems. The policy states that it is important that biodiversity and resilience considerations are taken into account at an early stage in both development plan preparation and when proposing or considering development proposals.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The following demonstrates the compliance of the scheme in relation to the relevant policies within the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) 2016- 2031:

Policy SW11: Sustainable Design and Place Making
Policy CW1: The Historic Environment
Policy EnW1: Nature Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience
Policy EcW3: Retail Hierarchy - Supporting Retail Provision
Policy EnW4: Environmental Protection
Policy EcW5: Town and Local Centre Development
Policy EcW8: Renewable Energy

Improving Social Well Being

- Policy SW11: Sustainable Design and Place Making

In reference to Policy SW11, the development must contribute to the creation of attractive and sustainable places through high quality, sustainable and inclusive design.

The scheme ensures that it does not negatively impact on the environment or the existing infrastructure at large.

The design of the development has been considered carefully and the proposed scale, form, mass and materials used in the construction and renovation of buildings and the public realm will not detract from the character of the surrounding built environment.

The construction will utilise high-quality materials and meticulous detailing, ensuring consistency with the character and aesthetics of the neighbouring architecture within the conservation area.

The High Street is complemented by a high-quality Public Realm that aligns with the existing landscape design of the area enhancing the experience for those arriving to the centre or navigating between transport nodes, contributing to an improved

urban environment. The goal is to create a healthy, active, visually appealing space while reducing opportunity for anti-social behaviour.

The proposed scheme ensures minimal negative impact on local amenity, light, and privacy. By removing buildings, recreational space is provided, enhancing the setting of historic structures like the listed chapel.

The Public Realm design includes sustainable drainage features including planting beds and varied paving. Measures to improve water quality and enhance biodiversity through diverse plant species are incorporated.

Improving Cultural Well Being

- Policy CW1: The Historic Environment

The policy emphasises the integrity of historic High Street, which will be conserved and enhanced. The proposal places particular emphasis on capturing the essence of local character and context. The site itself enhances the surroundings of historic buildings along the High Street, and the architectural design and choice of materials are influenced by historical references.

By incorporating these elements, the resultant scheme will make a positive contribution to the cultural character and identity of the town centre. The design not only respects and conserves the integrity of the existing environment but also enhances it.

Improving Environmental Well Being

- Policy ENW1: Nature Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience

Policy EnW1 necessitates that the development proposal must prioritise the promotion of ecosystem resilience and the

preservation and enhancement of biodiversity. Despite the current biodiversity value of the site, the proposal recognises the need for development and presents opportunities for improving the natural environment in the area.

The Public Realm concept is carefully designed to align with the local context and established landscape styles while actively seeking opportunities to enhance ecosystem resilience and biodiversity conservation within the town centre. This is achieved through the implementation of sustainable drainage systems and the incorporation of diverse planting strategies. Any potential impacts of the scheme will be mitigated and effectively managed through future maintenance and management practices.

- Policy ENW4: Environmental Protection

Development proposals must comply with Policy EnW4, ensuring that they do not have an unacceptable impact on people, residential amenity, property, or the natural environment. The design of the project is dedicated to enhancing the well-being of individuals, safeguarding property, and promoting a sustainable built environment through the creation of a high-quality Public Realm.

To enhance the water environment, the development will incorporate measures aimed at improving water quality wherever feasible. In terms of flood risk, the design of the Public Realm considers appropriate measures to avoid unnecessary risks and align with the requirements outlined in Technical Advice Note 15 (TAN 15).

The scheme ensures that there will be no presence of hazardous substances, land contamination, or land instability, guaranteeing a safe and secure environment for residents and the surrounding area. Furthermore, design considerations have been made towards minimising any noise, vibration, odour, and light pollution associated with the development. This commitment ensures a pleasant atmosphere for residents, visitors, and the wider community.

Improving Economic Well Being

- Policy EcW3: Retail Hierarchy - Supporting Retailing Provision

Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre, positioned as a primary retail hub, is the preferred location for retail, leisure, and compatible developments. Policy EcW3 encourages proposals that enhance the vitality and economic sustainability of the town centre, promoting the acceptance of new and improved retail, leisure, and complementary facilities.

The proposed scheme presents an exciting opportunity to improve the connection between the Train Station and the commercial High Street by opening up the Public Realm. This integration allows for enhanced accessibility and flow between the two areas.

Designed to meet high standards of design quality and sustainability, the development presents the opportunity to integrate retained existing buildings onto a vibrant and active public realm. These elements will contribute significantly to the vitality of the town, fostering a dynamic atmosphere.

- Policy EcW4 - Retail Allocation

The focal point of investment for meeting the broader regeneration goals of the Local Plan is Merthyr Tydfil town centre. This concentration of new investment aligns with the findings of the Merthyr Tydfil Retail and Commercial Leisure Study. By prioritising the town centre, this development presents an excellent opportunity to address the revitalisation of the High Street, serving as a catalyst for an improved retail environment.

- Policy EcW5 - Town and Local Centre Development

Policy EcW5 promotes the enhancement of the Town and Local Centre vitality and viability. The town centre boundary in Merthyr Tydfil encompasses the primary retail area and other

concentrated areas of town centre uses, such as civic offices and educational institutions. Its primary purpose is to designate the area where retail, leisure, and other town centre uses should be concentrated, following the sequential approach and protecting uses under the retail impact test.

The principal shopping area, which spans a small portion of the Town Centre, includes both sides of High Street between John Street in the north and Swan Street in the south. It also encompasses properties in Victoria Street, Market Square, Beacons Place, and the St. Tydfil's Square Shopping Centre. Recognising the importance of integrating retail with cultural, leisure, and other uses, the scheme aims to contribute to a vibrant and thriving town centre by strategically removing select existing buildings. This vision is supported by the design of the Public Realm which works to improve the overall attractiveness of the town's arrival experience.

- Policy EcW8 - Renewable Energy

Planning Policy Wales and the Welsh Government's Net Zero Strategic Plan prioritises renewable energy and low carbon energy. Renewable energy sources encompass wind, water, solar, geothermal energy, and biomass derived from plant material. Low carbon energy technologies focus on energy efficiency, excluding nuclear power. The Council actively supports the adoption of renewable energy as a tangible approach to reducing the local carbon footprint.

To align with these objectives, the scheme incorporates several renewable energy strategies, and the development aims to contribute to the utilisation of renewable and low carbon energy sources in the area.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Public Consultation

The consultation material illustrated here was exhibited during the latter half of June 2023, for an earlier iteration of the scheme which proposed a 'station to station' strategy, connecting the various transport interchanges across the town centre.. The proposal also included a new building and canopy for the train station.

Exhibition boards were displayed in a High Street shop which was open daily for consultation over a period of two weeks. The public were invited to leave comment prompted by a set of questions. These questions with reduced design information was also available on a project consultation website sponsored by the council.

View 'station to station' plans

CATEGORIES : PRESS RELEASE | 16 JUN 2023

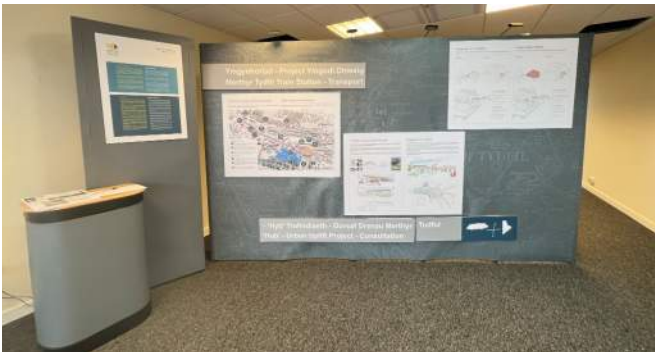


Residents and businesses will have an opportunity over the next two weeks to view plans to improve the 'corridor' between the new bus interchange and a refurbished railway station.

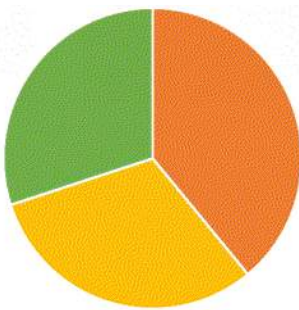
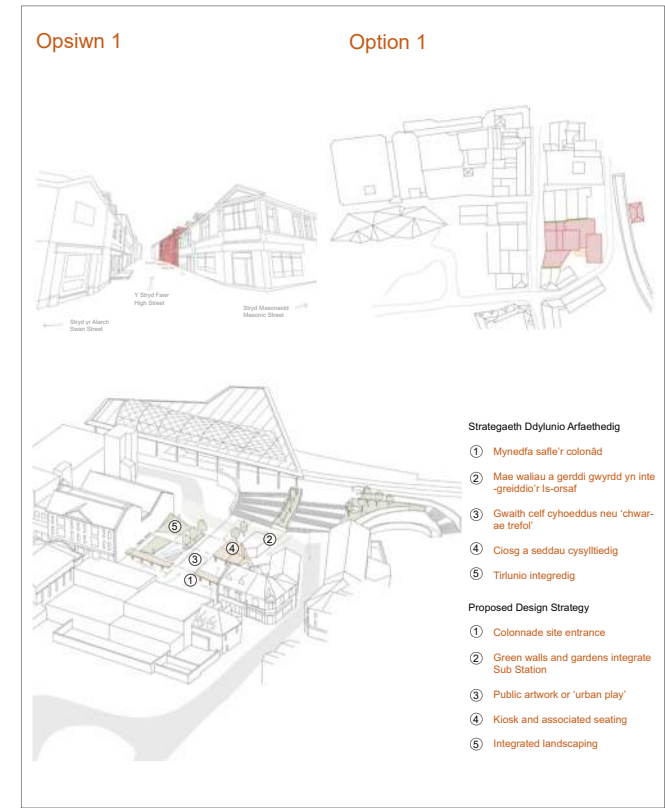
The County Borough Council consultation shop in St Tydfil Shopping Centre will be open from **Tuesday, 20 June to Friday 30** to display plans and ask for people's comments on proposals to create a 'welcoming, pleasant and high quality' connection from the train station to the High Street and the bus station.

The 15-year Town Centre Masterplan, aimed at transforming the town centre into a thriving retail, hospitality, leisure and business hub, highlighted a 'disconnection between bus and train station' and 'the poor visual and physical connection' to train station.

An online survey detailing the plans will be live from June 20. The consultation shop, which will be open from **10am-2pm each weekday** from 20-30 June, will also have paper copies of the survey available.



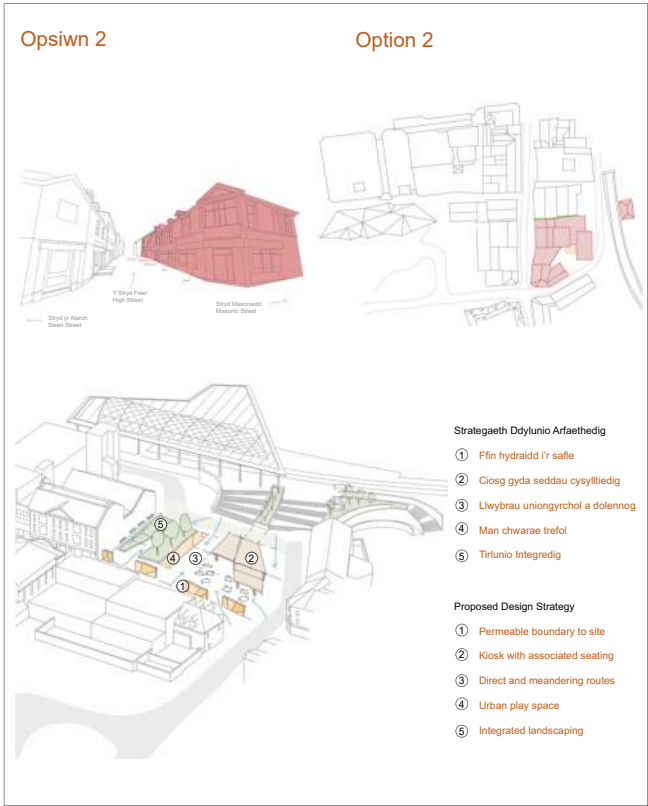
Public Consultation Display



Engagement in Public Consultation

Participation

In total 371 responses were collected. The following diagram represents percentage participation by each group. The following page outlines feedback from the public consultation, including key comments from each group identified in the study.



