BUCKLEY PLACE MAKING PLAN

place making
FLINTSHIRE

rl.
Roberts Limbrick

chris
jones

Flintshire County Council

This document has been prepared by :

Chris Jones
Regeneration

15 Nevill Street
Abergavenny
Monmouthshire
NP7 5AA

chris@chrisjones.studio
T: 01873 880666
M: 07968943084

Roberts Limbrick
Architects

1 Gold Tops
Newport
NP20 4PG

mail@robertslimbrick.com

0333 405 500

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01:
PURPOSE

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A PLACEMAKING PLAN?

The purpose of this Place Making Plan is to set out the needs, vision, approach and opportunities framework that will help plan and deliver place-based activity and investment in Buckley. Buckley is one of seven towns across the County that includes, Buckley, Connah's Quay, Flint, Holywell, Mold, Queensferry and Shotton.
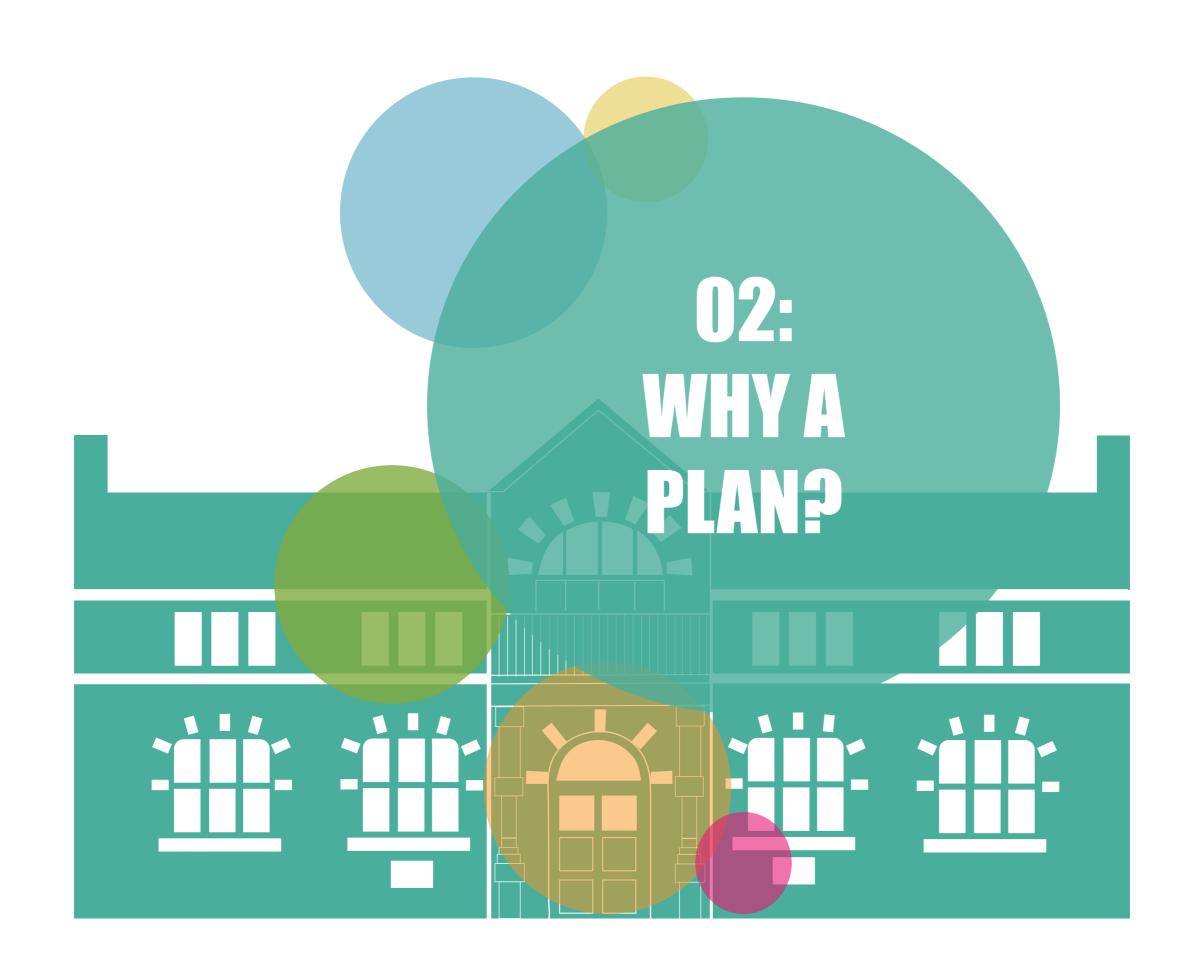
This Place Making Plan helps to draw out and identify local need, thereby providing evidence to strategic delivery organisations in aligning day to day services, in addition to levering in grant funding for future regeneration projects. It also sets out ways of working that bridges strategic-local partnering that helps foster joint project development, delivery and the longer term sustainability of a town such as Buckley.

02:
WHY A PLAN?

WHAT IS PLACEMAKING?

Planning Policy Wales states that placemaking is:

"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."

The Design Commission for Wales Placemaking Guide 2020 talks about the need for a holistic approach that takes into consideration whole places rather than individual land uses or each development in isolation. The concept of placemaking has developed in response to 'placelessness' within the

built environment whereby new development lacks a distinct identity, character, sense of community or collective ownership. Placemaking has grown in importance as the links with health and wellbeing have been more explicitly explored and understood.

How Does a Plan Support Good Placemaking?

Whilst a Placemaking Plan is not the sole solution to managing change and providing direction to a town like Buckley, it is important to frame long term aspirations and to also nourish relationships between the place, the people, and the activities. The goal here is to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. A long-term strategy and plan also ensure practical issues have been considered and the design of the space is able to accommodate the likely range of end uses required. A Plan is also about creating a place and not just about design as its about creating and developing an experience that people feel welcome and comfortable in.

Long-term placemaking activities should be developed in consultation with the community as they are the local experts who can present valuable perspectives and insights about the area's history, culture, function, or any other aspect that's considered meaningful for the people.

The Requirement

In May 2022, Welsh Government (WG) placed a requirement on Local Authorities across Wales to develop Place Making Plans in line with the Design Commission for Wales' six Place Making principles: https://dcfw.org/placemaking.

Place Making Plans are expected to be deliverable, reviewed regularly and include a shared vision for each town centre through a thorough process of engaging and consulting a wide range of stakeholders resulting in:

- An identification of issues that each place is experiencing including an exploration of broader issues such as transport, active travel, green infrastructure, housing, and health.
- An analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the town centre and its performance.
- Establishment of baseline data for the town centre.
- Identification of a clear boundary identifying the core town centre as well as the periphery of the town.
- Alignment with other local and regional plans, strategies, and priorities.
- An understanding of issues such as level of retail provision and potential for refocussing a more concentrated offer/ repurposing town centre premises where appropriate.

In response to WG's request for Place Making Plans, Flintshire County Council's Regeneration Team has developed and agreed an approach to co-ordinating the development of Place Making Plans for 7 towns across the County: Buckley, Connah's Quay, Flint, Holywell, Mold, Queensferry and Shotton. A schedule has been agreed with Flintshire County Council's (FCC's) Cabinet to undertake the work for the 7 Place Making Plans in 3 separate tranches, the first of which focuses on the towns of Buckley, Holywell and Shotton in 2023-24. Between January 2025 and March 2026, Place Making Plans will be developed for towns in tranche two of the work programme (towns of Connah's Quay and Queensferry) and tranche three (towns of Flint and Mold).

– Land uses
– Pedestrian flow
– Behaviour patterns
– Noise and smell
– Vehicle flow

Activity

Physical setting

Sense of place

– Townscape
– Built form
– Permeability
– Landscape
– Furniture

Meaning

– Legibility
– Cultural associations
– Perceived functions, attractions
– Qualitative assessments

Image from DCFW

Strategic Planning

Architecture

Community Involvement

Masterplanning

Public Realm Design

Placemaking

Landscape Architecture

Street Design/ Highway Engineering

Urban Design

Public Art

Place Programming /Events

Image from DCFW

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03: OUR PLACEMAKING PROCESS
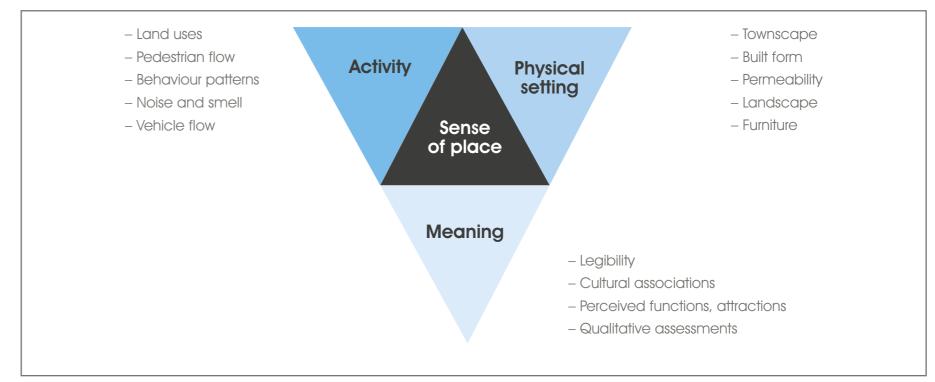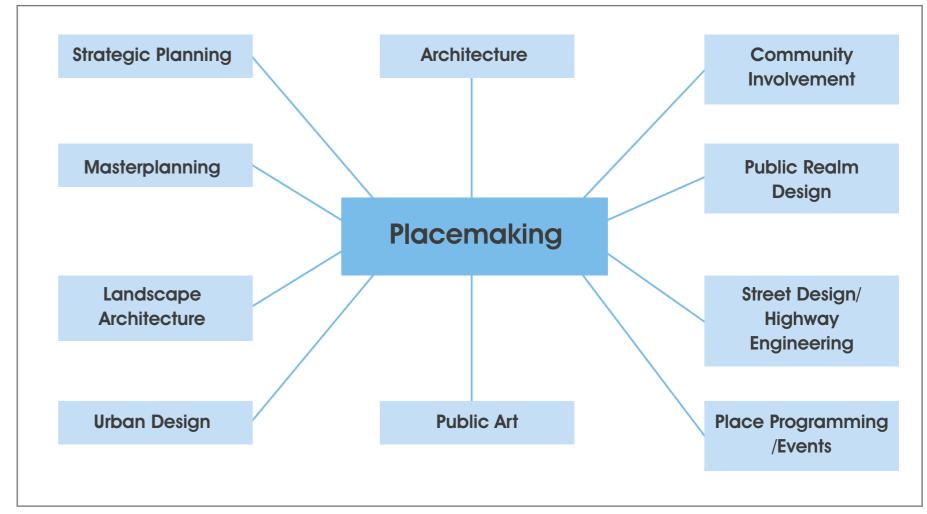
OUR PLACEMAKING PROCESS

Flintshire's Place Making Process has adopted an approach of investing in desk-based work that has gathered information from a diversity of experts in commercial, property, environmental quality, socioeconomic analysis and with specific input on green infrastructure. The County Council with local partners has also led on stakeholder and community consultation, using a blend of face-to-face and digital engagement in order to ensure the right amount and cross-section of views is obtained.

This collective approach to its research into Buckley as a place has then been distilled into a Place Making Plan, which has responded to the needs of the place, arriving at its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Treats (SWOT) analysis, key themes for consideration leading into a place specific vision, a set of aims and objectives and an opportunities framework. This framework provides the direction of travel for taking opportunities into actions going forward alongside strategic and local partners signing up to co-delivery and partnership working.

Stage 1 - Gathering Information and Data

- **Commercial Assessment**
- **Environmental Quality Assessment**
- **Socio-Economic Review**
- **Green Infrastructure Audit**

Stage 2 - Listening to Community and Stakeholder Views

- **Public Consultation**
- **Stakeholder Consultation**
- **Research into Perceptions of Buckley**

Stage 3 - Shaping the Place Making Plan Vision, Priorities and Framework

- **Policy and Strategy Review**
- **Place Analysis**
- **People Analysis**
- **SWOT and Themes**
- **Vision, Aims and Objectives**
- **Opportunities Framework**
- **Visualising Success**
- **Ways of Working**

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04: UNDERSTANDING THE PLACE
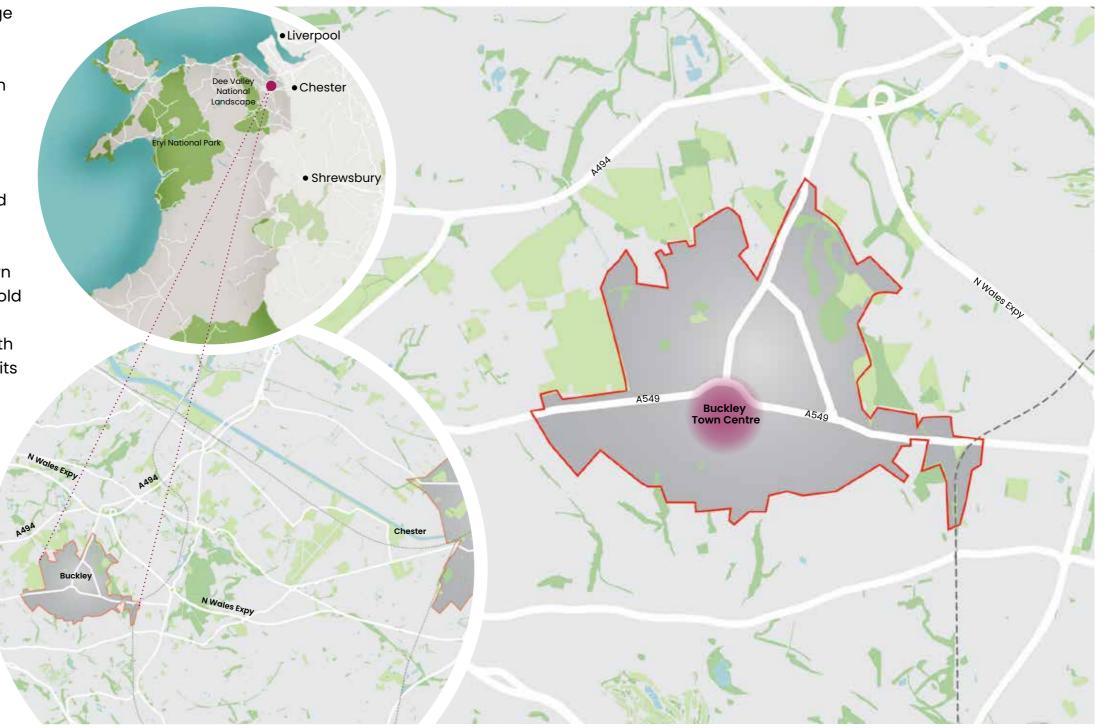
BUCKLEY- UNDERSTANDING THE PLACE

Buckley is located towards the eastern edge of Flintshire, close to the Wales/England border. It is a relatively self-contained settlement bounded by the A494 and North Wales Expressway. The junction between these two roads sits just to the north of the town.

Locally, the town sits just to the east of Mold and southern end of Deeside. Wrexham is also only 10 miles to the south of the town. The A549 runs through the heart of the town and connects at either end to the A494 (Mold Bypass) and North Wales Expressway. This affords the town excellent road links to north west England and North Wales. The town sits approximately 10 miles from Chester and around 25 miles from Liverpool, the main employment, leisure and services of the area.

Buckley town centre sits at the centre of the town and has a range of services and facilities to meet the day-to-day needs of residents. The south of the town is mainly residential whereas the north has more of a mix of uses. Large Commons and parks break up the residential areas and are interspersed with leisure, school and employment uses.

THE HISTORY OF BUCKLEY

Buckley is situated in the east of Flintshire on the range of hills that extends between the valley of the River Alyn and the narrow plain beside the Dee Estuary. Buckley has been a settlement since the Bronze Age and was gifted to Catherine of Valois by her husband King Henry V as a wedding present. The town grew duri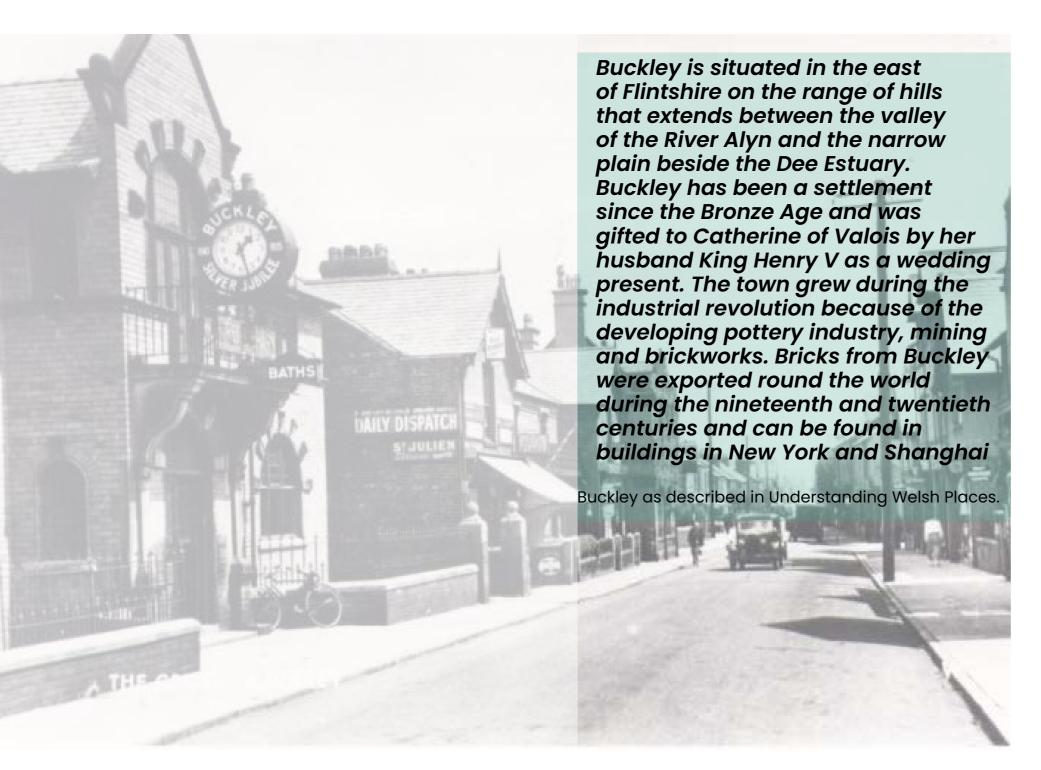ng the industrial revolution because of the developing pottery industry, mining and brickworks. Bricks from Buckley were exported round the world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and can be found in buildings in New York and Shanghai

Buckley as described in Understanding Welsh Places.

Historic development, Heritage & Culture

The town came to prominence during the 19th century and the Industrial Revolution around the mining of coal and clay and related industries. It is around this time that Buckley grew, and its main population was established, with people moving here from Ireland and nearby Liverpool. A historical map from 1898 shows the recognisable (now) A549, the high street and today's The Precinct Way.

Buckley has a proud history and heritage. The local library accommodates a local history museum on its upper floor, which hosts a few interpretation boards outlining the history of the town. Others can be found just outside the Buckley Shopping Centre entrance.

The Buckley Town Council building and its adjoining Old Library building are both exquisite examples of civic Victorian architecture. They are located within the extension of the high street but not within the semi-pedestrianised zone and therefore feel disconnected from the main high street public realm. Buckley's Church of St Matthews is the oldest parish, consecrated in 1822, located to the north east of the town and close to The Commons, Buckley's main park. The Church is a Grade II* listed building.

THE HISTORY OF BUCKLEY

The Tivoli is a key landmark in the cultural heritage of the town, as a nightclub that has hosted and continues to host many popular bands for gigs and concerts. The building dates back to the early 20th century and was formerly a cinema and music hall. It was refurbished in 2000 but its external facade now shows signs of wear. It continues to attract crowds from larger towns and cities such as Chester, Wrexham, Manchester and Liverpool.
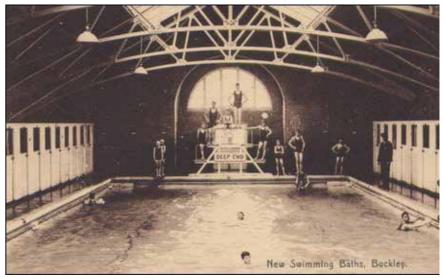
The above mentioned buildings are part of a number of listed buildings in Buckley. The list comprises:

• Buckley Town Council Offices and Library (the facade of which is Grade II listed), in the centre of Buckley

• St Matthew's Church (Grade II* listed), located in the NE of Buckley

• Lynch Gate to St Matthew's Church (Grade II listed)

• Emmanuel Church (Grade II listed), situated to the east of the town centre high street

• The Tivoli (Grade II listed), located to the west of the town centre high street

• Hawkesbury Hall (Grade II listed), located south of The Common, near Mill Lane

Also of note, supporting the town's identity, is the Royal Buckley Town Band established in 1822. The Band has won many awards both locally and nationally.

New Swimming Baths, Buckley.

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POLICY LANDSCAPE AND SETTING

NATIONAL

Well-being of Future Generations Act

Planning Policy Wales 2024

Wales Transport Strategy 2008

Active Travel Wales 2013

Future Wales – the National Plan 2040

Placemaking Guide 2020

Town Centres Position Statement 2023

REGIONAL

North Wales Economic Ambition Board Growth Vision

North Wales Regeneration Plan 2018-2035

People Strategy and Plan Stronger Together BCUHB

Actif North Wales 10 Year Strategy 2023-2033

LOCAL

Council Plan 2022-23

Well Being Plan 2022-23

Climate Change Strategy 2022-30

Supporting Nature in Flintshire

Flintshire Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2019-24

Flintshire Local Development Plan 2015-2030

Old Buckley Baths Feasibility Scoping Study Update

Buckley Investment Strategy, 2017

Buckley Town Centre Discussion Paper, 2015

Buckley Town Centre Masterplan, 2011

The policy setting for a place such as Buckley is important as it shows the relationships to national, regional and local agendas, providing strategic direction and alignment. It also shows the strategic opportunities and limitations to a place and its development.

NATIONAL

Well-being of Future Generations Act

The Well-being of Future Generations Act places a duty on public bodies to carry out sustainable development.

This is not a new concept for the planning system, as the principles of sustainable development have been at the heart of planning policy since Planning Policy Wales (PPW) was first published in 2002. However, the concept has been expanded under the Well-being Act and it requires an improvement in the delivery of all four aspects of well-being: social, economic, environmental and cultural.

The Well-being Act has established seven well-being goals, which are intended to shape the work of all public bodies in Wales.

In order to demonstrate that appropriate consideration has been given to the Well-being goals and sustainable development principle in the decision making process, public bodies are required to have regard to the 'five ways of working' contained in the Well-being Act. These require consideration of involvement; collaboration; integration; prevention; and long-term factors.

Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 – February 2024

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. It is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs), Welsh Government Circulars, and policy clarification letters, which together with PPW provide the national planning policy framework for Wales. PPW, the TANs1, MTANs2 and policy clarification letters comprise national planning policy. The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation and resultant duties such as the Socio-economic Duty.

Everyone engaged with or operating within the planning system in Wales must embrace the concept of placemaking in both plan making and development management decisions in order to achieve the creation of sustainable places and improve the well-being of communities. Sustainable Places are the goal of the land use planning system in Wales; they are the output of the planning system rather than the process of achieving them. All development decisions, either through development plans policy choices or individual development
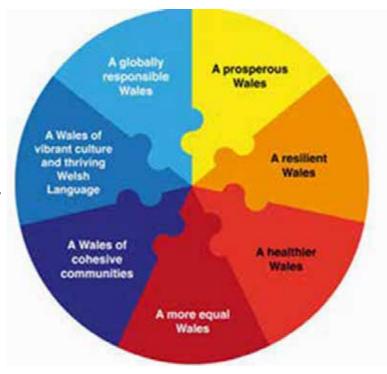
management decisions should seek to contribute towards the making of sustainable places and improved well-being. The planning system should create sustainable places which are attractive, sociable, accessible, active, secure, welcoming, healthy and friendly. Individual places can take many forms and interpretation of what makes a good place will vary. Each place will have its own unique characteristics, history and identity, based on how people have and will interact with the landscape and townscape. This 'sense of place' varies, from the rural countryside, which provides an economic and environmental base for agriculture and tourism to thrive, to urban areas which are continually evolving and providing the focus for major social and economic development. The intrinsic value of a place to people or communities is particularly important, which may be due to aesthetic, cultural, spiritual or historical reasons and planning authorities are best placed to understand these.

What is Placemaking?

PPW defines "placemaking" 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.

Town Centres – Retail and Commercial Development

The Welsh Government identifies a number of overarching objectives for retail and commercial centres, which planning authorities should aim to deliver through their development plan and development management decisions ensuring their maximum contribution to the well-being goals. The planning system must:

- Promote viable urban and rural retail and commercial centres as the most sustainable locations to live, work, shop, socialise and conduct business;

- Sustain and enhance retail and commercial centres' vibrancy, viability and attractiveness; and;

- Improve access to, and within, retail and commercial centres by all modes of transport, prioritising walking, cycling and public transport.

Retail and commercial centres are central to community activity and local prosperity and, in order to plan for them effectively, it is important to understand their function, roles and relationships. The use of masterplans, development briefs or place plans can complement retail strategies by providing additional detail and supporting the implementation of development plan policies. In developing strategies, plans and policies to revitalise and increase the attractiveness of existing retail and commercial centres, planning authorities should consult the private sector and local communities.

Wales Transport Strategy

The Wales Transport Strategy provides the framework for transport related activities and sets out the strategic priorities of a safe, integrated, sustainable, efficient and economic transport system serving Wales. It provides the context for the Welsh Government's aim to reduce the need to travel, particularly by private car, and supports a modal shift to walking, cycling and public transport. This is reflected in Planning Policy Wales and Future Wales, which put placemaking at the heart of the planning system. This modal shift is supported by the sustainable transport hierarchy, which prioritises walking, cycling and public transport.

The current Wales Transport Strategy, 'One Wales: Connecting the Nation', was published in 2008. Since then, the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 has been introduced, which is increasingly influential in the way we integrate active travel with new development. This is essential to enable people to walk and cycle as part of their everyday activities. Metro schemes are also being developed in the Southeast, Southwest and the North, which are being driven by significant investment from the Welsh Government and its delivery partners. The metro projects will provide significant opportunities for communities and new development to be supported by good quality public transport. Transport technologies have also advanced significantly in recent years, with ultra-low emission vehicles capable of having a transformative effect on the decarbonisation of transport. The Wales Transport Strategy, Llwybr Newydd, will recognise these changes and set out our long-term vision for transport. Llwybr Newydd, along with the associated transport policies and projects, have directly contributed to the spatial strategy, outcomes and policies of Future Wales.

Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013

Walking and Cycling have gained support when the Welsh Assembly passed the Active Travel (Wales) Act, that received royal assent in November 2013. The Act places a number of duties on the local authorities to continuously improve new and existing facilities and routes for walkers and cyclists and to prepare maps identifying current and potential future routes for their use. The Act also requires new road schemes to consider the needs of pedestrians and cyclists at planning and design stages. The active travel network should be designed or enhanced to meet a set of best practice standards. The Welsh Government has published guidance:

- The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 - Design Guidance;

- Satautory Guidance for the Delivery of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013;

- The Active Travel Action Plan

Future Wales – the National Plan 2040

Future Wales – the National Plan 2040 is our national development framework, setting the direction for development in Wales to 2040. It is a development plan with a strategy for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, achieving decarbonisation and climate-resilience, developing strong ecosystems and improving the health and well-being of our communities.

Area Statements – Natural Resources Wales

Area Statements produced by Natural Resources Wales in accordance with their duties under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, set out a strategy for the better management of Natural Resources for the benefit of future generations. As the name suggests, the statements are based on spatial areas.

There are seven covering Wales, of which four cover the National Park area.

- South East Wales

- South Central Wales

- South West Wales

- Mid Wales

State of Natural Resources Report (2020) (SoNaRR)

Natural Resources Wales must prepare and publish a report containing an assessment of the State of Natural Resources in Wales (SoNaRR). SoNaRR is a key document in the preparation of National Park Management Plans. The most recent SoNaRR highlights the need for public sectors to leverage change to tackle the nature and climate emergencies using transformative change across ecosystem, economic and social systems.

Environment Act 2016 Part 1 Sustainable Management of Natural resources and Part 2 Climate Change

Natural resources are essential for the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. They enhance the quality of the places where we live, work and visit and provide the landscapes and biodiversity that make these areas special.

Natural resources that are healthy and thriving are also healthier for people, their communities and for the economy, but demands on our natural resources are increasing. If we don't act now to manage our natural resources sustainably, there will be serious consequences that affect us all. We need to change the way we do things so that we continue to benefit from our natural resources now and in the future.

The Environment Act helps us meet this challenge by introducing the sustainable management of natural resources as a new approach which ensures that the way in which the use of and the impacts on our natural resources do not result in their long-term decline. We have learnt from the experiences of our international partners and are using international best practice by for example, implementing the UN Convention on Biological Diversity ecosystem approach, to help Wales lead the way on Sustainable Development. Our aim is to sustainably manage our natural resources in a way and at a rate that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations and which contribute to the seven well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Part 1 of the Act- S6 Biodiversity Duty requires public authorities to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote resilient ecosystems. To comply with this duty, public authorities are required to embed consideration of biodiversity and ecosystems into policies, plans, programmes and projects. Complying with the S6 duty will help maximise contributions to the Well-being goals. The Welsh government has published the following guidance:

- Action Plan for Pollinators in Wales 2013
- Action Plan for Pollinators Review 2013-2018 Future Actions action-plan-for-pollinators- review-and-future-actions-en.pdf (gov.wales)
- The Nature Recovery Action Plan 2015
- Natural Resources Wales 2017
- Future Wales the National Plan 2040

Placemaking Guide 2020 – Design Commission for Wales (DCFW)

The DCFW guide is aimed at everyone involved in creating successful places including the local community, urban designers, planners, architects, landscape architects, developers, transport planners, highway engineers and ecologists amongst others. All professions and all individuals involved in planning, designing, developing or managing places need to work together at all stages towards a common placemaking agenda. It is recognised that the nature of places varies across Wales, that rural hamlets are different to town centres and that a woodland can be as much of a place as an urban square. The focus of this guide is on settlements at all scales and locations undergoing change or new development.

The theory of understanding place commonly attributes the following key components which should be addressed to achieve good places and effective placemaking:

Activity

The activities that occur in the place supported by land uses, pedestrian and cycle movement, play and social life within the public realm and events.

Physical Form

The physical setting that makes up the place including the townscape, built form, landscape, topography, ecology, microclimate and public realm.

Meaning

The unique features of a place including the context, identity of existing places, unique sense of place, significant built and natural features, cultural associations, sensory experiences, safety and inclusiveness and sense of belonging.

Areas that place-making needs to consider are:

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 of the placemaking process. 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.

Town centres: position statement, May 2023, Welsh Government

In May 2023, Welsh Government set out the challenges faced by town centres and how they will help to reinvigorate them.

The statement opens by saying that town centres face complex challenges which are sometimes unique to specific places. However, most of the issues faced by struggling towns in Wales can be defined by the combination of the declining town centre and post-1980 out of town development. We need to recognise the complexity of these problems and work together in all sectors across the country to reinvigorate our town centres. This statement sets out the challenges faced by towns as well as the actions the Welsh Government will take to set the foundations for change and enable local delivery to develop our town centres as locations for a range of services, economic enterprise, employment and to be connected communities.

The challenges faced by town centres are identified as:

- Movement of services from town centres to out of town

- Business model issues

- Out of town locations reinforced by private car dependency

- Climate and nature emergencies

- Local capacity to deliver

The position statement outlined some Welsh Government Actions.

Town centre first policies

The withdrawal of public sector organisations and businesses has contributed to the decline of town centres. The strategic location or relocation of these anchor institutions into town centres will generate increased footfall and consumer spend to support a resilient retail sector as well as creating demand for other services. This will make towns more attractive to inward investment as well as to existing and new businesses.

Policies for out of town and their connectivity to town centres

The basic aim of any policy related to out of town development must be to encourage financial advantage and development opportunities towards the town centre, or to ensure out of town developments are socially and spatially connected to town centres. However, this cannot mean the

large-scale demolition or redevelopment of out of town developments, which is neither desirable nor environmentally responsible.

Joined up delivery

As well as the challenges set out above, each town will also be facing other specific issues and opportunities, and an understanding of local context is crucial to determining what type of investment is likely to be most effective in supporting a town's success. The basics for most towns will be similar – such as a decent bus service, a diverse offer of services, good digital connectivity – but how to deliver and prioritise them will differ. There is no straightforward prescription, or one size fits all model. An approach that allows each town to find local solutions that maximise the use of local initiative and knowledge is therefore imperative.

Action - work across government to develop a long-term plan for the location and/or relocation of a diverse range of public services into town centres, supported by the appropriate asset management strategies and associated governance structures of public service bodies.

Action - working across government, understand the revenue and capital spending and procurement frameworks of key public sector institutions (e.g., health, education) to ensure they are aligned with the Town Centre First policy.

Action - establish consortia of social landlords and private developers to enable housing developments in appropriate locations within and around town centres and which follow the principles of placemaking.

Action - the Transforming Towns funding must be targeted at the places where it can support transformational opportunities and under a placemaking plan, which has been developed locally across all sectors.

Action - consider options to support the capacity for delivery and the provision of specialist support, including considering the future remit of the Design Commission for Wales.

Action - work with public, social, and private partners to analyse the barriers and identify opportunities to ensure Green Infrastructure and nature-based solutions, using circular economy principles, are embedded, and prioritised in decision-making when undertaking works in public spaces within town centres.

Action - strengthen the implementation of the Town Centre First policy in planning and empower local planners to refuse developments which do not meet the policy and to propose new plans for the adaptive reuse of out of town developments.

Action - our guidance for the preparation of Regional Transport Plans (RTPs) will require Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) to consider wider policies including Town Centre First.

Action - we will explore a fair and equitable 'benefits and charges packages' approach to introducing any new demand management schemes, looking at ways to improve services before charges or introduce lower fares when charging starts.

REGIONAL

West Cheshire NE Wales Sub Regional Spatial Strategy (2006)

Whilst of its time, this collaborative, cross-border work recognised the lack of relevance of the national boundary when considering how the sub-regional economy functions, and gave Flintshire a principle role as a sub-regional economic hub. Many of its objectives are still relevant as a basis for the Local Development Plan (LDP), particularly as this partnership working continues as part of the Mersey - Dee Alliance.

Mersey Dee Alliance (MDA) - The Council is also a key partner in the MDA which was born out of recognition of shared economic, social and environmental interests across the West Cheshire, Wirral and North East Wales area. The Alliance was formed in April 2007 and comprises Cheshire West and Chester, Flintshire, Wrexham and Wirral, together with Chester University, Wrexham Glyndwr University, the Welsh Government and Mersey Travel. Whilst sitting either side of a national boundary, the Mersey Dee Growth region has been recognised as a single economic sub-region, with a population close to 1 million. The MDA's role is to enhance the profile and identity of the North East Wales / North West England border region and maintain and develop the region's competitiveness.

It has published a number of strategies including Sub Regional Spatial Strategy (2006- 2021). The recently published, Mersey Dee Growth Prospectus – Unlocking Our True Potential, sets out the transport infrastructure investment required to unlock the economic growth potential in addition and complementary to rail investment identified in the Growth Track 360 prospectus. The prospectus identifies Strategic Development sites including Warren Hall and Northern Gateway, due to their strategic locations and potential for significant growth.

North Wales Economic Ambition Board (Growth Vision & Development Bid)

The North Wales EAB developed a Growth Vision for the economy of North Wales in 2016 that aims to:

• Improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being.

• Support and retain young people in the region's communities.

• Address worklessness and inactivity across the region.

• Support and enable private sector investment in the region to boost economic productivity and to improve economic and employment performance.

These will be delivered through specific plans relating to infrastructure, skills and employment and supporting business growth. The North Wales Growth Vision will create thousands of jobs, boost the economy, improve transport and digital communication links, focus on renewable energy, support tourism and more. In broad terms, the vision is to grow the value of the economy by 2.8% per annum to £20 billion and to create over 120,000 new job opportunities. The Bid consists of a series of projects under eight programmes and key projects in Flintshire include supporting strategic employment sites at Warren Hall, Broughton and Northern Gateway, Deeside and delivering an Advance Manufacturing Centre.

