

East Hertfordshire District Council

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Comment text:

Submission from the East Herts Green Party. We believe that our proposals will provide improved electoral balance, better reflect community identities and ensure new boundaries are identifiable. These changes will enhance effective and convenient local governance and were derived by considering physical and human geography. Hertford Bengeo Though this ward is 1273 voters short we argue its high work load due to the challenging nature of its mixed town centre/suburb/rural make-up, including 3 schools and a significant number of businesses and community buildings means 3 cllrs should be retained. It is an active community: Bengeo Neighbourhood Area Plan groups, community gardens plan, 4 active residents associations, campaigns against a new quarry, crowdfunding for a local marsh a refurbished playground. It has one of the county's worst rat runs, amongst other traffic issues. All this raises cllr workload, and would be too challenging for 2. Instead we feel small boundary adjustments would bring better electoral equality, reflect the changed interests and identities of some parts of the local community, and promote effective and convenient local government. The current ward boundary runs along North Road in the south-west corner of the ward. North rd is not a natural boundary. From a point where the boundary with Castle ward runs along the river Lea, and meets the A414, we suggest moving it. Rather than following North Rd, it should continue along the River Lea, and the river Mimran to the railway line. Here the boundary should run north along the railway to the present boundary near Hertford North station. These are physical and geographical boundaries. This brings residents from HCA6 Hertford Castle Ward into Bengeo. HCA6 residents are more part of the Bengeo community than they are the Castle community. They travel into and through Bengeo ward to reach Hertford via North rd and St Andrew St and use the shopping and church on St Andrew St. They travel to Bengeo's schools at Mill Mead on Port Vale, St Josephs on North Rd, Duncombe on Warren Park rd and Bengeo on Bengeo St. Families with primary school-age children make strong bonds with other families in the same community, most of whom already live in Bengeo. HCA6 residents use Bengeo for sports facilities at Hartham and arts facilities at Courtyard Arts on Port Vale, so cultural facilities and interests are shared. HCA6 residents have stronger ties with the Bengeo community than those in Castle ward and through shared facilities, have stronger cultural links and interests too. We also propose a boundary change on the ward's NW corner. The current boundary runs North South near the railway. This is not a natural boundary, since it is crossed by 2 roads plus many footpaths, and does not reflect a boundary of shared interest or culture. A better boundary is the river Beane and the flood plain and escarpment. We argue the boundary should run from the existing 3-way boundary junction on the High rd, east to the river Beane and follow the Beane north to the railway bridge near Barleycroft Grove and from there north east till it meets the existing boundary. Residents on Vicarage Lane, Waterford Common and Barleycroft have stronger community and cultural ties with Bengeo ward, than they do with Waterford and Bengeo Rural North, via the primary school on Bengeo St and the key shops and facilities along The Avenue, the Bengeo community centre at Duncombe rd, Trinity Church, and the 2 pubs and the Bengeo Club, all on Bengeo St in Hertford Bengeo ward. Also, development has spread along Sacombe rd and Vicarage Lane with new homes at The Stiles and Waterford Wick creating a series of community links along the road to Waterford. Residents in Vicarage Lane, Waterford Common and Barleycroft also share a strong cultural tie with Bengeo residents through shared use of Bengeo's Waterford nature reserves, and through the series of footpaths and rights of way that link them. They also share common issues of traffic problems, through the issue of rat running vehicles along Vicarage Lane, as well as interest in local community campaigning against quarry developments to the northeast of Sacombe Rd. These changes would bring about 530 electors from Castle ward to Bengeo ward and about 100 electors from Hertford Rural North, cutting elector variance in Bengeo ward to about 8%, bringing better electoral equality for voters in both Hertford Bengeo and Hertford Castle. Hertford Kingsmead We suggest moving the current western boundary further west into Hertford Castle Ward to include

