

AGENDA ITEM NO 5

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND (LGBCE)
ELECTORAL REVIEW OF EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE – EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON WARDING
ARRANGEMENTS**

Committee: Council

Date: 20th August 2015

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[Q57]

1.0 ISSUE

1.1 To agree a submission to the Local Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) consultation on warding arrangements as part of the Electoral Review of East Cambridgeshire.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the Council agrees the submission to the LGBCE attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

3.0 BACKGROUND/OPTIONS

3.1 In April 2014 full Council agreed to request the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to undertake a review of Council size with a view to reducing the number of Members from 39 to 27.

3.2 The LGBCE announced in June 2015 that it is minded to recommend that 27 District Councillors should be elected to East Cambridgeshire District Council in the future. The announcement signals the start of a consultation asking the Council, interested parties and members of the public to propose a pattern of electoral wards to accommodate those Councillors. This consultation will end on 31st August 2015.

4.0 ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Whilst developing a new warding arrangement for the district, a number of issues with a Council size of 27 emerged, as set out on page 1 of the submission document (Appendix 1). Although 27 Councillors is the best fit in terms of providing effective and convenient local government, a Council size of 28 Councillors appears to meet the other LGBCE criteria more effectively. Therefore, the Council's submission to the LGBCE is based on a Council size of 28.

4.2 Table 1 on page 4 of the appendix sets out the Council's warding proposal. It comprises single Member wards where they were felt to meet the LGBCE

criteria, and multi-Member wards where these were felt to be more appropriate, in order to cover a dispersed rural area or to reduce the need to split parishes. Where the views of Parish Councils have been expressed, they have also been incorporated.

4.3 All Councillors have had the opportunity to input into the development of the proposed warding arrangement and a Member Seminar was held to discuss a draft version. The feedback from Councillors has shaped the final proposals.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

5.2 Equality Impact Assessment (INRA) not required.

6.0 APPENDICES

6.1 Appendix 1 - ECDC response to LGBCE consultation on warding arrangements.

Background Documents

Special full Council meeting minutes 15th April 2014.

The LGBCE website provides comprehensive details of the review to date -

<http://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/eastern/cambridgeshire/east-cambridgeshire>

Location

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East Cambridgeshire District Council

Response to LGBCE Consultation on Warding Arrangements

Introduction

East Cambridgeshire District Council (EADC) has previously submitted a proposal to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) for a council size of 27 councillors, which the LGBCE has indicated it is minded to agree. The next step in the review process is a consultation on warding arrangements for the district to accommodate 27 councillors.

Development of the Councils' proposed warding arrangements

The projected electorate for the district in 2020 (the date to which the LGBCE required us to forecast in order to future-proof the new boundaries) is 71,650. This takes into account expected new developments and projected population growth.

In developing its response to the consultation the Council has applied the three statutory criteria that the LGBCE must consider in devising its proposals:

- To deliver electoral equality for voters.
- To provide boundaries that reflect community identity and interests.
- To provide effective and convenient local government.

Whilst developing a ward pattern to accommodate 27 councillors a number of issues were identified:

- The forecast Ely electorate is too large to keep the parish within Ely wards. In order to deliver electoral equality for voters the parish needs to be split. Council Members and City of Ely Council believe the parish of the City of Ely should remain intact to reflect the community identity of the parish and provide effective and convenient local government for residents.
- There is a strong local desire for Wicken to remain within a Soham ward to reflect the community identity and interests of those parishes. However, doing this means there isn't enough electorate left to the west of the district to make wards of the required size to deliver electoral equality for voters.
- Burrough Green is not a good fit with the Bottisham and/or Swaffhams ward in terms of geography, local interests or identity. But to include it in the Cheveley and/or Dullingham ward would create a variance of -13%. To split Burrough Green in order to improve the variances would result in electors in the northern parish ward having to travel to Swaffham Bulbeck to vote as there is no suitable building in that area to host a polling station.

Whilst 27 councillors is the best fit in terms of providing effective and convenient local government, a council size of 28 councillors appears to meet the other LGBCE criteria more effectively. A council size of 28 would:

- Allow Ely parish to remain intact by adding a 7th councillor.
- Enable Wicken to remain in a Soham ward.
- Allow Burrough Green to be incorporated within the Dullingham ward.

A council size of 28 councillors does result in a -12.5% variance for Sutton, 63 electors below the permitted -10%. However, the forecast growth for Sutton to 2020 is considered low and it is likely that the variance would improve quickly, particularly as Sutton has started the process of producing a Neighbourhood Plan.

All Council Members have had the opportunity to input into the consultation process and a Member Seminar to discuss the proposed warding arrangement and amended council size has been held.

