

# Thomastown Conservation Area



## Character Appraisal and Management Plan (adopted July 2014)



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# **1. Introduction**

The carrying out of a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for every Conservation Area is a recommendation of the Merthyr Tydfil Built Heritage Strategy and Action Plan (August 2008). This Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan seeks to assess and analyse the current condition of the character of the Conservation Area, consider boundary changes and determine specific policies or projects to assist in its protection and enhancement.

**The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan is an aid for Development Control officers; to help them make decisions on applications which affect the physical fabric of the Conservation Area. It is also designed as a guide to help local residents, property owners and developers understand what is special about the area and the kind of developments which may be acceptable. This document should be seen as an additional piece of planning guidance for anyone considering development within the Conservation Area's boundaries.**

## **1.1 The Merthyr Tydfil Built Heritage Strategy and Action Plan (August 2008)**

This Strategy and Action Plan was adopted by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council in September 2008. It was commissioned in order to improve the way in which the rich heritage assets of Merthyr Tydfil are managed. The strategy assesses the condition of these assets and develops an action plan to address designation, funding, policy and management. One of the recommendations of the strategy is to review the existing Conservation Area of Thomastown, consider the amendment of its boundaries and put forward a management plan to ensure that the special nature of the area is preserved and enhanced.

This Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan is produced in order to understand and define the character of the Conservation Area and to establish and justify whether it is necessary to extend its boundaries. This Appraisal and Management Plan is essential in order for national policy and parallel policies in the Local Development Plan to work effectively.

## **1.2 Conservation Areas and Appraisals**

A Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest. The decision to designate a Conservation Area is made by the Council following an assessment of the character of the area. Once a Conservation Area is designated, the Council has recognised that the area has a special character and identity which is worth protecting.

The Council is required by legislation to preserve and enhance the character of each Conservation Area and all new proposals which affect that special character have to be considered in the light of this requirement.

As part of its continuing duties under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council is continuously reviewing its Conservation Areas to establish whether their boundaries need amendment and to identify potential measures for enhancing and protecting the Conservation Area.

A Conservation Area Appraisal is the first step in a dynamic process, which records and analyses the various features that give the Area its special architectural and historic interest. This appraisal aims to provide a clear and sound understanding of the Conservation Area by recording, evaluating and presenting all of the key elements that together make up its special interest and character as well as considering whether any changes to the Conservation Area boundary are required.

This appraisal is not intended to be a comprehensive list of, and does not provide detailed descriptions of all individual historic buildings. The omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

**Appendix 1 (Planning Policy Framework) sets out the national and local policies that guide and influence the production of a conservation area appraisal and management plan.**

### **1.3 The Management Plan**

The Management Plan is based on the opportunities and negative features, revealed during the survey of the area, and sets out proposals and policies which may enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

These proposals are prioritised in order for the enhancement of the Conservation Area to be more effective and to avoid harmful change to the fabric that makes the Area unique. The principal objective of the Management Plan is to formulate proposals which provide a basis for making sustainable decisions on the Conservation Area's future.

It is important to note that the undertaking of tasks set out in the management plan is reliant on community involvement and the involvement of organisations, private developers and other interested parties outside of the Council. The Council will endeavour to ensure that the tasks in the management plan are being undertaken and will consider varying ways to implement them.

### **1.4 Review**

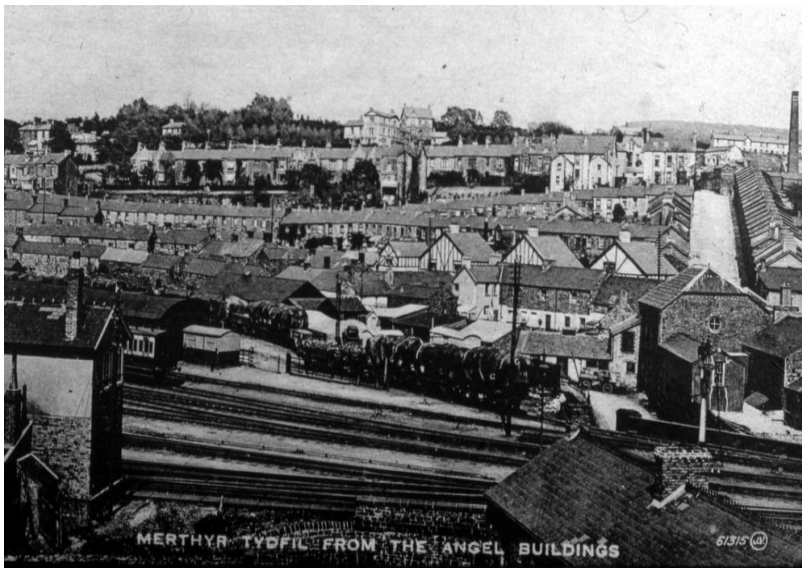
The appraisal should not be regarded as a static document. It will be subject to periodic review and update, especially in the light of new research, as more information and knowledge becomes available along with the continuing enhancement of the Conservation Area.

## 2. History and Location

### 2.1 Location and Etymology

The Thomastown Conservation Area is located to the east of Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre. It sits on a steep slope on the eastern side of the Merthyr Tydfil basin and commands impressive views across the town and across the valley over the wider historic landscape. The area is particularly steep to the east of Union Street and a round hillock rises in the area between Church Street and Newcastle Street. Prior to the development of Thomastown, the area was separated into a number of parcelled fields.

With no valuable outcrops, the area was not subject to excavation and was subsequently developed as a superior residential area. The streets are built in a grid pattern with the principal roads running alongside the hillside contours (from north to south). Church Street, Newcastle Street and Alma Street run from east to west connect the area to the town centre.

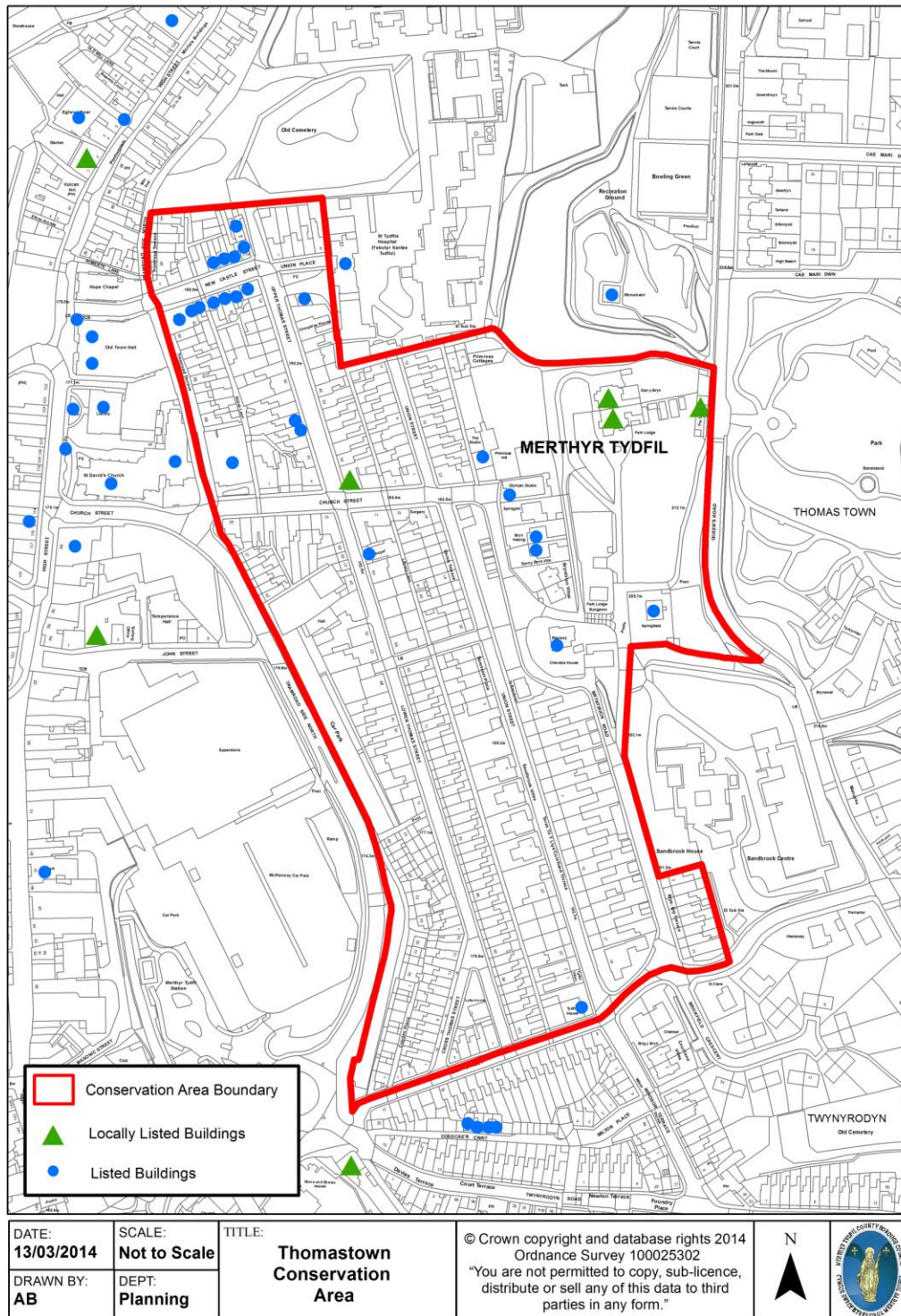


Above - Historic view from former railway yard (now Tesco car park). Below - View from the Boer War Memorial in Thomastown Park towards south-west.





