

Parliamentary Constituencies in England Review

Submission on Eastern Region

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1. INTRODUCTION

Vision

- 1.1 The Council's vision is to *improve the quality of life of all in Central Bedfordshire, and enhance the unique character of our communities and our environment.*
- 1.2 The vision for Central Bedfordshire Council was created by our elected representatives, staff, partners and stakeholders and was arrived at after considering the geography, demography and future growth of the area and views of the residents.
- 1.3 The Council's developing Community Engagement Strategy, builds on the commitments made in the bid for unitary status to place communities at the forefront of the Council's work – to ensure the Council and its key partners listen to, discuss and act on issues that are of utmost importance to the people in Central Bedfordshire. The aim is to build on the current engagement with the community, putting members of parliament and councillors at the heart of community and to move the Council towards higher levels of community empowerment.

Area

- 1.4 Central Bedfordshire is the gateway to the Midlands and East Anglia and is served by the M1, A1, A5 and A6 roads together with three different rail networks traversing the district giving rise to the influx of commuters specifically around the towns that support the rail links.
- 1.5 The Central Bedfordshire area currently has a population of around 250,000 and it is planned to grow rapidly, to an estimated population of over 300,000 by 2021, through the development of some 27,000 new homes. Moreover, the population is predicted to continue to grow quickly between 2022 and 2031 through further in-migration.
- 1.6 Central Bedfordshire covers an area of some 716 square kilometres and has a diverse mix of urban and rural communities. Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard, as market towns, represent the largest urban areas and collectively account for some 29% of the population. The other 6 towns are geographically spread across the area of the authority and collectively they account for a further 31% of the population. The remaining 40% of the population extend across some substantially sized villages to the very small hamlets each with its own individual character
- 1.7 This profile places considerable difficulties on the elected politicians, in the way that they represent and serve their respective communities. Specifically when taking into account the diversity of the socio economic groups across the Authority.
- 1.8 Central Bedfordshire is fully parished with 71 Town and Parish Councils.

Council

- 1.9 Central Bedfordshire is a Unitary Council and was formed in April 2009 based on the combined area of the former Mid and South Bedfordshire districts.

2. OUR APPROACH TO DETERMINING THE CONSTITUENCIES

- 2.1 We have been mindful of the Boundary Committee's (BCE) guidance on factors to consider when making a proposal on constituencies including:-
- every constituency in England must have an electorate as at the review date that is no smaller than 72810 and no larger than 80,473;
 - special geographical considerations, including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
 - local government boundaries as they existed on 6 May 2010; and
 - any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies.
- 2.2 Against this background we have reviewed the BCE initial proposals and would respectfully suggest that the revised proposals as shown in part 3 (below) reflect a clear cohesion of the existing community which takes into consideration a sense of locality and place.
- 2.3 Furthermore, we are of the firm belief that the county boundaries play an important part in the identity of the electorate and it is with this mind that in our alternative submission we have reduced the cross-county constituencies from 3 to 2.

3. THE CASE

- 3.1 We acknowledge that the BCE is under remit to reduce the number of constituencies and therefore in the case of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire it is not possible to treat the counties as separate entities. However, we would suggest that to have Central Bedfordshire represented by 6 MP's rather than the existing 4 simply dissipates the Council area even further as well as adding to an already confusing situation for the electorate. Moreover, the formation of Central Bedfordshire with its consequential new warding differs considerably from the data set as at 6 May 2010 and therefore to accept the BCE proposals would mean that we would have 5 existing Central Bedfordshire wards where a proportion of the parishes are represented by a different MP.
- 3.2 In formulating our proposals we have addressed, where possible, the anomaly of the parishes within the same wards having differing representation at Westminster but accept that it has not been possible to completely resolve the issue.
- 3.3 As previously indicated, Central Bedfordshire was formed from the former districts of Mid and South Bedfordshire and whilst both former authorities would have described themselves as rural communities they nevertheless differ considerably in

the concentration of their respective electorate. The former South Bedfordshire has 3 market towns; Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Leighton Buzzard within 5 miles radius of each other and collectively they account for some 70,000 electorate. Clearly, to separate them into different constituencies would simply create unnecessary divisions that have been forged over hundreds of years. Indeed, unless you lived in the area you cannot see where Dunstable boundary ends and Houghton Regis starts. Additionally, it should be noted that the long term development plan will inevitably create even closer ties between Leighton Buzzard and both Houghton Regis and Dunstable.

