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From: Adrian Roper [redacted]
Sent: 11 December 2022 16:55
To: reviews
Subject: Castle Point Boundary Revierws
Attachments: CPCA Boundary Review Proposal.pdf

Categories: [redacted]

Dear sir,

Please find Castle Point Conservative Associations comments on the redistribution of wards in the Castle Point Borough Council area.

Kind regards

Adrian Roper
Chairman

Castle Point Local Election Boundary Review
Conservative Party Submission

Executive Summary

The Boundary Commission have produced a fair proposition for changes to the local election ward boundaries in Castle Point. The local authority have overseen significant population shifts within its current boundaries and adaptations are needed in order to deliver best value to voters and fair representation across the Borough. Many of the changes proposed by comparison to the existing boundaries help better distinguish communities in South Benfleet, and equally deliver the necessary remedies in order to shrink the size of the Council from 41 to 39. The Conservative Party agrees that the most convenient way to deliver this change in overall councillors is through the reduction of wards on Canvey Island and an equalisation throughout the Borough with all wards having three elected representatives.

Castle Point Conservative Association asks the Commission in light of these agreements to make minor amendments based on local, community factors which will be outlined where appropriate for each impacted ward. The most significant suggestion from the Conservative Party is the recreation of a ward to the West of Canvey Island based around the Dutch and Canvey villages. There is a great history behind the representation of residents within a form of Canvey West ward over many decades and the character of this part of the Island greatly differentiates from its other significant communities. Arguments surrounding this change will be outlined further in the body of our response to this consultation.

In addition to this, the Conservative Party would like to use the opportunity afforded to residents throughout this review process to reconsider the names of the proposed wards. Suggestions have been made throughout guided by the Party's amendments and we hope this will support residents in better connecting with their locally elected representatives in future.

We appreciate any consideration you can offer our proposal which holds firm many of the principal areas within the Commission's proposition with locally minded changes suggested where appropriate to community needs.

Ward Breakdown

Canvey Village Ward

This amended ward is similar to the original Canvey West boundaries with the exceptions of land north of Somnes Avenue and the Waterside Leisure Centre which we believe to be better connected to a ward based on the residential areas around Wintergardens and St Katherine's schools.

The residential areas across both Canvey Village and the Dutch Village are interconnected and share similar social issues. The Boundary Commission should note the boundaries of a recent Public Space Protection Order covering the commercial land around Roscommon Way and the residential communities in the historic Canvey villages as an example of intertwined social issues which would fail to be coherently confronted without clear political boundaries that appreciate the need of a ward in the West of the Island. Moreover, this necessity is further exaggerated by the prevalence of commercial traffic movements and other social impacts from the retail estates in the West of the Island which also require addressing through a westernmost ward with dedicated representatives.

Finally, the suggestion that residents currently residing within Canvey Central ward on current Castle Point boundaries would be well-suited by the same representatives as the villages ignores the way roads north of Long Road and south of Canvey Lake do not centre themselves on the retail park area, rather use the Town Centre as their route for commercial

and retail interests. Additionally, many pupils in this central area of the Island find themselves divided between Wintergardens Primary School and Canvey Infants & Junior schools. This differs greatly with families in the West which would see Northwick Park as their local school. We believe that it is important for wards across Castle Point to be based around existing communities and would instead propose a Canvey Lake ward incorporating residents in the existing Canvey Central and Canvey Wintergardens wards as a better option for reducing the total wards on Canvey Island whilst still maintaining the sanctity of a community in the West.

Canvey Lake Ward

The Lake on Canvey Island is a central point for congregation and travel within the Island community. It is one of the primary maintenance responsibilities of Canvey Town Council and is frequently used as a space for community events hosted by the Town Council. The Lake connects residents in the Town Centre to the residential areas around Wintergardens and those who live between Long Road and its southern bank. A ward focussed on this formidable community centre point would be a change to current boundaries easily understood by the local community. In addition to this on social issues along the Lake and traffic concerns connecting Long Road with Link Road would be well represented by ward colleagues in this vicinity.

Canvey Furtherwick Park Ward

The Conservative Party's proposal differs from the Commission's suggestions in a minor way with the dissection of Canvey Town Centre. We have put forwards a proposal that naturally takes a significant portion of shops and community spaces to the south of High Street through to the easternmost point of Long Road within a ward using Furtherwick Road as its main link between these Town Centre spaces and the busiest parts of the seafront.

Our proposed Canvey Furtherwick Park Ward connects the traditional soul of the Island with the original Furtherwick Park School site (now Castle View School), the Paddocks Community Centre, King Georges playing field and the Labworth building all incorporated within a singular ward.

These communities differ from the residential areas around Hawkesbury Road which see Jones' Corner as a small commercial hub and face similar demographic and social circumstances to the village communities; which is why we have proposed this portion of Canvey South returns to a Canvey Village Ward in the west, and the Canvey Furtherwick Park Ward looks more to the east in order to produce a fair scale.

In achieving this latter point with a Canvey Furtherwick Park Ward shifting more to the east, the Conservative Party proposal hopes to consolidate the whole central strip of the seafront within a single ward. This prevents the split leaving the Windjammer Pub and coastal rock pools that are key features of Canvey Island's seafront offering from being shifted into the easternmost ward of the Island without a focus on the seafront's hub of activity.

Canvey Leigh Beck Ward

The Boundary Commission's changes to the current Canvey East ward see a shift to the west including May Avenue and its surrounding roads including the Windjammer pub and other integral aspects of the seafront which do not fit within the quieter character of Canvey Point and split the Island's tourist offering across two wards.

Instead we suggest that the residents living closest to St Anne's Church move into Canvey Furtherwick Park ward in order to deliver the fair allocation of electors across wards, and Canvey Leigh Beck Ward accommodates the community connected to Rainbow Road and Mornington Road which are self-contained from other residential areas through their connection with Larup Road and close vicinity to Smallgains Park and the nearby community

hall. It is the Conservative Party's view that these minor adjustments would better suit local residents and provide a less disruptive change to the boundaries of Canvey East.

The suggested renaming of this traditional Island ward to Canvey Leigh Beck provides a great opportunity for electors to feel better represented and connected to their representational boundaries. This part of Canvey Island contains the largest primary school in Canvey Leigh Beck, and Canvey Football Club, both of which are based around the Leigh Beck area. We feel this is an identity that would resonate with local electors.

Canvey Newlands Ward

The Boundary Commission has presented a similar Canvey North ward to what many residents have grown accustomed. However, it would be unfair to capture a community south of High Street in a ward to the north of the Island due to the disconnect with transport routes and social hubs. Instead the Conservative Party propose to contain the northern portion of May Avenue within Canvey Furtherwick Park ward where it is more geographically aligned, and the Rainbow Road to Mornington Road area residents within Canvey Leigh Beck.

This would provide an opportunity to encapsulate the '60 Acres' community near Canvey Golf Course and all other residential areas spanning Kings Park, Harvest Road and Papenburg Road within the same ward based around key transport arteries: Somnes Avenue, Central Wall Road, and Dovervelt Road.

There are many geographical and social explanations for why this ward structure is opportune for bringing similar communities together. On the one hand we have highlighted transport links – which are of particular importance to the Island community which is a highly congested region within Essex – whilst on the other this area covers a geographical flood plain which incapsulates a number of properties that face significant flooding issues, best fronted by ward representatives covering this significant area.

In addition to this, Canvey Island is currently experiencing substantial changes to its demographic makeup, as shown in the 2021 Census. This Review should inspire to bring communities together and this ward structure would prevent the current division of Canvey's Jewish population across a number of disconnected wards.

Hadleigh Castle Ward

Castle Point Conservatives understand the basis of the Commission's proposed Hadleigh East ward and are only asking the Commission to contemplate the consolidation of Hadleigh Town Centre and the St James' parish which runs slightly more northernly than the proposed border at present. This is a closer proposal to the current St James' ward boundaries, however, it has the benefit of keeping residential areas facing Hadleigh Town within one ward whilst the Daws Heath area and more north-facing communities that utilise the A127 are contained in a neighbouring ward. The importance of this can be further evidenced by the way residents living around John Burrows tend to face more towards Hadleigh Town Centre than the community in Daws Heath.

Westwood & Daws Heath Ward

The Boundary Commission's proposal for a Hadleigh West ward risks breaking the traditional boundaries of all Benfleet, Thunderlsey and Hadleigh. Instead the Conservative Party has put forward that residents around Rayleigh Road and in the south of Thundersley should not be combined with those south of the London Road who have a more Benfleet orientated school catchment and community attachment.

The Rayleigh Road is the primary Castle Point connection to the A127 and links appropriately to Daws Heath Road and the St Michael's Road link to the A127. Including Hart Road which links the south Thundersley region around the Woodmans roundabout on the Rayleigh Road.

We put forth that a ward in the north of the Borough which expands the previous Victoria ward boundaries to include A127 facing residents in south Thundersley would provide a more connected ward that could be adequately served by local representatives and highlight that residents in this well connected but northern corner of the Borough tend not to travel eastward. That said, the Commission has presented a Victoria ward which mostly appreciates the separate representation needed for Daws Heath which is important. Castle Point Conservatives feel that a ward including former Cedar Hall residents would be a better match than residents in Hadleigh Town Centre who are more connected with the traditional St James' parish.

Thundersley Village

The Boundary Commission's proposals for Thundersley ward have been kept primarily the same, despite a minor change to transfer the industrial site in the east of the ward away from the village and into the St George's ward nearby. This site more directly impacts residents in this community to the north of South Benfleet rather than the more rural and village charactered Thundersley.

