



COUNCIL – 1ST JULY 2025

SUBJECT: PLACEMAKING PLANS BARGOED AND BLACKWOOD

**REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR CORPORATE AND
REGENERATION**



1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update members on the development of placemaking plans for Bargoed and Blackwood town centres.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council has been developing placemaking plans for a number of its principal town centres to support the area-based masterplans that have been developed setting out the development and regeneration opportunities across a geographic boundary, in this case the Greater Blackwood Masterplan and the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Masterplan.
- 2.2 The first placemaking plan developed for the county borough was the Caerphilly Town 2035 Placemaking Plan and the next phase of placemaking plan development includes plans for Blackwood and Bargoed town centres.
- 2.3 Both plans identify key opportunity areas for intervention and a number of underutilised or empty properties are identified in these areas in both towns.
- 2.4 The Placemaking plans are frameworks to inform regeneration activity in support of the Welsh Government's "Town Centre First" principle, adopted by the Welsh Government, prioritising the health and vibrancy of town centres in decisions related to the location of new commercial, retail, education, health, leisure, and public service facilities.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Council
- (i) Endorses the Placemaking Plans for Bargoed and Blackwood as the

guiding plan for Regeneration Activity within the two towns and for Officers to collaborate and work in partnership with key stakeholders, where appropriate

- (ii) Notes that the Executive Director for Corporate and Regeneration will formally adopt the Placemaking Plans under his delegated approval

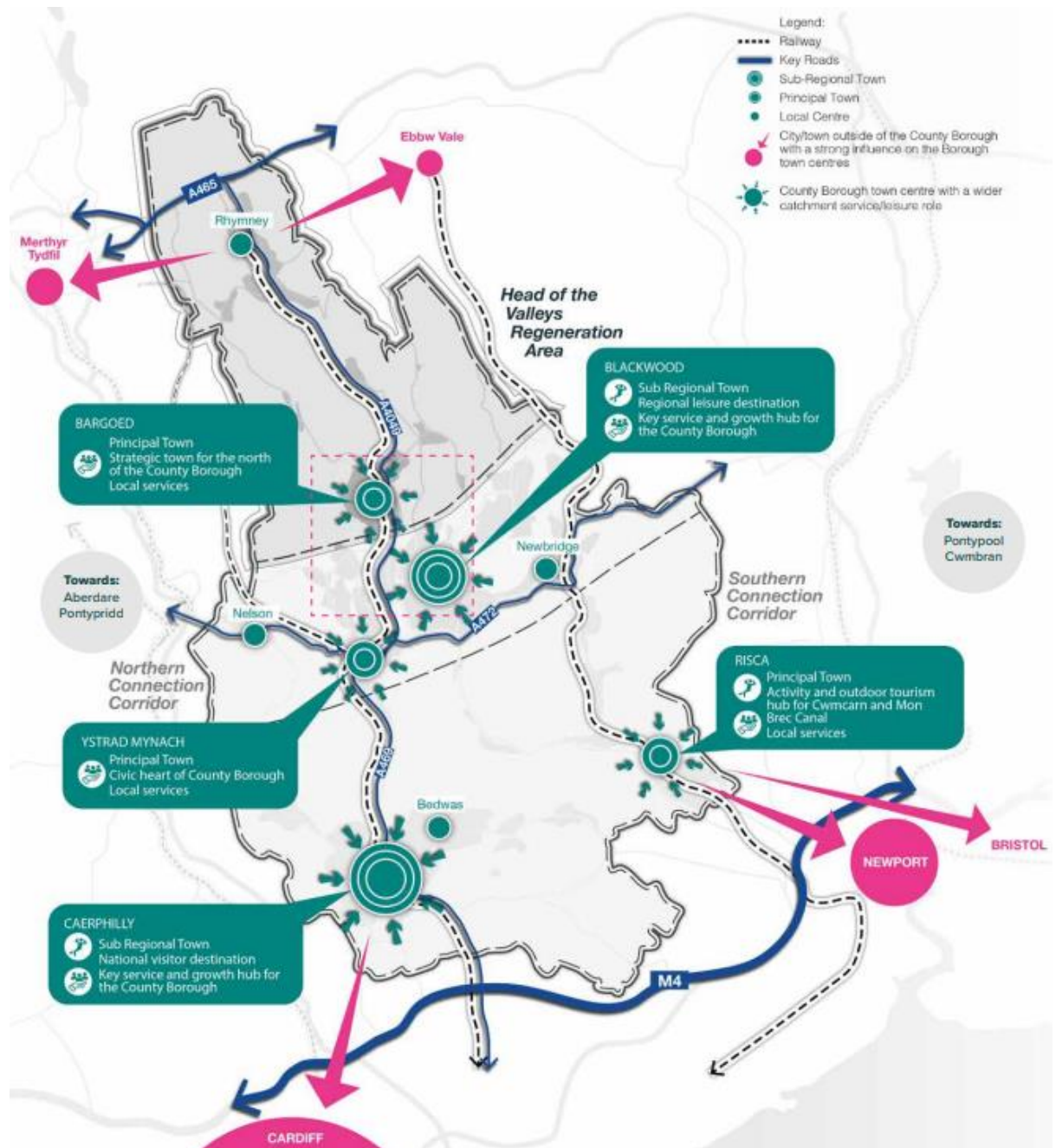
4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure that the authority has an appropriate plan in place to inform the actions and direction of officers and stakeholders for the benefit of its citizens and communities in and around Bargoed and Blackwood town centres.
- 4.2 To ensure that the Council can fully benefit from funding opportunities to support regeneration activity in Blackwood and Bargoed town centres.
- 4.3 Placemaking plans are frameworks to inform regeneration activity and will support the Welsh Government's "Town Centre First" principle.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 'Future Wales: The National Plan 2040' and Planning Policy Wales identify placemaking as the means to maximise well-being and create sustainable places through a holistic approach to planning and designing development that consider development opportunities holistically in the context of the local place to ensure they are appropriate to the place and best support the community. In this way placemaking ensures the design and delivery of development that promote people's prosperity, health, happiness, and well-being in the widest sense.
- 5.2 In order to benefit from Welsh Government Regeneration Department's Transforming Towns financial assistance local authorities are required to develop placemaking plans for their main towns. The Council is currently benefitting from financial assistance for a range of projects in Caerphilly Town where the implementation of the Caerphilly 2035 Placemaking plan has benefitted significantly from external funding including from Welsh Government's Transforming Towns grant and loan funding.
- 5.3 Extensive work has been undertaken by the Council's Regeneration Services department to develop placemaking plans for both Bargoed and Blackwood so that both towns can duly benefit from the financial support as has been received by Caerphilly and it is intended that mini placemaking plans for the towns of Ystrad Mynach and Risca will be progressed in line with the Council's newly endorsed Regenerations Strategy.
- 5.4 Through extensive consultation and stakeholder engagement, both plans are now completed and a final round of consultation on these draft placemaking plans is currently taking place.

