

Heritage Impact Assessment: Porthcawl Waterfront Regeneration

November 2025



Report No. 2431



Heritage Impact Assessment:

Porthcawl Waterfront Regeneration

November 2025

Prepared for the Urbanists

Report No. 2431

Version	Date	Sections Revised	Prepared/Revised by	Checked & Authorised by
1	14/11/2025	Original	Pete Clarke BSc MSc	Siân Thomas MCIfA
2	17/11/2025	5 and 6	Pete Clarke BSc MSc	Siân Thomas MCIfA

Copyright Notice: Archaeology Wales Ltd. retain copyright of this report under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, and have granted a licence to the Urbanists and their agents to use and reproduce the material contained within.

The Ordnance Survey has granted Archaeology Wales Ltd a Copyright Licence (No.100055111) to reproduce map information; Copyright remains otherwise with the Ordnance Survey.

Contents

1. Introduction.....	5
2. Legislation and Guidance	6
3. Methodology	8
4. Understanding the Significance of the Asset	12
5. The Development Proposals and their Impacts	19
6. Conclusions.....	24
7. Sources	27
Figures.....	29
Plates	33

Figures

Figure 1. Plan showing the location of the proposed development, the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings.....	30
Figure 2. Ordnance Survey Glamorgan Sheet XXXIX.SE 1900.....	31
Figure 3. Illustrative Masterplan.....	32

Plates

Plate 1. View along the Porthcawl Esplanade south-eastwards towards the marina.....	5
Plate 2: The Western Esplanade constituting of large Victorian and Edwardian villas and hotels, looking west.....	34
Plate 3. The Eastern Esplanade with its three- and four-storey terraces interspersed with modern apartment blocks, looking east.	34
Plate 4. The Breakwater and white-painted Lighthouse, looking south-east.	35
Plate 5. The Harbour and its northern wall showing evidence of the filled in access to the Dock, looking north.....	35

Plate 6. The Square, the oldest built-up area, is now a car park, looking south.....	36
Plate 7. The former Knights Arms pub that is now a smart row of holiday cottages, looking west north-west.....	36
Plate 8. Northern end of Hillsboro place, looking south-east	37
Plate 9. John Street highlighting a range of shop frontages, looking south-south-east.	37
Plate 10. John Street looking south-south-east.....	38
Plate 11. John Street highlighting modern additions such as the fitting of modern shops, looking south south-east.	38
Plate 12. View from the Breakwater towards Sandy Beach and the Coney Beach Funfair, looking north-east.	39

Tables

Table 1. Asset value criteria	10
Table 2. Magnitude of impact criteria	10

Summary

Archaeology Wales was commissioned by The Urbanists to carry out a Heritage Impact Assessment on the Porthcawl Conservation Area (WAL/BRID/267) in relation to the proposed regeneration of Porthcawl Waterfront, covering a 43ha area between the harbour (NGR SS 82048 76274) and Sandy Bay (NGR SS 82915 77124).

Porthcawl Conservation Area represents the historic core of the town of Porthcawl, located in Bridgend County Borough. The town originated in the early 19th century following the need for a harbour to export coal and iron from inland industrial centres. The usage of Porthcawl Harbour peaked in the late 19th century, leading to the construction of worker housing, shops and public houses. After the opening of nearby Port Talbot and Barry Docks, the dock saw almost a complete loss of trade and closed in 1906. The town was also a popular destination for day trippers and holiday makers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The report has assessed the heritage value of Porthcawl Conservation Area following the methodology outlined in the Cadw guidance document Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales (2017). The asset has a High heritage value, mostly derived from its evidential, historic and aesthetic values. These are largely based on the retention of its Victorian layout, the visual character on individual areas of the town, and the historical importance as a harbour in the late 19th century.

Aside from the general layout and building heights, plans have not been finalised. When plans become more detailed and eventually finalised, a more refined assessment of the impacts can be made. However, based on the information and the assessment of the heritage asset, proposals are considered to have a Low beneficial impact on the heritage value of Porthcawl Conservation Area.

Crynodeb Annechnegol

Comisiynwyd Archaeoleg Cymru gan The Urbanists i gynnal Asesiad o'r Effaith ar Dreftadaeth ar Ardal Gadwraeth Porthcawl (WAL/BRID/267) mewn perthynas â'r bwriad i adfywio'r Glan y Môr Porthcawl, yn gorchuddio ardal tua 43ha rhwng y lloches a'r (CGC SS 82048 76574) a Sandy Bay (CGC SS 82915 77124).

Mae Ardal Cadwraeth Porthcawl yn cynrychioli'r craidd hanesyddol o'r dref Porthcawl, wedi'i lleoli o fewn Sir Pen-y-bont. Sefydlwyd y dref yn y 19eg canrif gynnar yn dilyn yr angen ar gyfer lloches er mwyn allforio glo a haearn o'r canolfannau diwylliannol mewndirol. Wnaeth y defnydd o Loches Porthcawl cyrraedd penllanw yn y 19eg canrif hwyr, yn arwain at yr adeiladu o dai gweithwyr, siopau a thafarnau. Ar ôl yr agored o'r Dociau Port Talbot ac y Bari, welwyd y doc bron collid hollol o farchnad a chaewyd yn 1906. Roedd y dref hefyd yn gyrchfan poblogaidd ar gyfer ymwelwyr dydd a thwristiaid yn y canolrifau 19eg hwyr ac 20fed cynnar.

Mae'r adroddiad hon wedi asesu'r gwerth treftadaeth o'r Ardal Cadwraeth Porthcawl yn dilyn y fethodoleg a amlinellwyd o fewn y ddogfen Cadw Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales (2017). Mae gan yr ased gwerth treftadaeth Uchel, yn delio yn fwyaf o ei gwerthoedd tystiolaethol hanesyddol ac esthetig. Mae'r rhain ar y fwyaf yn seiliedig ar y dargadwad o ei gosodiad Fictoriaid, y cymeriad gweledol ar ardaloedd unigol y dref, a'r pwysigrwydd hanesyddol fel lloches yn yr 19eg canrif hwyr.

