

Protect our village from large-scale housing plans

'Development would place strain on Welsh language'

By GARETH WILLIAMS

CONCERNS have been raised that a village could be "swamped" and lose its Welsh identity if many more homes are built within its boundaries.

That's the view of Y Felinheli councillor Sian Gwenllian, responding to Anglesey and Gwynedd's Joint Local Development Plan which is due to be published in 2015.

The document has been compiled with a number of options that would dictate where the majority of Gwynedd's new homes and facilities would be built over the next 25 years.

While a number of options are on the table and the consultation phase came to an end last week, no decision has been made.

However, Cllr Gwenllian believes that following the wrong route could change the make-up of Y Felinheli totally.

She said: "Of course we need new homes in Gwynedd as a large percentage of the housing stock is not of sufficient quality.

"However, it's homes for local people that are desperately needed, with a growing requirement for community rented accommodation and affordable housing.

"A number of the options on the table mention the city of Bangor or Mon-Meni, which hold widespread implications from a village viewpoint.

"There's a danger for it to become drowned by new homes, which would urbanise a rural area and place additional strain on our language and culture.



CONCERN: Councillor Sian Gwenllian with the Joint Local Development Plans for Y Felinheli.

AR310111Felin.jpg

"I'd argue that the village has reached saturation point in terms of housing, and special measures are required in order to defend it.

"While the Welsh language is still alive with 72% of villagers fluent in the language, there is real danger it could lose its community status were we to become a satellite dormitory village for workers in adjacent towns and cities.

"I urge the council to protect current boundaries, restrict large-scale housing projects unless they meet local demand, and allow for leisure and open spaces within the village."

A Gwynedd Council spokesman said: "The process of preparing the

Joint Local Development Plan (JLDP) is the subject of a sustainability appraisal, which includes a strategic environmental assessment.

"This appraisal seeks to ensure that the JLDP's policies and proposals are consistent with sustainable development principles.

"The first steps in this process involve preparing a scoping report that includes a sustainability appraisal framework.

"This framework identifies sustainability objectives that are based on robust evidence that reflect the issues and challenges that face the plan area. In all, there are 11 objectives that deal with environmental, social and so-

cio-economic matters – including safeguarding, promoting and appreciating the Welsh language. The JLDP's contents will therefore be assessed against these key objectives.

"A consultation draft version of the scoping report can be seen on the council's website, and we intend to publish the latest version of the report during the next few weeks.

"The Joint Planning Policy Unit is also developing a methodology to undertake a Welsh Language Impact Assessment that will be used to assess the JLDP's impact on the Welsh language and culture at different stages in the plan preparation process."