

Design Review Report

Tonypandy Town Centre Strategy

DCFW Ref: N332

Meeting of 11th June 2025



Review Status

Meeting date

Issue date

Scheme description

Scheme location

Scheme reference number

Confidential11th June 202524th June 2025

Regeneration Strategy

Tonypandy Town Centre, Rhondda

Cynon Taff

N332

Key Points

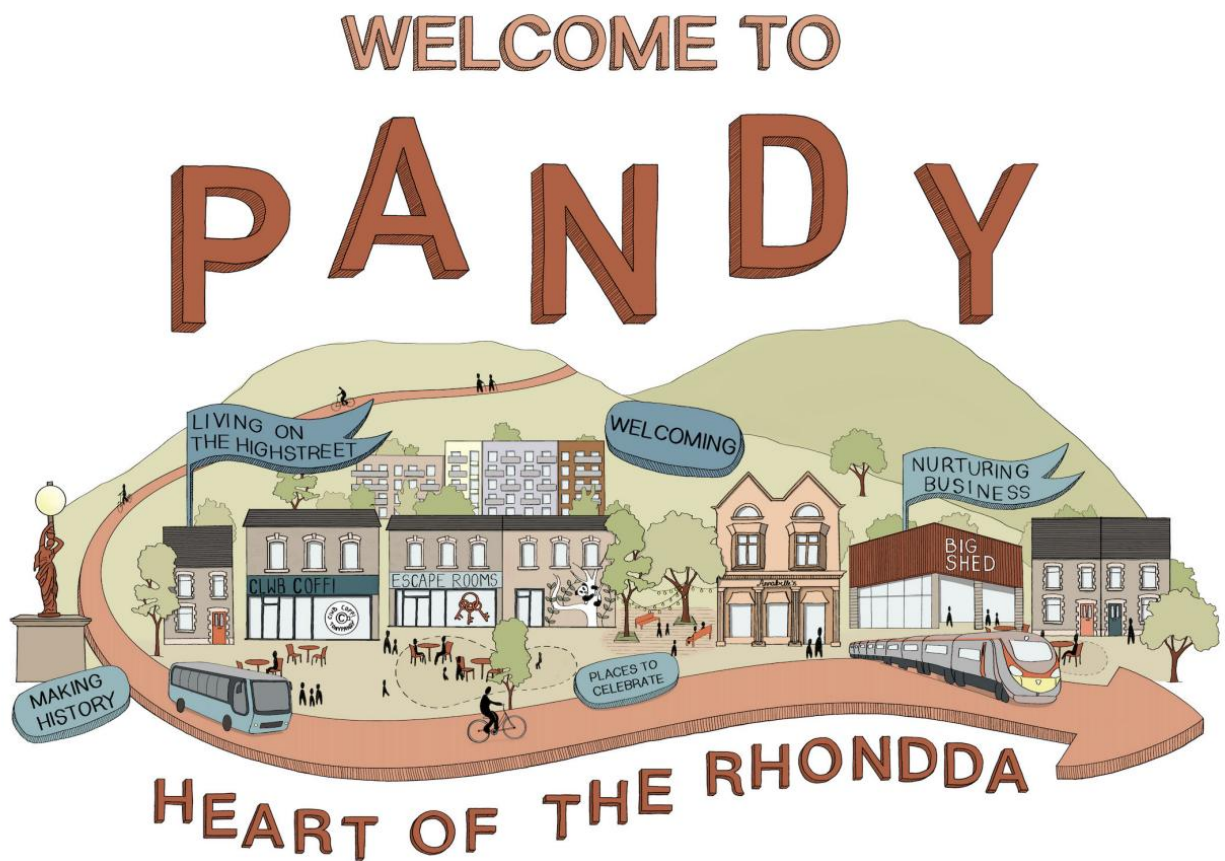
- The town centre strategy should reflect the ambitions of the client and stakeholders and that its focus is on meeting the needs of local residents and supporting local businesses.
- The strategy's ambitions would benefit from being focussed on those interventions that are most important to the future of the town.
- The strategy would benefit from greater emphasis on non-physical measures to support local businesses, such as support and mentoring for local business start-ups.
- Clarity is needed on the proposed consolidation of retail on the high street and what positive role the remainder of the high street can play.
- The document should be presented as the town's strategy and reflect the local voice.
- There should be greater clarity on the implementation of the strategy.

