



Review Officer (East Hertfordshire)
LGBCE
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Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Draft Recommendations for East Hertfordshire District Council Wards

This society, which is open to all residents in the village of Great Amwell, has some 300 members, and in addition to our local activities we take an interest in wider issues that may adversely affect the interests of our members.

On behalf of the Amwell Society I would like to make these observations on the LGBCE draft recommendations for the East Hertfordshire District Council (EHDC) wards.

Proposed Great Amwell and Stansteads Ward

We are pleased to see that the LGBCE has adopted the Society's proposal for a Great Amwell and Stansteads ward.

Combining Great Amwell ward with the Stanstead Abbots ward aligns the ward and parish boundaries and removes the need for parish wards in St. Margaret's. This will aid coherent local government and provide a clarity for residents as to who their representatives are at each level of local government. It will support the strong sense of a rural identity and 'belonging'.

By merging the wards, the effect of the increase in electorate in Stanstead Abbots as required in the District Plan is shared across the whole new ward, helping attain electoral equality by 2027.

It is also worth noting that for residents of all the parishes within the new ward, the St. Margarets (Herts) railway station serves them and not Ware. While residents use the combination of services available from Hertford and Ware for 'town' services such as libraries, doctors etc. they do not feel part of them even though they rely on them.

A key part of the District Plan is about preventing the coalescence of the surrounding villages into Hertford & Ware by keeping green spaces between them. Great Amwell is inset in the Green Belt, and this provides a valuable control to keep Great Amwell and Ware separate.

We would accordingly not have supported a merger of Great Amwell with Ware South as proposed in some other submissions to the LGBCE.

As to the name of the new ward we hold no strong preference between the proposed "Great Amwell and Stansteads" or "Stansteads and Great Amwell". However, we would not wish the name to lose the 'Great' as if shortened to 'Amwell' it might be seen to imply the inclusion of Little Amwell, which it does not. Little Amwell is now in effect part of

Hertford Heath and so in the Hertford Heath & Brickendon ward (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Amwell).

Dominance of the Urban Voice

We appreciate that the remit of the LGBCE is to deliver electoral equality, but we are still concerned that in the long term the result will be that the proportion of councillors representing rural electors will get smaller and smaller. This is not an issue unique to East Hertfordshire, and indeed is likely much more severe in even more rural areas of England.

While it is clearly right in principle that each councillor should represent an equal part of the total electorate, it can create under-representation of a different kind. This is analogous to the situation in Scotland where it has become necessary to have three 'protected constituencies' where they do not have to remain within the +/- 5% of the electoral quota, so that the unique situation in the Western and Northern Isles are adequately represented.

It is inevitable that with the need for development to be sustainable, which largely means to build new homes where services are available, that towns will grow and 'suck in' council seats leaving very large rural wards with few councillors. While they may represent an appropriate quota of the electorate, the issues that affect their electorate especially (such as rural buses) may lose out in the council chambers.

We suggest that the LGBCE could identify the potential problem to ministers as it will need policy decisions at some point.

Yours faithfully



William Brown

Chair