

This submission is on behalf of Independent Loughton Residents Association (LRA), Party ID PP128. LRA is a £5 a year residents association with 1000 household members. It has been run by volunteers and had elected Cllrs for 40 years. LRA's non-national political party approach is established and successful. Today, it holds 21 of 22 Town Council seats, 13 seats on District Council and has 1 County Councillor. Please see: www.LoughtonResidents.org.uk

We experienced a district review (Epping Forest) a few months ago so it is clear what powers and constraints LGBCE has. During a review, LGBCE briefly become expert on numbers of voters, areas where they live defined on maps and the numbers of electors which Councillors represent. If voting was compulsory, then a review based on logic and the LGBCE remit would be perfect. As voting is not compulsory, voter turnout at local elections is a small fraction of electors who receive Poll Cards. At Epping Forest District Council elections on 4th May 2023, voter turnout in Shelley was only 17%. Eighteen wards were contested and the district average was 24.2% turnout. The three lowest wards were 17%, 18% & 20% and the highest turnout was 37%. Many residents think LGBCE reviews could do more to improve voter engagement. What matters to residents is representation and increased democracy rather than equal number of voters.

Loughton Residents Association (LRA) expertise is residents and the communities of postcode IG10. LRA has been independent for 40 years and has had an uncountable number of resident interactions over that time. The association exists for residents and is run by residents. It's combined expertise and dedication is highly respected. I've only been involved for the last 20 years and been election agent for candidates since 2004. Over this time I've also listened to the concerns and opinions of thousands of residents in Loughton IG10.

The four LGBCE stated aims are: 1 - Councillors to represent a similar number of electors - aiming for democracy. 2 - Create boundaries that reflect community ties and identities - aiming for voter engagement. 3 - Deliver reviews informed by local needs, views and circumstances - aiming for high voter turnout. 4 - Reflect requests for single-member divisions. These aims are often shortened by LGBCE with their unique recurring phrase of 'Electoral Equality'.

This submission focuses on LGBCE aims two and three for the Essex County Council (ECC) 2023 Review. It hopes LGBCE will make changes which could improve representation for voters and 'Electoral Equality' for divisions 'Loughton Central', 'Buckhurst Hill & Loughton South' and 'Chigwell & Loughton Broadway'.

The LGBCE review of Epping Forest District published 10th March 2023 had 68 responses including 16 public rants. Only about 10 responses were informed but LGBCE ignored several authoritative submissions for IG10. Sadly, the LGBCE recommendation for a part of Loughton will cause avoidable confusion, resentment and lower turnout of voters in Loughton IG10 and Buckhurst Hill IG9 from 2024. LGBCE state a new combined ward after 2024 is 6150 electors divide by 3 Cllrs = 2050 each. In practice, a single Cllr could be contacted by 6150 electors. It is thought that LGBCE gave too much weight to their aim number one and not enough consideration to the LGBCE aims two and three.

At district elections on 4th May 2023, voter turnout in Shelley was only 17% from an electorate of 1894. The winning candidate only received 162 (one hundred and sixty two) votes. The three other credible candidates received 110, 34 and 24 votes. I highlight this trend of lower turnout which should be of concern to LGBCE. Our democracy needs voter engagement but the fact that 83% of the electorate did not vote for the winning candidate in Shelley should be troubling. Our democratic system needs confidence and stability but in the Shelley example, few people would cite 83% of the electorate not endorsing a candidate as a success of our democratic system.

Very few residents know the Essex County Council Division boundaries. Loughton Central Division has had very able LRA Councillors serving four Loughton wards in postcode IG10, of Alderton, Fairmead, St Johns and St Marys. The problem is many residents in the other three Loughton wards feel very un-represented with their voting choice and they resent being grouped with neighbouring towns of Buckhurst Hill IG9 or Chigwell IG7.

Residents in Loughton Forest Ward IG10 and Loughton Roding Ward are 6872 which is 44% of the electorate for the seat of Buckhurst Hill and Loughton South County Council Division (15597 electorate). Buckhurst Hill residents IG9 are uneasy voting for a candidate with a ballot paper description of 'Independent Loughton Residents Association'. Buckhurst Hill residents are 8725 which is 56% of the electorate. LRA has voting evidence from County Council elections in 2021 when they had a very able candidate. The electorate calculations are the latest from December 2022.

Even more unsatisfactory is that Loughton Broadway IG10 residents are 3408 which is 24.8% of the electorate for the seat of Chigwell and Loughton Broadway (13735 electorate). Broadway residents IG10 think they have no effective representation because 10327 voters, 75.2% of the electorate live in Chigwell - a town three miles away from them (IG10 2HY to IG7 5AF). The electorate calculations are the latest from December 2022.

In practice, electoral equality and opportunity for three sevenths of Loughton IG10 residents in wards Forest, Roding and Broadway has been very poor, for the past 20 years, because of Essex County Council Division boundaries.

A logical solution to this problem is to adjust the County Council boundaries slightly so that Loughton can be better represented in proportion to its district and county significance. Two future county divisions of Loughton North and Loughton South would achieve this with relevant non-controversial names. Loughton North would comprise of what is currently Loughton Broadway, Loughton St Johns and Loughton Fairmead. Loughton South would comprise of what is currently Loughton Alderton, Loughton Forest, Loughton Roding and Loughton St Marys. There may be minor balancing number adjustments but this is the main principal to ensure that future elections are more representative and democratic. Both divisions would be a good social mix of voters and areas.

Loughton is a town separated by green space from Buckhurst Hill and London. Many residents hope LGBC corrects the unsatisfactory division of Loughton by County Council Division Boundaries since 2002. Loughton electors deserve more consideration within the review of boundaries to improve representation, voter engagement and democracy.

Tables 1 to 4 compares towns of Loughton postcode IG10 and Buckhurst Hill postcode IG9. The data was compiled for the Epping Forest District Local Plan formal hearings with a Government Inspector in 2019. One third (1077 households) of district local plan respondents were from residents living in Loughton. Elector numbers are the main concern of the Boundary Commission but the tables also show the importance of Loughton within Epping Forest District and Essex County Council Division Boundaries. For example, the number of residents - **31106** in Loughton IG10 compared to **11380** in Buckhurst Hill IG9. The tables also show a Loughton Community fully engaged in the democratic system we have.

At a review for Epping Forest concluded in March 2023, a central district ward of Loughton Roding was paired with Buckhurst Hill East, against strong evidence. Unfortunately this damages the different community identities of Loughton postcode IG10 and Buckhurst Hill postcode IG9 which will not help higher voter turnout in future.

[illegible][illegible]

Table 3	Actual checked data In order of Settlement - Area square miles						
Settlement	Row numbers	Responses	% of 3273	Residents	Area squ. miles	People in 1 square mile	Wikipedia or Census
Remainder	N/A	436	13.32	48786	60.08*	*	*
Waltham Abbey	3149 - 3222	73	2.23	21149	16.37	1292	2011
Harlow	1235 - 1269	34	1.04	*	11.79	7294	*
North Weald Bas't	2591 - 2710	119	3.64	6039	8.80	686	2001
Chigwell	264 - 448	184	5.62	12987	6.05	2147	2011
Loughton	1352 - 2429	1077	32.90	31106	5.91	5263	2011
Ongar	2714 - 2841	127	3.88	6251	3.48	1796	*
Theydon Bois	2929 - 3125	196	5.99	4062	3.30	1231	2011
Epping	482 - 1224	742	22.67	11461	2.98	3846	2011
Buckhurst Hill	90 - 231	141	4.31	11380	1.40	8129	2011
Nazeing	2444 - 2588	144	4.40	4267	*	*	*
Total District	N/A	3273	100.00	130300	130.88	996	2016
Conclusion	Loughton has a very high number of residents living within a fairly small area of the district.						

Table 4	Actual checked data In order of Settlement - People living in 1 square mile						
Settlement	Row numbers	Responses	% of 3273	Residents	Area square miles	People in 1 square mile	Wikipedia or Census
Buckhurst Hill	90 - 231	141	4.31	11380	1.40	8129	2011
Harlow	1235 - 1269	34	1.04	*	11.79	7294	*
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Remainder	N/A	436	13.32	48786	60.08*	*	*
Total District	N/A	3273	100.00	130300	130.88	996	2016
Conclusion	Loughton has a large population living in a fairly small area and is already densely populated.						

* Reliable data not readily available.