

**North Hertfordshire Branch**

Branch Secretary:  
Martin Stears-Handscomb

[REDACTED]  
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[REDACTED]

19 July 2022

Jolyon Jackson  
Local Government Boundary Commission for England  
1st Floor, Windsor House  
50 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0TL

Dear Sirs,

**North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party Branch submission of evidence to the Local Government Boundary Commission's public consultation on new warding arrangements for North Hertfordshire Council**

This submission is in response to the 10-year Boundary Commission review of the electoral boundaries of wards in North Hertfordshire and has reference to the proposal agreed by the District Council on 14 July.

The membership of the North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party Branch includes councillors who are part of the Joint Administration of the Council but also crucially of members of local co-operatives, such as the successful Black Squirrel Credit Union, which has over 1,000 members in the area. The Co-operative Party, including this Branch of course, exists to support and develop co-operatives and other community initiatives, including food banks and community cafes, etc

We therefore have a particular concern that Criterion 2 of the guidance for the review is followed, namely that "new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable". We understand of course that this in the context of the need to ensure that the communities of North Hertfordshire have fair, equal and effective representation.

Colleagues in the community organisations confirm that the greatest needs met by them are in areas of social housing. In particular, the financial services provided by the Credit Union have focussed on communities with a high level of social housing, housing which is provided principally by the two largest local Housing Associations, with whom the Credit Union has partnership agreements. Our evidence therefore focusses on the need to ensure that as far as possible, these areas are well represented on the Council.

In our submission we raise our concerns related to this, while broadly supporting the Council submission. We look forward to receiving confirmation that the Commission has received our submission of evidence and that it will be considered as part of your deliberations.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Martin Stears-Handscorn.

Martin Stears-Handscorn  
Branch Secretary

N.B Signed copy sent by post to LG Boundary Commission

## **Evidence submitted to the Boundary Commission by the Co-operative Party for the North Herts review 2022**

### **The main concerns of and the evidence provided by the North Herts Branch**

As indicated above we wish to provide evidence related to Criterion 2: that “new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable”. In making our suggestions, we also recognise that any proposal should meet the requirements of Criteria 1 and 3. In doing this we refer in particular to the work and experience of the local Credit Union, (which is not affiliated to any party, having active volunteers from all parties and none).

As the Credit Union developed, initially in the two larger towns, Hitchin and Letchworth, it set up contact points in three estates or serving neighbouring estates, namely in the Westmill estate in Hitchin, in the Jackmans estate in Letchworth and in Walsworth serving several neighbouring estates. The Credit Union has members in the two smaller towns and in the Rural Areas, including a contact point in Royston. Partly owing to their smaller size, we make no comment about the warding of these areas and would broadly support the Council’s proposals.

With regards to the two larger towns, we therefore welcome the proposal that ensures that Westmill is well represented in the 2 member Hitchin Oughton ward and has not been amalgamated with a neighbouring wealthy area as we understand was an early proposal.

We also welcome the proposal to keep the Walsworth ward in its current boundaries.

We are however very concerned at the proposal in Letchworth to amalgamate the Jackmans estate with a neighbouring wealthy area, particularly when the Council had an alternative which better meets the Commission’s criteria and has been put together with the support of its independent consultant. This proposal was published as Option B in the public papers for the Council meeting of 14th July.

The Jackmans estate is bounded by the A505 (the “gateway” to Letchworth from the A1M and a major route through the town) and Baldock Road (a smaller main road). The existing Letchworth South East ward consists of the Jackmans estate, an area of the Council’s proposed Letchworth East and a neighbouring wealthy area of south Letchworth. The Credit Union’s experience in its Jackmans contact point and since is that it has significant numbers of members from both the Jackmans estate and the Council’s proposed Letchworth East ward, where there is also a preponderance of Social Housing.

Following the same logic of the Hitchin proposals we support the proposal (Option B) as it better meets Criterion 2 of the Commission’s guidelines, and for this reason also meets Criterion 3. We also note that it meets Criterion 1 slightly better than the Council’s chosen option.

Specifically, we believe the inclusion of the Jackmans estate with the rest of the Council's proposed Letchworth East ward to create a new Letchworth South East ward, is preferable to crossing the A505 to the Lordship estate and related wealthy housing. It would also deal with an oddity in the Council's proposal – creating Letchworth East as a single member ward, which seems inappropriate in an urban area, being the only one proposed in the larger towns (following the sensible amendment to the Hitchin proposals).

We note that to meet Criterion 1 – approximate equal representation – small groups of streets not connected to any estates are included in the proposed Letchworth South East ward. We are aware that this is always the case in boundary reviews. The knock-on effects on the rest of south Letchworth of Option B also meet the Commission's criteria.

In summary, the Co-operative Party Branch makes no comment and is generally supportive of the Council's proposals for Baldock, Royston and the rural areas.

It supports the Council's proposals for Hitchin (noting that an amendment was agreed at the Council Meeting and forms part of the proposals).

With regard to the Letchworth proposals it supports the proposal put to the Council as Option B, as that proposal better meets all three of the Commissions Criteria and in particular Criterion 2.

## Details of the Letchworth proposals presented as Option B at the recent Council meeting

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Letchworth South East		
Councillors	3		
Total electorate		5,957	6,359
Variance		2.5%	-4.1%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Letchworth South West		
Councillors	3		
Total electorate		7,077	7,204
Variance		21.7%	8.6%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Letchworth Grange		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		4,391	4,860
Variance		13.3%	9.9%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Letchworth Norton		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		3,571	4,078
Variance		-7.9%	-7.8%

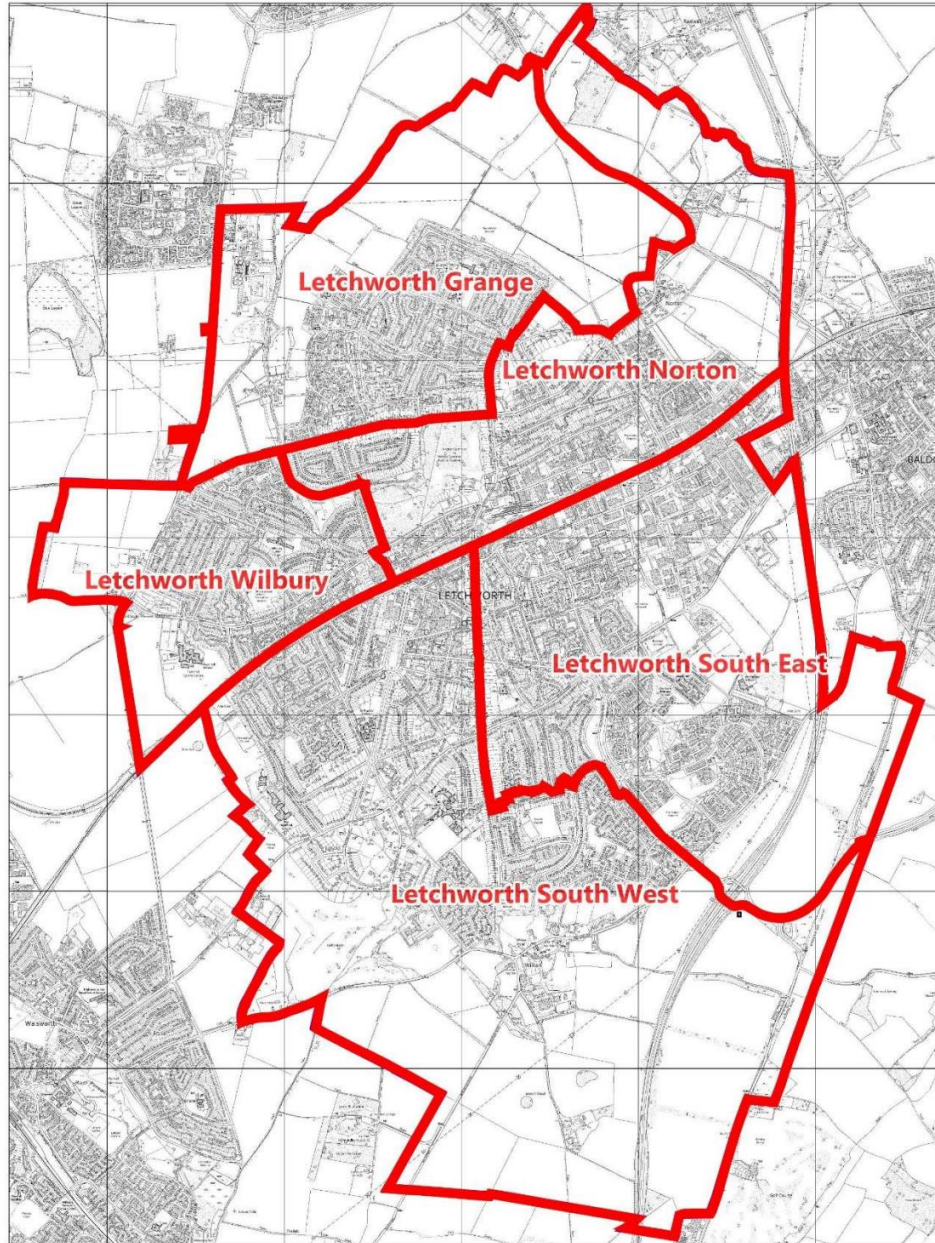
		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Letchworth Wilbury		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		4086	4086
Variance		5.4%	-7.6%

## Map of Proposed Letchworth Wards

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



Proposed Letchworth Wards



Scale: 1:30000  
Date: 04/07/22

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## North Hertfordshire District Council

### Personal Details:

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**Organisation Name:** North Herts Branch of the Co-operative Party

### Comment text:

I am attaching a copy of the submission from this organisation. A signed copy has been sent through the post to the LG Boundary Commission. Martin Stears-Handscomb Branch Secretary

### Uploaded Documents:

**Download ([https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download\\_document?file=draft%2F1658615353\\_Co-operative+Party+-+North+Herts+Boundary+Review+submission.pdf](https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1658615353_Co-operative+Party+-+North+Herts+Boundary+Review+submission.pdf))**