West Berkshire

Personal Details:

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Comment text:

I have represented the Parish/Ward of Bucklebury on the District Council since 1987 so this is the third change of such boundaries I have experienced. I have been a single ward member on two such changes and, since the last review, been part of a two member ward covering five parishes, so I hope my observations are of interest. As we represent five parishes my colleague and I attend as many Parish Council meetings together as possible and we always jointly attend their annual parish assemblies (which all occur in a concentrated two month period), we consider this is essential to our representation of our electorate who, mostly, do not understand the issues of boundaries, they just want to know who to contact for help/information. The proposed changes to create the new Aldermaston and Bucklebury ward would result in having to represent 15 parishes with their many meetings and despite the proposal of three councilors it would, in my opinion, be impossible to keep up to date with all that is happening. At the very least we would have to divide the ward into three parts on a practical level which would cause considerable confusion to the electorate as to who to contact and any benefit you perceive would be unimaginably diluted! The other issue is that, whilst on a map, there may be some similarities between these communities in that this is a large rural area comprising many small villages, in reality there is little synergy between these parishes with those situated north of the A4 being, largely, in the North Wessex AONB and those to the south having a different "feeling". An example of this is the dominance of AWE in Aldermaston with it's surrounding small industrial estates. In my opinion having such a large rural ward would be detrimental to the people living here and would seem to be against your own guidelines of grouping communities together with natural and shared values such as access to schools, both primary and secondary, medical services, transport etc. I support the counter proposal suggested by West Berkshire Council that your proposal should be modified to become three single member wards (as an example Bucklebury/Stanford Dingley/Midgham/Woolhampton) which would result in the full representation of the electorate as they know and deserve.