

Institute of Acoustics, on behalf of Welsh Branch

Consultation Response to TAN 11

Date of response : 20th Jan 2023

Consultation documents: <https://gov.wales/revised-planning-guidance-relation-air-quality-noise-and-soundscape>

The IOA is the UK's professional body for those working in acoustics, noise and vibration representing over 3000 members. It was formed in 1974 from the amalgamation of the Acoustics Group of the Institute of Physics and the British Acoustical Society (a daughter society of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers). The Institute of Acoustics is a nominated body of the Engineering Council, offering registration at Chartered and Incorporated Engineer levels. w: www.ioa.org.uk.

Two meetings were held by the Welsh Branch of the IOA to inform and then explore the views of members. This was principally done on the 13th December 2022, by Zoom, where 24 members attended.

Break out group facilitators were Peter Rogers(FIOA), Jack Harvey-Clark (MIOA), Daniel Goodhand (MIOA). The link to the discussion of the introduction and of one of the groups can be found here : [LINK](#).

Introductory comments

The IOA welcomes the aims and tone of this TAN, in what stands out as a bold piece of guidance supporting a forward thinking and progressive piece of policy. This guidance makes a good tentative step into introducing a soundscape approach to planning considerations to make more sustainable developments; combining the environmental stressors of air pollution and noise pollution. This responds to the call from the UN in their Frontier report of 2022, which references and recognises the work done by the Welsh Government in this regard.

The TAN remains a tentative first step in a change of approach to environmental noise, which opens up the invitation to focus on placemaking and in addition to traditional approaches encourages also thinking about the quality of the soundscape and interventions to it. This approach is welcomed, with a cautious note on making sure that guidance is clear and does offer sufficient encouragement to developers and Local Authorities to make sure it is implemented in practice.

The IOA points to the ProPG Planning and Noise (2017) which remains valid as additional guidance for directing practitioners dealing with new residential with regard to good acoustic

design in particular. This document was prepared jointly with CIEH and ANC and it is good to see this referenced on page 38.

The following responses are a garnered combination of views from members as general comments and also specific ones which are structured into the submission response style requested.

In responses to interpreted preamble questions in the cover notice to the consultation the following responses were gathered:

- 1) Is the move away from the approach in TAN 1997 (based on NEC's and PPG24) welcomed and why? Will losing the B-C NEC's boundary be an issue?

This was considered a sensible move forward and no problem given it is a progressive evolution from that place.

Assigning sites by external noise levels is arbitrary and the feeling was that people were tired of the NEC's. We design to internal noise levels and there was broad agreement this was a good move.

- 2) Is the closer link between air quality and soundscape welcomed and why?

As they go hand in hand this removes possible conflicts. For transportation, industrial, construction and mineral extraction sources the link is strong there are some situations the link is either weak or potentially there may be a positive benefit (such as where natural sound or manmade vibrancy sources where levels may be high but pleasantness also high and air pollution low). As a rule of thumb though the link would appear to be fairly solid.

Air quality normally overrides ventilation strategy. From that point of view the closer link is good because of communication between the disciplines. Issues are similar.

As a noise consultant (non AQ specialist) we tend to skip over the AQ parts, but this would force a more integrated consideration.

- 3) Does Supporting Document 1 provide enough supporting guidance on soundscape design approach and why?

Some members were initially nervous about this because of the subjective aspects, but like the tables and setting the path for the potential to improve soundscapes. This sets out when and why and was pretty clear.

Others were not entirely sure, recognising that it was good on principles but not specific in terms of techniques, remaining a perceptual framework. It was considered there may be a gap provided by lack of ISO Part 4 at this present time, which needs to be acknowledged. A suggestion made was Could do with what is appropriate for time and place and or community. That is the assessment which will make it tricky. A fall back maybe metric dominated approach.

This is where the biggest learning curve will be - on how we are evidencing this part of it. Least objective part of the guidance in terms of numbers. It is quite subjective. It is quite long - does all of it need to be in there. It's putting the onus on the soundscape person/team and it's not very specific. High requirement for survey/end users/existing inhabitants and collating demographic data. Not something acoustic

consultants are used to. All need to have a common understanding between planning/consultants etc. The guidance is open to interpretation.

Would certainly benefit from more case studies.

Q.1	Do you agree with the advice contained in Chapters 1 and 2 of the new TAN? Please explain where you disagree with the advice given.
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There was a sense that air pollution falls outside the expertise of most members, so this broadly presents a competence challenge. .

Chapter 1

1. Link with air pollution - discuss and distil any comments
2. Soundscape not just noise - discuss and distil any comments

Dealing with the uncertainty remains one of the challenges. BS4142 and context is a matter of judgement which is fully justified.

It's important to understand when to apply noise or soundscape approaches. There is the potential risk that soundscape might be requested when it's not needed or appropriate - i.e. for small residential developments (it was also noted that soundscape may be suitable for some small developments). Might not be the intention. There is a risk of "cut and paste" planning conditions.

Perhaps this section would benefit from a clarifying statement.

3. Scope of TAN (see below):

This TAN does not replace or supersede existing TANs or MTANs." (emphasis added). This sentence appears to suggest that the revised TAN 11 should be given weight alongside the existing TANs/MTANs covering issues not addressed 'in detail' by TAN 11.

Clarification indicated that this was intended to replace the TAN 11, a point which could be made explicit.

Chapter 2

1. Placemaking - is this helpful in setting the scene for PPW ? Does it need to be there ?

Generally this was agreed to be a good thing.

2. Integration air pollution, noise and soundscape - any comments on the links beyond transportation sound (natural sound for instance) ?

Generally this was agreed to be a good thing.

3. Figure 1 - summary of policy (is this clear ?)

Bit fluffy and aspirational but yes it is reasonably clear.

4. Scale & Agent of Change (is this understandable and clear ?)

No comments.

5. 'Triple jeopardy' - air pollution, impaired health and deprivation. Does this conflict with the traditional understanding which is Climate - Food- Nature (source : WWF) ?

Originate from PHW studies - interpretation : environmental pollution, impaired health and wellbeing , deprivation.

No other comments.

6. "Whilst a soundscape design approach is supported in this TAN, it should only be required by planning authorities instead of, or in addition to, a conventional noise control or acoustic design where it is considered necessary to create an appropriate soundscape and is likely to result in better placemaking in accord with PPW and section 4.3.3 of this TAN". Is this balance right ?

Yes, agreed. If looking at placemaking it could be more foregrounded. The intent is to shift focus to community environment and other aspects but perhaps undermine intent. A bolder step would be welcomed.

Nervous of the "instead of noise/acoustic design" statement. Most will need conventional noise control. Better to use the words "in addition to".

Q.2	Do you agree with the advice contained in Chapter 3 of the new TAN? Please explain where you disagree with the advice given, including where you consider there to be gaps or omissions.
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Air quality, noise and soundscape are key considerations from the outset.

Soundscape design should be integral to placemaking where it can add value to existing policy formulation and design guidance.

Any comments about this ?

Table 1 - sets out hierarchy for "environmental quality" evidence - meaning air and noise pollution and soundscape quality.

Implications for Action Planning - Local Authorities : Does it provide enough guidance ?

The view was this needs more technical guidance.

Identifying particular areas or drafting specific policies and/or preparing SPG covering circumstances where development proposals would require soundscape design responses.

Does the TAN identify clearly enough that LA's must complete an strategic assessment for a soundscape plan/ approach ?

Provides enough guidance to ask more of consultants.

On group felt that they don't think it does. There are responsibilities in LA and whether they have the resources to do this or subcontract it out. It's placing quite a burden on LAs. There is a lot of engagement with communities which they are best placed to do but it is uncertain whether it can be done in practice.

Q.3	Do you agree with the advice contained in Chapter 4 of the new TAN? Please explain where you disagree with the advice given, including where you consider there to be gaps or omissions.
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Is "proportionate approach" clear enough for Developers ? Might that be taken to mean they can ignore it - what are the incentives (carrots ?) and are any needed ?

Testing this by Developers do require "carrots". May need to be stronger but balanced. It is new and in infancy so down to the industry to educate.

