West Berkshire

Personal Details:

Name: Alan Rivers
E-mail: 
Postcode: 
Organisation Name: Newbury Constituency Labour Party

Feature Annotations

1: Suggested Welford Wickham boxford exc boundary from Hungerford and Kitbury
2: Suggested Great Shelford and east Garston exc from Downlands
3: Suggested West Ilsley exc from Compton and Basildon
4: Suggested division of the Basildon and Compton Ward
5: Suggested Crokhamp exc from Thatcham Central

Map Features:

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Comment text:

Newbury Labour Party wishes to make a submission pertaining to the Wards in West Berkshire Council which correlate to the Newbury Labour constituents. Those 21 wards are currently: Aldermaston, Basildon, Bucklebury, Cheveley, Clay Hill, Cold Ash, Compton, Downlands, Falkland, Greenham, Hungerford, Kitbury, Lambourn Valley, Northcroft, Speen, St John's, Thatcham Central, Thatcham North, Thatcham South & Crokhamp, Thatcham West & Victoria. We wish to focus on the aims of the electoral review. Which are: firstly, to recommend ward boundaries that mean each councillor represents approximately the same number of voters; & secondly, to ensure that the pattern of wards reflects the interests and identities of local communities as well as promoting effective local government. We also wish to address the need for the opportunity for fairer democratic representation in West Berkshire council. With regard to the first aim, to recommend ward boundaries that mean each councillor represents approximately the same number of voters, where councillors represent the same number of constituents, we would like to address the amalgamation of more rural areas into multiple representative wards. While we don't believe that it is an easy fix to amalgamate wards, we do recognize and accept that it is only fair to have fair representation numerically for constituents/councillor ratio. For these numbers, we defer to the Electoral Review Commission for all statistical matters. However, with regard to the second aim, ensuring that the pattern of wards reflect the interests and identities of local communities as well as promoting effective local government, we have some local knowledge to input. We specifically refer to the more rural wards of Aldermaston, Basildon, Bucklebury, Compton, Downlands, Hungerford, Kitbury, Lambourn Valley. 1. Hungerford & Kitbury Proposal: We believe the new Hungerford & Kitbury ward covers an area which does not share identities, nor follow geographic patterns. Therefore, it doesn't allow the councillors from these wards to be as effective as possible in local government. The area of boxford and welford/Wickham have long been isolated from the Kitbury ward due to their geographic positioning. Their access and proximity to Newbury along the A44909 or the Lambour Road, have most residents accessing the main constituency amenities of Newbury Town centre, via the North West of Newbury. Kitbury constituents, have a close and natural route into Hungerford along the Hungerford Road, and into Newbury Town Centre via Enborne Road, Enborne Street or Enborne Row which has its geographic access to Newbury from the South West. Therefore highlighting that the Kitbury and Hungerford wards do not share a natural road network with the boxford and Welford areas. In addition, Welford and boxford are not conveniently serviced by the railway which has stops in Kitbury and Hungerford. But constituents must cross the A4 or go under the M4 by car or bicycle, to access rail services. NB. these are not
safe nor realistic walking routes. Bus transport from Boxford and Welford are towards Lambourn and Newbury, and do not connect with the rail services at Kintbury nor Hungerford. We believe that the Hungerford & Kintbury Ward needs reassessing, not least because Welford and Boxford do not share the same services, patterns and needs as those of the Kintbury and Hungerford constituents. 2. Lambourn Valley/Kintbury: We believe that the Lambourn Valley should not be redrawn to exclude East Garston and Great Shefford, but rather to include the area of Welford and Boxford, as they follow the natural line of the Lambourn Valley, with shared roads, and bus networks. If there was a need to split this larger ward in to accommodate one councillor representing an approximate 3000 constituents, we would suggest the proposed boundary for Lambourn and an additional Ward to include East Garston, Great Shefford, Boxford and Welford and Wickham. 3. Downlands: With regard to the Downlands Ward proposal to include East Garston and Great Shefford, it is important to illustrate, that once again the service/infrastructure of the area of the Downlands means that these two village areas do not share infrastructure and services with the Peasemore/Brightwalton, Farnborough area, but West Ilsley does. Therefore we believe that Downlands ward should pick up West Ilsley and all areas to the West of the A34. The Copperage Road is a natural route for traffic from the Lambourn Valley, via the Farnborough & West Ilsley to the A34. It is important to once again reiterate, the shared roads and bus services for Great Shefford and East Garston are not in common with the greater Downlands area. 4. Compton & Basildon: We believe that the Compton and Basildon Ward should be split utilising the B4009 as a divide mark. Compton Ward to the north of the villages along the B4009, and Basildon Ward to include the villages along the B4009 and those to the south. Compton and East Ilsley are serviced by one bus service and typically the A34 or the road to the north of Hampstead Norreys is the natural route for traffic in the Compton area. The Basildon/Bucklebury/Streatley area are serviced by separate bus and road routes. The B4009 is the natural route for many between Newbury and Reading and marks a natural boundary line. 5. Aldermaston & Bucklebury: This should again be reconsidered to represent the shared road and transport services for these areas. The area around Aldermaston is serviced by trains and the area of Bucklebury serviced by bus transport. There is a natural watercourse through the Aldermaston area which means flooding prevention takes up much of the constituents concerns. We also believe that the area of Aldermaston/Padworth is very much a Wokingham/Reading centric area for constituents. Whereas Bucklebury is very much a different area, and affected by different issues. We would like to see this rethought. With reference to the number of councillors per ward, we have two concerns. The first relates to the relevance of the entirety of a ward for a group of three councillors. We believe that it is not possible for rural areas to get strong representation from councillors who may not be familiar with the detailed geographic section of their rural locations. Likewise, we believe it is not reasonable for councillors to expect them to have the detailed knowledge of these rural areas. Our solution is to reduce all three councillor rural wards to single councillor wards. Specifically, the ward proposals for: Hungerford & Kintbury, Basildon & Compton, and Aldermaston & Bucklebury. We also believe that the proposed Thatcham Central & Crookham ward should be reduced to a single councillor ward for the area to the south of the Kennet River and would refer to this as the Crookham ward. This would then allow the Thatcham Central Ward to take in the area to the north of the Kennet and still be represented by two councillors. Secondly, we believe, that while it is important to have fair numerical representation, ie. approx. 3000:1 constituents:councillor, it should also be a democratic consideration when thinking about representation by the variety of political parties. To amalgamate wards into 3 or 2 person wards, is to give an advantage to the party with the collective majority of votes in that 3/2 councillor ward ie. If a party holds a 51% share of voice in a ward with three councillors to be elected, that 51% will vote for all three candidates from the same party, thus allowing them to dominate the council for that area who may not have the true voice of the smaller locations. We would like to see, these wards to be split into 3 smaller wards. Therefore, if the majority of voters for the individual wards is not the same in each, there will be a fairer representation in the council of a range of political ideas and policies, relevant to the specific needs and concerns of the ward constituents, thus giving a far more democratic voice to West Berkshire constituents, specifically in the more rural areas. Thank you for your consideration.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded