

**Cyngnor Bwrdeistref Sirol Merthyr Tudful  
Cynllun Datblygu Lleol Amnewid (2016 - 2031)  
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council  
Replacement Local Development Plan (2016 - 2031)**

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)  
Note: Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan

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# Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan 2016 – 2031

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE NOTE: TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Whilst much of Merthyr Tydfil town centre's historic environment has been designated a Conservation Area, this should not be regarded as an obstacle to change but seen as an opportunity to ensure high quality positive intervention, which consolidates the architectural and historic value of the area. Historic buildings and sites demonstrate qualities of design, workmanship and use of materials that cannot readily be reproduced. Their form and inter-relationship provide an important backdrop to everyday life for those who live, work and pass through the town centre. The past and present functions of a place reflect its interaction with people and affect the values they ascribe to it.
- 1.2 The designation of a Conservation Area brings into force certain controls over development but the legislation and the official guidance that accompanies it are intended to ensure that change should be managed in a positive way to maintain the qualities that make up the special character of the area in question. All development within the conservation area should therefore be rigorously tested for compliance with national, regional and local conservation policies and other relevant policies of the Local Development Plan. Proper consideration should be given to these in determining all planning, conservation area and listed building consent applications.
- 1.3 In line with the recommendations made in the 2011 Conservation Area Management Plan, MTCBC now have Article 4 Directions in place in the Pontmorlais Quarter to further prohibit the type of alterations that would usually be allowed under Permitted Development Rights even in a conservation area.

### **PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT**

- 1.4 This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) Note aims to:
- Provide clarity to developers, statutory consultees, local residents/businesses and other stakeholders involved in the planning and development process affecting the Conservation Area.
  - Express the findings of the Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) and Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) carried out by MTCBC as guidance that assists with the implementation of policies contained in the Merthyr Tydfil Replacement LDP.
- 1.5 This document will also aim to assist in the implementation of the key objectives contained with the CAMP:
- To raise awareness of the area's heritage.
  - To increase the diversity and viability of the commercial premises in the area to help create business and employment opportunities for new and existing investors in the area.
  - To promote Merthyr Tydfil as a visitor destination.

- To improve public perception of Merthyr Tydfil, with residents, business owners and investors.
  - To improve the built environment of the Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area through co-ordinated enhancement schemes.
- 1.6 The strategy for the management of the Conservation Area, and the guidance contained within this SPG, should not be seen in isolation but within the context of MTCBC's corporate strategies. It should also relate to a prominent heritage protection policy that is enforced through the planning process, the Council's economic development and regeneration strategy, future housing, highway management, environmental health and sustainability considerations and others as they arise.
- 1.7 The guidance contained in this SPG aims to reflect the two main priorities of a Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP):
- to ensure the ongoing protection of the existing buildings and townscape of the Conservation Area
  - to guide its future development in a manner that preserves and enhances its special character and appearance.

### 2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 The Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area has been designated under national legislation in the form of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The act aims to give protection to areas which are judged to have special architectural or historic qualities. As the title suggests, the emphasis in Conservation Areas is on the area or on groups of buildings, rather than individual buildings. The quality of an area may relate to its historical unity or, in a more mixed environment, to the consistency and harmony between buildings and features of different periods.

#### National Policy

2.2 *Future Wales - The National Plan 2040* is the national development framework, setting the direction for development in Wales up to 2040. Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Edition 11, February 2021) sits below Future Wales and sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. It is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs), Welsh Government Circulars, and policy clarification letters, which together with PPW provide the national planning policy framework for Wales.

2.3 PPW incorporates the principles of placemaking into national planning policy, and chapter 6 of the document deals with ‘Distinctive and Natural Places’. Section 6.1 sets out the national policy position in relation to the Historic Environment, including a specific objective that seeks to *“preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas, whilst the same time helping them remain vibrant and prosperous;”* Further guidance is also provided in the Welsh Assembly Government’s Technical Advice Note (TAN) 24: The Historic Environment (2017) and TAN 12, Design (2016).

#### Local Policy

2.4 The Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) 2016-2031 was adopted in January 2020 and provides the land use planning framework for the County Borough.

The LDP includes the following objective in relation the historic environment:

LDP Objective 9 Heritage and Cultural Assets:	<i>To protect, enhance and promote all heritage, historic and cultural assets.</i>
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2.5 Policy CW1: Historic Environment also states that:

***“The integrity of our historic environment assets will be conserved and enhanced.***

***Development proposals will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated they would preserve or enhance the architectural quality, character or the historic or cultural importance of our designated historic environment assets.***

***Development affecting undesignated historic environment assets including, Locally Listed Buildings or structures, Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales, Urban Character Areas and Archaeologically Sensitive Areas should have regard to their special character and archaeological importance.”***

#### **WIDER CONTEXT**

- 2.6 Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area was designated in 2009 and has proved a successful mechanism in terms of both preserving the overall quality of the area, and also assisting in attracting grant funding to enhance the area. MTCBC are currently nearing completion of a second successful 5 year Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) scheme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund for Pontmorlais Heritage Quarter (which constitutes about a third of the Town Centre Conservation Area) that has made significant inroads into improving the character of Pontmorlais.
- 2.7 The strengths and weaknesses of the Town Centre Conservation Area have been identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) and Character Assessments commissioned by the Regeneration department in 2020. The Management Plan also formed part of the same commission and details general and specific planning guidance and controls effective across the Town Centre Conservation Area and outlines proposals for its enhancement.
- 2.8 The Conservation Area Appraisal has assessed the current Conservation Area and Article 4 Direction boundaries. Changes to the boundaries have been proposed in order to rationalise the extent of the Town Centre Conservation Area. In particular the CAA argues that the Town Centre Conservation Area extends beyond its natural boundary and that reducing the its size would allow for a greater focus on the area that makes the most significant contribution to the qualities of the town centre. A process of consultation and consideration will need to be followed prior to any amendment of the current boundary being adopted.
- 2.9 This Management Plan sets out objectives for the long-term protection and enhancement of the Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area. It is intended as an assessment of matters that need to be addressed and makes suggestions for policy aims, guidance and community involvement. Once the Management Plan is adopted by MTCBC it will carry significant weight as a material consideration in determining applications within, or which visually affect, the conservation area.

