

## Can Mr Browne's petition stop Thakeham?

A petition has been set up by Anthony Browne MP. It asks South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) to exclude Thakeham's South West Cambridgeshire New Town proposal from its Local Plan.

<https://www.anthonybrowne.org/form/thakeham-petition>

At the present time Thakeham has yet to submit a proposal to SCDC, so there is no proposal to consider. It had agreed to do so by Easter but this now appears to be delayed. The 'Call for Sites' closed two years ago but by law, late plans can still be submitted until a very late stage, even now – and by law, SCDC must accept late submissions.

As the Local Planning Authority, SCDC is required by law to consider all planning applications according to statutory processes. If it fails to follow those processes it exposes itself to potential Judicial Review, which in turn can become the basis for appeal by the applicant (in this case Thakeham). It is common for speculative developers to seek avenues for appeals, as we've seen in Barrington (Cemex) and Melbourn (New Road 199).

Ultimately the Local Plan must be signed off by an independent Inspector, who is appointed by the Government.

And the Housing Minister has the power to override a Local Planning Authority decision.

Thakeham continues to maintain that it is openly seeking national development channels – new government created channels that sit above and apart from Local Authority processes – to achieve their objectives. These are part of a general trend by Government to centralise planning powers away from Local Planning Authorities.

Government controlled national development channels could include a 'Cambridge Development Corporation' as mentioned by Rishi Sunak in his 2020 budget, or the recently published [Oxford to Cambridge Arc](#), which indicates four 'opportunity areas' along the East West Rail central section between Bedford and Cambridge – though these areas have not yet been identified.

The South West Cambridge Action Group is seeking to understand how far national channels have been pursued by Thakeham, and to what extent they may have been discussed with Government ministers and their departments. To that end, several key Freedom of Information requests have been denied, on the basis that information would be a 'distraction' and 'not in the public interest.' Those FOI responses can be found at <http://www.swcag.org.uk/news-and-events>.

Further helpful context setting out the national and local contexts, and the control of decision-making, can be found in this 23 February [letter from SCDC Leader Bridget Smith to Anthony Browne](#).