



Caerphilly County Borough Council

**Bute Town (Drenewydd)
Conservation Area
Character Appraisal**

July 2013

1. Introduction

1.1 Bute Town was built to a high standard between 1825-30 by the Marquess of Bute as three rows of terraced workers' housing on an exposed and isolated site at the head of the Rhymney Valley. It is located just south of the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road and is four miles east of Merthyr Tydfil. It is on the foothills of the Brecon Beacons overlooking the upper reaches of the River Rhymney. Following the demolition of much early industrial workers' housing in South Wales and the early 1970's, Bute Town today has an exceptional significance as a rare surviving example of one of the earliest planned, and best preserved, industrial workers' housing development in South Wales. In order to protect the unique architectural and historical nature of the area, Bute Town was designated a Conservation Area on 20th October 1972 at the same time as being declared a General Improvement Area. The group were also subsequently listed by Cadw under section 54 of the 1971 Town and Country Planning Act, as grade II buildings of special architectural or historic interest on 24th July 1973.

1.2 This Bute Town Character Appraisal builds upon policy set out by the Welsh Government in Planning Policy Wales, Circulars 61/96 and 1/98 and development plan policy contained in the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan (LDP) (Adopted November 2010).

1.3 This Character Appraisal has been recently prepared as a Review of the conservation area and to be read as a follow-on document in conjunction with the Butetown Conservation Area Enhancement Plan and Conservation Area Design Guide that were both adopted by Council in August 2005; the preparation and publication of which is required as set out in Section 71 (1-3) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation) Areas Act 1990. The consequences of which are summarised as follows:

- It shall be the duty of a local planning authority from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas.
- Proposals under this section shall be submitted for consideration to a public meeting in the area to which they relate.
- The local planning authority shall have regard to any views concerning the proposals expressed by persons attending the meeting.

1.4 The local planning authority is under a general duty to ensure that in conservation areas, in the exercise of its planning functions, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

- Notice must be given to the local authority before works are carried out to any tree in the area.

- Conservation Area Consent is needed for the demolition of any unlisted building in the Conservation area (subject to certain exemptions in terms of size. Some very minor buildings may be excluded from this provision);
- The details as to the limits of what works may be carried out without planning permission are somewhat different, and
- Extra publicity is given to planning applications affecting conservation areas and the planning authority is to take into account the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character of the area when determining such applications.
- The making of Article 4 Directions, limiting permitted development rights, is more straightforward.
- Limited financial assistance under the Historic Buildings Grant programme may be available from Cadw for the upkeep of a building in the area,
- The local authority may be able to take steps to ensure that a building in a conservation area is kept in good repair.

2. Purpose of this document

2.1 Having designated Bute Town as a conservation area, the Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that the character and appearance of the area is preserved or enhanced, and is protected from inappropriate development.

2.2 This Character Appraisal records and analyses the various features that have attributed to the area's special architectural and historical interest and is intended for use by planning officers, developers, residents and land owners to ensure that the character and appearance is not eroded, but rather preserved or enhanced through development activity and regular maintenance and repair.

3. Policy Background

National Planning Policies

3.1 Conservation Areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990. A conservation area is defined as “*an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*”. It is the quality and interest of an area, rather than that of individual buildings, which is the prime consideration in identification. Part of the conservation area (excluding the area to the north of Collins Row) is subject to an Article 4 Direction with regards to permitted development. The effect is to bring under control some works that would otherwise be carried out by a householder

without the need for consent. In such cases some development proposals will first be subject to a planning application.

3.2 Section 72 of the same Act specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a Conservation Area, special attention should be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

3.3 The three rows of terraced housing in Bute Town are grade II listed buildings. A 'listed' building is a building, object or structure that has been judged to be of national, historical or architectural interest. Buildings and structures of 'special architectural or historic interest' are designated as 'listed buildings' under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Also under Section 7 of this Act listed building consent is required for any works of alteration or extension to be carried out that would affect the character of listed buildings.

Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan (LDP)

3.4 Reference to the historic environment is made within Strategy Policy 6 (SP6 Place Making) of the Adopted LDP, which requires development proposals to have full regard to the context of local, natural, historic and built environment. Map 3 indicates the boundary of the Conservation Area and provides an overview of other land use designations that are pertinent to the area.

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

3.5 The Council has a series of other adopted Development Design Guides that need to be taken into account when considering any proposals for development within the Bute Town Conservation Area. Of particular relevance are:

- LDP 6 - Building Better Places to Live (November 2010);
- LDP 7 – Householder Development (November 2010).

3.6 There is also a useful series of booklets that have been prepared by Cadw providing summaries of good practice. Of particular relevance here is one such booklet entitled 'Industrial Workers' Housing in Wales - Care and Conservation.'

3.7 Cadw's 'Maintenance Matters! Website' is full of useful advice to owners and occupiers of historic buildings. Expert advice is coupled with photographs and drawings to provide an online guide to maintaining an historic building – what to look for, when and how to keep it in the best possible condition. The best feature of the website is being able to create a customised maintenance plan for a building, which can be used when carrying out regular inspections. By registering on the website, you will be able to store your plan online, update it and create an ongoing maintenance record.

3.8 Cadw also produces some specialised technical advice documents such as 'Materials and Techniques: Repointing in Lime (2010)'

3.9 Alongside these Cadw advice and best practice documents, there are a number of Council Public Information leaflets that have been produced to assist in the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas. Of particular relevance are:

- The Conservation and Renewal of Timber Windows (September 2004);
- Looking after your Old Buildings (September 2004);
- Pointing with Lime Mortars (September 2004).

