

Caldicot Town Centre Regeneration Strategy Refresh



Monmouthshire County Council - May 2022

Purpose

The Caldicot Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan, published in 2018, offered a vision for regeneration in Caldicot. This Regeneration Strategy Refresh revisits that vision, assessing the progress that has been made since then, and setting out the delivery focus for the coming years.

Since 2018, the early phases of implementation have focussed on transforming roads into civilised streets, the promotion of active travel and creating functional public space.

As physical improvements have taken place, design development has continued on other key town centre linkages, urban centre property enhancement schemes, additional public realm design and a renewed focus on tackling a large, underinvested retail parade.

More recently, Caldicot has also had to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic – which has emphasised the importance of the town as a hub for the local community that supports well-being, informal networks and wider social infrastructure. Its role within the Cardiff Capital Region has also grown with rail and road infrastructure improvements identified within the Burns Report with planned works at nearby Severn Tunnel Junction.

This document reflects on the progress of activity and investment to date, checks on its strategic direction of travel and presents the alignment and way forward for future projects.



The Cross civilised street scheme



Caldicot town centre today

Background

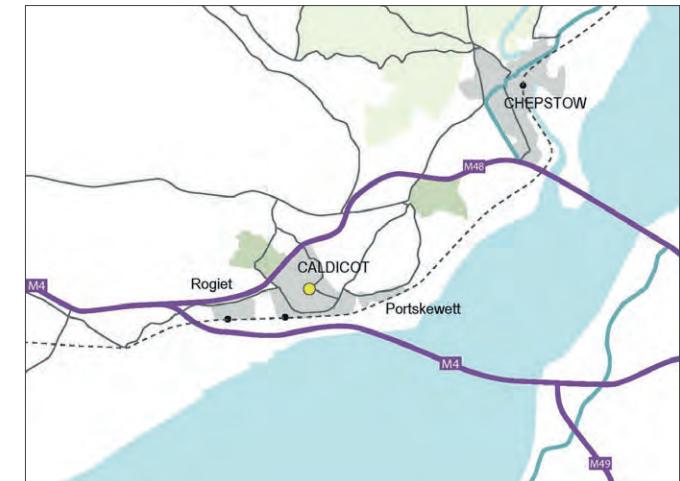
Caldicot is located in the south-eastern corner of Monmouthshire in south Wales. It is situated in the Newport East parliamentary constituency.

A small, railway-centred village until the early 1960s, Caldicot expanded rapidly in that decade as new homes were built for workers at the nearby Llanwern steelworks – a legacy that is still important in the town. Today, Caldicot's strategic location at the gateway to Wales on the road and rail networks is the key driver for growth.

Although Caldicot and surrounding settlements have significant employment bases, they also function as a 'dormitory' area with many people commuting to jobs elsewhere. Many new residents are attracted to Caldicot in part due to the easy access to nearby centres such as Cardiff, Newport and Bristol.

But the town's demographic remains mixed, and the historic links to steel and manufacturing mean that Caldicot is in some ways more like communities in the Welsh valleys than rural Monmouthshire. Some parts of the community continue to experience relatively high levels of economic inactivity, poverty and poor health.

The need to manage change and create a balanced community is key to the town's future. Placemaking and regeneration interventions will be central to achieving this, by creating a cohesive and connected series of neighbourhoods and removing barriers to economic and social prosperity.



Location of Caldicot in south east Wales

Key Facts and Figures



20% vacancy in town town centre primary frontages



Higher percentages of people on employment benefits than the Welsh average



3.5% reduction in pedestrian footfall over 5 years



733 people on the waiting list for a home in Caldicot



18.5% of people don't own or have access to a car (4.5% lower than the Welsh average)



Lower percentage of people with higher qualification than Welsh average



396 people need a home for a single person



Higher percentage of people that are retired live in Caldicot (18% compared to Welsh average of 16%)

Investment to Date

Since 2018, the County Council and local partner organisations have commenced investment in the town centre. In 2018, a new secondary school opened, with this £36.5m investment, 1st 21st century school located close to the town centre. The starting point has been a focus on improving the environmental quality, making it more accessible for nearby residents to walk or cycle in an getting local businesses fit for purpose in terms of their physical appeal. Work has continued to ensure that the larger and more complex schemes are 'project ready' - in particular the large, tired retail block at 7-43 Newport Road and the town's leisure centre.

Civilised Streets. As part of a wider campaign around the climate emergency and active travel, a number of civilised street schemes have been developed. These aim to set the right tone and function to town centre roads, linking key assets and attractions and adopting an integrated place based approach with green infrastructure, improved biodiversity and the introduction of sustainable urban drainage systems. These works have centred around the eastern Cross area and Church Road link to the Castle and Country Park. £1million has been invested to date on these areas.

Urban Property Enhancement. As part of Welsh Government's Transforming Towns programme, a number of town centre properties have benefitted from external façade improvements being guided by design code approach. Properties include a two Chinese takeaways, a sandwich and coffee bar, and an independent opticians. A photography studio and gallery and a youth drop-in centre have also been awarded a grant, with works due to be implemented in 2022-23. £1million has been awarded in grants with the private sector.

Renewed Public Realm. The Cross area of the town centre has seen its public realm improved with a small events space, additional trees and planting, cycle infrastructure and a better setting for local businesses.

Getting Project Ready. The County Council has also been developing proposals that they are in its pipeline ready for funding submissions. These include:

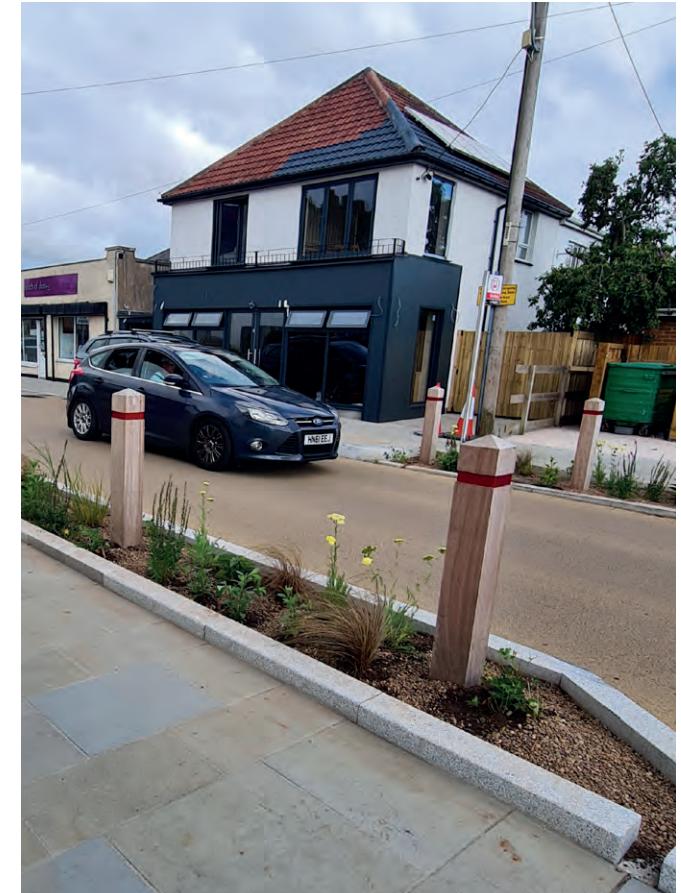
- Newport Road Public Realm
- Newport Road West Connections Project
- Caldicot Castle and Country Park Shared Route Project
- The Links Active Travel Project
- Woodstock Way/Mill Lane Active Travel Project
- Further Urban Property Enhancement properties
- Nos 7-43 Newport Road
- Caldicot Leisure & Well-being Hub



