

# Aberdare Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan

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TREFTADAETH GADARN | DYFODOL SICR



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# **Aberdare Conservation Area**

## **Appraisal & Management Plan**

Formally adopted by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough  
Council in December 2008

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**Acknowledgement.**

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's Development Control (Conservation Officer: Mr Mark Stephenson) working in partnership with the Council's Development and Regeneration Team compiled this document.

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## **1.0 Introduction.**

This Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan is focused on the Aberdare Conservation Area.

In order to develop a detailed understanding of the Conservation Area's quality and character, it is necessary to acquire a robust understanding of the history, development and form of the town centre. It is essential that the existing built environment be assessed to gain a detailed appreciation and understanding of the historic character and architecture of the study area. This assessment will then assist in the definition of proposals / initiatives for the enhancement of the area and ensure that the area's existing historic character, quality and appearance are accounted for and reflected therein. In this light, the Conservation Area Appraisal plays a critical role in assisting Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council to provide the necessary preservation and enhancement of this important area.

Another aim of this appraisal document is to satisfy the duties placed upon the Council, to protect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area from inappropriate development. By reviewing the character of the Conservation Area and formulating a Management Plan based upon its findings, the document gives guidance to ensure preservation and / or enhancement is carried out.

In the absence of guidance from Cadw, the document has been written in line with recognised guidance published by English Heritage on Conservation Area appraisals.

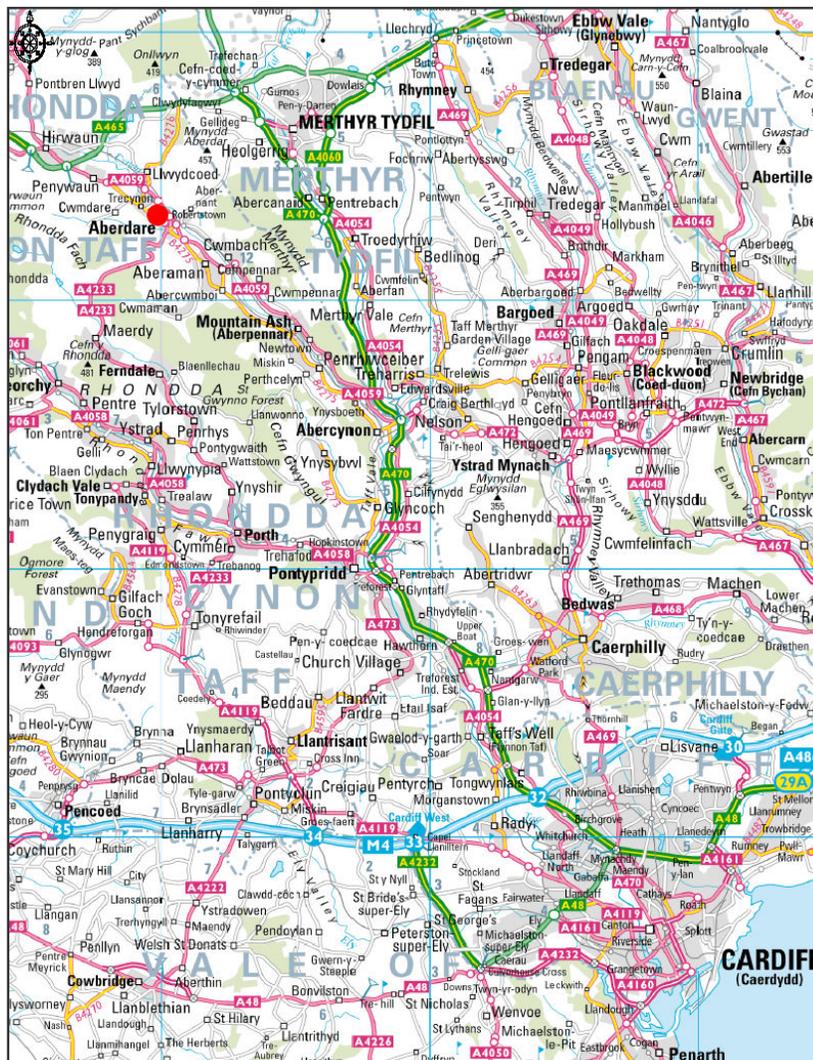
## 2.0 Aberdare: History & Evolution.

### 2.1 Preface.

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the history of Aberdare, what made it the town it is today, and the evolution and development of the town centre. It considers the town's location in the wider sub-region, and the history of its development.

### 2.2 Location.

Aberdare is located on the A4059, 23 miles north northwest of Cardiff, 7.5 miles south west of Merthyr Tydfil and 12 miles north west of Pontypridd. Aberdare is an important historic and nodal town in the northern part of the Cynon Valley, having good rail, bus and road networks linking it to other parts of Wales and the United Kingdom. Aberdare's location within the wider region is shown on the map below.

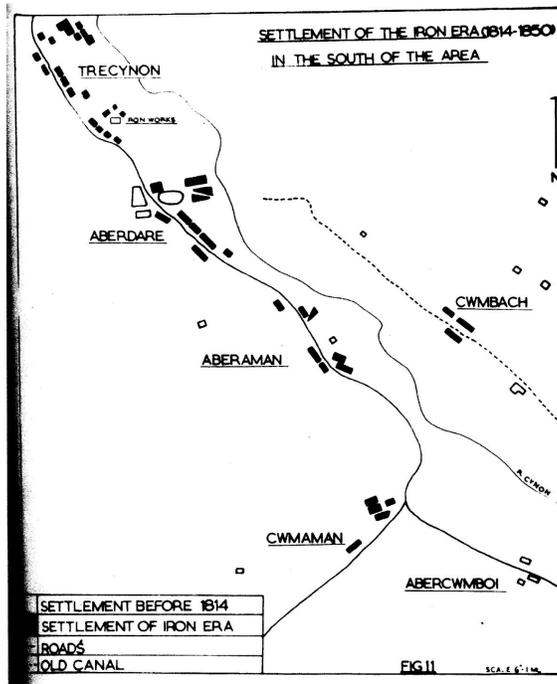


### 2.3 Population.

The current population of Aberdare is 15,829 and the current population of the Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough is 231,952.

### 2.4 Historical Development.

Aberdare was originally a small agricultural settlement that developed into an industrial town in the county of Glamorganshire, Wales, at the confluence of the Dare and Cynon rivers (the latter being a tributary of the Taf).



It is understood the village of Aberdare was centred around the ancient Church of St. John the Baptist (1189), although the present Church bell bears the date 1633, its chancel was rebuilt in 1777 and was enlarged in 1871-76.

By the 15th C, Aberdare contained a Water Mill in addition to a number of thatched cottages, of which no evidence remains.

Before industrial development occurred (pre 1833) the area was farmed and consisted of low vernacular houses for farm labourers, a Curate's house, and possibly a smithy. The nucleation around the Church (by 1800) is indicated by the position of the Vicarage to the south of it, the

(Source: *The Development of Settlement in the Aberdare Valley* by P. Brown, 1957.)

Tithe barn to the east, the village stocks to the north and smaller houses (long since demolished), which were built a little higher up the valley, to the west.

An anomaly to the main historical context is the Black Lion Hotel, listed as being late C18th / early C19th. This late Georgian building may once have stood alone and further historical study is required. A similar property, 42/43 High Street is also of this architectural style and has been listed as an early to mid C19th building.

Iron ore was found in the area in 1799, and a furnace was built at Llwydcoed. This resulted in the necessity for accommodation for the workers involved in the open excavation of iron ore. It appears this was the start of an influx of people into the quiet rural community of Aberdare.

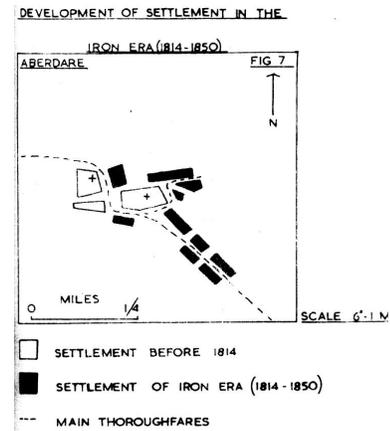
The coming of the Glamorgan canal in 1811 led to the setting up of the Gadlys Iron Works, close to the centre of the village. These works, opened by Matthew Owen, originally comprised four blast furnaces, inner forges, rowing mills and puddling furnaces. It is considered that the presence of the works provided impetus to the

further development of Aberdare as a nucleated town. The canal also connected the works to the coast, creating a trade route.

At the beginning of the 19th Century, Aberdare began to grow rapidly owing to the abundance of coal and iron ore. There was consistent population growth between 1801 and 1831 as the number of houses in the Parish rose from 218 in 1801, to 415 in 1821, and then to 809 in 1831. During the middle part of the century the population stood at 14,908 and rose to 32,299 by 1861, which brought and established a considerable number of Churches and Chapels, large hotels, inns, shops, wealthy industrialists and a good working population to the town.

The rapid development of the railways superseded the canals, and at the same time gave an impetus to the iron trade between 1820 and 1870 with a consequent rapid growth of the town. It is believed the railways also encouraged both Canon and Commercial Street to developed on a new axis, diminishing the importance of the earlier High Street.

In the 1830s, a new industrial development was to take place and was to have a most dramatic effect on the future of the town. Iron necessitated the use of coal and in 1837 a four-foot seam of high quality coal was found a depth of only 49 yards in the area at (43.25m). This established the pits: Gadlys (1844) and Ysguborwen Colliery (1849).



(Source: *The Development of Settlement in the Aberdare Valley* by P. Brown, 1957)

Prior to 1836, most of the coal worked in the parish was consumed locally, chiefly in the ironworks, but in that year the working of steam coal for export was begun, and pits were sunk in rapid succession. It was later in this century that coal provided the economic stability of the town.

Commercial Street developed as a shopping centre between 1847 and 1851, and in 1892 was described as "the leading thoroughfare in the town". In 1847 it consisted of a rough road flanked by cottages and gardens, but by 1851 it had become a busy trading centre that terminated at The Old Welsh Harp.

As indicated on a map of 1868, Aberdare's town centre had already been completed and the River Dare had been culverted under the town centre.

By early 1875, all the five iron works had closed, as the local supply of iron ore was inadequate to meet the ever-increasing demand created by the invention of steel, and as a result the importing of ore proved more profitable.

In 1891, a new company was formed to take over the Aberdare Collieries, which became the predominant industry. Whilst the coal industry continued to expand steadily, larger pits were developing in other areas. However, from 1900 onwards there were constant local disputes over wages and conditions, leading to the Great Strike of 1910.

Some pits in the Cynon Valley began to close but with the outbreak of the First World War there was an intense demand for steam coal and every colliery maximised

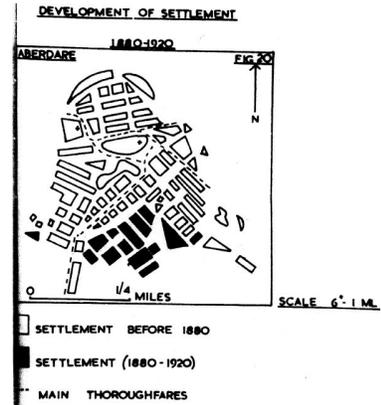
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production. Aberdare coal was recognised by the Admiralty as being of excellent quality for use in naval vessels, and there was again an increase in population.

After the end of the First World War, a crisis arose in the mining industry following a period of great demand. A great depression developed from the spring of 1921, culminating in the Great Strike of 1926. This resulted in the town being severely affected and the population steadily declined.

During the Second World War, factories were set up for the production of armaments and other works associated with wartime production. However, following the severe decline in mining, the well-established way of life was changing dramatically. This was particularly so in the post war years, when most people did not need to live locally to where they worked and therefore started to move to other areas, or travelled to work elsewhere.

Despite its rapid expansion in the early Victorian era and its decline after the Depression, Aberdare has maintained much of its earlier street layout and has escaped the wholesale redevelopment that took place in some towns after the Second World War.