Public Consultation Feedback

The following two questions remain relevant to the current proposal, and suggest general support for the principles of the scheme. Although when asked, responses favoured Option 2 which involves more extensive demolition, the general feedback was positive for both options, with a high proportion of the feedback in favour of an improved pedestrian route and visual improvements to the Lower High Street.

Question 1: Would you like to see an improved pedestrian route from the railway station to Lower High Street?

	Public	Business	Online Survey
Yes	141	111	97
No	2	4	16

Question 2: Would you like to see visual improvements to Lower High Street?

	Public	Business	Online Survey
Yes	141	111	103
No	2	4	10

Question 3: Do you prefer Option 1 or 2? (Option 1 - passenger corridor. Option 2 - public realm opportunity)

	Public	Business	Online Survey
Option 1	18	56	51
Option 2	102	50	62
Both Options good (no preference)	23	2	
Neither option		7	

Public Consultation Feedback

Participant Comments

Public:

- A large number of people suggested demolition to the west of the High Street to create better connectivity to the Bus Station.
- The main focus was around safety, policing, CCTV, and good lighting levels.
- There were comments on improving disabled access and user-friendly facilities including seating and non-slippery surfaces.
- A small majority of shop attendees suggested a Cycle Hub, pedestrianisation of Pontmarlais, and two way traffic flow at Lloyds Bank.

Business:

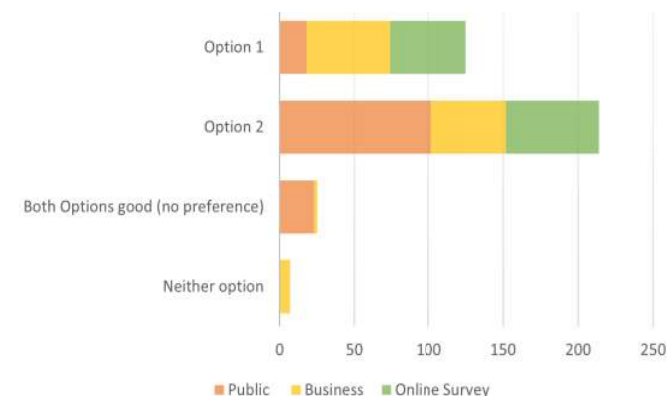
- There was an emphasis on the impact on business and ensuring businesses are supported and not lost.
- A large number of businesses would prefer a car park to a public realm, including disabled parking.
- There were suggestions to improve St Tydfil's Shopping Centre.
- A small minority of businesses queried better maintenance, cleansing and security in town.
- A small minority also suggested a greener public space, play provision for children, and a coffee shop at the train station.

Online Survey:

- The main concern was on safety and anti-social behaviour.
- A high number of comments suggested the money would be better spent elsewhere.
- There were suggestions to improve wayfinding and accessibility.
- There were suggestions to extend the proposed canopy to the High Street to provide weatherproofing.

Summary Conclusions

- The majority of participants across all three groups responded in favour of the introduction of an improved pedestrian route from the railway station to the Lower High Street.
- The majority of participants across all three groups responded in favour of visual improvements to the Lower High Street.
- 65% of responses prefer Option 2.



Comparison of Question 3 Responses by Group

PRE-APPLICATION FEEDBACK

Pre-application reference: PA/23/0020.

A pre-application was submitted for a previous more extensive iteration of the scheme, which involved work to the train station in addition to the public realm. As a result, not all feedback included is relevant to the current proposal. However, some comments remain relevant.

The following provides a summary overview of pre-application feedback received 30.09.23:

Project Vision

- The project vision and principle of the development is supported subject to meeting all relevant LDP policies.

Proposed Demolition

- Policy EcV5 of the LDP seek to protect the use of High Street properties for retail purposes within Use Class A1.

Pre-Application Advice:

- Justify the loss of retail facilities and the impact this may have on the viability and vitality of the town centre.

Design & Heritage

- Careful consideration has gone into the design and architectural process of the proposed canopy, which draws influence from both historical and modern engineering precedents.
- Historical context has been clearly set out.
- Introduction of a ticket office with a waiting area for passengers would provide an improved and welcoming experience.
- Large canopy will serve as a functional shelter for passengers whilst helping to reinforce placemaking.
- Proposed works to the train station would significantly improve the quality of the environment.
- Agreement that the rear aspect of the buildings along the High Street is not inviting for those arriving into Merthyr Tydfil by train.
- There is some concern over the potential saturation or underuse of open spaces.

Pre-Application Advice:

- Include illustrations/sections to show the relationship between the proposed canopy and the adjacent car park, which includes an elevated parking level.
- Consider alternative position where the railway line terminates were to be setback further south. Alternatively, discuss any technical and cost issues that prohibit this approach.
- Provide a clear understanding of the pattern of development along the High Street and its importance and value to the conservation area.
- Consider maintenance of street continuity to emphasise the building line and pattern of development.
- Consider appropriate treatment to the resultant gable ends of the buildings. The boundary treatment to the rear of No. 32 High Street would be important.
- Consider how the open space interacts with the rear service lane.
- Extend public space to the existing steps leading to the train station.
- Explore methods of screening service area outside open space perimeter to the north.
- Consider alternative approach on whether the rear aspects of High Street buildings could be redeveloped to provide a dual frontage.
- Provide a review of the open spaces available within the town centre and how the proposal sits within the hierarchy.
- Show clear understanding of how the proposed open space would be utilised so it does not compete with the other spaces.

Highway Implications

- The proposal does not present any significant highway safety concerns, subject to considerations in pre-application advice. (At this stage the Engineering and Highway Officer has not provided any advice on this initial design).
- Appears to be a lack of wayfinding from the open space to the bus station.

Pre-Application Advice:

- Further consideration should be given to how the link to the bus station could be improved, which may involve works along the High Street.
- Set out management of the public space to cater for some vehicular traffic movement. Consider measures to limit vehicular access during the day.
- Access road design to the nearby service areas could be altered

to change its environment, perhaps through a change in surface materials and planting to emphasise a pedestrian priority.

Ecological Assessment

Pre-Application Advice:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) would be required for the whole site, including an assessment of any existing landscaping or vegetation as well as a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats and nesting birds of those buildings proposed for demolition. Reports to also set out mitigation and compensation measures.
- Consideration of green infrastructure links,
- Use of native species only of at least Welsh/UK provenance.
- 10 year landscape establishment, maintenance and management plan.
- Lighting only allowed where and when it is necessary with provision of dark routes where required. Design to conform to guidelines.
- Enhancement in line with Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and Welsh Government Circular 'Securing Biodiversity Enhancements'.

Flood Risk

- Merthyr Tydfil Train Station is located outside of any identified flood risk area, however, the properties located along the High Street lie within a C2 Flood zone on the DAM map and within Flood Zone 3 on the FMFP.
- Consider updates to TAN15 following extensive consultation. It is anticipated to be updated by the Welsh Government in the near future, which may affect the policy considerations.

Pre-Application Advice:

- Provide a Flood Consequence Assessment (FCA).
- Advice would be sought from NRW on the FCA as part of the planning application process.

PLANNING HISTORY & LAND OWNERSHIP

Relevant Planning History

Railway Station:

- P/21/0269 - Erect wc cubicle.
- P/15/0279 - Improvements to Merthyr Tydfil Rail Station, forecourt and vehicular/pedestrian access.
- P/12/0104 - Improvement works to railway station including refurbishment and extension to railway ticket office, replacement shelter, cycle stand, CCTV and associated highway works and landscaping.

High Street Properties:

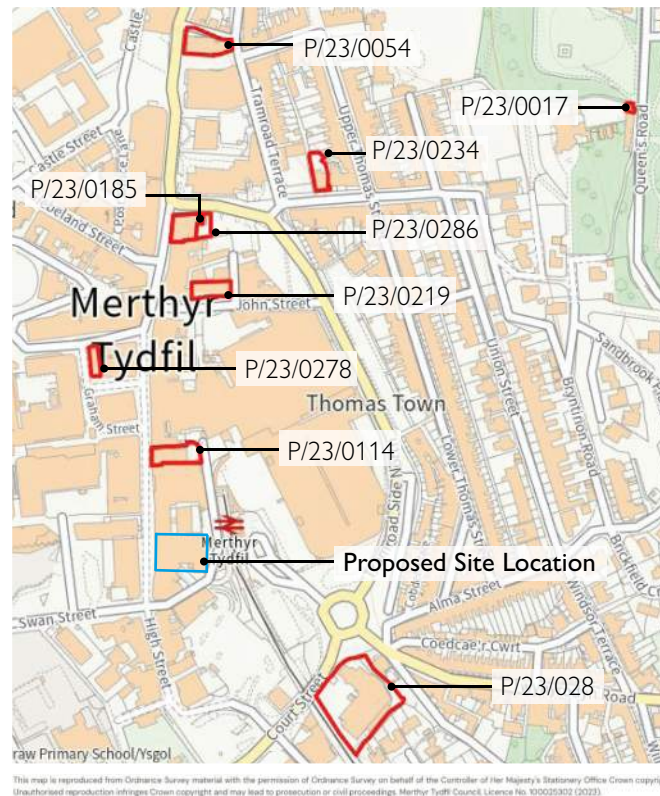
- P/21/0187 - (32 High street) Conversion of the first and second floor to provide three one bedroom self contained flats with part refurbishment of ground floor to provide an A3 takeaway use. Proposal to include associated external works.
- P/19/0244 - (40-42 High Street) Proposed refurbishment to create 12 flats and 7 self contained serviced units (holiday lets), together with new shop front, third floor rear extension and associated bike shed and bin store. Change of use of shop to cafe/bar/restaurant (A3 Use) and provision of ground floor storage areas.

Planning Application Requirements

- Fully completed planning application form and appropriate planning fee.
- Relevant ownership certificates.
- Site location plan 1:1250 scale which identifies application site outlined in red with surrounding area and north arrow.
- Supporting assessment/survey information eg. PEA, PRA, FCA reports.
- Detailed drawings of a suitable scale illustrating development in context including:
 - Site layout plan
 - Existing and proposed section details
 - Elevations
 - Floor plans
 - Soft and hard landscaping scheme

Planning Applications Map

The below image indicates relevant local planning applications within the nearby context of the proposed development site. The nearest planning application reference P/23/0114 involves retrospective planning permission to Barclays at 47 High Street following the removal of an ATM.



Planning Applications Map Search. Accessed through merthyr.gov.uk

Land Ownership

It is worth noting that part of the proposed development is currently under the ownership or another party.

Land ownership will need to be resolved prior to any planning application or building works being undertaken. This is a project risk and must be noted by the Client.

GEOLOGY

South Wales Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites

According to the *South Wales RIGS Audit*, the bedrock geology of the South Wales RIGS region is predominantly Palaeozoic rock. Information from the British Geology Survey's Geology Viewer has been included to provide an insight into the specific geology of Merthyr Tydfil.

Superficial Geology

Merthyr Tydfil comprises of mainly alluvium and till in its youngest geological deposits. These deposits formed during the Quarternary, which extends back approximately 2.6 million years from the present. However, there is no available information on superficial geology for the proposed site.



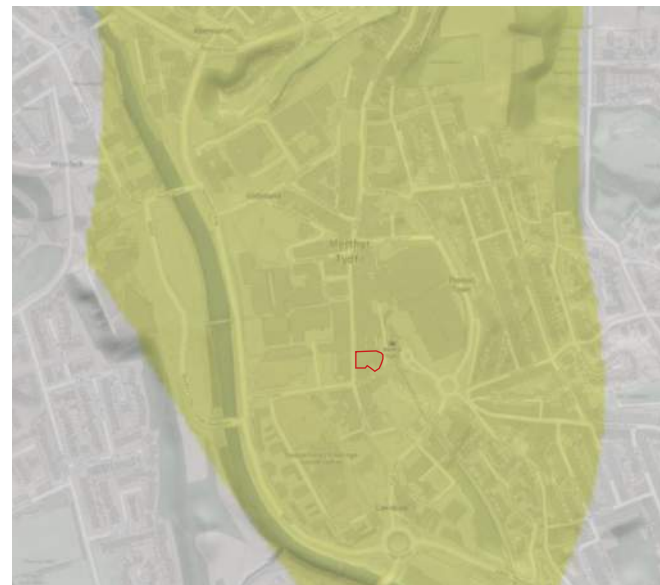
- Alluvium - Clay, silt, sand and gravel
- Till, Devensian - Diamicton

Superficial Geology map from British Geological Survey's Geology Viewer

Bedrock Geology

The bedrock geology of Merthyr Tydfil is a mix of South Wales Coal Measures Formations. The proposed site is comprised of Lower Coal Measures, a sandstone sedimentary bedrock which was formed between 319 and 318 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. Surrounding the proposed site, the geology is made of a Lower Coal Measure of mudstone, siltstone and sandstone, also formed during the same period. In terms of their lithological description, these areas are summarised as grey, productive coal-bearing mudstones/siltstones with seaeaths and minor sandstones.

Further south and outside the region indicated in the plan, the geology becomes South Wales Middle Coal Measures, a sedimentary bedrock formed between 318 and 309.5 million years ago.



- South Wales Lower Coal Measures Formation - Mudstone, siltstone and sandstone
- South Wales Lower Coal Measures Formation - Sandstone

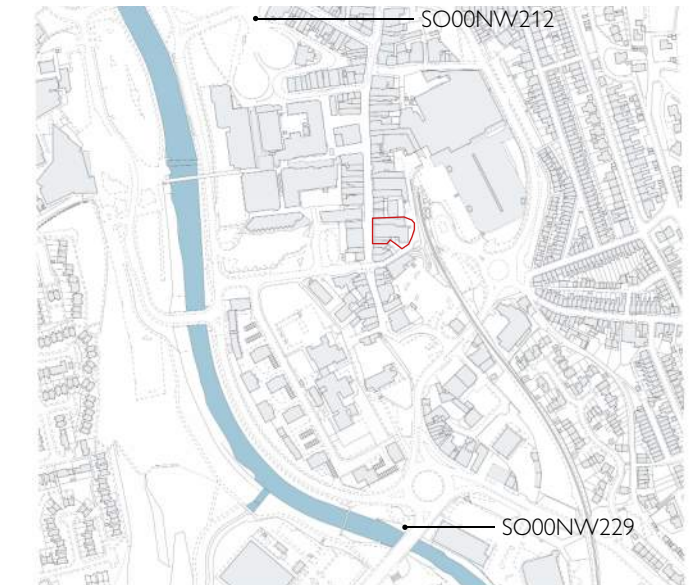
Bedrock Geology map from British Geological Survey's Geology Viewer

'The particular succession of rocks in the South Wales Coalfield contained all the raw materials necessary for iron production: Carboniferous Limestone (the flux in casting), Millstone Grit (the source of silica sands for brick making) and coal and ironstone.'

- *Merthyr Tydfil: Understanding Urban Character*, Cadw and Welsh Government

Borehole Data

SO00NW212 - Notes geological classification as Lower Coal Measures. Survey is on a well dated 1888, visited in 1950 and noted as disused.
SO00NW229 - Borehole completes at 31.6 metres below ground level. At the shallowest survey point (4.5m) the data notes very dark grey fine to coarse subangular to rounded gravel, slag, burnt rock sandstone and grit with occasional sandy clay and coarse sand. At it's deepest, the borehole comprised of grey thinly laminated fresh silty mudstone.



Borehole Location Plan from data on British Geological Survey's GeolIndex

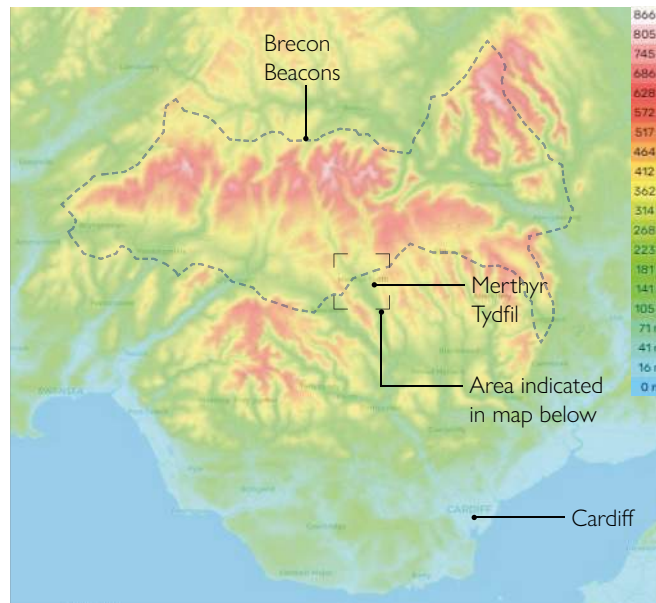
TOPOGRAPHY & LANDSCAPE

Landscape Overview

The site is within National Landscape Character Area 37 South Wales Valleys. This area is characterised by deep, urbanised valleys with extensive ribbon development which fills many valley bottoms and lower slopes. The urban and industrial character contrasts with the dramatic upland settings with steep hillsides, open moors and forests. Networks of railways and roads connect valley settlements. The topography constrains the passage between valleys with limited high passes. This area is characterised as the main transport/communication corridor linking the Merthyr to the ports, in particular at Cardiff and Barry, of the Glamorgan Coast. The area is also characterised by industrial settlement (largely post 1850s ribbon development) associated with coal and mineral extraction and transport, interspersed with valley agricultural field-scape.

Key landscape features include;

- Semi-Natural Broadleaved Woodland.
- Semi-Improved Neutral Grassland.
- Improved Grassland.
- Amenity Grassland.
- Buildings.



Topographic Map - South Wales, from <https://en-gb.topographic-map.com/>

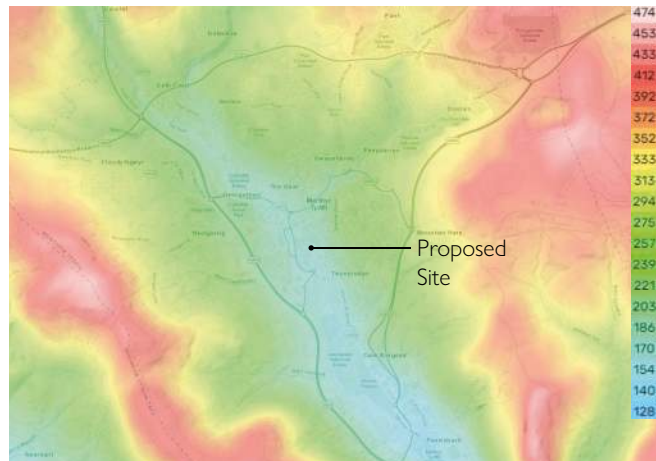
South Wales Valleys

Merthyr Tydfil is located at the northern end of the Taff Valley, between the mountainous landscape of the Brecon Beacons to the north, and the coastal towns and cities including Cardiff to the south.

Whilst non- statutory, Special Landscape Areas are identified within the Taff Valley as areas of high landscape quality within the administrative boundary. The five Special Landscape Areas within in the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Area are Nant Morlais and Cwn Taf Fechan, Winchfawr, Merthyr West Flank, Gelligaer and Taf Bargeod, and Pontygwaith and Taf Valley.



Merthyr Tydfil to Brecon, Photo from Sustrans



Topographic Map - Merthyr Tydfil, from <https://en-gb.topographic-map.com/>

Merthyr Tydfil

The minimum elevation of Merthyr Tydfil is approximately 117m, while the maximum is approximately 530m above sea level. The average elevation across the town is 313m. The elevation of the proposed site is lower than this, at approximately 170 - 175m above sea level.

The density of the urban grain restricts views, with some prominent landmark buildings at Pontmorlais located on a ridge of higher ground give prominence in the townscape. Wider views to the surrounding mountainous landscape are obtained from open spaces and along streets.

FLOOD RISK

South Easy Valleys Management Catchment:

The following is a summary of relevant findings from the South East Valleys Management Catchment Summary produced by Natural Resources Wales. This has been included to understand the wider context of Merthyr Tydfil within the South East Valleys.

Setting & Context

The valleys, which begins in the Brecon Beacons, flow through steep valleys, ending in the low-lying coast of Cardiff and the Gwent Levels. Slopes are grassland and forest, whereas valley floors are narrow and urbanised. Rivers have a flashy flow regime and there are a series of dams and reservoirs towards the upper catchment for residential and industrial water supply.

Water Quality

Many rivers have recovered from degregation resulting from iron, coal and industrial activity. Overflow from abandoned coal mines can cause water quality issues, and the overall status for the water bodies running through Merthyr Tydfil is 'Moderate'.

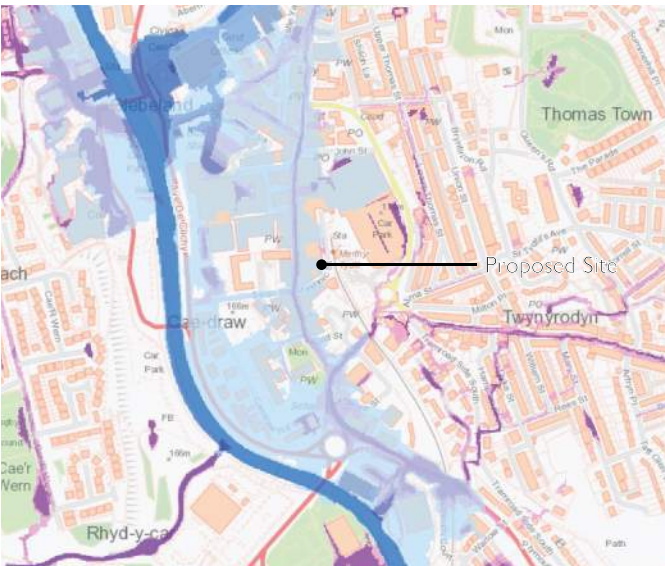
Flood Consequence Analysis:

The following is a summary of findings from the *Flood Consequence Assessment* produced for the Merthyr Bus Station in 2015.

Catchment Area

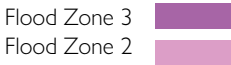
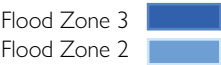
The proposed site is located in the upper Taff catchment, which in this area is predominantly rural. Upstream of Merthyr Tydfil, the two tributaries of the Cwn Taff and Cwn Taff Fechan merge to form the River Taff. The potential impact of the catchment area include the following:

- Where the steep valleys of the catchment would typically cause rapid response to rainfall, reservoirs located in the upper catchment may reduce this.
- The NRW Flood Map indicates flooding from the Nant Morlais may impact the town centre. Flood waters may join with flooding from the River Taff. However the modelling is unlikely to have accounted for culvert capacity.



Rivers and Sea

Surface Water and Small Watercourses



Flood Risk Map & Information - Taken from Welsh Government Development Advice Map, <https://naturalresourceswales.gov.uk/>

Technical Advice Note 15

The historical industrial landscape in Wales resulted in development and transport infrastructure focused around valley floors, lowland areas and around the coast with many areas vulnerable to flooding.

TAN15 provides technical guidance which supports the policies set out in Planning Policy Wales (PPW) in relation to flooding. The document sets out a framework against which flood risk can be assessed. It also provides advice on the consequences of the risks and adaptation advice.

The Town Centre is at risk of flooding and resides within a C2 Flood Zone (Wales Zone B). The map also shows that the surrounding area is at high risk from Surface Water and Small Watercourses.



Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan 2016 - 2031

The following outlines relevant policy with regards for flood risk and management strategies as set out in the *Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan 2016 - 2031*:

Policy EnW4: Environmental Protection

- New developments will be expected to avoid unnecessary flood risk and meet the requirements of TAN 15.
- No highly vulnerable development will be permitted within Zone C2.
- Development will only be permitted in flood risk areas where it can comply with requirements set out in TAN 15.

Policy SW11: Sustainable Development and Placemaking

This policy requires provision and integration of Green Infrastructure, with the opportunity to include open spaces and SuDS features.

5

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

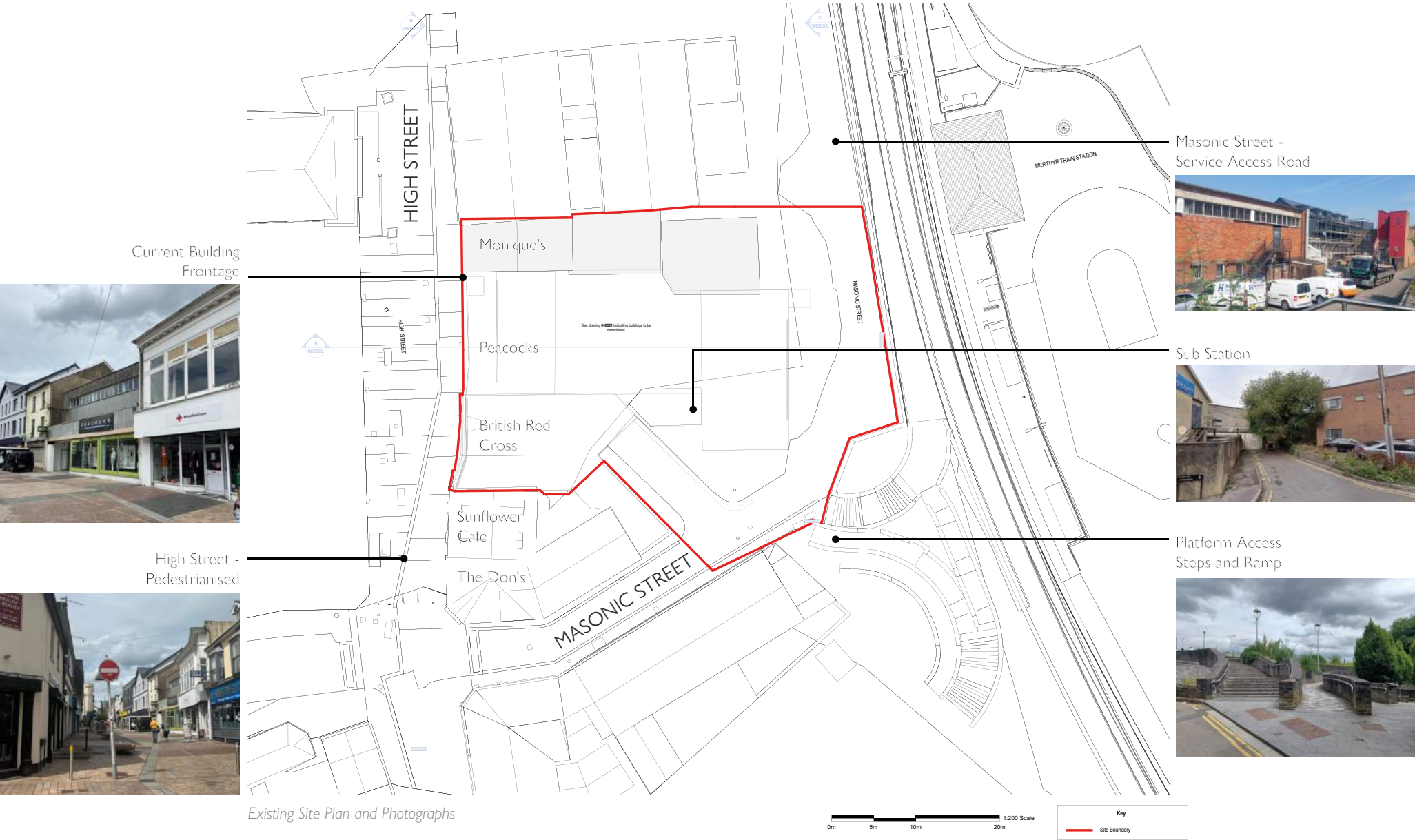
Next Steps

It will be beneficial for a Flood Consequence Analysis to be undertaken for the project site to understand the potential risk of development in and around the flood risk area. This will inform potential design responses that will be used to mitigate against the risk of flooding. **Flood mitigation methods and methods of sustainable design will be implemented into the proposal to improve flood risk factors, increase biodiversity and contribute positive environmental benefits to the area.** Consideration will be made towards the use of such design features as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), increased green space, and flood defence methods.

Stage 3 2024 Update

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council have procured a Flood Consequence Analysis directly from Hydro Solutions. There has been ongoing coordination with the Highways and Civils Engineers with Hydro Solutions. The site levels and building level of Monique's rebuild have been set to avoid flooding issues. Incorporation of SUD's and permeable paving into the scheme also ties into this. Refer to Appendices 3.0 and 4.0 for further details. At time of writing the FCA was not available from Hydro Solutions. As soon as it's available it will be issued to all relevant stakeholders.

EXISTING SITE PLAN



ECOLOGY & WILDLIFE

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

The following is a summary of findings from the Preliminary Ecological Assessment written in February 2022 for a more extensive iteration of the proposed development.. The appraisal included a desktop study and field survey.

See the 2023 Bat Survey and Roof Nesting Bird Survey on following pages for more information.

Survey Findings:

- There is one statutory designated site located within 1km of the station.
- There are three non-statutory designated sites within 1km of the proposed site.
- There are two Tree Protection Orders within 300m of the central grid reference.
- There are no Ancient Woodland sites within 1km.

Habitats:

- The following habitats were observed as part of the survey:
- Scattered trees - small numbers within survey area.
- Semi improved grassland - small pockets across survey area.
- Introduced shrub - small linear areas near rail station/supermarket car park.
- Wall - retaining wall running parallel to rail track.
- Buildings - most of the site comprised of the central town shopping area.
- Hardstanding - extensive areas across site.

Species:

European Protected Species

- Bats - potential for bat species to feed, commute and use buildings on site to roost.
- Otter - highly unlikely to utilise the urban habitat.
- Hazel Dormouse - no habitat site suitable within search area and highly unlikely to be in the survey area.

- Great Crested Newt - no habitat site suitable within search area and highly unlikely to be in the survey area.

UK Protected/Priority Species

- Badger - no habitat site suitable within search area and limited areas for potential suitable foraging habitat.

Mammals (Excluding bats, otter, hazel dormouse, and badger)

- West European Hedgehog - semi-improved grassland offer some limited habitat suitability.

Other

- Birds - recorded both within and flying over the survey area.
- Amphibians - urban habitat unsuitable.
- Reptiles - very little habitat with potential to support.
- Fish - no habitat suitable.
- Invertebrates - low numbers likely present due to urban habitat and limited connectivity to wider landscape.
- Protected Plant Species - none recorded growing within limited areas of semi-improved grassland.
- Invasive Plant Species - closest record was Japanese Knotweed.

Bats Preliminary Roost Assessment:

- Properties within the site boundary had features suitable for bats to roost.

Ground Level Tree Assessment:

- No trees within the survey area had Potential Roost Features.

Potential Impact of the Proposal:

- Most of the ecological impact of the proposal is likely to bats and birds. See the 2023 Bat Survey and Roof Nesting Bird Survey on following pages for more information.
- The statutory designated site within 1km of the proposal is unlikely to be impacted by the development.
- It is unlikely that the Cwm Glo/ Cwm-Glo a Glyndyrys and Rhydycar Gorllewin/ Rhydycar West SINC's will be impacted by the development.

Recommendations:

1. Mitigation

- Further surveys regarding bats were undertaken in 2024 as covered in Appendix 8.0 of this report.
- Measures to be detailed in a Construction Environmental Management Plan regarding best practice and pollution control.
- Mitigation for bats and birds is recommended but not a requirement as no evidence of bat or bird roosts have been found on the site of Moniques, Peacocks or British Red Cross.
- Toolbox Talks required for all site operatives prior to demolition works being commenced.

2. Optional Enhancement

- Bat boxes and bat bricks to be incorporated into any newly constructed buildings and appropriately located trees.
- Planting to incorporate suitable habitat to support house sparrow as a priority species.
- Artificial nest sites to be included for birds such as house sparrow and swift.

BAT SURVEY

Bat Survey

The following is a summary of findings from the Bat Survey Report written in August 2023 for a more extensive iteration of the proposed development.. The survey included a desktop study, dusk emergence and dawn return to roost surveys, and bat data analysis from information collected by bat detectors. A previous Bat Survey was also produced in 2022, which was reviewed as part of the 2023 survey.



Bat Survey Locations

Survey Findings:

- Two species of bat were recorded during the emergence/return to roost surveys, the common pipistrelle and noctule. The common pipistrelle was the most regularly recorded bat during all surveys.
- No emergence or return to roost at any of the four site locations was recorded.
- The area with the highest bat activity was around Masonic Street, at the willow tree next to the sub-station. Regular foraging was recorded at this location.
- Activity recorded suggest on site a roost is located nearby, beyond the survey area.

Potential Impact of the Proposal:

- Additional street lighting as part of the scheme would be likely to attract insects from the River Taff, which may increase the presence of pipistrelle species, but may possibly reduce the potential for wider diversity of species on site.
- There would likely be short term impact on commuting routes. In this instance, bats would establish alternative routes.
- There is low possibility that demolition would cause harm to roosting bats.
- The low number of bats roosting outside the site area may be indirectly impacted by noise, vibration, and dust during demolition and re-building works.



Noctule (Left) and Common Pipistrelle (Right)

Internal Building Inspections (2024):

- All three buildings proposed for demolition were inspected by the Ecology team during the summer with a technical note released in September. Please refer to Appendix 8.0 for full details.
- Based on survey evidence and the lack of bird nesting and bat roosting, there is no requirement for compensation features to be included in designs. Bat and bird boxes recommended in the reports are purely enhancement opportunities which could be installed post-completion.

Recommendations:

All adopted works are to comply with wildlife legislation and ensure long term site biodiversity is enhanced in line with the *Environment (Wales) Act 2016* and *Planning Policy Wales 11 (2021)*.

1. Demolition Works

'In the absence of mitigation the proposed demolition and re-development of the site is unlikely to have a significant negative impact on bats in terms of loss of foraging opportunities'

- A Toolbox Talk must take place prior to the works.
- Demolition of roofs with PRFs must be carried out using soft strip methods under ecological supervision by an NRW licensed ecologist,
- Roofing felt or timber sarking and insulation must be stripped slowly. Tiles and timber joists must be prised rather than hammered.
- If a bat is discovered during the process, all work in the area must stop immediately. A bat licensed ecologist or Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Species Protection Team must be contacted for advice. Work cannot continue until advice and action is taken.

2. General Bat Mitigation

- If works are to be carried out in active bat seasons, works are to be carried out during daylight hours.
- No night time working is permitted. If this is not avoidable, advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.
- Any additional lighting required during demolition and construction must be directional, positioned to prevent light spill.
- If a bat is discovered during the process, all work in the area must stop immediately. A suitably licensed ecologist or member of the NRW Species Protection Team must be contacted for advice.

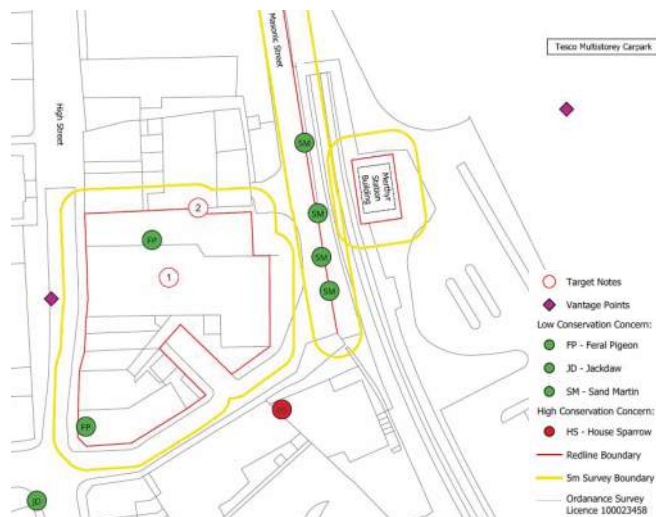
3. Stage 3 Development Design

- At Stage 3 the Lighting Consultant has ensured lighting elements containing LED luminaries of a suitable colour temperature have been specified. No UV components have been specified. Refer to Appendix 6.0 for full street lighting design.
- As per the soft landscaping proposal shown in Section 3.0 of this report, trees are native to the area and provide a habitat for local insects which will be attracted from the River Taf. This in turn will

ROOF NESTING BIRD SURVEY

Roof Nesting Bird Survey

The following is a summary of findings from the Roof Nesting Birds Survey Report written in August 2023 for a more extensive iteration of the proposed development. The survey included a review of roof-nesting breeding bird resources, field survey, and data analysis



Breeding Bird Rooftop Survey Results

Survey Findings:

- There is one statutory designated site located within 1km of the station, Cwm Glo a Glyndyrys SSSI. The proposal is unlikely to affect this site. There are three Sites of Importance for Natural Conservation with relevance to birds within 1km of the site, the Taff and Rhondd Rivers, Cwm Glo/ Cwm-Glo a Glyndyrys, and Rhydycar Gorllewin/ Rhydycar West.
- The site is within the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Conservation Area. 30 species were recorded during the breeding bird survey and at least six breeding territories identified within the survey area.
- Two species, feral pigeon and sand martin, were confirmed to have bred within the survey area. A further 2 species were confirmed to have bred just outside the survey area, house

sparrow and jackdaw.

- 26 species were assessed as non-breeding or flying over the survey area. Several of these species are of principal importance in Wales (SPI), herring gull, starling, and dunnoek. House sparrows are also an SPI and had also bred 10m outside the main site area.
- No breeding territories of high or medium conservation concern were recorded within the survey area. In terms of low conservation concern, two confirmed breeding territories for feral pigeon and at least four breeding territories for sand martin were identified.
- Two Tree Protection Orders lay within 300m of the site.
- The site is considered to be a site of nature conservation value.



House Sparrow (Left) and Sand Martin (Right)

Potential Impact of the Proposal

- There is likely to be negligible impact on the closest non-statutory designated site's riverine habitat for birds providing appropriate measures are put in place. It is unlikely that other non-statutory designated sites would be impacted.
- It is unlikely that TPOs will be affected.
- Impact on breeding birds within the main site is likely confined to individual nests which may be harmed during construction.
- There is, however, potential to harm sand martins. These birds may be displaced, particularly if the gable wall requires re-rendering.
- The adverse impact of habitat at the main site is low to negligible.
- Construction work will result in increased light and noise which may impact breeding success.
- The impact on river pollution and disturbance is likely to be negligible given appropriate control measures are in place.

Recommendations:

1. Mitigation

- Timing of works to ensure no birds, eggs or active nests are damaged or destroyed.
- Pollution control measures to be implemented in accordance with relevant guidance.
- Toolbox Talks to be given to all site operatives.

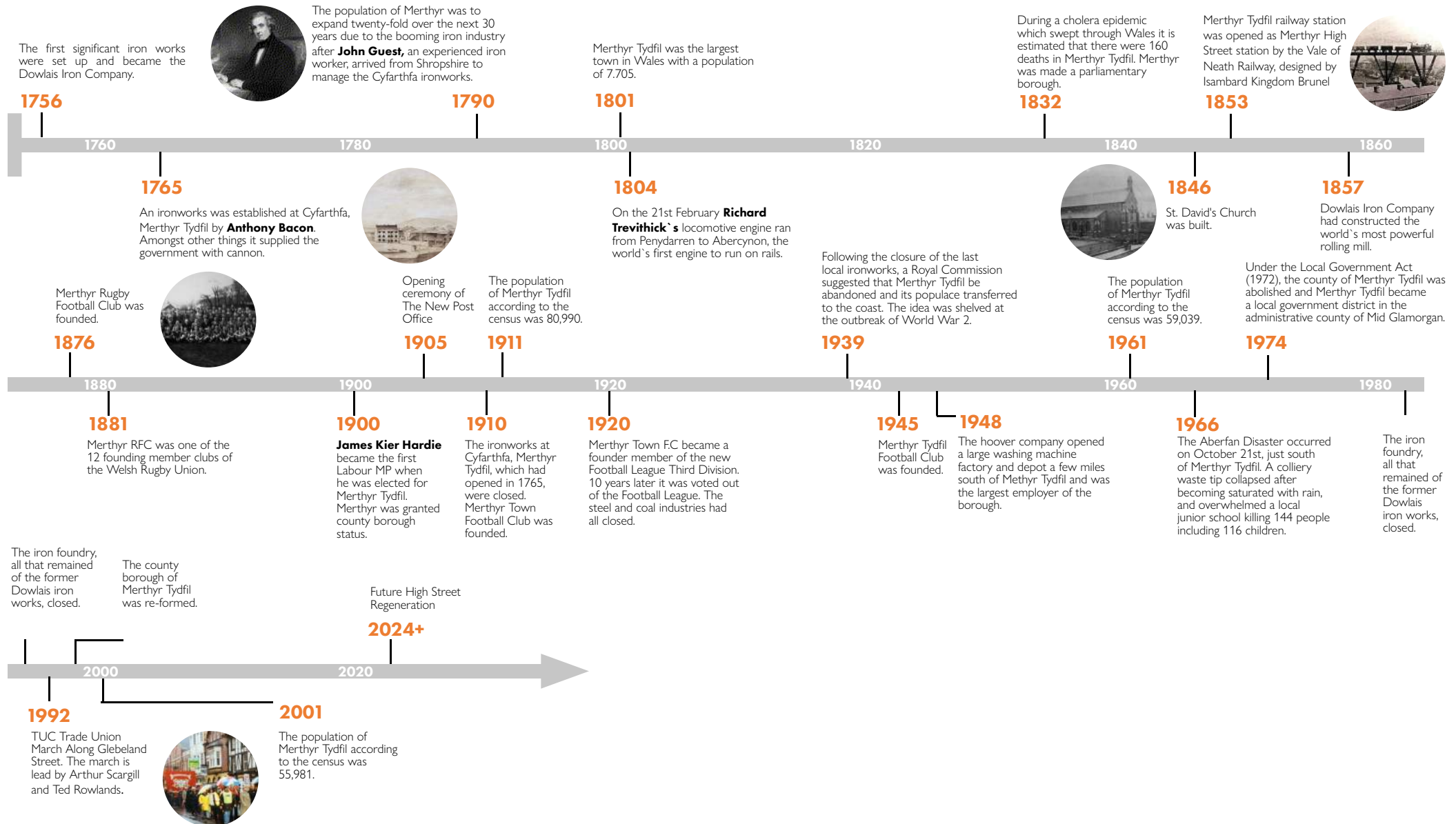
2. Enhancement

- Habitat creation through planting of locally sourced tree/shrub species within public spaces.
- Provision for house sparrow, starling and swift nest boxes under the guidance of a suitably qualified ecologist.

Stage 3 2024 Update:

- All three buildings proposed for demolition were inspected by the Ecology team during the summer with a technical note released in September. Please refer to Appendix 8.0 for full details.
- Based on survey evidence and the lack of bird nesting and bat roosting, there is no requirement for compensation features to be included in designs. Bat and bird boxes recommended in the reports are purely enhancement opportunities which could be installed post-completion.

TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS



LANDSCAPE HISTORY

18th & 19th Century Iron and Coal Industries:

Merthyr Tydfil's landscape history is closely tied to the iron and coal industries that emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries. Abundant coal deposits and high-quality iron ore were discovered in the area, leading to the establishment of ironworks, collieries, and other industrial facilities. Merthyr Tydfil quickly became a major industrial hub, attracting thousands of workers from all over Wales and beyond. Throughout the late-18th and early-19th centuries, Merthyr Tydfil was a crucible of innovation at the very forefront of Britain's industrial revolution.

As the ironworks and coal mines flourished, the landscape underwent significant changes. Colliery waste heaps, known as "slag heaps," dotted the skyline, while the rivers and streams were impacted by industrial runoff. The landscape became a blend of stark industrial structures, mining operations, and growing urban settlements.

Impact on Character:

The rapid expansion of industry brought both prosperity and challenges to Merthyr Tydfil. The town's population swelled, leading to the development of tightly packed worker housing and urban

neighbourhoods. The distinctive rows of terraced houses, built to accommodate the growing workforce, still stand as a testament to this era. The industrial activity also had environmental consequences, with air and water pollution affecting the quality of life for residents. The landscape, once characterised by natural beauty, was transformed into an industrial landscape marked by towering chimneys, noisy machinery, and the bustle of a working-class community.



Dowlais Steelworks from the Air

The first major ironworks and steel works to be established in the 18th century and in operation until the end of the 20th century. It was once the largest steel producer in the UK. Dowlais was one of the first to introduce steam power and went on to pioneer the use of the Bessemer process for steel production in 1865.



