



COUNCIL – 18TH APRIL 2024

SUBJECT: GREATER BLACKWOOD MASTERPLAN

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR, ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise members on the main issues identified by respondents during the public consultation exercise carried out between 3 January 2024 and 14 February 2024 on the Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan.
- 1.2 To approve the amended Greater Blackwood Masterplan as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Adopted Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan as a tool for guiding regeneration activity in Greater Blackwood.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Greater Blackwood Masterplan sets out development and regeneration opportunities and seeks to strengthen the economy and improve cultural, environmental and social conditions for residents and visitors. The Council will use the masterplan to bid for funding for projects in the area.
- 2.2 The Masterplan has the following vision:

“Greater Blackwood will be an attractive and prosperous place in which people choose to live, work and spend their free time. New housing will meet local needs in sustainable locations, and Blackwood’s town centre will be busy and sociable both during the day and at night. The area will have a strong and varied economy, an efficient and environmentally responsible transport system, and sustainable community facilities that promote well-being.”

- 2.3 The Masterplan has the following strategic objectives:

A. Protect and enhance Greater Blackwood’s status as a sub-regional employment centre (protect established employment sites, redevelop under-used or vacant employment land, diversify uses in town centres, and so on).

B. Establish Blackwood town centre as a sub-regional hub that is attractive, accessible and busy both during the day and at night.

C. Expand and diversify the visitor economy.

D. Improve transport links both within and beyond Greater Blackwood.

E. Promote well-being by enhancing or creating sustainable community facilities.

F. Provide housing that will meet local needs in sustainable locations.

- 2.4 The projects listed in the Masterplan Framework cover employment sites (including Oakdale Plateaux), Blackwood town centre, entertainment venues, community facilities, public parks, potential housing sites, and public-transport projects.
- 2.5 On 13 December 2023, Cabinet approved the publication of the Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan (Masterplan) for the purposes of a formal, six-week public consultation process. The consultation period began on 3 January 2024 and ended on 14 February 2024.
- 2.6 83 representations were received during this period. The Report of Public Consultation (ROC) considers the issues raised, provides officer responses and makes recommendations. The ROC is included as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.7 The main issues raised in the consultation responses were:
- Too little public transport;
 - Blackwood town centre (too little variety in shops, too few 'established brands', parking charges, crime and 'antisocial behaviour', business rates, commercial rents);
 - Support for the creation of a new town or market square in Blackwood;
 - Too many new houses proposed in Greater Blackwood;
 - Existing infrastructure is under strain;
 - The need for more health services and leisure facilities;
 - Lack of clarity about funding for projects;
 - 'Climate emergency' and 'decarbonisation' may affect people's freedom of movement;
 - Loss of 'greenfield' land;
 - Effect of affordable housing on the area's economy.
- 2.8 These issues have been addressed in the ROC. As a result of the responses received, several changes are proposed to the Masterplan (see the ROC for details).
- 2.9 Minor typographical changes and updates are included in the amended document (see Appendix 2) but are not set out in the ROC.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Council consider the representations received as part of the public consultation exercise and endorse the officer recommendations set out in the ROC.
- 3.2 That the Council formally approves the Greater Blackwood Masterplan as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Adopted Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan and as a tool for guiding regeneration activity in the Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To provide a policy basis for the future development and regeneration of Greater Blackwood.

5. THE REPORT

Background

- 5.1 The signing of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal signalled the intention of the 10 South East Wales local authorities to work together through joint enterprise, on issues of long-term development, infrastructure, land use, economic development and employment. It represents unprecedented levels of investment from the UK and Welsh Governments, as well as local authorities, and provides the vehicle for an integrated long-term approach to investment within the region. The City Deal agreement sets out a series of priorities and recommendations for the future growth and investment within the Cardiff Capital Region, of which Caerphilly County Borough is part.
- 5.2 The County Borough's regeneration strategy, 'A Foundation for Success', was approved in July 2018 and provides the strategic framework for regeneration activity over the five-year period to 2023. In addition to this, masterplans for Caerphilly Basin, Ystrad Mynach, the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area and the Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys, the first four in a suite of five masterplans designed to complement this strategy, were approved by the Council in July 2018, April 2019, November 2020 and October 2022, respectively. While A Foundation for Success has now reached its 5-year expiry date, the area masterplans are still valid and will be complemented by a new overarching regeneration strategy in 2024. The masterplans provide more detailed proposals for the regeneration and revitalisation of their respective areas.
- 5.3 There is an exciting opportunity to facilitate significant change through the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD), which will provide resources to unlock significant economic growth in the region, delivering jobs and private sector investment. While CCRCD seeks to relieve pressure on Cardiff as its regional city it also seeks to promote growth in smaller towns and industrial communities to rebalance social justice and prosperity. This Masterplan seeks to provide a direction of travel to ensure a transition towards economic and social success.
- 5.4 The City Deal Investment Fund will also facilitate the delivery of the South East Wales Metro. Improvements to bus services, which provide a high level of accessibility throughout the area, are part of the overall package, and it is anticipated that a future phase of the Metro project will create a railway station at Crumlin.
- 5.5 While the Masterplan identifies investment and development opportunities in Greater Blackwood, delivery will be dependent on decisions made by Cabinet and other public and private sector partners.

Public Consultation Exercise

- 5.6 A public consultation exercise was carried out between 3 January 2024 and 14 February 2024.
- 5.7 Consultation emails were sent to all elected members, community councils within the

Masterplan area, MSs and MPs.

- 5.8 Posters were displayed in public libraries (Blackwood and Oakdale) and in the centre of Blackwood. The consultation was advertised on the Council's website and social-media channels.

Key Issues Raised

- 5.9 83 representations were received during the consultation period. The ROC considers the issues raised, provides officer responses and makes recommendations. The ROC is included as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 5.10 Respondents were asked to comment on the Vision, Strategic Objectives, Development Strategy and site-specific proposals, and the responses have been grouped in the ROC to reflect this.
- 5.11 The main issues raised in the responses are:
- Too little public transport;
 - Blackwood town centre (too little variety in shops, too few 'established brands', parking charges, crime and 'antisocial behaviour', business rates, commercial rents);
 - Support for the creation of a new town or market square in Blackwood;
 - Too many new houses proposed in Greater Blackwood;
 - Existing infrastructure is under strain;
 - The need for more health services and leisure facilities;
 - Lack of clarity about funding for projects;
 - The declaration of a 'climate emergency' and the 'decarbonisation' project may affect people's freedom of movement;
 - Loss of 'greenfield' land;
 - Affordable housing and its effect on the local economy.
- 5.12 Representations were also made about farming, active travel and the shortcomings of wind turbines and electric vehicles.
- 5.13 Most respondents supported the Vision, the Strategic Objectives and the Development Strategy. Many of the proposals were supported, but respondents also suggested some changes and additional projects.

Conclusion

- 5.14 The ROC sets out each of the issues with an officer response and a recommendation for any amendments or action. All the proposed amendments have been included in the amended Masterplan (see Appendix 2).

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 Delivery of individual proposals contained within the Masterplan will depend on financial constraints and the implementation of related initiatives e.g. WG Transforming Towns, UK Levelling Up Fund, South Wales Metro, Active Travel Fund. Funding sources identified to date are set out in Section 7 of the Masterplan.
- 6.2 It is assumed that private-sector investment will be required for the implementation of

some proposals, and for facilitating the delivery of schemes involving key sites.

6.3 All representations received have been considered through the appended ROC.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 The Masterplan seeks to reduce inequality by attracting investment and jobs, improving active travel and public transport, and creating or enhancing sustainable community facilities.

7.2 The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) does not suggest that the Masterplan will have a negative effect on people in Greater Blackwood. Individual projects will have their own IIAs once they have been developed in more detail.

[Link to full Integrated Impact Assessment.](#)

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Section 7 of the Masterplan identifies known sources of funding. Cabinet will consider corporate priorities before making decisions about specific projects.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 The consultees listed below have been consulted on the report and their views have been incorporated accordingly.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 2000

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Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services

Background Papers:
[A Foundation for Success](#)

Appendices:
Appendix 1 Report of Public Consultation
Appendix 2 Amended Greater Blackwood Masterplan