

Review Officer (Test Valley)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
14th Floor Millbank Tower
Millbank
LONDON
SW1P 4QP

30th March 2017

TEST VALLEY WARD BOUNDARY CHANGES

Background

- The Boundaries Commission for England is recommending that Test Valley be reduced from a 48 to 43 councillor Borough Council.
- This will lead to greater equality of representation but only following the concomitant ward boundary changes to reflect the lesser number.
- Geographical changes have been proposed, including moving villages into different wards. This paper is concerned with those currently in Penton Bellinger Ward.
 - Penton Mewsey and Penton Grafton are to be moved into Charlton Ward. This is contrary to the current dynamics. Charlton although it strongly avers its status as a separate village is perceived as a continuation of Andover. The Pentons are rural villages surrounded by agricultural land actively farmed and see themselves as villages – not as part of a town. The local gap between Penton Mewsey and Charlton is an important feature. It is to be expected that both Penton Grafton and Penton Mewsey will make submissions in the next stage of consultation.
 - The remaining villages in the existing Penton Bellinger, Appleshaw, Fyfield, Kimpton, Shipton Bellinger and Thrupton are distinct settlements in a rural area. As such they have developed their own identity, and Thrupton is well on the way to developing its Neighbourhood Development Plan. The sitting Borough Councillors have an enviable record of attending very nearly all parish council meetings between them.

Proposals:

- The BCE proposes a new single seat ward as yet unnamed. Suggestions have not been invited from the parishes concerned and it is believed that some alternatives have been proposed. This paper strongly suggests that the name Bellinger Ward be adopted as it avoids any specific identification beyond that which already exists.
- Particularly in the case of Thrupton where an NDP is approaching maturity, it is important that the existing Parish boundaries remain unchanged. Any suggestion that the small part of Thrupton south of the A303 (16 dwellings, 33 electors) be moved to a different parish would distort the base statistics thus jeopardising the integrity of data thus far garnered. It is proposed that the current Thrupton and Shipton Bellinger parish boundaries remain unchanged.
- The other end of Thrupton Parish, the northern Dauntsey Lane and north of the A303 is admittedly an anomaly but will be addressed in the second stage of consultation.
- It is proposed that the decision to move the Pentons into Charlton be revisited as the perceptions and aspirations differ between urban and rural areas.

Comment: Ward representation is of fundamental importance to Parishes. Mutual respect and expectation are built slowly but are based on trust. It is accepted that changes to wards and the level of representation are necessary to maintain an electoral balance and this paper is submitted to present some alternative solutions that may be more palatable to villagers whilst still achieving the stated aim.

This initial response is submitted after consultation with the Chairmen of the villages concerned who have in turn consulted with their respective parish councils.

Signed on e-mail *CWM Milner-Williams*
Chairman, Thrupton Parish Council

Copy (by e-mail) to: Parish Council Chairmen of Appleshaw, Fyfield, Kimpton, Penton Mewsey, Penton Grafton, Shipton Bellinger, Chief Exec TVBC, Borough Councillors for Penton Bellinger, Cllr Phil North, County Councillor Mrs Zilliah Brooks, and respective Parish Clerks.