This submission was approved at a Full Council meeting and has cross-party support.

ECDC Warding Proposal – 28 Councillors

ECDC is proposing a council size of 28 councillors for the reasons stated above. The warding arrangement for the district to accommodate this council size is in accordance with the LGBCE criteria.

East Cambridgeshire can be broadly defined into two sub-areas. The northern part of the district is predominantly intensively farmed fenland, with many settlements located on higher ground on the old 'islands' in the fen. The south of the district is dominated by the horseracing industry with large areas of farmland converted to stud use. Residents mainly look to Newmarket and Cambridge for services and facilities.

The ECDC proposals reflect this by forming the southern area into 2 two-member wards. This reflects the areas topography and boundaries created by the road network. This particular arrangement is proposed as it keeps the Cambridgeshire part of Newmarket in one ward and it aligns Burrough Green with Dullingham, reflecting its close links with this village rather than with Bottisham.

Given the dispersed nature of this area and the number of parishes it contains, two-member wards were felt to be appropriate here, as it can be difficult for single members to cover dispersed rural areas. This allows for effective and convenient local government.

It is proposed that Burwell remains a separate ward and is not warded, reflecting and retaining the village's identity.

The Council's proposal for Soham is that it retains the north-south split, amended to reflect the changes in council size and the electorate. Wicken Parish Council has expressed a strong desire to remain part of the Soham south ward because of the local connections between the two areas.

Wicken has no shops and residents rely on Soham for many of their services including doctors, post office, banking and both primary and secondary school.

The reduced council size and impact on electorate numbers means that the parish of Isleham is too small for it to remain a single member ward. ECDC proposes that the Isleham ward is extended to include Chippenham and Kennett to allow it to remain single member ward, given the different identities of these parishes compared to Fordham and Snailwell. All three villages share a boundary with Suffolk and Chippenham children attend Isleham Primary School. Isleham and Chippenham are linked by the B1104 and Chippenham is linked to Kennett by the B1085.

Fordham and Snailwell should also form a single member ward so the Newmarket facing boundary remains in the same ward. In addition these two parishes contain a number of commercial businesses which the other parishes do not. There are a number of businesses parks along the Fordham – Snailwell corridor to the A14, including the Lynx Business Park within the parish of Snailwell.

Keeping the City of Ely Parish within Ely wards is something the Council supports very strongly and can only be accommodated with a council size of 28. This view is shared by City of Ely Council. The settlements that form the City of Ely parish have many shared links, associations, infrastructure and facilities. Keeping the parish communities together also will allow for more effective and convenient local government, as it will eliminate the confusion created if part of the parish falls within a different ward, and will also result in a greater focus of work for councillors.

The proposed warding arrangement for Ely suggests that the new North Ely development and surrounding area form a two-member ward, with the remainder of the parish being split to create a two-member ward to the east and a three-member ward to the west. The east ward contains the city centre and more rural parts of the parish, Ely Country Park, the parks within the city, the riverside and the fens out towards Stuntney, whilst the proposed ward to the west has a more urban, built up character.

Littleport Parish Council has requested that the Parish be un-warded to create a three-member ward and ECDC supports this. Significant growth, including three new schools and commercial development is planned for Littleport in the near future, and dividing the parish would result in unbalanced workloads for councillors, particularly if one councillor had to field all the enquiries about the schools, and confusion amongst residents as to which councillor they could approach about a specific issue. Un-warding would provide more effective and convenient local government for both councillors and the electorate.

ECDC proposes that Downham Villages becomes a single member ward comprising Little Downham, Pymoor and Coveney. Little Downham and Pymoor are part of the same Parish and both use Feoffees school in Little Downham. The villages of Little Downham, Pymoor and Coveney have shared many ancient community links, including local droves and community life, for centuries. They continue to share community links today, such as the Parish magazine, which covers events and write ups for the whole proposed Ward area. The three villages also share a History Community Archive Group, church services, annual scarecrow display, and the same Internal Drainage Board.

The forecast electorate for Sutton means that it is too large to become a ward itself so rather than split the parish it is proposed that a two-member ward consisting of Sutton, Mepal, Witcham and Wentworth is formed. Witcham, Mepal and Sutton share the same priest and the smaller villages look to Sutton for many services and facilities such as the doctor's surgery, restaurants and shops. Mepal and Witcham also share a primary school.

As stated above, the Council believes the low variance this arrangement creates will quickly improve and that the low variance is preferable to splitting the parish of Sutton. Sutton Parish Council has stated that it does not wish the parish to be split.

It is proposed that Haddenham and Aldreth comprise a single member ward reflecting the local identity and links of the parish.

