Adderbury
Parish Council

Response from Adderbury Parish Council on the Community Governance Review

Adderbury Parish Council (APC) is against this split of the village to form a new parish in the west. These are the reasons why Councillors believe a separate Parish would not be a good idea or benefit the community.

- The area of the west of Adderbury is not separate, it is part of the existing village of Adderbury. It does not have a clear identity nor any central focal point to delineate it as a village. There is a clear centre for the whole of Adderbury village as being the area around the Church and High Street and the Green. Despite WARA recalling the previous 2 parishes (prior to 1971) they still had shared facilities like the Church, schools and meeting places.

- There is no clear separate geographical identity for west Adderbury. Someone crossing the Sor Brook would not believe themselves to be in a separate village.

- The current Parish Council supports many village organisations, financially and practically, such as Morris Men and Woman with Day of Dance, Party in the Park, Photographic Society, Adderbury Library, Christopher Rawlins Primary School, Adderbury Park Football Club, Adderbury Institute and many more. Many Councillors also support village societies and attend events for village charities like FOCAL and FOSMA and WFAC. These are events, clubs and societies which spread across the whole community.

- There is no separate identifiable community of West Adderbury. There are no separate West Adderbury societies or groups and no separate community events have been held. The west of Adderbury is not socially or politically distinct from the rest of Adderbury in any way at all. Both East and West Adderbury do have a good community cohesion – it is a wonderful village for community events which are shared by all residents. It is untrue to claim as the petitioners do that the "residents of west Adderbury have no sense of belonging" or that APC "prevents West Adderbury from fulfilling its potential as a community". The residents of west Adderbury are already doing this as part of the community of Adderbury as a whole and the Parish Council is supporting them.

- The petitioners claim they speak for 250 west Adderbury residents who are its 'members'. However, by their own admission, there are 750 residents in the west of Adderbury so they will still be a minority view and cannot therefore be speaking from a majority position. Also this group has no evidence that it does speak even for 250 residents as there appears to be no constitution, no membership list and no public meetings have been held for consultation to assess what residents in west Adderbury might want. Therefore claims that west Adderbury residents 'do not share a vision of the future with APC' have no evidence behind them. In fact the APC's vision statement for all the community is clearly stated in the Adderbury Neighbourhood Plan and this received resounding support from residents at the Referendum, suggesting the majority of residents do support the APC's vision. Many of those residents are from west Adderbury and in fact the Neighbourhood Plan Chairman and the majority of the members of the steering group are residents of West Adderbury.

- The Parish Council has twelve Councillors who are from all parts of the village. They are all hard working volunteers, who represent the interests of all of Adderbury, irrespective of which particular part they live in. WARA has claimed the current PC is not representative of the population of west Adderbury. This is contradicted by the fact that the PC always has a good number of west Adderbury residents as councillors. At the last election in 2016, 8 out of 11 councillors were from west Adderbury and in the last two council terms

(from May 2018) the number has ranged from 7 to 4, which there currently are. Therefore the claims made by the petitioners that "APC does not allow west Adderbury residents a voice" or "to solve their own problems and meet their own needs" or west Adderbury residents "have no stake in deciding their own future" are simply not true. West Adderbury has always been very well represented on the APC.

- The current Parish Council has an excellent working relationship with Oxfordshire County Council, Cherwell District Council, Thames Valley Police and many other organisations which support the Council's work on behalf of the whole community.

- The existing Parish Council is pro-active in working with residents to benefit the community and there are a number of successful on-going projects in the village, supported by many residents who are actively involved. These include traffic calming, Adderbury Lakes Local Nature Reserve, the Biodiversity village project, the Forest School project with Christopher Rawlins Primary School and the Milton Road community pavilion and sports pitches. All of these were initiated by the current Parish Council and create many benefits for the residents of the whole village.

- The Adderbury Neighbourhood Plan (ANP) was also initiated by the Parish Council and involved residents from all parts of the village working together to produce a Plan. The ANP includes policies specific to the west of Adderbury as well as those which apply to the whole community. As stated above the ANP team, including its Chairman were largely from west Adderbury.

- One of WARA's claims is that the PC has not progressed any traffic calming in Adderbury, especially none in west Adderbury. However the Parish Council is working with the County Highways Authority to: paint new road markings; investigate the closure of the western arm of the Oak Tree junction to reduce traffic speed into the village on Milton Road and potential chicanes for Milton Road and Berry Hill Road; provide 30mph repeater signs; and move some of the VAS signs. The PC has also purchased a fixed camera to record those who speed in the village and we use volunteers as part of the 'Adderbury Speedwatch' initiative, in conjunction with Thames Valley Police. The majority of these measures are in west Adderbury and many have already been instigated.

- The Parish Council provides support to local residents who live within the flood plain, which includes the sourcing of sandbags and checking on residents who are affected by adverse weather. Councillors are also recruiting volunteers to be 'Snow Wardens' for the village to clear footpaths in poor weather and the Council has established an efficient system for the refilling of grit bins in the winter. These measures include areas of west Adderbury.

- Adderbury Cemetery is managed by the Parish Council. WARA have circulated rumours to the contrary, but there is plenty of space for further burials and the Parish Council has managed this well. The Parish Clerk has put a statement on the PC website as the rumours were completely untrue.

- Parish Council meetings are well run and give all residents of the Parish the opportunity to address the Councillors regarding issues which affect them and the community. All residents who contact the Clerk, Chairman or any Councillor receive an answer and action is taken where possible. Residents are never ignored. The petitioners have suggested that this is not the case. However they fail to point out that any disruption at meetings in the past was due to their own actions. Some members of the group calling themselves WARA have engaged in a long campaign against the APC for a number of years. This has involved two applications for JRs,

complaints against councillors to the CDC Monitoring Officer and unfounded allegations to the PC's auditors. WARA still refer to such actions despite the fact that they have all been firmly dismissed by the authorities applied to at every level. This is clearly vexatious on WARA's part. They also claim the APC has not taken notice of the Hoey Ainscough Report but the APC agreed an 'action plan' soon after the Report and has followed the advice of the Report, including tightening up procedures at meetings and using Standing Orders properly and effectively.

- The Lucy Plackett Playing Field (LPF) was bequeathed to the 'youth and others of the Parish of Adderbury'. At that time there were two Parish Councils which then had to work together. The current Parish Council sees no benefit in returning to this sort of arrangement for its continued maintenance. Current Councillors spend a lot of time looking after the Lucy Plackett Playing Field, including undertaking minor works like cutting back bushes, watering newly planted trees, litter picking, inspecting the play area and zip wire. This may be a potential extra expense for both parishes and it may also be a cause of delays if agreement has to be achieved at every decision.

- The issue with the Lucy Plackett Playing Field and the sharing of one facility across two parishes also applies to other areas such as the Church, Methodist Hall, Adderbury Institute, Adderbury Cemetery, library, School and community events such as Day of Dance, Party in the Park, School and Church fete (held in the Lucy Plackett) and the Community Days. How would use of these facilities and the fundraising for these village events be affected? The PC does not believe there can be any benefit in such a case.

- There is potential for an increase in Council Tax for all residents of the Parish – the splitting of responsibilities will not automatically translate into an exact split of costs. Often it is better for costs to be shared across a larger number of residents. Other costs may also occur for instance the upkeep of the historic Friends Meeting House (FMH) and The Pound, both in the west of Adderbury. The FMH has to be maintained by the Parish and as a Grade 2* listed building, the work can be costly. In the last 5 years the APC has spent approximately £45.000. Would a smaller Parish of west Adderbury have enough funds to provide for such upkeep?

- The case for a new West Adderbury Parish Council is based mainly on the grand gestures of stopping the Milton Road project and implementing traffic calming measures, on which the Parish Council is currently working with OCC to achieve (see above and the statement on the PC website for more details). The petitioners promoting the CGR have said they would like to use the Milton Road site for community uses 'better suited to the residents of West Adderbury', but with no details. However, this project is for the whole of the community of Adderbury and the land has been provided for all of Adderbury to use for 'Sports pitches and a community facility' under clear legal S106 agreements. There has been considerable support for this facility in two Parish Polls and as a policy in the Adderbury Neighbourhood Plan, including from many residents in the west of Adderbury who want the land to be used to provide an exciting venue for village sport and for the whole community to use for a range of activities.

- In their justification for the CGR, there does not appear to be any consideration of the many other day-to-day tasks carried out by Councillors; meetings with residents, meetings with contractors, litter picking, checking play equipment, liaising with other bodies, arranging the installation/filling of grit bins, arranging repairs/replacement of street furniture, ensuring dog bins are emptied…plus many more. This lack of forethought could have a serious detrimental impact on residents of all areas of the Parish, not just in the west of Adderbury.

- There is no evidence that the proposers of a West Adderbury Parish Council have considered the costs of running a Parish Council, including staffing costs, or the many polices they would need for employing a Clerk and how services such as grass cutting, weed control, dog waste collection, litter collection, plus many more, would be accounted for and split between the two. This would all take time and effort from Councillors willing to undertake such matters.

- In their most recent submission to the Consultation Working Group the Petitioners have claimed:
  "The issues of real concern to most people in West Adderbury are –
  The dangerous growth of speeding traffic,
  The costly plans for a new sports and community project unrelated to local need,
  The threat of overdevelopment,
  The provision of adequate drainage to protect homes from flood risks,
  The lack of a decent, dignified burial provision".

  In answer to these suggestions the Parish Council has shown above that:
  APC is working with the relevant authorities and the community to deal with traffic issues.
  The plans for a new sports and community project are based on local need. CDC has provided both the land and funds towards this project through S106 legal agreements with developers. If there were no local need then such agreements would not be possible.

  The matter of potential 'overdevelopment' can only be dealt with through the Planning process and APC always engages with CDC when applications come forward.

  Adequate drainage is a matter for OCC and the APC have been working with OCC Highways in particular on this issue. Also APC has a Flood Risk Policy and procedure in place, as mentioned above, and has worked hard in the past to ensure residents' property is safeguarded against flooding.

  Finally, there is ample room in Adderbury's cemetery for "a decent, dignified burial" and it is both untrue and insensitive of WARA to have claimed otherwise.

- The proposed divide of the village would not be as straightforward and easy as the proposers are suggesting and the Parish Council believes there would be no benefit to the residents of the community. It is not clear that the proposers have the best interests of residents at heart. They merely appear to be focussed on two main projects and have wrongly criticised the Parish Council on other issues including Adderbury Cemetery. There appears nothing positive in their campaign which has been not only negative but spiteful and vicious. It is difficult to see how the petitioners believe such a campaign can advance their cause with residents. Nor does the Parish Council believe that, should a separate council be set up it could lead to harmony or "promote cohesion for the whole of Adderbury", as the petitioners have suggested.

The Parish Council believes that if a separate Parish Council for the west of the village is established, the whole community will be the poorer for its creation.

21 August 2020