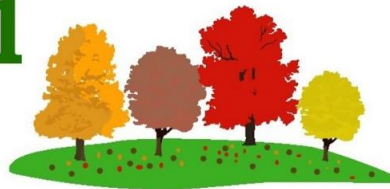


Sunningwell

Parish Council



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12/08/2026

Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
By post and email: angela.rayner.mp@parliament.uk &
lgrconsultation@communities.gov.uk

Dear Secretary of State,

**Re: Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire —
representation on behalf of Sunningwell Parish to be included within the Ridgeway
Council area rather than Greater Oxford Council**

We write on behalf of Sunningwell Parish Council and our parishioners following the announcement of 16 July 2026 confirming the three-unitary model for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. We understand that, under the proposal now being taken forward, Sunningwell parish is to be placed within the new Greater Oxford Council. Our request is that you consider making a boundary adjustment so that Sunningwell parish falls within Ridgeway instead, and this letter sets out the reasons for this request. For the record, this is an issue about which our Parishioners feel very strongly.

Growth

Sunningwell parish is located approximately two miles from and adjoins Abingdon and 5 miles from Oxford (see attached map). The parish has a strong record of contributing to

growth in the Abingdon area. Over recent decades Sunningwell, a parish of 348 dwellings, has facilitated more than 1,800 new homes on land transferred from Sunningwell to Abingdon Town Council, and hundreds more are currently in construction.

The Dalton Barracks Garden Village development will add a further 1,200 homes, bringing the total to 2,750 new homes on the outskirts of Abingdon, adjacent to Sunningwell, over the next few years. This will have a direct impact on local traffic, facilities and infrastructure in the parish. The overall projected target is 5,250 new homes over the coming decades.

In contrast to these developments in the proposed Ridgeway council, Sunningwell's ability to contribute to the growth of Oxford City is limited by distance, topography, poor transport connections and the bottleneck of the single overloaded A34 crossing at Hinksey which is not cycle-friendly.

Placing Sunningwell within Ridgeway would better facilitate on-going joined-up planning, infrastructure delivery and community and traffic management measures in locations where significant growth is already occurring in conjunction with Abingdon and where more is planned.

Devolution

Devolution requires communities to be able to contribute to, and to be heard in, their region in order to be effective.

As noted above, Sunningwell can and does contribute in an important way to developments within Ridgeway, in a way that geography makes impossible with Greater Oxford.

Moreover, our small rural parish with 904 residents dispersed at low density among 4 settlements surrounded by farmed agricultural land within the Oxford Green Belt has far more in common with the villages of the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire that will form Ridgeway than with the urban city area at the core of Greater Oxford.

Matters of importance to Sunningwell such as rural transport, drainage, countryside management, local infrastructure and rural service provision will be common to many of the settlements in Ridgeway, but alien to a city-based authority.

We believe that Sunningwell being in Ridgeway would better support the Government's objective of effective devolution by ensuring that smaller rural communities retain a meaningful voice and an ability to contribute within their new authority.

Natural Community Alignment and Parishioner Views

Sunningwell was historically part of Berkshire for centuries and therefore naturally aligned with Abingdon. Its ecclesiastical boundaries also naturally align with Radley which will be in Ridgeway. Sunningwell residents have very strongly voiced views that

they still look to Abingdon and the wider Vale for the majority of their everyday journeys for shopping, GP services and primary and secondary schools rather than central Oxford. The vast majority of SEND provision has been provided from Abingdon and having this delivered in future by Greater Oxford would cause disruption and logistical difficulties for families in need of support.

Sunningwell is also enjoyed by many visitors from neighbouring areas, with the majority coming from Abingdon, and many expected from Dalton Barracks when developed, due to the easy access and close proximity. It seems right that this protection and management of that amenity should be located in that administrative area.

Conclusion

We therefore respectfully request that the Government give serious consideration to including Sunningwell Parish within the proposed Ridgeway unitary authority rather than Greater Oxford.

We fully support the Government's wider objectives for reorganisation and growth. Our submission is made in the spirit of ensuring that the final boundaries best support those objectives, provide effective local representation, and maintain coherent community and administrative relationships for the benefit of residents.

We recognise that, although the decision about the three-unitary model has been taken in principle, it was a “minded-to” approach, and there is still opportunity to make some boundary adjustments that make sense. We note and welcome the fact that your predecessor has already exercised the power to modify boundary detail at the request of other authorities as part of similar announcements. We ask that the same flexibility be extended to Sunningwell before the Structural Changes Order is finalised and laid before Parliament, as this is fully consistent with the government's stated desire to give communities a stronger local voice and ensure decisions are made at the most appropriate local level.

Thank you for considering our request.

Karen Laister
Chair, Sunningwell Parish Council

cc. Layla Moran, MP for Oxford West and Abingdon.

Cllr Susan Brown, Leader of the Council, Oxford City Council.

Cllr Bethia Thomas, Leader of the Council, Vale of White Horse District Council.

Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Leader of the Council, South Oxfordshire District Council.

Cllr Tim Breader, Leader of the Council, Oxfordshire County Council.

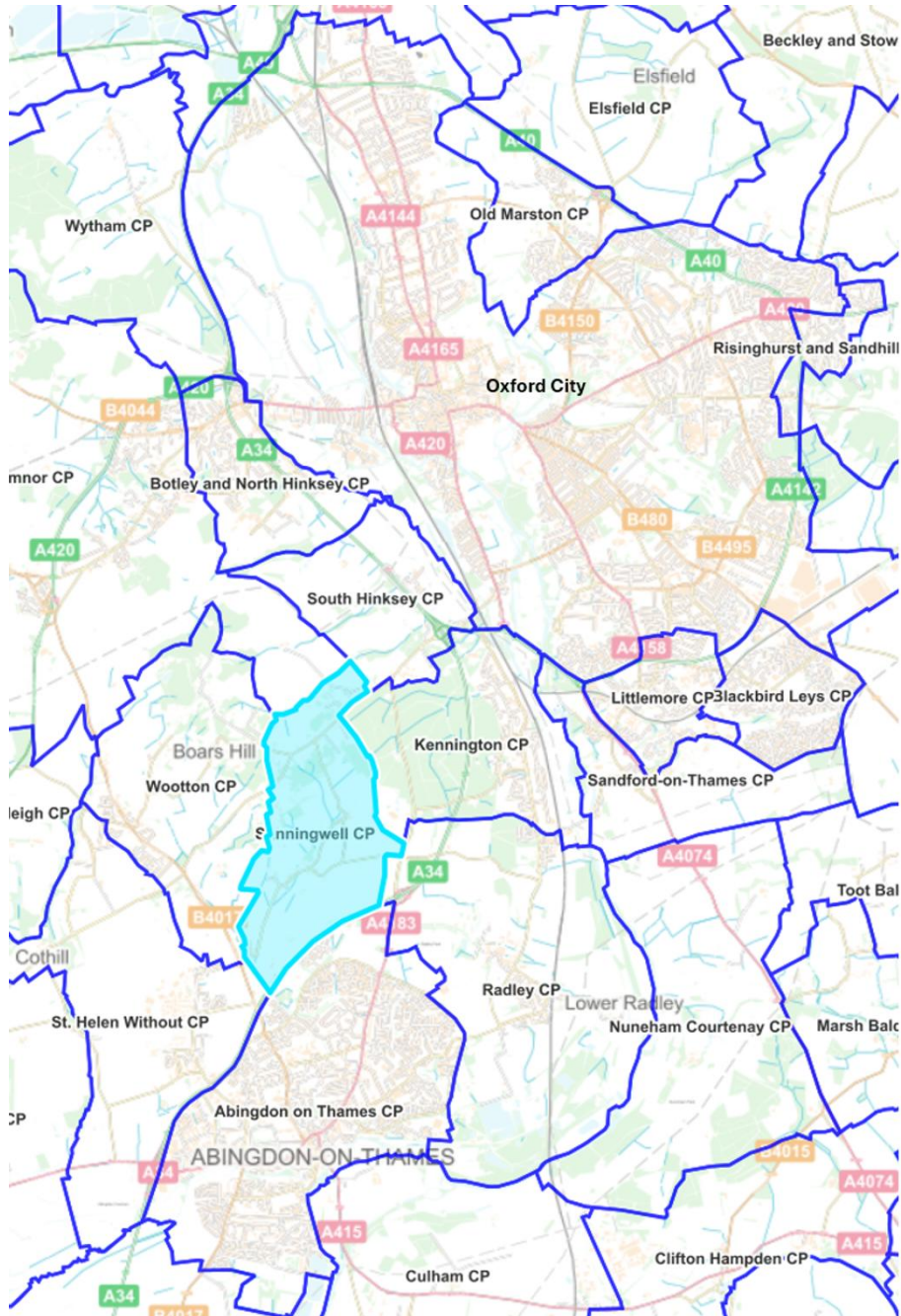
Cllr Diana Lugova, Liberal Democrat Member for Kennington and Radley Ward, Oxfordshire County Council.

Cllr Emily Smith, Liberal Democrat Member for Botley and Sunningwell Ward

Vale of White Horse District Council.

Cllr Ben Potter, Liberal Democrat Member for Botley and Sunningwell Ward

Vale of White Horse District Council.



Sunningwell Parish in relation to Abingdon and Oxford City