

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW OF THE ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES FOR BATH & N.E. SOMERSET LOCAL AUTHORITY

Lambridge Citizens' Objections to the LGBC proposals

We are a group of local residents, business owners and community campaigners in the Lambridge area of Bath. We are concerned about the consequences of the Review for our area and also general implications of the LGBC proposals. Specifically the reduction the numbers of councillors in Bath city wards; so that there would be seven single member wards where there are presently none.

The proposed reductions in councillor numbers within the Bath city wards seems not to recognise that the existing disparity of representation between these and NE Somerset's. The latter also have parish councillor representation which city wards lack. We are most alarmed at the proposed Larkhall ward boundaries to replace the present Lambridge ones.

General implications of LGBC proposals for BaNES

We appreciate the LGBC principle that single-member wards could be equivalent to those with two, or even three councillors in terms of the numbers of voters per councillor. However, we believe that the LGBC's other two guiding principles –efficient and convenient governance, and community identity – may not be satisfied by the proposals based mainly on numerical equivalence.

Efficient and convenient governance hinges on councillors being able to represent the views and interests of local people *and* the organisations and activities which take place within the ward. Councillors' workloads will vary according to the extent of the latter and the demands that they make upon her or his time. Thus wards with similar numbers of voters may differ significantly in terms of the need to deal with issues involved with schools, parks, or voluntary groups involved in community needs. Where these are numerous a single councillor may lack the time or resources to represent them all effectively.

Community identity is a mixture of geographic links and involvement with local institutions and organisations. An apparently clear demarcation on a map - for example along a main road or a natural boundary – may inadvertently separate residents from an adjacent area in which they regularly mix and share activities. These objections seem to apply particularly to the area with which we are most familiar and in which we live: the present Lambridge ward on the north-east of the city.

Lambridge/Larkhall and adjacent North-east wards

1. The Local Government Act 1992 stipulates reviews should reflect 'the identities and interests of local communities'. This will not be the case if the dismemberment of the present Lambridge ward takes place.

- Residents of Walcot, Fairfield Park and Bailbrook (and also parts of Walcot ward such as Ringswell Gardens) identify with the parish of Larkhall. They use shops and services there and send their children to Larkhall schools.
- Plans to cut the bus service connecting Fairfield Park to Larkhall centre caused major protests by hundreds of residents; proving the strong links between these areas.
- Larkhall has a huge range of community institutions and activities: numerous shops and eateries, three schools, a theatre, multiple activities in New Oriel Hall, voluntary and community groups, sports clubs, scouts, Transition Larkhall and Larkhall Festival.
- Fairfield Park and Bailbrook residents engage with and run these institutions. A Larkhall ward should therefore incorporate these areas. Similar arguments might also be applied to many Walcot residents.

2. 'Efficient and convenient' governance would not be possible with only a single member to represent the above interests.

- We understand from Lambridge's two present office holders that they have heavy workloads.

- These arise not only from assisting individual residents but the campaigns and concerns of various voluntary groups, businesses and other institutions on issues such traffic, parking, play facilities, council grants and planning proposals.
- Loss of the Fairfield Park, near St Saviours church and Bailbrook residential areas would not reduce the needs and demands of these groups and organisations.

Conclusions and Proposals re ‘Larkhall’/Lambridge ward proposals

- For all of the above reasons an electoral district centred on Larkhall needs two councillors and its boundaries should be wider than those currently proposed.
- Boundaries should certainly include Bailbrook and Fairfield Park and the area around St Saviours church – currently slated for transfer to Walcot ward.
- It should be noted that St Saviours is the parish church for Larkhall.
- If numerical equivalence for a two-member ward necessitates more voters than the current Lambridge ward contains, then the Larkhall-facing area below Camden Road, from Claremont Road to Snow Hill could be included.
- As Walcot ward, unlike Larkhall, has no natural centre, LGBC may also wish to consider whether Larkhall/Lambridge could sensibly be combined with most of the proposed Walcot ward in a larger three-member ward.

Signed:

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ADDRESSES/ CONTACT DETAILS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

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