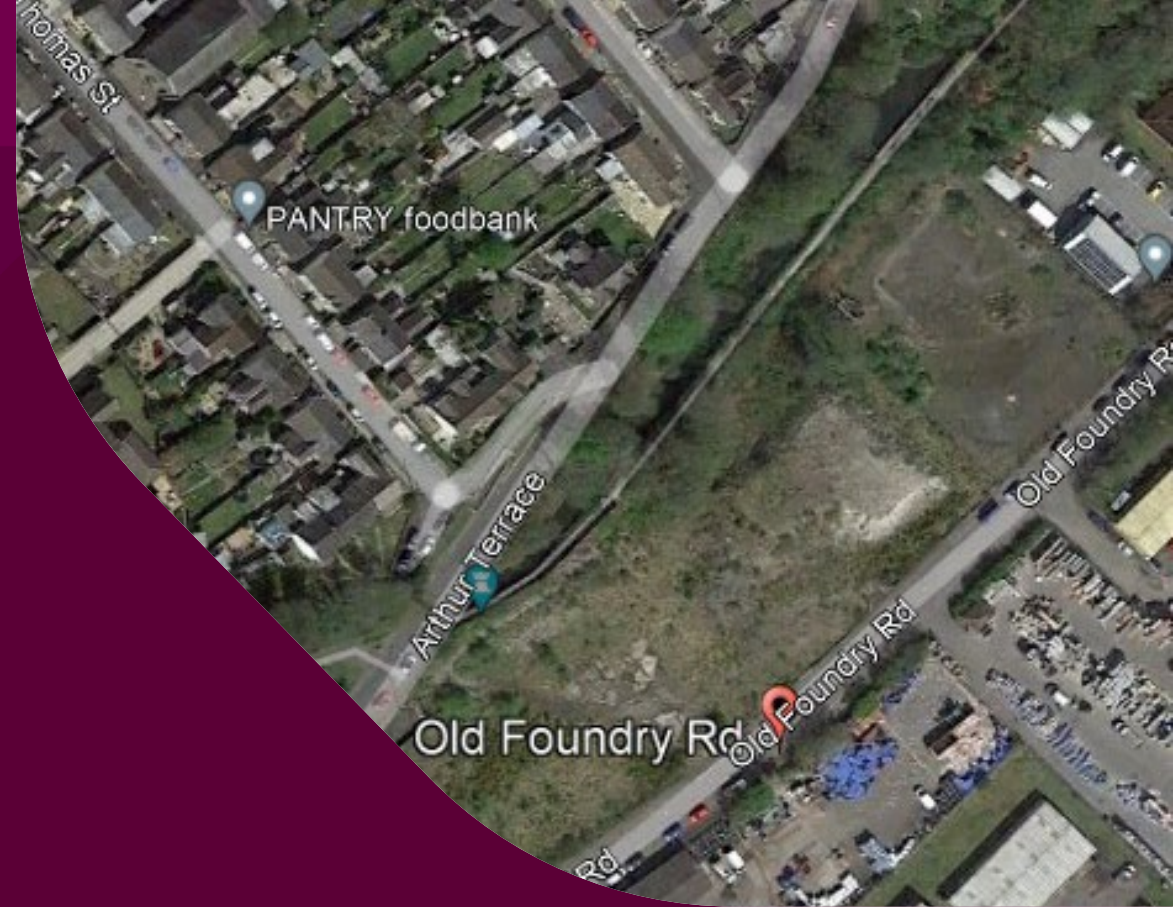


OLD FOUNDRY ROAD

WELSH LANGUAGE ACTION PLAN

May 2023

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Introduction

The application site is located in the Alloy Industrial Estate to the east of Pontardawe Town Centre, approximately 5km to the north of Neath and 12km to the north east of Swansea. The site is accessible via the A4067, which connects to the M4 approximately 6.5km to the south.

The application site is in a sustainable location and well connected to nearby public transport links and pedestrian access to the amenities in Pontardawe town centre. The application site is well positioned in relation to education, healthcare and community facilities.

The proposal is for 'the development of light industrial/commercial units (Use Class B2/B8) with associated parking, servicing, hard and soft landscaping and drainage infrastructure'.

The development description, the proposed development seeks to provide a series of 15 light industrial/commercial units with associated vehicle access doors and external parking to meet a growing demand for start-up businesses.

Linguistic Context

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.

Encouragingly, however, following devolution and the introduction of the 1993 Welsh Language Act, Welsh is being taught more in schools and therefore the number of Welsh speakers stands higher than it was in 1991. 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 (2000). This was revised and updated in October 2017 – ‘Planning and the Welsh Language’.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 seeks to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It contains seven well-being goals which certain public bodies (including local authorities and National Park authorities) must seek to achieve in order to improve well-being both now and in the future. One of the well-being goals is to create “A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language”.

Notwithstanding the above, the publication of the 2011 Census, showed that that ‘snapshot’ of the Welsh Language on a national level was the number of people who speak Welsh had fallen. It has been thought that migration trends and education might lead to an increase in speakers in less traditional Welsh-speaking areas, but the census suggested otherwise, with just two areas,

Monmouthshire and Cardiff, seeing a percentage increase.

NOMIS data for the 2021 Census Area Profile reveals that 68% of residents at the County Borough level identify as ‘Welsh only’, with a further 9% as ‘Welsh and British’.

Granular level data from 2021 is not yet available at the Pontardawe ward level, however, a review of summary data from the Office of National Statistics showing the changes between 2011 and 2021 indicates that the percentage of Welsh speakers in Neath Port Talbot fell from 15.3% in 2011 to 13.5% in 2021. In 2021, there were around 2,000 fewer Welsh-speaking Neath Port Talbot residents (over the age of three years) compared with 2011. The number of people who did not speak Welsh increased by 5,100.

Turning to the local context, the Supplementary Planning Guidance: Development and the Welsh Language (July 2017) sets out that the communities with the highest percentage of Welsh speakers (which includes the Pontardawe ward), have experienced the most significant loss in recent years, a trend replicated at the national level.

Local Context

The area is served by a Welsh medium school, namely Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pontardawe and the choice of parents to educate their children through the medium of Welsh is, therefore shown to be popular in the area. There is no evidence that the approval of this application will in any way prejudice that parental choice or the popularity of learning through the medium of the Welsh language.

. Turning to wider Welsh resources locally, the [Ty'r Gwrhyd Welsh Language Centre](#) has been operational since April 2016 under the control of Academi Hywel Teifi, and the center was officially opened by the Minister of Welsh and Lifelong Learning, Alun Davies AM, in July 2016.

[Neath Port Talbot Welsh Language Initiative](#), [Learn Welsh - Swansea Bay Area](#) and [Urdd Gobaith Cymru](#) have offices in the Centre and there are other local groups that promote Welsh locally such as Merched y Wawr, Cwm Gwawr Crotesi'r Cwm and Llais Community Paper, that meet in the building. This has enabled the Centre to act as a one stop shop for Welsh language information and services in the area and have enriched the Centre's activity as the organisations plan and support each other's work. The [Ty'r Gwrhyd Welsh language bookshop](#) is successful in attracting visitors of all ages to the Centre and providing resources to support Welsh-medium education and Welsh learners of all ages. There are 10 [Learn Welsh - Swansea Bay Area](#) classes held in the Centre on a weekly basis as well as informal courses and learning sessions. Academi Hywel Teifi hold a variety of regular educational / cultural events, including book talks and launches that are

suited and likely to attract a local audience. This demonstrates that various community organisations and groups also play an active role in community life and encourage the use of the Welsh language through life. Again, that objective is not prejudiced by the proposal.

Action Plan

Policy (both LDP and the supporting SPG) establish that commercial development proposals within the identified language sensitive areas, as this is, will be required to submit a Language Action Plan, setting out the measures to be taken to protect, promote and enhance the Welsh language.

Against the backdrop of a fall in Welsh-speaking Neath Port Talbot residents (over the age of three years) compared with 2011 and an increase in the number of people who did not speak Welsh, it is important to seek to protect and preserve the language.

Notwithstanding the above, given the commercial nature of the development proposed, it will not have the demographic implications that a residential proposal would on introducing new people into the community and into local schools. It is expected that these units would be occupied/staffed by people from within the County Borough and ideally they would be local to Pontardawe and there would be a mix of English and Welsh speaking staff. Given this and in line with the expectations of policy at the local level, the aim should (subject to ownership structure and the level of ultimate control that the applicant has over such matters) be to encourage the use of the Welsh language in the workplace and in interactions with customers, the public and other employees.

Signposting occupiers to the various local groups and events could be a meaningful way of ensuring that awareness is high among the businesses of what is available around them.

Naming the overall development in Welsh for example (Parc Hen Ffordd Ffowndri) may be a possibility subject to ownership structure etc. That would be a tangible way in which the scheme could support the language openly as well as in terms of creating a Welsh sense of place for the development.

Conclusion

The development of this site will provide new business unit supply into the market at the heart of a local population, close to a range of facilities and services that are already provided at least in part through the medium of the Welsh language. Improving and retaining employment opportunities locally can only help promote and sustain the Welsh language within the community by offering the opportunity for people to work locally. By increasing the ability of local people to gain employment in the community, it will protect and enhance those who by and large speak Welsh or contribute effectively to the culture of the locality. It therefore stands that the development will support the community and language as opposed to attracting a significant in-migration of people from outside of the area who are not Welsh speakers or sympathetic to Welsh culture. The proposal has the potential to contribute effectively to that beneficial objective.

In conclusion, the proposed development will provide a range and choice of new commercial units in a location already active for that purpose. It will as a result, offer the opportunity for retention of employment in the local area, supporting and sustaining the economic and social viability of local facilities and services, including Welsh language and culture.

It is therefore considered that the proposed development will not adversely impact upon the linguistic character of the community in accordance with relevant policy.

