

A. J. Bowring, Esq., Clerk to the  
Council, Wheatley Parish Council,  
34 Hillary Way, Wheatley,  
OXFORD.

County Hall  
Oxford OX1 1ND  
Telephone - Direct line (0865) 815

Switchboard (0865) 722422

A. T. Brown, C.B.E., D.L.  
*Chief Executive*

My reference  
JEO/SAT/LBS35/47

Your reference

Please ask for  
Mr. Orton

Date  
11th April 1983

Dear Sir,

Old Railway Cutting - Littleworth

At their meeting on the 29th March 1983, the Council's Land, Buildings and Supplies Sub-Committee considered the enclosed report on your Council's request to purchase/lease the Old Railway Cutting for the purposes of a nature reserve.

The Sub-Committee resolved;

- "(a) To accept in principle that the land be managed by the Wheatley Parish Council for the purposes of an informal nature reserve; and
- (b) To authorise their officers to enter into an appropriate agreement with the Parish Council, including provision for the appointment of a County Council representative on any management committee which is set up."

As you will see from the report, the County Council have been advised by the County Surveyor and Engineer that the history of the site, including the drainage problem, make it essential that the County Council should retain an interest in the land and should be responsible for any drainage or other problems that might occur.

I should be grateful if you could let me know if your Council is prepared to enter into a management agreement for the site. I shall then be able to consider with you the heads of terms of a management agreement.

Yours faithfully,

Chief Executive

Policy & Resources Committee  
LAND, BUILDINGS & SUPPLIES SUB-COMMITTEE  
RELATING TO PROPERTY

OLD RAILWAY CUTTING, LITTLEWORTH, WHEATLEY AND HORSPATH PARISHES

Joint Report by Chief Executive, Director of Planning & Property Services and County Surveyor & Engineer

1. The Littleworth railway cutting is held by this Sub-Committee, having been declared surplus to the requirements of the Environmental Committee in 1979- It has an area of 8.25 acres forming part of the bed and embankments of the former Oxford to Thame railway line (see plan attached). Sections of the cutting on either side of the area shown on the plan have already been declared surplus to Council requirements and disposed of - in the east to the Horspath Parish Council and in the west to the Wheatley Parish Council and adjoining owners.

2. Waste disposal on the site before 1974 caused some pollution problems which halted further use and required special drainage treatment. The site has been restored, although at a level substantially lower than the adjacent land. The eastern end of the site is crossed by a public footpath and has not been filled. The filling stopped short of the tunnel entrance at the western end of the site. This entrance has been blocked up.

3. When the Traffic & Works Sub-Committee declared the land surplus to their requirements, they were advised by the County Surveyor & Engineer as follows:

"...in late 1974, a serious pollution risk became apparent. Remedial works were immediately carried out and the site has now been restored and landscaped to form a recreation area."

"...because of the nature of the site, it is considered that the Council should retain ownership in order to monitor the long-term effects of the remedial works. However, the day-to-day management of the recreation area could best be handled by the Wheatley Parish Council who have asked that the site be leased to them".

In declaring the land surplus to their requirements, that Sub-Committee RECOMMENDED that the Land, Buildings & Supplies Sub-Committee grant a lease of the site to the Wheatley Parish Council.

4. Preliminary discussions with the Parish Council have culminated in a proposal from them that the land should be used as a nature reserve. The Chairman of the Sub-Committee, together with officers, discussed this proposal at a site meeting in January 1983 and the possibility of a joint management of the land was considered.

5. The County Surveyor & Engineer considers that the advice he gave in 1979 still holds good. The County Council should, therefore, seek to retain appropriate control over the activities which take place on the site and whilst it would be possible *for a lease* to be granted to the Parish Council, it might be preferable, in all the circumstances, for a less formal management agreement to be entered into. This could be for an agreed period, but would give the Parish Council a right to manage the land, the power to expend money on certain improvements, subject to the consent of the County Council, and could involve a County Councillor- being appointed to any management committee. It is not considered that the County Council should become involved in the provision of a recreation facility as this would not be a site of county-wide significance. The land in question is substantially in Horspath Parish and that Council have been invited to comment on the proposal. Their response will be reported orally.

6. If the Sub-Committee are minded to agree the proposals outlined in this report, they are RECOMMENDED:

- (a) to accept in principle that the land should be managed by the Wheatley Parish Council for the purposes of an informal nature reserve; and
- (b) to authorise their officers to enter into an appropriate agreement with the Parish Council, including provision for the appointment of a County Council representative on any management committee which is set up.

A. T. Brown  
Chief Executive  
J. F. Barrow  
Director of Planning & Property Services  
J. Peverel-Cooper  
County Surveyor & Engineer