

**Church Commissioners**

**Pastoral Committee**

**Endowments and Glebe Measure 1976**

**Glebe in the parish of Huntley  
(Diocese of Gloucester)**

**Note by Rex Andrew**

**Summary**

- (i) The Committee is invited to consider a representation from Huntley PCC against the proposed sale of 7.05 acres of glebe in the parish to the Good and Faithful Servant ("the G&FS"), a wholly owned subsidiary of the Gloucester Diocesan Board of Finance ("the GDBF"). The G&FS would then enter into a promotion agreement for development of the land with Gladman LLP, a land promoter.
- (ii) The PCC says that it objects to the proposed sale because its mission would be severely damaged if the Church at Huntley was seen as directly benefitting from it, and attempts to increase the relatively low attendance there would be sorely hampered. It also says that the infrastructure of the village would be unable to cope with the addition of the proposed dwellings. The priest-in-charge also expressed concerns about the way in which the matter had been presented to the PCC.
- (iii) The GDBF concedes that the matter could have been better handled from its end prior to the serving of notices on the proposed disposal of the subject glebe to the G&FS. Its Secretary has since met Huntley PCC to clarify the relationship of the land to the Church (i.e. the GDBF) and the lack of PCC responsibility for this decision. The profits of the G&FS are donated to the GDBF to resource mission in the diocese. It says that whilst there are undoubted local strains the GDBF believes that the proposed disposal of the glebe at Huntley is entirely compatible with its role in the promotion of the Gospel.
- (iv) As the G&FS is a "connected person" under the Measure, the transaction between the GDBF and the G&FS would also require the Commissioners' consent irrespective of the objection from the PCC. Depending on the outcome of the Commissioners' decision on the PCC's representation, that aspect of the transaction will be determined separately in the Private Session part of the agenda where two similar transactions relating to glebe land at Leckhampton and Willersey (neither of which attracted adverse representations) are also being considered.

## Introduction

1. The Committee is invited to consider a representation from Huntley PCC against the proposed sale of 7.05 acres of glebe in the parish to the G&FS.
2. Attached are:
  - Appendix A: A map of the benefice, the parish of Huntley, together with a plan of the subject glebe;
  - Appendix B: Photographs of the glebe site, together with two screen shots from Google Map;
  - Appendix C: Parish information sheet;
  - Appendix D: A copy of the covering letter together with the notice served by the GDBF on the PCC and the priest-in-charge;
  - Appendix E: The PCC's representation and associated correspondence, together with a letter from the priest-in-charge;
  - Appendix F: The Commissioners' letter seeking the GDBF's comments on the representations, together with a copy of its reply;
  - Appendix G: Extracts from the Forest of Dean Allocations Plan; and
  - Appendix H: **Confidential annex** (due to commercial sensitivities) containing:
    - (i) a copy of a valuation report of 25 November 2014 prepared by Messrs Bruton Knowles for the GDBF; and
    - (ii) the supporting application supplied by the GDBF to the Commissioners explaining the apportionment of any sale proceeds.

## Background information

3. The GDBF proposes to sell 7.05 acres of diocesan glebe land in the parish of Huntley to the G&FS, a wholly owned subsidiary company of the GDBF, which carries out land developments on its behalf and covenants its profits to the Board. In this case however, it is not intended that the G&FS would develop the land itself as the scale of speculative investment required is considered too high. The GDBF has explained that the professional advice from the Diocesan Registrar is that the land should nonetheless be transferred to G&FS as the most appropriate route for the disposal from a governance/tax point of view. If the transfer is approved the intention is that G&FS would enter into a promotion agreement with Gladman LLP, a land promoter, which would promote the subject land for residential development. Under the proposed agreement, on the grant of planning permission, the land would be sold on the open market, with the proceeds going in the first instance to the G&FS, which would then pay

Gladman its agreed share and covenant the remainder to the GDBF. If planning permission is not achieved the land would be returned to the GDBF as diocesan glebe.

4. The Huntley PCC has objected to the proposed sale and the Commissioners' involvement here is two-fold:
  - (i) they need to consider whether the proposed sale of the land to the G&FS and the subsequent promotion agreement should be allowed to proceed in light of Huntley PCC's representation; and
  - (ii) as the G&FS is a connected person for the purposes of s.20 of the Endowments and Glebe Measure they also separately need to give approval to the proposed transaction with a connected person.
5. The Commissioners' Pastoral Committee agreed in October 2014 that it was content with the principle of transfers of diocesan glebe to the G&FS to act as a developer but decided that the specific approval of the Committee to each individual transaction between the GDBF and the G&FS would be required. Therefore, if the Commissioners decide that the sale of this land may proceed notwithstanding Huntley PCC's objection, they will then consider separately the issue of whether the transaction to a connected person should be approved. This is the subject of a separate paper (P(15)14) which also deals with the proposed transfers of two other diocesan glebe sites, at Leckhampton and Willersey, which are not subject to representations, to the G&FS.

### **The PCC's representation**

6. Mr Sterry, priest-in-charge of the benefice of Huntley and Longhope, Churcham and Bulley since May 2012, writing on behalf of the PCC, explains that the situation of the Church in Huntley is a tenuous one as relationships with "the village" have not been entirely positive in the past and that villagers equate "the Church" which owns the land with the Parish rather than the GDBF. He says he could not emphasise enough the damage which would be done to the shakily improving relations between Church and village if planning permission were to be granted for 60 houses on what villagers consider to be Church land. He expresses concern that parishioners received a brochure from Gladman regarding their intention to seek planning permission for the glebe for the development of 60 houses before receiving any contact from the GDBF and contrasts this with the Board's approach to a possible glebe development at Longhope. He says that a number of the Huntley PCC members take a rather cynical and suspicious attitude to the GDBF and might well see the transfer to the G&FS as a ploy to avoid the PCC knowing about the proposal.
7. Subsequently, following a PCC meeting, which it says was informed by further correspondence with the GDBF Secretary and an awareness of the views expressed at a public meeting organised by the (Civil) Parish Council, the PCC gave its views regarding the proposed sale. The PCC says that its mission would be severely damaged if the Church at Huntley was seen as directly benefiting from a disposal of the land and attempts to increase attendance,

which is relatively low in relation to the population of the village, would be sorely hampered. It also says that the infrastructure of the village would be unable to cope with the addition of the proposed dwellings as the road, drainage and medical facilities are already inadequate and the Church School in the village cannot accept more pupils from the existing population.

8. Following a visit to the parish from the GDBF Secretary, the PCC asked that the matter be adjudicated upon by the Commissioners as it wished to sustain its opposition to the proposed sale.

#### **The Diocesan Board of Finance's views**

9. Canon Benjamin Preece Smith, the Gloucester Diocesan Secretary, replied on behalf of the GDBF. He acknowledges that the GDBF's initial failure of engagement with the parish on the proposed disposal of glebe is disappointing and that it would not wish to replicate this. He explains that Gladman gave notice they intended to submit a planning application, just ahead of Christmas, although the GDBF had assumed that any planning application would not proceed until contracts on the promotion agreement had been signed; this has still not happened.
10. Subsequent to Mr Sterry's original letter, he had met Huntley PCC and attended an open meeting of the Parish Council to clarify the relationship of the land to the Church and the lack of PCC responsibility for any decision to develop it. The GDBF has also supplied to the Parish Council and PCC a map of its local holdings in response to a specific request. Canon Preece Smith also agreed to write an article for the parish magazine but this offer was not taken up. He attached a copy of his initial correspondence with Mr Sterry dated 26 January 2015 which was also shared with the Parish Council. This explains that the glebe at Huntley is too large a site for the GDBF to handle directly and would require such a large speculative investment to realise that the Glebe Committee has tendered it to third parties: Gladman have been appointed under a promotion agreement under a no-win-no fee arrangement, whereby they seek planning permission in exchange for a percentage of the sale proceeds of the land should that occur, but with contracts yet to be finalised.
11. Canon Preece Smith confirms that the reasons for the GDBF's proposing the disposal of the subject glebe are as outlined in paragraphs 4.7.4. – 4.7.6 of the report of 25 November 2014 prepared by Messrs Bruton Knowles (contained in the 'Confidential annex': Appendix H). This indicated that although the land currently has planning permission only for agricultural use it is understood that the Local Authority (Forest of Dean District Council) cannot prove a five-year housing land supply which means, in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework presumption "in favour of sustainable development" it cannot rely on local plan policies to refuse applications for "sensibly" located sites. The village location of the Huntley glebe and its proximity to transport networks potentially make it such a site. He adds that this report was consequent to a commercial review of the GDBF's portfolio which produced similar advice and that the public marketing exercise resulted in it agreeing to proceed with one of the offers for the site.

12. The GDBF has considered the pastoral impact of this proposed disposal on the church in Huntley and, whilst noting the general concerns for relationships, it had not been advised of any specific detriment to the Church's local ministry. At the meeting with the PCC Canon Preece Smith mooted a number of potential issues with which the GDBF might engage, including provision at the local school and supporting local apprenticeships: as yet the PCC have not developed this discussion. In discussing specific issues with the PCC and the Parish Council at the open meeting it seemed clear that the overwhelming frustration was a road traffic bottle neck from the Forest of Dean into Gloucester, the principal employment centre. There was an acceptance that a relatively small development such as the one proposed could not hope to answer such an issue.
13. Canon Preece Smith explains that the diocese operates a pledge-based system of Parish Share. For 2014 the benefice contributed £39,800 towards a "nett" cost of ministry in the region of £57,000. "Nett" means after deducting £15,000 of diocesan income of which over half comes from the Diocesan Stipends Fund. For 2015 the benefice has increased its contribution to £41,000, with Huntley contributing £14,000 towards this. On its general stewardship profile, the ability of the PCC to maintain this contribution would rest not on new members to church but on long term members. Elsewhere, regarding the GDBF's largest, long standing and most controversial glebe development, none of the affected parishes have raised the issue in the payment of Parish Share.
14. He says that while as yet unclear on expected sale proceeds, should the proposed development at Huntley of some 60 houses go ahead, with half of these being affordable and with an average price of some £250,000, this could produce some £3m for the DSF, generating some £120,000 per annum, which would more than fund three priests, or a little over two once counting housing allowances. The rental on this glebe site is currently £550 per annum, which covers about one quarter of the council tax for the local priest.
15. Within the GDBF's assessment, the potential general impact of the disposal within the village is set against the potential wider benefit to the mission of the Church in the Diocese. The GDBF feels that whilst there are undoubted local strains it believes that the proposed disposal of glebe at Huntley is entirely compatible with its role in the promotion of the Gospel.

### **The Committee's Role**

16. A Diocesan Board of Finance must hold, manage and deal with glebe for the benefit of the Diocesan Stipends Fund. Its Trustees must normally obtain the best terms available when disposing of glebe property and the Committee needs to consider whether the proposed transaction is in the best interests of the Fund's beneficiaries. However, the DBF and the Committee may take appropriate account of any relevant pastoral considerations. In particular, the Commissioners may in approving a transaction require the inclusion of such terms as having regard to all the circumstances they think reasonable and proper to safeguard the amenities of any land which would be affected by it.



17. The Commissioners cannot require a Diocese to take a course of action it is unwilling to follow, but they have an essentially negative power to prevent a course of action proceeding. However, they must have cogent reasons for substituting their judgement for that of a Diocese in relation to the relevant aspects of a proposed sale.

### The Issues

18. The main issues to be considered are:
- (i) Would sale to the G&FS on the recommended terms and the entry into a promotion agreement be in the best interests of the Diocesan Stipends Fund? Is the possible financial benefit likely to be offset by any adverse effect on local giving and parish share payments?
  - (ii) Is the ability of the local infrastructure and church school to cope with the proposed development a factor which the Commissioners should take into account or is this a matter to be determined by the Local Planning process?
  - (iii) Are there any pastoral factors such as the harm to the reputation or mission of the Church locally that suggest that the GDBF should deal with the glebe in any way other than the proposed disposition? Might there be countervailing benefits in terms of mission opportunities and for the Church school and if so what weight should be given to this?



