

EARLY URBAN DESIGN SCHEMES IN THE SOUTH WALES VALLEYS



◀ **Ebbw Vale:** pedestrianisation enhancing the public realm

Maesteg: new bus station to achieve better accessibility and permeability ▶



◀ **Merthyr Tydfil:** Central library forecourt improvement — enhanced setting

The “Valleys Initiative”, introduced in the late 1980s, was fairly typical of early regeneration programmes, primarily targeting economic objectives such as a four-to-one leverage of private to public sector investment, and taking the cost per job as a measure of success. The projects included transport infrastructure, facelift, high street façades and remodelling to meet the current demands of standards and taste. Urban design efforts were restricted by the fragmented approach to funding and sponsorship. In architectural terms there was a tendency towards a preservationist approach, and so-called “harmonious” façades.

CAERPHILLY — RECENT REGENERATION IN AN HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT



Caerphilly: Town centre scheme, winner of the 1999 Civic Trust *Centre Vision* award



In the later 1990s, regeneration programmes still had economic objectives, as in the case of Caerphilly. But projects now tended to emphasise **sustainability** by providing an all-weather environment or easy parking facilities to attract shoppers and visitors for longer periods in all seasons. In design terms **quality** has assumed greater importance not only in terms of conducting urban design appraisal studies but also by specifying quality materials and providing good architectural detailing. As we see here, the mixing of the high-tech details of the new shopping centre with the medieval castle structure is not only harmonious but undeniably attractive.