#### **Boundary**

- 2.10 Best practice prescribes that Conservation Area boundaries should be occasionally reviewed to ensure that the original reasons for designation are still evident and relevant. Where it is appropriate to do so, boundaries should be amended. Reviews of the boundary as well as any accompanying guidance and assessments should

generally be undertaken every five years or in response to a notable change, including changes in policy or legislation. The boundary review undertaken as part of this CAA/CAMP proposes a number of amendments to the current boundary as outlined in Appendix 1.



### **3.0 CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER**

3.1 The special character of Merthyr Tydfil's town centre derives from:

- C19 and early C20 dense, urban development of the area as a commercial, civic, social and spiritual centre as a result of the rapid influx of labour to serve the local industrial expansion.
- A concentration of good examples of C19 and early C20 civic, social, religious and commercial buildings.
- Landscape modelled by the industrial archaeology of late C18 tramway routes linking the ironworks to the Glamorganshire Canal and the subsequent development of the Penydarren Tramroad by Trevithick, running along the eastern boundary of the area.
- The narrow and gently winding route of High Street, with most properties built directly at back of- pavement, creating a strong sense of enclosure and ever-changing oblique views.
- The variety of styles and finishes along High Street which result in a visually exciting streetscape.
- Small side streets, alleyways and yards opening off the High Street that form intimate, modest spaces more informal in character.
- Building groups and distinctive individual buildings of significant townscape value.
- The use of local, traditional building materials and details.

3.2 The special character of Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area is threatened by:

- Further loss of architectural detail and historic features such as, shop fronts, chimneys, windows, railings, barge boards and decorative plasterwork.
- Inappropriate modern interventions such as satellite dishes, electrical cabling, security alarms and rerouted drainage on the frontage of buildings; modern roof lights, large external flues and roof vents that stand above the roof line; shop fronts that don't relate to the façade above.
- The concentration of take-away food outlets, particularly along High Street Pontmorlais which contribute little to daytime activity and accentuate the poor mix of uses in this commercial area.
- Numerous unoccupied or partially occupied buildings and 'buildings at risk' including derelict and structurally unsafe property and associated 'temporary' hoardings and sheathing.
- Poor management of domestic and commercial waste; instances of fly-tipping and graffiti in areas that are not on the main thoroughfares.
- Inappropriate modern repairs or replacements such as modern flush doors, PVC rainwater goods, windows, doors, cladding and fascia boards; modern window replacements that sit flush to the elevation; inappropriate stylised reproductions of windows and shop fronts; pebbledash render; steel palisade fencing and profiled sheet metal cladding to rear of buildings.
- Unsympathetic shop fronts with over- dominant lettering or signage, oversized fascia boards, illuminated signs and externally mounted solid or perforated roller shutters;

inappropriate colour schemes that conflict with the architectural detail and subdivision of the buildings.

- Poor quality infill development where new buildings bear no relation to the special character of the conservation area.
- Lack of maintenance resulting in failing roofs and blocked rainwater goods, organic growth, water ingress, failing external finishes; the poor condition and appearance of many buildings due to lack of routine maintenance.
- Loss of enclosure to some areas eg at Pontmorlais Circus following the demolition of the Owain Glyndwr public house and numbers 51 to 55 High Street Pontmorlais in the 1970s.
- The clutter of uncoordinated public realm signage and street furniture.

#### **4.0 CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES**

- 4.1 In the light of national legislation and guidance and local development plan policies, the Management Plan recommended a number of objectives for the protection and enhancement of the Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area. These objectives are based on the analysis of the area in the Conservation Area Appraisal, and they also reflect the outcome of previous consultations with local stakeholders and residents. They are objectives which are designed to apply to the whole of the Conservation Area.

***Objective 1 - Developments within and adjacent to the Town Centre Conservation Area should in their scale, height and massing respect the wider setting of the Conservation Area, including views into and out of it.***

National guidance emphasises the need to consider the impact of development on the setting of a Conservation Area and views into and out of it. Merthyr Tydfil's Town Centre is distinguished by its topography and setting, especially its relationship to the old tramroads and to the wider Merthyr Tydfil landscape bowl in which the town sits. Its limited size means that its urban grain and changing perspective can be fully appreciated as one travels along the main thoroughfare. High or bulky buildings, or other installations, may have a detrimental effect on this wider setting, even though they may be some distance from the Conservation Area boundary.

***Objective 2 - Development within the setting of the Conservation Area which harms its character should be resisted. Development which positively contributes to the setting of the Conservation Area will be encouraged.***

All areas evolve to meet the changing needs of its populations. Developments within the confines of a Conservation Area should be designed in such a way that they protect and enhance the character of the area in line with Government guidelines. Proposals that actively harm or dilute the special character of the Conservation Area should be rejected.

***Objective 3 - Alterations to the streets, roads and lanes in the Conservation Area, including changes to the carriageway, pavements and parking layouts, should have regard to the character of the Conservation Area and its long-term conservation.***

Achieving the right balance between movement and the quality of a place is never easy, even in a reasonably modest town centre. The intention of this objective is to emphasise that the quality of streets and spaces should not be sacrificed to meet the needs of traffic or parking. The retention or reinstatement of historic street layouts and surfacing can often have a more positive effect of traffic calming and regulation than more engineered

solutions. The implementation of this policy will require close liaison between different Council services.

***Objective 4 - Uses that would be detrimental to the character of individual buildings and the Conservation Area as a whole will be resisted.***

The uses of buildings and areas are an important consideration in the preservation or enhancement of the special character of the Conservation Area. As a mixed-use area (predominantly commercial and residential uses), Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre continues to retain its original character. Pressures for change of use, for instance from residential and commercial to A3 Food and drink use (particularly evening biased take-away only establishments), can undermine the distinctive character of a Conservation Area leaving many prime locations shuttered up during the day and should be resisted. Generally speaking there is a presumption that the best uses for historic buildings are those for which the buildings were originally designed, or if that is not possible, that alternative uses of a sympathetic kind should be identified. The intention of this objective is not to prevent changes of use, but to indicate that primacy should be given to uses which are historically appropriate to the building or area concerned.

***Objective 5 - Where they make an important contribution to the character of the town centre, there should be a presumption in favour of retaining historic boundary treatments such as hedges, walls and railings, and to limiting on-street clutter.***

The character of the Conservation Area depends in part upon its historic grain, as defined by property boundaries and street layouts. Whilst the majority of commercial building in the area do not have frontages, the larger civic buildings within the area do. These areas contribute as much to the quality of the street as the buildings and a front area behind a wall or hedge is an integral part of the building and its setting. The removal or alteration of such boundary treatments can be immensely harmful to the appearance of an area and is to be resisted. Similarly, the alteration of the rear boundary walls is noticeable in parts (particularly to Pontmorlais' Tram Road North), and the removal or alteration of original boundary walls should be resisted.

