

Carmarthen

PLACEMAKING STRATEGY

March 2026

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Carmarthenshire
County Council

Contents

Introduction **1**

About Placemaking Strategies 2

The approach 3

Summary **4**

Important considerations **8**

Current trends 9

Location **12**

Public realm **20**

Movement **24**

Mix of use **28**

Identity **32**

People and community **36**

Making it happen **54**



Image supplied courtesy of LocalMotion Carmarthen



Introduction

In September 2025, Carmarthenshire County Council set out to develop placemaking strategies for three primary towns across the County. Placemaking is central to the Welsh Government's approach to planning. Placemaking helps to shape development, rather than simply approving, and seeks to involve communities in a meaningful way. It also helps to create a joined-up approach between partners seeking to work in a place and focuses not just on buildings but how people move around the place and what makes them want to spend time there.

This placemaking plan will support the key stakeholders of Carmarthen to apply for funding from funding bodies which will include Welsh Government and UK Government. Each of Carmarthen's stakeholders will have a part to play in the delivery of this placemaking plan.

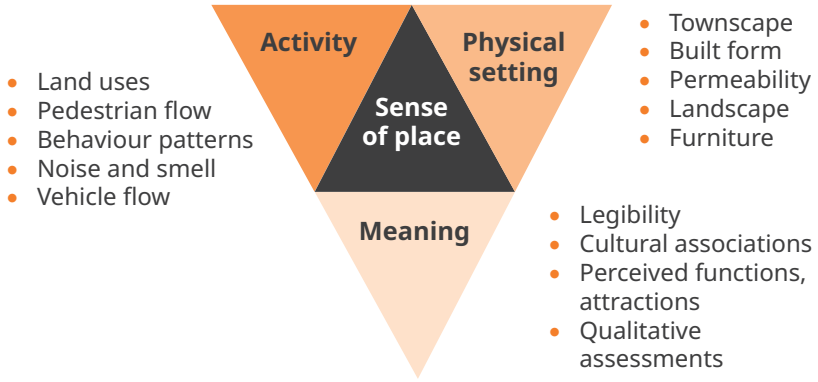
About Placemaking Strategies

Placemaking is all about creating healthy, sustainable places that support community wellbeing. The Design Commission for Wales has helped clearly set out what placemaking is by developing the Placemaking Wales Charter. The charter sets out six placemaking principles that help contribute to creating and maintaining good places. These are:

People and community – the local community is involved in the development of proposals. The needs, aspirations, health and wellbeing of all people are considered at the outset. Proposals are shaped to help meet these needs as well as creating, integrating and protecting and/or enhancing a sense of community and to promote equality.

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.

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 network and public transport stations and stops are positively integrated.



Source: Design Commission for Wales Placemaking Guide, adapted from Sense of Place Model, Punter (1991)

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 a 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.

Location – places should grow and develop in a way that uses land efficiently, supports and enhances existing places and is well connected. The location of housing, employment and leisure and other facilities are planned to help reduce the need to travel.

Placemaking strategies are not, nor should they try to be, detailed masterplans. They may consider some matters of more detailed design, but the principal function is to provide a clear summary of the key issues for a place, provide justification for which issues are the priority, and provide solutions to those issues in terms of a series of actions. They should also be used as a framework. The world does not stand still for the life of a plan, and so they need a degree of flexibility, they should be agile, providing a clear framework, but without being too prescriptive in terms of the details. Some of the proposed actions in a placemaking plan will be simple and straightforward to achieve, some elements will require more detailed design consideration and further engagement to make them a reality.

The approach

Urban Foundry Ltd were appointed to coproduce the placemaking strategy for Carmarthen working closely with the local community and the Economic Development team at Carmarthenshire County Council to achieve this. Figure 1 shows what this involved.

The approach involved a first round of consultation to understand what people felt the issues and opportunities were in Carmarthen. This was then developed into a list of priority outcomes and actions. These were then further consulted on and refined, first with the Carmarthen Town Forum and then through a public consultation.

This document provides the overall findings from the work.

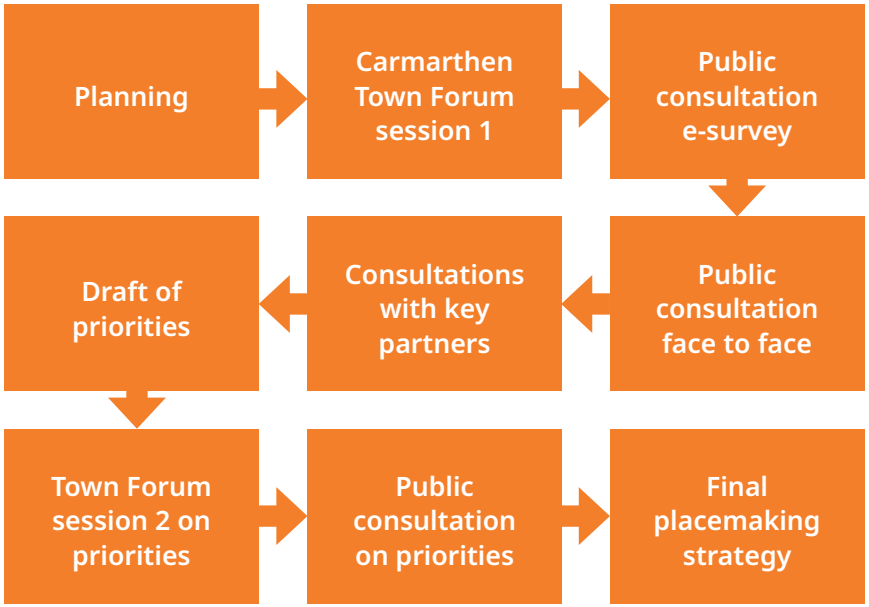


Figure 1 - Co-production approach to placemaking strategy

How to use this document

The strategy starts with a summary of the wider factors that will influence the placemaking strategy for Carmarthen.

The remainder of the report is then structured around each placemaking theme setting out:

- **Now** – what are the issues, challenges and strengths in the town
- **Where** – what do people want to change and strengthen over the coming months and years
- **How** – what are the practical actions that will deliver this change

The document can be used by anyone, but it is intended as a shared set of priorities and actions for key partners working in Carmarthen. This includes:

- **Carmarthen Town Forum** – providing a framework for priority areas for the Town Forum to focus on
- **Carmarthen Town Council** – providing evidence for projects and activities and to help guide priority activities in the town
- **Carmarthenshire County Council** – guiding priority actions for the Carmarthenshire Towns Team and other Council departments
- **Community and Voluntary Sector** – providing evidence and support for projects and programmes
- **Businesses, Developers and Investors** – showing where there is strong support for developments
- **Individuals** – understanding what the Taskforce and County Council are prioritising to improve the town and providing an accountability framework for this work

Each year Carmarthenshire County Council will prepare a report for the Carmarthen Town Forum helping to set out the progress being made towards delivering the strategy.

Summary

This is a brief summary of the current situation, what we want the impacts of this strategy to be, and how we can achieve those impacts. The subsequent sections in this strategy provide greater detail in each of these areas.

How things are

Carmarthen is an important regional centre, serving surrounding rural communities. It has independent shops, cultural organisations and public services as well as significant historic assets, a University, an attractive riverside, and links to the surrounding countryside. But these assets are not working together as effectively as they could.

The Town Centre is faring relatively well economically but still with considerable room for improvement. It lacks a clear sense of direction and feels disjointed. King Street, St Catherine's Walk, the market, castle and riverside are not well connected. Some of the main routes into the town are also unattractive and do not create a strong first impression. Whilst there are good green assets on its fringes, the town centre lacks greenery. The centre could more generally be better maintained.

There is a strong base of independent shops and cultural activity, but the retail offer is declining and there is not enough for young people, older people or to encourage people to stay into the evening. There are also vacant and underused building.

The town centre is dominated by traffic and surface car parking and can be difficult to navigate on foot, by bike or for people with accessibility needs. Public transport is not always frequent or well connected.

Carmarthen has a distinctive history and culture, including its Roman and medieval past, Merlin stories, coracles, market heritage and Welsh language. However, this identity is not always visible or well promoted. People also feel they are not sufficiently involved in decisions about the future of the town and that partners could work together more effectively.

What we want to improve

Location outcomes:

- Greater action around town centre first planning policy
- Improve connections to and use of Riverside
- Strengthen spatial form of town
- Develop strategic key buildings
- Improve links with cycle paths and surrounding countryside
- Improve connectivity
- Recognise and embrace historic urban form for all future developments with strong urban design
- Improve measurement and communication of progress

Mix of use outcomes:

- Improve the mix of uses in the town centre
- Increase use of public realm for leisure
- More emerging businesses receive support

Public realm outcomes:

- Maintain and improve existing spaces
- Improve the look, feel and use of key squares
- Greater amounts of green infrastructure throughout the town
- More use of the street scene
- More opportunities for play in the street scene
- Greater celebration of the street heritage
- A cleaner town
- More welcoming town

Movement outcomes:

- Improve options for people walking and cycling
- Improve the balance in the town centre between car and pedestrian
- Improve the Lane connections
- Improve public transport
- More people encouraged to make short stops en route
- Improved access to Carmarthen town centre for short stay trips

Identity outcomes:

- Greater sense of identity for the town
- Better showcase built heritage
- Develop riverside element of identity
- Strengthen the existing (strong) cultural base
- Improve cultural place branding
- Improve sense of vibrancy on street
- Better integrate UWTSD into the town's identity and sense of place
- Improve understanding and promotion of history
- Greater strength of the Welsh language through placemaking activities

People and communities outcomes:

- More opportunities for people to be involved in the town development
- More collaborative and strategic local government collaborations
- More opportunities for young people
- Create more opportunities for older people
- Improve communications
- Improve partnership working with private and third sectors
- Greater use of placemaking to deliver healthier towns
- Better coordinate Internal Council policies/processes to support town centre development

How we will get there

The key areas of work identified in the placemaking strategy include:

Connecting the town and riverside –

The strategy supports improved connections between the historic streets, shopping areas, castle, market, riverside and surrounding countryside. This includes better routes, gateways and signage and making more of the riverside as a destination.

