

*LEIGHTON LINSLADE BRANCH LABOUR PARTY*

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Maurice Blackman  
Chairman

Review Officer  
Central Bedfordshire Review  
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England  
76-86 Turmill Street  
LONDON  
EC1M 5LG

Dear Sir

Recommendations for "Leighton-Linslade Town and its Hinterland"

I write on behalf of the Executive Committee of this branch of the Labour Party to object to the proposals for Leighton Buzzard and Linslade, paragraphs 127 - 129, and the draft recommendation for Leighton-Linslade Town Council following paragraph 159.

The basis for our objection is that the three wards proposed for Central Bedfordshire Council are too large, do not represent distinct communities within the town and divorce the electorate from representation and accountability by identifiable councillors. While the boundaries chosen certainly have the merit of being distinct, that is their only merit. The area covered by each ward greatly exceeds the scope of local communities. For example, the area inclusive of Bideford Green, Himley Green and Southcott have come together to object to a major housing development affecting them all. This area, coupled with developments centred on Mentmore Road, would make an identifiable unit, while the remainder of Linslade either side of Linslade Wood would make another. The housing areas centred on Clarence Road form another identifiable community within Leighton Buzzard North, organised around local shopping and schools, complemented by the housing developments centred on Stanbridge Road in Leighton Buzzard South, again distinguished by shared shopping and schools. To fully understand the identifiable local communities, the responsible commissioners need to visit the area in person.

The three ward split that has been chosen also violates the principle that electors should have equal votes, in that such a split means that electors voting for a party other than Conservatives will never have any representation on Central Bedfordshire Council. While in theory any voter is free to vote for any party, the reality is that past electoral history has shown that the Conservatives will win all nine seats. You cannot consider the present Council to be an unbiased source of local knowledge when you examine its present membership. Multi-member seats would only be a valid way of ensuring all votes would be equal if you were to recommend that form of proportional representation where votes were for a party and seats were filled in proportion to the votes cast.

If you are minded to revisit your recommendations for Central Bedfordshire warding then we would propose that the communities chosen would form the basis for drawing boundaries for town council wards also. There again, the proposal you make will disenfranchise all voters choosing minority parties. A subdivision of the proposed Grovebury and Plantation wards to create a town centre ward which includes the areas around Clarence Road and East Street, would at least make possible the representation of views other than that of the Conservatives.