North Wales Regeneration Plan 2018–2035

This strategy sets out a shared vision and objectives for cohesive public sector regeneration investment and activity in North Wales until 2035. The shared vision statement is set out below.

The strategy provides guidance on how available funding should be prioritised, and helps to align the regeneration process with other initiatives to support economic growth, including the North Wales Growth Deal. It also aims to ensure that economic opportunities are available to as many people and communities as possible across the region.

"By 2035 North Wales will experience reduced inequality, increased employment, modernised town centres, an improved housing offer, a stronger visitor economy, a resilient rural economy, and improved health for local people."

Objectives

The North Wales Regeneration Strategy seeks to:

- **Reduce inequality** – by helping more people to share the benefits of future growth, with a particular focus on supporting those with the lowest household incomes to access opportunities.

- **Increase employment** – creating opportunities for employment through regeneration projects.

- **Modernise town centres** – by building on their role as centres for local economic opportunity, service provision and social inclusion. Recognising their role in the foundation economy and helping them to adapt to economic change.

- **Develop the rural economy** – helping to create sustainable rural communities through access to economic opportunities and access to services.

- **Improve the housing offer** – by ensuring that development takes place where there is demand, providing good quality housing options for existing residents, young people and for people locating to the area.

- **Strengthen the visitor economy** - through building on the tourism offer and strengths that exist in the region including the adventure and heritage tourism markets as well as providing an attractive location for major events at regionally important venues such as Parc Eirias and Wrexham Racecourse. By encouraging more visitors to North Wales and providing modern town centres, we will increase visitor footfall to our towns and spend within the local economy.

- **Improve the health of local people** – by creating places that promote physical activity, by providing quality environments and green space and by tackling poverty in our most excluded communities.

People Strategy & Plan Stronger Together, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

The Health Board's vision is to create a healthier North Wales, with opportunities for everyone to realise their full potential. This means that, over time, the people of North Wales should experience a better quality and length of life.

This vision is informed and shaped by the Welsh Government (WG) plan "A Healthier Wales", our own strategic overview document "Living Healthier, Staying Well", and our evolving Clinical Services Strategy, in North Wales. The Covid-19 Pandemic has had a huge impact in many ways:

• Supporting individuals in North Wales with Covid-19 and/or symptoms of Covid-19.

• The impact upon those without Covid-19 who have experienced delays in treatment because of the need to deal with the Pandemic.

• The impact upon our staff, who have delivered a magnificent response over 2 years of continual Pandemic conditions.

• It has limited our ability to deliver some of our previously stated development priorities, through the need to reprioritise.

• It has reminded us all, if a reminder was necessary, that we will need to respond differently to the challenges of delivering healthcare in a sustainable way going forward.

These impacts have heavily influenced our priorities for the coming years.

The Integrated Medium Term Plan (IMTP), and associated appendices, of which this People Strategy & Plan is one, lays out how we will do this by prioritising key areas of development that we will deliver with the resources available to us. The detail surrounding the actions we will undertake in the coming year with the IMTP also sets out, in indicative form, how we will build upon our actions in 2022/23 during 2023/24 and into 2024/25. The majority of our focus for 2022/23 is upon:

• Returning to full core business, including addressing the pandemic-related backlog of work, and

• Consolidating developmental work that has already begun but not yet finished, including work to deliver against the WG Targeted Intervention framework.

Actif North Wales, 10 Year Strategy – 2023-2033

Actif North Wales is the first regional physical activity and sports partnership to go live in Wales. We are made up of a wide range of organisations that have joined together to agree to work differently to achieve a shared purpose of more active communities in North Wales.

It strongly supports a whole systems approach to achieving a more active North Wales, building on the region's reputation for working collaboratively across sectors to deliver whole systems change.

This means working with communities and stakeholders to understand the challenge and to identify and test solutions working across sector, organisational and place boundaries to achieve long lasting improvements to health and wellbeing.

Its Vision is

"Everyone In North Wales Being More Active, Leading Healthier And Happier Lives".

Its Mission is "Everyone In North Wales Has Access To Safe Spaces And Places And Diverse Opportunities To Be Active Every Day"

Its framework for action is centred on four priority areas:

ACTIVE PEOPLE

Create and promote opportunities for everyone to be active.

Aim: To work with partners to grow and promote opportunities across a range of settings to help people of all ages and abilities to be active in their local area, as individuals, families and communities.

What we'll do:

1. Review current local opportunities to support people to be active.

2. Test and grow new opportunities that help people to be active in their local area.

ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Make the best use of local places and spaces to be active.

Aim: To test new ways of working at a local level to provide opportunities for people to be active in their locality by taking a 'place-based approach'.

What we'll do:

1. Pilot 'place-based approaches' in agreed localities (based on data and insight) across the region to:

   • Better understand the barriers and challenges people face to being active.

   • Co-create and co-develop interventions with the people living in the locality to grow opportunities for them to be active.

2. Support and help existing voluntary grass roots and community activity providers to survive and thrive, and those with capacity to do more to grow opportunities locally.

3. Map local places and facilities that can be used to help achieve our aims and inform future planning and facility development.

ACTIVE SOCIETIES

Sustain, maintain and grow by listening to, supporting and working with communities to make 'being active' the norm.

Aim: To use our regional platform and work with partners to connect with the population, raising the profile of the wider benefits of being active to different and diverse audiences.

What we'll do:

1. Lead communication campaigns and awareness days by showing real people being active in a way that works for them, so others can see people like them moving more and enjoying the benefits.

2. Review the current workforce across the region and map future needs (workforce and support) to deliver the strategy.

ACTIVE SYSTEMS

Multi sector engagement, coordination and collaboration.

Aim: To raise the profile of the Actif North Wales joint strategy and shine a light on the wider benefits of being active to embed it in policy and practice across the region.

What we'll do:

1. Develop a co-ordinated communications plan with partners to collectively highlight the wide benefits of being active.

2. Test new ways of working across the region, to unite sectors to commit to driving system level change.

3. Review data, evidence, and insight across sectors.

4. Use the strategy to target additional investment opportunities into the region.

LOCAL

Council Plan, 2022–23, Flintshire County Council

The priorities for Flintshire as a County are set by the Council and its local public sector partners. We work together as a Public Services Board (PSB) combining our resources for the benefit of Flintshire. Working to the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Council works collaboratively with local public sector partners as a Public Services Board. The Flintshire Public Services Board is at the heart of promoting a positive culture of working together, setting shared priorities and combining resources for the benefit of Flintshire, with an overall aim of improving local well-being. The Plan sets out the Council's priorities as:

People - Residents in Flintshire feel happy, safe and healthy

- Reduce the impact of poverty for people living in Flintshire

- Enable delivery of the right homes in the right place

- Helping people access support to maintain and improve their well-being

- Enabling successful learning and achievement

- Supporting people to retain their housing and live well, ensuring homelessness is rare, brief, and unrepeated

- Understanding people's needs and priorities through effective engagement

Places - Flintshire is a place where people want to live, visit and work

- Enabling active and sustainable travel options for people's everyday journeys

- Supporting people and businesses to adapt to climate change and extreme weather events

- Regenerate town centres and green spaces to support local well-being and employment

- Keeping our road network well maintained and safe

- Support our communities to enhance their local areas to create cleaner, greener and healthier environments

- Continue our journey to become a net zero carbon Council while influencing our communities to embrace climate action

- Creating inspiring, innovative and inclusive learning environments

Prosperity - Flourishing communities and thriving businesses in Flintshire

- Attract business investment to promote sustainability and jobs growth

- Explore ways to generate new and additional income

- Support people to access the labour market

- Grow the benefits of the visitor economy

- A Well Managed Council

Flintshire and Wrexham Well-being Plan 2022-23

The Public Services Board is where public sector organisations across Flintshire and Wrexham come together. We are working with our communities to change how we do things, to make sure we will be able to face the challenges ahead such as the climate and nature emergency, and how we ensure good mental health and wellbeing for all.

After working in partnership throughout COVID, the Public Services Boards of Flintshire and Wrexham have now come together as a single body. We are committed to working with energy and enthusiasm and listening to others. This means involving our communities, so they are always at the heart of our service design and the delivery of our services. This way, everyone can benefit fairly from our resources, our assets and accessible services. We are stronger together.

We have a strategic partnership with a strong focus on taking a shared approach to learning, decision-making and action. Together, our organisations employ lots of local people. Every member of the PSB is an anchor institution, here for the long term and working for our area, looking at how we use our resources better to build a fairer, healthier place. And how we can actively use our spending power to power the local economy and build well-being.

The main thematic and outcome area for the Well-being Plan is "Our Communities" which is focused on mobilising everyone's skills and talents to tackle climate change and the nature emergency and build a strong, fair, sustainable local economy. The Plan states that we must seize the opportunity to build a sustainable local economy, working across our region and across the border to grow local business, improve biodiversity and focus on developing green skills and infrastructure. This will help to mitigate the effects of climate change, adapt our communities to the impacts of a changing climate and support improved well-being outcomes.

It also identifies green skills as being a significant proportion of the future jobs market and so we need to provide the opportunity for everyone in our communities to get involved with the huge and varied opportunities in this sector. Active travel is also seen as being key to accessing a good range and quantity of well-paid, stable employment opportunities available, with the PSB promoting the idea of the 20 minute neighbourhood where jobs, facilities and shops are easier to reach without sitting in congestion.

Climate Change Strategy, 2022-2030, Flintshire County Council

The climate is changing and while it has always changed through natural environmental processes, it is now widely accepted that human activity is affecting the climate on a scale that is having detrimental effects on all living things. The Paris Climate Change Agreement 2015 recognised the need to accelerate actions and invest to reduce impacts on the environment. If we do nothing, the potential implications will be detrimental to our communities through risk to health and well-being, flooding, extreme heat, disruption to infrastructures in energy, transport and industry.

The Council supports the declarations made by Welsh Government for the Public Sector to become carbon neutral by 2030, and in Dec 2019 the Cabinet Members approved a motion to develop a clear Climate Change strategy, which will set key aims and actions for creating a carbon neutral organisation. The Council was responsible for greenhouse gas emissions of 46,434 tCO2e in 2018/2019 from the services it delivers, the buildings it operates and the goods/services it purchases. There are a number of actions the Council can take to reduce its organisational greenhouse gas emissions and this document sets out the Council's first step goals and actions to become a net zero carbon organisation.

The theme objectives centre around buildings, mobility and transport, procurement, land use and behaviour. The actions identified within each of these themes have had input from Members, the public, and Council employees in order to deliver a pathway that is both ambitious and achievable with the right investment, resource, collaboration and leadership.

The Council has identified aims within each of the key objective themes. Each of these objectives has a number of wide-ranging actions. The reduction aims are based on the 2018/19 baselines for each theme.

Net Zero Carbon by 2030

Buildings: 60% reduction in emissions by 2030 and adaptation measures	Mobility & Transport: 80% reduction in emissions by 2030	Procurement: 60% reduction in emissions by 2030	Land Use: increase carbon absorption and maintain biodiversity
• Cut emissions from heating and electricity in new and existing Council buildings • Design buildings for net zero carbon, adaptation and biodiversity • Investigation and alleviation of floods • Invest in renewables	• Convert fleet to electric/ alternative fuels • Invest in electric charging infrastructure • Deliver employee schemes in cycles and ultra low emission vehicles • Support agile working practices	• Ensure carbon is included throughout the procurement process • Work with our suppliers to develop carbon neutral working practices	• Calculate accurate baselines for carbon absorption and habitat richness are achieved • Further develop carbon absorption and enhancement of habitats • Further develop renewable energy opportunities

Behaviour: climate change is considered in all decision making. Members and employees are trained and aware of their responsibilities

Supporting Nature in Flintshire – Our plan to maintain and enhance biodiversity under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016

'Supporting Nature in Flintshire' is Flintshire's second plan for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in the county. The Council made good progress in 67% of the target areas under its 2016-2019 plan and are progressing our work in 2020 in a stronger position having continued to secure a number of grants for action for nature and to increase our Biodiversity Officer position to full time. Flintshire have been instrumental in ensuring the continuation of the Regional Nature Partnership (Bionet) which will be an essential tool in the development of a Local Nature Recovery Action Plan, in implementing targets from the National Nature Recovery Action plan, priorities from the Area Statements and wellbeing objectives.

Our plan is ambitious. It will involve working across council departments, driving change which will have multiple benefits and promoting new ways of thinking and working. There will be particular links with the Carbon reduction program and the emerging priority area of climate change.

The plan discusses grassland and common land, woodland and trees and also the importance of rural and green infrastructure which forms part of place making plans.

Rural and Urban Green Infrastructure

There are many undesignated sites and scattered fragments of habitats which have nature conservation value and are essential for nature. This forms our green infrastructure. It includes streams and small pockets of wet woodlands, old hedgerows, acting as corridors for wildlife in otherwise species-poor fields; ancient woodlands hosting hundreds of species including bluebells. Combined, these habitats provide for our more common and rare species such as Sand Lizards, Natterjack toads, Bats, Dormice, Otters, Great Crested Newts and thousands of wading birds on the Dee Estuary. Most urban areas within the County incorporate informal 'green space' which is important for wildlife and recreation. Many of these are the legacy of old industrial or mineral workings, which have developed natural flora and are the home for numerous insect species. Greenfield Valley, Holywell and Wepre Park, Connah's Quay are particularly valuable 'wild spaces'.

Flintshire Housing Strategy & Action Plan, 2019-2024

At the time of this Placemaking Plan being developed, the 2025-2030 Flintshire Housing Strategy was under development but not completed hence 2019-24 being the most recent strategy. The Council has identified three strategic priorities for the next 5 years, which they believe will provide the right framework for delivering homes, supporting people and promoting sustainability of place. These are:

- Priority 1: Increase supply to provide the right type of homes in the right location;

- Priority 2: Provide support to ensure people live and remain in the right type of home; and

- Priority 3: Improve the quality and sustainability of our homes.

The Housing Strategy priorities align with those set out in our Regional Homelessness Strategy and the Local Action Plan, as well as the Regional and Local Commissioning Plans for Supporting People. These strategic documents have been developed in conjunction with each other to ensure all the delivery is complimentary and the delivery principles are shared, including:

- The prevention of homelessness;

- That suitable accommodation is and will be available for people who are, or may become homeless;

- That satisfactory support is available for people who are, or may become homeless.

On key quality housing facts:

- 10.1% of occupied dwellings in the private sector across Flintshire contain a household which is in fuel poverty

- 1.6% of private dwellings do not have central heating

- A quarter of private rented dwellings fail the decent homes standards

- 30% of excess cold hazards can be remedied with an intervention that savings to the NHS will offset within one year

- The tenures with the highest percentage of dissatisfaction with the state of repair of their property is in the Council housing stock and private rented stock (2014)

- The Council and Welsh Government are investing £50m in the Welsh Quality Housing Standards addressing the levels of disrepair in the Council housing stock

The vision for the Housing Strategy is:

"To work in partnership with key stakeholders to inform and deliver the right type of quality housing and the most appropriate support to meet the housing needs of our population."

Flintshire Local Development Plan 2015 – 2030, Adopted Plan, 24th January 2023

The LDP follows on from the adopted Unitary Development Plan (2000-2015) and covers the period 2015 to 2030. The Council has prepared its adopted LDP in accordance with national planning policy and guidance. The plan provides a clear land use planning framework to address issues and opportunities facing Flintshire, aiming to provide certainty for its communities and a sound and consistent basis for making planning decisions.

The aim of the plan is to enable the delivery of sustainable development in a manner that balances all of the Well-Being requirements in a sensible and proportionate way, to allow the right development to occur in the right places.

The plan's policies (strategic and detailed) and proposals are organised within a themed approach comprising the following:

•   Creating Sustainable Places and Communities

•   Supporting a Prosperous Economy

•   Meeting Housing Needs

•   Valuing the Environment

The main planning challenges identified are:

•   The needs of a growing but ageing population with specific housing needs, and a general need for more affordable housing.

•   The need to ensure a supply of diversely skilled labour to meet the job growth and economic ambitions of the County.

•   A strong and prosperous economy, that acts as a driver and hub for the wider economic sub-region.

•   Supporting infrastructure, including housing, to meet this growth ambition.

•   A mix and type of housing to meet the range of needs and aspirations of communities.

•   The need to locate development in the most sustainable locations, and for it to be viable and deliverable.

•   The need for some development in rural communities to help retain community vitality.

•   Development that is functional, well designed, reduces its carbon footprint, and mitigates and adapts to climate change.

•   Sustainable and cohesive communities, recognising the role and function of our urban area, market towns, villages, and rural hamlets within the sustainable settlement hierarchy, and the relationships between them.

- Improved transport infrastructure and facilities which offer improved modal choice and accessibility to communities.

- The protection and enhancement of our natural, built, and historic environment, its character, quality and diversity, and local distinctiveness.

- Opportunities for the people in our communities to lead active, healthy, safe and secure lives.

LDP's Vision is

"The LDP is about people and places. It seeks to achieve a sustainable and lasting balance between the economic, social, and environmental needs of Flintshire and its residents, through realising its unique position as a regional gateway and area for economic investment, whilst protecting its strong historic cultural heritage and natural environment".

The LDP objectives are defined as follows:

Enhancing Community Life

1. Ensure communities have access to a mix of services and facilities, such as education and health, to allow community life to flourish, and meet the needs of particular groups such as the elderly.

2. Encourage the development of town and district centres as the focus for regeneration.

3. Promote a sustainable and safe transport system that reduces reliance on the car.

4. Facilitate the provision of necessary transport, utility and social / community infrastructure.

5. Facilitate the sustainable management of waste.

6. Protect and support the Welsh Language.

7. Create places that are safe, accessible and encourage and support good health, well-being and equality.

Delivering Growth and Prosperity

1. Facilitate growth and diversification of the local economy and an increase in skilled high value employment in key sectors.

2. Support development that positions Flintshire as an economically competitive place and an economic driver for the sub-region.

3. Repurpose the role and function of Flintshire's town centres as vibrant destinations for shopping, leisure, culture, learning, business and transport.

4. Ensure that Flintshire has the right amount, size, and type of new housing to support economic development and to meet a full range of housing needs.

5. Ensure that housing development takes place in sustainable locations where sites are viable and deliverable and are supported by the necessary social, environmental and physical infrastructure.

6. Promote a diverse and sustainable rural economy.

7. Support the provision of sustainable tourism development.

Safeguarding the Environment

1. Minimise the causes and impacts of climate change and pollution.

2. Conserve and enhance Flintshire's high quality environmental assets including landscape, cultural heritage and natural and built environments.

3. Maintain and enhance green infrastructure networks.

4. Promote good design that is locally distinct, innovative and sensitive to location.

5. Support the safeguarding and sustainable use of natural resources such as water and promote the development of brownfield land.

The LDP sets out a series of sustainable policies which the Place Making Plan needs to respond to. These are:

- Creating Sustainable Places and Communities

- Supporting a Prosperous Economy

- Meeting Housing Needs

- Valuing the Environment

The creation of sustainable places is an important principle that underpins the strategy of the LDP. Sustainable places are created from a balance of environmentally friendly, economically vibrant, and socially inclusive characteristics, that aim to benefit not only current inhabitants but also future generations.

The aim of such places is that they:

- Meet the needs of all members of their community;

- Provide access to opportunities;

- Make available services, infrastructure, and support;

- Provide a range of quality, affordable housing;

- Are resilient and adaptable to change;

- Comprise high quality development and spaces;

- Are distinctive and have a sense of place;

- Are attractive, sociable, accessible, active, secure, welcoming, healthy and friendly;

- Have considered global through to local issues and considerations;

- Consider the context, function and relationships between a development site and its wider surroundings.

PE7: Retail Hierarchy

Retail, leisure and commercial development will be directed towards the following hierarchy as identified on the proposals map.

Proposals will be supported where they are appropriate in scale and type for a particular centre.

Tier	Centre	
Town Centres	Buckley, Flint, Holywell, Mold, Shotton	
District Centres	Connah's Quay, Queensferry, Saltney	
Local Centres	Bagillt – High Street	Ewloe – The Highway
	Broughton - Broughton	Ewloe – Holywell Road
	Hall Rd	Flint – Northop Road
	Buckley – Lane End	Garden City – Welsh Road
	Caergwrle	Greenfield – Parade
	Caerwys	Hawarden Holywell - Holway
	Connah's Quay – Thornfield Ave	Hope Mostyn – Maes Pennant
	Connah's Quay – Englefield Ave	Mynydd Isa – The Square
		Penyffordd / Penymynydd
	Connah's Quay – Ffordd Llanarth	Holywell – Aston Park Road
		Holywell – Central Drive

Some place-based specific policies to outline include:

STR9: Retail Centres and Development

Retail developments will be guided by the County Retail Hierarchy. This approach will seek to maintain and enhance the vibrancy, viability and attractiveness of Flintshire's town, district, and local centres, supporting the delivery of appropriate comparison and convenience retail, office, leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities.

Retail centres will be the preferred location for new retail, leisure, office, social and other town centre uses. Major development will need to comply with the 'town centres first' principles within PPW in terms of the Needs Test, Sequential Test and Retail Impact Assessment.

Given the changing role of town centres, both Town Centre and Primary Shopping Areas are defined in recognition of the need for a degree of flexibility in maintaining occupancy and footfall, and to enable a tailored approach to be taken for each centre having regard to health checks, masterplans and action plans.

TOWN LEVEL

Old Buckley Baths Feasibility Scoping Study Update

The Old Buckley Baths Feasibility Scoping Study was a joint task between Buckley Town Council and the Flintshire County Council Regeneration Team, from March to July 2024, with funds from the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF).

Aim of the study

Using various public consultation methods, the aim of the study was to understand the level of local interest and enthusiasm regarding the future of the Old Buckley Baths Building. The future of the building is dependent upon enough local people giving their time and enthusiasm to develop it as a renovation project. If there is enough local support then the Flintshire County Council Regeneration Team, the Town Council and the Trustees of the building could work with these volunteers to develop a sustainable future for the building.

Public response to the study

Following a targeted social media campaign, the online study survey received responses from a total of 1554 people, 1083 of those stated that they were residents of Buckley. Two in-person consultation events, held in Hawkesbury Community Centre and Buckley Library in July, were well attended and

productive with 27 of those in attendance completing 'Working Group Interest Registration Forms'.

Study findings

Just over 90% [n=1298] of study participants stated that the restoration of the Old Buckley Baths building was important for Buckley, 71% [n=1025] stated that it was very important. 196 study participants (168 online and 28 in person) provided contact details volunteering to be involved in the development of a project for the Old Buckley Baths building.

Next steps/further information

Following the overwhelmingly positive public response to the study, all stakeholders involved are keen to maintain the level of local enthusiasm and momentum and quickly provide support for the community to develop a project for the building. Using SPF funds, the Regeneration Team has procured the services of Do-Well (UK) Ltd to establish an effective community working group to develop a project sufficient for a capital funding bid. Do-Well have worked with the local group of volunteers between Sept 2024 and March 2025. Ongoing work to explore feasible options for the building and undertake more exploratory work will continue from spring 2025 onwards.

chris jones   rl.   FLINTSHIRE place making plans

Key tasks include:

- Commissioning of surveys/ technical works.

- Appointment of design team: architect/ QS to develop RIBA stages 1-2 initially.

- Feasibility Study and Options Appraisal – usually external consultant to be procured.

- Outline Cost appraisal works.

- Identify funding sources – engage with funders.

- Raising and securing match-funding (usually minimum of 30% of overall project value).

- Further development of designs/ costs to RIBA stage 3-5.

- Obtain statutory consents/ approvals e.g. Planning approval from FCC Planning.

- Business Plan – usually external consultant to be procured.

- Establishing an organisation/ appropriate structure (e.g. Community Interest Company) to manage project/ asset during and beyond the funding period.

- Development of sustainability plan/ exit strategy beyond funded period.

- Funding application development and submission tasks – range of evidence documents required.

- Secure funding – including ongoing engagement with funding bodies.

Buckley Investment Strategy, 2017

The Investment Strategy was commissioned to test the level of market demand and interest in Buckley and prepare marketing material to promote Buckley's opportunities.

Property Market

The Buckley town centre is primarily a convenience and grocery retail node, although it also provides an important local services function to its surrounding catchment including hairdressing, goods repair, real estate agents, post office, bank and solicitors.

The town centre has seen a range of changes in recent years, both positive and negative for the town. Attracting key brands such as Aldi and Costa Coffee and the long-term lease renewal of Iceland are strong positives for the centre. However, these have been offset by the loss of the Health Centre, the closure of Budgens and the introduction of car-parking charges, which has combined to reduce footfall in the town centre.

Feedback from property agents was that Buckley is a small market, struggling to attract further retail tenants, particularly retail multiples. While it was recognised that the fundamentals of the town centre and its catchment were sound, with larger competition nearby, Buckley is not the preferred location for retail operators. This demonstrates the importance of Buckley's non-retail functions to its future overall importance.

The residential property market in the surrounding catchment is performing solidly, with a reasonable turnover of dwellings and investment from the development sector delivering new dwellings within the town centre's catchment.

In terms of the marketing of Buckley town centre, the points to highlight in regards to Buckley's property market should be:

- The list of national and regional brands;

- The recent introductions of Aldi and Costa Coffee and the renewal of the Iceland lease;

- There are available units to move into immediately, including within the Buckley Shopping Centre and along the high street;

- There are particular market gaps in Buckley, which could be exploited by incoming businesses, including discount goods retailers, specialist food retailers, clothing retailers, restaurants and leisure opportunities (there is a very run down gym - operating in a corner of the Buckley shopping centre);

- The surrounding catchment is growing, with current residential developments adding households in close proximity to the Buckley town centre.

Options for Buckley

Options for the renewal and regeneration of Buckley were explored, recognising the need to increase the attractiveness of the town centre for both consumers and businesses. This was prepared within the context of a lack of interest from prospective national retail brands. Therefore, options explored were focused on a 'bottom-up' approach.

Shop local schemes help reconnect the local population with their traditional high street, trying to draw some expenditure away from retail parks and online shopping. It is important that Buckley promotes its own identity and a positive story to encourage locals back to the town centre.

There are a range of temporary uses of vacant premises that have been explored, which increase overall activity of the town centre, project a more positive image than vacant units, encourage community groups into the town centre, allow entrepreneurs to test the market and provide a small level of income for landlords.
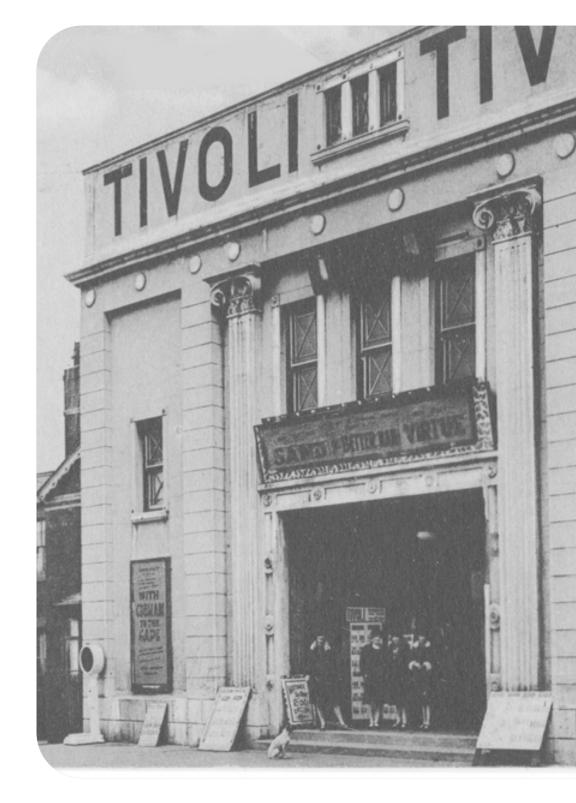
Increasing the reasons to come to Buckley will be important to ensure its long-term sustainability. While it will continue to be a retail node, the importance of retail is likely to be diluted in coming years, with non-retail uses, such as services, dining, events and socialising uses becoming increasingly important. Therefore, options to increase the night-time economy have been explored, including encouraging local restauranteurs to establish a presence in Buckley. Furthermore, Buckley could further capitalise on the Tivoli, a key music asset for the North Wales region.

Recommendations

The main recommendations were:

1. Broaden reasons to go to Buckley

2. Support existing businesses

3. Focus on increasing activity in the existing town centre footprint, rather than expanding the footprint

4. Proceed with the Grwp Cynefin proposal

5. Promote a mixed-use development for the vacant land east of Precinct Way

6. Develop a long-term plan for the Old Buckley Baths building

7. Develop a programme of promoting Buckley Town Centre

8. Review the level of resources and support for the Buckley Town Centre Manager

Buckley Town Centre Discussion Paper, 2015

In 2015 Buckley Town Council (BTC) set up a working group to examine the options for progressing the regeneration of the town centre. This discussion paper captures the key elements of the debate and can be used to further develop the discussion within the Town Council, and with key stakeholders. It sought to outline the town's opportunities and in particular identified the need to engage successfully with landowners and the market to generate investment interest within the town.

Since the Buckley Town Centre Masterplan was produced in 2011 there have been a number of changes in Buckley, both consistent and divergent to the Masterplan. The opportunity as part of this paper is to identify these changes to present the updated context of Buckley Town Centre's Regeneration and Investment.

There is a new "rejuvenated and multi-purpose square that can improve the aesthetics of the town and to accommodate events when not in use as a short-stay shoppers' car park. The delivery of the square represents a significant financial investment into the public realm which costs approximately £190,000 including construction, design and delivery fees."   Other public realm improvements included the recent addition of benches along Brunswick Road.

The Discussion Paper previously completed also noted that there were aspirations to bring Buckley Baths back into use for community purposes.

Buckley Town Centre Masterplan, 2011

In 2011, a Town Centre Masterplan was produced for Buckley which highlights the potential for change in Buckley and provides a framework for development. The masterplan contains aspirational proposals, which would have been facilitated predominantly by Flintshire County Council as a key landowner, along with support of private landowners.

Three core strands of investment and improvement are identified in the document to help to deliver the masterplan. These are:

- A rejuvenated retail centre – focusing on an extended Precinct with a new anchor supermarket with further mixed-use development on the east of a more pedestrian friendly Precinct Way;

- A new community hub – focused around the former Buckley Baths building, the Town Council offices and a new one-stop-shop facility on the site of the Police Station;

- An improved town centre spine – connecting these two complementary activity centres, a coordinated programme of environmental and townscape improvements focused along Brunswick Road and centring on a new town square designed around the relocated Buckley War Memorial.

An action plan accompanies the Masterplan document and highlights key actions that are required to progress the masterplan. The lead partner is identified although in most cases partnership working will be essential. An assessment is given to the priority and timescale associated with each of the actions. High priority actions are those that are considered to be most important in progressing the delivery of key elements of the masterplan.

Subsequent development activity in Buckley has deviated somewhat from the intents of the 2011 Masterplan, most notably the location of the new supermarket, which rather than being within the extended precinct, the Aldi has located further to the south. The Masterplan's intents for the new community hub have yet to be delivered and the proposed further retailing to the east of Precinct Way is still undeveloped.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC PROFILE

Population

19,703 live in Buckley Community

(Census 2021)

Age Distribution

Buckley has a slight drop in the number of individuals aged 0-19 (21.8%) compared to Wales (22.3%). Similar to that of other Flintshire towns Buckley demonstrates a slight drop in the number of individuals in the 20-34 age bracket (17.1%), which may be attributed to outward migration of young working age people, as has anecdotally been suggested. The population of 50-64-year-olds in Buckley (20.6%) is in line with that of Wales (20.5%), with it having the same proportion of individuals aged 65 and above (21.3%) compared to Wales (21.3%).

Language

Buckley residents are significantly less fluent in Reading, Speaking and Writing Welsh (10.2%, 10.1% and 8% of residents who can read, speak, and write respectively) than the general Welsh population of those who can (17.3%,17.8%, and 15.2%).

Housing

The proportion of household homeownership in Buckley (73.2%) is considerably higher than that of Wales (66.1%), and England and Wales (61.6%). It has the lowest proportion of households living in socially rented accommodation (11.6%) compared to Wales (16.5%) and England and Wales (17.1%) and has the lowest levels of households in private rented accommodation at 14.7% compared to Wales at 17.0% and England and Wales at 20.3%.

Vehicle

The proportion of households without a car in Buckley (13.7%) is significantly lower than in Wales (19.4%) and England and Wales (23.3%). This may be attributed to a need to travel rather than relative affluence. There is a higher than average access to more than 2 cars or vans (34%) compared to the Welsh average (27%).

Crime

Buckley town centre is significantly less impacted by most crimes compared to the national averages. Violent and sexual crimes, and anti-social behaviour are of the most prevalent crimes at 18 incidents each compared to national averages incidents of 40 and 20 respectively, in one year.

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Qualifications

Buckley has lower levels of individuals 16+ with no qualifications (16.4%) compared to Wales (19.9%), with 16.4% of the residents above 16 in Buckley having Level 2 qualifications as their highest level of attainment compared to 14.4% in Wales. It has a higher percentage of people with apprenticeships as their highest level of attainment (8%) compared to Wales (5.6%) and England and Wales (5.3%), with it having a lower proportion of residents with level 4 qualifications or above (28%) compared to Wales (31.5%). This may be attributed to limited access to further and higher educational facilities in Flintshire.

Economic Activity

The proportion of the economically active (excl students) of Buckley (60.2%) appears to be considerably higher than that of Wales (54.4%). Buckley has a lowest proportion of individuals unemployed (3.9%) compared to Wales (4.6%), and England and Wales (4.9%), with 10.7% of these residents unemployed due to due to long-term sickness or disability.

Occupations

The number of residents in Buckley at senior levels or in professional occupations is significantly lower than that in Wales at 10%, compared to Welsh average of 18.2%. 17% of the working population of Buckley consider themselves to be working in Professional occupations which is lower than in Wales (18.2%). 8.8% of the working population in Buckley account for process, plant and machine operative roles compared to 7.9% in Wales.

Health

A higher proportion of Buckley residents would consider themselves to have 'very good health' (47.7%) than Wales (46.2%), with a smaller proportion of Buckley residents considering themselves to be in 'very bad health' (1%) compared to Wales (1.7%).

Travel

57% of the Buckley population travel under 20km to work compared to 49% in Wales. Only 18.5% of the working population travel under 5km to go to work in Buckley, which demonstrates less people in Buckley can or choose to work from home. Those traveling less than 2km (i.e. live and work in Buckley) is less than the national average suggesting near-by employment opportunities are less in Buckley.

COMMERCIAL OFFERING AND VACANCIES

The high street is compact, offering a range of shops most of which are independent or local retailers, a few national names such as Spar and Rowlands are present. The Mold Road section of the high street accommodates a number of A1 (shops) and A3 (food and drink) uses along with two public houses, in addition to the town council offices and the old Library building. There are relatively few vacant units, this is reflected in the commercial data.

The Buckley Shopping Centre contains 19 shops and just over 30,000 sq ft of retail space. Tenants include national brands across retail and charity shops; Iceland, Savers, Barnardos, Tenovus and Mencap, with Iceland being the largest retailer. There are also some smaller local retailers including the well supported and popular Bistre Farm Shop.

The precinct is occupied towards the rear car parking area with the majority of the vacant units being situated towards the pedestrian high street. The precinct also contains the library and museum along with a large vacant office suite to the first floor.

Commercial Opening Hours

The high street operates from 9am to 6pm with the larger food retailers remaining open into the evening.

There is one restaurant on the high street, along with two pubs and a varied takeaway offer with varied closing times. The Tivoli Venue is close by and offers various entertainment into the evenings.

Rateable Values

We have compared the base rates adopted in Buckley to neighbouring competitive locations where occupiers are likely to consider and compare when looking to operate a business in the area. The base rates applied across the three locations are fairly consistent with Mold having the highest range considering its stronger market dynamics. The comparable evidence identified highlights that a significant level of stock fall below the £12,000 threshold where occupiers benefit from small business rates relief and therefore, spaces become a lot more affordable and accessible.

We also recorded the movement of rates from the 2017 assessment and the most recent 2023 assessments which came in to affect from 1st April 2023. For Buckley, rates appear to be falling slightly reflective of the weaker market segment performance over the past 5 years or so.

	Retail/SF ITZA	Offices/SF
Buckley	£17-£19	£5.5-£9
Holywell	£13-£18	£5.5-£8
Shotton	£15-£18	£5.5-£8
Mold	£17-£28	£6-£10
Flint	£15-£18	£5.5-£8

* Square Foot (SF) In Terms of Zone A (ITZA)

The retail core is centred around Brunswick Road and the Buckley Shopping Centre, also off Brunswick Road. The occupiers are mainly local or regional covenants with some nationals interspersed. Directly to the south of Buckley Shopping Centre is Iceland and across the car park from the Shopping Centre is Aldi, which opened in 2015 and shares an access and car park with Iceland off The Precinct Way where Home Bargains is opposite.

The employment areas are limited to two main areas off Standard Road and Brookhill Way (Pinfold Industrial Estate), with Pinfold Industrial Estate being the larger of the two. The build-up and nature of the office market is very limited and is as expected of a localised market.

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Business Rentals and Comparables

Buckley offered very few comparables for data, so evidence has been heavily drawn from the neighbouring town of Mold. This is in part due to the relatively few transactions that have taken place. Mold is a stronger performing retail market, with the Daniel Owen Shopping Centre and Mold High Street demanding prime rental values of £28-35/SF ITZA.

Retail lettings in Buckley are focused around the Buckley Shopping Centre and Brunswick Road. Evidence has been few and far between, however, a number of lettings were identified to provide a range. When dissected, retail transactions showed a tight range of between £9-£11/SFT on a flat rate basis and between £13-£27/SF when analysed In Terms of Zone A (ITZA). Prime ITZA rents in Buckley, which are being achieved in Buckley Shopping Centre and the main retail core, reflect £20-27/SF.

The Buckley office market is very small and limited to localised demand. The majority of stock appears to be located above retail units or individual one off out of town buildings. Furthermore, the office stock tends to be smaller and dated with little appeal to larger operators. Office rents overall showed a range of between £8.40-£12.50/SF, across 3 deals and within the last 3 years. All of the evidence was from the neighbouring town of Mold, with no evidence available of office lettings from within Buckley itself.

The top of the range was evidenced at a modern office block, which demanded £12.50/SF and is considered the prime rental tone for the area. At the other end of the spectrum, the lowest rate achieved was £8.40/SF, which was achieved for a letting of offices above retail on the High Street in the nearby town of Mold. There has been little new office development in the region, so the majority of stock are offices above retail units and therefore reflective of secondary rates.

In summary, prime rents in this sector are as high as £12.50/SF for new and high specification modern stock. Secondary offices are generally attracting reduced values in the region of £8-10/SF, with exact rates dependent upon factors such as location, quality and parking among others.

Commercial Yields and Comparisons

Commercial yields in Buckley sit at between 8% and 13%; however, if we widen our search criteria to include investment transactions from neighbouring relevant locations, it starts to show a much tighter range of between 8% and 10% with 8% reflecting more secure investments and the 10%, reflecting more historic buildings with weaker covenant strengths.

The deal which achieved the highest yield of 13%, was the most recent transaction that saw the Buckley Shopping Centre change hands via auction in

November 2022 at £1,625,000. The passing rent at the time of sale was £210,634 Per Annum. The centre was occupied by a mix of tenant types and of the 30,854 sqft, 3,510 sqft was vacant.

At the other end of the spectrum, Hibberts Corner achieved a yield of 8.22%. The property encompasses a manageable multi-let (across four tenants) retail premises with a prominent pitch in the town.

Whilst Mold outperforms Buckley from an occupier demand point of view, general yields appear similar to Buckley and the wider Flintshire market.

Investor demand for Buckley appeared to be from local/regional investors as oppose to national investment funds. Large investment funds tend to focus their concentration around central business districts where markets are more tested. Cheshire is the nearest market likely to attract this type of inward investment.

We have seen an increased number of local/regional investors entering into the market via Self Invested Personal Pensions.

Self-Invested Personal Pension allows investors to purchase commercial buildings and benefit from tax savings that they wouldn't necessarily achieve through investing in residential property.

Mix of Uses and Activities

The chart alongside shows the mix of uses and activities within the Town Centre boundary.

Figure 2 and Figure 3 show us that Buckley is following the UK trends of being a service led offer with health and beauty, takeaways and other professional services located within the town centre area at 56%. These are all local businesses with no regional or national brands represented. There are no national banks or building societies remaining in the town centre with some of these buildings either repurposed or available to relet. There is no pattern or cluster around this segment of use with them being pepper-potted along Mold Road and Brunswick Road and into the Buckley Precinct shopping centre.
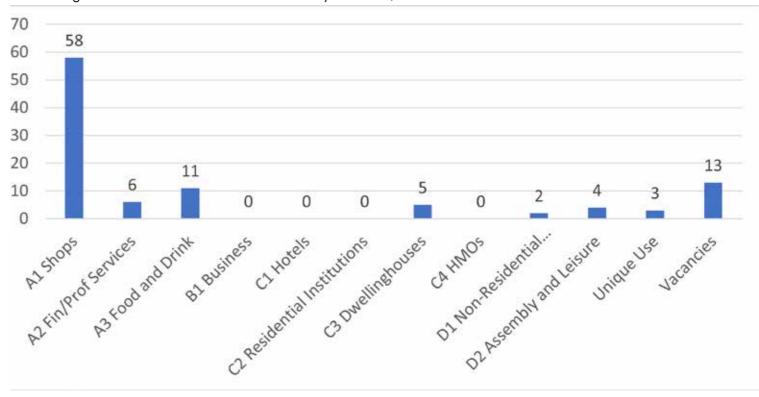
The convenience offer is represented by a number of convenience / tobacconists / newsagents (CTNs) and some food/fresh produce stores which include Aldi, Home Bargains, Iceland, Gerrards the Bakers and Bistre Farm Shop Butchers. Whilst Figure 1 shows that A1 use class for shops is strong, the comparison element of this is weak in terms of numbers and breadth of goods sold. Homeware, furniture and DIY is strong with HR Roberts & Sons being an established family run store as well as Bevans Home and Garden store within the precinct. Other comparison representation can be found in wedding fashion, books, gifts and cards but these are isolated and lack any cohesion. The only national brands are charity shops with Mencap, Tenovus and Barnardo's located in the shopping centre.

Food and drink lacks diversity with takeaway being the main segment represented by Fish & Chip, Kebab, Pizza and Indian shops. There are a couple of local cafes and a sandwich bar which appear to have a local loyalty. The only restaurant is Indian on the upper end of Mold Road. There is one public house which appears to be more drink related than an eating

out place. Whilst at the time of the site visit, the weather was poor, it is evident that there is not a breadth or quality to the food and drink offer that would attract local people to visit lunchtime or into the evening and at present no active uses that would spill out into the immediate public realm, bringing activity.

Whilst the town centre vacancy rates are marginally lower than the UK average at 14%, standing at 13%, there is a run of vacancies within the middle section of Mold Road, and some significant voids with the former Kwik Save building and also a number of vacancies within the shopping centre that tend to impact on the attractiveness and cohesiveness of the indoor offer.

Figure 1 – Breakdown of Town Centre Uses by Use Class;

Source: Chris Jones Regeneration

Figure 3- Breakdown of Town Centre Uses by Activity;

Figure 2 - Breakdown of Town Centre Uses by Segment;

Source: Chris Jones Regeneration

Source: Chris Jones Regeneration

Buckley Town Centre Streetscene

Source: Chris Jones Regeneration

STREET FRONTAGE ANALYSIS

Buckley town centre has a mix of civic, heritage and more modern properties. This can help create diversity and character within a street, however the quality of the frontages currently doesn't contribute a positive image of the town, that is attractive and would invite users in.

From the western approach you are met by poor first impressions by the way of tawdry commercial frontages and vacant premises. However, further along are a number of significant Victorian/civic buildings which add character to the street but need investment.

More modern properties can be found within the semi-pedestrianised end of Mold Road. However, the dated public realm does little to draw people in. The Buckley Shopping Centre anchors the eastern end of the street, the dated appearance, blank facades and large vacant end unit, bring the overall character down.

Legend:
- Good Quality Street Frontage
- Average Quality Street Frontage
- Poor Quality Street Frontage
- Direction of Traffic
- Semi Pedestrianised Area

SUMMARY OF 'GIVE MY VIEW'

As part of the community consultation, Flintshire County Council used the digital platform 'Give My View' which was promoted through a social media campaign. This campaign generated:

- 146,407 impressions

- 25,020 reach, with

- 1,594 people clicking on the survey

After clicking on the survey, 1143 surveys were completed with 830 open comments received which supported the analysis of local needs and focus for the Place Making Plan.

The social media campaign was most effective with more mature audiences, with those over the age of 65 showing the highest degree of engagement, closely followed by those between 55 and 64. Facebook was the most successful platform with Instagram coming in second.

One positive word for Buckley town centre now

One negative word for Buckley town centre now

35% *People feel Buckley town centre is welcoming*

17% *People feel positive about the current town centre offer*

13% *People rate Buckley as having good connections to local services and facilities*

Quality of life and safety is the highest priority for residents

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The top improvements to make in Buckley are:

- Vacant premises   79%
- Services   63%
- Parking   14%
- More greenery   11%
- Parks   8%
- Pavements   8%

Top 3 reasons for visiting Buckley town centre are:

- Grocery shopping   70%
- Services   40%
- To meet family and friends   16%
- To work   8%
- I use the community spaces   7%

What are the top 5 things for future investment?

- Retail opportunities   88%
- Building improvements   41%
- Social and community events   41%
- Leisure facilities   35%
- Health and well-being   26%

How often do people visit Buckley town centre?

- Every day   15%
- Multiple times a week   11%
- Once a week   23%
- Multiple times a week   11%
- Rarely   14%

How do people get to Buckley town centre?

- Car   77%
- Walk   57%
- Bus   3%

What time of day do people visit?

- Morning   42%
- Lunch   17%
- Afternoon   43%
- Evenings   20%

How long do people stay?

- I'm in and out   82%
- Spend a few hours   10%
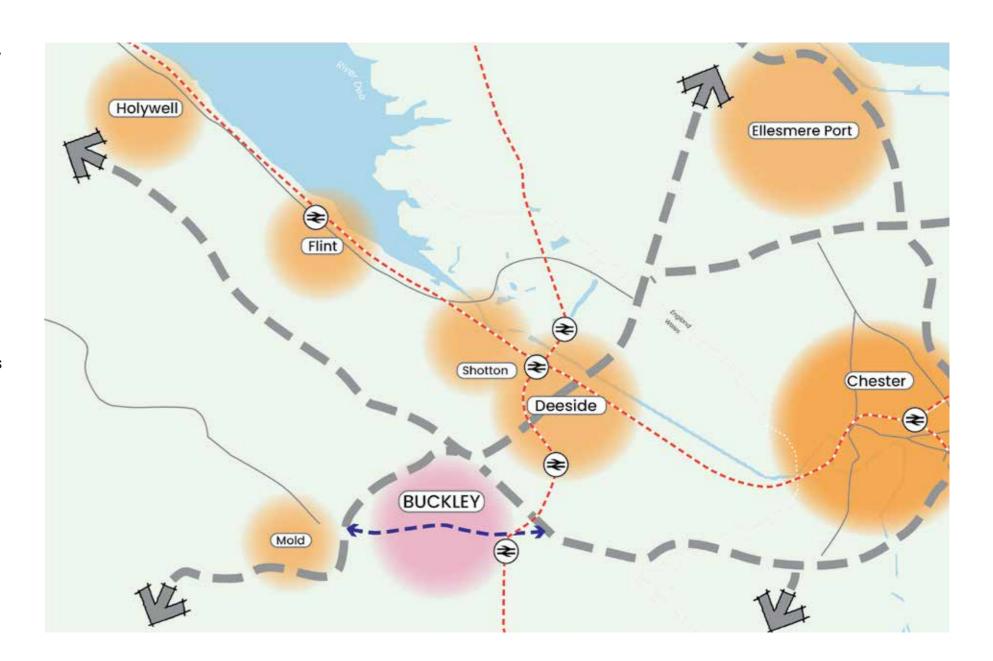
PLACE- CONTEXT AND CONNECTIONS

Buckley is situated on a range of hills between the river Alyn and the Dee Esturary about 6-miles from the border with England. As such, it sits within very close proximity to the major cities of the area, namely Chester to the east and Liverpool to the North.

The town sits just south of the junction between the North Wales Expressway (NWE) and the A494. To the east, the NWE places Chester within a 20 minute drive and Wrexham 30 minutes. To the west, it provides access to the towns and villages along the North Wales coast. The A494 runs north to the M53 and Liverpool, a 45 minute drive away. To the south it connects into Mold, the nearest town to Buckley 10 minutes away, and further into Mid Wales. The A549 runs through the heart of the town connecting either end into these major movement corridors. This results in Buckley having very good access and links to its surrounding towns and cities.

Buckley Train Station sits on the eastern edge of the town. This provides a regular service to Shotton (with onward connections to Chester and Holyhead), Bidston (with onward connections to Liverpool) and Wrexham. Although a key resource for the town, the train station sits at its very edge and feels divorced from the town itself.

This makes Buckley a key commuter town, with a lot of residents travelling into and out of the town on a daily basis.

PLACE- COMMUNITY ASSETS
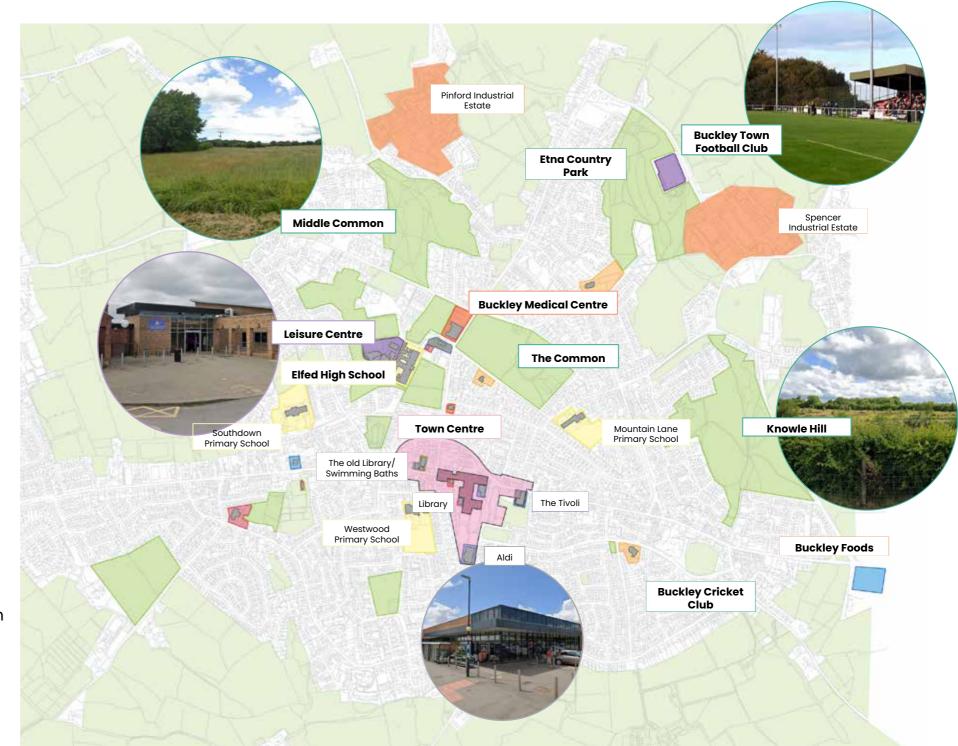
The urban form of Buckley radiates out from the town centre at the heart of the town. A series of facilities and services are then spread out throughout the town and along its edges.

A number of industrial and employment areas are located around the edges of the town, including Buckley Foods, a major employer in the area.

Large areas of Parks and Commons are found throughout the northern end of Buckley and break up the residential areas. This places residents of northern Buckley within easy reach of greenspaces. This is less common in southern Buckley which has more smaller local greenspaces.

Buckley Leisure Centre, Elfed High School, Buckley Medical Centre and Hawkesbury Community Centre are all located just north of the town centre. They are situated close together in and around the 'Commons' making them very accessible by walking and cycling (active travel).

Buckley Football Club Globe Stadium is situated on the north eastern edge of the town and is set to receive part of the £3million investment from the Football Association of Wales (FAW) being used to upgrade facilities across North Wales as part of preparation for the 2026 men's UEFA 19 Championship. The stadium will be used as a training venue during the tournament. This will hopefully act as a catalyst for further investment and resource in the facilities and wider area.

Pinford Industrial Estate

Etna Country Park

Buckley Town Football Club

Spencer Industrial Estate

Middle Common

Buckley Medical Centre

Leisure Centre

The Common

Elfed High School

Southdown Primary School

Town Centre

Mountain Lane Primary School

Knowle Hill

The old Library/ Swimming Baths

Library

The Tivoli

Westwood Primary School

Buckley Foods

Aldi

Buckley Cricket Club

TOWN CENTRE GATEWAYS

A549
As the A549 wraps around the town centre, the quality of the environment drops and is characterised by backs of properties, blank facades and walls. The four-way Mill Lane junction is a key (but poor quality) gateway along the route as it connects the town centre to the greenspace, leisure centre and high school to the north.

Western Gateway
The main road wraps around the northern end of the town centre creating a gateway space at the Bistre Avenue junction and allowing views down the high street. The number of junctions, wide roads and car parks make this a car dominated space, poor urban environment and unwelcoming pedestrian gateway.

Western A549
The western end of the A549 Mold Road is characterised by residential properties of varying degrees of quality. Victorian red brick properties are a particular highlight along the route.

Mill Lane
Mill lane runs down into and divides the high street in two. The street is characterised by a mix of residential and retail premises of varying quality. Where it meets the high street there is little sense of arrival or announcement. This should be a key pedestrian and cycle link into the town centre due to its connection to the local facilities to the north.

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Eastern Gateway

Large areas of highways, poor public realm and blank facades of buildings create a poor and unwelcoming gateway to the town centre. Glimpses of the high street announce the start of the town centre but the urban form and public space does not facilitate its access.

Eastern A549

Mainly residential in nature with some good quality red brick Victorian homes. The Tivoli music venue is a key building signifying the start of the town centre, but feels very divorced from it.

Padeswood Road North

The southern access to the town centre via Padeswood Road is more convoluted and is accessed off various side routes. This should be a key pedestrian/cycle route from the south as it is not a through route for vehicles.

Precinct Way/Aldi Car Park

This forms the main area of car parking in the town and a key arrival point for many people. There is however little signage or direction out of the car park and into the high street. Buckley Shopping Centre is the main access point out onto the high street but is visually unappealing. It closes during the early evening pushing people to alternative and less desirable routes at night.

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ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Buckley has a number of key facilities within the town. These help create a fairly self-contained settlement that meets the day-to-day needs of residents. However, these facilities tend to be dispersed throughout the northern end of the town and not well connected to each other, the town centre or residents in southern Buckley.

The A549 is a key route through the heart of the town and links into the wider movement network. The quality of this route towards the edges of the town is generally positive, however this reduces around the town centre. As the road loops north around the centre, it becomes characterised by backs of properties and blank featureless walls. This offers a poor impression of the town centre and town as a whole.

Buckley Railway Station is situated at the edge of the town and potentially difficult to access if not using a car. Better active travel and public transport links could boost its usage and help reduce the number of cars using the A549.

The Tivoli is an iconic music venue within the area. However, it sits on the edge of and feels divorced from the town centre. Creating a stronger connection between the two could encourage its use and encourage more visitors into the town centre.

The eastern and western gateways into the town centre are generally poor. They are characterised by wide carriageways and junctions and a poor urban environment. They do not create a welcoming environment for people approaching the town centre or encourage them to enter.

The Mill Lane link into the town centre is a key gateway north towards the Commons, Leisure Centre and High School. The four-way junction with the A549 does not help encourage active travel between the town centre and these key facilities and destinations.

Access from the main Precinct Way car park into the town centre is poor. Visitors can either enter through the featureless Buckley Shopping Centre (when it is open) or traverse the car park and around the back of shops and the library before crossing another car park.

The 'pedestrianised' eastern end of the high street has ample space for outdoor seating, landscaping and spill out areas but little is featured along the street. The barriers and bollards are a barrier to free and easy pedestrian movement and are not cognisant with modern urban design principles. The large vacant unit at the end of the street and other vacant plots need to help reinforce the town centre.
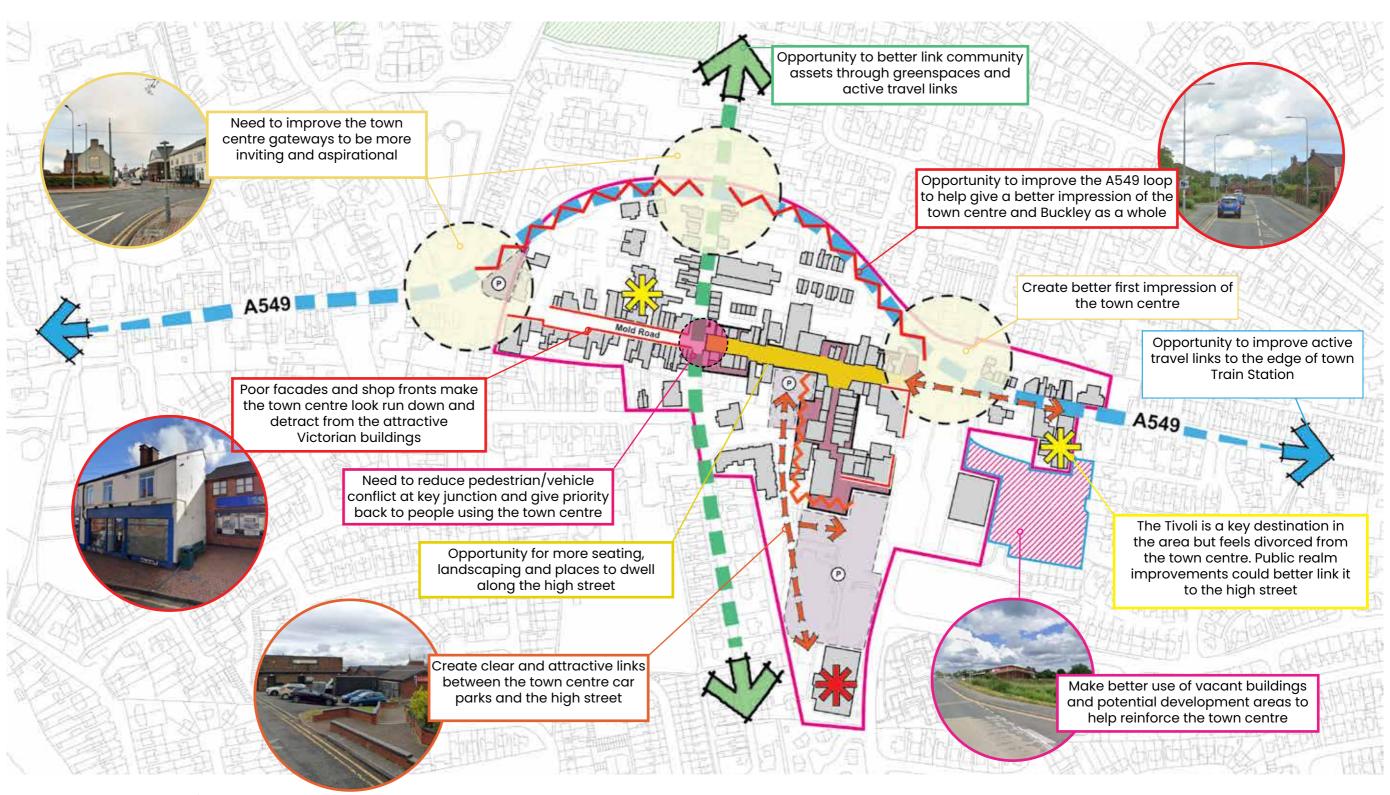
The western end of the high street is of lower quality and has a number of vacant buildings. However, the street is home to a number of high quality red brick Victorian buildings, which add character and identity to the area including the former Public Library and Swimming Baths. Poor quality shop fronts distract from these attractive buildings.

Opportunity to better link community assets through greenspaces and active travel links

Need to improve the town centre gateways to be more inviting and aspirational

Opportunity to improve the A549 loop to help give a better impression of the town centre and Buckley as a whole

Create better first impression of the town centre

A549

Opportunity to improve active travel links to the edge of town Train Station

Mold Road

A549

Poor facades and shop fronts make the town centre look run down and detract from the attractive Victorian buildings

Need to reduce pedestrian/vehicle conflict at key junction and give priority back to people using the town centre

Opportunity for more seating, landscaping and places to dwell along the high street

The Tivoli is a key destination in the area but feels divorced from the town centre. Public realm improvements could better link it to the high street

Create clear and attractive links between the town centre car parks and the high street

Make better use of vacant buildings and potential development areas to help reinforce the town centre

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SWOT ANALYSIS **PLACE**

STRENGTHS

- Good connectivity to Wrexham and Chester and gateway into North Wales and Eryri National Park
- Train station some 1.3 miles from the town centre with links to Wrexham and onto the Wirral, North Wales coastline
- Second largest community in Flintshire with 0.13% population growth
- Town centre is compact and flat, and easy to reach
- Past investment and regeneration programmes in the town centre in the 1990s and early 2000s
- Notable historical buildings such as Town Council offices and former Buckley Swimming Pool
- Proud heritage in brickmaking, coal, local town brass band (award winning) and the Tivoli nightclub/music venue
- Local amenities and facilities include library, Town Council offices, local history museum
- Oldest parish church of St Matthew's close to The Common
- Large car park provision to the south of the precinct shopping centre
- The Common is a large open space with a duck pond and playground
- Four primary schools, a high school and three registered GP surgeries
- The Buckley Shopping Centre precinct does have some active retailers and uses
- Vacancy rate of 13% is just below the UK average but there are runs of vacant buildings in Mold Road
- Community consultation identifies that people feel Buckley is welcoming (35%)

WEAKNESSES

- Proximity to A55 and A494 provides choice and results in leakage of trade
- The town centre feels divided between its pedestrianised area and the Mold Road end, with railings and street clutter
- Empty former Kwik Save building does not contribute to good first impressions from the east
- Highways infrastructure is designed for the motor car and for not walking and cycling
- Town centre lacks vibrancy and animation within the streets
- Shop fronts and street scene lacks cohesion and identity
- The Buckley Shopping Centre precinct does have some vacant space on the Brunswick Road frontage and at first storey
- Limited comparison (non-food) offer, with minimal national brands located
- Food and drink offer lacks breadth and is mainly takeaway
- Lack of activity within the evenings, only 20% visit then
- Limited office market sector provision, which is dated and small in size
- Demand is mainly local and regional and not from national investors
- A town that is doing "ok" but could be better, with only 17% of people feeling positive about the town centre offer

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OPPORTUNITIES

- Need to provide more historical interpretation on town's story
- The landmark Tivoli building is well known as a music venue, drawing in crowds from the North West and North Wales – need to repair its external façade
- Designing roads into streets and routes for walking and cycling
- The former Historic Swimming Pool building
- Growth in population with need to turn local community into the town centre for social and daily activities
- Edge of centre open spaces and amenities that connect outer communities
- Quality of life and safety is the highest priority for residents
- Residents wish to see vacant premises being tackled at 79%
- 88% of consultation respondents wish to see retail opportunities invested in

THREATS

- Larger retail destinations that are an experience and established draw
- Continued rise of digital shopping
- General economic situation, cost of living and uncertainty
- Perception and confidence in Buckley town centre with no significant demand that leads to further neglect and disinvestment

SWOT ANALYSIS **PEOPLE**

STRENGTHS

- Major employers within close proximity to Buckley that support and attract people to Buckley as a place to live e.g. Airbus in Broughton
- Most householders are homeowners, being mainly single family households (60%)
- Majority of householders are within 5km of town centre, making it accessible
- Buckley seen as a safe place, with only ASB and low level offences recorded
- Low levels of individuals with no qualifications (16.4%)
- Residents rate themselves as very good to good (47.7%) health-wise compared to all Wales average
- High levels of economic activity at 60.2%

WEAKNESSES

- High car ownership is good for mobility but provides choice
- 57% of residents commute over 20 km to work
- Only 18.5% travel under 5km to work in Buckley

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- **Opportunity to promote and develop active travel infrastructure**
- **Building on health and well-being activity**
- **Community living longer – role of residents in volunteering and community life**

OPPORTUNITIES

THREATS

- **Dependency on employment outside of town and catchment**
- **General economic situation, cost of living and uncertainty**
- **Drop in population between 20 and 34 age bracket due to migration of young working age people**

05:
BUILDING ON ITS FOUNDATION

EMERGING FOCUS/THEMES

NEED/EVIDENCE

The town's population has grown over the last ten years but its connectivity and proximity to other towns and retail attractors does result in a diversion of activity and a diminished loyalty to the town centre. Within Buckley's neighbourhoods and on the edge of the town there are some key assets such as the town football club, The Common and duck pond, a number of primary schools and the High Street that draw in residents but aren't visually connected to the town centre through a network of physical links.

EMERGING FOCUS/THEME

Announcing & Arriving at the Town Centre

The community of Buckley, with its strong sense of pride and belonging (routed in history, music, religion and sports), is currently with the people and not the place. That is because community venues/facilities/services are so widely spread rather than located centrally in the town. Often community events, like the Jubilee for example, bring people together outside of the town centre. However, the people are within easy reach of the town centre and it needs to feel more accessible and appealing to them nurturing that sense of belonging to a place. Active travel investment and finding ways to link uses for mutual benefits is a way to build relationships between people and places. Developing a series of physical stepping stones that link say the train station, with Chester Road, the Cricket Club, the Tivoli and the town centre. Likewise, a similar link from the Town Football Club to Mount Pool and The Common onto the High School/Leisure Centre and Community Centre and finally the town centre. There could also be an opportunity to provide a taste of community life in Buckley town centre e.g. football club shop.

NEED/EVIDENCE

The highway network takes you around the backs of the town centre, with views to service yards and rears of properties that don't let you look into the town centre. Some key vacant bookend buildings add to these poor first impressions from both edges. Even on arrival in outer car parks is bland and featureless, with the pedestrian route not legible or attractive.

EMERGING FOCUS/THEME

Open for Business – from Roads to Streets

From the outer section of Brunswick Road to the east and to the western Mold Road approach, the town centre needs to be announced from further out with a more distinctive gateway on arrival, specifically before Elfed Drive from the west and in advance of the Tivoli from the east.

Over the years, as with many places in the UK, the movement of cars has been prioritised over the movement of people. This has resulted in a very highway dominated 'road' network around the edges of the town with the A549 taking on the role of a by-pass. There are key areas where this balance needs to be redressed. For example - Brunswick road and Precinct Way – the east/west movement of people needs prioritising here.

Another example is right in the heart of the town where the natural flow of people between Mold Road and Brunswick Road is interrupted by the highway paraphernalia and the vehicle priority of Mill Lane and Padeswood Road. This Junction should be a space which sees the uniting of two distinct character areas rather than further adding to their separation.

There is a need for a strategic focus on some keynote buildings that have a strong association with the town such as the Tivoli, as well as those that are unoccupied such as the Kwik Save both at key approaches and need to create more positive messaging about the town centre.

Arrival in the larger car parks to the south of the town centre is poor with no sense of the space being associated with the town centre area, with roads directing you, not footways, trees, planting or signposting. This needs to be addressed.

The role of the Precinct in helping to activate the town centre frontage needs to be explored. The current library sits generally hidden from site but could form a key role in giving a public identity on the street with other active uses /lettings strategy combining to help bring a sense of activity and dynamism to the main shopping street.

NEED/EVIDENCE

The town centre experience is fragmented into two character areas – Mold Road and Brunswick Road that does not present a unifying offer to its users, with vacancies and poor quality frontages not presenting a cohesive and coherent identity. There are also some key activity generators e.g. the Tivoli and Aldi food store that are divorced from the main shopping area.

EMERGING FOCUS/THEME

Unifying the Buckley Character

The town's character is a tale of two halves which currently don't meet. The Mold Street side has a mixture of civic and heritage buildings that are strong but let down by neighbouring poor quality commercial frontages. This also ties into the carriageway and footways that are tired and worn. The junction with Mill Lane/Padeswood Road needs addressing as it creates severance with the pedestrianised area, with a need to declutter and treat this intermediate space. As above, this should be a unifying space and not contribute to further segregation.

The building character in the pedestrianised Brunswick Road end is from recent decades, is piecemeal and does not present a unified design code. This needs addressing with landlords and tenants and in co-ordination with public realm activation so that a Buckley experience is developed that evokes local, quality and service.

NEED/EVIDENCE

Existing public realm whilst in a relatively good condition is dated and does not provide structure for outdoor, social activity that is associated with commercial premises or for communal uses. There is no sense of outdoor dwell or opportunities to activate this outdoor public realm.

EMERGING FOCUS/THEME

Activating the Public Realm

Brunswick Road presents a pedestrianised space, even though vehicles are allowed in between 4:30pm and 10am. Loading bays and on-street disabled parking gives the impression that the space is about vehicle access and not a space for people. There is a need to develop opportunities for social space, events, markets and town festivals. Ideas such as a bandstand would promote the heritage in Buckley's brass band scene as well as provide a space for community events. It is these types of intervention that need to be trialled and rolled out.

The role of landscape and green infrastructure should be explored. A simple landscape strategy which ran across both main streets, combined with a decluttered, refreshed and 'people first' approach to public realm, would help to unify them as well as contribute to biodiversity, health and wellbeing and climate change mitigation.
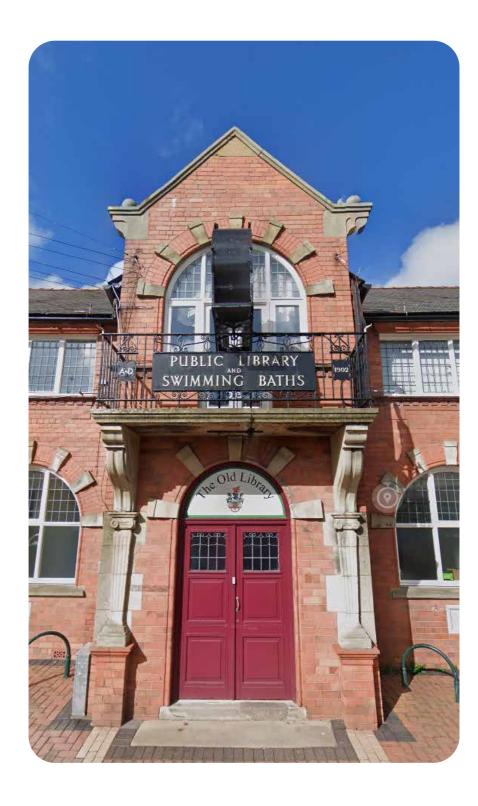
NEED/EVIDENCE

Civic and community facilities are hidden, not visible or have been relocated from the town centre with no sense of public services or other facilities that residents and town centre users can turn to. For example the town's library and town council offices are in the town centre but don't have any community interaction, with the police station closing and the primary health care centre moving out. There is a need to explore the location of public services as a driver of footfall and activity and community hubs.

EMERGING FOCUS/THEME

Establishing a Civic Heart

Previous masterplans and recent studies recognise the role and function of the Town Council and Old Buckley Baths Building. This building has a strong presence with a need to realise viable community uses that generate activity, sustainability and celebrate Buckley's heritage. Dependent on the mix of uses, such a community hub would have direct and indirect benefits to the town centre through basic services, volunteering and possibly acting as a springboard for other town centre investment and uses. Notwithstanding current fiscal pressures in the public sector, an appraisal of current community provision within the town needs to be undertaken and gaps in provision explored e.g. co-working space, youth provision, town football club retail outlet. Options appraisals on large and visible buildings, such as the former Kwik Save, should be considered. Multi-uses could again be explored to create local integrated hubs.

STRATEGIC VISION, AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Vision

Buckley – at the heart of community life, with its nearby neighbourhoods easily accessing local shops and eating places, active in health, well-being, arts, and culture, all underpinned by a proud heritage in industry and music and being well connected on the Welsh-English border

Key Aims

To enhance the quality and diversity of the town centre offer that feels local, appealing and touches community life.

