

North Yorkshire

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Please see attached document

Attached Documents:

- north-yorkshire-green-councillors-group-submission-on-lgbce-draft-proposals.pdf

North Yorkshire Council Boundary Review
by the Local Government Boundary
Commission England (LGBCE)

Submission by the North Yorkshire Green
Councillors Group to the
LGBCE Draft Proposals Consultation

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North Yorkshire Green Councillor Group approach to this consultation

This is a joint submission made on behalf of the four Green Party councillors who are elected members of North Yorkshire Council. This group did not make a submission to the earlier stages on the consultation, as it had participated in North Yorkshire Council's cross party working group and had contributed its views through that body. However, at this stage of the process the

The boundary review process and the proposed arrangements for divisions must address three statutory criteria which are of equal importance:

- Improving electoral equality by equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents.
- Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity.
- Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.

It is straightforward to quantitatively demonstrate whether electoral equality has been achieved. It is noted that the LGBCE draft proposal includes at least one "exception" case which falls outside the +/- 10% band, the justification being that in the area concerned the other criteria cannot be satisfied without exceeding the +/-10% band. Although the other two criteria are more subjective, in reviewing the draft proposals we have taken an evidence-based approach which is summarised below.

Regarding the community identity criteria, the principle of treating grouped parish councils as a unit should be applied generally to the boundary review exercise. Similarly, there should be a presumption that splitting parish/town councils into wards of different divisions should only happen when the parish is too large to form a single division. Weight should be given to the impact that school catchments have in creating community identities. Primary school catchments in rural areas are particularly strong influences on community identity. In areas near the authority boundary, consideration should be given to the extent to which community identity is focused on large settlements outside of North Yorkshire.

With regards to the effective local government criteria, avoiding splitting grouped parish councils has a positive impact because only one councillor need maintain a relationship with the grouped parish. We note that the LGBCE commentary on its draft proposals appears to indicate a preference for homogeneous divisions (e.g. all rural, all urban) where it is reasonably practical. We support this approach of reducing the complexity of a councillor's workload.

There are many legacy issues from the former districts such as local plans and operational arrangements at NYC (e.g. area committees) which mean that it is preferable for effective local government that divisions as far as reasonably possible do not cross these boundaries. Legacy issues will diminish over time, but they will remain operationally significant within NYC for several more years. The boundaries of the former districts often have significance as community boundaries because there are a variety of local groups and voluntary activities which work to these boundaries (e.g. Climate Action Stokesley & Villages, Community First Responder groups etc).

Submissions for the whole of North Yorkshire made to the previous stage by North Yorkshire Council and by the North Yorkshire Liberal Democrats had several instances of divisional boundaries splitting components of grouped parishes into different divisions. In our opinion, too much weight was put on electoral equality, and insufficient weight on the other criteria. We understand that those groups felt obliged to strictly apply electoral equality in their proposals.

LGBCE Draft Recommendations for the Stokesley Area

The external boundaries of the Stokesley sub-area are defined by: the local authority boundary of North Yorkshire; the physical geography; the legacy of historic local government arrangements; and the pattern of established community identities. Evidence supporting the rationale for the footprint of the sub-area was set out in Rudby Parish Council's submission to the previous consultation stage.

Subject to one minor amendment which relates to Bilsdale Midcable, we support the LGBCE proposals for the Stokesley area.

The LGBCE draft recommendations propose moving Bilsdale Midcable parish (a former Hambleton parish) out of the Stokesley area divisions in the interest of improving electoral equality in a proposed division which otherwise is entirely in the former Ryedale district. Our opinion is that the benefit of improving electoral equality for the proposed Helmsley and Ampleforth is outweighed by the harm caused to community identity and effective local government. Bilsdale Midcable has longstanding links with the Stokesley area which the LGBCE do not appear to have given sufficient weight in their proposed transfer of Bilsdale Midcable to their Helmsley and Ampleforth division.

