

Formal Response from Luckington and Alderton Parish Council to the Wiltshire Electoral Review by The Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

Luckington is a small parish located in the north west corner of Wiltshire. In the 2011 census the population was shown as being 630. The adjoining parishes are significantly larger.

Luckington lies within the Cotswolds, a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) meaning it is recognised as containing some of Britain's finest countryside. As such it is protected as a special landscape of national importance. The area covers 790 square miles, of which some 80% is farmland. The region is delineated by the belt of rich limestone – the source of building materials for cottages, fine buildings and churches. The limestone Cotswold stone in the northern Cotswolds is a rich honey coloured brown which gradually grades creamier towards the south at Luckington.

Luckington is about 6 1/2 miles (10 km) west of Malmesbury. The village is on the B4040 road linking Malmesbury and Old Sodbury. This route was originally a 'toll road' from the early 19th century. The parish is on the county border with South Gloucestershire and includes the village of Alderton and the hamlet of Brook End. The Fosse Way Roman road forms part of the parish boundary in the southeast. Five roads meet at Luckington, principally the former Oxford-Bristol road via Malmesbury and Sherston (B4040).

Badminton House is just across the county border, about 1 3/4 miles (2.8 km) southwest of Luckington village. Parkland of the Badminton estate extends a short distance into Luckington parish. Some of the farms within the parish are owned by the Badminton Estate.

In a valley to the south of the village of Luckington, seasonal springs are the source of the Bristol Avon. The Avon, from Luckington, passes through Malmesbury and Chippenham towards Bath and Bristol.

Alderton was acquired by the Montagu family of Lackham, then bought in 1827 by Joseph Neeld. When the estate was sold in 1966, most was bought by the Duke of Beaufort (Badminton Estate), who already had significant land holdings around Luckington. A school was built in Alderton at Joseph Neeld's expense in 1844. The school closed in 1923, with pupils transferred to Luckington.

Historically, development in this area of north Wiltshire has taken place along the line of the B4040, which follows the route of the River Avon's northern bank. This river can only be crossed by vehicular traffic via the bridges at Luckington, Sherston, Easton Gray and Malmesbury. This topographical limitation has resulted in development, over several hundred years, in strong community links and mutual inter-dependency between the settlements aligned along this route (Luckington, Sherston, Easton Gray and Malmesbury). Links with the villages of the proposed By Brook Division are sporadic, unstructured and almost non-existent.

All of the B4040 settlements were formerly in the North Wiltshire District Council area and for many years, the delivery of local services and facilities has followed this structure. Since the inception of Wiltshire Council, this council has chosen to deliver the majority of its services on an 'Area Board' model, the boundaries of which mirror the previous North Wiltshire District Council and are co-terminus with the current Wiltshire Council Electoral Divisions. These Area Boards are the route by which Wiltshire Council distributes discretionary funds to local parish councils.

These Area Boards' are chaired by Wiltshire Councillors, and usually cover several electoral divisions. The proposal to move Luckington parish to the new 'By Brook' division will also move 'Luckington' from one Area Board area (Malmesbury) to a completely different one (Chippenham). This is a very significant organisational move and is likely to cause disruption to the delivery of Wiltshire's services

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to Luckington and Alderton, and increased workload for local parish councillors (who are volunteers). It will leave Luckington organisationally dislocated from those communities with which it has the strongest historical and current community and local service ties. Since Luckington has such a small population (630), and the aim of the review is to 'balance' the number of votes in each electoral division, the parish council feels the level of disruption is unlikely to be worth the slight numerical 'tidying' effect that would be achieved.

Luckington parish has little in common with the other settlements which the review proposes to combine to form the new By Brook division. The draft recommendations report contains the following paragraph at para 52, this is the only reference in the report regarding Luckington:

"By Brook

Wiltshire Council proposed a division including the parish of Luckington with the parishes in the current By Brook division. This was in order to provide for good electoral equality. It described the area as entirely rural with a series of medium sized parishes which share natural community links and characteristics".

This statement is wholly incorrect and is misleading.

Luckington shares no 'natural community links' with the other parishes proposed for the By Brook Division. Whilst roads do connect the settlements, the Parish Council have not identified any 'natural community links' as suggested by the draft report.

All of Luckington parishes' 'natural community links' are in a linear form along the B4040 with Sherston and Malmesbury. Some minor links exist with the settlements of Acton Turville and Badminton (both in South Gloucestershire). The following are an example of the 'natural community links' which exist between Luckington parish and Sherston or Malmesbury:

Public Transport:

The only available public transport is a local bus service which runs along the B4040 through Luckington linking it with Sherston and Malmesbury to the east and Badminton and Chipping Sodbury to the west. There are no public transport options to any of the other 'By Brook' settlements.