4 Context and Historical Background

4.1 Bute Town, known locally as Drenewydd and also New Town, is a small, self-contained community situated just south of the Heads of the Valleys Road (A465). Bute Town, while less than 1 mile from the centre of Rhymney, commands a prominent position and lies within a surprisingly rural setting. At one time, worked-out operational pits surrounded it, but now there is little physical trace of the industrial activity that used to take place here.

4.2 The Settlement of Bute Town was constructed between 1825-30 by the Bute Ironworks Company in order to house workers of the Iron works at the Rhymney (Upper) Furnace – the development was situated a healthy distance from these works. It was conceived as a ‘new town’ comprising of four rows of industrial workers housing that were separated by wide streets or yards – however, only three rows of housing were actually built. Bute Town was formally laid out with a ‘grid-iron’ plan.

4.3 Each row was designed as a strong, balanced, unified and formal architectural composition using Renaissance ‘Palladian’ principles. Each symmetrical row was terminated by a two-storey ‘pavilion’ block and connected by narrower two-storey sub-servient ‘link’ blocks, to the dominant three-storey central ‘barrack’ block. The clarity of the architectural composition and quality of the design were carried through in the details. These included the generous and distinctive roof-scape with very shallow pitches and deeply overhanging eaves.

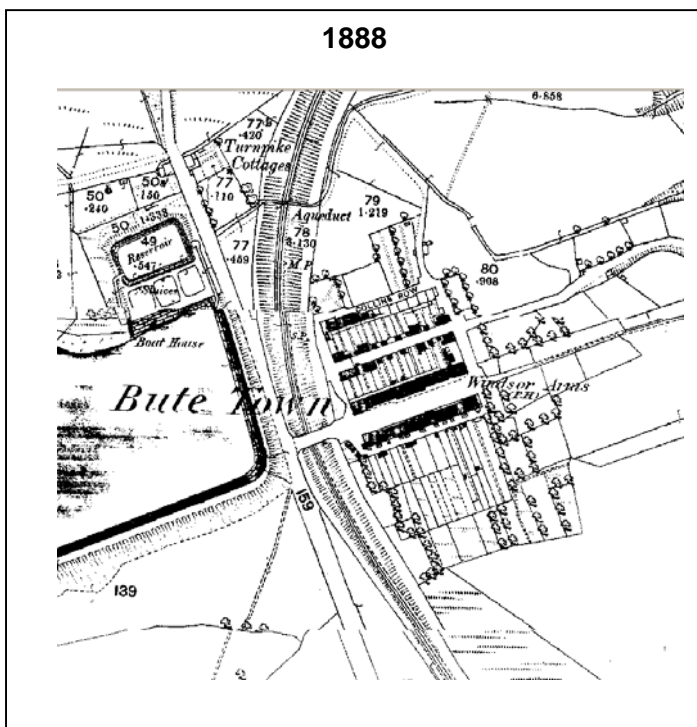
4.4 Most roofs had a very shallow pitch of 30 degrees, with the exception of the street elevations to the ‘link’ blocks at 40 degrees. In this way the designer was able to project the ‘pavilion’ blocks forward of the ‘link’ blocks without changing the ridge or eaves height. Such shallow pitched and hipped stone tiled roofs were very unusual in South Wales where roofs were traditionally steeply pitched between 40 and 50 degrees.

4.5 Whilst the design of Butetown’s roofs were not based on local building traditions, the roofs were covered with locally quarried sandstone tiles that contributed to the buildings’ local character. These stone tiles were laid in diminishing courses and oak pegged over battens. The roof structure

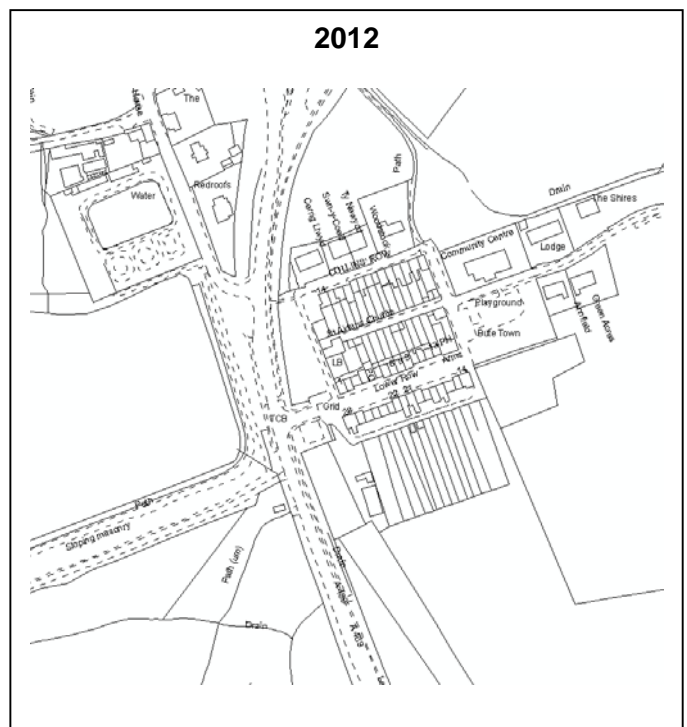
comprised wrought iron-strapped and bolted king-post trusses with cut purlins and rafters. Although roofs had deeply overhanging eaves they were originally without rainwater goods.

4.6 This type of planned development was unusual in the early industrial areas of South Wales where development tended to be ad-hoc or piecemeal. The terraces are constructed of locally quarried carboniferous Millstone Grit (Quartzite) sandstone. This is used for the thick random rubble stonework walls and chimneys. Mortar was generally made from a mix of lime and ashes although more recent repointing has been carried out in a cement based mortar. These features give the buildings their local character and distinctiveness.

4.7 The settlement as it stands today, remains largely unchanged from its original footprint in c.1830. The two maps below helps to highlight this point, with one OS map showing the settlement as it was in 1888, and one showing the 2012 extent of Bute Town. The main noticeable changes that occurred during this time were the removal of the railway, which ran alongside the west of the town and the demolition of 15 and 16 Collins Row that had been converted in 1875 to form a Board School.

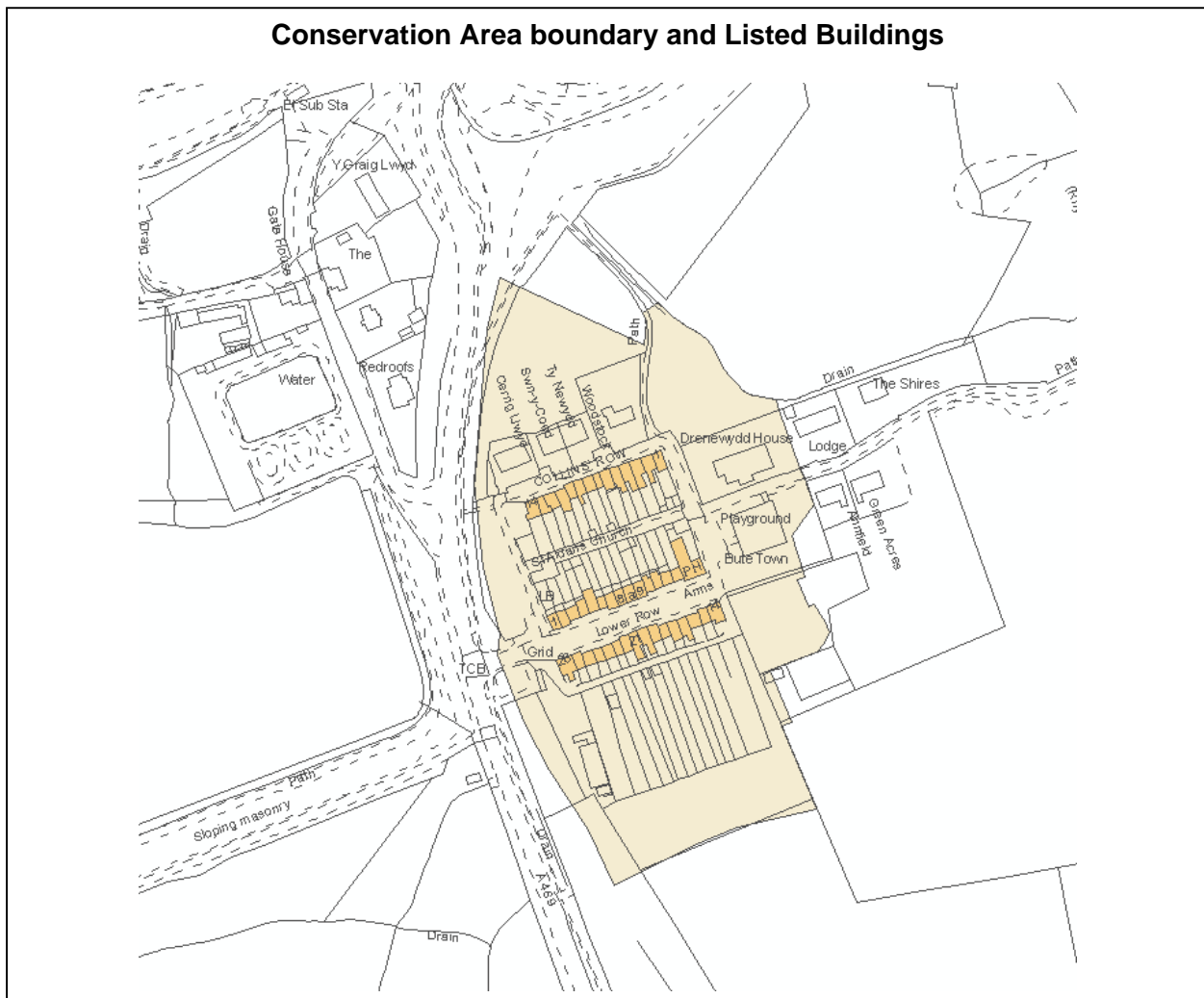


Map 1 1888



Map 2 2012

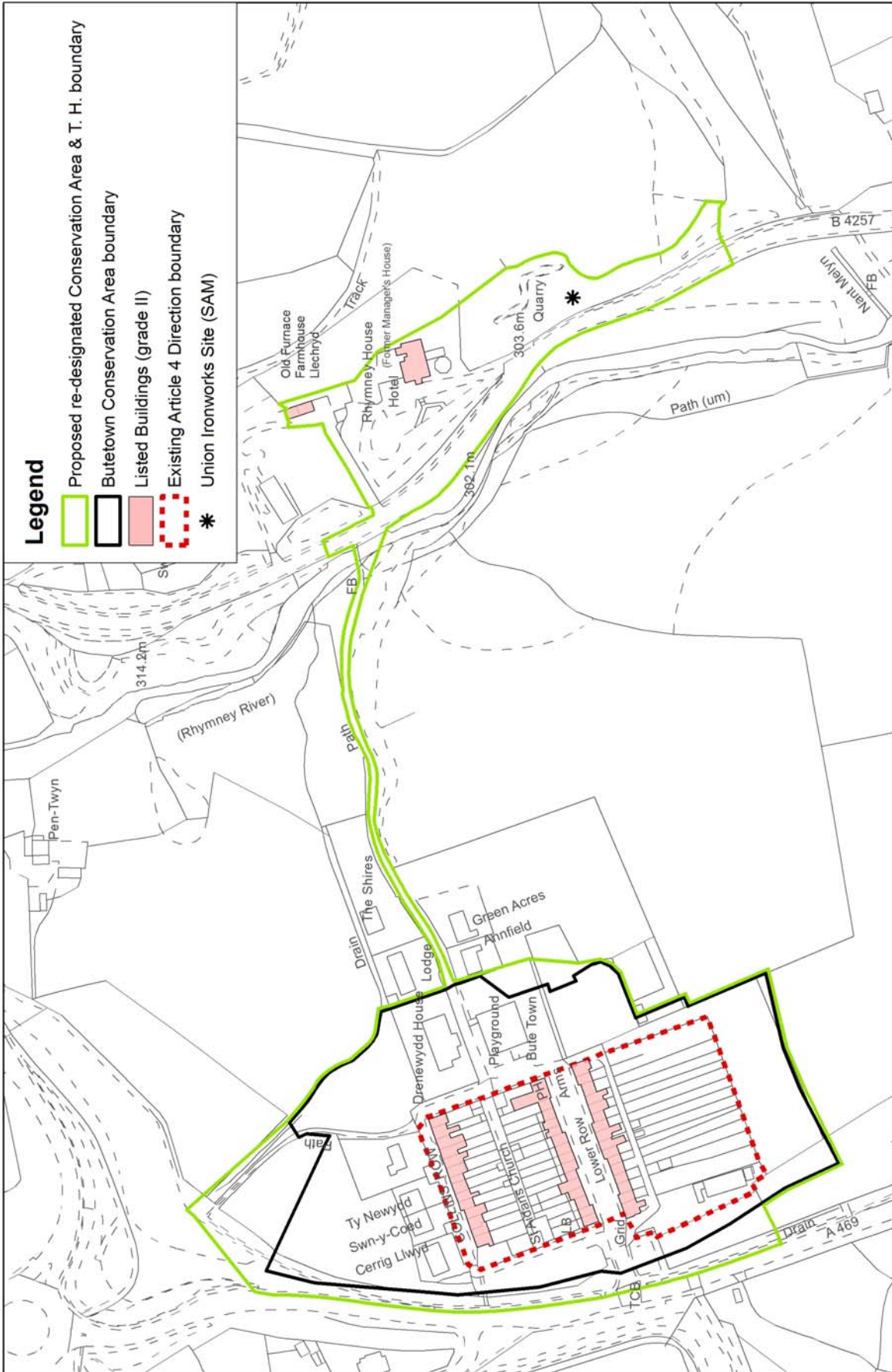
4.8 Today, the boundary of the Conservation Area (shown below) has been drawn around the original terraced rows (which are also listed, as indicated), the four bungalows to the north, the former Drenwydd County Primary School now a dwellinghouse and the children's playground.



Map 3

4.9 As indicated above, the three terraced rows (Collins Row, Middle Row and Lower Row) are all grade II listed. Consequently, any works proposed to any one of these buildings for its demolition and for any works of alteration or extension, which would materially affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest would first require Listed Building Consent from the local planning authority.

4.10 A local planning authority is under a continuing duty to consider whether it should designate new conservation areas or extend existing ones. Where appropriate, a conservation area may be varied or cancelled as a result of such reviews, using the same procedures as those that applied to their initial designation. Following an extensive review and character appraisal of this well established Bute Town Conservation Area, consideration has recently been given to the merit of extending the Conservation Area boundary to also include an area to the east, the Old Furnace Farmhouse, the former Manager's House of the Rhymney Iron Company (now the Rhymney House Hotel), the Union ironworks site and the pathway linking between them. This will form a more coherent area.



Map 4 Proposed re-designated Conservation Area boundary & TH (HLF) bid area

- 4.11 There is historically a strong link with the ironworkers' dwellings at Bute Town and where it shares group value with its neighbours along the B4257, namely the 'Old Furnace Farmhouse' at Llechryd, the former Manager's House of the R.I.C. (now the Rhymney House Hotel) and the scheduled ancient monument (Gm403) known as the 'Union Ironworks Site' or Rhymney Upper Furnace.
