

Dowlais

Conservation Area



Character Appraisal and Management Plan

(adopted January 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)

The above document 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 Dowlais, 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 document 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 document 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 by the Local Planning Authority, 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 or 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.

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 settlement of Dowlais is located to the north-east of Merthyr Tydfil on an exposed hillside. A short distance to the north of the settlement is the A465 “Heads of the Valleys” road, as well as the southern edge of the Brecon Beacons. The name ‘Dowlais’ derives from the Welsh word for stream (Lais). The name “Dow” is likely to originate from an interpretation of the number two (dau) as two streams converged in this mountaintop area, giving rise to the name “Two Streams”.

The Conservation Area was originally designated in 1998 and covers a collection of historic buildings associated with the Dowlais and Ivor Iron Works. It spans a gentle valley along which the A4102 leads from Merthyr Tydfil to join the Heads of the Valleys road. The Conservation Area is in two parts; one centred around Union Street, Market Street and Commercial Street and a more linear section straddling High Street. In between these two sections is a development of 1970s suburban residential housing.

2.2 History and development of area

Dowlais originally developed independently from Merthyr Tydfil due to it having its own ironworks, being located on the main road to Abergavenny and being approximately 1.5 miles from and at a much higher elevation than the historic centre of Merthyr Tydfil. However, it was physically absorbed into the latter by the early 1900s with the growth of settlements, and administratively by the establishment of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council in 1908. The growth of the community is outlined below and separated into five periods (early settlement, industrial development, urban and industrial growth, decline and demolition and post-industrial). The following is not an exhaustive account of history of the development of the area.

Early Settlement

Before the Industrial Revolution this area was used for grazing and hunting. The prevalent vegetation was scrub characterised by Alder bushes. Beneath the thin soil lay deposits of coal, iron and limestone which were in turn the reason for its later development. It is thought that there may have been an Inn located on the main route from Merthyr Tydfil to Abergavenny and a number of scattered hill-farmers’ homes were located within the vicinity.

Industrial Development

The Dowlais Ironworks were established in the 1750s, which developed from the rich natural resources present within Dowlais. As demand for iron rose, efficiencies in the technique for refining iron were developed in the mid-18th century and the most common technique was to use limestone kilns with coke or charcoal for fuel. Mineral deposits and flowing streams made Dowlais an ideal site for such development.

The sparsely populated and remote rural site of "Dowlais top" was purchased together with its mineral rights by Thomas, Lewis and Partners in 1757. The owners built a furnace to produce pig iron and began to extract minerals immediately.

Urban and Industrial Growth

The Dowlais works were at their most prominent in the nineteenth Century. The ironworks attracted hundreds of new people seeking employment. The growth of the settlement was entirely dependent on the growth of the ironworks. As a result, accommodation was built hastily and crudely, thus living conditions were poor. Over the century, the ironworks became the largest in the world, and Dowlais as a settlement flourished.

In 1807, John J. Guest, who had an elevated status in Victorian society, assumed the role of Dowlais Ironmaster. He was married to an aristocrat and was later made an MP and was knighted. Guest was responsible for the ironworks at the peak of its success and for many of the prestigious buildings within the Conservation Area including the company stables (known as Dowlais Stables), Guest Memorial Hall and St. John's Church. These overshadowed the crowded, grey, stone terraces which were built for the workers. Guest's wife, Lady Charlotte Guest, also became involved in the business of the iron works. She was a translator and took interest in her husband's philanthropic activities. During her time in Dowlais Lady Charlotte learned Welsh and translated several medieval songs and poems, and eventually the Mabinogion. Lady Charlotte is seen as an important figure in the revival of Welsh culture, although she was not Welsh herself.



Photographs Clockwise from top left, – Guest Memorial Hall, Stables, historic photograph of Market Street and St John's Church.



The ironworks helped make Merthyr Tydfil the largest town in Wales at the time of the 1801 census. By 1842, over 5,000 people were employed by the ironworks. In the mid 1800s steel was being produced at the works following the licensing of the Bessemer process in 1856. Eventually the works converted completely from iron production to steel production.

The area continued to prosper until the turn of the 20th Century when Ivor Chapel, the Constitutional Club, Public Library and the Dowlais Blast Furnace House were constructed.

