



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

29th September 2021

Report of the Director of Environment and Regeneration Nicola Pearce

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

The Placemaking Charter Wales

Purpose of the Report

To seek Member approval for Neath Port Talbot Council to become a signatory of the Placemaking Charter Wales.

Executive Summary

Placemaking was introduced as a central concept in Town and Country Planning in Planning Policy Wales 10 (2018) and is described as a '*...holistic approach to the planning and design of development and spaces, focused on positive outcomes*'. Through the application of placemaking principles, the planning system should aim to create high quality development and public spaces to promote prosperity, health, happiness, and well-being in the widest sense.

The Placemaking Charter was developed by Welsh Government (WG) and the Design Commission for Wales (DCfW) to set down the principles of Placemaking in a document that can be signed and endorsed by all organisations and bodies involved in the development process. Six principles are set out in the Charter covering *People and Community; Location; Identity; Movement; Mix of Uses* and *Public Realm*.

Organisations including Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) are being asked to sign the Placemaking Charter to demonstrate support for placemaking in all relevant areas of working and to promote the six placemaking principles in the planning, design and management of new and existing places.

The signing of the Charter will serve to demonstrate that the Council embraces good design and well-being principles, help to give clarity about the approaches the Council will take at all stages of the planning process, strengthen the commitment of planning in Wales to its principles and help to enhance an image of NPT as a forward-looking, progressive and inclusive authority.

Background

This report has been considered by Cabinet on the 22nd September.

The Placemaking Wales Charter was launched in September 2020 by Julie James, Minister for Housing and Local Government.

‘Placemaking’ means setting out from the beginning the aim of creating sustainable and attractive places for living, working and spending leisure time. It aims to move on from standard housing estates with minimal facilities, dependant on the private car, to more complete and inclusive communities.

The concept seeks to create a significantly better environment through creative design; working with the landscape and in the context of the existing settlement pattern, incorporating Green Infrastructure (GI), Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs), biodiversity and active travel connectivity. This starts with a clear masterplan to create attractive, sustainable and distinctive places with the aim of achieving improved health and well-being for all residents and for future generations.

Placemaking is therefore the proactive and collaborative process of creating and managing places. This process relates to more than the planning services function of the Council, and in fact relates to multiple service areas across local government that contribute to the creation and management of places. Placemaking is a key process to deliver the duties of the Well Being of Future Generations Act (WBFGA).

Placemaking and Planning

Placemaking is now central to the planning process and system in Wales, and is embodied in Welsh Government (WG) policy documents as a fundamental principle to be adopted by all practitioners. These documents include in particular:

- *Future Wales (FW) – A National Plan for 2040 (Feb 2021)*: which sets out the planning framework for the whole of Wales, including national planning policies;
- *Planning Policy Wales (PPW), Edition 11 (2021)*: Detailed national planning policy and guidance; and

- *Building Better Places: Placemaking and the Covid-19 Recovery (2020)*: Planning policy priorities to assist in taking action in the recovery period after the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

The Covid-19 pandemic (and associated restrictions / lockdowns) has demonstrated how important well-planned neighbourhoods providing a full range of amenities, pleasant environments and recreation space are to an individual's well-being – providing such environments is the aim of placemaking.

Future Wales and PPW emphasises placemaking on a strategic level with the objectives of becoming better connected, reducing travel and boosting local services to enhance identity, character, sense of community and collective ownership through the planning system.

Well-being is central to the placemaking process and gives importance to the need to work together to build better places. This is achieved by applying a holistic approach to the planning process: one that considers the context, function and relationships between a development site and its wider surroundings.

PPW sets out the approach to achieving well-being and sustainable development via placemaking. It emphasises the legacy of development for people and the environment. *“Good placemaking is...essential to the delivery of sustainable development and achieving improvements in the well-being of communities”*. (Planning Policy Wales, Paragraph 2.10).