The Cross civilised street scheme



Urban Centre Property Enhancement Property – Completed



Active Travel and SuDS scheme

SWOT

Strengths

- Strategic location in south-east Wales
- Road and rail connections
- Largest town population in Monmouthshire c 12,000, with a catchment population of 20,000
- A flat and accessible town
- Significant County Council investments e.g., C21C schools programme, Caldicot Comprehensive School
- Housing investment at Oakley Way from Monmouthshire Housing Association
- Close to rural area and Living Levels area
- Convenience food offer has the right range and quality
- Some active community and voluntary organisations

Opportunities

- Removal of Severn Bridge tolls
- Housing growth will lead to greater demand from town centre if offer is of the right quality and range
- Cardiff Capital Region Regeneration Plan
- Key employers within the area that form part of economic sector
- Caldicot Castle and Country Park has potential to become a key visitor attraction within the region
- Local and regional walking and cycling routes e.g., Wales Coastal Path
- Change in consumer behaviour due to Covid in terms of valuing local
- Town centre is relatively compact with purpose-built retail units
- A walkable hinterland, nearby bus stops and car parking.
- The Burns Commission/SW Metro proposals to increase frequency of train services from STJ to Cardiff
- MoD investment in nearby Caerwent Barracks

Weaknesses

- Mixed demographic with levels of inactivity, low-skill, low mobility and low aspirations
- Town centre environment is poor and having an impact on user and investor confidence
- Some notable voids that are persistent and large in size
- As per UK, comparison shopping is declining in the town centre
- Lack of enterprise space for creatives, knowledge sector and other emerging businesses
- Significant waiting lists for social and market housing in the town
- Poor connectivity across the town

Threats

- Post impact of Covid-19 on UK “High Street”
- Continued shopping habits towards online, albeit “local” shopping has been part of a refocus
- Growth in larger towns and cities and development of nearby out-of-town shopping outside Monmouthshire is resulting in diversion of trade from Caldicot and Severnside
- Lack of investment in town centre will lead to greater costs and time in regaining ground
- Digital use has increased due to Covid, but this can be harnessed in a positive way
- Flood risk and climate change

Our Vision

Vision	<p>“Caldicot - a connected community for residents and visitors with wellbeing at its heart” A place for living, well-being, trade, enterprise and learning and is connected into its neighbourhoods and the Living Levels</p>			
Goals	<p>Local Prosperity – opening up opportunities for local and regional enterprise and building a sense of place Connected Community – a place that is inclusive, mobile and sustainable and is a hub to explore from Cohesive and Healthy – smart integration of assets that provides a good quality of life for all</p>			
Themes	<p>Thriving Caldicot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nos 7-43 Newport Rd • Jubilee Way In Town Living Scheme • Newport Road Public Realm • Urban Centre Property Enhancement Scheme • Community Hub 	<p>Connected Caldicot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross Destination Space • Church Rd Active Travel • Multi-user route Active Travel • The Links Active Travel • Newport Road (West) Active Travel • Severn Tunnel Junction Transport Hub • Smart Towns Digital community 	<p>Healthier Caldicot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-being & Leisure Centre investment • Skatepark investment • Well-being spaces • Play • Grow • Cohesion • Local routes • Key corridors • Green trails • Biodiversity and community outreach • Castle and Country Park improvements 	<p>Heritage, Culture & Learning in Caldicot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21st Century Schools investment • Community Hub – learning • Together Works • The Zone Investment • Test town trading – link to schools • Caldicot Castle new cultural and creative space
Focus	<p>Creating a diverse place with a strong local identity</p>	<p>Developing an accessible place that is attractive for business, residents and visitors</p>	<p>Linking healthy assets ensuring equal access to positive lifestyles and outlooks for all</p>	<p>Building on 21st Century School Heritage Investment and Community Learning</p>
Measuring Success	<p>Diversity of Town Centre Uses, Business Start Ups, Social Mobility, Economic Activity, People Living in Town Centre, Community Engaged in Learning, Healthy Residents, Inter-Generational Activity, Local Facilities in Demand</p>			

Our Focus

Our focus is to bring about a cohesive place that is centred on community and economic well-being, through investments in the physical fabric of the town that respond to the needs of local people. It is underpinned by a string of integrated transport projects to make Caldicot a place that is accessible and easy to move around. Together these initiatives will bring local economic and social benefits for Caldicot, as well as maximising its role at a key strategic gateway into south-east Wales.

