**Response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England**

**Proposed Changes to Milton Keynes Wards**

Castlethorpe Parish Council objects in the strongest terms possible to the proposal to create the new ‘Hanslope & New Bradwell’ ward.

It is quite 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 about 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 totally 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 Neighbour 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. (A lot of recent work has been done by our Ward Councillors after re-routing of a bus route left residents unable to get to work or school)
* Fly tipping occurs in our lay-bys and on farmland
* 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. The urban areas got this as a matter of course. The rurals 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 much less planning development especially in New Bradwell and Bradville which are pretty much 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

Urban communities are mainly concerned with:

* Deprivation.
* Housing
* Community facilities
* Play areas

These  are hugely important. All these exist in the rural areas but not to the same extent and require less focus by councillors.  There is a materially different balance between urban and rural.

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.

Nevertheless, it is telling that, under the penultimate arrangements when there were single councillor wards and a single ward constituted Hanslope, Castlethorpe and Haversham, very successful Local Area Forums (LAF) were held quarterly with Milton Keynes 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 Hanslope. There isn’t one 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 Castlethorpe and Central Milton Keynes because some of the residents work at Santander or the shopping centre.

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

1. Frankly, single councillor wards worked really well with a Ward Councillor responsible for Hanslope, Castlethorpe and Haversham. 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 ward maintaining the 60-councillor total.  
     
   As a variant, we would also suggest that this 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, this would have the benefit of removing the possibility of voting deadlock with the even number proposed.
2. Alternatively, we would ask that an asymmetrical arrangement is made so that the rural part of the Ward has, say, two Ward Councillors (or even one), and New Bradwell and Bradville either stand-alone or joining with, say, Wolverton 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.
3. Finally, we have been made aware of a re-balancing exercise which is shown 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.

Castlethorpe Parish Council unanimously agreed to urge 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.

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| **Response to LGBCE Proposal for MKCC Ward Boundaries - Option 3** | | | | |
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|  | **Ward** | **Polling Districts** | **Electorate** | **Variance** |
| **1** | **Ouse Valley North** | **Haversham, 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% |
| 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% |