

Hanslope Parish Council

Response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Proposed Changes to Milton Keynes Wards

Hanslope Parish Council objects in the strongest terms to the proposal to create the new 'Hanslope & New Bradwell' ward.

We believe it is inappropriate to have a mixture of rural and urban wards which have such different characteristics and local government priorities. Furthermore, the urban areas of New Bradwell and Bradville, will constitute around 60% of the new ward, meaning that the rural voice will receive a lower level of attention. A key principle of these reviews is the alignment of community identities and interests and this proposal fails on this point in regard to the proposed ward.

The characteristics of urban and rural communities are very different:

Rural communities are primarily concerned with:

- Planning and development. A great deal of effort goes into the creation of Neighbourhood Plans by the community
- Agrarian flooding (from agricultural run-off) and maintenance of ditches
- Rural roads which are comparatively poorly maintained with more potholes and edge of carriageway collapse.
- Public Transport is critical for residents but, because usage is lower, the services are either subsidised or a 'demand responsive transport', MK Connect, is provided which is unpredictable and cannot be relied upon without huge time contingency to arrive at school, work or medical appointments on time.
- Hanslope in particular is geographically cut-off, and served only by narrow, rural roads and regularly gets cut off by flooding, due to the nature of local soil with its slow permeability. 2 feeder roads to Hanslope lie partially in West Northants Council area, leading to inconsistency, yet as a outlying village, it retains a particular village identity that would not be served well by being linked into a city settlement such as New Bradwell.
- Fly tipping frequently occurs in our lay-bys and on farmland – often at a substantial scale
- Rural crime includes theft of farm equipment and there are regular police initiatives (Operation Drover) to tackle farm theft as well as anti-social behaviour on farmland and other open spaces such as parks.
- A big recent issue was the rollout of first FTTC broadband and now full fibre or FTTH. The urban areas got this as a matter of course. The rural areas had to work hard with the providers, BT and then Gigaclear, to get a service and even now some households have no fibre access.

By contrast, in urban communities:

- There is typically less planning development especially in New Bradwell and Bradville which are largely fully developed.
- Riparian flooding – streams over-topping – rather than field run-off
- Urban roads obviously have potholes too but, perhaps because the roads have more traffic, these get more attention. The edge of carriageway is normally kerbed.
- Public Transport is good with scheduled services.
- Littering rather than fly tipping is more prevalent
- Urban crime including shoplifting and household burglary

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Urban communities are also heavily concerned with:

- Deprivation.
- Housing
- Community facilities
- Play areas

These are hugely important as well and whilst all exist in the rural areas, they are not to the same extent and require less focus by councillors. There is a materially different balance between urban and rural and it is not a “one size fits all” situation.

It is true that the existing Ward of Hanslope and Newport Pagnell North is a mixture of rural and semi-urban – Newport Pagnell would probably not regard itself as fully urban – but, in any case, there is less housing on the north side of the High Street which is in the current Ward and the urban dominance is less.

Nevertheless, it is telling that, under the penultimate arrangements when there were single councillor wards and a single ward constituted Haversham, Hanslope and Castlethorpe, very successful Local Area Forums(LAF) were held quarterly with Milton Keynes City Council to discuss the issues typically in the rural communities list above. Just one LAF meeting was held when Newport Pagnell joined the new, enlarged Ward. The issues were so different it was pointless continuing and a LAF hasn't been held since. There was almost nothing in common.

It is also important to debunk the assertion of an employment link between New Bradwell and the rurals, for which no evidence has been presented in support. There isn't a link albeit that there may be some people in New Bradwell who work at the government site at Hanslope Park but that isn't public knowledge and probably applies to other wards too. It would be like saying there is a strong employment link between Hanslope and Central Milton Keynes because some of the residents work at Santander or the shopping centre.

Hanslope Parish Council therefore asks LGBCE to consider other possible solutions.

1. In our view, the historical position of single councillor wards worked really well with a Ward Councillor responsible for Hanslope, Haversham and Castlethorpe. It created focus. We work well with our three current Ward Councillors but it causes delay when we have to pass an issue to all three and ask which of them will pursue it on our behalf. We really don't understand the rationale for moving away from this.

Based on the published electorate in 2029, these three polling districts total an electorate of 3,941 which is 2.10% variance from the published average per councillor of 3,860. The urban elements could then become a two-member urban ward maintaining the 60-councillor total. This would enable a higher level of focus from ward councillors when representing local interests.

As a slight variant on the one-member ward idea, we also suggest that a rural ward could be created as an addition to the 60 councillors assumed, making a total of 61 councillors. This would make for a council with an odd number of councillors as now, and whilst the numbers would need to be revisited overall and the average per councillor would of course slightly reduce to 3,797 so the variance would become 3.79%. This would also have the benefit of

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removing the possibility of voting deadlock with the even number proposed.

We recognise that the urban arrangement would need some adjustments to define the 3-member ward(s) that includes Bradville and New Bradwell.

2. Alternatively, we would ask that an asymmetrical arrangement is considered so that the rural part of the Ward has, either a single Ward Councillor as above, or two Ward Councillors covering a broader set of rural parishes, and New Bradwell and Bradville rather than stand-alone, join with, say, Wolverton who then has the extra Ward Councillor(s). We appreciate this is not 'neat' and thought would have to be given to the cycle of Ward elections but it would be much more democratically aligned with the needs of the respective residents and the alignment of community interests.
3. As another option, we have been made aware of a re-balancing exercise – attached below. This is an impressive piece of work creating two rural wards, Ouse Valley North and Ouse Valley South, though there is more development around Milton Keynes East which is happening in any case around the Moulsoe, North Crawley, Broughton area in the suggested Ouse Valley South ward.

