

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Houghton Regis North Site 1 (HRN1) - 5,150 New Homes Planning Permission Granted 2 June 2014.**

### **The Scandal of “Land Banking” - 10 Year Delay to New Homes for Thousands of Families.**

### **Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Admits to Taking Decisions in Secret and Refuses to Answer Key Questions.**

This follows on from CPRE Bedfordshire’s earlier Press Release on the subject dated 19/7/18

On 12 July this year CPRE Bedfordshire wrote to James Jamieson, Leader of CBC (copy attached) asking a number of detailed questions about the scandal of “Land Banking” at HRN1 - the largest single housing development site anywhere in Bedfordshire.

### **Land Banking is delaying the development of new homes for over 5,000 families.**

We received a letter in response from Mr Jamieson’s colleague, the Director of Regeneration and Business, Jason Longhurst dated 24 July (copy attached).

This letter confirms that CBC’s decision to accept substantial delays to housebuilding at HRN1 was taken in secret.

A spokesperson for CPRE Bedfordshire said:

*“It is nothing short of a major scandal that not a brick will be laid at HRN1 until 2023/24 - 10 years after planning permission was given. Building should have commenced many years ago.*

*It is a further scandal that CBC has taken the decision to accept these delays in secret - “behind closed doors”.*

*This is not a small, insignificant development, HRN1 is +30% larger than the town of Ampthill - and new homes for around 5,000 families are being unnecessarily delayed by the actions of the Council and Developers.*

*30 years of standing up for Bedfordshire’s countryside 1987-2017*

CPRE Bedfordshire is the Bedfordshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England which exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England. We advocate positive solutions for the long term future of the countryside.

*By taking decisions in secret, the Council has avoided democratic scrutiny by the public and by the majority of Councillors who were not involved in the secret decision making process.*

*Democratic accountability would have been ensured if the debate and decision were held at a Meeting of CBC's Executive Committee or, preferably at a Full Council Meeting.*

*Both of these meetings are televised and can be attended by members of the public."*

The spokesperson went on to say:

*"Mr. Longhurst has also failed to answer properly the majority of the questions we asked the Leader of CBC, James Jamieson, such as:*

- 1. Who took the decision to accept further substantial delays to house building at HRN1?*
- 2. What were the specific reasons for the delays?*
- 3. What specific factors have changed since the grant of planning permission which are now causing the delay to development?*

*And others.*

*For this reason we have been obliged to write again to James Jamieson, Leader of CBC listing the questions that Mr. Longhurst has failed to answer and asking for his detailed response.*

*We have also requested that the whole issue of HRN1 be debated at the next Full Council Meeting - copy of letter attached.*

*We look forward to his response."*

For further information please contact: Gerry Sansom Tel: 07810 520945

#### **Notes for Editors:**

1. CBC stated in 2016, after earlier delays, that house building should commence at HRN1 in 2017/18 - in fact, it could and should have started well before this date.

2. When Planning Permission was granted for 5,150 new homes on this site CBC stated that it was for "desperately needed new homes".

3. HRN1 site plan and layout can be found at <http://www.cprebeds.org.uk/news/item/2373-houghton-regis-north-site-1-land-banking>

4. A report on Land Banking by Paul Miner of CPRE National Office can be read here <http://www.cpre.org.uk/magazine/opinion/item/4782-the-scandal-of-land-banking?highlight=WyJsYW5kYmFua2luZyIsIldlYmFua2luZyciXQ==>

5. We understand that the developers involved in HRN1 are The Houghton Regis Development Consortium (HRDC), AVIVA, Lands Improvement Holdings and the Diocese of St Albans.

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CPRE Promoting and Protecting Bedfordshire's countryside and urban green spaces for present and future generations

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