

Boundary Commission proposals

Physical Geography

The Chiltern Hills are designated as an AONB in recognition of the distinctive landscape of the area, typified by the hilltop villages. They are quite distinct from Aylesbury Vale, which contains most of the proposed Princes Risborough constituency. Their exclusion from C & A would be even more anomalous, should the AONB ever gain National Park status.

The catchment of the Chess and Misbourne chalk streams lies within the villages area, and it would be advantageous to have one MP who could address issues regarding abstraction, flow rates and pollution.

Great Missenden has close ties with Little Missenden and Old Amersham, the main settlements in the Upper Misbourne valley, linked by the River and the A413.

Local Government Boundaries

The villages mostly lie within the Chiltern Ridges ward of the new Bucks UA, which also includes a substantial part of Chesham. They are also part of the newly created 'Chesham and Villages' community board.

Existing constituency boundaries

The Chesham and Amersham electorate is little changed by the initial proposals – increased to 76000 from 73000. The loss of the villages is compensated by the acquisition of Beaconsfield and Hazlemere, two areas with far more in common with High Wycombe and the M40 corridor.

The shortfall in electors in Princes Risborough which would result if the villages remain in Chesham and Amersham could be addressed by including Thame and Chinnor, which are currently part of the (oversized) Henley constituency, two areas having much more in common with the proposed constituency than the Chesham and Amersham wards.

Local ties that would be broken by changes to constituencies;

The existing constituency boundary reflects the close ties between the Hilltop Villages and Chesham. Chesham is the main communications hub, being the terminus of the Metropolitan Line, and most villages are on roads radiating from Chesham along the ridges.

The main N-S and E-W routes (A413, A416) intersect in Amersham; traffic congestion on these routes is a significant concern to Great Missenden and the hilltop villages.

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The HS2 factor

It is rather obvious that nearly all the above ground HS2 works in Buckinghamshire have been included in the new Princess Risborough constituency. Only a cynic would suggest that this was an attempt to confine the issue to a single constituency, and so limit the damage which disaffected voters can inflict on the main parties (who support the project). It is undeniable that this will create a considerable workload for the MP who represents the constituency, initially without an existing network of local connections – a workload currently shared among three MPs.

Summary

The proposed changes are not in the best interests of the areas added to, or removed from, Chesham and Amersham. The proposed Princes Risborough constituency lacks any existing centre of local government, and the only unifying feature appears to be the inclusion of a large area blighted by HS2.

We suggest that these issues should be addressed by the next revision of the proposals.

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Dr J E Conboy

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