- 4.12 'Old Furnace Farmhouse,' Llechryd, Rhymney has a datestone of 1802. It is a grade II listed building and is a scarce survival of a group of early ironworkers' cottages with an important iron roof structure, thought to be designed by Watkin George, a leading exponent of cast iron structures from the early 1790's, that has since been converted into a farmhouse. Large blocked archways suggest that the building may later have become a store. The Rhymney Iron Company plan of 1838 shows a complex of buildings at this Upper Furnace site with the area adjacent named 'Little Coal and Rough Pin Patch'. These cottages were formerly shown as 'Granary Row' on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1875.
- 4.13 The former Manager's House of the R.I.C. is also a grade II listed building and has been formerly known as the Ffynnon Glas, Cristals, 'The Three Counties Club' and presently as the Rhymney House Hotel. Sited on the main thoroughfare north of Rhymney town, SE of Rhymney Bridge and due E of Bute Town, it is set in an imposing position, above the road in a terraced garden. Rhymney House, is a large detached house, with important connections with the Rhymney Iron Company, that was built in 1801 as the Manager's residence on ground leased from the Duke of Beaufort. Formerly the house stood in ornamental grounds with a large kitchen garden and adjacent coach-house and stables.
- 4.14 The Rhymney Upper Furnace was first protected as a scheduled ancient monument by Cadw in April 1980. It was the first furnace and blowing engine to be built in the Rhymney Valley, which dates back from 1801. It was later known as the Union Ironworks. It is possibly a unique survivor of the first generation of single coke fired and water blown blast furnaces in South Wales. It represents a link between the single charcoal furnaces of the 18th century and the batteries of coke fired steam blown furnaces of the post – 1790 period. It is known for its association with the notable 'Egyptian' style furnaces adapted for South Wales and designed by McCulloch. The furnace is located immediately to the east of Bute Town and is the primary reason for Bute Town's existence. Excavation of this site could throw up important light on this transitional phase. The scheduled area lies in a field at the foot of a steep west-facing slope, currently set to grazing. The furnace consists of the circular hearth and bowl of the blast furnace, which is constructed of black vitrified bricks. During some seasons of the year, it is covered with nettles and other vegetation and not immediately obvious from outside of the SAM area. The demolished remains of Old Furnace Row are located along the western boundary of the site.

4.15 As can be seen therefore, there are good reasons for developing proposals to 'Re-unite Bute Town with its Heritage' i.e. linking up (or' re-uniting') the remains of this important Union Ironworks site with the Old Furnace Farm, The Rhymney House Hotel, via a marked footpath route over the Rhymney Bridge and up to Bute Town, a rare surviving example of 19th century town planning and amongst the earliest planned industrial housing development in the Welsh Valleys. It is further intended that the extent of this newly proposed Bute Town Conservation Area boundary be submitted to form a Round 1 Heritage Lottery Fund bid under the recently re-launched Townscape Heritage (TH) grants programme. This bid will take the form of a balanced portfolio of conservation-led projects including: -

- Develop a community-led archaeological survey and / or dig of the Union ironworks site, as well as interpretation measures,
- Repair and re-build boundary walls,
- Enhance public realm works,
- Improve the links across the river from Bute Town to the Union Ironworks site.
- Set up conservation skills training with apprentices and maintenance training for residents,
- Replace all defective Bute Town roofs with natural Welsh slate and associated works.

5 Past Restoration works

5.1 During the 1970's, an increased understanding of Bute Town's heritage merit led to the introduction of new planning controls and subsequent proposals to 'conserve the existing character of the village and to restore some of the architectural details' led by Mid-Glamorgan County Council with limited support from Rhymney Valley District Council and mostly funded by Cadw.

5.2 The works included:

- New re-constituted 'stone' tiled roof coverings with associated timber roof structure repairs and re-building chimneys.
- Removal of applied finishes (pebble dash and lime-wash) to external walls by grit blasting and re-pointing.
- Standardising front windows with one-over-one horned painted, timber sash windows (it was decided not to reinstate cast iron windows).
- Standardising front timber doors as painted, timber boarded doors.

5.3 These works were successful in creating a much more unified appearance to Bute Town and in retaining its traditional form. However, some aspects of the restoration works, such as the re-constituted stone tiled roofs have now exceeded their life expectancy, are now all defective and require urgent replacement, and some chimneystacks require rebuilding and lead trays inserted.

6 Spatial Analysis

6.1 The defining spatial features of this re-defined Conservation Area and surrounds are formed by:

- The dramatic architecture of traditional terraced housing and their distinctive materials;
- The corridor of open space between the A469 and Bute Town created by the dismantled railway;
- The dramatic 'main gateway' streetscape features including pennant sandstone boundary walls and village signage, timber fencing, a cattle grid, cast-iron white interpretation panel and bollards into the Bute Town Conservation Area,
- The collective public meeting points, such as the children's' playground, St. Aidan's church and The Windsor Arms public house.
- The Group Value of the Old Furnace Farmhouse, the Rhymney House Hotel and the former Union Ironworks site (SAM).
- The established footpath albeit, in need of enhancement which literally 'bridges' across the River Rhymney and linking buildings of special architectural and historical character and significance.

6.2 The unique composition and construction of the dwellings in Bute Town can be clearly seen from the A469. The distinct roofs, symmetry of dwellings and linear appearance highlight the importance of this well planned and designed town.

6.3 On approaching the Conservation Area, the grandiose appearance of pennant sandstone boundary walls, white cast-iron gates, interpretation panels, and other recent streetscape features such as seating and stone paviers; in stark appearance of the terraced housing – rising in the middle tiers - helps to highlight the importance of this settlement during the Industrial Revolution. The smaller rear lanes behind the terraced housing and around the eastern edge of the settlement provide useful access and service areas around the town, however, over the years incremental and inappropriate development along these rear lanes has damaged the uniformity of the rear of the terraced housing.

6.4 Consequently, it is important that this Character Appraisal is carried out in order to assess the positive and negative features that exist within the Bute Town Conservation Area.

7 Character Appraisal

7.1 This Character Appraisal has been undertaken in order to identify those parts of the Bute Town Conservation Area that are of special merit, and to recognise those parts that detract from this special character.

Positive Features of the Conservation Area

- Originally conceived as a model village, 3 rows of terraced housing (grade II listed)
- Shallow hipped roofs with deep overhanging boarded eaves
- St. Aidan's Church
- Windsor Arms Public House
- Special Landscape Area (NH1), Recreational Area & Open Space
- Boundary treatment around Conservation Area
- Formalisation of parking arrangements

Model village comprising terraced housing: Collins Row, Middle Row and Lower Row.



