



## Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust Ltd

### **Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan 2016 - 2031**

Examination Hearings

#### **Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust**

Submission 4:

#### **Policy SW6: Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area**

Summary of the Heritage Trust position (also in our LDP Submission 1)

“The ‘Hoover Regeneration Strategy Area’ masterplan – probably about to go into its third iteration due to the re-organisation of Hoover Candy following its take-over by Hiaer - needs to be scrapped.

In our view, there is no way the report meets the recommendations for a regeneration proposal set out in the Development Plan Manual.

The brief for a new plan for the whole (original) HRSA should be re-issued immediately with the priority the development of a new environmentally based river and river tributary SuDS restoration scheme to ‘reclaim’ the River Taff west bank, protect the village of Abercanaid and deliver the already promised green river bank corridor.”

The Heritage Trust strongly supported the concept of the Hoover Regeneration Strategy Area in its original version – with regeneration for the whole area (excluding Abercanaid village itself) on both east and west banks of the River Taff.

It was ambitious – but necessary for the revival of vast areas of land featuring on the west bank including the site of the massive Dragon Parc factory extension built in the late 1970s with public funding to extend the Hoover washing machine factory (on the east bank – and still in use supporting over 100 jobs and Hoover Candy warehousing and service support).

There appears to have been a serious breakdown in the planning and research work – as a masterplan reached the final stages without the realisation of the flood risk identified in recent flood risk studies.

The proposals for the wider HRSA would involve the delivery of up to 1,000 new homes – this was reported back to stakeholders through the early 2017 working parties. These groups (made up mainly of MTCBC officials) were advised they were to reconvene in the summer of 2017. This apparently did not happen.

Instead the HRSA was cut back – and the emerging masterplan was revised in short order.



The HRSA's housing target was cut back from 1,000 units to 400 units (with no adjustment to the LDP housing target).

We have a number of concerns – the principle one being the proposal (not acknowledged by MTCBC whose officials claimed the masterplan was a matter for the Welsh Government) to demolish the historic original 1948 Hoover façade structure, adjoining canteen/office/social club building and gatehouse and develop over the historic Hoover sports ground – turning a large part of the grass field into a car park.

We are lodging an application for protected status for the structures (a small part of east bank Hoover complex) with Cadw and in October of last year called for them to be saved at an event celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hoover factory opening – attended by the MTCBC chief executive. He was also handed personally a letter from the Heritage Trust on Hoover. There has been no response to that.

The cricket ground is currently being maintained to a high standard by a small team of volunteers who are former Hoover employees and/or Hoover Sports and Social Club members. This has been the situation for some 18 years. The ground – once the venue for a Glamorgan first class fixture – is currently used by Welsh national senior and womens teams and by local cricket clubs.

However, MTCBC have overlooked the point that the Heritage Trust is concerned that most of the west bank is now excluded from the HRSA – yet this is the section that most urgently needs regeneration.

We advocate strongly that the river and waterways flood risk research work is continued as a matter of urgency to identify now a major SuDS project to mitigate the flood risk, possibly open up culverts and provide a new green riverside environment. Land would still be available for regeneration. A new masterplan is needed.

What we are opposed to strongly is what seems to be an approach of retreat from the regeneration of the west bank – although this is vital for Merthyr Tydfil and should remain a key part of the LDP. Surely it is inconceivable for the Welsh Government and MTCBC to 'wash their hands' of this challenge?

The Heritage Trust has prepared a paper on the advantages of a future Metro interchange at Brandy Bridge and also warned that the positive selling points for the revised HRSA – the new welcoming approach to Merthyr Tydfil (turning a sports ground into a car park) and the riverside green corridor (the east bank is not accessible or even visible from the Hoover Candy factory side because the railway line passes and it is on an embankment at the southern end of the site) among them – may not be realised.

The HRSA masterplan (current version) claims that retention of the Hoover 1948 factory façade and associated buildings is 'not viable'. There is no evidence of this.



In respect of the Hoover sports ground, the Welsh Government planning rules seem to be overlooked. PPW10 states clearly that:

“4.5.4 All playing fields whether owned by public, private or voluntary organisations, should be protected from development except where: • facilities can best be retained and enhanced through the redevelopment of a small part of the site; • alternative provision of equivalent community benefit is made available locally, avoiding any temporary loss of provision; or • there is an excess of such provision in the area.”

RT 10-06-19