



RIBA Stage 3 Report

97-102 Taff Street Phase 2
Proposed Public Realm

Rev
P01

Date
July 2024

Contents

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Site location and context
- 3 Design approach and aims
- 4 The proposals



01_ View of existing site from the footbridge

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1

Introduction

This report has been prepared in support of a RIBA Stage 3 proposal for the new public realm site at 97 to 102 Taff Street, Pontypridd (former M&S and Dorothy Perkins sites).

The redevelopment of the site at 97-102 Taff forms part of a wider strategic programme of projects, currently being developed by the Council, that seeks to establish a new ‘Southern Gateway’ to the town centre, as identified within the Pontypridd Placemaking Plan.

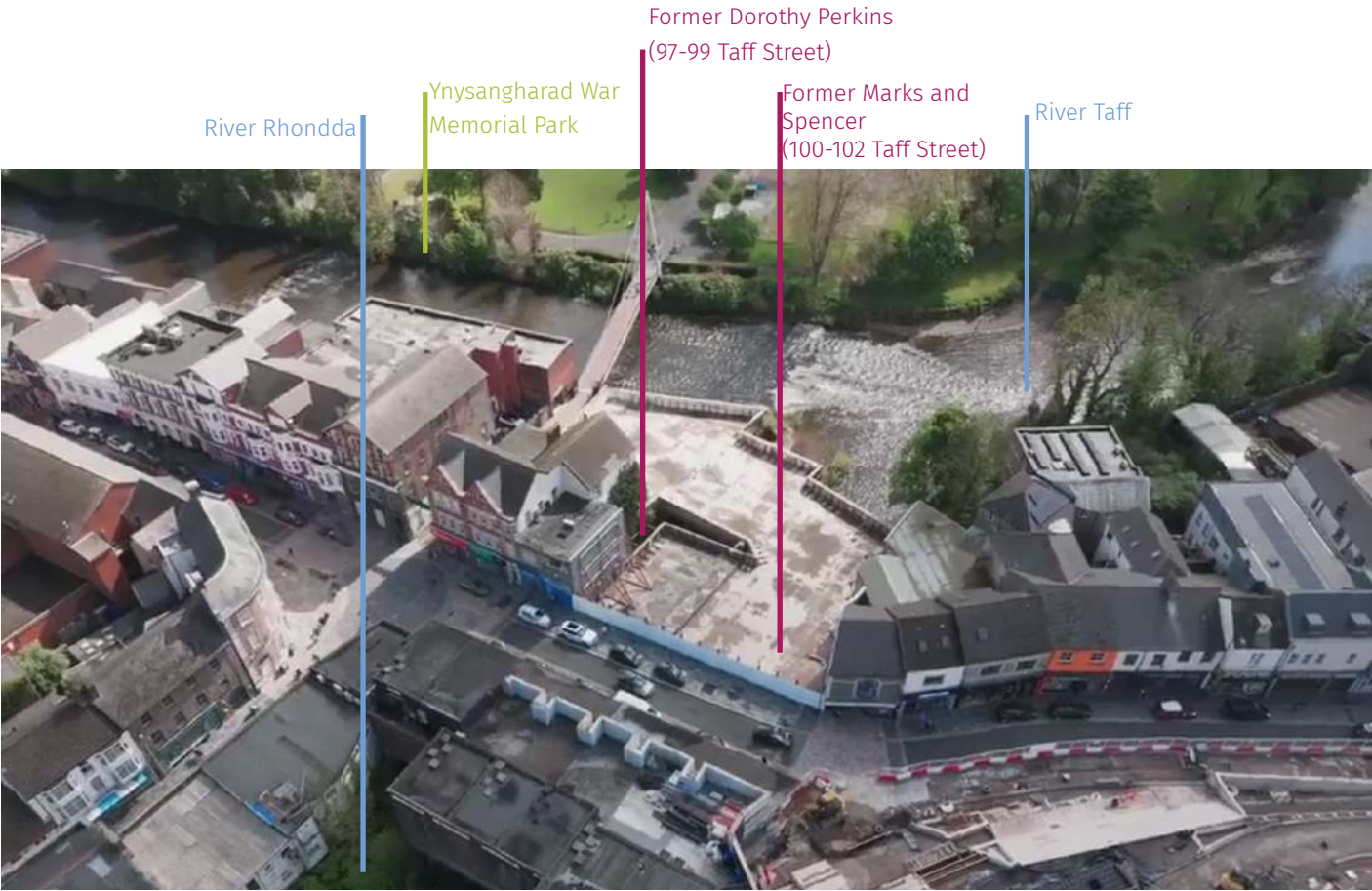
These projects include the redevelopment of the former Bingo Hall site and refurbishment and enhancement of the block of properties opposite, currently occupied by Tesco and others located opposite, together with future improvements to the railway station forecourt.

The council’s vision encompasses not only a functional connection but also an aspiration to create a pleasant and safe journey from the train station through the Southern Gateway into the town centre. RCT is dedicated to creating a sequence of interconnected public open spaces that serve as a pleasant transition for visitors as they make their way into the town centre.

DB3 developed the design to respond to this vision and the particular characteristics of the site. This document describes the architectural approach and the steps followed to arrive at a developed design.

These criteria are described in more detail in the following pages, explaining the process to arrive at the design as depicted in the last chapters of the document.

The proposals comprise of new public realm spaces, including transition areas between the town and the park, areas for food and beverage offers, new viewpoint, tree planting and unique urban furniture features and detailing within the conservation area.



02_ Aerial view of the area post demolition (extract from video time-capsule as published by Walters construction. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/walters-group-uk_pontypridd-waltersway-activity-7196765776312233984-5Yo9)

THE BRIEF

The council’s vision encompasses not only a functional connection but also an aspiration to create a pleasant and safe journey from the train station through the Southern Gateway into the town centre. RCT is dedicated to creating a sequence of interconnected public open spaces that serve as a pleasant transition for visitors as they make their way into the town centre.

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PHASE 1-DEMOLITION WORKS

The first phase of this project was the demolition works of the former Marks and Spencer and Dorothy Perkins buildings. Originally constructed in the early 1900’s, the redundant buildings have been cleared as part of the works to create a ‘Southern Gateway’ to the town centre leading to the design of a riverside plaza.

PHASE 2- PUBLIC REALM

The aim is the creation of a public open space that provides a safe and enjoyable route to the park entrance, new visual connections and opening up the town to the river for the first time.

2

Site Location and Context

The site is located on Taff Street, within Pontypridd Town Centre, accessed directly from the public footpath.

Taff Street and the other streets in the vicinity of the site are of commercial nature.

Taff Street provides access to a range of services and facilities.

Taff Street is one of the main streets of Pontypridd town centre and the site is located approximately 0.2miles to the West of the Railway Station.

The properties either-side of the site are terraced, , with the river Taff running along the rear boundary. The River Rhondda and small relief culvert runs directly below the former Marks & Spencer store.

The existing site cover an area of approximately 1,750m2.

THE PONTYPRIDD PLACEMAKING PLAN: THE AIMS & CORE AMBITIONS

Pontypridd town centre has faced significant challenges in recent yeas; first navigating the challenges presented to the retail sector and then experiencing flooding that damaged large areas of the town and endangered the businesses and employees.

