

To whom it may concern,

Please find below a letter from the Milton Keynes Labour Party concerning the draft proposals released by the Local Government Boundary Commission of England for Milton Keynes.

Firstly, we'd like to thank you for your efforts in producing a largely coherent scheme of ward boundaries in such a unique setting. As you'll now be intimately aware, Milton Keynes is a challenge to carve up for numerous reasons. Grid squares, a system incomparable with anywhere else in the United Kingdom, come with complex identities and community links – and those grid squares find themselves nestled between historic towns and villages that each have their own established communities. Arranging these in a cogent way within the mathematical constraints placed upon you is doubly difficult in a growing city, and we are grateful that you took the time to visit Milton Keynes and understand these challenges before publishing your draft proposals.

For the most part, we are pleased with the wards you have proposed. Though the boundaries themselves did not match many of our initial proposals, many of the key arguments we made at the consultation stage have been accepted. However, following conversations with local councillors, parish councils, and community groups, we believe there are some changes that ought to be made to ensure the best possible representation and governance for our residents.

Our response will cover six proposals:

- A transfer of Redhouse Park (KE) from the proposed Great Linford Ward to the proposed Hanslope & New Bradwell Ward.
- A transfer of Woolstone (FC) from the proposed Campbell Park & Willen Ward to the proposed Ouzel Valley Ward, and a subsequent transfer of Tinkers Bridge (SE) from the proposed Ouzel Valley Ward to the proposed Woughton & Fishermead Ward.
- An alteration to the border between the proposed Olney Ward and the proposed Broughton & Moulsoe Ward in order to divide Moulsoe (MJ).
- An alteration of the border between the proposed Walnut Tree Ward and the proposed Danesborough Ward so that it instead runs along Ortensia Drive in Wavendon Gate (HF) and H9 Groveway.
- A strong objection to the division of Whitehouse (PI) and the Loughton & Great Holm parish area in the proposed Loughton Ward, the proposed Bradwell Ward, and the proposed Stony Stratford Ward.
- A series of name changes for the proposed Bletchley North Ward, the proposed Bletchley Park Ward, the proposed Bletchley South Ward, the proposed Loughton Ward, and the proposed Bradwell Ward.

Adopting these measures will allow Milton Keynes City Council to best serve our residents in the years ahead, and we hope they are given serious consideration before the final report is published.

Yours sincerely,

**Milton Keynes Labour Party.**

## **1) Redhouse Park**

Transfer from the proposed Great Linford Ward to the proposed Hanslope & New Bradwell Ward.

Before we discuss the specific changes we propose to the Hanslope and New Bradwell Ward, we'd like to offer our strong support for the arrangement here more generally. Though our draft proposal was unable to do this, we believe it is beneficial that the rural parishes of Hanslope, Castlethorpe and Haversham are kept together, and in light of Newport Pagnell being contained in a single ward, we are pleased to see these parishes linked with the industrial towns they are historically and economically linked with. Though we proposed pairing these areas with Wolverton, we accept New Bradwell just as readily – these towns, predating the New City, have a shared history with the rural villages, and this ward pattern is not unprecedented either; some parts of New Bradwell parish were linked with the abolished Hanslope Park Ward prior to 2002. We are also pleased that the case we made in our initial submission for keeping New Bradwell and Bradville together has been accepted. Given that this proposal has clear grounding in both history and the provision of services, we hope that it is not significantly altered in your final draft.

However, we do have a concern regarding the placement of the new-build estate of Redhouse Park. The decision to include Redhouse Park as part of the proposed Great Linford Ward is one that appears rational on the surface. Indeed, our initial proposals to you during the consultation phase did include this estate in a proposed Stantonbury Ward which included the majority of the northern Great Linford parish area.