Hutton Rudby and Appleton Wiske Division

The draft recommendation resolves the main issue we raised in our earlier submission which was to secure an arrangement where all of the Rudby Parish Council area would be within the same division. With regards to the statutory criteria:

- At 4% above average, the proposal satisfies the electoral equality criteria.
- On community identity, the arrangement avoids splitting up Rudby Parish or any of the other grouped parishes. At the eastern end the divisional arrangement is consistent with primary school catchment boundaries. At the western end, the small villages are a natural fit with the rural character of Hutton Rudby and Appleton Wiske division.
- The division (unavoidably) covers a large area due to the low population density but there are reasonable connections by roads between all parts of the division. This makes it practical for the division councillor to maintain relationships with the large number of parish councils in the area and all the communities they serve. The proposed division is entirely within the footprint of North Yorkshire Council's Richmond Area Committee.

Our opinion is the proposal satisfies all three statutory criteria and achieves a satisfactory balance between them. We support the LGBCE draft recommendation for their proposed Hutton Rudby and Appleton Wiske division.

Stokesley Division

With a forecast electorate of 4430 by 2030, Stokesley town is not large enough to form a division on its own, so the division must include some of the adjacent parishes. The available choices for which parishes to include in Stokesley division is constrained by the need to leave sufficient electors to the east of Stokesley to form a division with Great Ayton as its major component.

Seamer, Newby and all the other nearby parishes have a relationship with Stokesley as their local market town. However, Seamer and Newby are the only adjacent parishes which fall within the Stokesley Primary School catchment. This is objective evidence they have a stronger community identity relationship with Stokesley than any of the other parishes.

With regards to the statutory criteria:

- At 3% below average, the proposal meets the electoral equality criteria.
- The arrangement includes the two adjacent communities which are likely to have the strongest community identity connections with Stokesley. All the other parishes included have a clear but slightly weaker connection.
- The division is compact in comparison with the more rural divisions and is well connected by roads (despite the unusual hourglass shape). The divisional councillor will only need to maintain relationships with a small number of parish and town councils. It should be an effective arrangement for local government.

Our opinion is that the proposal satisfies all three statutory criteria and achieves a satisfactory balance between them. We support the LGBCE draft recommendation for the proposed Stokesley division.

Great Ayton Division

The existing Great Ayton division is undersized, but Great Ayton itself is sufficiently large to make up the nucleus of a division in a similar way to Stokesley. The physical geography and low population density to the south and east means that the practically available options for achieving electoral equality involve adding electors from communities in the area around Stokesley to the Great Ayton division.

Submissions made by residents of Great and Little Broughton which are noted by LGBCE reflect the fact that some communities have stronger relationships with the market town of Stokesley than they have with the large village of Great Ayton.

Including Great and Little Broughton within the Great Ayton division rather than within the Stokesley division (with which they have historically been linked) may be sub-optimal on the community identity criteria for those particular communities, however, the available choices for alternative arrangements are constrained by the electoral equality criteria, the geography, and the strong links other communities have with Stokesley. Our opinion is that the proposed arrangement is the best distribution of parishes between the Stokesley and Great Ayton divisions.

We recommend that Bilsdale Midcable is retained within the Great Ayton division for the reasons set out below. Subject to this amendment we support the LGBCE proposed Great Ayton division.

Bilsdale Midcable

It is noted that the LGBCE draft proposal places Bilsdale Midcable in their proposed Helmsley and Ampleforth in the interests of achieving marginally better electoral equality for Helmsley and Ampleforth. Bilsdale Midcable is located in the former Hambleton district and part of the existing Great Ayton division so has legacy issues in common with Stokesley and Great Ayton rather than with Helmsley.

With regards to the community identity criteria, the parish primary school at Chop Gate is in a federation arrangement with Carlton and Faceby school (located in the proposed Stokesley division). The parish also falls within the catchment of Stokesley secondary school rather than in the catchment of Helmsley.

<https://bilsdalecarltonschoools.co.uk/our-schools/about-our-schools/carlton-faceby-ce-school/>

Our opinion is that the significant adverse impact on community identity and effective local government criteria outweighs the marginal benefit on electoral equality, therefore, we recommend that Bilsdale Midcable is placed in the Great Ayton division.

Summary of our opinion on the proposed Stokesley Area Divisions

We support the Stokesley, and the Hutton Rudby & Appleton Wiske divisions as proposed by the LGBCE. We support the Great Ayton division as proposed with the minor amendment of retaining Bilsdale Midcable within Great Ayton Division.

We support the proposed names for all three divisions.

