

Dear Councillor *****

July 2021

By May 2022, as a member of Dorset Council, you will be called on to vote on the publication version of the Local Plan, a plan that will profoundly impact the distinctive landscape, wildlife and heritage of Dorset and the lives of the people who live here for generations to come.

STAND – Save The Area North of Dorchester – strongly opposes the current blueprint for the County’s future as set out in the Plan. In particular, we oppose proposals to build 4,000 houses on land north of Dorchester and our petition, with over 5,000 signatories opposing DOR 13, as it’s referred to in the Plan, will be presented at the upcoming full Dorset Council meeting.

In addition to our objections to DOR 13 laid out at <https://stand-dorchester.net/why-were-objecting/> we want to use this open letter to set out our deep concerns about the process that has led to this Plan. First, many critical reports were unavailable for review during the recent stage of public consultation. These reports (for example on viability, flood risk, hydrology) will not be available until the publication stage of the revised Plan next year leaving very limited opportunities for scrutiny by the people of Dorchester, surrounding Parishes and across the County.

We also believe that the Plan has been hastily prepared based on out-of-date assumptions from proposals inherited from predecessor councils; and we believe that as a new authority Dorset Council has failed to deliver a compelling and innovative vision for the County and the people of Dorset, a vision that should deliver progress and prosperity while respecting our distinctive landscape, ecology, and culture.

The government’s unrealistic housing targets are driving the kind of mass development proposed in DOR 13. There is a critical need for realistically affordable homes in the County. But the Council should not accept the government’s requirement for over 30,000 new housing units plus an additional 9,000 from the BPC Council. This means 100,000 more people in our County in just 17 years putting enormous strain on our environment and infrastructure. There are strong grounds for adopting West Dorset MP Chris Loder’s proposal to distribute new housing in towns and villages around the county, thus supporting more sustainable local communities where needed.

As a result of the flawed consultation process so far, STAND has been re-energised. We have expanded our membership and our expertise includes specialists in heritage, ecology, culture, the law, planning and communications. We are joining with other groups to explain why this plan will have such a negative impact on Dorset. They include CPRE, the Climate Action Network, local protest groups, and local councils concerned about the impact of the plan on their towns and villages.

In coming months, we hope to have conversations with every one of our elected representatives on Dorset Council. We want to explain why we oppose DOR 13 and we will ask you to consider alternative proposals for meeting reduced government housing targets.

We know you take your responsibilities as an elected representative very seriously. We’d welcome your views on how the Plan addresses affordable housing needs, sustainable transport options, protection of our valued and historic landscapes across the County, and aligns with the Council’s climate emergency plan. We await your reply with keen interest. Please respond to the following email: alistair@chiz.org.uk

Yours sincerely,

Jane Ashdown

Alistair Chisholm

Kate Hebditch

STAND Committee Chair

STAND Co-ordinator

STAND Founder (2018)