However, the proposed Great Linford Ward is different in several ways. The most noticeable is the exclusion of Oakridge Park, which is the single most similar estate across the city to Redhouse Park, facing many similar issues around leaseholds and maintenance companies and generating consistent themes in casework. Combining Redhouse Park and Oakridge Park into the same ward was a key goal of our arrangements, as we believe this offers the best possible representation to residents – we regret that the draft proposals put forward fail to do this. With Hanslope and Castlethorpe making up a large rural area with similar casework themes and demands, and New Bradwell and Bradville doing the same towards urban Milton Keynes, there's a real risk that Oakridge Park becomes isolated within their ward as a geographically separated new-build estate in a far corner of your proposed Hanslope and New Bradwell – it is tough to square this with your statutory requirements for good governance. Equally, there aren't any similar new-build estates in your proposed Great Linford Ward either, meaning the same risk applies to Redhouse Park. Keeping Oakridge Park and Redhouse Park together gives the combined residents a much stronger voice and would ensure representation for two estates of roughly the same age and facing roughly the same problems – splitting them will force them to face them alone. This will also benefit the much smaller new-build estates in Hanslope, off of Long Street Road and including Harvington Crescent, De Beauchamp Avenue and various off-roads; and Castlethorpe, in which a new-build housing scheme was completed barely a year ago, making effective representation for new residents especially important as they grapple with the challenges new-build homes often face in their early years. It is a challenge to see how their voice would be as loud as it needs to be under the current arrangement.

Additionally, centering the proposed ward around Great Linford rather than Stantonbury is

problematic for residents of Redhouse Park. There is significant discontent within the estate around their position within Great Linford Parish Council, stemming largely from Section 106 funding generated from the development of Redhouse Park being used to redevelop a community centre in Great Linford itself, rather than constructing a long-desired community centre within the estate. When these boundaries are implemented, residents of Redhouse Park will cast their ballots from a portacabin – a tangible reminder of a perceived injustice from Great Linford Parish Council. There is very limited evidence of engagement between Redhouse Park and the rest of Great Linford Parish Council – we note that, in their 2024–2025 survey of residents priorities, none of the 88 responses came from Redhouse Park<sup>1</sup> (which is grossly disproportionate given the 43 responses from Great Linford, 16 responses from Neath Hill, and 4 responses from Giffard Park and Blakelands). This is a matter that prompts incredibly strong feelings and has been pushed by a series of parish councillors representing the area, and we urge the Boundary Commission to consider whether placing Redhouse Park within a Great Linford-centric ward is appropriate in light of community opposition.

This is especially significant given that Milton Keynes City Council voted to initiate a city-wide Community Governance Review at a full council meeting on the 22nd January 2025, which may seek to alter parish boundaries. Though it would be inappropriate to pre-empt the verdict of that review, this is an area where change could reasonably be expected given these community frustrations. Should Redhouse Park find itself re-parished within the Stantonbury parish area for the reasons we have outlined above, a decision to include it within the proposed Great Linford Ward in order to avoid further splitting the parish would be seen as incredibly short-sighted. Given that the 2013 review approved a six-way split of Great Linford Parish Council despite viable alternatives being proposed, we trust a three-way split now would not be seen as a non-starter.

Though we hope these community tensions are persuasive enough in their own right, there are other reasons that this change would be beneficial. Geographically, it would unify the area north of Wolverton Road into one council ward. This isn't just for the purposes of a clear, defined boundary; it will benefit governance too. We are concerned that the current proposals place Redhouse Park in one ward with one set of councillors, and the Linford Lakes in another. These lakes back directly onto Redhouse Park, and are frequently subject to speculation around – as well as the actual proposal of – planning applications, which prompts strong responses from residents of the estate. The lack of clarity on who to contact, and the responsibility of representing the lakes falling to councillors of whom they have no say in electing, is unlikely to serve residents of Redhouse Park well should this scenario arise again, as seems likely. We were pleased you acknowledged our concern around planning in your draft proposal, and we hope that you will now act upon it, given the compelling case to do so.