LGBCE Draft Proposals for the Richmond Area

The sub-area is the hinterland of the largest local settlement (Richmond). Richmond itself and the garrison towns of Colburn and Hipswell are urban in character while the remainder of this area consists of rural communities and scattered, mostly small, villages.

The river Swale is a major geographical feature. Richmond town lies on the north bank, but the urban area extends south of the river into the adjacent parish of St Martins. Richmond swimming pool, the old railway station, and Richmondshire Rugby Club are all located in St Martins parish which as a community is closely connected with Richmond town. These facilities primarily serve Richmond town. Continuing south along the A6136 there is then a distinctive break before entering the garrison towns of Hipswell and Colburn.

The communities of Hipswell and Colburn have strong military connections which differentiates them from the predominately civilian communities of St Martins and Richmond. The existing Hipswell and Colburn division included St Martins and excluded part of the Colburn town council area. As such it was a sub-optimal arrangement which we are pleased to see that the LGBCE proposals for the current boundary review has addressed.

Another major issue is that Richmond Town itself is too large for a single division but not large enough to form two. Hence Richmond must be subdivided, and some rural parishes must be combined with parts of the town to achieve electoral equality.

We note that the LGBCE report states that they “have largely followed the Liberal Democrats proposals for Richmond and the surrounding areas”. Richmond and Northallerton Green Party also found that the arguments presented by the Liberal Democrats were more persuasive than those put forward by North Yorkshire Council.

Hipswell & Colburn Division

The proposed new division is an improvement on the existing division because it unifies the whole of the Colburn Town Council area within one division, and the removal of St Martins creates a division with a more homogeneous character.

- At +8%, the proposed division achieves electoral equality
- These two garrison towns each have a strong community identity within themselves and with each other.
- The arrangement is effective for local government because the constituent parishes lie wholly within the division.
- The proposed name is appropriate because it acknowledges there are two linked communities.

Richmond Division.

For the reasons discussed above, St Martins fits better with Richmond town than with Hipswell and Colburn. It would not be possible to include the whole urban area within one division without a significant breach of electoral equality, hence an arrangement where part of the Richmond urban area is included in an otherwise rural division is unavoidable. The proposed arrangement excises an appropriately sized part of the town with reasonably clear boundaries within the urban area.

- At -10% the proposed arrangement achieves electoral equality
- As it includes the majority of the urban area, it has a strong community identity
- It should be an effective arrangement for local government because the division councillor only needs to maintain relationships with two local councils (Richmond Town and St Martins Parish).
- The proposed name is appropriate.

North Richmondshire and Brompton & Scorton

The A1(M) is a distinctive modern feature which roughly separates these two proposed divisions. We broadly agree with the rationale put forward by the Liberal Democrats which demonstrates why this distinctive physical feature happens to be in roughly the right place for a boundary. However, it is the underlying connectivity on the local road network, the alignment of parish boundaries, and the community identities which determine the location of the divisional boundary rather than the specific alignment of the A1(M). Other than around junctions, in rural areas motorways pass through an area without interacting with it to any significant extent.

These divisions as proposed:

- Achieve electoral equality
- Each has (mostly) homogeneous characteristics from a community identity perspective. The unavoidable inclusion of part of Richmond within North Richmondshire results in a division which has a hybrid urban/rural identity.
- Should be effective for local government.

It is noted that the draft submission from NYC published on their website proposes transferring the 300 electors of Stapleton and Cleasby from Brompton and Scorton to North Richmondshire on the grounds of local road connectivity. We find this an unpersuasive justification for exceeding the +/- 10% threshold on electoral equality. The parishes of Barton and Stapleton are not part of the same grouped parish, so unless evidence is presented that a strong affinity (which is unknown to us) exists between the communities of Barton and Stapleton, we prefer the boundaries as proposed by the LGBCE.

North Richmondshire is an appropriate divisional name, but we recommend that Brompton and Scorton should be named as Brompton on Swale and Scorton to clearly differentiate it from the other Brompton in the adjacent North Northallerton and Brompton division.

Summary of our opinion on the proposed Richmond area divisions

We support the Hipswell & Colburn and Richmond divisions as proposed. We support the Richmondshire North and Brompton on Swale & Scorton divisions with the boundaries as proposed by LGBCE but with an amended division name which uses the full name of Brompton on Swale village.

LGBCE Proposals for the Skipton Area.

The combined electorate of the town of Skipton and the nearby settlements of Carleton approximately 1 mile to the west and Embsay approximately 1 mile to the east is just over the lower bound for 3 divisions which achieve electoral equality. Where appropriate from geography and community identity perspectives, some other smaller communities in the area can be included within these divisions without breaching the upper bound for electoral equality.

We have three main concerns with the LGBCE proposals for the Skipton Area

- The community of Carleton is much more strongly connected with Skipton town than with villages in the Aire valley. It is less than 1 mile by road from the western edge of Skipton. Parents from the town send their children to the village primary school while village children attend school in the town. This close affinity is not reflected in the LGBCE proposal to place Carleton in their Aire Valley division.
- The communities to the north west of Skipton (Broughton, Elslack and Thornton in Craven) have little in common with those to the north east (Embsay with Eastby). Thornton in Craven in particular does not have a strong connection to Skipton. These small communities near the Lancashire border more in common with other rural communities in mid-Craven along the Lancashire border.
- Rectifying the concerns listed above requires a different arrangement for the Skipton divisions than the one proposed by the LGBCE. Our opinion is that the NYC submission to the previous consultation stage is a much better fit to the structure of community identities and physical geography of the Skipton Area. We support their proposals for the Skipton area and propose that they should be adopted with consequential changes made where necessary to the Dales divisions.

Glusburn, Cross Hills and Sutton in Craven

We support the LGBCE proposal to put Cross Hills and Glusburn (components of a group parish) in the same division. At +10.4%, the variation from electoral equality is marginal and the small variation from electoral equality is justifiable on community identity and effective local government grounds.

Aire Valley Division

Subject to the removal of Carleton from Aire Valley division on the grounds that it has a community identity which lies strongly with Skipton, we otherwise support the LGBCE proposal.

The impact on electoral equality of moving Carleton out of Aire Valley would create a division with an electorate at -10.7% from the 2030 average. Our opinion is that this small variation is justifiable on community identity grounds.

Skipton West

Due to the close proximity of Carleton village to Skipton and the strong community ties with Skipton, it is our opinion that Carleton should be part of Skipton West division, hence, we support the NYC proposal for their Skipton West.

The NYC proposal satisfies the electoral equality criteria and performs better on community identity than the LGBCE proposal.

Skipton East and Skipton North & Embsay with Eastby

After taking into account the boundaries we propose for Skipton West, the NYC proposals for the remaining two divisions are the most appropriate arrangements.

We agree with NYC that the western communities of Thornton in Craven, Elslack and Broughton should be placed in the mid-Craven division. The LGBCE proposal for mid Craven can comfortably accommodate these electoral districts without breaching the electoral equality threshold of +/-10%. Embsay in particular relates more with other villages to the east than it does with the small communities to the west of Skipton.

The area from Harrogate to the boundary with the City of York

Characteristics of the area

In the west, the urban core of Harrogate and Knaresborough is encircled by a “doughnut” of villages and rural communities which look towards Harrogate/Knaresborough for their retail, education, employment and other services. Communities west of the A1(M) strongly orient towards Harrogate/Knaresborough whereas communities further east increasingly orient towards York. Divisions with a long east-west axis would include communities with very different issues.

The gap between the hinterland of Harrogate/Knaresborough and the City of York boundary is populated by scattered market towns and villages. There are major transport corridors running through the area in both the north/south axis and the east/west axis. The area is dissected by rivers which strongly influence the pattern of community identities which has evolved because of the limited numbers of crossing points. The only crossing point of the Ure/Ouse between Boroughbridge and the City of York boundary is a small private toll bridge at Aldwark, hence the communities on either side do not have a strong relationship.

The rivers have long been significant boundary features for local government organisation. Communities north of the Ure / Ouse lie in the former district of Hambleton, while those to the south of these rivers lie in the former districts of Selby or Harrogate.

The LGBCE proposals for the Harrogate/Knaresborough urban core

We support the general approach taken by the LGBCE to Harrogate and Knaresborough whereby the divisions proposed are predominately urban in character. As far as is reasonably possible surrounding rural villages are not incorporated into otherwise urban divisions. We have no specific comments on the urban divisions.

