

Oxfordshire

Personal Details:

Name: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]
Postcode: [REDACTED]
Organisation Name: (Member of the public)

Comment text:

Related subject: Electoral boundary change Wantage

Please find attached my letter in regards to the proposal for a boundary change splitting out Charlton from Wantage.

Attached Documents:

- LGBCE comment.pdf

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Ref: LGBCE/Oxon/Consultation/001/PJR

[REDACTED]
24th October 2024

Dear Sir or Madam,

I have recently been made aware of the consultation which proposes changes to the electoral boundaries for my area. I fully recognise this is an important process and one which needs to happen on a regular basis to reflect the growth in communities and thus the electoral representation.

As I understand from the proposal, the changes for Wantage and Grove would be to create three separate areas being Wantage, North Grove and new area which encompasses Charlton through to Blewbury. Whilst I can see this would add an extra councillor to matters concerning Wantage and Grove, I have reservations if the boundary proposals are in the best interests of the Wantage community. Again I fully appreciate the need for the review, however it seems as if the new electoral areas have been decided by maths, ignoring the basic principles that electoral areas should be aligned with the communities they serve. I draw you attention to the following guidelines which clearly outlines these principles. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-governance-reviews-guidance>. The main premise of the guidelines is building communities where there are shared values, services and sense of "identity". Furthermore boundary changes must consider these especially where "community" already exists.

In terms of our community, there is no real distinction between Charlton Village and Wantage. In fact the new Kingsgrove estate (which is clearly Wantage) encompasses Charlton Village. In effect Charlton Village has now become a village inside Wantage. Various community services and organisations sit within Charlton which are intrinsic to Wantage. For example:

Wantage community Hospital

Wantage and Grove cricket club

Wantage Primary academy school (within Kingsgrove)

Wantage community support center.

Wantage Baptist Church and Graveyard.

Hence it should be clear there is very little community boundary between Wantage and Charlton. Most people would find it difficult to determine what is Wantage especially as you travel west

towards the town center. AST Wantage ... an example of a business within Charlton which identifies itself as Wantage. Charlton Garden Center within Wantage.

The new electoral boundary will thus fragment our community from an electoral perspective. This would be perfectly acceptable if the "fragments" are still fully aligned with the electorate. Sadly this is where the proposal just seems like "maths". The new Charlton to Blewbury area is ten miles long encompassing villages which could have completely different community agendas and alignment. This becomes more apparent as you travel East from Charlton through the Hendred's and on towards Blewbury. The further East you go the more likelihood of villages will be using services in Didcot. Hence it would follow that during any debates, campaigns right through to county council decisions, that any new electoral division would be biased depending on proximity to services. For residents of communities to the East such as Blewbury they would naturally favour decisions biased towards Didcot. To the west communities such as Lockinge and Ardington decisions biased towards Wantage. The Hendreds being central, either Didcot or Wantage. Hence the new electoral boundary just doesn't fit the guidelines in terms of community alignment.

I fully appreciate the plan considers future expansion however the likelihood of Wantage and Grove expanding at such a rate towards the Hendreds would not be within the timeframe for another electoral boundary review. The chances of Wantage expansion is more likely to be in the west with new East Challow developments already starting to connect Wantage. Hence it would be more sensible to align new boundaries to the west of Wantage and possibly splitting out Wantage into two areas being East and West as far as the Letcombes and Childrey. These areas have significantly more synergy to Wantage than Blewbury.

Overall I would welcome another council seat which was focused on Wantage. However with the current proposal I fear the new Charlton, Hendred and Blewbury segmentation will be far too diverse in terms of electorate to give Wantage a greater voice. The reduction in electorate in Wantage will further silence this voice and thus unless a new boundary plan is proposed I would prefer the current two joint Wantage and Grove councillors to represent my interests.

Regards [REDACTED]