

Penn Wood & Old Amersham Ward Buckinghamshire Councillors
Comments on
The Local Government Boundary Commission for
England's proposals
that will affect
the future warding of the Penn Parish section of the
current ward

1. Following the publication in August 2022 of The Local Government Boundary Commission for England's draft recommendations ("the LGBCE draft") for new electoral arrangements for Buckinghamshire Council, **Cllr Jonathan Waters, Cllr Mark Dormer and Cllr Mark Flys ("Ward Councillors")** comment as follows:
2. The Boundary Commission requested further comment on the proposed new Penn, Tylers Green & Loudwater ward, with particular focus on the Penn Parish. The new ward as proposed has a projected electoral variance of + 16% in 2021 and + 13% by 2028. The question being raised is between the importance of keeping the Penn Parish intact within a ward, its importance as a cohesive sense of place for residents against the simplicity of making wards electorally equal.
3. Penn Parish has a very distinctive character with 80% of the Parish being within the Green Belt, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and conservation areas. The 5 villages that make up the Parish are either washed over by the Green Belt or within a few hundred metres of open countryside or woodland. This sense of being able to go out of your front door and within minutes be fully immersed in a rural environment is what makes all areas of the Penn Parish unique from the settlements to the east of Tylers Green, or the south of Beaconsfield.
4. When you ask the residents what they would hold most dear and why they live within the Parish, it is this rural setting. It is why so many have moved out of London and other built up areas to this protected haven, gaining all the benefits of village life while retaining the good transport links from Amersham and Beaconsfield by train or easy access to the national motorway networks. These residents are also united behind the protection of this rural landscape, and the importance of not diluting the strength of the Penn Parish as guardians of this precious environment from urban pressures. Key to achievement of this, is the Parish having clear direct links with their Buckinghamshire Councillors and the Parish not being split across different wards.
5. However final ward boundaries are agreed, as local Buckinghamshire Councillors we totally support the view of the Penn Parish Council that it would be a retrograde step to split the Parish across more than one Buckinghamshire Council ward. It would dilute their position in any new ward, create confusion over which Buckinghamshire Councillor the Parish and the residents were served depending on which road they lived in, creating new artificial boundaries across the Parish. Of particular concern, is the Buckinghamshire Council proposal to split off a small section of Knotty Green to become a minor part of the Beaconsfield ward. This Buckinghamshire Council Proposal was a late addition that was not consulted on with us as ward Councillors

covering Penn Parish. If we had been consulted, we would have raised serious concerns with this proposal.

6. The Penn Parish has been undertaking its work over the last twelve months to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish. They have listed this work as evidence in their submission. It gives a clear picture of the unique nature of the Parish and the villages and countryside that it is made up of. Part of this work included surveys to gather residents' views and opinions and from the analysis, 91% of completed returns confirmed they considered their sense of place being very much part of the Penn Parish area. This evidence cuts across the view that areas of the Penn Parish are more aligned with Beaconsfield or Tylers Green and reduces the validity of these views.
7. The Penn Parish Council submission calls for a single member ward covering all of Penn Parish and Coleshill Parish. Both these Parishes have the same rural make up within the Green Belt and AONB linking particularly the ridge villages of Coleshill, Winchmore Hill and Penn Street. These two Parishes formed the old District Council ward of Penn & Coleshill due to these obvious links in character. Their proposal would fully meet the requirement of keeping Parishes whole and joining communities together with a common sense of place. The only negative would be the electoral numbers being -13% against the optimum, but this has been acceptable to the LGBCE elsewhere.
8. The original proposal placing the whole of Penn Parish within a new two-member ward of Penn, Tylers Green & Loudwater does raise issues, as it places two urban areas (Tylers Green and Loudwater) with a distinctly rural area (Penn Parish) and would not be an optimum choice for the Penn Parish or the LGBCE's preference for rural and urban areas not to be combined. If the outcome from the LGBCE final considerations is for the Penn, Tylers Green & Loudwater ward to be formed, it will be imperative that the Penn Parish remains intact (without removing the small section of Knotty Green or any other area) to ensure it carries significant weight within the ward and its position is not diminished just for electoral number equality.
9. Most of your deliberations when looking at wards focuses on settlements, the special rural identity of the Penn Parish for all its residents is about the countryside and the importance of its protection. The Penn Parish should be the last Parish that should be considered acceptable to split across wards due to its special character and we ask that this is fully taken into consideration in your final decision.