

**Oxfordshire County Council statement December 2023**  
**Item 13 Electoral Review: Local Government Boundary Commission for England Draft**  
**Recommendations**

Barry Gooch, local resident

Thank you for permitting me to address you on this matter.

I respectfully request that this Council makes a small amendment to its recommendation regarding Item 13 as it relates to the Southern Vale.

Please consider taking on board the views of Wantage Town Council (“WTC”) whose response to the Commission is neatly summarised by Julie Mabberley, who I believe is also speaking today. Adopting WTC’s proposal would reflect the views of locals and the actual geographical, historical, and social situation as it relates to our area.

The LGBCE report recommends that Grove representation reverts to being a single County Division as it was before 2008, which I completely agree with.

However, I, and many others, strongly disagree with the approach taken by the Commission towards Wantage and its surrounding area. The suggested new Division fails to meet the Commission’s own criteria of being coterminous as it cuts across several District, and Town boundaries.

Wantage is bounded on its southern limit by an AONB which prevents any development to the South. North of Wantage sits Grove and so the only possible future expansion of Wantage is to the East and West towards villages that rely upon the town for shopping and local services.

By disregarding any western expansion of Wantage, the Commission ignores the fact that these villages are currently lumped in with Shrivenham, some 11 miles distant and which has nothing in common with them, whereas they rely upon Wantage and historically formed part of Wantage Rural District Council.

Charlton is an integrated part of the town of Wantage, and is the location for Wantage Community Hospital, Wantage & Grove Cricket Club, and Wantage Community Support Centre. In these bodies the term ‘Wantage Community’ indicates the position that Charlton holds within the Town.

The suggested new Division would cross the A34 to extend as far away as Blewbury, Chilton, and Upton which are centred upon Didcot for all services and facilities. The Division would be unbalanced as the urban populations of Charlton and Kingsgrove would make up 56% of the constituents and inevitably drown out any issues from the small rural villages.

I respectfully ask that this Council takes these matters on board and recommends that the Commission revisits Item 13 as it relates to the Southern Vale.