

Community Governance Review: Harwell East

Engagement Report –
December 2022

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Executive summary

In 2014, the Vale of White Horse District Council agreed to create a new parish of Harwell East comprising of the area to the east of the A34 within Harwell parish, up to the boundary with South Oxfordshire.

Having previously agreed to establish a new parish, the council proceeded to consult residents on five main points:

- The name of the parish.**
- Whether the new parish should have a parish council or an alternative style of council (community, neighbourhood or village council).**
- The ordinary year of elections.**
- The council size (number of councillors).**
- Whether the parish should be divided into wards.**

This consultation received 97 completed responses and 164 partial responses. Only completed responses were included in the results.

The majority of respondents (59 per cent) did not support the proposal that the new parish be called “Harwell East parish”, with the most suggested alternative being “Didcot West” or “West Didcot”.

The majority of respondents supported all other proposals. More specifically: 58 per cent supported the proposal that the style of the new council should be a parish council; 54 per cent agreed that the effective date of the new parish should be 1 April 2023 and that the parish should return eight councillors; finally 58 per cent supported the proposal that the new parish should not be divided into wards.

The majority of respondents were residents of the parish (75, 77 per cent), 12 responded as a visitor or interested party (12 per cent), 3 were businesses / organisations operating within the parish (3 per cent), 2 were (district/county or town/parish) councillors (2 per cent), and 1 was someone who works within the parish (1 per cent). Another 7 respondents selected the option “other” and then provided further comments to specify. Of them, 6 were district residents who live near the parish but outside the boundary, and 1 was someone who works within the parish. When asked about the name of their business/organisation/council or other body, respondents answered: *‘Perpetual Childcare Ltd’* and *‘Harwell Parish Council’*.



Engagement methodology

A mailing was issued by the Elections Team to **905** properties that fell spatially within the area affected by the proposals. The addresses were identified using the Council’s Elections database, and the letters were addressed to “The Occupier”, with no use of personal details.

The proposals were:

- That the new parish be called Harwell East parish.**
- That the new parish should have a parish council to be called Harwell East Parish Council.**
- That the effective date for the new council be 1 April 2023, with elections to take place in May 2023.**
- That the council should return eight parish councillors.**
- That the council should not be warded.**

An online survey, offering participants the opportunity to indicate to what extent they support or oppose each proposal, along with a free text comment box, was launched on Tuesday 16 August and closed on Friday 30 September. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix C.

The mailing included a QR code to the online survey, [background information on the proposals](#), and details of how to send comments by electronic and postal correspondence. A copy of the notification can be found in Appendix B.

A press release was published for Vale of White Horse district councillors and Harwell parish councillors:
<https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/democracy/residents-feedback-to-help-finalise-new-harwell-east-parish/>

Social media posts on Facebook and Twitter reached 15,000 people and resulted in 2,0000 interactions (i.e. reactions, link clicks, comments), including 417 link clicks.



