



Brynmawr Placemaking Plan

Stage 2 Report

Jan 2023

ARUP

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Prepared by Arup on behalf of
Blaenau Gwent County Borough
Council

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WAR MEMORIAL
1914 - 1918

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE NAMES OF THE MEN WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR
1914 - 1918

ALFRED J. BROWN
ARTHUR J. BROWN
BENJAMIN J. BROWN
CHARLES J. BROWN
EDWARD J. BROWN
FRANK J. BROWN
GEORGE J. BROWN
HENRY J. BROWN
JAMES J. BROWN
JOHN J. BROWN
LEWIS J. BROWN
MORRIS J. BROWN
NATHAN J. BROWN
OLIVER J. BROWN
PETER J. BROWN
RICHARD J. BROWN
SAMUEL J. BROWN
THOMAS J. BROWN
WALTER J. BROWN
WILLIAM J. BROWN

OUR GLORIOUS DEAD
WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR
1914 - 1918

1914 - 1918

MARKET HALL
SINEMA NEUADD Y F

1894

1. Brynmawr Town Centre

Introduction

In October 2021 Arup was commissioned by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to produce a strategic Placemaking Plan that will provide a basis for future, strategic decision making in Brynmawr town centre and act as an evidence base to support Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Officers with future regeneration funding applications.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The Placemaking Plan aims to direct change and investment in Brynmawr town centre over the next five year. It is intended for use by Blaenau Gwent CBC as a 'roadmap' for future regeneration in the town centre, with a view to inspiring renewed economic growth and vitality in the town centre. The plan highlights opportunities to diversify the town centre in order to support existing business and facilities and to create the conditions to attract new enterprise. These opportunities have been considered in the context of available funding and delivery streams, and the particular economic conditions of Brynmawr.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY:

THE CHALLENGE

Brynmawr faces similar challenges to many of Wales and the UK's towns and cities. The rapid onset of digital retail, remote working and services in the wake of Covid-19 is transforming the way urban centres operate. From a position of having to use our centres to access services such as banks and retail we now need to want

to visit these places. This profound shift has led to a reduced need and lack of viability for physical retail and commercial spaces in town centres. In Brynmawr, this is coupled with the growth of the Lakeside Retail Park (to the south of the town centre), which has further drawn visitors away from the centre, and created a new retail destination. Lower than average spending power in Brynmawr and competing centres such as Merthyr Tydfil and further afield Cardiff have amplified the issue.

As a result of these changes the vitality of the town centre is likely to become more fragile and precarious without intervention. Yet a vibrant town centre remains essential to our sense of local pride, identity and as the basis of sustainable communities. To achieve this, Brynmawr will need to adapt, experiment and evolve, to capitalise on existing characteristics and opportunities for the town centre.

APPROACH: INNOVATION

Over recent decades public investment has typically been the subject of 'fixed-state' masterplans where the ultimate end goal is rarely realised due to the inherent complexity of aligning funding, local politics, delivery and long term stewardship.

The principle behind this plan is to drive sustainable change through local innovation; testing and trailing ideas in accordance with clear objectives. This incremental and more fluid approach embraces rapid experimentation to demonstrate to the public what change can look like and to test ideas in real time without committing to potentially high cost and high-risk interventions



2. Usk High Street

In doing so valuable lessons will be learned which will drive further innovation and reshape our thinking. It allows budding enterprises a lower risk pathway to growth by creating low-cost shared environments to operate from.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

In Brynmawr, the private sector does not operate with the same level of activity or deploy the same level of investment compared to areas of higher disposable incomes or higher visitor numbers. Basing this plan solely on the premise of private investment could be a risk.

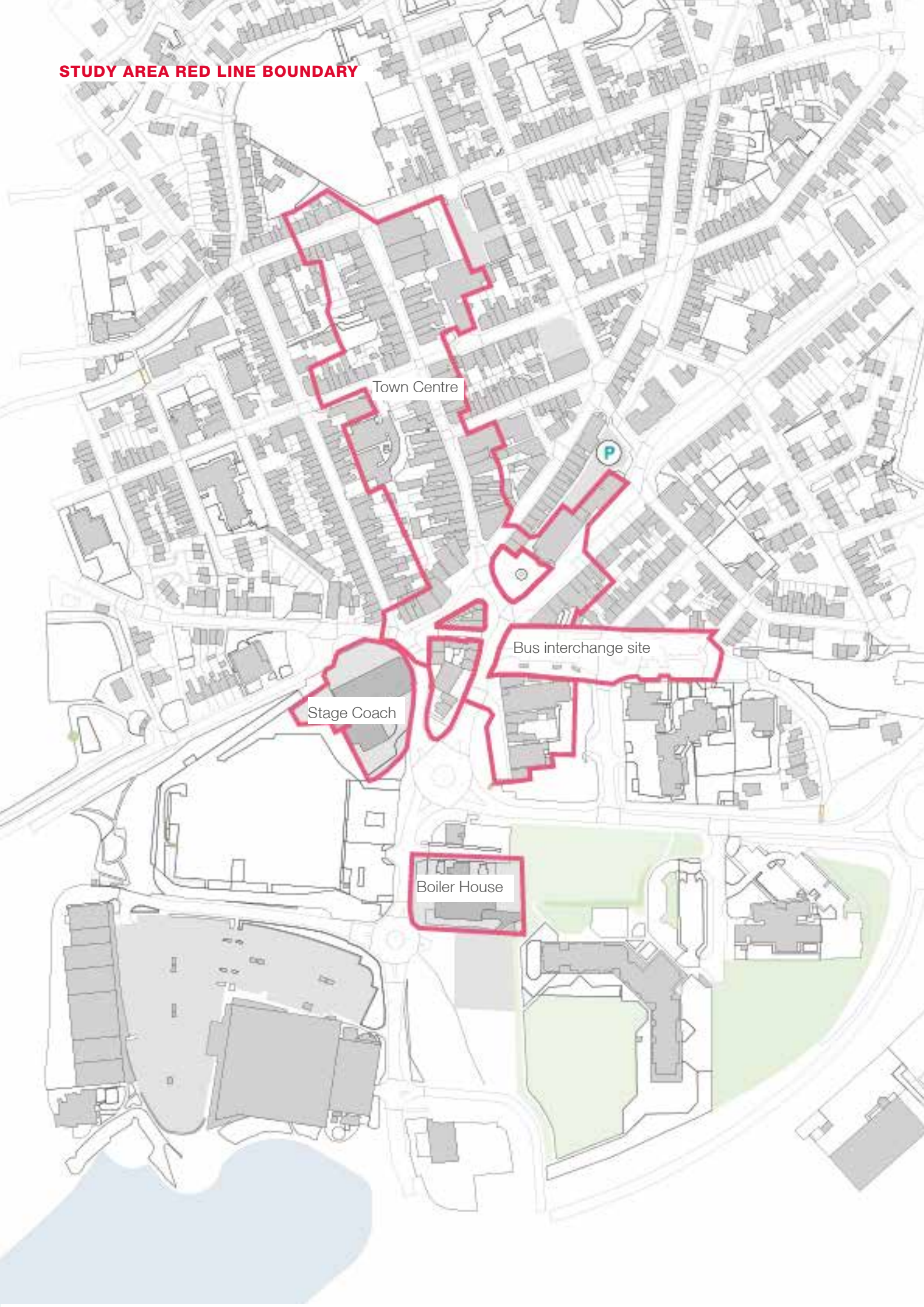
However, the onus does not need to be solely on public funding. There is a strong sense of community and local ambition for change in Brynmawr. Making a plan work for Brynmawr means working with the community to give a platform to local 'place' champions and to secure broad buy-in.

From the height of industrialisation where the 'penny in the pound' approach created the first schools, hospitals and libraries in the valleys to the Brynmawr furniture makers of the early C20th, social enterprise is part of the fabric of society in the valleys. Moving forward social enterprise can again be the driving force to reshape Brynmawr and deliver wider societal, economic and environmental benefits.

WHOLE TOWN APPROACH

The focus of this study is identified on the plan overleaf. In order to fully realise the potential of this area, a broader perspective has been applied which looks beyond these immediate confines. This is to ensure that opportunities to link change in the central area of Brynmawr with the wider area are understood. The second key aspect of this approach is the application of integrated place-making. This means exploring opportunities not through one particular lens such as transport but through multiple lenses including ecology, placemaking and sustainable transport and health to deliver multiple benefits from each intervention.

STUDY AREA RED LINE BOUNDARY



Town Centre

P

Bus interchange site

Stage Coach

Boiler House

1.1 Executive summary

Communities today are facing unprecedented challenges. Climate change, recovering from a global pandemic, the exponential growth of digital technologies, the rise in the cost of living, and national political uncertainty all pose challenges to our people and places. There is a need to consider new ways of thinking to adapt to these challenges, and ensure the health and resilience of our towns and cities.

Brynmawr faces its own challenges. The decline of the high street and decreasing footfall over the years has been detrimental to the local independent businesses, and has subsequently affected the vitality of the town centre. This has in turn had an effect on the wider community. The emergence of a new retail park on the edge of town and the gradual shift to online shopping, particularly in a post-pandemic world, are further factors in this decline. The town faces a fundamental decision – what is the future of local businesses and what type of town will Brynmawr be?

Despite these challenges, Brynmawr benefits from significant advantages. These include its historic character, beautiful natural surroundings, access to a wider landscape, accessibility via new road infrastructure and, most importantly, an engaged local community. These are all ingredients that will help Brynmawr confront the challenges it faces. In addition, major assets such as The Boiler House and a rich history in social enterprise could play an invaluable role in the regeneration of the town.

The over arching vision is for Brynmawr to be a 15-minute neighbourhood, where everything you need is within a 15-minute walk of your home. This model for a self-sufficient, sustainable town centre offers improved access to nature, employment, housing diversity, amenity and services, while reducing car

dependency, supporting active travel and strengthening sense of community and place. Brynmawr already has the basic building blocks for this approach, and could provide a benchmark for other towns of a similar scale and character. These basic principles can transform Brynmawr into a vibrant, resilient town making it a benchmark for other towns of similar scale and character.

This over arching vision is supported by six themes which act as a guide for future development and change in Brynmawr, supporting its transformation into a 21st Century Valleys Market Town:

- **Community:** creating a shared ethos of enterprise and fostering a strong and inclusive community. Brynmawr's engaged and passionate community is one of its greatest strengths. This is coupled with its historic links to social enterprise and community ventures, such as the Market Hall Cinema. This theme would support the diversification of the town centre, while also supporting wellbeing of the community.
- **Circularity:** directing sustainable growth and meaningful change. Adaptive re-use of existing buildings such as the Boiler House and the Stagecoach building are major opportunities, as well as more strategic ambitions around a low-carbon economy, local business and reducing waste.
- **Connectivity:** improving active transport and links across the town centre. Improved pedestrian and cycle movements within the town will be important for connecting the community and local businesses. It can also provide benefits to health and well-being, air quality and the natural environment. Digital connectivity also benefits local trade by creating opportunities for advertising and reaching out to a wider audience.

- **Economy:** uplifting local business and the foundational economy. This could be through opportunities for training, upskilling and collaboration particularly within the foundational economy, with support for start-ups and social enterprise. Flexible public spaces can also be beneficial, supporting Brynmawr's existing markets and events.
- **Health and wellbeing:** supporting a healthy and happy community in Brynmawr. Placemaking plays a crucial role in people's lifestyle choices and activity. Brynmawr, like many other places in Wales, suffers from illness related to inactive lifestyles and poor dietary habits. Re-shaping the physical environment by promoting active travel and taking advantage of Brynmawr's access to wider landscapes including the Brecon Beacons will have positive impacts on the future health and well-being of the community.
- **Creating a destination:** Diversifying what Brynmawr has to offer to attract visitors. Varying Brynmawr's offer in terms of uses activities and calendar of events will create an enhanced sense of place for the community and raise the town centre profile. This, in turn, will attract a broader range of people and larger scale investments in the future.

The Placemaking Plan has identified a number of possible projects which could act as catalysts for regeneration and help realise this vision for Brynmawr. In the report, different levels of intervention are explored to demonstrate their potential in the short to medium to long time periods.

The Boiler House is one of Brynmawr's major assets with its industrial heritage as part of the Dunlop Rubbery factory. The Grade II listed

building has the potential to be refurbished into a new community space focusing on food based social enterprise. This type of project can create meaningful employment, education and social activity. Located on the edge of the town centre, its iconic structure and exciting new programmes could be a major draw into the town centre.

Beaufort Street, considered the main high street, will be an important part of the town centre revitalisation. Physical interventions such as general building façade improvements, wayfinding, lighting, planting and sustainable urban drainage will help lift the high street environment. These could be supported by non-physical interventions such as business collaboration and a website.

The Market Square is at the heart of the town centre and has significant ties to Brynmawr's heritage and culture. There is a real opportunity to celebrate this space as a public place of gathering especially for community events, street markets and festivals throughout the year.

The bus station in its current form is oversized for its purpose and lacks character. It requires definition which can be created with the help of tree planting, SuDS, improved lighting, street furniture and shelter.

The stagecoach building is an opportunity for renovation. Whether the building is reused or not, there are some key opportunities on this strategic site which revolve around recreation, and support for employment and upskilling.

Ideas for a new park have also been explored with two possible locations – enhancing the existing Welfare Park or creating a new park at the heart of the town centre. In either option, the aim is to bring the landscape into town, providing a diverse range of indoor and outdoor community spaces.



A woman with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a bright green long-sleeved sweater and a leopard print skirt, is looking at a display of purple flowers in a shop. The shop has wooden shelves, colorful hanging ribbons, and warm lighting. The text "2. Sustainability" is overlaid in white on the image.

2. Sustainability

2.1 Sustainable growth

A TRANSITION IN THINKING AND THE PURSUIT OF DE-CARBONIZATION

In 2019 the Welsh Government declared a 'climate emergency' recognising the need for urgent action to combat the effects of global climate change. The target for Wales as a country to transition to net zero by 2050 requires pragmatic thinking around transitioning to de-carbonization.

Fundamentally, the impacts of climate change and the pursuit of net-zero will change the way in which we live, move around and require new ways in which to respond to waste management energy production and food supply chains.

At a global and national level, the guidance, policy, and legislation to direct decisions makes clear the need for sustainability in its broadest sense.

THE DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is not just for the pursuit of environmental 'green' policy but, it needs to be addressed in terms of long term economic sustainability whilst also maintaining and strengthening the social and cultural value of an area. This includes building upon Brynmawr residents strong pride in their community and the cultural impact of Brynmawr being one of the Valleys' only true market towns.

The Placemaking plan in Brynmawr provides an opportunity to respond at a town level, to global challenges through meaningful change within a rural community.

- Responding to a global issue on a local level to create local resilience associated with a changing climate (local flood issues, warmer summers, wetter winters, more extreme weather events)
- Impacts of climate change on economics (access to goods and services including availability of good and fluctuating prices associated with long distant supply chain)
- Issue of localised habitat loss, urban heat impacts and mitigation of these

SUCCESS THROUGH INNOVATION

Through innovative development and design guidance which carefully considers the impacts of climate change on social, economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions, Brynmawr can demonstrate how to begin to address the challenges we face.

This approach forms the basis for the strategies and recommendations included within this Masterplan document. This document assists Brynmawr in securing its long term sustainability through guidance and interventions that are specific to the unique challenges and opportunities contained within the town.

In a broad sense the project opens up the opportunity for a countering the issues of climate change through innovative solutions which work towards the same goals. Implementation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and a achieving an increase in net habitat and urban tree canopy along with adaptive re-use of buildings create the opportunity for Brynmawr to produce a truly innovative approach not yet seen within the area.

Innovation within the community is a key theme through Brynmawr's history and continuing this

tradition by upskilling the existing population, the creation of quality jobs and better utilisation of local supply chains, whilst supporting local businesses in more efficient business practices such as a reduction of single use plastics. All of these processes feed into the broad theory of the Circular Economy.

Strengthening the physical and economic resilience of Brynmawr will aid in securing long term sustainability for the area. It is key these links between the physical and economic elements of Brynmawr are to be strengthened which will improve the community's connection to the town centre.



GLOBAL

In response to the Paris Accord on Climate Change, The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals provide a blueprint at the highest level to direct decision-making towards environmental, political, social and economic sustainability.

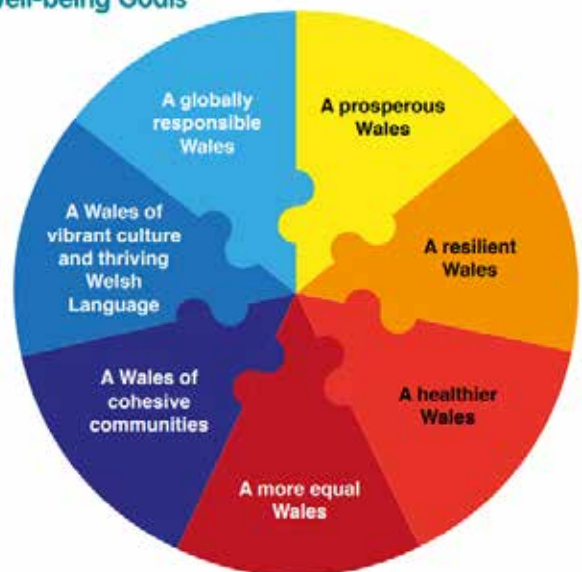
For Brynmawr, nine of the goals have been identified by Arup as being particularly relevant in steering the project.



NATIONAL

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 offers a radically different way of approaching development and change. The Act enshrines in law the need to consider the impact of our decisions on future generations. Central to the act are the seven goals and of equal importance, the five ways of working which set out the means for public bodies to achieve the goals. This is a unique piece of legislation that provides us with an unprecedented means of working differently toward a common goal.

Well-being Goals



Five Ways of working

- Long-term - Balancing short and long-term needs.
- Integration - Considering impacts on all goals.
- Involvement - Ensuring representative diversity
- Collaboration - Working together.
- Prevention - Preventing problems occurring or worsening.



Planning Policy Wales 10 identifies National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes that should be used to inform the preparation of development plans and the assessment of proposals.

