



Welsh Government

Implementation of environmental noise action plans in Wales

Procedure for the designation of quiet areas in
agglomerations

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1 Introduction

1.1 In this document we describe how the Welsh Ministers will designate “quiet areas” in large built-up areas (“agglomerations”) as required under the Environmental Noise Directive. We also offer guidance for local authorities to bear in mind when nominating candidate quiet areas to the Welsh Ministers.

1.2 The impacts of **noise** (understood to mean unwanted sound) and the benefits of **quiet**, both actual and perceived, are central to this process. Keeping that in mind, we intend to carry out this process in a way that supports both the existing plans and policies of the local authorities affected and the Welsh Government’s own strategic priorities. We will seek the views of the public through consultation at key stages, and the list of areas designated will be kept under continuous review to ensure that both it and this procedure document continue to reflect the needs of urban residents and our obligations under European legislation.

1.3 **Wellbeing** is one of the Welsh Government’s five headline indicators for sustainable development¹. It is defined as a positive physical, social and mental state, and not just the absence of pain, discomfort and incapacity. It is enhanced by conditions that include a healthy and attractive environment. One factor affecting the wellbeing of people living busy lives in the hustle and bustle of modern society is the ability to “switch off” that hustle and bustle from time to time. Tranquil spaces open to the public – whether they be public parks, libraries, museums, places of worship or other such locations – play a vital role for many people in helping them to do that.

1.4 One of the key themes in the Welsh Government’s Environment Strategy Action Plan² is “access and recreation”. This is linked to a commitment to provide opportunities for people to safely enjoy their local surroundings and natural environment by enhancing the quality of the natural environment, promoting participation and improving access. One of the outcomes sought by the Environment Strategy Action Plan is that there is easy, equitable access to ample high quality green space. This is linked to an action whereby local authorities complete green space assessments using the green space toolkit and grant aid provided by the Countryside Council for Wales. We are also committed to reducing carbon emissions by discouraging unnecessary travel, particularly car journeys, and to promoting equality and reducing the gap between rich and poor. All these policy priorities taken together mean we would like everyone who lives in an urban environment to have access to tranquil open spaces close to where they live and work. We will therefore encourage the nomination of candidate quiet areas in a manner consistent with these goals. Local authorities meanwhile may wish to link this process with their city-wide Open Space Assessments or with audits of open spaces that they carry out as part of preparing their Local Development Plans.

¹ See *One Wales: One Planet – The Sustainable Development Scheme of the Welsh Assembly Government*, chapters 1 and 8.

² <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/epg/envstratforwales/actionplans/2ndactionplan/>

When carrying out such work they may find opportunities to look at the distribution of areas of urban tranquillity and promote the benefits of existing tranquil spaces to local residents.

1.5 The Welsh Ministers will initially designate quiet areas by identifying public open spaces within each agglomeration defined under environmental noise legislation which

- (i) are considered by the relevant local authorities to have local amenity value that warrants protection from noise intrusion;
- (ii) are considered by the Welsh Ministers to be relatively quiet by urban standards, both in actual and perceived terms, according to strategic noise maps and the qualitative descriptions provided by local authorities; and
- (iii) (*recommended but not mandatory for designation purposes*) do not suffer from poor performance in terms of certain other criteria such as perceived safety and disabled access, which, while not directly related to quiet, nonetheless compromise the health and wellbeing benefits that would otherwise be conferred by quiet.

1.6 The designated quiet areas will initially be complemented by open spaces that are recognised as meeting these conditions but which lie just outside the agglomeration boundary and so cannot be formally designated as things stand. Areas outside the current agglomeration boundary may however be formally designated as quiet areas at a later stage, should the agglomeration boundary for environmental noise work be redrawn to encompass them.

1.7 Strictly speaking, poor accessibility cannot be a bar to qualifying for quiet area status since it is not directly related to the actual or perceived quiet of a place. Nevertheless, accessibility is one of the criteria against which we would like to measure the success of the quiet area identification process in Wales. Areas outside the boundary taken together with designated quiet areas should ideally aim to result in a distribution of tranquil spaces conferring all the benefits of quiet sufficient to meet the needs of local residents without requiring them to travel long distances.

1.8 The document concludes with a summary of Welsh planning guidance that can be applied to confer protection on quiet areas and, to a certain extent, any public open space with tranquillity value. In particular, chapter 13 of *Planning Policy Wales* now contains specific mention of the need to consider urban quiet areas where noise-generating development is proposed.

2 Background

2.1 The Environmental Noise Directive

2.1.1 Directive 2002/49/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise (“the Directive”)³, is also known as the Environmental Noise Directive or END. It aims “to define a common approach intended to avoid, prevent or reduce on a prioritised basis the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to exposure to environmental noise”. It focuses on the impact of environmental noise on individuals, thereby complementing other European Directives⁴ which set standards for noise emissions from specific sources.

2.1.2 The Directive defines **environmental noise** to mean “unwanted or harmful outdoor sound created by human activities, including noise emitted by means of transport, road traffic, rail traffic, air traffic, and from sites of industrial activity such as those defined in Annex I to Council Directive 96/61/EC of 24 September 1996 concerning integrated pollution prevention and control”.

2.1.3 The Directive requires Member States to designate **competent authorities** responsible for its implementation. It defines a **quiet area in an agglomeration** to mean “an area, delimited by the competent authority, for instance which is not exposed to a value of L_{den} or of another appropriate noise indicator greater than a certain value set by the Member State, from any noise source”. (L_{den} is the Directive’s “noise indicator for overall annoyance”, which in Wales has been calculated by computer models at intervals of ten metres throughout each agglomeration.)

2.1.4 One of the specific aims of the Directive is the adoption of **action plans** by Member States to preserve environmental noise quality where it is good. The action plans for agglomerations must include any actions which the competent authorities intend to take in the next five years to preserve quiet areas. The measures within the plans are at the discretion of the competent authorities.

2.1.5 The Directive was transposed in Wales by the Environmental Noise (Wales) Regulations 2006 (as amended) (“the Regulations”)⁵. Under the Regulations, the Welsh Ministers are the competent authority for preparing action plans for agglomerations in Wales. The Regulations require quiet areas in agglomerations to be identified in those action plans, and the action plans must aim to protect those quiet areas against an increase in noise.

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2002:189:0012:0025:EN:PDF>

⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/noise/sources.htm>

⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2006/2629/contents/made> as amended by <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2009/47/contents/made>

2.2 Action plans under the Directive

2.2.1 The Welsh Government has published two action plans for agglomerations to date⁶, one covering Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, the other covering Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. The Welsh Ministers established the boundaries of these two agglomerations for the purposes of the first round of mapping and action planning through the Environmental Noise (Identification of Noise Sources) (Wales) Regulations 2007⁷. However, from 2011 agglomerations can be identified simply by publishing maps.

2.2.2 The Welsh Government consulted the local authorities within the agglomerations and other interested parties as to how we might best go about identifying and protecting quiet areas. As a result of these discussions we took the view that there is a close relationship between the quiet area requirements in the Regulations and existing activities undertaken by local authorities in relation to the identification and management of public amenity and open space. The action plans therefore stated the Welsh Ministers' intention to link the initial identification of quiet areas with locations identified by local authorities as being important to their local communities.

2.2.3 During the first phase of action planning, local authorities within the agglomerations proposed a list of areas with particular local amenity value. These areas were identified by the Welsh Ministers as **candidate quiet areas** in the initial agglomeration action plans. In the absence of other criteria at that time the agglomeration boundaries were originally chosen so as to be consistent with the agglomeration boundaries already established for air quality assessment purposes. As an unintended consequence of this, the boundaries excluded public open spaces not entirely surrounded by built-up land, and such open spaces cannot now be formally designated as "quiet areas in agglomerations". However, the agglomeration boundaries may be reviewed in future rounds of environmental noise mapping and action planning to encompass new housing developments and those candidate quiet areas that currently fall outside their current limits.

2.2.4 The action plans stated that the Welsh Ministers, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, will confirm which of the candidate quiet areas should be designated as quiet areas for the purposes of the Regulations and Directive. They also state that the Welsh Ministers do not propose to set specific noise thresholds for the determination of quiet areas, that any noise criteria set in place in relation to individual quiet areas will be determined by the Welsh Ministers in consultation with the relevant local authorities, and that information on the location of all designated quiet areas will be made public.

⁶

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/epq/noiseandnuisance/environmentalnoise>

⁷ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2007/3519/contents/made>

2.3 Welsh Government policy – core principles

2.3.1 *One Wales: One Planet – The Sustainable Development Scheme of the Welsh Assembly Government* sets out our commitment to sustainable development as our central organising principle. In Wales, sustainable development means enhancing the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of people and communities, achieving a better quality of life for our own and future generations in ways which

- (i) promote social justice and equality of opportunity; and
- (ii) enhance the natural and cultural environment and respect its limits – using only our fair share of the Earth's resources and sustaining our cultural legacy.

2.3.2 *One Wales: One Planet* describes our vision of a sustainable Wales as one which has communities which are safe, sustainable, and attractive places for people to live and work, where people have access to services, and enjoy good health.

2.3.3 *One Wales: Connecting the Nation – The Wales Transport Strategy* recognises that traffic noise and pollution affect mental and physical health and deter people from walking and cycling. In relation to the local environment, it recognises that noise and vibration made by vehicles disrupt people's quality of life. It states that we will take action to reduce the effects of transport on noise and air pollution.

2.3.4 The following two core principles laid down in *One Wales: One Planet* must be central to all key decisions regarding our policies and programmes:

- (i) Involvement – people and communities are at the heart of sustainable development, so we will be inclusive in our involvement of all our stakeholders in the development of our policies and programmes, and the identification of solutions that meet their needs, promoting innovation in the way that we deliver services.
- (ii) Integration – only an approach that makes the connections between, and effectively integrates economic, social and environmental challenges, will achieve sustainable development.

2.3.5 Details of Welsh Government policy in relation to noise and urban planning are summarised later on in this document.

2.4 Concepts of tranquillity

2.4.1 If we are to assess not only whether an area is quiet, but also whether or not that quiet is contributing fully to the health and wellbeing of local residents, we must look at a slightly broader concept than noise taken in isolation.

2.4.2 **Tranquillity** means different things to different people, but it is generally understood to refer to an untroubled state, characterised by peace and calm and free from unwanted disturbances. This may refer to either a state of mind or the quality of a particular environment. It can be quantified either in terms of the absence of unwanted intrusions or by a balancing of positive and negative factors.

2.4.3 The Countryside Council for Wales published maps of rural tranquil areas in Wales in 1997 and 2009, based on the level of intrusion by human activity – distance from busy roads, built-up areas and so on. These maps of tranquil areas are published along with maps showing which parts of Wales have dark night skies unspoilt by man-made light pollution. The tranquil areas maps inform indicator 29c for the Wales Environment Strategy (“change in number and extent of tranquil areas as defined in Countryside Council for Wales mapping work”)⁸. By the very definitions used, nowhere within in a major town or city qualifies as a tranquil area for the purposes of measuring changes in tranquillity in open countryside. When assessing local urban tranquillity with a view to identifying quiet areas in agglomerations, we are to a certain extent forced to use a relative rather than an absolute standard. We need to tailor this standard to the reasonable and realistic expectations of town- and city-dwellers. In this context it is helpful to consider the contribution of positive sounds and visual features that can make a place seem quieter, thereby partially mitigating the omnipresent background noise of man-made activity. Such an assessment can always be complemented by a pragmatic absolute noise limit that rightly prevents excessively noisy areas being labelled as tranquil, despite their positive attributes. This approach reflects the value that local communities place on areas of relative quiet in urban areas.

2.4.4 Detailed research on the concept of urban tranquillity was undertaken by Scott Wilson Ltd for Westminster City Council in the Westminster Open Spaces Noise Study 2008⁹. In this study, the consultants carried out noise measurements, observations and questionnaires at twenty open spaces and used the results to develop a tranquillity scoring system based on the presence or absence of a wide range of positive and negative features.

2.4.5 We do not consider the expectations and preferences of residents in Welsh towns and cities to necessarily be the same as the expectations and preferences of users of open spaces in central London. We do not, therefore, consider it appropriate to apply the numerical scoring system developed specifically for Westminster to Welsh cities. However, we would not want to discourage Welsh local authorities from developing similar, locally applicable tranquillity scoring systems. Furthermore, we do consider some of the key qualitative findings of the Westminster study to be universally applicable. In particular, while very high noise levels will tend to result in a poor overall tranquillity score, at lower noise levels other factors can be at least as important as noise in creating perceptions of urban tranquillity or lack of it.

⁸ <http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/tableviewer/document.aspx?ReportId=10293>

⁹ http://www3.westminster.gov.uk/publications/publications_detail.cfm?ID=3863

2.4.6 The Westminster study hypothesised and to a certain extent confirmed five 'pillars' of urban tranquillity:

- sound
- presence of nature
- sense of personal safety
- culture and freedom of the place
- the visual or aesthetic pillar

2.4.7 An open space that is considered to have merit in all these five areas, where applicable, may be considered tranquil by urban standards.

