The Review Officer (West Berkshire)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
14th Floor Millbank Tower
Millbank
London SW1P 4QP

10 November 2017

Electoral Review of West Berkshire District Council

Reference:
A. LGBCE draft recommendations August 2017
B. West Berkshire Council agenda report 31 Oct 2017
C. Newbury & West Berkshire Liberal Democrats submission to LGBCE April 2017
D. Newbury & West Berkshire Liberal Democrats submission to LGBCE 10 July 2017

This is the response of the Liberal Democrat Party to your draft recommendations for the District (Reference A). It was prepared before Reference B was published but finalised after the Full Council meeting had voted on the recommendations therein.

There are only four Lib Dem councillors, of whom three attended the 31 Oct Full Council meeting and voted with the remainder of Council in support of Reference A. Significantly however the only Lib Dem representing a Newbury area Ward (Greenham) was absent, having recently suffered a stroke. It is the Council's proposals for Greenham and south Newbury which we have most difficulty in accepting.

The Newbury and West Berkshire Liberal Democrats do not cover the three Wokingham Constituency wards of the District. However this is likely to change with effect from 1 Jan 2018, from which date the Liberal Democrats in Berkshire expect to be organised on a basis coterminous with Local Authority boundaries instead of Parliamentary constituencies. We have therefore endeavoured to coordinate this response with our Lib Dem colleagues in the three District Wards of Mortimer, Burghfield and Sulhamstead. We understand that they intend to submit their own comments, which we have seen in draft and with which we broadly agree.

We have no comment on your recommendations for the following Wards:
Basildon & Compton, Downlands, Lambourn, Pangbourne, Thatcham North East, Thatcham West, Theale, Tilehurst & Purley, Tilehurst Birch Copse, Tilehurst South & Holybrook.

Our main objection to your proposals is the use of three-member rural wards, which we feel are too geographically large to be manageable by their councillors. However apart from the Hungerford & Kintbury Ward we have not come up with solutions.
We note that Reference B has achieved the breaking up of the Bucklebury & Aldermaston 3-
member ward and we have no objection to the Council’s proposals here. Nor do we object to
the Council’s counter-proposals for Basildon & Compton, creating one-member wards
throughout much of the eastern rural part of the District.

We are aware of proposals from Burghfield parish councillor Dr Royce Longton, which would
break up your proposed Mortimer & Burghfield Ward. We support this, especially the
inclusion of part of Sulhamstead parish in his Burghfield Ward, which would be a departure
from the Council’s proposal. It may be that the Council omitted Sulhamstead (YSG1) from
Mortimer & Burghfield inadvertently, since they make no reference in the text of Reference B
to this change from your proposal and have not included any change to this ward in their
map of their counter-proposals on page 14.

**Hungerford to Greenham**

The following set of proposals are linked and are based on the same general principles we
used in our original submission (Reference C). The main features involve the breaking up of
the 3-member Hungerford & Kintbury Ward and the re-drawing of ward boundaries in South
Newbury so as to have no 3-member wards there, while making what we believe better
‘communities’ and where possible using firmer boundaries.

We have not hesitated to divide parishes between wards where this is in accord with the
statutory guidelines and our general principles: in many cases, parish boundaries make little
sense for present-day purposes. Each of the changes described below (1-8 only) is
illustrated in more detail in maps in our Appendix to this letter.

Starting in the west:

1. **Denford and Avington** (parts of Kintbury parish north of the R Kennet and west of
Kintbury / A4 crossroads) to be made a parish ward and attached to Hungerford
(voting there), as part of a 2-member Hungerford District Ward, which would also
include Inkpen, Combe and West Woodhay parishes. This would add about 80 voters
to that ward, keeping it well within the 10% of mean size (for 2019). These voters
would as a result not need to use the Kintbury level crossing to reach their polling
station, which would be closer to most of their homes than Kintbury village centre.
They already look more to Hungerford than Kintbury for most purposes.

