



CABINET – 13TH DECEMBER 2023

SUBJECT: DRAFT GREATER BLACKWOOD MASTERPLAN

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To obtain Cabinet approval to consult the public on the Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan between 3 January and 14 February 2024.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Caerphilly County Borough and the wider Cardiff Capital Region is in a period of transformative change. The need for a strategy to coordinate regeneration initiatives and capitalise upon funding streams is urgent to maximise the potential benefits to the County Borough.
- 2.2 The signing of City Deal and the Cardiff Capital Region Investment Fund signalled an unprecedented investment of £1.2 billion, to support the region's economic growth. The investment fund will be used to take forward a wide range of projects and schemes that contribute toward economic growth.
- 2.3 The Greater Blackwood Masterplan seeks to stimulate economic, social and cultural activity, making the most of the area's town centre, employment sites, leisure venues and tourist attractions. It sets out a development strategy and framework for delivering these outcomes and will form the basis for bids from funding streams for projects in the area. The Masterplan now needs to be the subject of public consultation to get input from our communities on the proposals.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Cabinet endorse the Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan, and
- 3.2 That Cabinet agree that the Draft Masterplan be published for comment for a six-week period between 3 January and 14 February 2024.

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 Foundation for Success is reaching its 5-year expiry date, the area masterplans are still valid and will be complemented by a new overarching strategy early in 2024. The area 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, the Council's Regeneration Project Board will prioritise projects and proposals for consideration by Cabinet in line with the Council's Corporate Objectives and delivery will therefore be dependent on decisions made by Cabinet.

Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan

- 5.6 The Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan has been developed with 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.”

- 5.7 The Masterplan Vision is supported by a series of Objectives that set out the key elements of the approach to the area, and these will drive the delivery of a series of projects and actions that are set out in the Masterplan Strategy and Framework. that sets out the principles of how the area will develop over the time.

Consultation to date

- 5.8 Two members’ sessions: 12 November 2021 and 7 October 2022
 Council officers: 28 July up to 11 August 2023
 Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee: 7 November 2023

The following observations were made by ward members:

| Comment | Officer response |
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| In August, a consultation period of 10 days is insufficient. | The masterplan is a complex document to pull together. An initial timeframe was identified for its preparation, but the changes to the Scrutiny Committees meant that the deadlines for Scrutiny and the preceding stages have been brought forward significantly. This has curtailed the consultation window for the report and Masterplan. The Masterplan will be the subject of a 6-week consultation that will allow any comments on the Masterplan to be made and considered before the Masterplan is approved by Council. |
| Town councils should have been consulted. | Town and community councils will be able to comment on the masterplan during the six-week public consultation exercise. |
| No cost-benefit analysis. No estimated costs. Only ‘TBC’ in some places. | The Masterplan is an aspirational document that sets out potential regeneration and development opportunities. Every effort has been made to provide potential costs and funding sources, but for some projects this information is not yet available. |
| Reference is made to the Private Sector which own the Market Square – what discussions have been held with Zip Management can these be defined. | The role of the masterplan is to identify potential regeneration projects and development opportunities to enhance the Masterplan area. It is not the role of the Masterplan to set out detailed plans, as these will be prepared as projects and developments are progressed by the Council. |

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| <p>The Council will need to share some costs with Welsh Government.</p> | <p>The introduction to the Masterplan sets out the role of the Masterplan in terms of maximising the potential for regeneration. This will include funding from Welsh Government sources.</p> |
| <p>What internal discussions have been held between Officers/ Cabinet / Senedd please.</p> | <p>The Council is in constant discussion with Welsh Government over several emerging projects and will continue to have such discussions as other projects come forward.</p> <p>The role of the Masterplan is to identify potential regeneration projects and development opportunities that could be implemented as part of the wider regeneration of the Masterplan Area. The projects and opportunities are then progressed, where appropriate, through the Council's regeneration service. It is as part of that process that detailed discussions with Welsh Government take place.</p> |
| <p>Concern over the night-time economy and anti-social behaviour in Blackwood town centre. Has CCBC spoken to local shops?</p> | <p>No changes made. The Masterplan seeks a successful mix of uses in the night-time economy. The police would have to prevent, stop or investigate anti-social behaviour in Blackwood town centre. A detailed study (which will consider Blackwood's night-time economy) is currently being prepared to further support regeneration in the town.</p> |
| <p>A railway station in Blackwood town centre seems unlikely.</p> | <p>The main references to a new railway station were deleted from the current draft, but a couple of references in tables near the end of the document remained. These have since been deleted.</p> |
| <p>Support for heritage-related development.</p> | <p>Support noted. No change needed.</p> |
| <p>Suggestions for town-centre events.</p> | <p>Support and suggestions noted.</p> |
| <p>Need to increase the number of stalls in Blackwood's market.</p> | <p>Suggestion noted. Project B1 seeks to increase economic activity on and near Blackwood Square.</p> |
| <p>Concern about future of Post Office and Wilkinson. Cinema attracts many people to the town centre.</p> | <p>Observations noted. No change needed.</p> |
| <p>Reference to parking charges and the removal of a bus-station link between Ystrad Mynach and Blackwood.</p> | <p>Comments noted. No change needed.</p> |
| <p>Masterplan could draw attention to well-known musicians and athletes from the area.</p> | <p>Suggestion noted. Council might need to take legal advice before mentioning people and groups by name in a document.</p> |

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| Wanted to check whether Gelligroes Mill still functions as a radio museum. | Officers spoke to a representative of Gelligroes Mill and confirmed that the building has ceased to be a radio museum and now functions only as a candle-making workshop. |
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The Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee's observations are summarised below:

- Pleased to see a reference to a railway station at Crumlin.
- Potential for transport links to Oakdale Business Park.
- Tourist opportunities for Penman Park.
- Possible creation of business units at Navigation Colliery.
- 'Significant issues' with bus services (Scrutiny Committee was advised that bus services are not part of the Masterplan but are recognised as a serious matter).
- Many people are unaware of abandoned railway lines now used as cycle tracks (one allows people to cycle to Cwmcarn Forest Drive, for example).
- Individual projects will need in-depth analysis and detailed estimates of costs.
- Some concern over funding for projects.

The Scrutiny Committee was unanimous in its approval of the recommendations. The draft decision notice is attached to this report.

Conclusion

- 5.9 The central theme of the Masterplan is to engender economic and employment growth through maintaining and enhancing the existing employment base, particularly focussing on growing the visitor economy and enhancing the sub-regional position of Blackwood town centre and attaining additional benefit through integrating these with other services and attractions to maximise the benefits.
- 5.10 By putting in place a framework for investment and regeneration in Greater Blackwood that seeks to take forward these priorities, as well as implementing those of 'A Foundation for Success', the Masterplan has the ability to help bring about transformative change in this part of the County Borough.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in respect of this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Masterplan sets out a series of broad projects and proposals that will deliver a vision for Greater Blackwood. A key underlying theme of the Masterplan is to reduce inequality, particularly through the generation of new job opportunities through enhancements in the existing employment base, the visitor economy and the town centre and foundational economies. The Masterplan also seeks to increase accessibility throughout the masterplan area making it easier for everyone to access their required services and facilities.
- 7.2 The IIA has not identified any problems in the Greater Blackwood Masterplan. Every

detailed project that follows the masterplan will have its own IIA.

Link to the Full IIA

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Funding sources (where known) for specific projects are identified in Section 7 of the Masterplan. Decisions on the funding and delivery of individual projects will be made by Cabinet, based on the Council's Corporate Priorities, and will be reported separately.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 All consultee comments have been considered and, where necessary, incorporated into this report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Act 2000

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Consultees:

Councillor Gary Johnston (Chair, Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)
Councillor Philippa Leonard, (Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection)
Councillor Amanda McConnell (Vice Chair, Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)
Councillor James Pritchard, (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change)

Relevant ward members:

Cllr Mike Adams (Pontllanfraith)
Cllr Marina Chacon-Dawson (Cefn Fforest and Pengam)
Cllr Patricia Cook (Pontllanfraith)
Cllr Elizabeth Davies (Penmaen)
Cllr Nigel Dix (Blackwood)
Cllr Kevin Etheridge (Blackwood)
Cllr Andrew Farina-Childs (Blackwood)
Cllr Colin Gordon (Pontllanfraith)
Cllr Teresa Heron (Cefn Fforest and Pengam)
Cllr Jo Rao (Maesycwmmmer)
Cllr Roy Saralis (Penmaen)

Cllr Carl Thomas (Crumlin)
Cllr Shane Williams (Cefn Fforest and Pengam)
Cllr Kristian Woodland (Crumlin)

Council officers:

David Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services
Mark S. Williams, Corporate Director Economy and Environment
Steve Harris, Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Rhian Kyte, Head of Regeneration and Planning
Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services
Robert Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Mike Headington, Green Spaces and Transport Services Manager
Jeff Reynolds, Sport and Leisure Facilities Manager
Fiona Wilkins and Jane Roberts-Waite, Housing
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy
Ryan Thomas, Planning Services Manager
Allan Dallimore, Regeneration Services Manager
Phil Griffiths, Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager
Clive Campbell, Transportation Engineering Manager
Claire Davies, Private Sector Housing Manager
Jared Lougher, Sport and Leisure Development Manager

Background Papers:

A Foundation for Success

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan
Appendix 2 Draft Decision Notice (Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)