WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN – REGULATION 19 REPRESENTATION

Re: Proposed Settlement Hierarchy – Upper and Lower Boddington

To: Planning Policy Team, West Northamptonshire Council

Upper Boddington was previously classified as an Other Village and was elevated to Secondary Service Village status through the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan. Despite objections raised during that consultation, the higher classification has been retained in the Regulation 19 Plan. This means the village is considered suitable for more housing development.

I believe this classification is wrong because Upper Boddington has no public transport and very limited local services. I consider this part of the Local Plan to be unsound because it has not been properly justified by the evidence.

The following are my reasons.

1. WNC appears to be treating similar villages differently

Test of soundness: Not Justified – NPPF 2024, paragraph 36(b)
Relevant policy: Policy R1 – Rural Settlement Hierarchy.
References: SS5 Rural Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper (October 2026); Appendix 2 – Settlement Hierarchy Calculations; Appendix 4 – Qualitative Assessments for Settlement Hierarchy.

WNC is proposing to downgrade Staverton and Stoke Bruerne to Other Villages, partly because they have little or no public transport.

Both villages have primary schools. Stoke Bruerne even has 24 spare school places, yet WNC considers its poor public transport a reason to downgrade it.

Upper Boddington also has a primary school but has no bus service at all. Despite this, WNC has kept it as a Secondary Service Village, saying that more housing could help support the school.

WNC also compares Upper Boddington with Syresham and Chipping Warden, which are being upgraded to Secondary Service Villages. However, both of those villages have regular bus services.

Why I believe this is unsound
I do not believe WNC has clearly explained why poor public transport is a reason to downgrade some villages but is acceptable in Upper Boddington.
What I would like WNC to change
WNC should review these villages using the same criteria and explain why Upper Boddington deserves a higher classification despite having no bus service.
If there is not enough evidence to justify this decision, Upper Boddington should be reclassified as an Other Village.

2. Upper Boddington does not meet WNC's normal requirements for a Secondary Service Village

Test of soundness: Not Justified – NPPF 2024, paragraph 36(b)

Relevant policy: Policy R1 – Rural Settlement Hierarchy.
References: SS5 Rural Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper (October 2026); Appendix 2 – Settlement Hierarchy Calculations; Appendix 4 – Qualitative Assessments for Settlement Hierarchy.

WNC's own method of deciding village classifications includes a requirement for public transport. Upper Boddington has **no** bus service and does not meet this requirement.

The village was previously classified as an Other Village, but WNC upgraded it to a Secondary Service Village in the earlier draft Local Plan. It has kept that classification in the latest Plan.

WNC has made an exception because it believes allowing more housing could help support Boddington Primary School.

Why I believe this is unsound
I do not believe the need to support the school is enough, on its own, to justify overlooking the lack of public transport.
What I would like WNC to change
WNC should provide clear evidence explaining why Upper Boddington should be an exception to its normal requirements.
If this cannot be justified, the village should return to its previous Other Village classification.

3. Upper and Lower Boddington should be considered together

Test of soundness: Not Justified – NPPF 2024, paragraph 36(b)
Relevant policies: Policy R2 – Secondary Service Villages; Policy R4 – Small Settlements/Hamlets.
Reference: SS5 Rural Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper (October 2026), Section 6 – Linked Villages, paragraphs 6.29–6.31, page 16.

Upper and Lower Boddington have historically been recognised as linked villages. They share a parish, community facilities and a close relationship.

However, WNC has decided to treat them separately because they are more than 400 metres apart.

This means Upper Boddington is classified as a Secondary Service Village, while Lower Boddington is classified as a Small Settlement/Hamlet, which is treated as open countryside.

WNC has allowed other villages, including Pattishall, Astcote and Eastcote, to remain linked because of their relationship and shared facilities.

Why I believe this is unsound
I do not believe WNC has properly explained why the distance between Upper and Lower Boddington should outweigh their shared facilities and close community relationship.
I also question why shared facilities have been considered important when assessing some linked villages but appear to have been given less weight in Boddington's case.
What I would like WNC to change

WNC should review its decision to separate Upper and Lower Boddington and explain why the 400-metre distance is considered more important than their historical relationship and shared facilities.
I would like the Council to reconsider assessing Upper and Lower Boddington together as linked villages, taking account of how the two communities function in practice.

4. WNC's own figures raise questions about whether more housing will help the school

Test of soundness: Not Justified – NPPF 2024, paragraph 36(b)
Relevant policies: Policy R1 – Rural Settlement Hierarchy; Policy R6 – Rural Areas Housing Requirement.
References: SS5 Appendix 4 – Qualitative Assessments for Settlement Hierarchy; SS6 Rural Area Housing Requirements Background Paper (October 2026), Appendix B, Table B4 – 2025/26 Primary School Capacity Assessment, page 269.