(Signed) Rex Andrew

Church Commissioners  
Church House  
Westminster  
London SW1P 3AZ

9 June 2015

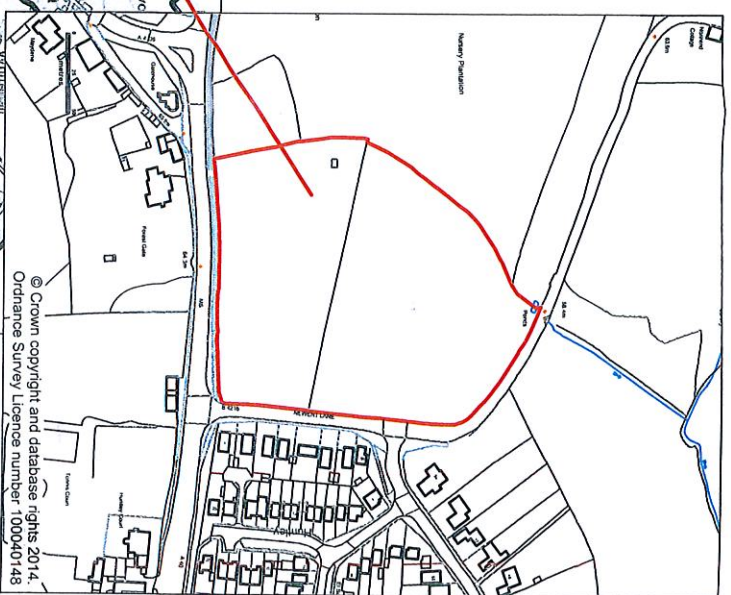
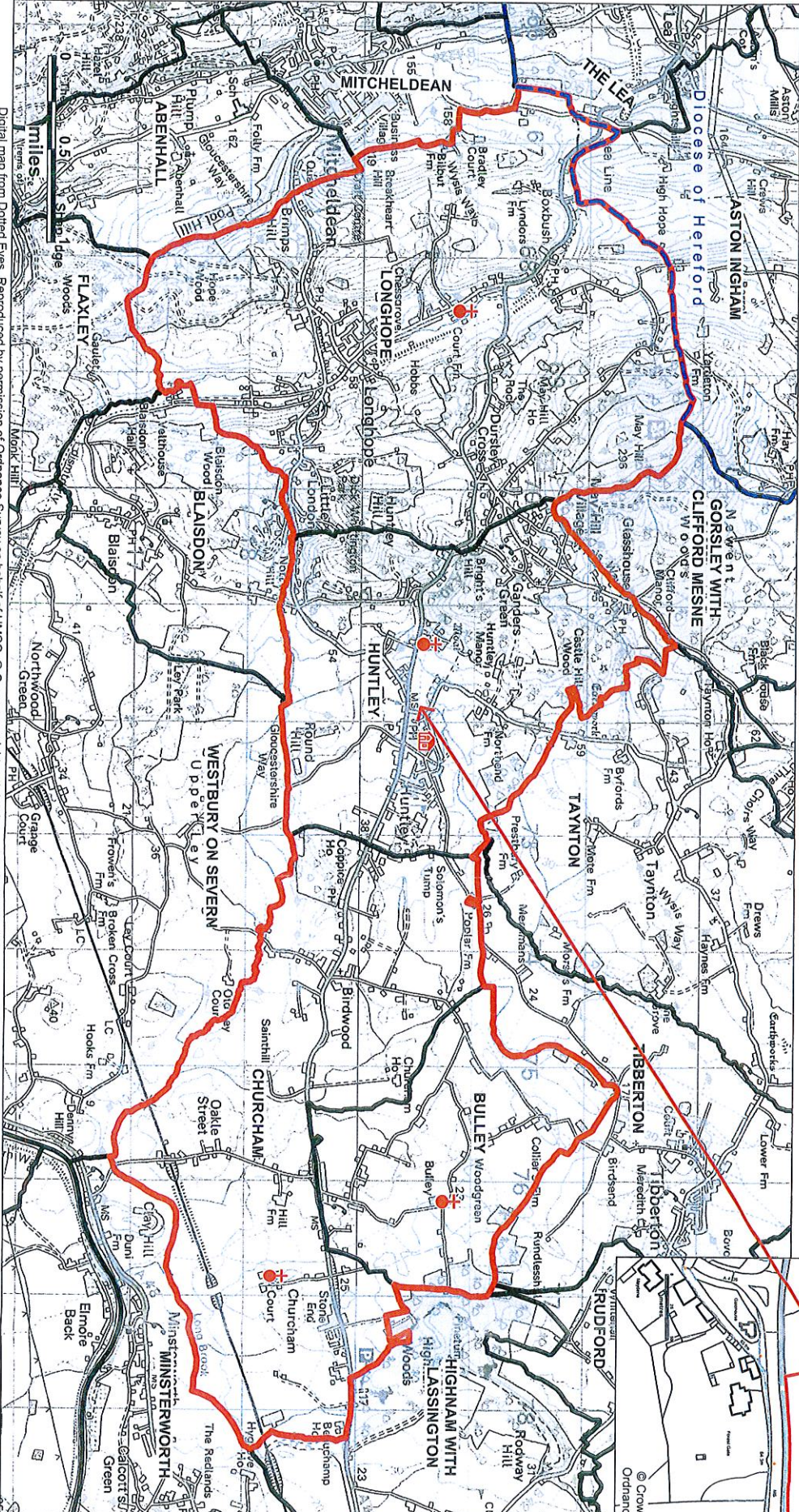
Appendix A:

A map of the benefice, the parish of Huntley,  
together with a plan of the subject glebe





-  The benefice of Huntley and Longhope, Churchham and Bulley
-  Diocesan boundary
-  Parish church
-  Parsonage house



© Crown copyright and database rights 2014.  
Ordnance Survey Licence number 100040148





Appendix B:

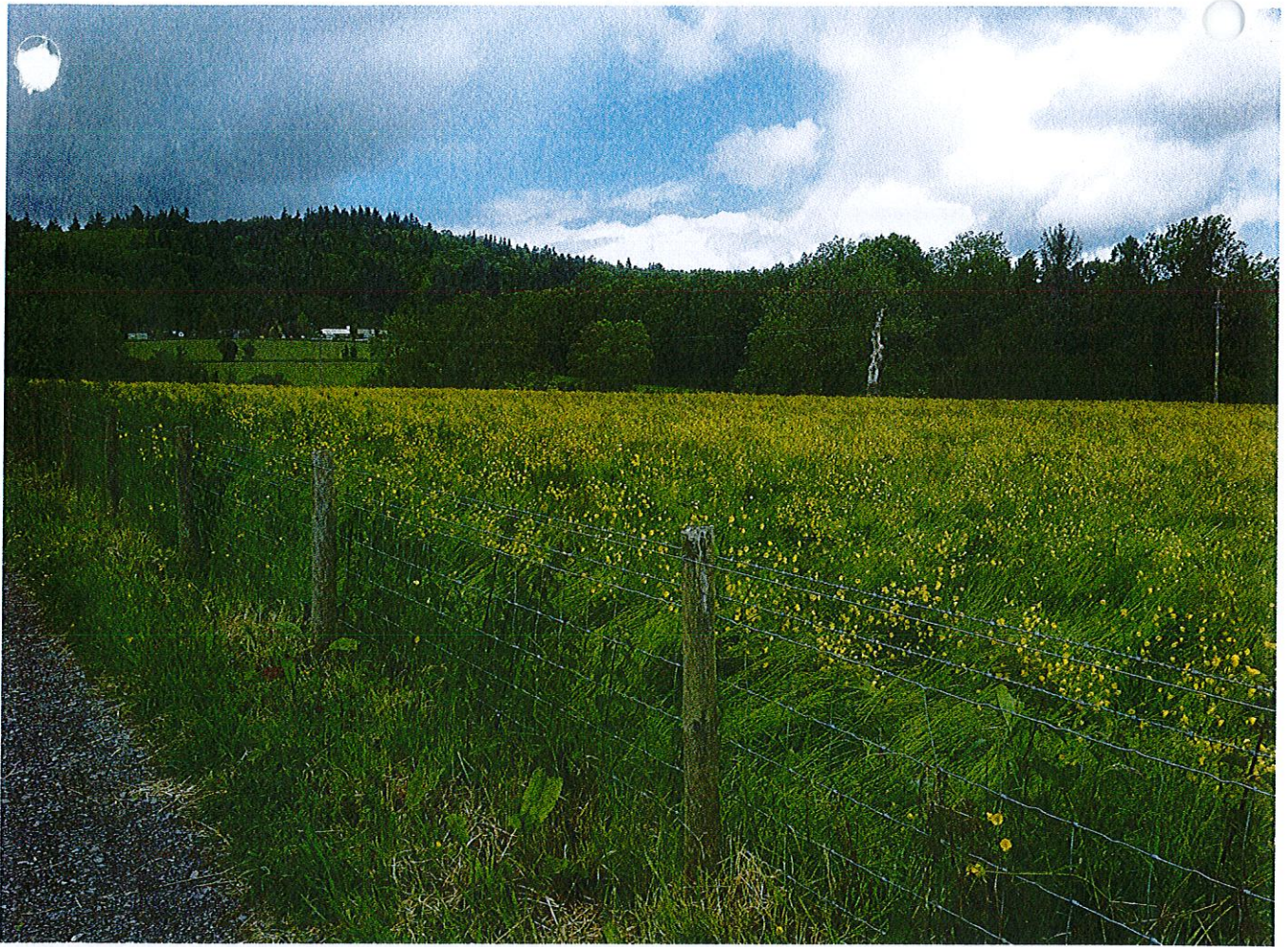
Photographs of the glebe site, together with two  
screen shots from Google Map













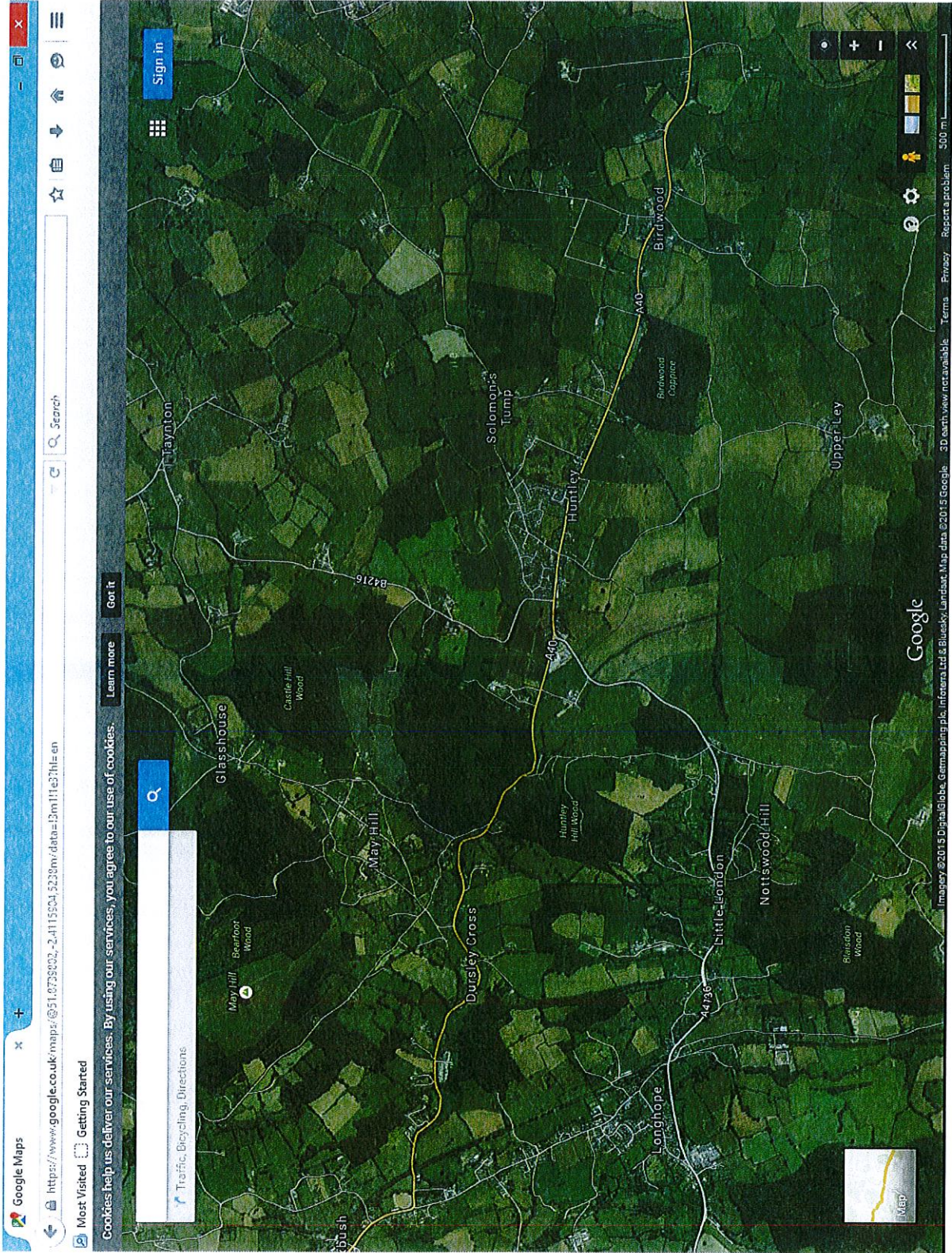




Google Maps interface showing a map of an area with a yellow route. The route starts near 'bush' and ends near 'Birdwood'. Key locations include Glasshouse, May Hill, Huntley, and Birdwood. The map shows roads like A40, A436, and A4736. A search bar at the top contains the URL: <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@51.0739802,-2.4115904,14z>. The interface includes a 'Sign in' button, a search bar, and a 'Zoom' control. A copyright notice at the bottom right reads: 'Map data ©2015 Google Terms Privacy Report a problem 500 m'.

15









Appendix C:

Parish information sheet





**PARISH INFORMATION FORM**

**P100**

It is important that the information provided on this form is accurate as the Church Commissioners may rely on such information in their consideration of representations and their decision could be open to legal challenge if any facts upon which they have relied are found to be incorrect.  
Please email the completed form(s) to: [pastoral@churchofengland.org](mailto:pastoral@churchofengland.org)

<b>BENEFICE</b>	Huntley and Longhope, Churcham and Bulley	
<b>Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge</b> (Date of institution/licensing)	Rev Chris Sterry 6/5/12	
<b>Patron(s)</b>	Bishop of Gloucester and Dean & Chapter of Gloucester	