***Objective 6 - Proposals for energy-saving measures and for sustainable forms of energy supply will be supported where they do not adversely affect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.***

The requirement to improve the energy performance of all buildings, including existing ones when altered, lies at the heart of both national policy and local planning policy. It is important that the introduction of energy-saving measures does not detract from the architectural and historic character of the Conservation Area. For instance, the use of uPVC windows, insulated exterior walling materials or solar panels in roofs all may be harmful to

the appearance of buildings, especially ones of traditional form and appearance. Part L of the Building regulations acknowledges this issue by allowing discretion to be used in its application to historic buildings. Under the term 'historic building' it includes:

- Listed Buildings
- Buildings in Conservation Areas
- Buildings on a local authority's 'local list'

Traditional buildings can be adapted to perform well in energy terms, although the cost and visual impact of such measures should not be underestimated. It is generally possible to introduce energy saving measures, for instance carefully installed draught proofing, loft insulation or secondary glazing. The form and nature of Merthyr's town centre means that solar panels or photovoltaic installations are unlikely to be able to be sited in locations where they would not be visually obtrusive. Care should always be taken that any measures adopted to improve energy use do not threaten the long-term conservation of the buildings (e.g. by leading to increased condensation).

- 4.2 It is acknowledged that development over the last 50 years or more both within and adjacent to the conservation area has not adopted a consistent approach and as a result a variety of styles has been employed over this time, some of which are of variable quality. By proposing these objectives, MTCBC is seeking to adopt a framework that will continue to gradually improve the overall character of the area over the next decade. Much of the development will by its very nature be gradual, but an incremental approach will take its cue from the guidance already in place and from the objectives identified within this document.

#### **5.0 CONSERVATION AREA ENHANCEMENT: ACTIONS & MANAGEMENT**

- 5.1 This section provides guidance for the enhancement of the Town Centre Conservation Area. The enhancement of a Conservation Area can take two principal forms:
- The sympathetic redevelopment of sites defined in the detailed appraisal of the area as detracting from the character of appearance of the areas; or
  - Pro-active proposals, such as the management and repair of a designed historic landscape, a scheme for the restoration of distinctive architectural features, the reinstatement of historic surfaces, or the reduction of traffic intrusion and the rationalisation of street signage.
- 5.2 As the area is fairly diverse it is not possible to give exhaustive and prescriptive guidance for all building types, but definition of some common parameters is included below. The guidance does tend to focus on the commercial buildings fronting the High Street as the buildings that are more likely to require assistance in their stewardship. The guidance is provided to aid the local authority, building owners and their consultants to make appropriate decisions with regards to the more important features of the buildings that have an impact on the public realm. It should be noted that the guidance provided is not intended as a set of hard and fast rules. Where appropriate justification can be provided in accordance with sound conservation principles, then alternative solutions to those suggested should not be dismissed.

#### **GUIDANCE**

##### **Existing Buildings**

- 5.3 A good number of the properties within the Merthyr Tydfil Conservation Area are listed and are consequently subject to rigorous consent mechanisms in order for any material alterations to be undertaken. However, numerous inappropriate alterations have been undertaken to the buildings (listed and unlisted) over the years that have eroded some of the qualities of the buildings and detracted from their appearance. Alterations such as the insertion of replacement windows, the provision of modern shopfronts with external roller shutters, changes to dormer windows, roof coverings and other details have been detrimental to the appearance of individual buildings and their immediate setting.

##### **Demolition**

- 5.4 Whilst most buildings in the conservation area are generally in good condition, it may be inevitable that some buildings will require demolition (in full or in part). Furthermore, opportunities may arise to improve the wider conservation area by demolishing poor quality or poorly designed buildings in or close to the area.

##### **Recommendation:**

- There should typically be a presumption against demolition (including substantial partial demolition or façade retention) of any buildings in the conservation area constructed prior to 1945, including outbuildings and associated permanent structures within backlands areas.

- Strong justification would need to be provided to make the case for the demolition of pre 1945 buildings. The demolition of post 1945 buildings might justify the attachment of conditions requiring archaeological mitigation even if their demolition raises no other issues.
- Proposals for demolition of a historic asset should not be considered in the absence of a detailed assessment / appraisal that demonstrates to the satisfaction of MTCBC that the building cannot reasonably be retained. Demolition work that receives consent must not begin until contracts have been let for the approved development.
- Where a building is considered to be in a dangerous condition, advice should be sought from MTCBC prior to any demolition. In such circumstances, all efforts should initially be made to secure the site from public access rather than demolition pending agreement of a way forward. Where feasible, existing structures should be recorded prior to demolition.

#### **Alterations & Extensions**

5.5 Alteration and extension of the superstructure of a building can lead to the loss of some of its historic value and townscape qualities and can have a negative impact on the character and appearance of the area as a whole. Insensitive and inappropriate rear and side extensions have degraded many of the views of the rear of the High Street. Future extensions should be of an appropriate size, form and scale as well as have a sympathetic approach to detailing and materials.

##### **Recommendation:**

Where alteration or extension is necessary for the continued use of a building or where it benefits the regeneration of the conservation area it should:

- Be well designed and of a quality at least commensurate with the historic buildings and the character of the site.
- not detract from the character and appearance of the area and be subservient to the parent building.
- be prioritised towards the less significant areas of the building (e.g. a rear elevation or previously altered area).
- involve the least possible degree of change to or loss of historic fabric.
- use like-for-like traditional materials where renewing original fabric unless an alternative can be adequately justified in terms of its visual effect on the conservation area.
- leave a record of the date when any significant changes were made.
- where possible enhance the character of the building
- respect historic plots, building / façade lines and maintain historic street patterns.

#### **Roofs**

5.6 The original roof coverings to most of the historic buildings within the Town Centre Conservation Area would have been Welsh slate. Current roofing materials identified in the area currently includes natural slate, artificial slate, concrete tiles, profiled metal sheeting and other materials.

**Recommendation:**

Where pitched roofs are to be re-covered, they should be re-roofed using appropriate materials to reinforce the character of the area. In most cases this will be natural slate, preferably Welsh slate whenever possible / budget allows.

