

Introduction

As described in consultation document <https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/node/4143>, 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 projected numbers of electors per councillor in the County Council in 2016 and 2020; the years before a County Council election.

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-South in Fulbourn County Council Division whilst moving the existing main village area into the Waterbeach Division as Fen Ditton-North; and
- B) constitute FDPC with 3 councillors to be elected from FD-N and 6 from FD-S.

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

Whilst the simple numerical calculation underpinning the proposal balances, Fen Ditton Parish Council (FDPC) believes that the data assumptions no longer hold up to scrutiny. FDPC concludes that the split is unnecessary and will have highly undesirable consequences for the parish. In response to the consultation, FDPC therefore objects to the ERC proposals for Fen Ditton in their current form.

Discussion

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

Table A1 in the ERC consultation and their assumptions for Fen Ditton (Appendix A) indicate:

	Waterbeach Division			Fulbourn Division	
Area	Excluding Fen Ditton	Fen Ditton (N)	Total	Excluding Fen Ditton	Fen Ditton (S)
Number of voters 2014	7338	571	7909	7071	15
Number of voters 2020	7520	571	8091	7670	1399
Change	+182	0	+182	+599	+1383

FDPC understand that the underlying data for proposed housing development were submitted some time ago by Cambridgeshire County Council. However, taking an average of 1.7 voters per dwelling (see Appendix A), the major changes by 2020 proposed in the review are:

- [Waterbeach + 184 voters or 108 dwellings
- [Fulbourn + 593 voters or 349 dwellings
- [Fen Ditton-South + 1384 voters or 814 dwellings (Wing)

At the East Cambridge Forum meeting of 1 June 2015, it was stated that the Wing programme has slipped with a decision on outline planning permission now due in late 2015. Even if all then goes well, current development plans indicate only 120 new homes per year

from 2018. The number of new dwellings occupied in 2020 is thus likely to be near 300 (510 voters) rather than 814 (1384 voters). This casts grave doubt on the fundamental basis of the proposed split.

If, as has also been stated, there are planning issues still to be resolved for developments in Fulbourn, there is a real risk that splitting Fen Ditton would result in the Fulbourn division having less than 90% of the county average voter numbers in 2020 before rising well above average in 2024 with Waterbeach then exceeding 110% of average some time around or after 2028 assuming new developments there now under discussion are progressed. FDPC therefore suggest that keeping Fen Ditton as a single unit within Fulbourn until the review prior to the 2024 elections would continue to deliver a reasonable degree of electoral equality and continue to reflect the interest and identity of the local community. This also minimises the risk of changes in 2020 being reversed in 2024.

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 will be excessive until several years after 2020. Until 2020, 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 B). 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 is in talks with Marshall's to create a Community Land Trust within Wing to meet this need.

FDPC notes that the ERC proposals do not reflect the geographical divide along the River Cam although retaining the link with Horningsea. The proposals would lead to two sets of District and County councillors being requested to attend PC and public meetings. Although they perform a vital role and contribute greatly to getting things done, this may not be a convenient use of councillors in the period up to 2020 when the number of voters in the parish is expected to be only around 1081.

Conclusion

Taking into account the revised timetable for Wing and impact on likely voter numbers, FDPC suggests that keeping Fen Ditton as a single unit within Fulbourn Division until the review prior to 2024 elections would continue to deliver a reasonable degree of electoral equality at County level and continue to reflect the interest and identity of the local community. This will delay a change until Wing is flourishing and the electoral numbers become clear.

The proposed split into a ward with 3 parish councillors and a ward with 6 will be highly unequal until some time well after 2020 and will negate the efforts made by Marshall's 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 enforced, 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.

Appendix A – ERC and County Council Data

Area	Number of voters 2014	Number of voters 2020	Change
Waterbeach	3236	3420	184
Milton	3132	3130	-2
Fen Ditton -N	571	571	0
Landbeach	679	680	1
Horningsea	291	290	-1
Sub Total	7909	8091	182
Division as % of County Average	101%	95%	.
Fulbourn	3817	4410	593
Teversham	1978	1980	2
Stow cum Quy	420	420	0
Little Wilbraham	342	350	8
Great Wilbraham	514	510	-4
Fen Ditton -S	15	1399	1384
Sub Total	7086	9069	1983
Division as % of County Average	90%	106%	.

County Total 478,908 521,380

Average per Councillor 7851 8547

Parish	Dwellings (2013)	Voters /Dwelli ng
Waterbeach	2060	1.57
Milton	1970	1.59
Fen Ditton	350	1.67
Landbeach	380	1.79
Horningsea	150	1.94
Fulbourne	1930	1.98
Teversham	1290	1.53
Stow cum Quy	250	1.68
Little Wilbraham	200	1.71
Great Wilbraham	280	1.84

Appendix B – 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, Badminton, Gardening clubs
- Village Society
- Parochial Church Council

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

- 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-South but not in Fen Ditton-North.

- 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)