



Appendix A

Response to the: *Draft New
Electoral Arrangements for
Central Bedfordshire Council*



1. INTRODUCTION

This submission presents the response to the *Draft Recommendations* for the number and location of electoral wards for the Central Bedfordshire unitary authority.

Whilst remaining firmly of the opinion that a council size of 60 would be more appropriate to meet the needs of our communities we nevertheless welcome the fact that the Committee has agreed the majority of our submission on the pattern of wards by accepting some 29 of the 31 wards proposed.

2. SANDY WARD

Sandy (Fallowfield Ward), Sandy (Beeston Ward), Old Warden, Blunham, Southill, Moggerhanger, Northill

We note with interest the conclusion of the Committee in respect of the proposals put forward for Sandy town and its hinterland but would contend that our original submission still remains the best option for the communities in this area.

We would very much refute the suggestion that there is a community link between Blunham and Sandy parishes and to incorporate Blunham within a 3 member ward for Sandy will simply see the interests of the residents of Blunham overtaken by the pressing needs of a thriving urban community.

The village of Blunham has less than 800 residents who maintain a rural lifestyle, they have a very close connection with the neighbouring parish of Moggerhanger as well as a natural affinity to Great Barford in the adjoining borough council area. Indeed, the infant and middle schools in Blunham and Great Barford serve both parishes and it would not be unusual for a secondary school placement to be sought in Biggleswade rather than Sandy.

In respect of children's activity groups such as the Cubs, Brownies and Beavers the parish would have its own groups however whenever there are insufficient numbers to maintain a particular children's group then membership and interest has transferred to Great Barford. The churches within Great Barford and Blunham are served by the same vicar.

In the majority of cases a shopping trip from Blunham would be to the nearby town of Bedford and not Sandy. Moreover, the plethora of events run in the nearby Moggerhanger Park is fully supported by the residents of Blunham. Indeed, the local football team is from the combined villages of Blunham and Moggerhanger.

The parish of Blunham is a thriving community that intertwines its country activities with its immediate rural neighbours and we would very much re-enforce our proposal of combining the parishes of Old Warden, Blunham, Southill, Moggerhanger and Northill together with the two adjoining town

wards of Sandy (Fallowfield) and Sandy (Beeston) to make a two-member ward to reflect the interests and identities of the local community.

Northhill

| Parish | 2013 electorate | Variance |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Sandy (Fallowfield Ward) | 1465 | |
| Sandy (Beeston Ward) | 665 | |
| Old Warden | 262 | |
| Blunham | 802 | |
| Southill (Stanford Ward) | 200 | |
| Southill (Broom Ward) | 467 | |
| Southill (Southill Ward) | 266 | |
| Moggerhanger | 508 | |
| Northhill | 1837 | |
| Total | 6472 | |
| Divided by 2 members | 3236 | -8.09% |

Acceptance of the above argument would mean that Sandy itself would become a two-member ward thus:

Sandy

| Parish | 2013 electorate | Variance |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Sandy (Ivel Ward) | 2840 | |
| Sandy (Pinnacle Ward) | 3900 | |
| Total | 6740 | |
| Divided by 2 members | 3370 | -4.28% |

3. DUNSTABLE

The combination of our proposed single member wards of Beecroft and Northfields is duly noted. The Council's submission sought to achieve, where appropriate, single member representation and concluded that whilst the pattern submitted did in fact separate a part of the Beecroft estate the extensive development within the north of the ward would eventually reflect a distinctly different community and sought to identify it as such. Nevertheless, we have no major objections to the Committee's proposal of a 2-member Northfields ward.

4 PARISH ELECTORAL ARRANGMENTS

We agree in general with your proposals in respect of the four town councils you have considered but would suggest in three cases that more equal ratios of electors to councillors could be achieved by adjusting the number of councillors per ward.

BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL

In respect of the recommendations for Biggleswade Town Council parish wards we are unsure as to why the Committee has sought to have a disproportionate electoral representation at town council level and we would recommend the following:

| Parish Ward | Members |
|--------------|-----------|
| Ivel | 7 |
| Stratton | 5 |
| Holme | 3 |
| Total | 15 |

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

In respect of the recommendations for Dunstable Town Council parish wards we are unsure as to why the Committee has sought to have a disproportionate electoral representation at town council level and we would recommend the following:

| Parish Ward | Members |
|--------------|-----------|
| Central | 3 |
| Icknield | 5 |
| Northfields | 5 |
| Manshead | 3 |
| Watling | 5 |
| Total | 21 |

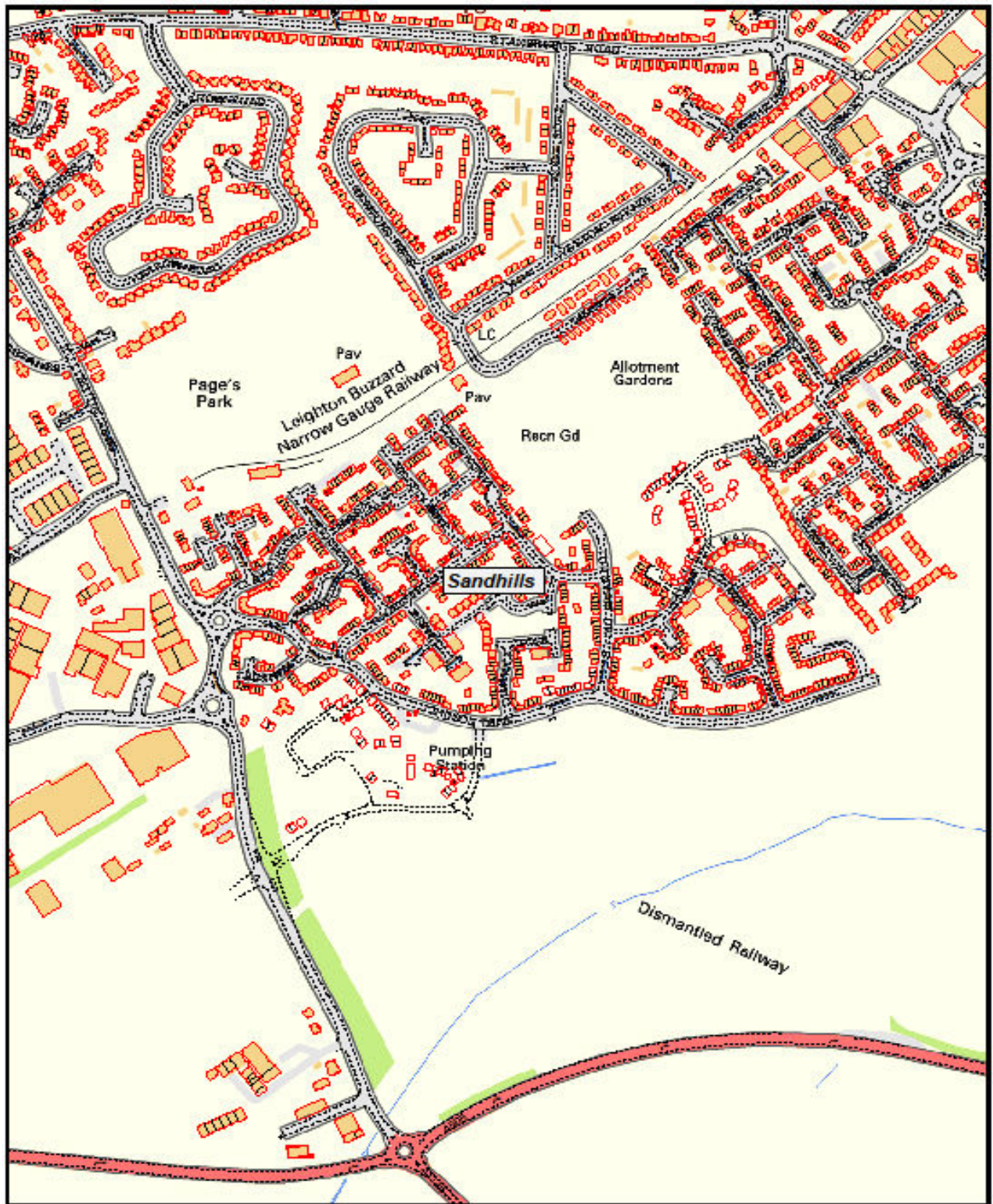
LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

The draft recommendations for Leighton-Linslade indicate that the town council has currently 20 members; this is fact incorrect. At the last electoral review of the former South Bedfordshire District Council area in 2002, it was recommended that the extensive development in the south east of the town be included in the Grovebury ward. Consequently, a request was received from the town council to increase the number of councillors to 21. This was approved at a later date by South Bedfordshire DC.

Here town council wards could be aligned with the new Central Bedfordshire wards which are based on clearly identifiable boundaries. This would give 3 wards each with 7 town councillors which would have the advantages of clarity and simplicity. But we consider that 7 Councillors per ward is too many in this context and therefore on balance would prefer to see some of the current town ward boundaries used to subdivide the three Unitary Wards as indeed you have proposed. Again we would recommend the following to achieve much better equality of ratios of councillors to electors than in your draft:

| Parish Ward | Members |
|--------------------|----------------|
| Grovebury | 5 |
| Sandhills | 2 |
| Linslade | 3 |
| Plantation | 5 |
| Planets | 2 |
| Southcott | 4 |
| Total | 21 |

It should be noted that we have introduced a sub-division of the Leighton Buzzard South Ward into Grovebury and Sandhills. Sandhills is distinct from the rest of the ward. Access to the suburb is only from Billington Road and there is no through road to any other part of the Unitary ward. Consequently, this new parish ward would be able to reflect a clear community identity in line with that already recognised by the retention of the Planets ward. Grovebury is an existing ward name applying to most of the rest of Leighton Buzzard South.



Sandhills Area, Leighton Buzzard



Date: 15 June 2010

Scale 1:6500

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Central Bedfordshire

5. WARD NAMES

We note that all of the town wards with the exception of Houghton Regis have the name of the town incorporated into the title consequently we recommend the following changes:

Houghton Regis –Tithe Farm

Houghton Regis - Parkside

Houghton Regis – Houghton Hall

6. CONCLUSION

To conclude, we are pleased to see that the majority of the Council's views have been incorporated into the draft recommendations and would submit that in the case of Sandy and the parish of Blunham we have given demonstrable evidence that our original submission is the most appropriate solution for the communities involved. Regarding town councils our proposed adjustments to numbers of councillors per ward would achieve much greater equality of representation by moving much closer to equality of ratios of councillors to electors.