

WELSH LANGUAGE ACTION PLAN

**Former Gwaun Cae
Gurwen Primary
School, Water Street,
Neath Port Talbot**

November 2022



Summary

Proposal:

Full planning permission for proposed residential development and associated works

Location:

Former Gwaun Cae Gurwen Primary School, Water Street, Gwaun Cae Gurwen, Ammanford, Neath Port Talbot, SA18 1HA

Date:

November 2022

Project Reference:

S21.262

Client:

Cartrefi D&D Homes

Product of:

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Introduction

- 1.1 Asbri Planning Ltd has been instructed by Cartrefi D&D Homes to prepare a Welsh Language Action Plan (WLAP) to accompany a full planning application for residential development and associated works on land at the site of the former Gwaun Cae Gurwen Primary School, Gwaun Cae Gurwen, Neath Port Talbot.
- 1.2 The application site lies within a Welsh Language Sensitive Area as noted within the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (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 plan area. Gwaun Cae Gurwen is considered by the LPA to be an area of special linguistic significance, as the main language of daily life is Welsh. LDP Policy WL1 (*Development in Language Sensitive Areas*) outlines that residential development for 10 or more dwellings requires a Language Action Plan to accompany any planning application. Such a plan is required to set out measures “*to be taken to protect, promote and enhance the Welsh language.*”

Background

2.1 The proposal is for full planning permission for residential development and associated works at the former Gwaun Cae Gurwen Primary School site. The proposed site plan shows the siting of 10 dwellings with the existing access retained off Water Street. The dwellings are oriented as 6 semi-detached dwellings fronting Water Street with a further 4 semi-detached dwellings located to the rear of the site.

2.2 The proposal is to provide 10 dwellings, providing the following mix;

- 6x 3-bed semi-detached dwellings;
- 4x 4-bed semi-detached dwellings.

The proposal will provide units of a size and type that will suit all family types and although the development will result in an increase in the general population, the house type mix will ensure that this increase does not favour/discriminate any one particular age group. The housing mix proposed will help cater for people of different ages and economic status, with differing lifestyles and levels of independence.

2.3 By its very nature, the development of new housing units will result in an increase in population to the ward of Gwaun Cae Gurwen, introducing an additional 10 dwellings to the existing stock, increasing the population of the area by some 38-40 persons. Although the proposed development will lead to an increase in the population of the settlement, it is the applicant's view that significant proportion of future residents are likely to originate from the local community itself.

2.4 Due to the increase in the immediate local population brought about by the proposed development together with its likely linguistic make-up, the scheme will have a positive effect on local services. The proposed development is located within walking distance of a number of these local services, new residents are likely to be encouraged to use such facilities, reducing the need for and use of the private car.

2.5 By virtue of the scheme comprising a residential development, no new 'facilities' are proposed by virtue of the application and the scheme is residential in its entirety. Notwithstanding, it is considered that the new population will serve to enhance and contribute to the established facilities within the community and may lead to the creation and establishment of new facilities and services.

- 2.6 It is considered that the site's development will have a positive affect on the local community. As concluded within the WLIA, the development amounts to 4 positive effects, 0 negative effects and 14 neutral effects, with no change anticipated. Using the established 'scoring system' 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 Gwaun Cae Gurwen and its surrounding area.
- 2.7 The proposed floor plans and elevations for Plots 1-6 indicate a pitched roof with a gable upon its front elevation. The front elevation indicates for three primary windows and a front door. The dwellings will be three bedroomed including a living area, open plan kitchen dining area, hallway and w.c. on the ground floor. The first floor will include one ensuite bedroom and two other additional bedrooms, as well as a bathroom.
- 2.8 The proposed scheme aims to address the five objectives of good de-sign, which include: Access, Character, Environment Sustainability, Movement and Community Safety.
- 2.9 **Access**
The proposed development has been designed in line with the principles of inclusive design and will be in full compliance with Approved Document M of the Building Regulations, which relates to access and use of buildings. The proposed plan retains one of two existing vehicular accesses into the site and includes its widening to ensure the passing of two vehicles.
- 2.10 **Character**
Plots 1-6 will follow the existing pattern of road fronting properties along Water Street. The access road into the site will then extend from Water Street forming an estate road within the development leading to the four semi-detached dwellings to the rear of the site.
- 2.11 Although the existing design context within the surrounding area is varied, it is considered that the proposed design is in keeping with the surrounding area due to the proposed materials pallete choices. Further details can be found within the accompanying Design and Access Statement and submitted architectural plans and visuals.
- 2.12 The dwellings will be located within a site that was historically host to the village primary school. Following its demolition, the site has started to deteriorate, it is therefore considered that the proposed development will enhance the visual amenity of the immediate area.

2.13 **Environmental Sustainability**

Given the site's proximity to public transport and active travel routes, the site promotes the use of sustainable transport modes. As mentioned within Section 2 of this statement, the site is located within walking distance to convenience stores and other essential services. It is envisaged that this will reduce the need for a car, which in turn reduces the carbon footprint for future residents. The use of locally sourced materials will contribute to the reduction in the carbon footprint of the scheme overall.

2.14 **Movement**

A fundamental component of good design is for the site to be accessible by several modes of transport. It has been demonstrated throughout this statement that the site is well located for both public transport and active travel methods giving access to other nearby settlements as well as the wider county.

2.15 Water Street comes from Heol Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen (A474). The A474 is the primary highway network linking Ammanford to the west and Pontardawe to the east. The M4 Motorway is accessible from both of these locations giving access to the wider south Wales region.

2.16 The application site is a short distance away from the schools within the area. Ysgol Gymraeg Gwaun Cae Gurwen is a short 8-minute walk away from the site whilst the area's comprehensive school is located a 20-minute drive away by car or bus.

2.17 The nearest train station is located in Ammanford, which is approximately a 14-minute journey by car. The station within Ammanford links with the wider rail network.

2.18 **Community Safety**

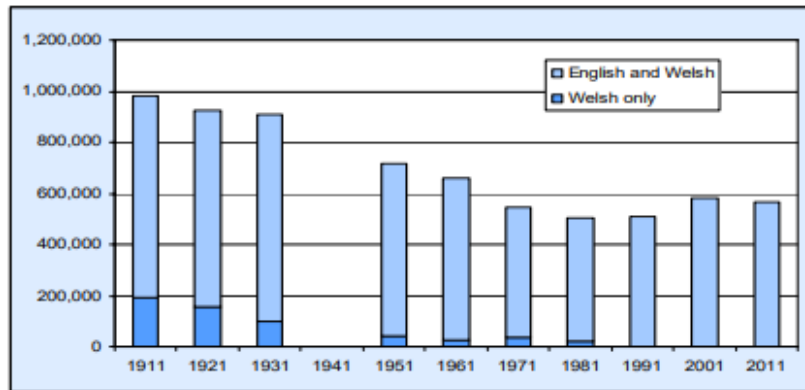
It is considered that the proposed development will enhance the existing community safety conditions at Water Street. The existing site can be a drawing factor to antisocial behaviour therefore its redevelopment will enhance the safety of the area.

2.19 In addition to the above, the properties will be within public view encouraging natural surveillance throughout the scheme.

2.20 Having regard to highway safety, the access/egress point will have adequate visibility splays from both directions, which will create a safe environment for both vehicles and pedestrians.

Ward/ Local Information

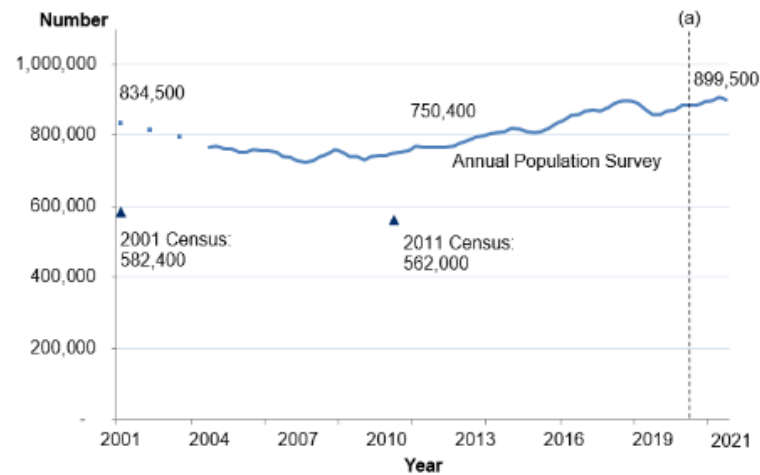
- 3.1 Nationally, the general trend of the number of people living in Wales with an ability to speak Welsh declined between 1901 and 2011, as evident within the below graph:



(Source: Statistical Bulletin 2012)

- 3.2 Notwithstanding, it is encouraging that the number of Welsh speakers has risen since 1991, a trend which has been accredited to the language being taught more widely 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 in light of continuous changes in terms of Wales' demography.
- 3.3 Notwithstanding the above, for the year ending 30 June 2022, the Annual Population Survey reported that 29.7% of people aged three or older were able to speak Welsh. This figure equates to around 899,500 people. This is 0.5 percentage points higher than the previous year (year ending 30 June 2021), equating to around 14,400 more people. (Source: <https://gov.wales/welsh-language-data-annual-population-survey-july-2021-june-2022>)
- 3.4 The chart shown below how these figures have been gradually increasing each year since March 2010, after they had been gradually declining from 2001 to 2007. The number of people reporting being able to speak Welsh decreased from December 2018 to March 2020, before generally increasing again since then. Welsh Government note that this increase should be treated with caution due to the change of survey mode since mid-March 2020 because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Number of people aged three or older able to speak Welsh, 2001 to June 2022



(Source: Annual Population Survey and population census)

- 3.5 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

- 3.6 At the time of the 2001 Census, it was found that 18.0% of the County's population were able to speak Welsh. The 2011 Census showed 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%.
- 3.7 Menter Iaith Castell Nedd Port Talbot note that *"some communities such as Godre'r Graig and Ystalyfera have seen a decline of over 10% within a decade. It could be argued that the area that stretches from Trebanos to Cwmllynfell and Rhos to Gwaun Cae Gurwen is the most important in the county in terms of its linguistic significance as it contains the highest numbers and percentages of Welsh speakers. This area is the county's linguistic axis..."*

Local Level – Gwaun Cae Gurwen

- 3.8 Gwaun Cae Gurwen is defined within Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan as *'language sensitive'*. Previously, the former Welsh Language Board identified and designated a 'Language Development Area' in Neath Port Talbot which included the communities of Lower

Brynamman, Gwaun Cae Gurwen, Cwmllynfell, Ystalyfera, Godre'r Graig. This area is of special linguistic significance as the main language of daily life is Welsh. As a result of socio-economic factors however, the integrity of the language is under threat.

- 3.9 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 (Gwaun Cae Gurwen) compared with Neath Port Talbot and Wales as a whole. The below figures highlight that the Welsh language plays a significant role within Gwaun Cae Gurwen with over 40% of the population able to speak, read and write in Welsh.

Gwaun Cae Gurwen – 2011 Census

	Gwaun Cae Gurwen	Neath Port Talbot	Wales
All people 3+	4,133	118,392	2,955,841
Can understand spoken Welsh only	9.6%	6.4%	5.3%
Can speak but cannot read or write Welsh	9.4%	2.7%	2.7%
Can speak and read but cannot write Welsh	6.2%	1.6%	1.5%
Can speak, read and write Welsh	40.1%	10.8%	14.6%

- 3.10 The site is situated within close proximity to several community facilities which are within walking distance. Adjoining Water Street is Heol Cae Gurwen which is host to convenience stores, a hair salon, post office and takeaways. Amman Valley medical practice is located a short distance away to the north just off Graig Road (A474). Cwmgors Rugby Club, Gwaun Cae Gurwen Community Clinic and Ysgol Gymraeg Cae Gurwen are located to the north off New Road.
- 3.11 Contact has been made with Neath Port Talbot's Education Department to establish details of current figures in respect of local school capacities. A response is currently awaited. A response is also awaited in response to a query related to pre-school play groups and reception classes capacity to accommodate additional Welsh and non-Welsh speakers. As and when a response is received, this WLAP and its findings will be updated accordingly.

Consultation and Engagement

4.1 As required by the Supplementary Planning Guidance (Development and the Welsh Language), Asbri Planning have made contact with the following individuals/groups/organisations in order to establish the extent of Welsh language activities and events occurring within Gwaun Cae Gurwen. The list reads as follows;

- Menter Iaith Castell Nedd Port Talbot;
- Local Ward Member: Cllr Sonia Reynolds;
- Local Ward Member: Cllr Sarah Thomas;
- Gwaun Cae Gurwen Community Council;
- Urdd Gorllewin Morgannwg Area officers.

4.2 Whilst responses have been limited to date, Cllr Sarah Thomas has responded to our email to highlight a number of community groups who operate in part or solely through the medium of Welsh. In their response, Cllr Thomas also highlighted her position on the planning committee and noted that the merits of the scheme could not be discussed in any way.

4.3 Cllr Thomas' list comprised the following community groups;

- Amman Tawe Partnership (Doctors Surgery);
- Amman Valley Trotting Track;
- Awel Aman Tawe;
- Brynamman Rugby Club;
- Canolfan Maerdy;
- Cwmgors Boxing Club;
- Cwmgors Rugby Club;
- The Guardsman (Community Pub);
- Gwaun Cae Gurwen Community Council;
- GCG Food Bank;
- Honeycomb Co-Op;
- Organised Kaos;
- Plant Dewi;
- Tairgwaith Primary School;
- Tairgwaith Workingmen's Club;
- Y Lolfa; and
- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Gwaun Cae Gurwen.

4.4 Within their response, the local member advised that to the best of their knowledge, all the abovementioned groups *"have Welsh speakers and Welsh*

language provisioning/services, with the possible exception of Honeycomb Co-Op”.

- 4.5 As detailed at 4.1, we have also sought details from Menter Iaith Castell Nedd Port Talbot, the local Urdd branch, Community Council and ward members in relation to any other groups or events that take place through the medium of Welsh. As responses remain outstanding from most consultees, it is considered that this section of the WLAP will be further added to once subsequent feedback is received from various consultees.

Mitigation

- 5.1 As detailed within the Development and the Welsh Language Supplementary Planning Guidance document, residential developments in Language Sensitive Areas are required to provide a financial contribution of £500 per unit. This figure will provide a package of mitigation measures over a 3-year period. For this scheme (10 units), a contribution of £5000 will be sought.
- 5.2 The SPG requires the WLAP to detail the measures proposed to protect, promote and enhance the Welsh language. As detailed within the WLAP, feedback from consultees has been limited to date and therefore it is a little too early to determine and prepare a specific suite of measures. It is the team's intention to firm up and establish the measures once a greater number of consultees respond.
- 5.3 Notwithstanding, the list of measures contained within Appendix D of the LDP provides a helpful starting point and is one that can be reviewed in the context of the list of groups/organisations set out at paragraph 4.3 of this WLAP. Alongside the set measures relating to bilingual marketing/signage and the production of a Welcome Pack for residents, the following age-categorised measures will be considered by the applicant;

Pre-School Children

In relation to children of pre-school age, the development's contributions could support and/or create opportunities for parents/carers to positively connect with the Welsh language through activities/groups such as:

- Cylch Ti a Fi
- Jamborees
- Sessions for prospective parents
- Sport Saturdays
- Sessions to encourage use of the language by Welsh speakers
- Mother and baby sessions
- Welsh in the home sessions
- Sessions in family groups;
- Plant Dewi sessions <https://www.plantdewi.org.uk/>
- Y Lolfa sessions <https://www.npt.gov.uk/5736>
- Activities related to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Gwaun Cae Gurwen as they have nursery age children at the school

Primary Age Children

The contributions sought could also support and create opportunities for primary age children to engage positively with the language in informal settings such as:

- Homework clubs – Ysgol Gynradd Gwaun Cae Gurwen/Tairgwaith Primary School;
- Sports classes - Ysgol Gynradd Gwaun Cae Gurwen/Tairgwaith Primary School/Yr Urdd/Amman Valley Trotting Club/ Brynamman Rugby Club/ Cwmgors Boxing Club/Cwmgors Rugby Club/Organised Kaos
- Special interest clubs
- Media workshops – radio
- Discos

Secondary School Age Children

- Revision clubs – linked with local schools
- Youth clubs – linking with established groups such as Yr Urdd and local schools
- Music classes
- Welsh language gigs – linking with schools, Yr Urdd, Menter Iaith Castell Nedd Port Talbot

Adults

- Sports/exercises classes – yoga, Zumba, 5 a side;
- Reading clubs – linking with Y Lolfa;
- Bingo, quizzes – linking with The Guardsman (Community Pub)/Tairgwaith Working Men's Club;
- Gigs - linking with The Guardsman (Community Pub);
- Organised walks;
- Coffee mornings.

- 5.4 The above suggested efforts seek to protect and promote and enhance the Welsh language within Gwaun Cae Gurwen. The community is well served by a wide variety of existing groups, organisations and initiatives and it is considered that contributions provided by virtue of this development would serve to sustain and support what is already in place whilst also providing an opportunity to utilise the contributions for the purposes of creating new schemes and events (to be determined by the needs and wishes of the

community). Details regarding how the measures can be delivered including details timescale will be confirmed in due course, subject to more detailed discussions with relevant consultees.

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Conclusion

- 6.1 This Welsh Language Action Plan has been prepared by Asbri Planning on behalf of Cartrefi D&D Homes in support of their planning application for the development of the former Gwaun Cae Gurwen Primary School site for residential purposes.
- 6.2 As the application site sits within a '*Language Sensitive Area*' and as the scheme constitutes a major development of 10 homes, the preparation and submission of a Welsh Language Action Plan has been necessary, in line with the requirements of LDP policies SP 22 and WL 1.
- 6.3 The WLAP has been prepared in line with the guidance provided within Appendices C and D of the Development and the Welsh Language Supplementary Planning Guidance document.
- 6.4 The WLAP has highlighted the known extent of local groups/organisations working within the community and has suggested appropriate mitigation measures to protect, promote and enhance the Welsh language within Gwaun Cae Gurwen. As responses have been somewhat limited to date from local groups and organisations, it is considered appropriate to amend the WLAP as further discussions are held. Notwithstanding, it is considered that this document comprises a robust starting point and should be considered as a 'live document' moving forward.