

Welsh Language Impact Assessment

Ty Mawr, Pontardawe

April 2022



Summary

Proposal

Welsh Language Impact Assessment

Location

Ty Mawr, Llys Glanrafon, Pontardawe, SA8 4EG

Date

April 2022

Project Reference

S21.270

Client

Pobl Group

Product of

Asbri Planning Limited

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Introduction

Client Brief

- 1.1 Asbri Planning Ltd has been instructed by Pobl Group to prepare a Welsh Language Impact Assessment to accompany a full planning application for residential development for conversion and extension of building to provide 12 no. affordable flats at Ty Mawr, Llys Glanrafon, Pontardawe. The application site lies within a Welsh Language Sensitive Area as allocated within the Neath Port Talbot LDP proposals map. Policy SP22 (*Welsh Language*) of the Neath Port Talbot LDP outlines that the Welsh language will be safeguarded and promoted within certain areas of the borough. Pontardawe is considered by the LPA to be an area of special linguistic significance, as the main language of daily life is Welsh. Policy WL1 (*Development in Language Sensitive Areas*) outlines that residential development for 10 or more dwellings requires a Language Action Plan to accompany the application.

The Proposed Development

- 1.2 The proposal comprises the conversion of the existing building from sheltered housing to self-contained flats with a two storey extension at the south eastern elevation. The ground floor illustrates for 6 units which will be replicated at first floor. The extension design will match the existing building. The extension will be built upon an area that is on the western elevation of the building.



- 1.3 Pontardawe is located approximately six miles north of the nearest town of Neath and approximately 9 miles north of Swansea.
- 1.4 The 2011 Census shows that the overall population of the Ward was 4,133 with 4,355 estimated population for 2020.
- 1.5 The site itself is well located within Pontardwe adjacent to its facilities and amenities. It is located on Ynysderw Road and comprises an existing two-storey building which provides sheltered accommodation. The area surrounding the site is predominantly characterised by residential dwellings with complementary uses situated throughout the area including a Lidl supermarket, Cwmtawe Community School and Pontardawe football rugby club.
- 1.6 In terms of demographics, at the time of the 2011 Census, the population of Pontardawe was 5,421. Of this population, 20.8% were able to read, write and speak Welsh. The equivalent percentage for Neath Port Talbot was 15.3%. On a national level, this figure was 14.6%. On the whole, Neath Port Talbot has a higher percentage of Welsh Language speakers compared to the national average.
- 1.7 As the ward has a greater proportion of individuals with an understanding of Welsh than at a County and National level, it is evident that the Welsh language forms an important role and feature of this community. As a result, any proposed development within this community must wherever possible protect and promote the Welsh Language, as well as mitigate any negative impacts such a development may introduce.

Methodology

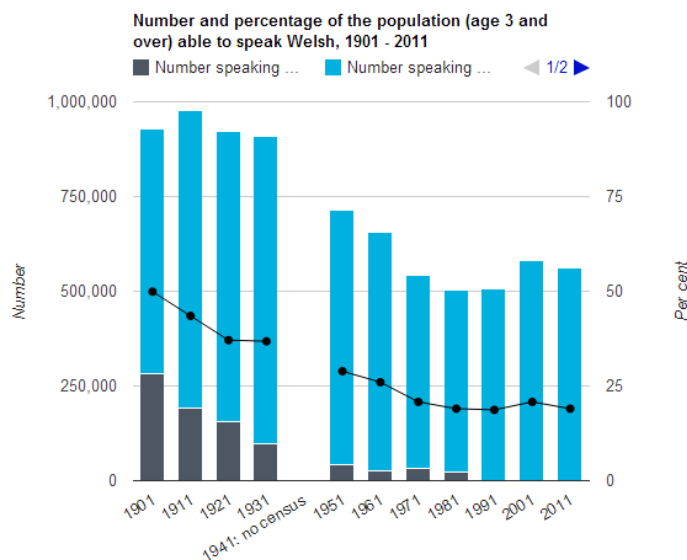
- 2.1 This assessment has been undertaken using the methodology and guidance set out by the document Planning and the Welsh Language: The Way Forward (2005) (PWL), in particular Appendices B and C. Although not formerly adopted as part of the national planning policy and guidance system, it is acknowledged as representing the most up to date and representative form of guidance on how Welsh Language Impact Assessments (WLIA) should be undertaken.
- 2.2 In assessing the potential impact of the proposal on the Welsh Language, this WLIA also aims to satisfy the requirements of the Policy SP22 of the Local Development Plan.
- 2.3 Policy SP22 states that:
- ‘The Welsh language will be safeguarded and promoted in the following language sensitive areas:***
- 1. Amman Valley***
 - 2. Swansea Valley***
 - 3. Pontardawe***
 - 4. The community of Crynant in the Dulais Valley.’***
- 2.4 Technical Advice Note 20: Planning and the Welsh Language (Revised October 2017), emphasises the need to address how the land use planning system can be used to consider and, if necessary, mitigate any effects of development on the Welsh language and the sustainability of Welsh language communities. The Welsh language is part of the social and cultural fabric of Wales. It is spoken by 19% of the population, and many others have some knowledge of the language or are in the process of learning it. There are substantial variations between the proportions of Welsh speakers in different communities, ranging from less than 8% in Blaenau Gwent to more than 85% in some parts of Gwynedd.
- 2.5 The Welsh Government’s aims and ambitions for the Welsh language are set out in the Welsh Language Strategy – Cymraeg 2050. The strategy recognises the need to provide Welsh speakers with easily accessible opportunities to use their skills in social and work settings. The strategy also identifies the imperative need to create favourable circumstances to encourage the number of Welsh speakers. This involves securing goodwill towards the language and providing language infrastructure such as technology and legislation, but is also concerned with securing an economic and social future for Welsh speaking communities.
- 2.6 The Welsh Language Commissioner has a responsibility for promoting and facilitating use of the Welsh language. The Commissioner is a consultee on LDPs, with the specific role of considering from an early stage the impact of LDP proposals and policies on the Welsh language. LPAs may seek the support of the Commissioner in the gathering and assessment of evidence at pre-deposit stage and for the purposes of annual monitoring. The Commissioner may also provide assistance and support to LPAs in the process of defining areas of language sensitivity or significance.
- 2.7 With regard to development management, the TAN maintains that, in determining

individual planning applications and appeals where the needs and interests of the Welsh language may be a material consideration, decisions must, as with all other planning applications, be based on planning grounds only and be reasonable.

Linguistic Context

National Level

- 3.1 From a national perspective, the general trend of the number of people living in Wales with an ability to speak Welsh has declined over the last century, as illustrated by the graph below:



- 3.2 What is encouraging though is that the number of Welsh speakers has risen since 1991, a trend which has been accredited to the language being taught more widespread in schools, the process of devolution as well as the 1993 Welsh Language Act. However, despite this rise, concern continues to be raised over the preservation of the language in the future and this has led to it now forming part of the planning decision making process, particularly since the introduction of Technical Advice Note 20: The Welsh Language – Unitary Development Plans and Planning Controls.
- 3.3 Notwithstanding the above, until the undertaking and publication of the 2011 Census, the current ‘snapshot’ of the Welsh Language on a national level is that although its decline has possibly been halted, less than a quarter of the population of Wales have an understanding of it.
- 3.4 The Welsh Government’s strategy, *Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers*, notes the Government’s ambition of reaching a million Welsh speakers by 2050. A projection for the number of Welsh speakers aged three and over up to 2050 has been produced as part of the strategy. It is projected that there will be 666,000 people aged three and over able to speak Welsh by 2050, equivalent to around 21 per cent of the population. This is just over 100,000 more Welsh speakers than there were in 2011 but around 334,000 short of the target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

County Level – Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

- 3.5 At the 2001 Census it was found that 18.0% of the County's population were able to speak Welsh. The 2011 Census shows that this percentage had fallen to 15.3%. Whilst the number of people who speak Welsh varies greatly across the local authority area, the figures show a decline in the percentage of Welsh speakers over the last decade by 2.7%.

Local Level – Pontardawe

- 3.6 Pontardawe is defined within Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan as '*language sensitive*'. The policy states "*on the whole Neath Port Talbot has a lower percentage of Welsh language speakers compared to the Welsh average. There are however, areas within the County Borough where the language is an integral part of the social fabric and an important element of day to day life. While these areas contain very high levels of Welsh speakers, the erosion of the language in recent years has become a great concern within these communities*".
- 3.7 The following table provides a comparison of the Welsh language skills from the 2011 Census in terms of the Ward in which the site lies (Pontardawe) compared with Neath Port Talbot and Wales as a whole.

Pontardawe – 2011 Census

	Pontardawe	Neath Port Talbot	Wales
All people 3+	5,421	118,392	2,955,841
Can understand spoken Welsh only	11.9%	6.4%	5.3%
Can speak but cannot read or write Welsh	6.2%	2.7%	2.7%
Can speak and read but cannot write Welsh	3.8%	1.6%	1.5%
Can speak, read and write Welsh	20.8%	10.8%	14.6%

- 3.8 The above figures indicate that the Welsh language plays a larger role in this ward than for the County and Wales as a whole. As a result, this has been given particular consideration during this assessment.

Language Impact Assessment

Is the development likely to lead to a population increase/decrease?

- (a) Will it affect the balance of English/Welsh Speakers (in a negative/positive way);
or
(b) Lead to an absolute or proportional decline in the number of Welsh speakers?**

- 4.1 By its very nature, the development of new housing units will result in an increase in population to the ward of Pontardawe, introducing an additional 12no. affordable flats to the existing stock, increasing the population of the area by some 30 persons. The current building is not in occupation and requires significant remodelling to make it fit for modern purpose affordable housing.
- 4.2 Although the proposed development will lead to an increase in the population of the settlement, it is the intention of Pobl Group that a significant proportion of future residents are likely to originate from the local community itself.
- 4.3 The dwellings as proposed will assist in meeting housing need within the Pontardawe. The future marketing of these properties is intended to be advertised locally. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the additional population generated will mainly comprise of local people moving to new accommodation.
- 4.4 In seeking to estimate the numbers of future local residents drawn from the Pontardawe area who are likely to read, write and speak Welsh it is therefore reasonable to apply a percentage of 20.8%. Of the additional population generated, therefore, it is likely that almost a quarter of these will be Welsh speakers.
- 4.5 Furthermore, any children forming part of the increase in residents are highly likely to be learning Welsh at school, this will also increase the number of new residents with the ability to read, write or speak Welsh, even if their parents are English speaking.
- 4.6 In summary, the percentage of those with an ability to read, write and speak Welsh will be at least 20.8% resulting in the introduction of 8 new residents with the ability to read, write and speak Welsh. However, this is a 'minimum' figure, which could increase naturally and could also be increased further through the mitigation measures outlined below.

Impact: Neutral Effect – Low Change

Mitigation: Mitigation measures are not required to address any negative impact.

Is the development likely to lead to increased in-migration?

- (a) Might this result in a permanent increase in the proportion of non-Welsh speaking households; and
(b) Would such a change be permanent or temporary?**

- 4.7 As outlined above, by its very nature, the development will lead to a degree of population

increase to the settlement, some 30 new residents. However, as outlined above, this increase in the population is not anticipated to have a detrimental impact on the Welsh language and culture of Pontardawe.

- 4.8 In addition to the above, it is likely that in order to become part of the local community, some new non-Welsh speaking residents may wish to learn the language. Furthermore, any children on the development will learn the language at school.

Impact: Neutral effect – Low change

Mitigation: Mitigation measures are not required to address any negative impact.

Is the development likely to lead to increased out-migration?

Might:

(a) The process of out-migration likely result in a loss of Welsh speaking households; and

(b) Would such a change be permanent or temporary?

- 4.9 Through the provision of additional housing units, it is highly unlikely that the proposal will lead to an increase in out-migration amongst either Welsh speaking or non-Welsh speaking households.

- 4.10 Of the total number of units proposed (i.e. 12 units), the development will consist of a mix of 6no. 2-bed (3persons) apartments and 6no. 1-bed (2persons) apartments. This will provide accommodation for a mixture of populations. Through the provision of this type of unit, any process of out-migration, which is predominantly due to young families leaving an area due to lack of housing, is likely to be prevented.

Impact: Positive Effect – Low change

Is the development likely to lead to a changing age structure of the community?

Might it lead to young/middle-aged/older Welsh speaking people leaving/moving into the area, leading to:

(a) Changes in traditional activity patterns, resulting in an increasing desire to move away; or

(b) Social tensions/break up of traditional social networks?

- 4.11 The proposed development in its totality will facilitate the delivery of a mix of units catering for a range of household sizes and types.
- 4.12 The proposal will provide units of a size and type that will suit all population types and although the development will result in an increase in the general population, the dwelling type mix will ensure that this increase does not favour/discriminate any one particular age group. The mix proposed will help cater for people of different ages and economic status, with differing lifestyles and levels of independence.

Impact: No change

Is the development likely to have an impact on the health of local people?

Might it:

- (a) Increase the risk of illness, therefore reducing the desirability to live in the community; or**
- (b) Potentially make life more expensive, therefore increasing the risk of financial problems/stress of the local Welsh speaking population?**

- 4.13 Due to its nature, it is unlikely that the development would have any effect on the local people's health, nor increase risk of illness. Therefore, in terms of this aspect, the proposal will not reduce the desirability to live in the community.

Impact: No change

Mitigation Required: None.

Is the development likely to have an impact on the amenity of the local area?

Might it:

- a) Deteriorate the environmental quality, therefore reducing the desirability to live in the community?**

- 4.14 Immediately to the north eastern, south eastern and southern boundaries, residential properties surround the site by Llys Glanarafon. To the west of the site is the nearest supermarket (Lidl). The area surrounding the site is therefore predominantly characterised by residential dwellings with complementary uses situated throughout the area including retail shops, Cwmtawe Community School and Pontardawe football rugby club.

- 4.15 The nearest bus stop is located along the A474 named the Jubilee by-pass and is approximately 300m from the site.

- 4.16 All the above will ensure that there is no deterioration in the environmental quality experienced by the locality and so have no detriment on the desirability to live in the

Impact: Neutral - No change

Mitigation Required: None

Is the development likely to lead to the threat of increased crime or violence in the community? Might it Increase the risk of crime or violence, therefore reducing the desirability to live in the community?

- 4.17 As a result of its residential nature, it is not envisaged or anticipated that there will be an increase in either crime or violence in the community as a result of this proposed development. Furthermore, the proposal has been designed in line with national guidelines and regulations, which consider the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour in new development.

- 4.18 It is of course not possible to predict the nature of the residents that will occupy the

proposed units, but an increase in population will by itself result in an increase in trends of 'natural surveillance'.

Impact: No change

Mitigation Required: None.

Is the development likely to have a detrimental impact on local businesses?

Might it potentially lead to local – Welsh speaking – businesses closing down due to:

(a) A decline in overall local population: or

(b) An increase of – non-Welsh speaking – residents; or

(c) An increase in harmful/helpful competition?

- 4.19 The proposal lies within a sustainable location within close proximity of a wide range of facilities in Pontardawe. Complementary uses are situated throughout the area including Lidl, retail shops, Cwmtawe Community School and Pontardawe football rugby club.
- 4.20 It has been established that there will be an increase in the overall local population, of which approximately 20.8% will be able to read, write and speak Welsh. Due to the increase of new Welsh speakers, it is therefore unlikely that local businesses will close. Furthermore, the residential nature of the development would not introduce an element of competition that would harm local Welsh speaking business. In fact, the likely number of new Welsh speakers will benefit any local Welsh speaking business.
- 4.21 Due to its nature, it is unlikely that the proposal will have any detrimental impact, on employment in the area, certainly in the longer/permanent term. During the construction phase there will be a possibility that employment will be provided to local people.

Impact: No change

Mitigation Required: None.

Is the development likely to lead to greater economic diversity?

Might it:

(a) Potentially lead to a greater number of different jobs for the local – Welsh speaking – population due to economic diversification; or

(b) Lead to increased in-migration of non-Welsh speakers?

- 4.22 As indicated above, the proposed development will deliver some local employment opportunities. Should Pobl Group aim to recruit more staff, procedures will be carried out in compliance with the Welsh Language Scheme. i.e.
- Staff recruitment advertisements will be bilingual;
 - Information packs, such as job descriptions and person specifications will be prepared in Welsh and in English for all posts;
 - When the Welsh language press is used to advertise, advertisements in those publications will appear in Welsh only;

- Advertisements for posts for which Welsh language skills are essential will appear in Welsh in all publications, with an explanatory note in English for English or bilingual publications.

Impact: No change

Mitigation Required: None.

Is the development likely to have an impact on local wage/salary levels?

Might it:

- (a) Potentially increase/decrease wage/salary levels due to increase work force/business competition?**

- 4.23 There is nothing to suggest that the proposal will have any impact on local wage/salary levels.

Impact: No change

Mitigation Required: None.

Is the development likely to have an impact on the average cost of housing?

Might it:

- a) Force local – Welsh speaking – people to leave the community; or**
b) Potentially lead to an increase in homelessness/housing stress amongst local - Welsh speaking – households; or
c) Prevent local Welsh speaking people from returning to the area?

- 4.24 In view of the above, it is unlikely that the cost of units on the proposed development is likely to force local Welsh speaking people to leave the community. In addition, there is no reason to believe that the development would lead to an increase in homelessness.

- 4.25 The provision of new residential units will not affect the local housing market in terms of prices, but will provide a wider range and choice, enabling more Welsh speakers to remain in the local community and not be 'priced out' of the local housing market, as well as enabling those who have left to possibly return.

Impact: Positive – Low change

Is the development likely to have an impact on local schools?

Might it:

- a) Threaten/secure local schools due to an increase/decrease of student rolls?**
b) Alter the balance between Welsh-speaking and non-Welsh speaking students?

- 4.26 Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pontardawe is a welsh speaking primary school situated in Pontardawe, Neath Port Talbot. Education is provided for pupils of between three and eleven years of age. The school admits pupils from the full ability range and from a wide

social and economic background.

- 4.27 Secondary-age children in the area would attend Ysgol Gymraeg Ystylafera-Bro Dur which is some 4.5 miles (10min drive) north of Pontardawe.
- 4.28 It is unlikely that the proposal would result in altering the balance between Welsh speaking and non-Welsh speaking students. However, the local education authority's policy of ensuring that all students have a choice to become bilingual will ensure that such an impact will be addressed immediately and so will be short term. As a result, the impact of the development in relation to this issue will therefore be neutral.

Impact: No change

**Is the development likely to have an impact on health care provision?
Might it threaten/secure local – Welsh medium – facilities/services?**

- 4.29 Due to the nature of the development, there is no evidence to suggest that the proposal would have an impact on health care provision in the area.

Impact: No change, but potentially Positive

Mitigation Required: None.

Is the development likely to have an impact on local services, such as shops/post offices/banks/ pubs? Might it threaten/secure local shops/post offices/banks/pubs in Welsh speaking communities, therefore forcing certain sections of the population out of the area/community e.g. the elderly or disabled of the young?

- 4.30 Due to the increase in the population brought about by the proposed development together with its likely linguistic make-up, the scheme will have a positive effect on local services. In addition, as the proposed development is located within walking distance of a number of these local services, therefore based on convenience grounds, it is arguable that the new residents are likely to be encouraged to use such local services.
- 4.31 The above increase in demand will of course also secure the viability of local services for existing residents in Pontardawe, thus providing a further positive effect for the community as a result of the proposed development.

Impact: Positive – Moderate change

Will the development potentially lead to social tensions, conflict or serious divisions within the – Welsh speaking – community?

Might it:

- (a) Have a significant uneven effect on different parts of the local community, potentially advantaging some groups and disadvantaging others; or**
(b) Violate traditional values of certain parts of the community?

- 4.32 Through its design and types of units, the proposed development will seek to ensure that it is sympathetic with both the physical and social environment of the existing settlement.

4.33 As a result of the above, the development itself should not lead to increase social tension in the settlement. However, to ensure that existing residents are made aware of the proposal and its elements, the developers would be happy to work with both the Community and Council to allay any fears raised.

4.34 In terms of any impact on specific groups within the community, the proposal will ensure that a mix of housing types is delivered, catering for all groups of the local population.

Impact: No change, but potentially Positive

Mitigation Required: None.

Will the development potentially lead to changes in local – Welsh-speaking – traditions/culture?

Might it:

- (a) Result in local – Welsh-speaking – households moving away from the stress; or**
- (b) Lead to significant increase of non-local – non-Welsh speaking – households; or**
- (c) Lead to an erosion of family ties or other social networks; or**
- (d) Lead to significant changes to the economic or social context, threatening traditional lifestyles; or**
- (e) Impact on local – Welsh speaking – households by introducing/ accelerating social change?**

4.35 There is no evidence to suggest that local Welsh-speaking households will leave the settlement as a result of the proposed development and so result in a negative impact on local Welsh traditions and culture.

4.36 In view of the scale of the development, it would not lead to significant changes to the linguistic social context of the settlement nor accelerate or introduce social change.

Impact: No change

Mitigation Required: Promotion of the Welsh language wherever practical

Is the development likely to have an impact on local voluntary/activity/youth groups?

Might it force local people active in local groups to move out of the community due to:

- (a) Drive an increase in unemployment/economic stress; or**
- (b) Drive an increase in house prices/housing stress?**

4.37 Due to its residential nature, it is not expected that the proposed development will have any impact on local voluntary, activity to youth groups. Similarly, there is no evidence on any grounds to suggest that the proposal will result in local people active in local groups to move out of the community.

Impact: No change

Mitigation Required: None.

Conclusion of Linguistic Effects

Overall Impact of the Proposed Development

- 5.1 This assessment amounts to 4 positive effects, 0 negative effects and 14 neutral effects, with no change anticipated. Using the scoring system set out in PWL, this amounts to an overall score of +4, which would indicate that the proposed development would have a positive impact on the Welsh language in the settlement Pontardawe and its surrounding area.

Interpretation of Results

- 5.2 In assessing the impact of a new residential development on the Welsh language, there is a danger to focus solely on the increase in population and the proportion of that population that hold Welsh Language skills i.e. the ability to read, write and speak Welsh. However, immigration of non-Welsh speaking households into an area with a high proportion of Welsh-speaking households is only one threat to the future of the Welsh language. The 'other side of the coin' is the retention of existing Welsh speaking households within communities with high percentages of people with Welsh language skills.
- 5.3 In conclusion, the proposed development of 12 units at Ty Mawr, Llys Glanarafon, Pontardawe will have an overall positive impact on the Welsh language and its future in the settlement and the surrounding area. Pobl Group, in promoting sustainable and resilient communities, will continue to encourage the use of the Welsh Language.