West Berkshire

Personal Details:

Name: Sarah Logan
E-mail: [REDACTED]
Postcode: [REDACTED]
Organisation Name: 

Comment text:

Please can we stop wasting money on this sort of rubbish?

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded
25 October 2017

Review Officer (West Berkshire),
Local Government Boundary Commission for England,
Millbank,
London SW1P 4QP

Dear Sir

I write as a former County and District Councillor for the Burghfield Ward in West Berkshire.

I note your current proposals for rewarding in the Burghfield/Mortimer area. This area is currently represented by five councillors, i.e. two representing Burghfield, two representing Mortimer and one representing Sulhamstead. Your proposals for a single, three-member ward would reduce this to three, at a time at a time when house building proposals approved in the Local Plan are likely to result in a substantial increase in the number of electors.

I welcome the proposed inclusion of those parts of the Sulhamstead Ward that effectively form part of the settlement of Burghfield Common (Electoral Register YSG2) within a ward based on Burghfield, if the Sulhamstead Ward is to disappear as part of the overall reduction in the number of West Berkshire Councillors. Indeed, inclusion of Sulhamstead YSG1 within Burghfield rather than Aldermaston and Bucklebury would also be beneficial in terms of community identity. However, Burghfield and Mortimer are both sizeable communities with very distinct identities. I therefore believe that both should have at least one councillor specifically looking after their interests, and with a three-member ward it is quite conceivable that the three councillors elected might all live in one of the two communities. I also note the proposal to include Uton Nervet and Padworth in an Aldermaston and Bucklebury ward rather than with Mortimer, and consider this a significantly retrograde step in terms of community identity.
My preferred solution would be to retain separate Burghfield and Mortimer Wards, with Burghfield enlarged by the addition of parts of Sulhamstead as indicated above, and each with two Councillors. However, if the number of local councillors has to drop to three then please retain separate Burghfield and Mortimer Wards, the former with two councillors and latter, which has substantially fewer electors, with one.

According to the 2017 Electoral Register a Burghfield Ward comprising YBJ1 and YBJ2 plus YSG2 and YSG1 would have 5669 electors, giving only a low variance as two member ward. A Mortimer Ward comprising Mortimer YSD1 and YSD2 plus YBB (Beech Hill) and YWF (Wokefield) would have 3526 electors. This is suboptimal for a one member ward, but this would be improved by including Ufton Nervet and Padworth in the Mortimer ward.

Finally may I advise that slight changes are made to paragraphs 73 and 74 of the notes that accompany your present proposal, if this material is to be included with the next round of consultation. The point is that the Parish of Burghfield contains two main settlements, a larger Burghfield Common in the south of the Parish, and a smaller Burghfield Village further north. The latter is referred to simply as “Burghfield” on OS maps, but as “Burghfield Village” on local road signs etc. The settlement of Burghfield Common does include part of the Sulhamstead Ward, but Sulhamstead does not extend into Burghfield Village. Your present wording is therefore misleading in suggesting that Burghfield Common and Burghfield Village are synonymous (73), and that Sulhamstead extends into Burghfield Village (74). I would therefore suggest rewriting paragraphs 73 and 74 without using the word “Village”.

Yours sincerely,

Dr R. E. Longton
West Berkshire

Personal Details:

Name: a markham
E-mail: 
Postcode: 
Organisation Name: 

Comment text:

It is a good idea to have three councillor wards. The reason for this is that the constituents will have a choice as to which councillor they contact. Furthermore it may well be the case that these members are of different political persuasions so the constituent again will have more choice. This is more democratic and more efficient.

 Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded
West Berkshire

Personal Details:

Name: Sarah Marshman
E-mail: [redacted]
Postcode: [redacted]
Organisation Name: [redacted]

Comment text:

