

EBBW VALE TOWN

PLACEMAKING PLAN

November 2021

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Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol
Blaenau Gwent
County Borough Council

SYNOPSIS
EBBW VALE PLACEMAKING PLAN VISION

This placemaking plan provides a Vision for Ebbw Vale town that sets a clear direction to work towards in the short, medium and long term. The plan will guide the future planning of the town, attract investment and shape future development and place enhancements.

The placemaking plan includes analysis of the current physical conditions and socio-economic trends of Ebbw Vale. This marks the baseline that the placemaking plan is responding to. It also describes the stakeholder engagement that was undertaken to prepare the baseline.

The plan then outlines the core spatial ambitions that underpin the vision for Ebbw Vale town, identifies the areas of the town that will be subject to investment and finally, describes the key projects that will help deliver transformation by 2035.

We want Ebbw Vale to thrive as a local place for its residents and businesses. If we can achieve this the town will also become a place that others visit and new businesses want to invest in.

In delivering the vision we want to embrace three key opportunity areas for the town:



1. CONNECTING THE LOCALITY



2. GREEN LEGACY



3. DIGITAL & TECH INVESTMENT

- Better connect the town with the assets that surround it.
- Create a '20-minute' neighbourhood where key destinations are highly accessible and strengthen each other.
- Improve Active Travel connections and public transport facilities.

- Extensive tree and SuDS planting to build upon Ebbw Vale's innovative green legacy.
- Create high quality green places that connect the centre to Ebbw Vale's natural backdrop.

- Embrace the digital and technological revolution with world-class connectivity.
- Help deliver the Tech Valleys agenda.
- Create an environment where new businesses can thrive and existing businesses are supported to grow.

SYNOPSIS
EBBW VALE PLACEMAKING PLAN CORE AMBITIONS

TO HELP DELIVER THE VISION FOR EBBW VALE TOWN WE HAVE IDENTIFIED SIX CORE AMBITIONS THAT WILL HELP US TO FRAME FUTURE PROJECTS AND GUIDE INVESTMENT INTO THE TOWN ...



1.

Establish the high street as a 'test-bed' for new business and **entrepreneurs**, but also cultivate **an environment of growth for existing businesses.**



2.

Create a series of new entrance spaces into the town centre that **open up the high street**, enhance the retail environment, green the centre and create space for new homes, work spaces and leisure uses.

3.

Revitalise the **connections between the town centre and The Works** to give pedestrians & cyclists greater choice, reliability and quality.



4.

Transform The Works into a vibrant and active destination; a place of arrival, culture, learning, working and living



5.

Establish **Eugene Cross Park as a regionally renowned sporting destination** that caters for specialist, elite and community teams and improve its connections to the town centre and The Works.



6.

Transform the Civic Centre site and it's environs into an **exemplary neighbourhood** of modern homes in a green sustainable setting.

WHAT IS PLACEMAKING?

PLACEMAKING IDENTIFIES AND USES LOCAL COMMUNITY ASSETS, INSPIRATION, AND POTENTIAL, WITH THE INTENTION OF **CREATING PUBLIC SPACES THAT PROMOTE PEOPLE'S HEALTH, HAPPINESS, AND WELL-BEING.**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This placemaking plan has been prepared for Ebbw Vale by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and Welsh Government as part of the Transforming Towns programme. It sets out the ambitions for the town, its role within the Capital City Region, and offers how to implement the Welsh Government's 'Town Centres First' policy.

Ebbw Vale has a strategic location at the northern part of the Capital City Region, approximately 30 miles north of Cardiff and 20 miles north of Newport. It is located strategically on the A465 (Heads of the Valleys) corridor and is connected by the railway.

Connectivity is and will continue to be transformed through the South Wales Metro and investment in greener transport. This will make it easier for people to access employment opportunities anywhere in the Capital City Region and encourage businesses to locate and invest across the region. Ebbw Vale can benefit from this, and with the right investment has a bright future. This placemaking plan has been provided to communicate our vision for Ebbw Vale and identifies the interventions and investment we want to attract to unlock the town's potential and ensure that it is a key economic, social and cultural centre for the Capital City Region.

Like all towns Ebbw Vale is facing stark challenges. The shift towards online retailing has been constant over the past 10 years, and this has now accelerated due to COVID-19. To combat this, town centres need to be re-purposed into diverse and liveable destinations that offer great experiences. This placemaking plan explains how we will help Ebbw Vale make this transition.



Ebbw Vale Town Railway Station



1.0 INTRODUCTION

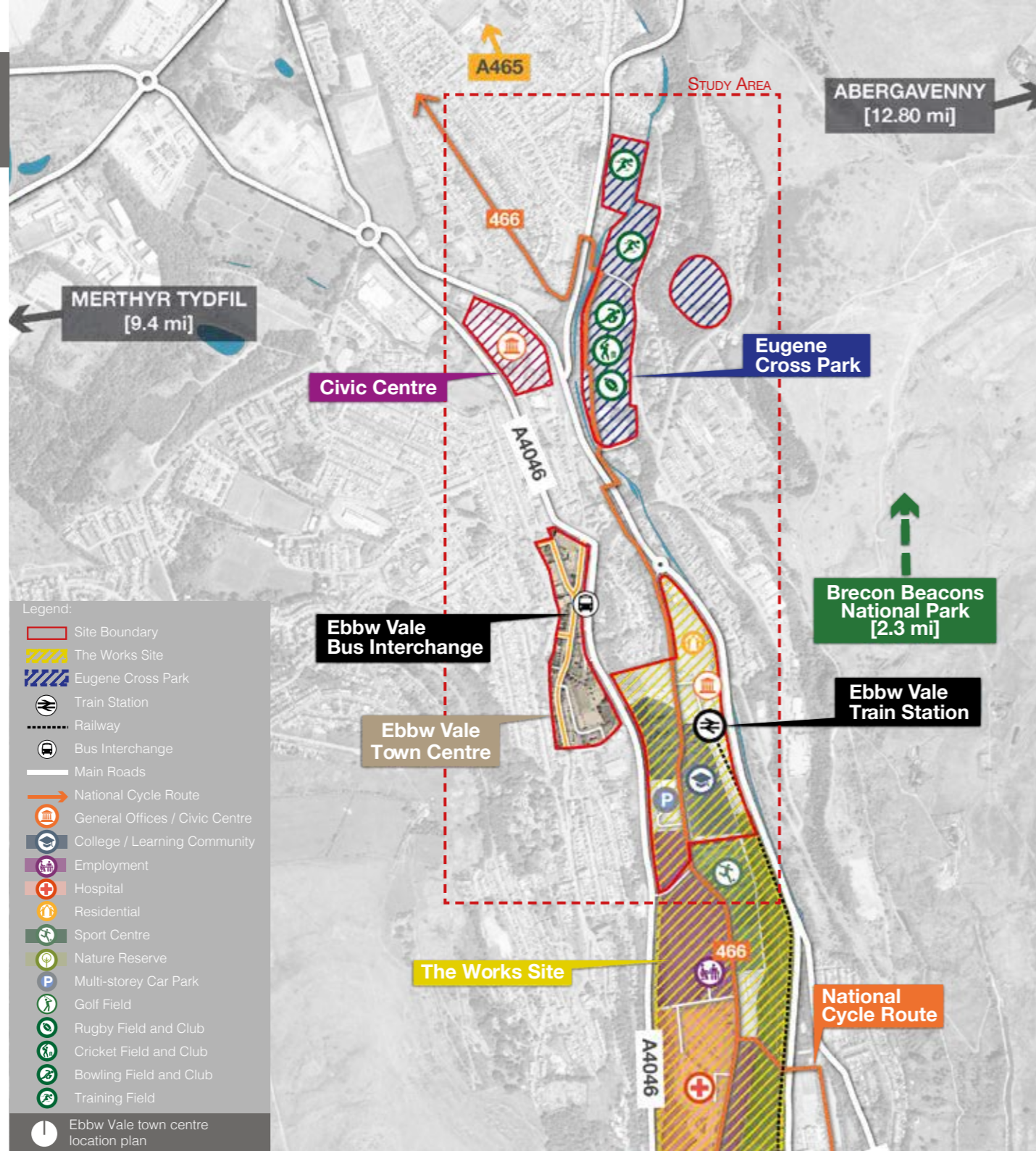
1.2 THE PLACEMAKING PLAN AREA

The placemaking plan includes the town centre, the northern area of The Works, the Civic Centre and Eugene Cross Park. An overview of each is below:

The Town Centre stretches along Bethcar Street, Market Street and James Street. It is home to a diverse community of independent retailers and businesses. The centre townscape is characterised by 2/3-storey buildings that include a series of distinctive heritage buildings. The public realm in the centre is good quality and provides plenty of space for pedestrians. There is an opportunity to create a series of distinctive green streets and public spaces.

The centre is highly accessible by car from the A4046 and there is a plentiful supply of car parking spaces. The highway infrastructure surrounding the town could be enhanced to improve the pedestrian environment and to encourage active travel into the town. A bus station and taxi rank are located directly in the centre and rail access is provided from Ebbw Vale railway station located on The Works.

The Works was formerly the Ebbw Vale steelworks site, and has a rich 200 year heritage. Following the closure of Steelworks in 2002, the 21 hectare site was transformed into an exemplary public service destination that now includes a college, school, hospital, leisure centre, homes, employment space, rail infrastructure and nature reserve. The northern area of The Works includes Ebbw Vale railway station, the General Offices, Coleg Gwent, Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, Ebbw Vale Sports Centre and the Box Park. Undeveloped sites provide an opportunity to attract further investment to the site.



1.0 INTRODUCTION

There is a significant level change between The Works and the town centre, which has partly been overcome by a funicular rail connection. There is a need to further enhance west-east pedestrian connections between The Works and the town centre. The national cycle route 466 passes through the site and connects it to Eugene Cross Park to the north. This offers the opportunity to establish a high-quality active travel corridor.

Eugene Cross Park: Eugene Cross Park is a 8.6 hectare sports and recreational ground located north of the town centre and The Works. The Park is home to Ebbw Vale R.F.C., Ebbw Vale C.C. and RTB Ebbw Vale B.C. Each club has playing facilities, clubhouses and spectator space, and there are two training pitches. A public right of way (also national cycle route 466) passes through the Park following the alignment of the Afon Ebwy. The River Centre Learning Community is located adjacent to the Park, but lets space from the Ebbw Vale R.F.C. in the Park. There is an opportunity to transform the area into a sporting, community and education destination that can support both grass-root clubs and organisations and cater for elite teams. Eugene Cross Park Sports Ltd has been set up to achieve this.

The Civic Centre is located to the west of Eugene Cross Park. The site comprises the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale Job Centre and former Ebbw Vale Leisure Centre which is now vacant. The site provides a key opportunity to create an exemplary green residential neighbourhood with strong active travel links to the town centre and wider local area.



Ebbw Vale Train Station



Dragon sculpture at Bethcar Street



General Offices



Funicular



James Street and Bethcar Street Junction



Ebbw Vale Town Centre

1.3 WHAT IS PLACEMAKING?



1.4 WHAT IS THE EBBW VALE PLACEMAKING PLAN?



1.5 WHY THE PLACEMAKING PLAN?



“The way places are planned, designed, developed and managed has the potential to positively shape where and how people will live, work, socialise, move about and engage. Placemaking is ensuring that each new development or intervention contributes positively to creating or enhancing environments within which people, communities, businesses and nature can thrive. (Placemaking Guide, Placemaking Wales, 2020, DCfW).

Placemaking is a requirement in Wales and is the means to deliver sustainable development as required by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, Planning Policy Wales and the Placemaking Wales Charter .

The placemaking plan provides a new vision for Ebbw Vale town and identifies the type of projects and investment that we want to attract. The plan is unique to Ebbw Vale and responds directly to the bespoke issues and opportunities present in the town. It does not seek to copy what has been done elsewhere. All the proposals of the plan are ‘people centred’ with each focussed on improving the experience of those that live in the town, work in the town and visit the town. The plan is the means to establish a sustainable future for the town that addresses the current issues and needs, while delivering a enhanced place and opportunities for future generations.

Like all town centres across the UK, Ebbw Vale has faced a series of significant challenges in recent years. First by the emergence of edge of settlement retail developments, then by the seismic increase in online purchasing, and most recently by the COVID-19 pandemic. The placemaking plan responds to the Welsh Government’s Town Centres First policy, offering a strategy to arrest further decline and help to re-purpose the town into a destination that people want to visit.

The plan will also ensure we deliver investment and change sustainably and appropriately as required by the national legislation and planning policy.



Ebbw Vale town centre on Market Day, a thriving place

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.6 TRANSFORMING TOWNS AND TACTICAL URBANISM

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed how we operate and has presented new challenges for many aspects of our economy and society. This include the vitality of towns across the UK. As we recover from the pandemic we must be mindful of the behavioural changes that have occurred during the pandemic and help Ebbw Vale town and its businesses become resilient to future challenges.

We can do this by working with businesses to help them bounce back, but also by attracting investment into the town that can create a better town centre environment for businesses and visitors, and also diversify the uses in the town so it becomes a place for leisure and work and to live. The placemaking plan will be the means for us to achieve this transformation.

While the placemaking plan is a long-term plan, and some projects and changes will take time to deliver, there are also short-term measures that we can start to pursue through the placemaking plan to build back better.

For example, we can adapt our streets to create external spaces for food and beverage retailers to use in the event of future social distancing restrictions. We can also utilise tactical urbanism, in the form of temporary parklets, planters, public art and seating areas, to create safe meeting and social spaces. Such spaces could become long-term assets for the town and create interest and a reason to visit.

There is also an opportunity to create new flexible work spaces for those that are unable to access office facilities. COVID-19 has placed pressures on the working lives of many people who have been unable to access the offices of employers and have instead been restricted to home-working. While for many the 'home-working' arrangement marks a significant improvement, for others it poses challenges to mental health and wellbeing and reduces social activity. To address this, there is an opportunity to deliver flexible workspaces in the town that can serve the wider residential population. Such spaces would have the added benefit of increasing footfall into the town centre.

Finally, COVID-19 has resulted in record rises in online retailing. This has forced businesses to consider how they get their goods and services to customers, with many local retailers embracing delivery services, click & collect, and online retailing. Many of the town's businesses have sought to explore these opportunities and through the placemaking plan further support can be provided to enable businesses to develop capacity in this area, and market and sell products and service digitally.



Precedent image: covered outdoor seating



Precedent image: Re-purposed parking space



Precedent image: Cafe occupying existing urban space

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.7 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

To create a placemaking plan that captures the distinctive character of Ebbw Vale and the local expertise of the people that live and work there, comprehensive engagement has been undertaken during the preparation of the placemaking plan.

The engagement was undertaken to find out about how the town works, what are the key ambitions for it, and what type of interventions and change would people like to see happen.

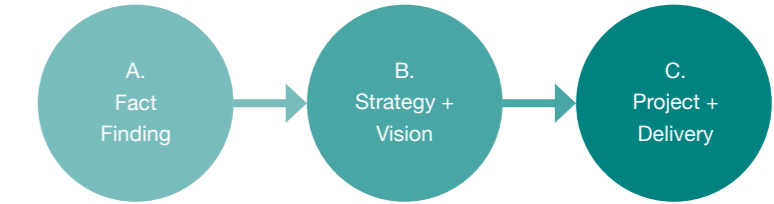
As a result of COVID-19 engagement has been undertaken with key stakeholders via online workshops. The key groups are identified opposite.

Wider public engagement is also to be undertaken and will inform the delivery of the projects that come forward through the placemaking plan.

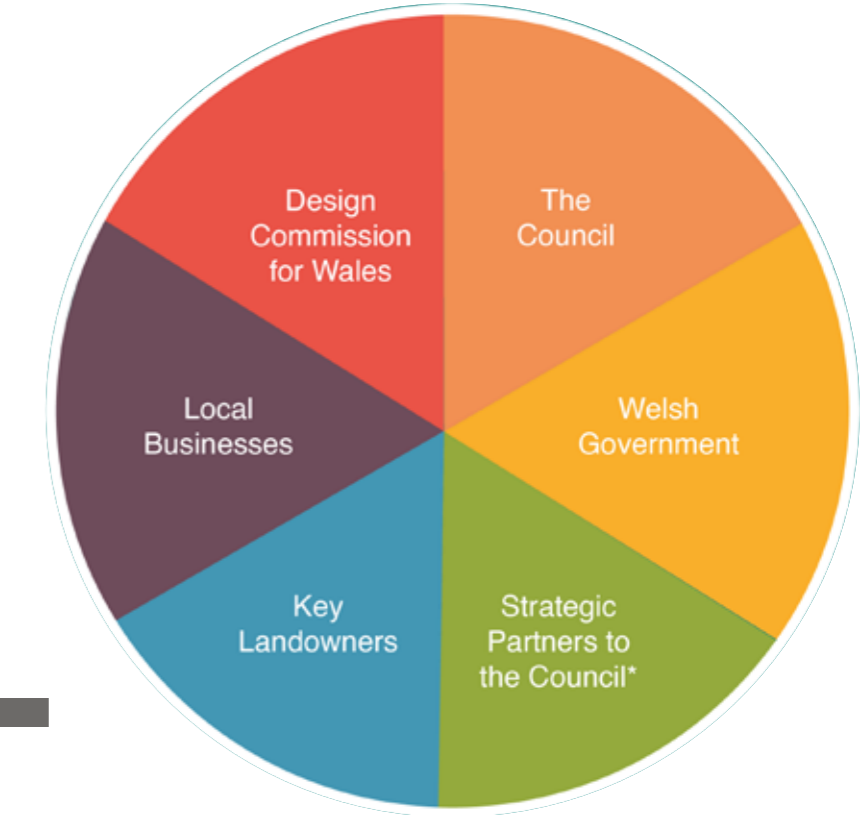
A summary of the key feedback that was provided by stakeholders is presented in the following section (Ebbw Vale Today).

* Strategic Partners:

Transport for Wales, Tech Valleys, Coleg Gwent, Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, Eugene Cross Park Sports Ltd, Ebbw Vale Cricket Club and Aneurin Leisure Trust.



Engagement stages



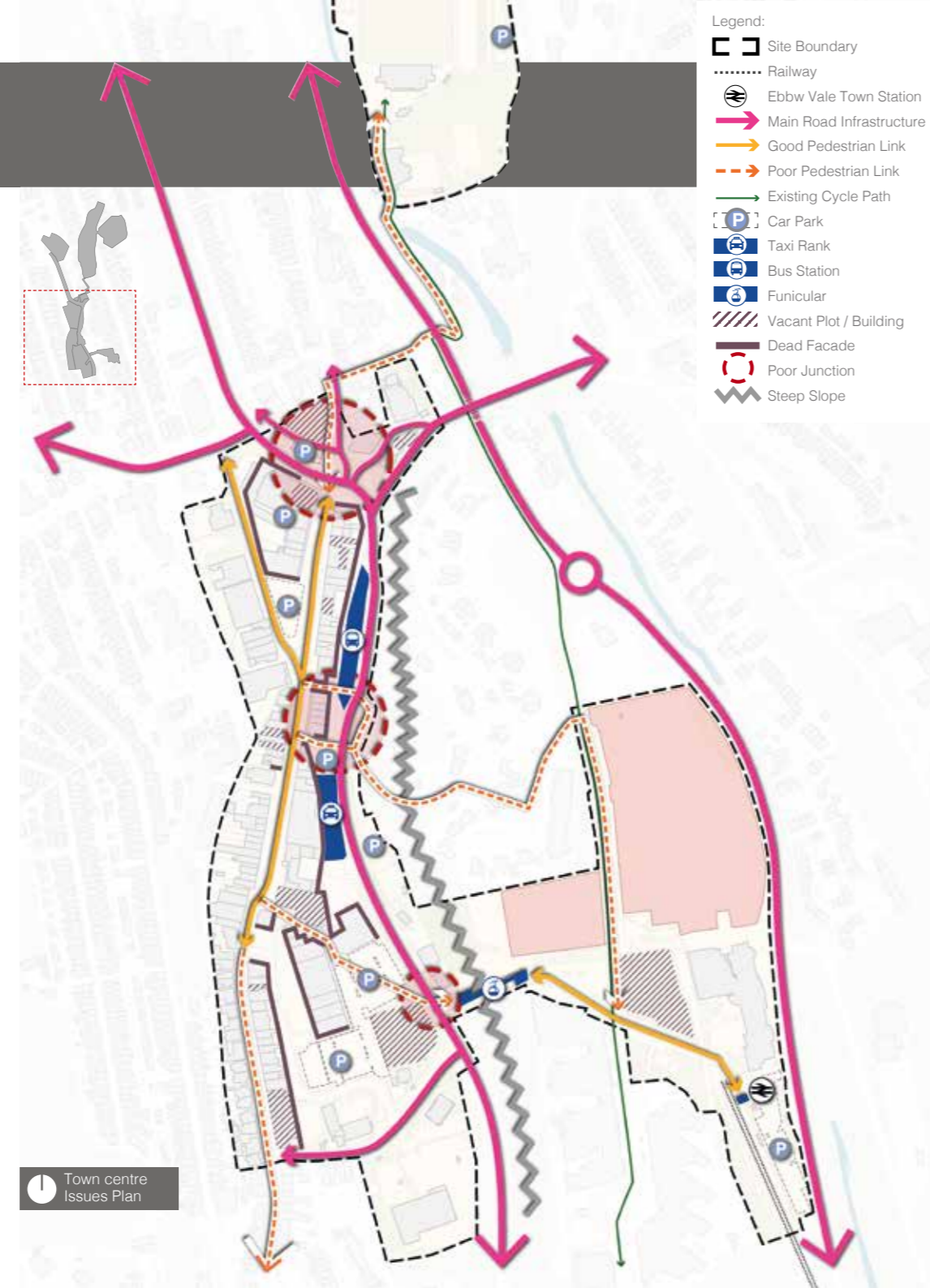
Engagement partners

2.0 EBBW VALE TODAY

To identify the issues and opportunities that Ebbw Vale town currently faces a physical place review of the town has been undertaken along with initial engagement with key stakeholders. A summary of the key findings is presented below.

2.1 THE ISSUES FACING EBBW VALE

- The multi-storey car park and associated block is of poor visual quality and has three blank edges. The structure fails to address the public realm and gives a poor first impression of the town centre when approached from the north.
- The quality of the 'northern gateway' is further eroded by redundant road infrastructure and surface parking.
- The town centre lacks high quality green open space suitable for social gathering.
- The A4046 and topography act as barriers to movement in an east-west direction, creating significant impediment to walking connections to the railway station, leisure and education facilities located at The Works site.
- The A4046 is a vehicle dominated route which combined with large areas of hard standing, and unsightly backs and service areas for shops, creates a poor pedestrian environment.
- The bus station, despite being centrally located is not visible from Bethcar Street, therefore undermining legibility and way-finding.
- The funicular railway does not function around the clock, and does not have steps as an alternative route. The alternative walking route between east and west is both illegible and circuitous.
- The railway station building lacks adequate weather protection, and is generally understated as an arrival point to the town.
- The area surrounding the railway station and General Offices lack activity beyond school hours.
- The high street would benefit from the improvement of the quality of shop fronts and buildings façades.
- Lack of variety and choice in night time economy.
- Urban form in the south east of the town centre is fragmented and vehicle dominated, providing a poor pedestrian environment and southern gateway.
- Eugene Cross park's facilities are in need of upgrades and walking connections to the town need improving.



Town centre Issues Plan

2.0 EBBW VALE TODAY



Eugene Cross Park & Civic Centre Issues Plan

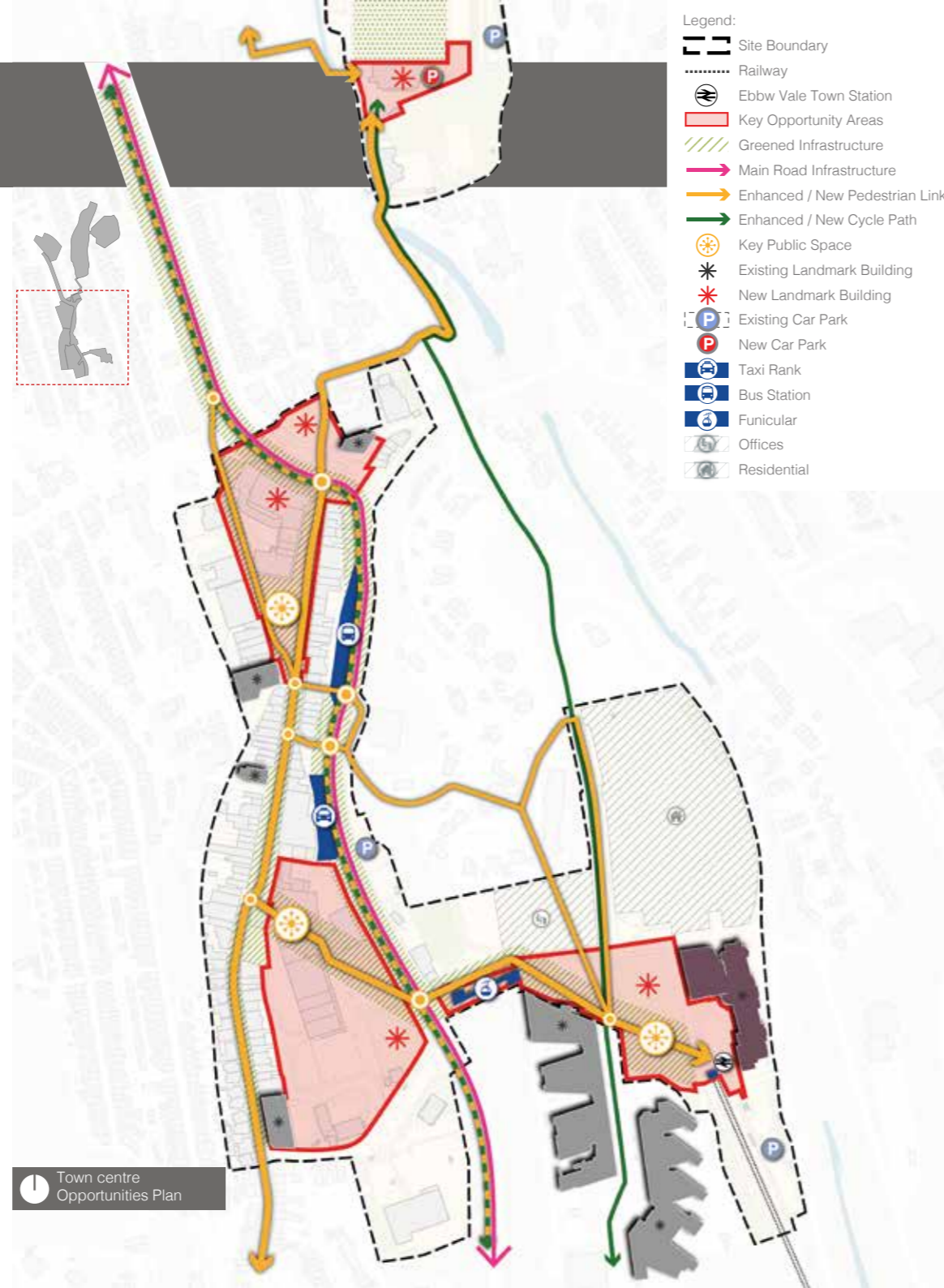
2.2 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK ON KEY ISSUES