Balancing the needs of people and cars –

The strategy supports safer walking and cycling, more accessible streets and better management of traffic, parking and deliveries. Partners will also work with transport providers to improve public transport.

Putting the town centre first –

Future planning, investment and decisions about public buildings and services should consider their effect on the town centre. Vacant and underused buildings will be supported back into use, and new development should respect and strengthen Carmarthen's historic form. A simple design guide will help ensure that new developments and building improvements strengthen the character, quality and connectivity of Carmarthen.

Supporting a wider mix of uses –

The strategy will support independent and emerging businesses, pop-up and meanwhile uses and more homes in the town centre. It will also create more opportunities for leisure, culture and evening activities.

Creating greener and more welcoming spaces –

Priorities include improving Nott Square and Guildhall Square, developing a town centre green infrastructure strategy and ensuring that planting and existing spaces are properly maintained. More seating, play, lighting and activity will encourage people to spend time in the town.

Strengthening Carmarthen's identity –

The town's Roman and medieval history, Merlin stories, market heritage, coracles, Welsh language and creative culture will become more visible through branding, signage, events and digital trails. The plan will also strengthen collaborative working with the University and cultural organisations.

Turning community involvement into action –

The Town Forum will bring partners together to drive the strategy, supported by regular community engagement and stronger links with the private and third sectors. Progress will be measured and reported so people can see what is changing.

Important considerations

In this section we set out some global, national and local trends that will inform the placemaking strategy. Please remember we have provided a simple summary of trends to help set the scene for this report. More detail including the data and information underlying these trends is set out in the technical appendix.

Current trends

Trends around people

Overall Carmarthenshire as a whole has a growing population and this is also the case in Carmarthen. Between 2011 and 2021 the population in Carmarthen increased by 3%. But there have been changes in the demographics. The proportion of young people (aged 15 and under) has increased by 7% and those of working age (16 to 64) has decreased by 1%. The number of older people (aged 65+) has increased by 13%. The number of Welsh Speakers is falling with 41% Welsh Speakers in 2011 falling to 38% in 2021.

The overall health of people in Carmarthenshire as a whole is improving. In 2021, 47.2% of Carmarthenshire residents described their health as “very good”, increasing from 45.7% in 2011. While those describing their health as “bad” fell from 6.0% to 5.2%. The percentage of people who were identified as being disabled and limited a lot in Carmarthenshire fell from 13.0% to 10.5%, while the percentage of people who were identified as being disabled and limited a little decreased from 11.4% to 11.1%. Current data for Carmarthenshire suggests a slight fall in life expectancy. 56% of people in Carmarthen are economically active and there are low levels of unemployment at just 3%.

These are important trends. It helps show that Carmarthen is growing, but it is also changing. People are older but there is improved health and the number of Welsh speakers is falling. Unemployment is low and levels of economic activity are remaining stable. This is important to placemaking as it helps highlight the importance of strengthening the Welsh language through all activities and recognising how the population is changing over time.

Trends around town centres

The mix of retail uses in Carmarthen broadly reflects the Carmarthenshire average, but there are several differences. The centre has a slightly higher proportion of comparison retailers compared with the Carmarthenshire and UK averages despite the higher vacancy rate. There is a relatively low provision of convenience goods shops, restaurant and cafés and hot food takeaways.

The Carmarthenshire Retail Study in 2023 helped highlight a desire among users of Carmarthen town centre for fewer vacant shops, more and better food shops and cheaper parking.

There is strong Welsh Government support for 'town centre first' approaches and an emphasis on placemaking, but with continuing pressure from out of town developments (some of it new, some from legacy pressures). Coupled with this there are also significantly increased capital costs of both materials and labour, making development more costly, inflationary pressures on revenue costs for staffing plus increases to Employers' National Insurance, and significant rises in other overhead costs (notably utilities), combined with the reduction or removal of post-Covid reliefs on business rates.

At the same time, purchasing power within the economy has been squeezed for individuals but also for many companies and also public sector bodies. The major casualties of Covid were the large nationals, which dominated high streets in larger towns and cities, which are very unlikely to be replaced by other nationals, creating multiple impacts that includes negative perceptions about how towns appear and the loss of a high street offer that would drive footfall.

Five years after the Covid-19 pandemic changed the way we work, in Wales 42% of workers are working from home at least some of the time[1]. More people are working from home permanently and many more working in a hybrid fashion. Welsh Government's current policy is aspiring to have approximately 30% of the workforce working at home at any one time to reduce commuter traffic. It is too early to say, but whilst there will be clear environmental benefits to doing this, it may also result in reducing demand for the hyper-local economy in town centres.

But across Wales and the UK there is substantial research showing how we want to spend our time and the impact this has on town centres. It helps show that towns that embrace a mixed-use, community focused approach buck the national trends around declining town centres. The research also shows modern consumers want an experience when they visit town, not just an errand. They might get a coffee, do some shopping, see an exhibit, and meet friends all in one trip[2]. Town centres that facilitate these varied activities are seeing loyalty and dwell-time increase.

These trends point to a change in how we use our leisure time and what we want from our town centres. They are increasingly becoming destinations that people visit for multiple reasons in a single visit. This is important to placemaking as the strategy needs to consider not just how people are using Carmarthen now, but how that is likely to change in the medium to long term.

1 https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2026/2/3/1770823261/remote-working-national-survey-wales-april-2024-march-2025.pdf
2 https://retail-focus.co.uk/community-hubs-shopping-centres-of-the-future/#:~:text=She%20notes%20research%20by%20Gensler%2C,day%20such%20as%20cookery%20classes

Wider trends

The ability of Carmarthenshire County Council and other partners to deliver on the placemaking strategy will be influenced by national decision making. Much of the strategic context provided by Welsh Government supports the ethos behind placemaking. In particular, the Welsh Government has a strong focus on sustainable development enshrined in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015). This act requires local authorities to carry out sustainable development and to do that by following five ways of working:

- **Long term** – thinking beyond short term fixes
- **Prevention** – stop problems before they happen
- **Integration** – join up different objectives
- **Collaboration** – work with other organisations
- **Involvement** – involve people and communities

This has been fully built into Carmarthenshire County Council's approach to producing this placemaking strategy.

However, this supportive strategic environment for creating places underpinned by sustainable development may be buffeted in the coming years by wider global events. The previous town level strategies were produced as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Prior to that global event, was the 2008 financial crash, and following Covid-19 have been the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East.

These events have a direct impact on placemaking. They impact on how stressed and strained households are because of the cost of living and rising fuel prices. They impact on businesses' willingness to take on risk and they can make it harder to sustain the vibrant town centres this strategy is aiming to support.

They will also impact how much progress is made over what time frame with the strategy. This is an important part of understanding placemaking, it is a local approach but is directly linked to wider events and an everchanging strategic environment.

Location

For the location theme we are interested in understanding how good we are at ensuring all developments make the place better and understanding if we have the right mix of developments in Carmarthen.

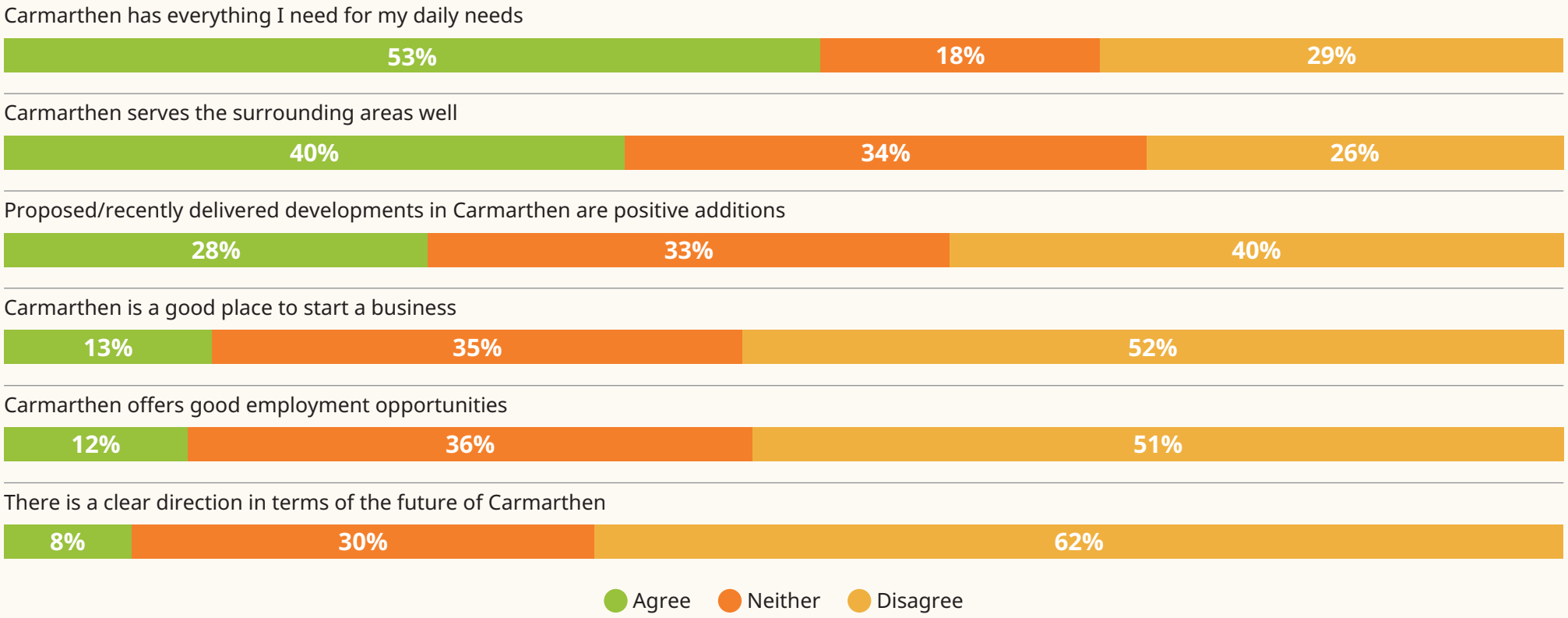
The placemaking principles define this area as:

Places should grow and develop in a way that uses land efficiently, supports and enhances existing places and is well connected. The location of housing, employment and leisure and other facilities are planned to help reduce the need to travel.

