

Cynlluniau Lle Ceredigion Place Plans

Aberaeron Place Plan

2019



Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council



ABERAERON PLACE PLAN

November 2019

Introduction

All communities in Wales have been encouraged to develop a Place Plan. The Aberaeron Place plan has been developed by Aberaeron Town Council in conjunction with the local community and Ceredigion County Council. Welsh communities now have more opportunity than ever before to shape the future of the places where they live and work.

The Plan links to other County Council strategic documents including:-

- The Ceredigion Local Development Plan
- The Ceredigion Single Integrated Plan
- Ceredigion For All (Local Service Board)
- The Ceredigion Corporate Strategy
- Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)
- The Ceredigion Wellbeing Improvement Plan

As such the document can function as community led Supplementary Planning Guidance for the local authority and assist with decisions and plans in relation to the use and development of land and changes and improvements to local services. The document can assist in achieving local aspirations and improve community well-being.

Background Context

Aberaeron is a town in the west of Ceredigion situated on the coastal trunk road A487. The town was planned in the early 19th Century and comprises elegant Regency style buildings located around a principal square and the harbour, which now forms a conservation area and many of these buildings are protected by way of listed building status. Later development occurred outside this historic area and includes dwellings, shops, businesses and holiday accommodation.

The town's main industry is tourism, but it is also the home of important public services including Ceredigion County Council and the new Integrated Health Centre, both of which create significant employment opportunities.

The town's community facilities serve not only Aberaeron the town but also the wider area. This includes a leisure centre, swimming pool, residential home and sheltered housing unit. The GP practice covers a wide area and is incorporated in the new integrated health centre.

A primary school, secondary school including 6th Form, a Pupil Referral Unit and the Canolfan y Môr Autism Unit are located in the town and serve the local catchment area and other parts of Ceredigion. The County Youth Service runs a statutory youth club and a number of other uniformed and non-uniformed organisations provide services for children and young people.

Aberaeron has a strong sporting heritage and there are many clubs in town that provide a host of sporting opportunities. This is also matched by a number of organisations that provide artistic and cultural opportunities.

The town therefore provides a range of services to a wider community including shopping, health, leisure, learning and community facilities.

Vision for the Future

Our vision is that Aberaeron will:-

“Embrace change yet retain its cultural heritage and identity as a special place within Ceredigion”.

The Town Council and this document seek to:

- make the town an attractive place to live;
- promote business growth and enhanced employment opportunities;
- retain and improve services for the benefit of the town and the wider community;
- maintain and promote its cultural heritage and the Welsh Language;
- continue to develop Aberaeron as a major tourism destination.

Consultation

A number of consultation events have been held and local residents as well as visitors have contributed towards the plan and its vision for the future. The final document has been developed in partnership with specialist consultants and specialist officers from the local authority.

Sustainability

To ensure that future development is positive and effective all actions in relation to identified issues and themes will be developed in partnership with others including Ceredigion County Council, Hywel Dda University Health Board, Dyfed-Powys Police, Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations and the Welsh Government. There will also be full consultation with local residents and businesses.

To this end the Town Council is currently developing a wider strategy that will provide direction and guidance for town developments and improvements. This will be supported by a series of Annual Plans to assist with clarity and action to ensure that residents are fully involved and aware of developments and improvement.

Key Themes

With regard to future development, whether of the built environment, the natural environment or services there are many factors that need to be taken into consideration. This includes local and national policies, some of which will be supportive and some restrictive. Reference will be made to such policies where relevant.

Community desires and aspirations. It is important that community needs are met, however this has to be balanced out against potential constraints including local geography, population size and fluctuations, financial restrictions, grant funding opportunities and other such things. References will be made to community feedback that has been received from consultation exercises and the wider community will be kept informed and consulted with in the future.

As such this document despite outlining potential future developments for Aberaeron is a fluid document and will continue to be updated and adapted at regular intervals.

