



Dorset Deserves Better

Campaign for Re-think of Dorset Local Plan

Newsletter 2 : 1 February 2022

Campaign Success

On Wednesday 26 January, the Leader of Dorset Council, Spencer Flower made an astonishing announcement on the Dorset Council website. In it, he admitted that the draft Local Plan is not the right one for Dorset; that it is not sustainable or based on local needs; and that it is not compatible with the Council's own Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy. He stated that the unprecedented 9,000 responses to the public consultation showed that many residents believe (as he does) that the current draft Plan chases housing numbers rather than local needs.

He went on to say that his team had been in discussion with Michael Gove – Secretary of State in charge of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – to suggest a radical new approach to our Local Plan process including :

- Reform the planning framework
- Drop the requirement to build houses for neighbouring Councils
- Delay the plan by two years to allow it to be re-thought from scratch
- Provide protection against developers from exploiting the delay.

Essentially, we could have written this statement ourselves. It is exactly what we were looking for - an admission that the current draft Plan is fundamentally flawed and that a fundamental re-think is needed !



More Concerning

However, it is far too soon to declare victory, pack our bags and go home. Although this is a good start, there is no guarantee that Dorset will be granted those rights by central government. Even if they are, there is no guarantee that we will end up with a Local Plan which genuinely puts the local people of Dorset first, preserves our open spaces, supports regeneration of our wildlife and meets our aspirations for a decarbonised Dorset with zero net emissions.

There are also some more worrying suggestions in Spencer Flower's announcement. He says he believes it would be better to build a small number of "bigger-scale new developments which bring in the necessary funding and infrastructure, rather than lots of smaller ones which put further pressure on already-stretched community resources". This is a dangerous suggestion as it implies large greenfield developments that are entirely dependent on the developers to provide infrastructure and "affordable" housing – such as the development of 3,750 houses to the North of Dorchester. There is no mention of zero-carbon building standards, no mention of building near existing public transport routes or other services to

reduce car dependency, no mention of alternatives such as brownfield developments or the need to allow some affordable housing in existing villages to maintain their vitality.

Another issue is what happens to planning applications while we are waiting for the new Local Plan to be developed. The existing Local Plans produced by former District authorities should be used as the basis for development decisions. However, the five-year planning supply is running out in some areas and, if the government does not give dispensation to drop this requirement, it could become impossible to stop developers going ahead with speculative uncontrolled developments. Furthermore, the draft Local Plan, although not in force, is already becoming influential over future developments. In a further exchange of emails with Spencer Flower, he has intimated that “other considerations” must be taken into account in planning decisions and that it may not be possible to stop planning decisions based on the draft Plan just because it is immature. These are dangerous words and could lead to a stream of unwelcome planning applications that are approved while a new Plan is still being drawn up.

Our Assessment

We have asked Dorset Council to show leadership and to be bold and courageous in Re-thinking a new Local Plan. We applaud Spencer Flower for his proposals to the Secretary of State : but his proposed changes to the plan-making system have not yet been realised and may never be. Meanwhile, there are things that Dorset Council should be doing right now to put the people of Dorset first, protect our green spaces and drive the agenda towards net zero. Spencer Flower’s announcement is a great start, but it is clear we still have plenty of more work to do.

What Happens Now ?

Over the coming weeks, we will be discussing with Alliance Partners how to respond to Spencer Flower and how to continue to hold Dorset Council to account. We will soon distribute a discussion document on how the Campaign strategy might change to meet the new situation and to keep up the pressure. We expect to place more emphasis on lobbying MPs for the changes required at national level while still keeping up the pressure on Dorset Council.

New Pan-Dorset Campaign Alliance Meeting

We propose a new pan-Dorset meeting of the Dorset Deserves Better Campaign Alliance to discuss changes to our Campaign strategy. We suggest either Tuesday 15 February or Tuesday 22 February for an evening Zoom meeting. Please let us know your preference between those dates.

Follow the Story

To view Spencer Flower’s announcement, go [here](#).

