

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 06 December 2021 21:51
To: reviews
Subject: East Hertfordshire District Council: Consultation Response

Categories: Submissions, Nicole

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the East Hertfordshire local authority boundary review. My interest is in the arrangements for Bishop's Stortford. My comments are structured according to the three legal factors used by the Commission in drawing up boundaries

New wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of voters as other councillors elsewhere in the authority

Based on the electoral figures spreadsheet provided on the LGBCE website, by 2027 Bishop's Stortford will require 14 councillors to be proportionate to the average electorate per councillor of 2,640. This would suggest **an increase in the number of wards for Bishop's Stortford from five to seven, with two councillors per ward**, although clearly there are other configurations, for example, four three-member wards and one two-member ward. **On balance, my preference would be for an increased number of two-member wards as this strengthens the link between councillors and specific geographic areas of the town.**

New wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable

Considerable growth is forecast on the northern and southern edges of the town. This reflects the Bishop's Stortford North and St Michael's Hurst developments to the north of the town, both already partly built-out, and in the south, the Bishop's Stortford South development. These new communities will have distinct needs and **it would be preferable for each development to be contained as a whole within a single ward, wherever possible**. In addition both Bishop's Stortford North and Bishop's Stortford South will have two 'local centres' with shops etc. that will act as a focal point for these communities.

Notwithstanding these new local centres, Bishop's Stortford has a radial street pattern and in many cases residents look towards the town centre, rather than identifying with distinct 'suburbs'. Furthermore, in some cases these busy routes into the town centre can act more as a dividing line than a focal point; the same applies to the railway (and to a lesser extent the River Stort) which bisects the town. As a result, using these existing physical features as ward boundaries should be considered wherever appropriate.

New wards should promote effective and convenient local government. Consider the number of councillors for, the geographic size of, and the links between parts of the ward.

Based on the principles outlined above, I would propose the following seven two-member wards:

Bishops Stortford North / (Bishop's) Stortford Fields

A new ward encompassing the whole of the Bishop's Stortford North (also known as Stortford Fields) development could be created. The southern boundary could be formed of Hadham Road and then Cricketfield Lane. There are almost no houses directly bordering these roads on the northern side, so the road itself would form an appropriate boundary. The western border could follow the existing Little Hadham boundary and the northern boundary could extend to the Hertfordshire border. In the north-east Farnham Road would form an obvious boundary, with the eastern boundary perhaps running along the existing Silverleys boundary, continuing in a north easterly direct along Whitehall Lane until it met Farnham Road.

Bishops Stortford Meads

The existing ward encompasses the new St Michael's Hurst development (currently centred on Morbury Avenue), it could border the proposed Bishop's Stortford North ward along Farnham Road and south-westwards following the Bishops Stortford North boundary to Cricketfield Lane / Hadham Road junction, as outlined above, with the railway line forming the easterly boundary. Given it is forecast to grow by 1,000 electors the southern boundary could be moved northwards, perhaps using the A1250 Hadham Road/Link Road as a southern boundary enabling a ward to encompass the whole town centre. The town centre will be a strong focal point already for residents in the south of this seat, given there are no shops/facilities along Rye Street.

Bishop's Stortford Silverleys

The Hadham Road (A1250) bisects the existing ward as it runs east-west. Whilst Hadham Road may appear on the map to act a focal point, given the lack of north-south routes in this part of the town, the communities either side of the A1250 have a limited interrelationship. This suggests Hadham Road would act as an appropriate boundary, especially given the sizeable population increase forecast for the current ward, driven by the Bishop's Stortford North development. Reflecting the principle of using the radial distributor routes as boundaries, a modified Silverleys ward could use Hadham Road as it northern boundary and Great Hadham Road as it southern boundary, if that configuration contained sufficient numbers of electors. It could be renamed Bishop's Stortford West.

Bishop's Stortford Central

The town centre is currently divided between Silverleys, Meads and Central wards. The boundaries of the Central ward could be extended slightly west, north and east, so the whole town centre is encompassed within one ward. The railway line need not necessarily form a ward boundary here, given there are three road bridges over the railway in relatively close proximity. It could be reduced in size on its south-western edge, with these areas subsumed into new West and/or South West wards.

Bishop's Stortford All Saints

This could be reduced in size and form a two-member ward by moving the southern boundary northwards and extending the western boundary to the railway line. Even more than is the case for Hadham Road in the west of the town, the railway line running north-south acts a dividing line in this part of the town, with no road bridges between the town centre and Michael's Road on the northern edge of the town. Although the county boundary constrains options at the southern end, the south western tip of the current ward could be moved into the Bishop's Stortford South ward, perhaps using Hallingbury Road as a boundary. Alternatively, or in addition, some of the area south of Dunmow Road and west of Haymeads Lane could be moved into a Bishop's Stortford Central ward.

Bishop's Stortford South and Bishop's Stortford South West

The existing ward could be split into two wards, a Bishop's Stortford South ward and a Bishop's Stortford South West ward, split into eastern and western components, perhaps using the Villiers-sur-Marne Avenue / Obrey Way as a boundary between the two. The northern boundaries would depend on the size and extent of the Bishop's Stortford West and Bishop's Stortford Central wards. As suggested above, the new Bishop's Stortford South could be contained in a single ward, logically this would be the eastern ward.

I recognise actual boundaries will need to strike a balance between the distribution of the electorate and other factors, however, I hope the suggestions outlined above are helpful for the Commission.

Many thanks,

