**Response to Consultation on Ward Boundaries - North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) From Pilton, Stoke Doyle and Wadenhoe (PSDW) Parish Council**

PSDW Parish Council met on 3rd July and considered its response to the draft recommendations produced by the Local Government Boundary Commission for North Northamptonshire, dated 23rd May, 2023.

As directed by the Commission, PSDW has given particular attention to: (57) the Oundle Ward and (38) the location of ward boundaries & the proposed ward names, and offers the following observations with supporting evidence:

**We believe that by the Boundary Commission’s own criteria, PSDW should be part of the Oundle ward rather than be included in the Thrapston ward. We offer the following evidence in support of this observation:**

* The vast majority of our residents rely on Oundle for services, which include: Oundle High Street with its independent butcher, book shop, hairdressers, beauty salons, barbers and bakery. It also has a Waitrose, a Tesco Express and a Co-op.
* For medical services the GP practice in Thrapston defines parts of our parish as being outside their catchment area with the result that many of our residents rely on the practice in Oundle.
* We have no sustainable transport links to Thrapston whereas Oundle is rather closer for many with walking or cycling an option used by a number of our residents. Moreover, the absence of buses means our elderly and non-drivers rely on volunteer driver services, taxis and their neighbours. Volunteer Action is run out of Oundle.
* Many locally-popular leisure activities are based in Oundle including: the Sports Centre, the Stahl Theatre, Barnwell Park & Clubs such as Bridge, Bowls, Tennis & Rugby and the U3A.
* Our PE8 post code means that in common with Oundle, our postal service is provided from Peterborough whereas the villages beyond Wadenhoe are serviced from Northampton.

**We believe an opportunity exists to improve the naming of the wards to more accurately reflect the predominately rural landscape.**

We note from item (38) of the consultation that:

…we *welcome comments on current draft recommendations, particularly on the local of the ward boundaries and the names of the proposed wards…*

Oundle and Thrapston currently sit on the extreme edges of their respective Wards and are essentially urban environments. Our proposition is that these names do not describe or evoke a sense of the rural environment that makes up most of the geographic area of both wards, which comprises a wide river valley with scattered villages and hamlets. The only areas that are not integrated into the rural landscape are the two towns. We therefore propose alternative names: Upper Nene Valley North (for the Oundle Ward) and Upper Nene Valley South (for the Thrapston Ward). Using North and South also demonstrates a clear link between the two Wards, which is currently invisible.

**In the longer term we have a strong preference for a single-councillor ward comprising the rural villages around Oundle.**

We note from item **(57)** of the consultation that:

*…. it would be possible to construct a two-member ward focused on the town of Oundle and neighbouring parishes, and a single-member ward comprising rural parishes further north. We would welcome further evidence as to whether this proposal might offer a better reflection of community identity, or result in two wards which were easier to represent effectively…*

We strongly agree with this idea and would go further by suggesting that the villages to the south of Oundle (including ours), which are far more aligned to Oundle than Thrapston, should be included in the suggested single-member (rural) ward. Although this would result in a ward with a relatively large geographic area, we can see considerable benefit in being grouped together with other small rural villages, rather than being mixed with the towns and larger villages (such as Woodford), as their needs and identities are different. We believe this will have support from other village communities.

**PSDW believes the A14 should be the southerly limit of the Thrapston Ward as currently drawn.**

Again, we note from item **(38)** of the consultation that:

…we *welcome comments on current draft recommendations, particularly on the local of the ward boundaries and the names of the proposed wards…*

PSDW believes the A14 is the natural southerly boundary of the Thrapston Ward*.*  The A14 is a very busy 4-lane dual carriageway and separates our villages physically & psychologically from those on the other side. Moreover, we believe Woodford has a very different identity to the villages north of the A14: it is significantly larger than average with semi-urban street scenes incorporating street lighting and a proliferation of highways signs & markings which we do not. Including Woodford within the Thrapston ward would mean that the urban or semi-urban voting population would overshadow the rural voice within the ward.

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