Conservative Party response to LGBCE’s initial proposal for Warwick District Council warding

Introduction
- The LGBCE produced its initial proposals for ward changes for Warwick District Council (WDC) at the end of March 2018. This document provides the Conservative Party’s response to these initial proposals.

Summary
- The Conservative Party notes that the LGBCE’s primary emphasis is on electoral equality and community cohesion, rather than co-terminosity. This has informed our consideration and response to the proposals and gives rise to changes from the Conservative Party’s original proposals.
- Overall, we are broadly supportive of the main recommendations in the report. The LGBCE has also asked for specific comments and proposals at various points through the report. Detailed comments have been provided below ward by ward, using/assuming the wards proposed by the LGBCE in its initial proposals.
- NB: References to paragraph numbers in this document refer to the document “Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Warwick District Council” published by the LGBCE in early April 2018

Bishop’s Tachbrook
- Supported as proposed by the LGBCE

Budbrooke
- Supported as proposed by the LGBCE, and please see the comments in relation to Lapworth & West Kenilworth

Cubbington and Leek Wootton
- Supported as proposed by the LGBCE

Kenilworth Park Hill
- Supported as proposed by the LGBCE

Kenilworth St John’s
- Supported as proposed by the LGBCE

Lapworth and West Kenilworth
- Supported as proposed by the LGBCE. We agree with and accept the recommendation to include the parish of Shrewley etc. into this ward rather than Budbrooke and note that in addition to the comments in the LGBCE report this would avoid splitting Shrewley from the rest of the Warwick District wards that are in the Kenilworth & Southam Parliamentary constituency.

Royal Leamington Spa wards
- We note the comments that the LGBCE have made and while disappointed that the proposals differ from our suggestions, we have carefully considered and reviewed the thinking of the LGBCE in their
proposals. We are therefore broadly accepting of the proposals and our comments on the five
Leamington Wards are in this light.

**Leamington Brunswick**

- Supported as outlined by the LGBCE. Please note the additional comments under Leamington
Clarendon.

**Leamington Clarendon**

- Supported as proposed by the LGBCE.

- We are aware of the Labour Party councillors’ proposal at the WDC Licensing & Regulatory meeting
of 29th May 2018 which supported the LGBCE’s proposal of the Victoria Park area fitting into
Leamington Clarendon but put forward an alternative northern boundary for the LGBCE’s proposed
Brunswick ward. Labour’s proposal moved the northern boundary of Brunswick ward to include the
new Station Approach development and the southern side of Avenue Road, rather than include them
in Leamington Clarendon as proposed by the LGBCE.

Whilst the new Station Approach area is a new community without any previous tie to any particular
ward and so could be argued to be in either ward, we would strongly object to the splitting of Avenue
Road between two wards. Avenue Road is a historic community of largely substantial houses
established at the same time in the late Victorian era – see the link below for example
https://www.ourwarwickshire.org.uk/content/catalogue_wow/leamington-spa-avenue-road-3

We also reiterate our comments from our initial submission:

“....with residents along Avenue Road having a strong affinity to the Town Centre, and considering
themselves as part of central Leamington, rather than South Leamington which Brunswick entails.”

Avenue Road therefore forms a natural and established community, which looks to the Town Centre
and with both sides historically in the same ward, and we would support this being maintained and
both sides staying within the proposed Leamington Clarendon ward. This was the position approved
at the WDC Licencing and Regulatory Committee, rather than the Labour Party’s proposal.

With respect to the boundary between Clarendon and Milverton, we note that the boundary goes
along Lillington Avenue, which results in the splitting of the Arlington Avenue community across two
wards. The Cricket Club, which is only accessible from Arlington Avenue, is a central community
facility for the whole of the Arlington Avenue area, including being the location of the Arlington
Avenue polling station. We would ask for consideration be given to moving the boundary between
Clarendon and Milverton for the are between the Kenilworth Road and Lillington Road to follow that
of the County Council boundary (i.e. between Woodcote Road and Warren Close.

**Leamington Milverton**

- Supported as proposed by the LGBCE. Northumberland Road being re-united together in one ward
makes community sense. Please also see the suggestion in relation to Clarendon Ward.

**Leamington North**

- Supported as proposed by the LGBCE.
Leamington Willes

- We have looked at various alternative proposals to address the LGBCE’s comments and concerns raised in paragraph 52. We agree with the LGBCE that there are two distinct communities. Several alternatives have been carefully considered, but most suffer from the same problem as identified by the LGBCE of splitting Gainsborough Drive.

- The District Council officers proposed an alternative version which includes drawing a ward boundary along the line of Sydenham Primary School and Ryland Close (attached), each being within the proposed new ward of Upper Sydenham, which would have one District Councillor, with a variance of -1% in 2023. The remaining Willes ward would have two District Councillors, with a variance of 11% in 2023. This option recognises the distinct differences between Upper Sydenham and Sydenham/Willes.

