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Uttlesford Council Liberal Democrats

30/07/2023

Dear Sirs,

**Essex County Council Draft Proposals for Division boundary changes**

I am writing on behalf of the Uttlesford Liberal Democrats who have studied the draft proposals produced by Essex County Council for boundary changes to the county council divisions in the Uttlesford District.

We agree with the proposals for the Saffron Walden, Takeley and Great Dunmow divisions but have major reservations on grounds of community interest and effective local government in both the proposed Stansted and Thaxted Divisions.

Firstly, in our opinion the proposal to transfer 7 polling districts (ACA ACC AMA AMBx2 AMC and AMH) in the north west of the district into the Stansted Division does not reflect in anyway how these wards access local services. These wards look Saffron Walden for their local services and have no or limited connection to the Stansted area. Secondly, to break the longstanding historic connections between Stansted Mountfitchet and the villages of Elsenham(AEA) and Henham(AEB) does not reflect their mutual community interests.

 Uttlesford Liberal Democrats wish to propose an alternative solution that will rectify both these problems. **We recommend (1)** that the Thaxted division should wrap around Saffron Walden to the west as well as the east and south as it currently does. All these polling districts look to Saffron Walden for their public services especially health and secondary education. They are within the Saffron Walden catchment area for convenience and comparison shopping. It also makes no sense for Audley End Station (in Wendens Ambo polling district AMH) which serves Saffron Walden to be located on the northern periphery of the Stansted Division as proposed in the draft and **(2)** that the scheme keeps Elsenham and Henham in the Stansted Division as they share secondary education at the Forest Hall School (as well as schools across the county boundary in Bishop’s Stortford) and health care provision in Stansted. In the last year Elsenham Surgery has merged with Stansted Surgery. Elsenham and Henham residents use the three dentists, convenience shops, hospitality businesses and library services in the Stansted. Elsenham and Henham resident’s share Stansted’s concerns about the inadequate road network serving their villages particularly Grove Hill in Stansted on the B1010. Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council has good working relationships with both these parish councils.

**We therefore propose**

1. that Elsenham and Henham remain in the Stansted Division
2. that the Newport polling district (ANA) (which also looks to Saffron Walden for many of their services) is transferred from the Stansted Division to the Thaxted Ward together with
3. the 7 village polling districts (listed above) to the west of Saffron Walden to form part of a “wrap around Saffron Walden” part of Thaxted division.

As you will see from the spreadsheet attached our proposal makes marginal changes in the number of electors proposed for both Stansted and Thaxted divisions.

In terms of the physical geography on the ground these proposals mean the Stansted Division’s northern boundary would become west of the M11 and south of the B1038 where the roads intersect to the west of Newport except where polling district boundaries straddle the B1038 in Wicken Bonhunt and Clavering. All the polling districts to the north of the B1038 would be in the Thaxted division.

Yours faithfully

Cllr Geoffrey Sell,

Leader of Liberal Democrat Group on Uttlesford District Council