

Pontypridd Town Centre Conservation Area

PONTYPRIDD

Appraisal and Management Plan
November 2011



STRONG HERITAGE | STRONG FUTURE
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Introduction

The aim of this Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan is to assist in the management of the Conservation Area in order to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area, and conserve that special interest which makes it worthy of designation.

Pontypridd Town Centre Conservation Area was designated in 1980 and revised in 2001. The existing Pontypridd Conservation Area boundary consists of two parts which are considered to contain attractive and important components of the townscape within the town centre. This Appraisal and Management Plan proposes an extension of the Conservation Area boundary which will include most of the rest of the town centre and Ynysangharad Park.

This Conservation Area is distinct from the neighbouring Taff and Graigwen Conservation Areas, both of which will be the subject of appraisals and management plans at a later date.

Legal & Policy Context

Conservation Area designation is more concerned with the overall quality and interest of an area, rather than individual buildings, although it is common for such areas to contain a number of Listed Buildings. Designation has a number of implications. Most importantly, the Council is required to give special attention to preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in exercising its planning functions.

Local Authorities are under a duty to “*formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas*” (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (LBCA)) Act 1990, s.71), and these should be reviewed from time to time.

Policy Wales 4th Edition (February 2011) paragraph 6.3.2 also requires Local Authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation or enhancement of Conservation Areas. A character appraisal assists this as it defines and analyses the special qualities and the architectural and historic interest that warranted the Conservation Area designation. Section 6.3.3 states that “Conservation Area character appraisals can assist planning authorities in the exercise of their planning and development control functions”.

The Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan (LDP) (adopted 2nd March 2011) contains policies to guide development in the County Borough until 2021. Policy CS 2 is a core policy setting out how sustainable growth will be achieved in the Southern Strategy Area of the County Borough (including Pontypridd). One of the criteria in the policy for achieving such sustainable growth is “protecting the cultural identity of the Strategy Area by protecting the historic built heritage and the natural environment”.

Policy AW 7 relates to the protection and enhancement of the built environment, including Conservation Areas and their settings. It requires that development proposals are demonstrated to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of such areas.

Policy SSA 1 requires development in the town centre of Pontypridd, inter alia, to respect the culture and heritage of Pontypridd; to be of a high standard of design and to make a positive contribution to the townscape; and to contribute to the enhancement of Ynysangharad Park.

The Local Development Plan is accompanied by a set of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), which provides further details on certain aspects of planning policy. In particular, the “Design in Town Centres” and “Historic Built Environment” SPGs are relevant to Pontypridd Town Centre Conservation Area.

Status of the Conservation Area Appraisal

The above policy documents are important considerations in determining planning applications within the Conservation Area and its setting. This Appraisal is also an important consideration and supports the above documents as it provides details about the features and characteristics of the Conservation Area that make it and the proposed new areas special. It therefore sets out a context for considering the location and design of new developments within Pontypridd Town Centre, to ensure it “preserves or enhances” the area.

The Appraisal also will form the basis for a Conservation Area Management Plan and the proposal to revise the Conservation Area boundary.



Pontypridd Town Centre Conservation Area: boundary as existing

Summary of the Special Interest of the Conservation Area

Key Characteristics

This Appraisal of the Pontypridd Town Centre Conservation Area concludes that the following are the key characteristics of the Conservation Area:

- Linear plan form and layout
- Surrounding landscape of steep valley sides
- Continuous townscape of large scale buildings on Taff Street and Market Street
- Dominance of late 19th and early 20th century architecture
- High quality examples of early 20th century architecture
- The Municipal Buildings, possibly the best piece of architecture in the Conservation Area
- Public open space in Ynysangharad Park
- Prominently sited railway station with high quality platform buildings
- 19th century planned street in Gelliwastad Road
- Consistency of quality materials throughout the building stock of the Conservation Area



* Taff Street in the late 19th century, showing the Butcher's Arms Hotel (now B&M Bargains) on the right.

Location and Setting

Pontypridd sits centrally within the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf, approximately 12 miles north of Cardiff, at the junction of the Rhondda and Taff valleys. The Conservation Area encompasses the majority of the town centre commercial area, while the surrounding valley sides contain residential development in three distinct areas – Graigwen, Graig and Glyntaff, each with distinctive 19th century character. This topography has largely dictated the form of the development of the town, with the town centre developing alongside the rivers at the floor of the valley, with steep residential districts climbing the hillsides.

The wider community of Pontypridd has a population of about 30,000 people.



Pontypridd in its wider context

Historic Development

At the mid-18th century, the junction of the Taff and Rhondda rivers was a relatively undeveloped, rural location which saw its first major development with the building of a bridge by William Edwards in 1756. After finally achieving success on the third attempt, Edwards' bridge was the longest single-span bridge in the world when built, and the locality became known as Newbridge. Despite this architectural showpiece, it was not until the opening of the Glamorganshire Canal in 1794 that the area began to see significant development.

Initially, the neighbouring settlement of Treforest saw the most development, with tin and iron works being in operation there. It was in 1818, with the opening of the Newbridge Chain, Cable and Anchor Works (later Brown Lenox), that real development started, with the location of the town making it an ideal place for a market. The market is said to have been held on its present site since 1805.



** The market in the 1920s*

The arrival of the Taff Vale Railway in 1841 put the town in an ideal position to benefit from the growing industrialisation of the valleys that stretch northwards from Pontypridd, with coal passing through the town on its way to the docks at Cardiff. Alongside this industrialisation, the town was developing in the form which largely survives intact today – Market Street, High Street and Mill Street are all mentioned in the 1841 census.

In 1856 the town's postmaster, Charles Bassett, achieved success in his campaign to change the name of the town from Newbridge back to Pontypridd (from Pont-y-ty-pridd – bridge of the earthen house), and the town's growth and success continued undeterred throughout the remainder of the 19th century, with a population of 6,000 by 1871. By this time there were numerous chapels in the town, and a municipal cemetery opened in Glyntaff in 1871. Following this came the establishment of newspapers – the District Herald, the Chronicle and the Observer, and a population of 20,000 by 1901.

