



Report of the Cabinet Member for Delivery and Operations

Extraordinary Council – 2 March 2021

To Agree that Swansea Council Should Become a Signatory to The Placemaking Charter

Purpose:	To seek endorsement from Members that Swansea Council becomes a signatory to the Placemaking Charter
Policy Framework:	Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; City & County of Swansea Local Development Plan (2019); Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; Planning (Wales) Act 2015; Planning Policy Wales, 2018;
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) The Placemaking Charter Wales is endorsed and Swansea Council becomes a signatory of the Charter
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Placemaking is 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, and its multi-disciplinary requirements align well with the Council's collaborative 'One Swansea' approach.

- 1.2 Swansea Council's Planning Authority is acknowledged as being at the vanguard of the placemaking approach in Wales. The Council adopted the Swansea Local Development Plan (LDP) in 2019, which has been highlighted as an exemplar development plan that embeds placemaking into strategic planning decision making. It is interwoven as a guiding principle throughout the Plan, including Policy PS 2 'Placemaking and Place Management' which underpins Development Management decisions at all scales.
- 1.3 The Council has also published planning guidance that sets out the key placemaking principles against which development proposals are assessed, and is consulting on a new suite of Placemaking Guidance document for residential development at all scales.
- 1.4 Alongside adoption of the LDP and the production of planning guidance, the Planning Authority has continued to drive forward transformational, place-led proposals, for major development sites across the County. This has included processing and negotiating major planning applications for a number of residential-led, strategic sites that will deliver new neighbourhoods and many thousands of new homes, alongside a range of community facilities and complementary uses. Placemaking has also been at the heart of city centre regeneration, including the transformative Copr Bay (Swansea Central) project. The principle remains of course just as relevant for smaller scale development, as the themes involved seek to ensure all new development contributes positively as far as possible to the creation of place.
- 1.5 Swansea's leadership of the placemaking agenda has been acknowledged by the Royal Town Planning Institute, with the Swansea LDP being a shortlisted finalist for the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence 2020, and also by virtue of the Design Commission featuring the Council's Planning Authority within the Placemaking Charter Launch.

2. Background and Context

- 2.1 Planning Policy Wales sets out the Welsh Government 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)

- 2.2 Placemaking is defined in Planning Policy Wales 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”.

(Planning Policy Wales p16)

- 2.3 Placemaking has also been emphasised as the dominant theme in the recently published Building Better Places, which the Welsh Government 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.”

(Page 2 Forward by Julie James)

3. Placemaking Charter Wales

- 3.1 The Placemaking Wales Charter was launched in September 2020 by Julie James, Minister for Housing and Local Government.
- 3.2 The Charter has been developed by Welsh Government and the Design Commission for Wales 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.
- 3.3 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, Welsh Local Government Association and national/regional house builders. This clearly demonstrates that Placemaking is embraced and endorsed across the entire development industry. The charter is summarized below in paragraph 3.3 and a copy attached as Appendix 1.

3.4 **Placemaking Wales Charter signatories 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. What this means for Swansea

4.1 As a signatory to the Placemaking Charter this is a 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.

4.2 Swansea Council is already addressing and delivering many of these outcomes as evidenced by the nature of work being undertaken on projects as diverse as Copr Bay (Swansea Central), the 21st Century Schools program, the 'More Homes' program, and public realm enhancements such as The Kingsway, Wind Street and Castle Square. Such work involves commitments across a wide range of departments, all of whom have a role to play in ensuring that new development and supporting infrastructure are informed by placemaking objectives.

4.3 The pledges of the Placemaking Charter are closely aligned to the Stated outcomes of Swansea: Achieving Better Together, namely to promote and/or deliver:

- Resilient and thriving communities which share responsibility for improving their areas and supporting each other
- Happy, safe and healthy people, with solid networks of support, who feel in control of their personal circumstances and aspirations
- A strong, diverse and adaptable economy which makes the most of Swansea's and South Wales rich assets and provides meaningful opportunities for local people
- Great places to live, work and visit with outstanding schools, diverse cultural opportunities, transport connections that keep things moving and a healthy environment for all
- High quality public services that work together and alongside communities to deliver services that meet people's needs

4.4 Furthermore, the Council's Corporate Plan sets values and principles that align with the Placemaking Charter:

"We will take a 'Team Swansea' approach, working as a whole-Council to ensure that every service can play a part in contributing to our well-being objectives and that we share resources and expertise. The needs of our residents and the major challenges facing Swansea can only be tackled through productive partnerships, greater integration of our services and pooling of resources."

(p7 Corporate Plan)

4.5 It is evident that the principles of the Placemaking Charter Wales are aligned with the Council's corporate priorities and the 'One Swansea' approach, and that the Charter is complementary to the focus on project delivery and positive development that enhances communities and the economy. 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.

5. Equality and Engagement Implications

5.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above.

- 5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has been undertaken and identifies mostly low impacts. The results of the screening are set out in Appendix B of this Report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 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. 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 can be suitably addressed using 'everyday' materials, utilised in a careful and creative manner. The Council in any event sets itself high standards in this regard, and has emphasised its commitment to advancing its schemes in compliance with requirements set by national policy and legislation. 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." It is clear that the Council's development projects, ranging from the More Homes program to the transformational Copr Bay scheme, are already fully embracing the principles of the Charter including the necessary financial requirements.
- 6.2 Placemaking draws in considerations of whole life costs and whole place costs. Whilst in some cases a proposed Council project could require a higher capital cost for a certain element in order to align with placemaking requirements, over the medium and longer term, the maintenance, society and well-being costs associated with that element may not be greater, and could actually be reduced. A cost/benefit analysis is always undertaken by the Council to assess the appropriate levels of investment at relevant stages of a scheme. Such matters can apply in the case of infrastructure

provision, such as requirements for a street design that delivers multi-functional benefits, including Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs) and enhanced biodiversity. Such requirements are nonetheless enshrined in legislation and policy (such as 'Future Wales' and the Environment Act), and so embracing the placemaking principles in the Charter provides the Council with a mechanism to meet these requirements.

- 6.3 Developers active within Swansea are increasingly already embracing the placemaking approach, given it has been established as a central theme of national and local policy for some time. Many have welcomed the potential for this approach to create places that can in some instances raise the overall development value of a scheme being delivered. There do however also remain concerns within the industry about the potential for increased costs arising in some instances relating to placemaking requirements, particularly if this is combined with other potential cost pressures such as new building regulations and planning obligation payments that can also be required to make a development acceptable. Matters relating to the financial viability of proposals are important to recognise and address with developers. In this regard there are established mechanisms in place to assess the financial viability of proposed schemes to help determine whether the delivery of sites would be unacceptably undermined by requirements, such as required planning contributions. 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 with the Council at an early stage of advancing development projects.
- 6.4 Future stages of the Charter are expected to include the provision of relevant training, the sharing of good practice and the creation of guidance and resources on specific aspects of placemaking

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Placemaking requirement is already embedded into the national and local planning agendas.
- 7.2 Signing of the Placemaking Charter is a statement of intent that Swansea Council will embrace placemaking in all service areas at all scales.
- 7.3 Planning Policy Wales along with the redrafting of the National Development Framework 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 in line with the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

7.4 The Placemaking Charter will need to comply with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards Regulations (No.1) 2015

Background Papers:

Planning Policy Wales, 2018

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-02/planning-policy-wales-edition-10.pdf>

Placemaking Charter web site 2020

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

Appendices:

Appendix A Placemaking Charter

Appendix B Equalities Impact Assessment Screening

Appendix A Placemaking 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 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.

