

# Councillor Andrew Schrader

Member for Billericay East



The Local Gov't. Boundary Commission for England  
*via email*

17<sup>th</sup>. October 2022

*Dear Sirs,*

## **Re: Electoral Review of Basildon Council: Warding Arrangements (Draft Recommendations)**

Further to my previous letter dated July 11<sup>th</sup> of this year, I write as a Conservative Basildon borough councillor in respect of the draft recommendations for new warding arrangements that have since been published by the Commission.

I strongly support the Commission's draft recommendations for Billericay, which seem measured and sensible. I am pleased that the frankly wacky counterproposals put forward by the Basildon Labour Group have been rejected and the Commission is not advancing widespread changes in the main Billericay wards.

I am pleased that the Commission has adopted the proposal to leave both **Billericay East** and **Billericay West** unchanged. This is a very sensible outcome for Billericay. The boundaries for both wards have now been firmly established for well over 40 years and will remain coterminous with the Town Council wards.

**Burstead**, though physically large, did need to grow but Labour's proposed 'uber-ward' stretching across the borough into Wickford was, in my view, wildly misguided. Bringing in Steeple View alone is a far more practical and proportionate solution. I also think the Commission's decision to maintain the A127 as a natural and obvious boundary between the north and south of the borough is a wise one. Labour's proposed new 'Laindon North' ward, which would have straddled the arterial, made no sense.

Having divested it of Steeple View, the proposal to merge the remainder of **Crouch** with the western area of Wickford that currently falls within **Wickford Castledon**, while the rest moves into **Wickford Park**, with **Wickford North** remaining unchanged, seems minimally disruptive.

c/o The Basildon Centre, St. Martin's Square, Basildon, Essex, SS14 1DL | 01268 533333

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Email: [andrew.schrader@members.basildon.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.schrader@members.basildon.gov.uk)

Telephone: [REDACTED] | Web: [www.andrewschrader.org.uk](http://www.andrewschrader.org.uk)

Facebook: [CllrAndrewSchrader](#) | Twitter: [@APSchrader](#)

The Commission did not take up any of my ward name suggestions, as almost nobody else appears to have commented on that aspect. Nonetheless, while I appreciate that ward names are not necessarily at the forefront of people's minds, I do think that they matter hugely, as that sense of identification within local communities is essential to effective political engagement.

I believe the name Burstead can safely be retained under its new ward boundaries but remain of the view that it may be worth considering **'Castledon & Crouch'** for that new ward. There was a separate Castledon ward from 1973 until 1979, after which it became part of the new Wickford South ward. This, in turn, became Wickford Castledon in 2002. Much of that ward is now being added to Crouch, the rest of which is made up of small villages, who have their own local parish councils and tend to identify more closely with Billericay than Wickford. My submission to the Commission is that it might be prudent to retain the Castledon name to preserve the separate identity of the part of Wickford joining the ward.

I also think it would be sensible to rename Wickford Park as **'Wickford South'**. It simply seems sensible to me that, if there are to be only two Wickford ward and one of them is North, the other ought logically to be South.

Moving south of the A127, I welcome the Commission's endorsement of our proposals that the current **Laindon Park**, **Lee Chapel North** and **Pitsea North-West** wards should remain unchanged. The Commission has slightly modified our proposals for **Langdon Hills** by moving the Westley Green area into the ward as well as Lee Chapel South. This seems reasonable though, as before, I still believe a name-change would be beneficial. Westley Green is already closely identified with Langdon Hills but I still think it should be **'Langdon Hills & Lee Chapel South'**, as the latter area has a strong separate identity, which has hitherto been swallowed up in 'Nethermayne' (a ward named after a road).

The Commission's proposals for the New Town differ substantially from those proposed by the Council but seem reasonable and I am generally in support. Whereas we broke up **Fryerns**, the Commission recommend leaving that intact, instead splitting up **Vange** between **St. Martin's** and the remaining part of **Nethermayne**.

You may recall that in July I advocated the creation of **'Basildon Town East'**, **'Basildon Town North'** and **'Basildon Town South & Vange'**. In light of these revised proposals, it does seem sensible to retain the name Fryerns for the unaltered ward.

I note that a resident suggested St. Martin's be renamed **'Barstable'**. This was another old pre-'79 ward and might be an artful solution. I have no idea what the boundaries of the old Barstable ward looked like. I believe it became part of what was later known as Fryerns Central (that too was abolished in '02).

Likewise, somebody suggested that Nethermayne be renamed **'Clay Hill'** but, in my view, that is just swapping one road name for another. Kingswood is a more recognised and

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established name for a large part of the remaining area and might be a more salubrious name for the ward. I did consider proposing that this ward be valled 'Vange' but, although the proposed boundaries are not dissimilar to the old pre-'02 ward of that name, a large part of the area people generally regard as Vange is effectively going to be split between the new St. Martin's and Nethermayne seats.

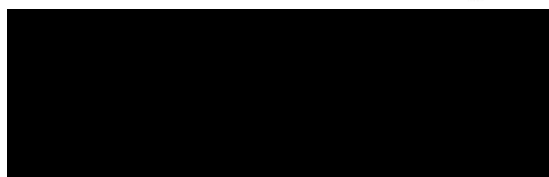
It would, in my opinion, be a terrible shame to completely lose the name Vange. There has been a ward named Vange ever since the formation of Basildon District Council way back in '73 and the area has a very strong sense of identity. One solution the Commission may wish to consider would be renaming St. Martin's as '**Vange North & Barstable**' – as an amended version of the name suggested by the resident – and Nethermayne as '**Vange South & Kingswood**'.

I note that **Pitsea South-East** remains largely unchanged with only very minor alterations. There was some comment around the name of the seat, acknowledging the Parish of Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet, and I note the Labour suggestion for a '*Pitsea North & Bowers*' ward. Looking at the interactive map and overlaying the ward boundaries with the parish boundaries, again I shall defer to the affected residents, but I would be supportive of renaming Pitsea North-West rather more straightforwardly as '**Pitsea North**' and Pitsea South-East as '**Pitsea South, Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet**'. This is, of course, a rather long name but I have it on good authority that residents of Bowers Gifford tend of object to the omission of 'Gifford' and, once you have included that, it seems needlessly provocative to exclude North Benfleet.

I dare say none of these will be adopted because I do not suppose that anybody else will think to suggest them! I include them for your consideration regardless.

If there is anything else I can do to be of assistance, please do not hesitate to get in touch. I have the honour to remain,

*Yr. humble servant,*



Cllr. ANDREW SCHRADER