

**SUBMISSION TO THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION**

**BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS CONSULTATION**

**CLOSING 11<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2017**

**ALASTAIR McCRAW.**

**MEMBER FOR ALTON WARD, (BRANTHAM, STUTTON & TATTINGSTONE), BDC.**

My original submission in August contained analysis of a number of different models. The draft recommendations appear substantially based upon my secondary design of a 31 member model, with an additional member for Sudbury. In this instance I shall mostly confine myself to a more local area to me. I do note that the proposed Bildeston & Whatfield wards seem somewhat tortuous. I would expect that these will attract considerable local comment. I would suggest that my 31 member model for these areas could be reconsidered.

**The Shotley Peninsula**

My main points concern the South-Eastern parishes of the Shotley peninsula, the area covered by the proposed Brantham & Holbrook, Chelmondiston & Shotley wards. The draft proposals have received a somewhat negative response locally and I'd like to address these concerns.

My original submission was based on a principle of using the 12 largest communities as the basis for wards. The draft recommendations achieve this with one exception, the joining of the 9<sup>th</sup> largest parish, Brantham, with the 12<sup>th</sup> largest, Holbrook. This has not been well received in any of the four parishes affected. Likewise, the isolation of Bentley from the rest of the Chelmondiston Ward is disliked from both ends of the proposed ward. The Shotley Ward seems acceptable to most and reflects local identity reasonably well.

**Brantham**

Brantham is something of an outlier, an anomaly in the Babergh & Suffolk context, developing over a hundred years ago as an industrial village and more recently as a commuter village. Historically and practically it has a stronger connection with Manningtree in Essex (and its sister parishes of Lawford & Mistley) than with most surrounding villages. Long standing connections of business, family, social links, services used, and the presence of Manningtree Rail station continue to be a massive influence in the community. With the addition of further development in the Brantham Regeneration Area (The Brantham Rail Maintenance Yard) this is likely to continue. Fundamentally it is not a rural village, and it has to be said, much influenced by Essex through shared concerns that cross the county boundary.

I also have some doubts about the anticipated growth figures supplied by BDC. Across the peninsula, these range from a 5% increase in the current Alton Ward (Brantham, Stutton & Tattlingstone) to 9% in Holbrook and 14-15% in the parishes to the east, along the River Orwell. Given that the average is supposed to be 4% across the Babergh area, some of these seem disproportionate. More relevantly even, a growth percentage of 5% for Brantham seems ridiculously low, given that outline permission for 320 houses there was granted in 2016.

For both the above reasons, I continue to believe that Brantham forms a natural unit for a single member ward. On the figures supplied, this would be 2195 electors compared to an average of 2313, producing a variance of -5%. I have good reason to suggest, as above, that this would be closer to the mean. It is still acceptable however. **(Options 1-4)**

### **Alton**

Much local discussion has centred around the formation of a Ward based around Alton Water, to be called Alton Ward and comprising of Stutton, Tattingstone and Holbrook. This does form a natural grouping of shared interests and concerns (something that could not easily be said of an inclusion of Brantham). The combined electorate is forecast to be 2692 with a variance of +16%. The Holbrook growth figure is calculated at 9%. This seems rather high, at over double the district average.

These options for Brantham, Stutton and Tattingstone (the current Alton Ward I sit for) would, I believe, be the preference for all three Parish Councils. I think an argument can, and should, be made for this high variance in an Alton Water based ward as an exception for the sake of community identity and interests. This split would achieve four single member wards, desirable for the communities affected, representation and accountability. It potentially comes at the cost of equality of representation, but as the peninsula is going to be underrepresented anyway, I think this may be justifiable. **(Option 1)**

### **Bentley Parish & the Peninsula**

I feel obliged to consider some other possibilities to attempt to address the position of Bentley Parish. There is no direct road link between Bentley and the rest of the proposed ward, a point that the proposed ward residents find unacceptable. It did form part of my own proposal. I acknowledge that this was not a perfect solution, but a function of my seeking electoral equality.

In my earlier submission, one of my models suggested a link between Capel St Mary, Bentley & Tattingstone as part of a two member ward. There is a clear road and services link between these. Accordingly Bentley's isolation could be dealt with by combining the Tattingstone/Stutton/Holbrook grouping with the proposed Chelmondiston Ward. A clear multi-directional road system connects all these parishes and could form a two member ward in the centre of the peninsula. This also covers most of the geographical area of the Peninsula Division of Suffolk County Council, although that is not necessarily a consideration. The Ward formed, being primarily rural villages, would contain one of the 12 largest communities as its population centre and already has a commonality of interests. The combined projected electorate would be 5,067 giving a high positive variance of almost 10%. I note however that growth rates are 'generously' projected at well over 10% in a very short space of time and I believe that to be too high. The reality is likely to be much lower. The variance is within the parameters however. This appears to me to be a viable, if geographically large, ward arrangement. **(Option 2)**

### **Single Member Wards**

Another possibility does exist, also designed to produce single member wards throughout the peninsula. Leaving Brantham and Shotley as I am here proposing, a ward could be formed joining Bentley with Tattingstone, Stutton, Wherstead and Freston. The first four are connected by road

links, but Freston (106 projected electors) does not connect internally. The total projected electorate would be 2325 to produce a variance of 0.5%. **(Option 3)**

The addition of Woolverstone is something I have considered, but I believe it aligns better with Chelmondiston. Additionally, this would only emphasise the internal road link problem. (Option 4)

The final ward in this model would be formed by Holbrook (the last of the 12 largest communities), Woolverstone and Chelmondiston where a clear triangle exists. The projected electorate is 2742 to produce a variance of +19%. Again I note the projected growth figures averages at 11% which seems high compared to district averages. I hesitate to separate Woolverstone from this ward, leaving Holbrook and Chelmondiston as the ward. The result, however, is unacceptably high variance.

**(Option 3)**

By adding Woolverstone to the Ward above with Freston the projected electorate would be 2,595 with a variance of +12%. Holbrook/Chelmondiston would have a projection of 2,472 for a variance of +7%. This is closer to the target level but presents another addition to the isolation problem. Fewer electors are affected from both Freston & Woolverstone than those in Bentley, however. **(Option 4)**

With the notable earlier exception of a split in the proposed Brantham & Holbrook ward, I believe this particular option for single member wards throughout the peninsula to be, although desirable, unattainable within the limits of the more important matters of equality of representation and cohesive communities and areas for wards. I acknowledge that there are issues of practicality in representation posed however by a large central two member ward. That is also true of a ward including two of the twelve largest communities such as Brantham and Holbrook.

### **Summary**

I ask that the Commission consider these points in making their final recommendations. They are based on considerable feedback from both my own ward and across the Shotley peninsula. Fundamentally I believe that Shotley (with some additions) and Brantham form discrete and separate units as the largest communities within the peninsula, as employment centres and that they have unique concerns. That should be reflected in the Warding pattern. My concern is to ensure that all other peninsula parishes are also served. Variations are on the whole positive meaning this peninsula is expected to be absorbing significant growth, on the figures supplied, leaving it under represented in comparison with the rest of the district. The individual and total variances for the Commissions proposed wards are all within the +10% target, but this comes at the cost of coherent wards that will serve the electorates effectively. My submission is that given an overall positive variance, less weight should be given in this locality to a single variance outside the +10%. I believe that Option 1 and Option 2 would best serve this need.

A summary table of my submission for this area is presented in the Appendix.

**Alastair McCraw**

**Member for Alton Ward, Babergh District Council**

**10<sup>th</sup> December, 2017**

## APPENDIX

<b><u>OPTION 1</u></b>				
<b><u>Ward &amp; Parishes</u></b>	<b><u>Projected Electorate</u></b>	<b><u>%age of 2313 Average</u></b>	<b><u>Representation</u></b>	<b><u>Variance per member</u></b>
<b>BRANTHAM</b>	2195	95%	1	-5%
<b>ALTON.</b> Holbrook, Stutton. Tattingstone	2692	116%	1	+16%
<b>CHELMONDISTON.</b> Woolverstone, Freston, Wherstead, Bentley	2375	103%	1	+3%
<b>SHOTLEY.</b> Erwarnton, Harkstead	2466	107%	1	+7%
<b><u>OPTION 2</u></b>				
<b>BRANTHAM</b>	2195	95%	1	-5%
<b>Alton &amp; Chelmondiston</b> Bentley, Tattingstone, Stutton, Holbrook, Wherstead, Freston, Woolverstone	5067	219%	2	+10%
<b>SHOTLEY.</b> Erwarnton, Harkstead	2466	107%	1	+7%
<b><u>OPTION 3</u></b>				
<b>BRANTHAM</b>	2195	95%	1	-5%
<b>STUTTON &amp; BENTLEY,</b> Tattingstone, Wherstead, Freston	2325	101%	1	+1%

<b>HOLBROOK,</b> Woolverstone, Chelmondiston	2742	119%	1	+19%
<b>SHOTLEY.</b> Erwarnton, Harkstead	2466	107%	1	+7%
<b><u>OPTION 4</u></b>				
<b>BRANTHAM</b>	2195	95%	1	-5%
<b>STUTTON &amp; BENTLEY,</b> Tattingstone, Wherstead, Freston, Woolverstone	2595	112%	1	+12%
<b>HOLBROOK,</b> Chelmondiston	2472	107%	1	+7%
<b>SHOTLEY.</b> Erwarnton, Harkstead	2466	107%	1	+7%