The turn of the 20th century was a time of great prosperity for the town, as evidenced in the survival of many buildings of quality from this period. The most notable, the Municipal Buildings, were designed by Henry Hoare of London and officially opened in 1906.

A further key milestone in the history of Pontypridd was the opening of Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, which was laid out in the 1920s in an Edwardian style and opened in 1923. The Park survives largely intact today with many original features and buildings surviving, including one of the earliest lidos in South Wales.

From the early – mid 20th century onwards, Pontypridd's building stock did not see such a high level of quality new development as previously. Some mid 20th century development, such as the demolition of Penuel Chapel its replacement with Fraternal Parade, and the demolition of the arcade which once connected Market Street with Catherine Street, now seem ill advised and provide the potential for high quality new development. The town, in the early 21st century, still retains much of its former grandeur in the building stock and street layout, which are to benefit from major public realm and townscape enhancement works beginning in 2011.

Spatial Analysis

Plan Form and Layout

Pontypridd retains much of its original plan form and layout, which was clearly heavily influenced by the topography of the area, in particular the locations of the Rivers Taff and Rhondda. The line of Taff Street loosely follows the line of the River Taff, with development on its west side, while Mill Street, historically the principal route from Pontypridd to the Rhondda Valleys, follows the River Rhondda from its junction with the Taff. Interestingly, neither road has properties which face the rivers, and the town has a feel of having its back turned on these rivers. It is probably that the rivers would have been rather dark and dirty at the time the town was developing, due to the prominence of industrial activity in the area and the disposal of pumped minewater directly in to the rivers, and as such they would have detracted from the environment within the town.

Market Street sits on an elevated piece of land adjacent to Taff Street, and is the historic and present day site of the market. This location may have been chosen to avoid potential flooding lower down on Taff Street and Mill Street.

The principal historic thoroughfare, Taff Street, now has traffic restrictions in place and Gelliwastad Road has replaced it as the main through-route for traffic. The line of Gelliwastad Road has roughly the same linear form as Taff Street, emphasising the linear nature of the town's layout.

At the southern end of the Conservation Area, Broadway/Sardis Road is the principal thoroughfare and is essentially a modern route which follows the line of the former tramway, replacing High Street which previously linked the town centre with the Graig area of the town.

The largest public space in Pontypridd town centre is Ynysangharad Park, which sits on flat ground to the east of the town centre on the other side of the River Taff. The park is connected to the town by a footbridge at the southern end of Taff Street and the main road over Victoria Bridge at the northern end.

Landmarks, Focal Points and Views

In the southern part of the Conservation Area, the former Clarence Hotel, recently known as Angharad's, provides a landmark feature at this entrance to the town, with the solid mass of the bingo hall behind. The northern elevation of the former bingo hall (formerly County Cinema) completely dominates that end of Taff Street. From the surrounding valleys, perhaps the most visually dominant feature of Pontypridd is St Catherine's Church, whose tower is prominent on the skyline of the town, in views from the surrounding hills.



Looking up Gelliwastad Road, with St Catherine's Church on the left

Within the town centre itself, focal points are provided at the junctions of Taff and Mill Streets, Taff Street and Peniel Lane and the two junctions between Taff and Market Streets. From within Taff Street, the large scale of the buildings gives this street a sense of enclosure which is enhanced by an awareness of the steep hillsides surrounding the town. From this and the surrounding streets, the neighbouring valley sides are a constant reminder of Pontypridd's valley location.

Streetscape vistas of note include that looking up Gelliwastad Road towards the impressive presence of the Municipal Buildings, and those in both directions up and down Taff Street, where the scale and variety of building types give a real sense of Victorian character to the street.

Ynysangharad Park forms a principal landscape focal point, and largely retains its character as an Edwardian style public park.

Buildings of the Conservation Area

The Conservation Area covers a large part of the town centre of Pontypridd, and as such there is a wide variety of building types and styles with the area. There are very few residential buildings in the town centre itself, and the character is largely derived from the commercial buildings which line the streets, and given the nature of commerce during the Victorian era when the town was developing, this character is rather varied. Taff Street and Market Street are characterised by large, continuous scale commercial buildings of generally three or four storeys, while Gelliwastad Road and Grove contain substantial 19th century terraced houses. Additionally, Gelliwastad Road contains four listed church buildings, giving that road a distinct character which relates directly to the fact that it is one of the town's few 'planned' streets. The area around Station Square has seen incremental change over the course of the 20th century and has lost some key buildings, but does retain some early 20th century key buildings. Courthouse Street contains some good quality public buildings, and these are a worthy addition to the Conservation Area.

Pontypridd's buildings showcase a variety of materials. There is much Pennant sandstone, often with brick dressings to window and door openings, and some with ashlar dressings. Others, the Market Buildings for example, are built in yellow brick with some red brick detailing and stone dressings to openings. Render is less commonplace in Pontypridd than stone and brick, but several prominent buildings such as the former Post Office in Station Square and the former bingo hall do have rendered elevations.

Pontypridd's overall character is of a 19th century town with a number of good quality early 20th century buildings suggesting a period of economic success around the turn of the century. The former Post Office in Station Square, the former Criterion Public House, the Lido in Ynysangharad Park, and the Pontypridd Observer building in Market Street, as well as others, all exhibit an early 20th century architectural confidence which is displayed in the level of high quality detail on their façades.

Although many buildings in the town centre have lost their original shopfronts or ground floor elevations, the casual visitor will find, if they cast their eyes to the upper levels, that a surprising level of original historic features and detailing exists in Pontypridd, although they are now in need of some restorative attention.

Listed Buildings

Buildings in Wales that are considered to be of national significance are added to the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, and thus become 'Listed Buildings'. Listed buildings are protected by law and any works of alteration, extension or demolition require express Listed Building Consent. More information can be sought from Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's Regeneration and Planning Division.

Pontypridd Town Centre Conservation Area currently has 29 statutorily listed buildings, three of which are listed at Grade II*. These are St Catherine's Church on Gelliwastad Road, the Municipal Buildings, and the Evan and James James Memorial in Ynysangharad Park.

The rest of this Conservation Area's listed buildings are listed at Grade II.

William Edwards' Old Bridge, as mentioned earlier in this document, is both listed at Grade I and a Scheduled Monument, but falls within the Taff Conservation Area.



** The Municipal Buildings, listed Grade II**



The Register Office on Courthouse Street (proposed extension to the Conservation Area), listed Grade II

Key Unlisted Buildings

As well as the Town Centre Conservation Area's 29 listed buildings, there are a large number of unlisted buildings which, while they may not meet the criteria for national designation, can be of considerable local interest and are worthy of retention. Such buildings make a strong contribution to and help to shape and define the character of the Conservation Area.

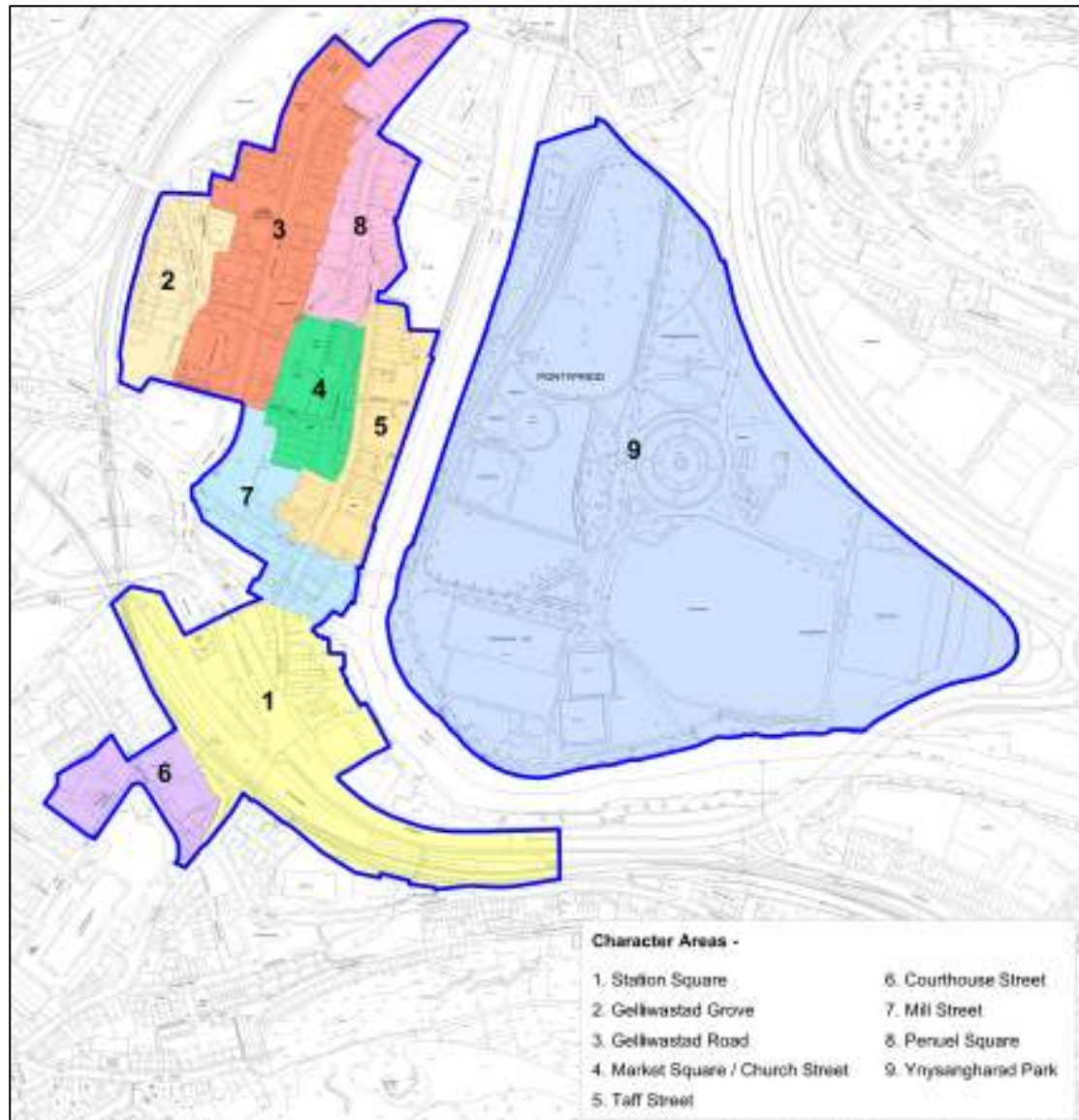
Individual unlisted buildings of merit are identified in each Character Area analysis section, but those of particular worth in the context of the Conservation Area as a whole include -

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- Former Post Office, Station Square
 - Ashgrove House
 - Gelliwastad Grove terraces
 - Gelliwastad House
 - Former Butcher's Arms Hotel
 - Barclays Bank
 - 69 Taff Street

Ynysangharad Park is included on the Cadw/ICOMOS UK Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales at Grade II. This designation is a material consideration in the planning process.

Character Area Analysis

For the purposes of this Appraisal, the existing and proposed Conservation Area has been divided into nine distinct character areas. The following section contains an analysis of each section individually.



Map showing the proposed boundary and character areas as identified

Character Area 1: Station Square

This area is the southern “gateway” to the town centre, and is dominated by the station and its long, curved platform. The modern carriageway (Broadway/ Sardis Road) splits the character area and crosses the High Street, which slopes up the hill south west towards the Graig and downwards north into the town centre.

