

WELSH LANGUAGE ACTION PLAN

**Former Tirbach Washery,
Tirbach Road,
Ystalyfera**

May 2026



Summary

Proposal:

Outline planning application for the redevelopment of the former Tirbach Washery comprising the construction of up to 160 residential dwellings and associated infrastructure works.

Location:

Former Tirbach Washery, Tirbach Road, Ystalyfera

Date:

May 2026

Project Reference:

S19.182

Client:

Mr Robert Maggs

Product of:

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Disclaimer:

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in this report is based on information provided by others. That information has neither been checked nor verified by Asbri Planning Ltd.

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Introduction

- 1.1 Asbri Planning Ltd has been instructed by Mr Robert Maggs to prepare a Welsh Language Action Plan to accompany an outline planning application for the redevelopment of the former Tirbach Washery comprising the construction of up to 160 residential dwellings and associated infrastructure works.
- 1.2 The site is allocated for development in the adopted Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (LDP) – Policy H1/31; this estimates that 160 units could be provided.
- 1.3 The site lies in the Ystalyfera ward which is identified in the LDP under Policy SP22 as a Language Sensitive area. As a result, any residential development of 10 or more units will be required to provide a Welsh Language Action Plan which details the measures to be undertaken to protect, promote and enhance the Welsh Language. This document has therefore been prepared in accordance with Supplementary Planning Guidance: Development and the Welsh Language (July 2017, in particular Appendix C: Welsh Language Action Plans).
- 1.4 The above reflects paragraph 2.7.2 of TAN 20: The Welsh Language (2016) which states that the Local Planning Authority may outline a need for measures to mitigate the impacts of development on the Welsh Language.
- 1.6 Consequently, Section 2 sets out the Policy Context of the Welsh Language; Section 3 provides the Background to the development; Section 4 examines the Local and Ward context; Section 5 refers to consultation exercises; and discusses whether Mitigation Measures are necessary. Conclusions are set out in Section 6.

Policy Context

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 11 (2021)

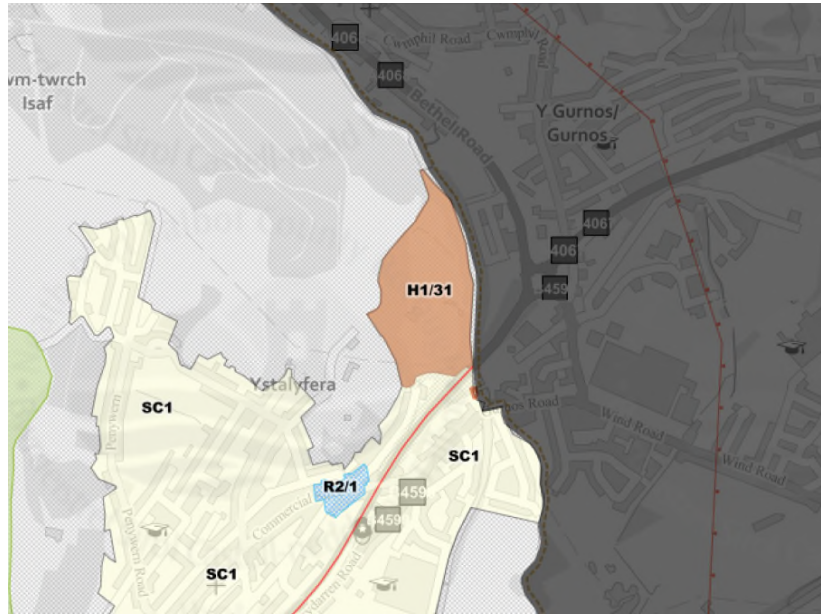
- 2.1 PPW sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government and provides guidance to local authorities when formulating planning policies. This overarching policy document states that the future well-being of the language across the whole of Wales will depend upon a wide range of actors, particularly education, demographic change, community activities and a sound economic base to maintain thriving sustainable communities. The land use planning system should also take account of the Welsh language and in so doing can contribute to its well-being.
- 2.2 The Planning Wales Act 2015 contains provisions relating to the consideration of the Welsh language in the appraisal of development plans and in dealing with applications for planning permission.

