

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

27 MAY 2021

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

TO PROPOSE THAT BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL BECOMES A SIGNATORY TO THE PLACEMAKING WALES CHARTER

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the endorsement of the Development Control Committee in proposing that the Council becomes a signatory to the Placemaking Charter Wales.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report refers to the implementation of the statutory Town and Country Planning system which assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:-**

1. **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the County Borough.
2. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.

3. Background

- 3.1 Placemaking is a proactive and collaborative process of creating and managing places. Although the Local Planning Authority may be considered as the main proponent, the placemaking agenda goes effectively beyond the Planning and related functions of the Council which has cross-disciplinary connections to multiple service areas across local government and its related partners in order to contribute to the effective creation and management of places. Placemaking is seen as a key process to deliver the duties of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act and key corporate priorities/strategies including the Corporate Plan and the carbon reduction aspirations of Bridgend 2030. Furthermore, its multi-disciplinary requirements align well with a one Council approach in carrying out its functions.
- 3.2 National Planning Policy (Future Wales 2040 and Planning Policy Wales 11) places placemaking at the heart of the Planning system. Placemaking principles

are already embedded in the current Bridgend Local Development Plan(LDP) through Policy SP2 and are to be enhanced and augmented in the replacement LDP which will be published for consultation in June 2021.

- 3.3 By becoming a signatory to the Placemaking Charter Wales, the Council will demonstrate its commitment to the placemaking principles and developing and improving its places.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 The Placemaking Wales Charter, launched in September 2020, has been developed by Welsh Government and the Design Commission for Wales in collaboration with the Placemaking Wales Partnership. This consists of stakeholders representing a wide range of interests and organisations working within the built and natural environment. The Charter is intended to reflect the collective and individual commitment of these organisations to support the development of high-quality places across Wales for the benefit of communities.
- 4.2 Current signatories to the Placemaking Wales Charter include the Home Builders Federation, Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation, Institute of Highway Engineers, Housing Associations, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, Royal Society of Architects Wales, Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association and national/regional house builders. The Charter is summarised below and attached as **Appendix A**.
- 4.3 Signatories to the Placemaking Wales Charter agree to promote the following principles in the planning, design and management of new and existing places:

People and Community – The local community are involved in the development of proposals. The needs, aspirations, health and well-being of all people are considered at the outset. Proposals are shaped to help to meet these needs as well as create, integrate, protect and/or enhance a sense of community and promote equality.

Location – Places grow and develop in a way that uses land efficiently, supports and enhances existing places and is well connected. The location of housing, employment, leisure and other facilities are planned to help reduce the need to travel.

Movement – Walking, cycling and public transport are prioritised to provide a choice of transport modes and avoid dependence on private vehicles. Well designed and safe active travel routes connect to the wider active travel and public transport network and public transport stations and stops are positively integrated.

Mix of Uses – Places have a range of purposes which provide opportunities for community development, local business growth and access to jobs, services and facilities via walking, cycling or public transport. Development density and a mix of uses and tenures helps to support a diverse community and vibrant public realm.

Public Realm – Streets and public spaces are well defined, welcoming, safe and inclusive with a distinct identity. They are designed to be robust and adaptable with landscape, green infrastructure and sustainable drainage well integrated.

They are well connected to existing places and promote opportunities for social interaction and a range of activities for all people.

Identity – The positive, distinctive qualities of existing places are valued and respected. The unique features and opportunities of a location including heritage, culture, language, built and natural physical attributes are identified and responded to.

4.4 As a signatory to the Placemaking Charter the Council would pledge to:

- Involve the local community in the development of proposals
- Choose sustainable locations for new development
- Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport
- Create inclusive, well defined, safe and welcoming streets and public spaces
- Promote a sustainable mix of uses to make places vibrant
- Value and respect the positive distinctive qualities and identity of existing places.

4.5 This will require a commitment across a wide range of departments and Council functions, all of which have a role to play in ensuring that new development and supporting infrastructure are informed by placemaking objectives.

4.6 The Welsh Government's 'Future Wales' document provides the National Development Plan and contains a specific policy requiring the public sector to show leadership and apply placemaking principles to support growth and regeneration for the benefit of communities. It states under Policy 2: "The public sector must lead by example and apply placemaking principles to create exemplar developments. In particular, (it) must prioritise design quality, innovation and sustainability."

4.7 The draft replacement Local Development Plan has 4 strategic objectives

- To Create High Quality Sustainable Places (Placemaking)
- To Create Active, Healthy, Cohesive and Social Communities
- To Create Productive and Enterprising Places
- To Protect and Enhance Distinctive and Natural Places

4.8 The future strategic sites coming through the replacement Local Development Plan will have to be designed with a priority on placemaking.