**Below – Map of the existing Conservation Area**



Immediately to the west of the Conservation Area is the town centre, to north is the St Tydfil's Hospital site (now vacant and allocated for residential use in the Local Development Plan), to the east, and further uphill, is a later residential area and Thomastown Park which overlooks the northern part of the conservation area. To the south is an area dominated by residential Victorian terraces known as Twynyrodyn.

The Thomastown Conservation Area contains a number of important historic sites, including the Former Miners Hall, Former Synagogue and Tydfil House. The area was developed during the industrial era of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and is known as having one of the largest collection of Georgian homes in South Wales. It has historic associations with other surrounding sites, such as the Penyarden Ironworks and Penyarden Tramroad.

The area of Thomastown is named after Dr William Thomas, who was a local magistrate and in 1822 was the Chairman of the select vestry; an organisation set up to supervise the running of Merthyr Tydfil. In 1828, he had purchased the Court House (a listed building located to the south-west of the conservation area) and a 172 acre estate. This estate would eventually become the Georgian development, of which he lent his name to.



**Above: Newcastle Street**



**Above: Upper Thomas Street cottages on Lower Thomas Street**



**Above: Cottages on Lower Thomas Street**

## 2.2 History and development of area

Thomastown is an integral part of Merthyr Tydfil town and lies immediately east of the traditional town centre and the oldest urban part of the town. The area developed during the industrial era of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. As the town grew, Thomastown grew eastwards and uphill. The nearest part of the Conservation Area to the town centre is characterised by workers cottages built around 1800 (known as Tramroadside). Some of these have since been demolished. The central section of the Conservation Area is dominated by larger terraced dwellings built in the mid 1800s and the easternmost portion of the conservation area is dominated by larger detached dwellings set among what were rural lanes overlooking the town.

### *The growth of Tramroadside*

Thomastown began its evolution during the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, at a time when Merthyr Tydfil had developed as a thriving town between the sites of several ironworks.

The 1790s saw the main ironworks of Merthyr Tydfil begin the transformation from the reliance on the canal system to the use of tramroads as the principal means of transport. As part of this change, the Penydarren Tramroad was constructed. The tramway was initially built in 1799 where nine and a half miles of track had been constructed to serve the Dowlais, Penydarren and Plymouth Ironworks. The tramroad was subsequently expanded to incorporate settlements further to the south of the Borough.

The success of this route resulted in a passenger service, carrying workers to their respective ironworks, and further south of Merthyr Tydfil as far as the canal at Abercynon. As a result of this, a number of worker's dwellings were built alongside the tramroad in order to gain convenient access. This resulted in the construction of Tramroadside in 1805. Part of its northern section is retained in Thomastown Conservation Area; however, Tramroadside also stretches a mile to the south along the Penydarren Tramroad.

The Penydarren Tramroad was the scene of the first journey of the world's earliest steam locomotive in 1804.



**Photo: Tramroadside North, terraced dwellings facing the route of the historic Penydarren Tramroad.**

### *Later Georgian and Victorian development*

By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Merthyr Tydfil had become an industrial centre of worldwide significance. This rapid expansion had caused pockets of wealth to be created amongst the higher classes of society. This is emphasised in the development of privately owned areas. One of which being Thomastown.



The central part of the Conservation Area was constructed between 1849 and 1865, and is the first known example of a middle-class residential area built in Merthyr Tydfil. The area was built in part of a 172 acre estate, owned by local magistrate, Dr William Thomas.

Dr. Thomas had allowed for a number of spacious villas to be built on his estate, such as The Rectory (originally known as Courtland House until it was bought by the Church in Wales in 1921), Springfield Villa, Bryntirion (since demolished), Brynheulog and Sunnybank Villa. All of which date from the mid 1800s. This area was then known as Adulam Fields before the name Thomastown (named after Dr Thomas) came into common usage. A short time later, Thomas permitted groups of professionals to commission the construction of terraced streets within his estate. Work began on Thomas Street in 1840, and was described in the Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian as the “most elegant in architecture and most pleasant in situation”.

Primrose Cottage and Upper Union Street were developed shortly afterwards. The latter terrace consisted of eleven Union Club owned houses which were built to complement the Union Workhouse, which was built in 1853, and subsequently rebuilt in 1870 (now the vacant St. Tydfil's Hospital). These houses were erected by an association of small proprietors paying small instalments on a monthly basis.

Newcastle Street and Courtland Terrace were constructed between 1850 and 1870, and stand as well preserved Georgian Terraces to date (many of which are now listed).



**Photos: Images of Union Street**

#### *Addition of Key Buildings*

Later development occurred in Thomastown with religious buildings adding a new dimension to its character.

In 1855, Wesleyan Reformers built Capel Salem on Newcastle Street. During this period, Shiloh Welsh Wesleyan Chapel (now the Former Miners' Welfare Hall) was built on Church Street, as a replacement to its previous site which became the site of the Vale of Neath Railway Co station.

The Wesleyan Chapel is attributed to Isambard Kingdom Brunel and is a rare surviving example of the very few Churches built by him.



**Above - Unitarian Chapel on Upper Thomas Street (also known as St Margaret's Church).**



**Above – Capel Salem on the corner of Newcastle Street and Tramroadside North (last used as a Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Hall).**

A Synagogue was built in the 1870s at the top of Church Street by the thriving Jewish community in Merthyr Tydfil. Many of which had arrived from Eastern Europe during the early 1800s. The building remains the oldest surviving synagogue building in Wales. This building was lastly used as a gym but is currently vacant.

A Unitarian Chapel existed during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, opposite the Court House occupied by Dr. Thomas. In 1901, a new Unitarian Chapel (today known as St Margaret's Church and occupied

by the National Spiritualists Union) designed by local architect E.A. Johnson and was built between the terraced homes in Lower Thomas Street.

Primrose Hill on Church Street is a listed, early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century 3-storey building, originally built as one dwelling house but now divided into flats. It is located at right-angles to the former synagogue and benefits from a backdrop of mature trees.

### *20<sup>th</sup> Century Changes*

Tramroadside North (boundary of the western edge of the Conservation Area) has become part of the town centre bypass and consequently some of the early workers' cottages have been demolished. This highway is considered to signal a physical separation between the Conservation Area (dominated by residential development) and the town centre which is dominated by a mix of commercial and civic uses.

### *Thomastown Park*

Parkland surrounds the Conservation Area to the north and west. Although not within the Conservation Area, Thomastown Park, stretching either side of Queen's Road, is intrinsically linked with the development of the area. The park contains the Boer War Memorial and affords views over the Conservation Area, town centre and across the valley.

### *Potential Development*

The St Tydfil's Hospital site, which contains the Former Union Workhouse, is allocated for residential development in the adopted LDP (2006 – 2021) and has been recently vacated by the NHS.

Sandbrook House is located immediately to the east of the Conservation Area and is vacant having been recently sold by the Council. This site contains buildings from the 1970s and 80s and mature trees. Part of the site is surrounded by a much older pennant stone wall.

*It should be noted the above is not an exhaustive account of the history of the development of the area.*

### 3. Assessment of Special Interest

**3.1** The Thomastown Conservation Area is significant as it contains an important cross-section of Georgian style housing on land once owned by one of Merthyr Tydfil's most famous patrons. Thomastown is reputed to contain one of the largest groups of late Georgian and early Victorian style buildings in Wales and is one of the first purpose-built residential suburbs in Merthyr Tydfil. Many of the facades are unified and classical in design with prominent buildings at corner locations. The area is therefore considered to be worthy of protecting. Thomastown Conservation Area was originally designated in 1978. Character Appraisals were undertaken in 2003 and 2007. Both of these devised 3 character areas (Georgian Tramroadside Cottages, Victorian Residential Area and High Ground to the East). The following statement captures the importance of the conservation area.

***The Thomastown Conservation Area includes some of the earliest examples of planned residential growth of Merthyr Tydfil for the working class, middle class and upper class who benefitted from the industrial growth of the town in the 1800s. The area also includes key sites with national importance such as the Penydarren Tramroad, the Former Synagogue and the Former Miners' Welfare Hall.***



Above: View up Church Street to the Synagogue



## 3.2 Location and Context



### **3.3 Key Characteristics of the Conservation Area**

- Georgian and Victorian residential suburb interspersed with listed religious and community buildings.
- Distinctive architectural style that is repeated throughout the area on residential dwellings.
- Significant number of narrow alleyways giving access to rear of properties.
- Set on slope of hill overlooking town centre.
- Smaller, older properties nearer the town centre and larger, newer properties further away and uphill from the town centre.
- Rectangular grid street pattern with longer streets following the contours of the sloping land.
- Location of various distinctive and important buildings and events with national importance such as the Penydarren Tramroad and the oldest surviving synagogue building in Wales.
- Densely developed and lack of public open space within the Conservation Area. Not particularly well connected to parkland surrounding the Conservation Area to the east and north-east.

### **3.4 Setting, Building Form and Landscape**

The Conservation Area is concentrated on residential development mainly constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Conservation Area's setting is on a westerly facing hill slope overlooking the town centre. It is entirely surrounded by urban development. However, to the north-east there is formal parkland offering a 'green' backdrop to the area. Some parts of the eastern extremities of the Conservation Area are fairly steep and contain woodland and large garden areas, especially to the north of the former synagogue and around Dan-y-Bryn and Park Lodge. This gives the area an attractive backdrop, especially when viewed from a number of locations in the town centre such as the railway station, Tesco car park and the westernmost stretch of Church Street.

Thomastown Conservation Area is linked by means of a number of intersecting streets and alleyways in all directions and is an integral part of the central and historic urban area of Merthyr Tydfil. The Conservation Area is mostly built-up and has no public open spaces.