Heblaw am y gosodiad cyffredinol ac uchderau'r adeiladau, nid yw'r cynlluniau wedi'u terfynu. Pan fydd y cynlluniau'n dod yn fwy manwl ac yn cael eu cwblhau, gellir cynnal asesiad mwy manwl o'r effeithiau. Fodd bynnag, yn seiliedig ar y wybodaeth a'r asesiad o'r ased treftadaeth, ystyrir bod y cynigion yn cael effaith fuddiol Isel ar werth treftadaeth Ardal Gadwraeth Porthcawl

1. Introduction

- 1.1.1. In November 2025, Archaeology Wales (henceforth – AW) was commissioned by The Urbanists to carry out a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) on the Porthcawl Conservation Area (WAL/BRID/267) in relation to the regeneration of Porthcawl Waterfront, covering a 43ha area between the harbour (NGR SS 82048 76274) and Sandy Bay (NGR SS 82915 77124) (The Urbanists 2025) (Figure 1).

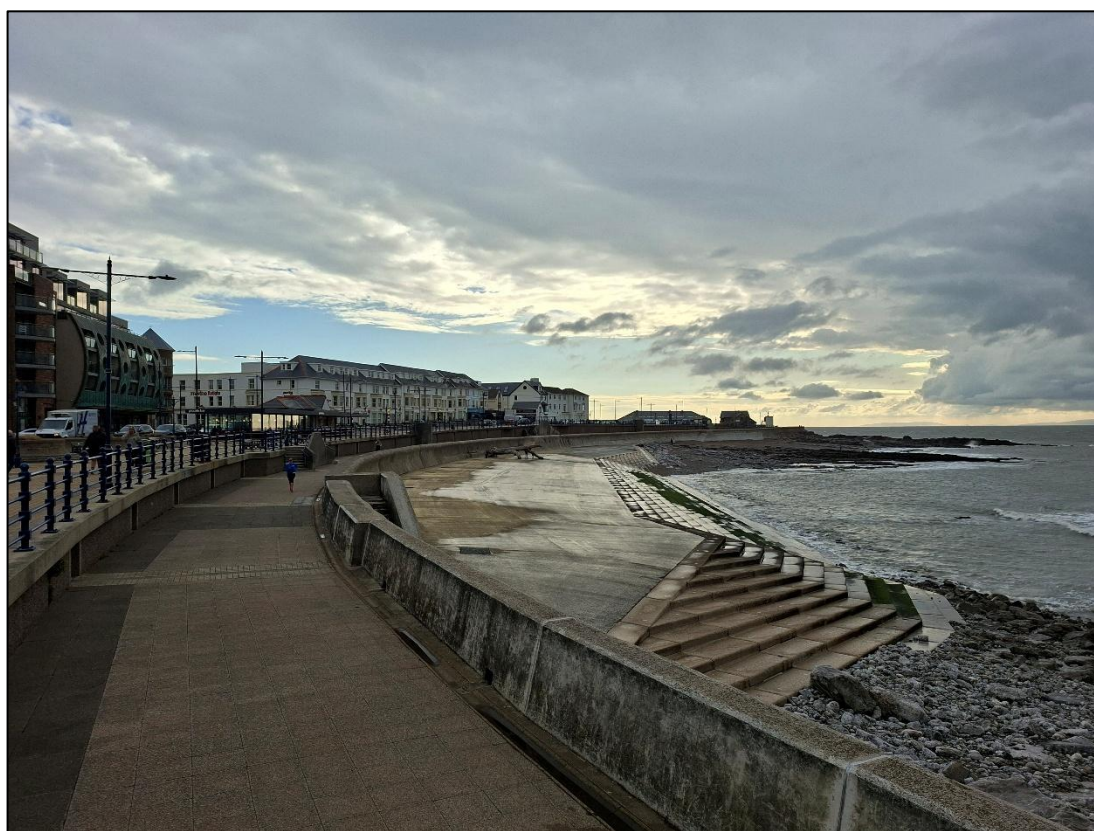


Plate 1. View along the Porthcawl Esplanade south-eastwards towards the marina.

1.2. Objectives

- 1.2.1. Following consultation with the Principal Conservation and Design Officer of Bridgend County Borough Council, a HIA was requested to understand the heritage values and character of the Conservation Area and the impacts the proposed development may have on it.
- 1.2.2. The aim of the HIA is to assess the impact of the proposed development on

the Conservation Area and to provide the Local Planning Authority (in this case Bridgend County Borough Council) with the information needed to make a decision on providing consent. The HIA has been undertaken in line with relative legislation and in accordance with *Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales* (Cadw 2017a), which sets out clear guidance for HIAs. The production of a HIA is intended to be an iterative process to produce the best design solution, which minimises impacts on the Conservation Area while achieving the design objectives.

1.3. Site Description

- 1.3.1. The proposed development area covers a 43ha of the Porthcawl Waterfront, between the harbour (NGR SS 82048 76274) and Sandy Bay (NGR SS 82915 77124) (Figure 1). The Porthcawl Conservation Area sits within the south-western extend of the development boundary and covers the area from the lighthouse along the front to Irongate Point.

2. Legislation and Guidance

- 2.1.1. The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023 came into effect in November 2024 and provides consolidated legislation for the effective protection and management of Wales' historic environment. The Acts that formerly provided the legislative framework for the management and protection of the Welsh historic environment — principally the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 — no longer apply in Wales.
- 2.1.2. National planning policy concerning the treatment of archaeological remains, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, and the wider historic built environment in Wales, is detailed in Chapter 6 of *Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12* (Welsh

Government 2024). Chapter 6 of the Planning Policy outlines the policy relating to Distinctive and Natural Places which includes the Historic Environment. Paragraph 6.1.7 states that:

“It is important that the planning system looks to protect, conserve and enhance the significance of historic assets. This will include consideration of the setting of an historic asset which might extend beyond its curtilage. Any change that impacts on an historic asset or its setting should be managed in a sensitive and sustainable way.”

