

PLACEMAKING IN WALES

Learning from Wales Planning Award winners
demonstrating aspects of good placemaking

**RTPI
Practice
Advice**

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FOREWORD

The Planning profession has often played a secondary role to others in the built environment in respect of placemaking.

This Practice Advice Note provides some excellent case studies to show that planners can be extremely influential in setting the context and driving successful place outcomes. The interdisciplinary understanding and training of planners is often not fully appreciated; nor is our willingness to work with other specialists to seek good place outcomes. This is core to what we do. No project exists in isolation and our understanding of context to a site is key. This may be physical, social, cultural or environmental. As a planning profession this is integral to our work.

In addition, the need to consider and drive climate mitigation in our built environment through a holistic appreciation of place has never been more important. Taking a local approach to transportation, energy supply, provision of green infrastructure and public realm is vital to give our places an identity and sense of community. In this respect this collection of exemplar projects makes a significant contribution to articulating 'what good looks like' and I hope it will assist in giving practical expression to the aims of the Placemaking Wales Charter.

Simon Power MRTPI
Chair RTPI Cymru



Creu Lleodedd Cymru
Placemaking Wales

Introduction

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 10 (December 2018) puts placemaking at the heart of planning policy in Wales, delivering the aspirations of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015.

“‘Placemaking’ is a holistic approach to the planning and design of development and spaces, focused on positive outcomes”

Planning Policy Wales Edition 10

The [Placemaking Wales Charter](#) has been developed in collaboration with the multi-disciplinary Placemaking Wales Partnership, comprising stakeholders representing a wide range of interests involved with placemaking in Wales. The Charter reflects the collective and individual commitment of these organisations, including the RTPI, to support the development of high-quality places across Wales for the benefit of communities. The Charter promotes the following principles in planning our places: **people and community, location, movement, mix of uses, public realm, and identity.**

“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 Edition 10

The RTPI celebrates outstanding projects that demonstrate the power of planning and place making through our awards. This collection of projects from the RTPI’s Wales Planning Award from across Wales reflects the diversity of planning achievements, whether in urban or rural areas, large or small in scale, involving new development, regeneration or conservation. These case studies have been selected to draw out the six aspects of placemaking identified through the Placemaking Wales Charter. They highlight how planning and planners work to create sustainable places for us to live, work and enjoy and the importance of placemaking and partnership working.

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.”

Placemaking Wales Charter 2020

The Jennings, Porthcawl

This well-known but under-used Grade II listed building was redeveloped to provide a restaurant, cafe and live work units, forming an active hub at Porthcawl seafront. The aim was to bring this building back into active use for local people and visitors alike and it is now a catalyst for further regeneration of the area.



There was significant pre application discussion between the Local Planning Authority (Bridgend) and Cadw. Porthcawl Civic Trust provided an important source of local knowledge and were instrumental to ensuring the integrity of the building was maintained. They were also influential in ensuring residents and businesses were informed of the proposals as they progressed, which enabled a smooth relationship between the listed building consent and the planning application process.

By using community engagement to inform the project, a heritage building was brought back into sustainable use in a way that keeps their future use flexible.

Ysgol Craig y Deryn, Snowdonia

Falling pupil numbers in local primary schools prompted a re-organisation of schools in Gwynedd, involving the closure of four primary schools and the construction of a new, larger school on the edge of the village of Llanegryn. The new the school was seen as providing long-term stability for the education of children of the area through the medium of Welsh and providing community facilities to adults and children alike.



The project posed the challenge of siting a large building into the sensitive landscape of the Snowdonia National Park, whilst at the same time ensuring that the character of the village was safeguarded. A collaborative approach was adopted with Gwynedd Council as the client, the design team of architects, engineers, landscape architects and ecologists and Snowdonia National Park Authority as the Local Planning Authority.

The design and choice of materials were successfully integrated into the setting which embraced the low rise of the slate roofed village and the mountains in the distance.

One of the opportunities presented by the project was to incorporate modern technologies to achieve substantial energy savings, including solar heating, rainwater harvesting and biomass heating contribute to this aim. It is estimated that the building produces about 10% of the CO² emissions produced by the former schools. The scheme achieved its BREEAM Excellent and EPC “A” rating.

Despite the contentious background of the project, the quality of the facilities provided by the school have proved to be an overwhelming success. It sought to reinforce a sense of place, social well-being and the linguistic heritage of the local area through a range of effective learning environments and community resources to benefit and sustain future generations.

Rhyl High School, Rhyl

This project was not just about providing a replacement fit for purpose building for the high school and co locating it with the nearby special educational needs school, but was also about improving the pupils' life chances and generating confidence within the local community about its future.

The nature and extent of the consultation process ensured community ownership of the building. Together with its well thought through design, it achieves its aim of providing a place of inspiration and learning for the community.



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.”

Placemaking Wales Charter 2020

Merritor site, Cwmbran

This regeneration of a contaminated brownfield site for a mixed use employment led scheme included a foodstore, designed to function as an edge of centre store whilst providing physical and visual integration with Cwmbran town centre and a remediated area with outline consent for the development of offices, hotel with ancillary pub/restaurant, car parking and public realm. The scheme involved a holistic approach to the site to retain factory employment and to support the important town centre.



The scheme aimed to promote behavioural change by providing substantially better links to the town centre and railway station.

Flint Walks Housing Scheme, Flintshire



Flint Walks involved the replacement of 1950s maisonettes with 92 council-built, affordable, energy efficient homes in the heart of Flint on a brownfield site which had been unattractive to the private market without substantial subsidy. A key feature of the scheme is that it has resulted in the integration of the site into Flint town centre when previously it had provided a negative physical barrier between the town and locations beyond the site.

Permeability was key to the community, who asked for a wide open link to the town, so that the housing area became part of the town and not a physical barrier, as in the past. The scheme matured as a result of involvement rather than consultation, reflected in the fact that no planning objections were received from the community at the planning application stage.

The outcome has resulted in a reinvigorated sense of place and sense of community at this location. Residents now respect this area and feel safe, as a result of the design and layout of the scheme, borne from the early discussions between the developer and the planners.

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.”

Placemaking Wales Charter 2020

Yr Ysgwrn, Snowdonia National Park

This project was to conserve and develop Yr Ysgwrn, home of Hedd Wyn, into a sustainable visitor destination. Hedd Wyn, one of Wales' most well-known poets, was killed at the Battle of Passchendaele and was subsequently awarded the bardic chair at the National Eisteddfod 1917.

The challenge was to conserve the existing site and its listed building, its historic and cultural significance and its remarkable sense of place, while developing a visitor experience as well as providing a home for the family to remain and continue to farm. The development involved adaptation of the original home, provision of a new car park, a new agricultural barn and the removal of a modern barn and extension from Yr Ysgwrn.



There was a strong involvement of both Cadw and planners, from start to finish, with considerable work prior to the final submission of the listed building consent and planning application. This included engagement with the family, local community and businesses with regard to the various options.

This is an excellent example of rural diversification and mixed use, combining traditional with modern, whilst in a National Park setting with historic / cultural and modern day agriculture, working side by side.

The National Lido of Wales, Pontypridd



The National Lido of Wales, along with the adjacent flagship play area, is a project among a suite of planning and regeneration interventions aimed at enhancing the role of Pontypridd in the Capital City Region. The project involved the restoration of a derelict Grade II listed 1920's lido into a regional visitor attraction, which in turn would contribute to the enhancement of the neighbouring park and Pontypridd town centre.

The scheme has expertly balanced sympathetic restoration and conservation alongside stylish

and contemporary new build in an art deco style. It has restored and preserved a unique part of Britain's heritage, and opened it up for a new generation to enjoy and experience, and is the only fully operational lido in Wales.

Caeau Mynydd Mawr Special Area of Conservation: Supplementary Planning Guidance and Marsh Fritillary Project, Carmarthenshire

The project manages the impacts of development in the Cross Hands Economic Growth Area on the Marsh Fritillary butterfly, one of the features of the [Caeau Mynydd Mawr Special Area of Conservation](#) (SAC), which is situated within the growth area.

The project provides a structured solution for developers wishing to develop land in the area as it delivers the necessary mitigation required in order that each development is compliant with the legislation. It secures the long term management of the marshy grassland habitat on which the Marsh Fritillary butterfly depends, and for which the Caeau Mynydd Mawr SAC has been designated.



Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) was adopted which provided a clear framework for setting charges for sums against development to provide resilience to the habitat supporting the Marsh Fritillary. The approach provides a proven methodology where development and habitat conservation need to work side by side.

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.”

Placemaking Wales Charter 2020

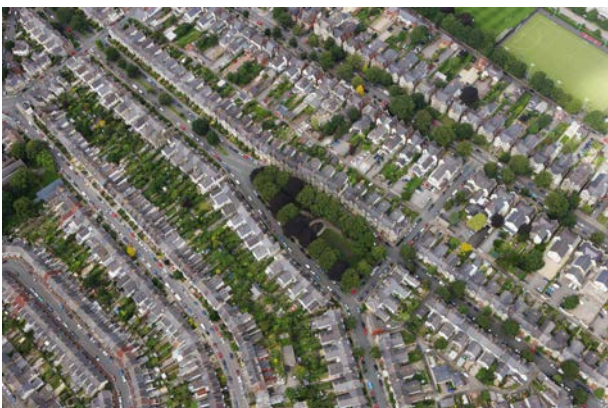
Blaenau Ffestiniog Town Centre

Investment in the public realm turned around Blaenau Ffestiniog town centre which has been in a spiral of decline. A cross-professional team designed and implemented a high quality public realm scheme, informed by extensive community engagement.

The project used traditional materials in an informed and imaginative contemporary manner to deliver striking public realm that celebrates the history and culture of the slate quarrying town of Blaenau Ffestiniog, creating a distinct sense of place and increased social cohesion and stimulated economic growth.



Tree Cover in Urban Wales Study



The [Tree Cover in Urban Wales](#) study, by Natural Resources Wales is a national study reporting on the extent of tree canopy cover for all of Wales.

The connection with trees' beneficial role to urban society is reinforced through the report. Demonstrating the economic benefits through creating attractive towns, encouraging inward investment, helping retail areas perform better, and providing a cost effective and sustainable alternative to grey infrastructure.

It illustrates the benefits to society through increased community cohesion, opportunities for exercise and connection with nature and, by providing inviting and attractive places this leads to lower levels of crime. It also highlights the role many tree species play in removing pollutants and emphasises the need for more trees along transport corridors, given that much of Wales' particulate pollution occurs along highways.

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.”

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The Pumphouse, Barry



The Pump House is a Grade II Listed Building built in the 1880s and previously formed part of Barry's historic dock complex providing hydraulic power to operate coal drops, lock gates, swing bridges and other equipment around the docks. Listed in 1992, it was disused for many years but remains an important local landmark with its imposing 42 metre high chimney, and is one of the few hydraulic pump house buildings which remain in Wales.

The scheme involved the conversion of the pump house to provide a mix of uses including a cafe, restaurant, 24-hour gym and 15 live/work spaces, creating a vibrant development for this part of the regeneration in Barry.

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.”

Placemaking Wales Charter 2020

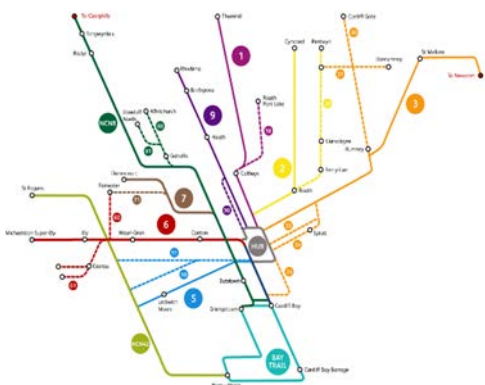
Porth Teigr, Cardiff Bay

Porth Teigr is part of the successful regeneration of Cardiff Bay, reuniting Cardiff with its historic waterfront. The comprehensive master plan adopts an imaginative approach to regenerating a formerly derelict and contaminated brownfield site. In particular, it delivers economic and social benefits by minimising travel demand. It supports sustainable transport through new site linkages, lower car parking provision, green travel plans and public transport revenue support.



The development of Porth Teigr has successfully addressed a number of key issues, including sustainable travel and providing initial public transport revenue support alongside establishing high quality links for non-private car users.

Strategic Cycle Network Plan for Cardiff



The Strategic Cycle Network Plan for Cardiff has been developed to ensure future investments in cycling are coherent and of a consistently high standard.

The network plans were developed in response to the recognition that there are huge opportunities to improve cycling in Cardiff.

The Strategic Cycle Network promotes sustainable social development, providing an attractive alternative to the private car and is encouraging the uptake of sustainable forms of transport for more everyday journeys, tackling congestion, delay and reducing transports contribution to air pollution and transport noise.



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