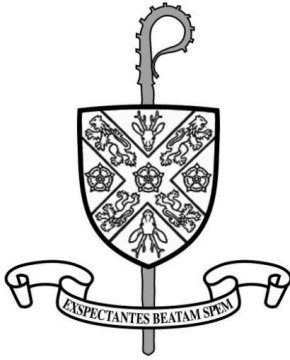


Diocese of Middlesbrough



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Statement on behalf of Mgr. Gerard Robinson - Parish Priest of St Joseph, Stokesley

We are aware that Mgr. Gerard Robinson has received a number of representations from Stokesley residents regarding the possible sale of land at St Joseph, Stokesley colloquially referred to as 'the Paddock'. To be clear, the sale of the Paddock is being explored at this time and preliminary discussions with the Parish Finance Committee have taken place. However, no final decisions have yet been made in this regard. Regretfully, we are aware that the Paddock has been advertised on some internet platforms. This should not have happened at this point in time and the advertisements have now been taken down.

The parishioners of St Joseph will be formally consulted about the possibility of a sale of the land. Once consultation has taken place with the parishioners, and any necessary consents have been obtained from the diocesan authorities, then a decision on whether to proceed with a sale be made.

It is disheartening that some of the representations received by Mgr. Robinson have been somewhat aggressive in nature. This is particularly disappointing as there is no proposal for the development of the land at this time and complaints are, therefore, being made against an, as yet, unspecified development. Most of the representations received suggest that the only acceptable use for this land is as open space, or as a nature reserve. Although this may be the outcome of the consultation in the Parish, alternative uses of the Paddock must also be considered. The Paddock could be put to valuable use as, for example, affordable housing, a residential care home, a health centre or many other uses of valuable benefit to the community. Accordingly, we suggest that to complain about the possible sale of the Paddock with no knowledge of how the land may be developed if a sale were to take place is premature. It is also unreasonable to deny the Parish the right to explore a sale of the land it owns and to consider how the receipts of any sale could secure the financial viability of the parish or to enable it to carry out its charitable objectives into the future.

A number of the representations received refer to a lack of public consultation. There is no requirement for any consultation with the public regarding the intention of the church to explore the sale the land. Public consultation is enshrined within the planning process. Therefore, the appropriate time for individuals to make representations regarding the potential development of the Paddock will be once a planning application is submitted to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and the nature of the proposed development is clear.

In summary: -

1. The Parish of St Joseph is exploring the possibility of a sale of the Paddock at this time and no decision has yet been made. The advertising of the land for sale was inappropriate and all marketing activity has now ceased.
2. Any objections made at this time are premature as it is entirely reasonable for the Parish to consider the best use of the Paddock for the future and the nature of any potential development of the Paddock is, as yet, unspecified.

3. Consultation with the parishioners of St Joseph's parish will take place before any final decision on the potential sale of the Paddock is made.
4. Public consultation will take place as part of the planning process should a sale to a developer ultimately take place and planning permission for a defined development sought.

Rev. Peter Warren
Chief Operating Officer

7 November 2025