

Mansfield, Simon

From: Neil Clarke <[REDACTED]>
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To: reviews
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Rushcliffe Borough Boundary Review
Attachments: RCA - Rushcliffe Borough Boundary Review 21 .docx

Categories: Submissions, Simon

Rushcliffe Borough Council Local Government electoral ward boundary review.

Please see attached a submission from **Rushcliffe Conservative Association** in relation to the above boundary review.

Your acknowledgement of receipt would be much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Neil Clarke MBE
Chairman - Rushcliffe Conservative Association

Rushcliffe Conservative Association

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12th December 2021

To:

Local Government Boundary Commission for England

reviews@lgbce.org.uk

Rushcliffe Borough Council – Ward Boundary Review Dec 21

Introduction/general comments:

Rushcliffe Conservative Association welcomes the opportunity to comment on the current Local Government Boundary Review and how it reflects on the work of Councillors elected to represent their communities.

Whilst we are supportive of some of the proposals, we also do have some serious concerns in relation to community identity, to local representation and to Councillors' workload.

We fundamentally disagree with the proposed 44 Councillors to be retained. The Review admits to an increase in population of 18% yet chooses to increase the average representation of electorate from just over 2000 to 2400 per Councillor, the same approximate 20% increase as the population. For some wards, especially those more sparsely populated over a wider geographic area, that represents a very significant increase in workload for Councillors.

The number should be increased to 48 at least, preferably more. An 18% increase in population actually takes the number of Councillors to 52.

In several areas little account has been taken of community identity or logical practicality of both representation and geographical spread/travelling. A "virtual tour" is not acceptable for this process; it needs to be actually "on the ground", and we urge the LGBC not to make any final decision before visiting the area in person and discussing local opinion.

We believe that Community Identity far outweighs the need to equalise numbers.

We comment on each ward proposal as follows:

Central Rushcliffe

Abbey & Musters Wards have no natural boundaries or community hubs, and it is suggested that their boundaries are redrawn using wherever possible major roads such as Davies Road, to create two wards each with two councillors.

Compton Acres and Lutterell Wards are adjacent, but there is no community hub in Lutterell and its residents look to Compton Acres, which does have local facilities. For this reason, these two wards should be combined into a single 3-Member Compton Acres Ward. (and see suggestion that some of Lutterell is moved to Trent Bridge).

Edwalton Ward proposals are acceptable.

Gamston Ward: The proposal to move some of Edwalton into Gamston Ward to give better electoral equality is accepted, but the former Grantham Canal is a natural boundary between the Gamston and Abbey Wards which, if possible, should be maintained.

Trent Bridge and Lady Bay Wards. The proposals are not acceptable. Lady Bay is a separate urban community. Increasing its size to include everything north of the A6011 Radcliffe Road and west of Regatta Way would be more acceptable and retain it as a two-member ward. Some of Lutterell Ward could be moved into Trent Bridge to give better electoral equality.

South Western Rushcliffe

Barton in Fabis

It is quite wrong to separate Barton in Fabis from 4 similar villages which all have community links, just to satisfy number equality.

This new ward has been proposed to accommodate the large development at Fairham. The groundworks are under way and houses will be constructed in the near future. However, the new development at Fairham is likely to be very different in terms of community identity to the existing and established settlements that would also fall into this ward. There is no doubt that due to the scale of development at Fairham that, once built, this will be a suburban settlement, contrasting vastly with the much smaller rural villages nearby.

The pace of development is difficult to predict and there may be far fewer electors resident in the ward at the time of the next two elections than predicted. Councillors have expressed concerns about the electoral equality in this area should development progress at a slower pace than expected.

We would wish the LGBCE to consider retaining the existing single-member Gotham ward (though perhaps a smaller geographical area would balance the new housing that does get built in Fairham before 2027) alongside a combined Sutton Bonington / part Leake ward (following the lines of the proposed Soar Valley ward below) at this Electoral Review. This would allow time for the new development at Fairham to be built and establish its own sense of identity as well as satisfying the needs of the smaller rural areas in the shorter term. In the future, a separate ward for the suburban Fairham area would be welcomed.

We support the requests of local communities that Sutton Bonington, Normanton on Soar and Stanford on Soar should be grouped together and Gotham, Thrumpton, Ratcliffe on Soar, Kingston upon Soar and Barton in Fabis (Inc Fairham Pastures) be grouped.

Soar Valley

We are very concerned about the large geographical area that this proposed ward covers and the impact of this on effective local representation. This proposed area covers 7 parishes and meetings tend to be on a monthly basis.

Councillors have reported that in multimember wards there is an expectation that all elected members respond to planning application consultations, attend parish council meetings and respond to resident enquiries. Otherwise, if responsibilities for attendance are split between Councillors, then those not attending are accused of not being bothered. Councillors are generally very active within their communities attending as many community events and parish council meetings as they can.

Ruddington

We do not have any comments to make as the ward proposal seems sensible.

Bunny

The Council is supportive of the retention of Bunny as a single-member ward. There do seem to be some anomalies splitting Plumtree from the previous ward, and Plumtree being retained with Tollerton may help the electoral split in Keyworth proposals.

Leake

We support the combining of East and West Leake to make one 3-member ward.

South Eastern Rushcliffe

Keyworth and Wolds

We would comment that some “plus” inequality could be reduced by putting Plumtree with Tollerton, as many in Plumtree identify more with Tollerton and Normanton on the Wolds than with Keyworth or with Bunny.

Nevile and Langar

We firmly believe this is an opportunity for LGBCE to reconsider the situation regarding Langar and Barnstone Parish Council. These two villages share a church, village hall and parish council, they have a clear shared community identity demonstrated in their strapline of ‘two villages – one community’, but straddle a Borough ward boundary which splits the Parish. At present, councillors from two separate wards service the needs of this parish, unnecessarily duplicating work and creating ineffective local governance. The whole parish should be moved into the Nevile and Langar ward.

North Eastern Rushcliffe

East Bridgford

We completely reject this proposal as being unworkable in practice. The geographical area is enormous and renders effective representation ineffective.

Councillors are generally very active within their communities attending as many community events and parish council meetings as they can.

There appears to be an assumption that 2 Councillors would split the representation at Parish Council meetings between them. This proposed new area covers 15 Parish Councils and Parish Meetings which tend to be on a monthly basis. Councillors have reported that in multi-member wards there is an expectation that all elected members respond to planning application consultations, attend parish council meetings and respond to resident enquiries, otherwise they stand accused of not bothering. Although some are able to divide the workload, others, especially where the councillors are not from the same political party, find this more difficult if they are to represent the community adequately.

A far more suitable proposal would be the use of the A46 as a natural boundary, creating 2 one-member wards, one Member for **East Bridgford Ward** and one Member for **Thoroton Ward**. It would be possible to include the Spinney Close settlement on the west side of the A46 into the Thoroton ward to help provide some flexibility for ensuring electoral equality.

Bingham North and Bingham South – taken together as the comments affect both equally.

North Proposed: 2 councillors Anticipated number of electors 2027: 4,568 Variance from the average 2027: -6%

South Proposed: 2 councillors Anticipated number of electors 2027: 4,745 Variance from the average 2027: -2%

The current proposal is to rotate the boundary for Bingham by 90 degrees from an East and West Ward to a North and South Ward. This would cut across county divisions and would cause confusion. The East/West approach fits with the surrounding villages, with the East side taking the whole of the centre of Bingham. This would mean that the town centre would be represented by one set of Councillors only. By changing the orientation, the town centre would be split. This would be confusing for residents, particularly as they would then follow a different pattern to the county divisions.

If retaining an East/West split was affected by the number of electors, there is the potential for Mill Hill Estate to be swapped to provide greater electoral equality.

It is requested that where possible any changes to Ward boundaries should be consistent with county division boundaries.

Whilst the redrawing of the internal Bingham boundary from East/West to North/South represents better electoral equality following development within the Town, this should be outweighed by the more practical and logical representation. The LGBCE should visit the area in person before finalising this decision. Councillors from this area feel that the arbitrary drawing of the line dissects the communities with which they have formed strong links over time. It also splits the centre of the Town, including the main school, for purely administrative purposes. The current East/West split is far more logical when visited 'on the ground'.

Aslockton and Cropwell

We completely reject this proposal as being unworkable in practice. The geographical area is enormous and renders effective representation ineffective.

Councillors are generally very active within their communities attending as many community events and parish council meetings as they can.

There appears to be an assumption that 2 Councillors would split the representation at Parish Council meetings between them. This proposed new area covers at least 9 Parish Councils and Parish Meetings, plus 2 part Parishes, which all tend to be on a monthly basis. Councillors have reported that in multi-member wards there is an expectation that all elected members respond to planning application consultations, attend parish council meetings and respond to resident enquiries, otherwise they stand accused on not bothering. Although some are able to divide the workload, others, especially where the councillors are not from the same political party, find this more difficult if they are to represent the community adequately.

Therefore, 2 single-member wards should be retained to cover this geographical area to ensure effective and convenient local government is maintained. We would further suggest that these two wards should retain the names of **Cropwell** and **Cranmer** albeit with slight changes to the outer ward boundary as proposed. There are important local historic links to Archbishop Cranmer which should be retained.

Our earlier comments in relation to the proposed Neville and Langar warding of Barnstone village under Neville and Langar are also apposite.

Northern and Central Rushcliffe

Radcliffe on Trent.

We are generally supportive of the proposals and would be relaxed as to whether Upper Saxondale is retained within Radcliffe on Trent, or is put into a new Cropwell single member ward. However, whichever is chosen, it is important that the WHOLE of Upper Saxondale is either in one or the other, especially as a new Parish Council is shortly to be created. At present, it is split between two wards, with Henson Lane forming the boundary.

Tollerton

We are generally supportive of the proposals, other than there may be a case for including Plumtree as it identifies more with Tollerton and Normanton on the Wolds than it does with Bunny or Keyworth. However, we understand that there is significant development planned in the Tollerton area and that electoral equality may not be achievable without change to the existing ward boundaries.

Cotgrave

We are generally supportive of the proposals. However, the LGBCE may wish to consider comments made above in relation to Clipston on the Wolds and Normanton on the Wolds.