

Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	11 February 2025
<b>Report Subject</b>	Place Making Plans update.
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cabinet Member for Economy, Environment and Climate
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy)
<b>Type of Report</b>	Operational

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Since December 2022, work has been led by the Council's Regeneration team to progress the development and completion of the first tranche of Place Making Plans. Work has also been underway to develop the initial stages of tranche two and three and to deliver projects in the town centres. This report outlines the current stages of completion for each of the seven plans and highlights positive engagement from residents and partner organisations to date in the development process.

Welsh Government's expectation is that Place Making Plans take a broad approach to increasing the vibrancy of our towns. The Council has worked with external stakeholders to create long-term visions, identify local needs and establish priorities that respond to the needs of each town. The Place Making Plans will improve the well-being and quality of life of residents, increase attractiveness to local people, visitors and investors and help to boost the overall economic vitality of each town.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1	Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review and note the progress made in developing Place Making Plans.
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**REPORT DETAILS**

<b>1.00</b>	<b>Explaining the Place Making Plan process and progress</b>
	<u>Background</u>

1.01	<p>In 2020 Welsh Government launched its “Town Centres First” policy to help breathe new life into town centres by locating services and buildings in town centres wherever possible. It subsequently launched a national £90 million ‘Transforming Towns’ investment package and encouraged the public sector to support towns through delivering regeneration activity which aims to increase footfall and create or sustain vibrancy.</p>
1.02	<p>In May 2022 Welsh Government asked local to develop Place Making Plans and provided a framework to inform this work. As part of this, Welsh Government confirmed that the award of future Transforming Town Place Making Grants would be conditional based on Place Making Plans being developed and locally approved. Welsh Government’s guidance suggests Place Making Plans should include a vision for each town, bring together a range of existing plans and strategies, and be informed by local engagement, consultation and a range of data and statistics to evidence local need.</p>
1.03	<p>At its meeting in October 2022, Cabinet approved seven Flintshire towns that Place Making Plans should be developed for, to be brought forward in three separate tranches:</p> <p>Tranche 1: Buckley, Holywell and Shotton  Tranche 2: Connah’s Quay and Queensferry  Tranche 3: Flint and Mold.</p> <p>This report provides an update on the process and on the progress made towards developing the seven Place Making Plans in advance of the first two completed Place Making Plans being presented in March 2025 to Scrutiny for review and to Cabinet for approval.</p>
	<p><u>Process and progress</u></p>
1.04	<p>The development of each Place Making Plan involves an eight-stage approach as outlined below.</p>

Stage	Programme of work
1	Review of statistical information, complete range of audits, assessments and site visit(s)
2	Design and undertake public consultation – phase 1 (online and in person)
3	Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis of consultation findings
4	Creation of draft Place Making Plan
5	Stakeholder consultation on draft Plan – internal and external to the Council
6	Design and undertake public consultation – phase 2 (online and in person)
7	Analysis of feedback and complete Place Making Plan and Executive Summary
8	Finalisation of Place Making Plan – ready for submission to Scrutiny for review and Cabinet for approval
1.05	<p>The draft Place Making Plans have been informed and shaped by consultation and dialogue with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Over 9,500 online responses to the public consultation using ‘Give My View’ platform (nine campaigns: seven towns at first stage consultation, and two towns at second stage consultation).</li> <li>2. 302 in-person consultation responses from events held in each of the seven towns.</li> <li>3. Regular meetings of multi-agency officer working groups to ensure that the developing plans are suitable wide-reaching in the scope and prioritisation.</li> <li>4. Engagement and participation of colleagues from a range of Council portfolios/ service areas including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Policy</li> <li>• Streetscene and Transportation</li> <li>• Regeneration</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Youth &amp; Inclusion</li> <li>• Social Care</li> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Housing Strategy</li> <li>• Finance</li> <li>• Valuation &amp; Estates</li> <li>• Communications/ Governance</li> <li>• Business Development</li> <li>• Access &amp; Natural Environment</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

5. Engagement and participation of colleagues from over 20 external organisations including:
- North Wales Police and Crime Commissioners Office
  - Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
  - Natural Resources Wales
  - Design Commission for Wales
  - Welsh Government
  - Actif North Wales
  - AURA
  - Federation of Small Businesses
  - Flintshire Local Voluntary Council
  - Age & Dementia Friendly Group
  - Theatr Clwyd
  - NHS Wales, Public Health Board
  - Town Councils
  - Greenfield Valley Trust
  - Buckley Working Group
  - Multiple Churches and Faith Groups
  - Commissioned external consultants / field experts

1.06 In line with the Cabinet approval in October 2022 the Place Making Plans are being developed in tranches to reflect the availability of resources. Progress towards the development of the plans is set out below.

