(**Appendix 6b)**

PROPOSAL FOR ADDITIONAL BENCHES AROUND
WATER ORTON VILLAGE.

At a recent Parish Council meeting it was proposed that the council investigate the siting of additional public seating around the village. This was as a result of resident feedback directly to the Parish Council and was also flagged up in the village health survey in 2025. It was felt that having additional rest areas would encourage more people, particularly those who are mobility impaired, to get out and walk more for their health and well-being. The locations of these rest areas could also form the spine of a village walking route as part of a community engagement project.
The scope of this paper is not to pre-empt the location process (though the final choices of bench type, colour and finish could be part of resident involvement) but to show the range of seating available and associated costs.

BENCH MATERIALS

The first consideration is what the benches should be made of and the relative advantages and disadvantages of the materials.

WOOD

The most traditional and perhaps most in keeping within a village location is the classic wooden memorial type bench. These are not necessarily the cheapest option and range from about £400 to about £600 depending on the quality of wood and construction. Hardwoods such as teak and oak have a much longer life of up to 25 years as opposed to pine which may last a mere 5 years. The lifespan of the bench relies on a regular maintenance schedule which is time consuming and certain treatments using oils may require the bench being out of action for a while. If wood was to be an option I would recommend as a minimum, 3 seater 1.5metre benches as it means that two solo walkers can sit without invading others space. However, 2 seaters could be used where space is limited and 4 seater (1.8 metre) for busy areas or memorial locations. Regular maintenance aside, these benches are not traditional public authority style benches and look good in garden locations and so the possibility of theft should not be discounted and a fixing kit should be installed to deter this. The inherent design of wooden benches means that they are inherently stable so deep fixings should not be necessary. The benches will require assembly but can be bought ready assembled at additional cost.
Additionally, wooden benches can easily be engraved or fitted with a plaque for either sponsorship or memorial purposes and which could further increase community involvement.



Cambridge teak 3 seat commercial bench from Sloane and Sons
£399 fixing kit for hard surface £100
fixing kit for soft surface £40



"Victoria" 4 seat teak bench from Ottena.
£565 inc VAT. fixing kit at extra cost

METAL CONSTRUCTION

Metal benches come in either full metal construction or hybrid construction of part metal or part wood or polymer (usually the supports are metal and the seat slats are wood or plastic composite) The materials used for the end supports or for full metal construction are welded mild steel, wrought iron, cast iron or cast aluminium.

There are a number of companies offering what they call park benches but are really garden benches. The cost of these is significantly less than many other forms of public seating due to the relatively low amount of construction and material used. However this results in a less sturdy bench which also requires regular treatment of the wood and also touching up of the paint finish on the metal parts to keep them looking pristine. The benches appear good value but I think durability could be an issue as well as the need for regular maintenance – I wouldn't mind one in my garden though.



Composite wood and cast iron bench
from Black Country Metalworks
£395

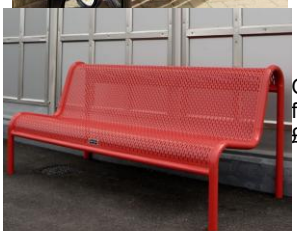


"Chatham" robust wrought iron
3 seater bench from Black Country Metalworks
£349

All metal and mixed material benches that are more suited to installation in public areas do start to get pricey and familiar local authority suppliers such as Broxap and Glasdon come into the frame as their products tend to be more robust and feature finishes like powder coating and galvanised steel for durability and reduced maintenance. Useful life is 15-20 years with regular visual inspection and retouching any rust patches if they occur.
I'm going to discount benches without backrests which are much cheaper but are merely perches and won't give our less able residents the restorative break that they may require to fully enjoy their walk round the village.



The “Sandford” 3 seat park bench from Glasdon
This is the Rolls Royce of park benches, traditional design, virtually maintenance free, vandal proof and there is even room for a logo – but top end pricey at £1282 (exc.VAT)



Outdoor Perforated Metal Street Furniture Bench with Tubular Frame
from Costcutters UK . Made from stainless steel and powder coated in a range of colours.
£622 (exc. VAT)



Forest Saver bench from Earth Anchors. A 1.8 metre bench with steel stanchions and recycled plastic slats in green or black.
Would require very deep base for secure fixings and may require a contractor to pour the footings – probably this style in general is not cost effective £646 inc VAT



“Evergreen” cast iron and recycled plastic bench from Earth Anchors.
More stable with a wider base but still requires a solid deep base and anchors for security.
Available in black or green £914 inc VAT also available as a backless bench £618 inc VAT



Steel park bench from Kingfisher Direct or Bin Shop £384. Available in a choice of colours.
Requires secure anchors or can be custom made with long leg extensions to set in concrete.



The “Lowther” 1.9 metre aluminium and recycled plastic bench sold by Glasdon. Tradtional look but virtually maintenance free.
Available with a variety of slat colourways. Delivery is free but the bench is delivered ready assembled.
Price is £657 plus VAT.



“Eastgate” Anti-vandal bench from Broxap. Traditional cast iron but with a host of anti vandal features such as galvanised mild steel slats instead of wood or plastic. Also comes in a variety of colours and fixing options
£792 (exc VAT) A version of this can be had with wood slats for £580 (exc VAT)

This is the “Queensberry” seat from Shelterstore. If you fancy something a bit contemporary then this could be the one. It is 1.9 metres long but can be cut down if required. It is constructed from mild steel and can be powder coated in any RAL colour. £636 (exc VAT)



ALL PLASTIC CONSTRUCTION

As the name implies these benches are all made from (usually) recycled plastic material and represent good value with excellent durability. They are virtually maintenance free and can be made in a choice of colours to suit the situation they are in or even if you just fancy a pop of colour. Also they don’t get searingly hot in summer or stingingly cold in winter. One of the downsides however, is that they require a lot more material to get the equivalent structural integrity of metal framed benches and so can look a bit bulky, losing the heritage look and intricacy of a cast iron or aluminium frame. From a vandalism point of view, plastic is easily melted and can eventually catch fire also the lightness of plastic means that they will need extra secure anchoring to avoid theft so if anti-vandalism is a priority in unsupervised areas then all metal may be a better option.



The “Shenstone” seat from Broxap is all recycled plastic and comes in a choice of colours including brown, black, blue, green and even Rainbow! It is relatively short at 1.56 metres and costs £541 (exc VAT)



“Dale” 1.2 metre bench in brown with 20 year guarantee. £356 (exc VAT) from CostcuttersUK



Park seat with back from NBB recycled furniture. Maintenance free for 25 years. Available in multicolour (red and green also available) as shown or plain brown. 3 lengths 1.2 (£444), 1.5 (£642) and 2.0 metres (£732)



“Phoenix” 1.8 metre bench from Glasdon £671 (exc VAT)



“Phoenix Jubilee” from Glasdon. This is a 2 metre bench mostly made of recycled plastic but with a steel frame for strength. It is available in a number of colours. £1120 plus VAT

CONCLUSION

The benches should be of durable construction and of materials that are both hard-wearing and long-lasting but require minimal maintenance so as not to over-burden our maintenance workforce. Where possible the council should also choose materials which minimise the impact on the environment. In practical terms, the seats should display a resistance to vandal attack including flame and paint spray. Other anti anti-social features should include arm rests to discourage skateboard jump offs.
Above all the seats should be comfortable to rest in so a back rest is essential and the seat should be comfortable during all weather conditions and seasons. Finally the seats should complement the village aesthetic as much as possible.
These are purely my own conclusions and I have hopefully given enough examples of the bewildering range of seating available so that councillors can see how I have arrived at my recommendations.
Firstly, I am excluding the wooden benches. Attractive as they are I think the amount of maintenance to keep them in tip-top condition is not warranted. They are not fit and forget, they are fit and faff about with year after year.
If money was no object then I would absolutely go for the Glasdon Sandford but unfortunately money IS an issue so that particular model must unfortunately be discounted.
The choice then simply comes down to the best value (though not necessarily the cheapest) metal or plastic seats and my top pick of a possible two is the Lowther by Glasdon which is an elegant cast aluminium and recycled plastic slat seat which should be comfortable and pretty vandal resistant and is a reasonable £657 plus VAT. The cost and logistics of a solid base should also be factored in but this would be true of any of the seats chosen.
However, if councillors wanted enhanced anti vandal features at the slight expense of seasonal comfort (and a bit more money) I would heartily recommend the Eastwood by Broxap at £792 plus VAT.
I reiterate that these are my own personal conclusions so please feel free to challenge, come up with your own suggestions or perhaps even go with one of the cheaper options.

Keith Brown