

To Cambridgeshire Councillors

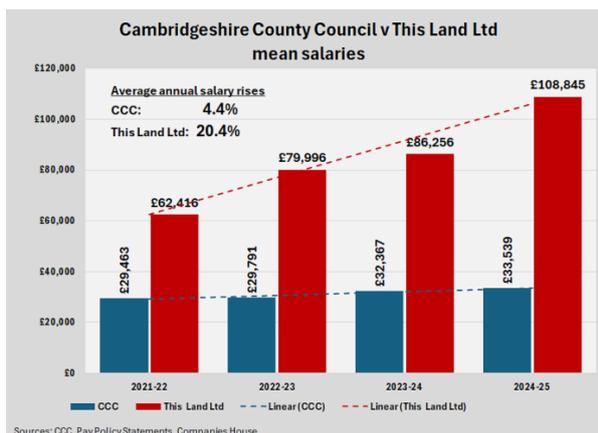
2nd October 2025

Dear Councillors,

Are you aware of the risks at This Land Ltd?

We are the Soham 100, a group of Cambridgeshire taxpayers concerned at the failure of Cambridgeshire County Council’s (CCC) wholly-owned housebuilding company – This Land Ltd. The campaign’s name is taken from the more than 100 taxpayers, mostly from Soham, who signed a petition in June asking for CCC to wind-up This Land Ltd before more public money was lost. The council summarily dismissed the petition for being “*libellous, rude, offensive, vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate*”.

This Land’s recently published [audited annual accounts for 2024/25](#) show that in the nine years since incorporation, the company has made comprehensive losses totalling £63.9million. It currently owes the county council £128 million in loan principal and unpaid loan interest. Since 2016, This Land has sold only 77 houses, with just one house sale in 2024/25 – a year in which it made a record loss of £13.633 million.



Alongside its catastrophic commercial performance is an almost total absence of effective oversight from committees at the County Council charged with This Land’s governance. In February this year, CCC’s local auditor [KPMG commented](#):

“The Council does not have the suitable skills and experience to effectively manage the risks associated with a commercial private sector subsidiary facing significant financial and cashflow challenges.”

As this week’s Cambridge Independent reported in an article inspired by the Soham 100’s latest press release (see Appendix below), other councils in Cambridgeshire are now expressing concern at the debts associated with This Land Ltd.

CCC however has concealed key information about This Land from the public and from its own elected members, several of whom have been denied their [statutory inspection rights](#) on information they are entitled to see.

We believe CCC is attempting to hide the true scale of This Land's failure – keeping the company alive artificially until local government reform kicks in, when the true costs may be concealed, and those responsible for the reckless gamble might escape accountability.

In light of This Land's worsening trading performance and the alarming 20.4% average annual salary rises, we believe the company needs to be closed down now to prevent losses spiralling further out of control.

This Land was set up in indecent haste in 2016 with no public consultation (contrary to councils' best value duty under [s3 of the Local Government Act 1999](#)) and no detailed business case. CCC's lack of knowledge or experience of the housebuilding sector, together with the unaffordable nine-figure borrowing it imposed on the company meant that This Land was never a going concern from the outset. CCC has consistently declined to acknowledge these stark facts. Consequently, we are now appealing to councillors from across Cambridgeshire to collectively call on CCC to hold an open, no-holds-barred debate on This Land, to which they are all invited, giving the authority the opportunity to fully explain its actions and detailed plans. The high-level [business plan](#) available to the public that was published in July does not begin to explain how the company can miraculously recover from its current position and pay off all its loans and interest over the next three and a half years.

CCC needs to come clean about the true figures and resolve the mess without delay, in the public interest. We believe it is also important to ensure that there will be no unresolved disputes over historical liabilities to plague the new unitary authorities, as happened at the former [Northamptonshire County Council](#). The key members at CCC responsible for oversight and governance of This Land are Cllr Lucy Nethsingha, Chair of the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee, Cllr Karen Young, Chair of the Shareholder Sub-Committee, and Cllr Chris Boden, Chair of the Audit & Accounts Committee.

Yours sincerely, on behalf of the Soham 100 Consortium,

Cllr Charles Warner

Where will This Land debt end up?

By Gemma Gardner

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Residents could end up paying millions for the financial problems of other authorities if new unitary councils are created, it has been claimed.

The concern relates to money owed to Cambridgeshire County Council by its development company, This Land, which could be shared across any successor authorities under the reorganisation.

The council has loaned £113.85m to This Land, invested £5.85m as equity and last year it handed over a further £6.3m due to a worsening economic outlook for housing developments.

After auditors said there was a “high probability” This Land would “default” over the lifetime of the loan the authority restructured the finances, converting about £60m into a grant. This Land has said it “acknowledges the concerns” and was focused on completing its existing developments.

A county spokesperson said it was “likely that any successor authorities will be shareholders in This Land”, though the details would be for the new councils to decide.

East Cambridgeshire District Council, one of the few debt-free authorities in the country, said the risk was unacceptable.

“We are immensely proud of the fact we are debt free,” a spokesperson said. “And it goes without saying that we are hugely concerned that both Cambridgeshire County Council’s debt and This Land’s debt would have to be absorbed

across the new unitary authorities.”

The three options proposed by councils are:

- A – One unitary authority for Peterborough, Huntingdonshire and Fenland, and another for Cambridge, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire;
- B – One unitary council for Peterborough, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Huntingdonshire, and another for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire;
- C – One unitary council with Peterborough, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland, and another for Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire.

East Cambs is backing proposal B in what it calls a “northern economic powerhouse”. It argues this option would keep council tax lowest for residents and bring the greatest investment in services.

“All the other options on the table would see East Cambs residents paying more for the bad financial decisions of other councils,” a spokesperson added.

A Cambridgeshire County Council spokesperson said: “It is likely that any successor authorities will be shareholders in This Land, however, the details of future shareholders and administrative oversight will be for the successor councils to negotiate.

“Cambridgeshire County Council will engage in this process, but the decision will be led by the successor authorities.”

A Cambridge City Council spokesperson said it had nothing to add to the county’s statement. South Cambridgeshire District Council was contacted for comment.