

Draft Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Masterplan

Report of Public Consultation

Introduction

This report has been prepared following public consultation on the Draft Heads of the Valleys Masterplan (Masterplan) held in early 2020. It summarises the key issues that were raised as part of the consultation, together with the officer response to the issues raised and any proposed changes to the Masterplan.

Public Consultation

The Masterplan was published for consultation on 17 February 2020, for a period of six weeks. Comments were invited on the document, which were required to be submitted to the Council by no later than Monday 30 March, the closing date.

Consultation emails were sent to all elected members, community councils within the Masterplan area, AMs and MPs.

Posters advertising the dates of the consultation, dates and times of consultation events and the locations of the associated documentation were displayed in libraries across the County Borough. The consultation was also advertised on the Council's website and social media channels.

Consultation material was also placed in all libraries across the County Borough, and staffed consultation events were held in Bargoed Library (Saturday 29 February and Tuesday 3 March) and Rhymney Library (Wednesday 4 and Thursday 5 March) to allow members of the public to discuss the Draft Masterplan with officers.

A total of ten responses were received. One was submitted using the paper representation form, one was sent via email (using the structure of the form as a basis for their response) and the remainder used the online representation form on the website. Respondents were asked to provide a postcode in order to determine the broad geographical area of responses. The analysis of this information indicated that seven respondents live in the Masterplan area, two live outside and one respondent declined to provide this information.

Respondents completing the online survey, together with those who filled out a paper representation form, were asked for their views on the Vision, Strategic Objectives and Development Strategy of the Masterplan. Respondents were also able to comment on site-specific proposals and identify any additional proposals that they considered should be included within the Masterplan.

The report sets out the responses in relation to the questions asked on the Vision, Strategic Objectives and Development Strategy. Representations made in respect of site-specific proposals are included under the relevant Strategic Objective. Only those that have been the subject of representations (either of support, comment or objection) have been included within the report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

In line with the Council's Equalities Monitoring procedures, respondents were asked (Q11) whether any of their answers to questions in the survey were impacted by any of the following: age; disability; ethnic origin; gender or gender reassignment; marital status; religious belief or non-belief; use of Welsh language, BSL or other languages; nationality; or responsibility for any dependents.

One response was received under Q11 concerning the regeneration of historic buildings and using the regeneration of Tredegar town centre as an exemplar. However, the relationship between this and any of the protected characteristics listed was not stated. It is therefore believed that this part of the form was completed erroneously, and that this response does not concern equalities implications. This response will instead be considered under Q7 (Do you have additional comments?).

Q2 Is the Vision for the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area fit for purpose?

The Masterplan sets out the following Vision:

“The Heads of the Valleys will capitalise upon the major public investment in the A465 and its strategic location along this corridor, complementing and strengthening employment opportunities and creating an exciting, vibrant place where businesses will want to locate and where people will choose to live and work.

It will strengthen and diversify communities by improving connectivity, supporting the role of the foundational economy and developing its role as a visitor and tourism destination by utilising its distinctive industrial heritage and natural attractions and spaces.

It will enable the provision of, and promote accessibility to, those commercial, leisure and community services that will equip people to lead more healthy and prosperous lives.”

Respondents completing the paper and online survey were asked whether they considered that the Vision was fit for purpose. The following representations were made:

Issues Raised	Officer Response	Recommendation
Support for the Vision. It is based upon an understanding of local need and wellbeing, demand and supply factors and economic and market conditions	Support is noted	No amendment recommended
General agreement that the Vision is fit for purpose, but no mention of Heolddu Comprehensive School or the adjacent Leisure Centre	This relates to a site-specific proposal and should be considered as a response to Q6	No amendment recommended
Prevention of parking in Bargoed town centre, charging for parking in War Memorial Car Park, no provision of a bus bay outside the former Spar are causing problems. New bus station is too big and badly sited. Council should buy empty shops and offer ‘peppercorn’ rents for the first year	These relate to site-specific proposals and should be considered as a response to Q6	No amendment recommended

Does not focus enough on education in Bargoed	The role and importance of education throughout the Masterplan area is implicitly recognised in the Vision (enable provision of, and promote accessibility to, community services)	No amendment recommended
Decent transport links are necessary for HoV residents to travel to work. Ignores the state of the road between Blackwood and Tredegar (A4048)	Connectivity and transport links are central to the Vision and are referred to. The A4048 is a site-specific proposal and should be considered as a response to Q6	No amendment recommended
New Tredegar is in need of regeneration. Provision of a lake would generate electricity and allow for leisure activities such as fishing and boating, also creating employment in associated areas	This relates to a site-specific proposal and should be considered as a response to Q6	No amendment recommended

Representations submitted under Q2 concerning specific projects not explicitly referred to in the Masterplan are treated as new site-specific proposals and considered as responses to Q6 (Are there any additional proposals that should be considered?).

