

Oxfordshire

Personal Details:

Name: Mr Kieron Mallon
Email: [REDACTED]
Postcode: [REDACTED]
Organisation Name: (District or county councillor)

Comment text:

Related subject: Banbury

Please see file attached.

Attached Documents:

- OCC Local Government Boundary Review.docx

Local Government Boundary Commission Consultation Banbury

Since the last Electoral Review of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) in 2012 and Cherwell District Council (CDC) in 2016 the major housing growth area has switched from the North (Hardwick) area to the two Southern areas, namely Easington and Calthorpe respectively.

This will continue with the current and emerging Local Plan. This will necessitate a further review of CDC wards in the very near future. Many hope this will enable the areas of Easington to the West of the Oxford Road and Calthorpe to the East of the Oxford Road to split and follow their historic, indeed ancient patterns as proposed by the OCC proposals and not the LGBC current recommendations to join them for OCC.

I therefore write in support of the original and new slightly revised proposals put forward by OCC, supported by Cherwell and Banbury Town Council and object to the latest LGBC proposals.

The OCC proposals include the three areas that will come into Banbury for the 2024 CDC and Banbury Town elections following the recent agreed CDC boundary review. The LGBC proposals do not include these areas, this is a mistake by the LGBC. These Oxfordshire County Council proposals also reflect better the historic neighbourhoods known as the Hamlets of Banbury. The original OCC proposals had support across all councils who had working groups with local members who gave up a considerable amount of time and were voted on and passed. Why the LGBC chose to change them, leaving out three vital areas and not recognising local communities has caused much confusion and not helped the democratic process.

The Cherwell DC Boundary Review Working Group which has Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, and Independent elected members, chaired by a Banbury Conservative Councillor with the V. Ch. a Banbury Labour Cllr who are respectively the Political leads on Boundaries in Banbury, voted twice firstly to support the original OCC recommendations and the inclusion of the areas overlooked by the LGBC and latterly to support the now slightly amended OCC proposals for Calthorpe.

Banbury has historically been split along defined areas, most of which are along clearly defined arterial roads. It has been described as one would cut a round cake or pizza; radiating out from Banbury Cross. Those names and areas have historical origins some going back to the Domesday Book and by medieval times based on manors and Townships within the hundreds of Banbury., hence the names are retained, eg. Easington, Calthorpe, Hardwick, Grimsbury, Ruscote. These areas are recognised by residents, Cross has no such historic basis, nor is it recognised by locals as a defined or loose residential area.

The current LGBC proposals cut the tip off all the slices and has and is being described as a “doughnut” option locally, of a made-up area to be known as “Cross” which no one on the ground would recognise or admit to belonging to, that splits/cuts the tips up of Ruscote, Easington and Calthorpe in particular and makes co-terminosity with current District Wards CDC worse, taking chunks out of most of the current known areas.

The LGBC proposals for the South of Banbury are also worse for current and prospective co-terminosity for the Calthorpe and the Easington areas respectively.

These areas, Easington and Calthorpe are separate areas/townships/wards in their community, historical and Political concept and until recently as separate Cherwell wards and are still separate Banbury Town Wards as well as the current separate County Council Divisions. Easington, mentioned in the Domesday book was the administrative centre for the Bishop of Lincoln as the Lord of Banbury and Calthorpe was a hamlet and medieval manor. Easington was and is recognised as the slice bounded by the Oxford Rd and the Broughton Rd as proposed by OCC. Calthorpe with its manor house still standing, is the slice which radiates south from the town centre bordered by the Oxford Road to the West and the River Cherwell and Railway in the East as proposed by OCC.

In the LGBC 2016 boundary decision the LGBC recommended that the area known as Poets Corner (CAK1) be kept in Easington as part of its recommendation, to reflect the Easington heritage – this is what residents and councils have always regarded as part of Easington, I see no reasoning in the current LGBC proposal as to why they have now recommended moving this area Polling District CAK1 into Ruscote, an area that has never included Poets Corner Polling District CAK1 in its Ward or Division in the history of the County, District Town or old Borough Council.