To view the subsequent correspondence, go to our web [here](#).

To view our more detailed analysis of Spencer Flower’s announcement, see [here](#).

Alliance News

Common Mead Lane, Gillingham



A useful test case of whether the provisions in the existing approved Local Plans and neighbourhood plan will be used as the basis for planning decisions is provided by a current planning application at Common Mead Lane in Gillingham. A group of residents are protesting against a proposed development by Fairfax of 70 houses on land that was not zoned for housing in the existing approved Local Plan and was identified in the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan as a possible recreation area. However, it is identified as a possible site for development in Dorset Council's the new draft Local Plan. The initial planning application was turned down, but the developers have come back with minor revisions. The planning application will be heard on 8 February by the North Dorset planning committee.

CPRE Press Releases

Dorset CPRE has released two more press releases: One on the [new Housing Needs report](#) (13 January), one on [Spencer Flower's announcement](#) (28 January)

STAND Protest March on 2 April

Save The Area North of Dorchester (STAND) are organising a march on Saturday April 2nd to protest against the DOR13 development north of Dorchester where 3,750 houses have been proposed in the draft Local Plan on a locally valued greenfield site of significant heritage value. The march will start in Maumbury Rings Dorchester at 10 am and then proceed through the town centre. To demonstrate their opposition to the proposal, STAND will recreate the famous Skimmity Ride from Thomas Hardy's 'Mayor of Casterbridge' in which miscreants are led through the streets on a donkey.

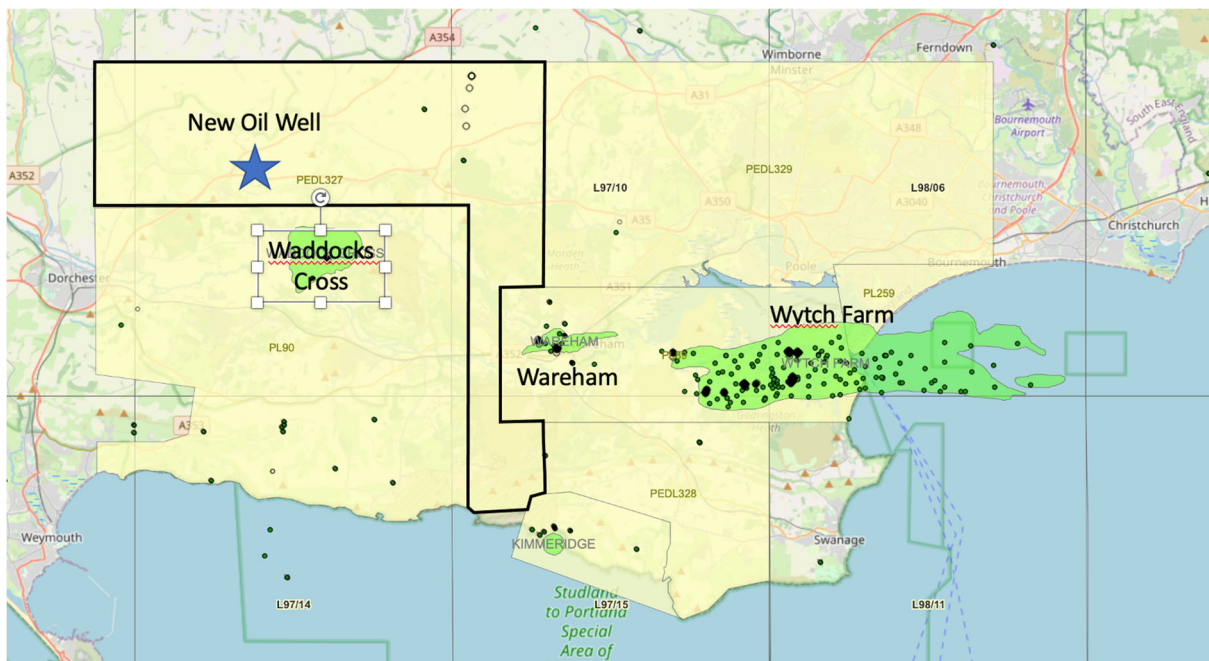
We welcome your News

Please send us news of your campaigning.

Article: Puddletown Oil Well

In our Open Letter to Dorset Council, the Campaign Alliance stressed the need for an urgent switch from the exploitation of fossil fuels to renewable energy generation in the county. The clear implication is that no new fossil-fuel exploitations should be opened up in the County.

South Western Energy Ltd (SWEL) are seeking planning permission for a new oil exploration well off the A354 near Athelhampton. They have asked for a production license for 20 years, with the oil to be transported by HGVs to the Fawley Refinery at Southampton. Dorset CAN believes this application is bad for Dorset, as it will add to carbon emissions and make it even more difficult for Dorset to meet its Net Zero Targets as stated in the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy.



SWEL have now submitted a Climate Change Assessment, Ecological survey, Heritage assessment, and Hydrological survey and report. These can be found [here](#). You can use this link to comment on the planning application. You will need first to accept Dorset Council's Terms & Conditions, then you will be taken to the application. Click on **Documents** and look for the documents dated 2022.

Comments are now invited on the new documents with a deadline of 9th February. If you wish to protest against this application, we advise that you submit comments and objections in your own words. You can find notes and some key pointers [on Dorset CAN's website here](#). If you do protest, please make clear that you are asking for the application to be refused.

Parish and Town Councils

Signatories to our Open Letter already include six parish councils – Arne; Cheselbourne; Corscombe, Halstock & District; Langton Matravers; Lytchett Matravers; and Stinsford – and just today, our first town council: Corfe Mullen. We have written to all of Dorset's 170 Parish and Town Councils, inviting them to join the Alliance. Many Councils have responded that they will consider this invitation at their next full council meeting. We have also received many emails from local councillors supporting our campaign.

If you have contact with your town and parish council, please urge them to join the Campaign and to co-sign the open letter to Dorset Council.

The Alliance grows !

Four new organisations have joined the Dorset Deserves Better Campaign this week – almost doubling the number of residents represented. We extend a very warm welcome to :

- **Turn Lyme Green, 470 supporters**
- **Dorchester Churches Together Ecology Group, 12 member churches**
- **Group of Wool Householdors, 12 members.**
- **Corfe Mullen Town Council, 10,000 residents**

So, the Campaign Alliance now includes **46 organisations representing over 33,700 residents of Dorset (about 9% of the population)**. Our new ambitious target is at least 50 member organisations, representing 45,000 Dorset citizens.

Campaign Communication

The main page for Dorset Deserves Better is <http://www.dorsetcan.org/ddb>
For general enquiries and communications, email: dorsetdeservesbetter@gmail.com
For media enquiries, email: mediadb@gmail.com
To view the news release and the Open Letter to Dorset Council, go to:
<https://www.dorsetcan.org/ddbpr>

Social Media

To keep up to date with the Campaign :

- Visit our website at: <http://www.dorsetcan.org/ddb>
- Follow all of our social media posts at:
 - Twitter: @Dorset_CAN;
 - Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/147832150657785>
 - Instagram: @dorset_can;
 - Snapchat: @dorset_can;
 - Dorset CAN (Climate Action Network) Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/DorsetCAN>

If you are the social media contact for any of our Alliance Organisations, please contact Tracee Cossey directly so that we can share social media content :
traceecossey@hotmail.com

Join the Campaign

If your organisation wants to join the campaign, please fill in and submit a form here: <http://www.dorsetcan.org/link>. Individuals can join the campaign at: <https://bit.ly/DorsetDB>

Join the Campaign Team

We will welcome help at the centre of this campaign, particularly in :

- Gathering news from partners and preparing the weekly newsletter
- Research, in order to strengthen our arguments as we build the campaign.

Please write to us at dorsetdeservesbetter@gmail.com

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