

Newport City Council
Local Development Plan

Council Response to Matters Arising

Hearing Session 19: Council's Response to LDP Shortfall
of 274 Units



1. Council's response to shortfall of 274 units

1.1 The Inspector concluded that the Plan currently falls short of its housing target by 274 units. The Council proposes to meet this shortfall by allocating 2 new housing sites to the Plan:

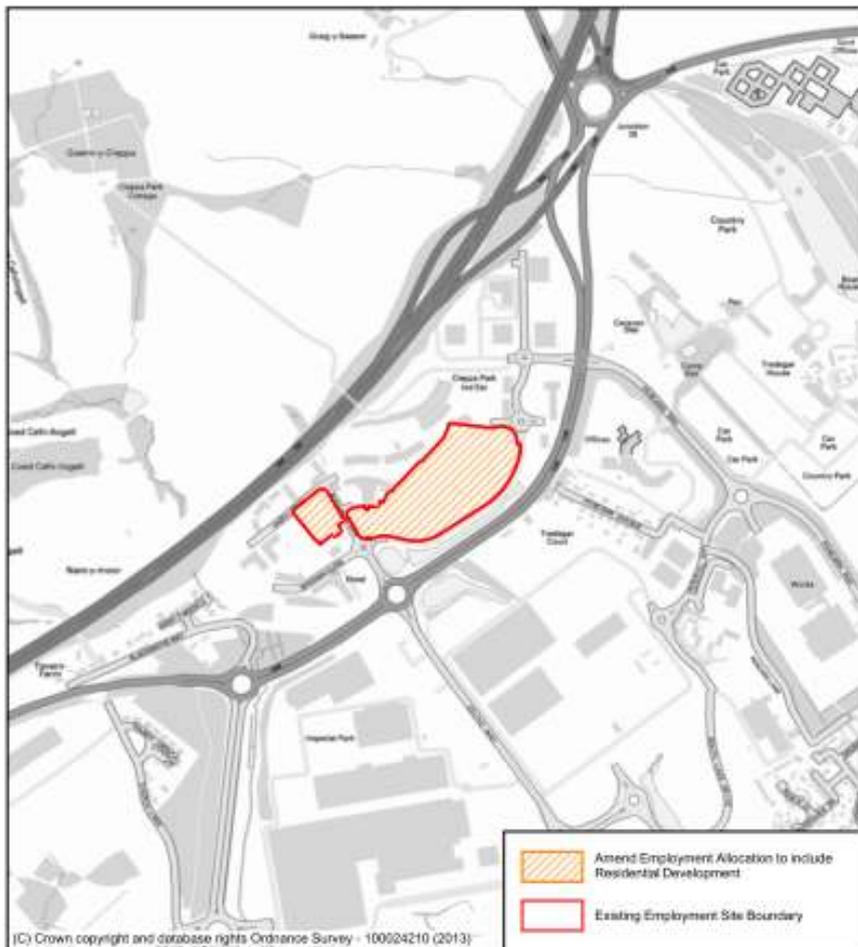
- Celtic Springs H1(61) - 200 units
 - Queens Hill School H1(62) - 92 units
- Total - 292 units**

1.2 The additional 292 units would take the total housing figure within the Plan to 11,640 units. This would provide a flexibility of 12.5% over the 10,350 requirement.

2. Celtic Springs H1(61) – 200 units (7ha)

Background

2.1 The Celtic Springs site is located in West Newport, Marshfield ward, and was allocated as an employment allocation as part of the Submission LDP. The agent submitted the site for housing as part of the Revised Deposit LDP consultation in June 2013 and the site was subsequently consulted upon as part of the Alternative Sites (RAS(A)029) consultation in September 2013. The plan from the Alternative Sites Assessment is shown below:



2.2 As part of the Alternative Sites, the Council assessed the site and concluded:

“Celtic Springs will be allocated for 6 hectares of B1 Use. We are aware that the developer of the site has been trying to market the site for a number of years, but to no avail. In accordance with proposed policy EM4, alternative uses of employment land will be assessed against a list of criteria. Information that demonstrates that the site and property has been marketed for a new employment use and that an on-going use is no longer viable is one such criterion. If appropriate evidence was submitted to the Council, then a scheme to incorporate residential development at Celtic Springs might be acceptable. The Council would need to be satisfied that the proposed residential use integrates well with the existing employment land uses in the vicinity. As no such evidence has been presented at this stage, it is considered that the Celtic Springs allocation will remain as per the Plan.”

2.3 Following this assessment, a planning application for residential development at Celtic Springs has been submitted (ref 14/0204). As part of the application, the applicant submitted material which demonstrated that they had attempted to market the site and attract commercial occupiers for the past 6 years, but have been unsuccessful. Planning Policy Officers took the view that there would be little sense in allowing the site to remain vacant indefinitely and effectively sterilising it for an employment use that may or may not ever materialise. The fact the agent has marketed the site for employment use for a period of 6 years demonstrates that a review of the proposed use is necessary.

2.4 Newport has an adequate supply of employment land identified in the Plan. The loss of 6ha of potential B1 land is not considered significant, especially as allocation EM1(i) Duffryn, which is short distance away, will be allocated for 38.5ha of B1 and B2 use. The Council is also aware that the Duffryn Site has recently been placed under offer for a period of 12 months to a major investor, therefore increasing confidence that the site will be delivered within the Plan period. Celtic Springs is already a mix-use development, consisting of a hotel, nursery, bakery, public house and restaurant, plus office development. Whereas Duffryn is a strategic prestige employment site which will only contain business uses, Celtic Springs offers something different and the addition of housing is considered compatible with the current mixed uses on site.

The Plan's Strategy

2.5 The Plan seeks to accommodate growth within the urban area and within the Eastern Expansion Area. This site is within the Newport urban boundary. The Plan also seeks to promote the reuse of brownfield sites in preference to extensive use of greenfield sites as these generally perform better in sustainability terms. It is acknowledged that the Celtic Springs site is greenfield, however, it is considered to be a highly sustainable location. The residential use would be located within walking distance of job opportunities, food-and-drink uses (including a public house and restaurant) and several bus stops. The addition of houses to this area would help to create a sustainable neighbourhood.

Constraints

2.6 The Celtic Springs site has been designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) on the basis of the mosaic of ruderal vegetation and neutral grassland that occupies it. A Phase 1 Habitat Survey has been undertaken and was submitted in

support of the planning application. The proposed development will need to mitigate or compensate for the loss of the SINC. The Council's ecologist is working with the applicant to negotiate how best to achieve this, which is likely to be through appropriate planting and design. Due to the nature of this type of SINC (ruderal vegetation and neutral grassland), it is not considered a significant obstacle to development and will not impact on the number of dwellings proposed.

- 2.7 The site is not within a flood zone and not considered to have any significant constraints.
- 2.8 No sustainability appraisal was submitted with the Alternative Site proposal. The site is currently being appraised and will be consulted upon as part of the Matters Arising Changes, but initial draft findings of the Sustainability Appraisal deem the site to be satisfactory.