Electorally, this would make for a more electorally equal map, and given that Redhouse Park has been situated in a ward with Hanslope, Haversham and Castlethorpe since the 2013 review, we also have reason to believe that some links between the areas have been developed by the existing

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<sup>1</sup><https://greatlinfordpc.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/GLPCData/Shared%20Documents/General/Website/Council%20Meetings%20Current/Full%20Council/25%2001%2029/07.0%20Summary%20slides.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=cNJVIG>

ward teams over that period. Though these reasons are not as significant as our concerns around parish relations and planning applications, we do believe they further aid our case.

**LGBCE's Proposed Great Linford Ward: 11,236 (+2%)**

**MKLP's Proposed Great Linford Ward: 10,211 (-7%)**

**LGBCE's Proposed Hanslope & New Bradwell Ward: 10,169 (-8%)**

**MKLP's Proposed Hanslope & New Bradwell Ward: 11,194 (+2%)**

## **2) Woolstone & Tinkers Bridge**

Transfer from the proposed Campbell Park & Willen Ward to the proposed Ouzel Valley Ward, and transfer Tinkers Bridge from the proposed Ouzel Valley Ward to the proposed Woughton & Fishermead Ward.

These proposals are being taken together, as the second part relies on the implementation of the first.

Woolstone – often The Woolstones, as this area really comprises the two villages of Great Woolstone and Little Woolstone – is a small, historic village that can trace itself back to the Domesday Book. Placed within the proposed Campbell Park & Willen Ward, it can share such a long heritage only with Willen. However, whilst Woolstone has not significantly changed in character since Milton Keynes was designated as a New Town, Willen has, with the majority of the area now comprising newer housing. The majority of the proposed Campbell Park & Willen Ward are key parts of the new city, with Springfield, Campbell Park, Downs Barn and Conniburrow having very little in common with the small village. Even Willen Lake, which sits between Willen and Woolstone, is only fifty years old.

Woolstone, on this basis, would be much more at home within the proposed Ouzel Valley Ward. The villages of Simpson, Old Woughton and Middleton – the original Milton Keynes – all find themselves mentioned in the Domesday Book, and feel much more like Woolstone in character. This would also create a clearer border between the two proposed wards, with H6 Childs Way and the Grand Union Canal being clearer than a border somewhere just north of the H7. Moving this area into Ouzel Valley would better reflect the identities of the communities involved, and we support this move in light of this. Though the current Campbell Park & Old Woughton Ward was subject to considerable criticism when proposed in 2013, many public responses praising it during the consultation identified the pairing of Woolstone, Simpson and Old Woughton as a key reason to support it; their shared heritage, even down to the movement of cattle and sheep between them centuries ago along “groveways”, a term which now lends itself as a name to a major grid road as well as a smaller road near Simpson, was stated and restated by resident after resident. In terms of provision of services, residents of Woolstone are linked towards Oakgrove, which provides supermarkets and retail outlets that are absent from the village itself – the Liberal Democrat proposal correctly identified Waitrose, but neglected to mention this was located in their proposed Ouzel Valley Ward – and schools, with the majority of secondary-aged pupils in Woolstone attending Oakgrove School, whilst their peers in Springfield tend to be enrolled at Milton Keynes Academy. Both on a historical basis and a practical provision-of-services basis, Woolstone would be far better included within the proposed Ouzel Valley Ward.

This area of Milton Keynes is an area in which community identities are highly-prized, and we urge the Boundary Commission to be wary of this – in particular, the community identities of the Woughton area in the middle of the proposed Ouzel Valley Ward are incredibly well-defined. Old Woughton Parish Council split from the Woughton Community Council in 2012 due to the depth of feeling between two different communities – for a whole host of economic, social, and political reasons, these two communities are vastly different, and those deeply-held beliefs are not neatly and conveniently bound by the V8. Given this, we are incredibly concerned at the inclusion of Tinkers Bridge – a key part of Woughton Community Council – within the proposed Ouzel Valley Ward. To split an established community council which has demonstrated just how important these community links are is a confusing decision, and one we cannot support. Though we are not pleased about the inclusion of Peartree Bridge within Ouzel Valley either, we recognise that there is historical precedent for this combination in the abolished Middleton Ward – Tinkers Bridge, however, is a core part of the Woughton Community Council area that should not, especially with the recent history of the area, be moved.