Sardis Road and Broadway follow the route of a previous Tram Road linking to nearby collieries. There were several buildings next to the north east side of the station that were demolished for road widening around 1990 (including the Half Moon public house and White Palace cinema).

As well as the station, the character area contains shops and other commercial premises on Broadway and High Street, and the listed Sardis Chapel.

Key Characteristics

- The unusual free Egyptian revival style architecture of the terracotta station buildings and its long platform, which was said to have been the longest in the world when built.
- The terrace of commercial properties on the north east side of High Street and Broadway. Many of the buildings retain original historic details, including the ornately detailed former Criterion Public House.

Designated Assets

- Eglwys Gymraeg Sardis/ Sardis Chapel - Grade II
- Pontypridd Railway Station - Grade II
- Railway Bridge beneath Pontypridd Railway Station - Grade II
- Criterion Public House (now Morgan’s Tavern) - Grade II



An ornate gateway forming part of the Grade II listed platform buildings at Pontypridd Station

Undesignated Assets

- Former Post Office Building (now Wetherspoon's Public House)
- Former Clarence Hotel (Angharad's Building)
- Former County Cinema (Bingo Hall)
- Former White Hart Public House (now Soul Suite)

Opportunities for Enhancement

- Improvement of shopfronts, including removal/ replacement of inappropriate signs
- Works to improve the quality/ maintenance of the station
- Improving the station's relationship with the rest of the town centre
- Improvement of the public realm
- Re-use of vacant buildings
- Improvement of signage on commercial properties



The former Post Office building (above), a key unlisted building within the Conservation Area, which retains original features including cast iron hoppers (right).



Character Area 2: Gelliwastad Grove

This area was developed in the latter half of the 19th century and mostly contains large Victorian residential dwellings. The majority of buildings are still in use as residential properties, however the area also includes Council Offices (Llwyn Castan) and the town's library.

Gelliwastad Grove is an important link between the town centre and the Victorian suburb of Graigwen. The main terrace on the road is to the west of Gelliwastad Grove and is elevated overlooking the town. The library and Llwyn Castan are to the north-east of Gelliwastad Grove and are accessed from Library Road. Gelliwastad Grove rises up and over the railway line. Ashgrove House is a large Victorian house which is currently (2011) being restored to a single residence after a period of office use. Ashgrove House is situated at the same level as nos. 1 – 11 Gelliwastad Grove and is therefore much higher than land to the south and east.

Key Characteristics

- Dominant pair of two and three storey terraces on elevated site
- On the eastern side of Gelliwastad Grove, between this road and Library Road, the area is partially dominated by a stone retaining wall with Gelliwastad Grove on the upper level.
- The library – a distinctive 19th century public building
- Attractive stone boundary walls and large mature trees



** An historic photograph showing the terraces on Gelliwastad Grove*

Designated Assets

- There are no listed buildings or scheduled monuments within this character area.

Undesignated Assets

- The library, with its ornamental bust of Shakespeare
- Ashgrove House
- Attractive retaining walls and terraced gardens
- Wide variety of mature trees and shrubbery on Gelliwastad Grove

Opportunities for Enhancement

- Reinstatement of lost historic features
- Removal/improvement of unsympathetic dormers, extensions, outbuildings and boundary treatments.



The bust of William Shakespeare above the original entrance to Pontypridd Library

Character Area 3: Gelliwastad Road

Gelliwastad Road forms a major thoroughfare within the town centre. It was laid out towards the end of the 19th century linking Catherine Street in the south with Morgan Street in the north, crossing previously undeveloped land associated with Gelliwastad House. The new road created an alternative north-south link through Pontypridd, altering its historically linear form which traditionally focussed movement and development on Taff Street.

Large houses along with religious and civic buildings developed along the road, which mostly still remain. The street has now been incorporated into the central area of Pontypridd, with professional offices replacing residential uses.

The construction of the Sardis Road Bridge in 1967 the widening of Gelliwastad Road to three lanes in 1990-93, and the introduction of traffic restrictions on Taff Street in recent years, have made Gelliwastad Road the main vehicular route through the town centre.

Key Characteristics

- A broad, straight street with consistent architectural style and a planned and formal character, in contrast to surrounding, older streets;
- The street is lined with late 19th century terraced houses with individual detailing, generally constructed with pennant stone with brick or stone detailing;
- Most houses have small front gardens bounded by stone walls and matching modern railings;
- Older terraces at southern end have rendered facades, some with ground floor shopfronts;
- Gelliwastad House is the oldest building in the street, and is set back from the main building line;
- The Victorian Gothic St Catherine's church is the most prominent building on the street and a significant landmark in Pontypridd;
- Three other large Victorian church buildings contribute significantly more formal and civic character of the street;
- The neo classical Municipal Buildings at the northern end has a strong presence within the streetscene, closing the vista and creating strong civic urban character.



Designated Assets

- St Catherine's Church, grade II* (right)
- St Catherine's Church Parish Rooms, grade II
- Pontypridd United Church and Hall, grade II
- St David's Church and Hall, grade II
- Muni Arts Centre, formerly Wesley Church, grade II
- Municipal Buildings, grade II*

Undesignated Assets

- Gelliwastad House
- Late 19th century terraces

Opportunities for Enhancement

- Restoration of lost historic features such as original windows.
- Improved advert signage more appropriate to the character of the street.
- Enhancement of the setting and condition of Gelliwastad House.
- Enhancement of the public realm through widened pavements, re-introduction of street trees etc.
- Continuance of uniform walls and railings (put in place following widening scheme)



Ornate ironwork on an historic veranda on Gelliwastad Road

Character Area 4: Market Street and Church Street

Other than the Park, Market Street is the foremost public space in Pontypridd town centre, and reflects the town's late 19th/early 20th century heyday through its high quality surviving architecture. The space is dominated by the market buildings, which comprise a variety of different individual buildings, mostly listed, on a scale which reflect the town's status as the principal market town in the area. Market Street is also the home of the outdoor market, and remains the most high status street in Pontypridd in terms of its architecture.

Church Street connects Market Street to Gelliwastad Road, and it is assumed that the street was laid out around the time of the building of St. Catherine's Church in 1868. Church Street continues the high quality architecture of Market Street, in particular with the former Co-op building, with its inter-war Neo-Classicism.

This character area, along with most of the rest of the town centre, retains its original 19th century street layout with very little alteration, and it is likely that the layout of Market Street adjacent to Taff Street lower down reflects the original topography of the land, and perhaps a desire to have the market itself on higher ground.



The townscape of Market Street, containing a number of listed buildings

Key Characteristics

- High quality architecture
- High quality materials – stone, different types of brick, timber windows, natural slate
- Large scale public buildings
- Focal point for town centre, and historical market place
- Vistas looking north along Market Street and west along Church Street

Designated Assets

- Pontypridd Observer Building – Grade II
- Blueberry Hotel – Grade II
- Market Chambers and Clothes Market – Grade II
- Old Market Hall – Grade II
- Lloyds TSB Bank – Grade II
- Former Co-op Building – Grade II

Undesignated Assets

- No 25 Market Street (rear of former Gwilym Evans department store building)
- Steps between no.s 19 & 20 with ornate overthrow lantern

Opportunities for Enhancement

- Repair and restoration work to the upper floors of buildings
- Reinstatement of lost features such as oriel windows
- Re-use and restoration of the former Town Hall theatre would greatly improve the visual amenity of the building and area
- Shopfronts, in particular on the east side of Market Street, could be improved to be more in keeping with the character of the area

Character Area 5: Taff Street

Taff Street is the principal historic thoroughfare in Pontypridd town centre, and this is reflected in the scale and architecture of the buildings which line it on both sides throughout the section of it in this character area. The scale of the buildings on Taff Street – generally three storeys or more – gives a sense of enclosure and continuity to the townscape which sets this street apart as the most important commercial space in the town.

The commercial dominance has been accentuated through the traffic restrictions in place in the street, and also through the quality of the street's architecture. Banks, shops, hotels and other building types represent the variety, with a variety of both styles and materials that give this character area its impressive townscape and distinctiveness.

Key Characteristics

- Large scale buildings – generally three or four storeys
- Good quality commercial architecture – banks, hotels etc.
- Sense of enclosure created by relatively narrow street and tall buildings
- Good quality street scene
- Late 19th/early 20th century architectural character



Taff Street displays a variety of building type and scale

Designated Assets

- NatWest Bank – Grade II

Unlisted Buildings of Merit

- Former Butchers Arms Hotel
- 85 Taff Street
- 88 Taff Street
- Barclays Bank
- Former Gwilym Evans department store
- The Prince's
- Clwb Y Bont, former brewery

Opportunities for Enhancement

- Replacement of unsympathetic shopfronts
- Re-use of upper floors
- Restoration of lost historic architectural features
- Improved linkages with Ynysangharad Park and the river

Character Area 6: Courthouse Street

This area, a proposed addition to the Conservation Area, is situated on the Graig side of the railway line and would be the only part of the Conservation Area on the western side of the railway.

The street contains a number of large, impressive buildings including a 19th century school building (with planning permission for conversion to flats), the former Registry Office, the original Court House building and a Masonic Hall. In addition to these public buildings, there are some large 19th century villas as well as some smaller residential properties.

It is proposed to include the public buildings at the southern end of the street in the Conservation Area, in recognition of their architectural and historic merit, and their original functional connections to the town centre.



Civic buildings lining the northern side of Courthouse Street

Key Characteristics

- Good quality 19th century public buildings
- Large retaining wall between the buildings on Courthouse Street and Pontypridd Station
- Variety of good quality building materials

Designated Assets

- Former Pontypridd Registry Office – Grade II

Undesignated Assets

- The Court House building
- The Masonic Hall

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- The cluster of semi-public and civic buildings dating from the late 19th/early 20th centuries
 - Stone boundary and retaining walls.

Opportunities for Enhancement

- Removal and replacement of unsympathetic modern alterations, including replacement windows and change of materials for roofs and removal of security grilles.



Quality architectural detailing on the Masonic Lodge on Courthouse Street

Character Area 7: Lower Taff Street and Mill Street

This area includes parts of Mill Street and Taff Street, and contains shops and other commercial premises. This area of Mill Street mainly consists of Victorian buildings. It was once a through road and would have been the main road from the town centre leading towards the Rhondda Valleys. Today this part of Mill Street is separated from the rest of it by the raised Catherine Street, although there is a well used pedestrian subway linking the two.

There were once further buildings in this character area facing Mill Street, Catherine Street and Church Street. In the late 19th Century, an Arcade had also been constructed linking Catherine Street and Market Street. These have now been demolished and the land is used as a car park and turning area.

The River Rhondda flows beneath Taff Street at this point and modern shops have been built over the river on either side of the original bridge. This character area also contains a few older buildings adjacent to the modern shops.

Key Characteristics

- 19th century buildings and original street layout remain on this part of Mill Street
- The varying heights and sizes of buildings on Mill Street create an interesting townscape

Designated Assets

None

Undesignated Assets

- Post Office Building, Mill Street
- 49 Mill Street

Opportunities for Enhancement

- Improvement of shopfronts, including removal/ replacement of inappropriate signage
- Improvement of the public realm, including the creation of a “square” at the end of west end of Mill Street
- Potential opportunity to redevelop the car park area

Character Area 8: Penuel Square

Penuel Square forms part of the town centre shopping area and is centred on a space formed in Taff Street at its junction with Penuel Lane. The character area also includes the buildings along Taff Street on its west side opposite the Taff Vale Precinct. Commercial buildings face Taff Street and the square, whereas Penuel Lane, which climbs up to Gelliwastad Road, has no buildings formally addressing it. The listed drinking fountain in the middle of the square and tree give the area some identity and a focal point, although currently the square suffers from a slight air of neglect and decay. Penuel Lane gets its name from Penuel Chapel, which stood where Fraternal Parade is now located (a 1960s/70s commercial development).

Key Characteristics

- The major characteristic of the area is the widening in Taff Street which accommodates the fountain.
- The steepness of Penuel Lane, an historic route which formerly led to Gelliwastad House, is also considered to add to the character of the area.
- The area contains some distinctive buildings, in particular no.69 Taff Street, an elaborate Art Nouveau confection, and the large YMCA building
- A cluster of Victorian buildings at the northern end of Taff Street
- Change of character towards top end of Taff Street and the edge of the commercial area
- Street furniture and artworks at the junction of Taff Street and Crossbrook Street

Designated Assets

- Penuel Square Drinking Fountain – Grade II

Undesignated Assets

- The YMCA – a large imposing building with some interesting neo-Baroque detailing
- Nos. 34, 35 and 35a Taff Street.
- 17, 18 Taff Street (Peacocks)
- 69 Taff Street



The Grade II listed fountain in Penuel Square

Opportunities for Enhancement

- Repair of buildings, and replacement of unsympathetic uPVC windows and shopfronts
- Redevelopment of Fraternal Parade
- Repair of listed fountain

Character Area 9: Ynysangharad Park

Ynysangharad Park, which is a proposed addition to the Conservation Area, is the largest open space in Pontypridd. The park was opened in the 1920s as a war memorial park, and laid out in an Edwardian style. The park contains landscape and sports features including cricket, tennis and rugby / football pitches, a miniature golf course and a lido.

The park is built on the mainly flat land adjacent to the River Taff on land previously associated with Ynysangharad House. The house was owned by local industrialist Gordon Lenox in the late 19th century and its lands were increasingly used for public recreation and events prior to its purchase for a park in 1919.

The park was reduced to its current size by the construction of the A470 in the early 1970s. This also resulted in the demolition of the original Ynysangharad House.

Ynysangharad Park is a Registered Historic Park & Garden, at Grade II. A description of many of its individual features is available in the Glamorgan volume of the *Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales*.

Key Characteristics

- Formal features including long tree lined avenues which link the main entrances in the north and west with the central area, lined with large Oak, Plane and Chestnut trees;
- Large number of trees of various ages, both deciduous and coniferous;
- Various landscape features including a sunken Italian garden, a circular sunken garden with a Band Stand, and traditionally laid out flower beds;
- Modern stone pillars and railings around the northern boundary on Bridge Street;
- Modern bridge over the River Taff, constructed in 1991, linking the park with Taff Street (the original was damaged in a flood);
- Original buildings including the now disused Arts and Crafts Lido, one of the earliest lidos in South Wales, and other pavilions;
- Sports pitches including Tennis, Cricket, Football and Bowls on the southern area, with modern cricket pavilion;
- Original sunken garden

Designated Assets

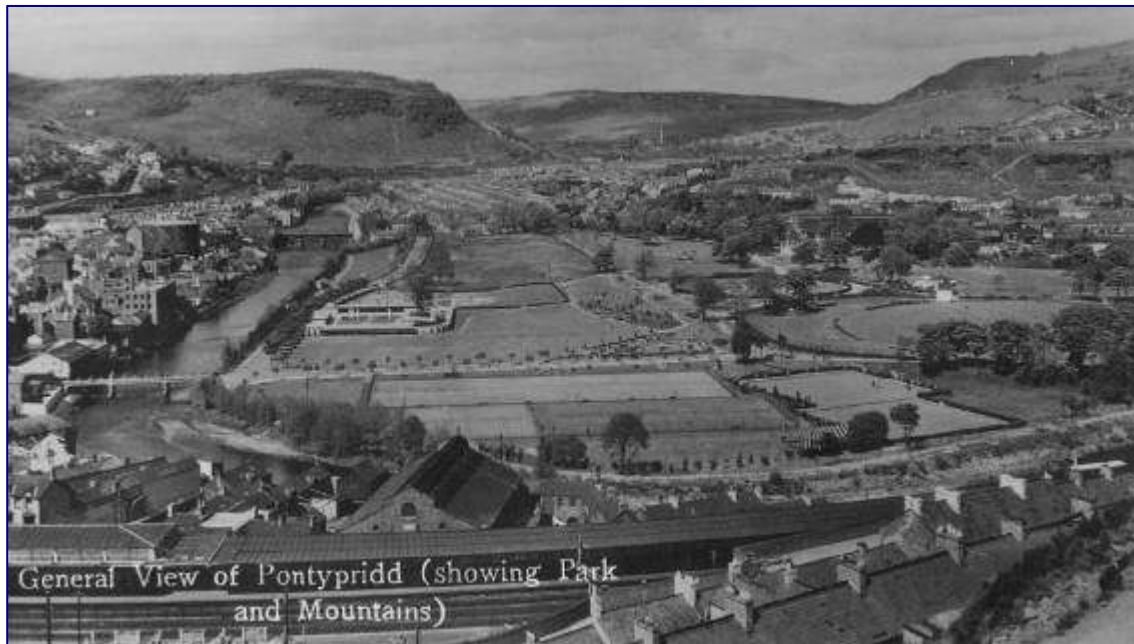
- The Park is a Grade II Registered Historic Park and Garden
- Lido, grade II
- Memorial to Evan and James James, grade II*

Undesignated Assets

- Numerous large trees of great character and landscape value;
- Various built features including small pavilions and the bandstand;
- Parts of walls belonging to the walled garden of the original Ynysangharad House.

Opportunities for Enhancement

- Repair and restoration of existing buildings, with opportunity for additional facilities such as a park café and horticultural facility;
- Restoration of the disused Lido. Funding has been acquired to progress detailed design;
- The arrival point from the river bridge could be considerably improved to create a better welcome to the park.
- Repair and reinstatement of historic park features and landscaping;
- Enhancement of areas adjacent to the River Taff, ensuring greater integration of the park and town



** An historic view of Pontypridd showing Ynysangharad Park*

Management Plan

Format of the Management Proposals

The appraisal part of this document has identified the features of the Pontypridd Town Centre Conservation Area that contribute to the special architectural and historic character of the area, those features and areas which it is considered should be added to the Conservation Area. It has also identified areas where there are opportunities for enhancement. These features and characteristics and the principal issues which arise from them form the basis for these management proposals outlined here.

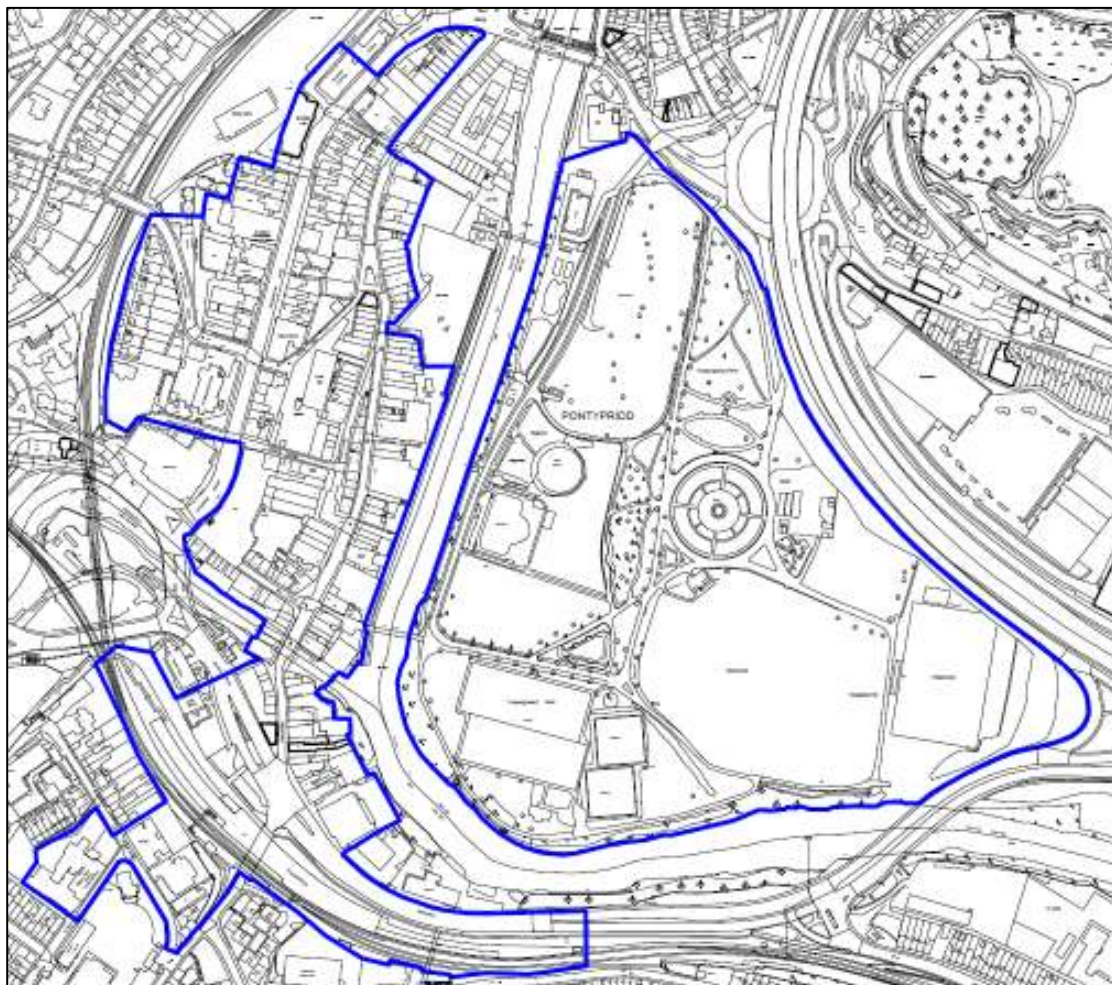
The proposals for the management of the Conservation Area are considered to support the implementation of Policy AW 7 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan, for the *Protection and Enhancement of the Built Environment*.

Key Issues

Boundary changes

The Pontypridd Town Centre Conservation Area was designated in 1980 and the boundary was revised in 2001. This Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has considered the boundary further and recommends that the boundary be redrawn to include most of the town centre, including the park. The reasons for this are as follows:

- This would allow the two existing areas of the Conservation Area to be joined and certain “chunks” of the shopping streets that have previously been omitted to be included. Whilst these are not in some cases the most attractive areas of townscape, this does allow for more consistency in the consideration of development within the town centre.
- It would allow part of Mill Street to be included, which includes some attractive older buildings and an interesting varied roofscape.
- It allows part of the Courthouse Street area to be included which contains some fine older civic buildings.
- It allows the Registered Historic Park to be included. Whilst the Historic Park status is a material consideration in deciding planning applications, Conservation Area status would give the park and its buildings stronger protection.



Repair and reinstatement of historic features and improvement of shopfronts and signage

A look around Pontypridd Town Centre reveals that many buildings retain interesting historic features. However, a significant number of buildings would benefit from the repair and reinstatement of historic features. The Council should support this aim through ensuring consistency in the determination of planning applications which support this objective.

Many of the buildings would also benefit from the replacement of their shopfronts and signage with ones that are more sympathetic to the character of the buildings they form a part of, and the Conservation Area as a whole.

In respect of the commercial properties, there are currently grants available through the Townscape Enhancement Programme (TEP) until December 2014 which can assist with the above. It is anticipated that this programme will result in significant improvements within the Town Centre.

In respect of the enhancement of properties, guidance is provided on materials and colours later in this document.



