Dear Richard and Paul,

**Electoral Review of the London Borough of Barnet: Barnet Council Officers Technical Response**

Please find attached Barnet Council Officers’ Technical Response to the draft recommendations from the LGBCE’s Electoral Review of Barnet, as published in March 2019.

John Hooton, our Chief Executive (also acting in his capacity as Barnet’s Electoral Registration Officer and Barnet’s Returning Officer) asked council officers, led from Electoral Services, to review and feedback on the technical aspects of the draft recommendations. This report is therefore restricted to the consideration of:

- the practicalities of the proposed ward boundaries (for example, checking that proposed ward boundaries do not cut through housing blocks, considering whether suitable polling districts and polling places can be organised within the proposed wards)
- considering what specific changes to Governance, oversight or the constitution might be necessary under the proposed new wards etc.
- whether there are any other unexpected implications for operational service delivery or organisational arrangements within the council.

I would like to say thank you once again for moving back the submission deadline, following the announcement that we would be delivering the European Parliamentary elections on 23 May this year. As you will see in the report, Barnet officers broadly welcome the commission’s draft recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for the borough.

In addition to the report, I also attach a full-borough shapefile that incorporates all of the officer suggested amendments to the LGBCE’s draft proposals.

If you would like any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact either me or Emily Bowler.

Kind regards,

**John Bailey**  
**Head of Electoral Services**  
London Borough of Barnet, North London Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, London N11 1NP

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**NOTICE:** From 1 July 2019, Barnet’s Electoral Services is relocating to: 2 Bristol Ave, Colindale, London NW9 4EW

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Electoral Review
of the
London Borough of Barnet

Stage 3 - LGBCE Draft Recommendations

Submission to the
Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Barnet Council Officers’ Technical Response

June 2019
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1. **Introduction**

1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is undertaking a review of the London Borough of Barnet’s electoral arrangements. The review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for the whole local authority, and will take decisions upon:

- The total number of councillors to be elected to the council (Council Size)
- The names, numbers and boundaries of wards
- The number of councillors to be elected to represent each ward.

1.2 The outcome of the review will be implemented in time to take effect at the May 2022 scheduled elections (i.e. these elections will elect councillors to the new wards for the first time).

1.3 In accordance to legislation\(^1\), the Commission must abide by certain criteria when drawing up proposals for new ward or electoral division boundaries. The main rules are:

- Delivering electoral equality for local voters - this means ensuring that each local councillor represents approximately (within +/- 10%) the same number of people so that the value of an elector’s vote is the same regardless of where they live in the local authority area.
- Reflecting the interests and identities of local communities - this means establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, maintain local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable.
- Promoting effective and convenient local government - this means ensuring that the new wards or electoral divisions can be represented effectively by their elected representative(s) and that the new electoral arrangements as a whole allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively. In addition, they must also ensure that the pattern of wards reflects the electoral cycle of the council.

1.4 The LGBCE have recently published draft recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for Barnet. The Commission considered all the submissions it received in the previous stages of the review before drawing up the draft recommendations which propose that:

- Barnet’s council size remains at 63 councillors (as at present).
- Barnet should move to having 25 wards - four more than there are now.
- The 63 councillors will represent; 14 three-councillor wards, 10 two-councillor wards and 1 one-councillor ward
- The boundaries of all wards should change, none will stay the same.

1.5 From 5 March 2019 to 24 June 2019, the LGBCE are accepting opinions and comments (submissions) from the public on these recommendations for Barnet Council.

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\(^1\) Schedule 2, *Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009*
2. **Barnet Council officers’ technical response**

2.1 This report sets out a ‘technical response’ (looking only at issues of practical and organisational concern) from Barnet Council officers to the LGBCE’s draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Barnet Council.

2.2 The Chief Executive (also acting in his capacity as Barnet’s Electoral Registration Officer and Barnet’s Returning Officer) asked council officers, led from Electoral Services, to review and feedback on the technical aspects of the draft recommendations and, on this basis only, to produce a report that comments upon the proposed new ward boundaries.

2.3 On this basis and in summary, officers broadly welcome the Commission’s draft recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for Barnet.

2.4 This report gives feedback upon the LGBCE’s proposed ward boundaries and is restricted to the consideration of:

2.4.1 the practicalities of the proposed ward boundaries (for example, checking that proposed ward boundaries do not cut through housing blocks, considering whether suitable polling districts and polling places can be organised within the proposed wards)

2.4.2 considering what specific changes to Governance, oversight or the constitution might be necessary under the proposed new wards etc.

