

Austin-Smith:Lord

Tredegar Placemaking Plan

Delivery 1 Report

Blaenau Gwent CBC

Revision 7 July 2022





View along Market Street to Saron Chapel
Austin-Smith:Lord

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

3. THE VISION

4. THEMES & STRATEGIES

5. THE FRAMEWORK PLAN

6. TIMEFRAMES & MEASURES OF SUCCESS

APPENDICES:

1. ANALYSIS: CHARACTER AREAS

2. THE HEALTHCHECK

3. THEMES & STRATEGIES

01
INTRODUCTION

WHY A PLACEMAKING PLAN?

Tredegar town centre and the Tredegar Business Park are pivotal to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's planned regeneration and investment within Tredegar under the Transforming Towns Fund programme. Responding to this focused approach, this placemaking plan has been prepared for the County Council and Welsh Government to identify issues and target activity where maximum benefit can be achieved. The plan sets out the vision and ambition for the town to meet the challenges of The Future Wales - National Plan 2040, in particular, the implementation of the 'Town Centres First' Policy.

Tredegar sits towards the eastern end of the string of upper Valley towns that run west - east along the southern foothills of the Brecon Beacons, some 26 miles north of Cardiff.

Within each of the valley towns within Blaenau Gwent the centres suffer high vacancy rates and low presence of national retailers compared to other valley towns. The covid pandemic has only accelerated this trend. Most suffer as a result of the dominance of out of town food retail stores and a key issue is that the town centres compete against each other with no clear roles. The challenge expressed in the Local Development Plan, is to provide a new retail hierarchy, identify clear roles and limit damage from out of town retail development.

Within the context of the Capital City Region, the neighbouring town of Ebbw Vale sits at the top of the local hierarchy with a Sub-Regional Role, followed by Tredegar, Abertillery and Brynmawr (District Town Centres), with Blaina a Local Town Centre and then Neighbourhood Centres.

Connectivity is key and the South Wales Valleys Local Transport Plan describes a modern, accessible, integrated and sustainable transport system for the SE Wales Valleys and beyond which increases opportunity, promotes prosperity for all and protects the environment; where walking, cycling and public transport provide real and sustainable travel alternatives.

South Wales Metro is an integrated public transport network that will make it easier for people travel across the Cardiff Capital Region, made up of 10 local authorities including Blaenau Gwent. Tredegar, which is currently disconnected from the railway line, will benefit from Bus Rapid Transit through connecting the town to rail links in Ebbw Vale, Rhymney and Merthyr.

Investment in necessary infrastructure will be a focus of the plan to make interchange between regional and local services seamless and attractive to the passenger.

Similarly, the plan outlines how Tredegar can transition towards and meet the aims of the Welsh Government's 'Future Generations Report 2020', which promotes a placemaking approach to community programmes and commits to "introducing the 20 minute neighbourhood concept for all towns and cities in Wales; creating healthier, happier communities fit for a zero-carbon future"

This will be achieved by prioritising mix-type development which combines town centre retail with housing, transport links, public services, workplaces and recreational facilities.

Central to the placemaking plan and underpinning each initiative is the importance of embracing the town's rich history in all aspects of the plan and design, to engender pride amongst the community and further an appreciation of what is 'their place'; and importantly, to relate Tredegar's heritage to the current context and drive the economy.

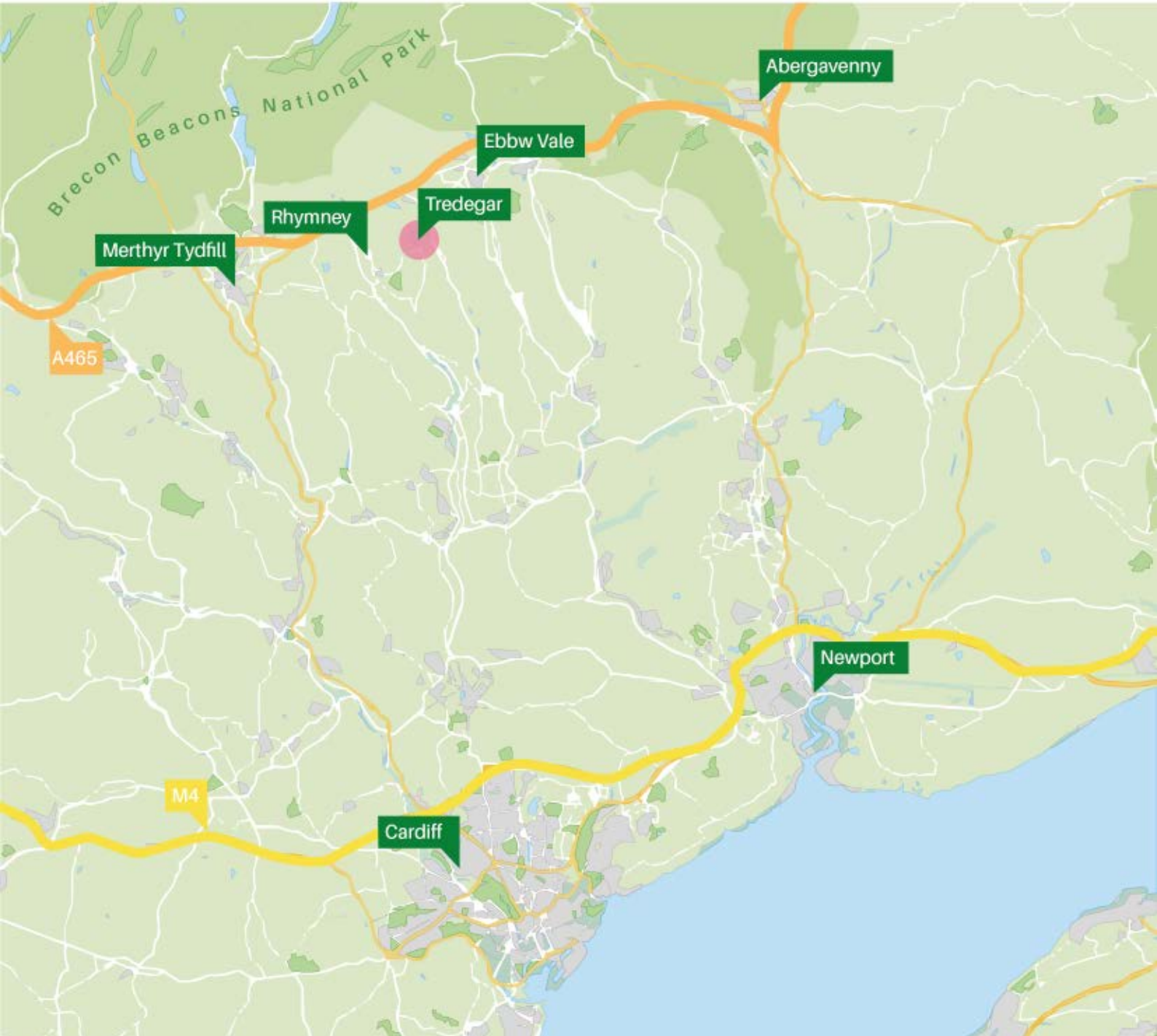


FIG. 1 TREDEGAR - THE WIDER CONTEXT

THE STUDY AREA

The study area initially consisted of the town centre as defined within the Local Plan and the Tredegar Business Park. This leaves a corridor of land between the two, around Coronation Street and Iron Row, that must be considered as part of the Placemaking Plan. Effectively, the town centre extends from Lidl and Gwent Shopping Centre in the north along Commercial Street to Castle Street Church and then southward along Castle Street to include the clock tower at the heart of The Circle.

This area has been subject to a number of masterplanning exercises over the years, and recently, was subject to an RIBA ideas competition that sought visionary concepts to unlock longstanding issues and trigger the imagining of the possible. In terms of recent physical interventions, the properties around The Circle have benefitted from substantial investment through the Townscape Heritage Initiative, which must become a touchstone for further growth and confidence in the town. However, the COVID pandemic, pre-existing pressures for change on the High Street and the production of Future Wales: the National Plan 2040 responding to climate change and sustainable, resilient communities, has collectively redrawn or refocused the landscape and points towards new measures for success for towns in Wales.



FIG. 2 THE STUDY AREA

LAND USE AND FACILITIES

The relative compactness of the town resulting from its historic, pre-car development, and with most of the town centre facilities and amenities within 10 minutes' walk from the surrounding residential areas, has the potential to achieve the goal of a 20-Minute Neighbourhood.

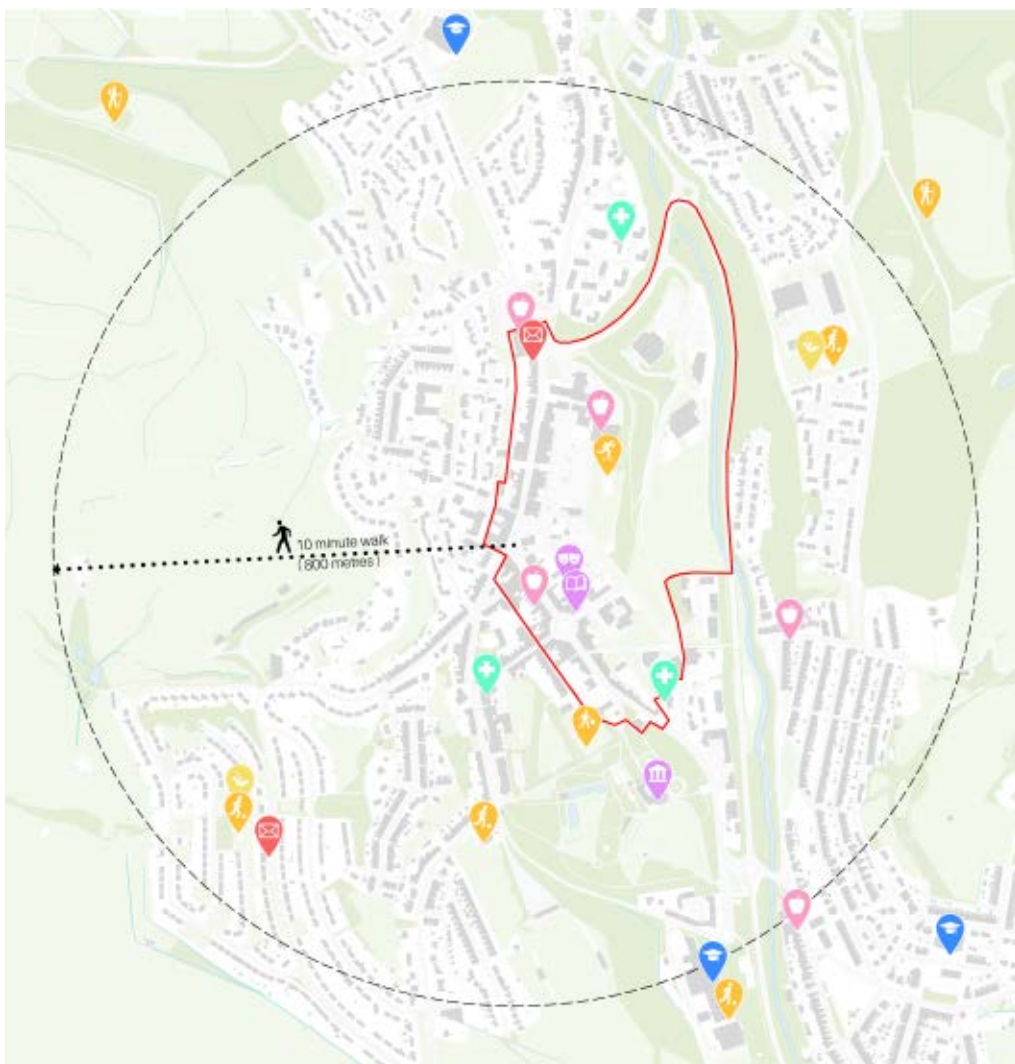














FIG. 3 LOCAL FACILITIES KEY

-  Leisure - Walking/hiking area
-  Leisure - Sports pitch / court
-  Leisure - Bowls
-  Leisure - Skate Park
-  Leisure - Equiped play area
-  Healthcentre/Doctors surgery
-  Education - School
-  Civic - Beddwelty House
-  Civic - Library
-  Civic - Theatre
-  Convenience Store / Groceries
-  Post Office

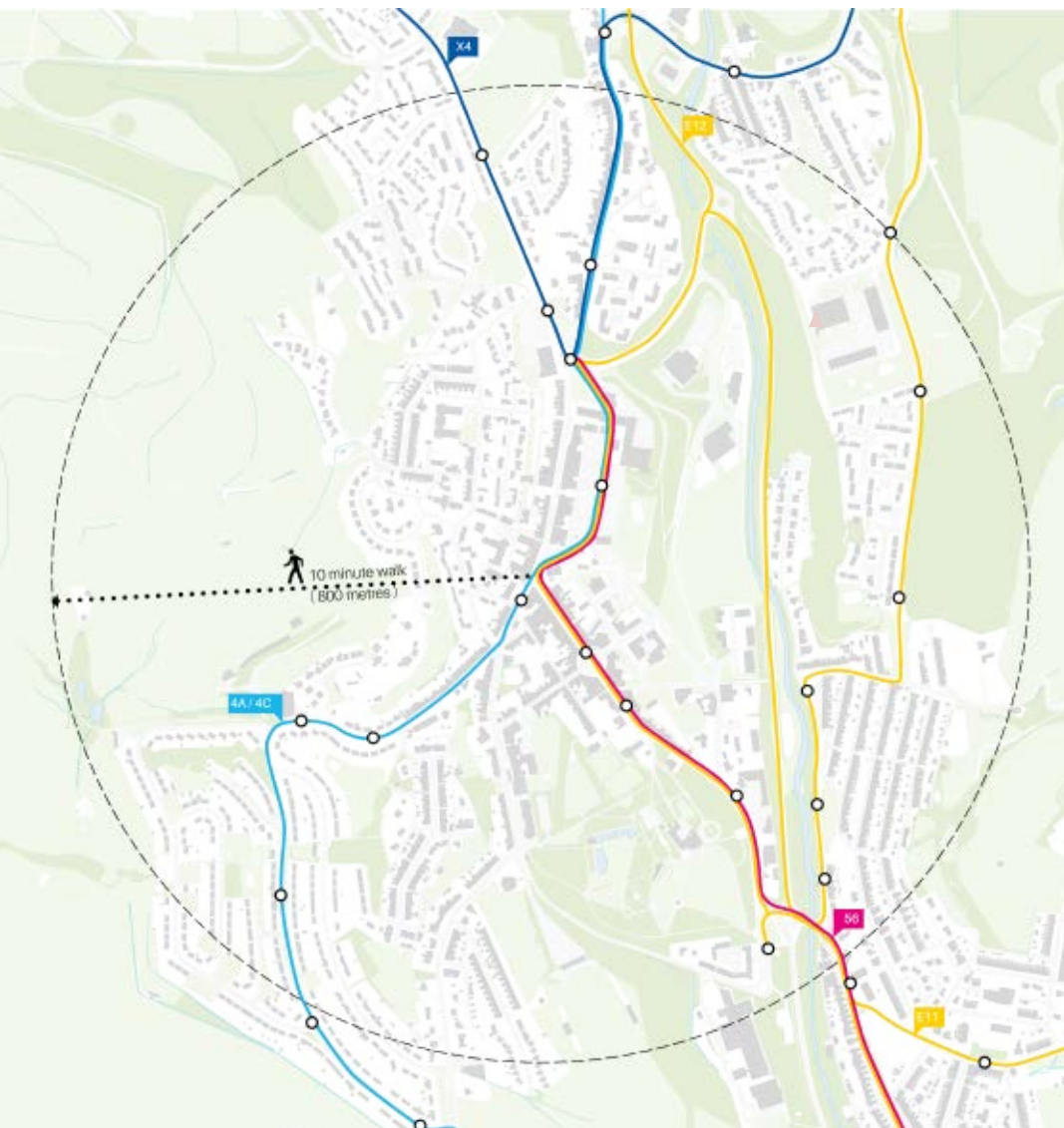
MOVEMENT

Tredegar is well served by road and poorly by rail. Both Rhymney to the west and Ebbw Vale to the east have rail connections, whilst Tredegar relies on the local and regional bus services. The Heads of the Valleys Road, the A465, runs immediately to the north of the town connection to Merthyr to the west and Abergavenny and onto England to the east.

As shown on Figure 4, the X4 regional bus accessing and departing Tredegar from the A465, is unable to interchange with the local services 4A/C, 56 and E11 within the town centre, as the buses are too long to

pass beneath the Gwent Shopping Centre underpass and enter the town. This is a severe hindrance to effective connectivity between local and regional services, which ideally would be brought together in a single hub.

Active travel routes are currently limited with National Cycle Routes 467 and 411 running to the north and east of the town centre. Connected to this, there is little by way of cycle or pedestrian infrastructure within the town, despite cycling (and mountain biking in particular) being a major draw within the region.








▼ FIG. 4 EXISTING BUS NETWORK

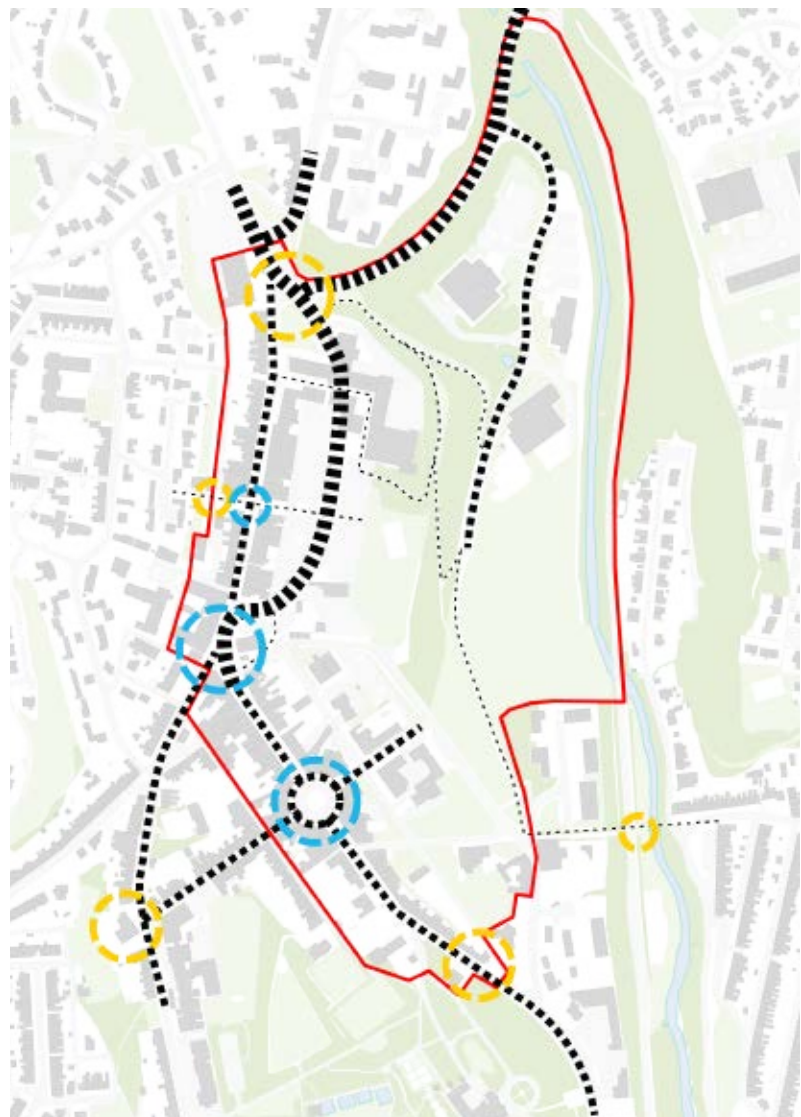
A pedestrian connection cuts across the grain running west - east through the retail core, from the residential area of Ty Bryn, crossing Commercial Street, linking to the bus stands on Stockton Way and the Gwent Shopping Centre Car Park.

Similarly, what was historically a strong west - east axis through the town runs down Market Street, across The Circle and down Iron Street. However, with the erosion of the housing area either side of Iron Street and the lack of connection with the business park, this route has lost its prominence.

The third west - east link, which again is evident on the Victorian maps, is the pedestrian connection linking the town centre with Georgetown, via Bridge Street, the pedestrian underpass beneath the A4048 and across the Sirhowy River.