This fight to include Tinkers Bridge inside the Woughton community that it has long belonged to is a path well-walked. In 2001, initial proposals to include this within the Middleton Ward were revised after a large-scale community response asked the Commission to retain Tinkers Bridge within the Woughton Ward. In 2013, letters from upset residents at the prospect of the Conservative-controlled City Council's ward proposal being implemented, which reunified the Woughtons, convinced the Commission not to proceed with that aspect of the draft. It is upsetting that, yet again, we are fighting this very same battle, and we trust that you'll acquiesce to the logic you have accepted several times before, for the case is no less compelling now than it was in 2001 or 2013.

We feel it appropriate to remind you of some of the comments from the public that the Commission previously received during their 2013 review from those associated with Old Woughton directed at residents and councillors in the Woughton Community Council parish area:

*"[They are] interested only in our area for the increase in spending power it affords their area... as to shared interests and community cohesion, there is none... and given the diverse nature of the two areas, [there] never will be."*

*"We were advised by a headteacher of the local school... that we should not send a child to that school because of social differences... we are not wealthy, and we are not snobs, but we have different values..."*

*"The interests and needs of the two areas are radically different, and may always be so... Old Woughton has much more in common with adjacent parishes including Woolstones, Middleton and Simpson."*

*"I therefore ask you to make every endeavour to ensure that community, not political, interests are at the heart of the boundary review... and if there's one fact that's very clear, documented and obvious to all: there's no community interest between Woughton on the Green, Woughton Park and Passmore, and the current Woughton Ward and Parish Council."*

These comments, from residents, suggest firmly that this arrangement does not reflect community identities whatsoever. We are confident that responses from the ongoing consultation for this review will demonstrate these feelings hold strong today. You accepted the overwhelming feelings then - there is no righteous case for disregarding them now.

Our suggested changes fully meet the statutory requirements, and arguably, they do so better than your draft proposals. This proposal improves the electoral equity of both the proposed Campbell Park & Willen Ward and the proposed Woughton & Fishermead Ward significantly; by both proving more electorally equal and providing for more effective governance by matching on-the-ground community boundaries, we hope that this change will be given serious consideration. Accepting the transfer of Woolstone from the proposed Campbell Park & Willen Ward to the proposed Ouzel Valley will provide the arithmetic leeway to make this possible, and as we simply cannot stress enough how inappropriate the current placement is, we have full faith you'll take advantage of this opportunity ahead of the publication of a final scheme.

**LGBCE's Proposed Campbell Park & Willen Ward: 11,446 (+4%)**

**MKLP's Proposed Campbell Park & Willen Ward: 10,812 (-2%)**

**LGBCE's Proposed Ouzel Valley Ward: 10,552 (-4%)**

**MKLP's Proposed Ouzel Valley Ward: 10,557 (-4%)**

**LGBCE's Proposed Woughton & Fishermead Ward: 10,603 (-4%)**

**MKLP's Proposed Woughton & Fishermead Ward: 11,212 (+2%)**

### **3) Moulsoe**

Alter the boundary between the proposed Olney Ward and the proposed Broughton & Moulsoe Ward to split Moulsoe Village from the MK: East expansion area.

In your full report, opinions were solicited on whether the Moulsoe parish area should be split between the rural village and the expansion area when deciding the boundary between the proposed Olney Ward and the proposed Broughton & Moulsoe Ward.

