

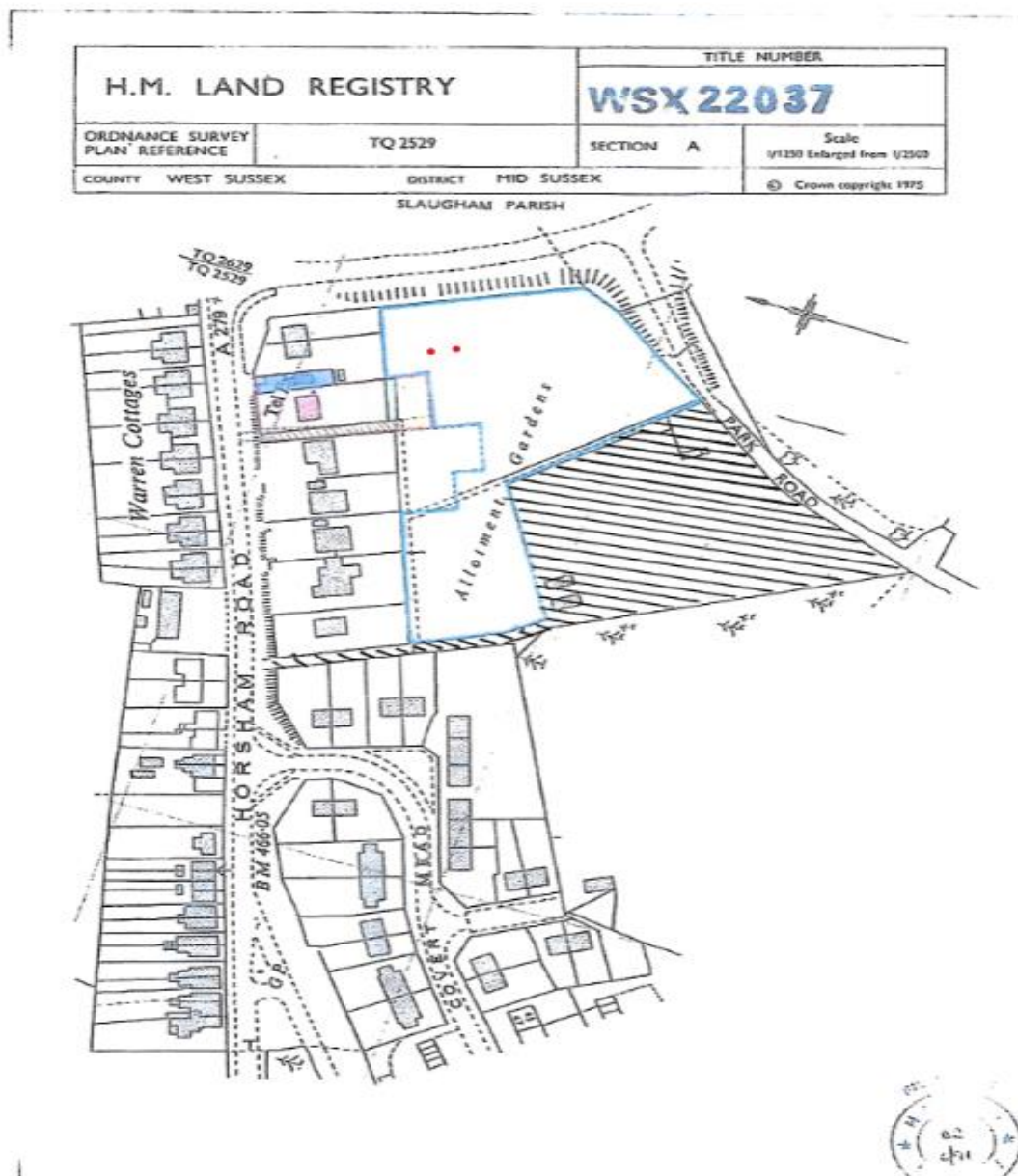
2nd July 2020 Full Council

Agenda Item Reference 6.2.1.5 St Dunstan's, Horsham Road, Handcross

Members are asked to consider acquisition of the land known as St Dunstan's, Horsham Road, Handcross.

Introduction

The 1.45 acre site is located behind the allotments on Horsham Road (*hatched area on the map below*) and is landlocked. The Estates department of St Dunstan's have spoken with this Committee and advised that they are prepared to dispose of the land, which is not operationally important to them. As a charity they are required to get best price for the land, which was valued at £15k, 18 months ago.



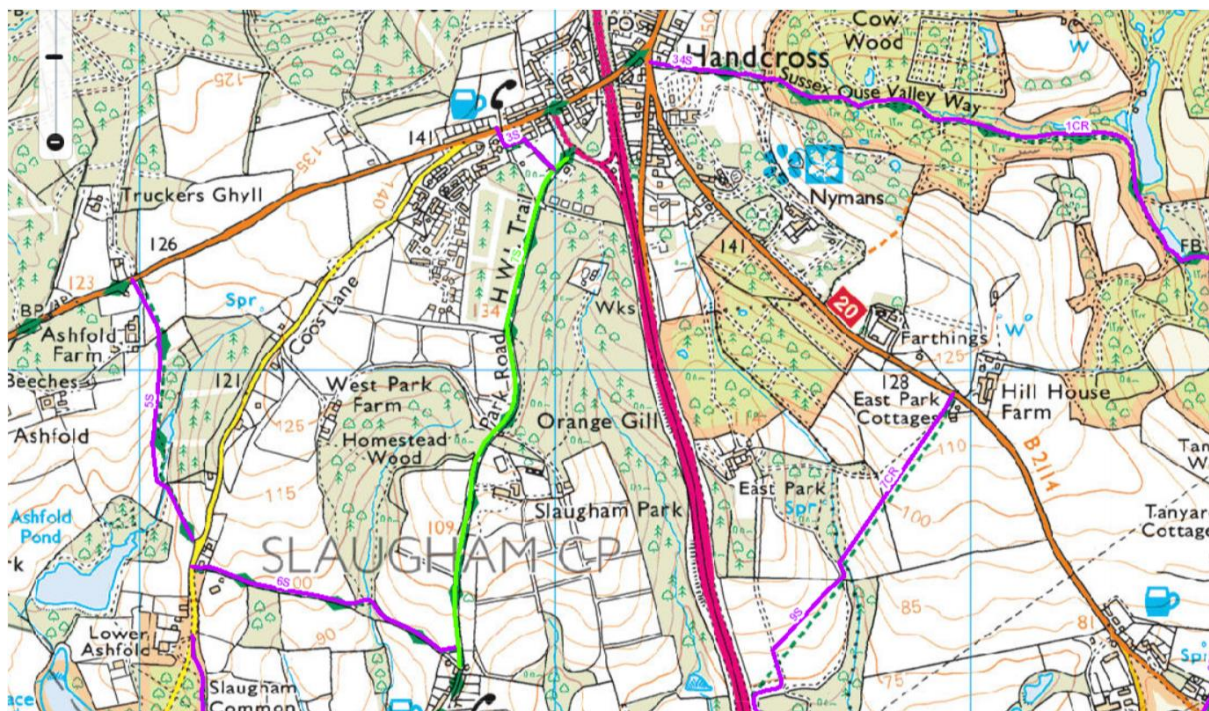
Purpose

The Recreation Committee would like to gauge the general consensus of the acquisition from members and seek Councils agreement to investigate the viability of this venture. If resolved in favour a working party will be formalised to look at the options available.

Initial Scope

The Recreation Committee are of the opinion that should the land be acquired it is designated as “open space” for the residents of Handcross and wider community to enjoy. This would be a welcomed asset to the village. It would offer the opportunity to link an already popular public footpath (see map below) as well as the potential to create new footpaths that service the village, further work would be required.

The Committee are not of the opinion that Handcross is in need of additional allotments, with the existing sites in Handcross and Warninglid offering 56 plots. The village does not currently require additional play space, or play equipment with three sites in close proximity.



Powers & Duties

General powers to acquire land and property stem from the Local Government Act 1972. (Section 20) *Land Power to acquire land by agreement, to appropriate, to dispose of Power to accept gifts of land. Local Govt Act 1972 ss 124, 126, 127 Local Govt Act 1972 s 139*

These enabled local authorities to acquire property for any of their functions, or for the benefit, improvement or development of their area. Local Authorities were empowered to acquire land notwithstanding that the land was not immediately required for that purpose.

The Local Government Act 2000 introduced additional ‘wellbeing’ powers which provide councils with the power to do anything which they consider is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of their area. This includes the power to incur expenditure, including land acquisition. There are more specific powers that support acquisitions for capital programmes or specific projects. Further work is required by The Clerk to investigate the financial regulations.

Funding

The parish council funds can be used for the purchase of land. As already mentioned, Councils have power under section 124 LGA 1972 to acquire land for the purpose of any of their functions (including the provision of open space) or for the benefit, improvement or development of their area. Unlike with disposals, there are no restrictions on what funds may be used, nor is there a requirement for a valuation, although in the interest of prudence I recommend that Council take advice from a chartered surveyor (not the vendor's agent, or a councillor).

The 2003 Regulations specifically provide that parish councils can incur capital expenditure from general (revenue) funds. So, the council can use part of the precept, or reserves, or income from hiring. However, members may want to prepare financial projections in order to consider whether it would be preferable to finance the purchase by a loan from the Public Works Loan Board.

Summary

This Committee would like to take the opportunity to investigate the acquisition as set out above. It is their view that this would be a welcomed addition to the southern end of the village that falls within the remit of the Parish.

They also feel that in light of COVID 19 that open space, walking, taking time to reflect in areas that can be enjoyed by many is of a premium and this would only add to the village for all to enjoy for future generations to come.

End