- Movement**
- Physical pedestrian connections between the Works and the town centre need to be improved. Signage also needs to be enhanced.
 - Population is due to increase in Ebbw Vale and opportunities to improve active travel should be considered.
 - There are key access points to the town centre that are susceptible to congestion.
 - A coordinated approach to parking requirements are required to provide sufficient capacity without the infrastructure dominating.
- Green Infrastructure**
- The slope between the town centre and The Works contributes green infrastructure, but affected by Ash die-back and requires management/species diversification.
 - Opportunities for planting on-street could be limited due to street services
- Use and Activities**
- Consider the future role of town centres, encourage more start up businesses in the town.
 - Residential development in the centre should be done in the right way.
 - The commercial future of the multi-storey complex is unclear and requires management.
- Public Open Spaces**
- Public spaces at The Works are not well utilised, as they are exposed, shady and poorly maintained. Maintenance and countering anti-social behaviour should be a key consideration for all design proposals.
 - The multi-storey at the top end of the town is no longer fit for purpose and physically detracts from the town centre.
 - There is limited space to create a terminus rail station building to create a landmark entrance without impacting on the existing parking. Consider synergies with the Station Square to create canopy, cafés and active frontage.
- Eugene Cross Park**
- Parking and access are limited
 - Overall utilisation of the site is poor, and the overlap between the cricket and rugby pitch can be problematic
 - The Ebbw Vale R.F.C. clubhouse is outdated and not functional.
 - There are no changing facilities at the northern end of the Park.
 - The northern pitches drain poorly and lighting is limited.
 - Long-term use of the police station needs to be considered.
 - The town centre uses are not attractive to students and young people.

2.0 EBBW VALE TODAY

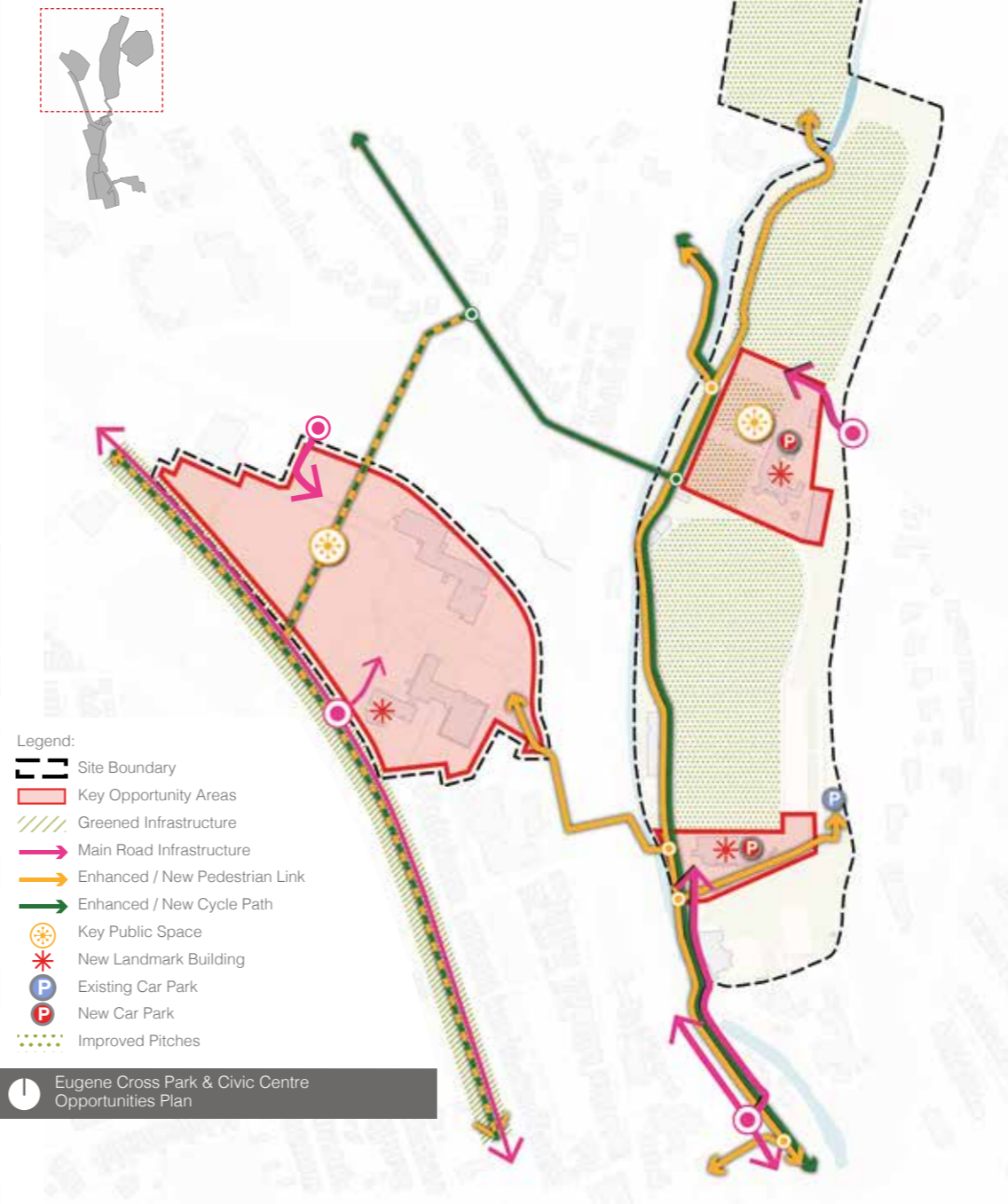
2.3 THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EBBW VALE

- Create a strong West-East movement corridor through the town.
- Create another pedestrian connection to bridge the slope between the town centre and The Works.
- Improve the legibility and safety of West-East and North-South pedestrian and cycle connections.
- Improve connections to Eugene Cross Park and the Ebbw Vale Sport Centre from the town centre and public transport nodes.
- Create a positive street environment for the A4046, which has active frontage; safe and comfortable foot and cycleways and convenient crossing points.
- Create clear visual links to the town centre from the bus station and the A4046.
- Create active frontage and attractive edges to the A4046.
- Create a series of high quality public open spaces, that draw on the character of the surrounding buildings and activities.
- Improve poor quality buildings and shop-fronts.
- Create an appropriate setting for key character, landmark and listed buildings.
- Diversify town centre uses to provide a broader mix of uses that create a more vibrant and active town centre.
- Create a new northern gateway that considers the renewal of the multi-storey car park and the associated development block and James Street car park.
- Create a vibrant, attractive and rail gateway; with a series of high quality public open spaces and uses that connect the town to the railway station and enable the area to become a destination in its own right.
- Deliver a new railway terminus building that creates a landmark entrance.
- 'Green' the town centre, by introducing new planting and SuDS
- Replace and/or rejuvenate the built facilities and Eugene Cross Park.
- Unlock the development opportunity provided by the Civic Centre.



Town centre Opportunities Plan

2.0 EBBW VALE TODAY



Eugene Cross Park & Civic Centre Opportunities Plan

2.4 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK ON KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Movement

- Improve the pedestrian crossings on the A4046 and improve the pedestrian links through The Walk and to The Works.

Green Infrastructure

- Central Valley improvements are an asset to the town, connections to the reserve should be considered.
- The 'green lung' in the centre of the study area should be retained and enhanced.

Use and Activity

- Work with town centre businesses and help them to diversify and thrive. There are good examples of businesses that are doing well, demonstrating demand for local retail.
- A series of flexible commercial spaces could be established in the town centre to create an opportunity to introduce and trial new uses and create new business opportunities.
- Create more start up spaces for homeworkers and entrepreneurs in the town centre, since Box Park units have been received well. Ebbw Vale library is also being pioneered as work space.
- Introduce more residential uses in the town centre to diversify uses.

Development Opportunities

- Create a vibrant, destination space that is a focus for hospitality uses and community events.
- Some food retail on The Works should be considered for the College and rail commuters.
- Welsh Government will invest £100m over 10 years to create 1,500-plus jobs. Transforming Towns has offered a range of interventions across Ebbw Vale, including Box Park and enhanced 5G coverage.
- There is an identified opportunity for Ebbw Vale to use the Tech Valley proposals to diversify uses within the town centre.
- The College is likely to grow its curriculum in the coming years which would require new premises close to the current College building. There is potential to accommodate this within the town centre to increase footfall and expenditure in the town centre.

Eugene Cross Park

- Establish a diverse facility to be used by multiple sport clubs from grass roots sports to professional clubs. Eugene Cross Park Sports Ltd has been set up to deliver this vision.
- There is an ambition to transform the facility into a key social hub, not solely a sports facility, while complementing the town centre offer.

2.0 EBBW VALE TODAY

To understand the commercial and economic constraints and opportunities that need to be considered in order to effectively deliver investment to Ebbw Vale we have examined the regional and local property market. The issues and opportunities identified are summarised below.

2.6 COMMERCIAL PROPERTY CONSTRAINTS

- The past 12 months has been one of the most turbulent and challenging periods for the UK economy with retail, leisure and hospitality businesses being some of the most seriously hit businesses by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Online shopping has grown exponentially. Already accounting for 19% of all retail expenditure in 2019, total e-spending reached 28% for 2020.
- Local spending power limited since 20% of the resident population are on benefits; and gross weekly full time pay is 16% lower than the Wales average and nearly a quarter less than the GB average.
- Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, average footfall was declining steadily by around 5% year-on-year between 2015 and 2019; with shopping centres, retail parks and High Street venues all seeing an impact.
- Vacancy rate expected to increase with Local Data Company recorded a UK-wide net reduction of -7,834 occupied retail units in H1 2020, with the greatest number of closures in 'comparison' retail
- Completion of the Heads of Valleys road will make out-of-town retail including Cyfartha Park and Trago Mills; and leisure facilities at Abergavenny more accessible.
- There is currently only limited office-based employment in Ebbw Vale with no bespoke office park.
- Town centre 'leisure' offer appears to have declined over the last decade, and in contrast to national trends which has generally seen the rise of the "coffee-shop" and other leisure services within town centres.

Resulting fundamental structural change in the retail and leisure sector has huge consequences for the role and function of our town centres..

Some of the trends and impacts as follows:

- Town Centre retail dominance is over – a much broader social mix of activities is needed within town centres.
- Rising consumer focus on "convenience" – especially in terms of accessibility of places, response to 'click & collect' and same day delivery response from on-line retailers.
- Downward value of the retail asset class



Generally low vacancy rate across the town



Uncertain long term future for some key retailers



National bank closures impact on High Street

2.0 EBBW VALE TODAY

2.7 COMMERCIAL PROPERTY OPPORTUNITIES

Looking forward, some of the key drivers considered vital to future success of places include:

Local Employment Prospects

- Much of the strategic employment growth is directed to either The Works (3.5ha) or the Ebbw Vale Northern Corridor (Rhyd y Blew 13.2ha & Bryn Serth 10 ha). Successful delivery of these proposals, especially new employment growth will help reinforce and strengthen the economic vitality of Ebbw Vale town centre, provided efficient and sustainable connectivity between the sites is also realised and maintained.
- The procurement of new enterprise floorspace is, we suggest, one of the priority actions for a town centre redevelopment as it would bring in young, entrepreneurial businesses that should grow and establish themselves in the town. In addition to directly generating new employment and investment, increased footfall can only assist existing retailers and nurture new retail and leisure operators.
- The attraction of high value-added businesses in digital, life sciences, creative and tech is a clear target of the Tech Town Centre initiative. However, there is a growth of local services and small businesses in the foundational economy and this entrepreneurial spirit should be nurtured and encouraged. This will require cost-effective 'easy in, easy out' floorspace, with low rents, no business rates (under SBRR threshold) and, importantly, high-capacity digital connectivity. There are a large number of vacant shops and accommodation in the upper floors above shops could readily be exploited in this regard.