Is the word "proportionate" a bit like reasonably practicable ... If you said "reasoned approach" maybe that might be clearer as to what is expected. What is the buy-in to the notion or placemaking. The "carrots" would be to expand the idea of what makes a good place". Broadening the idea.

There are going to be several different interpretations of what is proportionate. This is ambiguous. There is quite a bit of grey area.

In 4.1 What does : "consideration of existing and predicted air and sound environment quality on the proposed site" mean - predicting the soundscape quality ?. Leaving it open as it is - this is an example of fluffy language. As an initial assessment it is open. The delineation of the three concepts that make up environmental quality was air quality , noise pollution and soundscape quality.

Page 29 - It is recommended that a trained and experienced acoustician visit the site in person at an early stage - is this clearly enough defined ? Perhaps .

There is confusion of overlap. 4.1.1 - qualitative assessment is vague and is not a good indicator of a site's noise or soundscape. The requirement for the experienced acoustician needs to be emphasised and this needs to be the upfront part. The important pieces of information seem to be lost in the document because a lot of text. Perhaps highlights would help.

Chapter 4 defines pollution-sensitive and potentially polluting (or pollution-generating) development and focuses on four key iterative aspects which must inform the drawing up of any development proposal. This is aimed at improving the quality of proposals coming forward and will influence how acceptable a development may be with regard to air quality, noise and soundscape. The chapter emphasises the need for a proportionate approach, provides advice on the level of qualitative and quantitative assessment required, clarifies the role of noise control and acoustic design relative to the use of soundscape design, and recognises the importance of locally developed supplementary planning guidance.

Comments ?

No comments.

Pg 38.

4.3.3 Is the guidance on what a Noise and soundscape Design Statement (NSDS) is clear enough ?

No. More clarity is felt to be needed.

Comment on Table 2 specifically please ?

The risk levels do not seem clearly defined. Potentially confusing. A good aspect is the references to ProPG. The soundscape stuff is concerning where it remains a bit woolly.

Are the quantitative tests to avoid a NSDS wise to include or does it undermine the framework ?

The test is going to catch pretty much everything.

4.3.6 Vent and overheating - "Windows that can never be opened as a design measure to reduce the risk of building occupants complaining about noise".. This is a strong position and places highly insulated properties in a position to justify their overheating strategy. Is this welcomed ?

Perhaps needs to be linked to part O / AVO.

Is there a situation where the noise pollution may be tolerated for short periods to achieve the overheating condition or is this unsustainable ?

No comments emerged as a consensus, although this is clearly an important area to consider where openable windows are relied on.

Is pointing to AVO rather than ADO the right stance ?

Yes - pointing to AVO rather than ADO is wise.

Q.4	Do you agree with the advice contained in Chapter 5 of the new TAN? Please explain where you disagree with the advice given, including where you consider there to be gaps or omissions
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Chapter 5 addresses development management and determining acceptability of pollution impacts for pollution-sensitive and potentially polluting (or pollution generating) development. This chapter covers determining environmental conditions considered unsuitable for pollution-sensitive development and how planning permission should normally be refused for pollution sensitive development at sites where national air quality objectives are, or are close to being breached or which fail to meet one or more default sound criteria. This chapter also covers assessing pollution impacts generated by development while also highlighting how air pollution can affect biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems. The chapter applies the agent of change principle where pollution-sensitive development is proposed in the vicinity of existing pollution-generating activities, developers and applicants, as the 'agents of change', must use good design or take other steps sufficient to ensure, to

the satisfaction of the planning authority, that such development will not pose a risk to the continuation or, where reasonably foreseeable, growth of those pollution generating activities

Is the wording clearly enough aligned with NPSE and NPPF in terms of “avoiding” ...”making a noise problem worse “ for instance. How does this fit with what is “Unacceptable” and what is acceptable which have very specific meanings in planning ?

Regarding the agent of change trying to predict future operations - potential difficulty it being in the TAN.

Q.5	We have included two appendices to the TAN on The Role of Green Infrastructure in Air Quality and Soundscape, and Data and Information for Plan Making. Do you have any specific comments on either or both of these?
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5.2.3 ASHP - any comments ?

Guidance is now available as joint IOA and CIEH Practitioner note and also a note for the public, and it is noted that work is ongoing by the Welsh Government, but cumulative impacts of sound from a number of ASHP installations should be a overriding planning consideration within master plans.

5.2.4 - Agent of Change - any comments ?

Agent of Change remains an area which requires specific guidance for how to implement it in a way that is legally binding and protects both businesses and residents without leading to a quieting of vibrant areas as residential developments is allowed. Soundscape baselines for licenced premises are considered one way to benchmark the sound generated, and the value of that as a cultural consideration in the night time soundscape is an area that should be taken account of as part of the positive aspects of sound, where adequate mitigation is provided to residents to reasonably protect them.

Q.6	Do you agree with the advice contained in Supporting Document 1: Soundscape Design? Please explain where you disagree with the advice given, including where you consider there to be gaps or omissions.
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Broadly there was agreement on the advice contained within it.

More advice is needed on when and how to employ a soundscape design approach instead of, or in addition to, more conventional noise control or acoustic design.

The purpose of this approach would be to create and maintain appropriate soundscapes and achieve better placemaking in line with PPW, the Noise and Soundscape Action Plan 2018 to 2023 (NSAP) and TAN 11. It was felt this was a good goal.

Guide aligns with the objectives of good design outlined in PPW and elaborated on in TAN 12 Design and associated guidance, and seeks to position, as appropriate, soundscape design as part of the overall design approach taken in TAN 12.

This was agreed with and welcomed.

Introduces NSDS - Noise and Soundscape Design Statement, which is welcomed as a concept.

Q.7	The TAN seeks to mainstream issues hitherto seen as technical matters and as a result contains a plethora of detail which may be better presented in diagrammatic or more visual forms. Do you have any comments or views on how this should be achieved and the 'user friendliness' of the document improved?
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It was generally felt the document is too wordy and way too long, and much more could be done to distil more into diagrams and pictures. The tables were popular and welcomed and in themselves allayed some concerns.

Q.8	If in future years the Welsh Government were to issue additional Supporting Documents for this TAN, what topics should they focus on?
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1. Agent of Change
2. What make good sound quality where - the evidence
3. Internal soundscapes and wellbeing
4. Dealing with protecting vibrancy in cities and developing close to businesses

Q.9	What challenges and barriers need to be overcome , before the new TAN 11 can be implemented in full by planning authorities and developers? What (non-financial) support could the Welsh Government and other organisations provide, to help practitioners to overcome those challenges and barriers?
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A good evidence base for what helps improved soundspace to deliver improved wellbeing and biodiversity net gain would be needed to provide clear incentives to deliver the potential recommended by this TAN. Without it there is a barrier to adoption.

Examples of "what good sounds like" in different settings would be helpful early on to provide the confidence to adopt the soundscape approach as set out in TAN 11, beyond a more traditional noise control approach.

Case studies will be key to provide the supporting needed, and a clear demonstration from Welsh Government that decisions are enforcing the recommendations within the guidance in preference to a traditional noise control approach, especially in more challenging sites where new residential is proposed.

Dealing with existing housing stock and supporting revitalising communities with regard for the soundscape quality would be a worth focus as a challenge to deliver sustainable communities close to the services and businesses they serve them.

Q.10 We would like to know your views on the effects that TAN 11 and Supporting Document 1: Soundscape Design would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

No comments.

Q.11 Please also explain how you believe the proposed policy could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

No comments.

Q.12 We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

The IOA has provided feedback from two workshop sessions held with its members. One of the sessions is available to view here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AM7zv9EKIIQqESAdd6tZU-Y2gttedxK/view?usp=share_link

Beyond the feedback received the points made have been compiled by those preparing the response. By their nature the comments are daily general, which does not mean there are specific changes that may be relevant. This response does not repeat points made within the ANC response. Members have been asked to direct specific suggestions for changes through their own responses.

It is fair to note that a number of the feedback points have been critical, with a view to being helpful in the redrafting and production of a better document that will provide guidance for the next generation of developments. The general conclusion remains that this revision of TAN 11 is welcomed by the IOA and its membership.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: