

Policy on Development of Diocesan Glebe Land

We appreciate that this is a sensitive issue in many communities and want to clearly set out the diocese's long-standing approach to how we consider sale and development of glebe land owned by the diocese.

The diocese does not make arbitrary decisions on the future of its glebe land, nor are they solely finance-based. All the factors below are considered in consultation with the affected parish. Particular attention is given to issues around local facilities, services and sensitivities, as well as the potential benefits to parishes.

Use of glebe land income and capital

Glebe land was historically held by the rector of a parish for his own benefit, either to farm it himself or to let it to others for that purpose and keep the income. When the system changed to one where Dioceses pay clergy a stipend (salary), all glebe land was transferred over to dioceses. With this change came the 'ring-fencing' of all income and capital so that it could only ever be used for payments of stipends or other benefits to clergy. It could not be used for anything else. This remains the case today.

Effect on parish share

For every diocese in the country, this ring-fencing means that the more income a diocese can make from glebe land and investments enabled by the sale of glebe land, the less it needs to request from parishes via an increase in the Common Fund. In terms of the figures, in 2014 every additional £1million of capital invested in the glebe investment portfolio is the equivalent of a ½% rise in the Common Fund. If we didn't have this money, that's how much we would need to increase the Common Fund by. The benefit to parishioners across the diocese is significant.

Value of glebe land

Much of our glebe land holdings are valued on the basis of agricultural use. That same land with development potential is worth considerably more if sold for that purpose. In view of the Government's strategy for the provision of new housing throughout the country, we are alive to the opportunity this presents and anticipate approaches to the diocese by local authorities at district and parish level.

Local considerations

With any proposal for the purchase and development of glebe land, we seek to ensure that the following are included and considered as part of any proposal: community facilities, school enhancement in view of potential increase in pupil numbers, green spaces and play areas, potential impact on local shops and services, the mission of the local church and provision of affordable housing for the particular benefit of those with local connections. Such elements are less likely to be considered fully by a commercial developer looking to maximise profit.