The second element is that New Bradwell would be part of a 'The Bradwells' ward including Wolverton East. It should be noted that there is a genuine and long-standing relationship between New Bradwell and Wolverton going back as long as the foundation of the railway when New Bradwell was built for the workers at Wolverton railway works. In any case, both are urban and adjacent to each other. Wolverton West would be part of the Stony Stratford and Wolverton ward and again there is a long standing a genuine relationship dating back to the omnibus that took workers from Stony Stratford to the Wolverton works and they are just down the road from each other. Bradville would join the suggested Conniburrow Ward.

This solution keeps three member wards, with 60 councillors, and is well balanced to the target populations rather better than the LGBCE proposal in terms of variance from the average representation.

Hanslope Parish Council urges LGBCE not to adopt its current proposals but to consider and amend in favour of one of these options or another which keeps the urban and rural communities with a properly represented democratic voice in the new arrangements.

We have prepared this response in consultation with neighbouring parishes both Rural and urban, who like us feel strongly that the proposals as written are not suitable or appropriate and do not meet the basic test of community interests and identity and therefore should not be progressed.

We are willing to meet and work with the LGBCE Review Manager for this area as he considers the consultation inputs to discuss our concerns in more detail.

G Merry, Clerk to Hanslope Parish Council
On Behalf of Hanslope Parish Council

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Draft Response to LGBCE Proposal for MKCC Ward Boundaries - Option 3

	Ward	Polling Districts	Electorate	Variance
1	Ouse Valley North	Haversham-cum-Little Linford, Castlethorpe, Hanslope, Gayhurst, Stoke Goldington, Tyringham, Weston Underwood, Ravenstone, Lathbury, Olney West, Olney East	10, 826	-1.58%
2	Newport Pagnell	Newport Pagnell West, Newport Pagnell Central, Newport Pagnell Green Park, Newport Pagnell Cedars, Newport Pagnell Tickford	11, 421	3.83%
3	Ouse Valley South	Redhouse Park, Blakelands North, Giffard Park, Willen Park North, Willen Park South, Willen, Moulsoe, North Crawley, Astwood, Hardmead, Chichley, Sherington, Emberton, Clifton Reyes, Newton Blossomville, Cold Brayfield, Lavendon, Warrington	10, 839	-1.46%
4	Brooklands	Brooklands, Broughton Gate, Wavendon Farm	11, 095	0.87%
5	Danesborough	Wavendon, Wavendon Gate, Browns Wood, Woburn Sands North, Woburn Sands South, Bow Brickhill, Little Brickhill	11, 296	2.69%
6	Walton and Monkston	Monkston Park, Monkston, Kents Hill, Walton & Walnut Tree, Caldecotte	10, 947	-0.48%
7	MK Village	Broughton, MK Village, Oakgrove, Woolstone, Springfield, Peartree Bridge, WOGN, WOGS, Passmore, Woughton Park, Ashland, Simpson	10, 536	-4.22%
8	Bletchley South	Manor North, Water Eaton, Eaton North East, Manor South, Eaton North, Newton Leys, Eaton South	10, 898	-0.92%
9	Central Bletchley	Fenny Stratford, Granby, Abbeys, Central Bletchley, Leon, Church Green, Denbeigh Poets	10, 630	-3.36%
10	Bletchley North	Scots, Counties, Rivers, Fairways, Castles, Racecourses, Denbeigh Saints	10, 791	-1.90%
11	Fishermead & Eaglestone	Fishermead, Leadenhall, Coffee Hall, Beanhill, Netherfield, Tinkers Bridge, Eaglestone	11, 212	1.93%
12	The City Centre	CMK West, CMK East, Campbell Park, Oldbrook	11, 301	2.74%
13	Tattenhoe	Oxley Park, Westcroft, Kingsmead, Tattenhoe Park, Tattenhoe	10, 976	-0.22%
14	Watling Street North	Crownhill, Whitehouse, Calverton, Fairfields, Fullers Slade	10, 856	-1.31%
15	Shenley & Emerson	Grange Farm, Medbourne, Shenley Brook End, Shenley Lodge, Emerson Valley North, Emerson Valley South, Shenley Wood Village	11, 015	0.14%

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16	Watling Street South	Great Holm , Shenley Church End , Loughton , Furzton North , Furzton South	10,997	-0.02%
17	Stony Stratford & Wolverton	Stony Stratford South West , Stony Stratford North , Stony Stratford South East , Galley Hill , Wolverton Mill , Greenleys , Wolverton West , Hodge Lea	10, 825	-1.59%
18	The Bradwells	New Bradwell , Wolverton East , Bancroft Park , Stacey Bushes , Two Mile Ash , Bradwell	11, 432	3.93%
19	Conniburrow	Bradwell Common , Conniburrow , Heelands , Bancroft , Bradville West, Bradville East , Oakridge	11, 413	3.76%
20	Stantonbury	Stantonbury West , Stantonbury East , Neath Hill , Bolbeck Park, Downhead Park , Downs Barn , Great Linford	10,682	-2.89%