In that 2016 Review a respondent stated that Hightown Road area Polling District CAV1 should be part of Calthorpe and not Grimsby as the LGBC recommended and implemented. The LGBC stated that they thought their recommendations were a better reflection of community links. They are not according to residents who see themselves as part of Calthorpe and not Grimsby, separated, as they are from Grimsby by a canal, river Cherwell (previous county boundary) and 6-line Birmingham to London railway. The OCC proposals also better reflect the position on the ground by requesting and proposing that the Tramway area, separated as it is by the main railway line be moved into Calthorpe/ CAV1 polling district. The current residents and the hundreds more who will live there as more houses are built can see the CAV1 Polling station from their windows but currently and in the LGBC recommendations these voters, cut off from the rest of their current CBA1 polling district by the main railway line have a long-convoluted pedestrian or car journey to St Leonards Church Middleton Road in Grimsbury as there is only one bridge crossing the railway. By incorporating this area into Calthorpe as proposed by OCC they will have a short two-minute walk to the CAV1 polling station, this will inevitably increase a sense of place when voting and increase turnout at election times as this housing estate grows soon. The proposal to move this into the CAV1 polling district has already been raised by Banbury Town Council to Cherwell as the election authority who deal in polling districts. Grimsbury by the way was not even part of Oxfordshire until the 1888 Local Government Act and people can still remember local rivalry between the Cherwell (canal) area of Banbury/Calthorpe and “over the bridge” Grimsbury, across the river, up until the house clearances of the 1960s.

In the 2016 LGBC final recs. they put the Ruscote & Neithrop (Woodgreen/Park Rd) area into a Ruscote Ward, this is accepted as they have been incorporated in part and full in previous Ward/Division Boundaries also they look to the same shops, (Orchard Way) pub (old Admiral Holland) places of worship (St. Pauls Parish and the Methodists Church, Fairway) and were mostly part of the London Overspill Development of the 1960's and have a common built and community heritage – I query why, with little new development in this area, the LGBC, only 8yrs later now seek to split this recognised area into two separate Divisions?

Place, History and Co-terminous areas

The proposal by the LGBC to combine Easington, mentioned in the Domesday Book with Calthorpe a medieval manor, separated as they are currently on Banbury Town and Oxfordshire County councils and historically by the main Oxford to Banbury Road is not only historically wrong but short term in its projections. The emphasis on housing growth has moved from the North of Banbury (Hardwick) to the South East (Calthorpe) and the South West (Easington) each side of the Oxford Road but separated. Calthorpe is to continue its slice of the pie radiating out along the Oxford Road and Easington to have over a thousand homes built on the A361 Bloxham Road on the very South Western edge of the town, again widening its slice of the pie but still bordered by the main Oxford and Broughton Roads.

CDC are already planning for a district ward boundary review to acknowledge these massive housing developments and it will in all events propose to split the current, new, (only since the 2016 review) Calthorpe & Easington district ward to revert to their historic boundary of the Oxford Road. This was and is the preferred option of Banbury Town Council then and now and will once again better reflect the communities that live there and the amenities that serve these areas.

Therefore, the OCC proposal to keep Poets Corner CAK1 large Polling District in an Easington OCC Division makes sense as that's what residents and voters expect. CAK1 Easington is in the parish of St Hughs Easington and even vote at that church, located in the CAG1 polling district also part of Easington a short walk away.

The Parish of St. Hughs Easington contains the polling districts of CAG1, CAI1, CAO1, CAN1 as well as Poets Corner CAK1. These areas also are focused on the Queensway shops and the Easington Post Office and not any local amenity in Ruscote. It also has a separate bus service than Ruscote and is a 1970s development of large houses and bungalows as opposed to the 1950s/60s London overspill Bretch Hill/Ruscote area/ward.

The proposed OCC recommendations for Calthorpe are in the Parish of St. John the Baptist again using the main Oxford Road as a boundary between St Hughs (Easington) and St. John the Baptist (Calthorpe) this area (Calthorpe) also has a shopping focus on the shopping parade at Chatsworth Drive and a proposed new one on the Longford Park development which is still being built on the East of the Oxford Road. It has its own bus route that does not enter Easington.

Apart from the now out of date 2016 CDC boundary review there are no historic, community, ecclesiastical, local shopping centres or bus routes linking these two areas (Calthorpe and Easington) which will be proposed to be split in the next imminent CDC boundary review and kept separate by Banbury Town Council ward separated historically and Politically by the Oxford Road.

The OCC recommendations for the rest of the town had full support at each council and are not too different from the LGBC preferred options.

The OCC proposals are within or have a lower voter tolerance/percentage that other Divisions accepted by the LGBC in other parts of Oxfordshire and should be supported in Banbury.

The OCC proposals do not have any knock-on effects on the surrounding rural proposed Divisions so should be supported.

The OCC proposals better reflect the historical, Political wards and sense of place that voters recognise and for that reason should be supported by the Local Government Boundary Commission.

Cllr. Kieron Mallon