Note to Local Government Boundaries Commission re proposed revision of warding arrangements in West Berkshire

This is a joint submission from 2 of the 3 Parish Councils (Aldermaston and Beenham) representing residents of Aldermaston Wharf. We wish to draw the Commission's attention to the anomalous position of Aldermaston Wharf. We understand the 3rd Parish Council, Padworth, is still considering its position.

Until 20 years ago, Aldermaston Wharf was a small hamlet with only a few houses. In recent years, however, its good access and leisure facilities have led to dramatic growth and now comprises some 260 houses. A strong, integrated community has been established.

Aldermaston Wharf is crossed by both the A340 and the Kennet and Avon Canal. It therefore comprises 4 segments. One of these segments is in the Parish of Aldermaston, one is in the Parish of Beenham and two are in the Parish of Padworth. In terms of houses, this equates to 40, 66, and 157 houses in Aldermaston, Beenham and Padworth parishes respectively.

Not only is this community served by 3 separate Parish Councils, it is also served by 3 separate District Council wards within WBC, and even 2 separate parliamentary constituencies (Newbury and Wokingham).

With this level of division, it is difficult to ensure a coherent representation of the views of the Aldermaston Wharf community.

We have looked to see whether there is an appropriate solution to the warding arrangements by having Aldermaston, Beenham and Padworth all in the same ward. We note the intention to also reduce the number of Councillors from 52 to 42 (-20%). Based on the forecasted total of 124,492 electors in 2022 this equates to 2,964 electors per councillor in that year.

We believe our stated aim can be readily achieved by adjustment to just 4 wards as follows:

- Move Woolhampton (WG) from Aldermaston to Bucklebury
- Move Midgham (MA) from Aldermaston to Bucklebury
- Move Beenham (YBD) from Sulhamstead to Aldermaston
- Move Padworth (YPA) from Mortimer to Aldermaston
- Merge the residual Mortimer and Sulhamstead into a single ward with 2 Councillors

We believe that Woolhampton and Midgham have good commonality with Bucklebury and this would therefore be an appropriate move.

If this revision was implemented, we believe it would bring the following benefits:

- The number of Councillors for these wards would reduce from 5 to 4, exactly in line with target
- The 3 resulting wards in 2022 would have elector/councillor variances of just 0%, -11% and 0% for Aldermaston, the merged Mortimer and Sulhamstead, and Bucklebury respectively. The figure for the newly merged ward is low, but this is the area for targeted growth according to the Local Plan
- The community at Aldermaston Wharf would all be in the same ward

We therefore recommend this revision for your consideration.

From:
Aldermaston Parish Council
Beenham Parish Council

Date: 20th March 2017