



**Newnham  
Labour  
Party**



28 November 2015

The Review Officer (Cambridgeshire)  
Local Government Boundary Commission for England  
14th Floor Millbank Tower  
21-24 Millbank  
London  
SW1P 4QP

Dear Review Officer,

I am responding on behalf of Newnham Branch Labour Party to the Local Government Boundary Commission's new phase of public consultation in its electoral review of Cambridgeshire County Council. The latest proposals were discussed at a well attended ward meeting held on 26 November and it was agreed that I should write to the LGBC expressing strong opposition to the proposal to create a joint Newnham and Castle ward with two councillors. We object to this proposal for the following reasons:

1. It would be hard to find a more clearly delineated local community than Newnham, either in Cambridge itself or in other comparable cities.
2. Geographically, Newnham is bounded to the east by the river and meadows (the Backs and Coe Fen); to the south by the river and Grantchester Meadows; and to the west by sports grounds and open countryside.
3. Only to the north does Newnham have any direct connection with other residential areas and even here there is a substantial demarcation with neighbouring Castle ward. The dense housing concentrated in the south of the ward gives way to an area dominated by Cambridge University buildings and sports grounds (the Sidgwick Site; the Centre for Mathematical Sciences; the University Library; the University Rugby Ground; the University Athletics Sports Ground; the West Cambridge Site), numerous colleges (Robinson, Selwyn, Newnham, Clare Hall, Ridley Hall), large amounts of student accommodation (including Girton College Wolfson Court; Corpus Christi Leckhampton; Gonville & Caius Harvey Court and Stephen Hawking Building; King's College Garden and New Garden Hostels; Clare College Memorial Court; St Catharine's College St Chad's development and many other smaller college residences); several college playing fields (Gonville & Caius, Newnham, Corpus Christi, Trinity, St John's) and two schools. There are some residential streets in the north of Newnham with large well separated houses, but many of these have been acquired by colleges for student accommodation.
4. Madingley Road is a natural boundary to the north of the ward.
5. The area north of Madingley Road is dominated by college buildings and playing fields (Churchill College, Lucy Cavendish College, Fitzwilliam College, St Edmund's College and

Murray Edwards College). There is little residential property until Huntingdon Road is reached. The distance from the Grange Road/Madingley Road junction to Huntingdon Road via Storey's Way is almost a mile.

6. The modest number of residents living in the north of Newnham ward see themselves as part of Newnham and look to Newnham Croft for their local services. They certainly do not identify in any way with Castle ward.
7. Newnham has a history going back hundreds of years. Most of the residential streets were built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was a village then and still retains the feel of a village. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was extensive college and university development but relatively little residential development.
8. Newnham is self-contained and at the heart of the ward, in Newnham Croft, there is a good selection of local shops (two general stores, post office, butchers, bakers, chemist, hairdressers), a church and community centre, a social club, a garage, a nursery school and a primary school. Newnham Croft Primary School plays an important role in bringing families together and defining the area. The catchment area of the school matches the boundaries of the ward.
9. The community is well established and stable, with substantial numbers of the residents having lived in Newnham for many years. Having myself lived in the centre of Newnham for 27 years and brought up my family here, I know from personal experience what a strong sense of identity there is in the community.
10. Newnham is also seen as a well defined area by people living in other parts of the city.
11. Residents of Newnham look to Newnham Croft as their centre. They do not feel any affinity for Castle and would have no reason to make use of local services in Castle located several miles away and not readily accessible.
12. Local residents want to be represented by someone who knows the community and is part of it. On two occasions in recent years we have had candidates standing for Labour in the local elections in Newnham who lived outside the ward. Our opponents highlighted this in their literature and it became an issue on the doorstep. In one case, our candidate lived in Northampton Street, some 150m outside the ward boundary. In the other case, the candidate lived in Trinity College, again close to the ward boundary.
13. Not only are Newnham Labour Party members and Newnham residents strongly opposed to the merger with Castle, they are mystified as to why this should have ever been proposed by the Boundary Commission.
14. The only possible explanation that has been suggested to me is that combining Newnham and Castle wards reduces the percentage change in electorate that might result from new housing developments taking place in North West Cambridge. If this is indeed the justification, it seems bizarre that the wish of people to be represented by councillors who are part of their community should be compromised for the sake of administrative expediency.

15. There are simpler solutions available to compensate for any increase in population in Castle ward. For example, Churchill College could in due course be moved into Newnham ward. This would extend the ward boundary north of the Madingley Road, but would be far more acceptable than the proposal to create a combined ward with Castle. It would be similar to what was done in the past to adjust numbers by the inclusion in Newnham ward of King's College and St Catharine's College.
16. The proposal for a combined ward formed from Newnham and Castle would be unwieldy and impractical. It would be a misguided attempt to unite two distinct communities, the hearts of which are geographically far distant from each other. On some issues, the two communities could find their individual voices being muted as councillors representing them tried to reconcile differing points of view.
17. A single-member division for Newnham would respect the historic village identity of the ward and the strong wish of local residents to be represented by a councillor who knows the community and is part of it.
18. A single-member division for Newnham would also allow continuation of the present desirable arrangement of coterminous boundaries with the City Council.

We strongly urge you to review your proposals for Newnham.

Yours faithfully,



Professor John Yates FRCP  
Secretary, Newnham Branch Labour Party  
Email: [REDACTED]