

17th January 2022

VWHDC Community Governance Review (2022)

Wootton Parish Council does not want to suggest any changes to the present boundaries of the parish. Until the late nineteenth century the hamlets of Wootton and Old Boars Hill were outlying parts of Cumnor parish. Since then they have formed a separate parish with the same boundaries as today and over the years have developed into a single large village of some 3,000 inhabitants, centred around the Besselsleigh Rd shops, the Wootton and Dry Sandford Community Centre and the Bystander Public House. Although different parts of the village, such as Old Wootton, Boars Hill, and the B4017 corridor, have their distinctive social and architectural characters, the village is a well-integrated community as is evidenced in the replies to the questionnaire sent out in preparing our Joint Neighbourhood Plan with St Helen Without (made December 2019). There was a strong feeling of belonging to a neighbourhood and a strong satisfaction with the area as a place to live. This sense of community has been enhanced by the lack of significant housing development in the parish since 1970, apart from the relatively small Deerhurst Park. While there will be some development over the next ten years - notably a new housing estate on the old industrial park - there will not be a substantial increase in population and little change to the village's existing character. Wootton is a medium-sized rural parish with a diverse social, economic and, to a growing degree, ethnic profile, and the Wootton PC see no reason why its boundaries should be altered under the Community Governance Review. It also feels that the views of this diverse community are well represented on the current Parish Council which has a positive gender, age and work experience balance and has ambitions to enhance further the parish's pleasant and welcoming environment in the coming years.

Wootton Parish Council, however, would like to suggest a change of name to the Wootton and Boars Hill Parish Council. There are several reasons for this.

- 1) It would distinguish the Wootton/ Abingdon Council from the other Wootton Parish Council in Oxfordshire and the host of other Woottons in England (in Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, and so on).
- 2) It seems strange that when the original council was established in the late nineteenth century that the proposed name was not adopted, given that the parish was formed from two hamlets and Boars Hill was developing fast as place to live for affluent Oxford dons, such as Sir Arthur Evans.
- 3) It has been brought to our attention that some residents of Boars Hill feel that the Wootton Parish Council does not sufficiently reflect their interests.

It must be said immediately that the current Wootton Parish Council feels that this characterization is unfair. The Parish Council has gone out of its way to ensure that the feelings of Boars Hill residents are articulated in our representations to external bodies, especially the VWHDC, and that the measures we have taken and are taking to improve the parish's aspect and amenities benefit all



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parts of our community. In the case of our most recent initiatives - the better provision of litter bins, the installation of easy-to-access defibrillators, our rewilding initiative, and the design and location of the village sculptures (our ongoing Wootton Art Project, financed by VWHDC), Boars Hill's needs have not been neglected. It need hardly be said, in addition, that residents of Boars Hill use the Wootton and Dry Sandford Community Centre and the new Wootton Community Park, attend St Peter's Church (the parish church whose boundaries are coterminous with the civil parish), and send children to Wootton Primary School, all institutions and/or facilities which are financially supported directly or indirectly from Council grants.

Nevertheless, the Parish Council recognizes that residents of Boars Hill have developed an understandable pride in maintaining the special visual aspect of their area and that some among them feel that the area's unique heritage is not fully appreciated by other sections of the village. Renaming the Parish Council would be one way of demonstrating that Boars Hill is a much-loved part of the village, whose artistic and intellectual history gives it an important place in the life of the county and the country, not just Wootton. Renamed or not, the Parish Council looks forward to working closely with the Boars Hill Association to maintain the beauty and character of this special area. It hopes, too, that a member of the Association will be willing to come on the Council and help us carry forward our vision of turning the entire village into a community that would have warmed the heart of Matthew Arnold and all the other poets and writers forever associated with this unique part of our parish.

In summary, Wootton Parish Council do not want the boundary to be changed and we feel that given the Neighbourhood Plan has been made and covers the whole of our parish and that of St Helen Without PC it would be incredibly complicated to amend any boundary. However, we would like the Parish to be renamed to be more inclusive of all the areas of our Parish and to differentiate ourselves from other similarly named parishes.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Quigley
Clerk to the Parish