- 2.1.3. The policy regarding Conservation Areas is detailed in Chapters 6.1.14 to 6.1.17 and states that there should be a presumption in favour of preservation of the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. It goes on to state that:

“Preservation or enhancement of a Conservation Area can be achieved by a development which either makes a positive contribution to an area’s character or appearance or leaves them unharmed”.

- 2.1.4. Technical Advice Note (TAN) 24 states that planning proposals should fully consider the impact of the development on the historic environment (Welsh Government 2017).
- 2.1.5. The site is located within the Porthcawl Conservation Area (WAL/BRID/267). Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest. A decision to designate a Conservation Area is made by the Local Planning Authority after assessment of the character of the identified area, this often extends beyond the buildings alone. The road layout, street scene, trees and green spaces all contribute to the quality of the area. Designation gives special protection to this character and to achieve this the Council has extra control over demolition, minor development and the protection of trees.
- 2.1.6. The following guidance documents were consulted in the production of this

report:

- *Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales* (Cadw, 2017a)
- *Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales (Conservation Principles)* (Cadw, 2011)
- *Principles of Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment in the UK* (IEMA, IHBC and ClfA 2021)
- *Managing Conservation Areas in Wales* (Cadw 2017b)

3. Methodology

- 3.1.1. The production of a HIA is intended to be an iterative process to understand and minimise the impact of development proposals on the significance of historic assets within the design process. This assessment has followed the methodology outlined in Cadw's *Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales* (2017a). The guidance states that the assessment '*should be proportionate both to the significance of the historic asset and to the degree of change proposed*'.
- 3.1.2. The identification and assessment of significance for the various historic assets draws on the four heritage values defined by Cadw in *Conservation Principles* (Cadw 2011). These values consist of the asset's:
- Evidential value: the extent to which the physical fabric tells how and when the historic asset was made, how it was used and how it has changed over time. There may be buried, or obscured elements associated with the historic asset which may also be an important potential source of evidence.
 - Historical value: the historic asset may illustrate a particular past way of

life or be associated with a specific person or event; there may be physical evidence for these connections which it could be important to retain.

- Aesthetic value: the design, construction and craftsmanship of the historic asset. This can also include setting and views to and from the historic asset, which may have changed through time.
- Communal value: the historic asset may have particular significance to people for its commemorative, symbolic or spiritual value, or for the part it has played in local cultural or public life. This will be particularly important in the case of buildings in public use or sites where public access must be maintained or improved.

3.1.3. Assessing the significance of the asset in this way will allow any potential impacts of the proposed development, both beneficial and harmful, on the asset and its setting to be identified. In order to identify and assess the significance of the asset, the assessment draws on the following sources:

- Cof Cymru – National Historic Assets of Wales, Cadw data on designated heritage assets;
- Historic mapping, including historic Ordnance Survey maps and tithe maps;
- Aerial photography from the Central Registers of Aerial Photography Wales (CRAPW), Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography (CUCAP) and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW); and satellite imagery via Google Earth; and,
- Site walkover.

3.1.4. Both the regional Historic Environment Record (HER), which holds information

on known archaeological sites, monuments and finds, as well as previous archaeological investigations and the National Monuments Record of Wales (NMRW) databases were consulted for information on non-designated sites.

- 3.1.5. The heritage value of the asset has been assessed using the assessment criteria based on those provided in the *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, LA104* (Highways England *et al.*, 2020). The values are defined as:

Table 1. Asset value criteria

Value	Description
Very High	Assets of international importance
High	Assets of national importance. Assets that contribute to regional research objectives.
Medium	Assets of regional importance. Assets that contribute to regional research objectives. Assets with lower levels of preservation.
Low	Assets of local importance. Includes locally Listed Buildings and assets of limited value or poor preservation.
Negligible	Assets with little surviving archaeological, architectural, or historic interest.

- 3.1.6. The magnitude of the potential impact of the development proposals on assets is also assessed using criteria based on the same documents. Impacts can be adverse or beneficial. The criteria are defined in the table below:

Table 2. Magnitude of impact criteria

Magnitude	Description
Major	<p>Adverse: Total loss or substantial harm to key elements of the heritage interest of the asset or features or characteristics of the baseline (pre-development) conditions such that the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special interest of the asset.</p> <p>Beneficial: Significant removal of detracting elements or restoration of key elements of special interest strongly contributing to the</p>

Magnitude	Description
	asset's heritage value
Moderate	<p>Adverse: Partial loss or harm to one or more important elements or features or characteristics of the baseline (pre-development) conditions such that post development character or composition, or attributes of baseline will be significantly changed.</p> <p>Beneficial: Partial removal of detracting elements or restoration of key elements of special interest contributing to the asset's heritage value</p>
Low	<p>Adverse: Minor loss. Change arising from the loss or alteration will be discernible but underlying character or composition or attributes of the baseline condition will be similar to pre-development circumstances or patterns.</p> <p>Beneficial: Minor removal of detracting elements or restoration of elements of special interest contributing to the asset's heritage value</p>
Negligible	<p>Adverse: A slight loss of heritage interest through limited physical impact on the asset's value or a change within its setting that would be barely perceptible and the appreciation and understanding of the historic asset would be largely unchanged</p> <p>Beneficial: Slight removal of detracting elements or restoration of elements of special interest contributing to the asset's heritage value</p>
None	<p>No loss or alteration.</p> <p>Change not distinguishable or does not result in loss of heritage significance. Change does not result in any removal of detracting elements or restoration of elements of special interest.</p>

