

Statement from North Marston Parish Council

Dispute over the ownership of a parcel of land to the north of Quainton Road

North Marston Parish Council wishes to update residents on the outcome of the recent legal dispute concerning the land to the north of Quainton Road.

The Parish Council became involved in this matter following concerns raised by residents about the erection of Heras fencing around the land and, later, the belief that those claiming ownership did not hold a legitimate title. Acting on behalf of affected parishioners, the Parish Council formally challenged the registration of the land with HM Land Registry.

Following that challenge, HM Land Registry acknowledged that proper procedures had not been followed during the original registration and referred the case to the Property Chamber under a Court Order.

Throughout this process, the Parish Council has acted in what it believes to be the best interests of the village and its residents, seeking to protect land it considers belongs to the village. A mediation session, overseen by a senior land and property judge, was held in St Albans. Unfortunately, despite the Parish Council's best efforts, no settlement was reached at that time.

After receiving further legal advice, it became clear that continuing to court proceedings would involve significant additional costs and that, as the Council is not the registered owner, the likelihood of overturning the current registration in law was very low.

With this in mind, the Parish Council has reluctantly withdrawn from the court process. The registered owners will therefore retain title to the land, but negotiations have continued through each party's respective legal counsel, resulting in a partial settlement.

As part of this agreement, the registered owners have undertaken to:

- Plant a new hedge along the boundary,
- Remove the remaining Heras fencing,
- Reduce the existing hedges to a manageable height, and
- Reinstate the land drain and soakaway.

The Parish Council will be required to contribute to a proportion of the registered owners' legal costs, which will be assessed and approved by the judge.

Although this is not the outcome the Parish Council had hoped for, it has acted throughout in good faith, responding to residents' concerns and doing all it reasonably could to protect land it believes belongs to the village. Unfortunately, the high legal costs and the Parish Council's limited standing in law have made further pursuit of the matter untenable.

The Parish Council would like to thank residents for their patience and understanding throughout this difficult and complex process.