The building form of the area is dominated by linear residential development which generally follows the contours of the hill slope. Further uphill towards the eastern boundary of the Conservation Area this form breaks up somewhat and detached and semi-detached dwellings are present in a more unordered fashion. Most buildings have two storeys; this is however occasionally punctuated by larger non-residential buildings such as the Former Miners' Welfare Hall and Former Synagogue for example. Some residential dwellings have a basement level set within the hill slope, and so appear to be 3 storeys in height when viewed from the west.

Given that the area is fairly densely-built up and that there are no public open spaces there is very little landscaping within the Conservation Area except for the steeper wooded hillsides in the eastern part of the area described above. However the Conservation Area does border the public park at the Old Cemetery to the north and Thomastown Park to the east and north-east. The greatest landscape impact is the backdrop of trees along the eastern boundary of the Conservation Area.

### **3.5 Spatial Analysis**

Thomastown Conservation Area occupies approximately 17 acres (6.8 ha.) and contains mostly residential properties. The Conservation Area contains over 300 separate buildings and is strongly defined by 19<sup>th</sup> Century industrial symbols to its western side, with the incorporation of worker's cottages and the former line of the Penydarren Tramroad. Georgian style homes

characterise the area to the north of Church Street and Upper Thomas Street. The remaining content is dominated by Victorian (in era and style) terraced dwellings, larger semi-detached and detached dwellings at higher elevations. The Conservation Area has a number of distinct spatial elements,-

- Land Form – located on a slope rising towards the east. The easternmost parts are steeper and less developed. Views from the higher parts can be obtained across the town to the western side of the Taff Valley.
- Key Buildings – The Conservation Area is punctuated with larger key buildings which are mostly listed and considered to be of national and local importance. Some of these close views such as the Former Synagogue but some are discretely located within streets of terraced dwellings such as St Margaret's Church.
- Distinctive Architectural Style – The area contains a number of prevalent architectural details which are continued throughout the area in sections. For example, many residential properties in Newcastle Street, Upper Thomas Street and Lower Thomas Street have a distinctive uniform Georgian-inspired style adding character to these streets.
- Residential Dwellings – The area is dominated by residential dwellings. The homes of Thomastown represent an exemplar cross-section of Georgian and Victorian dwellings in Merthyr Tydfil. The residential buildings represent changes in architectural fashions throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The large villas, such as the Rectory and Sunny Bank are interesting Regency style buildings invariably stucco fronted and hipped-roofed. Gothic and Neo-Romanesque style churches are also located within the Conservation Area. These heritage features demonstrate a high group value, characteristic of this Conservation Area.
- Densely Built-up Environment – The Conservation Area is a fairly densely built up area of Merthyr Tydfil. Most of the terraced dwellings on the lower streets have no front gardens and only small rear gardens. Most properties do not have off-street parking, and streets are dominated by on-street residential parking. There are no public open spaces.

### **3.6 Archaeology**

There are no scheduled ancient monuments within the Conservation Area. There are, however, a number of post medieval records included on the Historic Environment Record within and close to the Conservation Area.

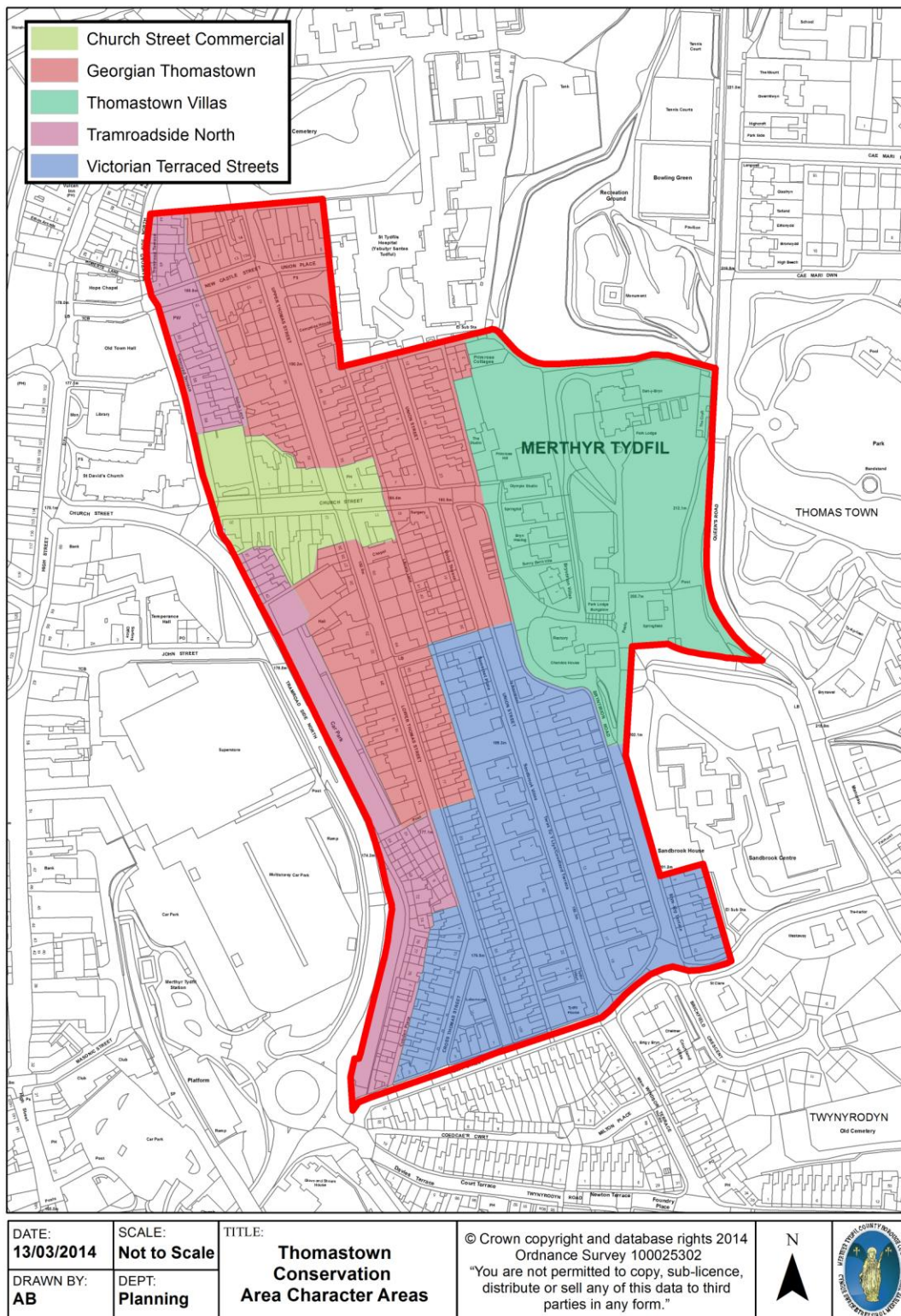
### **3.7 Character Analysis**

#### **3.7.1 Character and zones**

Previous conservation area appraisals have split the conservation area into 3 distinct character areas. These zones are dominated by the age of development that survives, the type of buildings, their size and scale, and the position of each zone on the hill slope. In the most recent analysis of the conservation area 5 character areas have been developed following careful analysis of the built-form of the existing Conservation Area, land uses and architectural style. These five areas are; 1) Church Street Commercial, 2) Tramroadside North, 3) Georgian Thomastown, 4) Victorian Terraced Streets and 5) Thomastown Villas.



### Map of character areas





### **1) Church Street Commercial**

This is the smallest character area and is characterised by uses rather than building forms. This character area contains the hub of commercial activity on Church Street which feels like an extension of the town centre. Unlike most of the Conservation Area, this area contains a number of retail and office uses, although many buildings may have started as residential properties. Recently, traffic priorities have changed in the town meaning that traffic travelling on Tramroadside North (separating Thomastown from the town centre) is automatically directed into Thomastown onto Church Street.

This character area includes buildings which contain a mixture of retail and office uses including the remains of the Former Miners' Welfare Hall (listed). This building began life as a chapel built to replace a previous chapel demolished to make way for the first Merthyr Tydfil Railway Station (since demolished and now a Tesco supermarket). The railway company, as a result of this demolition erected a new chapel of the same name (Shiloh Welsh Wesleyan Chapel). The building is attributed as being designed by the world-renowned engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who locally was an engineer for the Vale of Neath Railway Company.

In 1921, the building was converted into the Miners' Welfare Hall, and the corner tower was partly removed and the building lengthened. In 1987, it was converted to a club known as Charbonniers but was later destroyed by fire and is now a ruin in urgent need of repair and restoration before more of the fabric is lost. The building may be the only surviving reminder of the architectural work of IK Brunel.

The locally listed Brunswick Hotel is situated on Church Street. The building, though larger than its adjacent dwellings, displays similar characteristics to its neighbouring properties with raised banding bisecting the building's two floors, and plain rendered elevations.

### **2) Tramroadside North**

This character area is dominated by small workers' terraced dwellings built alongside the Penydarren Tramroad and a linear car park located in place of former dwellings. Compared to the houses in the rest of the Conservation Area, these houses are relatively small and modest in character. These buildings are also probably some of the earliest surviving dwellings in the Conservation Area given their location closest to the historic centre of Merthyr Tydfil and their location next to the Penydarren Tramroad. This area includes the listed former chapel on Newcastle Street. The Wesley reformers built Capel Salem on Newcastle Street in 1855 and by 1857, the congregation was recognised as Welsh Independent. During the twentieth century, the building served as the Borough Council's first computer section. More recently it was purchased as a Kingdom Hall by the Jehovah's Witnesses.

### **3) Georgian Thomastown**

This character area is dominated by Georgian-style terraced dwelling houses. It is likely that most of these dwellings were built in the early Victorian period but are characterised as having a 'Georgian' style designs. For example the vast majority of houses in this area do not benefit from bay windows and are built immediately on the back of the highway and have heavy-set detailing around the doorways. This area including Church Street is considered to be the first wave of purpose-built suburban housing in the area. Some of the properties are double fronted and most of them contain similar door-surround moulding features which is distinctive to this area of Merthyr Tydfil. The majority of the properties are finished with coloured render, usually pastel shades, creams and whites.

There are a cluster of listed dwellings on Newcastle Street. This character area also contains the listed St Margaret's Church (former Unitarian Chapel). The Chapel is set in the terraced row on

Lower Thomas Street close to the corner of Church Street and is dated 1901. The building was designed by E A Johnson of Abergavenny in an Art Nouveau Gothic style, consisting of a gabled façade with a large porch fronting onto the streetline in red brick pale freestone dressings. The building is now a spiritualist meeting hall. This building has a wholly different character and design from the adjoining dwellings.

This area contains the listed statue at the front entrance to the former St Tydfil's hospital. This memorial is dedicated to Sir WT Lewis, Lord Merthyr, and stands to the left hand side of the entrance forecourt. This was relocated from its original site outside the General Hospital, Penydarren Road.

Another feature of this area is the retaining wall on the eastern side of Union Street. This is particularly dominant on the middle section of this street opposite numbers 36 to 47, where it also contains large trees behind, adding a 'greener' character to this part of the street.

This area also includes Primrose Cottages. 2 semi-detached properties tucked behind Union Street and only accessible via a narrow footpath which leads one uphill into Thomastown Park.

#### **4) Victorian Terraced Streets**

This character area is dominated by Victorian terraced dwellings. This area is fairly densely built-up and contains no open public spaces. The terraces were built street by street on fields owned by Dr. William Thomas, overlooking Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre. There is a mixture of flat-fronted on-the-street terraced dwellings and those that benefit from bay windows and small front gardens. There are also pockets of more modern residential developments typically comprising of detached dwellings. There are visible retaining walls constructed from local pennant stone. The layout of the streets follows an established layout from character area 3, and similarly, rear footpaths are present.

There is variation in the design and treatment of terraced dwellings. Some have gables on the front elevation and some have elaborate design elements on the front elevation. A retaining wall runs across the front of properties on the eastern side of Union Street forming terraced dwellings' boundaries and necessitating the use of steps leading up to front doors.

#### **5) Thomastown Villas**

This area is dominated by detached and semi-detached houses in spacious and wooded surroundings. The area is the easternmost extent and most elevated part of the Conservation Area. It is also an area where the formal layout of rectangular streets dissipates into shorter curved streets, back lanes and streets without footways. This area also contains many listed and locally listed buildings. Probably the most significant is the former Synagogue situated at the end of (and top of) Church Street with commanding views down to the town centre. The area is sparsely populated and is bounded by Thomastown Park to the east and north, and the grounds to the Sandbrook House to the south. The individual buildings have their own character and differ to the other character areas. This area has less of a sense of uniformity than the other character areas thanks to the individually designed buildings constructed at different times. However they are all generally large in scale, especially compared to the other dwellings in the Conservation Area and some have extensive grounds.

Key buildings in this area include the former Synagogue, Primrose Hill House, Bryn Heulog and Sunny Bank Villa. The stepped lane between Bryntirion Villas and The Rectory also adds to the physical character of the area.

### **3.7.2 Activities and Uses**

#### *Prior to 1851*

The predominant land use within the Conservation Area is residential. Retail and office uses are almost exclusively confined to Church Street. Strong links to Merthyr Tydfil's industrial past remain by means of workers' cottages along Tramroadside, public houses and the former Penydarren Tramroad route. The layout of this area evolved after the construction of Tramroadside, the independent chapel, and part of the Union workhouse (now St. Tydfil's Hospital), which are the first known structures within the area.

The Board of Health maps, circa 1851, indicate a very sporadic population within the Conservation Area, with only a solitary terrace alongside Tramroadside and intermittent Georgian home along Church Street. The setting of Thomastown largely remained as open fields overlooking the town centre, with the cholera cemetery and mortuary chapel located to the north. The predominate use of the area was vastly different compared to its current format.

#### *1851 to 1875*

The largest change of use within the designated area occurred in between 1851 and 1875 when the construction of Georgian style homes started. This also culminated in the construction of a number of ancillary buildings and spaces including the infirmary, a girls' school, and The Brunswick public house, which still remains to date. Furthermore, a number of larger villas were established to the east of the Conservation Area. The setting of the Conservation Area was encompassed by open space to the north and east and brickworks to the south.

#### *1875 to 1900*

A multitude of religious buildings were added to the Conservation Area in between 1875 and 1900 with the introduction of the Synagogue on Primrose Hill and the chapel on Lower Thomas Street. Furthermore, an additional infirmary building was added to the north of the Conservation Area (at St Tydfil's Hospital). Thomastown Park was also established following this period and the Conservation Area had grown largely to its present day layout by this time.

#### *20<sup>th</sup> Century*

Minimal changes in use occurred during the period from the 1920s until the present day, such as the replacement of Bryntirion Villa and Bryn Teg House with modern counterparts, including the Sandbrook Social Care Day Centre. A commercial function had also been established among some units fronting Church Street, which benefits from close proximity to the Town Centre.

A number of dwellings were demolished during the 1960s along Tramroadside to make way for parking spaces. The setting of the Conservation Area was altered during the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century with the establishment of the Tesco supermarket to the west of Tramroadside, replacing the historic Merthyr Tydfil Railway Station.

### **3.7.3 Quality of Buildings**

The quality of buildings varies across the area. The vast majority of the residential dwellings are occupied and in a good condition. However, some of the listed buildings are vacant and in a poor condition such as the former Miners' Welfare Hall and former Synagogue. In particular, the former Miners' Welfare Hall is in a ruinous state and requires immediate restoration before more of the fabric of the building is lost.

Unsurprisingly, modern materials and additions such as uPVC windows and doors, satellite dishes, render and pebble-dash, and concrete roof tiles are present on many of the unlisted

dwelling houses and other buildings in the conservation area. Despite this, the overall impression of character area 3 especially, is of a preserved early suburban area, where most original architectural features remain in reasonable condition.

The previous Conservation Area appraisal undertaken in 2007 identified many positive buildings including most of the pre-war buildings in the area. Given that the majority of unlisted buildings were identified as positive buildings, a more comprehensive study has been undertaken as part of this appraisal to establish the key unlisted positive buildings which have retained original character. These are set out below.

### 3.7.4 Positive Buildings

Positive Buildings are those that are unlisted and not locally listed, but which are considered to add character to the Conservation Area because they have retained original and/or historic elements and detailing. The following buildings have been recognised as positive buildings with reasons given. Some of these properties are located outside of the current Conservation Area but are proposed to be included within the expanded Conservation Area (see Chapter 5).

Buildings in both the current Conservation Area boundary and proposed boundary extension (see chapter 5) have been assessed in respect of whether they retain original (or historic) fabric, and characters or features which are considered worthy of retention and protection. Such buildings could become subject to an article 4 direction (see Chapter 6) ensuring that such features are not lost without due consideration.

