

Laverstock & Ford Parish – The Way Ahead

The Heritage

The parish was formed under the Local Government Act of 1894 although Laverstock dates to pre-history with known ‘modern’ settlement from the 7th century. The parish has retained its identity despite the expansion of its new neighbour to the west of the River Bourne.



Farming has been the key identity of the parish. Fertile alluvial soils and gravels are used for arable, meadowland and pasture while the Upper Chalk of the surrounding downs are used for grazing.

The key separating points from the neighbouring city are the railway line and St Marks Path. Bishopdown Farm, which adjoins St Mark's Path, signalled the end of the rural boundary and the beginning of the city. Over the years, the Bishopdown Council Estate took land to the city and more recently, the first phase of Bishopdown Farm development also saw the boundary move, on advice from the then Salisbury District Council. The principal reason being that the housing was nearer Bishopdown Council estate than either Laverstock or Ford. Further development on the Bishopdown farmland, known as Hampton Park, was retained in the Parish of L&F.

Unfortunately, under the creation of the Parish of Salisbury, the geographic map forwarded by SDC/WC to the Electoral/Boundary Commission traced the wrong boundary and this was not spotted in time. The result is that the map of the parish of L&F and that of the parish of Salisbury now overlap.

There is no doubt that the newer Salisbury map is incorrect, as the supposed boundary encroaches past St Mark's Path and into the Bishopdown farmland. There is no access from St Mark's path into the Parish of L&F and this was the path walked on the parish "Beating the Bounds" procession. This inaccuracy requires correction at the earliest possible time to avoid doubt.

Significant development has taken place in the last 50 years and the parish now comprises Laverstock, Ford, Old Sarum and Hampton Park plus a small area of Milford to the south.

Further development is proposed at Old Sarum and in the new Core Strategy (2011) an additional inclusion of up to 500 dwellings is earmarked as an extension to Hampton Park and a new community at Longhedge, on the northern perimeter of L&F parish. This number will comprise between 450 and 800 dwellings, over time with additional employment land at both Old Sarum and Longhedge.

Representation

Laverstock & Ford Parish had two Salisbury District Councillors representing the entire parish, until 2003, when the new Hampton Park and the proposed Old Sarum development was deemed to add “too many electorate ” for the two councillors to represent. Hampton Park was ‘warded’ on a numbers basis and is still represented by a City councillor, although remaining, by the choice of the electorate, as part of the Laverstock & Ford parish, where the development has an entitlement of 4 seats on the Parish Council. There was a move made by the city councillors to claim Hampton Park as part of the city. However, a vote of the electorate of all parts of L&F Parish demonstrated that EVERYONE wished to remain together as part of L&F parish and outside of Salisbury.

At the formation of Wiltshire Council in 2009, one council division was formed as Laverstock, Ford & Old Sarum and once again, owing to the numbers, Hampton Park was “warded” to St Mark’s City Ward, although still remaining in the L&F parish.

Laverstock & Ford PC, uniquely, has a place on both the Southern Wiltshire Area Board and the Salisbury Area Board of Wiltshire Council, although, by choice, chose the Southern Wiltshire Area Board, owing to its rural village and agricultural affiliations and outlook.

The Laverstock & Ford Parish Council is the basic form of Local Government for the parish and this is active and comprises 13 councillors. Although councillors can reside in any part of the parish, 4 are deemed to represent places under the ‘warded entitlement’ of Hampton Park.

Changed Times

The Hampton Park entitlement was derived by the Electoral Commission when the Parish comprised Laverstock (inc Milford) 1000 dwellings. Ford 175 dwellings, Old Sarum 175 and Hampton Park 500 dwellings.

This total of 1850 dwellings was represented by 13 councillors. (142 dwellings per cllr)

The Electoral Commission therefore mathematically calculated that the percentage of dwellings for Hampton Park warranted almost four of the total allocation.

Since that decision and the decision of the communities to remain in L&F parish, there has been much additional housing under the Local plan of 2005 and as described earlier, much more in the Core Strategy 2011.

As at November 2011 the parish comprises:

Laverstock/Milford 1150 (including Pilgrims Way development)

Ford 180

Old Sarum circa 550 and rising rapidly to 850* in the next 2 to 3 years

Hampton Park 500. * *Persimmon & City Brisk Dev't Wish to increase this number further.*

Known total by 2014:

2680 Dwellings

Further Changing Times

Proposals in the Wiltshire Council Core Strategy for South Wiltshire includes Up to 500 homes in the Strategic Gap between Ford and Hampton Park (AKA Hampton Park Extension and HPII)

A new community at Longhedge for both Employment (8 hectares) and housing – initially 450 dwellings but with another 350 in reserve, making the land “doomed” as it will have been “Planner Blighted”. A further site at the southern end of the Old Sarum Airfield Conservation Area, in Ford, has been re-instated by the Core Strategy Inspector, despite WC members removing it, owing to there having been no consultation on this proposal, throughout the Core Strategy. This is being contested currently, by WC member for L, F & OS. No known further development is proposed in Laverstock or Ford.

Excluding the Ford sites the envisaged dwellings for the L&F parish would be:

Laverstock/Milford 1150

Ford 180 + *undefined number possible at Southern end of OS Airfield*

Old Sarum 850 + *undefined number possible at northern end of OS*

Airfield + any additional numbers obtained by Persimmon/City Brisk

Hampton Park 500

Hampton Park Extension 500

Longhedge 450 – 800

Maximum Total 3980 + *undefined number possible at Southern and Northern ends of OS Airfield + addnl Persimmon & City brisk*

Minimum is likely to be 3630 dwellings, if Longhedge does not exceed 450 and the Strategic Gap accepts only 300 dwellings on a revised plan.