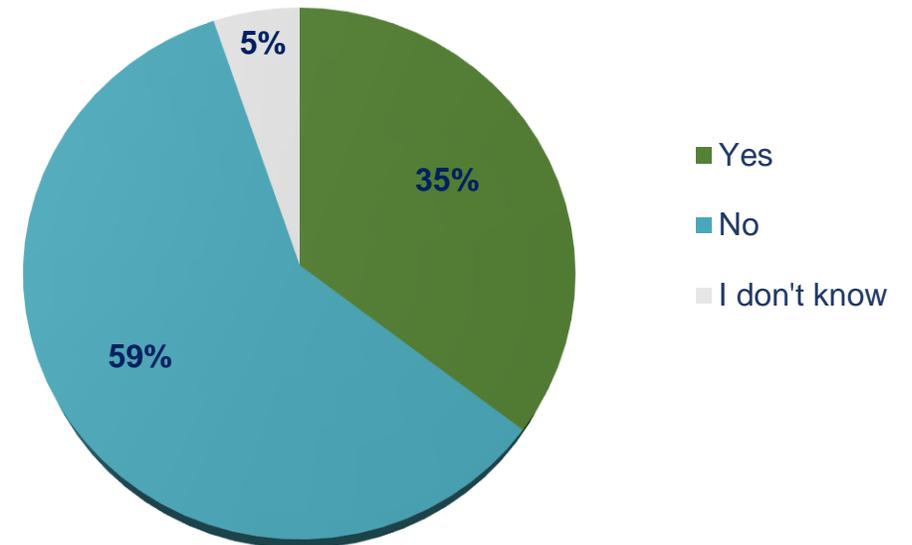
Key findings

Note: When stating percentages in the analysis, we are referring to the percentage of respondents that answered the specific question, rather than the total number of responses to the overall survey. Percentages may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding up over .5 and rounding down under .5. Words that appear in italics are quotes taken from comments received. Quantitative data not included in this report is available in Appendix D

Q4: Do you support the proposal that the new parish be called “Harwell East parish”?

96 out of 97 respondents answered this question, with one skipping it.

Over half of respondents (59 per cent) said that they do not support the proposal to name the new parish “Harwell East parish”.

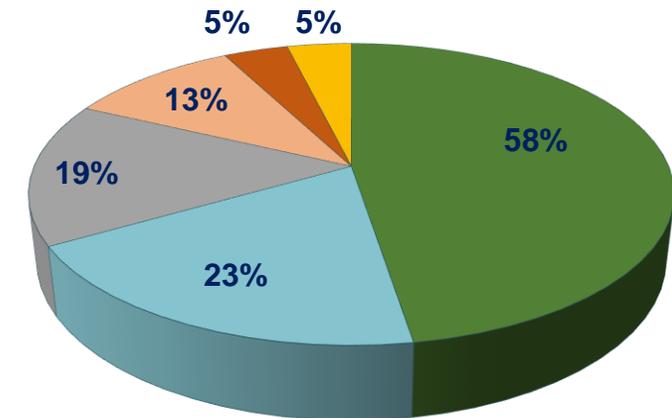


Q5: We would really welcome your suggestions as to what the name of the new parish should be. If you have any suggestions, please type them in the box below.

64 comments with suggestions on what the name of the new parish should be were received. Of these, the largest group (58 per cent), suggested a name which includes a reference to Didcot town, with the most frequently mentioned being ‘Didcot West’ or ‘West Didcot’.

The second most frequent suggestion (23 per cent) was a name that references “Valley”, with most comments including “Valley Park”, “Valley and Great Western Park”, or “Western Valley”.

Finally, the third largest group of responses suggested other names, including combinations of previous options (e.g. ‘Vale Parks Parish’, ‘Driftway Park’, ‘Boundary Park East’), or made unrelated comments. A full list of the comments made in response to this question is available in Appendix E.



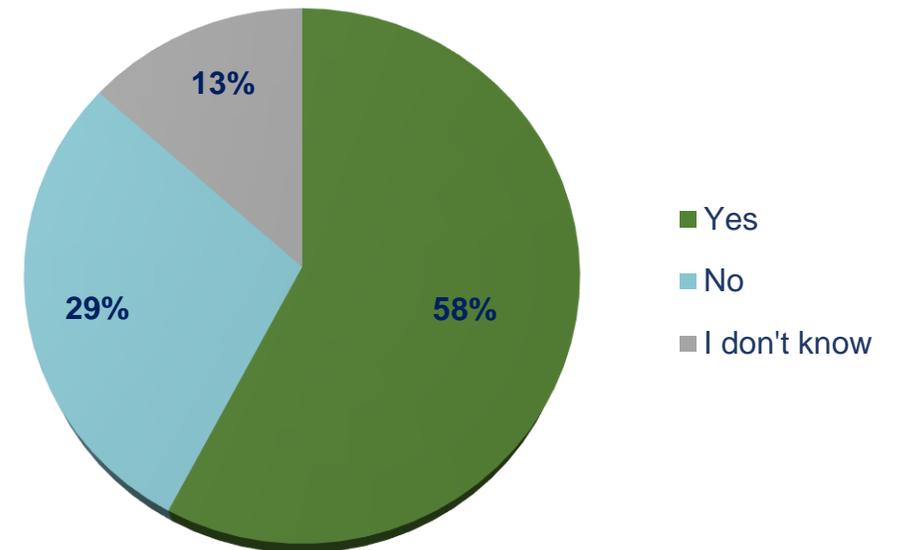
- Associated with Didcot (Didcot West/ West Didcot)
- Valley Park, Valley and GWP, Western Valley
- Other
- Associated with Harwell
- Unsupportive of the establishment of new parish
- Associated with Milton