residents in Beechwood Close, Copperwood and The Spinney with the new boundary returning East along the north side of Extension rd to improve local interests. This would also improve variance. Ware Ware St Marys, Ware Trinity and Ware Christchurch wards have insufficient voters to support 2 councillors each. New development at WARE2 will add about 200 electors into Ware Christchurch, plus 400 into Wareside. We suggest altering Ware Town Council's boundary to include WARE2. We also suggest altering the boundary of Ware St Marys by moving polling district WTR1 from Ware Trinity. WTR1 is an anomaly since it sticks out into St Marys and would be better suited as part of St Mary ward as residents share cultural and other interests due to their locality. This transfers about 900 electors into Ware St Marys, bringing improved electoral equality. We suggest reducing Ware Trinity to a single councillor ward by transferring the southern edge of WTR2 polling district to Ware Christchurch, so that the new boundary runs along Homefield, Fanhams and Queens Rds. This will transfer about 700 residents from Trinity to Christchurch. Finally we suggest expanding Ware Trinity north to include the rest of WARE2, adding about 400 electors from Wareside. All this improves elector equality, reflects changes in elector cultural identities and interests and promotes effective and convenient local government.

Hunsdon We suggest moving the ward boundary of Hunsdon and Thundridge and Standon so that WARE2 falls within Ware Town Council area and bringing the remainder of Wareside parish out of Hunsdon ward, splitting it between Thundridge and Standon, Much Hadham and Stanstead Abbots to improve overall elector balance and reflect the interests and identities of local communities. The new Hunsdon ward will contain Widford, Hunsdon, Eastwick and Gilston parishes.

Bishops Stortford We suggest increasing the number of councillors in BS Silverleys Ward to 3. This balances the electoral equality. We also suggest moving ward boundaries between BS All Saints, Meads and Central to improve the overall equality and reflect the changes in interests and identities of local communities.

Watton at Stone We argue Bramfield and Stapleford parishes should become part of the Watton at Stone ward. Both communities are already linked to the school, shops and other community facilities in Watton and road links, particularly the A119, pull these communities north towards this growing town more than towards Hertford. In terms of rural communities, Bramfield and Stapleford share many ancient links, with local land ownership overlapping the parishes. Linking these villages with Watton would deliver electoral equality, with overall elector numbers in the new ward reaching within 8% or so of optimal. It would better reflect the identities and interests of those local communities, and would promote effective local government.

Splitting Hertford Rural North ward this way allows Tewin North parish to be re-linked with Hertford Rural South ward and combined with Tewin South parish with which it shares many long standing community and cultural links. This Hertford Rural South ward has close to the optimum elector level to promote effective local government and electoral equality. The break up of Hertford Rural North ward would allow a realignment of Walkern ward boundaries. By combining the already linked communities of Tonwell in Bengeo Rural parish, with Sacombe and Dane End in Little Munden parish this would link residents - via local geography and the well-used A602 and Sacombe Pound routes - who already share facilities at Dane End. Extending the ward to include Burn's Green and Benington brings together rural communities with similar character into a new Hertford Rural North. This improves electoral equality.

Buntingford This ward has an excess of electors and the town itself, where all new developments are focused, is too compact to split without breaking up communities. We suggest combining Buntingford parish with those of Aspenden and Cottered into a new Buntingford ward with 3 councillors. The links between Aspenden and Buntingford have always been strong and will be strengthened due to spreading developments along Aspenden Road. The communities of Throcking, Cottered and Aspenden are already linked and continue to have a number of cultural overlaps and matched interests with the town of Buntingford. This 3 councillor ward would have improved electoral equality for local voters.

Walkern We suggest changing the Walkern ward, by combining Walkern, and Ardeley parishes with Great Munden and Westmill. These parishes sit with an easterly border defined roughly by the A10 and the river Rib and a west edge by the river Beane and Stevenage. The land between the Rib and the Beane has long been linked culturally and this new ward arrangement would return this ancient link.

Braughing and Little Hadham We suggest ward realignment by combining parishes of Buckland, Wyddial, Anstey, Meesdon, the Pelhams and Hormead, to form a single ward with approximately 2200 electors. Though lower than optimal, this represents an improvement on the current electoral equality in Little Hadham. And by combining the parishes of Braughing, Albury and Little Hadham, a second new ward can be created with close to the optimal number of electors. END

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