

Oxfordshire

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Organisation Name: The Labour Group on Witney Town Council (Parish or town councillor)

Comment text:

Related subject: Witney Town Council parish ward proposals

Witney Town Council has also submitted a response, formulated at Full Council.

This response is from the Labour Group of 9 of the 17 councillors. It is similar to the Council's response, but expresses some extra detail and rationale.

Witney Town Council works well with multi-member wards. The one single-member ward (Burwell Meadow) has been an anomaly since its introduction, giving disproportionate weight to the interests of what amounts to one small, quite homogeneous, housing area.

The proposal keeps that ward, renaming it Witney Burwell. However, this juncture is an opportunity to merge that ward into Witney South.

Witney South has been working well with 3 town councillors. The proposal suggests only 2. Merging Burwell Meadow (existing) into Witney South would enable it to remain a 3-councillor ward.

Part of Witney South has been removed at the County level changes, to join Ducklington. Whilst this makes little sense from a Witney Town Council viewpoint, it seems decided, so the proposed Witney Leys ward is the hardest to solve. It cannot sit in its natural home of Witney South (making it 4-member), due to county boundaries. However, it's an under-populated area with many light industrial units, car garages and DIY retail units, as well as recreational space. It does not warrant being a single-member ward and does not have an identity as such. This means it is preferable for it to be classed as part of Witney West, which is contiguous in the County seat with Ducklington. There is a discontinuity on the map of Witney Parish, which is basically a thin strip of Witney South, mainly A40 on one side of the road, . This does not seem to interfere with the West character, with residents in the Leys area routinely getting out to West Witney's Deer Park shops, woods and West Witney sports centre that way, and linking to that area by bike or foot via the Ducklington Lake pathways to the south and west of Witney's boundary.

We would have Witney West become a 4-councillor ward, to include the proposed "Witney Leys" area.

Witney Central is proposed to retain its 3 councillors. However, there's a proposal for a single-councillor ward called Witney Windrush, To avoid this, it should be part of Witney Central, making it a 4-councillor ward like Witney East.

Our regret is that North would go down to 2 councillors. Our preference therefore would be to have 18 councillors, with North retaining its 3. The Local Plan could see 1000+ houses added to the parish bordering Witney North, so changing parish boundaries at the juncture might also be relevant to Witney North.

Witney Town Council enjoys a mix of political representation, and we hope that this submission is taken as it is intended - with the best interest of Witney at heart, to ensure political mix and broad representation is sustainable and not skewed by single-member wards.

Attached Documents:

None attached