

# 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](#).

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## News story: 30% of officers progress from the ranks

Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon has revealed figures showing that almost 30% of officers in the Armed Forces progressed from the lower military ranks, as he met would-be officers at the Ministry of Defence's London HQ yesterday.

Across the Armed Forces, nearly a third of serving officers – a third of Army officers, a fifth of Royal Navy officers, and a quarter of RAF officers – commissioned having not joined at that level. Instead, over 1800 serving officers over a five year period have taken the development opportunities available to them in the military to reach their full potential at that rank later in their career.

The Defence Secretary spoke with students in week nine of the Potential Officer Development Programme (PODP), a 12 week intensive course which runs three times a year, aimed at catapulting soldiers from diverse backgrounds into the officer ranks.

He said:

The Armed Forces offer opportunities for everyone to reach their full potential, whatever their background. We are encouraging people to aim higher and teaching them valuable skills and become tomorrow's officers.

The PODP is designed to develop communications skills, knowledge of international affairs and cultural horizons, with the ultimate goal of getting students to qualify through the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst as officers in the Army. Amongst those to have already benefitted from the military's commitment to social mobility are nearly 500 former graduates of the PODP.

Becoming an Army Officer was just the start of the story for PODP graduate Kidane Cousland, who has praised the programme as "crucial to success".

Kidane was awarded last year's Sandhurst Sword of Honour for being considered the best cadet on his course at Sandhurst, and he says he was able to achieve the "impossible" thanks to the PODP scheme.

The Tottenham-born 25 year-old joined the Army in 2007 with four GCSEs, having had to retake three of them in college. Unable to read until the age of 12, he had written off his academic ability – until someone in his regiment spotted his potential leadership skills and sent him on the PODP.

Now a Second Lieutenant serving with the Royal Artillery, Kidane said:

The Potential Officer Development Programme gave me confidence in my ability and was crucial to my success. Without a high level of performance in the academic aspects at Sandhurst I would not have been a contender for the Sword of Honour. It's an achievement that I thought would be impossible before the Potential Officer Development Programme.



Second Lieutenant Cousland was awarded the Sword of Honour at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Crown Copyright.

Like Second Lieutenant Cousland, the majority of those who go through PODP do not hold a degree, but regularly go on to perform well at Sandhurst – a prestigious institution which traditionally draws on university graduates and the brightest cadets from the UK and abroad.

The Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Nick Carter, said:

The Army is a modern, inclusive employer and I want every recruit to be given the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Second Lieutenant Cousland is a tremendous example of how schemes like this can give those who don't have the best possible start in life a leg up, while helping us maximise the talent of everyone in the Army.

Potential Officer Chloe Rhodes, 27 from Lancashire, who met the Defence Secretary in London, will be hoping to follow in Second Lieutenant Cousland's

footsteps. Having joined the Army in 2006 as part of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, working on Apache Attack helicopters which were being deployed in Libya and Afghanistan, she is now enrolled on the PODP and is looking ahead to the Army Officer Selection Board in May.

She said:

The Army has given me the opportunity to complete many qualifications whilst in full time employment, including an advanced apprenticeship in electrical engineering and management qualifications. I have also travelled to 10 different countries over the last decade for various exercises and deployments, broadening my cultural awareness and life experience.

While Sandhurst has long been recognised as one of the most famous academies in the world, the Armed Forces has a host of other successful education initiatives aimed at being a vehicle for social mobility, including:

- Being the largest apprenticeship provider in the whole of the UK, with around 7,500 completed each year;
- Offering literacy, numeracy and a whole range of academic support to serving personnel;
- Offering learning credits where appropriate which can be redeemed against civilian qualifications up to PhD level.

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## [Green Party names Manchester Gorton by-election candidate](#)



Green Party

16 March 2017

- \* **Jess Mayo announced as Green candidate**
- \* **Greens the only party to challenge Labour after record election results**
- \* **Jess Mayo: "I will make sure Gorton is not overlooked or left behind"**

**\* Caroline Lucas MP: "Gorton can make history by going Green in this election"**

The Green Party has announced Jess Mayo as its candidate for the Gorton by-election.

Mayo will take on Labour for the seat in a bid to make history and become the first Green MP for Gorton, where the Greens finished second in the last local and General elections.

Caroline Lucas, co-leader of the Green Party, announced Mayo's candidacy at an event at Trinity House Community Resource Centre today, followed by a visit to Shahjalal Mosque and Islamic Centre.

The Green Party came 2nd in Gorton at the last election receiving 4,108 votes, with the Tories in third, followed by UKIP in fourth and the Lib Dems in fifth [1].

Mayo, a 36-year-old entrepreneur and mum-of-two, hopes to build on the record result from 2015 with a campaign targeting voters who value Britain's place in Europe, and those who feeling let down by a Labour Party in disarray and the Lib Dems who are struggling to regain the public's trust.

Jess Mayo said:

"The Greens are the only party to challenge Labour in Gorton and it's a privilege to stand in this by-election and give voters a real alternative. The Green Party has already brought about real change for this community by pushing the council to protect us from flooding and make our roads safer – imagine what we could do with a Green MP fighting Gorton's corner.

"The Green Party will tackle the housing crisis which is leaving people across Manchester on the streets and in poverty, by pushing for better social housing and a renters' charter to improve standards in the private sector. But it won't stop there, and in coming weeks I look forward to campaigning for a better future for Gorton in which it's not overlooked or left behind."

Caroline Lucas MP, Green co-leader, said:

"Gorton can make history by going Green in this election. The Tories are slashing public services. Labour are failing to stand up against an extreme Brexit and the Lib Dems are still struggling to regain the public's trust. The Green Party offers something different – an MP standing up for the people of Gorton, not engaging in the squabbling of the other parties.

"Voting Green in Gorton means electing an MP who opposes a dangerous Brexit, fights for your local schools and hospitals and stands up to the Government."

**Notes:**

1. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/constituencies/E14000808#constituency\\_result\\_headline](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/constituencies/E14000808#constituency_result_headline)



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## **Body weight requirements loosened for military academy candidates**

An amendment to the physical examination standards for military academies has loosened the body weight requirements for candidates, military authorities said.

The amended standards allow a male candidate weighing up to 30 percent more than the standard body weight for his height to pass the examination. For female candidates the maximum is 20 percent over the standard.

Standard weight for candidates, in kilograms, is the difference between his or her height in centimeters and 110, according to the standards.

The original standards released in 2006 stated that male candidates more than 25 percent heavier than the standard weight for their height, and female candidates exceeding the standard by over 15 percent, shall not pass the physical examination.

The amendment made other changes to the military academy physical examination, including permitting candidates to have larger tattoos and canceling several examination items such as checks for carsickness, seasickness and chronic sinusitis.

Authorities started work on the amendment in 2014, hoping to make the standards better match the physical and mental conditions of young people, which have changed due to social and economic development and improved living standards, according to the military authority.

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## **Top legislator thanks journalists covering annual session**

Chinese top legislator Zhang Dejiang has voiced his thanks to the journalists covering the annual session of the national legislature.

“The annual session is an important window for the world to observe China,” said Zhang, chairman of the National People’s Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, at the session’s media center on Tuesday.

The stories of this year’s parliamentary session have been well told and are worth praising, he said.

Zhang toured the news center set up by Xinhua News Agency in the Great Hall of the People, shaking hands with Xinhua staff and watching them report on the event through traditional and new-media platforms.

Zhang also talked with journalists from other state media outlets including the People’s Daily, China Central Television and China Daily.

The annual session of the NPC concluded Wednesday.