

East Hagbourne Parish Council

Statement to SODC at full Council meeting, 20 Feb 2014 on the Community Governance Review

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this evening.

I am here to represent the views of those residents of Millbrook living in East Hagbourne parish with respect to item 9 of the CGR which proposes moving those houses to Didcot parish.

We in the Parish Council found it very disturbing to hear on 19th December of last year that the Working Group had already taken a position on this issue before the consultation period had ended and in particular before our own response was submitted on 20 January.

East Hagbourne Parish Council's views have been shaped by a survey of Millbrook residents carried out last summer. We are concerned about the WG recommendation that Millbrook should be transferred to Didcot parish and feel that the strongly expressed wish of residents to stay part of East Hagbourne should be respected.

So I ask full council to take a broader view and reconsider this recommendation.

I will address the five assessment criteria in a moment, but since the survey of Millbrook residents is central to our comments I will say a few words about that first.

- We surveyed only those houses and flats that are directly affected by the proposal
- There are 316 residences in the area and we asked each household to complete a questionnaire with 7 questions;
- The survey was carried out in as neutral a way as possible through a professional market research company, with controls to maintain anonymity and avoid duplicate submissions;
- No pressure was put on people to give specific answers.

We can accept the survey as a true reflection of residents views.

The results of this survey showed:

- There was a good turn-out - 31% of households responded. What was particularly noticeable was that 88 of the 98 respondents provided written comments, sometimes quite extensive, as well as answering the specific questions.
- The overwhelming majority, [89 of the 98 households], or 93% of those that responded, opposed transferring to Didcot.

This echoes the results of an earlier survey carried out in 2000 when the majority of people surveyed wanted Millbrook to remain part of East Hagbourne.

Turning now to the review criteria:

1. Natural or man-made boundaries

The boundary between Didcot and East Hagbourne is long standing and people who live within East Hagbourne clearly feel part of it. In the survey, people cited family ties and social ties with the village or St Andrew's church.

2. Housing developments that straddle parish boundaries, resulting in people being in different parishes from their neighbours

Housing development has indeed progressed such that the boundary does not follow the existing roads.

However, while many people in the survey commented on their affinity with other parts of East Hagbourne, no-one commented on affinity with neighbours in adjoining parts of Didcot.

3. *Effective and convenient representation of local residents at parish level*

61% of survey respondents said they valued being represented by a volunteer Parish Council with low administrative overheads, indicating that they feel better represented as members of a small parish than as part of a larger town.

4. *The Boundary Commissions's proposals for the South Oxfordshire District wards.*

It is natural that at County and District levels, boundaries cover a wider and more heterogeneous area.

But at the local level it is important that people feel identity with the parish that represents them - and the survey results show that people do feel such identity with East Hagbourne.

East Hagbourne Parish Council has good relations with our representatives at both District and County level and is well able to represent the views of Millbrook residents in wider discussions

5. *Views of those people directly affected*

The people of Millbrook have expressed their views clearly and powerfully through the survey - they wish to remain part of East Hagbourne parish.

So, arguments can be made under all of the review criteria for Millbrook to remain part of East Hagbourne

Finally:

I understand that if the current proposal is accepted then it will go forward to 'consultation'.

- But such consultation will only be meaningful if the views expressed by residents have some material bearing on the eventual outcome.

- Since residents have already clearly and strongly expressed their views, I urge Council to act now and respect their wishes.

David J Rickeard

Chairman, East Hagbourne Parish Council

20 February 2014

Notes on process

Agenda item 5 is for public participation

Agenda Item 12 is the CGR (pages 13-140 of the briefing document refer)

2. Since the October meeting the working group has met twice to discuss what recommendations it wishes to make. At its first meeting, in December, it agreed a number of draft proposals on which it sought the views of the affected parish councils (and in some cases other organisations too). At its second meeting in late January it finalised most of its recommendations in light of responses received. In a few cases an ongoing e-dialogue took place to firm up recommendations.
7. As the detailed justification for each recommendation is set out in the schedule I do not propose to repeat those here. It is worth making a few general points, however:
 - the working group has used the assessment criteria contained in the terms of reference to guide its recommendations. One of those criteria, however, “views expressed in relation to any changes, particularly from those people directly affected”, it can only evaluate once council has consulted on its draft proposals. The obvious implication of this is that recommendations may well change between draft and final stage in the light of public comment

...

- council should be aware that the 2007 Act mentions specifically two of the criteria, namely effective and convenient representation of local people at parish level and the extent to which proposals reflect the identities and interests of the affected community. Whilst the working group has not given these greater emphasis it has been particularly mindful of them in its deliberations
- failure to meet one or more of the criteria did not disbar the working group from proposing a change. This was particularly the case where a proposed parish boundary change did not coincide with the newly created district ward boundary and/or county council division

What happens next?

8. Subject to any changes agreed by council at its meeting, the recommendations set out in schedules CGR1 to CGR29 will become the council’s formal draft proposals for consultation.
9. The terms of reference for the review that council agreed last October state that consultation will run from this meeting until 4 April. Given the previously made commitment to write to all of those residents directly affected by a proposed boundary change i.e. their property will move from one parish to another, officers now think that this is an unrealistically short period. It was previously agreed so that council could make final decisions at its meeting on 24 April.
10. The working group now proposes extending the consultation period until the end of May, to allow more time for respondents and to give it more time to analyse the responses and make final recommendations, which will come to council at its meeting in July. The revised terms of reference reflect this proposal.
12. A larger number of changes may result in parish boundaries no longer being aligned with district ward boundaries. We will seek what are known as consequential

amendments once council has taken its final decisions, although the LGBC has informed us previously that it will not address any of these anomalies prior to the 2015 elections. Instead, we expect to work through these with the LGBC post May 2015 and have district boundaries revised to align with new parish boundaries in time for the 2019 elections.

The items affecting East hagbourne are:

CGR9	Didcot, East Hagbourne, Long Wittenham, West Hagbourne	Amending the boundary of Didcot parish to incorporate that part of the Millbrook estate that is currently in East Hagbourne parish and parcels of land allocated for housing in Long Wittenham and West Hagbourne parishes.
CGR10	East Hagbourne	Creating a single ward parish.

The factors that the council will take into account in making decisions are as follows:

- natural or man-made boundaries that help to define clearly one community from another
- housing developments that straddle parish boundaries, thereby resulting in people being in different parishes from their neighbours
- effective and convenient representation of local residents at parish level
- the LGBCE's proposals for the warding of South Oxfordshire for the purposes of district council elections
- the newly created county council electoral divisions
- views expressed in relation to any changes, particularly from those people directly affected
- the extent to which proposals reflect the identities and interests of the affected community

Formal consultation on these will commence in March and end on 31 May 2014.

Council will decide on changes at its meeting on 17 July