**Dormers**

5.7 Dormer windows are a strong and significant feature in many of the commercial properties facing the High Street (particularly in Pontmorlais). Many buildings retain their dormers, but often, inappropriate detailing has eroded their qualities.

**Recommendation:**

Works to existing buildings where dormers exist should include for the reintroduction of proportions and details based on historic research / evidence in order to re-establish the dormer windows as strong architectural features in the area. Where dormers have been removed previously, the reintroduction of suitably detailed dormers should be promoted.

**Rooflights**

5.8 Numerous properties have had rooflights inserted, predominantly to the rear elevations. As would be expected with individual ownership, the size, type and location of the rooflights varies considerably.

**Recommendation:**

New or replacement rooflights should not adversely affect the character of the building. Where deemed necessary, rooflights should be suitable modern replica metal conservation styled rooflights, installed flush with the plane of the roof covering and where possible, generally in the upper half of the roof.

**Rainwater Goods**

5.9 The original rainwater goods installed to older properties would have been fabricated of cast iron. uPVC rainwater goods are now most common in the area, and whilst they function to help keep the building face dry, they do not have suitable aesthetic authenticity. The use of appropriately detailed and selected heritage detailed aluminium guttering would also be an acceptable alternative to cast iron, though it should be noted that the aluminium downpipes are not generally as robust as their cast iron counterparts, which would be a consideration on the street elevation.

**Recommendation:**

New or replacement rainwater goods should be traditionally detailed units of cast iron or cast aluminium to suit the evidenced arrangements (many of the buildings had ogee profiled gutters originally) with smaller diameter (approx. 3") downpipes. Downpipe locations to be considered in relation to elaborate shopfronts and historic features.



#### **Chimney Stacks**

5.10 Chimney stacks form a critical element in the roof profile of the area and help provide a perceptible rhythm to the urban streetscape. Numerous stacks have been taken down (likely to arrest damp and maintenance issues associated with them).

#### **Recommendation:**

Where stacks have been removed, encouragement should be given to reestablishing the chimney stacks (even if not operational) to enhance the street silhouette. New stacks can be constructed with full lead tray arrangements to prevent water ingress.

#### **External Walls**

5.11 The finishes to the external walls found within the town centre varies considerably, from the red brick and terracotta or sandstone detailing found on the larger civic buildings, the pennant stone faces of Hope Chapel and St. David's Church to the painted render finishes found predominantly to the commercial buildings (particularly at the upper levels above the shopfronts). The earlier render finishes to numerous buildings have been replaced with modern cement based renders that have a detrimental impact on the historic fabric.

#### **Recommendation:**

Where original render finishes remain and are sound, these could be repaired using suitable lime based render repairs, and where hard cement finishes exist, the best course of action would be to remove the render and replace it with new lime based render finishes that can be painted using breathable external paints. Alternatively, self-coloured lime based renders could be used if preferred. The wall finishes to the civic buildings should generally be retained and repaired.

#### **Shopfronts**

5.12 The installation of unsympathetic shop fronts and associated security measures to a great number of the buildings in the conservation area have been carried out in the past. As a consequence, these changes have not respected the character of the buildings or the conservation area and the impact has been an incremental erosion of the conservation area's qualities. As part of the Pontmorlais Townscape Heritage scheme, a number of properties in that area have had new shopfront arrangements based on historic details that have greatly enhanced the streetscape. In association with many shopfronts changes, security roller shutters have been installed to the external face of many shopfronts to the detriment of the building and the wider area. This detriment is particularly acute when the buildings are take-away food outlets that remain closed for much of the day and therefore give the street a particularly unwelcoming feeling.

#### **Recommendation:**

Further encouragement should be provided to have more building owners reinstate the older shopfront arrangements to re-establish and reinforce the character of the area. The need for additional security measures should be carefully considered, and if required, then shutters should be placed on the inside of the shopfront to lessen the impact on the streetscape when the units are closed. A shopfront is part of a whole

building, not a separate entity and as such, its design should reflect the style, proportions and detailing of the rest of the building – in particular the main street elevation above. Lateral expansion of shopfronts (across two or more traditional ground floor units) should still give consideration to the traditional rhythm and patterns. Historic shopfront features should be retained and incorporated into new installations wherever possible and the use of traditional materials should be encouraged.

#### **Windows and Doors**

5.13 The vast majority of windows throughout the conservation area have been replaced at one time or another, with most being substituted by inappropriate casement or uPVC arrangements. These changes have a significant impact on the character of the buildings and consequently on the wider conservation area.

##### **Recommendation:**

As and when replacement becomes necessary, new appropriate painted timber windows should be provided to the window openings (likely sliding sash or casement arrangement generally) with suitably detailed profiles. Traditionally detailed double glazed windows can be created using slim double glazing that would meet the aesthetic and performance requirements of modern day buildings.

#### **Equipment / Services**

5.14 New fixtures, such as extract ventilation, aerials, satellite dishes, roof-lights, signage and air conditioning equipment detract from the character of an individual building and the area as a whole.

##### **Recommendations:**

Building owners should carefully consider the need for external apparatus on their buildings, and if necessary, then:

- satellite dishes and aerials should not be visible from the public realm.
- avoid installing ventilators, flues, soil and vent pipes on roofs or elevations fronting the public highway or on visible side elevations; where they are absolutely necessary their visual impact should be minimised in terms of their position, configuration, size and design.

#### **Colours**

5.15 The use of inappropriate and modern colours detracts from the overall ambience of the town centre. In particular the use of modern brilliant whites on joinery and wall finishes along with the use of particularly brightly painted render finishes draws the eye and has a detrimental effect on views of and within the Conservation Area.

##### **Recommendation:**

Encourage the use of a limited palette of traditional colours, particularly a single off white for general use on windows and joinery components. A select palette of suitable

colours for various elements to be prepared with colour references to aid building owners in their selection.

#### **Buildings in Poor Condition**

5.16 Poor condition of an individual site or building can be detrimental to the appearance of the area and may set a bad example to other owners. This is a particular problem where buildings are unoccupied or only partly occupied or where there has been a lack of routine maintenance.

##### **Recommendation:**

The local authority will consider serving Section 215 notices where the condition of a building or site is detrimental to the character or appearance of the conservation area. Where it is clear that emergency or immediate repairs are required to any listed unoccupied building, or part of a building, in order to protect its heritage value and contribution to the character of the conservation area the authority will:

- contact the current owner (as recorded at the Land Registry)
- advise of the need to keep the building in good repair
- if the owner refuses to carry out the necessary repairs, consider serving a Section 54 (Urgent Works) notice.

