

Response to:

Local Government Boundary Commission

New electoral arrangements for Rushcliffe Council (Draft Recommendations)

October 2021

1. Introduction

We (the undersigned) strongly object to the ward boundaries proposed in the Draft Recommendations for the Soar Valley and Barton in Fabis wards.

It appears that in regard to these wards, the review has been driven by a desk top exercise based on inadequate knowledge of the nature of the area and links between communities.

As a result, although the Draft Recommendations state (para 4) that the commission had three main aims, the focus appears to have been on achieving "*electoral quality*" and does not sufficiently reflect and take account of the "*community identity*".

2. Draft Recommendations

The current draft recommendations for the Parishes of Barton in Fabis, Gotham, Thrumpton, Kingston on Soar, Ratcliffe on Soar, Sutton Bonnington, Normanton on Soar & Stanford on Soar are as follows:

Ward Name	Number of Cllrs	Electorate (2020)	Electors per Cllr	Variance from average %	Electorate (2027)	Electors per Cllr	Variance from average %
Barton in Fabis (Barton in Fabis)	1	225	225	-89%	2,276	2,276	-6%
Soar Valley (Thrumpton) (Gotham) (Kingston on Soar) (Ratcliffe on Soar) (Sutton Bonnington) (Normanton on Soar) (Stanford on Soar)	2	3,727	1,864	-9%	4,169	2,085	-14%

3. Our Alternative Proposal

We suggest alternative arrangements for the same Parishes as follows:

3.1 Stage 1 proposal

Ward Name	Number of Cllrs	Electorate (2020)	Electors per Cllr	Variance from average %	Electorate (2027)	Electors per Cllr	Variance from average %
Gotham (Gotham) (Barton in Fabis) (Thrumpton) (Kingston on Soar) (Ratcliffe on Soar)	2	2,022	1,011	-49%	4,295	2,148	-12%
Sutton Bonnington (Sutton Bonnington) (Normanton on Soar) (Stanford on Soar)	1	1,930	1,930	-6%	2,150	2,150	-12%

3.2 Stage 2 proposal

We note that (para 80) states that “*we cannot recommend changes to external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review*”

However, in our firm view it would serve it would be the best interests of all residents for Fairham to have its own Parish and Ward as soon as is practicable.

This would initially involve (by 2027 or earlier) petitioning Rushcliffe Borough Council to undertake a **community governance review** to alter the Barton in Fabis parish boundary with the objective of forming a new Fairham Parish.

We would then petition Rushcliffe Brough Council to request a **Related Alteration** be made by the Boundary Commission to align ward and Parish boundaries.

We believe that the most effective way of ensuring acceptable electoral equality, reflect community identities and support effective local government within our Parishes is to work towards there being single member Wards for Fairham; Gotham (including the parishes of Gotham, Barton, Kingston, Thrumpton & Ratcliffe) and Sutton Bonnington (including the parishes of Sutton Bonnington, Stanford & Normanton).

4. Rationale and commentary

4.1 Barton in Fabis Ward

Community Identity

The Draft Recommendations (October 2021) will result in Barton in Fabis village being split away from 4 similar village communities that it has had historic links with over centuries

(Thrumpton, Gotham, Kingston upon Soar and Ratcliffe upon Soar). These historic ties are reflected in modern day community links (see Illustrations in Appendix 1)

a) Parochial church links (see submitted illustration '453 Church Magazine') and note listing of 5 parishes)

b) Parish Councils / Parish Meetings representing the 5 communities meet jointly on a regular basis under the Chairmanship of our existing Borough Councillor on issues of mutual interest (see submitted illustration 'meeting invitation'). An example is the co-ordination of responses to the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan. Other examples are joint submissions on planning issues and the impact of the redevelopment of Ratcliffe upon Soar power station

c) Joint campaigns across subsets of the 5 villages. An example being opposition to the proposed quarry at Barton in Fabis from Barton, Thrumpton and Gotham under the banner "SAVE" (see submitted illustration)

d) Gotham, as the largest community of the 5, provides the only shop, library, pubs and doctor's surgery and therefore the 5 communities listed above have a joint interest in the provision of such services and work together on issues relating to these.

e) Frequent social contact between the communities for social and community events.