<b>Parsonage house</b> (address)	The Rectory, 56 Byfords Road, Huntley, Glos, GL19 3EL	
<b>PARISH</b>	HUNTLEY St John the Baptist	
<b>Population of parish</b> (adults & children) (Please state how computed)	1281 (Huntley 1105; May Hill 174) (2011 census)	
<b>Churches and sittings</b> (See Note 1 overleaf) Date built (approx.)	Huntley St John the Baptist (Parish Church)  (approx. 150)	May Hill All Saints (Mission Church)  (approx. 50)
<b>Church services and numbers attending</b> (See Note 2 overleaf)  Example:  1st Sunday 10.00am Holy Communion Common Worship A (30)	<u>Sundays</u> <u>1st Sunday</u> 11:00 a.m. Sung Eucharist –Common Worship (25) <u>2nd Sunday</u> 6:30 p.m. Evensong – BCP (10) <u>3rd Sunday</u> 11:00 a.m. Sung Eucharist –Common Worship (25) <u>4th Sunday</u> 8:00 a.m. Holy Communion – BCP (6) 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship (15) <u>5th Sunday</u> Combined Benefice service 10:30 a.m. (35) <u>Weekdays</u> No regularly advertised services	<u>Sundays</u> <u>1st Sunday</u> 9:30 a.m. Morning Worship (6) <u>2nd Sunday</u> 9:30 a.m. Holy Communion – Common Worship (25-30) <u>3rd Sunday</u> 9:30 a.m. Morning Worship (6) <u>4th Sunday</u> 9:30 a.m. Morning Worship (6)  <u>Weekdays</u>  <u>3rd Monday</u> 11:30 a.m. Holy Communion (10)
<b>Electoral roll</b>	47	