Q3 Do you agree or disagree with the Strategic Objectives?

The following representations were made:

Issues Raised	Officer Response	Recommendation
Strategic Objective C (Expanding the area's sphere of influence and improving connectivity) will enable more people to benefit from the redevelopment of Capital Valley, bringing direct economic benefits through improved public transport access, enabling more jobs to be created	Support noted	No amendment recommended
General agreement with the Strategic Objectives, but no mention of Heolddu Comprehensive School or the adjacent Leisure Centre	<p>Education and leisure are explicitly referred to in Objectives B (Improving social and economic resilience through education, training and careers advice) and H (Providing a suitable level of community, leisure and education facilities). However, as the response mentions, the CCBC Sport and Active Recreation Strategy is seeking to retain a leisure centre within the area, and it may be helpful for Objective H to mention national and local initiatives which have a crucial role in delivery of such facilities</p> <p>This relates to a site-specific proposal and should be considered as a response to Q6</p>	Amend Objective H to read "Providing a suitable level of community, leisure and education facilities, aligning with national and local initiatives including 21 st Century Schools and the CCBC Sport and Active Recreation Strategy where applicable, and establishing Integrated Well-Being Networks in order to connect communities' strengths and assets"
Broad agreement with the Strategic Objectives, though Objective A (Complementing, and integrating with, nearby initiatives such as the Ebbw Vale Enterprise Zone in order to develop a strategic employment function for Rhymney) could be more ambitious by designating the	It is agreed that the approaches taken by local authorities in respect of the Heads of the Valleys need to complement each other and have regard to the context set by WG, City Deal and the Valleys Taskforce, as well as existing initiatives e.g. Tech Valleys.	<p>No amendment recommended</p> <p>Tech Valleys is to be piloted in the north of the County Borough – opportunities are to be explored with Welsh Government</p>

<p>entire Heads of the Valleys as a 'business development zone', in cooperation with WG and other local authorities</p>	<p>It is understood that Tech Valleys is to be piloted across the north of the County Borough, and the Council will work with Welsh Government to identify opportunities for its implementation.</p> <p>Objective A seeks to increase the spread of economic growth by optimising its proximity to the Ebbw Vale EZ, thereby expanding the benefit of local programmes such as this. However, whilst an overarching context is important for the whole HoV, especially with regard to programmes such as Metro and elements such as the A465 which are universally applicable, it should be accepted that there are differences in terms of local economic specialism, the position of particular markets based on geographical orientation and the proximity of particular neighbours. Therefore, it is important that solutions are employed which are best able to utilise local strengths and characteristics, whilst ensuring that this is done in a coordinated fashion and that economic growth accrues which offers comprehensive and sustainable benefit to the HoV as a whole.</p>	
<p>If implemented, a lake in New Tredegar would make a good eco project and improve the area as a place in which to live and to visit</p>	<p>This relates to a site-specific proposal and should be considered as a response to Q6</p>	<p>No amendment recommended</p>

As with Q2, representations submitted under Q3 concerning specific projects not explicitly referred to in the Masterplan are treated as new site-specific proposals and considered as responses to Q6 (Are there any additional proposals that should be considered?).

Q4 Do you agree with the Development Strategy?

The following representations were made:

Issues Raised	Officer Response	Recommendation
Capital Valley is located in a sustainable location for further employment development having regard to the Metro and the A465 which will increase connectivity. Further development of this site for employment development complies with the Key Planning Principles and Section 5 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW)	Adherence to national planning policy is noted	No amendment recommended
No mention of Heolddu Comprehensive School or the adjacent Leisure Centre	The Draft Masterplan, including the Development Strategy, seeks to reflect the position taken by other, complementary initiatives where applicable. The Leisure and Tourism section of the Development Strategy focuses on those elements considered integral to the establishment and operation of the Valleys Regional Park. However, amending Objective H, as noted previously, would be helpful in terms of acknowledging the role of complementary strategies in the delivery of such facilities	No amendment recommended to the Development Strategy, but amendment recommended regarding the wording of Objective H (see previous table)
Broad agreement with the Development Strategy, but would like to see a greater commitment to aligning housing delivery across the HoV with sustainable job creation and improved transport links, in cooperation with neighbouring local authorities. The SDP should provide a framework for this	It is agreed that housing delivery should be aligned to job creation and improvements to infrastructure, and that local authorities should cooperate in delivery of this. Indeed, this is enshrined in national planning policy through PPW, and the newly published Development Plans Manual adds further detail in terms of how development plans (including SDPs) are to address some of	No amendment recommended