Decline and Demolition

During the 20th Century, the steel industry began to decline and many buildings within the Conservation Area fell into disuse and disrepair. Production at the works moved to Cardiff in stages starting in 1881 while the Dowlais Ironworks amalgamated with a number of companies and eventually lost any remaining connection with Dowlais. After the First World War, Dowlais was severely affected by the national depression and mass unemployment and poor living conditions were attributed to the area. Many relics of the industrial past were demolished including the site of the market buildings, workers terraces and Dowlais House.

Post-Industrial

In 1938, Austrian industrialist Oscar Peschek started his company O.P Chocolates in Dowlais. The operation included the Blast Engine House, which has been used as a warehouse but is now used as

the home of the Pant and Dowlais Boys and Girls Club. Though Peschek has relinquished ownership of the factory, it still remains a major source of employment in Dowlais

To date, only a few two bay terraced homes and key buildings which relate to the Ivor Ironworks remain within the Conservation Area. The area is now surrounded by 1970s housing with considerably more open spaces. A number of public facilities are still present within the Conservation Area, including a library, public house, hall and places of worship. A number of convenience stores and cafes are present outside of the area.

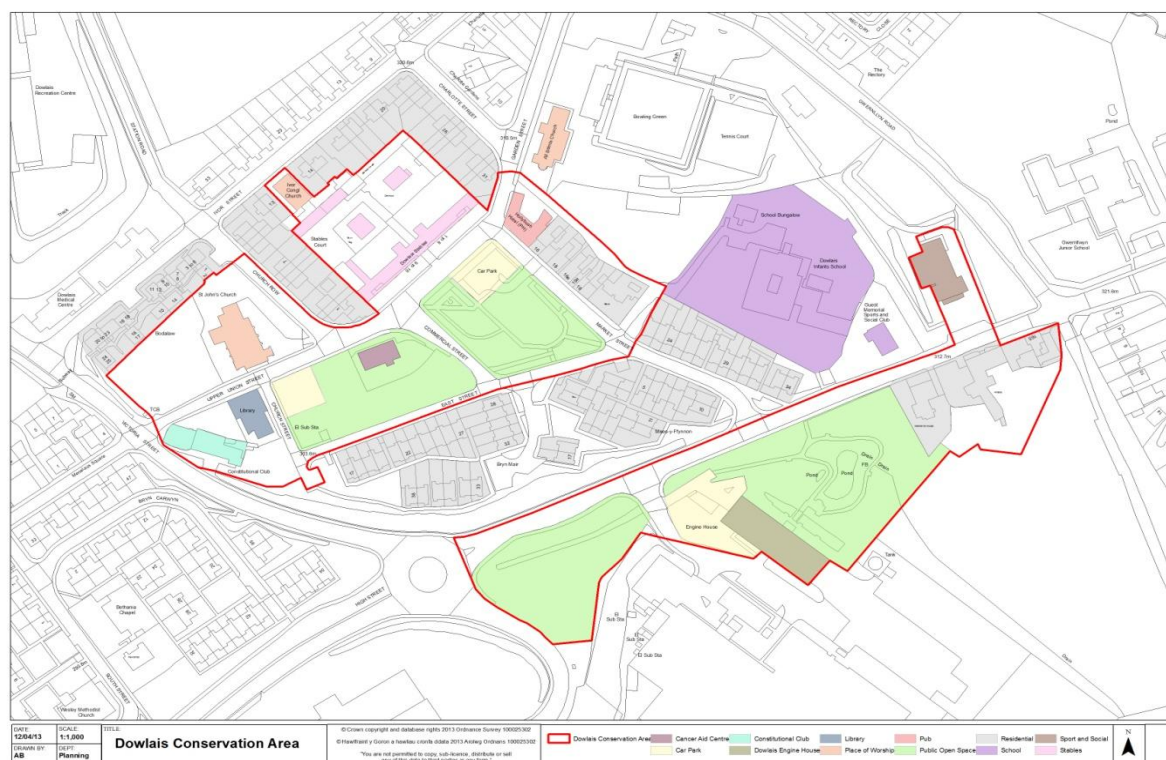
3. Assessment of Special Interest

3.1 This area of Dowlais is considered to have ‘Special Interest’, the character of which is considered by the Council to be worthy of protecting. Dowlais Conservation Area was originally designated in 1998 and covers the core of the settlement, recognising its architectural and historic quality. The following statement captures the importance of the conservation area.