Placemaking is defined in PPW as:

“A holistic approach to the planning and design of development and spaces, focused on positive outcomes. It draws upon an area's potential to create high quality development and public spaces that promote people's prosperity, health, happiness, and well-being in the widest sense. Placemaking considers the context, function and relationships between a development site and its wider surroundings. This will be true for major developments creating new places as well as small developments created within a wider place. Placemaking should not add additional cost to a development, but will require smart, multi-dimensional and innovative thinking to implement and should be considered at the earliest possible stage. Placemaking adds social, economic, environmental and cultural value to development proposals resulting in benefits which go beyond a physical development boundary and embed wider resilience into planning decisions”.

Placemaking has also been emphasised as the dominant theme in the recently published *Building Better Places*, which the WG considers its

strategy for putting placemaking at the heart of post Covid-19 recovery (July 2020): *“The Covid-19 Pandemic and our collective response to the issues it raises, is one of the most complicated challenges in a generation. We have all had to do things differently, think more about our actions, and act carefully and sensitively to those around us...Now, more than ever, we need to think about places and placemaking. This will be our core value in the work we take forward to bring about recovery in Wales. The regenerative action we take at all levels will be driven by integrated thinking and not short-term expedience which can have negative longer term consequences”.*

Furthermore, Future Wales 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. Policy 2 states: *“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.”*

Local Development Plan (LDP)

The Council is already implementing the principles of the Charter (refer below) through the LDP and the determining of planning applications.

Members will be aware that work will shortly commence on the Replacement LDP (RLDP) (2021-2036), within which the placemaking principles will be further embedded. The RLDP will be structured to reflect this. The new plan will be required to embrace placemaking as a central theme and this will be tested as a soundness issue at the plan’s Examination.

The principles of the Charter do not conflict with the policies and guidance adopted within the LDP, rather it complements them and highlights the main considerations in assessing any planning application.

Place-led proposals for major development sites are promoted through the Planning system, ensuring the creation of place is enshrined through the preparation of development brief’s and masterplans.

Placemaking should be at the heart of Town centre regeneration, and can help to implement potential ideas identified in the Urban Foundry Report: Rediscovering Our Towns – A Study for Neath Port Talbot Council (March 2021).

The Placemaking Charter

The Placemaking Charter, copied in Appendix 1, has been developed by WG and DCfW in collaboration with the Placemaking Wales Partnership, which is

made up of stakeholders representing a wide range of interests and organisations working within the built and natural environment.

The Charter reflects the collective and individual commitment of these organisations to support the development of high-quality places across Wales for the benefit of communities. To date, signatories to the Wales Placemaking Charter include:

- 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;
- Local Authorities (Newport City Council, City & County of Swansea, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority);
- Welsh Local Government Association; and
- National/regional house builders.

A full list of signatories is available on the link below, clearly demonstrating that placemaking is embraced and endorsed across the entire development industry: <http://dcfw.org/placemaking/placemaking-charter/>

The Charter includes six principles:

- **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 and leisure and other facilities are planned to help reduce the need to travel.
- **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.
- **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 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.

New detailed guidance has also been issued in the form of a Placemaking Guide 2020: <https://dcfw.org/wp-content/themes/dcfw-child/assets/PlacemakingGuideDigitalENG.pdf>

Becoming a Signatory

Signing up to the Charter will:

- Demonstrate that the Council embraces good design principles, and has commitment to Well-being of Future Generations Act principles in respect of the health and well-being of its communities and residents for the long term future.
- Emphasise to prospective developers the approaches that the Council will take at all stages of the planning process, giving greater clarity and certainty for all.
- Strengthen the commitment of planning in Wales to its principles.
- Help to further enhance the image of Neath Port Talbot as a forward-looking, progressive and inclusive authority, fully engaged in the improvement of its communities and environment.
- Not imply inevitable additional expense for developers: Good design more often just means doing things in different ways, and giving more thought to the local context. Furthermore, at the land acquisition stage, placemaking principles should not impact on development viability – matters that might imply additional expense for developers are largely already part of the planning and other regulatory requirements for sites (e.g. access arrangements, drainage/SuDS; open spaces; mix of uses and housing types/Affordable Housing etc.).

