

**RESPONDING TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND'S DRAFT
RECOMMENDATIONS**

A summary and guidance from us on the sorts of things you could include **THOUGH IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU USE YOUR OWN WORDS otherwise the Commission will disregard them.**

Wiltshire Council has spoken to the commissioners: they say: "IF THERE IS AN OVERWHELMING AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSE FROM THE COMMUNITY, THEN WE WILL MAKE THE CHANGE THEY REQUEST"

Any representations you make need to set out reasons in support or against a proposal **using the Commission's statutory criteria:**

- **electoral equality**
- **community cohesion**
- **effective and convenient local government**

and where possible **identify proposals.**

VOLUME OF OBJECTIONS OR SUPPORT, WITHOUT SUCH REASONS (ABOVE), WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO PERSUADE THE COMMISSION.

Website Link: www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Submissions email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

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DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO THE COMMISSION: 15th APRIL 2019

SUMMARY

Our parish could be under threat once again

You may remember the battle that took place in 2016 to ensure that Laverstock & Ford Parish retained its independence and was not swallowed up by Salisbury City Parish. Recent events could well lead to another look at our parish boundary in the next 2-3 years. The events are due to the independent Local Government Boundary Commission for England carrying out a review of the electoral warding (division) arrangements for the whole of England. This sets the boundaries for the wards for all Wiltshire Councillors (Cllrs).

While this review has no direct bearing on parish boundaries, any changes to the wards/divisions of Wiltshire Cllrs who represent our parish could influence Wiltshire

KB March 2019

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Council's (WC) views on whether another review of parish boundaries would be appropriate. **As a semi-rural parish, we believe we need 2 Councillors who are either dedicated to our parish or at least combine their responsibilities in our parish with other rural or semi-rural parishes rather than the City.**

We supported a WC proposal for our parish which was sent to the Commission last November. We believe it met the Commission's statutory criteria laid out for the review, namely:

- **Electoral Equality:**
 - Our 2 Wiltshire Cllrs would represent the same number of voters as all other wards within the county.
- **Community Identity:**
 - Community interests, identities and cohesion would be reflected and examples of community links were provided.
 - Warding boundaries would be easily identifiable.
- **Effective Local Government:**
 - It identified a common sense structure to assist Wiltshire in delivering effective and convenient local government.

We proposed that the names of the two divisions are:

- **Laverstock and Ford West** (Bishopdown Farm, Hampton Park and Riverdown Park, Longhedge and Old Sarum (part))
- **Laverstock & Ford East** (Laverstock, Milford (part), Ford and Old Sarum (part) and a number of other rural parishes)

Regrettably the Commission's recommendations ignored WC's and our recommendations and are divisive for our parish. The main points of the recommendations are:

- Our parish would be represented by 3 Wiltshire Cllrs and not 2 **but 2 of the 3 would have half Salisbury City, half Laverstock and Ford divisions.**
- **Laverstock would be divided along Church Road.**
- The north part of the split would also include Old Sarum, Longhedge and Ford plus Firsdown. Proposed title: Old Sarum & Laverstock North.
- The south part of Laverstock (and part of Milford) would be combined with Clarendon Park as well as that part of Milford which sits in Salisbury City parish. Proposed title: **Salisbury** Milford & Laverstock South.
- Finally, the Wiltshire Cllr for Bishopdown Farm/Hampton Park/Riverdown Park would also still have responsibility for Bishopdown and St Marks. Proposed title: **Salisbury** St Marks and Bishopdown.

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IN SUMMARY, THE COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS DO NOT ALIGN TO THEIR OWN STATUTORY CRITERIA OF COMMUNITY COHESION AND EFFECTIVE AND CONVENIENT LOCAL GOVERNMENT, NOR ARE 3 WILTSHIRE COUNCILLORS NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE THE THIRD REQUIREMENT OF ELECTORAL EQUALITY.

IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THIS PROPOSAL OF A 3 WAY SPLIT COULD OVERTURN THE DECISIONS MADE IN 2016, AS ONCE SPLIT, PARTS OF THE PARISH COULD BE EASILY AMALGAMATED INTO SALISBURY CITY.

PROBLEMS WITH THE COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Although Laverstock and Salisbury are close geographically, linking them, particularly in light of the 2016 Community Governance Review (parish boundary review) would **not be effective for local government or suitable on community cohesion grounds**. The linkage identified with Salisbury is contrary to the views expressed by the majority of our residents who identify with their community and our parish; they choose to live near not in Salisbury.
- **The character, needs and interests of Salisbury City and Laverstock and Ford Parish are quite different**. It would **not be effective local governance** for a unitary councillor to attempt to represent a half city/half semi-rural parish division when they have such divergent views on critical issues.
- The Commission's recommendations prioritise the avoidance of subdividing the Old Sarum area of our parish, but achieve it by instead **subdividing the village of Laverstock, in an entirely arbitrary fashion with no community reasoning provided**. This would have **a far more negative community impact**. Unlike in other areas where parishes are proposed to be divided, **there already exists substantial housing and strongly developed communities in Laverstock which mean the proposed subdividing is both inappropriate and unnecessary**. A subdivision of the Old Sarum area, with neither part joined with the city, is a far more suitable community proposal than choosing to divide the established village of Laverstock
- The new line dividing Old Sarum (proposed by WC and us) **retains all of the original community** (the former military area, inc Partridge Way, in the Laverstock and Ford East Division - where it has always been.
- With Old Sarum and Longhedge still having new build, it is where Wiltshire Cllr work is most likely to be required. Having two Wiltshire Cllrs to share that load and work together, is advantageous to parish and residents.
- Pg 39 of the Draft Recommendations; para 137 state: *Finally, we propose a Salisbury St Mark's & Bishopdown division which essentially replicates the existing division of that name*. **There is no rationale given for this decision; it seems purely arbitrary**. The area

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contains the new development at Riverdown Park, an area bounded by a new Country Park and which residents must have chosen to live in for the rural aspect of that community. Prior to that the Bishopdown Farm and Hampton Park area was bounded by green space and that community has enjoyed a rural feel for many years. **These are communities that do not share a City identity but a rural one and should not be included in an area that has City interests at heart.**

- **There is no connectivity between the relatively new Bishopdown Farm and Hampton Park housing developments and the older Bishopdown development apart from a poorly lit 2 m wide pathway**
- While Britford is not directly connected, this does not mean it has no shared community identity with the other near-Salisbury parishes. The parish of Britford was included with Fovant but it is not, as stated in the commission's recommendations, in any way a part of the Chalke Valley, especially as the bulk of the housing is closer to the city. While it does not have direct road links with Clarendon Park or Laverstock it shares character and identity with them as a rural parish close to but not part of the city and therefore **makes sense from a community cohesion perspective** – the absence of road links between Downton and Whiteparish did not prevent the commission accepting the council's proposals, because the two areas were still appropriate on a community basis. Britford being included with other rural parishes close to the city is also **a more effective governance** arrangement and more cohesive than dividing Laverstock into three.
- The Milford area was referred to as a parish in the commission's recommendations, which it has not been for well over 100 years. WC's proposals has two distinct city areas combined together ; an **effective and cohesive community arrangement**, whereas the Commission's recommendation results in one city community dominated by the parish of Laverstock and another joined with Clarendon Park and half of Laverstock village, a dividing line that is **not justified in the commission's proposals against any of the statutory criteria.**

GUIDANCE

The Commission have **only three criteria** for judging a "Good Pattern of Divisions":

- **Electoral equality:**
 - Does your proposal mean that councilors would represent roughly the same number of voters as elsewhere in Wiltshire?
- **Community identity:**
 - Community groups: is there a parish council, residents' association or other group that represents the area?
 - Interests: what issues bind the community together or separate it from other parts of your area?
 - Identifiable boundaries: are there natural or constructed features which make strong boundaries for your proposals?

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- Loss of Parish Identity and Cohesion.
- The PC is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan which will cover the entire Parish
- **Effective local government:**
 - Are any of the proposed divisions too large or small to be represented effectively?
 - Are the proposed names of the divisions appropriate?
 - Are there good links across your proposed divisions? Is there any form of public transport?

IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE, IN OUR VIEW:

- **Electoral equality:**
 - Does your proposal mean that councilors would represent roughly the same number of voters as elsewhere in Wiltshire? **YES!**

Community identity

- We have a very active Parish Council given a strong mandate in the 2016 Community Governance Review (parish boundary review)
- The Parish has clear boundaries that separate it from Salisbury City: Old Sarum (monument); Castle Hill; Cemetery; Laverstock water meadows and railway.
- Geographical link: arc from North to South with Monarch's way to River Bourne through to Milford and to Cockey Down.
- There is a strong green thread running through the parish identified by the Castle Hill Country Park combined with the water meadows and other green areas and footpaths such as the Country Park at Old Sarum, the Community Open Space at Longhedge, the Monarchs Way bridleway, Cockey Down and the Riverbourne Community Farm. These are addition to the other 18 designated footpaths, bridleways and byways which crisscross the parish.

Effective local government:

- The parish has a record of strong and effective governance for the benefit of its residents, for example:
 - the Parish Council's relentless pursuit of the Castle Hill Country Park and its associated play areas.
 - Old Sarum open areas
 - Longhedge open areas (our Parish Councillors lobbied for the large Community Open Space)
 - Play parks
 - Boardwalk
 - Open Area maintenance
 - Lobbying for employment land and opportunities
 - Support to the environment and farmers
- The enthusiastic and efficient Parish Council that believes strongly in inclusiveness, consulting on all significant issues and maintaining continual communication with its

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residents through, for example, an outstanding bi-monthly Newsletter and a regularly updated website.

- Strong support of and presence in Area Board.

**The PC will debate and agree its formal response to the Electoral Boundary Commission's recommendations at the next Parish Council meeting which will be held on 18th March.
Why not come along to it?**