

## Ashby, Jonathan

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**From:** Robert Lindsay [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 13 August 2017 21:56  
**To:** reviews  
**Subject:** Babergh Green Party's submission to Babergh ward review  
**Attachments:** Boundary commission submission Babergh Green Party.docx

Dear Boundary Commission,  
Please find our submission to the Babergh ward review attached and pasted below,  
Kind regards,

Robert Lindsay  
[REDACTED]

arty objects in principle to the reduction in number of councillors from 43 to 31 and the subsequent increase in ward size. For the following reasons:

- a. Equality of electorate can be perfectly easily addressed retaining the same number of councillors (43) and redrawing ward boundaries.
- b. It would lead to too much workload for the remaining councillors to adequately represent their electorate within each ward. The council's own submission detailed a survey that said that 81% of councillors predicted that their workload would increase as the demands on local government increase.
- c. There is no evidence of public support for increasing ward size and cutting the number of councillors. In fact the referendum in 2011 showed that the public of Babergh did not support a merger of Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils, which, while not directly a ballot on ward sizes, is we believe, an indication that the public of Babergh prefer to have their representation as close to them as possible. This applies just as well to wards as to the size of districts.
- d. In its submission, BMSDC recognises that there is a need for adequate electoral representation, beyond the requirements for councillors to sit on council committees, but it produces only one dubious piece of "evidence" to back its claim that cutting the number of councillors in Babergh by nearly a third from 43 to 31 "will not..dramatically impact upon the overall level of local government representation." It says that because there are 1,418 parish, town, district and county councillors across the two districts the numeric reduction of Babergh and Mid Suffolk councillors would not be not significant. Yet it is patently obvious that the representation provided by these different tiers of local government do not over-lap and are not equivalent. Each tier has its own responsibilities and services. It is only through Babergh District council and Babergh District councillors that residents and parish councils can impact on planning decisions. Parish and town councillors have no planning decision making powers. Many of Babergh's parish and town councils already regularly complain that they are not listened to by district councils and district planners. Any reduction in Babergh District councillor numbers will further reduce the ability of the citizens of Babergh to influence

planning decisions and have their views represented. Babergh itself is already involved in two judicial reviews over planning decisions, brought by parish councils - East Bergholt and Bildeston. In these circumstances, reducing representation on the planning authority for the electorate would not be a wise move.

- e. Effectiveness and convenience. Having more electors per councillor means that each councillor will be able to devote less time and less effort to each citizen. In wards where there are several parish councils, each councillor will be forced to spend less time addressing and representing the needs of each parish. For this reason increasing ward size and cutting the number of elected representatives is not conducive to effective or convenient provision of local services.

2. We also object to the creation of multi-member wards by this review and agree with the Boundary Commission's view that these should be avoided.

In our view, multi-member wards - whether for towns or rural areas - are far less effective at representing the views of the electorate than single member wards. Therefore the opportunity of this boundary review ought to be taken to eliminate multi-member wards completely.

Current suggestions show Sudbury, Great Cornard and Hadleigh becoming 4, 3 and 3 member wards respectively. The maps we have seen also appear to propose several rural wards being multi-member.

We do not see the necessity for this, and believe that there is no reason not to create wards across the entire district, including within towns, so that there is one councillor per ward. Indeed Sudbury, Cornard and Hadleigh currently have internal wards and will presumably retain them at town and parish council level. There is no reason new ward boundaries can not be drawn within these towns to create reasonable equality of representation. Perhaps the only circumstance where there would have to be a two member ward is where a single parish has far greater than 2,500 electors. We believe it is worth sacrificing a little bit of electoral equality to stick to the one member, one ward principle.

Parish councils and electors prefer to have one person to whom they can make representations. Experience shows that in multimember wards, roles can become confused, lines blurred and accountability difficult. Councillors in shared wards sometimes take it in turns to attend parish and town and other important meetings. But this leads to a lack of continuity. If all three or four attend, it becomes more difficult for electors to be sure who is taking up their concerns. Often a more effective and active councillor will end up "carrying" the less engaged or effective councillors within that ward. It is easier for a councillor to hide his or her ineffectiveness from the electorate in a multi-member ward.

Written by Robert Lindsay, Babergh District councillor 2014- 2015 and Bildeston Parish Councillor 2011-2015. Currently Suffolk County Councillor for Cosford division after consultation with members of Babergh Green Party