

Response by West Mersea Town Council

The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) review of Parliamentary Constituencies 2023

Introduction

West Mersea Town Council is a parish council in North Essex. It has a population of 7,285 according to the latest figures available (2019). The Council welcomes the opportunity to take part in the public consultation.

It notes the proposal to place West Mersea in a new constituency of Witham. Also, that the BCE has laid out a key principle that “it’s important that the constituencies we shape reflect your local community as best as possible.”

Objection

We are very much opposed to the proposal. This is for the following reasons:

- 1) There is very little in common between Witham and Mersea and Pyefleet. We are essentially a rural and farming community with substantial coastal and marine interests also with a significant holiday industry and visitor numbers. There are over 1,905 static caravans locally. We have a large number of residents that are retired. We are sited on an island at the estuaries of the Colne and Blackwater rivers connected by a road that frequently floods by the sea (Strood). Within West Mersea there are extensive internationally and nationally important features and elements linked with the environment that are designated SSSI.
- 2) Witham by contrast is a town where there is none of the above present. Where a significant number of residents are not employed in farming, marine, or holiday based industries, and are in employment in the areas of Chelmsford, or further afield in London. It does not share the key links with the preservation of the protected coastal environment.
- 3) There are no direct transport links between Witham and Mersea. The only way public travel is possible is by travel through Colchester as there is no bus service that links us with Witham. Travel by bus would take at least an hour and a quarter, or longer. Travel by car to Witham is some 50 minutes through country lanes.
- 4) Residents, many of which are over 60 (43%), would find it very unsatisfactory to have to travel in these circumstances to attend regular meetings with their MP.

Preferred Option

The present constituency arrangement of Mersea and Pyefleet with Harwich and North Essex is preferred. Retaining as it does the rural and marine common basis and where meetings with an MP can take place some 8 miles away in Colchester and travel by bus that takes 30 minutes.

If the arrangement cannot continue, then we would urge that Mersea and Pyefleet be placed in a constituency that could be formed for Colchester South. This would enhance our links with the biggest population centre in the area and could also link us with the villages and rural settlements in South Colchester such as Abberton and Fingringhoe. It would also enhance our local government links with Colchester Borough through which we are served at present. It would also provide a basis for a MP to be able to effectively, in our view, collectively deal with issues arising for the local community. Transport links are very good with Colchester and hourly bus service takes 30 minutes.

We respectfully wish to place these comments before the BCE for consideration.

31.03.22