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Design Review Report

Tonypandy Town Centre Regeneration Strategy

DCFW Ref: N332

Meeting of 12th February 2025



Review Status	Public
Meeting date	12 th February 2025
Issue date	26 th February 2025
Scheme description	Regeneration Strategy
Scheme location	Tonypandy Town Centre, Rhondda Cynon Taff
Scheme reference number	N332

Key Points

- Changing the perception of Tonypandy and the role of the Business Improvement District could be key focuses for the Town Centre Strategy.
- Consideration should be given to Tonypandy's role in the wider region and potential benefits of developing a wider strategy for the Rhondda Valley.
- The strategy should support start-up businesses and housing development.
- Further analysis should be undertaken of how people travel in the area (currently and into the future) and the potential benefits of improving access to Tonypandy Railway Station.

Consultations to Date

This is the first engagement with the Design Commission on this version of the strategy although early engagement was held with DCFW on the previous strategy in 2019. An important priority for the project is involving the community and so far this has focused on informal engagement.

The Proposal

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council appointed The Urbanists to prepare a regeneration strategy for Tonypandy Town Centre in 2019/20. They are now reviewing this work to create a Town Centre Strategy that reflects the current context and to set a vision for the town's future. This vision is intended to serve as a foundation for collaboration between the Council and its partners. Key themes from the baseline work for the 2024/25 work are shown below.

Key Themes

These key themes have been distilled from the emerging themes, highlighting common feedback within each placemaking principal. These will inform the strategy moving forwards.



Movement

Accessibility issues with topography

Illegal parking

Bus Station improvements



Mix of Uses

Residential use above retail

Shop front improvements

Reuse abandoned buildings



Location

Utilise connections to wider context

Encourage town centre living

Create attractions in Tonypandy



Public Realm

Create green space in the centre

Connect into green infrastructure

Enhance greenery in town centre



Identity

Change negative perceptions

Celebrate local history

Offer unique experience



People and Community

Spaces for young people

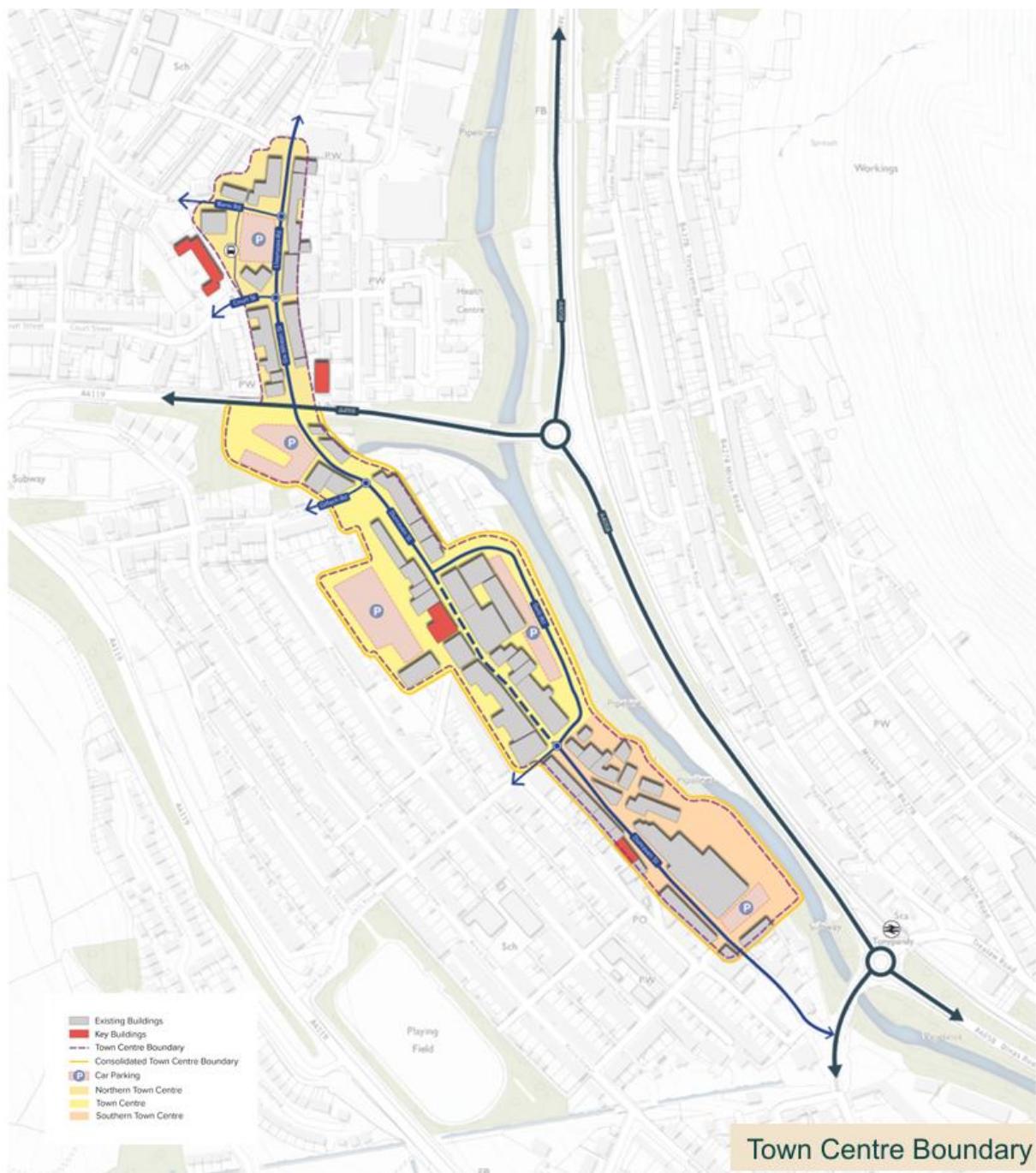
Toilet offer within town centre

Create community use on high st

Context

The project is focussed on Tonypandy Town Centre. The high street is relatively long and linear, with Tonypandy Railway Station to the south and the town's more civic functions to the north.

Tonypandy sits at the heart of the Rhondda Valley and faces challenges common to post-industrial towns, including aging building stock, population changes, socio-economic deprivation, shifting retail patterns, and transport connectivity constraints.



Site Location Plan

Main Points

Identity

It was clear from the review that residents have a strong sense of pride in being from Tonypandy. The town centre has a high footfall - with 844,452 people visiting per year compared to 494,955 visiting Treorchy and 115,985 visiting Porth. The town centre therefore has good potential, with some 'green shoots' such as a destination hairdressers and a distinctive locally owned café, but overall, its perception needs to change further.

The Rhondda Valley is made up of a connected network of settlements. The town centre has competition from Talbot Green, Pontypridd and Treorchy, but can offer something different that complements the other places. Talbot Green in particular has captured the bulky goods/large supermarkets/major out of town retail. Further consideration should be given to how the town sits within the valley and wider region and the potential benefits of developing a strategy for the Rhondda Valley as a whole. This may aid specialisation or distinctiveness of the offer of each place/town, including Tonypandy.

Culture, heritage and language can all contribute to a place's identity (such as the 'Pandy' vernacular for the town). Further consideration should be given to what this means for Tonypandy and how the strategy can support this.

Movement

The travel to work census data shows that most people travel by car, few use public transport (particularly train) and there are relatively high numbers of people working from home. This data needs to be updated to understand the current situation post-Covid. The analysis would also benefit from an understanding of where people work and how people travel to the town centre, schools and other key facilities.

The data showed only 1.7% of people travelling to work by train, which may reflect the date of the census and the impact of Covid at the time. The South Wales Metro improvements have not yet been fully implemented here and there have been long-term bus replacement services that may have affected usage. The location of the railway station, route to the town, lack of wayfinding and lack of car parking are also all potential reasons for the low usage. Consideration should be given to what the potential impact of the South Wales Metro improvements could be for Tonypandy and how the strategy can maximise the benefits of the Metro. Further consideration should be given to the benefits and potential for improvements to the accessibility to the railway station by foot, bike, bus and car.

High Street

The material presented identifies that the high street is relatively long and, as a result, there are issues of vacant units and a lack of a focal point. Consideration should be given to how to harness the potential of local people to start-up businesses. There may be the opportunity to create zones of experimentality, where people can open a business at low risk and try things out. The establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) has significant potential benefits for the town centre and could be a key priority for the strategy with a strong business training and support element. A focal point, such as a modest public outdoor event space, could act as a focus for destination activities to draw in residents and visitors alike.

The material presented identified potential gateways to the town centre. This could be reconsidered as how to make the whole town a welcoming place.

Residential Development

Tonyypandy would benefit from more housing in and around the town centre and the railway station, to provide greater footfall, surveillance and to reduce car dependant travel. Further consideration should be given to the housing need, potential for housing development and how the local authority and its partners could enable more housing development.

Involvement

The Design Commission welcomes the focus on involving the local community and using this engagement to inform the strategy. There are going to be competing goals from different stakeholders and we recommend not condensing the feedback down too much and instead considering all the issues more broadly to inform how this informs the strategy. The project could also consider how the town could cater for the needs of people living in Tonyypandy at different stages in their lives.

Implementation

We recognise that the objective is to create a strategy and not a delivery play, but deliverability is an important consideration. The fragmented land ownership in the town centre could be considered a challenge, but this granularity can also bring advantages. It could enable lots of little investments that are deliverable, rather than relying on a small number of large projects that might not come forward. The project should consider how the strategy can help enable local people and businesses to bring forward investments in the town. It might also consider the existing and innovative mechanisms available to the local authority and other public sector delivery bodies to facilitate and enable locally-led growth and regeneration.

Next Steps

The Design Commission would welcome further Design Review sessions to support the project.

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A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.

Attendees

Client: Angharad Stephens, RCT County Borough Council
Peter Mortimer, RCT County Borough Council

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DCFW Design Review Panel

Chair: Jonathan Vernon Smith

Panel: Simon Power
Lynne Sullivan
Steve Smith
Kedrick Davies
Carole-Anne Davies, DCFW Chief Executive
Jen Heal, DCFW Deputy Chief Executive
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Declarations of Interest

Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare ***in advance*** any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review and meeting Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

There were no conflicts of interest.