2.4.3 whether there are any other unexpected implications for operational service delivery or organisational arrangements within the council.

2.5 To complete the report, officers followed a scheduled programme of activities to ensure that the review was comprehensive and robust. This plan included:

- Utilising geographical data to review precisely where the proposed warding boundaries are intended to run across the borough (for example, how the boundaries follow specific roads, rail lines, open spaces etc.)
- Officer site visits to follow, examine and clarify proposed ward boundaries throughout the borough
- Initial consideration and planning for new polling district boundaries and polling place locations necessary within the new proposals
- A series of meetings with service areas across the council and our partners to discuss possible implications of the proposed changes
- Review impact on governance arrangements and the Constitution
- Comparing the new boundaries to the location of planned developments.

2.6 Whilst undertaking this technical review, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have confirmed a new housing target for Barnet of 4,126 homes per annum - the second highest of any local authority in England. It represents a doubling of the previous target which informed the 5-year housing supply submitted as evidence to the LGBCE at Stage 1 of the review. In practice this will mean the council must now deliver many more sites (profiled over a 10-year period) within the next 5 years and a new Local Plan will be published in Autumn 2019 to that effect. Officers consider this a matter of particular relevance to the proposed wards along the A5 road corridor in the west of the borough.

2.7 Officers are mindful that such considerations would ideally have been accounted for and submitted at Stage 1 of the review. However, officers invite the LGBCE to now consider
the new Growth Strategy that Barnet Council is developing to meet the newly published housing target. Our new Growth Strategy is available here.

3. **Effect upon governance, oversight and the Council’s constitution**

3.1. Officers have considered whether the proposed ward boundary changes will have an impact on our existing governance arrangements.

3.2. Proposals are not expected to impact on most of the council’s arrangements (i.e. Full Council, themed committees and other committees) as councillors are appointed to these based upon political proportionality. However, some committees are constituted on an area basis and are responsible for discharging functions within a defined geographic area. Consideration was therefore required as to whether our area based arrangements would be impacted and, if so, whether constitutional and administrative changes might need to be put in place to support the ward boundary changes and whether there were any significant resource implications.

3.3. Barnet’s current area based arrangements are: Area Committees, Area Planning Committees and Residents Forums. These currently align to the three Parliamentary constituency boundaries contained within the borough: Chipping Barnet constituency, Finchley & Golders Green constituency and Hendon constituency. There currently exists a helpful consistency of wards and Members per constituency across the borough (i.e. each constituency contains seven wards and three Members per ward) giving a total of 21 wards and 63 Members for the borough.

3.4. Appointments to Area Committees and Area Planning Committees are made based on ward rather than by political balance, with the composition being seven members for each committee. For example, the current Chipping Barnet Area Planning Committee covers the seven wards in the constituency (Brunswick Park, Coppetts, East Barnet, High Barnet, Oakleigh, Totteridge and Underhill) and membership is seven councillors - one councillor for each ward and an equal number of substitute members per ward. For each area based committee, two out of the three ward members will be appointed (i.e. as the main member or as a substitute member).

3.5. The assessment of the proposed ward boundary changes has primarily been focussed on whether area based arrangements could be retained in some format once the changes come into effect in 2022. Any changes to area based arrangements could have an impact on the operation of committees and the discharge of functions on an area basis. For example:
   - Area Committees have delegated budgets and approve local highways schemes and area based projects, and
   - Area Planning committees determine planning applications within their areas.

3.6. Ward boundary changes may require the significant amendment or discontinuation of area based arrangements which could have resource implications for the Council. For example, budgets delegated to area committees may need to be managed centrally, or there may no longer be a connection between area planning committees and the determination of planning applications with that geographic area.

3.7. Rather than try and quantify the impacts of no longer having area based governance arrangements, the Council have undertaken an assessment of whether area based governance arrangements, the Council have undertaken an assessment of whether area based governance arrangements,

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arrangements can be retained in some format. Officers have concluded that retaining slightly revised area based arrangements in some form would mean that resource and practical impacts would be negligible.

3.8. Consideration has been given to whether three areas can be retained that are compliant with the legal requirements of:
   • voting members can only be persons elected for wards within that area
   • the population does not exceed two fifths of the total area of the authority, and
   • the population does not exceed two fifths of the total population of the authority.

