



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

28 FEBRUARY 2022

PONTYPRIDD TOWN CENTRE – DRAFT PLACEMAKING PLAN

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (COUNCILLOR ROBERT BEVAN)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- Set out the draft Placemaking Plan for Pontypridd Town Centre which provides a bold vision for the regeneration of the town;
- To seek approval for a public consultation exercise to be undertaken in respect of the draft Placemaking Plan and to receive a further report detailing the results from the consultation;
- Provide a progress update on the redevelopment plans for the former Bingo Hall site, Marks & Spencer and Burtons/Dorothy Perkins buildings and the Muni Arts Centre.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the draft Pontypridd Placemaking Plan and agree to consultation and public engagement on the overarching Pontypridd Placemaking Plan including engagement on early ideas for the former Marks & Spencer /Dorothy Perkins/Burtons area;
- 2.2 Agree to receive a further report detailing the results from the consultation exercise;
- 2.3 In addition to consulting on the Placemaking plan, agree to a funding application being submitted to Welsh Government to demolish the vacant Marks & Spencer/Dorothy Perkins/Burtons buildings due to their dilapidated

and structural state and general poor quality and to commence the demolition process if and when funding is in place and on the securing of any necessary statutory consents;

- 2.4 In addition to consulting on the Placemaking plan, agree to move to the formal procurement stage to secure a development partner to deliver a hotel on the site of the former Bingo Hall/High Street/Sardis Road.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Pontypridd town centre has faced significant challenges in recent years but has proven to be incredibly resilient during these times. Significant investment is already underway but with continued investment and a co-ordinated approach, the town centre has a positive and bright future. A draft Placemaking Plan has been prepared to respond to this exciting and changing context and to enable Pontypridd to fully become a key economic, social and cultural centre.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 As with many town centres throughout the UK, Pontypridd town centre has faced significant challenges to its economic viability in recent years. This has been intensified further by the destructive flood events in the winter of 2020 that damaged large areas of the town and endangered businesses and more recently the socio-economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.2 While the challenges associated with the pandemic are not yet over, there are reasons for optimism as throughout this period, the town centre has demonstrated incredible sustained resilience. Evidence that Pontypridd is becoming a more resilient town is demonstrated by the latest footfall figures. The recorded figures for the months of October to December 2021 of 864,762 is an increase of 190,948 on the same 3 month period in 2019, prior to the Storm Dennis floods and COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.3 As demonstrated in the previous report in October 2021 '*Progress update on the delivery of Regeneration in Pontypridd Town Centre*', substantial investment has been successfully delivered over recent years under the Regeneration Framework for Pontypridd 2017 – 2022 '*Pivotal Pontypridd – Delivering Growth*'.
- 4.4 To maintain this momentum, the draft Placemaking Plan is underpinned by a baseline review that identifies the issues and opportunities in the town centre and proposes a series of phased interventions to ensure the plan delivers early positive change but also enables growth and investment consistently over a realistic delivery period.

5. DRAFT PONTYPRIDD PLACEMAKING PLAN

- 5.1 'Placemaking' is an overarching approach to improving how a place looks, functions and is experienced. The draft Placemaking Plan for Pontypridd Town Centre, shown at **Appendix 1**, seeks to replace the existing Regeneration Framework for Pontypridd (2017-2022) building upon the foundations of what has already been delivered and to provide a framework for delivering further new development and investment that can help improve the prosperity of Pontypridd, enhance the townscape and make it more resilient to future change.
- 5.2 The placemaking plan illustrates the scale of opportunity that exists in the town. To realise the opportunity, it will be important to create the conditions for a successful residential, office, leisure, and retail market that is supplemented by strong placemaking and active town centre management. It will also be crucial to explore opportunities to make the town resilient to future flood incidents.
- 5.3 Pontypridd has a unique townscape and landscape setting that includes two iconic rivers and a historic park. These strong attributes will be utilised to establish a destination that is a great place to work, live and visit.
- 5.4 Transport is a key consideration for the town centre and there are a series of the projects identified in the placemaking plan either relate to transport enhancements or require adaptations to transport infrastructure.
- 5.5 To guide future investment, the plan identifies the following core ambitions for the town centre:
- **A BUSINESS DESTINATION** with established development areas that provide striking gateways to the town and a series of flexible workspaces that combine to make Pontypridd an attractive to place to invest and work.
 - **A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE** with a choice of high quality new homes, accessible jobs and a bespoke leisure offer delivered in a unique riverside setting.
 - **CONNECTED AND ACCESSIBLE** with excellent pedestrian connections between the town centre and the railway and bus stations and high-quality cycle infrastructure that establishes the town as base to explore the wider valleys landscape.
 - **A GREEN WATERSIDE TOWN** with a unique outlook over the River Taff and the historic Ynysangharad War Memorial Park that provide

an unrivalled leisure and recreational setting and distinctive landscape.

- **A UNIQUE TOWNSCAPE** with iconic heritage buildings that are celebrated and have been reused to accommodate a mix of vibrant modern uses.
- **A CULTURAL AND SOCIAL DESTINATION** with an annual programme of events for Pontypridd that attract visitors and establish the centre as a unique cultural and social destination.
- **AN INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT TOWN** with a network of unique streets and spaces that are safe and accessible, resilient and adaptable to future challenges, optimised views of the unique townscape and riverside setting and provide space for outdoor activity.

5.6 The plan identifies a framework to deliver new investment that responds to the unique character of the town and the issues and opportunities that are present. The plan takes an overarching view of the key areas that make up the town centre and proposes a series of approaches that would strengthen the sense of place in each area that combine to revitalise the town as a whole.

5.7 Five spatial areas have been identified that will act as areas of specific focus for investment:

- **SOUTHERN GATEWAY** - A redeveloped gateway to the town that has a significant redevelopment of the key development blocks including the former Bingo Hall site and Marks & Spencer/Dorothy Perkins stores, enhanced links between the station and the high street and an improved public realm that opens the entrance to the town and establishes a riverside plaza and proposes a range of commercial uses in the railway station. It is proposed that redevelopment of this 'Southern Gateway' area could form Phase 1 of the implementation of the Placemaking Plan and further detail can be found at **Appendix 2**.
- **TOWN CENTRE CORE** - A reinforced core of refurbished buildings that will provide workspace, homes, retail and leisure uses, a riverside walkway and better pedestrian connections and spaces.
- **MARKET QUARTER** - A bespoke Market Quarter within the Town Centre Core that includes a rejuvenated market building and a unique retail and leisure offer in an historic setting, creating a destination in its own right within the heart to the town centre.

- **NORTHERN GATEWAY** - Continued regeneration of the northern gateway to the town that includes a rejuvenated bus station, explores the potential for a new train halt, further workspace and mixed-use development at Berw Road, enhanced art and culture and better pedestrian routes.
- **YNYSANGHARAD WAR MEMORIAL PARK** - A heritage park that has a natural riverside setting, diverse sport and recreational offer, is a hub for cultural and social events and base from which to explore the Valleys Regional Park.

6. **PROJECTS**

6.1 A series of projects and interventions have been identified collectively aimed at transforming the town by creating high quality development and public spaces that promote prosperity, health, happiness, and well-being. Full details can be found within the draft Placemaking Plan but in summary these projects will:

- Establish enhanced gateways into the town.
- Unlock large-scale commercial development opportunities.
- Deliver improved integration between public transport modes.
- Restore traditional buildings with new uses.
- Revive the town's traditional townscape.
- Create a new riverside and parkland setting.
- Make the town centre more resilient to future flood events that might occur.
- Provide better pedestrian routes and create spaces that that people can enjoy, and which businesses can use.
- Create spaces for social and cultural events.
- Develop a stronger digital presence and brand.

7. **PROGRESS UPDATE – KEY SITES AND PREMISES**

7.1 The sites detailed in paragraphs 7.2 to 7.7 have been identified in the draft Placemaking Plan as key areas that will contribute to the economic growth

of the town centre. Supported by government investment, progress is already being made towards securing a sustainable future for these prominent sites.

- 7.2 **Former Bingo Hall / Angharads Nightclub** – Funded by £2.2m investment from the Council and Welsh Government, these vacant and dilapidated buildings were acquired in March 2020 and subsequently demolished in August 2021 leaving the site development ready.
- 7.3 Expert advice has been commissioned to explore a range of commercial uses to strengthen the viability of the town together with opportunities for new distinctive architecture that builds on the town's unique assets and strengthens its sense of place.
- 7.4 Advice received clearly supports a hotel-led development with retail uses at the lower ground floor in this prominent location and a market testing exercise has evidenced that there are developers and operators interested in taking this forward.
- 7.5 Subject to approval, a formal procurement exercise will be undertaken over the next 6 months to secure a Development Partner to take forward a hotel-led development on site. The Council will work closely with potential Development Partners to ensure the best outcome for the town centre.
- 7.6 **96-99a and 100-102 Taff Street** – In March 2021, these vacant buildings formerly occupied by Marks & Spencer, Dorothy Perkins and Burtons, were acquired with investment from the Council and Welsh Government.
- 7.7 Situated opposite the former Bingo Hall site and adjacent to Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, these vacant properties provide an exciting development opportunity.
- 7.8 Early design work commissioned to explore opportunities for the site demonstrate that the properties provide a great opportunity to open the town centre towards the river and the park and to provide a range of leisure, commercial and retail uses in this location. The proposed public consultation presents a timely opportunity to seek views on the early proposals shown at **Appendix 2**.
- 7.9 The property formerly occupied by Marks & Spencer, being vacant since 2015 and suffering from a lack of maintenance is in poor condition, requiring extensive refurbishment and upgrading works both internally and externally. The property will continue to deteriorate without significant expenditure. Structural Surveys have been undertaken and the building is deemed to be beyond economic repair and consideration is now needed regarding demolition to maximise the redevelopment opportunity in this prime location. Whilst the Burtons/Dorothy Perkins building appears to have been maintained in relatively good condition by its previous owners, the

building itself is of poor architectural quality and detrimental to the character of the High Street and to the integrity of the Conservation Area within which it is located. As such it is recommended that the Marks & Spencer and Dorothy Perkins/Burtons buildings are demolished to allow future redevelopment of the whole site, shaped by the public engagement sought by this report and through the process of securing all necessary planning and other consents.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment screening form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full report is not required at this time. This will however be revisited following the public consultation exercise.

9. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Placemaking Plan will be subject to a Welsh Language Impact Assessment and an update will be provided following the public consultation.

10. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 10.1 No consultation has taken place at this stage; however the report proposes that a public consultation exercise on the draft Placemaking Plan, with a particular focus on the redevelopment of the former Marks & Spencer and Dorothy Perkins/Burtons stores, is undertaken over a 4 week period.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 11.1 There are no financial implications in respect of the development of the draft placemaking plan but as projects are developed, the financial implications will be fully assessed and reported as appropriate.
- 11.2 Subject to approval of this report, funding will be sought from Welsh Government to demolish the former Marks & Spencer/Dorothy Perkins/Burtons buildings. This will take the form of a grant application to the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns programme for the maximum 70% contribution towards the associated costs. The balance will be funded from existing Prosperity and Development budgets.
- 11.3 Costs associated with the procurement process for securing a development partner for the hotel-led development will be funded from existing

resources. The financial implications of the actual development will be subject to a further report.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 12.1 There are no current legal implications, but as the opportunities are developed, the legal implications will be fully assessed.

13. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 13.1 The draft Placemaking Plan has been developed in accord with the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024 'Making a Difference' which highlights that its town centres will be vibrant, thriving places where people wish to live, work and socialise and with Welsh Governments 'Town Centres First' approach, aimed at putting the health of town centres at the heart of the decisions taken by the public sector, businesses and communities.
- 13.2 All proposed developments within the draft plan will contribute to the goals of the Well Being of Future Generations Act. In particular, the economic and environmental well-being of Wales, supporting the delivery of a prosperous Wales, a more resilient Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

14. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

- 14.1 The draft placemaking plan identifies a framework to continue to deliver significant new investment to Pontypridd town centre that responds to the unique character of the town and the issues and opportunities that are present. The Placemaking plan will succeed the current Regeneration Framework for Pontypridd 2017 – 2022 'Pivotal Pontypridd – Delivering Growth'.
- 14.2 The successful delivery of the plan will result in transformational change for Pontypridd town centre. A coordinated effort between the public, private and third sectors will be required to realise the scale of opportunity in the town centre to ensure we can successfully deliver a dynamic, diverse and sustainable town centre where people are proud to live, work and visit.
- 14.3 Critical next steps for consideration are:

- Consultation and public engagement on the overarching Pontypridd Placemaking Plan including engagement on early ideas for the former Marks & Spencer/Dorothy Perkins/Burtons area.
- Agreement to seek funding to demolish the vacant Marks & Spencer/Dorothy Perkins/Burtons buildings due to their dilapidated and structural state.
- Agreement to move to the formal procurement stage for a development partner to deliver a hotel on the site of the former Bingo Hall/High Street/Sardis Road.

Other Information:-

***Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Finance & Performance***

***Contact Officer:
Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity and Development (01443 281114)***

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Item:

Background Papers

Contact Officer:

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