What we found

Through the consultation, overall 'Location' was rated as 4.8 out of 10 in Carmarthen

The more detailed analysis shows people feel Carmarthen has everything they need for their daily needs and serves the surrounding area reasonably well. But it also identifies a clear opportunity to create a clear direction for the future of Carmarthen.



The consultation and our own analysis identified the following key points:

- **Disjointed** – People described the layout as disjointed, with major attractions and retail areas spread out (King Street, St Catherine's Walk, Pensarn, market, riverside) people also felt visitors may struggle to find key areas
- **Gateways** – People identified the gateway routes as unattractive, especially the approach from the west
- **Strengthening connections** – The riverside and connection to Abergwili, Parc yr Esgob, the museum, and Tywi Valley Path were identified as key opportunities
- **Regional role** – People felt Carmarthen should act as a "regional centre" for west Carmarthenshire but currently doesn't market itself as such

Our own review and the consultation identified the following placemaking outcomes for location in Carmarthen:

- Greater action around town centre first planning policy
- Improve connections to and use of Riverside
- Strengthen spatial form of town
- Develop strategic key buildings
- Improve links with cycle paths and surrounding countryside
- Improve connectivity
- Recognise and embrace historic urban form for all future developments with strong urban design
- Improve measurement and communication of progress

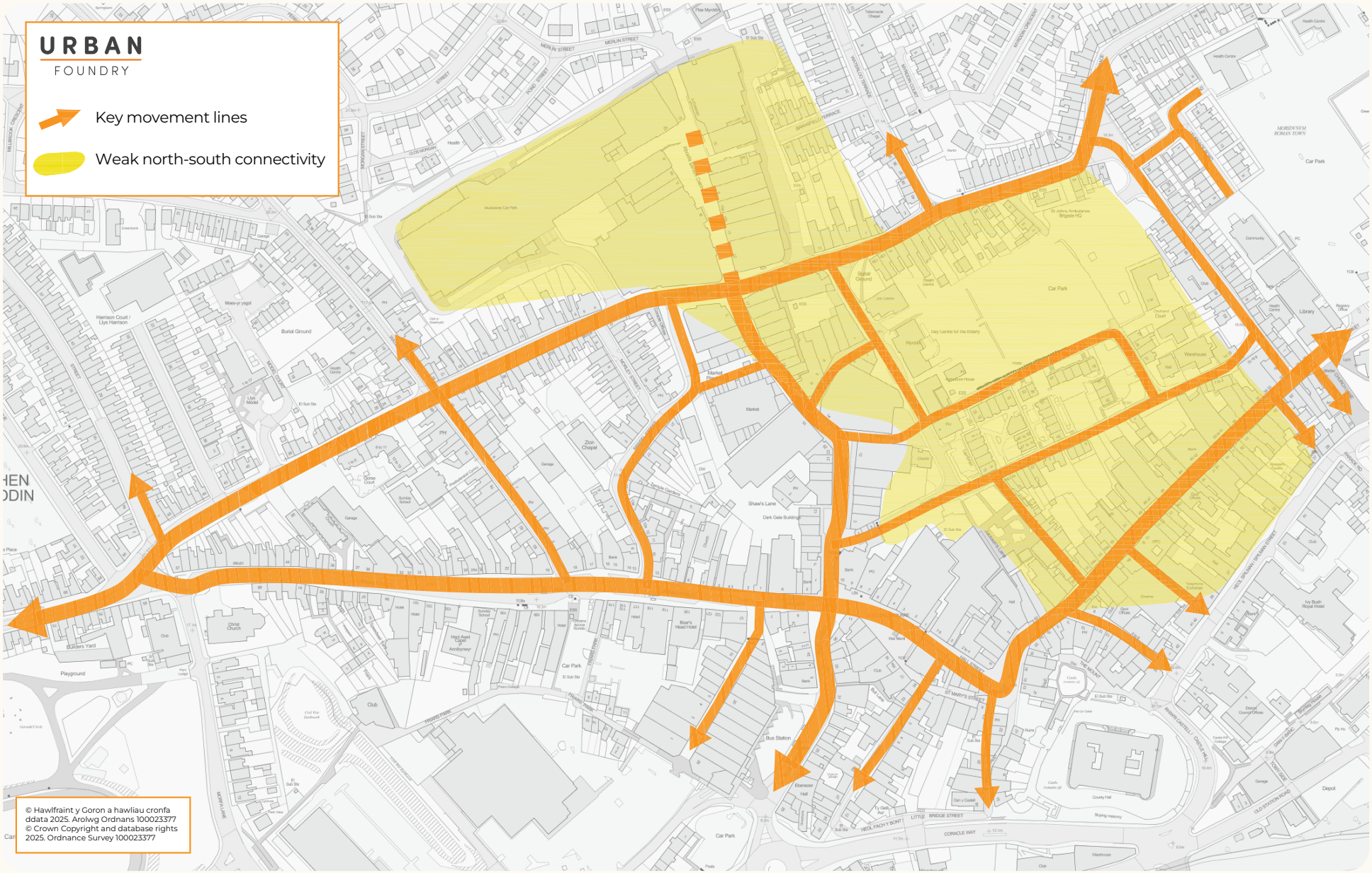
Feedback we heard through the consultation included:

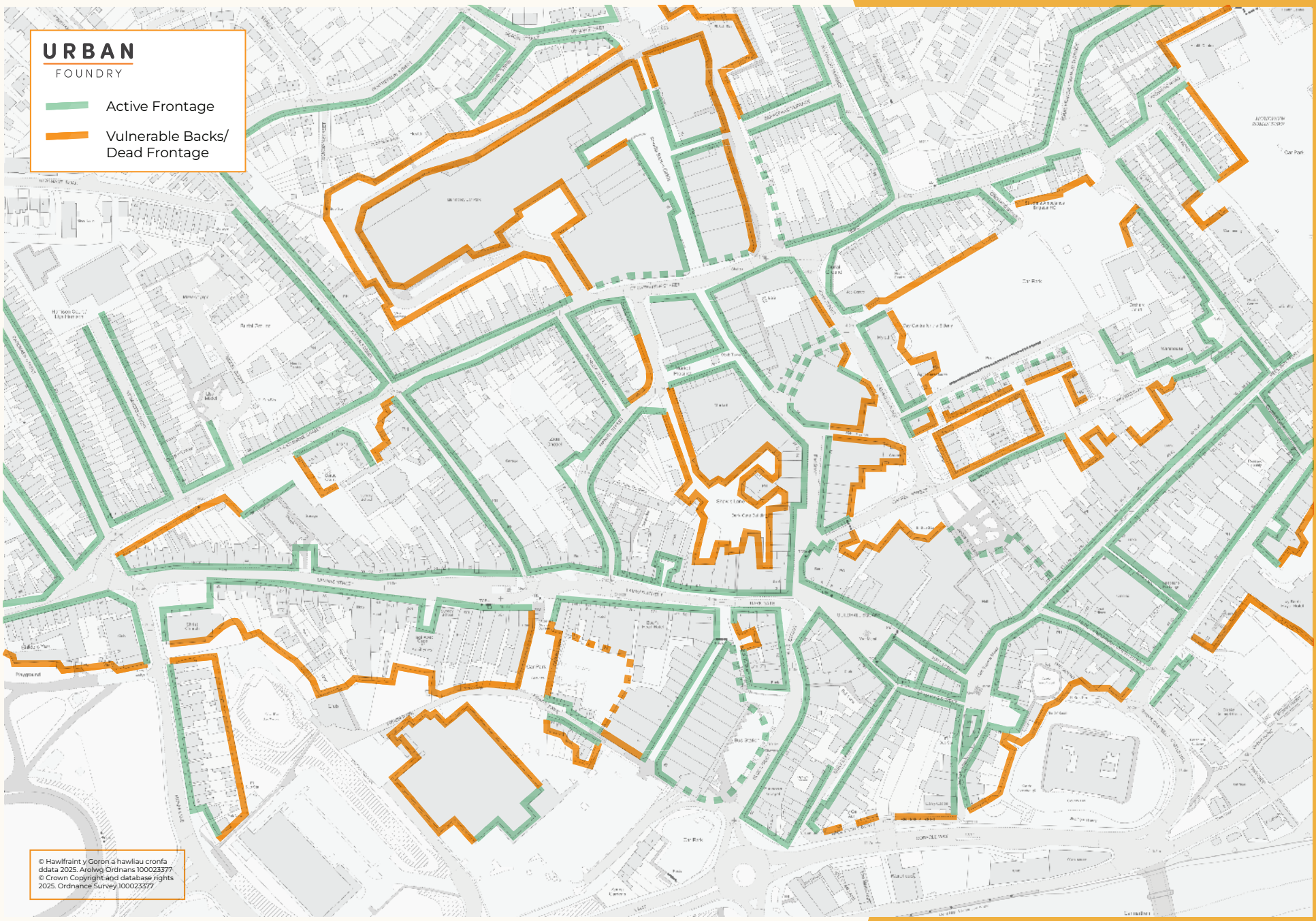
"Traffic is a constant nuisance in town, better management of traffic would be hugely advantageous."

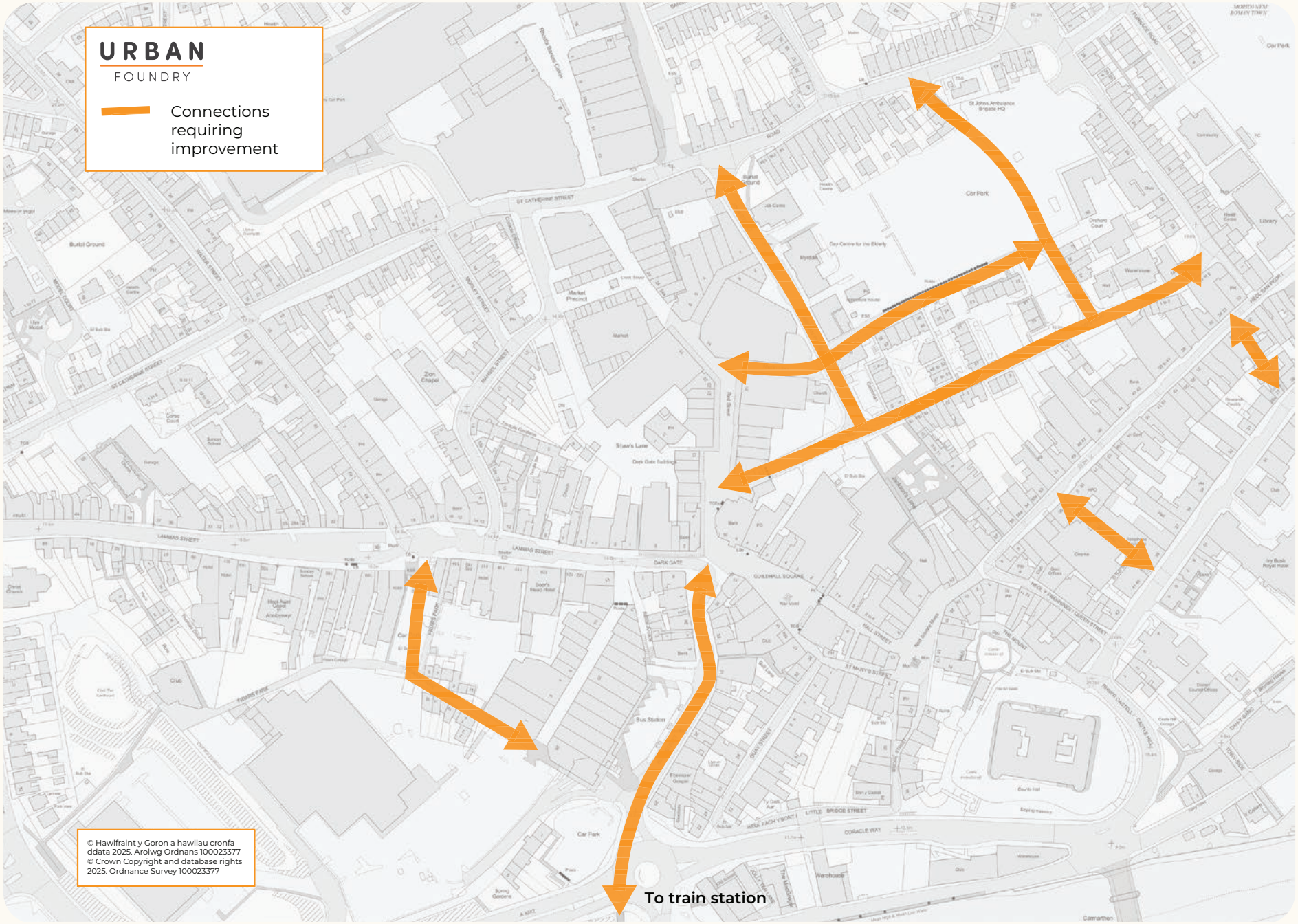
"I love it here, it has everything I need."

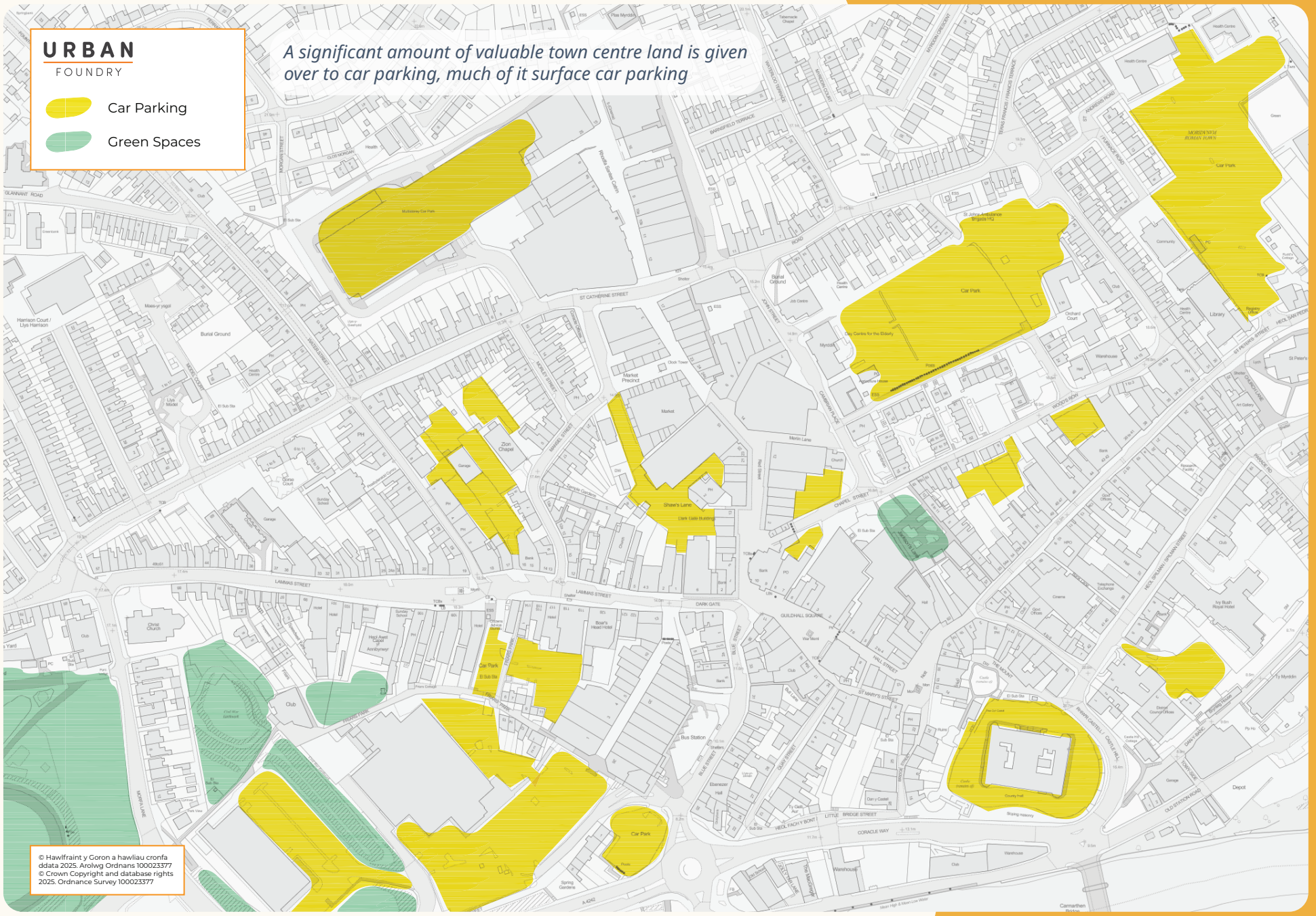
"King Street is the oldest market street in Wales and needs to be celebrated/ marketed properly"

"The riverside is under utilised and could draw in much more people than the drab centre."


URBAN
FOUNDRY
Key movement lines
Weak north-south connectivity
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URBAN
FOUNDRY
Active Frontage
Vulnerable Backs/
Dead Frontage
© Hawlfraint y Goron a hawliau cronfa
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URBAN
FOUNDRY
Connections requiring improvement
To train station
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URBAN
FOUNDRY
Car Parking
Green Spaces
A significant amount of valuable town centre land is given over to car parking, much of it surface car parking
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© Crown Copyright and database rights 2025. Ordnance Survey 100023377

Public realm

For the public realm theme we are interested in understanding how safe public spaces feel in Carmarthen, how green it is and how good the public spaces feel as 'people places'.

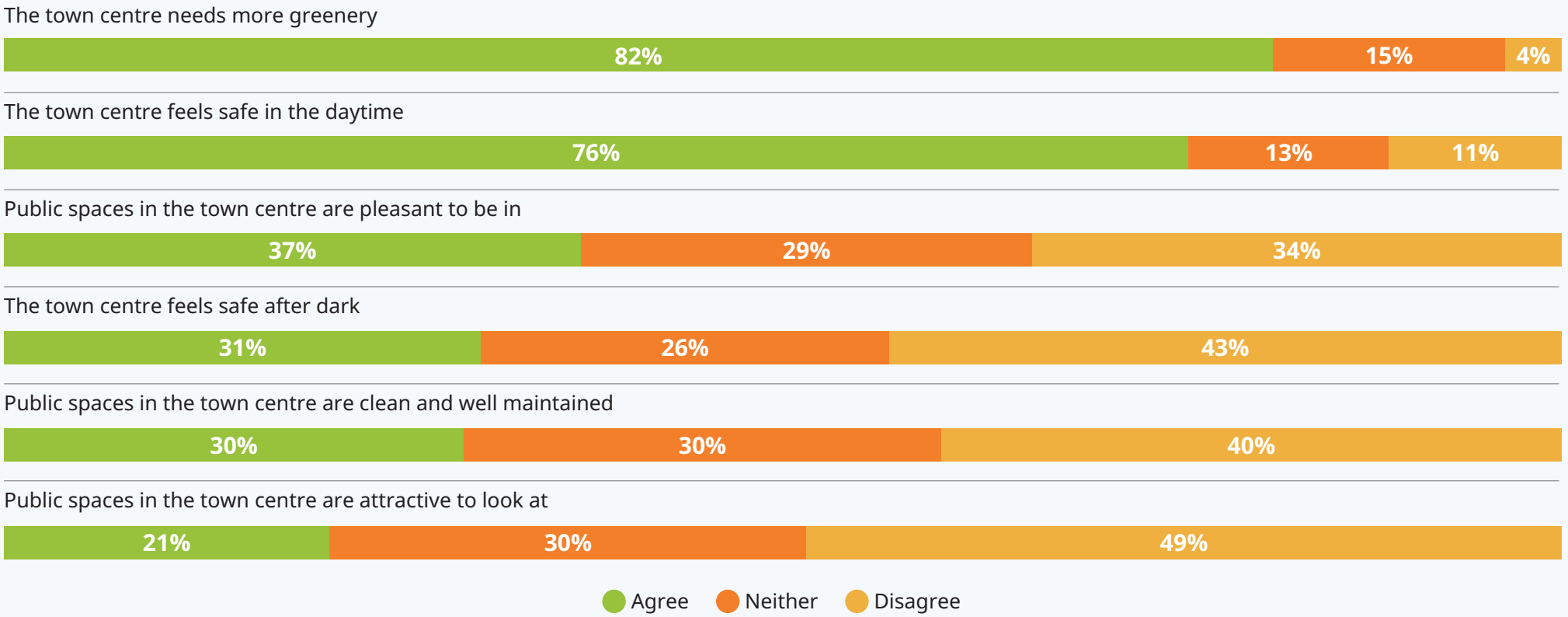
The placemaking principles define this area as:

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.

What we found

Through the consultation, overall 'Public realm' was rated as 4.8 out of 10 in Carmarthen

The more detailed analysis shows that people feel the town needs more greenery but is a safe place to be during the daytime.



The consultation identified the following key points:

- **Maintenance** – People feel the town is under-maintained and maintenance is inconsistent. This includes litter, weeds and bins as well as the need to maintain heritage buildings
- **Planting schemes** – People felt that new planting schemes became neglected due to lack of maintenance
- **Greenery** – More greenery in the town centre was identified but people recognised the high-quality planting in the park
- **Lingering spaces** – There is strong demand for more seating, shelter, lighting, trees, flowers and attractive public spaces where people can pause or meet

Our own review and the consultation identified the following placemaking outcomes for public realm in Carmarthen:

- Maintain and improve existing spaces
- Improve the look, feel and use of key squares
- Greater amounts of green infrastructure throughout the town
- More use of the street scene
- More opportunities for play in the street scene
- Greater celebration of the street heritage
- A cleaner town
- More welcoming town

Feedback we heard through the consultation included:

"Planters need to be kept tidy, you see them appear, thinking really positive, but they are not looked after"

"Dog mess everywhere. Bins overflowing. Regular fly tipping. The place is a mess"

"Small areas like Jackson's Square offer green space in the town centre"

"Safe and welcoming, especially at night"

Movement

For the movement theme we are interested in understanding how easy it is to get to Carmarthen, how easy it is to move around the town and if this is easier or harder depending on the level of mobility. We are also interested in understanding how the different bits of the transport system link together.

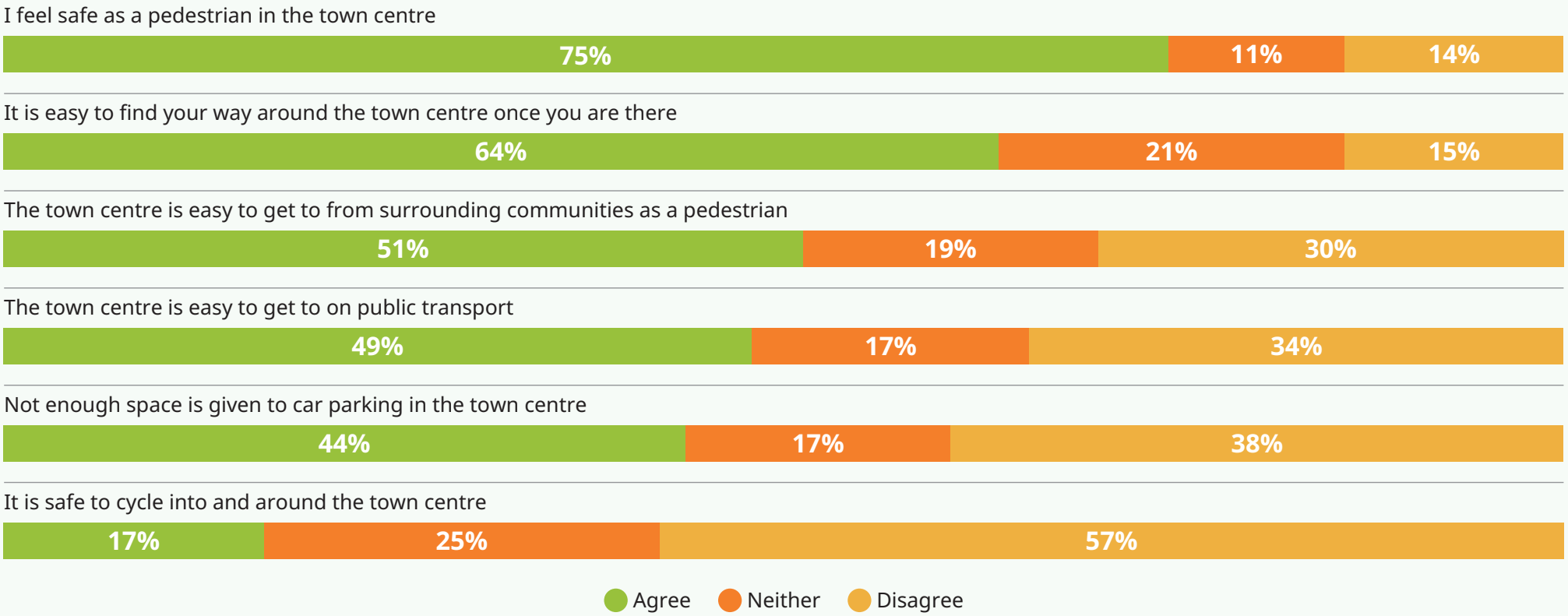
The placemaking principles define this area as:

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 network and public transport stations and stops are positively integrated.

What we found

Through the consultation, overall 'Movement' was rated as 4.9 out of 10 in Carmarthen

The more detailed analysis shows that people feel safe as a pedestrian but less so as a cyclist when moving around Carmarthen. People also find it easy to find their way around the town.



The consultation identified the following key points:

- **Car dominated** – People identified that Carmarthen is congested, car-dominated and increasingly difficult to navigate on foot or by bike
- **Traffic management** – Many feel traffic management is outdated and that constant vehicle access undermines pedestrian safety, especially on “pedestrianised” streets such as King Street, Nott Square, Guildhall Square and Lammas Street
- **Public transport** – Public transport is considered unreliable, infrequent and poorly connected to rural villages, the University, tourist areas, and neighbouring towns. Evening and weekend services are especially poor
- **Parking** – Parking charges are described as expensive, confusing, inconsistent and damaging to footfall
- **Accessibility** – People with accessibility challenges say the town is difficult to move around due to narrow pavements, uneven surfaces and lack of dropped kerbs

Our own review and the consultation identified the following placemaking outcomes for movement in Carmarthen:

- Improve options for people walking and cycling
- Improve the balance in the town centre between car and pedestrian
- Improve the Lane connections
- Improve public transport
- More people encouraged to make short stops en route
- Improved access to Carmarthen town centre for short stay trips

Feedback we heard through the consultation included:

"Why are there few buses after 5:30pm? Difficulty to park cars in town is making shoppers go to superstores. More cycle paths needed, roundabouts are dangerous."

"I feel safe walking through town at night but my wife doesn't"

"Free parking on a Sunday, this should bring more trade in to help shops rather than seeing businesses close down. Appreciate free parking on a Tues and Thurs after 3.30pm, however a lot of people work and by time get into town, all shops are closed"

"Maybe offer first 20 minutes free car parking, useful if you need for be a in town for a short while"

Mix of use

For the mix of use theme we are interested in understanding how good Carmarthen is as a mix of living, learning cultural/ leisure and office functions alongside retail.

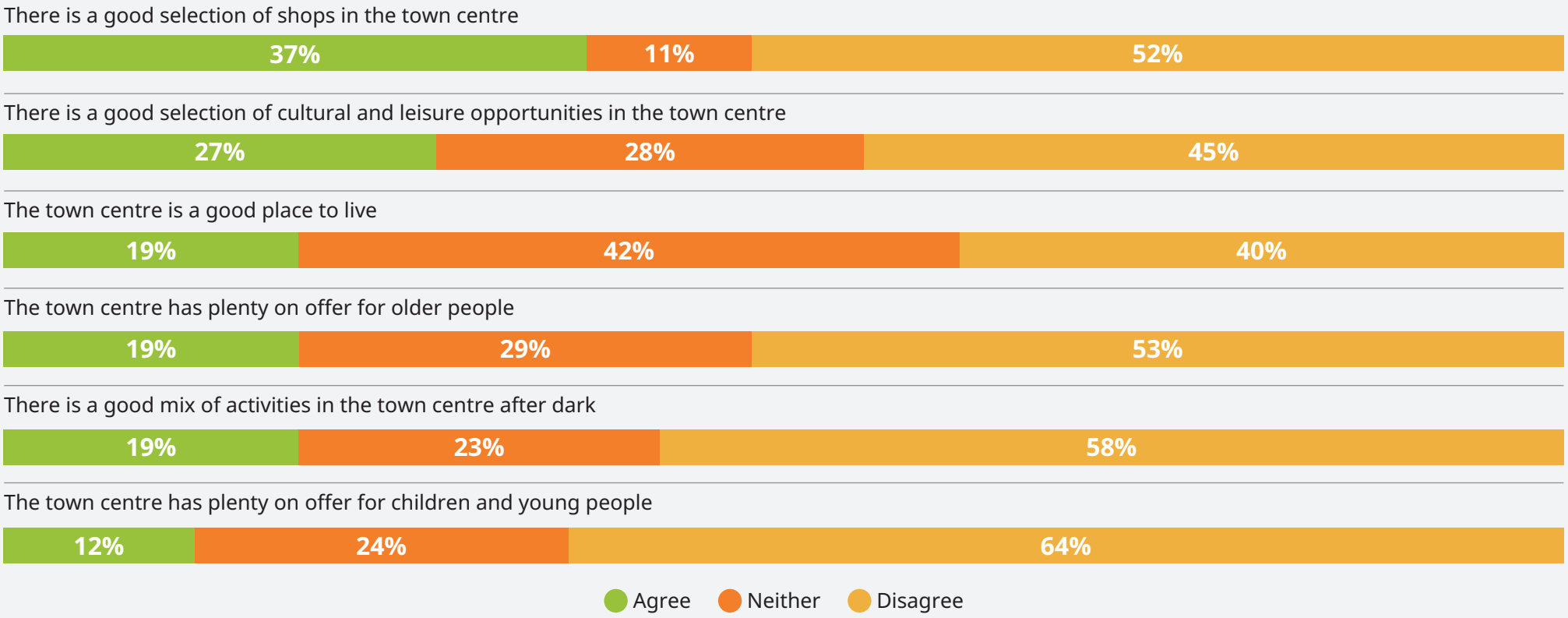
The placemaking principles define this area as:

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 a vibrant public realm.

What we found

Through the consultation, overall 'Mix of use' was rated 4.6 out of 10 in Carmarthen

The more detailed analysis shows that people recognise the strength of the retail offer but also there are opportunities to offer more for children and older people in the town centre.



The consultation identified the following key points:

- **Retail offer** – People identified that Carmarthen is seen as dominated by declining retail, with too many charity shops, vape shops, barbers and vacant units. There were also comments about desiring a better retail variety
- **Mix of uses** – The consultation identified a desire for a wider mix of uses: retail, leisure, culture, community spaces, food, markets and evening activity
- **Leisure, youth and events** – People called for more things to do: family activities, youth spaces, live music, markets, performance spaces, indoor leisure, cultural programming, venues, workshops, creative studios
- **Utilising buildings** – Concerns were raised about the Debenhams conversion with some identifying alternative uses
- **Support** – People identified a need for more small business support, lower rents and incentives

Our own review and the consultation identified the following placemaking outcomes for mix of use in Carmarthen:

- Improve the mix of uses in the town centre
- Increase use of public realm for leisure
- More emerging businesses receive support

Feedback we heard through the consultation included:

"We need areas that encourage people to meet, be active and mix in intergenerational groups."

"Empty shops – the town centre needs to be redefined"

"King Street is very special – lots of independent shops which is great. All the streets have managed to avoid the fast food shops. Well Done"

"Needs more cultural spaces, local crafts, use some of the empty shops to showcase our agricultural heritage. When locally owned shops open they need support for the first few years with appropriate levy of business rates."

Identity

For the identity theme we are interested in understanding what are the features of Carmarthen that make it unique and does Carmarthen make the most of these features.

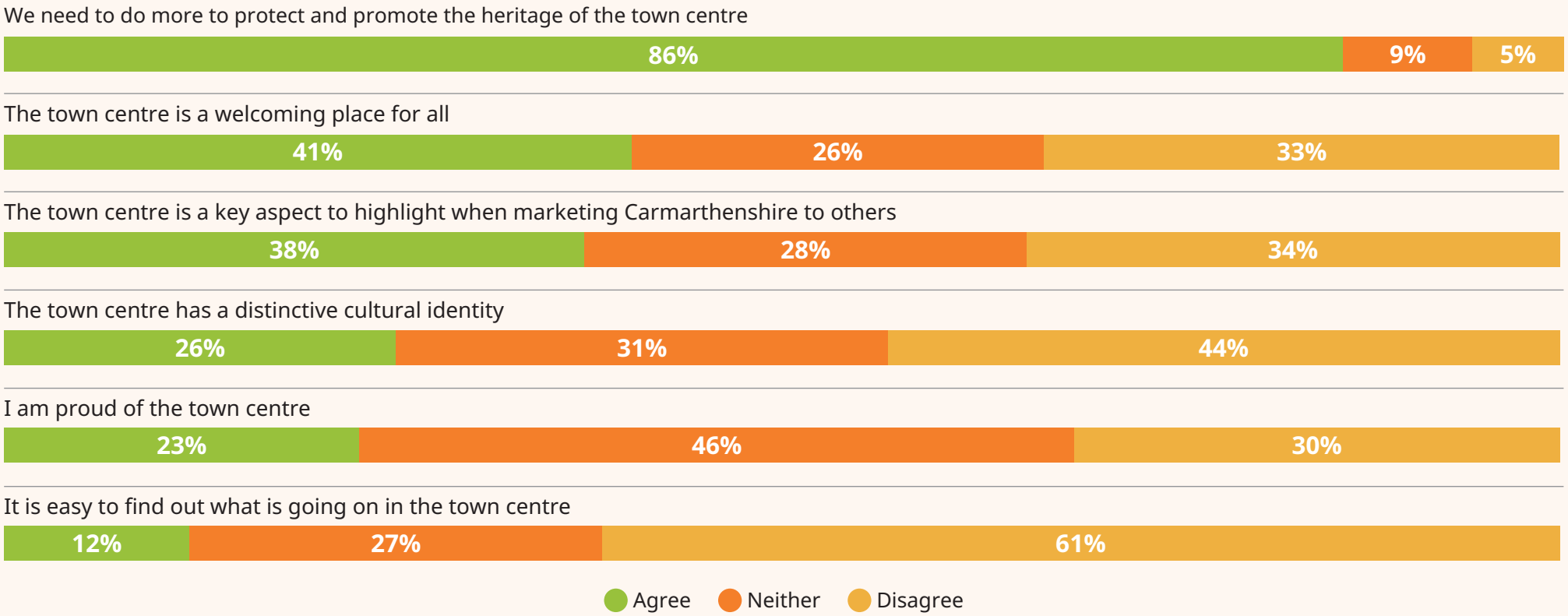
The placemaking principles define this area as:

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.

What we found

Through the consultation, overall 'Identity' was rated as 4.9 out of 10 in Carmarthen.

The more detailed analysis shows that people feel strongly the town should do more to promote the town centre and there is considerable opportunity to increase people's sense of pride in the town centre.



The consultation identified the following key points:

- **Fading identity** – People identified how they felt the town's identity has faded. Although the town is rich in history - Romans, Merlin, coracles, medieval streets, market-town culture - residents feel these assets are poorly promoted, underused or neglected
- **More of the same** – There is concern about the town becoming a generic, "clone town", losing its Welsh heritage, creative culture and sense of place
- **Story** – People reported visitors saying the town's story is unclear
- **Experiences** – People noted poor signage for historic attractions and a lack of visitor experiences. Cultural pride exists, but people want Carmarthen to express its heritage more confidently and creatively through events, storytelling, architecture, and public art

Our own review and the consultation identified the following placemaking outcomes for identity in Carmarthen:

- Greater sense of identity for the town
- Better showcase built heritage
- Develop riverside element of identity
- Strengthen the existing (strong) cultural base
- Improve cultural place branding
- Improve sense of vibrancy on street
- Better integrate UWTSD into the town's identity and sense of place
- Improve understanding and promotion of history
- Greater strength of the Welsh language through placemaking activities

Feedback we heard through the consultation included:

"I don't think the town has an identity , been lost over years of knocking down the old character and now looks like any other town. Visitors stop and ask if there's more to the town than the empty shops!"

"Poor communication and promotion of events. Museum not in the town centre"

"Massive history...sadly not used enough"

"We don't make the most of our cultural identity"

People and community

For the people and community theme we are interested at how good the key partners in the town are at creating genuine community involvement as an ongoing process.

