

Castle Point Borough Council

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Please see .pdf Document File as part of my Submission. I would appreciate notification that the File has been received and is acceptable and valid. Thank you.

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The Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

Electoral Reviews

New Electoral Arrangements for Castle Point Borough Council

Response to Draft Recommendations October 2022

Type of Submission: OBJECTION

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Name:

Canvey Island residents, both for over 40 years.

We have both taken active part in the Castle Point Local Plan process since 2007 until the current time.

Contact Details:

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This Submission is based upon the Boundary Commission's Three main Considerations;

-) *Improving electoral equality by equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents.*
-) *Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity.*
-) *Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.*

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Canvey Island is regarded as being a "Distinct Community."

The Island part of the Borough, has grown in population from the time of the formation of Castle Point in 1974 quite dramatically. This can be seen by the ONS census figures for 1971 of 26,608, to 38,459 by 2011, an increase in population of 44.6%.

Canvey Island is the most densely populated Town within Castle Point.

Canvey Island has also seen most of the Borough's Business and Industrial developments.

Despite this, "*The island has pockets of local deprivation with some wards among the most deprived in the country, exhibiting poor levels of educational attainment, low income and high health deprivation.*"¹

Concerns for Canvey Island Residents include the Flood Risk from both Tidal and Surface Water sources, the 2 Top Tier COMAH sites being close-by to the Urban Area, and the problematic restricted Road Access to and from the Island.

¹ Building Resilience in Communities (BRIC) - Canvey Island

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Our Case for 42 Councillors to Represent the residents of Castle Point.

The Boundary Commission appears to have as its chief desire:

*“We aim to propose a pattern of wards for Castle Point Borough Council which delivers:
•Electoral equality: each councillor represents a similar number of electors.”*

We believe the Commission’s desire to be honourable, however their Proposed Changes could better be seen to deliver Equality by arriving at a Different Conclusion where the Number of Councillors is concerned. The Boundary Commission’s current Proposals could be interpreted as adding Councillor ward representation inequality, to the list of Canvey Island Deprivations.

The Boundary Commission’s Current Proposal for **39 Councillors**, 24 Mainland and 15 Canvey Island, sees each Mainland councillor serving an average of 1,776 Electors, whereas each Canvey Island councillor will be serving an average of 2,014 Electors.

A proposed Average Total of 238 Electors per Councillor difference favouring the Mainland population’s representation.

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As an Alternative we would respectfully suggest that the Number of Councillors being Proposed should be 42 Councillors; Mainland 24 Councillors, Canvey Island 18 Councillors across 6 Wards.

Whilst the Ward Boundaries would have to be altered, this should cause little issue.

However the Representation would be far Fairer.

Each of the 24 Mainland councillors would serve an average of 1,776 Electors, whereas each Canvey Island councillor would serve an average of 1,678 Electors.

Thus resulting in a Total of just 98 Electors per Councillor difference, compared with the currently proposed Numbers of 238 Electors per Councillor difference.

This in effect delivers a far greater level of Equality, requiring only the adjusting of the current Canvey Island Boundary lines and identifying reasonable boundary markers, rather than the loss of 1 ward and the loss of 2 Canvey ward Representatives.

An exercise well worthwhile, in the cause of Democracy and Equality across the Borough of Castle Point.

Canvey Island, already considered to be the most “Deprived” and “Distinctive” part of the Castle Point Borough, with Equality being such a supposedly important part of the Election process this discrepancy must surely deserve addressing.

Disadvantages.

The so called Disadvantages, as indicated in the Castle Point Borough Council and the Castle Point Conservatives submissions against the 42 Councillors Proposal can be Addressed.

Through the Leader of Castle Point Borough Council, Councillor David Blackwell I have made enquiries and been assured that an increase in current Councillor numbers of 1 member, will not cause an insurmountable Financial issue.

Therefore the Equality of the Electorate should be seen to be of the most utmost Importance.

Currently there is a system of appointing Reserve Councillors to CPBC Committees. The idea being that reserve councillors should be better prepared for acting as stand-ins, in the case of committee member absences.

Further to this, given the situation that the Country and Borough finds itself in, there is a case for the Local Authority to be Better Prepared for increasingly difficult financial situations amongst Residents. The UK as a whole is facing a severe Period of Austerity. The Local Authority may have in mind forming a Task Force of councillors to see that Council Services are being delivered as Effectively as possible, to the more Deprived amongst the Borough's residents.

An appointment of just one more Councillor, than the current number of Councillors, offers an opportunity to improve links between the Borough Residents, especially those who may have the need to seek advice and guidance from the Social Services etc, by communicating with their ward representatives at the Local Authority.

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Perception of Community Safety

Canvey Island is a defended Flood Plain, being at or below sea level. The sea defence of the Island is reliant on the funding of the TE2100 scheme, which Aspires to increase the height of the sea defences in line with Climate Change by 2070. ²

Canvey Island also suffered from Rain Storms during the Summers of 2013 and 2014 causing the Flooding of many Homes. The 2014 event, a 1 in 300+ Year Event, led to the Drainage System being overwhelmed, and the Pumps, used to remove surface water into the Thames Estuary, Failing.

“The pumps form the final stage of a long and incredibly complex system, and rainfall on the island may flow a substantial distance before reaching them.”

