

Mr Spencer Flower  
South Walks House  
South Walks Road  
Dorchester  
DT1 1UZ

March 2021

Dear Spencer,

I am grateful for this further opportunity to respond formally to the consultation. I would be very grateful if this, together with my letter to you of the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021, would be taken to constitute my formal response to the consultation.

As you know, I have written to numerous constituents who live in the areas which will be most affected by the proposed plan. It is clear that there is widespread concern from my constituents about some of these proposals. Numerous others have also been in touch to express their concern. I have at all times encouraged my constituents to respond directly to this consultation.

### **General principles**

I strongly believe that the Green Belt should be protected and alternative sites, outside of the greenbelt, should be sought and prioritised. Locally, the Green Belt serves as an important environmental asset for wildlife and for local people. Significant development has already taken place locally and it is therefore vital that the remaining greenbelt is protected. The policy of the Government is that brownfield sites should be prioritised. This is something that has been repeated at a national level, and now that Dorset Council is one unitary authority, there is an opportunity for this policy of prioritising building on sites other than the greenbelt to become a reality. This should be the priority. The Government has made it clear that building on the greenbelt should happen only in exceptional circumstances. It seems to me that unless and until all other avenues have been explored, that high barrier and that high test has not been met.

There are several sites within the Mid Dorset & North Poole constituency that are greenbelt sites. I urge Dorset Council to do all that it can to protect the Green Belt and find as many sites as possible on brownfield sites. These concerns are held by many communities. The communities in Wimborne and Colehill have expressed their concerns about several sites that would substantially reduce the buffer between these two important and distinct communities. One of the primary purposes of the greenbelt is to maintain this buffer. In addition, sensible concerns about the impact on open space, wildlife and infrastructure have also been raised with me. I know that these considerations will also have been raised through the consultation process and I look forward to the Council taking these concerns into consideration.

I fully support the work that you, Councillors and officers are doing to produce this Local Plan. A Local Plan is an important document that will shape the future of our communities for decades to come. It is an opportunity to provide good housing, employment and recreational opportunities and defend our area from speculative planning applications that would be won on appeal, including in the greenbelt.

## **Specific areas**

As I set out above, the communities in Wimborne and Colehill have expressed their concerns about several sites that would substantially reduce the buffer between these two important and distinct communities. It is further the case that there have been a number of significant developments in and around Wimborne over the past few years, with more houses still to be built. The strong representations that have been made to me are that Wimborne and Colehill have had sufficient housing already, and that it would be unfair to burden the area further.

Corfe Mullen and in particular the Waterloo Valley has been raised with me. This special area has been assessed in the past as containing a flood risk. Further, it is a beautiful part on the edge of the village that has already been assessed by previous plans / applications, and has been deemed unsuitable. There is nothing that has changed since those decisions were made, which would warrant a change in the decision this time. The area should not be built on.

In essence, the sites identified for Corfe Mullen reignite existing concerns about the suitability of the sites identified. There is longstanding opposition within Corfe Mullen to development in the Waterloo Valley, this is in part due to concerns about flooding in this area.

The high numbers of additional housing proposed for Lytchett Matravers will add significant pressure on to local infrastructure and change the village feeling of Lytchett Matravers. Especially concerning are the plans for development right next to the school. Given the pressure that will be added by a large number of new homes, the land would be much better protected for use by the school. This view was also raised with me by the Parish Council.

The strong representations that have been made to me include that the village has already expanded significantly in recent years, and there are no exceptional circumstances that would warrant eroding the Green Belt further in and around the village.

## **Further general points**

There is a need to expand the information available in the next draft of the plan to demonstrate what infrastructure improvements would accompany any site allocations. Previous Plans have resulted in significant housing but the infrastructure, especially road and transport infrastructure have not improved at the same rate. Any Plan should improve transport links and infrastructure and this needs to be felt by the communities that are being asked to accommodate new developments.

I would like consideration to be given to the creation of a new town. This should ideally be close to existing major employment or transport links. A new town will reduce pressure on the towns and villages, especially those within the greenbelt.

In order to ensure that the public has confidence that any sites that are within the greenbelt that remain as allocated sites, further information about any brownfield site that have not been included is required. The Green Belt should only be used after all brownfield site have been used. If a site outside of the greenbelt is considered unsuitable, a clear explanation is required. Even difficult to develop brownfield sites need to be identified and given priority.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear from the above that there is strong opposition to building on the Green Belt. I share those strong concerns. Although it is absolutely the case that a Local Plan is necessary, all avenues should be explored before building on the greenbelt. It does not seem to me that exceptional circumstances exist in this case, which would warrant building on the greenbelt.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael." The letter 'M' is large and stylized, with a loop at the top. The rest of the name is written in a cursive, lowercase style.

Michael Tomlinson MP