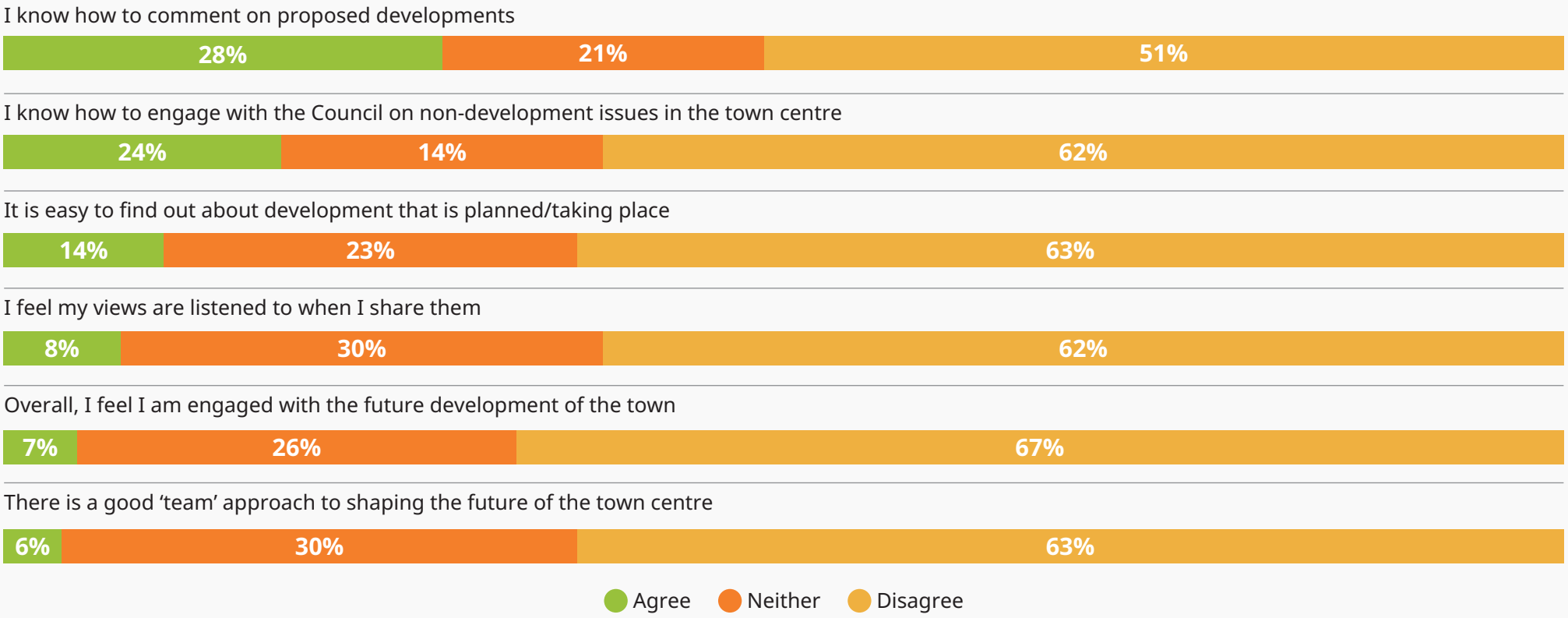
The placemaking principles define this area as:

The local community is involved in the development of proposals. The needs, aspirations, health and wellbeing of all people are considered at the outset. Proposals are shaped to help meet these needs as well as creating, integrating and protecting and/or enhancing a sense of community and to promote equality.

What we found

Through the consultation overall ‘People and community’ was rated as 4.9 out of 10 in Carmarthen

The more detailed analysis shows that people feel there could be a more ‘team’ approach to the future of Carmarthen and an opportunity to engage people more in that future.



The consultation identified the following key points:

- **Low visibility** – People identified a frustration with poor communication, low visibility of consultations and a belief that feedback is ignored. People also identified that updates were not shared meaningfully
- **Decision making** – There are frustrations about decisions seen as imposed without proper engagement
- **Greater transparency** – People identified a desire for more codesign activities, more listening and better publicity

Our own review and the consultation identified the following placemaking outcomes for people and communities in Carmarthen:

- More opportunities for people to be involved in the town development
- More collaborative and strategic local government collaborations
- More opportunities for young people
- Create more opportunities for older people
- Improve communications
- Improve partnership working with private and third sectors
- Greater use of placemaking to deliver healthier towns
- Better coordinate Internal Council policies/processes to support town centre development

Feedback we heard through the consultation included:

"More open meetings. Face to face sessions. Youth parliament. Engagement board consisting of councillors and residents."

"People in Carmarthen are welcoming and helpful"

"I completed the request 3 times to be emailed when consultations go live, I never get any notifications. I have written a couple of times about litter issues... no reply. I wrote about an emergency planning query, got a reply saying it had been passed on, but no answer yet.... so all in all comms with local councils and engagement is rubbish."

"Traditional Welsh town with the opportunity to support local independent businesses"

The Strategy

We set out the priorities for action across each of the six placemaking principles. You can read all sections or skip to the ones that are of most interest.

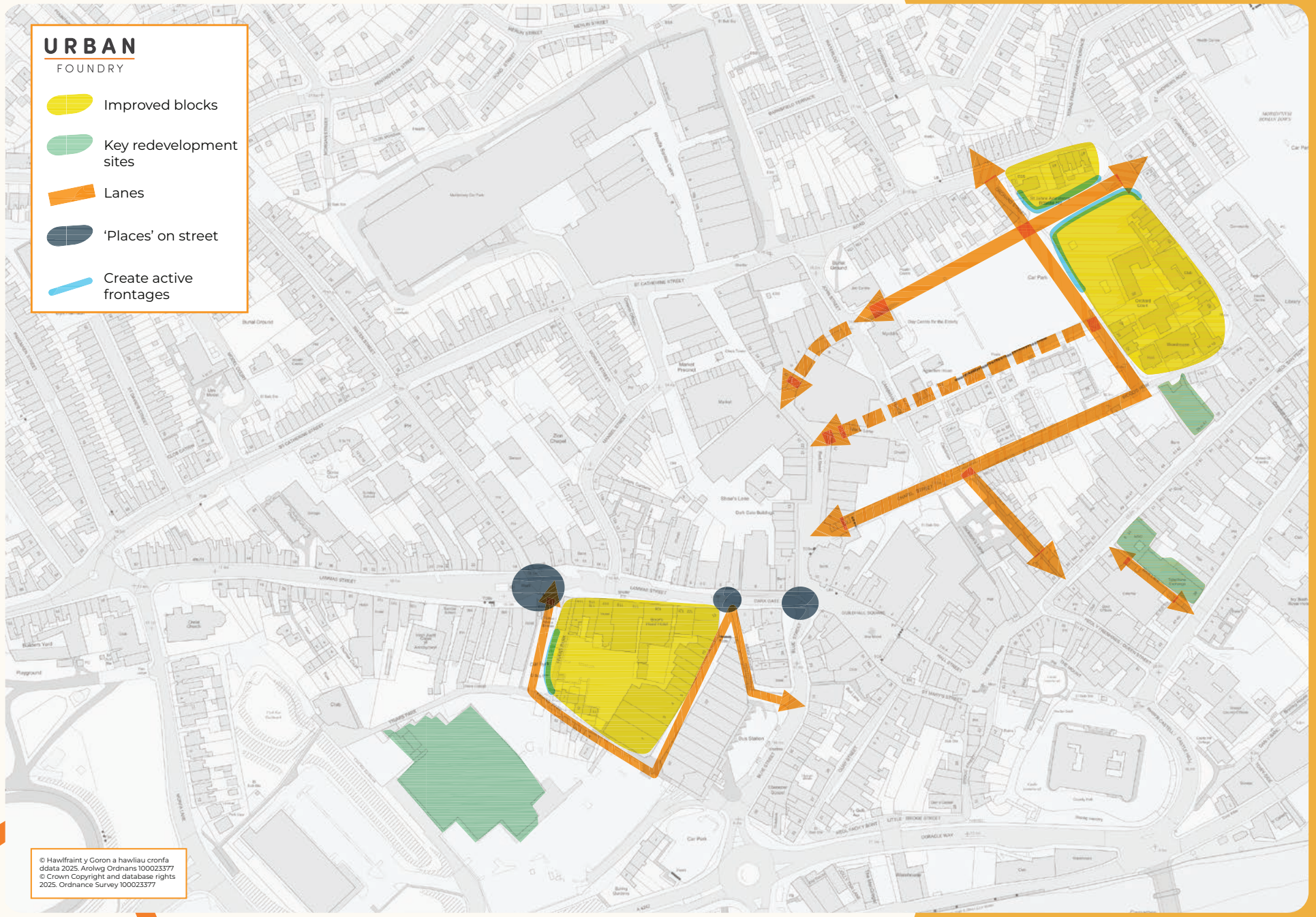
Actions

We have colour coded the actions to help consider who is most likely to lead on these actions and so who to connect with if you have an interest in making the action happen:

- **Green** are actions that Carmarthenshire County Council can lead on
- **Orange** are actions that can only be delivered in partnership with others

Location

Outcome	Action (See page 41 for Key to colours)	Priority
Greater action around town centre first planning policy	Assess new developments, including the future of existing assets owned by the Council, for the impact they have on the town centre	Medium
Improve connections to and use of Riverside	Explore opportunities for temporary structures that align with flood risk assessments that could support this as a destination area in the town	High
Strengthen spatial form of town	Protect vulnerable backs by re-establishing key blocks and connections Consider the potential of creating infill development in John St car park at former school site	Low
Develop strategic key buildings	Review key empty buildings and develop strategies and funding mechanisms for bringing them back into use	High
Improve links with cycle paths and surrounding countryside	Better physical linkages between town centre and paths and tracks for active travel (notably improving the pedestrian crossing from the town centre to the train station) as well as signage that encourages stopping in the town centre, but also using town centre as a base from which to explore	High
Improve connectivity	Improve the connections between the historic street pattern and immediately adjacent blocks. Introduce design interventions to improve these smaller scale gateways	High
Recognise and embrace historic urban form for all future developments with strong urban design	Develop a set of simple rules for urban design including mixed uses, perimeter blocks with active frontages, good density, and varying yields of buildings	High
Improve measurement and communication of progress	Establish a 'town centre health check' tool	High
	Provide a 'State of the Union' report via Town Forum each year	Medium


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Improved blocks
Key redevelopment sites
Lanes
‘Places’ on street
Create active frontages
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© Crown Copyright and database rights 2025. Ordnance Survey 100023377

