

Derbyshire

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Comment text:

Submission from John McCabe, chair of Somercotes Parish Council (Amber Valley)

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Local Government Boundary Commission
Review of Derbyshire County Council boundaries

Dear LGBCE
Derbyshire County Council boundaries – Amber Valley
Existing Alfreton & Somercotes Division

I am writing as chair of Somercotes parish council and local resident to express my concerns with the proposal submitted by Derbyshire County Council on how the current two-member Division should be split into two single member Divisions of Somercotes & Alfreton and Swanwick & Riddings.

Unfortunately the County Council did not publish their submission till 4 July – and it is not possible to consider and discuss this with the full parish

council before your deadline of 17 July.

I am very concerned that the proposal to split the Somercotes parish between the two County Divisions will make it difficult to represent our area properly – and cause considerable local confusion. Obviously most of our resources and services come from the County or Borough. So the parish council - and indeed individual residents - may have to relate to both tiers of government in arguing for facilities in Somercotes and responding to proposals from the County or Borough. For one tier it will be clear – the parish council area and borough council ward and councillors are coterminous. But when it comes to issues relating to the County the parish council (and indeed the Borough councillors) will have to make different sets of arguments depending on which section of Somercotes they are talking about – and will be dealing with different county councillors on different issues. A whole section of residents who identify as living in Somercotes will suddenly be relating to a Division and councillors solely from Swanwick & Riddings.

It will also disrupt the electoral arrangements for the parish council. At present the parish councillors are elected in one block with just one ward. Under the County Council proposals it will be necessary to create a new second ward for the area that is hived off in to the new Swanwick & Riddings Division.

As parish council chair I do feel it is very important to retain the integrity of the parish and not split it in different directions for different purposes. We do have a strong parish identity and I do not want to see this undermined.

I think this is also important in terms of accountability. Splitting the parish will just make things even more confusing for residents who often already find it difficult to know who is responsible for what.

To give just one confusing example my own road – Quarry Road - will now be in two different County Divisions depending which side of the road you live on.

A second confusing example is on Parkside which used to be split between Somercotes and Ironville & Riddings borough council wards. Sensibly the latest AV Borough council boundary review put the whole road in to the Somercotes ward as there was no direct road connection from Parkside to the Ironville & Riddings ward with Riddings Park in between. Yet now the whole road will be in a Division called Swanwick & Riddings with different County Council representation to the rest of the Somercotes ward area. This is just going to confuse residents even more than before.

There are many links between Somercotes and Riddings – but not just with the Windmill Estate etc that it is proposed to split off from the rest of Somercotes. Somercotes residents use Riddings Park as well as the Somercotes parks. Indeed we have made common arguments with the Riddings borough councillors (as they have no parish council) on issues relating to the failure to use money allocated from developers to provide facilities on the Somercotes and Riddings parks. A number of Somercotes children go to Riddings infant, nursery and junior schools as they are

more convenient and nearby.

But above all it would be damaging to weaken the strong identity of the Somercotes parish with this division.

I would urge the Boundary Commission to reject the proposal from Derbyshire County Council to split the Somercotes parish council area between two different County Divisions.

Yours

John McCabe
Chair, Somercotes parish council

Attached Documents:

None attached