



Representation on the draft ward boundary recommendations for Buckinghamshire Council.

The Wycombe Independents is a registered political party. Having consulted with our members and local residents we support the draft recommendations of the Boundary Commission and want to particularly draw attention to the Totteridge and Bowerdean Ward.

We **support** the proposal set out to retain a single ward of “Totteridge and Bowerdean” represented by two members.

As a political party we do not have representation on the Standards & General Purposes Committee on Buckinghamshire Council, and the committee only has two councillors out of fourteen who represent High Wycombe wards. We believe that there has been a lack of understanding of the communities on the east side of High Wycombe and how they are formed.

We **strongly oppose** the formal representation from Buckinghamshire Council requesting that the Totteridge and Bowerdean ward is split, with the Totteridge community annexed to the existing Terriers and Amersham Hill Ward.

The reasons for this are as follows:

- The original Boundary Commission proposals, which are being consulted on, include a combined Totteridge and Bowerdean Ward which maintains the existing ward boundaries and merely reducing the number of councillors from 3 to 2. A robust justification for this was given and we believe this should be upheld.
- The existing Totteridge and Bowerdean Ward has existed since 2013, and prior to that the wards were both within the same ward of “Bowerdean, Totteridge and Micklefield” (2007 – 2013). Therefore this electoral area is well established, recognised and understood by the electorate.
- The representation from Buckinghamshire Council states that the council has a desire to reduce the number of single member wards as much as possible. This particular proposed amendment is in direct contravention with this – creating an additional single member ward where the Boundary Commission proposals were for a two member ward.

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- The creation of a single member Bowerdean Ward has no positive benefit to the variance – keeping it at -6%, almost identical to the variance of the originally proposed Totteridge and Bowerdean Ward.
- Bowerdean is a densely populated urban area with high levels of social housing and lower cost rental properties. The percentage of the population on benefits and with long term illness or disability is also higher than usual. As a result amongst the electorate there is a greater need for proactive and hands on engagement from local councillors. In areas like this we believe a single councillor, forced to work alone, would potentially be placed in situations where they were at risk.
- We support the view that two member wards are desirable if at all possible as there are well documented benefits for this arrangement.
- The Totteridge community has a clear identity – made up of housing built in the 1930s and 1950s, much of which was built originally as council housing, both family homes, flats and sheltered accommodation for pensioners. Bowerdean has a very similar demographic. Terriers and Amersham Hill is more of a disparate ward which takes in a variety of smaller community focus areas and streets. It has a much more mixed housing tenure with small pockets of former council houses, some new build developments, large privately owned detached properties, flats and HMOs. The community make up is therefore considerably different to the traditional community of Totteridge.
- The only reasoning given for creating a single member ward for Bowerdean is to “improve community identity”. By the same logic Totteridge should also be made a single member ward, as the representation from Buckinghamshire Council actually detracts from the community identity of Totteridge. In reality residents who live in Bowerdean frequently would identify as being from “Totteridge” and have always been happy to accept that they form a cohesive community of “Totteridge and Bowerdean”.
- By similar logic the Amersham Hill section of the Terriers and Amersham Hill Ward could just as well be added to the existing Totteridge and Bowerdean Ward to create a single member “Terriers Ward” and a three member “Totteridge, Bowerdean and Amersham Hill Ward”. However in our view this would be as unjustifiable as the proposal put forward by Buckinghamshire Council.

Matt Knight
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