Schedule of work agreed by FCC Cabinet	Town	Stage of completion	Status/Progress.
Tranche 1	Shotton	8	Shotton Place Making Plan: work is complete to Stage 8. Final Plan now completed and ready for consideration by FCC and partner organisations.  To be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in March 2025.
	Holywell	8	Holywell Place Making Plan: Public consultation completed – findings being used to shape final version and Executive Summary.  To be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in March 2025.
	Buckley	6	Buckley Place Making Plan: Public consultation at design stage – to be completed by end January 2025.  Expected to be considered by Overview

				and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in May 2025.
	Tranche 2	Connah's Quay	5	Stages 1-3 completed. External funds secured to fund external Placemaking consultant to develop Plan. Consultant procured, work underway. Expected to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in October 2025
		Queens-ferry	5	Stages 1-3 completed. External funds secured to fund external Placemaking consultant to develop Plan. Consultant procured, work underway. Stage expected to be completed by mid-May 2025. Expected to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in October 2025.
	Tranche 3	Flint	3	Stages 1-3 completed. Stage 4 to commence from May/June 2025. Expected to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in April 2026.
		Mold	3	Stages 1-3 completed. Stage 4 to commence from June/July 2025. Expected to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in April 2026.
1.07	The Place Making Plans will create a long-term vision which will require a broad mix of projects and actions to be implemented to achieve them. Each Plan will be supplemented by an action plan to reflect available resources (revenue and capital) and the action planning process will identify key partners, funding sources, resources, timescales. Funding within the Council and amongst partner organisations will undoubtedly limit the amount of financial resource available to implement the plans, but at the same time will result in them being realistic in terms of what can be delivered.			
	<u>Town centre regeneration projects</u>			
1.08	Alongside the development of the seven Place Making Plans, the Council has a wider work programme which includes a broad range of projects across the seven town centres in Flintshire.			

	<p>The projects delivered reflect the emerging priorities of the Place Making Plans and include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Environmental improvements and green infrastructure development.</li> <li>2. Improvements to the physical appearance of the built environment.</li> <li>3. Renovating and bringing buildings back into active use.</li> <li>4. Facilitating the development of community-run facilities in town centres.</li> <li>5. Facilitating community-run activities and events in town centres.</li> <li>6. Undertaking feasibility work to enable future projects to progress in the development journey.</li> </ol>
1.09	<p>A summary of the current regeneration work programme is attached in Appendix 1. This work programme summary includes projects for which external funding totalling £4,702,711 has already been secured and outlines a further £.1 million to be sought from external funding sources for 2025-26</p>

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	<p>To date, the development of the Place Making Plans has been supported by £168,065 from the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund and Welsh Government Transforming Towns programmes. This has covered the cost of Place Making Plan development activity in full. Further WG revenue funding will be sought in April 2025 to fund the remaining activity to be delivered in 2025-26 financial year.</p>
2.02	<p>The current wider regeneration programme of work, together with individual project costs (capital and revenue) and funding sources is detailed in Appendix 1.</p>
2.03	<p>The staff team to deliver the Council's regeneration programme is almost entirely funded through past grant funding and a Council Invest to Save allocation of £148,144, supplemented by additional income from external funding when it can be secured. Since 2021, over £4.7m has been secured by the team to deliver the regeneration programme, a return on investment of £31.73 for every £1 spent.</p>

<b>3.00</b>	<b>IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
3.01	<p><b>Capacity</b></p> <p>The regeneration team comprises six officers. The workload connected to the development of seven Place Making Plan development is considerable, especially given this is being delivered alongside the wider Regeneration work programme. The sequencing of Place Making Plans being developed in tranches enables work to progress alongside project delivery and implementation of externally funded regeneration projects and activities.</p> <p>The risk of insufficient officer resource and being reliant upon external funding to fund staff posts is documented in the Council strategic risk register.</p>

	<p><b>Capital and revenue resources</b></p> <p>There is expected to be a mismatch between the scale of need identified in the emerging Place Making Plans and the availability of resources to address them.</p> <p>The main Welsh Government Transforming Towns capital programme has funded a range of investment activities in town centre across Flintshire in 2024-25, further details about projects are outlined in Appendix 1. Further Transforming Towns funding for will continue to be available to local authorities from April 2025. The funding available in North Wales remains small (£8m per annum for six counties) and is highly likely to be oversubscribed. However, Welsh Government are eager to see Place Making Plans inform and set the context for future town centre investment and may make further funding available.</p> <p>In addition, £1,542,000 was secured through the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund to deliver the ‘Town Centre Investment Programme’ between July 2023 and March 2025. Further funds albeit on a smaller scale (anticipated £500,000) are likely to be available through the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund Transition Programme for 2025-26. The Council’s Regeneration Team aim to apply for further funds to support ongoing place making and regeneration activity in 2025-26. The Council will need match funding or loan repayment funding in order to make full use of these opportunities.</p> <p>The Council’s long-term capital strategy includes the need to make investments in the town centres but does not, at this point, quantify this or identify specific proposals.</p> <p><b>Political</b></p> <p>Resources will not allow the Council to do everything everywhere and viable property interventions will not be present in every town. Managing expectations will be key in the process, particularly given that over 9,500 local people have already participated in consultation as part of the Place Making Plan development process. Interventions that change the form and function of towns may not always be popular locally. Where significant change is proposed then the development of local action plans and masterplans allow for extensive local consultation and discussion on options.</p>
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<b>4.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT</b>
4.01	<p>Multiple engagement and consultation activities have been carried out for each Place Making Plan developed involving the general public, partner organisations, and internal officers across the Council. This has resulted over 9500 responses to date from a range of activity undertaken, as follows</p> <p>Stage 1 Consultation: before the Place Making Plan was developed including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give My View online public consultation</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21 individual in-person consultation events (3 per town)</li> <li>• Engagement and consultation with 20 stakeholder organisations</li> <li>• Engagement with 23 local school children</li> <li>• 6 meetings each of the ‘People’s Group’ and ‘Places Group’.</li> <li>• Age and Dementia friendly audit</li> <li>• Meeting with local Members to present data findings from online consultation/ initial emerging priorities.</li> </ul> <p>Stage 2 Consultation – after the Place Making Plan was developed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give My View online public consultation.</li> <li>• Week-long consultation exhibition/ in person events.</li> <li>• 1 joint meeting of both the ‘People’s Group’ and ‘Places Group’.</li> <li>• Town Council: one-off meeting, followed up by written feedback.</li> <li>• Draft Plans shared with local elected Members.</li> </ul>
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<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix 1: Current Regeneration Work Programme.

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	<b>1. Further reading about Placemaking in Wales:</b> <a href="https://dcfw.org/placemaking/">https://dcfw.org/placemaking/</a>

<b>7.00</b>	<b>CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS</b>
7.01	<b>Contact Officer:</b> Karen Whitney-Lang, Regeneration Manager <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 702141 (English) / 01267 224923 (Welsh) <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:karen.whitney-lang@flintshire.gov.uk">karen.whitney-lang@flintshire.gov.uk</a>

<b>8.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b> <b>These are provided corporately on the Infonet (link) and maintained by the Executive Office</b>
	<p><b>Place Making Plan</b> - a plan that sets out a long-term vision for a place typically developed using robust evidence including data, consultation findings and visual assessments of a place. The aims of a Place Making Plan is to identify priorities for how the place can be improved to deliver multiple benefits to the local population, economy and environment.</p> <p><b>Give My View</b> – an online platform supplied by external supplier in partnership with Flintshire County Council which was used to engage and</p>



consult (survey) local people as part of the Place Making Plan development programme.

**Welsh Government Transforming Towns** – a funding programme currently worth £8million per annum in North Wales, designed to support investment in town centres across Wales as part of the implementation of Welsh Government's 'Towns Centre First' policy.

**Welsh Government's Town Centre First Policy** – a cross government policy that aims to tackle vacant premises, combatting dereliction and breathing new life into town centres across Wales.

**Shared Prosperity Fund** – a £2.6 billion investment fund from UK Government distributed to projects via regional lead bodies and local authorities for investment across the UK between 2023 and 2025.

**Shared Prosperity Fund Transition Programme** – a £900 million UK government funding programme for 2025-26 to be distributed across local authorities in the UK, to follow on from previous investment made between 2023 and 2025.