

Mrs S Rutherford



July 2017

For the attention of:  
Head of Legal Services  
Slough Borough Council  
St. Martin's Place  
51 Bath Road  
Slough  
SL1 3UE



Sir/Madam,

**Re: Disposal of land lying to the north of Norway Drive**

I am astonished to find a small notice in my local Press regarding Slough Borough Council's intended '**disposal**' of further recreational land to the north of Norway Drive.

I'm even more astonished that the notice has the audacity to mention the Local Government Act 1972. This Act has been totally disregarded and ignored by Wexham Court Parish Council for the last four years or so, and is now apparently also being disregarded by the borough council.

Frankly the Acting Head of Legal Services who has published this notice should already be aware that the disposal of this Parish Land is not 'legal' in any way.

The former Parish Council fought for many years to protect our Parish Land for the benefit of local residents and future generations, and long-term leases were secured in 2007 until 2032 (and subsequently renewable in accordance with the Law). This achievement was celebrated and relating information was published on the Parish Council's official website and in the Press.

Despite all this effort by the former Independent Councillors and the Clerk it didn't take long for a new Labour-controlled Parish Council to rescind the Agreement For Lease on the wedge of land next to the care homes for development, even though it had been promised to the people of Wexham "*in perpetuity*" by both the Parish and Borough councils. Objections were raised by members of the public, including a petition of 452 signatures (a copy of which

is in my possession and can be provided upon request), but this was ignored and the Council failed to carry out any consultation.

Indeed, residents have never been consulted, or even informed, about giving up *any* of our Parish Land.

It is no secret that the Labour Group have been wanting to surrender our land for development for some years, the true motive for which is unknown. However, at several Parish Council meetings during 2013-2015 I was assured that the remaining leases would be retained and NO further recreational land would be rescinded, surrendered or developed. These assurances were given to me and my fellow residents at **Public Meetings of Full Council**, and were Minuted by the Clerk. However, Minutes were frequently altered by the controlling council during this time to remove such references, and even Minutes that had been approved by Full Council and signed by the chairman were illegally altered and substituted during 2014.

Sadly I have recently learned that these assurances were completely bogus and the residents of Wexham have been deceived.

At the time of the public consultation regarding the development currently being built, on the land which was formerly under the Agreement For Lease, several questions were raised about the road that was shown on the plans as leading to the recreation park. We were told by the developers and the borough council representatives who were present that this would simply be a turning point, but it has now become clear that this road will be extended into our park to lead to more houses and they knowingly lied to the public.

More recently we were also promised that an expert would be visiting Wexham to assess and report the impact of all the development on the local infrastructure, and address the concerns raised, but it would appear that this was yet another lie.

The actions of the Labour Council in regard to our Parish Leases, and their behind-closed-doors policies, are clearly unethical and unlawful since it is the duty of a council to represent the best interests and the wellbeing of its residents. However, it has come to my notice that this Council has now rescinded yet another Parish Lease - again behind closed doors, again devoid of any public consultation, and with no consideration for our rights and needs.

We haven't even received any **statutory Annual Report** since 2012, the purpose of which should be to inform us of the Council's activities, contact details and financial performance (or lack of performance!), and should include

an invitation to residents to attend the Annual Parish Meeting. Further, no **statutory Annual Parish Meeting** has even taken place for several years. No 'due care and attention' is being exercised in accordance with Regulations and these councillors are consistently failing in their duty of care to the electorate... including spending all our public funds at their own convenience and with no accountability.

It has become crystal clear that the surrender of our Parish Leases has taken place simply to fund the out-of-control spending by the council. One has to wonder which individual councillors have personally gained from all of these secretive negotiations that have been taking place during the last four years??

I recall that a Resident Consultation Working Group was elected at the May 2014 Annual Meeting of the Council, but sadly the duties of this group of councillors did not appear to include any consultation in relation to our Parish Land. Instead the matter was discussed at Special Meetings and Part 2 meetings from which the public was excluded (and lacking a proper Resolution to do so).

The possible surrender of Parish Land north of Norway Drive was raised by a group of councillors and discussed at a Meeting of Full Council on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 2014. It was formally AGREED and MINUTED that **"this should be decided by Wexham residents and a full public consultation would take place before any final decision could be reached."** The council's failure to action this Resolution is nothing short of scandalous.

Development of this land will be detrimental to the wellbeing of local people since it will diminish the rights of the residents and our children who use the land for recreation and leisure. The public is being denied the right to local amenities and nobody is listening to us.

All of the above elements of the Parish Council's failings constitute breaches of the Law and the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

In addition to the above, I strongly object to the sale of this Parish Land on the following grounds:

- Development of this open green space would be detrimental to the rural environment of the area and detrimental to the wellbeing of the residents who use it and have enjoyed it for decades.
- Excavation of the land was attempted several decades ago resulting in subsidence of the surroundings due to gravel extraction and the presence of underground streams. Therefore any new excavation required for

development would be damaging and possibly dangerous to nearby properties. Both the Parish and Borough councils have been made fully aware of this fact.

- Any further development of our Parish Land would exacerbate existing problems in relation to the additional traffic and parking issues that are already evident on and around the Wexham Estate.
- The visual skyline would be spoiled, and the open green space available for community recreation would be minimalised. Approval of any development would therefore result in an unacceptable quality and degree of remaining amenity space and would be contrary to the needs of residents.
- Developments of the land would place an unacceptable additional burden on domestic services (water, sewers, etc.) which are already overstretched.
- Yet another large development would not in the best interests of the Wexham Court Estate and would not be in keeping with the character of the neighbourhood. Such developments are damaging to the overall aesthetic appearance of the area, alter the street scene, remove the existing spacious arrangement which was originally intended for the area and is enjoyed by the people residing here, and encroach on the rights of the said people.

The Local Plan for Slough and SBC's Planning Policy Guidelines take into account the requirements of neighbourhoods such as Wexham by applying various policies to prevent overdevelopment and loss of amenity space. These policies should therefore be fully considered, and thus prevent the sale of our land.

Recent decisions by the Planning Department in respect of approving large developments are eroding the identity and pleasant outlook of Wexham Court, and our historic Wexham Village has been completely engulfed and is unrecognisable.

Please formally register my objection to the sale of our Parish Land and ensure that the rights of the residents to enjoy this land is preserved for future generations as it has always been.



*Samantha Rutherford*

