

Bute Town

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL & CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN



Supplementary Planning Guidance to the LDP

Prepared March 2015

Adopted October 2015

A greener place to live, work and visit
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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg, ac mewn ieithoedd a fformatau eraill ar gais.
This document is available in Welsh, and in other languages and formats on request.

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ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

At a Meeting of Council on 6th October 2015, this document was formally adopted as supplementary planning guidance to the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021 Adopted November 2010 (LDP).

This document now supersedes the 'Bute Town Conservation Area Design Guide' and 'Bute Town Conservation Area Enhancement Plan' (August 2005), which have both been subsequently cancelled.

At a meeting of Planning Committee on 11th February 2015 it was resolved to extend and re-align the Bute Town Conservation Area boundary. The Committee further resolved to replace the Article 4 Direction with a new, extended Article 4(2) Direction boundary, for the proper and sustainable management of the historic environment.

This document is divided into two parts, Part 1 (the Conservation Area Appraisal) and Part 2 (the Conservation Area Management Plan).

The Conservation Area Appraisal records and analyses the various features that give the Bute Town Conservation Area its special architectural and historic interest. These features are noted, described, and marked on the Conservation Area Appraisal plans along with written commentary on how they contribute to the special interest of the Conservation Area. There is a presumption that all of these features should be "preserved or enhanced", as required by the legislation.

The Conservation Area Management Plan is based upon the negative factors and summary of issues identified in Part 1 and sets out proposals and policies that can preserve and enhance the character or appearance of the Bute Town Conservation Area. The recommendations include proposals for enhancement and policies for the avoidance of harmful change.

The Conservation Area Management Plan is written with the awareness that in managing local Conservation Areas the Council's resources are limited and therefore need to be prioritised. Financial constraints on the Council mean that proposals for which it is responsible may take longer than is desirable to implement. However, the Council will continue to encourage improvements to the Conservation Area in co-operation with property owners, groups and local businesses.

The document is intended for use by planning officers, developers, property owners and landowners to ensure that the special character is not eroded, but rather preserved and enhanced through development activity. The survey work for the appraisal was undertaken during October / November 2014. It should be noted that the appraisal does not record all features of interest. The reader should not assume that the omission of any building, feature or space from this appraisal means that it is not significant; if in doubt, please contact Caerphilly County Borough Council - contact details can be found at the end of this document.

This document formed part of a local consultation on an appraisal of the Bute Town Conservation Area and the policies and proposals the Council propose to enhance and protect it. If you would like to contribute and share information on the history of the area, or need any further information, please contact the Conservation & Design Officer at the address provided at the end of this document.



PART 1: CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Bute Town, Rhymney was designated as a Conservation Area on the 20th October 1972 in recognition that it has special interest in the context of the history of the industrial growth of the valleys and because of its unique character as one of the earliest examples of planned industrial housing in the South Wales valleys. The Article 4 Direction for the area, which serves to remove some permitted development rights of householders has been in place since April 1979.

1.2 Context

Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest. A decision to designate a Conservation Area is made after an appraisal of the area and an assessment of its character. This assessment can extend beyond the buildings alone and include road layouts, street scenes, trees and green areas, all of which contribute to the quality of an area. Designation gives special protection to this character and to achieve this, the council has extra controls over demolition, minor developments and the protection of trees.

1.3 Conservation Area Appraisals

The Council has a duty to review Conservation Areas to establish whether their boundaries need amendment and to identify potential measures for enhancing and protecting the Conservation Area. This appraisal provides an opportunity to review the boundary of the Conservation Area; to identify the character of the Area and some opportunities for its enhancement; and then, following consultation (should the local authority wish) to adopt the appraisal and its supporting guidance.

1.4 Policy Context

An important part of the appraisal is to define the character of the Conservation Area, and to prepare guidance, together with an appropriate framework for action. This can be supported by parallel policies within the statutory planning framework. The designation of conservation areas is included in Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Other policies relevant to the designation of the Bute Town Conservation Area include:

Strategy Policy SP6 'Place Making' in the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021 (Adopted November 2010) and Chapter 6 'Conserving the Historic Environment' of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 7) July 2014. In addition, alterations to St Aidan's Church would fall under the Ecclesiastical Exemption Order 1994 and any alterations would be subject to a Church in Wales faculty application.

Further relevant policies are also included in the Bibliography at the end of this document.

1.5 Boundary Review

One of the key elements of a Conservation Area Appraisal is to review the boundary to ensure that the Conservation Area continues to demonstrate clear architectural and historic interest. The review also takes the opportunity to consider whether the Conservation Area boundary should be extended or reduced, or whether there remains justification for retaining its designation if the character or appearance of an area has been diluted.

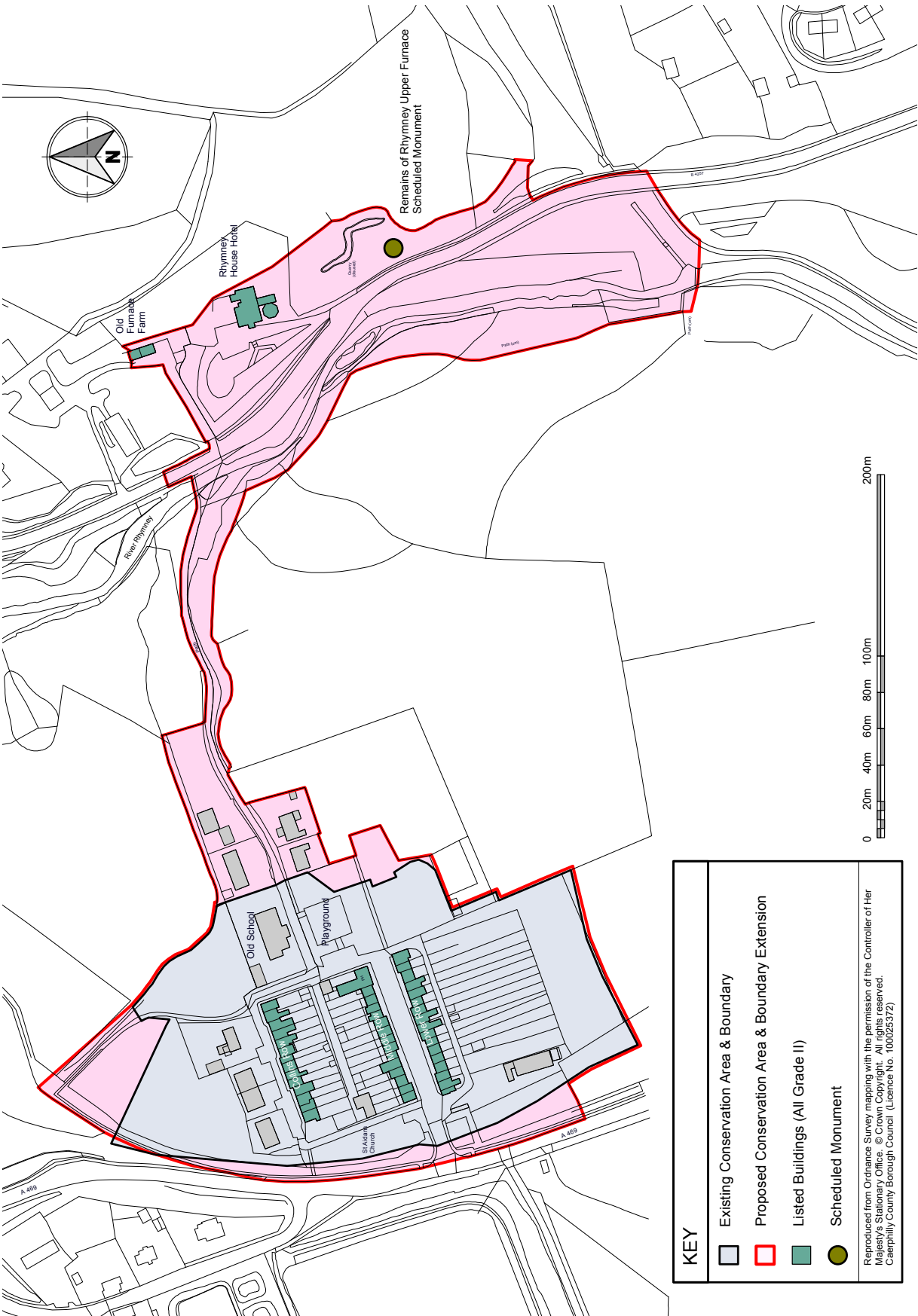
The core of the Bute Town Conservation Area is already well protected by the existing Conservation Area and the inclusion of the three terraced rows in their entirety on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (Listed Grade II).

The whole *raison d'être* for Bute Town was to provide suitable accommodation for the workers in the Upper Rhymney ironworks. There are significant views from the end of the terraced rows across the open countryside to the Rhymney House Hotel (formerly the manager's house of the Rhymney Iron Company, Listed Grade II) and what was the site of the Upper Furnace, Llechryd (Scheduled Monument).

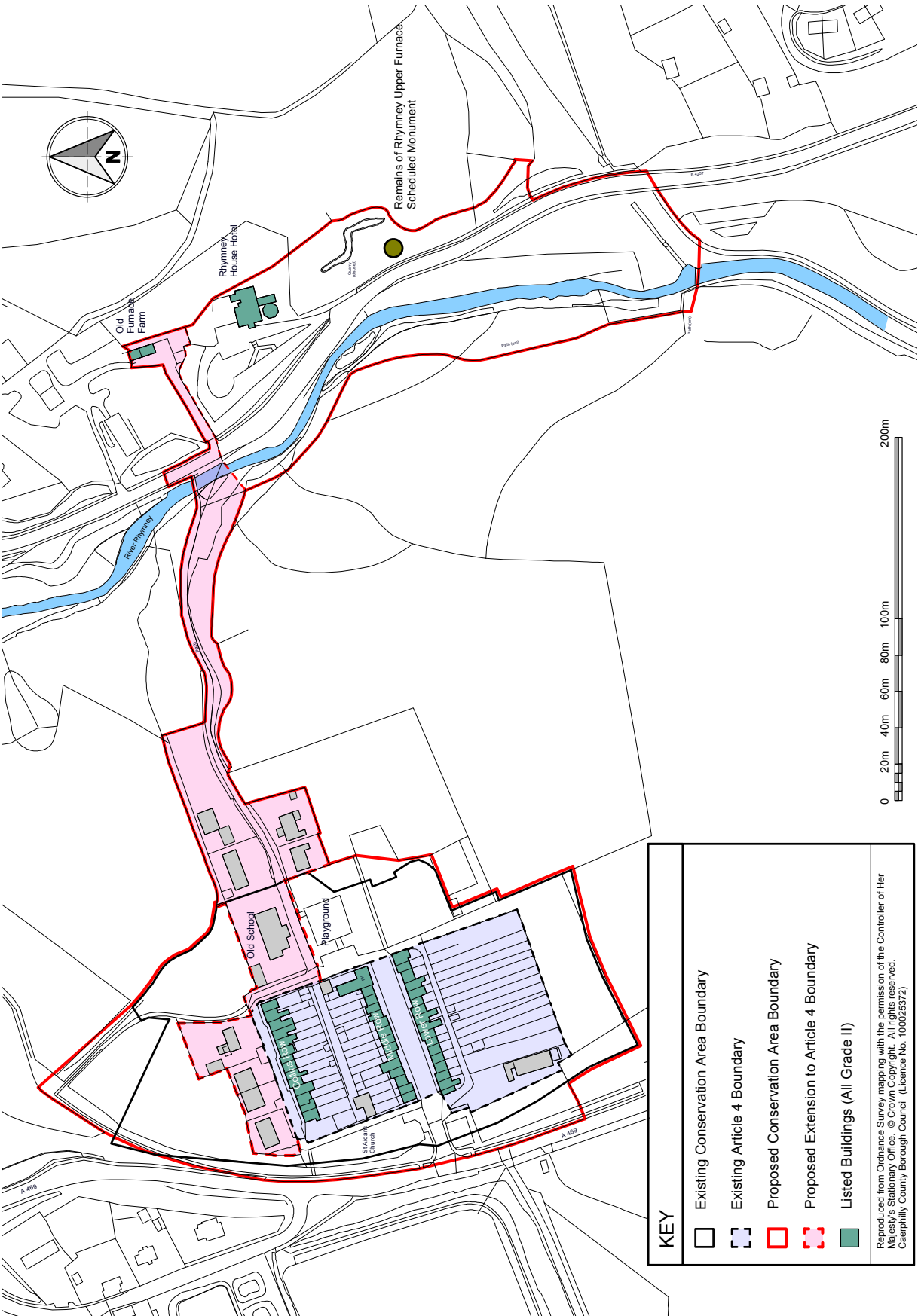
Reinforcing the association between Bute Town and its heritage would serve to restore the fundamental link between the two sites and provide the council with the necessary framework to control development between them. Several issues and opportunities for enhancement have been identified in this document that revolve around the current Conservation Area and Article 4 boundaries and make the case for extending the current boundaries to include areas adjacent to Bute Town.

It is proposed therefore, to extend the Conservation Area boundary to include the site of the Scheduled Monument (SM) along with the natural boundary surrounding the site that includes the former manager's house (Rhymney House Hotel) and the adjacent Old Furnace Farmhouse. The boundary is also to be extended to the west of the SM site to include the land either side of the Rhymney River and the footpath linking between the two distinct areas in order to safeguard the historic connection between the two sites. It is further proposed to extend the Conservation Area in three isolated areas so that it better follows the natural boundaries associated with the area.

In order to ensure that future development in the area immediately adjacent to the terraced rows takes full account of their context, it is also proposed to extend the Article 4 boundary to include the residential bungalows to the north and east of the rows and to follow the line of the footpath across the river to include Old Furnace Farm (listed Grade II). This extension is proposed in order to provide the Local Authority with control over what would likely be permitted developments (eg photovoltaic installations on roofs) that would undoubtedly have a detrimental impact on the integrity and character of the Conservation Area.



Plan 1 : Showing Existing and Proposed Conservation Boundaries following the Boundary Review



Plan 2 : Showing Existing and Proposed Article 4 Boundaries following the Boundary Review

2.0 HISTORIC CONTEXT

Historic Origins and Development of the Area

A brief summary of the historic development of Bute Town is included below. More comprehensive assessments of its history and significance was included in Alwyn Jones Architects' Conservation Plan (March 2007).

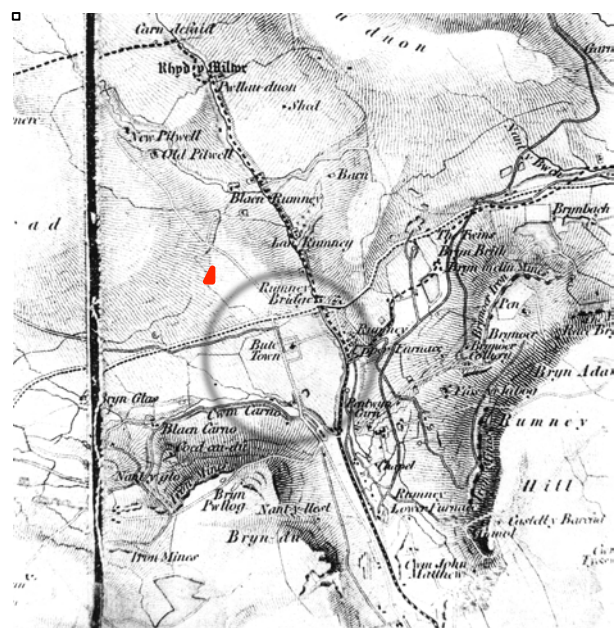
Bute Town, also known locally as Drenewydd, was built by The Bute Ironworks Company c.1830 as three rows of terraced workers' housing on an exposed and isolated site at the head of the Rhymney Valley, in the foothills of the Brecon Beacons. What made Bute Town most unusual amongst early industrial workers' housing was that it was such an elaborate formal architectural composition, built to such a high quality and exemplary in its complex mix of planned social housing.

The new town was given its name Bute Town due to the iron work's association with the Marquis of Bute, who owned the land, known as Gwain y Mynych (Monks Moorland), on which the settlement was established. It is known that by 1825 a road pattern was already laid out in Bute Town. It is therefore assumed that the housing was built shortly after and were all erected by the 1830's. Likely to have been conceived as the first phase of a more extensive development, Bute Town was prevented from reaching the scale envisaged by the exhaustion of the iron-ore of the early shallow workings around the 'Upper Furnace' in 1830-32.

The two inch manuscript OS plan dated 1813 clearly identifies the site of the Rumney Upper furnace, but there is no record of Bute Town. The first drawn record of Bute Town is the first edition One-inch Ordnance Survey Plan dated 1827, but published in 1832. This plan clearly shows the street layout of Butetown, although there are no buildings drawn.



Extract of Manuscript OS Plan (1813)
Bute Town location highlights (not mapped)

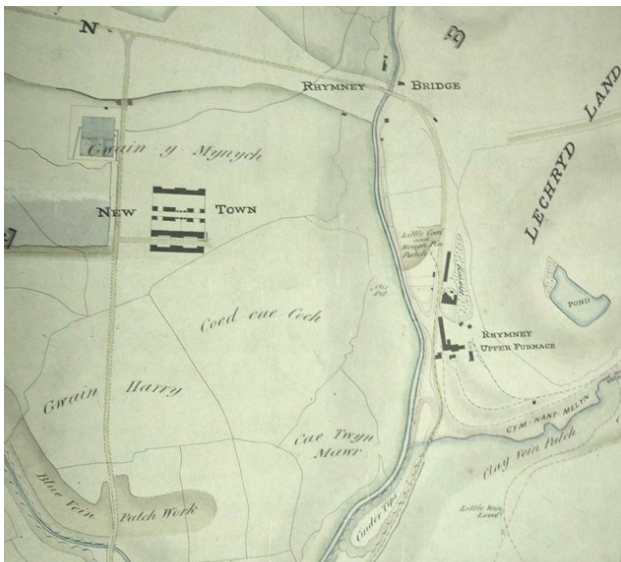


Extract of 2 inch manuscript OS plan (1827)
Bute Town road layout identified

The next drawn record of Butetown is the Surface Plan of ... the Property of Rhymney Iron Company, dated May 1838. This plan clearly shows the completed forms of three terraces, opposite the Rhymney Upper Furnace, and named 'New Town'. No plot divisions are drawn, but the outbuildings to the rear of Collins' and Middle Row are shown. One of these outbuildings may have been later converted from stables into the church.

The Tithe Plan of The Parish of Gelligaer in the County of Glamorgan, dated 1842 clearly shows 'New Town' as three identical rows with outbuildings to the rear of Middle Row and Collins' Row. The apportionment to the tithe plan describes the plot as 'pasture', the landowner as the Marquis of Bute, and the occupier as 'The Rhymney Company'.

It is worth noting that the extent of the Rhymney Ironworks is much smaller on the 1842 Tithe Plan than it is on the 1838 Surface Plan. This might suggest that the drafters of Tithe Plan omitted some surface features.

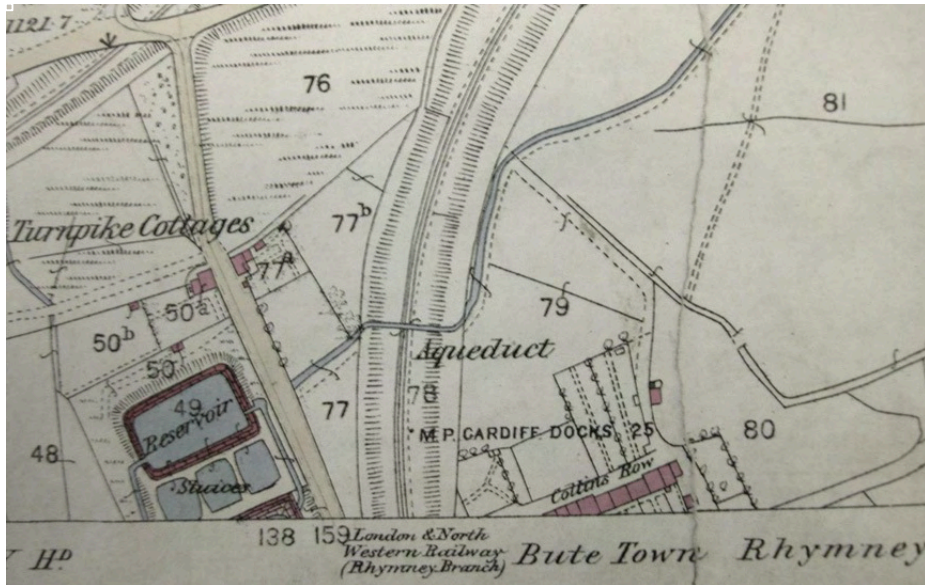


Extract of Surface Plan (1838)



Extract of Tithe Plan (1842)

The OS Plan First Edition dated 1875 shows well-defined external plots and internal party walls in their current arrangement. Windsor Arms Public House and Collins' Row are indicated, but the church is not shown. The London and North Western Railway, to the west of Bute Town, and the Rhymney brickworks had been constructed by this time.



Extracts of OS Plans (1875)

c.1830 - 1974

Apart from the decline of the industry that gave rise to Bute Town, the single biggest change affecting the vulnerability of Bute Town's character was that of ownership changing from one organisation, such as the Rhymney Iron Company, into private ownership. It is not clear when this occurred but by 1974 82% of dwellings had become owner occupied. Up until this time, a single organisation would have had responsibility for the overall care and maintenance of the buildings. Once private ownership occurred, the potential for such a holistic approach to the care of Bute Town was lost.

Evidence to support this can be seen in Mid-Glamorgan County Council's highly detailed photographic record of each property made in 1974. These photographs provide a valuable record of how Bute Town's character and condition had been affected by this time.

Other factors that had affected Bute Town's significance by this time included the demolition of the school occupying 15-16 Collins' Row and the construction of new dwellings immediately to the north of Bute Town. Both of these actions had a detrimental effect on the clarity of the original design.



View of central section of Lower Row prior to 1970's restoration works
Photo courtesy of CCBC

Despite Gelligaer Urban District Council's proposed 'slum clearance' demolition of Bute Town, Mid-Glamorgan County Council recognised its value and fought for its conservation. As a result, Bute Town today has exceptional significance as a rare surviving example of one of the earliest planned, and best preserved, industrial workers' housing developments in South Wales.

1974-78

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

A comprehensive programme of works was undertaken during this period which included:

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



View of Lower Row after the 1970's restoration works
Photo courtesy of CCBC

Whilst the works were successful in creating a much more unified appearance to Bute Town, the standard of some of the work was poor. Some chimneys were poorly re-built and roof defects became apparent shortly after the works were completed.

The works also failed to tackle the fundamental question of who would be responsible for the future maintenance of Bute Town. Despite the County Council's failed attempts to encourage a Bute Town residents' association this was left up to individual homeowners, some of who neglected this role.

Since 1978

Partly because of the maintenance matters mentioned, Bute Town's character has continued to be affected by numerous issues including: widespread water ingress due to roof covering defects; construction of some unsympathetic single storey extensions to rear and side elevations; ad hoc and inappropriate replacement of some windows and doors to front and rear elevations. Further issues with the rows and the Conservation Area as a whole are identified in section 3 of this report, and specific more detailed descriptions and guidance are also included in section 8.1 as part of the Conservation Area Management Plan.



West end of Middle Row prior to 1970's restoration
Photo courtesy of CCBC

3.0 CHARACTER ASSESSMENT / APPRAISAL

A number of key qualities have been identified to assist with the appraisal of the area.

3.1 A Distinctive Quality of Place

Bute Town was conceived as a 'new town' comprising four rows of industrial workers' housing (although only three were constructed) and was built on an exposed and isolated site at the head of the Rhymney Valley. The development was formally laid out with a 'grid-iron' plan, an orthogonal grid of streets intersecting at right angles. This grid was laid out perpendicular to the adjacent toll road with its main central axis leading towards the works, thereby avoiding direct views of the associated ironworks from within the houses.

The streets were of generous width (approximately 14m/46ft) in proportion to the generous scale of the rows and were believed to promote good ventilation and health. Furthermore, the development was sited a healthy distance from the ironworks. Such formally planned development was unusual in the early industrial areas of South Wales where development tended to be ad-hoc or piecemeal and often very close to the works themselves. Bute Town was also built to a very high standard, which was unusual when compared to other early industrial workers housing built during the period.