Castle Point Conservatives have also proposed adding the lexis 'Village' to the ward's title to reflect the nature of the ward. We are appreciative of the Commission's proposals which stop the village from being divided between St Peter's and Cedar Hall wards as it has been in the past.

Rushbottom Ward

The Boundary Commission's proposed St George's ward is similar to its current namesake and sensibly ensures separate representation for residents outside of Thundersley Village in the community near Woodlands Park.

The Conservative Party has proposed two minor changes: firstly that the industrial site – Manor Trading Estate - currently proposed to be in Thundersley ward is moved into Rushbottom Ward; and secondly that the commercial centre of this ward reflects the community within it along Church Road rather than the London Road – which we believe to be better represented by a Tarpots Ward containing the whole of this commercial hub. One of the difficulties in the past has been the way Tarpots is traditionally split between Appleton, St Peters and St Georges wards in their current forms. Keeping this commercial area as a focus of a singular ward would greatly enhance convenience of representation.

Finally, the Conservative Party continues to suggest more localised names for wards. In this case Rushbottom Ward to reflect the importance of the Rushbottom Lane, its popular underpass, and its community relevance to schools such as the Glenwood School.

Tarpots Ward

Castle Point Conservatives were excited by the prospect of a Tarpots ward splitting different communities in South Benfleet and we have made a suggestion to enhance the ward boundaries to encapsulate the whole of the town around the London Road. This allows for Tarpots Library to be included within this ward and a convenience to local government representation with the entrance to the Sadlers Farm roundabout fitting within a single ward.

In addition to this we would like the Commission to consider the Kents Hill Schools as the main primary level schools serving this community and believe this to be true with each of the residential areas surrounding the London Road not just to the south of it.

Appleton Ward
The catchment areas for the Appleton School in South Benfleet and its competitor The King John School tend to represent a natural divide in the South Benfleet communities. A primarily residential ward centred on the Appleton School is important for this community and we appreciate the Commission's accommodation of this in its proposal. However we have made somewhat substantial amends to the eastern flank of Appleton, Tarpots and St Mary's wards to recreate a ward centred on Vicarage Hill. We feel that residents within these areas are more likely to attend the King John School and represent a different community entirely with their term-time traffic flows different to the bulk of Appleton residents.

The Conservative Party has suggested for Jotman's Primary School to present a guiding case for where the boundaries of Appleton Ward should fall. For example we know that many pupils live just south of the London Road and should be incorporated into this ward for simplicity of representation. Understandably our proposed changes for a Vicarage Hill Ward create an elector deficit in Appleton Ward which is why this move towards the London Road would prove wholly sensible and allow the ward to fit within the general population levels of other proposed wards in the Borough.

St Mary's Ward
St Mary's parish in South Benfleet is a historic and deeply connected community. Castle Point Conservatives are happy to see the community to the south of Glyders fields, by Benfleet Downs, which sit within the parish are included to complete a community that current boundaries divide. This should create a local authority ward with representatives used to dealing with flooding issues (which impact this whole proposed area) and Benfleet Railway Station.

One proposed change from the Conservative Party does not impact the number of electors significantly. However, we believe that Jotman's Farm which has historically been linked with St Mary's parish and forms the bedrock of many childhood experiences for residents in this area to be moved into the St Mary's ward instead of Appleton which is more detached geographically and socially. This would honour the general link between Jotman's Farm and Benfleet High Street.

Our final suggestion is for the properties to the north of St Mary's Drive, from the foot of Vicarage Hill be included in a South Benfleet focussed Vicarage Hill Ward which would better link residents in this area to the King John School where they generally attend and the historic feature of Vicarage Hill many residents identify themselves with.

Vicarage Hill Ward
South Benfleet has always historically contained a ward which represents the community focussed around Vicarage Hill and the Boyce Golf Club. Castle Point Conservatives feel that the Commission's proposal does not allow for this representation and risks breaking the historic boundary between South Benfleet, Hadleigh and Thundersley. Three very distinctly different communities.

Instead we have proposed a ward quite similar to the current Boyce ward which would see the Benfleet community across Vicarage Hill, Benfleet Road, and Shipwrights Drive fairly represented. This communities utilise these distinct transport routes and their traffic is directed around the Hill.

We believe that Thundersley Park Road and Hill Road provide connectivity from the west of the proposed ward (currently in the Commission's Appleton ward) with the London Road and residential areas to the south of the London Road. Again connecting residents who are more likely to attend the King John school at the top of Vicarage Hill than the Appleton School.

Conclusion

Castle Point Conservatives thank the Boundary Commission for their considered and fair proposal for much needed boundary changes in Castle Point. We do however ask the Commission to consider our bolder proposals for Canvey Village Ward and Vicarage Hill Ward alongside the more minor community considerations we have proposed to both boundaries and ward titles.