FIG. 5 EXISTING MOVEMENT PATTERNS

-  Primary vehicular movement
-  Secondary vehicular movement
-  Pedestrian movement
-  Primary Gateway
-  Secondary Gateway

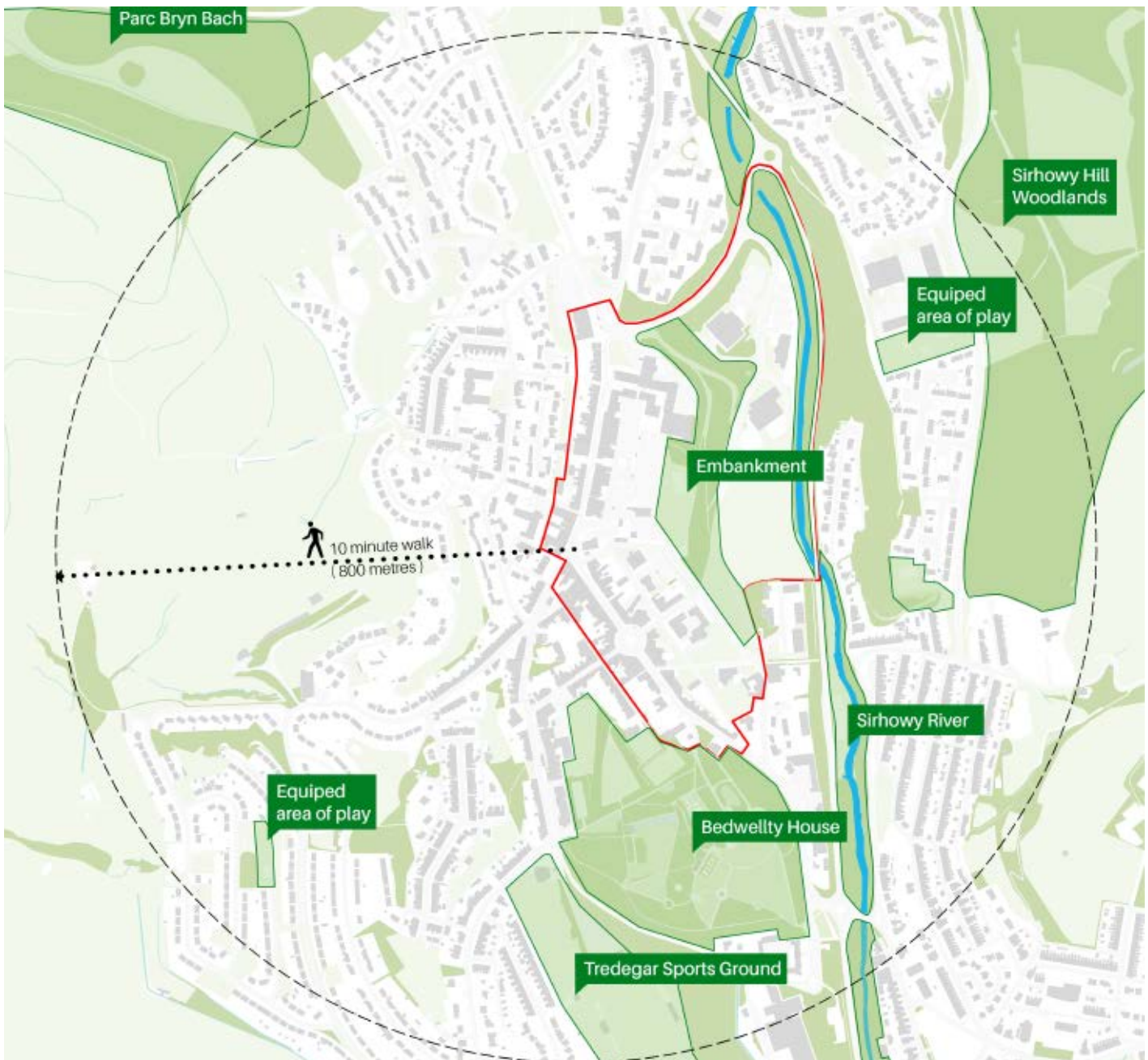


GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

There is little by way of civic green space within the town centre, a legacy of the hard, civic nature of the town plan. A pocket park exists to the west of Commercial Street at the junction with the pedestrian route to the housing area above the town. Bedwellty Gardens, the town park, lies to the immediate south of the town centre. There are a number of street trees throughout the town centre - on Commercial Street, either side of Stockton Way and around The Circle.

The linear nature of the settlement within the valley, however, means that access to green space is readily available on the hills above the town, on the embankment east of the town and along the river corridor. A walking route runs along the west bank of the river through the business park, but needs connectivity to a wider network.

FIG. 6 EXISTING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

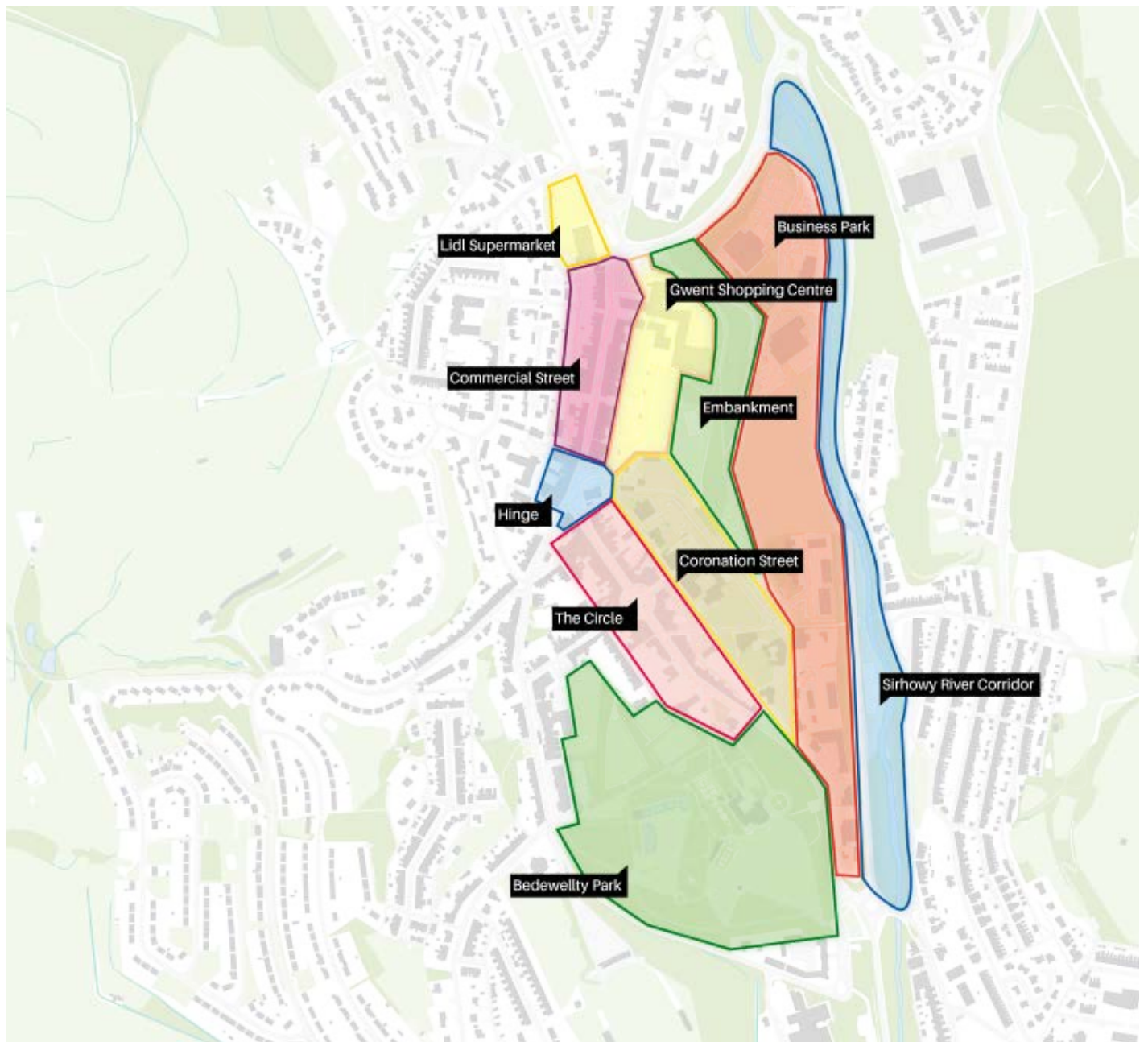


CHARACTER AREAS

The study area and its adjacent surroundings are made up of clearly defined character areas, each distinct from its neighbour and immediately apparent in moving through the town.

the detailed appraisal of these character areas is described in Appendix 1.

FIG. 7 CHARACTER AREAS



VIEWS AND GATEWAYS

Views generally within the study area are contained to the west by the rising ground and residential development, whereas to the south, they extend over the business park from the elevated position of the town centre, to the wooded western slopes of the Sirhowy valley.

Within the town centre, the views are linear along the two arms of the high street - Commercial Street and Castle Street. The joint in these two arms, around Castle Street Church, contains the internal views with the purple façade of the nightclub, DJ Loft, terminating the view northward from Castle Street.

Southward from the top of Castle Street, the iconic feature of the clock tower set in the middle of The Circle dominates the vista, with the wooded edges to Bedwellty Park beyond. The clock tower also

highlights in a secondary view from Harcourt Terrace, down Market Street and over Iron Row to the distant valley side. Here, a subtle piece of townscape has the main façade of the Saron Congregational Church on Harcourt Terrace angled to turn the view down Market Street, whilst terminating the view westward from the clock tower.

Recognisable gateways are formed at either end of the town, at the Morgan Road, Shop Row, Lower Coronation Street junction to the south; and the northern façade of the Gwent Shopping Centre to the north. The approach to the town, passed the park to the south, is an attractive and slowly revealing experience (accepting that more could be done to reinforce the actual gateway); whereas the shopping centre is a brutal and uninviting point of entry to the north.

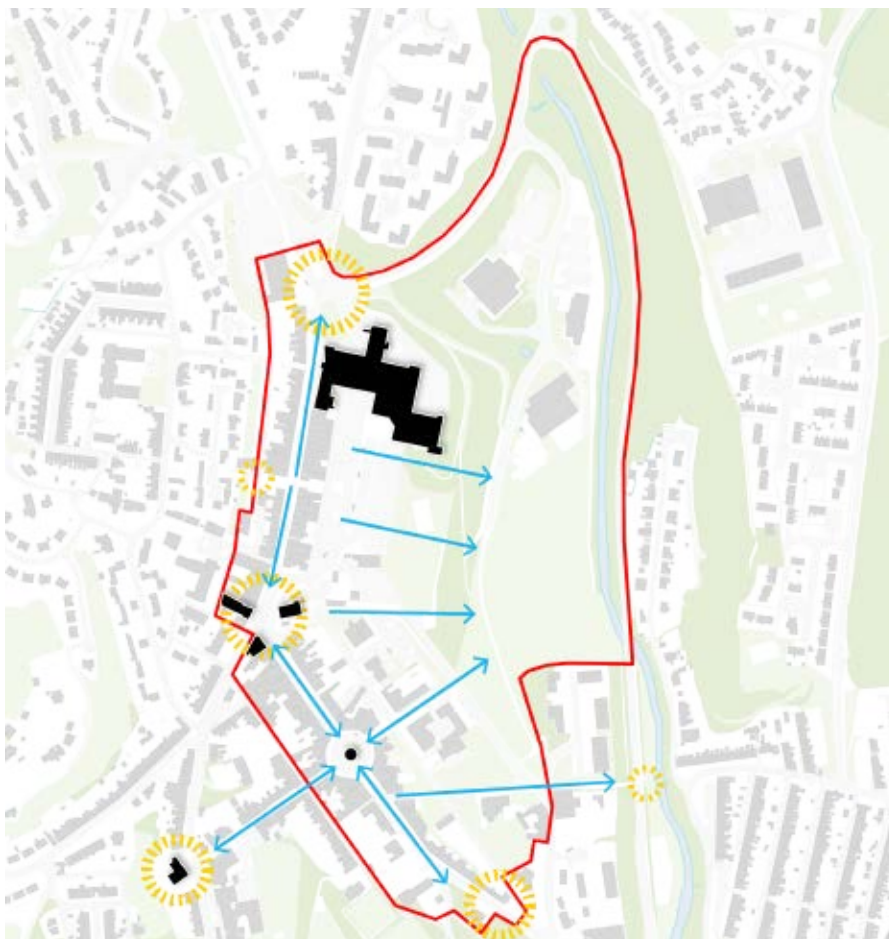


FIG. 8 VIEWS AND GATEWAYS

- Key view
- ☀ Gateway

URBAN QUALITIES

Figure 9 describes the areas exhibiting strong and weak urban qualities and frontages; primarily associated with the structure of the townscape and completeness of the facades, but also the quality and cohesiveness of the urban realm and landscape.

As can be seen, the two arms of the town centre - Commercial Street and Castle Street, have a consistency and continuity to their urban structure and

a quality to the urban realm, whereas the areas to the east of the main high street are fractured, ill-defined and lacking in urban character.

The wooded topography to the setting of the business park is attractive and complete, complemented by the landscape works within the park itself. Although little used and in need of some attention, the river corridor landscape is also of a quality.



FIG. 9 EXISTING URBAN QUALITY

- Good Quality Urban Environment
- Poor Quality Urban Environment
- Good Urban frontage
- Poor Urban frontage

TREDEGAR HEALTHCHECK

The Tredegar Town Centre Healthcheck has regard to the extent of the boundary defined by this study, which closely follows the current Town Centre boundary as defined in the Local Plan. It therefore extends from Lidl and the Gwent Centre in the north along the spine of Commercial Street (the primary retail area) and Castle Street to The Circle in the south.

The Placemaking Plan also encapsulates the Business Park to the east of the town centre. The purpose of the healthcheck is to assess the current state and vitality of the town centre, forming part of a robust, primarily retail evidence base to aid in the preparation of the Placemaking Plan for the town.

The full Healthcheck is to be found in Appendix 2, and covers:

- Diversity of uses
- Proportion of vacant street level properties
- Commercial Rents
- Access and Accessibility
- Customer views and behaviour
- Perceptions of safety and occurrence of crime
- Environmental quality

To summarise, the town is fulfilling its intended role within the Local Development Plan as a District Hub, serving the needs of its local communities and to this extent, subordinate in its role to Ebbw Vale as the Principal Hub. There are increasing rates of vacancy within the town centre, with particular concern with the level of vacant properties within the Gwent Shopping Centre, at the heart of the Primary Retail Area.

Whilst there are gaps and imbalances within the diversity of uses, the mix is basically solid and along with the underlying attraction and robustness of the urban structure, provides a good base for development of a unique and compelling vision for the town and offer within the Valleys.

TREDEGAR AT A GLANCE

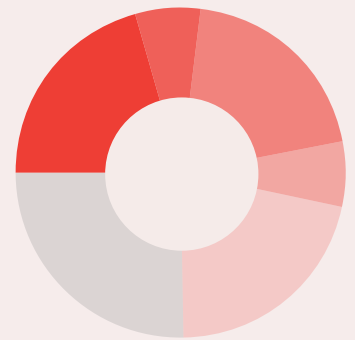
Town Centre Turnover



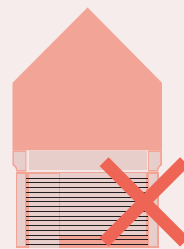
- Identified within the LDP as a district shopping centre to serve the needs of the local catchment area.
- Tredegar's population is circa 15,000 people
- Contains the second largest Town Centre in Blaenau Gwent, (The largest when based on the number of retail units. Ebbw Vale has a Town Centre Turnover 3x larger than that of Tredegar.
- Southern end of the Town Centre designated a Conservation Area linked with industrial heritage of the Town and links to Aneurin Bevan and the formation of the NHS

DIVERSITY OF USES

- Higher than the UK national average for A1 service uses reflects a large number of Hair and Beauty and Tattoo parlours.
- The Leisure Use class in Tredegar is slightly below the UK national average and has very high levels of fast food & takeaway provision, accounting for most of the A3-A5 use in the town centre.



PROPORTION OF VACANT SHOPS



25%

Shops vacant in Tredegar Town Centre

12%

Experian GOAD UK National Average February 2020

ACCESS & ACCESSIBILITY

- Car Parking in northern part of the Town Centre is well catered for but street parking dominates Commercial Street.
- Interchange between local and regional bus services is limited as the Gwent Shopping Centre underpass impedes access for regional busses.
- 76% of those surveyed thought that there was a good or very good ease of pedestrian movement around the town centre.



CUSTOMER VIEWS & BEHAVIOUR



- High local usage of the Town Centre with 75% of those surveyed within the Tredegar catchment areas said they visited Town Centre at least once a week.
- Poor perception of quality of the Town Centre shopping offer with 65% of customers surveyed suggesting that the quality of shops was poor or very poor.
- Almost half of all customers surveyed thought that the attractiveness and experience of food and drink establishments around the town centre was poor or very poor.

FIG. 10 BUILDING CONDITION SURVEY



02

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CREATIVE CONVERSATIONS: STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

The Tredegar Placemaking Plan has been prepared in collaboration with a wide array of stakeholders and consultees. Ideas and opinions have been shared locally by those who live and work in the town with the major stakeholders who operate within the Heads of the Valleys region and local borough council. Due to the Covid pandemic, the placemaking team has had little opportunity to consult widely with town centre communities, and stakeholder and schools' events and workshops have been restricted to online events, with comments and guidance gathered.

These conversations have helped set the agenda and identify priorities for change in the short, medium and long term. The team has facilitated countless meetings and workshops, often with one to one follow up conversations, with the following groups;

- Tredegar Advisory Board
- Welsh Government
- Welsh Government Metro Team
- Council Members
- Council Officer and teams:
 - Transport
 - Housing
 - Health
 - Destination Management
 - Police and Crime Prevention
 - Green Infrastructure
 - Active Travel
- Coalfields Regeneration Trust
- Sectors (Creative Industries, Pharmaceutical, High Street businesses, Gwent Shopping Centre, Chamber)
- Bryn Bach Primary School

WHAT WE WERE TOLD

OPEN SPACE

- Bedwellty House and Gardens and the heritage townscape
- Lack of connectivity with the Business Park
- Proximity to National Park and open countryside
- Skateboard Park is little used and general positive spaces for young people
- Too much open space that does not add anything, is poorly maintained and uninviting

GETTING AROUND (MOVEMENT + CONNECTIVITY)

- Sense of Tredegar being isolated - poor public transport connectivity and infrastructure
- Bring back the railway!
- Little active transport opportunities or infrastructure
- Tredegar doesn't strongly feature in the Regional Metro proposals
- Disconnection between the town and the business park
- Streets dominated by the car and traffic - little enforcement of parking restrictions
- The short section of Queen Victoria Street between Commercial Street and Castle Street, acts as a hinge for the main thoroughfare and is traffic dominated and lacking in active frontages, splitting the two halves of the town;
- Entry into Tredegar significantly impacted by the Gwent Shopping Centre underpass
- The bus station is also split by the underpass with regional buses operating from outside Lidl
- No entry into the business park from the south.

BUILDINGS

- Housing quality inadequate with poor quality of service
- Significant heritage and buildings at risk should be brought back into use
- Gwent Shopping Centre an eyesore and an obstacle as a northern town gateway

COMMUNITY/SOCIAL (ACTIVITY)

- Regeneration initiatives must not displace the existing communities, but enhance and support them
- Access to local amenities seriously lacking (convenience stores, GP, local school etc); Tredegar has the physical make up and proximities, but still fails as a 20 Minute Neighbourhood
- Concern that regeneration initiatives should not displace the existing communities but enhance and support them;
- recognition that change is needed though residents want to be included in the process of making change
- Desire to improve communication / collaboration between key institutions and the local communities

RETAIL/ECONOMIC (ACTIVITY)

- Activity on the high street benefited hugely from the series of events and festivals that used to occur - sadly missed and should be re-introduced.
- Overall retail activity very much dependent on the shopping centre vitality and success.
- Covid has been an enormous set back at a time of existing vulnerability.
- Long-term businesses remain with a commitment and willingness to 'carry on', but need support and grateful for any assistance

IDEAS SUGGESTED - KEY DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

The quality of the surrounding **natural environment** and the existing **architecture and heritage** of the town were sources of immense pride, but also considered to be key defining characteristics of Tredegar. There is a strong desire for this quality and character to be retained, as much as a springboard to growth and retention. Many people commented on the need for any new development to be sensitive to, and build on the existing fabric of the town and its context.