“Based on the evidence provided, the report also identifies that during the event misleading and in some cases incorrect messages were given to the public, and that avenues of

² Environment Agency Note: Flood Defence Requirements Local Plan 2018 Inspector Led Consultation Doc EXM-056

communication between Category 1 responders were insufficient to ensure that accurate, effective and coordinated communication took place with local residents.” ³

Following the Essex County Council Report on the incident, the Government Office for Science carried out a Section 19 Investigation Report, Peer Review. There has also been a S19 Investigation more recently into a Flooding incident on the Mainland of Castle Point.

There are many Vulnerable people on Canvey Island, many living in Single Storey Dwellings with no Flood Safe Refuge Areas.

Therefore a Councillor led Flood Resilience Forum, should be formed for the Borough.

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On Canvey Island, there are the Major Hazardous Installations of OIKOS and Calor Gas importation facilities. Incidents have occurred, such as:

“In March 2003 residents in the public information zone (PIZ) surrounding the Canvey Island site were provided with information about the off-site consequences of possible major accidents. This included information about how people would be warned of an incident with off-site consequences, what action they should take and how they will be kept informed in the event of an emergency at the site.

Calor Gas Ltd. did not warn or provide specific information to residents within the PIZ in relation to the incident on 27 October 2008” ⁴

Other incidents have occurred that appear not to have been reported to the relevant Authorities at the earliest opportunity.

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“Community leadership. Visible and empathetic community leadership by ward councillors at a very local level is hugely important. Community leadership cuts across preparedness, response and recovery; councillors need to understand their communities, local vulnerabilities, community networks, assets and businesses to help develop their community’s resilience, and then use this information and capacity to inform and support an emergency response if it becomes necessary.”

“Community leadership will also be crucial as communities rebuild and move through periods of recovery, when ward councillors can act both as the voice of the community within the council, and vice versa.” ⁵

³ Essex County Council “Flood Investigation Report – Canvey Island”

⁴ Answer to Castle Point MP Bob Spink’s question to SoS for Work and Pensions 21.04.2009

⁵ Local Government Association document “A Councillor’s Guide to Civil Emergencies” 2018

Through the proposed reduction of the Number of Canvey Island Ward Councillors , from 17 to 15 members, the local “*Leadership*” in the event of an Emergency will be seriously undermined.

The CPBC “Hazardous Substance Authority” currently has a very low profile. The opportunity to Inform and Educate residents as to how they should be Prepared and Respond to the Hazards of Living on Canvey Island is already in need of Addressing.

A Councillor led Safety Panel, including Residents, would help to make the Borough Residents, especially those on Canvey Island, to be Better Prepared for Incidents whether from Tidal Flooding, Surface Water Flooding or indeed a Hazardous Industrial Incident.

These Risks to the Public, particularly those living on Canvey Island, are defined as Societal Risk.

The Perception of Risk amongst Residents of Canvey Island, whether through Flooding or an Accident at the 2 Major Hazardous sites is, we consider to be Low as is Local Resilience.

The Perception of Risk for Canvey Residents, is of even less concern for the Mainland Residents.

Communication between the various Agencies, the Environment Agency, the Lead Local Flood Authority, the Health and Safety Executive, the Hazardous site operators, the Local Authority and the Residents of Canvey Island is the key to Preparedness.

Fewer Councillors for Canvey Island can be considered a retrograde step.

Therefore, we believe there is Evidence to Support and Justify the importance of Equality of Ward Councillor Representation across the Borough, and the Appointment of 42 Councillors will allow for Councillor led Forums and Safety Panels to provide for far better means of Communication and Awareness amongst Residents, than is currently the case.

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Canvey Island’s West Ward, proposed by the Boundary Commission for elimination, is one of the oldest Wards on the Island. It contains most of the Historical sites on the Island.

The current Boundary Commission proposal intends the transference of the Canvey Island “Dutch Village Estate” out of West Ward, into Winter Gardens Ward.

The Dutch Village Estate is Intrinsically and Historically linked to the Village Area.

The Dutch Village Estate physically abuts the dwellings in St.Marks Road, even though the Boundary Commission proposes that in future they be separated into different Wards.

Ward representatives must not only represent their electorate, but also represent the physical ward area.

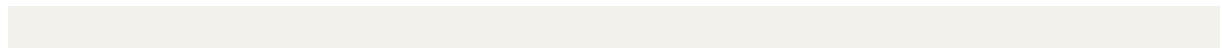
The nearest proposed Winter Gardens ward dwellings being approximately 350 metres away across open Land, from the Dutch Village Estate, making it in effect, Remote from the rest of the proposed Winter Gardens Ward.

However, within Canvey Island West Ward is the Thorney Bay Caravan site which is currently transitioning, from a part recreational caravan site, / part permanent caravan site, housing homeless and temporary contract workers accommodation site; into Sandy Bay, a *“luxury residential resort for all year round living. Exclusively for the over 50s.”* ⁶

There is the distinct probability the Sandy Bay site will accommodate in the region of 850 permanent dwellings, in contrast to the previous caravan site used by basically what may be considered many of them “transient” occupiers.

The likelihood is that the new permanent dwellers of the site, the over 50’s, will be more likely to participate in Local Elections, thereby a potential 1,700 new Electors in Canvey Island’s West Ward, allowing a possible retention of the current Boundary of West Ward.

We hope that, despite the level of consideration the Boundary Commission has already undertaken, these points will warrant further consideration.



⁶ [Sandy Bay Canvey Island - Sandy Bay](#)