

From: Simon Rossiter [REDACTED]
To: Arion Lawrence
Cc: Richard Buck
Subject: Emailing: Electoral Review Central Bedfordshire
Date: Fri 08/01/2010 15:07

Dear Sirs,

Please find attached a representation regarding the proposed boundary changes for the Plantation ward in Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire.

Yours,

Simon Rossiter
Plantation-Heath and Reach Conservative Association

The Review Officer (Central Bedfordshire)
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London
SW1P 2HW

8th January 2010

Ref: Electoral Review of Central Bedfordshire

Dear Sirs,

I represent the current Plantation and Heath and Reach Ward Conservative Association. We are a local political group which supports the residents of the existing Plantation Ward which includes the village of Heath and Reach within South West Bedfordshire.

We have read with interest the documents regarding the proposal to create a new ward pattern in Leighton Buzzard and its surrounding villages and note that there has been a recommendation to remove Heath and Reach from the current Plantation Ward and place it out of the main town wards in a village grouping instead.

I note from your letter to Mr Richard Carr on the 27th October 2009 that you have a paragraph which is headed "Creating a Ward pattern". This states that these wards should "reflect community identities and interests and would seek to use strong, easily identifiable boundaries. We as a committee wholly agree with this statement.

Heath and Reach although holding a village status is in no way separated from Leighton Buzzard either physically or environmentally. The Heath Road (The C 194) runs through the Plantation ward and continues through Heath and Reach to the A5 without a break in housing, thus there is no strong boundary between the two. The residents of both Plantation and Heath and Reach use the schools, facilities and parks which adjoin both areas and all share a common environmental program with the shared recycling centre and waste disposal services. The Leighton Buzzard Golf Club for instance has its club house in Plantation Road, Leighton Buzzard yet the course bisects Heath and Reach parish. We consider Heath and Reach to wholly be a part of this ward in every sense.

During a previous review of boundaries in 2004 the conclusion was drawn that Heath and Reach should remain as part of the main body of Leighton Buzzard's ward pattern and nothing has changed since then. The autonomy of the Parish Council has worked successfully since 2004 and has not been overrun by the Town Councils will and in this case I believe the Parish Council have written to you to express their desire to remain in the Plantation Ward also.

We fully realise the need to reduce the size of the number of council members but we feel there are many alternatives the proposed grouping of Plantation, Planets and part of Central Leighton Buzzard. With a population of only 1300 in Heath and Reach a grouping which includes Planets, Plantation and Heath and Reach would be both geographically and socially more coherent.

From the political perspective to maintain consistent representation this would also make sense as by moving Heath and Reach into a group as suggested to include Woburn, Ridgmont etc this would also change the boundary for the South West Bedfordshire Parliamentary Ward into Mid Bedfordshire thus changing the residents elected MP.

In conclusion, we would respectfully like to request that Heath and Reach is not removed from the Plantation Ward pattern and that an alternative grouping is considered where the long and amicable links between the residents of Leighton Buzzard and Heath and Reach are allowed to continue.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Rossiter
Chairman
Plantation- Heath and Reach Conservative Association



Submission to the Boundary Commission for England and Wales for the creation of the ward of Wrest

It is the wish of the Parish Council of Silsoe that the Boundary Commission consider this submission to create a Central Bedfordshire ward of Wrest, to include the parishes of Pulloxhil and Flitton / Greenfield. This submission has the backing of individual Silsoe villagers who responded to a questionnaire (attached at Annex A) in the August edition of the Silsoe News.

It should be pointed out that combined parish of Flitton and Greenfield also includes the hamlet of Wardhedges which lies between Flitton and Silsoe. The five communities proposed by the ward of Wrest form a unified geographical unit.

We contend that the current arrangements whereby Flitton / Greenfield and Pulloxhill are associated with Flitwick (East) and Silsoe with eight other villages and hamlets to its East does not truly reflect the interests of their communities.

Our case is based on a number of factors :-

- Electoral role size.
- Expected growth of the four villages
- Electoral boundary history
- Local history
- Church Benefice
- School catchment areas
- Emergency (fire and ambulance) cover
- Police Division coverage
- GP, dentist and hospital cover
- Transport links
- Employment patterns
- Post Office provision
- Current tri-partite working parties
- Disorientation of services under current ward arrangements

Electoral role size

The current electoral voters lists for the three villages are as follows :-Flitton 547, Greenfield 541, Pulloxhill 714 and Silsoe 1353. Based on the Boundary Commissions recommendations for the number of councillors required to serve the needs of Central Bedfordshire (ie 59), the combined total of 3155

falls within the 10% margin for the average number of voters within each ward

Expected growth

Silsoe in particular is already expected to increase with the both the current Millar Homes development of 168 houses and the Cranfield Campus redevelopment of some 434 houses. The former Millar Homes site, already under construction, will result in a population increase of 420 over the next 3 (+/-) years. The Cranfield Campus development, although likely to be delayed due the effects of the recession, is planned to further increase the population of the village by 1100 from 2014 onwards. There is provision for a new lower level school to be included in the Campus scheme.

Pulloxhill and Flitton / Greenfield have some plots available for development and based on recent increases, would each grow by a rate 14-20 souls a year. In a five year period this would result in a population increase of 175(+/-).

Electoral boundary history

Research in the Bedfordshire archives has identified that the grouping of Silsoe, Pulloxhill, Flitton and Greenfield with each other was originally mooted in the late 19th century, and by the early part of the 20th century the Silsoe, Flitton, Pulloxhill nexus had been established.

In the 1885-6 register of electors the ward of Flitton (District E) contained Flitton (122 voters) Flitwick (172) Pulloxhill (111) Silsoe (102) Steppingly (72) Westoning (112). By 1914 the four villages were part of the same ward (District F, changed to District M by 1936), Greenfield not yet being identified as a separate entity. By now the overall local authority was Ampthill Rural District Council (DC). There appeared to be a 'hiccup' by the time of the 1954 register when Pulloxhill was attached to the Maulden Ward, and Flitton included in the Flitwick ward. Silsoe being a separate ward.

Mid Bedfordshire (Beds) DC was created in 1974, and in the following year another anomaly was created by coupling Gravenhurst with Silsoe into a ward of Wrest. The anomaly being that the natural lines of communication (ie roads) for Gravenhurst go North to Clophill and East to Shillington., not West over open country to Silsoe.

In 1985 the Parish of Flitton and Greenfield was created, which in the Local Government Commission Report of 2001 on Mid Beds DC was confirmed as being part of a separate ward of Flitton/Greenfield and Pulloxhill. At the same Gravenhurst was detached from Silsoe, which became a separate ward.

In 2008 in preparation for the creation of Central Beds Unitary Authority a number of artificial two councillor wards were created whereby the four villages were included in alternately Flitwick (East) and Silsoe and Shillington.

Local history

The historic influence of Wrest Park can be seen on the ground, particularly in the villages of Silsoe and Flitton. Wrest Park House and gardens in Silsoe are linked to Flitton, with the De Grey family Mausoleum being located in the Flitton Parish Church of St John the Baptist.

Church Benefice

The three parishes are part of the United Benefice of Silsoe, Pulloxhill and Flitton and share the same vicar. This results in services being shared between the three churches.

School catchment areas

Each parish has their own lower school, under the current education system. However children from all three parishes attend the same middle school (Arnold in Barton-le-Clay) and upper school (Harlington Upper in Harlington). Children from all four villages use the same school bus service and consequently can develop friendship made in their schools.

The figures for children attending Arnold School are as follows :- Silsoe 47, Pulloxhill, 37, Greenfield 24 and Flitton 21. For Harlington Upper the figures are :-Silsoe 80, Pulloxhill 27, Greenfield 26 and Flitton 23.

The Pulloxhill and Greenfield lower schools are federated, sharing a governing body. The Vicar of the three parish churches is also a governor of all three lower schools.

Emergency (fire and ambulance) cover

The first response base for the parishes, for both fire and ambulance cover is located at the two stations in Ampthill.

Police Division coverage

All three parishes come within the Woburn Police district of Bedfordshire Police and in consequence share the same Police support team of one Sgt, two PC's and two PCSO's

GP, dentist and hospital cover

The population of all four villages is covered by five general and seven dental practices in Barton-le-Clay, Flitwick and Ampthill, all within 4 miles. The two main hospitals serving them are Luton & Dunstable and Bedford South Wing.

Transport links

Bus services, and the lack of such services, are a common thread that tie the villages together. There are currently three services covering the villages (not including the school bus service). These are the Stagecoach service X1 (Saturn) that runs from Bedford to Luton via Silsoe. Grant Palmer Buses run their X44 service from Bedford to Silsoe via Greenfield, Pulloxhill and Flitton. Flittabus Community Transport provide periodic services on five routes linking the villages to Ampthill, Flitwick, Bedford and Milton Keynes. With the current pressure on council funding all the villages share common cause in at least maintaining their bus links with the outside world. There are no services linking the villages to those in the east, ie Gravenhurst, Shillington and Stondon.

