



# Rutland County Council

**Rutland County Council**

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Review Officer (Rutland)  
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England  
14th Floor, Millbank Tower  
Millbank  
London SW1P 4QP

Dear Sirs,

Rutland County Council Full Council have considered the Draft Recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) published on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and conclude that they are not in support of the proposals for Council Size and Warding Patterns put forward by the LGBCE.

At its meeting on 15 January 2018, members voted in support of this response and agreed that the LGBCE should be asked to consider the following observations in relation to the LGBCE Draft Recommendations:

- Combining the Parishes of Braunston and Martinsthorpe has the effect of combining two disparate communities. It results in 2 Ward Councillors being responsible for covering 6 Parish Councils and a geographically sizable ward (around 8 miles across). It does not satisfy the LGBCE requirement to reflect community identity, nor does it provide for effective and convenient local government and does not even result in electoral equality as it results in a Ward with a -12% variance.
- The Council accepts the comments from the LGBCE regarding the RCC proposal to move Hambleton to Martinsthorpe, and on this basis suggests that it may be more appropriate to move Eggleton to Martinsthorpe instead – in order to improve electoral equality.
- There is significant evidence that the Parish of Barleythorpe should be separated from the County Ward of Oakham North West and be a Ward in its own right. A Community Governance Review was undertaken for the Oakham North West and Barleythorpe area during 2016/17. As part of this review a number of options were put forward for consultation, including an option to remove the common boundary between the two parish areas so that the entire parish area of Barleythorpe was brought within the Parish of Oakham (Oakham Town Council's parish area). The overwhelming response 59% (172 out of 293 responses) indicated a preference for Barleythorpe to have its own Parish Council and that it should remain separate from the Parish of Oakham. This was the ultimate outcome of the review. The submissions received from Barleythorpe residents during this consultation clearly evidenced a sense of belonging to the Barleythorpe Community (in spite of its close proximity to Oakham); a strong desire to maintain control over local issues to safeguard the interests of this rapidly growing community; and an aspiration to improve the quality of life for local residents along with community well-being and

cohesion through an effective local governance structure. Based on this evidence and the fact that Oakham North West is a rapidly growing area with a high percentage of electoral inequality, the Council based its original proposal on warding patterns on the premise that Barleythorpe be established as a separate 2 councillor ward. The Council then moved on to each of the other wards in order to ensure that, as far as possible, the relevant criteria were met for each area.

- The Barleythorpe Community see themselves as separate and distinct from the Oakham Town in spite of the geographical closeness. The only way to achieve this without having a significant impact on the other warding arrangements for the County is to increase the Council Size to 28, as Barleythorpe would require 2 ward members in order to achieve electoral equality due to the forecast increase in Council size by 2023.
- A proposal to create a separate ward for Barleythorpe on the basis of a Council size of 27 (as put forward by the LGBCE) could involve reducing the number of Ward Councillors for Oakham by 1 member (i.e. from 8 to 7), but this would result in significant changes to every County Ward of Oakham and such extreme changes are not justified in the light of the negative impact this would have on community cohesion for any effected areas.
- The LGBCE recommendation is that Barleythorpe Parish continue to share Ward Members with Oakham North West (albeit with an increase from 2 to 3 Councillors). The Council do not believe that this represents effective and convenient local governance given that Barleythorpe now have their own Parish Council and their desire to maintain their own unique identity as detailed above.
- The proposals contained in the Draft Recommendations for changes to the Oakham County Wards do not work when considering internal road links, they also depart from the use of the railway as the demarcation between east and west Oakham. The draft recommendations proposed by the LGBCE also propose moving the Oakham South East boundary to the High St, this would split the economic town centre down the middle. The changes also have the result of linking disparate communities and therefore have a negative effect on community cohesion. None of these recommendations were considered to reflect the community identity nor provide convenient and effective local governance.
- The Council notes that the response to the initial consultation on warding patters was relatively low, but many groups, organisations and individuals are now likely to respond to the draft recommendations as part of this next stage of consultation. Early indications are that many of the affected areas feel strongly that the draft recommendations do not achieve an appropriate balance and are predominantly based on electoral equality, to the disadvantage of maintaining community cohesion and providing for effective local governance.

The Council believes, therefore, that its original proposal remains the most effective in providing for electoral equality, resulting in convenient local government in order to protect the interests and identities of local communities and requests that the Boundary Commission re-considers its original proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Mr T Mathias – Leader of the Council