The five outcomes are:

- Creating and Sustaining Communities;
- Making Best Use of Resources;
- Maximising Environmental Protection and Limiting Environmental Impact;
- Growing Our Economy in a Sustainable Manner;
- Facilitating Accessible and Healthy Environments.

This considers how sites should be designed and delivered, through their full life cycle, including a wide range of socio-economic and infrastructure considerations beyond the site boundary.

‘Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales 2019’ sets out Wales’ commitment to tackling climate change; cutting emissions while moving towards a low carbon economy. The plan includes Sector Emissions Pathways, including strategies across buildings, transport and energy.



1854

MARKET HALL C
CINEMA NEHADDY FA

al Fish Bar

MARKET HALL CINEMA





3. Understanding Brynmawr

3.1 Learning from the past

A TRADITION OF COMMUNITY PRIDE

Establishing an understanding of Brynmawr's history and heritage is a key factor in shaping a new and prosperous future. The people of Brynmawr are proud of their town's heritage and identity.

It was one of many communities that was shaped by the industrial boom in the nineteenth century. It has strong connections to traditional industries with a history of mining, ironworks, and manufacturing.

The population grew rapidly in the early nineteenth century due to the requirement for an increase in housing caused by Nantyglo ironworks. As these natural resources began to be exhausted the population of the town began to decline.

A HISTORY OF INNOVATION

One of Brynmawr's notable stories is its history in social enterprise. To alleviate the issues of unemployment and poverty caused by the Depression in the 1920's, a group of Quakers attempted to help the local community by providing work and practical help.

Aided by volunteers from the community, the idea of crafts and industries was established, providing work and food for the unemployed, improving the local environment and helping establish social and cultural clubs for all ages.

The most successful social venture was the furniture workshops. Brynmawr Furniture

Makers employed youths and school leavers and provided them with training in furniture making skills. The business flourished and established a name for itself across England and Wales.

A key historical feature of the site is the Boiler House building, which is Grade II listed building and the last remaining remnant of the former Dunlop Semtex Factory which was engineered by Ove Arup prior to his rise to international prominence for his innovative work on the Sydney Opera House.

THE SOUTH WALES VALLEYS TRUE MARKET TOWN

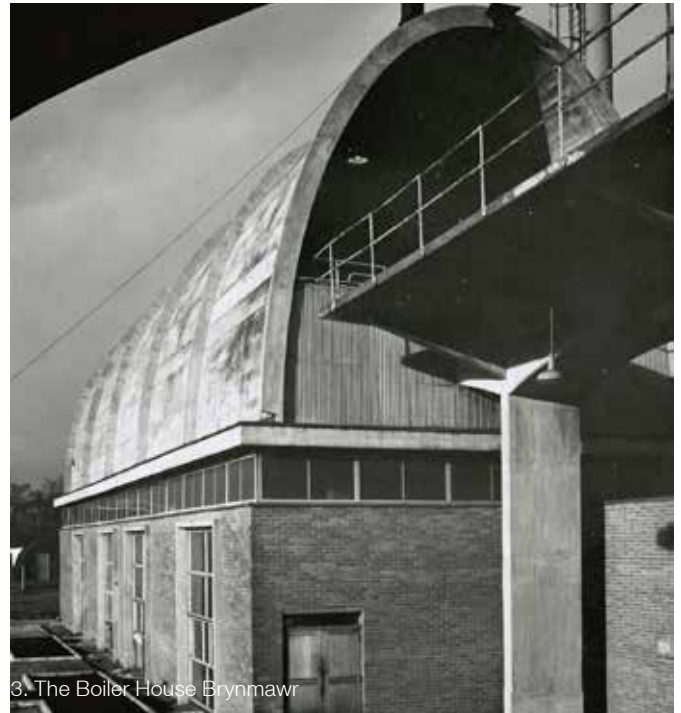
In the past Brynmawr was a market town that held regular markets and festivals around the Market Square and what used to be the Market Hall.

The Market Hall since converted into a cinema and theatre, is an important community anchor in the town. Although markets and events still take place in the town centre, it lacks the spirit it once possessed. Amongst the people of Brynmawr there is a strong positive feeling towards bringing this tradition back to life.

There is a key opportunity for Brynmawr to retain key elements of its former character and realise its potential as a 21st century Valleys market town. This proud town can move towards the next stage in its history whilst maintaining its connection to its past.

“It needs connectivity so old and new are stitched together - it needs a natural flow”

- Comments by BGCBC noted during SWOT session on Feb 3rd 2022



3. The Boiler House Brynmawr



4. The Old Furniture Factory, Brynmawr

3.2 Placemaking Overview

ECOSYSTEM OF TOWNS IN BLAENAU GWENT

At a strategic level, the town centres themselves have an important role to play in ensuring Blaenau Gwent is an attractive place to live, work, do business and invest in within a wider strategy for the area as a whole.

The Blaenau Gwent Town Centres Strategy Report was created by Nash Partnership in 2018 to set out the strategy for the 5 centres of Blaenau Gwent. The report had a number of outcomes and objectives. The report along with our own study and observations form and shape Brynmawr for the future in the context of the 5 towns eco-system. Along with the 5 towns of the “eco-system” Brynmawr should also be considered in the context of larger settlements slightly further afield. These being Abergavenny to the east and Merthyr Tydfil to the west.

The focus on the development of Brynmawr should view it within the context of the 5 towns. The challenge for Brynmawr isn't to compete with the other towns in the area but instead to find its place and grow with the other towns. There is the opportunity for Brynmawr to complement the other towns, rather than compete against them.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

There has been significant stakeholder engagement by both Nash Partnership in the creation of their report and also by Arup. The key themes from stakeholders were consistent in both cases. There is a clear community feeling that there needs to be an increase in support for community facilities.

BEAUFORT STREET

Feedback from engagement pointed to dissatisfaction amongst the community with the uses and quality of the high street with many feeling there were too many hot food takeaway and that metal roller shutters had a significantly detrimental impact upon the streetscape. Improving the quality of built environment to attract better land uses would improve the general sentiment toward the High Street.

TOWN CONTEXT

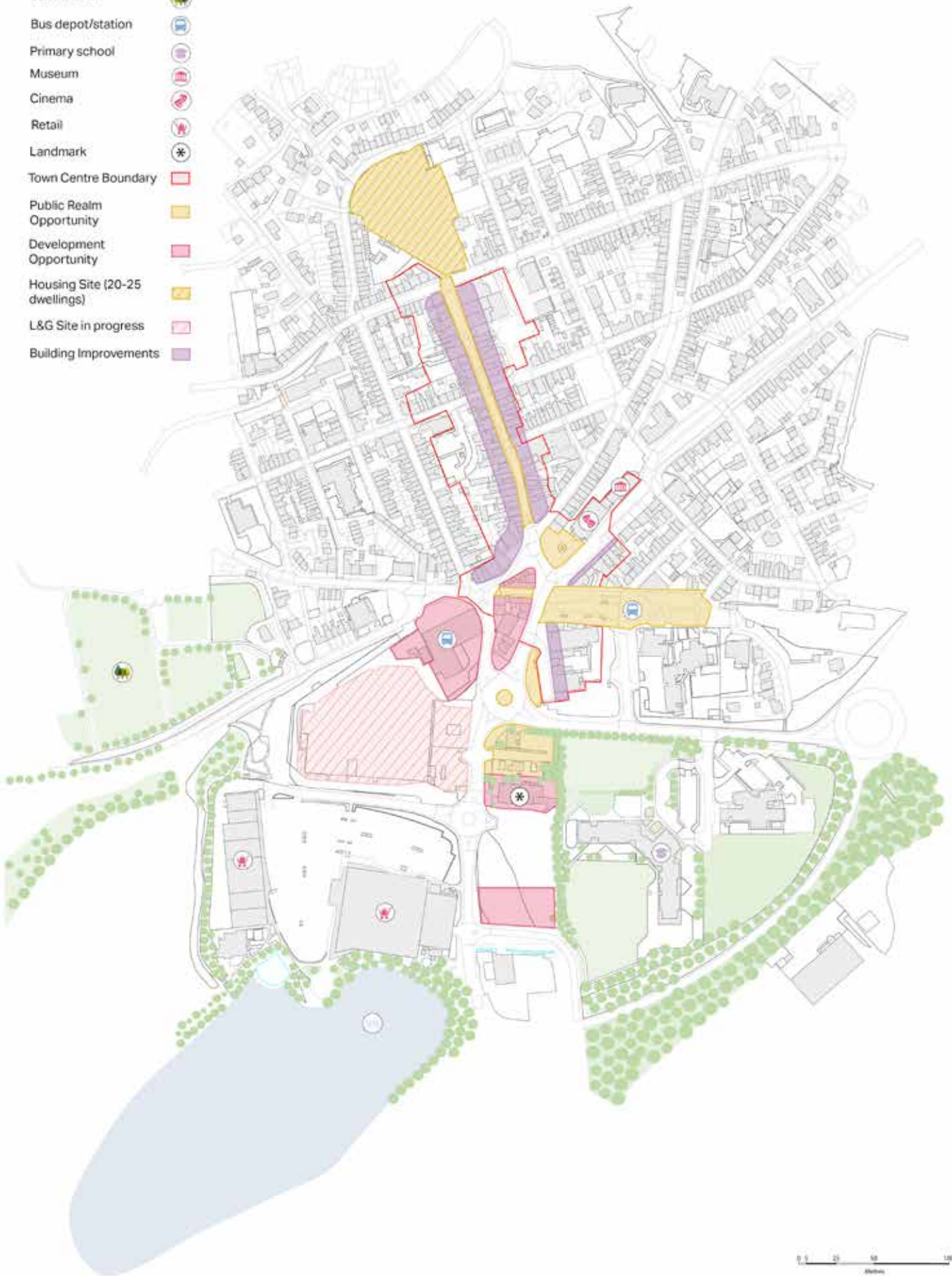
Currently the town is disconnected with little sense of continuity between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’. The former includes the retail along Beaufort Street, Market Square and the latter consisting of the retail park to the south. The complex layout of roads which intersect in the centre of the town create severance and impinge on the potential to redevelop the area into a coherent ‘place’. Despite these challenges a number of attributes exist from a centrally located bus interchange, local schools, health facilities and a the Grade II Listed Boiler House.

LOCATION OF INTERVENTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES



Key

- Water reservoir 
- Public Park 
- Bus depot/station 
- Primary school 
- Museum 
- Cinema 
- Retail 
- Landmark 
- Town Centre Boundary 
- Public Realm Opportunity 
- Development Opportunity 
- Housing Site (20-25 dwellings) 
- L&G Site in progress 
- Building Improvements 



3.3 Socio economic baseline

Due to low-income levels the potential for spending within the town centre is constrained. However, with the right type of interventions and development, its vitality and wellbeing across social, economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions can be greatly improved.

The fact that local communities experience social and economic disadvantage with lower levels of pay should not be a reason to write off opportunities for future regeneration and change. Regardless of economic and social background, all members of the community seek leisure, entertainment, engagement, and a sense of belonging in the place they live. Therefore, tailoring proposals for change to this demography is key to achieving a positive outcome.

The Gross Value Added (GVA) for Blaenau Gwent has been increasing over the past 10 years with manufacturing constituting the largest proportion of GVA, followed by real estate activities. Yet the underlying economic performance lags behind large areas of Wales and the UK.

In the following chapters, ideas that address key gaps in the market are explored in addition to opportunities that could encourage footfall to support existing businesses in Brynmawr. It is also acknowledged that broad societal trends such as online shopping and large retail parks challenge the vitality of town centres, particularly in a post-covid era. The key to overcoming these challenges is to offer what is missing, an interactive, dynamic new market town with a sense of community and place.

£23,300

Mean average equivalised disposable annual household income, Brynmawr

Before housing costs. Income estimates for small areas, England and Wales: financial year ending 2018, ONS

13%

Blaenau Gwent areas in Most deprived 10% of Welsh LSOAs

Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, StatsWales

5,530

Population of Brynmawr

2011 Census, ONS

15%

of the population of Brynmawr were employed in personal services in 2011. This was followed by 14% in elementary occupations and 13% skilled trades



3.4 Transport baseline

Main access to Brynmawr is via the road network. The new Heads of the Valleys Road (A465) running east to west towards the northern edge of town has created connections to wider areas. The A467 from the south and the A4047 running east to west are linked to the Heads of the Valleys Road and are gateways to the town centre. However, the town is dominated by vehicular movement which is detrimental to the success and wellbeing of the town centre. There is an opportunity to fully capitalise on the A465 connection and divert through-traffic away from the town centre.

The old town centre and the new Lakeside Retail Park are disconnected by roads physically and experientially. It also provides an expanse of free parking, which is contrasted by the relative lack of parking in the central town area. It is not just a pedestrian route that is required, but an environment that creates a high quality pedestrian experience.

The town does benefit from a bus service connecting the town to Cwmbran, Forgeside, Merthyr Tydfil, Ebbw Vale, Newport and Abergavenny. However, feedback from engagement suggest they tend to be infrequent and inaccessible. The closest train station is 4 miles away in Ebbw Vale.

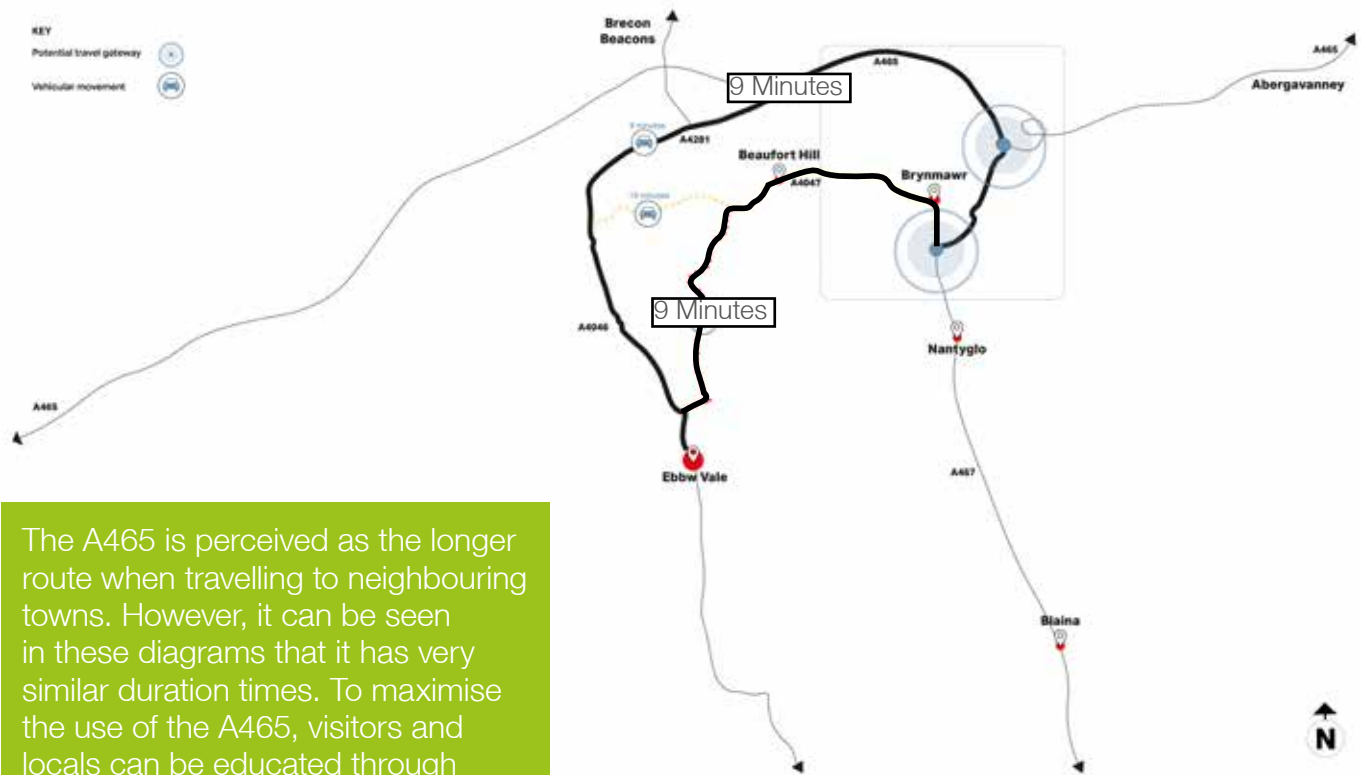
Our approach works in conjunction with the WelTag Stage 1 assessment completed by Arup in 2021 as well as the newly appointed WelTag Stage 2 assessment. The key interventions in the WelTag Stage 1 report are grouped into four areas. These are:

- Active travel interventions designed to improve the quality of walking and cycling
- Public transport interventions that focus on buses and the existing Brynmawr bus station
- Highways interventions that seek to change the layout of roads and car parks and
- Meanwhile uses that seek to make the best use of vacant or poor-quality development sites.