Though we did not split the parish in our original proposals, we believe that this would be justified. The village of Moulsoe has consistently distanced itself from development in MK East, and though it lacks obvious community connections with villages like Stoke Goldington, Ravenstone and Gayhurst, the strength of their bonds with North Crawley and Lathbury ought to be noted, particularly around school admissions and transport. In any case, Moulsoe's village identity is clearly closer to almost the entirety of the proposed Olney Ward than any of the Broughton and Brooklands development across the M1. You'll be aware the Parish Council expressed themselves in their meeting on January 14th 2025 a preference for remaining part of the Olney Ward, and given that there are no statutory barriers to such a move, we think a division of the parish is in the interests of both the residents of Moulsoe and the soon-to-be residents of the MK: East development.

In our view, the most sensible border is to include the area of the parish designated as part of Milton

Keynes East in Plan:MK within the proposed Broughton & Moulsoe Ward<sup>2</sup>, and the area outside of it as part of the proposed Olney Ward. Though we accept this is not yet a clearly-defined area geographically, we have been unsuccessful in finding a more physical dividing line – this will remain difficult until the housing development is fully underway.

We note that the name of the proposed Broughton & Moulsoe Ward is no longer appropriate should the village of Moulsoe be moved into the proposed Olney Ward. Given that a significant portion of this ward will not be in the area known as Broughton, we would prefer a more neutral name for the revised ward – we endorse either “Milton Keynes East”, reflecting both the geographic location of the ward and the MK: East development, or “Pineham”, which is both a central point and a ward name with historical grounding in local politics.

#### **4) Wavendon Gate**

Alter the boundary between the proposed Walnut Tree Ward and the proposed Danesborough Ward to run along Ortensia Drive and H9 Groveway.

As a consequence of existing polling districts, the current border between the proposed Walnut Tree ward and the proposed Danesborough Ward along Wavendon Gate is jagged and unusual. Currently, it goes directly through part of Glebe Farm, meaning that a small portion of that estate is contained within the proposed Walnut Tree, whilst the vast majority of the estate is within the proposed Danesborough Ward.

In our view, this is likely to confuse electors, and we believe it would be best amended to run instead along as it does currently until it reaches Ortensia Drive, at which point the boundary follows that road instead. It then should continue up H9 Groveway, before meeting the border of the proposed Danesborough Ward at Newport Road Roundabout. This would be a much clearer and a far better defined boundary, and would be much more intuitive than the current boundary which splits streets such as Garner Lane, Sulman Grove and Elmswell Gate.

Though this is a small change which we suspect involves a very small number of electors, this appears to us as an oversight based on flaws in the existing polling districts and parish boundaries – we hope you take the opportunity to push forward a more sensible border in your final report.

#### **5) Whitehouse and Loughton & Great Holm**

Revisit the decision to split the Whitehouse development and the Loughton & Great Holm parish area across the proposed Loughton Ward, the proposed Bradwell Ward, and the proposed Stony Stratford Ward.

Compared to the rest of this strong report, the proposed wards around the new-build development of Whitehouse in the western flank of Milton Keynes are inexplicable. We concede that the rapid growth of both Whitehouse and Fairfields over the next decade makes parishing this area difficult, but we do not accept that this challenge was not adequately faced up to. Decisions appear to have

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<sup>2</sup>[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/milton-keynes-east-development-framework](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/milton-keynes-east-development-framework)

been made for mathematical convenience, rather than being based on any community-centric rationale.

The division of Whitehouse is nothing short of irresponsible. As a new-build estate, it has not yet fully formed an identity, and to split into an arbitrary Whitehouse East and Whitehouse West before construction is close to finishing will be a serious barrier to those links developing – a cost we note that the Liberal Democrat proposal which pioneered this split acknowledged, yet suggested was no major loss. The current border means that, for some, the polling district for their ward is no longer located within the ward itself – this is a ridiculous situation that can only come to pass through hasty pen strokes posing as considered boundaries. The ward councillors, and the community parish councillors, have worked incredibly hard to foster a community dynamic in the estate composed mostly of people new to our city – a school, a community shop and a GP service have helped to develop this too. Putting this progress at risk is simply not worth it. There is absolutely no social justification for this, and we sorely regret that it has been proposed.