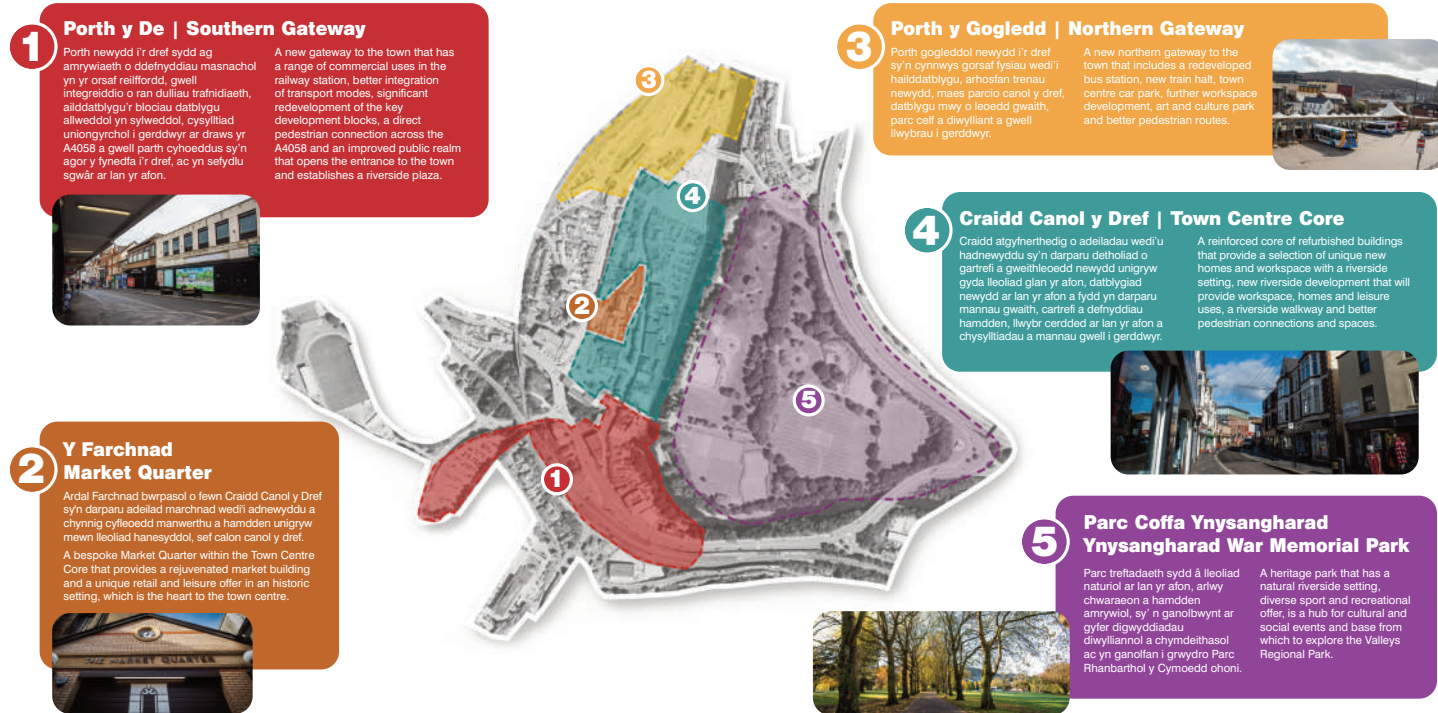
This placemaking plan is founded on the town’s unique setting and attributes and provides the basis for establishing Pontypridd as a unique place to work, live and visit. The vision set by this placemaking plan is ambitious in the current context, but it is also realistic and can be delivered by private and public stakeholders working collectively over a phased basis. Investment into Pontypridd is already reflected by the Llys Cadwyn development and the Metro will transform the connectivity of the town. The new development and placemaking opportunities identified in this plan respond directly to this exciting and changing context, and collectively they can enable Pontypridd to once again become a key economic, social and cultural centre that provides for the needs of its residents and also acts as a catalyst for spreading growth and prosperity through the wider Capital City Region. The Pontypridd Placemaking Plan has identified areas of specific focus for development in five spatial areas.

The placemaking plan provides a bold vision for the town centre, and identifies interventions that can be implemented consistently to unlock

the town’s potential and ensure that it is a key economic, social and cultural centre for the Capital City Region.

The Council has previously completed a range of significant regeneration activity in the town.

With the support of Transforming Towns funding via the Welsh Government, the Council acquired the former Bingo Hall and Angharad’s nightclub and the former M&S and Dorothy Perkins/ Burtons buildings, all of which were vacant and in a dilapidated state of repair and having a hugely negative impact on the townscape and character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The redevelopment of these sites is fundamental to the future growth and success of the town. This is a fact recognised by the placemaking plan, where all the considerations are analysed, and proposals have been developed in order to ensure the best outcome for the town (refer to image 3). The Former Bingo Hall site is already under construction and the proposals for this site are developed in parallel to the Bingo hall site to ensure a continuity of approach and cohesive design.



03_ Pontypridd town centre Masterplan- Key action areas

THE PONTYPRIDD PLACEMAKING PLAN:
SOUTHERN GATEWAY SITE

As described in the area’s placemaking plan , the Council intends to create a Southern Gateway and landmark entrance to the town. It will include large-scale mixed-use development that provides employment, leisure and residential uses. The site of the former Marks and Spencer and Dorothy Perkins buildings is integral to delivering the placemaking plan. The Southern Gateway report identifies the below key points:

•The Southern Gateway is identified in the Pontypridd Placemaking Plan as one of the key areas that can accommodate interventions, which would have a substantial impact in transforming the town centre.

•Since the production of the Placemaking Plan, the Council has been proactive in securing key properties in the area to ensure that it is able to manage the type of development delivered and ensure the highest design quality.

•The Southern Gateway is the first area that people experience when entering the town from the south, including from Pontypridd Railway Station. Transforming the area therefore provides the opportunity to create a distinct sense of arrival that is unique to Pontypridd; an opportunity to welcome people into the town; enhance its fine historic townscape; and open the town to its riverside and

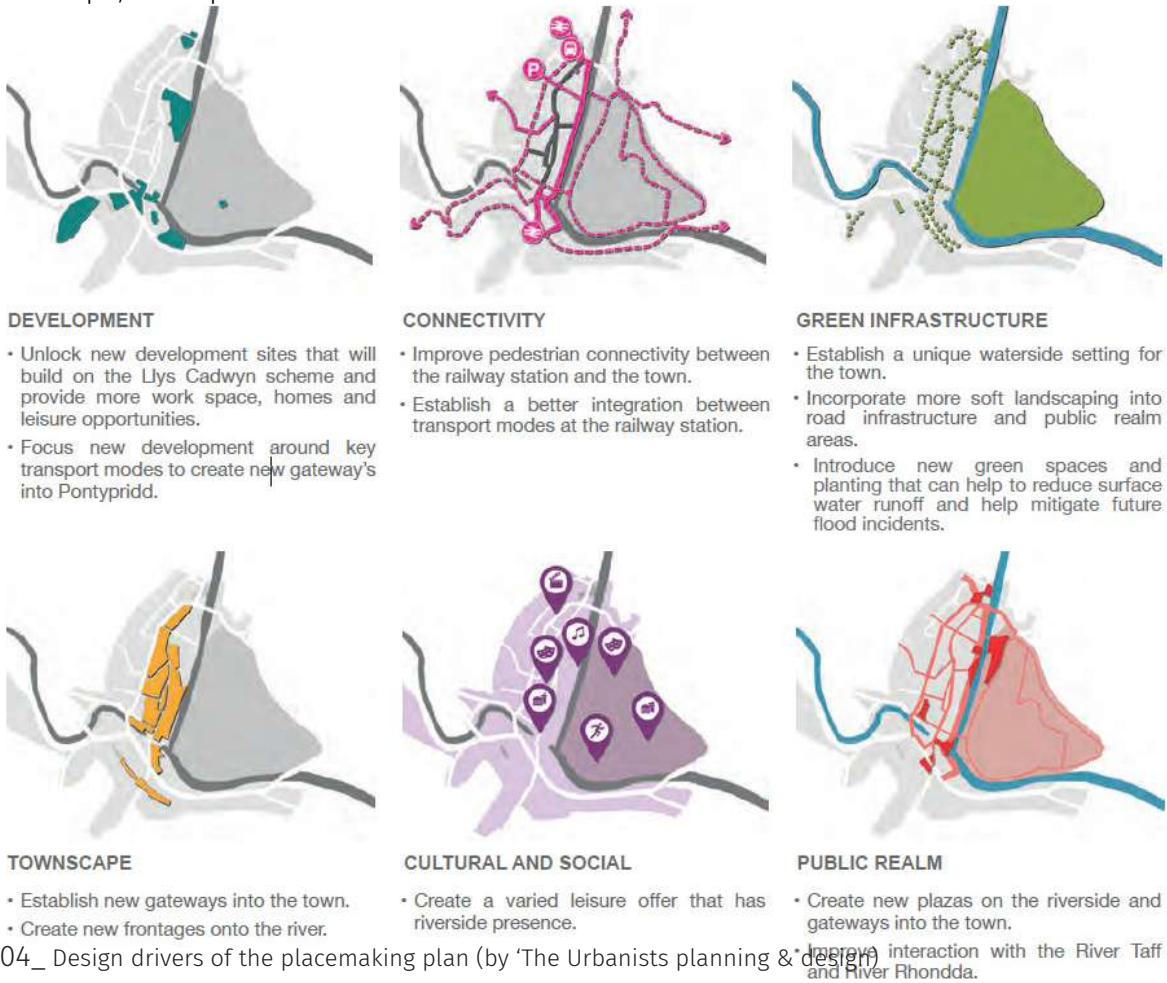
parkland setting.

•The river edge environment is poor but this could be improved through redevelopment of key premises on Taff Street.

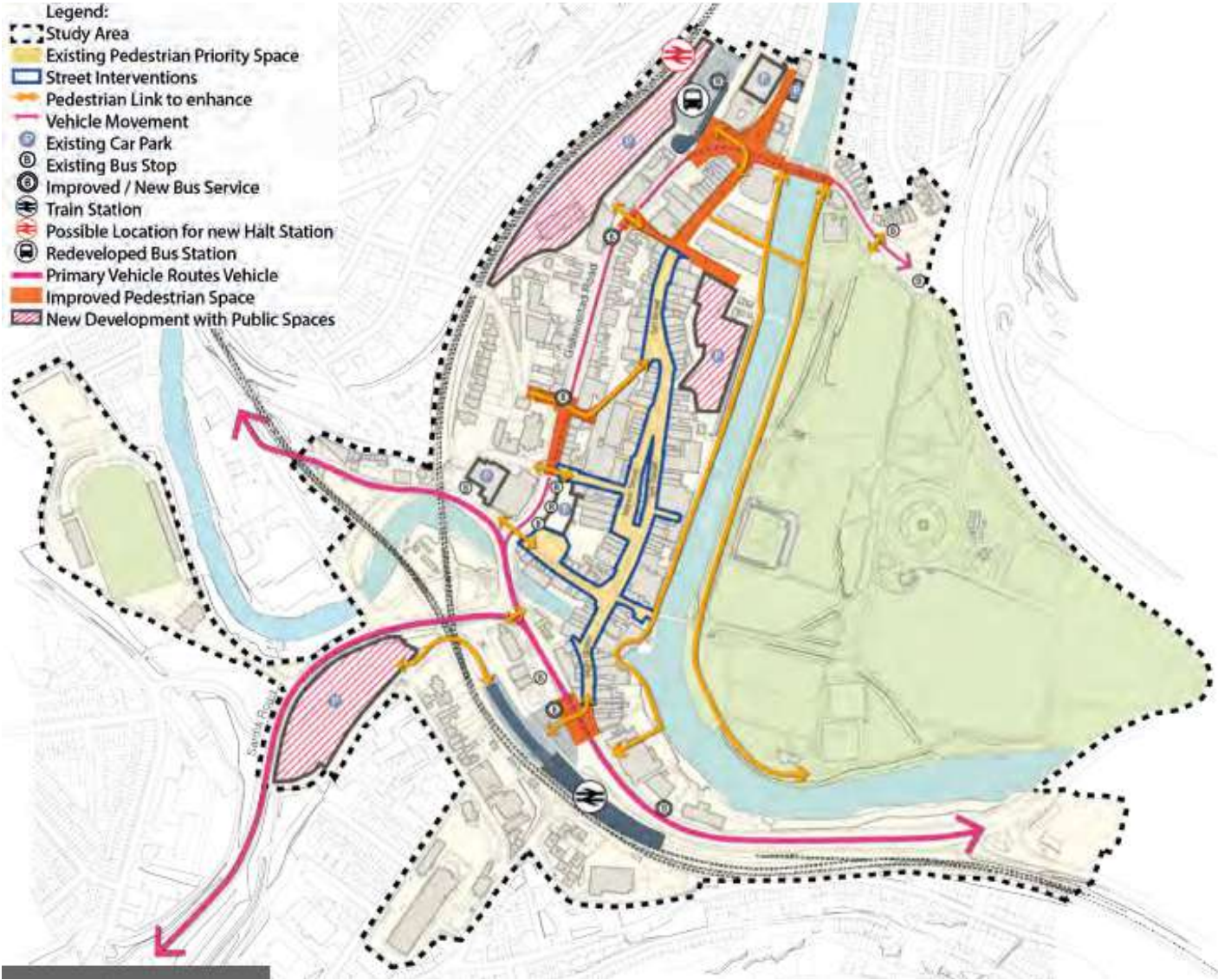
•The two-storey buildings are strategically located along Taff Street and on top of the structural bridge over the Rhondda River. The site extends to the back until the river front, providing a great opportunity to open the town centre towards the river. For the majority vacant, the buildings have recently been acquired by the council.

•The redevelopment plan for the site aims at opening up the town to the river and the park and introduce new commercial and leisure uses along the river.

The council is committed to deliver a new development in this area which would be of high architectural quality to provide the statement entrance required, exploit opportunities to create a distinctive interface with the River Taff and River Rhondda, establish views over Ynysangharad War Memorial Park and create excellent quality spaces for people by redeveloping the site of the former Marks and Spencer and Dorothy Perkins/Burtens buildings.



04_ Design drivers of the placemaking plan (by 'The Urbanists planning & design')



05_ Extract from Pontypridd Town Centre Placemaking plan

THE CONSERVATION AREA

Pontypridd’s overall character is of a 19th century town with a number of early 20th century buildings suggesting a period of economic success around the turn of the century.

“Pontypridd retains much of its original plan form and layout, which was clearly heavily influenced by the topography of the area, in particular the locations of the Rivers Taff and Rhondda. The line of Taff Street loosely follows the line of the River Taff, with development on its west side, while Mill Street, historically the principal route from Pontypridd to the Rhondda Valleys, follows the River Rhondda from its junction with the Taff. Interestingly, neither road has properties which face the rivers, and the town has a feel of having its back turned on these rivers. It is probably that the rivers would have been rather dark and dirty at the time the town was developing, due to the prominence of industrial activity in the area and the disposal of pumped minewater directly in to the rivers, and as such they would have detracted from the environment within the town.” (Conservation area appraisal)

Opportunities for Enhancement of this area as described in the Conservation area appraisal:

- Improvement of shop-fronts, including removal/ replacement of inappropriate signage
- Improvement of the public realm, including the creation of a “square” at the end of west end of Mill Street
- Potential opportunity to redevelop the car park area

The Appraisal describes (page 34) the purpose of the Conservation Area designation as being “to conserve the special architectural or historic interest that gives the area its character and makes it unique.” It is important to note that the Appraisal rightly confirms that good modern development will be supported as long as it respects the context of the area.

HISTORIC EVOLUTION OF THE AREA

The historic development of the area was identified from a desktop study of the Tithe maps and historic photos and archives.

The 1874 Tithe map (figure 06) is illustrating a bridge over Rhondda river and a building at the North East side of the bridge.

Photos from the turn of the 20th century (figures 04&05) shows Mill Street on left, Butchers Arms Hotel on right. Bridge railings came up to Mill Street junction. Pitched roof building on right will be demolished to construct Royal Liver Assurance building.

The 1921 Tithe map (figures 07, 11) is showing a wider bridge over Rhondda river with the Alexandra buildings developed on its North East side and High Street was built up to the river bank on the South West side.

Digital archives of Newspapers of the time show that Burtons Building (97-99 Taff street) opened in 1926.

The historic photographs 10 and 12 show that the buildings on 97-102 Taff street were built on the

side of the stone bridge over Rhondda river. The aero-films illustrate two buildings with pitched roofs to the front of Taff street and flat roof towards river Taff.

Photograph 14 dating from 1955 show a wider and extended building on 100-102 Taff street. The pitched roof as seen in the photo from 1932 is now depicted with a flat roof and longer; it is apparent that during this period the building has been altered and extended at the rear. That is also apparent in the Tithe maps from 1949 and 1952 (figures 08&09).

Therefore, the comparison of historic and contemporary photographs shows that 97-102 Taff Street buildings went through phases, alterations and additions.

This comparison also shows that the development of the town during the past century disregarded the surrounding natural environment and was focused on creating an enclosed commercial centre.

It is apparent that between the 1920s’ and 1950s’ the development of the town did not take into account either of the two rivers; the once open Rhondda bridge was extended and built over and all the buildings ‘turned their back’ to river Taff.



06_ Historic photograph depicting Rhondda bridge and the character of the area before the buildings in question were built.



07_ Historic photograph depicting Rhondda bridge and the character of the area before the buildings in question were built.

THE SITE TODAY: Views from and towards the site and opportunities



08_ View from the SE towards the NW of the site.
There is a height drop to Taff street on the right and a jigsaw of structures to the South West boundary.
The wall depicted on the left is 'acting' as temporary flood defence.



11_ View from Taff street towards the former Bingo hall site and the train station.
Opportunity for the two sites to be read as a sequence of spaces with similar character.



09_ View from Taff towards the Park(through openings to the hoarding).
Long views towards the park; this is an important view to retain as it highlights the relation of the park to the town.



12_ View from NE towards Taff street
There is a considerable height difference across the site. There is an opportunity to create intermediate spaces and create a transaction from higher to lower level.



10_ View from the NW towards the Park.
Opportunity to raise the level above the flood defence wall to open up views to the river.



13_ View from the park towards the site.
Currently all the developments are phasing towards High and Taff street, having their back yards towards the river and the park.
Opportunity for the site to be read as a new connection to the town.



3

Design approach: Connecting the Town and the park

The council's vision for the site encompasses not only a functional connection but also an aspiration to create a pleasant and safe journey from the train station through the Southern Gateway into the town centre. RCT is dedicated to creating a sequence of interconnected public open spaces that serve as a pleasant transition for visitors as they make their way into the town centre.

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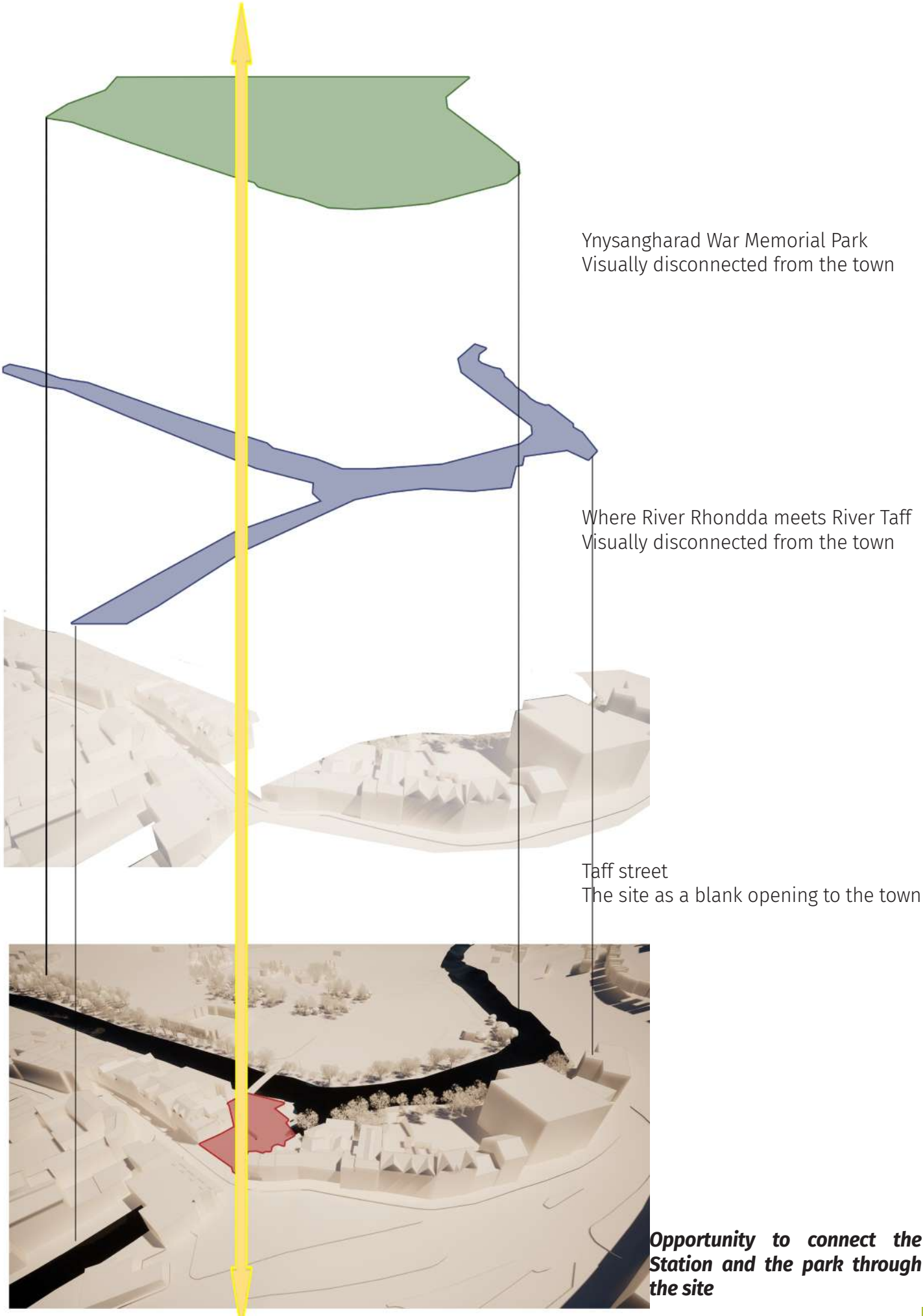
The context analysis highlighted the multiple character of the site; it has a unique location:

- it is situated on the line of the town's main commercial street,
- it is situated above Rhondda river and is adjacent to Taff river
- it is connected to Ynysangharad War Memorial Park via a footbridge.

The adopted design approach, aims at enhancing and highlighting these as part of the new public realm.

The aim of the design is to create a sequential spaces forming the Southern Gateway, and creating a connection between the town and the park. This is achieved through the introduction of a physical and visual path between the train station, the town, the river and the park.

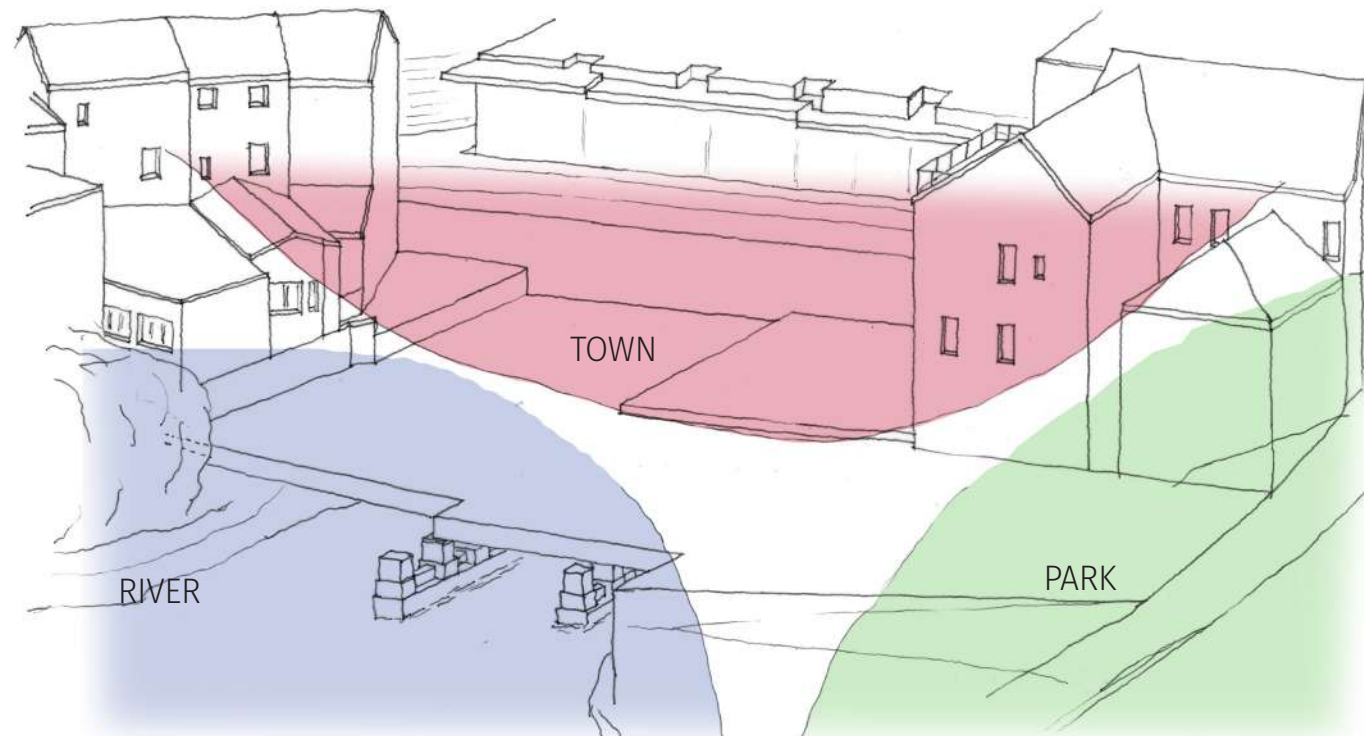
Thus, the main design concept is to connect all the different elements of the area via the introduction of a linear path.



SITE ANALYSIS AND DESIGN APPROACH

The site is in a key location between the town, the river Taff and the park and it can be read as three different zones:

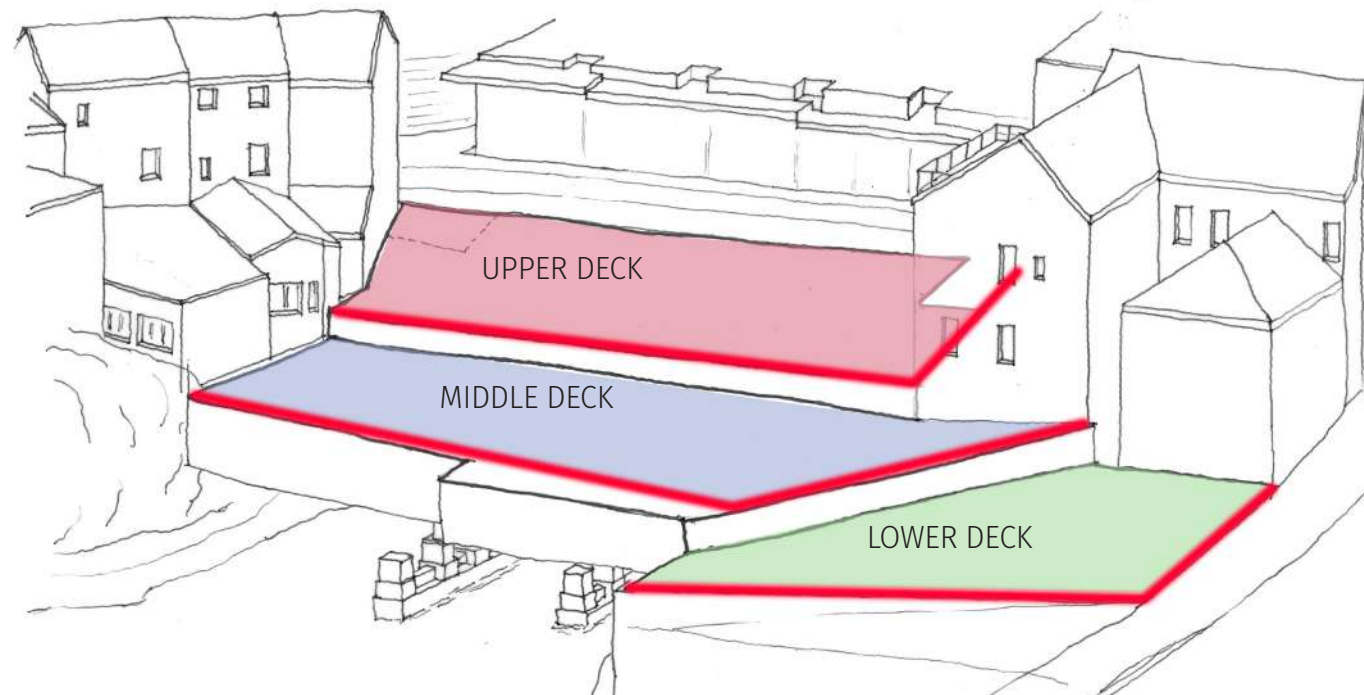
- the zone closer to Taff street and having an urban character
- the zone closer to river Taff bank
- the zone closer to the food -bridge and the park



There is a considerable difference in levels across the site, with Taff street being roughly 3 to 3.8 meters higher than the footbridge level.

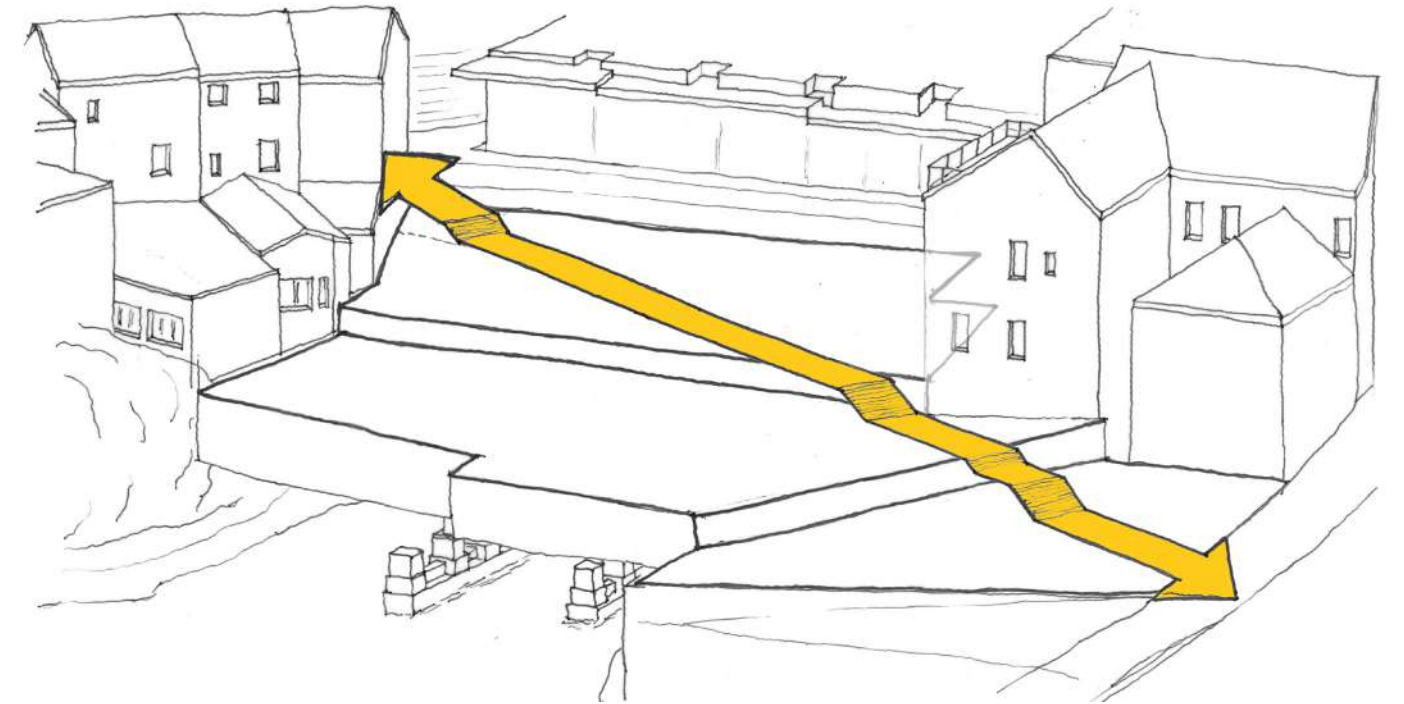
Our approach is to introduce three different plateaus corresponding to the different boundaries and levels of the site:

- The Upper plateau which allows an access from the bingo hall site and Taff street
- The Middle plateau which is set out just above flood defence level (+56.80m)
- The lower plateau which is set out on the footbridge level to allow a connection towards the park.

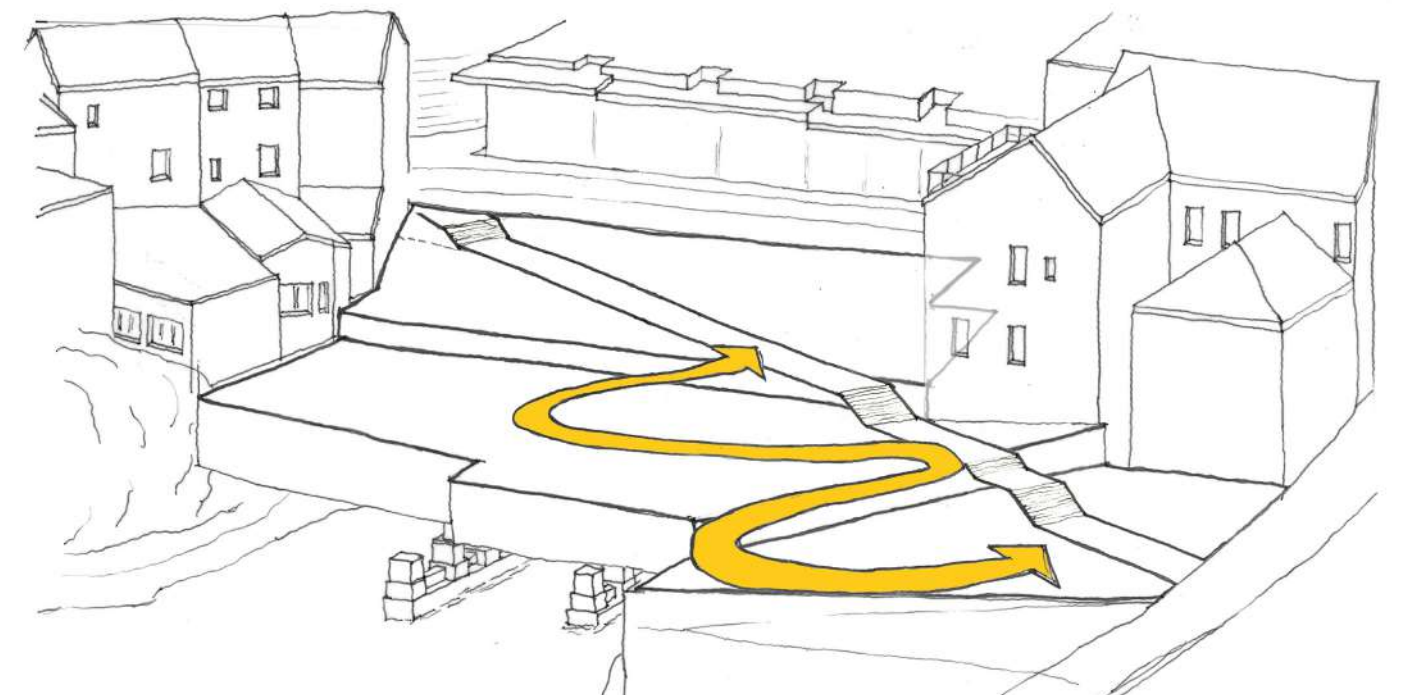


As set out from the masterplan, linking the train station to the town and the park is one of the most important design drivers for this scheme. The neighbouring site (former 'Bingo hall site') has also been developed following the same principles.

The proposed design expresses this principle with a diagonal movement and incorporated steps through the site.



However, in order to allow access to the different levels for all the users, a more sinuous path is introduced following an organic form. The path also allows for a more sustainable maintenance scheme to be in place as it allows for maintenance vehicles to access all the plateaus.



4

The proposals

The steep level changes across the site and creating a visual and physical 'link' between the town and the park have been the two main design factors forming our proposals.

The design has been developed to create views from Taff street towards the river and the park and to welcome visitors to use the space as a recreational and transition space. The upper and middle level will have unobstructed views towards the river and the park and seating areas that the visitors can use. Where appropriate, the level change has been addressed to both provide access and informal seating via a series of steps and picnic steps/seating. The steps have been designed with a low gauge to facilitate easy movement by all users.

Each plateau has been designed as an open 'plaza' with street furniture and fittings as well as with a flexible space that can be used from various vendors.

For the upper and middle plateaus, the flexible space can be used by pop-up vending, in the form of a cafe kiosk which will serve the visitors. Covered seating will be provided as part of the kiosk offering but will be stored out-of-hours to prevent misuse or vandalism. The kiosk will have power hook-up and built in storage area, for housing umbrellas and seating when not in use.

For the lower plateau, the flexible space can potentially be used by the neighbouring buildings, should an opportunity arises.

The middle plateau has been designed as an open plaza allowing visitors to rest and enjoy the views both within the public realm but also towards the river.

Almost the 2/3 of the site are situated above river Rhondda and an open culvert. A decision was made for the existing concrete slab to be maintained in order to minimise ecology and cost implications to the project. Nevertheless, due to the age and condition of the slab, a new structure has to be

installed at a higher level to accommodate the new design, similar to a 'podium' design. To that end a steel frame structure has been designed to support the middle and upper levels. The lower level sits over 'solid ground' and therefore the design is less constrained.

The site is designed as an open public space used 24/7. The proposed materials have been selected to be as robust and easy to maintain as possible and at the same time to aesthetically match the ones to the neighbouring sites and across the South and North Gateway plans. Since the upper and middle levels are designed in as 'podiums' the paved surfaces will not be permeable while the lower level, being over solid ground, will have permeable pavings.

The aim is to use landscape to soften the design and achieve biodiversity net gain. There are three large 'green areas' which can be planted with a variety of flowering shrubs and low planting. In order to highlight the diagonal movement through the site and frame the view towards the park, the design also includes for trees to be planted following linear path.

The finishes reflect the character of each plateau:

-the upper plateau has closely similar finishes to the former Bingo Hall site and High/Taff street to allow a 'continuous' sense of the space. The railing on Taff street reflect the historic photos and give a sense of an edge next to the river (image 7).

-the middle plateau still follows the same material pallet but more organic forms are introduced to link the new public realm to the river and the park

-the lower plateau, has a more earthy feeling with a considerable amount of the area being planted following and reflecting the river vegetation.

3D OVERVIEW



New 'screen' wall with climbers

Temporary Pop Up Kiosks offering temporary retail opportunities

DDA compliant path

Upper plateau to street level

Possibility for area to be used by Principality Buildings

Middle plateau with riverfront seating allowing views over the River Taff and Ynysangharad Park

DDA compliant path

New treatment to the lane and connection over bridge towards Ynysangharad Park

Note: Planting shown is indicative – please see Landscape Architect's drawings for detailed soft landscape proposals



Upper plateau to street level

Area for wall street art

DDA compliant path (gradient 1:21) with 1100mm high balustrade where needed

Allowance for area to be used by Principality Buildings

Temporary Pop Up Kiosks offering temporary retail opportunities

Middle plateau with riverfront seating allowing views over the River Taff and Ynysangharad Park

Soft landscaping area

Note: Planting shown is indicative – please see Landscape Architect’s drawings for detailed soft landscape proposals

CONCEPTUAL VIEWS



Note: Planting shown is indicative – please see Landscape Architect’s drawings for detailed soft landscape proposals

MATERIALS_ PAVING & PATTERN



Paving layout plan @ 1:200



MATERIALS_ PAVING & PATTERN

CONCRETE PAVING (Marshalls Conservation X series-)



Paving to plateaux: Pattern to match the former Bingo Hall site Conservation).



Zoning : Example of pattern for zoning/ creating different patterns



Sloping path : Example of pattern for curved paths (the proposed colour is to closely match the Bingo Hall site).

STEPS AND RISERS



Conservation X steps to the linear path

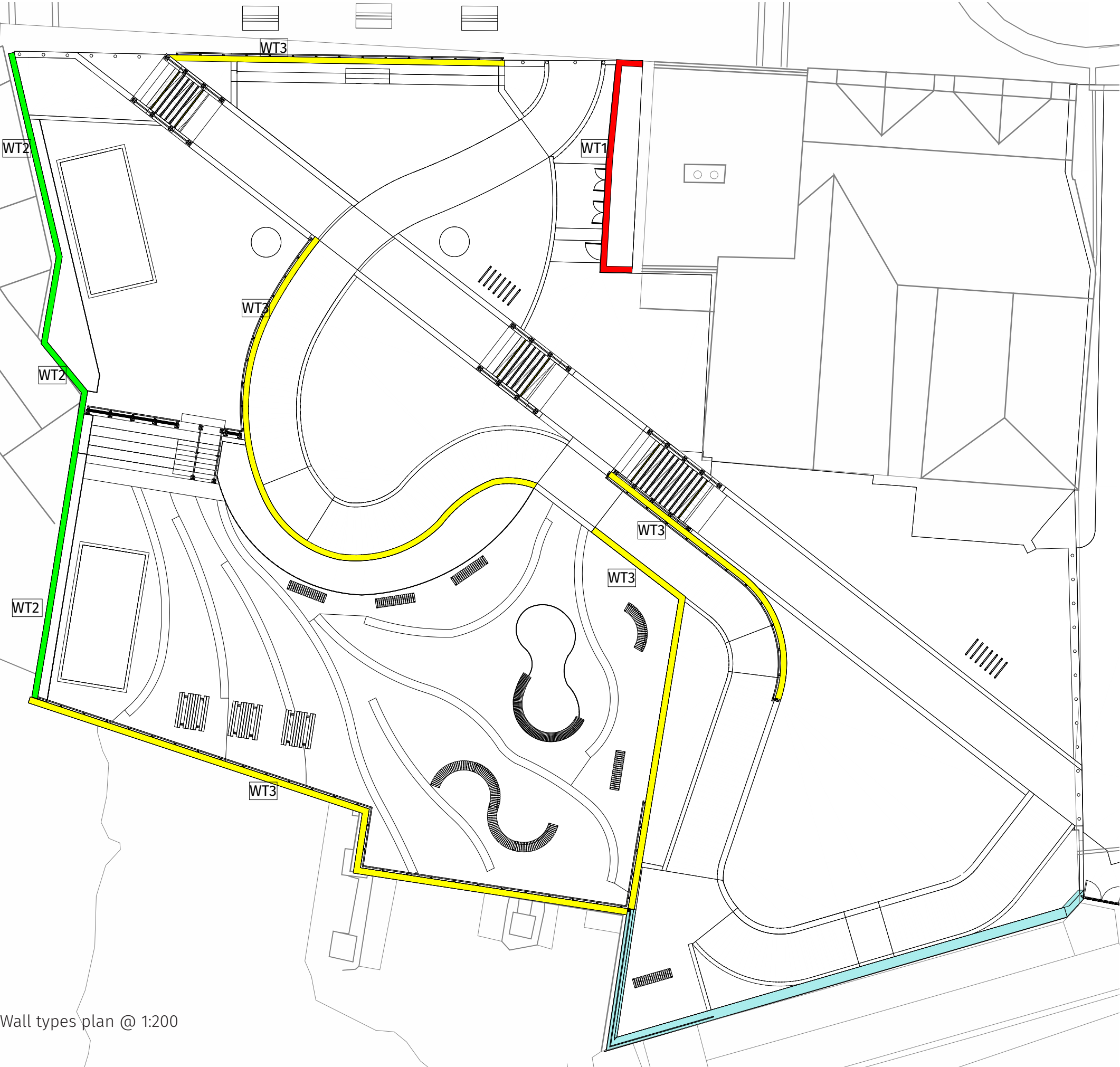


Marshalls conservation X kerb steps for the linear path



Marshalls tactile hazard warning paving close to steps

MATERIALS_ WALL TYPES



Wall types plan @ 1:200



WT1 Rendered cement board with Street art



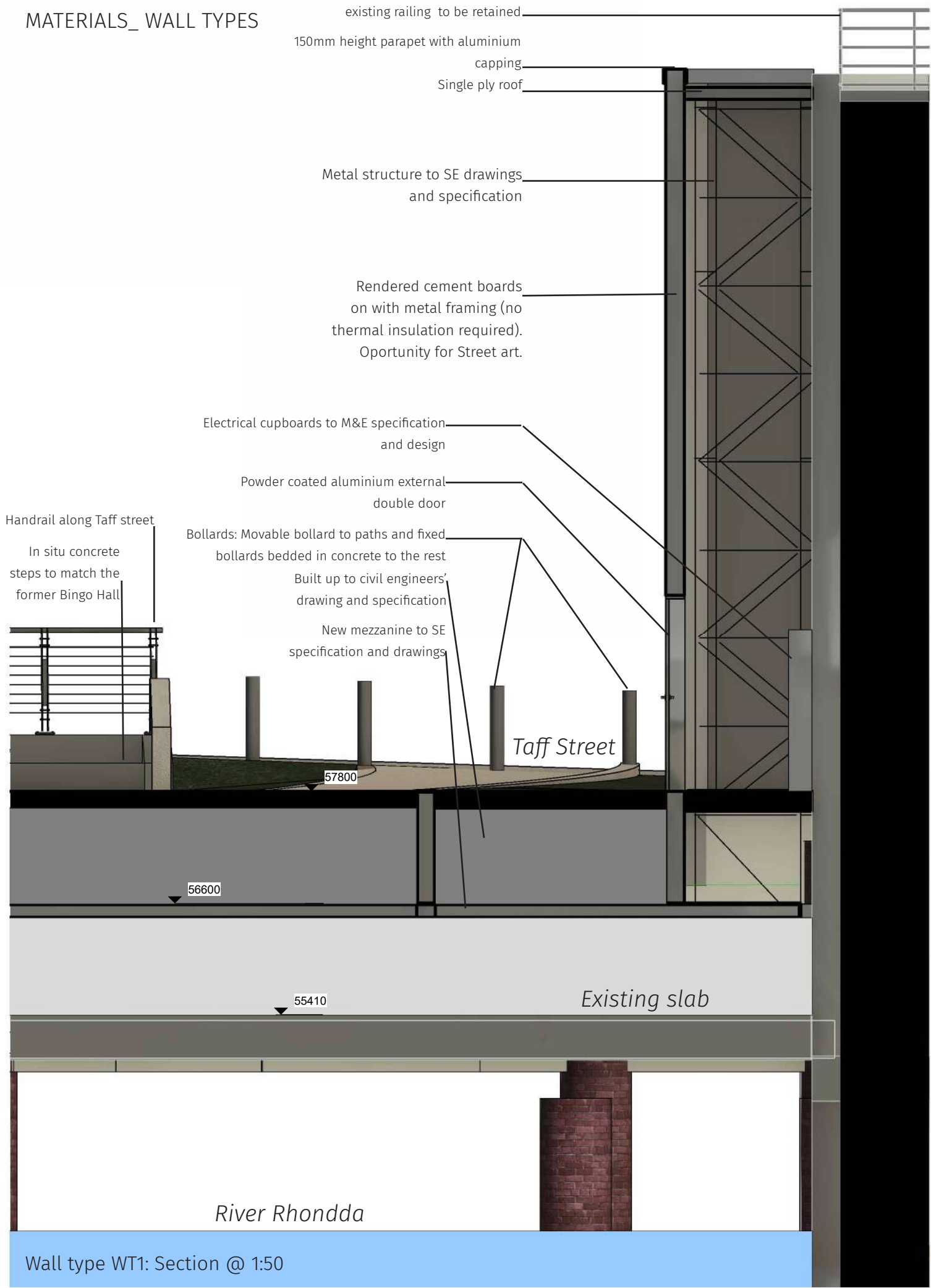
WT2 Metal fencing and climbers to boundary



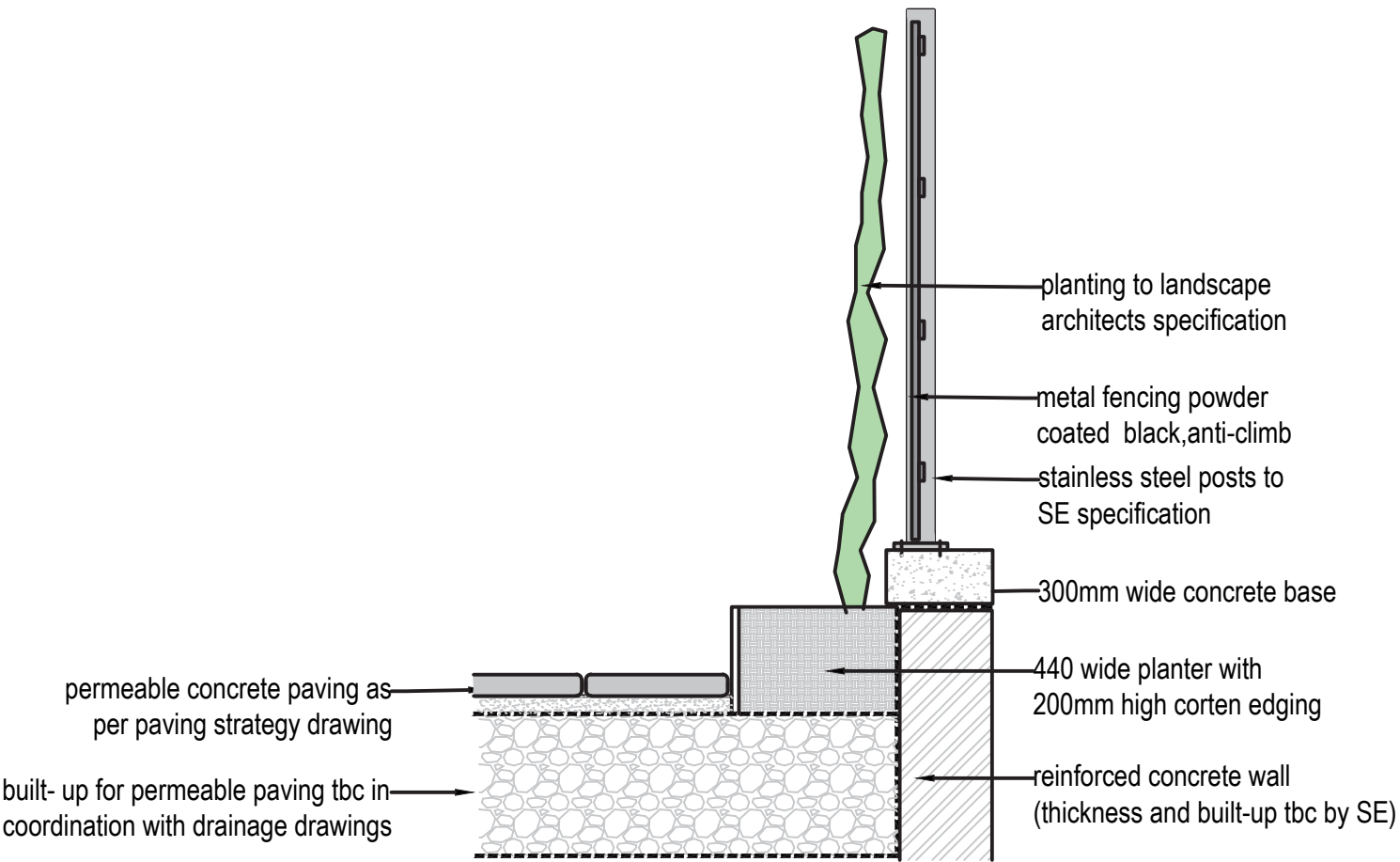
WT3 Marshalite walling Ash Multi (stone effect)

Existing brick wall to be retained and reinforced as per SE drawings

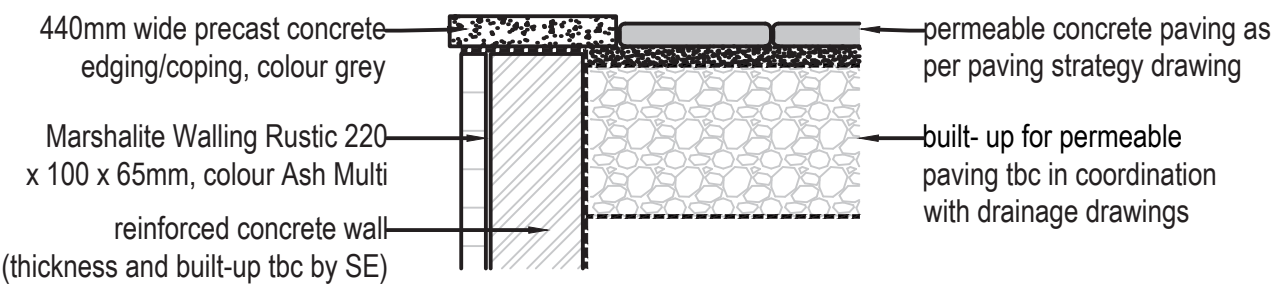
MATERIALS_ WALL TYPES



Wall type WT1: Section @ 1:50



Wall type WT2: Typical Section @ 1:20



Wall type WT3: Typical Section @ 1:20

MATERIALS_ FITTINGS



Fittings plan @ nts



'Streetlife Rough&Ready Free Form Tree Isles' to act as 'central piece' to public realm.
Seat: timber, untreated FSC® 100% Hardwood (Louro Gamela) beams (7x15cm | 2.8x5.9")
Walls: laser-cut weathering steel class A non-treated 4mm thickOptional: double powder coated finish in RAL colour



Furnitubes benches Zenith series as specified for the former Bingo Hall site
steel frame and posts for in-ground fixing, hot dip galvanised and polyester powder coated, with iroko timber slats smooth planned finish.



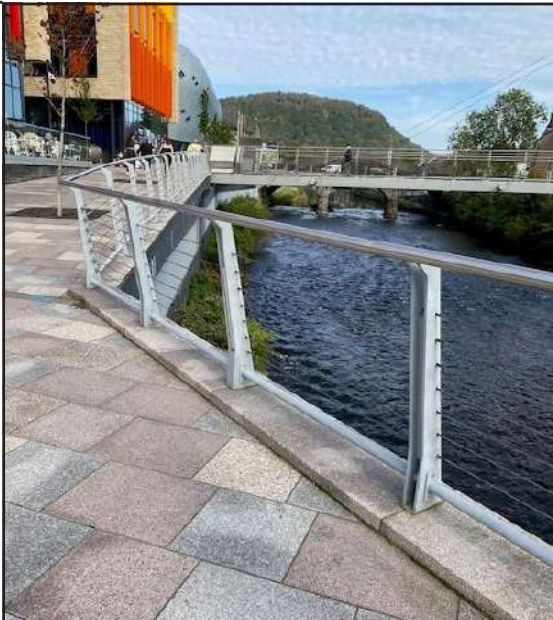
Furnitubes Arca Litter Bin
to match the Former Bingo hall site



Sheffield bicycle racks bedded in
concrete footings



GEO bollards



Bespoke Stainless steel Handrail/Balustrade:Raked (street and river edge) and Tapered (paths)
steel frame and posts for in-ground fixing, hot dip galvanised and polyester powder coated, with iroko timber slats smooth planned finish.



The image is a typical illustrations by the manufacturer showing how they would address the curvature and incline of the handrail system. The specification would be a modified raked upright post, with 10mm Dia or 12mm Dia solid infill curved bar replacing the wire infill. Depending on the span of the upright posts, there would be a central support to prevent distortion.

MAINTENANCE

Appropriate landscape management and maintenance is vital to the success of the landscape design.

The following key factors will need to be addressed in order to sustain a high quality public and private realm:

- Horticultural Health
- Hard Surfacing
- Repair and Replacement
- Safety and Security
- Cleanliness

Horticultural Health

The health and general condition of planted areas including trees, shrubs, and perennial plants is clearly indicative of the level of care and attention a place receives. Planting, including any replacements to dead or dying material, will be maintained in accordance with a Landscape Maintenance Specification. Trees will undergo inspections which will provide informative pruning to ensure appropriate habit and form, monitor health of trees and removal of dead, dying or diseased branches as required. Once established the removal of stakes / guying systems will be required where relevant. Shrub beds will receive ongoing maintenance to ensure weed free conditions through combined techniques of herbicides, cultivation and mulching. Pruning will be required to promote bushy, healthy growth and ensure individual plants establish dense cover as rapidly as possible. Trimming back of growth overhanging roads and footways, and replacement of beds/ species which have become over mature. Until fully established new trees and shrubs will require adequate watering.

Hard Surfaces

Seasonal maintenance of fallen leaves, snow and de-icing is required, and maintenance to keep paving weed free by combined means of chemical and hands.

Repairs and Replacement

The need for repair and replacement of finishes will be mitigated by the use of appropriate and durable materials. Nevertheless, in the long term a degree of maintenance and replacement is unavoidable.

Safety and Security

A safe environment is one that is accessible to all. As well as adopting ‘Secured by Design’ principles in the design of the landscaped areas, long term management and maintenance of the landscape proposals will be required. Well maintained places are less likely to suffer from crime as they are more likely to be used, thus increased presence will deter antisocial behaviour. Surveillance will be encouraged with landscaping enabling clear visibility along routes with trees being clear stemmed to 2m - therefore not blocking views.

Cleanliness

Cleanliness is the principal indication of the quality of management of the landscape design. It will be important to maintain the cleanliness of the landscape with regular collection and removal of leaves and debris and litter. Bins will be provided within the public realm. The design has been developed to allow access for a cleaning vehicle throughout the different levels.



London

Leeds

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Aberystwyth

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