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 20: The Welsh Language (2017)

- 2.3 TAN 20 supplements the policies set out in PPW, providing guidance on how the planning system should consider the implications of the Welsh language when LDPs are prepared, including the important roles of the Single Integrated Plan (SIP) and LDP Sustainability Appraisal (SA). The guidance states that the land use planning system should, where feasible and relevant, contribute to the future well-being of the Welsh language by establishing the conditions to allow sustainable communities to thrive.

Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (LDP) 2011-2026

- 2.4 Neath Port Talbot's LDP was first adopted in January 2016, which sets out a clear planning framework to address key issues facing the County, providing certainty and the basis for efficient planning decisions.
- 2.5 The site is allocated for residential development in the adopted LDP under Policy H1/31, for 160 dwellings:



2.6 Other key policies in the LDP are:

- **Policy SC1** – Settlement Limits
- **Policy I1** – Infrastructure Requirements
- **Policy H1/28** – Housing Sites
- **Policy AH1** – Affordable Housing
- **Policy OS1** – Open Space Provision
- **Policy EN7** – Important Natural Features
- **Policy EN8** – Pollution and Land Stability
- **Policy TR2** – Design and Access of New Development
- **Policy BE1** – Design
- **Policy SP22** – Welsh Language
- **Policy WL1** – Development in Language Sensitive Areas

2.7 The supporting Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Development and the Welsh Language (2017) identifies the following areas to be within the Welsh Language Sensitive Area:

- Cwmllynfell;
- Lower Brynamman;
- Gwaun Cae Gurwen;
- Ystalyfera;
- Trebanos;
- Godre'r Graig;
- Pontardawe;
- Alltwen;

- Rhos; and
- Crynant.

- 2.8 The wards are located in close proximity to each other mostly within the north and north-western part of the County and collectively hold the highest percentage of individuals with Welsh language skills. The Plan seeks to protect the integrity of the Welsh language within these areas, where an average of 39.5% of the population speak Welsh.
- 2.9 The site lies within the Welsh Language Sensitive Area as defined in the LDP. As the site is allocated for housing it has already been subject to an assessment through the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) process, an Action Plan rather than a full impact assessment is deemed necessary.

Background and Proposals

- 3.1 The proposals involve the redevelopment of the former Tirbach Washery and construction of residential development and associated works with all matters reserved.
- 3.2 The site is of an irregular shape located within the former industrial village of Ystalyfera in the upper Swansea Valley. It lies approximately 23km north-east of Swansea, and approximately 1.7km south-west of Ystradgynlais (its neighbouring town). The site itself is bounded to the north by Bethel Road (the A4068), to the east and south by the A4067, and to the west by large areas of tree and other vegetation coverage.
- 3.3 The site is brownfield in nature and was previously occupied by a coal washery.
- 3.4 The Afon Twrch adjoins the site's eastern boundary, whilst forestry adjoins the site's northern and western boundaries. Residential properties lie to the south of the site along Tirbach Road. Commercial and retail facilities are also located to the east of the site such as Lower Cwmtwrch's Recycling Centre and Home Bargains discount store.
- 3.5 Access to the site is currently obtained via a single-track road located to the west of the A4067. Notwithstanding, a signal-controlled junction is proposed to be constructed onto the A4067 to serve the development at this location. The access will also provide provision for pedestrians and cyclists, and two other pedestrian links are proposed to the east and south of the site. As such, the proposals will ensure that the site provides a good standard of pedestrian infrastructure that connects the Site to surrounding areas within Ystalyfera.
- 3.6 The proposal layout includes a mix of 1, 2, 3, and 4 bed properties. The proposed layout maintains the privacy and amenity of existing and proposed residential properties by ensuring appropriate separation distances and through the orientation of dwellings.
- 3.7 It is anticipated that the proposals will be considered in accordance with the policy context outlined in Section 2. The site falls within the Ystalyfera Ward, where a majority of the owner dwelling stock is owner occupied (63.2% compared to county average of 68.7%). The majority of dwellings are either semi-detached (45.1%) or terraced (25.5%). The average dwelling size in terms of number at the time of the 2011 Census in the Ystalyfera Ward was 2.2, marginally below the 2.3 average for Neath Port Talbot. Policy SP7 of the LDP

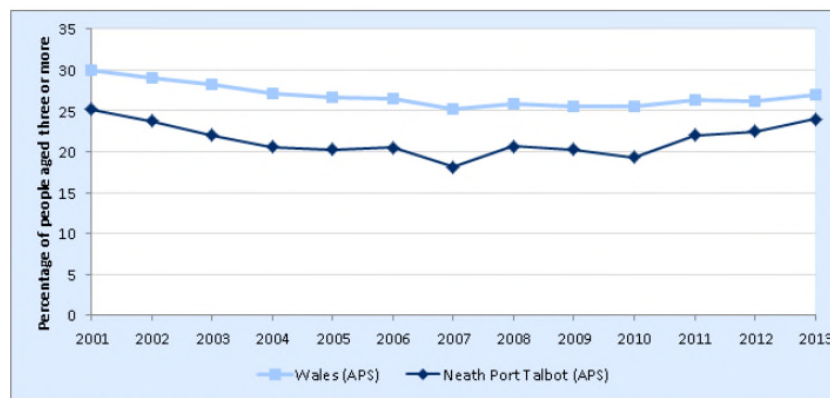
has identified a need for 7,800 new dwellings in the zone over the period of the LDP, with 1,200 needing to be for affordable homes, particularly 2 and 3 bed units.

- 3.8 The design of the proposal has taken into consideration the comments received from the Planning Department via pre-application advice, and further amendments have been incorporated, to take into account the various site constraints which became evident through the design process. It is therefore considered that the scale, form, massing, layout and design are appropriate to the local setting and would have no adverse impact on the existing community.

Ward/ Local Information

County Level – Neath Port Talbot

- 4.1 The 2021 Census found that 13.5% of the County Borough’s population could speak Welsh, which is a 1.8% decrease since the 2011 Census. There were around 2,000 fewer Welsh-speaking Neath Port Talbot residents compared to ten years prior. This represents a pronounced decline within the County Borough. The figures also show a marked reduction in the percentage of Welsh speakers from within traditional Welsh speaking communities within the county between 1991-2001.
- 4.2 Nevertheless, a more optimistic picture is painted in the Local Area Summary for Neath Port Talbot graph, which can be found below (Statistics for Wales, 2014). This is particularly true since 2007, however it should be noted that these figures are still below the Welsh average.



Source: Annual Population Survey

- 4.3 Further comparison data for the County Borough can be found in the table below, and provides a comparison between national and local statistics from the 2011 Census.

	Neath Port Talbot	Wales
All people 3+	139,812	2,955,841

Understands spoken Welsh	19.9%	27,850	672,828	22.8%
Speaks Welsh	14.8%	20,698	562,016	19.0%
Reads Welsh	14.9%	20,794	539,245	18.24
Writes Welsh	11.55%	16,144	459,824	15.56
Either speaks, reads or writes Welsh	17.83%	24,928	630,062	21.31%

Ystalyfera Ward

- 4.4 The application site lies within the Cwmllynfell and Ystalyfera electoral ward. The ward covers the village of Ystalyfera, located within the south-eastern section of the ward, whilst the village of Cwmllynfell is located to the northwest. A third village, Pen-Rhiw-Fawr, is located to the south of Cwmllynfell, as such is within the centre of the ward. As such, the ward is largely rural in nature, especially within the centre, south and west of the ward. Notwithstanding, a wide range of educational, and social opportunities are available within Ystalyfera including; Ysgol Gynradd Ystalyfera, and Ystalyfera Rugby and Football Club. Economic opportunities can also be found within the adjacent electoral ward to the northeast of the site (the Cwm-Twrch ward) within the Gurnos Industrial Estate.
- 4.5 Ystalyfera is a former industrial village and community in the upper Swansea Valley. The River Tawe runs through the western side of the village, and is approximately 23km northeast of Swansea and approximately 1.7km south-west of Ystradgynlais.
- 4.6 With regards to sustainability, Ystalyfera is well served in respect to its access to local services and amenities. For example, the site is located approximately 600m from Ystalyfera's Health and Wellbeing Centre, and the village also has a Post Office as well as a Tesco Superstore and Home Bargains. Ystalyfera also has its own local football and rugby clubs, which are located to the south of the site.