(Source: *The Development of Settlement in the Aberdare Valley* by P. Brown, 1957)

Some construction was undertaken from the turn of the 20th C up to the present time, although generally this was work of replacement or re-development.

Aberdare remains an important nodal town in the Cynon Valley, and is now primarily known as a significant commercial centre.

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### **3.0 Planning Policy Context.**

#### **3.1 Preface.**

This section seeks to identify the principal planning policy guidance and provisions of relevance to the Conservation Area. The provisions are simply identified at this stage, and serve as a source of reference for the Conservation Area Appraisal.

#### **3.2 What is a Conservation Area?**

The definition of a Conservation Area is:

***'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.'*** (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

#### **3.3 The Council's duties in regard to the Conservation Area:**

- The Council from time to time has to draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas and to consult the local community on these.
- In exercising planning powers the Council has to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
- This duty to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of a Conservation Area is set out in statute and assisted by relevant policy guidance. This framework is set out below.

#### **3.4 Planning Policy Framework, Policies & Guidance.**

Any development proposals within the Conservation Area will be subject to control through statutory legislation enshrined in the following principal Acts:

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
- Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; and
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

In terms of policies and guidance specific to the Conservation Area, the context is established by the following:

- Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (March 2002);
- Welsh Office Circular 61/96 - Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas (December 1996) (as amended by Welsh Office Circular 1/98 - Planning and the Historic Environment: Directions by the Secretary of State for Wales);
- The Mid Glamorgan (Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough) Replacement Structure Plan (adopted 1999);
- The Rhondda Cynon Taf (Cynon Valley) Local Plan (adopted 2004); and
- Technical Advice Note 12 (Design).

The guidance provided at the national level stresses the need for the Council to ensure the character and appearance of Conservation Areas are preserved

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and enhanced. PPW requires that Authorities take account of this responsibility in both the formulation of planning policy and in the exercise of development control functions. This guidance is echoed under Policy ENV10 of the adopted Structure Plan.

The adopted (Cynon Valley) Local Plan includes a number of policies that seek to protect the character, appearance and setting of Conservation Areas and listed buildings. Of these:

- Policy CON9 provides a presumption against development that would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a Conservation Area, whilst;
- Policies CON10 and CON11 provide similar protection to listed buildings and their settings.
- Policies CON12 and CON13 refer to the demolition of listed buildings and buildings within Conservation Areas – both seek to resist the removal of buildings worthy of preservation. For Conservation Areas, demolition will only be permitted for buildings that do not contribute positively to the area and where proposals for the future use of those sites have been submitted and approved.

In addition to the above, the adopted Local Plan also contains a range of general development control policies that can be used to protect the appearance of the Conservation Area. These include:

- Policy ENV1, which seeks to encourage high standards of design in all new development proposals, along with compatibility with surrounding uses;
- Policy ENV9, which seeks to ensure that extensions and alterations to existing buildings do not have a detrimental impact upon the street scene and neighbouring properties, and that privacy and amenity are protected;
- Policy ENV10, which requires a high standard of design for new shopfronts to try and prevent retailers (particularly multiples) using standardised design solutions without regard to building style and setting;
- Policy ENV11, which emphasises the need to consider the character of the building and the street scene when erecting advertising signage outside shops; and
- Policy ENV12, which seeks to restrict the insensitive installation of security grilles and ensure that any permitted are integrated unobtrusively within the existing shopfront.
- Policy ENV19, which seeks to ensure that any satellite dish installations within the Conservation Area do not detract from the character of the subject buildings or their surroundings.

### **3.5 Implications of Designation.**

The consequences of Conservation Area designation include bringing the demolition of unlisted buildings and works to any trees within the area under planning control. Other implications include more limited permitted development rights.

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## **4.0 Conservation Area Assessment.**

### **4.1 Preface.**

The purpose of this section is to provide an insight in to why the Conservation Area was designated, and to identify the current situation.

### **4.2 Background.**

Designated in 1989, the Aberdare Conservation Area relates to the historic Victorian core of the town centre and is considered to be: *“an area of special architectural / historic interest, the Victorian character and appearance of which is desirable to preserve and enhance”*.

### **4.3 Review of the Aberdare Conservation Area Boundaries.**

The boundaries of the existing Central Aberdare Conservation Area are shown on the map included in Appendix A. This forms the basis for the commentary provided below.

Following the outline on the map of the Aberdare Conservation Area, the form of the designated areas and the areas contained within it seem to be irregular. Whilst much of the property contained within the boundary has a visible street frontage to the commercial parts, and is readily viewed by the public, there are parts of the Conservation Area where the rear of properties are facing the street frontages.

Whilst there are detracting features from the Conservation Area, most of these detractors are what may be described as the rear of premises. There are considerable opportunities for enhancement, removal of poor quality buildings or features, and opportunities for re-modelling, where alteration or re-building works are undertaken.

Having considered the existing Aberdare Conservation Area boundary, there is **no** proposal to reduce or extend the existing Conservation Area boundary at this stage.

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## 5.0 **Townscape Analysis.**

### 5.1 **Preface.**

The purpose of this section is to look at the town centre as a whole, as well as the character of the individual streets and buildings. Grouped in Character Areas, it assesses the architectural and historical merits whilst identifying those areas that enhance or detract from the special character. An assessment has been undertaken of the existing buildings' impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Effects of traffic, physical condition of the building stock, outside pressure and capacity for change have also been identified, along with other relevant topics, to give a rounded analysis of the situation.

### 5.2 **General Condition.**

Whilst the town centre, in whole or in part, generally gives the impression of a Market Town of good quality, on closer inspection that quality has been eroded by a lack of aesthetically pleasing and historically correct reinstatement, repair and new works. In particular, out of proportion shopfronts and roller shutters both change the scale and character of the townscape. Also there have been some unfortunate infill and redevelopment on some sites, particularly in Commercial Street and Cardiff Street, which detract from the historic character of the Conservation Area.

The street frontages of the existing buildings within the Conservation Area are of varied form and condition. Out of the original buildings that have survived, the percentage of buildings in the town centre that are outwardly in their original form is large. This is because most of the buildings were constructed between 1845 and 1861, with a



further 25% expansion over the next 30 years. In build terms this is relatively recent, and therefore many of the buildings are in their original form, although some of their character may have been eroded.

Within the town, there are numerous examples of original features, such as sash windows with crown glass and shopfronts.

Opportunities exist for considerable improvement within the area, as there are many features that detract from the character of the Conservation Area. These could be removed and if all affected elements of construction of the existing buildings are then made good in an appropriate manner, this would provide significant enhancement.

The area contains thirty-three Listed Buildings and Structures. These are considered to be features of architectural and historic importance. All of the

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Listed Buildings and Structures within the town centre are considered to qualify as key buildings within the Conservation Area, and have been identified within their respective Character Areas. The assessment also considers those buildings worthy of statutory listing, but not on the list.

Many of the unlisted buildings within the town centre make a positive contribution to the character of the area despite some of them losing part of their architectural detail or having had it eroded by inappropriate repair or reinstatement works. These include buildings considered suitable for statutory protection and those, which warrant inclusion on a 'local list', and again have been identified within their respective Character Areas.

Gap sites have also been identified, which provide opportunities for redevelopment. They are discussed within the relevant Character Areas.

### 5.3 **Plan Form.**

The town centre has taken on an oval plan form as it has developed over the centuries. Different land ownership and use, along with routes that predate the piecemeal development, have all contributed to the form seen today.

### 5.4 **Views and Vistas.**

Generally, the views of Aberdare are of typical street scenes with buildings to each side of the streets, which because of their configuration around the elliptical plan form of the central part of the town, are curved and therefore foreshortened.

As the town centre is approached from nearly every viewpoint, the elegant octagonal spire of St. Elvan's Church can be clearly seen rising above the townscape. It can also be seen from most parts of this northern section of the Cynon Valley, as the Church occupies an elevated position within the town.

A view of St. John the Baptist Church is seen from the north west, across the open area of the churchyard, with a group of large trees which overpower the Church and partially obscure it from view. This green space is a peaceful haven on what is a busy roundabout of four merging roads. Beyond the church, the dominating road leads the eye away from the town up Gadlys Road, past a school and into the surrounding suburbs of terrace housing.



Entering High Street between the elegant three-storey former Town Hall and the massing of the brightly coloured Constitutional Club, the street scene narrows and gives no indication of Canon Street, other than the subdivision of the road. Beyond this, High Street continues into the distance and curves round, and mature planting in front of Rock Grounds terminates the view.

As viewed from Canon Street, the area around the Green Street Methodist Church, Siloa Chapel and Library is open in aspect, although the view of the

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Green Street Methodist Church is foreshortened by the former Town Hall, and the area beyond is overpowered by the height of the Council Offices.

The view of Canon Street from the west is terminated by the curvature of buildings at the end of Dean Street leading into buildings to the north of Commercial Street. The mass of the Constitutional Club, Trinity Presbyterian Church and the Palladium Cinema are predominant in this view, the majority of the remaining buildings being of two and three-storeys.

The view from Canon Street along Maendy Place is again different in scale, because of the predominant buildings of Trinity Presbyterian Church and the Palladium Cinema. It terminates in generally two-storey 19th C suburban housing.

As viewed from Canon Street, Whitcombe Street has a variety of buildings of varying characteristics and scale, although the view is somewhat obscured by the modern public toilet cubical and young trees, located in the pedestrianised area. In the distance more 19th C suburban terraces exist, and beyond that the hills of Mynydd-y-glog can be seen.

As viewed from the west, Commercial Street falls to the east, with a variety of buildings. In the foreground the view terminates in the modern road system and views to Pen-y-lan Hill. To the west, the land can be seen to rise above the recently formed landscaped area towards the mound of St. Elvan's Church.



(Above: View north to Mynydd-y-glog, RCT Archive  
Left: View east towards Pen-y-lan Hill)

Located in the south of Commercial Street is a pedestrianised access way, leading into Boot Lane and towards Market Street. The land rises steeply through the access way, and the view past the side of the Old Courthouse, towards the market is interrupted.

Looking eastwards down Boot Lane, a variety of recesses can be seen, but one is unaware of the open yard to the south because of the foreshortening of the viewpoint. As Boot Lane falls to the east, the view is terminated by the rear of buildings fronting Market Street.

From the east of Boot Lane, part of Commercial Street can be seen through the archway over the pedestrian access way leading northwards into Commercial Street, although the view is foreshortened because of the fall of

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the access way to the north, the archway restricting the view. Turning southwards, the view is of the corner of the Market and an open area adjacent, which is partially landscaped, but predominantly a vehicle parking area.

As viewed from the west, Market Street is curved and is made up of a variety of two-storey and three-storey stonework buildings, although there is a contrast between the colour of the Old Courthouse, the mass of the Market to the south, and the lower stone buildings to the north. The view terminates in the modern pedestrian access bridge associated with the road system beyond. As viewed from the east, the poor quality infill building adjacent to the Old Courthouse can be seen, although the view is terminated by the two-storey buildings of 1-4 Market Street, Boot Chambers and the rear of No. 1 Cardiff Street.

From the east curvature of Canon Street, adjacent to Boot Lane, Cardiff Street to the south west has buildings of different height and quality to each side of the street. When looking along Cardiff Street, to the north west, the predominant building is the former school on the left hand side, which foreshortens the view, but in the distance Victoria Square and the curvature of the good quality buildings are viewed past the War Memorial.

The junction of Victoria Square, with Cardiff Street and Canon Street, gives a wide variety of views, including the straightness of Cardiff Street and the curvature of Canon Street, together with the curvature of Victoria Square, rising to the west. Looking westward, Victoria Square has elegant buildings in the foreground, but the predominant feature is the War Memorial past which the statue of Caradog, with the late-Georgian Black Lion Hotel beyond, can be seen.

The junction of Victoria Square, Wind Street, Monk Street and High Street has a variety of views because Victoria Square falls to the north west and in the distance the roofscape of the Boot Hotel and buildings adjacent can be seen, whereas the view to the south east along Wind Street, which is level, diminishes with buildings of domestic scale to each side.