Public realm

Outcome	Action (See page 41 for Key to colours)	Priority
Maintain and improve existing spaces	Explore opportunities for community ownership for public realm spaces	High
Improve the look, feel and use of key squares	Enhance Nott Square and Guildhall Squares as centres of town. Encourage outdoor seating from café/bars/restaurants	High
Greater amounts of green infrastructure throughout the town	Identify opportunities for greening across the town with a town centre green infrastructure strategy. Ensure adequate maintenance schedules are in place with finances	High
More use of street scene	Remove barriers to tables/chairs being on street from bars/cafes/ restaurants. Set some simple rules and engage with local providers to ensure quality. Assist with some financial support to drive quality	High
	Install power points to reduce temporary event costs	Low
	Encourage and support potential for events within the Town Centre, provide opportunities for 1:1 support for all event coordinators	High
More opportunities for play in the street scene	Look at opportunities to introduce play activities within the town centre	Medium
Greater celebration of the street heritage	Public realm lighting scheme to feature key buildings	Medium
	Annual lighting festival in the darker winter months	High
A cleaner town	Create destination management plan for the public realm. Engage whole town 'team' approach to making it work. Include consideration of how refuse is dealt with as well as cleansing regimes	High
More welcoming town	Consider the development of a Welcome to Carmarthen scheme, including street ambassadors whose function would be to welcome and enable support within the town	Medium



Temporary sculpture in Plymouth



Image credit: Robert Bray Associates

Multi-functional sustainable urban drainage in London



Downpipe disconnection to rain gardens – simple, low cost green infrastructure in Swansea



Small scale urban drainage in Portland, Oregon

Movement

Outcome	Action (See page 41 for Key to colours)	Priority
Improve options for people walking and cycling	Work with Active Travel to identify opportunities for new cycle routes. Improve links to town centre for existing cycle routes. Incorporate better (secure) cycle parking in town centre at various locations	High
Improve the balance in the town centre between car and pedestrian	Enforce and enhance the existing car free zones at Nott Square/Guildhall Square/Red Street	High
	Encourage car sharing and incentivise public transport schemes for town centre workers to free up parking spaces	Medium
	Re-organise car parking to free up development space and to reduce the number of speculative trips looking for parking spaces	Low
	Enhance parking provision at the train station to encourage long-stay users to park on difficult to develop floodplain areas, freeing up capacity for development in town centre whilst retaining car parking	Low
	Create pick-up/drop-off ultra short stay bays	Low
	Encourage development of set times for deliveries to reduce pressure on the town centre, for example, early morning	Medium
	Create delivery bays for smaller vehicles delivering throughout the day (Amazon/DPD etc.) to be able to park legally for brief periods	Low
Improve the Lane connections	Increase the cleansing and lighting of lanes off King Street to secure them by design	Medium
Improve public transport	Work with public transport providers to improve the frequency and reliability of the public transport offer	High
More people encouraged to make short stops en route	During the summer months provide a riverside parking option and a free land train or shuttle bus into the town centre with strong signage and publicity. Encourage West Wales bound traffic to stop for food and sight-seeing before getting to their final destinations	High
Improved access to Carmarthen town centre for short stay trips	Provide a standard 30 minutes of free parking across all areas	High



Sarlat la Caneda



Reims

Mix of use

Outcome	Action (See page 41 for Key to colours)	Priority
Improve the mix of uses in the town centre	Explore options through the planning system and direct action to support residential in the town particularly above shops and infill developments where appropriate. It is essential that this is of a mix of type and tenure	High
	Explore mechanisms for strengthening the nighttime economy and the experience economy. Work with the University to maximise student income	High
	Identify how existing cultural assets can be protected and enhanced by engaging with owner/operators of key sites. Run a workshop to establish their opportunities and constraints and develop a micro-action plan for support	High
	Encourage cross promotion and support local businesses to support each other by cross referring	High
Increase use of public realm for leisure	Develop seating to enhance public realm and provide opportunities to dwell. Consider comfort/aspect/shade/wet weather in designs	High
	Incorporate into an events strategy an element specifically focused on micro-scale popup activations on street	Medium
More emerging businesses receive support	Support stakeholders to develop pop up and meanwhile space	High
	Link emerging businesses with existing business support	High



Unit Nineteen popup in Swansea



Blue Marble popup in Carmarthen



Adare Street popup in Bridgend



Popup spaces previously delivered in Carmarthen




MAKE & MEND a MELIN
Melin
Vintage
Clothing
@MelinCarmarthen
Make &
Mend
Upholstry
+
Upcycling Workshop
@Makemendworkshop
MAKE & MEND
Workshop
Keen to upholster!
Sign up for a
free or paid
Workshop!

Identity

Outcome	Action (See page 41 for Key to colours)	Priority
Greater sense of identity for the town	Develop a clear town brand that celebrates Carmarthen's unique identity	High
	Develop a town-level cultural strategy	High
Better showcase built heritage	Fund lighting projects to enhance built heritage	Low
	Support property owners to engage with Built Heritage when maintaining buildings to fall in line with conservation areas and town heritage requirements	Low
	Ensure consistency of signage within the conservation area through clear design guidance and support	Medium
	Activate the Castle. Work with National Lottery Heritage Fund, third sector groups and Cadw to achieve this	High
	Re-establish the town's market identity. Build on the indoor market and street market	Medium
Develop riverside element of identity	Encourage events/activities that focus on coracle and boat based water use in the summer months	High
Strengthen the existing (strong) cultural base	Establish a creative sector forum, which has a representative on the Town Forum. Provide secretariat for that forum	High
	Identify Carmarthen culture brand heroes and ensure that they are well supported as brand ambassadors for the town	High
Improve cultural place branding	Develop a place brand, built on culture, encompassing the real and the fantasy of the town's heritage (the Merlin, Roman and medieval stories/heritage are underused) with its contemporary strengths in art and culture	High
	Support stakeholders to apply for Town of Culture when appropriate	High
Improve sense of vibrancy on street	Develop an event strategy with external partner engagement for the town and tie in with public realm works	High
Better integrate UWTSD into the towns' identity and sense of place	Identify activities already in place in UWTSD that can compliment town centre for cross promotion e.g. Yr Egin and TV production linkages. Provide a simple pack (physical and digital) including places to eat, places to stay, places to relax in the town centre	High
	Develop a strategy for promoting Carmarthen as a filming location. Work regionally to create a SW Wales portfolio of locations so that you cross-fertilise one another	Low

Outcome	Action (See page 41 for Key to colours)	Priority
Improve understanding and promotion of history	Celebrate place names: Dark Gate, Red and Blue Street, King and Queen Street. Their history should be reflected not just in the names themselves but in interpretation and in the physical street scape at these locations	Medium
	Develop digital self-guided trails	Medium
	Develop and help to promote town walks	High
	Improve links between town and Abergwili museum. This is less about physical linkage due to distance, more in terms of signage and thematically linking it to Carmarthen	High
	Improve interpretation signage and link to digital trails	High
Greater strength of the Welsh language through placemaking activities	Create an easy to action Welsh language strategy designed with all partners in mind to help promote and support the everyday use of the language	Low



Lyric Theatre entrance



Simple attention to detail highlighting heritage in Lammas Street



Market food hall in Cahors



Feature lighting on buildings of significance in Lille

People and community

Outcome	Action (See page 41 for Key to colours)	Priority
More opportunities for people to be involved in the town development	Continue the refocus of the Town Forum. Ensure it is focused on driving change (proactive rather than reactive). Develop a culture of a 'team' approach, including increasing the understanding of the constraints under which local authorities operate	High
	Create a programme of regular community engagement around the town development	High
More collaborative and strategic local government collaborations	Create a more joined-up strategy between County and Town Councils for placemaking delivery and financing	Medium
Create more opportunities for young people	Support initiatives working with young people	High
Create more opportunities for older people	Ensure all future urban design and architecture considers an ageing population. This includes pavement widths, dropped kerbs, tactile paving and similar. Risk assess existing and retrofit where necessary	High
Improve partnership working with private and third sectors	Work with the third sector to deliver specific actions from the placemaking strategy. Identify areas where working with external partners can create mutual benefits	High
	Identify Carmarthen local 'heroes 'and celebrate them. Work with them as ambassadors for the town in a coordinated way	High
Greater use of placemaking to deliver healthier towns	Bring healthcare closer to people by adopting a 'town centre first' question for all future decisions related to health care facilities	High
Better coordinate internal Council policies/processes to support town centre development	Hold regular cross sector meetings within the Council focused on placemaking actions at senior officer level	Medium
	Explore how procurement can be enhanced to consider how it can be used to strengthen town centre businesses (and more generally Carmarthenshire based businesses)	High
	Adopt social value into all procurement	High





Placemaking consultation workshops



Making it happen

Placemaking is delivered by a partnership. Carmarthenshire County Council and Carmarthen Town Council, alongside other public sector bodies clearly have an important role. But it is wider partners including residents, the community and voluntary sector and the private sector that will help deliver the change set out in this strategy.

Making it happen in Carmarthen

Carmarthen already has a Town Forum. This group brings together people from across the town and they will take responsibility for driving key actions within the strategy. But anyone can get involved. If you have an idea of how to take forward one of the actions set out in this strategy contact Carmarthenshire County Council to discuss the first steps of how to move forward.

The Town Forum will review key metrics to understand the progress being made across each of the areas. A detailed framework is provided in the technical appendix, but progress will be judged on the following areas.

Placemaking theme	Indicator	Key points
Location	Footfall Economic activity level Unemployment level	This will help us understand how people are using the town and what the underlying strength of the town is
Public realm	Is the local environment pleasant and well looked after (Carmarthenshire Residents' survey)	This will give us an overall sense of how the public realm is being viewed
Movement	Satisfaction with transport (Carmarthenshire Residents' survey) Meters of cycle lane created or improved	Public transport is managed outside of local authorities. This will help us understand whether progress is improving
Mix of uses	Number of vacant units Buildings brought back into use	This will help us understand whether key buildings are being used in the town centre and if there is strong demand or otherwise for available spaces in the town
Identity	Increase in visits to webpage Increase in visitor numbers Do you like living in Carmarthenshire Percentage of Welsh Speakers	This will help us understand whether the actions are supporting local residents, visitors and the Welsh language
People and community	Does the Council give opportunities to participate in decisions (Carmarthenshire Residents' survey)	This will give us an understanding of the overall perception of the Council's offer

If you would like to discuss how you can get involved in delivering elements of the plan, you can contact us at: towns@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

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