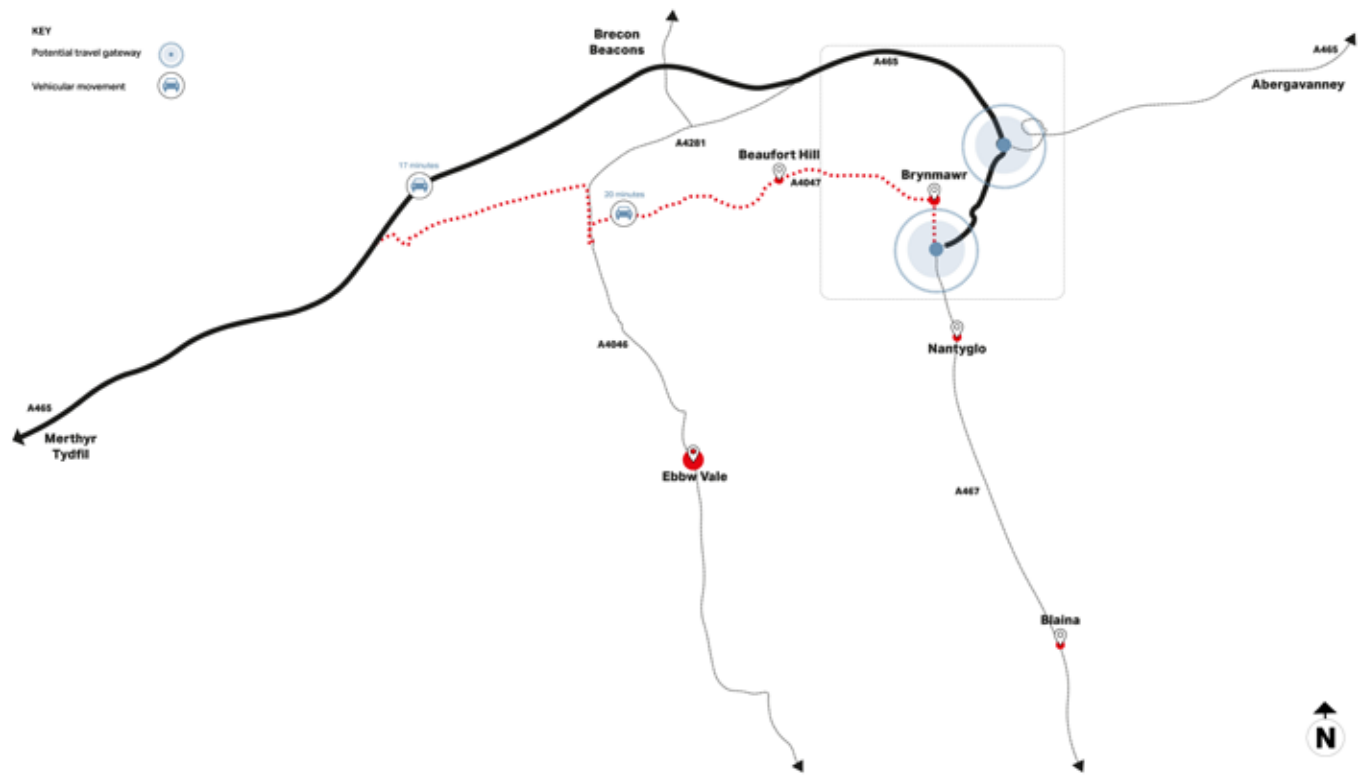
There are several ways to reduce traffic pressures within the town centre area. Some ideas include 20mph speed limits, pedestrian priority spaces, surface material changes, planting, and physical public realm features. Another bold, yet successful, method is bringing the town centre to life by planning temporary road closures for events throughout the year.

WelTag Stage 2 will work alongside this placemaking plan and both projects will be integrated with each other.





The A465 is perceived as the longer route when travelling to neighbouring towns. However, it can be seen in these diagrams that it has very similar duration times. To maximise the use of the A465, visitors and locals can be educated through potential travel gateways that consist of more prominent signage and wayfinding at key entry/exits into town.



3.5 Town centre Health check

The town centre health check is a study of the existing physical, social, and economic conditions and historic trends of Brynmawr town centre. It draws on both published data and findings from site visits and analysis including knowledge from the previous Brynmawr masterplan and WelTAG study.

The key findings and opportunities from the baseline study are detailed below.

BASELINE SUMMARY

- The current Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan has identified sustainable growth and regeneration opportunities in Brynmawr, including sustainable economic growth, quality housing and complimentary roles around tourism and mixed-use development.
- The key interventions from the WelTag Stage 1 study (2021-2022) were to divert traffic away from town centre, reinforce active travel, enhance public transport, focusing on buses, and explore potential for meanwhile uses.
- The town centre and new Lakeside Retail Park are disconnected by roads physically and experientially. Businesses in the town centre face strong competition for footfall and trade from the new retail park. At present Lakeside Retail Park is a self-contained attraction with weak pedestrian links and little customer spill over to the town centre. It is a major draw to Brynmawr, but the challenge is to attract some of these customers into the town centre.
- There has been a sustained decrease in footfall in the town centre which presents a real challenge. There must therefore be a focus on projects and measures that will attract people into the centre.
- The Gross Value Added (GVA) for Blaenau Gwent has been increasing over the past 10 years with manufacturing constituting the largest proportion of GVA, followed by real estate activities. Yet the underlying economic performance lags behind large areas of Wales and the UK.
- Despite being surrounded by beautiful landscapes such as The Brecon Beacons and The Valleys, the relationship is peripheral, and the town centre lacks green spaces.
- The vacancy rate in the retail sub-market in Blaenau Gwent is low, compared to Cardiff and other towns in Blaenau Gwent. However, the drop off in business rates is a trigger for action to help town prosperity.
- The Market Hall Cinema, being one of the oldest in the UK, and the market square are some of Brynmawr's attractive features and play a significant role in its future.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Reducing car dominance and supporting active travel and public transport, principally by maximising new access to the A465.
- Adopting a 'one town' approach which links the old and new
- Bringing the landscape into the town and the town to the landscape. It is important to explore opportunities such as access to nature, tourism and ways in which both The Brecon Beacons and The Valleys are experienced.
- The town requires a real focus on initiatives to strengthen a culture in which the town centres are seen as the focal points for their communities and to develop those aspects in which the town centres are able to have

a competitive edge over out of town stores and on-line retailing and services. A principal advantage of the town centres is the sense of identity and pride they can offer in a shared ‘community space’.

- Attracting people of all ages throughout the week and evenings and expand the Brynmawr events calendar.
- Support and celebrate the independents as a differentiator.
- Create destinations such as The Boiler House or a destination park.
- Build on Brynmawr’s rich history of social enterprise.
- Take a health-led approach in determining the nature and location of change.
- Unlock land for new uses, such as the NMC Factory and Bus Depot.
- ‘Cross-sell’ Brynmawr with BGCBC’s and other towns as an ‘ecosystem of towns’ rather than in isolation.
- Bring people on the journey through engagement and ambition.



3.6 Engagement Summary

Engagement was undertaken through one-to-one phone discussions with Brynmawr businesses, and virtual workshops with a range of stakeholders and community groups. This dialogue produced a great deal of local knowledge, suggestions for action and offers of help.

At the inception of the project a workshop was held with BGCBC councilors. The virtual workshop was held using an online whiteboard tool (Miro) where stakeholders were presented with an overview of the baseline data and the opportunity.

Through a swot exercise, stakeholder feedback from each session identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of

Brynmawr which helped create a summary of key themes and ideas to take forward as design principles. A summary of the common points that have emerged during the stakeholder engagement sessions is illustrated below. Overall, the stakeholders were able to ascertain the scale of opportunity and vision for Brynmawr with key themes evolving around connectivity and community. There was a clear consensus around the idea of rediscovering what Brynmawr has to offer and building on its rich history through a curation of events and destinations.

What is important and works well?

- There was a strong consensus around the sense of community where the locals are considered to be extremely loyal and actively engaged
- Brynmawr has a rich history as a market town and features the oldest cinema in Wales
- Brynmawr is part of an ecosystem of towns where it is strategically placed in the wider network with new road infrastructure and easy access to nature (Parc Nant Y Wan/ Brecon Beacons)
- The vast number of independent businesses and the variety Brynmawr town centre has to offer along the high street result in low vacancy rates

Comments by BGCBC noted during SWOT session 3rd February 2022

“Loyalty”

“Togetherness”

“Houses don’t have gardens” - What did people do in lockdown?

“Market is not used enough”

“You are able to take your time in Brynmawr”

Issues & concerns

- There is a lack of public transport with no rail connection and poor bus connections
- Heavy traffic and vehicle dominance roads with lack of public realm and green infrastructure
- Lack of connection between 'old' and 'new' town
- Maintenance of buildings and shop fronts need updating and modernising
- Lack of night-time economy
- There is the threat of not addressing the issues and lack of action as the town needs regeneration or will get left behind
- Competing with the neighbouring towns has led footfall to dramatically decrease
- There is a lack of developable space within the compact town
- Perception of Brynmawr is tainted with the increase of anti-social behaviour

Opportunities

- The cross-selling of towns within Blaenau Gwent would aid Brynmawr in having to compete with its neighbours
- Creating destinations/events which would increase footfall and revitalise town centre
- Encourage a community approach to get the local people onboard as well as upskilling through social enterprise
- Introducing sustainable travel with better transport links and access



3.7 Learning from elsewhere

One way of ensuring an effective approach for Brynmawr is to look at relevant case studies and learn from their success.

TREORCHY, WALES

Treorchy, a Welsh market town in the Rhondda Valley, won the UK's 'High Street of the Year' award in 2019. The former mining town was praised for its community led cultural events and the digital training offered to support local businesses. Where previously there was no online platform, a new Visit Treorchy website now gives local businesses a greater online presence, while a strategic partnership provides digital training and support to local entrepreneurs.

Year-round cultural events led by the community such as an outdoor cinema, an arts festival and an annual Christmas parade also increased footfall dramatically.

Another innovative initiative is their 'Hop, Shop and Save' scheme which offers advertising space on local buses in return for high street discounts to bus users. This not only encourages the use of public transport but also improves air quality in the town centre and increases footfall for the local businesses, most of which are independently owned.

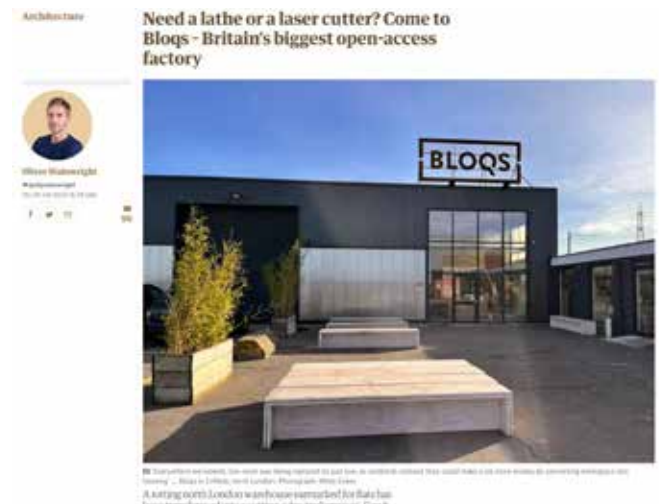


7. Treorchy High Street, The Guardian

BLOQS, LONDON

BLOQS is an open access factory in London, transformed from an under used industrial shed into a flexible pay-as-you-go workshop. It is a professional makerspace for entrepreneurs and professional makers such as carpenters, furniture makers, designers, builders, tailors, and sculptors to name a few. It is a collaborative, creative space where people can fabricate products with on-site equipment. In addition to the space and equipment, it provides training of new skills, a café for social space, a place to network and a chance to be part of the makers community.

This example is relevant to the Stagecoach site highlighting opportunities for renovation. It is also linked to Brynmawr's history in furniture making and other crafts.



8. BLOQS, The Guardian

TY PAWB, WREXHAM

Ty Pawb is a cultural community space where arts and markets come together under one roof. This cohabitation is a celebration of Wrexham's cultural heritage and the importance of markets within its identity.

The building is a transformation of a failing covered market and multi-storey car park from the 1990s. Today it accommodates new facilities including art galleries, market stalls, performance space, learning centres, studios, offices, cafes and bars. Ty pawb has had a great impact on the community helping regenerate the town centre and provide an alternative to the out-of-town retail parks and ailing high street. With a diverse mix of spaces and activities, it attracts a wide audience including national and international visitors.

This example can also be applied to the Stagecoach building. This approach can provide a space for the community to come together and create a destination for visitors. It builds on the significance of markets in Brynmawr, its strong sense of community and offers a place for social, economic and leisure activities.



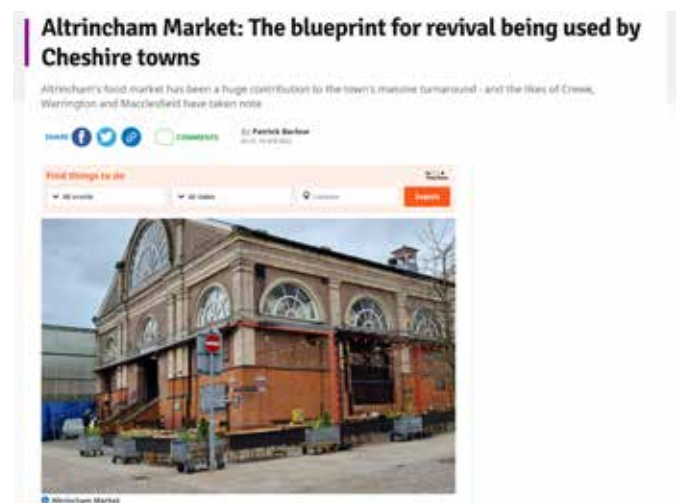
9. Ty Pawb, Wrexham Council News

ALTRINCHAM MARKET, CHESHIRE

Altrincham is a traditional market town in Cheshire dating back to 1290. The new Trafford Shopping Centre nearby, increasing business rates and parking charges led to the decline of its high street. Businesses disappeared and Altrincham recorded the highest shop vacancy rates in the UK.

Today Altrincham has been reinvented into a modern market town and is one of the most sought-after places to live in the country. The catalyst for regeneration was the refurbishment of the Market House, which is now a lively food hall with some of the area's best local food vendors. The market also offers stalls selling clothes and crafts. The year-round activities and events offer a great variety for locals and visitors increasing footfall substantially.

The Boiler House is the perfect candidate to follow in Altrincham's footsteps. In the following chapters we will explore how The Boiler House can become a thriving food destination in The Valleys.



10. Altrincham Market, Cheshire Live

3.8 Planning context

The traditional role of town centres as places to buy and sell, founded on attributes of the clustering of and access to goods and services has been eroded by online retailing and service provision and out of town shopping facilities. The future role of the town centres and the mix of services, facilities, and experiences they can provide is therefore a key issue.

PLANNING POLICY WALES

The key principles for the planning system in Wales are established by Planning Policy Wales (PPW). The key theme from PPW is People and Places: Achieving Well-being Through Placemaking – Using placemaking as a tool for the planning system to output sustainable Places which improve well-being of communities.

PPW has to be used in three stages.

1. Assessing plans or proposals against the Strategic and Spatial Choices issues and the national sustainable placemaking outcomes. This stage is to ensure that opportunities are correctly identified and any potentially required mitigation measures are included.
2. Assessing whether plans or proposals contribute to Active & Social Places, Productive and Enterprising Places and Distinctive & Natural Places. The merits of the proposal need to be considered whether they are in the public interest.
3. Ensuring the strategy or proposal aids in contributing to either sustaining or the creation of sustainable places.

PPW's raison d'être is to ensure good design which contributes to the viability and sustainability of places.

THE BLAENAU GWENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP)

The Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted in November 2012. Relevant policies for Brynmawr are as follows:

STRATEGIC POLICIES

- SP1 Northern Strategy Area – Sustainable Growth and Regeneration, where Brynmawr District Town Centre will explore opportunities to develop complementary roles around tourism; and support mixed-use development.
- SP4 Delivering Quality Housing – provision is made for the development of 3,907 new dwellings within the wider authority area by 2021.
- SP8 Sustainable Economic Growth – 50ha of employment land is allocated to meet the wider authority area's need by 2021.

POLICY DESIGNATIONS

- EMP2 Employment Area Protection – sites identified on the policy map are protected for employment use in line with their status in the employment hierarchy (EMP2.7; EMP2.8; EMP2.9; EMP2.17 and EMP2.19).
- ENV2 Special Landscape Areas – SLAs are located to the southeast, southwest and northeast of Brynmawr (Eastern Ridge and Mynydd James; Mynydd Carn-y-Cefn and Cefn yr Arail; and Beaufort Common).
- ENV3 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) – multiple SINC are

located around the settlement boundary of Brynmawr.

SITE ALLOCATIONS

- Housing Allocations are located within the settlement boundary of Brynmawr (H1.6; H1.7; H1.10, HC1.23, HC1.24, HC1.25) – these are for between 12 – 45 housing units respectively. An allocation exists within Brynmawr for Gypsy Traveller Accommodation (see GT1 – which is allocated to accommodate 6 pitches).
- MU3 NMC Factory and Bus Depot – land is allocated at the NMC factory for mixed-use development including 60no. New homes, and to act as an active link between the Town Centre and Lakeside Retail Park.
- T1 Cycle Routes – two cycle routes are located within Brynmawr, the HoV route linking Nine Arches Tredegar to Brynmawr (T1.1) and Brynmawr to Blaenavon (T1.8).
- T3 Safeguarding of Disused Railway Infrastructure – disused railway infrastructure east of Brynmawr will be protected from development that would compromise its future transport use.
- T4 Improvements to Bus Services – improvements are identified as part of a Bus Priority Scheme along the Brynmawr to Newport Bus Corridor (T4.1) and at the Brynmawr Bus Interchange (T4.2).
- T6 Regeneration Led Highway Improvements – land is allocated for the dualling of the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road (Tredegar to Brynmawr) (T6.1) to the east of Brynmawr settlement boundary.
- ENV4 Land Reclamation Schemes – a land reclamation scheme is proposed at Cwmcraehen, Brynmawr (ENV4.3).



11. Planning Policy Wales



12. Blaenau Gwent LDP



An architectural rendering of a vibrant, multi-level community courtyard. The scene is filled with diverse people, including families, individuals with strollers, and people in wheelchairs, engaged in various activities like walking, playing, and socializing. The courtyard is landscaped with large, stylized trees in shades of orange, yellow, and purple, interspersed with green lawns and pinkish-red planters. In the foreground, there are several colorful benches in yellow, orange, and pink. A large, multi-story building with a glass facade and balconies surrounds the courtyard. The overall atmosphere is one of a welcoming and inclusive public space.

4. A Vision for Brynmawr

4.1 A Twenty First Century Valleys Market Town

The vision for Brynmawr will mark a new chapter in the rich history of social enterprise and community led change that has defined the Welsh valleys.

The retail centre will be rapidly diversified to attract new visitors across the day and week and make it a place people want to use and not just need to use. Brynmawr will become a 15-minute neighbourhood which will bring new services, destinations, jobs, leisure and parks to the centre of the community. It will embrace innovation to adapt existing buildings and spaces and become renowned for experimentation and creative reuse. At the centre of this will be a renewed focus on the role of Brynmawr as one of the few true market towns in the valleys by breathing new life into the Market Square.

In doing so Brynmawr will rediscover its place as one of the few true market towns within the Welsh Valleys.



4.2 A 15 Minute Neighbourhood

15 MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOOD

What if we could access our daily needs within a 15-minute walk from our front door? The concept which has been adopted across Paris is becoming an increasingly important one within the built environment industry.

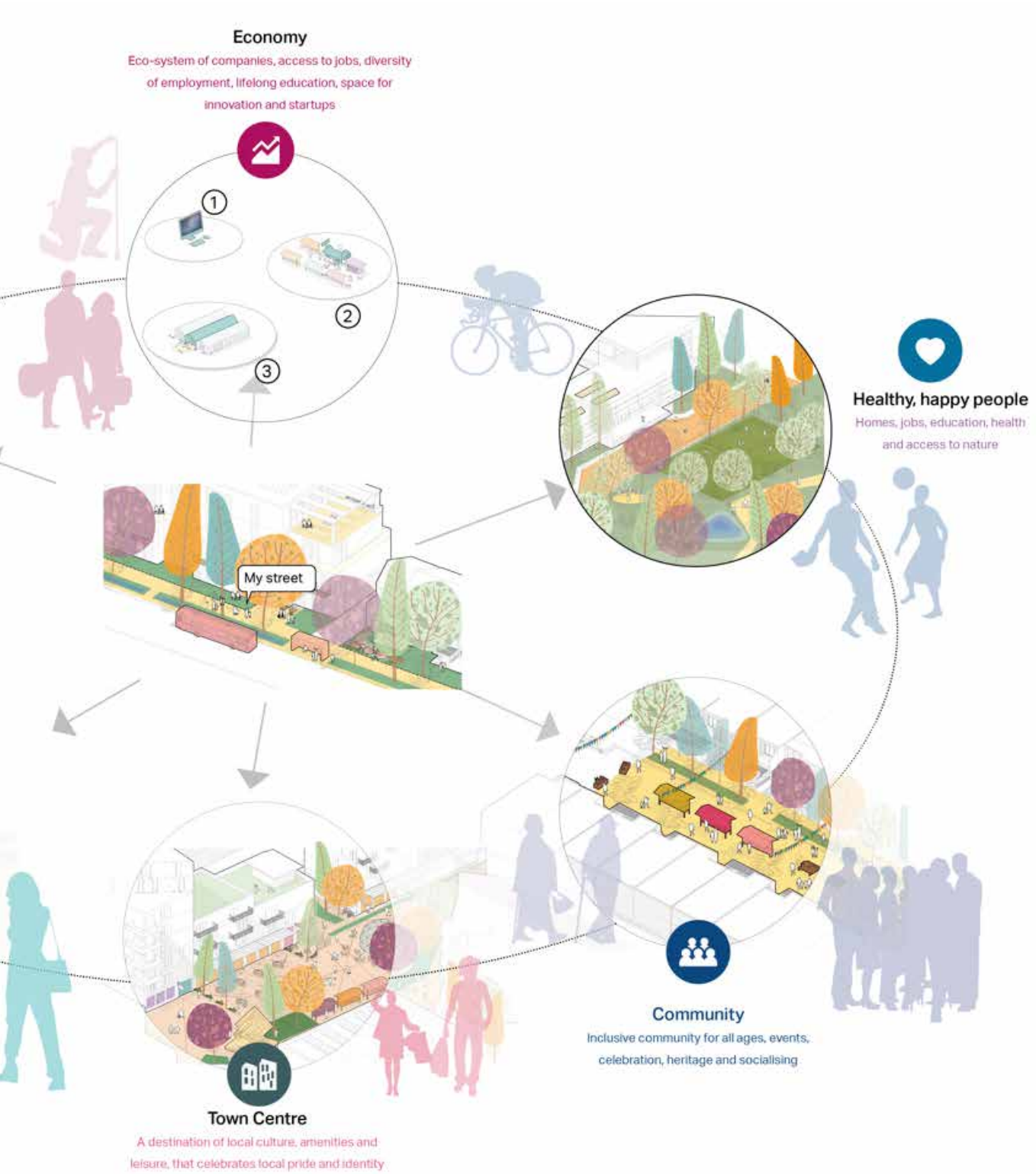
There are six principles which are the stepping stones for creating a self-sufficient town and a great place to live, work and visit. By providing improved access to open space and nature, improving the mix of employment types, encouraging a broader offer of amenities and services, reinforcing the strong sense of community, with a diverse offer of homes whilst supporting sustainable movement, a liveable, vibrant, and resilient town will be the outcome.

Living within a 15-minute neighbourhood means there is less car dependency, a more active community with an improved physical, social and economic life.

Brynmawr is a compact town surrounded by a residential area, making it an ideal candidate for the 15-minute town concept. With an enviable combination of urban and rural qualities, access to beautiful landscapes and a strong community, Brynmawr has some of the base ingredients to improve the life of residents and visitors alike, this is a core principle for the strategy for Brynmawr.



The 15-minute town



4.3 Objectives

Empowering
the local
community

Embedding
Circularity

Step Change
to Sustainable
mobility

WHATS DRIVING THE CHANGE?

Sense of community is a major strength in Brynmawr reflected in a cultural history of shared endeavour, expressed for example through the Market Hall Cinema. It's therefore essential the future evolution of the towns builds upon and nurtures local assets.

Circularity is a model based around the sharing, reusing and readaption of resources. The towns within the local area all grew on the basis of servicing carbon-based extraction and production, but now need to forge a new economy that is founded upon low carbon output and associated stewardship of the natural environment.

Improving the quality of the pedestrian and cycle environment within the locality improves connections to the town centre and reduces car dependency. Opportunities to improve not just routes but also facilities and services for active travel.

FACILITATING THE CHANGE

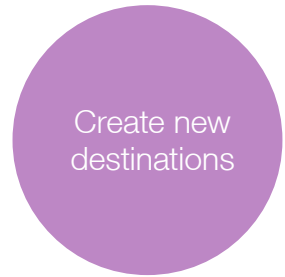
To diversify the centre and drive change there needs to be an ethos of enterprise. This entails enterprise as a creative endeavour, finding new and effective ways of doing things that bring improvements to the town centres and their contribution to wider well-being. There are already good examples of this approach such as social enterprises, Market Hall Cinema in Brynmawr and EVi in Ebbw Vale.

Involving young people in town centre projects will be important, ensuring that their concerns and aspirations are addressed and to help reduce vandalism and anti-social behaviour, an issue frequently raised throughout engagement.

Adaptive re-use of the Boiler House and its renovation to a beneficial use is important to safeguard an element of the town's identity and because of the opportunities it presents for a use that can help bring people to the town. The use should be one that can be run as a community initiative.

The Circular economy theme also looks towards better utilisation of local supply chains and supporting local businesses to promote themselves, and also reduce waste such as plastic. Improving the quality of the offering within the local area reduces the need to travel and improves the local economy of Brynmawr.

Active travel connectivity and, connectivity of the community and local businesses. Soft interventions such as supporting local businesses to improve their social and digital media presence, providing outlets to publicise positive stories and events are cost effective ways at improving the local economy and connecting businesses with customers beyond the passing trade, creating a destination of the town centre.



WHATS DRIVING THE CHANGE?

There is the opportunity to upskill the local population and provide new types of spaces to entice more business to town centre.

Brynmawr like many areas of Wales suffers from significant levels of chronic illness often associated with sedentary lifestyles and poor diet. Placemaking has a significant role to play in improving health and well-being by reshaping the physical environment to encourage more active lifestyles and positive community interaction.

Creating a sense of place that is unique to Brynmawr needs to be facilitated further than physical interventions, there is a need for a greater number of uses and activities.

FACILITATING THE CHANGE

There is potential for a work hub to capitalise on this creative energy and sense of independence to enable existing residents to live and work in the town. A work hub enables this, and can support start-ups, provide training space and create jobs.

Flexible space allows opportunities for other uses such as street markets showcasing local traders selling local goods and produce. Such markets can cater for the local demographic and attract new custom from beyond the town. Re-establishing Brynmawr as a true market town.

A major positive asset to the area is the green corridors and abundance of landscape surrounding the town, including the Brecon Beacons. These landscape features are highly valued by the community and is a striking feature for visitors unfamiliar with these valley towns. There are opportunities to improve this further. Connections to nature are proven to be significant to well-being.

Developing a programme of events and a social calendar which caters for social activity, family attractions and places for young people will prove transformative for the town centres social character. Other opportunities such as a 24-hour economy, and deregulation to allow for outdoor dining are interventions worthy of investigation to create a distinct sense of place.

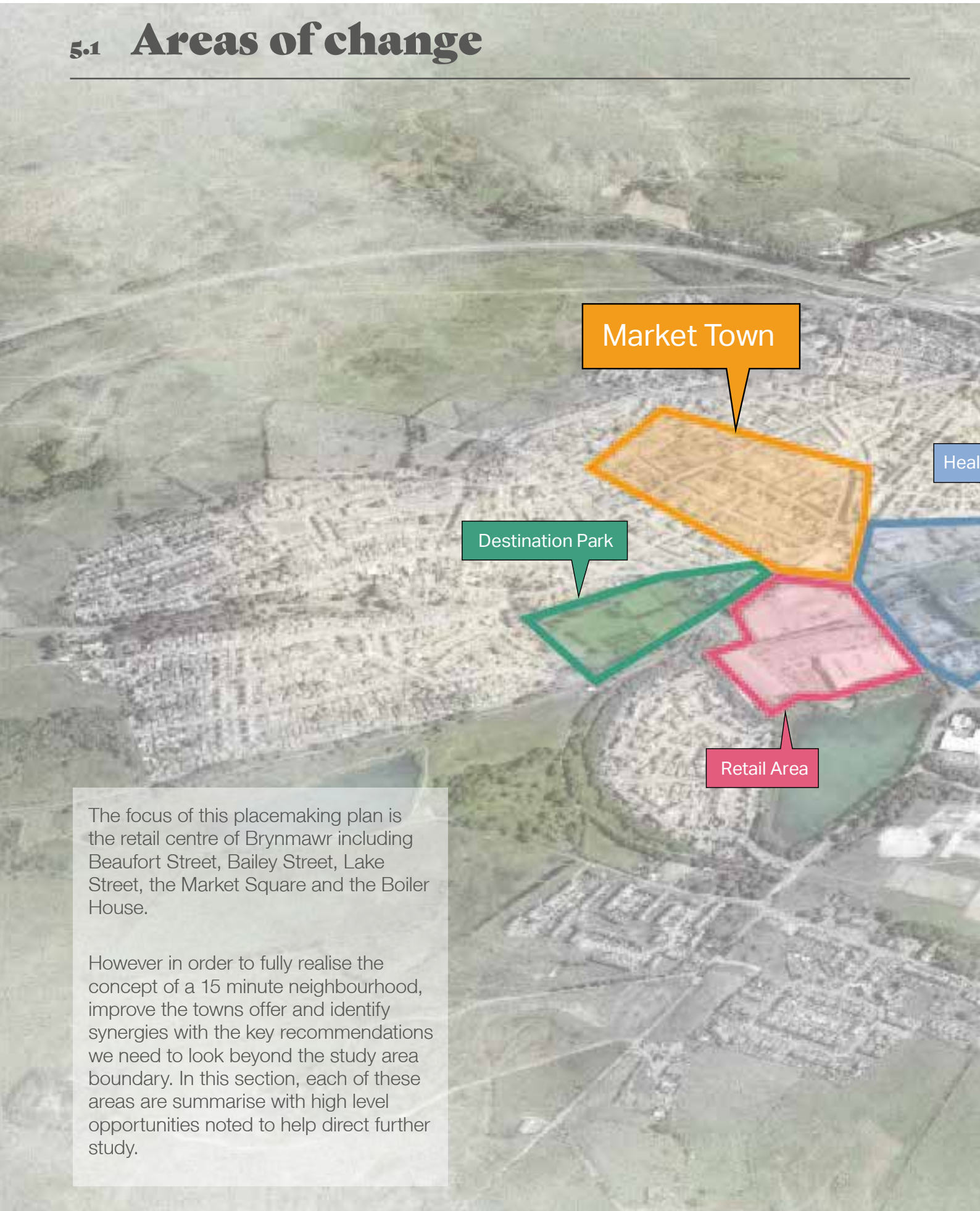
By galvanising the community, raising town centre profiles, and attracting people to use the centres. This in turn can build confidence and, over-time, enhance the prospects for some of the larger scale investments where these are needed.



An aerial architectural rendering of a city street. The street is shown in a light yellow color, with a green bike lane running along its length. The bike lane has a white dashed line on its left side and a white solid line on its right side. A person is riding a bicycle on the bike lane. The street is flanked by buildings of various heights and colors, including white, grey, and purple. There are trees and green spaces along the street, including a small pond on the left. The title '5. The Placemaking Plan' is overlaid on the image in a large, bold, black font. A horizontal line is drawn below the title.

5. The Placemaking Plan

5.1 Areas of change



Market Town

Destination Park

Retail Area

Heal

The focus of this placemaking plan is the retail centre of Brynmawr including Beaufort Street, Bailey Street, Lake Street, the Market Square and the Boiler House.

However in order to fully realise the concept of a 15 minute neighbourhood, improve the towns offer and identify synergies with the key recommendations we need to look beyond the study area boundary. In this section, each of these areas are summarise with high level opportunities noted to help direct further study.



Healthy/Happy People

MARKET TOWN

The traditional heart of the town and the primary concern for this placemaking plan. The future viability of this area is dependent on providing new destinations, new spaces and places that transform people's perceptions and draw a far wider audience of people to use it. At the heart of this plan is a circular economy approach to innovatively reuse the town's buildings and spaces including the Stage Coach site and Boiler House rather than demolish and rebuild where possible. To ensure change can be realised quickly to maintain public support and demonstrate intent, trial projects including the pedestrianisation of Market Square for events will engender a spirit of innovation.



PARK

The lack of green space in the centre of Brynmawr was cited during the engagement process and the transfer of this asset to community groups has inevitably led to challenges around financing and potential conflict between groups. Park spaces are vital in keeping people active, offering children invaluable outdoor time and providing a place to meet and talk away from the confines of your home.

Two levels of improvement have been identified to help maximise the potential of the Welfare Park. The first is to consider the operation and governance of the park in order to improve what exists. Parks Foundations for example (<https://www.nesta.org.uk/toolkit/how-set-parks-foundation/>) are an alternative way of running public parks by transforming parks into charitable trusts with a board of trustees which have a focus on income generation and entrepreneurialism. Whilst this approach tends to be focused on larger urban parks, there are many aspects that could be applicable to the Welfare Park. In line with proposal for the health and well-being cluster there is scope to decant uses from the Welfare Park to the area around the Well-being Hub and Blaenycwm Primary to reduce pressure on what is ultimately a limited space.



The second level of intervention involves a far more ambitious overhaul of the park into a destination park that would serve both Brynmawr and nearby towns such as Abertillery. Such a proposal would need to be subject to a full business case strategy but has the potential to add to the rich mix of destinations proposed in the town centre as part of a town-wide approach. Careful coordination with town centre proposals would be needed to avoid potential duplication if the proposal to create a central park in Brynmawr are pursued.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING CLUSTER

The Bromley By Bow model of community and health integration in London (<https://www.bbhc.org.uk/>) has demonstrated how blurring the boundaries between community groups/services and health can achieve far reaching benefits for local people. Inspired by this approach, there is significant potential to maximise the use of land adjacent to the Blaenycwm Primary and the Brynmawr Well-being Centre as part of a broader integration of these facilities with the boiler house proposal. It is recommended that the land around these sites is used to improve local biodiversity, provide natural play for children, create community allotments and recreational space. Each of these has a natural custodian either via the school, well-being hub or potentially the boiler house.

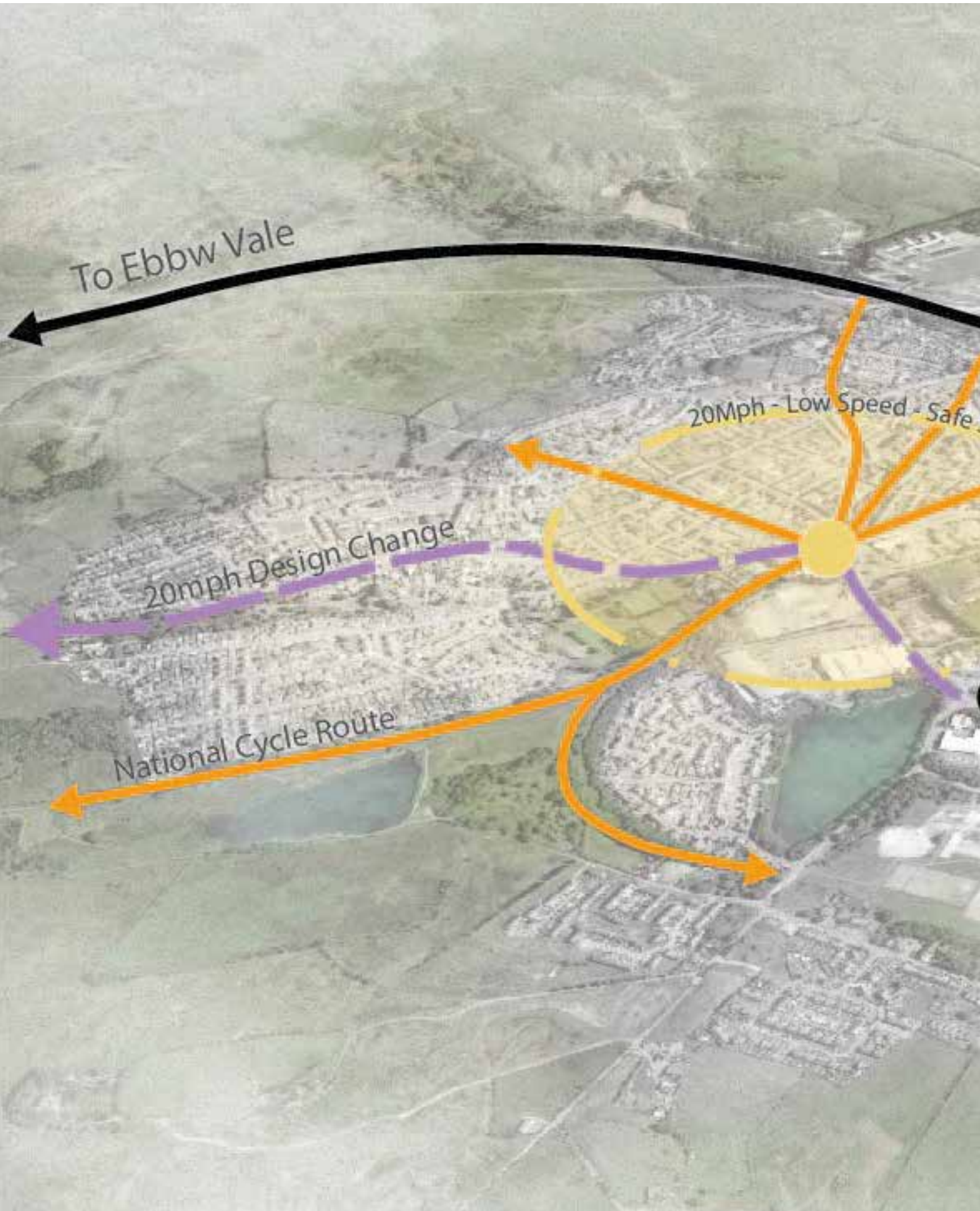
This simple-joined up approach offers numerous, wider benefits including increasing access to open space. Social prescribing from the well-being hub could see people suffering from isolation or inactivity involved in the community allotments. For the school there is the potential to engage early years children in community led habitat creation and natural play. The synergies with the boiler house proposals present the chance to create a wider 'eco-system' of health and well-being. This could be by supporting health literacy at the school through food production and healthy food preparation or by linking social services with the well-being hub to offer meaningful work for vulnerable adults.

RETAIL PARK

The existing retail park is currently expanding to the north with the arrival of a number of new outlets to add to the established area to the south. Whilst this has and will continue to bring new trade and visitors to the Brynmawr it has had a negative impact on footfall in the traditional retail area to the south. Throughout the engagement process it was evident that resolving the disconnect between the two needs to be addressed. Trying to replicate or compete with the retail park offer within the study area is not recommended, instead the focus should be on offering destinations, uses and services that cannot be provided here such as independent retail, community uses and open space.



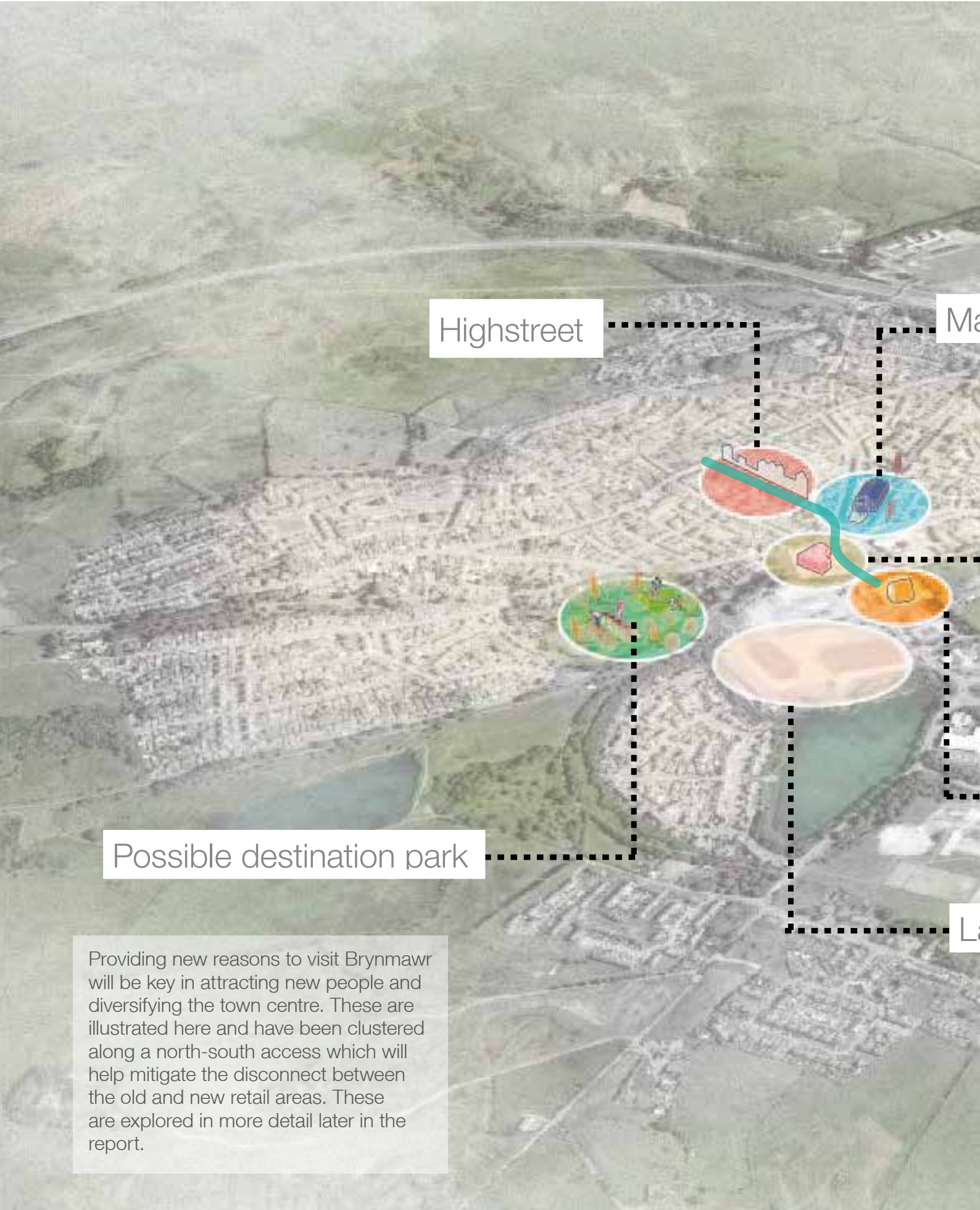
IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY





This placemaking plan will need to align with the emerging WelTAG work. Resolving traffic conflict and congestion in the central area is a key challenge. It is recommended that in order to achieve a better outcome for the town with greater pedestrian priority reduced car dominance that there is a rethink on the movement system. The concept illustrated here sees the town centre become a 20mph zone with priority for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. This is achieved primarily by redirecting traffic moving east out onto the Heads of Valleys road and away from the pinch point at Bailey Street. Lessons can be learned from the concept of 'Mini Holland' which are being trialed across England. In these areas, rerouting of roads are complimented by changes to the street design to improve the function and appearance of public spaces and streets toward pedestrians and cyclists.

CREATE NEW DESTINATIONS



Highstreet

Ma

Possible destination park

La

Providing new reasons to visit Brynmawr will be key in attracting new people and diversifying the town centre. These are illustrated here and have been clustered along a north-south access which will help mitigate the disconnect between the old and new retail areas. These are explored in more detail later in the report.



Market Hall

Stagecoach Depot/Park

The Boiler House

Lakeside Retail Park

A GREEN CORE

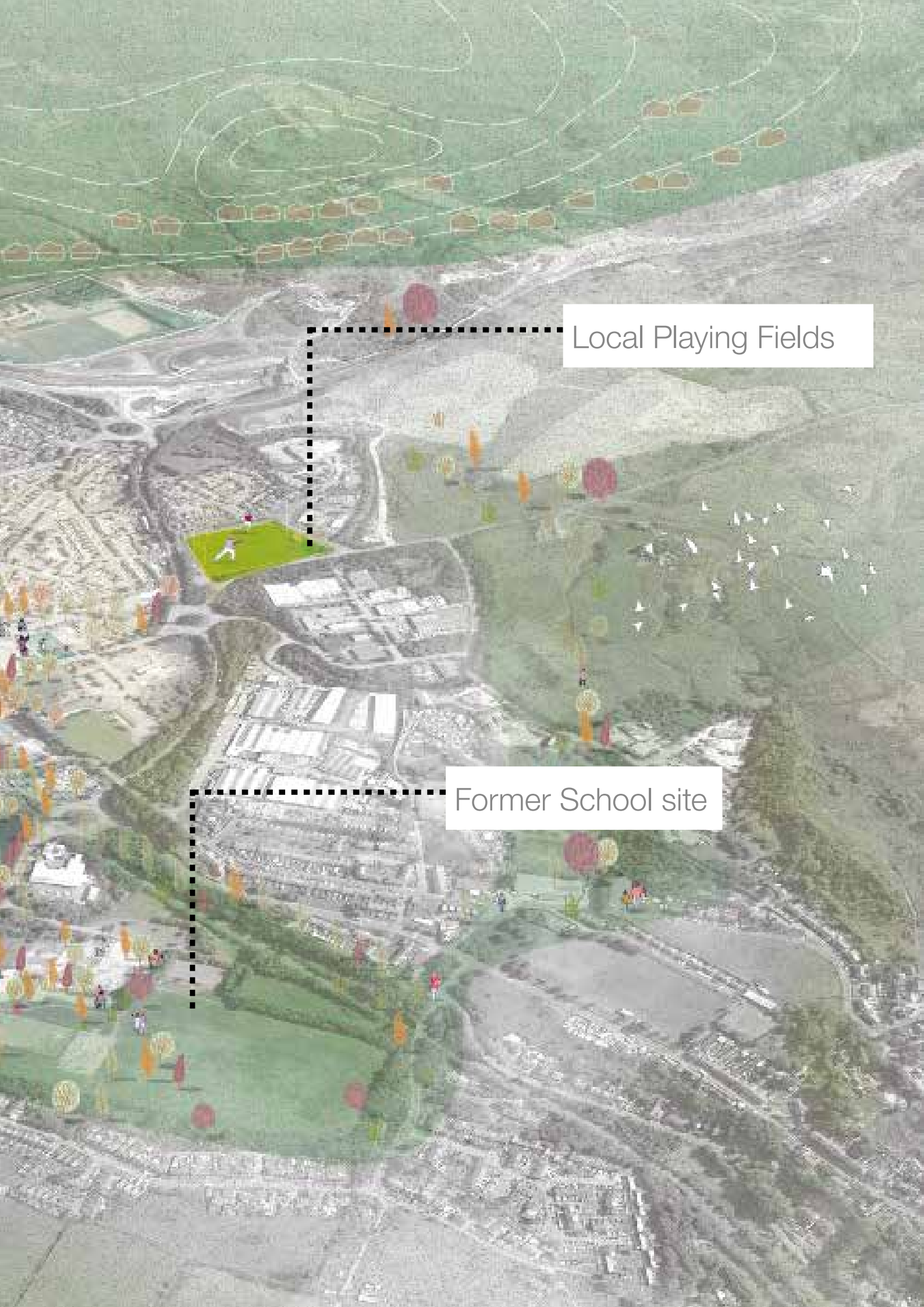
An aerial photograph of a town, Brynmawr, showing a green core in the center. The town is built on a hillside, with a river flowing through it. The Brecon Beacons are visible in the background. A dashed black line outlines the green core area. Three white boxes with black text are overlaid on the image, pointing to different parts of the green core: 'Brecon Beacons' points to the top right, 'Possible destination park' points to the middle left, and 'Parc Nant Y Waun' points to the bottom left. A semi-transparent grey box with white text is located in the bottom left corner.

Brecon Beacons

Possible destination park

Parc Nant Y Waun

The natural setting of Brynmawr will be drawn into the town centre through a combination of new SuDS features, landscape and the enhancement of Welfare Park. This will be a vital means of improving local resilience to flooding, improving biodiversity and enhancing health and well-being.



Local Playing Fields

Former School site

5.2 Key projects

This section outlines the proposed projects within the study area. These have been identified to unlock Brynmawr's future as a 21st Century Valleys market town. Two options with different levels of intervention have been explored and will be explained in more detail in the following pages.

KEY PROJECTS:

- The Boiler House
- Beaufort Street
- Stagecoach
- A new park (In Longer Term Scenario)
- Market Square and bus station
- Public Realm Route - Improvements to the north-south connection between Beaufort Street and Lake side retail park are integrated within the above projects and for the purpose of this plan are not presented as a separate project

Option 1 considers the potential of each of these projects in the short to medium timescale, as an intermediary state whereas Option 2 is more ambitious and proposes a long term end state. These are explored on the following pages.

PUBLIC ART

Whilst a specific strategy is not included here, public art has a prominent and important role to play in delivering change. Traditional public art has often taken the form of permanent sculpture or murals. It is recommended that a more creative and dynamic approach to public art is adopted to help demonstrate early in the process how change can be achieved.

A temporary installation within or around the Boiler House for example will begin to build interest and excitement in the building's future and change public perception of a redundant structure. Similarly, an external art work would rapidly change the appearance of the Stage Coach building and deliver an early landmark. In each instance, involving the community within the process will engender stewardship and draw local people directly into the placemaking plan.

Global and national picture

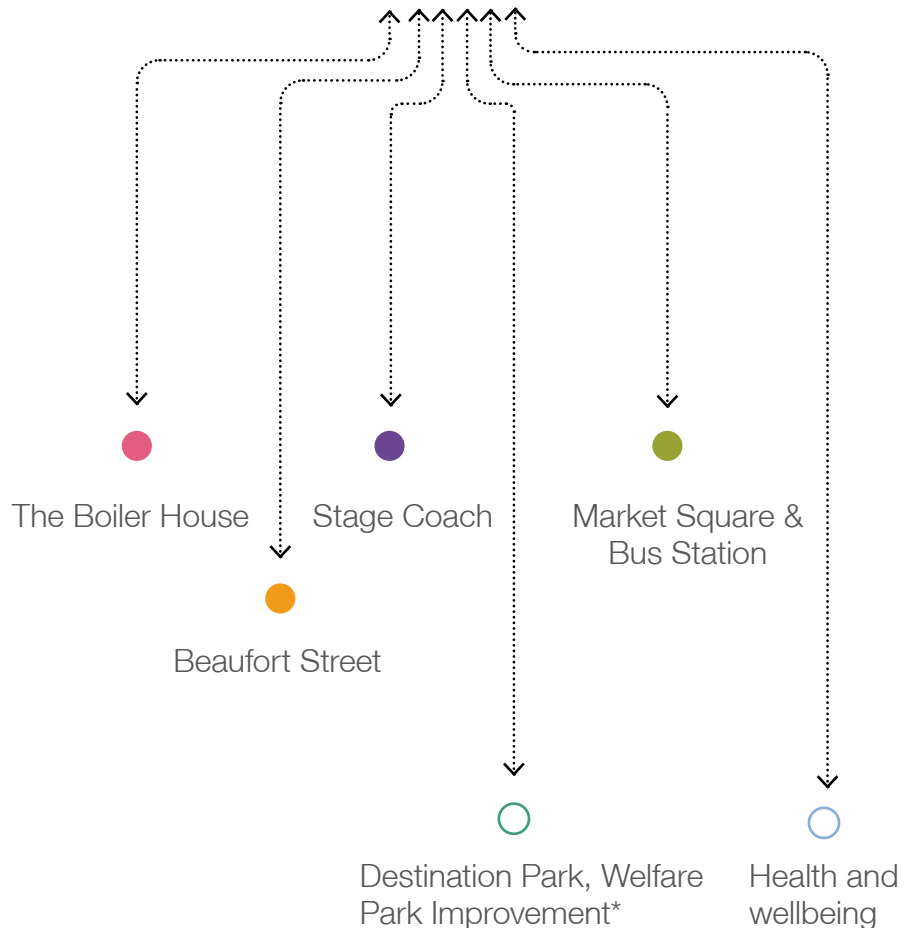


Planning Policy Wales
Environment Act (Wales) 2016

The vision for Brynmawr

Global to Local. The proposed change for Brynmawr as it relates to global and national agendas and the vision

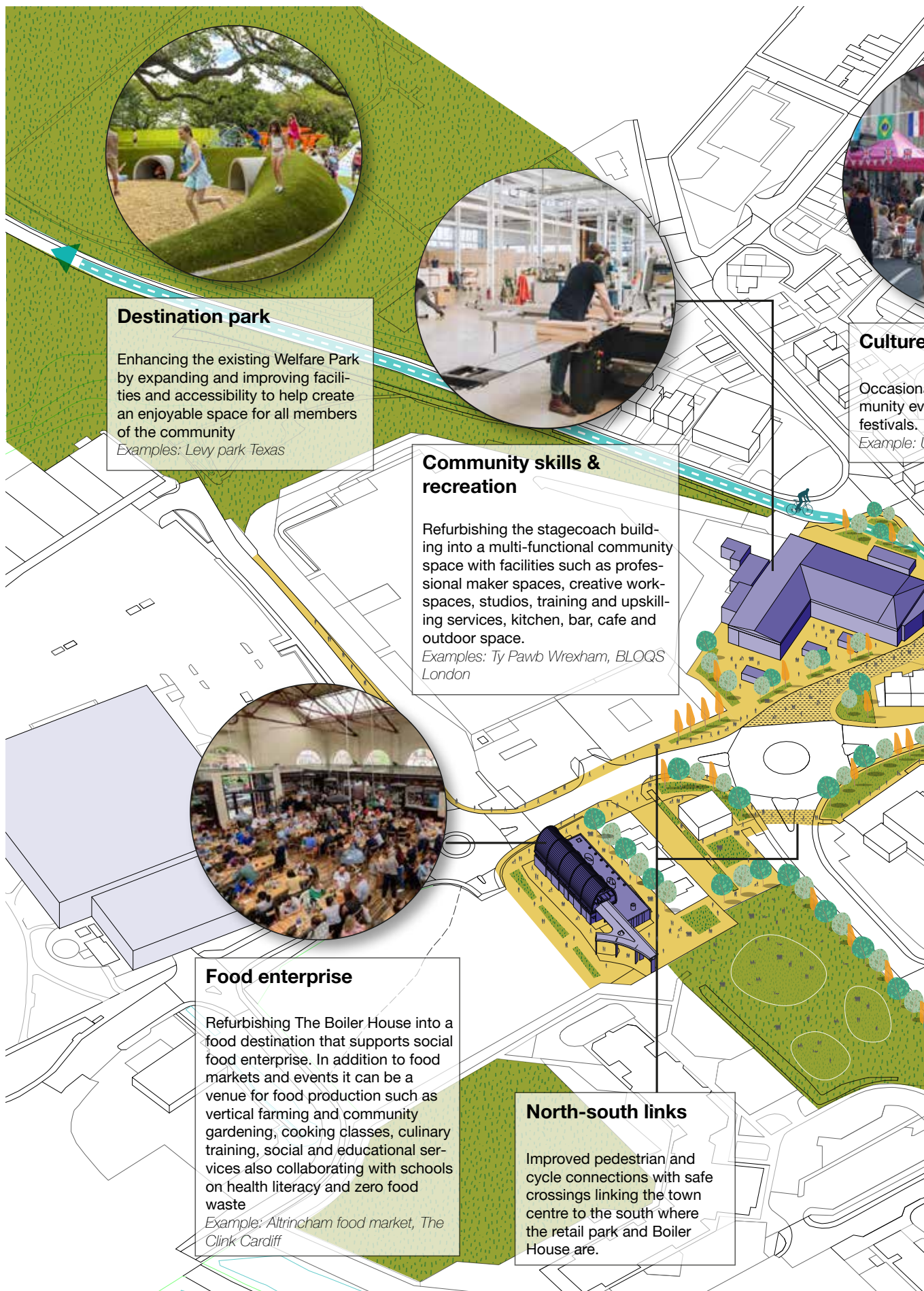
A 15 minute town and a C21st Market Town in the Welsh Valleys



Projects

*Within Longer Term Scenario this is within the Town Centre

Placemaking Proposed Plan



Destination park

Enhancing the existing Welfare Park by expanding and improving facilities and accessibility to help create an enjoyable space for all members of the community

Examples: Levy park Texas

Community skills & recreation

Refurbishing the stagecoach building into a multi-functional community space with facilities such as professional maker spaces, creative work-spaces, studios, training and upskilling services, kitchen, bar, cafe and outdoor space.