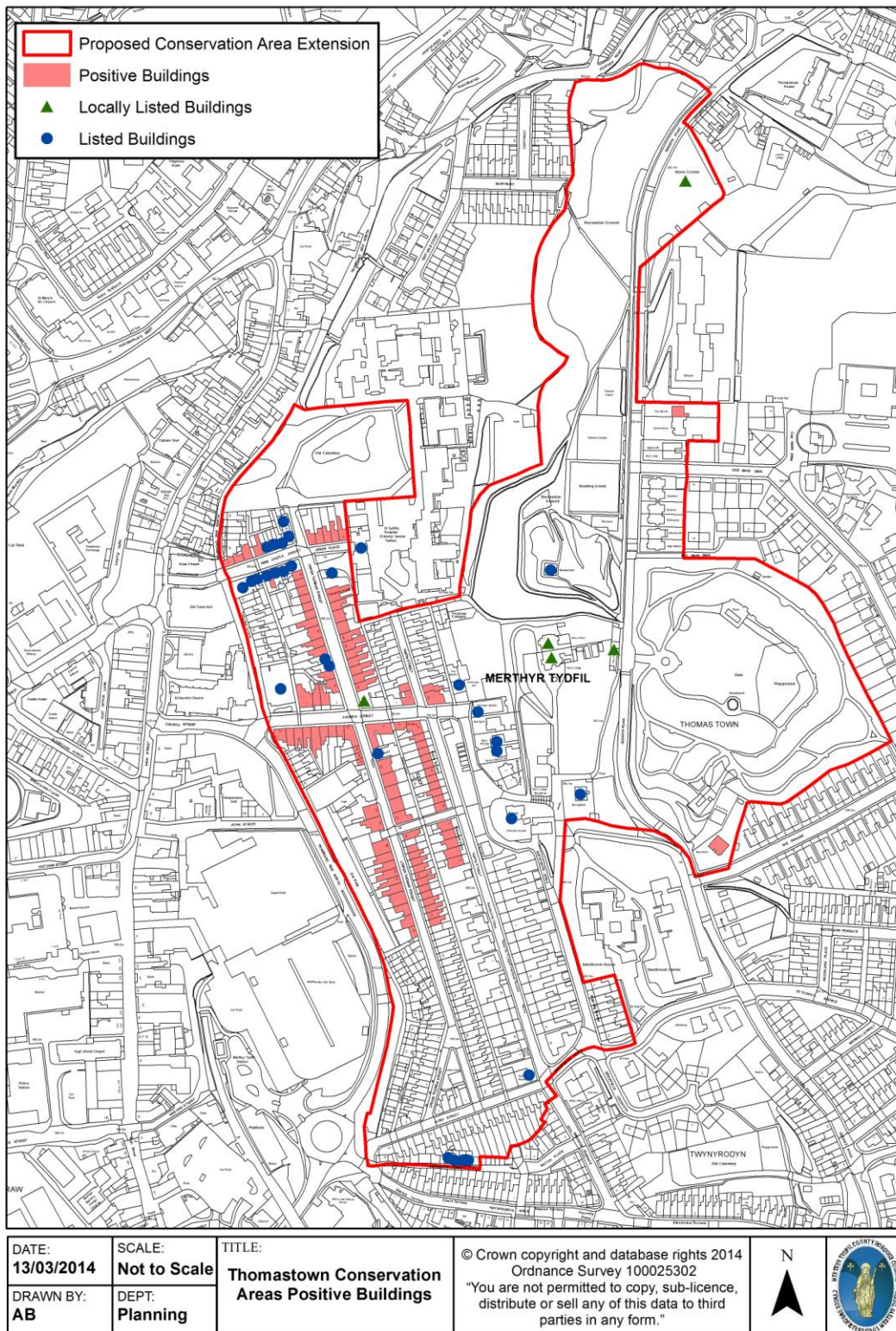
Site or address	Reason for inclusion as Positive Building
Brynawel, Queen's Road	Large detached Victorian or Edwardian Villa which contains sliding sash timber windows, balconies with decorative stone railings, decorative gable features and banding, Welsh slate roof and detailed stone corners.
All unlisted buildings (nos. 7, 8, 9, 10 and 18) Newcastle Street.	These dwellings share 'Georgian characteristics' of the listed dwellings, however, most have modern windows and doors and hence have not been statutorily listed.
Property adjoining no 45 Upper Thomas Street (northside).	This property has a Georgian style similar to listed properties in Newcastle Street and Upper Thomas Street and has retained timber sliding sash windows and slate roof.
The Mount, Queen's Road	Edwardian semi-detached villa on Queen's Road. Has retained elements of original build such as timber windows and slate roof.
11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, 58-59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77 and 78 Lower Thomas Street and 30, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54 and 55 Upper Thomas Street	Dwellings that share Georgian characteristics of listed buildings in Newcastle Street and Upper Thomas Street; however, most have modern windows and doors and hence have not been statutorily listed.
1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 Church Street	Buildings, mostly commercial, share Georgian characteristics of listed buildings in Newcastle Street and Upper Thomas Street; however, most have modern windows and doors and hence have not been statutorily listed. They are also highly visible as they line the main commercial street in the area and busier trafficked streets.



1, 2, 22 and 23 Union Street	Dwellings share Georgian characteristics of listed buildings in Newcastle Street and Upper Thomas Street; however, most have modern windows and doors and hence have not been statutorily listed. Also at prominent position at junction of Church Street and Union Street.
1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 Union Place	Dwellings share Georgian characteristics of listed buildings in Newcastle Street and Upper Thomas Street; however, most have modern windows and doors and hence have not been statutorily listed.
1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Somerset Place and 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45 and 46 Union Street (also known as Union Terrace)	Two rows of terraced dwellings which share design characteristics with the Georgian style dwellings elsewhere in the Conservation Area such as moulded doorways and detailing around windows; however, they most have modern windows and doors and hence have not been statutorily listed.

Many of the buildings above that have been determined as 'Positive' form the 'Georgian' core of the Conservation Area that makes this area unique in Merthyr Tydfil and across South Wales.


**Location map of Positive Buildings with Listed Buildings and locally listed buildings also denoted**






3.7.5 Local details, traditional materials

Tramroadside North consists of small simple stone terraced dwellings utilising dressed stone. The Georgian style terraces on Newcastle Street, Upper Union Street and Lower Thomas Street contain moulding features around front doors, arched doorways with semi-circular fanlights and mock pilasters topped with moulded architecture. These buildings tend to be finished in smooth coloured render. There are some examples of cast iron rainwater goods. The later terraced dwellings on Union Street and Lower Thomas Street display characteristics that are more commonly found in many Victorian terraced areas around the country. There are, however, still examples of mock pilasters and arched moulding around doorways, albeit less elaborate than on the Georgian style terraces. In addition, some of the Victorian terraces display Dutch-style gable frontages on Union Street.




The non-residential dwelling buildings in the area tend to display a variety of materials and architectural features. The key buildings are tabulated below.



Building	Features
Former Synagogue	<p>Heavy Northern Gothic style. Snecked rubble facings with ashlar bands and dressings. Slate roofs with red tiled ridges and finials. Crowning gable with polygonal finials and narrow louvred openings. Polygonal staircase turrets with conical roofs. Double flight of steps with stone piers.</p> 



<p><b>Former Miners' Hall</b></p>	<p>In ruinous condition. Missing roof and missing corner tower. Tall gabled Romanesque front elevation. Snecked rubble facings, freestone dressings. Oculus with chevron splay and hoodmould to gable. Aisled side elevation to Tramroad Side North.</p> 
<p><b>Nos. 11 to 20 New Castle Street</b></p>	<p>Two-storey Georgian style terraced dwellings. Light coloured smooth render. Door mouldings. Slate roofs. Stucco pilasters. Semi-circular fanlights. Sash windows with glazing bars.</p> 
<p><b>St Margaret's Church (Unitarian Church)</b></p>	<p>Art Nouveau Gothic. Elaborate set back gabled facade with overall porch. Red brick with pale freestone dressings including banding. Tall parapeted gable with finials and traceried panelling. Arched lower doorway under cornice with tablet flowers and shield.</p> 



<b>Primrose Hill</b>	<p>Three storey detached dwelling (now flats). Pale render finish. Sash windows with glazing bars. Simplified pilastered doorcase. Enclosed forecourt with right hand gatepiers.</p> 
<b>Tydfil House</b>	<p>Two storey, three window rendered regency style house. Gable end stack with cornice. Sash windows with small plane glazing. Walled and railed forecourt.</p> 
<b>Bryn Heulog and Sunny Bank Villa</b>	<p>Two storey, four bay Regency stucco hipped semi-detached houses. Sash windows with glazing bars to Sunny Bank Villa. Set-back traverse gabled entrance bays with Tuscan doorcases.</p> 

<p><b>Springfield</b></p>	<p>Detached two storey residential dwelling in walled garden. Regency style. Pebbledashed with hipped slate roof. Ground floor bays flank Tuscan porch. Original small pane glazing to rear sash windows.</p> 
<p><b>Chandos House (The Rectory)</b></p>	<p>Detached T-plan dwelling house. Two storey three bay stucco front with narrow recessed centre bay. Sash windows in plain reveals. Discretely located behind boundary walls and tall trees.</p> 

### 3.8 General Condition

The general condition of the unlisted buildings in the Conservation Area is considered to be good. However, a number of listed buildings are in a poor condition. In particular, the former Miners' Hall is in a ruinous condition. The listed buildings that are in the worst conditions are vacant.

#### SWOT Analysis

<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Group value of Georgian-style terraced dwellings which are listed. Reputedly largest collection of Georgian dwellings in Wales.</li><li>• Unique cluster of listed buildings related to historic events and important historic features.</li><li>• Close to the town centre (of which parts of are also within a Conservation Area).</li><li>• Prominent views to and from Conservation Area from town centre.</li><li>• Surrounding areas contain features and spaces of high value.</li><li>• Considered to be an affluent and popular area to live.</li><li>• 'Green' backdrop to conservation area.</li><li>• Development opportunities on surrounding sites (Sandbrook House and St Tydfil's Hospital).</li></ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Buildings in the worst condition are generally those that are vacant and listed. These also tend to be large buildings found in prominent locations.</li><li>• Consent granted for conversion of Synagogue; however, no works have been carried out suggesting that there is an issue of viability.</li><li>• Use of unsympathetic materials on some dwelling houses (eg uPVC and concrete roof tiles).</li><li>• No article 4 direction to prevent undesirable developments/alterations.</li><li>• Unfinished appearance of new dwellings between Union Street and Bryntirion Road.</li><li>• Retaining wall collapsing and derelict dwellings at Tramroadside.</li></ul>
<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Redevelopment of large sites just outside the Conservation Area (St Tydfil's Hospital and Sandbrook House) may help stimulate interest in area.</li><li>• Opportunity to consider expansion of Conservation Area to include Sandbrook House, St Tydfil's Hospital and surrounding parkland.</li><li>• Town centre is the focus of much physical regeneration works and investment in empty and listed properties. Thomastown could benefit from town centre investment.</li><li>• The recent awarding of Vibrant and Viable Places (VVP) funding from Welsh Government presents another opportunity to use grant funding to help reuse listed buildings in and around the Conservation Area.</li></ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continuing decline of vacant listed buildings.</li><li>• Absentee owners of vacant listed buildings who are unaware of their condition and opportunities to apply for grants to aid renovation and reuse.</li><li>• Potential lack of knowledge or interest in Conservation Area status by local residents and property owners.</li><li>• Continuing constraints on local authority resources hinders Council's ability to provide environmental improvements.</li><li>• Potential loss of buildings at St Tydfil's Hospital site as they do not benefit from any protection (i.e. listed building or Conservation Area control).</li></ul>

#### **4. Summary of Identified Issues**

- **Areas surrounding Conservation Area worthy of being protected under Conservation Area status, however until such areas are brought under Conservation Area controls these buildings and sites do not benefit from protection.**
- **Ruinous condition of Former Miners' Hall.**
- **Use of unsympathetic modern materials on some listed and unlisted buildings. No protection from further unsympathetic developments on unlisted buildings.**
- **Poor condition of the Former Synagogue.**
- **Absentee property owners of vacant sites.**
- **Unfinished appearance of new dwellings located between Union Street and Bryntirion Road. Potential breaches of planning control on buildings throughout area.**
- **Long-term vacancy of listed and unlisted buildings and apparent lack of viability in converting vacant buildings.**



## 5. Consideration of Boundary Changes

5.1 The Council can consider boundary changes to Conservation Areas if it is considered necessary in helping to preserve and enhance elements of townscape. The current boundary of the Thomastown Conservation Area was established in 1978 and the boundary has remained unaltered ever since.