*(Looking southeast, RCT Archive, 1982)*

Monk Street rises quickly to the south west, with the 19th C suburban terrace houses following the hillside in two-storey blocks. Griffith Street only becomes visible when passing the large mass of the three-storey Council Offices, and is a narrow steep street.

High Street, when viewed from the Caradog statue, rises over a crown in the road, which then falls to the west, past the car park that lies in the shadow of St Elvan's Church. In the distance, the Library terminates this view, with the High Street curving round to the right in front of it. In the far distance you can glimpse Cefnrhos-gwawr Hills.

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To the south of High Street, the mass of the buildings in the foreground hide the former Church building and Council Offices to the south west, and the conifers restrict the view of the Dare River beyond.

As Church Street rises to the east, the car park adjacent is at a lower level, and the Telephone Exchange and rear of the properties fronting Canon Street are visible. The land from the car park falls away westwards, and the top of St. Elvan's Church spire can only just be seen. The only indication of the height of the St. Elvan's Church mound is the northward rise of Church Street.

As viewed from the entrance to the Council Offices on High Street, the Telephone Exchange opposite obliterates most of the view of the rear of the Canon Street properties as does the slightly higher car park, but there is a fine view of St. Elvan's Church on its elevated mound above, together with the elegant buildings of Nos. 1 and 2 Victoria Square, adjacent.

From the car park, there is a view through the pedestrian access way to Canon Street, although this is considerably foreshortened by the fall in the ground from the car park to Canon Street, the remainder of the view being the rear of the Canon Street frontage properties.

Part of the charm of the centre is the number of curves as the roads wind through the town, around the central "island" on which St. Elvan's Church is located. There is a fine view from St. Elvan's Church to the north, over the recently formed landscaped area adjacent to Canon Street, with the unfolding roofscapes of Aberdare beyond.

Although part of the town, there is little awareness of the River Dare, which flows from the west through a narrowing channel between the Council Offices and the Library, and disappears into a culvert, which passes under the town and reappears to the east of Duke Street.

## 5.5 Character Areas.

Character Areas are focused around streets and spaces. There is naturally an overlapping of Character Areas as street scenes vary because of junctions of streets and variations of views. The defined Character Areas are identified below, along with the positive and negative aspects, landscaping areas and other contributing factors associated with each area. All areas and open spaces are shown on the map included in Appendix B.



(View into the parkland setting of Character Area A)

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## Character Area A – St. John the Baptist Church and Churchyard.

### Description.

This area forms the nucleus of the pre-industrial settlement, with the single storey church, known as St. John the Baptist, having fabric dating back to the medieval period. Constructed from local pennant stone with a slate roof, the Church sits in the south of the site, which along with its graveyard forms a Character Area that takes on a parkland setting.

The churchyard, where only the most historic gravestones remain visible, has an open aspect to the northwest and east, and is bound to the south west by a tall wall of alien conifers that shut off potential links with Character Area K. Although attractive, the other native trees, due to their mature inter-linking tree canopy, make the area dark.



A variety of stone walls, differing in heights, bound the site and are an attractive feature that are repeated beyond the Conservation Area. In some parts, the walls are topped with iron railings. The quality of this stonework gives evidence of Aberdare being a substantial town within the South Wales Valleys.

Approaching from the north west, a short length of High Street changes in character from the parkland setting to smaller scale buildings. No. 28 High Street is reflective of the Church in scale and material, and these former dwellings are built in a vernacular style. In addition to the random stone, the building uses blue bricks for the quoins on the corners, and for the apertures has an arch with a key stone detail. The single chimneys, one at each end, also introduce a buff coloured brick into its detailing. The roof incorporates three half-dormer first floor windows with gables and has crested terracotta ridge tiles.

The small double fronted cottage adjacent is typical of the houses constructed as part of the local iron industry and many of these are still in existence on Gadlys Road and Wind Street. The building has been externally modernised with replacement windows and has been pebbled dashed. The fenestration detail, with the simple rendered surrounds, and the low ceiling heights are characteristic of cottages of this period. Although the building has lost its chimneys, the roof retains the slate covering.

Beyond this are larger stuccowork buildings with a mixture of classical and French influence, which can be seen through the great variety of architectural detailing and coloured render. Due to the change in scale and massing, the

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approach between Character Areas A, B and part of Character Area K all inter-relate and space becomes tight and narrow, especially with the traffic control measures that are located in the centre of the highway.

**Neutral Issues and Problems:**

- Dark areas around the graveyard of St John the Baptist Church.

**Negative Issues and Problems:**

- Some public realm enhancement is required to overcome the current traffic and pedestrian management situation.

**Recognised Pressure and Capacity for Change:**

- With such a high concentration of conifers within the graveyard, the opportunity for some to be removed will not have a detrimental effect on the character. Consideration of totally removing the conifers with the replanting of native trees would also be beneficial.
- It is recognised that highway safety for both pedestrians and vehicles is important, but this safety should be balanced with the historical environment that the highway is located within. A sympathetic approach to highway safety is achievable through good quality planning and design. A possible reduction in the amount of equipment would be beneficial.

**Listed Buildings within the Area.**

Building / Structure Address	Grade
St. John the Baptist Parish Church, Green Street	II*

**Unlisted Buildings of Merit.**

- 28 High Street and its setting.

**Character Area B – Part of High Street, Canon Street, Maendy Place and south end of Whitcombe Street.**

**Description.**

Possibly laid out in circa 1855, Canon Street currently has one-way traffic flow and forms a linear street with two and three-storey buildings running parallel on either side. The traffic calming measures are very prominent with large planters located at the west end of the street. Pedestrian barriers, street signage and equipment also dominate this area.

The north west contains the largest concentration of large buildings, including nos. 42 and 43 High Street, the Constitutional Club and the Trinity Presbyterian Church of Wales, which are all high quality and imposing buildings.

42-43 High Street is listed as an early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> C three-storey late Georgian building with a rendered façade, plinth and first floor sill band detailing. The

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slate roof, with its ridge of crested tiles, has three narrow rendered chimneystacks and wide boarded eaves with deep curved brackets. The building has a five bay window arrangement with architraves to the twelve-pane sashes and small pane tripartite windows at either end on the ground floor. An ionic porch with iron columns, dentil cornice, deep-boarded fascia and panelled reveals identifies the main entrance. This building has similar architectural detailing to the late-Georgian Black Lion Hotel, and its location on a main route in and out of town gives the impression of a former important building.

The interesting Constitutional Club building brings a European flavour to the town. The bright blue and white coloured render elevation is one that stands out and dominates the top corner of the street. Opened in March 1894, the building has an eclectic architectural style. The almost symmetrical three-storey main block is splayed across the corner with three-storey ranges either side. The slate roof has a tiled cresting and is dominated by the unusual steeply pitched French chateau style roof with ironwork crown. Further classical detailing includes an elaborate acanthus derived panelled band to base, fluted pilasters, deep parapet, impost band with studded ornament, moulded architraves, and scrolled and lions head carved brackets carrying segmental cornice with bracket rising to pediments. Former wooden timber sash tripartite and semi-circular headed windows have been replaced with Upvc, but some original detailing remains through the fluted keystones. The Canon Street section has modern shopfronts.



Trinity Presbyterian Church, dated 1867, and its associated hall add a touch of neo-classicism. A mixture of two and three -storey, the complex is rendered and has a pediment with painted freestone dressings. A giant arch breaks the pediment, over recessed central two-bays with lettering. Further details include ionic pilasters with plain frieze, inscribed and foliated date stone, cornicing to both floors with a sill band. There are a mixture of six and twelve-pane horned sash windows, some in Venetian style or small, under a round or semi-circular moulded head or pediments with architraves. Six-panelled doors, fanlights and central lamp bracket form the entrance.

The Palladium Cinema appears outwardly as a three-storey building, although, internally it is a large volume. It has a large pediment gable facing the street, and a projecting entrance canopy at street level. It is the most dominant building in this part of Canon Street, and dwarfs the two-storey buildings in Maendy Place.

Whilst there are both two and three-storey properties on the street, the south side contains majority of the two-storey whilst the north has the higher

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quantity of the three-storey. However, on the southern side, there are some three-storey properties half way up and at the end of the street.

Where the intermittent three-storey properties break up the uniformity of the roof lines, they make for imposing buildings. In particular, the stone Masonic Hall with its coursed squared pennant stone gable end and contrasting colour classical detailing, and no. 25 with its projecting double bay windows on two floors both make valid contributions to the street.

The width of the properties tends to be in proportion to their height. Fenestration details are generally the same, with a ground floor shopfront, two windows to the first floor and if a three-storey property, a second set of windows.

The use of a splayed corner on a building allows the street to flow more easily at junctions. This splay is often topped with a hipped roof. One such example can be seen at the top of Canon Street.

Architectural detailing is predominantly simple with coloured facades being either of smooth painted render, decorated or a mixture of the two. Further embellishment comes in the form of plain or vermiculated quoins. One unit, now a public house, has retained its simple ceramic Victorian tilework to the ground floor level.



Some of the shops retain their original shopfronts. These features include the recessed doorway with tiled entrances, stall risers and ornately turned mullions. Many original fronts have been replaced with modern interpretations. Former shop signs complete with borders and created from render are located on the first floor wall in between windows. Additional features such as hanging signs and a projecting clock make for an interesting vista into this busy part of the town.

Requirements for security to shopfronts and ground floor windows after hours has encouraged the use of metal roller security grills or fixed grills. The roller shutters have impacted considerably on the design of the modern shopfronts, with the roller shutter often being located on the front of the building, rather than being integrated. It is at night when the use of these security measures has the biggest impact on the character of the area.

First floor apertures during the time of expansion in the town were traditionally a simple rectangle or an oriel window. The traditional material was timber, but

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the majority of these windows have been replaced with either metal or Upvc. Where an original timber sash window remains or has been replaced sympathetically, the number of panes vary between two, four and twelve. Where the original oriel windows exist, they exist in their entirety. Some include the box sash, horned frames, turned mullions and toothed eave-cornicing under its own shallow hipped pitched roof. Interesting one-off features, such as triangular first floor windows with attractive mouldings and turned mullions, contribute to the streetscape along with feature stained glass.

At roof level there is evidence of chimney removal that is often associated with the renewal of roof finishes. One property has crested ridge tiles, but the majority have been replaced with plain ridges.

Where chimneys remain, they have either been left as brick or have been rendered, and some retain their original clay chimney pots.

A pedestrian access way, similar to the link on Commercial Street, links the street with the car park in Character Area J, and uses mosaic artwork to enhance the internal walls.

Where Canon Street meets Dean Street, a public space is formed (Open Space 3) from a paved area being enhanced through the use of trees and street furniture. A modern public convenience cubicle is located in the centre of this space.

The former Queens Hotel, at 9 Canon Street, was remoulded in the 1930s. The works involved the entire first floor being inserted with glass, resulting in the loss of its former grandeur that can still be seen though its surviving neoclassical detailing. Additionally, there is an interesting two-storey building adjacent on Whitcombe Street, with a central arched access way, indicating hotel or commercial usage of the back yards.

Maendy Place is formed from a row of three two-storey domestic scale buildings with roof gable windows and ornate bargeboards. The properties are set back and separated from the pavement by a low stone wall, with chamfered capping stones, iron railing and gates. A ground floor bay is located adjacent to the pedimented and pilaster front door, but has a flat roof rather than a pitch. Modern alterations include replacement windows and doors, and satellite aerials on the front elevations.



The shoe repair shop to the west of Maendy Place, adjacent to the Presbyterian Church, has a good quality shopfront and an attractive hanging sign.

#### **Neutral Issues and Problems:**

- Sensitive relocation of the public convenience will enhance the public space.
- De-cluttering of the street furniture within Open Space 3 will provide for a more attractive area.