The impact that this decision, which directly affects only the Loughton Ward and the Stony Stratford Ward, has had on other warding decisions is not hidden. The decision to include Great Holm within the proposed Bradwell Ward is one, once again, with no community or historic basis. Not only does it insert an unrelated area with unrelated issues and an unrelated identity into the proposed Bradwell Ward, but it wrenches away an integral part of the Loughton & Great Holm parish area from the proposed Loughton Ward. Whilst we accept that the peripheries of parish councils may benefit from being included within wards they are closer to economically and socially – our earlier Redhouse Park proposal relies on this premise – there is absolutely no case for splitting out a core area of a parish to justify an irrational decision elsewhere in the city. We expect all relevant parish councils will share our deep concern, and we hope you place great stock in their views.

Unlike our other proposals, we are not proposing to you any fixed solution. To rectify this matter will require a complete redrawing of many of the western wards you have proposed, and these may still be incongruent with other proposals across the city, and we accept – albeit with great frustration – that changes of this magnitude are almost never made after the draft stage. Almost never, though, is not never, and we urge you to depart from that here and reconsider the western flank of the city.

## **6) Names**

**Rename a series of proposed wards to ensure they better reflect the communities they cover.**

Though we were content with most of the names proposed in the initial report, we believe some ought to be changed to better reflect the communities they cover.

It is our view that the proposed Bletchley North Ward would benefit instead from being called “Bletchley West”. This reflects that it is largely a successor to the existing Bletchley West Ward, and that much of the area covered by the ward is part of the West Bletchley parish area. “North” is confusing, as many would associate this with the Denbigh area that is instead part of the proposed Bletchley Park Ward. Given that both the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats proposed this name for near identical wards in the consultation stage, we hope you’ll make this change.



The proposed Bletchley Park Ward covers a much larger area geographically than the current Bletchley Park Ward, including the distinct area of Fenny Stratford. Tracing a unique history back to the time of Roman occupation, residents of Fenny Stratford are proud of their identity, and this should be reflected by naming the ward "Bletchley Park & Fenny Stratford".

The proposed Bletchley South Ward includes the new estate of Eaton Leys. In the body of your report, you invited opinion on whether this area should instead be included in the proposed Danesborough Ward. Having consulted ward councillors on the matter, we are of the opinion that moving Eaton Leys out of Bletchley South would risk isolating the community, and may undo hard work from local councillors in fostering a sense of community in the small estate over the last several years. However, to reflect the inclusion of the estate within Bletchley South, we believe a more appropriate name would be "Bletchley South & Eaton Leys".

Though we strongly oppose the proposed ward of Loughton, we accept that it may be implemented with unaltered boundaries. If this is the case, we would like to see the ward renamed to "Watling". Loughton is a small part of the original ward, and has very little in common with other parts of the ward, such as Whitehouse. Watling, in reference to Watling Street which forms the spine of the ward, is a much more neutral name that would be more reflective of the ward more widely. We would regret that, even in the event of Loughton & Great Holm Parish Council's objection to the ward pattern, the ward would bear the name of the parish - this is likely to confuse residents of Great Holm, and we believe it is best avoided. We also note that the Conservative Party similarly proposed Watling Street North and Watling Street South Wards in the area - this is an accepted name for this flank of the city.

The proposed Bradwell Ward bears a name that does not reflect the broader area, with Bradwell Village only a small part of the ward. The majority of the ward isn't even included within the Bradwell parish area, with Two Mile Ash, Bancroft, Bancroft Park and Great Holm having no connection to the name. Given this, we believe a more appropriate name would be "Abbey Hill", which is the name of the parish council that joins various parts of the ward together physically, as well as being a neutral name - Abbey Hill is a golf course and a parish, but not an estate - that doesn't prioritise one part of the ward over another.

The adoption of these names would, in some cases, minimise confusion as new boundaries are ushered in, and, in others, ensure that all parts of a proposed ward feel represented by their local councillors. We hope they will be given serious thought before a final report is published.