

# **Great Waltham Parish Council**

## **Proposals to address the outstanding maintenance works on the footways alongside the B1008 through Ford End and for the introduction of enhanced traffic calming measures through Ringtail Green, Ford End.**

### **Introduction**

1. Great Waltham Parish Council (“GWPC”) has previously requested that the authorities/agencies responsible both effect outstanding maintenance works on the footways alongside the B1008 through Ford End and introduce several enhanced traffic calming measures through Ringtail Green, Ford End. The two issues are not mutually inclusive, but do overlap in particular ways which are explained below, and therefore benefit from a holistic assessment. To date the only completed or proposed Local Highways Panel (LHP) schemes in relation to these issues are LCHE182009 (B1008 Ford End - Kerbing improvements) which was completed in April 2023 and LCHE222014 (Signage to identify the hamlet [of Ringtail Green]) which is ‘awaiting funding’, although it is expected to be advanced as a 2023/2024 scheme (as opposed to a carried over 2022/23 scheme being completed in 2023/24).
2. GWPC understands that road safety issues consistently raised by both its members and local residents have not reached those thresholds judged necessary to effect improvement works, despite their significant impact on the safety and well-being of not only pedestrians and cyclists, but also drivers, who use the routes involved. GWPC is mindful of various (principally financial) constraints which authorities/agencies cite as affecting their ability to complete work within their respective spheres of responsibility, but such justifications do nothing to alleviate the clear and present dangers which those who encounter them are forced to negotiate on a daily basis.
3. This paper provides an executive summary, followed by background details, confirmation of the current situations, and then GWPC’s conclusions and proposals for action.

### **Executive Summary**

4. The absence of maintenance and/or road traffic improvement works in Ford End has made pedestrian/cycle use of footways along the B1008 and the road through Ringtail Green more dangerous. Such works are needed to reduce the risk of death or injury.
5. Ford End and Ringtail Green residents have continued to contact GWPC members asking that they lobby on their behalf for the completion of maintenance/improvement works.
6. Significant remedial works needed to protect pedestrians and other carriageway users from harm have failed to materialise. This has exacerbated existing issues and had the knock-on effect of worsening situations elsewhere.
7. In particular, the failure to maintain the B1008 footways from the village to where the road through Ringtail Green meets the northern end of Dunmow Lane has increased the volume of pedestrian traffic along the road through Ringtail Green, a route GWPC had previously identified as requiring road safety improvement measures (see Appendix).
8. Previously a number of solutions have been proposed but have, for one reason or another, not been implemented. Citing new evidence, this paper restates the need for those solutions and proposes actions accordingly.
9. The paper concludes that the routes identified have become increasingly unsafe and are now inherently dangerous. Without action the risks of death or injury are only likely to increase.
10. The paper recommends that by resolution GWPC:
  - 10.1. Further lobbies all relevant authorities and agencies to take meaningful action.

- 10.2. As a minimum, strongly urges for the reconsideration of all previously contemplated LHP schemes and works with its city and county council representatives to formulate submission documents for improvement schemes.
- 10.3. Requests a meeting with Essex Highways to discuss the interpretation of ATC data and to seek its expertise and recommendations (as the subject matter expert) on traffic calming available for the road through Ringtail Green.
- 10.4. Seeks clarification of how works previously undertaken by the Highways Rangers will be carried out in future.
- 10.5. Establishes and communicates mechanisms for individual residents and businesses in the parish to complain about the increased dangers to which road users are being exposed and the failure by higher authorities to meet their obligations to provide and maintain good amenities.

## **Background**

11. In relation to the B1008 footways, because of Ford End's longitudinal character the road runs through the whole length of the village and traditional was serviced by usable footways on one or both sides, from Kings Farm in the north to the northern end of Dunmow Lane in the south. The deterioration of these footways has been raised in GWPC meetings over a considerable period of time:

11.1. In April 2021 GWPC discussed this agenda item at its monthly meeting:

*"Several Pavement footpaths are becoming overgrown in Ford End, Main Road, Great Dunmow end of Ford End, Sandon Hill, Main Road Ford End, Main Road Chelmsford. Also footpath between Ford End and North End, and footpath from Langley's South Lodge to Ash Keys".*

The aspect here affecting the B1008 was included after a member of the public raised the issue that one could no longer safely use the footway from Kings Farm to the village. After discussion two resolutions were made:

*"Ford End highway pavements to be raised with Highways Rangers".*

*"Other areas identified to be added to the action tracker for future referral to Highway Rangers".*

It is the first resolution which pertains to the issues discussed in this paper. GWPC's action tracker has recorded these developments in relation to the agenda item:

*"Highways Rangers won't work on the footpath from Kings Farm down into the Village as it has no backing. Highways Rangers recommend a LHP approach. Reported to Essex Highways [ref.] 2726389. LHP scheme in use. LHP have now archived the item. 09/04/2023 Essex Highways website: Enquiry Reference: 2726389 Issue: footway defects - The Street: Main Road, Chelmsford Last updated: 16/10/21 Status: A defect has been identified, the issue will be programmed for repair according to how we prioritise highway issues".*

At its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023 GWPC's Highways & Transport Committee noted, when reviewing the action tracker *"that the LHP scheme raised (LCHE182010) has been archived, which, with the demise of the Highway Rangers, leaves the problem unresolved"*.

The Essex Highways reference 2726389 relates to a specific location on the B1008 close to King's Farm, Ford End.

LHP scheme LCHE182010 was for 'B1008 Ford End - Footway improvements', with a description 'Width of footway through Village' and included a comment 'Highway Rangers to routinely side existing footways to fully open up available footway width'. GWPC has been made aware that 'The [LHP] sub committee decided [in January 2023] to recommend archiving this scheme. This will no longer be considered by the LHP'.

- 11.2. Separately the Ford End Road Traffic Committee (a group set up by local residents concerned by the plethora of traffic issues affecting the community) identified concerns over the width of footpaths along the B1008 as part of its *Capture of "Hotspots" in Ford End (March 2018)* report. This resulted in two projects being listed for possible LHP finding: viz. LCHE182009 (see 1. above) and LCHE182010 (see 11.1 above).
- 11.3. The third connected (but raised by residents separately) issue is that the footway along the B1008 from the village southwards to the northern end of Dunmow Lane is no longer usable. This is discussed below in more detail.
- 11.4. Therefore, in summary, in the years since the various issues were raised, apart from the raised kerbs at the bus stops, no improvement works have been carried out on the footways along the B1008. When it existed the Highways Rangers department recused itself on safety grounds (the reason given was that the footpaths had no backing, although it was never firmly established precisely what that means) and the LHP did not recognise the outstanding work as being sufficiently important and decided to archive the scheme which was raised, presumably on financial grounds (although a risk assessment against other schemes under consideration may have been completed, but this has not been shared with GWPC).
12. In relation to traffic calming measures for the road through Ringtail Green:
- 12.1. At its meeting on 18th October 2021 GWPC discussed issues raised in relation to traffic management through the hamlet (requests for speed reduction from 60mph to 40mph and Quiet Lane status), and resolved to document its further representations following the supply of traffic flow data. Subsequently, on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2021, GWPC wrote to its Chelmsford City Council LHP representative (see Appendix) indicating that GWPC 'believes that the case for making the route a Quiet Lane remains very strong and has been bolstered by findings from the data. It acknowledges that while more work may be needed to convert the route to a 40mph (or preferably 30mph) limit zone, there seems little reason not to progress to a Quiet Lane status, not least because all the necessary qualifying criteria are met'.
- 12.2. A LHP scheme (LCHE212014) was submitted for Quiet Lane status, but did not proceed as it did not get the support of the other members of the LHP. GWPC was disappointed that such an obviously beneficial and easy to implement initiative was rejected.
- 12.3. On 17<sup>th</sup> April 2022 GWPC held an extraordinary meeting in Ford End focussed on a variety of traffic related problems impacting the community. Residents raised a number of issues and GWPC resolved that: *"The Parish Council will continue to try to find solutions to the traffic problems in Ford End with all relevant agencies"*. Among the matters raised was the situation through Ringtail Green and at its monthly meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2022 GWPC discussed this agenda item:
- "To discuss actions to be taken at Ringtail Green following the extraordinary meeting at Ford End"*.
- The minutes of the meeting note:
- "A report was circulated about the concerns raised by residents of Ringtail Green about speeding traffic with 4 proposals:*
1. *Install Ringtail Green Name plates with a drive slowly message.*
  2. *Pursue Quiet Lane status for the lane – approximate cost £2,000.*
  3. *Paint Slow road markings at either side of the bend.*
  4. *Advisory road signs at either side of the bend e.g., maximum speed and chevrons"*.
- And the meeting made these resolutions:
- "Item 1 – Clerk to contact the street naming team at Chelmsford City Council"*
- "Clerk to raise LHP requests via Cllr Steel for items 3 and 4"*.