Linked to its heritage, the strong connections to Nye Bevan and the **founding of the NHS** based on the Tredegar model were mentioned as a source of visitor interest and also a touchstone and draw to future inward investment in health industries (research/ pharmaceuticals) and business tourism.

Arts and Culture are clearly seen as emerging components of the town's identity, and indeed of the Valleys as a whole. References to arts/culture and creativity were repeatedly mentioned in relation to the town's existing assets and future development. Enhancing the arts and cultural offer of Tredegar is clearly seen as fundamental to future success.

The opportunity to **invest in local businesses and create jobs** is seen as a real opportunity for the town, with a particular emphasis on health, innovative, creative industries and the digital economy. Which hopefully would lead to the local organisation of supply chains, which in turn would contribute to circularity; driving entrepreneurship and experiment.

With the changing characteristics of retail and the high street, the need for **mixed-use development** is also seen as a key driver for a successful town centre. People would like to see a mix of uses with an emphasis on firstly retaining existing businesses, then attracting new independent businesses and retailers, rather than a targeted focus on purely the large chains.

Support for the principles of the 20 Minute Neighbourhood were widely expressed, with better connectivity to facilities and services, open space and regional travel modes. It was noted that the **response to Covid** was supercharging certain potential interventions (eg active travel).

Green space and eco-friendly design principles are important to the people of Tredegar, with frequent mention made of the quality of Bedwellty Park. That said, the river corridor is an underused asset, seen as a part of the business park and not of the town. Sustainable design principles and features such as Sustainable Urban Drainage, permeable paving and green energy were frequently mentioned, along with the importance of encouraging sustainable modes of travel. In this area it was seen that policy and governance structures need to catch up with the Welsh Government **low carbon agenda** ambition. Ensure all strategies are turned into action!

Car parking and traffic were mentioned time and again as one of the biggest issues facing what can be considered the high street - Commercial Street/Castle Street. Resolving these issues, particularly around the hinge formed by Queen Victoria Street, will be key to improving the high street experience and better connecting the two parts of the town spine. Linked to this is the need to resolve **pedestrian connectivity and permeability** issues into and within the high street, including better integration of the housing to the west and the car park/bus hub and onward to the business park to the east. The stakeholders recognise the importance of creating a pedestrian-friendly, safe and attractive walking and cycling environment in order to successfully integrate the town centre with its residential context and thereby encourage sustainable modes of travel.

Young people were concerned about countering the impacts of climate change and ensuring that any new development should be **accessible and inclusive to all**. They were particularly concerned about safety and ensuring that the area is welcoming for young people. They were also worried about the aging population and the need to cater for them within the new development. Population growth in this part of the Valleys seems to be essentially about growing existing communities sustainably, with **better access to services and opportunity**.

Viability and sustainability were seen as fundamental to the success of the town centre. There was a consensus that these should be top priorities for the project, and should be embedded across all decisions that follow. There was a recognition that viability needs to be considered with the long-term aspirations of the project in mind, as early investments may be needed up-front in order to grow the value and achieve the longer-term objectives of the place. To this end, **meanwhile uses and projects**, of potential low value but immediate and of high impact would be useful to change perceptions and signal change.

Fundamentally, a **community-empowering engagement strategy** is needed to ensure successful delivery of the plan. However, what came over from a number of workshops was the need to **join the dots between policies, strategies and action**, accepting that investment was paramount to successful delivery of meaningful change. To achieve this, two things needed to happen; firstly, key institutions within the town and region must take the lead in change-making and be seen to **work with the communities**; and secondly, there was a need to **build alliances and coalitions between key stakeholders** - must improve existing coordination and collaboration.

03
THE VISION

THE VISION

Maintain and improve Tredegar as a Convenience and Community Centre, serving its local communities well, but overlay this by developing a Speciality Town signature, unique within the sub-region.

Of all the Valley towns, Tredegar is perhaps best endowed with a unique set of cultural and spatial assets. A rich tapestry of historic layers, retained within a singular, simple yet striking townscape structure; the town immediately creates a lasting impression.

These characteristics are immensely valuable, and Tredegar is the only town within its sub-region that has the potential to be defined as a Speciality town, where the anchor is not (just) retail. These attributes and characteristics must, therefore, be protected and the potential monopolised. Importantly, one of the key characteristics of Speciality towns is that footfall, dwell time and spend is balanced out across the year.

The vision for the town therefore seeks to enhance these inherent qualities, whilst creating a place that meets the ambition of ‘building sustainable places that support active and healthy lives, within urban neighbourhoods that are compact and walkable, organised around mixed-use centres and public transport, and integrated with green infrastructure’.

Delivering a sustainable mix of different uses will be key to generating a vibrant town centre, which is relevant, welcoming and inclusive to resident and visitor alike, throughout the day and across the year. A place that is loved, used and cherished by all its community, will become one that is immediately attractive to the guest.

The challenge will be to balance these new development with the town’s existing assets in a way that supports existing uses whilst also allowing new ones to flourish. Both policy and mindsets must remain sufficiently flexible to allow new uses to emerge, to improve viability and vitality, as technologies and markets evolve.

It is vital that new development creates high quality, sustainable architecture, be that new build or repurposed, complemented by habitable streets and spaces which extend life and activity into the public realm.

A sensitive, phased approach to delivery will encourage incremental growth over time, a growth that must be driven by local communities and stakeholders, empowered and supported by the public sector, ensuring that Tredegar leads in committing to the goal of realising the 20 minute neighbourhood concept - ‘creating healthier, happier communities fit for a zero-carbon future’.



View along Commercial Street



04
THEMES & STRATEGIES



A ROUTE TO SUCCESS

APPROACH

In order to move from an understanding of the existing context, and the current condition and performance of the town centre as a district hub, to identifying projects that would support the vision and “improve [the] functionality, attractiveness, liveability and vibrancy” of the town centre, a series of themes and strategies were developed. In combination, these would set out a model and criteria for success, and are derived from national, regional and local policy.

Particularly, the strategies emerge from the Welsh Government ‘Future Wales: The National Plan 2040’ and ‘Future Generations Report 2020’ for the adoption of a placemaking approach to community programmes and fully endorses the concept of the 20 minute neighbourhood for all towns and cities in Wales; driving towards “healthier, happier communities fit for a zero-carbon future.”

A stated aim for Welsh Government in its spatial strategy is “building sustainable places that support active and healthy lives, with urban neighbourhoods that are compact and walkable, organised around mixed-use centres and public transport, and integrated with green infrastructure”.

Responding to the particular circumstances and opportunities in Tredegar, the themes and strategies, as described more fully in Appendix 3, centre on:

- Sustainability
- Land Use
- Movement and Connectivity
- The Public Realm
- Culture and Heritage

The Key principles of each of these themes is:

SUSTAINABILITY

- 20 minute neighbourhood concepts
- Buildings: Adaptive Reuse
- Transport
- Energy
- Green Infrastructure
- Lifestyle: Health & Well-being

LAND USE

- Retail
- Commercial
- Residential
- Hotel
- Arts, Culture & Leisure
- Transport & Parking

MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

- Retail historic street patterns
- Safe and Accessible Streets for all
- Resolve the underpass
- Improve connections between housing, town centre, business park and river
- Promote active travel routes

THE PUBLIC REALM

- Sequence and hierarchy of public spaces
- Safe, active spaces
- Incorporate blue/green infrastructure

CULTURE AND HERITAGE

- Reveal and inform
- Engender pride and appreciation of their ‘place’ within the community
- Relate Tredegar’s rich history to the current context and drive the economy
- Embrace Heritage in all aspects of design

05
THE FRAMEWORK PLAN

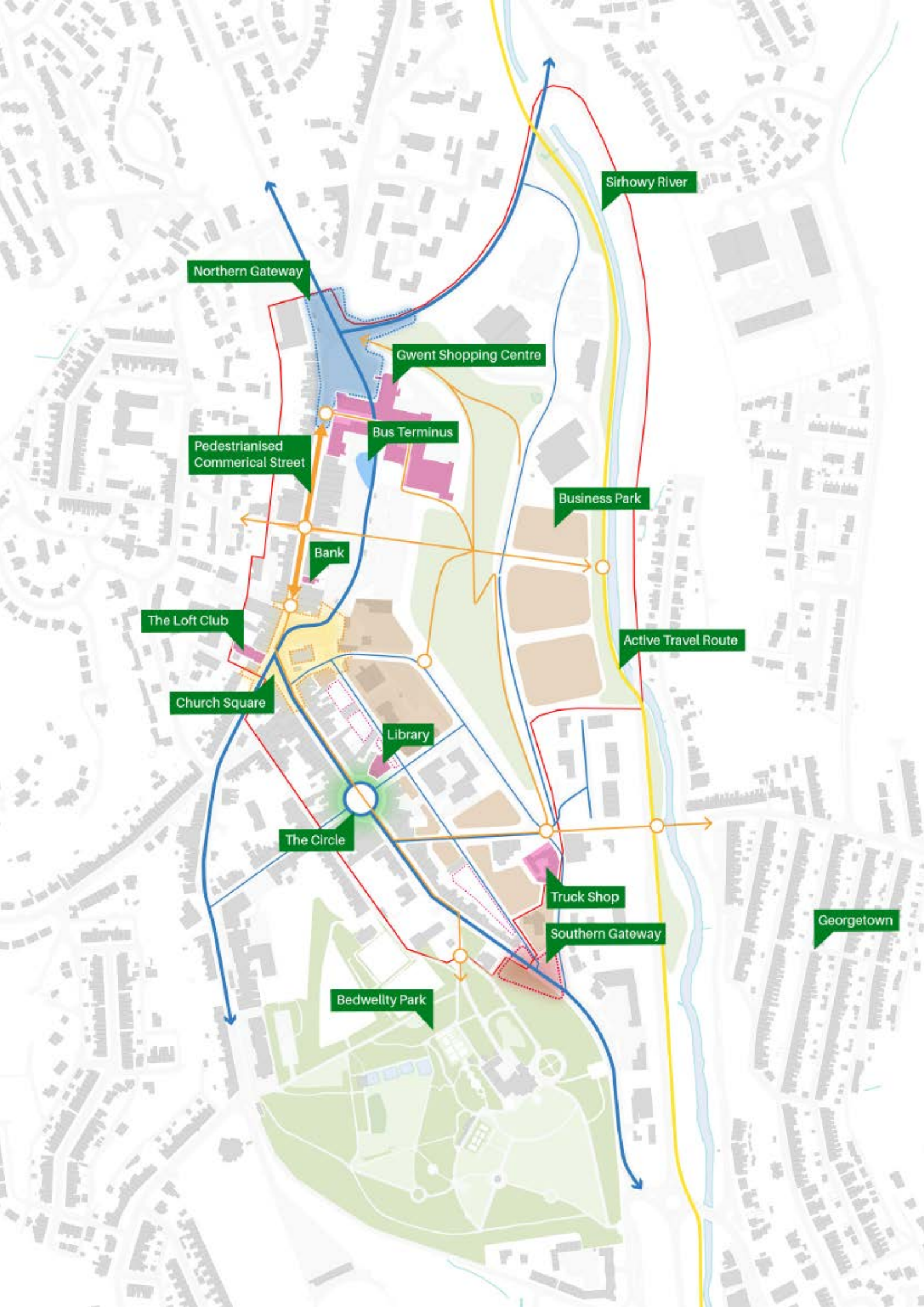
THE FRAMEWORK PLAN

The Placemaking Plan provides the physical manifestation of the Vision by way of defined spatial and movement objectives to which any potential schemes should conform and contribute. The plan addresses structural deficiencies within the built fabric and also issues of connectivity around the town, with the overarching aim of progressing the 20 Minute Neighbourhood concept.

The Placemaking Plan accepts that over the duration of the realisation of the plan, change is inevitable; instigated by political, social, economic or environmental forces. The plan needs to be sufficiently robust and flexible to accommodate such change without jeopardising the underlying and fundamental development principles.

**FIG. 21
PROPOSED FRAMEWORK PLAN KEY**





Northern Gateway

Sirhowy River

Gwent Shopping Centre

Bus Terminus

Pedestrianised
Commerical Street

Business Park

Bank

The Loft Club

Active Travel Route

Church Square

Library

The Circle

Truck Shop

Southern Gateway

Georgetown

Bedwellty Park

Bedwelty House

Clock Tower

Business Park

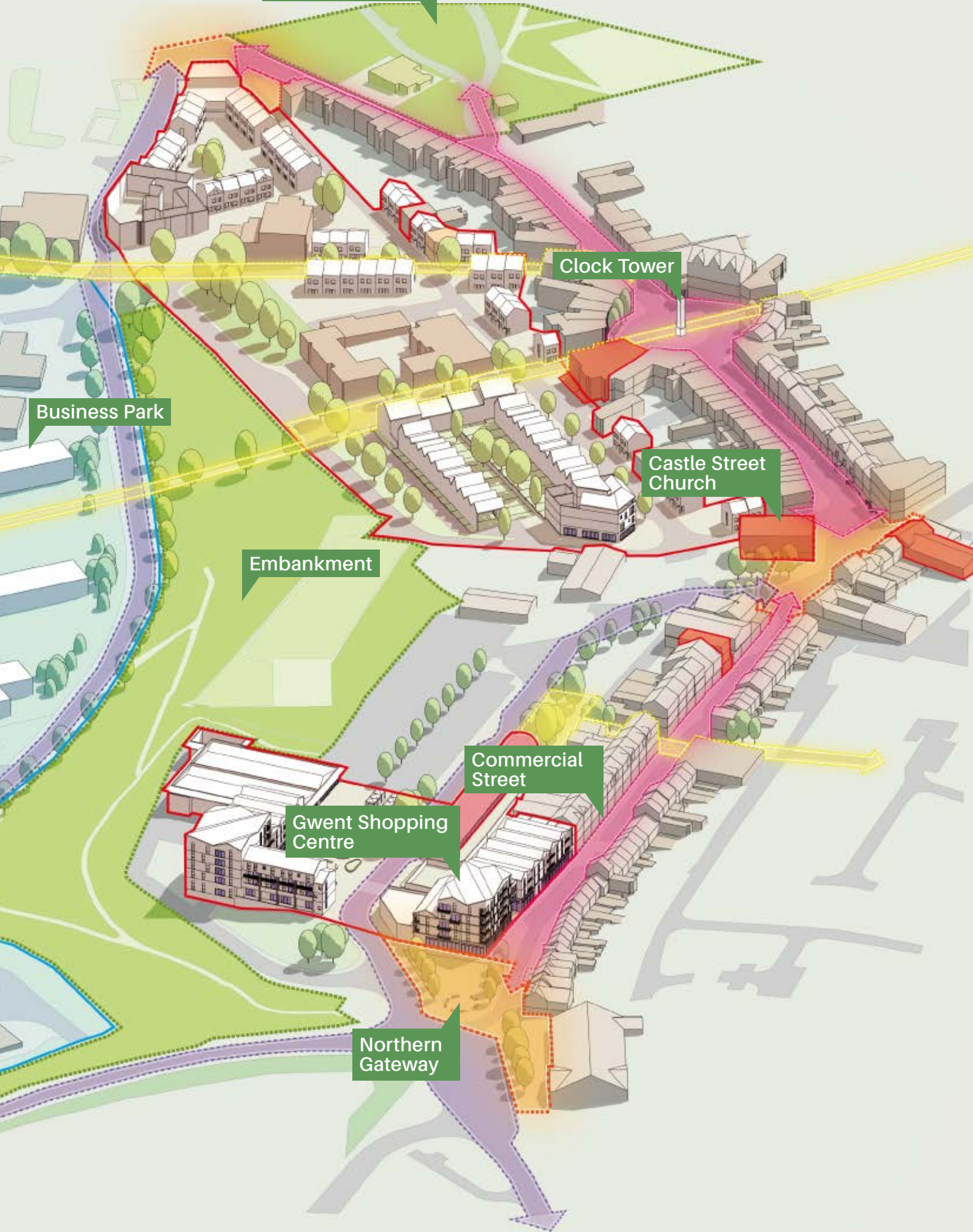
Castle Street Church

Embankment

Commercial Street

Gwent Shopping Centre

Northern Gateway

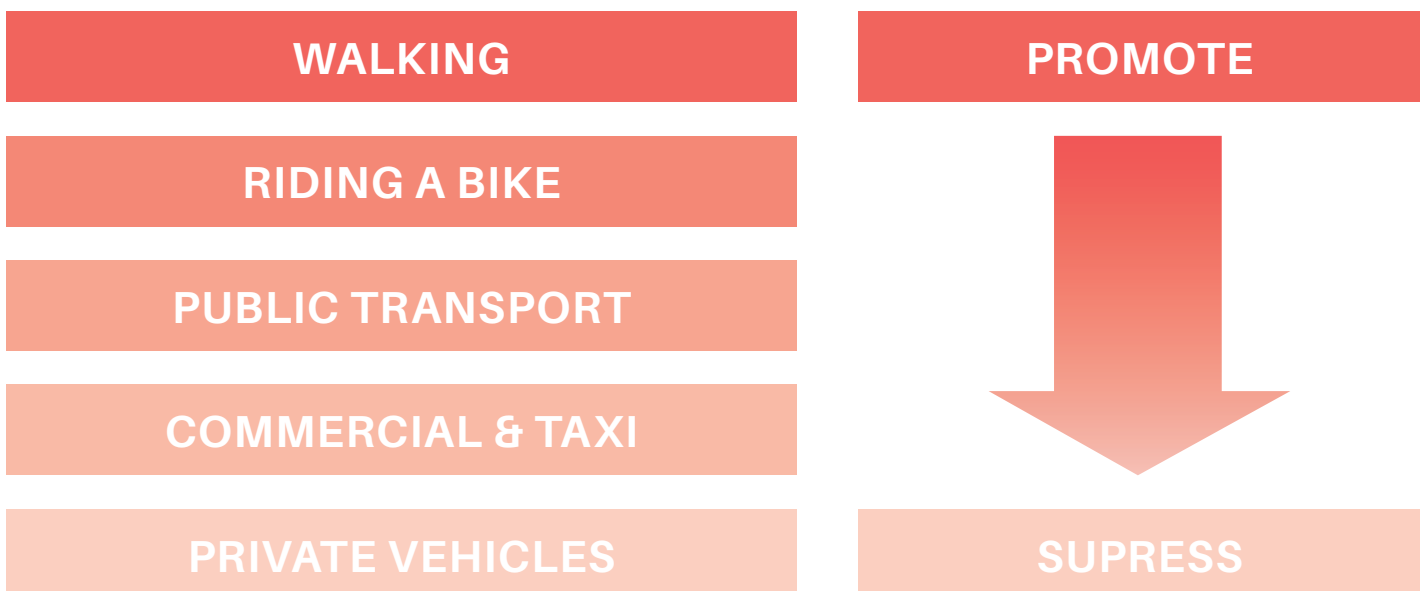


ACCESS & MOVEMENT

The plan establishes the principal pedestrian, cycle and vehicle movement patterns and points of access to enable ease of movement around the town based on active travel principles, whilst satisfying the need to service and supply town centre businesses and facilities.

Effectively, national, regional and local policy creates a hierarchy of travel modes, prioritising space within the public realm to promoting green, active means of travel - walking, wheeling and cycling. This hierarchy is illustrated in the diagram below.

However, it must be applied sensibly to recognise the needs of the broader transport and highway network and it is increasingly important to consider the movement of services and goods, not just people. Nevertheless, this hierarchy is a clear statement of the Council's priorities for movement within the region, and this must be reflected in the design of all streets and spaces.



THE PUBLIC REALM

Delivering a variety of public streets and spaces that respond to their location and function is a key aspiration of the Placemaking Plan. As stated above, the key principle in designing the public realm is prioritising the attractiveness and therefore the invitation to the cyclist and pedestrian, with the ambition to increase footfall, dwell-time and civic activity within the urban realm. This in turn feeds back into economic activity and the attractiveness of Tredegar as a place to live and visit. The Placemaking Plan clearly defines a strategy for the public realm around the character and typology of the public spaces, which seeks to achieve these goals.

HERITAGE

The strong historic urban model of the street pattern, key buildings, views and vistas all contribute to the town's identity and sense of place. Repair is required, but the fundamentals of this urban structure must not be lost and are essential to the success of the town going forward.

NEW INTERVENTIONS AND POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES

The Placemaking Plan identifies new development plots that would be brought forward over time. These key developments might consist of renewal, re-purposing or repair, but with the intention of building on the strong bones of the town to retain and increase critical growth within the community, effectively building in resilience for the economy, culture and well-being. The Placemaking Plan provides the starting point to assembling and bringing forward development.

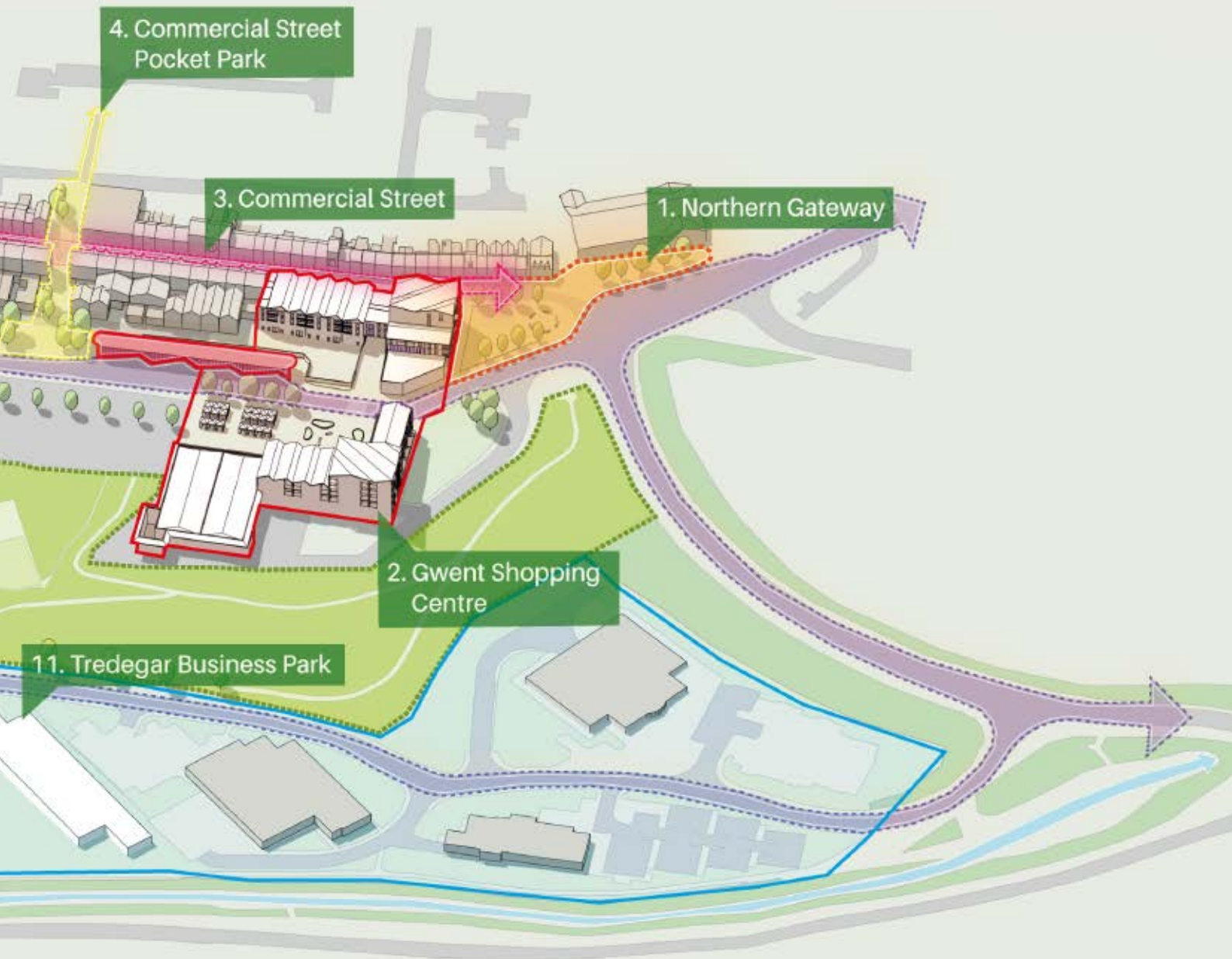
ACHIEVING QUALITY DESIGN

This should not be confused with the cost of development, but the quality of the designs brought forward within Tredegar should be measured by the developments ability to meet the aspirations set out in this document for sustainability, respect for the town's heritage, creating life between buildings and the scale, massing and density to support a 20 minute neighbourhood.

ACTION AREAS







4. Commercial Street Pocket Park

3. Commercial Street

1. Northern Gateway

2. Gwent Shopping Centre

11. Tredegar Business Park



Northern Gateway

Gwent Shopping Centre

Business Park

Commercial Street

Embankment

Castle Street Church

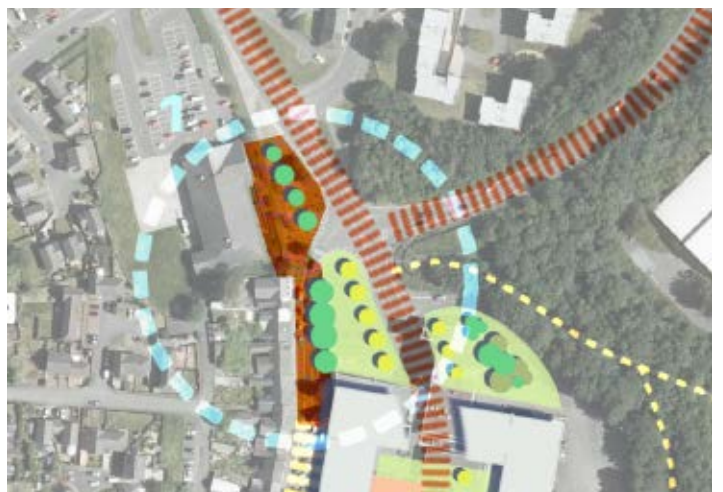
Clock Tower



1. NORTHERN GATEWAY

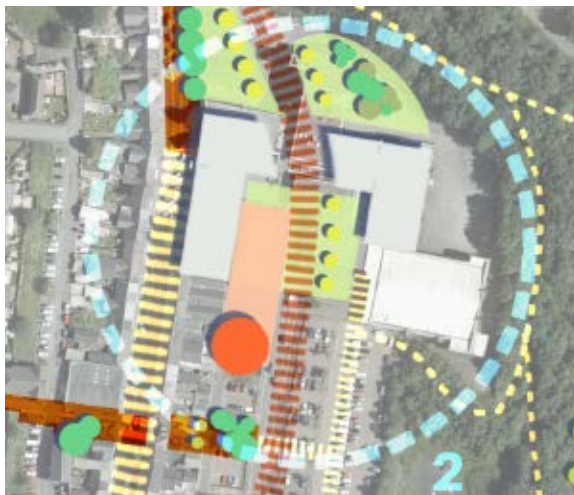
The northern gateway into the town is formed by the controlled junction outside the Lidl and north of the Gwent Shopping Centre. The junction is heavily traffic dominated and a sense of disconnection from, and lack of welcome to the town results. This is reinforced by the blank façade of the shopping centre and the oppressive nature of the highways underpass that passes beneath it.

Initial traffic modelling would suggest that the junction can be simplified, permitting active travel modes to better cross and enter the town, and the proposed regeneration of the Gwent Shopping Centre and reconfiguration and renewal of Commercial Street would also change the context of the gateway. The landscape works around the junction are of a quality and should be extended to follow the realigned Stockton Way into the town. Similarly, the urban treatment of Commercial Street should be expanded in front of the western street façade, where the remodelled shopping centre return eastward, to create a small public space running up to the Post Office and drawing Lidl onto the 'High Street'.



2. GWENT SHOPPING CENTRE

Effectively, this development currently forms the northern gateway into the town as all movement patterns are funnelled through the underpass on Stockton Way, under the shopping centre. The current shopping centre still fulfils an important retail function for the town, forming the majority of the Primary Retail Area. However, the quality of the environment and issues of access into the town centre for pedestrians, cyclists, cars and public transport are critically detrimental to the town centre and substantial reconfiguration and repurposing is required.



The programme needs to reflect the current realities of retail and to remain a key component of the town centre attraction, the centre needs to be re-envisioned as a mixed use development, potentially underpinned by a residential component, but containing retail, leisure and community facilities.

The underpass should be removed to allow the creation of a new bus interchange between local services and regional Metro services. Taking advantage of the consolidation of public transport the links to the active travel network would be strengthened by the provision of a cycle hub adjacent to the bus interchange.

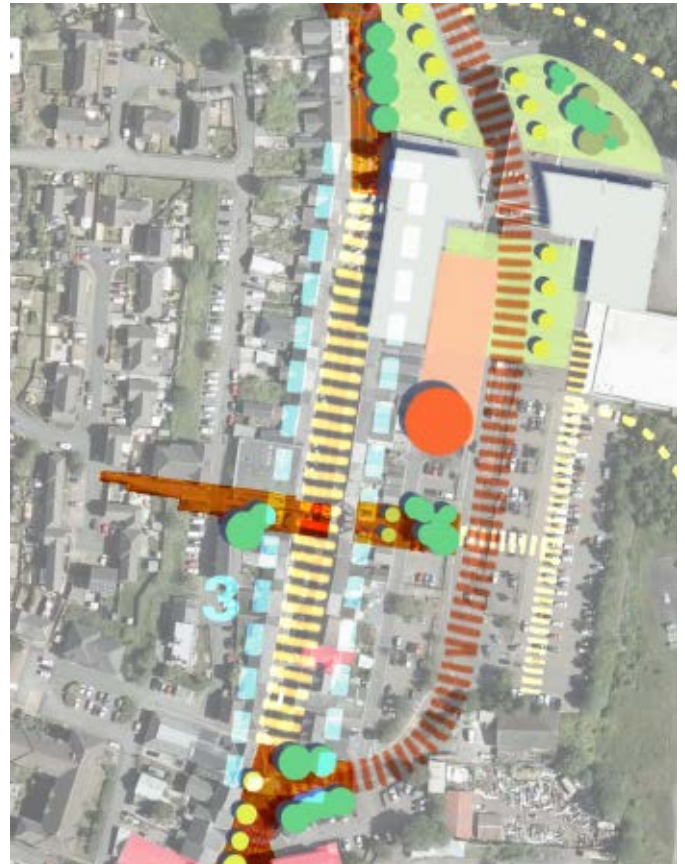




3. COMMERCIAL STREET

The issues on Commercial Street are intertwined. We need to generate more footfall and increase activity and dwell time to stimulate retail spend. This will assist with the property take up and investment in the street, addressing problems of vacancy, poorly maintained frontages and anti-social behaviour.

The streets needs to offer an invitation to the resident and visitor to meet, walk and spend time, through the provision of an attractive and pleasant environment. We need, therefore, to switch the emphasis from the immediacy and ease of vehicular access to promoting pedestrian and cycle activity. The proposal is to restrict vehicular access at certain times of the day, permitting service and deliveries, but in a predominantly pedestrian environment. The change over could be gradual, where the street is initially closed to vehicles to facilitate key events or festivals, but the transition needs to happen.



4. COMMERCIAL STREET POCKET PARK

With the exception of the two points of entry into Commercial Street to north and south, this is the only pedestrian intersection with the street, but provides access from the extensive housing area to the west and connection to the Gwent Shopping Centre and bus stands to the east. Recognising its importance and potential, a small pocket park already marks this midway point along the street, but is suffering from neglect, underuse and a lack of active frontages.

The reduced impact of vehicles through restrictions along Commercial Street, in combination with a renewed shopping centre and re-energised urban realm, would really enable this space to come alive.



5. CHURCH SQUARE

The 'knuckle' between Commercial Street and Castle Street has been lost as a civic space and is now a traffic junction that needs to be negotiated in moving between the two arms of the town - the high street spine. The majority of this space falls under the Town Centre Conservation Area, and should create a public space that addresses the Castle Street Church and provides spill out space for the buildings that terminate the two internal axial views along the streets clustered around the church. The highways function of this space will need to remain, but initial highways design suggests the land take for traffic purposes can be reduced, enabling suitable public realm to establish a central public space at the heart of the town.

6. CASTLE STREET

It is crucial that Castle Street is not overlooked in this plan. Recent works around the Circle have had a marked, but immediate effect, dramatically improving the attractiveness and offer around the Circle. However, to really make a difference to the wider town, the connections back to the retail area and onto Bedwellty Park, need to present a consistent quality and facilitate ease of movement.

Frontage improvements to the properties in combination with a sympathetic lighting scheme would draw the pedestrian along the street.



7. CORONATION STREET/IRON ROW

With strong reference to the Victorian street plan of Tredegar, the zone between Castle Street/Morgan Street and the business park should be repaired through phased residential-led development. As indicated on this early plan and following good urban design practice, these blocks should be designed as perimeter blocks, thereby accommodating density with lower building heights and a diversity of building types and uses. Importantly, when these blocks are grouped together to form a neighbourhood, it is the buildings themselves that define the public realm, as well as providing internal, sheltered semi-private spaces.

The redevelopment and repair of this eastern quarter of the town will take time, not only in terms of land assembly, with a number of uses still existing on the site, but also to build out in line with market demand. It is proposed therefore to establish a series of meanwhile spaces and uses, which could include allotments and other community growing areas, play areas and local open spaces.





8. MARKET STREET/IRON STREET

The strong axis of Iron Street and Bridge Street would regain its original importance and contribution to west - east movement patterns and the area would once again be worthy of inclusion within the Conservation Area.

The balance of the town would also be reinstated with the restoration of the urban form away from the current north-south linear nature to a more rounded community centred on The Circle. The town would regain depth.

Centred on the Circle, the urban realm of the two streets should be upgraded, focussing on the Saron Chapel to the west and a new point of entry into the business park to the south.



9. BRIDGE STREET/GEORGETOWN LINK

A linear pedestrian route connecting the Circle and the town centre to Georgetown to the east of the A4048. The route was strongly depicted in the early maps of the town and is still popular today. Some of the structure and directness has been lost, but could relatively easily be retrieved, with a continuity of paving material and lighting. This would be especially important at the underpass, which is somewhat daunting due to the restrictive headroom.

The western extent of the vista along the route terminates at the fine facade of The Olympia (now Weatherspoons), immediately below the Circle on Morgan Street.





BRIDGE STREET/GEORGETOWN LINK LOOKING EAST

10. SOUTHERN GATEWAY

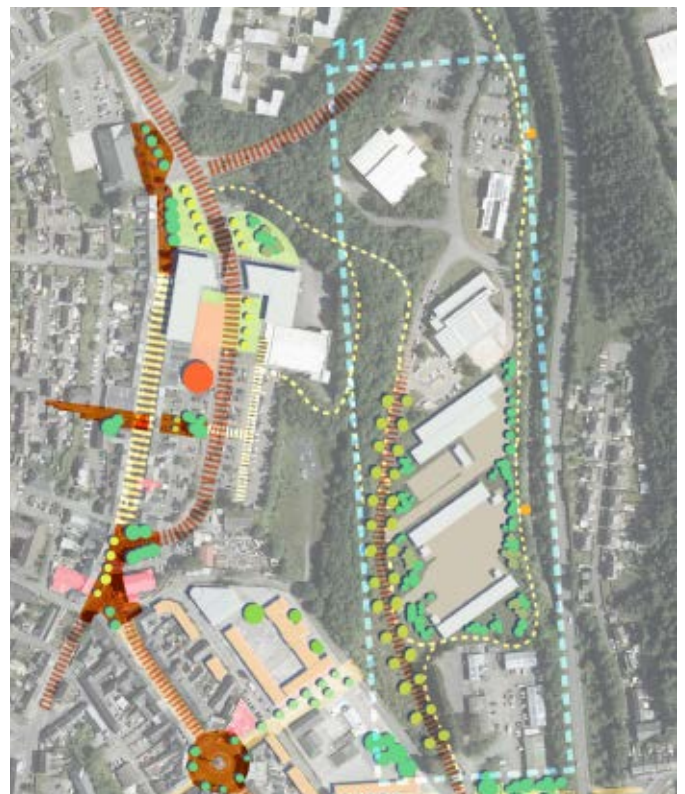
Continuing the theme of marking entrances to the town centre, place-marking principles should be applied to the area at the foot of Morgan Street, at the junction with Shop Row and Lower Coronation Street, to set the southern entrance point into the town centre. The development of a southern access into the business park along Shop Row would reinforce the importance of this entrance. The space is already there, and could be enhanced by tree planting and relatively minor public realm works to create this new space. There would effectively be a sequence of public space, each of differing character, along the town spine and between the two gateways at The Circle and Church Square.



11. TREDEGAR BUSINESS PARK

The business park is well located in terms of the road network and within the established, wooded river valley. All of the three existing premises are now let, completing the northern half of the site, however the southern half is undeveloped with no road infrastructure. The proposal would be to create a southern access into the site via Shop Row. This would be made possible by the partial demolition of the Truck Shop, retaining the areas of the listed building of greatest heritage interest (and retrievable condition), and widening the road corridor. The southern entrance would not only facilitate more local traffic movements from the south, but would encourage local bus operators to service the business park.

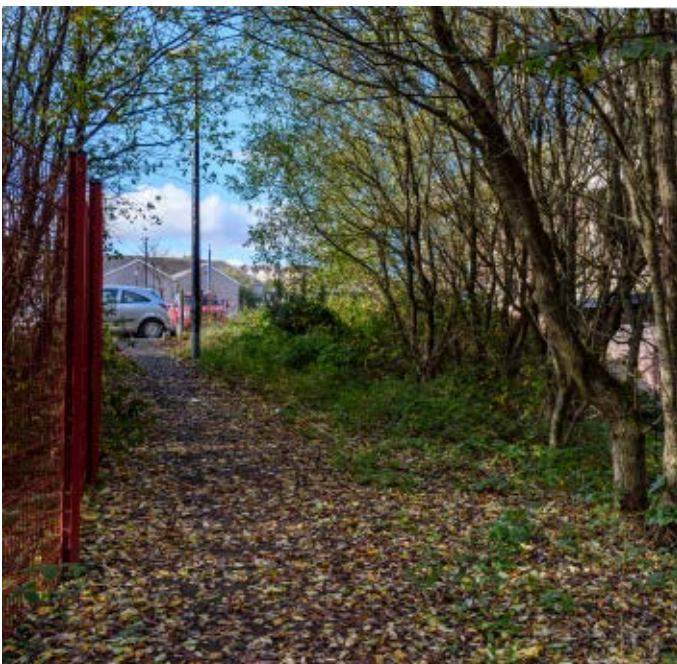
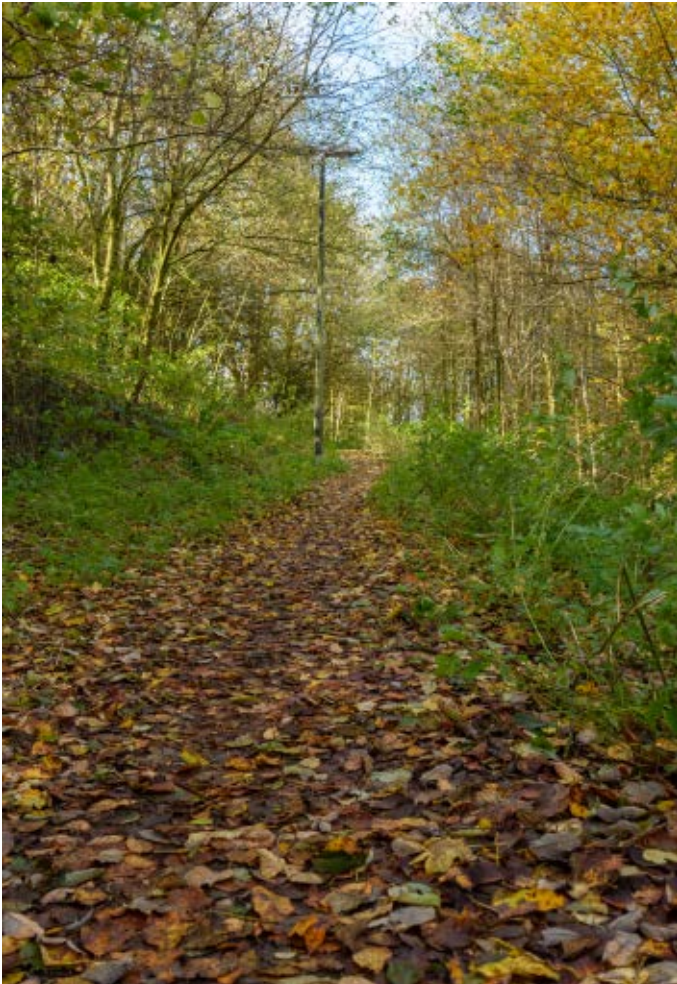
Connections back into the town centre would also be (re)created extending the west - east axial routes to Commercial Street and along Iron Street and Bridge Street. The improvements to the river corridor and associated increase in use as an active travel and ecological corridor, would further stimulate connectivity and attractiveness to potential investors in the park.