Penydarren Iron Works

Established in 1784 and operated until 1859. Penydarren was the first ironworks in Wales to make rail track, transporting railways to globally.



Hoover Washing Machines - 1960s Source: Old Merthyr Tydfil <http://www.alangeorge.co.uk/index.htm>



Thorn Electrical Industries - 1960s



Teddington Aircraft Controls Aerial View - Circa 1960's



Kayser Bondor Pentrebach & Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil- 1959. Hosiery and underwear

20th Century Post-Industrial Transformation:

The decline of the iron and coal industries in the mid-20th century resulted in the closure of many collieries and ironworks. This marked a significant turning point for Merthyr Tydfil's landscape and character. The process of de-industrialisation led to economic challenges, but it also opened the door to environmental restoration efforts and the diversification of the local economy.

In recent decades, Merthyr Tydfil has worked to reclaim and re-imagine its landscape. Former industrial sites have been re-purposed into parks, green spaces, and cultural attractions. Efforts have been made to balance economic revitalization with preserving the town's historical and natural heritage.

Today, Merthyr Tydfil's landscape and character reflect a blend of its industrial past and ongoing efforts to create a more sustainable, vibrant community. The scars of heavy industry are still visible, but they are now accompanied by rejuvenated spaces, cultural landmarks, and a renewed sense of identity that embraces both its history and its aspirations for the future.



Map of Merthyr Tydfil Centre c. 1888.

Above Images Sourced: Old Merthyr Tydfil Website http://www.alangeorge.co.uk/old_merthyr.htm

URBAN STUDY

Existing Land and Building Use Assessment

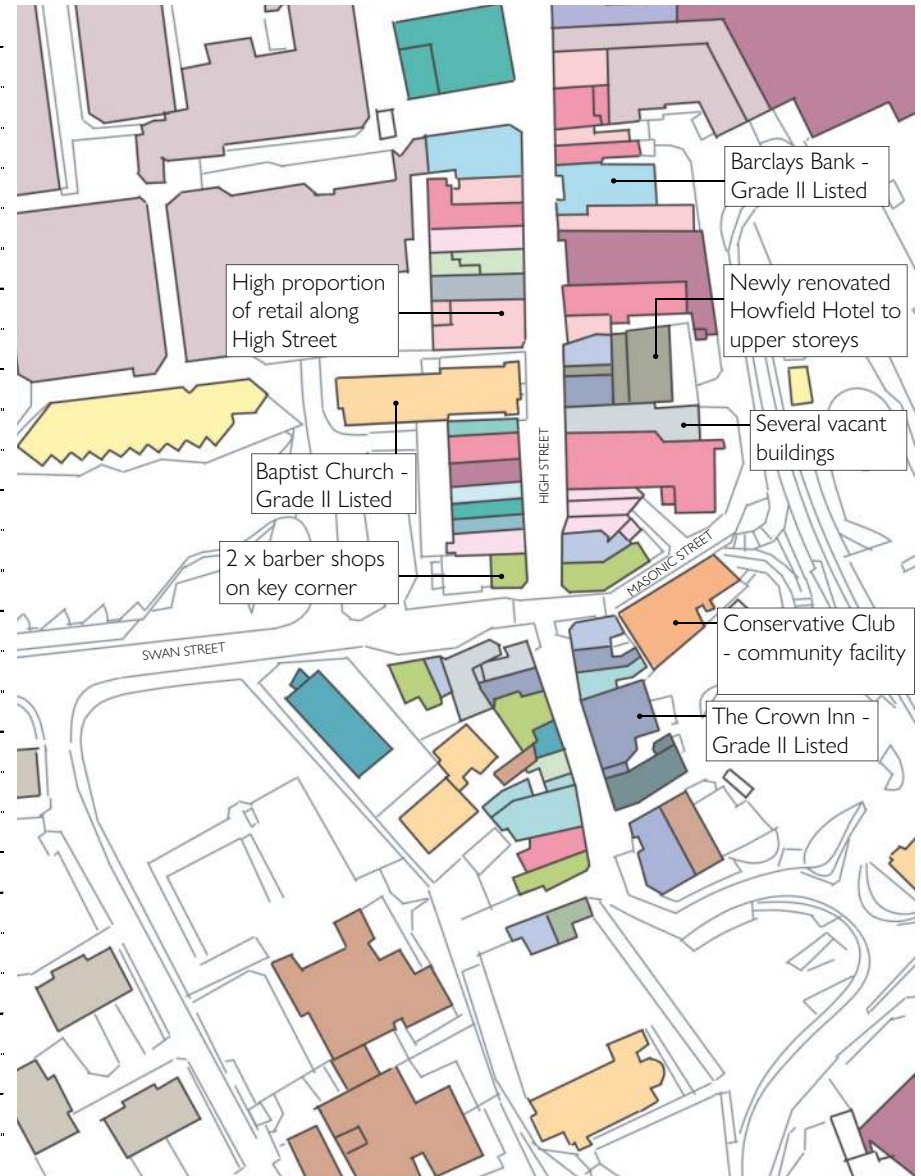
In the present day, the majority of the buildings in the core centre serve as retail/mixed-use, with a high proportion of local business including cafés and barbers, retail chains, and banks. The following land-use study highlights the Use Class of buildings within the core of the town.

Retail units throughout the high street mostly operate at ground floor level with vacant or under utilised space above. There are several listed buildings and buildings of historic interest throughout the town. Some vacant buildings have been identified in the town and residential areas.



Examples of Junctions Between Buildings from Refurbishment, Contemporary and Vacant

Use Class		Key Colour	Type
Commercial, Business and Service	E(a) - Retail	●	Fashion
		●	General Merchandise
		●	Charity Shop
		●	Shopping Centre
		●	Supermarket
		●	Takeaway Food (Sui Generis)
	E(b) - Food and Drink	●	Café/Restaurant
		●	Pub/Bar (Sui Generis)
	E(c)(i) - Financial Services	●	Bank
		●	Money Lending (Sui Generis)
		●	Pawnbroker (Sui Generis)
		●	Barber/Hairdresser
	E(c)(ii) - Professional	●	Nail Studio
		●	Tattoo Studio
		●	Estate Agent
	E(c)(iii) - Professional	●	Funeral Director
		●	Career Advice
	E(e) - Medical	●	Dentist
		●	Optician
		●	Physiotherapy
	E(g) - Offices	●	Office
Local Community and Learning	F1(a) - Education	●	School/Learning
	F1(f) - Worship	●	Place of Worship
	F2(b) - Hall or Meeting Place	●	Community Club
Residential	C1 - Hotel	●	Hotel
	C3 - Dwellinghouses	●	Flats
Other	Sui Generis	●	Station
		●	Vacant



Building Types Plan

HISTORIC CHARACTERISTICS & LOCAL IDENTITY

The architectural heritage of Merthyr Tydfil High Street offers a captivating glimpse into the town's history, reflecting its evolution from a rural community to a bustling industrial hub during the 19th century. The architectural styles and structures along the High Street tell a story of economic prosperity, cultural influences, and urban development.

The High Street is a tapestry woven with threads of industrial success, cultural diversity, and architectural evolution. The buildings stand as physical witnesses to the town's history, serving as a visual and historical link between its industrial past and its present-day aspirations.

Urban Planning:

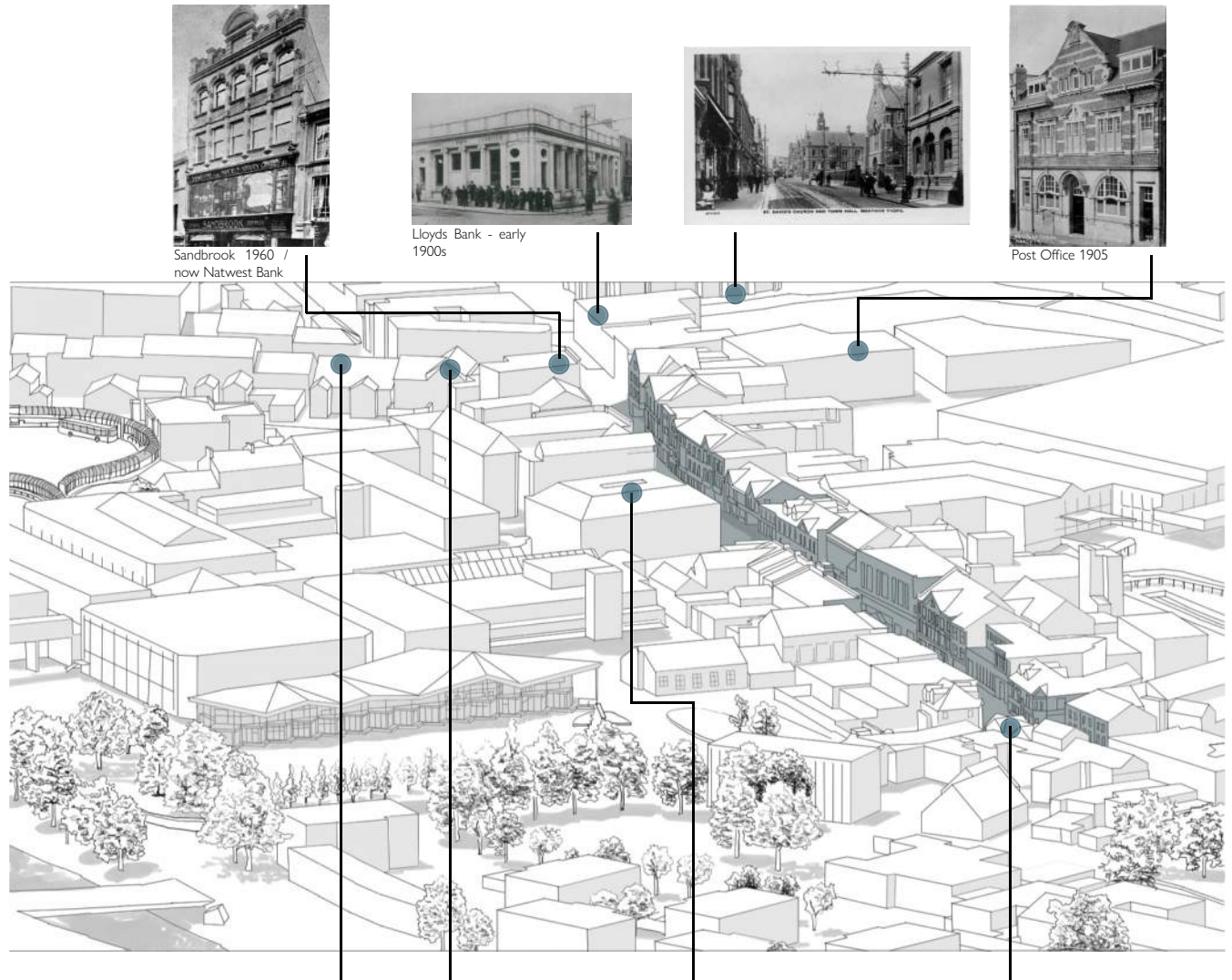
The High Street's layout and architecture offer insights into the town's urban planning during the 19th century. The close proximity of businesses and residences was a reflection of the era's urban density, as well as the necessity for workers to be in close proximity to their workplaces.

Commercial Elegance:

Many of the older buildings along the high street were designed as commercial spaces. Their architecture often showcases intricate details, such as decorative cornices, wrought ironwork, and large display windows. These features reflect not only the economic vitality of the area but also the pride of local business owners.

Industrial Flourish:

The architectural heritage along Merthyr Tydfil High Street showcases the town's once-thriving industrial status. The presence of grand Victorian buildings, often adorned with ornate façades, symbolises the prosperity brought about by the iron and coal industries. The robust architecture stands as a testament to the wealth generated during the height of these industries.



The Narrow Gauge Inn and the Red Cow 1995



The Old Belle Vue Hotel 1900s



Market Square in the 1960s



H. Samuel Jewellers Shop 1940

CHARACTER

2

EVOLUTION OF ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

Georgian Elegance:

The early years of Merthyr Tydfil's industrial transformation saw the emergence of Georgian architecture. This style is characterised by symmetrical façades, sash windows, and simple ornamentation. Some of the town's early structures, particularly those owned by the growing middle class, feature Georgian elements that add a touch of elegance to the landscape.



Examples of Georgian Architecture - Chapel and The Castle Inn

Victorian Opulence:

The Victorian era brought about a period of unprecedented economic prosperity for the town, resulting in the construction of impressive buildings that showcased opulent Victorian architecture. Elaborate detailing, ornate façades, and the use of a variety of materials were hallmarks of this period. Grand commercial and residential buildings, often adorned with decorative flourishes, reflected the town's affluence and aspirations. Merthyr Tydfil's Victorian high street architecture is a testament to the town's rapid industrialisation and economic prosperity during the 19th century. The architectural style of the era, characterised



Examples of Victorian Architecture

Contemporary Expressions:

The high street is not frozen in the past; it continues to evolve with contemporary architectural expressions. While respecting the historical context, new buildings and interventions reflect current design sensibilities and technologies, showcasing the town's adaptability and willingness to embrace change.

The diverse architectural styles of Merthyr Tydfil bear witness to the town's journey through time – from its agrarian roots to its industrial peak and into its modern era. These styles collectively narrate the story of the town's economic fortunes, cultural diversity, and architectural evolution, making the high street a living testament to Merthyr Tydfil's rich heritage.



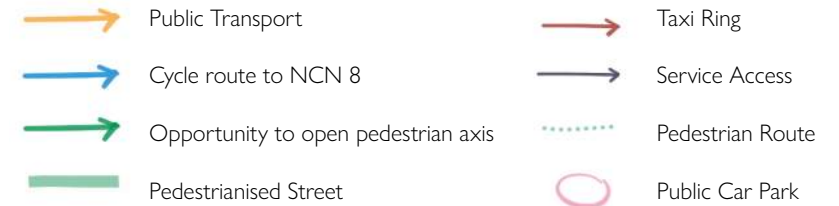
High Street Diagram Sketch

Adaptive Reuse and Modern Interventions:

Merthyr Tydfil's dedication to adaptive reuse showcases its commitment to maintaining a connection between the past and the present. By re-purposing historical buildings for contemporary use, the town creates a harmonious blend of heritage and innovation, fostering a sense of continuity and identity while catering to the changing needs of its community.

Some of the historic buildings surrounding the market square have been transformed into modern retail spaces while retaining their original façades. These adaptive reuse projects blend the town's historical character with the demands of a contemporary commercial environment, creating a harmonious integration of old and new.

MOVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS



Movement Opportunities and Constraints Sketch

ACCESS

1

Pedestrianisation

With the High Street currently pedestrianised there is opportunity to develop an open public realm leading users from the High Street across an east to west axis.

Legibility

Removing select buildings allows the route between the High Street and Masonic Street, onto the train station, to be more legible and accessible for all.

Sustainability

Improvement to pedestrian areas and improving connections between areas encourages users to traverse the space by foot.

Level Change

There is a level difference between the High Street and Masonic Street to the base of the station.

Service and Emergency Access

Masonic Street access will be retained for service and emergency vehicles.

Existing Ramp Access

The existing ramp from Masonic Street to platform level will be unchanged. The proposal will work to direct pedestrians to this access.

Utilities

The existing sub station will be relocated to allow for a more extensive and uninterrupted public realm space. Utilities identified in surveys may also require relocation.

Safety

Creating an active and overlooked public realm with passive mitigation methods in addition to hostile vehicle mitigation will discourage and prevent crime and anti-social behaviour.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

5

COMMUNITY SAFETY

3

PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT

Pedestrian Accessibility

A large portion of the High Street is pedestrianised, accommodating predominantly movement by foot. Limited access is available for service vehicles where necessary, however this is controlled through the use of bollards.

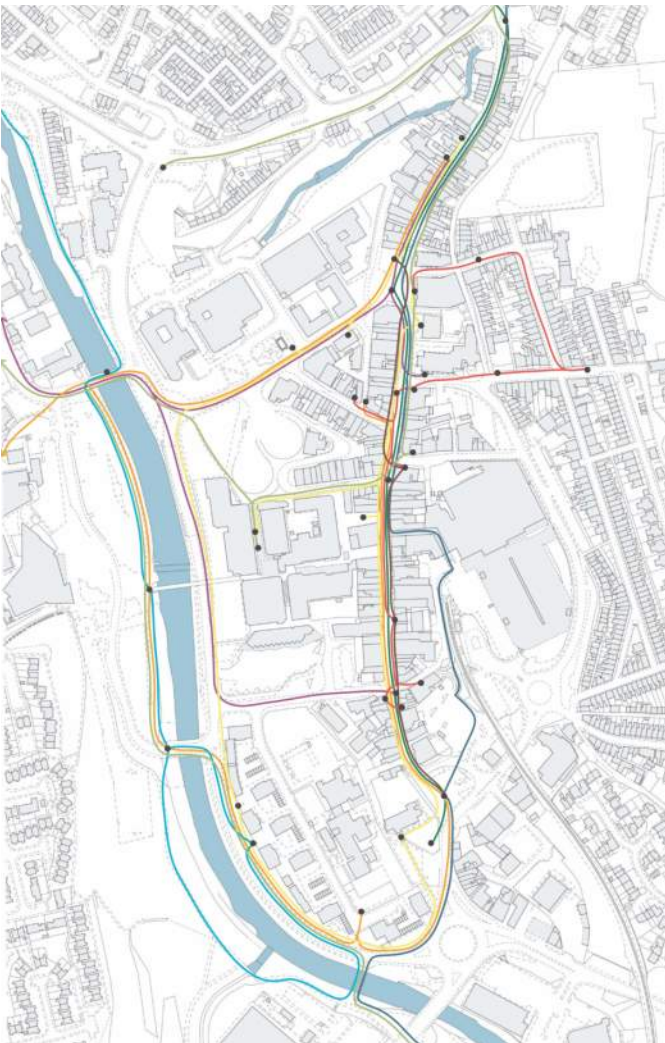
There are some level changes addressed through the implementation of ramps and stairs. The main example of this is the curved ramp joining the Train Station platform level with both Gillar Street car park and Masonic Street.

ACCESS

1



Above: Platform Ramp and Stepped Access
Right: Combined Walking Trails Mapping, Visit Merthyr / We Love Merthyr



- Landmark
- Off the Rails
- A Petticoat Trail
- A Vision Trail
- In the Footsteps of Dic Penderyn
- Look Up in Merthyr
- Merthyr at Play
- Welsh Words
- Walking on Water
- Square Hopping

'Within town centres and other mixed-use locations, priority should be given to maximising the opportunities for creating safe, attractive and accessible pedestrian environments.'

- Technical Advice Note 18

Town Centre Trails

Visit Merthyr and We Love Merthyr have compiled a short series of themes walking trails through the town centre. The trails follow heritage and histories including the role of women to the Welsh language. One particular walk, Off the Rails, begins at the location of Merthyr's first journey by steam locomotive on rails, and includes visits to the Memorial Fountain and Trevithick Tunnel.

2

CHARACTER

Hiking Trails in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough

There are several established walking routes within the wider borough, which either begin in the area or are entirely located there, ranging between 1.3km and over 60km. These include the following:

- Morlais Park Circular - 6.3km
- Morlais Castle - 1.4km
- Merthyr to Owl's Grove - 16.9km
- Pontsticill Reservoir - 45.4km
- Pontsticill Circular - 61.6km
- BPW Circular Walk - 21.4km
- Troedyrhiw Walk - 3.7km
- Merthyr Vale The Gap - 7.7km
- Trevithick Train to Merthyr Tydfil - 19.2km
- Trelewis via Bargod Taf - 5.5km
- Bargod Taf Circular - 1.3km
- Links and Loops Circular - 9.5km

BICYCLE ROUTES, PARKING & FACILITIES

National Cycle Networks

National Cycle Network routes provide signposted paths for walking, wheeling, and cycling, to encourage outdoor exploration. There are 2 National Cycle Routes within close proximity to the site:

Route 8 - Lôn Las Cymr

This route runs the whole length of Wales from Cardiff to Holyhead via 2 national parks, Brecon Beacons and Snowdonia. The route between Cardiff and Brecon, the Taff Trail, is mainly traffic free. The proposed site is a 2 minute cycle from Route 8.

Route 477 - Trevithick Trail

This 9 mile route runs between Merthyr Tydfil and Abercynon, taking approximately 45 minutes to complete. The route still includes the Trevithick Tunnel, and celebrates the first trip into the 'Age of Steam' in 1804. The proposed site is a 1 minute cycle from Route 477.

'The route commemorates the first journey by a steam locomotive to pull a load on iron rails in 1804, the precursor of the 'Railway Age' which changed the world in the 19th century. On February 21, 1804, the Penyarden locomotive, designed and built by the Cornish inventor Richard Trevithick for Samuel Homfray, master of the Penyarden Ironworks, pulled a load of 10 tones of iron and 70 men nine miles down the Taff Valley- all for a bet.'

- Visit Merthyr Website

The journey began at Penyarden Ironworks, to the Navigation and the Glamorganshire Canal. There are stone sleepers and markers along the trail to indicate historically significant locations.

CHARACTER

2

Recreational Cycling

Bike Park Wales is a large recreational mountain bike park located a 25 minute cycle ride from the proposed site via Route 8.

Cycling Parking

As evidenced in the images, the provision for cycle parking is limited to external bicycle hoops with little to no cover or security.



Image 1



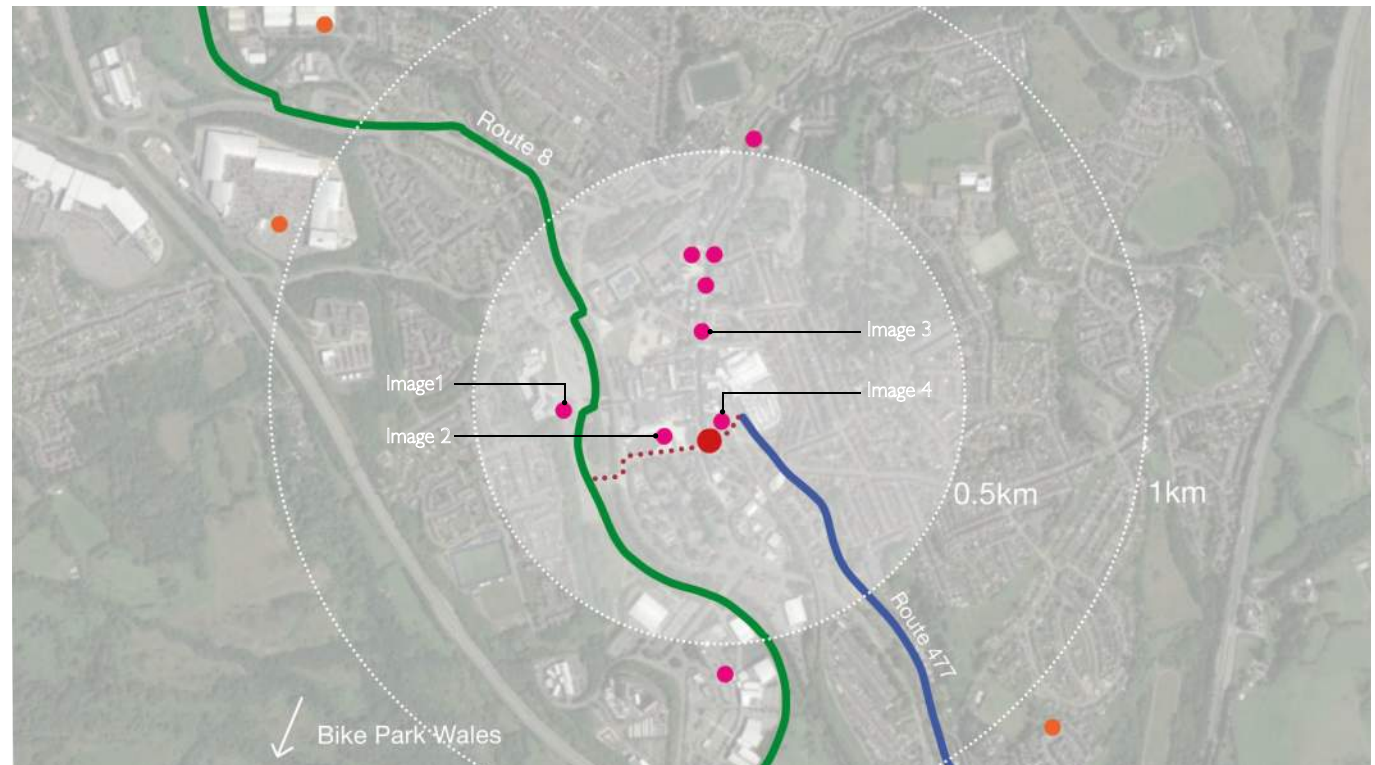
Image 2



Image 3



Image 4



— National Cycle Network - Route 8

— National Cycle Network - Route 477

..... Route from site to National Cycle Network

● Site Location

● Bicycle Shops

● Bicycle Hoops

Cycle Movement Mapping

BICYCLE THEFT DATA

UK Bicycle Theft

The British Transport Police and insurer Yellow Jersey compiled 12 months of policing data to identify trends in bicycle theft in the UK (excluding Scotland). They also carried out a supporting study of 2000 participants, with the following findings:

- >25% of participants have had a bicycle stolen.
- 53% of participants know somebody who has had a bicycle stolen.
- 6 in 10 of the participants who have had their bicycle stolen have never got their bike back.
- >50% of participants said theft in their area has put them off buying a bicycle.
- 83% of participants want more to be done to tackle bicycle theft in their area.

According to the report, transport interchanges are prime targets for thieves.

'Railway stations, and in particular those used by commuters traveling into larger towns for work, seem to be particular targets for thieves.'

- Report on Cycle Theft by Yellow Jersey and British Transport Police

Merthyr Tydfil Bicycle Theft

Data has been collected from *data.police.uk* in order to determine areas of high bicycle theft in Merthyr Tydfil. The following bicycle crime numbers were reported in Merthyr Tydfil from 2020 to the present day:

January - December 2021	19
January - December 2022	16
January - December 2023	11
January - April 2024	7



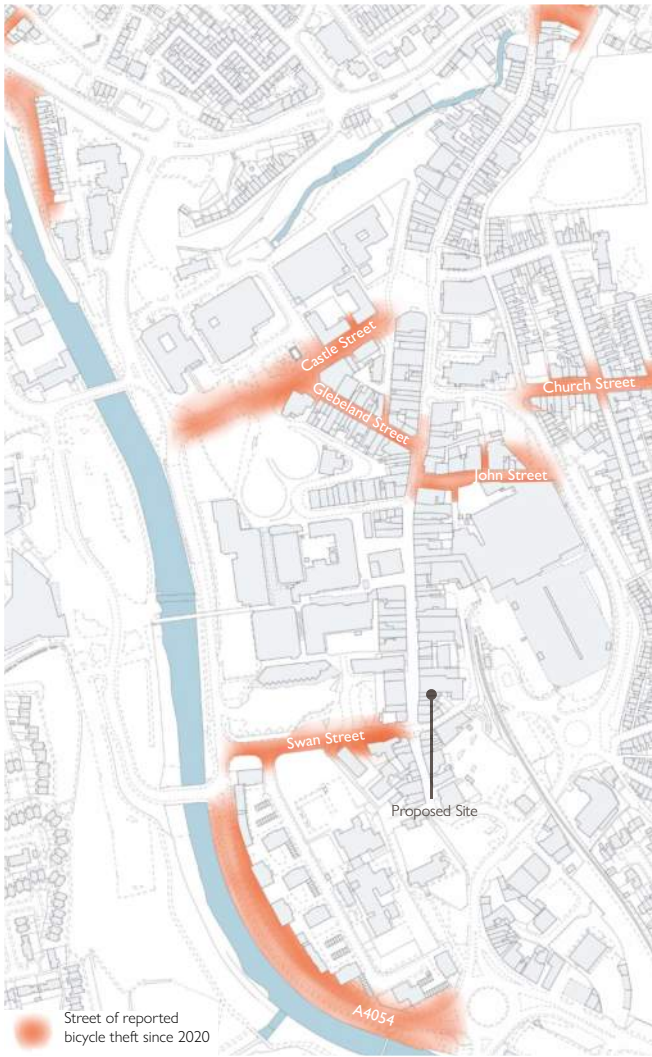
Location of reported bicycle theft since 2020

Right: Bicycle Theft Heat Map 2020 - 2023
Above: Merthyr Tydfil Reported Bicycle Thefts 2020 - 2023

The map highlights key areas in Merthyr Tydfil where bicycle theft has been reported to the South Wales police since 2020. From this data, it is clear that there is a high concentration of theft in the town centre.

Theft of a bicycle has been reported on streets in close proximity to the Train Station, including Swan Street. There are also thefts occurring a 5 minute walk north of the proposed site, along Castle Street, Glebeland Street, John Street, and Church Street.

There is a clear need to introduce safe and secure bicycle storage in the area, to improve upon the expanding transport infrastructure and



URBAN STUDY

Access and Movement



High Street Movement Analysis Sketch

MOVEMENT

Entry Points

There are several key moments where a visitor will enter Merthyr, through either public transport or personal vehicle. Gillar Street car park and the Train Station car parks are in close proximity to the lower high street, strategically situated between the Bus Station and Train Station.

Pedestrian Movement

In terms of pedestrian movement, the key north to south axis along the High Street is pedestrianised, with some controlled access available via bollards and other safety measures.

4

Service Vehicles

Masonic Street is currently utilised by some HGVs for deliveries to businesses along the High Street. Access is controlled via bollards at the junction between Masonic Street, Swan Street and the High Street,

3

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Drawing Legend:

-  Vehicular access - full time
-  Service vehicle access - controlled via bollards
-  Pedestrianised area - note: High Street accessible for emergency vehicles via controlled access bollards
-  Pedestrian route
-  Entry points to town - eg, stations and car parks

SERVICE VEHICLE ACCESS - MASONIC STREET

Service Access

There is an access road running parallel to the station platform, with the platform retaining wall to one side and the back of house buildings to the rear of the High Street units. It has been identified across several site visits that the Masonic Street access road is also occasionally utilised by HGVs and large lorries.

ACCESS

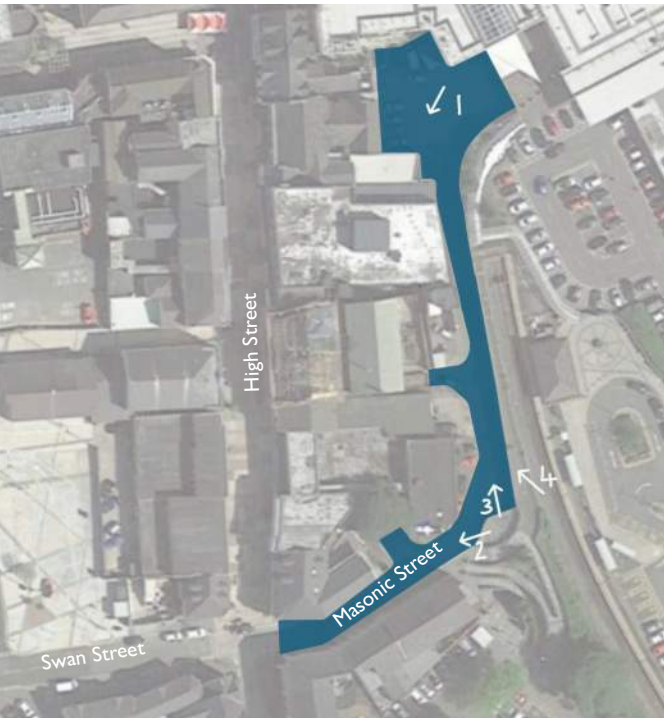
1



1 - Masonic Street Access

Accessible customer parking space

Informal parking



Masonic Street Service Road



2 - Lorry on Masonic Street



3 - HGV on Masonic Street



4 - Masonic Street from Platform

Vans parked to building rear

Construction vehicles parked

Safeguarding

As the access road runs to the rear of the proposed site, the design will incorporate various safeguarding techniques to ensure community safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicular traffic.

3

COMMUNITY SAFETY

URBAN STUDY

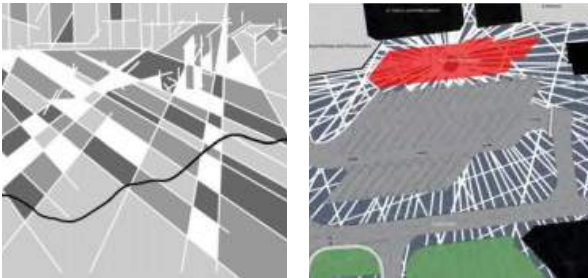
Existing Public Realm Assessment

1 Bus Station Public Realm

Open public realm space which complements the recently completed bus station, connecting the station to the High Street via Swan Street or the pedestrian route north of the Baptist Chapel. Artist Christopher Tipping was appointed by the council to carry out contextual research about the site and its surrounding areas, and to develop an interpretative strategy informing the design concept for the public realm. An overlay of historical activity routes and current-day desire lines generated a dynamic patterning which was abstracted to form the hard landscaping approach for the scheme. This is reflected in the use of intersecting lines within the paving and raised structures and retaining walls.



Bus Station Public Realm Photographs



Bus Station Paving Design Development



Street Pattern and Textures Sketch Plan

2 High Street - Mid

The line of the High Street is firmly established as the main north to south axis. The paving language is articulated through the use of striped paving elements of orange, red, and grey hues, which run horizontally. Outside prominent buildings such as the listed chapel, the paving language pauses, bringing attention to architectural details in the vertical plane.



High Street Photograph

3 High Street - Lower

The lower area of the High Street comprises of a pattern of grey paving slabs to the central area, with more defined pathways to shopfront areas. The semi pedestrianised area permits occasional vehicle use, which is clarified through the use of paving styles.



High Street Photograph