

THE CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL (HANOVER COURT AND PRINCESS COURT) COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 2026

OPENING SUBMISSIONS

ON BEHALF OF THE ACQUIRING AUTHORITY

Introduction

1. The purpose of the Order¹ is to enable the Council to secure vacant possession of Hanover Court and Princess Court (the "Estate") so as to demolish the existing residential blocks, which suffer from serious fire compartmentation deficiencies and structural risks of disproportionate collapse, and to redevelop the Estate to deliver 165 high quality new homes, comprising a net increase of 38 homes, together with a new community room, landscaping, parking and associated works (the "Scheme").²
2. The existing buildings on the Estate are moribund. They cannot practicably be remediated or refurbished to modern standards. Demolition and redevelopment is accordingly the only viable means of safeguarding residents and securing the regeneration of the Estate.³
3. The Council has prioritised acquisition by agreement throughout and has been successful in that goal. As at the date of Mr Jones's Proof of Evidence, 38 of the 45 leasehold interests within the Order Land (84%) had been acquired by agreement, with three further interests agreed and subject to conveyancing.⁴ Of the five objections originally lodged against the Order, three have now been withdrawn⁵ and one is non-qualifying. Ms Chi's objection and Dr Kharani's objection were withdrawn on Friday 2

¹ CD1.1 The Order was made on 19 March 2026 pursuant to s. 17 Housing Act 1985 and Acquisition of Land Act 1981

² CD9.2 para 2.1.1 [3441] and section 3.2 [3446-3447]

³ See the Moribund Report at CD7.4 [2959-2975]

⁴ CD9.2 para 1.4.4 [3439] and section 5.8 [3465-3466]

⁵ South Staffordshire Water's objection was withdrawn on 11 August 2026. See Ross Jones PoE CD9.2 para 9.2 [3485]

October.⁶ Negotiations with the remaining qualifying and non-qualifying objector are well advanced and are addressed further below.

4. These opening submissions address the following matters:
 - a. the statutory power under section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 and the relevant Guidance;
 - b. the Order Land and justification for the Scheme;
 - c. the quantitative and qualitative housing gain delivered by the Scheme;
 - d. funding and deliverability of the Scheme;
 - e. efforts to acquire by agreement and the position of the remaining objectors;
 - f. impact of the CPO, the Public Sector Equality Duty and human rights considerations;
 - g. response to the Outstanding Qualifying Objection; and
 - h. concluding remarks.

The Statutory Power under Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 and the Guidance

5. The Order was made under section 17 of the 1985 Act, which empowers a local housing authority to acquire land, houses or other buildings for the provision of housing accommodation, and, where authorised by the Secretary of State, to do so compulsorily.⁷ It is obvious that the purpose of the Order accords with the s. 17 power.
6. The Council has had regard throughout the process to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Guidance on the Compulsory Purchase Process (June 2026) (the "Guidance")⁸. The key relevant expectations of the Guidance for this Order are:
 - a. the acquiring authority should have taken reasonable steps to attempt the acquisition of all land and interests by agreement (paragraph 2.2);

⁶ Objector 1 of 32 Hanover Court and Objector 2 of 5 Princess Court

⁷ CD8.1 [3421]

⁸ CD3.2 [693]

- b. there are sufficiently compelling reasons for the compulsory acquisition powers to be sought at this time (paragraph 13.2);
- c. the acquiring authority should have a clear idea of how it intends to use the land which it is proposing to acquire and show that all the necessary resources are likely to be available to achieve that end within a reasonable timescale (paragraph 13.3);
- d. the interests of those affected by the exercise of the compulsory purchase powers need to have been considered, and mitigation offered where appropriate (paragraph 13.4);
- e. the acquiring authority should provide substantive information as to the sources of funding available for both acquiring the land and implementing the scheme for which the land is required (paragraph 14.1(a));
- f. generally, that funding is available now or early on in the process (paragraph 14.1(b));
- g. while it is not expected that all impediments to the delivery of a scheme will have been removed or overcome by the point at which the decision on the confirmation of a compulsory purchase order is made, the implementation of the scheme following the confirmation decision being made must be unlikely to be blocked by any physical or legal impediments (paragraph 15.1);
- h. Acquisition under s. 17 Housing Act 1985 must achieve a quantitative or qualitative housing gain (paragraph 187.1).

7. These opening submissions provide an overview of the Council's compliance with all of those expectations.

The Order Land and Justification for the Scheme

8. Hanover Court and Princess Court are large, dilapidated residential blocks linked by an adjoining garage block, situated on a site owned by the Council in central Cambridge,

and currently accommodating 127 flats. Despite some £2,500,000 spent on structural repairs, fire door replacement, asbestos removal and lift refurbishment between 2011 and 2021, the buildings remain dilapidated, and are at the end of their design life. They are not suitable for refurbishment given their form of construction.⁹

9. The Council has prioritised resident safety, committing approximately £15,300,000 to date in acquiring leasehold interests and relocating Council tenants, and a further circa £800,000 to a waking watch (subsequently a security patrol) pending vacant possession.¹⁰ The existing layout of the Estate has also contributed to escalating anti-social behaviour, including fire incidents, squatting and vandalism, which pose ongoing health and safety risks to remaining occupants.¹¹
10. The evolution of the Scheme followed extensive engagement with residents and stakeholders from 2021 onwards, including drop-in sessions, steering group and liaison group meetings, consultation events and surveys.¹² Four options were considered in the Council's Options Analysis (CD 7.3¹³): doing nothing, essential repairs, full refurbishment and retrofit, and redevelopment. Redevelopment (Option 4) was approved by the Housing Scrutiny Committee on 14 March 2023¹⁴ as the option best able to meet the Council's strategic objectives for housing delivery, design quality, energy efficiency and resident safety.

Quantitative and Qualitative Housing Gain

11. Paragraph 187.1 of the Guidance requires that acquisition under section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 achieves a quantitative or qualitative housing gain. The Scheme delivers both.
12. As to the quantitative gain, the existing Estate comprises 82 affordable and 45 private right-to-buy flats. The Scheme will deliver 165 flats, comprising 72 affordable (44%) and 93 private (56%) homes — a net increase of 38 dwellings and an affordable housing proportion 4% above the Council's adopted Local Plan standard of 40%,

⁹ CD9.2 paras 3.2.7-3.2.8 [3447]

¹⁰ CD9.2 paras 3.2.3 [3446], 7.2.1-7.2.3 [3476]

¹¹ CD9.2 paras 7.3.1-7.3.3 [3476-3477]

¹² CD9.2 section 4.1 [3452-3456]

¹³ [2921]

¹⁴ CD2.1 [148]

notwithstanding that affordable housing is not required by planning policy on this Scheme.¹⁵ Habitable rooms will increase from 288 to 412 (an increase of 124), bedrooms from 161 to 240 (an increase of 79), and bed spaces from 289 to 388 (an increase of 99). Cycle parking will increase from 52 to 273 spaces, an increase of 221.¹⁶

13. As to the qualitative gain, the replacement housing will be built to modern design, accessibility and sustainability standards, including compliance with the Nationally Described Space Standards, Building Regulations Approved Document M4(2) accessibility standards (with 5% of affordable homes to the higher M4(3) wheelchair-accessible standard), level access throughout and lifts to every block.¹⁷ The homes will achieve improved natural light, ventilation and thermal performance, lower energy costs and reduced carbon emissions.¹⁸ The Scheme will also reinstate a historic pedestrian connection between Bentinck Street and George IV Street, deliver a new community facility, and design out the layouts that have historically fostered anti-social behaviour through improved natural surveillance and inclusive public realm.¹⁹
14. Taken together, the Council considers that the Scheme delivers a substantial uplift in the number of homes and habitable rooms available to meet identified local housing need, while replacing poor-quality, unsafe accommodation with new homes designed to modern standards of safety, accessibility and sustainability. In short, it delivers a quantitative and qualitative housing gain that more than satisfies paragraph 187.1 of the Guidance.