“Dowlais Conservation Area embraces the two areas with the richest surviving examples of Dowlais’ industrial, social and religious heritage, which derive from the peak of the town’s worldwide influence in the 19th century.”

Appendix 2 sets out the implications of conservation area designation in respect of planning controls.

3.2 Location and Context





3.3 Key Characteristics of the Conservation Area

- Mostly Victorian with some Georgian era properties.
- 2 and 3 storey buildings, interspersed with larger and taller civic buildings (church, library, social clubs)
- Materials are generally stone and render with a mix of slate and concrete tiles for roofs.
- Mostly residential uses interspersed with civic uses such as the library and social clubs.
- Loose grid street pattern
- Public open space at core of conservation area.

3.4 Setting, Building Form and Landscape

The Conservation Area is grouped around a collection of classical and industrial Georgian and Victorian buildings surrounded by suburban housing. These imposing buildings are of a larger scale than the residential properties with the appropriate dimensions to create a sense of prestige. Most of the earlier buildings are constructed of coursed random rubble, predominantly Pennant stone with ashlar trimmings and grey Welsh slate roofs which are local materials traditionally used in the wider area. Later buildings are built of red and yellow brick which is characteristic of the Merthyr Tydfil area. The close association of these buildings also creates an area with a distinct historical identity.

The location of Dowlais, set on an incline and close to open countryside contributes to the area's landscape character. The Conservation Area is surrounded by post-war housing and a number of green spaces which have replaced the demolition of much of the original townscape. The Conservation Area affords good views towards the east and south enveloping a number of bare hills, which are resultant from former and existing industrial activity, and towards the west, down the valley towards the centre of Merthyr Tydfil and western hillside of the town. Formal planting and landscaping schemes have changed the character of the area from a densely packed network of terraced streets to an area with a more open and suburban character and appearance. This contrasts

sharply with the presence of formal grand buildings such as St John's Church, The Constitution Club, The public library and The Guest Memorial Sports and Social Club (originally a library) for example, and street names such as Market Street, Commercial Street, Upper Union Street and High Street, which suggest a more urban and commercial history.

Small parks within the area have been planted with plants and trees. Details such as stone walls and sculptures have been introduced based on the industrial heritage of the area.

Photographs – Sculptures and Public Art.

Left to right, - Dowlais Ingot in front of the Dowlais Blast Engine House, entrance to the small park to north east of the Dowlais Blast Engine House and the park in place of demolished market hall at Market Street.



3.5 Spatial Analysis of the Conservation Area

Dowlais is a relatively small Conservation Area with a population estimated at 50 people. It is surrounded by predominantly residential development. One of the Conservation Area's key features is the fact that it is in two distinct sections with Post-War housing situated between. The Conservation Area is strongly defined around 19th Century industry and mining, which has shaped its development and layout. The Conservation Area has a number of distinct spatial elements,-

- Land Form – located on a gradual slope, extending from the northern point of the Conservation Area at Dowlais Stables to the south eastern points where Dowlais Blast Furnace House is located. This topography has influenced the land use and location of all housing within the Area.
- Key Buildings – Their location within close proximity to each other giving a sense of importance to the area and signifying that this is the commercial and social centre of the settlement historically.
- Residential Dwellings – A small amount of older dwellings are located within and surrounding the Conservation Area reflecting its past industrial heritage and the need for workers to live close to their places of work. These dwellings are generally small 2-storey terraces indicating that they were built for the working classes.
- Boundary Treatments – Hedgerows and brick walls are situated around the Conservation Area, reflecting layout styles.
- Open Spaces – Pockets of open spaces are prevalent, though created from a combination of demolition since, and planned spaces during the industrial era. There is one well-maintained dominant open space situated on the site of the old market hall, which is well overlooked by surrounding buildings.