Taxis:

Residents of Luckington and Alderton invariably use taxis from Sherston, Malmesbury or Tetbury.

Highways:

Highways maintenance within Luckington & Alderton Parish is provided by Wiltshire Council Highways. The roads within the parish are well used, and the local geology necessitates regular maintenance and detailed attention to surface water drainage to avoid deterioration of the road surface and flooding. At present this is provided by the Highways Engineer for the 'Malmesbury Area Board' area and with local delivery via a 'Parish Steward' who visits the parish monthly. Their accumulated knowledge of local issues is prodigious and is also retained within a 'corporate memory' amongst the 'Malmesbury Area Board' team. This has even survived successive contractor changes as the individuals involved are either Wiltshire Council staff or have been 'TUPE transferred' through various contractors and have remained in post. Transfer of Luckington & Alderton to the

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proposed 'BY Brook' division will inevitably disrupt this service as 'By Brook' falls under a different Highways engineer, different highways team and a different Parish Steward. This is likely to damage the current excellent service the parish receives, the existing strong relationships, and will place a significant additional workload on the volunteer parish councillors who will have to plug the knowledge gap that will inevitably arise.

Policing:

Luckington and Alderton Parish is policed by Wiltshire Constabulary via its Malmesbury Community Policing Team (as is Sherston). By Brook is not. Community policing boundaries are normally co-terminus within Wiltshire.

Fire Brigade:

Initial response to incidents within the Luckington & Alderton Parish is provided by Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Brigade from the Malmesbury retained Fire Station, with appropriate support being drawn in (when required) from Yate Whole Time Fire Station (Avon Fire) and subsequently, from Chippenham Whole Time Fire Station.

Education:

Luckington has its own village Primary School, which often works in conjunction with Sherston Primary School. Pupils from both primary school's progress on the secondary school at Malmesbury School. School transport (coaches) start in Luckington and travel along the B4040 collecting pupils who travel to Malmesbury School.

Post Office /Shop

Luckington had its own Post Office and General Stores until 2016. This closed when the owners retired.

Luckington has a Pub, which now also runs a modest community shop within its premises, but it does not offer Post Office services.

Luckington and Alderton residents now use the Post Offices at Sherston (2 miles) and Badminton (2 miles). Within the proposed 'By Brook' division the nearest Post Offices are along minor lanes at Hullavington (7 miles) and Yatton Kennel (6.5 miles). In the case of Hullavington, the shortest route for Luckington parish residents is via Sherston.

Sherston Post Office occupies rented premises owned by Sherston Parish Council. There is a long-standing co-operative relationship between Sherston and Luckington & Alderton parish councils, with many examples of joint involvement available. There are no demonstrable ongoing co-operative links with any of the other parishes intended to be in the By Brook electoral division.

Doctor's Surgery:

This is located in the centre of Sherston and provides both Doctor's services and community health services to the parish of Luckington and Alderton. It is linked to the Malmesbury Area NHS Commissioning Group and some community services are provided at the Malmesbury Primary are Centre for Luckington and Alderton parish residents.

Currently plans are being progressed for the existing surgery building to be replaced with a new purpose build surgery in Sherston. This is being progressed by the Surgery, Wiltshire Council and the

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NHS. Positive leadership is being provided by the current Sherston electoral division councillor. Luckington and Alderton Parish Council feel the removal of the parish to By Brook, albeit in 2021, would have a detrimental impact on the parish's medical services.

Telephone and Internet Services:

These are provided to Luckington and Alderton via the Malmesbury exchange and routed via Sherston.

Conclusion:

The only rationale seemingly being offered for proposing to transfer Luckington Parish to the proposed 'By Brook' electoral division, is an attempt to make all of the electoral divisions more numerically balanced. Since Luckington is a very small parish with only 630 residents (2011 census), transferring the parish, or leaving it where it is, is unlikely to have any significant effect on the numerical balancing of the electoral divisions. The Parish Council cannot see any other advantages or benefits of moving Luckington to the By Brook division, only numerical neatness.

The comments regarding Luckington in the Draft Recommendations Report, namely, *'entirely rural with a series of medium sized parishes which share natural community links'*, are entirely incorrect and without merit.

In this response, we hope we have demonstrated the strength of the community links between Luckington and its near neighbour, Sherston parish. Wider afield, the significant links are between Luckington and the town of Malmesbury.

The current proposals to move Luckington to the 'By Brook' division seem to defy logic, common sense and reality. They are detrimental to community cohesion, and local authority service provision. They are also contrary to all historical and current community links, and as a Parish Council, we can see no merit in the proposal.

We ask that you confirm that the proposal has been dismissed.