

## Marriage across the denominations

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## How refugees are helped in the city

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# He suggested it. Now it's set to happen for real

**THE Archbishop of York planted the seed in our minds. Now we're doing what he suggested.**

Our diocese is responding to a challenge thrown down by the archbishop to put our money where our mouth is over much-needed low-cost housing in Portsmouth.

The Most Rev Dr David Hope suggested that dioceses should sell land more cheaply to housing associations that were prepared to build affordable family homes. He was speaking two years ago in the inaugural Bill Sargent Memorial Lecture during a visit to the city.

Now our diocese has linked up with the Portsmouth Housing Association (PHA) – which former Portsmouth priest Bill Sargent helped to launch – to help provide 30 low-cost homes in Fratton.

Our diocese hopes to sell just under an acre of land behind St Mary's Vicarage to PHA at less than the full market value. PHA would like to build a mixture of two, three and four-bedroomed flats and houses there. They would be offered to some of the 5,000 people on the council's housing list. Some could be helped to part-own their own homes for the first time.

Dr Hope said: "This sounds like a great project and has my full backing. I'm delighted that a suggestion I made two years ago has been picked up by the diocese and could become a reality."

City council planners are considering building plans drawn up by award-winning architect Roger Boyce. At a recent planning meeting, the council's architecture panel thought the plans were the best of their type they had considered.

PHA's planning application will include suggestions that residents could take part in a car share club, in line with council policy on sustainable travel. The significant trees on the site and as much of the green



The model of the planned development and (top right) Dr David Hope, Archbishop of York

# GREAT IDEA, ARCHBISHOP!

space as possible will be preserved.

Our diocese's head of property, Andrew Robinson, said: "As one of the founders of PHA, Bill saw the desperate need for affordable homes for the poorest families in the city. He saw that poverty was blighting their lives and was determined to restore their God-given dignity by providing them with proper homes. That's still the case today – 30 years later.

"The archbishop's suggestion came as a challenge, as Charity Commission rules state we should

aim to get the maximum return on any assets we hold. But we can satisfy them that this is consistent with what the Church stands for."

The land is 'glebe' land, which means it should help to provide income for Church of England clergy. However, because it has been left unused for more than 20 years, it has been providing no income to our diocese for this purpose.

Our diocese could have sold the land to a private developer, but that may have resulted in a larger number of more expensive homes being

crammed onto the site. The money from this sale will be used to help pay for clergy around our diocese, and to further ministry at the nearby St Mary's Church, Fratton.

Canon Bob White, vicar of St Mary's, said: "People might be upset about losing a green area. But the field is permanently locked and is the cause of more problems than advantages.

"We're very excited about these proposals, which show the Church being prepared to make sacrifices to help the poorest in our city."

## Our leaner structures and focus on mission

CHANGES to the way our diocese is structured will see a reduction in bureaucracy and a renewed emphasis on mission from the new year.

A new Diocesan Board of Mission will be created on January 1, bringing together the work of evangelism, social responsibility and spirituality for the first time. It will support parishes and deaneries in those areas and initiate diocesan-wide projects to help proclaim the gospel and build the kingdom of God.

Its three principal officers – the Ven Peter Hancock, director of mission; the Rev Peter Lippiett, spirituality adviser; and the Rev Nick Ralph, social responsibility adviser – have worked as a mission team since February.

The new board will oversee functions previously undertaken by our diocese's Council for Social Responsibility and Council for Mission and Unity. The former will continue as a sub-group of the Board of Mission, while the work of the latter will be taken up by the new board.

A Eucharist to mark the creation of the new board and celebrate the work of both councils in the past will be held at All Saints' Church, Commercial Road, Portsmouth at 10am on January 21. All are welcome.

The Diocesan Board of Finance will this month have its final meeting as a separate body. The Bishop's Council will become our diocese's Board of Finance from January 1, reducing the amount of bureaucracy within the diocese.

A smaller finance committee, including representatives from all deaneries, will take on the day-to-day work formerly done by the board and its executive committee.