

Draft Response to LGBCE Draft Recommendations

Introduction

The Council welcomes the opportunity to comment upon the recommended ward boundaries as proposed by the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBCE) for England in October 2021. The following observations have been drawn together from comments made by Councillors in an internal consultation exercise that was open to all. Councillors also have the option of responding to the LGBCE directly by the 13 December deadline.

The observations have been structured in line with the LGBCE Draft Recommendations to ensure the Council's comments reflect the proposals made by the LGBCE in this stage of the consultation. Comments from Councillors aim to highlight where the proposals do and do not reflect local community identities as well as practical geography on the ground as well as taking account of the LGBCE three main considerations when carrying out a review:

- 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.

South Western Rushcliffe

Barton in Fabis

Current: part of the existing Gotham ward

Proposed: 1 councillor

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 2,276

Variance from the average 2027: -6%

The Council recognises that this new ward has been created to accommodate the large development at Fairham that is due to be started in the next few years. However, it has concerns on two accounts. Firstly, that 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. Secondly, 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.

However, the existing ward member for this area is in support of these proposals which recognise the additional workload in terms of community leadership managing the settlement of a new residential area for both new residents and those who already live in the area.

The Council would encourage 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 Bonnington / 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; although the Council feels that the more rural existing villages in this area would continue to have more commonality with similar villages through the existing Sutton Bonnington and Leake wards. An alternative would be to combine the whole of the west of the Borough into one single three-member ward although the Council has serious reservations about the democratic equality and effectiveness of three-member wards in rural areas spanning large geographical areas (see note at the end of this document).

Soar Valley

Current: combination of the existing Sutton Bonnington ward with parts of Gotham and Leake wards

Proposed: 2 councillors

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 4,169

Variance from the average 2027: -14%

The Council is very concerned about the large geographical area that this proposed ward covers and the impact of this on effective local governance. Rushcliffe's Councillors are generally very active within their communities attending as many community events and parish council meetings as they can. This proposed area covers 7 parishes and meetings 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. 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.

The Council also encourages the LGBCE to take into account the comments made above in relation to the proposed Barton in Fabis ward.

Ruddington

Current: 3 councillors

Proposed: 3 councillors

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 7,100

Variance from the average 2027: -3%

The Council is satisfied that the proposals for Ruddington ward represent good electoral equality, community identity and effective and convenient local governance.

Bunny

Current: 1 councillor

Proposed: 1 councillor

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 2,324

Variance from the average 2027: -4%

The Council is supportive of the retention of Bunny as a single-member ward. However, Councillors were agreed that Plumtree has close community links with Tollerton and should remain within the Tollerton ward. If it is not possible to balance electoral equality by keeping Plumtree in the Tollerton ward, then the Council would suggest it has closer links with Keyworth with many Plumtree residents using health and education facilities as well as shopping and social groups within Keyworth. A main bus route also connects Plumtree and Keyworth.

The Council would encourage the LGBCE to consider the inclusion of rural villages such as Widmerpool and Willoughby on the Wolds currently in the Keyworth and Wolds ward instead of Plumtree as these villages have more in common with Wysall (in the Bunny ward) and the communities of all three villages identify better with each other (known locally as the W's) than either Bunny or Keyworth.

Leake

Current: 3 councillors

Proposed: 3 councillors

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 7,611

Variance from the average 2027: +4%

The Council is satisfied that the proposals for Leake ward represent good electoral equality, community identity and effective and convenient local governance.

South Eastern Rushcliffe

Keyworth and Wolds

Current: 3 councillors

Proposed: 3 councillors

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 8,027

Variance from the average 2027: +10%

The Council encourages the LGBCE to take into account the comments made above in relation to the Bunny ward and suggests that this may help to rebalance the electoral equality (reducing the +10% the current proposals suggest) as new housing developments within Keyworth grow the village during the next electoral cycle.

There is a strong feeling from one of the current ward councillors that the southern parts of the Keyworth and Wolds ward including Willoughby and Widmerpool should be incorporated into the Bunny ward rather than remaining in Keyworth and Wolds.

Neville and Langar

Current: 1 councillor

Proposed: 1 councillor

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 2,386

Variance from the average 2027: -2%

The Council is satisfied that the proposals for the Neville and Langar ward represent good electoral equality, community identity and effective and convenient local governance.

However, the Council would like the 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; in reality, councillors from two wards service the needs of this parish unnecessarily duplicating work and creating ineffective local governance. The Council would recommend moving the whole parish into the Neville and Langar ward.

North Eastern Rushcliffe

East Bridgford

Current: expanded East Bridgford ward to include areas currently covered by Cramner, Thoroton and Bingham West

Proposed: 2 councillors

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 5,227

Variance from the average 2027: +7%

The Council is very concerned about the large geographical area that this proposed ward covers and the impact of this on effective local governance. Rushcliffe's Councillors are generally very active within their communities attending as many community events and parish council meetings as they can. This proposed area covers 15 parishes and meetings 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. 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.

The Council asks the LGBCE to consider two single-member wards to cover this geographical area to ensure effective and convenient local government is maintained. It would further suggest that these two wards should retain the names of East Bridgford and Thoroton albeit with slight changes to the outer ward boundary as proposed.

Bingham North

Current: redrawing of the boundaries within Bingham to reach more equitable electoral representation

Proposed: 2 councillors

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 4,568

Variance from the average 2027: -6%

Whilst the Council understands the redrawing of the internal Bingham boundary from East/West to North/South represents better electoral equality following development within the Town, it encourages the LGBCE to 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'.

Bingham South

Current: redrawing of the boundaries within Bingham to reach more equitable electoral representation

Proposed: 2 councillors

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 4,745

Variance from the average 2027: -2%

See comments above in relation to the proposed Bingham North ward.

Aslockton and Cropwell

Current: newly created rural ward encompassing part of Thoroton, part of Cramner, part of Radcliffe on Trent and all of Cropwell ward

Proposed: 2 councillors

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 5,342

Variance from the average 2027: +10%

The Council is very concerned about the large geographical area that this proposed ward covers and the impact of this on effective local governance. Rushcliffe's Councillors are generally very active within their communities attending as many community events and parish council meetings as they can. This proposed area covers 8 parishes (plus 2-part parishes) and meetings 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. 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.

The Council asks the LGBCE to consider two single-member wards to cover this geographical area to ensure effective and convenient local government is maintained. It would further suggest that these two wards should retain the names of Cropwell and Aslockton albeit with slight changes to the outer ward boundary as proposed. If the LGBCE wishes to implement the current proposal, the Council would recommend the name of the ward should be Cropwell and Aslockton instead.

Upper Saxondale residents' association are happy their suggestions have been accepted

The Council would encourage the LGBCE to consider its earlier comments in relation to the warding of Barnstone village under Neville and Langar above.

Northern and Central Rushcliffe

Radcliffe on Trent

Current: reduction of current Radcliffe on Trent ward to exclude Upper Saxondale

Proposed: 3 councillors

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 7,471

Variance from the average 2027: +2%

The Council is satisfied that the proposals for the Radcliffe on Trent ward represent good electoral equality, community identity and effective and convenient local governance.

Tollerton

Current: reduction of existing ward losing Plumtree Parish to Bunny ward and Clipston and Normanton on the Wolds move to Cotgrave ward

Proposed: 1 councillor

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 2,636

Variance from the average 2027: +8%

The Council would encourage the LGBCE to consider the comments made above under 'Bunny' which suggest that Plumtree has significant community ties to Tollerton and should be retained within this ward if at all possible. The same applies to Clipston and Normanton on the Wolds - both communities look to Tollerton for social activity, schools, and shops. However, the Council understands 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

Current: expansion of existing Cotgrave ward

Proposed: 3 councillors

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 7,329

Variance from the average 2027: 0%

The Council is satisfied that the proposals for the Cotgrave ward represent good electoral equality, community identity and effective and convenient local governance. The Council would, however, encourage the LGBCE to consider comments made above in relation to Clipston on the Wolds and Normanton on the Wolds.

North Eastern West Bridgford

Trent Bridge

Current: Combination of existing Trent Bridge and Lady Bay wards minus the homes between Rectory Road / Albert Road and Abbey Road, Abbey Circus, Exchange Road and the rear of Manvers Road which all now fall into Abbey ward.

Proposed: 3 councillors

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 6,699

Variance from the average 2027: -8%

The Council is strongly opposed to the proposals for the Trent Bridge ward. Several Councillors have expressed the view that the area currently considered as Lady Bay ward has a distinct and separate community identity to other areas of West Bridgford even though those areas may be geographically close. It is closely bounded by the canal and a major road, and it has a close-knit urban community that is distinctly different to its surrounding area. In contrast, the current Trent Bridge ward has a significant student population due to its proximity to the main route into the city (and its two universities) and easily accessible public transportation links. The Council would strongly encourage the LGBCE to visit the area in person before finalising this decision.

The Council accepts that community identity is only one of its considerations when deciding where ward boundaries should be drawn and understands that electoral equality and effective governance must also be taken into account. The Council would be interested to understand more about the implications of different warding patterns for this area and is keen to work with the LGBCE to find a solution which best meets the aims of the review.

In addition, the Council would like to draw the LGBCE's attention to a parish split created by this warding pattern. This would seem an opportune time to move the Adbolton ward of Holme Pierrepont parish into the new Gamston ward so that the whole of the parish is now in this ward rather than still being split between Gamston and Trent Bridge wards

Gamston

Current: Combination of existing Gamston North and Gamston South wards with a small additional area from the existing Edwalton ward.

Proposed: 2 councillors

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 4,836

Variance from the average 2027: -1%

The Council is satisfied that the proposals for the Gamston ward represent good electoral equality, community identity and effective and convenient local governance. However, the Council would like to draw the LGBCE's attention to the fact that this proposed ward straddles both parished and non-parished areas, and the comments above under 'Trent Bridge' in reference to the Adbolton ward of Holme Pierrepont parish.

Abbey

Current expansion of existing ward to the north, taking in part of the existing Trent Bridge ward south of Rectory Road / Albert Road, and a small area of the existing Edwalton ward in the Leahurst Gardens area.

Proposed: 3 councillors

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 6,718

Variance from the average 2027: -8%

The Council is satisfied that the proposals for the Abbey ward represent good electoral equality and effective and convenient local governance. Councillors have noted that there is no particular community identity or focus in this area and that there are distinct differences between the north and south of the ward. These concerns are not significant enough for the Council to propose any changes to this proposal.

One councillor had reservations about the changes proposed and suggested a different boundary arrangement. As an individual view, this will be put forward to the LGBCE separately.

South Western West Bridgford

Compton Acres

Current: small expansion of existing ward to gain land from the south of Northwold Avenue to Rugby Road from the existing Lutterell ward

Proposed: 2 councillors

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 4,839

Variance from the average 2027: -1%

The Council is satisfied that the proposals for the Compton Acres ward represent good electoral equality, community identity and effective and convenient local governance.

One Councillor suggested that due to the geography and close alignment of both the Compton Acres and Lutterell wards that the two should be combined into one three-member ward. In an urban and non-parished area, the Council's reservations about three-member wards do not stand and there is very little between the two areas in terms of community identity.

Lutterell

Current: contraction of existing ward of the same name losing all land from Rugby road northwards

Proposed: 1 councillor

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 2,567

Variance from the average 2027: +6%

The LGBCE are encouraged to consider the suggestion made above under 'Compton Acres'. If, however, the LGBCE is minded to keep Lutterell as a separate ward, the Council feels that the name 'Wilford Hill' is more representative of the smaller ward. The reduction in size does better represent community identity in the area – there is a Wilford Hill residents association, facebook page and running club with essentially the same boundaries.

Musters

Current: expansion of the current ward to include properties north of South Road / Musters Road to the rear of Loughborough Road from the current Lutterell ward

Proposed: 2 councillors

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 5,369

Variance from the average 2027: +10%

The Council is satisfied that the proposals for the Musters ward represent good electoral equality, community identity and effective and convenient local governance.

One councillor noted that there are distinct differences between the north and south of the ward, but the balance of views expressed were in support of the changes.

Edwalton

Current: slight reduction of existing ward to lose properties to the east of Alford Road to the new Gamston ward

Proposed: 2 councillors

Anticipated number of electors 2027: 4,774

Variance from the average 2027: -2%

The Council is satisfied that the proposals for the Edwalton ward represent good electoral equality, community identity and effective and convenient local governance. The Council is mindful that in any future review this arrangement may change as the new Edwalton community, which is currently only part built and occupied, will have established its own identity which may or may not link with that of the existing and established areas of this ward.

Comments related to Multi Member Wards

The Council received many comments from Councillors relating to the increased number of multi-member wards. There was general consensus that whilst multi-member wards worked well in non-parished or suburban areas, they were entirely unsuitable for large rural areas and that this seriously impacted upon the democratic representation and good governance of these areas.

Larger multi-member wards work well in our key settlements such as Leake, Ruddington, Keyworth, Cotgrave, Radcliffe and Bingham. Councillors are able to work together within a relatively compact geographical area, there is generally only one town or parish council to attend and support, resident concerns are similar in nature, and it is easier to attend community events and surgeries. In some of the larger rural areas proposed in the LGBCE Draft Recommendations, multiple councillors could be expected by their communities to attend up to 15 parish council meetings a month, as well as commenting on planning applications from a number of different and diverse communities, travelling over significant distances to be present at community events or talk to residents directly. This makes it very difficult for residents to form any kind of connection with their local representative, effective local governance becomes distant, and the community leadership that councillors provide is spread so thin it is almost non-existent.

There is no doubt that 'buddying-up' does provide resilience in case individual councillors are indisposed or on holiday. However, Rushcliffe has significant evidence to demonstrate that if these circumstances do transpire then swift action is taken to ensure that community leadership and representation is maintained.

Whilst the mathematics may suggest that multi-member wards are a good idea, the reality is that in some cases they are an impediment to effective and convenient local governance as well as seriously undermining the community's ability to access and influence local representatives.