South Oxfordshire
District Council

Listening Learning Leading

CGR 28

Parishes Affected

Wheatley, Holton

Matter to be considered

Amending the northern boundary of Wheatley parish to align with the A40, incorporating land currently in Holton parish

Impact on district and county council boundaries

Affects Wheatley and Forest Hill and Holton wards

Summary of parish council responses

Wheatley parish council made this proposal stating:

"The area between the London Road/Old London Road, Wheatley and the A40 is in the parish of Holton yet is totally separate from the rest of the Holton village to the north. It can only be accessed by passing through the parish of Wheatley. The boundary currently runs along the old Holton Park Wall. This is a built up area and is of a different, largely urban character, to the rest of Holton village and, being adjacent to Wheatley, is already considered by most of the residents as being part of Wheatley.

As well as the residential areas of Fairfax Gate, Cromwell Place, Biscoe Court, Tyndale Place and the north side of Old London Road (population approx 120), it contains the Wheatley Business Centre and the Wheatley Farm Shop.

As well as these developed parts the area also includes the woodland owned by OCC near the flyover and the Christmas tree site to the east. There are also areas of open land, both to the east and west. It would be more logical if this area was part of Wheatley Parish."

Holton parish council opposes any change. It submitted a lengthy response, the key elements of which are:

- the affected residents do not feel that they are part of Wheatley
- London Road/Old London Road forms a clearly defined boundary and the land to the north, including the historic park wall, has a different character
- Wheatley parish council wants to bring this land into its parish because it sees it as possible development land

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It is appropriate to quote two elements of the submission in entirety:

"The ancient boundary wall which marks the extent of Holton Park has existed for many centuries and is of historical importance to Holton residents and clearly marks the village boundary. A change of boundary would erode the ancient community ties. The actual entrance to Fairfax Gate marks one of the original Holton Park entrances. The identity of Holton is linked to the history of Holton Park and a boundary change would dilute this special characteristic.

Recently the Local Government Boundary Commission in their final recommendations (March 2013) reviewed the warding for South Oxfordshire District Council and agreed that **' Holton has an easily identifiable existing boundary and Community identity and rejected the proposal to split Holton between two Wards'** as was suggested then by Wheatley Parish Council. It would make a mockery of that Boundary Commission decision a few months ago to now split the village of Holton.

Summary of other responses

A number of residents of the area under review have written to the effect that they would prefer to remain in Holton parish. Most cite the historical importance of the current boundary – the parish boundary is coterminous with the boundary of Holton Park, which now houses Oxford Brookes Wheatley campus and Wheatley Park school.

Cllr Anne Purse has written in detail in support of retaining the current boundary. She cites its historical significance. Her letter includes the following:

"I would go so far as to say that the historic wall boundary is one of the clearest and best known of Wheatley's boundaries, and probably one of the easiest to define in any area I represent. Also, other parishes such as Forest Hill successfully straddle the A40, even without the easy links that Holton has with the bridges.

Whereas Wheatley Parish tends to have relatively close housing even up to its borders, Holton like many other villages has sporadic housing outside the actual village in most directions, as well as towards Wheatley, with housing fairly close to Forest Hill, and to Waterperry. It does not seem odd that it has houses next to Wheatley. A number of the parishes I represent have housing right up to Oxford City's boundary , with only the very small Bayswater brook defining the boundary. This is true of Forest Hil, Beckley and to some extent Stanton St John.

Recommendation

To extend to boundary of Wheatley parish to align with the A40, incorporating land currently in Holton parish

Justification

This boundary has been a source of contention between Wheatley and Holton parish councils for a number of years. Prior to the A40 dual-carriageway being built, London Road/Old London Road formed a good well defined man-made boundary following the outer edge of Holton Park and the case for changing it would have been significantly weaker. The key question now is whether the A40 dual-carriageway provides a better boundary and the working group considers it does, notwithstanding the view of the Local Government Boundary Commission in respect of district ward boundaries.

The A40 dual-carriageway is a very strong man-made boundary, albeit there are crossing points in two places. In the working group's view this takes precedence over other considerations. It notes that the properties affected all access directly onto London Road/Old London Road, both of which are in Wheatley parish and that they form part of the built up area that most people would regard as Wheatley. The affected properties are much closer to the centre of Wheatley village than the main part Holton village. It also notes that Wheatley Business Park and Wheatley Farm Shop are within the area it proposes to move into Wheatley parish.

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