2. **Wash Water** and other parts of Enborne east of the A34 bypass (but not the rest of
Enborne) added to Wash Common ward. This was explained as ‘point 2’ in our July
submission (Reference D), which was supported as a one-member ward in
Reference A (para. 63) apart from disagreement on whether to use the parish
boundary as a western boundary. We do not however support the extension
northwards of Wash Common Ward to make it a 3-member ward (see ‘8’ below for
our new proposals for South Newbury). The loss of about 300 voters from Enborne
parish to what would under our proposals be a one-member Kintbury Ward would be
more than compensated by…..

3. **Rural Speen** (west of A34 bypass) largely moved from Newbury & Speen Ward into
Kintbury Ward. Stockcross and Marsh Benham – but not Bagnor, which is better
connected to Newbury – link well to Kintbury via the A4 and are much more rural
than those parts of Speen east of A34. In Reference D (point 4) we included these
430 (approx.) voters in our Chieveley Ward for the same reason but we think they should now be in Kintbury Ward.

4. **Leys Gardens**, Goldwell Drive and Jesmond Dene moved from Newbury Central into Newbury & Speen Ward, because after ‘3’ above it will be below required electorate. The homes of these 75 voters are accessed off Old Bath Road, which leads to Speen. They are no more connected with Newbury town centre than other parts of Northcroft Ward that have been moved into ‘Newbury & Speen’. In addition, to make up the loss of voters¹ ....

5. **Hutton Close** and other properties on the west side of Shaw Road south of River Lambourn (about 100 voters once Hutton Close is re-developed) also could be moved into Newbury & Speen Ward (from Clay Hill) to replace the rural parts of Speen removed into Kintbury. These properties were originally in Shaw-cum-Donington parish and are accessed easily from Shaw church and Trinity School across Shaw park or via Church Road Shaw.

6. **Change the name of Newbury & Speen Ward to Speen & Shaw.** The name “Newbury and Speen” implies that it includes the whole of Newbury, which is misleading. In fact, the whole of the ward was once either part of Speenhamland or Shaw-cum-Donnington parishes almost until living memory and was in Speenhamland County Division until the formation of unitary councils in Berkshire in 1998.

7. **Include Stoney Lane development in Clay Hill.** This was our ‘3’ in Reference D but has not been included in either your draft recommendation (Reference A) or the Council’s response. In paragraphs 45 and 57 of Reference A you support the retention of existing adjacent Cold Ash parish parts of Clay Hill Ward and it seems to us a simple oversight not to have extended west adding this newly consented development (about 150 voters) which is likely to be fully occupied well before 2023.

8. **Move the boundary between Greenham and St Johns Wards to A339.** This is a much better boundary than Newtown Road and St Johns Rd, as the Council agree in Reference B. However we do not like the remainder of their proposals for South Newbury, especially their very oddly shaped Eastfields Ward². Instead we suggest that Greenham Ward and Wash Common Ward in Reference A be split into three two-member Wards, with some adjustment to Newbury Central’s southern boundary as well:-

   a. **Greenham Ward** would be bounded on the west by A339 north to Eeklo Close (excluded), then along Greenham Road north, Racecourse

¹ We also believe insufficient account has been made of the proposed ‘North Newbury’ development (400 homes) which is likely to all be occupied by 2023 and which alone will add more voters to Newbury & Speen Ward than the Council’s estimate used in Reference A.

² The Pyle Hill ward of Newbury town has been part of Greenham district ward since 2003 and contains Greenham’s community centre and its only primary school. In community terms it is much more Greenham than Newbury and is separated from – not connected to – Eastfields by Stroud Green.
Road and down the rear of Boundary Road east side properties (so that all of the Racecourse development including Denman Close, in Newbury, is in Greenham Ward) to the railway. It would then follow the Newbury / Greenham parish boundary, even though any office conversions occupied north of the railway (but in Greenham parish) might fit better in Newbury South or Clay Hill Wards. Our estimates for the electorate are 6049 (2019 - +7%) and about +5% for 2023.

b. **Newbury South Ward** would include all of Newbury east of A339 between the river Kennet and north of Stroud Green and Southbys allotments, plus all of NB12 in the current St Johns (except properties accessed off Monks Lane and south of Woodridge on Andover Road east side). It also includes the block formed by St Johns Road, Newtown Road, the railway and A339. For this ward, the A339 is actually more of a link than a barrier via the so-called Burger King and Sainsburys roundabouts. For 2019, we estimate some 5339 voters here (-6%). It is difficult to forecast numbers for 2023 because of uncertainty over policy on office conversions and land use change in the currently non-residential area of the town east of A339.

c. **Wash Common Ward** would include all of the Sandleford Park strategic housing development, which has just yesterday been refused by the Council’s planning department. It is impossible to forecast whether any new dwellings will be occupied before 2023 but it remains as land designated for housing and it is still possible that 1000 new dwellings could be occupied on the site by then. In addition to the Wash Water block (see ‘2’ above) the whole Falkland Ward except a block north of Fifth Road – moved into Newbury Central – would be included. For 2019, assuming no development at Sandleford, electorate will be about 5175 (-8%) but if Sandleford goes ahead ‘full steam’ thereafter it could rise to +20% by 2023. However we believe any development here is likely to take much longer and this ward could be within the 10% margin until nearer 2027.

9. **Newbury Central** would exchange the block containing St Johns church described above (to Newbury South) for the block of Wash Common Ward in Reference A north of Fifth Road: Kingsbridge & Salcombe Roads and Sunderland Gardens. These were formerly part of a “Craven Ward” in Newbury District Council (up to 1997) which included most of central Newbury but did not extend east of Newtown Road.

10. **Sandleford parish ward.** Because the proposed Sandleford parish ward of Greenham, which Lib Dems and BCE have put in Wash Common, currently

---

3 Applications for residential conversions of office buildings, under ‘permitted development’, amounting to about 300 voters by 2019 are currently being considered and seem likely to be approved and quickly implemented at Overbridge Square off Hambridge Lane.
has only 7 electors, to give it five (out of 15) parish councillors makes it like a ‘pocket borough’! We suggest that the ward is not created until after 2019 but that if it has to exist it has just one parish councillor initially.

11. **Other parish ward changes** are clearly a consequence of almost all the above proposals. However we will not elaborate on these here. They affect Kintbury, Speen, Enborne, Cold Ash, Greenham and Newbury. We will be pressing the District Council to undertake a Community Governance Review immediately after adopting the new District wards, so as to bring parish boundaries more into line with some of the above ward boundaries and present-day communities around Newbury.

**Thatcham**

We note that your proposals for Thatcham are said to be “broadly based” on our July submission. We are keen to see Thatcham Central & Crookham (3-member ward) split and are content with the Council’s proposals for doing so.

However we are keen to see Florence Gardens and Heath Lane properties moved into Thatcham West, as was proposed by you in Reference A but is not part of the Council’s response.

DR TONY VICKERS, Chair, Newbury & West Berks Liberal Democrats
APPENDIX TO LIBERAL DEMOCRAT (LOCAL PARTY) RESPONSE TO LGBCE PROPOSALS FOR WEST BERKSHIRE DISTRICT 10 NOV 2017

APPENDIX TO NEWBURY & WEST BERKS LIBERAL DEMOCRATS COUNTER-PROPOSALS NOVEMBER 2017

1. Denford & Avington – part of Kintbury parish to be included in Hungerford two-member ward.

2. Wash Water – moved from Hungerford & Kintbury into Wash Common
3. Move most of rural Speen parish (Stockcross and Marsh Benham) into Kintbury Ward.

4. Leys Gardens estate moved into ‘Newbury & Speen’ ward
5. Move Hutton Close into ‘Newbury & Speen’

6. Change name of ‘Newbury & Speen’ ward to ‘Speen & Shaw’. The historic boundary of Speenhalland parish is shown as a pecked line, also Shaw-cum-Donnington.
7. Add Stoney Lane development to Clay Hill. The site is now consented for housing.
8. Proposed boundaries between Greenham, Newbury Central, Newbury South and Wash Common wards