- 12.4 Item 1 has developed as LHP scheme LCHE222014 (see paragraph 1. above). Item 2 had already been submitted as LHP scheme LCHE212014. Item 3 was submitted to GWPC's Chelmsford City Council LHP representative who subsequently confirmed that the proposal was:

*"[...] discussed [...] with the LHP Manager. He believes that to have SLOW written on the road, you also have to have a triangular warning sign as well. This would be determined as part of the design process. However, it would need to get through the LHP validation process first to go to the design stage, which is unlikely to happen given that the recorded speeds were an average 22mph, 85th percentile 27mph and there are no reports of accidents in that area. These measurements were made on the straight patch as specified by GWPC. However, if GWPC wish to fund this option, the LHP Manager estimated a cost between £5K and £10K. To refine the cost estimate would need the design work to be undertaken, which is usually about a third of the cost".*

Item 4 was also submitted by GWPC to its Chelmsford City Council LHP representative who confirmed:

*"Advisory speed limits would have the same issues as Item 3 above – maybe more onerous scrutiny. The Price guide suggests that "Change of single speed limit which is uncontentious and where minimal infrastructure is required. £15,000". As this is not actually a change, it may not be as high as that. Again, to refine the estimate would need a funded design".*

- 12.5 Despite the best efforts of those involved, nothing has occurred on the ground. The Quiet Lane status request has been rejected despite obvious benefits. The signage scheme is creeping forward, but without any firm timetable for implementation, and apparently cost barriers prevent any consideration of improved road signs or markings based on the evidence submitted to date.
- 12.6 At its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023 GWPC's Highways & Transport Committee noted (in relation to the four schemes originally proposed 'that it has only been possible to progress one proposal (LCHE222014) [Gateway signs]' and 'agreed to produce a paper with new evidence making the case for recommending that previously rejected schemes are reconsidered, especially taking account the impact of the archived scheme LCHE182010 [B1008 Ford End – Footway improvements]'.)

### **The present condition of footways along the B1008**

- 13 GWPC is not aware of any maintenance work having been carried out on the footways of the B1008 through Ford End since the matter was raised in April 2021 (and forcefully reiterated by residents at the extraordinary meeting in April 2022). Since then the already parlous state of the footways has deteriorated further to the extent that some sections are now unusable by pedestrians whose passage can only be made by stepping onto the carriageway itself. This is obviously a highly dangerous escalation of the situation and in practice has forced residents to stop using footways in this condition and to seek alternative routes.
- 14 This scenario (in relation to the condition of the B1008 footway from the village to the northern end of Dunmow Lane) is the facet of the problem which impacts the road safety issues through Ringtail Green (see Conclusions, below).

### **The hazardous nature of the road through Ringtail Green**

- 15 The letter of 24<sup>th</sup> October 2021 to GWPC's Chelmsford City Council LHP representative (see Appendix) provides the information necessary to understand the nature of the area. Currently the facts remain that the road through Ringtail Green is predominately a narrow country lane, containing a sharp 90° bend which can only be safely negotiated at very low speeds, and where pedestrians and motor vehicles are likely to encounter each other in close proximity. In addition, it remains subject to the statutory 60mph without any other additional traffic calming measures.

- 16 In particular, GWPC's letter of 24<sup>th</sup> October 2021 makes the case for a more refined interpretation of Essex Highways Automatic Traffic Count (ATC) data in unusual circumstances. The situation in Ringtail Green is fundamentally misrepresented by focussing solely on average speeds.

