

LGBCE Response to Draft Boundaries in Milton Keynes – Jan 25

This is an individual response to the LGBCE consultation on the draft ward boundaries for Milton Keynes to apply from 2026 onwards. I'm writing as a private individual, but it's no secret my interest comes from serving as a ward councillor until 2021, in the Campbell Park and Old Woughton ward with all the challenges that this brought, and I'll declare that upfront.

Overall, I feel you have done an excellent job with the draft boundaries. My first response is to support them in full. The sheer number of communities you have united through these proposals is extensive. It's a significant improvement on current arrangements in Newport Pagnell, Furzton/Emerson Valley, Great Linford, Walton Park, Campbell Park, Crownhill, and West Bletchley. I'd urge you not to agree to any revisions that would leave these areas split, or create splits in Wolverton, Stony Stratford, or consider splitting Hanslope from Haversham.

I think you've picked by far the strongest of the submissions you were given, and the changes you've made to it are all improvements. You've correctly identified serious shortcomings in the other party proposals. Interestingly I thought the proposal from Bradwell Parish Council, the only other group to try to draft a citywide scheme had some merit, and there's lots of similarity with your draft proposals.

I'm not sure if you've picked up on the theme but several of your proposals essentially revert to the 2002-2014 boundaries. This is a good thing – having experienced both sets of boundaries, the earlier ones were more coherent and natural for the growing city. Again, all credit to you for responding to the extensive feedback on this and for showing willing to move away from what hasn't worked. I'm glad that the LGBCE doesn't have the statutory rule that the parliamentary commission does, about considering local ties that will be broken by any changes. This tends to bake in poor boundaries over time, simply because they were the least worst option at the last review. The rule would work better by considering ties that would be formed by changes, or allowing an analysis of how strong ties in practice actually are. If you have any influence in feeding back to policymakers on this point, this review is a great example where you'd probably have ended up with weaker proposals having to give more credit to existing boundaries.

You asked for feedback on 3 specific points in your draft report, and I'd like to make some suggestions on ward names. I'd also like to check that one of your parish rewarding proposals is correct as I'm not sure that it is. These are the only areas I can see to comment on:

a) Moulsoe parish – paragraph 51 (of your draft report)

I'd urge you not to split this area. If you do so, the existing village will have one set of (rural) councillors and the new expansion area will have a different set of (urban) councillors. The development will thus become a political flashpoint, with the rural councillors supporting existing residents with no reason to take interests of new ones into account, and vice versa. We've already had some of this with opposition from rural councillors to the road closures necessary for the new Moulsoe development.

We had a similar situation with the Glebe Farm/Eagle Farm development which was unpopular in the village of Wavendon, with many residents outright hostile to having a large new development near them. Having a single set of Councillors serving both areas was crucial to managing tensions, and Wavendon's parish council website now speaks proudly of a "One Wavendon" approach with no preference or discrimination between the historic and the brand new areas. This has been well managed at both parish and ward level, and I'd suggest it's a template for Moulsoe as well. Having a single set of Councillors will ensure the new development integrates, and the views of the whole community are balanced.

b) Eaton Leys – paragraph 62

This is a minor issue in the context of the overall review. You've asked for evidence of the community links of the Eaton Leys development. This is a significant ask – it seems to me that it doesn't have any! As I recall it was a highly controversial planning application, which the Council couldn't ultimately resist due to inability to demonstrate a 5 year housing supply at the time. It was always a developer-led proposal and the Council didn't allocate it and always maintained concerns about how sustainable the site was, with no public transport or links to any existing communities.

So I think you should treat it as an isolated and essentially unplanned (by Milton Keynes standards) community, unless you receive strong evidence to the contrary.

What I would suggest is that the boundaries in this area are complicated:



Although the boundaries themselves are strong, following major roads, your Bletchley Park ward has a narrow spike to the east, and your Bletchley South ward has this eastern area. I appreciate that “make the maps look neat” isn't a statutory criteria for the LGBCE (alas) but this looks like a particularly contrived set of boundaries.

I think the Lib Dems have a point that the Eaton Leys community is isolated from the rest of Bletchley. You asked whether this area should be split into the rural ward, and I think there's a strong case for this. You've noted that it would mean creating a new parish ward on Bletchley and Fenny Town Council, and I think this may be a noble objective on its own – it would ensure the Eaton Leys community has a voice in its parish and a focal point for concerns. So overall I think it's probably worth moving Eaton Leys to the rural ward and doing this. But it will leave the map looking awkward.

However can I suggest an alternative: use the River Ouzel as the boundary throughout.

The Ouzel is a strong enough boundary that it's used to define the ward boundaries to the north, and the borough boundary to the south. It also acts as the defacto eastern boundary of Bletchley. When you leave Bletchley to the east (from Fenny Stratford along Watling St) it's when you cross the River Ouzel that the shift from urban to rural takes place.

If you made the boundary something like:



Then the transition between the rural/urban area would be much more natural.