4.9 Placemaking is now recognized as a function of the Planning and Development Services Group in the Communities Directorate Business Plan 2021/22. Both the Development Control Committee and the Planning Service are best placed to act as the Council's placemaking champions to ensure new development complies with the principles set out in the Charter. There is an aspiration to set up a 'Placemaking Unit' within the team drawing from existing expertise as well as taking on additional resource and suitable training in order to provide the necessary placemaking input

into new schemes. This would include the Council's own projects as well as any private sector development.

- 4.10 In practical terms this could involve amongst other things, the requirement for developers to have a Placemaking expert on board at pre-application stage and developing a suite of up to date Supplementary Planning Guidance documents. This will enable Bridgend to become an exemplar Authority in terms of placemaking.
- 4.11 Becoming a signatory to the Placemaking Charter therefore provides an opportunity for the Council to confirm its commitment to delivering quality places and recognizing the key role that this plays in enhancing the health and well-being of its communities and residents for the long-term future. This will require a whole Council agreement and further approval will be need from the Corporate Management Board, Cabinet and Council.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 The statutory Town & Country Planning system requires Local Planning Authorities must determine Planning applications in accordance with the relevant regulations and policy.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 As part of the wider statutory Planning process the effective management of land and its change seeks to help to eliminate inequality and disadvantage in people's lives. This has been reflected in the recently published Planning Policy Wales 11 (PPW11), which aligns the Planning system with other key Welsh Government strategies including the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and the Socio-Economic Duty.
- 6.2 There are no direct implications associated with this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 The statutory Town & Country Planning System and associated Planning policy including Placemaking principles is aligned in accordance with the seven Wellbeing goals and the five ways of working as identified in the Act.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 The cost of the administering the statutory Town and Country Planning System is met from current budgets. Higher quality development may lead to higher overall cost although this may impact on the development industry. There may also be a requirement to provide suitable training to Officers and Members as well as the need for additional resource to provide the necessary placemaking guidance to developers although this cost could be offset by pre-application fees and the use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs).
- 8.2 Compliance with the placemaking agenda and being a signatory to the Charter requires that the Council must ensure its own proposed schemes are of a high quality. This inevitably requires an appropriate level of investment and financial

commitment however, if placemaking is addressed in a comprehensive manner at a suitably early stage of the development process following the principles set out in the Charter, it will not necessitate any increase in costs being incurred by the Council on its development projects. More importantly, good placemaking is far more than specifying expensive materials or reducing the scale or scope of development. In many instances, adhering to the principles of the Charter may be suitably addressed using pragmatic solutions in a careful and creative way.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 That Members endorse that Bridgend County Borough Council agrees to become a signatory of the Placemaking Wales Charter.
- 9.2 That the Group Manager Planning & Development Services pursue the matter through the Corporate Management Board and seek the approval of Cabinet and Council.

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Background documents: Appendix 1 – Placemaking Wales Charter



Placemaking Wales Charter

The Placemaking Wales Charter has been developed in collaboration with the Placemaking Wales Partnership which is made up of stakeholders representing a wide range of interests. The Charter reflects the collective and individual commitment of those organisations to support the development of high-quality places across Wales for the benefit of communities.

In signing the Placemaking Wales Charter every organisation agree to support placemaking in all relevant areas of their work and promote the following principles in the planning, design and management of new and existing places:

People and community

The local community are involved in the development of places. The needs, aspirations, health and well-being of all people are considered at the outset. Places are shaped to help to meet these needs as well as create, integrate, protect and/or enhance a sense of community and promote equality.

Location

Places grow and develop in a way that use land efficiently, supports and enhances existing places and is well connected. The location of housing, employment and leisure and other facilities are planned to help reduce the need to travel.

Movement

Walking, cycling and public transport are provided to provide a choice of transport modes and avoid dependence on private vehicles. Well designed and safe active travel routes connect to the wider active travel and public transport network and public transport stations and stops are positively integrated.

Mix of uses

Places have a range of purposes which provide opportunities for community development, local business growth and access, jobs, services and facilities via walking, cycling or public transport. Development density and a mix of uses and features help to support a diverse community and vibrant public realm.

Public realm

Blocks and public spaces are well defined, welcoming, safe and inclusive with a distinct identity. They are designed to be robust and adaptable with landscaping, green infrastructure and sustainable drainage well integrated. They are well connected to existing places and provide opportunities for social interaction and a range of activities for all people.

Identity

The positive, distinctive qualities of existing places are valued and respected. The unique features and opportunities of a location including heritage, culture, language, built and natural physical attributes are identified and responded to.