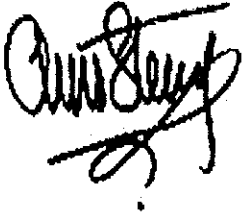
<b>Staff/lay assistance</b> <i>(e.g. curates, lay readers, NSMs etc.)</i>	1 Reader; 1 Reader with PTI; 1 Reader Emeritus Occasional assistance from two resident retired priests			
<b>Churchmanship and characteristics of that churchmanship</b>	Central	<i>If there is more than one church in the parish please indicate any difference in the churchmanship in the individual churches</i>		
<b>Please indicate the PCC's position on Resolutions A, B and C by ticking the relevant box</b> <b>OR</b> <b>whether there is a Resolution under Paragraph 20 of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (if so, please explain the exact nature of the alternative arrangements made, and the reasons for requesting the same).</b>	A <i>In favour of restricting exercise of women's ministry in parish</i> B <i>In favour of preventing woman holding office of incumbent etc.</i> C <i>Has requested special episcopal arrangements</i>  <i>Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests</i>	<b>YES</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>NO</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>NOT VOTED</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Parochial church organisations and number of regular attenders</b>	Mothers Union – 25 members			
<b>Other parochial and/or community buildings</b>	None	<i>Please indicate if any building is not primarily for church use</i>		
<b>Other denominations</b>	May Hill Methodist Church			
<b>Sociological make-up of parish</b> <i>(e.g. rural, industrial, residential etc.)</i>	Largely suburban housing in a previously scattered rural community			
<b>Shopping and other local facilities</b> <i>(e.g. Post Office, General Store, Doctor, Dentist, Police Station, Pubs, Clubs, other recreational centres)</i>	One failing pub. Two garages. One commercial Butcher who also sells retail. No other facilities. Huntley Village Hall. Huntley Cricket Club.			
<b>Bus services</b> <i>(please give brief details of any daily bus service around the parish and/or to the nearest town/village centre and their relevance in enabling attendance at church services)</i>	Hourly buses to Gloucester, Ross-on-Wye (direct) and Ross (via the Forest) No impact on worshippers whatsoever			

<b>POPULATION</b>		
1	<i>Is the population increasing or decreasing and, if so, to what extent and over what period? (In case of doubt about population figures, the local authority may be able to help.)</i>	Increase of 100 in Huntley since 2001 census due to new housing. Currently stable – unless the Glebe land is sold for development, when it will increase by approx 120
2	<i>How is the population distributed (e.g. in one or more centres, or dispersed over the parish)?</i>	Mainly in Huntley village and in May Hill Village with some scattered rural population on the fringes.
<b>PAROCHIAL LIFE ETC.</b>		
3	<i>Approximately how many of those on the church electoral roll live outside the parish?</i>	None
4	<i>To what extent does the congregation come from outside the parish?</i>	None
5	<i>Does the congregation increase significantly during the holiday season? If so, please give details.</i>	No
6	<i>Do a significant number of parishioners attend other Anglican churches in the area? If so, give details (eg for reasons of convenience or because the same congregation attends different churches in rotation).</i>	4 attend Bulley because of previous family links
7	<i>Has any other denomination a strong following in the parish? If so, please give brief details.</i>	Forest Gate Community Church at Mitcheldean, Longhope Baptist Church
<b>CHURCH SCHOOLS</b>		
8	<i>Is there a church school? If so, please state name and type.</i>	Huntley CofE School – voluntary aided
9	<i>Approximately how many pupils are there?</i>	120
10	<i>From which area are they drawn?</i>	Mainly from the village, with a small number from outside at the moment.
11	<i>Are the school buildings available for parochial purposes? If so, please give details.</i>	On special occasions, by arrangement
12	<i>Please also state name and type of other schools in the area.</i>	Secondary children attend Newent Community School, Dene Magna or Grammar School in Gloucester
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>		
13	<i>What is the parish share, and to what extent does the PCC meet the working expenses of the clergy or lay workers?</i>	£1400 <sup>0</sup> committed in 2015 (less than requested) PCC meet full clergy working expenses
14	<i>Please indicate what, if any, trust funds are available to the parish and for what purposes.</i>	None
<b>ARE THERE ANY OTHER FACTUAL POINTS WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS TO UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER OF THE PARISH BETTER ?</b>		

<b>PLEASE: (i) INDICATE THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT, OR OTHERWISE, OF THE PCC FOR THE PROPOSALS/DRAFT SCHEME (OR ORDER); AND/OR</b>			
<b>(ii) PLEASE SHOW THE VOTING FIGURES (IF A VOTE WAS TAKEN)</b>			
	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstentions</i>
<i>On the local formal consultations:</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>

On the published draft Scheme:	n/a	n/a	n/a
--------------------------------	-----	-----	-----

The Standing Committee agreed unanimously to oppose the present proposal by the Diocese to transfer the Glebe Land to 'The Good and faithful Servant'. Following a meeting with the Diocesan secretary the Standing Committee reported to the Parochial Church Council who resolved unanimously to submit an objection to the proposal (9 out of 10 members attending and voting)



Priest-in-charge, 7.vi.2015