It is proposed that Stretham, Little Thetford, Witchford and Wilburton form a two-member ward. These villages all have links to Witchford as they form the catchment area for Witchford Village College. This arrangement also reflects the strong local connections between Stretham and Wilburton parishes who have recently set up a joint Community Land Trust.

Table 1 sets out the Council's warding proposals for a council size of 28 councillors.

For some wards the Council has proposed new names, adopting a pragmatic approach of using the names of larger settlements to define wards. Where the Council has created wards within parishes, the electorates are approximate. The Council would look to work with LGBCE to define precise boundaries, if it is minded to accept the principle behind each proposal.

Table 1: ECDC Warding Proposal – 28 Councillors

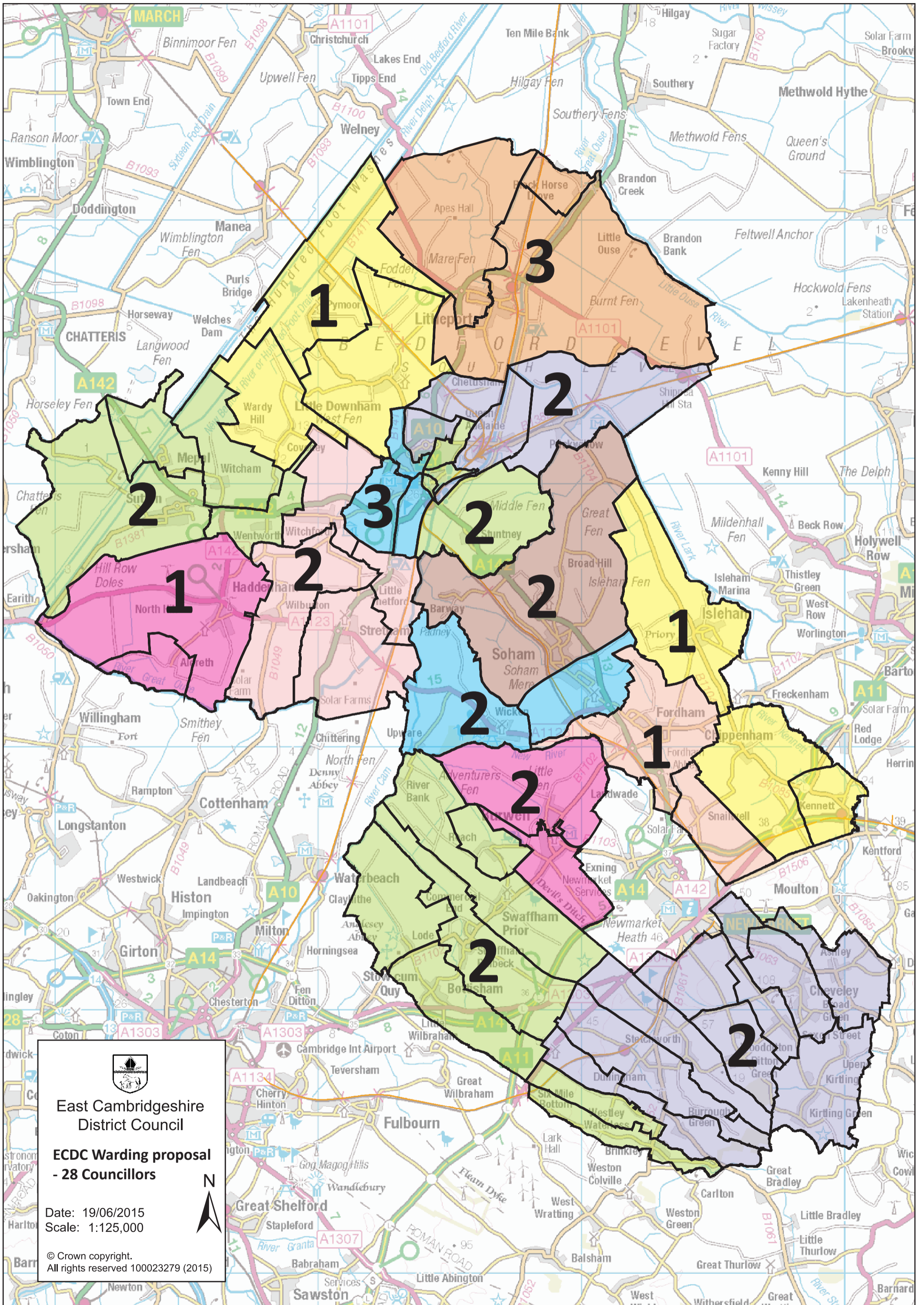
| Ward Name | No. Councillors | Electorate 2020 | Variance (%) | Description | Detail |
|------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|--------------|---|---|
| Woodditton | 2 | 5,320 (2,660 per councillor) | 3.9% | Includes Cheveley, Ashley, Kirtling, Saxon Street Woodditton, Stetchworth, Dullingham and Burrough Green. | This arrangement keeps the Cambridgeshire part of Newmarket in one ward. It also reflects the physical division that the A11 creates, the geological change along broadly the same line and the Newmarket centred sociology of the southern villages. Burrough Green is included in this ward as its local connections are with Dullingham rather than Bottisham. |
| Bottisham | 2 | 4,730 (2,365 per councillor) | | Includes Bottisham, Lode, Brinkley, Westley Waterless, Swaffham Bulbeck, Swaffham Prior and Reach. | The remaining villages in the south come together to form a two-member ward. |


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| Burwell | 2 | 5,430 (2,715 per councillor) | 6.1 | Burwell. | This arrangement proposes Burwell remains a multi-member ward. |
| Fordham | 1 | 2,410 | -5.8 | Includes Fordham and Snailwell. | Fordham and Snailwell to form a single member ward so the Newmarket boundary remains in the same ward and to reflect the commercial/industrial nature of these parishes. |
| Isleham | 1 | 2,620 | 2.4 | Includes Isleham and Chippenham and Kennett. | As the Isleham electorate is too small for it to remain a single member ward it is proposed that the ward also includes Chippenham and Kennett. |
| Soham North | 2 | 5,270 (2,635 per councillor) | 3 | Includes the north of Soham, the proposed new boundary being round Qua Fen Common, around Cornwell Close, Wetheralls Close and Bell Gardens to Pratt Street. Along Station Road, Gardeners Lane and Mill Corner. | The Soham north – south split is retained but amended to fit the new electorate figures. |
| Soham South | 2 | 5,470 (2,735 per councillor) | 6.9 | Includes the area of Soham south of Qua Fen Common, Cornwell Close, Wetheralls Close and Bell Gardens to Pratt Street. Along Station Road, Gardeners Lane and Mill Corner and Wicken. | Wicken is aligned with the south of Soham to reflect local connections and the wishes of the local community and Wicken Parish Council. |
| Ely 1 | 2 | 5,213 (2,607 per councillor) | 1.9 | Ely north area covering Chettisham, polling district HF2 (except Wissey Way, Nene Way and Buckingham Drive), Merivale Way and Allen Road from HF1, Queen Adelaide and Prickwillow. | This arrangement will ensure the electors from the new Ely North development are in the same ward. |
| Ely 2 | 2 | 5,193 (2,597 per councillor) | 1.5 | Area covering the remainder of polling district HF1, Stuntney, polling districts HG1 and HK1, Station | The remainder of Ely is split east-west along existing polling district boundaries where possible. The majority of the city centre is contained within the |

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|------------------|---|---------------------------------|-------|--|--|
| | | | | Road, Back Hill, Dovehouse Close and Potters Lane from HH1. | proposed Ely 2 ward. |
| Ely 3 | 3 | 7,464 (2,488 per councillor) | -2.7 | The area covering the remainder of HH1 plus polling districts HI1 and HI2. | This proposed ward covers the south and west of the City. |
| Littleport | 3 | 7,740 (2,580 per councillor) | 0.8 | Includes Littleport, Black Horse Drove. | Littleport to be un-warded. This arrangement is supported by Littleport Parish Council. |
| Downham Villages | 1 | 2,440 | -4.7 | Includes Little Downham, Pymoor, Coveney. | This arrangement reflects the existing warding arrangement for Coveney and Pymoor and the links these villages have with Little Downham. |
| Stretham | 2 | 5,130 (2,565 per councillor) | 0.2 | Includes Stretham, Little Thetford, Wilburton, Witchford. | This arrangement reflects the Witchford Village College catchment area and the strong local connections between Stretham and Wilburton. |
| Haddenham | 1 | 2,740 | 7.1 | Includes Haddenham and Aldreth. | The Parish of Haddenham forms a single member ward. |
| Sutton | 2 | 4,480 (2,240 per councillor) | -12.5 | Includes Sutton, Mepal, and Wentworth Witcham. | Sutton has too large an electorate to enable single member wards in this area. Sutton Parish Council has stated that it does not want Sutton to be split into parish wards. These communities have strong local connections and share many local services and facilities. |

Map 1: ECDC Warding Proposal – 28 Councillors

The numbers on the map indicate how many councillors are required to represent the given area.




East Cambridgeshire District Council
ECDC Warding proposal
- 28 Councillors
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