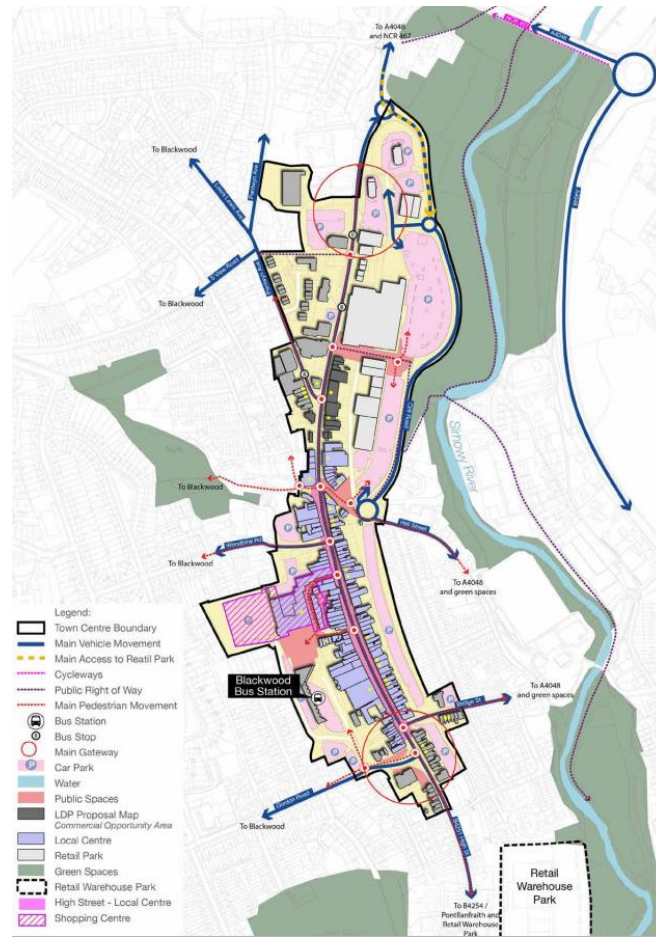
- 5.5 Following the principles of the Placemaking Wales Charter, these plans have evolved in close dialogue with Welsh Government's Regeneration Department so they are aware of the key opportunity areas identified in each town and they are also aware of a number of empty or underutilised properties in each town that have been identified for intervention.



- 5.6 The majority of Wales' population live in a town or city with a population of more than 10,000 people and so the environmental, economic, social and cultural well-being of the country and our county borough is reliant on the success of our towns but they face a number of challenges which can be

unique to specific places as a result of a combination of general decline, post-1980 out of town development, covid impacts and online retailing amongst other challenges.

- 5.7 Competition for activity between town centres and out of town development has seen services and businesses withdraw from the town centre reducing footfall and local spend. This trend was exacerbated during the Coronavirus pandemic where some of the activity that still operated in towns such as cafes & gyms have been relocating out of town with a more local trend towards relocating on industrial estates. This has led to the Welsh Government reinforcing its commitment to its town centres first approach to development opportunities and the importance of placemaking in setting an aspiration and direction for interventions to support the growth and recovery of town centres.
- 5.8 In preparing placemaking plans for Bargoed and Blackwood town centres it is important to recognise the unique attributes of each and the key functions that they have evolved that will create opportunities to shape the future of each town and also ensure that complementary roles are prioritised so that all towns can flourish.
- 5.9 Blackwood has a significant catchment that is due to grow further, is located in the strategically important northern connections corridor which provides a west/east transport connection through the mid-Capital City Region and is a recognised regional leisure destination.
- 5.10 Bargoed has a smaller population and catchments but provides key retail, leisure, and service functions to their communities and the communities in adjacent residential settlements and is the gateway to and traditional service centre for the upper Rhymney Valley and the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area.
- 5.11 The placemaking process involved an extensive place analysis of each of the town centres in line with the Placemaking Wales Charter principles regarding sense of place: i.e. Activity, Place & Meaning taking on board feedback from the community, looking at transport provision and use, the mix of uses in each town and their location. From this analysis a vision, ambitions, interventions and opportunity areas have been identified for each town.



- 5.12 The placemaking plans attached at Appendices 1 and 2 are intended to provide a framework for the direction and delivery of prosperous and regenerated town centres in Bargoed and Blackwood. The opportunity areas identified within the plan will evolve over time as interventions and private sector interest develops to shape the footprint and nature of any specific development within the context of each town centre.
- 5.13 Town centres have had to adapt and changes as a consequence of the challenges faced over a sustained period of time, and it is worth noting that the fastest growing sub-categories of demand identified in recent years has been: Fast food, beauty salons, barbers, convenience shops, nail salons, bakers, pet shops, bars and café's highlighting how town centres are now more orientated to a service offer and away from a retail offer.
- 5.14 To support the Council in delivering on the ambitions identified in the Placemaking plans, Welsh Government have approved a £1m Town Centre Loan fund that can be used to support private developers to bring empty properties back into use and a £4.5m loan fund for the council to establish a property acquisition fund within the town centres. This mirrors the approach taken for Caerphilly where a property acquisition fund of over £5m has been established using a mix of WG loan funding and CCBC monies.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 Delivery of the placemaking plans will be reliant on maintaining staff resources over the longer term to deliver and implement the action plan.
- 6.2 There is stability in the long term with regard to the financial plan of the authority and that cuts in public spending are short term in nature.
- 6.3 That there is a long-term replacement funding programme for the UK Levelling Up programme that can be accessed by Local Authorities alongside the availability of Welsh Government Regeneration funding.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 [Link to Integrated Impact Assessment](#)

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The authority has earmarked a limited amount of capital funding to different projects under the Place Shaping Plan that will contribute to the actions of the regeneration strategy and external revenue funding is currently in place to provide staff resource that can deliver against actions under the people theme. External funding will be used where available to resource and deliver projects that emerge from the strategy.
- 8.2 It is expected that private investment and external stakeholder resources will contribute to a number of the desired outcomes identified in the strategy.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The strategy place making plans are long term in nature in order to achieve sustainable growth and prosperity and it is expected that staff resources will change over this time frame. There are no personnel implications as there are staff in place across the authority that have a role in delivering the outcomes that align with the placemaking plans.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 All consultation responses have been reflected in the report.
- 10.2 Blackwood and Bargoed Town Councils have been presented with the Placemaking Plans for their town and fed back their comments on the placemaking plans.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000, Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections Act 2021

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Cllr. S Cook, Cabinet Member for Housing.
Cllr. Elaine Forehead, Cabinet Member for Social Care.
Cllr. Nigel George, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Highways.
Cllr. Philippa Leonard, Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection.
Cllr. Chris Morgan, Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces.
Cllr. Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities.
Cllr. Gary Johnston, Chair of Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.
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- Appendix 1 Bargoed Placemaking Plan
- Appendix 2 Blackwood Placemaking Plan