Main Attributes:

- Excellent example of amongst the earliest planned industrial housing
- Three rows of terraced housing constructed specially for Ironworkers in the Rhymney Valley.
- Designed to be a strong, balanced, unified and formal architectural composition using Renaissance 'Palladian' Principles.
- Uncommon form of architecture for this era – built with good space and light.
- Largely unchanged from its original construction.
- Dominant, hipped roofs and deep overhanging eaves.

History of the Terraced Housing

7.2 All three terraced rows of housing – Collin's Row, Middle Row and Lower Row, have group value and are laid out in a grid-iron pattern. They are an excellent example of early 19th century town planning and their original form and layout has been largely undisturbed over the years. Built to a high standard, the design was not based on local building traditions, however the materials used throughout were locally sourced and gave the buildings their local character. For example, the exceptionally thick random rubble stonework walls and chimneys were built of locally quarried carboniferous Millstone Grit (Quartzite) sandstone. The high quartz content made this stonework much harder and durable than the Coal Measures (Pennant) Sandstone more commonly found throughout South Wales.

7.3 The rows are of the narrow fronted two-up-two-down type housing. The 'pavilion' blocks, 'link' blocks and 'barrack' blocks provided three different size of dwelling to reflect the different status and needs of the occupants.

7.4 When compared to other industrial housing of the period, Bute Town's houses were built to very high standards of space, light, ventilation and general strength of construction. The regimented form of the road pattern suggesting that the roads were intended to be the start of a much larger town. The scheme was built by an enlightened iron master, who had philanthropic interest, since conditions for local workers were traditionally poor and at the time poor housing and 'stagnant air' were associated with ill health.

7.5 A key feature of Bute Town is that it is totally planned, which is unusual for an early industrial settlement. Every aspect of the development forms part of an interconnected whole. Collin's, Middle and Lower Rows should be seen in relation to one another and not simply as isolated streets. St. Aidan's Church, which lies between Collin's and Middle Rows, focuses attention on the space between the terraces, including rear gardens and the backs of the houses. Thus, it is not only the façades of the houses that are important, but also the whole buildings and the environment around which the buildings stand. It is this totality of design that gives Bute Town its powerful architectural identity.

7.6 In the 1970's Bute Town was declared a General Improvement Area. Restoration works soon began to replace roofs, re-build chimneys and remove the pebbledash cladding from some exterior walls and to standardise windows into 2-pane horned timber sashes and doors that are now all timber boarded with a centrally glazed aperture. These renovation works mainly applied to frontages; whilst the rear and side windows had not all been standardised.

Shallow, hipped roofs, deep overhanging eaves and sliding sash windows

Main Attributes:

- Deep overhanging eaves provides a distinct roof edge.
- Consistent and symmetrical along the three individual rows.
- Most roofs have a shallow pitch of 30° - allowing for the middle 'link' roof blocks of 40° to appear more prominent without changing the eaves or ridge height.
- Doors and windows of vertical proportion are recessed within the stonework. They are one over one sliding horned sashes and of a symmetrical pattern throughout.



7.7 The shallow hipped roofs, deep overhanging eaves and sliding sash windows are all unique to the design of Bute Town. Roofs were covered with locally quarried sandstone tiles, pegged over battens, and the roof structure comprised wrought-iron strapped and bolted king-post trusses with cut purlins and rafters. Although roofs had deeply overhanging boarded eaves, they were without rainwater goods.

7.8 Windows originally had cast-iron frames with thin glazing bars in a 3 over 6 arrangement with small top-hung casements. Windowsills were probably locally quarried sandstone, later replaced with buff brick, and doors were ledged, braced, boarded and painted.

St Aidan's Church



Main Attributes:

- Originally a stable block built alongside the houses in 1835.
- Situated in a prominent position to the west of Bute Town and clearly visible from the main road.
- First established as a Church in Wales in 1890 and renovated in 1979/80.
- Still a key part of the community - a quaint church with bell-tower used for regular church services, as a polling station, and for presentations and meetings.

7.9 The church is a significant unlisted, though 'curtilage' building within the Conservation Area. Whilst it is small and unassuming, its central location and orientation within the village has contributed to the architectural character of the village and to the community activities that residents wish to participate in.

Special Landscape Area, Recreational Area & Open Space

Main Attributes:

- Areas of public open space are present within the Conservation Area – especially around the west where the old railway line has been dismantled and landscaped.
- These areas are well maintained and provide an open place for residents to relax.
- These spaces help preserve the open aspect of the Bute Town village, and its environs.
- Wide streets help to maintain the open aspect of Bute Town.
- The children's play facilities are well located and equipped.



7.10 The open aspect of Bute Town was of paramount importance when designing the town. For example, the streets were intentionally in generous proportion to the scale of the terraced rows, as this was believed to help promote good ventilation and health.

The Windsor Arms Public House



Main Attributes:

- This grade II listed building provides an historic link to the industrial era, as it was and is the focal point for socializing and a venue for meetings.
- Maintained as a public house since 1841 through to the present day.
- The pub shares Bute Town's traditional stone frontages, with 2-pane horned sliding sash windows and deep, overhanging eaves and front door as found in the village, painted timber-boarded with a central obscured glazing aperture.
- Traditional pub signage

Boundary treatment around Conservation Area

Main Attributes:

- Differentiates the Conservation Area from the A469 – providing a main focal point on of arrival with visitor parking and an interpretation panel detailing the history of Bute Town.
- Line of dismantled railway provides a green frontage and valuable open space at the entrance to the village.
- Iron kissing gates towards the north-west provide an important entrance feature into the Conservation Area.



Formalisation of parking arrangements



Main Attributes:

- Three parking areas are located on the site of the former dwellings at 15 and 16 Collins Row, at the end of Middle Row facing the recreation area and at the approach way into Butetown.
- They allow for a structured approach to parking in an area where parking is difficult.
- Sensitively designed and structured.

Negative Features of the Conservation Area

7.11 As well as numerous positive features within the Conservation Area, the survey also highlighted some negative features. These are:

- **Defective roof coverings and roof space conversions**
- **Rear extensions and the use of inappropriate materials**
- **The Windsor Arms public house - inappropriate materials used**
- **Former Drenewydd Primary School – now Drenewydd House**

Defective roof coverings and roof space conversions

Negative Aspects:

- The existing roofs are in a poor condition and are all defective. They comprise of reconstituted stone tiles with matching ridges that have exceeded their life expectancy.
- Some chimney stacks have not been re-built; the flaunching is in a poor condition and the lead work poor.
- A variety of rooflights have emerged to create attic spaces, some of which are deteriorating.



Existing roofs

7.12 The existing roof coverings are pitched, hipped and finished with reconstituted 'stone' tiles laid in regular courses with varying widths. The ridge is similarly finished with a reconstituted 'stone' tile of regular width, cemented in place. The roofs are in a poor condition generally, and have now exceeded their design life. Consequently, they are brittle, fractured, slipped and missing in many areas. It is apparent that the tiles have significantly weathered in many locations. The weathering is uneven, has created hollows on individual tiles where water can sit. This has attracted excessive moss growth on north facing roofs that holds in the moisture, looks unsightly as well as significantly increasing the loads on the roof.

Chimney stacks

7.13 Chimney stacks are located at the apex of the roofs. They are simple stacks and regular in plan form, with a stone detail on the top. Many feature chimney pots of varying styles, although some

have no pots or capping showing a square flue opening. The leadwork is often defective and the flaunching is in a poor condition. Some stacks have been rebuilt, whilst it is clear that those with randomly coursed stonework have not.

Rooflights

7.14 In a number of locations rooflights have been added to afford the internal conversion of the attic spaces of the houses. The rooflights are of the conservation type, however, it is notable that many of the frames are rusting, and that sufficient lead flashings are not obviously present. Roof lights are only recommended for approval on rear elevations in order to minimise the visual impact on the conservation area.

Rear single storey extensions, boundary walls & garages in a variety of style and designs

Negative Aspects:

- Many properties have developed single storey rear extensions to accommodate additional modern facilities – for example, kitchens and bathrooms.
- Some rear windows have been replaced with white UPVC.



- The rear lanes contain a mix of rear walls, extensions and garages which serve to fragment the appearance of the area through the use of inappropriate materials, sizes, colours and finishes.

St. Aidan's Church

Negative Aspects:

- This is currently a prominent; 'hard' landscape area to the north of the church that is covered with uneven concrete slabs (to replace stolen pennant slabs).
- These could perhaps be benefit from being replaced with a 'softer' rose garden and seated area, which would contribute positively, to local community life.
- A combination of Welsh Church Fund or C in W funding may be available for this.



Windsor Arms Public House



Negative Aspects:

- Unsympathetic repair work undertaken on some boundary walls.
 - Use of inappropriate materials such as red brick, render and alternative rubble stones.
 - Walls have been pointed in lime based and cement based mortars using a variety of pointing styles.
 - A small bulge is visible in the gable end to the Windsor Arms pub.
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- Visually intrusive secondary glazing has been installed behind single glazed sliding sash windows, detracting from the historic fabric and character of the building.





- On land opposite the public house there is a paved area for car parking that leads onto the children's play area that could be landscaped and tidied up.
- There may also be potential to provide a formal seating area here in association with the Windsor Arms PH.

Former Drenewydd Primary School and Community Centre – now 'Drenewydd House'

Negative Aspects:

- UPVC windows and doors were installed as part of recent conversion works to the former school, damaging the architectural character of the building.
- Caravans have been sited within the curtilage of the former school.



- Part of the pennant sandstone boundary wall has been demolished.
- Cumulatively, these changes have a vastly detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Footpath linking Bute Town with the B4257, the Old Furnace Farmhouse, Rhymney House & the Union ironworks Site.

Negative Aspects:

- The footway down to the Rhymney River is narrow and in parts overgrown with trees and bushes.
- There is a river crossing although this needs some attention and could be subject to an enhancement scheme in liaison with Highway engineers and Countryside Services.



- The bridge takes a pedestrian straight onto the main road, without realising it and traffic can take you unawares. There needs to be a provision for improving the walker's awareness of this.
- There is no discreet, unobtrusive signage indicating where you are or directing you to the scheduled ancient monument just to the south.

Old Furnace Farmhouse, Llechryd, Rhymney

Negative Aspects:

- A grade II listed building, retained on Cadw's list notwithstanding extensive, unsympathetic alterations including new windows.
- Important for its early cast iron roof structure although no longer visible and as a scarce survivor of early ironworkers' housing.



Rhymney House Hotel, Llechryd, Rhymney



Negative Aspects:

- A grade II listed building, retained on Cadw's list, notwithstanding substantial external and internal alterations for its key position on the site of the earliest ironworks in Rhymney and its important connections, being built in 1801 as the Manager's House of the Rhymney iron Company.
- Large detached house formerly with 12 pane and tripartite sashes now replaced.
- Reputed to have retained a cast iron roof structure although no longer visible.

Union Ironworks site, Llechryd, Rhymney.

Negative Aspects:

- This field is in private ownership, is protected by an established, well-laid hedge with post & wire fencing behind, and is currently used for grazing sheep. It would go unnoticed if it weren't for the fact that at the core of this site are visible remains and features of an early ironworks site, a hugely important scheduled ancient monument with huge potential in the context of SE Wales Industrial Ironworks landscapes.
- The scheduled area lies at the foot of a steep west-facing slope. Remains of a first generation single coke fired and water blown blast furnace is thought to remain there, although only the circular hearth and bowl are now visible.



Development Control Matters

7.15 Planning Policy Wales Edition 5 November 2012 provides the national planning policy context for Wales, supplemented by Technical Advice Notes (TANs). Further guidance is provided in Welsh Office/National Assembly for Wales and Welsh Government Circulars.

7.16 Chapter 6 of PPW, 'Conserving the Historic Environment' sets out the Welsh Government's objectives in 6.1.1. with regard to the protection and enhancement of listed buildings and conservation areas in Wales as follows: -

- To preserve or enhance the historic environment, recognising its contribution to economic vitality and culture, civic pride and the quality of life, and its importance as a resource for future generations; and specifically
- To ensure that the character of historic buildings is safeguarded from alterations, extensions or demolition that would compromise a building's special architectural and historic interest;
- To ensure that conservation areas are protected or enhanced, while at the same time remaining alive and prosperous, avoiding unnecessarily detailed controls over businesses and householders.

7.17 The Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan (Adopted November 2010) provides the local policy framework for the development and conservation needs of the county borough. In this respect the Council has a key role in securing the conservation of the historic environment while ensuring that it accommodates and remains responsive to present day needs. This is an important part of the Council's wider sustainable development responsibilities, which needs to be taken into account in the exercise of both planning policies and of development management functions.

7.18 In addition, planning permission would not normally be granted without also, where necessary, the corresponding listed building and conservation area consents under the (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990) legislation.

7.19 The three rows of terraced housing are currently almost all privately owned with the exception of one property that is owned by Caerphilly County Borough Council. Caerphilly County Borough Council is also responsible for administering parts of the heritage protection system relating to listed buildings and conservation areas. As such the authority has control over the activities of property owners where works require planning permission or affect a designated conservation area or listed building or structure. In the case of the Council-owned property, the Welsh Government and Cadw exercise their controls in this case, in conjunction with clearly laid out procedures in respect of local planning authority administrative assistance.

7.20 The planning system is currently therefore the main existing management tool for the protection of Bute Town through existing Development Plan policies.

7.21 As such, there should be a strong aim to retain characteristic architectural details and materials as well as re-establishing the details and materials where possible. There is a uniformity about the structures within Bute Town having been designed as a single entity. However, it is noticeable that this is gradually being eroded.

7.22 A progressive creep has taken place in the past with regards to unregulated alterations to the properties. Any proposed works to Bute Town should therefore be based on the following conservation principles: -

- Minimum interventions
- Use of like-for-like materials
- Retention of as much of the historic fabric as possible
- Conserving as found
- Reversible interventions.

7.23 It is recognised that agreement to fund the works to Bute Town and environs will not be immediate. It is therefore of paramount importance that during the intermediate period, that residents be encouraged to undertake basic maintenance of the houses to ensure that existing problems are not exacerbated. Failure to carry out such maintenance works could eventually lead to currently sound elements of building fabric being detrimentally affected.

7.24 As such, all rainwater goods should be thoroughly cleaned out twice per year. In particular rainwater gullies should be cleaned out, and any drainage runs rodded to ensure efficient flow.

7.25 All ivy, vegetation and lichen should be removed from all external walls and roofs in general, with the ground level around the buildings kept where possible a minimum of 150 mm below the interior floor level. Furthermore, all grass and vegetation should be cut away at least 300mm from the external face of the walls.

8 Summary of Conservation Area Appraisal

8.1 The settlement retains its basic structure and form, which from a distance presents a striking view of solidity and architectural dominance.

8.2 The buildings and surrounding area benefitted from substantial capital investment during the 1970's when the former Rhymney Valley District and Mid Glamorgan County Councils carried out extensive renovation and improvement works which form the basis of what can be seen today. However after **forty** years, some properties are now in need of substantial maintenance or restoration. Some residents have undertaken some inappropriate and unsympathetic maintenance work to their properties, with a mixture of styles and standards being applied. This has, in some instances, led to a significant dilution of the historic fabric and architectural character of the area.

8.3 In the late 1990's Caerphilly County Borough Council invested significant funds from the Heads of the Valleys Programme and Welsh Government funding to upgrade and enhance the public realm in the area with schemes being undertaken at:

- The new 'gateway' entrance to the Bute Town Conservation Area. The new car parking area and interpretation panels help to create a striking entrance into the Conservation Area and helps to signify the importance that Bute Town still holds a link to the Industrial past of the Rhymney Valley.
- The addition of new street signage, an interpretation panel, kissing gates, two re-surfaced parking areas, new cycle stand, as well as upgraded pennant sandstone paving, a seating area, bollards and native tree planting all serve to enhance the character of the area.
- Improvements have been made to install a new playground and to improve the village green.

8.4 The settlement of Bute Town has seen a considerable amount of regeneration work take place since the 1970's since grant aid has become available. Work needs to continue to remedy the following significantly negative aspects of the Conservation Area:

- Drenewydd House - the former 'Drenewydd Primary School' and Community Centre – boundary wall treatment
- Inappropriate materials used on extensions and boundary walls in the rear lanes and on the Windsor Arms Public House.
- Footpath access from Bute Town to the Union Ironworks site, Llechryd, Rhymney
- A 'hard landscape' concrete flag stoned area to the north of the church that replaced stolen pennant stone slabs.
- Rear stone boundary walls along the rear lanes.