Demographic Trends

- Changing demographics (both population size and age structure) will present towns with different demands in terms of access, movement and the overall sense of place. As the primary settlement, Ebbw Vale is expected to deliver some 45% of planned housing growth (some 952 units)

Connected Communities

- The value of thinking and acting locally has increased during the enforced lock-down period with many people re-assessing their traditional journey to work and reconsidering local accessibility of services, entertainment, leisure and shopping activities. This in turn perhaps creates more demand for housing within walking distance of town centres.
- This is evidenced in the rise of the 20-minute city idea whilst people are also seeking more flexible space within their homes. Resilient digital connectivity in our homes is also now paramount in purchasing decisions.

Experiential Environments

- Consumer behaviour has moved away from shopping as the main event to demanding wider experiences and enjoyment of "places". Whilst potentially halted during the pandemic, this trend is expected to resume with town centres needing to offer a broader mix of activities and cultural events whilst also creating safer environments for stronger social connections.

Digital and Mobile Technology

- Town centres must adapt and respond to the demands of technology and find ways to interact more effectively with consumers of the future; especially if looking to attract younger consumers.

Importance of Space & Safety

- The Covid-19 pandemic has undoubtedly made people re-evaluate their surroundings and homes and it is clear a premium is placed on access to green spaces – both in the wider countryside and within our urban areas. Creation of effective, safe and attractive public spaces is paramount in designing successful places for the future. Thinking around personal space and impact on people density is evolving with more space required for each person whether they are resting or moving. This may lead to a desire for wider footpaths and more space for outdoor seating. Places that deliver a stronger sense of personal safety are likely to create a competitive advantage.

Climate Change Demands

- Consumer responses to climate change is leading pressure to buy local, reduce the need to travel and cut unnecessary packaging. Something especially highlighted during the pandemic with local traders and independents seen as "going the extra mile" to help. The e-retail sector will be quick to respond to these challenges, with movement on packaging and investment in electric vehicles for distribution.

Our vision for Ebbw Vale town is simple; we want it to thrive as a local place for its residents and businesses. If we can achieve this Ebbw Vale will also become a place that others want to visit and new businesses want to invest in.

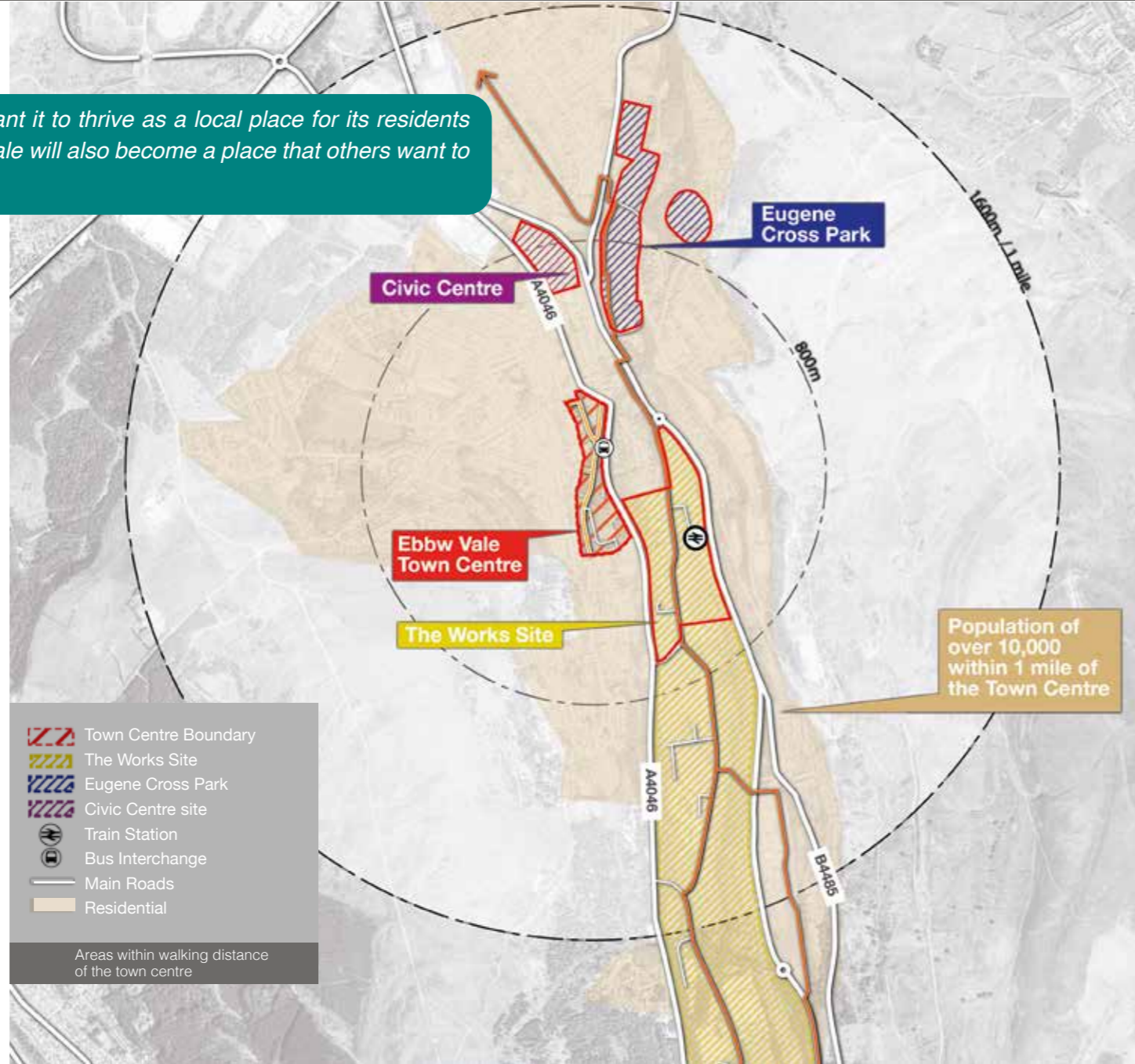
3.1 UNDERSTANDING THE VISION

To achieve our vision and transform the town after the Covid-19 pandemic, we need to put the 'Town Centres First' policy into action, and the placemaking plan provides the means to do this.

In delivering our vision we also want to exploit three key opportunity areas for Ebbw Vale town:

1. Connect the town with the locality and destinations.
2. Build on the area's green legacy.
3. Exploit tech and digital investment opportunities.

Further detail on each of these opportunity areas that can be delivered through the placemaking plan follows.



1. CONNECTING THE LOCALITY

- Better connect the town with the assets that surround it.
- Create a '20-minute' neighbourhood where key destinations are highly accessible and strengthen each other.
- Improve Active Travel connections and public transport facilities.

3.2 A 20-MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The Covid-19 pandemic requirements to stay local, and work from home has led to people rediscovering their local centres. The 20-minute neighbourhood concept embraces this, with people living and working in their local centres, enjoying open spaces close to home, and accessing all the goods and services for everyday life conveniently on foot or cycle.

The town's catchment is extensive and includes a number of key sites like The Works, Eugene Cross Park and the Civic Centre. If we can better connect the town with these area and the wider settlement via high quality active travel routes and good public transport we can ensure that the town and the surrounding area works together as one to increase vitality.

In addition to the physical connections creating a mosaic of diverse uses, in the town centre is also critical to encourage more people into the town. Introducing more residential uses and creating new types of workspace and leisure use in the town will help to create round the clock activity that will breathe life back into the centre. While making the town cleaner, greener and more inviting and enhancing its distinctive features would create a unique experience-based offer that cannot be bought online.

Finally, uses in the surrounding destinations need to complement the town centre offer. Ebbw Vale is undergoing extensive housing growth that can increase the vitality of the town. Complementary investment into the key sites of the The Works, Eugene Cross Park and Civic Centre site can further strengthen the town centre while also rejuvenating each site.

Key Facts:

- 45% of planned housing growth to be accommodated in Ebbw Vale
- Rail frequency to be increased to half hourly service
- Anywhere in Ebbw Vale can be reached in 20 minutes on an electric bike or public transport.



2. GREEN LEGACY

- Extensive tree and SuDS planting to build upon Ebbw Vale's innovative green legacy.
- Create high quality green places that connect the centre to Ebbw Vale's natural backdrop.

3.3 A GREEN AND HEALTHY TOWN

Greening town spaces have well-documented multi-faceted benefits on people's physical and mental wellbeing, as well as environmental benefits. Urban green spaces provide:

- Greater levels of social activity.
- Stronger neighbourhood relationships.
- Greater levels of physical activity.
- Improved health and wellbeing.
- De-carbonisation and tackling climate change.
- Improved air quality.
- Reduce flood risk and better manage water quality.
- Create new habitat and improve biodiversity.

Blaenau Gwent has outstanding natural assets, and a rugged backdrop visible from anywhere in the town. Moreover, Ebbw Vales Garden Festival at it's peak attracted over 2 million visitors to Ebbw Vale and provided the town with a national reputation and rich green legacy.

New green park spaces, vertical greening and street planting could be incorporated to unlock the numerous and health and environmental benefits and mark a new chapter in the town's innovative green legacy.

Key Facts:

- The Blaenau Gwent We Want study, part of the 2017 Blaenau Gwent well-being assessment found that (36%) identified the natural environment as what is special about the area
- Parks, vertical greening and street planting could be incorporated to bring the town's green character right into the centre



3. DIGITAL & TECH INVESTMENT

- Embrace the digital and technological revolution with world-class connectivity.
- Help deliver the Tech Valleys agenda.
- Create an environment where new businesses can thrive and existing

“The Fourth Industrial Revolution will be the most disruptive period any of us has ever known, as we continue to witness a blurring of the real world with the technological world.” Grimsey Review 2 (2018).

3.4 EMBRACING THE 4TH REVOLUTION

Not since the onset of the industrial revolution has technology been poised to play such a transformational role in the lives of consumers and operation of businesses. Preparing for this technological revolution that is upon us now is essential.

Increasing reliance on technology, including: cloud computing; digital interactions; artificial intelligence and 'Internet of Things' has changed patterns of working.

The future workplace has begun to look radically different as employers respond to a growing requirement for a work-health balance. While the town centre will grow importance in delivering social connections, community and personal experience.

There is the potential for a whole range of different types of business accommodation to thrive in the town centre, including small suites and co-working space for small companies and start ups.

There is a need to re-calibrate the town centre so they are resilient to change. The Tech Valley's policy which applies to Blaenau Gwent creates the opportunity to diversify uses within Ebbw Vale's town centre.

Key Facts:

- Welsh Government's Tech Valleys is committed to creating a new tech-cluster in Ebbw Vale
- £100m Tech Valleys programme offers a mixture of 5G technology, a new campus for cyber testing & innovative new business space

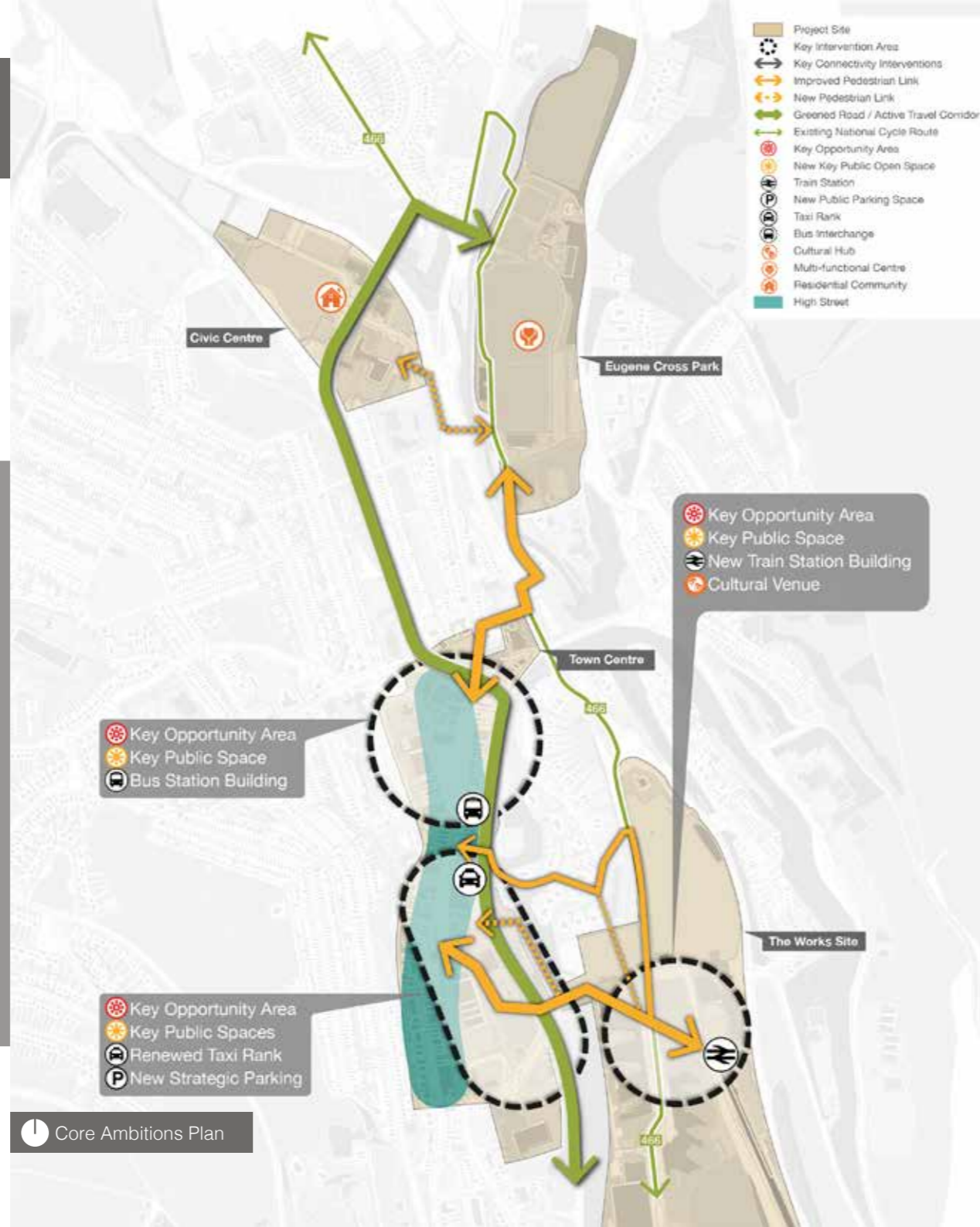
3.0 EBBW VALE IN 2035

3.5 THE CORE AMBITIONS FOR EBBW VALE

To help us deliver our vision for Ebbw Vale town we have identified six core ambitions that the **placemaking plan must deliver upon**. These respond to the key issues and opportunities identified through the place analysis and stakeholder engagement and if achieved will deliver the vision.

The six core ambitions will guide the type of projects and investment that we will pursue through the placemaking plan and explain the type of changes that we will deliver over the plan period. They will provide strategic direction over the placemaking plan period.

Our core ambitions for Ebbw Vale town follow.



3.0 EBBW VALE IN 2035



1. Establish the high street as a 'test-bed' for new business and **entrepreneurs** but also cultivate **an environment of growth for existing businesses**.



2. Create a series of new entrance spaces into the town centre that **open up the high street**, enhance the retail environment, green the centre and create space for new homes, work spaces and leisure uses.



3. Revitalise the **connections between the town centre and The Works** to give pedestrians and cyclist greater choice, reliability and quality.



4. **Transform The Works into a vibrant and active destination**; a place of arrival, culture, learning, working and living.



5. Establish **Eugene Cross Park as a regionally renowned sporting destination** that caters for specialist, elite and community teams and improve its connections to the town centre and The Works.



6. Transform the Civic Centre site into an **exemplary neighbourhood** of modern homes in a green sustainable setting.

4.0 THE PLACEMAKING PLAN

4.1 THE PLACEMAKING PLAN STRATEGY

To explain how we can deliver our core ambitions for Ebbw Vale Town we have prepared a placemaking strategy. This is visualised below and shows the key areas we want to change and projects we want to pursue. The key outcomes of following this strategy would be:

- New northern and eastern gateways into the town centre that enhance the pedestrian environment and deliver new commercial uses that diversify the centre.
- A more diverse high street on Bethcar Street, James Street and Market Street with new homes, work spaces and leisure uses alongside retail businesses.
- A series of green streets and spaces that can be utilised by local people and businesses and support biodiversity.
- A restored townscape that includes modern architecture and heritage buildings and shop fronts.
- Enhanced active travel routes that better connect the town and its wider settlement.
- A greater sense of arrival to the town by train and transformation of The Works into a diverse destination that complements and strengthens the town centre.
- Transformation of Eugene Cross Park into exemplary sports and community facility and the Civic Centre into a green neighbourhood.



4.0 THE PLACEMAKING PLAN

In addition to the physical projects and interventions that we intend to make, there are a series of non-physical interventions. While these cannot be shown visually on a strategy they are essential to the success of Ebbw Vale town. Such measures include developing a digital presence for the town, strengthening the quality of WI-FI coverage, creating a favourable commercial environment for businesses to survive and grow and establishing a regular series of events and initiatives that raise interest in the town as a destination and increase visitors. Each of these has been built into the placemaking plan and further detail is provided later in the document.



4.0 THE PLACEMAKING PLAN

Through the analysis we have identified a series of unique intervention areas in the town and surrounding area where projects and investment can be focussed to deliver the placemaking strategy. The focus for each of these areas is identified below, with the following analysis demonstrating the type of investment and projects we intend to deliver in each area.

4.2 INTERVENTION AREAS

Northern Gateway

A new entrance space from the north where pedestrians are prioritised, new green space is created for everyday enjoyment and local events, and key buildings are redeveloped to create an attractive and engaging townscape that enhances the street-scene.

Eastern Gateway

A new entrance to the town from the east that delivers an improved pedestrian environment, better public realm that opens up the entrance to the town centre and connects the centre to The Works. Redevelopment of key blocks to offer a greater mix of viable uses in the centre.

Town Centre Core

Restored buildings and shop fronts in a green street setting. Diverse mix of uses that include vibrant retail businesses, workspaces, incubator and tester units for 'start-ups', leisure uses, homes and live/work spaces.

The Works

New landmark entrance to Ebbw Vale by rail with new terminus building and Station Square development to provide new civic and cultural space and outdoor event spaces. Enhanced pedestrian connections to the town centre.

A4046 Corridor

An enhanced active travel environment with space for cycle lanes, planting and priority pedestrian crossings to connect the town centre and The Works. Better integration of the bus station and taxi rank into Bethcar Street and treatment of rear properties.

Civic Centre

A new green neighbourhood with modern energy efficient homes and new active travel corridors that provide access to the town centre, The Works and Eugene Cross Park.

Eugene Cross Park

A modern sports and community destination with a new indoor training facility and community hub, all-weather outdoor training pitches and enhanced active travel and vehicle connections.



Project Intervention Areas

Non physical projects are not included in the intervention areas, but they are pivotal for the success of the town centre and are included in the following analysis.

4.0 THE PLACEMAKING PLAN



Glamorgan Archive at the General Offices

4.3 THE TOWN CENTRE CORE

Main Issues

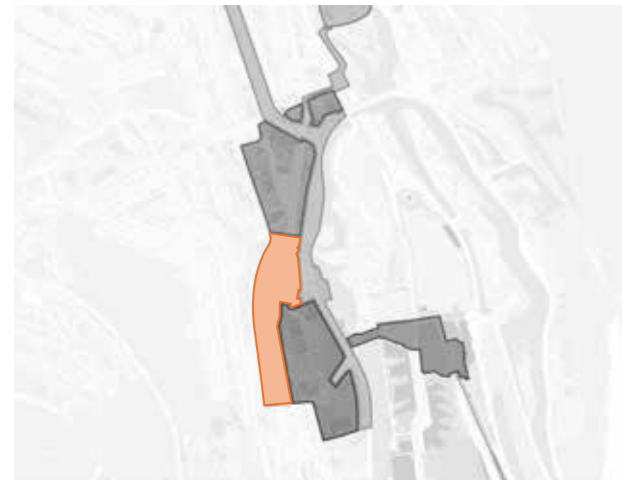
- Lack of high quality public spaces for outdoor socialising and events.
- Lack of greenery and park spaces.
- Lack of public space activation and “spill-out” spaces.
- Extended retail zone, with building vacancy affecting footfall and creating unattractive / inactive spaces.
- Overall quality of the retail offer needs improvement.
- Lack of commercial space, which would offer lunchtime trade.
- Under-utilisation of upper storeys.



Northern entrance to Bethcar Street.



Public space in front of the library.



The Walk access to Bethcar Street.



View of Bethcar Street looking south.

Re-enliven the town centre core by focusing upon visitor experience, creating a unique place with a mix of independent retail and hospitality. Delivering change will rely on a mix of place based projects: uplifting quality of the built fabric and shop fronts, creating character areas around new and reinvigorated public open spaces, and activity based proposals: condensing the retail zone, supporting & enabling new uses, and embracing technology.



Potential Projects

- Create a series of flexible commercial units that can be utilised by emerging businesses to test and grow their business.
- Deliver ‘live-work’ units in the town centre and identify targeted opportunities to create new homes above commercial premises that can cater for a range of needs (including and ageing population and young people), diversify town centre uses and increase activity beyond retail hours.
- Create a series of ‘spill-out’ spaces for existing cafe / coffee shop retailers.
- Restore and refurbish building façades and shop fronts to enhance the character of the town centre. Key priority to be given to batches of properties facing onto key public spaces.
- Green the street-scene through targeted tree planting, SuDS and vertical green infrastructure. New planting to connect to strategic greening interventions delivered as part of the northern and eastern gateways (refer below) and frame spill out spaces created for retailers. Ongoing maintenance to inform specification.
- Rationalise street furniture and ensure appropriate maintenance measures are in place to maintain the retained furniture.
- Create a regular programme of events and temporary placemaking to create interest and drive foot fall into the town.
- Establish a Local Development Order to provide greater flexibility for changes of use that would complement the town centre and help increase activity and footfall.
- Promote the town centre as a ‘pilot project’ to test the benefits of freezing or reducing business rates for town centre businesses.
- Nurture strong local leadership (via establishment of a BID or Chamber of Commerce) that can organise the growth and diversification of the town centre offer from the ‘grass roots’ up.
- Provide high-speed network coverage in the town centre to enable businesses to trade but also encourage visitors and flexible workers to stay in the town.
- Develop an online digital presence for the town centre that promotes the town and its businesses and provides a means for retailers to trade online.



Establish the high street as a ‘test-bed’ for new business and **entrepreneurs** but also cultivate **an environment of growth for existing businesses.**

4.4 NORTHERN GATEWAY

Main Issues

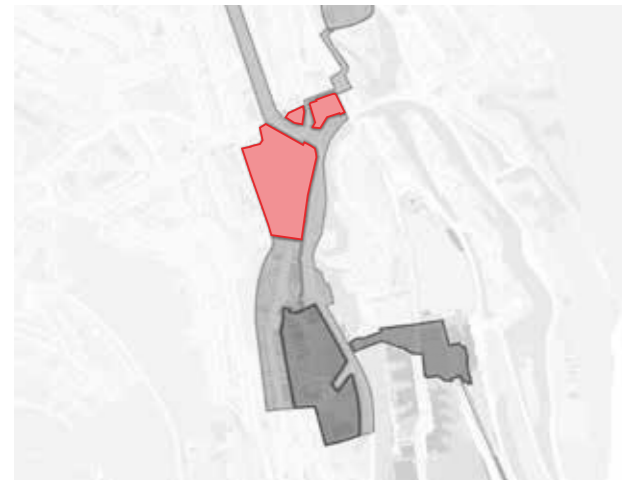
- The gateway is dominated by surface and multi-storey car park, and redundant road infrastructure, creating an unattractive entrance to the town centre.
- The main public space (Market Square) enclosed between Market Street and James Street is used as car park, precluding the use of the space for social gathering and events, temporary markets, and events.
- With the exception of two mature trees, there is no greenery.
- Inconsistent use of materials and need to rationalise street furniture.
- Dead / inactive façades onto public spaces.



Northern gateway, complex junction arrangement.



Northern gateway, multi-phase crossing.



Market Square.

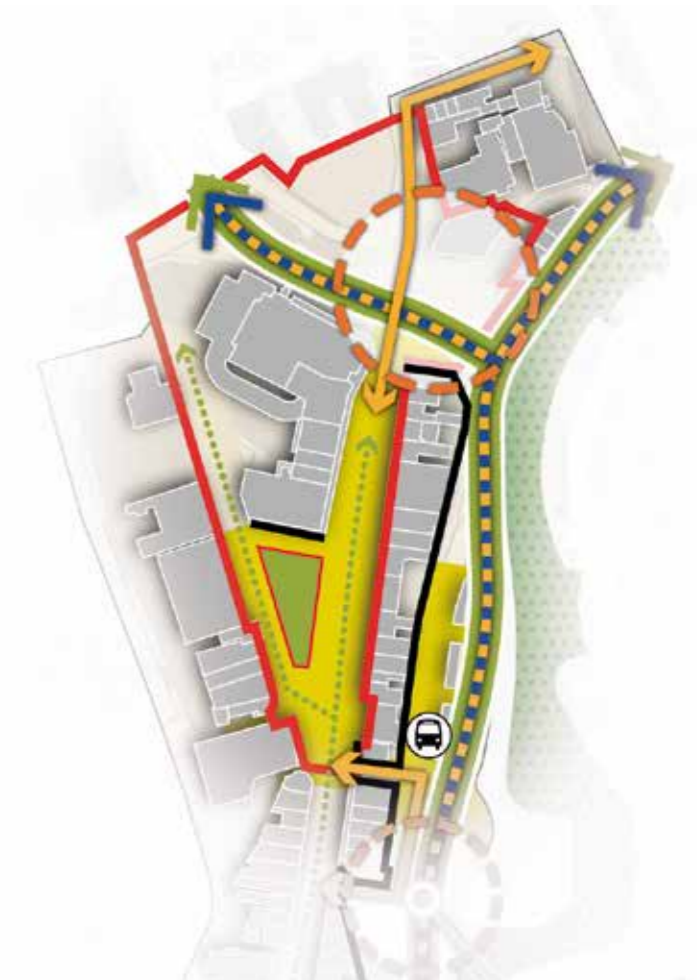
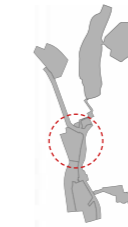


James Street looking towards Market Square.