Q6. As the new parish has over 1,000 electors a council must be created. As to the style of the council, legislation offers a choice of alternative styles for a parish, which all have identical powers: parish council, community council, neighbourhood council, village council.

Do you support the proposal that the new council should be a parish council?

All 97 respondents answered this question.

Of them, the majority (58 per cent) supported the proposal that the style of the new parish should be a parish council and not a community, neighbourhood or village council.



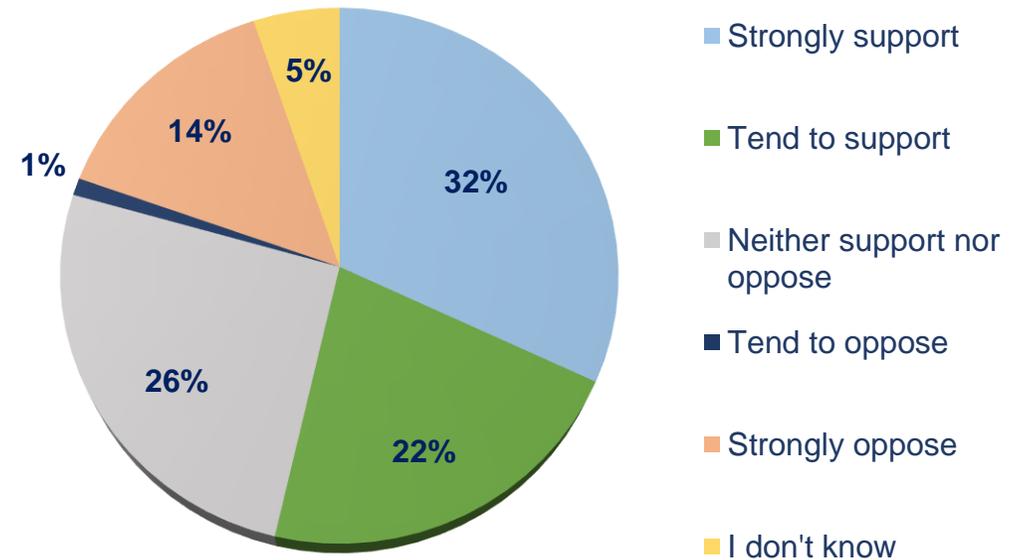
Q8. The Vale of White Horse District Council proposes that the effective date for the new council will be 1 April 2023, with elections on 4 May 2023.

To what extent do you support or oppose the proposal that the effective date for the new council should be 1 April 2023?

Over half the respondents (54 per cent) supported the proposal that the effective date for the new council should be 1 April 2023. This figure includes 32 per cent who said that they strongly support it, and 22 per cent who tend to support it.

Conversely, 15 per cent of respondents did not support this proposal, including 14 per cent who strongly opposed it and 1 per cent who said they tend to oppose it.

26 per cent of respondents neither supported nor opposed this proposal.