To raise awareness of a "local" town centre experience for residents, create and develop its appeal, build a following and viable enterprises and activities.

To activate a public realm that links discrete spaces of music, culture, shopping, community and eating out through performance space, markets, use of trees and planting and extending commercial activities.

To highlight and improve a range of community services that support health and well-being, learning, socialising and create a cohesive Buckley community.

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Objectives

Develop local solutions that open opportunities for new businesses, and fill gaps in the current offer of community and social meeting spaces.

Enhance the way people arrive in the town centre, in a way that is more people-centred from Buckley's neighbourhoods, and to connect assets that sit on the edge through to the heart of the town centre.

Draw in peripheral assets through physical design changes that turn them into the town centre and makes them feel part of the experience, daytime and evening.

Develop hubs at both ends of the town centre that are visible, generate activity and lead to extended dwell, spend and other secondary benefits.

Maximise the tradition and values of the Buckley brand and present these through marketing, events, festivals, performances and activity e.g. brick, pottery, brass bands, music heritage at The Tiv, etc.

PLACE & PEOPLE OPPORTUNITIES

Place Opportunities

In order to achieve the vision, aims and objectives, the following opportunities have been identified.

Announcing & Arriving at the Town Centre

Activating the Public Realm

Rebuilding the Buckley Character and Identity

Greening Buckley

The Role of the Activity Generators

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People Opportunities

Connected Communities

Local Solutions
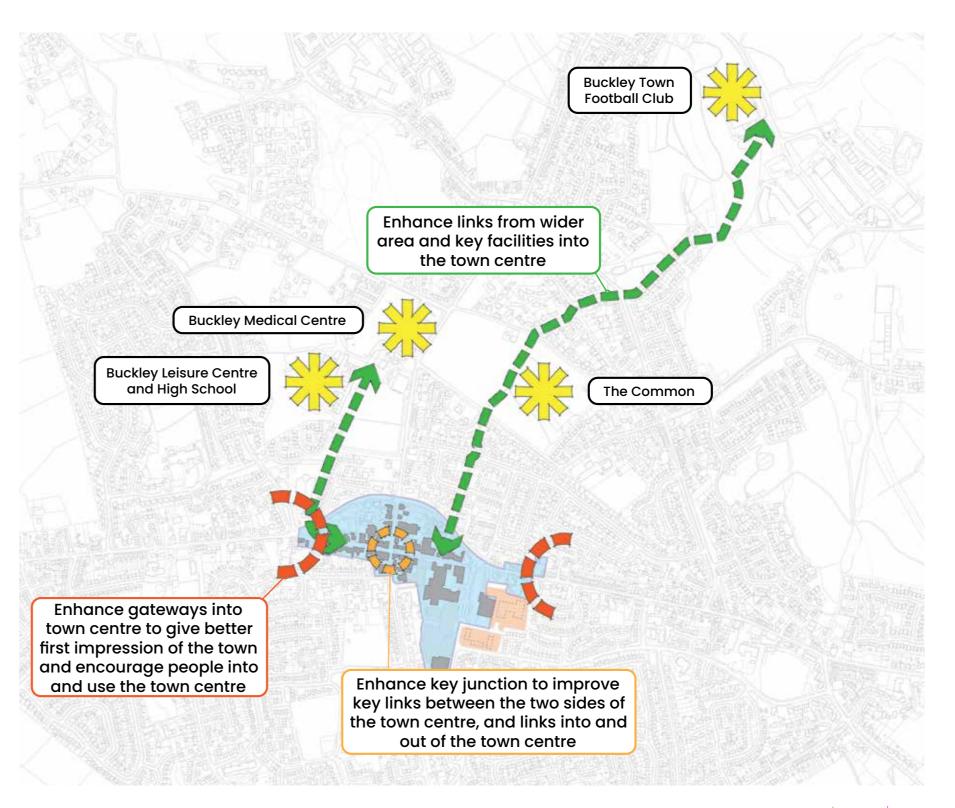

Building the Buckley Brand

Partnership Working

OPPORTUNITIES FRAMEWORK – WIDER AREA

Buckley Town Centre sits at the heart of the town with many other key facilities located to the north of it, including the Leisure Centre, High School and Medical Centre. There is the opportunity to better link these key facilities to the town centre through active travel links. A number of greenspaces and Commons in the area allow for a series of off road foot and cycle links as far north as the football club.

The western and eastern gateways into the town need to be enhanced to create a more welcoming impression and help draw people into the town. Reducing the impact of the car and making the areas more pedestrian-friendly will improve the accessibility of the town centre from surrounding areas.

The Mill Lane/Mold Road/Padeswood Road/Brunswick Road junction is a key point within the town. It's the main link between each end of the high street and north to the Common and key facilities. It is currently car-dominated and has numerous barriers to movement, which if reduced would help better facilitate movement through the town centre.

Buckley Town Football Club

Enhance links from wider area and key facilities into the town centre

Buckley Medical Centre

Buckley Leisure Centre and High School

The Common

Enhance gateways into town centre to give better first impression of the town and encourage people into and use the town centre

Enhance key junction to improve key links between the two sides of the town centre, and links into and out of the town centre

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OPPORTUNITIES FRAMEWORK – TOWN CENTRE

Strengthen links from town centre into surrounding areas.

Opportunity to enhance Civic Centre area of town.

Create new central focus area / arrival point. Potential for events / performance shelter / stage with enhanced public realm. Use structure to define space and control leakage into car park. Opportunity for public area to adjacent building edges.

Re-imagine blank gable wall into visually attractive gateway feature.

Buckley Town Council / former baths

Opportunity to enhance eastern gateway. Improve landscaping areas, remove barriers to pedestrian and cycle movement and create opportunity for "Welcome to Buckley" feature.

Opportunity to enhance western gateway to give more space to people, landscaping and public art to give better first impression into the town centre.

Central gateway to be improved to better link two ends of the street and allow for better crossings for pedestrians. Create a place for people where the car is a guest.

Buckley Precinct

The Tivoli

Opportunity for building and shopfront enhancement strategy - potential design code.

Strengthen links between the town centre and Tivoli venue.

Renovate and reuse the vacant building to create new focal building that puts out a positive aspect into the town centre. Potential to relocate public services here.

Opportunity to provide enhanced landscaping to approach edges.

PLACE OPPORTUNITIES - ANNOUNCING & ARRIVING AT THE TOWN CENTRE

Better connect to surrounding areas

Reduce the impact of the car and make crossing the road easier

Enliven blank facades

Create more space for people

Help create better connections to the Tivoli

Gateway Spaces

The town centre is bookended by two gateway spaces where Ffordd Argoed/A549 diverts traffic north, from the historical linear route through the town. This results in undefined car-dominated spaces with visual connections along the high street but a poor pedestrian environment that makes accessing it difficult and uninviting.

Large areas are given over to cars, with wide junctions and reservations making crossing the road difficult. This is compounded by railings and anti-walking paving corraling pedestrians to crossings, off the direct routes of movement. The roads need to be redefined so that more space can be given back to

pedestrians and crossing becomes easier. Narrower junctions, removal of barriers and more direct crossing points will help with this.

This reclaimed space can help form new public spaces that are vibrant and attractive and help welcome people to the town centre. More space for landscaping, seating and public art will help create attractive and vibrant spaces that create a strong impression of the town centre and help draw people in. Public art and murals, that can reflect the heritage of Buckley, can enliven blank facades and create a more colourful and vibrant environment.

Reduce the impact of the car on gateway spaces

Direct crossings with no barriers to movement

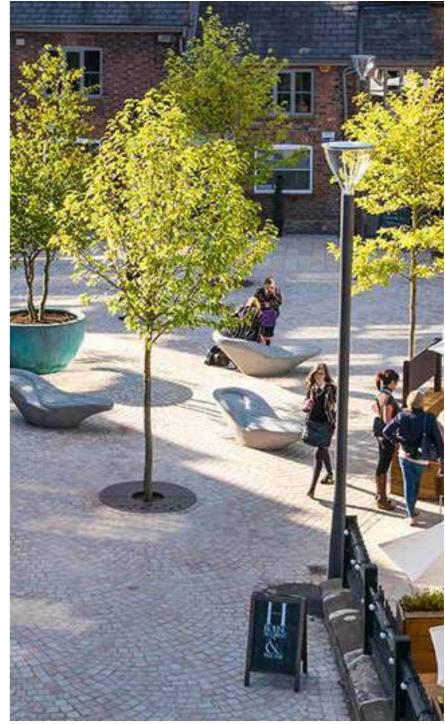Public art that celebrates the towns heritage

Landscape areas can be used for play

Create welcoming features

Enhance blank facades through art and murals

More space for people to dwell and spill out

PLACE OPPORTUNITIES - ANNOUNCING & ARRIVING AT THE TOWN CENTRE

Remove barriers to help facilitate movement

Central Gateway

The Mill Lane/Mold Road/Padeswood Road junction sits at the heart of the high street and is a key space in linking the two sides of the high street. Mill Lane to the north is the key link between the town centre and facilities around The Common, Buckley Medical Centre, Leisure Centre and High School. Padeswood Road runs south and provides access to the Brunswick Road Car Park.

This junction has been designed around the needs of the car and actively inhibits pedestrian movement through barriers and anti-walking paving. These create a barrier between the western and eastern side of the high street and discourage movement between them.

The junction needs to become a place for people first, which aids pedestrian movement through, into and out of the town centre. This will encourage people to visit and use the full length of the high street and make linked trips between the town centre and surrounding areas. Barriers need to be removed and a raised table/crossing points would allow for seamless movement through the space.

High quality materials can help define crossing points and the carriageway so that the space can be shared more effectively between people and vehicles. This is also a key location for wayfinding information to aid legibility into and through Buckley.

High quality materials used to help define areas

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People and cars successfully share the space

Prioritise pedestrian/cycle crossings

Key location for wayfinding displays

Strong linear features that help connect the two sides of the street
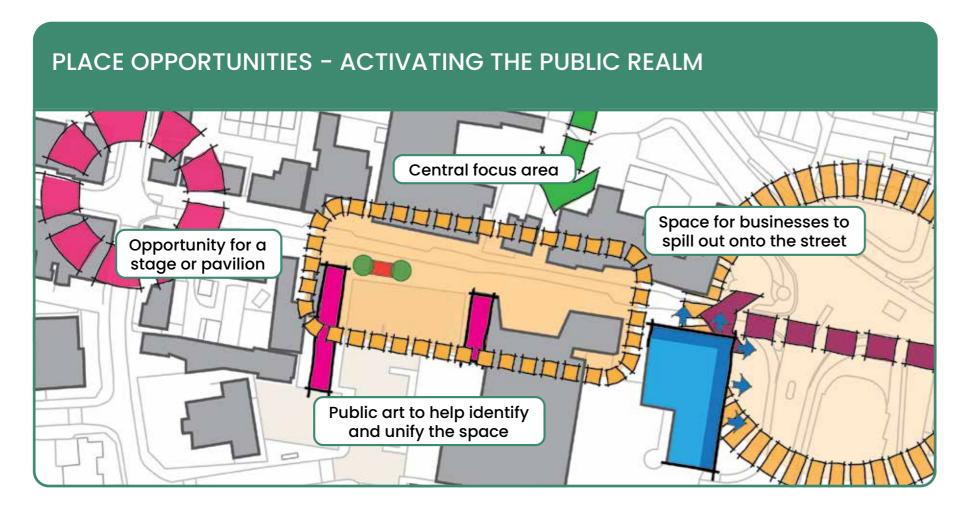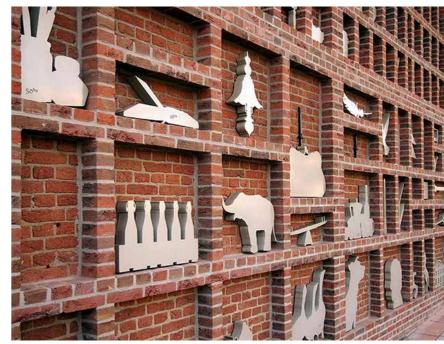
A place for people where cars are the guest

PLACE OPPORTUNITIES - ACTIVATING THE PUBLIC REALM

Central focus area

Space for businesses to spill out onto the street

Opportunity for a stage or pavilion

Public art to help identify and unify the space

Central Focus Area

There is the opportunity to create a focus of activity within the town centre, around Brunswick Road Car Park and Buckley Precinct. This would help enliven the town centre and help draw people in.

This would be centred around a pavilion/stage in which various activities could take place such as music performances or festivals. Seating and landscape areas would be arranged to allow for views of this pavilion, with the option for additional temporary seating to also be used. This would create

a hub within the street that people can gather in and socialise throughout the day and evening.

Surrounding shops and cafes will be encouraged to spill out into the space, to further add to the activity and vibrancy of the area.

The space could be unified through the use of public art along the blank façades of the surrounding buildings. This would help create a real identity to the space and encourage people to stop and dwell.

Public art to help define and enclose the space

Opportunity for more evening activities

Fixed seating arranged towards events space

Opportunity for colourful temporary seating

Encourage more spill out space

Space for markets....

Pavilion/stage for music performances and events
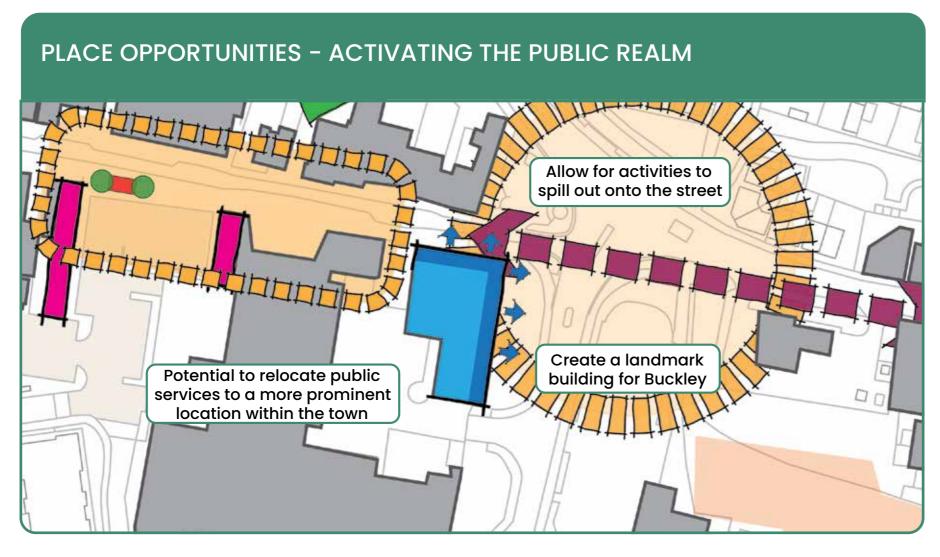
....landscaping and seating

PLACE OPPORTUNITIES - ACTIVATING THE PUBLIC REALM

Allow for activities to spill out onto the street

Potential to relocate public services to a more prominent location within the town

Create a landmark building for Buckley

Uses within the building interact with the street

Reimagine former discount store as key landmark building

The former discount store at the end of Brunswick Road sits, and is a key landmark, between the town centre and eastern gateway space. It is however failing in its potential to present a positive impression of the town and encourage people in.

This building could become a key landmark for the town. Reimagined as a hub of activity that presents a

positive and architecturally significant frontage onto the high street and gateway space. Large areas of glazing and ground floor activities could help connect the building to it surroundings and be a focus and draw for people entering the town centre. A possible use for this building would be the relocation of public services, with activities spilling out into the street and revitalising the area.

Space for spill out events

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Possible relocation of public services

Creates a positive frontage to the street

Opportunity to create a landmark building

Activity spills out into the street

Connecting outside to inside

PLACE OPPORTUNITIES – REBUILD THE BUCKLEY CHARACTER & IDENTITY

There exists an opportunity to help improve and unify the identity of Buckley through its built environment and public realm. At present, the retail core of the town centre has two distinct character areas. To the west is Old Road: a historic fabric and environment. To the east is Brunswick Road: a fragmented mix of historic with more recent infill developments. There is the opportunity to reinforce the distinct character areas whilst also providing some unity across the town centre. This could be in the form of a Streetscape Design Code.

A Design Code that can help ensure that as changes and design proposals are introduced they will tap into an overall vision and identity of the town and ensure they are of the highest quality and standards. A part of the Design code will also be to help create a cohesive streetscape and character, through use of its materials, landscaping and design principles. It can also help create a unified shop frontage design guide, with the aim of reducing the current clash of styles to a more harmonious one, whilst still acknowledging the district character areas.

- **Creating a design guide for the whole street to help clarify the identity and vision of Buckley.**
- **Specifying the use of materials and landscaping to create a harmonious and unified street scene.**
- **A shop front design guide to encourage a move towards a unified design that minimises clutter.**
- **Develops a strategy whereby key buildings, frontages and historic detailing is enhanced and celebrated within the street.**

DESIGN CODE EXAMPLES   **BEFORE**

AFTER

DESIGN CODE EXAMPLES   **BEFORE**

AFTER

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PLACE OPPORTUNITIES - GREENING BUCKLEY

Greening town centre streets that create form and structure is a key priority in adding to public realm, places to sit as well as providing solar shade, absorbing rainwater runoff and supporting other forms of climate adaptation, local nature and wider resilience. Streets can also promote local growing, herb boxes and recipe cards to promote use of seasonal vegetables and use of local supply chains. These activities also underpin wellness within a town like Buckley.

Green spaces, parks, recreation and sports grounds, footpaths, verges and other areas of greenery need to be linked together so residents can access and engage with them. Opportunities within the town centre to introduce additional tree planting, pollination areas and ground planting add to local biodiversity and nature conservation. The pedestrianised area of Brunswick Road would be more appealing with additional trees that draw people through the street, create more structure and areas of shade.

Opportunities for community growing should be explored where groups are formed and can manage underused land for productive purposes. This can form part of social prescribing linked to community health projects. This could also be linked to youth enterprise activity linking to pop-up food outlets and training activities.

- **Additional planting in key town centre approaches and gateways;**
- **Tree planting within the pedestrianised area;**
- **Use of productive landscape to support community activity, training and use in food-based community enterprises;**
- **Supporting civic planting that improves pride in place and is functional as rainwater gardens in addressing climate adaptation.**

PLACE OPPORTUNITIES – THE ROLE OF ACTIVITY GENERATORS

The need to develop the town centre's identity as a neighbourhood within neighbourhoods is a critical success factor for those towns that have found ways to repurpose and rediscover themselves. Where people meet and engage, leads to a sense of belonging, feeling good in a place and building a buzz and energy.

Buckley has a significant town population that, due to their mobility, have choice when it comes to their leisure and shopping time. They are drawn by an experience that is created, made, crafted, produced and curated that is a trip out or linked into their working week. Currently, they do not see Buckley town centre as their first choice.

The need to present a diverse, local and quality experience is an opportunity that can be achieved through developing hubs or destinations in the town centre. Their location is also important as they can generate footfall and linked activity in between. There are three existing or potential hubs/destinations in Buckley town centre that create dumbbells at either end being the former Swimming Baths and The Tivoli music venue and nightclub. There is also potential for a third destination that would activate Buckley Precinct, being the former Original Factory Shop on Brunswick Road.

The future of the former Swimming Baths on Mold Road is subject to a feasibility study with an initial consultation identifying the desire to preserve the history of the building and to bring it back into community use. The baths, built in 1928, were funded by Mine Owners, under a Government Scheme that donated monies to a Welfare Fund. There is a local desire to maintain the values and spirit of why it was built, for community benefit, but with a modern day multi-functional feel. If restored, the heritage of the building would have secondary benefits for neighbouring businesses and their frontages, so that they feel part of the civic and historical part of the town centre.

At the other end of the town is The Tivoli, which has the opportunity to connect with the town centre and elevate its rich music history, during the 70s, 80s and 90s as a key place for bands to play in tour, as well as period it was a nightclub and now back to a live music venue. The music heritage, and to the promotion of itself to residents and music goers across the region, needs to develop along with physical investment. Both inside and out regeneration of the building is needed along with consideration of how it engages with Brunswick Road, through to the town centre, at this outer gateway.

Finally, Buckley Precinct, whilst partially active inside, does not present good first impressions with the former Original Factory Shop being a bookend that is unoccupied and not saying the town centre is "open for business". Its blank side elevation presents an opportunity for opening up the corner through glazing and use of community art. How it interacts with the immediate pedestrian space needs to be addressed through its access, glazing, signage and what happens inside. Whilst its size poses significant challenges, there are also opportunities to complement other "hubs" and destinations. Suggestions include the relocation of public services to a prominent and active location in this building, a well-being and advice centre that could include fitness referrals and signposting, possible retail and community outreach presence for sports organisations in the town e.g. Buckley Football Club and a space for trialling and testing new ideas and enterprises. A flexible space could also be used for community cinema, summer kids clubs and other activities.

- **Understand how underused large town centre assets can be enhanced or repurposed and how these relate to one another and generate linked pedestrian footfall and activity;**
- **Support the Old Buckley Baths regeneration project development process and the established community volunteer working group, which is a future investment the local community is keen to see happen and support;**
- **Explore ways to enhance the experience and physical setting of the privately owned Tivoli as a regional music venue and the associated benefits to the local economy and artistic/ creative/music sector;**
- **Explore ways of working with the Buckley Precinct landlord with a specific focus on the former Original Factory Shop corner building that finds ways of animating and trialling new activity that directly benefits precinct tenants and the wider town centre.**

PEOPLE OPPORTUNITIES - CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

To improve the connectedness of Buckley neighbourhoods with the town centre so it is accessible, networked and attractive, whether this forms part of active travel, biodiversity schemes or local nature projects.

To the north of the town centre there are a number of notable assets such as the comprehensive school, leisure centre, community centre, Football Club and The Common area that form part of community life.

To the south Padeswood Road acts as an axis for active travel serving the neighbourhoods of Nant Mawr and Spon Green.

Networked paths and trails need to be signed with walking times, with also opportunities to provide interpretation on former mines, brickworks, potteries and other sites of historical interest that link you into the town centre.

The town centre needs to have cycle infrastructure such as stands and shelters at strategically placed locations.

The town's train station has the challenge of being one mile from the town centre with the main Brunswick Road being the main link between the two destinations. Nevertheless, Buckley having a train station is a key asset for the town and can support local employers and those visitors accessing the night time economy, specifically seeing bands at The Tivoli. Improvements to Brunswick Road (east)/ Chester Road would help people on foot and also wheeling.

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PEOPLE OPPORTUNITIES - LOCAL SOLUTIONS

Buckley needs to come together to explore, create and co-deliver local solutions that meet existing gaps in the town centre offer but also bring people together through the trial, campaign or project. This can be achieved through a Meanwhile Project Approach, use of outdoor markets and through events and festivals.

There is a need to search for and engage with micro and small enterprises that want to explore low-cost routes to market. The need for support mechanisms for hiring market stalls, space within units, themed events and scope for product placement in public facing outlets. It can also be centred on community/ social enterprises that may have more independence and flexibility with risk and creativity. Support for a meanwhile or start up business scheme needs to be provided in relation to landlord liaison, insurances, subsidised rentals and business development/ marketing advice.

The role of young people can also play a key role with the provision of youth enterprise projects that help in trialling and plugging gaps in the town centre offer. This could include a partnership project with The Tivoli with immersion in sound and lighting, stage design and other creative skills. Other ideas could include a young people's canteen project that provides a place

- **Shining a spotlight on community life, groups, clubs and stories that are found out in the wider town but are given a town centre space to promote their activity, partner a local café, social evenings, etc;**
- **Partner organisations that have a following and identity that would be more visible in the town centre e.g. Buckley Town Football Club community shop with indoor football net;**
- **Pop Up activity in Buckley Precinct. Work with landlord on a series of pop-up events such as supper club (partner Farm Shop), community cinema, theatre and other activities.**

to learn about hospitality, develop new skills and create a local experience that celebrates the use of local produce and also blends in local music, arts and culture.

This also needs to link into "Building the Buckley Brand", so that the offer and experience becomes a part of the new narrative and identity.

PEOPLE OPPORTUNITIES – BUILDING THE BUCKLEY BRAND

Buckley is a proud town, with a strong foundation in industry, making bricks and pottery, community, music and much more. From a small parish it has become Flintshire's second largest settlement due to its location on the English–Welsh border and the demand for housing. The settlement has outgrown what the village centre was with a need to reposition the town centre to its residents, established and new.

Identity is not about a logo and a strapline but about a campaign that resonates with the sense of place and its people. It needs to elevate its unique assets such as being the town that built bricks that have been used across the world, through its brass band and that Led Zeppelin played at The Tivoli. Such a campaign could be about "Making it in Buckley", which looks to the past but also to the present.

As with other Flintshire town centres, there is a need to adopt a holistic approach to shaping an identity that is formed through the mix of town centre uses, social spaces, and people-based streets that is part physical and part promotional.
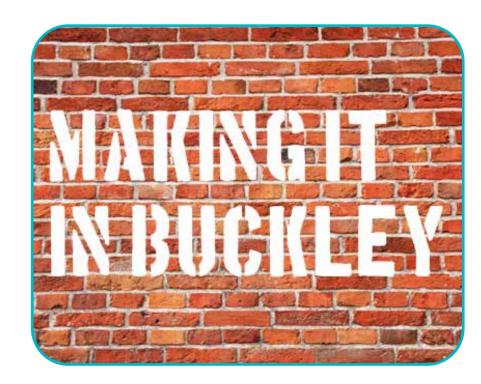
The physical element needs to centre around the place-based opportunities that this Plan outlines, which touch on a design code, colour palette, signage and other details that bring together an identity that meets a set of values. It's also about creating space for activity to be drawn to and adding to the personality of the town centre. Other

ways of projecting an identity can happen through community art, smaller community projects that interpret the local culture and heritage of a place. This can be physical artwork such as murals or temporary installations or events in buildings.

Some ideas for Buckley could include:

- Buckley – battle of the brass bands

- Buckley Walk of Fame – bands that have played at The Tivoli

- Buckley community art- brick making project – cross community or a town centre mural programme

Promotional elements of identity can take the form of a town centre campaign that could mentor and coach small businesses in creating the right experiences on the physical shop floor through to digital engagement. A wider community campaign on buy/shop/eat/meet up "local" also forms part of a collective identity that builds relationships and a cohesive offer. As already outlined, meanwhile projects and the trialling of new activities in empty or underused spaces also provide a valuable platform for testing new products and uses, helping to determine whether they meet local needs and align with the community's identity.

- **Design code for town centre that supports town palette, shop front design, signage, etc;**
- **Community-led branding initiatives – community art projects, murals, trails and routes, local photography campaigns and other initiatives;**
- **Develop local events programme – signature and local;**
- **Town centre business support that promotes "local" message and sense of place/ community through a blended approach that is on-street and digital.**

PEOPLE OPPORTUNITIES - PARTNERSHIP WORKING

To ensure place-based activity and investments have an impact and are sustainable and strategic, local partnerships need to be close to ensure all knowledge, experience, skills and effort is pointing in the same direction.

- Town partnership – information, promotion, sharing

There is also a need in Buckley to pilot and trial some ideas that are community-facing and activate the town centre.

- **Developing a street activity programme – music, arts, markets – trial street "bandstand";**
- **Develop a community art scheme that supports signage telling the Buckley story and gateway murals;**
- **Work with Precinct landlord on pop up events – cinema, supper clubs, theatre…;**
- **Keep Buckley Tidy/Green – explore tidying up/greening/planting gateways, underused space, public areas.**

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VISUALISING SUCCESS

The need to understand what success looks like is important when you are enabling and delivering change within a place like Buckley. It helps to understand the outcomes that you are reaching and the process you needed to follow to meet these. Visualising success is also good for motivation and rally around a common purpose, building trust and relationships. It also importantly demonstrates to those organisations that are funding projects, that you are attaining your outputs and outcomes and shows a return on investment. The diagram shows examples of outputs and outcomes by theme, which form part of an evaluation framework that a place-based partnership would use to monitor progress.

Gateway Spaces

OUTPUTS

- Total surface area of highway land enhanced
- Total surface area of green infrastructure added or improved as a result of support
- No of walking /cycling movements
- Linear metres of active travel routes created or improved
- Air quality count
- Pedestrian footfall from adjoining residential footpaths

OUTCOMES

- Increased mobility across the whole community
- Greater visitor and user experience
- Greater sense of place and local destination
- Increased opportunities to explore and engage with the town centre
- Increased sense of welcome and physical cohesion
- Local economic growth and sustainability

Central Gateway

OUTPUTS

- Total surface area of highway land enhanced
- No of walking /cycling movements
- Vacancy rate
- Diversity of town centre uses and activities
- Town centre user dwell time
- Town centre user spend
- Town centre satisfaction
- Change in town centre user perception

OUTCOMES

- Greater visitor and user experience
- Increased mobility across the whole community
- Greater sense of place and local destination
- Increased opportunities to explore and engage with the town centre
- Increased sense of welcome and physical cohesion
- Local economic growth and sustainability

Central Focal Area

OUTPUTS

- Total surface area of pedestrianised added value to

- Total surface area of green infrastructure added or improved as a result of support

- Creation of an outdoor performance space

- No of town events, festivals, markets and activities

- Vacancy rate

- Diversity of town centre uses and activities

- Town centre user dwell time

- Town centre user spend

- Town centre satisfaction

- Change in town centre user perception

OUTCOMES

- Increased street activity

- Increased opportunities to explore and spend time in the town centre

- Greater sense of place and local destination

- Greater diversity of arts and cultural activity and immersion with the local community

- Enhanced local economic and social well-being

- Increased sense of welcome and community cohesion

- Building confidence, loyalty and sustainable growth

Reimagine Former Discount Store as Key Landmark Building

OUTPUTS

- One keynote building enhanced and repurposed

- Square metreage of floor space improved

- No of community uses created / supported

- No of users /visitors

- Vacancy rate

- Diversity of town centre uses and activities

- Town centre user dwell time

- Town centre user spend

- Town centre satisfaction

- Change in town centre user perception

OUTCOMES

- Greater diversity of town centre activity

- Greater community patronage, activity and spend

- Inter community group working and sustainability

- Greater sense of place and local destination

- Enhanced economic and social well-being

- Increased sense of welcome and community cohesion

Rebuild Buckley Character & Identity

OUTPUTS

- Diversity of town centre uses and activities
- Vacancy rate
- Local business growth
- Pedestrian footfall
- Town centre user dwell time
- Town centre user spend
- Town centre satisfaction
- Change in town centre user perception

OUTCOMES

- Greater sense of place and local destination
- Enhanced economic and social well-being
- Greater opportunities for local enterprise and entrepreneurship
- Increased feeling of community safety
- Increased sense of welcome and community cohesion

Greening Buckley

OUTPUTS

- No of community planting projects /initiatives
- Total surface area of green infrastructure added or improved as a result of support
- No of volunteers
- No of social prescribing activities
- Air quality count
- Improved biodiversity count

OUTCOMES

- Greater community wellness through the presence of enhanced town centre greening
- Green infrastructure enables dwell and greater enjoyment of the town centre space
- Increased resilience to climate change
- An appealing experience for all

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The Role of Activity Generators

OUTPUTS

- No of town centre buildings brought back into use

- Total surface area of town centre space reused

- No of community uses created / supported

- No users /visitors

- No of community groups supported /sustained

- Vacancy rate

- Diversity of town centre uses and activities

- Town centre user dwell time

- Town centre user spend

- Town centre satisfaction

- Change in town centre user perception

OUTCOMES

- Greater diversity of town centre activity

- Greater community patronage, activity and spend

- Inter community group working and sustainability

- Greater sense of place and local destination

- Enhanced economic and social well-being

- Increased sense of welcome and community cohesion

Connected Communities

OUTPUTS

- Linear metres of active travel routes created or improved

- Increased participation in walking and cycling

- No of local people participating in outdoor physical activity using green infrastructure

- No of walking/cycling movements

- No of community groups engaged

- No of wellness events and activities

- No of people experiencing greater health and well-being benefits

- No of town centre businesses aligned to well-being activities and experiences

OUTCOMES

- Reduction in health and wellbeing inequalities

- Greater community cohesion

- Pathways are opened to learning, employment and other activities

Local Solutions

OUTPUTS

- No of new community-led initiatives and campaigns developed
- No of trials and demonstration projects
- No of physical enterprise initiatives
- No of partnered projects
- No of marketing and promotional activities
- No of events, festivals and activities
- No of local town centre businesses supported
- No of new micro to SME businesses supported
- No of jobs (FTE/PTE) supported/created
- No of new products developed
- Pedestrian footfall
- Vacancy rate
- Diversity of town centre uses and activities
- Town centre user dwell time
- Town centre user spend
- Town centre satisfaction
- Change in town centre user perception

- Capacity within the local community enhanced
- Greater inter-group working and networking
- Increased levels of creativity and innovation
- Improved partnership working
- Local assets and venues are sustainable and growing
- Organisations are more viable and sustainable
- Buckley brand is growing

Building the Buckley Brand

OUTPUTS

- Create an accessible Buckley brand, story, toolkit and campaign
- No of marketing and promotional activities
- No of town centre properties that have embraced Buckley brand colours and imagery
- No of events, campaigns, festival and activities that support the message of a Buckley brand
- No of residents and volunteers involved in community-centred projects
- No of town centre businesses mentored
- No of meanwhile projects

OUTCOMES

- Increased awareness of Buckley brand and its town centre
- Increased town centre user and visitor activity
- Increased sense of welcome, community cohesion and loyalty
- Greater sense of place and local destination
- Enhanced local economic and social well-being

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Partnership Working

OUTPUTS

- No of community groups and organisations supported

- No of network sessions

- No of joint projects/initiatives/plans developed and delivered

OUTCOMES

- Greater collaboration and co-operation across community groups and organisations

- Funding and resources levered in

- Sustainable working and networks that have well-being as a central focus

WAYS OF WORKING

Development & Delivery

Delivery of this Placemaking Plan is dependent on a partnership approach where strategic and local organisations bring their own individual objectives into a collective set of proposals that mutually benefit each other and importantly benefit Buckley town centre and its immediate neighbourhoods. The opportunities within this vision and strategy require different mixes of partners, resources and timetable for development and delivery.

The key success factors for delivery within a Placemaking setting include:

- Understanding individual strengths including knowledge, expertise and physical assets and how these can be aligned.

- Communication and co-ordination at both a strategic and implementation level.

- Working to a common design code that ensures consistency in built environment and public space and meets respective climate change and sustainability targets.

- Connecting the needs of local residents with various pathways to learning, health and well-being, physical activity and employment.

- Presenting a unified identity for a place like Buckley, while respecting the identities of individual organisations.

Partnership Working

The Placemaking Plan process has already initiated a partnership approach since it identified the need for a collaborative approach to Place Making across town centres in Flintshire in June 2022.

The Council has an established Places Group, which is part of the Economic Collaboration Group governance structure. The purpose of the group is to achieve joined-up thinking, planning and delivery of priorities within town centres in relation to the built environment including redeveloping or improving properties, public realm improvements, green infrastructure and active travel initiatives. The group also has a role to discuss and agree funding priorities, including decision making for the use of funding available to the Council to implement Place Making.

A review of the Places Group was completed, and opportunities to improve its overall effectiveness were identified including i) improve collaborative working and co-ordination of Place Making across the council, ii) develop an annual work programme reflective of place making activity being led by different services/ officers across the council and improve the monitoring and reporting of Place Making activity and delivery against approved Place Making Plans.

The Council has also established and co-ordinates a People -focused services group, which covers a range of mainly external bodies and organisations that have a people-focused element in their provision. Some internal Flintshire County Council services are also represented. This group includes representatives from the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, North Wales Police, Flintshire Local Voluntary Council, amongst other organisations.

In growing this partnership approach, the Placemaking Plan needs to consider local, grass roots community groups as well as the local business sector, so that an equitable public, private community/voluntary sector alliance is formed. What form the partnership takes needs further discussion between organisations, so that it has an agreed purpose, aims and objectives, the right scale of operation, values and ways of working. Such a partnership would need to be designed so that it:

• Supports, enables and co-delivers place-based action in Buckley

• Provides a common space for organisations to share ideas and solutions

• Promotes Buckley within and outside of the local community and

• Makes the place better now and for future generations.

PLACES GROUP

PEOPLE GROUP

LOCAL DELIVERY

place making
FLINTSHIRE

chris jones

rl.
Roberts Limbrick