

PENTON MEWSEY PARISH COUNCIL

To Review Officer (Test Valley)
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Penton Mewsey Parish Council's Objection and Alternative Proposals to the Boundary Commission's Draft Recommendations for the Review of Test Valley Borough Council's Electoral Wards

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A Definitions

Penton Mewsey	Penton Mewsey Parish Council and the Parish of Penton Mewsey
Test Valley	Test Valley Council Borough
The Commission	The Local Government Boundary Commission
Recommendations	The Commission's draft recommendations
Submission	Test Valley's submission to the Commission
Survey	The Survey of Residents carried out by Penton Mewsey
The Pentons	The parish of Penton Mewsey and the immediately adjoining part of Penton Grafton

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B Summary

1. Penton Mewsey objects to the Recommendations to transfer Penton Mewsey and Penton Grafton Parishes from the existing Penton Bellinger Ward to form a new ward (number 18 in the Submission) with Charlton Parish Council to be known as Charlton and the Pentons. The grounds of objection are :-
 - i There is no community identity or shared interest between Penton Mewsey and Charlton.
 - ii The characteristics of the two areas are entirely different. Penton Mewsey with the immediately adjoining part of Penton Grafton is a distinct rural settlement with many of its own facilities, its own identity, priorities and challenges. Charlton is an indistinguishable part of urban Andover with its separate requirements.
 - iii The results from a recent survey of residents of the Pentons support these conclusions by an overwhelming majority. Appendix Bii (Page 14) lists 38 reasoned objections out of 55 responses. The survey and its results are described below.
 - iv A single ward member will be faced with conflicting interests to represent from the different communities. As one resident aptly put it:
*“Such a Councillor would 'stand astride' the green gap, with a foot in each of two different environments...
Street lighting is just one obvious example of very different attitudes, expectations and expenditure in the two areas. Such a Councillor would find representation of a whole Ward with a single perspective extremely difficult.*
- 2 As an alternative, Penton Mewsey proposes the transfer of the Penton Mewsey and Penton Grafton Parishes to the proposed Bourne Valley Ward with an adjustment to that Ward by returning one polling district and part of another (Alamein No1 and Smannell north of the Roman Road) to Andover Romans which will improve the electoral equality of that ward. Charlton would be transferred either to Andover Harroway Ward or part of it, namely Harroway Polling District no 4. All these proposals meet the equality of electorate criterion and have regard to community interest requirements.
- 3 If the alternative proposals set out in 2 above are not acceptable, Penton Mewsey argues that the lack of community interest with Charlton outweighs the lack of electoral equality in either leaving the two Penton Parishes as part of the former Penton Bellinger Ward or moving them to the Bourne Valley Ward without adjustments to that ward.

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C Boundary Commission's Guidance on the conduct of the Review

4 The following quotations from the Commission's published guidance are set out to help understand the relative importance of the three criteria of electoral equality, community identity and effective and convenient local government. Also to help understand how community interest might be assessed.

5 The publication entitled "How to propose a pattern of wards contains the following in its introduction:

"As such, the Commission is much more likely to accept your proposals if they are based on one or more of the criteria (added note – the three criteria listed above in 4) above."

It is relevant to note the reference to "one or more" (not all) of the three criteria.

6 Page 5 contains the following:

"Occasionally, it will not be possible for us to put forward a boundary proposal that clearly meets all these principles. In fact, the statutory criteria can sometimes contradict each other, for example where a proposed ward might reflect the shape of local communities but delivers poor levels of electoral equality. In these cases, the Commission will use its discretion – and the quality of the evidence presented to it - to come to a conclusion."

7 Page 6 the following:

"Although we strive for perfect electoral equality for all wards or divisions, we recognise that this is unlikely to be exactly achieved. If you propose a boundary that has many more, or fewer, voters in it than the target we set in the paragraph above, we will need to see evidence that such a variance is justified on the grounds of our other statutory criteria set out below. The more your proposal causes councillors to represent many more, or fewer, voters than the average, the more persuasive your evidence will need to be. You will need to explain to us why your proposal reflects the interests and identities of local communities and/or the arrangement would provide for effective and convenient local government."

8 This advice clearly accepts that community interest is capable of being more important and persuasive than electoral equality.

9 The Commission's document entitled "Electoral Reviews Technical Guidance "dated April 2014 contains the following:

"4.35 However, in practice we do not see reviews resulting in wards of mathematically equal size. This is because the approach to electoral equality must be tempered by other considerations which generally reflect the particular characteristics of an area under review, and its communities. This recognises that council members represent individual electors and collective communities."