5.2 This appraisal proposes the enlargement of the Thomastown Conservation Area boundary to include a number of important sites that lie just outside current limits. These sites have either historic or architectural qualities that are considered worthy of protection and enhancement, or offer opportunities for redevelopment that is likely to have an impact on the current Conservation Area. The implications of being within a Conservation Area for property owners are set out in Appendix 2. The key areas that are considered worthy of being incorporated into the Conservation Area are listed below with reasons for their inclusion.

5.3 The adopted Built Heritage Strategy recommends expansion of the Thomastown Conservation Area boundary to include the 'most significant elements' of the St Tydfil's Hospital site, burial ground (Cholera Cemetery) and buildings on the south side of Alma Street.

5.4 The proposed extended boundary of the Conservation Area will be the first priority in the management plan and, subject to public consultation it will be implemented as soon as possible following adoption of the appraisal and management plan.

Area/site	Description and Reason for Inclusion
<p><b>The Old Cemetery Park (Cholera Cemetery)</b></p> 	<p>Public open space in well maintained condition only accessible via access from Upper Thomas Street. Ownership status is unclear, however, the Council has maintained it for a number of years. Bodies still present underground.</p> <p>This small park offers a good quality setting for potential development at the St Tydfil's Hospital site. It also has a historic relationship with the development of the area generally as it provided the location for the burial of those who perished in the cholera epidemic of the mid 1800s which delayed the building of the workhouse at the St Tydfil's Hospital site.</p> <p>Bringing this site into the Conservation Area boundary would ensure greater protection for the trees within the park and the open space, especially as the park is not under the ownership of the Council. Recommended to be included in the Built Heritage Strategy.</p>
<p><b>Thomastown Park and Recreation Ground, Queen's Road.</b></p> 	<p>Mostly formal parkland which surrounds the Conservation Area to north and east. Straddles Queen's Road. Well maintained by the Council. Contains traditional park infrastructure such as memorials and monuments, tennis courts and a bowling green, a pavilion, playground, bandstand and paddling pool. The recreational ground contains a stone circle and the Boer War memorial.</p> <p>Integral to the growth of this part of Merthyr Tydfil as a 'middle class' suburb. Part of the park is formed in a</p>

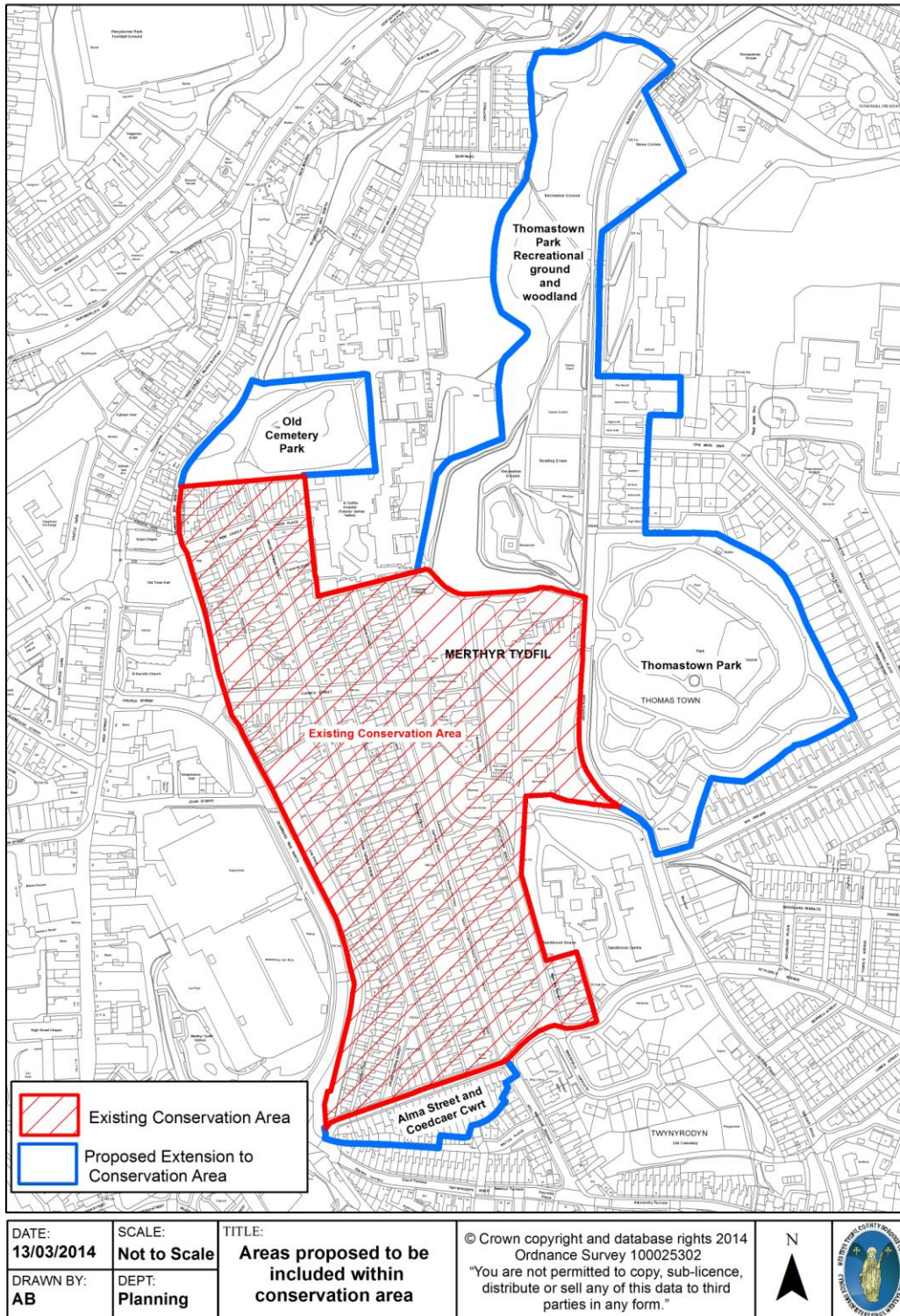
 	<p>disused quarry and has a distinctive bowl shape with dwellings located on higher ground and backing onto it, rather than overlooking it.</p> <p>This area of proposed extension also contains a number of Edwardian semi-detached properties and detached Victorian properties on Queen's Road.</p> <p>Bringing this area into the Conservation Area would ensure protection for trees that add value to the character of the area, afford greater scrutiny of development proposals that affect the character of the Edwardian dwellings and greater protection of some characteristic features of these buildings.</p>
<p><b>Alma Street (south-side) and Coedcae'r Cwrt</b></p>  	<p>The northern side of Alma Street is already within the Conservation Area. However, the southern side contains a complete row of terraced dwellings that have a distinctive character as each house is stepped down the steep hill towards the west. Some of these terraced properties contain elaborate mouldings around the front door, the like of which are found elsewhere in the Conservation Area. From the junction with Union Street, long views can be afforded across the town to St Tydfil's Church and beyond to Mynydd Aberdar and Mynydd Merthyr.</p> <p>Coedcae'r Cwrt is situated behind (to the south of) Alma Street and contains a number of older, smaller, stone-faced listed cottages. The cottages are probably of a similar age to the oldest dwellings in the Conservation Area at Tramroadside North. This street has the appearance of a rear lane and also contains many garages and back entrances to other residential properties.</p> <p>Bringing these areas into the Conservation Area boundary recognises the historic importance of the early terraced cottages and the important views that can be gained from the top of Alma Street. The historic features present on the Alma Street terraces would also be protected from unnecessary loss.</p> <p>The Built Heritage Strategy recommends that this be included in the Conservation Area.</p>

5.5 It should be noted that the adopted Built Heritage Strategy (2008) also recommended that parts of the St Tydfil's Hospital site be considered for inclusion into an expanded



