

# Cheshire East

## Personal Details:

**Name:** Sarah Giller  
**Email:** parishclerk@rainow.com  
**Postcode:** SK12 1SU  
**Organisation Name:** Rainow Parish Council (Representative of parish/town council)

## Comment text:

Please find attached Rainow Parish Council's contribution to the consultation.  
If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

## Attached Documents:

- letter-to-boundary-commission-cec-wards-210324-final.pdf

# Rainow Parish Council

[www.rainow.com](http://www.rainow.com)

Clerk: Mrs Sarah Giller

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
01625 850532

Email: [parishclerk@rainow.com](mailto:parishclerk@rainow.com).

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LGBCE  
PO BOX 133  
Blyth  
NE24 9FE

Dear Sir/Madam

## **Local Government Boundary Commission - Cheshire East Council Electoral Review**

Rainow Parish Council would comment as follows:

### **Rainow Parish**

Rainow, one of the largest parishes in England in land area, is a rural parish lying along the western edge of the Peak District National Park. The National Park boundary bisects the Parish, running along the B5470 road through the core of the village which largely comprises older properties fronting along the main road together with a 1960/70s residential development to the west of that road. Much of the Parish outside the Peak Park is designated as Green Belt and/or Peak Park Fringe with a general presumption against development. A number of Conservation Areas in Rainow were designated in 1994. Rainow is located within the slopes and valleys with woodlands of the South West Peak as described within the Peak District Landscape Characteristic Assessment. A nature reserve has recently been established in the Parish by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust building upon conservation previously undertaken by local voluntary groups.

The landscape is characterised by upland pasture and open moorland rising up to over 550m height along the Derbyshire boundary to the East. The Parish has a heritage of agriculture combined with industrial activity including quarrying, small scale coal mining and cotton mills. There is little industrial activity today and the agriculture is dominated by upland pasture for sheep and cattle. The Parish council includes a number of councillors who form part of the local farming community, reinforcing the rural nature of the Parish. The communal facilities in the Parish are limited to the Primary School, Church and Church Centre, Institute and Robin Hood pub. There are no health, leisure or retail facilities and residents requiring these are dependent on access to the neighbouring towns, principally Macclesfield.

### **Issues Affecting Rainow Parish**

The issues that affect Rainow Parish are common to other rural areas along the edge of the Peak District and include:

- Rural crime – e.g. theft and worrying of livestock, vehicle and equipment theft
- Impacts of visitors – e.g. parking, maintenance of paths and stiles, dog fouling and sheep worrying
- Winter maintenance of highways – e.g. local contractors undertake snow clearance on behalf of the CEC)
- Access to health, leisure and retail services
- Rural bus services
- Lack of mobile phone reception and effective broadband
- Speeding and safety on rural roads – particularly use of Parish roads for high-speed driving of motorcycles and ‘super cars’
- Heavy goods vehicles using the B5470 through the centre of the village
- Protection of the local landscape and heritage features

The recommendations in our Parish Plan, published in 2006, relate to many of the above issues and emphasise the rural nature of the needs of residents of Rainow Parish.

### **Current Warding Arrangements**

Currently Rainow forms part of Sutton Ward of Cheshire East Council (CEC), the ward comprises a series of rural Parishes along the edge of the Peak District National Park. Rainow Parish Council (RPC) expressed a strong preference for such an arrangement during the review of ward boundaries leading to the establishment of CEC in 2009. RPC has found the current arrangement to work very well and we have received excellent support from each of our Sutton Ward councillors. They have been able to focus on the rural issues that face Rainow and the other parishes within the ward and ensure that these are represented effectively at the CEC level. The Sutton Ward councillor has also maintained strong links with other organisations with responsibilities for Rainow and the other rural areas, including the Peak District National Park authority and the specialist Rural Policing team. One of the Rainow Parish councillors, Andrew Gregory, was formerly a CEC Sutton Ward councillor is currently a Parish Member of the Peak District National Park Authority.