### **Conclusions**

- 17 GWPC believes that even in isolation both matters demand action beyond any currently being considered. The following observations are offered:
- 17.1 The footways alongside the B1008 through much of Ford End are no longer fit for purpose and in many places are either unsafe or represent a dangerous hazard for pedestrians wishing to use them.
  - 17.2 The demise of the Highway Rangers has highlighted a gap in services which does not appear to have been filled by other resources.
  - 17.3 Because of the condition of the footways alongside the B1008 the more pedestrians are being subjected to the hazards already identified for the road through Ringtail Green.
  - 17.4 To access the northern end of Dunmow Lane (Byway No. 25 Great Waltham) at the eastern end of the road through Ringtail Green pedestrians are choosing to eschew the dangers of negotiating the B1008 footways and using the Ringtail Green route as the alternative. In addition, the road through Ringtail Green remains the only connection between Footpath 105 Great Waltham and Footpath 86 Great Waltham and Byway No. 25 (and Footpath 44 Great Waltham). The existing pedestrian traffic along the road is being inflated by the unsafe condition of the B1008 footways. Therefore, there is now (compared to when previous schemes were considered) a significantly increased risk to pedestrian and other non-motor vehicle users of the road through Ringtail Green.
  - 17.5 The absence of more refined, sophisticated interpretations of ATC data means that meaningful road safety and traffic calming initiatives for Ringtail Green have seemingly been ignored or not properly considered. There is a case for the subject matter experts involved (Essex Highways) to be more imaginative and to offer innovative solutions.
  - 17.6 The rationales for traffic calming measures remain strong and sound. The clear and present danger articulated in the letter of 24<sup>th</sup> October 2021 remains, with the overall level of likely harm having increased with additional pedestrian traffic.
  - 17.7 Apart from possible financial constraints and the vagaries of the LHP triage process in terms of selecting schemes for progression, all of the initiatives previously proposed for traffic calming on the road through Ringtail Green remain as (or indeed are more) valid now compared to when they were originally proposed.

### **Recommendations**

- 18 These actions are recommended. That GWPC agrees by resolution:
- 18.1 To further lobby all relevant authorities and agencies for traffic calming and maintenance works as they affect the footways alongside the B1008 in Ford End and the road through Ringtail Green.
  - 18.2 In particular, as a minimum, given the new evidence cited in this paper, to lobby for the reconsideration of all previously contemplated schemes (that is, Quiet Lane status for the lane, 'SLOW' road markings at either side of the bend, and advisory road signs at either side of the bend, e.g., maximum speed and chevrons). This would be achieved by working with its city and county council representatives to formulate submission documents for improvement schemes.
  - 18.3 To request a meeting with Essex Highways to discuss the interpretation of ATC data and to seek its expertise on the range of traffic calming available for the road through Ringtail Green

(notwithstanding any current absence of funding). That is, to understand what other innovative solutions can it recommend as the subject matter expert.

- 18.4 To seek clarification of how works previously undertaken by the Highways Rangers will be carried out in future. Even if this results in an understanding that such works will not now be completed, GWPC will be able to confirm to its parishioners that a valuable service has been withdrawn and alert them to the possible consequences.
- 18.5 To establish and communicate the mechanisms available for individual residents and businesses in the parish to complain about the loss of amenity (state of the footways alongside the B1008) and the hazards imposed because of increased pedestrian traffic on the road through Ringtail Green. And in addition, to draft a template wording which complainants could consider using.

## Appendix

Letter from GWPC to its Chelmsford City Council LHP representative

# Great Waltham Parish Council

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Date: 24.10.2021

Dear Councillor Steel,

### **Re: LCHE212013 – Ringtail Green, Great Waltham - Traffic management improvements. Request for speed reduction 60mph to 40mph and Quiet Lane status**