- The above option is our preferred option, but we have developed an alternative solution if the LGBCE felt unable to recommend the above option. Part of the existing Leamington Willes County Council division includes the Whitnash Town ward of Whitnash East. This is the current polling district of Leamington Sydenham 5 (WSYS) which is proposed to be in the new district ward of Leamington Willes and is a new-build area which is distinctly different even from the rest of Upper Sydenham, let alone the main part of Willes Ward.

We are proposing to move the polling district WSYS into the Whitnash District ward, rather than the Willes District ward. This would split the Leamington Willes County Division, but as there already has to be a separate ward of Whitnash East for the Whitnash Town Council (i.e. the polling district of WSYS), this does not give rise to any additional wards or sub-divisions than is already the case.

Residents are also already used to being part of Whitnash having a councillor representing them in the Whitnash Town Council. Moving this part of Whitnash into the Whitnash ward would also reduce local confusion as to living in Whitnash, paying Whitnash Town precepts, but voting for a Leamington based councillor at the District level. Obviously, it cannot solve the issue in relation to the County Division at this time as County Division boundaries are outside the remit of this LGBCE review but that could be addressed at a future date.

The proposal would also result in a reduced variance of electoral equality outcome in both Willes District Ward (3 councillors) and Whitnash District Ward (3 councillors). Willes would change from +8% to -3% and Whitnash would go from -9% to +2% in 2023, so overall reducing the electoral variance, at the same time as connecting electorally an “isolated” community with the rest of Whitnash Town.

Radford Semele

- Supported as proposed by the LGBCE.

- We note that the Parish of Weston-under-Wetherley which is included within Radford Semele, is proposed by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission to be in Warwick & Leamington, whereas the rest of Radford Semele will be in the Rugby and Southam constituency. This is not ideal.

Warwick Aylesford

- We welcome and support the LGBCE’s proposal for Aylesford ward, and especially for keeping both sides of the Stratford Road in the same ward. This retains the community cohesion that has unfortunately been lost in the respective County Divisions.
Paragraph 61 refers to the Mallory Drive area and has proposed to include it in Aylesford. The geographic connection to Aylesford is poor, as it is physically disconnected from most of Aylesford by both the large Sainsbury’s superstore/car park to the east on Birmingham Road and Warwick racecourse to the south. It is a more natural geographic fit with Warwick Saltisford, which it immediately adjoins across the Birmingham Road. We would request that consideration be given to moving the approximately 270 electors into Saltisford, which would result in Saltisford being 1% variance and Aylesford being -7%.

**Warwick Myton & Heathcote**

- We have reviewed the LGBCE’s request in paragraph 59 to find an alternative solution to that proposed by the Council. As was the case when the proposals were first drawn up, we have not identified a solution that meets the requirements of electoral equality and community cohesion. Therefore, we support the warding for Myton & Heathcote as proposed by the LGBCE.

- However, if the changes to Leamington Willes/Whitnash outlined above were to be supported, there is an opportunity for consideration of moving parts of Warwick Gates that are on the west side of Tachbrook Road, but currently are in Whitnash ward (e.g. Juliet Drive, Eglamour Way, etc) into Myton & Heathcote ward, by moving the Whitnash/Myton & Heathcote boundary to run down the middle of Tachbrook Road. Note that the west side of Tachbrook Road itself does not have any houses in it. This move would impact approximately 500 electors and result in electoral variance of 4% for Myton & Heathcote and -4% for Whitnash, assuming that WSY5 is allocated to Whitnash from Leamington Willes.

These 500 electors have a Warwick CV34 post code and would therefore be considered part of Warwick Parish. This is important locally, as the CV34 postcode is used by local charities as being within the Town of Warwick and therefore eligible for grants. For example, see these charities who both refer to the “Parish of Warwick” as CV34.

www.sirthomaswhite.org.uk
http://warwickapprenticingcharities.org.uk/

The area itself is called Warwick Gates, not Whitnash Gates, and from our work on the doorsteps over the years, most people believe and state that they live in Warwick Gates, not Leamington, nor in Whitnash. They look to the Town of Warwick with most of the children in secondary schools in Warwick rather than Whitnash. Moving these electors into Myton and Heathcote would reinforce the sense of a community and where they align to. We recognise that due to the County and Town/Parish boundaries, this proposal would need a new ward within Whitnash Town Council of one councillor.

We have looked at the same sort of boundary move in respect of that part of Warwick Gates that is in Bishop’s Tachbrook ward on the same principles as above. We recognise though that there is no solution that would meet the LGBCE’s criteria of electoral equality in respect of both Bishop’s Tachbrook and Myton & Heathcote. This remaining anomaly will therefore need to be left for a future boundary review of the County Council boundaries.

**Warwick Saltisford**

- Supported as proposed by the LGBCE as this maximises community cohesion and combines the heart of Warwick town into one ward. Please also see the Warwick Aylesford ward comments in relation to the Mallory Drive area becoming part of Saltisford.
Warwick Woodloes
- Supported as proposed by the LGBCE as we agree with the LGBCE’s analysis of the wider Woodloes area and of the Eastley Crescent and Wilmcote Road areas belonging to Woodloes.

