

Gloucestershire

Personal Details:

Name: Julia Wathen

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Organisation Name: Chair of Owlpen Parish Meeting (Representative of a local organisation)

Comment text:

Dear Sirs

The proposal to move Owlpen Parish Meeting from Dursley Division to Wotton-u-Edge Division was discussed at our Parish Meeting on November 27th and rejected unanimously. 67% of the adult population of the Parish attended the meeting or voted via proxy.

Our concerns principally relate to the fact that this proposal would put Owlpen in a different Division to Uley and that all three of the considerations which the Commission is said to take into account, and aims to 'strike the best balance between', appear to have been ignored. They are as follows:-

1. Improving electoral equality.

Owlpen is a very small Parish Meeting having a current resident adult population of 35. It is difficult to understand how such a small number could make a significant difference to a Division total. As we are adjacent to and totally fused with Uley, any local issues impact both parishes equally and so we raise them together with the appropriate authorities. Owlpen thus benefits from the combined Parishes' electoral weight. Being separated from Uley and rolled into a separate Division with which Owlpen will have no issues in common would actually diminish the impact of our electoral representation.

2. Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity.

Owlpen and Uley are located side by side within the Ewelme valley on opposite banks of the Ewelme River. Some of our farms thus have land in both parishes. Both roads which lead to Owlpen start in Uley. Uley provides all the local services used by Owlpen residents i.e. shop, pub,

doctors' surgery, school. The churches in Owlpen Nympsfield and Uley have been a United Parish since 2005. In 2018 this combined Parish was joined with Dursley and the Ewelme Benefice was created. All utilities arrive in Owlpen via Uley, Dursley or Nailsworth and Horsley. Owlpen has no connection with Wotton-under-Edge bar a shared boundary along a small section of the A4135 and across a few fields.

3. Supporting 'effective and convenient local government'. Owlpen is an easy walk and under half a mile by road from Uley and some 3 miles from Dursley. It is six miles from Wotton-under-Edge and while there is public transport between Uley and Dursley there is none between Owlpen and Wotton-under-Edge. At present Owlpen Parish Meeting and Uley Parish Council work together on issues which affect both villages. Given that Owlpen and Uley can both look at and hear each other across the Ewelme Valley issues such as planning approvals, noise, local celebrations (Jubilee and Coronation) and the new successful Lantern Festival are planned with both party's interests at heart. The Uley Village News publication is used by Owlpen, Uley PC holds Owlpen CIL money and an Owlpen page on the Uley PC Website is planned. Thus when issues arise which need raising at County Level we are already all in agreement. Recent examples being signage for Fiery Lane warning heavy vehicles and the campaign to stop the construction of an ugly visible mobile phone mast in Owlpen which would have blighted our AONB and been highly visible in Uley. The need for action by two County Councillors would have only added an extra layer of complication to the handling of these issues and doubled the administration at Parish level.

From Owlpen Parish's perspective therefore it does not feel as if enough local research has gone into the formulation of this proposal and that Owlpen has been picked on purely because it is a small unit and easy to adjust 'on paper'. Given how small we are however, the proposal that the Division move will make a significant difference to a constituency total seems questionable.

We sincerely hope you will take the above facts into account before making any decision. Please contact us should you wish to do further research or visit Owlpen in order to understand why your three considerations fail to strike any balance and why the residents of Owlpen feel so strongly that this proposal should not go ahead.

Yours faithfully

Karen Randall - Chair of Owlpen Parish Meeting

Julia Wathen - Clerk to Owlpen Parish Meeting

November 30th 2023

Attached Documents:

None attached