	<p>these issues, particularly housing and employment.</p> <p>How this approach is to be applied in a site-specific way going forward will be a matter for the emerging LDP, and the Masterplan cannot create new policy or put forward proposals that run counter to policies or proposals contained within the adopted LDP. The Delivery Strategy mentions the importance of the SME sector towards housing delivery in the area and it is anticipated that the document will act as a lever for bringing in additional investment that can help realise the delivery of housing in sustainable locations</p>	
<p>No imagination has been given to environmental issues, outdoor leisure activities and general wellbeing</p>	<p>The Development Strategy seeks to address these areas through sustainably located job creation allied to infrastructural improvement, an emphasis on education, training and upskilling, and – in relation to the environment, leisure and wellbeing – developing the Valleys Regional Park concept, supporting proposals for renewable energy generation and associated community benefit and the establishment of Integrated Well-Being Networks alongside the provision of community, leisure and education facilities</p>	<p>No amendment recommended</p>

Q5 Do you have any comments to make on specific proposals?

A Complementing, and integrating with, nearby initiatives such as the Ebbw Vale Enterprise Zone (EZ) in order to develop a strategic employment function for Rhymney, establishing it as a gateway to the Valleys

Issues Raised	Officer Response	Recommendation
<p>A-1 Redevelopment of Capital Valley is supported. The Masterplan should support a range of wider uses than those identified, in order to maximise flexibility, its economic prospects and the close proximity of the station. The site is key to the regional economy.</p> <p>Much of the site is within a C2 flood risk area and PPW states that local authorities should take a “de-risking” approach to unlocking the development potential of such sites. The Council should therefore work with the site owner to develop its potential, and engage in dialogue in respect of potential funding that may be forthcoming.</p>	<p>Support is noted.</p> <p>It is agreed that Capital Valley is a key site within a regional economic context, and the Masterplan notes its infrastructural attributes in terms of its strategic position close to the A465 and Rhymney Station, as well as the existence of a railhead.</p> <p>The response mentions the site in terms of its status as a secondary employment site within the LDP, which permits B1/B2/B8 development. It is envisaged that any redevelopment would focus on increasing the presence of one or more of these uses, thereby giving it significant flexibility within its continued role as an employment site. The uses cited in the response, and mentioned in the document (manufacturing [potentially advanced manufacturing in relation to automotive], processing, energy and institutional) are provided as examples of how the site’s role may develop within the context of the EVEZ/Tech Valleys, which must be taken into account as a significant, local influence and are intended to be neither exhaustive nor restrictive. Whilst the position taken by PPW is noted in respect of C2 land,</p>	<p>Addition of new bullet point under ‘Development Principles’ to read “Potential mixed-use development including housing or commercial uses”</p> <p>Amend fourth bullet point under ‘Development Principles’ to read “Optimise the site’s strategically advantageous position through a range of economic uses, including potentially targeting complementary uses to those forming the basis of the existing EZ/Tech Valleys”</p> <p>Continue to engage with site owner and WG regarding redevelopment options, site constraints and funding opportunities</p>

