Welsh Government Response - Newport Council’s Response to LDP Shortfall of 274 Units

The Council’s response to meet the identified shortfall of 274 units (ED027.7) is to allocate two new housing sites; Celtic Springs for 200 units and Queens Hill School for 92 units.

The Welsh Government is perplexed by the Council's decision to propose a residential use on the employment allocation (as set out in the submitted LDP) at Celtic Springs; an employment allocation the Council considered ‘sound’, a position which has not changed throughout the examination process and for a proposed use that is not supported by a sustainability appraisal.

The Celtic Springs allocation is underpinned by an evidence base that the Council itself considers robust to support the retention of the allocation for 6ha of B1 employment land. The Council has maintained the allocation in the plan submitted for examination and most recently reaffirming this position by responding to Matters Arising from the hearing sessions with “intentions primarily for B1 business uses” on-site. The justification for the Council’s sudden change of opinion is non-existent.

In the Council’s response to Matters Arising (Session 7) the justification text for Policy EM3 actively seeks to resist alternative proposals on new employment allocations. Whilst the site may have been marketed unsuccessfully for 6 years, the extent of the marketing in accordance with the authority’s requirements in paragraph 6.27 is unclear. Critically, the Employment Land Review (ELR) identifies the prestigious employment site as one of the few small-scale allocations unconstrained by policy or ownership aspirations. There is currently no explanation of how criterion ii) of Policy EM3 would be satisfied if the limited range and choice of small-scale greenfield employment allocations is depleted.

The Welsh Government considers that the Council should reconsider this proposal to ensure it does not undermine its own employment evidence base, as expressed in the LDP submitted for examination and both written and verbal statements made throughout the examination process to date.