- Maendy Place and the rear of the Palladium Cinema could benefit from enhancement.
- The micro character of the pedestrian access into Character Area J could be made more inviting by integrating side access in to the premises to each side of it, rather than the tunnel-like effect of the current situation.

#### **Negative Issues and Problems:**

- Poor quality timber structure to the rear of 42 High Street.
- Inappropriate use of Upvc for replacement windows and doors.
- Dis-proportionate shopfront replacements.
- Insensitive use/location and styling of metal roller shutters and associated equipment.
- Use of fixed metal security grills to ground floor windows on prominent facades.
- Fixing of satellite dishes and TV aerials on prominent locations.
- Large quantities of redundant electrical wires fixed to building facades.
- Some of the roof structures are showing signs of fatigue under a heavier roof than the rafters were designed to carry. This is caused through the inappropriate use of roof materials such as cement tiles, which in an area that is predominantly slate, also has a detrimental affect on the traditional detailing.
- Loss of chimneys and associated features.
- The domestic nature of the concrete paving used for pavements is detracting from the character of the area.
- Some public realm enhancement required.

#### **Recognised Pressure and Capacity for Change.**

- The erosion of original details, lack of ability and knowledge to undertake the necessary repairs, the lack of understanding of the importance of the historic environment and lack of knowledge to reinstate missing architectural detail all contribute to the impression of progressive deterioration.
- Again it is recognised that highway safety for both pedestrians and vehicles is important but this safety should be balanced with the historical environment that the highway is located within. A sympathetic approach to public realm matters is achievable through good quality planning, design and use of sympathetic materials. A possible reduction in the amount of equipment would be beneficial.

#### **Listed Buildings within the Area.**

<b>Building / Structure Address</b>	<b>Grade</b>
No. 42 High Street	II
No. 43 High Street	II
Aberdare Carpet Company, Canon Street	II
M.J. Rayner, Canon Street	II
Deckers Club, Canon Street	II
Constitutional Club, Canon Street	II
Hall attached to Trinity Church, Weatherall Street	II
Trinity Presbyterian church of Wales, Weatherall Street	II

Pillar Box on the pavement outside the Palladium Cinema, Canon Street	II
Telephone call box on the pavement outside the Palladium Cinema, Canon Street	II

#### **Unlisted buildings of Merit.**

- The Masonic Hall, No. 41 Canon Street;
- E. Webber & Sons, Fishmongers, No. 25 Canon Street.

#### **Gap Site 1 - No. 1 Canon Street.**

Sandwiched between the prominent former Palladium Cinema and No. 3 Canon Street, is a site where originally a three-storey shop with accommodation above and dormer windows once stood. Formally known as Lewis's Shoe Shop, the building was demolished in Oct 2002 following many years of neglect.

Whilst two development options have been investigated as part of other works, the need for a development brief for this site is realised due to the sensitive nature of the area.

#### **Character Area C – Whitcombe and Dean Street.**

##### **Description.**

Approached from the town centre by means of a pedestrianised area between Character Areas B and D, Whitcombe Street also has vehicular access from the north and Dean Street.

From the south the buildings are generally three-storey, with colour rendered elevations of stucco, pebbledash and modern mineralised

sprayed application. This area has lost much of its character because of the discontinuation of the former street scene and the unfortunate use of pebbledash.

The buildings to the west are more elegant than those to the east and as the street heads north into Seymour Street the buildings reduce to two-storey.

Nos. 29-31 (west side) are three-storey town houses with a ground floor over a basement set half way into the ground. The front yard is bounded by a low stone wall with railings and piers, capped with ornate cast iron features. Steps lead up to the front door with its pediment, fine architrave and panelling to the reveals. A series of modifications have occurred but different original features



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occur at different levels, so a full picture of the original buildings could be pieced together.

The Gloucester's Public House again has been pebble dashed, but retains its simple window surrounds with a key stone detail. The rest of the buildings in this eastern row are either smooth or rough rendered. Predominantly commercial to the ground floor and residential above, one original shopfront remains. These buildings at one time all had oriel windows and smaller windows above. Today only two properties have their original oriels, albeit modernised, and one that has been reduced in size. The block has two hipped roofs at either end, and is covered in slate with terracotta ridge tiles. Some brick chimneys also remain. No 19 also has vermiculate type keystones and has an attractive external hanging bracket and sign.



**Neutral Issues and Problems:**

- This area has lost much of its character because of the discontinuation of the former street scene.

**Negative Issues and Problems:**

- Inappropriate use of Upvc for replacement windows and doors.
- Inappropriate use of pebbledash that has obliterated much fine Victorian and Edwardian detailing.
- Fixing of satellite dishes and TV aerials on prominent locations.
- Loss of chimneys and associated features.

**Recognised Pressure and Capacity for Change:**

- Modern requirements within the buildings are acceptable, however sympathetic and careful consideration of the historical environment is required.

**Gap Site 2 – Corner of Whitcombe Street and Seymour Street.**

The site was formally occupied by a large red brick Memorial Hall, with fine baroque terracotta detailing. To the east elevation, the building was single-storey and stepped up to a three-storey building as it went west along Seymour Street.

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Whilst a development option has been investigated as part of other works, the need for a development brief of this site is realised due to the sensitive nature of the area. The site is allocated within the adopted Local Plan for redevelopment, and this establishes that a range of town centre uses would be appropriate.



**Character Area D – Part of Canon Street, south end of Whitcombe Street and Commercial Street.**

**Description.**

Constructed on the historical route to Merthyr Tydfil in the early 19<sup>th</sup> C, the wide pedestrian street is currently surfaced with standard pavements enhanced by cobbled sets, has drainage channels and is dotted with street furniture. The lining of trees gives an attractive softening effect to the otherwise linear street that is bounded by two and three-storey buildings of varying dates, materials and building styles.



Although there is consistency in the height of the buildings, the architectural style is attractively mixed and characteristically dates from the late 19<sup>th</sup> C. Common detailing like smooth coloured rendered facades with rendered window surrounds, ground floor shopfronts, oriel windows, and repeated second floor fenestration and gables face on to the street. The buildings also show an assortment of black and white gothic detailing, red brick Flemish gabling and 1930s style blocks.

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Upon closer inspection, the buildings are littered with interesting architectural details ranging from rustification quoin work, decorative crested ridge tiles with finials terminating at the gables and roof dormers, to decorative sign writing with panelling / borders and some fleur-de-leys motifs all formed in render.

Open Space 4 is located at the eastern end of Commercial Street. This area is attractive in that it provides a circular seating area, which is half bound by a pennant stone wall with a blue brick capping, and which is terminated with piers. The landscape is enhanced through shrub planting on the grassy bank behind, and the street furniture has taken on a Victorian design. Paving has been raised to create a pedestrian link across the carriageway.



At nos. 19-20 is a two-storey 1960s concrete building with vertical detailing. This is in stark contrast to the traditional architectural style that dominates the street.

Half way up the street (heading west) there is a pedestrian access way leading between Commercial Street and Boot Lane (Character Area E). This is similar to the link on Canon Street, and uses mosaic artwork to enhance the internal walls.

The windows in this street are also interesting. There is evidence of the original early Victorian curved shopfront, and the original twelve pane timber sash windows to the upper floors, at nos. 44-45. An interesting window arrangement is the first floor glazing to no. 8, where the whole first floor is glazed to full height and the timber frame has decorative turned mullions. There are also numerous gothic or semicircular arched windows. The use of stain glass is also apparent.

The west end of the street is terminated with further landscaping (Open Space 11). A welcomed continuity of street furniture and tree planting in a semi-circular arrangement forms an attractive link with Open Space 4, located at the eastern end of the street, and Open Space 10, located west across the road.



The buildings further west continue, with the three-storeys and facades showing typical early Victorian detailing, such as twelve pane windows decreasing in size as they rise up the building, string courses, a mixture of

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some ground floor rustification and smooth render, toothed eaves corncing, and keystone detailing to windows.

Continuing in to Whitcombe Street, nos. 21-26 have undergone extensive modernisation with an attempt to harmonise with the traditional nature of the town.

Modernisation has affected the majority of the properties with items such as shopfronts being replaced with replicas of the Victorian era, and the upper windows being replaced with Upvc. Original slate roofs have been replaced with cement tiles and unfortunately the chimneys have been lost. Some buildings do still have evidence of these lost details in the form of awnings or short chimney stacks, built of buff coloured brick, but unfortunately they are stripped of any character and no longer in use.



Good quality stonewalls, even in back land areas, as exemplified by stone walling in the rear access way between Commercial Street and Market Street and at the rear of commercial properties. More good quality stonewalls leading from Canon Street to Duke Street assist to reinforce a sense of Aberdare being substantial.



Duke Street is located to the east and consists of modernised two-storey tall premises, which are two to three windows wide. The corner property has a splay with hip and some classical features. Roofs are a mixture of slate and cement tiles. All chimneys have been removed, and most have modern shopfronts and timber replacement windows and doors.

Facades are generally uncluttered and maintained well.

The Dean Street part of the character area is predominantly the rear of the commercial buildings in Commercial Street. The most prominent structure is the alien warehouse-type buff brick building to the rear of nos. 4-5. Some former stone walls are present around the electricity substation but these have been “up-graded” with brick quoins and copings. Rendered and pebbledash properties exist with signs of modernisation and little historical detailing remains. This is the location for commercial and domestic refuse bins and there is a high level of on street parking.

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### **Neutral Issues and Problems:**

- The micro character of the pedestrian access could be made more inviting by integrating side access in to the premises to each side of it, rather than the tunnel-like effect of the current situation.

### **Negative Issues and Problems:**

- Properties detracting from the character of the Conservation Area include nos. 19, 19a and 20 Commercial Street and the Dean Street facing properties, including the sub-station on the south side of Dean Street.
- Inappropriate use of Upvc for replacement windows and doors.
- Insensitive positioning of trickle vents in replacement timber sash windows.
- Insensitive positioning of boiler vents and other extraction equipment.
- Insensitive positioning of waste pipes.
- Dis-proportionate shopfront replacements.
- Insensitive use/location and styling of metal roller shutters and associated equipment.
- Fixing of satellite dishes and TV aerials on prominent locations.
- Large quantities of redundant electrical wires fixed to building facades.
- The domestic nature of concrete paving used for pavements is detracting from character of the area.
- Some of the roof structures are showing signs of fatigue under a heavier roof than the rafters were designed to carry. This is caused through the inappropriate use of roof materials such as cement tiles, which in an area that is predominantly slate, also has a detrimental affect on the traditional detailing.
- Loss of chimneys and associated features.

### **Recognised Pressure and Capacity for Change:**

- Similar in character to Character Area B, this Character Area projects ongoing deterioration because of poor quality replacement shopfronts, the removal of existing buildings and their replacement with poor quality buildings, lack of maintenance, removal of architectural detailing, and spiralling downturn of repairs.
- Unsympathetic refurbishment has taken place without due regard to the Conservation Area, possibly due to lack of knowledge, understanding and ability to refurbish in a sensitive manner.

### **Unlisted buildings of Merit:**

- Woolworths, Nos. 4 and 5 Commercial Street;
- Nos. 37-39 Commercial Street inclusive, although No. 36 Commercial Street, subject to further investigation, may have had a balancing elevation to No. 37 Commercial Street, which has since been lost;
- Pickled Pepper Public House, No. 43 Commercial Street (former Bush Inn);
- No. 44 Commercial Street.

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## Character Area E – Boot Lane.

### Description.

Boot Lane is a narrow access way with rear yards off it to the south and east. It leads from Canon Street to Market Street, with a pedestrian access way, via an archway, to Commercial Street on its north side. Formerly an access way serving the rears of commercial premises on Commercial, Canon and



Market Streets, the street is bounded by a variety of two and three-storey buildings to each side, of mixed construction materials. The space is tight and is very uninviting due to graffiti, parking in any available space, lack of repair, loss of details, under-utilisation of space and lack of undeveloped opportunities.

