 **Leader of Chelmsford Liberal Democrats**

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**Essex County Council boundary review – proposals for Chelmsford**

In the narrative below and with the attached spreadsheet, we make the following proposals for ECC divisions in Chelmsford district.

The Liberal Democrats hold 33 of the 57 seats on Chelmsford City Council and four of the nine Essex County Council seats. We are therefore well placed to understand the local community ties that make most sense when putting forward boundary proposals. This representation is on behalf of all those councillors and the Local Party.

Our proposals

We support the LGBCE’s decision that Essex CC should have 77 seats, as the best fit for the current population / electorate numbers. Therefore Chelmsford should retain nine seats. Any reduction in council size would place an additional workload on county councillors, which is not in the interests of effective local government.

Divisions 1 and 2

There is no need to change the existing **Great Baddow** and **Chelmsford Central** divisions. When it is possible to keep existing wards/divisions, that should be supported as the best way of meeting the LGBCE criteria.

Division 3

We note that the **South Woodham Ferrers** division is outside the plus/minus 10% range. The existing division covers the South Woodham Ferrers town, which has a strong sense of community, as a fairly compact new town built in the late 1970s. It has its own Town Council and, in the interests of effective local government, really deserves to have its own County Councillor. However, if you are minded to increase its electorate to more like the county average, then adding Woodham Ferrers and Bicknacre makes the most sense. We reluctantly propose this in the attached spreadsheet. The division should then be called Woodham Ferrers (i.e. minus the word South).

Division 4

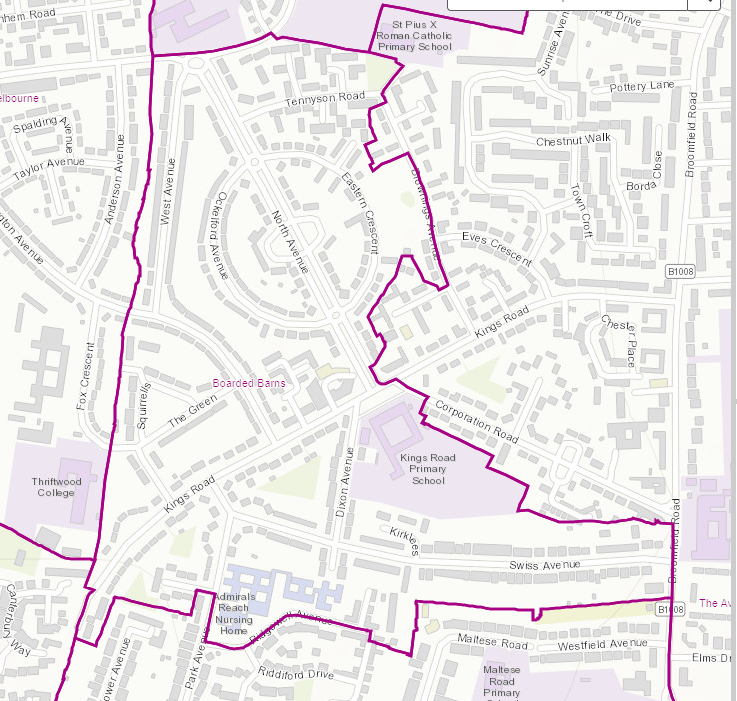
We note that the **Chelmsford North** division is outside the 10% range.. The most obvious way to address the shortfall AND meet the other LGBCE criteria is to add streets from the community that is currently divided between Chelmsford North and **Chelmsford West**.

There is an estate in this area of current/former social housing built in the inter-war years, known as Boarded Barns. The estate comprises Eves Crescent, Corporation Road and Kings Road (eastern half), which are currently in North Division (CJB Polling District); and Eastern Crescent, North/West Avenues, The Green and Kings Road (western half) currently in West Division.

You can see this on the following map showing Polling District CFA Boarded Barns.

Our main proposal is that all of Kings Road (and road north of it) should be in North division and everything south of it should remain in West division i.e. the polling district CFA should be split up. That would move approximately 1500 of the 1998 (*as at 2029 numbers*) voters into North and leave about 500 still in West. This would keep both North and West divisions within the 10% range of 14,479 and 17,696.

If, however, you think it better to move a whole polling district, then you could put all of CFA into North. That would leave **Chelmsford West** division just below the lower end of the 10% range (at 14363) but might better meet the criterion of effective local government. We’ve used that in the attached spreadsheet as it is the only official number.

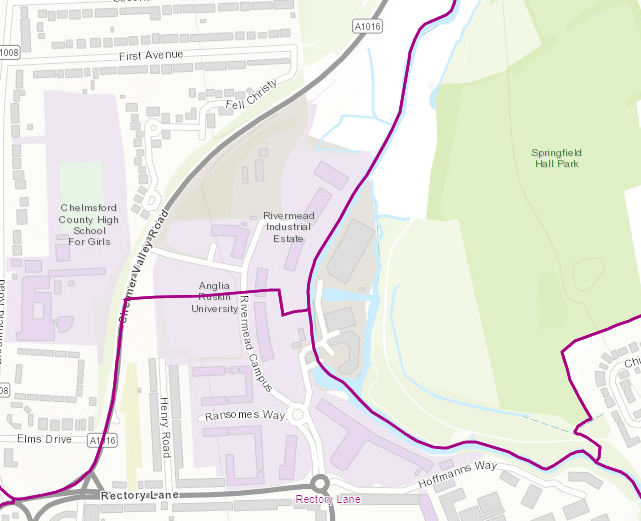


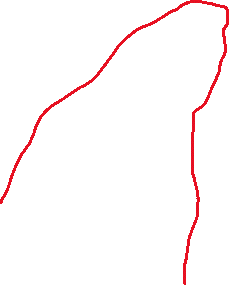
*NB We have seen the proposal from Essex County Council. They propose to move the middle section of Springfield division into North (CMA-Springfield Chelmer). Springfield Chelmer is the other side of the River Chelmer valley and therefore it would not be effective local government for the county councillor for North division to represent such a separate area, and there are little or no community ties between the two areas. The effect on Springfield division would be to effectively split it into two.*

Division 5

**Chelmsford West** should be amended as discussed above. Chelmsford West should also be amended to take account of a new housing development that has ended up in obviously the “wrong” division. See the map below. The blob coloured yellow are brand new flats that are part of the Rivermead area and are just starting to be occupied. They cannot be accessed from Springfield division, where they currently sit and therefore have no community ties with Springfield and it is not effective local government for them to be part of Springfield. Thus the Chelmsford West boundary should be changed to the red line on the map below. Then all of the campus of Anglia Ruskin University would be in West division (but there are no homes/registered voters in the area described as Rivermead Industrial Estate on the map). The Chelmer Valley Road is a more effective boundary between North and West than an arbitrary line through the middle of the university campus. (At the time of the last review that was open land.)

Making this change would add a small number of voters to Chelmsford West, so it would then be just about within the 10% range even if you move all of CFA Boarded Barns to **North** as discussed above.





Other divisions

Our proposals for the rest of the District are driven by the request that we believe you have received from the new Chelmsford Garden Community Council (CGCC), which was created on 1st April 2023 following a Community Governance Review by Chelmsford City Council. The CGCC area is currently split between three ECC divisions – Chelmer, Springfield and Broomfield/Writtle.

We agree with the CGCC proposal that CGCC should all be in one division. CGCC comprises much of the areas of significant housing growth that are outside the city centre (both from the last 25 years and proposed for the next 20 in the Adopted Local Plan). CGCC is being designed by the City Council and developers as a genuinely sustainable, wholly new community.

We believe that it makes much sense for both effective local government and ties of community interest to have this new parish/community area in one division. For example, it isn’t effective local government if the Chelmer county councillor has four whole (ancient) parishes to represent and a small part of one more (CGCC), which is of a wholly different and brand-new nature. It is possible to create a set of divisions that delivers that objective and that meets the fairness objective too, by being of similar size.

Division 6

**Chelmer** would be the appropriate division to contain all of the CGCC area. Chelmer Village was a brand new community / ward created in the 1980s and added to in the 2000-2010 period. It therefore makes sense from the perspective of community ties to have similar neighbourhoods in one division.

We therefore propose adding the following polling districts to Chelmer: CKC Armistice; SBF Belsteads, SBG Broomfield East. Those three (plus CAD Beaulieu Park which is in Chelmer) comprise CGCC area.

*NB If you agree with our proposal, you will need to use the actual boundary of the CGCC area. Since supplying the figures you are using for this review, Chelmsford City Council carried out a polling district review to ensure that the PDs matched the CGCC area for the May 2023 elections. The polling districts and parishes that you have on your website are therefore not quite accurate. Only a small number of homes are affected at the moment but development in the Local Plan will change that.*

In the interests of fairness (meeting the target numbers) we need to move one more area into Chelmer. We propose Great & Little Leighs SAC polling district. The Chelmsford City Council ward of Boreham & The Leighs is currently split between two divisions; this proposal would unite it and thus support effective local government for the two ward councillors to liaise with one County Councillor.

Chelmer would then need to lose some areas in order to be within the target range. We propose that MBA Little Baddow, MBB Danbury East and MBC Danbury West are moved into a (much revised) Stock division. The Chelmsford City Council ward of Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon is currently split between two divisions; this proposal would unite it in one and thus support effective local government for the three ward councillors to liaise with one County Councillor. Little Baddow and Danbury are ancient villages, on a hill high above the Chelmer valley and the other side of the river from Chelmer Village, which is a community of a different character. The community ties of Little Baddow and Danbury suggest that they should be in the same, broadly rural division.

Division 7

**Springfield** under our proposal above for the CGCC area loses CKC Armistice and would thus have almost exactly the target number of electors in 2029. This has the further advantage of maintaining in one division areas of similar community interest and moving the area north of busy White Hart Lane (the new housing) into Chelmer.

Division 8

**Broomfield & Writtle** (under our proposals above for Chelmer) has lost SBF Belsteads and SBG Broomfield East (its part of the Garden Community area) and SAC The Leighs. (SBF and SBG are the areas of new housing growth – an urban extension, rather than rural character of the rest of the division.) We therefore propose it should gain the parishes of MDA Stock and MDB Margaretting in order to be within the 10% range. These villages have community ties with the village of Writtle in the division.

Division 9

**Stock** division is thereby amended by all the changes set out above. It gains Little Baddow and Danbury and loses Stock, Margaretting, Woodham Ferrers and Bicknacre. We therefore propose that it is renamed Danbury and The Hanningfields, which is a clear definition of the area covered.

Footnote

We have seen the proposals from Essex County Council. In respect of Chelmsford (and Uttlesford, Colchester and Epping Forest) the ECC proposals did not receive unanimous support from the Boundary Review Committee of ECC, because (we believe) they failed in significant ways to take account of community ties and effective local government. These proposals above from the Liberal Democrats better meet the LGBCE criteria.

Summary

Overall, our proposals pay close attention to the community ties that exist in the area (better than those of Essex County Council), in particular acting on the wishes of our newest ‘parish’ council representing our major growth area, by putting it all in one division. Consequential amendments are required.

We have one division just outside the plus/minus 10% range (by 115 voters) but we think that is acceptable on grounds of community ties. If you accept our proposal for a split polling district, none of them will be outside the range.

We hope these proposals find favour with the Commission. Do please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Kind regards



Stephen Robinson