



Laverstock & Ford Parish Council

Incorporating Milford, Bishopdown Farm, Old Sarum & Longhedge

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Review Officer (Wiltshire)

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England

1st Floor,

Windsor House

50 Victoria Street

London

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13 April 2019

Dear Sir or Madam

ELECTORAL REVIEW OF WILTSHIRE: DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Laverstock and Ford Parish Council has considered the LGBCE's draft recommendations for Laverstock and Ford Parish, however it objects in the strongest terms to the Commission's recommendations for:

- three divisions / Wiltshire councillors rather than two.
- splitting Laverstock village into two divisions.
- two of the three Wiltshire councillors representing divisions split across parts of Laverstock and Ford Parish and Salisbury City Parish.
- giving the split divisions Salisbury names.

It believes that the recommendations do not align to the statutory criteria of **community identity and effective and convenient local government**, nor does it believe three Wiltshire Councillors are necessary to achieve the third requirement of **electoral equality**.

The Parish Council wishes to stress the importance for both **community identity and effective local government** that for the first time, Laverstock and Ford Parish Council, Wiltshire Council and Salisbury City Parish Council agree on the future electoral division arrangements, the Parish boundary and Area Board representation for Laverstock and Ford Parish. This follows a significant period of animosity resulting from a proposal in 2016 by Salisbury City Parish to absorb all of Laverstock and Ford Parish. The proposal was rejected strongly by Wiltshire Council, but the proposal and its aftermath led to residual ill feeling which is only recently abating. The significance of this new consensus cannot therefore be overstated. It paves the way to strengthening the geographically close, but separate, **identities and cohesiveness** of the two parishes, fostering better and more

productive relations between the two, celebrating and sharing what each does differently, and making sure the voices of the different communities are **equally represented** at the unitary level via the Area Boards.

The Parish Council notes that the Commission does not consider that its recommendations for electoral divisions constrain Wiltshire Council's ability to resolve the issue of Laverstock and Ford Parish's Area Board representation. However, under the Commission's proposals, the Parish Council believes that it would continue to experience the poor representation it already experiences by having its Bishopdown Farm ward combined with elements of Salisbury to form the Salisbury St Marks and Bishopdown division, where the city dwelling Wiltshire Councillor is unable to effectively represent the semi-rural needs of the Parish residents.

The Parish Council raised this problem of lack of effective representation with the Laverstock and Ford Wiltshire Councillor, the Chairman of Southern Wiltshire Area Board and the Wiltshire Council Monitoring Officer. It was told it would all be resolved when the division boundaries were reviewed, hence the support from Wiltshire Council for two Laverstock and Ford Wiltshire Councillors, both sitting on the Southern Wiltshire Area Board where the Parish has natural affinity.

Proposed divisions "Old Sarum and Laverstock North" and Salisbury Milford and Laverstock South"

The Commission's recommendations for "Old Sarum and Laverstock North" prioritise the retention of the Longhedge / Old Sarum area of the parish in a single division by, instead, separating the Bishopdown Farm and Laverstock ward areas and splitting Laverstock Village, the Parish "capital", between two divisions in a seemingly arbitrary fashion, ignoring the nature of these communities and without providing any **community identity or governance reasoning**. The Commission's recommendations would have a far more negative community impact, particularly when considering the established nature of the housing, connectedness and strongly developed communities in Bishopdown Farm and Laverstock wards. The Parish Council therefore re-asserts that the dividing of Longhedge /Old Sarum, an area of predominately newer housing, such that both parts are included in divisions containing mostly the same parish and not combined in a division containing an element of a city parish is far more acceptable on a **community identity and effective local government** basis than separating the much more established communities of Bishopdown Farm and Laverstock wards, splitting Laverstock Village and, furthermore, connecting them with a Salisbury City division. There is no doubt that the larger part of Old Sarum shares connections via the Green Lane by-way with the Bishopdown Farm area of its own Parish and that the remainder of Old Sarum fits very well with the hamlet of Ford and Laverstock Village along with the parishes of Britford, Firsdon and Clarendon Park. Furthermore, these arrangements deliver the required **electoral equality**.

It is noted that the Commission is "not persuaded that Laverstock shares commonality with Britford and Odstock, or that Laverstock Parish looks more to the more rural villages,

rather than Salisbury.” In the 2016 Wiltshire Council Community Governance Review, which included a survey of all Laverstock and Ford Parish residents, 99.3% of the 1010 responses stated they did not wish to be absorbed into the city and that they choose to live near, not in Salisbury. The linkage identified with Salisbury is therefore contrary to the views expressed by the majority of the residents of the Parish who identify both with their community and the Parish. Being geographically near and ‘looking to’ the larger settlement of Salisbury does not mean that no commonality exist with other rural parishes that exist further from the city, as it is about the character and interests the residents share with them, not least the unhappiness at the prospect of being joined with the City in a division. The Parish Council does, however, accept the Commission’s arguments with regards Odstock.

Although Laverstock and Salisbury are close geographically, the inclusion of parts of Laverstock and Ford Parish within divisions combined with Salisbury City wards would not be a sensible arrangement for **effective local government**. A Wiltshire Councillor would find it extremely difficult to represent such a division effectively as the two parts have very different identities, needs and interests, as demonstrated in the result of the residents’ survey in the 2016 Community Governance Review, summarised above and by the Parish’s current experience of the Salisbury St Marks and Bishopdown division.

“Salisbury St Mark’s & Bishopdown”

Page 39 of the Commission’s Recommendations; paragraph 137 states: “Finally, we propose a Salisbury St Mark’s & Bishopdown division which essentially replicates the existing division of that name”. There is no rationale given for this decision and therefore it again seems arbitrary.

As a result of the 2016 Community Governance Review, Wiltshire Council moved the 300 houses of the Bishopdown Farm development (which has good roads links and multiple footpath connections with both the Hampton Park and Riverdown Park developments of Laverstock and Ford Parish compared to a single unlit walkway connecting it to the old Bishopdown estate) into Laverstock and Ford Parish. These houses have always had shared the local facilities: a shop, doctors’ surgery, dentist, vet, village green and pavilion and a split site village school and strong community representation with the Parish. In addition, every one of the 300 households had received the Laverstock and Ford Parish Newsletter for many years before the area was moved in to the Parish. It would seem that again, the Commission has ignored the 2016 Wiltshire Council Community Governance Review, and the idea that parishes should, where possible, be used as building blocks, resulting in a division unnecessarily splitting a parish.

The Parish Council therefore restates that its original proposals, in line with those of both Wiltshire Council and Salisbury City Council, of one division comprising parts of Laverstock and Ford Parish only and another joining the rest of the Parish with other nearby rural parishes (but not Odstock) would be far more appropriate for **community identity and effective local governance** and can be achieved with **electoral equality**.

The Commission has overlooked the strong community identity within the Parish, and in so doing created divisions which would undermine governance for both Laverstock and Ford Parish and the City Parish. Furthermore, the Parish Council objects vigorously to the proposed names for the 3 divisions and still believes firmly that the recommended 2 divisions (23 and 24), which fall primarily within the Parish, should be named simply **Laverstock and Ford West** and **Laverstock and Ford East**. The use of a Parish's name with East and West added to each division being entirely consistent with the conventions used across other Parishes in the County.

The Parish Council's original submission contained detailed evidence to support our proposal, which has been included in Appendix 1.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Prince
Clerk to the Parish of Laverstock and Ford

Enclosure:

Appendix 1 – LAVERSTOCK&FORDPC_WILTSHIRE_Final_2November2018



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The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
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2 November 2018

Dear Sir or Madam

ELECTORAL REVIEW OF WILTSHIRE: WARDING ARRANGEMENTS

Laverstock and Ford Parish Council is responding to your invitation dated 28 August 2018 for submissions to be taken into account in advance of your decision making regarding the future division boundaries for Wiltshire Council.