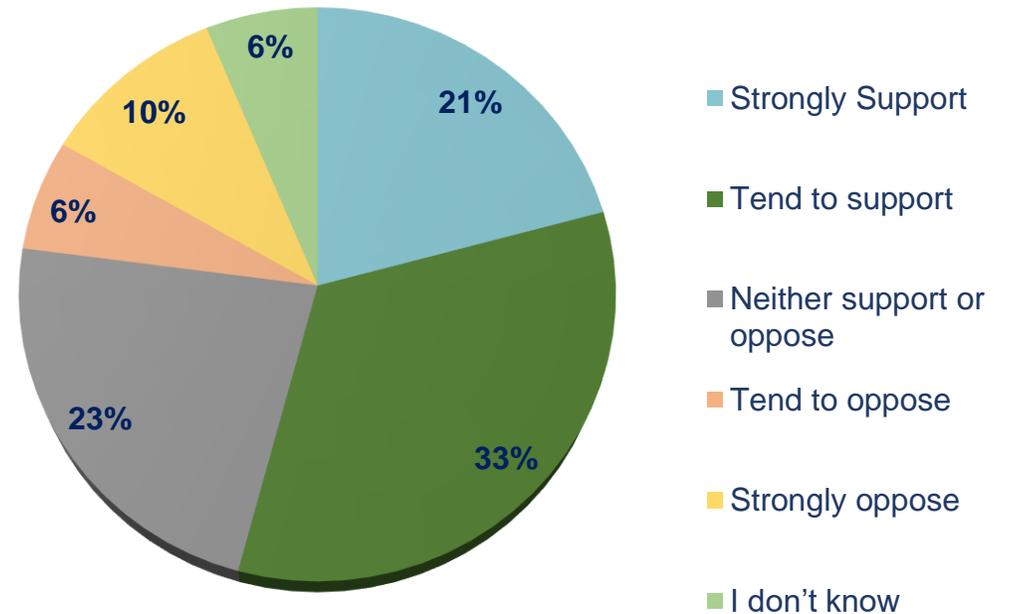


Q9. To what extent do you support or oppose the proposed council size of eight councillors?

Over half the respondents (54 per cent) support the proposal that the new parish should return eight councillors. This includes 33 per cent who said that they tend to support it, and 22 per cent who said that they strongly support it.

Conversely, 16 per cent of respondents opposed the proposed size of the new parish. This includes six per cent who said they tend to oppose it, and ten per cent who strongly opposed it.

23 per cent of respondents neither supported nor opposed this proposal.