Funding and Deliverability of the Scheme

15. The Council has an approved redevelopment budget of £31,094,000 for the Estate, with currently forecast Council spend of £26,181,000, leaving appropriate contingency within the budget.²⁰ On 25 August 2026, Homes England confirmed that the Council had been awarded Strategic Partnership status under the Social and Affordable Homes Programme 2026-2036, with total funding of £96,360,000 to deliver 803 homes, of

¹⁵ CD9.2 para 3.5.2(a)-(b) [3448]

¹⁶ CD9.2 para 3.5.2(c)-(f) [3448]

¹⁷ CD9.2 para 3.5.3(a), (f), (h) [3448-3449] and para 8.6.1 [3482-3483]

¹⁸ CD9.2 para 3.5.3 (b)-(e) [3449], 3.6.2(d) [3451]

¹⁹ CD9.2 para 3.5.3 (i)-(o) [3450], 3.6.2(c) [3451]

²⁰ CD9.2 paras 6.3.4, 6.3.6 [3473]

which £8,640,000 is allocated to the Estate.²¹ The Council has also secured £975,000 of grant funding from Round 4 of MHCLG's Brownfield Land Release Fund for demolition works and a new sub-station.²² The Council's Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) has confirmed the Council's financial commitment and standing to deliver the Scheme.²³

16. The Scheme benefits from a resolution to grant planning permission, with the decision notice expected between October and December 2026 following completion of the section 106 agreement and finalisation of two planning conditions.²⁴ A conditional JCT Intermediate Building Contract is already in place between the Cambridge Investment Partnership ("CIP") and Hill Partnerships Limited to progress detailed design, demolition and enabling works, with site mobilisation and soft-strip works programmed for March-April 2027 and demolition for July-August 2027, subject to vacant possession and discharge of pre-commencement conditions.²⁵
17. CIP, the Council's 50/50 joint venture development partner with Hill, has a proven track record of delivering housing across the city over the past nine years.²⁶
18. There are no foreseen impediments that would prevent demolition and redevelopment of the Estate once the planning decision notice is issued and vacant possession is secured. The Scheme has secure funding and no likely impediment to delivery within a reasonable timescale, consistent with paragraphs 14 and 15 of the Guidance.

Efforts to Acquire by Agreement and the Position of the Objectors

19. The Council's regeneration programme has prioritised acquisition by agreement throughout. There were originally 45 leasehold interests within the Order Land; 43 have now either been acquired by agreement or are agreed but subject to conveyancing. The remaining two are the subject of ongoing negotiation. The Council has successfully relocated 80 of 82 affected secure tenant households.²⁷

²¹ CD9.2 paras 1.4.8 [3439], 6.5.1-6.5.2 [3474], Appendix RJ1 [3547]

²² CD9.2 paras 6.2.3-6.2.5 [3471]

²³ CD9.2 Appendix RJ11 [3593]

²⁴ CD9.4 section 2.3 [3613-3614]

²⁵ CD9.2 paras 6.6.2, 6.6.7 [3474, 3475]

²⁶ CD9.2 para 6.6.1 [3474]

²⁷ CD9.2 para 1.4.6 [3439]

20. Negotiations continue with the remaining objectors. In respect of Objector 3 (33 Princess Court), the Council continues to engage notwithstanding the practical difficulties of the leaseholder's residence overseas, and anticipates agreement being reached between the parties in relatively short order.²⁸ The Council also continues to engage with the non-qualifying objector (24 Hanover Court) to progress matters towards agreement.
21. It is clear that the Council has taken reasonable steps to attempt to acquire the interests by agreement in compliance with the Guidance. Any outstanding disputes as to the level of compensation payable are a matter for the Upper Tribunal on a reference under the compensation code, and are not a reason to withhold confirmation of the Order.

The Public Sector Equality Duty and Human Rights

22. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (CD 8.5²⁹) requires the Council, in exercising its functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and victimisation of persons sharing protected characteristics, to advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The Council has had due regard to this duty throughout the regeneration programme, recognising that the exercise of compulsory purchase powers may have a disproportionate effect on residents with protected characteristics, in particular those with disabilities or medical conditions and elderly residents.
23. In deciding whether to confirm the Order, the s. 149 duty to have due regard is on the Inspector. The evidence of the impact of the CPO on those with protected characteristics to support the Inspector's compliance with the duty is set out in the Council's Equality Impact Assessments, which were prepared in 2023, and updated in February and June 2026 (CD 7.2³⁰ and CD 7.5³¹).³²
24. Practical mitigation measures adopted for tenants and leaseholders include tailored housing assessments and occupational therapist adaptations, sheltered housing and