Unsympathetic shopfronts can have a detrimental impact on the streetscape

An example where original, ornate shopfront features survive but suffer from poor maintenance, excessive cables and wiring and unsympathetic signage



Restricting “Permitted Development” rights

Compared to other buildings in the area, dwellinghouses have considerable rights to carry out development without applying for planning permission under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. Scope therefore exists to alter and extend dwellinghouses in an unsympathetic manner, without needing the benefit of express planning permission. This could significantly contribute to the erosion of the character of the residential parts of the Conservation Area.

To this end, an Article 4(2) Direction is proposed under the above Order to remove rights to carry out certain works to dwellinghouses without obtaining express planning permission first. This is likely to be put forward at a later date, in order to allow consideration of whether such a direction is required within other Conservation Areas in Pontypridd.

An Article 4(1) Direction under the General Permitted Development Order to restrict rights in respect of other properties is not considered necessary at this time, as such properties have much more limited rights to develop without obtaining planning permission. However, the Council will monitor the potential need for this in the future.

Works to improve the Public Realm

As part of a £10.5M regeneration scheme, considerable investment is being made into enhancing Pontypridd’s public realm. The regeneration scheme includes complete refurbishment of the public realm, with new paving, high quality street furniture and lighting, and attractive features, creating an entirely new vibrant image of the town centre. Regeneration improvements will stretch the length of Taff Street, Market Street, High Street, Mill Street and Church Street.

Works to improve Pontypridd Station

Listed Building Consent has been granted to carry out improvement works to the canopy of the station and works to allow the reinstatement of the disused platform. Such work is considered beneficial to the appearance of the Conservation Area, particularly as the station is the first impression train passengers get of Pontypridd Town Centre, and will enhance visitors’ experiences. Further plans to enhance the station are being developed.

Design and layout of new developments

Some sites have been identified as potential redevelopment opportunities within the Appraisal. However, their development largely depends on the will of their owners and their ability to finance it.

The purpose of Conservation Area designation is to conserve the special architectural or historic interest that gives the area its character and makes it unique. However, development of a more contemporary character will also be supported, providing it takes account of the Conservation Area at all stages of the development, paying particular attention to the details of design, layout, materials etc. This ensures that good modern development can take place while respecting the context of the area.

Monitoring

This appraisal and management plan has been produced as part of a process of review of all Conservation Areas within Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Council will, from time to time, continue to review the Conservation Areas and update appraisals and management plans where needed.

In addition to this, the situation in Pontypridd Town Centre will be continually monitored through the assessment of applications for planning permission and conservation area consent, and consideration will be given to whether any future actions are needed.

Enforcement

The Council's Conservation, Planning and Enforcement Officers can pursue enforcement action where development has taken place without express consent where it is required. Through these measures, the Council can continue to ensure the long term conservation of Pontypridd Town Centre. The Council also has the power to impose Urgent Works Notices under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to secure works to listed buildings where the short term preservation of a building is under threat, although it is anticipated that these will only be used in very limited circumstances.

Materials

Pontypridd town centre, and especially Taff Street and Market Street, are characterised by a broad range of building types, sizes and styles built in an ad hoc fashion during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The resulting character is one of mixed organic development, with no prominent formal style themes. A large range of materials are present, with a number of themes and pallets emerging.

Stone fronted buildings

Pennant stone is the predominant building material within the Town Centre Conservation Area, and is especially characteristic of late 19th century residential buildings on Gelliwastad Road, Gelliwastad Grove.

Many pennant stone buildings make use of other materials within their frontage, notable red and buff coloured bricks or ashlar for details such as window surrounds and quoins.

Brick fronted buildings

The Taff street area in particular contains many brick fronted buildings with a variety of brick type and colour, although there is a predominance of smooth red and buff coloured brick.

Many brick buildings incorporate significant elements of ashlar or other stone for decorative features, window surrounds and coping.



The grade II listed NatWest Bank, where a mixture of brick, stone and natural slate has been used to great effect, with original timber windows surviving.

Other materials

Many buildings within the conservation area retain original materials which reflect the period within which they were built. This includes natural slate roofing and timber doors, windows and shopfronts.

A small number of buildings incorporate render within their facades either as an original feature or a modern alteration (for example where an historic oriel window has been removed).

Materials within new developments

New developments within Conservation Areas should have regard to the desire to 'preserve or enhance' the character of the conservation area.

When choosing materials for new buildings, consideration should be given to the type, quality and consistency of materials within the surrounding area.

Where neighbouring buildings have a strong and consistent pallet of materials, such as on Gelliwastad Road, new development should seek to use similar or complimentary materials in order to maintain the street's existing character.

Where there are a variety of materials used within adjacent buildings, materials should be chosen which contribute positively to the mixed character of the street. Modern materials are more likely to be acceptable in such locations where they are demonstrated to be appropriate and of a high level of quality is achieved.

Renovations and alterations to existing buildings

Where existing buildings are of a high quality, and contribute to the character of the conservation area, property owners should seek to use traditional materials appropriate to the individual building, and ideally those original to the building.

Colours

The colour palette of Pontypridd is dominated by the earthy colours present in the materials used to construct the buildings. These primarily consist of brown / red pennant sandstone, deep red and buff coloured bricks and dark grey slate roofs.

Few buildings are rendered, and where they are colours tend to be neutral and pale, often off white, cream or light grey.

Painted features also have a range of colours. Timber windows and window surrounds are typically white or off white dominating, although where colour is present, especially on C19th buildings, typical Victorian colours such as deep greens, crimson and black are common.

Shop fronts and signs have a wide range of colours. Victorian shop fronts typically have dark, subdued colours with deep green being common throughout the town.

When applying colour to existing buildings and shopfronts, owners should have regard to the original character of the building and the period within which it was built. Painting over originally exposed building materials should be avoided.

New developments should have regard to the colours present within the surrounding streetscape.