3.9. By drawing boundaries for three new areas which are largely co-terminus with the existing areas, then using population and electorate projections, it has been concluded that area based arrangements can be retained based on the new ward boundaries, albeit with some minor revisions to the number of members appointed to each committee.

3.10. Officers assessment has concluded that the proposed ward boundaries would enable the council to retain area based arrangements which would largely align to the existing boundaries, albeit with some revisions necessary to align with the proposed ward boundaries.

3.11. In two of the proposed areas, eight members and substitute members would need to be appointed. A practical issue arises in one area which would contain nine of the proposed wards. Theoretically there should be nine members and substitute members to that committee.

3.12. However, for the single member ward (Muswell Hill) that will not be possible as there is only one member. It might be possible that an arrangement could be put in place to enable the Muswell Hill member to have a substitute from the neighbouring ward (i.e. Coppetts), but a review would be required as to whether this is legally permissible.

3.13. In practical terms, it would be administratively more convenient if Muswell Hill and Coppetts became one three-member ward (i.e. retained in a broadly similar arrangement to the current Coppetts ward). However, as stated at 3.7, officers view is that area based arrangements using the new wards could still be delivered with little impact on practical governance arrangements.

3.14. Having a single one-member ward within the borough will mean that some ‘one-off’ special arrangements would need to be put in place to allow for representation and substitution of responsibilities should the councillor for that ward not be available (for example, due to sickness, holidays or private employment reasons etc.).

3.15. Officers believe that more consistency in terms of governance procedures, organisational make-up and councillor support can be achieved if, given that having all ‘3 member’ wards will no longer be possible, all wards still have multiple councillors (i.e. all wards are represented by either 2 or 3 councillors).

4. **Electoral practicalities of proposed ward boundaries**

4.1 Following analysis of the proposed ward boundaries, officers are suggesting a number of (relatively minor) alterations. These suggested amendments to the proposed new ward borders support the considerations outlined in point 2.4.1. above.

4.2 Officers have proposed changes to ward boundaries that they believe will help ensure that the wards are as easily identifiable as possible (particularly when viewed on a map - as this is how most electors will generally view them). In those cases where a road is used
to define a ward boundary, clarity is achieved by following the centre-line of these roads. Officers believe that this also protects the border from becoming less clear should any developments or building works occur in the future.

4.3 In addition, officers have considered the Commission’s proposal to create a single member ward in Muswell Hill. In support of point 3.14 above, officers would again suggest that Coppetts and Muswell Hill wards should be combined making the basis for electoral representation more consistent for electors across the borough.

4.4 The officers detailed comments can be found on the following pages, together with maps showing the proposed new ward boundaries.

5. Officer’s detailed response (ward level)

5.1 High Barnet and Underhill ward border

The LGBCE proposed border between High Barnet ward and Underhill ward runs along most of Wellhouse Lane. However, just before Wellhouse Lane meets Wood Street it deviates from the road and instead follows a footpath to join with Wood Street.

To ensure that all properties addressed as being on Wellhouse Lane are included in the new High Barnet Ward, officers propose that the new boundary continues along Wellhouse Lane and joins Wood Street at the road junction of Wellhouse Lane (see Figure 1). Officers believe that this will make the ward boundary more easily identifiable and safeguard against a recently proposed development on Whalebone Park (immediately to the east of the footpath) introducing any unintended warding complications.

This suggested change would affect only 2 electors and so have no effect on electoral equality.

Figure 1:
5.2 High Barnet, Underhill and Barnet Vale ward border

The LGBCE proposes that the boundary between High Barnet and Underhill will run behind the shops on Wood Street and High Street, in order to place all of the town centre into the High Barnet ward.

However, a more defined border that is easily identifiable is achieved by running the boundary along the centre of Wood Street (as per the existing border) to the junction with High Street and then continuing along the road before turning east at Gordon Way (where it also forms the border with the new Barnet Vale ward) - see figure 2.

This suggested change to the LGBCE proposed boundaries would currently affect 159 electors (keeping them in Underhill ward and not moving them to High Barnet ward).

Figure 2:
5.3 *Barnet Vale and Whetstone ward border*

The LGBCE have proposed that the boundary between Barnet Vale and Whetstone will run behind the gardens of the properties on Buckingham Avenue.