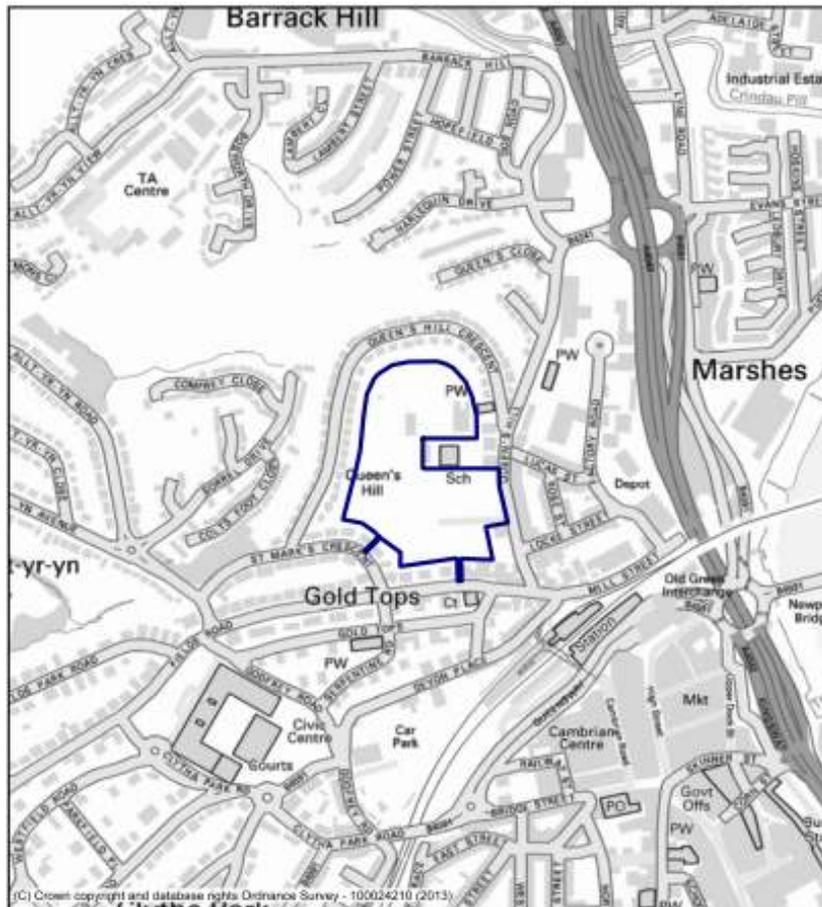
Delivery

- 2.8 The site is currently the subject of an outline application which is expected to be determined by Committee over the summer. The outline application, submitted by the site owners, is for 'up to 200 dwellings'. On the proviso that that application is approved, the agent intends to submit a reserved matters application and expects first completions in 2016. The site is expected to be completed within 7 years; therefore all 200 units will be completed within the Plan period.

3. Queens Hill School H1(62) – 92 units (4.4ha)

Background

- 3.1 Queens Hill School is within Central Newport and located within the Allt-yr-Yn ward. The site is a former education centre and therefore brownfield. The Council requested candidate sites in March 2009 and this site was put forward at that stage (1232.C1). It was the subject of a sustainability appraisal and scored well, however, the site was not taken forward by the Council as the school was open at the time and there was uncertainty with regard to the release of the land.
- 3.2 The site was put forward again as part of the Revised Deposit LDP consultation in June 2013 and subsequently consulted upon as part of the Alternative Sites consultation (RAS(N)053) in September 2013. The plan from the Alternative Sites Assessment is shown below:



3.3 As part of the Alternative Sites, the Council assessed the site and concluded:

“Contrary to some of the replies from representors, this site has not been put forward as a proposed gypsy/traveller site, but has been suggested for residential development. It is unnecessary to include this proposal in the Revised Deposit LDP because the Plan already identifies sufficient land for residential development. A proposal of this nature — which, given the urban location, may be acceptable in principle — would have to be the subject of an application for planning permission”.

3.4 Since the above assessment, the site has become available and a residential planning application has been submitted (14/0386). The school site has now closed and there is confidence that the site can be delivered for housing. The St Mary’s Catholic School at the rear of the site remains in operation and the Council will ensure appropriate provision is made for this to continue. As part of the planning application, it is likely that land in the northeast corner of the site will be transferred to the St Mary’s School for parking, plus a drop off area and sports pitch. These facilities will improve the school and help it to keep operating into the future. This land transfer has been taken into account in the planning application and will not impact on the proposed dwelling numbers. The application, for ‘up to 92 dwellings’ is expected to be determined by Committee over the summer. The application is submitted by the owner of the majority of the site. The remainder of the site

belongs to the Council. The application has been submitted in liaison with the Council as part of its land disposal programme.

The Plan's Strategy

- 3.5 The site is brownfield and within the Newport urban boundary. It is there considered to meet the Plan's Strategy.

Constraints

- 3.6 There are no tree preservation orders onsite, but a number of trees are considered to be worthy of retention by the Council's Tree Officer. The site is also within close proximity to a listed building (Shire Hall). Both of these issues are not considered insurmountable.
- 3.7 The site is not within a flood zone and has no other significant constraints.

Delivery

- 3.8 The site is currently the subject of an outline application which is expected to be determined by Committee over the summer. The outline application is for 92 dwellings. On the proviso that that application is approved, the agent intends to submit a reserved matters application and expects first completions in 2016. The site is expected to be completed within 5 years of commencement, therefore entirely within the Plan period.

4. Final Conclusion

- 4.1 The Council believes that Celtic Springs and Queens Hill School are sound deliverable sites and invite the Inspector to consider adding these sites to the Plan to make up the identified shortfall. The fact that planning applications have already been submitted provides confidence that they will be delivered within the Plan period.
- 4.2 As previously discussed in Session 19, the Council's windfall figure of 95 units per annum is based on historic deliveries of smaller sites of less than 50 units. As these two sites are 200 units and 92 units respectively, they will not double count with windfall predications.