- 4.7 Additionally, the site is excellently located in terms of access to local schools, such as Ysgol Bro Tawe and Ysgol y Wern Primary schools, as well as Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera, Ysgol Gymraeg Dyffryn y Glowyr and Ysgol Maesydderwen Comprehensive school.
- 4.8 Further to the above, the nearest bus stop is located approximately 200m to the northeast of the site at the Co-op store, and provides access to Ystradgynlais and Coelbren, both of which are located to the northeast of the site. Neath train station is located approximately 18km to the south of the site and provides access to a wide range of destination both to the west and east, such as Swansea and Cardiff respectively.
- 4.9 Neighbouring Wards are Cwarter Bach to the north, Cwm-Twrch to the northeast, Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen and Lower Brynamman to the west, Pontardawe to the southwest, Godre'r Graig to the south, and Rhos and Ynyscedwyn to the southeast.
- 4.10 Data from the 2011 Census show that the village of Ystalyfera has an overall population of 3,019. In 2011, 46% of people aged 3 and above could speak Welsh in the Ward, which can be compared to 14.8% of all residents within Neath Port Talbot, and 19.0% within Wales as a whole.
- 4.11 Notwithstanding, Ystalyfera has seen a 20.7% decline in the proportion of Welsh speakers within the Ward between 1991 and 2011, which is illustrated in the table below. Comparisons with the 2001 Census is also provided here.

% Welsh Speakers 1991	% Welsh Speakers 2001	% Change in proportion of Welsh Speakers 1991-2001	% Welsh Speakers 2011	% Change 2001 - 2011	% Change 1991 - 2011
66.67%	54.56%	-12.11%	46%	8.56%	20.67%

4.12 As the site is located has a greater proportion of individuals with an understanding of Welsh than at both County Borough and national levels, it is evident that the Welsh language forms an important role and feature within this community. Consequently, any proposed development within this community must seek to protect and promote the Welsh Language, as well as mitigate any negative impact such a development may introduce, which is in line with Policy WL1 (Development in Language Sensitive Areas).

Welsh Language Education Provision

- 4.13 Band A of the Council's 21st Century Schools Capital Funding Programme comprises 7 schemes, 2 of which relate to improving Welsh-medium education within the county borough. New build premises were provided at Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera-Bro Dur's north campus site to develop 'all-through' Welsh-medium educational provision for pupils aged 3-18. The school now provides secondary education provision for both local pupils and for pupils from neighbouring authority, Powys.
- 4.14 The north campus development was complemented by a further new build that established secondary phase education (11-16) in the south of the County Borough, through the development of Ysgol Gyfun Bro-Dur, which opened its doors to years 7 and 8 pupils in 2018. This development addresses significant concerns of parents over long travel times to and from Ystalyfera, concerns that had previously influenced parental decisions when considering opting for primary phase Welsh-medium provision.
- 4.15 Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council have produced a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022-2032, which supersedes its 2017-2020 plan. This confirms that Welsh-medium education is an integral and essential part of the learning offer in Neath Port Talbot. The authority underpins this principle by ensuring universal access to this provision. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council recognises that language and culture are critical parts of an individual's identity and is committed to promoting and celebrating Welsh language learning across all phases and sectors.
- 4.16 The WESP 2022-32 details how they plan to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools and in the wider communities and future growth will be planned for. The WESP aligns itself to national policy and guidance in order to contribute to the Welsh Government's aim of achieving a million Welsh speakers by 2050.
- 4.17 Further to the above, five of the county's eleven Welsh medium primary schools are located within the Welsh Language Sensitive Area (WLSA), together with one of the county's two Welsh medium secondary schools. Schools located outside the WLSA boundary also have catchments extending into the boundary. Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera is the only Welsh medium primary and secondary school within the ward.
- 4.18 As aforementioned, Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera provides Welsh language educational provision for pupils between the ages of 3-18, thus providing both primary and secondary education on site. The school is located within

the village of Ystalyfera, and there are currently 155 pupils between the ages of three and eleven on roll, which includes 28 nursery-aged pupils. Pupils are divided between seven classes, with one class per year group. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work.