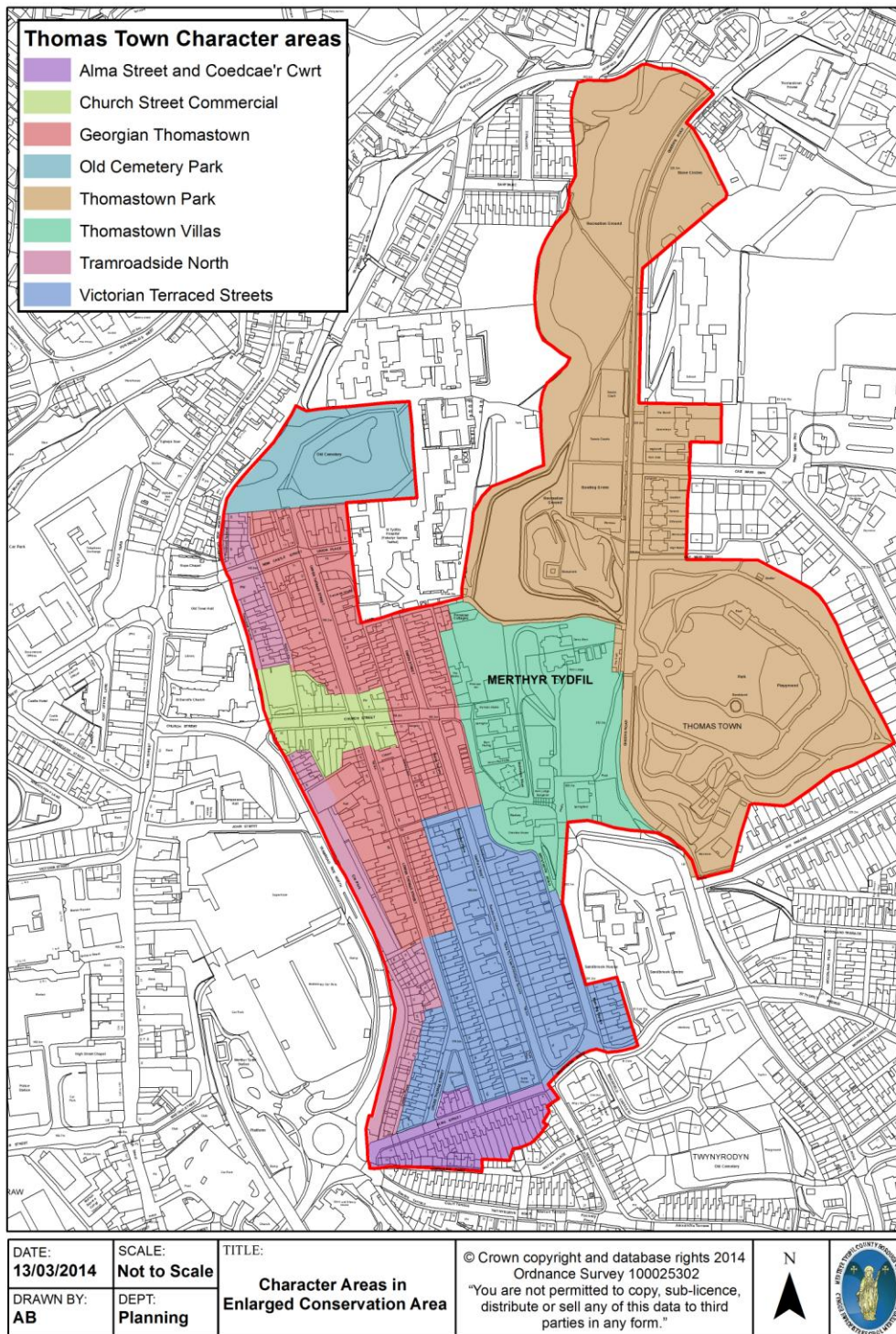
Conservation Area. Since 2008 the NHS has vacated and sold the site. At the time of writing the site is in the hands of a private owner and discussions are taking place with the Council regarding potential redevelopment of the site including the potential reuse of the listed entrance block and former Union Workhouse. It should also be noted that in 2011 Cadw visited the St Tydfil's Hospital site and did not consider that the former Union Workhouse or any other elements of the site were worthy of being listed. The former Union Workhouse is noted for its historic importance to Merthyr Tydfil and its architectural quality. At the same time it is also noted however that it has been much altered, losing one wing of its original cross shaped formation and having an unsympathetic 1970s extension situated across the front (west) elevation which greatly obscures the historic parts of the building. Given these reasons it is not considered appropriate to recommend the inclusion of any more of the St Tydfil's Hospital site within an enlarged Conservation Area. However the Council will continually monitor this issue and may consider incorporating parts of the St Tydfil's Hospital site in the future.

## 5.6 Map showing the extent of the proposed boundary changes





**5.7 Map showing the character areas of the enlarged conservation area following analysis of the surrounding areas in para. 5.2.**



## **6. Consideration of the restriction of permitted development rights**

**6.1** The Council can restrict permitted development rights (the right to carry out development without the need to first obtain planning permission) where it is considered necessary to ensure that the character of the Conservation Area is not lost through low-level, piecemeal development. An Article 4 direction can be made to restrict such rights such as the ability to change windows, materials and the application of colour for example. Article 4 directions tend to be used in Conservation Areas and currently Merthyr Tydfil has only one Article 4 direction in the Pontmorlais area of the Town Centre Conservation Area. The imposition of an Article 4 direction normally follows consultation with those who would be affected.

**6.2** Non-residential dwellings have very limited permitted development rights and listed buildings require listed building consent for all works affecting the fabric of the building that cannot be considered to be repair and maintenance. Given the amount of residential dwellings in the Conservation Area, it is therefore considered that the restriction of permitted development rights would have the greatest impact on residential dwellings, their appearance and the protection of existing features. However, many residential dwellings have undergone changes where traditional features have either been removed or altered. However some unlisted properties have retained original and historic features which are considered worthy of protection. It is therefore considered necessary to implement an Article 4 direction restricting permitted development rights at a number of properties (see para. 6.4).

**6.3** The Welsh Government introduced changes to permitted development rights for residential dwellings on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013. In general, and under certain conditions, these changes allow householders to construct larger extensions before requiring planning permission. Residential dwellings in Conservation Areas face further restrictions however. The following is a list of where planning permission is required in addition to normal planning controls in Conservation Areas.

- **The cladding of any part of the exterior of a dwelling with stone, artificial stone, timber, render, pebbledash, plastic or tiles.**
- **The installation of external wall insulation.**
- **An extension that extends more than 3m from the side elevation of the original dwelling house or be set back, by less than 1m, from the nearest point in any wall comprised of the principal elevation.**
- **The removal of a chimney. The installation and alteration of a chimney.**
- **The insertion of a roof light into a roof slope**
- **Any alterations to the roof of a dwelling resulting in a material alteration to its shape, notably dormer windows.**
- **The construction of any building, raised platform, swimming pool or container for domestic heating purposes within the curtilage of the dwelling house which is more than 20m from the dwelling house and would exceed 10 square metres, or is situated between the side elevation of the dwelling house and the section of the boundary which faces that wall.**
- **The installation of an antenna on a chimney, or to a building which exceeds 15 metres in height or to a wall or roof slope which fronts a highway.**

- **Demolition of any building over 115 cubic metres requires Conservation Area Consent.**

**Other controls include -**

- **The installation of satellite dishes on any wall or roof slope facing and visible from a highway.**
- **Trees are protected as they can make a significant contribution to the character of an area. Anyone proposing to cut down, prune, top or lop a tree in a conservation area which is not covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) has to give six weeks notice in writing to the Local Planning Authority prior to carrying out any works to the tree.**

**6.4** Following the analysis of the Conservation Area (see chapter 3) it is considered that an Article 4 direction should be introduced on the following properties for the following reasons.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Reason for article 4 direction</b>
Brynawel, Queen's Road	Property has retained many original/historic features such as timber windows, stone balcony, decorative stone and render work on the front elevation and slate roof. Conservation Area status would protect the property from re-cladding. An Article 4 direction can be used to ensure proposed changes to windows and roof materials would require planning permission.
10 Newcastle Street	Property has original/historic timber sliding sash windows and slate roof. It is not listed. An Article 4 direction can be used to ensure proposed changes to windows and roof materials would require planning permission.
No. 44 Upper Thomas Street	Property retains original/historic timber sliding sash windows and slate roof. It is not listed and an Article 4 direction can be used to ensure proposed changes to windows and roof materials would require planning permission.
The Mount, Queens Road	Property retains original/historic timber sliding sash windows and slate roof. It is not listed and an Article 4 direction can be used to ensure proposed changes to windows and roof materials would require planning permission.

## 7. Management Proposals and Strategy

7.1 The identified issues and potential solutions are set out in more detail below.

Issues	Solution	Priority
<b>Areas surrounding Conservation Area also have historic character and are worthy of protection</b>	Extend Conservation Area boundary to include areas identified in chapter 5. Undertake public consultation prior to extending boundary. Consider impact on dwelling houses in respect of permitted development rights.	1
<b>Extremely poor condition of former Miners' Welfare Hall</b>	Target VVP funding for building. Contact owner. If owners cannot be contacted consider other options such as Council or buildings preservation trust purchase, to ensure long term preservation and commitment to reuse, preserve and restore. Consider re-use options that allow redevelopment that closely matches original build.	2
<b>No protection from the replacement of historic or desirable features from unsympathetic alterations on unlisted residential dwellings.</b>	Implement article 4 (2) directions on specific properties where there is no existing protection. Article 4 (2) directions remove certain permitted development rights for property owners. For example they may require owners to apply for planning permission when replacing windows or when applying a different colour to their property.	3
<b>Poor condition of vacant former Synagogue</b>	Target VVP funding for building to help with plugging the economic viability gap for reuse. Contact owner. If no progress is made on developing scheme for reuse consider enforcement powers to ensure building has an acceptable visual appearance.	4
<b>Unfinished appearance of new build properties between Bryntirion and Union Street. Potential breaches of planning control introducing unsympathetic alterations to buildings.</b>	Council Conservation and Enforcement Officers to develop and carry out targeted enforcement programme to identify where action can be taken. Consider whether action would be expedient and ensure action is taken to remove unsympathetic changes.	5
<b>Vacant Buildings</b>	Contact owners. Undertake land registry search. Consider use of Request for Information notices and s.215 notices to find responsible persons and ensure buildings have an acceptable visual appearance.	6
<b>Highway issues including the increase of traffic flows, patchy Tarmacadam repair of missing flagstones and lack of signage.</b>	Investigations to be made with the Council's Engineering Section regarding the use of pennant slabs/flags when repairing streets, improvements to the highway network to tackle excessive speeds and to review signage in the area.	7
<b>Poor condition of retaining walls and properties on Tramroad Terrace.</b>	Council's Conservation Officer and Structural Engineer to review properties and retaining structures alongside Tramroadside North. Take action where considered necessary.	8



7.2 The Council's Design, Heritage and Conservation Officer will be consulted on any development proposed in the Conservation Area. The Council will endeavour to ensure that any proposed development is of a high quality design and fully justified in its context. Any proposal for development in the Conservation Area will only be permitted if it preserves and enhances the area and accords with the heritage and conservation policies of the Local Development Plan (LDP).

## 8. Community Involvement

8.1 The Council's Planning and Regulatory Committee approved a draft version of this document for consultation purposes in May 2014.

8.2 The draft Conservation Area and Management Plan was subject to a 6 week public consultation period. All properties within the current Conservation Area and those within the proposed enlarged area were contacted, inviting occupiers/owners to a public meeting held on the 19 June 2014 in the Redhouse (Old Town Hall). The public meeting was well attended with approximately 40 local residents in attendance across the Conservation Area. In addition there were representatives from the Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust.

8.3 A number of issues were raised at the public meeting and during the consultation period. The key issues and comments raised are shown below. Some of these issues were not considered in the draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

Comment or Issue Raised	Action
Traffic problems (volume and speed) in Upper Thomas Street, Tramroad Terrace and Newcastle Street) since traffic priorities have changed in the town centre. Drivers ignoring one-way signage. Visibility poor at junctions.	Management Proposals (chapter 7) to include proposals to investigate use of traffic calming measures and better signage at key junctions to create a safer environment.
The former workhouse and entrance at the former St Tydfil's Hospital site should be included in the expanded conservation area boundary.	This issue has been previously considered by the Town Planning Division. Given that discussions are currently ongoing with the site's new owners regarding redevelopment and the fact that Cadw did not consider the Workhouse to be worthy of listing in 2011, it is not considered at this stage appropriate to include the workhouse within the Conservation Area. This decision can be reviewed at any time and it may be possible to alter the Conservation Area boundary should the workhouse be re-used. The entrance block is already listed and therefore is protected from demolition and alterations that may affect its character and appearance negatively. No amendment to document.
Concern over lack of progress of alley-gating. Planning permission granted but works not undertaken.	Planning permission has been granted. The installation of the gates is the responsibility of the applicant.
Slabs/flagstones of historic pavements removed illegally and replaced with Tarmac finish leaving an untidy appearance.	Investigations to be made with the Council's Engineering Section regarding the use of pennant slabs/flagstones when repairing streets. Added to management proposals.
Lack of signage for Bryntirion Road and Tramroad Terrace.	Investigations to be made with the Council's Engineering Section regarding a review of street signage in the Conservation Area. Added to management proposals.
No bus service through Church Street since traffic priorities altered.	Outside the remit of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. Inquiries to be made with local bus providers. No

	amendment to this document.
Concern over the condition of retaining walls and properties on Tramroad Terrace. Better steps and walls needed.	Further investigation required by the Council's Conservation Officer and Structural Engineer. Task added to management proposals.
There should be a robust enforcement strategy to ensure that the elements which justify Conservation Area designation are not subjected to incremental degradation.	Town Planning Officers already carry out pro-active enforcement within Conservation Areas. Some specific sites within the Conservation Area have already been identified in the management proposals for action, specifically the vacant listed buildings. Separately the Town Planning Division will be developing an Enforcement Strategy in respect of the Historic Environment later this year. No amendment to document.
The Former Miners' Hall is an eyesore.	Already included in management proposals.

No opinions were received in respect of the proposal to expand the conservation area or impose article 4 directions.

Additional Information was also received regarding the history of the area and chapter 2 of this document has been amended accordingly.

8.3 In addition to public consultation, other Council service areas were consulted on the appraisal and management plan such as Highways, Leisure, Parks, Corporate Estates and Regeneration, no response was received.

## **9. Monitoring Commitment, Review and Updating**

9.1 It is important that the Conservation Area is monitored from time to time so that the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan can be reviewed where needed. As part of the background work for this Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan a photographic record of buildings within the Conservation Area was produced. Such evidence is invaluable in case of any future disputes regarding development which may have taken place without the benefit of the required consent from the Council. The Council will consider enforcement action to ensure the long term conservation of Thomastown. These measures may include the power to impose, in limited circumstances, Urgent Works Notices where the short term preservation of a building is under threat and the power to reverse works undertaken where consent has not been granted.

9.2 The appraisal has concluded that boundary changes are needed to ensure the long term preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area and adjoining areas. Issues have been identified regarding buildings and spaces within the Conservation Area, such as the vacancy and poor appearance of some specific but highly visible sites. Potential solutions have been put forward to address these identified issues in order to assist with the ongoing preservation and enhancement of the character and setting of the Conservation Area, including the enlarged area.

9.3 Ideally Conservation Area appraisals should be reviewed every 5 years, and it is anticipated that another review shall take place within 5 years.

## 10. Appendices

Appendix 1. Planning Policy Framework

Appendix 2. Summary of implications of conservation area designation



## Appendix 1 Planning Policy Framework

**1.1** The Council has a duty in exercising its planning powers to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and supplemented by relevant Planning Policy Guidance. Accordingly, this Planning Policy Framework is set out below:

### 1.2 National Legislation

The provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 give local authorities the power to designate conservation areas. As the principal form of legislation, its definition of Conservation Areas shall be used for the purpose of this Conservation Area Appraisal:

*“A Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.*

This definition often extends beyond buildings alone, and includes the road layout, street scene, trees and green spaces; reiterating the quality and interest of the area.

Development proposals within Conservation Areas will be subject to control through statutory legislation, encompassing the following three primary Acts:

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990

These acts restate that in making a decision on an application for development in a Conservation Area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of that area.

### 1.3 National Policy

The following documents apply to Conservation Areas

- Planning Policy Wales (edition 6, February 2014)
- Welsh Office Circular 61/96 – Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas (December, 1996) *(As Amended)*
- Technical Advice Note 12 (Design)

The policy provided at the national level provides advice on the designation of Conservation Areas, and the importance of assessing the special interest of each one in an appropriate manner. The guidance also stresses the need for the Council to ensure that the character and appearance of Conservation Areas is preserved and enhanced.

### 1.4 Local Policy

The existing development plan framework in Merthyr Tydfil is provided by the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan 2006-2021 (adopted May 2011) Policy BW6 (Townscape and Built Heritage) states:

*The Council will protect and support the enhancement of the unique built heritage of the County Borough. Development proposals will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated they would preserve or enhance the architectural quality, character and setting of any of the following:-*

- *listed buildings;*
- *scheduled ancient monuments;*
- *conservation areas;*
- *registered Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest;*

- *townscape character and the local distinctiveness of settlements;*
- *other historic, archaeological and cultural features of acknowledged importance.*

Regard should therefore be given to the character and setting of the Conservation Area as well as Listed Buildings. Proposals must not have an unacceptable impact on the setting of any Conservation Area.

In addition policy AS4 of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan refers to Historic Landscape. It should be noted that the Thomastown Conservation Area is within the Merthyr Tydfil Historic Landscape Area where there is a presumption in favour of protection, conservation and enhancement of this area. Merthyr Tydfil is a landscape of outstanding historic interest containing the internationally renowned iron and coal industrial landscape of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Policy AS4 states:

*There will be a presumption in favour of the protection, conservation and enhancement of:-*

- *Gelligaer Common, and*
- *the main settlement of Merthyr Tydfil*

*in accord with their status as Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales.*

*The extent of these areas is shown on the LDP Proposals Map and proposals for development will only be permitted where they would maintain or enhance the character and integrity of the landscape.*

## Appendix 2 Summary of the Implication of Conservation Area designation

The designation of a conservation area raises some important issues and implications for both property owners and local authorities. The following is a brief list of the key implications of conservation area designation.

- **Demolition of Buildings (Conservation Area Consent)**  
Any building with a cubic content greater than 115 cubic metres, (or part of a building that is greater than 115 cubic metres in size), will require Conservation Area Consent for demolition.
- **Planning Permission**  
The need to obtain planning permission (for non-householder development) remains the same as in other areas (unless an Article 4 Direction has been imposed, see below) however the Council will generally expect that any application has taken onboard the special characteristics of the area and the design of schemes and the materials proposed should reflect this.
- **Alterations to Dwellings (Householder Development)**  
Planning permission is required for the following: -
  - 1) Insertion of dormers in, or other alteration to, a roof slope.
  - 2) Installation of satellite dishes on a wall fronting a highway, any chimney, or building more than 15 metres in height.
  - 3) Cladding any part of the exterior of a dwelling house with stone, artificial stone, timber, render, pebbledash, plastic or tiles.
  - 4) The installation of external wall insulation.
  - 5) An extension of more than 1m in height.
  - 6) The removal of a chimney. The installation and alteration of a chimney.
  - 7) The insertion of a roof light into a roof slope.
- **Trees**  
Written notice must be given to the Council 6 weeks before intending to carry out surgery to, or fell, a tree in a Conservation Area, unless it is dead, dying or dangerous.
- **Advertisements**  
Generally the Council will apply stricter scrutiny when assessing applications in Conservation Areas. For example, internally illuminated fascia signs are generally considered inappropriate in Conservation Areas and will be resisted by the Council.
- **Special Directions**  
The Council has the power, following public consultation, to serve a direction under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to bring developments where planning permission would not normally be required, under planning control (these are known as **Article 4 Directions**). For example, the Council could control the replacement of doors and windows, the insertion of new window openings and the alteration of front gardens. The purpose of these additional controls is to ensure that the special qualities of an area are not slowly diminished by minor but continuous alterations that cumulatively could have the same adverse effect as one large inappropriate development.