

SUBMISSION FROM CLLRS GAVIN GRANT AND MARTIN SMITH ON THE MALMESBURY COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW FOR THE ELECTORAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Introduction

We are the Wiltshire Councillors for the Malmesbury and Sherston Divisions.

We know well the areas under discussion in the current Community Governance Review, both as local residents and Councillors.

We have walked the concerned area twice together and on a further occasion in the case of Cllr Grant.

The views of the parish Councils and Committee

We regret that a mutually satisfactory solution that meets the combined needs of the community identity of the Burton Hill area and good governance has not been agreed between the Malmesbury Town Council and Malmesbury St Paul's Without Parish Council.

We note that each has now put forward different solutions related to the area that we will discuss later. However, we continue believe that such an appropriate solution does exist.

The core of that solution was agreed in detail sent to the Committee by the immediate past Mayor of Malmesbury and Chair of the Town Council, Cllr Paul Smith and the current Chair of St Paul Malmesbury Without Parish Council, Cllr Roger Budgen.

Their proposed solution was set out in writing in their submission to the Committee. It was confirmed by both in conversations with each other in our presence and with both of us in our site visits.

Where we part company with their proposal and with the Committee's initial recommendation is that we believe there is no case for including within the area of Malmesbury Town Council of properties on:

- either side of the B4049 (Swindon Road)
- turnings off the B4049 (Swindon Road) namely The Knoll, Cowbridge Crescent/Kemble Close of Sir Bernard Lovell Road and the turning of it.

The inclusion of this area in Malmesbury Town Council would have split the Parish of Malmesbury St Paul's Without by isolating Milbourne and other rural properties. That would not have served the community identity of these areas or the cause of good governance.

We urge the Committee not to pursue this aspect, but rather to focus their attention on the transfer to Malmesbury Town Council of an appropriate area of Burton Hill that we detail below along with the land designated as the Malmesbury Industrial site.

Burton Hill

In regard to the area known as Burton Hill, we have devoted a considerable amount of time wading this area and looking at it in great detail.

As a result, we believe there is a case for the inclusion of properties on the Eastern side of the A429 as set out in the Committee's recommendation for consultation.

Consequently, we urge the Committee not to propose that any part of this area is transferred to Malmesbury Town Council. We set out our reasons for this below.

We note that part of this area was proposed for transfer in the initial proposal sent to the Committee by Cllrs Budgen and Smith. However, having walked the area with them and discussed in detail what we saw, we believe that both now share our view that this area should remain with the Parish of St Paul Malmesbury Without.

We examined the area of the east of the A429 and those on the B4042 Swindon Road. This area again consists mainly of large detached houses backing onto fields.

Other buildings in this locality consist of the Malmesbury Primary Care Centre, the now closed Malmesbury Police Station, a BT facility and major care homes. These serve the entire area and not simply residents in the Malmesbury Town Council area.

As such, we see no clear case to transfer them out of the Parish.

Hardly a house has its entrance onto the A429 itself in this area. Rather they are set back in discreet turnings and often back onto open countryside. As such they are much in keeping and share common character with other areas around the town of Malmesbury that have been accepted as rural in nature and their continuing location in the Parish of St Paul Malmesbury Without is no longer in dispute.

We also part company with Malmesbury Town Council's current proposal in that we do not believe there is a strong case to include in the Malmesbury Town Council area, the small number of approximately 15 properties on the Western side of the A429 and to the South of Arches Lane.

We did examine in detail and walk around the area to the South of Arches Lane.

The properties found there are very different in character from those to the North of Arches Lane. The Southern area is one of low-density housing that, with very few exceptions, are large, detached properties. As such they are much more in keeping with similar, more rural areas on the edge of Malmesbury found elsewhere in the Parish.

Consequently, we share the view of St Paul Malmesbury Without Parish Council that such areas should not form part of an urban town council such as Malmesbury Town Council.

Where we part company with the Parish's most recent proposal and support in part the current proposal made by Malmesbury Town Council is in the area immediate to the North of Arches Lane and to the West of the A429 with a boundary of the small tributary brook to the Sherston Avon River to the South further down Arches Lane.

Our proposal

The logic of our proposal and recommendation to include this area of properties within the boundary of Malmesbury Town Council is as follows:

1. The main road access to the properties in this area comes off the B4042 (High Street) on the town side of the Waitrose roundabout.

The roads here are:

- Barley Close
- Burton Hill
- Water Meadows

1.1 This area is shown on Google Maps as being a 5 minute walk to Malmesbury High Street and the civic and faith facilities to be found in the Town centre (it should be noted that the walking times to the same locations from residential areas already included in the Malmesbury Town Council area from White Lion/ Parklands is 23 minutes and is shown from Snell Avenue as being some 25 minutes)

1.2 The route to the Waitrose supermarket (in the current Malmesbury Town Council area) is by a traffic light controlled pedestrian crossing. The Waitrose side of that road is in the current Malmesbury Town Council area.

1.3 The pavement from this area flows into Malmesbury via a footbridge over the Sherston Avon. That footbridge ends in the principle park (St Aldhelms Mead) that is owned by and sits in the Malmesbury Town Council area.