- 3.4 The proposal to include the town of Dunstable within the Luton North constituency we believe is contrary to the fundamentals of a *broad community of interest*. The market town of Dunstable is contiguous with the border of Luton at Poynters Road to the east of the town however the remaining boundaries join the rural communities of Caddington, Kensworth, Totternhoe and Houghton Regis to which they are inextricably linked. The connection with Luton is in most cases the convenient *through* transport link to the nearest railhead for onward journeys to London and the South East or for employment at Luton Airport which ironically also traverses parts of the Central Bedfordshire Council area. Central Bedfordshire does not have any hospitals within its boundaries consequently, there is a link to all of our neighbouring authorities not just Luton. There are number of the electorate who would shop in Luton however there are an equal number who would shop in Milton Keynes, which is outside of the CBC area. The cultural lifestyle of Luton is significantly different from that enjoyed by the residents of Dunstable and it is difficult to see where there is any common ground of integrated community involvement short of supporting the only professional football club within the whole of Bedfordshire which is Luton Town FC.
- 3.4 Our purpose in re-instating the former Mid Bedfordshire constituency is once again to reflect the lifestyle and the community that already exists. Mid Bedfordshire is an agricultural area and bears no correlation to the town of Leighton Buzzard. The electorate of the area share the same values and the same interests and with the exception of the small towns of Flitwick and Ampthill the electorate are spread across the large areas of countryside.

4. PROPOSED CONSTITUENCIES

- 4.1 In determining our scheme we have endeavoured to incorporate into each constituency parishes and towns where strong community links already exist. Whilst at the same time recognising that the reduction of one constituency within Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire will inevitably mean that a number of the electorate will be moved to an adjacent constituency.
- 4.2 Although the following constituency detail shows changes to some 14 of the 16 BCE initial proposals it should be noted that with the exception of only 2 of our constituency proposals (Mid Bedfordshire & Hoo and Harpenden & Luton South) the changes in the majority of the constituencies are quite minimal.

Constituency	Ward	District/Borough/City/ County	Electorate	From BCE Proposal
Bedford CC			77658	No Change
	Brickhill	Bedford BC	6339	
	Bromham	Bedford BC	6413	
	Castle	Bedford BC	5805	
	Cauldwell	Bedford BC	5630	
	De Parys	Bedford BC	4405	
	Goldington	Bedford BC	6174	
	Harpur	Bedford BC	5285	
	Kempston East	Bedford BC	4345	
	Kempston North	Bedford BC	4030	
	Kempston South	Bedford BC	5549	
	Kingsbrook	Bedford BC	6143	
	Newnham	Bedford BC	3896	
	Putnoe	Bedford BC	6421	
	Queen's Park	Bedford BC	4997	
	Turvey	Bedford BC	2226	
Broxbourne CC			78485	
	Broxbourne	Broxbourne BC	4972	
	Bury Green	Broxbourne BC	4751	
	Cheshunt Central	Broxbourne BC	5427	
	Cheshunt North	Broxbourne BC	5456	
	Flamstead End	Broxbourne BC	5234	
	Goffs Oak	Broxbourne BC	6170	
	Hoddesdon North	Broxbourne BC	5400	
	Hoddesdon Town	Broxbourne BC	5299	
	Rosedale	Broxbourne BC	3316	
	Rye Park	Broxbourne BC	4846	
	Theobalds	Broxbourne BC	5243	
	Waltham Cross	Broxbourne BC	4764	
	Wormley & Turnford	Broxbourne BC	6730	
	Great Amwell	East Herts DC	2118	
	Stanstead Abbotts	East Herts DC	2337	
	Hertford Heath	East Herts DC	2158	Hertford & Stortford CC
	Northaw & Cuffley	East Herts DC	4264	
Hemel Hempstead CC			77339	
	Redbourn	City of St Albans	4778	St Albans CC
	Adeyfield East	Dacorum BC	3927	
	Adeyfield West	Dacorum BC	4037	
	Aspley & Corner Hall	Dacorum BC	6236	
	Bennetts End	Dacorum BC	4481	
	Boxmoor	Dacorum BC	6277	
	Chaulden & Warners End	Dacorum BC	6754	
	Gadebridge	Dacorum BC	4121	

	Grovehill	Dacorum BC	5544	
	Hemel Hempstead Town	Dacorum BC	3954	
	Highfield	Dacorum BC	4093	
	Kings Langley	Dacorum BC	3897	
	Leverstock Green	Dacorum BC	6760	
	Nash Mills	Dacorum BC	2121	
	Watling	Dacorum BC	4149	
	Woodhall Farm	Dacorum BC	4072	
	Ashridge	Dacorum BC	2138	SW Hertfordshire CC

