

PRESS RELEASE

Date: 20 July 2009

Embargo until: 00.01 21 July 2009

Contact: Martin Ford on 01224 790052 or maf.cairnie@gmail.com

CLLR MARTIN FORD CALLS ON ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL TO RULE OUT COMPULSORY PURCHASE OF MENIE HOMES FOR DONALD TRUMP

Residents around the Menie Estate must not be left wondering - and worrying - whether Aberdeenshire Council will compulsorily purchase their homes to help Donald Trump further expand his proposed housing and golf development. That is the view of Aberdeenshire councillor Martin Ford who has acted to end the uncertainty by submitting a formal notice of motion for the next meeting of the full Aberdeenshire Council.

Cllr Ford's notice of motion is:

'Aberdeenshire Council will not use compulsory purchase powers to force Aberdeenshire residents from their own homes on or adjacent to the Menie estate'

Commenting, Martin Ford said:

"Estate residents are being left in limbo not knowing whether councillors will make them leave.

"It must be very stressful for residents living with the anxiety caused by this threat to their homes. The Council owes it to them to end the uncertainty.

"The other reason for tabling the notice of motion is to ensure the Council discusses this matter in public. I was concerned that the Council could use 'financial confidentiality' as a reason for taking a decision on compulsory purchase in private session.

"This decision is such a crucial one, concerning as it does basic rights important to us all, that it must be taken in public. People are entitled to know what their councillors have to say and how they vote. A debate and vote in public will ensure that those directly affected by the decision can be present when it is taken if they wish.

"Fundamentally, what we have here is an estate owner who wants to clear residents from his estate because he can make more money from the land if they are not there. The same argument - economic benefit - was used to justify clearing people to make way for sheep.

"But this is twenty-first century Scotland. Different values must surely prevail. Rights for all, not dependent on wealth, balanced with limits on personal freedom to protect the rights of others.

“To me, it is obviously wrong to throw a family out of their own home - a major, life-changing event - just because their presence is an inconvenience to a non-resident land-owner wanting to do exactly as he pleases.

“After all, Mr Trump has sufficient land already. Enough for a truly massive development. We know - because he said so - that Mr Trump could build his golf resort and housing development on the Menie estate using the land he already owns and for which he has outline planning consent. He may want these additional properties but he does not need them. That too should be sufficient reason for the Council not to use compulsory purchase.

“The development going ahead does not depend on whether or not Mr Trump is able to acquire the additional properties. Unless that is, Mr Trump now chooses to impose it as a condition on himself - because he wants to.

“Of course, if residents can agree a price with Mr Trump and are willing to sell that is entirely up to them. But if they don't want to sell, they shouldn't have to.

“Beyond those residents directly affected, many other people have spoken to me expressing serious concern about this issue. There have also been many letters to newspapers. Whilst nobody likes compulsory purchase in any circumstances, it is generally acknowledged to be necessary sometimes for public works. But people are strongly opposed to the idea of the Council using compulsory purchase purely to help a private developer.”

Councillors will be asked to vote on Cllr Ford's motion at the Aberdeenshire Council meeting starting at 10.15 on Thursday 1 October 2009. The meeting will be held at Aberdeenshire Council's HQ, Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen.

ENDS

NOTES

Notices of motion appear on the agenda for meetings of the full Aberdeenshire Council (generally as item 3) and are debated in public.

Cllr Martin Ford sits as a Democratic Independent councillor on Aberdeenshire Council. He is a member of the Scottish Green Party.

Planning permissions and land ownership are different issues. Cllr Ford's motion is a completely separate matter from Aberdeenshire Council's consideration of planning applications submitted by the Trump International Golf Links Scotland for the same properties. (See article at <http://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/Article.aspx/1243615>).

Aberdeenshire Council has stated publicly that any decision about compulsory purchase of homes at Menie will be taken by the full council. (See article at <http://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/Article.aspx/1208996>).