This would make the parish ward you'd need to create a little larger: in the additional area to transfer to the rural Danesborough ward (between Watling St and the A5) there is a large garden centre (adding to the rural impression) a single dwelling on Watling St (Dropshott Farm) and a small number of houses on Belvedere Lane which all have characteristics of rural rather than urban development.

c) Split of Whitehouse – paragraph 79

I don't know this area well, but the rationale and detail of what you have proposed in the draft recommendations looks sensible and in keeping with the design and progress of the estate. I would stick with this unless there's strong evidence to the contrary.

d) Ward Names

Most look fine but a couple of suggestions:

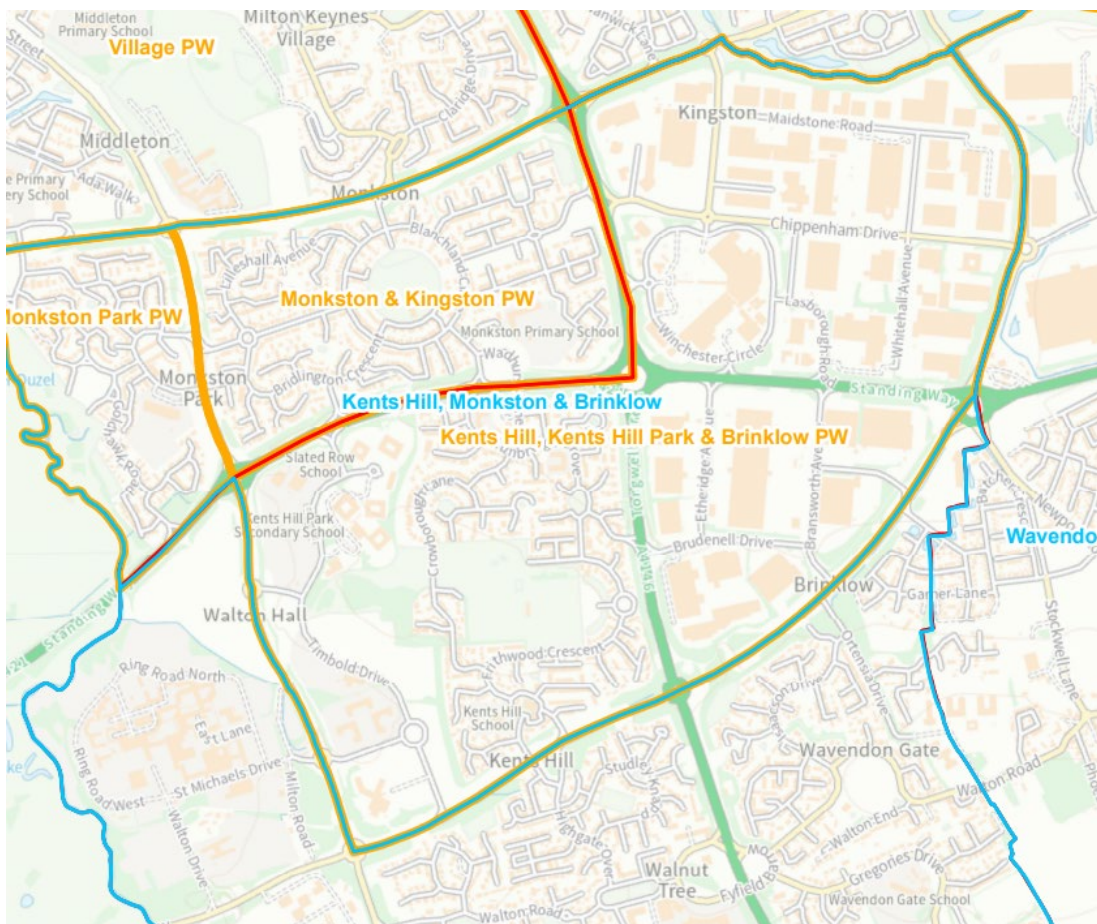
- Walnut Tree – this is the largest estate and central in the ward, but the previous ward with near-identical boundaries was called Walton Park, and the parish council covering most of the area is called Walton. Suggest either of these in preference (but Walnut Tree would be understood.)
- Bletchley North – this should be Bletchley West. This is a successor to the ward of the same name, it's all covered by West Bletchley parish, and when I think of North Bletchley I generally think of the area around the football stadium and the Denbigh industrial area (which is not in this ward.)
- Danesborough – I've never liked this name. It's based on the old iron age hill fort on the hill overlooking Bow Brickhill. It's an obsolete name, previously used for the rural 1 member ward (Bow Brickhill, Little Brickhill, Woburn Sands, Wavendon Village.) How many people really

understand this name? The largest settlements in the ward are now the new developments at Glebe Farm / Eagle Farm which are several kilometres away from the hill fort (which is now right on the edge of the new ward.) I suspect that if you asked residents in this area where Danesborough is, you'd be waiting a long time for an answer. Is it time to bite the bullet and use a more familiar name based on the largest settlements? I'd suggest Wavendon or Wavendon and Woburn Sands. Note that you shouldn't refer to "The Brickhills" as this includes Great Brickhill which is in the Bucks unitary area.

e) Kingston Parish rewarding (paragraph 57 refers)

I might be wrong but can you double check your proposal here please?

Happy with the principle of moving Kingston retail park to be in the Walnut Tree (or Walton Park) ward, as it does form a natural unit with Brinklow. Looking at your proposal, you're going to create a single parish ward for Kents Hill, Brinklow and Kingston, crucially with Kents Hill as a residential estate so it has a good number of electors.



Don't you need to rename the parish wards then?

"Monkston and Kingston" no longer contains Kingston! So I think you need a further renaming:

Monkston and Kingston -> Monkston

Kents Hill, Kents Hill Park & Brinklow -> Kents Hill and Kingston (You could make this longer but it will be unwieldy – Kents Hill Park is not connected by road but it is by path and it's all part of the same grid square, and Brinklow has far less presence than the major retail park at Kingston. Crownhill is another estate similarly split but there's no naming difference.)

I do not really understand why Brinklow is in the name of the parish, but the far more significant Kingston is not.

I hope some of these thoughts are useful – good luck concluding the review.

Best wishes

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