The Rt Hon Vince Cable MP
Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills
1 Victoria St, London
SW1H 0ET

Dear Secretary of State,

Open letter to Secretary of State for BIS: Changes to Local Land Charges Registers

We are writing to make you aware of the likely consequences of the proposed changes to centralise Local Land Charges Registers, currently included within the Infrastructure Bill.

If these changes are enacted, there will be severe and widespread disruption for hundreds of small businesses, local authorities, the property market and the wider conveyancing process, whilst many jobs which rely on local land charges registers will be jeopardised.

An independent survey this month of 106 Local Authority chief executives has revealed substantial opposition to the proposals. A staggering 98% oppose the changes, whilst a further 86% believe they were not properly consulted about the reforms. The Land Registry's own consultation also demonstrated that 82% of respondents felt the Land Registry had not considered all viable options.

If the Government insists on ploughing ahead with these plans, an additional burden will be placed on local authorities who will be required to continually provide data for a centralised register during this transition to the Land Registry, unless this is funded by government. This is at a time when local authority budgets are already under immense pressure.

We are highly concerned about the untried and untested scheme which may be unable to cope with demand, leading to a collapse in potential home ownership deals and significant backlogs throughout the system.

We request that the Government urgently rethink the introduction of these proposals and focus on developing a more suitable alternative.

It is not too late to stop this – there is substantial opposition to these measures and we urge you to rethink the significant ramifications these changes will have on the market and on both private and public sector employment, by removing these clauses from the Bill.

Signed

James Sherwood-Rogers, Chairman, Council of Property Search Organisations

Cllr Peter Box CBE, Chair, LGA Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board

Cllr Neil Clarke MBE, Chairman of the District Councils' Network

Amanda Renshaw, Chair, Local Land Charges Institute

Steve Davies, Chief Executive, Association of Independent Personal Search Agents