- 4.19 Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera is also located on the same site within Ystalyfera. A review of the school's website confirms that Welsh is a core subject at the school, and therefore features in each child's curriculum. Welsh is also used as the main teaching medium, and all subjects, excluding English, are taught solely through the medium of Welsh.
- 4.20 According to the information provided by the staff at Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera, both primary and secondary phases of the school have capacity to serve the pupils generated by the development, in terms of the school capacities compared with the current number of pupils on roll.
- 4.21 In terms of Welsh Language Community organisations, Menter Iaith Castell Nedd Port Talbot (Neath Port Talbot's Welsh Language Initiative) was established in 2002 after Menter Iaith Aman Tawe was split in two. Its aim is to promote and expand the use of the Welsh language within the county borough. They provide opportunities for people to use the Welsh language throughout the county. The group hosts a wide variety of activities within the county, that range from tea and coffee mornings for Welsh speakers and learners, to monthly music nights and youth clubs for young people.
- 4.22 With regards to Ystalyfera itself, Menter Iaith have appointed a new youth officer that will be based in Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera twice a week to increase the number of extracurricular activities that are hosted through the medium of Welsh in the village.

Engagement and Mitigation

- 5.1 In accordance with Part 1A of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2016 ("the 2016 Order"), all major developments are required to be subject to pre-application consultation, prior to the Planning Application being validated by the Local Planning Authority.
- 5.2 The Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) exercise for this site has yet to be undertaken. Responses on any issues raised which relate to impact on the Welsh Language and which merit changes will be included in the final version of the WLAP.

Local Case Studies

- 5.3 Whilst there are no recent examples of housing developments within the Welsh Language Sensitive Area of Neath Port Talbot County Borough, it is still important to consider case studies in nearby counties, such as Swansea. As such, two examples from Swansea are provided below.
- 5.4 Another housing developer, Barratt Homes have advanced development on the Chapel Fields site in Loughor, and the sales office was contacted on the 20th of August 2020. At the time, 30 dwelling had been pre-reserved. Whilst the sales agent was reluctant to breach any confidentiality protocols, he did confirm that all but one of the prospective purchasers were currently living at addresses in the SA post code area. The single buyer outside the area hailed from Cardiff.
- 5.5 Similarly, Bellway Homes are currently undertaking construction operations at the Parc Mawr site in Penllergaer, and are currently contracted to develop 184 of the 850 proposed homes at the site. To date, 13 dwellings have been built, all of which have are occupied, and 20 dwellings have been pre-reserved. Approximately 80% of people that have either purchased or pre-reserved a property at the site come from Swansea, with the other 20% coming from areas such as Cwmbran and the Midlands.
- 5.6 The patterns outlined above are likely to be reflected in future sales of the proposed dwellings at the former Tirbach Washery site. The number of Welsh speakers will therefore reflect the current percentage of 46%. Certainly, it is unlikely that the development will attract a high proportion of non-Welsh speakers into the settlement.
- 5.7 With the assumption that the occupiers from the 160 proposed units will be local, it can be estimated that of the 352 new residents generated, some 162

will be Welsh speakers, reflecting the proportion in the existing Ystalyfera community (46%).

- 5.8 Notwithstanding, it is still important to note the intended mitigation measures to promote and preserve the language as part of the development.

Proposed Mitigation Measures

5.9 Bilingual marketing of properties

It is important for Mr Robert Maggs or any future developer to be able to market the scheme to people in whichever language they feel most comfortable using. The applicant recognises that some of their prospective customers may be first language Welsh speakers who conduct most of their day to day lives through the medium of Welsh. Such customers will be encouraged upon being able to review marketing material that is written in their first language. Such efforts often foster good relationships between customers and prospective occupiers. Providing marketing materials in Welsh will demonstrate any developer's commitment to ensuring that the Welsh language is promoted and respected as part of the development. Its use within marketing materials will demonstrate any developer's knowledge and understanding of the Welsh Language Act 1993, which confirmed equal status between both languages.

5.10 Production of a welcome pack for each household which sets out the Welsh language provision in the area

With reference to the former Tirbach Washery site, the developers will prepare and distribute a welcome pack containing information on local transport routes, community services/groups and relevant contact details. As the site is located within a WLSA, information relating to local Welsh language groups, clubs, initiatives and services will also be provided.

For example, it is the developer's intention to make reference to events arranged and held by Menter Iaith Castell Nedd Port Talbot (Neath Port Talbot Welsh Language Initiative). Menter Iaith Castell Nedd Port Talbot encourage and promote the use of the language within communities and such initiatives can be found across Wales. Menter Iaith Castell Nedd Port Talbot's work focuses on the following:

- Events – Menter Iaith Castell Nedd Port Talbot arrange various events in various locations throughout the county;
- For children and families, Menter Iaith Castell Nedd Port Talbot host a range of services and events in the area e.g., music nights;

- For young people, Menter Iaith Castell Nedd Port Talbot liaise closely with local schools to provide opportunities for young people to socialise in Welsh;
- For learners, Menter Iaith Castell Nedd Port Talbot provide a range of opportunities for Welsh learners to practice their Welsh in a social environment.

As well as highlighting the events on offer by Menter Iaith Castell Nedd Port Talbot, the welcome pack will highlight the learning opportunities provided by Learn Welsh – Swansea Bay Region¹. Based at Swansea University, Learn Welsh – Swansea Bay Region forms part of the National Centre for Learning Welsh network of course providers, delivering Welsh courses for adults in the City of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot County Council areas.

The welcome pack will also make reference to initiative and events held locally by the Urdd². Urdd Gobaith Cymru is a National Voluntary Youth Organisation with over 55,000 members between the ages of 8-25 years old. Since 1922, the Urdd has provided opportunities through the medium of Welsh for children and young people in Wales to enable them to make positive contributions to the communities within which they live and study.

Furthermore, the welcome pack will make reference to more local level initiatives in Ystalyfera itself where appropriate and relevant. Please note that the examples referenced above may not comprise the complete extent of opportunities features within the welcome pack.

The welcome pack will be bilingual, distributed in both Welsh and English.

5.11 Welsh street names within the development

In order to ensure that the development protects and promotes the local linguistic character and cultural distinctiveness of Ystalyfera, the developer will work with the relevant bodies (likely Royal Mail and the local authority) to ensure that all streets within the development have Welsh names. The names will reflect the character and cultural distinctiveness of the village and will draw inspiration from local features, notable figures etc.

¹ <https://sway.office.com/PdwoNEkckNTJ6fO0?ref=Link>

² <https://www.urdd.cymru/en/about-us/>

Conclusion

Overall Impact of the Proposed Development

- 6.1 As stated, the proposal for 160 dwellings by Mr Robert Maggs will result in the introduction of some 352 new residents, as a result of multiplying the number of dwellings (160) by the average dwelling size in the Ystalyfera Ward (2.2).
- 6.2 With reference to the origin of potential purchasers at the Barratt Homes site in Loughor, and Bellway Homes site in Penllergaer, it is likely that a large proportion of buyers and affordable home occupiers will be Welsh, with the majority from Neath Port Talbot, Swansea and Bridgend. Similar proportions of Welsh speakers who will live in the future development will also be likely to largely reflect the existing percentage in the area of 46%.
- 6.3 In assessing the impact of a new residential development on the Welsh language, there is a danger to focus as above, on the increase in population and the proportion of that population that hold Welsh language skills. 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 need to retain existing Welsh speaking households within communities with relatively high percentages of people with Welsh language skills.
- 6.4 In conclusion, the proposed development of 160 dwellings at land at the former Tirbach Washery site is likely to have an overall positive impact on the Welsh language and its future in the Ward of Ystalyfera. Whilst figures don't suggest a need for measures, the applicant is eager to demonstrate a well-balanced approach to ensuring the long-term presence of the Welsh language in Ystalyfera.