

East Cambridgeshire District Council response to the Local Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) consultation on its draft recommendations on the new Electoral Arrangements for East Cambridgeshire District Council.

Introduction

The draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for East Cambridgeshire District Council were published by the LGBCE on 17th November 2015. The draft recommendations comprise 14 wards, a reduction of 5 wards from the current arrangement. Amendments have been made to the Ely, Soham, Bottisham, Woodditton, Haddenham and Sutton wards proposed by the Council.

Draft recommendations warding arrangement

The draft recommendations are largely based on proposals put forward by East Cambridgeshire District Council and propose a council size of 28 members.

As the changes to Ely and Soham wards are minor boundary amendments to ensure the ward boundaries align with the new county division boundaries, The Council is minded to support these changes.

However, for the reasons given below, the Council does not support the draft recommendations relating to the Bottisham, Woodditton Haddenham and Soham wards.

Bottisham and Woodditton wards

The Council's proposal includes Burrough Green in the Woodditton ward. However, to reflect transport links through the ward, the draft recommendations include Burrough Green in the Bottisham ward.

East Cambridgeshire District Council requests that Burrough Green be included in the Woodditton ward, as Burrough Green has very strong community links with villages in the Woodditton ward, particularly Dullingham and Stetchworth. In terms of transport links, there are closer links from Burrough Green to the villages in the Woodditton ward than to Bottisham. Bottisham is 9.9 miles from Burrough Green (15 minutes drive time) compared to 1.9 miles from Dullingham (4 minutes drive time), 2.8 miles from Stetchworth (6 minutes drive time) and Cheveley, which is 6 miles away (12 minutes drive time).

Haddenham & Sutton

East Cambridgeshire District Council proposed a 2 two-member Sutton ward, but this resulted in - 12.5% variance (the minimum permitted by the LGBCE is -10%). To improve the electoral equality the LGBCE propose a three-member Haddenham & Sutton ward.

However, this arrangement does not reflect the community identity and interests of the two wards. Haddenham has its own shops, post office, doctors and primary schools and shares no facilities or community links with Sutton.

Although the variance for the Sutton ward is outside the permitted range, this is only a shortfall of 630 electors and the low variance this arrangement creates will quickly improve.

The Council understands that variances outside the +/-10% have been allowed for other electoral reviews and so should also be permitted in this case.

The recently completed review for Dorset County Council contains a ward (Swanage) with a variance of +11%. Two wards that formed part of Hertfordshire County Council review have been permitted variances exceed the permitted range (Tring +11% and London Colney -12% and Coleshill North and Water Orton ward in Warwickshire has been allowed a variance of -11%.

The Council therefore requests that Haddenham and Aldreth comprise a single member ward reflecting the local identity and links of the parish, and that Sutton, Mepal, Wentworth and Witcham comprise a two-member ward.

Haddenham Parish Council does not support the three-member proposal and also will be writing to the LGBCE to request that Haddenham becomes a single-member ward.