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Report To Full Council Meeting

May 21st 2024

Placemaking Plan Update

Author Cllr Malcolm Wilson

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Since the last update on Placemaking received at the March meeting the Placemaking project has made significant progress, and this report summarises this activity and provides information on the timeline to complete the plan.

2. Community Engagement, Other Activity and Emerging Themes

- 2.1 The community wide survey closed at the end of March and we had 274 responses to the survey. The final general community 'drop in' was held at the Farmers Arms Aberthin on the 11th March.
- 2.2 We visited the Welsh School on the 29th April for a Placemaking engagement event with their school council. This was a successful event and the children and staff were fully engaged with the process and provided lots of ideas and opinions on what they would like to see in the town.
- 2.3 I attended the Charter Trust meeting to update them on Placemaking on 17th April.
- 2.4 The Placemaking task and finish group held its bimonthly meeting in March and the next meeting will be held on the 23rd May. An additional meeting was held on the 30th April which is discussed below.
- 2.5 In a further attempt to engage with the town businesses a food and drink business 'drop in' was held in the Horse and Groom on 25th April. Despite 38 food and drink outlets having hand delivered leaflet inviting them to attend the numbers who attended was extremely disappointing, although one



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business did meet me after a couple of days later. Meaningful engagement with the Town's business is proving very difficult to achieve and other ways to achieve this are being explored.

From the community engagement through the survey, specific responses from organisations such as the Charter Trust and other events held at schools, drop-ins, the Coronation event, etc (19 in all), several themes have emerged which can be summarised as follows:

- Offline activity themes:
 - Connectivity
 - Facilities for young people
 - Natural and Built Environment
 - Local Business Economy / Public Services and Facilities
- Online surveys:
 - Community spirit
 - Shaping the development of the community
 - Connectivity
 - Public transport

2.6 More detailed analysis of the themes can be found at Appendix 1 to this report and a schedule of offline events at Appendix 2

3. Appointment of Consultants to Complete the Plan

3.1 The Welsh Government have provided funding to the Vale of Glamorgan Council to meet the cost of employing consultants to complete community engagement, develop the emerging themes and draft the plan for a second round of consultation and before finalising the plan. With some of these funds being held back to meet the cost any 'quick wins' that are identified in the final plan.

3.2 Eleven submissions were received by the Vale and four companies were interviewed on the 11th April, I was part of the interview panel. Optimised Environments were appointed who are a Manchester based consultancy with a Cardiff office. Their proposal in response to the brief can be found at the following link:

[120117_Optimised_Environments_ltd-240314_CowbridgeResponseDoc.pdf](#)