This regimented design effectively ignores the sinuous nature of the surrounding valleys (where developments have typically followed the lie of the land) and contributes strongly to the development's uniqueness and sense of place.

The decline of the iron industry in the area that followed the construction of Bute Town has meant that the development is a somewhat isolated and self-contained community. This isolation has played a significant contribution to the fact that the quality of the place has not been excessively diluted over time.

The natural isolation of Bute Town means it has the appearance of a community apart. This separation is further reinforced by the boundary to the west side of the development, where recent alterations have introduced stone boundary walls, a cattle grid arrangement and created a small car park to the west of the site. This all serves to reinforce the feeling that this is a community apart, almost a gated community. This can make the visitor feel somewhat of an intruder to the place.



Aerial image showing Bute Town's relative isolation from surrounding communities and relationship to the old ironworks site.
©2014 Google, Bluesky



Aerial view of Bute Town showing the orthogonal grid iron plan.
©2014 Google, Bluesky



Entrance to Bute Town off the A469 with large sign, stone walling and cattle grid

The current Conservation Area is a compact area limited to the three designed terraces and their close environs. By its very nature, the character of the area is fairly homogeneous, which is one of its principal distinctions. At one time it was surrounded by worked-out and operational pits and levels but little physical trace of this industrial activity is visible and the area is now set in rough pastureland.

3.2 Grouping of Buildings

Many Conservation Areas are made of clear and distinct character areas, often influenced by developments over time and the gradual morphology of the spaces. Bute Town on the other hand is the polar opposite of this type of space and is effectively a snapshot in time reflecting the changing nature of the industrialisation of the South Wales valleys in the early part of the nineteenth century. Whilst the buildings making up the Conservation Area have not been preserved without modifications, their essential character remains as tangible today as when they were constructed.

By its very nature, the principal buildings within the Conservation Area are grouped into three terraces, each made up of modest dwellings with a disproportionally wide and grand street (between Middle Row and Lower Row). The unfinished nature of the area is tangible with the three rows seemingly dropped into an otherwise open landscape without any real focal points or urban grain other than the regimented rows themselves.

The area immediately to the east of the terraces is taken up by the old school building (constructed circa 1906) and an area of open ground, presumably the school's playing field but currently a children's play area. This area has a definite character that is different to the terraced accommodation, but no less appealing.

3.3 Scale, Rhythm and Pattern of Use

The coherent designed 'model village' approach to the three terraces means that all of the principal buildings within the Conservation Area are of the same scale with little variance in their height, indeed the same ridgeline is consistent either side of the central blocks with small variations in pitch being introduced to take account of the steps in the frontage of the rows at each end without affecting the ridge height. This uniformity is a principal characteristic of the rows and is clearly noticeable from distant views of the area where the roofs are often the dominant feature.



Vista on the approach to Bute Town



View of Bute Town prior to 1970's refurbishment works with bridge over railway



View of the old school facing the playground



Western end of Collins Row where two houses have been demolished, their site currently used as a car park.

As a politely designed collection of buildings with strong neo-Palladian influences, the rhythm of the rows couldn't be much more defined than it is. The one exception to this is the loss of the western end of Collins Row, which has a significant and detrimental effect on the strength of this particular terrace and compromises the essential symmetry of the row and the grid-iron composition of the place.

The area remains, as it was originally intended, wholly residential, with the exception of the local public house (The Windsor Arms) located at the eastern end of Middle Row and the modest St Aidan's Church constructed at the western end of the area between Collins Row and Middle Row. A further exception was the later old school building (1906) to the east end of the current Conservation Area, but this has recently been converted to residential use.

3.4 Views and Vistas

The very form and limited scale of the Conservation Area means that views of the area from within are limited to linear streetscape vistas of the terraced rows. Nevertheless, these views from within are the essence of the character of Bute Town with the formal, polite and regimented design of the terraces forming the framework to most vistas.

Constructed as terraced rows with rear lane access, the streets are the focal point of the rows with all of the houses having introspective aspects. The concession to the introspective nature of the terraces is the views out of the collective at each end of the rows to the distant rolling heads of the valleys, which when they were first constructed would have given a distant view of the impressive furnaces.



Lower Row



Collins Row

Middle and Lower Row looking west



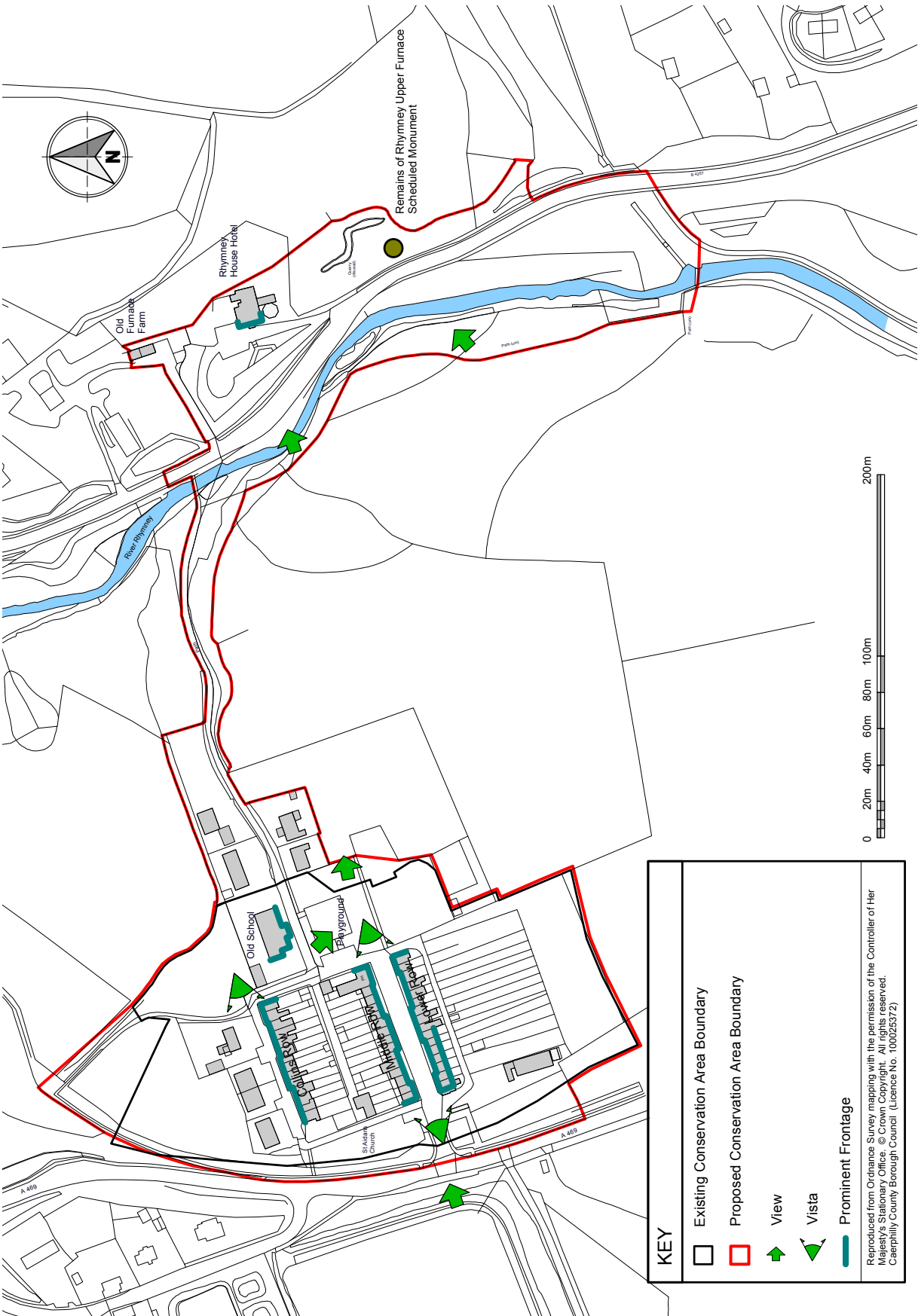
Views of the Conservation Area from further afield are essentially modest roofscape views, where one has to work to pick out the collective as the muted tones of the pointed stonework and weathered roof materials seem to blend into the surrounding exposed and windswept landscape.



View into the Conservation Area from the North



Distant view of roofs from the outskirts of the town of Rhymney



Plan 3 : Views and Vistas in and around the Conservation Area with prominent frontages identified

3.5 Movement

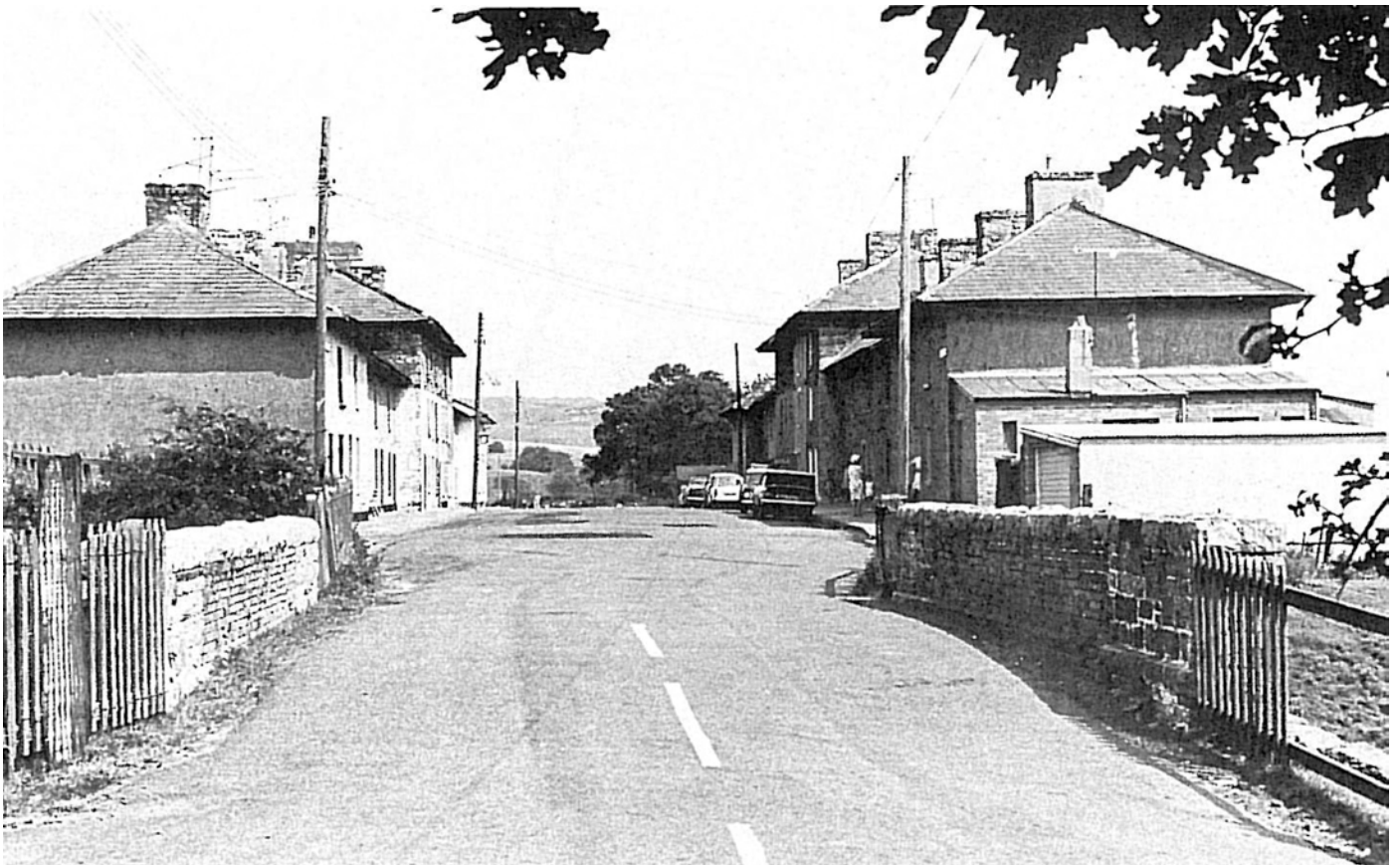
The movement within the Conservation Area is primarily created by the residents or those visiting the residents. The area's isolation and detachment from the main arteries means that incidental traffic or movement is extremely unlikely, and as a consequence the area is pedestrian orientated.