The Parish Council submits the following for your consideration:

Laverstock and Ford Parish Council is aware of both the Boundary Commission's statement that;

"in areas where parishes exist, the parish boundaries often represent the extent of a community. In fact, the Commission often uses parishes as the building blocks of wards and electoral divisions"

and of the fact that in the recent Parish Boundary Review / Community Governance Review of 2016 Wiltshire Council ratified the views expressed by Laverstock and Ford Parish Council and 99.3% of the 1010 Parish resident's survey responses (48% came from Laverstock, 28% from Ford and Old Sarum, and 24% from Bishopdown Farm /Hampton Park).

The residents believed strongly that the Parish is an entity with a semi-rural identity, separate and distinct from that of Salisbury City Parish (who wished to take over the entire Parish) which the residents value and wish to preserve. Furthermore, in line with the concept that those who live together are governed together, residents are content that the Parish Council exercises good governance at their local level.

Number of Councillors and Area Board representation

The Parish Council notes that in their deliberations, Wiltshire Council's Electoral Review Committee adhered to the principal that where Wiltshire Council had carried out previous Community Governance Reviews it would be appropriate to adjust division boundaries and Area Board boundaries to reflect those changes. Indeed, this Parish Council made a request to Wiltshire Council in 2012 in light of the known continued growth in the Parish to ensure that there were 2 Wiltshire Councillors for Laverstock and Ford when the boundaries were next reviewed, and that the entire Parish be placed in the Southern Wiltshire Community Area.

The Parish Council therefore accepts and supports the recent Wiltshire Council recommendation for 2 electoral divisions, with one Wiltshire Councillor each, both to be placed in the Southern Wiltshire Community Area; i.e. both should sit in the Southern Wiltshire Area Board, where the Parish feels most affinity.

At present Laverstock and Ford has close to one-third of its Parish in a Salisbury Community Area which is represented by a different Area Board to the rest of the Parish. This is to the detriment of good governance as the Parish Council is required to field representatives to attend 2 Area Boards, one of which, the Salisbury Area Board, does not naturally empathise with the semi- rural and rural aspects of the Parish.

Division names

Laverstock and Ford is a long-established Civil Parish with a strong identity and believes firmly that the 2 divisions (23 and 24), which fall primarily within the Parish, should be named simply **Laverstock and Ford West** and **Laverstock and Ford East**. The use of a Parish's name with East and West added to each division is entirely consistent with the conventions used across other Parishes in the County.

The Parish Council objects vigorously to Wiltshire Council's proposed names of 'Old Sarum' and 'Laverstock' for these 2 divisions. Some reasons for objecting to 'Old Sarum' and 'Laverstock' are given below.

Division 23

The proposed name of 'Old Sarum' ignores the 673 dwellings that will comprise Longhedge Village when completed and fall within this division. More significantly, it also ignores a further 1300 properties in the division, namely the Bishopdown Farm / Hampton Park / Riverdown Park complex. Lastly, not all of Old Sarum is within this division. The name of 'Old Sarum' therefore cannot be appropriate.

Division 24

This division will comprise the village of Ford, the remaining part of the Old Sarum estate, the element of Milford which falls within the parish and Laverstock itself, together with the other smaller parishes of Clarendon Park, Firsdawn, Britford and Odstock. Therefore, the use of the name 'Laverstock' alone is not appropriate.

The Parish Council has serious reservations that the names proposed by Wiltshire Council will impact significantly on the unity within the Parish that residents wish to retain as demonstrated only 2 years ago. This also goes against the concept of the evolving Neighbourhood Plan which has a boundary coincident with that of the Parish. The Plan

looks to retain the cohesiveness of the Parish and encourage the residents from its various communities to continue to feel united within it. Therefore, the Parish Council firmly believes that it would be appropriate for the names of the 2 divisions to retain the existing longstanding Parish name with 'West' and 'East' added to it. Therefore, the Council recommends the following names:

- Division 23 - **Laverstock and Ford West** comprising Bishopdown Farm, Hampton Park, Riverdown Park, Old Sarum (part) and Longhedge and,
- Division 24 - **Laverstock and Ford East** comprising Laverstock, Ford, Milford (part) and Old Sarum (part) together with the parishes of Clarendon Park, Firsdow, Britford and Odstock.

Electoral Equality

The Parish Council believes that the matter of electoral equality has been met by the Wiltshire Council recommendations, the 5 electoral divisions of the Southern Wiltshire Community Area being within a 10% variance of the 4263 target. The Parish Council also believes that this has been achieved without detriment to the electoral equality of the proposals for our neighbouring areas. The Parish Council recognises that some smaller Parish's electors have had to be included in the Eastern Division to reach the target but understand their Parish Councils to be content with the arrangements.

The Parish Council would like to present the following evidence in support of our representations:

What defines the Parish and marks it out as a distinct community or communities? What are the identifiable boundaries?

- The very existence of the Parish and non-political Parish Council having, with the support of the communities it serves, robustly defended a recent existential challenge from Salisbury City Parish.
- The Parish has a clear geographical connection. When viewed on the map there is a clear boundary to the West between the Parish and Salisbury City Parish. It is then linked on the eastern boundary by the ancient Monarch's Way from the ridge line to the north down to the River Bourne, which then is a key feature of the Parish as it runs through Ford, Laverstock and out to Milford. Castle Hill Country Park (the new community green space linked to the Riverdown Park housing development) is a clear boundary between Salisbury City Parish and the settlements to the East with the railway line providing an interesting modern industrial delineation; but just as clear a boundary.
- The Parish consists of high chalk landscapes dissected by chalk stream. 65% of the land is working countryside or farmland and this is reflected in the green spaces of the Parish which are mostly managed using traditional farming methods (extensive grazing, hay making). These include the privately-owned chalk downland; Cockey Down and Laverstock Down, which is accessible as CROW Act farmland. In addition, it has the water meadows, which have just been taken on for the benefit of the Parish by the Devenish Bradshaw charitable trust and the Country Park which it

is about to construct and be managed in partnership with the Land Trust and local volunteer groups.

- The Parish is distinct in that it is composed of settlements interspersed with farmed countryside. Salisbury City Parish is largely a mixture of formal parks with urban residential, e.g. large areas of 1920s, Victorian and medieval city housing with some modern settlements. The Parish's established residential areas each have more of a self-contained feel; Its latest settlement is called "Longhedge Village".
- Old Sarum and Longhedge are maturing with their own identity. There is a large proportion of residents who are connected with a wide variety of locations with no economic connection to Salisbury City Parish. For example:
 - The military in Tidworth, Bulford, Larkhill, Middle Wallop and Army HQ in Andover.
 - DSTL at Porton Down.
 - Commuters to Andover and Basingstoke
- Ford has a distinct hamlet feel.
- Riverdown Park, Hampton Park and Bishopdown Farm are now a cohesive community. The focal points of the Hampton Park shops and the split site infant and junior school with their very active community focussed PTA reinforce this.
- Laverstock Village is a distinct entity with the railway an obvious boundary with Salisbury City, and its link to Milford is both historical and geographical.

Shared community events

- Being a Parish of distinct and contrasting communities, nine years ago the Council published a Parish Plan to ensure that what it delivered was appropriate to their differing needs. The philosophy which was borne with the Parish Plan has stayed with the Council. It doesn't profess to know what is best for its communities, so it constantly consults.
- The Council has now embarked on a Neighbourhood Plan to carry on and enhance this work and has a Steering Group with representatives from all the Parish communities.
- The Council takes its Parish Council meetings around the communities, inviting the public to address Councillors at the start of every meeting.
- When a big issue crops up the Council sends questionnaires via its News Letter and Web Site inviting residents' views, or sponsors public meetings to determine a way forward, for example issues concerning traffic in Ford and the threat of a large development on the Old Sarum Historic First World War Airfield.
- There are active Beavers, Cubs and Scout groups across the Parish and open to all.
- The Council organises co-ordinated volunteer litter picks across the communities.
- The Council has been and will be holding community wide events in the burgeoning Castle Hill Country Park including the planting of a First World War memorial woodland and a community art project in which the artist was inspired by the Laverstock pottery and worked with students from the west division (Greentrees School) at the Community Farm in the east division.

- The established Community Farm in the East division attracts many volunteers from the Parish communities. The farm's unique strength is that admission is free to all. They run entertainment events, not least a Salisbury Live day. They also take part in National Farm Open Day, which attracts c. 6000 visitors.

Shared amenities and facilities

- In line with the Parish Plan aims, the Council has implemented the acquisition of land for residents and visitors to enjoy and improve their wellbeing. It is on target to have over 300 acres in direct Parish or trust ownership.
- This has allowed the Council to work towards a “green link” connecting all its communities via footpaths, bridleways and cycle-ways which is now nearing completion.
- The Council has a well visited, up-to-date and content-rich Parish website.
- All homes in the Parish have a volunteer hand-delivered vibrant Parish Newsletter six times a year.
- The Community Farm.
- Country Parks: at Old Sarum to be joined shortly by the Castle Hill Country Park.
- The various community centres at Laverstock, Old Sarum and Hampton Park, all enjoy shared use
- **The Laverstock and Ford Sports Club which has 25 acres of sports pitches and river-fronting meadowland**, with fishing rights. Membership is open to all in the Parish. The social side of the club comprises lounges, a dance area and sports bar. They organise many social events.
- Play Areas: there are currently 7 play areas owned by the Parish Council, with a total of 31 due when all the developments are complete.

Public facilities – doctors, schools, vets

- The Council has considerable experience with helping its new communities to get started. Its track record is formidable with Old Sarum and Riverdown Park examples of the Council's success. Longhedge is on its way.
- The Parish has doctors, dentists, vets and schools shared across the communities.
- Whilst there are primary schools serving most of our communities, the secondary schools serve the whole Parish (and beyond).
- The council has made all school children, whether resident in the Parish or not, temporary residents of the Parish and we have a School Liaison Group to keep this idea alive. The Council awards a cup for a civic minded pupil. These interventions have had a positive effect on the behaviour of pupils in the Parish.

How do the facilities provide focus for community interaction?

- Every new development has been integrated by schools, community buildings, the Parish's green spaces, the Parish Newsletter and Parish website.

- They have a range of community-led projects on and in them that build community cohesion, education, career progression, mental and physical well-being and economic value.
- The School Liaison Group ensures interaction between the school and resident communities.
- The Parish green link encourages the communities to mix in the enjoyment of the Council's shared green spaces.

Community groups

- The Parish Council itself.
- The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.
- The Schools Liaison Group.
- The School PTAs.
- The Community Farm Group.
- The Water Meadows Charitable Trust.
- The Castle Hill Country Park volunteer group.
- The interface between the Parish Council and its Communities is enhanced by the way the Council provides financial support for groups in the Parish via its grant scheme and the provision of facilities and support. These groups range from those above and a skateboard park group, to the Women's Institute.

Local interests

- The Council has a common thread of interest across the Parish in the countryside and outdoor pursuits – running, walking, cycling, dog walking, gardening, play parks.
- The Council builds community interest across the Parish in its distinctive natural and historic heritage focussing on the River Bourne chalk stream, most recently through the Heritage Lottery part-funded project the Council is leading to install a riverine Boardwalk together with both on and off-site state of the art interpretation at our Whitebridge Spinney Green Space in Laverstock.

Transport links

- The Parish has a comprehensive road network
- It is served by a number of bus routes
- It has increasingly good links for green transport routes across the whole Parish – cycling, walking.

In conclusion, Laverstock and Ford Parish Council believes that in proposing the electoral arrangements above it has met and evidenced the three criteria of good electoral equality, community identities and interests and effective and convenient local government.

It commends to you Wiltshire Council's recommendations for two electoral divisions, with one Wiltshire Councillor each, both to be placed in the Southern Wiltshire Community Area and therefore both sitting in the Southern Wiltshire Area Board. However, the Council

objects to the names proposed by Wiltshire Council for the two divisions and, instead, recommends the following:

- Laverstock and Ford **West** - comprising Bishopdown Farm, Hampton Park, Riverdown Park, Old Sarum (part) and Longhedge (Division 23);
- Laverstock and Ford **East** - comprising Laverstock, Ford, Milford (part) and Old Sarum (part) together with the parishes of Clarendon Park, Firsdown, Britford and Odstock (Division 24).

Yours faithfully

Andrew Prince
Clerk to the Parish of Laverstock and Ford