### **Future Warding Arrangements**

As noted above, RPC has found the current CEC warding arrangements to work very well, ensuring that the needs of Rainow residents, which are dominated by rural issues, are effectively represented at the CEC level. We believe it important that Rainow remain part of a rural focused ward.

We have close relationships with neighbouring rural parishes, including sharing a parish clerk with Sutton Parish Council, jointly funding the purchase of speed indicating device (SID) with Pott Shrigley and Adlington Parish Councils and continuing to fund the operation of the SID with Adlington PC. As noted above there is a specialist rural policing team, which has received funding from RPC for equipment for rural activities, and they operate across many of the rural parishes along the Peak Park fringe area. Our local Police Community Support Officer, who attends most RPC meetings and holds regular local surgeries, covers this rural area and is able to coordinate responses to the common issues affecting these parishes.

We understand that CEC may be suggesting that Rainow become part of a ward along with the eastern part of the Bollington Town Council area. RPC would be strongly opposed to such a change. Bollington is an urban area with very different issues from those facing a rural parish such as Rainow. This was recognised by CEC itself in their conclusion of the recent Community Governance Review (CGR) that reported in 2022. In response to a suggestion by Bollington Town Council that the boundary between Rainow and Bollington be moved to transfer part of Rainow Parish into Bollington CEC noted that:

- *‘it would take in a large rural part of Rainow containing Green Belt land and Peak Park fringe areas’* and
- *‘The Borough Council is also conscious that, whilst rural areas that are adjacent to towns are generally dependent to varying degrees on those towns for some services, that does not mean they identify as part of the urban area’s community’.*

On the basis of the above and other evidence CEC recommended no change to the current Bollington/Rainow boundary. Thus the CEC CGR recognised that the rural community of Rainow is very different from the urban community of Bollington. RPC are surprised and disappointed that CEC, having acknowledged the fundamental differences between Rainow and Bollington in their 2022 report, consider that a single councillor could provide effective representation for a combined Bollington (east) and Rainow Ward. RPC believe that Rainow residents would be greatly disadvantaged by such an arrangement, given that the great majority of the residents of such a ward would live in the urban area of Bollington and thus the councillor's workload would be dominated by urban area issues.

RPC wish to remain within a rural focused ward for the reasons detailed above. We consider that a councillor focussed on rural issues will be able to provide far more effective representation for Rainow residents than one representing a mixture of urban and rural communities. RPC believe effective representation, achieved by grouping areas of similar communities, to be more important than simply balancing numbers of voters per councillor. Our strong preference is to remain with the current warding arrangements. However, if changes have to be made then we should remain part of a rural focused ward. This may be achieved through inclusion of other rural Parishes along the Peak Park fringe, such as Pott Shrigley, Adlington, Lyme Handley and Kettlethulme in addition to some of those already within Sutton ward.

### **Conclusion**

**To conclude, RPC is unanimous in the view that the residents of Rainow Parish would be best served by the Parish remaining within a CEC ward comprising similar rural parishes along the Peak Park fringe area. We understand that CEC may be suggesting combining Rainow with the eastern part of the ward currently covering the Bollington Town Council area. RPC are strongly opposed to any such change as this would greatly reduce the effective representation of Rainow residents' needs as the focus for the CEC councillor would be dominated by urban rather than rural issues. Indeed, CEC themselves, in the conclusion of their Community Governance Review of Parish and Town boundaries in 2022, acknowledge that the rural identity of Rainow is quite different from the urban area of Bollington Town Council. RPC believe that effective representation for their residents is better achieved by being represented by a CEC Councillor for a wholly rural ward. This will enable our CEC councillor to be focused on rural issues, including those related to the National Park, and that this focus is much more important to our community than simply balancing numbers of residents per councillor.**

Yours faithfully



Mrs S Giller  
Parish Clerk to Rainow Parish Council