

FDPC - Proposal FDPC Meeting 2nd June 2015

DRAFT Response to Electoral Review draft proposals

Electoral Review draft proposals for Fen Ditton Parish

The Electoral Review commission is proposing to split the parish of Fen Ditton into two Wards. Currently the entire parish is in the Fulbourn county council division. The commissions intention is to take into account changes in the population for 5 years.

This would result in the Parish council also being split with the parish area north of the old railway line having 3 parish councillors and the area south of the line (Wing) having 6 councillors. North Fen Ditton would be in the Waterbeach division and South Fen Ditton would stay in the Fulbourn division.

The easiest way to view the changes is on the Boundary Commissions web site.

<https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/node/4143>

Response

Unworkable for possibly decades

The proposal have one obvious flaw that makes it impossible to implement for possibly a decade or longer. South Fen Ditton is currently sparsely populated with probable less than 15 houses, plus an additional two with planning permission.

The proposed major development known as Wing has yet to be granted outline planning permission with the process proceeding at a slow pace.

Even when the first homes are occupied there is a two year period before a resident can apply to become a councillor (Unless they have moved locally).

The developers phasing plan currently indicates building starting in 2018, with 120 homes built per year indicating the community would not be fully developed until 2026 at the earliest. This was confirmed by the developers but is subject to change. As part of the land is brown field we would not be surprised if the phasing slips.

Availability of potential Councillors for Fen Ditton South.

During discussions when Wing was first tabled, the parish council considered the option of requesting they form a separate parish, advise was taken from ACRE who advised that, in their experience newcomers to new developments typically show little interest in becoming councillors. They are typically younger busy families and do not have to time to commit. This casual observation is supported by our experience in asking new residents in our Blue Lion development, within the village to take an active part in parish council activities.

Our assessment is that the earliest availability of the number is potential councillors required for

Fen Ditton South, assuming that the local community calls for a separate ward could be between 6-10 years away.

Alternative Recommended Devision

The 2011 census indicates around 654 residents of voting age in Fen Ditton. The future of Fen Ditton South (Wing) would be in the order of 3,000+. Also the numbers for the Waterbeach ward do not seem to take into account the large number planned of new home.

The numbers in Fen Ditton North are small relative to both Fen Ditton South and the division suggest to us that splitting the parish is unnecessary and would be detrimental to shaping the future enlarged community of the parish. An alternative boundary should be used to keep Fen Ditton as one ward.

Community Ties

There are currently no local ties between the communities as there is almost no community in the proposed Fen Ditton South Ward. The plan is to develop these ties as the Wing development is built up, especially as in the early years the new residents will have little community facilities like clubs to join and all parties are keen not to make them feel isolated.

Currently Fen Ditton has almost no links or transport ties with the community west of the River Cam.

Parish council meeting may also become problematic with two district councillors especially if they are from different political parties with different agendas.

Planned Community Links

To facilitate community links the Parish Council and the land owner have been working together from concept to integrate the current community (Fen Ditton North) with the Wing development by avoiding duplication of community facilities and intent to create cycle and foot access to encourage traffic between the two areas.

The following community facilities are available in Fen Ditton North but *not planned* for Fen Ditton South.

- Riverside Bar and Restaurant (The Plough)
- Unique (oldie world) Bar/Restaurant also closest pub to South Fen Ditton
- Local Pub (Kings Head)
- Village Church
- Cricket ground/pavilion
- Riverside access and walks

Clubs and events currently only operating in Fen Ditton North

- Cricket Club
- The BUMBS (Boating event) – on the River Cam
- Retired persons coffee club

- Football Club
- Bowles Club

The following community facilities will be available in Fen Ditton South but *not available* in Fen Ditton North.

- Shops, cafe and Supermarket
- Community Hall equipped for staged events, plays etc.
- Parish Council Offices

Common shared facilities available in both areas

- Community hall's
- Football playing field's
- Pavilions, one large one small.

Long Term viability

Two of the existing facilities in Fen Ditton North have spare capacity and the potential additional customers could ensure their long term viability and the new community could be the key to this. The village has lost one community pub to a housing development in the past few years and two of the remaining three could benefit from more customers, the Church is certainly in need of more customers to ensure it remains open in the longer term.

Community Operations

The current parish is small with only one part time clerk, as it has no office space the clerk has to work from home. Meeting space is also very limited and not fit for purpose. All the maintenance work is done by contractors on tight budgets and volunteers, often leaving some maintenance below the standard we would like.

The long term plan is to integrate all operations across the parish, which the developers are supporting by providing an office for the parish council on the new development. This is likely to require full time staffing and more available resources for ongoing maintenance improving the economics of scale across both areas.

Affordable Housing for Locals (Fen Ditton North)

A recent survey by the housing association Hastoe and Cambridge ACRE, has identified a need for affordable housing in the Fen Ditton North area. The parish councils plan to meet this need through a Community Land Trust and allocating some housing on the Wing development or the proposed Fen Ditton South area. The parish council and the land owner are in talks to form a Community Land Trust for this purpose and to hold all the community assets on Wing (FD South).

The proposal to split the parish into two wards puts the feasibility of this into question.

Schooling

Fen Ditton North currently has one primary school which is very popular. There is another included in the proposed outline plan for Fen Ditton South, however, this is part of phase 3 on the developers plan, so there is likely to be a period where pupils from Fen Ditton South will have to attend the school in Fen Ditton North thus reinforcing community ties.