As stated above, good quality stonewalls, even in back land areas, as exemplified by stone walling in this rear access way between Commercial Street and Market Street, further assist to reinforce a sense of Aberdare being substantial.

### Negative Issues and Problems:

- High levels of graffiti.
- Lack of repair and loss of details.

### Recognised Pressure and Capacity for Change:

- Parking in any available space can be controlled through the implementation of parking restrictions. Working with the Highways Transportation and Fleet Section could resolve issues.
- Scope for regeneration potential of this back land area to create a “Shambles” type street scene to attract specialist shops.

## Character Area F – Market Street and part of Cardiff and Duke Street.

### Description.

Market Street is a pedestrianised area dominated by the classical architecture of the listed Market Buildings, and a mixture of two-storey and three-storey construction. This group also includes the New Market Tavern Public House, buildings to the west of Duke Street and associated buildings to the north of Market Street.



Locally known as Market Shopping Centre, the buildings, built around 1853, were constructed from a local course rubble pennant sandstone with hipped slate roofs, in almost a symmetrical block. A long (four + three + four-bay) single storey frontage is stepped forward and up to centre Granite impost bands compliment the pennant stone. The architectural detailing includes semi-circular headed openings with voussoirs and small pane lunettes. The New Market Tavern and the Market Hall both have a high plinth detail and the slate roofs are complimented with tiled crestring and boarded eaves.

The market elevation to Duke Street is again a long single storey, almost symmetrical range. However, part of the polycarbonate roof is open and supported on a metal roof. This roof and a stone boundary wall continue to the main market building.

As a collective, these market buildings form the main group of stone buildings in Aberdare.

Duke Street is a wide one-way highway with traffic calming measures that run past the bus station. The spine wall to the bus station is constructed of pennant stone and has blue brick arched and quoin openings, linking the street with the station forecourt. Cast iron supports, glass canopy roofs, and a circular ticket office and facilities with clock feature and slate roof, provide for an attractive solution between the town and its vital public transport.



1-2 Cardiff Street has a three-storey rendered façade, splayed corner, and side elevation that is decorated with rusticated keystones, moulded window surrounds, stringcourses, quoin detailing, a replacement timber box sash and modern shopfronts. The reconstituted slate roof is hipped and the chimneys have been removed.

A large contribution of character to this area comes from the Open Space (5). Formed from a mixture of tarmac car parking and pedestrian walkways, the

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area is lined with trees, mixed type street furniture, iron gates and railings, and attractive stone boundary walls. The pavements are constructed from poor quality block paviours, but some circular detailing is placed outside the Old Court building. The attractiveness of this area makes for a relaxed atmosphere, with the shops and cafes spilling out on to the street.

The service yard area to the south of the pedestrianised Market Street is used predominantly for car parking.

Further good quality stone walls assist to reinforce a sense of Aberdare being substantial.



#### **Neutral Issues and Problems:**

- Although not unattractive, the predestination of the area around the market could receive a cohesive approach to street furniture and de-cluttering, along with a quality pavement surface.
- Tired looking shops.

#### **Negative Issues and Problems:**

- Poor quality detailing and signage.
- Dis-proportionate shopfront replacements.
- Insensitive use/location and styling of metal roller shutters and associated equipment.
- Fixing of satellite dishes and TV aerials on prominent locations.
- Large quantities of redundant electrical wires fixed to building facades.
- Inappropriate use of Upvc for replacement windows and doors.
- The domestic nature the concrete paving used for pavements is detracting from character of the area.
- The service yard area, used predominantly for car parking, has a negative impact on the character of the area.



#### **Recognised Pressure and Capacity for Change:**

- Parking in any available space can be controlled through the implementation of parking restrictions.

- Unsympathetic refurbishment of the buildings without due regard to the Conservation Area, possibly due to lack of knowledge, understanding and ability to refurbish in a sensitive manner.
- Building and street enhancement in the area through a partnership working approach between Planning, Highways and Regeneration would significantly improve this area.



#### Listed Buildings within the Area.

Building / Structure Address	Grade
Aberdare Market, Market Street	II
The New Market Tavern, Market Street	II
Nos. 13, 14 and 15 Duke Street	II

#### Character Area G – Cardiff Street and part of Cross and Bute Streets.

##### Description.

Cardiff Street is different in character to most of the Character Areas because of its two-way traffic flow. It has been an access route into the centre since circa 1825, when it was a turnpike route. The 19<sup>th</sup> C redevelopment resulted in properties to the south west having a variety of heights, from the modest single storey building to three-storey properties.

The wide road with outstretching view out into the Cynon Valley is busy with traffic. A generally cluttered streetscape is decorated with attractive streetlamps and bollards. Pedestrian barriers are somewhat on the heavy side and are in great quantity.

The street is an eclectic mix of buildings. Predominantly three-stories with some two-storey infill, the buildings are all commercial spaces. Larger buildings are located on the south east side of the street but these lie outside the Conservation Area.

The attractive buildings on the street are those constructed of the local pennant stone, used in a random rubble and snecked rubble masonry. The classical stone building at no. 55 is classically decorated with bull nosed quoins and freestone dressings. Further along the



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street the use of coloured render, pebbledash and brick contribute to the facades. The roof materials are a mixture of cement tiles, reconstituted slate and original slate. Chimneys have been removed. To the ground floor, modern timber shopfronts dominate with a mixture of softwood, metal and ceramic tile stall risers.

The architectural detailing of the street varies considerably from the heavily classical detailing of no. 55, with deep dentil cornice, panelled frieze with roundel ornament, sill bands and architraves, keystones and bracket sills, and bracketed stone balconies; to the plainer rendered reveals; to the modern interventions or insensitive infill of nos. 56-57 and 61-62. An interesting and one-off contribution to the street is a crow-step gable.

Rendered lettering and old cast iron Conservation Area street signs are in existence, along with semi dormers set in the roof of a low two-storey building.

No. 55 is an attractive pennant and freestone building, with its semi-circular arched ground floor windows, pointed architraves and timber sash windows, marginal glazing bars, and a mixture of camber and square headed windows to the upper floors. The rest of the historical properties have windows over three-stories. The modern units either have no upper windows or contain a row to the first floor only. There is evidence of the removal of original fenestration and infilling of the window openings, as blanks can be seen.



At the corner of Cross and Cardiff Street is the Conway Inn, a prominent and historical public house. A small shopping complex, consisting of a courtyard with first floor balcony, is on the site of the former school and dominates the north west side. Stone pillars, new walls and railings have been used to tie the new with the old. An end gable corners into Cardiff Street, to give a two-storey rendered front façade with semi dormers. Set back from the road, the raised entrance provides for a sitting platform outside the modern shopfront.

Cross Street has a fine two-storey gothic styled buff bricked building with red brick detailing.

On the other side are two-storey 19<sup>th</sup> C dwellings, all of which have been modernised in some way. The corner property on Cross and Bute Street is again splayed and has irregular stone cladding to the ground floor with render above.



On the opposite corner is no. 55 Bute Street is a fine looking early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> C three-storey cement rendered building with curved corner. Some original sash horned timber windows remain, with corner windows being curved and the first floor being tripartite. The building has a hipped modern tiled roof with wide boarded eaves and cement rendered chimneystack.

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The buildings on Bute Street that are within the character area predominantly belong to the rear of Cardiff Street. A tall pennant stone wall keeps the rear of the bank protected, and it is interesting to see the slate hanging tiles on the rear and at the full height of the building. Further along is a mixture of a three-storey modern brown brick rear extension, a tall two-storey late 19<sup>th</sup> C building and earlier 19<sup>th</sup> C buildings, all located off the back of the pavement. Predominant materials range from render, pebbledash, and cement tiles, to replacement windows and doors. Roofs generally have no chimneys. One low two-storey property retains its course pennant rubble stone face, small sash windows, slate roof and chimneys, albeit one is capped. This gives an indication to the former look of the street.

#### **Neutral Issues and Problems:**

- Although not in the Character Area, the large brown bricked building with glazing, occupied by Wilkinson, dominates the cross roads of Cross and Cardiff Streets.

#### **Negative Issues and Problems:**

- Inappropriate use of Upvc for replacement windows and doors.
- Insensitive positioning of waste pipes.
- Dis-proportionate shopfront replacements.
- Insensitive use/location and styling of metal roller shutters and associated equipment.
- Fixing of satellite dishes and TV aerials on prominent locations.
- Large quantities of redundant electrical wires fixed to building facades.
- Some of the roof structures are showing signs of fatigue under a heavier roof than the rafters were designed to carry. This is caused through the inappropriate use of roof materials such as cement tiles, which in an area that is predominantly slate, also has a detrimental affect on the traditional detailing.



- Loss of chimneys and associated features.
- Properties detracting from the character of the Conservation Area include nos. 52, 54 -58, 61-62 and 64 Cardiff Street. On Bute Street, no. 10 detracts, whilst no. 56 detracts from the high quality of No. 55.
- The rears of the properties on Cardiff Street have an impact on Bute Street.
- Some public realm enhancement required.

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### Recognised Pressure and Capacity for Change:

- This Character Area could be considerably enhanced by careful reinstatement works, sensitive infill, and re-elevation works to all of the modern and inappropriate development.
- Consideration should be given as to how this street scene could be improved, including colour render works to elevations in both Cardiff Street and Cross Street, through partnership working between the Council's Development Control and Development and Regeneration Services. For example, 64 Cardiff Street, potentially a redevelopment opportunity, could be greatly improved with a further two-storeys added to it as potential commercial let-able space.
- Public realm matters could be addressed via a unified approach, again through partnership working.

### Listed Buildings within the Area.

Building / Structure Address	Grade
Pillar Box on pavement outside Nos. 60 and 62 Cardiff Street	II
No. 55 (Midland Bank), Cardiff Street	II
Bute Chambers, 55 Bute Street	II



### Character Area H - Victoria Square and Bute Street.

#### Description.

This area incorporates part of Canon Street and part of Cardiff Street, which lead into Victoria Square, a one-way, subdivided street system around the Open Space in which the war memorial stands.

The current three-storey mid to late Victorian buildings have possibly replaced an earlier development. The buildings comprise a mixed array of historical detailing and modern replacement shopfronts to their facades, which make the road seem narrow at this point.

Victoria Square was the site of the former turnpike, allowing entry into the town. Currently triangular in form, the area is home to the isolated traffic island with the war memorial upon it. The curvature of the road at Victoria Square leads up in to the High Street.

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To the east of the war memorial stands the Boot Hotel, an elegant three-storey listed but vacant building. Formally one highly decorated building with features dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> C, the building is now visually two with a retail shop located on the corner at no. 25 Cardiff Street.

Around the corner from no. 25, heading east, are nos. 1-5 Market Street. These two-storey slate roofed (with terracotta crested ridge tiles) commercial premises have first floor bay windows with finials. Some have been replaced with Upvc, but some retain the original timber sashes. One original chimney is retained and has a slate type pot. Modern shopfronts are present. Nos. 1-3 have their original moulded fascias. As a collective, they make an attractive contribution to the streetscape.



No. 7 Market Street is a building of unfortunate scale and massing that is exaggerated by the two-storey façade of the Old Courthouse, a highly decorated Portland stone building with a symmetrical Baroque façade.

Further good quality stone walls, both old and new, add to the character of the area.

Further use of the splayed corner is seen on the adjacent property to the Boot Hotel. This, alongside the splay of no. 1 Cardiff Street (see character area F), gives a more relaxed entrance way to Market Street. This relaxed detail can also be seen at nos.18 - 20 Victoria Square.

Heading back towards the memorial, the road heading west is lined with predominantly three-storey terraced properties, with only a few two-storey near Wind Street. Dating from the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> C, the area is believed to be second phase of development. The Bute estate planned the first in 1825.

Generally smooth coloured render is used along side a variety of decorative features to the façade. Plain and vermiculated rustification, quoin work and flat arches with various voussoirs types and keystones are used. Simple window surrounds are seen as are squared hood moulds. Pilasters with panelling details and various stringcourses are also displayed.