²⁸ CD9.6 paras 5.5.1-5.5.3 [3650-3651]

²⁹ [3425]

³⁰ [2908]

³¹ [3270]

³² CD9.2 paras 8.3.1-8.3.3 [3479]

support options for older residents, funded removals, redecoration and reconnection costs, translation and interpretation services, and a shared equity scheme for qualifying leaseholders.³³

25. The Council recognises that the Order engages the Convention rights of affected residents, in particular Article 8 (respect for private and family life, including the home), Article 1 of the First Protocol (peaceful enjoyment of possessions), and Article 6 (right to a fair hearing), which is satisfied by the statutory procedure for objection and challenge. Articles 8 and A1P1 are qualified rights, and the Council has balanced the interference occasioned by the Order against the compelling public interest in the Scheme, having regard to the extensive consultation undertaken and the robust, fair offers made to residents.³⁴ The Council remains satisfied that the interference with Convention rights occasioned by the Order is necessary, proportionate and justified by the significant public benefits that the Scheme will deliver.³⁵

Response to Outstanding Objector

26. There is one outstanding qualifying objection to the CPO, that of Ms Johnson of 33 Princess Court³⁶. The following observations are made in respect of key aspects of her objection:
- a. The suggestion made that as at the date of her objection Ms Johnson had received no substantive communication, no offers to purchase her property and no genuine attempts to negotiate or provide a market value assessment is entirely inaccurate. Mr Jones's schedule of communication³⁷ with Ms Johnson demonstrates that the Council has been in communication and negotiations with Ms Johnson since 2022 and has made several offers to acquire 33 Princess Court over the years. The fact that the parties have not yet agreed a settlement is not for want of trying on the Council's part;

³³ CD9.2 paras 8.4.1(a)-(p), 8.4.2(a)-(j) [3479-3481]

³⁴ CD9.2 para 8.7.5-8.7.10 [3484-3485]

³⁵ CD9.2 para 8.7.9 [3485]

³⁶ CD5.3 [2438]

³⁷ Appendix RJ 10 [3588-3592]

- b. The suggestion made that the Council has not considered reasonable alternatives to the acquisition of Ms Johnson's property and the redevelopment of the Estate is inaccurate. The Council considered four options in its Options Analysis³⁸ and the redevelopment option was approved by the Council's Housing Scrutiny Committee. Ms Johnson presents no different scheme or alternative solution to the myriad of issues with the Order land, let alone one that would secure the safety of residents and deliver the benefits of the Scheme;
- c. Ms Johnson alleges that the use of CPO powers would be disproportionate *if* the Scheme is not fully funded or faces significant planning hurdles. The Council's clear and unchallenged evidence is that the Scheme is fully funded and does not face any material hurdles to the grant of a planning consent;
- d. Ms Johnson's concerns in respect of her residence in the USA and compensation implications of capital gains tax liability and currency exchange are being addressed through the provision of specialist taxation advice for Ms Johnson that is being funded by the Council.³⁹ In any event, they are compensation matters for the ultimate determination of the Upper Tribunal if not agreed. They are not matters that should prevent the confirmation of the Order.

Conclusion

27. There is a compelling case in the public interest for confirmation of the Order:
- a. the existing buildings on the Estate present serious fire safety and structural risks that cannot practicably be remediated;
 - b. the Scheme delivers a quantitative and qualitative housing gain that satisfies paragraph 187.1 of the Guidance;
 - c. funding for both acquisition and delivery of the Scheme is secured, with no likely impediment to implementation;

³⁸ CD7.3 [2921]

³⁹ CD9.6 para 5.12.3 [3469]

- d. the Council has made sustained and genuine efforts to acquire all interests by agreement, as evidenced by the acquisition of the great majority of interests, the withdrawal of three of the five original objections and the advanced state of negotiations with the remaining objectors.

28. The Inspector is therefore respectfully asked to confirm the Order.

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6 October 2026

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PURCHASE ORDER 2026**

ACQUIRING AUTHORITY'S LIST OF APPEARANCES

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Witnesses:

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