

Community and Linguistic Statement

Proposed 61-Bedroom Care Home

Plot 5700, North Wales Business Park, Abergele, Conwy, LL22 8LJ

Introduction

This Community and Linguistic Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the proposed development of a 61-bedroom care home at Plot 5700, North Wales Business Park, Abergele.

The application site comprises an undeveloped parcel of land of approximately 1.05 acres within the established North Wales Business Park. The site is located on the edge of Abergele and benefits from good access to the town, surrounding residential areas, local services and the wider highway network. The surrounding area accommodates a mixture of uses including residential, commercial, healthcare and community uses.

The proposal seeks to provide a modern, purpose-built care home comprising two dedicated care units. Unit 1 will provide 31 bedrooms for residents requiring non-acute care, whilst Unit 2 will provide 30 bedrooms for residents requiring acute care, including three specialist bariatric care beds.

In addition to individual en-suite bedrooms, the development will provide a range of communal and specialist facilities including lounge and dining areas, quiet/activity rooms, a hydrotherapy pool, cinema room, gym and salon. The building will also include nursing stations, consulting rooms, staff facilities, offices and other accommodation required for the day-to-day operation of the care home.

The purpose of this Statement is to consider the potential implications of the development upon the local community and the Welsh language and to identify measures which can help support the continued visibility and use of Welsh as part of the development.





Proposed Site



North Wales Business Park / Surrounding Development

Planning Policy Context

The importance of the Welsh language within the planning system is recognised at both national and local level. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 establishes *A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language* as one of the seven national well-being goals. The Planning (Wales) Act 2015 also strengthened the consideration of the Welsh language within the planning system, recognising that the potential effects of development upon the language can represent a material planning consideration where relevant.

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 forms part of the statutory Development Plan and identifies, through Outcome 4, the objective of creating “*A Wales where people live in places with a thriving Welsh language.*” Future Wales recognises the national ambition of achieving one million Welsh speakers by 2050 and seeks to ensure that development supports the conditions in which Welsh can continue to develop as a natural and thriving part of communities.

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12) provides further guidance on the relationship between development, placemaking and the Welsh language. Paragraph 3.25 recognises that the future well-being of the language depends upon a range of interconnected factors including education, demographic change, community activity and, importantly in the context of the present proposal, a sound economic base capable of maintaining thriving and sustainable communities.

PPW further recognises that considerations relating to the Welsh language may be taken into account in determining planning applications where they are material. The emphasis is therefore not simply upon avoiding adverse effects, but upon creating sustainable places and economic and social conditions within which the language can continue to be used.

At the local level, Policy CTH/5 of the Conwy Local Development Plan seeks to ensure that development supports and sustains the long-term well-being of the Welsh language and does not, through its size, scale or location, significantly harm the character or linguistic balance of a community. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance LDP6: The Welsh Language provides further guidance on the assessment of community and linguistic effects.

The proposed care home has been considered against this policy framework. As discussed below, the proposal is not considered likely to result in any material adverse effect upon the linguistic balance of Abergele. Conversely, the creation of permanent employment, opportunities for local recruitment and the potential for Welsh to be used

naturally within both the workplace and care environment are considered consistent with the broader objectives of national and local planning policy.

Welsh Language Context

The Welsh language forms an important part of the cultural identity of Conwy County Borough and North Wales more generally. Its continued use within homes, workplaces, community facilities and public life is important in maintaining sustainable and distinctive communities.

National and local planning policy recognise that development can influence the conditions in which the Welsh language is used. Consideration should therefore be given not simply to the number of people associated with a development, but also to its nature, its likely demographic effects, the employment opportunities created and whether opportunities exist to encourage the everyday use of Welsh.

The relevant local planning policy is Policy CTH/5 of the Conwy Local Development Plan, which relates specifically to the Welsh language. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on the Welsh Language provides further guidance on assessing the potential linguistic implications of development. The Welsh language has also been identified as a relevant consideration within the Design and Access Statement submitted with this application.

The most recent Census data provides an important indication of the linguistic characteristics of Conwy County Borough. The 2021 Census recorded that 25.9% of residents aged three years and over within Conwy were able to speak Welsh. This compares with 27.4% recorded at the 2011 Census and 29.4% in 2001.

The Census data therefore demonstrates a gradual reduction in the proportion of Welsh speakers within the County Borough over the last two decades. Between 2011 and 2021, the proportion of Welsh speakers decreased by 1.5 percentage points, with approximately 1,600 fewer Welsh-speaking residents recorded in Conwy in 2021 compared with 2011.

Year	Percentage of Welsh Speakers in Conwy
2001	26.4%
2011	27.4%
2021	25.9%

Notwithstanding this reduction, the proportion of Welsh speakers within Conwy remains appreciably higher than the national average. At the 2021 Census, 17.8% of the population of Wales aged three years and over reported being able to speak Welsh, compared with 25.9% within Conwy.

The figures demonstrate that the Welsh language continues to form an important part of the social and cultural character of Conwy County Borough. They also reinforce the importance of ensuring that new development, where appropriate, provides opportunities to support the continued use and visibility of the Welsh language.

The Census figures provide useful context when considering the proposal. Whilst the proportion of Welsh speakers within Conwy decreased between 2011 and 2021, the ability to speak Welsh remains appreciably above the Wales-wide average. The language therefore continues to have an important role within the social, cultural and economic life of the County Borough.

This is particularly relevant to the proposed development because the care home will function not only as residential accommodation but also as a significant local workplace. The linguistic effect of the development should therefore be considered in terms of the opportunities it creates for Welsh to be used in employment and in the day-to-day provision of care. Recruitment from Abergele and the wider Conwy and North Wales area would provide opportunities for Welsh-speaking employees, whilst the availability of Welsh-speaking staff would be of particular benefit to residents for whom Welsh is their first or preferred language.

The proposal therefore provides an opportunity to support the continued everyday use of Welsh within a healthcare and employment setting, rather than simply seeking to mitigate potential linguistic impacts.

Abergele is an established market town and coastal community situated between Colwyn Bay and Rhyl. It serves a wider surrounding area and provides a range of services, facilities, employment opportunities and public transport connections. The application site occupies an accessible location on the edge of the existing settlement and forms part of an established Business Park.

The development is not proposed within a small or isolated rural community where a development of this scale might result in a sudden or disproportionate change to the population. It is proposed within an established urban area which already accommodates a diverse population and a range of residential, employment, healthcare and community uses.

Assessment of Impact

The potential community and linguistic implications of the development have been carefully considered.

Although the proposal provides accommodation for up to 61 residents, it is important to distinguish a residential care home from a conventional housing development. The proposal will not create 61 separate households, nor will it introduce 61 dwellings onto the open housing market.

As a result, the development will have no direct effect upon local house prices or the availability of housing for existing residents. It will also not generate additional school-age children and will therefore have no direct effect upon local schools or the availability of Welsh-medium education.

The residents of the care home are likely to come from Abergele and a wider local and regional catchment depending upon individual care requirements. The development may therefore provide an opportunity for people requiring specialist care to remain within, or closer to, their existing communities, families and support networks.

This is considered to be a positive community consideration. The Design and Access Statement identifies a need for specialist accommodation for the area's ageing population and confirms that discussions have taken place with Social Services during the development of the proposal.

A particularly important consideration is the employment that will be generated by the development.

The operation of a 61-bedroom care home will require a range of employees. The Design and Access Statement identifies permanent employment opportunities across nursing, care, administration, catering, housekeeping and facilities management. The development will also support wider economic activity through the procurement of goods and services during both the construction and operational phases.

These employment opportunities have the potential to benefit people living within Abergele and surrounding communities. Local recruitment should be encouraged wherever reasonably practicable, providing opportunities for existing residents, including Welsh speakers, to obtain employment locally.

Employment is an important component of maintaining sustainable communities. Providing good-quality employment locally can assist in retaining people within their communities rather than requiring them to travel elsewhere for work.

The care home also presents a particular opportunity in relation to the Welsh language because it will operate as both a residential environment and a workplace.

For some residents, Welsh may be their first or preferred language. The ability to communicate with staff and other residents through Welsh can therefore contribute positively to their comfort, wellbeing and sense of identity. This is particularly relevant within a care environment where residents may spend a significant proportion of their time within the facility.

There is consequently an opportunity for the development to encourage the everyday use of Welsh rather than simply ensuring that the proposal does not adversely affect the language.

Having regard to the nature of the development, its location within an established Business Park and the scale and character of Abergele, there is no evidence to suggest that the proposal would result in a significant adverse change to the linguistic balance of the local community.

The development will not result in the loss of any existing community facility or space where Welsh is currently spoken. Neither will it adversely affect access to Welsh-medium education or existing bilingual services.

The proposal is therefore considered unlikely to have any significant adverse effect upon the Welsh language. The employment and community benefits associated with the development, together with opportunities to encourage the use of Welsh within the care home itself, have the potential to result in a neutral to positive linguistic effect.

Positive Measures

As with any significant development within Wales, opportunities should be taken to ensure that the Welsh language is visible and can be used naturally as part of the development.

The applicant will seek to incorporate proportionate measures into the operation of the care home, including the use of bilingual Welsh and English signage within appropriate public and communal areas, together with bilingual information and literature where appropriate.

Consideration should also be given to the linguistic preferences of residents. Where residents wish to communicate in Welsh, reasonable efforts should be made to facilitate this through Welsh-speaking members of staff where available.

Welsh-language ability could also be welcomed as part of the recruitment process, particularly for resident-facing roles. This would both support Welsh-speaking residents and create employment opportunities for Welsh speakers living within Abergele and surrounding communities.

The applicant could additionally encourage staff who wish to develop their Welsh-language skills to access suitable training opportunities. This would provide a longer-term benefit by increasing the ability of the workforce to provide services bilingually.

Where activities and social events are organised for residents, opportunities should also be taken, where appropriate and practicable, to incorporate Welsh-language activities, entertainment or engagement with Welsh-speaking community organisations.

The naming of the care home provides a further opportunity to recognise the local cultural and linguistic context. Consideration should therefore be given to an appropriate Welsh or bilingual name for the development.

These measures would assist in ensuring that the Welsh language is treated as a natural part of the identity and operation of the care home and would reflect the approach of promoting and normalising bilingual communication.

Conclusion

The proposed development has been considered in the context of the Welsh language and its importance to Abergele, Conwy County Borough and the wider North Wales area.

The proposal will provide a modern 61-bedroom care home offering specialist accommodation for people requiring acute and non-acute care. It will also provide a range of communal and specialist facilities intended to support the health, comfort and wellbeing of residents.

Importantly, the proposal is not comparable to the development of 61 conventional residential dwellings. It will not create a significant number of new independent households, affect the availability or affordability of local housing, or generate additional demand for school places.

The development will instead provide an important care facility whilst creating permanent employment opportunities across a range of occupations. It will also generate indirect economic benefits through local expenditure, procurement, servicing and maintenance.

There is no evidence to suggest that the development would result in a significant adverse effect upon the Welsh language or alter the linguistic balance of Abergele.

On the contrary, the development presents opportunities to support the Welsh language through local employment, bilingual signage and communication, recognition of residents' linguistic preferences and encouragement of Welsh-language skills amongst employees.

With these positive measures incorporated into the operation of the facility, the development is considered capable of making a neutral to positive contribution to the Welsh language and the wider community.

The proposal is therefore considered compatible with the objectives of national and local Planning Policy relating to the Welsh language and will provide a valuable new care facility whilst respecting the linguistic and cultural character of the area.

Abergele and Wider Area

