

Castle Point Borough Council

Personal Details:

Name:

[REDACTED]

E-mail:

[REDACTED]

Postcode:

[REDACTED]

Organisation Name:

Comment text:

Please see the attached file for my response to the recommendations. Unfortunately, the system will not allow me to upload two files, and the second one contains the data I refer to, so I will make a separate submission to upload that file.

Uploaded Documents:

Download (https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1665191289_Boundary+Commission+Response+with+proposals.pdf)

LGBCE Response – Castle Point Recommendations

Thank you for publishing your comprehensive report with your recommendation for the future wards of Castle Point. I will be submitting this response in addition to a shorter one which I have asked others to co-sign.

[REDACTED] Canvey West resident

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Prelude

In the Commission's full report, it is noted that there are three primary considerations when drafting ward boundaries:

- 1) Improving electoral equality by equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents. (Ideally within 10% of being exactly equal)
- 2) Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity.
- 3) Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.

It is my contention that considerations 1 and 2 are not fulfilled with the current recommendation by the LGBCE, and that all three considerations are better fulfilled with two alternative proposals.

In paragraph 9, the Commission has recommended that Castle Point have 39 councillors. From this it is clear that the Commission believes that at least 39 councillors are needed for effective and convenient local government, so any suggestion of reducing the number of councillors on the mainland to ensure electoral equality with Canvey is not going to be accepted.

In paragraph 22, the Commission states that a ward within 10% of the average for authority has 'good electoral quality.' I would urge the Commission to also ensure electoral equality in the context of Canvey Island compared to the mainland, and not just the individual wards.

In paragraph 29, reference is made to the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009, and the Commission states that there is a presumption that a council electing by thirds will have a uniform pattern of three-councillors wards, which will only be deviated from with compelling evidence based on the statutory criteria. Schedule 2, paragraph 2(3)(d) and 2(5)(c) is cited as the basis of this, as the legislation only states that it is 'desirable' that the district council returns an appropriate (defined essentially as divisible by 3) then the LGBCE is justified in arguing that any deviation from this must be considered in the context of the three primary considerations.

One note which I think is important to add is that Sandy Bay is already a part of Canvey Island West ward – contrary to paragraph 57 of the report. Even though the official maps split the Thorney Bay/Sandy Bay site in half, I can confirm as a candidate in the 2022 local elections for Canvey West that residents of Sandy Bay were also voting in West ward and appear on the marked register under West ward as provided to me by Castle Point Borough Council. A council officer also helpfully reminded me at the start of the campaign that Sandy Bay was in West ward to ensure that I was aware.

Concerns with and objections to the current proposals

Improving Electoral Equality

The current proposals diminish electoral equality in a meaningful manner. However, paragraph 56 states that the abolition of Canvey West ward is due to ‘the need to ensure good electoral quality.’ I have uploaded a spreadsheet alongside this document which uses the data presented by the Committee but aggregates the wards based on whether they are on Canvey Island or the mainland of Castle Point. I have also provided a few calculations based on whether there was 1, 2 (status quo) or 3 more councillors on Canvey Island.

I would begin by stating that I appreciate that technically, the requirement for electoral equality based on wards has been met by the current proposal as all individual wards are projected to be within 10% of the CPBC average by 2028. However, I would argue that this ward-only analysis is not a fair manner in which to assess electoral equality. The Commission has already accepted that Canvey and the mainland are distinct parts of Castle Point. I would argue that electoral inequality needs to be analysed on not just a ward-by-ward basis, but a Canvey-Mainland basis too. The data demonstrates that mainland wards of Castle Point will be, on average, 13% below the CPBC average ward population by 2028. This is to the detriment of Canvey, whose underrepresentation is an average of 8% over the CPBC average by 2028.

With 5/5 Canvey wards and just 1/8 mainland wards being overrepresented, it is clear that Canvey's voters would not have true electoral equality with the mainland. A 21% variance gap between Canvey and the mainland would result in systemic underrepresentation of Canvey Island on Castle Point Borough Council.

As a brief aside, I would also note that in the report the Labour party's suggestion of merging Canvey West with neighbouring wards was taken as strengthening the Commission's proposal to do so. However, I would ask the Commission to only take Labour's suggestion in the full context of their submission, where they asked for the number of councillors to be reduced to 36. In such a scenario, there would not be such a drastic imbalance between Canvey and the mainland as the mainland would then lose 3 councillors with Canvey losing 2.

The detailed electoral figures for the existing wards of Castle Point demonstrate just two wards which do not meet the criteria for electoral equality. I believe that the first, St George's ward, has been appropriately addressed by the Commission's proposal by adjusting Benfleet's ward boundaries. However, the second ward which does not meet the criteria, Canvey West, is projected to be 31% over the average ward population for Castle Point. It is surprising to me that in the name of improving electoral equality, Canvey West's already under-represented population will have less representation than before. Yet the mainland of Castle Point, with their already demonstrated electoral equality in in all but one mainland ward (which the Commission have fixed) will retain every single one of their councillors yet also will be dragged to an average of 13% variance below the CPBC average. To illustrate this unfairness, I will copy a small section of the data I referenced earlier below.

Ward	Total Number of Councillors	2028 Electors	2028 Electors Per Councillor	Variance from CPBC's average	Variance from CPBC's average %
Appleton	3	5,125	1,708	-159	-9%
Central	3	6,159	2,053	186	10%
East	3	5,981	1,994	126	7%
North	3	6,000	2,000	133	7%
South	3	6,070	2,023	156	8%
Winter Gardens	3	5,996	1,999	131	7%
Hadleigh East	3	5,032	1,677	-190	-10%
Hadleigh West	3	5,101	1,700	-167	-9%
St George's	3	5,192	1,731	-137	-7%
St Mary's	3	5,539	1,846	-21	-1%
Tarpots	3	6,083	2,028	160	9%
Thundersley	3	5,500	1,833	-34	-2%
Victoria	3	5,042	1,681	-187	-10%
Total	39	72,820	x		x
Average	x	x	1,867		x
Mainland	24	42,614	1,776	-92	-13%
Canvey	15	30,206	2,014	147	8%

I hope that this contrast between Canvey's aggregate and the mainland's provides the evidence needed that the current proposal does not meet the spirit of the statutory requirement for electoral equality, even if it does meet a technical interpretation of it. It cannot be fair for 15 Canvey councillors to represent an average of 13.4% more electors each than their average mainland equivalent, or at its most extreme for Canvey Central's 3 councillors to represent 22.4% more electors than Victoria's councillors.

Reflecting Community Identity

On this statutory consideration, I would make the case that Canvey Central, Winter Gardens, and Canvey South are just splitting West, and the changes do not reflect community identity.

I will use three examples to illustrate this argument:

- 1) Haven Quays. Residents here at the end of Haven Road are already quite isolated from the rest of Canvey West ward, let alone the rest of Canvey Island. However, Canvey West ward does a good job of amalgamating the distinct geographical small communities in the Dutch Village, Saints estate, Canvey Village, and the Deepwater Road & Hawkesbury Road areas. With this in mind, those residents in Haven Quays best exemplify the issue with the proposal to dissect Canvey West and distribute it to neighbouring wards, as they do not share a community identity with Canvey Central residents in the way they are more likely to with Canvey West residents. A similar case can be made for the waterside cottages residents on Canvey Road.
- 2) The Dutch village being absorbed into the Winter Gardens ward is another example of the changes not reflecting community identity. Dutch Village residents would be hard pressed to find a bus which would take them to the core of the Winter Gardens ward, and it is separated by fields in a way that it is not separated from their West ward neighbours. This change seems to be entirely related to the requirement for electoral equality and completely disregards the community identity of the area.
- 3) On a less obvious note, Hawkesbury Road and its neighbouring roads does not fit the community feel of Canvey South as well as it fits in with Canvey West, and Thorney Bay Road is a better divider between wards. The character of the area is far more in line with the character of Canvey Village rather than the areas of Canvey Central.

Effective and Convenient Local Government

The criteria for this requirement appears to be primarily related to the number of councillors needed to fulfil important council and scrutiny roles. For what it is worth, I would argue that being systemically under-represented means that local government will be less convenient and less effective for Canvey residents than our population deserves. This will inevitably translate into less Canvey councillors at full council and at committees representing our interests which could lead to ineffective representation for us in local government.

Alternative Proposals

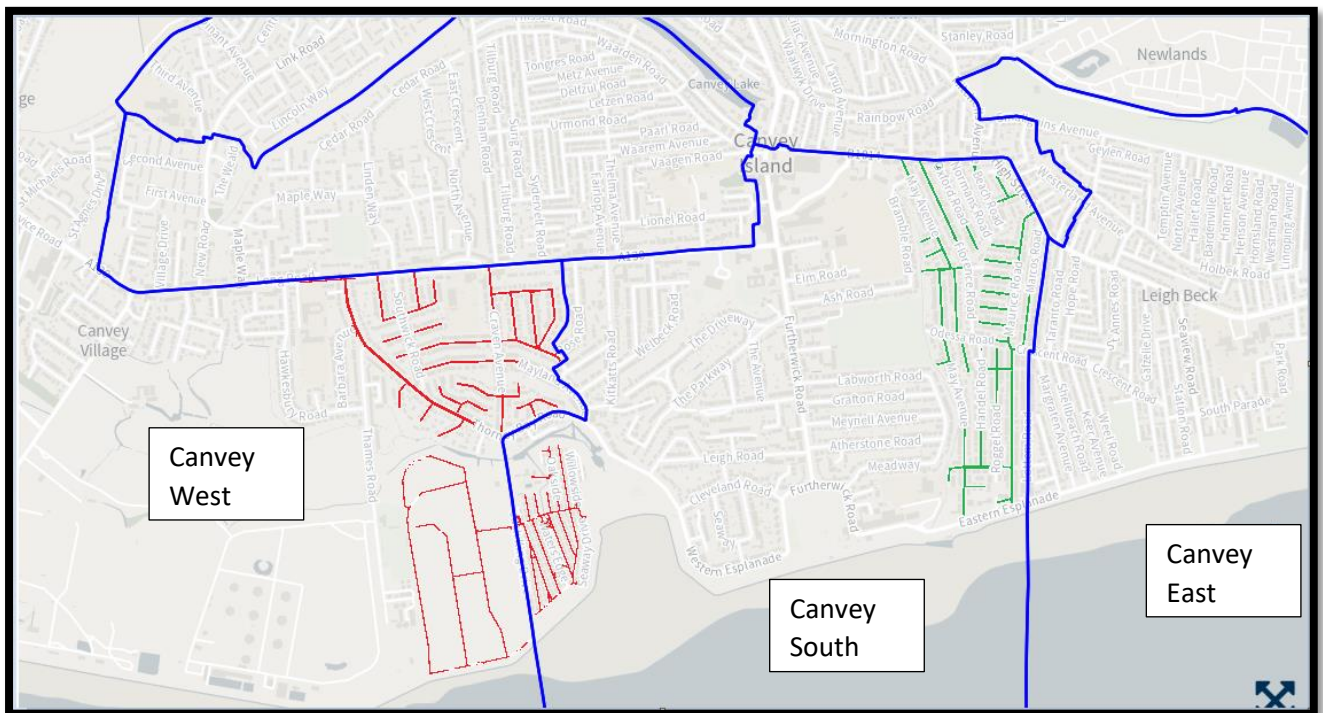
Proposal 1: Retain Canvey West with 2 councillors (my preference)

I have made a rough suggestion below to amend the current wards and retain two councillors for Canvey West. Currently, Canvey West is under-represented with its voter to councillor ratio. Canvey East is over-represented, and the rest of Canvey's wards are projected to be close enough to the ideal councillor to voter ratio for electoral equality.

To address this, Canvey West could be reduced in size by transferring some or all of the roads highlighted red (see map on next page) to Canvey South. This would create a clear and defined boundary along Thorney Bay Road. I would also note that the character of this area highlighted red is more in character with their neighbours in Canvey South ward, and when campaigning in the local elections I even had one resident in this area say to me that they reported their issues to Cllr Campagna (Canvey South councillor) as they always assumed he was their councillor. I believe it could be said that this would strengthen statutory concern 2 regarding communities.

Thereafter, some or all of the roads highlighted green could be transferred to Canvey East ward. Again, this area is closer in character to their neighbours in Canvey East than homes adjacent to Furtherwick road in South ward. The Commission's current proposals already suggest similar transfers to Canvey East and South, but this alternative proposal would ensure that Canvey gets a

fairer number of councillors proportionate to its current and projected population by retaining a smaller West ward.



A minor suggestion to address the slight overrepresentation of Winter Gardens ward and under-representation of North ward would be to transfer Harvest Road and its side-roads from North to Winter Gardens.

In the data shown in the uploaded excel sheet, I have given three scenarios to increase Canvey's number of councillors. In Scenario 2 (which aligns with my proposal here) there is shown to be an almost perfect equality with the CPBC average if Canvey were to retain 17 councillors rather than lose two. The Commission's proposal results in Canvey wards having an average 8% variance above the CPBC average number of electors. On the other hand, retaining the two councillors would result in Canvey being just 0.04% (1 elector) away from perfect electoral equality between Canvey and the mainland of Castle Point. I believe that this is objectively a significant improvement to electoral equality.

I will not repeat the points raised in the earlier section regarding community identity and effective and convenient local government, but please take it as given that I believe this proposal addresses my earlier criticisms by keeping our communities together and ensuring effective representation.

Proposal 2: Retain Canvey West with three councillors

I think this proposal would be inferior to the first one, but it would still be better than the current recommendation of abolishing Canvey West ward and leaving all of Canvey underrepresented. On a practical front, adjustments could be made to bring parts of Canvey South (e.g., up to Welbeck Road) and/or parts of Canvey Central (e.g., the area containing first and second avenue) into Canvey West to balance out the population better if West had three councillors. Regarding electoral equality, as in proposal 1 this also results in better electoral equality than will be the case if the two councillors are removed. The Commission's current variance is 8% above average for Canvey wards, whereas with three councillors it would be just 3.21% (56 electors) below the new CPBC average. The Commission has already established that it would accept a 13% variance below the CPBC average for the aggregated mainland wards, so I would argue that a 3% variance below average for Canvey is again objectively better at meeting the statutory criteria for electoral inequality.

Conclusion

It may be unfair to boil down this complex issue into a simple point, but I think that doing so highlights the strength of feeling that I and many others have on this issue and reaches to the core of our concerns with the Commission's recommendation.

If Canvey West, is already under-represented with too many voters for its two councillors, then how can it be fair or promote electoral equality to take our councillors away? If the Commission does not believe that electoral equality takes priority over the presumption of 3-councillor wards, then I would argue that increasing Canvey West's councillors by 1 is a more appropriate course of action which meets the criteria better (even with electoral equality as a secondary priority to the standard ward arrangements) than it would be to remove its two councillors.

Although I would love for Canvey West to have another councillor, I believe that the case for Canvey West to retain two councillors has been demonstrated as the objectively best way to achieve electoral equality for Canvey Island and the mainland. The ward boundary adjustments on Canvey to ensure electoral equality would also be far less dramatic than what is currently proposed.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my response.

Ward	Total Number of Councillors	Current Electors	Current Electors Per Councillor	Variance from CPBC's average %	Variance from CPBC's Average	2028 Electors	2028 Electors Per Councillor	Variance from CPBC's average	Variance from CPBC's average %
Appleton	3	5,093	1,698	-5%	-89	5,125	1,708	-159	-9%
Central	3	5,941	1,980	11%	194	6,159	2,053	186	10%
East	3	5,872	1,957	10%	171	5,981	1,994	126	7%
North	3	5,937	1,979	11%	193	6,000	2,000	133	7%
South	3	5,783	1,928	8%	141	6,070	2,023	156	8%
Winter Gardens	3	5,738	1,913	7%	126	5,996	1,999	131	7%
Hadleigh East	3	4,699	1,566	-12%	-220	5,032	1,677	-190	-10%
Hadleigh West	3	4,802	1,601	-10%	-186	5,101	1,700	-167	-9%
St George's	3	4,938	1,646	-8%	-140	5,192	1,731	-137	-7%
St Mary's	3	5,476	1,825	2%	39	5,539	1,846	-21	-1%
Tarpots	3	5,554	1,851	4%	65	6,083	2,028	160	9%
Thundersley	3	5,437	1,812	1%	26	5,500	1,833	-34	-2%
Victoria	3	4,396	1,465	-18%	-321	5,042	1,681	-187	-10%
Total	39	69,666	x	x		72,820	x		x
Average	x	x	1,786	x		x	1,867		x
Mainland	24	40,395	1,683	-11%	-103	42,614	1,776	-92	-13%
Canvey	15	29,271	1,951	9%	165	30,206	2,014	147	8%

Scenario	Add Canvey West Ward	Total Number of Canvey Councillors	2021 Canvey Electors	2021 Electors Per Canvey Councillor	Variance from CPBC average %	Variance from 2021 CPBC Average	2028 Canvey Electors	2028 Electors Per Canvey Councillor	Variance from CPBC average %	Variance from 2028 CPBC Average	Total Error 2021+2028 By Electors (Current Proposal = 312)
1	1 Councillor	16	29,271	1,829	5.04%	88	30,206	1,888	3.70%	67	155
2	2 Councillors (Status Quo)	17	29,271	1,722	1.33%	23	30,206	1,777	0.04%	1	22
3	3 Councillors	18	29,271	1,626	-1.96%	-33	30,206	1,678	-3.21%	-56	23
LGBCE Proposal											312

Scenario	Total Number of Councillors in Castle Point	Total Number of Electors 2021	Electors Per Councillor	Total Number of Electors 2028	Electors Per Councillor
1	40	69,666	1,742	72,820	1,821
2	41	69,666	1,699	72,820	1,776
3	42	69,666	1,659	72,820	1,734