Shopfronts are varied in quality, material and design. No. 6 is a good example of a traditional timber front, with it being well proportioned and retaining its turned mullions, grills above the window and recessed doorway. No. 8 is formed from brass in a Victorian style, complete with awning above and tessera entrance step. No. 38 has a dual aspect shopfront, with a replacement on to Victoria Square and a traditional circ 1910, but now blocked, front onto Wind Street. Many modern replacements are somewhat disproportionate to the building behind.

Above the ground floor are commonly two-window wide fenestration arrangements with two further smaller windows above. Oriel windows enhance some first floors and no. 8 has a highly attractive and unusual double height arrangement, starting at first floor. Many of the premises retain their two or four pane timber sash windows, whilst properties such as Compton House have twelve pane windows. Moulded



and classical quoin detailing around these upper openings is present, with keystone surrounds on many of the later buildings located closer to the memorial. Some replacement with Upvc is evident.

Other interesting features include rendered sign writing and associated details to facades, and ornate hanging brackets.



The roofs are a mixture of slate and cement tiles, with a majority of the chimneys, complete with pots, in existence. Toothed eave-cornicing is attractively used along the facades of nos. 3-10, whilst decorative eave-brackets contribute to the character at no 34, along with its crested ridge tiles. Ornate bargeboard to the gable end of the public house and no. 27 add further interest.

Nos. 26-27 make a valuable contribution to the streetscape, with their interesting curved facade of iron balconies, oriel window and steep gabled elevation. No. 27 is not dissimilar to 37/38 Commercial Street.

On no. 71 Bute Street, there is a marble plaque, set in the pebble dashed rendering, inscribed "Queen Mary's Cottage visited by King George V & Queen Mary June 27th 1912".

Open Space 7, located opposite the Black Lion Hotel, is landscaped to compliment the Caradog Statue. Formed from contemporary flagstones, the area is enhanced through planting, trees and seating. Although heavily bollarded, the area and the street adjacent are sufficiently wide enough to provide a breathing space within the town, which is assisted by the one-way traffic.

North of this landscaped area are the properties of no.1-2 Victoria Square. Both are three-storey town houses and have a wealth of detail, ranging from simple window surrounds to classical façade detailing. A ground floor bay with eave-brackets adds further interest to the front garden, where rendered or brick walls, topped with iron railings and planting contribute to the streetscape. These are amongst the more elegant buildings in Aberdare and are believed to be the result of the first phase planning of the area by the Bute estate in 1825.



#### **Neutral Issues and Problems:**

- Nos. 3, 4 and 5 Victoria Square are in need of structural assessment and repair works, and careful reinstatement works to the buildings.
- A general lack of maintenance work, and unless rectified, these elevations will potentially deteriorate and will considerably detract from the elegance of the street scene.

#### **Negative Issues and Problems:**

- Inappropriate use of Upvc for replacement windows and doors.
- Dis-proportionate shopfront replacements.
- Insensitive use/location and styling of metal roller shutters and associated equipment.
- Fixing of Satellite dishes and TV aerials on prominent locations.
- Large quantities of redundant electrical wires fixed to building facades.



- Inappropriate use of roof materials such as cement tiles, which in an area that is predominantly slate also have a detrimental affect on the traditional detailing.
- Loss of chimneys and associated features.
- Properties detracting from the character of the Conservation Area include no. 29 Victoria Square and no. 7 Market Street

#### **Recognised Pressure and Capacity for Change:**

- Although this area contains the most elegant buildings in Aberdare, it is also an area of general deterioration, indicative of spiralling downturn. If not halted through maintenance, this will lead to the loss of the architectural merit in the area. Redecoration and repair works of nos. 1 and 2 Victoria Square signify some progress and this indicates what could be achieved.

### Listed Buildings within the Area.

Building / Structure Address	Grade
War Memorial, Victoria Square	II
Caradog Arms Hotel, Victoria Square	II
No. 25 (Radio Rentals), Victoria Square	II
The Old Courthouse, High Street	II
Pedestal and Statue of Caradog	II
Market Shopping Centre, High Street	II

### Unlisted Buildings of Merit:

- Nos. 1-4 Market Street – Boot Chambers;
- Meredith Butchers, No. 11 Victoria Square;
- No. 71 Bute Street, visited by King George V and Queen Mary on June 27th 1912.

### Character Area I - Monk Street, part of Griffith Street and part of High Street.

#### Description.

Located on an elevated part of the town, this area contains a high concentration of superb Listed Buildings. Although the buildings are all at a various stages of deterioration, they all retain the majority of their architectural merit.



The prominent but derelict Bethania Chapel on Wind Street is built of local pennant sandstone coursed rubble with plinth and quoins. The narrow main entrance is marked by ornate iron gates, stone piers and stone boundary walls with steps. Behind this is the former Sunday school with its former freestone façade that faces, in part, on to Griffith Street.

The Black Lion Hotel, with its late C18/early C19 late Georgian elegance, sits at the top of Victoria Square and has a pleasant setting, with the area of public landscaping in the front. Situated behind iron railings, the three-storey building is rendered to first and second floors with a rusticated ground floor, and vermiculated quoins and pilasters to the ends of both sections rising from the first floor sill band. The building has a slate roof with a parapet to the front, and it is unfortunate that the chimneystacks have been removed, as well as the dormers. The central main entrance is covered by a porch with cylindrical cast iron columns, a feature once common in Aberdare, raised on

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stone plinths, octagonal bases and capitals. The timber sash windows remain, as does the panelled door. A sidewall screens the yard, and at a right angle is a taller rubble range with a cambered arch to the ground floor, possibly a former coach house.

A former Council building is on the corner of Griffith and Monk Street. The Monk Street elevation is of a half dressed pennant stone to basement / street level with rendered upper floors (ground level on Griffith St). There are regularised ashlar quoins to the corners but irregular detailing around windows. Ashlar is used on the frieze above the stone and on the higher stringcourse. Ashlar architraves highlight the entrances, and each has either a painted or carved inscription, identifying who can enter through it. Replacement "Georgian" type Upvc windows are present, as is an attractive transom window, believed to be original.



Griffith Street is steep and narrow with its two-storey, "two-up two-down" dwellings located directly off the pavement. Some dwellings retain their four pane timber sash windows, however modernisation has occurred through the use of Upvc and pebbledash to the former rendered facades. The attractive but dominant Calfaria Chapel and Sunday School is set in

its own graveyard with mature yew trees, and is bounded by stone walls. The Classical three-bay front is constructed from local pennant coursed rubble walls and freestone.

Further stone walls with both random and square stonework and ornate capping stone are used, contributing to the historical theme of the town.

The pebbledash Victoria Hall, on the corner of Monk Street and High Street was built in the 1960s in a modernist style, and is adjacent to the attractive Black Lion.

Over looking the landscaped car park are potentially a fine group of three-storey, colour rendered buildings. Generally two windows wide and with modern shopfronts, these buildings retain some chimneys. A modern dormer to the front roof slope interrupts the former elegance of the façade. Adjacent is the current Wetherspoon public house, located within the former post office building, and built of local pennant dressed stone with flat headed arches made up from voussoirs and prominent keystones.

Adjacent again, the former Chapel is raised and set back on its own grassy bank with dressed pennant stonework, ashlar quoins to corners and around the gothic windows, and ecclesiastical detailing. Finely carved ashlar is also used on the stringcourses, pinnacles and hood detail to the window.

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**Neutral Issue and Pressure:**

- The maintenance and visual improvement of Victoria Hall would allow the building to blend sensitively with the streetscape. Alternatively, a sympathetically designed replacement scheme could also work.

**Negative Issue and Pressure:**

- Dereliction of key buildings is considerably detracting from this area. Careful reintegration of these buildings by means of assessment and sympathetic proposals that respect these Listed Buildings will lift this area.

- The Black Lion Hotel is currently vacant and in need of very careful assessment, so that reinstatement works of missing architectural details, structural repair and works necessary to assist bringing the building into full commercial use are achieved.



- Inappropriate use of Upvc for replacement windows and doors.
- Dis-proportionate shopfront replacements.
- Insensitive use/location and styling of metal roller shutters and associated equipment.
- Fixing of Satellite dishes and TV aerials on prominent locations.
- Large quantities of redundant electrical wires fixed to building facades.
- Inappropriate use of roof materials such as cement tiles, which in an area that is predominantly slate, also have a detrimental affect on the traditional detailing.
- Loss of chimneys and associated features.

**Recognised Pressure and Capacity for Change:**

- The character of this area has been eroded because of dereliction, vacant and under-utilised buildings and under-used upper floor spaces, poor quality repair works, and general deterioration due to poor quality repair works.
- Planning permission and listed building consent, for the alteration and conversion of the Bethania Chapel and Sunday school into residential flats, have been approved.

**Listed Buildings within the Area.**

Building / Structure Address	Grade
The Black Lion Hotel, Victoria Square	II
Bethania Chapel, Wind Street	II

Sunday School attached to Bethania Chapel, Wind Street	II
Calfaria Chapel, Monk Street	II
Hall attached to Calfaria Chapel, Monk Street	II

#### Unlisted Buildings of Merit:

- The former Labour Exchange, Monk Street, with entrances for men and children;
- The former Chapel, High Street, now Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC offices.

#### Character Area J – including St. Elvan’s Church and buildings and land adjacent to the North of High Street.

##### Description.

This Character Area is located centrally in the Conservation Area and is bounded by the oval plan created by the road network. The land is raised towards the centre, but slopes gently down to the west and sharply to the east.



St Elvan’s Church, built by the Bute family in 1851, is to the east and set in a small churchyard on an eminent location in the town. Reached from Victoria Square, Church Street and from Canon Street, the building is of the Decorated Gothic style. Snecked (Dyffryn) rubble walls with Bath stone dressings, slate roofs with cresting, and mostly ogee tracery windows, make for an attractive building. The octagonal spire creates

an interesting skyline that can be seen from most parts of this northern section of the Cynon Valley.

Located on a hill, the Church is bound by matching stone walls. Vehicular access is via Church Street through a set of grand entrance gates, comprising of tall stone piers and ornate iron gates. Further pedestrian access is from the gate and steps that lead up from Open Space 10. There is no evidence of burials, as no graves are located within the grounds.

To the west of the Church, at a lower level, is the central car park for the town. Mainly laid with tarmac, the area is enhanced through the creation of planting areas and a mixture of high and low stone walls. The lower walls are capped with blue edged bricks and iron railings. Trees and shrubs fill the planting areas. The area is lit and the payment machines are located within metal shelters with a mono-pitched roof.



To the north east a contemporary landscaping scheme (Open Space 10), consisting of raised planting beds on blue brick walls topped with granite, attractive high stone walling and mature trees, forms a backdrop with iron pedestrian gates linking to the church. The semi-circular theme is repeated here through the seating, paviour pattern with cobble sets, in ground lighting and public art, which all form an attractive setting. This location, with the junction of Whitcombe, Canon and Commercial Streets, along with Victoria Square, all provide for a “public square” type effect within the town centre. It is only the necessity for accommodating traffic that prevents the opportunity of forming a more formal square.

A highly visible electrical substation to the north of the Church, and the concrete mass of the Telephone Exchange to the west, sit on the High Street as the road dips towards the library. An adjacent site is vacant and this, and all of the former equipment and buildings, are bound to the rear with standard fencing.



To the north of the car park is the rear of Canon Street, with the typical arrangement of rear extensions at right angles to the main façade, and in this case lower rear yards.

#### **Negative Issues and Problems:**

- Visual improvement through a planting scheme around the electrical substation and the vacant site would improve the aesthetics.
- Possible painting of the Telephone Exchange would integrate this into the streetscape.

#### **Recognised Pressure and Capacity for Change:**

- It is proposed this area should be the subject of careful consideration, in respect of the potential to redevelop and perpetuate the Victoria Square street scene. This must be a long-term project because of the telephone exchange that appears to house old equipment which, when replaced with modern technology, may, by negotiation, be able to be re-housed in smaller accommodation or in an alternative area.
- With access improvements for pedestrians and improved public realm works in this area, there is an opportunity for greater public participation including art and sculptures, which would further enhance this area.
- The area around St. Elvan’s Church, which is the main grassed area within the centre of the town, could be considerably enhanced by a

careful landscaping proposal and proposals to extend this area, as part of a through route, linking various parts of the town centre.

### Listed Buildings within the Area.

Building / Structure Address	Grade
St. Elvan's Church, Church Street	II*

### Character Area K – including Rock Grounds and Green Street.

#### Description.

This is an area bounded partially by the Dare River to the south, and is an area of more open aspect, incorporating three Listed Buildings, a listed structure, a high quality designed library and the Council offices.



Housed in a building of good proportions, the Council building is half dressed pennant stone to base with ashlar quoins to corners, around windows and stringcourse. The upper storey is rendered and the building has a hipped slate roof. Ornate hoppers and down pipes add interest, and although the building is surrounded by car parks, the front is landscaped with grass and a memorial of Keir Hardie.

The predominant character of this area is one of openness, but this area currently contains the greatest number of alien conifers and obstacles, barriers and prominent equipment.



Open Space 8 continues the circle theme in its cobbled sets, and provides for an attractive setting. It contains street furniture and mature planting, consisting of trees in the pavement and shrubs to the river bank behind. Stairs and unsympathetic blue brick walls lead to a bridge over the river, to link the Council Offices with the town. Railings to the library add interest as does the listed Mile Post.

Further north is Open Space 1 that consists of a large paved area with numerous sub areas of grass and a chessboard feature. Some trees have been planted to break up the large space and a raised planter, possibly a former water feature, provides for seasonal colour. The space is used for artwork display, and four specifically designed art bollards are currently on show.

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The key buildings here are the Town Hall, Central Library, Green Street Methodist Church and the Siloa Chapel. The majority of these buildings have smooth coloured render with various architectural detailing.

The former Town Hall, built as a Market Hall in 1831 but succeeded in 1853 by the present market, is a three-storey structure with cement rendered elevations, slate roof, tiled cresting and wide boarded eaves. The building has architraves and sill bands to all floors, with an entablature band to ground floor over semi-circular headed windows with stopped labels. All the windows are T-shaped horned sashes, with an attic roundel over tripartite windows and a Venetian window to the first floor on the principle face. A six-panel door with two-pane fanlight and adjacent war memorial plaque denotes the main entrance.

The Church, dated 1859, has a symmetrical neoclassical façade consisting of a pediment, blank tympanum and cornicing, with semicircular heads to its windows and doors. The rear the building has been extended, and the use of alternative materials and Upvc has a striking appearance to the otherwise attractive building.



The chapel, rebuilt in 1855, is larger and more modest in its classical decoration with only a stringcourse and drip stone detail to its façade, and a front courtyard bound by low rendered walls, with railings above and four stone piers. The interest in the chapel comes through its early 19th C windows.

The Central Library, constructed in 1963, is a two-storey Portland stone faced structure, the upper storey projecting on pilotis in two directions. It is a neat, cubic, modernist building of good quality. The Portland stone has been painted with a cementitious product, which has obliterated the quality of the stonework.

Open Space 2 is a planted up traffic island. Raised planters provide seating areas for resting walkers, but the location is spoilt with the heavy-handed collision barriers and numerous pedestrian crossings and highway equipment.

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### Neutral Issues and Problems:

- A general lack of maintenance work, and unless rectified these elevations will potentially deteriorate and will considerably detract from the elegance of the street scene.

### Negative Issues and Problems:

- The former Town Hall is in poor condition and is vacant. As a prominent building, in its current state of deterioration, it detracts considerably from this area.
- Inappropriate use of Upvc for replacement windows and doors.
- Insensitive positioning of waste pipes.
- Use of alien materials.
- Some public realm enhancement required.



### Recognised Problems, Pressure and Capacity for Change:

- The area has seen a period of poor investment in maintenance of its properties. This could be due to lack of economic stability or just a lack of knowledge and ability to undertake appropriate repair.
- Recognised as an under-utilised area within the town centre, the area could give rise to an opportunity for further enhancement via public art. Partnership working could assist in this.
- It is proposed that the public realm works should be the subject of careful study and sensitive management. Again partnership working could assist in this.

### Listed Buildings within the Area.

Building / Structure Address	Grade
English Methodist Chapel (including Vestry), Green Street	II
Town Hall, High Street	II
Hall attached to Siloa Capel Y Annibynwr, Green Street	II
Milestone, High Street	II

### Unlisted buildings of Merit:

- The Library, High Street;
- The Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC Offices off High St.

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## 5.6 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Archaeology.

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the Conservation Area and therefore Scheduled Ancient Monuments Consent will not be applicable.

## 5.7 Assessment of Trees within the Conservation Area.

There are **no** trees or wooded areas within the Conservation Area that are covered by Tree Preservation Orders.

The prominent groups of native trees are located on:

- Land associated with St. John the Baptist Church;
- Land associated with St. Elvan's Church;
- Land associated with the Council Offices, High Street.

Individual trees or smaller groups of native trees are located:

- Adjacent to No. 42 High Street;
- At the junction of Whitcombe Street and Canon Street;
- At the junction of Commercial Street and Boot Lane;
- Within Commercial Street;
- Land adjacent to Duke Street;
- Within Market Street;
- Adjacent to the service bay, the Market;
- Land adjacent to Victoria Square;
- Within the Calfaria Chapel grounds;
- Adjacent to the car park, High Street;
- Adjacent to Wetherspoon, High Street;
- Adjacent to the Milestone, High Street;
- In the vicinity of the Library and Green Street Methodist Church.



Non-native trees, which are considered to detract from the overall quality and character of the Conservation Area, include Cyprus and Leylandi. These are found:

- In the grounds of St John the Baptist Church;
- Adjacent to Green Street near Aberdare Library;
- On the East and West boundaries of the Council Offices, off High Street;
- Adjacent to the Telephone Exchange, High Street.

It is recommended a tree survey of all of the trees in the Conservation Area is undertaken and mapped. Thereafter, a Tree Management Plan should be prepared and implemented.

It is also recommended that the non-native trees identified above are removed and replaced by semi mature native trees.

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## 5.8 Summary of Character, Neutral and Negative Issues and Problems.

### Character - Local Details.

Predominantly built following the Georgian era, Aberdare began to expand dramatically after 1841, thus the predominant part of its visible construction today must be considered to be wholly of the mid to late Victorian era. This over-arching architectural style can be seen in the remaining elegant and varied elevations that form the character of the town centre.

The details given below relate to the correct era of the town and should be the first line of consideration when dealing with a planning application for development within the Conservation Area.

#### 1. Scale / Siting

- Predominantly a mixture of two-storey and three-storey construction.
- Linear / parallel streets.
- Properties built off the back of the pavement.
- Width proportionate to height, with two or three windows.



#### 2. Design

- Stone buildings reminiscent of early houses.
- Construction predominantly simple in form.
- Splayed corners.
- Hipped or gabled roof. Gable sometimes to the front as well as side.
- Half and full dormers to roof.
- Embellishment of facades through the architect / builder and the favoured style at the time of building. (French, Gothic, Baroque or Neoclassical)
- Simple shopfronts at the ground floor.
- Chimney at the gables.

#### 3. Façade detailing

- Plain stucco / rendered façades.
- Façades have a variation of the following details: rustification, incised stone blocks, string courses, plain or decorative quoins, plain or decorated pilasters, pediments, plain or moulded window and door surrounds or hoods, architraves, voussoirs, keystones and various eaves corning.
- Colour rendered elevations.
- Ceramic tilework.
- Rendered lettering, motifs and borders.
- Balconies.
- Simple or pierced / decorative ridge tiles.
- Ornate bargeboards and finials.



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#### 4. Windows and Doors

- Ground floor sliding sash windows or shopfronts
- Two or three sliding sash windows at first floor, dependent upon the width of the elevation or the use of projecting bay windows.
- Bay or oriel windows with hipped roofs.
- Flat, gothic or cambered arches to windows and doors.
- Various patterns to the windows include multi-paned sliding sash windows (early) or centrally sub-divided larger paned sliding sashes (later).
- Clear and stained glass.
- Doors either solid four-panel or for shops, three-quarter glass above a panel with light above.



#### 5. Shopfront

- Recessed doorway with tiled entrance and security gate.
- Stall risers.
- Ornatly turned mullions.
- Angled fascia with signage.
- Pilasters with console brackets.
- Large panes of glass with top lights.
- Awnings.
- Hanging bracket with signage.



#### 6. Landscaping

- Stone walls with decorative capping to piers (stone or cast iron).
- Simple or ornate railings and matching gates.
- Street furniture, materials and planting.



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## Character - Local Materials.

The details given below relate to the correct era of the town and should be the first line of consideration when dealing with a planning application for development within the Conservation Area.

### 1. Roof

- Local slate.
- Cement tiles are not recommended.
- Clay or terracotta ridges.
- Brick or rendered chimneys with overhanging cappings and clay chimney pots.
- Timber detailing – finials, bargeboards.

### 2. Walls

- Local Pennant sandstone.
- Details in freestone such as Portland stone or Bath stone. Granite has also been used.
- Brick. Colours include blue, red or buff.
- Stucco or render. Left plain or painted.
- Pebbledash or other applications are not recommended.
- Decorative tiles.



### 3. Windows and Doors

- Timber.
- Windowsills in local stone.

### 4. Shopfront

- Timber.
- Brass.
- Aluminium.
- Decorative tiles to stall risers. Other materials include timber, metal or cement render.
- Canvas or plastic type awnings.
- Signage: metal, timber, aluminium.

### 5. Rainwater goods

- Cast iron gutters, hoppers and downspouts.

### 6. Landscaping

- Iron railings.
- Block pavements are not recommended.
- Cobbled sets.
- Trees / planting.



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### Neutral Issues and Problems:

- A general lack of maintenance work, and unless rectified these elevations will potentially deteriorate and will considerably detract from the elegance of the street scene.
- Individual property enhancement within and on those properties that border the Conservation Area.
- Enhancement through the continuation of street scenes.
- The sensitive relocation of the public convenience would be beneficial.

### Negative Issues and Problems:

- Individual property enhancement within and on those properties that border the Conservation Area.
- Inappropriate use of Upvc for replacement windows and doors.
- Insensitive positioning of waste pipes.
- Use of alien materials.
- Public realm enhancement required. Visual improvement could be made through sensitive planting schemes and pavement surfaces.
- Dis-proportionate shopfront replacements.
- Insensitive use/location and styling of metal roller shutters and associated equipment.
- Fixing of satellite dishes and TV aerials on prominent locations.
- Large quantities of redundant electrical wires fixed to building facades.
- Inappropriate use of roof materials such cement tiles, which in an area that is predominantly slate, also have a detrimental affect on the traditional detailing.
- Loss of chimneys and associated features.
- Inappropriate use of pebbledash.
- Insensitive positioning of trickle vents in replacement timber sash windows.
- Poor quality detailing and signage.
- Car parking issues.
- Evidence of graffiti.
- Lack of repair and loss of details.



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## 6.0 **Management Plan / Strategy.**

### 6.1 **Preface.**

It is clear from the assessment that Aberdare requires stronger, more detailed planning and design guidance to set the context for future development in the town centre.

Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC has a range of tools available to deliver its duty of preservation and enhancement. A Conservation Area Management Plan is an initial document that provides the overarching framework for the preservation and enhancement of the area by setting out the Council's strategy and the tools it intends to use to deliver that strategy. It uses the identified character and the issues arising from the recognised problems as a benchmark, along side the capacity for change, to make recommendations in order to ensure the preservation and enhancement can be developed.

### 6.2 **Recommendations.**

The following recommendations are identified below:

#### **1. Resources.**

**Time:** Upon delivering this framework, management, including delivery time to implement the guidance, decision-making procedures and policy changes, to ensure effective leadership, monitoring and enforcement within the Conservation Area should be prioritised.

