Dear Mishka Meyers,

I am writing in response to the draft recommendations put forward by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for the future electoral arrangements for West Berkshire Council.

In the main I think the proposals are sensible and I am supportive of the way in which they reflect the Commission’s aims to deliver electoral equality and to ensure that electoral arrangements should provide for effective and convenient local government. However, I am not convinced that the pattern of the new wards supports the third aim – to reflect as far as possible the interests and identities of local communities.

Like the Council itself, I am particularly concerned by the Commission’s proposed three-member wards and I would like to register my strong support for the counter proposals put forward by West Berkshire Council which are based on good local knowledge of the communities of West Berkshire and largely reflect the parish structure which remains the building block of this largely rural area.

These counter proposals focus on the Newbury and Greenham area, Thatcham Central and Crookham, Tilehurst and Purley, Aldermaston and Bucklebury, with minor tweaks to Hungerford and Basildon and Compton. Areas where there is local support for the changes, for example Burghfield and Mortimer, have been left as per the draft recommendations. This is not an attempt to change for change’s sake, it is based on what is genuinely believed will work best on the ground. I draw your attention to the document submitted by West Berkshire Council for details of the suggested revisions.

I very much hope that the Commission will carefully consider these counter proposals and I would be grateful if you would accept this submission as my response to the consultation.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Benyon