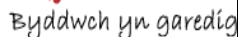
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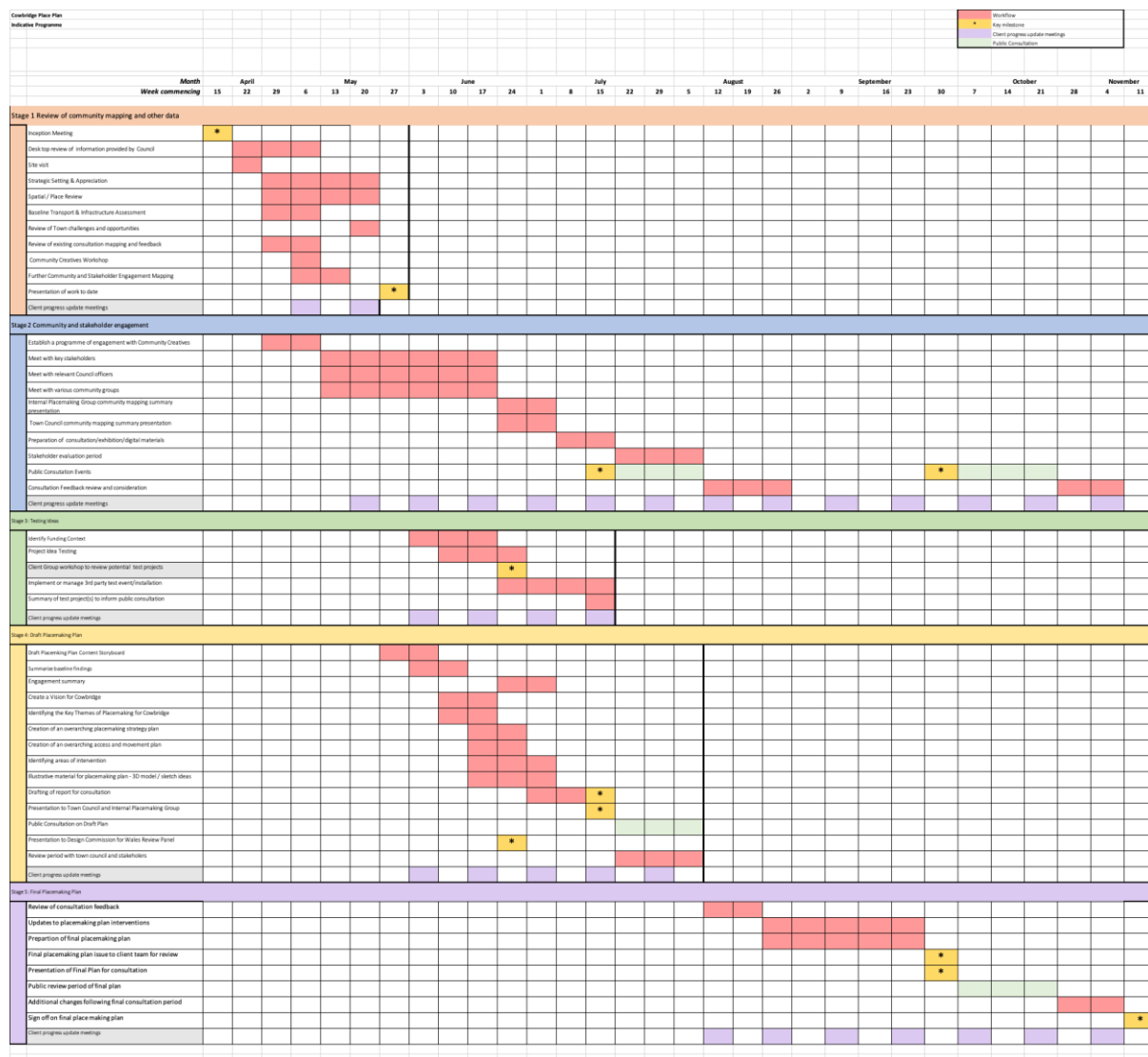
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- 3.3 The consultants visited Cowbridge on the 29th and 30th April for a familiarisation visit and met the Town Council's Placemaking Task and Finish Group on the morning of the 30th April. The itinerary of the visit is shown at Appendix 3. Throughout the first day staff from different Vale departments such as highways and conservation joined the walkabouts and Cllr John Andrew, and I participated in the conservation walkabout at the end of the first day.
- 3.4 The consultants as stated met the Placemaking Task and Finish group on the 30th April and presented their initial views. A copy of the presentation can be found at:
- [optimised Environ presentation to PM T & F Group 30 April 2024pdf.pdf](#)
- 3.5 They produced revised timetable for completing the project which is shown below and shows the draft plan out for consultation in July and the final sign off the plan in November 2024. It should be noted that there may need to be some further approvals by both the Town Council and the Vale before the plan is made a public document:



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5, Recommendations

- 5.1 The Council is asked to make comment on the revised timeline to produce the Placemaking Plan and note the appointment of the consultants and the revised monitoring arrangements.



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Appendix 1: Emerging Themes for Online Survey and Offline Events

1. Online Survey

Cowbridge Placemaking – Emerging Themes

Community Spirit

- Majority of respondents (73%) feel part of the community
- Ways to improve community spirit:
 - **Enhancing Social Spaces:** To improve social interaction
 - **Community Events and Activities:** More local events
 - **Youth Involvement:** Need for facilities and activities for younger generations
 - **Improving Communication:** Better communication channels
 - **Addressing Infrastructure Needs:** Improving transportation links, public spaces, repurposing existing buildings to serve community needs
 - **Promoting Diversity and Inclusivity:** Embracing diversity, supporting residents of all backgrounds
 - **Empowering Residents:** Greater call for resident involvement in the decision-making process
 - **Supporting Local Businesses:** Reducing business rates and creating environments that encourage shopping locally
 - **Addressing Concerns:** Overdevelopment, lack of communication from local authorities and need for better maintenance of public spaces
- Overall, responses emphasized the importance of creating inclusive spaces, fostering community engagement and addressing the diverse needs and interests of Cowbridge residents across different age groups and backgrounds

Shaping the development of the community

- 30% of respondents felt that they can shape the development of Cowbridge
- How respondents would like to become more involved in shaping the future of Cowbridge:
 - **Concerns about the vibrancy of the High Street:** Concerns over decline of businesses on the high street, desire to support existing businesses
 - **Placemaking and Community Involvement:** Residents would like to become more involved: Placemaking Champions



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- **Influence on Decision-Making:** Desire for greater influence on decisions regarding developments, leisure facilities and planning applications
- **Engagement and Consultation:** Express importance of engaging with wider community beyond social media: more surveys, public forums, meetings etc
- **Youth Involvement:** Younger people to be involved in decision-making
- **Improving Communication:** Residents seek better communication channels with local authorities
- **Concerns and Solutions:** Lack of transparency in planning process
- **Collaboration and Participation:** Willingness to collaborate with local groups
- Overall, responses highlighted a strong desire among residents to play a more active role in shaping the future direction of their town addressing concerns and preserving its unique character and community spirit.

Connectivity

- 39% of respondents agree that Cowbridge is well connected and uses land efficiently
- 27% of respondents agree that in Cowbridge there are well designed, safe active travel routes
- The most used form of transport was a car or van – 86%, with the next most used mode of transport was the bus, 9.0%
- How respondents think travelling around Cowbridge on foot or bike could be encouraged:
 - **Cycle Lanes and Paths:** Dedicated cycle lanes - especially along busy roads like the A48
 - **Improved Footpaths:** Highlight importance of well-maintained and well-lit footpaths, especially in darker or less frequented areas
 - **Reduce Car Dependency:** Reducing car dependency is crucial for promoting walking and cycling.
 - **Public Transport:** In order to reduce reliance on cars, public transport options must be improved.
 - **Community Engagement:** Walking clubs, cycling groups and educational programs to promote a culture of active travel
 - **Infrastructure Improvements:** Wider pavements, designated pedestrians crossing and better signage to make walking and cycling routes and more accessible and safer
 - **Linking Surrounding Villages:** Highlight need for safe and accessible routes connecting Cowbridge to surrounding villages



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- Overall, the key to encouraging walking and cycling around Cowbridge lies in improving infrastructure, promoting alternative modes of transportation and fostering a community-wide shift towards active travel

Public Transport

- How respondents felt people could be encouraged to use public transport more often:
 - o **Lower Costs:** Many respondents mentioned that cheaper fares or special rates for students and families
 - o **Increased Frequency:** A common theme was the need for more frequent bus services, especially to outlying villages and towns. Waiting times, a significant deterrent
 - o **Reliability:** Reliable and punctual bus services are essential
 - o **Expanded Routes:** Requests for bus routes to be extended to more destinations, including Barry, Llantwit Major and surrounding villages
 - o **Improved Connectivity:** Better connections to other modes of transport (train station) and improved coordination between schedules
 - o **Comfort and Safety:** Need for more comfortable buses, plus safety concerns, especially late-night services
 - o **Accessibility:** Accessibility for people with disabilities
 - o **Information and Communication:** Accurate and readily available information about bus routes, schedules and service changes was deemed essential
- Overall, addressing these concerns could help encourage more people to use public transport and reduce reliance on private vehicles, leading to benefits such as reduced traffic congestion, lower emission and improved access to transportation for all members of the community.

Mix of Uses

- 44.5% of respondents agree that Cowbridge has a good mix of uses, which provide opportunities for development

Public Realm

- 74.2% of respondents agree that the streets and public spaces of Cowbridge are well defined, welcoming, safe and inclusive

Distinctive qualities of Cowbridge

- 81.8% of respondents value and respect the distinctive qualities of Cowbridge

Satisfaction levels of living in Cowbridge



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- 77.9% of respondents are satisfied with where they live

The following question asked respondents what would most improve living in Cowbridge in the short term (next 12 months), medium (next five years) and long term (next ten years).

Based on the response provided, several key areas of improvement have been suggested for enhancing living conditions in Cowbridge in the short, medium, and long-term.

Short Term (next 12 months)

- Improve pedestrian safety, particularly for school children.
- More social activities and events for all ages. Increasing events and activities to bring the community together and enhance the town's vibrancy.
- More social activities and events for all ages
- Conduct surveys to understand residents' preferences for retail and hospitality options
- Better footpaths for pushchairs
- Enhanced communication with the community through regular surgeries and diverse media channels
- Creation of a central point of contact for community information
- Improved maintenance of public spaces, including repairing pavements and roads
- Explore options for a Marks & Spencer food store
- Increase availability of taxis and activities for young families
- Increased public transport options, including shuttle bus routes and more frequent bus services
- Encouraging shopkeepers to improve the appearance of their shops through courses and competitions
- Addressing littering issues and ensuring cleaner streets through regular clean-up efforts
- Addressing immediate infrastructure issues such as repairing pot holes and improving traffic management
- Enhancing public amenities by installing more street bins, particularly around schools and police fields
- Implementing measures to reduce speeding in the town, potentially through enforcement of speed limits

Medium Term (next 12 months)

- Redevelopment of the livestock market site for a new venue or market hall



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- Introduction of cafes with outdoor space
- Development of cycle lanes and walking routes, including safer road crossings
- Reinforcement of independent shops and businesses
- Exploration of options for a swimming pool
- Improvement of public transport, including the reinstatement of a rail connection
- Creation of an arts/community center
- Reinforcement of community events and festivals
- Provision of more activities for young people and teens
- Reconsideration of speed limits and road signage
- Developing additional community facilities such as a multi-level exhibition / activity space at Old Hall and a pop-up kitchen/cinema/café
- Improving access to essential services like healthcare and schools
- Encouraging a diverse mix of shops and businesses, while limiting housing development to maintain the town's character
- Enhancing transportation infrastructure, including better road maintenance, cycling facilities and potentially introducing a railway station
- Investing in public transportation and improving bus links to and from Cowbridge
- Creating a more inclusive environment for teenagers by providing youth facilities and addressing negative attitudes towards them
- Implementing measures to control housing development prevent overcrowding, ensuring that infrastructure and services can adequately support the population

Long-Term Term (Over 12 months)

- Expansion of employment opportunities and green spaces
- Redevelopment of the rear of the town hall
- Establishment of a football stadium for the local football team
- Continued focus on preserving the town's character and heritage, sustaining the preservation of historic buildings and green spaces
- Implementation of measures to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution.
- Exploration of options for a lido or swimming pool
- Development of a community hub or arts centre
- Prioritization of infrastructure projects to support sustainable growth
- Consideration of housing development plans and their impact on the community
- Providing affordable housing options, especially for young people and the elderly

2. Offline Events



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Emerging themes from the activities undertaken can be briefly summarised as follows:

- **Connectivity**

- Maintenance, signage and usability of footpaths
- Desire for safe, traffic free cycling routes
- Desire for safe pedestrian routes, within town centre and connecting to neighbouring communities
- Active travel routes for young people – for leisure and to and from schools
- Public transport options – focus on unreliability of services.
- Poor mobile signal
- Poor Broadband speeds
- High levels of walking between locations reported – e.g. from Llanblethian and Clare Garden Village to town centre as well as recreational walking on local footpaths. Walking options are clearly valued.

