



From: Buckingham Constituency Liberal Democrats

To: Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Re: Response to draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements for the Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority

Date : 3 December 2022

To Whom in May Concern

I am writing to you on behalf of Buckingham Constituency Liberal Democrats with our response to the draft recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for Buckinghamshire Council, from August 2022. As in our original submission, we focus particularly on the area covered by the Buckingham constituency.

Our main response is that we are in broad agreement with the recommendations made, as representing a workable compromise between the goals relating to electoral variance and ward cohesion.

We wish to comment in particular on the arrangements for the proposed Horwood, Winslow, Steeple Claydon, Grendon Underwood, and Quainton wards. We are aware that Buckinghamshire Council is making a submission (the decision to do so is a matter of public record) to combine the proposed Horwood and Winslow wards into one, two-member ward; to combine the proposed Quainton and Newton Longville wards into one, three-member ward; and to combine the proposed Steeple Claydon and Grendon Underwood wards into one, two-member ward. As far as we are aware, the reason put forward for this submission is 'community identity'. By contrast, we wish to strongly support the current LGBC proposal for single-member wards for Horwood, Winslow, Quainton, Steeple Claydon, and Grendon Underwood for the following reasons:

Horwood and Winslow. In proposing two separate, single-member wards, the LGBC draft recommendation states that "we were not persuaded we had received sufficient evidence relating to community identities that would justify" a two member ward combining Winslow and surrounding villages. In our own original submission, we stated that "Winslow has a strong identity and its own town council. It should return to being an independent, single member ward", and that "historically the villages between Winslow and Buckingham made up a single ward and should return to this status". The two proposed wards align with historical wards and respect the cohesion of Winslow town as a ward. We do not believe that combining them would reflect community identity

and strongly support the two single member wards of Horwood and Winslow proposed in the LGBC draft recommendations.

Quainton and Newton Longville. In our original submission we suggested three single member wards based on Newton Longville, Stewkley and Quainton, to replace the current 'Great Brickhill' ward. However, the LGBC considered that the expected growth of Newton Longville over the period to 2028 would create too high a variance (14%) to be acceptable. The proposed development at Salden Chase which would create this additional growth for Newton Longville has been in the pipeline for many years and, whilst there is an extant planning consent, development has yet to commence. The development proposals are complicated by the fact the principal access to the site lies within the geography of Milton Keynes City Council rather than Buckinghamshire Council. Given the history of the application site, and local knowledge, we do not believe that the build-out rate will achieve the figures suggested by Bucks Council by 2028. With this in mind we would urge the LGBC to look again at our proposal for three single-member wards.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, so far as Quainton is concerned, we fully support the LGBC proposal to create a single member ward. The LGBC draft recommendation states that the proposed Quainton ward "would effectively reflect community identities" and that submissions had been received from Quainton Parish Council and two local residents opposed the existing Great Brickhill ward on the grounds "that the ward is too large and composed of disparate communities". We agree with this assessment. Combining the proposed Quainton and Newton Longville wards into a three-member ward would create an even larger and more disparate ward than the current Great Brickhill ward, which we consider to be unacceptable and not reflective of community identity.

Steeple Claydon and Grendon Underwood. The LGBC draft recommendation specifically points out that a two-member Grendon Underwood ward (essentially what Buckinghamshire Council were proposing originally and are now proposing again) "would link distant rural communities in a geographically large ward. The Council's proposed ward would not, in our view, be conducive to effective and convenient local government, nor reflect community identities". We fully agree with the LGBC view on this matter and strongly support the creation of two, single-member wards for Steeple Claydon and Grendon Underwood. We understand that boundary lines need to be drawn somewhere and that there is always a possibility that two or more neighbouring parishes on either side of a boundary may feel they have more in common than the ward boundary reflects. However, we continue to believe strongly that a ward that incorporates 19 parishes and stretches from Steeple Claydon parish in the north to Ickford in the south is too geographically dispersed to represent community identity or be conducive to effective local governance and representation.

Buckingham. We would like to make one further observation on the proposed three-member Buckingham ward. We recognise the difficulty in creating three single-member wards for Buckingham and indeed were unable to propose a solution of our own. However, we do have serious concerns about the practicality of this being a three-member ward. If all the elected members were from a single political party or community grouping, then representation could be shared. However, in the emerging political climate this is highly unlikely as we have seen with recent electoral representation changes in the current three-member Bernwood ward. In the case of Buckingham, a possible election of three councillors from three different parties, would that each

elected members would end up having to cover a vast geographic area with a multiplicity of parish councils. We do not believe that this would lead to sound governance or good community representation. In the circumstances we would urge the LGBC to look again at this area.

We would like to thank the LGBC for this opportunity to contribute further to this process and look forward to the publication of the final report on 28th February 2023.

With kind regards,



Dr Anja Schaefer
Chair, Buckingham Constituency Liberal Democrats