The Basildon and Compton Ward states it shall have 2 councillors. I would like to query why the ward should be made so large and then given two councillors - what is the benefit of this rather than making it two smaller wards with an individual councillor in each? It is a not-insignificant distance from the western to the eastern boundaries of this ward and it looks to me that the suggested ward could be split roughly in half, assigning one councillor to each ward.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded
This submission is in response to the most recent draft recommendations by LGBCE regarding the future composition of West Berkshire Council and the future geographic boundaries of individual wards. In a previous submission to LGBCE dated 5th April 2017 I expressed my concerns regarding the ward boundary proposals submitted by West Berkshire Council and for ease of reference I quote Paragraph 7 of that submission which reads as follows: “Obviously I am not in a position to comment on the details of the proposals which have been put forward in relation to other wards but as far as the electorate of Basildon ward is concerned, I believe a simpler and more practicable proposition would be to retain the existing ward of Basildon and to expand it slightly by including the parish of Ashampstead which borders with both Aldworth and Basildon. Ashampstead already has longstanding connections with both Aldworth and Basildon as all three form the Joint Benefice of Basildon, Aldworth and Ashampstead and share the same vicar. Ashampstead has a current electorate of 293 and its inclusion in Basildon ward would result in a combined electorate of approximately 2830 which would be within five percent of the proposed average number of electors per councillor.” I have recently had the opportunity to read the response to the latest LGBCE draft recommendations submitted to you by West Berkshire Conservative Association (WBCA) and was interested to note that it includes the following comment: “Basildon and the Ridgway communities have very little to do with one another and this ward should be split into two discrete communities in single-member wards: • Basildon comprising Basildon, Streatley, Ashampstead and Aldworth; • Ridgeway comprising West Ilsley, East Ilsley, Compton, Hampstead Norreys and Yattendon.” This coincides with the revised ward boundary proposal submitted to you on 21st June 2017 by our district councillor Mr Alan Law, namely, that Basildon ward be retained and expanded to include Ashampstead. As I mentioned in my submission dated 9th July 2017, Councillor Law’s recommendation is an eminently more practicable recommendation than the one originally proposed by West Berkshire Council for two reasons. Firstly, it would be in the best interests of electors resident in the ward by making it easier for them to maintain contact with their elected councillor and, secondly, it would make it easier for any future councillor for the ward to discharge his or her responsibilities to be a link between the users and providers of Council and other public services. The purpose of this submission is therefore to confirm that I fully support and endorse the recommendation of WBCA that Basildon Ward should in future comprise Aldworth, Ashampstead, Basildon and Streatley.
Dear Sir or Madam

10th November 2017.

Local Government Boundary Commission Review
West Berkshire Council Ward Boundaries

I am submitting these comments which very largely repeat my submission earlier in the year to your website as a Private Resident living in Mortimer Common. My recommendations then are unchanged but some changes to the proposals have been made and we now understand that West Berkshire Council at their Special Council Meeting on 31st October 2017 have proposed that Mortimer YSD 1&2 should be represented by a three Member Ward - Mortimer and Burghfield. As a former District Councillor for the present two member Mortimer Ward which then included Beech Hill, Wokefield, Ufton Nervet, Padworth and Mortimer, I am all too aware of the difficulties that the current proposals will cause.

Reform is needed to rationalise the fragmentation in the Padworth Wharf area and that is addressed in the current plans by combining that area with Aldermaston, and by adding Ufton Nervet and part Sullhamstead to Burghfield. However, there is no logical reason for splitting Beech Hill (YBB) and Wokefield (YWF) from their established Service Centre in Mortimer.

Burghfield and Mortimer are separate communities, and both are expanding under current but very different development planning regimes. Mortimer has an approved Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) which will result in clearly defined housing development (c120 by 2019) to meet the needs of the existing population in a sustainable way that can be supported by the existing infrastructure. In Mortimer we have a bus service and a railway station, a range of shops, churches, library, infants/junior schools, post office, bank, doctors, dentists, sports and recreational facilities for all age groups, which is why we were designated as a Service Centre for planning purposes.

Burghfield is also a Service Centre and has the facilities that are needed for its population which is 50% larger than Mortimer. It has struggled to contain its expansion in house building against developer pressure and is only now thinking of preparing an NDP. They have their own political and development problems to contend with and to my knowledge Conservative Burghfield Councillors have failed in the past to support actions in adjacent parishes such as Wokefield and have stated that they have no knowledge of or interest in the more remote parish of Beech Hill (5 miles to the east).

The current Ward Boundary proposals seek to force through a rural three Member Ward which I maintain is definitely not in the interests of either Mortimer or Burghfield. There is no political or financial benefit to either village and a very doubtful economic benefit to the District Council. If the total number of Council Members are reduced by 10, the basic saving of £65,000 plus expenses is likely to be quickly consumed by the remaining 42 councillors in
increased allowances and costs associated with the extra workload that is inevitable.

I understand that you are tasked with equalising the Population / Councillor ratio but in this specific case, I maintain that Burghfield can be best served by two members and separately Mortimer/Beech Hill/Wokefield* (3750 electors by 2019) by two members rather than the one proposed in West Berkshire Council’s Conservative agenda of 31st October 2017. Some flexibility needs to be introduced at this late stage to avoid a democratic imbalance in which three councillors from a larger and predominantly Conservative Burghfield could be elected to represent a smaller and more Liberal Mortimer.

Yours faithfully

G B Mayes

*Except the twenty seven houses on the east side of Reading Road Burghfield which should be in Burghfield Ward.
I don’t see the point of ClayHill being its own ward. Its small, and I see no value in it remaining like it is. The emphasis on the ClayHill ward is always on Turnpike and therefore those that live in the Western end are often ignored on issues/funding/development. I think it would be far more equitable to be part of the wider Newbury/Speen ward.

Jo McIntyre
West Berkshire

Personal Details:

Name: John McLeod

Comment text:

I live in Reading West and I do not see how it can be justifiable to change the boundaries for it to include Bucklebury, etc. The political reasons for doing it could not be clearer - but it's not good for democracy to carry out such blatant gerrymandering and this proposal should not be implemented. Please can it be re-considered and not take place.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded
Further to my earlier submission I welcome the fact that the LGBC has taken up the proposal to create a Wash Common Ward however there are some idiosyncrasies with some of the arbitrary boundaries that have been created as a result: 1) By not taking the boundary line as the A34 to the west of the ward, properties in Enborne Row (part of Wash Water), Enborne Lodge and Wash Common Farm fall into Hundgerford & Kintbury which makes no sense in terms of their locality or where their interests lie and indeed breaks up the community of Wash Water in terms of their representation. 2) I would again re-iterate that the community requirements of those living north of Monks Lane and Essex Street (other than the cul de sacs leading off both roads) are very different from those living in Wash Common. This is because the long hill on top of which Wash Common lies makes a huge difference to residents and those living at the top have very different requirements in terms of transport and local infrastructure (such as libraries and shops) to those living down the hill where a walking/cycling trip to the town centre is a more viable option (especially for the more elderly residents). As such we would again urge the commission to look at using the St George's parish boundaries as its starting point for this exercise as more accurately reflecting the community of Wash Common 3) Different ward sizes. I am very uncomfortable with the notion that wards should vary in terms of the number of representatives they have. I had not considered this in my earlier submission but in light of these proposals in strikes me that there is an undemocratic bias where some electorates will get 3 votes in a local election whilst others only 1. Either there is a stipulation that even in wards with more than one councillor voters only get one vote or the wards are divided up so that they are single wards. Otherwise there will be an inherent bias towards the incumbent party in any multiple wards where the same voter can elect more than one councillor.
I have lived in East Garston for over 20 years. I do not agree with the proposal to place East Garston in the Downlands Ward. East Garston is naturally affiliated to Lambourn through the geography of the Lambourn Valley. Residents of East Garston travel to Lambourn as their District centre for shops, Library, doctors surgery, and other community facilities. We have a public transport link to Lambourn and many connections with the racing industry which is centred on Lambourn. Many of the public service issues that affect local people and services in East Garston are common to Lambourn, not just in general terms, but specifically. For example, matters to do with Highways - we are talking about the same roads; matters to do with transport - it's the same bus route. To separate East Garston from this natural affiliation - which has endured successfully for many years, makes no sense. It will not significantly increase the number of people represented within a revised Lambourn Ward, especially as many of the issues will be common. The proposed link to a revised Downland Ward is likely to make it more difficult to secure effective representation as we have little in common with the many other village communities in the proposed ward, other than being rural. Those other villages have a more natural affinity to Newbury as their district centre, given the road network and absence of any other district centre within the area. This will make it very challenging for the single Councillor to adequately grasp and have time to understand issues that affect East Garston residents. The proposed boundary change will not be in the best interests of the residents of East Garston. I understand that the Parish Council has also objected to the proposal and I urge the Commission to include East Garston in the proposed Lambourn Ward.
West Berkshire

Personal Details:

Name: Matthew Sleightholme
E-mail: 
Postcode: 
Organisation Name: 

Comment text:

How on earth is the Hungerford and Kintbury representatives actually going to be accountable for such a geographic expanse. It would make more sense to expand Wash Common / Central Newbury out to the a34 as a boundary rather than have people in Enborne Row represented by people many miles away. In effect Enborne Row is Newbury, it is definitely not Hungerford. I think you need to relook at the Newbury area and those around it and see if people are being well represented locally.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded
West Berkshire

Personal Details:

Name: Bernie Southgate

E-mail: [Redacted]

Postcode: [Redacted]

Organisation Name:

Comment text:

The 3 member ward seems to have little benefit and would be too big in what would be 15 parishes. Enlarging the ward to include Bucklebury Bradfield and Aldermarston will make an uncomfortable mix of parishes. The villages of Aldermaston, Bucklebury and Bradfield are all different in the issues they face. Why not make this 3 single member wards: Aldermarston, Bucklebury and Bradfield.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded
West Berkshire

Personal Details:

Name: David Southgate
E-mail: [redacted]
Postcode: [redacted]

Organisation Name:

Comment text:

The 3 member ward proposed will test the ability of the WB Councillors to attend the PC meetings and Annual Assemblies in what would be 15 parishes. Enlarging the ward to include Bucklebury and Aldermarston will dilute representation and local expertise on planning matters. The villages of Bucklebury and Bradfield have a 'different feel' from those on the other side of the A4. Why not make this 3 single member wards: Bucklebury, Bradfield and Aldermarston.

 Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded
West Berkshire

Personal Details:

Name: Alan Stiemens
E-mail: [REDACTED]
Postcode: [REDACTED]
Organisation Name: N/A

Comment text:

Tilehurst South & Holybrook Ward should be part of Reading. Following the offloading of intense overdevelopment in the area by WBC this area no longer shares anything with its westerly neighbours. Planning, Transport, Waste disposal and other council services would be better served if this area became part of Reading from where the residents of this area feel they belong and where a local council may well have empathy for the plight of Calcot residents.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded
West Berkshire

Personal Details:

Name: David Townsend
E-mail: [REDACTED]
Postcode: [REDACTED]
Organisation Name:

Comment text:

I speak as a resident of Stanford Dingley, currently part of the Bucklebury ward. I am horrified at the proposal to further expand what, in my view, is a ward which is already too large, stretching as it does from, effectively, Englefied, to the far side of Hermitage. How on earth could councillors possibly have in depth knowledge of the complexion of such a vast area. I urge you to reconsider.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded
16th September 2017

Dear Review Officer
Local Government Review Officer

REVIEW OF WARD BOUNDARIES, WEST BERKSHIRE

Thank you for receipt of your revised proposals for new wards in the West Berks District.

It is regrettable that you have summarily dismissed my suggestions (and those of Cold Ash Parish Council I note) following what appears to have been your fleeting visit to this area. It is somewhat bewildering that you thereby conclude by outward appearance that whole groups of people in Cold Ash have "strong links with the rest of Thatcham town".

In spite of your own guidelines on parish boundaries, you have added yet more parts of Cold Ash for inclusion with Thatcham wards. This will have the effect of "double administration" in the minds of the affected electors, thereby causing unnecessary confusion.

Links with other parts of the locality surely depend on several factors, as for example - workplace, shopping place, transport, location of relations or friends live and personal preferences. It is clear from your report that you are not familiar with this district - you referred to Little Copse (paragraph 45) as if it were a settlement of houses, whereas in fact Little Copse is a wood in Cold Ash. To you it is merely a name on a map. You failed to observe that the settlement you want to transfer to Thatcham North-East is named "Southend", which can hardly be described an "overspill from Thatcham". Southend has been there since the 1940s and the residents are in no doubt that they live in Cold Ash Parish. The same applies to the Heath Lane area (immediately south-west of Southend), where even the newest development (Billingtong Way area) has been there since 1981.

You claim that you are "not making any proposals to change the parish boundary". However, you are making moves to that effect and by implication you are creating a precedent under the guise of electoral equality. Furthermore, it appears that the affected inhabitants have not been specifically consulted on this important matter? Such a change will undoubtedly create a feeling of boundary change.