Car ownership levels are high as would be expected in an isolated community, but in combination with narrow house frontages, this means that on-street parking is prevalent. The proliferation of cars and vans parked in various haphazard configurations on the wide street between Middle and Lower Rows is visually intrusive and detracts from the quality of the space.

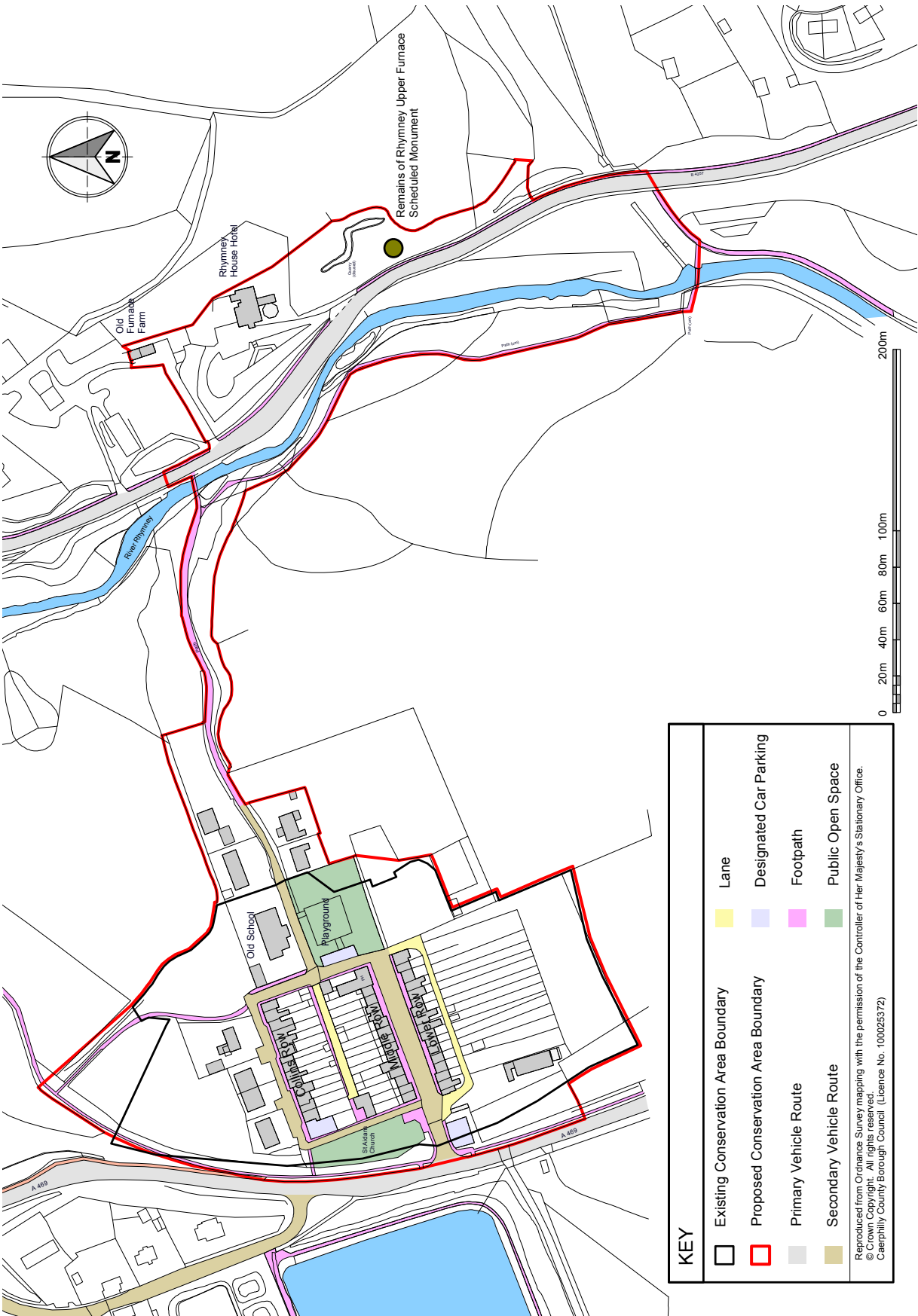
There are footpaths that lead from the area in several directions, leading west to the adjacent reservoir, north towards the heads of the valleys road and east towards the old ironworks site and towards Rhymney. It is also possible to walk south towards Pontlottyn along the A469.



View of street between Middle and Lower Rows, where haphazard parking and vehicles mar the view of the street, even during the working day when many residents are not at home.



Entrance to Bute Town prior to 1970's refurbishment works, via bridge over the railway (now removed)



Plan 4 : Movement in and around the Conservation Area

3.6 Landmark Buildings

Conservation Areas often have various landmark buildings, that is buildings which have significant social and historic links with the development of the area and which contribute positively to the area's character.

In the case of Bute Town, the terraces as a whole are the landmark buildings, and their homogenous character means that they do not read as a series of landmarks, but rather a collective.

As such, identifying and assessing various landmark buildings (often included as part of a Conservation Area Appraisal) is not included within this document.

3.7 Public & Private Space – Hierarchy

Collectively, Bute Town is a relatively private community positioned as it is off the main A469 road with no through routes. The street is the principal public space, although the open play area to the east and the strip of ground to the west of the houses is also public.

The playground is reportedly well used by the community, but the choice of materials and bright colour scheme is not sympathetic to a historic setting.

The area of ground to the west of Bute Town is an open grassed area. This wide verge provides welcome separation from the traffic on the busy A469, but its design could be improved to separate the community from the road and its associated traffic noise further.

Adjacent to this western strip of land, hard landscaping has been undertaken in an effort to create a usable area adjacent to the church, but this relatively exposed space next to the busy main road is somewhat unwelcoming and unlikely to be much used.

Private space is limited to the rear gardens of each of the properties, though even here the compact and back to back forms mean that privacy is not easy to achieve for residents.



Large playground with bright primary colours stand out from the purposeful design of Bute Town generally



Land to west side of Rows adjacent to A469



Hard landscaped yard adjacent to St Aidan's Church



View of back lane between Middle Row and Collins Row with various garages and rear wall alterations

3.8 Materials & Details

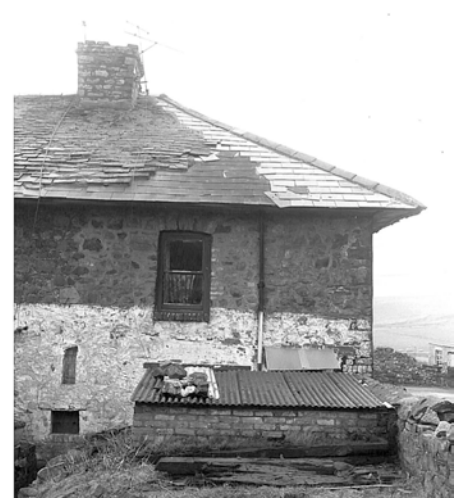
Whilst Bute Town's design may have been radical and a significant departure from local traditional buildings, the materials used throughout were locally sourced and gave the buildings their local character. The thick random rubble masonry walls were built of locally quarried carboniferous Millstone Grit sandstone that is significantly harder and more durable than the Pennant sandstone commonly found throughout South Wales.

The roofs were covered with locally quarried sandstone tiles rather than the commonly used Welsh slate, principally because of transport difficulties - note that most buildings in Merthyr Tydfil at this time were roofed with slate because the opening of the Glamorganshire canal made transport of the slate economically viable. This, in combination with the low roof pitches and deep overhanging eaves details make for a fairly unique aesthetic that echoes the Palladian styles of grander buildings. The replacement roof tiles currently in place are concrete replicas, but their heavy weathered character is eminently suitable visually, despite them having inherent functional and longevity issues.

The condition of the existing roofs is of particular concern, but the replacement material to be used will require careful consideration. Changing the finished material to Welsh slate for instance will have an impact on the character of the terraces, particularly in distant views where the roofscape is the dominant feature. There is however photographic evidence that demonstrates that many of the roofs in Bute Town had previously been covered in slate prior to the 1970's refurbishment.

It is known that the rows did not have rainwater goods originally, and that the current aluminium gutters and downpipes were added as part of the 1970's refurbishment works.

Doors and windows are of a tall and slender proportion and set back deeply within stonework reveals. It is believed that the windows would likely have been cast-iron frames with fine glazing bars in a 3 over 9 arrangement with small top-hung casements. Window cills were probably locally quarried sandstone, later replaced with brick, and doors would have been ledged, braced and boarded.



Photos of roof to Middle Row prior to 1970's restoration works.



Detail of existing roof / eaves arrangement. The existing tiles attract excessive moss growth. The plain soffit and large diameter downpipes are inappropriate details in the context of Bute Town's heritage.

4.0 ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 Alterations and New Development

Issues

The loss of architectural details such as original doors and windows, rainwater goods etc. along with some previously undertaken inappropriate alterations to building elements has eroded the character and appearance of some of the buildings within the Conservation Area.

Poorly located equipment such as satellite dishes and TV aerials detract from the quality of the architectural space.

Insensitive extensions and alterations to the rear and side elevations can be visually prominent and intrusive in both close and long distance views.

Whilst not located within the current Conservation Area, the detached bungalows to the east of the terraces have a negative impact on the area. Future proposals to extend or adapt these properties would be likely to have a direct impact on the setting of the Conservation Area.

Enhancement Opportunities

Ensure that alterations to buildings are undertaken in a sensitive manner to respect the original design and character of the buildings.

Ensure that alterations incorporate high quality materials that match or complement the historic buildings.

Avoid prominent elevations and important vistas for the location of necessary equipment. Consider the installation of centralised shared systems for TV aerials and satellite dishes located away from the existing buildings.

Encourage the use of traditional window and door design where development opportunities arise. Review design guidance on such building elements to protect the special character of the area.

Ensure that the impact of alterations to exposed side and rear elevations is not detrimental to the individual buildings or groupings in short or longer distance views. Seek to enhance these elevations and encourage the removal of inappropriate features and extensions.



Insensitive extensions to the prominent west end elevation of Lower Row.



Chimney stack on Middle Row with a plethora of television aerials



The rear of Collins Row with an eclectic mix of shoot-out extensions with differing roof forms that do not complement the designed and unified nature of the rows.



Traditional steel window which is appropriate adjacent to new white uPVC doors that are not. Note also inappropriate white uPVC pipework.

Ensure that development proposals are considered as part of the wider group of buildings and are of an appropriate scale and form so that the uniform appearance of the area is maintained.

Seek to ensure that development proposals for buildings outside of the Conservation Area but with a direct impact on its setting are sympathetic to its character and appearance. Where it is appropriate to do so, extend the Conservation Area boundary to provide suitable protection to the wider context of Bute Town and its inexorable link to the old ironworks site.

4.2 Public Realm

Issues

Designed entrance to the community from the west side forms a distinct visual and physical barrier that appears somewhat contrived and conflicts with the architectural quality of the buildings. The presence of the cattle grid is an unusual element that reinforces this separation.

Stark white street furniture is incongruous with the natural and understated colours of the buildings within the Conservation Area, and in some cases its design is rather quaint. In particular, the information board set within the car park to the west of Lower Row is quite dominant and visually intrusive as a result of its height, location and colour.

On-street parking is often haphazard between Middle and Lower Rows, visually detracting from the unified street scene.

The wide avenue between Middle and Lower Rows is one of the important features of the development, but also creates a very wide and inappropriate section of macadam surface.

The scale of the children's play area in relation to the size of the public open space is overwhelming. In addition, the playground furniture and associated fence in primary colours is particularly urban in character, in stark contrast to the muted tones and semi-rural atmosphere of the Conservation Area.



Entrance area arrangement with stark white street furniture. Note also the character of the stonework to the entrance walling is at odds with the stonework of the rows.



Cattle grid arrangement at the threshold / entrance to Bute Town



The well-proportioned wide street between Middle and Lower Rows is a strong feature of the area, but the large expanse of macadam is without warmth or texture.



The play area and equipment dominates the public open space because of its size and primary colours.