- **Facilities for Young People**

- Frequently highlighted as lacking by older respondents – with particular focus on activities/facilities for older teenagers
- Repeated call for return of Youth Club by older respondents, this request not so marked amongst younger respondents.
- Older respondents report higher satisfaction with facilities such as Play Areas for Primary aged young people.
- Mixed attitudes regarding provision of new skatepark / upgrade to existing skatepark.
- Older respondents report needing to travel to neighbouring communities such as Llantwit Major to access sports activities and facilities for children / grandchildren
- CGV respondents positive regarding re-location of Iolo Morgannwg Welsh Medium school to new site within the development.

- **Natural and Built Environment**

- High emphasis on value of green spaces in and around the town for well-being / recreation. Rural location /access to green space often cited as reason for move to the town.
- High reporting of recreational and active travel through green spaces
- Physic Garden often marked as space of high value to residents.
- Historic features have been less strongly marked as of value to residents than perhaps pre-supposed. Residents appear to value the unique character of the town without highlighting particular historical / cultural features.



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- Most highlighted issue with town infrastructure is the surfacing of the Butts car park on the site of the old Cattle Market.
- **Local Business Economy / Public Services and Facilities**
 - Focus on insufficiency of local health provision – GP surgeries / care services.
 - High level of dissatisfaction with facilities for physical activity, improvement to facilities provided by the Leisure Centre requested. Repeated requests for a swimming pool, from both older and younger respondents.
 - High value is placed on the range of independent shops.
 - Younger respondents would value greater range of shops, to include cheaper options.
 - Younger and older respondents report supermarket shopping outside of the town due to cost issues associated with the two supermarkets within the town.
 - Respondents report disquiet with restaurants and cafes having recently closed. The hospitality offer of the town is seen as having declined post-Covid.



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Appendix 2: Offline Events Held

Summary: Offline Engagement Activity for Cowbridge Placemaking

Placemaking activity in Cowbridge began in January 2023 when VOGC Officers met with Elected Members and Officers of Cowbridge Town Council, along with key stakeholders identified by the Town Council where the Placemaking process and objectives were explained to those present.

After a period of planning and development, the first public facing engagement activity took place in Cowbridge at the Coronation Picnic which was held in the Bear field in Cowbridge on the 2nd of May 2023. This marked the beginning of the 'on the ground' activity that is outlined in the table below.

Date & Location	Activity Type	Summary description
02/05/23 Bear Field	Map-based engagement with residents at Coronation Picnic	Broad demographic of residents attending event were introduced to concept of Placemaking via placing heart stickers on map of the town to show places they value and love to spend time. Comment slips also used for suggestions for improvements/further detail. C. 150 responses recorded.
01/07/23 Town Hall	Workshop activity at Mayor's Coffee Morning	Residents attending event were invited to form groups on tables and to complete 'Placemaking Grids' using three of the Placemaking themes to create a Gaps and Assets table for the town. C. 40 people engaged.
06/07/23 Cowbridge Comprehensive School	Awareness raising session on Placemaking by Town Mayor to School Council	15 pupils engaged. No feedback collected as awareness raising only.
13/09/23 Duke of Wellington pub	Workshop activity for business owners/traders	Invited attendees were asked to form groups on tables and to create Gaps and Assets table related to running a business in the town. Attendees were



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		also asked to separately complete the exercise as residents of the town. Information regarding Business Grants and pilot local banking hub was also provided to attendees. C. 25 people engaged [note: this was a disappointing turn out given promotion of the event by the TC with the local business community]
10/10/23 Cowbridge Comprehensive School	Placemaking awareness raising session and workshop activity with Year 7 pupils	Informal introduction to Placemaking plus comment sheet exercise. 60 pupils engaged.
14/11/23 Town Hall	Meeting with Members of Cowbridge Charter Trust	Introduction to Placemaking objectives by VOGC Officers plus request for input. Written submission offered and received Jan 24.
15/01/24 Cross Inn (on junction between CGV and road to Llanblethian)	Clare Garden Village and Llanblethian Residents drop-in session	Residents were invited to complete short questionnaires focused on how they move between home and local facilities and for CVG residents on whether they felt themselves to be residents of Cowbridge. C. 60 people engaged.
22/01/24 Town Hall	Workshop activity with Yr 3-6 pupils from Y Bont Faen Primary School	Pupils undertook a mapping exercise and a likes and dislikes questionnaire. C. 25 pupils engaged
02/02/24 Waitrose Foyer	Engagement with shoppers (residents and visitors)	Shoppers were invited to place like and dislike stickers on map of Cowbridge and to 'vote on what they considered most important out of the 3 emerging themes of connectivity, youth