2.4.8 In September 2010, Environmental Protection UK (EPUK), commissioned by the City of London Corporation, published a report entitled *Quietening Open Spaces*¹⁰. In it they presented suggestions as to how existing policy can be used to promote work towards improving tranquillity in city open spaces, together with practical ways in which tranquillity can be enhanced in parallel with other aspects of environmental quality.

2.4.9 The European legislative requirement to identify and protect quiet areas is a central theme in the report. EPUK recognise that local knowledge is needed to make a true assessment of the current and potential utility of any open space. The report comes to the following conclusions:

Overall, in determining whether an area is 'quiet' to people using the space, the following findings can be derived from work carried out across Europe:

- Natural rather than mechanical sounds are favoured.
- Visual quality can enhance 'quietness' or tranquillity.
- Size as such is immaterial – small spaces in inner cities can have high value in terms of providing respite, opportunity for relaxation and exercise.
- Attitudes to what constitutes quiet are to some extent determined by culture and location.
- The WHO guideline of 55 dB(A) has been taken as a starting point for looking at the designation of quiet areas. In dense UK urban areas it would be unrealistic to expect early achievement everywhere, but it has been widely adopted as a longer term aim.
- A substantial part of a space being at least 6 dB below the typical daytime level of its surroundings might be a practical early guideline.

Quietening Open Spaces, EPUK, September 2010

¹⁰ <http://www.environmental-protection.org.uk/publications/>

3 The process of selecting and designating quiet areas

3.1 Nomination of candidate quiet areas

3.1.1 Local authorities are invited to nominate public open spaces within their relevant agglomeration boundary as candidate quiet areas, bearing in mind the tranquillity criteria outlined below. All candidate quiet areas, including those identified prior to this document being issued, will need to be assessed against the sound, nature and visual/aesthetic pillars of urban tranquillity as a minimum before they are considered further by the Welsh Ministers for full quiet area designation. We consider these three pillars to be the ones that contribute most directly to a perception of quiet.

3.1.2 Only areas that fall within an agglomeration boundary can be formally designated as quiet areas by the Welsh Ministers. However, in addition to candidate quiet areas within the agglomeration boundary, local authorities are invited to nominate open spaces close outside the boundary which they consider to meet the minimum criteria. These may be used to inform the placement of the agglomeration boundary in future rounds of noise mapping, and may be formally designated as quiet areas in those future rounds should the boundary thus come to encompass them.

3.1.3 Candidate quiet areas other than public open spaces may also be nominated. The justification for such nominations should be made on a case-by-case basis.

3.2 Site-specific tranquillity assessment

3.2.1 A local authority identifying an open space that has merit in terms of the sound, nature and visual/aesthetic pillars is requested to fill in the form on page 13, providing a short qualitative account of how well the space measures up in those terms. The authority is also asked to provide some additional information on those characteristics not directly related to perceived quiet, but which could negate the health and wellbeing benefits conferred by quiet (such as poor air quality or lack of disabled access). These additional criteria will not affect the space's eligibility for quiet area status and providing information on them is voluntary. However, the information will help the Welsh Government develop policy in this area in conjunction with local authorities and other stakeholders.

3.2.2 The assessment is subjective but must be based on local knowledge. It is for the local authority to decide whether a site visit is required to describe the tranquillity properties of the space in question with confidence. It is also for each local authority to follow its own appropriate internal sign-off procedures before submitting the forms to the Welsh Government to be considered by the Welsh Ministers. The completed forms sent to us will be made available to members of the public on request.

3.2.3 Below is a list of the sorts of things that should be considered when making the assessment. It is particularly important to highlight any criteria for which an area either (a) has outstanding merit, or (b) has noticeable room for

improvement. In the latter case, an area is disqualified from being designated as a quiet area only if the failing criterion is directly related to perceived quiet (that is, related to soundscape, nature or visual/aesthetic qualities).

3.2.4 Criteria directly relating to perceived quiet

Soundscape

Describe in words the typical aural experience of a member of the public visiting the space in question. What are the dominant man-made sounds (in particular from transport or industrial activities)? How do the levels inside the space compare in relative terms to typical levels in the surrounding area? What positive sounds (e.g. birdsong, rustling leaves, flowing water, the welcome sound of fellow human beings) are characteristic of the place? Do unwanted sounds mask or detract from natural sounds or other positive sounds within the area in question? Have noise complaints been received from visitors? Is the noise situation improving or deteriorating? Are further mitigation measures being considered? (Details of any quantitative noise assessments that have been carried out would also be welcomed. However, these will be considered by the Welsh Government when using the strategic noise maps to screen out excessively noisy candidate quiet areas, rather than as part of the subjective assessment of perceived quiet.)

Presence of nature

Describe the extent to which the perception of nature enhances the experience of a member of the public visiting the space in terms of perceived peace and quiet, or in terms of providing a positive distraction from or masking externally generated man-made noise. Please mention any particular features such as flower beds, trees, hedgerows, birds or water bodies supporting wildlife. Photographs may be included as supporting evidence.

Visual or aesthetic qualities

Describe the typical visual experience of a member of the public visiting the space in question in as much as it is likely to affect their perception of quiet and provide a positive distraction from or masking of external man-made noise. Name any particular features of beauty (natural or man-made), as well as any particular eyesores that are likely to detract from a sense of tranquillity, such as litter, unwanted graffiti, or being able to see as well as hear passing road traffic. To what extent does a visitor feel they have escaped the usual urban surroundings within this place? Have complaints been received from visitors concerning visual features? Is the aesthetic quality improving or deteriorating? Are measures being considered to make the place more attractive? Photographs may be included as supporting evidence.

3.2.5 Criteria not directly relating to perceived quiet but which may nonetheless detract from the health and wellbeing benefits otherwise conferred by quiet, and which the local authority may therefore wish to consider when selecting prospective candidate quiet areas

Sense of personal safety

Sometimes public spaces feel too rowdy, but they can also feel too quiet. Do a sufficient number of members of the public use the space in question during its hours of opening that it doesn't feel too isolated? (Bear in mind also that if it is nearly always deserted, the benefit conferred by the quiet on local residents cannot be extensive, even if those few visitors do feel safe.) May a visitor reasonably feel that assistance is at hand in case of an emergency? Is the location currently or historically associated with criminal or antisocial behaviour, or a perception thereof?

Culture and freedom of the place

Does the space in question have its own individual character? Is it notable for its historic or cultural features? Do members of the public visiting the space in question have a sense of belonging to the community? Are they put at their ease by the design and layout of the place, which allows them to choose their level of interaction with fellow human beings in accordance with their mood and personal preferences? Please also feel free to mention here additional options available for visitors such as provision of seating, playgrounds, availability of refreshments, toilet facilities, etc. However, there is no unique description of the ideal tranquil space. Different characteristics suit different forms of public amenity.

3.2.6 The person completing the form on behalf of the local authority is then asked to confirm whether the nominated area has been identified as an area of poor air quality (i.e. failing to comply with any of the limit or target values set down in the Air Quality Standards (Wales) Regulations 2010) and whether it has disabled access, is generally open to the public during the daytime and does not require payment of a fee to enter.

3.2.7 Failure on the points in paragraphs 3.2.5 and 3.2.6 is not a bar to quiet area status, but detracts from the potential benefits otherwise conferred by quiet on local residents.

3.2.8 As an aside, completing the tranquillity assessment exercise for a public open space might be considered by a local authority as a step towards applying for Green Flag¹¹ status for the space in question. Conversely, existing Green Flag Award-winning sites are likely to make ideal candidate quiet areas, as they should meet all the subjective criteria outlined above. More generally, all sites mapped as accessible and natural when local authorities use the Countryside Council for Wales green space toolkit to assess their green spaces are likely to be worth considering as candidate quiet areas.

3.2.9 As the health benefits of green space are most needed by those in areas scoring high on the index of multiple deprivation, local authorities may wish to take a proactive approach to seeking out and bringing up to quiet area standard green spaces in or within walking distance of such areas.