Examples: Ty Pawb Wrexham, BLOQS London



Food enterprise

Refurbishing The Boiler House into a food destination that supports social food enterprise. In addition to food markets and events it can be a venue for food production such as vertical farming and community gardening, cooking classes, culinary training, social and educational services also collaborating with schools on health literacy and zero food waste

Example: Atrincham food market, The Clink Cardiff

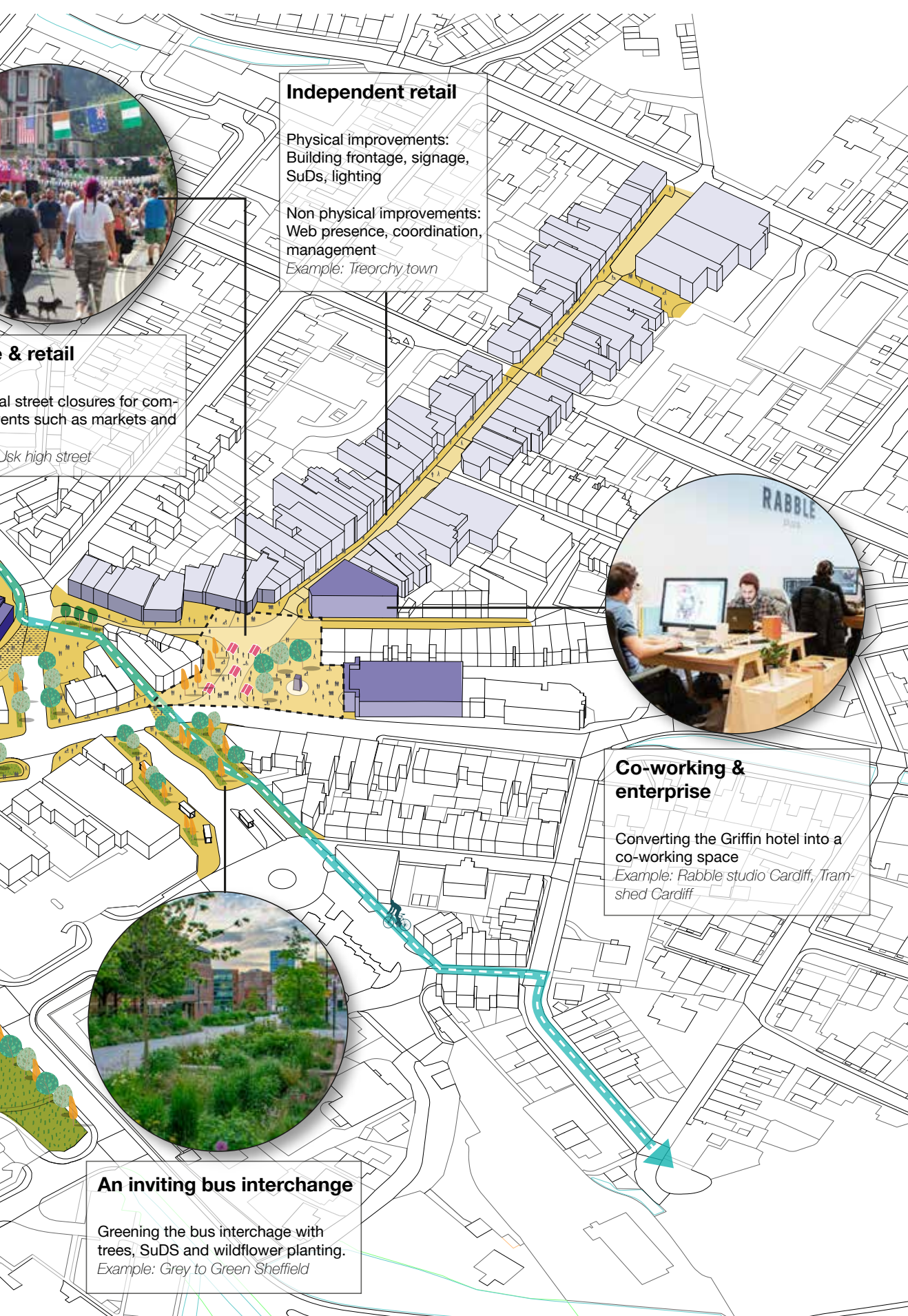
North-south links

Improved pedestrian and cycle connections with safe crossings linking the town centre to the south where the retail park and Boiler House are.

Culture

Occasional community events, festivals.

Example: ...



Independent retail

Physical improvements:
Building frontage, signage,
SuDs, lighting

Non physical improvements:
Web presence, coordination,
management
Example: Treorchy town

Street & retail

Temporary street closures for com-
munity events such as markets and
festivals

Example: High street



Co-working & enterprise

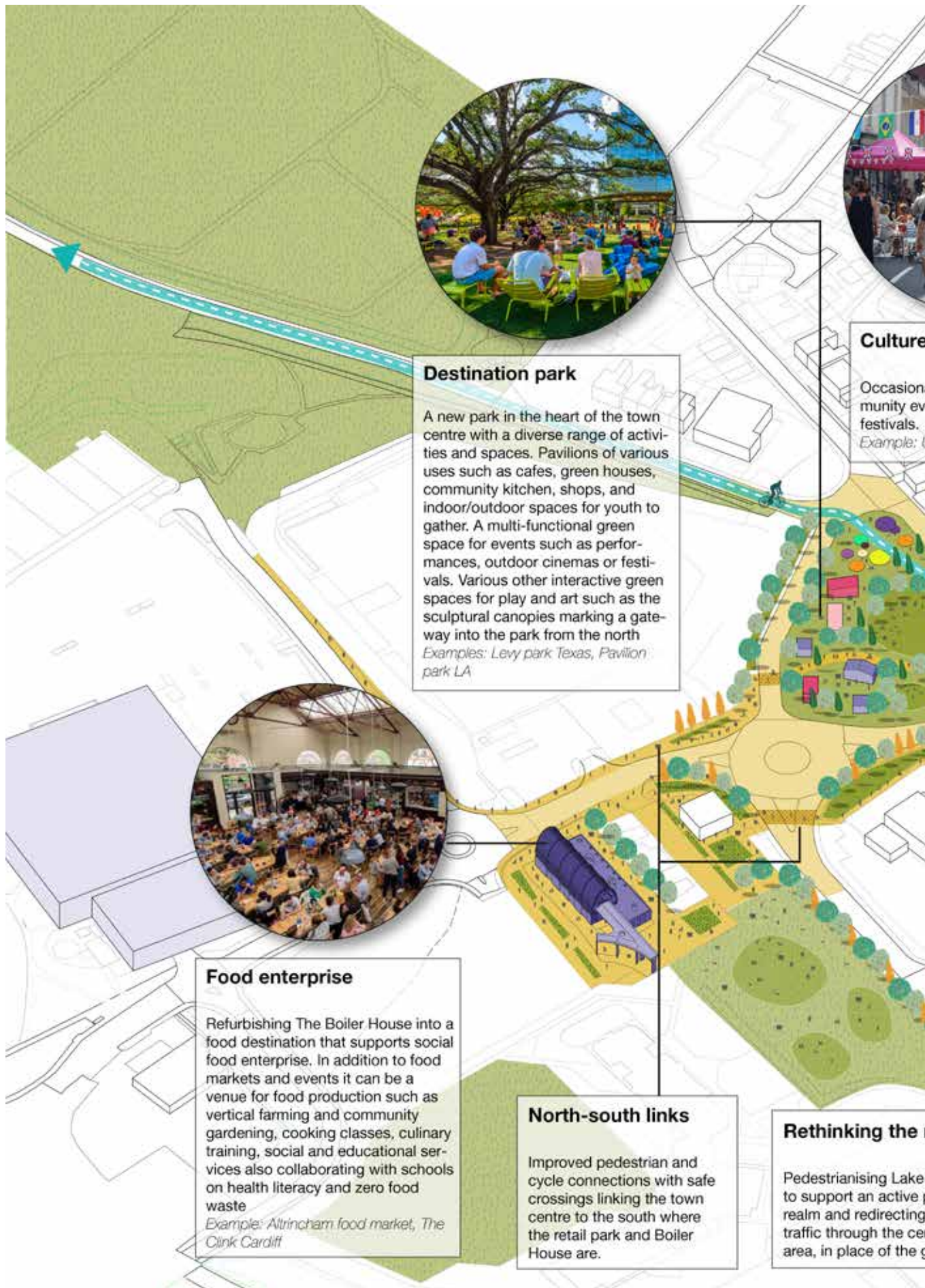
Converting the Griffin hotel into a
co-working space
*Example: Rabble studio Cardiff, Tram-
shed Cardiff*

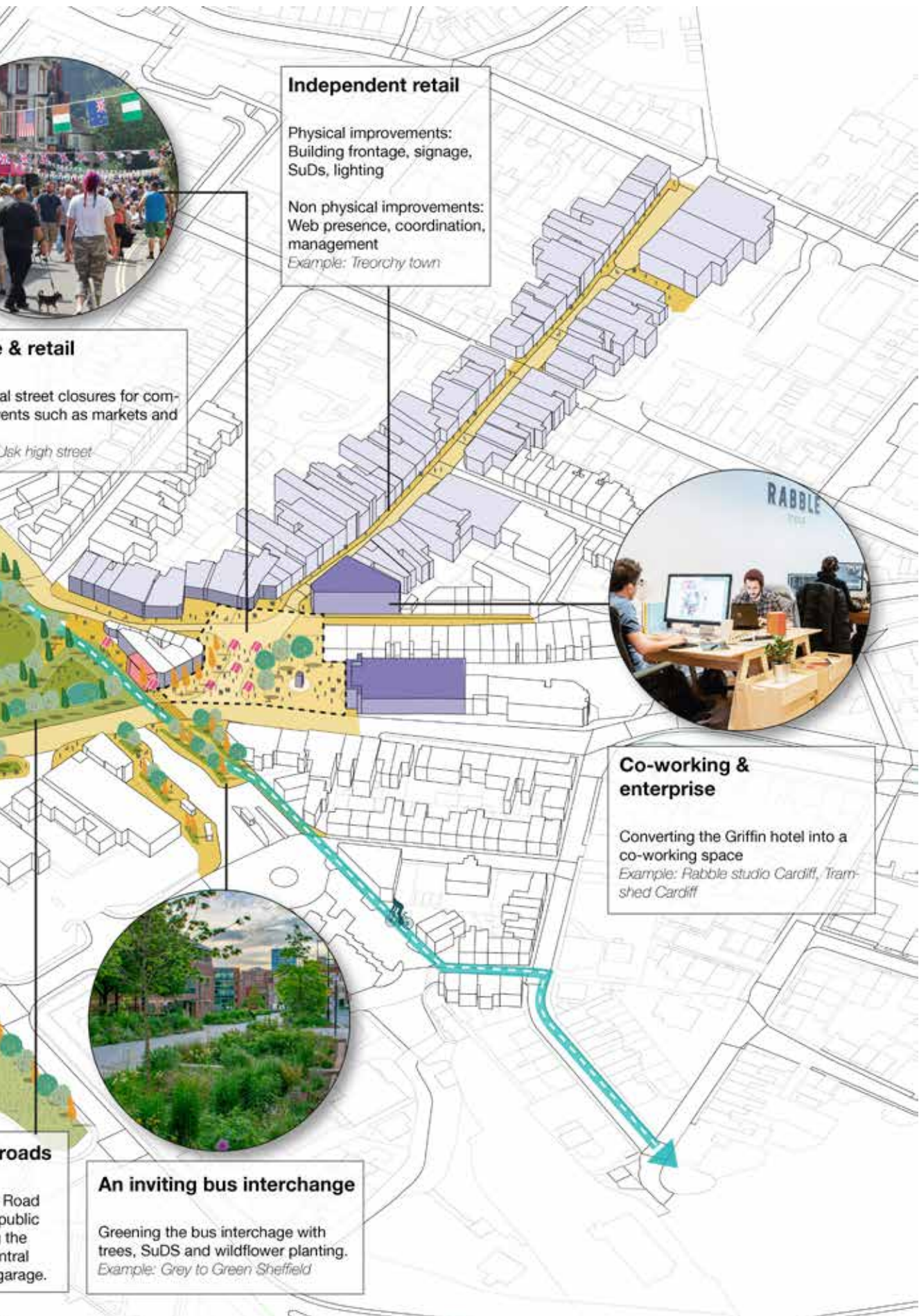


An inviting bus interchange

Greening the bus interchange with
trees, SuDS and wildflower planting.
Example: Grey to Green Sheffield

Potential Longer Term Scenario





Independent retail

Physical improvements:
Building frontage, signage,
SuDs, lighting

Non physical improvements:
Web presence, coordination,
management
Example: Treorchy town

Street & retail

Partial street closures for com-
munity events such as markets and
festivals

Example: High street



Co-working & enterprise

Converting the Griffin hotel into a
co-working space
*Example: Rabble studio Cardiff, Tram-
shed Cardiff*



An inviting bus interchange

Greening the bus interchange with
trees, SuDS and wildflower planting.
Example: Gray to Green Sheffield

Streets & roads

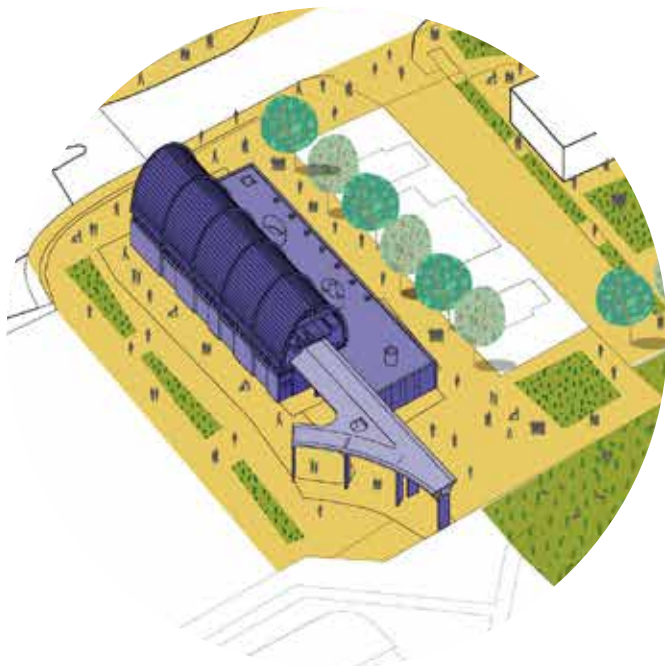
Public realm improvements
such as street furniture, lighting,
planting and seating.

THE BOILER HOUSE

The Boiler House was the first part of the rubber factory complex built at Brynmawr between 1946 and 1951. The main factory building was demolished in 2001, with the Boiler House and pump house the last remaining buildings. The Boiler House is Grade II listed but has been unused and derelict for many years.

It is located near the retail park, on the southern edge of the town centre and is within easy walking distance to the town centre and bus interchange. Being on the edge allows it to act as a gateway building into Brynmawr town centre and its proximity to the new retail park can help create a spatial link between the retail park and the town centre. Currently, pedestrian and cycle movement between The Boiler House and the town centre is poor. However, with improved access and public realm, there can be an active connection between the two.

The Boiler House is a major asset to the town due to its historical and architectural significance and could be a catalyst to wider town centre improvement therefore with the right approach, it can put Brynmawr on the map. Given the potential costs of repurposing the structure it is likely that any future use of the structure will need public sector investment. During the collation of this study, The most beneficial reuse would be a community-focused use that addresses gaps in the current town offer and is complimentary to the existing facilities and activities. Social Services have expressed an interest in creating a food based social enterprise to provide meaningful employment for vulnerable adults by adapting the building. The food prepared would be used to feed the elderly and infirm in the wider area. Using this initial proposition Building on Brynmawr's history in social enterprise The Boiler House has potential to become a food destination where food, health, education, employment, and tourism come together for community benefit.





