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**Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside**

The Crown Estate  
[enquiries@thecrownestate.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@thecrownestate.co.uk)

AND

Hemel Garden Communities  
[hello@hemelgardencommunities.co.uk](mailto:hello@hemelgardencommunities.co.uk)

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

23<sup>rd</sup> November 2022 (by email)

Dear Crown Estate and Hemel Garden Communities,

### **Hemel Garden Communities Vision Survey**

This is an open letter in response to your most recent consultation document (prepared and published by “Hemel Garden Communities”) and the attached survey from the consultation [website](#). This ‘Vision’ survey is a generalised statement of objectives relating to urban development generally with which no reasonable person could possibly disagree, thus rendering it meaningless.

To suggest that responses to this survey would reflect peoples’ views on a specific development proposal which takes no account of the strong statutory protection of the land affected is both misleading and disingenuous at best. The misleading starts with the title of the proposed development in using the term “garden communities”.

The Garden City movement has an illustrious history since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in promoting a sophisticated and comprehensive set of criteria and guidelines controlling all aspects of the development of a sustainable community. Its early influence was considerable but the approach has been diluted by the general addition of the word ‘garden’ to any number of low density residential proposals without consideration of the community and social infrastructure intrinsic to the original concept.

It is entirely inappropriate that the Crown Estate, as a “public body (which) seeks to work with the grain of prevailing government policy”, is promoting a development of 11,000 houses on designated protected land – the Green Belt and setting of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Recent Ministerial statements have been very clear that Green Belt and AONB designations are to be maintained, if not enhanced.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill presently going through Parliament re-emphasises that commitment and we actively campaign for clarification of technical guidance to local authorities to strengthen statutory protections. Local community opposition has caused the preparation of the Dacorum Local Plan to be paused due to concerns relating to the potential

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loss of Green Belt to development; similar concerns are increasingly expressed by St Albans communities.

There are serious worries over the major physical infrastructure such as transport, sewerage and water supply which would be required. Dacorum Borough's own evidence base for its Local Plan points up the need for extensive near-term network upgrades in infrastructure which would be both disruptive and hugely expensive. To these may be added the severe impacts of extra housing on the Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation and the globally significant chalk stream of the River Gade.

The promotion of this development in this location continues the full fronted assault on the Green Belt which is causing massive damage to highly valued and productive countryside. Your proposed development is in danger of bringing the planning system into disrepute and no amount of "green-washing" will reduce the impacts of its permanent loss.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Berry  
Planning Manager

cc:

St Albans City & District Council, Dacorum Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire LEP.