**Skills:** Skills to assist in the delivery should come from in-house expertise. The physical preservation / maintenance should come from specialised tradesmen acquired from external sources as and when required.

**Financial:** The necessary planning resources to manage the Conservation Area will be covered through in-house costs. Further assistance to aid the preservation / maintenance is to be offered through grant funding.

#### **2. Decision Making Procedures.**

All Council Departments involved in decisions affecting change within the Conservation Area should understand the significance of Conservation Area designation and work corporately in a **team approach**, to ensure that development decisions are appropriate for the historic context, e.g. future work should not undermine previous preservation / enhancement schemes and should not damage the fabric or appearance of the area.

Identified key services and external agencies, based on the findings of the appraisal include:

- Planners;
- Landscape Architects;
- Arboriculturist;
- Highway Engineers;
- Conservation Officer;
- Urban Designer;

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- Artists;
  - Town Centre Manager;
  - Regeneration Officers;
  - Statutory Undertakers;
  - Accessibility Officer;
  - Road Safety Officers.

### **3. Guidance and Design Principles.**

#### **A. Policy guidance and design principles for maintenance and repair.**

The erosion of character in the town has been identified through lack of maintenance, inappropriate repairs, poor quality replacement of historical detailing, requirements for modern living and potentially lack of understanding of the importance of an attractive historical streetscape for the economics of the town.

It can be seen that recent sensitive repair and redecoration works within the town signify some progress and this indicates what could be achieved. Sympathetic approaches can be achieved through the adoption of the following principles:

- Regular maintenance to prevent or at least delay significant repairs. Any repair should only be undertaken where necessary. Wholesale repair without any significant need is not only financially wasteful but has an impact on the loss of historical fabric and character.
- Repairs should only be carried out on a “like for like” basis, often adopting the traditional methods and materials.
- The only exception is where the fabric is beyond economic repair and the only replacement option is to use a modern feature. Care and consideration needs to be taken to avoid the unnecessary loss of further historic fabric.
- Understanding the importance of good quality workmanship and that the use of appropriate materials and methods has greater long term benefits both financially and physically than the quickest and cheapest route.
- Modern requirements within the buildings are acceptable, providing sympathetic and careful consideration of their impact on the historical environment is fully assessed. Where modern requirements are required, e.g. boiler flues and satellite dishes, prominent locations should be avoided. Former features could be used, such as running flues up chimneys or placing equipment on rear elevations that do not have such a large impact on the historic streetscape.
- In replacing historical detailing, research and receiving the correct advice is paramount. Old photographs and discussions with traditional trades-people will be beneficial in the long term.

It is recommended that Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC formulate design guidance on the issues raised, using the principles above. If this guidance is combined with the possibility of providing financial assistance, the current lack of necessary repairs being undertaken could be reduced.

Awareness raising of the historic environment of Aberdare could be aimed at owners. This approach could also be aimed at the providers of these

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traditional skills and materials, and therefore contribute to the self-sufficiency of the local economy.

By re-igniting the interest in the town's buildings and with encouragement through Council partnership working, dereliction, vacant and under-utilised buildings, and under-used upper floor spaces may be a trait of the past.

### **B. Policies for new development within the Conservation Area and Development Briefs.**

It has been identified that poor infill development has occurred, in particular along Cardiff Street, which has a detrimental impact on the streetscape, the heritage setting and the qualities of the Conservation Area.

Although infill developments can be seen to contribute to the history of the town, inappropriate development has a negative effect. All new developments should be based on the principles of good urban design and the historic context, following the principles below:

- Preserve and reinforce the town's distinctive pattern of historic development.
- Have regard to existing building lines and surrounding building orientation.
- Reinforce the architectural character of the area through an informed understanding of building forms and styles, features and materials.
- Pastiche forms of development and superficial echoing of historical features should be avoided.
- Respect the scale and mass of the neighbouring buildings. It is essential that new development is not out of scale, as this is instantly recognised and has a detrimental impact on the existing character. Heights, floor levels, size of windows and doors, and roofscapes should all be carefully considered.
- Minimise the visual impact of the associated uses of the development, e.g. car parking.
- Any landscaping proposal should harmonise with the rest of the town. Use of materials and features should be locally distinctive and should not impact on other historic buildings.
- Maintain key views and vistas within, into and out of the area.
- Identified regeneration potential should be investigated and progressed.
- Gain public support in order to utilise Council powers to encourage the commencement of suitable sensitive development.

Where gap and vacant sites have been identified, it is recommended that these sites be discussed by Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC, with the relevant local groups and The Victorian Society, to enable Development Briefs to be prepared. These will not only aid the owner / developer to produce a suitable scheme, but save time for Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC in prolonged discussions over inappropriate development.

### **C. Policies for Public Realm works within Conservation Area.**

It has been recognised that parts of the town require further enhancement, and the highway network within the centre raises significant issues. Whilst it

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should be noted that roads are essential to the economics and use of the town, and consideration of safety for both pedestrians and vehicles is important, this modern conundrum should also be balanced with the historical environment that it is located within. The following principles could be adopted to assist in any proposed enhancement of the public realm or highway matters:

- Understanding of the need to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
- Partnership working between Council services with different skills can greatly assist in achieving the objectives of a Conservation Area designation.
- A sympathetic approach to public realm and highway solutions is achievable through good quality planning and design.
- A cohesive approach to the town centre rather than a piece-meal programme of enhancement works. Past schemes can be evaluated to ascertain if they are worthy of replicating or require alteration.
- Reduction in the amount of highway equipment and implement shared facilities where possible.
- Where in key pieces of public realm, highway equipment is necessary, design and scale must relate to the historic environment in which it is placed.
- On street car parking can greatly impact on the character of the area. Use of restrictions and off street parking should be implemented.
- Include art and sculptures, which would further enhance this area.
- Use of sympathetic materials for all public realm works, including paving works and the roadway system.
- In proposing materials, maintenance and sustainability issues should be fully assessed. This should involve the relevant Council services at an early stage.
- Reevaluate past “temporary” enhancement schemes that are now redundant, and remove all associated equipment and wiring.
- Partnership management, that includes a coordinated programme of monitoring and maintenance to ensure the upkeep of the area.
- Tree Management Plan.
- Gain public support in order to utilise Council powers to encourage the commencement of enhancement schemes.

### 6.3 **Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).**

Local Development Plans Wales (WAG, 2005) states that whilst Local Development Plans should contain sufficient policy detail to inform the determination of planning applications, they should not be excessively detailed. Detailed guidance on the way in which the policies and proposals within the LDP will be applied (in particular circumstances or areas) can then be provided through Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).

In terms of the content of any SPG specific to Aberdare, it is recommended that this will be formulated as part of a separate study. However, it is suggested that any guidance prepared should include reference to original elevational features that are considered to contribute to the overall character of the town. A number of these are still identifiable within the town centre and the use of this document can be a good starting point.

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In addition, SPG could also provide guidance to enhance the overall appearance of the area by, for example, encouraging timber shopfronts and seeking the use of traditional bracketed hanging signs (which are DDA compliant). The guidance could also include a full decoration schedule (including elevations, windows, window sills, string courses, mouldings, shopfronts), which specifies the colour range considered appropriate for the Conservation Area (this should be based on an industry standard colour range, e.g. BS 4800). As an alternative, the colour schedule could also be included in any Article 4 Direction issued.

As outlined above, SPG will clearly have a useful role in the preservation and enhancement of the town centre. However, its policies and status must be made known to owners, occupiers and developers within the Conservation Area. To achieve this and ensure its success, the need for community involvement is recommended.

Whilst the Council has formulated associated design guidance on conservation matters in the past, eg shop fronts, the documents can be considered in general terms. This indicates that a further document relating to more detailed policies (i.e. SPG) would be more effective in protecting the Conservation Area from inappropriate development. An explanatory leaflet could also go beyond the scope of SPG and provide a summary of potential sources of funding / grant assistance available for works within the Conservation Area. It could also include reference to any Article 4 Direction issued within the Conservation Area. In this light, it is considered that in the future the current document should be reviewed and, ultimately, re-issued to summarise more detailed policy guidance provided through SPG.

SPG is unlikely to be adopted until the LDP has been. Consideration should therefore be given to producing an interim design guidance document.

Potentially, the most important role of any interim guidance will be to raise awareness amongst owners, occupiers and developers within the town centre of the implications of the town's Conservation Area status. It will alert them to the existence of the local policies, advise of the need for planning applications to be submitted in connection with replacement shopfronts, any works which have a material effect upon the external appearance of property within the Conservation Area, of the limitations placed on 'permitted development' rights, and of the existence of funding / grant assistance.

#### 6.4 **Boundary Changes.**

Having considered Aberdare's current Conservation Area boundary there is no proposal to reduce or extend at this stage.

#### 6.5 **Article 4 Directions.**

The objectives of Conservation Area designation can usually be secured through the statutory development plan and the exercise of Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC's development control duties. In certain circumstances, however, an Article 4 Direction can be issued to allow the Council to bring under their control matters, which would not normally require the formal grant of planning permission (i.e. those that constitute 'permitted development').

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An Article 4 Direction can be made under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (GPDO), to remove some or all of the Permitted Development Rights normally granted to landowners.

It is recommended that **two Article 4 Directions** are made for Aberdare Conservation Area. These are as follows:

1. Given the presence of both residential and commercial properties, an Article 4(1) Direction will allow the Council to control details of certain minor works to commercial buildings, that can currently be undertaken without formal approval. Article 4(1) Directions require the approval of the Welsh Assembly Government.
2. Article 4(2) Directions relate only to 'dwellinghouses' that front a highway, waterway or open space within a Conservation Area. It is important to note that this can not be used to impose additional controls on houses converted into flats and commercial property.

It should be noted, however, that if planning permission is refused under an Article 4 Direction for development that would otherwise have been 'permitted development', the applicant could be entitled to compensation under some circumstances.

It is proposed that the Conservation Area boundary will form the extent to which the Article 4 Directions would apply.

#### 6.6 **Enforcement.**

Where unauthorised works have taken place, Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC's Development Control Officers, Planning Enforcement Officers and legal advisors can pursue a programme of appropriate action using powers available, where deemed necessary.

The powers available to local authorities include:

- Taking enforcement action against unauthorised development – planning contravention notices/ breach of condition notices/ enforcement notices/ stop notices/ and injunctions;
- Serving repairs, urgent works and Section 215 notices; and
- Compulsory purchase orders.

#### 6.7 **Local Listing Opportunity.**

"Unlisted Buildings of Merit" have been identified in order to potentially compile a list of local properties that are important to the community. The structures are important to the town either through association, event or architectural merit, and therefore contribute significantly to the character.

To establish such a document, further consultation and community involvement is required. It must be noted that creating such a document does not give statutory protection to those structures placed within, unlike listed buildings. Consideration is given to the document in the planning process and the emphasis is on preservation, but this is not guaranteed.

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6.8 **Conservation Area Committees.**

Relevant guidance advises the establishment of Conservation Area Advisory Committees, consisting of people who are not Members of the Authority, and referring to them for advice on applications that would, in the opinion of the Authority, affect the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. At this present time the establishment of such a group **does not** form part of the recommendations.

6.9 **Mechanisms / tools for monitoring change.**

In addition to a review of the Conservation Area to encompass changes and new priorities, key tools to monitor changes could include dated photographic surveys and further research.

Routine maintenance programmes of the public realm could provide an opportunity to monitor and identify any matters as they arise.

Although aimed at listed buildings, a “Building at Risk Register” could also be used to monitor those listed building within the Conservation Area.



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7.0 **APPENDICIES.**

A: Conservation Area and Boundary

B: Character Areas with Open Spaces and Vistas











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8.0 **BIBLIOGRAPHY.**

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(2002): ***Planning Policy Wales.***

(1999): ***The Mid Glamorgan (Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough) Replacement Structure Plan.***



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If you would like this document in a large print, other formats or in Welsh, we will do our best to help.

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