Enhancement Opportunities

Consider improving the current entrance arrangement to Bute Town to create a more welcoming approach to the Conservation Area. A holistic approach should be taken that also takes account of other area finishes and treatments of the threshold between Bute Town and its surroundings.

Seek to reduce the impact of the stark street furniture, either through the selection of new more appropriate fittings, or at the least by changing the finished colours of retained items.

Introduce a consistent approach to the design and materials used for paving, street furniture and lighting. New items should complement and be appropriate to the architecture and setting of the Conservation Area – modern minimal styled items would be more appropriate than replica Victorian styled items.

Investigate opportunities to reduce the impact of haphazard on-street car parking, particularly between Middle and Lower Rows. Refer also to Item 4.3.

Seek to enhance the street scene through the provision of further stone paved surfaces to the whole or part of the road between Middle and Lower Row.

Assess the value and use of the existing public spaces and consider their role within the community and likely use following further strengthening of the links between Bute Town and the old ironworks site. This appraisal identifies the use of the open ground / play area in front of the old school building as a potentially meaningful defined area of public open space that could provide the wider community with an enhanced public space. It also identifies the ground to the west side (adjacent to the main road) as having potentially improved use. Consideration should be given to scaling down the size of the playground to create a more flexible open space for use by the wider community for a variety of uses / functions.



Pennant flagstone paving recently reinstated is entirely appropriate and adds to the character of the area.



Pennant stone setts have been used in recent works and work well with the overall aesthetic of Bute Town

4.3 Movement

Issues

Significant traffic noise can be experienced from the adjacent A469 main road, particularly at the western ends of the rows, principally as a result of the speed of traffic on the road.

Resident parking in front of their properties can be somewhat haphazard, particularly between Middle and Lower Rows, where the generous proportions of the street allow for various parking orientations (a mixture of parallel parking and angled head on parking). This variation creates a visual conflict with the ordered regularity of the properties themselves.

Visitor parking is currently provided for in a small car park immediately outside the confines of Bute Town off the A469. In practical terms the car park is a useful asset to the area, but visually it has a detrimental effect on the views of the area on the main approach. This car park is reportedly used by car sharers because of its convenient location adjacent to the heads of the valleys roads, thereby limiting its usefulness as space for visitors to Bute Town.

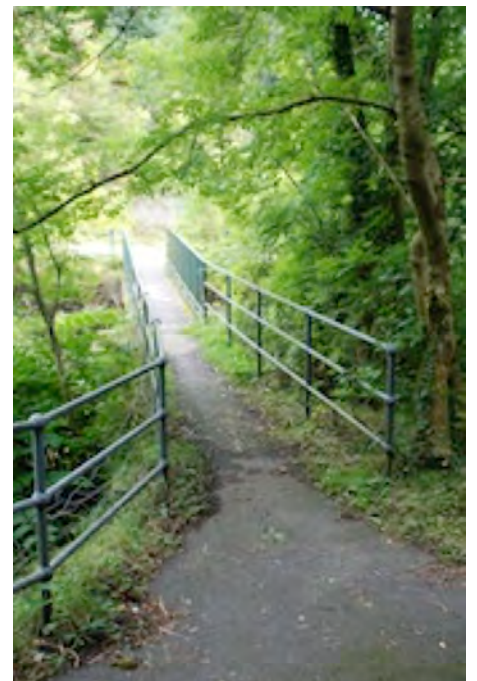
Various trailers and horse boxes are parked in the land immediately to the west of Lower Row that provide a visual distraction from the terraces. Similarly, the seemingly discarded containers and lorry trailer located to the east of Lower Row detract from the quality of the place.

Whilst not highlighted as a specific issue in itself, an opportunity exists to enhance the car park adjacent to the Windsor Arms pub to improve the effect it has on the wider setting of Bute Town and in particular on the public open space.

Pedestrian movement between Bute Town and the old ironworks site is provided via an existing path and bridge crossing over the river Rhymney. Improvements could be made to this route to enhance the pedestrian experience and provide an improved appreciation of the link between the sites.



Land to west of Bute Town. Improved landscaping could help create a more useful community space and reduce traffic noise



Narrow bridge across river from footpath leading towards old ironworks site.

Enhancement Opportunities

Seek to reduce the amount of traffic noise experienced within the confines of Bute Town to reinforce the unique qualities of the area through the use of increased planting / screening between the community and the main road. Consideration could also be given to appropriate low-key traffic calming measures close to the area. This would be particularly beneficial if there is an increase in pedestrian visitors to the area.

Consider options to regularise the parking arrangement between Middle and Lower Rows by introducing upgraded surface finishes to naturally create ordered parking orientation. Consideration should be given to creating symmetrical parking arrangements on both sides of the street to respect the order and symmetry of the rows. It should however be noted that this regularisation would likely reduce the number of effective parking spaces on the street and may not be desired by the residents who have developed a workable solution at present, albeit somewhat haphazard.

Seek to minimise the impact that the parking area adjacent to the entrance to Bute Town and the parked vehicles adjacent to the rows have on views into and out of Bute Town by incorporating improved landscaping to screen the parked cars from the approach views to Bute Town.

Consider parking management measures to limit the use of the west car park by non-visitors, or alternatively consider a redesign to create more parking spaces.

Consider upgrading the car park adjacent to the Windsor Arms pub to improve the impact it has on the wider setting of Bute Town's public space.

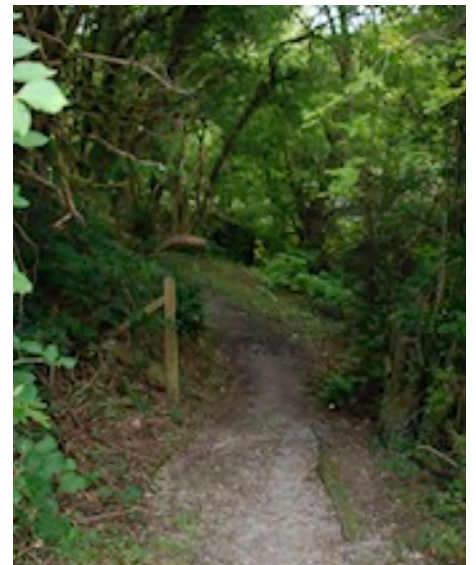
Consider improving the pedestrian links between Bute Town and the old ironworks site and providing additional awareness to the pedestrian of the link between the sites.



Visitor car park adjacent to entrance would benefit from additional screening / landscaping. This would also help to screen the view of the agricultural equipment and buildings to the south.



Path leading from Bute Town down towards the river.



Opportunities exist to improve the pedestrian link between Bute Town and the old Ironworks site.

4.4 Landscaping

Issues

With the exception of the open area in front of the school building and the strip of open ground to the west side, soft landscaping is not a strong feature in the Conservation Area. The existing planting scheme to the west side of the Conservation Area is without character and is limited to a number of isolated trees and post and rail fencing.

The use of the land immediately adjacent to the terraced rows for the storage of vehicle trailers (old lorry trailer to the east of Lower Row) and animal trailers to the west are visually intrusive, along with the large stack of wrapped silage.

Enhancement Opportunities

Ensure that proposed planting schemes are suitable for the location (using indigenous species) and will make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Particular consideration should be given to the effects that planting schemes can have on the area both close up and from a greater distance.

Provide localised planting schemes to screen certain key views of the site, particularly those where planning controls may have limited effect.

4.5 Views

Issues

Parked cars mar some of the key views and long views along the street.

The strong view down the centre of the wide street between Middle and Lower Rows focuses one's eyes towards the end of the street, but the unfinished nature of the development is particularly noticeable as a simple urban bench and street lamp form inadequate focal points.

The visual link between the site of the old ironworks and Bute Town are particularly evocative with the old manager's house (Rhymney House Hotel) clearly visible from several critical locations, though more appreciation of this link should be provided with interpretation about the missing furnace.

Enhancement Opportunities

The principal and important views and vistas should be maintained. Public realm works and any new development adjacent to the Conservation Area should seek to maintain and where appropriate enhance the views identified in the appraisal.

Long distance views both into and out of the Conservation Area should be considered in the assessment of proposals for new development close to Bute Town or alterations to existing buildings.

Seek to provide an improved and stronger focal point at the east end of the main street between Lower and Middle Rows. A piece of artwork or other feature could provide a stop end to the street at this focal point.

Opportunities should be taken to reinforce the link between Bute Town and the old ironworks site by ensuring clear views of the site are available from the public open space at the east end of Middle Row and Lower Row. Further public interpretation would also be beneficial.

4.6 Missing Buildings / Vacant Sites

Issues

Two properties at the west end of Collins Row have been previously demolished and the site is currently used for parking. The strong symmetry and rhythm of the terraced rows means that this loss is particularly noticeable as the row is without its terminating 'book end'.



Lack of focal point at the east end of Middle & Lower Row.



A prime location for an enhancement opportunity to serve the whole community as it responds to the rows and the public open space.



Distant view towards the old ironworks manager's house (Rhymney House Hotel) and site of old ironworks furnace, which would have been to the right of the house.



West end of Collins Row with missing 'book end' properties.

Enhancement Opportunities

The reconstruction of this end of Collins Row would significantly enhance the terrace and complete the originally constructed arrangement that is core to the uniqueness of Bute Town.

4.7 Local Identity

Issues

Bute Town owes its very existence to its association with the old ironworks located at the head of the Rhymney valley, and the current urban form of the historic buildings at Bute Town is a clear illustration of the aspirations of the ironworks owners and the increasing awareness of the needs of workers during the early part of the nineteenth century. In spite of this rich history, there is a distinct lack of on street awareness, promotion and interpretation of the history (information panel to the west car park aside).

Enhancement Opportunities

Encourage the promotion of the area's heritage and culture through appropriate and coordinated interpretation and signage. The further development of the heritage trail to strengthen the links between the Bute Town Conservation Area and the ironworks site could be used to demonstrate how the area was conceived and played its part in the industrialisation of the South Wales valleys.

Public art reflecting appropriate local themes could be used to promote the character and identity of the area. The open spaces at either end of the Conservation Area (particularly the old school play area) would seem to be suitable focal points for such items.



Historic view of Union Ironworks with the manager's house (now the Rhymney House Hotel) in the background and furnace to right hand side. The terraced row of houses has been demolished.

Photo ©National Museum Wales

4.8 Conservation Area Boundary Review

Issues

The existing Conservation Area boundary covers the immediate area surrounding the three terraced rows and their environs along with the old school building and its associated open space. It includes the detached bungalows to the north (facing Collins Row), but does not include those to the east of the area leading towards the old ironworks site. Whilst these bungalows are not of any historic value in themselves, they do form an integral part of the Bute Town collective and suitable mechanisms to control future development would be desirable.

The existing Conservation Area boundary does not include the old ironworks site or the footpath linking the two historically connected sites. Since both sites are irrevocably linked, the old ironworks site would benefit from similar levels of planning control to rationalise and reinforce the bond between the two sites.

The existing Conservation Area boundary does not always follow the natural boundaries adjacent to the site making its definition somewhat arbitrary in certain locations.

Enhancement Opportunities

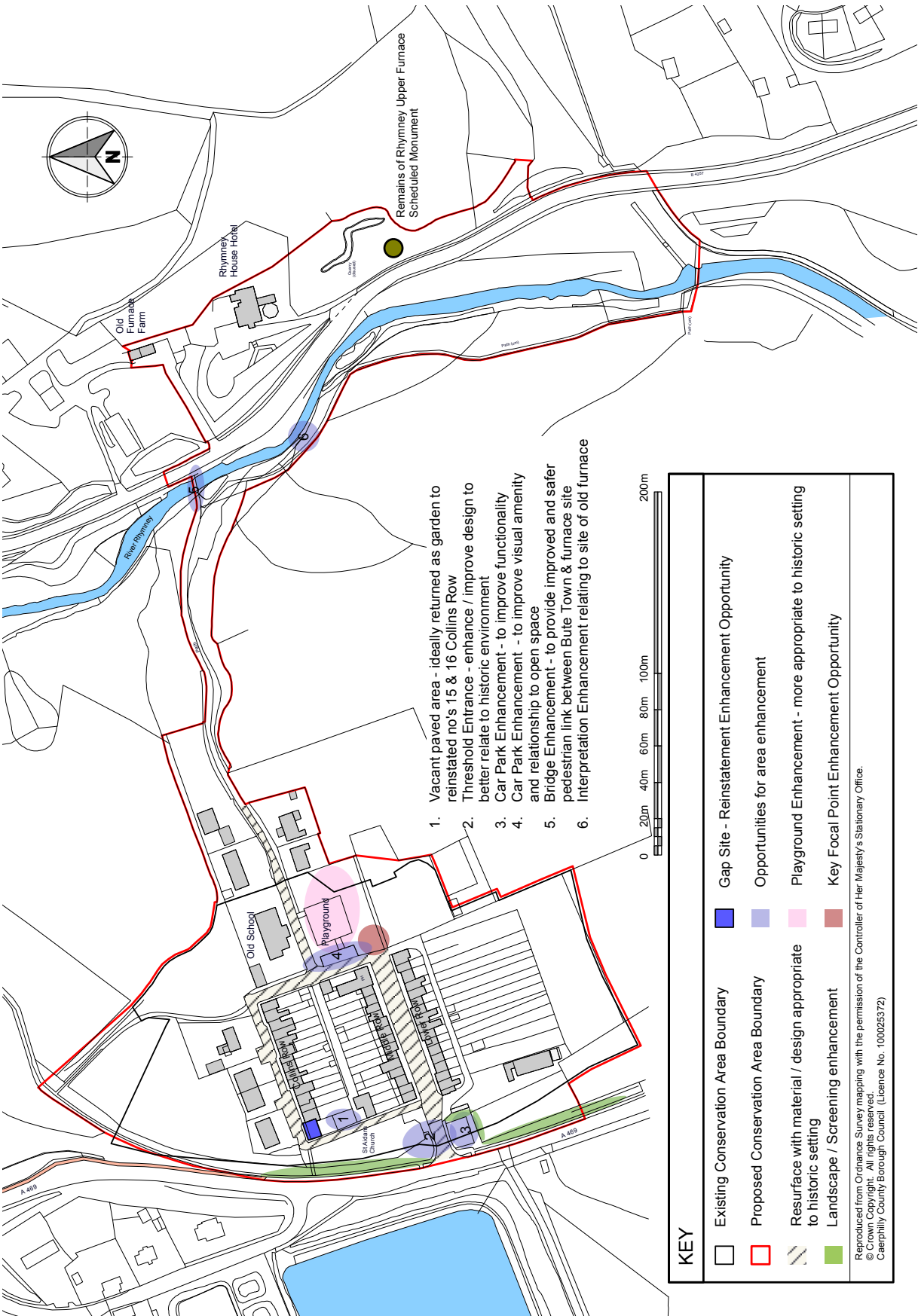
The Conservation Area boundary should be extended to include the bungalows immediately east of Bute Town.

The Conservation Area boundary should also be extended to follow the path leading to the old ironworks site and the site of the old ironworks in order to provide robust controls on possible future development and harmful alteration to the wider area of historic significance.

Regularisation of some anomalous boundary lines should be undertaken to better follow the current natural boundaries surrounding the site.

Article 4 directions should be extended to include the detached bungalows to the north and east of Bute Town to ensure that otherwise permitted developments do not have a detrimental effect on the character of the area.

Article 4 directions should also be applied to include the Old Furnace Farmhouse.



Plan 5 : Enhancement Opportunities, showing principal locations for significant enhancement of the Conservation Area

5.0 FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

5.1 Introduction

Earlier sections of the document describe the features, which make up the special character of the Conservation Area and identify potential for its enhancement.

The appraisal and guidance will be used to:

- Provide guidance on the area's special qualities and how to preserve and enhance them;
- Inform a scheme of enhancement to guide development in the area;
- Inform the assessment of planning applications in accordance with planning legislation;
- Set out priorities for the management and enhancement of the public realm in the future,

and to:

- Ensure that new development is sensitive to the character of the Conservation Area and well integrated within its existing form and layout;
- Increase public awareness and appreciation for Bute Town's special character and history;
- Provide support for property owners in their efforts to preserve and enhance the Conservation Area;
- Keep it an attractive place within which to live and visit.

5.2 Working in Partnership

Land and Property Owners

The most effective way to enhance the Conservation Area is to ensure that those planning work or development understand its character. Section 3 of this document outlines the character of the Conservation Area.

The Council

Although the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to prepare a scheme of enhancement for a Conservation Area, there is no specific identified budget or mechanism for its achievement. This means that enhancement can only usually be achieved in association with other strategies, in co-operation with other Council Service areas or in partnership with others.

The following initiatives are those where the Council could have a significant role in influencing and bringing forward enhancements:

- Through the use of the Conservation Area Appraisal as a material consideration to guide the assessment of planning applications. Design Statements submitted in support of planning applications will be expected to show that development has taken account of the character identified in this document.
- Through the preparation of SPG to control the care of existing properties within the proposed expanded Conservation Area and to guide the design of new alterations,
- Through the promotion of an understanding of the area's cultural and historic significance through links with schools, libraries and community groups.
- Through the effective management of existing Council budgets, for example highway improvement and repair, and traffic management.
- Through the support of initiatives to enhance and strengthen the tourist, and leisure role of the area through initiatives identified within the LDP Strategy. This adopts a number of key objectives.

The following are put forward for adoption following consultation on the appraisal findings:

- To conserve historic buildings and structures,
- To preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Bute Town Conservation Area,
- To promote historic connections between people places and events in the area,
- To identify additional funding opportunities for the protection of Bute Town's historic assets.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations summarise action to be taken on adoption:

- The character assessment and the recommendations above be confirmed as the basis for the integration of the historic environment within the Framework provided by the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan to 2021 (Adopted November 2010).
- The appraisal serves as a framework for the assessment of planning applications in compliance with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act [1990].
- The boundary changes recommended in the first stage of the review be adopted and advertised in accordance with the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act [1990].

PART 2: CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

6.0 INTRODUCTION

The format of this section reflects the two main priorities of a Conservation Area Management Plan:

- to ensure the ongoing protection of the existing buildings and townscape of the Conservation Area
- to guide its future development in a manner that preserves and enhances its special character and appearance.

The strengths and weaknesses of the Conservation Area have been identified in the Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

The Management Plan details general and specific planning policies and controls effective across the Conservation Area and outlines proposals for its enhancement.

7.0 GENERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The Bute Town Conservation Area owes its designation and its protection to national legislation in the form of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The detailed obligations set out in that act are not included in this report, but in summary, the act aims to give protection to areas which are judged to have special architectural or historic qualities. As the title suggests, the emphasis in Conservation Areas is on the area or on groups of buildings, rather than individual buildings. The quality of an area may relate to its historical unity or, in a more mixed environment, to the consistency and harmony between buildings and features of different periods. In the case of Bute Town, a detailed analysis of the Conservation Area has been provided in the Conservation Area Appraisal included as Part 1 of this document.

The designation of a Conservation Area brings into force certain controls over development but the legislation and the official guidance that accompanies it are intended to ensure that change should be managed in a positive way to maintain the qualities that make up the special character of the area in question.

7.2 Local Planning Context

This framework includes the Caerphilly County Borough Council Local Development Plan up to 2021 (Adopted November 2010). Of particular reference to this report is policy SP6 'Place Making' from the CCBC LDP. The key objectives that have a direct impact on the Conservation Area are:

- 22 Maintain the vitality, viability and character of the County Borough's town and village centres and re-establish them as a focus for economic activity and community pride.
- 23 Maintain, enhance and develop a hierarchy of town and village centres which are easily accessible, and which meet the needs of all sections of the population.
- 24 Protect and enhance the overall quality of the historic natural and built environment of the County Borough.

The Welsh Government also has several objectives, which include: -

- Enhancing the historic environment,
- Safeguarding historic buildings, and
- Ensuring that Conservation Areas are protected and enhanced.

Chapter 6 'Conserving the Historic Environment,' of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 7) July 2014, states in paragraph 6.3.2 that 'Local planning authorities are required to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation or enhancement of Conservation Areas. The positive management of Conservation Areas is necessary if their character or appearance is to be protected and enhanced. Authorities should establish consistent criteria against which existing and/or new Conservation Areas and their boundaries should be reviewed.' In paragraph 6.3.3 it also states that 'The preparation of townscape audits and Conservation Area character appraisals can assist planning authorities in the exercise of their planning and development management functions.'

7.3 Management Plan Policies

In the light of national legislation and guidance and local development plan policies, this Management Plan recommends a number of draft policies for the protection and enhancement of the Bute Town Conservation Area. These policies are based on the analysis of the area in the Conservation Area Appraisal, and they also reflect the outcome of consultations with local stakeholders and residents. They are policies which are designed to apply to the whole of the Conservation Area: more detailed recommendations relating to specific parts or elements within the Conservation Area can be found in section 8.

Policy 1

Developments adjacent to the Bute Town Conservation Area should in their scale, height and massing respect the wider setting of the Conservation Area, including views into and out of it.

Explanation

National guidance emphasises the need to consider the impact of development on the setting of a Conservation Area and views into and out of it.

Bute Town is distinguished by its topography and setting, especially its relationship to the surrounding countryside. It's limited size means that its wider setting can be appreciated at every point in the protected area with views of an undulating green horizon and an expansive sky form an ever present backdrop. High or bulky buildings, or other installations, may have a detrimental effect on this wider setting, even though they may be some distance from the Conservation Area boundary.

Policy 2

Alterations to the streets, roads and lanes in the Conservation Area, including changes to the carriageway, pavements and parking layouts, should have regard to the character of the Conservation Area and its long-term conservation.

Explanation

Achieving the right balance between movement and the quality of a place is never easy, even in a small isolated area like Bute Town. The intention of this policy is to emphasise that the quality of streets and spaces should not be sacrificed to meet the needs of traffic or parking. The retention or reinstatement of historic street layouts and surfacing can often have a more positive effect of traffic calming and regulation than more engineered solutions.

The implementation of this policy will require close liaison between different Council services.

Policy 3

Uses that would be detrimental to the character of individual buildings and the Conservation Area as a whole will be resisted.

Explanation

The uses of buildings and areas are an important consideration in the preservation or enhancement of the special character of the Conservation Area. As a predominantly residential area, Bute Town continues to retain its original character. Pressures for change of use, for instance from residential to commercial use, can undermine the distinctive character of a Conservation Area and should be resisted.

Generally speaking there is a presumption that the best uses for historic buildings are those for which the buildings were originally designed, or if that is not possible, that alternative uses of a sympathetic kind should be identified. The intention of this policy is not to prevent changes of use, but to indicate that primacy should be given to uses which are historically appropriate to the building or area concerned.

Policy 4

Where they make an important contribution to the character of Bute Town's Conservation Area, there should be a presumption in favour of retaining historic boundary treatments such as hedges, walls and railings, and to limiting on-street clutter.

Explanation

The character of the Conservation Area depends in part upon its historic grain, as defined by property boundaries and street layouts. Whilst the three terraces in Bute Town do not have front gardens, other properties within the Conservation Area do. In residential areas, front gardens contribute as much to the quality of the street as the buildings and a front area with a garden behind a wall or hedge is an integral part of the house and its setting. The removal or alteration of such boundary treatments, for instance to create car parking spaces, can be immensely harmful to the appearance of an area and is to be resisted. Similarly, the alteration of the rear and side boundary walls are particularly noticeable in Bute Town's terraces, and the removal or alteration of original boundary walls is to be resisted.

Policy 5

Proposals for energy-saving measures and for sustainable forms of energy supply will be supported where they do not adversely affect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Explanation

The requirement to improve the energy performance of all buildings, including existing ones when altered, lies at the heart of both national policy and local planning policy.

It is important that the introduction of energy-saving measures does not detract from the architectural and historic character of the Conservation Area. For instance, the use of uPVC windows, insulated exterior walling materials or solar panels in roofs all may be harmful to the appearance of buildings, especially ones of

traditional form and appearance. Part L of the Building regulations acknowledges this issue by allowing discretion to be used in its application to historic buildings. Under the term 'historic building' it includes:

- Listed Buildings
- Buildings in Conservation Areas
- Buildings on a local authority's 'local list'

Traditional buildings can be adapted to perform well in energy terms, although the cost and visual impact of such measures should not be underestimated. It is generally possible to introduce energy saving measures, for instance carefully installed draught proofing, loft insulation or secondary glazing. The form and nature of the Bute Town Conservation Area mean that solar panels or photovoltaic installations are unlikely to be able to be sited in locations where they would not be visually obtrusive. Care should always be taken that any measures adopted to improve energy use does not threaten the long-term conservation of the buildings (e.g. by leading to increased condensation).

8.0 ENHANCEMENT : ACTIONS & MANAGEMENT

This section provides guidance for the enhancement of the Conservation Area.

The enhancement of a Conservation Area can take two principal forms:

- The sympathetic redevelopment of sites defined in the detailed appraisal of the area as detracting from the character of appearance of the areas; or
- Pro-active proposals, such as the management and repair of a designed historic landscape, a scheme for the restoration of distinctive architectural features, the reinstatement of historic surfaces, or the reduction of traffic intrusion and the rationalisation of street signage.¹

8.1 Guidance

The Rows

As listed buildings, each of the three terraced rows in Bute Town are subject to rigorous consent mechanisms in order for any material alterations to be undertaken. However, numerous inappropriate alterations have been undertaken to the buildings over the years that have eroded some of the qualities of the buildings and detracted from their appearance.

Roofs

The original roof coverings to the rows were pegged stone roof tiles, although documentary evidence exists showing that some of the roofs had been extensively re-roofed using natural Welsh slate. The current roofing material is a modern concrete replica tile (laid as part of the extensive 1970's renovation works). A suitable and durable alternative would be to re-roof using natural slate (as recommended in the Bute Town Conservation Plan 2007). Whilst this would have a visual impact on the current visual aesthetic of the rows, it is a viable and proven alternative to stone roof tiles and was historically a natural progression from local stone tiles when transport links allowed.

Recommendation: To re-roof the whole of the three rows using heavy grade natural slate as a single project in order to provide suitably weatherproof and durable roof coverings to protect the assets in the long term.

Rooflights

Numerous properties have had rooflights inserted, predominantly to the rear elevations. As would be expected with individual ownership, the size, type and location of the rooflights varies considerably along each terraced row. This haphazard arrangement is in conflict with the politely designed appearance and symmetry of the rows as a whole.

Recommendation: To remove the existing rooflights to all of the rows as part of the proposed re-roofing works and to provide new rooflights to the rear elevations in a designed and considered arrangement to suit the symmetry of the rows. The new rooflights should be suitable modern replica metal conservation styled rooflights, installed flush with the plane of the roof covering.

¹ English Heritage's 'Guidance on the management of conservation areas'

Rainwater Goods

There were no rainwater goods installed on the terraced rows originally (photographic evidence prior to the 1970's refurbishment), as the roofs relied on their deep overhanging eaves to throw rainwater away from the walls. The current arrangement consists of a modern extruded aluminium ogee gutter with isolated large diameter downpipes.

Whilst the use of aluminium guttering would be acceptable from a weight and durability point of view, the more elaborate ogee profile is commonly found on later Victorian buildings. A simple half round profile (either cast iron or cast aluminium) with smaller diameter downpipes would be more appropriate.

Recommendation: To replace the whole of the rainwater goods system as part of the re-roofing works, using simple half round (cast iron or cast aluminium) fittings with smaller diameter (approx. 3") downpipes. Additional downpipes would be required.

Eaves Detail

The current eaves detail with plain painted sheet soffit boards (plywood assumed) are a strong feature in the character of the rows, particularly when viewed from the street. The lack of any articulation to the board as well as its decoration in a modern bright white is stark and draws the eye. Historic photographs taken prior to the 1970's refurbishment reveal that the soffits were boarded, made up of 3 or 4 wide softwood boards. Replacement of the current boarding with more traditional softwood soffit boards would improve the character of the soffit and the strong influence the eaves have on the street views.

Recommendation: To replace the present eaves detail arrangement as part of the re-roofing works using painted softwood timber boarding (e.g. beaded T&G profile) to an informed detail.

Chimney Stacks

The chimney stacks form a critical element in the roof profile of the terraced rows. The chimney stacks have been identified as being problematic and allowing water ingress into the buildings; a number are currently covered with temporary tarpaulin to limit this ingress. The chimney pots on the rows are varied in their form and colour and some have been infilled. Some stacks (particularly in Middle Row) have inappropriate television aerials installed. Photographic evidence prior to the 1970's refurbishment shows that the stacks were built of large square edged dressed coursed stone rather than the more random rubble appearance of many of the stacks at present.

Recommendation: To review the condition of the chimney stacks, undertake repairs and replace all leadwork, including the provision of lead trays as required. New simple plain round chimney pots to be provided (including dummy pots to blocked flues). Stacks to be rebuilt using stonework of a character to match the photographic evidence of the pre 1970's restoration along with a matching over-sailing course.

Walls & Pointing

The existing masonry walls of the terraced rows are thicker than most masonry walls on workers housing and are well built and exceptionally robust. The locally sourced millstone grit sandstone is semi-coursed since it has more horizontal emphasis than would normally be found in a truly random rubble wall. The mortar used to construct the wall is lime based and is likely to have been made up with ash in the aggregate. Some recent re-pointing has been undertaken using cement based mortar, though this does not appear to be having a detrimental effect on the stone.

Recommendation: It is imperative that the character of any repairs to the existing stonework match the character of the existing masonry walls (size, colour, character of the stone etc.). If and when the opportunity arises, the removal of modern cement based mortar pointing should be encouraged and future re-pointing work should be undertaken in a suitable lime based mortar, colour matched to the original mortar.

Windows and Doors

The sliding sash windows to the front elevations of the terrace were replaced as part of the major refurbishment works in 1978. Whilst the windows contribute to the designed and homogenous appearance of the street, the fenestration arrangement as a simple one over one design (without glazing bars) is historically inaccurate. It is likely that the original fenestration would have been small paned iron windows.

At some stage (believed to be during the 1970's restoration works) the original window sub-cills were replaced with brick sub-cills. Whilst this is a robust detail, the brick sub-cills are inappropriate.

The majority of the windows to the rear of the terraced rows have had their windows replaced, many with inappropriate uPVC windows.

Recommendation: Front windows generally to be retained and repaired. As and when replacement becomes necessary, new painted timber sliding sash windows should be used in a simple 6 over 6 pane arrangement (without horns to the sashes). This would be deemed to be a visually suitable and eminently more practical alternative to iron windows.

uPVC windows should be removed to the rear elevation and replaced with three over three painted timber sliding sashes as remains at the rear of No.7 Middle Row (at first floor level).

Should the opportunity arise, the replacement of the brick sub-cills with new Pennant sandstone sub-cills should be encouraged.

Extensions & Garages

Insensitive and inappropriate rear and side extensions have degraded the views of the rear of the terraced rows. Future extension should be of an appropriate size, form and scale. Design guidance on this has previously been prepared. In addition, many of the inappropriate extensions have been constructed with render finishes painted in light modern colours that are particularly noticeable in distant views of the rows. Large detached garages have also been constructed in many rear gardens that have a detrimental effect on the views into and out of the area.

Recommendation: Future extensions and garage proposals to be generally in accordance with the document : Bute Town Design Guidance for Extensions & Garages (March 2007). Investigate possible options to negotiate the removal of the inappropriate extensions (particularly to the west end of Lower Row). Encourage residents to redecorate their existing extensions from a colour palette that blends with the colour of the existing masonry walls.

Missing Buildings

The previously demolished buildings at the west end of Collins Row are a significant loss to the symmetry, rhythm and completeness of the Bute Town terraces.

Recommendation: Explore various means to put a suitable project in place to rebuild the missing buildings in order to complete the appearance of the row. The external appearance should mirror that of the east end of the row.

Equipment / Services

Poorly located equipment such as satellite dishes and TV aerials detract from the quality of the architectural space. This is particularly noticeable on the front elevation of Middle Row since they face the street.

Recommendation: Identify opportunities to provide shared aerial or satellite systems for multiple dwellings to minimize the amount of street clutter. If possible, the dish or aerial position should be located away from the main vistas.

Colours

The use of inappropriate and modern colours detracts from the overall ambience of Bute Town. In particular the use of modern brilliant whites on joinery are prevalent and draw the eye.

Similarly, bright colours have been used on street furniture and metal components, and in some instances masonry paint on rear extensions have a detrimental effect on distant views of the Conservation Area.

Recommendation: Encourage the use of a limited palette of traditional colours, particularly a single off white for general use on windows and joinery components. Rainwater goods and eaves generally to be decorated in a single muted colour throughout as part of the proposed re-roofing works to provide unity. A select palette of suitable colours for various elements to be prepared with colour references to aid residents in their selection.

8.2 Bute Town Threshold

Entrance Walls / Gate

The existing entrance walls, gate, large sign and cattle grid to the west end of Bute Town at its main entrance are an incongruous collection of features that reinforce a feeling of separation from the wider community. The various elements seem to be somewhat haphazardly arranged and include incongruous built in seating in uninviting locations and multiple litter bins grouped together. The presence of a cattle grid seems out of place with no apparent open or grazing common land nearby. The character of the stonework to the freestanding walls is at odds with the character of the stonework to the terraced rows. Until the removal of the railway, access to Bute Town was via a stone walled bridge over the railway (see photograph in item 3.5).

The use of pennant sandstone setts as a flooring material adjacent to the entrance area has been successful and is a suitable alternative to large pennant stone flags.

Recommendation: Consider redesigning the entrance to Bute Town to more closely resemble the previous arrangement based on historic / photographic evidence.

Car Park

The car park adjacent to the main entrance into Bute Town is well used. Unfortunately, this means that the presence of vehicles parked in front of the principal approach detracts from the views of the terraced rows. Ideally, this car park would best be relocated away from the main entrance to the area, but as a well used space, and one which provides necessary parking for visitors without inconveniencing residents this would seem unlikely. The finishes to the pub car park adjacent to the Windsor Arms are in poor condition, and the refurbishment of this area would greatly improve the character of the public open space in Bute Town.

Recommendation: Provide visual screening / landscaping of the car park to minimise its impact on views of Bute Town from the west and on approaching the entrance to the Conservation Area. Encourage the redevelopment of the pub car park to provide improved civic space.

8.3 Public Realm

Road Surfaces

The pleasant proportions of the streets in Bute Town mean that the carriageways are particularly wide for a typical residential street. This arrangement creates a large expanse of macadam surface visible, which is somewhat incongruous with the buildings. Macadam is a practical and cost effective road material, but varying the road surfacing materials would help to minimize the impact of the macadam and could be used to delineate between parking areas and the main carriageway without introducing road markings, which would be visually intrusive.

Recommendation: Consider resurfacing the street to include a macadam area for parking adjacent to the pavement and laying stone setts similar to those used at the main entrance to the central section of the street. Refer also to stone gutters adjacent to the kerb edge as seen on Collins Row as an example of a minor alteration that softens the impact of the macadam road. Proposals should respond to the strength of symmetry of Bute Town – asymmetric parking arrangements would be visually intrusive, despite perhaps being more efficient.

Street Furniture

Much of the street furniture in Bute Town is inappropriately decorated using a bright modern white, and this is stark against the otherwise muted tones of the terraces. In addition, the character of some of the fittings is somewhat at odds with the character of Bute Town, with Victorian styled street lights and modern takes on historic elements, some of which has an oddly seaside character that seems out of place in Bute Town.

Recommendation: Consider sourcing more appropriate street furniture with less fussy detailing. Should finances be unavailable, re-decorate the existing furniture using more suitable muted tones.

Playground

The playground area to the east of the rows has modern playground equipment within a hoop top railing enclosure. The playground equipment and railings are all decorated in bright primary colours somewhat at odds with the character of Bute Town as a whole. The size of the playground also seems disproportionately large in relation to the size of the community it serves.

Recommendation: Consider reducing the scale of the playground to reflect the size of the local population likely to use the equipment. Consider also replacing the play equipment with items more aesthetically appropriate to the historic environment.

8.4 Adjacent Land

Land to west side of Bute Town

The green expanse to the west side of Bute Town is on the site of the siding to the old railway line. It provides some distance from the traffic of the A469 but is seemingly an underused space, likely because of its proximity to the road and the traffic noise.

Recommendation: Consider improving the screening / landscaping to the boundary between the Conservation Area and the road to help reduce the impact that the traffic noise has on the area.

8.5 Detached Buildings

Boundary Treatments

In some cases, inappropriate boundary treatments to properties which currently lie outside the Conservation Area have a detrimental impact on the area.

Recommendation: Where less desirable boundary treatments have been erected (outside the existing Conservation Area as well as within it), consider using improved landscaping to minimise the effects of the existing boundaries on the Conservation Area.

8.6 Links to the Old Ironworks

Whilst the story of Bute Town may be known to some, there are many who are not aware of its links to the old ironworks site. Reinforcing the tangible links between the site of the remains of the old furnace (Scheduled Monument) and Bute Town would help to reunite the area with its heritage.

Recommendation: Consider physical and educational proposals that would allow Bute Town to be reunited with its heritage. Consider enhancing the existing Bute Town Heritage Trail to reinforce the links between the old Union Ironworks site and Bute Town. Opportunities to tell the story of Bute Town's heritage should be explored along with consideration of how to best deal with the likely increased traffic.

9.0 PROTECTION

9.1 Existing Designations

The existing designations within the proposed Conservation Area are shown on Plan 1 of the Conservation Area Appraisal (with the exception of the TPO's) and are summarised below.

- Bute Town Conservation Area
- 5 listed buildings / groupings, namely:
 - Nos 1-14 (consec) Collins Row
 - Nos 1-13 (consec) Middle Row & attached Windsor Arms PH
 - Nos 14-28 (consec) Lower Row
 - Rhymney House Hotel
 - Old Furnace Farmhouse
- 1 Scheduled Monument – Rhymney Ironworks Upper Furnace
- Tree Preservation Orders – Numerous TPO's are in place within the confines of the Conservation Area

9.2 Extension to the Conservation Area

The Conservation Area Appraisal proposed an extension to the Conservation Area to reinforce the links between Bute Town and the old ironworks.

This management plan has reviewed this proposal and suggests that it should be taken forward for designation.

ACTION: The local authority will seek to extend the Conservation Area designation as stated above.

10.0 ENFORCEMENT

10.1 Introduction

The development control powers available to the local planning authority through listed building and Conservation Area designation are outlined above.

There are several examples where alterations to listed and unlisted buildings may have been made without listed building consent and/or planning permission. These include extensions, the replacement of windows with inappropriate uPVC, the insertion of rooflights and alterations to the boundaries of listed buildings that may be considered to be part of their curtilage.

10.2 Article 4 directions

The Conservation Area Appraisal identified the need for Article 4 Directions to prevent the incremental erosion of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area to include parts of the existing and proposed extension to the Conservation Area Boundary.

It is therefore recommended that the areas identified on Plan 2 of the Conservation Area Appraisal showing the proposed extension to the Article 4 boundary be adopted.

ACTION: The Local Authority will seek to extend the Article 4 Boundary in line with the proposal made in item 1.5 of the Conservation Area Appraisal.

The Local Authority to produce and distribute supplementary planning guidance for property owners affected by the Article 4 Directions boundary change.

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

11.1 Introduction

The previous parts of the report have examined the measures required to protect and enhance the Conservation Area, including specific recommendations for elements within the area.

This part of the report looks at how these measures should be implemented, i.e. which organisations or groups should be responsible for them, how they might be funded, and over what timescale the proposals should take place. The division of responsibility in caring for any Conservation Area is bound to be complex, and it hoped that some of the recommendations in this report can be implemented very quickly, whilst others will be ongoing, or should be programmed within a specific timeframe.

11.2 Community Engagement

The principal responsibilities for the stewardship of Bute Town Conservation Area fall jointly on Caerphilly County Borough Council and the local residents. Whilst many of the local residents are interested in the history of Bute Town, they may not be fully aware of the benefits of the Conservation Area and how they can influence its future.

Successfully engaging the local community with their heritage creates an ethos of conservation that can become almost self-regulating as members of the community learn about their environment and how to best look after it. The creation of a Heritage Trust jointly populated by the residents of Bute Town and the Local Authority could provide a platform to encouraging this engagement.

Communities often have various skills and expertise within them that are underused, but additional training and education in traditional skills can be used to help maintain and repair historic buildings from within the community.

11.3 Actions

Conservation Area legislation and official guidance deal mainly with local authority powers and responsibilities, but a Conservation Area is the responsibility of all the building owners, users and others who enjoy the area, acting in partnership with the local authority to protect and enhance its character. Whenever possible this Management Plan identifies actions which can be shared amongst those who have an interest in the Conservation Area.

The resourcing and programme for the actions are often difficult to give in detail, but an attempt has been made to give an order of magnitude to different actions, plus an indication of where the priorities should lie.

The actions are described here under the following headings:

- Development Control

The first and principal line of protection for the Conservation Area lies in development control by the planning authority. This covers demolitions and alterations to unlisted buildings, new developments in the Conservation Area, other works affecting the streetscape and the felling and lopping of trees. It also covers changes of use. The listed buildings within the Conservation Area are protected by virtue of their status, and works to St Aidan's church would require faculty consent from the Church in Wales.

Programme: Ongoing

Responsibility: Local Planning Authority in conjunction with Cadw (where Listed Building Consent applies) and the Church in Wales (where Ecclesiastical Exemption applies).

Resourcing: Development Control will require regular and consistent input from conservation professionals. The protection of views and the preparation of development briefs may require some increased resourcing by the Local Planning Authority.

- Enforcement

In the case of Conservation Areas, the mechanisms of Development Control may be strengthened in three ways:

- The application of Article 4 Directions. In this instance it is recommended that directions be served on parts of the existing and proposed extended Conservation Area boundary. This has been identified in consultation workshops during the preparation of this plan.
- The monitoring of buildings at risk.
- The serving of urgent Works notices or section 215 notices. No recommendations for the use of urgent works powers are included in this plan.

Programme: Article 4 Directions to be served within the next year (see also Guidance, below).

Monitoring of Buildings at risk: ongoing.

Responsibility: Local Planning Authority.

Resourcing: The use of Article 4 Directions may involve a modest increase in Development Control work (in drafting and serving the directions). Monitoring buildings at risk and the serving of an urgent works notice also have only modest implications for resourcing. If however, a significant number of listed or unlisted buildings fall into disrepair there would be a need to apply additional resources to meeting that challenge.

- Enhancement

Proposals for the enhancement of this Conservation Area are discussed in detail in section 8 of this plan. They apply in particular to the improvement to the streetscape of Bute Town and the strengthening of its links to its heritage.

- The Rows - Roof and Chimney Stack Works

Responsibility: Caerphilly County Borough Council & Homeowners

Resourcing: Potential Public Funding.

- Linking Bute Town with the Old Furnace Site
Responsibility: Caerphilly County Borough Council & Cadw
Resourcing: Potential Public Funding.

 - Playground and Public Area Improvements (east side of Rows)
Responsibility: Caerphilly County Borough Council
Resourcing: Potential Public Funding.

 - Public Realm Improvements
Responsibility: Caerphilly County Borough Council
Resourcing: Potential Public Funding.

 - Threshold / Entrance Improvements
Responsibility: Caerphilly County Borough Council
Resourcing: Potential Public Funding.
- Guidance
This plan has identified four specific areas where the production of guidance literature will be important to the protection and enhancement of the Conservation Area.
 - Design guidance on extensions and garages
 - Design guidance on windows, doors, roofs etc.
 - Advice to building owners of properties which are the subject of Article 4 Directions
 - Advice to building owners regarding the use of a suitable palette of coloursProgramme: The preparation of design guidance on extensions and garages has previously been prepared (2007), but should be reviewed in light of current opportunities and to be made available to the residents of the Conservation Area. Preparation of the other types of guide will be ongoing, and in the case of the Article 4 Direction will depend on when those directions are introduced.
Responsibility: Caerphilly County Borough Council
Resourcing: The preparation of guidance may require additional resourcing during the next 5 years.

- Maintenance

The proper maintenance of buildings, street materials and other features is crucial to the long-term care of the Conservation Area. This falls under the following headings:

- Residential Buildings

There are already examples of residents cooperating in the maintenance of their properties. This can be encouraged through guidance literature and other advice. There may be instances where specific projects are led by the Local Authority (as with the proposed re-roofing works), but it must be stressed that the maintenance responsibility for the buildings following these works returns to the building owners and not the Local Authority.

Programme: Ongoing

Responsibility: Building owners

Resourcing: Principally a matter for collective decision-making by building owners.

- Street Paving & Furniture

Historic paving materials are a key aspect of the Conservation Area, for which special provision needs to be made as part of street maintenance and replacement.

The Local Authority should make maximum use of its powers under the New Roads and Streetworks Act to inspect works by utility companies and to apply financial penalties for inadequate reinstatement.

Programme: Ongoing

Responsibility: Local Planning and Highways Authorities.

Resourcing: The use of historically appropriate materials may be an additional cost in carrying out street works. Highways contractors may need specialist skills for maintenance. In respect to the inspection of works by utility companies, provision exists for costs to be recovered from the companies, but increased awareness and early liaison could prevent damage to historic fabric in the first place.

- Public Open Areas

The care and maintenance of public open areas is often key to their continued use, be that playgrounds or more flexible open land for general community use.

Programme: Ongoing

Responsibility: Local Authority.

Resourcing: Maintenance of the open areas and playground in Bute Town is already budgeted for by Caerphilly County Borough Council.

- Boundary Walls

Historic stone boundary walls are a key aspect of the Conservation Area, for which special provision needs to be made as part of its maintenance and replacement.

Programme: ongoing

Responsibility: building owners

Resourcing: Principally a matter for building owners, but advice on the retention and repair of masonry walls should be provided by the Local Planning Authority along with encouragement to reinstate previously removed stone walls.

- Protection

This plan has identified that an extension to the Conservation Area to create closer links with the old Union ironworks will strengthen the area.

Programme: Within one year

Responsibility: Caerphilly County Borough Council

Resourcing: The implementation of this protection will require some additional resourcing.

- Community Engagement

Establishing a forum or mechanism for dialogue and the promotion of Bute Town's heritage between local residents and the wider community with the support of the Local Authority, perhaps in the form of a local Heritage Trust. The trust could take on the responsibility for promoting the enhancement and maintenance works within the Conservation Area as well as making information more readily available to local residents. In addition, various events including training workshops in traditional building skills as well as wider community celebrations could be arranged and promoted.

Programme: Within one year

Responsibility: Local residents & Caerphilly County Borough Council

Resourcing: The implementation of this protection will require some additional resourcing.

- Traffic and Movement

The role that traffic and movement have in the Conservation Area have been identified in numerous places throughout this plan, and consequently some specific recommendations are dealt with under other headings (public realm, paving etc.). As such no specific recommendations have been included.

11.4 Funding & Resourcing

The plan has previously noted that the care of the Conservation Area should be a shared responsibility. The formation of a Bute Town Heritage Trust could be a significant asset to the Conservation Area and the community as a whole, and would likely be well placed to identify and encourage partnerships that can take forward the actions identified in this plan.

Inevitably, a large proportion of the burden of caring for the Conservation Area falls upon the Local Authority because of the obligations placed upon it by the planning legislation. It is essential that the authority commits adequate resources to enable it to exercise its powers and responsibilities.

In recent years Townscape Heritage (TH) grants administered by the Heritage Lottery Fund have been an important source of finance for Conservation Area enhancement projects. A TH grant application (Round 2) is currently planned for submission in March 2015, and it is hoped that it will provide the principal source of funding for the enhancement of the roofs to the terraced rows and to reinforce the link between Bute Town and the old Union Ironworks site. Further sources of funding may also be available from other sources to provide match funding. The Local Authority and other stakeholders should continue to seek alternative revenue streams to continue protecting and enhancing Bute Town.

11.5 Monitoring and Updating this Plan

The effectiveness of the Management Plan will depend upon the way its policies and recommendations are administered.

Three key factors need to be in place to successfully implement the plan:

- The commitment of all relevant Local Authority departments to the protection and enhancement of the Conservation Area. Other stakeholders, including government agencies (eg Cadw), local organisations and building owners also have a key role to play.
- The application of sufficient resources, not just to enable the Local Authority to carry out its statutory duties but also to help initiate (in partnership with others) the enhancements recommended in the Conservation Area Management Plan.
- The review of the Management Plan after five years, involving a fresh round of consultations similar to those which have taken place at this initial stage.

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