Hertford and Stortford CC			78753	
	Braughing	East Herts DC	1996	Letchworth CC
	Bishop's Stortford All Saints	East Herts DC	5642	
	Bishop's Stortford Central	East Herts DC	7090	
	Bishop's Stortford Meads	East Herts DC	4317	
	Bishop's Stortford Silverleys	East Herts DC	4032	
	Bishop's Stortford South	East Herts DC	6440	
	Hertford Bengoe	East Herts DC	5784	
	Hertford Castle	East Herts DC	6192	
	Hertford Kingsmead	East Herts DC	3891	
	Hertford Sele	East Herts DC	4174	
	Humsdon	East Herts DC	2097	
	Little Hadam	East Herts DC	1850	
	Much Hadam	East Herts DC	2212	
	Sawbridge	East Herts DC	6555	
	Thundridge & Standon	East Herts DC	2265	
	Ware Chadwell	East Herts DC	2305	
	Ware Christchurch	East Herts DC	3855	
	Ware St Mary's	East Herts DC	4086	
	Ware Trinity	East Herts DC	3970	

Hertsmere CC			74672	No Change
	Aldenham East	Hertsmere BC	3674	
	Aldenham West	Hertsmere BC	3551	
	Borehamwood	Hertsmere BC	5219	

	Brookmeadow			
	Borehamwood Cowley Hill	Hertsmere BC	5835	
	Borehamwood Hillside	Hertsmere BC	6496	
	Borehamwood Kenilworth	Hertsmere BC	3996	
	Bushey Heath	Hertsmere BC	5062	
	Bushey North	Hertsmere BC	4652	
	Bushey Park	Hertsmere BC	3371	
	Bushey St James	Hertsmere BC	5396	
	Elstree	Hertsmere BC	3574	
	Potters Bar Furzefield	Hertsmere BC	4826	
	Potters Bar Oakmere	Hertsmere BC	5484	
	Potters Bar Parkfield	Hertsmere BC	5896	
	Shenley	Hertsmere BC	3740	
	Carpenders Park	Three Rivers DC	3900	

Letchworth CC			80088	
	Hitchin Bearton	North Herts DC	5929	Hitchin & Harpenden CC
	Hitchin Highbury	North Herts DC	5933	Hitchin & Harpenden CC
	Hitchin Oughton	North Herts DC	3609	Hitchin & Harpenden CC
	Hitchin Priors	North Herts DC	3590	Hitchin & Harpenden CC
	Hitchin Walsworth	North Herts DC	5987	Hitchin & Harpenden CC
	Arbury	North Herts DC	2095	
	Baldock East	North Herts DC	2231	
	Baldock Town	North Herts DC	5612	
	Ermine	North Herts DC	2005	
	Letchworth East	North Herts DC	4133	
	Letchworth Grange	North Herts DC	5688	
	Letchworth South East	North Herts DC	5632	
	Letchworth South West	North Herts DC	5865	
	Letchworth Wilbury	North Herts DC	3947	
	Royston Heath	North Herts DC	4035	
	Royston Meridian	North Herts DC	4114	
	Royston Palace	North Herts DC	3939	
	Weston & Sandon	North Herts DC	1622	
	Buntingford	East Herts DC	4122	

Luton North BC			78126	
	Biscot	Luton BC	8439	Luton South CC
	Bramingham	Luton BC	5611	
	Challney	Luton BC	8328	
	Dallow	Luton BC	8848	Luton South CC

	Icknield	Luton BC	5756	
	Leagrave	Luton BC	7708	
	Lewsey	Luton BC	8421	
	Limbury	Luton BC	5594	
	Northwell	Luton BC	5309	
	Saints	Luton BC	8659	Luton South CC
	Sundon Park	Luton BC	5453	

Harpenden & Luton South BC			76729	
	South East Bedfordshire	Central Bedfordshire	6034	Hemel Hempstead CC
	Harpenden East	City of St Albans	5377	Hitchin & Harpenden CC
	Harpenden North	City of St Albans	5211	Hitchin & Harpenden CC
	Harpenden South	City of St Albans	5291	Hitchin & Harpenden CC
	Harpenden West	City of St Albans	5656	Hitchin & Harpenden CC
	Farley	Luton BC	7000	Luton South CC
	High Town	Luton BC	4705	Luton South CC
	Round Green	Luton BC	7606	Luton South CC
	South	Luton BC	5964	Luton South CC
	Stopsley	Luton BC	5393	Luton South CC
	Wigmore	Luton BC	8193	Luton South CC
	Barnfield	Luton BC	5434	Luton South CC
	Crawley	Luton BC	4865	Luton South CC

North Bedfordshire CC			77530	
	Carlton	Bedford BC	2365	
	Clapham	Bedford BC	4636	
	Eastcotts	Bedford BC	2397	
	Great Barford	Bedford BC	5301	
	Harrold	Bedford BC	2490	
	Oakley	Bedford BC	1880	
	Riseley	Bedford BC	2289	
	Roxton	Bedford BC	2315	
	Sharnbrook	Bedford BC	2339	
	Wilhamstead	Bedford BC	4459	
	Wootton	Bedford BC	4139	
	Stotfold & Arlesey	Central Bedfordshire	11456	Letchworth CC
	Potton	Central Bedfordshire	5728	Letchworth CC
	Northhill & Blunham	Central Bedfordshire	6861	
	Sandy	Central Bedfordshire	6673	
	Biggleswade	Central Bedfordshire	12202	

Mid Bedfordshire &			78922	
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Hoo CC				
	Barton	Central Bedfordshire	5749	South West Beds CC
	Flitwick East	Central Bedfordshire	6382	South West Beds CC
	Flitwick West	Central Bedfordshire	5842	South West Beds CC
	Toddington	Central Bedfordshire	5181	South West Beds CC
	Woburn & Harlington	Central Bedfordshire	7664	South West Beds CC
	Shefford	Central Bedfordshire	6776	Hitchin & Harpenden CC
	Silsoe & Shillington	Central Bedfordshire	6172	Hitchin & Harpenden CC
	Langford & Henlow Village	Central Bedfordshire	6522	Hitchin & Harpenden CC
	Ampthill	Central Bedfordshire	5555	North Bedfordshire CC
	Cranfield	Central Bedfordshire	3720	North Bedfordshire CC
	Marston	Central Bedfordshire	4368	North Bedfordshire CC
	Maulden & Houghton Conquest	Central Bedfordshire	5885	North Bedfordshire CC
	Cadwell	North Herts DC	1765	Hitchin & Harpenden CC
	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	North Herts DC	5589	Hitchin & Harpenden CC
	Kimpton	North Herts DC	1752	Hitchin & Harpenden CC

South West Beds CC			73766	
	Dunstable Downs	Central Bedfordshire	11089	Luton South CC
	Icknield	Central Bedfordshire	5219	Luton South CC
	Northfields	Central Bedfordshire	5076	Luton South CC
	Watling	Central Bedfordshire	5393	Luton South CC
	Grovebury	Central Bedfordshire	7067	
	Houghton Regis	Central Bedfordshire	11913	
	Leighton Linlade Central	Central Bedfordshire	11276	
	Plantation	Central Bedfordshire	5929	
	South West Bedfordshire	Central Bedfordshire	5604	
	Southcott	Central Bedfordshire	5200	

South West Hertfordshire CC			78269	
	Aldbury & Wiggington	Dacorum BC	1876	
	Berkhamsted Castle	Dacorum BC	4560	
	Berkhamsted East	Dacorum BC	4474	
	Berkhamsted West	Dacorum BC	4533	
	Bovingdon, Flaunden & Chipperfield	Dacorum BC	6438	
	Northchurch	Dacorum BC	2160	

	Tring Central	Dacorum BC	3969	
	Tring East	Dacorum BC	2177	
	Tring West & Rural	Dacorum BC	4096	
	Chorleywood East	Three Rivers DC	3310	
	Chorleywood West	Three Rivers DC	4252	
	Coxley Green	Three Rivers DC	4275	
	Croxley Green North	Three Rivers DC	2618	
	Croxley Green South	Three Rivers DC	2726	
	Ashridge	Three Rivers DC	2582	Watford CC
	Hayling	Three Rivers DC	2427	Watford CC
	Moor Park & Eastbury	Three Rivers DC	4455	Watford CC
	Northwick	Three Rivers DC	3232	Watford CC
	Maple Cross & Mill End	Three Rivers DC	4046	
	Penn	Three Rivers DC	2513	
	Rickmansworth	Three Rivers DC	3281	
	Rickmansworth West	Three Rivers DC	2751	
	Sarratt	Three Rivers DC	1518	

St Albans CC			78847	
	Ashley	City of St Albans	5314	
	Batchwood	City of St Albans	5376	
	Clarence	City of St Albans	4730	
	Colney Heath	City of St Albans	4103	
	Cunningham	City of St Albans	4608	
	London Colney	City of St Albans	6627	
	Marshalswick North	City of St Albans	4887	
	Marshalswick South	City of St Albans	5223	
	Park Street	City of St Albans	5536	
	Wheathampstead	City of St Albans	4705	Hitchin & Harpenden CC
	St Peters	City of St Albans	5514	
	St Stephen	City of St Albans	5231	
	Sandridge	City of St Albans	3844	
	Sopwell	City of St Albans	5105	
	Verulam	City of St Albans	5036	
	Bedmond & Primrose Hill	Three Rivers DC	3008	

Stevenage CC			78366	
	Datchworth & Aston	East Herts DC	1937	
	Walkern	East Herts DC	2098	
	Watton-at-Stone	East Herts DC	1738	Welwyn & Hatfield
	Chesfield	North Herts DC	5173	

	Codicote	North Herts DC	2095	
	Knebworth	North Herts DC	4122	
	Bandley Hill	Stevenage BC	4865	
	Bedwell	Stevenage BC	4873	
	Chells	Stevenage BC	4899	
	Longmeadow	Stevenage BC	4474	
	Manor	Stevenage BC	4969	
	Martins Wood	Stevenage BC	4670	
	Old Town	Stevenage BC	5858	
	Pin Green	Stevenage BC	4538	
	Roebuck	Stevenage BC	4681	
	St Nicholas	Stevenage BC	4446	
	Shephall	Stevenage BC	4408	
	Symonds Green	Stevenage BC	4380	
	Woodfield	Stevenage BC	4142	

Watford CC			77039	
	Oxhey Hall	Three Rivers DC	2576	
	Callowland	Watford BC	4976	
	Central	Watford BC	5433	
	Holywell	Watford BC	5663	
	Leggatts	Watford BC	5142	
	Meriden	Watford BC	5467	
	Nascot	Watford BC	5687	
	Oxhey	Watford BC	5028	
	Park	Watford BC	5763	
	Stanborough	Watford BC	5192	
	Tudor	Watford BC	4556	
	Vicarage	Watford BC	4975	
	Woodside	Watford BC	5125	
	Abbots Langley	Three Rivers DC	3701	South West Herts CC
	Langleybury	Three Rivers DC	3774	South West Herts CC
	Leavesden	Three Rivers DC	3981	South West Herts CC

Welwyn Hatfield CC			79437	
	Hertford Rural North	East Herts DC	1796	
	Hertford Rural South	East Herts DC	1934	
	Mundens & Cottered	East Herts DC	1907	Letchworth CC
	Puckeridge	East Herts DC	2034	Letchworth CC
	Brookmans Park & Little Heath	Welwyn Hatfield BC	4585	
	Haldens	Welwyn Hatfield BC	4770	
	Handside	Welwyn Hatfield BC	5205	
	Hatfield Central	Welwyn Hatfield BC	4588	
	Hatfield East	Welwyn Hatfield BC	4687	

	Hatfield South	Welwyn Hatfield BC	3533	
	Hatfield Villages	Welwyn Hatfield BC	3901	
	Hatfield West	Welwyn Hatfield BC	5538	
	Hollybush	Welwyn Hatfield BC	5242	
	Howlands	Welwyn Hatfield BC	4483	
	Panshanger	Welwyn Hatfield BC	4918	
	Peartree	Welwyn Hatfield BC	5133	
	Sherrards	Welwyn Hatfield BC	4418	
	Welwyn East	Welwyn Hatfield BC	4779	
	Welwyn West	Welwyn Hatfield BC	3122	
	Welham Green	Welwyn Hatfield BC	2864	

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Whilst we agree with the principals of the review we firmly believe that the changes proposed by the BCE does not take sufficient account of the fact that Central Bedfordshire (CBC) is a newly formed authority which is striving to create a sense of place and identity within its new boundaries. Moreover, an integral part of building the community identity is the relationship that CBC, its Towns and parishes has with the Members of Parliament and the proposal to only have one constituency wholly contained within the Council's area will fundamentally change the relationships that currently exist. Indeed, to have so many wards with different MP's as proposed by the BCE seeks to divide local ties and local communities.
- 5.2 Central Bedfordshire aims to become an excellent authority, to deliver high quality democratically driven services and to provide strong, effective and accountable community leadership. It is against this background that this submission is made. The Council commends its recommendation to the Boundary Committee for England.

