

Press release: £45 million to accelerate 4,500 homes in Cambridgeshire

A key site near Huntingdon that will provide over 4,500 new homes has been given a major boost with a £45 million loan from the Homes and Communities Agency, it has been announced today (16 March 2017).

The investment from the Home Building Fund will help developers Urban&Civic accelerate the delivery of the site by funding the provision of vital infrastructure across the 1400 acre former airfield at Alconbury Weald.

Announcing the deal at international property conference MIPIM HCA Chief Executive Nick Walkley said:

This deal is exactly the sort of thing we are here to do – providing the means to realise the full potential of development sites and provide the impetus to enable a real transformation in local housing markets.

Alconbury Weald is a major development of recognised quality and we will work closely with Urban&Civic to accelerate the new housing and community facilities that this site can deliver for a major growth region of the country.

Alongside thousands of new homes, the former airfield near Huntingdon in Cambridgeshire will provide up to 300,000sq m of floorspace for new businesses within the GCGP LEP's Enterprise Zone and a range of community facilities, including a secondary school and three new primary schools of which the first opened last year, alongside hundreds of acres of green space.

Housing and Planning Minister, Gavin Barwell said:

Speeding up house building is one of the key measures we set out in our Housing White Paper, so that we get the right homes built in the right places. The £3 billion Home Building Fund helps do just that by unlocking large housing sites like Alconbury Weald.

Having visited the development last year, it will not only provide much-needed homes, but also space for new businesses as well as schools and community facilities.

Chief Executive of Urban&Civic plc Nigel Hugill said:

The HCA and Urban&Civic are fully aligned from our experience of large sites to our ambition to accelerate the delivery of housing from them. At Alconbury Weald we have brought forward infrastructure spend as a direct consequence of the HCA's involvement and look forward to working in partnership with Nick and his team over the lifetime of the development.

The government is right to emphasise the importance of large sites in meeting housing demand in areas of strong economic and demographic growth, as well as helping widen the supply chain for faster housing delivery.

The HCA is the government's national housing and regeneration delivery agency for England and manages around 8,900ha of land.

Urban&Civic plc is an established property development and investment company. The delivery of strategic land is at the core of Urban&Civic's business model where, as Master Developer, it owns or has the stewardship of over 4,000 acres across 4 sites located close to Cambridge, Huntingdon, Newark and Rugby.

- Alconbury Weald is located at the former Alconbury Airfield and adjacent land to the North of Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, approximately 15 miles south of Peterborough; the site is a 1,420 acre predominantly brownfield site
- as a whole, the Alconbury Weald site will support the delivery of 290,000sqm of employment floor space, 5,000 homes, 700 acres of green spaces and an assortment of complementary transport, energy and community facilities
- HCA is lending £45.07m to Urban&Civic Alconbury Ltd (wholly owned subsidiary of Urban&Civic plc) under the Home Building Fund and will accelerate the delivery of 4,507 housing units in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire
- the HCA funding will help to fund enabling works, road and utility infrastructure and s106 obligations across the wider site; HCA funded infrastructure will also benefit the current housebuilders on site, particularly Redrow and Morris with the delivery of a secondary road access points onto their respective sites
- currently, Hopkins homes are already on site building homes and Redrow and Morris to have houses built by Summer 2017; the first primary school to support this development was opened in Sept 2016

For further information on Alconbury Weald visit their [website](#).

[Press release: New chair appointed to The Pensions Advisory Service](#)

The appointment was made without holding a competition and has been made in agreement with the [Commissioner for Public Appointments](#) who was content given the fact that a new body is to be created that will replace The Pensions Advisory Service (TPAS).

Ann will oversee the continued delivery of free, professional and impartial guidance on pensions and support for people if they have a problem or complaint about their workplace or private pension.

The Pensions Advisory Service delivers its information and guidance service through a variety of channels including telephone, web chat, written and online enquiries, outreach events and on its website. It is also responsible for delivering Pension Wise's telephone services.

Minister of State for Pensions, Richard Harrington said:

Ann Harris brings a wealth of experience and skills to The Pensions Advisory Service which does excellent work in helping the public with pension inquiries.

With more than 178,000 customers, and more than 2.7 million visits to its website in the past year, TPAS' services are very much in demand so it's vital it attracts a senior leader of such high calibre.

Ann Harris OBE said:

I am delighted with my new appointment as TPAS Chair.

This is an exciting time for TPAS, as it prepares for the proposed transition to a new single finance guidance body.

I am determined that it continues to deliver its core business of giving people professional, independent and impartial help with their private pensions.

About The Pensions Advisory Service

The TPAS service is free to the public. It is delivered by in-house pension specialists and a nationwide network of volunteer advisers who have typically worked in the pensions industry in roles that have required a high level of technical knowledge.

Single finance guidance body

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HM Treasury have recently [consulted on a single guidance body](#) bringing together:

The consultation sets out a proposal to create a single body providing debt advice, money guidance and pensions information and guidance. The body would complement financial guidance provided by the third sector and industry, provide more targeted support for consumers and generate efficiencies.

This new body will make it easier for consumers to get the guidance they need.

Ann Harris OBE – Biography

Ann previously worked for 40 years as a civil servant, latterly holding senior Civil Service roles in finance and programme management. She was awarded an OBE in 2009, for her services to DWP.

Ann's roles outside DWP include acting in a trustee role for the Civil Service Pension programme, management board and operations committee. Ann is also an audit committee member for the Gambling Commission and volunteers regularly for her local Citizens Advice Bureau, where she is a volunteer trustee. She previously served with TPAS as a non-executive director for 18 months prior to becoming chairperson.

Media enquiries for this press release – 0203 267 5122

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[Education Secretary Kirsty Williams praises Wrexham specialist school](#)

The school is one of the leading special needs education facilities in the country and the Education Secretary toured the classrooms to see the excellent work undertaken there.

St Christopher's is a maintained special school for pupils aged between 6-19 years with a range of special educational needs and was awarded 'Excellent' in their last Estyn inspection in 2014.

In December last year the schools was awarded Welsh Government funding through the Arts Council to allow pupils to access artistic events that would normally be restricted due to the financial costs.

Kirsty Williams said:

“I want to thank everyone for welcoming me here today, I know that a school is a busy place so I appreciate you giving me your time and showing me the facilities.

“St Christopher’s inclusive approach to education is to be welcomed and I’ve been impressed by how they support all learners to gain the qualifications they need for their next stage of learning. Others have much to learn from your approach.

“Within the education system we want to improve the aspirations of those who need extra support. Our Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Bill, will, if passed, completely overhaul the system for supporting pupils with additional learning needs.”

The Welsh Government recently announced £20 million of planned investment to support learners with additional learning needs.

Record number of volunteers from SRUC Oatridge help at heritage site

Countryside Management and Rural Skills Students from the Oatridge Campus of Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC) got their hands dirty by enjoying a day volunteering with Scottish National Heritage (SNH).

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