The proposals seek to create a usable and beautiful green open space that acts as an anchor for community life, alongside street redesign that improves pedestrian connectivity and legibility. The space & accompanying introduction of active and interesting frontages will be the catalyst for strategic projects to create a distinctive and attractive landmark building that defines the Northern Gateway.

Potential Projects

- Create an improved pedestrian entrance into the town centre by simplifying the A4046 junctions serving Market Street, Libanus Road, Market Square and James Street to prioritise pedestrian movement, improve driver legibility, create a greener environment and unlock commercial development opportunities.
- Redevelop key development plots to create a landmark visual entrance into the town centre, deliver a greater mix of uses (including residential, retail and work space) and revitalise the street scene.
- Create a green public open space on Market Square to provide a green core to the town centre that can soften the town centre street scene, integrate new commercial development into the town centre, create a setting for music/theatre events and businesses and provide residents and visitors with an everyday social space.



Fulfilled core ambitions:



Establish the high street as a 'test-bed' for new business and **entrepreneurs** but also cultivate **an environment of growth for existing businesses.**



Create a series of new entrance spaces into the town centre that **open up the high street**, enhance the retail environment, green the centre and create space for new homes, work spaces and leisure uses.

4.5 EASTERN GATEWAY

Main Issues

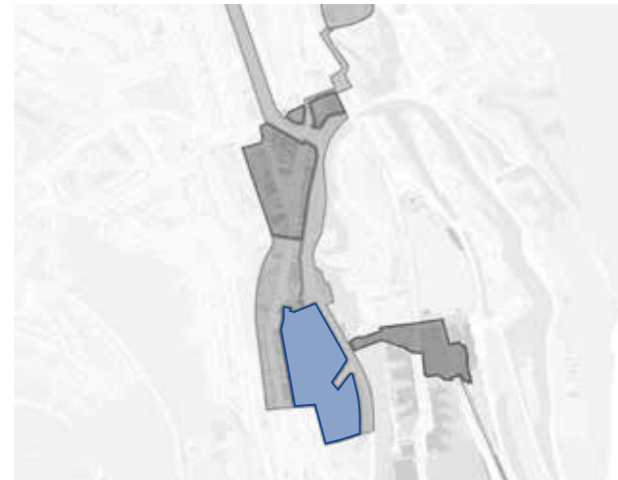
- The gateway is characterised by an empty lot at the south east corner and by extensive car parking.
- Lack of sense of arrival and weak pedestrian accessibility.
- Poor legibility and pedestrian environment, with ill defined links to both the Town Centre and The Works.
- Lack of green public spaces and amenities.
- Changing retail habits mean the long term future of this type of retail development should be considered.
- Existing pattern of development lacks synergy with the town centre.



Pedestrian link to the town centre is poorly overlooked.



Path that connects The Works to the town centre is overgrown.



The pedestrian link that crosses Iceland and Argos parking.



Ebbw Vale Police Station, Bethcar Street entrance.

Creating an attractive, well defined entrance to the town from the south, an improved public realm, and establishes visible connections to the Town Centre and the Works. Re-imagining this area will include redevelopment of key development blocks to create a diverse range of uses, including a high quality public open space, cafe/restaurant, consolidated retail uses, and new workspaces.

Potential Projects

- Redevelopment of the former Police Station and adjacent buildings to diversify uses and increase high street activity.
- Future redevelopment of the Police Station site to include landscape features space that can become a green heart at the town centre for use by residents and visitors. New green space to improve west/east pedestrian movement and enhance views of the town centre from the A4046.
- Open the southern facade of the old bank building so that commercial activity has the opportunity to spill out onto the Old Bank Square.
- Re-purpose The Walk shopping centre to include a mix of uses and create an external environment that is green, prioritises pedestrians and opens up access to the high street from the east of the centre and The Works.
- Provide electric charging points in The Walk car park and establish as a flexible town centre car park to encourage prolonged visits into the centre.
- Redevelopment of vacant development plot to create a southern landmark for the town centre and diversify uses in the town. New development to improve pedestrian connectivity between the town centre and The Works.
- Reduce the vehicle dominated design of The Walk by improving pedestrian connections.
- Consider the requirement for signalisation of the junction connecting The Walk and A4046.



Fulfilled core ambitions:

Create a series of new entrance spaces into the town centre that **open up the high street**, enhance the retail environment, green the centre and create space for new homes, work spaces and leisure uses.

4.6 A4046 CORRIDOR

Main Issues

- Redundant and hard road infrastructure, creates a poor and unpleasant pedestrian and cyclist environment. This is also accentuated by the complete lack of active façades along the road.
- Unsightly service areas and rears of properties dominate the street scene.
- Poor junctions and crossing provides a bad pedestrian connectivity.
- The bus station is badly integrated into the town centre.
- Taxi rank design is inefficient and unattractive.



View dominated by barriers and ugly backs of properties



A4046 at the northern gateway with large areas of functionless space.



Existing bus station featuring relatively new bus waiting zones.



Bus Station adjacent unsightly servicing area.

Redesign of the whole street corridor to create a safer, more inviting environment for pedestrians and cyclists. The project introduces cycle lanes, safe and convenient crossings, new green infrastructure and sustainable water management. Better integration of the bus station and taxi rank and the town are also proposed.



Potential Projects

- Reduce the design speed of the A4046 as it passes through the town centre area and prioritise the movement of pedestrians, including west / east movement between the town centre and The Works. To include wider pavements, enhanced pedestrian crossings at strategic connections between the town centre, reduced carriage and painted central reservations, removal of barriers and street clutter, targeted planting.
- Designate a traffic free cycle route that connects to Eugene Cross Park and the Civic Centre and interfaces with existing and proposed active travel corridors.
- Targeted treatment of the rear of properties on Bethcar Street and Market Street to reduce the visibility of poor quality backs and the presence of service and storage areas to create better views of the town centre and a better pedestrian and visitor environment.
- Integrate the bus station into Bethcar Street via targeted removal of structures, street furniture and infrastructure to improve pedestrian connections and create views into the high street and new northern gateway.
- Improve pedestrian movements through the bus station by replacing existing barriers to movement (notably on the pedestrian island) and instilling natural traffic calming measures that correspond to the wider treatment of the A4046.
- Reconfigure the taxi waiting area to a 'pull in' from the A4046 to reduce the space given over to vehicle waiting areas and create opportunities to enhance pedestrian connections into the high street and activate the adjacent unit for commercial activity.
- Green the existing car park to the east of the A4046 and equip with electric charging points.

Fulfilled core ambitions:



Create a series of new entrance spaces into the town centre that **open up the high street**, enhance the retail environment, green the centre and create space for new homes, work spaces and leisure uses.



Revitalise the **connections between the town centre and The Works** to give pedestrians and cyclists greater choice, reliability and quality.

4.7 THE WORKS

Main Issues

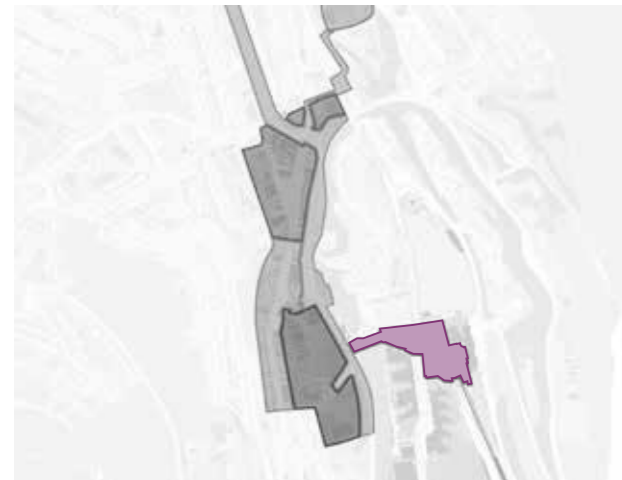
- Poor way-finding and sense of arrival.
- Small train station.
- Undeveloped sites provide a poor sense of enclosure and surveillance.
- Lack of activities, footfall and surveillance encourage anti-social behaviour.
- Underused green space and lack of good quality public space able to accommodate events and social gatherings.
- Lack of direct pedestrian access to the town centre through ramp / stairs.



Ebbw Vale Town Station.



General Offices building and the new annex.

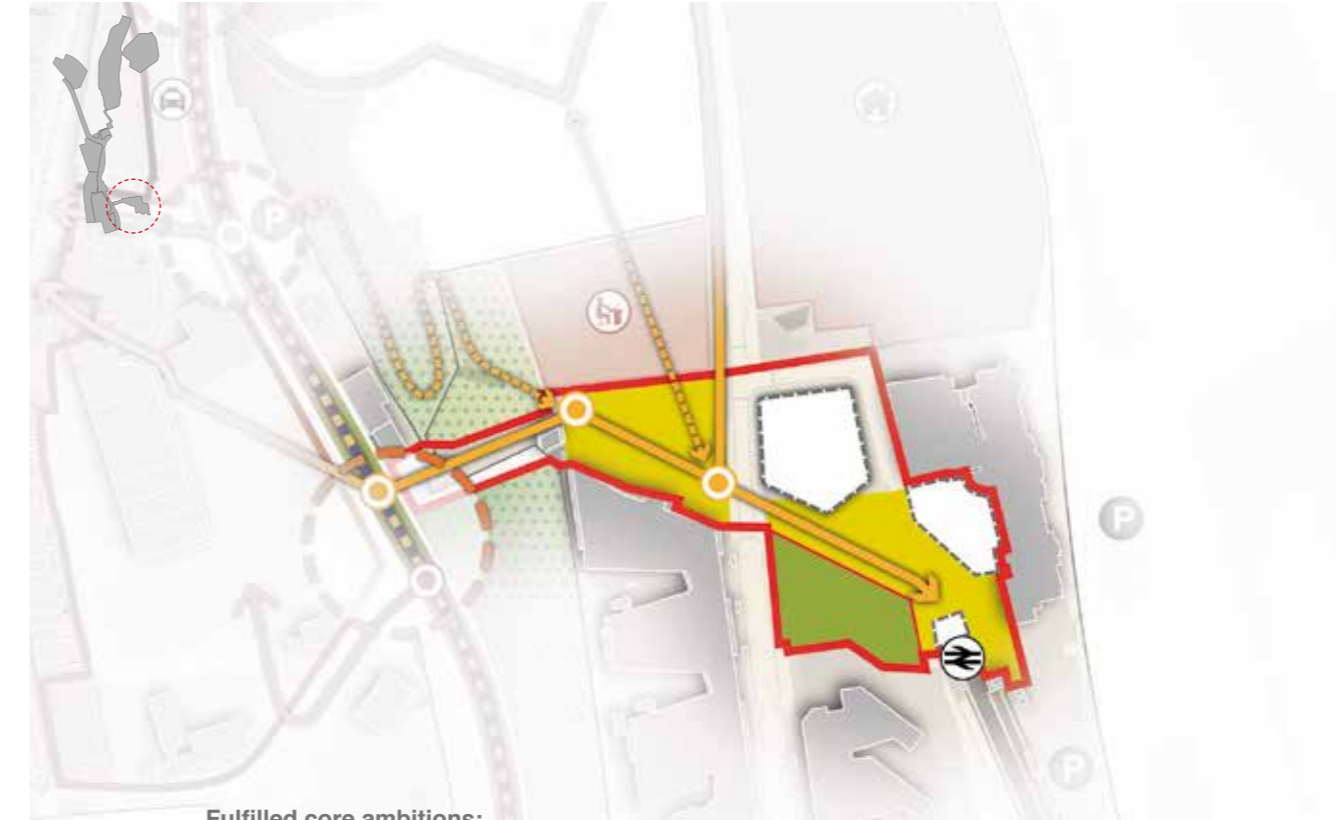


Station square empty plot.



The funicular that connects the Works site to the town centre.

Redevelopment of Station Square to create a new outdoor event space, a heritage-led expansion of the General Offices, and improved pedestrian connections to the Town Centre. A new landmark railway terminus building will improve passenger waiting and offer a better sense of arrival.



Fulfilled core ambitions:



Transform The Works into a vibrant and active destination: a place of arrival, culture, learning, working and living.



Revitalise the **connections between the town centre and The Works** to give pedestrians and cyclists greater choice, reliability and quality.

Potential Projects

- New railway station terminus to create a sense of arrival to Ebbw Vale and improve the passenger waiting experience.
- Heritage-led expansion of General Offices to accommodate the growing use of the building for civic and democratic purposes, with event space to add to the sense of arrival.
- Redevelopment of Station Square to provide a new cafe / restaurant and mixed use development with multi-use landscaped outdoor space.
- New landscaped square for outdoor events and to provide a 'day-to-day' work and learning space. Signature lighting to create a distinctive night-time entrance.
- Enhance the existing pedestrian connection between The Works and town centre with enhanced signage and lighting and explore opportunities to make the route more direct.
- New direct pedestrian connection that connects The Works and town centre via The Works Box Park.

Station Square and the General Offices

Station Square is the rail gateway to the town and represents a key place to design a high quality sense of arrival and place, while also creating a local destination. There is an opportunity to redevelop the vacant site on Station Square, a new Railway Station building, a possible heritage led extension to the General Offices building to respond to the increased use of the facility and high quality public spaces and routes.

New commercial uses delivered in the Square must be appropriate to the setting provided by the General Offices, education uses and new box park and complement the vitality of the town centre. The design of new development should be sensitive to the listed General Offices with appropriate scale and massing and an high quality architectural approach that utilises complementary materials.

- a1 New building uses to be defined, but could include cafe / restaurant, work space, cultural venue and residential.
- b1 New railway terminal building including covered outdoor waiting area bike racks and rentals to support active travel.
- c1 Sensitive extension to General Offices.
- d1 Easy to maintain green infrastructure & rain gardens.
- d2 Attractive and hard wearing hard landscape.
- d3 Enclosed outdoor rooms act as spill-out spaces.
- d4 Street furniture to for socialising and recreation. Signature lighting to reinforce places and routes.
- d5 Legible way-finding system.

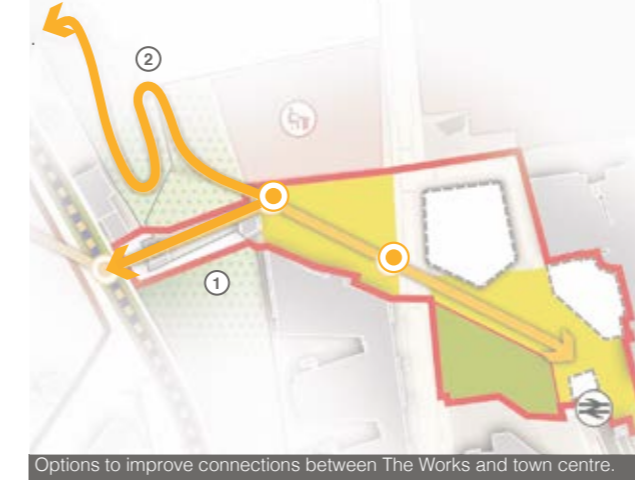


Station Square sketch visual.

West-East Pedestrian Movement

Increasing the connectivity between The Works and the town centre it is fundamental to improve accessibility, support active travel and attract visitors and businesses into Ebbw Vale. The existing funicular rail line marks a significant investment but alternative options are required to provide connectivity beyond its operational hours.

As a minimum the existing pedestrian routes between The Works and the town centre need to be enhanced, with better way-finding, lighting and surface treatments. There is also a need, to explore providing a more direct route. The topography between The Works and town centre is the key constraint to delivering this with a sharp change of approximately 25m. Two options have been identified that need to be investigated: the first a plaza and stepped structure aside the existing funicular (1), the second a ramped access that would run through the green corridor and provide access to the car park on the A4046 (2).



Options to improve connections between The Works and town centre.



Station Square: New development to be sensitive to the setting.



Station Square: Development can diversify The Works and create activity.



Station Square: Easily maintained spaces for interaction and socialising.

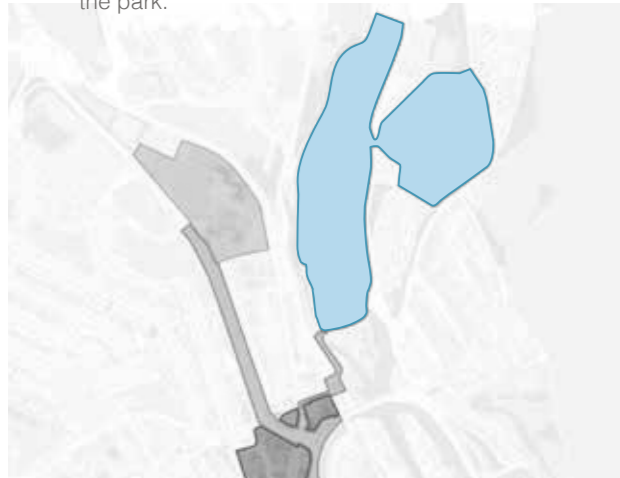


Movement: Stepped access featuring planting and a water feature.

4.8 EUGENE CROSS PARK

Main Issues

- Poor accessibility.
- Lack of parking space.
- Obsolete buildings provides poor energy performance structures and poor facilities.
- Rugby and Cricket field overlap.
- Lack of a communal facility and of public sport provisions.
- Poor drainage affects the quality and playability of sport pitches.
- The Afon Ebwy River is visually disconnected from the existing pedestrian and cycle paths that run across the park.



Southern access to Eugene Cross Park



Rugby Club House.

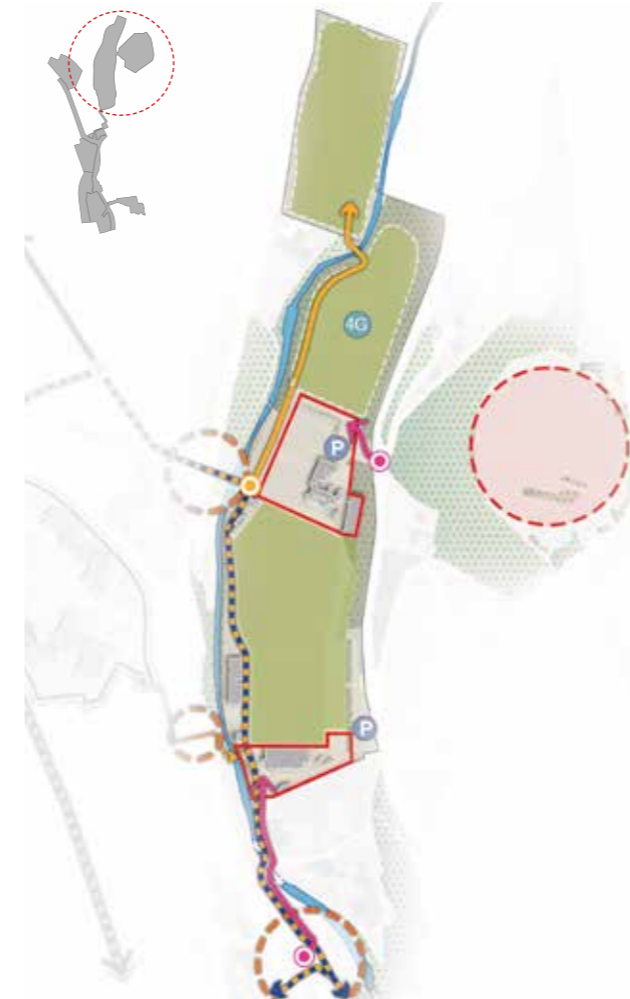


Afon Ebwy River.



Eastern access.

A multi-purpose Sports and Community Campus at Eugene Cross Park with renewed and reconfigured sports pitches and associated facilities. Improved vehicular access on site, and new training facilities will improve utilisation of the site. Enhanced connections to the riverside walk and the wider active travel network.



Potential Projects

- Enhancement of Ebbw Vale R.F.C. clubhouse and ground infrastructure to create a new southern entrance to the Park.
- Enhancement of Ebbw Vale Cricket Club and RTB Ebbw Vale Bowls Cub facilities to create a renewed heart to the Park.
- Provision of dynamic indoor multi-purpose sports and community facility on the northern playing fields with associated parking areas.
- 4G training pitches on the northern playing fields with indoor changing and storage facilities.
- Enhance the existing vehicle access into the middle of the Park from Newchurch Road to improve access to the 4G training facility, Cricket Club and Bowls Club.
- Provide a new vehicle access from the west of the Park to serve the indoor facility and 4G training pitches.
- Enhancement of existing right of way through the Park into an attractive riverside walk with outdoor exercise facilities and which connects to wider active travel links to the town centre and wider settlement.
- Enhance the key pedestrian and cyclist routes from Eugene Cross Park to the town centre, Civic Centre and The Works to encourage visits by foot and bike. To include better lighting, hard landscape treatments, planting to soften the journey and cycle lanes.

Fulfilled core ambitions:



Establish **Eugene Cross Park as a regionally renowned sporting destination** that caters for specialist, elite and community teams and improve its connections to the town centre and The Works.

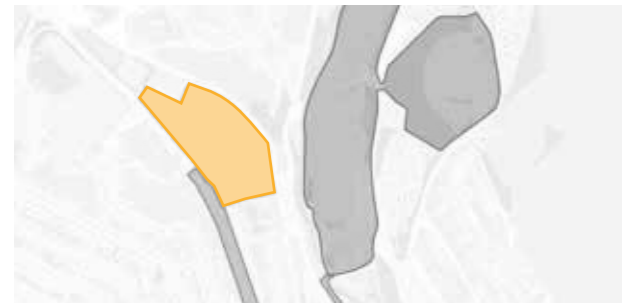


Precedent image: Pitches marked for multiple uses.

4.9 CIVIC CENTRE

Main Issues

- Civic Centre and former leisure centre buildings are vacant.
- Vehicle and road infrastructure dominant environment.
- Poor pedestrian and cycle connectivity to the town centre and Eugene Cross Park.
- Lack of public spaces and amenities.



Former leisure centre site



South east boundary with buffer planting



Department of Work and Pension's Job Centre building



Council Building and car park to the South

Potential Projects

- Residential redevelopment of the Civic Centre site and adjacent land to create a vibrant green neighbourhood with a mix of modern energy efficient homes.
- Integrate the existing health centre and residential development to create a wellness village.
- Establish an active travel corridor that connects the Civic Centre site with the town centre to enable residents to move easily and quickly to the town centre. Active travel route to continue north to wider residential development being delivered in the Northern Corridor growth area.
- Enhance pedestrian connections from the Civic Centre site to Eugene Cross Park and The Works.



Fulfilled core ambitions:

Transform the Civic Centre site into an **exemplary neighbourhood** of modern homes in a green sustainable setting.

The civic centre site is proposed for redevelopment, to create sustainably located homes within easy reach of the town centre and Eugene Cross Park.



Precedent: Mixed use scheme with residential and health/community uses.



Precedent: Contemporary homes that respond to Welsh vernacular.

4.0 THE PLACEMAKING PLAN

4.10 TOWN WIDE PROJECTS

There are a number of projects that apply to the whole placemaking plan and a critical to its successful delivery. These projects, summarised below, are equally pivotal for the success of the town centre.

- Establish better cycle routes & cycle parking throughout the town centre to serve leisure and commuter cyclists.
- Incorporate bike hire facilities in key areas throughout the town centre. Include electric bike hire to address level change throughout the town.
- Reinforce signage from the Ebbw Vale Town Railway Station and The Works to the town centre.
- Consolidate town centre signage to reduce clutter while clearly signposting attractions and parking and highway requirements.
- Coordinated lighting throughout the town to enhance the sense of place of key buildings and key spaces in each of the key intervention areas.
- Expand on the existing programme of events to develop a consistent calendar of activity that includes heritage, food, music and recreation.
- Work with existing businesses to improve the diversity of retail and hospitality offer within the town centre.
- Deliver improved frequency of rail service, including later evening train services with integrated ticketing.

DIGITAL INTERVENTIONS

- 5G connectivity throughout the town centre with 5G classroom at the Works site.
- Create a digital high street through development of an app that allows interaction with Ebbw Vale and provides access to local businesses.
- Establish a brand and marketing strategy for the town, that consistently promotes the leisure, tourism and retail offer that is available in the town and wider region.
- Create or link to existing digital resources (online maps/council website/app) to aid way-finding for the cycle and walking opportunities through the town.

