

**Full Council
14 April 2022**

Questions and Statements submitted for the Public Participation Period

Question – submitted by Jane Ashdown

The Council has recently hired Hyas Associates to engage in master planning for the proposed DOR 13 development included in the current draft Local Plan. This development of 4,000 houses north of Dorchester is being pursued as a “Garden Community” following the Council’s successful bid to join the Homes England Garden Communities programme. The government guidance on garden communities (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/garden-communities>) draws attention to the need to assess viability of a garden community and specifically notes that the following actions should be taken:

review scheme viability at the plan-making stage to test deliverability and inform policy development

consider retesting viability at the master planning stage, and when development details become more refined

When will these tests of viability be undertaken and when will the findings from these viability tests be published and available for public consideration?

Statement – submitted by Giles Watts

Councillor Flower, my name is Giles Watts and I am representing the “Dorset Deserves Better” Campaign. We are a non-political, Dorset-based organisations with the aim of persuading Dorset Council to re-think the draft Local Plan. We laid out the basis for our request to you in an open letter sent on 17th January and currently have the support of 41 community-based organisations and 16 town or parish councils representing over 68,000 Dorset Residents (about 18% of the county).

We thank you for the open exchange we have had on this subject via email. We are encouraged by many of the things you have said publicly – that you seek a Local plan which is right for the people of Dorset and which promotes sustainability rather than chasing housing targets and which recognises the ambitions of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy (CEES). We also welcome your approach to ministers for various exemptions and protection while a new plan is being built.

However, the current situation is perilous. All existing local plans are now technically out-of-date and the presumption in favour of development is starting to be applied and there is no guarantee the government will respond quickly or in full to your requests. This has created a situation of great uncertainty and risk. Uncertainty in your plans and the risk of pre-emptive and uncontrolled development that will not provide many of the things that Dorset needs such as: affordable and social housing, developments to grow our economy with green jobs, reduction of our carbon emissions and the restoration and protection of the environment.

For these reasons, we urge your Council address the following three issues as soon as possible:

1. Be transparent about the scope and timetable for the new Local Plan, and make sure that it is robust even if concessions are not forthcoming from central government. This

should include a detailed analysis of last year's consultation exercise and the publishing of all evidence underpinning the Local Plan.

2. Put in place options to prevent a breakdown in the planning process and reduce the risk of pre-emptive development while the new Plan is being developed.
3. Start a process of public engagement to involve local organisations in rethinking and rebuilding the Local Plan.

Our Alliance members are keen to support this process and to meet with you soon to discuss how we may work together to support the development of a new Local Plan. Indeed, an early meeting would do much to allay the uncertainties and to create a more powerful route to a better future for the people of Dorset.

Thank you very much for your time and attention.