	<p>opportunities for other commercial uses, housing or mixed-use schemes should be considered.</p> <p>The Council welcomes the opportunity to continue to engage and work with the site owner with respect to bringing a positive redevelopment of the site forward, and to utilise this approach as a means of taking advantage of funding sources through City Deal which can help realise this.</p>	
<p>A-3 Heads of the Valleys Industrial Estate. The whole of the north of the County Borough, including Bargoed and Gilfach, should be incorporated within the Tech Valleys initiative. This would need to involve WG, adjoining local authorities, Valleys Taskforce, employers and H/FE</p>	<p>It is agreed that a coordinated approach is required to achieve social and economic benefit across the whole of the HoV, and whilst the majority of the wider HoV is outside the scope of this document, it does seek to help facilitate economic development where it can through an adherence to regional and sub-regional approaches that apply, notably Metro, City Deal, Valleys Taskforce and the Ebbw Vale EZ. Rhymney is immediately adjacent to the EZ, has a large supply of existing, operational (though, in some instances, high vacancy) employment land and therefore there is an obvious synergy in taking these areas forward under a common approach, especially where sites are in need of redevelopment.</p> <p>The Council is presently exploring opportunities to expand the Tech Valleys initiative into the north of the County Borough in partnership with Welsh Government. Tying in certain components of this approach (public sector intervention potentially</p>	<p>Tech Valleys is to be piloted in the north of the County Borough – opportunities are to be explored with Welsh Government</p>

	<p>including business support and financial incentive) to activities that the VTF and others are engaged with across the whole sub-region, such as training and education, can assist in building up particular attributes that will, with the addition of locally specific economic interventions in specific locations, have social and economic benefit for the wider area, particularly as EZ-based operations become self-sustaining and reach a 'critical mass' from which certain sectors can further develop.</p> <p>Central to this is the role and function of settlements within the Heads of the Valleys going forward, which will be work undertaken as part of the review of the LDP (and, regionally, by the SDP). Allied to this will be the need to align housing and employment with each other and with infrastructure, and to consider how this process allows for an equitable and sustainable distribution of economic growth across the north of the County Borough.</p>	
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C Expanding the area's sphere of influence and improve connectivity

Issues Raised	Officer Response	Recommendation
C-2 Other Stations (Bargoed, Pontlottyn, Brithdir, Tirphil). Improvements should be made to Gilfach Fargoed Station. If more trains stopped here, it would be better used. Additionally, it provides a gateway (without using a car) to Parc Coetir Bargoed	Proposals within the Masterplan concerning station improvements are 'led' by the priorities of Transport for Wales and actions that have been identified under the Metro programme. Gilfach Fargoed Station has not, as yet, been identified by TfW in this category and, therefore, it would not be prudent to include it	No amendment recommended

H Providing a suitable level of community, leisure and education facilities, and establish Integrated Well-Being Networks in order to connect communities' strengths and assets

Issues Raised	Officer Response	Recommendation
H – Providing a suitable level of community, leisure and education facilities, and establish Integrated Well-Being Networks in order to connect communities' strengths and assets. Heolddu Comprehensive School and the Leisure Centre should be included here, as both are important to residents of Bargoed and the surrounding area	<p>Proposals within the Masterplan concerning education reflect the Council's proposals outlined to date under Band B of the 21st Century Schools programme, which represents the key mechanism for delivering investment in schools</p> <p>The CCBC Sport and Active Recreation Strategy is seeking to retain a leisure centre within the area, and it may be helpful for Objective H to mention national and local initiatives which have a crucial role in delivery of such facilities. However, Heolddu Leisure Centre is an existing facility, rather than a Masterplan proposal</p>	No amendment recommended, but amendment recommended regarding the wording of Objective H (Q3)

Q6 Are there any additional proposals that should be included within the Masterplan?

Issues Raised	Officer Response	Recommendation
<p>Prevention of parking in Bargoed town centre, charging for parking in War Memorial Car Park, no provision of a bus bay outside the former Spar are causing problems. New bus station is too big and badly sited. Council should buy empty shops and offer 'peppercorn' rents for the first year</p>	<p>It would not be feasible for the Council to buy empty shops and offer them at 'peppercorn' rents. However, it does, and will continue to, engage with owners of retail units in an effort to bring them back into beneficial, and commercially viable, town centre uses.</p> <p>It is hoped that some of the measures contained within the Masterplan i.e. the potential for redevelopment at the bottom end of the town centre for a more sustainable mix of uses, increased journey frequency via the Metro can help increase footfall and revitalise Bargoed as a commercial location. Town Centre Management are aware of the issue of limited car parking in terms of its impact on local businesses, and it is understood that this is being looked at</p>	<p>No amendment recommended</p>
<p>No mention of Heolddu Comprehensive School or the adjacent Leisure Centre</p>	<p>The Draft Masterplan, including the Development Strategy, seeks to reflect the position taken by other, complementary initiatives where applicable.</p> <p>Proposals within the Masterplan concerning education reflect the Council's proposals outlined to date under Band B of the 21st Century Schools programme, which represents the key mechanism for delivering investment in schools and, as the response mentions, the CCBC Sport and Active Recreation Strategy is seeking to retain a leisure centre within the area. Consequently,</p>	<p>No amendment recommended, but amendment recommended regarding the wording of Objective H (Q3)</p>