Whitnash
- As discussed above, we are proposing two complementary changes to the original proposal for Whitnash.
  1) To move WSY5 into Whitnash ward out of Willes ward and
  2) As a consequence of 1), move the area west of Tachbrook Road into Myton & Heathcote.
- 2) requires that 1) happens, and 2) would not be proposed on its own. However, 1) does not need 2) to happen as it is a proposal that can stand on its own.

Town wards
- We are supportive of the boundaries proposed by the LGBCE throughout the District except as identified below

Kenilworth Town Council
- We are concerned that the Town wards of Park Hill and St John’s have a high number of councillors in each ward and that wards of this size will not provide effective and convenient local government for two reasons:
  - They will be difficult to administer in elections. For example, in St John’s with the three major national parties plus Green and independents, the ballot paper could extend to between 20 and 30 candidates.
  - There will be a disconnection between electors and individual councillors, as they will not be sure who to turn to when choosing from 7 or 8 councillors.
- We are aware that Kenilworth Town Council is to consider proposing to split each of Park Hill and St John’s into two sub-wards of 4 and 4, and 4 and 3 respectively, and would support their proposals.

Royal Leamington Spa Town Council
- On reviewing the proposed Town wards we have identified a significant electoral variance between three Town wards of approximately the same electorate.
  - Leamington Clarendon Town Ward has an electorate of 7,352 in 2023, and with three councillors gives an average electorate per councillor of 2,451 in 2023. Similar numbers apply to Leamington North.
  - Leamington Milverton Town Ward has an electorate of 7,188 in 2023, and with only two councillors gives an average electorate per councillor of 3,594 in 2023

Therefore, two wards that have an electorate differential of less than 200 in 2023 (i.e. 3%) have a representative differential of 46%. To address this differential, we are proposing to increase the Leamington Town Council from 16 councillors to 17 councillors, with the 17th councillor being allocated to Leamington Milverton Town Ward.

- Other than the point above, we agree with the LGBCE proposals for Royal Leamington Spa Town Council

Warwick Town Council
- We agree with the proposal from the LGBCE for Warwick Town Council.
Whitnash Town Council

- We are not clear following the comment in paragraph 64, whether the LGBCE has the powers to make changes to the parish electoral arrangements in Whitnash, as while the changes in Whitnash as proposed by the LGBCE are small, they have resulted in a degree of inequality across the Town Wards. We are also not clear if the changes proposed by us to move Whitnash East (Polling District WSY5) into Whitnash District ward would constitute sufficient change to merit a revised Town warding structure. Nonetheless, we make the following proposal on the basis that the changes are sufficient to enable the LGBCE to make changes to the Town’s electoral arrangements.

The four wards have the following electorate per councillor in 2023 (number of councillors in brackets):

- Whitnash East (1) 912
- Whitnash North (5) 462
- Whitnash South (4) 703
- Whitnash West (5) 411

We would propose adding 1 councillor to Whitnash East and increasing Whitnash South by 1 councillor, or possibly 2 councillors. In contrast we would recommend reducing Whitnash West by 1 councillor. This would give the following more balanced representation in 2023:

- Whitnash East (2) 456
- Whitnash North (5) 462
- Whitnash South (5) 563 or possibly (6) 468
- Whitnash West (4) 514

Further adjustment to Whitnash West would be required if our proposal on adjusting the Whitnash/Myton & Heathcote ward boundary was to be implemented and would require one councillor to be allocated to the “Warwick Gates” ward from Whitnash West.

Ward names – District and Towns

- Several parties and councils have commented on the potential for confusion in the towns and villages of having County, District and Town divisions/wards with the same name but not the same boundaries. There is regular confusion on the doorstep when talking to residents that they are in one ward for District, but not in the similar named ward for Town (or County).

We would strongly support the concept that unless wards/divisions are fully co-terminous they should be given different names for each level of local government and would ask the LGBCE to follow this principle.

- We specifically wish to comment on the proposed name of “College” ward for Leamington Town. Even during the review of the initial LGBCE proposals, this has caused considerable confusion as to its location. Residents, and indeed many experienced councillors, have thought this referred to the area around Warwickshire College, which is often abbreviated locally to “the College” and is over a kilometre away from “College” Ward. This has and will cause confusion and instead we would suggest that the proposed “College” ward for the Leamington Town Council is renamed “Maltings”, based on the area “The Maltings” which is within the ward. Other names linked to other streets in the new ward (such as Northumberland or Lillington) would create similar confusion as the proposed “College” ward name, so are not recommended.
The LGBCE has proposed that the rural ward in the west of the District is called Lapworth and West Kenilworth. This is a name that partially reflects the area, but we would propose an alternative name of Kenilworth Abbey & Arden for the District Ward, which uses the existing district names in combination, and also reflects the Abbey area of the town of Kenilworth and the wider geographic area of Arden, reflecting the mix of rural communities (Burton Green, Shrewley, Rowington etc.) rather than narrowly focussing on the village of Lapworth. It would also address the issue raised above of a ward and a division having the same name but having different boundaries.