14. The Boiler House, Brynmawr

As a food destination it could provide various integrated initiatives including:

- On site food production such as community gardens and innovative production methods such as vertical farming.
- Health literacy and awareness. This can involve collaborations with schools encouraging their participation in learning about healthy eating and introducing projects such as the farm-to-table concept and healthy school lunches.
- A food market celebrating local produce which can also be linked to the markets in the Market Square.
- Food festivals, guest chefs, micro-breweries and eateries that can boost the evening economy in Brynmawr
- Social spaces for events such as cooking classes
- Training and upskilling in the hospitality and culinary sector for local people potentially linked to Coleg Y Gwent.
- Adding social value through social services including employment opportunities for vulnerable adults
- Promoting zero food waste and adopting a circular model where food waste from local supermarkets are made use of.
- Meals on Wheels
- Care for the elderly by reducing isolation by transitioning from meals on wheels to communal dining at the boiler house.

There are various examples we can draw inspiration from some of which are shown in the images on the next page. The diagram shows an indicative spatial arrangement of some of the suggested activities within the building.

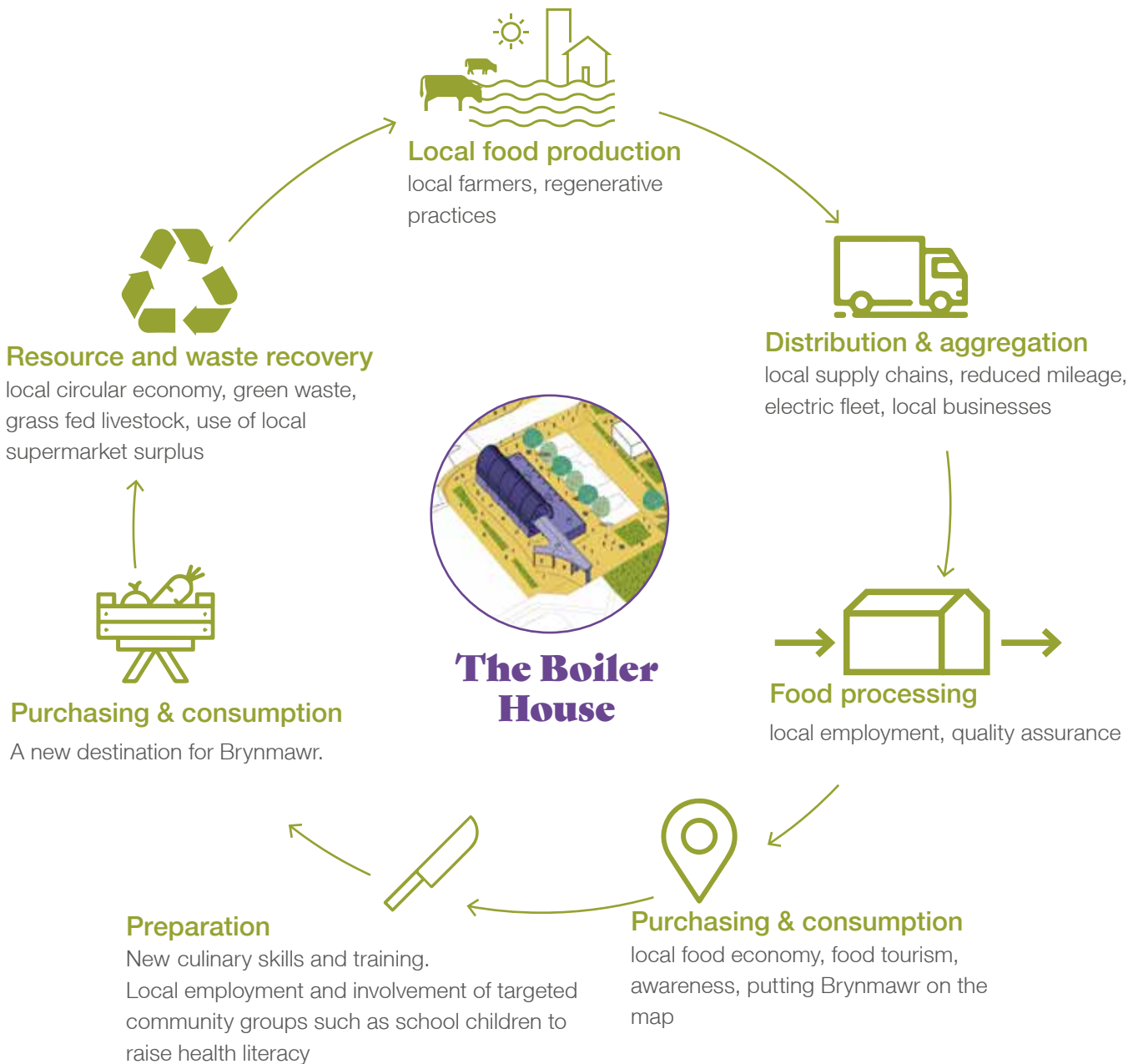


Social influences

Climate change sentiment, possible changing attitudes to animal produce, awareness of the value of local produce

Political influences

UN SDGs, Well-being of Future Generations Act, Declaration of a Climate Emergency, Brexit



Economic influences

Farming subsidies, market value of produce, target markets and their spending power

Contextual/environmental influences

The quality of the surrounding landscape, the iconic Boiler House building

How a circular economy of food production and consumption at the Boiler House can benefit the town and respond to global challenges such as climate change.



Potager Garden, Falmouth

Once a market garden in the 1950's, the site closed down in 1980 only to be completely consumed by nature. Potager Garden now plays host to a number of events and workshops.



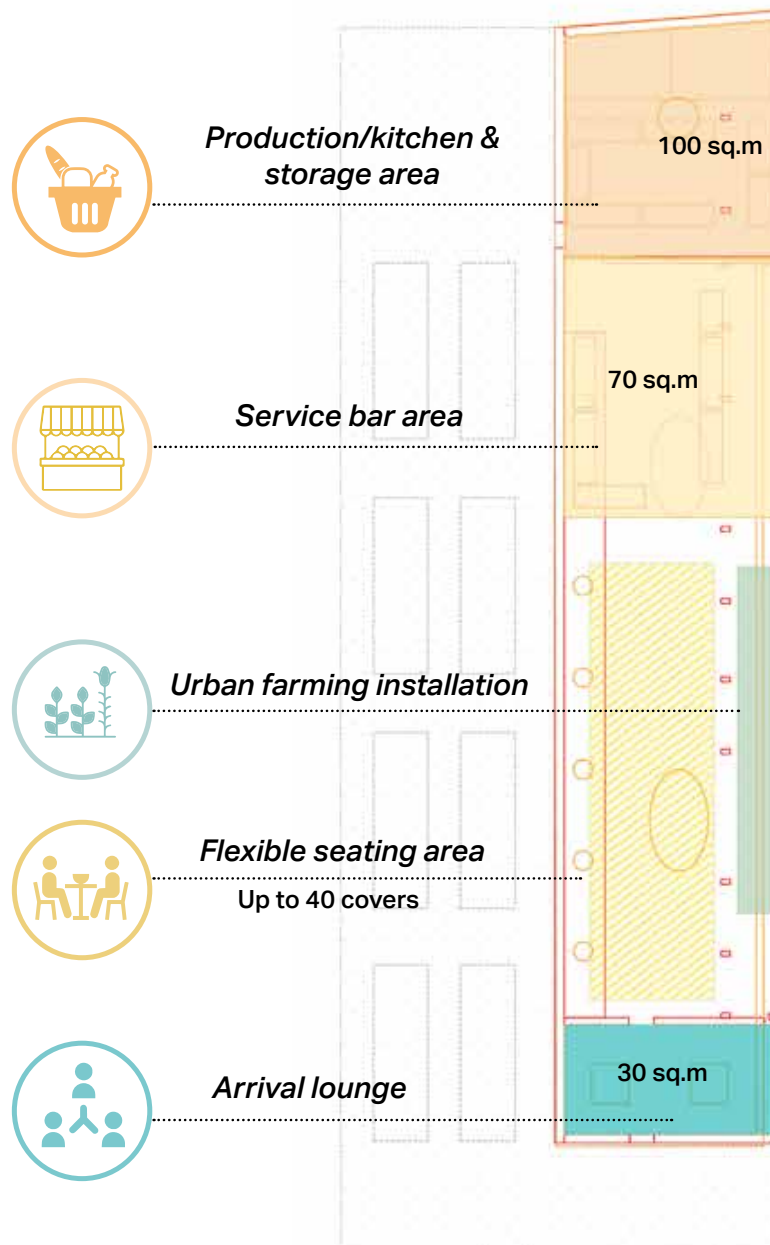
Neighborhood Farm, Amsterdam

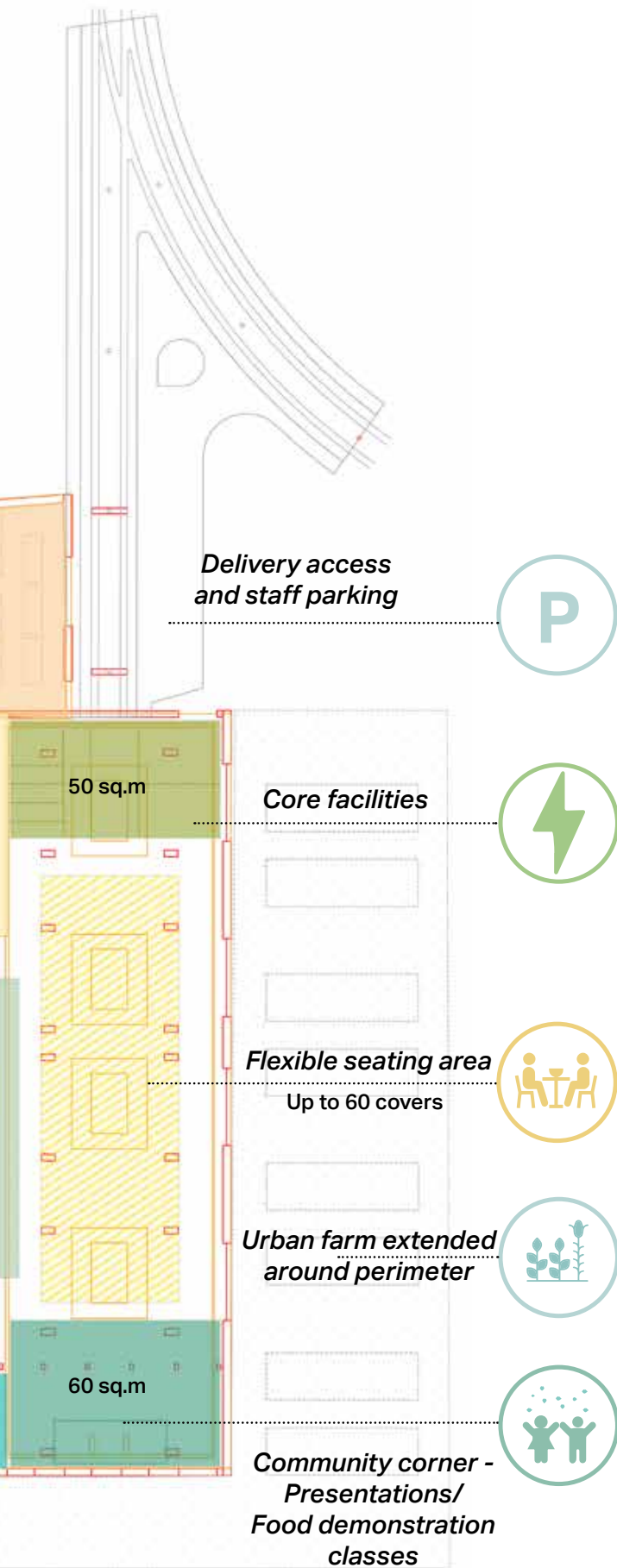
People with a distance to the labor market are offered a safe and pleasant environment, under the guidance of the permanent employees, in which to gain experience and build self-confidence.



Bioaqua Farm, Somerset

Research and development of aquaponic methods, education, and services with their aquaponics courses to deliver highly productive systems that are, efficient and sustainable for all.





Market Hall Victoria, London

Repurposed into a food hall with space for over 450 people. This historical space brought back to life across 3 floors consists of a coffee shop, 10 creative kitchens and 3 bars ready to serve food and drink from London's most exciting brands.



Borough Market, London

The latest redevelopment has opened a new education centre which will be used as a classroom and kitchen to help visitors learn more about the Market and the food it sells.



The Clink Charity, Cardiff

The high-quality meals at The Clink Restaurant at HMP Cardiff are cooked and served by the prisoners in training who are working towards gaining their City & Guilds NVQs in Food & Beverage Service, Professional Cookery and Food Hygiene.

STAGECOACH

The stagecoach site is in a key location between the town centre and the new retail park making it a strategic spatial link between the two. The stagecoach building is an industrial building with a large L-shaped footprint. Our approach is to explore two scenarios, one where the stagecoach building is repurposed and one where it is demolished. Although the structure is not architecturally beautiful has limited architectural appeal, the potential to refurbish it is worth exploring. This would be a positive step towards sustainability goals and adopting a circular economy model.

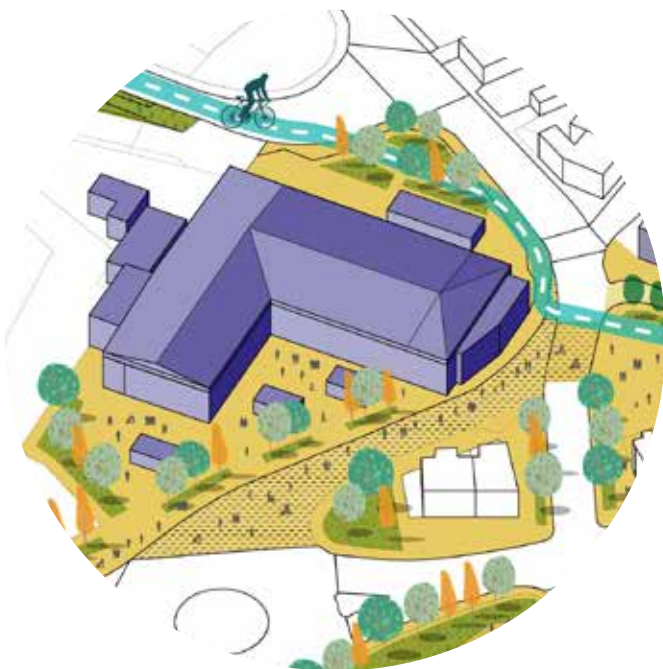
Option 1 – Refurbishment

The stagecoach building can be an ideal location for a multi-functional space with facilities that cater to the needs of all members of the community. Taking inspiration from Brynmawr’s history in furniture making and feedback from adult services and an incentive to support employment opportunities and upskilling within the community, this new community building may provide facilities

such as professional makerspaces, flexible workspaces, creative workspaces, studios, training, and adult learning facilities. Based on feedback from the community youth council, it could also provide a recreation and entertainment space for younger members of the community who currently do not have a space to come together. Additional uses such as kitchen, bar, café and an outdoor seating and play area can also compliment the primary uses. By pedestrianising Lake Road and redirecting traffic through the central area, the public realm surrounding the new community building can be activated with outdoor seating, planting, play areas, pop-ups and various other activities. There are a number of successful case studies we can learn from including Ty Pawb in Wrexham and BLOQS in London.

Option 2 – Destination Park

This scenario looks at demolishing the existing stagecoach building to make space for a destination park in the heart of the town centre. This allows Lake Road to be redirected to the edge of the new retail park creating a larger uninterrupted space for the park. In such a scenario the uses proposed for the Stage Coach site should be incorporated into the park design as a series of structures or single structures that define the park





15. Stagecoach Depot, Brynmawr



16. BLOQS, London



17. Ty Pawb, Wrexham



HIGH STREET

Beaufort Street presents potentially the most challenging aspect of this plan. Numerous concerns have been raised during the engagement process from difficulties accessing the street, a perceived over supply of take-aways to the loss of national chains. The future prosperity of Beaufort Street is intrinsically linked with the delivery of projects outlined in this report, each of which will be integral in improving the baseline economic performance and footfall of Brynmawr.

Despite this at the time of writing, vacancy levels were low and there is still a strong sense of character to the street despite the need for physical improvement to improve the overall appearance. Coordinated action with the business owners will be needed to deliver meaningful change. A Business Improvement District (BID) model may be applicable albeit at a smaller scale. It is recommended that an initial feasibility study into a BID or similar model is undertaken.

Physical improvements can help improve the functionality and appearance of the street but disruption caused during construction needs careful consideration to avoid losing the support of local business. Trial projects that include temporary landscape installations is one way of assessing the potential risk/reward of changes to the movement and parking system.

Building improvements will deliver short to medium term benefits but without a plan for long term maintenance and overall uplift in economic performance are likely to revert to their current state. Improvements to Beaufort Street should be a combination of physical and non-physical interventions.

PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS INCLUDE:

- Targeted building improvements, including the refurbishment of building frontages. Please note that in isolation these measures are deemed insufficient to transform the patronage and vitality of Beaufort Street and should be focused on buildings where a longer term maintenance plan can be evidenced.
- A coordinated and consistent approach to Signage and wayfinding including decluttering
- A landscape strategy that incorporates Sustainable Urban Drainage, planting and potentially temporary and permanent parklets
- Improvements to lighting to ensure both a sense of safety and spectacle
- Improvements to pavements and crossings to enable inclusive access for all irrespective of physical ability.
- The potential relocation of public uses such as service centres or skills centres
- Encouraging the activation of the 'space above the shop' for residential or office use.
- Encouraging uses that align with the objectives of this report such as repair shops. Such uses can deliver multiple benefits from supporting a circular economy approach but can also provide invaluable opportunities for people suffering from isolation or in need of meaningful employment.
- Coordinating proposed events and changes

NON-PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS INCLUDE:

- An improved web presence and digital support and training for businesses on the high street
- Marketing and advertising to draw people into the town centre.
- A Hop, Shop and Save scheme similar to Treorchy
- Expanding the year round events calendar and creating a 'defining' annual event for Brynmawr



18. Example of Sustainable Drainage System in Sheffield



19. Treorchy High Street, The Guardian



20. Engine Shed Co-working Hub, Bristol

A NEW PARK

The lack of green space within the town centre was noted as a common theme within the engagement process. Two scenarios have been explored for the new park.