In signing the Placemaking Charter an organisation agrees to support placemaking in all relevant areas of work and to promote the six placemaking principles in the planning, design and management of new and existing places.

Once an organisation has agreed and signed the Charter, the name of the organisation will be added to the list of signatories on the Placemaking Wales partnership website and will be sent the Charter logo to use.

As a signatory to the Placemaking Charter, the Council pledges 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; and
- Value and respect the positive distinctive qualities and identity of existing places.

Implementing the Principles of the Placemaking Charter will also help to:

- Deliver the vision, objectives and principles of the Council's 'Corporate Plan' and 'Recovery Plan' as we move out of the pandemic; and
- Implement to Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board Well-being Plan: The Neath Port Talbot We Want 2018-2023.

Appendix 3 considers the compatibility of the placemaking charter with Other Council Strategies.

Financial Impacts

Compliance with the placemaking agenda, and being a signatory to the Charter, requires that the Council ensures its proposed schemes are elevated above 'placeless' and/or low quality developments. This inevitably requires an appropriate level of investment and financial commitment.

Notwithstanding this, provided that placemaking is addressed in a comprehensive manner at a suitably early stage of the development process, following the principles set out in the Charter will not necessitate any increase in costs being incurred by the Council on its development projects.

PPW underlines this by highlighting that *'Placemaking should not add additional cost to a development, but will require smart, multi-dimensional and*

innovative thinking to implement and should be considered at the earliest possible stage.'

Where placemaking is only addressed in a superficial manner, and/or at a late stage of the process, developers can run the risk of incurring unnecessary additional costs, such as those relating to re-design costs or 'retro-fitting' requirements to schemes that have been inappropriately advanced. Developers can seek to avoid the burden of such unnecessary costs however by adopting a pro-active and collaborative approach with the Council at an early stage of advancing development projects.

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

A first stage integrated impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The first stage assessment, attached at Appendix 2 has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required. A summary is included below.

- **Equalities** – The signing of the Placemaking Charter is part of a process intended to ensure that the planning process embodies consideration of equalities issues from the start and throughout the processes and procedures that govern its preparation and that the resulting developments are as far as possible planned to ensure that equalities issues are fully addressed.
- **Welsh Language** – The Placemaking Charter has been prepared in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1)) Regulations 2015 and the proposed consultation and its content embodies the principles of the regulations. The Charter will help to ensure that the development planning process also takes into account Welsh Language requirements in all aspects.
- **Biodiversity** – The endorsement of Placemaking principles should help to ensure that future development takes full account of all duties and requirements to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems.
- **Well-being of Future Generation (5 ways of Working)** – Placemaking and the Placemaking Charter fully embrace all five ways of working. The document positively integrates with the Council's well-being objectives; involves people and collaborates with partners in its development and implementation; and ultimately will help to address any foreseeable problems in planning future development.

Socio-Economic Duty

This report and the associated documents do not involve any strategic decision-making. Consideration of the Socio-Economic Duty is therefore not applicable in this case.

Placemaking does however add social, economic, environmental and cultural value to development proposals resulting in benefits which go beyond a physical development boundary and embed wider resilience into planning decisions.

Valleys Communities Impacts

Delivering on the principles of the Placemaking Charter would bring equal benefits across the whole of the County Borough.

Workforce Impacts

No implications.

Legal Impacts

No implications.

Risk Management Impacts

No implications.

Consultation

There is no requirement for external consultation on this matter.