Possible addition: The original “Bishopdown Farm” development on land previously in L&F parish comprises 300 dwellings. The residents

association for the area includes both Bishopdown Farm and Hampton Park as it's geography of representation. At their request, L&F Parish Newsletter is distributed to all residents on Bishopdown Farm and they have allegedly stated that a preference for representation would be L&F Parish and not Salisbury Parish. This has not been tested.

Issues

1. The Parish Boundary

This has become important owing to the possible creation of a Community Farm and Nature Reserve, gained through the planning consent within the Strategic gap separating Ford and Hampton Park. This is where the accurate L&F map has been subverted by the overlapping of the newly created Salisbury parish map. The risk is that to do nothing would lead to the city claiming the Community Farm and Nature Reserve and turning it into an every day city Park. The envisaged plan via the L&F PC is to extend the community farm project and retain the chalk down land and farming associations of the land.

2. Parish Council Membership

The 13 places on the PC were set years ago and are known to have represented 1850 households at the time of the warding with the 4 places allocated to HP pro rata. **By 2014, 2680 dwellings** are envisaged and HP would represent under 19% of the parish, making the pro rata allocation between 2 and 3 seats if the parish retained just 13 seats in total.

If the 2003 representation ratio of councillor to households was retained (142), the number of councillors would need to increase to 19. This would restore the Hampton Park allocation to 4.

The L&F PC need to judge its required councillor to household ratio for the immediate future, before any further considerations.

A ratio of 175 households to 1 councillor would require 15 seats in 2014. The Hampton Park pro rata allocation, whilst it remains warded, would be 3 seats.

Post 2014

The current uncertainty relates to the Core Strategy and its outcomes and implementation. 500 dwellings at Hampton Park could become, perhaps 300. 450 at Longhedge could become 800 overnight. Land at both the southern and northern end of Old Sarum Airfield could be developed for an undefined number of houses. Persimmon and City Brisk are keen to add further dwellings at Old Sarum.

Probability suggests that the parish will comprise circa 4000 dwellings eventually with the Core Strategy seeking to deliver up to 950 of these in the short term, to deliver affordable housing needs.

This would signal a total housing number of **3630 in L&F Parish possibly by 2017** – *during the life of the next Wiltshire Council.*

The current 142 dwellings to 1 parish councillor would require 26 Parish Councillors. The expanded Hampton Park, if still warded, would warrant 8 parish councillors.

The question will no doubt be asked, “Why would the new housing at Hampton Park be warded and not be part of the Laverstock, Ford and Old Sarum Division?”

The answer would be twofold at least.

1. Numbers would be too great for that division, which is also subject to growth and
2. When the “Warded” area was mapped, the boundary was drawn as Roman Road (Not by L&F parish, of course!).

The earlier mentioned 175:1 ratio would warrant an increase for the PC to 21 Parish Councillors in 2017. (including 6 for Hampton Park)

A greater ratio of 200:1 would necessitate 18/19 councillors (5 for HP)

To retain a level of say 15 councillors, the ratio of households per councillor would be a minimum of 242:1 or to cope with ongoing/unknown growth 250:1 (4 for HP, if it remains warded)

Wiltshire Council Representation

With 3630 dwellings in the Laverstock & Ford Parish by perhaps 2017, there is a certain desire for two Wiltshire Councillors to represent the Parish exclusively. This would enable the parish to wholly look to the Southern Wiltshire Area Board, as requested of Wiltshire Council, at its inception.

Wiltshire Council currently looks at 3700 electorate per councillor, as the ideal. This will need to grow in future, if numbers are to be maintained. Currently ten per cent, either way is within the acceptable margin. It is extremely difficult to judge occupancy, although more single person dwellings are being built than previously. WC report 4025 electors for the Parish of L&F currently for a “Tax Base” of 2212 dwellings. (1.82 electors per dwelling) **Somewhere between 6600 and 7000 residents by 2017 would be a fair assessment and gets close but does not reach the electorate required for two Wiltshire Councillors.**

Further Consideration

As described in the Heritage opening statements, Bishopdown Farm was wholly in L&F parish until the initial 300 homes of Bishopdown Farm development.

The L&F PC may wish to engage with that community to restore the historic parish once again. An estimate of 550-600 additional residents would need to be factored in to all the numbers, although they would just fit (based on estimates only) the two Wiltshire Councillor scenario. However, with 16 Parish Councillors @ 250:1 ratio. No distinction would be made for any part of the parish.

By 2020 forecast Housing by community

Laverstock	1150
Ford	350
Old Sarum	1000
Longhedge	450
Hampton Park	1000
TOTAL	3950 – Residents @ 1.82 per household = 7200
<i>Bishopdown Farm 300 – 550 residents @ 1.82 per household</i>	
<i>(Currently outside L&F parish)</i>	

Grand Potential Total 7750 residents and 4250 dwellings

7750/2 = 3875 residents represented by 2 Wiltshire Councillors, if whole of former parish re-united.

Parish Councillors for the potentially enlarged parish, even at 250:1 = 17

Next Steps

1. Consideration by the Parish Council
2. Formation of a Task Group comprising the existing WC members and selected PC Cllrs + possibly co-opted members of the parish with expertise.
3. Make contact with Wiltshire Council to advise that some changes will be required for 2013.
4. Establish more accurate data, as available, consult as necessary, determine benefits or otherwise for the Parish of Laverstock & Ford and its residents
5. Make final recommendations to the PC and consult residents
6. Ensure WC registers requirements of the parish and its people in good time for changes to take effect at the earliest possible time (2013/2017)

The original document was presented to the L&F Parish Council in November 2011 and a project group formed to investigate the possibilities and eventually make recommendations to the PC to decide future policy and actions.

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