On the matter of electoral equality, the evidence suggests that the changes you are proposing on the Cold Ash-Thatcham boundary are clearly unnecessary - as based on your own 'electoral equality' recommendations (see enclosed sheet).

I quote hereunder the deviations from the optimum electorate of 6,057 (for a two-member ward) in each case if Cold Ash Parish were to remain integrated as a whole, with the exception of that part of the Manor Park Estate. Unfortunately the latter area does present a problem owing to there being no clearly visible boundary between the parishes of Cold Ash and Newbury on that estate.

The figures hereunder are based on year 2023 and taken from your own estimates.

If those parts of Cold Ash that you want to 'transfer out' were to be incorporated within the proposed Cold Ash & Chieveley ward, that ward would have about 6,235 electors, resulting in a deviation of +2.9%, perfectly acceptable on your own criteria.
Thatcham West would then have about 5,752 electors, giving a deviation of -5.0%, which is acceptable on your criteria.

Thatcham North-East would have about 5,615 electors, giving a deviation of -7.3% once again acceptable on your own criteria.

The two Thatcham wards in question could easily be made more equitable by retaining the current ward boundary down the middle of Northfield Road, thereby avoiding unnecessary confusion to the 76 (approximately) residents on the east side of that road.

This would result in Thatcham West having a deviation of -6.3% and Thatcham North-East having a deviation of -6.0%.

As you can see from the enclosed summary sheet of your own proposals, all these deviations are compatible with your own adopted deviations, which vary from +10.4% and +9.9% to -7.5% and 7.0%. There are several deviations that float around 4% and 6% within those extremes. It is therefore clear that the three deviations described above would provide acceptable conformity with the overall set of deviations and also avoid unnecessary confusion.

Yours faithfully

Copies:
Thatcham Town Council
Cold Ash Parish Council

Review Officer (West Berkshire),
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
14th Floor Millbank Tower
Millbank
London, SW1P 4QP
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I wish to make a general objection to the proposals. I fully understand the desire to ensure that each councillor represents approximately the same number of electors. However, I believe that this desire should be trumped (sic) by a more important requirement, that there should be no multi member wards. For example, in a 3 member ward, an elector has the opportunity of voting for 2 candidates from one party and 1 candidate of another. This 'preference splitting' is not available to electors in single member wards and therefore it surely follows that electors are being treated unequally. I believe that this inequality substantially outweighs the equality of having equally sized electorates. Therefore I find the proposals totally unacceptable. I believe that the voters of West Berkshire should be presented with 2 options: the current proposal and a second proposal with only single member wards. Of course, it would then help if the 2 options were presented with a list of pros and cons. My current local ward, Cold Ash, is currently a single member ward, represented by a councillor who lives in the middle of the ward. That has cost benefits for all, basically less time and money needing to be spent to get around the ward. Given one if not the basic driver for change is a containment of costs, it seems wrong to continue with multi member wards. I wish therefore that further consideration be given to the subject and a single member for all wards option be put out for consultation.
To Whom it May Concern

As a member of the Inkpen Parish Council I am concerned that the proposed new draft recommendation of the above ward to include Boxford and Welford will be too large geographically for just 3 councillors. At present we in Inkpen are very well served by our 2 ward councillors and the proposed new area will be difficult for them with just one other to serve effectively. Additionally there are no existing links with the villages north of the A4.

The Hungerford and Kintbury Ward should include Hungerford, Kintbury, Inkpen, Combe, Hamstead Marshall and Enborne, all of which share a natural association, Boxford and Welford and the area north of A4 should be excluded.

Jennifer Edwards Wilson
West Berkshire

Personal Details:

Name: Philip Wood
E-mail: [redacted]
Postcode: [redacted]
Organisation Name:

Comment text:

Why have multi-member wards? Such wards almost always return members from the same party, splitting them might provide opportunities for other parties to gain a seat, and marginally improve the chances that the council might actually reflect the electorate. They also mean that electors know who their representative is. I live in a two member ward - when I contacted one of them I was told that the other dealt with my part of the ward - if the members are splitting them for convenience why not split them formally? Finally single member wards might also discourage the appalling practice of parties putting up candidates who don't want to be elected but stand knowing that, on the off-chance that they might actually get a seat, much of the workload can be taken by others. The concept of democracy in local government is already laughable, multi candidate wards just make the joke funnier.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded