



Laverstock & Ford Parish Council

Incorporating Milford, Bishopdown Farm, Old Sarum & Longhedge

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The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
1st Floor,
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50 Victoria Street
London
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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, Firsdow, Britford and Odstock (Division 24).

Yours faithfully

Andrew Prince
Clerk to the Parish of Laverstock and Ford