#### **Change of Use**

5.17 Change of use of a building can lead to a number of incremental changes that over time erode the value of the building and the character of the area, as may the mix of uses.

##### **Recommendation:**

In considering applications for change of use, the Council will:

- request information on the design of refuse storage, parking, waste pipes, ventilation fixtures, satellite dishes, aerials and any other fixtures, such as signage.
- ensure that proposed changes of use are of an appropriate scale in relation to neighbouring buildings.
- ensure that proposed change of use or new development do not result in a detrimental change to the character of the area.

#### **Listed Buildings**

5.18 Alterations to listed buildings, such as the insertion of replacement windows and changes to dormer windows and roof coverings, may be detrimental to the appearance of individual buildings and their immediate setting, and may also set a poor precedent to other owners.

##### **Recommendation:**

Any proposed alterations to a listed building should be sympathetic to its historic fabric and appearance, and be fully justified. Owners of listed buildings will be notified of unauthorised changes to their buildings. Where evidence is available, (e.g. in the

form of dated photographs) enforcement action will be taken to ensure that either the original fabric is reinstated or an application for retrospective consent is made for alterations that are considered acceptable.

#### **Other Buildings of Heritage Value**

5.19 Alterations to other (unlisted) buildings of heritage value have been carried out in the past, most notably the removal of architectural features, inappropriate repairs and replacements, and the installation of unsympathetic shop fronts and associated security measures. These changes have not respected the character of the buildings or the conservation area. The impact has been an incremental erosion of the conservation area's qualities.

#### **Recommendations:**

Through example and encouragement the local authority will promote the reinstatement of historic features and the replacement of unsuitable modern elements and will also take the opportunity to secure improvements to existing detrimental features (for example, inappropriate windows) as part of any new building work.

#### **New Buildings and Infill Developments on Gap Sites**

5.20 As a tightly arranged urban environment, the town centre has only limited opportunity for the provision of new buildings. Some isolated gap sites do exist following previous demolitions / clearance works and there are opportunities to improve the character of the area should opportunities arise to develop some of the mid/late 20th Century buildings. The setting of existing buildings of heritage value and the character of the conservation area as a whole can be adversely affected by new development and views into and out of the conservation area may be compromised. The quality of new buildings may also be inadequate and may lack the design attributes of the historic buildings that characterise the conservation area, thereby failing to preserve or enhance its character. The predominantly C19th character of the town centre may also be diluted by the design and appearance of new buildings within the conservation area. Furthermore, there is a risk that the scale, massing, proportions or position of new buildings and infill developments may be at odds with the pattern of existing buildings.

#### **Recommendations:**

In order for future proposals for new buildings to be considered it is important that a clear understanding of the special qualities of the Conservation Area be demonstrated and that stringent design criteria in determining future planning applications be adopted. Submissions should include sufficient relevant design details and the submission of pre-application design statements for complex or large development proposals should be encouraged as a basis of discussion between the developer and the planning authority. The following items should be given particular consideration

- Setting and Context - Applications for planning permission for new development within the conservation area should if appropriate, include an impact assessment to

demonstrate that views into and from the conservation area are not adversely affected and that the setting of existing buildings is preserved or enhanced. The prominence of the site should be a key issue along with the impact that the proposed development will have on key approaches within the conservation Area.

- **Quality of Design** - There will be a strong presumption in favour of using materials traditional to the area as identified in the CAA, particularly for smaller developments. Artificial materials (e.g. reconstituted slate) should be avoided. Modern materials of good quality may be appropriate if it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that they do not have an adverse effect on the character of the conservation area. New building work must respect the design and detailing of existing buildings of heritage value in the conservation area – this is not intended to lead to pastiche designs, but rather respectful good quality contemporary design. Larger developments should generally be of high quality contemporary design that should reflect the overall character of the area through the careful use of materials and textures.
- **Scale and Proportion** - Relative positions of existing buildings and their relationship to the road, pavement and site boundaries should be respected. General proportions and massing of existing neighbouring buildings, including ridge and eaves heights, should guide new development within and close to the conservation area. New development should respect the established building pattern or rhythm as defined by historic ownership boundaries throughout the conservation area; infill development on gap sites should be influenced by historical precedent and the nature of adjoining buildings of heritage value. Where already diluted by modern alterations, new developments should seek to restore the original relationships and hence contribute to the heritage focus of the conservation area.

#### **Architectural Character & Detail**

5.21 Details, materials and finishes contribute to the architectural or historic character and appearance of a building and their alteration or loss can be detrimental to the property and the area. In particular, shopfronts of poor design and ground floor street frontages that don't relate to the façade above may have an adverse effect on the character of an individual building and the appearance of the conservation area.

#### **Recommendations:**

Building on the constructive improvements already undertaken as part of the Townscape Heritage project in Pontmorlais, a greater understanding of the architectural character and detail within the wider conservation area should be promoted. This should include the promotion of a Shopfront design guide, and where necessary, additional guidance and support should be given. Through example, good conservation practice should also be promoted in the area for the more significant assets (including recording of existing features to significant buildings in advance of any works taking place), while sympathetic change should be encouraged for the less significant buildings that nevertheless play a part in the character of the area. Enforcement action should be taken against unauthorised work where appropriate. The majority of buildings in the conservation area are commercial and as such would

require planning consent for works that materially affect the external appearance of the building, including the removal of building features.

The following items should be given particular consideration :

Details, materials and finishes

- Existing original features and previous good quality, sympathetic repairs or replacements should be retained if at all possible. Where their renewal is necessary, it should generally be on a like-for-like basis in terms of design, materials, and workmanship. Any changes to primary features such as windows, doors and chimneys should be carefully considered by the local authority and the decision to change justified as part of any application.
- Repair of worn or damaged features should be considered the default position as opposed to replacement; for example, partially decayed timber doors and windows may be economically repaired by a suitably skilled joiner allowing the retention of original historic fabric and detail.
- Upgrading should be considered before replacement to meet modern requirements; for example, draught stripping and secondary glazing of existing windows should be considered in preference to wholesale replacement.

Shopfronts

- Promote reinstatement of historic features and replacement of unsuitable modern elements.
- Take the opportunity to secure improvements to existing detrimental features (for example externally fitted security shutters) as part of any new building work.
- Historic architectural features should be retained and, if replacement is necessary, traditional design, materials and workmanship should be used to replicate the original.
- Resist internally illuminated signs and ensure that all signage is of a quality suitable to the building to which it is attached and respects the character of the conservation area. Backlit signage is favourable.
- Fascias and signage should be in proportion with the building and shopfront and should not extend above the natural shopfront cornice level.
- Traditional swing signs are often appropriate, subject to size and design.
- The colour palette of a shopfront and its signage should reflect the traditional, historic character of the streetscape
- Traditional awnings maybe appropriate, subject to design but flags and similar features are unlikely to be.

### **Hard and Soft Landscape**

#### **Soft Landscaping**

5.22 As an urban town centre location, the extent of soft landscape within the town centre conservation area is limited. The following areas provide most of the contribution:

- The steep sloping ground to the rear of the Masonic Temple
- The Pontmorlais Memorial Garden

- The small landscaped garden on the site of the demolished Owain Glyndwr public house at Pontmorlais Circus
- The car park on the site of the demolished 51-56 Pontmorlais
- Open grassed area to part of Penderyn Square (site of the demolished Castle Cinema)
- Planting to the frontage of Carnegie Library
- St. David's Churchyard
- Open ground bounded between Church Street, Johns Street and Tramroadside North
- St Tydfil's Churchyard

These areas do provide some relief from the tight urban character and the green foliage is often a welcome backdrop giving a sense of enclosure around the edges of the area.

**Recommendations:**

Trees that contribute to the character of the conservation area will be retained or where they need to be removed for reasons of health and safety, replaced by trees of appropriate species and maturity. When new trees are planted the impact of the tree on important views, both now and when it reaches maturity, will be considered.

### Hard Landscaping

5.23 Much of the core of the conservation area, particularly the pedestrianised parts of the High Street, has been re-surfaced in recent years with good quality modern materials that are appropriate to the conservation area. Poor or inappropriate hard landscaping around buildings of heritage value can significantly detract from their setting, particularly where significant areas of car parking are proposed around historic buildings. Historic boundary walls, railings and gates contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area and their loss, alteration or unsympathetic replacement can adversely affect the area.

**Recommendations:**

A detailed landscaping scheme must be submitted with all planning application for new buildings or significant alteration to existing sites. Parking provision and anticipated vehicular movements must be considered along with the occupancy level and use of any proposed building. Proposed uses for existing buildings where the scale of car parking detracts from the character of the conservation area will be rejected. New boundary treatments should reflect the prevailing historic boundary treatments of the area. Surfacing for yards, car parking, paths and hard-standing must be of good quality and use appropriate traditional materials. Existing historic boundary walls and gateposts should be retained; their alteration as part of any planning permission will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and when fully justified and mitigated. Demolition of historic lines of enclosure will be strongly discouraged. Repairs or renewal of original boundary details will be carried out using like-for-like traditional materials. Reinstatement of historic features and replacement of

unsuitable modern elements will be actively encouraged where any alteration works are being considered.

#### **Public Realm**

5.24 Merthyr Tydfil town centre has the potential to be a place known for its high quality public realm, drawing on the precedents set within the existing streetscape fabric. The quality of the streetscape can be used to enhance and celebrate its distinctive features and buildings. Outside of the recently renovated core the quality of the streetscape can, however, be fragmented due to incremental changes and a lack of strategic thinking about the streetscape as a whole and how individual parts relate to the whole. It is essential that a holistic approach to the public realm informs proposals for its improvements to avoid such fragmentation.

#### **Pathways & Pavements**

5.25 The public realm surface finishes to most of the High Street have been upgraded in recent years with stone paving being used for the pavements and pedestrianized areas. Subsequent works (presumably related to services installations) have been undertaken and inappropriate materials have been used to make good (macadam).

##### **Recommendation:**

Ensure that repair and maintenance of pathways and pavements are carried out regularly, and that any making good following new works to services (particularly by statutory providers) be carried out using like-for-like traditional materials or reusing the existing paving materials. In addition, take the opportunity to continue reinstating historic finishes to the wider conservation area including side roads and access roads off the main thoroughfare.

#### **Street Furniture & Signage**

5.26 Street lighting, pedestrian signage and other street furniture design requires careful consideration, both within the town centre and in the immediate surroundings in order to preserve and enhance the setting of the conservation area; similarly highway markings, signage and other features can be detrimental to the character, appearance and setting of the conservation area, being visually intrusive and of inappropriate design.

##### **Recommendations:**

- Ensure that all highway and pedestrian signage and street furniture is necessary and of an appropriate design and construction
- Ensure all new surfaces respect and enhance the character of the area (e.g. avoid discordant colours and over-complex designs).
- Remove visual clutter where the opportunity arises (e.g. remove or integrate free-standing signs, CCTV masts and lamp posts).
- Co-ordinate the design, materials and colour for all street furniture items.
- Ensure that lighting is designed such that source and level of illumination respects and enhances the character of the area.



- Use only road markings and signage that are the minimum necessary to comply with highway safety.

#### **Management**

5.27 The management of the wider public realm, particularly away from the main thoroughfare can clearly prove to be challenging with instances of graffiti and fly-tipping taking place.

##### **Recommendation:**

Encourage reporting of occurrences of fly-tipping and graffiti etc. and put procedures in place to swiftly remove material that is harmful to the visual amenity and character of the conservation area. The local authority will consider serving a Section 215 notice where the condition of property is detrimental to the character or appearance of the conservation area. Prepare and agree a long-term maintenance plan for the area, including targeted maintenance and monitoring regimes, and carry out physical improvements where necessary.

#### **Traffic Movement**

5.28 The town centre has depended on movement for its existence following the construction of the tramroads. The significant change in modern times is of course the rise of the motor car, and the pressure that car use puts on streets and roads designed for the pre-car age. One of the significant threats to the quality of conservation areas often comes not from the way buildings are treated but from the negative effects of traffic and parking. It is often assumed that the best solution to this conflict is to ban the car and introduce pedestrianisation, but the adoption of that solution can also have negative effects, especially at times when streets are not busy. A moderate degree of traffic, as well as having practical benefits, enlivens a street. The issue is finding the right balance between vehicles and the quality of the place they serve. The town centre is already an area that has a mix of traffic movement status with the lower town being substantially pedestrianised as far as St David's church. Pontmorlais Circus is a busy traffic hub with significant numbers of vehicles passing through all day long. The current one-way system operating up Pontmorlais High Street limits the amount of traffic passing through, though it continues to create queuing traffic at certain periods which has a detrimental effect on the ambiance of Pontmorlais High Street. The use of short stay parking bays on the High Street would seem welcome to encourage trade, though over-staying appears to be common.