3.6 Archaeology

There are no scheduled ancient monuments within the Conservation Area. However there are a number of records on the Historic Environment Record within and close to the Conservation Area all dating from the post medieval period.

3.7 Character Analysis

Character and zones

The Conservation Area is split into two zones. One of these areas is centred on High Street and linear in form. The other, larger area is centred around a square shaped park and a less formal open space bounded by Upper Union Street, Market Street and East Street. Both zones contain a variety of uses and include listed buildings and open spaces.

The character of the Conservation Area is that of a network of attractive and imposing Georgian and Victorian buildings set in a continuously evolving townscape. The main buildings all have historical references to the previous industry which dominated the area, either being built as part of the Guest family's association with the town, such as the Guest Memorial Hall and Dowlais Library, or in direct relation to the ironworks such as the Blast Furnace House and Stables.

Most of the buildings of special interest within the Conservation Area are civic buildings, creating a sense of importance. This reflects the high quality of architecture in the area and the setting of each is important to their appreciation.

The Conservation Area links these prestigious Georgian and Victorian buildings with one row of two storey terraced houses, stepped down the hillside. These were built as higher quality houses (compared to smaller workers' terraces which have now mainly been demolished) at a similar time to the neighbouring, historic, civic buildings. Many have been insensitively modernised, but the original characteristics and dimensions which remain still have architectural merit, and contribute to the character of the area.

The square in front of the Dowlais Stables is the site of the former Market House and Police Station. Since its demolition, Market Street has lost its sense of enclosure, and an aspect of Georgian and Victorian development has been lost throughout the Conservation Area.

Late 19th Century plans suggest a denser character to the area, with terraced homes being located to the south of the top section of the Conservation Area, and in the square between Church Street and Commercial Street. This remained largely the same until the 1960s where crowded cottages were demolished and replaced by pockets of green trees, benches, shrubberies, low timber walls and grass. This, in essence, has changed the essential local characteristic of the Conservation Area from a busy and crowded settlement centre to a spacious, open and green suburban area.

Activities and uses

Although the area seems quiet today compared with the hive of activity that would have occurred in the past, the conservation area does maintain a range of uses including a library, places of worship, a public house and sports and social clubs. The dominant use is residential and some non-residential buildings have been converted to residential uses over the years and this process is ongoing. For example, The Stables has been converted to residential flats and St John's Church has planning permission and listed building consent for residential conversion to flats. There are few retail uses in the conservation area and the feel of the area is 'suburban' in contrast to it once being the commercial and social heart of Dowlais

Quality of buildings

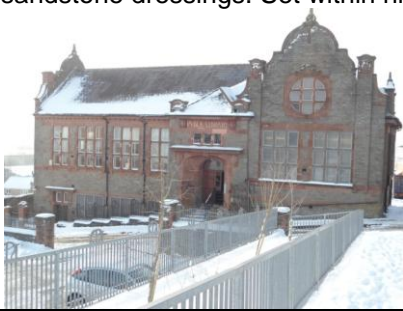

Unsurprisingly the quality of the buildings varies in the conservation area. Of the key buildings, the locally listed Constitutional Club is considered to have a poor physical appearance, which is unfortunate as it is highly visible as one approaches the conservation area from Victoria Street and the west. St John's Church is currently vacant; however, it does have planning permission and listed building consent for conversion to flats. If the development is carried out, this would ensure the long term viability of this building. Should the development not take place, it is considered likely that the church's appearance would deteriorate the longer it stays vacant.




There is a varying quality in the appearance of the residential buildings within the conservation area where a variety of alterations have taken place. To some extent the introduction of modern materials such as uPVC windows, satellite dishes and concrete tiles and the resizing of openings is considered to have eroded the character of the conservation area. The vast majority of buildings, including listed buildings are in private ownership.



Local details, traditional materials

The Guest Club on High Street is considered to be an extremely distinctive classical-style building with a grand appearance. This building utilises brown sand stone and bath stone and together with its distinctive architectural style, is a rare type of building in the area. The other listed buildings utilise local pennant stone, ashlar, painted stucco and red brick as their main materials. These materials are commonly found in the wider area, especially on more prominent and important buildings. The materials generally reflect what was available at the time of construction and the fashion of using certain materials to indicate wealth and importance to distinguish such buildings from workers' housing.