The key themes have been broken down into ten areas to assist with clarity and understanding. There are however many obvious overlaps and links between themes.

1. Future Strategy

The vision for Aberaeron has already been set out in broad terms and this was developed on the back of the consultation exercises with the community. These areas will be developed in more detail in other themes.

Strategic aims are to:-

- make the town an attractive place to live;
- promote business growth and enhanced employment opportunities;
- retain and improve services for the benefit of the town and the wider community;

- maintain and promote its cultural heritage and the Welsh Language;
- continue to develop Aberaeron as a major tourism destination.

Links to Local Development Plan (LDP) policies:

Policy DM19: Historic & Cultural Landscape (protects buildings of cultural & historic importance)

Policy DM07: Conservation Areas

Policy DM03: Sustainable Travel

Policy LU18 & 19 Retail Proposals County wide & in Urban service centres & LU21 Change of use from an Existing Retail Use

Policy LU22: Community Provision

Policy DM09: Design & Movement, Policy DM10: Design & Landscaping

2. Focal points

All towns have key focal points, landmarks and attractions that make them unique. Its is important to maintain existing ones wherever possible but at the same time improve and develop them wherever possible and develop new ones. Focal points for Aberaeron include;

- **The inner and outer harbour.** These are viewed by many as the key focus for the town. It is essential that the harbour and its structures are maintained and enhanced to continue and develop its tradition as both a harbour for sailing and fishing activities, and also as a focal point for tourists regardless of any harbour defence works that are required urgently. There is potential to enhance the areas immediately adjoining the harbour at Pwll Cam, the South Beach area and near the Tourist Information Centre which in recent years have become unkept.

Community feedback;

“Improve the moorings and develop the harbour to make it a better sailing destination.”

“Install lock gates and develop pontoons.”

“Sort out the flooding issue.”

- **Cae Sgwar.** Cae Sgwar is one of the most used leisure sites in town and as such its retention and development is vital to the sustainability. The square is now maintained by the Town Council and work is constantly ongoing to keep it as an attractive space.

Community feedback;

“Provide a water fountain for fresh drinking water.”

“Respect and safeguard the historic names of buildings and places.”

- **County Hall.** This historic building is the key landmark in the centre of town. It provides a strong link between the council and the residents in that it is used as offices by the County Council and includes the library where there is a County Council Contact Centre.
- **The Old Hospital.** The hospital facilities have now moved to the new Integrated Health and Care Centre in town, which in itself could be viewed as a new landmark in town. Now plans have yet been drawn up for the old building however there is a desire to retain the buildings character as a major landmark.

Links to Local Development Plan (LDP) policies:

Policy DM19: Historic & Cultural Landscape (protects buildings of cultural & historic importance)

3. High Street Improvement

Aberaeron despite being a small town and not having a huge number of shops is a key shopping centre for the wider community and other parts of west Wales. There is a variety of shops, retail outlets and places to eat and the provision is of a good range from economical good value shops to what is nowadays described as “high end”. It is of great future benefit to improve and develop this provision wherever possible to it must be in-keeping with the architectural quality of the town.

Community feedback;

“Maintaining the town centre as a vibrant shopping centre is essential going forward.”

“Maintaining our convenience shops is essential to the vitality of the town as an Urban Service Centre.”

“Improving frontages is needed.”

Links to Local Development Plan (LDP) policies:

Policy LU18 & 19 Retail Proposals County wide & in Urban service centres & LU21 Change of use from an Existing Retail Use

4. Sustainable travel and accessibility

Aberaeron is well served by the bus services with routes and regular buses from north to south and east to west, as well as a daily bus to Swansea and Cardiff. However, the following matters should be considered in any future traffic management plan.

It is recognised that there is insufficient off-street parking provision in the town. Pay and display car parks are currently located at South Beach, North Beach and Regent Street, however at busy times this is not sufficient to meet the needs of the town. There needs to be review of spaces within town that could change use and be made into car parks.

These problems lead to heavy traffic build up in the streets and a large amount of illegal parking either double parking, on yellow lines and in dangerous places. There is a serious need for a review of traffic flow within the town centre. This would have a positive impact on pedestrian safety.

The parking issues also have a detrimental effect on tourism visits linked to coaches as there is not a suitable location for coach drop offs in town.

Community feedback;

“The introduction of a one-way system at Water Street and Quay Parade would be good especially in summer.”

“There is a serious problem with traffic emerging from Alban Square at its junction with South Road (A482).”

“A town hopper bus needs to be considered in the context of serving the new integrated health centre.”

“It would be good to have more free parking during peak hours.”

Links to Local Development Plan (LDP) policies:

Policy DM03 Sustainable Travel

5. Improving the Natural and Built Environment

As a town Aberaeron benefits from a fantastic balance between green spaces and buildings and it is vital to retain the town character and preserve things for the future. Any developments in either area need to retain and enhance town character.

Aberaeron prides itself on its character and as things develop it is vital that basic services such as street cleaning are retained and improved. The whole view of the town and its cleanliness and ambience are vital to retaining its place as a special place to visit.

All developments in town must respect the architectural heritage of town and it may be that the conservation area within the town centre should be extended.

All green sites should also be maintained to a high and safe standard and improvements made wherever possible for the benefits of residents and tourists.

Community feedback;

“Promote Aberaeron as a clutter free town.”

“Improve pedestrian access.”

“Promote a litter free environment.”

“Respect development design in the context of a Listed Building environment.”

“Work with CADW on listed buildings but do not restrict green developments.”

“Enhance the natural environment for the benefit of local residents.”

Explore opportunities for greener local energy from the river and the sea.”

“Provide charging points for electric cars.”

Links to Local Development Plan (LDP) policies:

Policy DM06: High Quality Design and Placemaking,

Policy DM09: Design and Movement &

Policy DM10: Design and Landscaping

6. Health and Well-being

All opportunities must be taken to ensure that individuals whether locals or visitors are able to lead an active and healthy life. Aberaeron is lucky in that it provides a whole host of opportunities for individuals to participate in a huge range of activities. All efforts must be made to maintain and improve upon current facilities and opportunities. The health of the nation is now covered by the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act so it is vital that we look to the future and provide for our future generations.

In relation to the previous issues linked to traffic problems within town all opportunities need to be explored in relation to active travel to reduce the number of short journeys and provide opportunities for health improvement.

Community feedback;

“Aberaeron needs an artificial turf pitch.”

“It would be good to improve the changing rooms at the cricket/football pitch and have a club house”

“We must make sure that we don’t lose our swimming pool. Our children live by the sea and need to be able to swim”

“Improve the harbour facilities and develop water sports.”

“Enhance the natural environment for the benefit of local residents.”

“Extend the Llanerchaeron footpath to Ciliau Aeron.”

“Promote local footpaths and walking.”

Links to Policy:

Well-being of Future Generations Act.

7. Tourism

Aberaeron is a major destination for tourists many of whom are not one off or short stay visitors but have a caravan in or close to town and visit most weekends and for longer stays. The tourist information centre has a high footfall and provides a service that is not just relevant to town but to the wider area including other parts of Ceredigion. Although the service is provided by the County Council the Sunday opening hours are funded by the Town Council.

Tourism is a vital lifeblood for Aberaeron and all theme in this document have some link to tourists and their visits to Aberaeron. It is therefore essential to ensure that all developments in town retain a balance and that one development does not cancel out or restrict another.

As well as the landmarks and attractions already mentioned there is a wide variety of tourist accommodation in Aberaeron. From caravan sites and camping ground to boutique hotels and holiday cottages. All are well used and visitor numbers are high, however there is at present a decline in the bed and breakfast sector with businesses for sale. The biggest hotel in town The Royal Feathers is currently closed and this has had an impact on the number of beds available. The hotel was a major venue for functions and this too has had a knock on effect on businesses.

There currently appears to be the need for a more co-ordinated approach to tourism development to retain a balance of provision and improve services. The way that people organise and plan their holidays is changing and with the increase in online booking future developments need to be for the benefit of the town.

Community feedback;

“What is happening with the Feathers.”

“There needs to be better parking.”

“A Chamber of Trade would be beneficial.”

“There are a lot of events for tourists.”

“Town Wifi and a town App would be good.”

Links to Local Development Plan (LDP) policies:

LDP Tourism Topic Paper

8. Culture Heritage and the Welsh Language

Aberaeron prides itself on its individual character and its historical and cultural background. As such all future developments must seek to retain and promote this. Cymdeithas Aberaeron has a major role to play in securing the historical context.

The fabric of the town is vital to retaining all cultural aspects and therefore all developments must be in-keeping with architectural qualities.

Many within the town and the locality speak Welsh either as first or second language and again all efforts must be made to retain and improve the use of the Welsh Language within the community.

Community feedback;

“More Welsh Lessons would be good.”

“Respect and safeguard the historic names of buildings and places.”

“Make more efforts to provide visitors with information about the history of the town like the town trail.”

Links to Local Development Plan (LDP) policies:

The emerging LDP2 strategic policy S06 designates the whole county as linguistically sensitive and is supportive of development to promote and support the use of the Welsh language.

9. Climate Change

At this current moment in time climate change, its impact on the world we live in and the efforts of man to rectify the situation are high on every agenda. It is therefore important that all developments within Aberaeron and the wider community link to this agenda. Many efforts have already been made around town by individuals organisations etc in relation to such things as reduction of use of single use plastic and more will continue to be made.

It was clear from the consultation events that all residents view it as a priority and therefore again there is a need for a co-ordinated and managed approach.

Community feedback;

“More Fairtrade products should be available in town.”

“Provide charging points for electric cars.”

“Aim to be a carbon positive and plastic free town.”

“Work with Cadw and the LPA to ensure listed buildings are not prohibited from installing solar panels.”

10. Development Opportunities

Developments in relation to places are always dependant upon geographical areas, especially in relation to land use. Aberaeron itself has a relatively small and physically restricted landscape. It is constrained by surrounding steep slopes and due to this topography there is a shortage of suitable development land for the future. The amount of land identified in the Local Development Plan is very limited.

This provides a conundrum for Aberaeron in that there is a balance to be achieved between retaining the old and developing the new. Throughout the community consultation exercises a number of possible areas were raised/suggested and these are listed here. However each one has its own issues and considerations.

- **The harbour.** Ideas for the harbour were listed previously. Key issues for harbour area development would be the sea defences and problem with flooding. Possible impacts on the carparking spaces and the fact that it is a conservation area.
- **The Hospital site.** Provision has now moved to the new Integrated Care Centre. It is not yet known what will happen to the old hospital but there is a need in town for housing and specifically affordable housing. There are already requests for the façade of the building to be retained. Any developments on the site, that do not retain the facade would need to be in character with the historical architecture of Aberaeron.” There could also be implications in relation to parking.
- **Housing needs and opportunities.** As previously mentioned building land within Aberaeron is very limited and it is difficult to identify any space for housing and particularly affordable housing development beyond that in the LDP. What creative solutions can be found to provide suitable affordable housing for local residents that doesn't impact on the character of the town?
- **Economic development opportunities.** As it stands such opportunities as with housing would essentially need to be within the current built environment and therefore there is a need for creative and co-ordinated solutions. There is very limited opportunity for light industrial type development. With regard to retail there are very few empty shops in Aberaeron and this is encouraging. The shopping area is relatively small and when shops become available, they are quickly filled. The larger shops are harder to fill when they become available due to the high business rates. It is important that Aberaeron remains attractive for businesses who want to establish themselves in the town. Aberaeron has thrived by having small, unique and individual shops which offer something unique to the shopper.