Integrated Approach

The County Council has adopted an integrated approach to its thinking, development, and delivery around place-making. The first phase of improvements to Church Road, for example, brought together active travel, green infrastructure, destination management, climate change and education as well as town centre regeneration. Project development is people focussed, with a holistic approach to design, delivery, and future management.

The Projects

Our proposed projects are centred around a number of themes, being:

Transport has a strategic and local focus with the location of Caldicot alongside the A48 and the main Swansea to London trainline seen as of high regional importance and the need to improve accessibility and mobility across the town to narrow the gap between those economically active and those that face barriers to work, health, community, and other activities. Activities include Severn Tunnel Junction Station Hub and a series of local active travel links across the town that link it across its east to west axis.

Regeneration activity has been delivered over the last three years with a vision, action plan framework and detailed design development focussed on making linkages with neighbourhoods, applying civilised and quiet street principles, and embedding green infrastructure through its design thinking. The focus now is on core town centre with its dated public realm and 1960s retail block and rear parking and service yard space. Regeneration plans also recognise the nearby attractors of leisure, play, heritage, and culture with a key aim to integrate these into the Caldicot experience.

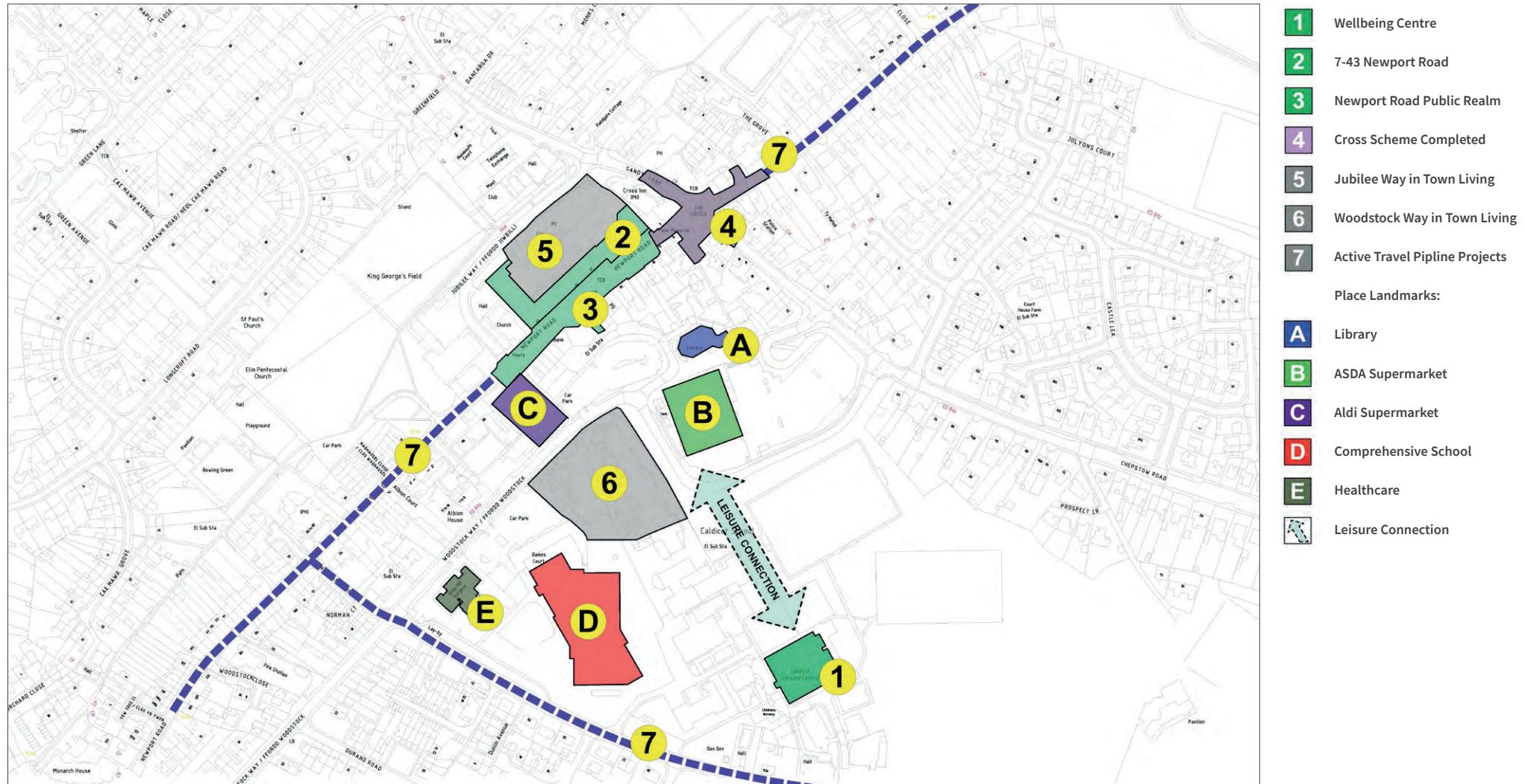
Culture and Heritage sit on the edge of the town centre providing an important daily resource for local residents as well as drawing in visitors. This includes the town's leisure centres, a community hub for young people and upgrading the town's historical Castle and environs that will support heritage interpretation, arts and gallery space and a setting for events and festivals that celebrate the local arts and culture of the area.



Delivery Focus

	An Enterprising Caldicot	An Active and Green Caldicot	Living in Caldicot	A Cultural & Historical Caldicot
Project Ready	7-43 Newport Road Retail Block Urban Centre Property Enhancement Fund Plus	Leisure & Well-being Hub Newport Road Public Realm	WG Housing Grant (thematic)	
Funding Secured – Implementation Started		Church Road Phase 2 (WG & MCC funded) Castle & Country Park/Greenway Shared Route (WG & MCC funded)		Caldicot Castle Visitor Centre (MCC and Private Operator)
Design Development	Urban Centre Property Enhancement Fund grant bids	Newport Rd West Connections Project Woodstock Way AT Project Severn Tunnel Junction/Station Road Linkages	Jubilee Way Urban Living/Courtyard Scheme Old School Site Residential Scheme	
Completed	Urban Centre Property Enhancement Fund 4 Properties Completed 2019-2022	The Cross Civilised Street Scheme Church Road Phase 1		

Town Centre Focus & Activities



Caldicot Town Centre, completed and planned place based investments (OS license)

Transport

Severn Tunnel Junction

This project will establish Severn Tunnel Junction as a 'hub' location for rail and bus services, with more trains to Newport, Cardiff and beyond, more car parking, better bus provision, new active travel routes and facilities, and better facilities at the station. This would be facilitated by new road access to the station from the M48, reducing traffic on the M4 by diverting journeys to rail services via the rail hub, as well as parking provision.

Church Rd

The Church Road scheme is an active travel and placemaking project linking the town centre with Caldicot Castle and Country Park. It also connects homes to the north of the town with primary and secondary schools. It is about changing modal priority across a main road with the use of green infrastructure, sustainable urban drainage principles and a street based design that aims to get people to walk and cycle. It also complements the multi-user route through the Castle and Country Park and links into the town centre Cross Destination Space. Phase 1 of the project has been completed, with phase 2 due to be implemented during 2022-23.



Active Travel Scheme , Church Road

Multi-User Route Active Travel Scheme

The multi-user route connects the Links (formerly the Greenway project) through the Castle and Country Park. It creates a route that meets active travel and leisure needs as part of a strategic east to west axis. The project is in two phases: phase 1, from Church Road to the Country Park car park, and phase 2 from the car park onto the Links (Greenway route). The project supports and complements green infrastructure and destination management improvements within the Castle and Country Park.

The Links Active Travel Scheme

Proposals for creation of nearly 3km of safe and attractive active travel route suitable for all users including walkers, cyclists and, where achievable, horse riders between Crick and Caldicot and to destinations in between. The project will connect with existing active travel opportunities at Portskewett, Crick Road (Caldicot), Caldicot (Castle and town) and stretching north to Caerwent. It will encourage a greater modal shift from car journeys to key destination points using the greenway active travel route.



Active Travel Scheme, Caldicot Castle and Country Park



Newport Road

Plans are currently under way to regenerate the High Street along Newport Road, with extensive improvements to the public realm, refurbishment of the northern retail parade, car park improvements and the construction of new sustainable in-town housing.



Regeneration

Nos 7-43 Newport Road

This 1960s retail block occupies a large part of the town centre with its dated appearance not contributing in a positive way in terms of first impressions and to the overall experience. The County Council is reviewing its acquisition options and its timing with other town centre projects. The block currently has commercial uses on the ground floor and private rented flat accommodation above. The proposals are to refurbish the whole block which would also link with the rear car park proposals on Jubilee Way. Subject to an options appraisal and market testing, the block could accommodate a mix of commercial uses, community facilities as well as affordable homes on the upper floors. The project would be linked to social clauses during construction and would explore ways for local employment pathways and partnering.

Urban Centre Property Enhancement Fund

As part of Welsh Government's Transforming Towns programme, a number of town centre properties have benefitted from external façade improvements being guided by a co-ordinated design code approach. Properties include a number of Chinese takeaways, opticians, a sandwich and coffee bar and a youth drop in centre. A photography studio and gallery has also been awarded a grant and is due to implement the works in 2022-23.



Proposed Improvements to 7-43 Newport Road



Proposed Urban Centre Property Enhancement Property, Wye Valley Studios

Jubilee Way In-Town Living

To the rear of the town centre is Jubilee Way car park which the County Council owns. As part of a wider masterplan the proposals are to provide 21 one and two bed homes retaining an inner courtyard for public parking, a public toilet block and enhanced landscaping. An element of affordable homes would be a requirement for the scheme to meet local housing demands. This proposal is linked to Nos 7-43 Newport project and is in early development.

Newport Road Public Realm

The town's public realm requires a makeover after some 25 years with it needing to respond to the need to animate and repurpose the shopping offer and experience. A design for the space has been developed which includes linkages to and from other parts of the town centre, locations for the outdoor market stalls, an event space, and greater areas of dwell as well as trees and improved greenery. The design also engages more with the built form in terms of pavement activity, signage, and other furniture. The design is now being developed in detail and ready for implementation in 2023-24, and is subject to a Levelling Up Funds bis to UK Government.



Concept Design, in-town living, Jubilee Way



Proposed public realm improvements, Newport Road

Culture & Heritage

Caldicot Well-being Centre and Skatepark

The existing leisure centre site needs regenerating with it built in the 1970's. The County Council has managed and maintained the site but it needs significant investment to bring it up to modern day standards. The site is located close to its residents and other clubs/organisations so has further potential to inspire our next generation to be fit and healthy. The site already has good links with the exercise referral scheme and local GPs and provides vital opportunities for social interaction so important for mental health benefits. The swimming pool and skatepark are also seen as valuable assets by the local community.

The skatepark is at risk of closure due to deterioration in the foundations. New investment would provide a new park and outside area making the site a hub for local community. The site will provide additional play opportunities for younger children.

A business case and supporting data has been undertaken by Max Associates for the County Council, with a planning application submitted in May 2022.

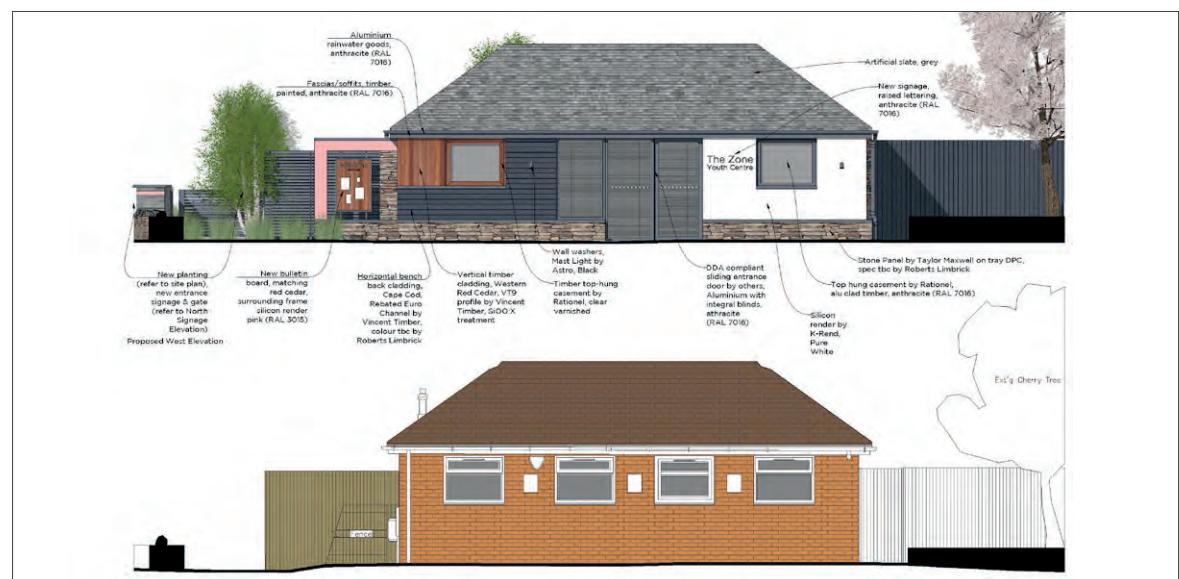
The Zone

Caldicot Youth Centre – the Zone is in a central and accessible location on the corner of Church Road and Chepstow Road. The building is owned by the Monmouthshire County Council and is leased to a charitable trust.

Proposals to enhance its setting, main elevations so that it fits with the town's design code are underway, with also planned internal refurbishments. This forms part of a multi-site community hub provision.



Proposed Gym, Well-being and Leisure Centre



Caldicot Castle and Country Park

The main focus at the Castle and Country Park is upgrading and providing new cultural and creative space, its community assets etc, and overall enhancements of the castle offer to enhance the visitor experience and community use. This will be achieved by a series of linked transformational projects across the castle and the country park, including:

1. Addressing access and improving the visitor welcome

- Moving the main entrance to the “Mitel” roundabout and providing new car parking and welcome gateway etc.
- New visitor hub outside the castle, incorporating cycle station, enhanced toilets / showers (links to multi-purpose route and reconfiguring the existing car park)

2. Extending the activity and play offer

- including redeveloping the play area and facilitating greater cultural activity

3. Optimising the environmental assets of the park

- enhancing the Neddern valley, additional wetland habitat, including resolving the lake water supply
- Creating an interpretation based visitor experience in the grounds that enhances understanding and stewardship for the area's natural resources

4. Developing the castle offer

- enhancing the visitor experience by re-presenting and interpreting the castle interior / buildings;
- creation of a multi-purpose learning, activity, and cultural space in the ground floor of the south-east tower
- event infrastructure for live music/theatre and other activities



Caldicot Castle

