**Simpson & Ashland Parish Council**

**Milton Keynes Ward Boundary Review**

Simpson & Ashland Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to Milton Keynes City Council’s ward boundary review (2025), for the information of the Boundary Commission.

1. The Parish of Simpson and Ashland is situated at the southern end of the **Campbell Park and Old Woughton Ward**. Simpson Parish was created in 2001, a development of Simpson Neighbourhood Council (1997-2001). In about 2006 the parish boundary extended westwards to incorporate the areas of Ashland and West Ashland, as their development began to take shape.
2. The origins of Simpson can be traced back to Saxon times, as recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086. It was a small community, much of it based around agriculture and trade connected to the Grand Union Canal. St Thomas’ Church competed for a congregation with a strong Methodist presence in the village. From 1876, Simpson shared a school with Woughton on the Green, immediately to the north. During World War 2 Simpson was home to a number of workers from Bletchley Park. The village’s population rapidly expanded in the early 1970s with the creation of the new town of Milton Keynes; the early housing developments have become an integral part of the modern heritage of the city. The community takes pride in its past, both ancient and modern, as exemplified by the regular and varied contributions to the annual Heritage Open Days.
3. The Simpson part of the parish has distinct physical boundaries: to the east the River Ouzel and the edge of part of Caldecotte Lake; to the south the A5(D) dual carriageway, a major north-south route through the centre of the city; and to the north the H9 Groveway dual carriageway, which forms the boundary with Old Woughton parish. The space between the village housing and the river/lakeside is an expanse of parkland – the Ouzel Valley linear park – which extends north, parallel with the course of the river, and provides continuity and coherence with the communities concerned – Woughton Park, Woughton on the Green and Great and Little Woolstone. The parkland is managed to excellent effect by Milton Keynes Parks Trust and provides widely-used leisure space for both the local communities and more widely.
4. The residential area of Ashland was developed on land that had previously accommodated a greyhound stadium and, for some years, was the site of a popular Sunday market. In about 2006, as properties were starting to be built at the eastern end, closest to Simpson, it was agreed that it made sense for the area to be incorporated into a new and larger parish of Simpson and Ashland. The growth of housing development took longer than originally planned, but the estate has been complete for the past five years or so, its western boundary bordered by the V7 Saxon Street. To the south of the housing lies Ashland Lakes, surrounded by greenspace (all managed by the Parks Trust) up to the parish boundary formed by the A5(D). Much of the Ashland housing is quite densely arranged and the estate has acquired a cohesive identity around a central square where there are shops and fast-food outlets.
5. The third component of the parish, West Ashland, accommodates a large Domino’s Pizza manufacturing and distribution base and, further to the west, the Blue Light Hub, an ultra-modern complex that houses all three emergency services, which opened in 2020. As far as we are aware there are no registered electors in West Ashland.

In response to the invitation to identify features which characterise the parish, we note the following:

1. The two areas that constitute the parish have cohered in a variety of ways. For example:

* the Parish Council has two community halls – one in Simpson, that can trace its history to 1921, and one in Ashland (funded, in part, by Section 106 money) which opened in 2023. Both are managed by the part-time Parish Clerk and a part-time Facilities Manager. The experience of Simpson Village Hall has proved invaluable in establishing systems and practices for Ashland Lakeside. Both facilities are well used by their respective communities. Since 2023, the bi-monthly Parish Council meetings have alternated between the two. So far, in 2024, each facility has served as the location of a Citizens Advice Bureau session, advertised across the parish (and see below).
* The parish has a website [www.simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk](http://www.simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk) and there is an active parish Facebook page. A high-quality printed newsletter (three or four issues a year, each of 8 or 12 pages), is delivered to every address in the parish and is also accessible on the website (see above). Our ward councillors often use the Facebook page to communicate matters of interest. There are also five noticeboards spread across the parish which are well used to publicise events. meetings etc.
* The Parish Council regularly receives, reviews and comments on planning applications from both Simpson and Ashland, as notified by Milton Keynes City Council.
* Charles Warren Academy, the primary-age school in the buildings of what was formerly Simpson School (the 1972-built replacement for the historic Simpson and Woughton School (see above)) serves families from both communities.

1. Historically, the adjacent villages of Simpson and Woughton on the Green have had interests in common e.g. the shared school. Today, Simpson & Ashland PC enjoys a cordial and collaborative relationship with Old Woughton PC, for example over a shared concern for road safety on H9 Groveway, which is the boundary between the parishes (this is currently under review by MKCC, with a proposal for changes to the layout out for consultation). Other areas of collaboration are the provision of (jointly funded) CAB sessions for residents, and matters to do with heritage, the canal and the common open spaces.

As a parish, we are content with our position within the Campbell Park and Old Woughton ward.

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