12. THE EMBANKMENT

The steep wooded embankment connecting the town to the business park is a great asset in terms of green structure to the town and business park and providing a wooded recreational environment, but the existing footpath system is neglected, with the limited lighting vandalised. In its current state it acts as a deterrent to movement between the two areas.

With increased activity on the business park and residential uses being located at the shopping centre, the footpath system should be upgraded and lighting restored, to encourage safe active movement between the town, business park and the river.



13. THE PROGRAMME

In creating these new town centre and high street environments, it is not just about highway restrictions and physical urban renewal, the programme of activities is key - the stage may be set, but it requires activity to create the draw. Farmer's markets, craft fairs, music, film, food, seasonal and heritage festivals would establish a regular programme of events throughout the year. These programmes should be cross-pollinated with the hospitality and the food offer to build a critical mass of visitor, resident and tourist engagement with the town.



06

TIMEFRAMES &
MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Action Areas

Measures of Success

| | Town centre vacancy numbers | Footfall | Retail spend/turnover/sales | Nighttime economy | Gross Value Added (GVA) | Retail diversity | Hotel bed nights | Place attractiveness |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Northern Gateway | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | High | High | Low |
| 2 Gwent Shopping Centre | High | High | High | Low | High | High | Low | High |
| 3 Commercial Street | High | High | High | High | High | High | Low | High |
| 4 Commercial Street Pocket Park | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | High |
| 5 Church Square | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | High |
| 6 Castle Street | Low | Low | Low | High | High | Low | High | Low |
| 7 Coronation Street/Iron Row | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | High | Low |
| 8 Market Street/Iron Street | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | High |
| 9 Bridge Street/Georgetown Link | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | High | High | Low |
| 10 Southern Gateway | Low | High | High | High | High | High | Low | Low |
| 11 Tredegar Business Park | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | High |
| 12 The Embankment | Low | Low | High | High | High | High | High | Low |
| 13 The Programme | Low | High | Low | High | Low | Low | High | Low |

Events and festival days

Resident numbers within town centre

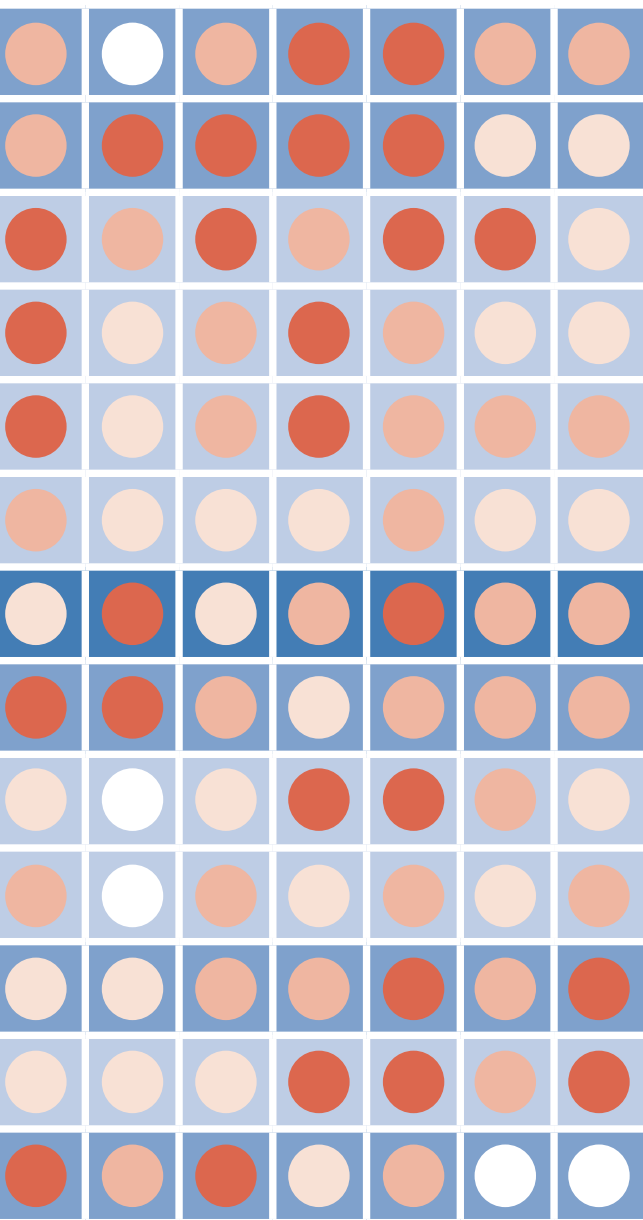
Customer/visitor/resident satisfaction

Ease of Movement

cycle and walking usage

Air Quality

Green infrastructure (tree cover)



Key

- Little / No Impact
- Low Impact
- Medium Impact
- High Impact

- Short term (3 years)
- Medium term (5 years)
- Long term (5+ years)

APPENDIX 1
ANALYSIS: CHARACTER AREAS

CHARACTER AREAS

The study area and its adjacent surroundings are made up of clearly defined character areas, each distinct from its neighbour and immediately apparent in moving through the town.

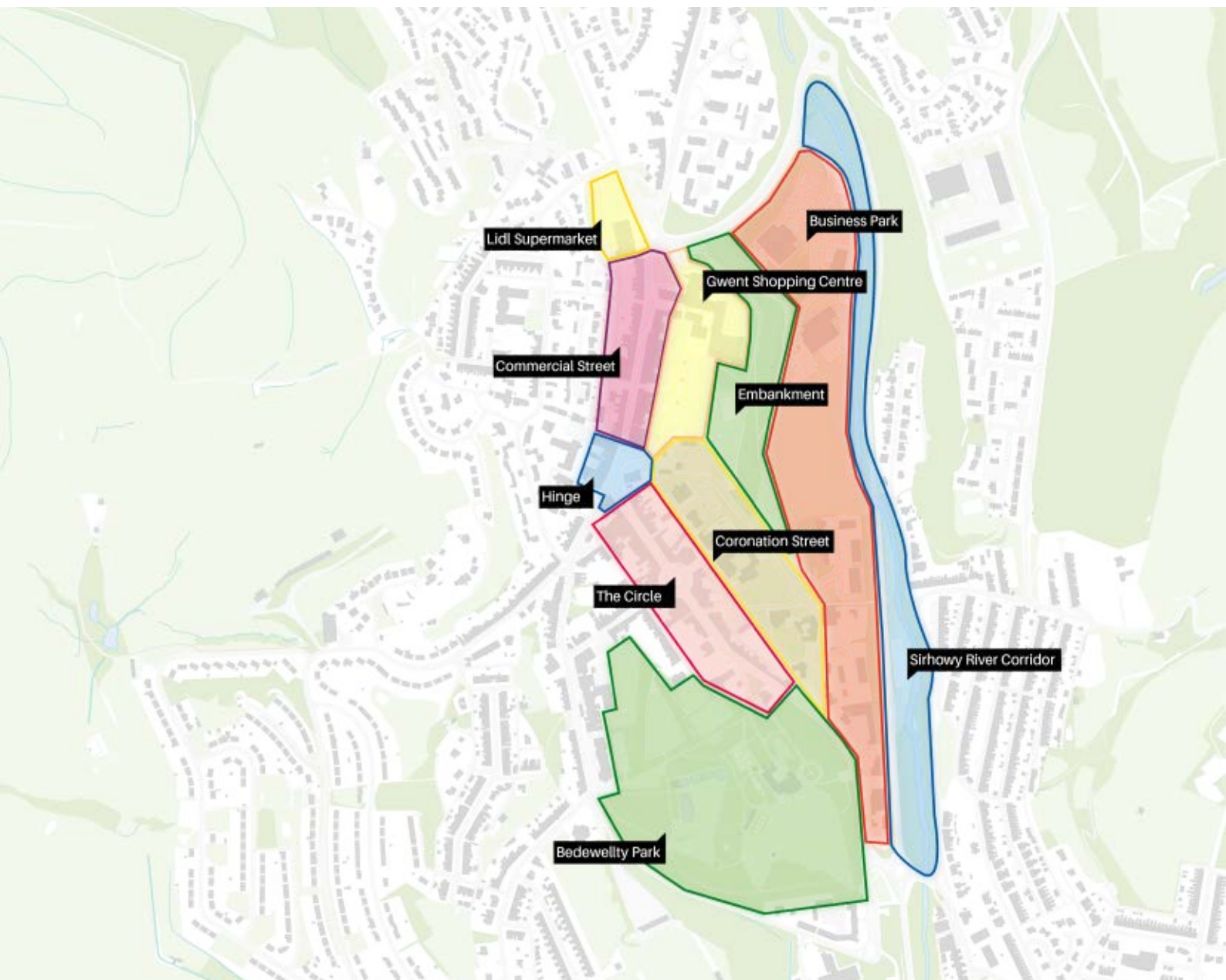


FIG. 9 CHARACTER AREAS

COMMERCIAL STREET

AREA 1

- The northern arm of what can be considered the high street.
- Hard, narrow, linear and contained shopping street, with only a few breakouts to east and west
- Dramatic views northwards to the Brecon Beacons
- Busy (but mainly with cars!)
- Vacancies, shuttered shop fronts and unsympathetic signage are all visually detrimental to the strong and consistent underlying structure.



CASTLE STREET

AREA 2

- Slightly more generous and expansive streetscape with long views southwards over and along the valley
- Steeply sloping to the south towards The Circle, where the clock tower is neatly and centrally framed by the street frontages.
- The topography lends interest with raised stepped platform entrance areas
- Intermittent views along connecting streets to the west up into residential areas and to the east long-range views over the business park to Georgetown and the wooded eastern side of the valley



QUEEN VICTORIA STREET AREA 3

- A short section of Victoria Street that forms a knuckle between the two arms of the high street
- Open views eastwards either side of the solid mass of Castle Street Church
- An area dominated by the highway and traffic, disconnecting the flow of the high street
- Lack of animation from adjacent properties



STOCKTON WAY AND GWENT SHOPPING CENTRE AREA 4

- A busy open area of predominantly car parking and highway
- The solid bulk of the Gwent Shopping Centre encloses the view to the north
- The backs of Commercial Street properties frame the western edge, with car parking areas and the pocket park connection to Commercial Street.
- To the east, striking, open views over the old skateboard park, wooded embankment, business park and river to the woodland beyond.



LIDL AND NORTHERN JUNCTION

AREA 5

- Modern superstore set above busy (and confusing!) traffic signalled junction
- Surroundings are wooded, green and enclosed
- Housing is visible along the roads to the north
- The main vehicular gateway to the town centre is beneath the shopping centre - daunting and uninviting



TREDEGAR BUSINESS PARK

AREA 6

- A flat low-lying landscape alongside the river, historically the ironworks, but with the exception of the ruined Truck Shop to the south, no vestiges of this remain.
- Modern business units surround the entrance and estate road to the north, set within landscaped grounds
- The southern area is vacant, open, rough pasture, awaiting development
- The wooded river corridor screens the A4048 8n embankment and with the wooded embankment to the west creates an attractive setting for the business park
- A series of industrial units are situated to the south accessed off Shop Row, cut through by the pedestrian connection between Georgetown and the town centre beneath the A4048 and over the river.



CORONATION STREET/ IRON ROW

AREA 7

- Two secondary streets running parallel to Castle Street with gapped-toothed commercial and residential development
- The Little theatre is one of only few community facilities within the town centre
- Strong views over the valley to the east and south
- Vacant plots create small, often unkempt landscapes, with little structure to the streets



THE EMBANKMENT

AREA 8

- A heavily wooded embankment separating the business park from the town
- A footpath connection zig-zags down the slope connecting the business park with the shopping centre car park
- A little used skateboard park resides on a plateau area immediately beneath the car park and accessed from Iron Row
- The wooded embankment mirrors the wooded slopes of Georgetown to the east of the river



SIRHOWY RIVER CORRIDOR

AREA 9

- Attractive wooded corridor, but with little opportunities to view the river!
- A pedestrian route with sitting areas and artwork has been created along the stretch within the business park, but seems little used.
- A great asset that needs revealing and brought into use.
- Potential for onward active travel connections to north and south



HOUSING AREA

AREA 10

- Dense residential area on the hillside above Commercial Street
- Although immediately adjacent to the retail core, seems separate and disconnected
- Poor planning has left only one narrow point of connections between the town centre and housing area, which needs strengthening and reinforcing



APPENDIX 2
THE HEALTHCHECK

TREDEGAR TOWN CENTRE HEALTHCHECK

This town centre healthcheck provides a snapshot of the current state of Tredegar town centre. *Future Wales: The National Plan 2040* sets the context for the appraisal and suggests the indicators, promoting a new vision of environmentally responsible, spatial development around compact centred towns with active travel and local facilities. It argues that the way forward, as set out in the *Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*, should be to place a much greater emphasis on environmental sustainability and social justice, mitigating against the current norm of low-density developments where the car is a default necessity for work, retail and leisure.

A further point of reference is the emerging Replacement Local Development Plan, which establishes policies governing retail and town centre development and growth.

Tredegar is defined as a District Hub within the Local Development Plan, whose role, whilst acknowledging its subordinate status to neighbouring Ebbw Vale as the principal hub within the borough, is to meet the 'culture, leisure and tourism needs of' its 'local communities' (SP1 Northern Strategy Area). Similarly, with respect to the retail hierarchy proposed within the Local Plan (SP3), Tredegar will act as a district shopping centre, principally to serve the needs of the immediate catchment, with Ebbw Vale providing the sub-regional retail role.

Given that the Healthcheck exercise was undertaken during the Covid pandemic, realistic and relevant primary data was difficult if not impossible to source, with many properties closed for the duration of the pandemic difficult to distinguish from those already or planning on permanent closure. Similarly, footfall was very low and not indicative of 'normal' trading conditions. Much use was made, therefore, of recent pre-pandemic reports and figures. The *Blaenau Gwent Retail and Leisure Study - April 2021*, (where again, the survey and healthcheck work was also undertaken during the period of the pandemic) also undertook a household survey in Tredegar to establish shopping behaviour, and resident and visitor views on the town centre, which provides useful insights.

A sense of the condition and appearance of the town centre was gleaned from site visits to the town through April and May this year.

The purpose of the health check is to form part of a robust, primarily retail evidence base to aid in the preparation of the Placemaking Plan for Tredegar. The Tredegar Town Centre Healthcheck was undertaken having regard to the extent of the boundary defined by this study, which closely follows the current Town Centre boundary as defined in the Local Plan. It therefore extends from Lidl and the Gwent Centre in the north along the spine of Commercial Street (the primary retail area) and Castle Street to The Circle in the south. The Placemaking Plan also encapsulates the Business Park to the east of the town centre.

TREDEGAR OVERVIEW

Tredegar is comfortably the second largest town centre within Blaenau Gwent behind Ebbw Vale, based on retail floorspace and would be the largest were it based on the actual number of retail outlets. However, a truer indication of the role of Ebbw Vale as the Principal Hub is gleaned from town centre turnover, which is three times greater than Tredegar, and reflects the relative number of national multiples.

The population of Tredegar (which includes Waundeg, Sirhowy and Georgetown) is slightly over 15,000 (2019). It is located 20 miles north of Cardiff along the Sirhowy Valley and lies immediately to the south of the A465, the Heads of the Valleys Road. It is, therefore, on the southern edge of (but outside) the Brecon Beacons National Park. The larger town of Ebbw Vale, the Principal Hub town within the Northern Strategy Area of Blaenau Gwent, is to the east of Tredegar.

The southern part of the town centre, around the Circle, is designated a Conservation Area and the town caters for a number of tourists and visitors, interested in the industrial heritage. A further source of interest in the town is the political and historic interest of the role of Aneurin Bevan and his links and references to Tredegar in the formation of the National Health Service.

Many of the Valleys are served by a railway; unfortunately, Tredegar is not one, with the rail line closing under the Beeching Cuts in 1963. Although proposals were mooted to re-open the line in the Welsh Metro proposals this is not the current proposal and the service along the valley currently extends as far as Blackwood. Bus is, therefore, the means of public transport, with other nearby rail stations at Ebbw Vale and Rhumney.

The current large employment site at the Tredegar Business Park is located immediately east of the town centre alongside the Sirhowy River, with good access to the town and the A465. Approximately half of the site is currently developed.

TREDEGAR AT A GLANCE

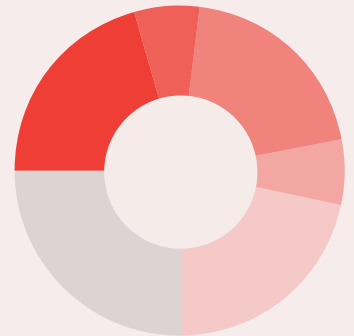
Town Centre Turnover



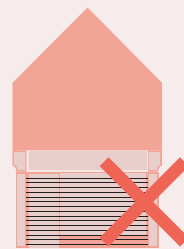
- Identified within the LDP as a district shopping centre to serve the needs of the local catchment area.
- Tredegar's population is circa 15,000 people
- Contains the second largest Town Centre in Blaenau Gwent, (The largest when based on the number of retail units. Ebbw Vale has a Town Centre Turnover 3x larger than that of Tredegar.
- Southern end of the Town Centre designated a Conservation Area linked with industrial heritage of the Town and links to Aneurin Bevan and the formation of the NHS

DIVERSITY OF USES

- Higher than the UK national average for A1 service uses reflects a large number of Hair and Beauty and Tattoo parlours.
- The Leisure Use class in Tredegar is slightly below the UK national average and has very high levels of fast food & takeaway provision, accounting for most of the A3-A5 use in the town centre.



PROPORTION OF VACANT SHOPS



25%

Shops vacant in Tredegar Town Centre

12%

Experian GOAD UK National Average February 2020

ACCESS & ACCESSIBILITY

- Car Parking in northern part of the Town Centre is well catered for but street parking dominates Commercial Street.
- Interchange between local and regional bus services is limited as the Gwent Shopping Centre underpass impedes access for regional busses.
- 76% of those surveyed thought that there was a good or very good ease of pedestrian movement around the town centre.



CUSTOMER VIEWS & BEHAVIOUR



- High local usage of the Town Centre with 75% of those surveyed within the Tredegar catchment areas said they visited Town Centre at least once a week.
- Poor perception of quality of the Town Centre shopping offer with 65% of customers surveyed suggesting that the quality of shops was poor or very poor.
- Almost half of all customers surveyed thought that the attractiveness and experience of food and drink establishments around the town centre was poor or very poor.

DIVERSITY OF USES AND PROPORTION OF VACANT STREET LEVEL PROPERTY

DIVERSITY OF USES:

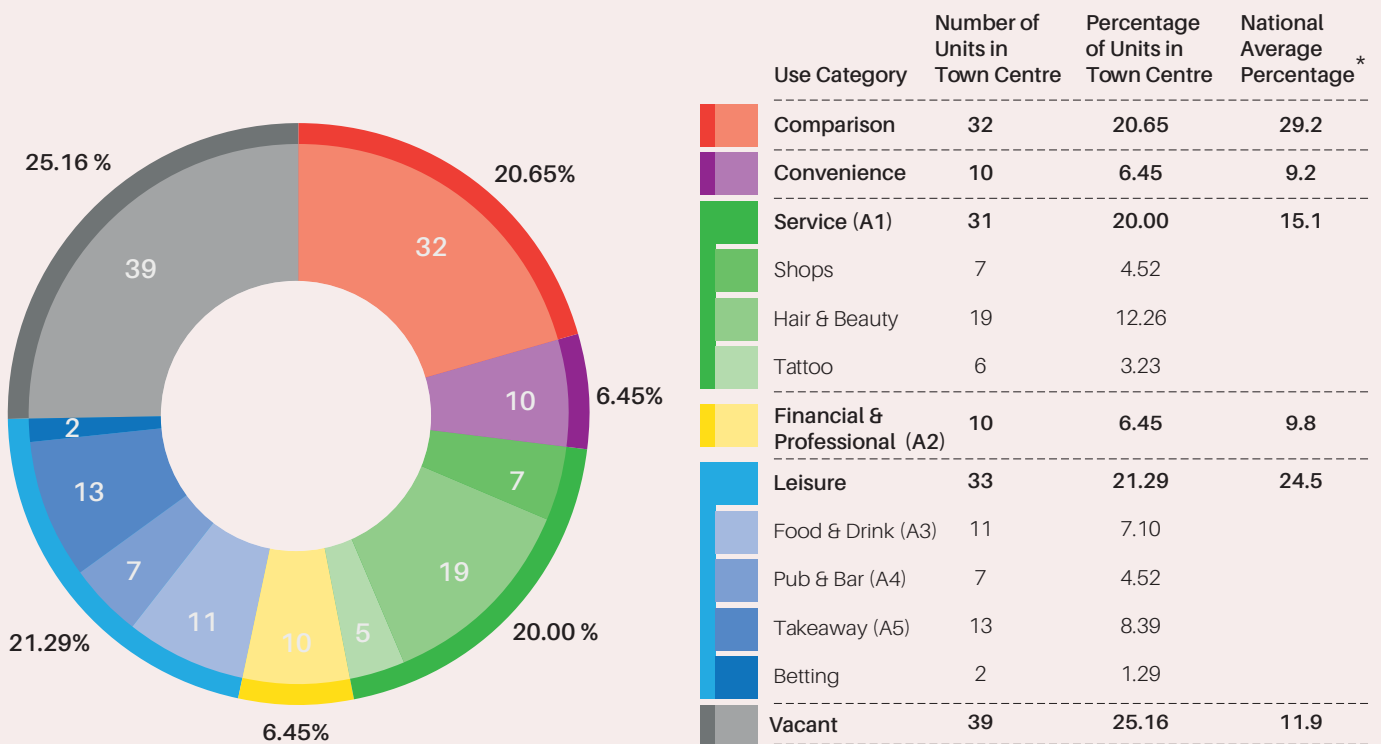
The Principal Retail Area (PRA) lies to the northern end of Commercial Street and includes the Gwent Shopping Centre, which straddles Stockton Way. The diversity of uses within Tredegar Town Centre closely matches the national average for Wales in most use classes with the exception of A1 services, which at 20% is 4.9% above the UK national average and the proportion of comparison goods stores, which is 8.55% under the national average. (Figure 1)

The comparative surplus of A1 service uses reflects a large number of Hair and Beauty and Tattoo parlours located in the Town Centre.

The Leisure Use class in Tredegar is slightly below the UK national average by 3.21%. Tredegar has very high levels of fast food & takeaway provision, accounting for most of the A3-A5 use in the town centre. But what is marked even from a walking survey, is that whilst there is a higher provision of takeaways and cafes, there is no 'restaurant' provision.

There would, therefore, appear to be a qualitative need to improve the mix of A3 uses within Tredegar, to better reflect the expenditure available to spend on eating out in cafes and restaurants compared with fast food and takeaways. The former uses would also support the vitality of the town centre to a greater extent than fast food and takeaway uses as they are more likely to be open at the same time as the retail uses, that is, during

FIG.1 DIVERSITY OF USES IN TREDEGAR



*Experian GOAD UK National Average February 2020

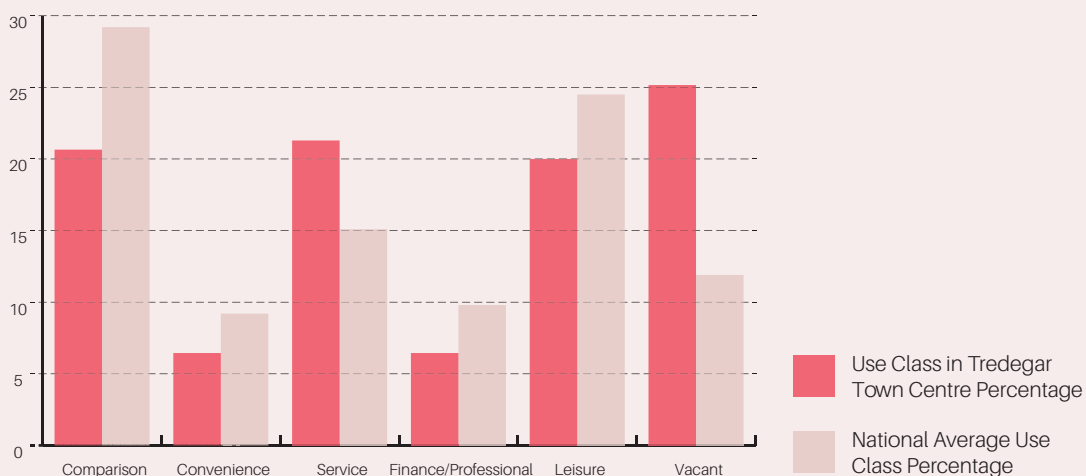
the daytime trading hours, respond to the ambition to attract and retain both tourists and regional residents to the town and have greater potential to increase the dwell-time of visitors.

Tredegar was used as a case study for developing a benchmarking tool for assessing town centre performance in Wales*, published in August 2021, but based on evidence gathered pre-pandemic. This study provides a good basis to compare with our findings. The case study classified Tredegar as a Medium Market Town based on its retail mix. Reflecting this assessment, the study indicated that it is performing poorly compared to its peers, with vacancy rates in 2016 around 12 pp higher than the category benchmark.

However, a closer examination of its catchment area suggests that Tredegar is situated in more urban, deprived communities than other towns of this type, and that a Medium Market Town’s diverse mix of businesses, focused on comparison goods and independents, is normally associated with more affluent, rural catchments and is, perhaps, not appropriate for a town centre such as Tredegar. The case study suggested that whilst independent businesses can be used to anchor a town, their lack of resilience can leave poorly performing towns fragile. Given the correlation between service businesses and improvements in town centre performance in deprived areas, their recommendation was that Tredegar’s stakeholders focus on attracting more service businesses to the town.

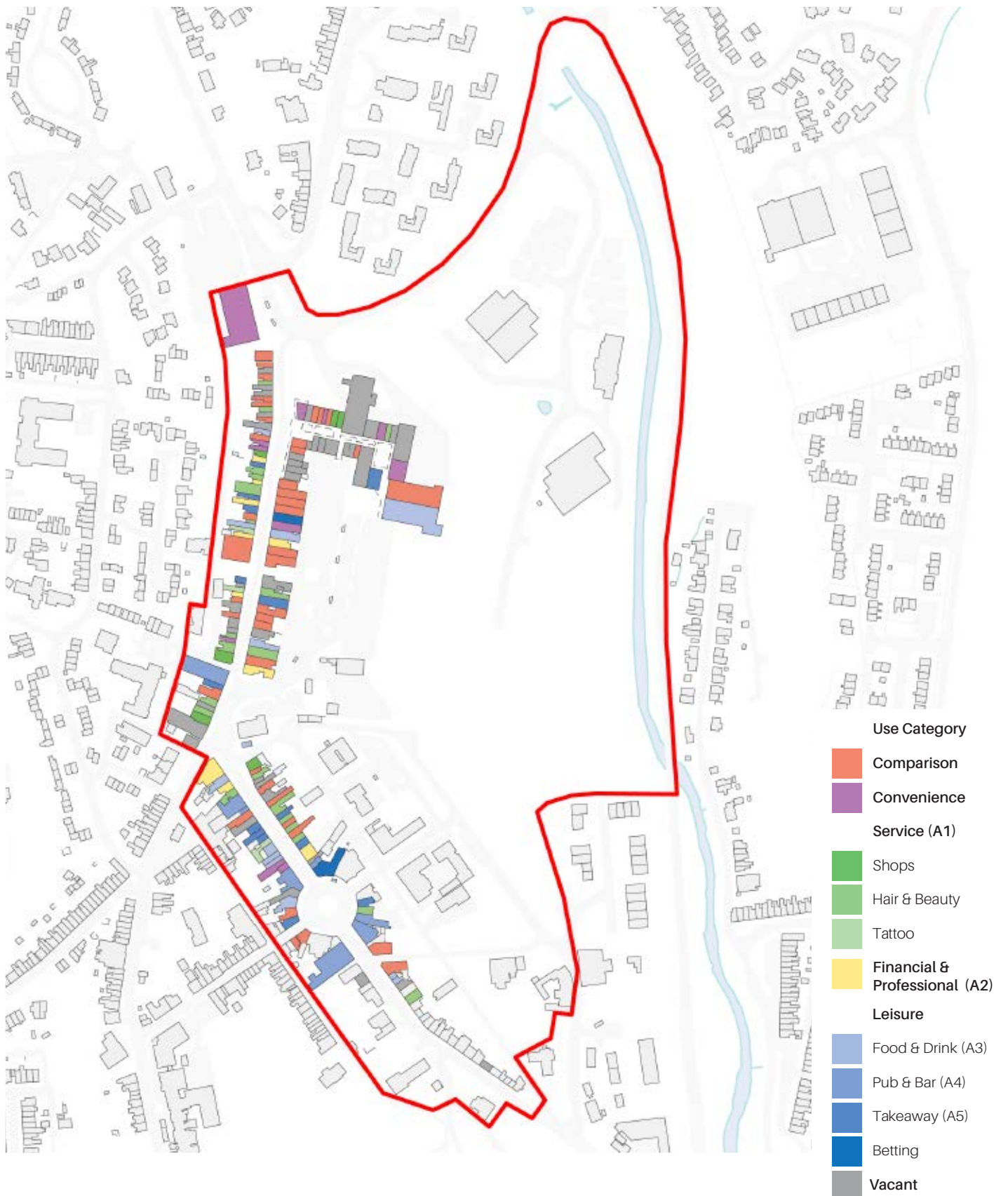
* Jones, S., Newing, A. & Orford, S. Understanding Town Centre Performance in Wales: Using GIS to Develop a Tool for Benchmarking. Appl. Spatial Analysis (2021).

FIG.2 COMPARISON OF USES WITH THE UK NATIONAL AVERAGE



* Experian GOAD UK National Average February 2020

FIG.3 GROUND FLOOR USE PLAN



PROPORTION OF VACANT STREET LEVEL PROPERTY

The proportion of vacant street level property in Tredegar is just over 25%, more than double the UK national average. There has been an increase in the number of vacant units over the past seven years, but with many of these coming in the period 2013-16, with the loss of numerous national multiples, particularly from the Shopping Centre. During the undertaking of the health check, it was difficult to be definitive about the status of properties in this regard, as a number had been closed for a long period due to the pandemic, with plans to reopen as restrictions were lifted.

However, it was observed that the vacant units comprised a variety of building types and floor plates, and whilst the units were dispersed across the town centre, the vast majority were situated on Commercial Street and within the Shopping Centre. The majority of vacant units appeared to be well maintained, but a number were showing signs of neglect (figure 6) The increasing level, and long-term nature of vacancies within the Gwent Shopping Centre is a concern in terms of sustaining viability of the Primary Retail Area in its current form.



Vacant units to Gwent Shopping Centre Facing Commercial Street

COMMERCIAL RENTS

Commercial rents in the town vary significantly dependant on property sector.

RETAIL:

Nationally the decline of High Street retail has been much publicised. The primary retail area in Tredegar is dominated by The Gwent Shopping Centre and Commercial Street, with a vacancy rate double the national average asking rents range between £8.27 and £11.70 psf which is significantly lower than the nearby town of Merthyr Tydfil. The volume of vacant space provides an occupiers market creating favourable lease terms for occupiers.

OFFICE:

Regional Office markets have demonstrated a steady recovery through Q1 2022. Occupiers are demonstrating a flight to quality with 54% of take-up being for the highest quality space. In Q1 2022 the largest proportion of regional office take-up (28%) was from the Public Services, Education & Health sectors, demonstrating the importance of public sector occupiers to a regional office market. The office market in Tredegar is limited, with space provided within Welsh Governments Enterprise Zone of Tredegar Business Park with rents between £6.50 and £7.50 psf

INDUSTRIAL:

The industrial market in south Wales has shown resilience throughout the last 24 months. The IAS Stats highlighted that in Q1 2022 the largest number of deals was for smaller units up to 5,000 sq ft at an average of £6.00 psf for lettings and an average capital value of £74 psf for sales. For units between 5,000 and 10,000 sq ft the average rent was £5.41 psf and lettings of 10,000 to 20,000 sq ft showed the lowest average rent at £3.88 psf. The lettings of 20,000 to 50,000 sq ft averaged £4.07 psf and for units over 50,000 sq ft the average rent was £4.32 psf. For Q2 2022 the Stats again show that the largest number of deals was for units up to 5,000 sq ft with lettings at an average of £6.50 psf. Industrial space in the area is dominated by the Business Improvement District of the Rassau and Tafarnaubach Industrial Estates. Welsh Governments' 2018 Tech Valleys Strategy includes Tredegar Business Park which has recently seen the successful relocation of Frontier Medical to a 30,000 sqft building at £4.00 psf.

ACCESS & ACCESSIBILITY

VEHICULAR ACCESSIBILITY

Road access to the town is good, with nearby access to the A465, Heads of the Valley Road. Car parking for the northern area of the town centre is well provided for with all day, free parking at the extensive surface car park serving the Gwent Shopping Centre and ancillary car parking areas to the rear of Commercial Street off Bank Lane. A further car park is centrally located to the north of Castle Street Church. Time-limited parking restrictions are in place along Commercial Street with on-street parking permitted along the wider Castle Street. Other than the on-street parking however, there are no designated car parks serving the southern section of the town centre.

Tredegar is served by regular bus services to the bus hub along Stockton Way, with regional bus services calling at the stops outside Lidl. Regional buses are not able to access the Stockton Way stands, as they are too long to manoeuvre through the shopping centre underpass. This prevents ease of interchange between the regional and all of the local bus services.

Over half of those surveyed were of the view that the availability of car parking was either good or very good.

PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT

Pedestrian movement is also well catered for within the town centre, with good connections between bus station, car parking and the shops. Not surprisingly, therefore, almost 76% of those surveyed thought that there was a good or very good ease of movement around the town centre.

The pedestrian experience on Commercial Street suffers in the balance with the vehicular, with the ease and accommodation of car parking, often parking herringbone so requiring reversing movements and unenforced in terms of the duration, taking precedence over pedestrian comfort and facility. The abundance of heavy steel bollards to protect the already narrow pavement zone is testament to the problem.

The knuckle between Commercial Street and Castle Street is a perceptual divide, splitting the town centre in two. Reconnecting the two parts of the town and giving each part a clearer and more defined role should be a primary goal.

CUSTOMER VIEWS AND BEHAVIOUR, PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY AND OCCURRENCE OF CRIME

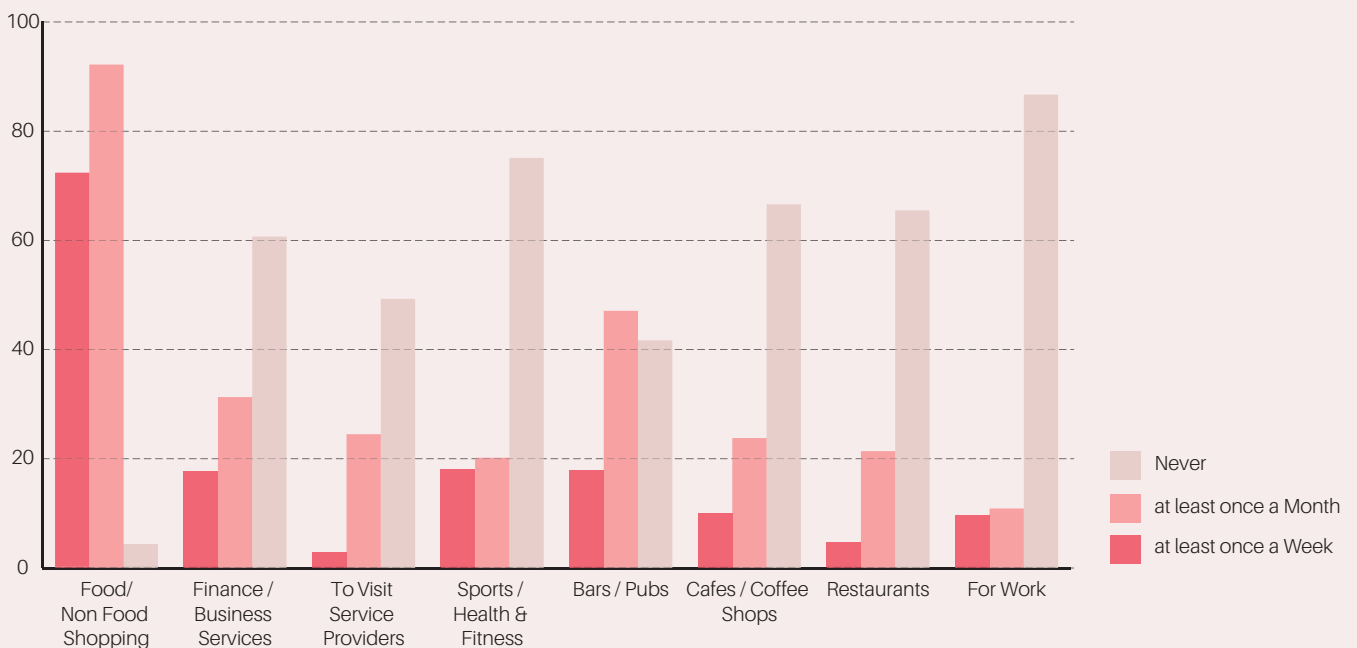
CUSTOMER'S VIEWS AND BEHAVIOUR

As part of the *Blaenau Gwent Retail and Leisure Study - April 2021*, local household were surveyed to establish shopping behaviour and visitors and residents asked about their perceptions of the town centre. Three quarters of those surveyed within the Tredegar catchment area said they visited the town centre at least once a week, with by far the most popular reason being to shop. 90% of all visitors indicated that they shop in Tredegar at least once a month. The bars and pubs were well-used on a monthly basis by both residents and visitors alike, with financial and business services also acting as a draw.

However, it would appear that usage of the town centre does not reflect the perceived quality of the offer, with almost 65% of customers suggesting that the quality of the shops was poor or very poor.

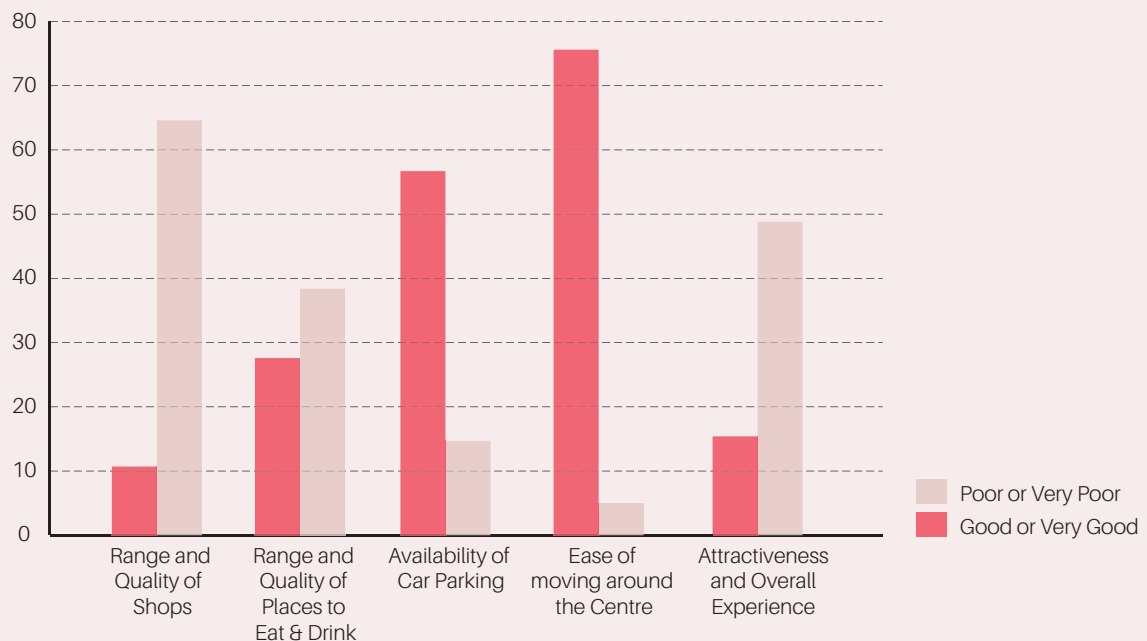
Similarly, far more customers thought that the quality and range of the food and drink establishments was poor and in terms of the overall attractiveness and experience almost half of those questioned thought the offer was poor or very poor, whilst only 15% were of the view it was good or very good. What was liked was the availability of parking and, particularly, the ease of moving around the town centre.

