

**TITLE: Land at River Close, Mepal**

Committee: Finance & Assets Committee

Date: 26 March 2026

Author: Director Legal & Monitoring Officer

Report number: AA175

Contact officer: Maggie Camp, Director Legal & Monitoring Officer

[maggie.camp@eastcambs.gov.uk](mailto:maggie.camp@eastcambs.gov.uk), 01353 665555, Room 112A, The Grange, Ely

## **1.0 Issue**

- 1.1. Members are requested to consider and approve the licence of the allotment land adjacent to 10 River Close, Mepal, Cambridgeshire to Mepal Pantry.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1. Members are requested to:

- (i) Agree the licence to Mepal Pantry of the allotment land adjacent to 10 River Close Mepal on the terms set out in paragraph 4.2 of this report; and
- (ii) Authorise the Director Legal & Monitoring Officer to proceed accordingly.

## **3.0 Background/Options**

- 3.1. The land was historically let to the resident at Number 9 River Close for many years as allotment land at a peppercorn rent. The Council received notification that the resident was unable to use the land. At that time, the Council were not aware that the land was owned by the District Council.
- 3.2. The Council received notification that the new residents at Number 11 River Close had enclosed the land within their garden and were using it as an extension of their garden. When contacted by the Council, they said that they had undertaken enquiries with both the District Council and Sanctuary Housing as the land was unregistered and neither party had claimed ownership of the land.
- 3.3. The District Council made enquiries, and it appeared that the land had been missed from a first registration exercise with the Land Registry undertaken by the Council in 2010. The title deeds indicated that the District Council did own the land and an application for first registration of the land was subsequently made, which was successful.
- 3.4. A resident contacted the Director Legal in December 2024 to outline that the residents of Number 11 River Close had moved out of the property. In January 2025, the Director Legal and Open Spaces & Facilities Manager attended on site and ascertained that the property at Number 11 River Close was empty and for sale on the open market.
- 3.5. On the site visit, it was clear that a small fence had been erected to delineate the land owned by the Council from the land owned by Number 11. Following the site visit, the Open Spaces & Facilities Manager erected a fence around the land with

a gate inserted in the fence for maintenance. This would make clear to any prospective purchasers that the land was not included in the sale of Number 11 River Close.

- 3.6. In the meantime, the Director Legal contacted the resident who had made contact in December 2024 to confirm the actions taken and to ask if there would be anyone in the village who would be interested in using the land as an allotment. An initial enquiry was received from Mepal Makers, a local group formed specifically to tackle loneliness amongst the older rural male population, but this did not reach fruition.
- 3.7. Subsequent enquiries brought forward an expression of interest from Ruth Marley on behalf of Mepal Pantry, who confirmed that they would be interested in having the land on licence for use as an allotment.
- 3.8. By way of background, Mepal Pantry has been based in Mepal for the past 7 years and supports local families through the provision of bread, fresh fruit and vegetables via FareShare supermarket collections, alongside produce purchased directly from local farmers. The expression outlined that over the festive period 2025, they supported more than 150 visitors, responding to a significant increase in food waste and need.
- 3.9. Further, having access to land locally would allow Mepal Pantry to meaningfully develop their work by growing produce to directly support the community that they currently serve and their existing work would make it particularly suited to this purpose.

#### **4.0 Arguments/Conclusions**

- 4.1. The land is currently unused and is being maintained by the District Council. The land has previously been used as allotment land for a long time by a resident in Mepal. A licence to Mepal Pantry for use as allotment land would bring the land back into use and provide a significant benefit to the local community.
- 4.2. It is recommended that the licence should be on the basis that Mepal Pantry are responsible for the full maintenance of the land and the surrounding fence, the land would only be used as an allotment for the purposes of Mepal Pantry and on payment of a yearly peppercorn rent (£1). It is proposed that the licence would be for a period of one year in the first instance, but this could be extended on an annual basis, subject to the agreement of the Director Legal in consultation with the Chair of Finance & Assets Committee.
- 4.3. The District Council currently owns and maintains this area and if Members agree the licence of the land as requested, Mepal Pantry will be liable for future upkeep and maintenance. If the land were retained, the District Council would continue to be responsible for the maintenance of the land and the fence.

#### **5.0 Additional Implications Assessment**

5.1 In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

<b>Financial Implications</b>	<b>Legal Implications</b>	<b>Human Resources (HR) Implications</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>

<b>Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)</b>	<b>Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA)</b>	<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>

## **6.0 Appendices**

Appendix 1: Location plan – showing the land edged in red.

## **7.0 Background documents**

Email correspondence with Mepal Pantry and Legal file reference 005781.





St Mary's Church

Cemetery

6.3m

Mepal and Wilcham  
C of E (VC)  
Primary School

Pond

River Close

River Close

Brangehill Lane

Wist

Wistow Rd

### East Cambridgeshire District Council

Area marked in red = 134.82m2

Date: 12/01/2026

Scale: 1:1,250