WNC says that allowing more housing in Upper Boddington could help support the future of the primary school, however, WNC's own figures show:

There are currently 35 spare places at the school.

28 new homes are proposed for Upper Boddington.

These homes are expected to generate approximately 10 primary-school-age children.

This would still leave approximately 25 spare school places.

This means that even if all the estimated additional children attended Boddington Primary School, almost 73% of the currently available spare places would remain empty.
I fully support protecting our village school, but I question whether these additional children would make a significant difference to its long-term future.

Why I believe this is unsound
WNC has not clearly demonstrated how the proposed housing would secure the school's future or why this justifies overlooking the village's lack of public transport.
What I would like WNC to change
WNC should provide evidence showing how the proposed housing would help secure the school's future and why this is a sufficient reason to give Upper Boddington a higher classification.
If the evidence does not support this decision, the classification should be reconsidered.

5. WNC's own assessment shows that Upper Boddington is poorly connected

Tests of soundness: Not Justified – NPPF 2024, paragraph 36(b); potentially Not Consistent with National Policy – paragraph 36(d).
Relevant policies: Policy R1 – Rural Settlement Hierarchy; Policy R6 – Rural Areas Housing Requirement.
References: Policy R6 Assessment Background Paper, page 27 (exact document reference to be confirmed); SS5 Rural Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper; SS5 Appendix 4 – Qualitative Assessments for Settlement Hierarchy; NPPF 2024, paragraphs 109 and 110.

WNC's own assessment gives Upper Boddington a low connectivity score of approximately 20–23.

The village has:

- No public bus service.
- No GP surgery.
- No general food shop.

This means residents are heavily dependent on cars to reach work, shops, healthcare and other essential services.

Despite recognising these problems, WNC still considers Upper Boddington suitable for Secondary Service Village status.

Why I believe this is unsound
I do not believe WNC has adequately explained why a village with such poor transport connections and limited services should be given a higher classification.
What I would like WNC to change
WNC should explain how Upper Boddington's poor accessibility has been taken into account and why it is considered suitable for additional housing growth.
If the decision cannot be properly justified, Upper Boddington should be reclassified as an Other Village.

6. Disproportionate Weight Given to Limited Post Office Provision

Test of soundness: Not Justified – NPPF 2024, paragraph 36(b)
Relevant policy: Policy R1 – Rural Settlement Hierarchy.
References: SS5 Rural Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper (October 2026); SS5 Appendix 2 – Settlement Hierarchy Calculations; SS5 Appendix 4 – Qualitative Assessments for Settlement Hierarchy; NPPF 2024, paragraph 36(b).

Upper Boddington's Post Office is only open for four hours each week:

- Tuesday: 2 pm–4 pm
- Friday: 10 am–12 noon

It is closed every evening and throughout the weekend, making it difficult for people working normal daytime hours to use. Despite these very limited opening hours, WNC awards the Post Office the full 10 points in its settlement hierarchy assessment, apparently the same as a Post Office open five or six days a week.

Upper Boddington's total score is 47 points. Without the 10 points awarded for the Post Office, its score would fall to just 37 points, below the threshold for a Secondary Service Village.
Why I believe this is unsound – Not Justified
I question whether it is reasonable to give a Post Office open for just four hours a week the same points as one providing a full-time service.
Although WNC's scoring system may allow this, I do not believe it properly reflects how limited the service is or how accessible it is to residents.
This is particularly important because the 10 points make a significant difference to Upper Boddington's overall score and proposed classification.
What I would like WNC to change

WNC should review how Post Offices are scored and consider whether opening hours and the range of services available should be taken into account.
It should also reassess Upper Boddington's score to establish whether its Secondary Service Village classification remains justified when the very limited Post Office service is properly considered.

Overall conclusion
I believe WNC has not provided enough evidence to justify keeping Upper Boddington as a Secondary Service Village.

The village has no public transport, very limited services and does not meet the normal public transport requirements within WNC's settlement hierarchy methodology.

I do not believe WNC has demonstrated that additional housing would make enough difference to the Primary School to justify overlooking these problems.

I therefore consider Policy R1 of the Regulation 19 Local Plan to be unsound because Upper Boddington's classification has not been adequately justified, as required by paragraph 36(b) of the NPPF 2024.

I ask WNC to review the evidence and reconsider Upper Boddington's classification, with a view to returning it to Other Village status.

Soundness: I consider the Plan unsound for the reasons given above.

I ask that this representation is considered as part of the independent examination of the Local Plan.

Yours Faithfully

Name:

Address:

Date