In terms of features and architectural style the following table outlines distinctive features of key buildings.

Building	Features
Public Library	Dutch-style gables, Art Nouveau carved details. Pennant stone with sandstone dressings. Set within hill slope. 
Dowlais Works Blast Engine House	Red brick and yellow dressings. Large scale industrial building with hipped slate roof. 

<p>Ivor English Congregational Church</p>	<p>Painted stucco with pediment gable. Very long arched lights.</p> 
<p>St John's Church</p>	<p>Anglican style church. Rubble stone and ashlar dressings. Octagonal turret on SW corner.</p> 
<p>Dowlais Works Stables</p>	<p>Squared grey-brown rubble stone. Centrally place arched entrance with octagonal timber lantern with lead dome on ridge. Long elevation forming one complete side of square created following demolition of the market hall.</p> 

Former Guest Memorial Library	<p>Neo-Classical. Varied stones. Bath stone Tuscan columns. Tetra style Portico and bath stone balustrades.</p> 
Constitutional Club	<p>Contrasting beige and cream rendered building. Orientated to face junction of Upper Union Street and Victoria Street. Extensions to rear (south).</p> 

Negative factors

- The Constitutional Club has a rather poor appearance with varying window styles and materials and poor upkeep of rendered finish. The side and rear (including services such as the fire escape) are highly visible from Victoria Street.
- Unkempt open space in the centre of the conservation area next to well maintained park. There are also other patches of unkempt open space/vacant land such as between Constitutional Club and Library.
- The Cancer Aid Centre is poorly located within a larger space and has a poor interaction with the street. Although planning permission was granted on the surrounding vacant land in 2009 for residential development no development has taken place.
- Traditional workers housing has been much altered. Many have satellite dishes on the front elevation.
- Car park on Market Street is unlit and this is a concern for local residents.

Positive factors

- The cluster and range of listed buildings.
- Well maintained public open space in the centre of the conservation area.

- Examples of positive conversion of listed buildings (Dowlais Works Stables).
- Most listed buildings are in an acceptable condition.

3.8 General condition

The general condition of the conservation area is considered to be fair. However, there are some areas which need much needed attention such as the Constitutional Club (given its size and location) and the unkempt and overgrown areas of open space/vacant land. There also appears to be a lack of awareness or general apathy towards the conservation area. A consultation event aimed at raising awareness and offering a conservation drop-in only attracted a handful of residents although all residential properties received a hand delivered notification.

SWOT analysis

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of high quality and large scale listed buildings. • Good well-maintained open space in centre of conservation area. • Concentrated on a cluster of important buildings and the historic commercial centre of Dowlais. • The Stables development showcases how redevelopment of listed buildings can be achieved successfully 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissected by 1970s development (not one cohesive conservation area). Physical improvements may only be concentrated on larger part of the conservation area. • No article 4 direction to prevent undesirable development/alterations. • Some ambiguous and unkempt open spaces. • Missed opportunity at Cancer Aid Centre. Left-over land may be difficult to market for redevelopment. • St John's Church is vacant. • Some buildings poorly maintained. • Visible satellite dishes on front elevations of residential properties.
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment/reuse of St John's Church (planning permission and listed building consent granted). • Development potential on land adjoining Cancer Aid Centre to help enclose square and provide quality contemporary design. • Community involvement with Library, public house, social clubs and place of worship situated within conservation area. Also primary school nearby. 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apparent lack of awareness of conservation area designation and its meaning among inhabitants and property owners. • Further deterioration of terraced dwellings on Market Street resulting in loss of historic features and introduction of unsympathetic features and materials. • St John's Church remaining undeveloped. • Lack of interest in conservation area, appraisal and management plan by local inhabitants and property owners.

4. Summary of identified issues

- Poor condition of Constitutional Club
- Lack of awareness of conservation area designation, understanding and engagement in the local area.
- Unkempt open space next to well-maintained formal open space
- St John's Church is still vacant (although has permission for residential conversion) and vulnerable to deterioration
- Satellite dishes visible on the front elevations of residential dwellings

Photographs clockwise from top left, - Market Street, St John's Church, vacant open space close to the Cancer Aid Centre and vacant open space between the library and the Constitutional Club.



5. Management Proposals and Strategy

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

Issues	Solution	Priority
Poor condition of Constitutional Club	Engage with owner to encourage refurbishment of property. Consider the use of grant funding to aid refurbishment. Determine whether the use of planning enforcement powers are necessary.	1
Lack of awareness and engagement	Engage with local community groups based in Dowlais to help with tidying up/planting of unkempt open spaces. Consider ornate signage relating to a local feature or event (such as Lady Guest's translation of the Mabinogion) demarcating the conservation area at key entrance points and interpretation panel within conservation area.	2
Poor condition of ambiguous open spaces	Identify ownership and responsibility of space between library and Constitutional Club. Engage with local groups/school to help improve appearance of open space in centre of conservation area. In the longer term, consider the development opportunities of vacant sites and consider the use of development briefs to help promote the appropriate development of such sites.	3
St John's Church remaining vacant	Engage with owner regarding progress of implementing permission to convert to residential.	4
Satellite dishes on fronts of residential properties	Take enforcement action where possible and where considered expedient to do so to remove dishes from visible locations. Offer advice for re-siting to occupiers.	6 (although can be achieved relatively quickly)
Car Park on Market Street is unlit	Consider the installation of lighting or other solutions that will alleviate local residents' concerns regarding this space. Explore funding options and implement any solutions.	5

Photographs. Left to right, Constitutional Club and ambiguous open space.



5.2 The 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.

6. Community Involvement

6.1 A Conservation drop-in event took place at Dowlais Library on 18 April 2013. Prior to the event all residential properties within and adjoining the Conservation Area were sent leaflets about the Conservation Area Appraisal and the drop-in event. The drop-in event was primarily focussed on awareness raising and to establish if there were any common concerns among residents. Unfortunately the event was not very well attended which could be evidence of a lack of awareness or interest by residents. However it may have been that the event took place at a time or date which was inconvenient for the majority of residents.

6.2 Of those that did attend, there was a general feeling that a lot of historic features have already been lost. One attendee commented that in the past there was some resentment towards the industrial owning capitalist class (by the general public and local authority) which may explain why some features were lost with little resistance. Some attendees commented on the quality of the conversion of The Stables on Upper Union Street that has been carried out.

7. Consideration of boundary changes

7.1 Dowlais Conservation Area is fairly unique in that it is separated into two parts. The larger section is centred on the formal open space at Market Street and contains a number of large Victorian-era listed buildings. The smaller section straddles High Street and again contains two impressive (in scale and design) listed buildings.

7.2 It is not considered necessary to alter the boundary to create one single conservation area as the majority of the development between the two areas is 1970s residential development. The designation of this area as a conservation area is not considered necessary to protect and enhance the buildings and spaces in the existing conservation area.

8. Consideration of restriction of permitted development rights

8.1 The Council can restrict permitted development rights (the right to carry out development without the need to first obtain planning permission) where it feels necessary to ensure that the qualities of the conservation area are 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 a consultation period with those who would be affected.

8.2 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. However, many original features, such as timber windows, slate roofs and original stone finish or lime finish of the residential dwellings have already been lost. Therefore, the imposition of an article 4 direction would not assist in the protection of such historic features.

8.3 The Welsh Government introduced changes to permitted development rights for residential dwellings on 30th 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, 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.**

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.

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 Dowlais. 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 no boundary changes are needed to ensure the long term preservation and enhancement of the conservation area. Issues have been identified regarding buildings and spaces within the conservation area and the apparent lack of awareness by owners and occupiers of the conservation area designation and its impacts. 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.

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

1. Planning Policy Framework
2. Summary of implications of conservation area designation

10.1 Planning Policy Framework

10.1.1 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:

10.1.2 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.

10.1.3 National Policy

The following documents apply to Conservation Areas

- Planning Policy Wales (edition 5, November 2012)
- 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.

10.1.4 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 Dowlais 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 18th and 19th 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.

10.2 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**

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 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**

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, plastic or tiles.

- **Trees**

Written notice must be given to the Borough 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 Borough Council has the power, following public consultation, to serve a direction under the Planning Regulations 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.