Option 1 – Welfare Park as the destination park

The first option proposes opportunities to revitalise Welfare Park by improving its facilities, expanding activities, and diversifying the types of green spaces making it more accessible and enjoyable for the whole community. This will require a plan to coordinate interests between the various community groups currently involved in the maintenance of the park.



21. Welfare Park, Brynmawr

Option 2 – A new park in the centre

The more ambitious option is to create a new destination park in the heart of the town centre. The new park can be designed to provide different types of green spaces such as a multi-functional gathering space for events and performances, a play area for kids, gardens and community growing spaces and an interactive art or sculpture garden. It may also have pavilions with different uses and activities such as cafe, greenhouse, shops, community kitchen, classroom and recreational spaces for youth to gather. The new park also creates an active travel link between north and south of the town, connecting the town centre to the retail park and the Boiler House. Signed pedestrian and cycle paths and pedestrian crossings provide safe movement across the town.

The new destination park can be a major asset to the town providing leisure and entertainment not only to the local community but potentially to neighbouring towns as well. Its location in the centre is beneficial as it stitches the old and new parts of town helping increase footfall on the high street and activate the town centre.

There are many case studies to draw inspiration from such as Levy Park in Texas, Julia Reserve Youth Park in Sydney and Pavilion Park in LA.

The following pages provided further context on this concept.



24. Natural play areas



22. Pavilion Park, LA



23. Levy Park, Texas

A NEW GREEN HEART FOR BRYNMAWR

There are numerous reasons for the location of a new park within the town centre of Brynmawr in lieu of another land use.

Throughout engagement there was a clear theme that the local population felt that there is a distinct lack of green space within the town centre. The option of a park also looks to solve the severance between the town centre and the retail park by creating a high quality and distinct link.

The creation of a park within the town centre also makes the town more attractive to a wider audience, giving more reasons to visit Brynmawr town centre, increasing the footfall within the town centre.

The location on the old depot also looks towards a potential realignment of the road which changes traffic conditions leading to reduced traffic and congestion. This provides greater alignment to tackling climate change at a local level and greater alignment to Welsh Government policy.

KEY ISSUES TO ADDRESS

Lack of green space within the town

Drop in footfall

Lack of activities within the town

Drop in business rate income

Traffic and congestion through town

Severance between north and south of the town



WIDER GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE LINKS



WELFARE PARK

PARC NANT Y WAUN



BRECON BEACONS

FORMER SCHOOL SITE

A new green space in the centre of Brynmawr would become part of a wider green infrastructure network. This will add to network of green walking and cycling routes and habitat corridors to enhance both human and environmental health.

FOUR KEY COMPONENTS

The park has the size and location support people of all ages and abilities and deliver wider social and environmental benefits.

A LANDSCAPE ENGINE

Providing a space to connect with nature that also responds to climate change and flood resilience and habitat creation at a local level through planting (carbon sequestration and habitat) and water filtration and storage through SuDS strategies.

A CENTRAL DESTINATION

Creating a new heart within Brynmawr that focuses on turning the negative into a positive and provide a new destination within the town centre, and a link between the severed north and south.

A COMMUNITIES HOME

The park as a place for all different types of groups and people to meet, interact and partake in hobbies and activities that improve their lives.

A PLACE WHERE IT HAPPENS

Different events around the year which change the perception and image of the town, whilst boosting footfall into the town centre and showing new visitors and business what Brynmawr can be.





A Landscape Engine

A PLACE FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE

The early vision for the park centres around 4 distinct landscape area. These landscape areas have distinctly different uses but all work towards creating an improved environment based around the nature.



41%



Percent of species to have declined since 1970

Source: State of Nature Report 2019

Long-term contact with nature is linked to longer lives.

Source: The Lancet Planetary Health



NATURE BASED PLAY

- benefits of nature and natural environment
- natural play for education



27. Mayfield Park, Manchester

BIODIVERSITY

Blaina Gwent Bio diversity net gain requirements
Requirements around national BNG



28. Wildflower Biodiversity Fitz Park London

SUDS

SuDS and SABS requirements



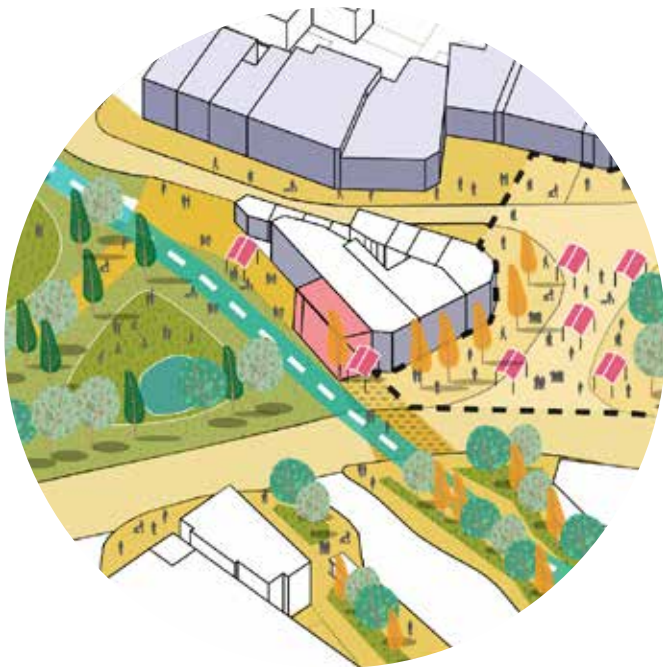
26. Sheffield SuDs Streets

A Central Destination

A NEW HEART

Turning the negative areas into positive creates new activity and vibrancy within the town. The park is south facing and screens the back of existing buildings, giving the area life.

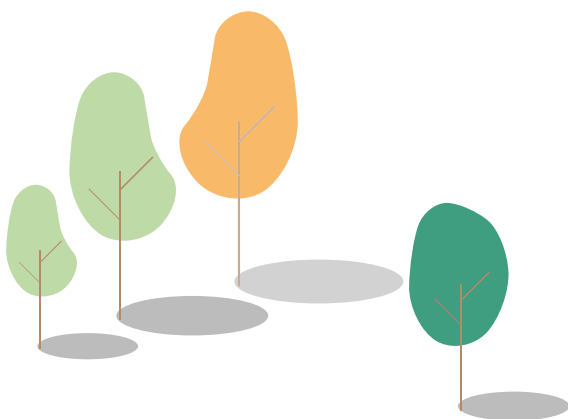
This is facilitated through the use of lightweight modular buildings to create new uses such as a new park cafe within the area which creates a new destination that also gives the park life and eyes on the street.



30. Urban Coffee Farm, Melbourne



29. Frau Gerolds Garten, Zurich





A Communities Home

A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

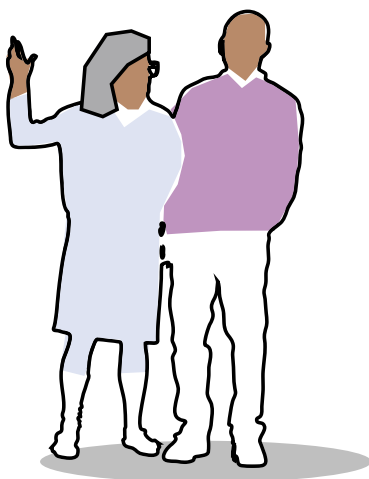
Creating a space that can cater for all ages and different types of people allows a greater sense of belonging within the park. It gives people stewardship and a sense of ownership of the area.

There is an opportunity to also provide for people through initiatives such as youth clubs, men sheds, female health support group, allotments for urban farming.

The park would need to become a place for all ages where the whole community is welcome. Circular economies could be showcased through the construction of these spaces.



32. 'Mens sheds' in action



33. Youth Club, East London



A Place Where It Happens

A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

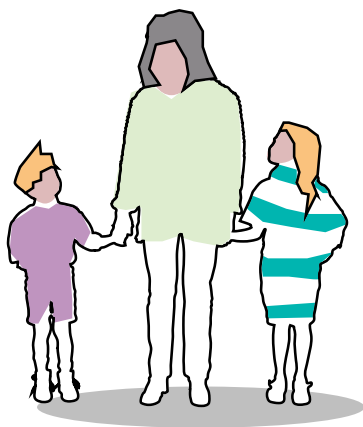
Creating a multi-functioning multi-use park within this location offers the opportunity to change the initial perception and visitors image of the town.

A place for new events, in a unique location will create buzz, and excitement about visiting Brynmawr.

High quality events offer the opportunity to “sell” the town to new visitors and new potential business.



35. 'Canal side' Regents Tow Path, London



36. Frau Gerolds Garten, Zurich

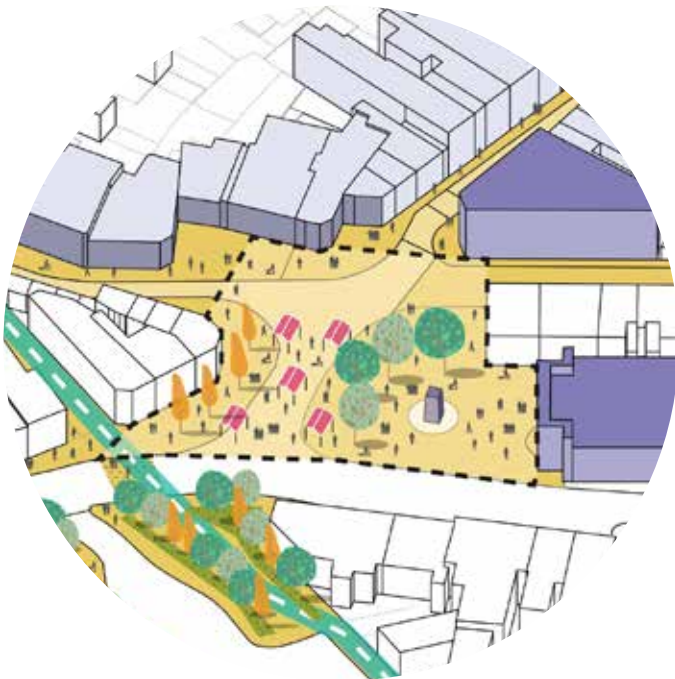


MARKET SQUARE AND BUS STATION

Markets are a significant part of Brynmawr's identity and to become a successful 21st Century Valleys market town it will need an appropriate civic space to conduct these events. The best location is at Market Square as it is the town's focal point and where the community currently congregates. However, in its current state, the space is constrained and inadequate for large scale events. One way to approach is to organise occasional street closures around Market Square for these community events such as markets and festivals. As it is a temporary measure, it will have minimal impact on traffic. This, in turn, will increase footfall, boosting business, and will enliven the public realm in the town centre.

This method has been proven effective in many places such as Usk High Street.

The central location of the bus station is very convenient and can be a good incentive to use public transport. Improvements to the bus timetables to increase frequency and accessibility are needed. However, there needs to be some spatial interventions to the bus station as well. The bus station is currently oversized for its purpose, undefined and surrounded by blank facades. Lack of suitable shelter and surveillance can also result in an uncomfortable and unsafe experience. Greening this space with trees, SuDS and wildflower planting with improved seating areas, shelter and lighting can enhance the waiting experience and create a safer environment for its users.





39. Brynmawr Town Centre



38. Usk Town Centre, Monmouthshire

5.3 Phasing and delivery summary

DELIVERY AND PHASING

A Delivery Plan has been developed, as a separate document, to support this Placemaking Plan. This articulates the case for investment in Brynmawr town centre, and sets out clear and deliverable actions to move the plan forward. For each identified project, a set of key actions and overall delivery plans has been developed. These are summarised in Table overleaf. For further detail, see the Delivery Plan.

To support delivery of the projects, and the next step actions associated with each, there are several potential sources of funding available. These are summarised in the Delivery Plan, and include:

- Shared prosperity fund (UK Government): £585 million of funding allocated to help spread opportunity and level up Wales, with three investment priorities – Community & Place, Supporting Local Business, and People & Skills (approx. £28M of which is ringfenced for Blaenau Gwent).
- Levelling Up Fund: £4.8 billion fund supporting town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects, and cultural and heritage assets. Bids for funding are required by 6 July 2022.
- Transforming Towns: supports projects to redevelop and improve town centres. This includes several funding programmes, including the Targeted Regeneration Programme (between 2018 and 2021, £100 million).
- Cardiff Capital Region City Deal: a £495M Wider Investment Fund aimed at priority investment areas of innovation, infrastructure and challenge.
- Active Travel Fund: funds projects which seek to achieve objectives of model shift, improved active transport accessibility and improved community connections. In 2022/3 £60M of funding is available, for projects which demonstrate alignment with WeITAG.
- National Lottery Heritage Fund: provides funding for heritage projects at range of scales (from £3,000 to £5M), prioritising projects that meet outcomes of involving people; resilience; wellbeing; skills; local economy; and creating better places.

Alongside seeking grant funding support, there are several other sources of funding for delivery of the identified projects, including private investor funding using key partners to support delivery of specific projects e.g. Boiler House. There could be an opportunity to consider a Business Improvement District (BID) in Brynmawr, as has been developed in Ebbw Vale. This would need further investigation, and exploration with the business community before implementation.

Project	Phasing	Overall cost*	Project partners	Key next steps
The Boiler House	Planning & feasibility (1-2 years) Delivery (2-5 years).	£3M to £5M	Blaenau Gwent CBC, Aneurin Bevan health board, Coleg y Gwent, local business	1.1 Feasibility study 1.2 Engagement with partners (soft market testing) 1.3 Engage with local community
Beaufort Street	Planning & strategy (6-12 months) Delivery (1-2years)	£100,000 to £250,000	Blaenau Gwent CBC, local community & businesses	2.1 High street improvement strategy 2.2 Community website 2.3 Local business engagement
Stagecoach Site	Planning & feasibility (6-12 months) Delivery of stagecoach (1-2 years) Delivery of Lake Road (2-3 years)	£250,000 - £1M <i>Excludes any costs of site acquisition</i>	Blaenau Gwent CBC, Youth Forum, Coleg y Gwent	3.1 Site acquisition 3.2 Stagecoach refurbishment feasibility and plan 3.3 Lake Road transport strategy 3.4 Skills, employment and youth services review 3.5 Engagement and soft market testing with partners
Market square and bus interchange	Trial (3-6months) Strategy (6-12months) Delivery (1-2 years)	£100,000 to £250,000	Blaenau Gwent CBC, local businesses, Youth services	4.1 Trial Events 4.2 Events strategy and programme 4.3 SuDs / Public realm improvements plan 4.4 Engagement and soft market testing with partners
Welfare Park	Identify management models (12 months) Park improvements (1-2 years)	up to £100,000	Blaenau Gwent CBC, local community groups	5.1 Stewardship & management models 5.2 Engagement with local community groups
North-south connection	Planning (6-12 months) Delivery (1-2 years)	up to £100,000	Blaenau Gwent CBC, local community	6.1 North-south corridor active transport plan

*Costs are approximate, and are based on professional judgement and benchmarks. They should be subjected to further investigation and testing.

6.1 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

There is a clear need for an ambitious and innovative placemaking plan for Brynmawr. Without intervention it is likely that a continual decline of the long standing town centre will occur. In addressing this issue and to shape a prosperous future for the town centre the following conclusions are offered:

INNOVATION WILL BE KEY

Simply trying to respond to the pressures the town centre faces from Covid, online retail to competing centres with traditional approaches such as building improvements alone is unlikely to bear fruit. There is an urgent need to test, trial and explore new ideas to generate as yet unknown but positive outcomes. The approach to the Stage Coach site is one such example where it is recommended to test ideas related to skills development, employment, youth involvement and community use.

SUSTAINABILITY NEEDS TO BE THE BEDROCK OF ALL CHANGE

The policy, legislative, scientific and moral case for a plan based on sustainability is irrefutable. This does not mean a more expensive plan instead this placemaking plan is an opportunity to raise awareness of sustainability amongst the community and demonstrate in real time how we can move to a circular economy which makes best use of existing assets such as the boiler house.

THE PLAN NEEDS TO BE 'OWNED' BY THE COMMUNITY

There is a prominent role for the community to play in driving change in Brynmawr. Local 'ownership' can be realised through social enterprise models such as the concept for the Boiler House or community led initiatives recommended for land around the Brynmawr Well-being centre. This is how growing numbers of people will be drawn to the common aim of this placemaking plan and will be the custodians of positive change.

EARLY, VISIBLE CHANGE IS ESSENTIAL

For the community and business fraternity to embrace this plan, early success will be vital. The plan recommends a number of projects such as the Market Square and Stage Coach site where meaningful and impactful change can be realised within a short period of time. These early phases will be critical in changing the perception and function of Brynmawr to enable later stages of change



NEXT STEPS

Momentum is an important part of this process. Outlined below are a number of recommended next steps to ensure that the enthusiasm generate during engagement is translated into change on the ground

FURTHER ENGAGEMENT

There will be a need to re-engage with the public and key stakeholders on the plan to understanding any key areas of concerns and conversely to understand where there is a consensus on proposed projects. Keeping people on board will build trust and will positively shape the plan.

PRIORITISATION AND PHASING

It is recommended that there is an early decision on where the emphasis should be in terms of funding applications and the delivery of projects. This should be extracted from further engagement work and availability of resource from within the council. Priority projects should be those where it is felt that there is a greater chance of securing funding and delivering within a shorter timescale

FEASIBILITY STUDIES

The next stage of work for projects including the Boiler House and Stage Coach site will be to undertake full feasibility studies. These could be aligned with a Business Case approach to understand for example the full costs of such projects, future operational strategies and to begin the process of securing funding.

DELIVER TEMPORARY PROJECTS

The Market Square presents an opportunity to quickly put into place the recommendations of this report. An early win here would involve the temporary redirection of traffic and a community led event. Temporary installations/uses should be considered for the Boiler House and Stage Coach case as a precursor to a permanent use. These help change perception of these buildings, demonstrate commitment from the council and can be invaluable test-beds for 'end-state' use.

CELEBRATE THE PLAN

It is important to generate excitement and enthusiasm around the work undertaken. Taking the time to convey the positivity surrounding the proposals and the benefit to the community via different communication channels helps to shift public perception and draw people into the process.





ARUP