The LGBCE proposals for the market towns

We support the LGBCE proposals for having divisions centred on the market towns of Boroughbridge, Easingwold, Knaresborough and Tadcaster. These all achieve an acceptable balance between the three statutory criteria. Where smaller adjacent communities have been included with market towns to achieve electoral equality, the choices are logical and justifiable.

The LGBCE proposals for the rural divisions east of Harrogate

The LGBCE propose three rural divisions (Spofforth & Tockwith, Hammerton, and Tollerton & Ouseburn) covering the area in the middle of the ring of market towns.

While achieving electoral equality, in our opinion the proposed arrangement gives insufficient weight to the community identity and convenient local government criteria. Our concerns with the LGBCE proposal are:

- It proposes two very long east-west divisions running from Knaresbrough/Harrogate to the edge of York and straddling the A1. We do not agree that having divisions with a long east-west axis is the right strategy because it doesn't reflect the structure of community identities.
- Ideally no division would straddle both sides of the Ure/Ouse. Unfortunately, the available electorate numbers don't work for achieving electoral equality without having one division straddling the Ouse. There are two options for resolving this shortfall. The boundary commission opted for including the Marton cum Grafton and the Ouseburn parishes with the communities on the north of the Ouse. The alternative is to include the York centric communities of Moor Monkton and Nun Monkton. Our opinion is the Monktons are a better fit because communities on both banks of the Ouse orient towards York as their major services centre.
- Marton cum Grafton and the Ouseburn parishes are in the "wrong division" because they lie to the south of the Ouse and have little in common with communities on the north bank which are more centred on York as their major town.
- Tockwith has more in common with the Hammertons than it does with villages on the outskirts of Harrogate. Splitting up the existing Spofforth and Tockwith division creates an opportunity to link Tockwith with similar communities.
- The Boundary Commission proposal splits some grouped parishes into different divisions which is a poor arrangement for effective local government.

In formulating our alternative proposal, we have taken into consideration the following issues:

- The electorate size sits at the bottom end of the range for 3 divisions. Given the draft proposals for the surrounding towns are acceptable, our alternative proposal aims to improve the arrangements for the electorate which makes up the communities with this central rural area. This leaves the surrounding divisions as proposed by the LGBCE.
- The west end of the area is centred on Harrogate and Leeds for employment, retail and services. This creates a reasonable degree of shared identity amongst all the rural communities closest to Harrogate/Knaresborough.
- The east end is centred on York for employment, retail and services. This creates a degree of shared identity amongst all the rural communities closest to York.
- The Ure/Ouse is a major physical and community boundary running east-west. It is a longstanding boundary for local government organisation including being the boundary between the former Hambleton and Selby districts. There are significant differences in legacy issues such as Local Plans on opposite sides of the river.
- The Ure/Ouse as a physical boundary has prevented the development of shared identity between communities on opposite banks. The only crossing point between Boroughbridge and the York ring road is a toll bridge on a minor road at Aldwark.
- The A1 is a potential boundary feature and in broad terms parishes to the west of it focus on Knaresborough/Harrogate for shopping and services.
- The area includes several grouped parish councils (e.g. Little Ouseburn, Kirby Hall and Thorpe Underwood; Cattal, Hunsingore and Walshford) which should be treated as single units within the boundary review process. These should not be split between divisions.

Our alternative proposal is to:

- Create a new rural division which wraps round the south, east and north sides of Harrogate / Knaresborough: "Spofforth and Ouseburn". All these communities are part of the hinterland of Harrogate and Knaresborough so share common issues.
- Create a new division in the centre of this area: "Hammerton and Tockwith". This has a main north-south axis as does the existing Ouseburn division.
- Create a new division from the communities north of the Ouse plus the Monktons: "Tollerton and Monkton". While on the opposite side of the Ouse to the rest of the division, which is not ideal, the Monktons are within the sphere of influence of York as are the likes of Shipton and Newton on Ouse on the north bank.

Our proposed arrangement (see figure below) performs similarly to the LGBCE draft proposal on the electoral equality criteria, but it performs much better on the community identity and effective local government criteria. We request that the LGBCE consider this alternative arrangement for this area.

