

Proposal for Fen Ditton Parish Council (FDPC) Meeting on 7th June

FDPC objects to the New Draft Recommendations for electoral boundary changes (consultation closes 20th June 2016). Full details are provided in the attached pages and the key points are summarised below:

- a) FDPC believes that the data assumptions for the changes in the number of electors that are likely to take place in the five-year period to September 2021 do not hold up to scrutiny. Firstly, the implementation of Wing has been delayed and the ERC estimated change of +1384 is an unrealistic overestimate. FDPC suggest a change of up to +510 is considered. Secondly the ERC change of +185 in Waterbeach is an underestimate since significant additional planning permissions were granted in 2015 and 2016. FDPC suggest a change of +559 or more is considered depending on how many of the latest permissions were taken into account by ERC.
- b) FDPC concludes that the split is unnecessary and would have highly undesirable consequences for the whole parish including Wing and would be an inefficient use of County Councillors' time for involvement in Fen Ditton.
- c) FDPC propose that the proposed allocation of Parish Councillors by area and a split into two wards is deferred until sometime well after 2021 since this will otherwise negate the efforts made by Marshalls and FDPC to develop a shared identity and shared facilities as Wing grows.
- d) Based on our analysis, FDPC propose that Fen Ditton is retained as a single unit within Fulbourn Division since this will deliver a satisfactory degree of electoral equality and continue to reflect the interest and identity of the local community and minimises the risk of changes in 2021 being reversed in 2024.
- e) A better solution would be to also retain Horningsea in Fulbourn (FDPC-4) and FDPC fully supports Horningsea Parish Council's proposal on this. The result would be that no boundary changes would be recommended for Fulbourn Division in September 2016. If, as expected, further growth in Waterbeach takes place, this would offset the expected growth in Wing and further changes in 2024 might not be necessary.
- f) If neither of the above are accepted by the ERC, FDPC propose the option to move all of Fen Ditton into Waterbeach Division.

FDPC proposals would defer any major boundary changes within the parish until Wing is flourishing.

Introduction

As described in consultation document

http://www.lgbce.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/28500/Cambridgeshire-New-Draft-Recommendations-.pdf, the Electoral Review Commission (ERC) is proposing to split the parish of Fen Ditton into two electoral Wards as part of a county wide programme to balance the numbers of electors per councillor in the Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) by September 2021.

It is proposed to:

- A) split the village of Fen Ditton along High Ditch Road and east of the disused railway line to include the proposed Wing development and retain the new Fen Ditton-East in Fulbourn County Council Division whilst moving the existing main village area (together with Horningsea) into the Waterbeach Division as Fen Ditton-West; and
- B) constitute Fen Ditton Parish Council (FDPC) with 3 councillors to be elected from FD-W and 6 from FD-E.

There would be no change to overall parish boundaries or parliamentary boundaries.

The proposal is therefore unchanged since the previous consultation in June 2015 and does not reflect the response made thereto by FDPC nor address the concern raised by Waterbeach in their response of 01 July 2015.

FDPC believes that the data assumptions do not hold up to scrutiny. FDPC concludes that the split is unnecessary and will have highly undesirable consequences for the parish. FDPC therefore objects to the ERC proposals for Fen Ditton in their current form. Details are given below.

Discussion

1. Proposal A - Analysis of voter numbers and impact on County Divisions

FDPC understand that the underlying data for proposed housing development were submitted to the ERC by CCC based on 2014 electoral registrations and known plans. Taking an average of 1.7 voters per dwelling, the major changes by 2021 proposed by CCC/ERC are that Fen Ditton-East will grow by + 1384 voters (i.e. 814 dwellings) due to Wing with a further increase in Fulbourn Village of +589 (i.e. 346 dwellings). In fact, planning permission for Wing was delayed until May 2016. At the Cambridge East Community Forum Meeting of 12th May 2016, Richard Oakley, Marshall Group Properties Cambridge reported that the first phase of 450 dwellings of a 12 year 1300 home project should start in 2018. Assuming that each phase will last around 4 years and that occupation will start in or after 2019, FDPC recommend that a realistic estimate of the change would be no more than +510 voters (or 300 dwellings) based on around 2/3 occupation of the Phase 1 total by September 2021.

ERC (2016) project that the total number of voters in Waterbeach itself will increase from 7047 to 7230 (+185 i.e. 108 dwellings). However, recent medium scale approved applications for Bannold Road (north) and Cody Road may have added up to 300 unaccounted for dwellings (i.e +510 voters). Taking a value of 220 dwellings (i.e. 374 voters) as the minimum that is potentially extra to the ERC data leads to a 2021 total of 7604 voters, an increase of 559. FDPC recommend that CCC verify if the 300 approved dwellings are additional to or include the 108 allowed for in their existing data.

Using the ERC spreadsheet provided in 2016, FDPC have checked 4 scenarios assuming an increase in of 520 voters in Wing and 559 in Waterbeach by 2021 to test if the number of voters per councillor for Waterbeach and Fulbourn divisions would be within the desired +/-10% of the county average.

The resulting total numbers of voters and % deviations from county averages are shown in the table below. The scenarios are as follows:

FDPC-1 merely maintains the proposed split.

FDPC-2 removes the split and places Fen Ditton in Fulbourn.

FDPC-3 removes the split and places Fen Ditton in Waterbeach.

FDPC-4 removes the split and places Fen Ditton and Horningsea in Fulbourn as at present.

Scenario	ERC 2016		FDPC-1		FDPC-2		FDPC-3		FDPC-4	
Division	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Fulbourn	9069	6%	8190	-4%	8761	3%	7670	-10%	9051	6%
Waterbeach	8091	-5%	8465	-1%	7520	-8%	8985	5%	7604	-11%

FDPC assess that the advantages and disadvantages of the scenarios include:

1. If FDPC falls within only one county division, only one county councillor will be required at FDPC meetings. This is more efficient than requiring two county councillors to attend.
2. If Fen Ditton stays in Fulbourn, it will maintain its links with parishes affected by Cambridge East on the city and airport / Wing boundaries and the Green Belt. The A14 would form much of a clearly identifiable boundary to the north.
3. If Fen Ditton moves into Waterbeach, this builds on the historic ties between Fen Ditton and Horningsea and would develop the common interests in the A14, traffic and buses on the Horningsea Road (B1047) and the Kings Lynn – Cambridge railway line. The Newmarket Road would form much of a clearly identifiable boundary to the south and so Fen Ditton would have weaker links to Cambridge East.
4. If Fen Ditton and Horningsea stay in Fulbourn, no changes to the present boundaries would occur, most of the advantages described in 1) to 3) above are achieved and the River Cam would be retained as a clearly identifiable boundary in the north-west.

FDPC note that a major development is expected in Waterbeach (possibly starting before 2025) if the barracks site is developed. Such a development might then require the current ERC proposal to move Fen Ditton and Horningsea to be reversed in the next review to meet the 10% criterion.

2. Proposal B - Analysis of impact on Fen Ditton

The proposal does not conclude any transitional arrangements to account for the gradual and delayed development of Wing. Expected voter numbers mean that six parish councillors from Wing will be excessive until several years after 2021. Until 2021, it is likely that candidates would be mainly drawn from the existing community due to the rules on eligibility to stand for election.

From the inception of Wing, FDPC has worked closely with Marshalls to ensure its integration and reinforce its identity within the community, both through transport links on foot or bicycle and through consideration of how community resources and other interests could best be shared (Appendix A). The new primary school planned for Wing is in Phase 3 so there is likely to be a period where pupils from Wing will have to attend Fen Ditton Primary School thus reinforcing community ties. A recent survey identified a need for a small amount of affordable housing to serve the parish.

FDPC wishes to restart talks with Marshalls about the possibility of creating a Community Land Trust adjacent to Wing to meet this need.

3. Conclusions

Taking into account the revised timetable for Wing, the recent planning approvals in Waterbeach and consequent impact on likely voter numbers, FDPC conclude that keeping Fen Ditton as a single unit within Fulbourn (FDPC-2) would continue to deliver a satisfactory degree of electoral equality and continue to reflect the interest and identity of the local community and minimises the risk of changes in 2021 being reversed in 2024. This will delay a change for Fen Ditton until Wing is flourishing.

If Horningsea is also retained in Fulbourn (FDPC-4), there would be no boundary changes in Fulbourn Division but a small shortfall in voters could occur in the Waterbeach division subject to CCC confirming that their figure of 108 dwellings is already included in the recently approved planning permissions. If the 108 dwellings are additional to the 300, the small shortfall would disappear. If, as expected, further growth in Waterbeach takes place, this would offset the expected growth in Wing and further changes in 2024 might not be necessary.

If neither of the above are accepted by the ERC, FDPC propose the option to move all of Fen Ditton into Waterbeach (FDPC-3).

The proposed split of Fen Ditton into a ward with 3 parish councillors and a ward with 6 will be highly unequal until some time well after 2021 and will negate the efforts made by Marshalls and FDPC to develop a shared identity and shared facilities as Wing grows. FDPC suggests that delaying a decision on a split until 2024 will avoid this. If a split is nevertheless enforced by ERC, avoiding the imposition of fixed numbers of councillors before 2020 would avoid the inequality although doing little for enhancing the shared identity of the community.

4. Footnote

The ERC new draft recommendations report appears to be misleading with reference to the existing situation. Para 9 uses the proposed numbers of councillors (61) for both 2014 and 2021 rather than the actual value of 69 in 2014. This affects the average quoted in Para 9. Para 41 and Appendix A also present numbers for 2014. These again appear to be based on the proposed future numbers of councillors and future allocation of wards and parishes to divisions rather than the existing situation. This calls into question the statement that there are currently 20 exceedances of the desired 10% threshold. FDPC suggest these points are addressed in Final Recommendations due in September 2016.

Appendix A – Community Identity and supporting facilities in Fen Ditton

Clubs and events currently operating in Fen Ditton include:

- Cricket Club and Football Club (Recreation Ground)
- Town and University Bumps, Rowing Regattas – on the River Cam
- Retired persons coffee club
- Bowls, Badmington, Gardening clubs
- Village Society
- Parochial Church Council

The following community facilities are available in Fen Ditton West but not planned for Fen Ditton-East:

- Riverside Pub/Restaurant (The Plough)
- Historic Pub/Restaurant (The Ancient Shepherds) which will be the nearest to Fen Ditton-South
- Pub (Kings Head)
- Parish Church (St Mary the Virgin, Grade 1 Listed Building)
- Church Hall
- Cricket ground/pavilion
- Riverside access and walks
- Cemetery

The following community facilities will be available in Fen Ditton-East but not in Fen Ditton-West:

- Shops, cafe and a supermarket
- Community Hall equipped for staged events, plays etc.
- Parish Council Offices
- Ice rink

Common shared facilities to be available in both areas

- Community halls
- Football playing fields
- Children's play areas
- Pavilions, one large one small.
- Allotments (tbc)