##### **Recommendation:**

Continue to monitor the traffic priorities through the conservation area in order to ensure that the proposals suit the area, particularly as increased investment may change the dynamic of the area. Ensure also that parking restrictions are enforced in order to allow the on-street parking to be used as intended.

#### **6.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN**

- 6.1 The previous parts of this report have examined the measures required to protect and enhance the Conservation Area including specific recommendations for elements within the area. This part of the report looks at how these measures should be implemented, i.e. which organisations or groups should be responsible for them, how they might be funded, and over what timescale the proposals should take place. The division of responsibility in caring for any Conservation Area is bound to be complex, and it hoped that some of the recommendations in this report can be implemented very quickly, whilst others will be ongoing, or should be programmed within a specific timeframe.
- 6.2 The principal responsibilities for the stewardship of the Town Centre Conservation Area fall jointly on Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and the local residents / owners. Whilst some of the local businesses and residents are interested in the history of the area, they may not be fully aware of the benefits of the Conservation Area and how they can influence its future. MTCBC on the other hand have the advantage of an overview of the wider area and following the success of National Lottery Heritage Fund Townscape Heritage funded projects in Pontmorlais it is vital that they continue to take the lead in the stewardship of the historic environment.
- 6.3 Successfully engaging the local community with their heritage creates an ethos of conservation that can become almost self-regulating as members of the community learn about their environment and how to best look after it. The Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust already exists and could perhaps provide a platform to encouraging this engagement. Communities often have various skills and expertise within them that are underused, but additional training and education in traditional skills can be used to help maintain and repair historic buildings from within the community or locality.
- 6.4 A number of recommended actions are listed below that would help further engage the community with the heritage and significance of the town centre:
- Establish a mechanism for dialogue between local residents groups, business groups and landowners to support businesses in terms of maximising viability and economic potential.
  - Build on the Townscape Heritage project in Pontmorlais to continue to promote enhancement and maintenance works within the conservation area.
  - Build on previous engagement activities with local school children by hosting further workshops / educational trails linked to the national curriculum.
  - Continue to make conservation area information readily available to residents, e.g. ensure that appraisals, management plans and strategic documents are readily available in local libraries and on the internet.
  - Consult with the Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust to help preserve the conservation area's special character and to instigate enhancements where appropriate.

- Continue to engage with local residents' groups in the recording of the area in terms of its present-day character and historical development.
  - Ensure that Merthyr Tydfil is promoted in local and regional tourism initiatives and to support the development of events to encourage the use of Merthyr Tydfil town centre by local people and visitors.
  - Continue to celebrate Merthyr Tydfil's heritage through interpretation, events, festivals and awards.
- 6.5 Conservation area legislation and official guidance deal mainly with local authority powers and responsibilities, but a Conservation Area is the responsibility of all the building owners, users and others who enjoy the area, acting in partnership with the local authority to protect and enhance its character. Whenever possible this Management Plan identifies actions which can be shared amongst those who have an interest in the Conservation Area. The resourcing and programme for the actions are often difficult to give in detail, but an attempt has been made to give an order of magnitude to different actions, plus an indication of where the priorities should lie.

#### **Funding & Resourcing**

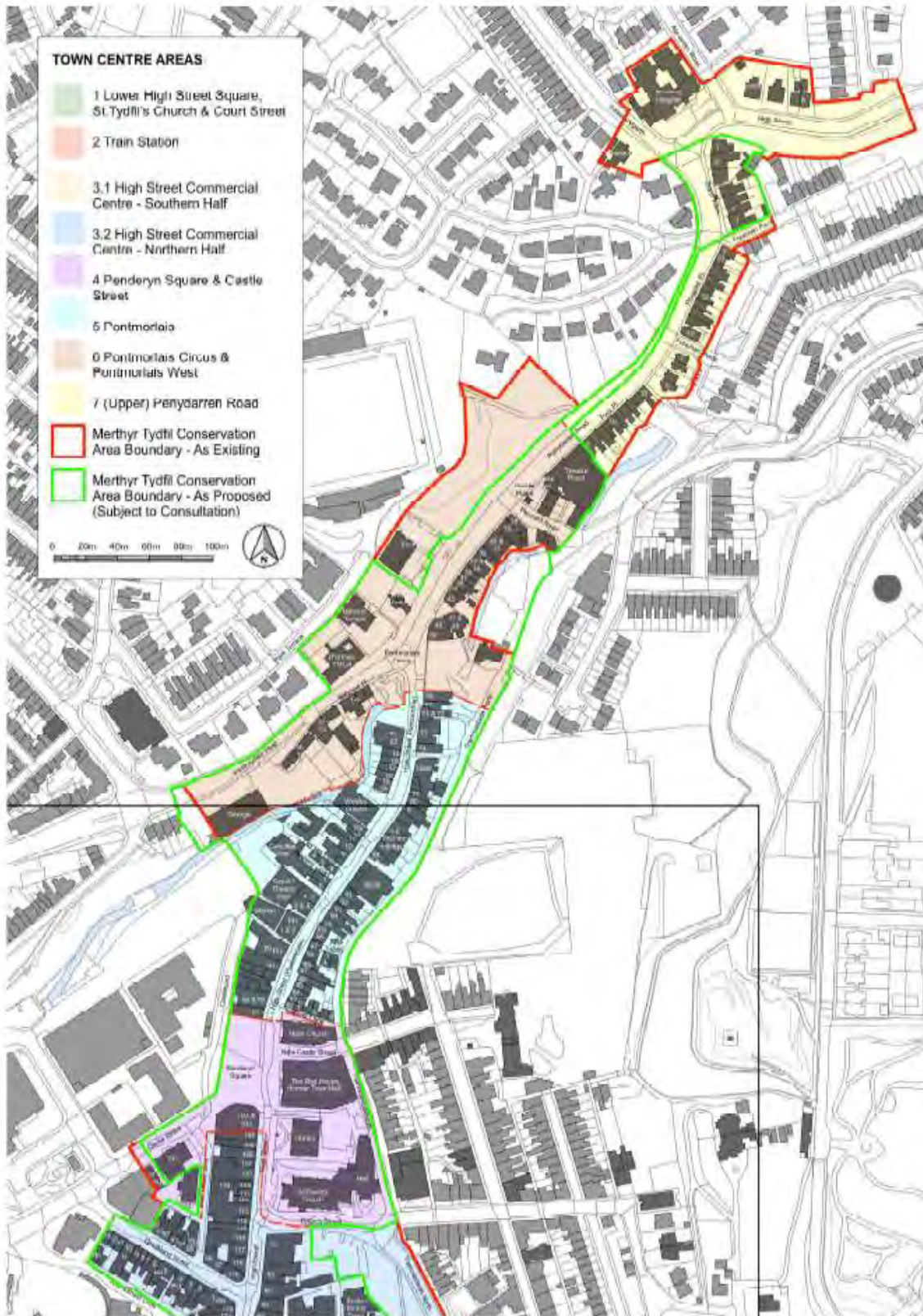
- 6.6 Inevitably, a large proportion of the burden of caring for the Conservation Area falls upon the Local Authority because of the obligations placed upon it by the planning legislation. In recent years Townscape Heritage (TH) grants administered by the National Lottery Heritage Fund have been an important source of finance for enhancement projects in Pontmorlais. Further funding may also be available from other sources to provide match funding. The Local Authority and other stakeholders should continue to seek alternative revenue streams to continue protecting and enhancing the town centre.

