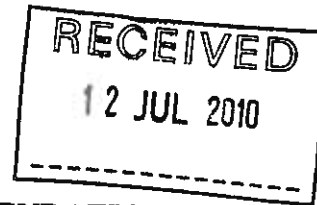
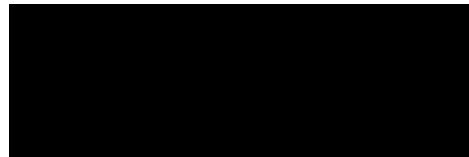


Review Officer
Bedford Review
The Local Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76-86 Turnmill St
London EC1M 5LG



Dear Sir

BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Castle Road Residents' Association wishes to object most strongly to the Commission's draft recommendations for Castle Ward. Our concerns are non-political and, following full canvassing and debate, we believe are overwhelmingly representative of the vast majority of our members and local residents.

A petition opposing the recommendations signed by 400+ residents is enclosed.

We note that without any justification the Commission has disregarded its own guidelines, which clearly state that natural barriers such as rivers and major roads should be observed. At present, Castle Ward is bounded by the River Ouse on the South side, and by the A428, an extremely busy major thoroughfare on the North side. To the West, the Ward extends to the main railway line, and to the East the boundary is Newnham Avenue, another major through route (although the Castle side of this road was strangely moved into Newnham Ward a few years ago).

Castle Ward extends across the Town Centre, both east and west sides of the ward having a common interest in this area.

The proposal accepted by the Commission ignores not only the obvious major geographical barriers but also the needs of residents, despite its responsibility to support local communities. The Castle Road area is at present a close and very real community, centred on the local shopping, business and social facilities of Castle Road. At present, it is possible for us to look after the common interests of this community, including the many issues on which we look to our two Ward councillors to help us. These include the state of the roads, street lighting, parking, speeding and anti-social behaviour. The issues that concern residents do not suddenly change at the point where Denmark Street (a side-street) and Castle Road (a minor thoroughfare) cross at an insignificant intersection.

Under the proposed arrangements, we as a residents' association will have to deal with councillors from two separate wards on such issues as the proposed one-way system north of Castle Road and possible extension of the Controlled Parking Zone.

We are an organization of volunteers who do not have time to spend on duplicative consultation and all the communication difficulties that will arise. We are surprised, too, that especially in these difficult times for public services, the Council will have the resources to support such arrangements. The police will also have difficulties as their current beat arrangements follow ward boundaries.

We fear that the proposed arrangements will clearly fail to secure “effective and convenient local government” in Castle Ward.

It is bad enough that Castle Road should be cut in half along a quiet, minor residential road, but the division will cause Russell Avenue, a small single-sided road of 31 houses all facing on to Russell Park is also to be divided. Many issues arise relating to the park, for example from its use as a public venue, parking on the grass, new facilities and anti-social behaviour (not least graffiti). It is absurd that residents in these roads might contact four different councillors on these issues.

Residents in the area of Castle Ward to be included in Newnham Ward will be effectively disenfranchised from their proposed new ward as they are to be completely cut off from it by Newnham Avenue and have little connection with what happens there.

We fail to see how any of this “reflects the identities and interests of local communities”.


The area of Castle Ward that we represent works well with the area to the west of the Town Centre because we have a common interest in such issues as the night-time economy and related anti-social behaviour, and concerns over traffic-routing and possible pedestrianisation. Residents from the Kingsbrook and Cauldwell areas, separated from Castle Ward and the Town Centre by the River Ouse, do not share these concerns, which impact on our daily - and nightly - lives. It could be argued of any ward outside the Town Centre, or indeed any village in the Borough, that the residents have an interest in the Town Centre because they use it for shopping and leisure activities. But it is residents of Castle Ward who have to put up, in their own homes, with the noise from pubs and night-clubs, and ever increasing licensing applications for more opening hours.

Nor can we think of any issues existing south of the river over which we might have common cause, so these residents too are ill-served by your proposal.

It seems to us that the Boundary Committee is interested in “number-crunching”, to the exclusion of all other objectives.

We very much hope that you will choose to listen to the views of a residents’ association.

Yours faithfully

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of Ian Mortimer.

Ian Mortimer

Chairman

Castle Residents’ Association