

Placemaking Review Report

Carmarthenshire Placemaking Strategies

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Meeting of 15th July 2026



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Key Points

- The three Placemaking Strategies provide a strong foundation for future placemaking activity across Ammanford, Carmarthen and Llanelli and demonstrate a clear commitment to the Placemaking Wales Charter.
- A clear vision or set of ambitions for each town would help communicate their distinctive identity and future direction.
- Clear visual communication and presentation would strengthen the strategies, helping readers understand the key messages and proposed actions.
- Each strategy would benefit from a single integrated spatial framework that brings together the six placemaking principles and clearly shows how the principal routes, spaces, uses and development opportunities combine to support the vision.
- Greater emphasis should be given to creating a plan for implementation, prioritisation and early actions to maintain momentum, support delivery and avoid becoming a wish list.
- Continued engagement, collaboration and refinement of the strategies is encouraged as implementation progresses.
- An online Placemaking Plan dashboard would give each town a clear, accessible and regularly updated way to communicate priorities, responsibilities, funding and delivery progress, helping maintain public trust, partner coordination and momentum.

Consultations to Date

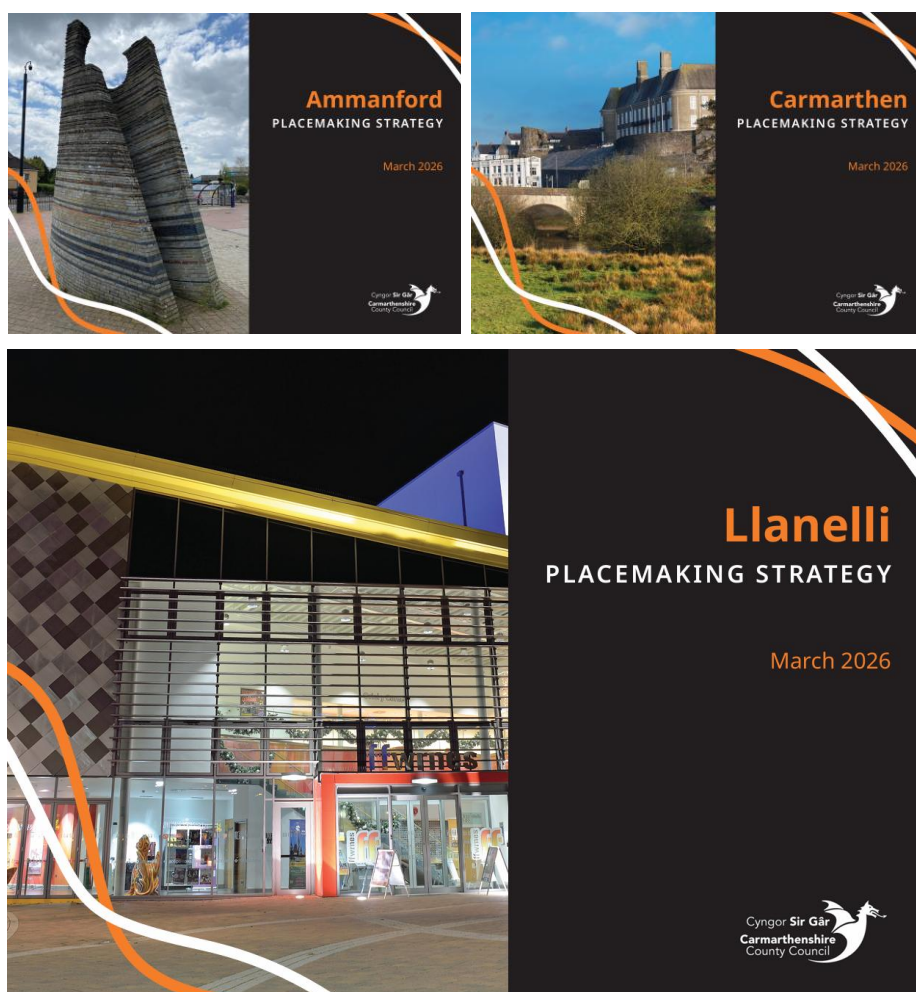
Carmarthenshire County Council sought feedback on the emerging Placemaking Strategies for Ammanford, Carmarthen and Llanelli. This was the first engagement with the Design Commission on the draft strategies and the review considered the strategic direction of the documents, their effectiveness as placemaking frameworks and their ability to support future decision-making, investment and delivery. The review took place at an advanced stage in the preparation of the strategies, providing an opportunity to inform their final refinement prior to publication.

The Proposal

The material reviewed comprised Placemaking Strategies for Ammanford, Carmarthen and Llanelli. Developed through engagement with communities and stakeholders, the strategies are structured around the six Placemaking Wales Charter principles and identify the issues, opportunities and actions that will help inform the future development of each town. They are intended to support collaboration between partners, guide future investment and provide a framework for the delivery of placemaking projects over time.

Context

The strategies relate to the three primary towns of Ammanford, Carmarthen and Llanelli, each of which play an important role as a centre for services, employment, retail and community life within Carmarthenshire. While each town has its own distinct character, opportunities and challenges, all are responding to changing patterns of town centre activity, evolving economic and social conditions, and the need to support sustainable growth and regeneration. The strategies seek to respond to these issues while recognising the individual identity and aspirations of each town.



Emerging Placemaking Strategies for Ammanford, Carmarthen and Llanelli

Main Points

The three Placemaking Strategies represent a significant piece of work and provide a valuable foundation for future placemaking activity in Ammanford, Carmarthen and Llanelli. The commitment to the Placemaking Wales Charter throughout the documents is welcomed, together with the extensive engagement that has informed the strategies. The following comments focus on opportunities to strengthen the strategies to support their implementation and maximise their long-term impact.

Vision

There is an opportunity to strengthen the overall direction of the strategies by developing a clear vision or set of ambitions for each town.

A concise vision could communicate the distinctive qualities of each place, the principal challenges and opportunities, and the longer-term ambitions for the towns, bringing together the various themes into a clear and coherent direction for future change. This does not need to be lengthy and could be presented through a simple diagram or infographic that draws together the key messages from across the document. A strong narrative would also help explain not only what actions are proposed, but why they are important and how they contribute towards the future of the towns.

The vision should remain rooted in the individual characteristics of each settlement, reinforcing what makes each town distinctive and providing a clear reference point for future decision-making and investment.

Integrated Spatial Framework

Alongside topic-based diagrams, each strategy would benefit from a single integrated spatial framework showing how movement, public realm, land use, green infrastructure, identity and key development opportunities relate to one another. This would help the six placemaking principles to be understood as mutually reinforcing rather than separate workstreams, and provide a clear basis for prioritisation, investment and future project briefs.

Implementation

The intention to prepare both public-facing strategies and more detailed internal delivery documents is welcomed and provides an appropriate distinction between communicating the strategy and managing implementation.

The published strategies would nevertheless benefit from a clearer explanation of how they will be implemented. Rather than presenting a comprehensive list of projects, greater

emphasis should be given to identifying priorities, highlighting early actions and explaining how projects will be sequenced over time.

A concise implementation section within the published documents could identify immediate actions, early opportunities and key delivery partners, whilst recognising that a more detailed action plan will continue to evolve. This would help maintain momentum, provide greater transparency and reinforce confidence that the strategies are intended to drive change rather than simply identifying projects.

Where projects are led by organisations other than the Council, these should be presented positively as collaborative opportunities, clearly identifying the organisations and partnerships that will be important to successful delivery. These are currently indicated in red which suggests they are difficult or less likely to happen when in fact they could be a great catalyst for change by other organisations.

Identifying a small number of early interventions or quick wins that reinforce the distinctive identity of each town would help demonstrate progress, maintain stakeholder confidence and build momentum for the longer-term ambitions of the strategies.

Communication and Presentation

The strategies contain a considerable amount of valuable information but would benefit from being presented more visually.

Greater use of diagrams, mapping, infographics and visual summaries would help communicate the key messages more effectively and ensure important information and priorities are not lost within the text.

The layout and structure of the reports would benefit from refinement to help readers understand the relationship between context, analysis, priorities and proposed actions. This would also strengthen the overall narrative, allowing each section to build progressively from understanding the place, to identifying opportunities, before concluding with priorities for change.

Consideration should be given to making it clear where photographs are of the towns and where they illustrate broader aspirations. We also encourage reviewing the colours used to differentiate the actions and using formatting, such as bold text, to draw attention to key interventions and actions.

Analysis

The strategies are informed by a comprehensive programme of engagement that captured valuable local knowledge and experience. This provides an important foundation for understanding how people perceive each town.

There is an opportunity to complement this qualitative evidence with additional factual information where appropriate. Greater distinction between community perceptions and supporting evidence would strengthen the overall case for future interventions and help demonstrate why particular actions have been prioritised.

Some additional evidence may need to be identified as the next stage of work rather than delaying publication of the strategies. Information relating to movement, parking, development capacity, housing need, demographic change and wider socio-economic conditions could all strengthen the strategies and provide a more robust evidence base for future delivery. Presenting this information visually would also help establish a stronger context for the proposed actions.

Collaboration

Successful implementation will depend upon maintaining strong relationships with communities, businesses and partner organisations beyond the publication of the strategies. Continued collaboration should therefore become an integral part of the delivery process, enabling projects to evolve through ongoing dialogue and shared ownership.

Further engagement with younger people is encouraged, alongside opportunities for temporary interventions, testing and experimentation that can inform longer-term projects while maintaining community involvement. Greater emphasis could also be given to explaining the role of delivery partners and demonstrating how organisations, businesses and communities can contribute to delivering the ambitions of the strategies.

Future Development

These strategies provide an important starting point and we recognise that there is more work planned to support their implementation. As projects progress there will be opportunities to strengthen the evidence base, refine priorities and develop more detailed proposals for individual towns and projects.

These strategies should be viewed as the beginning of an ongoing placemaking process rather than a completed piece of work. As implementation progresses there will be opportunities to strengthen the evidence base, refine priorities, track and celebrate

progress, and continue engaging communities and partners in shaping the future of each town.

Town-Specific Observations

Ammanford

The strategy provides a strong understanding of Ammanford's compact centre, independent businesses, Welsh language and cultural identity, together with the opportunities presented by the Cross, Quay Street, the Arcade, College Street, the railway station and the park.

The next stage provides an opportunity to develop a stronger place-specific vision, supported by a single integrated spatial framework that demonstrates how these assets can be reconnected to create a more walkable, active and distinctive town centre.

The breadth of proposed actions demonstrates ambition, although a smaller number of priorities and clearly identified quick wins would provide greater focus and help build confidence in delivery.

Overall, the strategy provides a robust understanding of the town and a strong foundation for future work. The principal challenge is to reconnect its existing assets and establish a clearer sense of direction, moving from engagement and analysis towards implementation.

Carmarthen

The strategy outlines Carmarthen's placemaking challenges and opportunities, including supportive community engagement and principle-based action plans to create sustainable, vibrant urban spaces in the town. These elements depend heavily on one another, so the proposed town centre health check tool to measure progress will be fundamental to supporting and evidencing this collaboration.

The next stage needs to develop a rationale for prioritising and directly addressing the issues and opportunities identified across the principles, and to translate this into a cohesive plan with clear examples and aspirational visions for each project. This will make it clear which actions are immediately viable (e.g. new seating in Nott/Guildhall Sq.) and have direct physical impact, whilst others inform management plans (e.g. a destination public realm programme) and have an indirect impact on placemaking initiatives.

Overall, the strategy provides a strong foundation for creating a sustainable, vibrant, and inclusive town centre that reflects Carmarthen's unique identity, supports community wellbeing, and adapts to evolving economic and social trends.

Llanelli

The strategy recognises Llanelli's distinctive assets, including its coastal setting, cultural offer, town centre and market, providing a strong foundation for future placemaking and regeneration.

The next stage provides an opportunity to develop a stronger place-specific vision and integrated spatial framework that better demonstrates how these assets can reinforce Llanelli's identity and support future investment.

Greater emphasis should be given to identifying a small number of quick wins that celebrate Llanelli's distinctive character, alongside further evidence gathering to support the detailed development of future projects. Additional photography and visual examples would also help communicate the ambitions of the strategy more effectively.

Overall, the strategy provides a comprehensive understanding of Llanelli's opportunities and challenges. The principal opportunity is to build upon the town's distinctive coastal location and cultural identity, establishing clearer priorities and moving from analysis towards delivery.

Next Steps

We would welcome further engagement as the strategies move into implementation, particularly through Design Review of individual projects as proposals emerge. We would also welcome the opportunity to comment on future Placemaking Strategies for other towns across Carmarthenshire. Early engagement is encouraged to maximise the value of Design Review and help inform proposals as they develop.

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A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.

Attendees

Client: Tessa Bufton, Carmarthenshire County Council
Stuart Walters, Carmarthenshire County Council

Project Team: Ben Reynolds, Urban Foundry

DCFW Design Review Panel

Chair: Jen Heal, DCFW Chief Executive

Panel: Amanda Spence
Gareth Howell
Felicity Barbur, DCFW Design Lead
Max Hampton, DCFW Design Advisor

Declarations of Interest

Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare ***in advance*** any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review and meeting Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

It was noted that Urban Foundry has undertaken work for the Design Commission for Wales. The declaration was noted and all were content to proceed.