Employment patterns

All four villages have Small to Medium sized Enterprises (SME's) located in their midst. In the case of Silsoe and Pulloxhill pressure to expand these firms is causing severe concern to both populations. In the main these SME's draw their employees from outside the villages, whilst villagers themselves work elsewhere, including commuting to Bedford, Luton, London and Milton Keynes.

Post Office Services

Silsoe is also the only Post Office in any of the villages and is the closest to the majority of the population in all four.

Current tri-partite concerns

A measure of the mutual interests shared by the villages has been recently expressed by a common position on the location of traveller sites. An equal concern is the problem of speeding. The three parishes have formed a common working group to work together, thereby reinforcing the steps they are taking individually.

Disorientation of services under current ward arrangements

Due to the distance away from Silsoe of the villages to its east, particularly Stondon and Henlow Camp, their support provided by police, fire, ambulance, hospitals, schools and transport services are oriented away from Silsoe. Its support being provided by services based to its west, covering the proposed grouping of the three parishes into a ward of Wrest.

Comments on the proposed arrangements as put forward by the Tory and Libdem groups

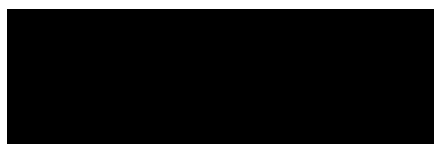
Both the new proposals appear to take their own electoral self interest as the starting point for their submissions. They fail to recognise, especially in the case of the majority (Tory) proposal, the historic and very real current ties that link the four villages.

In the case of the Tory submission they once again wish to link Silsoe with villages to the east (albeit not including Henlow Camp and Upper and Lower Stondon). As illustrated in our submission Silsoe's traditional association has been with villages to their west. The Tory proposal for Pulloxhill and Flitton / Greenfield is even more ludicrous. Our neighbouring parishes have been given the same treatment as was hastily arranged for Silsoe in the initial plan for Central Beds; namely a 'ribbon' ward, grouping villages together with no shared bond.

With regard to the LibDem submission, this has at least the benefit of attempting to group parishes into 'islands' rather than 'ribbons'. However in this case it picks the wrong 'islands'. For some strange reason Pulloxhill is grouped with four villages to the south. Placing them with Barton Le Clay, (almost a small town) will subsume their interests, rather than supporting them in a ward of Wrest. Silsoe is linked with Flitton / Greenfield, but once again the mistake is made of including Gravenhurst (a village literally on the other side of the hill). The hill being a very real barrier as shown in our submission.

Whilst not within our terms of reference. It is possible to posit alternative groupings for neighbouring parishes. For example Shillington, Gravenhurst and Meppershall all share a common linked line of communication, north to Shefford and south to Barton. Shefford with Clifton, as they have merely one field separating them on the Shefford / Clifton Road.. Stondon with Henlow Camp, as they are joined by Station Road running west to east and the A600 running north to south. Henlow Village would best be linked with villages to the north, as the airfield is a very real barrier to an association with Henlow Camp.

Signed



Myles Greenhalgh
Silsoe
Parish Councillor
Jan 2010
On behalf of Silsoe Parish Council

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Annex A to Silsoe Boundary Commission submission
dated 1 Jan 2010

Silsoe boundary review

The Boundary Committee for England is to begin its review of the electoral arrangements for Central Bedfordshire. As all villagers will be aware, at the initial election in June for the Unitary Authority, our ward included eight other villages and hamlets, extending over to Henlow Camp, some six miles due East of Silsoe. This arrangement, whereby two councillors were elected for a large area, is to be looked at by the Boundary Committee, beginning on the 4th of August..

Silsoe, Pulloxhill, Flitton & Greenfield Parish Councils are considering making a case to create a single councillor ward of Wrest. Our neighbours feel that the inclusion of their villages in the Flitwick ward is unrepresentative of their interests, as we may feel is the case with Silsoe and our extended ward.

Silsoe Parish Council would therefore appreciate feedback from villagers as to their views. To this end using the two statements below, would registered voters please advise by phone, Email, or using the strip below, indicate which option they prefer. Send to Myles Greenhalgh, [REDACTED]

I believe that the current two councillor ward of Silsoe / Shillington represents the best interest of Silsoe village.	YES / NO
I believe that a single councillor ward of Wrest, including the villages of Pulloxhill, Greenfield and Flitton would better represent the best interests of Silsoe village.	YES / NO

Name	Address

Silsoe Parish Council