

Your Town Your Future

Talgarth Planning Brief

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority December 2008

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I. Introduction

- I.1 This Planning Brief covers the market town of Talgarth and the adjacent former Mid Wales Hospital and sets out broad land use and design principles to act as a framework for future development and investment.
- I.2 The town of Talgarth is one of the six first tier settlements in the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority Approved Unitary Development Plan. It lies at the North Western foothills of the Black Mountains. The town is set within a superb and dramatic rural environment that is visually very attractive, but it remains low key in terms of its profile. The Town sits alongside the A479 Trunk Road and is located between the county town of Brecon to the West, Hay on Wye to the East and is adjacent to the village of Bronllys, which is just outside the National Park. It offers a strategic pivotal position for transport between South and Mid Wales.
- I.3 The town of Talgarth is the main settlement for the community, with a population of approximately 2,000. There is a second settlement at the historic village of Trefecca, while the community of Pengefnordd to the South is a focal point for the wider rural hinterland, as well as providing a hub for activity tourism. The nearby Black Mountains Gliding Club at the foot of the Black Mountains is of regional and national significance.
- I.4 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation statistics show that with the exception of St. Johns Ward in Brecon, Talgarth experiences a higher level of deprivation than the rest of the Powys area of the Park.
- I.5 Talgarth benefited considerably from the advent of the Railways in the 1880's, which helped to consolidate its position as a prominent Market Town. The decommissioning of the Hereford-Brecon line in the 1960s under the Beeching Review had a severe negative impact on the economic vibrancy of the town. Nevertheless, the former Mid Wales Hospital with its Nursing School continued to play a vital role locally, as the major employer in the area. However, the wind down of the Mid Wales Hospital, which commenced in the early 1990s, and its eventual closure in 1999, had a major impact on the town. Over four hundred NHS staff were transferred to other sites and some took early retirement. As anticipated in the Chapman Warren Report on Talgarth¹, the closure led to a lack of confidence and investment in the area. In terms of planning status, the former hospital is allocated as 'previously developed land for mixed use' in the National Park Authority Approved Unitary Development Plan, March 2007. It is currently styled The Black Mountains Business Park, but for a combination of reasons, the site does not enjoy high occupancy rates and has recently been in administration. In Talgarth itself there are a number of business units, both in the town centre and on the Talgarth Business Park on Trefecca Road, all of which enjoy full occupancy. A block of 8 incubator business units have been built by WAG[DE&T] in the Business Park, with the support of European Union funding and these are currently being marketed.

¹ A Regeneration Strategy for Talgarth 1995 – 2000. Chapman Warren 1995

2. What is a Planning Brief?

- 2.1. According to The Good Practice Guidance Planning and Development Briefs: A Guide to Better Practice (DETR, 1998), all Planning Briefs 'inform developers, and other interested parties of the constraints and opportunities presented by a site, and the type of development expected or encouraged by local planning policy.'
- 2.2. The policy context of this brief is in line with the existing policy, as laid out in the Authority Approved Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and will provide guidance that is consistent with existing policies.
- 2.3. The DETR research indicates that there are three main types of planning/development brief. This brief will incorporate all of them;
 - (i) it will clarify current policies,
 - (ii) facilitate appropriate development and
 - (iii) highlight Talgarth's attributes.
- 2.4. A Planning Brief must also bear in mind the limits of the planning system. In order to achieve its purposes the input of other agencies is crucial to the success of the brief's aims.

3. What is the purpose of this brief?

The purpose of this planning brief is to:

- Stimulate regeneration and foster economic vibrancy
- Provide a basis for the consideration of any future planning applications within Talgarth and the former Mid Wales Hospital
- To supplement the planning framework set out in the Authority Approved Unitary Development Plan
- Guide and inform developers to ensure the planning requirements and special purposes of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority are met and the needs of the community are identified and prioritised
- To encourage high quality development within Talgarth to better link the town spatially, socially and economically with the former Mid Wales Hospital and Bronllys, while preserving and enhancing the stunning natural environment
- To promote and facilitate the involvement of other agencies where necessary/appropriate, including Powys County Council, Powys LHB, WAG [DE&T], CCW and Cadw

4.2. Development Plan Policies:

Brecon Beacons National Park, Authority Approved Unitary Development Plan, March 2007 (UDP).