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		facilities and cultural and recreational facilities. C. 80 people engaged.
26/02/24 Duke of Wellington Pub	Residents Drop-in	It was hoped that residents would respond to the invitation delivered to all Cowbridge residents to attend the drop-in session and have their say. Unfortunately, less than 5 people were engaged with during the evening.
04/03/24 Duke of Wellington Pub	Residents Drop-in	The second of the three promoted dates. Engagement was better on this date, particularly with residents of the local Independent Living Facility. Questionnaires were completed. C. 20 residents engaged.
05/03/24 Welsh St Donats (neighbouring village)	Engagement with Community Council	Cllr Malcolm Wilson addressed the Community Council Meeting and promoted the online survey to members.
11/03/24 Farmers Arms, Aberthin (neighbouring village)	Drop-in aimed at residents of Aberthin Village	The third of the three promoted dates. Unfortunately less than 5 people were engaged with.
13/03/24 & 20/03/24 Cowbridge Library	Engagement with attendees of Toddler and Knitting sessions	Promotion of the Online Survey
20/03/24 Cowbridge Leisure Centre	Engagement with residents using the Leisure Centre Facilities	Promotion of the Online survey
22/03/24 Filco Supermarket Cowbridge	Engagement with shoppers	Promotion of online survey and mapping exercise. C.40-50 residents engaged.
08/04/24 Old Hall Cowbridge	Meeting with Yr 12 Cowbridge Comprehensive Pupil	



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25/04/24 Horse & Groom Pub Cowbridge	Focus Group with Food and Drink retailers/businesses	Scheduled Event
29/04/24 Ysgol Iolo Morgannwg	Workshop activity with pupils at Welsh Medium Primary School (Welsh speaking VOGC Officer to attend)	Scheduled Event

Alongside these public-facing activities, VOGC Officers and TC Members have continued to meet on a weekly basis to monitor progress and plan Placemaking activities. Bi-monthly meetings of the Town Council's Placemaking Working Group also continue to take place. Membership of this group primarily consists of Elected members of the Town Council and VOGC Officers, but meetings are also sporadically attended by other stakeholders from the local community.

As would be expected, some of the engagement activities listed within the table above proved more successful than others in raising awareness of the purposes of Placemaking, and in capturing the views of residents about the priorities for the town over the near and medium future.



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Appendix 3: Cowbridge Site Visit - Monday 29th April / Tuesday 30th April

Time slot	Duration	Discipline	Task
10:30-11:00	30mins	Masterplanning / Transport and Council project team	Meet at Creative Rural Community CF71 7AH) Arrival and introductions
11:00-12:30	1 hour 30mins	Highways and Active Travel	Meet at Town hall at 11.am (High St) Site walkaround – discuss opportunities for movement in the town centre / traffic improvement etc
12.30-13:30	1 hour Lunch		
13:30-15:00	1 hour 30mins	Landscape	Meet at Town hall at 1.30pm (High St 7DD) Site walkaround – discuss opportunities for the public realm and surrounding green spaces
15:00-16:30	1 hour 30mins	Conservation	Meet at Town hall at 3.pm (High St) Site walkaround – discuss opportunities for culture and heritage within the town buildings, features, and character areas
16:30-17:00	30 mins	Masterplanning / Transport and Council project team	Review of the day
17:00-18:00	1 hour	Masterplanning	OPEN to review areas covered through the day additional photos if required
9:00-9:30	30mins	Masterplanning / Transport and Council project team	Meet at Town hall at 9am (High St, 7DD) Set up



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9:30-11:00	1 hour 30mins	Masterplanning / Transport / Council project team / Placemaking group	Placemaking Group discussion with Stakeholders
11:00-11:30	30mins	Masterplanning / Transport and Council project team	• Debrief with project team • Review of site walk overs and throughout the day. • Discussion on next steps