

Buckinghamshire Council

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Comment text:

I have two main comments for this stage of the consultation: 1) Elector Projections: The numbers used to forecast the electorate in 2027 are completely wrong and way too high, based on erroneous assumptions. There is no way that the electoral base will grow from 410,789 (2021) to 443,064 (2027). This is effectively assuming that more than two new towns the size of Marlow will pop up across the county on the space of 5-6 years. The assumptions are based on the false premise that planning permissions and future development will occur. This does not reflect the true nature of the housing market, where supply is constrained until demand ensures higher prices and margins can be attained by developers and development occurs in parcels to sustain market pricing. In addition, following a period of overheating in house prices, a much higher cost of living will result in higher inflation and higher interest rates, putting pressure on existing mortgages and future applications, thus depressing the housing market. As a result, there will be a slowing of development. It would make more sense to use a shorter term adult population CAGR (say last 5 years) which reflect increased house-building offset by declining net migration. ONS 2018-based population projections for 20+ (only available age split) reflect an increase from 411,795 to 422,767 in 2027. This feels far more realistic overall than the numbers proposed in the Boundary Commission Review to date. This number will most likely adjust downward with the 2021 Census Update released later this year. 2) The Wooburns, Bourne End & Hedsor: Notwithstanding the comments above about excessive projections, this Ward should be adjust to include the areas of Well End and Abbotsbrook which sit to the western part of Bourne End. They are included within the settlement definition of Bourne End (as designated by road signs and in the Wycombe Local Plan); however, they presently sit in the Parish of Little Marlow which reflects a historical division of settlements no longer matched by reality and the coalescence of communities. This caused great confusion at the 2021 election when many electors in Well End and Abbotsbrook found they could not vote for candidates in Bourne End, their natural community. Well End and Abbotsbrook areas are presently included in the Flackwell Heath, Little Marlow and Marlow South East Ward, which is an arbitrary construct comprising settlements in several different Parishes and Town Councils. The settlements of Wellend and Abbotsbrook would add approximately 790 electors to The Wooburns, Bourne End & Hedsor. Little Marlow is a further 456 electors should that be included as well.

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