1.4 There is no such pavement link to the St Pauls Without Parish from the Burton Hill Road exit.

1.5 Driving into the Parish from this area requires the vehicle to drive through the Malmesbury Town Council area. Walking necessitates going through the housing estate and crossing the main and very busy A429 via a zebra crossing (the A429 forms the barrier between Malmesbury and St Pauls between the Waitrose and BP Garage roundabouts - this is a logical boundary to us in this area too).

2. Arches Lane.

The property density to the North of Arches Lane and to the West of the A429 is very noticeably denser and urban in character.

2.1 Three groups of these properties are accessed off the Northern side of Arches Lane:

- Orchards Court
- The Burton Hill Caravan and Camping Park
- two individual bungalows.

2.2 Orchard Court is a development consisting of a small number of bungalows and a larger number of two storey flats controlled by entry phones. The development is serviced by the Town centre circular bus route.

2.3 Residents walking out of the area would do so via the Barley Close development (please see above) and their walking time to the High Street and town centre is approx 7 minutes.

2.4 The Burton Hill Caravan and Camping site features a dozen of so permanent, static caravans. The site is linked by a footpath to the footbridge that ends in the St Aldhelms Mead footbridge. The walking time to the High Street and town centre is approximately 7 minutes.

2.5 The Burton Hill Caravan site makes extensive use in its marketing of the facilities in Malmesbury and the quick and easy walking access from the site into the town to enjoy those town centre facilities.

2.6 The two bungalows are the last dwellings on this side of Arches Lane before the landscape changes to open farmland.

3. Other properties

There are three or four houses at the top end of Arches Lane near the A429. Their small back gardens border the Barley Close development.

4. The Malmesbury Industrial land

We note that the initial proposal submitted by Cllrs Budgen and Smith argued for the transfer of the Malmesbury Industrial land to Malmesbury Town Council.

4.1 We endorse this view. There is no such land to be found elsewhere in the Parish. By contrast, there are already three such small-scale industrial estates housing local firms in the Malmesbury Town Council area.

4.2 We share the views of Cllrs Budgen and Smith that the Town Council has greater experience, resources, and capacity to support Wiltshire Council's Economic Development team in securing appropriate and needed commercial development of this site. Not least as the Town Council is working in formal partnership with the Malmesbury Town Team. This is a not-for-profit Community Interest Company dedicated to promoting the economic interests of Malmesbury of which Councillor Grant is an unpaid Director.

5. Conclusion and recommendations to the Committee

5.1. We consider and submit that in this area, the A429 forms a significant and long accepted boundary between Malmesbury Town and its neighbouring rural parish of St Pauls.

We propose that boundary should be extended from Waitrose roundabout to Arches Lane.

5.2. We consider that the location of the Road entrance to and exit from Burton Hill, Barley Close and the Water Meadows being off the High Street is significant as is the very short walking time and pavement link to Malmesbury High Street and the Town Centre facilities and amenities.

We note that the pavements and footbridge links into Malmesbury from this area. We further note that the housing density and nature in this area is in keeping with urban rather than rural communities

We propose that the properties and their residents located on Burton Hill, Barley Close and the Water Meadows should be placed into the Malmesbury Town Council area.

5.3. We consider that the properties and their residents at Orchard Court and in the Burton Hill Caravan and Camping Site are urban in their density and nature.

We note the footpath links from these areas take residents either through Barley Close or to the footbridge link to Malmesbury. We also note the town circular route bus calls at Orchard Close providing a direct public transport link to Malmesbury High Street and town centre facilities.

We further note the marketing materials promoted to visitors to Burton Hill Camping and Caravan site make strong and clear reference of the easy and short walk to Malmesbury.

5.4. We believe Arches Lane and the A429 provide clear, immutable boundaries between areas of housing that are urban in nature with strong links to Malmesbury and that the small Brook to the east delineates clearly between land designated for housing and that dedicated to farming

We recommend that the Committee support the use of these clear boundaries to delineate between the urban area of Malmesbury Town Council and its rural neighbouring parish of St Paul Malmesbury Without.

5.5. We believe that there is a strong and compelling case that the land designated as the Malmesbury Industrial Development area should form part of the land in the Malmesbury Town Council area.

Businesses such as Aldi who have based their business there and others such as Sweetnam & Bradley who strongly desire to develop their currently Malmesbury based business there (we both visited that firm to discuss their expansion plans and the desire to use that site for that purpose). They do so because of Malmesbury and its population as customers and workforce, not as rural businesses operating in a rural area. We further note the existence of three similar existing and developed industrial estates within the Town Council area, and the growing partnership between Malmesbury Town Council and the Malmesbury Town Team CIC.

We recommend to the Committee that the land designated for business development currently occupied by Aldi and the Nurden Garden Centre currently being marketed for further commercial development be transferred to Malmesbury Town Council, so joint other business designated area that all sit inside the Malmesbury Town Council area.

Finally, we note that our proposal as set out above aligns with the core of that put forward to the Committee by the immediate past Mayor of Malmesbury and Chair of the Town Council who was in office at the start of this Community Governance Review, Cllr Paul Smith and the continuing Chair of the St Paul Malmesbury Without Parish Council, Cllr Roger Budgen with whom we have worked closely since the Committee invited us so to do.

We urge the Committee to adopt our proposal for the reasons set out above as they adhere to the principles of community identity and good governance.

Councillor Gavin Grant
Wiltshire Councillor for Malmesbury

Councillor Martin Smith
Wiltshire Councillor for Sherston (including the Parish of Malmesbury St Paul's Without)