Fulfilled core ambitions:



Establish the high street as a 'test-bed' for new business and **entrepreneurs** but also cultivate **an environment of growth for existing businesses.**



Safe separate foot-way, with street trees and rain gardens

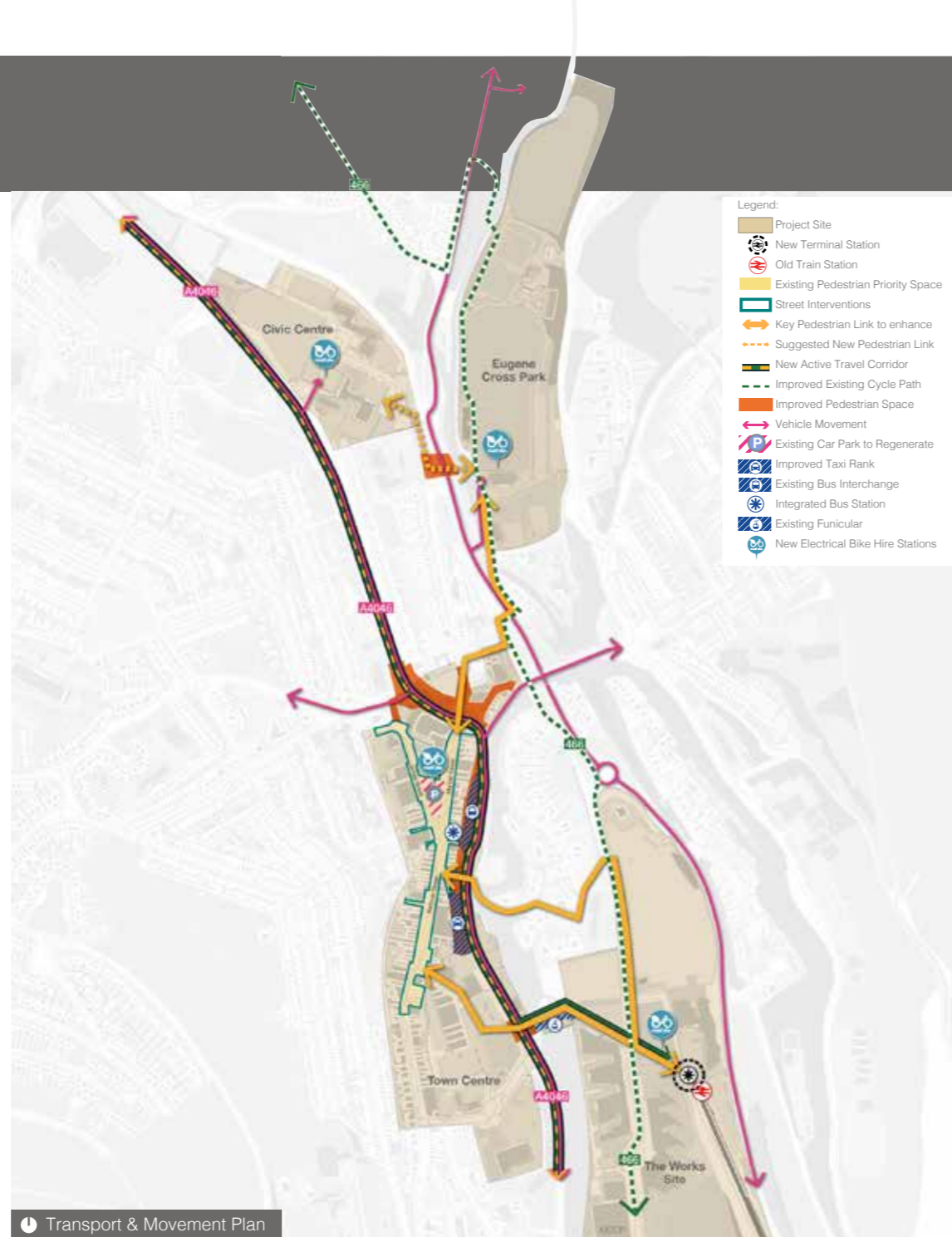


Walking route south through The Works and wildlife park with backdrop of Ebbw Vale's green landscape.

5.0 TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT STRATEGY

Given that the placemaking plan has opportunities to deliver investment and projects in different areas of the town and locality, excellent connections and active travel infrastructure are critical. Our strategy for connecting the placemaking plan area is described below.

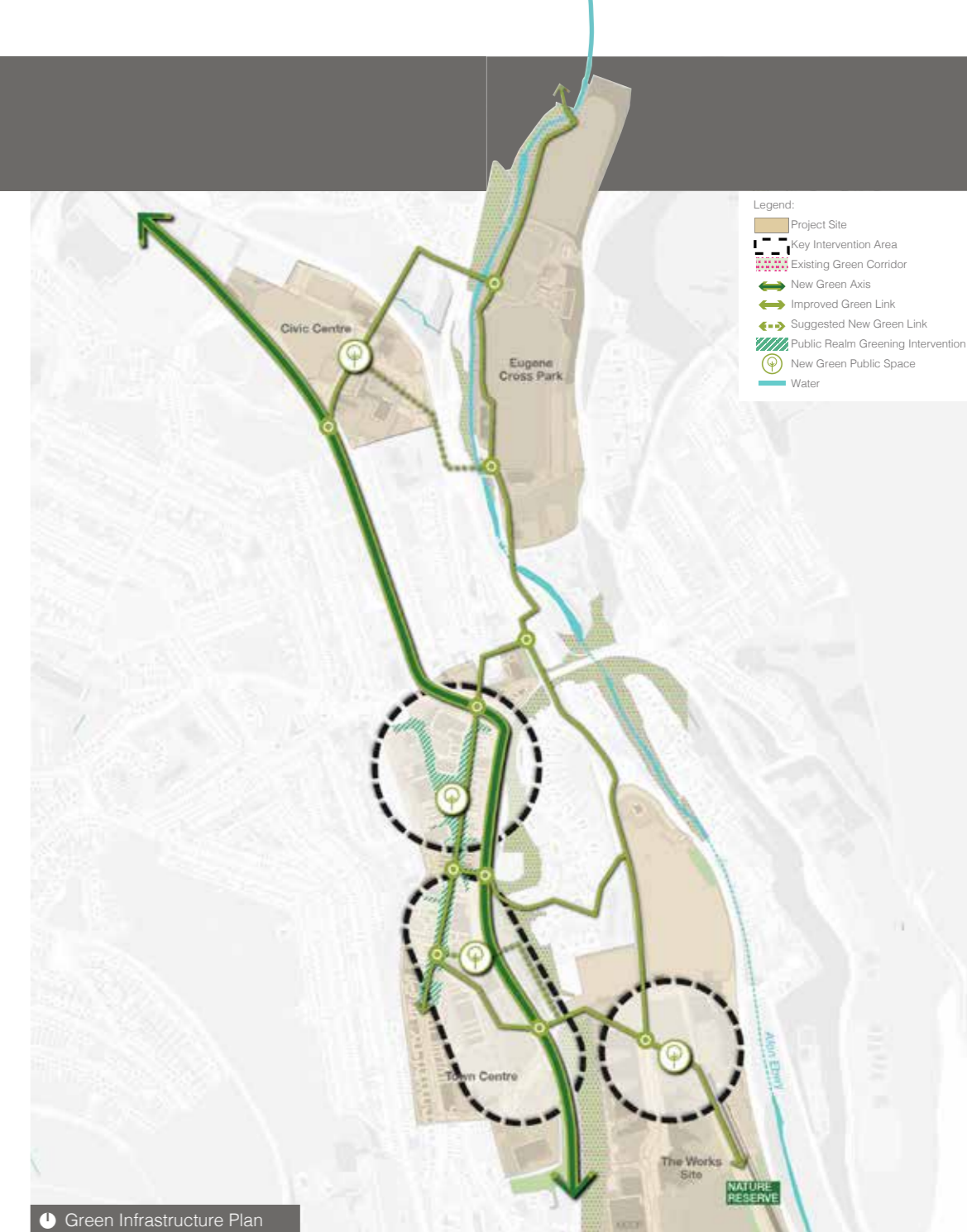
- Remove redundant road infrastructure along the A4046 to provide a safe and attractive active travel corridor for pedestrians and cyclists. Connect it to the existing 466 National Cycle Route.
- Connect the new active travel corridor on the A4046 to the existing 466 National Cycle Route.
- Improve existing cycle routes into the surrounding settlement, increase bike parking provision and introduce rental bike service across the town. Electrical bikes to be considered to provide fair accessibility to nearby residential communities.
- Better integrate the bus station into the town centre.
- Better integrate taxi rank into the town centre.
- Regenerate Market Street surface car park into a green public space, while providing flexibility to retain the area for parking.
- Implement an attractive and clear way-finding system.
- Provide an alternative pedestrian connection alongside the existing funicular to improve west/east connectivity.
- Enhance the existing pedestrian connection between The Works and town centre with signage, lighting and surface treatments.
- Create a welcoming and functional train gateway to the town with a new terminal station; high quality public realm; improved way-finding.
- Incentivise rail passengers to utilise the Ebbw Vale Parkway Station and its park and ride to address congestion at Ebbw Vale Town station.



6.0 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

In achieving our vision for Ebbw Vale we want to unlock the areas' green legacy and establish the town as an exemplar 'green' town. In better connecting the placemaking plan areas through investment in our active travel network we will create a landscape network of green corridors and places. Our strategy for delivering this is below.

- Regenerate the A4046 into a north-south green corridor with integrated active travel.
- Provide a green infrastructure network by greening the key pedestrian links through the plan area. For example the connections between the town centre, The Works and Eugene Cross Park.
- Introduce new public green spaces to serve the local community and attract visitors, and which are maintainable and 'owned' by new commercial developments and the community.
- Introduce parklets, planters and modular furniture to soften the town centre streets.
- Further consider vertical greening solutions in those parts of the town centre that are constrained by underground utilities.
- Protect the existing green corridor that runs along the A4046 and the River Ebbw.
- Provide a safe and active connection to the existing nature reserve located in The Works Site and work with partners to continue enhancing the reserve for the local community.



7.0 THE PLACEMAKING WALES CHARTER

In Wales placemaking is a statutory requirement of the planning system; the means to deliver sustainable development and provide solutions and investment that addresses current needs while also safeguarding the demands of future generations. The Placemaking Wales Charter provides guidance on how to undertake placemaking and introduces six placemaking principles to be considered. The placemaking plan for Ebbw Vale town has been prepared in accordance with the Charter and its principles. The below provides a summary of how the placemaking plan responds to the principles.

PLACEMAKING WALES CHARTER PRINCIPLES	EBBW VALE PLACEMAKING PLAN RESPONSE
<p>1. People and Community The local community are involved in the development of proposals. The needs, aspirations, health and well-being of all people are considered at the outset. Proposals are shaped to help to meet these needs as well as create, integrate, protect and/or enhance a sense of community and promote equality.</p>	<p>Comprehensive engagement has been undertaken during the preparation of the placemaking plan to find out about how the town works, what are the key ambitions for it, and what type of interventions and change would people like to see happen. Wider public engagement is also to be undertaken and will inform the delivery of the projects.</p>
<p>2. Location Places grow and develop in a way that uses land efficiently, supports and enhances existing places and is well connected. The location of housing, employment, leisure and other facilities are planned to help reduce the need to travel.</p>	<p>A key element of the vision is the 20 minute neighbourhood. The proposals intend to create a fine mosaic of diverse uses, intensifying residential uses, introducing new urban parks and creating new types of workspace will create round the clock activity that will breathe life back into the centre.</p>
<p>3. Movement Walking, cycling and public transport are prioritised to provide a choice of transport modes and avoid dependence on private vehicles. Well designed and safe active travel routes connect to the wider active travel and public transport network, and public transport stations and stops are positively integrated.</p>	<p>The form of new development will reduce the need to travel, while improved active travel infrastructure will reduce the reliance on private vehicles. Street space and underutilised plots previously dominated by cars are given over for planting, gardens, new public open spaces and bike lanes.</p>
<p>4. Mix of uses Places have a range of purposes which provide opportunities for community development, local business growth and access to jobs, services and facilities via walking, cycling or public transport. Development density and a mix of uses and tenures helps to support a diverse community and vibrant public realm.</p>	<p>The Placemaking Plan comprises a number of projects, strategies and non-spatial interventions. The tenure, mix and density is outline at this stage and will be developed at the next stage, however, a vibrant mix of uses that supports the 'Town Centre first' principle, supports local businesses, digital innovation and promotes active travel will be adopted.</p>
<p>5. Public Realm Streets and public spaces are well defined, welcoming, safe and inclusive with a distinct identity. They are designed to be robust and adaptable with landscape, green infrastructure and sustainable drainage well integrated. They are well connected to existing places and promote opportunities for social interaction and a range of activities for all people.</p>	<p>Individual projects will tie together to create a multifunctional network of green streets, formal and informal spaces, walls and roofs. Projects include: introducing new park spaces and vertical green elements; extensive native street tree planting, management of existing green infrastructure, introducing SUDs to new and existing urban streets and spaces throughout the town.</p>
<p>6. Identity The positive, distinctive qualities of existing places are valued and respected. The unique features and opportunities of a location, including heritage, culture, language, built and natural physical attributes, are identified and responded to.</p>	<p>We have the opportunity to build on Ebbw Vale's distinctive heritage to create a unique experience-based offer in contrast with online shopping, convenient by proximity. Projects will build upon the town's Green legacy, strengthening the green infrastructure connections through the town. Projects will seek to build on incorporate Digital innovations and promote Ebbw Vale as a tech cluster.</p>

8.0 CONCLUSION

This placemaking plan responds to Ebbw Vale town's unique setting and attributes and provides the basis for enhancing the town into a unique place to work, live and visit. The vision set by this placemaking plan is ambitious in the current context, but it is also realistic and can be delivered by private and public stakeholders working collectively over a phased basis.

Welsh Government's Transforming Towns agenda has meant that investment into the placemaking plan area is already underway at The Works. Improved connections between key destinations, digital enhancements, along with the new development and placemaking opportunities identified in this plan form an action plan for implementing the Town Centres First policy and will be transformative for the town.

The projects and placemaking opportunities identified in this plan respond directly to this exciting and changing context, and collectively they can enable the town and its surrounding area to once again become a key economic, social and cultural centre that provides for the needs of its residents and also acts as a catalysts for spreading growth and prosperity through the wider County Borough and Capital City Region.



The 'Box Park' at The Works, a modern new work space for 'start ups'.



The Urbanists, The Creative Quarter, 8A Morgan Arcade, Cardiff, CF10 1AF, United Kingdom

 theurbanists