1. At its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> October the Parish Council (PC) discussed the issues raised in relation to traffic management through Ringtail Green (as referenced above), and resolved to document its further representations following the supply of traffic flow data. The PC believes that the case for making the route a Quiet Lane remains very strong and has been bolstered by findings from the data. It acknowledges that while more work may be needed to convert the route to a 40mph (or preferably 30mph) limit zone, there seems little reason not to progress to a Quiet Lane status, not least because all the necessary qualifying criteria are met.
2. The PC is aware that you may already be familiar with some of the information included here, but is mindful that its contents may be shared with others, so articulating the precise context of the points made seems a prudent approach.
3. **Quiet Lane criteria.** The criteria are met as follows:
  - a. *It must be possible to position signs in discrete locations whilst indicating clearly to road users that they are in a Quiet Lane.* There is adequate verge and sight lines for signs to be installed at both ends of the route.
  - b. *PR1 and PR2 routes cannot be designated as Quiet Lanes.* The route through Ringtail Green is not a PR1 or PR2 route.
  - c. *If the road carries more than 1,000 vehicles per day, then it cannot be considered for a Quiet Lane.* The survey data shows a daily average of 163.9 vehicles.
  - d. *The speed of vehicles using the road is also important and the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile must show speeds less than 35mph.* The average speeds by this measure in the survey were 26.6mph northeast bound and 27.2mph southwest bound (overall 26.9mph).
  - e. *Only narrow, single-track roads are suitable to be designated as Quiet Lanes.* The route is a narrow, single track with very occasional passing areas.
  - f. *They should be rural in character and ideally be in a rural area to be most effective.* The road is rural. There are frequent pedestrian and equine movements along its length and then across the road to a public right of way.
4. **General comments on the survey data.** The PC has reviewed the 7-day ATC data supplied for the route through Ringtail Green, and while it understands that a Quiet Lane designation does not come with any robust enforcement activity, it feels that a more sophisticated analysis and interpretation of the survey information not only makes clear that the route meets all the qualifying criteria for Quiet Lane status (see above), but also that it (despite the disadvantageous positioning of the recording device) clearly demonstrates excessive speed is an issue and any means of mitigation can only improve possible outcomes for all of its users. For the PC, a Quiet Lane designation seems to be the most sensible, obvious approach to

initiate measures which it believes would be supported by its parishioners, and especially those residing at the properties in Ringtail Green. In particular, the PC has the following observations in relation to the area and the data:

5. **Nature of the road.** Without taking account of the configuration of the highway between the B1008 and Pleshey Road the data are misleading. This section of road is essentially two straightaways with good visibility approaching a connecting blind 90° bend, which the PC believes can only be safely negotiated by traffic at no more than 10-12 mph. The PC's local knowledge shows that, in any event, any approach to and travel away from the bend by vehicular transport always requires initial deceleration upon entry and subsequent acceleration away. It is the speeds of approach and acceleration away with which the PC are concerned, and which it believes the data show are excessive.
6. **Negotiating the route.** It should always be borne in mind that the road is narrow, essentially a single track, and that typically vehicles approaching in opposite directions cannot pass without one or both moving partially or wholly off the carriageway. Such passing manoeuvres can only occur at slow speeds – the data supplied may be marginally affected by counting vehicles whose speeds were lower than might otherwise have been the case because they had encountered other traffic. While the 90° bend itself can accommodate two vehicles on the carriageway at the same time, this can only be achieved at very slow speeds with extreme caution, often with one vehicle coming to a standstill. An issue identified at the bend is the potential for excessive speeds of approach from either direction making the required passing manoeuvre significantly more hazardous than necessary. It has been reported that 'near misses' at the bend are not unusual.
7. **Volumes of traffic and use of the route.** The low volume of vehicular traffic recorded along the route is acknowledged. However, the PC notes that a principal criterion of a Quiet Lane designation is this very characteristic (that is, less than 1,000 vehicles per day), so the fact that the route comfortably meets this requirement surely adds to the case for its designation. However, what the recorded data do not show is how popular the route is for dog walkers, cyclists and horseback riders, both as a walk/ride from Pleshey Road and back (effectively using it as a cul-de-sac because travel on the B1008 becomes too hazardous in the absence of footpaths) and as a connection to the Dunmow Lane green lane which starts where the road meets the B1008. Naturally, excessive speeds of vehicular traffic along such a narrow lane in the proximity of other road users concerns the PC. Any warning of such hazards for drivers, such as signs showing a Quiet Lane categorisation, would seem a sensible, shrewd precaution.
8. **Incidents involving vehicles along the route.** The PC is aware that while no road traffic collisions have been formally reported along the route, it has received anecdotal evidence that private property (a fence) adjacent to the bend has been damaged on two occasions by vehicles using the road. The PC believes that proactive precautionary measures to prevent incidents are better than post-accident reactive ones.
9. **Siting of the survey device.** The fact that readings were taken at just one location along the route means that while useful information was collected for a fixed point, a complete understanding of the speed patterns along the whole route is lacking. A working assumption would be that a survey taken a similar distance from the 90° bend but on the Pleshey Road side would yield similar results to those taken on the B1008 side. However, even then there would be no indication of speeds closer to the Pleshey Road or the B1008. In particular, the PC is concerned that the data obtained provide no real indication of the speeds immediately after traffic exits the B1008; that is, as it moves from the 40mph limit on that route and encounters signage advising that the national speed limit has come into force. The PC believes because there is no disincentive or precautionary advice to slow down from the 40mph limit on the B1008 to a speed more appropriate for a single vehicle lane, speeds are



excessive. Indeed, the PC feels the current signage may act as a positive encouragement, or at least subliminal incentive, to actually increase speed after leaving the B1008. Again, Quiet Lane status signage would have a calming effect.

10. **Closeness of the survey point to the bend.** The map supplied shows the data was collected at a point no more than 40-50 metres before the bend, approaching from the B1008. Given the hazard of the bend and the slow speeds needed for it to be negotiated safely, this seems to be well into the deceleration (approaching from the B1008) and acceleration (from the Pleshey Road direction) zones vehicular traffic would typically exhibit when using the route. The PC's view is that the readings supplied are therefore in a specific context, not typical of other points elsewhere on the route, and certainly not the maximum speeds one would expect, especially closer to the B1008 for traffic entering the road from that direction.
11. **Interpreting the data in the local context.** The PC acknowledges the nature of the summary data; that is, the overall average daily speed (22.0mph) and overall average daily 85%ile (26.9mph) and that there is little variance between the northeast and southwest directions of travel. However, because of the low volumes involved, the PC believes that interpretations using mean speeds data in this way can be misleading and that with such a small sample focussing on outliers is much more important – it feels that on this occasion simply using averages fails to properly recognise and address the issues raised. In particular, the PC notes that despite the close proximity of the bend, with the need to be travelling at no more than 10-12mph for its safe negotiation, 176 southwest bound vehicles (29.6% of the total traffic going in that direction) were still travelling at 25mph or more at the survey point. This includes 30 travelling between 30-35mph and 3 between 35-40mph. The equivalent data for northeast bound vehicles accelerating away from the bend towards the B1008 was 131 vehicles (23.8% of the total in this direction) over 25mph, with 20 recorded at 30-35mph and 1 between 35-40mph. Taking into account all of the factors and caveats detailed elsewhere in this response the PC believes the recorded speeds at this point on the route by such a significant minority of users demonstrate a routine disregard for the principles of safe driving and offer a powerful indicator that significantly higher (and thus even more inappropriate) speeds are likely to be practiced elsewhere on the route. Again, Quiet Lane status would help to promote safer driving.
12. **Two types of drivers.** Overall, 839 vehicles (73.2%) were recorded as travelling at no more than 25mph. The PC believes this shows that the majority of drivers use the road sensibly, and that were the whole route to be designated as having a 30mph limit this would not be out of keeping with what safer drivers actually execute in practice. Designating the route as a Quiet Lane would be a sensible first step in helping to reduce the speeds of the 25% or so of users who are seemingly not using the route in a way which minimises not only the risk of vehicular collisions, but also (and the PC believes more importantly) the hazards faced by other road users, in particular pedestrians, cyclists and horseback riders. Also, reducing incidents of heavy braking and acceleration and encouraging smoother driving skills will help to reduce noise and exhaust pollution in the area.
13. In summary, it is clear to the PC that the data provided make a strong case for progression to Quiet Lane status. It hopes that further consideration of its representations in this respect will prove successful. However, in any event, the PC would be pleased to be advised of the target costs for a Quiet Lane designation.
14. Furthermore, the PC believes the evidence obtained from the data (together with the further information and contexts supplied in this letter) also make a robust case for the immediate introduction of a speed limit below the statutory 60mph, to either 40mph (to match the limit on the B1008), or, ideally, 30mph which seems more compatible with the levels of safe driving speeds one would expect for the route. On that basis the PC would also appreciate details how it can ensure full and complete consideration of a designation to a 30/40mph speed limit

has taken place and why, given the evidence supplied, such an additional implementation cannot also be progressed.

Yours Faithfully

W. Adshead-Grant  
Clerk to the Council