4. Understanding the Significance of the Asset

4.1. Historic Background

- 4.1.1. The development of Porthcawl was the result of a group of local landowners and industrialists looking to provide a better way to export coal and iron from the developing industrial centres of Maesteg, Tondy, Cefn Cribbwr and Kenfig Hill. In the early 19th century, merchandise had to be transported over Newton Beach to be shipped. In 1825, an Act of Parliament allowed the formation of The Duffryn Llynvi Porthcawl Railway Company (Flint 1969). The group invested £60,000 to build a horse-drawn railway, initially from Duffryn Llynvi Ironworks in Maesteg, to a new seaport at Porthcawl.
- 4.1.2. The railway (GGAT01057.0m; NPRN34803) was built between 1826 and 1828 and a small, tidal harbour (LB19363) with short breakwater was built on the east side of Porthcawl Point. Warehouses for the various exporters were constructed along the west side of the harbour (NPRN34273), and the large Jennings Warehouse (LB11369; GGAT02346m, NPRN34263) was built on the western quay. Within the row was a public house, Anchor Inn (GGAT12264m), also owned by the railway company.
- 4.1.3. The decision to adapt the horse-drawn railway to steam was made in 1847, but it was not until 1860 that steam railway tracks were opened adjacent to the original line (Flint, 1969). The company amalgamated with the separately owned branch, Bridgend Railway, to become Llynfi Valley Railway (gracesguide.co.uk).
- 4.1.4. In 1864, Llynfi Valley and Ogmore Railway Companies jointly obtained an Act of Parliament to expand and improve Porthcawl Harbour. The harbour was often unusable in poor weather and winter months due to strong tides and winds. The construction of the new Breakwater (LB19362) and Lighthouse (LB11370; GGAT01481m) significantly improved access and the new dock

(GGAT02529m) accommodated more and larger vessels. These developments were largely driven by the Brogden family, who had purchased Tondu Ironworks and were developing coal mining in the Ogmore Valley.

- 4.1.5. The peak of use of Porthcawl Harbour was in the following decades. The dock was accessed by numerous rail branches from the main line, which in 1873 was bought by the GWR and became the Ogwr Porthcawl Line. Historic mapping shows a relatively gradual development of the town of Porthcawl. The early development of dock and railway worker housing, public houses and shops was unplanned. However, alongside the expansion of the harbour, in 1865 James Brogden purchased land to lay out the town's streets, the first of which was John Street (Bridgend County Borough Council 2014).
- 4.1.6. The harbour's success was relatively short-lived. In 1898, the opening of Port Talbot and Barry Docks caused an almost total loss of trade and Porthcawl Dock was closed in 1906.
- 4.1.7. The town was already becoming a popular destination for day trippers and holiday makers in the late 19th century (Porthcawl Civic Trust Society 2020). In 1871, the Bank Holiday Act allowed ordinary workers time off, and Porthcawl rail connections to the South Wales valleys made it an accessible location. As part of his development of the town, Brogden also built the Esplanade along the seafront to the west of the harbour, and it was gradually populated by hotels in the late 19th and early 20th century (GGAT12265m, GGAT02546m, and GGAT07700m).

4.2. Porthcawl Conservation Area

- 4.2.1. Porthcawl Conservation Area was designated in August 1973 and currently consists of those parts of the town which were substantially complete during its period of industrial growth before 1885 (Bridgend County Borough Council 2014).

4.2.2. The Conservation Area has been split into seven character areas. These are;

- Esplanade West
- Esplanade East
- Harbour and Breakwater
- The Square
- John Street/Well Street
- Hillsborough Place
- Esplanade Avenue/Picton Avenue

4.2.3. Within the Conservation Area lie Listed Buildings that represent the establishment and early history of the harbour in the early 19th century; the Breakwater (LB19362), Lighthouse (LB 11370), Outer Basin Walls (LB19363), Old Customs House (LB19358), and Jennings Warehouse (LB11369), as well as the Look-out Tower (LB19359) just outside the development area boundary. Although the use of the harbour has changed, with the closure of the docks and conversion of the basin for leisure boat use, it retains strong heritage character (Thomas and Stratton 2025).

4.2.4. The Square Character Area bounds the development area in the south-west. It is the oldest built-up area of Porthcawl, but its heritage value is diminished by views of modern or undistinguished buildings along the five narrow lanes that enter The Square (Bridgend County Borough Council 2014).

4.3. Significance of the asset

Evidential value

4.3.1. The evidential value of Porthcawl Conservation Area is drawn from the fact that its layout largely aligns with the earliest layout of the town, including the harbour and related buildings. The survival of historic buildings in the

Conservation Area contributes towards this.

- 4.3.2. John Street appears to be the original route into Porthcawl, with the historic railway running to its immediate west; Well Street is also labelled on the 1884 Ordnance Survey map. Dock Street, Marine Terrace, Lifeboat Road, and the Esplanade are unnamed on this map, but clearly align with the modern roads. The north to south orientated Caroline Street and Mary Street have been constructed by the time of the 1900 OS map (Figure 2). The road layout has changed little since the 1940s – see on the Ordnance Survey map from 1949. The most considerable change within the Area is the removal of the station and associated railway lines, and the subsequent construction of The Portway road in this area. The nearby dock was closed in 1906.
- 4.3.3. According to the Porthcawl Conservation Area and Management Plan (Bridgend County Borough Council 2014), the majority of buildings within the Area were constructed between 1885 and 1914, including almost all the terraced housing in the area. The post-1947 buildings are largely centred around The Square. Despite the construction of occasional new buildings, the overall character of the town is maintained with the retention of Victorian and Edwardian architecture. This is strengthened by the occasional impressive building such as the Grand Pavilion and Westhouse Hotel. Modern improvement works through the town could have disturbed buried archaeology or removed historic features from buildings.
- 4.3.4. At Irongate Point, there is a large green space at the very west of the Conservation Area. This has existed since the earliest maps of the area, with no evidence of building in this location. Any potential buried archaeology within this area is likely to have survived due to the lack of construction or landscaping occurring here.

Historical value

- 4.3.5. The town's Conservation Area draws historical significance from its association with coal and iron exportation in the 19th century and its later popularity as a seaside town.
- 4.3.6. In the early 19th century, coal and iron from industrial centres such as Maesteg had to be transported over Newton Beach in order to be shipped. To counter this, between 1826 and 1828, local landowners built a railway between Maesteg and Porthcawl, along with a small tidal harbour east of Porthcawl Point. Subsequent warehouses and associated infrastructure were erected nearby, including the Anchor Inn that was owned by the railway company. In the 1860s, a new breakwater, lighthouse, and dock were built to improve access and accommodate larger vessels. The early development of dock and railway worker housing, public houses and shops was unplanned. The harbour's success, however, was relatively short-lived, with the 1898 opening of Port Talbot and Barry Docks leading to an almost complete loss of Trade. The Porthcawl dock was subsequently closed in 1906.
- 4.3.7. It also has minor historical significance as a popular seaside destination in the 19th century. Its extensive rail connections across South Wales allowed day trippers easy access to Porthcawl. This helped lead to the construction of the Esplanade along the west of the town, with the construction of various hotels during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Aesthetic value

- 4.3.8. The aesthetic value of the Conservation Area is drawn from its distinctive areas, each with their own individual aesthetic appeal. The Appraisal and Management Plan for the Conservation Area (Bridgend County Borough Council 2014) notes seven distinctive Character Areas, each displaying a variation in historic buildings and structures. Each areas represent a different

time period and/or building design.

- 4.3.9. The Western Esplanade constitutes large Victorian and Edwardian villas and hotels, as well as the Grand Pavilion (LB19364) (Plate 2). The Eastern Esplanade comprises a sweep of attractive three and four storey terraces, interspersed by modern apartment blocks (Plate 3). Continuing east, the Harbour and Breakwater area represents the oldest landscape in Porthcawl, evidenced by the presence of six Listed Buildings within this Character Area. The Breakwater retains its historic character, with the angular dark stone structures juxtaposed with the white painted Lighthouse and Look-Out Tower (Plate 4). The Harbour itself is an impressive space, presently filled with moored boats; the northern wall shows evidence of the filled in access to the Dock (Plate 5). The oldest built-up area – The Square – sits immediately to the north-west of the Harbour. It can be accessed via five different streets – as would have been the case during the late Victorian period, seen on the 1884 OS map. However, the space is visually unappealing, having become a car park for surrounding buildings (Plate 6). The buildings themselves are in varying condition. At the northern side, the former Knights Arms pub – derelict at the time of the Appraisal and Management Plan is now a smart row of holiday cottages (Plate 7). The rear aspects of other buildings appear tired, especially the former Glamorgan Holiday Home to the south (Plate 6).
- 4.3.10. Conversely, the north to south orientated Picton Avenue, Esplanade Avenue, and Hillsboro Place consist of rows of terraced cottages and houses, all from a different time periods, with various finishes and alterations throughout (Plate 8). John Street and Well Street comprise the main shopping area of Porthcawl, with a range of styles including some impressive late 19th century shop frontages (Plate 9). These are interspersed with modern shops, which do detract from the character of the area (Plate 10). Throughout the Conservation Area, modern elements, such as the addition of telephone lines, lampposts,

and the fitting of modern shops have impacted the overall aesthetic of the space somewhat (Plate 11).

- 4.3.11. Key views are identified in the Appraisal and Management Plan. These include between the Breakwater and Irongate Point, and vice-versa, as well as the view out to sea from the centre of the Promenade. The view west along the coast is noted, as well as the views eastward from the Breakwater towards Sandy Beach and the Coney Beach Funfair (Plate 12). The key views along the three main north to south orientated roads are also identified.

Communal value

- 4.3.12. The Porthcawl Conservation Area draws its communal value from its largely accessible nature. As of the last Census in 2021, Porthcawl has a population of 16,133 (Census Data). The main shopping centre – John’s Street – is located within the Conservation Area and serves as a popular area for residents of Porthcawl and visitors; the central part of the road is pedestrianised during the day for easier access for shoppers. Most of the Conservation Area has open access – including the open space at Irongate Point, and the entirety of the Breakwater. Recently, a children’s play area was constructed to the north-west of the Breakwater, adding to the Area’s communal value.

4.4. Overall heritage value

- 4.4.1. Porthcawl Conservation Area has a **High** heritage value, derived from its evidential, historic and aesthetic values. These are largely based on the retention of its Victorian layout, the visual character on individual areas of the town, and the historical importance as a harbour in the late 19th century.

5. The Development Proposals and their Impacts

5.1. Development Plans

5.1.1. The proposed development plans include an extensive redevelopment of Porthcawl Waterfront (The Urbanists 2025) (Figure 3). At present the design plans have not been finalised, but the current Masterplan splits the site into eight areas which are:

- Salt Lake Harbour,
- Salt Lake Promenade,
- Salt Lake Crescent,
- Hillsboro,
- Coney Beach Walk,
- Coney Beach Park,
- Sandy Bay Village,
- Sandy Bay Gardens
- Dunes

5.1.2. Each of these areas will see a mixture of development which will include leisure and community spaces, a hotel, residential properties, health and wellbeing spaces and woodland. The current plans for the structures across all areas of the site shows that the majority of buildings will be between two to four storeys tall, with only three structures being five storeys high and two at six storeys high.

5.1.3. The construction works will include the excavation of building foundations, services and new road layouts as a minimum. There will also likely be ground disturbance for other associated infrastructure, such as security fences and temporary site compounds, during the construction phase. Aside from the

general layout and building heights, plans have not been finalised. This provides limited design options to choose between.

- 5.1.4. The south-western corner of proposed development contains the Conservation Area and is labelled as Salt Lake Harbour in the Masterplan. The largest construction in this area is a semi-private courtyard space, surrounded on three sides by buildings of varying height, which will be located immediately to the north and east of the Conservation Area boundary. These buildings will consist of apartments and ground floor commercial/community units. This area contains the two of the tallest buildings in the proposed development, labelled as up to five and six storeys tall, with the remaining structures in this area between one and three storeys tall.
- 5.1.5. Further three to four storey tall apartment blocks are planned for the Masterplan Character Areas of Salt Lake Promenade and Salt Lake Crescent. These areas are located just to the east of the Conservation Area and to the north of the Salt Lake Harbour Character Area.

5.2. Heritage Impacts

- 5.2.1. This impact assessment relates to the plans provided and, at this early stage of the design process, comments can only be made in relation to general form of the redevelopment as it currently stands. When plans become more detailed and eventually finalised, a more refined assessment of the impacts can be made.
- 5.2.2. Porthcawl Conservation Area and the proposed redevelopment have a limited overlapping area. The parts of the Conservation Area that are located within the redevelopment area include the Harbour and the southern end of Hillsboro Place Car Park. Discussion of physical effects of the proposals on the Conservation Area will therefore focus solely on these areas. However, the three to six storey buildings within the Salt Lake Harbour, Salt Lake Promenade

and Salt Lake Crescent areas have the potential to create visual impacts on the Conservation Area, which are also considered below.

- 5.2.3. The construction of the proposed development will directly affect a portion of the Conservation Area; the redevelopment area comprises approximately 17.9% of the total Conservation Area. No buildings are so far planned within the limit of the Conservation Area; the three to six storey apartment buildings noted previously are located to its immediate north and east. The largest development planned within the Conservation Area is Hillsboro Square, containing a green space, a play area, dining areas, a pop-up market area, and an active travel route, located at the eastern end of Dock Street. Other superficial works, such as road resurfacing or tree planting, could occur within this area. The historic docks were located in the area to the east of Hillsboro Square, with several rail lines running through this area and connecting to the docks. Any works within this area has the potential to disturb any surviving buried archaeology located here.
- 5.2.4. Currently, the development plans indicate no changes in the Harbour and the Breakwater. Any work in this area – if included in future proposals – could have a substantial impact on the physical fabric of this space, thus impacting its evidential value.
- 5.2.5. The proposed development plans will have no impact on the historical value of the Conservation Area. As previously discussed, the historical value is drawn from coal and iron exported from the town's harbour in the 19th century and the later popularity of Porthcawl as a seaside town. Neither of these associations will be lost as a result of the proposed development. There is potential for positive impacts on the historical value of the Conservation Area within the proposals. Archaeological monitoring, especially in the area surrounding the former dock and railway lines, could help provide insight

relating to the construction of any buried structures.

- 5.2.6. The proposed development will have some impact on the aesthetic value of the Conservation Area. The majority of the Conservation Area, especially to the west, will not be visually impacted by the development; the Area is mostly flat and the buildings along the eastern edge of the Conservation Area block any line of sight at ground level. However, the Masterplan notes that the structures planned immediately to the east and north of the Conservation Area, within the Salt Lake Harbour, Salt Lake Promenade and Salt Lake Crescent areas, include buildings that would be between three to six storeys tall. At present the buildings along the eastern edge of the Conservation Area stand between two to four storeys tall, which would mean that there would be limited visual impact on views outwards from this section of the Conservation Area. The six-storey structure within the Salt Lake Harbour area would be visible above the height of the existing structures along Hillsboro Place, Lifeboat Road and the eastern end of the Esplanade.
- 5.2.7. Regardless of their height, these proposed buildings, and much of the rest of the development will be visible from the easternmost parts of the Conservation Area, including the Harbour and Breakwater, and its associated Listed Buildings. The land north of the Harbour, where the historic dock was once located, is flat and currently largely an open grassed area, so the building of apartments up to three or four storeys here will have a visually striking difference.
- 5.2.8. Most Main Views identified in the Appraisal and Management Plan will be unaffected by the development. The view from the Breakwater towards Sandy Beach and the Coney Beach Funfair, will be affected, but current buildings at the northern end of Eastern Promenade already appear distant. The construction of new – albeit taller – buildings here, would seem to be visually

minimal. According to the Masterplan, the design of the unit in Salt Lake Harbour is intended to draw on the heritage of the area in detailing and materials but also be distinct. Following on from Hillsboro Square, a pedestrian route is planned between the new spaces of Salt Lake Harbour and Salt Lake Promenade, each with their own distinctive character. This will create a natural continuation of Dock Street, one of the earliest roads in Porthcawl. This can have a positive impact on the aesthetic value of the Conservation Area, helping to frame the view eastward towards Sandy Bay.

- 5.2.9. There will be no negative impacts on the communal value of Porthcawl Conservation Area, as the development does not remove any public access space within the Area. There is an opportunity for a positive impact from the development. The new Hillsboro Square will provide access via an active travel route, to John Street. The improved focus on this entrance to the town centre will help connect this area with the historic harbour of Porthcawl.
- 5.2.10. During the construction phase of the redevelopment there will be a low adverse impact on the heritage value of Porthcawl Conservation Area. This is due mostly to the visual impacts of the construction activity on the Harbour and Breakwater, including its Listed Buildings. The physical fabric of the Conservation Area will be minimally affected by these initial works.
- 5.2.11. Overall, the proposals are considered to have a **Low beneficial** impact on the heritage value of Porthcawl Conservation Area once construction is complete. This is due to the opportunities for positive impacts from the proposed development. Archaeological monitoring of works around Hillsboro Square could help provide insight relating to the construction of any buried structures and thus improve the historical value of the Conservation Area. Aesthetic value could be improved with the eastward view of Sandy Bay through the pedestrian route continuing from Dock Street. The communal value could also

be positively impacted, with the improved connection through Hillsboro Square.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1.1. Porthcawl Conservation Area (WAL/BRID/267) represents the historic core of the town of Porthcawl, located in Bridgend County Borough. The town originated in the early 19th century following the need for a harbour to export coal and iron from inland industrial centres. The usage of Porthcawl Harbour peaked in the late 19th century, leading to the construction of worker housing, shops and public houses. After the opening of nearby Port Talbot and Barry Docks, the dock saw almost a complete loss of trade and closed in 1906. The town was also a popular destination for day trippers and holiday makers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
- 6.1.2. The Conservation Area contains nine Listed Buildings and no Scheduled Monuments. Six of the Listed Buildings are located in the area around Porthcawl Point at the south-western corner of the Area, and include the structures of Harbour and Breakaway themselves, as well as associated warehouses, a lighthouse and look-out tower.
- 6.1.3. The site of the proposed development is an irregular shaped area, covering 43ha of the Porthcawl Waterfront, between the harbour and Sandy Bay. The Porthcawl Conservation Area sits within the south-western area of the development boundary. The proposed works involve a regeneration of Porthcawl Waterfront.
- 6.1.4. The report has assessed the heritage value of Porthcawl Conservation Area following the methodology outlined in the Cadw guidance document *Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales* (2017a). The asset has a **High** heritage value,

mostly derived from its evidential, historic and aesthetic values. These are largely based on the retention of its Victorian layout, the visual character on individual areas of the town, and the historical importance as a harbour in the late 19th century.

- 6.1.5. The development plans were outlined in Section 5. The proposed works will see a mixture of development which will include leisure and community spaces, a hotel, residential properties, health and wellbeing spaces and woodland. The current plans for the structures across all areas of the site shows that the majority of buildings will be between two to four storeys tall, with only three structures being five storeys high and two at six storeys high. Aside from the general layout and building heights, plans have not been finalised.
- 6.1.6. Porthcawl Conservation Area and the proposed redevelopment have a limited overlapping area. The parts of the Conservation Area that are located within the redevelopment area include the Harbour and Hillsboro Place Car Park. Works planned for this area are minimal, with the largest development planned is Hillsboro Square, containing a green space, a play area, dining areas, a pop-up market area and an active travel route, located at the western end of Dock Street. Other superficial works, such as road resurfacing or tree planting, could occur in this area. These could have minor adverse impact on any buried archaeology, especially structures related to the historic dock and railway lines.
- 6.1.7. The aesthetic value of the Conservation Area will be somewhat impacted by the proposed development. Most of the Area will be shielded from the new development by existing buildings. However, the four to six storey structures planned to the areas immediately to the north and east will be likely visible from parts of the Conservation Area. The biggest visual impact will be on the eastern portion of the Conservation Area, including the Harbour and

Breakwater, who will have largely uninterrupted views of the proposed development. According to the Masterplan, the design of the nearest units is intended to draw on the heritage of the area in detailing and materials but also be distinct. The development near Coney Beach Funfair is fairly distant, so visual impacts will be minimal. Positive impacts on the aesthetic value could be achieved with the new pedestrian route, a continuation of Dock Street, aiming to accentuate the view to Sandy Bay.

- 6.1.8. The historical and communal value of the Conservation Area will see no negative impacts from the proposed developments, but there are opportunities for positive impacts. Any archaeological monitoring undertaken would increase the knowledge about the history of the site and thus enhance the historical value of the Conservation Area. The communal value could also be increased, with the improved connection through Hillsboro Square, from the town centre.
- 6.1.9. Overall, the proposals are considered to have a **Low beneficial** impact on the heritage value of Porthcawl Conservation Area.

7. Sources

General

Bridgend County Borough Council. 2014. *Porthcawl Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan*. February 2014.

Cadw, 2011. *Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales (Conservation Principles)*.

Cadw, 2017a. *Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales*.

Cadw, 2017b. *Managing Conservation Areas in Wales*.

Flint, A.J. 1969, The Dyffryn Llynvi and Porthcawl Railway 1825 – 1860. *Morgannwg* vol 13, 103 – 107.

Highways England, Transport Scotland, Welsh Government, and Department for Infrastructure. 2020. *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges: LA 104 - Environmental assessment and monitoring*.

IEMA/IHBC/CIfA, 2021. *Principles of Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment in the UK*.

Porthcawl Civic Trust Society, 2020. *Porthcawl. Much more than meets the eye. Stage II, Part A. Health and Leisure*.

The Urbanists. 2025. *Porthcawl Waterfront Regeneration Design Code*. July 2025.

Thomas, S. and Stratton, S. 2025. *Desk-Based Assessment: Porthcawl Waterfront Regeneration*. Archaeology Wales Unpublished Report No. 2424.

Welsh Government, 2017. *Planning Policy Wales. Technical Advice Note (TAN) 24: The Historic Environment, May 2017*.

Welsh Government, 2024. *Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12*.

Websites

Census Data, *Porthcawl*. <https://censusdata.uk/w04000645-porthcawl>. Accessed 13/11/2025.

Grace's Guide to British Industrial History, gracesguide.co.uk. Accessed 29/10/25.

Maps consulted

Ordnance Survey County Series, First Edition, Glamorgan, Sheet XXXIX, surveyed 1876, published 1884, six-inch to the mile.

Ordnance Survey County Series, Second Edition, Glamorgan, Sheet XXXIX.SE, revised 1897, published 1900, six-inch to the mile.

Ordnance Survey Sheet SS87 & Part of SS77 – A, published 1949, 1:25,000.

Ordnance Survey Sheet 170 – The Rhondda, revised 1971 to 1972, published 1974, 1:50,000.



Figures

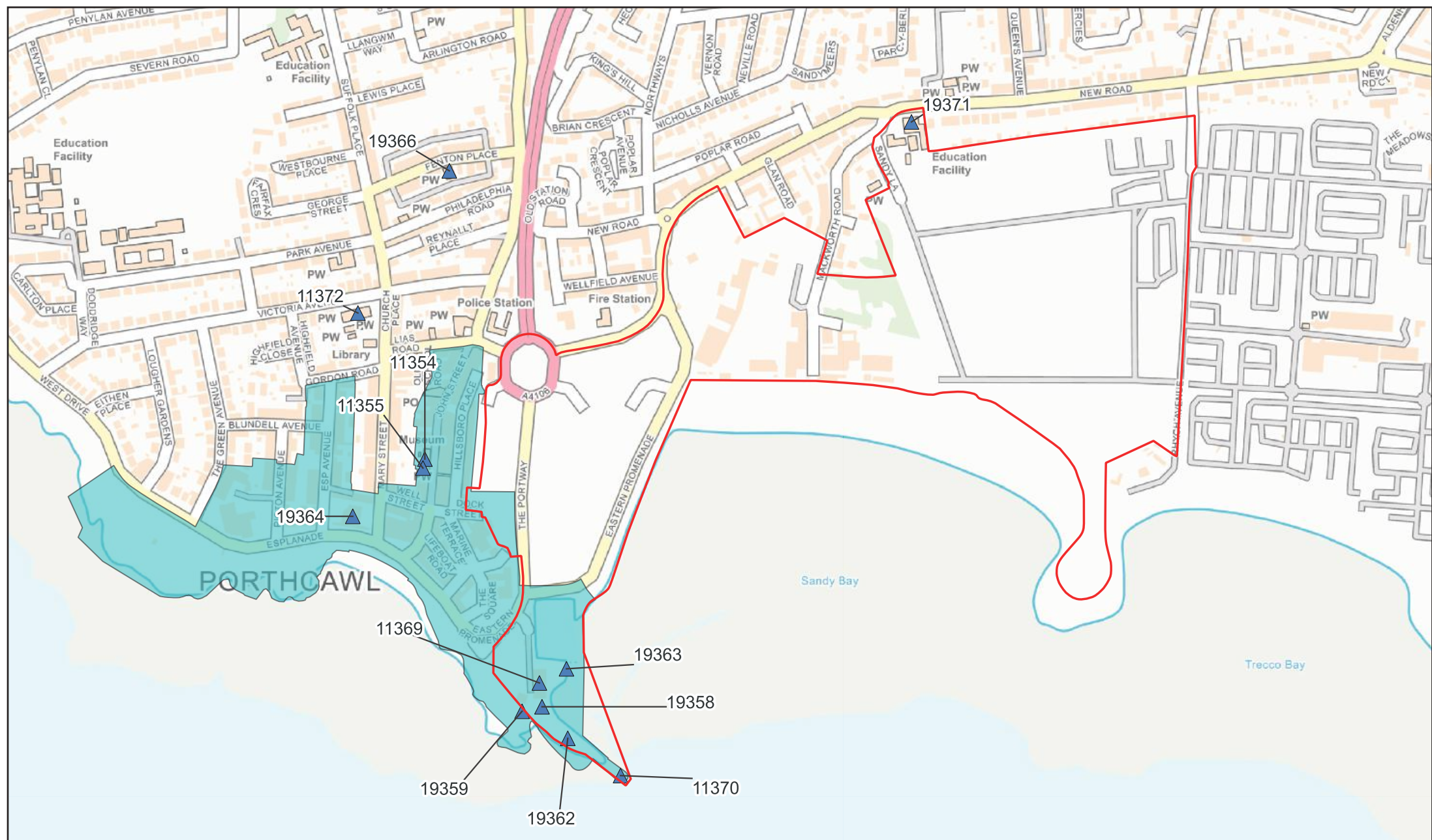


Figure 1. Plan showing the location of the proposed development, the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings

- Development boundary
- ▲ Listed Building
- Conservation Area



0 200m 400m





Figure 2. Ordnance Survey Glamorgan Sheet XXXIX.SE 1900

- Development boundary
- Conservation Area



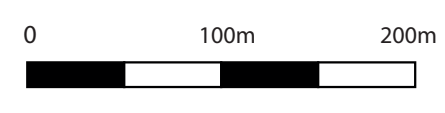
0 200m 400m



ARCHAEOLOGY WALES



Figure 3. Illustrative Masterplan





Plates



Plate 2: The Western Esplanade constituting of large Victorian and Edwardian villas and hotels, looking west.



Plate 3: The Eastern Esplanade with its three- and four-storey terraces interspersed with modern apartment blocks, looking east.



Plate 4. The Breakwater and white-painted Lighthouse, looking south-east.



Plate 5. The Harbour and its northern wall showing evidence of the filled in access to the Dock, looking north.



Plate 6. The Square, the oldest built-up area, is now a car park, looking south.



Plate 7. The former Knights Arms pub that is now a smart row of holiday cottages, looking west north-west.



Plate 8. Northern end of Hillsboro place, looking south-east



Plate 9. John Street highlighting a range of shop frontages, looking south-south-east.



Plate 10. John Street looking south-south-east.



Plate 11. John Street highlighting modern additions such as the fitting of modern shops, looking south south-east.



Plate 12. View from the Breakwater towards Sandy Beach and the Coney Beach Funfair, looking north-east.



Archaeology Wales Limited

Main Office, Unit D11.6 Treforest Industrial Estate

Pontypridd - CF37 5UR

Tel: +44 (0) 1686 440371

Email: admin@arch-wales.co.uk

Web: arch-wales.co.uk

