

Denham Parish Council response to Local Government Boundary Commission for England recommendations

1. Introduction

- 1.01** Denham Parish Council (DPC) has carefully considered the recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) report into new electoral arrangements for Buckinghamshire Council (BC), published in August 2022. DPC have issued leaflets, held public “drop-in sessions”, and had several open Full Council meetings in consideration of this draft response.
- 1.02** DPC believe that the LGBCE have not totally understood the spirit nor ethos of the communities that make up Denham. The Parish in fact contains five settlements being Denham Green (DG), Higher Denham (HD) Tatling End (TE), Denham Village (DV) and New Denham & Willowbank (NDW). It can be demonstrated that both historically and currently these parts have acted together and are a cohesive whole.
- 1.03** DPC benefits from having a wide range of experience and expertise within its Councillor membership. When issues arise requiring specific skills, they are often managed by Councillors who are not necessarily in that particular locality, so recognising the strength and effectiveness of all five settlements acting as one Denham entity.
- 1.04** DPC understands that the three main considerations of an electoral review are, as established by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act, that it gives equal weight in: -
- Ensuring the recommendations reflect community identity
 - Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government
 - Improving electoral equality by equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents.

The Guide to the 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies, issued by the Boundary Commission, specifically sets out in **paragraph 35** that the Act does NOT require the Commission to achieve constituency electorates that are “as close as possible to” the UK electoral quota. The Commission’s preferred illustrated intent demonstrates that **respecting local ties** is in preference to minimising variances which result in split communities and is in conflict with Rule 5.

As a result of the public consultation and deliberations of DPC it is submitted that the community have three primary conclusions on the LGBCE recommendations for Denham:-

- DPC objects most strongly to the annexing of NDW from the rest of Denham and its inclusion into a new Iver ward,
- DPC accepts the proposed joining (of all five settlements) of Denham with Gerrards Cross, Fulmer and Hedgerley into a larger ward, provided adequate governance arrangements are put in place
- The proposal to change the current ward arrangements of Denham Parish Council is rejected.

2. Denham’s objections to annexing of NDW

- 2.01** DPC strongly objects to the annexing of NDW from the rest of the Denham community for several key reasons. Firstly NDW properly functions as an integral part of the parish’s current single ward administrative arrangements for Denham. Whilst it has its own local resident groups, like other parts of Denham, on all wider community issues it identifies with Denham. In governance terms a good example of this would be the formulation and making of Denham’s Neighbourhood Plan whereby NDW’s key characteristics are fully integrated into the objectives of the plan thus recognising its identity with the wider Denham.

- 2.02** Whilst the proximity of NDW to Uxbridge and the adjoining London Borough of Hillingdon is recognised in physical terms, the bulk of NDW resident junior aged children attend school in Denham. Additionally the local children who attend Brownies, Guides and Air cadets are based at facilities in other Denham settlements.
- 2.03** Additionally there are demonstrable church groups and many other organisations & sporting teams that are Denham focussed which take many participants from NDW and have no such affinity to similar in Iver or other parts of Buckinghamshire.
- 2.04** Contrary to the LGBCE draft recommendations the A40/M40 roadway is not a barrier between NDW and the rest of Denham. Transport links between Iver and NDW are however limited, and they have virtually no public transport connectivity. The dividing line between NDW and DV is coincident with Denham Roundabout and traffic flows directly and perfectly well between the two. Indeed the informal linkage provided by the Colne Valley Park and the Grand Union Canal between NDW and DV is a real community linkage. There is however real distance between NDW and Iver and no reason or affinity to be linking the two.
- 2.05** Thus DPC rejects the arbitrary annexation of NDW to a new Iver ward. In fact that action, justified by LGBCE to “make the numbers work” is absolutely contrary to community identity and would go against effective local government.

3. Support for a Denham & Gerrards Cross Ward

- 3.01** There is however justification for joining Denham with Gerrards Cross (GX) so that a three-councillor ward can be created. As is demonstrated by the current unitary ward arrangements, which link Denham with GX East and Fulmer, the current three councillors invariably split the workload between themselves on an informal geographic basis.
- 3.02** Whilst there is some community identity between Denham and GX, as evidenced by their respective Churches, many public services treat the two areas as separate and somewhat distinct. There is therefore a need for improved governance arrangements between the two areas to establish common ground in local government administration terms and achieve enhanced effectiveness.

4. Reject change of DPC Ward arrangements

- 4.01** Arising from the above arguments, it is abundantly clear that there is no rational reason why the current parish ward arrangements should be changed. In fact DPC made very pertinent reasons in 2018 as to why Denham should be administered by a single parish ward. Those points remain valid and reverting to a three-ward basis would be a retrograde step.

5. Conclusion & Way Forward

- 5.01** It is clear that DPC, and the wider community that it represents, reject the LGBCE draft proposals in respect of annexing NDW from the rest of Denham and would urge a significant re-think by the Commission. DPC does however accept the joining of Denham into a three Councillor Ward. There is however absolutely no rationale in changing the existing ward arrangements of DPC.
- 5.02** DPC does not advocate moving people and communities about for the sake of tidy mathematics and cannot sustain an alternative argument of electoral equality that Fulmer, Hedgerley, Wexham or any sub-division of GX be moved into a Denham ward.