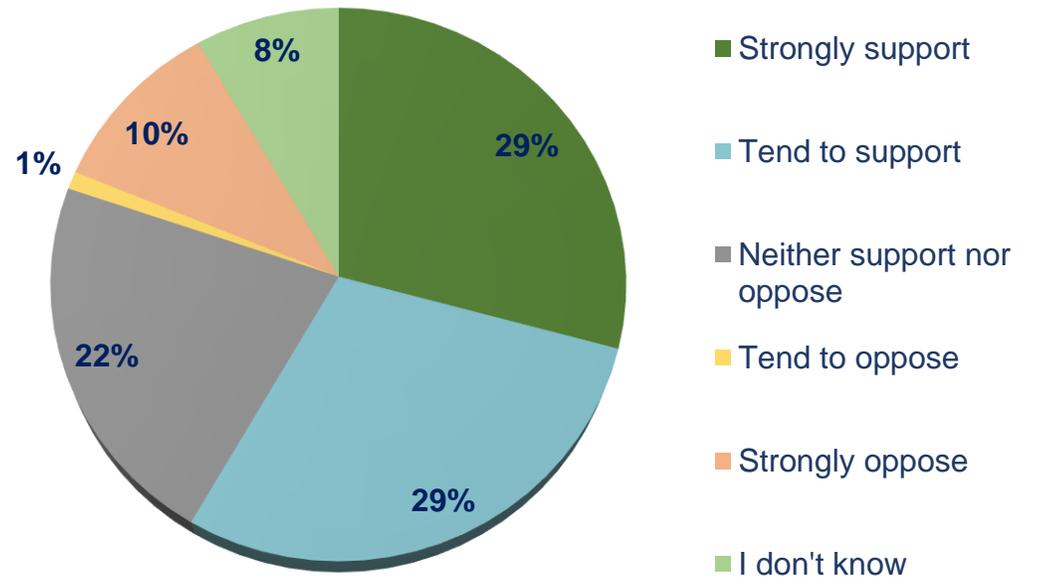


Q12. To what extent do you support or oppose the proposal that the new parish should not be divided into wards?

Over half the respondents (58 per cent) supported the proposal that the new parish should not be divided into wards. This result includes 29 per cent who said that they tend to support it, and 29 per cent who said that they strongly support it.

Conversely, 11 per cent of respondents opposed the proposal that the new parish should not be warded. This includes 10 per cent who strongly opposed it and 10 per cent who said they tend to oppose it.

22 per cent of respondents neither supported nor opposed this proposal.





Demographic data*

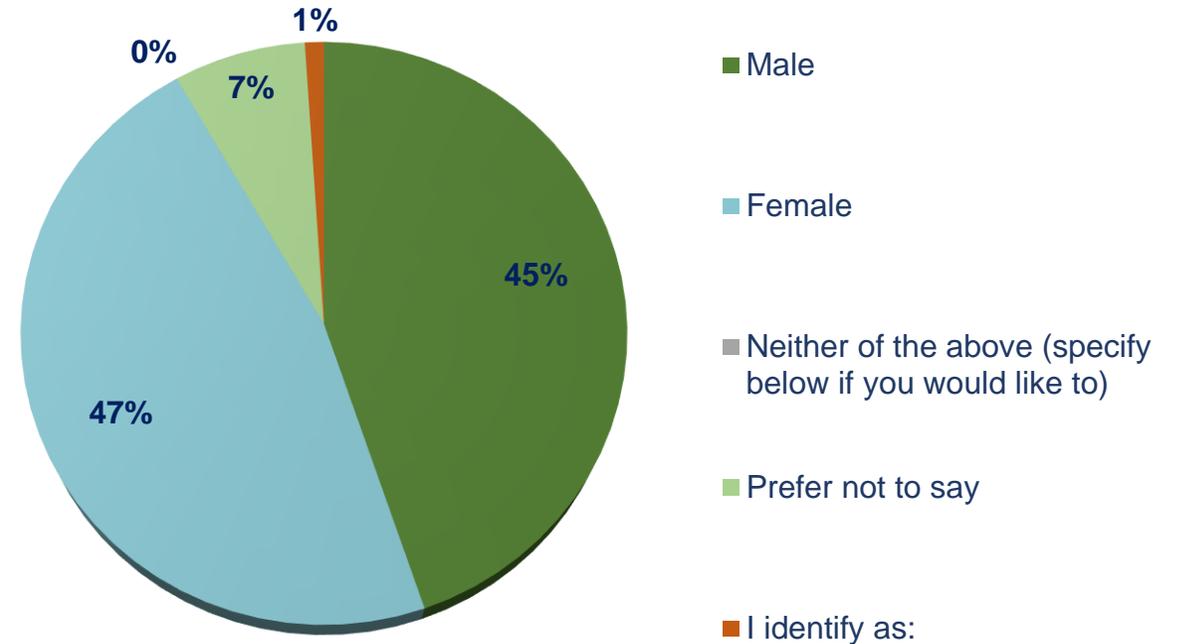
* All data on the district's population referenced in this section is taken from the Census 2021 and is available on [Local Insights](#)

Q15. Which of the following describes how you identify yourself?

Respondents to this survey were almost equally split between males (45 per cent) and females (47 per cent).