#### **Monitoring and Updating this Plan**

- 6.7 The effectiveness of the Management Plan will depend upon the way its policies and recommendations are administered. It is key to recognise that Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area is a living place that will continue to change and evolve. The principal challenge to the area is to manage that change in a way that allows the area to thrive as well as safeguarding and enhancing the special qualities, character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 6.8 Three key factors need to be in place to successfully implement the plan:
- The commitment of all relevant Local Authority departments to the protection and enhancement of the Conservation Area. Other stakeholders, including government agencies (eg Cadw), local organisations and building owners also have a key role to play.
  - The application of sufficient resources, not just to enable the Local Authority to carry out its statutory duties but also to help initiate (in partnership with others) the enhancements recommended in the Conservation Area Management Plan.
  - The review of the Management Plan after five years.



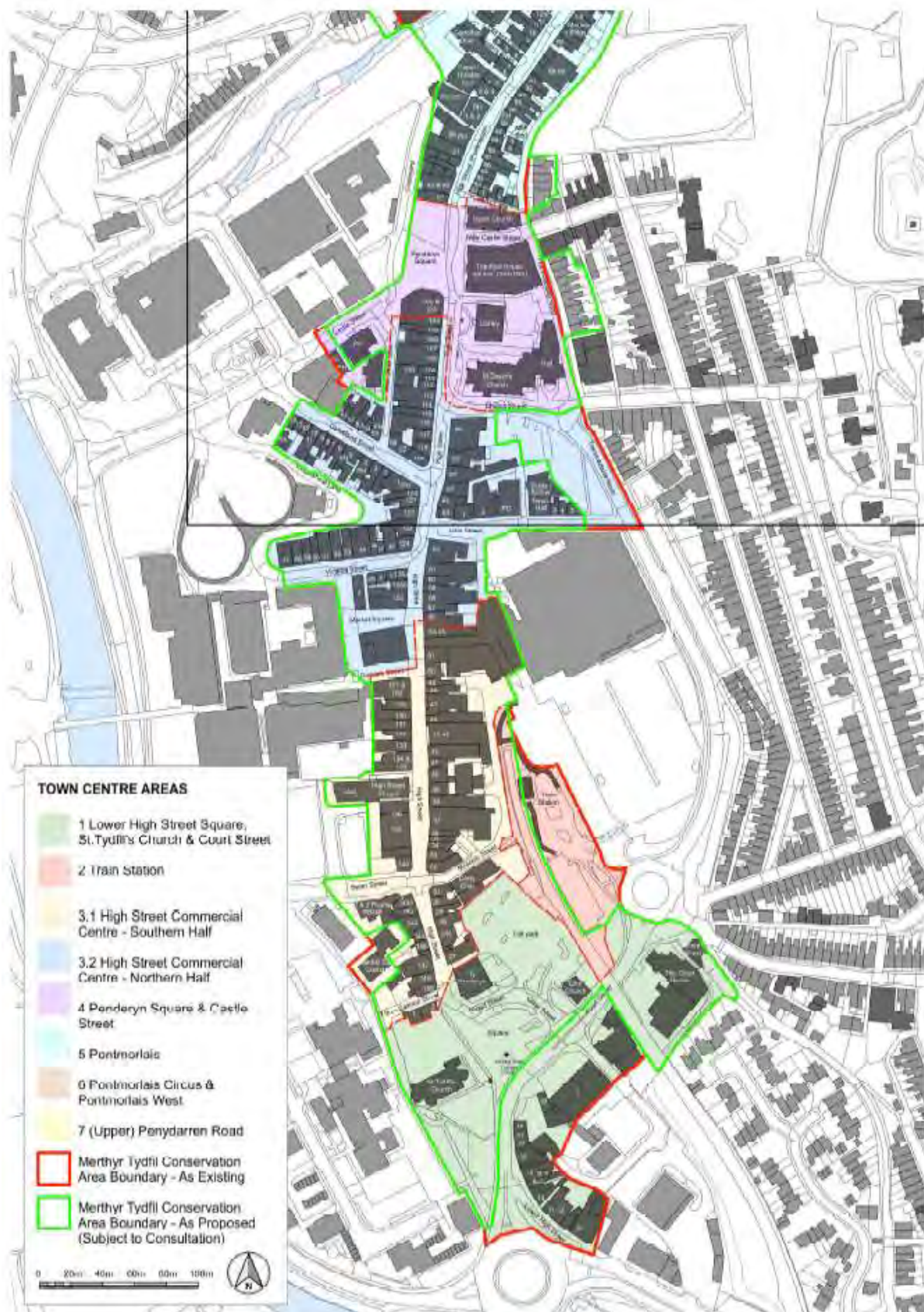
### Appendix 1 – Proposed Boundary Changes



Suggested revisions to Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area Boundary (1 of 2)

# Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan 2016 – 2031

## SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE NOTE: TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN



Suggested revisions to Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area Boundary (2 of 2)