

The Parish Council of Offord Cluny and Offord Darcy

Response to the Boundary Commission Proposals for the Wards of Huntingdon District Council.

Proposal :- Offord Cluny and Offord Darcy to be within Godmanchester Ward

I write as Chair of the Parish Council of Offord Cluny and Offord Darcy. The matter of the Boundary Commission's proposals for new ward boundaries across Huntingdonshire was discussed at our most recent Parish Council meeting. The draft recommendation published by the Boundary Commission in June 2016 is that we shall be included with Godmanchester and Hemingford Grey in a ward with three allocated District Councillors. During the discussion it became clear that none of the Offord Parish Councillors regarded this as satisfactory. It may balance the numbers but it doesn't address any of the other factors mentioned that make for a desirable Ward structure.

In the document "Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Huntingdonshire District Council" the justification for this particular ward was as follows :-

Aside from the district-wide scheme, we did not receive any submissions relating to this ward. We have proposed a different ward from that put forward in the district-wide scheme. The district-wide scheme included part of Huntingdon town in its proposed Godmanchester ward. We consider that this would not reflect community identities in the area, and we are not proposing to include this proposal in our draft recommendations. However, Godmanchester ward would have 12% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2021 if no additional electors were included. We also noted that in the district-wide scheme, the electoral variance of the proposed The Hemingfords ward was greater than 10%. In order to address the electoral variances in both wards, we have included Hemingford Abbots in a ward with Godmanchester. We consider that our proposed ward here meets our statutory criteria, and we are including it as part of our draft recommendations.

So no mention of the Offords at all !

The statement above makes the point that including part of Huntingdon within Godmanchester ward would not "reflect community identities within the area". It cannot be emphasised too strongly that this is equally true of this recommendation – the Offords have no "community identity" in common with Godmanchester. The point has to be made that there is basically **no** connection between the Offords and Godmanchester, no community interests or identities in common. We doubt that truly effective local government will result from this boundary structure and with Godmanchester being a Town Council rather than a Parish Council, we fear that our interests and requirements will be largely ignored

For some years now, villages in this part of Cambridgeshire have (at the behest of both Cambs County and Hunts District Councils) adopted a “hub and spoke” structure whereupon key facilities are centred on the hub village and serve the surrounding spokes. In the case of the Offords, we are a spoke to Buckden’s hub. Hence our Doctor’s surgery is in Buckden, along with shops and recreational facilities. We have many issues in common – for example at the moment :-

1. A proposed large housing estate in Buckden is causing concern regarding the load on the Doctor’s surgery, the access to the A1, impact on school rolls etc. These are all issues that impact on the Offords as well as Buckden.
2. The construction of the A14 Southern Bypass and consequent roadworks on the A1 over a period of four years will almost certainly result in rat-running through both villages
3. This and a number of other factors are causing concern over safety at the level crossing between Buckden and the Offords.

These are just three examples of situations that we have in common with Buckden and which would be dealt with much more efficiently at District level if we were part of Buckden ward rather than Godmanchester.

So incorporating the Offords into Buckden ward is very much our preferred option.

Ian Weitzel

Chair of the Parish Council of Offord Cluny and Offord Darcy

████████████████████

Tel:- ██████████