7 per cent said they prefer not to say how they identify themselves, and only one respondent (one per cent) selected the option “I identify as”. The comment made to complete the sentence was “*human*”.

These results are representative of the wider population of the district, which is almost identically split between male and female residents, although females form a slightly bigger group than males.(*)

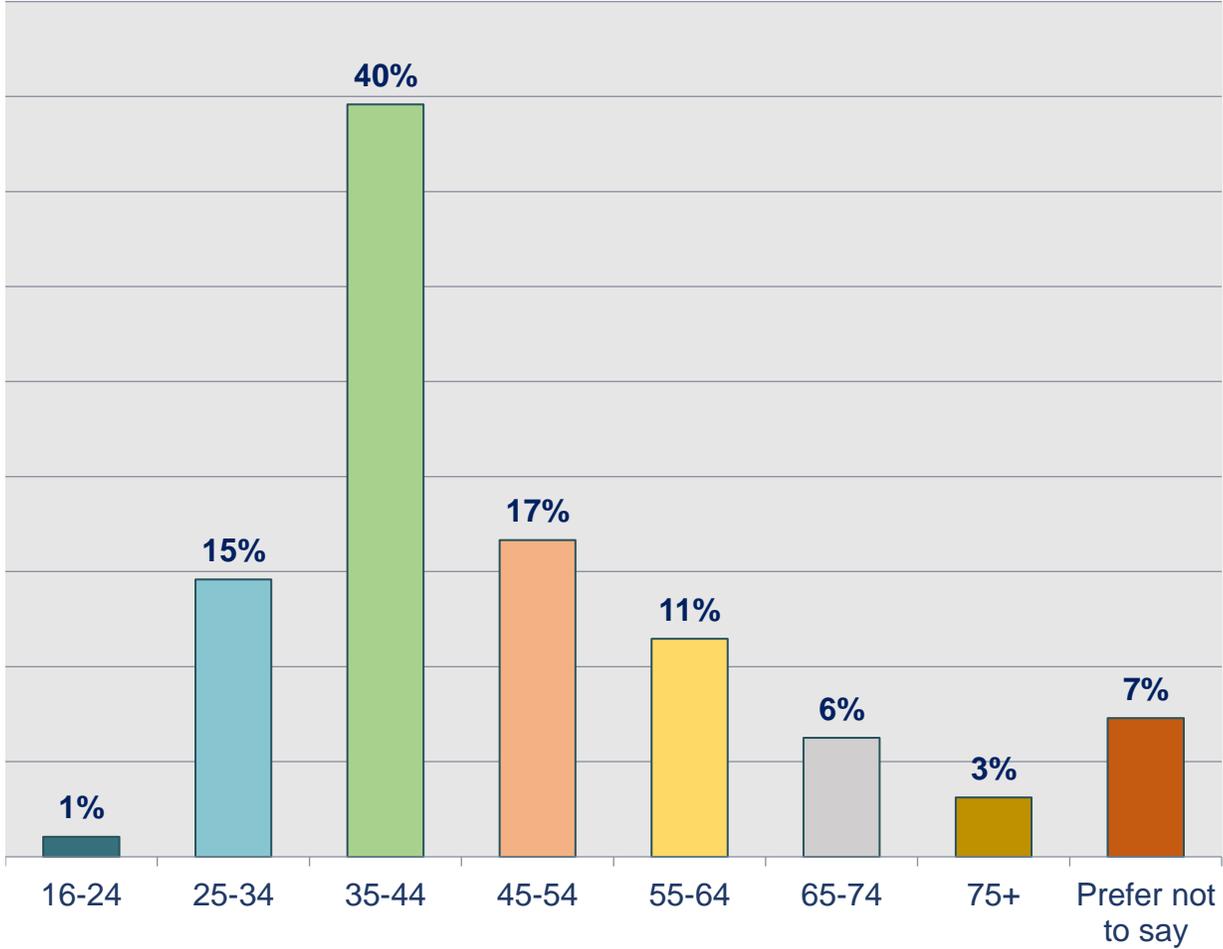


Q16. How old are you?

96 respondents answered this question, with only one skipping it.

The largest age group to respond to this survey were 35-44-years-olds, who made up 40 per cent of all respondents, followed by 45-54 and 25-34-year-olds, who made up 17 and 15 per cent of respondents respectively.

The distribution of respondents by age group does not reflect well the district’s population. More specifically, 35-44-year-olds appear to be overrepresented since they make up 14 per cent of the Vale’s population and 40 per cent of respondents, whilst those over-75-year-olds appear underrepresented, making up 10 per cent of the district’s population but only 3 per cent of respondents.



Q17. What is your ethnic group?

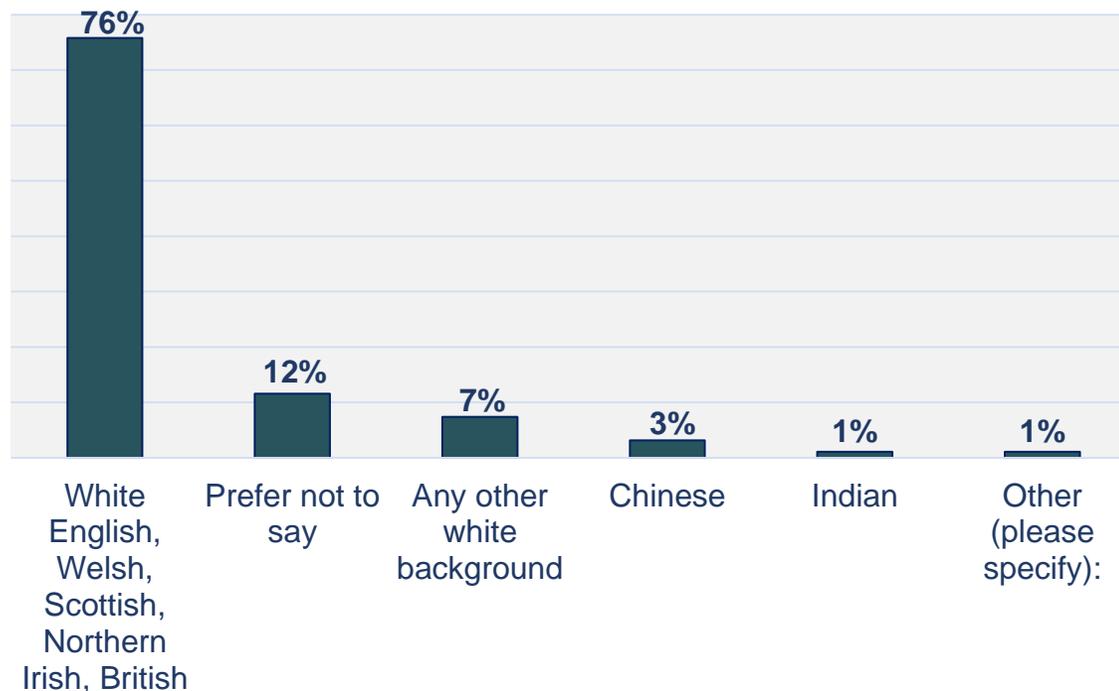
The vast majority of respondents were White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish and British (76 per cent).

This was followed by 12 per cent of respondents who said they prefer not to disclose their ethnic background, and 7 per cent who were from any other white background.

3 per cent of respondents were Chinese and 1 per cent were Indian.

Only one respondent selected the option “Other, please specify” and then commented “*My race or gender is not relevant to these questions*”.

The distribution of respondents by ethnic group is fairly representative of the wider district’s population, where White British and Northern Irish make up 90 per cent of the total, whilst other white backgrounds and Indian make up 4 and 1 per cent respectively.

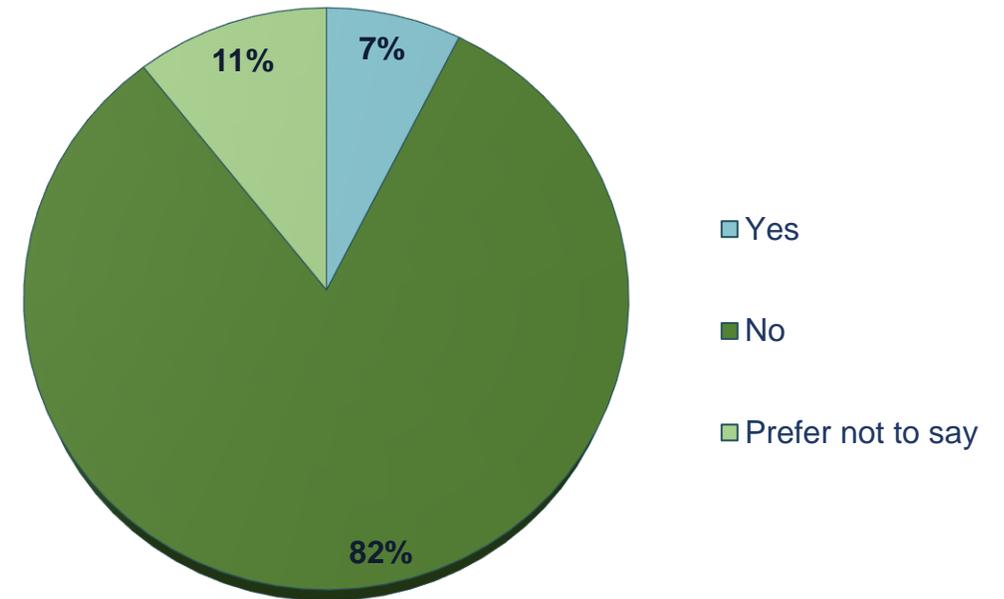


Q18. Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more?

The vast majority of respondents said that their day to day activities are not limited because of a health problem or disability (82 per cent).

Conversely, 7 per cent said that their activities are limited because of a health problem or disability, whilst 11 per cent preferred not to say.

5 comments were made in response to this question. Of them, 3 respondents said that they feel this question is not relevant to this survey or prefer not to respond.





How we used your results

The data collected through this consultation was collated and analysed after the closing date.

We used the results emerging from our analysis to make evidence-based recommendations to the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee. More specifically, the consultation results suggest that:

- The name of the new parish should not be “Harwell East parish”. The most suggested alternative name was “Didcot West parish” or “West Didcot parish”.**
- The new parish should have a parish council.**
- The effective date for the new parish should be 1 April 2023, with elections to be held on 4 May 2023.**
- The size of the new parish should be eight councillors.**
- The new parish should not be warded.**

As a result of this, at its meeting in early December the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee agreed that the new parish, on land previously within Harwell parish east of the A34, would come into existence in 2023 with elections in May. The new parish will be known as Western Valley, have an unwarded parish council known as Western Valley Parish Council and have 8 councillors.

In addition to using the results of this consultation to make recommendations to the committee, we have used the equalities data on sex, age and ethnic group to understand if, and to what extent, survey respondents were representative of the district’s population. This assessment helps us evaluate our ability to reach and give voice to everyone in our community, and learn how we can improve our services in order to do so. Comparative data on the prevalence of disability was not available at district level and so we were not able to undertake an assessment for this variable.

Further information



Please see below how you can get in touch with us:

- For information about the consultation or the results presented in this report, please contact the Consultation and Community Engagement Team by emailing haveyoursay@southandvale.gov.uk or calling **01235 422425**.
- For more information about the new parish and the deliberations of the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee, please email Steven Corrigan, Democratic Services Manager, at Steven.Corrigan@southandvale.gov.uk.