	it may be helpful for Objective H to mention national and local initiatives which have a crucial role in delivery of such facilities	
Ignores the state of the road between Blackwood and Tredegar (A4048)	Whilst strategic connectivity and infrastructure issues are vital to the success of the Heads of the Valleys, these are addressed within the Masterplan, both conceptually and in terms of specific proposals. The A4048 is an important route in terms of linking communities such as Argoed (within the Masterplan area) to those outside. However, whilst issues of practical maintenance are important, these are more effectively addressed through other means	No amendment recommended
New Tredegar is in need of regeneration. Provision of a lake would generate electricity and allow for leisure activities such as fishing and boating, also creating employment in associated areas	<p>It is envisaged that development and implementation of the Valleys Regional Park (VRP) will have a positive impact across the whole Masterplan area and beyond in terms of increasing and broadening the scope of individual leisure attractions, particularly those that exist within the natural environment, thereby having a widespread benefit in terms of sustainability and well-being through the creation of a legible, sub-regional network</p> <p>It is not clear whether any work has been undertaken by the respondent in terms of feasibility for the proposed lake or the difficulties it would present to surrounding properties. The plan submitted would appear to involve the loss of the access from White Rose Way to New Tredegar Business Park, and possibly the units themselves, and this is not something which could be entertained</p>	No amendment recommended

Q7 Do you have additional comments?

Issues Raised	Officer Response	Recommendation
An introduction should be included to emphasise that the document concerns the Darren and Upper Rhymney Valleys	<p>The area to which the document refers is the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area, which covers a wider area than the Darren and Upper Rhymney Valleys and whose boundaries are delineated by the adopted LDP. Due to the intention that the document be approved as supplementary planning guidance for this area, it would be inconsistent to depart from this</p> <p>The first paragraph of Section 2 (The Study Area) sets out the extent of the area, although it is accepted that it does not presently refer to the Darren Valley, alongside the Upper Rhymney and Sirhowy Valleys</p>	Amend first paragraph of Section 2 to read “The Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area is located in the northern part of Caerphilly County Borough, and comprises the Darren, Upper Rhymney and Upper Sirhowy Valleys, including the principal town of Bargoed and the local centre of Rhymney. It incorporates the wards of Twyn Carno, Moriah, Pontlottyn, Darren Valley, New Tredegar, Aberbargoed, Bargoed, Gilfach and Argoed”
A diagram should be included setting out the extent of the area concerned, indicating each settlement therein	A map of the study area in its entirety is presently set out on page 12 of the document, on which each settlement is clearly labelled, as well as transport links and ward boundaries. It is proposed that this map be moved to the start of Section 2 in order to sit alongside the above description and more clearly assist readers’ understanding of the area to which the document relates	Move map on page 12 to page 5
Markham Colliery, Aberbargoed Plateau, Bedwellty School and the Bargoed 21 st Century Schools proposals are not in the Upper Rhymney Valley and should not be included	These sites all fall within the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area, therefore their inclusion within the document is appropriate	No amendment recommended

<p>No mention is made of a potential new road between New Tredegar and Abertysswg, due to issues of instability concerning the A469</p>	<p>The document recognises the importance of increased accessibility in the Upper Rhymney Valley and explicitly mentions the aspiration for a new route between New Tredegar and Rhymney (proposal C-4, A469 Resilience Route, p.34). No specific route is identified in the document, as the feasibility work undertaken to date has only made a preliminary assessment of potential options</p>	<p>No amendment recommended</p>
<p>The Council should look at the regeneration of Tredegar, where lots of historic buildings are being regenerated</p>	<p>It is agreed that historic buildings, where work to maintain/bring them back into use is undertaken positively and sensitively, continue to play a valuable role in the settlements in which they are located</p> <p>Where there are opportunities for regenerating historic buildings, the Council will continue to work with land owners, Cadw and others in terms of bringing forward schemes that retain a practical purpose, maintain the character of the building in heritage terms and enhance local distinctiveness, legibility and sense of place</p>	<p>Amend Objective E to read “Maximising the impact of the Valleys Regional Park, protecting and enhancing important green spaces and built heritage and promoting tourism”</p>