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- 10 This advice again supports the view that community identity can outweigh the need for electoral equality.
- 11 The following extract gives advice on the test of community identity:
“4.37 Community identity and interest is harder to define than electoral equality for which there is a simple mathematical test. Often, it cannot easily be measured, and can mean different things to different people. It is essential, therefore, that those taking part in a review who make a case on the basis of community identities and interests can explain to us exactly what the community is and, more importantly, what defines it and marks it out as distinct from others.
4.38 For some, community identity could be defined by the location of public facilities such as doctors’ surgeries, hospitals, libraries or schools. Research on community identity supports this view but notes that such arguments cannot be considered in isolation. It will certainly not be the case that merely saying that such facilities exist can justify a community identity argument. We would be looking for evidence that such facilities stimulate or provide a focus for community interaction: this would be distinct from their role as points of service delivery to individual citizens.”
- 12 This guidance on community identity will be addressed in later sections. Points to note though are the reference to the fact that the existence of facilities alone does not in itself establish a community identity argument and the need to define the community.

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D Test Valley's Submission

- 13 The Submission contains the following analysis of the Pentons and Charlton:
“Whilst the village of Charlton is contiguous with Andover, it is felt that Charlton stands apart from the town with its own separate, individual identity. The Andover Vision partnership’s work to create a 20 year vision for Andover does not include the village of Charlton and Charlton is currently undertaking its own Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore, Charlton’s sense of place does not lend itself to inclusion in an urban ward.
The villages of Penton Mewsey and Penton Grafton are collectively known as The Pentons, and share a Village Design Statement that was adopted following consultation with residents of both Penton Mewsey and Penton Grafton. Both villages are surrounded by arable farmland, and share a village website and Village Design Statement. The smaller Penton Grafton does not have a shop, meaning that residents use the local stores in Penton Mewsey and Charlton, as do residents in the hamlet of Clanville. The area of Weyhill village which is included in the proposed ward is in Penton Grafton parish, and is home to the Penton Grafton Parish Council offices. Charlton Lakeside outdoor centre provides extensive sports and leisure centre facilities that are used by residents from across the proposed ward. The Church of England churches within the proposed ward, at Charlton and Penton Mewsey, are linked by the Benefice of Pastrow.”
- 14 Penton Mewsey does not believe that these statements are altogether accurate nor do they support the joining of the Pentons with Charlton for the following reasons:-
- i It is acknowledged that Charlton is physically part of Andover’ (*‘contiguous’*). This fact is confirmed by physical inspection when travelling to Charlton in any direction from Andover. It is inconsistent therefore to state that Charlton *‘stands apart from the town’* which is in any event a phrase which lacks precision and could apply to a number of areas not within the actual Town Centre.
 - ii The preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan merely reflects the existence of a parish boundary and is not a determinative factor. The same applies to Andover Vision.
 - ii Charlton is urban in nature and does not lend itself to combination with the two entirely rural parishes of the Pentons. The residents of Charlton constitute a community entirely different in nature from the residents of the Pentons by virtue of the different built environments and the nature of local and community facilities. Conversely, the rural Pentons do not lend themselves to combination with urban Charlton.
 - iii New housing development comprising 85 units is currently under construction at Goch Way in Charlton. There are pressures for further development of over a thousand houses identified by developers in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment although the Local Plan has not made specific allocations at this stage. Such an additional number of houses would clearly distort the current electoral equality figures and emphasise and underline the urban nature of Charlton.

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- iv The results of the Survey show that the use of the Charlton Leisure facilities by Pentons' residents is of no significance. The centre is only used by 13 % of residents; 84% use other locations or none at all. Other relevant information from the survey is set out below (Section F) (Page9) which includes shopping patterns and other facilities. There is no shop in Penton Mewsey as suggested in the Submission; the small one attached to the White Hart Inn in fact closed in August 2013.
 - v In relation to Pastrow Benefice following comment from the survey carried out by Penton seems relevant:
'In my experience with Charlton joining the Pastrow benefice they are very urban in their outlook and have no concept of village life. If we join with them we will gradually be merged into an urban thinking and the gap between us and Charlton will be closed.'
- 15 Other comments from the Survey about the proposed merger with Charlton are set out in Appendix A (page13)

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E Boundary Commission's Recommendation

16 The relevant part reads as follows

"41. Grafton Parish Council and Thruxton Parish Council, the latter writing on behalf of all the parish councils in the current Penton Bellinger ward, objected to the Council's proposed Charlton & the Pentons ward. They argued that Charlton was part of Andover and should not be combined in a ward with the rural Penton villages. Both submissions pointed to the gap between the two settlements as evidence of the different communities.

46. In relation to the proposed Charlton & the Pentons ward, having visited the area we accept the argument of the two parish councils that there is little separation between Charlton and Andover and there is quite clearly a physical gap between Charlton and the Pentons. However, we also noted the Council's argument that Charlton considers itself to be a separate community from Andover, is creating its own neighbourhood plan and that residents in the Pentons use shops in Charlton as well as Charlton Lakeside, an outdoor leisure centre. Also, given the high electoral variances in the three wards to the east, south and west of Charlton & the Pentons, changes to the Council's proposal would have a substantial knock-on effect on other areas, and we have no evidence to support such changes to those areas.

47. It is clear from the submissions we've received that there are different views about the make-up of communities in this part of the borough so we would be particularly interested in alternative proposals for this area that reflect community identity and have good electoral equality."

17 It is significant that the Commission accepts that Charlton and Andover are not physically detached but that the Pentons are clearly separated by a *'physical gap'* from Charlton .Further that the Commission recognises that a key issue in relation to this part of the Proposal is community identity (*'different views about the makeup of communities'*). In effect, the Commission is inviting alternative proposals which address this question (*'would be interested in'*). The Commission also highlights the effects of changes to its proposals upon the three wards to the east , south and west (but not to the north) This point is taken up in Penton Mewsey's alternative proposal.

18 As indicated above New housing development comprising 85 units is currently under construction at Goch Way in Charlton. There are pressures for further development of over a thousand houses. Identified by developers in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

19 On a point of detail, as indicated above use of Charlton Lakeside by Penton residents is not significant. Shopping patterns will be discussed below in the context of the Survey but it is to be noted that Charlton is not the major centre for facilities for the residents of Penton Mewsey or the Pentons.

20 The key point is that not only does Penton Mewsey not have a community identity with Charlton but as explained below it has very much its own special identity.

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F Penton Mewsey's Objection

- 21 The following features characterise and evidence the community of Penton Mewsey and the Pentons and their separate identity. Their existence and activities support the view that The Pentons have their own identity separate from Charlton.
- i They are rural settlements predominantly surrounded by arable and grazing land, woodland and open spaces.
 - ii The Pentons enjoy the following community facilities among others -
 The Penton Recreation Centre, a local trust, responsible for the Village Hall, Recreation Ground including the Cricket Field, Tennis Courts, Sports Pavilion and children's play area. The Centre organises a number of village events, including quiz nights, summer parties, hog roasts, skittles evenings and auctions of promises.
 The Penton Cricket which includes a number of local residents as players and maintains the outfield and square.
 The Penton Tennis Club.
 The Penton Players, a local based and supported amateur dramatic society.
 Holy Trinity Church.
 An active Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.
 The Village News.
 The Companions, a social club which organises village outings and meals.
 Penton Mewsey is the Lead Parish for a cluster of 13 rural parishes formed as part of the Hampshire County Council's Lengthsman Scheme which provides funding for highway, footpaths, open spaces and associated maintenance in rural areas.
- 22 The following statistics and facts about the facilities used by residents of the Pentons emerge from the Survey. A total of 207 forms were distributed of which 55 were returned completed.

For, shopping, doctors and leisure the survey identified the following patterns

	Shopping	Doctors	Leisure Activities
Andover Town Centre	43.	15.	8.
Charlton	39.	34.	7.
Weyhill.	26.	1.	4.
Ludgershall	5.	5.	12.
Elsewhere	28.	1.	34.

At least one of the doctors surgeries listed under Charlton is in fact in Andover which would make the percentage going to Andover 89%.

- 23 In relation to two specific questions, residents expressed their views on the question of community identity. The questions and verbatim comments are listed in Appendix A. These demonstrate overwhelmingly that residents of Penton Mewsey do not identify with Charlton. Ai contains 12 references to community and ii has statements emphasising the urban nature of Charlton.

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Appendix A iii illustrates the use and importance of exclusive Village Facilities.

- 24 Conversely for Charlton Penton Mewsey is not aware of what if any detailed evidence has been put forward or considered to establish that Charlton residents have any affinities or ties with Penton Mewsey.

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G Penton Mewsey's Alternative Proposals

- 25 Bourne Valley Ward
Move Alamein Polling District No1 and part of Smannell north of the Roman Road to Andover Romans Ward and add Penton Mewsey and Penton Grafton Parishes to the Bourne Valley Ward.
- 26 Andover Harroway Ward.
Combine Charlton Parish with the whole of Andover Harroway Ward or part of it – namely Polling District Harroway No 1 -if 4 member wards are not acceptable. There is no upper limit in legislation regarding the number of councillors that may be returned from each ward or division. The Commission's view appears to be that wards or divisions returning more than three councillors result in a dilution of accountability to the electorate. Although there are currently no principal authority wards or divisions in England returning more than three councillors, there are a number of four member wards in Scotland.
- 27 Alternatively, Penton Mewsey invites the Commission to use its experience to produce electoral equality based on the second limb of the alternative proposal or place community identity above electoral equality as suggested at paragraph 3 above.
- 28 Appendix B sets out the calculation of electorates resulting from the proposals in paragraphs 25 and 26.

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H Conclusion

29 The Commission recognising the existence of conflicting views over its recommendation invited alternative proposals. Penton Mewsey has responded constructively and positively with an objection based on firm evidence and a workable alternative.

30 This objection was submitted in draft to Penton Grafton Parish Council who has confirmed that the objection and its alternative proposals have that Council's full support and endorsement which it is anticipated will be confirmed directly to the Commission.

31 Contacts for further information.

Stephen Millen Chairman [REDACTED]

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J Appendices

A SURVEY RESULTS

i COMMUNITY IDENTITY

The responses below are to the following question:
What do you like best about living in the Pentons ? (no more than 10 words)

Village life

Safe friendly village with well maintained footpaths

The friendly atmosphere

A quiet friendly village

Pleasant friendly people, low crime unspoilt houses

Pretty friendly village, quiet

Peaceful friendly people sense of community

Warm friendly village & people

Friendly neighbours, quite village within easy reach of town.

Beautiful place, friendly, good community

Strong sense of community

Good village good people and involved

Countryside and friendly village

It's quiet with a nice sense of community

Quiet & reasonably friendly without intrusion

The village community is great

Very friendly people, minimum traffic

Peace, quiet

Peace and quiet

Peaceful village environment

Village atmosphere

No through traffic, generally friendly and sensible community

Rural ambience, active community

Rural, farming environment

Sense of village community/ distinctness. Geographical and otherwise

Discrete village with all types of housing in tight community

It has everything except a pub

Green spaces and village environment

The quiet surrounding

Conservation area status. Excellent infrastructure,(village hall, church, playing field footpath pub etc.,)

Rural location

It's rural but nearness to bigger location towns (Salisbury)

Surrounded by beautiful countryside, attractive village and church

Countryside

Rural life

Living in a rural area.

Peaceful and tidy. Rural ambience.

Beautiful, safe, quiet village

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*The village environment, community spirit and quite location.
Good community spirit, nice environment, low crime rate
It is a quiet pretty friendly village
I like the village setting and the people
It is natural and in the country
The village and people
Community spirit, open green spaces and footpaths and a cul de sac of Chalkcroft Lane.
Village, rural community
Location, pretty and well kept village, nice people
Countryside but close to amenities*

ii PERCEPTION OF CHARLTON.

The following are residents' answers to the following question :
Do you think the Pentons have any identity or affinity with Charlton or community interest? 43 answered 'no' and 4 'yes'

If NO tell us why you think this.

The following is the list of reasons given.

- 1 *In my experience with Charlton joining the Pastrow benefice they are very urban in their outlook and have no concept of village life. If we join with them we will gradually be merged into an urban thinking and the gap between us and Charlton will be closed.*
- 2 *Charlton does not appear to be a village but is a part of Andover and the Pentons are very different in character.*
- 3 *Charlton seems to be in the process of being incorporated into Andover.*
- 4 *Charlton is so obviously a suburb of Andover.*
- 5 *Charlton has been consumed by Andover with all the development.*
- 6 *Charlton has lost their gap with Andover and is now being developed. PM has no historic ties with Charlton unlike PG. If we become integrated with Charlton it would be one more step to losing our own distinct rural identity.*
- 7 *Charlton is urban; the Pentons are a separate community.*
- 8 *Charlton is urban, contains about 4,000 people and is no longer a country village. It is dominated by large housing estates.*
- 9 *Charlton is effectively urban and unlike the Pentons.*
- 10 *They are part of Andover.*
- 11 *They are effectively an extension of Andover. No added value. We are already a large enough ward.*
- 12 *Charlton is overspill housing for Andover and not a true village.*
- 13 *Both have distinct identities.*
- 14 *The character of Charlton is very different from the Pentons.*
- 15 *Village vis a vis urban.*
- 16 *Charlton is not a village and has low community cohesion. The Pentons are distinct, identifiable as a village and community.*
- 17 *Charlton and Penton are geographically separate. Growth of Charlton likely to have a negative impact on Pentons.*

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- 18 *Appear different types of community (more urban) so likely to have other priorities.*
- 19 *It is not a village as Penton is very different.*
- 20 *Definitely not. We are a rural community and a conservation area.*
- 21 *Supermarket, chemist, dentist, doctors all at Charlton town.*
- 22 *Charlton is an urban/suburban community. The Pentons are rural villages.*
- 23 *Important to keep green gap between Pentons& Charlton.*
- 24 *Charlton is joined to Andover, the mile or so of green space needs to be preserved at all costs.*
- 25 *We are surrounded by green fields which makes us unique at the moment. Let us keep it that way.*
- 26 *By history though might have if grouped together in some way.*
- 27 *Pentons are villages, Charlton is not.*
- 28 *Penton rural and wish to remain so. Charlton sprawl. Infilling to be contained at all costs.*
- 29 *Charlton has very different feel and focus.*
- 30 *Charlton is urban conurbation being really an enclave of Andover which has lost its identity.*
- 31 *Charlton is its own community. Penton is its own community.*
- 32 *Totally different type of community.*
- 33 *Charlton is more urban sprawling area and is part of Andover while the Pentons are rural and have a sense of community and belonging. They appear to have very different characters so do not have an identifiable affinity.*
- 34 *It's growing all the time and is becoming part of Andover. Keep Penton Rural.*
- 35 *Penton is a rural community, we are not part of Andover and we want to maintain the local/strategic gap between Penton and Charlton.*
- 36 *Charlton is the beginning of the town. We are the beginning of the countryside. Choose*
- 37 *Charlton if you want town life. Choose Penton and you are choosing rural life.*
- 38 *They are a town, Penton a village.*

iii STATISTICS FROM SURVEY.

VILLAGE CLUBS & SOCIETIES / FACILITIES:

The village clubs/ societies and facilities fared very well in the survey with possibly more advertising for interest in the Table Tennis groups and classes held at the village hall. One comment asked for fitness classed during the day.

87% felt that the facilities overall were well maintained

When asked Are you aware of the following the percentage of YES responses was as below:

GROUPS/ SOCIETIES	YES responses:
PRC	93%
PENTON PLAYERS	91%
TENNIS	85%
TABLE TENNIS	47%
COFFEE MORNINGS	87%

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CLASSES AT THE VILLAGE HALL 67%
CHURCH EVENTS 84%

The Village Hall is used by 76% of responders. 21% do not use it.

The church is attended by 62% of the responders whilst 33% do not use.

The White Hart Public House raised very many comments about being closed. 65% would use it if it was opened, whilst 22% did not use it.

The recreation ground is valued and used by 64% of responders. 25% do not make use of it.

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B Electorate Calculations for Penton Mewsey's Alternative Proposals with % variations from equality.

Bourne Valley:

Commission's Recommendations:	2518
Less Alamein No 1.	703
Smannell (part)	222
	<u>1593</u>

Add Penton Mewsey	330
Penton Grafton	649
	<u>2572 +6.6%</u>

Andover Harroway:

Commission's Recommendations:	
Polling Districts	
Alamein No 3.	1754
Harroway No 1.	1984
Harroway No 2.	1291
Harroway No 3.	1692
Harroway No 4.	988
	<u>7709</u>

Add Charlton.	1652
	<u>9371 +3.02%</u>

Or alternatively /

Andover Harroway	7709
Less Harroway No 4.	998
	<u>6711 +7.2%</u>

Harroway No 4.	988
Add Charlton	1652
	<u>2650 + 9.9%</u>

Andover Romans:

Commission's Recommendations:	6561
Add Alamein No 1.	703
Smannell(part)	222
	<u>7486 +3.4%</u>