



DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

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Robin Potter, Chair Planning & Environment Committee

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Sent to: gardencommunities@communities.gsi.gov.uk

11 February 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

WEST DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL (now DORSET COUNCIL) GARDEN COMMUNITIES BID

It has been brought to my attention, by a local action group known as STAND, that Dorchester Town Council has been included as a named supporter to a bid for Garden Communities funding, for an area to the north and outside the boundary of Dorchester. The area was designated as DOR15 in a local plan consultation document circulated by West Dorset District Council in 2018; the Town Council is also included as the named parish authority in the bid application.

By the inclusion of Dorchester Town Council alongside others in the header for the application, and by references to the Town Council's Corporate Plan at sections 6a and 9a of the document, it might be assumed that the Town Council supports the application. To be clear, the Town Council has never considered supporting the application. If it did so my expectation is that the Town Council would not wish to be party to this specific application.

Due to a very short notice period given by the District Council in 2018 to provide a letter of support for the application the matter was not considered by the Town Council. Our Town Clerk wrote a letter of support for the idea that Garden Communities principles should be applied wherever in the district an area was ultimately designated for development through a yet to be completed Local Plan process, whether on this or any other site in the district, but also referenced the Council's comments made through a recent Local Plan consultation process relating to site DOR15.

The Town Council has previously objected to the inclusion of site DOR15 in the Local Plan for a number of reasons, primarily relating to the need for extensive public infrastructure to be

in place. Coupled with a requirement to provide at least 35% affordable housing, the Council felt strongly that these essential requirements would render the scheme unviable.

The likely outcome was that the scheme would then be delivered without providing key parts of the essential infrastructure or affordable housing, something which sadly West Dorset District Council had a consistently poor track record on. As these issues are unlikely to be resolved satisfactorily the Town Council is likely to continue to oppose development in the area covered by the bid in any future consultation relating to the Local Plan process.

I am concerned that, in submitting the bid document, West Dorset District Council failed to reference the Town Council's opposition to the specific site, instead interpreting a letter of general support for Garden Communities principles provided at officer level as their evidence of support for the scheme from the local Town Council.

As such I believe the bid document misrepresents the view of the Town Council and would ask that the Town Council's name is struck from the application (for accuracy the area under discussion is not currently within the Town Council's boundary so there is no reason for our name to appear).

I would also request that any reference to the grant award to develop the Garden Community idea does not reference the Town Council. While we cannot request that reference to our Corporate Plan is removed from the bid document I would point out that the Plan was written long before the idea of site DOR15 was proposed and that the Council's Corporate Plan is in no way supportive of the Garden Communities bid.

I would not wish this request to be interpreted as being negative towards the programme you are managing; I believe that the Town Council would always want to see schemes developed along Garden Community principles in preference to commercially controlled development. The Town Council has not, however, given its support for this specific site and I see little likelihood in our position changing in the future.

Yours sincerely,



Robin Potter
Chair of Policy Committee, Dorchester Town Council

c.c. John Sellgren, Director of Place, Dorset Council