

Appendix 3

West Adderbury Residents Association Consultation response

Dear Councillors

For many years, residents of West Adderbury have felt that their concerns and needs were being ignored in favour of the majority in East Adderbury and Twyford. Despite having had (at one point) six West Adderbury councillors on the Parish Council, issues affecting West Adderbury have always been decided by this majority, without regard for the views of West Adderbury itself. For example, when West Adderbury asked the rest of the parish via a parish poll to support the use of some Section 106 funds to address speeding traffic on Milton, Berry Hill, Horn Hill and Cross Hill Roads, the residents of Twyford and East Adderbury instead voted to continue using these funds to develop sports facilities on Milton Road – despite the fact that this money came from new developments in West Adderbury.

It is clear to WARA that a single Parish Council cannot possibly effectively represent all three areas of the parish, and that since West Adderbury is the rural minority our needs will always come last. In desperation, nearly 200 West Adderbury residents signed a petition asking CDC to reinstate West Adderbury Parish Council, which co-existed happily with the old East Adderbury Parish Council up until the early 70s. These residents asked CDC to consider whether the governance of West Adderbury “reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area, and is effective and convenient”. Hundreds of pages of evidence were supplied during the first stage of the consultation to support the view that such governance could only be achieved by reinstating a separate Parish Council for West Adderbury.

Despite this, the CGR Working Group appears to have made the decision very early on not to reinstate our Parish Council. This view is supported by the Chair of the Working Group’s statement at the Council meeting on 19 October 2020: “To be absolutely clear, the second consultation which we have to have by law will be on warding or the number of councillors. It will not be another consultation on separation. That has already been decided.”

The basis of this decision appears to relate simply to the absolute number of votes and the percentage in favour of and against separation of the parish. This is evidenced by the Working Group Chair stating that “consultation had clearly shown a majority against separation”, and in Steve Jordan’s letter of 21 October 2020, which states “Given the high percentage of responses that did not support the proposal, the Working Group unanimously agreed that separation of the existing parish council should not take place.”

According to the law and guidance on CGRs, the principle criteria to be considered by the Working Group should have been the identity and interests of West Adderbury, and whether the current arrangements are effective and convenient. There is nothing whatsoever in the Working Group’s report to suggest that any of these criteria were considered. Instead, the Working Group has looked at the parish of Adderbury as a whole and has made a decision based solely upon the views of the majority.

In other words, in response to a petition which stated that the needs and wishes of West Adderbury are always outvoted by the majority in East Adderbury and Twyford, the Working Group ran a poll in which – surprise, surprise – the wishes of West

Adderbury were outvoted by the majority in East Adderbury and Twyford. As far as we can see, no further work or discussion has taken place. In its report, the Working Group does not suggest that West Adderbury does not have its own identity, or that governance in West Adderbury is already effective and convenient; these matters were simply not considered. The Working Group has made a decision based on a vote, in which it did not confirm whether respondents actually lived in the parish, or even in the county. While it is open to the Working Group to consider the opinions of the wider parish, these opinions should not have been given the same or greater weight than the principle criteria set out in law. It seems incredible to us that Councillors cannot see the problem with the approach they have taken.

To add insult to injury, the Working Group Chair went on to opine that “The group felt that the real problem was the feeling that they were not being represented by the parish council despite the fact that they always had a pretty good number of councillors who lived in West Adderbury”. In addition to making very little sense, this statement completely ignores the many comments submitted by West Adderbury residents, and suggests that the Working Group knows better than we do what the “real problem” is.

In failing to address the concerns WARA has raised over the past months with the way in which the CGR has been handled, CDC has lost the confidence of West Adderbury residents. We simply do not believe that CDC has considered what would be best for West Adderbury, as we asked them to. The Working Group has let us down.

With regard to the proposal to ward the existing Parish Council, we note that the CGR guidance states “Warding may be appropriate where the parish encompasses a number of villages with separate identities, or a village with a large rural hinterland”. There is no minimum requirement in terms of number of residents for a ward to be set up. However, WARA believes that setting up a new ward for West Adderbury would simply formalise our status as a minority, since inevitably CDC would not propose an even split of councillors between wards. While we would have a designated number of councillors representing West Adderbury, these councillors would always be outvoted by councillors representing East Adderbury and Twyford.

WARA does not believe that warding is the answer to the serious and ongoing governance issues in West Adderbury. However, should CDC be minded to proceed with warding, WARA suggests that the ward boundary be along the Sor Brook and that the wards be known as West Adderbury and East Adderbury/Twyford. A larger number of parish councillors would perhaps be beneficial in bringing new ideas and views to the existing council, which has seen the same small core of councillors run the parish for over 20 years.

Best wishes to you all for 2021,

The WARA Committee
(Kevin Underwood, Allan Ziff, Denise Mobbs, Tom Osborne, Sue Bradley)

Response from Adderbury Parish Council on the Community Governance Review Second Stage of the Consultation Process

At the first stage of the consultation process, Adderbury Parish Council (APC) objected to a split of the village to form a new parish in the west and these reasons were stated in its response to Cherwell District Council (CDC).

The Parish Council was pleased that Cherwell District Council's Community Governance Review Working Group agreed that a split was not in the best interests of the community and that the Parish Council of Adderbury should remain as one Body.

However, the Parish Council does not support the further proposals by the Working Group that the Parish be split into two Wards and the number of Parish Councillors be increased. Some of the reasons for not supporting the original proposal still apply. The reasons for not supporting the specific proposal for two Wards are as follows:

- West Adderbury residents are well represented on the existing Council. There are currently seven members of the Parish Council who live in West Adderbury. These Councillors work hard for the whole community of Adderbury, not just the part of the village they live in.
- At the last election in 2016, eight of the eleven elected Councillors were from West Adderbury and the number since has ranged from seven to four. The most recent four vacancies have been filled by two residents from West Adderbury and two from elsewhere. To create a Ward system would restrict who could stand for vacancies, which does not seem democratic and is not the case at Parish Council level generally.
- The Parish Council always engages with residents from West Adderbury, just as it does from elsewhere in the Parish. In the last two to three years alone the PC has worked with them on many projects including traffic calming, biodiversity, Community Speedwatch, the sports pitches and community pavilion on Milton Road, to name but a few.
- The Parish Council, has recently consulted with residents of the village on the proposed traffic calming measures in West Adderbury. These are two chicanes on Milton Road and Berry Hill Road and a closure of the Milton Road/Horn Hill Road junction to stop traffic speeding into the High Street. The Community Speedwatch Scheme also operates in West Adderbury as well as other areas of the village.
- CDC has referred to Kidlington Parish as an example of Wards. However this is not comparable as Kidlington is far larger than Adderbury (being about 15000 residents) but Adderbury is only around 3000, which is the equivalent of one Ward for Kidlington.
- The Parish Council already has a system of 'Areas of Responsibility' by which Councillors take note of their allocated area in the village, albeit perhaps less formally than as a 'Ward Member'.
- APC does not see any positive reason for having two Wards and believes it will be detrimental. Those who have vociferously campaigned for their separate council may simply see it as a version of that and this will cause disruption and argument at APC meetings if some councillors think their opinions should carry more weight since it is 'their Ward'.

- The area of West Adderbury is not big enough to form a Ward. If there are two Wards this could only be formed by including residents from other areas of Adderbury which have never been considered as West Adderbury. The PC does not think this is acceptable.
- In the first consultation the residents of Adderbury were very clear that they did not want the village to be split and they wanted the village to remain a united Parish. There was an overwhelming majority in support of the existing Parish Council. Creating an unnecessary Ward system would be contrary to those wishes.
- The suggestion of Wards was never part of the original petition and therefore should not be considered. The original petition had no intention of extending West Adderbury or of setting up a system to work under the existing Parish Council. Cherwell District Council are in danger of making changes which were not requested under the CGR petition system and also of ignoring the clear wishes of the majority of the electorate of Adderbury.
- This is also shown in the suggestion of using the A4260 as a boundary. CDC have said this was suggested by just eight of the 739 responders to the first consultation. This is completely insufficient a number to give any credence to this idea.
- The lack of support for WARA and its proposals was demonstrated by the low number of responses in support of the petition's ideas in the first consultation process. The number of people supporting the original proposal was less than the number of people who signed the petition to call for the CGR in the first place.
- APC believes there is no mandate for any changes to the Governance of this Parish and that has been clearly demonstrated by the responses to the first consultation. Only 181 residents supported the first consultation request. CDC have accepted this was only 24.7% of those who responded and it is only 7% of the whole electorate of Adderbury. Therefore CDC now risks imposing changes which have not been requested nor supported in any way and would in fact, be contrary to the wishes of the majority of the electorate of Adderbury.

The Parish Council urges Cherwell District Councillors to listen to the clear wishes of the majority of residents within the Parish of Adderbury and to recommend that the Parish Council remains unchanged.

The Parish Council believes that if a separate Wards with the Parish Council are established, the whole community will be the poorer for their creation.

24 November 2020