Aldermaston Parish Council (APC) strongly objects to the proposal that Aldermaston Parish should be merged into an enlarged Ward called Aldermaston & Bucklebury, and which would return 3 District Councillors. We object for two principal reasons:

- the formation of a multi-member Ward would remove the dedicated accountability we currently have with a single member
- we have little affinity with the northern parishes within the proposed Ward.

APC supports the goal of reducing the number of District Councillors, and improving the equality of voter numbers. In the original consultation, we submitted a joint proposal with Beenham Parish Council that achieved these goals, and at the same time removed the anomaly of Aldermaston Wharf being divided into 3 existing Wards.

The Boundary Commission acknowledged that this proposal did indeed provide for wards with good levels of electoral equality and reflected community identities. However, they rejected the proposal on the grounds that it did not consider Englefield, Sulhamstead and Ufton Nervet Parishes. The Boundary Commission further stated that they had not been able to identify a warding pattern that would satisfactorily accommodate these three parishes, and gave examples of various patterns investigated that they considered did not provide sufficient electoral equality. They also noted that their proposal would result in a relatively large ward and welcomed views on it.

APC does not support the principle of multi-member wards, as they do not provide a single member who is solely accountable to a Parish. Multi-member wards result in a reduction in democratic accountability and should be discouraged.

In our submission we identified that Aldermaston Parish had affinity with adjacent Parishes such as Beenham, Padworth, Brimpton and Wasing, which formed a natural cluster and was consistent with the goals of the consultation. We also mentioned that Midgham and Woolhampton had a natural affinity with Bucklebury. These affinities have been ignored so that electoral equality can be achieved elsewhere.

We believe that undue importance has been given to electoral equality to the detriment of natural affinities and clusters. We feel we have been penalised to achieve electoral balance elsewhere.

We request that further consideration be given to our original proposal as identified in para 80 of the Boundary Commission's Report. We request that the Boundary Commission be asked again to investigate the issue of Englefield, Sulhamstead and Ufton Nervet Parishes to see whether improved electoral variances can be identified, if needs be accepting a solution that provides a slightly worse variation than was previously considered acceptable. This would ensure a large majority are not disadvantaged to meet the electoral balance of a small minority.