



Questions to the Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee at the meeting on 29 April 2020 regarding the Council-led Garden Community update report:

Question 1 – Land Ownership

Your council-led garden community report states that three principal landowners have pulled out of your negotiations and you will be continuing with just five principal landowners. You don't currently have explicit agreement from any of these five landowners. You said to Lenham's residents in January that the scheme would not proceed if landowners weren't supportive. How many supportive landowners do you consider a minimum before deeming the whole project uneconomic?

Question 2 – The Economic Case

It is widely accepted that we will be entering recession in the coming weeks. Your council-led garden community report acknowledges that you have no interested developers for your scheme and it is unlikely that any will now come forward with the housing market about to collapse. Is it appropriate for Maidstone Council to be investing half a million pounds of taxpayer's money in a project that isn't going to go anywhere when there are more pressing financial priorities for the borough council to focus on?

Question 3 – Transport

Your council-led garden community report suggests a focus on sustainable transport instead of 'big kit infrastructure' investment like the motorway junction and High Speed rail station. With 1,000 new homes already planned for Lenham in its Neighbourhood Plan plus those at Charing, Harrietsham and other surrounding villages, this report suggests that 5,000 homes in your new town could be unlocked by improvements to just one junction and provision of a local shuttle bus.

Existing traffic on the A20 plus the number of additional car trips generated from 5,000 new homes would require a dual carriageway. Will this end up being your plan?

Question 4 – Environment & Biodiversity

In April 2019 the Council approved a motion declaring a climate emergency and committing the borough to being carbon neutral by 2030. How is the Council's intention to build a new town on 900 acres of predominantly greenfield land near Lenham compatible with your ambition to embed biodiversity and climate change action in everything the Council does?

Question 5 – Call for Sites

The Council's own guidance for making a submission to the Call for Sites last year explicitly states: *"It is important that the submission includes confirmation from the landowner (or the person in legal control of the site) that the site will be available for the development being proposed."* Your council-led submission for site 289 Heathlands garden community has a red boundary line of some 900 acres with over 150 landowners included. You did not seek their collective permission for including their land in this process.

Is your submission for site 289 going to be withdrawn given you failed to meet the basic requirements set out in the Council's Call for Sites eligibility criteria?