¹¹ <http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/GreenFlag/>

Subjective assessment of urban tranquillity (for use by local authorities)

Name of area being assessed		
Local authority in which area is located		
General description of area (including its approximate size in hectares and primary land use)		
Note: The boundary of the candidate quiet area should be clearly marked on an accompanying map.		
<u>Criteria directly relating to perceived quiet</u>		
A substantially positive report in these three categories and a screening test to identify excessively noisy areas on the strategic noise maps are the essential criteria for formal quiet area designation.		
Soundscape		
Presence of nature		
Visual or aesthetic qualities		
<u>Supplementary criteria contributing to overall tranquillity and wellbeing</u>		
These are optional for formal quiet area designation purposes but affect the level of actual benefit conferred on local residents by an area being perceived as quiet.		
Sense of personal safety		
Culture and freedom of the place		
Opening hours		
Disabled access (y/n)	Fee to enter (y/n)	Poor air quality (y/n)
Name, position and contact details of person completing checklist		Date

3.3 Formal designation of candidate quiet areas

3.3.1 The Welsh Government will invite local authorities to submit tranquillity assessment forms for all the open spaces that have been nominated and given candidate quiet area status.

3.3.2 We will check that the forms have been duly completed, and seek additional information if we have any queries. An area will only be eligible for designation as a quiet area if at least 75 percent of the grid points contained within it on the strategic noise maps are associated with an L_{day} noise indicator value lower than 65 decibels, both for road and for railway noise. Areas failing this test are considered to be too noisy to be labelled as quiet, regardless of other mitigating factors that may be present¹². Areas that fail on the subjective criteria directly relating to perceived quiet will also be excluded. Areas which are not generally open during the daytime, lack disabled access, demand a fee to enter, suffer from poor air quality or fail on the other subjective tranquillity criteria may still qualify for quiet area status. However, in these areas the potential benefits conferred as a result of the area being quiet may not be fully realised.

3.3.3 We will publish a list and a map showing all the candidate quiet areas that meet the criteria directly relating to perceived quiet and that have not been identified as being too noisy on the noise maps. We will seek the views of the public as to their suitability for formal quiet area status. Members of the public may also wish at this stage to highlight potential quiet areas that have not been nominated but which they feel should be considered. The Welsh Government will seek local authority comments on such nominations. Subject to comments received, the Welsh Ministers will amend the agglomeration action plans so as to designate candidate quiet areas within an agglomeration boundary to be quiet areas for the purposes of the Environmental Noise Directive. Reasons for any candidate quiet area being rejected will also be made public.

3.3.4 We will review the agglomeration boundaries previously defined for environmental noise purposes and amend them where the Welsh Ministers consider appropriate in order to allow tranquil spaces outside the current boundaries to be designated as quiet areas (following public consultation).

¹² The agglomeration action plans stated that we do not propose to set specific noise thresholds for the determination of quiet areas. Rather, we consider the **perception** of and **benefits conferred** by quiet to be more important factors in determining an area's suitability for quiet area status. Furthermore, the methodology used to generate the strategic noise maps was developed primarily with identification of very noisy areas in mind, and made generic assumptions about the traffic flows on quieter roads, with reduced accuracy as a result in those locations. However, we also recognise that the most noisy areas must be ruled out from being quiet areas regardless of any other mitigating factors that may be present, and we consider it prudent to have an absolute noise limit set to act as a backstop for the subjective assessment.

If a candidate quiet area within an agglomeration is not yet covered by the strategic noise maps because the agglomeration boundary has been redrawn to encompass it since the maps were last updated, it will be eligible for consideration as a potential quiet area following the next round of mapping.

3.3.5 Further candidate quiet areas may be nominated later on, and designated as quiet areas in the agglomeration action plans if they meet the relevant criteria relating to quiet and lie within the agglomeration boundary. Depending on the number of new nominations, the Welsh Ministers may consult on new candidate quiet areas and amend the action plans to designate them as quiet areas at any subsequent time in the action planning process. We envisage looking at this on an annual basis.

3.3.6 We will review the list of quiet areas in dialogue with local authorities at least once every five years to ensure that the designations are still justified.

4 Protection of quiet areas in Welsh planning policy

4.1 The formal designation of quiet areas complements existing policies on managing open space and noise. The planning system contributes to urban tranquillity in a number of ways and in so doing supports the aims of quiet areas, offering them a certain level of protection.

4.2 *Planning Policy Wales – Edition 3* (PPW)¹³ contains a number of policies on reducing noise and managing and protecting those larger open spaces which implicitly include areas of relative quiet. These policies are supported by *Technical Advice Notes* (TANs)¹⁴ that provide guidance for policy delivery.

4.3 In chapter 13 of PPW (*Minimising and Managing Environmental Risks and Pollution*), paragraph 13.13.1 refers to the Welsh environmental noise action plans and their specific aim of preserving environmental noise quality where it is good. The environmental noise action plans are a planning consideration in the use and development of land.

4.4 Paragraph 13.14.1 states that local authorities should adopt policies to prevent potentially noisy developments in areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise. ***“Development plan policies should have regard to any relevant [environmental] noise action plan, including the need to protect urban quiet areas against an increase in noise.”***

4.5 In terms of using development control to preserve relative quiet, paragraph 13.15.2 states that ***“special consideration is required where noise-generating development is proposed in or near statutorily designated areas, including urban quiet areas designated in [environmental] noise action plans”***. It goes on to say that the effect of noise on the enjoyment of other areas of landscape, wildlife and historic value should also be taken into account. This is covered in further detail in *Technical Advice Note 11 – Noise* (TAN 11)¹⁵.

4.6 In chapter 4 of PPW (*Planning for Sustainability*), paragraph 4.5.1 lists noise reduction and improvements to quality of life as among the Welsh Government’s priorities for urban areas. Paragraph 4.5.2 encourages promoting the inclusion of open space in mixed use development. Paragraph 4.10.7 stresses the importance of good design in relatively compact mixed use developments to keep noise levels low. This is supported by TAN 11 and *Technical Advice Note 12 – Design* (TAN 11)¹⁶.

4.7 Chapter 5 of PPW (*Conserving and Improving Natural Heritage and Coast*) includes sections and paragraphs throughout on protecting areas that are likely to have tranquillity value. Although many protected areas (statutory and non-statutory) will be, by their nature, away from towns and cities,

¹³ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/ppw2010/>

¹⁴ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/tans/>

¹⁵ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/tans/tan11>

¹⁶ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/tans/tan12>

important areas of protected land exist within or on the edge of urban agglomerations. These include wildlife corridors, common land, woodland areas and local nature reserves.

4.8 Paragraph 5.3.9 states that the Welsh Government will ensure that international responsibilities and obligations for conservation are fully met. Paragraph 5.3.11 states that local non-statutory sites can add value to the planning process, particularly if such designations are informed by community participation and reflect community values. Local authorities should apply these designations to areas of substantive conservation value where there is good reason to believe that normal planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection.

4.9 As well as these designations, paragraphs 5.4.5 and 5.7.4 require the inclusion of development plan policies to conserve native woodland, and protect and enhance open spaces of conservation value and the character and landscape of the undeveloped coastline. All of these could in principle be considered for candidate quiet areas. This is supported by *Technical Advice Note 5 – Nature Conservation and Planning* (TAN 5)¹⁷ and *Technical Advice Note 14 – Coastal Planning* (TAN 14)¹⁸.

4.10 Chapter 11 of PPW (*Tourism, Sport and Recreation*) supports the development of sport and recreation to improve quality of life. Its three main planning objectives all promote the provision of accessible open spaces and natural environment, in particular within urban areas.

4.11 Paragraph 11.1.11 states that open spaces with significant recreational or amenity value ***should be protected from development***, particularly in urban areas. ***It could be assumed that all spaces and parks identified as candidate quiet areas or tranquil spaces just outside the agglomeration boundary would be offered this extra protection as they could all inherently claim to have significant amenity value. The additional value given to an open space formally designated as a quiet area could provide an extra level of protection in that such a designation could reasonably be regarded as recognition of significant amenity value.*** The paragraph also stresses the multi-functional properties of open spaces which include enhancement of quality of life, biodiversity, conservation of nature and landscape and air quality, all of which may be seen as contributors to a sense of tranquillity. Relative quiet is a clear additional function that larger amenity spaces and many smaller ones will possess. It is even apparent in most recreational spaces, as the noisiest of playing fields will exhibit quiet at times, although the temporal nature of tranquillity in those areas would usually preclude them from being candidate quiet areas.

4.12 Paragraph 11.3.3 states that authorities need to consider the effects of sport and recreation on neighbouring uses in terms of noise and traffic, as well as ease of access and the safety of residents, users and the public.

¹⁷ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/tans/tan5/>

¹⁸ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/tans/tan14/>

4.13 *Technical Advice Note 16 – Sport, Recreation and Open Space* (TAN 16)¹⁹ encourages local authorities to carry out Open Space Assessments to ascertain the quantity and quality of each type of open space in their area. This would then be used to guide policies on open space in Local Development Plans and identify areas deficient in amenity and recreational space.

¹⁹ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/tans/tan16e>

5 References

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