*NOTE: In the case of non-members, this agenda is for information only

DEREHAM TOWN COUNCIL

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22nd October 2026

To All Members of the Recreation Committee
Councillors A Brooks, P Duigan, Z Flint, A Greenwood, R Jamieson, and P Morton.

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the **Recreation** Committee at the Memorial Hall on **Tuesday 27th October 2026** upon the rising of the Heritage and Open Spaces Committee meeting to consider the items on the Agenda below. All Councillors are welcome to attend the above meeting even if they are not a member of the particular committee.

Yours faithfully

A N Needham

Mr A N Needham
Town Clerk

Members requiring further information, or with specific questions, are asked to raise these with the appropriate officer at least two working days before the meeting. If the information requested is available, this will be provided and reported to Council.

AGENDA

1. To receive apologies for absence.

2. **Declaration of Interest**
   In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, Members are asked at this stage to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Registerable Interests; as defined by the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council. Councillors shall declare such interest as soon as it becomes apparent, disclosing the nature and extent of those interests. Failure to disclose any Disclosable Pecuniary interests or to knowingly give false or misleading information is a criminal offence under section 34 of the Localism Act 2011.

3. To consider purchase of Glebe Lands from the Church of England.

4. To consider progressing the project to acquire additional open space and sports pitches in the south of Dereham.

5. Update on Dereham Saints project to replace changing rooms.

6. To consider supporting Dereham Saints to draw down S106 funding to install a borehole and irrigation system.

7. To consider repainting Neatherd play equipment

RECREATION COMMITTEE · AGENDA NOTES

Dereham Town Council

3. To Consider Purchase of Glebe lands from the Church of England

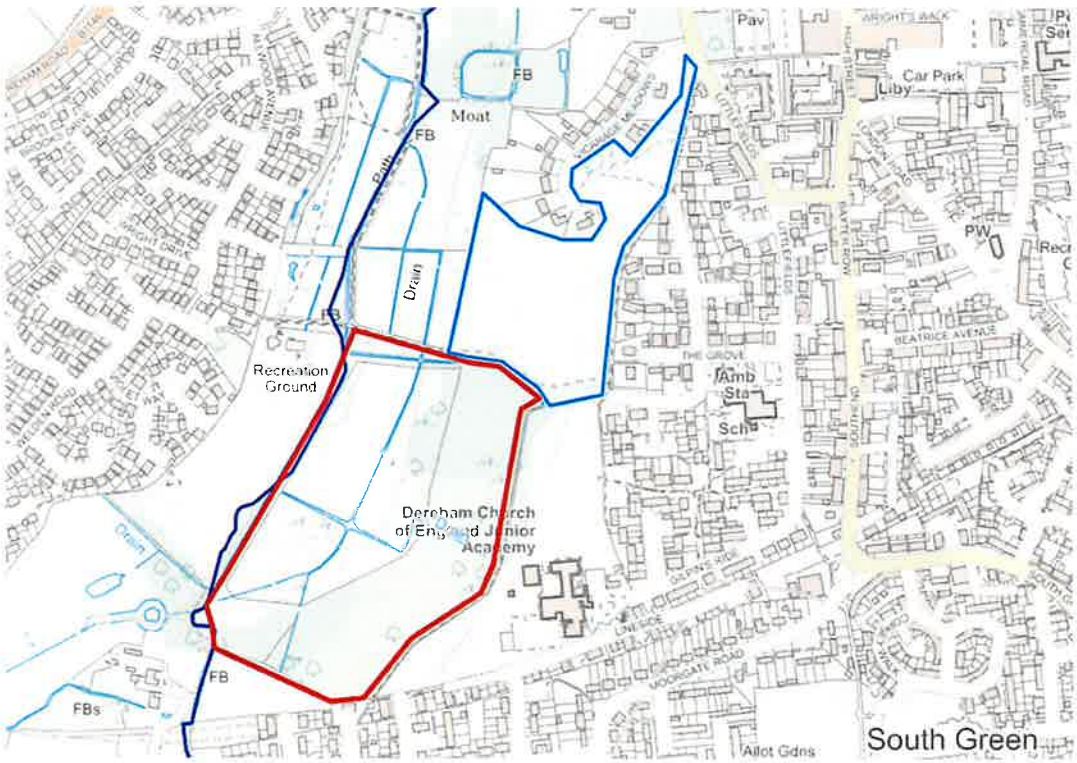
Purpose: To decide whether the Council should purchase two parcels of land from the Diocese of Norwich.

The Committee is asked to consider the principle to purchase approximately 30 acres of Glebe land for £55,000, funded from the earmarked reserve for acquiring additional open space, subject to valuation and Charity Commission approval.

The land

Two parcels are offered, outlined in red and light blue on the plan below.

Parcel	Current status
Blue land	Leased to the Town Council at £1 per year; lease expires in 2075
Red land	Held by the Diocese; no legal public right of access, though there has been informal public access



Both parcels are classified as natural or semi-natural areas, so neither would meet the identified need for outdoor playing space or sports pitches.

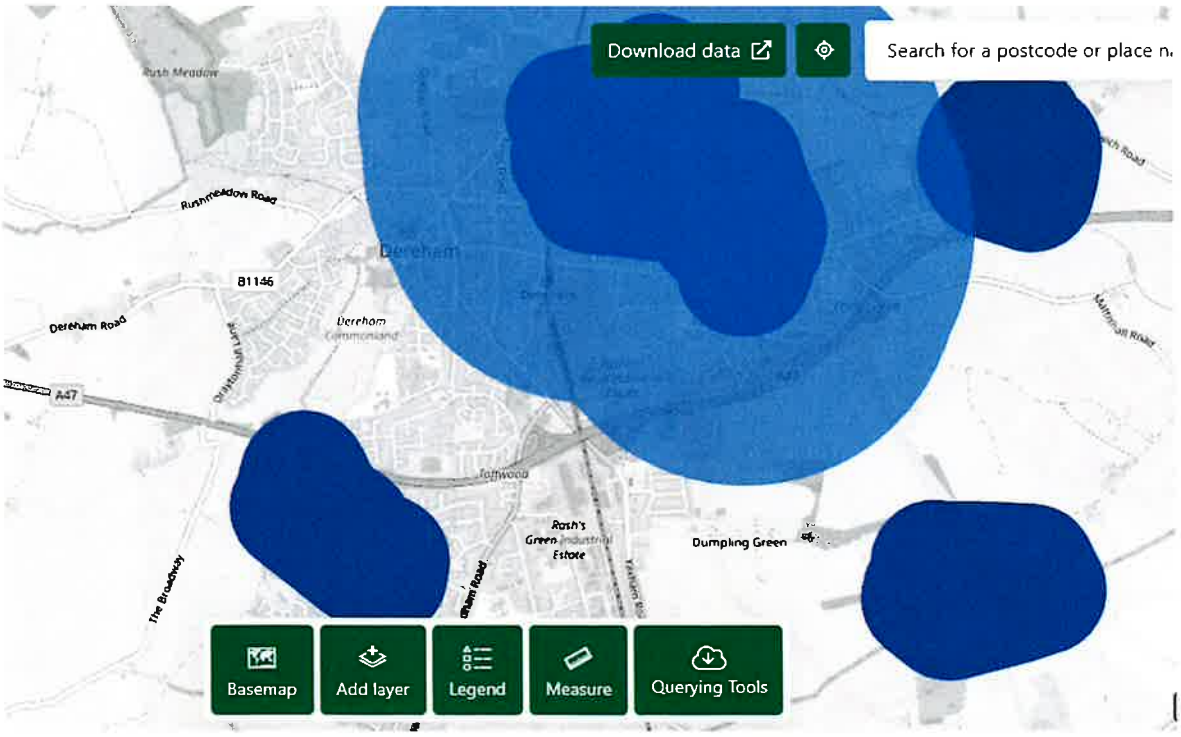
The two parcels should be assessed separately, because they carry different risks. The blue land is secure only for as long as the lease runs. At £1 a year it is cheap, but it is not permanent, and in 2075 the Council's tenure ends. The red land is the parcel that adds genuinely new public open space, since it is currently held by the Diocese with no legal right of access. Purchase converts both into freehold public open space in perpetuity — one from a time-limited lease, one from no legal access at all.

Why purchase?

Purchasing secures both parcels as public open space in perpetuity — not for the 49 years remaining on the blue land's lease, and not at the Diocese's discretion on the red land. Freehold ownership removes the 2075 expiry as a future risk and removes the Town's exposure to a successor landlord's intentions.

It protects an area of nature for residents in central Dereham and in some of the town's most deprived wards, including areas with very low levels of car ownership. Those are precisely the residents least able to travel to the town's larger green spaces, and for whom a walkable area of nature delivers the greatest benefits.

Access to natural green space is well recognised as bringing significant health and wellbeing benefits — sufficiently so that Natural England has produced an Accessible Green Space Standard. Dereham performs well for accessible natural green space overall, but much of it lies in the north of the town. Mapping against the standard shows areas of Dereham that do not currently meet it; see map below.



securing these parcels as public open space in perpetuity would bring additional areas, in the centre and south of the town, within the standard.

The parcels do not compete with the Council's playing-space ambitions. They would not meet the need for outdoor playing space or sports pitches. That is a point in favour of proceeding, not against: this purchase draws on the reserve for acquiring additional open space, and it does not significantly impact the budget that the south Dereham openspace project requires.

A purchase now is the only route that has been offered. The Diocese has confirmed it will not grant a long-term lease at £1 per year. Without the Council holding the freehold, leaves control of future use, with the Diocese.

The timing is favourable and may not recur. Land adjoining an expanding town, held by a body willing to sell at a discount to market, with an existing relationship and several years of discussions behind it, is not a common set of circumstances. If the Council declines now, the land passes to whatever the Diocese does next — and the Council's ability to secure open space in the centre of Dereham diminishes.

Cost

The Diocese has indicated it would accept £55,000, subject to a valuation and Charity Commission approval. The Diocese appears to be under obligations similar to those on local authorities and must secure best value.

The total area is just over 30 acres, equating to £1,833 per acre. The Savills land values report indicates that poor-quality grazing land sells for around £5,000 per acre. Further Savills work on amenity woodland sales between 2017 and 2021 found average prices ranging from £13,000 per acre for areas under 10 acres down to £4,500 for larger blocks. The price under consideration is therefore well below generalised market values.

Even the most conservative benchmark in that evidence is above what the Council is being asked to pay. On the Savills figures, £4,500 per acre for larger blocks is the lowest comparison available — two and a half times the £1,833 per acre under consideration. The comparison that matters is not the highest figure in the report but the lowest, and the offer sits below all of them.

The valuation is a safeguard, not a condition that leaves the decision open. The Diocese's offer is explicitly subject to an independent valuation, so the Council is not being asked to accept an unverified price. The valuation will either confirm the figure or provide the basis for further negotiation. Approving the recommendation in principle allows that process to run from a position of having agreed the Council wishes to proceed.

The Diocese's own obligation to secure best value is evidence the price is genuine. A body required to demonstrate it is achieving the best available price has no reason to accept £55,000 for land it could sell elsewhere if the market supported more. The £1,833 per acre figure reflects the land's actual character — no development potential, limited agricultural use.

The Diocese was asked whether it would consider a long-term lease at £1 per year and said it would not.

The maintenance cost is modest and proportionate to what it secures. Around £3,000 per year as a basic minimum for the red land is the cost of securing roughly 30 acres of new and permanently protected open space. Set against the Council's overall budget, it is a small annual figure for a permanent asset, and it is a cost the Council can plan for with certainty. Improvements to the area may attract grant funding; any grant secured would reduce the net cost further, and none has been assumed in the figures.

The funding source exists for exactly this purpose. The purchase is to be met from the earmarked reserve for acquiring additional open space — a reserve held for the acquisition of open space, being applied to the acquisition of open space. The balance in the reserve currently stands at just over £700,000.

Background

The Council has held a number of informal discussions and soundings with the Diocese of Norwich about the Glebe lands over the years. The Diocese approached the Council some years ago to ask whether it would be interested in purchasing the land. In October 2025, the Council instructed the Clerk to begin discussions with the Church of England with a view to securing the land as public open space.

The outcome of those discussions was brought to Committee in July 2026. The Committee felt the lower end of the range quoted, £60,000, was still too high, and asked the Clerk to offer a lower figure of £50,000. At Full Council the matter was referred back to Committee. The Council's negotiating position has already produced a result: the Diocese's opening figure was £60,000 and it has now indicated it would accept £55,000 — a reduction the Council secured by testing the price. The offer on the table reflects that work.

At the last Committee meeting, questions were raised about whether the cost per acre was too high. On the evidence in this paper it is not: at £1,833 per acre the price is below every comparator in the Savills material, and the valuation will confirm or challenge that before any money changes hands.

Recommending agreement in principle is what enables the remaining conditions to be met. The purchase is subject to two conditions — valuation and Charity Commission approval — neither of which the Council can progress while the question of whether it wishes to buy remains unresolved. Agreeing to proceed authorises the Clerk and the Diocese to arrange the valuation and pursue approval, and to bring terms back to Committee before any final commitment. Declining or deferring means the valuation is not commissioned, the Charity Commission route is not tested, and the offer sits unanswered.

4. To consider progressing the project to acquire additional open space and sports pitches in the south of Dereham

Purpose: To agree next steps on the project to acquire additional open space and sports pitches in south Dereham.

Recommendation: That the Committee approves public consultation on the concept plan and instructs the Clerk to obtain a formal valuation from the District Valuer.

Background

At the last Committee meeting, the Council agreed to progress this project and to take further legal advice on the best way forward.

NP Law advised that the Council has accumulated a good evidence base, and that it would now be appropriate to gauge public opinion — particularly on how local residents would benefit from additional land, and whether any scheme would have broad support.

The Council has a body of evidence justifying the need and has taken expert advice on suitable locations. The best location is identified in the plan at Annex B.

The plan shows an initial concept for consultation and evaluation. The final plan is likely to look very different depending on the outcome of public consultation, evaluation and any discussions with the landowner.



Proposed next steps

1. **Public consultation on the proposed concept.** Engage Rachel Leggett to prepare and conduct the engagement process, which may need some face-to-face engagement so that ideas can be discussed and developed, alongside an online survey, plus a report of the findings. Estimated

cost: around £1,500. A more professional-looking concept plan is an option at an additional £1,000.

2. **Valuation from the District Valuer,** for the concept plan and for a smaller alternative. Without an understanding of the valuation, it would be difficult to decide what size could be accommodated within the available budget. Estimated cost: £1,200–£1,500, based on previous valuations — possibly slightly more, as this may be a more complex valuation.

5. Update on Dereham Saints project to replace changing rooms.

The Town Council is supporting the Dereham Saints to draw down £70,000 S106 funding to replace their dilapidated changing facilities. A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

6. To consider supporting Dereham Saints to draw down S106 funding to install borehole and irrigation system.

Part of the Saint's strategy to try and increase the playing capacity of the limited number of pitches they have is to install a bore hole and irrigation system. The irrigation system would allow ensure that going into any new season, the playing surface is at the best it can be. If the pitches enter a new season in poor condition the number of matches than can be played in a season can be severely diminished, incurring costs of training off-site and cost and risk of playing off-site. While there are pitches available in surrounding villages and at schools, these are not guaranteed as these other bodies will always prioritise the maintenance of their own playing surface. A well maintained and good quality pitch can accommodate 3 times the number of matches that a poor quality pitch can accommodate. Given the predicted dryer summers, being able to start the season with a good quality pitch will become increasingly difficult without irrigation.

The cost of installing the Borehole with associated works is £18,000

The cost of irrigation equipment is £2,000

There is currently £110,000 S106 funding available for this type of project.

If the Council agrees to support the project it is recommended that Town Council draws down the funding and installs the borehole and the Saints draw down the funding the movable equipment.

The borehole is not moveable so if the Saints, at anytime in the future, decide to move; they could not take the borehole with them. If the council installs and owns the borehole it can recover the VAT whereas the Dereham Saints cannot.

7. To consider repainting Neatherd Play equipment.

At the last committee meeting the committee recommended leaving the equipment to revert to natural unpainted timber. This recommendation was not approved at full council and the matter referred back to committee to consider again with detailed costs and what warranty might be available, so that an estimate can be made as to how frequently the equipment may need painting in the future i.e. would this be a recurring cost every 2 years / 5 years / 10 years?

The cost of repainting would be £3,500 – the warranty period was not available at the time of writing but should be available at the meeting.