Relevant Policies

Policy G3: Development in the National Park.

This policy outlines what is required of all proposals for development or change of use of land or buildings within the National Park.

(Please refer to the UDP p.17 for detailed information).

Policy G6: Design.

Applications for development will be expected to meet the Welsh Assembly Government's key design objectives and respond to the local context. The policy also sets out what proposals will be required to demonstrate.

(Please refer to the UDP p.19-20 for detailed information).

Policy Q17: Development affecting Conservation Areas.

New development and alterations to existing buildings with or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area will only be permitted where it preserves or enhances the character of the area and where the design, all building materials, proportions and detailing are appropriate to the Conservation Area.

(Please refer to the UDP p.35 for detailed information).

Policy Q19: Shop Front Design in Conservation Areas.

New shop fronts or alterations to existing shop fronts in Conservation Areas will only be permitted if the architectural character and design, building materials, scale, proportions and detailing are in keeping with the Conservation Area.

(Please refer to the UDP p.36 for detailed information).

Policy ES1: Retention of Existing Commercial Sites.

Change of use from allocated or existing commercial sites to a non-commercial use will only be permitted when it meets certain criteria listed in the UDP. *(p.71)*

Policy ES2: Changes of Use in Town Centres.

Use changes also have criteria which are also listed on pg.71 of the UDP. The policy also refers to "Prime Retail Cores". The area of the Prime Retail Core is shown on the proposals map.

Policy ES5: Loss of Village Shops and Public Houses.

Criteria must be met, as on p.73 of the UDP, in order for a loss to be permitted.

Other policies may apply. Please refer to the UDP. The UDP is available on the Authority's website

<http://www.breconbeacons.org/the-authority/planning/strategy-and-policy/udp>

4.3. Planning Obligations Strategy – Approved by NPA October 2008

The Authority recently approved the Planning Obligations Strategy which seeks to ensure that any new development will make a positive contribution to the special

qualities of living and working within the Park. It achieves this by negotiating with developers for the provision of facilities and services.

The Planning Obligations Strategy will be a key tool in realising the opportunities raised in this Planning Brief.

The Strategy is available on the Authority's website.

<http://www.breconbeacons.org/the-authority/planning/strategy-and-policy/spg-and-dc-guidance-notes/planning-obligations-strategy>

5. Description of Talgarth

5.1. Employment

The former Mid Wales Hospital was a major employer in the area until its closure in 1999. At that time the area had already been identified as suffering from a lack of investment including the physical fabric of the town, vacant shops and houses and a poor image. The Local Health Board have also consulted recently on a plan to slim down/close Bronllys Hospital, which has further implications for employment in the area. A number of sites have been allocated for employment and/or mixed use in the Authority Approved UDP, including the former Mid Wales Hospital.

5.2. Housing

There are a number of allocated sites for housing in the Authority Approved UDP, including a recent allocation on land north of the doctors' surgery, all of which may provide the type of housing attractive to young families including an element of affordable housing. The existing housing stock is varied in type and condition, ranging from the historic core, to post war Council Housing, to modern estates. There are a number of buildings in the town centre, particularly around Bell Street that have suffered particularly from HGV traffic at the pinch point of the A479, prior to the completion of the Talgarth Relief Road in 2007. These properties would benefit from substantial investment to bring them back into use and to improve the townscape, including Cadw, private sector housing renewal and 'living above the shop' initiatives.

5.3. Traffic

Congestion in the centre of Talgarth was common in past decades due to narrow streets, sharp bends and a lack of on street parking. However the problem has been largely resolved by the A479 Talgarth Relief Road, which was completed in 2007. The removal of traffic and therefore the reduction in wear and tear to the physical fabric of Talgarth creates a more pedestrian friendly environment, for locals and visitors alike. It also presents an opportunity for a growth in civic pride, with local groups taking active steps to access funding to improving the fabric of buildings and streetscape. Parking remains a problem with little on street parking in the town centre. A key issue is the lack of a convenient pedestrian route connecting the main car park with the town centre. The issue of a safe and appropriate pedestrian and cycle route linking Bronllys with Talgarth amenities is also of concern locally, given the traffic speeds and volume along Bronllys Road following the Relief Road construction and the substandard pavement adjacent to the A479.

5.4. Tourism and recreation

Talgarth is a popular area for walking, mountain biking and pony trekking, and is the home of the Black Mountains Gliding Club. The Talgarth Trust manages the volunteer run Talgarth Information and Resource Centre which, amongst other things, provides tourist information and sign posts locals and visitors alike to a range of services and facilities in the area. Talgarth has many different societies and clubs, including the Gwernyfed Rugby Club, Gwernyfed Football Club, Talgarth Cricket Club and the

Bowling Club. However, given Talgarth's status as a local sporting hub, it is remarkable that there is no indoor, year round sports facility to serve a community of its size. The Inspector made reference to this at the UDP Public Inquiry in 2005 in her consideration of the Hay Road site.

Talgarth Women's Institute, the Bell Gardening Club, a Whist Club and Talgarth Luncheon Club are all long established and well supported. The Talgarth Festival of the Black Mountains, a well established community event, is held every August Bank Holiday Weekend and continues to grow in popularity. The previously mentioned Talgarth Information and Resource Centre, also provides the community with free job search internet access and basic computer tuition for the Brecon Job Centre New Deal 50+ Scheme.

5.5. Conservation of landscape, wildlife and archaeology

Talgarth is at the foothills of the Black Mountains and close to Pwll-y-Wrach Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Park Wood. The former is one of the Brecknock Wildlife Trust's most visited sites. The River Enig is a prominent resource in the townscape together with the Tower Bridge near The Mill. The Bridge is shortly to be renovated, following the de-trunking of that stretch of the former A479 and plans are also well advanced to renovate the Mill itself, which is the subject of a successful Rural Development Plan bid for funds to establish a hydroelectric scheme for community benefit. Downstream, the Wye and Usk Foundation has recently undertaken environmental works to enhance the fish habitat. It is vital that wildlife corridors are maintained, in line with the Habitat Regulations. The Relief Road construction took careful account of wildlife issues, notably the use of local rivers by bats for navigational purposes; it is vital that this environmental focus is maintained. The wider Talgarth hinterland is rich in archaeological terms, notably the Castell Dinas hill fort at Pengeffordd, the ancient church at Llanelieu with its rood screen and Bronllys Castle.

5.6. Local Amenities

Talgarth has many existing essential services including, a primary school, medical centre, Town Hall, bank, branch library, fire station, play areas, post office, community supermarket, pharmacy, a range of local shops showcasing local produce, youth and community centre, several churches, tourist information centre and pubs/cafes. The livestock market is well supported and is of importance well beyond the local farming community; Talgarth has one of the very few family run micro abattoirs in the National Park, which services the local retail butchers as well as a significant number of local hotels and restaurants

5.7. History

Talgarth has a rich history; Talgarth was the royal residence of Brychan, King of Brycheiniog during the 5th Century. St Gwendoline is buried at the church in Talgarth, as is Howell Harris, founding father of Methodism, whose ministry was at nearby Trefecca. 12th Century Bronllys Castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument at the eastern entrance to the town, which also forms the gateway into the Brecon Beacons National Park.

5.8. Town Centre

The central part of the town has retained its medieval street pattern and the historic buildings of the townscape have remained largely intact although some are in a poor state of repair. The central area is a Conservation Area and contains a number of prominent listed buildings, including The Tower which has recently been restored. There are a number of retail units, financial and small businesses in the Town Centre as well as the livestock market less than 200 metres from the Town Centre.

6. Potential and Aspirations

The town's location, its development opportunities and the commitment of the local community should provide the springboard for a new positive identity for Talgarth, both as a place to live and to work. The following represents some of the potential which exists in the area:

6.1. History

There may be opportunities to explore links with the historic towns of Brecon, Hay-on-Wye as well as Brecknock's castles (including Bronllys Castle), Brecknock Museum and the history of industry and hospitals in the area. The entire area of Talgarth and its communities falls within the Middle Wye Valley Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. There is a strong basis for developing a partnership with CPAT (Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust).

6.2. Transport

Talgarth Relief Road and Bronllys By-pass have brought significant traffic relief to the affected communities. To build on these benefits consideration could be given to:-

- better pedestrian linkage between the car park and the town centre
- increasing the roadspace for cyclists (cycle lanes, priority rights of way, communal bikes) throughout the area
- improving cycling facilities such as cycle storage.
- a universal 20mph for all the settlements involved (achieved in part by narrowing the roads to provide more pedestrian and cycle space) and
- cars being required to give way to buses, cyclists and pedestrians.
- every settlement in the district could be linked by on-road cycle lanes. In this way, the plan would achieve better control of speeding traffic and better links between communities without having to increase policing.
- park and ride facilities could be provided to draw visitors and locals in off the Relief Road/By-pass into the town and to and from different events in the area (including shows and festivals in town, in Hay-on-Wye and Brecon).

6.3. Former Mid Wales Hospital

The Mid-Wales Hospital site has huge potential. The site has the benefit of new owners and is allocated in the UDP as a mixed use site. It is imperative that the potential is realised and any development is linked to and provides benefits for the wider community.

- It is an important site for roosting and hibernating lesser horseshoe bats (and some other bat species).
- There is also the opportunity in any development proposals to explore the site's capacity to supply combined heat and power to itself and to the town through wood burning boiler systems.
- The National Park Authority (NPA) will negotiate with the new owners of the site to produce an updated development brief and these issues can be explored in more detail.

6.4. Sustainable Living

Talgarth and district has abundant environmental and sustainable living assets and great potential to draw on these. These assets can be summarised as:-

- Habitat;
- Renewable energy (e.g. the Talgarth Water Mill); and
- Localised food production.

Involving people in energy and food are two principal means of engendering co-operation and civic involvement. Encouraging self-sufficiency in renewable energy and food could become a high priority for the area. Sustainable living could itself become an attractor to the district, as well as providing new employment.

The Rural Development Plan Project (Low Carbon Communities – Powys) has now commenced and the Severn Wye Energy Agency Wales Offices are committed to moving other projects forward to achieve ambitions in respect of a lower carbon footprint for the town.

The Big Green Challenge project is active in Talgarth and has an ultimate target to make the National Park area energy self sufficient. This may give rise to applications for renewable energy projects.

6.5. Biodiversity

Biodiversity is one of the district's strongest assets.

- Some of Brecknock's strongest lesser horseshoe bat roosts are known to be present in the area, including the Former Mid Wales Hospital site, Bronllys Castle and several large farm complexes in the area, with ecological links to roosts further afield.
- The district is a known stronghold for dormouse and great crested newt in Brecknock.
- It is rich in rivers, including River Wye SAC (and the Llynfi),
- It is rich in bird life
- It is in one of the two areas of the Park where there may be Pine Martens.

In order to understand the area's biodiversity, a desk-top survey could be commissioned from Biodiversity Information Service (BIS) of what has already been recorded, what site designations are here and what habitats and species of principal importance to Wales are known to be present. This could then be used to develop

interpretation plans and routes, as well as habitat management and restoration plans and to develop partnerships with appropriate bodies to implement these. The Wye and Usk Foundation, Brecknock WT and The Woodland Trust are already present in the area for example. The information garnered from an audit could be used to develop local interest in forming special interest groups or joining existing ones.

6.6. Talgarth Regeneration Group

The Talgarth Action Group [TAG] was set up in the mid 1990s to promote local regeneration and was responsible for commissioning Chapman Warren to produce 'A Regeneration Strategy for Talgarth, 1995 – 2000.'

The more recently established Talgarth and District Regeneration Group is pro-active in involving the community and agencies to provide a focus for action and drawing down grant aid. Their Action Plan for Talgarth and District was widely consulted upon in 2005/6 and officially adopted in Autumn 2006. Working in close partnership with Talgarth Town Council, the Group has been active on a number of fronts, including fostering local producer markets and improving access and signage issues locally to support sustainable tourism.

The Town Hall Basement Task Group has commissioned an options appraisal for the currently underused space in the Town Hall basement to become a multi-use community hub building, to host a range of local services.

This Development Brief will establish a vital link between the Regeneration Group's aspirations and the planning system.

7. Strategic Sites

7.1. The tables below show all the sites within Talgarth which are allocated for housing, employment or mixed use in the Authority Approved UDP, March 2007. Each of the sites can be found on the extracts of the Proposals Maps set out in Section 8 below. The Site Codes shown in the tables allow easy reference of the sites on the Maps. The tables are extracts from the Approved UDP. The information relating to planning permissions and completions is therefore correct at the time that the UDP was approved in March 2007. Further information on more current progress on each of these sites may be obtained by contacting the Authority.

7.2. Table I - Policy SSI: Housing Land in First Tier Settlements. (UDP Extract)

Settlement	Site Code	Site Name	No of Units	Greenfield (G) or Brownfield (B)	WITH PERMISSION		WITHOUT PERMISSION
					Built or Under Construction	Not Started	
Talgarth	T1a	New House, Trefecca Road	18	B	-	3	15
Talgarth	T1b	Trefecca Road	6	G	-	3	3
Talgarth	T2	Regent's St Garage	13	B	-	13	-
Talgarth	T3	adj. Neuadd Felin-Back Lane	6	G	-	6	-
Talgarth	T4	School Street	6	B	-	4	2
Talgarth	T9	North of Doctors Surgery	36	G	-	-	36
Talgarth Total			170		-	29	56

7.3. Table I - Policy SS4: Sites Allocated for Employment Uses (UDP Extract:)

Settlement	Site Code	Site Name	Site Area	Appropriate Use	Site Description and Comments
Talgarth	T5	Adjacent Brookside Cottage	0.25	General Industrial (B2)	Small Area still undeveloped
Talgarth	T7	Hay Road, Talgarth		B2 General Industrial	An area of land allocated in the Adopted Local Plan

7.4. Table 2 Policy SS5: Allocation of Previously Developed Land for Mixed Use (UDP Extract)

Settlement	Site Code	Site name	Site Area (Hectares)	Appropriate Use	Site Status
Talgarth	T8	Mid Wales Hospital	4.5 ha	Mixed Use/Commercial	Subject to SPG – See Appendix 7A. Access constraints, new ownership with commercial use
Talgarth	T6	Hay Road, Talgarth (DSO & Wireguards)	0.9	Mixed use The Developer to submit a Development Brief to take into account the spatial context of the area	An area of brownfield land (0.9ha) on Hay Road with the empty DSO yard and Wireguards factory.

8. Maps

The following are extracts of the Unitary Development Plan Proposals Maps which relate to Talgarth.

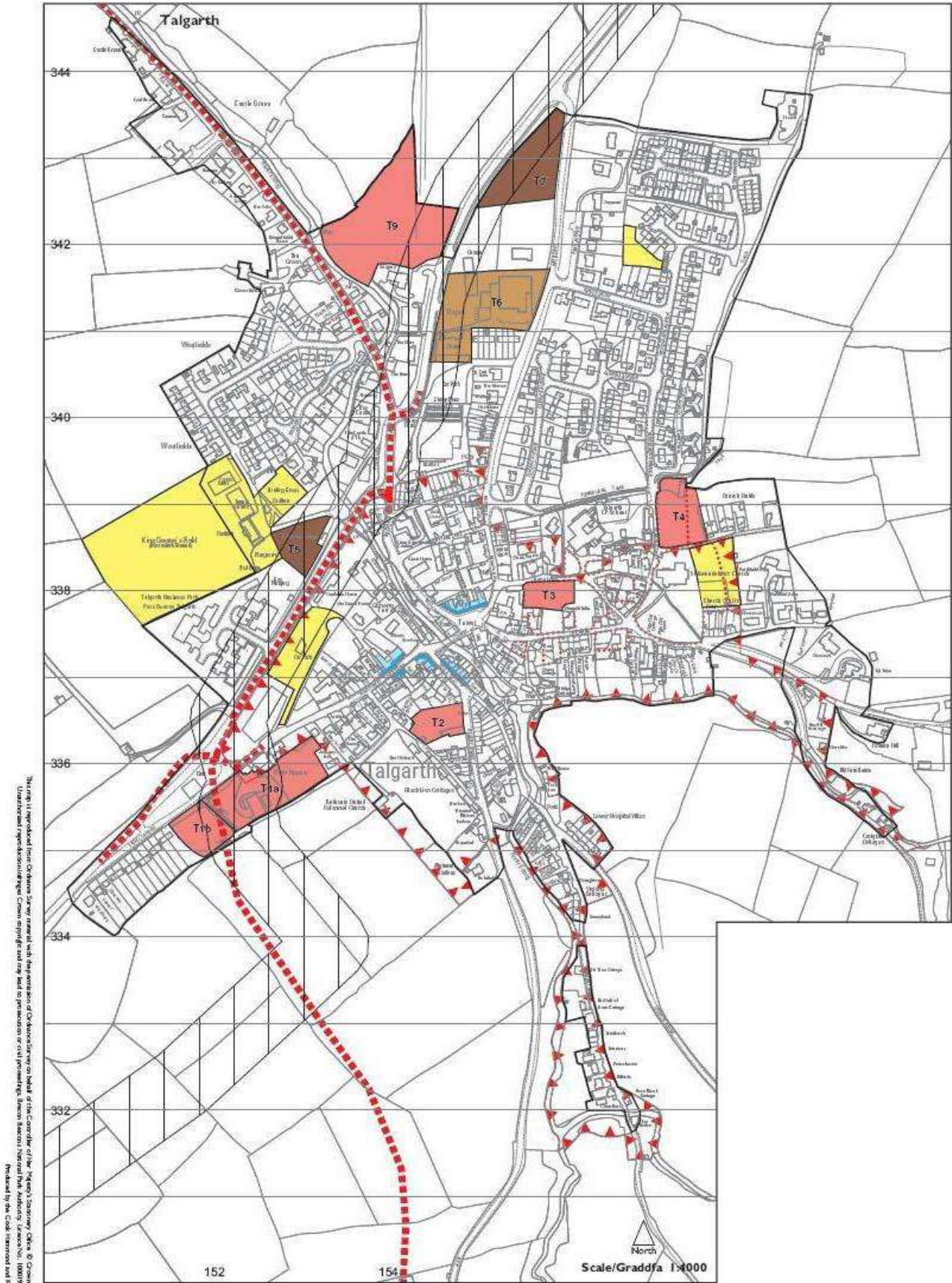
8.1. Map Key

Proposals Map Key - Mynegai I'r Cynigion

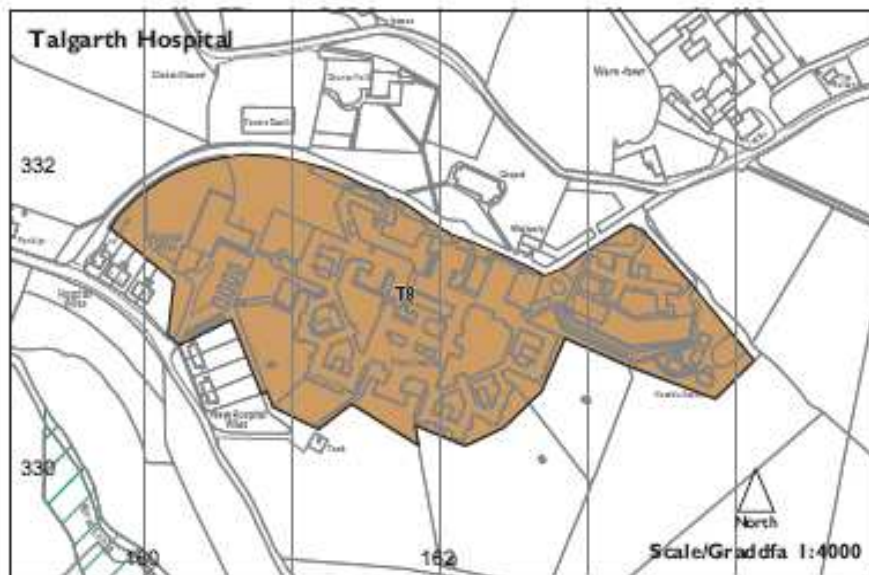
		National Park Boundary Ffin Parc Cenedlaethol
		Settlement Development Boundary Ffin Datblygu Anheddiad
		National Nature Reserve Gwarchodfa Nature Genedlaethol
Q2		Site of Special Scientific Interest Safle o Ddiddordeb Gwyddonol Arbennig
Q2		Special Area of Conservation Ardal Cadwraeth Arbennig
Q10		Scheduled Ancient Monument Heneb Cofrestredig
Q12		Area of Archaeological Evaluation Ardal Gwerthusiad Archeolegol
Q17:Q18		Conservation Area Ardal Gadwraeth
Q7		Historic Park or Garden Parc Neu Ardd Hanesyddol
		Community Council Boundary Ffin Cyngor Cymuned
SS1:SS2		Housing Allocation Dosraniad Tai
		Site Developed or Under Construction Safle Datblygwyd Neu Ar Waith
SS4		Employment Allocation Dosraniad Cyfogaeth
SS5		Previously Developed Land Allocated for Mixed Use Tir a Ddatblygwyd yn Gynt a Neilltwyd at Ddefnydd Cymysg
SS4		Regional Employment Site Safle Cyfogaeth Rhanbarthol
ES2:ES3		Prime Retail Core Prif Graidd Adwerthu
ES2:ES3		Retail Frontage in Prime Retail Core Ffrytiad Adwerth Mewn Prif Graidd Adwerthu
ES32		Existing Community Use Defnydd Cymunedol Ar Hyn O Bryd
		Talgarth By-Pass Ffordd Osgoi Talgarth
Part 1 Policy 4		Pressure and/or Vulnerable Areas Ardal o Dan Bwysau/Ardal Fregus
Appendix 6		Quarry Planning Permission Chwarel & Chaniatâd
S8		Quarry Planning Permission Buffer Zone Cylchfa Ragod Chwarel & Chaniatâd
H4		High Pressure Gas Consultation Zone Nwy Pwysedd Uchel Ardal Ymgynghori

8.2. Talgarth Proposals Map (UDP Map Page 38)

(Please see Table in Section 7 above for Key to Site Codes)



8.3. Talgarth Hospital Site (UDP Map Page 39)



9. Opportunities.

A. Emphasise the positive aspects of Talgarth's facilities and services to enhance its role and image within the National Park

- i) Promote Town Scheme or equivalent to promote commercial property improvement in the town centre
- ii) Promote local produce and farmers' markets
- iii) Promote energy self sufficiency
- iv) Build on the success of tourism initiatives to encourage overnight stays, with a particular emphasis on sustainable tourism development
- v) Promote a sense of place and unique identity, based on the historical and cultural qualities of the area
- vi) Promote a greater understanding and appreciation of SSSI Wildlife Sites and the wider natural environment
- vii) Promote the newly constructed DE&T Business Units, to encourage full occupancy and the establishment of a range of high quality local businesses
- viii) Encourage more sustainable forms of transport through improved cycling facilities

B. Enhance the physical attributes of the town centre to encourage investment.

- i) Promote private sector housing renewal in the town centre and 'living above the shops' initiatives
- ii) Promote schemes which will provide for the physical conservation/regeneration of the town centre, including close partnership working with Cadw
- iii) Improve signage and pedestrian links from the recently refurbished car park, to help promote a more attractive visitor experience, while minimising environmental impacts.

C. Improve the desirability of Talgarth as a place to live and work

- i) Encourage good design of new housing to reflect sustainability objectives and unique identity of the town
- ii) Ensure pedestrian and cycle linkages from new development into the countryside, into the town centre and to schools- and enhance the natural environment
- iii) Promote a relationship between employment and housing through live work developments
- iv) Ensure consistent planning gain for the community through any planning proposals
- v) Promote an updated development brief for the former Mid Wales Hospital