Recommendations

That having considered the report and having due regard to the Integrated Impact Assessment, it is resolved to commend the following to Council for approval:

1. That the Council endorses the Placemaking Charter Wales; and
2. That authorisation is given to the Head of Planning and Public Protection to submit an application to the Placemaking Partnership for the Council to become a signatory to the Charter.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

To demonstrate that the Council embraces and is committed to delivering and promoting the six placemaking principles.

Implementation of Decision

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Placemaking Charter Wales

Appendix 2 – Integrated Impact Assessment First Stage

Appendix 3 – Compatibility of Placemaking Principles with Council Strategies

List of Background Papers

Legislation and Regulations:

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

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

Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Planning Policy / Guidance:

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040.

Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 (2021).

Neath Port Talbot LDP (2011-2026) (January 2016).

Placemaking Charter: <https://dcfw.org/placemaking/placemaking-charter/>

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APPENDIX 1 – Placemaking Charter Wales



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 these organisations to support the development of high-quality places across Wales for the benefit of communities.

In signing the Placemaking Wales Charter I/my organisation agree to support placemaking in all relevant areas of my/our 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 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 and 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 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.



APPENDIX 2 – Integrated Impact Assessment First Stage

1. Details of the initiative

Initiative description and summary: Signing of the Placemaking Charter Wales
Service Area: Planning Policy, Planning and Public Protection
Directorate: Environment and Regeneration

2. Does the initiative affect:

	Yes	No
Service users	✓	
Staff	✓	
Wider community	✓	
Internal administrative process only		✓

3. Does the initiative impact on people because of their:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't Know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence)/How might it impact?
Age		✓				The Placemaking Charter sets out principles to be applied in the planning of development. The principles adopted could potentially affect any residents but the Charter is specifically intended to help ensure that no individual group will be impacted differently because of their particular characteristics.
Disability		✓				
Gender Reassignment		✓				
Marriage/Civil Partnership		✓				
Pregnancy/Maternity		✓				
Race		✓				
Religion/Belief		✓				
Sex		✓				
Sexual orientation		✓				

4. Does the initiative impact on:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't Know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence)/ How might it impact?
People's opportunities to use the Welsh language			✓			The Placemaking Charter is a document published in English and Welsh and will not in itself have a significant impact on people's opportunities to use the Welsh Language.
Treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English		✓				As above. This is embodied in the legislation and guidance controlling the parameters of public documents of this nature and is checked and confirmed by the Welsh Government.

5. Does the initiative impact on biodiversity:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence) / How might it impact?
To maintain and enhance biodiversity	✓					The signing of the Placemaking Charter should ultimately have a small positive impact on the maintenance and/or enhancement of biodiversity since it would indicate the Council's intention to implement good placemaking principles, including maintaining and enhancing biodiversity.
To promote the resilience of ecosystems, i.e. supporting protection of the wider environment, such as air quality, flood alleviation, etc.	✓					As above, endorsement of the Placemaking Charter principles should have a small positive impact on the effects of development on the resilience of ecosystems.

6. Does the initiative embrace the sustainable development principle (5 ways of working):

	Yes	No	Details
Long term - how the initiative supports the long term well-being of people	✓		The Placemaking Charter is concerned with the promotion of Placemaking to ensure that well-being principles are embodied in developments that will create permanent environments for the future.

Integration - how the initiative impacts upon our wellbeing objectives	✓		Placemaking principles embody the need to integrate all the well-being objectives in the development process to ensure and require that the new development proposals fully integrated with all other relevant plans, initiatives and strategies, working towards the same objectives.
Involvement - how people have been involved in developing the initiative	✓		The Placemaking Charter initiative has been developed by the Welsh Government in full consultation with all interested parties. This report seeks to agree the Council's endorsement and signing of the Charter to ensure that involvement principles will be embodied in development planning at all stages.
Collaboration - how we have worked with other services/organisations to find shared sustainable solutions	✓		The signing of the Placemaking Charter underlines the Council's intention to fully embrace collaboration principles at all stages of the development planning process including organisations from the public, private and community/voluntary sectors.
Prevention - how the initiative will prevent problems occurring or getting worse	✓		The public commitment to embrace placemaking principles that the signing of the Charter demonstrates will serve to ensure that the principles are fully built in to the Council's approach to development planning to fully and fundamentally ensure that, as far as possible, future problems are prevented from occurring and existing problems are addressed if possible or at the least not exacerbated or otherwise worsened.

7. Declaration - based on above assessment (tick as appropriate)

A full impact assessment (second stage) is not required	✓
Reasons for this conclusion	
<p>Equalities – The signing of the Placemaking Charter is part of a process intended to ensure that the planning process embodies consideration of equalities issues from the start and throughout the processes and procedures that govern its preparation and that the resulting developments are as far as possible planned to ensure that equalities issues are fully addressed.</p> <p>Welsh Language – The Placemaking Charter has been prepared in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1)) Regulations 2015 and the proposed consultation and its content embodies the principles of the regulations. The Charter will help to ensure that the development planning process also takes into account Welsh Language requirements in all aspects.</p> <p>Biodiversity – The endorsement of Placemaking principles should help to ensure that future development takes full account of all duties and requirements to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems.</p> <p>Well-being of Future Generation (5 ways of Working) – Placemaking and the Placemaking Charter fully embrace all five ways of</p>	

working. The document positively integrates with the Council's well-being objectives; involves people and collaborates with partners in its development and implementation; and ultimately will help to address any foreseeable problems in planning future development.

	Name	Position	Date
Completed by	Lana Beynon	Planning Policy Manager	13 th August 2021
Signed off by	Ceri Morris	Head of Planning and Public Protection	15 th August 2021

APPENDIX 3

Compatibility of Placemaking Principles with Council Strategies

NPT Well-being Plan

- Objective 1: Support children in their early years, especially children at risk of adverse childhood experiences;
- Objective 2: Create safe, confident and resilient communities, focusing on vulnerable people;
- Objective 3: Put more life into our later years - Ageing Well;
- Objective 4: Promote well-being through work and in the workplace;
- Objective 5: Value our green infrastructure and the contribution it makes to our Well-being;
- Objective 6: Tackle digital exclusion.

There is nothing in the Placemaking Charter that would be incompatible with the NPT Well-being objectives, and it would specifically support and help to deliver objectives 2 and 5 in particular.

NPT Biodiversity Duty Plan

- Objective 1: Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels;
- Objective 2: Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management;
- Objective 3: Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation;
- Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats;
- Objective 5: Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring;
- Objective 6: Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery.

The application of placemaking principles would need to take into account biodiversity principles and objectives. The Placemaking Charter would not alter this.

NPT Digital Strategy

- Priority 1: Transforming the way we deliver our functions/services and increasing use of the Council's online functions/services by residents;
- Priority 2: Contributing to the development of favourable conditions for economic growth in the county borough;

- Priority 3: Embracing a “digital first” approach to the way we support our workforce

Nothing in the Placemaking Charter is incompatible with these priorities.

NPT Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy (DARE) Strategy

Objectives:

- To take a coordinated approach across the Council to introduce a variety of measures to reduce the Council’s own carbon emissions whilst carrying out its business.
- To reduce energy consumption or where reduction is not possible, to use fuel sources that are less harmful to the environment.
- To address any barriers to the development of renewable energy across the County Borough and to promote the sustainable and appropriate use of renewable resources.
- To maximise opportunities for carbon sequestration and minimise carbon release through the appropriate management of our natural resources.
- To work with all our partners and local businesses on joint actions, to share good practice, maximise assets and encourage the adoption of a similar approach.
- To raise awareness so that our employees and the public can understand the options for and benefits of the choices that can be made.
- To maximise the benefits of Welsh Government funding opportunities.

Nothing in the Placemaking Charter is incompatible with these objectives.