

## Wychavon District Council

### Personal Details:

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### Comment text:

Councillor Linda Robinson I have been the Wychavon District Councillor representative for the Upton Snodsbury Ward continuously since 2007. In May 2021 I also became the Worcestershire County Cllr. for the Upton Snodsbury Division which as well as their 13 District parishes also incorporates Drakes Broughton, Stoulton, Norton & Whittington. I am also a resident of Stoulton parish. This background gives me an in depth understanding of how these parishes operate , their workload and the major differences between them, which I hope may be useful as you make your final decisions. The current Upton Snodsbury ward is the largest single member ward in Wychavon covering an area of 20.5 sq. miles. It has a very rural nature comprising of small villages, scattered farms and homesteads with a predominantly agricultural background. These small communities work closely together with their neighbouring villages as well as sharing common interests, social activities, history, culture, outlook and religious activities. They have only two vicars between them and mainly share the same diocese. Their churches are a key part of their village lives. Not all the villages have communal facilities such as village halls but regularly use those from their larger neighbouring village. Membership of social clubs such as WI, Mother's Union, Cubs & Brownies, bowls and fitness classes as well as sports clubs are made up of representatives from all their communities as they would not be viable otherwise. I have had many residents contact me as I am sure you will have had in response to your consultation. Very few seem to be in favour of your proposals and this I believe will be borne out in the consultation responses from themselves and their Parish councils who have had lengthy discussions at their recent meetings which I regularly attend. Whilst smaller in number individually than the larger settlements they take a healthy interest in local affairs and governance. In fact, they consistently record the highest turnout in Wychavon at local elections. The biggest concern is that they feel they would have little in common with their proposed new ward partners. Peopleton is currently their largest village with a population of 590, their demographics as recorded by Wychavon in their ward profiles show a large percentage of 60- to 84-year-olds which is consistent with the rest of the ward. I am very concerned at the inconsistency of the proposals to the current US ward. It would appear that segments of communities have been randomly taken out or added at both ends with a chunk taken out in the middle where most of the larger facilities are situated simply to balance up numbers elsewhere. This could seriously affect their representation. Many residents still live in the same village where they were born. The proposal to remove Peopleton from the US ward has frankly has led to confusion as to the lack of logic of placing it with Drakes Broughton. There appears to be little synergy between them as DB is much larger and demographically a very different community which is rapidly growing and looks more towards Worcester and Pershore. There are significant differences between Peopleton and Drakes Broughton. . DB village alone has a population of over 1,395 which is increasing rapidly with all its new development while Peopleton has a fairly stable 590. This gives rise to a real concern that there would be a disproportionate workload for the local ward councillor between the two parishes. DB has potentially much larger issues ahead such as the proposed Parkway Development on its doorstep of initially 5,000 homes rising to 10,000 homes eventually with its associated infrastructure and much local upheaval for many years to come. Very much a significant and time-consuming issue for the local councillor but much less so for Peopleton. It is however of course also a major concern for Stoulton, Norton & Whittington. Drakes Broughton also has an adopted neighbourhood plan as does Norton and inevitably substantial growth still to come. DB have a much younger wider demographic with many young families and first-time buyers. There is also a much higher amount of social housing and a higher crime rate. This makes for very different social and economic cultures. The addition of the much larger Whittington parish to the U.S. Ward is equally hard to understand. Whittington shares a boundary with Worcester, its children go to school there and residents have good travel facilities into the city for work and recreation. It has a far more urban feel with its rapidly growing extensions towards the city. As their County

Council representative, I would acknowledge that they have a natural affinity and long standing partnership with adjoining Norton Parish and share many facilities plus a similar younger demographic than the U.S ward. I believe they are keen to remain with Norton which is their natural and current partner even if this means creating a two-member ward. Finally, the removal of Kington & Dormston from the opposite end of the ward into the much larger two member Inkberrow ward which looks towards urban Redditch has not been well received for similar reasons. In your Draft recommendations as published para 4 it is suggested that 'the Commission's aim is to ensure that the recommendations reflect community identity '. For all the reasons outlined above and the multitude of comments received from residents your proposals do not seem to align to this. Similarly, also in para 4 'you seek to provide arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.' The very unbalanced and diverse proposed workload would create a disproportionate balance of time between the electorate and their local representative. I note the suggestions in para 21 of your Analysis & draft recommendations. The current number of electorate in U.S ward is 2,329 against an average of 2372 . Under the new arrangements the forecast for this ward would rise to 2,747 which is a variance of 8%. So well above the desired average number of 2,546. Reverting back to current boundaries I would suggest possibly substituting Stoulton into Upton Snodsbury rather than the larger and more intensive Whittington if they cannot remain as currently with Drakes Broughton . This would fall in line with desired numbers and create a more balanced and manageable work and time load. The smaller and more rural parish of Stoulton shares many similar characteristics and boundary to the rest of Upton Snodsbury ward. Currently similar problems and issues are shared throughout this rural ward and everyone benefits from working them through together, sharing local knowledge and solutions through their joint District Councillor. Your proposals seem to lack the synergy and balance that the Upton Snodsbury Ward as a whole currently enjoys. I would ask you to reconsider any changes to enable the mutually effective representation residents currently receive from their local representative in this predominantly rural ward to continue.

**Uploaded Documents:**

None Uploaded