



## Rio Ferdinand announces plans to build sporting academy in Houghton Regis

By LutonOnSunday | Posted: March 17, 2016



Rio Ferdinand, Mark Noble and Bobby Zamora (back row, l-r) with kids helped by Legacy

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FORMER England captain Rio Ferdinand has today announced Government-backed plans to partner Central Bedfordshire Council and regenerate one of the most deprived areas in Houghton Regis with a world-class sports academy and education and community facilities to transform the lives of young people.

Legacy – the former Manchester United defender's regeneration company, set up in 2015 with footballers Mark Noble and Bobby Zamora, who play for West Ham and Brighton respectively, will partner Central Bedfordshire Council to revitalise an area of Houghton Regis called Kingsland, which is in the 20 per cent most deprived areas in the UK, with 41 per cent of children living in income deprived households.

Set in the 22-hectare Kingsland site, this is an innovative pilot scheme which Legacy aims to roll out across the UK.

It will see Houghton Regis benefit from a leading sports academy – with potential as the base for the Rio Ferdinand Foundation – while the former England international will personally coach aspiring young footballers.

With sport at its heart, this will help engage young people and encourage them to better their lives and career prospects by linking education, leisure, sports and skills with new home.

Rio Ferdinand, chairman of Legacy, said: "We aim to help all young people develop to their full potential. My team-mates and I have seen at first hand the transformational effect that football can have on young lives.

"It transformed my life and I intend to use my platform to forge a legacy for young people everywhere. Legacy is building for people by responding to the needs of local communities and, by doing this across the UK, we will be building a brand and a long-term relationship with the people who live in our homes."

Today at MIPIM 2016 – alongside Rio Ferdinand and Housing Minister Brandon Lewis MP – Central Bedfordshire Council Leader Cllr James Jamieson introduced a six-month period of exclusivity with Legacy to develop the plans for the Kingsland project.

He said: "At Central Bedfordshire we're all about transforming communities, making places the very best they can be and enhancing life chances for residents, especially the young, by giving them the skills to change their futures.

"We are both proud and excited to be working with people who share these ambitions, colleagues from Central Government, our partners in Aviva and, of course, the inspiring and passionate advocate of social change, Rio Ferdinand. So it is with delight that we announce these plans for Kingsland as a statement of intent to regenerate 22 hectares of our land for this inspirational sport-led development, to be brought forward by Legacy."

The Kingsland project, which comes with the full support of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and Housing Minister Brandon Lewis MP, is set to 'turn housing on its head' by building more than 1,000 new homes with community as its focus.

These will be desirable, modern, purpose-built living spaces in a range of tenures, but Legacy will deliver more social and affordable housing than any other.



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