Lack of strategic fit between Barton in Fabis village and Fairham Pastures development

The Draft Recommendations would result in Barton in Fabis village being subsumed long term in to a vastly bigger urban extension whose residents and concerns will be very different from those of a rural village. It is also worth noting that whilst Barton in Fabis village is in the Green Belt, the Fairham Pastures development is not which will require the Parish Council to review all planning applications and associated matters in terms of two distinct sets of criteria.

The comments from our current Borough Councillor Rex Walker are noted in the report (paras 36 & 37) regarding the difference between the more suburban character of the Fairham Pastures development and the small rural village of Barton in Fabis (c200 electors). It is highly regrettable that these comments, made on behalf of all of us, have not been acted upon.

Fairham Pastures development

The Fairham Pastures development will in future comprise an electorate considerably in excess of that projected in 2027 and estimated at 7-8,000. The area should have its own representation to reflect the differing concerns of this large scale, more suburban community. In 2027 the oldest buildings will be 4-5 years old, parts of the site will still be under development and concerns will centre around construction and infrastructure related issues, the roll out of services and management of green spaces and the challenges of community creation and cohesion. These all create a very different set of issues, challenges and opportunities typical in rural villages and require their own means of representation.

For the above reasons we therefore propose (Stage 1) that Barton in Fabis (including Fairham Pastures development) continues to be linked with Gotham, Thrumpton, Kingston upon Soar and Ratcliffe upon Soar and that (Stage 2), the Fairham Pastures development is separated to form a ward on its own.

4.2 Soar Valley Ward

As is noted in the Draft Recommendations (para 41) the establishment of a Soar Valley ward *"was not proposed to us"*. This was for a good reason as the Soar Valley ward as outlined is an artificial construct based solely on an accident of geography in terms of the existence of the Soar Valley. As already noted above, the parishes of Gotham, Thrumpton, Kingston upon Soar, Ratcliffe upon Soar and Barton in Fabis village share many common community interests which are local to their area. They share fewer community links with villages and communities in the area further south (Sutton Bonnington, Normanton on Soar and Stanford on Soar). These latter communities gravitate more towards East Leake and Loughborough.

4.3 Electoral Equality

The draft recommendations do not provide for satisfactory electoral equality.

Notionally, the proposed Barton in Fabis Ward would achieve acceptable equality (-6%) by 2027. However, we are concerned by the prospect of a 2023 election with a projected 225 electors for an entire Ward. This would be unviable, verging on farcical. We are further concerned by the projections for 2027 which are based on timely delivery of the houses at Fairham. Already experiencing delays, were these to continue we would face the risk of a further unviable 2027 election.

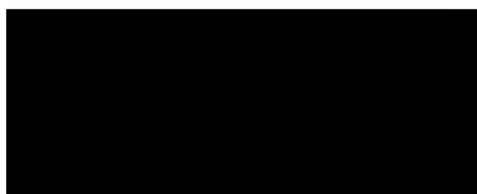
Our proposal of including the Fairham growth within the existing Gotham Ward provides some 'electoral buffer' whilst the development is built out.

It is acknowledged that the two Wards we propose would both have electoral equality (-12%) outside the target of 10%. However, the proposed Soar Valley Ward (-14%) offers greater inequality than our proposal.

For the above reasons we therefore contend that the concept of the Soar Valley ward does not reflect current community identity, nor provide adequate electoral equality. We propose that Sutton Bonnington, Stanford on Soar and Normanton on Soar should form one ward. Gotham, Thrumpton, Kingston upon Soar, Ratcliffe upon Soar and Barton in Fabis should form a separate ward (as per the current ward arrangements), but as a 'two councillor' ward.

25/11/2021

Signed on behalf of:



Chairman

Barton in Fabis Parish Council:

Appendix 1

