

Second draft

**Councillor Julia Wassell Member for Totteridge and Bowerdean Ward
Submission to the Boundary Commission Consultation.**

Re Buckinghamshire Council Proposals

I write to you as one of the three sitting councillors in Totteridge and Bowerdean ward in respect of the Buckinghamshire Ward Boundary consultation. All 3 Councillors for the ward voted against the Council proposals on Wednesday 30th November 2022.

I fully support the Commission proposal to retain Totteridge and Bowerdean ward as a two-member ward for Buckinghamshire Council 2025.

I have been the councillor here in Totteridge and /or Bowerdean for a total of 43 years counting my service at County Council, Unitary Council and District Council as separate terms of office. Appendix 1

I agree with the Commission that Totteridge and Bowerdean should remain exactly as it is as two-member ward. I have experience of 1,2 and 3 member wards and numerous boundary changes and in my experience working alongside one other colleague is the best option and most effective for residents. This enables one councillor to be available when the other has annual leave or absence and enables some resident choice.

Challenging the Council Response.

Community of Terriers and Amersham Hill and Totteridge are linked by one road but not so comprehensively linked as the Bowerdean and Totteridge wards which are joined together for the full length of Bowerdean/Totteridge border. They have a strong community identity.

The Local History of Totteridge

Ordinance survey maps can be seen from the mid 19th century within the well-researched book Totteridge - A Buckinghamshire Village by Chris Gladstone (2000). These clearly show that Terriers and Totteridge have had separate village centres based around Totteridge House and Terriers House since 19th century. The current Totteridge centre in Polling District WW comprises a Conservation area, Common, GP Surgery and Pharmacy a Community Centre, two parades of shops, a pub the well-known landmark the Dolphin, the converted Golden Fleece pub which is now a Tesco Express. There are two schools, a church. Totteridge was unified by a series of farms before it was built on and Hicks Farm Rise and Kibbles Court named after the family who owned Hicks Farm recognise this. Bowerdean Farm ran adjacent to the Totteridge farms until sold for development in the 1920s. All of this history and the origin of the name Totteridge meaning 'look out hill' can be read in the above publication. Lower Totteridge Polling District WX was more closely linked with

Bassetsbury Manor in Ryemead ward which owned much of the land and farms in the vicinity.

Transport Links

Whilst there is one road that runs through Totteridge and Terriers in a North / South direction, called Totteridge Lane. The main linkages are East/West. And these East/West connections run throughout Bowerdean, Totteridge, Micklefield and Ryemead and form the area known as East Wycombe.

East West Roads between Totteridge and Bowerdean are

Totteridge Road, Wingate Avenue, Hillview Road, Totteridge Drive, Walton Drive.

The East / Bus Route is served by bus route 33/33a from Castlefield via the railway station up Totteridge Road across Totteridge to Micklefield. We also now have PickMeUp demand responsive bus.

The East/ West Public Footpaths are Gordon Road Bowerdean through Totteridge and Micklefield to the GommValley SSI. The route is known as the East Wycombe Panoramic Walkway and is about to have Community Infrastructure Levy monies spent on improving it.

Healey Avenue to Linchfield public footpath.

Hillview Road Bowerdean Public Footpath to the Drives estate Totteridge.

Walton Drive to Old Hardenwaye to Totteridge Lane.

These bus, highway and footpath routes knit Totteridge and Bowerdean together very effectively.

Resident Views

Residents of Totteridge including Totteridge Road and Totteridge Lane have petitioned the council for a Community Governance Review to form a Parish Council. In December 2018 the petition of nearly 500 names being in excess of 7.5% of the population was presented to the legacy Wycombe District Council. Residents did not want to change the boundary of Totteridge; they requested a Parish Council on the same footprint as the current Totteridge ward boundary.

Whilst it is true to say that a small length of Totteridge Lane forms a junction with Totteridge Road the majority of Totteridge Lane is in Terriers Ward and does not relate to Totteridge Road at all.

Community Facilities

There are two polling districts in Totteridge one of which the Council has ignored. We refer to upper Totteridge WW and lower Totteridge WX. As mentioned, upper

Totteridge includes a Conservation Area (see character survey, Totteridge) with the common, GP, Pharmacy, a community centre, two parades of shops, a pub the well known landmark the Dolphin, the converted pub now a Tesco Express. There are two schools, a church. In lower Totteridge there is the long established St Andrews Church and the Hampden Way Children's centre for Bowerdean and Totteridge. Other community facilities include the Totteridge Baptist Church, the shops at the Quadrangle, a large number of units of flats for pensioners including Chartridge House, Holywell Gardens, Windrush Drive, St Hughes Avenue, Hicks Farm Rise and Leas Close. The current Totteridge ward has ample community facilities and a new health and wellbeing centre is being developed at St Andrews Church. Lower Bowerdean has the Everest estate built in 1953 which is social and private owned former council estate. Across Hatters Lane are two major social housing developments of Windrush Drive and St Hughs Avenue. The Council proposal has not mentioned any interest in this less affluent part of Totteridge.

9. Totteridge and Amersham Hill (Bowerdean)

I agree with the Commission that 2 member wards are generally preferable. I think they are safer for Councillors and offer residents more choice.

The council has paid little attention to the interests of Bowerdean ward. Excellent work has been achieved by the Wycombe Islamic Society to convert the old Happy Wanderer pub into a community centre called the Hive which now has a café, called Mosaic. The Muslim community primarily live in upper Bowerdean WG and a more mixed community live in lower Bowerdean WH. There are shops and services for all and the railway station and town centre are nearby, in fact a 5 minute walk.

I consider the possibility of Bowerdean becoming a one-member ward completely unacceptable. It has a tendency towards volatility and complexity in a wide range of circumstances from neighbourhood disputes to the more serious domestic violence and knife and gun crime. Tempers particularly flare up around vehicle issues and parking in this densely populated area. It has but one public open space Underwood Park, but many people are fearful of going there due to what they perceive as gangs and drugs activity, and it is hidden away and not overlooked. Crime does occur there, in all these circumstances it is much better to have two councillors together in this ward.

Bowerdean fits very neatly with adjacent Totteridge ward with good road and public footpath connections. A bus that travels up Totteridge Road in the centre of the ward 33 and 33a. There are clear boundaries to the ward. The railway track to the south and features and landmarks where the ward joins Terriers and Amersham Hill ward such as the Dolphin pub, Totteridge or Portland Parade of shops, Bowerdean. Many groups and organisations are now referred to as Totteridge and Bowerdean such as the Police Neighbourhood Action Group, the Children's Centre, the Opportunity Bucks funding. The whole East Wycombe area is also referred to as the East Wycombe community. Public Health held an East Wycombe organising committee.

In conclusion, the new Unitary Buckinghamshire Council proposals are poorly evidenced and are not supported by residents, to my knowledge. I fully support the Commission's perspective of fewer councillors and believe that the Council response lacks a comprehensive knowledge of the whole Totteridge and Bowerdean community and how cohesive the linkages and connections are. Of all the permutation of boundaries since 1997 that I have known the current Totteridge and Bowerdean configuration is the most suitable. When we had Totteridge divided into the old Green Hill and Totteridge and Keep Hill and Hicks Farm ward, pre 2005, councillors had to be on the phone a good deal to each other about misdirected casework and Schools Appeals. The Council's proposal would subsume Totteridge into the tail of an elongated ward and it would not have the prominence it has today. Bowerdean has been isolated with just one Councillor and no justification is made for this. To describe it as 'disparate' is not strictly accurate, it is diverse.

Councillor Julia Wassell

Buckinghamshire Councillor Totteridge and Bowerdean Ward.

Appendix 1 – Councillor Julia Wassell 1997 - 2022

From 1997 – 2005 I was the Buckinghamshire County Councillor for the Keep Hill and Hicks Farm Division. (1 member).

From 2003 to 2007 I was the District Councillor for Totteridge 2 members and from 2007 to 2015 District Councillor for Bowerdean Ward. (2 members).

From 2005 to 2013 I was the Buckinghamshire County Councillor for Bowerdean Micklefield and Totteridge. (2 member). Boundary change.

From 2013 to 2021 I was the Buckinghamshire Councillor for Ryemead and Micklefield. (1 member). Boundary change.

From 2015 to 2020 was the District Councillor for Totteridge. (2 member).

2020 to 2021 Shadow Unitary Councillor Totteridge 2 member, Ryemead and Micklefield. (1 member). Covering Totteridge and Bowerdean vacancy. (1 member).

2021 to currently I am Buckinghamshire Councillor for Totteridge and Bowerdean. (3 members).