Consultations to Date

This is the second Design Review for the Tonypandy Town Centre Strategy. The strategy has been developed since the previous preview in February 2025 and positively responds to the Design Commission's comments.

The Proposal

The Urbanists are preparing a Town Centre Strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council that reflects the current context and sets a vision for Tonypandy's future. This vision is intended to serve as a foundation for collaboration between the Council and its partners.

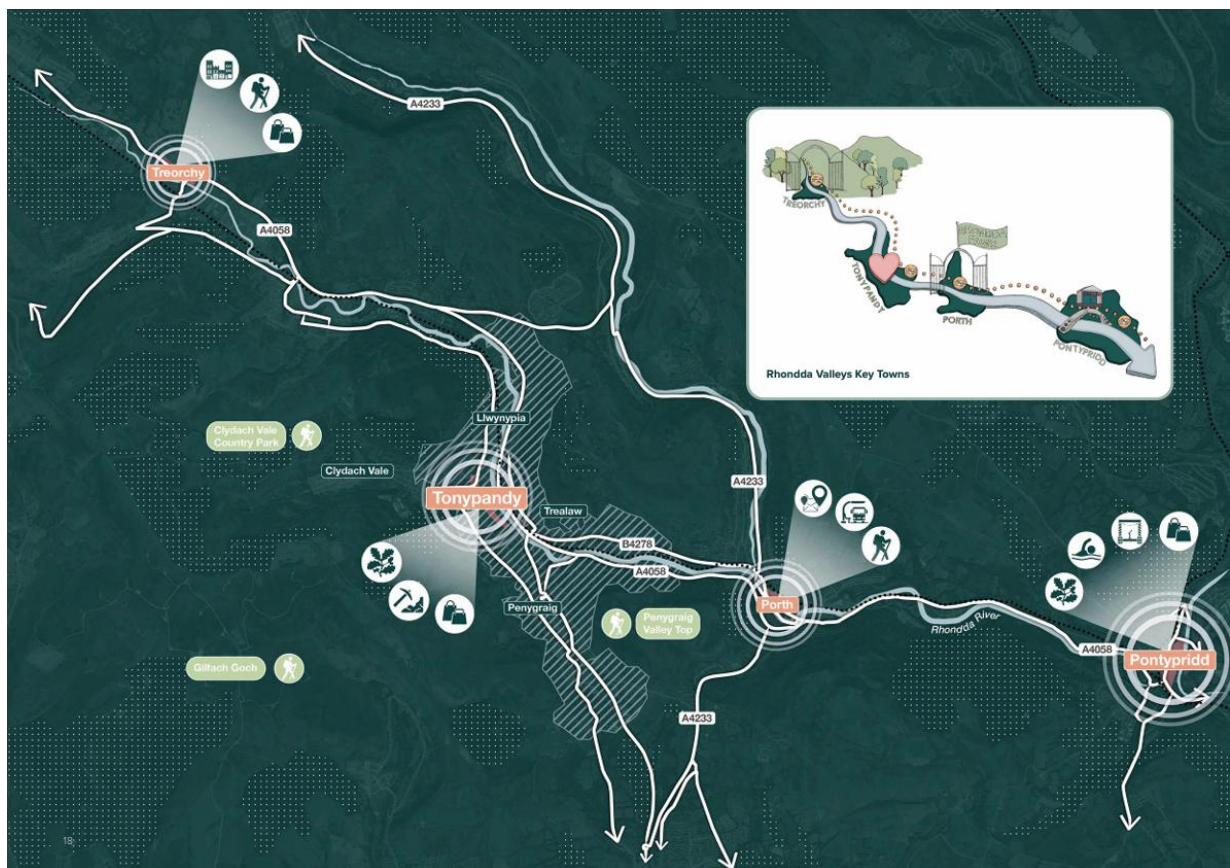


Visual Representation of the Tonypandy Town Centre Strategy

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.



Rhondda Valley Context

Main Points

The Design Commission welcomes how the latest draft of the town centre strategy sets Tonypany's role in the wider region, highlights the importance of supporting start-up businesses and promotes more housing within the town centre.

Focus

The document would benefit from being more specific that the local residents and business owners are the focus for the strategy. The strategy then needs to be clear on the real needs of the local community, what will positively impact them most, how to challenge local perceptions and how to rejuvenate local confidence. This local focus needs to influence throughout, including shaping the vision, what success looks like and the projects, and influence which of the projects should have priority. This will give the strategy more focus and make it more specific to the town. A review may also provide a chance to make subtle changes to the proposed ambitions (as per below).

Ambitions

Consideration should be given to which of the identified ambitions are most important. Nurturing Business, Living on the High Street and Places to Celebrate came through as being most important to Tonypany and could benefit from greater focus or emphasis. That is a place people know and live in, work from and have to travel from, rather than being a regional destination in itself.

Thus, the Welcoming ambition may be better considered in the context of connectivity. This could be achieved with a subtle difference in the wording and emphasis. The history of the town has come through as important to local people but might be better reflected in a different way, with the ambitions focused on being more forward looking.

Living

We welcome the emphasis in the strategy on attracting more people to live in the town centre. More people living in the town centre can support the vibrancy of the high street.

Seeking a balance between the demand for one-bedroom social housing and the importance of have a mix of tenures to support a diverse community will be important.

The train station and anticipated service improvements presents a great opportunity for the town. The potential for public transport orientated development near the train station should be explored, notwithstanding the limited space/constraints. Similarly in the context of the Welcoming ambition, good connectivity to and from the station may also be considered in making the most of an improved train service.

Next steps of how housing development is brought forward and who will do what will be important in realising this ambition. We encourage partnership working with RSLs and other local housing developers and using the planning system to provide greater certainty and help enable development. The role of the private sector should also be considered, particularly in the longer term.

Business

We encourage greater emphasis on softer measures to support local businesses, recognising that physical interventions (such as improvements to shop fronts and the public realm) are unlikely to be what makes the difference in the success of new and existing businesses.

Further detail is needed as to what is needed to support local business start-ups. The strategy can showcase local successful businesses, such as Annabelle's, Clwb Coffi and Rhondda Escape Rooms, and highlight how this was achieved. These successful businesses could play a role in mentoring new businesses as well as contributing to further engagement activities. It is also important that it is clear and easy to access what support is available.

The strategy proposes consolidation of the High Street to Dunraven Street. Consideration is needed as to what this will mean in practice. Is it that investment will be focused in this concentrated area, that this will be the focus for retail or something else? Consideration also needs to be given to the implications for the rest of the high street. What purpose will these parts of the high street serve? Will they remain commercial on the ground floor or will change of use to residential be allowed? We would encourage maintaining the benefits of having non-residential ground floor uses in generating activity and providing a focal point at the heart of the town. Could the high street have different character areas with the more peripheral parts accommodating a greater diversity of non-retail uses with greater flexibility to change use? The strategy needs to be clear on this and consideration given to how this will be implemented and managed through the planning system.

Presentation

The strategy is well presented with good graphics and clarity. The document would benefit from being presented more as the town's strategy, with a more local voice, rather than the consultant's on behalf of the council. There are a lot of different icons representing a wide range of different aspects and perhaps having fewer might be more impactful and clearer.

Consideration should be given to different ways of presenting the projects to give the most important ones more prominence and to provide a clearer link between the analysis, opportunities and timings.

The presentation should also reflect the intended audience being local people and local investment.

Status

We welcome the intention to adopt the strategy as a formal corporate document. It is important that the strategy has status but that there is flexibility for it to be developed over time. It is important that the strategy links into other council policies, plans and actions. It will also be important for the document to be publicly available and easy to access.

The new BID will be a key stakeholder and it will be important that they have influence and buy-in to the final strategy before it is adopted.

Delivery

The ideas around delivery and implementation were well described in the meeting but would benefit from being clearer in the document. The document should be clear on who will be implementing the strategy and how, what the Council's role will be, who the partners are and what role will they play. Overall, the strategy would benefit from greater detail and clarity on what is going to happen to support the delivery of the strategy.

Next Steps

The Design Commission would welcome further engagement on the strategy and early Design Review on specific projects that emerge from the strategy.

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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

Design Team: Florence Bell, The Urbanists
Liam Hopkins, The Urbanists

DCFW Design Review Panel

Chair: Andrew Linfoot

Panel: Simon Power, Lead Panellist
Stephen Smith
Jen Heal, DCFW Deputy Chief Executive
Max Hampton, DCFW Design Advisor

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.