FIG.4 FREQUENCY AND PURPOSE OF VISITS TO TREDEGAR



The disparity between the high local level of usage of the town centre and the poor appreciation of the experience, suggests that there is great potential to improve the mix and the quality of the offer, increasing the number of visits, particularly from wider afield and extend dwell time.

FIG.5 PERCEPTION OF TREDEGAR TOWN CENTRE



TOWN CENTRE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

The linear, elongated town centre of Tredegar runs north/south and is split into two sections. Commercial Street forms the northern section and Castle Street, down to The Circle, forms the southern. The two sections hinge around a busy, highway dominated stretch of Queen Victoria Street, which is a major thoroughfare and junction at the heart of the town. The lack of activity from the buildings around this knuckle, combined with the predominance of traffic, effectively splits the town centre in two.



The major anchor to the northern section of the town centre is the Gwent Shopping Centre, a solid, almost brutal, 1970 construction that straddles Stockton Way, forcing traffic coming into the town into a dark, constrained underpass. This creates a poor, unattractive gateway into the town from the north.



By contrast, the area around The Circle, which pins the southern end of the town centre, forms an attractive townscape, recognised by Conservation Area status and benefitting from substantial recent and on-going investment in properties surrounding The Circle and the lower sections of Castle Street.



With the exception of the central hinge area, the quality and consistency of the streetscape is generally high and both Commercial Street and Castle Street have a strong scale and completeness. Natural stone materials have been used for pavements and crossing, however the street furniture and signage is now looking somewhat heavy and dated.



The qualities and character of Commercial Street are marred by the preponderance of cars and delivery vans. Parking restrictions are in place, but are not adequately enforced. The infrastructure required to restrict the vehicle within the street is in itself a obstruction to ease of movement for the cyclist and pedestrian.

FIG. 6 BUILDING CONDITION SURVEY



APPENDIX 3
THEMES & STRATEGIES

SUSTAINABILITY

THE EXISTING CONTEXT

In September 2020, Blaenau Gwent declared a 'Climate Emergency' after councillors voted unanimously to work towards making the borough council carbon neutral by 2030. With a focus on addressing the carbon footprint of the council as an organisation, measures would include:

- Systematically reviewing the climate change impact of each area of the Council's activities;
- increasing local resilience to climate impacts already in the system;
- Maximising local benefits of these actions in other sectors such as health, agriculture, transport and the economy;
- Supporting, and with all other relevant agencies, moving towards making the borough Zero Carbon over the next decade.

Beyond looking at the immediate corporate impacts, other actions for consideration, that support the Welsh Government's ambitions captured in their plan 'Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales', could include:

- increasing the efficiency of buildings;
- prioritising these measures for council housing and private sector housing;
- addressing fuel poverty;
- building solar, hydro and other renewable energy generating and storage plant;
- requiring all new housing and commercial developments to be low carbon;
- replacing the vehicle fleet with electric and/or hydrogen powered vehicles;
- switching to 100% fossil-fuel-free energy and adapting the council's purchasing policy;
- commissioning consultations with the borough's young citizens, who will be most affected by the effects of climate change.

Bold actions are required to achieve this ambition. As a town, through its existing potentialities and with the opportunities and capacity to effect change, Tredegar has a clear role to play in reaching this goal and in setting a precedent for future sustainable development within the borough and Valleys region.

THE 20 MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOOD - AN HOLISTIC APPROACH`

Neighbourhood is state of mind, it is not a physical place.

In order to shape the future of Tredgar and ensure it evolves in a sustainable way, it is necessary to think of it in the round, avoiding cherry-picking and imposing individual green actions and initiatives. As with any town, city or community, it is the special and unique circumstances of Tredgar’s social and physical evolution that must play their part in building its future.

The concept of the 20 Minute Neighbourhood, grounded in an understanding of the forces that have formed the community, provides an outline of the principles and approaches that should be taken to ensure sustainability is fundamental to the transformation of Tredgar. Commitment to the concept of the 20 Minute Neighbourhood is becoming firmly established in national planning thinking, although not yet embedded in policy. The Commissioner for Wales recommended in Chapter 3 of the Future Generations 2020 report that in order to support and encourage cohesive communities, the Welsh Government should “commit to introducing the 20 minute neighbourhood concept for all towns and cities in Wales; creating healthier, happier communities fit for a zero carbon future. This means strong, well-connected neighbourhoods where people live within a 20 minute walking distance of key everyday services, and prioritising mix-type development which combines housing, transport links, public services, workplaces and recreational facilities.”



Tredgar is ideally suited to this approach and the key tenets that underpin the 20 Minute Neighbourhood concept and outlined within the Future Generations report, effectively underpin this Placemaking Plan. The compactness of the town, proximities of residential areas to shops, facilities and services, the location of transport facilities and access to open space would all fit within the parameters of the 20 Minute Neighbourhood. However, this doesn’t mean that Tredgar is currently functioning as a 20 minute neighbourhood and it is through adopting an holistic approach around these principles and then achieving the quality and culture that is required that drives change. Neighbourhood is a state of mind, it is not a physical place, so to achieve this requires the plan to be people-centred and developed with and for the stakeholders within the community.

Any development proposals, therefore, will be expected to incorporate sustainable approaches with regard to the following topics:

- Buildings
- Energy
- Transport
- Green and blue infrastructure
- Lifestyle, health and well-being

SUSTAINABILITY

BUILDINGS - ADAPTIVE REUSE

- First look to reuse and retrofitting of existing building stock
- Build in adaptability and longevity to any new development
- Reduced energy need
- Adopt modern methods of construction - eg offsite/modular
- Incorporate smart technology
- Improve biodiversity - green walls, green roofs
- Enhanced access to open space (lessons from pandemic in terms of private and semi-private outdoor space within residential development)



Adaptive reuse to create coworking spaces, Palermo

TRANSPORT

- Proposals must adopt Council Active Travel policy, providing well-designed streets and secure cycle parking, building in improved cycle and pedestrian routes and furthering 20 Minute Neighbourhood principles
- Tie into and develop Regional Metro plans, including an improved bus station provision
- Develop a cycle hub adjacent to bus station and as a node on the active travel network.
- Development must address and respond to the Council's Climate Emergency goals
- Rationalise surface car parking to promote active travel whilst accommodating necessary car users of the town centre
- Make provision for increased use of electric vehicles through the locating of electric charging points



Edmonton Green Cycle Hub

ENERGY

- River Sirhowy hydro scheme
- Use of PVs on shopping centre
- Use of PVs around bus/cycle hub
- Encourage sustainable procurement, targeting low or zero carbon energy generating technologies



Energy Positive Housing at Active Homes, Neath

SUSTAINABILITY

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

- This refers to the use of trees and vegetation in combination with permeable hard surfaces to capture, infiltrate, and clean stormwater. Beyond stormwater management, green infrastructure also provides significant additional benefits including air cooling and cleaning, reduced building energy use through shading, air cooling through evapotranspiration, enhanced aesthetics, and public health benefits.
- The key design and planning elements of this nature-based approach should include the following:
 - Accepting the need for hard surfaces and footpaths, plant more and pave less! Then support by healthy soils, and include bio-swales and rain gardens.
 - Maximise use of green (vegetated) roofs for stormwater capture and air cooling/cleaning benefits.
 - Maximise use of porous pavement technologies to support natural hydrology.
 - Use attenuation for capturing and enabling reuse of excess stormwater for irrigation, etc.
- Preserve and enhance the tree canopy. Tree canopy cover directly correlates to reduced urban heat island effects, creating a much more comfortable outdoor living environment and reducing emissions from internal cooling. Tree cover is also strongly linked with air quality improvements that improve public health outcomes. For example, create meanwhile woodland planting on the business park. This would be cut into as necessary, as development is brought forward, but a setting is created.
- Develop wetland and riparian planting to Sirhowy river corridor
- Rainwater management - incorporate swales, rain gardens, tree planting, green roofs, ponds and permeable paving
- Improve biodiversity - green roofs, living walls, allotments, communal gardens, meanwhile open spaces
- Explore opportunities for new street trees provision



Planted green wall, humanising a tall narrow space



Raingarden and swale

LIFESTYLE - HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- Promote and improve access to Tredegar Sports Centre, Aneurin Leisure.
- Encourage/develop regular Farmer's Market
- Expanded opportunity to grow your own - develop allotments and communal growing areas to west of town centre, and within longer term residential sites and within area of skateboard park.
- Connection to open spaces, cycle and walking routes
- Encourage healthy environments for all ages, particularly encouraging children to establish and develop healthy and sustainable habits



Active Travel

LAND USE

THE EXISTING CONTEXT

Across the UK the impact of Covid-19 has been to accelerate long-standing trends in most markets, this has included the:

- accelerated decline of retail in our town centres, most noticeably for discretionary retailers;
- demand for more flexible employment space including co-working (which potentially increases demand in peripheral town centres as hubs for enterprise and start ups); and
- demand for home working, with higher quality, larger, but town centre focused residential properties with access to a range of amenities (further promoting strategies embodied in the 20 Minute Neighbourhood).

KEY PRINCIPLES

RETAIL

Concentrate on measures within the shopping environment of Commercial Street and Gwent Shopping Centre to generate footfall and improve dwell time. Retain and support existing retailers, including during periods of construction or refurbishment.

COMMERCIAL

Further examination of the potential to develop new and existing industries (pharma in particular) on the business park, links to visitor and leisure economy, heritage/ business tourism.

RESIDENTIAL

Need to understand and apply the potential for residential, both private and social, to become a component of the Gwent Shopping Centre site, but also the repair of the area between Castle Street and the business park. Increasingly, gaps are appearing within this area and the key to supporting 20 minute neighbourhoods is maintaining size and density. Compact settlement patterns of sufficient size can reduce the distances between home, jobs, facilities and amenities and make more effective use of transport infrastructure. They also provide sufficient critical mass of population to support local services, reduce landtake to provide space for blue/green infrastructure lead to reduced transport emissions, better public health and greater social interaction.

HOTEL

Of the Valley towns, Tredegar is possibly the most well-served in terms of accommodation, but does it cater for and enable the ambitions of the Visitor Management Plan to be realised?

ARTS, CULTURE AND LEISURE

Culture and heritage underpins much of the destination and tourism proposals, based on Tredegar's unique legacy of heritage and cultural assets, which are, perhaps, best embedded and presented of the towns within the region. These activities are a special driver of character which typifies Tredegar and offers potential for further concentration of cultural, artistic and recreational uses that will bring a daytime and evening presence into the town. By clustering these uses, there is an opportunity to create an environment where existing and new cultural assets can collaborate on activities and projects. The programme should facilitate this greater alignment within the cultural, artistic and recreational sectors, and land uses that accord with this principle will be supported.

TRANSPORT AND PARKING

A balance is required as the move to active travel modes is pursued, to ensure that there is adequate parking provision and access for the car to support the various economies in the town. This balance point should continue to shift, as public transport facilities and active travel infrastructure and culture increases. Our view is that this balance is too far skewed towards the vehicle at the moment, with streets dominated by car movements and parking. Areas of car parking should also be treated as flexible, to permit temporary uses and functions and attractions to flourish, for example, markets, fairs and festivals.

LAND USE

THE STRATEGY

The fundamental disposition of land uses within the town is historically grounded, well-established and fits nicely with the market demand, and the existing qualities and characteristics of each area - the urban grain, topography, heritage assets and building footprints. It is the finer grain that needs examining, where the proposed richer, mixed use approach is essential, with the overall aim of creating active and attractive ground floors - retail, commercial, food and drink, with residential above, and/or a mix of education, community, mixed with commercial. This generates footfall and passive surveillance with an improved sense of personal security.

To support this finer grain mix of uses, and potential for increased footfall, the streets and public realm need to respond providing greater space and invitation for cycling, walking, social interaction and flexible activities such as markets, fairs, festivals and events.

Certain areas of the town have been identified for particular attention:

GWENT SHOPPING CENTRE

The shopping centre forms to core of the Primary Retail Area and anchors the northern end of the town centre. The healthcheck has identified the struggling nature of the retail offer and the area needs a new lease of life and energy, in keeping with the overall strategy. Opportunities exist to create a new mix of uses, retaining retail, but permitting residential, community uses and workspaces to enhance the appeal and attraction of this key element.

CHURCH SQUARE

The area in front of Castle Street Church is a key connecting space between the two main areas of the high Street (Commercial Street and Castle Street) and needs uses that bring life and activity, whilst accepting it will continue to enable traffic to move through the town from north to south and east to west. The existing buildings would be retained, but need charging with uses that contribute to activity within new civic spaces.

CORONATION STREET/IRON ROW

The gap-toothed, neglected nature of this area, immediately to the rear of Castle Street, needs addressing either through strategic retreat or, preferably, residential-based mixed use. The relocation and potential redevelopment of the Glan yr Afon Surgery and restoration of elements of the adjacent historic Truck Shop, present opportunities to pin the southern end of this redevelopment strip. Development in this area could take time and meanwhile uses, for example, allotments and temporary open spaces, should be considered.

TREDEGAR BUSINESS PARK

With current post-pandemic demand for industrial, warehouse and distribution space, the temptation is to increase the use classes permitted on the business park. However, the opportunities to build on the recent arrival of a pharmaceutical business onto the park in terms of growth and employment opportunity, combined with the alignment of such uses with the destination and tourism plan for health-based conferencing and business tourism, should firstly be developed. The creation of a new access to the south of the business park would hopefully open up this area and build on the momentum.

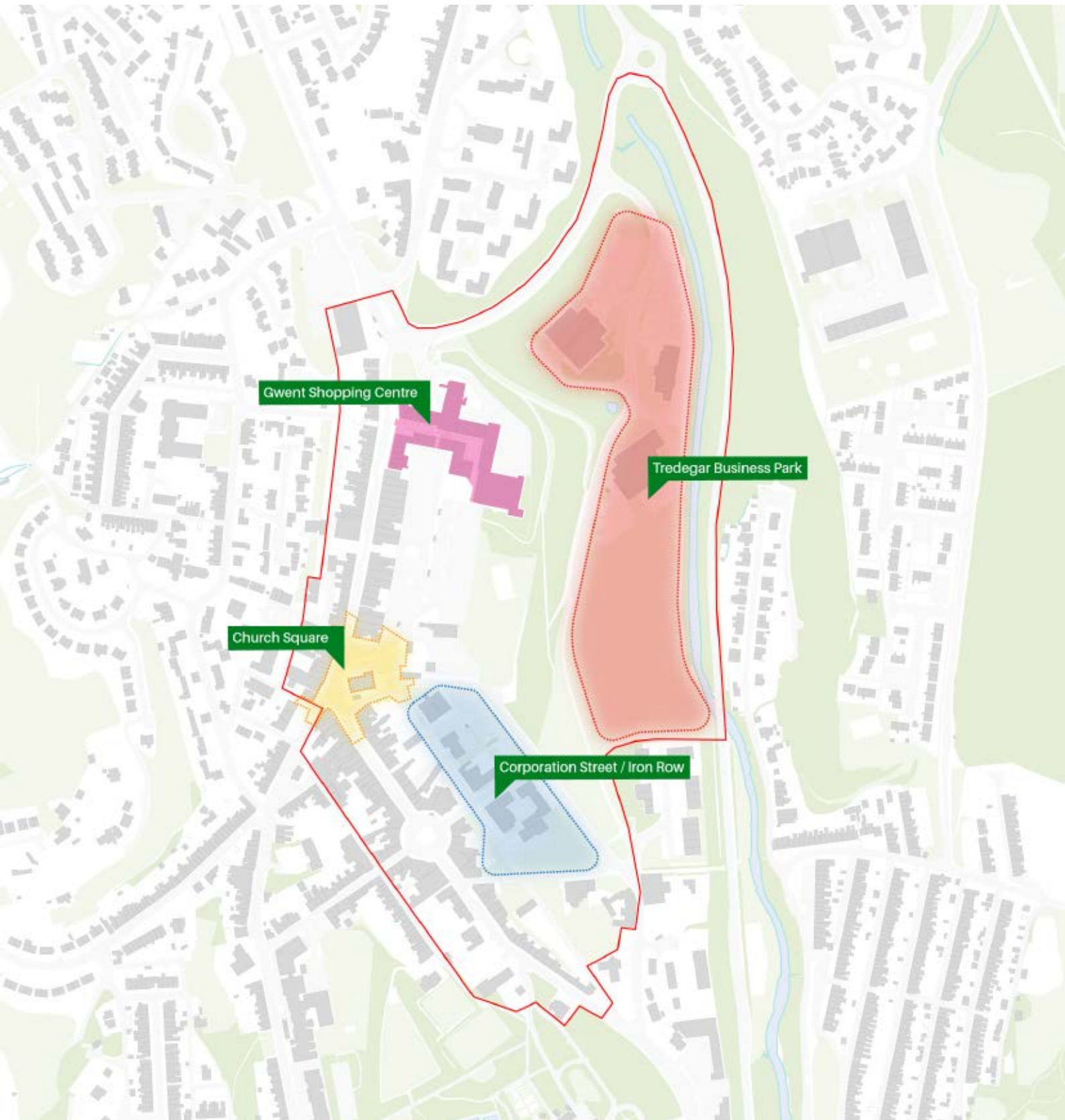


FIG. 17 LAND USE KEY AREAS

MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

THE EXISTING CONTEXT

The car, and the perceived need for an immediacy of parking to the front of shops and premises, currently drives the movement patterns and vehicular dominance around the town. The historic street pattern is still fit for purpose, but the balance of space allocated for pedestrians, cyclist and vehicles need overhauling and turning on its head.

The underpass at the Gwent Shopping Centre prevents regional buses from accessing the town centre and interchanging with the local services, and also presents an uninviting entrance to the town for the pedestrian, cyclist and motorist.

Apart from access at either end and the connection to the Gwent Shopping Centre, Commercial Street has only one other point of connection and access. This is a crossing point centrally along the street providing access eastward to Stockton Way and the car park and westward to the residential estate. A small public seating area is located at this intersection.

The central hinge between Commercial Street and Castle Street, where Queen Victoria Street cuts through to Stockton Way, is traffic dominated and stifles continuity along the main spine of the town.

There is currently no easy, or sense of, connection between the town centre and the river and the business park also seems remote and disconnected from the town.

KEY PRINCIPLES

RETAIN THE HISTORIC STREET PATTERN

The primacy and strong spine of the historic route through the town centre from Commercial Street onto Castle Street, through The Circle and onto Bedwellty Park would be reinforced and form the basis of the movement patterns within the town.

SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE STREETS FOR ALL

We will promote footfall, activity and dwell time within the streets for all groups within the community. Encouraging Promoting the night time economy should retain a sense of safe streets.

OVERCOME THE CHOKE OF THE UNDERPASS AT THE GWENT SHOPPING CENTRE

Future development of the Gwent Shopping Centre must address the visual and physical issues around the underpass, permitting successful regional and local bus interchange within the town and a welcoming entry for the visitor to the town.

IMPROVE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE TOWN CENTRE, BUSINESS PARK AND RIVER

The disconnections between the town centre, the business park and the river need repairing, to foster movement between the various areas and a sense of communality. These connections would be active travel modes with improved and safe pedestrian and cycle routes. As well as providing amenity for the resident, this would also bring further visitors into the town, with enhancements to the river corridor as a regional cycle and pedestrian route,

PROMOTE ACTIVE TRAVEL ROUTES INTO AND AROUND THE TOWN CENTRE

A key component of a move to a 20 Minute Neighbourhood is the establishment and encouragement of active travel on safe and secure pedestrian and cycle routes. These should look to connect to the regional network of trails and thereby extend local, amenity routes around the town, to feed into longer recreational travel around the county.

MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

MOVEMENT STRATEGY

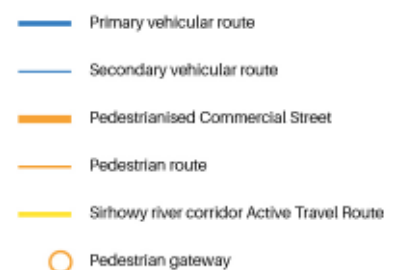
VEHICULAR

- Building on the opportunities presented by the Metro Scheme, promote and improve local bus connections, visitor and leisure use. Creating a consolidated bus interchange on Stockton Way.
- In the longer term, Commercial Street becomes closed to vehicular traffic (excepting servicing and access). Initially, this would most probably be trialled to coincide with the regeneration of the shopping centre and markets/events/festivals to promote footfall.
- New traffic arrangements to Lidl northern gateway junction; Commercial Street/Queen Victoria Street junction allowing improved pedestrian and cycle connection between Commercial Street and Castle Street.
- Once space is created by the regeneration and repurposing of the Truck Shop, create a new southern entrance to the business park.

PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST

- Create an integrated network of safe cycle and pedestrian routes
 - Strengthen the link to Georgetown via A4048 underpass/Bridge Street to the town centre
 - River Corridor including seating/rest areas with river overview with connections to the wider network
 - Ty Bryn to bus station and onto the business park and river, via Commercial Street open space
 - Market Street/The Circle/Iron Street and on into the business park and river corridor
 - National Cycle Route 467 - create river corridor and town centre options.
- Establish an Active Travel hub at the new bus interchange, with cycle storage, hire and repair facilities.
- Provide and designate space for the cyclist and pedestrian along road and street corridors.
- Provide information online, at bus station/cycle hub, civic buildings and tourist destinations on the cycle and pedestrian network.

FIG. 18
PROPOSED MOVEMENT KEY



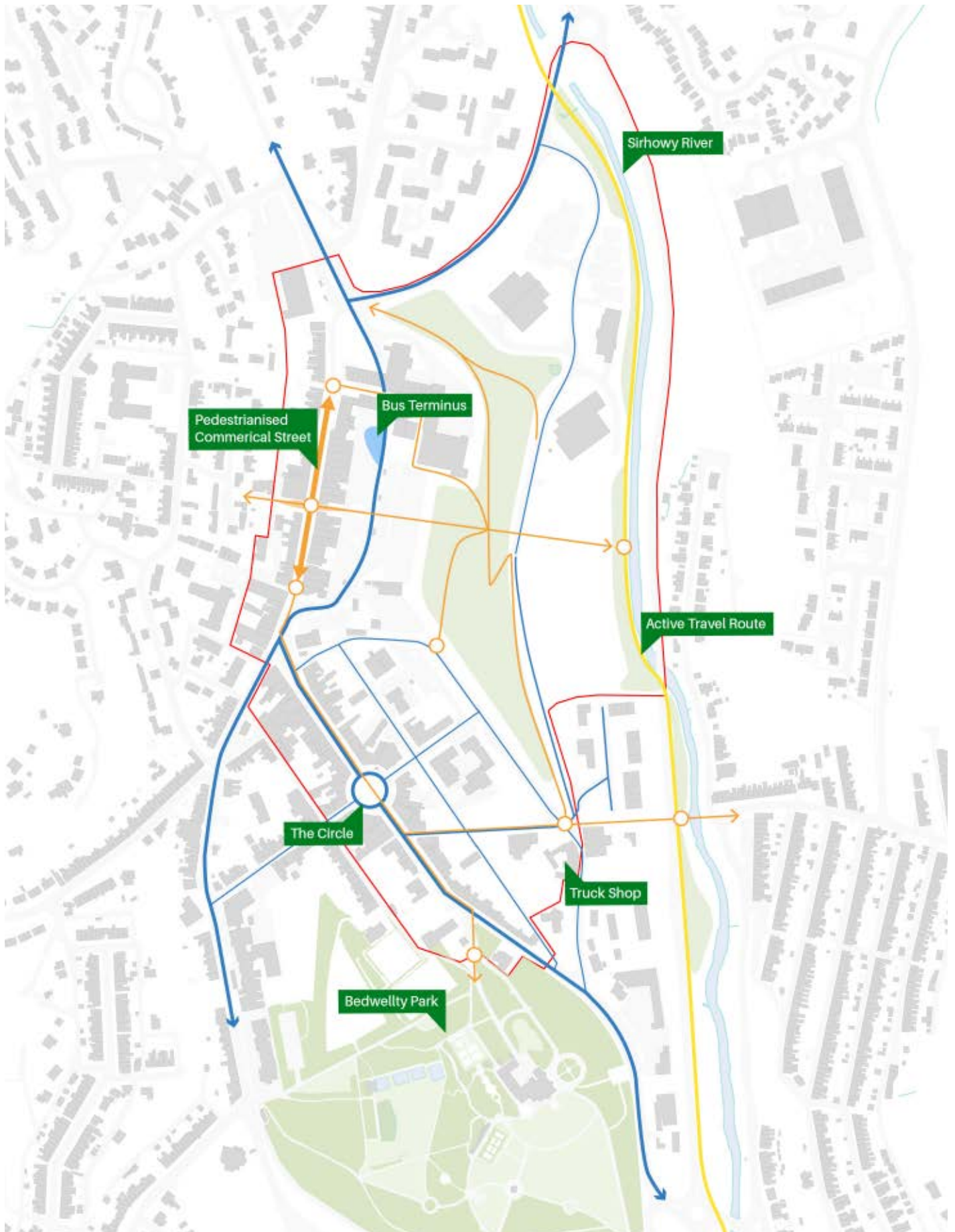


FIG. 18 PROPOSED MOVEMENT

THE PUBLIC REALM

THE EXISTING CONTEXT

Bedwellty Park is a wonderful amenity for the town, but is peripheral to the town centre and does not function as a civic space as such. There is little real successful civic space within the town, where people can gather, celebrate or casually meet. Most areas of hard open space are given over to car parking.

There is public open space within the courtyards within the shopping centre. However, this is tired and neglected and being enclosed by vacant properties with no outlook, of little invitation to the pedestrian to linger. Similarly, the two small open spaces either side of Commercial Street, where the footpath between Ty Bryn and the car park cuts through, are ideally located, but again, suffer from neglect, a lack of pedestrian activity on Commercial Street and no interaction or active frontages from and with the enclosing properties. Particularly to the east of Commercial Street the small pocket park is slightly daunting.

KEY PRINCIPLES

IMPROVE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO SECTIONS OF THE MAIN TOWN SPINE

The pedestrian realm has a key role to play in reuniting the two arms of the town centre spine - Commercial Street and Castle Street, bridging the disconnect currently caused by the highway dominance.

CREATE A SEQUENCE AND HIERARCHY OF PUBLIC SPACES

The overall aim is to dramatically improve the invitation to the pedestrian and cyclist to populate, tarry and enjoy the experience of being within the public realm of the town centre. A sequence and hierarchy of public spaces would provide connectivity and legibility, from small courtyard spaces and pocket parks spilling out from cafes and retail, to play parks and green spaces. They should be sequences on the active travel routes.



Light installation for safety and interest

CREATE SAFE, ACTIVE SPACES

Public spaces need to feel and be safe places to stay. They should be overlooked by adjoining properties and streets and preferable adjacent to active frontages that provide a positive interaction with the space. Lighting is important to provide a sense of personal security, whilst retaining the welcome and attraction.

INCORPORATE BLUE/GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Well designed and engineered drainage and planting infrastructure can become a positive component of the public realm, with planted raingardens, swales and open channels enlivening the experience of the outdoor spaces and extending knowledge of natural systems.

COMMUNITY AND MEANWHILE SPACES

Community spaces provide valuable opportunities for new and existing residents and visitors to the town to meet and mingle. Development proposals on particularly the Gwent Shopping Centre and Coronation Street/Iron Row area will be expected to provide for the provision of open spaces for community use to encourage interaction and neighbourliness.

These spaces should be designed to incorporate and encourage play for all ages, as well as facilitate pop-up community events. They must be safe, overlooked and activated by surrounding land uses. Some of these spaces might be temporary in nature, awaiting the later phases of development.

Proposals must also incorporate sustainable urban drainage features as an integral design component. Community Spaces have the potential for allotments and community growing (for example community orchards).

THE PUBLIC REALM

THE STRATEGY

The strategy for the public realm open spaces is to work in conjunction with the streets, cycle and pedestrian routes to create a continuity within the public realm that allows and ease of movement around the town, with a variety of open spaces of differing scales, character and uses. Public spaces would be located where people would naturally seek to gather and in relationship with key buildings and functions within the town, namely:

- Gateways
- Intersections
- Open Spaces
- River Corridor



Pedestrianisation of Waltham Forest

CULTURE & HERITAGE

THE EXISTING CONTEXT

The area of the town centred on The Circle falls within the Tredegar Southern Town Centre Conservation Area. It is contiguous with the Bedwellty Park and Gardens Conservation Area to the south, and extends northward to include the Castle Street Church and properties opposite. The two Conservation Areas in Tredegar are the only such designated areas in Blaenau Gwent and indicate the richness of the historic evolution of the town and the importance of heritage to the offer and attraction of Tredegar.

The urban grain, the planned arrangement of streets and spaces of Tredegar, are as much a defining element of the town as are the buildings themselves. The central spine is still relatively complete, although there are a number of vacant buildings and buildings in disrepair. However, away from the central spine the enclosure of the streets is somewhat haphazard, with numerous gap sites diluting the strength of the built structure. The topography of the town lends some exciting views over the valley and the business park and down Castle Street from Castle Street Church to The Circle.

The UK Government report *People, Place, Culture* explores the relationship between people and their environment, highlighting the important role regeneration can play in nurturing and growing the level of cultural engagement communities have with their space. 'Cultural identity is strongly tied in with a person's sense of engagement, belonging, understanding and appreciation of their 'place' ... What is local and unique has a special value and should be supported and encouraged'.

This is, in simple terms, what placemaking is all about: 'capitalising on a community's unique assets, inspiration and potential with the intention of creating public spaces, places, events and activities that promote people's health, happiness and wellbeing.'

Telling the story of Tredegar is improving with numerous printed and online descriptions of the heritage assets of the town and its evolution, with Heritage Trails available to follow and OCR locations around the town.

The stories are important, as there is tremendous interest in the industrial heritage of the Valleys and the spreading of the technologies and products worldwide. There is also great interest and potential in the role of the town and Aneurin Bevan in the founding of the National Health Service, with health and pharmaceutical companies seeing a link with the location that could result in business tourism.

KEY PRINCIPLES

REVEAL AND INFORM

Take every opportunity to tell the story, through the retention and restoration of historic buildings and spaces and in their detail. But importantly, enable engaging interaction of heritage with the community, through repurposing buildings and information.

Digital placemaking can help transform regeneration projects into more than the sum of their parts: environments rich in historical meaning, but also in economic and social opportunity. So continue to develop digital placemaking experiences that truly engage the visitor and stakeholder communities.

RELATE TREDEGAR'S HISTORY TO THE CURRENT CONTEXT AND DRIVE THE ECONOMY

Heritage-focused placemaking schemes express and serve the needs of a wide range of stakeholder communities, by helping those communities forge a deeper connection to their shared past, and a greater sense of belonging in the present. Placemaking, therefore, creates social value, by building spaces where people want to live, work and play. This, in turn, creates economic value, by creating a need for local services and businesses. Placemaking and heritage are therefore key strategic assets we should bind together in our regeneration projects.

EMBRACE HERITAGE IN ALL ASPECTS OF DESIGN

Tredegar needs to move forward, exhibiting the best of contemporary design in its public spaces and buildings. However, these should be respectful of the scale, textures and detail of its heritage - rooted, but not stuck in the past.

THE STRATEGY

INFORMING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The proposal to wrap the heritage of the town into the Placemaking Plan is based on the layering of the various heritage components, which collectively form the distinctive identity and spirit of the town. These components can be broadly categorised as:

- Heritage buildings
- The urban form
- The topography
- Details and materiality

HERITAGE BUILDINGS

There are a variety of listed heritage structures and buildings within the town, mainly emerging from the industrial heritage of the 19th century, with many associated with Bedwelty Park and Gardens. The buildings and structures are of varying heritage significance, but collectively add to the character and distinctiveness of the town and are a strong, visible reminder of the past, whilst assisting in telling the story going forward.

The Clock Tower in the centre of The Circle, for example, is the iconic landmark of the town and a ready and distinct symbol.

Listed Buildings:

01. Bedwelty House
02. Ice House to NW of Bedwelty House
03. Great Exhibition Lump of Coal at Bedwelty Park
04. Bandstand at Bedwelty Park
05. War Memorial at Bedwelty Park
06. Former Tredegar Company Shop
07. Saron Congregational Chapel, including attached schoolroom
08. Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, including schoolroom
09. N.C.B. Club
10. The Town Clock
11. Christina Louise Nursing Home
12. St George's Church

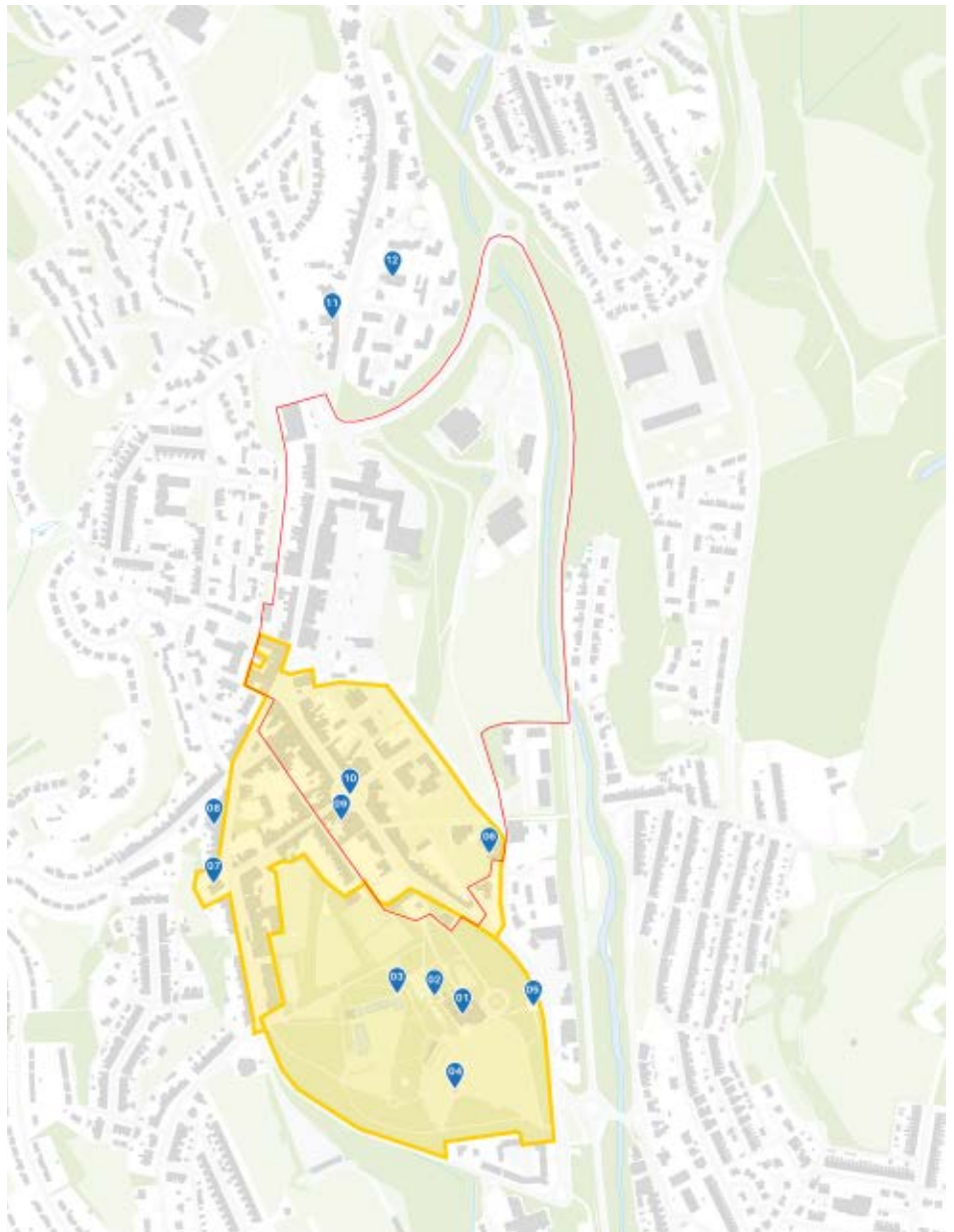


FIG. 19 CONSERVATION AREAS AND LISTED BUILDINGS

THE URBAN FORM

The historic, planned urban form would be preserved and repaired, with particular attention strengthening the west/east town axis between Saron Chapel, along Market Street, through The Circle and along Iron Street to the business park. Linked to this, the built structure evident in the 1888-1913 OS plan around the eastern side of the town bounded by Iron Row would also be renewed. Interestingly, this area, although now totally devoid of heritage buildings or historic urban quality is still within the Conservation Area.

Also evident from the Victorian plan is the public space around Castle Street Church, which should be rediscovered and freed from the constraints of the highway and the car, and the importance of the pedestrian route between Georgetown and the town centre running along Bridge Street. The framed views of the listed Olympia cinema (now a Wetherspoon) terminate the view within the town centre and turn the viewer towards the Clock Tower.



THE TOPOGRAPHY

The town was structured around the works area, which in turn, was dictated by the topography of the River Sirhowy valley. In following the existing grain, new development should maximise the potential for views over the valley and the interest that can be achieved within the townscape through carefully articulating changes in level, to move the point of interest and perspective of the observer as they navigate the town.



DETAILS AND MATERIALITY

Not only is there great joy to be had from quality materials and carefully crafted detailing within the public realm, their use can also reinforce local distinctiveness and help to keep local suppliers and crafts alive. The underlying materiality of Tredegar strongly reflects its solid and robust industrial heritage, however, this solidity was often offset and overlaid by a simplicity and lightness of detailing within street furnishing, for example. To a certain extent this contrast and clarity has been lost, with the accretion of 20th century highway infrastructure and signage, and an exercise needs to be undertaken to strip away all superfluous elements and rationalise street signage and furniture.

New street furniture should be kept to a minimum, contemporary, simple, elegant, yet appropriate to context. The last refresh of the urban realm made use of robust, quality natural paving materials, but this would benefit from a visual lift through incorporating detail into drainage channels and changes in paving unit size and textures, and contrasting the weight and mass of the paving and kerbs with a considered use of modern street furniture components. The existing faux historic furnishings result in a heavy, sombre, cluttered appearance.



DRIVING THE VISITOR ECONOMY

Heritage, and building on the tremendous legacy of the historic assets of the town is not only crucial in fostering the sense of identity and pride within the community, but has rightly been identified as a key driver of the visitor economy. The Destination Management and Tourism Plan identifies a number of themes for development as an attractor for the visitor economy:

INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

Every aspect of Tredegar in its current form, from its physicality to its social structures and community has been founded, influenced or touched by its industrial heritage. This is important not just for the Valleys, but the influence of Welsh industry and production is global and the story is of interest internationally.

NHS AND HEALTHCARE

The role of the town and the influence of the health care facilities provided to the ironworks families on Aneurin Bevan and the formation of the National Health Service are well-known and of tremendous interest to visitors as well as a source of pride and inspiration for local communities. There is also an attraction to pharmaceutical and medical companies proud of their association with the NHS or provision of health-related products or services in creating a link with Tredegar. Stories resonate and even a recently borrowed or acquired history has value and can help foster a shared culture.

The opportunity exists, therefore, not just to attract potential investors in these medical fields, but to take advantage of the other qualities and facilities of the town and the region to establish a business tourism market based on health, well-being and the medical industry.



BEDWELLY HOUSE

Central to both the above strategies, Bedwellty House is not only a fantastic facility and location to contribute to developing and serving the themes, it is redolent with a history of both the industrial heritage and the formation of the NHS, being originally the Ironmaster House and then the council chambers where Aneurin Bevan cut his political teeth.



NATURE AND WELL-BEING

Tredegar sits immediately south of the Brecon Beacons National Park with great access to nature and the myriad opportunities for walking and cycling. The extension and expansion of the active travel routes around the Heads of the Valley region, connecting into the national park, will improve this access network. Similarly, the development of the Metro system will enhance public transport connections around the region, which is a key consideration in planning routes for walking and cycling from a fixed base. Cycle hire and repair facilities developed as part of the regeneration of the Gwent Shopping Centre and linked to a new bus hub, would further reinforce the attraction of Tredegar as a base for outdoor activity and cycling and walking in particular.



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