

St. Helen Without Parish Council

Clerk Anna Clarke, 13 Beech Close, Wootton, Abingdon, Oxon, OX13 6DQ
Telephone/Fax 01865 321555 *E-mail* clerkshwpc@gmail.com

10th February 2017

By email to:

Mr Nigel Warner – Abingdon-On-Thames Town Council

Dear Mr Warner

Request by Abingdon Town Council for a Community Governance Review

Thank you for your letter dated 6th February 2016. As you acknowledge, its contents are indeed controversial. You will be aware that we have been trying since December 2015 to discuss with your Council the issue of the inclusion of part of our parish in proposals for your proposed Neighbourhood Plan (section E as highlighted, i.e. part of zone B on your original map). This land has already been agreed for housing development in the Vale's Local Plan Part 1. You are now also looking to further expand your parish boundaries to include section F, Shippon and Dalton Barracks.

Consultation with you [also including Radley and Sunningwell] has not been possible despite numerous requests and you have now taken this action unilaterally without notice of any form to St Helen Without Parish Council. You will understand, therefore, that members of our Council unanimously regard your action as not in the public interest of local residents; and, is a thinly veiled attempt to appropriate an area with considerable future potential in relation to development and CIL generation.

It will, of course, ultimately be the residents who decide on the outcome should your request for a Community Governance Review be approved. Please inform your Councillors that we take the view that the expense involved in conducting such a review, at a time when all public services are under extreme pressure and restricted local authority budgets are resulting in services being heavily reduced or cut, is not good management of public funds.

We will be making representations to the VWHDC that the grounds upon which you base your request for a review are inaccurate and ill-informed. As evidenced by the considerable audience attending a recent meeting to discuss our intention to develop a neighbourhood plan jointly with Wootton Parish Council, our residents value the rural status of Shippon and wish to preserve it.

The rationale for your request for a Community Governance Review applies as much to any village with a border contiguous with Abingdon as it does for Shippon and we have therefore taken the precaution of advising those villages accordingly. In the case of Shippon it is, sadly, the fact that Abingdon, with the possible exception of Waitrose and Tesco, is not the focal point of our residents for services and infrastructure, given the general lack of a vibrant town centre and appalling traffic management.

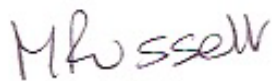
The Dalton Barracks site, which is all within the Green Belt, should preclude development on the airfield. If the main area of the site within the security fence becomes available for re-development in 2029, and the military housing comes onto the open market, then this area will require its own services and infrastructure. It is, therefore, far from logical to consider

amending the boundary at this time and, following a complete boundary review by the Vale in 2014, not justified.

Naturally we reject your assertion that "...a change of the boundary should be seriously considered in order to provide for effective and convenient representation of local residents at parish level and the boundary as suggested would better reflect the identities and interests of the affected community". This statement ignores the fact that local representation is at the heart of local governance arrangements at parish level and does not bode well for the fate of Shippon residents if your proposals are successful.

We believe that given the proposals for unitary governance in Oxfordshire, which is under public consultation, the parish structure and its focus on locality is of critical importance. We will therefore be advising our residents accordingly.

Yours sincerely



Madeleine Russell

Chair, St Helen Without Parish Council

Enc.

cc.

David Hill, Chief Executive – South Oxon & Vale of White Horse DCs

Ed Vaizey, MP for Wantage

Nicola Blackwood, MP for Oxford West & Abingdon

Cllr Richard Webber

Cllr Catherine Webber

Wootton PC

Sunningwell PC

Radley PC

Marcham PC

Drayton PC

St Helen Without Parish Boundary