Officers suggest changing the boundary to follow the centre of Buckingham Avenue until it meets Temple Avenue (see figure 3). This will move all properties on the south of the street (odd numbered properties) into the new Whetstone ward.

This revised boundary would currently affect 80 electors and thus have only a limited effect on the number of electors per councillor across the two wards - both staying comfortably within the acceptable tolerance.

**Figure 3:**
5.4 Coppetts and Muswell Hill ward border

The LGBCE are proposing a 2 member ward for Coppetts and a single member ward for Muswell Hill.

As outlined at between 3.12 and 3.15 and 4.3 above, officers suggest that the proposed Coppetts and Muswell Hill wards are combined to retain a 3-member Coppetts ward. This is achieved by removing the proposed boundary along the A406 between the two proposed wards (see figure 4) and by retaining all of the existing ward boundary with Woodhouse ward (figures 5 and 6).

In addition, retaining the existing boundary with Woodhouse ward ensures that all of Coppetts ward is wholly retained within the Chipping Barnet Parliamentary Constituency. Accepting the LGBCE proposals for Coppetts will introduce significant practical electoral issues in the event any combined parliamentary and local elections (or by-elections). The Council would be required to create two very small, unmanageable (as in providing a polling place is likely to prove impossible) and (for electors) highly illogical polling districts for very small numbers of electors (one of 410 electors and the other for just 95 electors).

The overall effect of these suggested changes would be to combine the electorates for the proposed Coppetts (8,720) and Muswell Hill (4,271) wards and to add an additional 315 current electors from the proposed Woodhouse ward. This would result in a Coppetts ward with a total of 13,306 electors and 4,435 electors per councillor.

Figure 7 shows proposed ward boundaries for a new combined Coppetts ward.

Figure 4:
Figure 7:
5.5 **Woodhouse ward**

Due to the officers suggested changes to Coppetts and Muswell Hill wards (at 5.4 above) and to offset the loss of electors, officers suggest that the west boundary between Woodhouse and West Finchley continues along the High Road until it reaches the junction with the A406 (North Circular) - see figure 8.

This suggested change, along with the change suggested in 5.4 above (to the border shared with Coppetts on the eastern edge of the ward) would increase the number of electors within Woodhouse by 537. This would result in 4,503 electors per councillor and remains within the tolerance for variance from average.

**Figure 8:**

[Map of Woodhouse and West Finchley wards showing proposed boundary changes]
5.6 West Finchley ward

For the new West Finchley ward, the LGBCE proposes that the southern border runs along Squires Lane. Officers would prefer that this border ran along the A406 (North Circular Road), as this very busy road acts as a natural ward boundary (although the Long Lane does conveniently run underneath the A406) – see figure 9.

However, officers have been unable to find a way to use the A406 as the ward boundary and keep West Finchley ward within the variance for electoral equality.

Figure 9:
West Finchley ward – continued:

However, officers do propose that the north-west corner of the current West Finchley ward (that has been moved into the Totteridge and Woodside ward) be retained within the proposed West Finchley ward. Retaining this area within the ward will ensure that the proposed West Finchley ward is wholly retained within the Finchley and Golders Green Parliamentary Constituency. As with the situation at 5.4 above, the current LGBCE proposal will introduce a significant practical electoral issue in the event of any combined parliamentary and local elections (or by-elections). Once again, this would require an impractical and illogical polling district to be formed for just 505 electors.

By making these changes, the new West Finchley Ward would be projected to include 11,993 electors (3,998 per councillor) and would still be within the tolerance for variance from average.

Figure 10:
5.7 **Golders Green North and Golders Green South ward border**

Currently, the LGBCE proposes to run Golders Green North ward’s west boundary around one building (Wohl Lodge) situated on Ravenscroft Avenue.

Officers suggest that the 21 flats of Wohl Lodge (and currently 17 electors) be included in Golders Green North (see figure 11). This will ensure a clearer and more consistent boundary.

**Figure 11:**
5.8 Colindale South and West Hendon ward border

The LGBCE proposes that the south border of Colindale South runs through the gardens of Silkfield Road.

Officers suggest that, to improve the clarity of this ward boundary, it should in fact run along the centre of Silkfield Road. By moving this border, 67 electors (28 properties) located on Silkfield Road will move into West Hendon which overall has an insignificant effect on the variances in both affected wards.